



Developing our strategy 2018-2021

What we're doing...

We're developing our new strategy for 2018-2021 – we've got a first draft ready, and would really value your feedback to help us to set off in the right direction.

What we'd like to hear from you...

We're ambitious about the future, but also recognise that we need to remain focused and deliver the high quality work that our members and partners expect from us. We'll always work to use our resources well, though some areas of this strategy will require additional investment to deliver. Recognising this, **we're keen to know what in this strategy you'd like us to prioritise, and where you think there are ideas that are "nice to have" rather than crucial to our work.**

We've developed this strategy through talking to our network groups, members, and wider group of partners and stakeholders to get their insights into the challenges and opportunities ahead. We've also reflected on learning from our recent work. There will be things that we've missed, or ideas you have about how we can develop our thinking further. **We're open to ideas about what you'd like to see us add to the strategy, as well as where you think we need to clarify what we're looking to do.**

We've heard loud and clear that people value the cross-sector and collaborative approach that London Funders offers for all our members, and have sought to embed this throughout our strategy for the years ahead. **We're open to ideas about how we can strengthen our cross-sector offer further, and to feedback if you think there are areas of this strategy that should be delivered by other people.** We'll explore further partnership opportunities based on your suggestions.

We'll be developing a membership strategy that sits alongside this plan, to broaden our network by bringing in new groups and people into the membership who can help us to achieve our ambition. **Do let us know if you have thoughts on new categories of membership we should explore, or if there are things we can do for you as members that would help to strengthen your work.**

We know that we've been working on this document for a while, and that we need constructively critical friends to help us. If you've got ideas, suggestions, comments or thoughts that don't fit in the questions we've picked out above, then please let us know. We're only effective when we're working well together with our members and partners, so **all your feedback is welcome!**

What we'll be doing next...

We'll be working to collate and consider your feedback, and develop a final version of our strategy that will be put before our Trustee Board in April 2018. This will include detailed workplans for the coming years (prioritising the elements you tell us are most important), and clear measures of our success so that we can be clear about the impact we're achieving (or the learning we're generating).

We'll share the final strategy with you by the end of April – but we're also keen that it's a living document, so please do keep your feedback coming as we implement our strategy, and we'll keep developing our work to ensure we're meeting your needs and delivering our shared ambition.

Draft strategy 2018-21 – v1.0

Purpose:

To be the place where funders¹ from all sectors collaborate, connect, contribute and commit together to strengthen civil society and create a better London.

Mission:

To help people across London's communities to live better lives, through creating the conditions in which London's funders can thrive. We aim to ensure that:

- Civil society organisations meet the needs of Londoners;
- Political and social systems meet the needs of Londoners; and
- Londoners' needs are met.

Why we have these aims:

Effective and resilient civil society organisations are essential to enabling London's 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.

Ambitions for 2018-2021:

To play a key role in defining and creating a new framework for civil society which underpins a fairer, more cohesive London.

To play a key role in the shifting relationship between the public, private and charitable sectors.

To set out practically how society can work better and differently so that the issues facing Londoners are addressed more effectively and equitably to support a fairer, more resilient and sustainable London where individuals and communities thrive.

¹ Linked to this strategy will be a refresh of the membership strategy – as part of this, the potential to extend our definition of funders to also include philanthropists, asset owners, giving vehicles etc will be considered

What we mean by collaborate, connect, contribute and commit together...

Collaborate:

We create 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 and ideas; developing a shared understanding of need; collaboration; trust-building and fostering a greater understanding between people from different organisations.

We 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 sectors engaged in the building and strengthening of London's civil society.

Connect:

We develop and promote practical tools. 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 connect people with the tools for strengthening London's civil society. This involves 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.

Contribute:

We are an informed voice in the development and refinement of policy. Our aim is to play a critical role in policy formulation and refinement and to ensure that the combined intelligence, experience and opinions of our members are represented to strengthen civil society in London.

We 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.

Commit:

We enable 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 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.

What we will do to make this real

Collaborate:

We will continue to convene established networks that address the **issues** Londoners face, recognising the value these bring to our members, focusing on: Children and Young People; and Healthy London. We will also seek to **revitalise** our network looking at unlocking assets in London.

We will continue to help shape **practice** through bringing funders together to focus on how they work, focusing on: Research and Evaluation; and the Borough Grants Officers Forum.

We will establish **new** networks that seek to enable collaboration on further issues affecting Londoners, based on identified needs and concerns of members, focusing on: housing and homelessness; advice and justice; the ageing population; and funding in place beyond boroughs. We will also have a new practice-based network focusing on learning from emergency response.

We will hold a one-off event each year 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.

We will also establish new network **groups**: 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. for the chairs of the Giving Schemes) 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).

We will formalise our programme of **events** 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 during the year, where members can network more informally.

Connect:

We will produce, share and act on **learning** reports that can inform funder practice, including: lessons for funders in emergency response, building on the work linked to the Grenfell Tower fire and the terrorist attacks in London and Manchester.

We will 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; 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.

We will strengthen **understanding** of London's funding ecology through conducting an annual audit of our members, to inform joint working (through an understanding of common interests and priorities) and to help inform wider understanding through a state of the sector report.

Our experience of developing and delivering support to the **London's Giving** schemes will see us expand to all London boroughs, sharing learning between schemes to increase their effectiveness.

We will seek to **advocate** for London's funding ecology 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.

Contribute:

We will identify the issues which affect Londoners and concern our members, and develop **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.

We will 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 as appropriate (feeding in to the development of a range of work areas, including the GLA's civil society strategy, the new Mayoral youth narrative, and the philanthropy reviews underway in the capital).

Commit:

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; exploring vehicles to enable joint funding of initiatives (potentially through a subsidiary charitable company that could hold grants for joint projects); further develop our portal and application process learning following the emergency response review; and look at where funders can share resources to increase effectiveness, from joint "funder plus" work through to shared due diligence.

We will 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).

We will 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).

We will deliver **cross-sector projects** that demonstrate the positive impact of collaboration, through highlighting what works on initiatives such as London's Giving.

We will 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).