

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

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Connecting the Capital

Wandsworth Care Alliance

Ref: 19665

Amount requested: £127,895

Adv: Caspar Cech-Lucas

Base: Wandsworth

Benefit: Wandsworth

Amount recommended: £127,900

Purpose of grant request: To develop a volunteer brokerage project for Wandsworth

The Applicant

Wandsworth Care Alliance (WCA) is a charitable company established in 1991 to provide information and advice as an independent voluntary sector voice by monitoring, reviewing, and contributing to the improvement of health and social care services. The applicant now offers services traditionally associated with a Council for Voluntary Services (CVS), including development support, training, information, networking, and providing a voice for the voluntary and community sector on a borough wide scale. WCA delivers the provision of Healthwatch Services for the borough, the Voluntary sector Coordination service, and a project providing a platform for the voice of mental health service users.

Background and detail of proposal

The application is specifically to develop a volunteer brokerage project for Wandsworth, an initiative that was successfully piloted in 2020. The budget includes a part-time salary for a project worker, project and management costs, and overheads. Through this grant the applicant aims to proactively recruit 600 residents as volunteers, maintain and promote an effective online matching service linking volunteers with local organisations, and deliver an effective programme of networking and capacity building support to volunteer-using organisations to enhance their skills and strengthen their volunteer offer. Through this activity, 50 organisations will be matched with volunteers drawn from the local community, providing those organisations with an additional, sustainable resource which embeds them more securely in the communities they serve. In addition, 100 organisations will receive advice, guidance, and training in one-to-one settings or via the Volunteer Involving Organisations Network to strengthen their skills in recruiting and managing volunteers. This project will develop the volunteer brokerage programme further and give volunteering a prominence and profile it does not currently have in Wandsworth.

Using an accessible online database, the applicant will link residents with local volunteering opportunities. Alongside the matching service, WCA will promote volunteering; provide volunteering advice for residents to help them find the right volunteering role for them and support the application and recruitment process. Working with a range of voluntary and public sector organisations, WCA will develop new, flexible forms of volunteering, and support volunteer involving third sector groups through a network and programme of developmental support. The brokerage project will allow promotion of a central contact point for organisations, volunteers and volunteering opportunities within the borough.

The pilot was a response to more than three thousand borough residents volunteering during the pandemic. Research carried out for WCA this year showed that, post pandemic, there has been a greater need for volunteers but more difficulty recruiting them. The pandemic has shown Wandsworth residents the importance of being part of their community, with the brokerage allowing individuals to understand and access the local volunteering opportunities available to them. As part of the WCA Voluntary Sector Coordination Service, the brokerage will benefit from the guidance of a reference group made up of elected and co-opted representatives from local groups including groups working with excluded and disadvantaged communities.

Financial Information

WCA holds multiple contracts that contribute to the organisation's income on a consistent basis. The applicant has good relationships with the organisations who tender these contracts, and while some are currently up for re-tendering, WCA are confident that they can be secured again. The organisation has no history of overspending in the last five financial years and has always returned a surplus in that time. The organisation has a robust reserves policy, with an aim to hold between £174k and £379k in 2022/23, representing three to just over six months of operating costs. The table below shows unrestricted reserves increasing each year and within the target range, which is reasonable.

Year end as at	2021	2022	2023
	Signed Accounts	Draft accounts	Budget
	£	£	£
Income & expenditure:			
Income	484,945	512,270	611,737
Expenditure	(434,924)	(467,180)	(576,479)
Surplus/(deficit)	50,021	45,090	35,258
Reserves:			
Total restricted	12,734	0	0
Total unrestricted	205,149	262,973	298,133
Total reserves	217,883	262,973	298,133
Of which: free unrestricted	205,142	262,966	298,126
Reserves policy target	154,000	122,000	174,000
Free reserves over/(under) target	51,142	140,966	124,126

Recommendation

£127,900 over three years (£40,500; £42,600; £44,800) towards the costs associated with developing a volunteer brokerage project for Wandsworth