

Political Technology Awards 2025

Newspeak House Cohort

2024-25

Political Technology Awards

Exercise

Section 1 - Divergent Phase

Introduction

Background

Newspeak House (NH) is an independent residential college founded in 2015 with the mission to study, nurture and inspire emerging communities of practice across civil society and public sector in the UK. In 2024, NH admitted 15 participants to its yearlong Introduction to Political Technology programme (7 of whom reside on the college premises and 8 of whom reside elsewhere), the successful completion of which earns participants the title of Fellow.

This current cohort contains diverse professional and academic backgrounds: in law, economics, ecological futures, development studies, political science, digital humanities, computer science, applied mathematics, journalism, gender studies, human-computer interaction, graphic design and international relations. The cohort's respective backgrounds are widely complementary and make for rich interdisciplinary dialogue, whilst also providing ample context in which to practice the resolution of differing and conflicting approaches to the ethical and practical dimensions of this field.

This document forms the final report for the 2024-25 Newspeak House cohorts work on the grantmaking exercise, or the 'Political Technology Awards 2025'.

Throughout this exercise the cohort acted as a grantmaking committee, with a (fictional) budget of £5,000,000 to allocate across a portfolio of 293 projects in the field of political technology.

The scope for the exercise involved the prioritisation of the following three tasks:

- designing and organising group processes for three complex political activities: impact evaluation, co-budgeting, and co-writing
- developing an overview of the landscape of political technology projects, institutions and research
- reflecting on your own values and priorities as they relate to political technology

The committee allocated the full budget of £5,000,000. This funding was spread across a number of projects, with different projects receiving different levels of funding, based on the cohorts perception of the importance of the project, rather than need. In this sense, the funding serves as a proxy for how important the cohort, who make up the committee, believes each project is.

Motivation

Applying to the Introduction to Political Technology programme at NH reflects a candidate’s general interest in the design, uses, and impact of political or civic technologies, but each of us was motivated by distinct experiences, interests, and future aspirations. The resulting diversity of the cohort represents an interesting design challenge for a task of this nature, and our collective response to this task, although self-organised, has therefore deliberately sought to accommodate and integrate our respective skill sets, ideological stances, availability, and goals.

The table below summarises the goals of an illustrative sample of the cohort, who took part in a seminar (as part of Joshua Becker’s ‘Engineering Group Decisions’ course session on Saturday 22nd February) that was dedicated to supporting attendees to surface and discuss their particular “intrinsic motivations” for engaging in this task.

Name	Intrinsic Motivations for Engaging in this Task
Mel Tranfield	Improve algorithm design skills, problem-solving with code, refine group programming experience, and contribute to a project with real-world impact.
Paulina Wisdom	Engage with the cohort, explore creative problem-solving, and gain a deeper understanding of the Political Technology (PT) landscape.
Yung-Hsuan Wu	Exploring the PT landscape, experimenting with algorithmic decision-making, and analyzing the interaction between human judgment and AI systems
David Norton	Improve technical skills, support group progress, and engage in collaborative problem-solving within the cohort.
Tristan Spill	Managing information overload (infoglut), exploring personal values, understanding project motivations, fostering effective group coordination, and improving how the group deals with complex

	information..
Dorcas Nyamwaya	Explore grant allocation processes, understand the reasons behind successful applications, and examine how group values influence the relative importance of various factors in grant decisions.
Richard	Visualizing and integrating data from multiple sources, aligning the group's goals with project objectives, and fostering inclusive group decision-making.
Simon Wisdom	Understanding and improving grant-making processes, assessing decision-making frameworks, and promoting open communication.

Methodology and Experimentation

Following the Spring Term Orientation on January 21st, the cohort began collaborative discussions both asynchronously (via the #grantmaking-exercise channel on Slack) and synchronously, through impromptu meetings. These discussions focused on defining roles essential for completing the grantmaking exercise. Ollie proposed an initial set of roles, including Project Management, Data Retrieval, Algorithm Engineer, Researcher of Best Practices for Evaluation, and more. Cohort members selected roles they wished to take on, and Simon initiated the research by scraping 293 political technology project websites, publishing the text through Streamlit.

As Google released its Deep Research tool, the cohort experimented with generating reports on a subset of projects. However, scalability issues led to considering alternatives like Open Deep Research, Open AI, Hugging Face, and DZHNG. Though some insights were gleaned, these experiments weren't scaled.

In parallel, a survey was proposed to rank evaluation criteria, with the option to assign weights based on their relative importance. The evaluation criteria were derived by querying NotebookLM, incorporating "Giving Done Right" and "Money Well Spent" as key references. However, it became clear that this approach required data we didn't have, and so a minimum viable methodology was prioritized. At this point, a Slack PM bot was introduced to automate task summaries and assignments, though the bot's effectiveness was limited due to its erratic performance.

Screening Process

The screening process began with an initial pool of 293 political technology projects, which were manually reviewed by two committee members, Mel and David. The goal was to eliminate projects misaligned with the initiative's core priorities or failing to meet basic eligibility criteria. Projects were quickly assessed based on content and alignment with strategic goals like civic engagement, collaborative grantmaking, and technological feasibility. This manual review reduced the pool by 67%, leaving 96 projects for in-depth

evaluation. Further details on the criteria used for exclusion, and examples of discarded projects, will be included in the final report.

Scoring Framework

We evaluated projects using seven criteria with weighted importance. These criteria come from the frameworks outlined in ‘Modern Grantmaking’ as cited above.

Criterion	Weight	Description
Mission Alignment	20%	Advancement of political technology goals and societal needs
Equity & Inclusion	20%	Promotion of fairness, accessibility, and broad participation
Evidence & Innovation	15%	Approach based on evidence or innovative solutions to participation gaps
Potential Impact	15%	Meaningful outcomes for political systems
Feasibility & Sustainability	10%	Realistic design with long-term viability
Risk & Groundbreaking	10%	Appropriate risk-taking with breakthrough potential
Design Quality	10%	User experience, workflow, and functionality quality

Each criterion used a 1-5 scale with detailed descriptors for each score level (see Appendix A for full scoring rubrics).

Evaluation Workshop

A 120-minute workshop was held to evaluate the 96 shortlisted projects. The workshop used a five-phase structure to ensure calibration, consistency, and consensus among evaluators:

- Phase 1: Introduction & Calibration (40 minutes) involved reviewing the evaluation framework and conducting practice ratings.
- Phase 2: Individual Project Evaluation (45 minutes) had participants score projects on seven weighted criteria.
- Phase 3: Pair Calibration (15 minutes) focused on resolving discrepancies in scores.
- Phase 4: Full Group Calibration (15 minutes) involved resolving significant scoring differences.
- Phase 5: Allocation Finalization (5 minutes) confirmed the distribution of the £5,000,000 across five funding tiers.

As a result, 79% of evaluated projects (76 of 96) received funding, with the remaining projects deemed less aligned with the funding criteria.

Funding Allocation Structure

The funding was distributed across five tiers based on final weighted scores:

- Tier 1: Transformative Projects (£150,000 each)
- Tier 2: High-Impact Projects (£100,000 each)
- Tier 3: Promising Projects (£50,000 each)
- Tier 4: Seed Potential Projects (£20,000 each)
- Tier 5: Recognition Grants (£12,500 each)

This tiered system allowed for a diverse range of projects to be funded while ensuring that resources were allocated efficiently to initiatives with the greatest potential for impact.

Tier	Description	Projects	Amount per Project	Total Allocation	% of Budget
1	Transformative Projects	15 (top 5%)	£150,000	£2,250,000	45%
2	High-Impact Projects	15 (next 5%)	£100,000	£1,500,000	30%
3	Promising Projects	15 (next 5%)	£50,000	£750,000	15%
4	Seed Potential	15 (next 5%)	£20,000	£300,000	6%
5	Recognition Grants	16 (next 5.5%)	£12,500	£200,000	4%
-	Unfunded	218 (remaining 74.5%)	£0	£0	0%

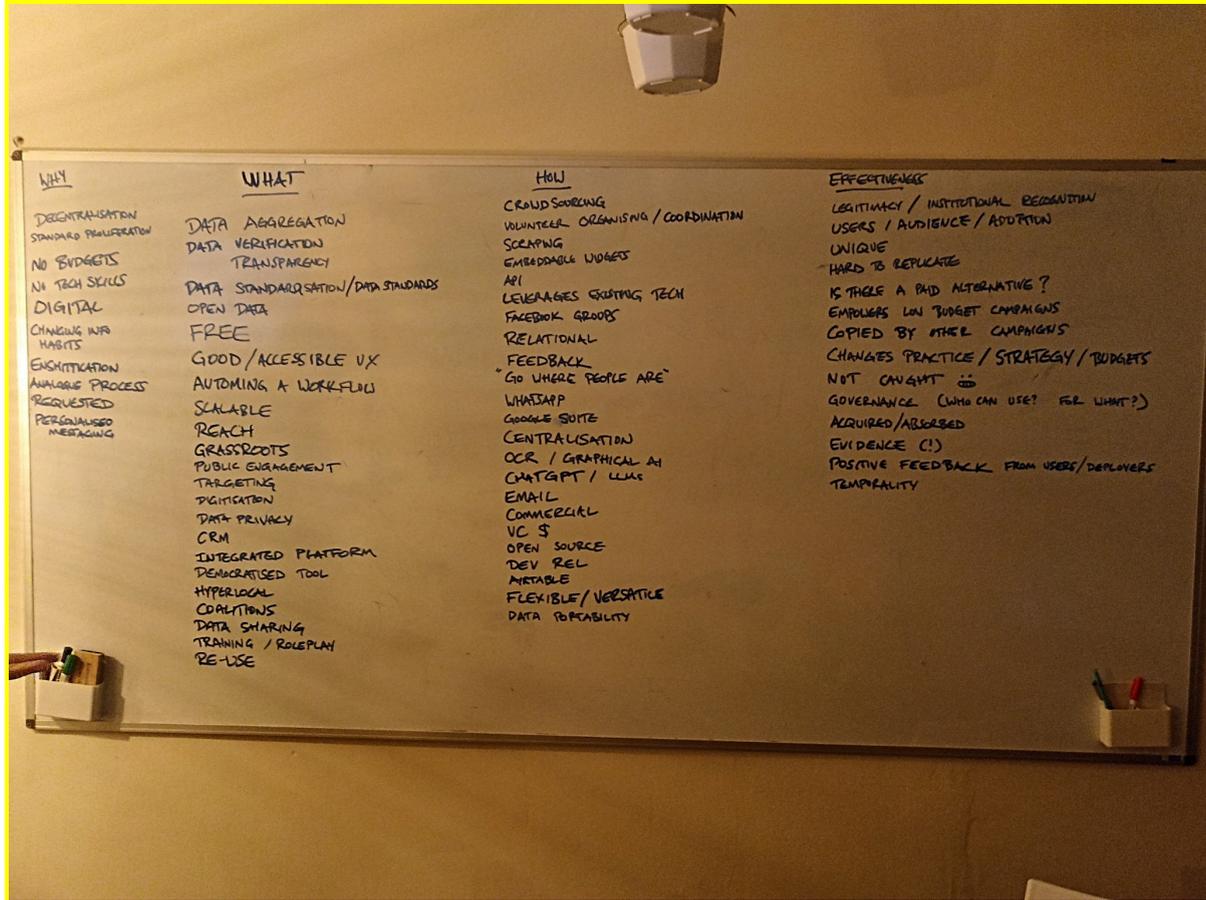
Total Allocation: £5,000,000 (100% of available budget)

Synchronous Workshops

The synchronous working section of our process involved a series of workshops and real-time collaborative sessions designed to facilitate focused discussions, problem-solving, and decision-making. These sessions allowed cohort members to engage in deeper, more interactive exploration of key issues, refine ideas, and reach collective decisions on critical aspects of the project. The collaborative environment encouraged dynamic exchanges, contributing to a more refined and holistic approach to the grantmaking and evaluation process.

