

International Disasters Fund (IDF)

Report and Recommendation from the Central Grants Unit

Background

The City of London holds a contingency fund of £100,000 in its City's Cash budget, allocated to the International Disasters Fund (IDF) administered by the Finance Committee.

A report on use of this fund was presented to Finance Committee on 31 January 2017 where it was noted:

- a) The strong criteria applied by the Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) for the selection and monitoring of UK aid charities;
- b) The ability of the Central Grants Unit (CGU) to provide recommendations of appropriate charities to support, including due diligence reviews;
- c) That donations given as restricted to a specific appeal or purpose are required under charity law to be spent directly on that purpose.

When a DEC appeal is not launched, a donation could be made to an individual charity carrying out humanitarian relief in the area. It is acknowledged that the transparent governance controls applied by the DEC means that Finance Committee can be confident in giving direct to the individual charities that are members of the DEC, should they believe this to be the most appropriate use of the Corporations' emergency donations budget. The CGU is in place to provide advice and recommendations on how donations would be best placed in the instance that a DEC appeal is not launched.

The IDF has an annual budget of £100,000. In the 2019/20 financial year there was an underspend of £25,000 that is now subject to the usual carry forward process. If agreed there will be a budget available of £125,000 for 2020/21 financial year. In April the IDF awarded two donations totalling £40,000 leaving a total budget of £85,000 remaining subject to the carry forward being approved.

Emergency Relief – London Response to COVID-19

The coronavirus outbreak is a global health emergency that is affecting the way every one of us goes about our daily lives. In the UK we are in the midst of the pandemic with the total death toll as at 27 May 2020 exceeding 37,000 people. Charitable organisations in the UK are navigating in uncertain times and having to adapt services to deal with the complex situation of the lockdown. The City of London Corporation has reacted quickly in response to COVID-19. The report below outlines the broad range of charitable funding responses to the Coronavirus Pandemic and its impact on Society in London and the UK.

Funding Response from City of London Corporation

London Community Response Fund and London Community Response

The London Community Response Fund (LCRF), as part of Bridge House Estates, was launched on 27th March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 crisis. City Bridge Trust (CBT) has contributed £1m which has been matched by the GLA for the launch. The GLA announced a further contribution of £4m on 23rd April 2020. Several other funders have committed funding, including Bloomberg, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, the Clothworkers Company and the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts.

The Fund currently stands at £7.9 million and a full list of donors can be provided on request (n.b. some donors wish to make their contribution anonymously). This is part of a wider response, [London Community Response](#), which is being co-ordinated by London Funders, whereby funders unable to contribute to the LCRF (perhaps for reasons of geographical or beneficiary restrictions) can nevertheless align with this wider response. A single application portal is available on the [London Community Response](#) website for charitable organisations

in London. The total value of [London Community Response](#), including LCRF, was £16.4 million as of 27th March 2020.

CBT Response

At the March CBT Committee meeting a programme was agreed to provide additional support to current grantees with an annual income of up to £500,000 in the form of one-off unrestricted grants. These grants – calculated on the basis of equivalence to a current quarterly payment – were to help groups offset losses of earned income (through cancellation of events, hire fees, etc) caused by the current lockdown.

As a result, 202 grants were awarded to 202 organisations. The maximum size of grant awarded was £15,000 with the average being £8,460. The total amount awarded was £1,709,067.

CBT are working in collaboration with other funders to ensure that, as far as possible, there is a coordinated and timely range of support to the charitable sector. At the time of writing the Trust is also considering ways in which it can maximise flexibility and support to its grantees (eg through enabling grants to be used for core costs).

Central Grants Programme (CGP)

The CGP has worked to provide flexibility to all its grantees in these uncertain times. Projects have been extended and monitoring information simplified to ensure that organisations can cope with reduced capacity. The CGP has continued accepting applications to provide consistency for City of London Communities.

