



Effective funders, thriving communities

# Plan for 2013 & 2014

“Our planning and development in the current environment require us more than ever to be adaptive and offer our members experimentation and exploration of new ideas and practices. Just as funders are increasingly recognising adaptiveness and resilience in funded organisations, so too do they need to understand the elements of these characteristics themselves and share their understanding of effective funding and how to achieve it.”

## **Summary of purpose**

This plan offers a broad strategy and direction for London Funders. We recognise that this continues to be a challenging period for funders with severe constraints in resources for many and a rapidly changing policy environment which has harsh consequences for London. Alongside these is a renewed interest in learning together, modelling good solutions and investing in adaptiveness and resilience in the voluntary and community sector.

## **Vision**

A growing network which encompasses an increasing number of the funders of the voluntary and community sector in London.

A growth in membership and engagement from the private sector.

A contribution to ensuring that funders together influence the changes taking place in London to minimise adverse effects on Londoners and invest in effective voluntary and community organisations.

## **Mission**

Effective funders, thriving communities

London Funders is the membership organisation of funders and investors in London's voluntary and community sector. Its mission is to strengthen and support funders to better meet the needs of Londoners.

London Funders links all the funding 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 and events, the website and other published material, and management of resources are the responsibility of the small staff team, 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 and interaction of those working in or responsible for our member organisations.

<p><b>Our members</b> At the end of 2012 we had 90 member organisations</p> <p>These included all the London boroughs and London Councils along with foundations, Lottery distributors and others</p> <p>Of those not in the public sector, nine fund in London as a whole and 16 in specific areas of London while 31 have a national (or wider remit) while also committed to effective funding in London and understanding London better</p> <p>Between them they represent all kinds of funding, including grantmaking, commissioning and lending</p> <p>Of the total, 12 are associate members, i.e. organisations whose main purpose is not financial support of VCS services but which manage at least one stream of funding</p> <p><b>Facts and figures on London</b> Europe's largest city (over 8 million) and the sixth richest in the world also has.....</p> <p>...the UK's highest regional rates of poverty among children (37% in poor households), people of working age and pensioners</p> <p>We have around 1.4 million disabled people in London</p> <p>We have the most ethnically diverse population in the UK with 42% of people identifying themselves as other than white British</p>	<p><b>Broad objectives</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Bringing members together around priority topics. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updates on policy</li> <li>Sharing practice</li> <li>Planning great investment – smarter funding</li> </ul> </li> <li>2 Funders working together <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convening members around key topics</li> <li>Testing new models</li> <li>Exploring joint approaches</li> <li>Fostering new philanthropy</li> </ul> </li> <li>3 Shining a light on London issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sharing what funders know</li> <li>Increasing links to researchers, academics</li> <li>Sponsoring research</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p>Our planning and development in the current environment require us more than ever to be adaptive and offer our members experimentation and exploration of new ideas and practices. Just as funders are increasingly recognising adaptiveness and resilience in funded organisations, so too do they need to understand the elements of these characteristics themselves and share their understanding of effective funding and how to achieve it.</p> <p>This plan therefore offers a direction for London Funders and a vision that we will pursue. Throughout the period we will check how we are measuring up in practice against the vision, how we help funders achieve their aims and how together we model solutions.</p> <p>The Honorary Officers agree half yearly targets individually with the staff team and monitor performance on management, governance, service delivery and external relations.</p> <p>The Executive Committee monitors quarterly how the plan is being achieved and will refocus as resources and the changing external environment require.</p>
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## Building on past performance

In 2012

- We increased our membership and broadened the range of funding represented by our members, especially in reflecting the growth of social investment.
- We captured knowledge
  - on changes in housing policy, which have profound implications for many Londoners and pose challenges for boroughs and social landlords in particular
  - on constructive investment in advice services, which is assisting with significant re-engineering of services
  - on changes in local approaches to public health
- We strengthened organisational effectiveness through meetings on payment by results, innovation, assets and property, and sharing research and evaluation between members
- We published reports on each of our meetings and a monthly e-bulletin
- We worked on a demonstration project by supporting a group of our members and other key agencies to undertake a feasibility study into the creation of a legacy fund from the London 2012 Games and subsequently to campaign for the creation of a new endowed foundation to support community-based sport and sport for development.

## Our resources

### People

#### Executive Committee

The Committee is made up of 12 people elected from our member organisations (not from associate members). Each is elected for three years and can stand for a second three-year term. The Committee has the power to co-opt to fill skills gaps and in 2012 did so for the first time to recruit a Treasurer. The Committee elects its own officers and has a Chair and Vice Chair as well as Treasurer. The Committee meets quarterly and usually adds an annual away day for planning and budgeting. The Committee members are trustees of the charity and directors of the company.

#### Staff

There are two full-time staff, Director and Network Development Co-ordinator.

We propose in mid-2013 to recruit an Intern for three days per week to support this small team with, in particular, the database, the website and the administration of events, and to assist with small research projects and mapping exercises. We also aim to build up a small group of volunteers to help with working groups and the preparation of material for the website and the e-bulletin.

