

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides – Cornerstone Fund**

**The Bridge Renewal Trust**

**Adv: Caspar Cech-Lucas**

**Amount requested: £300,000**

**Base: Haringey**

**Amount recommended: £300,000**

**Benefit: Haringey, Harrow,  
Kensington and Chelsea, Merton**

**The Lead Organisation**

The Bridge Renewal Trust (TBRT) is a registered charity established in 2009. It has over a decade of experience of providing a range of vital front-line support and specialist support and services aimed at improving health and wellbeing, supporting education and employment, relieving, and preventing poverty, and improving the life-chances and quality of life of local residents. TBRT is the Strategic Partner for Haringey Council and provides a range of support for the community, voluntary and social enterprise sector. It delivers this work through building capacity, developing the sector, enabling the local groups to access funding individually and through collaboration and consortia. TBRT is also host to Haringey Giving, established in 2019 as an independent, resident led partnership and local Place Based Giving Scheme.

**The Partnership**

The core partners of the Givings Together collaboration at Stage 1 included six Place Based Giving Schemes (PBGS) comprising a mix of well-established and smaller and emerging PBGS in Barking & Dagenham, Camden, Haringey, Harrow, Kensington & Chelsea, and Merton. In the six-month development phase this new partnership has built trust amongst the partners, developed relationships, and agreed a set of principles and objectives to guide future work. The partnership involves community partners to ensure representation from communities (within each borough) which experience structural discrimination in accessing funding. These new partners will join the Givings Together partnership to develop representation in their governance and decision making. These new partners include Naz & Matt Foundation, Sister System, Youth Action Alliance, Merton Centre for Independent Living, Harrow Association of Somali, Voluntary Organisations Ltd and Make Your Mark B&D. Both Camden and Barking and Dagenham have decided to step back from the partnership ahead of the second stage. CBT's officer assessment is that the remaining partners are strong enough to take the project forward and share an appetite for a test and learn approach as they are at similar stages of the participatory grant making journey.

**The Proposal**

The focus of this collaboration is to build the capacity of Place Based Giving Schemes to develop and apply Participatory Grant Making (PGM) models in a local context. The partnership commissioned a research report mapping PGM approaches, focusing on London but also drawing in examples from other areas. The report, due to be published later in the year, highlights the need for capacity building and infrastructure development, creating spaces for formal and informal peer learning, and ensuring diversity is considered an asset in PGM. The findings have helped to inform the Stage 2 application. With many funders curious, yet cautious about participatory models, the Givings Together partners hope to strengthen their community of practice. They will generate evidence and resources to build knowledge and tools that can be applied and adapted by those wanting to develop their own PGM models within PBGS. The community of practice and work to date has already triggered interest and discussions about PGM models within the London Givings Network. The ambition is that the partnership will help to generate a transformative shift in practice and power so that structural discrimination in grant making is addressed through communities having a greater role in how funding decisions are made, and money is spent.

Givings Together is mindful of the fact that a 'one size fits all' approach to PGM will not work for every community or PBGS. It is committed to flexibility, a test and learn approach and piloting PGM approaches co-created with community groups. From this it will collate learning and insight and develop a hub of good practice to build on what currently exists and share insights from Givings Together and other sources. The application outlines a clear set of objectives. The Risk Register submitted with the application outlines plans to create a detailed delivery plan within the first three months of a grant. The partnership will recruit a Coordinator and appoint an independent evaluator.

### **Cornerstone Fund Outcomes**

This proposal addresses the five main Cornerstone Fund outcomes under the headings of 'Capacity and Capability' (by developing capacity within PBGS to deliver a range of PGM models); 'Co-production' (through the involvement of communities impacted by structural discrimination in the partnership and community of practice to lead the programme); 'Data and intelligence' (through harnessing knowledge and experience of communities on the effectiveness and impact of PGM; and to continue to gather learning and data about PGM within PGBS; and sharing this online through the resource hub); 'Voice and influence' (through partnership and leadership from representatives from specialist community organisations); 'Collaboration' (by networking within and across sectors and building a community of practice amongst London PBGS).

### **Equity Considerations**

By including the voices of community partners who have experienced discrimination in the pursuit of funding within the design of the programme, Givings Together has

considered equity in all decisions made in relation to the partnership. At Stage 1, 50% of the Project Board were community leaders who have experienced structural discrimination, and the goal will be for this to be a minimum of 75% during Stage 2.

### Financial Information

TBRT is located within a community centre which contains the Laurels Healthy Living Centre which generates rental income. Other funding sources include earned income from sales, service contracts from commissioners, and grants from charitable funders and the Local Authority, representing diverse income streams. £3.4m was held in unrestricted funds at the end of 2021, but just over £3.0m of this was designated against the net book value of fixed assets and programme relates investments. The applicant's reserves target is to hold 6 months of unrestricted expenditure in free unrestricted reserves. In the organisation's 2021 accounts £320k of free unrestricted reserves were held, representing 2.9 months of unrestricted expenditure. There is a strategy in place to build reserves, which includes planned discussions to negotiate a lower energy supplier bill considering the cost-of-living crisis. Although the reserves target is not met in the table below, the charity seems stable due to reserves building year on year, consistent surpluses, and a high percentage of confirmed income each year (with 92% of income confirmed in 2023), communicating confidence in financial management.

Year end as at	2021	2022	2023
	Signed Accounts	Forecast	Budget
	£	£	£
<b>Income &amp; expenditure:</b>			
Income	2,244,212	2,854,731	2,644,996
Expenditure	(2,106,114)	(2,454,846)	(2,600,147)
Gains/(losses)	9,549	0	0
<b>Surplus/(deficit)</b>	<b>147,647</b>	<b>399,885</b>	<b>44,849</b>
<b>Reserves:</b>			
Total restricted	120,681	215,038	226,088
Total unrestricted	3,375,306	3,680,834	3,714,633
<b>Total reserves</b>	<b>3,495,987</b>	<b>3,895,872</b>	<b>3,940,721</b>
Of which: free unrestricted	320,348	625,876	659,675
Reserves policy target	656,449	1,107,381	1,024,494
Free reserves over/(under) target	(336,101)	(481,505)	(364,819)

### Recommendation

This is a strong proposal to build the capacity of Place Based Giving Schemes to develop and apply Participatory Grant Making models in a local context and to address structural discrimination in grant giving through shifting power in decision making. Funding at the level requested is recommended:

**£300,000 over three years (£100,000 x 3) towards a project to build the capacity of Place Based Giving Schemes in London to develop and apply Participatory Grant Making models in a local context.**