

The City Bridge Trust

Bridging Divides: Application for a grant



About your organisation

Organisation Details

Name of your organisation: Stratford Circus Arts Centre	
If your organisation is part of a larger organisation, what is its name? n/a	
In which London Borough is your organisation based? Newham	
Contact person: Ms Mia Gulati	Position: Development Manager
Website: http://www.stratford-circus.com	Social Media Accounts: SCAC: 1. twitter.com/StratfordCircus 2. facebook.com/stratfordcircus1/ 3. instagram.com/stratford_circus BLUE SKY ACTORS: 1. twitter.com/Blue_Sky_Actors 2. www.facebook.com/blueskyactors 3. www.stratford-circus.com/creative-learning/blue-sky-actors/
What Quality Marks does your organisation currently hold? N/A	

Legal Status

Legal status of organisation: Registered Charity			
Charity Number: 1145183	Company Number: 07828129	CIC Number:	Bencom Number:
When was your organisation established? 21/12/2011			
Aims of your organisation: Situated in one of the most culturally diverse and yet socio-economically deprived boroughs in the country and with low levels of arts engagement - Stratford Circus Arts Centre is a place where the most exciting performing artists make work with children and young people, with a focus on creating original shows that reflect communities local to us. We believe access to art brings joy, empowers people and brings them together. Based in the heart of Stratford, our work is influenced by our strong relationships with diverse communities in London Borough Newham and East London, and we respond to that environment using creativity as a tool for improving social outcomes. Originating in 2001 Blue Sky Actors has been resident at Stratford Circus Arts Centre. As a disability led ensemble its aims are founded on inclusive theatre which includes challenging prejudice; raising the profile of disability-led arts and supporting adults with disabilities to realise their potential.			

Main activities of your organisation:

Stratford Circus Arts Centre is a community hub, a performing arts centre and an important local resource that uses the arts as a tool to facilitate social change. Our venue, with an open access foyer, café and flexible multi-use spaces including two theatres has enabled us to deliver varied services since our independent charity status in 2011.

We deliver, co-commission and stage theatre-based arts, develop artists, offer creative learning projects with pathways to employment and run participatory activity for hard to reach demographics. We are driven by the needs of communities local to us and believe passionately in the power of the arts to change lives. Through the arts we deliver positive outcomes for educational attainment, skills progression and well-being. In 2017/18 128,826 people engaged with us in our building and off-site through artistic and community work and we had 9,786 participants in our creative learning programme.

Your Staff & Volunteers

Full-time:	Part-time:	Trustee/Board members:	Active volunteers:
15	1	8	6

Do you have a Safeguarding policy? **Yes**

Are the following people in your organisation subject to DBS checks?

Paid Staff Yes	Volunteers Yes	Trustees / Management Committee Members No
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Property occupied by your organisation

Is the main property owned, leased or rented by your organisation?	If leased/rented, how long is the outstanding agreement?
Leased	Currently being renegotiated

Environmental Impact**What action have you taken in the past year to progress environmentally sustainability principles and practice?**

Stratford Circus Arts Centre received grant funding from the local authority and Arts Council of England which enabled the delivery of essential planned works and the building is now in a much improved condition. Certain elements of the works have dramatically improved the building's sustainability. Significantly a new double air lock front door was installed to the front of the building, reducing the energy lost from the foyer and keeping the area warmer. During 2015 we participated in the Mayor of London's Energy Re:Fit programme, carried out by British Gas and supported by Arts Council England. This consisted of installing LED lamps throughout the building as far as possible. We were advised that the new installation had achieved an 11% reduction on the overall site electrical consumption, which has meant an important energy and carbon saving as well as an annual financial saving.