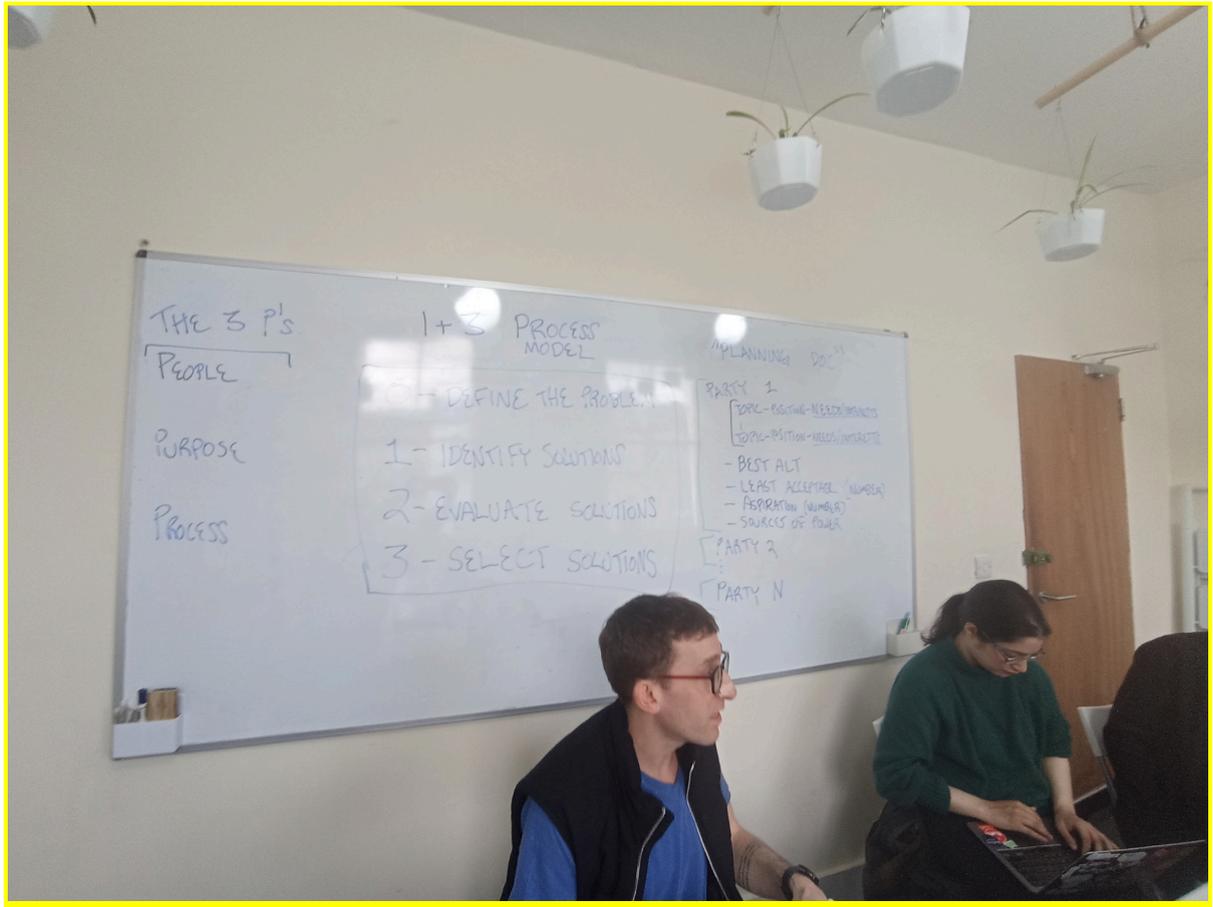
Effective Political Technology Workshop (Hannah O'Rourke)

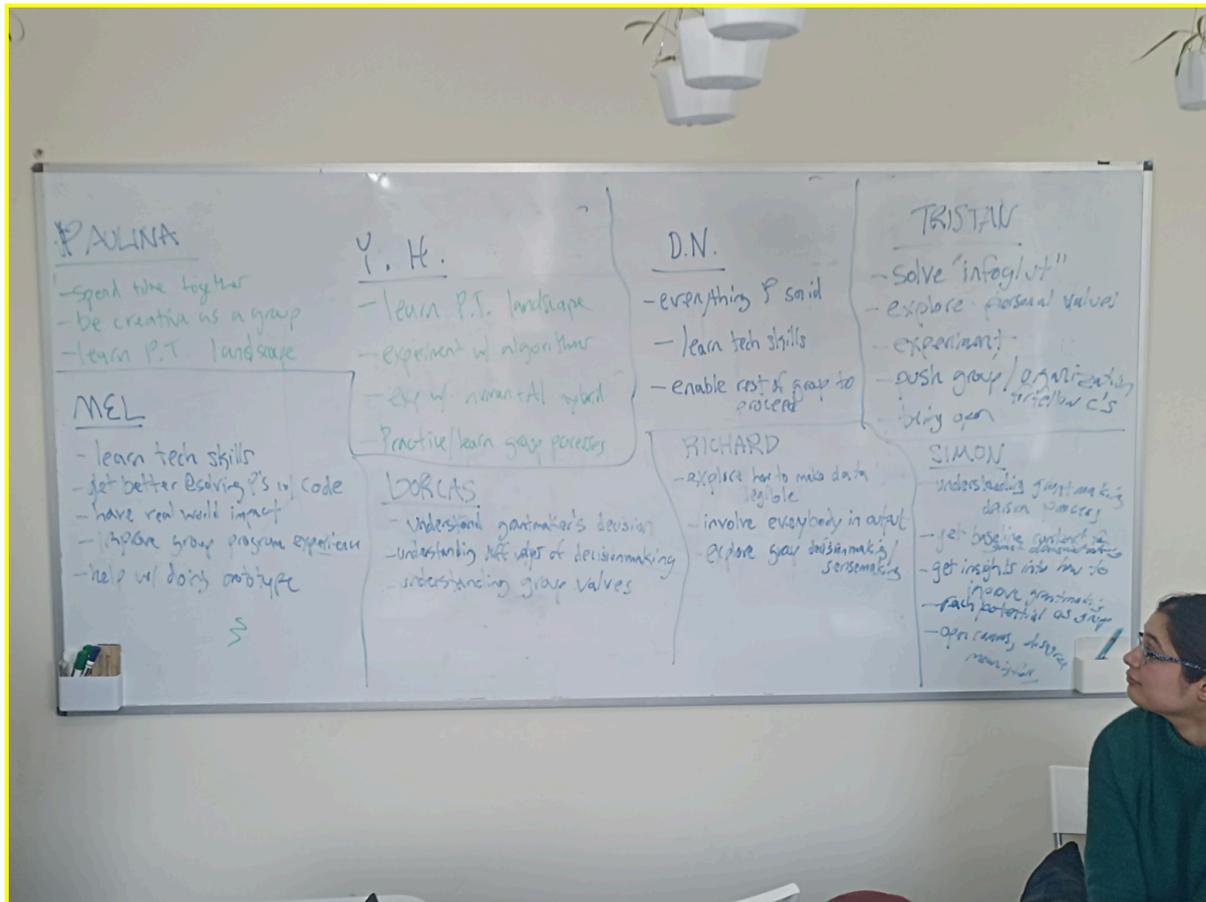
Hannah's Effective Political Technology Workshop (11 February) focused on identifying key factors for success in political technology tools, analyzing 13 campaign technologies in terms of their purpose, mechanisms, and effectiveness. The discussions aimed to uncover innovation opportunities and limitations within these tools.



Decision-making frameworks for Grantmaking (Joshua Becker)

The Brainstorming session with Joshua Becker (22 February) explored decision-making frameworks for grantmaking. It introduced the 3 P's (People, Purpose, Process) and the 1+3 model, both designed to clarify objectives and improve group decision-making, while also reflecting on individual motivations and project goals.





Reflections on purpose and intrinsic motivations during the 3 P's exercise.

We conducted a planning exercise that involved analyzing the positions, needs, and interests of each party on various topics, considering their best alternatives, least acceptable options, aspirations, and sources of power. The session concluded with a discussion on resource allocation strategies.

Next steps included determining the number of experiments to conduct, establishing methods for gathering information, and defining the criteria for evaluating potential outcomes.

Ranking Discussion

Over the course of the experiment, there were a number of discussions on potential ways of ranking. Some students communicated their reflections via Slack, asking a number of questions:

1. Should we turn to AI, and if so, how much power do we delegate?
2. What is the right type of interface between human intelligence, collective intelligence, and machine intelligence (and even swarm intelligence, if we want to think about collectives of machines too) for optimal fairness? And what about for optimal efficiency?

3. Where are the trade-offs between making a heavy workload more manageable on the one hand, and risking the moral impacts of relying on AI's biases and hallucinations on the other?

This prompted other students to think about conducting a pool of experiments to test different ranking methods. Out of these discussions, there was an interest in exploring how to:

1. interrogate our initial impulse to reduce this diverse set of complex projects into a single ranking, and to instead consider approaches that embed contextual details (such as issue areas, theories of change, scale, or methods) into the allocations themselves, allowing for a nuanced understanding of each project's attributes, along multiple dimensions that could potentially also enable like-to-like comparisons of similar projects within the overall set. See more [here](#).
2. question our initial reliance on AI and machine-driven methodologies, especially at the evaluative stage of scoring and ranking the projects' relative importance. This led to a desire to add more human input to the ranking process.

A proposal emerged to conduct a two hour "human powered" workshop ([the agenda for the workshop is here](#)). Prior to exercise, Mel and David manually went through the project list, with the scoring rubric, and eliminated projects based on their discretion that they believed would be unlikely to score well. Approximately two thirds of the projects were eliminated in this stage. The workshop featured group calibration exercises with approximately half of the cohort, individual evaluations of the subset of projects scored, and group discussions.

Projects were scored on seven weighted criteria (1-5 scale):

We evaluated projects using seven criteria with weighted importance. These criteria come from the frameworks outlined in 'Modern Grantmaking' as cited above.

Criterion	Weight	Description
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Risk & Groundbreaking	10%	Appropriate risk-taking with breakthrough potential

Design Quality	10%	User experience, workflow, and functionality quality
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Based on scores, projects were allocated to five funding tiers.

Building on these proposals and others ([see here](#)), another proposal was developed to use a hybrid of the above to plot the projects along high dimensional space, and then use a dimension reduction algorithm (k-means clustering) to generate comparable groups, in which the projects could be ranked meaningfully. This was incorporated into the “human powered” workshop.

Once we have these various rankings, we could compare them - how different are they? how does more or less AI change the outcome? how does more or less collective intelligence change the outcome? do bigger projects get prioritised? does institutional reform or technological innovation come out on top?

Alternative Methods attempted

Algorithmic approach (Simon Wisdom)

Simon proposed an algorithmic approach to allocate the funding, primarily based on scraping available website data and using an LLM to score the projects by inferring from summarized descriptions. Here is the original proposal:

Phase 1. Preference Collection & Weighting

- Write an open ended survey for cohort members to:
 - Rank evaluation criteria
 - Assign weights to different factors
- Combination of multiple choice + open ended questions, use an LLM to standardize it
- Output is a weighted preference framework

Phase 2. Parallel Evaluation Streams

- In parallel to figuring out our preferences, we use an LLM to score every project on our criteria
- After LLM scoring, we sample the output and get human input to validate the LLM score
- Make adjustments and rescore if necessary
- Also have humans look at the top 10, top 20, or top 50, or top N by category/tag

Phase 3. Final Allocation

- Combine:
 - Weighted preferences
 - LLM scores
 - Human-adjusted evaluations
- Generate final allocation recommendations

Simon made progress on Phase 1 and 2, but didn't achieve cohort buy-in—and in fact faced pushback on the approach by several members of the cohort—so he abandoned the effort in favour of the 'human-powered' approach. Simon notes this was a political decision by the cohort, and he would have preferred to continue with his approach, but found it amusing and interesting to be part of a messy group process. On reflection - Simon thinks he could have worked harder to explain his process and onboard others into his process.

Phase 1 - Survey

Simon generated a survey using Google Forms and sent it out to the cohort, with the purpose of understanding individual values with respect to how the cohort should allocate funding. The questions of the survey can be found in Appendix Z.

9 out of 15 students responded to the form, with around 77% being male students.

Which 3 outcomes matter most to you?

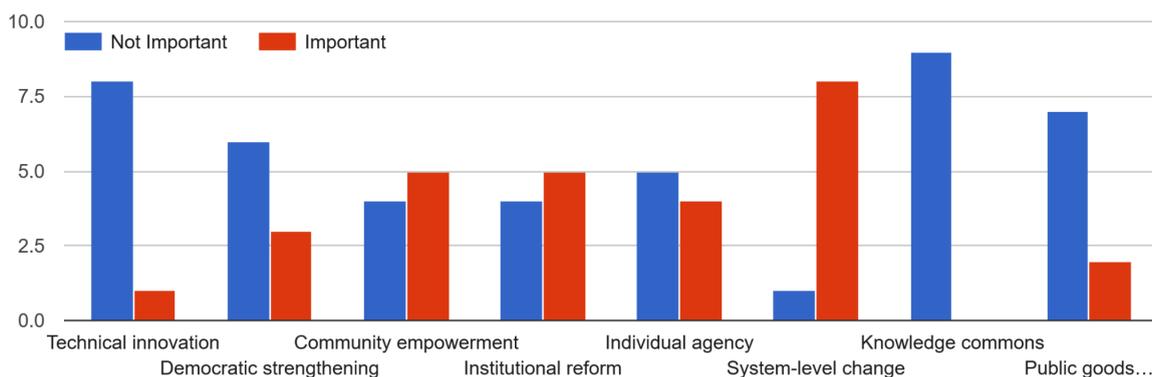


Figure 1 Responses to the Value Alignment question (Q9) of the survey

Some of the students analysed the results of the survey and were happy to find consensus on many alignment areas.

