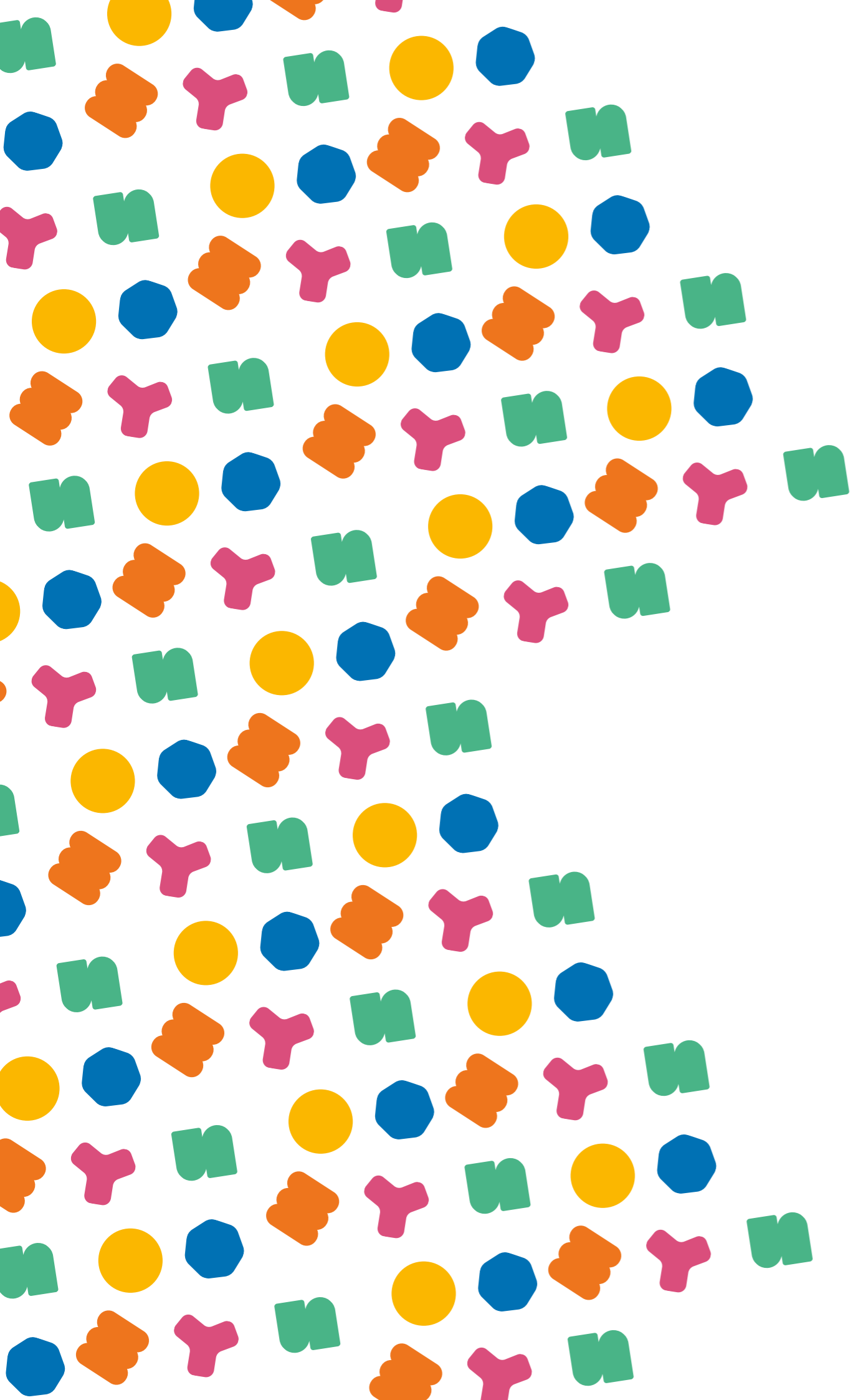




Reflecting on our
Festival of Learning





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About London Funders

London Funders is the network for funders and investors in London's civil society. We are the only place that brings together public, private and independent funders to discuss and act on issues facing our city.

From the arts to zoos, and from Barking to Barnet our members invest in every aspect of London's life. They support the capital through grants, commissioning, social investment and more, as well as directly to Londoners.

We're here to enable 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.

Looking back at our Festival of Learning

Over the course of two weeks in May 2021, almost 900 attendees from across the funding and civil society sectors came together to take part in London Funders' first Festival of Learning.

Broken down into five themes (collaboration, community, equity, leadership and process), this booklet breaks down the insightful conversations, presentations and questions that were covered over the two week event. The wide diversity of topics discussed at the Festival included lessons from leaving leaders, facilitating collaboration through uncertain times, and how funders can prioritise equity in their grantmaking.

And sessions took place in a variety of different formats – from “learning lairs” to interactive seminars, from panel debates to informal conversations, we made sure to give attendees the chance to contribute, consider and collate the information that they need to understand developments in best practice in the funding sector, and the challenges and opportunities ahead for civil society.

To ensure that we captured everything that was talked about at the Festival of Learning, London Funders commissioned independent consultants Dinah Lamming and Sarah Sandford to attend and write-up the key findings from every session. As well as providing summaries of presentations, they have pulled out the big questions for funders to consider as we move from recovery planning to substantial action.

As we enter the autumn term (so to speak), we're bringing the lessons from the Festival of Learning back to the fore. The London Funders team is keen to ensure that all of the positive changes in funding “stick” and that we look to the future with renewed confidence and ambition. As you read through the session notes, you will find out more from fantastic case studies of both organisations and funders delivering differently during the most unprecedented of circumstances, and see key points for how we can maintain this momentum.

We hope that you enjoy the recaps provided in the pages ahead – which we have arranged thematically for you to easily focus in on the areas of most interest – and if you would like to pick up the points raised in any of the sessions, do not hesitate to get in touch with the London Funders team.

Introduction

SARAH SANDFORD'S REFLECTIONS

A Festival of Learning. Right. Having spent half of my career in philanthropy as an academic – where language choices were minutely (and often excessively) debated – my enthusiasm for the impressive session programme left me in a quizzical frame of mind. Would this be like the time when a student in a rather florid turn of phrase proposed to set out a “fireworks display of innovation” in his essay?

At the end of six rich days of talks and discussions, I was a believer! This Festival of Learning was indeed the occasion to celebrate and showcase the remarkable achievements of London Funders, its members and wider civil society in unusually difficult times.

Whilst the festival also celebrated individual funders' innovative ways to respond to the crisis, the most discussed success was of course the unprecedented feat of collaboration that was the London Community Response (LCR). Bringing together 67 funders and launched a mere four days after lockdown, it has granted over £57 million through a light-touch process. It built a novel and comprehensive approach to equity and inclusion, with over 70% of funding in later waves going to organisations led by and for marginalised communities. Crucially, it allowed grantees to change how the funds were used as and when required.

Imprinted in the Chinese symbol for crisis is the symbol for “change point”. From the opening session onwards, panellists spoke about how the covid-19 pandemic had shaken people into action after too long spent focusing on potential barriers – notably risk and hesitancy to collaborate – “If the funding decision is right 96–97% of the time, how much does the rest really matter” remarked one of the speakers in the opening session, in the light of the success of the LCR in terms of slimmed down applications and flexible funding

If collaboration, simplification and equity were the watchwords of the last 15 months, what next? Some used the metaphor as this period where recovery seeps in as a liminal space. “It's like the party is nearly over – and somebody's already starting to play with the light switch” remarked one funder. Some raised fears that positive change could too easily whisked away, whilst others urged caution about continuing on the same course without appropriate reflection

on the emerging context. There was a thirst for further discussion about how to integrate these different ways of operating through the Festival and beyond – with a recognition that every funder ultimately has to steer its own course.

The Festival was an opportunity to showcase – and also to critique – new approaches to equity. The London Community Response collaboration (which, over the five waves of funding, gave nearly half of its funding to equity-

led groups) worked closely with six partner organisations (Ubele, Women's Resource Centre, Inclusion London, LGBT+ Consortium, Council of Somali Organisations and London Gypsies and Travellers) and funded them to be critical friends and sources of intelligence on the ground. They were involved in all levels of the grant-giving process, from outreach and application forms, to sifting and decision-making.

One of the equity partners reflected that it was "one of the most positive things that I did last year" and another that the approach was "quite brave." One common thread of the sessions was that processes count, but authenticity and tenacity matter more. A member of a participatory grant panel on the Corra Foundation's session reminded us that "marginalised communities can tell a mile off if you're not sincere in your engagement."

Whilst there are many reasons to be proud of advances in equity, many voices came to bear witness to the magnitude of the task still ahead of us, including the Ubele Initiative, the Baobab Foundation, the Muslim Charities Forum and the LGBT+ Consortium. Unfortunately, flexible and equitable grants are the exception rather than the rule, especially for small groups on the ground.

Furthermore, as the recent funding surge for equity-led groups has been tied to covid-19, even umbrella organisations do not necessarily have a secure financial future beyond 2021 to keep reaching out to small groups. As for the small groups they represent, LGBT+ Consortium's recent survey of members found that 61% of respondent organisations face closure in the next six months.

The approach of the LCR was appreciated, but throughout the Festival charities

fed back there is still a lot more to do to embed intelligence and equity-led approaches across the system. A grantee of the LCR spoke about how the flexible grant conditions of had allowed her to use funds to keep her team, whereas all their other grants wanted to put a hold on drawdown of funds until after the crisis.

There were parallels to be drawn with the needs of equity-based organisation and the objectives of the place-based giving movement. This "old-but-new approach", with roots going back to the 1990s and gaining momentum over the past decade, also emphasises full community involvement, collaboration and a focus on long-term resilience.

Early signs indicate that the approach has had particular value during the crisis. One speaker told us how she sees signs that the power dynamic is shifting a little from grant-givers to grantees – and hints of more collaboration on the ground and a greater reach to communities. The approach is still challenging for some funders, as it demands time and consistent funding for it to succeed.

If – as one funder put it – we are stronger when we have "power with" rather than "power over" community organisations, and that working with smaller organisations led by marginalised communities has wider benefits for all – more effort is needed to reach out and provide more and better funding for them. The Baobab Foundation noted that some barriers to funding could be quite easily overcome if

"...as one funder put it – we are stronger when we have "power with" rather than "power over" community organisations, and that working with smaller organisations led by marginalised communities has wider benefits for all – more effort is needed to reach out and provide more and better funding for them."

we abandon the current funder language about risk and think more instead about managing risk. Speaking about funding equity-led organisations, attendees were reminded where the responsibilities lie: "Many organisations tell us that they are on a journey. But it is up to them, not us, to see that the journey ends up in the right place."

A diverse and passionate group of leaders from London's civil society also shared their perspectives on how to make funding systems work better for them. They explained what it is like to go "cap in hand" to ask to change the use of funds, or to spend hours of unpaid time on a grant application, only to get the most perfunctory "no". One grantee of the LCR described his organisations' receipt of a grant during covid-19 as the most "immense psychological help".

The pandemic opened many leaders' eyes to the fact that digital communication is unavoidable. Whilst the challenges and opportunities of working by Zoom were discussed, sessions also highlighted the potential of technology to revolutionise philanthropy. Digital is no longer second best – said one participant – sometimes it is better.

IG Advisors showed us their work to galvanise groups of philanthropists. Their portal "The Mesa" is aimed particularly at engaging younger donors and women donors to collaborate. On the beneficiary side, online communities are becoming more and more important. Statistics from Facebook's presentation included that 70% of Britons who are a member of an online group receive information or support from it.

Online communities have the capacity to connect with beneficiaries 24/7 and have the ability to reach tens of thousands

of people, as well as to connect smaller, bespoke groups of interest. Yet they have with very little infrastructure and often do not have a legal status (such as being a CIC or a registered charity). Engaging with how online groups operate is essential for funders, we heard. Their influence and impact are already surpassing our processes. "In twenty years" time, every grant-maker will be funding online groups – so why not start now?"

Grantmakers also have a role in unleashing the potential of data for social impact. Those who are maths-phobic need not fear: Superhighways' session showed us how learning about data can be made simple, all the while focusing on what the charity needs to know. In addition, the National Lottery Community Fund and Rocket Science presented their localised data tool, which allows funders to cut and visualise data about the distribution of philanthropic money. Bringing funding to life, the potential to see on a colour-coded map who does what and where has already sparked new collaborations.

With the end of a period marked by upheaval and challenge in sight, London's funders have much to celebrate. The Festival of Learning was an occasion to refuel before taking to the road again to meet the challenges of recovery and renewal.

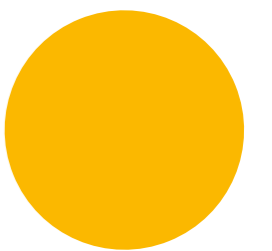
The mental health crisis unleashed by the pandemic – a subject of great concern throughout the conference – has not

spared funders' staff and leaders. Burnout, isolation, conflicts of responsibilities... leaders need to take care of themselves to be able to take care of their team and grantees. As discussed at the Festival's leadership sessions, many Directors and Chief Executives found having a mentor immensely helpful, for many reasons, including keeping them connected and moving ever forward, day by day. Leaders also recommended checking in regularly with staff, having ongoing conversations with trustees about wellbeing, and making sure that staff maintain a work/life balance even in frantically busy times.

Are London's funders ready to take on the future despite these challenges? Personally, I noticed only the smallest hints of weariness. Indeed, there was an appreciation of how the crisis had unleashed so much energy and created so many opportunities. As for the challenges ahead: "We can do this," one of Ubele's Booska paper's authors reminded us, "because there is such a thirst for social justice out there."

Sarah was one of two writers commissioned by London Funders to attend every session of the Festival of Learning to capture key reflection points

FESTIVAL
OF LEARNING
COLLABORATION



OPEN DISCUSSION

COLLABORATION

This session brought together a small group of funders to reflect on their experience of collaboration, particularly over the last year. Alongside a sense of achievement for the progress embodied by the LCR, there was also a sense of a need to go further – not just to include more recipients – but also to involve more donors.

CHAIR

Helen Mathie,
London Funders

On the positive side:

- Several participants had praise for key figures in the LCR and London Funders, particularly for their support of small groups.
- Some found that there had been a greater appetite to stay in touch and share experience in the last year as traditional networking opportunities disappeared.
- A participant felt that recently, “collaboration is almost a default than a thing to do on a to-do list”.
- Another reflected that “it feels good to share risks through collaboration”.
- Whilst collaboration has not been possible for everyone, just staying in touch helps a lot, particularly in a difficult period.
- Collaboration could be framed to hesitant trustees as giving “more bang for your buck”.

On the less positive side:

- One participant came from a small foundation that had declined to participate in LCR, as the trustees felt that it was too small to be able to participate in its processes.
- Another felt that we could move forward now towards “collaborations of the unusual suspects”.
- One participant reflected on the funding for foodbanks. According to one of his trustees, it would cost less to give £10 worth of food directly to recipients by putting £10 in their pocket rather than by creating the infrastructure necessary to distribute through foodbanks.
- Some organisations received such big grants through LCR – but what about other, smaller organisations?
- One participant was somewhat cynical about collaboration. He wondered if “collaboration is the enemy of strategy”.

A discussion about the risks involved in collaboration, particularly in today’s environment followed:

- Helen noted that risk comes up in many conversations these days, and that with the epidemic, people are necessarily more relaxed about it.
- Someone raised the issue that small community organisations, led by beneficiaries, are bound to look more risky to trustees.
- According to one participant, every recipient looks very risky right now; everybody is living off their reserves and some charities are borrowing for the first time.
- It is not necessarily the finance people in funders that are risk averse: they can be real champions of small organisations.
- Someone raised the point of view that perfect collaborations are not desirable: it would mean that there would be nobody there to call out things going wrong/highlighting potential difficulties.

Points for reflection

- Based on the success of the LCR, how can collaborations include more donors beyond the “usual suspects”?
- How can we become accustomed to the benefits of imperfect collaborations?
- How can we capitalise on the increased appetite to stay in touch?
- How do we make use of technologies?

Reos Partners

FACILITATING BREAKTHROUGH: ENABLING COLLABORATION IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Adam Kahane is a leader in resolving problems in collaborative ways. A Director at Reos Partners, an international social enterprise helping people move forward on their most important and intractable issues, he has worked in more than 50 countries over 30 years, and has been praised by many leaders, including Nelson Mandela.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Adam Kahane,
Director, Reos Partners

Speaking from his home in Canada, Adam discussed with Festival participants how he has supported governments, corporations, civil society organisations, activists – people – to work together to address great challenges. **On the positive side:**

The covid-19 year was one of great innovation, Adam began. Though characterised by terrible stress and suffering, the year has also seen new and improved ways of working collaboratively. Over the course of 2020, Reos Partners has worked in 33 different countries, on 130 projects where, as one of his collaborators, Canadian doctor Marcia Anderson puts it, the starting point is always “Can we at least agree that things are not right as they are?”

This question is the starting point for any collaboration across differences, Adam argues, and in the session then set out five key learnings from both the crisis and his career to date.

First, and most basic, that collaboration is never the only option: “we can’t collaborate on everything with everyone”. When faced with a problematic situation, there are four different options: forcing, or making things the way we want them, whether or not others agree – sadly often the default option, through power, money or violence. The other options: adapting, or trying to live with the situation; exiting; or collaboration.

Second, that collaboration is becoming increasingly necessary, but also increasingly difficult. Offering great potential, but also some danger – Adam gave the example of French resistance and collaboration in World War Two – there will always be tension when people decide to collaborate.

Third, Adam’s experience is that while collaboration is neither easy nor guaranteed, it is always possible. Not always because of the obvious “recipe” of focussing on the good of the whole; then focussing on the problem and what a solution might be; and then on what people need to do – but by understanding that we can never know what other people will do!

“Stretch collaboration” is often needed – this is Adam’s fourth lesson from a career helping to resolve seemingly intractable situations. Based on recognising the importance of how we relate to others – involving acknowledging conflicting views and beliefs, and how then to work on moving forward, a step at a time – stretch collaboration foregrounds compromise. It will be messy, and usually not straightforward, but means recognising

that if others need to change, then so, probably do we. This leads to the fifth and final point...

... “Removing the obstacles”: *Facilitating breakthrough, by supporting people to move forward together is key to the work done by Reos Partners, Adam citing the work done on the long road to Colombia’s peace accords. Crucially, he emphasises three drives to unblocking collaboration: the drives to love, to power and, above all, to justice. Love, or the drive to reunification, is necessary, but not enough – a collaboration needs to recognise the different powers of different interests, and in a way that is just.*

Many questions followed on Adam’s work and how it differed between different types of actors, collaboration in our own times and how collaboration can help London. Adam was clear that, though not an expert on London’s funding needs, the issues here are really the same as elsewhere, and that vision and compromise are key – “if we don’t compromise, we won’t get where we need to go”.

Points for reflection

- If we can’t agree on much “can we at least agree that things are not right as they are?”
- Can you live with the reality that we never know what another person will do, and still find a path to collaboration?
- When is there a need for justice in your conflict situation?
- If another party needs to change, then can you accept that, so, probably, do you?

National Lottery Community Fund

LEARNING LAIR SPEAKERS

The Learning Lair was an interactive session hosted by the team from The National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF), who presented their own work and then challenged participants to come up with new ways of learning.

