

REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD2770

Workforce Integration Network

Programme: Supporting Londoners to benefit from growth

Executive summary:

The Mayor of London is committed to ensuring all Londoners have access to good work. The Workforce Integration Network (WIN) supports this aim by helping employers build inclusive workplaces; and improve representation of Londoners from Black, Asian and racially minoritised backgrounds. This project is part of the mayoral mandate to supporting Londoners to benefit from growth (approved in MD3395: Delivery plan – supporting Londoners to benefit from growth).

This Director Decision seeks approval to allocate and spend up to £135,000 to deliver a full programme evaluation for WIN; commission new research on Black disabled Londoners in work; and develop practical resources for businesses to enhance uptake of equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives as a business-improvement tool.

This expenditure supports WIN's 2025–26 delivery; and follows Director Decisions DD2755, DD2757 and Mayoral Decision MD3364.

Decision:

That the Executive Director of Communities and Skills approves allocating and spending up to:

- £50,000 on evaluating the Workforce Integration Network programme to assess its impact; inform future delivery; and provide actionable insights and recommendations that employers and partners can implement
- £25,000 on new research on Black disabled Londoners and work, to better understand the barriers faced and identify opportunities for targeted support; this work will help to shape development of the Inclusive Talent System in London, and employer practice
- £60,000 on developing support resources for businesses, aimed at supporting them to realise the benefits of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) to grow their businesses amidst a backdrop of growing anti-EDI narratives.

AUTHORISING DIRECTOR

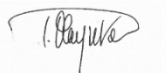
I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Tunde Olayinka

Position: Executive Director,
Communities & Skills

Signature:



Date: 27/11/2025

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The Workforce Integration Network (WIN) works with employers to tackle structural barriers that prevent underrepresented groups from accessing and progressing in good work. Through employer engagement, partnerships, research and targeted initiatives, WIN supports inclusive growth and contributes to the Mayor's mandate of supporting Londoners to benefit from growth.
- 1.2. The WIN is part of the Inclusive Talent System, and supports two key actions of the recent Inclusive Talent Strategy:
 - putting employers at the centre of driving inclusive growth
 - ensuring Londoners can find the right training and career path for them.
- 1.3. WIN contributes to building a more inclusive labour market, where diverse talent can thrive and employers are equipped to be change leaders within their industries.
- 1.4. The programme takes an intersectional approach to labour market inclusion, prioritising support for those who have been shown to face most inequities in the London labour market. This includes Black men (aged 16–24, and 50 and over); and Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black women. It also recognises the impact of socio-economic status and disability.
- 1.5. In 2025–26, WIN will deliver across three major programme areas:
 - The Design Lab programme, approved under DD2755. This year the programme will deliver a Design Lab for employers in the health sector. It will also provide ongoing legacy support for organisations that previously participated in the Design Lab in 2023–24, and require help to build on their successful work.
 - The Inclusive Talent Brokerage. This project, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, connects community-based organisations with diverse, job-ready talent – thus supporting inclusive employers across London. This project is approved under MD3364 and DD2757.
 - New research on Black disabled Londoners. This will form a strategic input for the Inclusive Talent System, and delivery of the new London Inclusive Talent Strategy. The work will ensure that interventions to address London's labour-market inequities also meet the needs of those who are excluded from good work because of disabilities. The team will also produce targeted support resources, and a peer network for businesses, so they can continue delivering their work to address labour market inequities, against the backdrop of increasing hostility to this work.
- 1.6. This decision form seeks approval of expenditure on a comprehensive evaluation of the WIN programme, to assess its impact and inform future delivery; and produce insights that will shape how London's Inclusive Talent System can better support Londoners from the most marginalised backgrounds to access good work. The evaluation will provide insights and recommendations that employers and partners can implement. It will also include assessing the impact of work delivered this year – such as the latest iteration of the Design Lab programme and research.
- 1.7. Disabled Londoners face a disability employment gap of 38.5 per cent.¹ Black disabled Londoners face compounded barriers due to both racial and disability-related discrimination. The unemployment rate for Black and minoritised disabled Londoners stands at 10.3 per cent, compared to just 2.8 per cent for non-disabled White workers.² In addition to being less likely to be in employment, disabled

