



Committee: Funding Committee of the City Bridge Foundation Board	Date: 9 th June 2025
Subject: Chief Funding Director's Update Report	Public
Report of: Sacha Rose-Smith, CBF Chief Funding Director	For Information

Summary

To support the Funding Committee in the discharge of its duties, this regular report provides an update on key areas of activity to note and agree, where necessary. Specifically, the report provides details on the following: Funding Updates on Bridging Divides, including the Anchor, Propel/Collaboration Circle and Suicide Prevention programmes and *Bridging Divides* Legacy and Transition work, CBF's Trans Inclusion in Funding Policy, updates on the Enterprise Development Pilot and social investment, the recruitment of a Director of EDI, Equity Partners Forum, strategy & governance updates on the CBF Board, a CBF Board and Committee Member Portal, Arkwright Scholarship and Smallpeice Trust - Bridge Challenge STEM day, Impact & Learning updates on Welcome Sessions, 'Lunch and Learn' and Spotlight Talks Series, plus updates on Finance and Media Coverage.

Recommendations

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 contents of the report.**

Main Report

Funding Updates

1. [Bridging Divides Update](#) – City Bridge Foundation closed its open and responsive funding programmes to new applications for one year from 8 October 2024, following an earlier partial closure in July. The decision, approved by the Funding Committee and CBF Board in September 2024, was prompted by a sharp increase in applications that exceeded available funding, alongside the need to focus on strategic priorities such as the Future Funding Policy (FFP), the Suicide Prevention Programme and the Anchor Programme.
2. Following the closure announcement, CBF had a total of 928 applications in the system, with a total requested amount of £173.6 million. As reported at the February meeting, by mid-January 2025 applications had been reduced to 404 (totalling £60 million), representing a reduction of over 56%. Of these, 198 applications (totalling £31.3 million) were under assessment, with 206 remaining to be sifted and allocated.



3. As of 20 May 2025, applications have been reduced further by 79% to 85 applications (totalling £11,420,771) currently under assessment. Of these, 30 applications are scheduled for consideration at the 29 May Funding Panel. The remaining 55 applications will be presented to the final Funding Panel in June. CBF remains on target to complete all assessments by the end of June 2025.
4. This progress reflects an extraordinary collective effort during a period of exceptional demand. The team's flexible, proportionate approach and sustained commitment have been instrumental in driving this phase forward at pace. To have processed such a high number of applications in a little over seven months is a remarkable undertaking and we should acknowledge the considerable dedication, care and focus the team has brought to this challenging task.
5. Trans Inclusion in Funding Policy – In April 2025, the UK Supreme Court provided a judgment on the definition of 'women' for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010. In light of the Supreme Court ruling and the subsequent interim guidance issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), officers will consider the implications on the charity's Trans Inclusion in Funding Policy, which specifically deals with CBF's approach to dealing with issues in relation to our funding practice.
6. The CBF Board has authorised the Acting Managing Director of CBF to adjust the existing policy if necessary, after taking legal advice, and submit a revised version of the Policy to the Board for review. This will be undertaken in conjunction with the City Corporation as part of a wider corporate approach to risk management on this issue.
7. Anchor – Round Two of the Anchor Programme launched in Spring 2024, supported by enhanced guidance through a dedicated webpage and pre-application webinars. Applications decreased from 173 in Round One to 73 in Round Two, reflecting the programme's more focused criteria. To date, 22 grants totalling £26m have been awarded, including £11m to nine organisations in 2024/25.
8. As Cohort One reached the end of their first year, Anchor Leads piloted a new impact and learning process co-designed with funded organisations. This includes a light-touch reflection form and in-person sessions with Funding Managers. Insights will shape future monitoring and learning approaches.
9. On 30 April, an in-person welcome session was held for Cohort Two of funded organisations from Round Two. The session included an overview of the funding programme, practical guidance on working with City Bridge Foundation, and a networking lunch. This informal gathering brought together organisations from both cohorts with the aim of fostering stronger peer relationships, shared learning, and opportunities for future collaboration across cohorts.
10. Alongside work building partnerships with Cohorts One and Two, Anchor Programme Leads have been holding one-to-one conversations with senior staff at leading trusts and foundations. These discussions support the programme's legacy goals to influence the wider funding sector and share a blueprint for designing ambitious, long-term core funding programmes that drive systems



change. Insights from these conversations will inform the design of an interactive learning session for funders, scheduled for September 2025.