SPEAKERS

Sarah Watson,
Head of UK Knowledge and Learning, National Lottery Community Fund

Nick Smith,
UK Knowledge and Learning Manager, National Lottery Community Fund

Zoe Anderson,
UK Knowledge and Learning Manager, National Lottery Community Fund

David Rowlands,
UK Knowledge and Learning Manager, National Lottery Community Fund

Clare Randle,
UK Knowledge and Learning Officer, National Lottery Community Fund

The Knowledge and Learning team was set up at the NLCF four years ago, in response to a concern there that it was not capturing the wealth of knowledge gathered by its staff, past and present, nor systematically learning from it. In three stages, the team set about rectifying this: first by improving infrastructure and access, via a Knowledge Bank. With 22 separate topic areas, the Knowledge Bank now has 1,800 evidence briefs and has been accessed 27,000 times this past year. Secondly, the team began to embed knowledge management, through activities such as the Pot-luck Lunches described below; and thirdly has worked to add value to that knowledge, sharing its insights not just internally but via the NLCF website.

A fourth stage was conceived when the team, though happy with its progress, began to realise that the NLCF lacked good systems for extracting knowledge from its grant-holders. The team began to convene sessions with both grant-holders and other charities, with workshop events such as Coffee Clubs – getting them together, and listening.

Not only has this increased the NLCF's listening and learning, but grant-holders themselves have benefited, with workshop events helping them to see their own impact – and non grant-holders have put themselves on the NLCF's radar. Learning – anonymised where appropriate – is put on the NLCF's website, so that others can search, and learn.

Each of the team presented a different type of learning activity. Storytelling is a major one – “a way of getting to the human side of how interventions change people's lives, which is not always shown by the numbers”, began Clare. She continued that, particularly recently, “It has been extraordinary to hear their voices... a way of delivering powerful information, especially the less tangible side.” Certainly the case study Clare gave – of activity packs distributed to children and their families by Home Start Wandsworth – was compelling, with people feeling “cared for” and in one case, allowing a woman to express her post-natal depression.

At Coffee Clubs, people are put in touch with other completely randomly to meet (virtually, still) and chat. Once simply an internal way of sharing learning – as the Pot-luck Lunches still are – the NLCF widened their use during the pandemic, so that grant-holders could benefit too. A month-long pilot in the South-West was so popular that the Clubs are now offered to 1,000+ grant-holders, regionally grouped, with a survey showing 72% of them want the NLCF to do more.

Feedback shows the Clubs helping organisations to learn, share, network and collaborate. Crucially, Clubs help with feelings of isolation. “Thanks for

organising this”, commented one grant-holder, “it was the first person I'd spoken to in six months that hasn't been in crisis.”

Having heard the theory, participants in the session then tried the practice. Split into two teams, each had to come up with a new learning activity that would boost the NLCF's reach and impact. In a vote, second place went to the team working on video-storytelling – a means of capturing and distributing an organisation's story quickly and easily. However, the winner was the team which worked on a “Tinder for charities”. The idea, similar to Bumble Business, suggested an online platform for matching applicants with funders. Not only would learning be shared, and captured, but, crucially, charities would have some agency. The NLCF has taken this idea away and we will watch this space with interest!

Points for reflection

- What is the place for storytelling in capturing impact?
- And what is the impact of storytelling?
- Should we continue digital meetups where charities can meet donors and funders in a post-pandemic world?

Barking and Dagenham Giving

A CIVIL SOCIETY REVOLUTION? LESSONS FROM BARKING AND DAGENHAM'S NEW SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE PARTNERSHIP MODEL

Members of the team responsible for setting up Barking and Dagenham Giving – BD Giving – were introduced by Helen Mathie from London Funders, and asked to set out how the network was set up in such a short time in early 2020, how it developed during the crisis, what went well, and not so well, and what was learned, how it will go ahead into the future.

SPEAKERS

Avril McIntyre,
Chair, BD Collective

Geraud de Ville de Goyet,
Chief Executive, BD Giving

Pip Salvador Jones,
Chair, Barking and
Dagenham CVS

Karen West-Whyllie,
Chief Executive Officer,
Barking Enterprise Centres

Geraud and Pip set out the context: Barking and Dagenham is an area marked by post-industrial decline, which worsened following the closure of the Ford plant. Not only is there widespread deprivation, largely due to joblessness, with large areas of council-led housing, but there have been rapid changes in the ethnic make-up of the community. "Covid-19 has turbo-charged existing tensions in a damaged social sector locally, which has not kept up with the population churn", Geraud added. The result is that its ability to access external funding does not match the local need – three-quarters of local charities have incomes below £100,000, and there was some mistrust and conflict in the sector.



Against this history, BD Collective – a group of social infrastructure organisations including Barking Enterprise Centre and the local CVS – came together to create BD Giving, supported by a council keen to rebuild relationships with the sector, and indeed to transfer an endowment to fund change. An entity rather than an organisation, supported by Lankelly Chase and its learning partner, Ratio, BD Giving is trying something radical. "It's all about relationships", Geraud said. Through collaboration with other actors, partnership, and participatory grant-making, it hopes both to fund immediate need and to create lasting change.

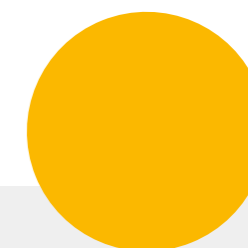
Avril was compelling on how the aim was first made concrete. A new, £50,000 fund for capacity-building had been announced, and instead of organisations applying separately, BD Collective got several together, suggesting they apply jointly, with each of them subsequently delivering in its area of expertise. "It was a game-changer", she explained, "a no-brainer: one gateway, one website", adding, "We are starting to create an environment where it is better to work together than to be in competition. Though there are challenges... we are genuinely working together to support residents".

Over the year, BD Giving has applied for and distributed £150,000 in grants through this partnership model, its sub-networks focussing on adult social care, health, food poverty and youth. And community participation is at its heart – local people not just deciding on priorities and designing the sub-networks, but 15 of them also part of the grant-making

process. "[There are] so many smart people in the area", Geraud says, "and this work gives them the chance to come to the fore", going on to cite an example of a young woman leading the network of 200 young mothers.

Geraud is clear-eyed about the fact that this is still work-in-progress. "We have a long way to go to build trust and to make change," he says, citing the need always to hear residents' voices, to keep devolving power and to begin to work on measuring the outcomes of this approach. And to maintain the "healthy distance" from the council necessary to give and receive feedback – though the council is happy to see work taking place through this new model, and is transferring an

endowment fund to BD Giving. Clearly, there is a renewed culture, "comfortable with messy situations and sometimes messy solutions", and relationships are at the heart of its work. "The key will be to hold on to these gains", Geraud concluded, and Pip commented, quoting Julia Unwin: "We can be the gatekeeper. We can make the change."



Points for reflection

- What is your tolerance for messy situations and messy solutions, with relationships at their heart?
- What are the advantages of recognising and living with complexity?
- How can funders help generate an environment where it is better for umbrella bodies to work together than separately?

Place-based giving in London

CELEBRATING AND LEARNING FROM THE MOVEMENT

Helen Mathie, from London Funders, opened the session by giving a brief history of London's Giving community, of which Islington Giving was the first of 14 now in the network, with many more in development.

SPEAKERS

Cameron Bray,
Learning & Participation
Manager, Barking &
Dagenham Giving

Danielle Green,
Assistant Director,
Camden Giving

Victoria Steward Todd,
Chief Executive Kensington &
Chelsea Foundation

London Funders' 2020 report, "The Power of People, Partnerships and Place", set out five principles for local, place-based giving – the first being that everyone has something to give, be it time, talent or money. Second, that giving should be based in an understanding of a community's needs, not driven by funders; and so third, that funders should listen to local people, and encourage them to participate in decision-making. Fourth, that funders should collaborate with partners, and lastly that all partners should have an equal voice.

The report divides London boroughs into four different typologies, depending on their levels of voluntary sector activity, local assets and access to local funding. Overall, it's calculated that in Phase Two of London's Giving, 2017–2020, the schemes had raised almost £10m, generated in-kind donations of over £550,000, with volunteering valued over £1m – and made grants worth £8.7m. Interestingly, the past

year has surpassed those average levels – Londoners have given their time and money generously in the crisis: London's Giving schemes raised £5.5m and granted £3.9m.

What, Helen asked, had the three representatives of London's Giving schemes learned in the crisis?

The Kensington and Chelsea Foundation is the longest-established of the three: set up in 2008 by a resident concerned about the inequality obvious in a borough where Holland Park and Grenfell Tower are barely a mile distant. Raising funds from High Net Worth Individuals, trusts and corporates, the foundation has 11 board members, of whom nine are residents. However, while Victoria explained that it partners with local organisations – mostly grassroots – the Foundation has not yet moved towards diversifying its board or participatory grant-making, though recently "dipping its toe in" with three young people helping on youth grant decisions.

At Camden Giving, set up in 2017, there's a similar disconnect between a neighbourhood that's wealthy in parts but with inequalities in health and employment – only 7% of jobs in the borough go to local people. Funds are raised mostly within the borough and local businesses, and grants are given to small charities and community organisations. Danielle explained the organisation's progress in participatory grant-making, where trustees devolve all decision-making to panels of local people, which have so far awarded £4.5m. Local people are also trained, and paid, to co-design programmes – Camden's Changemakers Fund, supporting youth safety for 16–25 year olds, has 10–15 young people again trained and paid as panellists.

Cameron set out the aims of Barking and Dagenham Giving. They are: to collaborate with local people, share local decision-making and get resources to the people who need them. Formed during the crisis, it has seen priorities surface such as the digital divide (half the local population does not have regular access), something echoed by Danielle, where Camden Giving has been resourcing in this area. The other major change in funding was for food – at Kensington and Chelsea, food projects had not previously been funded, but the majority of crisis funding went to this theme.

Finally, Danielle spoke of the shift seen in local giving. Volunteering dropped off a little as businesses had to close and staff worked from home elsewhere, but there was a spike in gifts in kind, primarily in donation of food. Victoria echoed this last point: the foundation raised £1.9m last year, more than double the previous total – it's clear that local people are very willing to support local projects.

Points for reflection

- The growth in participatory grantmaking has been great, but as its acceleration has been largely driven by increased localism during the pandemic, will the momentum continue?
- How can we keep the spotlight on inequalities once the crisis has abated?
- What is the role for funders in tackling the digital divide during the pandemic and beyond?

London Community Foundation
and Muslim Charities Forum

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO FUNDING: A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The London Community Foundation (LCF), a funder working with London's grassroots, and the Muslim Charities Forum (MCF), the umbrella body for Muslim-led charities across the UK since 2007, have been working together during the covid crisis in a two-way learning project.

SPEAKERS

Fadi Itani,
CEO, Muslim
Charities Forum

Harriette Tillott (Chair),
Programme Manager,
The London Community
Foundation

Following six months of consultation with 140 charities, the organisations' report – the MCF X LCF Strategic Partnership – sets out the barriers to grant funding faced by Muslim-led charities in London, and some recommendations to bridge the gap between these charities and other players in the sector. The aim: to improve the infrastructure of this sector within a sector, and to encourage and support these charities to begin to apply for funding.

Muslim-led charities were early to respond to the covid crisis, supporting their communities as they historically have. However, the majority of the sector was faced with stretched resources, a lack of income due to the difficulty of community fundraising, reliance on volunteers, and of course a rise in demand – findings set out in two MCF reports researched earlier in the pandemic.

The joint report, recently published, develops these themes, setting out 11 barriers that Muslim-led charities face in London. Prominent among them are a lack of awareness of grant funding as a possibility, allied to a perception of hostile attitudes, and then anxiety about the processes involved. Trust is also lacking, and concern that the origins of funds might not meet Muslim laws, and of course there is a lack of time, especially in the pandemic, and experience.

Each barrier has recommendations attached for charities, set out in the report and which are already being promoted through various means, such as webinars, round-table discussions, and telephone calls to support capacity-building at the charities. And there are recommendations for funders too, ranging from the general improvements seen over the crisis in simplifying application and monitoring processes, through to improving funder transparency, communication and accessibility – and towards a more equity-led methodology in grant-making.

The overall aim is to overcome the systemic barriers Muslim groups face, through learning, yes, but also to encourage collaboration, partnership and increasing trust. The recommendations have been welcomed by Muslim-led charities and funders alike, and in February 2021, the MCF was chosen to distribute funding from Comic Relief's Global Majority Fund across its sector.

In the meantime, from a starting point at the beginning of the pandemic where MCF found that only 16% of Muslim-led organisations had been able to access grant funding, the partnership supported

charities to apply to Waves 4 and 5 of LCR funding. And although funding has not been broken down between different religious groups or ethnicities, over 75% of grants made in Waves 3, 4 and 5 went to organisations led by people in the communities they serve.

And of course learning has grown too. LCF was grateful to have had this opportunity – a "vital first step" in investing in BAME-led infrastructure in the capital. In Harriette's words, "We wouldn't expect other sectors in society to survive without infrastructure, yet we expect the charity sector to live hand to mouth... You don't grow a good and effective social sector unless you fund every bit of that social sector... if we don't fund organisations like MCF, we all fail."

Points for reflection

- How can we sustain the gains in funding BAME-led infrastructure organisations beyond the crisis?
- For example, how can Muslim charities that were encouraged to apply to the LCR be encouraged to apply for other sources of grant-funding in the future?
- Could your organisation provide data on the source of funds which would help Muslim charities decide whether or not to apply?

**FESTIVAL
OF LEARNING
COMMUNITY**



Opening session

WELCOME TO THE FESTIVAL OF LEARNING

This was a chance for participants to get together informally – as if at a real event, opened James Banks. As the Festival was planned as a springboard for the renewal of civil society, he asked for thoughts from the past year: what has changed, what went well or badly, what should endure?

“Everything,” opened one attendee. “We’ve gone from panic mode, to a slightly calmer mode now... Now we’re [in the place where we work out] how to do things differently”.

CHAIR
James Banks,
London Funders

Crucially, funding changed, as grant-makers, led by London Funders, began to collaborate, most obviously with the creation of the London Community Response (LCR), to get help quickly to those who needed it. Sixty-seven different funders together made £57m of grants over five “waves” of funding, “quickly, simply, equitably”, to quote Geraldine Blake at another event.

And the operational side of funding changed. First, a “transformation both quick and spectacular”, as another attendee put it, to flexible working. Not just in the office vs home divide, but with paper vs online. Suddenly, legal requirements had to change, and hard-copy was no longer key to grant-making.

Adaptation was fast, participants agreed, and worked well. A London Funders survey of members has found only 2% of respondents expecting to work 9–5, five days a week in future, but in this session

feelings were mixed on home-working. Those keen on flexible working argued not just for the extra time, given lack of travel-time, but a new-found ability to convene meetings with people in different geographies, simply not practical before. Others, were not entirely convinced, not just given the variability of people’s living spaces, but the importance of staff meeting their colleagues physically, particularly when things are not going well.

Processes sped up too: the LCR created a simplified application form, and the same is mooted for monitoring. Visits could not be made – it was only in the final wave of LCR that even video calls were done: until that point, decisions were made from desk assessments.

Not that everything went smoothly. The collaborative funding through the LCR, was a “challenging but positive experience”. Yet some funders stuck to their existing processes despite the scale of need, citing one taking a year to make a decision about some mental health funding: “a disconnect between the needs of the community and the academic needs of a funder”. And a couple of participants commented that the adaptability of some trustees was slow, with different expectations of the pace needed and different attitudes to risk.

Collaboration, was the overwhelming answer. An attendee commented “What’s really changed is we’ve built relationships with other funders – we had always wanted to but not got around to it. [The crisis] could be a catalyst for greater things to come.”

Flexibility in working practice, too. “The systems are there now”, there can be a permanent change, and a focus on what people actually do with their time, rather than the time itself. And the simplification of grant-making processes. “All the usual tricks of the trade went out of the window”, a funder involved in the LCR noted, “and one of the lessons might be letting go a little and trusting the applicants... [Focussing on] the possible and not the perfect. Was every grant eligible? Probably not. Does it matter? No, because 96–97% [were].”

Finally, DEI. Everyone welcomed the changes seen in participation and equity, and agreed these must endure. “Look at [recent] election results, what are they telling us? There will still be people who need their basic needs met, but [others] want to do things for themselves.”

“Most organisations have changed how their services are delivered”, James concluded. “[That is] also true of funders. [The challenge is] how to integrate what we’ve learned with the bits from the past we don’t want to lose? There will be messiness, but it will shake down because we need to keep the progressive stuff.”

Points for reflection

- How can we keep the good habits of collaboration going once the crisis is over?
- How can we use the lessons of the crisis as a catalyst for things to come?
- When working from home ceases, how can we use technology to keep connecting with people from different geographies.

Facebook

COMMUNITIES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

This session brought together two community groups who deliver primarily through online platforms, a grant-maker and a representative of Facebook charged with supporting digital communities.

SPEAKERS

Andy Ratcliffe,
Executive Director of
Programmes, Impact on
Urban Health

George Gabriel,
Community Partnerships
Team, Facebook

Suzanne Alderson,
Founder, Parenting
Mental Health

Teboga Moalusi,
Dope Black Dads

Suzanne Alderson, founder of the Parenting Mental Health community on Facebook, which has 17,000 members worldwide of which 10,000 are in the UK, began the session by sharing her personal experience of caring for her daughter, which led her to found this community. Struck by her experience of being alone on suicide watch for her daughter, engulfed by layers of shame, she did not want other parents to feel as alone as she did at that moment.

Parenting Mental Health's online community helps parents in similar circumstances connect at any time of day or night to receive peer support. Trained volunteers assure day and night continuity. A parent who had forced to wait outside of a hospital where her daughter was being admitted in the middle of the night, because of covid restrictions, said later to Suzanne that she knew "someone would be up, someone would care – and the support would be virtual but very, very real"

George Gabriel works for Facebook's community partnerships' team. Its

purpose is to serve Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram to create community for social good. Previously, he spent ten years as a community organiser, including at Citizens UK. He shared some headline statistics (not yet publicly available) which illustrate the extent of the online revolution that is revolutionising how people seek and receive support. 39% of those in a large survey of the UK say that the most important group of which they are a member is an online community. Furthermore, 70% of British people who are a part of an online group say that they have received emotional support or information from it.

These groups – often lived-experience groups – may be highly impactful but yet detached from other infrastructure – for example many may not be registered charities. Statistics show that they are becoming part of our social fabric – but yet we are the same human beings with the same need for connection. Online does not have to replace online.

Following George's presentation, Teboga Moalusi from Dope Black Dads spoke. As a father from South Africa, he was confronted with negative stereotypes of black fatherhood. The Dope Black Dads' community seeks to reposition black men as fathers, helping them navigate masculinity, fatherhood, mental health and collectivise blackness. The platform is a digital-first platform including a Facebook group, a blog, an award-winning podcast and a shop. The aim is to educate, inspire, heal and celebrate. It is part of a wider "Dope Black" community, looking to improve the outcomes of all black intersections.

Andy Radcliffe, from Impact on Urban Health, spoke next. He expressed a sense of humility towards Suzanne and Tebogo. He wanted to underline that digital delivery should not be through of as second best: he has seen examples where it is not just comparable but better. He was adamant that digital delivery is miles away from privileged white philanthropy. He wonders how philanthropy can respect digital communities' identity at the same time as providing support.

