GREATER**LONDON**AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD1181

Title: Project Oracle – additional funding for LSEF support

Executive Summary:

This DD requests the provision of an increase in grant funding to Project Oracle to reflect the continuing support the project will provide to recipients of London Schools Excellence Fund (LSEF) grant funding to undertake the evaluation requirements of their projects.

Decision:

The Director is asked to approve the increase in grant funding of £99,616 (over two financial years 2013-14 and 2014-15) to Project Oracle in order that the project can continue to carry out its activities under the existing grant agreement.

AUTHORISING DIRECTOR

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.
It has my approval.

Name: Jeff Jacobs

Position: Executive Director, Communities and Intelligence

Signature:

Date: 25 March 2014

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

Project Oracle is a youth evidence hub, a repository of knowledge, which aims to understand and share what really works in youth and education programmes in London. By supporting charitable youth, education and training organisations to develop their capacity to undertake project evaluations Oracle's ultimate aim is to improve the quality and efficiency of interventions in turn improving outcomes for children and young people programmes in the capital.

Project Oracle is a co-funded GLA project that was launched in June 2012 as a one year funded project (ending in July 2013). A request for an additional three years funding was submitted to the Investment and Performance Board (23 April 2013), and approved (subject to a positive evaluation of FY2012-13, which was received in November 2013).

The original funding partners were the Economic Social Research Council (ESRC), the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime (MOPAC). Discussions are currently underway with the Youth Justice Board who are considering joining the funding partners on this project.

2. Funding

The GLA will receive the annual contributions from the other co-funders, as set out in Table 2 below, and make the scheduled payments to Project Oracle as outlined in the grant agreement.

Table 1: In-year budget, by co-funder.

Core funder contribution	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	TOTAL
Economic Social Research Council	£50,000	£75,000	£75,000	£0	**£200,000**
Greater London Authority	£125,000	£125,000	£125,000	£0	**£375,000**
Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime	£50,000	£100,000	£100,000	£50,000	**£300,000**
TOTAL:	**£225,000**	**£300,000**	**300,000**	**£50,000**	**£875,000**

The GLA grant funding (£375K) will constitute 43% of core funding (i.e. £875,000) for the Project Oracle (over the next four financial years) and will be paid in arrears on achieving the stated milestones and outputs for the specific period of activity, laid out in the grant agreement.

Additional Funding
The additional funding of £99,616 granted to Project Oracle to carry out this evaluation support will come from the LSEF budget (see MD1132).

Support to London School Excellence Fund: Project Oracle will provide additional, interim, support to the London Schools Excellence Fund grant recipients until the external programme evaluator is in

place. There was an initial three month delay with the procurement of the external evaluator due to the value of the potential contract (which under the GLA's Contract and Funding Code requires the contract to be let in accordance with the procurement regulations) which has increased, necessitating extended support to the beneficiaries of the LSEF to meet the evaluation requirements of their grants. Essential advice, guidance, training has been provided by Project Oracle which is in line (but also additional to) Project Oracle's current deliverables.

For Activities undertaken (or that will be undertaken by July 2014) by Project Oracle for the LSEF, see section 7.

3. Objectives and expected outcomes

Under the existing Project Activities (see list below) an increased volume of work is proposed to provide additional evaluation guidance and support the LSEF projects. This work will be delivered under the Training and Knowledge Sharing activity with Project Oracle stakeholders in relation carrying out effective evaluations.

Aim	Project Oracle is the Mayor's programme for 'understanding and sharing what really works' in improving the lives of children and young people in London
Objective 1	Generate new evaluation research (through researcher placements and an evidence competition)
Objective 2	Synthesise existent evidence for London youth projects to make it more usable (through systematic reviews and dissemination methods)
Objective 3	Exchange skills and knowledge in a sustainable and cost-effective way (by reverse placements and knowledge sharing events)
Objective 4	Lay the foundations for improving future policy, commissioning, and practice (by providing resources and embedding new learning)
Objective 5	Drive consistency and standardisation in the provision and use of evidence for youth social policies in London

4. Other considerations

a) **Key risks and Issues**

Risk	Description	Mitigation
Delivery	Risk that the institutions involved in the delivery of the project cannot meet the required outcomes.	Rigorous contract and risk management by GLA officer(s). Strong project governance will mitigate this risk
Reputation	Risk of programme failure or GLA's failure in management of programme.	Strong project management and governance. Appointment of appropriate delivery partner(s).

b) **Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities**
Project Oracle was part of the Mayor's Time for Action (2009), a flagship programme for reducing youth violence and improving youth opportunity. It is mentioned on p. 13 of the Strategic Plan. It also supports the Mayor's wider vision for young Londoners.

c) **Impact assessments and Consultation**

The original consultation for Project Oracle was carried out as part of Time for Action. The Mayor received almost 600 responses, representing views from a range of London residents, community organisations, practitioners, the voluntary sector, and the statutory sector.