In April 2020 a grant of £9,795 was awarded from the Combined Relief of Poverty Charity to Age UK City of London to support its work coordinating the set up and delivery of the City of London Foodbank that is now operating across the Square Mile.

International Disaster Fund

At the start of the lockdown it was agreed that the IDF explore options to support organisations working in the UK in response to the Coronavirus Pandemic. As a DEC appeal has not been launched specifically for work in the UK it was decided to look at organisations responding on a National and Local level. The scope of the work had to fall outside the eligibility of CBT and be focused on emergency relief in line with the IDF agreed policy.

In April 2020 the Finance Committee agreed a donation of £20,000 to The British Red Cross to support its work nationally and £20,000 to Team Rubicon to assist in its aid efforts tackling the Coronavirus outbreak in London.

In May 2020 Members requested the CGU advise on other causes that could be supported at this time and within the context of the wider funding environment that the City of London is involved in. Below is an analysis of specific causes that have been raised with the CGU:

City Harvest – Is a food distribution Charity operating in Greater London. Since the start of the lockdown the Charity has been increasing efforts to distribute food to those most in need in London. The Charity currently holds a grant with CBT outlined below and would be able to apply for further funding as its work meets the eligibility criteria of the Bridging Divides Strategy:

£111,000 over three years (£36,000; £37,000; £38,000) for the post of Warehouse Manager (40 hours per week).

Business in Community (BIC) – A request was submitted looking for urgent funding towards a brokering service between business and UK Communities to support with the rebuild stage as UK society begins to get back on its feet after lockdown. Further information was requested about this proposal and BIC was proposing a much more significant donation than could be considered under the IDF.

St John Ambulance – Have reoriented its entire delivery to support the COVID-19 response effort and as a result, since the start of April 2020 has been delivering over 1,000 hours a day of clinical support in local communities nationwide supporting the NHS. St John Ambulance has worked tirelessly with its partners at NHS England to support a range of individual trusts and organisations across the country to deliver increased ambulance capacity and support hospital trusts responding effectively to COVID-19 challenges. The number of COVID-19 cases and deaths has had a major impact on NHS resources. The charity's role in responding to the needs of communities across the nation has never been more relevant or urgent.

The Charity's current financial position has been severely affected by COVID-19 due to a complete loss of its usual operating income from first aid training and event cover. Sustaining COVID-19 operations is very expensive, therefore any contribution will allow St John Ambulance continue to provide more support and care to those at their most vulnerable during this pandemic and help to save even more lives. A donation could be directly attributed to the work the Charity is delivering in London.

The DEC and International Emergency Funding – The IDF should always be ready to respond to any DEC appeals that are launched or be able to respond to International Disasters. The CGU is in regular contact with the DEC and International Partner Charities about appeals for support. There are currently ongoing conversations with the DEC, and the CGU will be given advance warning of any Appeal Launch. Funds should remain in the IDF to ensure it can still make a meaningful contribution in the event of a natural disaster later in the financial year.

Recommendation

The City of London Corporation has been decisive in its response to the Coronavirus Pandemic through its work as a Charitable funder. The immediate emergency needs of the Charity Sector and Communities in London are being well supported now, both through the City Bridge Trust, London Community Response Fund and the initial donations made through the International Disaster Fund. Additional to this there is a wide range of other funding available to the sector through the National Emergency Trust and The National Lottery Community Fund.

The IDF should remain in a position to react to International Disasters when they occur. The CGU's connection to the DEC and other International Charities allows for these donations to be swift in response and impactful to an emergency on the ground.

It is understood that the Finance Committee wish to support an organisation that is providing services in response to the Coronavirus Pandemic in London. St John Ambulance have had to significantly increase its delivery in response to the impact of Covid-19 while finding itself in a difficult position due to a loss of fundraising income. It is recommended that the Finance Committee agree a donation of £20,000 to St John Ambulance to support the Charity in its response to the Coronavirus Pandemic in London. This will leave £65,000 available in the IDF to impactfully support an emergency response either Nationally or Internationally later in the Financial Year.

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