During Q&A, the issue of digital inclusion arose. Facebook have an accessibility team, focused on older people's inclusion. There is a recognition that inclusion might

be tricky for some people. George noted that at Facebook, they try to support cohorts of online leaders who can provide mutual support, because their role can be "really lonely" at times. He finished with a provocative prediction: "In 20 years' time, every want to do things for themselves."

"Most organisations have changed how their services are delivered", James concluded. "[That is] also true of funders. [The challenge is] how to integrate what we've learned with the bits from the past we don't want to lose? There will be messiness, but it will shake down because we need to keep the progressive stuff."

Points for reflection

- Digital may not be merely as good as in-person, but better.
- How can funders adapt to support online communities that may have substantial reach to minoritised communities or communities of need, given that they may have neither bank account nor charity registration?
- If in 20 years' time all funders will be supporting digital communities, after today's session, where do you want to go from here?

Rethink Mental Illness

COMMUNITIES THAT CARE

This session was a discussion between Will Higham and Kaneez Shaid from Rethink Mental Illness (often known as Rethink) about the Communities that Care alliance model; a new way of partnering between the NHS and local community groups to provide accessible, friendly, open-door services.

SPEAKERS

Kaneez Shaid,
Head of Community
Engagement,
Rethink Mental Illness

William Higham,
Associate Director of
Programme Innovation,
Rethink Mental Illness

Rethink is a charity that focuses on the severely mentally ill that engages both in service provision and campaigning for treatment and a better quality of life.

The session was particularly pertinent in the light of recent events. Mental health has been a key issue of concern for Londoners and the capital's policymakers during the pandemic – and the situation is unlikely to get better overnight. Polls show that 79% of those already affected by (severe) mental illness reported a worsening of their symptoms during this period. The pre-pandemic, NHS waiting list was already 14 weeks long for inpatient treatment: today, the waiting list is more than a year.

The NHS has recently decided to invest an additional £1bn into community mental health, with 20% of that sum being earmarked for services run by the voluntary and community sector. Rethink has been involved in pilots of these schemes into which small community groups are invited to be intimately involved. Whilst the scale of this investment is unprecedented – according

to Will – when the extra funding is divided up across the UK, if care is not taken to reflect on the right model, it may not be enough to tackle the scale of the current crisis.

Rethink is in touch with over 130 peer support groups across the UK. It aims, by working with these organisations, to create and enable new models of community mental health care, in partnership with the NHS. Rethink's role is akin to an innovation lab, where it works out how to get very small peer-led communities to partner with the seemingly monolithic NHS. This role of incubating equal partnerships is essential, but it is not funded by the NHS, so Rethink was obliged to draw on its own resources to make sure that this work happened.

Rethink's first task was to engage people in the local community – going beyond the usual suspects to groups that may have been reluctant to engage in the process. These groups were more "dangerous" in a positive way for the NHS – but Kaneez and Will are adamant that cultural change was a necessity. It would have been only too easy to engage with just the usual suspects. Kaneez notes that working with these peer-led and other small organisations was often quite a challenging and emotional process. Groups had to clear the air after old rivalries and contexts before contemplating partnership. Nevertheless, as Geraldine Blake from London Funders noted, by engaging with small organisations close to communities, "this is how you get to human rights".

The pilot in Somerset aims to be a happy, convivial place, where people could exchange baby clothes in one corner, drink tea in another and get some housing advice in another. Crucially, it is led by peers and service users rather than by NHS staff. Anecdotal evidence suggest that the impact is notable: for example, someone who would have been hospitalised for up to a year was able to achieve stability by engaging regularly with the drop-in service.

Rethink has published several guides for commissioners on how to undertake place-based work. They're keen highlight the importance of this work right now, as people now consider reverting to "steady-state commissioning", which would presumably favour the "usual suspects".

Points for reflection

- Would you fund a charity to convene small groups to collaborate if it could lead to a big change in how public funding happens?
- What part do you see for your organisation of meeting post-pandemic mental health needs?
- What sort of a team and skillset would you need to convene local groups around an issue such as mental health?

Berkeley Foundation

PRIORITISE, PREVENT AND PROTECT: KEEPING YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE FROM HOMELESSNESS

“Everyone in” was an early success during the crisis, with charities, local and central government, and individuals working together to support homeless people off the streets. Since then, however, there have been rising numbers of young people experiencing homelessness – with almost 50% more young people sleeping rough between July and September 2020 than in those months in 2019.

SPEAKERS

Kas,
young client, SPEAR

Laura Blair,
Peer Researcher,
Toynbee Hall

Meghan Roach,
Service Manager, New
Horizon Youth Centre

Dr Rosie Reynolds,
Springboard
Team Leader, SPEAR

Sally Dickinson,
Head of Foundation,
Berkeley Foundation;
Trustee, London
Fundors

This session sought to discuss why this is happening, what the civil society response has been and where investment should be prioritised to address, and ideally to prevent youth homelessness. Chaired by Sally Dickinson, from the Berkeley Foundation, which focusses on supporting young people and tackling homelessness, the session opened with Kas, a client of SPEAR, generously sharing her story.

Kas has been living at SPEAR's hostel since 2019, after a breakdown in family relationships. Although the referral there was complicated and fraught, she has settled and is honest about the pros and cons. The main difficulty is not in the hostel, but in the system, as it is not possible to work without paying higher rent, or moving into private accommodation. Some residents work for cash-in-hand, but Kas, supported by

SPEAR, has been doing work experience, and courses, building her CV. She is eloquent on the benefits of being at the hostel, particularly during the pandemic and praised the Team Leader there who helped her to settle, learn to cook, look for work and begin to navigate the system – and who spoke next, Rosie.

Rosie's caseload has doubled over the course of the pandemic, thanks to “intertwined” issues of family breakdown, disrupted education, lack of employment and, often, mental health issues. Rosie has seen young people rough sleeping in boroughs where that was unusual before, and it's been harder to work in the crisis due to rises in demand, increased mental health difficulties, and navigating the future now being uncertain for everyone.

Meghan agreed – demand at New Horizon Youth Centre is up, and former clients are returning, usually having lost jobs during the crisis. She described how services had to change in lockdown, with the closure of the centre and its outreach work. Everything moved to remote delivery, where New Horizon not only offers assessment, counselling and housing advice, but online programmes on life-skills, for example, or employability. And while it has difficult being unable to help clients in person, digital engagement has reached some young people not confident enough to come into the centre, and clients in outer London.

What hasn't worked so well has been the longer-term support the centre usually offers – hence Meghan's relief that collaborative working between different providers in the sector has deepened. Sally agreed, and felt that it was the role of funders to resource joined-up services and make them work. And not just within the sector – funders should be looking longer-term, at prevention, and beginning to address cross-sector the intertwined causes behind so much youth homelessness.

To these, Laura – a peer researcher working with other young private renters

– reiterated that relationship breakdowns are affected young people during the pandemic. Not just in families but in any shared housing – Laura pointing out difficulties of living in shared flats during the lockdown, with tension inevitable with young people insecure financially and emotionally. Rosie agreed – to young people coming from dysfunctional families, learning relationship skills is key.

All agreed that permanent change is not possible without changes in policy on housing and mental health services, where there is currently a “cliff edge” at age 18. For Kas, the future looks hopeful: she has built her CV, is moving to Evolve Housing to gain more independence, before going into the bidding system to get a flat. SPEAR was crucial, though, at a time of crisis, “to give me the space and independence to get back on my feet”.

Points for reflection

- The speed at which services were adapted during the crisis was exemplary. How can momentum be maintained to facilitate work, for example to streamline risk assessments that can hold up delivery of services?
- How can funders ensure that services are joined up? How can they act to focus on prevention of homelessness as well as to alleviate its impact?
- Relationship problems were a key driver of increased homelessness during the crisis. As lockdowns ease, how can homelessness charities help young people learn relationship skills that could prevent tensions and ultimately homelessness?

Centre for London THE LONDON FUTURES REVIEW

The London Futures Review is a “big re-think” of the future of the city, opened Rob. A strong growth phase over the past 25 years, fuelled by globalisation and the Olympics, is drawing to a close because of Brexit, growing inequality, the housing crisis, climate change – and now the pandemic.



SPEAKER
Rob Whitehead,
Director of Strategic Projects,
Centre for London

London is a city of contradictions – with a growing population but marked by inequality, successful in economic terms but with stalling productivity and too many on low wages, and with a strong reputation but now beginning to fall in the indices of greatest cities globally. “It’s time to take stock”, Rob said, asking: “Have we reached peak London?”

Led by the Centre for London, and funded by local government, trusts and corporates (listed on the Centre for London’s website), the Review has been planned in three phases, concluding by 2023. Phase One, London at a crossroads, is an analysis of where London is now – “part stock-take, part a framing for how we might think about London’s long-term future”, and concluded last year. Phase Two, happening now, is a consultation on “Your Future London”, and Phase Three will frame the conclusions from each into a wider discussion about London’s place in the nation, and indeed globally, now and in the future.

As elsewhere, major forces impacting London include, first, now, the recovery

from the pandemic, alongside existing challenges such as climate change, an ageing population, disruptive technologies, increasing nationalism, and the continued rise of the Asian economies. The Review looks at case studies from other cities, to see how other nations are living with these forces: at affordable housing in Tokyo, for example; the “15-minute city” being achieved by cycling in Paris; low traffic schemes in Barcelona; successful management of utilities in Medellin.

And Rob asked participants to suggest which factors make a good city, going through the themes being shared in the consultation: democracy and governance; fairness and public service; liberty; health; prosperity; diversity and cohesion; security and resilience; connectivity and mobility; environment and quality of place. Each has its challenges, all the way from affordability to poor air quality, and it’s difficult to rank their importance – different people will of course have different views.

The Review then groups these factors into five potential scenarios, each of them plausible for a future London, but often mutually exclusive: “Safety-First London”, prioritising better health but with the sacrifice of some civil liberties; or “Levelled-up London”, where fairness and cohesion are prioritised, but result in a business exodus. On the other hand, “London MegaCapital”, has a jobs-first agenda, and prioritises connectivity, but at the cost of net zero; or “Fifteen-minute London”, where environmental

concerns are put ahead of jobs. Finally, “Londependence”, where London becomes even more powerful than now, and increasingly autonomous.

The group debated and often disagreed on the ideal scenario, which of course pointed up the huge task faced by the Review – its aim in 2023 to set out a shared vision for London’s future. Should people wish to contribute further, its consultation is now live, Comres is running a poll, and the summaries of its round-table discussions to date are on the Centre for London’s website, where there is also an interactive quiz, aptly titled “Your Future London”.

Points for reflection

- Which factors for you are the most important ingredients for making a better London? How does that fit with your organisation’s vision?
- Who would you need to work with to achieve your vision, and how do we all go about trying to shape that?

Locality

COMMUNITY SPACES AT RISK FUND

Launched in late 2020, and delivered with Locality, the Community Spaces at Risk Fund is the GLA's £750,000 fund to protect to protect grassroots cultural centres, social clubs, youth, education and other spaces that are locally rooted in the capital.

SPEAKERS

David Moynihan,
Head of Services, Locality

Raja Moussaoui,
Senior Policy Officer,
Mayor's Culture at Risk Office

Providing direct support such as specialist business and property advice, and advocacy, the Fund also makes grants to at-risk spaces such as cultural centres, social clubs, youth, education and other locally rooted spaces critical to supporting vulnerable groups, but seeing incomes fall in the covid-19 crisis.

Representatives from the Mayor's Office and Locality presented the background to the Fund, its methodology and three case studies from its work – and talked about how they have been balancing the immediate response to an emergency with longer-term recovery planning.

Raja is from the Culture at Risk Office – set up to protect cultural infrastructure and to mediate and sometimes lobby in planning disputes. The Fund grew out of this office as it became clear that many grassroots spaces were at risk during the crisis, as demand grew but income fell, especially in areas of high deprivation. It was aligned with waves four and five of the LCR – first with smaller grants of up

to £10,000 to help organisations navigate the crisis, now being followed by medium-sized grants of up to £25,000 to support reopening.

Locality was chosen to help deliver the fund – a membership body supporting community organisations, it was able to work on both the specialist, one-to-one business support and the grant-making process. David, from Locality, and Raja took us through the Fund's eight-stage process, from the appraisal stage, where applicants were scored across a range of objectives (such as supporting local integration, contributing to community resilience, and risk), through to monitoring. On the balance of using data and community voices in decision-making, Raja was clear, that "Data is the secondary approach, a supporting mechanism... part of the Fund's aim is to strengthen community voice."

Of the 442 organisations eligible for funding who applied, over half were community centres, many of them delivering a range of activities to tackle isolation, and support mental health and resilience – and all of them under financial pressure when they were needed most. In the first cohort, 41 organisations were supported, mostly user-led (41% BAME-led; 39% female-led) – and as well as one-to-one business support, the fund provided one-to-many advice and training, for example with webinars on fundraising.

David took us through three case studies from that first cohort. The Lido in West

Ealing, run by the Ealing Community Resource Centre, is an affordable workspace with meeting facilities – and of course had lost most of its income from tenants. The Fund supported its leaders through lease negotiations and helped with a business continuity plan, including fundraising support.

At the Suvai Deaf East Community in Ilford, a multi-generational café and social hub for London's deaf community, providing support and advocacy, a crisis in income meant that the centre was about to close. Again, the Fund provided support, helping with business continuity planning and relationships with the council.

Finally, the Hornsey Vale Community Association, a volunteer-led centre supporting the community for over 30 years but in dispute with the council over its lease, and losing volunteers due to this dispute, as well as the crisis. The Fund provided support in negotiating the lease, and indeed David mediated between the Association and the Council.

The work is vital, the team feels – in lockdown, people needed support, and research shows that areas with community spaces such as parks had better crisis responses. "It's a small investment to achieve long-term solution", concluded David.

Points for reflection

- In the areas that you fund, has it been true that areas with community spaces have been more resilient under the lockdowns and pandemic?
- For you, is data secondary to community voice, or vice-versa?
- How do we make a transition from a crisis-response towards recovery and renewal?

A New Direction and partners

SENSE-MAKING OF THE CULTURAL ECO-SYSTEM SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE WAKE OF COVID 19

A New Direction is a non-profit working to enhance the capacity and agency of children and young people in London to “own their creativity, shape culture and achieve their creative potential.”

SPEAKERS

Corinne Bass,
Senior Partnerships Manager,
A New Direction

Lawrence Walker,
Senior Business Development
Manager, A New Direction

The organisation works with and through various partners, such as schools, artists, arts organisations – and of course children and young people – both to enhance the arts ecology and to provide real opportunities throughout the school years and into employment.

As part of the organisation’s “Reset” response to the covid-19 crisis, it commissioned a series of Listening Projects in early 2021. These projects have been an attempt to capture and reflect “a moment in time” during the pandemic, by listening to young people’s experience of the evolving dynamics of London’s cultural infrastructure, and to use the learning from the projects to improve A New Direction’s own offer as we come out of the crisis, advocate for young Londoners’ needs and indeed for the sector itself.

Five Listening Projects – on young people’s experience of covid; the experience of organisations leading creative educational practice;

employment; the response of creative learning to the climate crisis; enabling creative communities; and the response of creative organisations to the climate crisis – were commissioned from five different research organisations. Each project combined virtual conversations in groups with individual interviews with the young people, their families, and arts organisations and schools that A New Direction works with – with overlap between the consultants kept at a minimum.

Once the Listening Projects had been completed, Lawrence, Corinne and the team began to draw out the common themes emerging – mostly around support and learning. Three forms of support emerged as key: on mentoring and the importance of relationships; on the importance of “third spaces”, outside home and school and the digital potential of new platforms and spaces; and on mental health. Here, both individual support and the well-being of the community were highlighted, alongside the importance of education and creativity, and the acknowledgement of the vital role of the natural environment.

As far as the findings on learning were concerned, six major themes that recurred were around paying attention, i.e., the value of ongoing listening, through and beyond the recovery; working together; and advocacy, not just for young people but on behalf of the creative sector. Staying local was also a strong theme; as were inclusion and representation;

and indeed redefining creative practice moving forward.

As a result of the Listening Projects, A New Direction has begun to take the learning from these rich conversations, and make recommendations for actions within each of the themes outlined above. Already, in consultation with its Young Challenge Group, the organisation is building the learning into its own programmes; and at the same time, starting to create mechanisms for sharing it with more widely across the sector. “Let’s take this chance to reset”, reads A New Direction’s call to action, “and move forward with what we know works, leave behind what doesn’t, and introduce new ways of working, together.”

Points for reflection

- How can we ensure that we keep listening when we return to business as usual?
- With young people’s learning so disrupted through the crisis, how can we be sure to make space for creativity and the arts, both inside and out of school?
- What can funders do to support third spaces (that are neither home nor school)?

**FESTIVAL
OF LEARNING
EQUITY**

R



The Social Investment Consultancy

EQUITY IN FUNDER COLLABORATION

What can we learn about funding for equity-led organisations from the London Community Response’s approach, which aimed to be fast, simple and equitable? Of the £57 million disbursed so far, at least £28 million went to equity-led organisations (most of this in the later waves, 3, 4 and 5) and 27% of funds went to organisations facing more than one type of disadvantage.

SPEAKERS

Bonnie Chiu,
Managing Director,
the Social Investment
Consultancy

Tracey Lazard,
CEO, Inclusion London

Vivienne Hayes MBE,
Women’s Resource Centre

Inclusion London and the Women’s Resource Centre, umbrella bodies respectively for disabled people’s and women-led organisations, were critical in ensuring that LCR’s grants reached equity-led organisations. Specifically, how did LCR embed equity in their processes, and what worked?

The panellists broadly thought that process that LCR designed and implemented deserved much recognition. Tracey said that it was “one of the best things I did last year”. She thought that the process was genuinely collaborative and appreciated that her organisation was able to be involved at both an operational and strategic level.

Vivienne reflected that the approach was “probably quite brave.” The panel of organisations appointed to improve the reach of grant-making to equity-led organisations (which was composed of the Ubele Initiative, LGBT+ Consortium, Council for Somali Organisations, London



Gypsies and Travellers as well as Inclusion London and the Women’s Resource centre), was for Vivienne an opportunity for organisations with different roles but shared goals to come together and exchange their knowledge and expertise. Tracey reflected that the role of the panel went beyond processes: they were also critical friends. It was refreshing to be a part of a panel who had broadly similar views about how to reach equity-led organisations: she was not the only one in the room thinking the same thing and speaking up, as has often been her experience.

The panel was involved in four stages of the process:

- **Outreach.** Through the equity partners, there was extensive outreach to publicise the funding to small equity-led organisations. This involved a lot of intensive, hands-on work to help organisations understand that they had an opportunity to raise the profile of the work that they do.
- **Applications.** At the application stage, the panel both helped individual organisations with the form and fed back to London Funders and the LCR partners the questions that were or weren’t working. They also used this intelligence to address strategic issues such as how to define a disabled-led organisation. Vivienne emphasised that the equity panel members were not gatekeepers, but facilitators of the relationship between funders and potential recipients.
- **Sifting. The panel also played a role in educating the people** sifting applications, as the sifters were not necessarily qualified to rate the equity dimension. For example, Tracey explained why projects that

treated disabled people as passive recipient of services were damaging and should not be eligible for funding.

- **Funding decisions.** Vivienne was involved at this stage and was very enthusiastic about it: she saw it as a chance to shift structural inequalities. Similarly, the head of the funding decisions panel for wave 5 felt that the presence of the equity panel members created an opportunity for more nuanced decision-making.

