

Brief for an evaluation of the 'Communities in Nature' programme

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (CGF) working in partnership with Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) invites proposals to conduct an evaluation of its 'Communities in Nature' programme which, over the last five years, has aimed to 'grow the social role' of (botanic) gardens. The evaluation will assess impact and outcomes so far and provide recommendations for the Foundation on its approach and for BGCI on development of the work beyond CGF's support, which will end in 2015.

Introduction

The purpose of the UK Branch of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is to bring about long-term improvements in well-being particularly for the most vulnerable, by creating connections across boundaries (national borders, communities, disciplines and sectors) which deliver social, cultural and environmental value. It aspires to be outcomes orientated – placing a significant emphasis on evaluation and communicating the learning from the work it does to those with the ability to create positive change – and to ensure that its support leaves a legacy as regards policy and practice.

One of the broad themes of the Foundation's work in the UK is better protection of the environment. This aims to help in the development of a society which benefits from a more sustainable relationship with the natural world and understands the value of its resources. Over the last five years, it has had two main strands: 'valuing nature' and 'greening the economy'. 'Communities in Nature' has been supported under the 'valuing nature' strand, which has tried to identify strategies that have impact in promoting the value of the environment and help to drive change to more sustainable lifestyles, through a creative engagement with the natural world.

'Communities in Nature' has been conceived and led by BGCI, an international membership organisation linking more than 2,500 botanic gardens in 120 countries. BGCI has been instrumental in developing the *Global Strategy for Plant Conservation* under the auspices of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and catalysing action to ensure the worldwide conservation of threatened plants. www.bgci.org

'Communities in Nature'

The 'Communities in Nature' programme seeks to 'grow the social role' of botanic gardens, addressing the needs of communities and plant conservation in a mutually beneficial approach.

Why this programme? Botanic gardens are found in most countries of the world, predominantly in urban areas, where they can play a significant role in raising awareness about the necessity of plants in sustaining life, provide expertise to local communities and access to the benefits and pleasures of nature. Developing a more social role may help botanic gardens to deliver more effectively on their mission to educate people about the role of plants in human existence and thus motivate people to protect plants in all their diversity better. It may also help botanic gardens to access new funding and revenue streams and increase their perceived relevance in a context of constrained resources.

Further information about 'Communities in Nature', including key reports and short films of pilot projects, can be found here: http://www.bgci.org/education/communities_in_nature.

The programme to date

In 2009 with CGF support, BGCI commissioned original research from the University of Leicester Research Centre for Museums and Galleries into the potential for botanic gardens to develop a more socially engaged role. *Towards a New Social Purpose: Redefining the Role of Botanic Gardens* (RCMG, 2010) identified significant potential in this work, some pioneers, but also real barriers to change.

Further CGF support has enabled BGCI to fund, support and evaluate pilot projects with six botanic gardens in the UK, establishing a community of practice and new policies and approaches; produce a range of support and promotional materials, including online media, advice manuals, and peer-reviewed articles to raise profile and academic credibility; and, in the most recent phase of activity, to spread and embed the work in gardens beyond the UK. It has also provided some organizational support to BGCI to reflect on and review its activities more generally, helping to facilitate in 2013 the implementation of BGCI's new five-year plan which includes an objective to support botanic gardens in growing their social role.

Alongside 'Communities in Nature', CGF has also supported the Geffrye Museum 'Evergreen Gardeners' project (<http://www.geffrye-museum.org.uk/learning/community-outreach/older-people/evergreen-gardeners/>) and 'Nature Play', an action research project at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE), which is assessing the impact on biodiversity and the children themselves of under-fives playing in a wild part of the garden.

The Foundation has invested about £500,000 in all in 'Communities in Nature' and related activities over the last five years, which amounts to around 20% of its Environment budget in the UK.

Overall aim and outcomes

'Communities in Nature' has developed organically over the last five years with its aims and outcomes adjusting accordingly. Overall the aim and outcomes could be summarised as follows.

