

MEETING: 14/07/2016

Ref: 13092

## ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Making London More Inclusive

Stratford Circus Arts Centre

Adv: Jemma Grieve Combes

Amount requested: £83,972

Base: Newham

{Revised request: £93,214}

Benefit: Newham

Amount recommended: £93,240

### The Charity

Stratford Circus Arts Centre (SCAC) is a performing arts centre dedicated to bringing high quality arts experiences and participatory opportunities to local audiences. Built in 2001, the fully accessible venue includes 2 theatres, a dance studio and meeting rooms. Last year it ran 470 shows and welcomed 180,000 people through its doors, including 60,000 for professional performances. The charity is proud that its audiences are largely comprised of local families and include people who have little experience or knowledge of the arts. SCAC offers a number of participatory groups including baby dance, a youth choir, leap of faith (older dance), age-well actors and singers and Blue Sky Actors – of which this application is concerned.

### The Application

SCAC is requesting funding to develop its flagship Blue Sky Actors performing arts group for adult actors with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The group has been running for over 10 years and provides valuable opportunities for its members not only to perform but to build friendships and social networks.

### The Recommendation

To date, the Blue Sky Actors group has been funded for one-off projects but a lack of longer-term funding has limited the ability to plan ahead. A grant would give them the opportunity to establish themselves as a high-level performance group and to develop the skills of individual members, not only in terms of performance skills but in terms of broader employability skills. Following discussions with your officer, the applicant has decided that it is not the right point in time to consider creating a separate legal structure for Blue Sky Actors. This element has therefore been removed from the original grant request although the overall sum requested from your Committee has been raised to reduce the need for fundraising to make the project viable. A revised budget request has been appended to the application form elsewhere in your papers.

***£93,240 over 3 years (3 x £31,080) towards the salaries of the Education Manager (5¼ hours/week) and Project Coordinator (9¼ hours/week); the sessional costs of the Artistic Director, Assistant Director, and Artistic Support Workers; and the running costs of the Blue Sky Actors project.***

### Funding History

None

### Background and detail of proposal

Blue Sky Actors meets for weekly 3-hour rehearsals for 3 terms of 10 weeks each. The funding request seeks to develop the group in three main areas. The first is to build on the group's current success to create a high-level performance group with an increased number and quality of performances. This would include 2 in-house

productions a year with increased production values, for example with sound technicians and costumes; 1 site-specific project where the actors take their work out to an external venue, for example they previously presented a performance in a local bowling alley; and 1 research and development project, which would focus on exploring ideas rather than creating a production. They would also seek to increase exchanges with other disability arts groups.

The second development area is a Lead Artists' Scheme where 6 lead artists from the Blue Sky Actors group would receive specialist training, eg acting Masterclasses. They will take on a more leading role in rehearsals and may be able to direct in the future, helping to build sustainability into the group. The third development area is a Professional Development Scheme. SCAC recognises the challenges that people with learning difficulties and disabilities can face in accessing employment. They will work with all Blue Sky Actors to create an individual learning plan and to develop pathways to employment in the performance industry and beyond.

### Financial Information

Forecast income for 2016/17 is £1,232,085, of which 19% is confirmed and 40% expected from trading activities as at 14 June 2016.

The organisation's cost of generating funds is stated as nil in the 2014/15 accounts because fundraising has previously been undertaken by the CEO and education team and not stated separately. In addition, a large proportion of income is sourced from hire fees and performances rather than fundraising. Moving forward a Development Manager position has been created and the cost of this post will be included in the future cost of generating funds.

The organisation is aware that their reserve holding is currently very low at approximately 2 weeks' worth of expenditure. They have diversified income streams and have recently taken on a new Development Manager position which should increase their ability to leverage grant funding as well as individual and corporate giving. They are growing their events programming and looking at alternative methods of income generation such as offering hot-desking facilities. The Board meet regularly which the charity advises includes financial experts.

Year-end 31st March	2014/15 Audited	2015/16 DRAFT	2016/17 Current Year Forecast
	£	£	£
<b>Income and Expenditure</b>			
Income	1,342,310	1,147,403	1,232,085
Expenditure	1,044,314	1,097,383	1,194,564
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	40,218	(4,883)	3,412
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	257,778	54,892	34,109
<b>Total Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>297,996</b>	<b>50,020</b>	<b>37,521</b>
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	22%	4%	3%
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	Nil	Not yet calculated	Not yet calculated
<b>Free unrestricted reserves</b>			
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	35,656	60,561	63,973
~ how many months' worth of expenditure	0.4	0.7	0.6
Reserves Policy target	180,000	180,000	180,000
~ how many months' worth of expenditure	1.6	1.9	1.8
Free reserves over target / (under target)	(144,344)	(119,439)	(116,027)