

## **IntergenerationalAll:**

### **A call for pilot projects addressing a 21st century challenge**

#### **Call for Proposals**

As part of our Ageing & Social Cohesion programme, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation requests proposals for intergenerational pilot projects seeking to address a 21<sup>st</sup> century challenge. The Stage 1 deadline for receipt of application forms is 12 noon on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2010; successfully shortlisted projects will pass to Stage 2 and be required to submit a full application by 12 noon on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

#### **Background**

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is an international charitable foundation with cultural, educational and social interests which aims to connect and enrich the experiences of individuals, families and communities. With its headquarters in Lisbon, but with branches in London and Paris, the Foundation is in a privileged position to support transnational work which tackles contemporary issues facing Europe, in the context of an ageing population. With a history of working for the benefit of both older and younger groups at risk, the UK Branch and the Gulbenkian Human Development Programme identified ageing as a common priority and in 2008 began an exploratory phase commissioning papers and hosting investigative seminars focusing on three key areas; dementia, intergenerational issues and isolation amongst older people.

Following the results of this investigative phase, the Foundation felt much could be achieved by working transnationally on intergenerational practice particularly. And so earlier this year a joint project *Ageing and Social Cohesion*, was launched with the central aim of improving social cohesion whilst lessening isolation in the UK and Portugal through strengthening relations across the ages. In order to help stimulate new approaches to intergenerational contact and improve interventions in both countries we considered it necessary to take an in-depth look at current patterns and practices in the UK and Portugal, whilst identifying other imaginative ideas internationally.

These results have helped us to identify key strengths and gaps in both regions which we now intend to explore further through the piloting and close support of a select number of innovative and imaginative projects. We consider building the potential of organisations and their projects through guidance, mentoring and network support to be of key value and will seek with each successful applicants to realise this goal.

#### **The Brief**

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century will present significant challenges, which as a whole will be unlike any other set of challenges faced before. Environmental change, cultural changes such as those brought about by migration, and growing inequalities are likely to be of an unknown magnitude.

At the same time, huge demographic shifts worldwide mean for the first time many regions will see numbers of young people surpassed by numbers of older people. These changes signify many great achievements of the past century which should be celebrated; we are living longer, healthier lives than ever before. Nonetheless with changing family structures and increased geographic mobility,

within and beyond national borders, many of us spend much of our lives within our own age groups with the result that growing numbers of young and old report limited contact with one another. The impact on family relationships and care arrangements leave many feeling isolated while in communities the gap between young and old can lead to misapprehension and even mistrust and fear.

There is a growing need now to encourage contact across generations and to promote greater cohesion within communities by combating linear generational divides. Whilst many excellent intergenerational projects have been established across the globe, little is known about their impact or efficacy despite the fact that good relations between different generations are repeatedly acknowledged as important in creating a harmonious environment, both within the family, and the wider community. Where analysis has been undertaken, the potential benefits of intergenerational practice are shown to be wide and varied; those who participate in activities feel a greater sense of understanding and friendship while at the same time feeling personally valued for their effort and skills; for older groups this often leads to additional physical and mental health improvements and for younger people improvements in learning and employment skills are often cited.

Through this programme we seek to test a range of approaches to intergenerational working through the support of projects in the UK and Portugal which shall be closely supported, monitored and evaluated at every stage; the results of this analysis will be shared and disseminated nationally and transnationally to inform practice in local and national government, the voluntary sector and grassroots organisations.

## **Theme**

With significant demographic, cultural and environmental shifts comes the need to redefine our vision of the community and rethink how communities can respond together to 21st Century issues. Many activities seeking to achieve social change are still set in a context that can be perceived as nostalgic for a past that never was, rather than, in response to current realities, bringing people together to think about the type of neighbourhoods and communities they desire to live in and will work to bring about. And real community achievements can only occur when individuals of all ages feel empowered to take part.

