

MEETING: 12/03/2015

Ref: 12521

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Strengthening London's Voluntary Sector

Voluntary Action Islington Limited

Adv: Sandra Jones

Base: Islington

Benefit: Islington

Amount requested: £96,873

Amount recommended: £96,900

The Charity

Voluntary Action Islington (VAI) is the council for voluntary service serving the London Borough of Islington. As well as providing some capacity building support and an information service, the charity has been responsible for running the borough's volunteer centre since 2009. The organisation represents Islington's voluntary and community sector in various cross-sectoral partnerships and networks, as well as enabling its members to influence change. Operating from premises in Pentonville Road, the charity provides a resource centre used by the voluntary sector for hiring desk space and meeting and conference rooms.

The Application

This proposal is focused on VAI's role as the borough volunteer centre and will provide support to improve induction and training for volunteers and create volunteer supervisor roles. The request is for two-year funding towards a part-time Project Officer, a one day per week Senior Project Officer and associated running costs.

The Recommendation

It is one of your priorities to improve volunteer management within voluntary and community sector organisations. In 2011 your Committee awarded VAI two years' funding to help groups, mainly from minority ethnic and refugee communities, to be more effective in recruiting and sustaining volunteer involvement. This application builds on the previous grant and is to work with small and medium sized community organisation to improve induction of new volunteers and to create new roles whereby volunteers supervise other volunteers. The project will be delivered by a part-time Project Officer and part-time Senior Project Officer, with associated running costs and costs of delivering training courses:

£96,900 over two years (£48,000, £48,900) for the costs of a p/t (4 dpw) Project Officer; 1 day per week Senior Project Officer; and associated running costs and the costs of delivering training courses.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
13/03/2014	A grant of £375 under the Eco Audit programme for the provision of a one day information workshop for front line workers.
30/06/2011	A grant of £91,000 over two years (£45,000; £46,000) towards the salary and on-costs of a full-time Development Officer
03/04/2008	£129,000 over three years (£42,000; £43,000; £44,000) towards small group development work in LB Islington.

Background and detail of proposal

Feedback obtained by VAI from local groups suggests that there is no shortage of people coming forward and expressing an interest in volunteering. However, organisations often struggle with making the best use of this initial interest and

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enthusiasm, as there is a mismatch between the expectations of volunteers and the volunteering opportunities that organisations have the capacity to provide. Often, volunteers do not stay the course as their induction is ineffective and staff do not know how to manage and support them. Some groups have identified the need for developing volunteer supervisor roles to support them in extending the range of services that they offer to the local community in Islington.

The project will work with at least 30 groups over the two years to develop the skills of staff and volunteers. The support offered includes direct help with the induction of volunteers, so that there is a better match between expectations of volunteers and local organisations. Training on the effective management of volunteers will also be given to paid and volunteer staff from 30 voluntary groups, with the resources developed being shared on VAI's website. More intensive work with organisations will be undertaken to develop a volunteer supervisor role. One-to-one support will be undertaken, focusing on the development of policies and procedures and volunteer training. Web-based resources and a social media platform for participants will be developed, where good practice can be shared.

Financial Information

Forecast income in the current year 2014/15 is £485,512, of which £475,800 (98%) had been confirmed by December 2014. This level of income represents a reduction of £87,190 (18%) compared to the prior year and the charity attributes this to reductions in public sector grant funding. This was anticipated by VAI as it moves from a position where most of its income is from statutory sources to one of more varied streams including the rental of space at the charity's resource centre.

The figure for the cost of generating funds in the table is £3,045 (0.5% of total income). This figure is low, however, the charity's 2013/14 accounts show that some fund raising costs appear to have been classified as expenditure on charitable activities. This has been discussed with VAI, who have agreed to review their calculation of the cost of generating funds for 2014/15 year end.

Year end at 31 March	2013/14 Audited Accounts £	2014/15 Current Year Forecast £
Income and Expenditure		
Income	572,702	485,512
Expenditure	547,767	532,692
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	4,230	(47,180)
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	20,705	0
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	24,935	(47,180)
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	4.4%	(9.7%)
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	3,045 (0.5%)	-
Free unrestricted reserves		
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	376,026	328,846
How many months' worth of expenditure	8.2	7.4
Reserves Policy target	164,330 – 383,437	159,808 – 372,884
How many months' worth of expenditure	3.6 – 8.4	3.6 - 8.4
Free reserves over/(under) target	211,696 – (7,411)	169,038 – (44,038)