Whilst the process was stimulating and important work for the equity panel, it involved a considerable investment of time for the equity panel members. They were remunerated for their time, and they would urge any funders working with equity partners to show that they do indeed value appropriately their time and contribution.

Points for reflection

- Does your grants portfolio reflect your ambitions for equity? How would you measure that?
- How are equity considerations embedded in each and every stage of the grant-making process?
- To do better in the future, who could you call on as a critical friend, and how could you show them you value their effort and advice?

Ubele Initiative

STRUCTURAL RACISM IN THE VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE SECTOR

This conversation was a discussion between Yvonne Field and Natalie Armitage and James Banks of London Funders, and questions were fielded both ways.

SPEAKERS

Yvonne Field,
Founder and CEO,
Ubele

Natalie Armitage,
Project Manager,
Ubele

James Banks,
Chief Executive,
London Funders

The Ubele Initiative is an African Diaspora-led intergenerational social enterprise founded to build more sustainable communities across the UK, with the aim of engaging communities through a bottom-up approach.

Natalie asked James why he thought it was important to hear from Ubele at this conference. James reflected that it was an important time in the light of the Black Lives Matter movement and the death of George Floyd, to think about how the sector operates and makes decisions. Emergency rounds of funding were coming to an end and it is important to reflect on whether that has reached Black and minoritised communities. Finally, he thinks it is important to have a conversation about whiteness, rather than Blackness, in the context of a sector that is so white. James and the speakers also talked about personal experiences over the last year. Yvonne, who has more than 35 years' experience working connecting communities, reflected that the past year has been particularly intense. She has not taken any holiday since 2019 and has

been busy with Ubele's appointment to support the GLA's work, rapidly exposing where needs are and how to address them. All the while, she has been coping the impacts of covid-19 on her friends and family.

The Booska Paper is a position paper that draws on research with a wide range of Black and minoritised community organisations and national funders, exposing structural racism in the voluntary sector. Ubele took on a convening role, seeking to harness a collective voice. Natalie noted that some organisations contributing checked and re-checked that their name would not be used and their contribution would not be identifiable – a sign that the Black voluntary sector felt that speaking up to those in power could be dangerous.

Another striking theme was precarity exacerbated by the covid-19 pandemic. Many organisations have been concerned about the basics: food, water and heating. Despite the light shined on small community organisations and their struggles because of the pandemic, Natalie told us that so many stories remain untold. It is as if "people are drowning, but we have not yet called for the lifeboats." Ubele estimates that 9 out of 10 organisations it surveyed are facing closure.

Before setting out concrete advice, Natalie and Yvonne had an overriding message: "do not come to us piecemeal." She cited the LCR and the National Lottery Community Fund's Phoenix Fund as good examples of all-in, reflective and inclusive engagement – even if they weren't perfect. Unfortunately there are still many organisations who think that they could "just call Yvonne at Ubele" to sort out any issues around race they face. Ubele does not necessarily have the time, energy and resources to engage with even the most sincere of them – which is why Ubele is grateful to London Funders for funding them to undertake such work.

The Booska Paper, available online from Ubele, gives more detail, but here are some of the key points Natalie raised during her presentation:

- **If funders are serious about anti-racist work, they should provide long-term unrestricted funding** otherwise there will be fears that the funder is not seriously committed to structural change.
- **Do not assume that BAME-led work is necessarily anti-racist.** BAME-led organisations face substantial incentives to fit in with the white-led funding environment.
- **White funders should make the time and space to cultivate relationships with Black and minoritised leaders:** but this is not the responsibility of minorities to reach out. White funders and other organisations may say that they "are on a journey" but BAME communities don't have a choice to choose to travel or not! It's up to everyone who benefits from whiteness, to realise the journey is not just about understanding it and themselves to unlearn - but taking action every step of the way to address it.

- **Improve accountability of funding.** BAME communities deserve real explanations about why their funding request has been turned down. In the light of underconfidence in these communities, empty rejections may lead to further exclusions.
- **Intersectional communities (e.g. Black and disabled) still face disadvantage when applying to funding streams for BAME communities.** Ring-fencing for specific intersectionalities should be considered.

In the light of some scepticism about the intentions of white-led organisations and those "on a journey", Natalie ended the session on a more upbeat note: "we can do this, because there is so much thirst for social justice out there".

Points for reflection

- How can your organisation contribute to accountability about where and to whom funding goes?
- Be aware of the distinction between BAME-led and anti-racist work.
- How should you invest your time in cultivating relationships with BAME leaders?
- What do you need to do to commit to the long term? – so that you can be seen as credible and invested?

Funders for Race Equality Alliance **FUNDING AUDIT: CURRENT PRACTICE IN RACIAL JUSTICE FUNDING**

The Funders for Race Equality Alliance is a group of 43 foundations (including Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Barrow Cadbury Trust, and Power to Change), working together to advance race equality in the sector.

SPEAKERS

Josh Cockroft,
Esmée Fairbairn
Foundation

Saphia Yousef,
Equally Ours

Set up in 2019, a key part of its mission is to increase the amount of funding allocated to the BAME sector – and specifically to BAME-led organisations – this has only grown in importance against the background of Black Lives Matter, and the disproportionate consequences experienced by marginalised communities during the pandemic. To track this funding, the Alliance has designed an audit tool enabling funders first to analyse their portfolios – and then to develop targets and strategies that fit with the racial justice agenda.

At one of the best-attended sessions of the Festival, Emma Ackerman, a London Funders trustee, introduced Josh, Esmée's data lead, and Saphia, who is interning at Equally Ours, which provides the secretariat for the Alliance. Together, they presented the results from the first cohort of the funding audit, and talked about how funder thinking and practice is evolving in response to this work, and the growing understanding in the sector of the importance of racial justice.

"Funders are trapped in using their own networks, which are flawed, which is part of the problem", opened Josh, who has been working on the project since its inception two years ago. It was the increasing awareness of this issue, however, that led to Alliance being set up, and to 13 funders forming the first cohort of the audit.

The audit is designed around four questions. First, is the grant going to a BAME sector organisation? Second, is the grant intended to benefit BAME communities? Third, what type of work is it supporting (such as service provision, capital works, campaigning). Lastly, is the project tackling the root causes of inequality, or its symptoms? (The sub-questions to each question, along with other specifics of the audit design, such as sampling size, can be found on the Equally Ours website).

That first cohort, of 13 funders, represented £122m of grants – around 5% of the total given by the top 300 grant-makers in the UK. The audit found that 23% of those grants went to work designed to benefit BAME communities, and that a further 19% would benefit those groups but was not specifically designed to do so. And 14% of the grants went to organisations with a mission of supporting BAME communities – but only 6% to organisations actually led by representatives of the communities they serve.

Of course though the data is interesting in itself – and results from the second cohort

are due next month – the audit tool will be more useful when it can be used to guide decision-making. The Alliance is working with 360 Giving to develop an DEI data standard for funders to use.

In the meantime, many funders are already acting on the audit results. The Smallwood Trust, for example, discovered that 7% of its funding was going to the BAME-led women's sector it hoped to support – and has trebled that proportion over the past year. Trust for London found that while 70% of its funding was going to BAME beneficiaries, only 14% of grantees were actually BAME-led. And, since its audit, Lloyds Bank Foundation is now taking a more targeted approach to becoming an anti-racist funder, establishing a new fund with a ring-fenced 25% for BAME-led organisations.

Points for reflection

- How can you use data to track progress towards your goals in supporting BAME, or indeed other equity communities?
- How can collaborations – such as the Funders for Race Equality Alliance – help funders go further?
- How can you break out of limited networks?

Equity in grant-making **THE “WHAT” AND THE “HOW”**

The session on equity in grant-making was opened by **Geraldine Blake from London Funders with the comment that the topic of equity was creating the most interest at the Festival, and the power of its central theme – “nothing about us without us” – runs throughout the session.**

SPEAKERS

Bonnie Chiu,
Managing Director, The
Social Investment
Consultancy

Aureliane Froehlich,
Equally Ours

Baljeet Sandhu,
Chief Executive, Knowledge
Equity Initiative

Harriet Stranks,
Director of Grants Lloyds
Bank Foundation

The Social Investment Consultancy (SIC) has been working on lessons from the LCR on equity in grant-making, and Bonnie opened with the observation that, in 2018, the Association of Charitable Foundations found that 99% of foundation boards were white. Given this, and the inequalities in society, embedding equity in grant-making is not just the right thing, but the smart thing to do, so that funders gain a better understanding of the contextual realities of their work, and their grant-making becomes more sustainable.

Aureliane from SIC presented an evaluation of the 2027 Programme, where Associates, with lived experience of the communities being funded, work for a time within funding organisations. The aim is not simply to move grant-making towards greater inclusivity, but to involve people with lived experience in decision-making – and ultimately to improve the quality of the grants. Between 2017–2020, 28 Associates completed the programme, enabling them to access the sector, with some subsequently being employed on a

permanent basis. On average, Associates influenced between two and six grants made – totalling around £1.2m – and half of them changed funders’ existing processes.

The Lloyds Bank Foundation worked with two Associates, and Harriet was eloquent on their influence – indeed one has been employed there. “Lots of really rich learning” came from the programme, which part of the foundation’s journey towards embedding equity in grant-making. This process began following an audit showing that applications from BAME-led organisations were less likely to be funded than others by the foundation. Every job description now has DEI as a first principle, and equity has been placed at the heart of every piece of work. “Once you shift focus”, Harriet says, “it can change how everyone in the organisation thinks and acts”. Not that it’s easy – it has been “a long and slow journey”.

Baljeet was passionate on the importance of embedding equity – again, as the smart thing to do. Why? Well, for far too long, society – and grant-making – have been shaped by people without the lived experience of those they support. While understanding that grant-makers do their best to understand the challenges of disadvantaged communities, many are not aware of the unconscious biases we all have, nor understand the power dynamic. Arguing for more diverse workforces, and boards, Baljeet is clear that grant-making is more impactful when informed by those with actual lived experience (ie, not simply representation), and diversity of thought. An attendee from a local authority also shared that they now have paid representatives from BAME-led networks on various steering groups.

TSIC spoke too about barriers to equity, mostly a lack of diversity within grant-makers, alongside contentment with the status quo – particularly in middle management, where people were sometimes reluctant to change processes, or take risks. Aureliane mentioned one Associate, describing a grant-maker rejecting an application due to small inconsistencies – all that was needed was a phone call!

These barriers were echoed by the other speakers. Baljeet was compelling on well-meaning, well-intentioned middle-class professionals making decisions about communities outside their experience. And those same people perhaps assuming that working-class people have neither training nor knowledge to work in foundations – pointing up the contrast

with businesses, where millions of workers do well. “in practice”, she says, “everyone learns on the job”. Harriet added that “we don’t know what we don’t know” – that ignorance, and maybe fear of giving offence, mean that grant-makers may simply lack the bravery to make changes.

What three things would each do to embed equity? Baljeet said she would recognise the value of genuine lived experience; move to participatory models of funding; and do due diligence through an equity lens. Harriet said to be humble and to accept that accessing funding is difficult for people. Always put trust at the heart of processes, and recognise that organisations are doing their best; and third – it’s a long journey, keep at it!

Points for reflection

- Are you aware both of the make-up of your own staff and boards, and of the proportion of funding going to/success of applications from BAME-led organisations?
- Could you come to see yourself as both well-meaning AND somebody who might have unconscious biases?
- Be aware that changing the existing power imbalance is a process that will take time.

LGBT+ Consortium

WHAT DOES RECOVERY LOOK LIKE FOR LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITIES?

This powerful session took place on the international day against homophobia, transphobia and biphobia 2021 – the 31st anniversary of the WHO stopping classifying homosexuality as a mental disorder.

SPEAKERS

Carla Ecola,
Project Director,
The Outside Project

Jolliff Seville,
Black Trans Foundation

Martin Karadzhev,
London Coordinator,
LGBT+ Consortium

Marita Haakonsen,
London Engagement Officer,
LGBT+ Consortium

Martin Karadzhev of the Consortium began by setting the scene for needs of LGBTQIA+ communities in this last year marked by covid-19. The mental health situation for LGBTQIA+ Londoners was already very serious: 61% of queer and trans Londoners reported symptoms of depression pre-pandemic, with trans and non-binary people particularly suffering. LGBTQIA+ communities face additional challenges in housing, employment and healthcare which compounds mental health needs.

Consortium knows that the pandemic has been accompanied by a worsening of transphobia, both on and offline. According to Galop, 93% of trans people in the UK have experienced transphobia in the past year. And there was an 118% increase in homelessness in LGBT+ communities – perhaps because some people were dealing with uncomfortable and potentially homophobic family situations during the lockdowns.

It is estimated that 61% of LGBT+ service providers face closure in the next six months. As part of Consortium's response – and in order to set out a challenging agenda for change akin to the Mayor's



plan for London – they have created a LGBT+ recovery plan for London. A working group gathered information from 90 organisations, and a version of this plan was launched in April 2021. It was grouped around six headings: mental health, the trans community, housing, youth, community space and safety, and culture and sport.

Martin passed the floor to two of the Consortium's members. First, Carla Ecola from the Outside Project spoke about how the organisation was created to cater for LGBT+ housing needs. Carla, who has worked in the homelessness sector for many years, found that many traditional homeless providers did not provide services for their specific needs and identities.

In 2017, the Outside Project was founded and launched a 24-hour urgent care centre with ten beds – London's first queer hostel. In 2019, they opened a community centre, which allowed space for LGBT+ projects to use their space. The pandemic posed considerable challenges for the organisation and its desire to make sustainable changes for queer Londoners who find themselves homeless. The community centre was closed and the hostel's modus operandi had to change to respect the lockdown. During that time, the staff and beneficiaries made a video together (and apart) with clips from each person's lockdown home, called "Make space for homeless queers."

Then Jolliff Seville from the Black Trans Foundation explained that the pandemic has been disastrous for trans Londoners – and that's saying something because the situation was already very bad. He told us that London has the highest rates of trans violence in Europe – and that, compared to countries that do have some specific trans healthcare provision, the UK offers the worst service. The provision that does

exist collapsed under covid-19, and at current rates, someone who joins a waiting list today can expect to have his/her/their first appointment in 2039...

As a response to this situation, the Black Trans Foundation has started offering 16 weeks of free therapy for clients to help them process the trauma of being black, trans and going through a pandemic – amongst other things. Within three minutes of putting the therapy slots online, the service was "sold out." As the charity moves from an emergency response to a long-term response, they will train counsellors about the issues affecting trans people and their mental health.

A lively discussion about how grant-makers could reach out to LGBT+ communities and increase the successful applications for funding from this group followed the presentations. One of the barriers that was raised was that many groups are not registered charities, CIC or community groups – which may be

because to register, the organisation needs to give an address. That means giving someone's address, making them a potential target of homophobia in their own home. Jolliff added that there can be lots of administrative detail around, for example, having a bank account whose start date matches the official start date of the organisation. Small organisations can often feel – particularly in light of the length of application forms – that they are being judged against much larger organisations – all the while firefighting just to keep their organisation running.

Added to these barriers, there are the specific needs of intersectional communities and LGBT+ people that have been touched by trauma. Making an application involves making oneself vulnerable. A funder with a history of working with and for LGBT+ communities put it like this "With all the day to day things I have to do towards our goal, why would I apply to a funder whom I don't think will understand me?"

Points for reflection

- What role could you play in working towards the LGBT+ plan for London?
- Would you like to attend a "meet the funder" event organised by the LGBT+ Consortium in order to understand better their members' needs?
- Is your grant-making trauma-informed?
- What would happen if a trans organisation applied for funding but faces obstacles?

Open discussion

EQUITY IN FUNDING

A small group gathered online on Tuesday for a conversation on our own learnings, as grant-makers, on diversity, equity and inclusion from the past year: what happened during the crisis, what worked or didn't work, and what will we take forward.

CHAIR
James Banks,
London Funders

One grant-maker from a long-established Foundation was interesting on how the covid-19 crisis accelerated the funder's beginning to grapple with the concept of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). Until the pandemic, and the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement, though DEI had "come across our radar", little had happened: now the Foundation is looking internally, at its own history, and externally, at the bigger picture. Small steps are being made – one community panel has been set up, led by someone from a BAME background; the Foundation is looking at its application forms; and the subject of DEI will be part of a long-planned overhaul of the charity due to take place soon.

Likewise, another participant, also from a well-established charitable trust, agreed that the concept of DEI was relatively new to it, and was being "confronted" at the moment. The Trust has had a governance review in the past year, setting out its over-arching goals. For its grantmaking, those goals do now incorporate DEI, and

in time it is hoped (and quietly being planned by leadership) that DEI will influence its internal make-up, too.

All participants agreed that, while the staff employed at foundations are usually forward-thinking and keen to act in more open and transparent ways, in areas like DEI, some of the leadership, and most usually the trustees, are much more conservative. This is a theme we have heard throughout the Festival, where an early presentation quoted the Association of Charitable Foundation's report from 2018 showing that 99% of trustees at trusts and foundations were white. And while many trustees do "get it" – several of whom have spoken at the Festival – some others are unaware of their unconscious bias, and/or very conservative, and/or not subject to the usual term-limits, and/or rather risk-averse.

As one attendee put it, it's "a delicate path". James, from London Funders, was sympathetic to the tensions and wondered how London Funders as a membership body might help with this work of influencing those who govern funders. Pondering aloud, James thought through various mechanisms for this – providing more formal support for trustees in some form, maybe, possibly via its member network groups. At the moment, these are thematic, or geographical – in future there might be scope to tackle overarching issues such as DEI. Or by deepening networks of trustees, so that peer-to-peer influencing might take place – participants acknowledging that boards elsewhere could share their approaches. In the meantime, London Funders is delighted to host festivals such as this one, so that staff can speak together on

this and any topic, share their concerns in confidence, and begin to think about a way forward.

Despite the reservations on governance, however, all the participants were agreed that at an operational level DEI is well accepted, and in many places developing fast, partly as a result of the pandemic speeding many processes up. We've heard over the week from many funders overhauling their recruitment processes,

or looking at funding applications through a DEI lens, or creating participatory panels. The crisis has only accelerated this process and though it may take a while for every stakeholder in the sector to catch up, catch up they will, given time and understanding.

Points for reflection

- Would it be helpful for an umbrella body such as London Funders to support funders as they look into their history and respond by becoming more inclusive?
- If your organisation is behind the curve, what can the other sessions at this conference tell you about how to move forward?
- Would it be helpful for umbrella bodies such as London Funders to do more work with trustees, especially where the foundation has less community awareness on its board? If so, what would work best for your organisation? Peer-to-peer discussions, or network groups on topics such as DEI – or something else?

Baobab Foundation

DIGGING DEEPER: INSIGHTS ON TAILORED FUNDING TO ORGANISATIONS LED BY BLACK PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES EXPERIENCING RACIAL JUSTICE IN 2020

Dilhani came to discuss the “Digging Deeper” report, which looks at the funding received by Black people and communities affected by racial injustice. It was designed to be complementary to Ubele’s Booska Paper, in that it focuses more on funders.

