



## **Our strategy: 2018-2021**

## Who we are and what we do

### Our purpose

We're here to strengthen civil society and create a better London, through enabling funders from all sectors to be effective. We're focused on collaboration – convening funders to connect, contribute and cooperate together, to help people across London's communities to live better lives.

### Our beliefs

We believe that Londoners should be at the heart of our work, and that of our members – with their needs, their strengths and their hopes driving developments in the funding community.

We believe that effective and resilient civil society organisations are essential to enabling London's people and communities to thrive. Equally, the systems that govern civil society are important determining factors in how effective and efficient it can be.

We believe that civil society organisations are best supported to meet the needs of Londoners when funding is based on a shared understanding of need, with good funding practices, and a collaborative approach to funding that ensures resources are channelled to the right places.

We believe that social systems - the policy framework within which civil society operates, and how funding is accessed by civil society organisations - can be altered to meet the needs of Londoners better. This outcome is underpinned by funders efficiently allocating resources, as well as collaborating with others to improve understanding of where funding is most needed and how best to channel support there. It is further driven by changes to policies and structures that affect civil society organisations, for which we believe funders can be active advocates.

### Our aims

We **convene**, creating the space for productive conversations and collaborations. Our aim is to use the space we create for cross-sector dialogue as a vehicle for: sharing information, approaches and ideas; developing a shared understanding of need; collaboration; and trust-building.

We **connect**, bringing people and organisations together with the ideas and tools they need to be effective. Our aim is to develop and showcase practical ways for doing things differently and in such a way as to strengthen civil society and create a better London.

We **contribute**, shaping policies that affect Londoners through our informed voice. Our aim is to play a constructive role in policy development and to ensure that the combined intelligence, experience and views of our members are represented to strengthen civil society in London.

We **cooperate**, enabling funders to commit to working together to tackle the issues facing London. Our aim is to strengthen practice, increase the impact of assets and resources through aligning these effectively across funders, and create the mechanisms that enable collaboration to work.

We do all this whilst aiming to be an exemplar organisation ourselves – with a focus on ensuring our own ways of working are effective and efficient, and that we celebrate the diversity of the funding community and of the city we love in all that we do.

## What we want to achieve by 2021

### Our ambitions

To enable the funding community in London to support communities to face the challenges, and seize the opportunities, of the changing environment in the coming years we will focus on:

- setting out practically how funders can work differently so that the issues facing Londoners are addressed more effectively;
- playing a key role in creating new frameworks for civil society which enable a more resilient and sustainable London where individuals and communities thrive; and
- working across the funding community to redefine the relationships between the public, private and charitable sectors to support a fairer and more cohesive London.

Whilst working towards our ambitions we will also maintain our agility – responding to events and developments as they arise in London, to ensure we are effective at addressing emerging needs.

### Our work programmes

To achieve our ambitions we will deliver work programmes under our four priority aims of convening, connecting, contributing and cooperating, with learning from the first year of this strategy being used to shape the responses and plans for the period through to 2020/21.

#### *Convene*

We will convene and facilitate a programme of meetings and events, together with online spaces, aimed at facilitating a sharing of information, intelligence and opinion across public, private and charitable funding sectors engaged in the building and strengthening of London's civil society.

In 2018/19 we will:

- continue to convene established networks that address the **issues** Londoners face, recognising the value these bring to members, focusing on: Children and Young People; and Healthy London;
- seek to **revitalise** our network looking at unlocking assets in London;
- continue to help shape **practice** through bringing funders together to focus on how they work, particularly on: Research and Evaluation; and the Borough Grants Officers Forum;
- set up **time-limited** focused network groups looking at work to tackle serious youth violence in London, and a practice-based network building on learning from emergency responses;
- pilot a network group working with **Trustees**, focusing on bringing the Chairs of the London's Giving schemes together to share experiences and strengthen their work, using the learning to inform our development of future role-specific network groups;
- hold a one-off event that brings all our networks, and wider membership, together in one place at the same time – the **big network day** – where the big London issues that cut across our networks and groups can be discussed and new opportunities for collaboration identified; and
- pilot **one-off events** focusing on topics of concern to members and to London, using the learning from these to establish our formal programme of events for members.

By 2020/21 we will:

- have established **new** networks that seek to enable collaboration on further issues affecting Londoners, based on identified needs and concerns of members, focusing on issues that we expect will include: housing and homelessness; advice and justice; the ageing population; and funding in place beyond boroughs;
- establish new network **groups** based on our piloting of role-specific networks in 2018/19, expecting these to include: horizon scanning and long-term vision/planning (senior leaders); new grantmakers (future leaders); and governing grants (Trustees). Through these groups we will also facilitate sub-groups as needed (e.g. on a thematic or place basis) to strengthen collaboration and sharing, and also look at formal links between groups (e.g. mentoring for current leaders to support future leaders, or action learning sets for smaller groups); and
- formalise our programme of **events** based on experience of testing these in 2018/19, expecting the programme to encompass: breakfast briefings (sharing intelligence on big issues affecting London); lunch and learns (showcasing new projects and ideas from members); and dinnertime debates (presenting challenging topics in an engaging way). We will also seek to strengthen networks and knowledge between members through organising social and cultural events, where members can network more informally.

