

Committee: Funding Committee of the Bridge House Estates Board	Date: 11 September 2023
Subject: Propel Programme Update	Public
Report of: Sacha Rose-Smith, Chief Funding Director	For Information
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Summary

This paper provides an update on the Propel Programme, a ten-year funder collaboration co-ordinated by London Funders (the charity supporting the only cross-sector membership network of funders and investors in London’s civil society) to which City Bridge Trust (CBT) has allocated £30m. It provides confirmation of final Round One spend, plans for future rounds, and information regarding the distribution of spend for the remaining funds (£22.9m of £30m). Communities that experience structural inequality were prioritised for funding, with 100% of CBT’s funding going to equity-led organisations (that, is those led by and for racialised communities, Deaf and Disabled people, LGBT+ people and/or women and girls). This ensured that funding reached those organisations that are best placed to make change happen to explore, develop and lead collaborative approaches that tackle some of London’s biggest issues affecting change at systems level (addressing root causes) A list of funded organisations is provided at Appendix 2. As this is a highly ambitious and learning programme, timelines have shifted (as expected) following development work and decisions taken by the Propel Strategy Group (on which CBT officers sit). These changes allow the programme to remain flexible, responsive to sector need, and maintain its focus on equity outcomes (ensuring the programme remains inclusive and progressive) and impact at a systemic level (ensuring that the ultimate impact of the work is focused on tackling the root causes, and not just the systems, of inequality in London).

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members, in discharge of functions for the City Corporation as Trustee of Bridge House Estates (charity reg. no. 1035628) and solely in the charity’s best interests:

- i) Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. Propel is a ten-year, £100m funder collaboration stewarded by London Funders. It provides strategic and long-term funding at scale for systems change work (fundamental change that affects how a whole system functions). It has a pioneering and innovating approach, for example utilising a common “front door” which allows applicants to submit one application which can be seen by multiple funders. In March 2022, £30m was earmarked towards the collaboration (see background paper), of which £7.1m has been spent to date. The programme will last for ten years and/or award grants of up to ten years. Other collaborating funders include the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF) and the Greater

London Authority (GLA) (see Appendix 1 for other involved funders). It is envisaged that funding will be distributed across a number of rounds.

2. The Funding Committee has been kept abreast of programme development via the Chief Funding Director's reports, which have contained breakdowns of funding awarded, equity statistics, key dates etc.
3. **Appendix 1** contains further details on the background, aims and objectives of the programme. **Appendix 2** outlines funds awarded to date.
4. In Round One, which launched in October 2022, £7,126,610 was awarded to 33 organisations, for between one and three years of exploratory ("Explore grants") or development ("Deliver & Develop grants") work. All grants were awarded by April 2023. A learning partner has been appointed and learning discovery will be shared with the committee as it becomes available. See **Appendix 2** for a breakdown of Round One expenditure.

Programme Development

5. Subsequent open rounds will be shaped alongside funded organisations and other funder collaborators. A strategy group including collaborating funders and equity partners (which has CBT representation) agrees programme design, start dates etc. There is currently no appetite to award grants to new organisations through an open round in this financial year: This is because most of the projects awarded funding in round one are still underway, and in the very early stages. In order to provide continuity for as many of the originally funded organisations as possible, in line with the Propel aims and objectives, which include long-term funding over a period of up to 10 years, the strategy group has agreed to wait until groups have undertaken sufficient work within their respective projects to feed into the co-design of the next round.
6. In this financial year and next, CBT are likely to award top-up grants to some of the organisations awarded an initial twelve months of exploratory funding (known as Explore grants). This will allow applications for continuation funding for those projects where it is appropriate.
7. Of the 28 Explore grants made in the first round, CBT funded the vast majority (23 grants). The initial delivery of this 'top-up' funding will only involve CBT but will still operate under the Propel umbrella, and utilise its single 'front door', which allows access to existing project and organisational information,
8. The exact design of the programme is subject to co-design with the cohort of funded organisations, other funders and equity partners, but some broad principles are in place. These include developing a process that recognises both the early development and exploratory nature of these grants, and that funded work is highly user-driven, meaning that priorities may shift.
9. These grants will be recommended between January and March 2024 (for the first up to 16) and between April and July 2024 (for the last up to 7), according to CBT's scheme of delegated authority. Based on initial forecasting, it is not expected that any one of these grants is likely to exceed £400,000.

10. The remaining Propel grantees already funded will be offered the opportunity to apply for continuation funding through further rounds of collaborative Propel funding in 24/25 and 25/26. There may also be new grants awarded depending on the total amount of funds available within the collaboration.

