

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2559

Title: Building Strong Communities Mutual Aid, Festival of Ideas follow-on, and Inclusive Volunteering

Executive Summary:

The Building Strong Communities (BSC) mission sets out the overarching goal and key aims for the GLA and strategic partners in supporting community-led and community-level recovery from Covid-19. The goal is that “By 2025 all Londoners will have access to a community hub ensuring they can volunteer, get support and build strong networks”. In November 2020 MD2726 approved expenditure of up to £375,000, and in October 2021 MD2854 approved £1,114m of expenditure for work that leads to the BSC outcomes.

These decisions also approved delegated authority to the Assistant Director to return for further approval for expenditure from the Team London and Community Sport 2021/22 budget. This ADD requests permission for spend relating to learning and engagement work with local mutual aid networks, work to support civil society groups to use Londoners’ voices to lead the recovery, and for work to support inclusive volunteering and removing barriers to volunteering for Londoners from under-represented groups.

Decision:

That the Assistant Director of Team London and Community Sport approves:

1. *Expenditure on grant funding* of up to £35,000 for learning and engagement work with local mutual aid networks
2. *Expenditure on grant funding* of up to £35,000 for follow on work to build on the learning generated from the Festival of Ideas
3. *Expenditure on grant funding* of up to £40,000 for work to support inclusive volunteering and removing barriers to volunteering for Londoners from under-represented groups

AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT

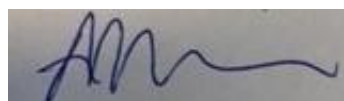
I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor’s plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Alice Wilcock

Position: Assistant Director, Team London and Community Sport

Signature:



Date:

21/2/22

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The Building Strong Communities (BSC) mission sets out the overarching goal and key aims for the GLA and strategic partners in supporting community-led and community-level recovery from Covid-19. The goal is that “By 2025 all Londoners will have access to a community hub ensuring they can volunteer, get support and build strong networks”.
- 1.2. Communities must be in the driving seat of how community hubs are created and what they look like. Community hubs will therefore take different forms in different areas, as they will need to be responsive to the needs and assets of local communities. Some hubs may be in the form of physical ‘bricks and mortar’ spaces, with the potential to positively reinforce other missions, including thriving high streets. Others may have a strong online presence for communities of interest dispersed across geographies. Hubs may also be comprised of networks of people supporting one another in local communities (without a dedicated building, for example). And, of course, hubs can also combine some or all these characteristics together.
- 1.3. In all cases, for community hubs to emerge, communities will first need strong foundations of: local networks to support Londoners to lead the recovery, systems that enable unheard Londoners’ voices to influence change, and community-run activities that build a sense of belonging and feelings of connection. The four mission aims detailed here are therefore stepping-stones to achieving the mission goal.
- 1.4. In November 2020 MD2726 approved expenditure of up to £375,000 for expenditure to support hyperlocal volunteering activity, provide additional coordinated support for the Social Enterprise and Community Business sector, and recognise the volunteering work done by Londoners during the pandemic at that point. It also delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Team London and Community Sport authority to approve detailed expenditure plans for learning and engagement work with local mutual aid networks, which is the subject of this ADD.
- 1.5. In October 2021 MD2854 approved expenditure of up to £1.98m over the 21/22 and 22/23 financial years to support those communities that have been most adversely affected by Covid-19. Work completed under this MD will contribute towards the mission by supporting small, community-led organisations to create opportunities for communities to come together. This will provide important foundational work leading towards the establishment of community hubs in areas of most need. It also delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Team London and Community Sport authority to approve detailed expenditure plans for work to support civil society groups to use Londoners’ voices to lead the recovery. This work builds on the learning and identified needs generated from the Festival of Ideas, which included a focus on work to support inclusive volunteering and removing barriers to volunteering for Londoners from under-represented groups, both of which are now included in this ADD.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. This Decision requests permission for expenditure relating to delegated authority, as approved in MD2726 (£35,000 for learning and engagement work with local mutual aid networks), and from

MD2854 (£35,000 to build on the learning generated from the Festival of Ideas, and £40,000 for work to support inclusive volunteering and removing barriers to volunteering). Further detail of this work is laid out below.

