

Brief for Synergi Learning Partner

About Synergi

Synergi is a programme of work which focuses on the intersection of racial justice and mental health. It had a previous iteration as a knowledge hub, bringing together research and network building.

In its new iteration it is hosted by NSUN, with a focus on abolitionist responses to mental health and supporting grassroots groups to challenge state violence. In this, there is a lot of scope to experiment, innovate and to try new approaches, as this is a well-resourced programme of activity.

Synergi has four main workstreams:

1. Community Responses to Mental Health – working with grassroots groups to experiment with community-based mental health care
2. Supporting Movement Spaces – working with grassroots groups to map local carceral systems that contribute to mental ill health in racialised communities
3. Grants Programme – small grants programme redistributing resources to grassroots and user-led groups working on mental health and racial justice
4. Festival – a creative culmination of the above three workstreams

Mental ill health, distress or trauma is often caused by and/or exacerbated by racial injustice and carceral forms of state violence. Our aim is for Synergi to support the work of groups at the frontline of challenging this, and to effectively contribute to building collective memory and power on mental health and abolition.

Funding from Lankelly Chase is secured until March 2025, with scope to grow Synergi beyond this by securing additional funding.

About NSUN (the National Survivor User Network)

NSUN is a network of people and grassroots groups with lived experience of mental ill-health, distress and trauma. We work towards the distribution of power and resource in mental health.

NSUN is a user-led organisation, and all staff and trustees have lived experience of mental ill-health, distress or trauma. Over the past couple of years, NSUN has scaled and changed. This is an exciting time to work with an organisation which is growing and [embarking upon a new strategic direction](#), focussed on doing things differently in mental health and beyond.

About the role

We are looking to work with a learning partner to help us reflect on, design and facilitate processes to help us consider:

- 1) how we can implement Synergi's vision most effectively
- 2) the ongoing and longer-term impact of our work,
- 3) our use of power and resources
- 4) how best to approach and implement monitoring, evaluation and learning

Over the period, the learning partner will work closely with the Synergi team and wider partners to gain an in-depth understanding of the work. You will facilitate critical reflection on all aspects of Synergi. You will work with the Synergi team to establish appropriate and effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. We are looking for someone/an organisation to input innovative ideas of ways to capture our impact and learning.

This is a new programme of work, and this is an exciting role as you will play a key part in helping us to shape the work in line with our strategy. We don't have a fixed vision for what our work with a learning partner should be, so there is scope for you to be creative and exploratory – in line with the values of Synergi as a whole.

Whilst you will mainly be working with the Synergi team, transparency and accountability about our work plays an important part and so this role will also include listening to the views of groups and organisations that we will be collaborating with. In collaboration with Synergi staff members, we will also want you to develop material that we can share externally.

You will help us to capture the learning from Synergi in an accessible and informative way, synthesising key information to enable this. You will also provide recommendations for research, and individuals and organisations that we ought to be engaging with to deepen our learning and to strengthen this programme of work.

You will be helping the Synergi team to develop our approach to monitoring and evaluating all of Synergi's workstreams, including the grants programme. We particularly want to consider how the workstreams can interact and build on each other. You will work with us to develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation plan for the programme which will include an end-of-project evaluation.

This is a 2.25-year contract. We are funded until March 2025 but there is scope for it to develop beyond that. This work will inform the 'what next' and provide reflection and recommendations for that.

This is contract work and so you will manage how and when you work on this piece of work, including the involvement of others. You will need to use your own equipment and insurance.

What we are looking for

Essential:

- Shared values, with an understanding of and commitment to racial justice, mental health and abolition
- Experience of undertaking large-scale monitoring, evaluation and learning for complex and interlinked projects, including using creative/non-traditional approaches
- Familiarity with the UK grassroots/movement-building landscape and ability to support equitable ways of working in this context
- Experience developing accessible and non-onerous qualitative and quantitative tools for a wide range of stakeholders
- Excellent organisation and planning skills, with an ability to adapt as the work and wider landscape of operation changes
- Ability to build trusting relationships with a wide range of people – staff, partners, grassroots organisations, grantees, etc
- Self-organised and proactive approach to managing own workload
- Experience of grant-making processes and ideally, experience of evaluating them
- Ability to assess both our internal practices and ways of working and our external work to ensure that there is congruence between the two

We would particularly welcome applications from individuals from marginalised or racialised communities, and from individuals who have non-traditional working experience.

Budget

The budget for this work is £15,000 per year with a maximum budget of £37,500 (inclusive of VAT) between the start of the contract and March 2025. Break points will be included in the contract.

Tasks

Implementing Synergi's vision most effectively	- Establish and help to maintain effective and meaningful monitoring and evaluation systems,
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	<p>including developing indicators for what ‘success’ looks like</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop appropriate mechanisms for the collection of monitoring and evaluation data, in collaboration with team members - Contribute to the production of materials for sharing progress externally through research and networking, identifying potential collaborations and interventions to strengthen the programme of work
Considering the ongoing and longer-term impact of our work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designing and delivering reflection and learning sessions (for example, on specific workstreams, on overall progress against indicators, etc) for the Synergi team at regular intervals
Reflecting on our use of power and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speaking to key Synergi partners (in particular, grassroots organisations) to hear their experiences and views
How best to approach and implement monitoring, evaluation and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommending approaches to monitoring and evaluation that are specific to the context and values of Synergi - Working with the team to devise and implement and monitoring and evaluation plan - Designing and delivering an end-of-project evaluation
Other/ongoing tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular communication with the Synergi Co-directors and team members, as needed - Attendance at key Synergi events, as appropriate

Timeframes for delivery

Our intention is that the learning partner will work with the Synergi co-directors to co-create a timeline that works for the programme and for you. With this in mind, the list below is not an exhaustive list and we are open to these timeframes being adaptable according to the changing needs of the programme. Timeframes for key deliverables will be decided upon together and confirmed at the start of this assignment.

- Update meetings every 3 months with Synergi team
- Interim reports every 6 months, as per the needs of the work programme but likely to relate to specific workstreams.
- March 2025 final/end-of-project evaluation report

Expression of interest

To apply for this role, please provide no more than one A4 page outlining the approach you would take to this work.

Please include:

- Key things you would be aware of when monitoring and evaluating a programme of work that is rooted in mental health, racial justice and abolition, and working primarily with lived experience led groups.
- How you would approach this work, including the values and thinking guiding this
- How you would deliver this work within the specified time-frames and budget

The deadline for expressions of interest is **9.00am on Monday 28 November**. Please email it to info@nsun.org.uk with the subject heading 'Synergi Learning Partner'. You can also email us if you have any questions about this brief or would like this document in a different format.

Interviews for shortlisted candidates will be held online via Zoom on **Wednesday 7th December** with Lena Mohamed and Jilna Shah, Co-directors of Synergi.