

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD3048

Title: Food Roots 2 – supporting the sustainability of the food-aid sector

Executive summary:

This Mayoral Decision seeks approval for expenditure of up to £740,000 of the Equality and Fairness team's core budget across financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24, on a second phase of the Food Roots Incubator programme.

The funding will be used to deliver a range of activities to support the sustainability of food partnerships and their constituent food-aid organisations, so they can better support Londoners who need to use emergency food aid.

This decision supersedes the approval for the expenditure of up to £200,000 on the Food Roots Incubator programme in 2022-23 that was granted under cover of MD2869: Robust Safety Net Workplan 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Decision:

That the Mayor approves the expenditure of up to £740,000 to fund the delivery of a second phase of the Food Roots Incubator programme (£370,000 in 2022-23, of which £170,000 is additional to existing approvals, and £370,000 in 2023-24, subject to future budget approvals).

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:

5/12/22

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

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. This Mayoral Decision (MD) seeks approval for expenditure of up to £740,000 on a second iteration of the Food Roots Incubator programme across financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24.
- 1.2. The original Food Roots Incubator programme ran from May 2021 to August 2022. It supported and invested in 10 local food partnerships to help them strengthen new relationships formed during the pandemic; and to encourage them to develop in ways that did not embed emergency food aid as the solution to food insecurity.
- 1.3. MD2869: Robust Safety Net Workplan 2021-22 and 2022-23 initially approved the expenditure of £200,000 on a second phase of the Food Roots programme in 2022-23. This decision document seeks approval to supersede the approval granted under cover of MD2869, and increase the amount of funding for the programme to £740,000 in total across 2022-23 and 2023-24.
- 1.4. The Survey of Londoners 2021-22 found that 1.2m adults have low or very low food security; and the children of one in seven parents have low or very low food security. Since then, the sharp rise in inflation has meant that nearly 80 per cent of Londoners have seen an increase in their living costs. With 13 per cent inflation on food prices this autumn, it's getting harder for many Londoners to afford essentials.
- 1.5. The latest GLA polling shows that over half of Londoners are now either financially struggling or just about managing; and 70 per cent of those on the lowest incomes are buying less food and other essentials to make ends meet. Therefore, providing support to food partnerships and embedding approaches to help Londoners increase their incomes is likely to make a tangible difference to many households.
- 1.6. This proposal builds on the programme of work described in MD2891 to deliver a range of activities to help Londoners mitigate the worst effects of the cost-of-living crisis.
- 1.7. The 'food partnerships' described in this document are (typically) local partnerships that provide support to Londoners experiencing food insecurity; and involve local authorities, voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, and businesses. Many of them were initially formed at the height of the pandemic.
- 1.8. 'Cash-first' approaches are interventions or measures that focus on providing cash or other financial support to service users (e.g. supermarket vouchers, cash payments, or help to increase income through new benefit claims) rather than emergency food parcels or other in-kind support. These approaches help to tackle the underlying causes of food insecurity; offer those benefitting from them greater choice and dignity; and are more sustainable to provide in the longer term.
- 1.9. The Healthy Start Voucher scheme is open to those who are pregnant, or anyone responsible for a child under four, on a low income. The vouchers, worth between £4.25 and £8.50 a week, can be used in most UK supermarkets to purchase fruit and vegetables, milk or infant formula. In London only 63 per cent of eligible households are claiming Healthy Start vouchers, compared to 71 per cent across the whole of England.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. The aim of the Food Roots Incubator programme is to help food-aid partnerships across London to develop and embed more sustainable ways of working, in order to better support Londoners who are

forced to rely on emergency food aid. This includes supporting cash-first approaches in food-aid organisations.

2.2. The programme aims to achieve this through the following objectives:

- an increase in the number of food-aid providers within partnerships that offer support beyond food – including cash-first and wraparound approaches, and referrals to advice services
- increased awareness and visibility of Healthy Start across food partnerships, including newly trained staff and volunteers who can signpost and support applications
- improved ability of food partnerships to access sustainable external funding
- new and strengthened relationships across the VCS within an area, and between borough councils and their local food-aid providers.

2.3. The primary aim of the programme is to support food partnerships to become more sustainable in the medium to long term, by moving away from traditional food-bank models. However, the support offered through the programme will also allow partnerships to take steps to tackle shorter-term delivery challenges arising from the likely spike in demand for emergency food aid over the coming months.

2.4. The programme budget will be used to:

- provide grant funding to around 10 food partnerships that allows them to recruit a dedicated co-ordinator role to: develop, share and embed best practice; build relationships between organisations; and address any short-term delivery challenges
- commission an expert incubator partner to facilitate peer-learning and run learning sessions, and create a community of practice across London
- commission a dedicated training and campaign support offer for partnerships to help increase the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers (as an introduction to cash-first delivery in their settings)
- commission/provide funding to organisations already modelling best practice in the sector to provide mentorship or other personalised support to partnerships
- commission a robust programme evaluation, to demonstrate the value of best practice and equip partnerships to obtain longer longer-term funding from sustainable sources.

2.5. The expenditure and deliverables are detailed below:

Deliverables	2022-23 expenditure to be agreed under this decision	2023-24 expenditure to be agreed under this decision (subject to future budget approval)	Total to be agreed under this decision
10 to 12 food partnership grants (of up to £50,000 each)	£230,000	£230,000	£460,000
Procurement of incubator support, Healthy Start trainer and coordinator, best-practice mentors, and programme evaluation	£140,000	£140,000	£280,000
Total	£370,000	£370,000	£740,000

- 2.6. Because the Food Roots programme primarily supports strategic change within partnerships, it is difficult to track outcomes based on the improved support that Londoners receive as a result.
- 2.7. However, we will gather data from grantee partnerships and the support programme to track progress towards the following outcomes:
- a local Healthy Start uptake campaign delivered by each of the grantee partnerships (10 expected), including upskilling workers from 30 local community organisations within grantee partnerships to support new Healthy Start applications
 - a support programme including 12 learning workshops, 4 project visits and 40 personalised support sessions delivered by best-practice mentors, as well as additional regular email support including updates, resources and events.
- 2.8. Through the programme evaluation we will also track some or all of the following:
- the number of people who receive advice or other cash-first support as a result of partnerships, including referrals to local council support
 - the number of people supported to claim Healthy Start vouchers via the programme (and the resulting monthly/annual cash value of the claims)
 - the number of organisations who, at the end of the supported programme, believe their partnership's response to food insecurity is more resilient and/or sustainable than before
 - increased collaboration between partnership members, such as new or improved data sharing, referral routes, strategic planning or joint funding bids
 - if possible, the experiences of Londoners who had reduced or no need for emergency food aid following cash-first, wraparound, or similar support from the partnership.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Many groups of Londoners with protected characteristics are disproportionately likely to experience financial hardship, which makes them particularly vulnerable to rising living costs and the need to rely on emergency support. For example:
- the poverty rate amongst households in which a disabled person lives is 35 per cent, compared to 25 per cent of non-disabled households
 - children in families with a disabled member are more than twice as likely to experience low income and material deprivation (20 per cent) than children in families where no one is disabled (8 per cent)
 - 38 per cent of Londoners of Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic (BAME) ethnicity are in poverty, compared to 21 per cent of Londoners of White ethnicity
 - 19.1 per cent of households with an ethnic minority as the household reference person (HRP) are in fuel poverty, compared to 12.6 per cent with a White HRP
 - older Londoners, and households in which a disabled person lives, are also disproportionately likely to experience fuel poverty due to having higher energy requirements
 - single parents, disabled Londoners and Black Londoners are more likely to experience low or very low food security

- migrant Londoners – especially those with no recourse to public funds – face a particularly high risk of destitution.

3.2. Although the programme of work set out above is designed to indirectly support all Londoners who require emergency crisis support, the Healthy Start training offer means there's a specific focus on pregnant people and parents of young children. Parents are particularly likely to be struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. For example, GLA polling in July found that households with children were nearly twice as likely as average (23 per cent versus 12 per cent) to have, by necessity, purchased fewer essentials; and therefore, to have either gone without or relied on outside support. The polling also found that Healthy Start is seriously underclaimed: only 63 per cent of eligible households in London are claiming as of March 2022, compared to 71 per cent in England as a whole. This suggests that specific focus on encouraging Healthy Start uptake could be an effective targeted measure to support low-income parents with young children.

4. Other considerations

Key risks and issues

4.1. The key risks and issues are as follows:

Risk/issues	Mitigation
Despite funding increased capacity, and supporting work to end the need for food banks, food-aid providers and other organisations within food partnerships may continue to be overwhelmed.	The increased capacity resulting from this funding could be temporarily used (if required) to take steps to address short-term delivery challenges – for example, by recruiting additional volunteers.
There is only a limited number of organisations with the skills and expertise to tender successfully for the procurement contract.	Officers will conduct market-warming exercises with potential suppliers to encourage strong applications. The process will also support and encourage both modular and cohort approaches to tendering, to make it easier for smaller organisations to tender successfully and anticipate the necessity of onward grants or subcontracting.
The programme requires a variety of recruitment. This may take time and cause delays to project delivery.	GLA officers and incubator partners will assist partnerships in promoting any job vacancies amongst wider stakeholder networks and via multiple channels.
GLA staff capacity is insufficient to launch and manage the full programme of work within the desired timeframe.	Commissioning the learning and mentoring component via a single procurement process will help reduce the capacity required from staff during both procurement and delivery.

Considerations for procurement, the provision of grant funding and subsidy control

- 4.2. All procurement of goods and services or grant funding will be carried out/provided in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code. Officers will liaise with TfL procurement to agree the best strategy for procuring the goods and services required for delivery of the programme. Furthermore, all recipients of the GLA's grant funding will be selected via an open and transparent process where prospective proposals will be reviewed in accordance with a published prospectus including award criteria.
- 4.3. Delivery will begin in 2022-23 and continue to completion in 2023-24. Appropriate clauses will be inserted into all contracts and grant agreements to ensure that funding is not committed ahead of the 2023-24 budget being approved.

- 4.4. The terms of all grant funding provided through the programme will give due consideration to regulations regarding subsidy control. Where appropriate, specific terms will be entered into grant agreements to cap the level of onward grants, should recipients need to provide onward funding. All recipients of grants will be charitable organisations or public bodies (such as councils) that do, and will as a consequence of GLA funding, provide free services to Londoners. None will be economic operators selling goods or services for a profit in a competitive market; and all will contribute some of their own resources to the programme. This could include (for example) existing staff and volunteer resource; project management resource; training and communications resource/content; IT equipment and case management systems; and use of physical space for providing support to Londoners.

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.5. This funding will invest in food partnerships, helping to ensure that Londoners who experience extreme financial hardship receive appropriate, dignified and sustainable support – including access to advice and income maximisation support that can help end the need for emergency food aid. This will contribute to the long-term goal of the Robust Safety Net mission, which is to ensure that “by 2025 every Londoner can access the support they need avoid or alleviate financial hardship.”
- 4.6. These proposals also link to the Building Strong Communities recovery mission by supporting the emergency food-aid sector to develop relationships across their local voluntary sector and with their borough council, as well as embedding more sustainable and resilient ways of working.
- 4.7. This activity described in this decision document seeks to help Londoners mitigate the rising cost of living, which is a current Mayoral priority under the wider Getting London Back on its Feet priority.

Conflicts of interest

- 4.8. There are no conflicts of interest to note from officers involved in the drafting and approving of this decision form.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. Approval is sought for the expenditure of £740,000 on the Food Roots Incubator programme over two financial years (2022-23 and 2023-24), all of which will be funded from the Low Income and Food budget held within the Communities and Social Policy Unit. This expenditure is broken down into two allocations of £370k each year; this is in line with the budget allocation for 2022-23 and plan for 2023-24. The £370k allocation for 2022-23 includes the £200k already approved for this programme under cover of MD2869.
- 5.2. Funding for future financial years will be subject to the annual budget-setting process and is subject to change. Any contracts or grant agreements that commit the GLA in future years will be subject to suitable break clauses.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions requested of the Mayor concern the exercise of the Authority's general powers; and fall within the Authority's statutory power to do such things considered to further or that are facilitative of, or conducive or incidental to, the promotion of social development within Greater London. In formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought, officers have complied with the Authority'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 United Kingdom consult with appropriate bodies.

6.2. In taking the decisions requested, the Mayor 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; advance equality of opportunity 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; and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.

Procurement, grant funding and subsidy control

- 6.3. The decision seeks approval of a £740,000 budget for the Food Roots Incubator programme. The officers have explained in paragraph 4.2, above, that all procurements and the provision of grant funding will be undertaken in accordance with the Authority's Contracts and Funding Code.
- 6.4. Paragraph 2.5, above, envisages the provision of 10 to 12 grants of up to £50,000 each. This would keep the grants below the subsidy control threshold, which is currently £315,000. If this position changes, and any of the grants are likely to exceed the threshold, the officers should seek legal advice in relation to subsidy control.
- 6.5. Finally, the officers must ensure that an appropriate contract or funding agreement be put in place between the Authority and the service provider or grantee before commencement of the provision of services or the funded activity.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of incubator support contract(s)	October – December 2022
Competitive grant award exercise	October – December 2022
Mobilisation phase (e.g. recruitment, data sharing agreements, governance agreements, evaluation framework design)	December 2022 – January 2023
Initial delivery period	January 2022 – March 2023
Break clauses, if required	
Secondary delivery period	April – December 2023
Evaluation findings	January 2023
Project close	January 2023

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? NO

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:

Emily Spoor has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Sponsoring Director:

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

✓

Mayoral Adviser:

Dr 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 17 October 2022.

✓

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

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

Signature

Date:

D. Gove

24/11/22

CHIEF OF STAFF:

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

Signature

Date

D. Bellamy

23/11/22