

MEETING: 11/09/2023

REF: 20424

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Anchor Programme

Organisation name: Spectra CIC	Adv: Dion Holley
Amount requested: £1,002,612	Base: Kensington and Chelsea
Amount recommended: £1,003,000	Benefit: London-wide

Purpose of grant request: Spectra CIC will use core funding to build capacity in the trans and sex worker sector.

The Applicant

Spectra CIC (no. 07975254) was established in 1996 as the West London's Gay Men's Project. Commissioned by the London Borough of Hounslow, its services specifically focused on providing sexual health and HIV support to men who have sex with men (MSM) populations in West London. Overtime, the applicant extended its reach to the wider LGB population to meet the needs of the sector. In 2012, the applicant set up as Spectra CIC to reflect changes in provision and the need for greater community engagement. In light of developments in the trans sector, Spectra CIC has since shifted its focus in 2014 to support transgender (trans) communities and now sex worker communities in and around London.

Trans is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity does not match with the sex they were assigned at birth. This includes (but not limited to) transgender, transsexual, gender-queer (GQ), gender-fluid, non-binary, gender-variant, crossdresser, genderless, agender, nongender, third gender, bi-gender, trans man, trans woman, trans masculine, trans feminine and neutrois. In addition, Sex Work is an umbrella term that describes someone who provides a sexual service to a client or observer for money or other forms of economic value. This includes (but is not exhaustive to) Porn Performance, Webcam, Trade Sex, Street-based Sex and Erotic Dancing.

Background and detail of proposal

The applicant has previously received funding from the CBT and currently holds a Cornerstone grant to further the development and delivery of services through its Trans Learning Partnership (TLP). The partnership has co-designed and delivered on its aim to research, collect data and advocate for trans communities by producing a 10,000-word report that responds to 'phase 1' of the NHS consultation on gender affirming care for Children and Young People (CYP). This work, alongside other activities, has enabled the TLP to successfully advocate for the right of trans people and reduce existing barriers and inequalities to accessing healthcare. Through the TLP and its activities, Spectra CIC has learned the importance of mutual knowledge sharing, with stakeholders expressing further interest in a central resource hub for trans communities. It believes this approach will be vital for creating systemic change within the community by convening online research and resources into one place. In addition, the TLP has learned that capacity building is essential for its strategic

positioning, ensuring all staff have the skills to produce stronger pieces of work. In turn, this will create better long-term stability for the TLP and the sector.

This organisation is highly committed to amplifying the diverse voices and experiences of trans and sex worker communities. For example, it is currently reviewing a 'Needs Assessment' report carried out for Southwest London's Sex Worker Support Services (SWS). By doing this, it was able to demonstrate the inadequacy of the report and the data it uses, while working with sex worker organisations to establish an accurate reflection of the issues and scope of sex work. Similarly, the charity has represented the needs of trans people by facilitating workshops for health professionals. This enables health professionals to understand the experiences of trans people accessing healthcare and thus encourage greater trans inclusivity within its services. In addition, Spectra CIC has made significant steps to platform the diverse voices of trans people of colour (TPOC). For instance, it has developed a 'Levelling the Field' project that provides safe spaces for TPOC to meet, share experiences and provide the TLP with non-extractive data to collect and use. Spectra CIC is committed to sustaining equity and systemic change in its operating sectors.

Core funding will support two new part-time posts; a sustainability Fundraiser (SW focused) and a Sex Worker Strategic Lead. These roles will help Spectra to create and manage the Sex Work Coalition and support fundraising for it. Additionally, funding will contribute to three existing part-time posts and the CEO salary who will oversee the core work of Spectra CIC and its internal and external relationships. Lastly, a training, participation and learning budget has been included. Funding will enable Spectra CIC to:

- Develop a sustainability plan that not only re-focuses the strategic approach of the TLP, but also builds the necessary foundations for it to become its own independent charitable organisation.
- Collaborate on a new sex worker coalition and SW advisory group that will co-design work and address the systemic barriers faced by sex worker communities.
- Collect robust/peer led data into sex worker communities since current data is inaccurate and unrepresentative of the diverse nature of this sector.
- Build new relationships with SWS and organisations/groups to ensure the coalition is representative of the sector.
- Upskill and empower trans and sex worker communities by providing learning and development opportunities to gain new skills and knowledge.
- Create paid safe spaces for trans and sex worker communities to share experiences, which will lead to better community and sector outcomes.

Spectra CIC meets the criteria for Anchor Programme Funding:

1. It provides second tier support, utilising an incubator model. This is a peer led approach whereby services are designed by people with lived experience. It strengthens autonomy and agency within the sector by allowing service users and front-line organisations to inform the work.
2. Spectra CIC is a user-led organisation. There are 12 LGBTQ+ members in SMT, 8 of which are trans.

3. It encourages collaborations within the sector, for example it has successfully worked within the TLP and the GMI Partnership, both previously funded by CBT. Coalition building is important for building a collective voice within the communities and the sector. Spectra has held focus groups with front-line sex worker groups, such as the Sex Worker and Resistance Movement (SWARM), who have shown an interest in a sex worker coalition.
4. It takes an intersectional approach to its work. For example, it understands the intersections between trans and sex worker communities with many trans people doing sex work to pay for gender affirming care.