¹ Trust for London, 2024, [Supporting disabled people into work](#)

² TUC, (2024), [Disability Pay and Employment Gaps](#)

Londoners who are in work often earn less than their non-disabled peers.³ Evidence highlights that the disability pay gap is further exacerbated by race and gender, with disabled Black women among the lowest-paid groups.⁴

- 1.8. The government is undertaking significant reforms to improve employment outcomes for disabled people, and those with long-term health conditions. To support these changes around work and disability, and to shape the interventions delivered through London's Inclusive Talent System, WIN will commission targeted research into the barriers faced by disabled Black Londoners seeking good work. This will ensure their voices and intersecting experiences are central to policy and practice. This work will provide key insights to improve the quality of interventions targeted towards supporting Black disabled Londoners into good work; and equip employers with the insights and tools needed to improve inclusion and equity in the workplace.
- 1.9. There is growing concern among business leaders about a shifting narrative on the importance of inclusion in the workplace, shaped by a changing political and global context that differs significantly from the momentum seen after 2020. This shift has led some organisations to pause or scale back important work to support Londoners from all backgrounds into good work. The Mayor of London and system leaders across London remain strong advocates for this work. This project will equip businesses with the tools and support needed to sustain and expand this essential work – reinforcing the value of workplace diversity through strong, cross-sector leadership.
- 1.10. The project will set out: the strategic business case for the importance of workforce inclusion; and how it helps drive innovation, productivity, wellbeing and retention. It will be collaboratively developed with business leaders and human resources (HR) professionals. By grounding narratives in London's unique context and lived experience, as well as the benefits for employers and growth, the project will help businesses connect with diverse talent and respond effectively to evolving workforce needs.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

Disability research

2.1. The objectives for this work are as follows:

- Identify systemic barriers:
 - Examine how intersecting identities (race, disability, and gender) affect access to employment-related services and the labour market.
 - Highlight structural barriers within the public and private sectors, through quantitative and qualitative insights of the lived experience of Black disabled Londoners. This work will demonstrate the impact of policy gaps and service failures on everyday life.
- Assess policy and practice: Review existing national and corporate policies for inclusivity and equity, in collaboration with Black disabled communities, to design actionable recommendations.
- Inform programme delivery: Gain insights, and develop proposals that can support and shape the delivery of existing skills and employment initiatives. This includes delivery of the Trailblazers programme; the Inclusive Talent Strategy; and the Get London Working plan.
- Influence decision-makers: Develop recommendations that inform efforts to influence change across sectors in London.

³ Office for National Statistics, [Disability pay gaps in the UK: 2014 to 2023](#), 17 October 2024

⁴ Living Wage Foundation, [Why low pay is a racial justice issue](#), 17 October 2023

2.2. The expected outcomes of this work are as follows:

- Policy recommendations: Through this work, develop a set of targeted proposals for employers, as well as local and national government, to address identified gaps.
- Business inclusion guidance: Work towards practical guidance for employers on inclusive recruitment for Black disabled Londoners.
- Community engagement:
 - Strengthen the voice and visibility of Black disabled people in policy and business forums.
 - Raise public awareness of, and increase the understanding around, intersectional discrimination, to shift public narratives around disability and race.

Business support resources on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

2.3. The objectives for this work are as follows:

- Reframe EDI narratives to reflect a clear business value:
 - Produce effective and usable resources that position EDI as a strategic asset, rather than a compliance obligation – highlighting the link between inclusive practices and innovation, productivity, workplace wellbeing and retention.
 - Develop a usable evidence base and narrative prompts for employers, and identify common misconceptions and resistance points around EDI, to produce an evidence-based narrative that resonates with businesses and diverse audiences.
- Engage stakeholders across sectors: Use the opportunity to build coalition, and collaborate, with business leaders, HR professionals, and community organisations on the benefits of EDI. This work will be done through facilitated dialogue, and co-design of inclusive policies and practices.
- Ensure regional relevance and local resonance: Tailor narratives to reflect London's unique demographic, economic and social contexts; and incorporate lived experiences of underrepresented groups in the workforce.

