

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS 2017 - SPOKEN COMMUNICATION/ ORACY

Supporting young people to find their voice

Introduction to Big Change

[Big Change](#) was created to think differently about the role that charity can play to catalyse positive change for young people in the UK. We identify and support early stage ideas that give young people the skills, opportunities and support they need, to thrive in life, not just exams.

Since we launched in 2012, we have worked with a number of partners to help them develop and grow ideas that are preventative, systemic and have the potential to operate at large scale.

Having supported a number of projects spanning a number of different areas we have realized that to maximize our impact we are better placed to focus deeper support on a fewer number of areas. Oracy and supporting the next generation to find their voice is one of these focus areas - it is an area we have supported since 2014 through our partnership with Voice 21. We recognize that there are many different elements to developing active communication and relating and are now looking to expand our support of projects in this area.

Oracy refers to talking well, and learning well through talk, whether in education or in life. Talking well involves being a confident, sensitive and effective communicator. Learning well through talk means growing personally, academically, and socially through verbal interactions with other people.

Please read the summary in the appendix for an early overview of the problem, opportunity and some of the potential areas and questions we are looking at.

This process

Over the course of the next two months we are looking to identify and support projects or ideas that are currently pre-start up or at small scale but have the potential to scale nationally.

As well as granting money, we are also committed to working alongside our project partners, to understanding their needs and working collaboratively to help achieve them.

This year we are looking to:

- Support 2-4 great projects with funding of £50k - £250k per project;
- Convene influencers and key stakeholders around this mission;
- Build a funding and support network of individuals and organizations; and
- Support research and awareness-raising around this critical issue.

We are interested in receiving proposals from individuals, charities or social enterprises with ideas or projects that fit our criteria - our selection criteria are below, Appendix I explains our thinking around the change we want to see in more detail and Appendix II contains more information about some of our existing grantees.

Key selection criteria

Proposed projects must:

1. Have a bold ambition for system change: could the project have significant impact on young people and the broader sector? What is the unique and disruptive insight that can really change the way things are done?
2. Focus on positive growth: would the project clearly support young people to thrive in life?
3. Demonstrate that there is a real need: is there a demonstrable gap or opportunity?
4. Have passionate leadership: are the right people in place with the expertise and experience to fulfil their big ambition?
5. Be a good fit for Big Change: can we add significant value to the project?

Some other guiding principles - proposed projects should:

1. Be based on a new or unproven idea or new application of an existing idea (e.g. in new sector/geography).
2. Have an impact on the broader sector as much as the immediate beneficiaries;
3. Be based on evidence that it *could* work, even if there isn't a track record demonstrating that it *has* worked;
4. Likely have a project budget of less than £1m at present (no minimum);

Direct delivery programmes will be considered alongside research, sector coalitions and testing of innovative ideas. Projects will be prioritised based on the scale and potential of their impact and how they could benefit other organisations or the sector itself in addition to the direct beneficiaries.

A note on the criteria

In the early stages of this process, we consider the first point to be the most important: does the project have a bold ambition for system change? Often we receive proposals that are looking to incrementally grow an existing project from, for example 3 locations to 5, and we would urge anyone submitting an idea along these lines to reconsider. We still want to hear from you but please think more along the lines of what you think needs to happen for the wider sector to benefit from the work your organisation does. We have included examples of projects that we have partnered with in the past in Appendix II and hopefully that is a useful guideline alongside the other information in this document.

The proposal

Please send us a 1-2 page expression of interest outlining:

- The big change that the project/idea aspires to achieve;
- A clear indication of what the project or idea is and how it works or might work;
- Information on what else is needed to grow the project/idea in the next 3 – 5 years;
- A clear indication of how much funding you are applying for;
- A contact email address and phone number; and
- Anything else we should know!

Next steps

Please send expressions of interest as a PDF or Word attachment to ideas@big-change.org by noon on Friday 17th March with the reference “Oracy: Project proposal”. Projects that are invited to the next round will be contacted by Friday 24th March. There will be a second round of proposals and a meeting before grants are made, with full proposals due in on the Friday 21st April. Following this will be a period of negotiation and due diligence, including site visits, that may take up to six months.