In November 2011, a range of workshops were delivered to the community and voluntary sector that were attended by more than 120 individuals from over 87 organisations. Feedback collected from these events highlights that Project Oracle is needed and must have the capacity to support organisations willing to participate. This proposed expenditure meets the request from the consultation. A paper, published by NESTA (the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) entitled 'Evidence for Social Policy and Practice' also endorses Project Oracle as a piece of public sector innovation.

5. Financial comments

5.1   MD1260 approved a grant agreement between the GLA and the London Metropolitan University for the delivery of Project Oracle over the period from 2013-14 to 2016-17. The total value of the grant was up to the maximum value of £875,000.

5.2   Approval is now being sought to increase the grant funding to Project Oracle to reflect the support the project will provide to recipients of London Schools Excellence Fund (LSEF) grant funding scheme to undertake evaluations of their projects. The propose increase in grant funding to the London Metropolitan University is £99,616 which will be administered over two financial-years (2013-14 and 2014-15).

5.3   The additional grant of £99,616 will be funded from the London Schools Excellence Fund budget that was approved by MD1132 (held within the Health & Communities Unit).   Any changes to this proposal including budgetary implications will be subject to further approval via the Authority's decision-making process. All appropriate budget adjustments will be made.

5.4   The Education & Youth Team within the Communities & Intelligence Unit will be responsible for managing this project and ensuring that all activities associated with the proposed grant complies with the Authority's Financial Regulations, Contracts & Funding Code and Funding Agreement Toolkit.

6. Legal comments

6.1   Section 1- 5 of this report indicate that:

6.1.1   the decisions requested of the director (in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code) fall within the Authority's statutory powers to do such things considered to further or which are facilitative of, conducive or incidental to the promotion economic development and wealth creation and social development in Greater London: and

6.1.2   in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is ought officers have complied with the Authority's related statutory duties to:

- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people;

4

- consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom; and

- consult with appropriate bodies.

6.2 Section 1 above indicates that the contribution of £99,616 to Project Oracle amounts to the provision of grant funding and not payment for services. Officers must ensure that the funding is distributed fairly, transparently, in accordance with the GLA's equalities and in manner which affords value for money in accordance with the Contracts and Funding Code.

Officers must ensure that the appropriate documentation is put in place between the GLA and Project Oracle before any commitment to fund is made.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Project Oracle delivers the LSEF specific outcomes by:
1. at Application Stage
   - Advising on evaluation section of LSEF application form for stage 1 and 2 of Round 1 and Round 2 and Round 3 single application forms.

2. at Evaluation Delivery Stage
   - Collecting and reviewing of baseline data/ data collection and monitoring tools for all rounds
   - Managing the Standard 1 submissions to Project Oracle website for all projects
   - Reviewing high value applications ensuring evaluation plans are proportionate to the grant value.
   - Delivering capacity building sessions to support all LSEF organisations to develop Theories of change and evaluation plans (including monitoring approach) and offer follow-up support
   - Validating of Standard 1/2/3 submissions e.g. Evaluation frameworks, Theories of Change, (where applicable).
   - Capacity building GLA staff in reviewing and agreeing evaluation frameworks and theories of change

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract [for externally delivered projects]	NA
Announcement [if applicable]	NA
Delivery Start Date [for project proposals]	NA
Final evaluation start and finish (self/external) [delete as applicable]:	NA
Delivery End Date [for project proposals]	NA
Project Closure: [for project proposals]	NA

Appendices and supporting papers:

MD 1260 Project Oracle
MD 1132 London Schools Excellence Fund

Public access to information
Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI Act) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

Note: This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after approval <u>or</u> on the defer date.

Part 1 Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO
If YES, for what reason:

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring)

Part 2 Confidentiality: Only the facts or advice considered to be exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act should be in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form – NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:	Drafting officer to confirm the following (✔)
Drafting officer: Siobhan McKenna has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms that:	✔
Assistant Director/Head of Service: Amanda Coyle has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval.	✔
Financial and Legal advice: The finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal, and this decision reflects their comments.	✔

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature   **Date**