

The Growing Space, Wincanton – Request for funding towards establishing as an accredited training provider

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Purpose of the Report

To consider a contribution towards The Growing Space to support the organisation to become an accredited training provider.

Public Interest

The Growing Space is a Community Horticultural Scheme based in Wincanton. The organisation has identified an opportunity to develop the scheme to provide accredited training which would be of benefit for local people and will help the organisation to become more financially sustainable.

Recommendation

- (1) That a contribution of £5,000 from the Members' Discretionary budget is made to support the delivery of the project, subject to all other funding being in place.
- (2) That the grant is paid in stages as set out in the report.

Background

The Growing Space was established in 2002 as a sister organisation to the Balsam Centre. The project took over land in the centre of Wincanton which had been derelict for a number of years and transformed it into a thriving community garden. The scheme provides opportunities for people to volunteer but has also been very successful at working with groups and individuals to use gardening as a therapeutic intervention.

The request for funding does not meet the Community Grants criteria as it is for a revenue contribution over £1000. It is recommended that the request is met from the unallocated funds in the Members Discretionary budget from 2016/17.

Previous funding support

Grants – 2014 - £750
2016 – £1000

Current Situation

The project has been extremely successful and as a result has managed to benefit from back to back awards from the National Lottery. This has allowed the scheme to employ a full time project manager and a part time project worker. In order to secure funding the project has had to continually identify new groups and types of activity which will eventually become unsustainable. The organisation has been investigating ways to use the knowledge and skills of staff and volunteers to find more sustainable sources of income.

Business Plan

The Growing Space board has been working to try to identify income streams that will help the organisation become more sustainable and less reliant on grants.

Evidence of Need

The need for vocational training and the aspiration to find a way for people to access training locally has been established for some time.

6 - 19 year olds often experience barriers to participating in learning and traineeships.

- The emotionally demanding nature of busy college environments doesn't cater for 16 – 19 year olds experiencing mental ill-health and social isolation. Dropout rates from traineeships for this age group are high.
- Transport to colleges (over 15 miles away) in this rural area is expensive and sporadic.
- Young people experiencing mental ill-health find public transport anxiety inducing.

Somerset Skills and Learning funded a pilot programme to evaluate the impact of delivering specialised mental health support and employment skills activities monitoring and recording beneficiaries' progression, measuring the key outcomes of the project and recording and responding to beneficiary feedback.

Evidence from the pilot project concurs with research showing the need for employment support and therapies to be co-located in community focussed organisations. Of the 30 participants in the pilot:

- All had the support of the centre's mental health worker – 15 had intensive support.
- 6 are now in paid work
- 6 reported sufficient motivation and confidence to look for work
- 18 progressed to independent volunteering
- 9 progressed to further learning
- 3 formed a group who are now supporting others in the wider community
- 5 were supported by the centre's job club.

The Indices of Deprivation 2015 show that for Education, Skills and Training, areas of Wincanton are amongst the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country (ranked 6,359 out of 32,844 LSO in England; where 1 is the most deprived LSOA).

The majority of the town is amongst the 40% most deprived neighbourhoods in the county.

The Growing Space has a good reputation for project delivery and for offering a high quality services. As mentioned previously, this has led to a strong relationship with funders and in particular the Big Lottery. Working with the Balsam Centre to offer accredited vocational training will represent a significant change for the Growing Space which will help to secure further lottery funds to help with transition to a reduction on grant reliance. The request is for a contribution towards a three year programme of work to establish the Growing Space as an accredited training provider.

If the bid is successful, Lottery funds will be used to employ an Educational Officer for 2 years to develop the accredited vocational training offer at The Growing Space. The post holder will work with local schools and colleges to develop local vocational training courses. A key part of the scheme will be to identify year 11 students that are unlikely to leave school with the minimum required credit to qualify for further education or an apprenticeship and to provide accredited, transferable skills to improve prospects of employment.

Providing accredited training will generate an income stream for the organisation which will eventually lead to financial sustainability. The information supplied by the applicant identifies the potential for

significant income generation. Currently, post 16 education is funded through guided learning hours. If a particular qualification has a guided learning hour value of £10, then a course lasting 30 hours on which 10 learners were enrolled would have a full value of £3000.00. The applicant estimates that it will require 3 or 4 30 hour training sessions with 10 learners on each to break even, (or the equivalent number of hours made up of shorted courses and workshops).

If members agree to support the project, it is recommended that payments are staged as set out below in order to reflect the fact that the support may not be needed by the third year.

Year 1 - £2500

Year 2 - £1500

Year 3 - £1000

Financial Implications

A sum of £9,200 remains unallocated in the Members' Discretionary Budget, which must be used within the current financial year.

If Members support this proposal then a sum of £4200 will remain unallocated in the Member's Discretionary Budget.

Corporate Priority Implications

Focus Four: Health & Communities: encouraging communities to be healthy, self-reliant and with individuals who are willing to help each other.

Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications

Providing local access to a range of activities and services reducing the need to travel which therefore reduces carbon emissions.

Equality and Diversity Implications

The loss of services designed to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged in target communities is likely to have a significant effect over time.

Background Papers: None