

MEETING: 30/01/2020

Ref: 15344

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Connecting the Capital

Revolving Doors Agency

Adv: Gilly Green

Base: Southwark

Amount requested: £133,126

Benefit: London-wide

Amount recommended: £133,130

The Applicant

Revolving Doors Agency aims to break the cycle of the 'revolving door' where people who face multiple and complex needs such as homelessness, substance misuse, mental health and domestic or sexual violence are trapped in a cycle of crisis and crime. By putting people with lived experience at the heart of the solutions, and partnering with national and local government, policymakers, commissioners and academic researchers, the organisation aims to improve the policies, practice and systems that trap people in the cycle.

The Application

RDA aims to demonstrate and share evidence of effective ways to reform public services and in doing so transform the lives of individuals it describes as currently failed by the system. Its approach is underpinned by enabling those with lived experience to be heard by those with the power and influence to change policy and systems. To facilitate this, RDA has established three regional user forums whose members help set the organisation's agenda and who talk directly to people in power so decision makers can design services based on their unique insights. The focus of the application, co-produced by people with lived experience, is to further enhance the London Regional Forum, enabling a programme of meetings and a more structured package of training, induction and support, including accredited training in facilitation and peer research for members. This will enable users to gain skills for personal development, as well as to participate more fully and run meetings more effectively in the Forum. The application over 5 years includes costs for support staff, travel, Forum attendance fees, accreditation costs and communications. RDA is contributing approximately £36,000 of its own funds to the overall budget.

The Recommendation

RDA delivers a balanced approach of evidence-based research, system knowledge and lived experience to bring about positive change for very marginalised people. Some of its most successful, high profile work - including gaining considerable government support for its campaign calling for a new presumption against prison sentences of less than 6 months - originates through discussion in the user forums. The forums also deliver significant personal development for those who are involved. As an organisation that punches above its weight, a grant is recommended:

£133,130 over 5 years (£31,000, £29,860, £27,000, £24,170, £21,100) to support the costs of further developing the London Regional User Forum.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
10/3/2013	£143,000 over three years (£62,800; £51,900; £28,300) towards a f/t Senior Service User Officer and running costs of a project to develop and

test an innovative and replicable approach to involving offenders with multiple complex needs including poor mental health in local commissioning processes.
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Background and detail of proposal

The London Forum has been operational since 2008. Membership is open to those who have been in recent contact with services and has at least one of the underlying needs described above. Most have multiple needs. Members join through word of mouth or through referral agencies. Individuals sign up to a two-year tenure (so the Forum acts as a personal stepping-stone to positive community engagement or change) and are supported to understand the policy ambitions set by service users and staff so their engagement is meaningful. Users run the meetings, managing at times competing agenda. Membership of between 20-30 people is consistent and diverse with good representation from women and BAME individuals. RDA is keen to also work upstream and involve more younger members in its forums with the preventative aim of stopping the entry into the full cycle of the revolving door.

Financial Information

RDA has enjoyed long term support from several key Trusts and Foundations including Lankelly Chase Foundation and the Barrow Cadbury Trust and this support is set to continue at least for the next two years. It does not receive any statutory grants and has a strict 'ethics' code about the funding it can accept to maintain its independence. It does however raise almost 50% of its funding through providing consultancy to other organisations on user engagement including to other funders and statutory bodies. Whilst RDA saw reduced grant income in 2019 and returned a deficit, it has capitalised on its 25th year anniversary to bring in increased income in the current year and has raised its earned income for the third consecutive year. RDA recognises its unrestricted reserve level is declining, but by continuing to promote its consultancy services RDA is confident it can reverse this pattern going forward.

Year end as at 31st March	2018	2019	2020
	Signed Accounts £	Signed Accounts £	Budget £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	711,756	646,066	823,218
- % of Income confirmed as at 8/7/19	N/A	N/A	90%
Expenditure	(607,321)	(693,013)	(823,582)
Total surplus/(deficit)	104,435	(46,947)	(364)
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	35,167	(18,897)	18,455
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	69,268	(28,050)	(18,819)
	104,435	(46,947)	(364)
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	455,593	563,851	539,399
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	165,285	191,559	172,740
No of months of operating expenditure	4.4	4.1	3.8
Reserves policy target	113,898	140,962	134,849
No of months of operating expenditure	3.0	3.0	3.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	51,387	50,597	37,891