



Working together to strengthen London's voluntary and community sector

LONDON FUNDERS BUSINESS PLAN 2010-12

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London Funders business plan 2010-12

1 Summary

We are committed to activity which will bring solid and tangible outcomes for our members. To benefit the voluntary and community sector – and, therefore, to benefit London’s communities – we want to help develop better informed funders and investors making better decisions.

This plan sets out our objectives for the next three years, with our ideas for activities alongside performance indicators and measures of effectiveness to help us not only demonstrate our impact but keep aiming high in our ambitions for the organisation.

The period represents a new jumping-off point for London Funders, after a few years of subsidy by the London Development Agency, when our plans and ideas for membership growth and income diversification come to fruition.

Our members have been increasingly active in taking part in activities and confirming our value to them: our strongest work priority is to maintain the standards and usefulness of our work to funders and retain their commitment.

We are becoming more visible externally and our work priorities also reflect our need to build further on this, extending our range of committed stakeholders in all the sectors but with special reference to public bodies and the corporate sector, regionally and nationally. Increasingly we hope that London Funders will be identified as a marketplace of ideas and an information exchange, supportive of its members and knowledgeable about London.

This plan is monitored by London Funders’ Executive Committee at its quarterly meetings and is renewed annually so that it rolls forward as a three year plan with the first year handled in greatest detail.

At the heart of our plans is a commitment to activity which will bring solid and tangible outcomes for our members. To benefit the voluntary and community sector – and, therefore, to benefit London’s communities – we want to help develop better informed funders and investors making better decisions.

Where we start from

2 Introduction, vision, mission, principles. The duration of this plan

2.1 Vision

Our vision is of a thriving and sustainable third sector that meets the needs of Londoners.

2.2 Mission

London Funders exists to strengthen and support London's funders to better meet the needs of Londoners

London Funders is the membership organisation which works with funders and investors supporting London's voluntary and community organisations. It links all the sectors, providing foundations, funders from the public sector and corporate givers with opportunities to share their experience and learn from each other. It helps to forge productive relationships which contribute to the wider benefit and overall sustainability of London's voluntary and community organisations. It aims to contribute to a vibrant, varied, fit for purpose third sector which is appropriately and fairly funded.

To achieve this London Funders brings funders together to:

- * Share knowledge about social issues in London and keep up to date with social change
- * Increase understanding of current funding and policy trends
- * Identify and encourage best practice in grantmaking or investing to support and strengthen the voluntary and community sector
- * Get to know each other better and work intelligently together
- * Improve efficiency and increase leverage on investment
- * Promote innovation in funding
- * Be a channel for dialogue between funders and the third sector in London.

While the organisation of meetings, maintenance of the website and management of resources are arranged by the small staff team - the Secretariat - London Funders is in reality the whole network of member organisations. The breadth of membership, quality of work, relevance of activity, and nature of our policy development are a function of the engagement of those working in or responsible for our member organisations.

2.3 The principles that underlie our work

The importance of London Funders is our focus on the Capital. Although the other English regions and other countries of the UK have considerable and particular needs, so too does London. Because of the scale and complexity of London these can be masked and need exposure to policy and funding development.

The key defining feature of our work is cross-sectoralism, through which regional and local government funders get into dialogue with independent trusts and foundations, livery companies, loan finance investors, corporate sector donors and new philanthropists. Each works within different frameworks and constraints. All have overlapping but distinct aims and objectives. What all share is a love of London, a belief in Londoners and various areas of expertise about different parts of London and its third sector.

London Funders can break down barriers between funders and fund seekers for the benefit of all. We need to identify those in the voluntary and community sector who have expertise in analysing the current environment and can scan the horizon for future trends, and link them appropriately with funders; we also need to help maximise the use of funders' knowledge and expertise. It is in everyone's interest for budget-holders to be well-informed and this is part of London Funders' role - to inform funding decisions and help funders work intelligently together in a spirit of equality to improve practice and outcomes.

Through our members and the approach taken by the Executive Committee we have developed a strong set of values recognising and embodying as best we are able diversity, progressive and strategic approaches to funding, and the sustainability and resilience of the voluntary and community sector. We are outcomes and impact-driven.

2.4 Purpose and duration of the plan

The plan sets out our detailed objectives for 2010, within a broader view of the three calendar years 2010-12. The Executive Committee will review progress at each quarterly meeting. It will also update the plan annually and roll it forward so that there is always a detailed annual time-frame within which work will be managed.

This plan is based on discussion by the Executive Committee of the development they want to see and their ambitions for London Funders as an effective and sustainable organisation, using resources in a smart way and genuinely focused on outcomes for London and Londoners.