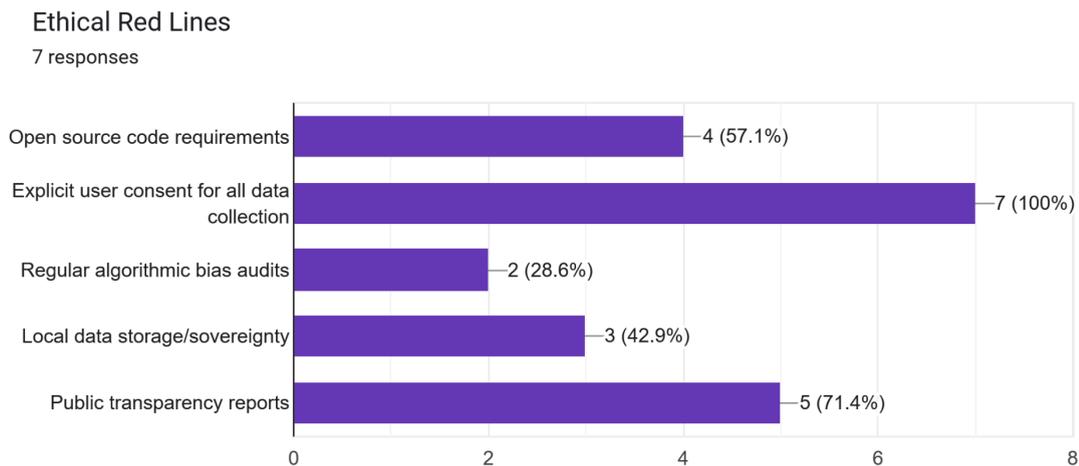


Figure 2 Responses to the Ethics question (Q13) of the survey

Of particular interest within the scope of this methodology, were cohort members responses to the 'Critical Factors' question contained within the survey; namely *'in one to three sentences, describe the most important criterion for evaluating a political technology project, and why it matters'?*

Responses included:

1. It needs to feel obvious, inevitable and for the common good.
2. Track record of making changes
3. Whether it's actually useful to anybody. Whether it's a solution to somebody's problem, or a solution in search of a problem.
4. I would say the single most important criterion in an impartial sense is whether the goal that it originally started with has been achieved, or how far it is away from the goal if it hasn't yet achieved it. For my personal evaluation, it would be whether it is likely to lead to significant system level change or has indicated whether this is possible from its past performance/research around the idea/quality of idea.
5. EVIDENCE: Evidence that the technology is needed and doesn't reinvent the wheel & evidence of close connections with a variety of stakeholders or stakeholder groups who will/might actually use the tool
6. Impact + feasibility (proof of concept / product market fit)
7. If it has the potential to lead to paradigmatic change with leveraged impact. I don't think it needs to be proven but just needs to demonstrate a theory of change that has potential to do so.
8. Is this project actually likely to have a positive impact on people's lives? a) is this a real problem, b) would the solution solve it, c) will people use this solution.
9. Community empowerment is key for me: does this political technology really help a community, is built for a community, and can the community use it by themselves and for themselves?

Following the survey analysis, some students examined the draft algorithm, particularly its weighting of criteria. They tested it using the top-rated values from the survey—community empowerment, system-level change, and institutional reform. Others expanded the dataset, adding columns to reflect key dimensions such as technical innovation, democratic strengthening, individual agency, knowledge commons, and public goods creation, along with theory of change and track record. Meanwhile, another student worked on the technical infrastructure, developing a GitLab pipeline to run the script and deploy the app locally via Docker, ensuring OS-independent functionality.

Phase 2 - Evaluation

Simon wrote Python code in Jupyter notebooks to scrape website content, pass to an LLM (Claude 3 Haiku), extract structured data, and score on 7 fields generated from the Phase 1 survey. Unfortunately they are too messy and unstructured to be useful to include in this report - if we continued with this methodology Simon would have cleaned them up to include them.

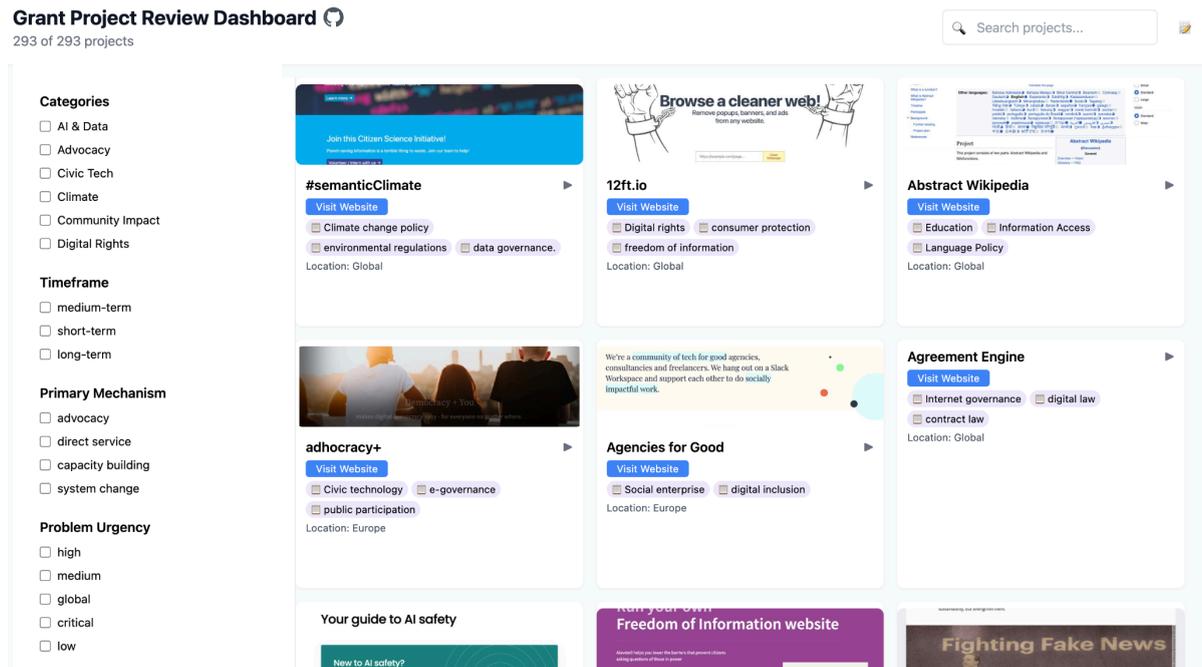
The scraped data can be found here: [📄 grantmaking_projects](#)

Key features were extrapolated from the website summaries by using an LLM. The features are listed below:

1. website
2. content_summary
3. categories
4. year_founded
5. project_location
6. funding_source
7. problem_scope
8. problem_urgency
9. problem_complexity
10. problem_statement
11. target_population
12. problem_type
13. policy_area
14. primary_mechanism
15. timeframe
16. impact_potential
17. activities
18. outputs
19. outcomes
20. impact
21. system_change_rating

- 22. individual_agency_rating
- 23. institutional_reform_rating
- 24. community_empowerment_rating
- 25. democratic_strengthening_rating
- 26. track_record_rating
- 27. theory_of_change_validity_rating

In an effort to make it easier for humans to browse the projects, Simon created a [dashboard](#) based on this data:



Dashboard (code in [Github](#))

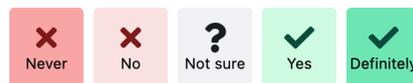
Ideally, this interactive dashboard could have been extended to allow for voting as a way to collect more nuanced and scalable feedback from the cohort, inspired by [collectivetech.io](#):



Museums for Refugees

I volunteer with refugees at Sparrow Hill asylum centre in Saxford. They have to live on £5 per day for everything. To give you an idea, a return bus fare to the city costs £4.40 so that's too much for them to be able to spend. Without any money to

Do you feel we should fund this?



16 more ideas. [See all](#)

Mel's Algorithm

This work formed part of an early-stage trial exploring computational approaches to grantmaking. Specifically, the team developed a basic ranking algorithm derived from survey data created by Simon, in which cohort members voted on eight key categories. The initial MVP was built in C#, with alternative versions in Python also explored. Beyond informing the ranking process, the exercise aimed to build coding and problem-solving skills across the cohort. Ahead of these sessions, some participants engaged in Codewars challenges shared via the #coding Slack channel to help reactivate and sharpen technical thinking.

We looked at different approaches to incorporating the different categories in a ranking algorithm. Algorithms are good tools to use to sort through and rank 293 projects in contrast to humans, but that depends on how well the algorithm is designed and whether it actually includes the areas that the humans, ourselves, wanted to be considered. One of the main concerns was the 'critical factor multiplier' - the critical factors in the decision that members of the cohort contributed in the survey. As this data wasn't given in a numbered, easily 'rankable' format, it made it more difficult to include it in a straightforward ranking algorithm - it would have to map to a number. LLMs were consulted in deciding the best approach, e.g asking Claude how it might be best to approach the ranking algorithm when there were this many factors to consider. The key part here was that we asked 'how' we might approach this and not to do it for us.

The first approach create a scoring model that weights each criterion. This can be done by doing a simple class, in any language but we tried it in C#. Then, we created a scoring function that combines the criteria we had, e.g geographic reach, time horizon, problem urgency etc. The next step was to multiply each criterion (rated 1-5) by its corresponding weight and adds them together. For example, if a project has high urgency (5) and this criterion has a higher weight (say 1.5), it contributes more to the final score than other criteria.

So essentially, this part of the code would have handled the final decision making:

```
var criticalFactorMultiplier = 1.0;
if (!project.HasOpenSource) criticalFactorMultiplier *= 0.7;
if (!project.HasUserConsent) criticalFactorMultiplier *= 0.6;
if (!project.HasBiasAudits) criticalFactorMultiplier *= 0.8;
```

This starts with a multiplier of 1.0 (no penalty). For each critical factor that the project lacks, the multiplier is reduced. For example:

- No open source: multiplier becomes 0.7 (30% penalty)
- No user consent: multiplier becomes 0.42 ($0.7 \times 0.6 =$ another 40% reduction)
- No bias audits: multiplier becomes 0.336 ($0.42 \times 0.8 =$ another 20% reduction)

So if a project is missing all three critical factors, its score will be reduced by about 66.4%.

[The LUIGI classification system: a multidimensional, methodological alternative to linear ranking](#)

David identified a fundamental epistemological limitation in the initial Political Technology Awards evaluation framework: the inherent incompatibility of ranking 293 heterogeneous projects along a single dimension of "importance", arguing that projects in the political technology space embody vastly different theories of change, operate across disparate domains, and employ methodologies that cannot be meaningfully compared through unidimensional assessment. As David questioned: by what rational criteria could one establish a legitimate comparative valuation between a secure communications protocol and a civic engagement platform?

This methodological inconsistency creates what philosophers of science would identify as a category error—attempting to compare entities that belong to fundamentally different taxonomic classifications. Such forced comparisons necessarily introduce arbitrary judgments that obscure rather than illuminate the complex landscape of political technology.

David also reasoned that assigning precise numerical values of "importance" to such diverse projects implies a false sense of precision. The traditional ranking approach suggests an ability to distinguish between projects with exactitude, when in reality such

fine-grained discriminations cannot be meaningfully justified given the inherent incommensurability of projects with different theories of change, target populations, and methodologies. This pseudo-precision potentially masks the substantial uncertainty and subjectivity inherent in cross-category evaluations.

The LUIGI Method

In response to this epistemological challenge, David developed the LUIGI method (Layered, Unbiased Information & Grouped Indexing)—an alternative with three core components:

1. **Egalitarian base allocation:** Each project receives identical base funding (£17,064.85 when dividing £5,000,000 across 293 projects).
2. **Multi-dimensional classification system:** The decimal portion employs a structured SLAY code that encodes multiple evaluative dimensions, preserving the complex, multi-faceted nature of each project rather than collapsing distinct qualities into a single metric.
3. **Contextual Integrity:** The system preserves essential contextual elements required for nuanced understanding, avoiding the reductive simplification inherent in linear ranking methods.

Empirical Application: The SLAY (Structured Logic for Analytical Yoking) key implementation

The example table below demonstrates the empirical application of this sort of classification system:

Project	Problem Summary	Problem Type (XX)	Methodology (YY)	Horizon (ZZ₁)	Scale (ZZ₂)	SLAY Code	LUIGI Allocation
hatemeter.eu	"Proliferation of online hate speech"	11 (Disinformation)	04 (Systemic Accountability)	01 (Immediate)	03 (Systemic)	11040103	£17,064.8511040103
12ft.io	"The internet is increasingly paywalled"	01 (Access to info)	03 (Knowledge Democratization)	01 (Immediate)	01 (Individual)	11030101	£17,064.8501030101

adhocracy. plus	"Lack of accessible digital tools for participatory decision-making"	03 (Civic Participation)	02 (Participatory Infrastructure)	03 (Structural)	02 (Community)	30230302	£17,064.8 50302030 2
aisafety.info	"AI systems pose risks of misalignment"	04 (AI Ethics)	07 (Normative Framework)	02 (Mid-Term)	03 (Systemic)	40702\03	£17,064.8 50407020 3
alaveteli.org	"Lack of free access to scholarly works"	01 (Access to Info)	03 (Knowledge Democratization)	03 (Structural)	03 (Systemic)	10303\03	£17,064.8 50103030 3

Such systematic encoding creates a structured representation of each project's multi-dimensional profile without imposing an artificial hierarchy between fundamentally different initiatives. For instance, comparing hatemeter.eu and aisafety.info reveals two projects addressing different problem types through distinct methodologies, operating at different time horizons but similar scales of impact. The LUIGI method acknowledges these distinctive profiles without forcing the logically untenable (and perhaps unproductive) question of which is "more important".

