

# A CITY FOR ALL LONDONERS

## An Inclusive City Growth Workshop

11<sup>th</sup> November 2016, 9.30 – 13.00

### Community, Active Citizenship & Participation Table 3 Session 1

**Facilitator in bold facilitator – comments in bold**

Respondents in regular text

*These notes are a summary of the conversation*

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#### **Sarah Mulley, Head of Social Policy and Diversity at Greater London Authority**

Bharat Mehta, Trust for London

Nathan Yeowell, London Borough of Sutton

Muge Dindjer, City of Westminster

Eileen Conn, Peckham Vision

Peter Eversden MBE, London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies

Wilfred Rimensberger, Millbank Creative Works MCM CIC

Patricia Roman, Latin Elephant & Loughborough University London

Pauline Broomhead, Foundation for Social Improvement

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#### **Let's begin by going around and introducing ourselves and perhaps saying a bit about what brought you here.**

Sarah Mulley, Head of Social Policy and Diversity at Greater London Authority.

Peter Eversden, Chairman of the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies. We're a charity representing community groups in London.

Bharat Mehta, Trust for London. We're a grant-making body and fund the field of social welfare, working to improve the lives of Londoners. Our mission is to tackle inequality.

I'm Muge Dindjer. I'm the Policy and Scrutiny Manager for the City of Westminster, and I provide support to backbench councilors. I also sit on the Trust of London.

Patricia Roman, Latin Elephant and Loughborough University of London. We work actively with different migrant groups in Elephant and Castle and have a mission of bringing about localized economies being important to London's economy.

Nathan Yeowell, London Borough of Sutton. We're drafting a community plan, the Sutton Plan. As a way going forward to service providers, I'd like to see how we can get more involved in the community.

Wilfred Rimensberger, consultant for University of Arts, I run Millbank Creative Works, which links local communities together in idea-based sustainable projects.

Pauline Broomhead, Foundation for Social Improvement. Our organization is about ten years old. Our mission is to support small charities in the UK, but we have about five to six thousand members and about

40% are London based. All of our services and membership are free. As we move forward into our second ten years, we are considering how to help more community groups be as sustainable as they can be.

Eileen Conn, Peckham Vision. We are a local community group in South London. We've been working on planning and regeneration and have had an impact on Peckham's community. My personal interest is how to strengthen community links so people can work together. I would like to see how the GLA can give proper recognition to community groups, because it's really off balance in terms of policy making.

**Thank you very much. There's a lot there already which we could talk about all day but we've only got 45 minutes. Let's spend about two minutes outlining where we are. This is the first time in a number of years when we've had a deputy Mayor who's looking at community engagement, which I think will make a huge difference in leading us where we should be. For him to take a corporate lead in terms of engaging with London's civil societies, and Londoners more broadly, there are two questions I would like to address today. One of the questions that would be helpful to talk about is how we can most effectively engage with all of you in the work we do. There's a real commitment to changing how City Hall engages. The London Plan is a good example. The second question is how, strategically, can the GLA and the Mayor support the activity that happens at a more local level?**

I'd like to start by building on what Eileen said. The thing that is failing is the local authority's relationship, and we need the Mayor to make that better, because a lot of civil societies groups find themselves stonewalled. There's no ability to engage. It makes them feel alienated. It's a question of how can the Mayor have the right policies in place and make sure the local authorities do what needs to be done, because it's their relationship with the local communities that matters.

One of the formal ways that gives civic communities power is through a neighborhood forum, which can then develop a neighborhood plan. Most of Westminster is covered by neighborhood forum. We have a formal and informal relationship with them. I think that's one answer.

I've been promoting neighborhood planning and I'm disappointed. Developers are determining what happens before the community has had a chance to say what they want.

We should be connecting with people who are working in small businesses and neighborhoods. It's just hot air unless something happens. To link the organizational institutions on street level and give them some credence. I can only speak from our Borough, but we're ignored, sidelined. Talking to the community means talking to individuals. It's not just this or the relationship with authorities like GLA but we need strengthening at community level otherwise all we are doing is bits of their work.