Aim: to promote the social role of botanic gardens in and beyond the UK, encouraging gardens to examine their philosophy, values, goals and practices with the aim of realising their own potential to contribute toward positive social change and broad environmental awareness about climate change.

Intended outcomes:

- A model for botanic gardens worldwide to develop their social role
- An increased awareness and wider understanding among botanic gardens about their potential to play a more social role in society
- Increased motivation among gardens and capacity to develop their social role
- An emerging community of practice where botanic gardens feel supported and challenged to extend themselves further
- Institutional change in a number of gardens
- Increased engagement between botanic gardens and their local communities
- Increased participation in environmental issues by different sectors of society

- The 'Communities in Nature' initiative continues to thrive and scale beyond 2014 and the Foundation's support.

Reports and evaluations

There are reports and/or evaluations by BGCI, RCMG and/or individual botanic gardens for all key stages of the programme. See Appendix I for an overview of documents available.

The evaluation brief

CGF is commissioning an evaluation in order to help us understand:

- i) what progress has been achieved in meeting the aim and outcomes (see previous section);
- ii) the strengths and weaknesses of the programme and of the Foundation's support;
- iii) how to help this work thrive beyond 2015; and
- iv) recommended next steps.

We would like the evaluation to explore and provide an overview of:

- the achievements of the programme;
- the outcomes (intended and unexpected) of particular projects for the organisations supported and the groups they have worked with;
- the roles of CGF and BGCI in the programme, what value they have provided in addition to funding, and any lessons for the future and/or other programmes;
- a summary of the learning from the programme from the perspective of the organisations supported and otherwise involved;
- key priorities and challenges going forward;
- the broader context and value of the programme and its longer term viability.

The report should make specific recommendations for BGCI on development of the work beyond the Foundation's support in 2015.

The outputs from the evaluation should be:

- a short accessible report (no more than 20 sides of A4) structured to reflect the main findings and a summary of learning from the programme (which may include more detailed information and analysis in annexes)
- internal presentations of a draft and then a final report (with an executive summary of no more than 4 sides of A4 and a powerpoint presentation).

The process – including timetable and costs

Timetable and costs

A draft report will need to be completed by early March 2015 and the final report by early April 2015. The final report will be launched on 30 April 2015 at an event at the 9th International Congress on Education in Botanic Gardens in Missouri, USA.

There is a total of £15,000 available for this work including costs, expenses and VAT.

Commissioning process

If you would like to undertake this evaluation, please respond by email with a full proposal and costings by **Monday 1 December 2015**.

Proposals should include/demonstrate:

Full contact details of the proposer: This should include email addresses, telephone numbers and postal address.

Context: An understanding of the context for this work.

Relevant evaluation experience: Outline previous work of this type you have undertaken and any theoretical basis for your approach.

Research design, methods and analysis: You must state clearly the methods to be adopted and why they are appropriate, citing any relevant research or other experience you have. Please provide as much detail as possible about how you propose to collect data and analyse it and the issues and challenges this may pose (ethics, quality etc).

Timetable: Please provide a schedule setting out the elements of the work to be undertaken in this study, indicating how long you think this will take in days, the personnel involved and the fee per day.

Costs: Detail the full costs for the approach you propose.

Please also provide us with one or two examples of reports or summaries of previous relevant projects you have undertaken and the names and contact details of two referees willing to attest to the quality of your work and your ability to meet deadlines.

The criteria for assessing proposals will be:

- knowledge and understanding of the issues;
- experience in evaluation and learning methodologies;
- the strength of the proposed approach (rigour, appropriateness, practicality);
- likely positive contribution to our learning and that of the projects we support;
- the value for money provided by the proposal.



For further information or an informal discussion, contact Louisa Hooper at lhooper@gulbenkian/org.uk or 020 7012 1408.

