Overview of London Funders’ insight meetings

To ensure that our members are informed about how current events, demographic trends and policy decisions affect the lives of the communities we serve, London Funders host monthly member-exclusive insight meetings. Keep an eye on our website for [upcoming events.](https://londonfunders.org.uk/latest/events)

We host meetings at the last Wednesday of every month. Topics will be announced at the beginning of every month via Funder Five and on our website.

Civic Strength Index

We were delighted to be joined by Hannah Goulding and Ladan Dirie from the GLA who provided an introduction to the Civic Strength Index; how funders can use it and heard from London Funders members on how funders can engage with the Index as it grows.

Co-designed and co-created with Londoners, the Civic Strength Index was developed by The Young Foundation and funded by the GLA. It helps London boroughs and organisations support discussions about the strengths of their communities and consider how to build on them. The index provides a definition, framework, case studies and interactive tool and maps exploring the spread of civic strength across London.

You can find the index and post-code look up tool (which provides a code per ward) [here](https://www.youngfoundation.org/our-work/publications/london-civic-strength-index/).

Three themes of civic strength came out of the research:

1. **Relationships and Social Capital**

This section pinned down the things that are more difficult to measure; what people think of when they think of a strong community e.g. opportunities for community life, social support, relationships between neighbours, trust and social cohesion. The importance of engagement, the number of volunteers and registered charities were consistently mentioned in this section. More work is being done on retrieving relevant data in this area, but northern parts of London received a weaker score compared to the rest of the capital.

The highest scoring areas included a patch of boroughs in the west (Ealing, Hounslow, Richmond Upon Thames) and east (Barking and Dagenham, Havering).   
  
The report includes case studies such as Newham Food Banks. Food banks highlight the complexities of the data used; they tend to represent increased needs alongside decreased support so reveal a strong sense of community but should not be needed as a long-term fixture.

1. **Democratic Engagement**

This section covered institutional trust, accessible engagement and civic responsibility. This is also an area where it is hard to gather robust data – e,g. level of access to democratic education and perception of collective responsibility.There was no pattern in the data and results were broadly mixed across London. One recurring concern within the surveys was how governments would receive a desire to be engaged in local decision making. There were different ways of looking at what a strong score means; high scores of institutional trust or a high civic responsibility driven by mutual aid groups.

The case study on inner London Boroughs suggests they generally have a lower voter registration and turnout, which consequently contributes to low scores of institutional trust, with particular focus on Stamford Hill West and Springfield in Hackney and Whitechapel. Despite this, some inner areas got some of the highest scores, such as Bow East and Lansbury.

1. **Public and Social Infrastructure**

This section covers everything around services and spaces that makes the above themes possible – public services, financial resources, access to green spaces etc.This was the easiest to measure area when it came to the data; number of libraries, new business survival rates, healthy streets scorecard levels).

Not surprisingly, provision was higher in the centre of London (Dulwich Village, Chelsea Riverside, Abbey Road in Westminster). Wards in outer boroughs tend to have fewer community centres and cultural spaces per capita. It was suggested that the data could be used as evidence of need in grant applications where necessary.

Saved within the report are sources for data used across indicators which you can explore. The GLA would be interested to know about data funders collect that could contribute to the index and support some of the domains where there are data gaps for the development of phase two of the project.

* What data do you have?
* What’s the associated geography of this data (ward/borough level/pan-London or concentrated in area/s)?
* How regularly is this data collected?

The GLA would welcome comments/questions on the index and further conversations – please do get in touch with [Hannah.goulding@london.gov.uk](mailto:Hannah.goulding@london.gov.uk) and [ladan.dirie@london.gov.uk](mailto:ladan.dirie@london.gov.uk).

The slides with further information can be found [here](file:///C:\Users\Jessica%20Herbert.LF-LAP-10\OneDrive%20-%20London%20Funders\Desktop\GLA%20Civic%20Strength%20Index%20Presentation.pdf).

Further reading and resources

All resources from the event can be found [here](https://londonfunders.org.uk/latest/events/insight-meeting-how-do-we-measure-building-strong-communities).

The London Funders data insight with further reading can be found [here](file:///C:\Users\Jessica%20Herbert.LF-LAP-10\London%20Funders\London%20Funders%20Team%20Site%20-%20Documents\Shared%20Data\LFD\LFG%20Files\3.%20Events\Events\2022\Insight%20meetings\February\Data%20insight_Building%20strong%20communities.docx).

The Civic Strength Index, GLA

<https://www.youngfoundation.org/our-work/publications/london-civic-strength-index/>

What is it and how can funders use it, London Funders

<https://londonfunders.org.uk/latest/news/civic-strength-index-what-it-and-how-can-funders-use-it>

Useful datasets, London Funders

<https://londonfunders.org.uk/resources-publications/tools-funders/useful-datasets>

Reports Reloaded: Civil Society in the Age of Coronavirus – A+B+C=D?, London Funders

<https://londonfunders.org.uk/latest/news/reports-reloaded-civil-society-age-coronavirus-abcd>

Reports Reloaded: 3 years on from More, Better, Together: a strategic review of giving in London – where are we now?, London Funders

<https://londonfunders.org.uk/latest/news/reports-reloaded-3-years-more-better-together-strategic-review-giving-london-where-are>

Flipping the coin: two sides of community wealth in England, The Young Foundation

<https://www.youngfoundation.org/our-work/publications/flipping-the-coin-two-sides-of-community-wealth-in-england/>