SPEAKER

Dilhani Wijeyesekera,
Social Justice Campaigns and
Philanthropy Advisor, Baobab
Foundation

Baobab is a new type of foundation led by and for Black and minoritised communities. Its objective is to scale communities’ capacities to resource themselves and it is governed by the community organisations it represents. Baobab is the name of a proud, resilient, dignified tree that grows in parts of Africa. It evokes a strength that stands in contrast to the implicit perception that the BAME label implies a deficit of some kind – which Dilhani calls out as institutional racism.

Digging Deeper aims to inform Baobab’s design and support wider learning about funding – uncovering where its added value comes from and how it can learn

from others. It is based on 26 interviews from 19 organisations, with the data anonymised in the final report.

Dilhani shared some additional insights about funding for BAME-led organisations. She notes that there has been enormous demand for the funding available in the wake of the crises: for example, The National Lottery Community Fund’s Phoenix Fund had over 1,347 applications for £22.3 million of funding, against a pot of £2.4m.

The report underlines that the recent funding surge to Black and minoritised communities mainly comes from covid-19 funds and not as an explicit response to the Black Lives Matter movement. The report finds that racial justice is conspicuously absent from most funding calls and few organisations have been able to use unrestricted funding to strengthen their organisation. Umbrella organisations have received more funding – but even their future remains uncertain beyond 2021. The Baobab Foundation concludes that the events of the last 15 months have not radically changed the sector.

The report calls for funders to be more aware of intersectionalities. The BAME label does not refer to a homogeneous group, and labels are not one-dimensional (apparently some people are not on board with this message because one respondent told Dilhani that all communities should get together to make things easier for funders!). Each group has specific needs and, for example, black disabled women might face multiple levels of oppression. This oppression influences how they interact

with the funding environment. Groups affected by trauma may react differently to funders requests, e.g. to tell their story. Additionally, confidence can be an issue for some groups: some organisations have a tendency to ask for what they need in order to avoid rejection.

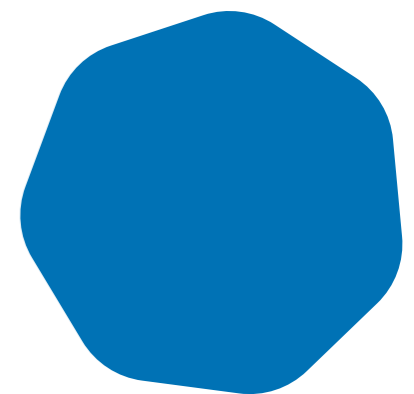
Despite the long way ahead, Dilhani is encouraged by the process of “deep learning and unlearning” that funders have been on this last year. Funders have many levers to pull on to make a step towards levelling the playing field – such as flipping the questions around: e.g. asking “tell us how we can help you to

meet our objectives?” rather than “tell us how you meet our criteria”. It is also important to break down the “risky” label applied to small organisations. When it is broken down into components – accounts, processes – Dilhani’s view is that risk amounts to (at worst) a solvable problem.

Points for reflection

- What would it take to make racial justice a priority for your organisation?
- What is your approach to reaching out to and prioritising the needs of intersectional communities?
- Are your funding processes trauma-aware? Do you take account of the under-confidence of certain communities?
- Given the potential for meeting human rights through small community organisations, how can funders come to see “risk” as a solvable problem?

**FESTIVAL
OF LEARNING
LEADERSHIP**



London Funders (and friends)

NEW LEADERS

Chaired by Sally Dickinson, the session brought together four new leaders in the sector. How, Sally asked, has it been learning to lead during such turbulent times? What has gone well, what has gone badly, what have you learned, and what will you continue to do?

SPEAKERS

Savraj Kaur,
Executive Director,
United in Hammersmith
and Fulham

Sufina Ahmad MBE,
Director, John
Ellerman Foundation

Mete Coban MBE,
Councillor, LB Hackney

Sally Dickinson,
Berkeley Foundation,
Head of Foundation; London
Funders, Trustee

Clare Kiely,
Head of Funding and
Approaches, Comic Relief

How has it been learning to lead in turbulent times?

“It was difficult to have to deal with the crisis with no experience or training”, opened Savraj – appointed in June 2020 as the first Director of United in Hammersmith and Fulham. London Funders helped Savraj to obtain a mentor, and over the year she has learned to consult more, partner more – and to take things slowly.

What has gone well?

All the speakers agreed that there is a new feeling of collaboration across the sector. Mete praised funders for stepping up immediately (likewise volunteers). Sufina was compelling on the renewed focus on an existing ideal – the building of more open, trusting relationships with both grantees and fellow funders. “The membership bodies have done a fantastic job in keeping us connected”, she says. Clare agreed, praising London Funders especially, and adding that another plus point in such strange circumstances has been the ability to make connections without travel-time. “Yes, there has been isolation, but more sharing has been possible online”.

And good practice has benefited, too. DEI principles were already being prioritised in the sector, but the crisis accelerated their centrality. At the John Ellerman Foundation, Sufina and the team have put DEI at the heart of grantmaking, and the organisation has remodelled data-systems and benchmarking to support this; and in Hammersmith, Savraj – learning from Camden Giving’s participatory approaches – has recruited a Community Grants Panel.

What has not gone so well?

“Everyone’s vulnerabilities came out, including those of trustees” said Savraj, echoing what many leaders at the Festival said about the difficulties facing their staff in the pandemic. Increased (and often acute) need in society, and therefore more work, but with less contact – plus the variable conditions of working from home – have made work for many funders more difficult.

Both Mete and Sufina were honest about the difficulties of spending most of the year alone. Mete mentioned that at times he felt helpless witnessing the effects of the crisis in the borough – though on the plus side it has acted as a wake-up call on the need that’s there. Sufina spoke about importance of being open with others about difficulties, and making the time to have those conversations.

Linked to this has been the difficulty of communicating with staff teams. Savraj has recruited a Community Grants Officer, but they have barely met face-to-face. Clare said that she had felt the need to be more directive than normal, to ensure some staff delivered on their objectives.

What have you learned, and what will you continue to do?

It was interesting, Sufina felt, that questions on the well-being of staff might not have arisen pre-pandemic in a conference session, and stressed the importance of continuing to prioritise this. Leaders themselves also need quiet spaces to reflect and recharge, and to have open discussions with others. Clare was clear about the need to speak in confidence with others, including mentors: “You have to make the time.”

Clare and Sufina also felt they had grown as leaders, having to manage uncertainty, learning to balance empathy with direction, and empowering others to bring their best selves to the job. Savraj agreed: “it’s crucial to adapt”, and, having identified skills gaps on her board, is filling them.

This leads on to a broader point from Sufina: “It’s become obvious that a single funder can’t do everything – it’s important to learn when to be the facilitator rather than the doer”. The sector has adapted quickly, and all four leaders are determined their learning will translate into future planning.

“It’s amazing what can be achieved with the right political will”, commented Clare; and Mete pointed out that the long-standing challenge of rough sleepers had been dealt with overnight, literally. No-one wanted to go back to business as usual. “We put our egos aside, realising we’d only get through this if we worked together”, concluded Mete, “When we want to do something, we will find a way.”

Points for reflection

- How can a funder work with staff it has only digitally “met” and how will relationships be affected when we go back to the office?
- Should all leaders have mentors?
- As the pandemic situation evolves, how can we keep “putting our egos aside” for the common good?

London Funders (and friends)

LEAVING LEADERS

Bharat, Sarah and Rebecca are all leaving Chief Executive posts at funding organisations. What, David asked, have they learned during the crisis, how has it impacted their leadership style, and what lessons should be learned in the sector?

SPEAKERS

Bharat Mehta CBE,
Chief Executive,
Trust for London

Sarah Ridley,
Former Chief Executive,
London Marathon
Charitable Trust

Dr Rebecca Bowden,
Chief Executive,
Heathrow Community Trust

David Farnsworth,
Chief Grants Officer,
City Bridge Trust; Chair,
London Funders

Baobab is a new type of foundation led by and for Black and minoritised communities. Its objective is to scale communities' capacities to resource themselves and it is governed by the community organisations it represents. Baobab is the name of a proud, resilient, dignified tree that grows in parts of Africa. It evokes a strength that stands in contrast to the implicit perception that the BAME label implies a deficit of some kind – which Dilhani calls out as institutional racism.

Bharat was confident that the organisation, and indeed the sector – funders and grantees alike – would rise to the challenge of a crisis, and “boy, did they!” Trust for London is fortunate in being an endowed foundation, and indeed the endowment had a good year, so the trust was able to grant £2.3m more than usual. With beneficiaries always front and centre, the Trust was able to respond quickly to need, but Bharat was clear too that funders should never lose sight of their wider role in creating systemic change.

Other lessons learned included the importance of constant consultation with all stakeholders, and collaboration – Bharat cited the speed with which funders

worked together in a crisis, through the LCR, and stressed the need to maintain support to beneficiaries as the crisis eases. And the board: do not, he urges, regard the board as a nuisance, rather use the expertise and passion of people giving their time freely to help shape and monitor the work you do.

On leaving the London Marathon Charitable Trust, Sarah felt similarly on the importance of the board, particularly where the income from a trading organisation moves to a charitable foundation, and communication is key. The difficulties in a time of crisis that Sarah discussed were similar to Bharat's, in that staff were stretched but rose to the challenge, but different, as the London Marathon Charitable Trust's income dropped significantly. In 2019, it generated £11m for grant-making – 2020 saw a fraction of that. Money had been set aside for existing grantees, but there were no new grants.

On the positive side, many things worked well. There was an immediate meeting of need, with a shift from what Sarah termed the “relentless focus on applications and monitoring” to a lighter touch process. Many processes were streamlined, and the IT worked well – even the trustees went paperless! And though the trust was unable to put some plans into action, it did take the time to “put our own house in order” in terms of governance and future strategy.

Reflecting on her leadership style, Sarah was honest in finding it difficult, while supporting others, to share the personal difficulties she was having in the pandemic. She was emphatic that leaders be kind to themselves as it can be lonely at the top, and stressed the importance of using networks for mutual support.

Rebecca, leaving the Heathrow Charitable Trust, agreed, saying how important it was to be mentored. Her tip: ask someone who you see doing a good job if they will mentor you. Otherwise on leadership, she felt it was key being her authentic self at work, that others working there know why she cares – hopefully empowering others to care about their jobs too.

Like Sarah, Rebecca's organisation had seen lower income over the crisis – the trust's corporate donor is Heathrow Airport, much of whose business disappeared. Moreover, Heathrow had to restructure its staff, so that valued colleagues lost jobs, and Rebecca had to restructure at the Trust, too. Grantmaking was cut to 20–30% of normal levels, and though the Trust was open about that difficulty, and could only grant to existing beneficiaries, it was “oversubscribed hugely”.

More positively, Rebecca agreed with Sarah and Bharat that much had worked well on staffing and tech. Most importantly, she stressed putting the Trust's values into practice: that beneficiaries should come first. “We know the grant-holders like never before, and vice versa” – the Trust helping them to access other donations, often in kind. Food from the airport (memorably Harrods Easter eggs!), and Heathrow's apprenticeship levy, which couldn't be used in the business, were also disbursed. The corporate and charitable partners worked more closely than ever before, with trustees keen to reconnect. These were the learnings Rebecca hopes will endure: first, building back together, with corporates, funders and beneficiaries working together; and second, more equitable conversations with beneficiaries.

Points for reflection

- How can we take the good from the shifts in practice that have been seen, and hold onto them? For example, do you know your grantees better than ever before? How do you want to sustain your relationships with them beyond the pandemic?
- How can corporate foundations maintain their values and offer ongoing support when corporate revenues plummet?
- What do you think the value of mentoring would be for you as a leader?

London Funders (and friends) GOVERNING THROUGH CRISIS

The session brought together senior leaders – from funders and councils – who have had to navigate great challenges in the past year while staying true to the long-term vision and values of their organisations. What worked well as you led others through such difficult times, asked the session chair from London Funders, and how will you take what you’ve learned into the future?

SPEAKERS

Andrew Blessley,
Trustee, Clothworkers
Foundation

Ruth Dombey OBE,
Leader, LB Sutton

Edith Galliers,
Head of Policy, Equalities and
Communities, LB Redbridge;
Trustee, London Funders

Dhruv Patel OBE,
Chair, City Bridge Trust

Russell Prior,
Chair, London
Community Foundation

What went well?

Ruth began with an understatement: “The past year has been pretty full on”. As Leader of LB Sutton, with 800 services supporting 210,000 residents, one of the first things she did as the crisis hit was to convene a meeting with local voluntary organisations, to work out how best to help people in need, and how to recruit volunteers. Money was key, of course, and the council distributed covid grants and stepped in to help with back-office work – for example to support food banks – finding generally that partnership working was a success.

Communication and partnership were mentioned by the other leaders too, as crucial in enabling action at speed. “It’s hard to remember where we were”, commented Russell, “we’ve learned so much, so quickly.” The London Community Foundation set out strategic grant principles as the crisis hit: putting grassroots, community-led organisations at the heart of funding; directing those funds to those in greatest need; recognising the need to support infrastructure and capacity. And collaboration: the LCR was a “game-changer”, with donors becoming more open-minded as a result. As a result of this swift decision-making and action, the

Foundation distributed double what it does in a normal year.

Finally, as in many sessions at the Festival, the leaders were delighted at the acceleration of concepts previously in discussion. Changes to process, often years in the discussion, happened quickly and largely successfully. Andrew was compelling on how the crisis had been a catalyst for the Clothworkers Foundation to look at its processes and practices, as well as its approachability. Reaching out to grantees, the decision-making turnaround sped up and we “surprised ourselves” by the boldness with which, for example, there was unanimous agreement to release some reserves to increase funding.

What didn’t go so well?

“Staff were at capacity”, said Dhruv, “and at risk of burnout.” Ruth grew increasingly concerned for mental well-being across the borough, and in the council itself. There was often a work overload, and the council found implementing Whitehall directives at very short notice hard, but partnerships held up, partly because of excellent local connections nurtured over many years.

And communication, though good in the main across partnerships, did sometimes suffer. Dhruv mentioned people’s busyness – it wasn’t always possible to get hold of people – and Andrew spoke of the difficulty of bonding online and inducting new trustees.

Plus there were glitches in the IT itself. Edith opened with this – a glitch had made her late to chair the session – and Andrew spoke about how the switch to online working was difficult, Dhruv adding that when chairing meetings, it was hard sometimes to sense the energy in the room.

Finally, putting concepts into practice quickly was a challenge – Dhruv shared his delight at convening equity panels for grantmaking but was honest about the difficulty of recruitment, especially at speed.

What are the lessons for the future?

“Exceptional times call for bold leadership”, said Andrew. And on boards which are rather “conservative”, “one or two need to put their heads above the parapet”. Ruth agreed: “Clear, decisive, supportive leadership” is key, with an eye on how it can be sustained under pressure. And an understanding and acceptance that, when moving at speed, not everyone will be happy.

Important too is knowing when to step back, and let the team do what they know how to do best. But always keeping tabs on how staff are coping – it’s key to be aware of the pressures on them, and not to add unnecessary requests. And

delegation – at City Bridge Trust, with £25m being granted, one of the first changes was to increase delegation to gain speed.

Likewise, embedding good practice, despite its being conceived in haste has had some long-term positive effects. “We were behind the curve”, Andrew said of the Clothworkers’ board make-up. Despite a review in 2019, “things were going slowly”, but early 2021 saw three new trustees from minority backgrounds join the board.

Finally, the collaboration achieved between funders and with the public sector, corporates and other donors – and of course the voluntary organisations themselves. “It would be a real shame to lose that”, said Russell, and indeed this was a major theme of the session. “Time spent on collective work was not wasted”, he said, “Behind every leader must be a collective will, a common purpose.”

Points for reflection

- How can leaders help maintain the gains made at speed made during the pandemic period?
- Have you been inspired to be bolder during the pandemic period? How can you maintain that capacity?
- How can teams continue to bond and evolve during the post-pandemic (hybrid?) workplace?

Closing session

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

What reflections do you have from the Festival, asked James Banks from London Funders, what learning will you take forward?

SPEAKERS

Bonnie Chiu,
Social Investment
Consultancy

Fadi Itani,
Muslim Charities Forum

Meghan Roach,
New Horizon Youth Centre

Shabana Aslam,
Islington Giving

On DEI and equity in grant-making

This was a movement that had already started, pre-pandemic, but which has gathered momentum and hopefully there will be no going back. There has been constant discussion of the ethnic make-up of funders' own staff and boards – and a general will to be more representative, with initiatives such as the 2027 Programme becoming more embedded in the sector.

Where grant-making is concerned, there is a new focus both on the organisations to which grants are given, and to the decision-making process itself. "We have embedded the learning from the LCR," said Bonnie, "the higher threshold for BAME-led organisations championed by those involved, from 50% to 75% of leadership, is the new standard for equity-led organisations".

And equity in the grant-making process is increasingly key, too – the Festival has highlighted the growth of equity-led, or participatory funding. "This is a different way of channelling funds and support to organisations doing the work", remarked Bonnie, "Do things better, and always in service of those in need."

"Equity is not about vulnerable identities but thought-leadership, insights and wisdom", she concluded. While a number of funders "pushed themselves out of their comfort zone... We need to do a better job about showing [that it's] not just the right thing, especially given the injustices revealed by covid, but the smart thing."

On flexibility and simplifying processes

Flowing from this increased mutual trust is a will to simplify and to be more flexible – for example by concentrating less on the project work that grant-makers (and their boards) love, and more on the unrestricted funding of core costs that organisations always need, whether or not in a pandemic. "We have seen more flexibility and generosity from funding partners", commented Meghan, "so we want to build on that momentum."

"The flexible approach [is here to stay]," said Shabana, "especially on core costs. [As are] the stripped-back processes – applications and decision-making have become much quicker." And "sometimes we can be more helpful by doing less", James commented.

On collaboration and partnership

"We need to recognise what we can't do, and so collaborate with partners", opened

James. "The power of people coming together has been fantastic." "I'm proud to be a Londoner and even prouder to be involved in LCR and see people punching above their weight for the London community", agreed Bonnie. And Shabana added, "The community spirit [during the crisis] and the coming together from all sides – our shared humanity is something to continue to build on. We must take a few more risks, explore new ways of working, especially in collaboration."

Fadi concurred, "Yes, we were challenged, but could overcome it and we can work together to defeat any threat in the future." But he also emphasised the need for sectors to reach out. "There has been amazing work on the ground from faith communities" he said, "deep, grassroots stuff reaching communities quickly on their first call for help. But outsiders are suspicious", which needs work.

On looking after our own staff – and ourselves

"We're so caught up in the delivery that we mustn't forget the staff doing it. It's been really hard working from home, especially when [staff have been] taking difficult calls from people in distress", said Meghan. "So we need to invest in the staff team and make sure support is in place."

And, finally

"The Festival has been very welcome", opened Shabana. "[It] has been all systems go for so long, it has been great to have a reflective time."

"I'm in awe of the vibrancy of civil society in London" commented Bonnie, who has lived here several years now. "We need to step in and step up for communities needing support", commented Fadi, "[in the] hope that the day after tomorrow they will not need us. [In time], people will be able to serve their own communities. I hope that the Muslim Charities Forum is a temporary solution."

"People always say they'll learn", concluded James, "but then [things go back to normal and] it's business as usual." Meghan developed the thought, "We have opportunities to innovate and we need to continue to do that outside our comfort zone." Fadi agreed: "We [have been] forced to change things and must learn, not just adjust temporarily. The [voluntary] sector influences millions of lives, so it's not acceptable to go back to the old normal. There is slow, institutional change. It takes time."