Finance Details

Organisation Finances

	Year of most recent audited / examined accounts	Current financial year forecast	Next financial year budget
End of financial year date	31/03/2018	31/03/2019	31/03/2020
Grants & donations:	£677,108	£713,507	£705,222
Earned income:	£543,729	£612,087	£615,258
Other income:	£96,650	£200,198	£157,479
Total income:	1,317,487	£1,525,792	£1,477,959
Charitable activity costs:	£722,940	£766,565	£751,229
Cost of raising funds:	£43,195	£44,469	£46,257
Other costs:	£607,752	£677,179	£676,418
Total expenditure:	£1,373,887	£1,488,213	£1,473,904
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end:	£31,811	£69,934	£73,989
What is your organisation's reserves policy?			
SAT Trustees have agreed to build a minimum reserves level of 3 months operating funds equivalent to £180,000 at current costs. This target is set for 2022 and will be achieved through prudent financial management and growth of current services. The business is also investigating further income streams to spread risk. The current level of unrestricted reserves is £31,811.			
For your most recent financial year, what % of your income was from statutory sources? 1-10%			

Organisational changes

Describe any significant organisational changes to your structure, financial position or core activities since the date of your most recent accounts.

N/A

Grant Request

<p>Which of the Trust's programmes and priority areas will your application deliver? Connecting the Capital</p>														
<p>Which of the programme outcome(s) does your application aim to achieve? Connecting the Capital/Londoners experiencing inequality or disadvantage have greater wellbeing and independence through improved access to arts, sports and other community facilities and services Connecting the Capital/Londoners experiencing inequality or disadvantage are better heard and represented leading to better decision-making</p>														
<p>Please describe the purpose of your funding request in one sentence. To provide continuation two year funding for Blue Sky Actors project to support personal and professional development for each actor and a programme of professional productions.</p>														
<p>When will the funding be required? 01/09/2018</p>														
<p>Is this request to continue work that is currently funded or has been funded in the last year by: City Bridge Trust? Another funder? (if so which) Yes</p>														
<p>How much funding are you requesting?</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">Year 1:</td> <td style="width: 20%;">Year 2:</td> <td style="width: 20%;">Year 3:</td> <td style="width: 20%;">Year 4:</td> <td style="width: 20%;">Year 5:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>£35,994</td> <td>£35,994</td> <td>£0</td> <td>£0</td> <td>£0</td> </tr> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">Total Requested: £71,988</p>					Year 1:	Year 2:	Year 3:	Year 4:	Year 5:	£35,994	£35,994	£0	£0	£0
Year 1:	Year 2:	Year 3:	Year 4:	Year 5:										
£35,994	£35,994	£0	£0	£0										

What 3 main differences or outcomes do you want to achieve through your funding proposal?

<p>Overcome isolation, loneliness and increase in confidence Regular rehearsals and performances (to peers, families & friends) give individuals a sense of community and social interaction which greatly increases confidence and decreases feelings of loneliness. Participants have a sense of pride in the contribution they make to it.</p>
<p>Progress personally and professionally By supporting each member to fulfill their individual goals we will create opportunities for members to find their own paid work in the sector or enable them to seek funding for their own creative projects in the future using our networks.</p>
<p>Be better represented in the wider community This project changes overt and covert prejudices towards those with physical/learning disabilities. We will challenge these prejudices with theatre that promotes social change, whilst having high artistic standards in front of diverse audiences. This will make a difference to the participants and society alike.</p>

What are the main activities or outputs you will deliver to achieve these differences?

<p>The creation and development of three high-quality productions annually by adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. This comprises of skills development for individuals, master-classes and workshops in theatre skills and three ten-week rehearsal sessions with the artistic director and artistic enablers.</p>
<p>The personal and professional development of individuals using goal-setting with support to enable participants to work towards aims throughout the project.</p>
<p>Support for lead actors with their individual projects, including support with auditions and productions, empowering and encouraging them to be role models for other actors with disabilities and the wider community.</p>

You and your grant request

What, specifically, are you applying for (your project)?

Stratford Circus Arts Centre's creative learning programme includes the Blue Sky Actors project, a disability-led theatre ensemble for adults with learning difficulties or disabilities. Led by Ray Downing, Artistic Director, the ensemble is open to all comers of different abilities and ages for enjoyment and learning. It meets every Saturday afternoon and develops originally devised issue-led theatre leading to public performances including, recently, *The Unusual Suspects* and *Alice in Winterland*.

