

MEETING: 04/07/2013

Ref: 11584

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Strengthening the Third Sector

London Advice Services Alliance (Lasa)

Adv: Jenny Field

Amount requested: £99,594

Base: Tower Hamlets

Amount recommended: £99,500

Benefit: London-wide

Purpose of grant request: To provide an online support service for frontline advice-providing organisations across London on welfare reform and the localisation of the welfare state.

Background

Lasa was established in 1984 as a second-tier body providing services to advice-giving voluntary organisations with the aim of improving standards of legal advice and information. It provides a wide range of online resources and support; social welfare law training; ICT consultancy and support; and advice sector policy-related work. It is one of the key players within the advice sector, working closely with CABx, law centres, local authorities, and other major agencies such as Shelter, Macmillan, Age UK and Carers UK.

Funding History

You have funded Lasa on several occasions previously, the last being a grant of £100,000 over two years for a project to ensure that voluntary and community groups were making effective use of funding they received for ICT developments. This project came to an end in March 2011. Monitoring was of a high standard, back up by an independent evaluation.

Current Application

This application proposes to develop a new online service to support frontline organisations during a time of major welfare reform where there is likely to be significant local impact.

Building on the success of its "RightsNet UK" website (which provides a range of welfare rights support services for advice workers), it is proposed to develop a new "RightsNet Local" website, with a suite of online, borough-specific, resources and tools tailored to local need in each of the 32 boroughs, plus the City of London. The range of resources will include overarching information on welfare benefits, debt, fuel poverty, housing rights and community care. At the borough level, information will include localised council tax support, the devolved system of community care grants and crisis loans, discretionary housing payments and direct payments to those with community care needs. The website will also provide information about local sources of advice and support, including local advice agencies, Jobcentre Plus, key local authority contact

information, local advice networks and self-help groups. Finally, the website will provide an update service on local changes in policy and practice regarding welfare reform, online tools to map trends in local advice need for social policy purposes, and to demonstrate the impact of welfare reform.

It is proposed that the service will be delivered by working through Lasa's existing networks – Citizens Advice, Advice UK, the Law Centres Federation – as well as with local authorities and advice and information providers across London. In addition, it will also target those working in settings where advice needs, particularly regarding welfare reform, may become apparent, for example, in GP surgeries, community centres, youth clubs, faith groups and care homes.

Financial Observations

Audited accounts for the year ended 31 March 2012 show a deficit of £141,821 (14.2% of turnover), comprising a deficit on restricted activity of £188,094, partially offset by a surplus on unrestricted funds of £46,273.

The trustees' reserves policy is to hold free unrestricted reserves equivalent to 3 months' worth of expenditure, which, based on the current year equates to £146,700. At 31st March 2012, free unrestricted reserves amounted to £127,556 equating to 2.6 months' worth of total expenditure.

Draft accounts for 2012/13 show a deficit of £54,501 (4.9% of turnover), met entirely from unrestricted funds. This should reduce free unrestricted reserves to £92,199 (1.9 months' worth of expenditure).

The 2013/14 budget projects income of £589k and a surplus of £2,000. This includes grant income amounting to £308k (52% of total income) which has all been confirmed. The balance of £281k represents income to be earned during the year, mainly from subscriptions, courses and conferences.

Officer's Appraisal

The current economic downturn; increasing unemployment, debt and homelessness; combined with the scale of welfare reforms currently going through, means this project is more needed than ever. Lasa's combined expertise in both advice services and ICT make it well positioned to deliver this proposal to a high standard.

Recommendation

£99,500 over two years (£53,800; £45,700) towards the cost of establishing an online support service for voluntary sector advice agencies across London on welfare reform and the localisation of the welfare state.



The City Bridge Trust

Charity Registration Number: 1035628

Working with Londoners: Application for a grant

Please read the guidance notes before completing this form

Reference:
(office use only)

11584

Date Received:

13.12.12

Programme
Area:

7

1. About your organisation

Name of organisation applying for grant: Lasa	
If the organisation is part of a larger organisation, what is its name?	
Address for correspondence 3rd Floor, Universal House 88-94 Wentworth Street London	
Postcode: E1 7SA Is this your home address? No	
Contact person: Mr Shawn Mach	Position: Head of Social Welfare Law Services
Phone: 020 7426 4478	Fax: 020 7247 4725
E-mail: smach@lasa.org.uk	
Website: www.lasa.org.uk www.rightsnet.org.uk	
Legal status of organisation: Charity and Company limited by guarantee	
If registered, please give charity number: 800140	
Year and month organisation established: 1984 June	

2. Request for funds

Under which of the Trust's themes are you applying (see our website or brochure for further details)? Strengthening the Third Sector
Purpose for which funds are requested: (25 words maximum) To provide an online support service for frontline advice-providing organisations across London on welfare reform and the localisation of the welfare state.
How much funding is requested? Year 1: £53822 Year 2: £45772 Year 3: £ Total: £99594

3. Aims of your organisation

Lasa aims to see good advice available to all who need it and works to secure this by providing high quality support services to legal advice and information providers; promoting access to advice; promoting & developing new approaches to the use of technology in third sector organisations; and being a source of good practice and innovation.

