



Committee: Funding Committee of the City Bridge Foundation Board	Date: 10 June 2024
Subject: The Bridge Programme - Evaluation and Next Steps	Public
Report of: CBF Chief Funding Director	For Information
Report Author: James Lee, Bridge Programme and Total Assets Lead	

Summary

This report outlines the progress of the third phase of the Bridge Programme, through which a range of non-financial support is offered to funded organisations, under City Bridge Foundation (CBF), key learnings to date, the future direction of the programme and the most recent evaluation report.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Funding Committee of the City Bridge Foundation Board, in discharge of functions for the City Corporation as Trustee of City Bridge Foundation and solely in the charity's best interests:

- i) Note the update on the third phase of the Bridge Programme.
- ii) Note the Interim Review Report of the Bridge Programme – Review & Reset; and
- iii) Note the proposals set out in paragraphs 25 and 26 for further improvements to be made to the Bridge Programme.

Main Report

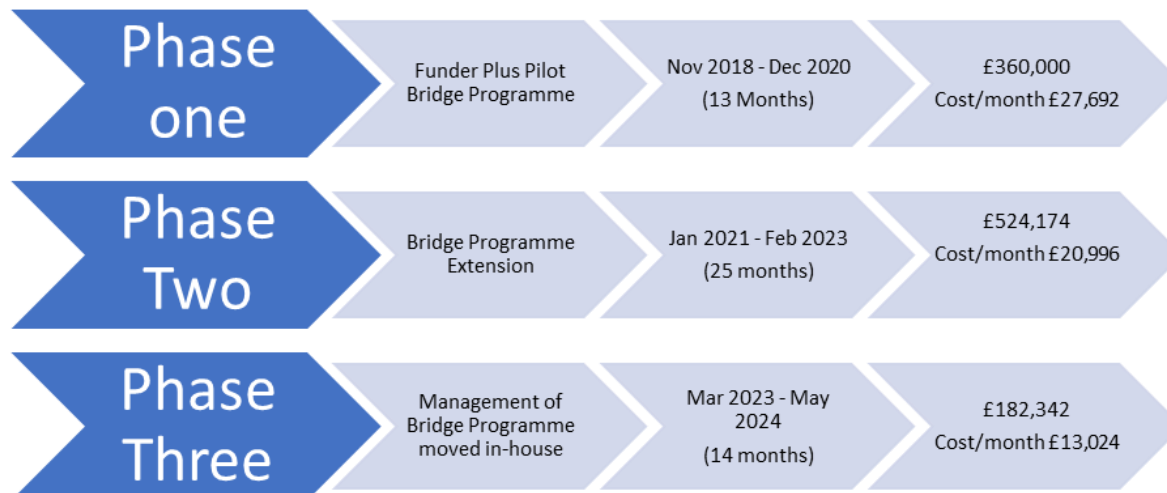
Bridge Programme Background

1. In September & November 2018, the CBF Committee agreed proposals to pilot a new Funder Plus offer, now referred to as the "Bridge Programme". Through the Funder Plus offer, CBF has supported organisations with their development, provided access to learning and training opportunities, provided Access and Eco audits and utilised the charity's convening power and networks. The model that was approved comprised a contract of £60,000 to Rocket Science, appointed as Learning Partner and Manager of the programme. Grants of £150,000 each were awarded to Locality and the Cranfield Trust to provide a diagnostics service and then to connect CBF grantees to appropriate providers of support services or to facilitate peer support/networking opportunities amongst grantees. Total initial costs were £360,000.
2. Around 30 of the Foundation's funded organisations took part in the pilot which finished at the end of December 2020. The onset of Covid-19 in March 2020 caused a significant hiatus in the programme and affected the capacity of organisations to



engage. Despite Covid-19 disruptions, there was significant evidence to extend the pilot phase, contributing to Bridging Divides and supporting recovery for London's civil society.