The beneficiaries are local people attending from Newham and other boroughs and are of all ages and backgrounds. The total membership is 30 and an average of 28 people attend on a regular basis at the Saturday afternoon rehearsal sessions. In addition are family members, friends, carer networks and audience members.

We are requesting a grant for a further two years to contribute towards wider public awareness, creative professional development and greater levels of support and skills-enhancement for individual members.

How will the project described achieve your stated outcomes?

This grant will support Blue Sky Actors to:

- ? Increase in confidence
- ? Overcome isolation and feelings of loneliness
- ? Progress personally and professionally
- ? Be better represented in the wider community
- ? Feel greater levels of inclusion within the community

Many people with disabilities feel invisible and face ongoing routine discrimination leading to low self-esteem and aspirations. This project supports increased positive visibility and engagement of persons with disabilities which shifts expectations of the role and contribution of persons with disabilities, reducing societal stigma and opening up further opportunities for participation in all aspects of life.

Members of Blue Sky Actors (and by extension their families) gain huge benefits from engaging with this weekly activity. A continuation grant would extend that benefit educationally, artistically, and socially. Additionally, it would extend performance opportunities which would in turn bring wider exposure to participants and for more people to experience disability-led theatre.

How do you know there's a need for this work?

Disabled people are particularly limited in their cultural opportunities, due to access and other barriers, and have an average national engagement rate of 50%. With an engagement rate in Newham of less than 20%, and the closures of Day Opportunities Service, the level of engagement by disabled residents is less than 10%.

The lack of opportunity to participate in typical leisure activities, intensifies the invisibility of those with disabilities in mainstream society. An empowering project such as Blue Sky Actors is therefore extremely popular. The project is heavily over-subscribed and there is a long waiting list for new applicants. The current cohort number thirty which is the maximum number of attendees that the project can work with to ensure an impactful experience and to allow the artistic enablers and the artistic director to work with all participants on an individual level and to produce a high standard ensemble production.

How will the work be delivered - specifically, what will you do?

Blue Sky Actors is a thirty-strong collective of actors of all abilities who come together for the enjoyment of theatre and the sense of community gained from engaging in a group activity. Every week they gain new skills, social interaction and valuable peer support.

This project will deliver:

- ? Weekly rehearsals of original new plays during term-time to develop and deliver a ticketed professional production at the end of each term to friends, family and the general public
- ? Professional support from artistic director and artistic enablers
- ? Two professional performances staged annually at Stratford Circus Arts Centre
- ? Industry professional masterclasses for the whole group
- ? Regular skills training workshops
- ? Mentoring sessions
- ? Signposting opportunities for individual actors
- ? Bespoke personal and professional development sessions for individual actors
- ? Lead actors supported with their individual projects.

Why are you the right organisation to do this work?

We have a strong track record of working with people with disabilities and learning difficulties with many flagship projects including:

Blue Sky Actors project since 2001 under the leadership of the artistic director Ray Downing
Specialist theatre productions for children and young people with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD)

Presenting the best national disability-led theatre companies such as Extant and Graeae on our main stage

Stratford Arts Social project ? events for older adults experiencing isolation

We are an experienced venue for disabled participants & audiences with movable seating, wide aisles, disabled toilets & dressing rooms, hearing loops, lifts and regular access training.

Staff hold enhanced DBS and are familiar with policies, including Vulnerable Adult Protection & Equal Opportunities Policies.

The building benefits from being in the heart of Stratford and very near local and national transport.

We have strong link to local communities, arts companies, care & education sectors.

How does your work complement and not duplicate other services within your area?

There are disability-led ensembles in other boroughs but similar to Newham there are not enough to cope with demand for places. This project complements and supports the ecology of artistic projects tailored to people with disabilities and actors are regularly signposted to other opportunities due to the close network of Ray Downing and SCAC.

