

Committee(s):	Date(s):
City Bridge Trust	13/03/2014
Subject: Strategic Initiative – Research on Access to the Arts for People with Learning Disabilities	Public
Report of: Chief Grants Officer	For Decision
Summary	
<p>This report requests funding to commission scoping research to determine the current status of access for people with learning disabilities to museums, galleries and performing arts in London and to determine strategies for improvement.</p>	
Recommendation	
<p>Members are asked to:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Approve a sum of £40,000 from your allocation for Strategic Initiatives to commission Lemos&Crane to undertake research into the scope for people with learning disabilities to access the Arts in London.</p>	

Main Report

Background

1. The Trust has been a regular and significant supporter of access to services for disabled Londoners since it commenced its grant-making in September 1995. Since then, you have awarded several millions of pounds to projects across and crossing London to enable disabled people to live more independently and to have the opportunities that many of us take for granted.
2. You have had a focus on disability and access issues in every major funding programme since your inception. In 2007 you published “Opening Doors Across London” – an examination of the impact of your support for better building access and guidance for those considering such improvements and which upheld the view that your support for better access to buildings has had a significant and far-reaching impact on service provision and on policy.
3. Your current programmes – Investing in Londoners – continue the commitment to access to buildings and services with a particular focus on ensuring that disabled Londoners can take part in arts and sport. Other programme strands incorporate support to enable people to live more independently and to address, for example, some of the consequences of poor mental health.

Current Position

4. Whilst much has been achieved in the past 15-20 years to make London a more accessible city (driven, also, by legislation such as the Disability

Discrimination Act 1995 and subsequent amendments and latterly the Equality Act 2010) much of the emphasis – and benefit – has been on addressing the needs of people with physical disabilities. Those with learning disabilities have not fared as well.

5. The social lives of adults with learning disabilities too often revolve mostly around day centres, pubs, cafes and sitting at home watching television or on the internet. Access to more meaningful social activity - including sports clubs, the arts, museums and galleries – is an essential component in building resilience and protective and empowering social networks.
6. Despite longstanding commitments to access, participation, learning and diversity, the major museums, galleries and arts venues are not required by funders or policy makers to promote access for people with learning disabilities to the same degree they might be for those with physical disabilities. The websites of most major venues are explicit about their support for physically disabled people to enter and enjoy their buildings and services but are mute by comparison on their support for learning-disabled people, especially adults.
7. This is not to say, of course, that nothing is happening. There have been, and are, some very good initiatives though many of these are event-type (eg festivals) or short term projects.
8. In short, progress on improving access for people with learning disabilities is at best small scale, limited, patchy and not sustained. The impact, therefore, is minimal. There is no established body of good practice for improving access in performing arts venues and, particularly, in galleries or museums (60% of which are in London). As well as there being a big gap in policy and practice, there is also very little research.

Proposal

9. Your officers convened a breakfast seminar in December 2013 attended by representatives from the British Museum, the V&A, the Barbican, and the London International Festival of Theatre. Other funders were also represented, including Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and the Rayne Foundation, whilst from the disability arts world came Shape Arts, Heart n Soul and Magpie Dance. All agreed that much more needed to be done to improve access for adults with learning disabilities but, foremost, was the need to determine the current picture, through research.
10. Since the breakfast seminar initial discussions with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) confirmed that the picture was “patchy at best”. Staff at HLF are keen to be involved in any research undertaken.
11. It is proposed to commission a scoping study to understand the extent and nature of activities and approaches to improving access to the arts, galleries and museums for people with learning disabilities; and to identify gaps and make recommendations for good practice as well as policy. The key objectives would be:

- To review the policy and practice of performing arts venues, galleries and museums in London in relation to adults with learning disabilities
 - To identify activities and projects currently taking place to improve access
 - To identify activities and projects being undertaken in adult social care or in supported housing to improve access to such activities
 - To scope a larger programme of work with venues to develop and disseminate models of good practice
 - To make recommendations for funders and venues on improving access for adults with learning disabilities
 - To present and discuss the findings at a seminar for funders and service providers
12. Given the nature of the subject and the constituency it is proposed to commission Lemos&Crane (sic) to undertake this research. They have delivered very effective and valuable research for you on previous occasions, including that which instigated your Fear & Fashion programme and, more recently, on the research leading to your highly regarded publication *The Arts Case – Why the Arts make a difference*. They currently operate your Growing Localities Awards scheme which, in this second year, has seen an increased profile and attracted a greater number of applications than last year. They also bring to the table excellent contacts and credibility within the Arts world (Gerard Lemos CMG is currently Vice-President of the British Board of Film Classification and was previously Deputy Chairman, then Chairman, of the British Council) whilst having practical knowledge of the Trust's work and its position within the City Corporation.

Costs

13. Lemos&Crane have provided detailed costings for undertaking the scoping and research and which amount to £40,000 (ex VAT). These costs include the writing of the final paper (including its design and web enabling); its dissemination and promotion online; and on the organisation and running of a seminar to take forward any recommendations. The costs, calculated on daily rates of researchers and senior personnel involved, are reasonable.

Conclusion

14. Whilst access to goods and services for people with physical disabilities has greatly improved in the past 20 years – largely through a combination of stick (legislation) and carrot (greater understanding and awareness) – the same cannot be said for people with learning difficulties. By focusing on improving access to the arts, (particularly to museums, galleries and theatres) your Trust can play a significant and timely role in enabling learning-disabled adults to enjoy the freedom and choices which many of us take for granted. The scope to mobilise other funders to use their influence to instigate change in this area is also considerable.

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