

Annual Report of the Hubs Manager for the BIEN General Assembly

31 August 2022 - by Neil Howard

Mustardseed Trust made a grant to BIEN for a period of three years starting from April 2022. This report represents the first Quarterly Progress Update accounting for our work.

1. Recruitment of Paid Staff

As soon as the grant was announced, we set out to recruit the paid staff it will support. In order to appoint the best possible Hubs co-ordinator, the Executive Committee in its April meeting appointed a Central Team to conduct the procedures of staff recruitment. The Central Team (CT) comprised the Chair, Vice-chair, an EC member designated as the Hubs Supervisor, the Treasurer and one more member from Latin America. The CT agreed on a job description, person specification and appointment process, and advertised the post through BIEN's website and its monthly newsletter which has a readership of about 14,000 people around the world interested in Basic Income.

Eight applications were received, and following a scoring process four were shortlisted. Interviews were held, at which shortlisted candidates were asked to give a short presentation about how they would create a BIEN hub and ensure that it was doing what it was supposed to be doing. All of the candidates were then asked the same questions, the answers to which were scored by the panel.

The process resulted in higher and almost equal scores for two of the candidates, and even using the planned tie-breaker questions it was impossible to separate them. In relation to the expertise and experience of the two candidates, the panel, and subsequently the Executive Committee, agreed that Wolfgang Wopperer-Beholz would be offered the post of Hubs co-ordinator, and that Christopher Nwafor would be offered the post of Hub manager for Africa. Both offers were accepted. Wolfgang lives in the UK and so is now directly employed by BIEN since June 20th 2022, Christopher is an independent contractor since 1st of July 2022 with whom an appropriate contract has been agreed and signed.

Accountability

The Executive Committee has appointed a new trustee, Dr. Neil Howard (the present author), who is on the staff of the University of Bath and is experienced in project management and large

grant fundraising, to be Hubs supervisor. Effectively, Neil has taken on the role of project manager for the roll-out of the programme of action supported by this Mustardseed Grant. It is through Neil that Wolfgang and Christopher will be accountable to BIEN's Executive Committee, and he is responsible for their supervision, training and support.

Induction

Neil has organised Wolfgang's and Christopher's inductions, and in July Dr. Torry organised a seminar for Wolfgang and Christopher, to which Executive Committee members were also invited, on the definition of Basic Income and on variants and alternatives. Wolfgang also benefited from attending a significant gathering of the European UBI movement in Braga, Portugal, shortly after he began work, which provided him an excellent opportunity to get to know key figures within the ecosystem.

Further appointments

The Executive Committee is aware of the need to raise additional funds to enable the release of that element of the Mustardseed grant that has to be matched. It also plans to raise further funds so as to enable recruitment of regional Hubs managers in Asia and Latin America. Plans are in being put in place for this effort, beginning with an appeal for funds and funding contacts to be made at BIEN's General Assembly and a Crowdfunding campaign.

2. Strategic Planning

After Wolfgang's induction, he, Neil and Chris began planning for the Hubs development process. The process has begun with a round of interviews of EC members about their current roles and challenges as well as ideas and vision for BIEN's future, followed by a survey of BIEN members and partners on the same topics. Based on the results and on the input generated in a session at the international UBI meeting in Braga mentioned above and facilitated by Wolfgang, an action plan for longer-term strategic and organisational development is in development. In parallel, work on near-term projects like a website overhaul and streamlining the membership registration process is going ahead, as will the iterative development of organisational structures. We anticipate this initial 'data gathering' phase of the project to take three months, after which the true building work will begin.

In parallel, Christopher Nwafor is developing a plan specific to the development of the Africa regional Hub. The initial phase of this work is likely to take the form of Africa's first regional UBI conference bringing together activists, civil society and scholars in order to lay foundations for a future network.