

Committee: Grants Committee of the Bridge House Estates Board Bridge House Estates Board	Date: 6 March 2023 27 March 2023
Subject: Bridging Divides: Infrastructure Funding - Capacity Building and Representation – Media Trust	Public
Report of: Sacha Rose-Smith, Chief Funding Director	For Decision
Report Author: Lydia Parr, Funding Manager	

Summary

This report requests £585,125 over five years under Bridging Divides to contribute to the delivery costs of ‘Stronger Voices’, a comprehensive media, strategic communications training, and capacity building programme for 100 equalities organisations in London. Media Trust (MT) will build on five years of successfully delivering the programme which has strengthened the voices of 71 equalities organisations, raised the profile of their work in the media and, reached hundreds more equalities organisations through an annual Masterclass Series open to the wider equalities sector.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Grants Committee of the Bridge House Estates Board, in the discharge of functions for the City Corporation as Trustee of Bridge House Estates and solely in the charity’s best interests:

- i) Endorse a grant to the Bridge House Estates Board of £585,125 over five years to Media Trust, to contribute to the delivery costs of the Stronger Voices Training programme for 100 equalities organisations.

It is recommended that the Bridge House Estates Board, in the discharge of functions for the City Corporation as Trustee of Bridge House Estates and solely in the charity’s best interests:

- i) Approve a grant of £585,125 over five years to Media Trust, to contribute to the delivery costs of the Stronger Voices Training programme for 100 equalities organisations.

Main Report

Background

1. The Media Trust (MT) established in 1994 is a communications charity (number 1042733) that believes in the power of media to change lives. It encourages the media and communications industry to share their time, knowledge, and creativity to benefit charities, and underrepresented communities. It aims to amplify charities’ voices by building their communications skills through innovative training, volunteer brokerage and content programmes to help them reach and engage new audiences. MT is regarded as a key infrastructure organisation for London’s civil society sector.

Background and detail of proposal

2. MT requests a further five years of funding for the 'Stronger Voices' programme. If awarded, CBT will have continuously funded the project for 10 years in total. As per CBT policy a fallow period does not apply to civil society support organisations (i.e. "infrastructure" bodies). To sustain this programme beyond the proposed CBT grant MT is seeking to secure grant funding and in-kind support from media partners and will work to identify funding opportunities and explore match funding models.
3. At the end of the latest year of the project 100% of participants rated the programme as good/very good, 100% reported knowledge of communications planning as high, 93% reported an increase in their ability to raise their organisation's profile and 80% rated their ability to use advocacy and campaigns to influence public opinion and policy as high.
4. 'Stronger voices' is a comprehensive media, strategic communications training, and capacity building programme for 100 equalities organisations (20 per year) to upskill staff and provide them with a strategy to help target their audiences more effectively and raise the profile of their work in the media. Over the course of six months, a cohort of 20 London based equality organisations will learn best practice in communicating for change, marketing and campaign planning, social media, interacting with the media and media interview training in a series of one day workshops. The programme will be delivered in partnership with Equally Ours a well-respected national network of organisations working across all areas of equality. Equally Ours will work with MT to steer programme development and delivery, recruit the organisations, and deliver a strategic communications workshop as part of the training.
5. Additionally, as part of the programme MT will deliver:
 - a. A sector-wider masterclass on intersectional storytelling for 100+ equalities organisations.
 - b. Quarterly events for 170 equalities organisations in the alumni network.
 - c. 3 masterclasses for 200 equalities organisations.
 - d. A roundtable connecting 50 equalities organisations, journalists and policymakers.
6. A strategic communications programme, there is growing need to strengthen the voices and resilience of London's equalities organisations and the communities they serve. High inflation, an expected recession, shifts in legislative frameworks, and spike in demand for charity's services highlights the need to support equalities organisations to amplify the voices of marginalised communities. The impacts of the pandemic and #BlackLivesMatter have highlighted the systemic inequality faced by marginalised communities. Cost pressures on UK households is exacerbating inequalities further, as is the surge in demand for the support provided by London's equalities sector to marginalised communities. As the most disadvantaged have been found to be the least represented, it is an important time to support the equalities sector with their strategic communications, media

engagement and campaigning, to ensure the media and policymakers hear from those with lived experience of inequality.

Budget

Expenditure	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	TOTAL
Salary	£43,216	£44,512	£45,848	£47,223	£48,640	£229,439
Training Sessions	£20,957	£21,586	£22,235	£22,901	£23,588	£111,267
Framing & Peer Networking Sessions	£6,529	£6,725	£6,927	£7,134	£7,348	£34,663
Roundtable	£5,532	£5,698	£5,869	£6,045	£6,226	£29,370
Advisory Group	£3,332	£3,432	£3,535	£3,641	£3,750	£17,690
Travel	£600	£618	£637	£656	£675	£3,186
Accessibility	£6,000	£6,180	£6,365	£6,556	£6,753	£31,854
Evaluation	£2,000	£2,060	£2,122	£2,185	£2,251	£10,618
Overheads	£22,042	£22,703	£23,384	£24,085	£24,808	£117,022
TOTAL:	£110,208	£113,514	£116,922	£120,426	£124,040	£585,109

Financial Information

- Media Trust is in good financial health. A review of the organisation's previous sets of audited accounts shows sound financial stewardship. The charity's policy is to hold approximately four and a half months of core salaries and overhead costs. Reserves were just below the target level in the previous financial year, 2020/21. MT explored new ways of reducing the charity's dependence on volatile forms of income and secured more funding resulting in an increase in unrestricted reserves. MT was particularly successful in securing ad inventory donations from across mainstream media platforms including ITV and Channel 4, news titles such as The Guardian, social media channels Facebook and Snapchat, and outdoor advertising space. MT also successfully developed another strand of industry-derived income relating to the government's Kickstart scheme, working with media companies to place young people on placements with MT providing recruitment and induction support.
- 34% of income for 2023/24 has already been secured with a further 39% of income streams considered to be highly likely. Streams such as Corporate Partner membership fees for example are renewed annually with the bulk of renewals happening in August and January. Whilst income is not considered formally secured, a rise in Corporate Partnership income indicates activity is returning to pre-pandemic levels. MT continues to explore more reliable funding streams which has, for example, resulted in the charity applying for more multi-year grant funding.

Year end as at 31st March	2022 Signed Accounts £	2023 Forecast £	2024 Budget £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	1,847,608	1,698,000	1,494,259
Expenditure	(1,695,996)	(1,687,034)	(1,488,881)
Surplus/(deficit)	151,612	10,966	5,378
Reserves:			
Total restricted	936,065	936,065	936,065
Total unrestricted	349,678	360,644	370,520
Total reserves	1,285,743	1,296,709	1,306,585
Of which: free unrestricted	289,277	300,243	305,621
Reserves policy target	300,000	300,000	300,000
Free reserves over/(under) target	(10,723)	243	5,621

Conclusion

9. MT has over 30 years' experience supporting small charities, and five years delivering 'Stronger Voices' for the equalities sector. The applicant has a strong network, social media profile and expertise in outreach and tailoring programmes to the needs of the sector making MT the most suitable organisation to conduct a project of this nature. The project costs may appear high but are, in your officer's view, justified. The cohort is increasing from 15 to 20 organisations per year in response to demand from the sector, the programme will engage over 500 people whilst strengthening the voices of 100 equalities organisations, supporting them to effectively communicate inequalities faced by Londoners, improve media representation, and campaign for change.

Lydia Parr

Funding Manager

E: lydia.parr@cityoflondon.gov.uk