11. Propel/Collaboration Circle – At its February meeting, the Funding Committee authorised the Chief Funding Director, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee, to develop a proposal for submission to the CBF Board regarding use of the balance of the allocated funds for Propel, a programme aimed at delivering long-term funding for organisations focussed on systems change, as a funding award to the Collaboration Circle (CC), a vehicle established by London Funders to convene funders in the interests of collaboration. The development of proposals was subject to ensuring the legal, financial and operational arrangements to be implemented by CC (and other conditions) were satisfactory to CBF. Following review of the drafted proposals, the decision has been deferred to June/July, and officers will continue to work with London Funders and other funders involved to negotiate an agreement for how CBF will contribute to and participate in CC.
12. Suicide Prevention – Work with CoL procurement to tender for a learning partner was completed in February 2025 and a contract has been signed with Making Impact Matter who performed well at tender. Initial meetings have taken place and work has begun. Onboarding meetings have taken place with funded organisations and the whole cohort will be brought together for an event in early July.
13. Discussions are ongoing with an organisation around a proposal for suicide prevention legacy funding based on its previous application to City Bridge Foundation's suicide prevention strategic partnership funding programme. This application was judged to be fundable at assessment stage, but ultimately not taken forward due to budgetary constraints following panel discussions. The team is working with the organisation to explore potential areas of engagement beyond the charity's initial application, which may have operational benefits for CBF. This includes a potential opportunity for CBF to engage with the organisation's ongoing work around suicide prevention in high-risk locations, particularly public places. Details of the organisation can be provided in the non-public section of today's meeting.
14. Legacy and Transition – Work is underway to ensure that grants awarded under CBF's old funding policy (*Bridging Divides*) continue to be managed to a high standard and that we maximise potential for learning that helps the development of our new policy as we transition to *Standing with Londoners*. The new staffing structure includes a dedicated team to oversee Legacy and Transition work, managing what is likely to be over 1,000 grants but with numbers falling rapidly as these awards reach their natural end dates. As the new Justice Areas are still in development, officers will bring recommendations for a series of ambitious strategic transition awards to ensure that CBF provides ongoing support to the sector. The transition awards will build on the ideas set out in this Committee's December 2024 paper "Future Funding Policy: Transition and Legacy". These awards will be developed in consultation with the sector and come to your September Committee for onward approval by the CBF Board.

Social investment and Social Enterprise



15. Enterprise Development Pilot – Enterprise development is an integral part of CBF's new funding policy, *Standing with Londoners*. The December 2024 Funding Committee approved work to pilot a programme of enterprise grant making and capacity building support to help build the resilience of charities and voluntary organisations at a time of significant demand for their services and increased funding pressures. Experienced enterprise support providers were invited to submit delivery proposals via a call published on CBF's website in March 2025, along with the offer of pre-application advice. We received eleven proposals, including from consortia and from sector-leading providers. The overall standard of response was very high and the proposed levels of collaboration between partners was notable. Four of CBF's officers were involved in the shortlisting and they interviewed four providers. Detailed assessment is currently taking place. Feedback was offered to all unsuccessful applicants, and most have taken this opportunity.
16. Officers have prepared a paper with further recommendations for the enterprise development work which can be found later in this pack.
17. Social Investment – In May, CBF, working alongside Trust for London and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation announced a new £1.5m pilot to create the UK's first Black-led female-founded social investment fund. *Beyond Barriers* provides grant funding to support knowledge sharing and skills transfer from the Sumerian Foundation (one of CBF's social investment advisors) to BUD Leaders. Through social investment provided by the three foundations, BUD Leaders can then provide patient and flexible catalytic capital to Black-led social enterprises in London. The pilot is a response to the findings of the Adebawale Commission on Social Investment.
18. As part of ongoing efforts to promote awareness and accessibility of CBF's social investment fund—and to support the growth of the wider social investment ecosystem—officers have participated in several sector-facing events over recent months. This included speaking engagements at the Enterprise Grants Task Force Showcase, and CBF's active support of the Association of Charitable Foundations' (ACF) Social Impact Investors Group (SIIG) events. These included participating in an "office hours" session for organisations seeking social investment for the first time, and attendance of the Social Investment Showcase (formerly known as Market Information Days). CBF also hosted a stall at Good Finance Live and attended the BUD Leaders Conference, continuing our engagement with key partners and reinforcing our commitment to equity and accessibility in the sector.
19. Since the last Funding Committee, officers have reviewed 58 social investment enquiries. The total funding requested through these enquiries is £18.82 million, although 24 organisations have not yet disclosed a specific funding ask. Where figures are available, the average request stands at £553,529, with individual enquiries ranging from £32,000 to £3.5 million. At the time of writing, 13 proposals are actively under consideration and are likely to progress to investment. These total £6.46 million in requested funds, with an average ask of £497,153.