3. The evaluation of this first period¹ showed how those engaged on the programme received a high impact service. The report also recommended several enhancements to improve Programme Governance, Programme Delivery and Communications in particular.
4. In January 2021, the CBF Committee agreed to contribute £360,000 to extend the pilot of the Bridge Programme for a further two years. This included an additional grant of £150,000 to each of Locality and Cranfield Trust to continue to run the 'Triage and Connect' service; attend programme 'test and learn' meetings as well as learning events with funded organisations; and to hold a grants 'pot' that enable CBF grantees to purchase the support they need. The remaining £60,000 was used to procure Rocket Science as Learning Partner and Manager for the programme.



Current Position

5. Having received excellent guidance and support from Rocket Science throughout the first two phases of the Bridge Programme, the CBF Funding Committee agreed, in September 2022, that the management of the Bridge Programme should be taken in-house with effect from March 2023 and led by the Bridge Programme and Total Assets Lead, recruited at the end of October 2022, to better integrate and embed this work, as part of CBF's core offer to funded organisations.
6. Since March 2023, considerable work has taken place internally and with Locality and the Cranfield Trust to build upon the good foundations of the Bridge Programme and enhance the support CBF can offer to funded organisations. CBF's more active management of the Bridge Programme, has presented an opportunity to better

¹ Background Paper - Report to the City Bridge Trust Committee, entitled 'The Bridge Programme Funder Plus Offer, dated 28 January 2021.



integrate and align the Bridge Programme with CBF's current strategic funding, future funding direction and emerging findings of the end-to-end review.

7. Alongside this internal work, CBF has found value in exchanging ideas with other funders and has spoken with colleagues at Lloyd's Bank Foundation, Paul Hamlyn and Esmee Fairbairn to ensure that the Bridge Programme is helpful, accessible and aware of other provision available to the sector.
8. This has led to an expansion of the broader funder plus offer around the Bridge Programme reflecting insights garnered through the Programme. The new initiative of 'Spotlight Talks' which are being delivered in partnership with the Impact and Learning Team are one example of this. They provide a platform for funded organisations to share their knowledge and expertise with other funded organisations. The first 'Spotlight Talk' was a success, attracting 55 attendees – more information can be found here: <https://www.citybridgefoundation.org.uk/news-and-blog/spotlight-talks-international-womens-day>.
9. Following recent papers to this Committee regarding strategic work on trans inclusion, mental health and suicide prevention, the Bridge Programme is now exploring and utilising how the learning from these initiatives can enhance its offer. This additional support might come in the form of one-to-many sessions to better equip organisations to combat online hate crime, suicide prevention training to bring an awareness of risk factors into their work.
10. In the last 15 months the programme has seen significant improvement in the uptake of support, thanks to efforts to better communicate this offer internally to funding managers (who account for nearly half of all referrals) and to promote this offer externally with the support of the comms teams. A recent survey of all CBF funded organisations shows that only 6.5% of respondents were not aware of the Bridge Programme, which speaks positively to the programme's general visibility.
11. CBF is now in a position to further iterate the offer of non-financial support available through the Bridge Programme. In line with the recommendations of the End to End Review, we are considering whether the Bridge Programme could be introduced at an earlier stage in an applicant's journey with CBF (See Recommendations 1 and 6 of the End-to-End Review Paper).
12. For the financial year 2023-2024, the Bridge Programme supported 47 of 50 applicants, representing 5.5% of CBF's active grants portfolio. As of May 2024, CBF has received 211 applications for support through the Bridge Programme and has delivered or is in the process of delivering support to 138 organisations. In addition to the one-to-one support available through the Bridge Programme, it has also delivered 28 one-to-many learning opportunities, attracting 297 attendees.



Year	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Applications received	41	18	50
Applications supported	30	17	47
Applications not supported	11	1	3

Average provider costs for support on the most popular topics were:

Top 5	% of activity	Average cost
Strategic/business planning	22%	£3,010
Fundraising	18%	£1,892
Governance	12%	£2,563
Impact	11%	£3,686
Marketing/Comms	9%	£2,860

NB costs include VAT where applied but do not include Connector or other programme costs

Learning from the Bridge Programme

Management of the Programme

13. Prior to bringing the management of the Bridge Programme within CBF, colleagues at Rocket Science provided valuable reporting with suggestions for improvement. These included a clearer role for CBF in the management structure, a unified approach to data collection, and an expansion of available services.
14. We have addressed these needs during this third phase by appointing a dedicated internal programme lead, using a single data management source across the programme and expanding the offer based on feedback from our funded organisations.
15. A key principle of the programme at its inception was to ensure that the offer of capacity-building support was seen as independent from the offer of funding. “Clear blue water” between the Foundation and funded organisations was maintained by outsourcing the diagnostic elements of the programme.
16. Feedback from participants (**see Appendix 1**) in the Bridge Programme has indicated that the ‘clear blue water’ principle is not considered a high priority for those engaging in the programme. Through further discussions with funded organisations, the delivery partners and funding managers it is understood that this separation is not the best approach any longer, especially if CBF becomes more relational in its approach with funded organisations and actively learns from their involvement with the Foundation. To test this we adopted an ‘opt in’ approach to sharing information with CBF as recommended in a previous paper to this committee and have found that this has been taken up by every applicant to the Bridge Programme without exception.



Provider Pool

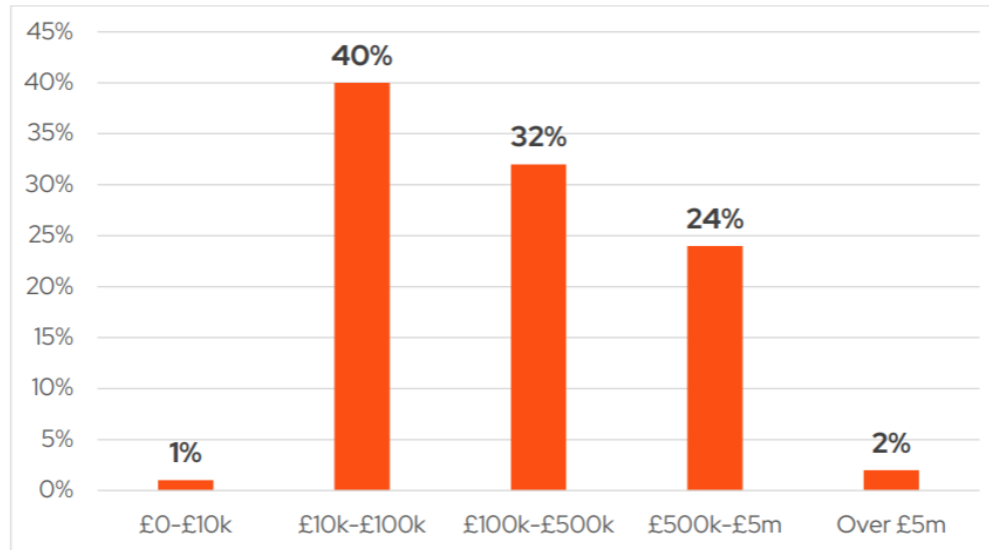
17. The pool of external organisations providing specialised support around different focus areas to Bridge Programme participants (frequently referred to as our 'Provider pool') was reviewed upon the recommendation from the pilot phase. A further eight Providers were added to the list of available resources. Digital support, guidance on diversity, equity and inclusion and legal support were all identified as areas which needed greater focus and remained a priority in filling during the second phase.
18. During the third phase, we have attempted to address the identified gaps by adding providers of legal support and digital expertise but recognise that there is still more work to be done to diversify the pool of services being provided through Bridge, both in terms of the support provided and the types of organisations providing support.
19. As we move to diversify the range of providers being used by the Bridge Programme, this also represents an opportunity to ensure CBF's funder plus offer reaches and is relevant to the broad range of CBF's work, particularly around social investment. Ongoing discussions with CBF's Funding Director and Social Investment Fund Manager and Social Investment Analyst and Relationship Manager are taking place to identify what is required for this evolving area of CBF's work.
20. To encourage more funded organisations to access the Bridge Programme, CBF must utilise a more diverse and representative range of service providers. This includes more civil society organisations, user-led organisations and B Corps (a business certified by B Lab to meet high standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency, balancing profit with purpose). Officers intend to prioritise this work in the next phase. A full list of all current providers and the frequency with which they are used can be found **at Appendix 2**.

Organisation Demographics

21. The Bridge Programme has reached a variety of voluntary and community sector organisations, many of which are smaller organisations within the CBF portfolio. A significant number of organisations supported were small organisations, with 73% of organisations supported having an annual income of less than £500k.



The largest percentage of those supported were small organisations, with income between £10,000 a year and £100,000 a year. 73% of those supported had income under £0.5m.



22. Almost all organisations (97%) were 20 years old or under. Approximately two fifths (39%) had been operating for 8-10 years. This presents a stark contrast to the findings during the pilot phase of the programme where approximately 60% of organisations had been in operation for over 20 years.

Impact

23. A survey we conducted in April/May of this year with all of our Funded organisations provides the following insights about the Programme:

- 76% of respondents agreed the programme easily provided the support they needed.
- 71% felt the programme supported their mission.
- 68.4% reported increased confidence in their roles.
- 65.7% reported increased confidence in leadership.

24. 60.5% felt the programme improved their service offerings. This shows that the apparent strengths of the programme's actual support process lie in its ease of access and relevance to organisations needs, as well as its leadership training, team and organisational management, and service delivery support offerings. It is noteworthy that, for all statements, negative responses do not exceed 13% (those who 'somewhat disagree' or 'strongly disagree'). We will learn from this feedback to continue improving the programme but overall this speaks to the good standard that the Bridge Programme already fulfils. Areas needing improvement include accessing support, resolving property issues, strengthening financial management, and monitoring social and environmental impacts. An interim report providing more detail on the learning from the Bridge Programme to date can be viewed **at Appendix 1**.



Proposals

25. Following points 14 and 15 regarding the principle of 'clear blue water' and considering the findings of the End-to-End Review, particularly recommendation 10 of that review: 'To connect Funding Managers more closely to the Bridge Programme', we propose exploring further integration of some aspects of the Bridge Programme into the core work of the funding team. Officers seek this committee's endorsement to explore this approach and return with detailed proposals on resourcing and capacity implications. At that stage, we will also generate proposals in alignment with the emerging findings of the Future Funding Direction around our broader funder plus and total assets offer beyond the Bridge Programme, building on the learning we have amassed over the last 18 months in this area.
26. It is also recommended that there is a comprehensive review of the current provider pool and a stated aim of moving towards using more civil society organisations and user-led organisations in line with our values around procurement. We know that the current provider pool is heavily weighted towards independent consultants and lacks representation from user-led organisations. Officers propose a target of having at least 50% of our expenditure on Bridge providers going to charitable and/or user-led organisations.

Conclusion

27. The Bridge Programme is a service that is clearly valued by the organisations that access it. Since its inception, CBF has continued to iterate the programme and our funder plus offer will continue to evolve in alignment with our future funding direction. The End-to-End Review (E2ER) contains many recommendations which could help to deliver a better standard of support through the Bridge Programme. The idea of having a closer relationship between Funding Managers and the Bridge Programme (E2ER Recommendation 10) and the possibility of introducing the Bridge Programme at an earlier stage in an applicant's journey with CBF (E2ER Recommendations 1 and 6) all merit exploration and speak to the Bridge Programme's position as a valued element of the relationships that CBF holds.

Background Papers

- Report to the City Bridge Trust Committee, entitled 'The Bridge Programme Funder Plus Offer, dated 28 January 2021.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Bridge Programme Review Interim Findings
- Appendix 2 – Bridge Programme Providers and their usage

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