

MEETING: 11/09/2023

REF: 20511

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Anchor Programme

The Interlink Foundation	Adv: Clara Espinosa
Amount requested: £1,421,586	Base: Hackney
Amount recommended: £1,283,370	Benefit: Hackney, Haringey and Barnet

Purpose of grant request: To support the organisation's core functions through its policy, research and community voice work to address systemic barriers to the Orthodox Jewish community accessing key services.

The Applicant

Established in 1990, Interlink Foundation (IF) is a London based membership infrastructure registered charity (no. 1079311) serving the Orthodox Jewish (Charedi) voluntary and community sector. It supports over 200 Charedi community organisations mainly based in Hackney, Barnet and Haringey with a small percentage based in Manchester and Gateshead. The charity supports organisations to narrow the gaps in poverty, health care provision, education and housing. Its main activities involve providing capacity building support such as governance, finance and offering an organisational health check to ensure good practice. It facilitates funding partnerships between voluntary organisations and the public sector to strengthen the community's voice. It engages in research and policy work as well as providing social incubation of new projects that address unmet needs and gaps in services.

Background and detail of proposal

IF has been instrumental in enabling the Charedi voluntary sector to collaborate with the wider voluntary sector to meet the needs of members of its own community and beyond. It currently holds a Bridging Divides (BD) grant, which is due to end in November 2024, towards the salary of a Development Officer. The aim is for Charedi organisations to work outside their own community, in partnership with the wider voluntary sector and the public sector. Some achievements so far include supporting 32 new London organisations with capacity support and the Orthodox Jewish Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools (WAMHS) pilot where IF was able to link a local youth charity with CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services).

The Charedi community is a racial and religious minority that has a long-standing history in London since the 20th Century. The inherited and intergenerational trauma linked to years of persecution has created an inherent fear of authority and the community is set up to look after its own. To date, there are roughly 30,000 Charedi

Jews living in London and it is the fastest growing community in Europe, growing at a rate of 4% annually.¹

The current structures associated to existing policies, the lack of culturally sensitive services and the misrepresentation created by the media are marginalising and excluding this community. Although IF recognises the importance of forming partnerships outside of the Charedi community (which is what the current BD grant is helping to do) it wishes to use the anchor fund to address the root causes of inequity and to bring about systemic change.

The funding will contribute to IF's core costs and ensure the sustainability of two key roles in the organisation; a part-time Policy Officer (0.7 FTE) and a contribution to the CEO's salary (proportionate to the London benefit). The funding will enable IF to:

- Revive its strategy groups, these are meetings and networks that bring together key Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups and statutory partners to coproduce solutions together that lead to positive structural change and more equitable outcomes for the community. The strategy groups are organised around themes whether that's children, maternity services or adult services and are place based around Hackney, Haringey and Barnet. This creates a platform for organisations to speak directly to those who have the power to influence change and to identify gaps in service provision.
- Engage in research, policy and advocacy work with member organisations to effect policy changes and practices that address inequities in services for Charedi Londoners. This is in line with its strategic goal to work on issues of importance to the Orthodox Jewish community such as children having equal access to therapeutic services and ensuring that public authorities honour the public sector quality duty by taking action to mitigate inequalities that exist in minority ethnic communities.² IF has plans to assist on a demographic piece of research to ensure that the population is counted accurately as the Charedi community were undercounted in the most recent census.³
- Address the increase of hate crime and hostility by raising awareness and understanding through the facilitation of community visits. These visits will be co-produced with community groups and will allow commissioners and policy makers to meet the organisations working on the ground, to get a deeper understanding as to what the issues are.
- Deliver cultural training for key connectors (such as civil servants and politicians) and to give a voice to the community through the Pinter Trust, founded by IF to tell the story of the UK Charedi community in its own words. The trust aims to train people to be ambassadors and to upskill community lay

¹ Institute of Jewish Policy research. (2022) Haredi Jews around the world: Population trends and estimates. Available at: <https://www.jpr.org.uk/reports/haredi-jews-around-world-population-trends-and-estimates>

² Public authorities must show consideration as to whether they *should* take action to meet these needs or reduce the inequalities for those with protected characteristics however it does not oblige them to take action to mitigate the inequalities.

³ Institute of Jewish Policy Research. (2023) Assessment of the 2021 Census data on Haredi (Strictly Orthodox) Jewish children in England. Available at: <https://www.jpr.org.uk/reports/assessment-2021-census-data-haredi-strictly-orthodox-jewish-children-england>

leaders in social media and media skills to help Charedi voices cross the digital divide.

- Reignite partnerships with racial justice organisations and wider knowledge sharing. IF was involved with HEAR Equality in its initial stages and Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations (CEMVO). As workload and demand increased, IF lost capacity to work on those partnerships and the community voice got sidelined. This funding will allow IF to strengthen partnerships with equity-led organisations and the Greater London Authority (GLA), recognising that it takes time and resources to build those relationships.

Core funding will allow IF to focus on activities such as insight gathering, information sharing and addressing systemic racism. It is led by and for the community and organisations it supports as all staff team and Board of Trustees are from the Charedi community and have a unique understanding of the communities' cultural norms. IF's board members are elected annually through a postal ballot by its membership organisations. It is committed to equitable practice; the organisations and communities it supports designs its services and goals emerge where members are driving them. Similarly, the charity supports communities that address intersecting identities; disability, maternity and age feature prominently in its membership. IF is one of London's key infrastructure organisations; it recognises its role to give voice to the issues that its member organisations are experiencing and to facilitate partnerships.

