

MEETING: 09/12/2024

REF: 25067

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Anchor Programme

Race on the Agenda	Adv: Lorna Chung
Amount requested: £1,500,000	Base: Islington
Amount recommended: £1,500,000	Benefit: London-wide

Purpose of grant request: Long term funding to enable Race on the Agenda (ROTA) to mitigate systemic racism through capacity-building, advocacy, and fostering collaboration within the sector.

The Applicant

ROTA is a Black and Global Majority (BGM¹) led and run social policy membership organisation, registered as a Charitable Company in 1997 (no.1064975). ROTA is focused on combatting systemic and structural racism. ROTA is one of Britain's leading anti-racist change drivers supporting and amplifying the work of anti-racist organisations across the UK. Working with communities impacted by systemic racism, ROTA helps create the policies and practices to tackle inequality. This is achieved by carrying out strategic projects and through action research on various aspects of the many BGM communities throughout the UK. ROTA's services can be grouped under four categories: Policy Development Voice and Representation, Information Research and Awareness Raising, Media Representation and Thought Leadership, and Projects for Capacity-building and Skills Development.

ROTA works pan-London to increase the capacity of BGM-led organisations and strengthen the voice of these communities through increased civic engagement and community-led action research. ROTA works across a wide range of themes prioritising policy areas, such as housing and homelessness, education, health and wellbeing, employment, criminal justice, migration, environment and climate justice, and social class and poverty. All of ROTA's work is based on the principle that those with direct experience of inequalities should be central to creating solutions to address them. Its work is actively informed by the lived experiences of BGM communities and their organisations. ROTA works with these groups and uses its lobbying and communications expertise to facilitate communities to exercise their power, empowering them to wield their influence and drive change.

Under City Bridge Foundation's (CBF) responsive programmes, CBF does not allow grants amounting to more than 50% of an organisation's turnover, but under the Anchor and Propel Programmes this is allowed, when Officers have conducted a thorough review of the organisation's sustainability and are satisfied.

Should this grant be awarded, the percentage of ROTA's overall income from CBF (when including all grants combined – the Propel grant and current strategic initiative plus this Anchor recommendation) is likely to exceed 50% in the next 24 months. The assessor has considered the organisation's financial position and other

¹ BGM is the preferred terminology used by ROTA and therefore is used throughout this report.

information to ascertain its ongoing sustainability and is satisfied that this does not represent a risk due to the charity's extensive track record and fundraising plans.

Background and detail of proposal

CBF has been a long-term funder of ROTA. Below is a brief overview of its achievements and aims with CBF funding. Where project funding has been awarded, ROTA has achieved positive programme outcomes, with no issues raised by Officers.

- **Training and Capacity Building (2014-2017):** CBF funding was awarded for ROTA to deliver training and capacity building in relation to the Equalities Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Over the three years ROTA consistently exceeded delivery outputs and outcomes with positive feedback from participant organisations.
- **Cornerstone (2018-2022):** ROTA was the lead in a partnership of three organisations - Action for Race Equality and Runnymede Trust – delivering a project called Communicating the Race Equality Message Effectively (CRÈME). The partnership set out to achieve systemic change through building the media capacity of BGM organisations. Via the partnership, 23 BGM organisations received tailored media support, over 40 organisations attended training sessions and collaborative events were held on covid, funding, mental health as well as a campaign in response to the Police, Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill. It also led to many media coverage opportunities (including a major Channel 5 News segment on racism) and a collaboration with the Institute for Public Policy Research. It has left a legacy of a podcast, a YouTube channel and collaboration with the Institute for Public Policy Research.
- **Propel (2023-2026):** with Propel funding, ROTA is training community researchers in the skills needed to undertake research into issues of systemic inequity. This programme will support communities to develop the tools to challenge and confront and hold to account public sector decision making and policy changes that adversely impact BGM communities and training will equip communities to recognise, navigate and challenge the system on issues that are important to them. In wave one, ten community researchers have conducted research with members of their communities on the themes of employment and education and the first report will launch in January 2025. Wave two will focus on housing and health and wellbeing and community researcher recruitment will commence in early 2025.
- **Core funding (2020-2025):** ROTA has also been in receipt of core funding from CBF, initially awarded over three years in 2020 under the responsive Bridging Divides programme. CBF has also supported ROTA via core funding through Strategic Initiatives, in recognition of ROTA's position as a leading voice in the fight for racial justice and its work tackling systemic racism in London. It's current one year core funding grant is due to end in September 2025, and ROTA will draw down this Anchor grant following the completion of its active core funding should this grant be approved. This is to avoid funding duplication of its CEO and

