

CITY BRIDGE TRUST – Delegated Authority (Requests up to £250k)

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Positive Transitions\Disabled people (choice and control)

Deafinitely Theatre

Ref: 15615

Adv: Jack Joslin

Amount requested: £200,000

Base: Camden

Benefit: Waltham Forest

Amount recommended: £200,000

Purpose of grant request: To provide 5-years of consistent funding for Deafinitely Youth Company, London's only accessible arts provision for deaf young people, benefiting over 400 deaf people aged 14 - 21 each year.

The Applicant

The Charity was established in 2002 by the current Artistic Director, herself a deaf artist. Its aim is to bring bilingual (BSL and English) theatre to a mixed hearing and deaf audience, providing a platform for professional deaf actors. Each year, it produces a main show which premieres in London and every other year it also produces a family show which is toured nationally. Alongside the programme of performance it runs a training programme for emerging deaf artists in partnership with RADA and the Royal Court; and a youth programme using drama to build confidence and communication skills in young people aged 14 – 25. It is the only such company producing bilingual theatre and supporting young people in this way.

Background and detail of proposal

This application is for support for a specialist youth group working with Deaf Young People. The youth group meets fortnightly and comprises of groups of up to 20 young deaf people aged 14 – 25. Participants are recruited from across London and all are auditioned although in practice none are turned away. Recruitment is through the deaf community including special schools and units and through social media. The project also recruits at a couple of major deaf events each year.

The 6-month programme offers a range of workshops led by deaf artists, together with visits to theatres and theatre companies. A range of external organisations including the Royal Shakespeare Company and National Theatre offer guest workshops, visits to shows with backstage tours and special Q and A sessions. Every other year, the group participates in the National Theatre Connexions programme for youth theatre groups. Alongside the youth group activities, the charity offers at least 2 work placement opportunities per year. They also have an admin post designated for a young deaf person aged 18 – 21 on an annual contract.

The overarching aims of the group are to improve confidence, communication skills and enhance personal development. The charity stays in touch with youth group alumni, supporting them into the next stages in their life for example by helping them to apply for access to work funding. The group does not specifically aim to prepare members for a career in the arts or to move them on to the adult training programme (although there is some overlap). There is a residential part to this project (which you do not fund) but they will not be seeking your funding to cover this aspect of the work.

The project will work with 200 young people over 5 years to increase their confidence, communication skills and support them in taking more responsibility for their own creative and personal development.

Deafinitely has functioned fully throughout the lockdown period with staff continuing to work remotely from home. Whilst administrative expansion plans are currently on hold to save on costs, an interim producer has been engaged to cover crucial tasks, and one new staff member, the youth project co-ordinator, joined the team in July after a three-month independent furlough period. This project was due to start in 2020 but the Charity has decided to postpone it until April 2021 when they hope to be able to deliver the programme in full. Your funding if approved will be for an April 2021 start date.

Financial Information

The reserves policy is for 3 – 6 months expenditure. Rising costs on a largely stable income from the NPO Arts Council funding is impacting their overall reserves together with the impact of a recent move of premises.

The impact of the Coronavirus is set to further impact the Charity, but they have updated income projections to reflect a worse case scenario which will impact overall income. They have put several projects and staff recruitment on hold to keep costs down in the short-term. The Arts Council funding is secure, and the Charity has been successful in receiving some interim funding in the meantime.

	31-Mar	2019 Signed Accounts £	2020 Forecast £	2021 Budget £
Income & expenditure:				
Income		476,935	463,692	342,562
- % of Income confirmed as at 06/07/2020		N/A	100%	81%
Expenditure		(402,261)	(436,562)	(320,770)
Total surplus/(deficit)		74,674	27,130	21,792
Split between:				
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)		159	12,759	30,897
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)		74,515	14,371	(9,105)
		74,674	27,130	21,792
Operating Expenditure (unrestricted)		145,982	208,388	211,030
Free unrestricted reserves:				
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end		107,395	121,766	112,661
No of months of operating expenditure		8.8	7.0	6.4
Reserves policy target		72,991	104,194	105,515
No of months of operating expenditure		6.0	6.0	6.0
Free reserves over/(under) target		34,404	17,572	7,146

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
29/11/2012	£150,000 over three years (3 x £50,000) towards the costs of a programme developing the talents of deaf people within the theatre.

Recommendation

The charity is an Arts Council NPO which provides a stable financial underpinning for its core artistic work as well as offering an indicator of the quality of its mainstream work and its special place within the national arts ecology. The Youth Programme has been funded by Children in Need until the end of the financial year 2019/2020. It has an established and successful model for working with young deaf people who are often socially excluded which has been further exacerbated by the Coronavirus Pandemic. The programme uses visual and physical activities to support participation and a sense both of community and success – both of which can be transformational for young people who now rarely have access to specialist education or leisure provision. The programme does not aspire to make them artists but to bring out their creativity, provide them with positive role models in the workshop leaders and find their own voice. The opportunity to do this within a professional deaf artistic environment is unique and funding is recommended as follows:

£200,000 over 5 years (5 x £40,000) to contribute to the costs of the Youth Programme for deaf young people in London.

Approved.....
Chief Grants Officer /
Deputy CGO

Approved.....
Chair

Approved.....
Deputy Chair

Date.....

Date.....

Date.....