Our strength is knowing the community and engaging them in very creative ways that hasn't been done with migrant communities in London. We've been advocating for involvement of migrant communities. The community groups aren't organized or systematic, but with a little bit more help they could be. GLA says it's efficiency of resources. But it's not just about this land having a certain amount of value, because the community groups will always lose. How do we manage that, and the information and knowledge those community groups contain? Also, there's the idea that developers are dominating the agenda. We're promised that our report will be in the cabinet report but then nothing happens. We're only supported to a point, and that has to stop. Community groups have to be a part of these forums, at local level and GLA level. We were offered one token forum, but that was it.

I don't think we're integrated at a local level. My community groups know a lot about planning and conservation, then there's voluntary groups and friends groups, but we're all focused on what we're doing. My people can influence them with expertise, but we're not getting together.

What's stopping it?

Nothing's stopping it, but they don't realize the importance of community groups. I'm trying to get them to reach out and support them, understand them.

It's an institutional problem.

From an officer's point of view, sometimes we think things slow down too much. A problem we've got is that these conversations are going off-kilter. Rightly or wrongly, what's driving the conversations between authorities and community groups is that the money is gone. What I found interesting is that you have 32 boroughs up in arms with the Mayor. If there's anything City Hall can do to encourage better development and practices, that would be good.

Are you advocating the old GLC model of funding at local level?

No, I'm advocating that there be money made available to borough and local communities.

That's a GLC model though, isn't it? We have to learn from what happened.

### **I have to say there's not a lot of money at City Hall.**

I think one of the people's problems is fragmentation. And one of the solutions to it is to establish it and map it, and keep it alive and current. University of Arts is working with students on a mapping project on community values. The processing itself is quite revealing because the students and local residents involved start to think and become involved and build projects around it. The key problems are then resources in terms of places, and that's particularly difficult in central London where everything is sold as soon as it becomes available. That's what London needs to do: protect community spaces. Looking at Peter who's spent his life and heart into generating energy and picking up on potential situations and vitalizing it – it's strong personalities and it causes fragmentation to a degree because you have a lot of strong individuals driving things. It creates little kingdoms. In the past you had unions looking after the working class and giving them the language tools and that's all gone. I think there's a gap between educating people and enabling them to speak the language and getting them the tools to deal with complicated situations.

We're running a community cohesion project. In terms of engagement more generally, the big thing on the health agenda is the lack of engagement, little community engagement, and health really recognizing that. That process has been imperfect but it's not too late to be an ongoing process. The other thing is how we engage with the GLA. It would be better to have a dialogue for local scrutiny members to feed into your work and to receive outcomes into your work. It needs to be a local process.

A point on charities and lack of togetherness. Delivery of services is not what community groups are about. There's serious institutional problems here. Community groups are different from sector groups. We had a health and wellbeing strategy developed, but still that has nothing to do with planning. Planning and regeneration are on a different cosmos. There's no link. It's causing serious problems in mental health, obesity, and impacting the way we live. It's also related to the housing crisis. Recently we discovered something the council was developing and presenting to advertisers, which was to come and see all the land that was ripe for developing. One of the things you could do in the London Plan is to require the planning process begins in the boroughs. We look at what's there and what its potential is, and what the community potential is. All the land is going. All the things we're talking about are impossible if we don't have little plots of land for these things. If GLA can't do something about that, there's something seriously wrong with GLA's powers.

These issues are very alive. Obviously housing is a major issue, as well as work spaces and community spaces. I think there's clearly a question with what the GLA can do through the planning role we have and how to improve these processes at the local level. There's some points around evidence and intimation and what we can do from the bottom up to facilitate that evidence. The FLA can provide access to data.

We've got to be data rich. We've got evidence galore on what's gone wrong but have not analyzed it.

I wonder if there's something we can do to rebalance that. We don't have the right kind of evidence. There's a point on convening, coordinating, and encouraging connections. We can identify best practices.

Eileen, I think your analysis is spot on. It's not because local groups don't exist though. The funding system has changed. The GLC flew over the heads of local authorities to fund small organizations. Things have moved on from that because others have come on the scene. I don't think local authorities are linking up with community organizations like they used to. People just aren't engaged in the same way. I'm wondering if there aren't ways in Section 106 to be used in ways other than just building things, and to incentivise that, I wonder if the Mayor would consider a matching arrangement. Where does the GLA's money come from? The sale of land perhaps. It's about community engagement. It might have a problem of political contamination, but some kind of arrangement would bring in another community we don't talk about or are blind to, which is the corporate sector. We need to engage with them in a constructive way. They have a role to play in this.

Local authorities are engaging with businesses – some of that happens locally.

I'm not an activist in the local community, but when we started to engage with the more formal voluntary sector, we found that it was difficult to link them around the common agenda, to access them and for them to access each other. Only when we started to find some common voice could we start to produce data. We've had a 64% increase the past four years. Pulling these common threads together enabled us to talk to government, so there needs to be a cohesive voice across the smaller groups. I would like to learn how to find out about them, what are their needs that other organizations could support. While I welcome people wanting to get the business sector involved, realistically they get less than 3% of their funding from them. They may bring something, but they won't bring everything. 90% is from government, so how can we work better to leverage that support?

Before we finish, I would like to consider what the London Plan can do. Matthew said we have to provide work and places to live. We have lost industrial land at twice the rate we used to. We've had permitted development for offices which has driven out small entrepreneurial groups who used to work there. It does nothing for community cohesion. We have not provided housing at 30% of the living wage, and can't even understand how we can. The GLA plan, the London Plan, has got to influence these things, protect workspaces, provide training for people who aren't equipped, to provide housing.

It's not quite what I was saying about developers. There should not be development on land until there has been a researched report made public about what is happening on that land in terms of work, housing. Important sites have been demolished without any grasp of what they have been doing. We shouldn't start developing until there's been a public discussion. We can't do it properly in 45 minutes. What can we do to make sure the notes you take back aren't misinterpreted by GLA. We have these short, superficial sessions, but what is going to be done to continue this discussion? The GLA could do incredible service for London if they set up something to continue this conversation.

I'm not misinterpreting you, I'm quite clear about understanding you. There's a role to be played by developers as well. I also have a view, which is that in Britain, we have a planning process which is about potential of stopping everything, forever, so whatever one's view on Heathrow, Gatwick, whatever, it will happen but in another lifetime.

I'm talking about small sites, not the large ones.

Just engaging on that, there's a very clear distancing between the corporate world and developers and communities. The minute we receive funds from developers we lose the trust of the community. We are trying to bring the council to communities and get them to talk with migrant and ethnic businesses, so we are engaging. The fact is developers are giving money to silence these groups.

There is a difference between Section 106 and receiving direct money.

It's what they do with it that matters. How many of my community groups have said, where is my Section 106 sill?

So there's a question of transparency, scrutiny, and actually a bottom line approach, so a grassroots approach. The policy making process needs to start at the grassroots level where the community is. They can't be told that they can't intervene in the process, be rejected.

Many of the other leaders can impose what they want. Matthew can't.

**I think Matthew doesn't have the kind of levers that others have. We have to work in partnership, because there's no other way of doing it. Matthew is very clear about that. Part of our job is to make sure these community engagement points are reflected. Going back to the point about this discussion process, please do go onto the website and send in the document. This is the beginning of a conversation. I won't claim that we are there yet, but our aspiration is to fundamentally change the process of these things. There is real commitment to improving these strategies. This has been an incredibly rich conversation, so thank you.**

# Community, Active Citizenship & Participation

## Table 3 Session 2

**Facilitator in bold facilitator – comments in bold**

Respondents in regular text

*These notes are a summary of the conversation*

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### **Sarah Mulley, Greater London Authority**

Andrea Carey Fuller, Deptford Neighbourhood Action

Dr. Yasminah Beebeejaun, UCL

Prakash Daswani

Sofia de Sousa, the Glass-House Community Led Design

Iman Achara, Partners in Integration Network

Yvonne Field, the Ubele Initiative

Sufina Ahmad, City Bridge Trust

Eileen Storrar, Borough of Waltham Forest

Shirley Hanazawa, Justspace

Richard Lee, Just Space

Shaina Churchill

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**As Matthew said at the beginning, his role is new, so we haven't had anyone in the past eight years who has lead community engagement. We're really excited about it. One part of the process is understanding how City Hall, the GLA group, and the Mayor engage with communities. Matthew will have a corporate lead on that, to put in time the processes that allow the GLA to do that more effectively. We're at the starting point of that process, but there's a real commitment to doing it. The second part of it is a policy question on how the GLA can support London civil society, the formally constituted sector, and community groups and how the GLA can make sure London has a vibrant civil society for us to work with. It will be helpful to get people's views on both these points. Let's start now by flagging what questions you would like to answer.**

I'd like to invite all of you who have been involved in this more than me, to answer how do I turn around this charity that meets ten times a year for two hours each. The reason they've invited me to come along is because I'm younger, and because I'm brown. Civil society organizations are dying because people who founded these societies have failed to create successor organizations to carry them on, so there's a gap there. How do we turn it around? And addressing something called community: if you go back to the word's origins, it's about sharing responsibility and therefore values. I'd like to find out what shared values went into founding these societies which will determine where we go in the future.

**I think that's a useful example of the issues we're talking about. Any other points?**

Mine is just about people's sense of agency, and I'm pleased there's an interest in civil societies. We have a championing and brokerage role, but how do we bring the average Joe into the conversation as well? So that we're not just speaking about people but for people.

Oftentimes we forget the work of people before us who really have done important things. We shouldn't throw away the work that's come before us because we lose a lot of lessons. We should be focusing on not disparaging what people have said before, but in the context of now – issues like food banks, poverty, globalization, climate change, the hatred and racism and discrimination – what would we do with the limited resources we have, what could we achieve, realistically? If we can just pick up something that

would stimulate the energy that the Mayor wants, that would help this discussion. The Mayor is in a position not to interfere with local government, but to raise the profile of some of the people who have been disenfranchised from the conversation and we need to have a dialogue with these communities: refugees, travelers, gypsies. Value is two ways, not just the people who are there, but the people who are coming in, new, and settling. What is it that we have in common that we can share? We need to promote fairness, equality, and respect of communities.

Certainly I concur with the question of intergenerational work that is needed to make sure we have continuing work. The other thing is that in order to build the organization we have, it took three years because we realized that the people who came into Deptford, the communities that are there aren't getting a slice of the new cake – people in London who don't look like me or people of color. So for me, in terms of what we're asking communities to invest in terms of time, because we're not time rich. It's left to the people who are privileged. The GLA needs to think about that. What are we asking people to put in to develop their communities?

The point about neighborhood forums, there's a need for the GLA to support the coming together of neighborhood forums so all of those things can be shared. We've got values to avoid exclusion, but we've added on the economy for the common good, supporting local and independent shops through our neighborhood plan and how to integrate that with the borough for better planning. The local market traders in Deptford don't get local support because there's too much gentrification and those new shops aren't aimed at the local communities. It's at the exclusion in terms of social cleansing, especially young people who are getting pushed out. Could we hold a neighborhood event where you bring all the forums together to look at the issues we're facing?

To reiterate what you were saying about volunteering, what is the structure that can support that? What does that look like?

I think for Just Space and the community groups that are a part of it, it's about how the Mayor values community groups. I do mean associations of volunteers: it's a very important part of civil society that we would like to feel is valued. We have a number of proposals in our community plan around this, but I just wanted to register this issue for the Mayor about valuing and resourcing. There's a huge need to resource the value that community groups can make, especially since we are asking them to collaborate with the Mayor, and we need to have some sort of resource from the GLA to do that. It's been a real struggle for many community groups to get here today. Perhaps even some of you received the invitation just yesterday, so it feels like we are not the first thought. We're the last thought and we'd like to change the dynamic, so that in events like this, we're on the invitation on our own right, not just if the borough drops out, and so we can get that recognition because we feel secondary.

Picking up on that point, in terms of practical solutions that the voluntary sector might have: the sector could really help achieve something. There's a wide range of things from strengthening voice, not just about you liaising with the agency.

**The only way that that social policy agenda can be delivered is through partnership. I'd like for us to have a laser focus on what the Mayor and the GLA can do. A lot of issues are really local, and there's a question on how we can support that very local activity. On this point about engagement, I completely agree and we're at the beginning of this journey. This administration will treat it very differently from the previous one.**

I think the GLA has some work it can do in terms of influencing the devolution agenda and working with boroughs to develop a stronger narrative to contrast what the media says about people who are different. I have all confidence in Matthew that he can take all the energy in this room to influence all the sectors across the board, from housing to transport, etc. and help us understand the system. I've been in the sector since 2009, and it's only in the past few months that I've understood there's a role the private sector could play in helping. We lose our sense of agency when you see decisions made for the benefit of

business and not for the local communities. Bring us to the table to take some of the institutional failures and help us take them on too.

I'd like to talk about the social media narrative with the London story. Minority groups' voices are not heard but they are actually contributing by owning businesses. You need a Mayor who has the courage of leadership. I'm hoping his advocacy skills will come into play here. When I say there were good practices that happened prior to this, I'm talking about Camden. There were big events that involved ordinary people – that bottom up approach, and I could see the valuable processes that he put in place. People used to come all the way from the outer boroughs of London to attend these events, so you had a platform which enabled those voices to be heard. Perhaps we should have something similar, not something that excludes them. We've lost all that progress and almost gone back. If you want to have active participation and citizenship, let's learn something from models before that have worked.

Mine is just a general statement: in fact, in one community there's a vast universe of migrant communities that don't always agree with each other. Agency and the need for volunteering should be up front and center. The ads on the Underground don't say enough. There's a quote by Margaret Mead I'd like to mention because it is being recorded, "the value of what we try to do, never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has." The reason that I've gone back to those dreary two hour meetings is because they're full of really quite wonderful people. It was the human element that brought me back because I wanted to persuade them that they could do their business more effectively. What got me in was more that what I saw, to reaffirm the value of human relationship. People have been carrying a burden for ages, and if you tap into the human spirit, you really can change the world.

On your point about cross-sector understanding and creating a space for issues, bringing together leadership and activity around different issues, creating a collaborative community: we're one of the only organizations in our environment to bring different sectors together – the business community, the third sector, the government – you never have them getting in a room together to discuss what can be done collectively. The Mayor is in a very good place to do that, to bring them together.

We're trying to do that with the local forum, in an area where we've gotten a deferral on the planning application, because so much of the community is against it. You have a massive community up to 150 people with the council officers and developers to review-

In a neutral equal space.

Yes, so you collaborate together, and they're going to resist it, but we're going to keep pushing for it because it's the only solution to push deferment.

I'd like to see the GLA focusing on a number of communities including BME communities. There just hasn't been a focus on them in London. Just looking around the room physically, if this were held on a Saturday or in the evening, it might look very different. There's a lot that can be offered. We've got eighteen stories over the last two years about leaders who have been running the community spaces in London. Gathering histories about the charismatic people who have run these things in the past years. I also think we need an interesting, innovating, creative next-generation leadership programme. Systems and processes right now ensure we end up with the usual suspects. The GLA can at least lead on developing. There's a bit of a crises around young people's engagement. We're trying to give them social enterprise, create skills, but I don't see many diverse people in those spaces.

Just following on to that, there are some organizations-

I'm not talking about mentoring either.

In terms of coalition as well, it's very interesting what's been done in Chicago for example, where there was an African-American Mayor bringing in different people in leadership positions. What could the GLA

do right now? I work with Sisters on Cart, and one of the big problems is finding a space that's free and it's those kinds of things. What's the value of participating? A lot of participation is just extracted and there isn't anything that comes back. What value do you give the community to give them a sense of empowerment?

Picking up on your point about leadership: in Hackney there is a young Black men leadership programme. Volunteering is great for some, but some kind of resourcing in a peer leadership programme is needed so that people can influence each other. There are some examples of that, so that's something that the GLA could do.

It's great to see two funders at the table because we were trying to put together a paid internship programme and we were told it wasn't worth the money.

The Rank Foundation scheme is terrific. There was a ripple effect on young people. It was volunteering but they were paid, so that bit of money transformed a whole range of communities.

**There have been a lot of really rich ideas in this discussion. Let's bring it back to GLA and what they can do. What would be the one thing it and Matthew could do? We don't have a huge budget, so in terms of pulling together resources that is one tension. Some of the examples we've heard are about participating at the local level. How can we as a city support this to make sure these local processes work better?**

I suggest the Mayor work with the Evening Standard, or the Angel Estate which have turned around the lives of so many, for example former gang members who are now small business owners. The Evening Standard is a tool that can make people feel a part of a larger process. You could also have something like an award ceremony that would reward people for beautifying the environment, for example, and that would get the community engaged. You need to raise the profile and reward them. I see the Mayor hobnobbing with Tatler and those people could be drawn into the charities that have lost their resources. As a result of the endowment, we are benefiting. I never knock anybody for wanting to better themselves. Community means working with businesses, and that's where the Mayor comes in. you will begin to see a change in attitude from valuing the work that people are doing, and that's a really tactical way in which you can do that. I do nominate people for the community work they've done. To transform a society so that when someone works they feel proud.

