

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Reducing Poverty

Lewisham Multi-Lingual Advice Service (LMLAS)

Adv: Sandra Jones

Base: Lewisham

Amount requested: £110,954

Benefit: Lewisham

Amount recommended: £92,200

The Charity

Lewisham Multi-Lingual Advice Service (LMLAS) has been providing legal advice services since 2002 to people whose first language is not English, offering 12 languages regularly, with access to more if required. The charity also acts as advocate to social services, schools, health and provides interpretation and referral services. The charity works with seven other advice providers in the borough to ensure that the advice on offer is delivered in an effective way, to those most in need.

The Application

The applicant is seeking a grant as a contribution towards several posts (totalling 27 hours per week) to provide face-to-face debt and welfare benefit advice to people whose first language is not English. The application meets your programme outcome '*more people accessing debt and legal services*'.

The Recommendation

LMLAS has built up a good reputation for providing quality advice to people in their own language, successfully providing a service for 15 years. After discussions with your officer, the level of funding requested has been adjusted as an element of the project included a digital skills officer and volunteer co-ordinator, for neither of which the purpose meets your criteria. The organisation has had a small reduction of grant from the local authority with the service being delivered in a different way, with LMLAS being part of a wider Advice hub providing telephone advice. This will reduce the level of face-to-face service offered, which is essential when offering advice to those whose language is not English.

£92,200 over three years (£31,500, £30,100, £30,600) as a contribution towards the Service Manager (8.5 hours per week), Advice Caseworker (11.5 hours per week), Project Administrator (11 hours per week), sessional workers each with different languages (6 hours per week), and associated running costs.

Funding History

None

Background and detail of proposal

LMLAS works in partnership with seven other main advice providers in Lewisham to provide effective and co-ordinated advice in the borough. The local authority are changing the way advice is funded, which includes LMLAS using the funding to focus on being part of a telephone helpline as the first port of call to access advice, with appointments for face to face meetings being accessed via the telephone line service, with only a small part being for initial face-to-face work. Given the charity's clients have limited or no knowledge of English, this is considered a barrier to getting

support from LMLAS. This is at a time when the level of demand for advice and advocacy is increasing.

This project will allow the charity to maintain a reasonable level of face-to-face advice, even if they are not successful with their bid to the Big Lottery Fund (currently at the final stage).

Financial Information

Forecast income in the current year is £45,785, all of which is confirmed. The organisation has not indicated the Cost of Raising Funds, and this is something that they will be considering in future years; this has not been included in the table below as they have yet to have the discussion. Figures for the current year are low due to funding from the Big Lottery having ceased with no alternative funding in place. The figures for 2017/18 assume that the two applications that are currently under consideration will be successful; these bids are one from City Bridge Trust and a larger one from Big Lottery Fund, which has got through to the final stage. The third source of funding is from the local authority at £34,897 per annum, confirmed for the next three years.

The figures for 2017/18 indicate that the organisation is holding 71 months free reserves. The actual amount is anticipated to remain static from 2016/17, however the reason that the figures are skewed is that the vast majority of costs are due to be covered by restricted income, leaving only £4,782 as operating expenditure from free reserves.

Year end as at March	2015/16 Examined Accounts £	2016/17 Forecast £	2017/18 Forecast £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	98,065	45,785	197,343
- % of Income confirmed	n/a	n/a	18%
Expenditure	100,345	80,872	197,343
Total surplus/(deficit)	(2,280)	(35,087)	0
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(19,120)	0	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	16,840	(35,087)	0
	(2,280)	(35,087)	0
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	35,339	80,872	4,782
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	63,403	28,316	28,316
No of months of operating expenditure	21.5	4.2	71.1
Reserves policy target	8,835	20,218	1,196
No of months of operating expenditure	3.0	3.0	3.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	54,568	8,098	27,121