#### Supporters

We have received considerable help through venues for meetings and refreshments from Brewin Dolphin, Buzzacott, CCLA, Cripplegate Foundation, Local Government Information Unit, Mazars, Newton and Trust for London. At the start of 2013 we were also developing similar links with the GLA and Russell-Cooke Solicitors and had a meeting hosted by the British Museum.

### Money

Member subscriptions are our main source of income. Additionally we are in receipt of support from City Bridge Trust (a three year grant). This includes an opportunity to commission an evaluation report in late 2013 or early 2014.

### Members

At the end of 2012 there were 90 members and associates. A priority for London Funders is to retain existing members and bring in new ones, especially from under-represented sectors such as corporate donors, and health and housing funders.

## Activities/work streams to fulfil our objectives

1 Bringing members together	2 Funders working together	3 Shining a light on London Issues
<p>We will organise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• events for members, tackling in more depth key areas explored in 2012:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>advice services;</li> <li>services for children and young people;</li> <li>London’s housing;</li> <li>VCS support services;</li> <li>health services;</li> <li>the impact of poverty on London</li> </ul> </li> <li>• we will create opportunities for members to look at: changes in public sector funding of the VCS and consider implications for London; and examples of improvements in service provision through informed investment and new approaches to funding</li> <li>• events on topical issues e.g.:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implications of localism;</li> <li>risk and opportunity in social investment;</li> <li>balancing crisis and the survival of services against longer term investment and preventative work</li> </ul> </li> <li>• updates on refugees and migrants and awareness of critical equalities issues</li> <li>• opportunities to help funders understand and respond to new issues, e.g. effects of the introduction of Universal Credit (and implications for London)</li> <li>• We will continue to work on building membership so as to encourage communication and shared learning across the funding landscape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will refocus our activity in order to encourage members to explore how they can work together.</li> <li>• We will convene members interested to share information on new ways of investing in specific sectors (e.g. advice services), and encourage joint approaches to investing in the VCS</li> <li>• We will convene a group interested in sharing ideas on tackling homelessness and issues for people with no recourse to public funds</li> <li>• We will support funders in developing a harmonised response to the new arrangements for the Social Fund</li> <li>• We will convene members interested in sharing policy and practice on assisting the VCS with property and asset development</li> <li>• We will continue as needed to support efforts to create a legacy for community-based sport from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games</li> <li>• We will explore ways for members to tap into new sources of philanthropy</li> <li>• We will continue to work on building membership so as to encourage more communication and shared learning across the funding landscape.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will use our published reports, e-bulletin, website and social media to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>highlight what we learn from our events;</li> <li>share research findings;</li> <li>publicise our members’ achievements, programme outcomes, etc.;</li> <li>analyse and publicise trends to help funders forecast change, help the VCS respond and encourage policymakers to face the facts</li> </ul> </li> <li>• We will undertake mapping of funding and identify gaps where our members will be assisted by detailed and up-to-date information</li> <li>• We will share information on effectiveness in commissioning and procurement, and partnership building between public sector funders and the VCS</li> <li>• We will promote and publicise pan-London thinking and shared or harmonised approaches</li> <li>• We will participate in the Powerful Ideas series in order to raise key issues about London and attract a broad audience to debate them</li> <li>• We will continue to participate in key networks and share their knowledge and views, e.g. the London Debt Strategy Group and the GLA’s London Strategic Migration Partnership</li> <li>• We will work with members and other agencies in research projects on key areas</li> </ul>

## Underpinnings of the plan

In mapping out our activities and work streams for the coming years we have reminded ourselves of the need for adaptiveness as a critical strategy in rapidly changing and challenging times. We will keep under review:

- our ideas about how to fulfil our vision and mission for London's communities via our support for and networking of funders
- our understanding of where we can best have an impact and the role we need to play
- what success looks like
- what skills, capabilities and resources we need to harness in order to create the impact we have set out to achieve.

## Work undertaken and services to our members will take the form of

**Members meetings/seminars** at least quarterly

**Project groups including**

**Research and Evaluation**

**Unlocking Assets**

and exploration of new groups around funding work with **children and young people** and **destitution and homelessness**

**Learning from Funders** (discussion sessions in a funder-only environment)

**Joint meetings** arranged in partnership with specific members or external agencies

**Monthly e-bulletin**

**Website and social media**

**Research**

**Collaboration**, including participation in key networks

## Evaluation of our effectiveness

Within each of our activities we identify their purpose and use quantitative and qualitative indicators that measure our delivery and help us measure effectiveness in each case. For example:

- Obtaining and analysing feedback from participants in all our events and meetings, including outcomes from their involvement with us
- Checking participation levels, e.g. the proportion of our membership attending events, and contributing information and ideas to our work and plans
- Using tools such as Google Analytics to review usage of the website
- Annual surveys on aspects of our work, e.g. on usefulness of the e-bulletin, resources on the website, issues we should be tackling, etc.
- Annual analysis of membership retention and expansion
- Reporting to the Executive Committee regularly on all the above and the correlation between our plans and our activities (e.g. frequency and regularity of publishing the e-bulletin, levels of attendance at our events, quality of published reports, satisfaction levels with content of our events).

