

Committee: Grants Committee of the Bridge House Estates Board	Date: 5 December 2022
Subject: Updating Grant Recommendation Reports	Public
Which outcomes in the <i>BHE Bridging London 2020 – 2045 Strategy</i> does this proposal aim to support?	1 and 3
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
Report of: David Farnsworth, Managing Director of BHE	For Decision
Report Author: Tim Wilson, Funding Director	

Summary

City Bridge Trust (CBT) periodically reviews the structure of its grant recommendation reports, and this paper recommends updates to support decision-making by highlighting matters of equitable leadership and finance.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Grants Committee of the Bridge House Estates Board, in discharge of functions for the City Corporation as Trustee of Bridge House Estates (charity reg. no. 1035628) and solely in the charity's best interests:

- i) Agree that the format of grant reports is restructured so the funding recommendation is moved from the end to the top of the report and a new table is included below the recommendation setting out key issues relevant to equitable leadership and finance.

Main Report

Background

1. Following completion of the Bridging Divides interim review earlier in the year, and the refresh of all open funding programmes, CBT is receiving an increasing volume of grant applications. Each application is subject to a preliminary review (a 'sift') before it is allocated to a Funding Manager for close consideration. This starts with a desk review covering not only the nature of the proposed work and its alignment with CBT's funding policy, but also the applicant's track record, future strategy, and its financial health.
2. Grant assessment involves getting the right balance between rigour, speed, and proportionality. CBT aim to make timely decisions (within 6 months of application, or 3 months for small grants) that are carefully considered and within line of our public commitment to be a trusting and flexible funder. Grant recommendations need to balance several considerations including (but not limited to):
 - a. Is the work consistent with current funding policy?
 - b. Does the organisation have active leadership or engagement from the community or communities it seeks to benefit?
 - c. Will the grant result in positive impact?
 - d. Will the scale of positive impact be as great as intended?

- e. Will there be any negative consequences to the award?
 - f. Is the grantee financially viable and likely to be a good custodian of BHE money?
 - g. Do the costs presented in the funding application represent good value for money?
3. Some applications can be rejected relatively quickly or advised to withdraw and make revisions (if the work is not currently fundable but could be with some adjustments). The remainder receive an in-person assessment visit. Before any grant recommendation is made to the Grants Committee, it has been subject to careful consideration by a Funding Manager, review by a Funding Director, and financial assessment by colleagues in the BHE and Charities Finance Team (where the funding recommendation is for more than £50,000). First signatory is usually the Managing Director or Associate Director who can also pick up any outstanding matters before reports come to Members.
 4. Reports necessarily summarise key points. They should be clear, impartial assessments highlighting the most material information. Officers receive training and ongoing feedback to ensure that funding assessments and reports are of high quality and proportionate. CBT periodically reviews the structure of grant reports and officers recommend making the following changes to support decision-making:
 - a. The funding recommendation is moved from the end to the top of the report so the assessment can be read in context of the proposed grant.
 - b. A new table is included below the funding recommendation:

Equitable leadership	<i><Whether the organisation’s leadership (senior staff and board) is reflective of the community/ies being served></i>
Finance	<i><Any significant issues to flag that are explored in more detail in the body of the report></i>

5. Assessors would use the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Data Standard¹ to support the evidencing behind comments on equitable leadership. The standard sets a high bar, and, where organisations do not yet meet the standard, assessors would expand further in the body of the assessment report and explain why the grant was still recommended if the type of work warranted it, or if the organisation was taking active steps to improve equity.
6. The finance comments would draw attention to any key points that are discussed later in the report and there would be scope to make this element “No significant issues” if there were no major risks to highlight to Members. Officers in the Funding and Finance teams would work together to develop the content so that flags in the header are succinct and risk focused.

¹ <https://www.funderscollaborativehub.org.uk/collaborations/dei-data-standard>

Corporate and Strategic Implications

7. Strategic implications: The activities outlined in this paper support the aims and objectives of BHE's overarching strategy, *Bridging London 2020 – 2045*. They will support the charity to reduce inequality in London.
8. Financial implications: None.
9. Security implications: None.
10. Legal implications: The report and its recommendation should be considered based on what is solely in the best interests of the charity, BHE.
11. Risk implications: The report and its recommendation support the effective implementation of CBT's operational risk register.
12. Equalities and resources implications: The *Bridging Divides* funding strategy has an explicit focus on reducing inequality, and implementation of the recommendation presented in this report will generate data supporting the charity's work to champion sector equity, and help it identify where it can make improvements.
13. Climate implications: None.

Conclusion

14. The recommended changes are consistent with CBT's [Funding Approach](#) which was approved at the March 2022 Grants Committee. Subject to approval, the new approach will be rolled out in 2023 with supporting guidance and training for the Funding and Finance teams.

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