Learning and engagement work: £35,000

- 2.2. This Decision requests permission for grant funding of up to £35,000 for learning and engagement work with local mutual aid networks. This will consist of two distinct pieces of grant funding, as laid out below.
- 2.3. Grant funding of £15,000 will be awarded to Hammersmith and Fulham Volunteer Centre (HFVC) to build on the Mutual Aid work that the organisation completed from April – July 2021. Hammersmith and Fulham Volunteer Centre are the only organisation that can deliver this work as it is a direct evolution of their Mutual Aid plus programme and builds on the relationships that they established with mutual aid groups over that time.

The Continuation of the Mutual Aid Plus programme will offer:

- ongoing tailored support by e-mail, phone or Mutual aid ‘café’ to the fifty organisations that HFVC supported through the first phase of Mutual Aid Plus in 2021.
- build and broker relationships with mutual aid groups and larger organisations that will help mutual aid groups to achieve their goals
- build relationships and offer support to new Mutual aid groups that the programme hasn’t engaged with before
- help groups transition by supporting them with exit strategies (I.e. if the Mutual aid group as it was set up is no longer operating effectively providing the group with options for changing legal form, collaborating with others or ceasing activities safely.)
- collate and share good practice and useful information with mutual aid groups. This element of delivery will connect with the second part of funded work with mutual aid groups as outlined in 2.4.

The outcomes of this work will be:

- for groups supported by Mutual Aid Plus to increase awareness and understanding of their impact, future, challenges and opportunities
 - increased networking and collaboration between mutual aid groups (noting there had been strong connections early in the pandemic but they are not as strong now)
 - increased access for mutual aid groups to good practice materials and helpful information – working with other GLA funded partners and stakeholders in this area
 - a plan for each group in the short and long-term how to achieve their aims and be sustainable
 - for groups supported by the Mutual Aid Plus programme to have their voices and experiences heard in developing a resource bank for mutual aid groups (related to 2.4.)
- 2.4. Grant funding of £20,000 will be awarded for an organisation to develop an online resource bank for mutual aid groups. The development of such a resource bank was a recommendation from the final report of the Mutual Aid Plus programme in 2021. No such existing repository of comprehensive information and resources for Mutual Aid groups currently exists and the development of this will provide a useful pan-London resource that can be shared. This will achieve the outcomes of:

- serving the needs of existing mutual aid and hyperlocal groups across London by sharing accessible information about data management, group development, building relationships and organisational structures.
- support the establishment of new groups through the provision of information about mutual aid, building on a group and good practice that has worked well since 2020/21.
- build on the expertise of the groups that have engaged with the Mutual Aid Plus programme by connecting with HFVC to ensure that the development of the resource bank meets the needs of groups.

An RFP process will be completed to identify a delivery partner for this piece of work, as there are a number of social research organisations that would be appropriate to approach.

- 2.5. Mutual Aid has been an important mechanism for informal volunteering over the last two years enabling people who might not have otherwise volunteered to support others in need in their communities. If the BSC mission is to ensure that all communities in London have access to a community hub then it is important that both formal and informal opportunities to volunteer are embedded in communities. This work supports the BSC outcomes: Londoners are supported to lead the recovery in their own communities and; feelings of connections within and across communities are increased.

Building on the Festival of Ideas: £35,000

- 2.6. This Decision requests permission to grant funding of up to £35,000 for follow on work to build on the learning generated from the Festival of Ideas. The Festival of Ideas was an engagement activity for the Building Strong Communities Mission that was carried out from July – September 2021. 104 events took place in communities across London Boroughs, engaging almost 4500 Londoners.
- 2.7. Throughout the festival Londoners were asked to share their views on what strong communities look like, where they come together and what is needed for recovery from the pandemic. Seven key elements of strong communities were identified from the Festival of Ideas. These were: Services that meet local needs; opportunities to come together; places and spaces for the community; Voice and Ownership; commitment to diversity and inclusion; safety and funding support. This decision seeks permission for the award of grant funding of £35k to be granted to London Plus for the development of an online tool that collates case studies and learning from the Festival of Ideas, provides a space to create connections between communities and resources to help communities act where they think it is needed. This online tool will:
- bring Building Strong Communities partners together in a joint piece of work
 - create a platform where people can see what positive activities have been happening in their communities (Discover)
 - address the Festival of Ideas finding of the need for opportunities to come together and voice and ownership by enabling communities to reach out to each other (Connect)
 - address the Festival of Ideas finding of the need for voice and ownership by giving individuals and civil society groups the information they need to make positive changes in their communities.
- 2.8. London Plus are a key partner in coordination and delivery of the Building Strong Communities Mission. The CEO of London Plus sits on the steering group for the mission and the organisation promoted and led activities for the Festival of Ideas. London Plus have been undertaking work over the last few months called 'Tales of Covid', where they have employed a writer to gather case studies on how communities came together during Covid-19. There is a strong desire in the BSC

mission team, comprised of GLA colleagues and external stakeholders to fund visible joint projects which engage with and meet the needs of the sector. The proposal to fund the development of this online tool builds on the priorities of the GLA, and outcomes achieved through Festival of Ideas, London Plus' Tales of Covid and London Funders LCR (London Community Response) case studies. London Plus are well embedded in the BSC work and have strong connections in the sector and so are in a good position to utilise this funding in ways that meet the outcomes of the mission. The funding will be spent on scoping the design of the tool and identifying a development partner to take forward the build.

- 2.9. This work supports the dissemination of information to Londoners as part of the BSC Mission. The aim of the tool is that it will provide a gateway to inspire community activity and enable people to connect to better achieve the outcomes of the BSC mission.

Supporting inclusive volunteering: £40,000

- 2.10. This Decision requests permission to grant funding of up to £40,000 for work to support inclusive volunteering and removing barriers to volunteering for Londoners from under-represented groups. This will be achieved through funding organisations that are equity-led or working with communities with protected characteristics, identified through the Sport Unites grant application process. As outlined in MD2854, the objectives and outcomes of this funding would be to use the findings from the London Festival of Ideas to support work that increases equity and inclusion in volunteering and participation. This will contribute to the mission aims by increasing the range of volunteering roles available and improving volunteering experiences particularly for under-represented groups – which will be critical to creating inclusive and thriving community hubs, as well as belonging and connections more broadly. One of the key insights from the recent Festival of Ideas was how in need of funding organisations are, particularly community groups led by Londoners with protected characteristics, who face additional challenges and have also been particularly impacted by Covid-19.
- 2.11. Insights gained from the Festival of Ideas highlighted that Strong communities have a commitment to diversity and inclusion ensuring that efforts to build communities address community cohesion, inclusion, accessibility and structural inequalities. The projects that will be funded through Sport Unites all focus on communities that face greater barriers to accessing health and wellbeing opportunities or connecting with others. Additionally, these programmes provide a space and opportunities for people to come together – both features of two other key insights from the Festival of Ideas.
- 2.12. Participants from the Festival of ideas highlighted that resources and funding are vital in enabling communities to come together and support one another and that access to spaces, places or venues that are accessible, affordable, inclusive and that enable communities to come together is a specific challenge faced by many communities.
- 2.13. Although the Sport Unites programme supports projects that use sport and physical activity, priorities also include strengthening connections in local areas and across communities, decreasing isolation/loneliness and improving people's mental health and wellbeing. Not all organisations applying for funding are Sports Groups. Many groups are community organisations (such as YMCA groups, or community café's), who amongst their varied work, use sports activities as a tool to meet their objectives. The grant element of the programme has a particular emphasis on supporting under represented groups of Londoners. Applications to the most recent round have been analysed by team members across the BSC mission. It was noted that applications were received from groups looking to fund equity focussed work, that aligns with the aims of this

budget and with needs the same as those identified as part of the key insights from the recent Festival of Ideas. Although it had not been originally intended for organisations who would be supported by this equity budget to be identified through this process, it would be remiss to duplicate work and repeat a competitive process when groups have already been identified through alternative means. Working in collaboration with the Sport Unites programme on this equity work provides an opportunity to address insights from the Festival of Ideas about funding communities and gain learning across a range of outcomes.

2.14. This expenditure will grant fund four organisations identified through the Sport Unites grant application process. Each either reach or are led by people with protected characteristics, have a focus on connecting people and reducing social isolation (an aim of the BSC mission) and involve volunteers from under-represented communities.

2.15. The projects funded through Sport Unites would provide learning on:

- how community groups can create empowering spaces and opportunities for people with protected characteristics.
- good practice on how volunteers from communities with protected characteristics can be involved in delivering community activities
- how the GLA as a funder can better support equalities groups.

These projects will support the Building Strong Communities outcomes of:

- feelings of belonging are increased and social isolation is decreased
- feelings of connection within and across communities are increased

In addition to these outcomes the four funded projects will also align with the insights gained from the Festival of Insights. In particular:

- providing services that meet local needs
- providing opportunities to come together
- commitment to diversity and inclusion
- providing spaces and places for the community.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the GLA must have 'due regard' of the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. The BSC mission recognises the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on London's diverse communities. It embraces London's diversity and fosters good relations by bringing Londoners from a variety of backgrounds together in support of common causes, amplifying their voices and allowing them to play an active role in recovery from Covid-19. By promoting and championing volunteering and social action programmes, this will increase the opportunities for Londoners to play an active role in their communities. A recurring theme amongst the programmes is equity – that these programmes are designed to provide means that will advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, acknowledges that support requirements may differ between groups, and provides that support.

- 3.3. Team London previously commissioned research to look at the barriers and challenges involved in enabling Londoners to participate in volunteering. This was to ensure that volunteering and social action programmes are structured in a way that is as appealing and accessible as possible. The Survey of Londoners showed that volunteering and social action participation improves social integration. As such, increasing accessibility of programmes will improve rates of social integration experienced by volunteers.
- 3.4. The work also embraces London's diversity and fosters good relations by connecting Londoners from a variety of backgrounds together in support of common causes.
- 3.5. Research has shown that more people take part in informal volunteering than formal volunteering. The NCVO report *Time well Spent* (2019) observes 'some people that are under-represented in formal volunteering participate more in informal ways, for example through acts of neighbourliness'¹ The expansion of mutual aid groups over the last two years provides increased routes for communities to connect in informal ways. By funding support and resources for mutual aid in London the GLA are able to promote and champion informal volunteering in London and support increased opportunities for under-represented groups to be more involved in their communities.
- 3.6. The development of the online tool following on from the festival of ideas will provide an opportunity to showcase the breadth of volunteering and community action across communities in London. Diversity and inclusion will be a foundational principle of the case studies that are displayed. This will also provide an opportunity to amplify the stories and experiences of Londoners from under-represented communities, fostering good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.7. The groups funded through Sport Unites are all equity-led organisations (focusing on the deaf community, disabled people-led organisations, LGBTQ+ community and older people from African and Caribbean communities.) This funding will directly support those groups to create spaces and places that meet the needs of communities with protected characteristics, thus advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.

4. Other considerations

4.1. Risks

	Risk Description	Mitigation/ risk response
1	Mutual Aid work: Risk: The resource bank developed does not meet the needs of mutual aid groups	The risk is low and will be mitigated through requiring that the developer of the resource bank takes into account the views of mutual aid groups through the Mutual Aid plus programme. Team London will set KPIs and seek opportunities to facilitate community input to the development of the resource bank so that it can best meet the needs of Londoners.

¹ NCVO, *Time well spent* (2019) https://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/policy_and_research/volunteering/Volunteer-experience_Full-Report.pdf. P83

2	Festival of ideas follow on: Risk: That London Plus are unable to source a delivery partner to deliver the online tool within the budget.	The BSC team will work closely with London Plus on the development of the online tool. The collaborative effort between BSC partners will provide access to a wide scope of potential delivery partners including funders, Universities and private developers. The team will prioritise value for money and will begin with a scoping exercise to understand what can be achieved within the available budget.
3	Equalities group funding through Sport Unites: Risk: That the funded organisations do not provide evaluation that can be used as a learning opportunity for the BSC mission.	The BSC team will work with Sport Unites to include measurable outputs and outcomes in the monitoring frameworks of the funded organisations. Sport Unites will be clear that funding is contingent on adequately completed monitoring information.

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.2 Team London's work on supporting civil society engages with communities and civil society groups across London to encourage active participation in community and civic life for all Londoners. This links to Mayoral strategies on social integration, social mobility and community engagement. It also, as referred to in this application, aligns with the Building Strong Communities mission of the London Recovery Board. Team London will be working closely with the Communities team and other relevant teams across the GLA and the Recovery Board to share findings emerging from this work. The work links heavily with recovery priorities around equity and inclusion, and supporting those Londoners who have been disproportionately affected by Covid.

Impact Assessments and consultations

- 4.3 The BSC mission consults relevant groups and stakeholders when undertaking any new programmes. The development of the mutual aid work has been informed by research conducted with 38 organisations in 2020, insights gained from the Mutual Aid Plus programme in 2021 which supported 50 organisations and a Roundtable with twelve research and delivery partners in November 2021. The development of the Online tool follows directly on from the Festival of Ideas which engaged with nearly 4000 Londoners. The design of the platform will be shaped around the insights gained from this engagement.
- 4.4 There is an established Board for the Building Strong Communities Mission to ensure that the voice of a range of stakeholders are involved in shaping programme activities. The board is co-chaired by representatives from London Councils and Black Thrive and includes members of London Funders, London Plus and the Corporation of London.
- 4.5 Due consideration has been given to any conflict of interest (that may arise), including from those involved in the drafting and/or clearance of this decision form. None have been found to exist except for that noted in 4.6.
- 4.6 A GLA officer for the BSC programme has a trustee officer role at London Plus, an organisation the BSC mission works closely with. This officer has recused themselves from GLA decision-making in relation to this organisation.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. Approval is sought for the expenditure of £110,000 in the form of grant funding detailed within this decision (summarised in the below table).

Workstream

Learning & Engagement Work	£35,000
Building on the Festival of Ideas	£35,000
Supporting inclusive volunteering	£40,000
Total	£110,000

- 5.2. The costs will be funded from the Team London programme budget for 2021-22 under the 'Building Strong Communities' mission.
- 5.3. Any expenditure relating to Financial Year 2022-23 will follow the standard accounting procedures for the financial year end.

6. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Date
Sign funding agreement with Hammersmith and Fulham Volunteer centre Launch request for Proposals for Mutual Aid resource Bank	February 2022
Launch Mutual Aid Plus programme Begin scoping of online tool with London Plus Announce Equalities projects funded through Sport Unites.	March 2022
Delivery of online tool to follow up from Festival of ideas	July 2022
Final evaluation of Mutual Aid Plus programme; Completion of Mutual Aid resource bank Delivery end date for projects funded through Sport Unites	October 2022

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? NO

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:

Truly Johnston has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 21 February 2022

✓

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE:

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

Signature



Date

21/2/22