

MEETING 19/06/2015

Ref: 12134

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Strengthening London's Voluntary Sector

Voice4Change England

Adv: Jenny Field

Amount requested: £86,797

Base: Lambeth

Benefit: London-wide

Amount recommended: £60,000

Purpose of grant request: To improve the resilience of the BME voluntary sector in London through developing models of collaborative and partnership based work.

Background

Voice4Change was established during 2007 in order to represent the BME third sector at the national policy level. It is a membership organisation that aims to increase the BME third sector's involvement in the policy making process; increase awareness amongst policy makers, funders and the wider voluntary sector of its members' impact; and to increase the capacity of the BME sector to make its voice heard.

Time-limited funding until March 2011 was provided by central government until March 2011 to help establish the organisation. Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG - which you are currently supporting) acted as the employing body initially whilst the Minority Ethnic Network for the Eastern Region acted as the accountable body. Voice4Change incorporated as an independent body in July 2010 and attained charitable registration in March 2011.

Funding History

In September 2011, you approved a grant of £108,200 over two years (£55,800; £52,400) towards a project to develop fair and equitable collaborations between London's BME and mainstream voluntary sector. Reporting to date has been of a good standard.

Current Application

You are requested to fund this project for a third and final year. The first year of the project focused on scoping, research and development in order to identify the barriers to successful collaboration, using desk research, one to one interviews and focus groups. This enabled the organisation to produce a 'Barriers to Collaboration' publication which has been widely disseminated through the council for voluntary service (CVS) network; through London Voluntary Services Council (LVSC); and other key infrastructure bodies such as BTEG. By engaging with a number of organisations and networks, the Development Officer has been able to develop a Guiding Principles Framework for successful collaboration between the sectors which was launched, in partnership with LVSC, at an event last October. Voice4Change has also begun to compile case studies of successful collaborations between the sectors and which are being made available on its website. In addition, it has provided 50 days of training and support during the past year to BME groups in London.

As a result, it has been able to build its reputation for expertise in this area, evidenced through its work in collaboration with LVSC and through the requests it receives to deliver workshops and speak at events.

In a climate of scarce resources, collaborative working is more important than ever, as more organisations are looking to the development of more formal partnerships and even mergers. If funding is approved for a further year, Voice4Change proposes to:

- Work with 30 organisations in relation to partnership and collaboration and compile models of merger where appropriate.
- Run 10 themed workshops on partnership working.
- Broker partnerships and collaborations amongst local groups and infrastructure organisations through the delivery of 50 sessions of one-to-one support.
- Produce three detailed case studies for dissemination.
- Organise two events to showcase good practice in collaborative and partnership across different sectors.

As a result it is hoped to help make the sector more resilient and skilled at surviving during difficult times.

Financial Observations

Independently examined accounts for the year ended 31st March 2013 show a deficit of £121,369 (78% of turnover), comprising deficits of £66,297 on restricted and £55,072 on unrestricted funds. Turnover decreased by 53% on the previous year as a result of several government, time-limited, funding streams coming to an end.

The organisation's reserves policy is to hold between 3 and 6 months' worth of expenditure in free unrestricted reserves which based on projected expenditure in 2014/15 equates to between £51,288 and £102,576. As at 31st March 2013 free unrestricted reserves amounted to £58,719, which is equivalent to 3.4 months' worth of current year expenditure.

Latest management accounts for the year ended 31st March 2014 show a deficit of £104,589 (84% of turnover), comprising deficits of £26,925 on unrestricted activity and £77,664 on restricted funds. The restricted funds deficit is due to expenditure being financed from restricted funds received in the previous year. Free unrestricted reserves at 31st March 2014 stood at £31,794 which is equivalent to 1.9 months' worth of current year expenditure.

The budget for the current year to 31st March 2015 projects an overall surplus of £11,121 (5.1% of turnover), all on unrestricted funds. Of the budgeted anticipated income of £216,274, £130,134 (60.2%) had been confirmed at 22nd May 2014. The balance comprises trading income as well as this grant application of £60k.

At 31st March 2015 free unrestricted reserves are predicted to be £42,915, which is equivalent to 2.5 months' worth of current year expenditure.

Officer's Appraisal

Voice4Change is one of the key players in the infrastructure arena and it has gained a reputation as an effective contributor in the policy, planning and decision making

arenas. It is important in the current climate that organisations work more collaboratively. However, it is also important that collaborations are fair and equitable if they are to be sustainable and support BME communities.

The amount requested is comparatively high relative to your usual patterns of grant-making and relative to the amount of your current grant. (Applicants are advised that continuation funding is usually at a level similar to the previous award.) The amount recommended is therefore for a lesser amount. This will enable Voice4Change to deliver the proposed programme but means that you will be contributing less towards its core costs than the applicant had hoped for.

Recommendation

£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.