Newham has high levels of residents classed as disabled (17% of working age) and 74% of people with a disability also have a work-limiting disability (compared to London average of 60%). Unemployment and economic inactivity rates of such individuals is much higher than those with just one type of disability (Newham's Economic Assessment 2010 to 2027).

Lack of employment opportunities, and the access barriers that disabled people and especially artists face in networking, make it extremely difficult for disabled people to make a career in the arts, even though many jobs are highly suited to them.

How will you ensure that your project will hear and represent the views and needs of disadvantaged people and/or diverse communities?

This project is tailored to the needs of individuals. Blue Sky Actors enables individuals to be empowered to create, work with their strengths, challenge their weaknesses & be allowed to play in a safe & supportive atmosphere greatly increasing their confidence and skills level. The performances are devised so that everyone performs to the best of their abilities and the roles are selected according to their strengths. Some participants have additional skills in singing and dancing for example, and they are often given performance time to perform solo in front of the audience? this is incredibly empowering for them. Each individual has 1-1 time every term to set personal and professional (acting and general work skills) goals which is bespoke. For example some members wish to secure an agent, whilst others wish to increase general professional skills such as answering emails.

How does your project engage and empower individuals and/or communities to come together on this issue? Will you be working with people who are particularly excluded?

Participants have a range of disabilities and learning difficulties with additional mental health needs. These include Asperger's Syndrome, Dyslexia, Muscular Dystrophy, Epilepsy, Downs Syndrome, ADHD, Autism and Cerebral Palsy. Many of them may have low socio-economic status due to their disabilities. People with disabilities struggle to establish a sense of a valuable self and engaging in the arts can help them to raise self-esteem.

Our focus is that regardless of background and ability, people have a chance to take part in the performing arts. We use the arts as a way to engage everybody but especially people from extremely excluded or under-represented communities in this socially inclusive theatre programme. Involvement in this project helps to tackle issues on stage and promote choices and needs off stage that can provide an opportunity for people with disabilities and their networks to advocate for their rights.

Is the focus of your project meeting an already identifiable need (acute or otherwise) or are there elements which are preventative and/or incorporate early action?

Less than 3% of workers and less than 1% of freelance contractors in Arts Council-funded organisations are disabled. This inevitably affects organisations' policies, practices and programming, with disabled people seldom seeing their lives represented within the wider culture. Lack of employment opportunities, and access barriers that disabled artists face in networking, make it extremely difficult for disabled people to make a career in the arts, even though many jobs are highly suited to them.

We believe that the Blue Sky Actors project provides preventative / early action as it increases participants' social networks, performance and public speaking skills which leads to increased wellbeing and confidence and better employability. Some of the participants want to be professional actors, but because of their additional learning difficulties and disabilities, barriers to finding paid acting work become almost insurmountable. Other participants value the social networks and find the regularity of the sessions to be therapeutic.

Who might you need to work closely with in delivering this project - whether before, during or afterwards?

Blue Sky Actors project is part of an ecology which relies on support from many organisations and networks. This includes other disability-led theatre ensembles such as Face Front Inclusive Theatre, Act Up Newham and Blink Dance Theatre. The project also works closely with arts industry professionals such as production, technical and drama specialists. Individual participants are usually supported by family members, carers and care workers and staff work together with participants to ensure that they are supported and encouraged in a safe atmosphere. Recently Blue Sky Actors worked with disability charity Mencap to create a series of instructional stories regarding sexual health and education. We will explore continuing partnership with Mencap and other national disability charities.

Our aim as a funder is to help people move positively between any of the four stages of Surviving, Coping, Adapting and Thriving. For your project at which of these stages will most people begin their journey?

Most participants will begin their journey at the coping stage. Participants of the project have learning difficulties, disabilities and sometimes more than one disability. These include: Asperger's Syndrome, Dyslexia, Muscular Dystrophy, Epilepsy, Downs Syndrome, ADHD, Autism, Global Delay Disorder and Cerebral Palsy. In addition, they may have other physical health issues and mental health needs. Participants may suffer from low self-esteem and lack of confidence due to stigma and discrimination. This project helps those individuals to discover their self-expression in a supportive safe environment. Over time this helps them to become more confident and independent.