Lasa's vision is of a society where access to information and expert advice on how to use it is available to all; where everyone, regardless of ability to pay, has access to the law to challenge discrimination, bad practice and disadvantage. We help thousands of organisations every year to provide better social welfare law advice to their clients; deliver more effective and efficient services through technology support; and influence policy for advice services.

4. Main activities of your organisation

Lasa offers knowledge, support and resources in technology and social welfare law advice. We also influence policy for the advice and legal services sector. Our services include online information and support (rightsnet, ICT Knowledgebase, Suppliers Directory), social welfare law training, telephone advice, ICT consultancy and support, & advice sector policy work. We help thousands of organisations to provide better welfare rights advice to their clients; deliver more effective and efficient services through strategic technology support; influence policy for advice and legal services; and raise awareness of third sector technology needs. We won a Nominet Internet Award 2011; a Technological Innovation prize at the LexisNexis Taxation Awards 2012; and a Technology4Good award 2012. Lasa provides support to social welfare law advisers who work with some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged communities, including families living in poverty, people with disabilities or mental health issues, and minority ethnic communities. We work across the spectrum of advice-giving organisations including CABx, law centres, local authority social services, residential care and housing departments, as well as independent advice giving organisations such as Shelter, Macmillan, Youth Access, Age UK and Carers UK.

5. Number of staff

Full-time	Part-time	Management committee members	Active volunteers
17	4	9	0

6. How do you support your volunteers?

When we have engaged volunteers, we have provided regular supervision and management support, and training and development opportunities. We also pay volunteer travel and meal expenses.

7. Property occupied by your organisation

Is the main property owned or leased/rented by your organisation?	If leased/rented, how long is the outstanding lease/rental agreement?
Leased	until 25 th March 2013.

8. Finance

From your most recent audited or independently examined accounts, complete the following:

Financial year ended -

Month: **March**

Year: **2012**

Income received from:	£
Voluntary income	16248
Activities for generating funds	-
Investment income	3785
Income from charitable activities	977373
Other sources	613393
Total Income	1610799

Expenditure:	£
Charitable activities	1117328
Governance costs	21899
Cost of generating funds	-
Other	-
Total Expenditure	1139227
(Deficit)/surplus for the year:	471,572

Asset position at year end	£
Fixed assets	15254
Investments	
Net current assets	620915
Long-term liabilities	(164597)
*Total A	471572

Reserves at year end	£
Endowment funds	
Restricted funds	328762
Unrestricted funds	142810
*Total B	471572

* Total A and Total B must be the same and should be taken from your balance sheet

9. Statutory funding

For the financial year above, what % of your income was from statutory sources?
25%

10. Material changes

Describe any material changes to the organisation's activities, structure or financial position since the date of the most recent accounts:

None

11. Previous applications to the Trust

Have you applied to the Trust before? If so, please give details:						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Month/Year: Jan	/	2009	Ref: 9339	Grant received: £100000	OR application rejected	<input type="checkbox"/>
Month/Year: Apr	/	2008	Ref: 8483	Grant received: £55000	OR application rejected	<input type="checkbox"/>
Month/Year: Sep	/	2004	Ref: 5817	Grant received: £90000	OR application rejected	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Previous funding received

Funding received by your organisation from the following sources during the last **THREE** years:
(i) City of London (other than the City Bridge Trust) **(ii)** London boroughs **(iii)** London Councils (formerly ALG)
(iv) Health authorities **(v)** Central government departments **(vi)** Other statutory bodies (e.g. Housing Corporation, Arts Council) - List source, years and annual amounts:

	Year: 2009	Year: 2010	Year: 2011
(i) N/A			
(ii) N/A			
(iii) London Councils	307559	240354	240354
(iv) N/A			
(v) HMRC			62500
(vi) Big Lottery Fund	118978	107824	97448

13. Previous grants received

Grants received by your organisation from charitable trusts and foundations (other than the City Bridge Trust) during the last **TWO** years. List source, years and annual amounts:

	Year: 2010	Year: 2011
Cripplegate Foundation	8528	8528
The Tides Foundation	-	470153
NAVCA	36000	36000
Trust for London	12150	16000
Wates Foundation	13000	7000
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation	17000	-

