

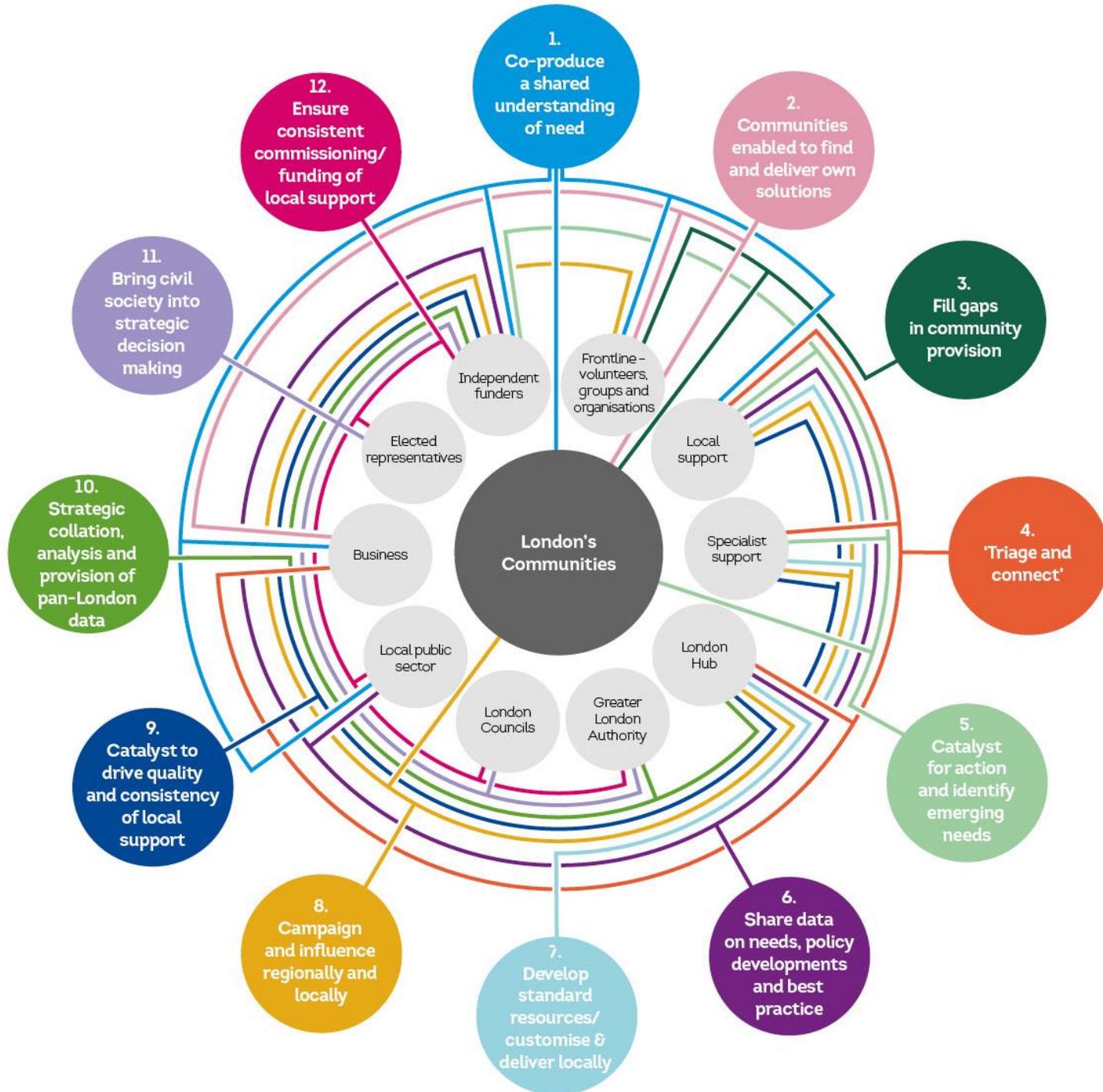
What works in building sustainable and resilient Civil Society Organisations



