



Committee: Funding Committee of the City Bridge Foundation Board	Date: 10 June 2024
Subject: Bridging Divides: Infrastructure Funding - Media Trust (22464) Capacity Building and Representation	Public
Report of: Sacha Rose-Smith, CBF Chief Funding Director	For Decision
Report author: Lydia Parr, Funding Manager	

Summary

Whilst this proposal can be considered under Delegated Authority, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair queries were raised about the increase in cost per film and if the proposal met the priorities of the Foundation during the Delegated Authority process. Officers undertook to explore these queries in more detail and in response to the questions the report has been amended. As such the proposal is being referred to committee for further consideration.

Recommendations

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

- i) Award Media Trust £282,675 over two years (£139,553; £143,122) to work with a cohort of 10 City Bridge Foundation grantees per year on the Telling Your Stories project.

Main Report

Background

1. The Media Trust (MT) established in 1994 is a communications charity (1042733). MT encourages the media and communications industry to share time, knowledge, and creativity to benefit charities, and underrepresented communities. It aims to amplify charities' voices by building communications skills through innovative training, volunteer brokerage and content programmes to help reach and engage new audiences. This engagement often leads to new funding opportunities, increased donations, and more volunteers, contributing to the sustainability of organisations in the sector. MT is a vital infrastructure organisation for London's civil society sector providing charities with training, film production, news distribution and volunteers from the media industry.

Current Position

2. Funding is sought to continue the Telling Your Stories project; annually 10 CBF funded organisations will have a short film created highlighting its work. The films are completely free for the organisations and vary greatly in style and content, and are used for purposes such as brand awareness, volunteer recruitment, campaigning, and fundraising. Working with some of the industry's most creative directors, producers, and camera operators, a collaborative



approach results in powerful and engaging charity films that can be widely shared.

3. The films have extremely high production values and are often award-winning. The films produced bring immense value to CBF's funded organisations. An organisation from the most recent cohort was invited to apply for funding on two occasions as a direct result of the film resulting in the organisation securing an additional £30,000. Five films from the latest cohort won Charity Film Awards, boosting each organisation's profile and awareness of its work.¹
4. An increased budget cost per film from £1,500 to £2,500 is requested. The budget per film was £1,000 in 2016 (grant ref.13481) and has been £1,500 per film since 2018 (grant ref. 14978). The increase reflects elevated inflation and higher overall costs for both MT's operations and for the filmmakers, production crews and other partners. The true cost of each film varies between projects but is well in excess of the £2,500 budget. For example, a film produced in latest cohort would have cost an estimated £105,550 to produce if all components had been paid for. With all Directors volunteering their time for free, the projects rely heavily on cast and crew often volunteering their time and securing as many elements as possible of the film at a reduced cost or for free e.g. borrowing equipment not hiring, making edits themselves not paying for post-production and hiring sound production people with their own equipment. MT produce films for the funded organisations of The Mercers Company and the Santander Foundation, both of which grant fund the increased budget of £2,500 per film.
5. The films are used extensively on CBF's social media platforms LinkedIn and X, regularly shown at events, and used as part of induction process for new employees to showcase the wide array of organisations and work the Foundation supports. The films have an extremely long shelf life and can be utilised for years alongside the skills participants gain from the workshops. The films are used on the CBF website² as an example of the type of projects the Foundation funds. As MT offer a unique and much needed service CBF partners with MT, for example, at the funded organisation learning day MT were paid to deliver a session which was amongst the most popular for funded organisations as free communications support is so rare.
6. Although this application falls under CBF's Infrastructure funding the outputs of the project also meet the Voice and Leadership strand as MT supports specialist organisations working with under-represented or marginalised communities, and the organisations that support them, to strengthen voice. This proposal for funding Media Trust justifies a grant rather than a commission due to its comprehensive nature, encompassing not only the production of high-quality films but also providing extensive training, support, and resources for charities. The project's aim to amplify charities' voices and engage underrepresented communities aligns with the Foundation's priorities, making it a strategic investment in building communication skills and promoting social impact.

¹ [Synergy Theatre Project](#) , [One in Four](#) , [Fulham Good Neighbours](#) , [Arts for All](#) , [HostNation](#)

² [Support and Services for Deaf and disabled people](#) , [Revenue funding: making London a greener city for all](#) , [Support for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants](#) , [Voice and leadership](#) ,