Finally, "There is no us and them", concluded James, "There is only us."



**FESTIVAL
OF LEARNING
PROCESS**



Reos Partners DELIVERING DIFFERENTLY IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Reos Partners, a small social enterprise consultancy, was commissioned by London Funders (with funding from various LCR partners) to learn from how the experiences of civil society groups (CSOs) during the covid-19 period can inform their future work – and what funders could do differently to support CSOs to keep the best of the changes.

SPEAKERS

Mike Wilson,
Executive Director,
Pembroke House

Otis Roberts,
CEO, Jason
Roberts Foundation

Patrick Torsney,
Chief Executive,
Brixton Advice Centre

Sam Dale,
Head of Programmes,
London Sports Trust

Sydney Hayes,
Consultant,
Reos Partners

Reos Partners' report, *Delivering differently in times of crisis*, is based on its September 2020 survey of 582 CSOs and recipients of support from the LCR. Four major types of adaptation were identified: using technology in new ways; communicating through new channels; using physical space in new ways; coordinating people in new ways. In the session, each type was illustrated by a case study – the four charity representatives compelling on the changes they had made to their models, partly enabled by the rapid response of funders.

1: Using technology in new ways: the Brixton Advice Centre

Patrick Torsney, CEO, explained the centre's role in the Lambeth community: a specialist legal centre, it gives free legal advice, formerly mostly in person, on issues such as welfare, housing and debt, with a pro bono clinic each Thursday evening provided by solicitors and barristers volunteering after work. The centre also works with local foodbanks, schools and refugees.

With the lockdown, the centre had to close – but with 80% of its clients used to coming in, it had to adapt quickly. Patrick explained how the staff set up, and publicised, new telephone lines, but, crucially, also moved its services online. The centre had always had a website, a simple, practical one, and now, as well as users using its webforms (which worked well quite quickly), the legal clinics moved online too, and this service has won a national award. Crucially, the centre also employed a coordinator to manage the online service, using funds rapidly provided via London Funders, and with a much-simplified process.

The online service has taken off in a much bigger way than expected, so that the centre has had to limit its support to people living in Lambeth, and introduced a simple means test. Demand has still been huge, with up to 500 cases during the pandemic – employment and housing disputes especially “off the scale”. While it has been challenging to manage a staff team working remotely, the learning for the future is that the centre is more than a physical presence, and that it will from now be more of a hybrid model, able to deliver a broader set of services to a wider range of people than before.

2: Communicating through new channels: Jason Roberts Foundation

Otis Roberts, CEO of the Jason Roberts Foundation in Brent, described the football-based projects for young people that it delivered, pre-covid, from a new

facility which had to close temporarily with the lockdown. The Foundation worked mostly with young people who would not otherwise have access to coaching and playing opportunities, focussing on social inclusion, and had recently begun a project working specifically with young people with special educational needs.

The lockdown meant an immediate need to find new ways of working, starting with an anti-knife crime event planned to take place in Wembley, which though “not brilliant” online, “went down well”. Ongoing work also had to be adapted, and the foundation re-thought its website, and created a podcast, *You are not alone*, which has broadened out to tell stories from different cultures around Brent. Donors funded equipment – which, when young people could come back to the facility, helped with training programmes – and the foundation began to reach a wider audience.

Otis' most important learning was that the Foundation was previously “so hell bent on delivering through sport” that it had not been reaching a potentially wider group, including, now, older people interested in fitness and/or nostalgia. So, “we went back to the drawing board to work out what's important” for the community, and how best to deliver it – though multiple channels – in the future.

3: Using physical space in new ways: London Sports Trust

Sam Dale is a leader at the London

Sports Trust, which works with children and young people across Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea and Hammersmith & Fulham, promoting better physical and mental health through sport. With the lockdown, the trust's provision moved from being face-to-face to online, using the social media used by its clients.

This transition was not always smooth: some staff and coaches found it difficult to work online, plus not all of the children and young people had access to smartphones or laptops. The Trust persisted, and as lockdown eased, The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea offered it an empty car-park beside the canal to develop as a community area, with sports pitches for basketball and tennis, kayaks, areas for communal gardening and a food delivery service (with *City Harvest*). Young people decorated the space, with paint and graffiti, and older volunteers helped with gardening – the space has been well used, brought people from different areas and age groups together and, Sam says, helped with people's mental health in the lockdown, as well as physical well-being.

4: Coordinating in new ways: Pembroke House

Mike Wilson, Executive Director, introduced Pembroke House, a community organisation working in Walworth since 1885. When the lockdown brought physical closure, Mike and his colleagues from the Walworth Group partnership – including the council, schools, and

residents' associations – got together on Zoom to plan what was needed.

The immediate need – in an area of long-standing deprivation, with 45,000 residents in three wards – was access to food and essential goods. What Mike calls a “phenomenal effort” of collaboration saw food hubs being set up in two of Pembroke House’s buildings; a referral network of 40 partners; deliveries from FareShare and The Felix Project; and the hundreds of people who volunteered to help being used to pack and deliver food parcels – over 33,000 to date. The team is still supporting 400+ households, and, more broadly, the Walworth Group used donated IT to help create a wider partnership, with nine foodbanks and a triage service to target help across all of Southwark.

Mike ascribes the success of the collaborative response partly to the crisis itself, and the obvious and urgent aim, together with the clear tasks that had to be done. Plus open sharing of information, coordination and, crucially, the rapid response from funders. He was compelling on the subject of the power of neighbourhoods, where it’s possible to create infrastructure to enable change, and advocates a model of a “Neighbourhood Funnel”, linking local wards to the borough, through to regional and then national collaborations. Above all, however, he wants to harness the energy we’ve seen during the crisis to make longer-term changes in his

neighbourhood, and others, working on a Neighbourhood Food Model to try to tackle the root causes of food poverty, not its symptoms.

Points for reflection

- How can funders keep working together, without hierarchy? Can we recognise that no one organisation has all the answers?
- How can we keep trusting CSOs and show it by being more open to fund core costs?
- Could funders continue to trust CSOs to adapt and collaborate: investing long-term and being more open to funding core costs (as indeed the final wave of the LCR prioritised)?
- How can we keep our processes (e.g. LCR’s simple, single format application form or a reporting form) light for CSOs?
- How can we marry diversity in collaboration with a unified strategy and purposefulness?

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Locality and Rocket Science

THE BRIDGE PROGRAMME, LEARNING FROM CBT'S PILOT OF FUNDER PLUS

This session was an opportunity to hear from stakeholders in the City Bridge Trust's (CBT's) Bridge programme, including a grantee (The Garden Classroom), capacity building partners (Intelligent Health and B&G partners), the learning partner (Rocket Science), and independent experts on capacity building (Locality).

SPEAKERS

Ben Payne,
Director,
B&G Partnerse

Dave Ahlquists,
Development
Manager, Locality

John Griffiths
Director, Rocket Science

Kay Richardson,
CEO, The Garden
Classroom

Marc Harris,
Evidence & Research
Lead, Intelligent Health

Following a review in 2018, the Bridging Divides strategy (and the Bridge Programme as part of it) was envisaged to last for at least five years. As such, it was not designed to be a covid-19 response programme. However, it aims to nurture resilience in the organisations that it has funded, many of whom have been grappling with threats to their existence during the pandemic.

This strategy creates space beyond traditional grant-making for what CBT refer to as funder-plus support, which offers capacity building to grantees. This might sound like standard practice, but it aims to be much more deeply embedded in the grantee organisation. Rather than provide funder-led and funder-controlled capacity-building support to grantees, the funder-plus approach ensures that the grantee really gets what they want and need.

Through partners The Cranfield Trust and Locality (referred to as the "connector" organisations), the grantee meets with these independent experts to take the

time to reflect deeply on what they might need to go further. Sometimes, the charity already has a clear idea of what support they want, other times they uncover deeper needs that CBT and its partners can help with. The capacity building support is not delivered by CBT nor by the connector partners, but by organisations identified by the connectors as most likely to be able to respond to that need. Typically, this leads to 4 days of support, aimed at having a more lasting impact than funder-imposed support would.

During the session, an example of how the Funder Plus Bridge Programme worked was set out by stakeholders from Locality (the connector in this case) and from Intelligent Health and B&G Partners, the providers who helped charity the Garden Classroom during the lockdown period.

The Garden Classroom, which connects urban families and children with nature in a context of limited local green space, was struggling with the implications of lockdown. Whilst so many other funders wanted to ring-fence their support for post-lockdown (which would have meant losing the Garden Classroom's team) CBT gave towards core costs to help them remain operational during the crisis, and to prepare for a surge in support after lockdown. With mental health one of the most serious casualties of the lockdown, the Garden Classroom knew that it had an important role in facilitating the relationship with green space as it eased.

Funder-plus support also helped them to devote headspace to other questions they were facing. Having worked with Locality to identify their needs, the desire to work

more on their impact arose. Put together with Intelligent Health and B&G partners, the organisations began to work together to better collect data about beneficiaries' experience of the Garden Classroom. There had been a disparity between the questions the Garden Classroom asked their beneficiaries (mainly about learning) and what they wanted to demonstrate (impact on mental health). They worked both on how to collect data (Intelligent Health's forte) and on how to tell a story about with their role (B&G Partners' strength).

The presentation at the festival comes at a moment where the extended pilot of the Bridge Programme is being evaluated by Rocket Science, CBT's learning partner. In the course of this work Rocket Science plans to develop KPIs for the programme in order to attract new stakeholders, notably funding partners (with the current connector organisations remaining in place).

Points for reflection

- How can leaders help maintain the gains made at
- How can you make sure that the capacity building support you offer is rooted in a bottom-up, charity-driven approach?
- Is there value in several funders coming together to offer a mutual grantee such support, or for a joint fund where grant-making is based on this method?
- Funder-plus was initially conceived to help organisations grow. During the covid period, it evolved to aim to ensure the stability of grantees, many of whom were under threat. As the crisis eases, are you aiming to help your grantees grow or remain stable? Why? How?



New Philanthropy Capital

THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF TRUST BASED PHILANTHROPY

Trust is increasingly seen as essential for philanthropy, particularly in the light of the disruption that the pandemic has engendered. In the UK, over 70 funders have signed the Flexible Funders pledge from IVAR, and have committed to embedding open and trusting grantmaking practice.

SPEAKERS

Liz Gadd,
Principal for Effective Philanthropy, NPC

Katie Boswell,
Associate Director for Strategy and Leadership, NPC

In the United States, a movement called trust-based philanthropy has emerged to embody the notion of trust. Liz Gadd and Katie Boswell from NPC facilitated this session, based on a recent research project. They introduced us to the six principles of trust-based philanthropy:

- Multi-year unrestricted funding
- Do the homework (the onus of due diligence falls upon the giver)
- Simplify and streamline paperwork
- Be transparent and responsive to charities needs
- Solicit and act upon feedback
- Offer more than financial support

Though there is greater consensus around these principles than before the pandemic, there is good reason for funders to be wary before embracing them wholeheartedly. Liz raised a few potential pitfalls:

- **A fine line between trust and bias.** Research in psychology has unveiled several types of bias, including affinity bias (the tendency to prefer “people like

us”), perception bias (stereotypes about different groups), and the “halo effect” (the tendency to project positive qualities onto someone already liked).

- **Challenge bias.** Funders need to be open to critical biases in the decision-making processes, notably a lack of diversity of actors involved. A grant-maker could ask themselves whether they are the right person to make a decision. Funders could assess the pipeline of incoming applications for diversity, and also consider their place in the funding ecosystem (after all, it’s not necessary to be all things to all people).
- **Easier to trust in the context of an existing relationship – which disadvantages outsiders.** Not only does the donor have pre-existing data about the charity, the relationship may be conducive to sharing information about problems and risks.
- **Easier to trust when the relationship is short term.** The LCR funding was short-term: that means that the risks of trusting do not seem so stark. How can trust be developed in contexts where funding is longer-term and risk is too?

In breakout groups, a number of powerful insights emerged:

- The Flexible Funder pledge had led to an instance of a grantee using it to hold a funder to account that was not respecting the principles of effective philanthropy. If this could be reproduced, it would mean that

the pledge is a powerful tool for justice in grant-making.

- Small differences in language can be really powerful. A question such as “What are you worried about?” elicits a very different response to “What are your challenges?”
- Trust-based philanthropy can be facilitated by the use of equity partners (as developed for the LCR) to reach communities who might otherwise have been overlooked.
- A participant raised the idea of “radical vulnerability” as being the touchstone for trust-based philanthropy.

Finally, an insight about trust that all funders would do well to keep in mind: “Something going wrong doesn’t mean that your trust was misplaced”



Points for reflection

- How can you reap the advantages of more trusting relationship with grantees without falling prey to biases?
- How can you reach grantees from outside your circle of the “usual suspects”?
- Which of the suggested questions above do you need to ask yourself to make sure processes are not tainted by bias?

Superhighways

SHAPING A MORE DATA-WISE LONDON

The Datawise London programme – funded through the Cornerstone Fund – is a partnership set up to support London’s small charities and community groups. The aim is to help them to use their data well, not simply for reporting purposes but to shape their services and to influence change.

SPEAKERS

Kate White,
Manager, Superhighways

Sorrel Parsons,
Digital Adviser and Training
Manager, Superhighways

Kate and Sorrel from Superhighways – which manages the programme – found that **small organisations have, in general, been slow to use and analyse data, and that, before Datawise was formed in 2019, there had been no holistic data-support programme for London’s charities. They asked for participants’ views on how best to help small groups move away from using data “just” for monitoring and begin to use it to improve more generally. A variety of answers came back – from increasing capacity and capability, through to a need for simpler processes and peer learning, to banishing a school-born fear of maths!**

The team talked us through its “entry-level” Data Essentials sessions, aimed at getting organisations to move from in-person to online, and designed to be accessible, interactive – and fun. The central theme is “encouraging curiosity”, spinning out into nine linked sessions, starting with “what is data?” and moving through topics such as “data collection”, “digital tools” and “external data sources” to “data assessment” and “data storytelling”.

In the sessions, attendees are asked to rank the uses of data for charities. The top three responses are “measuring outcomes”, “funder reporting” and “recording activities”, with “strategic planning” and “predicting user needs” further down the list (more or less in reverse order from Festival participants asked how data should be used). Data is split by the team into four types: user, engagement, service, and outcome, and attendees are encouraged to differentiate between them, and discuss which to use when. And to follow their hunches, such as “we aren’t supporting people from the most deprived wards”, and then see which type of data can give an answer to that question, and what that data says.

Data Essentials has had 151 participants from 116 small organisations to date. Datawise of course maps its own data, and as well as user feedback deeming the sessions “easy to understand”, yet “thorough” and even “fun”, it follows up to see how clients put the learning to use. While this survey is at an early stage, there is evidence that as well as using data to evidence impact more robustly, five clients have responded that its helped them to better shape their services.

Kate and Sorrel gave the example of the journey of Redbridge CVS, where staff came to Data Essentials, from which they gained the confidence to choose new systems, then followed up with the course on Excel. Another client, Salisbury World, supporting refugees in Brent, also started with Data Essentials, and has begun to use data to tell its story.

Through Data Essentials, Introduction to Excel and the more advanced Data Cohort, Datawise has worked with 676 participants across the 33 London boroughs. Although its two-year grant is coming to an end later, and delivery will be reduced, the learning is being packaged up to be useful in future, and the team is partnering with other funders, such as Lloyds Bank Foundation, to deliver to some of their grantees. The team has met with a Scottish Government representative to set out the benefits of its support, and are hoping for some interest from Westminster. “Data and digital are like tea and biscuits”, said Kate. “They go together and we need to help on both.”

Points for reflection

- Is it enough to tell charities to learn about data, or do they also need help to become inspired to use it for their own aims?
- How can funders support entry-level data training, such as that offered by Datawise, beyond the time horizon on the grant?
- Should training be purely technical, or should it concentrate on inspiring charities to learn too?

City Bridge Trust

IMPACT AND LEARNING TEAM

How have the events of the past 15 months catalysed the movement at City Bridge Trust towards becoming a values-led, learning organisation?

SPEAKERS

Alice Thornton,
Head of Learning at Renaisi

Dinah Cox,
Consultant, City Bridge Trust

Jen Durrant,
Impact and Learning Officer,
City Bridge Trust

Ruth Feder,
Head of Impact,
City Bridge Trust

Sam Grimmett Batt,
Funding Director,
City Bridge Trust

Ruth, Head of Impact and Learning there, posed the question in the introduction to the session and then, with colleagues Sam (Funding Director) and Dinah (Associate Director), and Alice from Renaisi, which has been working with the trust on its strategy, took us through the journey.

TCity Bridge Trust is the charitable arm of Bridge House Estates, set up in 1282 to build, maintain and earn revenue from the Thames bridges in the City of London, and grants around £20m each year to organisations seeking to reduce inequality in the capital. Already in 2018, it had set up a five-year (now a ten-year) strategy, Bridging Divides, at once to put learning at its heart and to become values-led as London entered a period of change. Of course, that change has only accelerated in the past year, and the trust – with its staff working from home – has been implementing the strategy while at the same time adding management of the London Community Response “Fund within a fund” to its normal funding activity.

Alice, from Renaisi, asked the Trust’s staff (and the session’s attendees) what do they consider to be a learning culture? The answer is not just that they consult, listen, reflect, and share information with grantees, but there is also a shift in emphasis, where the funder learns alongside others in civil society rather than simply “imparting our knowledge”. Certainly, the Trust was in “listening mode” as the crisis hit, and its initial actions, to offer grantees core rather than project funding, and to reduce monitoring requirements, were extremely popular. And though covid-19 has slowed the strategy a little, the priority for the trust this year is to deliver “learning with, rather than to” the people it supports, and to become more engaged with those partners so that it can increasingly gauge its own impact.

This deliberate shift in the power dynamic is bound up in the values-led approach the trust is taking – its aim to put equity at the heart of its work. Again, this was always part of the strategy but its importance increased with the pandemic, where disadvantaged groups were disproportionately impacted. Sam, who led on the LCRF at the Trust, was clear that funders must recognise both these immediate circumstances and the historic under-funding of BAME groups and act accordingly.

Dinah is the Trust’s lead on DEI, advocating for all marginalised groups, and was passionate too on the Race Action Plan that is part of its response to Black Lives Matter. Beginning by listening to staff concerns, and asking what people

wanted, the Trust is looking to create a workforce, and governing body, that is more representative of its community. And at the same time, a philosophy where grant-giving is increasingly informed by listening to those with lived experience, as was built in to the LCRF.

While there have been some difficulties, inevitably, over the year – home working was initially a bit “wobbly”; the timescale for implementing the strategy stretched – there have been lessons learned too. That collaboration, internally and externally – “we as a sector, we as LCRF” – is worth more than the sum of its parts. That the

benefit of having a neutral, sector-wide organisation, such as London Funders, in times of crisis, is huge. And that at such times, the perfect can be enemy to the good. That listening is key. “We’re not there yet”, Ruth concluded, “but we have the aspiration and we’re on the way.”

Points for reflection

- Do we always listen before we speak?
- Do you as a funder learn alongside others in civil society rather than simply “imparting your knowledge”?
- Are we aware that collaborations, internal and external, are worth more than the sum of their parts?
- Are you aware of the power dynamics in your work? What are you doing to change them?

Open session

PROCESS

The third day of the Festival of Learning saw a small group gather online to discuss how processes worked in the pandemic.

