

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Making London Safer

Women's Resource Centre

Adv: Jenny Field

Amount requested: £243,583

Base: Islington

Benefit: London-wide

Amount recommended: £220,000

The Charity

Women's Resource Centre (WRC) was established in 1984 as an umbrella body supporting women's voluntary and community organisations. Its area of benefit covers the whole of England. However, since it is based in London, and because London is home to a high proportion of women's organisations, a high proportion of its work takes place in London. It has a membership of over 500 organisations working on a diverse range of issues, such as health, violence against women, education, employment, criminal justice and the environment. It is the lead body for the Women's Health and Equality Consortium and the London Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Consortium.

The Application

The London VAWG Consortium currently comprises 21 women's organisations with a track record of delivering high quality services across all London boroughs. It was established in 2012 in order to bid for funds under London Councils' *Sexual and Domestic Violence* funding programme. This resulted in the securing of c£3m for the provision of direct, frontline services within the sexual and domestic violence field. The consortium was formed to enable the groups to bid together collectively rather than to bid against each other as separate entities.

It is now proposed to establish the Consortium as a legal entity in its own right in order to enable it to bid for other contracts, and enable other women's groups to join the Consortium. It is proposed to employ a full-time London VAWG Consortium co-ordinator whose role would be to co-ordinate the establishment of the Consortium as an independent body (either a registered charity, a charity incorporated charity or a community interest company); provide capacity building support to members; lead and co-ordinate bids and tenders; ensure contracts are reported on in a timely and effective manner; lead on communications with external stakeholders; and co-ordinate the Consortium's strategic and operational direction. Also included in the bid is the cost for some of the smaller members to obtain the various quality marks that are a requirement of an increasing number of tender documents.

The Recommendation

WRC has a good track record and is an important player within London's infrastructure sector. The establishment of the Consortium and the relationship it had with London Councils during its development (which continues to this day) is an excellent example of how the sector and funders can work together effectively and positively.

Changes in the funding landscape are having a negative impact on specialist women's services and commissioning is increasingly important to this sector. Whilst

commissioning is needs led (based on local joint strategic needs assessments) the process of commissioning means that women's organisations are in competition with large, often generic, national and private sector organisations. The shrinking of commissioning departments in local government and health has led to the streamlining of contracts with commissioners often opting to purchase from a single generic provider who may not have the knowledge and experience to provide specialist women's services. Establishment of the Consortium as a legal entity will enable it to be more competitive but also be able to offer specialist services to mainstream providers.

If funding is approved, the exit strategy for the grant is that the Consortium will develop a full cost recovery model in its tendering. This should be in train by Year 3 of the grant, and a taper is therefore recommended in the final year. Whilst the recommended grant is higher than many of your grants, this is a consortium bid that will directly benefit a significant number of organisations and is set to grow.

£220,000 over three years (£85,000; £75,000; £60,000) towards securing the long-term sustainability of the London VAWG Consortium.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
09/07/2015	£25,000 over 6 months towards the preparation of a business case for a third sector Women's Building.
17/11/2011	£114,000 over three years (3 x £38,000) towards a training programme to enable women's third sector organisation improve their use of digital technologies and social media in order to influence policy and get their messages heard.
13/03/2008	Request withdrawn.

Background and detail of proposal

In 2015, WRC received funding from Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust to set up a women's voluntary and community sector commissioning support unit to develop the strategic and delivery capacity of women's voluntary organisations outside London, to engage with commissioning opportunities and to build stronger relationships with commissioners. The skills and knowledge from this work will be used for the benefit of the London VAWG Consortium. It is hoped that a further 10 women's organisations will have joined the Consortium by the end of the funding period.

Following London Councils' review of its grant programme from April 2017, the *Sexual and Domestic Violence* is one of the strands it has decided to continue. Whilst subject to assessment, this means the Consortium members stand a good chance of continuing to receive London Councils' funding, although this may be at a reduced rate.

Financial Information

Forecast income in the current year is £836,202, of which £830,202 (99%) was confirmed by 5 May 2016. The charity advises that the deficits in 2014/15 and 2015/16 were both planned and the result of work on developing policy, strategy and income generation.

Income increased in 2015/16 by 12.7% compared with the previous year, largely as a result of funding awarded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to establish the Women's Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning Support Unit.

Free reserves are below target as shown in the table but the trustees recognise the importance of maintaining a free reserves holding in line with their target and aim to achieve this through increased fundraising activity, in collaboration with partner providers, and through increasing their provision of consultancy services.

The cost of generating funds is low and, whilst the charity confirms that it does devote sufficient resources to securing income, it will review the calculation of this cost with its auditors.

Year end at 31 March	2014/15 Audited Accounts	2015/16 Draft Outturn	2016/17 Current Year Forecast
	£	£	£
Income and Expenditure			
Income	725,224	817,031	836,202
Expenditure	763,155	882,778	841,043
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(56,144)	(65,747)	(10,841)
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	18,213	0	0
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	(37,931)	(65,747)	(10,841)
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	(5.2%)	(8%)	(1.3%)
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	7,235 (1.0%)	10,000 (1.2%)	10,500 (1.2%)
Free unrestricted reserves			
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	235,291	169,544	158,703
How many months' worth of expenditure	3.7	2.3	2.3
Reserves Policy target	190,789	220,695	210,261
How many months' worth of expenditure	3	3	3
Free reserves over/(under) target	44,502	(51,151)	(51,558)