Pedagogical and pragmatic advantages

David reasoned that this approach offers four key advantages:

1. **Resource optimisation:** The method eliminates what David termed "potentially intractable, inevitable (maybe fruitless?) discussions" about relative importance between categorically different projects like Creative Commons and the Civic Tech Field Guide.
2. **Taxonomically coherent comparisons with preserved diversity of opinion:** As David noted, "If we wanted, we could assign worthiness-based points *within* the categories." This facilitates legitimate comparisons within coherent taxonomic boundaries while avoiding what David characterised as "unproductive debates about the metaphorical worthiness of water vs. air." When disagreements about importance occur within categories, LUIGI can encode multiple perspectives in the

same allocation. For example, with Creative Commons, one evaluator's high rating of importance (9) and another's moderate rating (5) can both be preserved in a single classification (£17,064.85010309103), transforming disagreements into structured data rather than forcing artificial consensus.

3. **Enhanced analytical depth:** By transforming the exercise from ranking to classification, the LUIGI method enables what David described as "a richer set of insights into the 293 projects," supporting both "technical experimentation and qualitative sense making."
4. **Encourage experimentation:** The LUIGI approach encourages experimentation with various methods of categorisation and understanding. This experimental mindset fosters a deeper comprehension of the political technology field by inviting participants to create and consider multiple taxonomic frameworks, classification schemas, and conceptual models. Rather than settling for a static, one-dimensional assessment, the method promotes active intellectual engagement with the complex relationships between different types of projects and their distinctive contributions to this ecosystem. David reasoned that this dynamic approach to evaluation becomes itself a valuable learning exercise that advances collective understanding of the field.
5. **Methodological pluralism:** LUIGI's decimal classification system provides a formal mechanism for representing diverse analytical approaches simultaneously. Instead of forcing convergence to a single perspective, the encoding architecture allows multiple interpretations to coexist within the same structure. This pluralistic approach recognises that complex socio-technical systems often require multiple analytical lenses to be comprehensively understood, and transforms what would typically be hidden committee debates into structured data that enriches understanding of both the projects and the evaluation process itself.

Statistical algorithm on top of human-generated data

Wanting to experiment with algorithmic processes while preserving the human element in the grantmaking exercise, Yung-Hsuan came up with the idea of having humans do project evaluations but using machine learning algorithms to do project ranking.

Yung-Hsuan attempted to combine David's LUIGI approach and Paulina's human-powered rating approach (as outlined in Section 2) given their shared processes. David's approach (encoding meaning with numbers) requires humans to go over the large number of projects manually to determine the problems that a project is solving and the intervention methodologies adopted by the project. Paulina's approach requires humans to read through what each project is about before rating them based on a scorecard. Yung-Hsuan first liaised with both David and Paulina to make sure the process of having humans go over projects overlaps, and that both sides can converge on the same scheme for human volunteers to rate the projects. Then, after the human raters rated 96 projects (see Section 2 for detail) manually, Yung-Hsuan took the resulting dataset to perform statistical analysis and transformation.

Yung-Hsuan started with grouping projects that solved similar problem types and using similar intervention methodologies to make the comparison of projects more meaningful. He identified the most common problem-methodology pairs and created 8 major groups. Then, he applied Principal Component Analysis (PCA), an easy-to-use and common dimensionality reduction algorithm to the projects, reducing the 7 scoring dimensions (see the Scoring Framework below) to 1 dimension to create rankings among each group. His code and results could be found on the [public GitHub repo](#), specifically the [yh-doingstuff.ipynb Jupyter notebook](#).

Section 2 - Convergent Phase

We ultimately decided on a simplified, 'human-powered' methodology, inspired by Modern Grantmaking (Bull & Steinberg), using which we assessed projects based on their design, goals, and theory of change rather than funding needs or current organizational capacity.

Key Allocation Results

- Total Budget: £5,000,000
- Projects Evaluated: 293
- Projects Funded: 76 projects (25.6% of evaluated projects)
- Distribution: Funding allocated across five tiers based on evaluation scores

1. Allocation Methodology

Summary

Our grantmaking process began by screening 293 political technology projects to a shortlist of 96 candidates. Through a structured 120-minute workshop, we evaluated these projects across seven weighted criteria, resulting in 76 funded projects across five tiered funding levels. This methodical approach ensured resources were directed toward initiatives with the strongest alignment to our criteria and greatest potential for advancing democratic participation, transparency, and innovative civic engagement.

Initial Screening Phase

The initial screening employed a rapid assessment protocol where Mel and David manually reviewed each project website for 2-3 minutes, eliminating those that were inactive, outside the realm of political technology, or lacking sufficient implementation evidence. This human-centered approach allowed the team to efficiently reduce the dataset from 293 to 96 candidates (33% of the original pool) while still capturing diverse promising initiatives for deeper evaluation in the workshop phase. Assessments were made based on the scoring methodology inspired by Modern Grantmaking, as Mel and David sought to eliminate projects that were likely to score poorly along the evaluation dimensions. See:

This initial review reduced the project pool from 293 to 96 candidates (33% of the original pool) that warranted full evaluation. This more manageable subset allowed for deeper analysis and more thoughtful consideration during the formal evaluation workshop.

Projects with misaligned focus, inaccessible websites, and underdeveloped concepts were eliminated.

Some examples of projects excluded during this phase, including the rationale for exclusion, include:

1. Hatemeter (<http://hatermeter.eu>): Hatemeter was a project aimed at systematizing, augmenting, and sharing knowledge on anti-Muslim hatred online. It developed an ICT tool to monitor and analyze internet and social media data related to Islamophobia, supporting NGOs and CSOs in countering such narratives. The project operated from February 2018 to January 2020. As the project was time limited, and concluded in 2020, it was deemed that allocating funding to a dormant project would not be a good use of limited resourcing.
2. Decentralized-ID (<https://decentralized-id.com>): Decentralized-ID focuses on providing decentralized identity solutions, aiming to give individuals control over their personal information without relying on centralized authorities. Because the grantmaking initiative prioritised projects with direct social impact or within the specific thematic areas outlined earlier, a project centered on decentralised identity did not align closely with these objectives.
3. Entitledto (<https://entitledto.co.uk>): Entitledto offers online benefits calculators to help individuals in the UK determine their eligibility for various welfare benefits and tax credits. While Entitledto provides a valuable public service, its core offering—benefits calculators—has been relatively unchanged for years, and is sustainably funded using a minimalist web advertising model. Reviewers may have prioritized projects with more innovative or experimental approaches to systemic problems, especially those proposing new methods or technologies.
4. Timecounts (<https://timecounts.org>): Timecounts provides a modern volunteer management solution, offering tools for recruitment, onboarding, scheduling, and communication for organizations that rely on volunteers. Timecounts is already well-established and financially sustainable, so less in need of prioritisation than emerging projects with greater funding needs.
5. Labour Xchange (<https://labourxchange.uk>): Labour Xchange is a platform designed to connect workers with employers, focusing on flexible and fair employment opportunities. While Labour XChange presents a series of ethical propositions and commitments to fair work, it essentially functions as a gig economy hiring platform, with no clear and transparent rationale for how it avoids the problems with employment status that such forms of labour transfer bring, making it largely inappropriate for funding under the terms of the values expressed throughout this evaluation process.

Rater Evaluation Process

With our refined list of 96 projects, we implemented a structured 120-minute workshop divided into five sequential phases:

1. Introduction and Calibration (40 minutes)
 - Explained evaluation framework and scoring criteria
 - Collectively evaluated sample projects to establish baseline standards
 - Conducted individual practice evaluations to ensure scoring consistency
2. Individual Project Evaluation (45 minutes)
 - Participants scored assigned projects across seven weighted criteria
 - Each project received a total score out of 5.0
 - Evaluators documented reasoning for their assessments
3. Pair Calibration (15 minutes)
 - Formed pairs to review each other's evaluations
 - Focused on highest and lowest scored projects
 - Addressed scoring discrepancies and adjusted where necessary
4. Full Group Calibration (15 minutes)
 - Discussed borderline cases and significant scoring divergences
 - Made final adjustments to meet budget constraints
 - Achieved consensus on tier placement decisions
5. Allocation Finalization (5 minutes)
 - Confirmed final funding allocation across the five tiers
 - Verified exact budget distribution of £5,000,000

Based on our evaluation scores and subsequent tier assignments, we determined that 76 of the 96 evaluated projects (79%) would receive funding across our five funding tiers. The remaining 20 projects, while valuable, did not score high enough to receive funding in this allocation round. This approach ensured that our limited resources were directed toward the initiatives with the strongest alignment to our criteria and the greatest potential for impact in the political technology space.

Scoring Framework

We evaluated projects using seven criteria with weighted importance. These criteria come from the frameworks outlined in 'Modern Grantmaking' as cited above.

Criterion	Weight	Description
Mission Alignment	20%	Advancement of political technology goals and societal needs

Equity & Inclusion	20%	Promotion of fairness, accessibility, and broad participation
Evidence & Innovation	15%	Approach based on evidence or innovative solutions to participation gaps
Potential Impact	15%	Meaningful outcomes for political systems
Feasibility & Sustainability	10%	Realistic design with long-term viability
Risk & Groundbreaking	10%	Appropriate risk-taking with breakthrough potential
Design Quality	10%	User experience, workflow, and functionality quality

Each criterion used a 1-5 scale with detailed descriptors for each score level (see Appendix A for full scoring rubrics).

Funding Tier Structure

Projects were allocated to five funding tiers based on their final weighted scores, to allow for a spread of funds across a diversity of projects, without diluting the funding so significantly as to no longer be useful to an organisation.

Tier	Description	Projects	Amount per Project	Total Allocation	% of Budget
1	Transformative Projects	15 (top 5%)	£150,000	£2,250,000	45%
2	High-Impact Projects	15 (next 5%)	£100,000	£1,500,000	30%
3	Promising Projects	15 (next 5%)	£50,000	£750,000	15%
4	Seed Potential	15 (next 5%)	£20,000	£300,000	6%
5	Recognition Grants	16 (next 5.5%)	£12,500	£200,000	4%
-	Unfunded	218 (remaining 74.5%)	£0	£0	0%

Total Allocation: £5,000,000 (100% of available budget)

Results

The structured evaluation process yielded a clear distribution of funding outcomes based on project alignment, innovation, and potential for civic impact. Of the 96 projects that advanced to the final assessment stage, 76 were selected for funding, with awards

distributed across five defined funding tiers. This section outlines the breakdown of funding decisions, highlights key trends across the selected initiatives, and provides insight into the types of projects that scored highest under the seven evaluation criteria. The results reflect a strategic allocation of the £5,000,000 budget to maximize democratic engagement, transparency, and technological advancement in the political sphere.

Tier 1: Transformative Projects, £150,000 allocation

The following 15 projects received our highest funding allocation. Each project is accompanied by a brief description of the work it entails, as well as the rationale for its inclusion in this tier.

Be My Eyes

A crowdsourced app connecting visually impaired users with volunteers and company representatives for real-time visual assistance via video call.

Why it scored highly: Be My Eyes excels in accessibility, providing a direct, impactful solution to improve quality of life for visually impaired individuals, and fosters a strong, engaged volunteer community.

Open Origins

A platform enabling users to trace and verify the provenance of digital content, aimed at combating misinformation and establishing source transparency.

Why it scored highly: The project is highly relevant to current issues of misinformation, enhancing transparency and accountability in digital content, aligning with the goal of promoting trustworthy information online.

CrowdJustice

A crowdfunding platform that empowers individuals and communities to raise money for legal action and access to justice.

Why it scored highly: It democratizes access to legal recourse, supporting marginalized communities and causes, while fostering greater justice system accountability and equity.

Fix My Street

A civic reporting tool that allows residents to flag local infrastructure issues (like potholes or broken lights) directly to the relevant authority.

Why it scored highly: Fix My Street enables real-time public participation in urban management, improving transparency in local governance and enhancing community engagement.

Internet Archive

A nonprofit digital library preserving and providing free access to historical internet content, books, media, and software for public use.

Why it scored highly: The project has a profound impact on digital preservation and equitable access to knowledge, supporting education, research, and historical transparency.

Tor

A free and open-source tool that enables anonymous communication online, enhancing digital privacy and freedom from surveillance.

Why it scored highly: Tor plays a critical role in digital rights, ensuring users' privacy and freedom of expression, particularly in oppressive regimes, making it an essential tool for maintaining democratic freedoms.

DeepSeek

A Chinese LLM research tool, that allows for information acquisition at a lower than normal environmental and financial cost.

Why it scored highly: DeepSeek is innovative and has made significant contributions to its field.

OSINT Toolkit

A modular, open-source suite of tools for conducting open-source intelligence (OSINT) investigations, widely used by journalists and researchers.

Why it scored highly: The OSINT Toolkit empowers investigative journalists, researchers, and NGOs with the tools needed for transparent, fact-based reporting and accountability investigations.