3 Background to London Funders

3.1 Formalities and governance

London Funders was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in October 2005 (company registration number 5596299). It is also a registered charity (number 1116201).

The governing body is a 12-person Executive Committee, elected by members from amongst their number. Committee members serve for three years and may stand for two three-year terms in succession before a gap in service of at least one year. Committee members elect honorary officers from amongst these elected members. At the start of 2010, members and their terms of service were

1	Lisa Greensill, Government Office for London, Chair	2008-11
2	Katherine Payne, The Mercers' Company, Vice Chair	2007-10
3	Debbie Pippard, Big Lottery Fund, Vice Chair	2009-12
4	Ian Redding, London Councils, Treasurer	2009-12
5	Susan Humphries, London Borough of Haringey	2007-10
6	Andrew Robinson, CCLA Investment Management Ltd	2007-10
7	Bonnie Royal, London Borough of Southwark	2007-10
8	Mubin Haq, City Parochial Foundation	2008-11
9	Sandra Jones, London Borough of Lewisham	2008-11
10	Jill Andrews, Safer London Foundation	2009-12
11	Alastair Wilson, UnLtd	2009-12
12	Kristina Glenn, Cripplegate Foundation	2010

Kristina Glenn was appointed at the start of 2010, until the AGM, to fill a vacancy left by the departure of Sara Llewelin from The City Bridge Trust. Terms run from AGM to AGM (normally therefore starting in June).

3.2 Membership structure

London Funders is a membership association. Membership is open to organisations which support London's third sector with grants and donations or which purchase services from the sector through commissioning and procurement. These may be public bodies, charities and voluntary organisations, private sector companies and individual donors.

Associate membership is open to third sector organisations distributing funding in London but not as their primary function. They may participate in all meetings to which members are invited. Staff, volunteers and committee members of Associates have no vote at London Funders meetings and may not hold office in the organisation or be members of the Executive Committee. Strategies for expanding membership are a key part of work in 2009 and 2010.

At the end of 2009, membership stood at 96 (seven more than a year before). Of these 81 are full members, split between sectors roughly as follows:

	2009	2008
Statutory bodies	48%	51%
Independent foundations	37%	42%
NDPBs	10%	4%
Corporates	5%	3%

Members at the end of 2009

Action Acton (associate)
Arts Council
bassac (associate)
BBC Children in Need
Big Lottery Fund
Capacitybuilders
Capital Community Foundation
CCLA
Charity Bank
Church Urban Fund
City Bridge Trust, The
City of London Corporation
City of Westminster
City Parochial Foundation
Community Foundation Network (associate)
Comic Relief
Cripplegate Foundation
Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund
Diocese of Southwark
East London Community Foundation
Equality and Human Rights Commission
Football Foundation
Girdlers' Company Charitable Trust
Government Office for London
GrantScape
Groundswell UK (associate)
Help a London Child
Heritage Lottery Fund
Hillingdon Community Trust
In Kind Direct (associate)
Jack Petchey Foundation
John Lyon's Charity
Joseph Levy Foundation
King's Fund, The
Lloyd's Charities Trust
Lloyds TSB Foundation
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
London Borough of Barnet
London Borough of Bexley
London Borough of Brent
London Borough of Bromley
London Borough of Camden
London Borough of Croydon
London Borough of Ealing
London Borough of Enfield
London Borough of Greenwich
London Borough of Hackney
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
London Borough of Haringey
London Borough of Harrow
London Borough of Havering
London Borough of Hillingdon
London Borough of Hounslow
London Borough of Islington
London Borough of Lambeth
London Borough of Lewisham
London Borough of Merton
London Borough of Newham
London Borough of Redbridge
London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames
London Borough of Southwark
London Borough of Sutton
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
London Borough of Waltham Forest
London Borough of Wandsworth
London Catalyst
London Councils
London Development Agency
London Diocesan Fund (associate)
London Housing Foundation
London Probation
Mayor's Fund for London, The
Media Trust (associate)
Mercers' Company, The
New Philanthropy Capital (associate)
North West London Community Foundation
Peter Cruddas Foundation
Pilgrim Trust, The
Pilotlight
Red Ochre (associate)
Rosa UK
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
Safer London Foundation
St Katharine & Shadwell Trust
School for Social Entrepreneurs (associate)
Social Enterprise London (associate)
Social Investment Business, The
Sound Connections (associate)
Sport England
Thames Community Foundation
Transform Newham (associate)
United St Saviour's Charity
UnLtd
Wates Foundation
Young Foundation (associate)

3.3 Staffing

The Secretariat is made up of two full-time members of staff, the Director and the Network Development Manager. Part of the cost of a service level agreement with the Association of Charitable Foundations (from which London Funders rents a small office and share of a meeting room) is the provision of finance services up to an average of one day per month, covering bookkeeping and financial management. London Funders has also made good use of office-based volunteers. From the start of 2010, sessional work by a freelance consultant will augment the Secretariat's work, especially in editing the e-bulletin and updating the website.

