

City Bridge Trust – Monitoring Visit Report

Organisation: Women's Environmental Network Trust	Grant ref: 10918	Programme area: London's Environment(a) Environmental Education
Amount, date and purpose of grant: 17/11/2011: £82,100 over three years (£32,300; £24,300; £25,500) towards the delivery of the Spice it Up! programme. The grant is conditional upon the Trust not being the organisation's largest single funder in years 2 and 3.		
Visiting Grants Officer: Jemma Grieve Combes	Date of meeting: 01/04/2014	
Met with: Kate Metcalf, Local Food Project Coordinator (postholder); Julia Minnear (postholder);, Shirley Abranches, Finance Officer		
1. Introduction to the organisation: Women's Environmental Network (WEN) was set up in 1998 to raise awareness about environmental issues that affect women. It delivers projects and campaigns addressing key environmental and economic factors largely, but not exclusively from a female perspective. Past projects include Fruity Beauty (environmentally friendly cosmetics); Real Nappies; Enviromenstrual; Gender and climate change; and Local Food. The organisation is relatively small and benefits from the support of 6 regular office volunteers plus more who volunteer at one-off events.		
2. The project funded: City Bridge Trust funding supports the expansion of Spice it Up! an urban food growing project which aims to empower unemployed Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women in Hackney to learn to grow, or grow more, sustainable food where they live. Over three years the project aims to deliver 12 4-week training courses each with 20 trainees; arrange voluntary placements in community gardens for each trainee; create 1 new community garden; provide a quarterly newsletter and peer support network; and run 6 Culture Kitchen events. By the end of the three year project, 180 women are expected to have improved food skills and confidence to grow food. WEN anticipates at least 600 people will more aware of the environmental, social and economic benefits of local food.		
3. Work delivered to date: The first year of the grant was well reported on. WEN delivered 4 Spice it Up! Courses with 15 trainees; 1 advanced course with 23 trainees; 2 culture kitchen events with 100 attendees each; 4 peer support network events/visits; 4 e-newsletters; and developed the food growing space at several community locations. At the monitoring visit your Officer learnt more about the Spite it UP training courses. Each course involves classroom and practical elements as well as visits to other community food growing spaces. At level 1 topics include seed sowing, soil, pests and organic planting. Level 2 courses are more in-depth and include guest speakers on topics such as permaculture, propagation, fruit trees and pruning. The courses are not accredited which is preferred by some attending, but for those who are, for example, looking to improve their employability, WEN will signpost to accredited courses such as those run by OrganicLea. The social aspect of Spice it Up! is really important so as well as providing group work as part of the courses, WEN also facilitates a peer network and the Culture Kitchen events. Culture Kitchen events attract alumni of Spice it Up! as well as others. The most recent event in March 2013		

included workshops is seed-sowing, cooking, fruity beauty, routes to higher education at University of East London, knitting, fruit carving; a shared lunch prepared by Spice it Up! trainee/food co-op social enterprise graduate; and stalls including energy efficiency advice, WEN/Tower Hamlets Community Seed Library, University of East London, and a food co-op.

The year 2 monitoring report is due in May 2014.

4. Difference made:

The success of the project means that WEN is diversifying Spice it Up! for different beneficiaries. For example, WEN has worked with IRIE Mind Centre in Hackney to train services users in community food growing and set up a community food garden. Most users suffer from paranoid schizophrenia and other mental health issues. WEN found they had to adapt their standard training course, for example, focusing more on practical than theoretical elements. WEN has also carried out some work with housing estates. Staff have found some new challenges such as challenging attitudes of young people towards food growing and limiting the training to residents – but there is lots of demand and the potential for work to develop further.

5. Grants Administration:

Both postholders were met at the monitoring visit and the organisation confirmed that monthly returns are sent to HMRC in real time. City Bridge Trust funding is correctly accounted for as a restricted fund and shown separately in the current budget. City Bridge Trust funding wasn't separately acknowledged in the 2012/13 accounts but included as part of Local Food Fund (Big Lottery)/ Spice it Up. This was raised at the monitoring visit. It was an oversight and will be addressed in the 2013/14 accounts. The organisation is currently setting up Quickbooks which will make this easier to do in the future. Fuller details of their current financial position will be submitted with the organisation's year 2 monitoring report in May 2014.

6. Concluding comments:

This small organisation delivers an impressive amount of work with passionate and knowledgeable staff. It delivers on target and accounts for its work well. It has been able to use the success of its food courses with women to adapt and run new courses for other target groups which will help it expand its work in the future. Moving forward your Officer discussed how stories and case studies would help the organisation better communicate the value of its work. The organisation was able to share a small booklet on its Food Projects which it produced in 2013 including case studies with individuals. These really help show the diversity of women attending its courses and how it has helped them develop in different ways.