

Committee:	Date:
City Bridge Trust	27/11/2014
Subject: Update on Access Europe	Public
Report of: Chief Grants Officer	For Decision
Summary	
<p>At your last meeting, you received a Strategic Initiative proposal to fund Access Europe to run a pilot programme of capacity building support to help London's voluntary sector access European funding. The report is appended at Appendix A for your information. You deferred a decision, requesting that further information be brought to this meeting.</p>	
Recommendation	
<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve a Strategic Initiative of £60,400 over 30 months to enable Access Europe Network, to run a pilot programme of capacity building support designed to enable voluntary organisations in London take up funding opportunities offered by various European funding streams. 	

Main Report

Background

1. Access Europe Network (AEN) is a newly formed Community Interest Company, established to improve access to EU funding for London's public and voluntary sectors. The City of London Corporation is one of its four core supporters, funding of £50,000 a year for three years having been approved by Policy and Resources Committee in February 2014. The other three funders are London Councils, the GLA and Greater London Enterprise.
2. AEN evolved from London Councils, through the London Councils European Service which was delivered by Greater London Enterprise until June 2014. The new organisation is more developed than its predecessor and has been set up in response to the new round of EU funds (well in excess of €750 million) that will become available for London between 2014 and 2020.
3. AEN provides a combination of free and paid-for services to London local authorities. It provides intelligence, advice and support to ensure that London

organisations, including London's voluntary sector, are well equipped to access the opportunities available.

The Proposal

4. Access to EU funds is increasingly important to the voluntary sector, especially in a climate where other funding opportunities are being reduced or cut. However, access to these funds is not easy and the sector needs to be realistic about the funds that could benefit them.
5. The proposal from AEN is to build the capacity of a number of London's voluntary organisations with the aim of helping them make successful bids and manage their projects effectively, through a pilot programme of support over a 30-month period.

European Funding Streams available 2014 -2019

6. More information about the various funding streams and the characteristics of potential applicants is provided in a table appended at Appendix B.
7. Particular concerns were raised at the last meeting about the 'Europe for Citizens' programme. This programme aims to improve civic and democratic participation at EU level, with two themes:
 - European Remembrance.
 - Democratic engagement and civic participation, including town twinning.
8. The first theme has funded three programmes in 2014: the 100th anniversary of World War 1, the fall of the Berlin Wall and 10 years of the enlargement of the EU to central and Eastern Europe. The Imperial War Museum and the Netherhall Educational Association (set up in 1952 by Opus Dei and others to foster academic, social, spiritual and character development, especially among young students) were the only two UK projects funded.
9. The second theme has not awarded any town twinning or city network grants to UK organisations. Three UK grants were awarded under the civic participation programme: the Centre for Economic Policy Research received a grant for its aim of fostering non-partisan, high-quality, policy-relevant economic research through its network of 800 researchers; Community Service Volunteers received funding for Volunteurope, a 32 year-old network promoting the value and principles of volunteering, active citizenship and social justice across Europe; and the Euclid Network which helps to manage EU programmes through its network of 300 members across 31 countries.
10. Although there is some potential for voluntary sector engagement in projects funded on this programme (although not to lead them) neither strand of this programme is likely to attract smaller voluntary sector organisations which are the target of AEN's proposal to your Committee today.

Conclusion

11. It perhaps should be emphasised that not every participant in the proposed programme will necessarily secure EU funding, following the competitive bidding process. Nevertheless, the capacity building support they will have received will be valuable in itself and will help them in future non-EU funding rounds, such as competitive tendering procedures.

12. Whilst EU funds are not suitable for all voluntary organisations, the latest funding round does present significant and welcome opportunities from which London's voluntary sector could benefit.

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