3.4 Development of London Funders

Formerly known as London Funders Group, the network had a long informal period while it matured into its current form. At a fairly early stage it was taken on by London Boroughs Grants (which became the Association of London Government and then London Councils) where it was hosted for five years. The motivating factors for involvement recorded in the early days were:

- * declining faith in single sector solutions to tackle disadvantage
- * search for effective and sustainable partnerships
- * growing interest in funding strategies with an impact on areas of multiple deprivation
- * recognition of the need to fund more effectively
- * the search for better monitoring and evaluation

Independence from any one funder became an important issue for the Group and for a time a purely voluntary group ran the organisation, offering a programme of relevant and interesting events for funders in London.

The London Development Agency sponsored new development of London Funders from 2003 with a three-year development grant of £313,400. This recognised a need for funders to share information and to develop a collective response to provide a more coordinated approach to funding for London's voluntary and community sector.

A consultation exercise in January 2003 for the London Funders website re-development project provided clear evidence of this need and helped to identify key areas for future work. A need to share knowledge was expressed as the priority at that time.

Since then, membership has steadily grown and very firmly connected public sector and independent funders in learning and discussion in every one of the network's activities. For three years London Funders was helpfully hosted by the Association of Charitable Foundations and during this time it became clear that there was sufficient interest for a separate charitable company to be created. The formalities were in place from late 2005, including an elected Executive Committee and by May 2007 London Funders was fully independent with its own staff and separate income.

Membership subscriptions were introduced in 2006. A decision by London Councils in 2007 to assume responsibility for the subscriptions to London Funders on behalf of all the London boroughs has been important: while staff of virtually all the boroughs are active and engaged members of London Funders, the exercise of collecting 34 separate subscriptions would absorb a great deal of time.

A new London Development Agency (LDA) grant starting in October 2007 and running until March 2010 (£150,000 in total) assisted London Funders at a critical period of growth and development. Member subscriptions in 2009 provided 52% of income and while effort was made to increase the number of members, and identify new sources of funding, this assistance from the LDA was crucial. Targets for the grant included the development of an income generation strategy to reduce the dependency of London Funders on external grants.

4 Review of London Funders' performance and development

4.1 Information services

Our **website** (www.londonfunders.org.uk) is an information resource for funders, investors and commissioners supporting London's third sector. The Secretariat continues to find ways of improving and refreshing its content and encouraging visitors. In mid-2009 a section was added to support funders during the recession. Funding a redesign of the website is a priority.

Our **e-bulletin** is published every two months, circulated to members and interested agencies, and posted on our website. It covers member updates, new programmes, publications, research and news. Items are brief for quick scanning and provide links to more detail. Urgent or important matters are also circulated in mini-bulletins (12-15 a year). New formatting and accessibility improved the e-bulletin in 2009 and readership continues to increase. In 2010, effort will go into new ways of organising the information it contains, featuring more of our members' activities – through profiles and new regular features – and fostering greater interactivity with members.

4.2 Project groups: working on members' special interests

These are cross-sector groups set up at members' request, usually meeting quarterly for presentations and discussion; members set the agenda around policy development and action. Brief notes are posted on our website and new participants are welcome. Groups are:

Asylum, Refugee and Migration

This group arose in 2007 when funders and refugee agencies discussed the development of the Mayor's refugee strategy: it now extends to all migrants. Group aims: shared knowledge about funding and related issues; map funding, identify gaps in funding; coordinate funding, helping to fill gaps and respond to new needs; propose strategic solutions to improve funding for this sector.

Chair: Mubin Haq, City Parochial Foundation

Good Practice in Grantmaking

Inspired by the Gershon review of public sector activities that focused on reducing bureaucracy and finding ways to increase efficiency and effectiveness, this Group takes a practical look at how funders can promote efficiency, identify cost savings (especially in the back office) and work together to ensure coherence in the funding environment.

Chair: Ian Redding, London Councils

Olympics and Paralympics

This Group works to identify short, medium and long-term projects related to Olympic planning and legacy, and how and why sport helps in developing communities. They are interested in exploring aspects of the Olympic legacy in its broadest sense.

Chair: Stewart Goshawk, The City Bridge Trust

Research and Evaluation

The Group explores the use of research to develop funding programmes, data sources, skills for commissioning research, effective use of knowledge and research data to influence policy.

