

MEETING: 17/02/25

REF: 25069

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Anchor Programme

Voice4Change England	Adv: Anneka Singh
Amount requested: £1,485,477	Base: Camden
Amount recommended: £864,525	Benefit: London-wide

Purpose of grant request: Core funding to support Voice4Change's core activities to build a unified movement to tackle race inequality.

The Applicant

Voice4Change England (V4CE) is a registered charity (number 1140624). It was established in 2007 as a national membership organisation for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) voluntary sector organisations. V4CE is led by people from communities experiencing racial inequality.

V4CE has 488 members, 50% of which are London based. It delivers direct infrastructure support to BME community organisations, strengthens the sector through collaboration and works with members and affiliates to increase awareness of the BME voluntary sector and improve its direct involvement and representation in decision making and policy forums. A focus on harnessing and sharing the BME voluntary sector voice is a particular priority of the charity, and V4CE feeds this into policy work, campaigns, consultations and research.

Its core purpose is increasing the influence of the BME sector and race equality, by addressing the root causes of discrimination and marginalisation in current systems.

Background and detail of proposal

V4CE was established following a national summit in 2005, which brought together over 40 BME organisations to explore how their interests could be best represented within national policy making and programme development. It was concluded that the BME voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE) needed a unified voice, which should be drawn from existing BME organisations.

In its upcoming strategy, V4CE recognises complex social issues as multi-faceted in nature, requiring multidisciplinary approaches. With regards to transformational systems change initiatives, it states that collaborative efforts are needed to amplify impact and drive broader change.

An Anchor Programme grant will significantly contribute to the organisation's aim to build a united movement to tackle race inequalities that affect systems and entrench oppressive structures. Drawing on its network of London-based organisations, V4CE will bring together sector voices to influence political, economic, and social change. V4CE strategically plans to increase its systems change work in the following areas, which have been identified through consultations with stakeholders including VCSE organisations and surveys with its member network:

- Health
- Housing
- Education
- Climate

V4CE strongly considers these as interrelated areas, which are intersectional in nature. It aims to continue its legacy of identifying and working with mechanisms of local influence to ignite change for minoritised communities in London.

V4CE does not have long-term core funding. The organisation spends a disproportionate level of time securing resources, which impacts the resources required to effectively tackle the root causes of race inequality in a collaborative and strategic way. An Anchor Programme grant award will enable V4CE to support core staff roles to design and deliver initiatives with the BME voluntary, community, social enterprise sector (VCSE) to initiate long-term change in the aforementioned areas.

V4CE has a track record in engaging in systems change initiatives:

- In partnership with Runnymede Trust, V4CE initiated 'Reframing Race', which aims to reframe public conversations around race, racism and racial justice. This has been a live programme since 2019.
- In partnership with Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), V4CE released 'Home Truths' (2020) and 'Home Truths 2' (2023) research reports, which highlighted systemic race equity issues in UK civil society.
- V4CE, in partnership with Black Global Trust and The Social Investment Consultancy, created Pathway Fund, which is a pioneering new impact investment wholesaler committed to advancing opportunities for Black and Ethnic Minoritised social enterprises and their communities across the UK.
- In 2023, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport launched the VCSE Contract Readiness Programme to upskill voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations (VCSE) to bid for public sector contracts. The programme is jointly delivered by V4CE, School for Social Entrepreneurs and Social Enterprise UK. V4CE aims to increase this work into local authorities.

During the lifetime of the Anchor Programme grant award, V4CE's aims to glean valuable learning from its work to demonstrate that increasing inclusion and representation (including tackling intersectional inequalities and engaging small frontline organisations) can be carried out to transform systems.

With an Anchor Programme grant award, V4CE aims to increase the capacity of the BME sector to engage in work which promotes positive structural change in housing, health, education, climate and develop effective partnerships in these efforts.

London's Race Equality sector

There is a continuing need for a national body with the reach and credibility to represent the BME VCSE sector's interests. London's race equality sector is an active space, owing to London's demography and its geographical significance as the UK's capital city. V4CE has established a London-based network and has relationships across London's VCSE, who it will continue to engage with to address systemic race inequalities. Although V4CE has a national remit, the recommendation in this report is proportionate to V4CE's London work.

V4CE has tended to concentrate its work in London owing to its membership level. In 2014/15, and in recognition that many BME organisations had limited understanding of The Localism Act 2011, V4CE piloted a project which sought to deliver targeted infrastructure support to BME organisations aiming to use Community Rights powers to transfer buildings and deliver services. V4CE has since supported the VCSE with building acquisitions and maintenance in Brent, Southwark, Lewisham and Lambeth. It has also supported organisations to access and maintain community spaces (including support to access grants and planning permission).