Oporaua (Civil Network OPORA)

OPORA is a Ukrainian think tank that focuses on electoral observation, security, countering disinformation, and advocating for international reforms.

Why it scored highly: OPORA's exceptional track record in election monitoring, its data-driven advocacy, and its critical role in upholding democratic values in the face of war and disinformation made it a standout project with significant long-term societal impact.

CertBot

A free, open-source software tool that helps websites obtain and renew SSL/TLS certificates from Let's Encrypt, making encrypted browsing widely accessible.

Why it scored highly: CertBot makes the internet more secure by facilitating encryption adoption, directly supporting privacy and security for users globally.

Share Your Paper

A tool enabling researchers to legally and easily upload and share full-text versions of their academic papers to improve access to knowledge.

Why it scored highly: This project promotes open access to scientific knowledge, breaking down barriers to research and supporting equitable access to scholarly resources.

Parse The Bill

A legislative analysis tool that breaks down complex bills into plain language summaries to make policymaking more accessible to the public.

Why it scored highly: Parse The Bill makes legislation more understandable and accessible, increasing transparency in the political process and empowering citizens to engage in policy making.

Choose A License

A user-friendly guide developed by GitHub to help open-source creators select the most appropriate software license for their work.

Why it scored highly: This project simplifies the legal complexities of open-source licensing, ensuring creators can easily share their work while protecting intellectual property and promoting collaboration.

Birdwatch

A community-driven moderation tool from X (formerly Twitter) that allows users to collaboratively annotate and fact-check misleading content on the platform.

Why it scored highly: Birdwatch fosters a community-based approach to content moderation, empowering users to counter misinformation, which aligns with the goal of improving the transparency and accountability of online platforms.

What Do They Know

A transparency platform enabling users to submit and browse Freedom of Information requests to public bodies, promoting government accountability.

Why it scored highly: This platform empowers citizens to access government-held information and advocate for transparency, directly contributing to civic engagement and accountability

Common Characteristics of Top-Funded Projects

Transparency-Enhancing: Many projects focus on increasing access to information, whether through government (e.g., What Do They Know, Parse The Bill), scientific knowledge (Share Your Paper), or public infrastructure (Fix My Street).

Civic Empowerment: These tools help individuals participate more meaningfully in democratic processes (CrowdJustice, Birdwatch, Oporaua), or hold institutions accountable.

Open Source / Public Interest Tech: Most projects are open source and designed to serve the public good, aligning with principles of openness, interoperability, and community contribution.

Digital Rights & Privacy: Several initiatives (Tor, CertBot, DeepSeek) support user autonomy and data protection, critical in today's surveillance-heavy digital environment.

Accessibility & Inclusion: Projects like Be My Eyes and Choose A License prioritize usability and equitable access, helping to bridge digital or legal knowledge gaps.

Global Relevance & Local Utility: While globally applicable, many tools are grounded in local needs or legal systems, with a capacity to be adapted or scaled internationally.

Tier 2: High-Impact Projects (£100,000 each)

The Circuit

The Circuit is an innovative journalistic collaboration focused on decoding the Cook County, Illinois court system through data analysis. The project, led by Injustice Watch and Better Government Association, investigates how the courts operate, offering in-depth coverage of criminal justice issues, including racial disparities, wrongful convictions, and the systemic impacts of court decisions. The Circuit presents data-driven stories to reveal patterns in court cases and expose injustices, empowering the public and lawmakers with critical insights.

Why it scores highly: This project exemplifies a robust use of data journalism to address pressing societal issues, with a direct impact on public understanding of the criminal justice system. The transparency and investigative rigor applied to court data provide actionable insights for reforms, making it a valuable resource for democratic engagement and systemic change.

GovTrack

GovTrack is a web-based tool that tracks legislative activity in the United States, offering real-time updates on bills, voting patterns, and elected officials. It helps citizens understand how laws are being shaped and encourages civic participation.

Why it was chosen: GovTrack effectively supports transparency and accountability in governance, empowering citizens with critical information on the legislative process and fostering informed political engagement.

Community Rule

Community Rule is an online platform that provides resources and training for communities to create their own legally binding governance rules. It aims to increase local democratic participation and ensure self-governance in diverse community settings.

Why it was chosen: The project promotes grassroots democracy and decentralizes decision-making, strengthening local governance and empowering communities to take ownership of their democratic processes.

Beckton

Beckton is a tool designed to help create and manage groups of paying members by leveraging conditional commitments, a concept pioneered by PledgeBank. The platform uses GoCardless to set up Direct Debits that are only activated if a certain target of commitments is met. This innovative tool aims to support the creation of new membership organizations by making it easier for individuals to join once a group threshold is reached. It provides a straightforward, flexible approach to building sustainable, member-driven communities.

Why it scores highly: Beckton's focus on facilitating sustainable membership growth through innovative, tech-driven solutions aligns with democratic principles of collective action and community-building. Its capacity to empower grassroots movements and organizations enhances civic engagement and participation.

See3

See3 is a software toolkit that allows developers to capture and verify authentic images directly within their apps. It utilizes device-bound secrets to mark media as legitimate at the moment of capture, ensuring the photo was taken with an unaltered camera sensor and without tampering. The toolkit is easy to integrate, supports various platforms, and is compatible with smartphone cameras, making it a versatile solution for ensuring media authenticity.

Why it scores highly: See3's ability to verify image authenticity in real-time offers significant value for media integrity and trust, addressing crucial concerns around misinformation and photo manipulation.

Populate

Populate is a digital studio that creates user-centered designs to solve complex challenges. They collaborate closely with clients to ensure products are functional, engaging, and easy

to use. By focusing on data visualization and interactive tools, they help users better understand intricate issues.

Why it scores highly: Populate's ability to simplify complex problems into accessible digital solutions that foster engagement makes it a powerful tool for driving civic participation.

Members Interests

Members Interests is a platform that tracks the interests and activities of elected officials, allowing voters to better understand their representatives' priorities and actions. It aims to promote transparency in politics and strengthen voter awareness.

Why it was chosen: The project increases political transparency and accountability, enabling citizens to make more informed decisions and hold their elected representatives accountable for their actions.

Anti Eviction Mapping Project

This project uses mapping tools and data to highlight instances of eviction and housing displacement in urban areas, offering resources and support for tenants facing eviction. It works to raise awareness of housing justice issues.

Why it was chosen: The Anti Eviction Mapping Project provides critical information to underserved communities, amplifying tenant rights and advocating for housing justice, which directly addresses societal inequality.

DemocraciaKit

DemocraciaKit is a collaborative civic tech initiative in Mexico that provides open-source tools, training, and data to empower citizens and civil society to improve democratic processes.

Why it was chosen: DemocraciaKit's focus on educating people about the democratic process fosters civic engagement and encourages lifelong political participation, making it a highly impactful project.

Conservative Party Funding

Conservative Party Funding is a platform that tracks and analyzes donations to the Conservative Party in the UK. It aims to increase political transparency by making funding information accessible to the public.

Why it was chosen: This project supports transparency in political financing, helping to ensure that political influence is monitored and accessible to citizens, contributing to a more informed electorate.

Find Local Consultations

Find Local Consultations is an online tool that helps citizens find and participate in local governmental consultations on various issues, promoting public input into policy decisions.

Why it was chosen: The project enhances civic participation by providing easy access to local consultations, empowering citizens to engage in the decision-making process and influence policy at the local level.

Turkopticon

Turkopticon is a platform that allows workers on Amazon Mechanical Turk to rate requesters, creating a more transparent marketplace and improving working conditions by holding employers accountable.

Why it was chosen: Turkopticon promotes labour rights and fairness in the gig economy, empowering workers to have a voice and contribute to improving working conditions within a global platform economy.

SugarTrail

Sugartrail is an open-source tool that maps the flow of funding in civic and political tech, revealing who funds what—and where influence lies. By scraping and visualizing grant data, it aims to bring transparency to opaque funding networks.

Why it was chosen: This project was chosen for funding because it aligns with goals of transparency and democratic accountability, helping to uncover power dynamics in civic tech. Its open-source, scalable design offers valuable applications for research, journalism, and institutional insight.

Guardian Project

The Guardian Project develops open-source mobile apps that protect users' privacy and help circumvent censorship. Their tools focus on human rights advocacy and secure communication, especially in authoritarian regimes.

Why it was chosen: The Guardian Project supports global human rights and digital freedoms by providing critical tools for secure and private communication, empowering individuals to maintain their privacy and freedom of expression.

Overton

Overton is a policy intelligence platform that helps researchers, think tanks, and institutions track how research influences government policy. It aggregates policy documents, links them to academic research, and visualizes the connections, making it easier to measure real-world impact.

Why it was chosen: Due to its strong alignment with democratic strengthening and evidence-informed policy.

Tier 3: Promising Projects (£50,000 each)

These projects showed significant promise for large-scale impact, strong alignment with democratic or public interest tech goals, and clear pathways to growth.

Organise – A platform enabling workers to collectively advocate for rights and workplace change. Strong on collective action and user empowerment.

Collective Tech – Infrastructure and tools to support decentralized, democratic organizing. Fits well with institutional reform and democratic innovation.

Sci-Hub – A controversial but widely used repository for free academic access. High-impact on knowledge commons, though legal concerns exist.

Nyaaya – Simplifies Indian laws into accessible guides. Excellent for transparency, inclusion, and access to justice.

Vframe – Visual AI tools used to detect weapons and human rights abuses. Innovative application of tech for accountability.

Open Standards for Data – A framework promoting the adoption of open data standards for public sector data. Supports transparent, interoperable data use across institutions, aligning with democratic principles of open governance.

Notify – UK Government platform for sending notifications to the public. High feasibility, public benefit, already scalable.

Open Access UK – A platform promoting transparency in public sector research funding. Supports open access and accountability by tracking UK public sector funding for academic research.

Charity Digital Skills Report – Annual insight into digital capacity in the charity sector. High value for shaping sector support and policy.

Open Collective – Transparent funding platform for open-source and collective initiatives. High mission alignment and proven impact.

Atlas of Surveillance – Mapping law enforcement surveillance tools in the US. Promotes public awareness and civil liberties.

EDGAR – EU Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research. Strong climate data infrastructure with public value.

arXiv – Open-access archive for scientific papers. Longstanding knowledge commons infrastructure.

Spartacus – Database of labour struggles and strikes. Supports collective memory, worker movements, and research.

Strikemap – Crowdsourced map of UK industrial actions. Supports worker visibility and democratic data practices.

Tier 4: Seed Potential (£20,000 each)

Projects with strong ideas, niche value, or early-stage promise that could develop significantly with targeted investment.

Write To Them – Enables users to contact elected officials easily. Clear civic utility, could expand with updated features.

Postcodes.io – Free postcode lookup API. Low visibility but key infrastructure that supports many civic apps.

Cybersecurity for Democracy – Research initiative monitoring digital threats to democracy. Important emerging focus area.

Political Ad Trends – Tracks political ad spending online. High potential for transparency, still in early stages.

Which constituency is that in? – Simple civic tool for electoral awareness. Useful but limited in scope.

Huridocs – Human rights data management tools. Well-aligned with justice and civic accountability.

The Accountability Project – Tracks political influence and corruption data in the US. Valuable civic infrastructure.

Turbo Phonebank – Tool for high-volume political phonebanking. Supports mobilization and electoral engagement.

grim – Investigates how public infrastructure fails. Early-stage but thought-provoking framing of systemic issues.

Orca Ready – UK emergency planning and readiness app. Public safety focus, useful in crises.

Polis – Online deliberation tool using AI to surface consensus. High democratic innovation potential.

Harmonica – An LLM-powered chatbot for superfast sensemaking and deliberation. Early-stage concept with interesting civic potential.

Violation Tracker – Database of corporate violations. Strong transparency play, especially for economic justice.

Climate Action Tech – Community of technologists focused on climate solutions. Early-stage, network-building potential.

CoTech – Network of worker-owned tech cooperatives. Valuable model for sustainable and democratic tech development.

Tier 5: Recognition Grants (£12,500 each)

Acknowledgement of contributions to the civic tech ecosystem. These projects had lower need or growth trajectory but strong alignment and existing impact.

Matrix-Whatsapp Bridge – Enables communication between Matrix and WhatsApp. Supports open, interoperable communication.

They Work For You – Tracks UK MP activity. Longstanding civic tool with enduring value.

Snowdrift – Platform for sustainable funding of public goods. Innovative concept, still early in adoption.

Guide to Major Trusts – Directory of UK funding bodies. Useful resource but lower innovation.

Papertree – Collaborative writing and publishing platform. Early-stage, creative civic use cases possible.

WikiData – Structured, open data from Wikipedia. Core infrastructure supporting countless civic projects.

Directory of Safety Tech – Maps online safety tech providers. Useful policy tool, not widely known.

Mapped – Visualisation tool for collaborative mapping. Niche utility but civic relevance.

Spacetube – Mapping satellite launches and activity. Niche audience but strong data transparency potential.

Consul – Participatory democracy software used by governments. High mission alignment, already well-established.

Murmurations – Protocol for decentralized network directories. High experimentation value.

