

MEETING: 14/03/2018

Ref: 14357

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - English for Speakers of Other Languages

Women for Refugee Women

Adv: Rebecca Green

Amount requested: £90,000

Base: Islington

Benefit: London-wide

Amount recommended: £90,000

The Applicant

Women for Refugee Women (WRW) is a registered charity set up in 2007 to support women who seek asylum and to challenge the injustices they experience. WRW therefore works in three main ways: to support and empower asylum-seeking women at the grassroots through a weekly drop in centre; to improve public understanding of the experiences of refugee women by sharing the voices of refugee women; and to create policy change by informing and lobbying Parliamentarians about the need for a fairer asylum process.

The Application

This application focuses on the first of the charity's areas of activity: its work at the grassroots with women seeking asylum. WRW runs the Women Asylum Seekers Together (WAST) project –an open and inclusive group which welcomes all women at any stage of the asylum process to a weekly drop in including yoga, English classes, lunch and other 'enrichment' activities to engage women in the community and building confidence to be involved in WRW's campaigning work. This application concerns WAST's term-time ESOL classes which are organised by the Grassroots Manager and taught by qualified volunteer ESOL Teachers.

The Recommendation

This is a well-run and user-led grass roots project, providing a safe space for women seeking asylum. There is a focus on engagement with the community and on improving confidence, and the ESOL classes fit well within this wider work. The organisation requests a contribution towards the salaries of the project staff, and costs associated with delivery of the English classes (up to Entry level 3).

£90,000 over three years (3 x £30,000) towards the salaries of the Grassroots Manager (equivalent of 1.5 dpw) and Grassroots Intern (equivalent of 1.5 dpw), associated project costs of the term-time ESOL classes (up to Entry level 3) and a contribution to core costs.

Funding History

None

Background and detail of proposal

WRW delivers the majority of its work through its head office in Old Street, in a building used solely by women's groups. Previously a charitable unincorporated organisation, it became incorporated in January 2016. Along with its policy and campaigning work, WRW runs 2 grassroots projects, the WAST project (of which this ESOL project forms a part) and the London Refugee Women's Forum which has a focus on campaigning and speaking out about issues that concern the participants. Several of WRW's Board members are themselves refugees and bring first-hand experience of seeking asylum in the UK. In addition, participating women are

encouraged to actively engage with planning activities and implementing changes, and WRW encourage self-determination.

The WAST project works with women seeking asylum in London, many of whom have very poor English and are struggling to participate in the community. The Monday drop in centre is attended by approximately 100 women weekly, and includes the term-time ESOL classes, 'enrichment activities', lunch, and activities such as yoga. The enrichment activities provide opportunities for women to improve their confidence and skills through courses such as drama and public speaking, and are often run in partnership with other groups. In addition, there are outings and activities to enrich women's learning and see what is available to them in London.

The primary focus of the ESOL classes will be to improve language in a classroom environment, however some specific visits are included within this request where they are run integrated with the classes and to support the ESOL students with community involvement. The provision of ESOL ranges from pre-entry classes up to advanced conversational skills, however this request concerns WRW's 4 ESOL classes from pre-entry up to Entry Level 3, including a mothers and toddlers class.

Financial Information

The charity currently holds reserves above its 6 month policy. When questioned about this at assessment the charity stated that it has been conservative in income budgeting in recent years. Although not planning a deficit, some of their 3 year grants are coming to an end in the next year, so they would plan to use their reserves to cover any shortfall. Increased expenditure in 2018/19 is due, in part, to a particular project being developed in partnership with another organisation. This additional expenditure will only take place if fundraising for that project is successful.

Year end as at 31 March	2017 Examined accounts £	2018 Forecast £	2019 Budget £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	366,878	293,591	338,688
- % of Income confirmed as at 15/01/18	n/a	100%	34%
Expenditure	(268,249)	(293,591)	(338,688)
Total surplus/(deficit)	98,629	0	0
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	40,922	0	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	57,707	0	0
	98,629	0	0
Cost of Raising Funds	5,043	6,000	6,000
- % of income	1.4%	2.0%	1.8%
Operating expenditure (total)	268,249	293,591	338,688
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	186,487	186,487	186,487
No of months of operating expenditure	8.3	7.6	6.6
Reserves policy target	134,125	146,796	169,344
No of months of operating expenditure	6.0	6.0	6.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	52,363	39,692	17,143