

City of London Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund

Key Themes arising from public consultation May 2022

Information about the Consultation

This consultation on the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund (CILNF) was sent to stakeholders across the City by the Department of the Built Environment, the Department of Community and Children's Services and the Central Grants Unit. This consultation received nearly twice as many responses (32) as the original consultation (17) conducted during the setup of the CILNF in 2019.

Over a third of responses came from residents of the City, with responses from businesses and community organisation constituting the rest of the responses.

There were two key proposals in this consultation: a proposal to revise the normal upper limit on funds for any one project from a percentage amount to a fixed figure and a proposal to allow organisations to reapply for funding at the end of a grant. Of the responses received regarding these two proposals, respondents were overwhelmingly in favour of both changes being proposed (92% and 90% respectively).

Question 1: Please tell us about some of the challenges your community faces. *We ask this question to better understand the needs of the City of London's communities. You could tell us about a ward-specific issue or a wider issue. It can be a big or small issue that has an impact on many people or just a few.*

Three broad themes emerged from the responses to this question: concern for the environment, a desire to see greater provision of activities for families (especially those on lower incomes) and a need to improve the accessibility of the City for disabled and older people.

Responses to this question included:

- *“Cleaner air; more green spaces are needed. For the wider City I believe that more needs to be done to bring in more people into the City to understand how it works and that the City is open to all”*
- *“Adapting our infrastructure to create a better space for the wider community, with improved disabled access.”*
- *“People often have the impression that the City is wealthy and it can be difficult to attract funding for community projects but this is not the reality. It is good that this fund exists, my children have been to some activities supported by this fund.” (sic)*

Question 2: Please tell us about the priorities you think the CILNF should have when distributing funding. *Since its launch in September 2020, the CILNF has funded a wide range of work across health & wellbeing, arts & culture, sustainability, restoration and regeneration. The CILNF is deliberately wide in the scope of what it can fund, so that local communities can determine their own priorities and how the CILNF should be used.*

A wide range of spending priorities were suggested, many of which are eligible for support through the CILNF. Others were more relevant to Departmental responsibilities and not eligible for funding through CIL. Respondents highlighted the need for the Fund to be flexible to respond to community needs. The priorities suggested by respondents included:

- Crime prevention
- Dealing with homelessness
- Street cleansing
- Public transport services
- Community facilities (including halls and meeting places)
- Green spaces
- Heritage assets
- Air quality
- Public realm improvements, including improved biodiversity
- Tackling food poverty
- Improvements to retail centres and streets
- Improving the City's cultural offer

Question 3: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about how you think the CILNF should be used?

A number of responses cited a lack of awareness amongst City communities of the support available through the CILNF. It became clear from a number of responses that there is a need for the City to be doing more to promote the CILNF.

Other comments indicated a general satisfaction with the CILNF processes that have been implemented and an encouragement to use the CILNF beyond the geographic boundaries of the Square Mile to support other spaces owned and managed by the City of London Corporation,

- *“Odd that this is the first that I have heard about CILNF. As a small business in the City, and a resident, I'm surprised.”*
- *“The City of London Corporation has many lovely green spaces outside the Square Mile, such as Hampstead Heath, Coulsdon Common, and Riddlesdown. It would be great if projects on these green spaces would be eligible for CILNF funding too. Thank you for your consideration!”*
- *“I think your application processes are good and robust.”*

Question 4: Should the maximum grant amount be a fixed figure instead of a percentage? *Currently, the maximum value of a grant that an organisation can apply for is 15% of the total CILNF funds available. We have noted that this is both unwieldy and unfair for applicants: applications which come later in the year are disadvantaged by the continual spending of the CILNF over the course of time. It is proposed that the maximum grant amount is revised to be £500,000 with authority for the City Corporation's Resource Allocation Sub-Committee to exceed this limit for applications that demonstrate exceptional community benefit.*

The proposal within this question received great support, with 92% of respondents expressing a favourable view towards this change. As part of the ongoing management of the CILNF, the Central Grants Unit has closely monitored the pipeline of applications received and worked with applicants to drive value for money against the funding being sought. To date, the CILNF has only received two applications for funds in excess of £500,000.

Responses to this question included:

- *“Agree that the fund needs to work fairly over the year and so a fixed figure would be fairer”*
- *“I think this is a very good approach, providing discretion.”*
- *“Yes. This is also because organisations applying are often unsure of what the total of amount of CILNF funds available.”*

Question 5: Currently, the CILNF will not fund an organisation more than once, should this rule be changed? *Given the small size of the Square Mile, we believe there is a case to be made for allowing organisations to reapply for funding at the end of a grant: there are a limited number of organisations who are working in the Square Mile and allowing organisations to reapply to the CILNF will enable their continued support for the City's communities.*

This question saw 90% of respondents express a view in favour of changing the rule on reapplication to allow organisations to seek repeat funding from the CILNF.

Any organisation seeking to reapply to the CILNF will, of course, have to demonstrate a successful track record of delivering positive outcomes for City communities in their previously funded work. There will also be a need longer-term to balance a portfolio of existing organisations against new applicants to the CILNF.

Responses to this question included:

- *“Yes. This is particularly essential for projects or events, which are not once-off activities. It would ensure continuity and sustained support. Otherwise, beneficiaries and participants might feel left out suddenly when a programme ends, without an alternative to meet their needs.”*

- *“Yes. There is a strong need to allow re-applications, to support and strengthen organisations building roots and a legacy in the area, and to allow further investment in work with proven track-record and/or insightful evaluation.”*
- *“I agree with this case, subject to evaluation of the use made of the previous grant.”*

Question 6: Is there anything else that you would like the CILNF to keep or change about the way it operates?

The responses to this question broadly fell into two categories: a desire for greater awareness of the CILNF and satisfaction with the current operation of the CILNF. There is certainly more that the City could be doing to encourage applications to the CILNF from City communities, in particular by doing more to involve residents.

Responses to this question included:

- *“Publicity for successful projects could be improved.”*
- *“Make it more accessible to residents. What would be really good is a YouTube video on CILNF and how residents can get involved. YouTube Is becoming the best way to communicate complex issues to many of them.”*
- *“Not at this time. It looks like your application process is straightforward.”*
- *“The application process was very smooth, we have felt well supported by our Grants Officer and the monitoring is not excessive, so all of these things would ideally stay the same.”*