Budget Update

11. The original recommendation paper (in March 2022) stated that £30m would be earmarked, with a view to committing the full amount over two years providing there were sufficient contributions of scale from other funders.

12. There were sufficient contributions of scale from other funders (including the Mayor of London and National Lottery Community Fund), but these were committed with a view to being awarded over a longer period. In the spirit of the collaborative nature of the fund, and because awarding our contribution over the initially envisaged period would have meant funding without the leverage of other collaborators, the timescale for delivery has been extended.

13. The Funding Committee was informed in December 2022 that £5m had been spent in 22/23 and that £12.5m was allocated in 23/24. There have since been further revisions (outlined below).

14. The change to the timescale of the funding being released does not have any impact on the overall allocation of £30m to be spent, and therefore will not impact any other planned programmes. The overall Propel timescale of ten years is also unaffected.

15. This change has also been reflected in the revised forecast presented in the Budget Monitoring Report in this paper pack, with a reduction in anticipated expenditure in this financial year (2023/24). Originally £10.5m had been allocated towards Round Two in 2023/24, but that round will now take place in f/y 2024/25, with £4.9m of expenditure committed in f/y 2023/24 (representing top-up grants and some residual Round One applications that were approved after year end).

16. Please see the revised expenditure plan below, noting that as this is a highly iterative programme there are likely to be further changes over time. The Committee will be kept informed of developments.

Table 1: Revised Expenditure Plan

	22/23	23/24	24/25, 25/26 and onwards	Total
Original Forecast	£15m	£15m	£0m	£30m
Revised Dec 22	£5m	£12.5m	£12.5m	£30m
Actual/Current forecast	£5.7m*	£4.9m**	£19.4m	£30m

* Some Round One expenditure was carried over into 23/24 due to delays in decision making.

** of the £4.9m, £1.4m is Round One expenditure already incurred and £3.5m is forecast to be spent on top-up grants.

16. The original forecast was an estimate, as Propel is a learning and iterative programme, and at the time of forecast (and the revised forecast) programme development and collaborative negotiation had not yet begun.
17. Forecast expenditure from 2024/25 onwards remains dependant on agreements at the Propel Strategy group which will be informed by learning from grants awarded, information from the learning partner, and equity partner input.
18. Please see the table below which outlines the expenditure plan in terms of rounds of funding. Note that Round Two planning has not yet begun, and the total awarded will depend on decisions around programme design taken by the Propel Strategy Group. This figure is therefore subject to significant revision once planning begins. Round Three onwards is subject to planning in future years.

Table 2: Expenditure Plan in Terms of Rounds of Funding

Round One (actual)	Top-up Grants (forecast)	Round Two (forecast)	Round Three onwards (forecast)	Total
£7.1m	£5.5m	Between £4m and £10m	Between £7.4m and £13.4m	£30m

Corporate and Strategic Implications

19. Strategic Implications: The activities outlined in this paper support the aims and objectives of BHE's overarching strategy, *Bridging London 2020 – 2045*. They will support the charity in becoming a world-class charitable funder and responsible leader.
20. There are no further financial, security, legal, risk, equalities or climate implications other than those already outlined in the report.

Conclusion

21. Propel continues to successfully deliver a collaborative and innovative approach to funding long-term systems change in London's Civil Society. Programme development is progressing well, with partners continuing to engage through the stewardship of London Funders.

Background Papers

- Report to the Funding Committee of the Bridge House Estates Board, dated 9 March 2022, entitled 'Collaborative Action for Recovery' (non-public), Item 21.

Appendix 1: Propel Background

Propel is focused on putting money and power in the hands of communities who are best placed to make change happen.

Propel is and has always been about collaboration – recognising that the challenges we face are too big for any funder, charity or community to tackle alone. Our shared ambition is to build long-term collaborations that draw on the strengths and assets of us all so that, together, we can tackle the issues facing London.

Over the next ten years, Propel will provide flexibility and capacity to organisations led by and for groups experiencing structural inequality so that they can explore, develop and lead collaborative ways of tackling some of London's biggest challenges. This includes providing support for young people, women and girls, LGBT+ communities, Deaf and Disabled people, and communities experiencing racial inequity.

Propel is powered by [London Funders](#) and are being supported by a growing list of funders, including Bloomberg, City Bridge Trust – the City of London Corporation's charity funder – The National Lottery Community Fund, the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, Trust for London, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Mercers, John Lyons Charity, John Laing Trust, Bloomberg, and advice funders co-ordinated by London Legal Support Trust.

We are encouraging more funders to get involved in this ongoing collaboration to give London's communities the long-term support needed to drive change in the capital. If you're a funder who is interested in getting involved, email the London Funders team: info@londonfunders.org.uk

The principles uniting Propel funders

These principles were co-designed with Propel partners, which emerged as the most challenging for funders to build processes and programmes around, and therefore the greatest opportunities to test ourselves.

- **Systemic** – engaging with the whole system around an issue, tackling root causes not just symptoms, building a shared understanding of how systems can change
- **Bold** – experimenting and taking risks together, influencing wider ways of working
- **Flexible** – recognising that the future is uncertain, that funders and grantees are on a learning journey together, trusting grantees to respond to changing challenges and opportunities
- **Sharing power** – recognising that everyone has something to contribute (money, knowledge, networks and reach), investing in people's capacity to co-design, embedding participation in decision-making from the start, building trust and confidence

- **Equitable** – unlearning old ways of working, biases, and lenses on the world, ensuring that design, process and decision-making are inclusive and take account of the diversity of the sector and of communities
- **Non-partisan**– recognising both civic and democratic leadership, combining the convening power of politicians with wider participation and voice
- **Long-term** – investing beyond political and institutional cycles, providing stability for civil society partners and seeking to make transformational change
- **Accountable** – jointly accountable to each other and to the communities we serve

Funding partners



MAYOR OF LONDON



Appendix 2: Round One Expenditure (CBT funding only)

CBT has awarded a total of £7,036,700 across 10 Deliver and Develop (D&D) grants for up to three years, and 23 Explore grants for 12 months. The larger D&D grants ranged from £150,000 to just over £1.1m, while the smaller Explore grants were for up to £50,000. The success rates for applications assessed by CBT for D&D and Explore grants were 77% and 79% respectively.

Explore – a grant for up to one year, for up to £50,000, for organisations to explore the issues they want to tackle, how change might be possible and who needs to be involved in making the change happen.

Deliver and Develop – a grant for up to three years of up to £1.5m to expand existing delivery, learn about the impact, and build partnerships to scale approaches that work.

User led category	Total £ Approved (Explore)	# Approvals (Explore)	Total £ Approved (D&D)	# Approvals (D&D)	Total £ Approved (all)	# Approvals (all)
Deaf and Disabled	£198,910	4	£1,290,500	3	£1,489,410	7
Intersectional	£94,000	2	0	0	£94,000	2
LGBT+	£146,300	3	0	0	£146,300	3
Racialised/migrant	£368,000	8	£2,315,600	4	£2,683,600	12
Women and Girls	£291,500	6	£500,000	1	£791,500	7
Not by and for	£0	0	£1,921,800	2	£1,921,800	2
	£1,098,710	23	£6,027,900	10	£7,126,610	33

Organisations from the first cohort of grantees were invited to a Welcome Breakfast hosted by London Funders at the Arc Community Centre in Islington on 26 April 2023. The event was well attended, with speakers including Bruna Boscaini, Director of IRMO (co-funded through Propel by CBT and London Legal Support Trust), Ali Ahmed from equity partner Ubele, with the Chair of the Funding Committee, Paul Martinelli, representing CBT.

List of grants awarded:

Organisation	Amount (£)
The Ubele Initiative	1,216,600
The Bridge Renewal Trust	1,073,400
Inclusion London	989,600
Young Westminster Foundation	848,400
Race On The Agenda	500,000
Women's Environmental Network Trust	500,000

Lewisham Refugee & Migrant Network (LRMN)	398,000
Indoamerican Refugee and Migrant Organisation	201,000
Action on Disability	150,900
Disability Law Service	150,000
Islington/ The Maya Centre	50,000
Maternity Action	50,000
Day-Mer, Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre	50,000
AVA - Against Violence and Abuse	50,000
National Survivor User Network	50,000
Touretteshero CIC	49,910
British Deaf Association	49,900
Goldstar Creative Marketing	49,900
Friends of the Joiners Arms Ltd	49,800
Connected Routes CIC	49,500
Hackney Chinese Community Services Association Ltd	49,500
Mabadiliko CIC	49,100
Headway East London	49,100
Project Zero WF	48,700
Queercircle CIO	48,500
Teen Action	48,100
Mosaic LGBT+ Young Persons' Trust	48,000
C V S Brent	47,200
Women's Resource Centre	45,900
Place At My Table	44,300
Connect: North Korea	42,800
Anti Trafficking & Labour Exploitation Unit	42,100
St Mary's Centre Community Trust	36,400
	7,126,610

A list of organisations funded by the whole collaboration in Round One can be found here: <https://londonpropel.org.uk/news/first-grants-made-through-propel/>