CHAIR
Geraldine Blake,
London Funders

Geraldine Blake from London Funders opened the discussion, reminding us of the role the organisation plays in enabling its 170 members to convene, collaborate and debate: and asked about funders' experiences of what worked well with their processes, what did not, what has been learned and what continued.

One of the big wins was an early move to simplifying processes and moving them online – need was great, and immediate, and on the funders' side time was tight, with teams dispersed and under pressure. "We simplified various processes, and the world didn't end", commented one attendee. As we know, the LCR application form was simple, universal, and has worked well.

At another funder, they described how they had already been in the process of changing their methods, with their offices due to close in 2020 for a refurbishment and a move to greater online working. The funder moved to Office 365 and not only has all worked well, but they commented that learning has also improved, with the database an ever-greater resource.

Another big win was the sector's move towards core cost funding, which all participants hope will remain when the pandemic ends. The argument for funding core costs has been around for decades, but the speed of the crisis and the immense need of both beneficiaries and the organisations helping them meant that funders – in order to support both – needed to switch focus. Again, "the sky has not fallen in".

While meetings did happen relatively efficiently online – and certainly it's a way of getting the right people in the room to make decisions quickly – there was a general feeling that in-person meetings, and especially visits to organisations, had been a loss.

While this change is unlikely to remain across the board, there are arguments for choice, now that it is obvious that meeting by phone or online can work well. Participants agreed that online training events and webinars are aspects to be retained: they broaden reach and reduce costs – even more so if the event is recorded. An early London Funders webinar on the LCRF attracted 680 people – a highly efficient way of disseminating information.

Because of the speed of reaction to the crisis, and the overriding need to get stuff done, more flexibility was shown than ever before, participants agreed, and risks were sometimes taken. "Changes were accelerated that might have taken five to ten years", said an attendee, which asked equity partners to sit on its decision-making panel, accelerating the process to community participation. Geraldine agreed, citing Waves 3, 4 and 5 of the LCR funding, where 75% of grants were made to organisations led by the communities

they are serving. There was in general an increased appetite and willingness to accept risk, especially at board level – "some mistakes were made, but that's fine."

Other practices changed overnight too, and are likely to change forever in the new normal. Of these, probably the most key to working processes in the future is the move to flexible working. Born out of necessity, liked by some, not by others – flexible working, it was agreed, is here to stay.

Collaboration has become much easier as funders and organisations worked together to support people in the crisis. Though it will be harder to sustain once

the crisis has passed, as people move back into their offices and re-join their organisations physically, the past year or so has shown that it is possible, that people can work collaboratively – and participants were grateful to London Funders, whose lead was so valuable. Geraldine had opened the session by exhorting continued collaboration and remarking that nothing is now impossible now that the sector has worked at pace and at scale. "Crucially, when funders work together things often work better for the communities they serve."

Points for reflection

- Can funders create a common grant-reporting framework?
- Would your organisation be open to accepting either a communal report or simply the grantee's annual report?
- If during the pandemic, processes were simplified, and the "world didn't end" what are the implications for other barriers that your organisation has?
- What can be learned from the LCR's approach to equity?

TOOLS TO ENHANCE PLACE-BASED FUNDER COLLABORATION

Data creation and analysis may sound rather dry to some, but in Yorkshire and the Humber, the National Lottery and Rocket Science have created a tool that aims – and has already proven to be – a tool for greater collaboration.



- SPEAKERS**
- Abdou Sidibe**, Head of Funding, Yorkshire and Humber, National Lottery Community Fund
 - James Turner**, Associate, Rocket Science
 - John Griffiths**, Trustee, London Funders, and Director, Rocket Science
 - Kate Hainsworth**, CEO, Leeds Community Foundation and GiveBradford
 - Lisa Hornung**, Data Analytics Lead, Rocket Science

Abdou Sidibe, Head of regional funding for the Yorks and Humber region, explained why they commissioned the creation of a data tool to understand better the funding environment in the county. The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF) wanted to improve its understanding of the value added to the region by its funding (as one of the biggest philanthropic funders of the region). They also wanted to see what value there was to working with other funders who shared interests. Before the tool was developed, they had a rather piecemeal, project-by-project, approach to collaboration. Abdou reflected that other funders were perhaps more sceptical at first.

One exception was the Leeds Community Foundation, who according to CEO Kate Hainsworth, already felt somewhat isolated before and had identified collaboration as a pressing priority. They saw that the report would have advocacy value for the sector – as well as their organisation. Following data being published, the Leeds Community

Foundation was asked to join the West Yorkshire Economic Recovery Board based on their greater understanding of the sector’s role. Furthermore, they were able to use the data to reach out to national funders.

John Griffith and Lisa Horning, of Rocket Science, and James Turner, an independent consultant for Rocket Science, set out the more technical aspects of the project. The first stage was completed in 2019 with a new phase in 2021 to make the tool more interactive. As analysts of the sector, they felt that there was a vacuum to be filled: the NCVO Civil Society Almanac does not say much about funders.

The data analysed comes from the Civil Society Almanac, 360 Giving and a supplemental survey of 53 local grant-makers (local authority funding was not included in the analysis). They created a dashboard data visualisation tool that allows data to be cut and presented in several different ways. For example, it uses a colour-coded map to show where the most/least funding is allocated in the regions’ counties, and on another to show where funders are located.

Whilst the Civil Society Almanac highlights the region as receiving relatively little investment, the research unveiled funding of more than £100m a year, of which 77.7% came from the NLCF.

Recent work allows for data to be analysed at a more granular level using the data visualisation tool, including data about who receives money (e.g. community groups, sports clubs, village halls, etc).

Abdou highlighted a flourishing of new initiatives in the region: for example, a forum in Sheffield was launched for organisations to learn more about each other and collaborate.

Many questions about how the tool can be used were raised by the audience: mainly about the capacity of the tool to answer questions about equity, particularly about the distribution of allocation of resources. Abdou responded: “let’s get more data!”



Points for reflection

- What is the state of play for data in London? What data is specifically needed in the London context?
- Could you use new data to drive forward collaboration?
- What sort of data on equity do you need?

In from the cold

WORKING TOGETHER TO DEVELOP THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN HAVERING

London Funders' Cold Spots study from 2019 researched where funding was going in London, and which boroughs received relatively less funding than the average.

SPEAKERS

Caroline Forster,
Project Lead, Havering
Funding Programme

Jerry Haley
Senior Community and
Resilience Officer, London
Borough of Havering

Lorraine Clear,
Manager, Home Start
Havering

Mary Rose Gunn,
Chief Executive, The Fore

Sheila Keeling,
Chief Executive, Addup

Havering, in outer London was one of these – raising 78p per head in 2018 from inside the borough, against £2.88 in Barking and Dagenham, for example. And so, in 2020, The Fore, along with the London Borough of Havering and the Havering Compact of local civil society organisations, launched the Havering Funding Programme – worth £240,000 – to help to address local needs.

Its aim was not just to address immediate need, but to show that a collective approach to grant-making could increase both the flow of funds and pro bono support – capacity-building through marketing support, for example, or financial modelling – to an area with few internal resources. Mary Rose talked us through the three rounds of the programme: the first in March 2020, which gave urgent unrestricted grants, of up to £5,000 to fund essential services, to 17 small organisations. A second round, that summer, allocated grants up to £15,000 to seven charities to help with longer-term planning; with a final round, £60,000 of National Lottery Community Fund grants, to four further Havering charities.

Jerry, from Havering Council, was delighted by the collaboration – by the speed of the response in the midst of the crisis, and by the work with smaller organisations of which the council had been unaware. “This is a diverse area and [despite] the green belt... there is deprivation here. Some small organisations are overlooked”, he said. The programme worked well, partly because its project lead, Caroline, was immersed in the area and very helpful – “we saw eye-to-eye from Day One.”

Caroline herself agreed. While she was unable to assess every application, discussions with charities helped with the understanding of their services, and their challenges. And she wrote up many of the final requests for funding herself, to alleviate pressure on those organisations.

For this the grantees at the session were particularly grateful. “Usually the process takes forever, especially the complicated questionnaires”, commented Sheila from Addup, “it takes the majority of my time... taking me away from the day job.” Lorraine from Home Start Havering agreed, “During covid, volunteers have left, making it difficult to apply for funds, as paid staff [are busy].”

The Fore has surveyed charities receiving first-round funding, to find that for 42%, this was their only emergency funding, and that 58% of grantees were able to keep programmes running as a result of support. Business models were adapted in 50% of grantee organisations, with 33% improving their digital capacity – and another 33% said they would not have survived the pandemic otherwise. Overall, the Havering voluntary sector

increased its income from £200,000 in 2018 to £500,000 last year, including approximately the £240,000 from the programme (£150,000 from Havering Compact; £60,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund; £30,000 from The Fore), which also leveraged some crowdfunding.

While there is room for improvement – Mary Rose explained, that given its model of working with corporate partners, The Fore has decision-making panels made up from those partners, along with past grantees, rather than a participatory approach – all stakeholders were happy. Havering Council was happy with the support, with the programme’s simple approach, and the increased communication in the borough. So were

the grantees, for whom the programme came out of the blue and was easy to navigate.

Going forward, Mary Rose is hoping to raise interest in replicating the programme in other cold spots. Sadly, there is no further funding for Havering – though The Fore will keep in touch – but the charities were happy with the experience, which Lorraine feels “...will help us to find longer-term funding”. “We felt valued”, said Sheila. “It’s not often that you feel like that.”

Points for reflection

- Might the data about external funding towards London boroughs inform your allocation of funds?
- Would you consider a collaborative approach to filling in grant applications, with you as a funder adding detail and refining a draft based on conversations with the potential grantee?
- Can the needs of corporate partners for involvement in grant-making decisions be married with participatory grant-making approaches?

Corra Foundation

LESSONS LEARNT FROM SHIFTING TO PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING

What can London's funders learn from the Corra Foundation's model of participatory governance, which aims to put people affected by the care system, or people from minoritised communities, at the heart of their grants decision-making process?

SPEAKERS

Allan Farmer,
Head of Place,
Corra Foundation

Beth-Anne Logan
Development Worker,
North Lanarkshire Council

Blair Wycherley,
Scottish Retail Entrepreneur

Emily Wallace,
National Programme Manager
(People in Place), Corra
Foundation

Kelly McFadden,
Manager, Listening
Fund Scotland

The Corra Foundation, formerly the Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland, came to share their reflections on two programmes involving participatory governance.

In the first of these two the foundation, as set out by Alan Farmer, Head of Place for the Corra Foundation, worked with the "The Promise", an organisation born of the Scottish Government's Independent Care Review that set out in early 2020 an agenda for change. The Promise, a partnership, was set up as an independent body endowed with £4 million to "keep the promise" – Corra acts as the grant-making partner to the Promise.

There were two elements to the strategy set out in the care review:

- An **open call** to help organisations change their internal culture, with a budget of £3 million allocated to it; and
- A **diagnostic route** aimed at five organisations, with £1 million allocated.

The Scottish Government had a tight timescale for allocating this funding. This

urgency was non-negotiable, though it was not necessarily conducive to creating trust and relationships to fuel the participatory aspects. Nevertheless, the Foundation has many things to be proud of during this process. Corra helped convene a short-term advisory group, including young people who had been in the care systems as well as public, private and third sector organisations involved in the care system. The role of the panel was first to agree on the criteria for making decisions and subsequently to become the decision-making panel. Over two short months the panel – which contained a lot of different experiences, skills and attributes – assessed over 200 organisation and came to final assessment decisions. According to the Corra Foundation, some things went well, including:

- The ability to engage people from across Scotland and create a strong team spirit;
- Paying people for their time; and
- Developing the time and space to allow for positive challenge.

Some things could have been improved:

- Structures were not in place before the recruitment of the panel;
- More training to assess applications could have helped;
- There was not enough time to have detailed conversations about the use of language; and
- Pulling out the quieter voices in the room was challenging.

The second participatory grantmaking process was outlined by Emily Wallace, from the Corra Foundation's Equity Fund. She recounted an ongoing process to reach out to minoritised communities, working with the Stewart Foundation as the funding partner. Some pro-active

grants – 30 in total so far – have been made, with 22 known organisations and 8 new to Corra.

The decisions were directed by a community-led grant-making panel – which included Roma communities, children and young people, and Bengali communities – with a focus on mental health and culturally-appropriate counselling. About half of the communities were already known to Corra, whereas for others a process of networking and careful establishment of relationships was needed. Emily recounted that:

- It takes a long time to reach communities; you cannot expect groups that have been excluded for a long time to come to you;
- Networks and connections at a local level are key;
- Corra staff/Stewart Foundation staff were not necessarily the right people to have in the room when decisions were made – support from the background;

- Pay for panellists' time to show that it is valued; and
- Listen and respect minoritised communities use of language and labels.

During the discussion, Beth-Anne Logan, from North Lanarkshire Council and a member of a participatory grant-making panel for young people in care, had some powerful insights. She noted that participatory processes are not just a chance for funders to reach marginalised beneficiaries or public bodies to make better choices: contributing to the Independent Care Review gave her life meaning as she contributed to tangible policy change. She highlighted the importance of decision-makers being conscious of their power dynamics and the need for time create fruitful participatory processes. Finally, she reminded us that whilst process is important authenticity is key: "marginalised communities can tell a mile off if you're not sincere in your engagement."

Points for reflection

- What are the important elements of reaching out to long-time excluded communities – e.g. investment of time, money, to relationships?
- Taking part in a participatory process seems to have value in itself for those on the panel.
- How can you show that you are sincere in your engagements?



I.G. Advisors

MOBILISING MORE RESOURCES FROM YOUR IMPACT COMMUNITY

The Mesa is a customisable B2B platform that helps donors find, create and participate in online communities with the aim of inspiring more impactful philanthropy, part-funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

SPEAKER
Lauren Gross,
 Managing Director,
 The Mesa

Lauren Gross explained that, based on a mapping of trends in philanthropy, I.G. Advisors had identified a need to engage with women donors, younger donors (defined as being less than 55 years old) and donors from the UK. Their scoping work identified that:

- **Women** are projected to make up 53% of UK millionaires in 2025. They may have an interest in funding women's causes. They are said to be more emotional and to seek greater involvement and engagement as philanthropists.
- **Younger donors** often prefer to work collaboratively. They tend to explore the potential of the internet as part of a drive to work globally. They have an interest in social entrepreneurship and seek action and impact – now.
- There are lots of **UK-based** billionaires as the economic environment is favourable. They are often impact-focused with an international outlook.

I.G. Advisors feels that these three communities contain unlocked potential for effective philanthropy. They put in place an iterative approach to understanding needs and testing their model. Their market research found that:

- There is a thirst for authentic, action-oriented communities online.
- There is a desire for targeted high-quality content.
- People did not want libraries of information but instead human contact around shared interests.
- People seek both online and offline dimensions of community.
- High Net Worth Individuals favour small private group discussions about philanthropy.

The Mesa is not open access: the creators pay to launch and run the community's portal with a menu of options available. Upon login, invited users have the opportunity to create a profile based on their characteristics and interests. This can be shared with other members of the group and they can, if they want, make connections to other users (beyond their community that they have been invited to join).

Communities do not just grow up organically in The Mesa: their content and boundaries are deliberately cultivated to keep the focus on the philanthropic goals. In order to curate a community effectively, Lauren told us that it is important for those who start and maintain it to be clear about its purpose and value. Once clear about that, questions community leaders should ask themselves include: What do members want more of? What makes people join and then come back?

“What keeps you up at night?” and “how do you as a member like to be involved?” These questions can help the community have reach and to drive people to keep engaging.

Key performance indicators are important (e.g. traffic, satisfaction and who responds – the so-called return on engagement) but should not be a be-all and end-all. Lauren reminded us that community is not about hundreds or thousands of members, nor does it develop overnight. Rather, with The Mesa, it about philanthropic purpose at the right size and at the right pace for the group.

In response to a question, Lauren explained that the pandemic has made

many people realise that they can't avoid digital. However, whilst there is considerable enthusiasm, many groups are not yet prepared to engage in this high-involvement approach.



Points for reflection

- In your online communications, do you favour high-quality content over high-quantity?
- Which of your stakeholder groups could be galvanised through online community? Would it be women and younger people, or another group entirely?
- If you have an idea for an impact group or similar, who would be suited for the rigours of cultivating content and favouring the development of community?

Renaissi

HOW TO FUND PLACED-BASED WORK THAT STICKS

What does it take to improve a place? “Place-based funding is not new, but it keeps changing”, opened Geraldine Blake of London Funders, as she introduced the team from Renaissi, which works with stakeholders on the concept of place. “It’s more than just funding in one geographic community” she added, “it’s about interacting with the communities that use those spaces.”

SPEAKERS

John Hitchin,
CEO, Renaissi

Lily O’Flynn,
Senior Project Manager,
Renaissi

Renaissi believes in the power of place to address social issues, “because it reaches beyond traditional systems to invite multiple perspectives and unite people around shared ambitions.” John took us through concepts of place: place as geography, pure and simple; and place as understanding, where lived experience is influenced by memories, relationships and the various groups who have moved in and out over time. And place as policy concept, where an “invented boundary” makes sense to policy-makers for a societal issue being worked on – “it’s really about systems change”, he explained.

Renaissi’s framework – Place-based systemic change – while detailed, can be summed up in a sentence. The approach has to be done intentionally (building a defined programme, connecting with others, creating an infrastructure); it has to be systemic, long-term; and will take not just time to build, but hard work and consistent funding. Crucially, communities, organisations and investors must all work

together: “Lots of funders shy away from it”, John warned, “saying I’m not a place-based funder – to which one answer is to become place-informed”.

Over time, place-based approaches have been called many things: “community wealth-building”, “anchor strategies” and, increasingly, “levelling-up”, in a series of policy “waves” starting in the late-1990s, when Renaissi was set up by Hackney Council to help with regeneration. The current wave, John thinks, is part of the “pushback” against the austerity programmes of the past decade, and the strategy has grown in relevance over the pandemic both to address immediate need, and as a support to the recovery: “We believe with place as a unifier it’s possible to build a clear vision and relationships that will enable inclusive, sustainable change”.

How to make it stick, though? Lily took us through Renaissi’s four-part model, where the local context; the identity of the project; the power behind the initiative (including its funding); and the relationships between those involved are each considered. Context and identity are visible, obvious, but power and relationships are often hidden, “below the water” and have greater influence on creating change. Each of the four is taken into account as an initiative relevant to the place is shaped – and only by addressing each will that initiative stick.

Lily was asked how the approach is being affected by covid-19. Although the context and identity of community projects have become more difficult, with greater need and stretched resources, the collaboration and flexibility reported throughout

the Festival have altered power and relationships in a positive way. On power, Lily described how more value is being given to the voice of the community, with the power dynamic shifting a little, from grant-maker to grantee, as funders show more flexibility. And in relationships, Renaissi is seeing more collaboration between organisations on the ground, more trust from funders, and a greater reach to communities in need.

There won’t be obvious “wins” straightaway, the team concluded – there may be more questions than answers in the short term. But funders are learning about different areas and their needs, and the crisis has brought with it better relationships between those funders

and local authorities, which have in the past found it difficult to reconcile their different priorities, time-frames and appetites for risk. And while funders do sometimes over-claim for their impact, increasingly most do understand that this is a long-term process. Having the Renaissi framework helps to track progress against a long-term goal, while showing instances of impact, and learning, along the way.