Will there be any elements of this project that will help you or your beneficiaries to reduce your environmental footprint?

The environmental impact of Blue Sky Actors is very low. Scripts for performances need to be printed in large size fonts for accessible reading? however each participant is given a bound folder and this prevents the need for repeat printing.

Funding required for the project

What is the total cost of the proposed activity/project?

Expenditure heading	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
The Blue Sky Actors Rehearsals Schedule	15,250	15,250	0	0	0	0
Lead Artists Scheme	660	660	0	0	0	0
Professional Development Scheme	2,500	2,500	0	0	0	0
Professional Production 1 (Sept-Dec) x 2 years	3,642	3,642	0	0	0	0
Professional Production 2 (Jan - Mar) x 2 years	3,607	3,607	0	0	0	0
Research and Development Projects x 2 years	2,108	2,108	0	0	0	0
Project Management and Coordination	11,544	11,544	0	0	0	0
Evaluation	2,200	2,200	0	0	0	0
Core Costs	3,321	3,322	0	0	0	0

TOTAL:	44,831	44,832	0	0	0	0
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What income has already been raised?

Source	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Income from ticket sales x 2 years (estimated based previous years)	750	750	0	0	0	0
Income from Blue Sky Actors classes x 2 years	1,500	1,500	0	0	0	0
Support in kind: Stratford Circus Arts Centre	4,087	4,087	0	0	0	0

TOTAL:	0	0	0	0	0	0
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What other funders are currently considering the proposal?

Source	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
The Charles S French Charitable Trust	2,500	2,500	0	0	0	0
TOTAL:	0	0	0	0	0	0

How much is requested from the Trust?

Expenditure heading	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
The Blue Sky Actors Rehearsals Schedule	15,250	15,250	0	0	0	0
Lead Artists Scheme	0	0	0	0	0	0
Professional Development Scheme	0	0	0	0	0	0
Professional Production 1 (Sept-Dec) x 2 years	3,642	3,642	0	0	0	0
Professional Production 2 (Jan - Mar) x 2 years	3,607	3,607	0	0	0	0
Research and Development Projects (August) x 2 years	0	0	0	0	0	0
Project Management and Coordination	8,436	8,436	0	0	0	0
Evaluation	2,200	2,200	0	0	0	0
Core Costs	2,859	2,859	0	0	0	0

TOTAL:	35,994	35,994	0	0	0	0
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Who will benefit?

How many people will directly benefit from the grant per year?

270

In which Greater London borough(s) or areas of London will your beneficiaries live?

Newham

Hackney

Redbridge

Hammersmith & Fulham

London-wide

Does this project specifically target any groups or communities?

Yes - please enter details below

This project will specifically work with the following age groups:

16-24/25-44/45-64

This project will specifically work with the following gender groups:

Male

Female

This project will specifically work with the following ethnic groups:

Asian/ Asian British (including Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; Chinese; Any other Asian background)

Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British (including African; Caribbean; Any other Black/ African/ Caribbean background)

Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups

White (including English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British; Irish; Any other White background)

If Other ethnic group, please give details:

This project will specifically work with Deaf and disabled people:

Yes

This project will specifically work with LGBTQI groups:

No

This project will specifically work with other groups or communities:

How will you target the groups/communities you have identified? What is your expertise in providing services for these groups?

Stratford Circus Arts Centre has been delivering this project under the artistic leadership of Ray Downing since 2001.

Are there any groups or communities you think your organisation will find hard to include through this project?

No

If yes, please specify which groups or communities? Where possible using the categories listed above.

If yes, what steps will you take to make your services accessible to and meet the needs of the groups/communities you have identified?

Declaration

I confirm that, to the best of my knowledge, all the information I have provided in this application form is correct. I fully understand that City Bridge Trust has zero tolerance towards fraud and will seek to prosecute and recover funds in every instance.

Please confirm: Yes Full Name: **Mia Gulati**

Role within **Development Manager**
Organisation: