

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD2732

Title: Recovery Fund - Robust Safety Net mission projects

Executive Summary:

This MD covers projects that fall within or complement the 'Robust Safety Net' recovery mission, one of the nine recovery missions signed off by the London Recovery Board on 15 September 2020.

These projects contribute to the mission's goal – that by 2025, every Londoner is able to access the support they need to prevent financial hardship ('A Robust Safety Net').

This decision covers expenditure of £900,000 from the GLA 2020-21 Recovery Fund for the scaling up and extending of activity to embed the provision of social welfare legal advice in community locations (such as schools or community food settings such as food banks or community pantries); and supporting local authorities and their voluntary and community sector partners to address food insecurity. Separate proposals, to be approved via a Director's Decision, will be brought forward with respect to the remaining £100,000 allocated to the Robust Safety Net mission from the Recovery Fund.

Decision:

That the Mayor:

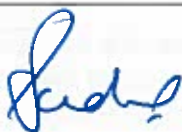
1. approves expenditure of up to £700,000 (£110,000 in 2020-21, £350,000 in 2021-22, and £240,000 in 2022-23) on a grant funding scheme for supporting low-income Londoners through the provision of advice services embedded in community locations, including, but not limited to, primary schools and community food settings;
2. approves expenditure of up to £200,000 (£120,000 in 2020-21, £80,000 in 2021-22) on a grant funding scheme to support local authorities to take measures to address food insecurity; and
3. delegates authority to the Executive Director for Communities & Skills to receive and spend any match funding in respect of the provision of advice services embedded in community locations and the Food Roots Incubator Programme, should this become available.

Mayor of London

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

18/12/20

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. COVID-19 has had a profound and too often tragic impact on the lives of Londoners. Thousands of people in our city have died. Many more have suffered from the effects of the virus and some are still recovering. All Londoners have seen their way of life severely disrupted – often with dire consequences for their economic wellbeing or their physical and mental health.
- 1.2. As well as responding to the immediate challenge of mitigating this impact, there is also a need to focus on London's longer-term recovery from COVID-19. The London Recovery Programme, overseen by the London Recovery Board, has identified a grand challenge to restore confidence in the city, minimise the impact on communities and build back better the city's economy and society.
- 1.3. One mission ('A Robust Safety Net') focuses on ensuring that, 'by 2025, every Londoner is able to access the support they need to prevent financial hardship'. Delivering this mission will involve putting in place targeted interventions to connect the most disadvantaged or excluded communities with advice or hardship support; taking steps to address deserts of provision; and raising awareness amongst Londoners of their rights and financial entitlements, and where they can get help to enforce or claim them.
- 1.4. In addition, work is ongoing in partnership with local authorities and other partners through the London Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG) and supporting structures to tackle more immediate challenges, including those relating to food insecurity.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. The work underway to develop an action plan for the delivery of the mission has identified the following four broad elements of a safety net:
 - access to a national welfare benefit system that provides for a minimum standard of living;
 - access to formal/statutory elements of the local welfare system (local authority hardship funds, support with council tax etc) to effectively prevent or resolve moments of crisis or problem debt;
 - an awareness of one's rights and entitlements and the support necessary to assert them; and
 - access to emergency support services such as food aid to alleviate the manifestations of destitution or extreme poverty.
- 2.2. While there may be opportunities for recovery partners to coalesce around specific advocacy asks in relation to the first bullet point, it is anticipated that the work of the recovery mission will focus on the second and third elements, while the work of the SCG is likely to be the best place to focus on the fourth in the short term.
- 2.3. In line with the above, and the overall focus of the recovery mission, the initiatives detailed below would seek to either reduce financial hardship by improving awareness of and access to the various forms of support available, or reduce food insecurity by strengthening the VCS organisations that help those at risk of it.
- 2.4. The GLA was already developing plans for activity that would directly contribute to some of these elements and this outcome. Current engagement with local partners through the SCG and supporting structures is also identifying further opportunities to strengthen some of these elements.

- 2.5. The following specific interventions, for which approval for expenditure is sought, set out how the overall outcomes would be pursued.

Supporting low-income Londoners by embedding advice in community locations

- 2.6. In 2019/20, the GLA commissioned the Child Poverty Action Group to deliver a pilot project to assist primary schools in implementing a range of measures to support low-income families. This included embedding welfare rights advisors in the 11 schools that took part. The advisors secured additional income for one in three families they saw, with an average increase of more than £7,000 per household. Overall, £3 of additional income was generated for families for every £1 that was spent on advisors. The pilot also resulted in the creation of a number of new partnerships and referral pathways between schools and a range of different local, pan-London and national support services and local authorities.
- 2.7. Approval is sought for funding to scale up this successful pilot. It is proposed that £700,000 is allocated to funding the development of 8-10 local partnerships to support schools, local authorities, VCS support services and other partners in areas of identified need to relieve and prevent hardship amongst low-income families and individuals. Building on the approach piloted to date, these community locations will principally be primary schools, but the project will also seek to test the approach in other locations, including community food settings.
- 2.8. The first phase of this project will seek to support the development of partnerships between 'anchor' advice providers or funders (which we expect will primarily be law centres, Citizens Advice Bureaux, or potentially local authorities) and locations in the community where families or individuals that could benefit from that advice can be reached.
- 2.9. Partnerships will then be able to bid into a second phase where larger grant awards will be available to implement new approaches to connecting users of those community locations into the support available in their localities. An evaluation covering both phases of the project will be commissioned
- 2.10. Within a flexible approach, this grant fund would seek to track a number of key outcomes that will be determined by further scoping, but which could include amount of income gained for supported households, or numbers of households supported to resolve their migration status, for example.
- 2.11. To the expenditure authorised via this MD will be added £50,000 already authorised by MD2680 for delivering social welfare support to low-income families, taking the total budget to £750,000. This extra money will be used immediately to support and fund partnership development activity. This work will help match schools with relevant local and/or pan-London partners and assist them in developing consortium bids. We then intend to launch the full grant fund towards the end of the financial year 2020-21 with a view to successful consortiums carrying out work for the duration of the following academic year (September 2021 to July 2022).
- 2.12. As a result of delivery being anticipated to take place across the next full academic year, it is anticipated that some of costs of funding this delivery will be incurred in the first half of the 2022-23 financial year.
- 2.13. We will also be seeking to attract matched or pooled funding for the scheme from other funders who have shown interest in the 2019-20 pilot and our proposed approach for this fund (particularly those that are currently funding complementary school-based initiatives). As this will not be confirmed until a later date delegated authority to receive and spend any match funding is being sought.
- 2.14. Indicative breakdown of expenditure:

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Phase 1			
Partnership development grants of £5-10,000 for up to 10 school partnerships	£50,000		
Partnership development grants of £5-10,000 for up to 5 food partnerships	£40,000		
Phase 2			
Project evaluation	£20,000	£40,000	
Delivery grants of £50,000 for 8 school partnerships		£160,000	£240,000
Delivery grants of £50,000 for 3 food partnerships		£150,000	
TOTAL	£110,000	£350,000	£240,000

Tackling food insecurity: support for small voluntary and community sector organisations

- 2.15. Building on action to help boroughs and voluntary and community sector organisations strengthen the co-ordination of responses to food insecurity amongst both shielding and non-shielding households during lockdown, it is proposed that £200,000 is allocated to establishing a Food Security Incubator programme. Recognising the important role that many small VCS organisations are playing in supporting those at risk of food insecurity, and the pressure this is placing those organisations under, this programme aims to support collaboration between local authorities, civil society and public/private sector organisations with the goal of supporting food partnerships – and the organisations that they consist of – to grow, diversify and become sustainable.
- 2.16. Grantees will be supported by a commissioned incubator programme which will develop their skills and long-term sustainability through a learning cycle of reflecting, planning and doing. The curriculum will be finalised in conjunction with the commissioned partner, but could cover:
- understanding the root causes of food insecurity and targeting drivers;
 - collaboration: developing partnerships which are sustainable and resilient to change;
 - involving experts by experience;
 - finance: fundraising and forward planning;
 - using data and insights in decision making; and
 - evidencing impact through monitoring and evaluation.
- 2.17. In addition to the overarching goal of supporting the sustainability of partnerships, the programme will also require partnerships to demonstrate delivery against one of three goals:
- ensuring sustainable, collaborative and resilient support structures are in place to effectively respond to rising food insecurity and future crises;

- increasing London's ability to tackle the root causes of food insecurity and reduce the need for food aid, particularly through embedding and strengthening the practice of integrated 'cash first' approaches; and
- improve physical access to healthy food and increase take-up of food-related benefits such as Healthy Start vouchers and Free School Meals.

2.18. By supporting food partnerships to grow, diversify, and become sustainable, the following outcomes are expected:

- increased community resilience to respond to shocks and support recovery;
- increase in sustainable collaborations that are able to respond to the needs of London's communities; and
- more joined up and coordinated support for Londoners from civic, public and business sectors.

2.19. Along with grant awards of between £10,000 and £15,000 to help them deliver against the above objectives, this programme will procure an incubator programme to support the cohort of grant recipients initially on a six-month basis, but with the ability to extend the contract.

2.20. We are working with a partner organisation who may be able to either provide match funding to expand the programme or align funding to increase the number of partnerships that can be supported through the programme. As this will not be confirmed until a later date delegated authority to receive any match funding is being sought.

2.21. Indicative budget breakdown:

	2020-21	2021-22
Commission incubator partner	£30,000	£20,000
Grants of between £10,000 and £15,000 for 12 food partnerships	£90,000	£60,000
TOTAL	£120,000	£80,000

2.22. There is a clear distinction between the grants to support food partnerships in this and the preceding section. The development grants for food partnerships under the embedded community advice project will be for the specific purpose of preparing partnerships to bid into the main grant programme to embed access to social welfare advice in community food settings. The grants in this food security incubator programme will be paid to the partnerships of VCS organisations and local authorities in order to support them to grow, diversify and become more sustainable.

Further actions in support of the Robust Safety Net mission

2.23. In addition to the above, the establishment of the Robust Safety Net mission offers the opportunity to bring together a range of partners to identify further actions that can be taken to support the identified elements of the safety net. Work with the appointed mission leads to realise this opportunity is already underway, with the first iteration of an action plan due to be presented to the London Recovery Board in January and a process of stakeholder and community engagement planned to begin shortly afterwards. It is anticipated that there will be funding requirements arising from either the engagement activity itself, or the outcomes identified by that engagement that will require funding this financial year.

2.24. One such area of activity relates to the strategic co-ordination of the provision of social welfare legal advice in London. By establishing strategic partnerships of funders and providers of advice the mission will define the scope of interventions to better enable Londoners to assert their rights and

entitlements. These interventions could include targeted support for the provision of advice in identified geographical 'deserts'; schemes or campaigns to raise awareness of legal rights and entitlements and where support for realising them can be found, such as a single point of access; or investment in infrastructure to support the provision of advice.

- 2.25. Another area of activity relates to the provision of elements of what can be described as the local social security system, including local welfare assistance schemes, council tax support schemes and discretionary housing payments. Again, by working through the structures of the recovery programme, interventions to improve the coverage of these elements of the local social security system – potentially by developing a minimum standard for local welfare provision, and working with boroughs to meet that standard – will be identified.
- 2.26. A final area of activity relates to shorter term, crisis support interventions that recognise the potential for fast-moving and high-impact challenges to living standards in the wake of the end of the EU transition period or any further wave of Covid infections. These could affect issues such as destitution, food insecurity or fuel poverty and require rapid interventions.
- 2.27. Separate proposals in relation to the areas above, to be approved via a Director's Decision, will be brought forward with respect to the remaining £100,000 allocated to the Robust Safety Net mission from the Recovery Fund.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the Mayor is subject to the public sector equality duty and must have due regard to the need to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. Relevant protected characteristics under section 149 of the Equality Act are age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 3.2. The initiatives described in this document all seek to connect Londoners on low-incomes or at risk of hardship with forms of relevant support. Therefore it will be important to consider which groups, including those sharing protected characteristics, are most likely to have need of or be in a position to benefit from this support, what barriers might prevent them from doing so, and how we can monitor whether they are or not.
- 3.3. Certain groups experience higher risks of poverty and destitution than others. The poverty rates for Londoners from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities is 38%, compared to 21% for White Londoners. For households with a disabled member, the rate is 31%, compared to 27% for those without¹. Foreign nationals – especially those with no recourse to public funds – face a particularly high risk of destitution².
- 3.4. Previous GLA research has highlighted how the cumulative impact of changes to the national tax and benefit system has had a disproportionately large and negative impact on the incomes of households with a disabled member, households with children (especially lone parents), and Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi households³. This stems from the fact that these groups are likely to rely on welfare benefits for a proportionally larger share of their incomes. The converse is therefore also expected to hold – that initiatives that seek to increase households' income by raising awareness of entitlements

¹ <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/publications/lpp2020/>

² <https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/over-one-and-a-half-million-people-were-destitute-uk-2017>

³ <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/welfare-reform-2019/>

to welfare benefits should stand to be particularly beneficial to these groups. This will be reflected in the design, communication and evaluation of these initiatives.

- 3.5. There is also evidence that certain BAME groups are relying more heavily than other groups on food banks⁴ – with food banks also reporting increases in usage by groups with no recourse to public funds. Again, initiatives focused on linking Londoners into sources of emergency support such as food aid will reflect that in their design, communication and evaluation.
- 3.6. Initiatives targeted at the strategic co-ordination of social welfare legal advice will also need to respond to the evidence of which groups are less well served by specialist provision of this nature. Analysis commissioned by the GLA⁵ last year identified young people, some BAME groups and disabled Londoners as groups that experience either a lack of specialist provision, or barriers to accessing 'mainstream' provision.

4. Other considerations

- 4.1. As mentioned in paragraph 2.11, £50,000 of pre-approved funding will be added to the total budget for the activity outlined in this MD for delivering support to low-income families via schools. This will take the total budget to £1,050,000. The additional £50,000 in question was approved by MD2680 Communities and Social Policy Programme Budget 2020-21 and will be taken from the £70,000 allocated to delivering social welfare support to low income families, building on and disseminating the findings of the successful child poverty schools pilot in 2019-20 (part of the Equality and Fairness Team budget).
- 4.2. The proposed expenditure of £100,000 for further activity responding to the Robust Safety Net mission will build on existing work being delivered by the Equality and Fairness Team, including work on increasing Londoners' awareness of their employment rights. A budget of £75,000 was approved for development of the Employment Rights Hub, the key vehicle for awareness-raising about employment rights, through DD2480 Equality and Fairness Team – short-term delivery of key programmes, and MD 2680 Communities and Social Policy Programme Budget 2020-21.
- 4.3. No-one involved in the preparation of this form has any conflicts of interest to declare.

Risk register

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Rating	Mitigation	Residual rating
Schools do not engage with community advice grant funding scheme	2	3	A	Building on learning from pilot phase, a primary partnership development phase has been built into proposals to raise awareness of the grant funding opportunity. All links to schools through	G

⁴ <https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-food-banks-report.pdf>

⁵ <https://asauk.org.uk/projects/>

				existing GLA networks (e.g. Healthy Schools Network, Team London Youth Social Action School Grants) will be exploited	
Investment in food partnerships duplicates investment from other funders	3	2	A	Proactive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders through the Mayor's Food Board (and its sub-groups) will enable alignment with any other initiatives	G
Commissioned partners fail to deliver resources to expected quality or to time	2	2	A	Set clear and specific parameters for commission; build in regular milestones to check progress; work with trusted partners where possible	G
Financial mismanagement of any funding provided by the GLA to partners involved in the programmes outlined	1	3	A	The GLA will conduct due diligence on all partners, before funding agreements are signed	G

- 4.4. This document links to Mayoral strategies and priorities as outlined in section 1, principally due to it authorising expenditure in support of the goals outlined in the 'Robust Safety Net' recovery mission, as signed off by the London Recovery Board, which is co-chaired by the Mayor.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. Approval is sought for expenditure of up to £900,000 on the Robust Safety Net mission projects. A detailed breakdown is as follows:

Mission Projects	Approval for Expenditure in 2020-21 £	Approval for Expenditure in 2021-22 £	Approval for Expenditure in 2022-23 £	TOTAL £
Supporting low-income Londoners by embedding advice in community locations	£110,000	£350,000	£240,000	£700,000
Tackling food insecurity: support for small voluntary and community sector organisations	£120,000	£80,000		£200,000
Total	£230,000	£430,000	£240,000	£900,000

- 5.2. Of this expenditure, £900,000 will be funded by the 2020-21 Recovery Fund created under MD2666. Future years' budgets are indicative, and still subject to the GLA's annual budget setting process. All necessary budget adjustments will be made.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. Under section 30 of the Greater London Authority (GLA) Act 1999 (as amended) the Mayor, acting by the GLA, may do anything that furthers the promotion of London's economic development and wealth creation, social development and environmental improvement ("the principal purposes") and under section 34 may do anything that facilitates, is conducive or incidental to doing so. In general terms the expenditure proposed to be approved under this Form is authorised by section 30 of the Act as pursuing one or more of the GLA's principal purposes.
- 6.2. Under section 31 of the GLA Act, the GLA may not, however, incur expenditure to provide education services, health services (other than public health services) or social services where the provision in question may be made by a London borough council, the Common Council or any other public body or in connection with anything that is within the powers of MOPAC, the LFC or TfL to do. This does not, however, prevent the Mayor incurring expenditure in co-operating with, or facilitating or co-ordinating the activities of, such bodies. As programmes, proposals and individual activities are developed they will be reviewed to ensure that any related GLA expenditure remains within what is permitted by the Act.
- 6.3. Expenditure and the procurement of contracts and suppliers, and the making of grants, must be carried out in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code and Financial Regulations.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Table 1 – Embedding advice in community locations

Activity	Timeline
Promotion of grant programme/expressions of interest	Jan 2021
Draft spec for and procure evaluation	Jan 2021
Partnership building/bid development activity	Feb-Mar 2021
Launch of full grant scheme	Mar 2021
Bid evaluation/grants awarded	Apr/May 2021
Activity planning/preparation	Jun/Jul 2021
Start delivery of food partner interventions	Jun/Jul 2021
Delivery of specific summer holiday interventions	Jul/Aug 2021
Start delivery of term-time interventions	Sep 2021
Interim reporting from grantees (food partnerships)	Oct 2021
Delivery of specific holiday interventions	Dec 2021/Jan 2022

Intermediate reporting from grantees (school partnerships)	Feb/Mar 2022
End of food partner interventions	Mar 2022
End of term-time interventions	Jul 2022
Delivery of specific summer holiday interventions	Jul/Aug 2022
Final evaluation	Jul/Aug 2022
Project Closure	Sep 2022

Table 2 – Tackling food insecurity

Activity	Timeline
Finalise specification of incubator	January
Application documentation complete	January
Launch of incubator programme – applications open/Tender documentation for incubator published	January
Applications close/Tender process closes	January
Incubator contract awarded	February
Successful applicants informed	February
Grant letters in place	February
Programme commences	February
Completion of programme	September
Event, including case studies and evaluation findings	October

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 either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral**Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? YES**

If YES, for what reason: To ensure best value in procuring commissioned services (evaluation and incubator)

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring) May 2021

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under 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:

Daniel Drillsma-Milgrom has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

Sponsoring Director:

Sarah Mulley has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

Mayoral Adviser:

Debbie Weekes-Bernard has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.

Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 14 December 2020.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

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

Signature

D. Gove

Date

16 December 2020

CHIEF OF STAFF:

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor

Signature

D. Bellamy

Date

14 December 2020