Soweego – Wikidata linking and disambiguation engine. Niche utility with technical value.

Transparency in Supply Chains Platform – Holds companies accountable for modern slavery reporting. Strong on equity and impact.

Missing Numbers – Identifies data gaps in UK civic datasets. Useful diagnostic tool for data transparency.

Otree – Framework for economic experiments. Academic focus, strong infrastructure, but less civic visibility.

Copbot Online – a web-service to crowd-source human risk-predictions, and see how they compare to a number of language models, limited in scale.

Section 3 - Reflections

Conclusion

The report so far is a testament to the challenges presented by collective decision making processes, especially when there are 15 voices, some louder and some quieter, speaking to and over each other at the same time. In order to make sense of the process over the course of this two month project, it is worth highlighting how complex any decision making process can be, and this is particularly true of decision making processes that rely on the 'collective' in order to come to fruition.

The use of the term 'committee' might for some conjure an image of 15 cloaked monks secluded in a mountainous tower making powerful decisions about the life and death of

political technology projects. In reality, from the beginning to the end of this exercise, there was not a single instance where all 15 of us were present in the same room - not even virtually. Much of this effort happened asynchronously; not because we couldn't stand to be in one another's presence, but rather because each of us had our own external roles and responsibilities - jobs, volunteering, hobbies and otherwise - that required a more flexible approach to working.

Instead, we met up with, or called one another, at irregular intervals; sometimes driven by anxiety to get elements of the project finished, and at other times grasping opportunity, when committee members happened to be in the same place as a result of other happenings.

All of this may make one question how we could ever land this grantmaking exercise in one piece, given how messy everything and everyone seemed to be. However, that is precisely the first lesson we learned in collective decision making:

While complexity is inherent in collective decision making, messiness is not: From the get go it was clear that using an 'organized' approach to make sense of our decision making process would result in very piecemeal progress; discussions about having set roles, responsibilities, and subcommittees as a structure for our decision making were abandoned less than two weeks in to the exercise.

What happened was what Patricia Shaw (2002) would call a 'complexity approach'. Instead of following a stringently laid out and temporally sequenced step-by-step approach to grantmaking, each of us took off into our own directions and had conversations with each other at random yet crucial timings. These solo adventures and conversations, while not explicitly guided, began to morph into a broad understanding of what was going on and what needed to be done; several people, at times, served in the role of a project manager, tagging people in the Slack channels or direct messaging another to check out an idea. Soon, we started to see 'self-organizing' behaviors as groups began to form and actions started to emerge: Simon, Richard, and Mel (software dev-background and very technically well-versed) kick-started with a programming-based approach; Ollie, Tristan, and Simon started discussing the role of humans and AI technologies, with David and Yung-Hsuan pulled to the idea of more experimentation and the diversification of methods; later on, Paulina and Tristan began the human-powered process discussion, while Mel, David, and Yung-Hsuan began a side chat on the usage of a second set of algorithms.

'Patterns' of discussions 'emerged' over lots of coffee and screen time, with the topic of technology-driven versus human-driven processes being the most contentious (more on that later). In other words, even when we didn't explicitly organize, we implicitly self-organized into a form of governance that Cairney, Heikkila, and Wood (2019) would describe with complexity theory.

With the individual cells (each of us) acting almost independently, the collective still managed to converge on an agenda to be discussed, decisions to be made, and actions to be taken. We indeed took lots of actions, as evidenced from the report above. However, we also arrived at a tricky political situation:

Techies and non-techies: friends, foes, or faux foes?

The political question underlying our approach to this exercise —more than a disagreement yet less than a conflict—was palpable throughout the entire exercise. It was most pronounced during one of the classes nearly half of the committee members attended in early Spring.

In a session of the Institutional Analysis module, some committee members began describing the efforts they've made in approaching the exercise with algorithmic-driven and LLM-heavy methods, while the others expressed concerns and objections. Rounds of back and forth surfaced an important issue yet to be addressed during the course of the entire Newspeak House fellowship: the divide between the techie and the non-techie.

While the goal of the fellowship was to allow those more technically inclined and those more sociopolitically minded to interface, there was always an implied difference between the two sides that runs deeper than the focus of their skill sets. The 'techies' were portrayed to be more technosolutionist, applying whatever technology has to offer to the grantmaking exercise as the immediate answer; the 'non-techies' seemed to be paralyzed while in protest of such solutions, even at times being portrayed as having missed the point of the exercise. Neither of the portrayals were borne out (as proven through later conversations and timely mediation), but the way they were seared into the minds of committee members at the start of the exercise only solidified some of the beliefs of techie-vs-non-techie difference into group factions.

What made this situation political was the keyword 'paralyzed' in non-techies' account of their experience. Seeing the relative silence and inaction of the collective, the techies of the group made the first move in suggesting a solution; they went for what they were familiar with, which was to collect and scrape as much data as possible, employ some algorithms and AI systems to help simplify the process, and generate preliminary results to be iterated and improved on.

However, the technicality of this approach along with the overwhelming amount of information for the non-techies 'paralyzed' them; the techies' action seemed to have given them first-mover advantages while the non-techies were left to grapple with them. Some withdrew and became excluded from the process altogether. This seemed to mirror much of the real-world tech and non-tech communities struggle, where the former break barriers and the latter play a game of catch-up. There were undeniable power differentials at the start of the class where the clash between techies and non-techies was first voiced out. That's not to say that there wasn't a solution to the political situation, though.

Fortunately, the techies at Newspeak House weren't as interested in establishing a tech oligarchy as others in San Francisco might've been. In fact, they're as interested in knowing what the non-techies think and want to do as the non-techies themselves. The techies made the first move so as to provoke conversations and even invite objections so as to break the inertia; this conflict was actually welcomed, as Sarah Schulman (2016) might've agreed with, because it surfaced a much needed conversation on a salient topic.

AI-human collaboration: approach with caution and intention

The techie-non-techie faux divide shed light on the crucial issue the 15 of us needed to find an agreement on: how much do we want non-human intelligence (e.g., AI-driven tech) to be a part of this decision making process?

It became clear that all of us made sense of the projects differently; some might be happy with describing them using just the metadata (e.g., project activeness, GitHub logs, geographic/temporal scope), some might want a deep understanding of their theories of change, and some others prefer to consume the regurgitated yet digestible bites provided by LLMs.

Recognizing this, there was a plurality of methods born to sketch out different degrees of AI and human involvement in the decision making process.

Paulina's human-powered rating approach was a straightforward attempt to gather as many humans as possible to collectively make sense of the projects and give ratings. However, it is noted that the rating scorecard was partially created with LLMs' processing of human-written books on grantmaking.

Simon's AI driven approach, on the other hand, heavily leveraged LLMs to score all the projects; nevertheless, the scoring criteria of the LLMs came from open-ended surveys filled by all committee members (humans!).

Yung-Hsuan's algorithmic approach attempted to apply some statistical modeling to the human ratings generated under Paulina's approach to produce a final ranking of projects; specifically, he looked into applying Principal Component Analysis to reduce all 7 scoring dimensions into 1 and compared the results to that coming from the human-decided weights under Paulina's original approach.

The final converged ranking was the one presented in Section 2; in all different lines of inquiries, the final converged method seemed to make the most sense to most committee members in terms of explainability while being simultaneously the most complete. Regardless, it is worth mentioning how the collective came to approach AI-human

collaboration with a far more calibrated understanding and constantly negotiate the boundaries of AI involvement in the work with caution and intentions.

Questions posed by Edward:

Throughout the course of the project, a number of questions were posed by Edward to the cohort. We have endeavoured to answer as many of them as possible above, but have also appended them below; in case others feel motivated to think about these questions themselves, or indeed other questions they might ask of the cohort off the back of this process and report.

1. How did the committee organise itself and why? e.g. internal communication, project management, roles, decision-making, inclusion, conflict management?
2. any references, research, or design processes used to develop these? any political values expressed?
3. any strengths, weaknesses, or skills identified in the team?
4. What research sources, methods, or political values were used to inform development of the allocation methodology?
5. Any notable projects in the list that were influential to the process? e.g. that changed the way you thought about how projects should be evaluated, or could be themselves used in the allocation process itself.
6. The brief explicitly states "This is an opportunity to explore computational and data-driven approaches." What computational approaches were considered, and how were they applied?
7. What research sources, methods, or political values were used to evaluate individual projects?
8. What didn't go as planned, and how did you compensate?
9. What would you do differently next time?
10. Any notable projects in general that you'd like to highlight?
11. What is the process by which this report is being compiled?
12. How would you characterise the politics of your ultimate approach? How does it compare with your initial intention?

Limitations

Some of the limitations of our methodology are explored below:

1. We would've wanted to iterate through the rating exercise multiple times. Currently, we only did the rating once, and from a quick statistical analysis of inter-rater performance, we could see distinguishable in different raters' rating preferences. A few iterations of the rating exercise with each rater rating projects they haven't rated before may have countered this.

2. We didn't measure inter-rater agreement (or inter-annotator agreement, IAA). If we did multiple iterations, we could see if each project is rated similarly across raters to establish more credibility to our rating scheme.
3. Some of our scoring dimensions are not well-defined; raters had to base it off on first impressions of the projects and deduce how the scoring dimension would've applied.
4. We should interrogate more the impact of the human-decided weights of the scoring dimensions on the final ranking. This could be done by comparing the ranking results with different weights, etc. A potential problem with arbitrarily decided weights is that some projects, albeit beloved by all, may get a low overall score if they perform suboptimally in certain scoring dimensions weighted more while high in other dimensions weighted less. This will inevitably happen, but we should investigate why, how, and whether this is desired.
5. The PM bot's overwhelming presence led many students to disengage with the grantmaking channel, and some voiced their frustrations during the NH Institutional Analysis course. By the second week of February, some cohort members had not yet been onboarded. The team's lack of a concrete project plan, combined with the survey's rollout amidst the confusion, likely led to reduced participation. By late February, the PM bot was disbanded, and it can be speculated that its disruption negatively impacted the survey response rate

Individual Reflections

☰ Newspeak House 2024-25 Grantmaking - Individual Reflections

Annex

List of political technology projects

1. <http://hatemeter.eu>
2. <https://12ft.io/>
3. <https://adhocracy.plus>
4. <https://aisafety.info>
5. <https://alaveteli.org>
6. <https://aleph.occrp.org>
7. <https://algorithmwatch.org>
8. <https://all-our-ideas.citizens.is>
9. <https://annas-archive.org>
10. <https://antievictionmappingproject.github.io/landlordtech>
11. <https://aragon.org>
12. <https://arxiv.org>
13. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2005.13701>
14. <https://atlasofsurveillance.org>

15. <https://bellingcat.gitbook.io/toolkit>
16. <https://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk>
17. <https://birdflurisk.com>
18. <https://certbot.eff.org>
19. <https://charitybase.uk>
20. <https://charitydigitalskills.co.uk>
21. <https://cheeri.app>
22. <https://choosealicense.com>
23. <https://ciudadaniai.org>
24. <https://civicbudget.org>
25. <https://civiclick.com>
26. <https://civicrm.org>
27. <https://civictech.guide>
28. <https://ckan.org>
29. <https://climateaction.tech>
30. <https://cm.cip.org>
31. <https://cobudget.com>
32. <https://collab.land>
33. <https://collaborative-data.theodi.org>
34. <https://collectivetech.io>
35. <https://common.io>
36. <https://commonslibrary.org>
37. <https://communities.sunlightfoundation.com/methodology>
38. <https://communityrule.info>
39. <https://conservativepartyfunding.co.uk>
40. <https://constituencies.squiffy.io>
41. <https://constituteproject.org>
42. <https://consulproject.org>
43. <https://contractsfordatacollaboration.org>
44. <https://coops.tech>
45. <https://copbot.online>
46. <https://coralproject.net>
47. <https://cortico.ai/platform>
48. <https://councilclimatescorecards.uk>
49. <https://creativecommons.org>
50. <https://cybersecurityfordemocracy.org>
51. <https://data.humdata.org>
52. <https://data.mysociety.org>
53. <https://datatrusts.uk>
54. <https://decelerator.org.uk>
55. <https://decentralized-id.com>
56. <https://decidim.org>
57. <https://developer.parliament.uk>