Contact

We are working alongside Ten Years Time who are helping us manage this process and if you have a specific question not answered in this document, please contact:

Jake Hayman at Ten Years’ Time, jake@tenyearstime.com (0208 004 6426)

APPENDIX I

EMERGENT NARRATIVE ON ORACY

1.1 Definition

Oracy refers to talking well, and learning well through talk, whether in education or in life. Talking well involves being a confident, sensitive and effective communicator. Learning well through talk means growing personally, academically, and socially through verbal interactions with other people.

1.2 Why should we focus on oracy?

- Around 50% of pupils from areas of socio-economic deprivation enter schools with language skills below those expected for their age,¹ and the language development of those from especially deprived backgrounds lags seventeen months behind their more affluent peers by the time they start school.²
- 57% of teachers say they have not received any training in oracy in the last three years and 53% would not know where to look for more information if they wanted it.³
- 50% employers say they are 'not satisfied' with school leavers' skills in communication.⁴ One report estimates that by 2020 over half a million UK workers will be held back by soft skills deficits, including communication and interpersonal skills.⁵
- Oracy underpins many non-cognitive skills, and a review of the long-term impact of 'non-cognitive skills rival IQ in predicting educational attainment, labour market success, health and criminality.'⁶
- Over 75% of people with mental health disorders have communication difficulties,⁷ and 10% of children under the age of 16 known to have a clinically significant mental health illness, nearly half of these are likely to have Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN).⁸
- 60% of young offenders⁹ and two thirds of pupils at risk of exclusion from school have been found to have SLCN.¹⁰ Spoken language disorders are also

¹ ICAN. (2006). The cost to the nation of children's poor communication.

² Save the Children (2014) How reading can help children escape poverty. London: Save the Children

³ Millard, W. and Menzies, L. (2016) *The State of Speaking in Our Schools*, London: Voice 21.

⁴ CBI/Pearson (2016) *The Right Combination: CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey 2016*, London: CBI.

⁵ McDonald's (2015) *The Value of Soft Skills to the UK Economy*, London: Development Economics.

⁶ Kautz, T., Heckman, J. J., Diris, R., Ter Weel, B., & Borghans, L. (2014). Fostering and measuring skills: Improving cognitive and non-cognitive skills to promote lifetime success. National Bureau of Economic Research.

⁷ The All Party Parliamentary Group on Speech and Language Difficulties; Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, 2014

⁸ <http://www.ican.org.uk/What-we-do/Monthly%20Theme%20-%20Mental%20Health.aspx>

⁹ Davies 2013 Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer 2012: Our Children Deserve Better: prevention pays

¹⁰ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/255237/2901304_CMO_complete_low_res_accessible.pdf

¹⁰ Gross (2011) https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/9683/nwm_final_jean_gross_two_years_on_report.pdf

extremely common amongst young people and adults in the criminal justice system.¹¹

- In the last four elections, only around 40% of 18-24 year olds voted. The gap in participation between younger and older voters has doubled in the last twenty years. This gap is particularly large in the UK compared to other countries^{12, 13}, and pupils are less likely to engage in political discussions in school if the school is in an urban setting or has an immigrant population.¹⁴

1.3 Improving oracy could:

- Help improve attainment and outcomes for all children, but in particular those with delayed language development.
- Reduce the attainment gap between more and less advantaged children.
- Mean that all pupils, including the most disadvantaged, would learn to talk well.
- Boost teachers' confidence and expertise in using spoken language, and ensure they give it the time they believe it deserves.
- Help disadvantaged pupils perform more confidently in interviews and at assessment centres, widening access to further and higher education.
- Give school-leavers the spoken communication skills they need to transition into the world of work, and help employers recruit highly articulate school-leavers and graduates.
- Boost young people's self-esteem, confidence, collaboration and teamwork.
- Help reduce the incidence of youth mental health problems.
- Reduce repeat exclusions from school, and initial youth offending and reoffending.
- Reduce the costs of remedial action - including incarceration - further down the line.
- Boost discussion of controversial or political issues by people from different communities, and political participation by young people.
- Help young people build happier and more fulfilling relationships with loved ones, including partners and family members, both during adolescence and later life, and more constructive professional relationships.

