

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Strengthening London's Voluntary Sector

Media Trust

Adv: Geraldine Page
Base: Hammersmith & Fulham
Benefit: London-wide

Amount requested: £148,665

Amount recommended: £148,700

The Applicant

The Media Trust (MT) established in 1994 is a communications charity that believes in the power of media to change lives. It encourages the media and communications industry to share their time, knowledge and creativity to benefit charities, and underrepresented communities. It aims to amplify charities' voices by building their communications skills through innovative training, volunteer brokerage and content programmes to help them reach and engage new audiences. MT has been delivering the 'Telling Your Stories' project on behalf of the Trust for a number of years, offering a selection of the charitable projects you support the opportunity to have a short film made about their work by professional filmmakers.

The Application

MT is requesting funding for its Stronger Voices project, a comprehensive media and strategic communications training programme for 30 equalities organisations to skill up staff and provide them with a strategy to help target their audiences more effectively. Following the training the equalities organisations will be matched with a media volunteer from a MT corporate partner to help the organisations to develop a realistic and compelling campaign to engage audiences and policy makers with their work. The programme will be delivered in partnership with the Equality and Diversity Forum (EDF). EDF is a well-respected national network of organisations working across all areas of equality. It will work with MT to survey the communications needs of London's equality organisations to inform the development of the programme, help recruit the organisations, deliver a strategic communications workshop as part of the training and assist with monitoring the project on an on-going basis.

The media and capacity building training will be delivered over a period of 3-4 months in each year consisting of 5 intensive full day workshops, starting with EDF's strategic communications workshop designed specifically for equalities organisations, framing the context of communicating effectively about human rights, inequality and poverty. There will be further workshops on messaging and campaign development; understanding the media; getting your story into the media and media interview training and planning a social media and digital strategy. Additionally as part of the programme MT will deliver;

- Beneficiary spokesperson training - for the beneficiaries of the organisations taking part.
- Networking with journalists and media professionals – following the training MT will organise a networking event with its corporate partners, such as BBC, Trinity Mirror and Bloomberg where participants can put their training into practise and pitch their stories and campaigns directly and receive feedback.
- Communications audit and campaign planning with media mentors – Media Industry volunteers will work with the equalities organisation for 3 months

supporting them to drive their communications forward, raise their profile and secure increased and improved media output and visibility for their work.

- Advocacy Masterclass programme – in response to the wider skills gap in the sector MT will run four specialist master classes per year in partnership with leading media brands and speakers. The topics will be informed by the communications needs survey lead by EDF, to help identify specific communications themes that charities find challenging and would like additional support with. Delivered to 100 professionals and volunteers working for equalities organisations.

The Recommendation

MT has a very good track record in delivering intensive communications capacity building programmes for marginalised and underrepresented communities. In partnership with EDF, MT is in a strong position of expertise and capacity to support equality organisations to be able to tell their stories and the important role this has in reaching the wider public and policy makers, thereby helping them to achieve long-term support and drive policy change. The project costs may appear on the high side but are justified given the level, detail and nature of intensive work required to deliver such a comprehensive training programme to a high standard. Additionally following your Grant Officers advice MT has increased the number of equalities organisations taking part from 24 to 30 and put processes in place to encourage cascaded learning and removed the suggested £30 fee for Advocacy Masterlasseses.

£148,700 over two years (£75,000; £73,700) to contribute to the delivery costs of the Stronger Voices Training Programme for 30 equalities organisations, including Advocacy Masterclasses, digital guides and volunteer brokerage.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
15/06/2017	£720 for the Media Trust to manage the subtitling for 'Telling Your Stories' screening at the Barbican
22/09/2016	£49,107 for the Media Trust to work with a cohort of City Bridge Trust grantees on a "Telling Your Stories" project.
09/07/2015	£50,000 over 12 months towards a marketing and business development programme that will allow Media Trust to explore opportunities for earned income and the potential to take on social investment.
06/06/2013	£80,000 for a final year's funding to provide media training to 110 young Londoners to tell London's stories to a wide national and regional audience.

Background and detail of proposal

A number of studies have highlighted a significant communications and digital skills gap in the charity sector. The House of Lord Select Committee on charities report (2016-17) found “the sector as a whole is lagging at least five years behind the corporate sector in terms of utilising digital communications tools”. EDF has conducted research into how equalities organisations can be heard within an unfriendly media environment. There is a growing body of evidence showing the best ways to inform inspire and persuade people but very few charities/campaign communications draw on this. This project in partnership with EDF will draw on the research and use MT expertise to create a capacity building programme that will

help participants navigate the difficult media landscape to influence policy makers, advocate on behalf of their beneficiaries effectively and reach wider audiences.

Financial Information

MT is in a stable financial position and its strategic review includes a development plan for building the charity's reserves to its target level of £500k. The deficit in unrestricted funds in 2017 relates to a designated fund of £77,302 which had been set aside for use by MT's previous subsidiary Community Channel and was utilised in the year, as Community Channel was turned into an independent entity. The remaining deficit on unrestricted reserves of £28,683 was due to planned investment in MT's new strategy.

Year end as at 31 March	2016	2017	2018
	Audited Accounts	Audited Accounts (CC received 17 Oct 17)	Forecast
	£	£	£
Income & expenditure:			
Income	3,125,352	2,437,305	2,240,000
- % of Income confirmed as at 27/07/2017	n/a	n/a	64%
Expenditure	(2,950,151)	(2,521,578)	(2,081,000)
Total surplus/(deficit)	175,201	(84,273)	159,000
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	51,155	21,712	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	124,046	(105,985)	159,000
	175,201	(84,273)	159,000
Cost of Raising Funds	240,814	261,705	405,000
- % of income	7.7%	10.7%	18.1%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	1,693,406	1,578,664	958,000
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	364,570	355,114	440,000
No of months of operating expenditure	2.6	2.7	5.5
Reserves policy target	500,000	500,000	500,000
No of months of operating expenditure	3.5	3.8	6.3
Free reserves over/(under) target	(135,430)	(144,886)	(60,000)