Office Manager salaries which are included in its Anchor Programme request and currently being funded via CBF SI.

ROTA is an important racial justice organisation, playing a crucial role in tackling systemic inequity in London. It is a compelling applicant for funding under the Anchor Programme, which was designed in recognition of the value of equity-led infrastructure organisations, the barriers they face, and a need to target funding at them to redress the balance and ensure the long-term sustainability of the sector. It has been well documented that BGM-led organisations have long been under resourced and underfunded. Infrastructure organisations also face unique challenges in accessing funding with very few trusts and foundations funding in this space, leading to a very fragile ecosystem. As a BGM-led infrastructure organisation, positioned at the intersection of these challenges, ROTA has faced a double disadvantage in accessing funding.

ROTA is requesting Anchor Programme funding over ten years towards three salaries: CEO, Office Manager (Administration and Membership Engagement) and Finance Manager. Long-term funding of these core positions will provide ROTA with sustained stability and enable it to focus on delivering high impact advocacy, research and capacity building. Funding will enable ROTA to deliver its 2024-2030 strategic objectives, recently developed at a Board awayday. These objectives include conducting high quality community research on structural racism with its members, influencing policy that impacts on BGM communities, capacity building and training BGM individuals and organisations, and running an effective and efficient organisation.

Like other voluntary sector organisations in recent times², ROTA has faced recruitment challenges specifically in hiring a permanent CEO. The charity has now successfully recruited into the position with an anticipated start date of January 2025. Further strategy development (including consultation with membership) is due to commence once the CEO is in place. Priority areas will include housing and homelessness, health and wellbeing, education, employment, criminal justice, migration, environment and climate justice, social class and policy. These themes align with CBFs own priorities and mission of supporting a fairer London. Anchor Programme funding would enable ROTA to remain adaptable to emerging needs whilst maintaining stability. The level of focus on each area will depend on community need, member priorities and aspirations, and funding available to carry out the work.

ROTA is led by and for BGM people. ROTA's membership base of over 2,500 is made up of individuals and organisations (grassroots, user-led groups as well as larger organisations such as trade unions). Membership is free with members gaining access to networking opportunities, policy briefings, consultation responses, reports, and the opportunity to participate in policy steering groups. ROTA actively incorporates the input of its members into all aspects of its work ensuring BGM voices are embedded and represented across all publications, events, and networks. Participation is at the core of its mission – to drive systems change by working

² Civil Society, 'Charities pausing operations due to recruitment crisis, study reveals' <https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/charities-pausing-operations-due-to-recruitment-crisis-study-reveals.html>

collaboratively with communities affected by racism, using evidence and research to support them to exercise their power and influence. This is exemplified through its participatory community research, co-creating with BGM communities to amplify their voices, and hold institutions accountable and achieve policy and legislative changes.

ROTA is uniquely positioned within the racial equity infrastructure sector working across a breadth of areas supporting frontline organisations and influencing policy to bring about race equity in London. Additionally, it has close relationships with sister organisations having worked collaboratively on projects, networks and coalitions (for example the Cornerstone funded CRÈME project, the Coalition of Race Equity Organisations, the AVOCADO Programme)³. ROTA has shown consistent commitment to achieving systemic change for its membership throughout its CBF funded (and wider) work. It continues to strive for a world where systemic injustices are eliminated; the consequences of racial injustices are acknowledged, and communities are supported to heal and thrive. Recent research conducted includes a four-year project investigating the disproportionate use of unofficial exclusions in schools which affect Black children three times more often than white children, and publication of the State of the Nation Report in partnership with Heriot-Watt University⁴ evidencing that black communities are 70% more likely to be impacted by the housing emergency and homelessness. ROTA has considerable experience in conducting community research and will be well placed to continue with this work via its new strategy.

