

MEETING: 24/05/2016

Ref: 13191

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Strengthening London's Voluntary Sector

Voluntary Action Harrow

Adv: Joan Millbank

Amount requested: £81,250

Base: Harrow

(Revised : £85,198)

Benefit: Harrow

Amount recommended: £85,200

The Charity

Established in 2011, Voluntary Action Harrow (VAH) is a not-for-profit co-operative which works with Harrow's voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) providing training, information and guidance to help them achieve their objectives. As a second tier support organisation, VAH's mission is to build a strong, independent and unified not-for-profit sector in Harrow. In the year ending March 2015 VAH delivered 45 training sessions attended by 543 participants and provided training and capacity building advice to 300+ local groups. VAH also co-ordinates 'Pop Up Harrow', a volunteering website signposting residents to local volunteering opportunities, and it co-ordinates and undertakes database management for Harrow Community Action, a consortium of local third sector groups which is working towards creating a collaborative bidding platform to secure public sector contracts.

The Application

The applicant is seeking a 3 year grant to allow it to deliver a capacity building programme which will focus on monitoring, evaluation and evidencing of impact. The work will focus on smaller groups operating within Harrow and will be delivered through training courses, one-to-one, phone and on-line support.

The Recommendation

Through this programme, VAH is seeking to help align the work of Harrow's third sector with the emerging outcome-focused approach of funders, thereby helping to strengthen the groups' ability to secure funding and sustain their role in delivering local services close to the community. Following the assessment meeting costs were adjusted to provide for one substantive project post (as opposed to a shared function within the co-operative).

£85,200 over three years (£27,200; £28,200; £29,800) towards the salary of a part-time (21 h/p/w) Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Development Manager and project running costs.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
27/11/2014	£3,400 (8.5 days) to provide an eco-audit.
03/10/2013	Application withdrawn. Plan to submit an application later in the year after changes have been made to their governing instrument.

Background and detail of proposal

In April 2014 local research into a sample of Harrow groups (34 organisations) found that 73% felt that they were ineffective in regard to undertaking evaluation. In a separate survey in November 2014 45% respondents said they felt they would benefit from development support to improve their monitoring, evaluation and impact reporting. In response to the change in statutory funding mechanisms, funders' focus

on outcomes and the need to diversify funding sources, Harrow VCSE have come together to form consortia funding platforms. The approach offers smaller groups the opportunity to be part of the bidding for larger funding pots, contract and commissioned finance. However, many smaller groups recognise that they often lack the knowledge, skills and mechanism to gather monitoring information and undertake effective evaluation.

VAH proposes to improve the sectors' monitoring, evaluation and impact reporting, knowledge and skills through provision of a tailored programme of support. The programme will offer three strands: one-to-one support of up to 6 days per group (20 groups per annum); 4 x 0.5 day training workshops each year; and online and phone support to provide 'quick help' and resource materials to at least 30 groups over three years. Overall the programme will benefit at least 90 different groups over three years. The impact of the programme on individual groups and the sector will be monitored and VAH expects that 80% individual participants and participating groups will report improved knowledge and implementation.

Financial Information

Of the £65,252 income budgeted for 2016/17, £33,782 (52%) had been secured via grants by April 2016. Projections for earned income are in line with previous year achievements. The charity advises that income is lower in 2016/17 due to the end of grants and taper funding. The budget does not include the grant request to City Bridge Trust nor the related expenditure.

VAH has supplied a reserves policy and a rationale for the low annual targets shown in the table, which it says due to employed co-operative members being on zero-hours contracts.

The cost of generating funds reflects publicity and marketing costs only; all bids for funding are prepared by co-operative members on a voluntary basis.

Year end at 31 March	14/15 Unaudited Accounts £	2015/16 Forecast Outturn £	2016/2017 Budget £
Income and Expenditure			
Income	88,368	108,178	65,242
Expenditure	72,546	91,798	69,038
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	15,822	(3717)	(3,796)
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	0	30,126	0
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	15,822	16,409	(3,796)
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	17.9%	15.2%	(5.8%)
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	0 (0%)	977 (0.9%)	840 (1.3%)
Unres free reserves held at Yr End	25,746	22,029	18,417
Months' worth of expenditure	4.3	2.9	3.2
Reserves Policy target	4,156	6,221	8,499
months' worth of expenditure	0.7	0.8	1.5
Free reserves over/(under) target	21,590	15,808	9,918