

MEETING: 09/12/2024

REF: 25063

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Anchor Programme**

<b>Equally Ours</b>	<b>Adv: Clara Espinosa</b>
<b>Amount requested: £667,100</b>	<b>Base: Lambeth</b>
<b>{Revised request amount: £924,604}</b>	<b>Benefit: London-wide</b>
<b>Amount recommended: £924,900</b>	

**Purpose of grant request:** Equally Ours requires core funding to advance its strategic aims over the next ten years, supporting London-based members and its wider London networks in shaping meaningful, structural public policy changes that address climate action, social justice, and economic opportunity.

**The Applicant**

Equally Ours (EO) is a registered charity (Charity Number: 1135357) and was formed in 2002 as the Equality and Diversity Forum, in 2018 it changed its name to Equally Ours. It is the only national UK-wide pan-equality<sup>1</sup> and human rights network with over 80 members and roughly 45% of its members based in London. It supports civil society organisations that are led by, provide frontline services to, and/or advocate with and for communities who experience discrimination and disadvantage. Its mission is to advance people's equality and human rights through connecting funders, community groups and organisations, and by using collective evidence to influence social change and bring about social justice.

EO advocates for systems change on and at the intersections of race, religion/belief, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, poverty, migration status, and human rights. In terms of second tier-activities carried out, it provides a combination of national and London capacity building services through research and policy. In addition to this, it delivers a strategic communications programme which aims to shift public attitudes and strengthen capacity of the sector to communicate more effectively and has trained over 200 London equality and poverty groups. EO builds an evidence base through its second-tier support by combining lived experience and evidence from frontline organisations to show policymakers that the causes of inequality are primarily systemic, not individual and advocates for co-created policy solutions. After the first Equality Act in 2006, EO grew into an influential network that successfully made the case for improving protections for everyone, contributing to the Equality Act 2010.

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<sup>1</sup> Pan equality- support groups to see that their experience of inequality is not the only experience and that other groups with protected characteristics are experiencing it too.

## Background and detail of proposal

EO encourages organisations to collaborate on specific shared problems across all protected characteristics using an intersectional approach.<sup>2</sup> The charity's mission and services promote an understanding and awareness of intersecting issues, and what it means for good practice, service delivery and meaningful inclusion. An example of this is EO's partnership with Inclusion London (a Cornerstone recipient funded by CBF). EO has been commissioned to deliver its strategic communications training to seven London-based Deaf and Disabled People's Organisations (DDPOs) with the aim of shifting the attitudinal narrative that underpin and perpetuate discrimination of disabled people and to move towards more progressive and inclusive views. The collaboration so far has achieved positive results, 100% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they felt equipped to develop, implement and embed a strategic communications approach within their organisation.

Furthermore, it holds a policy forum each month creating a space for members to share research and a platform for them to engage directly with government ministers to ensure there is a pan equality response to initiatives and formal consultations. These monthly member meetings include speakers from within the membership, supporting members to play leading roles in those sessions. EO embeds a human rights approach<sup>3</sup> throughout its work, for example, it follows the social model of disability which is a fundamental structural model acknowledging the existing structural barriers that disabled people face rather than taking an individual approach. EO has a ten-year strategy in place and wishes to use the Anchor funding to advance systems change on its strategic aims addressing the three themes below:

- Protecting and improving the **law** on equality and human rights
- Embedding **climate justice** into local and national strategies and policy on climate adaptation

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<sup>2</sup> Intersectional- this term is used to talk about a wide range of intersecting identities, including factors such as migration status, disability or age, all of which can affect the different types of discrimination or unfair treatment faced by communities and individuals.

<sup>3</sup> A human rights-based approach takes the principles of human rights (rather than the specific laws) and applies them in practice. People's rights are put at the heart of how things are done.

One way to use a human-rights base approach is to apply the PANEL principles:

- Participation – people should be involved in decisions that affect their rights
- Accountability – there should be monitoring of how people's rights are being affected, and remedies when things go wrong
- Non-Discrimination and Equality – all forms of discrimination must be prohibited, prevented and eliminated. People who face the biggest barriers to realising their rights should be prioritised.
- Empowerment – everyone should understand their rights, and be fully supported to take part in developing policy and practices that affect their lives
- Legality – approaches should be grounded in the legal rights that are set out in domestic and international laws

- Increasing **investment** in solutions to the root causes of inequality and rights abuse.