From 2023-2024, V4CE delivered the YourVoteYourVoice project, which was supported by the Greater London Authority (GLA) to raise awareness about changes to voting processes, as brought in by The Elections Act 2022. V4CE promoted political literacy among underrepresented demographics in London elections through workshops and sector infrastructure support.

V4CE is in receipt of a five-year grant award from City Bridge Foundation (CBF) to deliver 'Catalyst', to build the capacity, leadership, efficiency, and organisational resilience of BME voluntary sector organisations in London. Thus far, V4CE has successfully delivered a series of in-person workshops across London and has developed a needs assessment framework to offer bespoke support to organisations. In reference to systems change work, V4CE's experience with the London BME VCSE has shown a need for tailored programmes to build understanding of the benefits and feasibility of action. Its Catalyst programme aims to lay foundations for this work. Through networks accessed on this programme, V4CE is influencing the diversity of organisations it is engaging in systems change work.

Financial Information

Year end as at 31 March	2023	2024	2025
	Signed Accounts	Draft Accounts	Management Accounts
	£	£	£
Income & expenditure:			
Income	1,139,738	1,686,402	2,111,012
Expenditure	(1,179,761)	(682,019)	(2,606,323)
Surplus/(deficit)	(40,023)	1,004,383	(495,311)
Reserves:			
Total restricted	94,388	836,687	244,575
Total unrestricted	16,289	278,373	375,174
Total reserves	110,677	1,115,060	619,749
Of which: free unrestricted	13,542	275,626	372,427
Reserves policy target	120,000	120,000	150,000
Free reserves over/(under) target	(106,458)	155,626	222,427

V4CE is supported by trusts, foundations and statutory bodies. Following several years of significant growth in income, presenting a challenge given the need to scale rapidly in terms of financial management, it achieved a surplus at 2023/24 year end. Part of its growth has included hosting Pathway, which has added further complexity to the rapid growth which has taken place. Pathway is now being spun out into a separate entity (although its income and expenditure remain within the figures included above to end of 2024/25), ensuring greater clarity for financial

management. Following Pathway being spun out, it is expected that V4CE's standalone income may reduce somewhat compared to 2024/25.

Its reserves policy target is to retain funds equivalent to three months' operational expenditure, excluding its onward grantmaking funds. In 2022/23 and 2023/24, this was calculated to be £40,000 per month. This rises to £50,000 for 2024/25. Having been below target through its rapid growth phase, V4CE's free reserves figure improved in 2023/24 and is anticipated to be in a similarly strong financial position in 2024/25, demonstrating that the organisation is establishing stronger financial management controls following the period of rapid growth. The Anchor Programme grant request is not included in V4CE's 2024/25 income projection.

Funding History

ID	Type	Meeting Date	Decision
26692	Bridging Divides – Social Investment	11/12/2024	£150,000 over 12 months to Voice4Change England to support Pathway's core operations until the expected receipt of dormant assets funding.
20488	Anchor Programme	19/05/2023	An unsuccessful application deemed to be outside the Anchor Programme criteria.
19736	Bridging Divides	05/12/2022	£399,040 over 5 years to cover the salary and running costs of an infrastructure project to build the capacity and organisational resilience of BME voluntary sector organisations in London.
14074	Stepping Stones	15/06/2017	An unsuccessful application because the social investment proposal was judged to be difficult to realise given the organisation's then financial position.
12860	Investing in Londoners	23/09/2015	£122,240 over two years towards a part-time Development Director plus associated running costs of a project to support the BME voluntary sector in London to develop policies and good practice around volunteering and asset management.
12134	Investing in Londoners	19/06/2014	£60,000 as a third year's contribution towards the full-time salary and associated running costs of a project developing models of collaborative and partnership working.
10722	Working with Londoners	07/09/2011	£108,200 over two years towards a project to develop fair and equitable collaborations between London's BME and mainstream voluntary sector.

Recommendation

V4CE is an established and respected second-tier membership infrastructure body and national advocate for the BME voluntary, community, social enterprise sector. The organisation and its work is closely aligned with Anchor Programme funding priorities. The below funding recommendation has been reduced to take into account proportionality to V4CE's London focussed work. A lower funding level from years 1 – 3 takes into account V4CE's Bridging Divides grant award:

£864,525 (£60,000, £65,000, £70,000, £87,385, £90,000, £92,700, £95,480, £98,340, £101,290, £104,330) over ten years to support Voice 4 Change England's core costs.