As research has shown, many of the most successful intergenerational projects are based on common interests and goals; those that bring together participants, both old and young, to work on a particular objective, or to share enjoyment of a specific activity are not only beneficial to the participants, but also often have significant wider impact for their community. Both analytic and anecdotal evidence suggests initiatives with outside goals are far more likely to succeed than projects whose sole aim is to bring together people of different ages.

As such we are asking applicants to present projects which by joining together younger and older groups will seek to address a 21<sup>st</sup> century challenge.

## **Sub-themes**

The *IntergenerationAll* programme has 3 key strands under which applicants may apply; **Environment, Migration and Intercultural issues**, and **Isolation and Loneliness**.

## **Environment**

There are very few left who know nothing of environmental issues and the threats posed to our world by accelerating climate change. But knowledge does not always lead to action and for many the word 'environment' alone now holds daunting connotations. Unfortunately, many do not recognise the small actions they already carry out which impact beneficially upon their environment and give helpful results. Young and old have much to learn and gain from one other in these terms; many essential practices which help to protect and maintain a healthy balance within the environment are being lost to the generation who will most suffer from the impact of climate change; and younger people can help bring new ideas, tools and technologies to help retain and spread this valuable knowledge held by older generations. By using the skills and energy of both generations new and interesting initiatives may be found.

We are interested in receiving project proposals that aim to encourage citizens to extend small actions and become active in the care of their local and global environment through positive facilitation and support by project managers.

## **Migration and Intercultural issues**

All evidence points to the fact that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be strongly marked by the dislocation of large numbers of people due to economic, humanitarian and environmental issues. The unprecedented scale of the ever increasing movement of populations requires all societies to find innovative responses. New ways of ensuring these changes do not lead to wider social problems are needed; at the same time, communities must be encouraged to make the most of new encounters, sharing and learning from each other's cultures.

Many ethnic minority and migrant groups often experience unique intergenerational issues; some cannot travel as complete families, and so many young migrants have no meaningful contact with older people; those migrant families who are of three or more generations can face issues of misunderstanding with many grandparents unable to accept the behaviour the grandchild has adopted from their new home country. These issues are further complicated by the tacit understanding of many Europeans that migrant cultures often have a stronger 'sense of the family' and are better at 'looking after their own', a misconception which evidence repeatedly shows to be false. Cross-generational and cross-cultural contact among different groups could offer a new, broader and more balanced way of helping the young and old of distinct backgrounds to share their differences whilst building towards a shared community.

We welcome projects which aim to improve cultural understanding across the generations, both within and across ethnic groups.

## **Isolation and Loneliness**

With the dispersion of populations, disintegration of families and widening gaps between generations comes a growing trend of isolated individuals who suffer from a lack of regular contact with others. As younger and older people go through difficult transitions many are left feeling lonely and without reliable support networks or understanding to get them through difficult periods.. Levels of reported depression indicate the results such isolation may have on the population over long periods on psychological and emotional wellbeing: by the year 2020, depression will be the

2nd most common health problem in the world. Whilst loneliness is an affliction felt keenly among older groups, it is clearly not an experience unique to this consort. Increased contact between different generations could significantly help to reverse this trend, enabling those experiencing loneliness to reconnect and recognise their value once more.

We welcome projects which seek to combat loneliness and isolation of young and/or older people through sensitive and imaginative projects.

### **Recommendations**

Applicants are encouraged to consider the following questions in their proposals which will subsequently be developed in partnership with the Foundation:-

What are your aims and objectives?

What innovative tools and methods might you use?

How will you ensure relevance and value for both age groups?

Will the work ask participants to use existing skills and/or develop new ones?

How might you involve participants in the design and implementation of activities?

Will the work have wider social impact?

Will it be replicable elsewhere?

What future could the work have?

### **Timescale**

The Stage 1 deadline for receipt of application forms is **12 noon on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2010**; successfully shortlisted projects will pass to Stage 2 and be required to submit a full application by 12 noon on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

Projects will be expected to run for 12 months from the start date which will be confirmed in consultation with the Foundation and Thinkpublic.

### **Budget**

A grant of £30,000 is available for each project to cover the 12 month period of the initiative.