EO aims to incorporate its model of convening, pan equality and human rights analysis, narrative framing, policy advocacy and capacity building across these interconnecting themes. With regards to climate justice, it wishes to identify what voluntary and statutory preparedness, and response planning looks like in terms of communities who experience discrimination and inequality and how good practice could be more widely replicated. It will ensure that Londoners' equality and human rights are built into action at national and local levels to address climate breakdown, and that those most at risk have a voice and can play a leading role in setting and delivering change goals. EO in the past has collaborated with Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership (VCSEP), chairing the equality steering group which focuses on planning and responding to extreme weather events.

With regards to law, EO will continue to protect and expand people's equality and human rights in law and increase public understanding of how equality and human rights matter to them, their loved ones and communities. It will convene its membership and collaborate with wider civil society networks to create a pan equality evidence base enabling them to show policy makers that equality and human rights matter to the majority, not just one minority group. Additionally, it will continue to work with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) as its critical friend, encouraging them to use their statutory power to influence change. This work builds on EO's long-standing track record of influencing the law. It was commissioned by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to coordinate the London Hate Crime Stakeholder Reference Group (consisting of 170 members) which is a space for hate crime groups to raise issues and themes with MOPAC and London Metropolitan Police. Learning from this will feed into policy advocacy, including the next phase of the Law Commission Review of hate crime. Furthermore, the charity holds regular meetings with the Government Equalities Office (GEO) and the Cabinet Office's Equality Hub using this space to share members' concerns.

With regards to investment, EO will look at how investment can bring about social change at scale and wishes to increase investment in solutions to the root causes of inequality and rights abuse. It aims to influence local and national governments' capital investment, including in the green economy, so that it plays a major ongoing role in reducing gaps in employment rates for communities who experience structural barriers and discrimination in the labour market. It will continue to run its Equality Sector Enterprise Development programme (supporting equality sector charities to develop enterprise strategies and build financial resilience) and wishes to advocate for the development of new funds to harness social investment and impact investment to create change in the areas of people's equality and human rights. Additionally, it has provided the secretariat for Funders Race Equality Alliance (FREA) since 2019, a group which aims to increase funder investment in Black and Minoritised-led organisations tackling racial inequality.

Through its combined voice with members, EO has a track record of bringing about effective systems change by influencing policy makers, as well as highlighting issues

that are specific to individual groups, so that policy makers can take a comprehensive and holistic approach. It recognises that structural inequality persists through attitudes and institutions. If underlying attitudes and barriers in institutions are not addressed, then it is difficult to bring about systems change. An example of this was its research commissioned by the Crown Prosecution Services (CPS) into rape and serious sexual offences in England and Wales. It used findings to identify incorrect dominant narratives in the public discourse that can obstruct justice and to develop alternative narratives that reflect facts using values-based reframing techniques; this provides an effective way to talk about rape without perpetuating myths and stereotypes. EO aims to use the funding to continue to provide intersectional policy analysis, connect London members with policy makers and wider network and strengthen the voice of civil society through its strategic communications programme.

EO meets the criteria of the Anchor programme as it works in an equitable way by embedding its human rights-based framework and trauma informed approach in how it interacts with its members as well as its own staff. It adapts its services so that every member regardless of organisational size can engage. It prioritises members and staff wellbeing, embeds co-design, offers closed sessions in its steering groups and creates safe spaces for members to share their views. In addition to this, it develops public policy positions by consensus across the membership. Under its constitution, the majority of trustees must be elected from the membership by the members. The three main themes of law, climate justice and investment were chosen by its members, and the creation of the new ten-year strategy came out of several workshops with members, trustees and EO staff. Its members are “by and for” organisations and are at the heart of everything EO does for example, new initiatives are developed and delivered collaboratively, compensating members with lived experience for participating in projects, steering groups and research. Equally, 75% of board and senior staff have lived experience of inequality, discrimination or abuse related to one or more protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010, as well as those facing socio-economic inequality. The charity is working to embed its anti-racist programme with recommendations coming from staff-led workshops on issues that staff prioritised as well as how it can apply an anti-racist lens to organisational changes and processes. EO recognises that most of its staff will have trauma related issues and has prioritised work around strengthening its wellbeing support focusing for example on the intersection of trauma and race. Although EO has a national focus, the recommendation in this report is proportionate to EO’s focus on London and the yearly recommended amount equals to roughly 14% of the charity’s annual income.