Proposal

7. MT initially requested five years of funding, based on discussion at assessment a two-year grant period is recommended. This request is higher than the budget for the previous Telling Your Stories grant. Previously MT covered significant costs from the grant through core income obtained through other grants and corporate partnerships. This proposal budget covers all the costs associated with delivering the programme, as MT are no longer able to subsidise the extra costs. The unfunded costs from the previous grant MT covered include a proportion of the Executive Producers salary, contributions towards the Marketing and Communications staff, senior management time required to oversee the programme, and contributions to overheads.
8. Taking learnings from the previous grant, MT want to provide organisations with communications training, coupled with a well-structured plan and relevant assets, to significantly influence the reach and engagement levels of the films. To broaden film visibility, each organisation will receive distribution training, personalised support through calls and drop-ins, and a Media Trust-created press pack with visuals, social media content, and press releases to facilitate a successful launch.
9. Charities increasingly want to involve service users in the films adding to the films' authenticity. Training on best practice around working with people with lived experience, inclusive storytelling, and safeguarding, for both the charities and filmmakers has been included in this proposal. Additional funding is sought to facilitate diversifying the pool of filmmakers to include more directors from under-represented backgrounds and those with lived experience. An accessibility budget is also built into the proposal for greater inclusion in pre-and post-production, training, and distribution.
10. At the Chair and Deputy Chair request MT provided two reduced budget options:
 - a) **Option 1** - reducing the cohort to 8 organisations instead of 10, this would be a new recommendation of £255,435 over two years (£126,134; £129,300). This allows MT to retain the face-to-face training, accessibility costs throughout the project, distribution training and communications packs for each of the films as well as the additional training for Directors and Grantees on involving people with Lived Experience.
 - b) **Option 2** - reducing the project to the essentials to produce 10 films per year, a new recommendation of £248,193 over two years (£122,567; £125,626). This budget would result in the project being delivered online instead of in person, Directors and Grantees would not receive training on involving people with Lived Experience, each organisation would not receive distribution training, or personalised communications packs and the accessibility budget has been removed.



Financial Information

11. Media Trust has adopted a free unrestricted reserves policy of £300,000 to represent approximately 4.5 months of core salaries and overhead costs. The charity has incurred a large, restricted deficit (2022/23) but overall holds a healthy level of unrestricted reserves which has kept it in line with the policy target. The organisation has been building free reserves in the 2022/23 and 2023/24 years and is forecasting to hold reserves slightly above policy in 2024/25. Just over 37% of income is confirmed for 2024/25 with a further 29% of income considered highly likely stemming from a range of sources including Corporate Partner Membership renewals, Charity Services Paid for Training, and Grants and Contracts. MT are working to secure grant funding and in-kind support from media partners to continue the programme identifying funding opportunities and exploring match funding models with its media partners.

Year end as at 31 March	2023 Signed Accounts £	2024 Management Accounts £	2025 Forecast £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	1,269,244	1,651,576	2,064,592
Expenditure	(1,789,772)	(1,647,000)	(2,029,000)
Surplus/(deficit)	(520,528)	4,576	35,592
Reserves:			
Total restricted	449,914	449,914	449,914
Total unrestricted	315,301	319,877	355,469
Total reserves	765,215	769,791	805,383
Of which: free unrestricted	291,367	295,943	331,535
Reserves policy target	300,000	300,000	300,000
Free reserves over/(under) target	(8,633)	(4,057)	31,535

Funding History

ID	Type	Meeting Date	Decision
IPP428	IPP	04/03/24	£1,330 inflationary pressures payment associated with Bridging Divides grant ref.19924
IPP564	IPP	04/12/23	£3,600 inflationary pressures payment associated with Strategic Initiative grant ref.15589
20384	Anchor Programme	04/12/23	Rejected.
19924	Bridging Divides	06/03/23	£585,125 over five years to contribute to the Stronger Voices Training Programme for 100 equalities organisations.
IPP110	IPP	06/03/23	£3,770 inflationary pressures payment.
17742	LCRF (Wave 3)	26/11/20	Towards the London element of a project addressing post-covid comms needs of the voluntary and community sector.



17045	LCRF	08/07/20	£17,000 to fund the essential and urgent costs, so organisation can carry on providing support to Londoners.
15628	Bridging Divides	28/11/19	£223,000 over three further and final years to contribute to the Stronger Voices Training Programme for 45 equalities organisations.
15589	Strategic Initiatives	28/11/19	£236,000 (£59,000 x 4) for the Media Trust to work with a cohort of 10 City Bridge Trust grantees per year for 4 further and final years on a "Telling Your Stories" project.
15579	Strategic Initiatives	26/09/19	£1,500 to develop and run a new Distribution workshop to complement the "Telling Your Stories" project.
14978	Strategic Initiatives	14/11/18	£49,995 over six months for delivery costs of the "Telling Your Stories" project.
14213	Investing in Londoners	23/11/17	£148,700 over 2 years to contribute to Stronger Voices for 30 equalities organisations.
14012	Investing in Londoners	27/07/17	Withdrawn.
14018	Strategic Initiatives	15/06/17	£720 for subtitling at 'Telling Your Stories' screening at the Barbican.
13618	Stepping Stones	22/09/16	Rejected.
13481	Strategic Initiatives	22/09/16	£49,107 to work with a cohort of City Bridge Trust grantees on a "Telling Your Stories" project.
12728	Stepping Stones	09/07/15	£50,000 over 12 months towards a marketing and business development programme to explore opportunities for earned income and the potential to take on social investment.

Conclusion

12. There are no other organisations with the same level of connections, skills, and experience required to support charities that currently offer this type of opportunity to the sector. The films are invaluable for organisations to enhance brand awareness, recruit volunteers, campaign, and fundraise. The Option 1 budget is MT's preferred option. However, it is requested committee consider the original funding recommendation of £282,675 over two years (£139,553; £143,122) as this would enable MT to work with a full cohort of 10 City Bridge Foundation grantees per year. Each funded organisation would receive training and expert communications support to promote and distribute the films, allowing the project to have the greatest impact.

Lydia Parr

Funding Manager

E: lydia.parr@citybridgefoundation.org.uk