London's Racial Justice sector

By 2011, most specialised funding programmes open to BGM-led infrastructure organisations had ended. In 2010 there were over 50 BGM-led infrastructure organisations in England, however funding cuts led to the closure of 17 of the largest organisations (and many smaller-sized ones). This has left gaps, and ROTA's position as one of the few remaining BGM-led infrastructure organisations is important considering the long-term trend of closures. Many BGM organisations are small and micro-sized, and targeted support to these organisations from infrastructure bodies has been in decline with the closure of the Small Charities Coalition in 2022 and the Foundation for Social improvement in 2023. With over 2,500 members, ROTA not only provides support to organisations, but elevates their voices emphasising their critical role in addressing structural inequalities based on their insights and lived experiences.

ROTA's research, advocacy and capacity building work are increasingly vital in the context of a declining number of BGM-led infrastructure organisations. The effects of this are compounded by the challenges of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. BGM-led organisations have been disproportionately affected by these challenges, resulting in a lack of capacity, funding, and growth at a time when the needs of

³ The AVOCADO programme was launched in 2016 by Money4Youth (now known as the AVOCADO Foundation) in collaboration with ROTA and Black Fundraisers UK (a network run by the Institute of Fundraising). The programme provides intensive financial capacity building to BAMER organisations and is now fully run by the AVOCADO Foundation. The AVOCADO Foundation is also an applicant to this round of the Anchor Programme (ref. 25065).

⁴ Heriot-Watt University, 'Homelessness Amongst Black and Minoritised Ethnic Communities in the UK' [Homelessness Amongst Black and Minoritised Ethnic Communities State of the Nation Report 2.pdf \(hw.ac.uk\)](https://www.hw.ac.uk/stn-reports/2023/homelessness-amongst-black-and-minoritised-ethnic-communities-in-the-uk.pdf)

communities are growing. The result, in line with wider voluntary sector trends, is reduced capacity and higher demand.

Financial Information

ROTA has faced funding challenges since the pandemic which has led to income and expenditure fluctuations. For example, the award of conditional funding (from other funders) has contributed to fundraising challenges. Despite these challenges, reserves have remained within target level (3-6 months expenditure) in FY2023, FY2024 and are budgeted to do so in FY2025. The target shown in the table below reflects the lower end of the target range (three months expenditure). The large deficit shown in the table below for FY2025 is due to restricted funding being carried over.

In the budget reviewed for FY2025, CBF funding is expected to represent 62% of the charity's income. This included existing funding for core costs including salaries (CEO, Finance Manager, Policy Officer, Office Manager) and Propel funding. The Propel grant will end in July 2026 and from FY2026 onwards Anchor Programme funding would be ROTA's only income from CBF.

CBF is therefore expected to be the majority funder for FY2025, and a budget for FY2026 indicates this could also be the case in that year – dependent on the outcome of applications made to National Lottery, Esmee Fairbairn, and Nuffield Foundation. If these three applications are secured, CBF will be funding 45% of budgeted £719k income, with an additional application to Oak Foundation not included in this figure, which could further reduce reliance on CBF. As such, broadening ROTA's grant funders and achieving financial sustainability is a priority for trustees.

As well as diversifying its grant funders, ROTA is also focused on diversification of income streams more broadly, through work with a fundraising consultant. It plans to develop earned income from delivering training to corporate organisations, universities and unions. Opportunities are in the pipeline, but ROTA does not currently have capacity to capitalise on them. ROTA has also had past success in securing individual and legacy donations so is keen to develop this income stream. Its longer-term income generation plan is to build organisational research capacity to be eligible for public research funding. Furthermore, the increased stability that long-term core funding via the Anchor Programme offers will give ROTA the capacity to pursue funding from a broad range of sources (both grant funding and earned income), putting it in a better position to achieve financial sustainability.