58. <https://developers.democracyclub.org.uk/api/v1>
59. <https://digitalcharitylab.org/product/digital-account-management-toolkit>
60. <https://docs.holepunch.to>
61. <https://docs.plus>
62. <https://dogooder.co>
63. <https://dovetail.network>
64. <https://dunadyne.org>
65. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Calculator>
66. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:In_the_news
67. <https://entitledto.co.uk>
68. <https://esper.com/product>
69. <https://ethelo.com>
70. <https://fairbnb.coop>
71. <https://farmerchat.digitalgreen.org>
72. <https://fatebook.io>
73. <https://filmot.com>
74. <https://fixmyblock.org>
75. <https://fullfact.org/ai>
76. <https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk>
77. <https://getodk.org>
78. <https://github.com/bellingcat/EDGAR>
79. <https://github.com/bluesky-social>
80. <https://github.com/compdemocracy/polis>
81. <https://github.com/cverluse/PatCit>
82. <https://github.com/datakind/Data-Observation-Toolkit>
83. <https://github.com/deepseek-ai/DeepSeek-V3>
84. <https://github.com/DISARMAFoundation/DISARMframeworks>
85. <https://github.com/fission-codes/fission-codes>
86. <https://github.com/g0v/vue.vtaiwan.tw>
87. <https://github.com/geeksforsocialchange/PlaceCal>
88. <https://github.com/harmonicabot>
89. <https://github.com/huridocs>
90. <https://github.com/i-dot-ai/awesome-gov-datasets>
91. <https://github.com/ideal-postcodes/postcodes.io>
92. <https://github.com/kazad/pastecal>
93. <https://github.com/mastodon/mastodon>
94. <https://github.com/notchia/dao-governance-surfaces>
95. <https://github.com/openpolitics/groupthink>
96. <https://github.com/podemos-info/participa>
97. <https://github.com/PopulateTools>
98. <https://github.com/propublica/django-collaborative>
99. <https://github.com/RadicalxChange/rxc-voice>
100. <https://github.com/rahvaalgatus/rahvaalgatus>

101. <https://github.com/ribenamaplesyrup/sugartrail>
102. <https://github.com/SentinelTeam/grim>
103. https://github.com/sinar/popit_ng
104. <https://github.com/StanfordCDT/pb>
105. https://github.com/thicknavyrain/uk_elections_leaflets
106. <https://github.com/travisbrown/birdwatch>
107. <https://github.com/tulir/mautrix-whatsapp>
108. <https://github.com/ushahidi/platform-comrades>
109. <https://github.com/vbuterin/DAO>
110. <https://github.com/WhoTargetsMe/ad-transparency-standards/blob/main/implementation.md>
111. <https://github.com/ytdl-org/youtube-dl>
112. <https://gordonguthrie.github.io/frankensteinbill>
113. <https://gov.uk/find-local-consultations>
114. <https://gov.uk/government/publications/directory-of-uk-safety-tech-providers>
115. <https://granicus.com/uk>
116. <https://granitt.io>
117. <https://grantnav.threesixtygiving.org>
118. <https://guardianproject.info>
119. <https://hact.org.uk/tools-and-services/uk-housing-data-standards>
120. <https://hand-written-petition-scanner.streamlit.app>
121. <https://humbledata.org>
122. <https://idealist.org>
123. <https://instantill.org>
124. <https://joss.theoj.org>
125. <https://journaliststudio.google.com>
126. <https://kialo.com>
127. <https://kumu.io>
128. <https://labourxchange.uk>
129. <https://landexplorer.coop>
130. <https://liberopinion.com>
131. <https://library.theengineerroom.org>
132. <https://liquidfeedback.com>
133. <https://littlesis.org>
134. <https://localinsight.org>
135. <https://manifold.markets>
136. <https://mapit.mysociety.org>
137. <https://mapped.commonknowledge.coop>
138. <https://mapping.kids>
139. <https://matrix.org>
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142. <https://membershippuzzle.org>

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144. https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Abstract_Wikipedia
145. <https://metaculus.com>
146. <https://missingnumbers.org>
147. <https://moralmachine.net>
148. <https://murmurations.network>
149. <https://nationbetter.uk>
150. <https://navigator.oii.ox.ac.uk>
151. <https://nestr.io>
152. <https://nookcrm.com>
153. <https://numfocus.org>
154. <https://nyaaya.org>
155. <https://nymtech.net>
156. <https://oa.report>
157. <https://openaccess.transparency.org.uk>
158. <https://openaccessbutton.org>
159. <https://openaudience.org>
160. <https://openbudgets.eu>
161. <https://opencollective.com>
162. <https://opencouncildata.co.uk>
163. <https://opendatacommunities.org>
164. <https://openheartmind.org>
165. <https://openletter.earth>
166. <https://openprocurement.io>
167. <https://openreferraluk.org>
168. <https://opensupplyhub.org>
169. <https://orcaready.org>
170. <https://orcid.org>
171. <https://osf.io>
172. <https://osintframework.com>
173. <https://overton.io>
174. <https://pageviews.wmcloud.org>
175. <https://parsethebill.com>
176. <https://parti.xyz>
177. <https://participedia.net>
178. <https://planit.org.uk>
179. <https://plausible.io>
180. <https://plunkett.my.site.com/keepitinthecommunity/s>
181. <https://urbit.org>
182. <https://policyengine.org/uk>
183. <https://policykit.org>
184. <https://policymogul.com>
185. <https://postbug.com>

186. <https://privacybadger.org>
187. <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/citizensadvice/vizzes>
188. <https://publicaccountability.org>
189. <https://publicmediastack.com>
190. <https://pursuanceproject.org>
191. <https://quadraticvote.radicalxchange.org>
192. <https://radicle.xyz>
193. <https://remembertovote.org.uk>
194. <https://research.localgov.digital>
195. <https://richardpope.org/blog/2017/03/05/beckton-a-tool-to-build-groups-of-paying-members>
196. <https://right-to-know.org>
197. <https://riseup.net>
198. <https://riversentiment.app>
199. <https://sci-hub.se>
200. <https://secfirst.org>
201. <https://securedrop.org>
202. <https://see3.xyz>
203. <https://semanticclimate.github.io>
204. <https://shareyourpaper.org>
205. <https://site.urbanistai.com>
206. <https://snowdrift.coop>
207. <https://sobre.ejparticipe.org>
208. <https://sourceafrica.net>
209. <https://soweego.readthedocs.io>
210. <https://spacetu.be>
211. <https://spartacus.app>
212. <https://standards.theodi.org>
213. <https://strikemap.org>
214. <https://talktothecity.org>
215. <https://tech-coops.xyz>
216. <https://thecircuit.cc>
217. <https://thegovernmentsays.com>
218. <https://theodi.org/insights/reports/registers-and-collaboration-making-lists-we-cant-trust-report>
219. <https://timecounts.org>
220. <https://tiscreport.org>
221. <https://trends.whotargets.me>
222. <https://troubling-ai.glitch.me>
223. <https://turbophonebank.com>
224. <https://turkopticon.ucsd.edu>
225. <https://ukraine.ua/invest-trade/digitalization>
226. <https://upgrader.gapminder.org>

227. <https://vframe.io>
228. <https://violationtrackeruk.goodjobsfirst.org>
229. <https://voteforpolicies.org.uk>
230. <https://votespeaker.wyza.uk>
231. <https://web.archive.org>
232. <https://whoisology.com>
233. <https://whopostedwhat.com>
234. <https://www.agenciesforgood.org>
235. <https://www.bemyeyes.com>
236. <https://www.changelab.io/democracy>
237. <https://www.communitytech.network>
238. <https://www.crowdjustice.com>
239. <https://www.crowdwrite.xyz>
240. <https://www.csail.mit.edu/research/wikum-bridging-discussion-systems-and-wikis-collective-summarization>
241. <https://www.discourse.org>
242. <https://www.donotpay.com>
243. <https://www.dsc.org.uk/publication/the-guide-to-major-trusts-2025-26/>
244. <https://www.fixmystreet.com>
245. <https://www.forms.service.gov.uk>
246. <https://www.givefood.org.uk>
247. <https://www.globaleaks.org>
248. <https://www.gov.uk/service-manual>
249. <https://www.govocal.com>
250. <https://www.govtrack.us>
251. <https://www.hotosm.org>
252. <https://www.localintelligencehub.com>
253. <https://www.loomio.org>
254. <https://www.marksoutoftenancy.com>
255. <https://www.martus.org>
256. <https://www.mastodonc.com>
257. <https://www.meet.coop>
258. <https://www.mptwitterbios.co.uk>
259. <https://www.mpwatch.org>
260. <https://www.myaction.center>
261. <https://www.mysociety.org/climate/neighbourhood-warmth>
262. <https://www.notifications.service.gov.uk>
263. <https://www.open-contracting.org>
264. <https://www.opencrvs.org>
265. <https://www.openorigins.com>
266. <https://www.openownership.org>
267. <https://www.opensanctions.org>
268. <https://www.oporaua.org>

269. <https://www.organise.org.uk>
270. <https://www.otree.org>
271. <https://www.papertree.earth>
272. <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk>
273. <https://www.payments.service.gov.uk>
274. <https://www.plinth.org.uk>
275. <https://www.polimonitor.com>
276. <https://www.polimorphic.com>
277. <https://www.prolific.com>
278. <https://www.publiceditor.io>
279. <https://www.rightsdd.com>
280. <https://www.shreddigitalguides.org.uk>
281. <https://www.sign-in.service.gov.uk>
282. <https://www.teachingpublicservice.digital>
283. <https://www.theyworkforyou.com>
284. <https://www.torproject.org>
285. <https://www.usahidi.com>
286. <https://www.watchduty.org>
287. <https://www.welivedit.ai>
288. <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com>
289. <https://www.whatgov.co.uk>
290. <https://www.wikidata.org>
291. <https://www.workerinfoexchange.org>
292. <https://www.writetothem.com>
293. <https://yrpri.org>

Notebook LM generated evaluation criteria

I. Organizational Overview & Capacity

- **Legal and Structural Information:**
 - IRS status
 - Year established, history and structure
 - The organization's mission statement
- **Leadership and Staff:**
 - Names of key leaders and board members
 - Qualifications and experience of staff
 - Staff diversity
 - Employee engagement and satisfaction
 - Turnover rate
 - Whether leaders recruit, develop, engage, and retain the talent necessary to deliver on the mission

- Whether leaders provide continuous, candid, constructive feedback to team members
- **Financial Health:**
 - Overall financial status
 - Budget allocation
 - Sources of funding
 - Whether they have an operating reserve
- **Track Record:**
 - History of success
 - Any previous evaluations or performance assessments
 - If new, the projected outcomes of the project, outputs and activities

II. Problem Definition & Needs Assessment

- **Problem Statement:**
 - A clear and specific description of the problem being addressed
 - Data that demonstrates the magnitude of the problem
 - Consequences of inaction
 - Whether the problem is local or global
- **Needs of Beneficiaries:**
 - Evidence of understanding the needs and interests of the target population
 - How the applicant engaged with stakeholders to understand their needs
 - Whether the stakeholders' current behaviors are conducive to meeting their needs

III. Proposed Solution & Strategy

- **Goals and Outcomes:**
 - **Clear, specific, and measurable goals** for the proposed project
 - How the applicant defines success
 - Whether the applicant's goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART)
 - The ultimate intended outcome
 - Intermediate outcomes
 - Aspirational outcomes
- **Theory of Change:**
 - A clear explanation of how the proposed activities will lead to the desired outcomes
 - The logic of their decision making
 - Whether the organization takes a proactive approach or responds to requests
- **Strategies and Activities:**
 - Description of the specific activities or programs that will be implemented
 - Rationale for the chosen strategies
 - How the activities connect to the solution
 - Whether they use data-driven approaches
 - If there are any opportunities for collaboration and overlap with other goals
 - How the organization addresses the relatedness of issues
 - How the proposal balances focus and relatedness of issues
- **Risk Assessment:**
 - Identification of potential risks and challenges

- Contingency plans to address risks

IV. Implementation & Monitoring

- **Action Plan:**
 - A detailed plan of how the activities will be carried out
 - How they will ensure the activities, outputs, and outcomes are delivered
 - A timeline for implementation
- **Performance Measurement:**
 - Specific, measurable indicators for tracking progress toward goals
 - How the organization will collect data on its activities, outputs, and outcomes
 - Whether they have a performance management system
 - If they have a data system to track indicators
 - Whether they plan to collect data to improve their programs
 - Whether they use their performance data to communicate about their progress
 - How they will share what they're learning with other organizations
 - How they will use data to inform their strategic direction
 - Whether the data collected is transportable and generates knowledge for other programs
- **Feedback Mechanisms:**
 - Plans for gathering feedback from beneficiaries and other stakeholders
 - Whether they plan to use feedback to refine strategies
 - How the organization will get feedback from people who left their program
- **Adaptability**
 - How the organization will adapt to new information or changing circumstances
 - If they have a plan to make course corrections
 - Whether they are open to new ideas

V. Subjective Factors

- **Alignment with Values and Priorities:**
 - How well the applicant's goals and approaches align with your values and philanthropic priorities
 - Your passion for the work they are proposing to do
- **Potential for Impact:**
 - Your sense of whether the proposed project has the potential to make a significant difference
 - How much good you think your dollars can do with this project
- **Clarity of Communication:**
 - How well the applicant articulates their goals and strategies
 - How clear and understandable their proposal is
 - Whether they can explain each goal in a sentence or less
- **Openness and Transparency:**
 - How open the organization is to external feedback and new ideas
 - How candid the organization is about their challenges and successes
 - If the organization is transparent about their operations and outcomes
- **Relationship Potential:**

- Your sense of whether you can have a good working relationship with the organization
- How responsive and consistent they are in their communications
- **Passion and Commitment:**
 - The organization's passion for the work
 - The applicant's commitment to the cause
- **Ethical Considerations**
 - Whether the organization's practices and values align with your own.

