

**MEETING 19/06/2014**

**Ref: 12171**

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Strengthening London's Voluntary Sector**

**Race On The Agenda**

**Adv: Jenny Field**

**Base: Islington**

**Amount requested: £54,915**

**Benefit: London-wide**

**Amount recommended: £55,000**

**Purpose of grant request:** Delivering training, brokering pro-bono legal expertise and providing ongoing support, so organisations can produce equality monitoring/evaluation compliant with legislation and hold public authorities to account.

**Background**

Race on the Agenda (ROTA) was established in 1984. It is one of the UK's leading social policy think-tanks focusing on issues that affect people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities. It aims to build the capacity and strengthen the voice of BME organisations through increased civic engagement and participation in society.

ROTA's work with young people on gun and knife crime and, more recently on girls and women associated with gangs, has had considerable influence in shaping policy both at the local and the national level.

**Funding History**

You have funded ROTA on several occasions previously. You approved a grant of £90,000 over three years in September 2001 towards an information service for the BME voluntary sector in London. In October 2002, you approved a grant of £52,000 over two years on your then Golden Jubilee grants initiative for a programme of community cohesion; and in April 2007 you awarded £25,000, on your special edition Leadership and Reconciliation programme. The work undertaken on these various projects was of a good standard. In May 2012, you awarded a grant of £100,000 over 2 years (2 x £50,000) towards the full-time salary and associated running costs of a Project Officer providing training, capacity building support and advice and information on the Equalities Act 2010. This grant is due to end in September 2014, when a monitoring report will be due.

**Current Application**

This application is for a third year's contribution towards the project currently funded. The Equality Act 2010 is one of the most fundamental overhauls of UK anti-discrimination legislation for a number of years. It aims to simplify previous strands of anti-discriminatory legislation by bringing them together under a single Act. The legislation has significant implications for frontline organisations and statutory bodies, since it covers areas such as services and public functions, and premises and contracts.

Working closely with key local voluntary sector infrastructure bodies, your current grant has enabled ROTA to provide: training introducing the Equality Act to approximately 120 voluntary and community groups annually in order to help them

strengthen their equality practices; training to approximately 150 organisations each year on using the Public Sector Equality Duty provisions of the Equality Act to hold public authorities to account; and to provide one to one support to voluntary organisations that either require advice about their individual practices or on how to use the Act to challenge their local authority. In addition, it has developed online resources to complement this programme of work.

If funding is approved for a further year, ROTA would continue to provide training as before. In addition, 40 organisations will receive 'train the trainer' training, in order to enable understanding of the Equality Act to cascade throughout the sector in London and ROTA will aim to work with approximately 40 organisations to provide one-to-one support over technical aspects of the Act.

A practical example of how ROTA has supported a voluntary sector organisation to use the Act to challenge a public authority took place in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, where a local disability charity used the Public Sector Equality Duty provisions to question a potential move of the Substance Misuse element of the Kingston Wellbeing Service based at Surbiton Health Care Centre. The CEO of the charity persuaded the Director of Public Health to undertake an Equality Impact Analysis.

### **Financial Observations**

Audited accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 show an overall deficit of £8,975 (2.5% of turnover), comprising a deficit of £15,077 on restricted funds, partially offset by a surplus of £6,102 on unrestricted funds.

The reserve policy states that the organisation aims to hold between three and six months' worth of expenditure which based on the current year's projected expenditure is between £66,852 and £133,704. Free unrestricted reserves at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 stood at £182,215 which is 8.2 months' worth of current year expenditure.

Draft accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 show a deficit of £86,104 (43.3% of turnover), comprising a deficit of £64,613 on unrestricted funds and a deficit of £21,491 on restricted funds. The deficit on unrestricted funds was due to the decision to use its excess of reserves, to continue to fund work which had previously been funded through restricted funds that had come to an end.

The budget for the current year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 predicts a further deficit all on unrestricted funds of £35,825 (15.5% of turnover). Total predicted income is £253,785 of which £231,585 (91.3%) had been confirmed at 29<sup>th</sup> May 2014. This will reduce the charity's unrestricted free reserves to a predicted £81,777 at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015, which is equivalent to 3.7 months' worth of expenditure in the current year.

### **Officer's Appraisal**

ROTA has a reputation for providing high quality services and it is an important provider of infrastructure support in London. It is consulted widely by central government, notably the Home Office and the Department for Education, as well as regionally, for example by the GLA and London Councils.

The Equalities Act is a significant piece of legislation and it is important that third sector organisations understand its implications for them. The proposed programme

fits well within the localism agenda of encouraging local people to take more responsibility for their communities.

### **Recommendation**

**£55,000 over one year towards the full-time salary and associated running costs of a Specialist Project Officer providing training, capacity building support and advice and information on the Equalities Act 2010. Release of the grant is subject to receipt of a satisfactory monitoring report for year 2 of the current grant.**