### **Connect**

We will connect people with the tools for strengthening London's civil society. This will involve developing our own initiatives, as well as helping to platform and embed developments from across our membership, and working with partners such as 360 Giving to optimise the tools available.

In 2018/19 we will:

- produce, share and act on **learning** reports that can inform funder practice, focusing on lessons for funders in emergency response, building on the work linked to the Grenfell Tower fire and the terrorist attacks in London and Manchester;
- work collaboratively to produce and highlight **research** that informs the debate around London's future, focusing on developing new ways of understanding what need looks like in London now;
- work with our friends at 360 Giving to strengthen **understanding** of London's funding ecology through conducting our first review of our members, to inform joint working (through an understanding of common interests and priorities) and act as a springboard for data sharing;
- meet with other **regional funding networks** in the UK to explore opportunities to share experience, ideas and connections across different areas to strengthen all our work; and
- seek to **engage** on behalf of London's funding community on relevant bodies and be involved in strategic initiatives where we will gather intelligence, insight and learning and share this with our members to enable them to benefit from early sight of developments that may impact on their work, or on the communities they are engaged with.

By 2020/21 we will:

- have connected members with **thinkers and researchers** to bring their work to life in relation to the funding community, focusing on the issues of concern to our members and communities in London, which we expect will include: what the post-Brexit funding ecology will look like in

London; how ten years of austerity have impacted the capital and what funders need to think about for the coming years; what opportunities devolution presents for London; thinking on the role of London in relation to the rest of the UK; and what works in other places where learning can be shared with London;

- have worked with 360 Giving and partners to enable the production of an annual “**state of the sector**” report focused on increasing understanding of the funding community in London;
- have used our experience of developing and delivering support to the **London’s Giving** schemes to enable a growth in their impact (based on establishing metrics for measuring change), sharing learning between schemes to increase their effectiveness.

### *Contribute*

We will act as an advocate for the funding community to policy- and decision-makers – actively seeking to influence policy development and refinement in a constructive way so that it better serves the creation and strengthening of civil society in London.

In 2018/19 we will:

- pilot the production of **policy briefings** looking at serious youth violence in London, working in partnership with others to explore how policy developments and funder learning can shape practice as our members seek to tackle this issue with our communities and partners;
- proactively engage with strategic developments where the **voice** of the funding community can positively support policy, focusing on the GLA’s civil society strategy, the new Mayoral youth narrative, and the philanthropy reviews underway in the capital; and
- link our members to opportunities to contribute to developments directly, and facilitate joint responses where appropriate to **amplify** the voice of our members and the funding community, for example on the government’s civil society strategy.

By 2020/21 we will:

- identify the issues which affect Londoners which are relevant to the funding community in the capital, and develop a broad programme of collated **policy briefings** that highlight the information people need to know, and work with our members to identify how we can positively influence the development of policy to achieve our mission. We will explore the problems, gather funder learning, identify what needs to change, and make the positive case for change. We will ensure that this policy work is embedded in our networks and collaborative work strands so that funders can also take action on these issues together; and
- work to **advocate** for our members and their views and experiences to relevant bodies where policy and strategy are formulated that will impact on London, through proactive engagement with all relevant parts of the GLA, London Councils, and national government departments.

### *Cooperate*

We will work with our members at every stage of the collaboration journey, and support them through developing the frameworks and tools that support active commitment to collaboration, understanding their interests and ambitions and bringing the right people together to effect change, and sharing what we’ve learned to inspire and enable others to work together effectively.

In 2018/19 we will:

- get the **nuts and bolts** of collaboration right, enabling our members to work effectively together to increase their impact through developing protocols for how members work together, and by further developing our portal and application process learning following the emergency response review;
- continue to provide leadership for the **Way Ahead** in London, coordinating the implementation of the change plan, and identifying opportunities to bring funders together linked to this work (building from the establishment of the Cornerstone Fund); and
- deliver **cross-sector projects** that demonstrate the positive impact of collaboration, through highlighting what works on initiatives such as London's Giving.

By 2020/21 we will:

- **strengthen collaboration** by exploring vehicles to enable joint funding of initiatives (potentially through a subsidiary charitable company that could hold grants for joint projects), and look at where funders can share resources to increase effectiveness, from joint "funder plus" work through to shared due diligence – whilst also maintaining our agility, and responding directly and proactively if the situation in London requires us to step up;
- develop a new project to test out models of measuring **collective impact**, working with a group of funders in one place or with one theme, and seeking to overlay one evaluation framework across their interventions (as one organisation with multiple funders would do, but doing this through following the people or the place, not the organisations); and
- explore new ways for groups of members to work together, including the potential for hosting **joint posts** on behalf of members (e.g. a number of smaller members pooling funding for a shared specialist post), as well as for our initiatives (e.g. Giving Schemes sharing expertise more formally, complementing the multi-skilled workers in each borough), or to **jointly procure** solutions or products through a preferred supplier model.