

# London Community Response Fund

## Learning from Waves 1 – 5



Total value of grants awarded	Total income	Contributing funders
£31.4m	£32.05m	20

A collaborative funder response to support the civil society sector, co-ordinated by London Funders, launched on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020, shortly following the start of the first national lockdown. Based on eight funding principles, the **London Community Response (LCR)** was

anchored in trusting and equitable grant-making, and drew on learning from previous joint-funder emergency collaborations. It offered a common application form to allow civil society organisations to make applications for emergency support. The LCR brought together 67 funders and distributed £57.7m through 3,381 grants.

As part of that initiative, **the London Community Response Fund (LCRF)** was established to enable donors (including independent and public sector funders, livery companies, and city businesses) to donate to a single fund rather than separately considering grants. Of the overall amount, LCRF was responsible for distributing £31.4m via 1,685 grants – 54.4% of the total funding distributed.

**LCR** - London Community Response, the collaboration of 67 funders led by London Funders.

**LCRF** - London Community Response Fund established as a restricted fund which enabled other funders, who chose not to fund projects directly via the LCR, to join the efforts, with CBT administering

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LCRF funding was most concentrated in the inner boroughs, largely reflecting those with the highest concentration of wards that are most deprived within London. Barking and Dagenham, Waltham Forest, Ealing, Enfield, Hillingdon and Hounslow also contain many areas of deprivation but had a lower concentration of applications and funding across all five waves, making them good candidates for future prioritisation.

*Distribution of LCRF grants by borough (£)*



<sup>1</sup> Contributing funders to LCRF include City Bridge Trust, the Greater London Authority, Quadrature Capital Foundation, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Macquarie Group Foundation, Clothworkers Foundation, Bloomberg, Alan and Babette Sainsbury Charitable Fund, Worshipful Company of Weavers, Horners' Charity Fund, Worshipful Company of Management Consultants, Salters Company, Chartered Accountants Livery Charity, BDT & Company LLC, Fuellers Charitable Trust Fund, National Lottery Community Fund, and other anonymous donors.

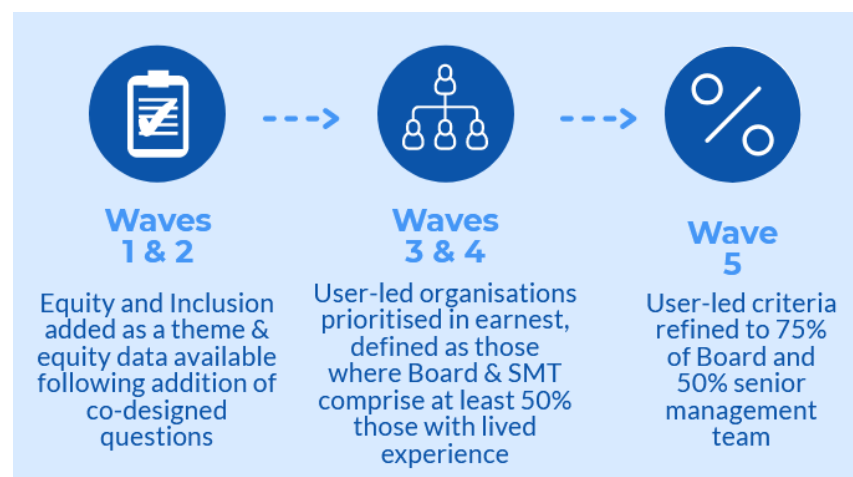
## Striving for an equitable approach

In recognition that the pandemic was exacerbating existing inequalities, from Wave 2 the LCR introduced an additional theme of equity and inclusion and added equity questions to the application form. LCR was then able to prioritise user-led organisations delivering support to racialised communities, LGBT+ people, Deaf and Disabled people, and women, including in response to the increased focus on Black Lives Matter following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020.

Commissioned by London Funders, LCRF funded four Equity Partners to provide strategic and operational support to the wider LCR: providing intelligence and insight, raising awareness, supporting smaller organisations to make applications, advising on best practice and sharing reflections and learning. These were Ubele Initiative (with the Council of Somali Organisations and London Gypsy Traveller movement), LGBT+ Consortium, Inclusion London, and the Women's Resource Centre. In Wave 5, Equity Partners also joined the LCRF Advisory Panel.

Through interviews with staff, assessors and contributing funders, LCRF was one of the LCR funders which took part in case studies gathered by The Social Investment Consultancy (TSIC) on the equitable approach taken in LCR, which can be read [here](#).

## An iterative approach to equitable prioritisation



Equity and inclusion was prioritised in the LCR funding response, introduced as a funding theme during the delivery of Waves 1 & 2. Application form questions were co-designed by the Equity Partners, meaning data was available to inform the prioritisation of grants for

funding by the Advisory Panel. By Wave 3, formalised criteria was introduced which prioritised organisations reaching one of the four equity groups where their board and senior leadership comprised at minimum of 50% those with lived experience.

Live tracking of the proportion of approvals reaching each priority groups supported the Advisory Panel to make live decisions: for example when it became evident that disproportionately fewer LGBT+ and (within the women-led category) VAWG organisations were receiving funding, the under £1m threshold was removed, enabling a greater number of applications to be considered.

In Wave 5, equity questions were further refined by the equity partners to require a higher level of user led representation on the board - with senior staff remaining at 50%. Feedback from Inclusion London highlighted ways to strengthen the assessment of Deaf and Disabled-led organisations, including identifying where power was genuinely in the hands of Deaf and Disabled people, and together with the other equity partners emphasised the importance of ensuring organisations were embedding a human rights approach, and guidance for LCRF assessors was updated.

Approaches that supported equity in the application process included:

- **Responsive and iterative** approach to the design and delivery of assessments and decisions, live adaptations to emerging information
- All applications that were recommended for declination by assessors

<i>% of Approved grants led by and for each of the priority groups</i>				
<b>'Led by' Category</b>	<b>% of Approved Grants Waves 1 &amp; 2</b>	<b>% of Approved Grants Wave 3</b>	<b>% of Approved Grants Wave 4</b>	<b>% of Approved Grants Wave 5<sup>2</sup></b>
LGBT+	5%	9%	12%	8%
BAME	43%	58%	71%	66%
Deaf and disabled	8%	13%	12%	7%
Women	59% <sup>3</sup>	40%	43%	38%

- were reviewed with an equity lens by the Advisory Panel
- A more **relational** approach with assessors e.g., use of video calls and pre-shared questions, which addressed the power balance, and signposting unsuccessful applicants.
- A greater appetite for **risk**; emergency context did not allow for the review of extensive information
- An emphasis on **equity** and **expertise by experience** when assessing the quality of an organisation
- The Advisory Panel took a nuanced approach to organisations meeting intersecting needs

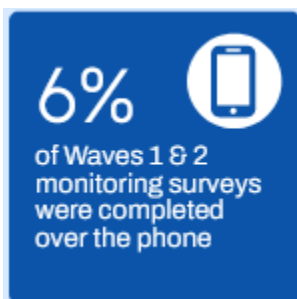
Approximately 61% of organisations funded through LCRF had never received CBT funding before, showing that the programme enabled us to reach beyond the “usual suspects”.

### Equity in grant management and monitoring

Many civil society organisations who were responding to the external situation also faced internal capacity issues, as well as personal challenges as a direct result of the pandemic. It was important that the grant management approach of LCRF remained light touch and flexible to support its grantees to meet these challenges. We addressed this through:

<sup>2</sup> The change to the classification of “user-led” in order to ensure funding was reaching organisations where strategic, governance and leadership power genuinely sat with those with lived experience led to fewer organisations meeting the criteria as the threshold for board membership of those with lived experience increased

<sup>3</sup> Data not collected in early waves



- Pointing successful applications to CBT's 'Funder Plus' offer, such as capacity support through the Bridge Programme
- Being flexible about expenditure by the charity where required and extensions to projects (where they met the emergency nature of the funding)
- An agreed '8 simple questions' approach to monitoring across the LCR collaboration
- Shared monitoring with co-funders to reduce reporting requirements
- Tendering externally for a grant monitoring partner, with equity questions forming part of the tender process
- Offering telephone monitoring to all grantees. Although there was low take-up, alternative formats are necessary for accessibility.

## Learning Partners

LCRF made a grant to London Funders of 50% of the costs of two learning partners for the whole LCR collaboration: Reos Partners and The Social Investment Consultancy (TSIC). The partners made recommendations on future ways of working, how to strengthen the approach to equity and inclusion, and the key areas of focus as we look towards renewal. Their reports can be found [on the London Funders website](#).

## Recommendations for CBT resulting from the learning from LCRF

- Prioritise user-led organisations in some or all of its programming
- Recognise expertise by lived experience – with training on individual equity groups and intersectionality
- Equity as equal in importance to other risk mitigation factors
- To review all rejections with an equity lens
- Engage equity partners as anchor/learning partners
- Jointly monitor where possible, and improve approaches
- Continue to be flexible and responsive, as in Flexible Funders commitment
- Strengthen links to enable continued funding to newly-engaged user led organisations
- Tender widely, ensuring equity questions are included in assessments.

**What next?** Being “Collaborative” is one of CBT's PACIER values, and we remain committed to learning from the successes of the LCR collaboration. We have already begun embedding some of the recommendations above into our wider operations and will continue to apply learning from LCRF across all our work.

# SUCCESSSES OF LCRF

## CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION



National, regional and local independent funders

Philanthropy networks

Public sector funders

Corporate funders

Equity partners

## EQUITABLE APPROACH



61% of organisations funded in Waves 1 to 5 had never been funded by City Bridge Trust before

## REACHING MORE ORGANISATIONS



Prioritising organisations led by and for women, BAME, LGBT+, and deaf and disabled people

## FLEXIBLE & LIGHT-TOUCH GRANT MANAGEMENT



Joint monitoring approach across LCR

Option to report back over the phone

Flexibility in use of funds so grantees able to respond to the situation on the ground

Working with expert equity partners

Live equity data tracking