### **London’s Equality sector**

Across the UK, only 0.1% of all registered charities work on human rights. As more avenues for support have closed, additional pressure has fallen on EO’s member organisations to meet increased demand. In addition to this, funding towards equality and justice groups carrying out policy and advocacy work is scarce, particularly for led by and for organisations. In the UK, human rights continue to be eroded such as people’s right to peaceful protest, access to benefits and disability support and the

treatment of migrants. Despite ongoing social issues such as the cost-of-living crisis, people's access to social security and an adequate standard of living, including food and housing shortages, continue to be key issues facing Londoners. Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis have disproportionately affected Black and minoritised communities. EO works to increase policy focus on solutions to root causes of inequality and injustice and invites those most impacted by inequality to influence policy-makers. An example of an area of inequality, is climate breakdown which will cause more frequent and significant weather extremes across London and the UK resulting in an increase in food insecurity and migration pressure. There is a risk that strategies put in place to combat climate breakdown will ignore the rights and needs of women and marginalised communities and will only exacerbate and deepen inequality. EO has a vital role to play in ensuring organisations engage in influencing policy makers to factor equality and social justice into every level on climate preparedness.

### Financial Information

Year end as at 31 March	2023 Signed Accounts £	2024 Draft Accounts £	2025 Budget £
<b>Income &amp; expenditure:</b>			
Income	737,198	737,070	629,617
Expenditure	(725,946)	(680,187)	(660,056)
<b>Surplus/(deficit)</b>	<b>11,252</b>	<b>56,883</b>	<b>(30,439)</b>
<b>Reserves:</b>			
Total restricted	312,133	363,238	295,149
Total unrestricted	(8,665)	(2,887)	34,763
<b>Total reserves</b>	<b>303,468</b>	<b>360,351</b>	<b>329,912</b>
Of which: free unrestricted	(13,384)	(5,506)	32,144
Reserves policy target	132,077	125,555	125,555
Free reserves over/(under) target	(145,461)	(131,061)	(93,411)

Equally Ours (EO) income is made up of restricted and unrestricted grants, membership fees and donations. Its free unrestricted reserve policy is three months of planned expenditure, which at year-end 2024 was at £125,555. In year-end 2023 the charity experienced a deficit of £13,384 in its unrestricted free reserves which was partly due to delayed unrestricted income from Esmee Fairbairn Foundation intended for year-end 2023 which was received in year-end 2024. It also experienced a deficit in its unrestricted free reserves in year-end 2024 due to the organisation experiencing higher costs due to the cost-of-living crisis and the fact that its arrangement for below-market-rate office rent, IT and payroll services during Covid-19 ended, increasing the organisation's expenditure.

The charity is conscious that it needs to increase its unrestricted free reserves to meet its reserves policy target. It closely monitors its cashflow and reserves position and has created a short, medium and long-term plan to increase its unrestricted reserves. Some of the activities will involve investing in a digital individual giving strategy to increase donations, creating a donor retention programme, increasing earned income by expanding consultancy services that can generate revenue and developing long-term collaborations with other charities, businesses and government entities to create shared funding opportunities. In year-end 2025, EO is expecting an increase in its unrestricted free reserves, the charity is confident that the increase in

its unrestricted reserves will continue as it plans to diversify both its routes to influence and its income streams.

**Funding History - None**

**The Recommendation**

The aim of the Anchor Programme is to fund for ultimate success and your officer worked with the charity to amend the budget to reflect the true costs of delivering the work and as such the amount recommended is higher than the amount requested due to increasing the years of funding from seven to nine years. Funding is recommended as follows:

***£924,900 over ten years (£79,700; £82,300; £85,000; £87,700; £90,600; £93,600; £96,600; £99,800; £103,100; £106,500) of core funding towards one full time role, furthering Equally Ours' strategic aims in supporting London-based members and its wider London networks to shape structural public policy changes.***