

**MEETING: 14/11/18**

**Ref: 14738**

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving London's Environment**

**Women's Environmental Network Trust**

**Adv: Julla Mirkin**

**Amount requested: £95,769**

**Base: Tower Hamlets**

**Benefit: Tower Hamlets**

**Amount recommended: £110,600**

**The Applicant**

Founded in 1988, the Women's Environmental Network (WEN) is an environmental charity that focuses on the relationship between women's empowerment, the environment and health. WEN aims to empower women to make environmentally informed choices, becoming agents of change in their families, communities and in society, and to participate equally in an environmentally sustainable future. WEN's Local Food Programme has championed community food growing projects in some of London's most deprived communities for over 15 years. Local food growing activities are considered to be a powerful medium, through which marginalised women can engage with local and global environmental issues; improve their health; learn new skills; make friends and celebrate their own food knowledge and heritage.

**The Application**

Funds are requested for a part-time Coordinator and expansion of the Tower Hamlets Food Growing Network (THFGN) activities, including local food growing projects and opportunities for more Londoners to improve their wellbeing and environmental knowledge.

**The Recommendation**

WEN has featured in Big Lottery's good practice video report, 'More Than Just the Veg' and has been used as a case study in 'Growing Health', published by Garden Organic and Sustain. The amount recommended is higher than that requested as a contribution to core costs has now been included, as have Volunteers' expenses, including the additional travel expenses incurred by Volunteers with limited mobility.

**£110,600 over three years (£35,720; £37,160; £37,720) towards the part-time (3.d.p.w) salary of the Tower Hamlets Food Growing Network Coordinator, activity costs and a contribution to core costs of the Women's Environmental Network.**

**Funding History**

Meeting Date	Decision
10/01/2013	£10,000 over two years (£2 x 5,000) towards the salary and project costs for four BAME women-led community food growing projects.

**Background and detail of proposal**

The Tower Hamlets Food Growing Network (THFGN), coordinated by WEN, has created twenty new growing spaces in Tower Hamlets, some of which are in social housing settings. THFGN activities include delivering leadership training, called 'Garden Leaders', that supports female residents to take on the leadership of its growing spaces; the 'Spice it Up' programme, which offers gardening training for BAME women; healthy eating sessions are delivered through THFGN's 'Live Well' programme and therapeutic gardening through its 'Soil Sisters' programme. Four network gatherings are convened per year and the community seed library is run without any dedicated staffing. This proposal seeks to fund a part-time Coordinator

for THFGN and to contribute to existing programme costs, with some additional resource for developing new activities. Over the proposed three-year funding period, WEN will deliver outreach into hard-to-reach communities; it will increase access to food growing activities in Tower Hamlets and expand its network, supporting the development of new growing projects.

Over the three-year proposed funding period, quarterly network meetings will be delivered, each attracting approximately 100 attendees. Two 4-week long growing courses and two growing tours will be organised annually - one to a project in Tower Hamlets and one to Kew Gardens. The network will establish five new growing spaces in Tower Hamlets annually and will develop a database of all the borough's growing projects with a view to promoting volunteering and social prescribing. THFGN also proposes to deliver an annual training day for social prescribers and healthcare professionals to strengthen referral pathways. The proposal includes work to restructure THFGN's membership offer, expanding membership and creating a formal community steering group to shape the work of THFGN.

### Financial Information

In the last three years, WEN has had three grants to support its organisational development, including a Local Sustainability Fund (LSF) grant in 16-17 to build capacity in financial management; Comic Relief funding for three years (ending in Jan 19), for core costs; and a Building Capabilities Fund grant from the Big Lottery, which ends in November 2018, and funded an organisational review. Following this period of development WEN has a new organisational strategy, improved financial systems and has increased the capacity of its senior leadership team, costs for which will be covered from WEN's reserves, whilst it works to diversify its income streams. A proposal to increase WEN's reserves target to £50k is being presented to the Board imminently with the aim of achieving this target by the end of 18-19. These developments demonstrate how WEN is moving away from an overdependence on restricted project funding, which offered minimal funding for fundraising, training and strategic development. This proposal is to fund the development of a core programme of work and to expand the organisation's membership base. WEN was also invited to submit a second stage application to Esmée Fairbairn for core support costs in Oct 18.

Year end as at 31 March	2017 Examined Accounts £	2018 Draft Accounts £	2019 Budget £
<b>Income &amp; expenditure:</b>			
Income	147,512	207,429	315,467
- % of income confirmed as at 21/08/18	n/a	n/a	70%
Expenditure	(146,647)	(141,200)	(319,006)
Total surplus/(deficit)	865	66,229	(3,539)
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(4,296)	41,757	(3,540)
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	5,161	24,472	1
	865	66,229	(3,539)
Cost of Raising Funds	0	0	0
- % of income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	41,418	19,889	63,249
<b>Free unrestricted reserves:</b>			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	38,172	62,644	62,645
No of months of operating expenditure	11.1	37.8	11.9
Reserves policy target	10,355	4,972	15,812
No of months of operating expenditure	3.0	3.0	3.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	27,818	57,672	46,833