Chair: Andrew Cooper, The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund

Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Development

Aims to create more coordinated funding of voluntary and community sector infrastructure in London through supporting the ChangeUp Agenda (existing and new); mapping existing funding to second and third tier organisations; piloting new ways of working; and looking at ways to assess the impact of second tier funding in London.

Chair: Debbie Pippard, Big Lottery Fund

Grassroots Grants

Since mid-2009, London Funders has convened the ten funders delivering this Office of the Third Sector programme in London, supporting sharing of information and tips on programme management and encouraging pan-London collaboration on fund development.

4.3 Meetings: collaborative, cross-sector information exchanges

London Funders' meetings offer information and opportunities for discussion, stimulate ideas and policy development, encourage networking and wider circles of contact; they create scope for collaboration between foundations and across sectors. They are increasingly seen as key events that help form policy and provide a key channel of communication for decision-makers.

Quarterly meetings for members

These meetings (usually half-days) are a really important building block of our work. They tackle current issues, often focused on a particular topic on which funders are keen to have up to date information, opportunities to look at good funding practice, and explore potential for collaboration or new approaches. Attendance has been strong and drawn from all funder types. Choice of speakers has been helpful in building alliances.

Joint meetings, policy briefings

It is vital that London Funders is responsive to new issues, new learning in the sector and opportunities for building new partnerships. We therefore maintain the ability to set up meetings, often at short notice, and with a variety of purposes:

- * inform members about new activities or publications from our membership
- * ensure that perspectives, practice and experience are shared across the funding sectors – public funders, foundations, corporates and non-departmental public bodies
- * highlight useful pieces of research or learning
- * offer a thorough briefing on a part of the third sector where there are new factors for funders to understand
- * link with other partners in exploring an issue.

4.4 Support for and relationship building with the third sector

Joint meetings and policy briefings are a way of building links with voluntary organisations and forging alliances, especially with infrastructure organisations (regional and borough) to help London Funders remain abreast of current issues in the sector. Our website includes the "e-gateway for fund seekers", a section to advise voluntary and community organisations seeking funding where and how to look for and apply to appropriate sources.

4.5 The recession

The pressures facing all kinds of funders as well as fund seekers at this time have caused London Funders to focus very strongly on ways of assisting members to cope and to collaborate in ways that will strengthen them and the third sector in London. This orientation will be carried forward in meetings, information material and website development as well as opportunities for partnerships and alliances and for influencing public policy.

4.6 Positioning and member perceptions of London Funders

Analysis of member satisfaction with our activities has been largely gauged by levels of participation in meetings and project groups, renewal of membership subscriptions and evaluation forms completed at major meetings. We keep records of numbers of users of the website and individuals signing up for the e-bulletin. We aim always to ensure that our activities are equally relevant to the different sectors represented in the membership. The evaluation of our work at the start of 2010 by Rocket Science in relation to our grant from the London Development Agency will provide new evidence of our progress in this and provide methodology to maintain such measurement: we will aim to learn a great deal from it.

5 External environment: needs analysis; future trends

The funding environment

- * complexity of funding streams
- * increased competition for funding
- * increase in focused programmes, less open grantmaking
- * multiplicity of government programmes, often short term
- * increased commissioning and procurement
- * pressures on infrastructure support
- * pressures on endowed foundations' asset base and income levels in the current economic climate
- * reductions in public sector funding for the third sector, in the current economic climate
- * for all funders a high level of uncertainty over resourcing in the next few years and a need to review all aspects of funding to maximise increasingly scarce resources
- * diversion of resources to Olympics investment
- * impact of central government policy and funding on local settings – increased uncertainty about policy change resulting from the general election in 2010
- * increased requirements on applicants (fraud avoidance, etc)
- * increased partnership work between funders
- * personalisation agenda in the care services
- * cuts in ring-fenced funding, especially affecting some boroughs
- * big voluntary organisations getting bigger and squeezing out small and medium ones
- * loan finance and community development financial instruments
- * criticism of heavy expectations of monitoring and evaluation by funded groups.

London factors

Population

- * demographics – more old and young than other regions
- * largest refugee and asylum seeker population with distinct service and support needs
- * scale of migration
- * cultural and linguistic diversity
- * polarisation of wealth and poverty
- * scale and intractability of child poverty
- * pressures on housing

Government and economy

- * complexity of government structures
- * London as a global city
- * fear of the impact of the recession on London as a financial centre
- * Thames Gateway
- * disadvantageous local government finance settlement
- * large scale regeneration projects
- * local authority services becoming more diverse: important when there are big divergences between neighbouring boroughs
- * lack of recognition of London needs – exaggerated sense that London is prosperous and getting enough support

Voluntary and community sector

- * second tier needs

Environment and other special factors

- * threat/fear of terrorism
- * threat of flooding
- * impact and potential of Olympics

Other external factors – national and global

- * climate change
- * potential health pandemics
- * increasing technology, and its rate of change
- * emerging control agenda through government, rather than a development agenda

Where we are heading

6 Developing the plan

6.1 Strategic direction

The strategic priorities are summarised at the start of Section 7 and expanded in the subsequent pages. London Funders will focus strongly on

- * maintaining, expanding and deepening its services to members
- * evaluating the impact of its work on funders and
- * seeking out new partners to achieve its goals.

At the same time we will give attention to our own operations - finding ways of smarter and more intensive working, improving income generation and building sustainability.

Achievement of all the aims depends crucially on maintaining staffing and finance, and the support and commitment of Board members and other volunteers.

The Executive Committee has confirmed its commitment to achieving real improvement in the income sources of London Funders by strengthening membership, reviewing charging policies, exploring sources of grant support and sponsorship and opportunities for earned income. Committee members have begun their work by exploring the implications for relationship management and maintain a strong awareness of the commitment in this Plan to partnership building inside and beyond London Funders' membership.

6.2 Critical success factors

The Executive Committee and staff have looked in detail at how best to define indicators of success, measured against London Funders' purposes (set out as seven points on page 4 of this Plan). They will use a range of agreed criteria to look at activity against the plan at each of the Committee's quarterly meetings, and refresh the business plan annually. Particular focus for analysis will include:

- * monitoring levels of participation in all of London Funders' programmes
- * ensuring an increasing membership, year on year, and a healthy level of renewals
- * surveying levels of satisfaction with services offered
- * checking regularly with members on their priorities and pressures
- * levels of interest in working on London Funders' governing body and planning groups
- * ability to cover core costs increasingly from subscriptions, sponsorship and help in kind
- * effectiveness in raising funds for specific projects
- * fostering collaboration between members, and shared thinking on policy development
- * identifying tangible outcomes from our work to support funders
- * invitations to London Funders to take part in policy discussion
- * visibility in the media
- * increase in and better coordination of funding for the third sector
- * bridges between funders and the third sector.

The Committee will also set and monitor targets in relation to areas such as diversification of income; stronger income streams; increasing membership (and the mix of different types); increasing member participation in face-to-face activities; consistency, regularity and relevance of electronic/printed contact with members; maintaining or improving the number of events offered; good and timely publicity for our activity; speed of production and quality of reports on our activity – for participants, members and publicly available on our website; follow up of issues raised at our events, including information on the website; performance against staff members' strategic objectives; external visibility: in press, in members and others' newsletters, etc; rate of contact with new potential stakeholders.

7 Action plan

7.1 Priorities

London Funders' choices about work to be undertaken and relationships to be built will be made in the light of the three strategic areas set out below, each with its own priorities.

Strategic Area 1 Organic growth

London Funders' strategies for existing work at its current level and work that London Funders aims to expand

	Priorities	Timescale
1.1	Sustainable and well-governed organisation in the light of the economic downturn	Continuing
1.2	Bringing funders together to create value for money through smarter working	Continuing
1.3	Promoting the role of funders to politicians in order to ensure sustainability	Medium term
1.4	Strengthen how we communicate our work to members and to a broader audience	Now and continuing
1.5	Better use of membership resource: using expertise of members in policy development, training, etc	Stronger focus from 2010
1.6	More work on supporting and retaining current members	Review and measure annually
1.7	Greater feedback and engagement with members and evaluation by them – relationship management	Continuing; review mid-2010 after LDA evaluation
1.8	Identify correct level of free offer to members as against charged services	Refer to Executive Committee in April 2010
1.9	Review the model for project groups	Refer to Executive Committee in April 2010

Strategic Area 2 Diversifying our business

This section outlines London Funders' strategies for expanding its business by diversifying the membership base and working methods

	Priorities	Timescale
2.1	Development of membership – look at all areas of financing and commissioning the third sector to find where we should be expanding (health, housing and so on)	Funds raised for this. Concentrated work from early 2010
2.2	Knowledge management – in terms of need and social change (eg changing demographics)	Start to scope work in 2010 for later development
2.3	Bring in expertise from non-member agencies	Continuing
2.4	Research	Review purpose and

		potential for funding during the period
2.5	Continuing professional development – explore scope for training programme as new source of income	Report commissioned from volunteer, due April 2010; action plan to follow
2.6	E-bulletin continues a priority rather than broader knowledge management	Immediate
2.7	Look for opportunities to contribute to policy development of key London agencies, using Executive Committee members and project groups to assist thinking	Continuing

Strategic Area 3 Working in partnership with others

London Funders will identify opportunities to support its aims by working in partnership with other organisations and sectors

	Priorities	Timescale
3.1	Partnerships for contracts and funding to enhance our capacity to win contracts	Start work in 2010 on strengthening own capacity
3.2	Partnership for knowledge/research experience	Continuous process of building links
3.3	Partnership to support response to the recession – to mitigate impact	Major focus for as long as needed
3.4	Partnership for volume	Continuous part of EC thinking

7.2 Operational implications

The current plan's priorities depend on a heightened level of efficiency in several areas:

- * data capture about members - their participation in our activities and the impact of London Funders on their work and therefore on the strengthening of the voluntary and community sector in London. Improvement in this area will be addressed by implementing a new database as rapidly as possible from early 2010.
- * efficiency in the use of information and communications technology so that London Funders has reasonable guarantees of a robust email system, including knowledgeable use of mass mailing techniques and good routines for maintaining clean and up-to-date records.
- * various factors relating to the website: this has not been a stable system. Minor improvements in design and regularity of review of content have begun. The development of a complex section relating to funders' recession response has revealed weaknesses in underlying structure and design as well as dependency on external expertise. More substantial improvements need to be a priority.
- * A reprioritisation is needed of the Director's time towards partnership building, publicity and media exposure. This will also require a review of workloads and procedures.

7.3 Deliverables 2010-11

These fall into the strategic areas described above:

- * continuing and expanding our established work
- * diversifying our business
- * building partnerships

In all London Funders activities our goals are to:

- * drive up the proportion of members active in the network and get more people involved from each of our member organisations
- * take every opportunity to focus on London-specific issues
- * support our members in better funding practice

7.3.1 Current commitments

1 Quarterly members meetings: on topics of broad interest to a majority of members: at least three months in advance of each meeting we will consult the Executive Committee (and regularly ask members) about topics to consider, and also scan the environment for issues of relevance to funders. In preparation for each meeting we will be advised by a small planning group, on content, speakers and format. A report will be published as soon as possible after each meeting – circulated to members, posted on the website, and used with a broader audience where useful for visibility or policy influence.

Principles:

- * strengthened ability to ensure all sectors making up London Funders are equally well provided for in our choice of meeting topics and approach to planning
- * effort put into ensuring feedback and learning from that feedback
- * appropriate follow-up and capturing of outcomes from meetings to maximise their value to members
- * publicity beyond London Funders' members to showcase their good practice.

The key topics identified for members' meetings at the start of 2010, based on members' expressed interest and a range of opportunities, are: to follow up constructive work on funders' response to the recession (and especially the worsening "social recession"); to help funders understand and adapt to the implications of elections at national and local level in May 2010; and to share knowledge and practical help in the area of climate change and good environmental practice.

2 Project groups: three or four meetings a year for each of the six existing groups. The Secretariat supports these groups by arranging and servicing meetings (normally providing the meeting space at London Funders' offices, taking and circulating minutes, liaising with each Group chair over agendas and speakers, and providing technical support for meeting presenters). The meetings provide opportunities for members to share experience and seek information, support or collaborators for new ventures, and hear expert speakers to assist in informing policy development and practice.

We will review early in 2010 the value of a new group to support the development in London of the personalisation agenda.

Principles:

- * remain alert to gaps in areas covered by project groups and be ready to establish new ones covering other areas of interest
- * regularly review the range of interest and membership of each group
- * encourage groups to keep a good balance between external input and opportunities for learning from each other or developing collaborative partnerships
- * capture outcomes from the groups: disseminate within London Funders and externally
- * use ideas and issues to inform other London Funders' activity.

3 **Policy briefings, joint meetings:** at least three in each year in response to member demand and opportunities to highlight good practice.

Principles:

- * more deliberate selection of topics to build new partnerships within our membership
- * offer these events as a showcase for the best work by our members
- * do more that is directly relevant to local government
- * do more that is directly relevant to corporate funders and investors
- * see these meetings as an opportunity to forge new alliances with the third sector.

4 **Website:** keep making incremental improvements to the website to make it richer for members to use and create opportunities to show the nature and range of discussion at London Funders' gatherings and of expertise in the network. If possible find the resources for a thorough review to improve the website.

Principles

- * limit amount of material on the website that is available to members only
- * enable members to find forthcoming events and recent publications easily
- * help new users understand the nature of London Funders
- * keep it current
- * develop techniques to drive members regularly to the website.

5 **E-bulletin:** to produce this to a high standard six times a year electronically, and issue at least two mini-bulletins between each main e-bulletin

Principles:

- * main focus to share information, from inside and outside the network, that is relevant to funders' practice or informs their knowledge of London; also to disseminate material which funders will find relevant to share with funded organisations
- * increase the range of readers inside and outside the membership to highlight to a broader audience the usefulness of London Funders
- * circulate the e-bulletin in a format which is easy to read, navigate and share
- * keep items brief
- * sample opinion of readers regularly
- * introduce new features and approaches to encourage interest and responsiveness.