VI. Comparative Data

1. **Benchmarking:**
 - a. How the applicant's approach and performance compare to others in the field
 - b. Whether the organization is aware of existing knowledge and best practices in the field
 - c. Whether there are other funders supporting the same goals and strategies
 - d. Whether the organization has considered lessons learned from others
2. **Grantee Perceptions:**
 - a. How other grantees rate the organization
 - b. Whether the organization has gathered any feedback from grantees
 - c. Whether the organization treats its grantees fairly
 - d. Whether the organization is consistent in its communication with grantees
 - e. If grantees feel comfortable approaching the organization with a problem
 - f. How helpful grantees find the organization's selection process
 - g. How much pressure grantees feel to modify their proposal

Dashboard of Political Technology Projects

<https://nwspk.github.io/political-awards-2025/>

Survey Questions

1. Email *

Impact Priorities

For each factor, select how strongly you value its higher end of the spectrum. For example, for "Geographic Reach," 1 = local focus is fine, 5 = global reach is critical.

2. Geographic Reach (Local vs. Global) *

1 = Local-only scope is acceptable, 5 = Must have broad/global scope

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Local: Global

3. Time Horizon (Immediate vs. Long-Term Impact) *

1 = Immediate/short-term results are enough, 5 = Must demonstrate long-term impact

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Imnr: Long-Term

4. Problem Urgency (Low vs. High) *

1 = Low urgency is acceptable, 5 = Only fund highly urgent problems

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Low High Urgency

5. Innovation Potential (Incremental vs. Breakthrough) *

1 = Incremental improvements are fine, 5 = Must fund radical/novel approaches

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Incr Breakthrough

6. Ease of Implementation (Hard vs. Easy) *

1 = We can tackle projects that are difficult to implement, 5 = Must be relatively easy to deploy

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Harc Easy

7. Sustainability / Maintenance Needs (Low vs. High) *

1 = We can support short-term projects, 5 = Must be easily maintained long-term

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Shoi Long-Term

8. Risk Appetite *

Which best describes the balance of proven vs. experimental approaches in our overall funding portfolio?

Mark only one oval.

- 80% proven, 20% experimental
- 60% proven, 40% experimental
- 50% proven, 50% experimental
- 40% proven, 60% experimental
- 20% proven, 80% experimental

Value Alignment

Select EXACTLY 3 outcomes that matter most. Mark as "Important" for your top 3 choices, and "Not Important" for the rest.

9. Which 3 outcomes matter most to you? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Not Important	Important
Technical innovation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Democratic strengthening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community empowerment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Institutional reform	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Individual agency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
System-level change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowledge commons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public goods creation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Critical Factors *

In one to three sentences, describe the single most important criterion for evaluating a political technology project, and why it matters.

Stakeholder Priorities

Rate the importance of engaging each stakeholder group in project evaluation and feedback, on a 5-point scale.

11. How important is it to engage each of these groups? *

Mark only one oval per row.

	1 - Not Important	2 - Slightly Important	3 - Moderately Important	4 - Very Important	5 - Critical
Direct users/ citizens	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government/ institutional partners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community organizations/ NGOs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technical experts/ developers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marginalized/ underrepresented communities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Ethics and Data Governance

How should we balance various ethical considerations in our projects?

12. Data Collection vs. Privacy *

1 = Prioritize minimal data collection, 5 = Collect comprehensive data with robust protections

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5
Priv:	<input type="radio"/>				
					Data Rich

13. Ethical Red Lines

Which of these must be non-negotiable requirements for funded projects? (Select all that apply)

Check all that apply.

- Open source code requirements
- Explicit user consent for all data collection
- Regular algorithmic bias audits
- Local data storage/sovereignty
- Public transparency reports

Project Sustainability

Evaluate different aspects of project sustainability and community ownership on a 5-point scale.

14. Rate the importance of different sustainability factors *

Mark only one oval per row.

	1 - Very Low Priority	2 - Low Priority	3 - Medium Priority	4 - High Priority	5 - Very High Priority
Community ownership/ governance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Diversified funding sources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Open-source community maintenance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Documentation and knowledge transfer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technical debt management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Political Technology Grantmaking Human Powered Workshop

Workshop Purpose

This workshop provides a structured approach for allocating £5,000,000 across 293 political technology projects.

The workshop is designed as a collaborative exercise focused on three core elements:

1. Designing and organizing group processes for impact evaluation, co-budgeting, and co-writing
2. Developing an overview of the political technology landscape
3. Reflecting on values and priorities related to political technology

The participants will assess which projects are most important based on their design, goals, and theory of change and not on funding needs or current organizational capacity.

The scoring system is inspired by [Modern Grantmaking](#) by Gemma Bull and Tom Steinberg.

Workshop Schedule (120 minutes)

Section 1: Intro and Calibration (40 minutes)

Explanation of the evaluative framework and scoring criteria.

Let's do 3 projects **together** to see how to evaluate (20 min)

david.william.norton@gmail.com to cherry pick 2

Let's do 3 projects **individually** to see how to evaluate (20 min)

david.william.norton@gmail.com to cherry pick 2

Questions and process clarification (5 min)

Section 2: Individual Project Evaluation (45 minutes)

Individual scoring of assigned projects and entry of scores - [scoring framework](#) below (45 min)

Section 3: Breakout Rooms Pair Calibration (15 minutes)

Form pairs to review each other's evaluations (5 min)

Discuss highest and lowest scored projects (10 min)

Address scoring discrepancies and adjust where needed (10 min)

Identify key projects for full group discussion (5 min)

Section 4: Full Group Calibration and Allocation Decision (15 minutes)

Share your experience in the solo and pair work evaluations (10 min)

Discuss significant or borderline cases (10 min)

Make final adjustments to meet budget constraints (5 min)

Finalize and approve allocation (5 min)

Section 5: Wrap-up and Next Steps (5 minutes)

Summarize key decisions and allocation outcome

Close workshop

Scoring Framework

Projects are evaluated on 7 key criteria using a 1-5 scale. Scores are weighted and combined for a total score out of 5.0. Inspired by [Modern Grantmaking](#).

Scoring Criteria and Weights

1. Mission Alignment (20%)
2. Equity & Inclusion (20%)
3. Evidence & Innovation (15%)
4. Potential Impact (15%)
5. Feasibility & Sustainability (10%)
6. Risk and Groundbreaking (10%)
7. Design Quality (10%)

Important Reminders

- Focus on project **design, goals, and theory of change**
- Do NOT consider how much funding a project needs
- Do NOT evaluate current organizational competence or positioning
- Money allocation represents the cohort's assessment of importance
- The entire £5,000,000 budget must be allocated
- Document your reasoning for posterity

Scoring Guidelines

1. Mission Alignment (20%)

How well does the project advance political technology goals and address societal needs?

Score	Description
5	Project directly addresses core political technology priorities (democratic participation, transparency, accountability, political organising, knowledge democratisation) with exceptional clarity. The project fills a critical gap in the political technology ecosystem.

4	Project clearly advances important political engagement goals. Mission and objectives are well-articulated and meet significant needs. Strong alignment with democratic values.
3	Project has moderate relevance to political technology. Goals are somewhat aligned with political needs, but could be more focused or impactful.
2	Limited connection to political technology priorities. Purpose lacks clarity or addresses peripheral issues.
1	Minimal or unclear relationship to political technology. Purpose is undefined or misaligned with democratic values.

2. Equity & Inclusion (20%)

Does the project design promote fairness, accessibility, and broad participation?

Score	Description
5	Exceptionally thoughtful design for inclusive political participation. Actively removes barriers for marginalized communities. Features comprehensive approaches to ensuring diverse voices are heard.
4	Strong consideration of equity issues in the project design. Addresses needs of diverse communities and includes features to ensure broad accessibility in political engagement.
3	Moderate attention to inclusion. Basic accessibility considerations present, but some groups may still face barriers to participation.
2	Limited equity considerations in design. Significant barriers may exist for certain communities.
1	Project design may inadvertently reinforce political inequalities. No evident consideration of diverse participation needs.

3. Evidence & Innovation (15%)

Is the approach evidence-based or innovatively addressing gaps in political participation?

Score	Description
5	Exceptional integration of research with innovative approaches. Builds thoughtfully on established knowledge while introducing novel solutions. Clear theoretical foundation.

4	Strong foundation in existing evidence with meaningful innovation. Demonstrates awareness of similar initiatives and builds upon them effectively.
3	Moderate balance of evidence and innovation. Some research basis, but connections to political theory could be stronger. Innovation is incremental.
2	Limited evidence basis or innovation. Approach is neither well-grounded in research nor particularly novel.
1	Lacks both evidence basis and innovation. Approach contradicts established knowledge or represents a regression from existing solutions.

4. Potential Impact (15%)

What meaningful outcomes could result from this project for political systems?

Score	Description
5	Potential for transformative, far-reaching impact on political systems. Clear path to achieving significant outcomes in democratic participation or governance. Potential to benefit thousands or millions of citizens.
4	Strong potential for substantial impact on political engagement. Clear outcomes identified with plausible mechanisms for achieving them.
3	Moderate impact potential. Outcomes are positive but limited in scale or depth. Benefits a narrower range of political participation or addresses less critical needs.
2	Limited impact potential on political systems. Outcomes are modest or primarily benefit already-engaged groups.
1	Minimal impact potential. Unlikely to generate meaningful political outcomes or may have unintended negative consequences.

5. Feasibility & Sustainability (10%)

Is the project design realistic and sustainable?

Score	Description
5	Exceptionally well-designed with clear implementation pathways. Conceptually robust with strong sustainability logic. Thoughtful consideration of long-term viability.
4	Project is well-designed with high likelihood of successful implementation. Clear conceptual approach to sustainability.

3	Moderately feasible design with some sustainability considerations. Long-term viability requires further development.
2	Feasibility concerns in project design. Limited sustainability planning. Significant conceptual risks to long-term viability.
1	Significant feasibility issues in the project design. No apparent sustainability model. Conceptually flawed approach.

6. Risk & Groundbreaking (10%)

Does the project take appropriate risks that could lead to breakthroughs in political technology?

Score	Description
5	Takes bold, calculated risks that others avoid, with potential for groundbreaking political technology breakthroughs. Innovative approach challenges core assumptions about political participation.
4	Takes significant risks in addressing challenging political problems. Approach is notably different from conventional solutions with thoughtful risk management.
3	Moderate risk-taking. Some innovation beyond conventional approaches but stays within established parameters. Limited breakthrough potential.
2	Minimal risk-taking. Largely conventional approach with minor variations. Little potential for meaningful breakthroughs.
1	Either avoids necessary risks or takes uncalculated risks. Too conventional to drive political change or too risky without proper theoretical grounding.

7. Design Quality (10%)

How well-designed is the project in terms of user experience, workflow, and functionality?

Score	Description
5	Exceptional design quality that perfectly aligns with project goals. Intuitive interface or methodology. Demonstrates deep understanding of user needs in political contexts.
4	Strong design quality with thoughtful attention to user experience. Clear workflows and functionality that support political engagement goals.

3	Adequate design quality. Functional but with some usability limitations. Basic understanding of user needs demonstrated.
2	Limited design quality. Significant usability issues that may hinder adoption or effectiveness.
1	Poor design quality that undermines project goals. Confusing interface or methodology that presents serious barriers to use.

Funding Allocation Tiers

Based on total weighted scores (out of 5.0), projects will be allocated to funding tiers. We could potentially allocate funds divided by topics like 'Academy Awards' too.

Tier 1: Transformative Projects

- Top 5% of projects (15 projects)
- Allocation: £150,000 each
- Total: £2,250,000 (45% of budget)

Tier 2: High-Impact Projects

- Next 5% of projects = 15 projects
- Allocation: £100,000 each
- Total: £1,500,000 (30% of budget)

Tier 3: Promising Projects

- Next 5% of projects = 15 projects
- Allocation: £50,000 each
- Total: £750,000 (15% of budget)

Tier 4: Seed Potential

- Next 5% of projects = 15 projects
- Allocation: £20,000 each
- Total: £300,000 (6% of budget)

Tier 5: Recognition Grants

- Next 5% of projects = 16 projects
- Allocation: £12,500 each
- Total: £200,000 (4% of budget)

Unfunded

→ Remaining 75% of projects = 218 projects

Total Budget Allocated: £5,000,000

Project Evaluation Workflow

Step 1: Individual Research

For each assigned project:

1. Visit the project website or repository
2. Research the project's purpose, design, and approach
3. Consider how it addresses political engagement challenges
4. Note specific evidence supporting your evaluation

Step 2: Complete Scoring Card on [Sheet](#)

Step 3: Group Calibration Process (after initial individual scoring is finished)

1. Compare scores with a partner, focusing on:
 - Projects you scored very high (4.5+)
 - Projects you scored very low (below 2.5)
 - Projects you found difficult to assess
2. Discuss rationales for scores
3. Adjust scores where appropriate based on new insights
4. Identify projects requiring full-group discussion

Step 4: Final Allocation

1. Compile all scores in the central spreadsheet
2. Apply the funding tier algorithm
3. Review the preliminary allocation as a group
4. Make adjustments to ensure the £5M budget is exactly met
5. Document key justifications for highest funded projects