IF has a positive track record of influencing policy and bringing about systemic change. For example, when the two-child benefit cap was introduced, IF partnered with Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) to give evidence as to the impact that this policy would have on Charedi families. Similarly, IF supported Children Ahead, a charity that supports children with learning difficulties, to influence public sector policy by getting Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group to recognise its duty of care to all children in the borough and to commission a pilot of developmental therapy and mental health services for Charedi children.

It works collaboratively and has established strong partnerships between Charedi community groups and mainstream organisations, such as London Youth, National Council for Voluntary Youth Services, and Age UK, amongst others. It currently works closely with borough-based consortia bidding vehicles in Hackney and Haringey.

London's Orthodox Jewish sector

The faith sector is impacted by different policies and is rarely considered in the bigger picture or consulted on issues not directly relating to faith. There is a need for government to understand the complexities of community involvement and integration of faith groups in society.⁴ Faith communities can play a key role in

⁴ The Bloom Review. (2023) Does government 'do God?': An independent review into how government engages with faith. Available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1152684/The_Bloom_Review.pdf

promoting the overall wellbeing of society and addressing systemic issues across communities. However, there is historic underinvestment in organisations working with minoritised communities and funding is often harder to secure.⁵

The Orthodox Jewish charity sector is overstretched. As the community has grown, so have the needs especially around youth provision, services for disabled children and adults, and support for emotional and mental health. The Charedi community is disproportionately impacted by the cost-of-living crisis; the cost of kosher food is four times the inflation rate for non-kosher food.⁶ Even where there are universal mainstream services that are in principle open to all, there are significant cultural barriers that result in Charedi children and families not accessing statutory services. For example, in Hackney, 30% of children are Charedi, but approximately 95% of commissioned services do not reach them.

IF embraces complexity and adapts to changing needs. In the past, IF would not have described itself as an organisation that challenges antisemitism however it has recognised that the community needs a voice, and it is becoming further ostracized due to the lack of understanding and awareness in broader society.

Financial Information

Year end as at 31st March	2022 Signed Accounts £	2023 Draft Accounts £	2024 Budget £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	1,029,553	916,717	890,910
Expenditure	(1,124,061)	(987,606)	(873,709)
Surplus/(deficit)	(94,508)	(70,889)	17,201
Reserves:			
Total restricted	0	0	0
Total unrestricted	414,448	343,559	360,760
Total reserves	414,448	343,559	360,760
Of which: free unrestricted	407,959	325,767	342,968
Reserves policy target	151,791	120,822	142,581
Free reserves over/(under) target	256,168	204,946	200,387

IF has a diverse income stream made up of donations, income from services to other organisations and consortium-based contracts which makes up 50% of its income. It is in a positive financial position with free unrestricted reserves of £407,959 equating to eight months of free reserves which is within its target of three to twelve months of running costs. The charity experienced a deficit in 2021/22 due to Covid funding ending and due to a previously owned IF project, Chinuch UK, becoming a separate charity which meant IF lost some of its income. Whilst this was partially offset by reduced project expenditure, core costs could no longer be shared across this project.

⁵ Civil Society. (2022) Faith charities report facing additional barriers to grant funding. Available at: <https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/faith-charities-report-facing-additional-barriers-to-grant-funding.html>

⁶ The Jewish Chronicle. (2022) Jewish children going to bed hungry in kosher cost of living crisis. Available at: <https://www.thejc.com/news/news/jewish-children-going-to-bed-hungry-in-kosher-cost-of-living-crisis-4FCckFZ76BNLT5d11POR4K>

The charity is holding higher than expected reserves as it had to decrease expenditure in 2021/22 and 2022/23 to manage the deficits; this involved reducing the staff team however in the following years it has plans to expand the team which will bring the free reserves level down. Additionally, IF maintains high reserves and cash level to cover the core costs that are not supported by project-based funding and to mitigate funding that is received retrospectively from a project being carried out. For 2023/24, it is expecting a small surplus and has secured 71% of its income.

Funding History

ID	Type	Meeting Date	Decision
15169	Bridging Divides	30/10/2019	£250,000 over five years (5 x £50,000) towards the salary of a FTE Development Officer and related running costs of a project supporting capacity building, and resilience amongst Charedi organisations.
12917	Investing in Londoners	26/11/2015	£80,000 over two years (2 x £40,000) towards the salary and related running costs of a project supporting partnership and collaboration amongst Charedi organisations in North London.
11055	Working with Londoners	26/04/2012	£120,000 over three years (3 x £40,000) towards the salary and associated running costs of a project developing partnerships between Charedi community groups and mainstream organisations which tackle disadvantage and create opportunities for everyone.
9149	Working with Londoners	22/01/2009	£80,000 over two years (2 X £40,000) towards the salary and related running costs of two part-time Development officers to support Orthodox Jewish community organisations improve their organisational and management skills.

The Recommendation

Recommended amount has decreased to ensure the contribution towards the CEO's salary is proportional to the charity's London benefit.

£1,283,370 over ten years (£138,000; £122,610; £121,340; £118,200; £122,200; £128,340; £130,620; £132,520; £134,520; £135,020) of core funding to address the systemic barriers to the Orthodox Jewish community accessing key services.