

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving London's Environment**Trees for Cities**

Adv: Tania Bronstein
Base: Lambeth
Benefit: London-wide

Amount requested: £150,000

Amount recommended: £150,000

The Charity

Trees for Cities (TfC) is a charity that works with local communities to improve neglected urban spaces through tree planting and landscaping projects. Its work focuses on creating edible playgrounds in schools; urban woodlands, and canopy cover in urban areas.

The Application

TfC seeks funds over three years to develop edible playgrounds in 20 London schools, providing children with opportunities to grow, nurture, harvest and eat fruit and vegetables, while helping to integrate outdoor learning into the school curriculum. The charity will design and help build the edible playgrounds and also support participant schools to maintain, sustain and fund their edible gardens.

The Recommendation

TFC has vast expertise and a demonstrable track record in embedding food-growing into the school curriculum, with success in bringing about change in children's eating habits and in their environmental awareness. A grant is recommended as follows:

£150,000 over three years (3 x £50,000) towards staffing and associated costs of developing and sustaining edible playgrounds in 20 London schools. The grant in years two and three is subject to securing the balance of funds needed to make the project viable.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
31/10/2012	£100,000 over two years (2 x £50,000) towards salary and project costs to provide work based Level 1 horticultural training for 120 long-term unemployed and socially excluded young adults.
25/11/2008	£105,000 over three years (3 x £35,000) towards a programme of community environmental activities and education.
21/03/2002	£75,000 over three years (3 x £25,000) towards environmental education and community work around tree planting initiatives.

Background and detail of proposal

TfC started life with a mission to plant trees in the most barren and desolated parts of London. Twenty years on, it has planted 500,000 trees and has worked with 65,000 volunteers. It now operates nationally and internationally, but London remains the key focus of activity.

The charity has been developing "edible playgrounds" in schools since 2000. This work includes site surveys; design; landscaping; engaging pupils, the school community and volunteers in planting; "hands-on" work; and educational workshops and maintenance support. Independent evaluation of this work indicates that, in 72%

of the schools, pupils were more likely to choose fruit over less healthy snacks; and in all schools, children have gained greater knowledge of science, the environment and improved social skills. The project was a finalist at the 2013 Financial Times-Citi Ingenuity Awards for projects across the globe which are tackling, imaginatively, the challenges facing today's cities.

This proposal seeks to develop 10 "flagship hubs" in schools with ample outdoor space for large edible playgrounds, and 10 "sow and grow" schools where space is limited, encouraging schools to share facilities and resources. The work would be enhanced by bespoke online resources, and by engaging local business and TfC's corporate partners as volunteers and supporters. An external evaluation would be provided on pro-bono basis. TfC would work with each school for one year; and with five, six and nine schools in years one, two and three respectively. Annual costs of "flagship hubs" are £30,000 and "sow and grow" schools come to £10,000. Detailed breakdown of costs supplied are considered reasonable.

TfC has raised funds for the project's first year (schools are contributing 37% of the costs). For later years, LB Lambeth has just confirmed £100,000 (having won £600,000 from London's Mayor and a Department for Education award to tackle child obesity through better diet and food education). Schools are anxious to meet the new curriculum whereby Key Stage 2 pupils should know where and how food is grown, and understand the principles of healthy eating and seasonality. TfC is confident that it would attract more schools (and hence more funds) for the project. At this juncture, it would be prudent to make the release of funds in years two and three subject to TfC securing the full balances needed.

Financial Comments

Confirmed income in 2014/15 was £641,979 (47.3%) at 2nd August 2014. The charity has advised that it is not unusual for it to have raised this percentage of its income at this point, as funds from local authorities and other landowners are usually agreed just before the planting season late October. In response to a reduction in income in 2013/14 of £69k (5%), TFC will soon appoint a business development manager with a remit to develop new income streams and strengthen future income generation.

Year end at 31 st March	2012/13 Audited Accounts	2013/14 Draft Accounts	2014/15 Current Year Budget
	£	£	£
Income and Expenditure			
Income	1,403,936	1,335,310	1,357,250
Expenditure	1,490,747	1,328,010	1,352,021
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(86,811)	42,042	5,229
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	0	(34,742)	0
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	(86,811)	7,300	5,229
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	(6.2%)	0.5%	0.4%
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	193,414 (13.8%)	134,069 (10.0%)	140,030 (10.3%)
Free unrestricted reserves			
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	440,881	466,818	472,047
How many months' worth of expenditure	3.5	4.9	4.2
Reserves Policy target	372,687- 621,145	332,001- 553,337	338,005 - 563,342
How many months' worth of expenditure	3.0 – 5.0	3.0 – 5.0	3.0 – 5.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	68,194 – (180,264)	134,817 - (86,519)	134,042– (91,294)