

**MEETING: 10/01/2017**

**Ref: 13641**

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Strengthening London's Voluntary Sector**

**Sound Connections**

**Adv: Sandra Davidson  
Base: Tower Hamlets  
Benefit: London-wide**

**Amount requested: £60,000**

**Amount recommended: £60,000**

**The Charity**

Sound Connections' mission is to develop, enable and empower young Londoners through music, and has been a 2<sup>nd</sup> tier music development agency for London for 14 years. It brings together organisations and practitioners working across three themes: Challenging Circumstances, Early Years, Youth Voice. Across these specialisms the organisation leads the way in best practice, empowering practitioners, and ensuring high-quality provision. In line with its priorities, the charity provides information, networking, consultancy, research and training and development opportunities.

**The Application**

Sound Connections is seeking funding to develop and expand the work of the Challenging Circumstances Music Network (CCMN) to equip practitioners and organisations to improve their monitoring, evaluation and impact reporting. This will be achieved through harnessing a variety of methods including roundtable discussions, training sessions and seminars, identifying gaps in provision, 'cold spots' and reviewing existing evidence, and developing monitoring and evaluation toolkits.

**The Recommendation**

Sound Connections has a strong track record of providing support services to those working in music education. Since 2002, the charity has established itself as a leader in young people's music making in London. It delivers ground-breaking musical opportunities, quality professional development and high impact research and advocacy. This holistic approach allows the charity to shape both practice and policy. This project has been developed following research it commissioned to establish the support needs of those providing high-quality music education activities for children and young people facing challenging circumstances.

***£60,000 over three years (£14,000; £22,000; £24,000) towards staff costs – project management and coordination, freelance costs, associated running costs and training sessions to develop and expand the Challenging Music Network in London.***

**Funding History**

Meeting Date	Decision
03/10/2013	Declined as the proposal did not sufficiently address your programme outcomes.

**Background and detail of proposal**

In response to the briefing commissioned in 2013, Sound Connections spearheaded the CCMN to facilitate peer-to-peer support and to provide opportunities for shared

learning amongst those working at the cutting edge of provision for young people facing severe and multiple barriers to engagement. The network has provided a wealth of opportunities since its inception and now has 66 members including freelance practitioners and small to mid-scale organisations. Member organisations include working with visually impaired children, refugees, young offenders, and young people with mental health issues, and disabled young people. The organisations' practitioners within the CCMN are highly-skilled and valued by their participants, but are often under-resourced and facing increasing pressures to advocate and fundraise for their vital work. A recent Network meeting identified a particular need for support with monitoring, evaluation and impact reporting - especially soft outcomes reporting. In a competitive funding climate, it is more important than ever that organisations are able to demonstrate their effectiveness and to work in partnership.

Sound Connections aims to develop and expand the work of the Network to include establishing and disseminating evidence of need, supporting Theory of Change development, providing monitoring and evaluation toolkits and training support. The project will be managed by a lead officer, and supported by the project team and selected freelance experts. The Director of the charity will oversee the programme as a whole.

### Financial Information

Forecast income for the current year is £372,821 of which £301,366 (81%) has been confirmed by November. The organisation is currently in receipt of a three year Youth Music grant (April 2015- March 2018). The Trustees are relatively confident that this grant will be extended beyond March 2018.

The cost of generating funds is low as the charity does not have a dedicated fundraiser with fundraising being carried out mainly by the Senior Management Team. The figures shown relate to external freelance support brought in to lead on particular fundraising applications.

Year end at 31 March	2015/16 Independently Examined	2016/17 Forecast
<b>Income and Expenditure</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Income	346,639	372,821
Expenditure	346,505	383,171
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	11,404	673
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(11,270)	(11,023)
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	134	(10,350)
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	0.04%	(2.8%)
CoGF (% of income)	500 (0.1%)	3,500 (0.9%)
<b>Free unrestricted reserves</b>		
Unrestricted free reserves at Year End	78,090	78,763
Months' worth of <i>running costs</i>	3.8	3.9
Reserves Policy target	61,073	61,073
Months' worth of <i>running costs</i>	3	3
Free reserves over/(under) target	17,017	17,690