2.4. The expected outcomes of this work are as follows:

- Enhanced understanding and uptake of EDI as a business-enhancing tool:
 - Increased awareness of the tangible benefits of EDI among business leaders and employees.
 - Reduced resistance to, or backlash against, EDI initiatives across the business community.
- Improved EDI communication strategies: More nuanced and inclusive language used in internal and external communications, leading to greater uptake of inclusive employment practices; and more businesses implementing inclusive recruitment and progression policies. This, in turn, would mean improved representation and retention of diverse talent across sectors.
- Strengthened cross-sector collaboration: Form coalitions to share best practice and support EDI efforts across public, private and third-sector organisations.

Evaluation

2.5. The objectives for this work are as follows:

- Assess the impact of the WIN programme in supporting underrepresented Londoners to access good work; and the impact of specific initiatives, including the Design Lab and commissioned research, to understand their contribution to programme goals.

- Identify insights to guide the future design and delivery of the WIN programme; the Inclusive Talent System in London; and wider business and stakeholder practice.

2.6. The expected outcomes of this work are as follows:

- Clear guidance and evidence on how future iterations of the WIN programme can be refined to more effectively meet the needs of underrepresented groups.
- Practical, evidence-informed recommendations for employers and partners to improve inclusive employment practices.
- A deeper understanding into how WIN methodology can help the Inclusive Talent System develop, to more effectively support inclusive access to good work across London.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Equality Act), as a public authority the GLA must have due regard to the need to: eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and any conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act; and advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. The relevant protected characteristics under section 149 of the Equality Act are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Compliance with the duty may involve ensuring people with a protected characteristic are provided with all the opportunities that those without the characteristic would have.
- 3.3. WIN focuses on improving pathways for underrepresented groups in the workplace, particularly those who face the highest barriers, such as Black men; and Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black women. An intersectional analysis showed that these groups experience significant inequality and exclusion because they possess one or more characteristics in addition to ethnicity that compound disadvantage. Further, disability and socio-economic class are also key intersectional factors that can negatively impact on labour market outcomes.
- 3.4. WIN works to improve the recruitment, retention and progression of Black and racially minoritised Londoners. It collaborates with employers to support these underrepresented Londoners into good work. London's average unemployment rate is 6 per cent – but the following groups all have a rate significantly higher than the average:
 - Pakistani and Bangladeshi women: 11.3 per cent
 - Black women: 10.5 per cent
 - Black men: 12.4 per cent.
- 3.5. The research on Black disabled Londoners will explore how existing services and support can be improved to better meet the needs of this group. By identifying gaps in provision and highlighting lived experiences, the study aims to inform more inclusive policy and practice. This work will ultimately support better economic outcomes for Black disabled Londoners; and ensure they are not left behind in efforts to build a fairer and more equitable city.
- 3.6. EDI narrative work will play a vital role in encouraging more employers across London to recognise the value of recruiting individuals from all protected characteristics. Through targeted engagement and storytelling, this initiative will help shift mindsets and promote inclusive hiring practices. By fostering a more representative workforce, the work supports the development of a truly inclusive economy – one where all Londoners can thrive.

3.7. A comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment for work delivered as part of this Decision is in development.