Points for reflection

- If you shy away from the demands of place-based work, what are the barriers? Given the potential benefits of place-based giving, are these barriers set in stone, or could they be alleviated?
- If you are already engaged in place-based work, are there any of the four levers that you could work on to make your joint work “stick”?
- Is the slight shift in the power dynamic all covid-19 related? How can we hang on to the shifts in the power dynamics at a local level?

IVAR

WHY AND HOW TO BE AN OPEN AND TRUSTING GRANT-MAKER

Eliza Buckley, Head of Research at the Institute for Voluntary Action Research led this session and set out the eight commitments to open and trusting grant-making in the Flexible Funders' Pledge, developed with the involvement of London Funders.

SPEAKERS

Edmund Kung,
Director, Sport 4 Health

Eliza Buckley,
Head of Research, Institute
for Voluntary Action Research

Gina Crane,
Director of Communications
and Learning, the Esmée
Fairbairn Foundation

These commitments are:

- Don't waste time
- Ask relevant questions
- Accept risk
- Act with urgency
- Be open
- Enable flexibility
- Communicate with purpose
- Be proportionate

Thus far, 70 funders have signed up. Eliza called on Gina to give the perspective of an organisation that has signed the pledge. Gina explained that they were ready to commit to these principles, as the Foundation came to realise the combined cost of individual funders' requirements for grantees, which led them to seek a permanent change.

During the pandemic, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation took the decision to drop all reporting requirements for current grantees. They also made 545 additional emergency grants with a median size of £23,000. This was quite different from

many funders who continued to require some form of reporting. Grantees reflected back that the immediate support and trust from the Foundation was an enormous source of "psychological help" during the pandemic. Gina has found that grant recipients do not think that grantmakers necessarily understand the power dynamics inherent in their relationships – making this act of trust particularly welcome.

Edmund Kung from Sport 4 Health, a Community Interest Company with a revenue of about £50,000 a year, came to share his experience of grantmaking practice. Although £50,000 might be seen as small by some standards, to raise that amount he typically has to make herculean efforts, with up to 20 grant applications a year. Nobody pays for that time, he points out, and yet no one takes a moment to provide feedback to him. He also finds it galling that he is in competition with much bigger charities that have paid fundraisers – "couldn't small grant-amounts be reserved for small organisations only?" Application forms can be baffling – funders tend to use to jargon – "couldn't they use plain English?" Edmund was happy to receive funding through the LCR and appreciated the approach. He told us that he hoped many other funders would adopt single application forms.

Edmund's candour and ideas were well received and stimulated a lively discussion on the barriers to unrestricted funding – and how they might be overcome. Gina noted that in her experience, many of the barriers to open and trusting grant-making are at a Funding Manager level, where both system and cultural change are needed. An attendee added that when processes change for grant applicants,

the amount of work for funders does not go down, which might disincentivise change. Another remarked that there are several barriers to core funding. Another attendee shared that for some funders that receive national government funding, it is sometimes difficult to change practice due to deadlines. A local authority representative, added that council members are often risk averse when it comes to changing funding practice.

As the clock ran out on the session, Eliza congratulated all of the 70 funders that have signed up to the pledge – since as we have seen, becoming more flexible is no mean feat!

Points for reflection

- Can you see the combined cost of practices of funders like you, above and beyond your organisation's individual contribution? Does this make you want to change?
- Where are the sticking points against flexibility in your organisation? Can you see how to overcome some of these?
- What could you reduce the load for small organisations that comes from fundraising? For example, could small grant amounts only be available to small organisations, in order to level the playing field?

City Bridge Trust

LEARNING FROM WAVES 1 AND 2 OF THE LONDON COMMUNITY RESPONSE FUND

This session began with the City Bridge Trust team explaining their role in the LCR. The London Community Response Fund (LCRF) existed as a “fund within a fund”, with contributions from several other funders, as well as the Trust’s emergency grantmaking going through the fund.

SPEAKERS
Dr. Emma Harrigan and Sam Grimmett Batt,
 from City Bridge Trust

Natalie Wade,
 Founder and CEO,
 Small Green Shoots

Jonathan,
 Small Green Shoots

Like other funders in the LCR, the City Bridge Trust signed up to the principles of the collaboration and gave grants through the common funder portal.

Emma began by giving a rundown of waves 1 and 2 of the London Community Response Fund. These waves, which covered the period from 6th April to 12th June 2020, amounted to a relatively small amount of funding (£1.8 million for the first wave and £23.2 million in the second, compared to over £57 million overall). Whilst around 70% of funding from later stages went to equity-led organisations, the percentage was much lower in these initial funding tranches.

Emma presented the findings of a survey of grantees. In order to improve accessibility of the survey, grantees had the option of taking an online survey (aimed at helping those not confident writing in English) or having a phone conversation to give their feedback. It turned out that relatively few respondents asked for a phonecall – perhaps because in these two waves, there was quite a

large proportion of larger grants, as Sam pointed out.

Overall there were 701 responses of which 41% were large grants (more than £10k) and 59% were small grants. Some of the most common uses of the funding were:

- For online platforms (20%)
- Food donations and supplies (19%)
- Staff costs (18.9%)

At the end of the funding period, about 10% had some unspent funds – perhaps because the lockdown impeded delivery from time to time. For those that did this was on average £2,880. 41% said that they spent money on something other than the original project.

As well as these quantitative questions, there were a number of “learning questions.” When asked what did you learn, responses included: online delivery and new ways of working, to highlight needs, to be brave. When asked about longer-term changes, 27% expected online delivery will continue in the future as we look towards a hybrid model of working. Many (65%) say that they have been impacted by covid-19 in some way, shape or form. As for ongoing issues, respondents cited the effects of poverty and inequality, confusion, mental health, financial worries and emerging needs.

Small Green Shoots works with young people with a passion for music, and helps them to obtain critical roles in creative industries. The young people supported by the charity are referred to

as the “Shoots”. Jonathan – a Shoot – said that the lockdown was a tense and highly stressful time. Many Shoots, who didn’t find their place in school processes or structures, had begun to have hope for their future. As the terrible events in the United States unfolded, this hope was shaken.

The LCRF grant helped Small Green Shoots on a number of levels. They spent their money on food for those who were shielding, some mental health provision and on technology that would allow the young people to keep working at home (for example an Adobe package giving full access to Photoshop). Importantly, they also set up a routine online so they

could keep in touch with one another and encourage each another in their ongoing creative projects. The unrestricted funding helped them stay “agile” said Natalie.

When asked by a funder what funders can do to help organisations like Small Green Shoots, Natalie said “Be a supporter! Be a fan! Be intuitive and flexible!...Be a human being.” Concretely, she suggested that funders create case studies about projects they have liked, so new applicants know what to aim for. Reflecting on the LCRF funding she said “there is nothing like knowing you don’t need to go cap in hand to ask a funder for a change in programme.”

Points for reflection

- What do you see as the advantages of offering a conversation instead of an online survey or form?
- How could unrestricted funding be used to help organisations through future crises, once the pandemic is over?
- What role can and should grantmakers have on community grantees’ feeling of hope, perception of their power, and their self-confidence?

The Fore MICRO ORGANISATIONS – UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF AGILE CHANGEMAKERS

The Fore’s aim, John told us, is to help small charities and social enterprises through unrestricted funding and capacity building – and it is specifically designed to be charity-led.

SPEAKERS

John Collins,
Programme Director,
The Fore

Mark Wallace,
Rothschild
(Partner of The Fore)

Marsha Powell,
Chief Executive (BelEve)

Okela Douglas ,
Founder and Director
(Sister System)

They focus on organisations having a turnover of under £500,000 a year and have a particular focus on micro-organisations that have a turnover of under £100,000 a year.

Of the UK’s 160,000 registered charities, 82% have an income under £100,000, and 58% have an income under £10,000 – something that John would like to see change. These registered charities receive less than 5% of the sector’s income. Furthermore, most (87%) Black and minority-ethnic charities have income under £100,000. RAFT is the Fore’s programme that supports the resilience of micro-organisations. Of the applications to their Transition Fund in 2020, 54% came from “micros” and 45% of grants were to micros. In 2021, 57% of organisations applying were micros, and 58% of grants went to micros.

John moved to an open discussion with Marsha and Okela – something that reflects The Fore’s aim to get their grantees’ stories told. BelEve focuses on improving the self-esteem of girls

aged 8–21 to help them become the next generation of female leaders. Sister System also focuses on girls and young women, helping them through resilience workshops, mentoring, and career coaching.

He asked for the organisations’ experiences of and reflections on applying for funding. Marsha said that her BelEve does not necessarily have the confidence to go out there and apply for big pots of funding, in a context where the focus is on “just trying to keep afloat”. Okela echoed that: she is passionately focused on delivery, which means that it is hard to find the time to become a good fundraiser. She too has experienced challenges around confidence, but both women have had to keep on knocking on doors to keep their organisations afloat. Positive funding decisions can be a boost both for her and the wider community, building resilience.

Conversations with funders are not always easy. It can be hard to raise difficulties for fear of the consequences. One thing that both charities feel they have to offer in conversations with funders is a story about their identity, challenges, strengths and goals – but as they don’t often “get the mic” they may shy away from telling it. In the light of the last year’s events, people are showing a greater interest in Black and minority-ethnic led organisations. Marsha recalled being told that “we’d love you to apply” – but should it really take such a crisis to amplify their stories, she asked.

Both were positive about The Fore’s process, which they felt had the right

balance between asking some relevant questions on a form, followed by an in-depth conversation that allows for their narrative to be shared. They also felt freer to speak about issues that they are struggling with than with other funders. Marsha said that getting support from someone like The Fore has raised their confidence and ambitions. Today BelEve aims for a turnover of £300,000, which dwarfs their pre-pandemic turnover of £100,000. These are exciting times for the charity, but nevertheless it feels like that there’s a delicate balancing act ahead to make growth go hand-in-hand with keeping things at a human scale.

As for what they would like to see from other funders, Marsha and Okela agreed with Mark that micro-organisations like theirs do not need to become “agile” but that they always have been. They’d like to be able to voice concerns and worries with funders without fear of the consequences – and still being seen as resilient organisations. They’d like for the interest in Black and minority-led organisations to be sustained and genuine, and for micro-organisations’ contribution to be recognised – both individually and as partners.

Points for reflection

- How could you adapt your processes to micro-organisations?
- Do they need to become more agile, or could you do something to add to their agility?
- How can you accentuate the value of an applicant’s story? How can you help them “take the mic?”
- What are you doing to ensure that the progress towards equity is maintained once the media spotlight on Black Lives Matter subsides?



Reos Partners

LCR LONDON 2023 SCENARIOS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

This two-hour long workshop took participants through an experience conceived by Reos Partners, one of London Funders’ two learning partners for the LCR. Its purpose was to help participants reflect on how to recreate renew the world we live in as the pandemic seemingly abates.

SPEAKERS

Sydney Hayes,
Consultant,
Reos Partners

Yiannis Chrysostomidis,
Senior Associate,
Reos Partners

Yiannis introduced Reos Partners as worldwide experts in scenario planning with an emphasis on processes. He told us that their primary interest is in social challenges characterised by dynamic complexity – that is to say that causes and effects are separated apart and mediated by many factors. Furthermore, no single actor in the room can solve the problem(s). They create scenarios – structured, considered stories describing a small set of future contexts that help people connect with the direction they want to take.

Yiannis emphasised that these scenarios are neither predictions or projections, preferences or options. They aim to be relevant, challenging for existing mindsets, plausible and clear – and help us to see the full picture rather than “keep our nose pressed up against the canvas”. By seeing the future in a number of different lights, participants learn what they can do to create the future they want to be a part of.

Sydney read out the scenarios, one by one. They take place in 2023 – in the

near future at a timepoint that we can just about imagine in these uncertain times (normally, scenarios are set five years ahead). The scenarios aim to evoke strong responses, both emotional and rational.

- Building back the same. “A high-quality public health response resulted in voluntary mass immunisation and returned safety, ease, and a semblance of life going back to normal in Central London. With shifting power dynamics and cuts in funding provided to local authorities, the central government holds more power and decision-making. This has created a top-down structure which permeates society”
- Building back together. In this scenario, people are seen as the foundation of society. After going through a period with no wage increases, economic slowdown, unemployment, increasing poverty and inequality, and pressure on essential workers in the health system, these systems are rebuilding and regenerating. Society works together to build forward better by collaborating and rethinking how society operates. It is a reorganisation of the economy, a shift in the public and government thinking, and a reinvestment in London’s small businesses and arts and culture scene.”
- Building back differently “The government responded poorly to the covid-19 pandemic and was unable to rein in the crisis. All communities, regardless of income level, were unable to fight off the effects of the pandemic, though vulnerable communities were more heavily affected. The social, economic, and healthcare systems have been overwhelmed to the point of breakdown, and the quality of life in Central London has been drastically degraded.”

- Not building back “The state of the economy has continued to drive unemployment rates up. Those who have jobs, are overworked. People are plagued with vicious cycles of misinformation from the media. The state of not only London, but of the nation and the international political and economic landscapes weigh heavily on the minds of government and citizens alike.”

Yiannis and Sydney asked participants to reflect on what these scenarios evoked, whether it be a sense that scenarios are plausible or implausible, or a reflection on how their efforts need to be channelled to move towards a better future.

For one attendee, the exercise evoked a need to be intentional at a time when so many structural shifts are occurring simultaneously. There is a short time interval before things could revert to things as they were before, which presents an opportunity to secure permanent structural change. Another commented that it feels like everybody has been

operating on short timescales. Now the challenge is how to turn a one-year plan into a four-year plan.

Questions were asked about how more power can be shifted to the voluntary sector and harness the energy of the last 15 months. There is a risk that big government chooses to prioritise achieving outcomes, rather than giving communities the confidence to act. And can funders let go and become more trusting – and as a non-adversarial force of opposition to government? Furthermore could London Funders have a role in providing advice about how funders can be advocates without contradicting Charity Commission Guidelines?

The session ended with Reos partners asking a question for participants: “What do you see now that you haven’t before?”. Geraldine Blake from London Funders said that she understood that questions about shifting power are no longer optional.

Points for reflection

- How can you move from power over to power with community organisations
- How can communities be given the confidence to act rather than to passively receive?
- How can funders be a force for opposition and stay within Charity Commission guidelines?

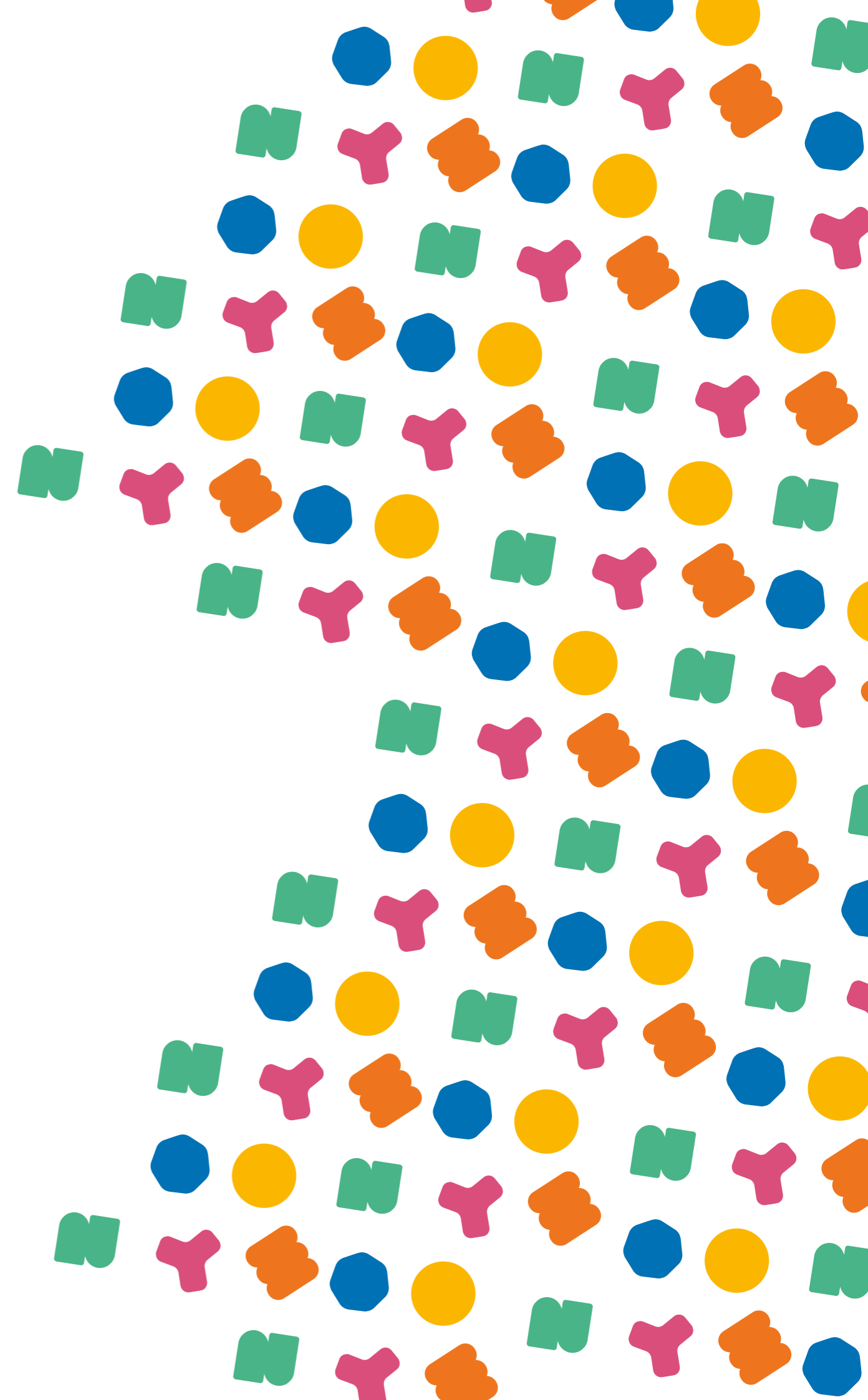
What next

We're picking up the five themes of collaboration, community, equity, leadership and process at our upcoming Camference in September 2021 (which is free to attend for London Funders members). We're bringing our members back together to share even more learning, knowledge and resources in three headline plenary sessions. Furthermore, we're convening our thematic network groups (on topics including housing and homelessness, health and equity) to talk through what practically needs to be done in the funding sector. We hope to see you all there – both on screens and in person.

For further reading, we launched four learning reports on the London Community Response. Covering funding processes, scenarios for the future, how groups delivered differently and equity-centred grantmaking, they ask: "What have we learned? What do we need to un-learn? What would we do differently if there is a "next time"? You can find these reports, and more, on the London Funders website at www.londonfunders.org.uk. The London Funders team is also working with IVAR on the "Flexible Funders" programme to make sure that "what worked" isn't lost in the "new normal", and encourages our members to sign up to the commitments at www.ivar.org.uk.

We're using feedback from both the Festival of Learning and the Camference, alongside the views and ideas of people across our diverse communities, to inform our new organisational strategy. We're looking to recalibrate the way we work so that we can support our members and, most importantly, Londoners in the months and years to come.

As always, we'd love to hear from our members on how we can support the funding sector and encourage best practice. Do get in touch with the London Funders team if you'd like to chat about our work.





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