Becoming financially self-sustaining is a key pillar of ROTA's strategic development and core element of this proposal – securing long term core funding will provide ROTA with the stability necessary to provide effective support to organisations in the racial equity sector. This will be strengthened by a new CEO, due to start in January 2025, coupled with a recently developed 2024-2030 strategy (referenced earlier in this report).

Year end as at 31st March	2023	2024	2025
	Signed Accounts	Draft	Budget
	£	£	£
Income & expenditure:			
Income	159,249	269,193	225,053
Expenditure	(185,983)	(151,043)	(368,552)
Surplus/(deficit)	(26,734)	118,150	(143,499)
Reserves:			
Total restricted	0	151,261	22,527
Total unrestricted	153,498	120,387	105,622
Total reserves	153,498	271,648	128,149
Of which: free unrestricted	152,639	119,528	104,763
Reserves policy target	46,496	37,761	92,138
Free reserves over/(under) target	106,143	81,767	12,625

Funding history

ID	Type	Meeting Date	Decision
23789	Strategic Initiatives	09/12/2024	£150,000 over one year to enable Race On The Agenda to implement the next phase of its strategic development.
20412	Anchor Programme	04/12/2023	Despite its merits, ROTA's EOI was not successful in Round One of the Anchor Programme due to the high volume of competitive applications received.
21101	Strategic Initiatives	11/09/2023	£60,000 over 12 months to enable Race On The Agenda to offer a competitive salary to recruit a suitable CEO.
20001	Propel	06/03/2023	£500,000 over three years (£162,000; £167,000; £171,000) for the posts of Training and Engagement Manager, Research and Policy Consultant, Training 30 Community Researchers and associated project and management costs.
IPP165	Inflationary Pressures Payment	06/03/2023	£2,520 awarded to support with increased inflationary costs.
15923	City Bridge Foundation - Bridging Divides	08/07/2020	£85,200 over 3 years (£30,900, £28,400, £25,900) as contribution towards the core costs of the organisation.
17355	LCRF	08/07/2020	£12,915 towards three months of costs as outlined in application.
15327	Anniversary infrastructure support programme	21/03/2019	£257,100 over three years (£93,100; £82,000; £82,000) towards a programme of communications and media support services benefitting approximately 200 BAMER organisations.
14821	Anniversary infrastructure support programme	07/09/2018	£19,400 towards a Project Manager, associated overheads and workshops and events of a pilot seeking to address the communication and media support needs of BAMER organisations in London.

14371	Anniversary infrastructure support programme	14/03/2018	£25,000 towards the CEO's salary to enable ROTA to remain actively engaged with The Way Ahead.
13940	Anniversary infrastructure support programme	11/05/2017	£50,000 over one year towards a salary and operational costs. The grant is to be spent over a minimum 10 month period to support the organisation's involvement in The Way Ahead and is subject to a review after 6 months.
13021	Investing in Londoners	28/01/2016	£112,700 over two further years (Â£55,600; Â£57,100) for the salary of a f/t Project Officer and related costs of a project providing training, capacity-building, advice and information to London's voluntary sector.
12171	Investing in Londoners	19/06/2014	£55,000 over one year towards the full-time salary and associated running costs of a Specialist Project Officer providing training, capacity building support and advice and information on the Equalities Act 2010.

Recommendation

Via the Anchor Programme, CBF can provide ROTA with the long-term funding it needs to effectively resource the Black and Global Majority-led sector with its research, capacity building and advocacy services. Long term support enables ROTA to remain stable, whilst adapting to emerging needs, benefitting the entire racial justice sector and London's civil society. ROTA's commitment to systemic change across themes such as housing, education, health, climate justice aligns with CBF's priorities of a fairer London.

Funding is recommended as follows:

£1,500,000 over 10 years (£150,000; £150,000; £150,000; £150,000; £150,000; £150,000; £150,000; £150,000; £150,000; £150,000) towards core funding to enable ROTA to deliver vital second-tier services aimed at combatting racial injustice.