7.3.2 New development

There are several areas where work will be under way during **2010**:

1 Membership development: we are committed to building new membership in several core areas, notably among health and housing funders. This will be approached through commissioning expertise in these fields and planning relevant events and meetings to foster links with our existing members. If we are successful in expanding our membership to these sectors, we will ensure that our continuing offer to members reflects the new range of interests they represent.

2 Response to the recession: we are committed to organising a conference in the second half of 2010 to assist funders in understanding more about the continuing impact of the recession on the whole field; share good practice; and foster new ideas and practices to mitigate the impact of the recession on funders, the VCS and London communities. In view of the seriousness of the recession and its differential impact on the various funding sectors, it will be a dominant theme for London Funders at least for the first two years of the period. Work to develop a "recession-tracking" group will start in 2010.

We will maintain and extend partnerships with key organisations to support this work.

3 Stock-take of members: we will continue to use a questionnaire sent out with the welcome pack when an organisation joins or rejoins London Funders), to help us make sure we are reaching as many people within each member organisation as we can and to raise awareness and understanding of London Funders among members. This also gives us regularly updated contacts for other information gathering. We are tracking the improvements in numbers this gives us.

We will complete a baseline survey of members to help us estimate the value of our members' contributions to the VCS in London through grants, contracts and loans. We will plan to develop a profile of each member for use on our website and which can be used over time to deepen detailed knowledge of the work and contribution of each one.

In late 2010 we will explore the need for and feasibility of creating a detailed directory of funders and a series of funding maps on specific aspects of funding (like the "Funding Jigsaw" on work that benefits children and young people).

4 Both to satisfy demand and to begin to develop an earned income stream, we will experiment with offering **training opportunities** to our members, sampling ideas about methods (eg action learning sets) and topics and looking in depth at financial implications and marketing.

5 Continue to improve links with **local government funders** (which represent a high proportion of the membership): London Councils has facilitated a link with the Borough Grants Officers Forum which in part addresses the issue and will be monitored carefully. It complements a continuing programme of visits to each borough.

Further ideas will be explored with a view to development from early **2011**:

1 Dissemination: we will explore systematic ways of ensuring that good work from our members and others is publicised, research outputs shared and used, and particular examples of good practice advocated.

2 Knowledge base on London: the need for and feasibility of developing systematic resources to inform our members about London and its communities (statistical data, research material, policy documents). We will review the need for London Funders' website to build a knowledge base about London issues and how these are addressed. We will examine the need for a section on who governs London, how London is organised, who are the key actors/power brokers in shaping policy and services for London and whether funders need an annual London "stock-take". We will consider the practicality of a relationship with Greater London Economics and other key information analysts about London.

3 Development of **case studies** that exemplify good practice in all aspects of funding amongst members. Use them to encourage smarter giving.

4 Identification of **research topics** and sources of funding to pursue them.

Outcomes from our work in 2010 and 2011

- * better informed funders
- * shared knowledge
- * members more actively involved
- * generation of high quality information
- * better funding practices
- * more collaborative activity
- * well used and well thought of resources for funders
- * maximised dissemination of members' research, publications, experience
- * more substantial information to support arguments about London's resource needs
- * ideas for research topics and potential funding sources.

Indicators

- * increased attendance at meetings and events
- * proportionate balance of attendance from different membership types/sectors
- * bigger range of staff in the member organisations making use of our services
- * increased involvement in project groups and member-led agendas
- * greater use of our website
- * issue of e-bulletin and mini-bulletins as planned
- * increased number of subscribers to the e-bulletin
- * delivery of recession work
- * completion of "stock-take"
- * documenting case studies
- * development and implementation of self-evaluation; methodology developed to make continuing evaluation a part of normal operations

Some of these activities are relatively easily measured. For these the Secretariat will develop survey mechanisms, collate data gathered and report to every Executive Committee meeting. The Executive Committee and staff will explore the best ways of achieving this, taking advice on how to define and measure the more intangible areas. By the end of this plan period there should be several years of data for assessment of performance improvement.

For example: we will record

- * numbers of meetings and events against targets
- * attendance at all events, analysing proportion of active membership activity levels by membership type rates of change over time
- * nature of feedback on events, based on evaluation forms and informal comment
- * speed and quality of production of reports on events
- * follow up of issues raised at our events, including information on the website.

Some of the outcomes are less amenable to measurement: feedback mechanisms will be explored, and scope for some in-depth research, perhaps using external resources. In the meantime effort will be put into regular requests to members for anecdotal contributions.

