

MEETING: 21/03/2019

Ref: 15183

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Connecting the Capital

The Garden Classroom (TGC)

Adv: Sandra Davidson

Amount requested: £57,450

Base: Islington

Benefit: Islington & neighbouring boroughs

Amount recommended: £57,500

The Applicant

Established in 2008 by the founder member of King Henry's Walk Garden in Islington, The Garden Classroom (TGC) was a social enterprise and is now a registered charity. It connects inner city children and young people to the natural world by providing creative outdoor experiences that inspire and educate while nurturing a respect for the environment. TGC provides bespoke learning in local parks and gardens, improving access to nature and passing on the skills and values needed for an ecologically sound future to the next generation. TGC offers high quality interactive environmental half or full-day sessions aimed at improving literacy, numeracy and basic scientific knowledge. During 2016-17 TGC delivered 202 educational sessions, high-quality events and activities, working with over 6,000 beneficiaries. Sessions are delivered in partnership with a pool of committed freelance facilitators. Many facilitators are actors or performers with a Theatre in Education background, skilled in creating memorable and inspiring learning experiences for large groups of children. In addition, TGC delivers continuous professional development training for teachers on behalf of the Royal Horticultural Society, equipping teachers with the skills and confidence to teach outside the classroom.

The Application

As a result of the success of the project of over the last three years with your funding, TGC is seeking two-year continuation funds to build on and develop high quality environmental outdoor learning. The funding will support a part time Education and Community Manager (4dpw) and Finance Officer (1dpw) to develop new and improved central financial data analysis and presentation. The grant request includes a contribution towards The Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) Level 3 training costs for the Finance Officer.

The Recommendation

Your previous grant has delivered good outcomes and the charity now wishes to continue the project for a further two years. A grant is advised:

£57,500 over two further years (£29,000; £28,500) for 4dpw of the Education and Community Manager; and 1dpw of the Finance Officer's Salary costs. Year 1 includes £1,250 towards AAT Level 3 Training costs.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
28/01/2016	£81,200 over three years (£26,500; £27,100; £27,600) for 4dpw of the Community Education Support Officer's salary costs; and 1dpw of the Finance Officer's salary costs.

18/04/2013	£25,000 towards the salary and on costs of the Chief Executive to consolidate and deliver an environmental programme in North East London.
14/10/2010	£40,000 (2 x £20,000) over two years towards the salary and on costs of the Chief Executive, delivering an environmental education programme in North East London.

Background and detail of proposal

Last year TGC celebrated 10 years of providing education in natural environments. Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cambridge visited King Henry's Garden Walk in Islington (event hosted by RHS) in January 2019 to see how the project brings people together through gardening and food cultivation. In 2017 TGC won the prestigious Horticulture Week Custodial Award for best Parks Partnership and was also shortlisted as best new charity at the Charity Times Awards in 2017. TGC works closely with local stakeholders and has an excellent reputation. Islington Council recently granted a new seven-year agreement to continue to use an ex park-ranger building in Newington Green. Both local businesses and funders worked together to improve the building for TGC use and the hut has become more visible, attracting wider attention. After a successful pilot, TGC will deliver a new Urban Forest Schools service in parks and gardens in NE London. Local Head Teachers have indicated great interest and work with four schools will begin in April. Community work continues to be successful with greater numbers of children and young people reaping the benefits of spending meaningful time in natural environments.

Financial Information

The level of free unrestricted reserves is based on total operating expenditure in the table below as most of TGC's activities are restricted. The charity's reserve policy is to hold the equivalent of three months' core expenditure; trustees are seeking to raise the level of free reserves through on-going fundraising. The cost of generating funds increased following the recruitment of a fundraiser used for a period of three months. The Director of Strategy and New Programmes is now responsible for fundraising which equates to 1.25 days per week.

Year end as at 31 Aug	Aug-17 Examined Accounts £	Aug-18 Draft £	2019 Budget £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	239,467	262,305	325,611
- % of income confirmed as at Jan 18/2/19	n/a	100%	77%
Expenditure	(194,171)	(238,957)	(305,536)
Total surplus/(deficit)	45,296	23,348	20,075
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	42,568	21,729	25,064
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	2,728	1,619	(4,989)
	45,296	23,348	20,075
Cost of Raising Funds	15,470	20,873	15,000
- % of income	6.5%	8.0%	4.6%
Operating expenditure (all expenditure)	194,171	238,957	305,536
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	18,128	19,747	14,758
No of months of operating expenditure	1.1	1.0	0.6
Reserves policy target	48,543	59,739	76,384
No of months of operating expenditure	3.0	3.0	3.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	(30,415)	(39,992)	(61,626)

