

**MEETING: 23/09/2015**

**Ref: 12786**

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving London's Environment**

**Hackney City Farm**

**Adv: Sandra Jones**

**Amount requested: £139,500**

**Base: Hackney**

**Benefit: Hackney**

**Amount recommended: £117,300**

**The Charity**

Set up in 1984 on a brown field site at the corner of Haggerston Park E2, Hackney City Farm (HCF) aims to give local people the opportunity to experience farming. This includes agriculture, horticulture and gardening. The work of the farm includes chances to learn green skills, to train for employment, to improve people's health and to help people understand and preserve the biodiversity of the local environment and increased knowledge of natural ecosystems.

The Farm offers volunteering programmes, classes in upholstery, sculpture, textile printing and pottery; it has worked particularly with disaffected young people, disabled people and with asylum seekers; and it has become a local meeting place and information exchange.

**The Application**

HCF seeks funding for an Education and Volunteer Programme aimed at increasing biodiversity at the farm site and surrounding area by involving local people and schools in the development and maintenance of natural habitats. The project will be working on site at HCF as well as in schools to redevelop under-used areas within the school environment. This project builds on current work being undertaken by the charity and the application is for 2 part-time posts equivalent to 7 days per week undertaking volunteer co-ordination and developing a forest school.

**The Recommendation**

HCF has built up a good reputation for delivering quality activities and involving local people in volunteering and the development of the Farm. The charity has been working for over 10 years with local schools in delivering education programmes; as well as working extensively with volunteers; engaging with hard to reach groups such as vulnerable adults and young people, disabled people, refugee and migrants and parents on low incomes. The request is to cover 7 days per week staff time. However the sum recommended is lower as it is your usual practice for projects such as this to fund a maximum of one full-time equivalent post. The organisation is aware of this and is happy to be considered on this basis.

***£117,300 over 3 years (£37,300, £40,000, £40,000) towards the costs of a FTE Volunteer Co-ordinator post (job share) and associated running costs.***

**Funding History**

Meeting Date	Decision
27/09/2012	Withdrawn as funding had been secured from the Big Lottery Fund.
03/05/2007	£106,000 over three years (£40,500; £35,000; £30,500) for the salary of the Director and for development of the Farm as an Environmental Improvement Centre and Social Enterprise.

## Background and detail of proposal

HCF will build on existing volunteer and school programmes that have been run over the past three years, in order to develop new workshops around biodiversity themes, the development of which has come from a recent review on the work of the Farm.

Many teachers did not feel confident leading growing projects on the school site without support, and so HCF will be working with three schools per year to develop under-used areas, using mainly recycled materials, to make outdoor classroom spaces and habitats. This will enable schools to become corridors for wildlife in the urban landscape.

At the farm environmentally themed workshops for schools will be run, and a new 'Forest School' area will be developed where schools and young people can attend educational sessions in a natural environment. This area is a child-led learning space, which allows young people the opportunity to explore and understand the natural environment.

These projects will only be made possible through the use of volunteers. They will be supporting the schools and creation of the Forest School and at the same time be trained and educated on biodiversity. The work of this project will be co-ordinated by the post funded through the City Bridge grant.

## Financial Information

Total forecast income in 2015/16 is £457,811, of which £382,800 (83.6%) had been confirmed. The reserves policy is to hold three months' worth of expenditure in free unrestricted reserves. At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 free unrestricted funds stood at £50,139 (£50,261 - £122) which is equivalent to 1.6 months' worth of expenditure. The Farm is planning to increase this year on year as shown in the table. The charity advised that the cost of generating funds is high as this comprises the core costs of running the farm which facilitates the operation of its activities and school.

Year end at 31 March	2013/14 Independently Examined Accounts £	2014/15 Forecast £	2015/16 Current Year Forecast £
<b>Income and Expenditure</b>			
Income	378,914	427,113	457,811
Expenditure	373,889	419,002	445,000
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	7,968	8,111	12,811
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(2,943)	0	0
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	5,025	8,111	12,811
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	1.3%	1.9%	2.8%
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	149,921 (39.6%)	159,000 (37.2%)	161,000 (35.2%)
<b>Free unrestricted reserves</b>			
Free unrestricted reserves held at Year End	50,139	58,250	71,061
How many months' worth of expenditure	1.6	1.7	1.9
Reserves Policy target	93,472	104,751	111,250
How many months' worth of expenditure	3.0	3.0	3.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	(43,333)	(46,501)	(40,189)