

City Bridge Trust – Monitoring Visit Report

Organisation: Olmec	Grant ref: 10374 (JF)	Programme area: Strengthening the Third Sector\ (b) BME & refugee community organisations
Amount, date and purpose of grant: 02/12/2010: £128,000 over three years (£42,000; £42,500; £43,500) towards the salary and associated running costs of a capacity building programme supporting third sector BME social enterprises across London.		
Visiting Grants Officer: Jemma Grieve Combes	Date of meeting: 11/02/2013	
Met with: John Mayford, Director; Mei Yee Hui, Social Enterprise Programme Coordinator		
<p>1. Introduction to the organisation: Olmec is a social enterprise that champions race equality by supporting BME and refugee led social enterprises. Established in 2003 as a subsidiary charity of Presentation Housing Association, Olmec became an independent charity in 2010. It offers a portfolio of services including Step Ahead, the project funded by City Bridge Trust; Step Change to help organisations manage change such as moving from a charity to social enterprise legal structure; Solid Foundations supporting people from BME and refugee communities into employment, training and work experience; Co-operative Diversity Action offering support to encourage more people from BME communities to get involved in and set up co-operatives; and Black on Board to help individuals from BME communities to be effective board members and trustees.</p>		
<p>2. The project funded: City Bridge Trust awarded £128,000 in December 2010 to develop Olmec’s Step Ahead programme, which combines elements of its ‘Ready to Grow’ and ‘First Steps’ programmes. The project aimed to provide intensive, one-to-one support to 30 organisations in cohorts of 15 organisations over 18 months and to support a further 50-100 organisations through training programmes and business breakfast sessions. Olmec identified that they particularly wanted to reach Bangladeshi, Somali and Polish communities, and at the time of application were conducting research to better understand their social enterprise needs.</p>		
<p>3. Work delivered to date: Olmec successfully recruited 15 organisations as part of the first cohort of one to one work and has recruited 11 to date for the second cohort. A wide range of organisations from different communities have been recruited with projects including a Saturday football league for young people, community café, space for community organisations and film-making. Each organisation receives a diagnostic check, using 18 different elements of need and a development plan is created from this. Typically one-to-one work lasts for up to 18 months which avoids any dependency upon Olmec. Beyond this organisations can stay involved through training and networking opportunities and can still pick up the phone to ask questions. Training events are on target and reflect current demands of organisations. Recent events have included social impact measurement, developing a marketing strategy and social media, and training on pricing and costing and investment planning is forthcoming. Business breakfasts to provide networking opportunities are held every 2 months. Both training events and business breakfasts are clearly promoted with</p>		

venues, dates and topics on Olmec's website.

4. Difference made: Olmec has found that one to one support is a particularly valuable way of supporting organisations and cited several examples of success. One of the success stories is DCP Health Care, an organisation that signed up to Step Ahead in February 2012 to develop a project working with personal budgets. Olmec provided them with support on market research, business planning, networking and financial intelligence. With this support DCP achieved Care Quality Commission approval in July 2012, officially launched the project in September 2012, received a haberdasher's business award in October 2012, signed their first client in November 2012 and received their first funding of £10,000 in January 2013 for a project marketing officer.

Step Ahead is promoted to social enterprises from a range of different BME communities across London and has even had inquiries from different parts of the country. Olmec has furthered understanding about Bangladeshi, Polish and Somali led social enterprises through a case study report it published in June 2011.

It is important to recognise that City Bridge Trust support will have a far wider benefit than the development of each organisation supported. For example an external evaluation of Olmec's 2008-2011 Ready to Grow programme found that even before the programme had finished, the support provided had helped 20 BME led social enterprises to create at least 39 new jobs and expand turnover by £618,000. An estimate of social return on investment was £6 for every £1 invested.

5. Grants Administration: The grant is well managed with clear records kept both on project progress and finances. All grant outputs are incorporated into organisational Key Performance Indicators which are then linked into monthly supervisions with employees. The monitoring report received at the end of year 1 was satisfactory and unusually Olmec have also published key monitoring information from year 1 on their website. The Social Enterprise Programme Coordinator attended the meeting with your grants officer and was knowledgeable both in the subject matter and in the details of individual organisations supported. A satisfactory P11 was sent following the meeting.

6. Concluding comments: Olmec is providing a valuable service which is helping a wide range of social enterprises to grow and become more sustainable. Working with organisations on a one-to-one basis means that Olmec can work with organisations to not only understand their needs holistically but to help them deliver their development action plans over time. This is a difficult time for race equality organisations with significant cuts to statutory funding, but Olmec are successfully generating new business. Notably City Bridge Trust funding has been instrumental in helping Olmec to lever in other sources of funding including direct commissions to run its First Steps programme from RBS and the Metropolitan Housing Foundation.