7.3.3 Developing partnerships

This is an area under constant review and careful effort is put into building constructive relationships that will strengthen the visibility of London Funders and enhance its reputation. In the life of this plan, the Executive Committee will undertake more systematic thinking about the range and nature of partnerships for project development, to expand the knowledge base about funders and to support their work, and to strengthen London Funders' financial robustness.

For example, over the plan period we will:

- 1 Develop a strong political map and create dialogue with key organisations and structures.
- 2 Make use of members' knowledge and interest in London's voluntary sector infrastructure and London Funders' membership of the London Regional ChangeUp Consortium to develop a strategy to promote more, and better co-ordinated, funding of London's second tier.
- 3 Work with key agencies such as New Philanthropy Capital and use our members' combined expertise to advise donors and founders of new resources for the sector.
- 4 Explore ways of developing an honest broker role between third sector partners (principally second tier agencies) and key policy influencers, creating a platform and opportunities for dialogue.

5 Position ourselves to ensure that second and third tier organisations have access to us and perhaps shared ownership of some products.

7.3.4 Operational issues

Sustaining London Funders as a more robustly funded organisation is a prime focus for the Committee, and all choices of activity will be made in the context of the need to generate new, and where possible sustainable, income streams, through building our brand, strengthening the range of partners and supporters, and our visibility and reputation, in order to ensure the continuation and development of our services in pursuit of the mission.

1 General

- * set realistic targets and monitor them
- * continue to develop strategies to keep costs down: eg help in kind to reduce office costs; use volunteers, interns, secondees and students to augment staff complement; keep learning smart techniques eg improvements in data management or efficiency in technical aspects of communication with members
- * find a source of support for a study on income generation.

2 Subscriptions

- * strengthen membership numbers and breadth (especially through discussions with health and housing bodies, corporate givers, looking at our relevance to each sector)
- * build increasingly robust relationship with London Councils in order to secure their block subscription for boroughs year on year
- * review subscription structure every five years and the level of fees every year (though actual increases may be less frequent)
- * review scope for membership by individual large donors.

3 Sponsorship

- * increase range of members offering help in kind – venues, volunteers, joint receptions
- * identify new sources of funding or help in kind (commercial, professional advisers)
- * develop a package to streamline what we offer for external sponsorship
- * assess need for a sponsorship policy
- * review the costs and benefits of creating a subscription category for sponsors/ partners/ friends.

4 Grant support

- * identify opportunities for project funding – research, conferences, etc
- * research likely supporters; discuss the issues involved in approaching members for such assistance.

5 Develop profitable services

- * explore possibilities for selling services and knowledge
- * explore the scope to develop and sell training
- * investigate the implications of taking on a loan to develop new services

6 Develop opportunities for partnerships

- * explore possibilities for joint bids for development

Outcomes

- * A sustainability strategy with measurable indicators
- * subscriptions rise as a percentage of income
- * reserve of at least three months' costs maintained
- * develop a fund for project development
- * policy developed on charging for certain events
- * earned income coming on-stream during 2010.

Indicators

- * increased number of members and broader membership base
- * record and analysis of areas of growth – public sector/charities/NDPBs/corporates; size of members; areas of interest – geographic, environment, sports, health, housing, etc
- * use of this analysis to feed back into recruitment strategy and programming
- * meeting budget challenges
- * more financial supporters
- * diverse income sources
- * Executive Committee members engaged in financial strategy and approaches to potential donors and supporters.

8 Financial implications

At present, subscriptions typically represent about 50% of income. The Executive Committee regularly reviews subscriptions and agreed an increase in 2010 rates. The Executive Committee is aware that the London Development Agency grant is tapered, with the final instalment of £25,000 due in early 2010. The current budget assumptions are that grant income from new sources will increase as will sponsorship and support in kind and both the Executive Committee and the Secretariat are focussing strongly on developing a realistic new income strategy.

Expenditure is kept under rigorous review and members are generous in their support through sponsorship, the provision of venues, contributions to catering and the offer of support staff for events.

London Funders continues to be co-located with the Association of Charitable Foundations. The central location has many advantages, including access to a meeting room for project groups and committee meetings.

9 Key risks and their management

The Executive Committee has undertaken an exercise which it repeats at least annually to identify the areas which could represent risks for London Funders, assigning to those risks a score based on likelihood and impact.

The areas examined in depth are:

- governance
- market position
- external factors
- external credibility
- operational and internal factors and
- financial sustainability

The Committee and staff discuss in detail the controls which will minimise the likelihood of risks within these categories, if this is within London Funders' control, and lessen their impact. Any areas still considered high risk become a standing item on the Executive Committee's quarterly meeting agenda and are subject to considerable additional scrutiny.