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A bit of background

- Key reviews of lottery and other funded programmes
 - Community Assets, Awards for All, Supporting Change and Impact, Transition/Start up Fund, Community Shares, Local Trust
- Design of tools and assessment of organisational sustainability and strength
 - VCS Assist (LVSC), Ready 4 Change, SCID, Organisational strengths review (Reaching Communities) various impact/evaluation tools and grant management
- Direct delivery of support
 - VCS Assist, Village SOS, Local Sustainability Fund and pro-bono support

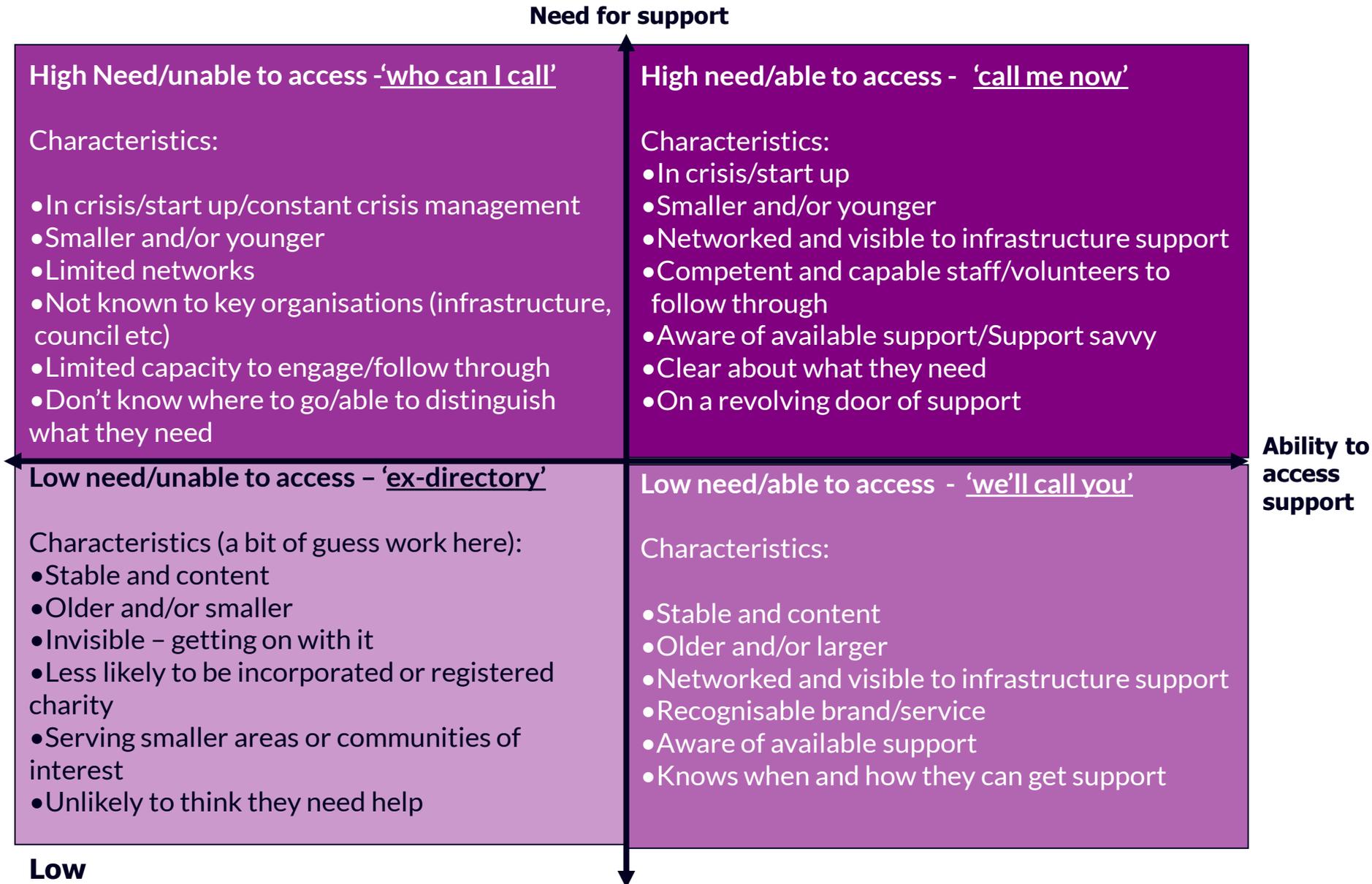
What did life look like before 2010?

