Scholarship and Educational Fund with Enlarged Budget

Amount allocated: Rs. 10,00,000

Abstract:

The Scholarship and Educational Fund (SEF) provides financial support to Aurovilians, mainly to youth, who seek educational opportunities currently not available inside of Auroville. This includes college and university fees and related costs and CBSE courses (at New Era Secondary School, Auroville). The SEF was created in 2008 to provide support in the form of interest-free loans, payable when recipients begin to earn an income.

Originally the SEF team believed that scholarship funds could be raised without too much difficulty, in India and abroad; however, it was found that, while scholarship grants for outstanding students in specific subjects are available, support for a community of students in general does not meet open ears. SEF tries to provide opportunities for this community of students, allotting funds based on the criteria of a student’s motivation and aptitude as well as the family’s financial needs. Part of this grant will be utilized for a study of the impact of the fund to date.

Q2 report (July – September 2017):

During this last quarter (July-September 2017), Bajaj CSR funds were used to support 20 students. Support was provided according to SEF guidelines which prioritize financial need and also consider academic performance. Each recipient submitted an application and each application was reviewed and considered by the SEF team as per established guidelines.

An initiative to survey past SEF recipients was added to our program. This survey will be distributed to all students who received support during early years. The survey will investigate recipients’ status in terms of their academic and professional careers, with the overall goal of evaluating the impact of SEF efforts and improving our understanding of the educational needs of Auroville youth. An Aurovilian with substantial experience conducting research and surveys has joined the SEF team to conduct this survey work, which will begin in October 2017.

Q3 report (October – December 2017):

As the funds for this project have been exhausted except for those required to conduct a survey on the SEF beneficiaries in the early years of operation, we focused on this aspect.

After a lengthy search for an adequate person to survey the past beneficiaries, we identified Aurovilian Fanny Canette who has experience with surveys and in research. After updating the contact details (addresses, mail IDs, telephone numbers), Fanny wrote to altogether 50 SEF beneficiaries, at least twice to each; eleven addresses could not be updated. Ten completed surveys have been received via email; three beneficiaries were interviewed personally; a few more responded but not yet with complete answers.

For the subsequent months we hope to have some more responses. Fanny will have to analyse the replies and analyse and summarize the findings with respect to possible conclusions. Getting responses from beneficiaries has proven to be harder than expected.
Q4 report (January – March 2018):

With funds for scholarship provisions to students already exhausted by October 2017, the work left to complete was the survey of past beneficiaries of the Scholarship & Educational Fund (SEF), i.e. to collect some more responses from beneficiaries, to analyse the responses and draw some conclusions if possible.

Aurovillian Fanny Canette, in charge of the survey work, wrote to altogether 54 SEF beneficiaries with confirmed mail addresses. Of these, 18 answered, i.e. 15 by email and three in a personal interview. Enclosed find the final report on the survey.

Outcomes:

Firstly, having an enlarged budget for funding higher studies of Auroville youth almost tripled the annual budget, which was appreciated by the SEF team and by the recipients. As reported on Oct. 7th, 2017, the funds were used to support twenty Auroville students in their higher studies, nineteen of them within India, and one for a one-year course in Brazil. (Details on students, study courses, universities etc. had been submitted along with the said report of Oct. 2017.) As per the statutes of the SEF, support was provided in consideration of financial need and academic aptitude and performance.

Secondly, the survey of earlier SEF beneficiaries allows some conclusions on specific steps to be taken and will help to modify our mode of working. (E.g. we shall insist on more “career counseling” i.e. on personal guidance of students in their study choices – for details see survey report.)

Conclusion:

The SEF is extremely grateful to have been enabled to allot financial support that was much more substantial than in all preceding years. The survey of early beneficiaries made the team aware of issues that should and can be addressed. We intend to follow up accordingly.