¹¹ Cross, M. 2007 *Language and social exclusion*. ICAN Talk Series Vol 4. Available at: <http://www.ican.org.uk/~media/ican2/Whats%20the%20Issue/Evidence/4%20Language%20and%20Social%20Exclusion%20pdf.ashx>

¹² <http://www.democraticaudit.com/2016/05/06/how-to-reverse-the-civic-empowerment-gap-of-young-people-teach-them-about-politics-in-school/>

¹³ Detailed recent statistics on political engagement broken down by gender, age, socio-economic status, and ethnicity can be found here: <http://www.auditofpoliticalengagement.org/assets/media/reports/Audit-of-Political-Engagement-13-2016.pdf>

¹⁴ Conover and Searing, 2000, A Political Socialization Perspective (summary available here <http://pol250jennings.blogspot.co.uk/2008/05/conover-searing-2000-political.html>)

1.4 Where are the key gaps?

The key gaps in oracy provision for young people are in:

- **The Early Years**, because while there are a wide range of interventions and resources currently on offer to support young children's oracy, provision remains patchy during this crucial phase in their development.
- **Schools**, because while Voice 21 and other organisations are making ground in creating a mindset shift towards oracy, many teachers are still not able to give oracy the time they feel it deserves, or access oracy training and resources.
- **Mental health**, where there is a chronic shortage of speech and language services available for young people and affordable support for schools.
- **Supporting healthy relationships**, where the resource (including time) to teach young people about importance of communication in developing positive relationships is often very limited.
- **Social exclusion**, where very little system-wide proactive work takes place to target and address vulnerable young people's SLCN or oracy more broadly.
- **Citizenship and democracy engagement**, where access to interventions (such as a quality Citizenship or personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum, or other opportunities to discuss key issues) is patchy.

1.5 Some remaining questions

- How can we address a lack of consistency in Early Years support for parents, children and professionals across different parts of the country?
- Is it possible to persuade schools with a history of low engagement in oracy to change their attitude?
- Should developing high quality spoken communication for the workplace be a primary goal, or should we focus on ensuring students have great subject knowledge and acquire work-relevant spoken communication skills indirectly through interactions - about subject content - in school?
- How can we improve access to mental health support for 18-25 year olds, in Higher Education, work, or who are unemployed?
- Is it possible to join up different agencies and organisations so that, for example, third sector organisations with expertise in prisons can work with primary age pupils at risk of exclusion?
- What role could social workers play in developing oracy among young people at risk of social exclusion?
- Would impact in oracy best be achieved using the existing vehicle of Citizenship education or through other educational programmes?

- Should we focus explicitly on improving oracy *for relationships*, or on oracy in general, which will drip feed into improved communication in relationships?

1.6 Call to action

Oracy has a unique potential to leverage positive change for all young people, irrespective of their circumstances, age or background. Oracy is a set of processes *and* outcomes, giving pupils the skills in spoken communication they need to flourish academically and throughout their lives. Building young people's oracy can help us create a happier, fairer and more productive society.

APPENDIX II

EXAMPLES OF PREVIOUS BIG CHANGE PROJECTS

Frontline (2013)

We first met Frontline in the spring of 2013 when they were pre-launch and pre-delivery of their graduate programme to train social workers. At this time they had support from government to run a three year pilot, and we felt that there was a role for Big Change to support their marketing and communication work. We recognised that Josh and his team were well set to deliver an excellent social work training programme but crucially for us, were also in a position to fundamentally change the public perception of children's social work for the better. By attracting high achieving graduates, and to some extent rebranding the profession to those graduates there was big potential for impact on the broader sector. In 2016 we are delighted to say that Frontline received backing from the government to scale nationally.

Voice 21 (2014)

Through their work at School 21, Ed and the team at 21 Trust had an insight and an idea that they thought could and should be scaled across the UK: bringing speaking into schools to sit alongside reading and writing. To us it is a great example of a single idea that has the potential to fundamentally change how young people are being prepared to thrive in life, not just in exams. The grant in 2014 supported the roll out of a curriculum, assessment tool and teacher training programme that had the potential to be in every school in the country. Even if we are not successful, we are confident that we will have pushed the dialogue on the importance of speaking skills forward in a meaningful way.

RECLAIM (2015)

When RECLAIM submitted a proposal in 2015 to fund the expansion of their programme from 4 cities into 7, we wrote back to them and asked if they could rethink their proposal (we liked the organization and focus but the initial proposal was simply around scaling their existing programme). Ruth came back to us with an idea that had been on her mind for a while but was something she hadn't had the time, funding or permission to pursue. And that was to research why despite working class young people having the skills and ability to succeed at the highest level, they struggle to access leadership positions. RECLAIM already had years of experience working with young people across Greater Manchester and we felt that this was a project that had the potential to bridge the gap between young people's abilities and the leadership opportunities afforded to them.