I think that there's something around encouraging, giving, or philanthropy. It would be interesting to know with the current relationship with London councils, to see how we can get from a city level down to a local level. If you are going to do things like campaigning through the Evening Standard, please involve us. I think that there is disappointment when people's voices aren't included.

For me, one of the things that hasn't been mentioned is inequality of society and how you address that. For example, if you want different areas to benefit, you have to acknowledge that there are different benefits that have been distributed. There needs to be more equal distribution.

That brings me to social justice. To try and respond to the questions you're provoking us with, I'm of the school that the Mayor has a lot of power and influence. Yes, of course there's arguments about the Mayor having more devolved powers. Local issues are what inspire community activity. But actually a strategic framework is what's needed, and the London Plan is supposed to provide that. The social justice element is extremely weak in the London Plan. The economic driver is very prevalent. There's a need within that strategic framework to provide more attention to social justice. The London Plan categorizes what the Mayor, the borough, and the developer can do. It doesn't have the neighbourhood section. The lowest level mentioned is the borough section. Neighbourhoods are only mentioned in the introduction but it's not followed through in the actual plan at all. Who is able to participate at local planning? There is no equality, there's huge disadvantage. The Mayor could be steering how one does achieve some genuine equality in the whole of London. The second example is community assets. In the London Plan at the moment, there's mention of pubs: there's a paragraph around protecting pubs as a community asset. But

there's nothing around markets, community centers, there's just no reference. Clearly there's huge development pressure around all of these, so the Mayor could actually bring all of these within the strategic framework which would give encouragement. And how does one implement all these aspirations? When it comes to monitoring and implementation there's no social justice mentioned. The Mayor should set out a statement about including community groups. In all the Mayor's strategies, how is there going to be a full engagement? There is no statement of intent. Within the Just Space document, we have said that we would like to get together with the Mayor to generate a statement on these things. We're very keen to work with you on this and hope you are up for it.

**We are, and the fact that Matthew has community engagement on his agenda makes it quite clear that we are going to need a defined strategy. I want to pull out a couple things that I've heard since we have just a few minutes to wrap up. There's clearly a set of issues around the London Plan, and what can be done in the London Plan to set a vision and expectations around community engagement around the local level. The other thing I've been hearing is the Mayor's power to provide expectations around how we all live together. The third thing is the power of the GLA to convene different partners, different communities and provide spaces and context to promote those conversations where elsewhere they don't happen.**

It's also to provide space for others to influence each other.

There's a huge number of undocumented migrants in London, and there's practical things that can be done to encourage a route to citizenship, although we should be careful it doesn't create a bigger divide between London and the rest of the country.

In terms of your first point in engagement, I suggest some kind of mapping or assessment for what's being done.

In the past few years, there's been a shift in the volunteer groups where they've had to compete for resources and now we're asking them to collaborate. We should recognize that there's been tension since they did have to compete before. Just to respond to the multidisciplinary approach, that is embedded in the civil service already: working with local businesses, the police, entrepreneurs, people who do mentor young people. Let's not just use that resource but strengthen it.

We tend to invite those sectors in, but they don't invite us in as equal partners. That's something the Mayor can champion: that parity of contribution that we bring to the table.

There's a real danger that policy can be seen as slogans and remain that way unless they're anchored in real examples. We should seek out examples of good and bad practice. Going back to what you were saying about paid internships, I applied at a very small organization at the Heritage Lottery Fund to provide paid traineeships at London living wage for 77 young people from diverse communities, 18-25 year olds for a year, hosted by a national heritage organization like the British Museum or the National Trust. They were delivered by the organizations themselves though we planned it. And no one said that it was a waste of money. After a year, the people of color who came out of it, people who are usually associated with low-level service jobs, were seen instead as executive decision makers. 93% of them got jobs immediately in the sector. So the Mayor should work with other funding sectors to encourage more of this.