- Remember Change Up and Capacitybuilders?
- Funders often had learning and support programmes tied to their grant programmes linked to evaluation and delivery – much more government investment
- General sense that infrastructure was a good thing and worth having – Strong CVSs, regional networks and national support
- Universal services and support – free at point of access for organisations
- Push to reduce grant dependency and generating income through enterprise by delivering services – being commissioning ready

What does life look like now?

- Local and regional infrastructure is going through change, some have closed/merged – facing uncertainty
- Cuts in public sector funding have reduced capacity throughout – in funders/commissioners, infrastructure and frontline services
- The great commissioning deception
- Competition driving out collaboration – ‘My impact is bigger than yours’
- Increasing demand for grant funding
- Organisational support is either patchy or tightly bound around ‘next big thing’ social investment

Need and ability are determinants of whether organisations access support or not



What have we learnt ?

- Risk aversion often at trustee level – difficult to challenge governance
- Organisations believe that their weaknesses put them at a disadvantage with funders
- Organisations have to be ready to embrace change – often linked to crisis/nowhere else to turn/loss of key staff
- Whilst external support/challenge is good, need to focus on building internal skills and capacity
 - covering staff costs for training and development or just having time to do stuff works just as well
 - flexible funding and access to information/support about who to go to (LSF example)
- You need longer engagement – a year is probably not enough.... But need to measure to keep momentum

Learning for funders and organisations



Importance of diagnostics

- Play an important role in helping to understand strengths and weaknesses, process equally helpful as well as access other support
- Many out there, both free and paid for
- But few measure cross-organisational perspectives

We recommend

- 360 degree process ideally including beneficiaries
- Tools cannot replace one to one – often need both and as part of on-going development process for the organisation
- Timing is key – anything can happen between diagnostic and support starting

Being flexible within boundaries

- Greater flexibility with how to spend funding creates better fit between what organisations need – often around **developing governance and organisational capacity**
 - Determine change objectives and plan around these why not use a Theory of Change?
 - Change takes time need to think of change as a continuous process
 - Balance between external support and developing internal capability BUT needs trusted advisor/critical friend - important to keep people on track and focussed
 - Impact measurement and understanding what change organisations are trying to achieve remains the greatest need – organisations don't realise that doing this can help access other funding and develop compelling messages about their services/offer
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Help to access support and connect

- Often staff are up for the challenge but sometimes trustees are less able to respond
- Organisations often don't know where to access support – guidance from LSF was relatively poor so left to chance
- Many are in the same boat so having some peer support built in can be really helpful (but not compulsory)
- Help to seek and commission the right support for what they need – existing networks can be helpful but need to be clear about expectations and ability to deliver – smaller organisations are not used to tendering
- Specialist expertise can be hard to find – so having contact book in back pocket can really help

Learning from the Local Sustainability Fund



Local Sustainability Fund

- £20 million fund from the Cabinet Office in 2015 (was originally £40 million) for small/medium sized VCS
- Designed with sector bodies NCVO, NAVCA etc
- Administered through Big Lottery Fund
- Stage 1 included a diagnostic now used as BLF's tool
- Stage 2 required a change plan and advisor support free of charge to develop it
- Took six months to announce winners
- Took nine months to make the first payment

Our approach

- Developed their change plan and provided pro-bono support for their application (5/6 awarded)
- Acting as critical friend and brokering in other specialist support as needed
- Supporting fundraising and new forms of income generation BUT not doing it for them – building capacity as we go
- Helping organisations understand their impact better and their audiences
- Supporting business development activities

Daffodil Advocacy

- Based in Redbridge providing one to one and self advocacy support for people with learning disabilities across three boroughs (incl Waltham Forest)
- Met by chance at a market warming event
- Service user led organisation
- Impacted by local commissioning decisions and Care Act
- Was called The Daffodil Advocacy Project
- So what have we done?

Coroners' Courts Support Service



Planning for CCSS's National Expansion

Developing a sustainable funding model

Capturing and measuring impact

Improving use of communications/media

Assuring the quality of the service/accrediting the training of volunteers