London's Sex Worker and Trans sector

It is important to recognise that the systemic issues within sex worker and trans sector overlap in various ways, particularly where these identities intersect.

London's Sex Worker Sector:

Data on London's sex workers is vastly limited and not representative of the diverse communities and types of sex work. Most research focuses on street-based sex work, which is a systemic problem in and of itself. Sex worker communities face many challenges, particularly access to sex related healthcare (SRH). Research has demonstrated that 33% of sex workers do not know their HIV status. Furthermore, female sex workers are 30 times more likely to contract HIV. Access to SRH is vital, even so, sex workers avoid healthcare services due to fear of exposure. If you are visible as a sex worker, it is much harder to secure employment or housing, which are basic human rights. This has influenced the issue of homelessness and poverty amongst sex workers. Moreover, there is a high population of MSM and trans sex workers in London who are disproportionately affected stigma and discrimination. These groups experience high risk of violence. With few MSM and trans specific SRH services, different sex worker communities will continue to have poor health as they rely on informal measures.

London's Trans Sector

With the rise of anti-trans rhetoric and gender critical views, the trans sector has become a hostile and volatile environment for trans people and TPOC. Gender critical proponents believe that sex is immutable and should not be conflated with gender identity. The negative spotlight on trans visibility has made trans people the most targeted group in the LGBTQ+ community. For example, a report from Stonewall shows that 41% of trans people and 31% of non-binary people have experienced hate crime because of their gender identity. Another report written by Galop shows that 8% of trans respondents have experienced physical assault compared to 1.9% of the public. The data is clear – trans people are at risk and in need of safe spaces more than ever.

In addition to violence, trans people like sex workers, face a range of systemic issues, such as poor access to healthcare, which can inhibit their ability to thrive in society. Stonewall's 2017 report on trans people's experiences show that 41% of respondents felt that health providers did not understand their trans specific needs. Furthermore, 24% of trans people faced discrimination from healthcare providers, with at least 7% being refused care. Access to healthcare is important for gender

affirmation, so the lack of care being provided is a systemic issue that needs to be resolved.

Financial Information

Spectra CIC continues to maintain a stable income and ability to generate surplus year on year. In addition, the applicants spending matches its secured level of income. 97% of budgeted income for 2023/24 has been secured and 76% for 2024/25. This anchor request has not been included within its confirmed funding. The list of funders Spectra CIC has secured funding from includes Esmée Fairbairn, CBT, The Henry Smith Foundation and Children in Need. Spectra CIC are currently waiting for outcomes from trusts and foundations such as the National Lottery Fund, Lululemon and the Clock workers' Foundation for its income for 2024/25.

Spectra CIC's board have agreed to operate at a reserves policy based on a minimum of three months operating costs. This cost equates to 385k, taking the applicant over its reserves target. Additionally, its forecasted free reserves for 2023/24 and 2024/25 are expected to be exceed its target reserve policy. Even though there is no obligation for this CIC to have a reserves policy, it has chosen to hold a level of funds to cover unexpected/planned costs, such as staff redundancies. It also acts as a buffer against funding and contract loss, which is important for sustaining services, cash flow and core function in a volatile sector.

Year end as at 31 March	2023	2024	2025
	Signed accounts	Forecast/ Management	Budget
	£	accounts	£
	£	£	£
Income & expenditure:			
Income	1,593,639	1,829,786	1,867,280
- % of Income confirmed as at	100%	97%	76%
Expenditure	(1,540,998)	(1,801,385)	(1,801,739)
Total profit/(loss)	52,641	28,401	65,541
Balance sheet:			
Net assets/(liabilities)	310,213	338,614	404,155
<i>Of which:</i>			
Income & Expenditure reserves	310,213	338,614	404,155
Total reserves	310,213	338,614	404,155
Months' expenditure covered by I&E reserves	2.440	2.256	2.692

Funding History

ID	Type	Amount	Meeting Date	Decision
19380	Anchor Programme Developmental Grant	£3,000	20/06/22	to be involved in the design group of the anchor programme, contributing to elements such as the application process, eligibility criteria, reporting requirements and what the vision and goal of the programme should be.
19072	Bridging Divides - Cornerstone	£498,000	09/03/22	Cornerstone funding to support the critical next steps for the Trans Learning Partnership: to develop a robust evidence base through trans community-led research; to inform policy and systemic change; and

				address stark inequalities faced by the trans community.
19067	Bridging Divides – Strategic Initiatives	£36,700	09/03/22	Bridge funding to support the infrastructure and participatory costs of the Trans Learning Partnership while awaiting the outcome of a Stage 2 Cornerstone bid
18635	COVID19 LCRF (Wave 5)	£49,915	30/04/22	A one-off, unrestricted grant equivalent to one regular quarterly payment for the organisation's current grant. COVID19
17227	COVID19 LCRF (Wave 2)	£15,265	08/07/20	A one-off, unrestricted grant equivalent to one regular quarterly payment for the organisation's current grant. COVID19

The Recommendation

£1,003,000 over seven years (£135,300, £138,000, £140,700, £143,600, £146,400, £149,400, £149,600) to support core costs and build capacity in the trans and sex worker sector through second-tier collaboration and capacity building.