4. Other considerations

4.1. Risks and mitigations are outlined in the table below:

Description of risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigations	RAG
Low employer engagement due to shifting priorities or reduced capacity.	Reduces reach and effectiveness of WIN research and interventions.	Low	Early engagement with key employers, maintaining regular light-touch contact and developing industry body partnerships.	Amber
Ever-changing political context.	Reduced support for EDI initiatives.	Medium	Develop politically neutral messaging; align with economic growth and productivity goals; build cross-sector coalitions.	Amber
Struggle to reach and engage a sufficiently diverse cross-section of Black disabled Londoners.	Findings that do not fully reflect the breadth of experiences and needs.	Low	Develop targeted outreach through trusted community partners. Tailor engagement methods to meet access needs and cultural preferences. Work with the Mayor's EDI Advisory Board and disability forums, to provide clear steers and strategic guidance.	Amber
Decision-makers or employers are not receptive or lack capacity to act.	EDI narrative work may not translate into meaningful change	Low	Embed EDI work within the strategic priorities of businesses and partners. Co-create actions with decision-makers to ensure relevance, ownership, and follow-through.	Amber
The EDI messaging may not resonate with all employers – particularly those with limited prior engagement in inclusion work.	Disengagement or misinterpretation of the project's aims.	Medium	Use business-targeted (co-designed) messaging, and real-world examples, to connect with employers' values; and show how EDI supports business and community outcomes.	Amber
Employers and partners may experience fatigue from repeated EDI engagement, especially if they perceive the work as critical of their actions.	Sector disengagement	Low	Celebrate wins to sustain motivation and awarding progress.	Amber

5. Financial comments

5.1. Approval is sought for the expenditure of up to £135,000 in 2025-26 financial year to deliver a full programme evaluation for WIN, commission new research on Black Disabled Londoners in work, and develop practical resources for businesses to enhance uptake of EDI initiatives as a business-improvement tool. The breakdown is as follows.

- £50,000 for an evaluation of the WIN programme to assess its impact, inform future delivery and provide actionable insights and recommendations that employers and partners can implement.
- £25,000 New research on Black Disabled Londoners and work, to better understand the barriers faced and identify opportunities for targeted support. This work will help to shape development of the Inclusive Talent System in London, as well as employer practice.
- £60,000 The development of support resources for businesses, aimed at supporting them to realise the benefits of EDI to grow their businesses amidst a backdrop of growing anti-EDI narratives.

5.2. The expenditure of up to £135,000 will be funded from the WIN programme budget.

5.3. There is sufficient budget in the approved 2025-26 GLA budget to fund the expenditure of £135,000 from the WIN programme budget in 2025-26.

6. Legal comments

6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions sought concern the exercise of the GLA's general powers, falling within the GLA's statutory powers to do such things considered to further, or that are facilitative of, or conducive or incidental to, the promotion of the social and economic development and wealth creation and the improvement of the environment in Greater London. In formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought, officers must comply with the GLA's related statutory duties to:

- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people
- consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the UK
- consult with appropriate bodies.

6.2. In taking the decisions requested, the Director must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty; namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation) and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Director should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.

6.3. If the Director makes the decisions sought, officers must ensure that:

- all services, supplies or works required are procured in liaison with TfL Procurement and in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code; and contracts are put in place between and executed by the GLA and contractors before commencement of such services
- any award of grant funding is made fairly, transparently, in accordance with the GLA's equalities requirements and with the requirements of GLA's Contracts and Funding Code (and where applicable the Subsidy Control Act 2022) and funding agreements are put in place between and executed by the GLA and recipients before any commitment to fund is made.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

7.1. The project will be delivered according to the following timetable:

Activity	Timeline
Procure contract for an evaluator	December 2025
Procure contract for research organisation: disability research	November 2025
Procure contract for a delivery partner: narrative work	November 2025
Delivery start date: disability research	December 2025
Delivery start date: narrative work	January 2026
Business roundtables	January to mid-February 2026
Complete narrative framing	March 2026
Publish disability research	March 2026
Finalised narrative report	April 2026
Final evaluation start and finish	September 2026

Appendices and supporting papers:

None.

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will be published either within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Strategic Programmes

Does this decision seek approval for activity falling within the remit of a programme delivery plan? YES

If YES, which programme/s does this fall within: Supporting Londoners to benefit from growth

Part 1 – Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If YES, for what reason:

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring)

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form? NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Phyllis Abebrese has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service:

Rupinder Pahar has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval.

✓

Financial and Legal advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

Mayoral Delivery Board

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 10 November 2025. ✓

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Fay Hannan

Signature:

Date: 26 November 2025