

**MEETING; 26/09/2019**

**Ref: 15010**

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Connecting the Capital**

**EcoACTIVE Education Services**

**Adv: Sandra Jones**

**Base: Hackney**

**Amount requested: £70,000**

**Benefit: Hackney**

**Amount recommended: £70,000**

**The Applicant**

EcoACTIVE (formerly EcoACTIVE Education Services), a charitable incorporated organisation, was established in 2002 to promote sustainable development in Hackney and East London through a range of activities which build participants' knowledge, skills and confidence. Activities include waste education in schools; working with local volunteers in parks and estates to encourage gardening, food growing and biodiversity improvements; air quality awareness; workshops on energy saving and creative community development with local community groups around reuse and saving resources through arts and crafts.

**The Application**

EcoACTIVE wish to expand on their Community Gardens Network Project by delivering a volunteer skills development programme and community education activities in community gardens, half of which will be on new plots with the other half will be existing gardens needing support to become sustainable. Participation will help enhance social cohesion and reduce loneliness. This will be achieved by appointing a project officer for 14 hours per week, a Co-ordinator for 11 hours per week and associated running costs.

**The Recommendation**

EcoACTIVE is a well-run and well-respected organisation delivering a range of activities to increase environmental awareness and community resilience. This application meets the outcomes of the Connecting the Capital programme as local communities will have better, more sustainable assets and greater wellbeing through improved access to community facilities.

The original project budget included an element of building and maintaining the gardens. As these are on plots of land on housing estates, it is considered that the landlord (mainly housing associations and local authority land) should contribute to the improvement of the plot of land, and that the City Bridge funding should be for developing the local communities and volunteers. In discussions with officers, it was recognised that, rather than funding the garden maintenance and development, that they should increase the materials for the skills and education workshops and for sessional staff. The grant recommended is therefore:

***£70,000 over three years (3 x £25,000) to contribute to the salary costs of the Project Officer for 14 hours per week, Co-ordinator for 11 hours per week and associated running costs.***

**Funding History**

Meeting Date	Decision
15/06/2017	Stepping Stones: to develop training courses and an online shop targeting schools, housing associations and parks.

13/02/2013	£84,000 over three years (£27,440; £28,000; £28,560) towards the salary and on-costs of a Senior Education Officer to deliver a whole-school and community project to prevent food, energy, paper and packaging waste in N London.
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### Background and detail of proposal

The aim of the project is to give greater access to outdoor environmental activities to people from different backgrounds living in a specific, often deprived area. By taking part in this project, people in each neighbourhood will recognise and develop their strengths / talents to deliver sustainable community gardens. By the end of the project volunteers will have the skills and confidence to run their own community gardens with minimal support from EcoACTIVE.

The staff identify plots of land to be developed and the owners of the land are contacted, and permission sought. All gardens will be in the top 20% deprived Lower Super Output Areas. Participants will be identified by promoting the garden through local organisations, housing officers, GPs and local people.

### Financial Information

The organisation's reserves policy is to hold three months in free reserves. From the information in the table below you will see that the level of free reserves is consistently higher than this target.

The deficit being incurred on restricted funds would need to be covered by unrestricted or free reserves, which would therefore reduce the amount by which they are over their target.

Year end as at 31 March	2018 Examined Accounts £	2019 Budget £	2020 Forecast £
<b>Income &amp; expenditure:</b>			
Income	190,552	210,638	238,347
- % of Income confirmed as at 22/02/2019	n/a	n/a	73%
Expenditure	(215,609)	(251,518)	(244,347)
Total surplus/(deficit)	(25,057)	(40,880)	(6,000)
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(4,105)	(33,551)	(10,582)
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(20,952)	(7,329)	4,582
	(25,057)	(40,880)	(6,000)
Cost of Raising Funds	0	14,359	4,235
- % of Income	0.0%	6.8%	1.8%
Unrestricted expenditure	132,294	135,404	122,008
<b>Free unrestricted reserves:</b>			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	63,840	58,511	61,093
No of months of unrestricted expenditure	5.8	5.0	6.0
Reserves policy target	33,074	33,851	30,502
No of months of total expenditure	3.0	3.0	3.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	30,767	22,660	30,591