

MEETING 28/11/2019

Ref: 15628

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Connecting the Capital

Media Trust

Adv: Geraldine Page

Base: Westminster

Amount requested: £222,996

Benefit: London-wide

Amount recommended: £223,000

The Applicant

The Media Trust (MT) established in 1994 is a communications charity that believes in the power of media to change lives. It encourages the media and communications industry to share their time, knowledge and creativity to benefit charities, and underrepresented communities. It aims to amplify charities' voices by building their communications skills through innovative training, volunteer brokerage and content programmes to help them reach and engage new audiences.

The Application

MT is requesting three years continuation funding for the 'Stronger Voices' project you originally funded in November 2017. It is a comprehensive media and strategic communications training programme for 45 equalities organisations (15 per year) to skill up staff and provide them with a strategy to help target their audiences more effectively. Over the course of six months, a cohort of 15 London based equality organisations each year will learn best practice in communicating for change, marketing and campaign planning, social media, interacting with the media and media interview training in a series of one day workshops.

Following the training the equalities organisations will be matched with a media volunteer from a MT corporate partner to help the organisations to develop a realistic and compelling campaign to engage audiences and policy makers with their work. The programme will be delivered in partnership with Equally Ours (previously the Equality and Diversity Forum). Equally Ours is a well-respected national network of organisations working across all areas of equality. It will work with MT to steer programme development and delivery, recruit the organisations and deliver a strategic communications workshop as part of the training.

Additionally, as part of the programme MT will deliver;

- Staff and Beneficiary spokesperson training - for the beneficiaries of the organisations taking part.
- Networking with journalists and media professionals – following the training MT will organise a networking event with its corporate partners, such as BBC, Trinity Mirror and Bloomberg where participants can put their training into practise and pitch their stories and campaigns directly and receive feedback.
- Communications audit and campaign planning with media mentors – Media Industry volunteers will work with the equalities organisation for 3 months supporting them to drive their communications forward, raise their profile and secure increased and improved media output and visibility for their work.
- Advocacy Masterclass programme – in response to the wider skills gap in the sector MT will run four specialist master classes per year in partnership with leading media brands and speakers. Delivered to 100 professionals and volunteers working for equalities organisations.

The Recommendation

MT has a very good track record in delivering intensive communications capacity building programmes for marginalised and underrepresented communities. In partnership with Equality Ours, MT is in a strong position of expertise and capacity to continue to support equality organisations to be able to tell their stories and the important role this has in reaching the wider public and policy makers, thereby helping them to achieve long-term support and drive policy change. The project costs may appear on the high side but are justified given the level, detail and nature of intensive work required to deliver such a comprehensive training programme to a high standard.

£223,000 over three further and final years (£73,300; £74,300; £75,400) to contribute to the delivery costs of the Stronger Voices Training Programme for 45 equalities organisations, including Advocacy Masterclasses and volunteer brokerage.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
26/09/2019	£1,500 for the Media Trust to develop and run a new Distribution workshop to complement the "Telling Your Stories" project.
14/11/2018	£49,995 over six months for the delivery costs of the "Telling Your Stories" project.
23/11/2017	£148,700 over two years (£75,000; £73,700) to contribute to the delivery costs of the Stronger Voices Training Programme for 30 equalities organisations, including Advocacy Masterclasses, digital guides and volunteer brokerage.
27/07/2017	Application withdrawn.
15/06/2017	£720 for the Media Trust to manage the subtitling for 'Telling Your Stories' screening at the Barbican
22/09/2016	£49,107 for the Media Trust to work with a cohort of City Bridge Trust grantees on a "Telling Your Stories" project.
22/09/2016	Stepping Stones application – declined.
09/07/2015	£50,000 over 12 months towards a marketing and business development programme that will allow Media Trust to explore opportunities for earned income and the potential to take on social investment.
06/06/2013	£80,000 for a final year's funding to provide media training to 110 young Londoners to tell London's stories to a wide national and regional audience.

Background and detail of proposal

The first two years of Stronger Voices has been very successful demonstrating that it responds to a direct need across the equalities sector. 100% of the organisations participating in the first year reported an increase in their organisation's ability to raise its profile using media and agreed the programme was a real confidence builder, notably regarding posting online content and approaching journalists. Home Office Statistics show that between 2017 and 2018, police recorded 94,098 hate crime offences, more than double the total five years ago. The voice of equalities organisations, their leaders and beneficiaries are vital in advocating for equality and rights. The media is also crucial in helping eradicating prejudice from society; however, newsrooms still fail to reflect wider society. Research by the City University¹ (2016) found 94% of journalists are white. This can lead to a misrepresentation of under-represented and marginalised communities in the media. Stronger Voices, by training small equalities organisations in shaping the narrative surrounding their work and beneficiaries will empower them to reach new and wider

¹ City University London survey randomly selected a pool of 8,000 journalists working across broadcast, print and digital in local, regional and national news organisations in the UK.

audiences. Consequently, challenging prejudices and stereotypes; portraying hopeful, empathetic stories that can influence policy makers and reach wider audiences.

Financial Information

MT is in a stable financial position and its strategic review includes a development plan for building the charity's reserves to its target level of £500k. The deficit in unrestricted funds in YE 2018 relates to several major programme areas coming to an end. Additionally, MT has been through a series of transitions with two CEOs (one interim) and the Head of Fundraising Events being replaced over the course of FY 2017/2018. Changes were made by the new CEO with a series of redundancies and a refocused drive to secure corporate sponsorship. Savings from organisation downsizing and being accommodated in new serviced offices in late 2018 will generate further savings in running costs and give MT more flexibility to scale up or down its workforce in line with programme demands.

Reserves policy is £500k representing just over six months of salaries and overhead costs. Currently, reserves are lower than this target. The Trustees are considering ways of reducing the charity's dependence on unpredictable forms of income and securing more reliable funding streams. The Trustees review the policy and progress towards meeting the target level of reserves annually and the Finance and Audit Committee will review the policy in the interim if warranted.

Year end as at 31 March	2018 Signed Accounts £	2019 Draft £	2020 Budget £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	1,759,528	1,907,102	1,905,412
- % of Income confirmed as at 8/7/19	N/A	100%	53%
Expenditure	(1,878,465)	(1,744,167)	(1,883,335)
Total surplus/(deficit)	(118,937)	162,935	22,077
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	34,891	143,036	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(153,828)	19,899	22,077
	(118,937)	162,935	22,077
Cost of Raising Funds	362,490	221,194	128,323
- % of income	20.6%	11.6%	6.7%
Total expenditure	1,878,465	1,744,167	1,883,335
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	203,377	223,276	245,353
No of months of total expenditure	1.3	1.5	1.6
Reserves policy target	500,000	500,000	500,000
No of months of total expenditure	3.2	3.4	3.2
Free reserves over/(under) target	(296,623)	(276,724)	(254,647)