Louisa Hooper
November 2014

Appendix I: Communities in Nature timeline/ docs and reports

Initial research (2009-10)

BGCI social role proposal to CGF, 2009
BGCI proposal to the Board, April 2009
RCMG Research design, June 2009
Redefining the Role of Botanic Gardens: Towards a new social purpose, RCMG, 2010 – full rpt
Towards a New Social Purpose: Redefining the Role of Botanic Gardens, RCMG, 2010 - summary
BGCI update report, Jan 2010
BGCI report, Sept 2010
RCMG presentation of key issues, 2011

First year pilots (2011)

BGCI proposal to CGF, May 2010
BGCI proposal to the Board, June 2010
NBGW exit evaluation – confidential, June 2011
BGCI Report to CGF, Oct 2011
Growing the Social Role: Partnerships in the community, RCMG, Nov 2011 – evaluation

Second year pilots (2012)

BGCI proposal to CGF, 2011
BGCI Proposal to the Board, June 2011
BGCI Funding Agreement, July 2011
BGCI update, March 2012
BGCI evaluation plan and research questions, April 2012
BGCI Think Tank report, Aug 2012
Communities in Nature: Growing the social role of botanic gardens, evaluation, June 2013

Embed and scale (2013-14)

BGCI proposal 2012
BGCI proposal to the Board, Oct 2012
BGCI Partnership Agreement, Dec 2012
Stakeholder workshop report, Prague botanic garden, May 2013
Survey monkey results of European botanic gardens, May 2013
BGCI Interim report, June 2013
BGCI Interim report, Nov 2013
BGCI Interim report, June 2014

Organizational support (2013-14)

BGCI application to CGF, Aug 2013
BGCI Proposal to the Trustee Meeting, Sept 2013
BGCI Partnership Agreement, Oct 2013
BGCI Interim report, Jan 2014

Evaluation and dissemination (2014-15)

BGCI proposal to Trustee Meeting, Oct 2014

+ Geffrye reports and evaluation and RBGE report (when available)

Appendix II: Communities in Nature related grants

2009: Botanic Gardens Conservation International

£44,850 for research into social exclusion and inclusion within botanic gardens in the UK and Ireland, to culminate in debate at the 4th Global Botanic Garden Congress in Dublin in June 2010.

2010: Botanic Gardens Conservation International

£60,000 to promote the social role of botanic gardens throughout the UK, through research dissemination and pilot projects in which botanic gardens examine and reshape their philosophy, values, goals and practices in order to realise their potential to contribute towards positive social change and environmental awareness.

2011: Botanic Gardens Conservation International

£132,000 to consolidate and expand work to develop the 'social role' of botanic gardens, by supporting five new projects identified through a nationwide call for proposals, and by the production of a 'How to' manual available online for all gardens.

2012: Botanic Gardens Conservation International

£135,000 over two years to scale and embed the success of the 'Communities in Nature' initiative through a three-part strategy: promoting the evidence of impact; building and supporting an international alliance of 'social role' gardens; and supporting gardens to scale projects and secure funding.

2013: Botanic Gardens Conservation International

£18,000 to support BGCI's strategic development and implementation of a new five-year plan, embedding its commitment to developing the social and environmental roles of botanic gardens.

2014: Botanic Gardens Conservation International

Up to £12,000 to launch an evaluation report of the 'Communities in Nature' initiative and disseminate its findings.

2011 The Geffrye, Museum of the Home

£65,000 over two years to develop and run a new adult learning programme for older, vulnerable people in the local area, inspired by the museum's gardens, encouraging a creative engagement in the natural world, and linking biodiversity concerns more centrally to the museum's core work.

2013 The Geffrye, Museum of the Home

£33,000 to build on the success of the Geffrye Museum's 'Creative Gardening for Isolated and Vulnerable Elders' project, continuing a core group course in-house and developing an 'outreach model', which will extend the benefits more widely, scaling the programme and securing viability long-term.

2013 Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

£25,000 to promote children's access to natural green space by testing the theory that nature play can be used as a tool to encourage natural regeneration and biodiversity, disseminating the evidence and developing practical guidelines for the sector.