14. What steps is your organisation taking to reduce its carbon footprint?

Lasa is always seeking to minimise its carbon footprint, and we have regular environmental audits as part of this process. We recycle the majority of our waste: paper, cardboard, plastics (where possible), batteries, metals, glass, redundant PCs and other electrical equipment. Printers are set to duplex by default. Computers are turned off in the evening. We have replaced our old lightbulbs with energy efficient bulbs. Office heating is kept at a low level and stays off at weekends, evenings and public holidays. We monitor electricity and gas usage, and purchase electricity from renewable sources. Lasa encourages the use of public transport and cycling, by offering season ticket loans, participating in the 'Cycle to work' bicycle scheme and providing bicycle parking. We carbon offset any flights taken. We use recycled, environmentally friendly and fair trade products where available, and ensure all new computer equipment is energy star rated and as environmentally friendly as possible. We recently upgraded our telephone system, which resulted in a considerable energy saving. We are establishing an expertise in 'Green Computing', and produce articles for our ICT Knowledgebase - see www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/greencomputing.

15. Purpose

Complete this section whatever the amount of grant requested. **In addition**, if the request is for £25,000 or more in total, a fuller proposal should be sent with this form. Also, if your application is for all or part of new or existing post(s), please enclose a copy of the relevant job description(s) including the salary level.

In order to provide the right information, please refer to guidance note 15 before completing this section.

Our new online service 'rightsnet local' will provide support to frontline organisations across London enabling them to provide quality-assured advice and information to disadvantaged communities at a time of major welfare reform with significant local impact.

The Need - Rightsnet local responds to the need generated by the impact of the government's national welfare reforms on London communities; the increasing localisation of the welfare state; and the consequent increased demand placed on frontline advice and information services as a result of unemployment, welfare reform and increasing poverty. The project also responds to changes in the size and shape of the sector, targeting the increasing number of generalist advisers and 'problem noticers' in non-traditional advice settings such as GP surgeries, community centres & faith groups.

Delivery - Rightsnet local will provide a suite of online resources and tools tailored to local need in each of the 33 London boroughs including:

- information resources on welfare benefits and related welfare reform, debt, fuel poverty, housing rights, and community care, including leaflets, factsheets, and podcasts
- borough-by-borough information on local authority provision to meet local need, including localised council tax support; local social fund replacement schemes; discretionary housing payments; and community care direct payments
- an update service on local changes in welfare reform policy and practice, and online tools to map trends in local advice need
- borough-by-borough information on local sources of advice and support; and on employment and training opportunities.

Rightsnet local will build on the success of our national rightsnet service, www.rightsnet.org.uk, winner of a Nominet Internet Award 2011, and over the two-year life of the project will-

- Engage with more than 1,000 frontline VCS organisations across 33 London boroughs better equipping them to provide effective support to people with social welfare law problems
- Improve the skills and confidence of beneficiary organisations to identify solutions to social welfare law problems by developing and maintaining more than 500 pages of original online content, facilitating access to more than 3,000 sources of quality-assured information
- Improve the effectiveness of social welfare law advice & information provided by beneficiary organisations across 33 London boroughs by facilitating more than 150,000 visits to the site, with a quarter by quarter increase in the number of visits.

Why Lasa is the right organisation - Lasa provides both social welfare law services and technology advice and support. We have a track record in developing successful, award-winning resources that combine adviser support with online delivery. For example, our rightsnet service receives more than 20,000 unique visitors every month, Citizens Advice ensures access to the site for every CAB and rightsnet was the only second-tier website to receive the LSC quality mark. In recent user surveys 95% said that using rightsnet helped them to improve their clients' financial position.

Meeting the Trust's theme and principles - Lasa's aim is to help the third sector become stronger. Rightsnet local encourages the sector's use of ICT and improves the capacity of front-line organisations to provide better support to people with social welfare law problems. Beneficiary feedback will be regularly obtained and used in service development. The project will involve organisations in the assessment of project outcomes. We value and promote diversity through our commitment to the improvement of advice provision across a diverse range of London organisations each providing services to disadvantaged groups. The project will share learning through the online publication of updates on project developments and evaluation findings. Lasa routinely addresses carbon footprint issues in our advice on ICT development. We have regular environmental audits

16. Explain how you will monitor and evaluate both your own outcomes and those of the programme under which you are applying.

We will monitor our own and programme outcomes by collecting quantitative data on organisations who have engaged with the project, take-up of support services and project resources; and qualitative data to measure changes in the strategic use of ICT to provide better social welfare advice and information regarding welfare reform; changes in adviser skills & confidence, and changes in effectiveness of social welfare advice provision.

Qualitative measurement of the outcomes will include regular feedback sessions with beneficiary organisations, principally using online feedback mechanisms and yearly online surveys employing scales of change to indicate shifts as a result of project interventions.

Indicators we will use to measure change include number of organisations reporting & demonstrating improved ability: to use ICT to provide effective advice to service users on welfare reform as it impacts on their local community; to use online channels to stay up-to-date with changes in law as they relate to welfare reform; to be equipped for the impact of welfare changes on their clients; and, through increased adviser skills & confidence, to provide up to date, quality assured and effective advice and information to local communities. We will also commission formal evaluation to chart the project's progress and to inform future development.

17. Beneficiaries

How many people will benefit from the grant per year? **1000 VCS organisations in total (500 per year)**

In which local authority is your organisation based?
Tower Hamlets

Which borough(s) of Greater London will benefit from this grant?
(if more than one, please give % for each)
Londonwide - 100%

At what address will the activity be located? **3rd Floor, Universal House, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London, E1 7SA**

What age group will benefit? **All age groups**

What will the ethnic grouping(s) of the beneficiaries be?

	%		%
White - British		Black - Caribbean	
White - Irish		Black - African	
White - Other (please describe)		Black - Other (please describe)	
Asian - Indian		Black - British	
Asian - Pakistani		Chinese	
Asian - Bangladeshi			
Asian - Other (please describe)		Other (please describe)	
Open to everyone			100

What proportion of the beneficiaries will be disabled people?
We would expect 20% of beneficiaries to be disabled people.

18. Funding required for the project

What is the total cost of the proposed activity/project?

(List main expenditure headings and amounts)

Expenditure heading	Year 1 £	Year 2 £	Year 3 £	Total £
Fees - website development, hosting	10500	3500		14000
Fees - project evaluation	1000	1000		2000
Printing & Stationery	350	350		700
Marketing/Advertising	1000	1000		2000
Travel & Subsistence	250	250		500
Refreshments	200	200		400
Telephone, Post, Courier	350	350		700
Photocopier, Library & Subscriptions	250	250		500
IT & Equipment costs	1378	1378		2757
Project Staffing - Salary	23314	23314		46628
Employers NI, Pension, Training	4081	4081		8162
Managements Costs	4749	4749		9497
Support costs	6400	5350		11750
TOTAL	53822	45772		99594

What income has already been raised?

(List amounts and main sources)

Source	Year 1 £	Year 2 £	Year 3 £	Total £
N/A				
TOTAL				

What other funders are currently considering the proposal?

No others at present. City Bridge Trust is our first approach for the rightsnet local project.

19. Funding requested from the Trust

How much is requested from the Trust? (List main expenditure headings and amounts)

Expenditure heading	Year 1 £	Year 2 £	Year 3 £	Total £
Fees - website development, hosting	10500	3500		14000
Fees - project evaluation	1000	1000		2000
Printing & Stationery	350	350		700
Marketing/Advertising	1000	1000		2000
Travel & Subsistence, refreshments	450	450		900
Telephone, Post, Courier	350	350		700
Photocopier, Library & Subscriptions	250	250		500
IT & Equipment costs	1378	1378		2757
Project Staffing - Salary	23314	23314		46628
Employers NI, Pension, Training	4081	4081		8162
Managements Costs	4749	4749		9497
Support costs	6400	5350		11750
TOTAL	53822	45772		99594

20. Funding requested from the Trust (continued)

When will the funding be required? **April 2013**

Is the activity to continue beyond the period for which funding is requested?

If so, how will it be resourced? **We aim to replicate the success of our national rightsnet service which we transitioned from a grant funded project to a self-sustaining service. We did this by generating income from a variety of sources including user subscriptions; advertising revenue; as well as statutory funding (both local and national government), and grant funding. Rightsnet was shortlisted for The Guardian Social Enterprise Award**

If any planning or other statutory consents are required for the project to proceed, what stage have the applications reached? **N/A**

Declaration on behalf of applicant organisation

I, **Terry Stokes** (your name)

am an authorised representative of

Lasa (your organisation)

within which I am **Chief Executive** (your position)

To the best of my knowledge, all the information that I have provided in this application form is correct

Signature



Date

7/12/12

Return the completed form to: The City Bridge Trust

City of London

PO Box 270

Guildhall

London EC2P 2EJ

Please

- **do not send this application by fax or e-mail** - unless applying online, applications must be posted to the Trust
- **do send the information in the checklist** - if items are missing, your application will be returned to you
- **do send only the information in the checklist** - if further information is required, we will contact you
- **do ensure you have signed and dated this form** - we cannot accept forms which have not been signed and dated
- **do use the correct postage** - the completed form and additional materials are likely to exceed 100g in weight