20. Recent enquiries have spanned a range of themes, including increased investment demand from social enterprises and charities aiming to strengthen their technology infrastructure; organisations focused on EDI (including neurodiversity, disability, and racial justice); environmental justice and sustainability; and community-led initiatives in sport and wellbeing.
21. In April 2025, officers facilitated a site visit to the Helen Bamber Foundation's recently opened premises for members of the Funding Committee. During a guided tour, attendees saw first-hand how CBF's £240,000 social investment had enabled the organisation to refurbish the building to a trauma-informed standard, creating a safe and welcoming environment for the survivors it supports.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Updates

22. Director of EDI – CBF are pleased to welcome Jerome Williams to the charity as the new Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). He will be joining CBF on Monday 9 June and brings over 15 years of experience as an EDI expert, including successful stints as Head of Diversity and Inclusion at Citizen Housing, Sovereign Housing Association, and the Department of Energy and Climate Change.
23. Jerome's appointment is a vital step in CBF's ongoing commitment to EDI and creating a more equitable workplace that aligns with CBF's values. His expertise will help CBF in its engagement on EDI with its external stakeholders, funded organisations, bridge users and visitors to Tower Bridge. It will also help CBF work with the wider City of London Corporation.
24. Equity Partners Forum – In 2023, CBF launched an equity partners forum to help guide our strategy, improve our practises and ensure CBF remain abreast of key equity trends. In 2025 and following a competitive recruitment process, the Funding Team appointed seven Equity Partners to refresh the group and act as 'critical friends'. The appointed organisations are: Consortium, Women's Resource Centre, Race on the Agenda, Action on Race Equality, Inclusion London, The AVOCADO Foundation and Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE). Representation gaps remain a continued area for focus and improvement.
25. On 15 May, the Funding Team convened the first Equity Partners meeting, discussing members' motivations for joining the group and what they need from CBF and the group to be able to contribute fully. Officers invited thoughts on the draft terms of reference, which will be amended and shared. Members heard about the progress so far on *Standing with Londoners* and interrogated this. We also touched on the overarching Theory of Change for the policy and will return to this at the next meeting.
26. Equity Partners are compensated for their time and commit to regular meetings.

Strategy and Governance

27. CBF Board Elections and Appointments – On 7 May 2025, the CBF Board convened for its first meeting of the 2025/26 civic year, the Board having been constituted at the April Court of Common Council meeting. The Board re-elected



Deputy Paul Martinelli as Chair of the CBF Board, and elected Simon Duckworth as the new Deputy Chair of the CBF Board, taking over from Giles Shilson. The Board then agreed to reconstitute the Funding Committee, and appointed Deputy Nighat Qureishi, Deputy Paul Martinelli, Deborah Oliver and Deputy James Thomson to the Committee for the ensuing year, with Deputy Nighat Qureishi also elected as Chair of the Committee. In accordance with the Standing Orders of the Court of Common Council, a Deputy Chair for the Funding Committee will be agreed at this meeting, and expressions of interest from the elected Members will be sought in advance.

28. CBF Board and Committee Member Portal – In response to Member feedback provided as part of the internal Governance Review and in the interest of improving the charity's offer to Board and Committee Members, the Strategy & Governance team has been working to roll out a CBF Member Portal on SharePoint. The portal will be available to all CBF Board and Committee Members and will be used to provide access to Board and Committee agendas and minutes (increasing ease of access to items provided as links), induction and training materials, diary dates and external charity guidance. Members are invited to provide feedback on the portal and request material for inclusion on a standing basis.
29. Arkwright Scholarship and Smallpeice Trust - Bridge Challenge STEM day – On 8 April 2025 CBF's Arkwright Engineering scholars attended a behind-the-scenes tour and bridge walk of Tower Bridge alongside a City Corporation Group Engineer. The students had the rare opportunity to lift Tower Bridge to allow zero-carbon Singaporean vessel Green Pioneer to pass underneath. The scholars thoroughly enjoyed this opportunity, and the visit was captured as a news item on the CBF website. Given the Arkwright Scholarship is a two-year programme and CBF does not have the engineering capacity to mentor two cohorts of scholars at once, it is proposed to pilot sponsorship of a Bridge Challenge STEM day, a full-day, curriculum-aligned STEM activity for students aged 11-16, delivered by The Smallpeice Trust in alternate years. The programme supports learning across Engineering, plus Maths, Science, and Design & Technology, and aims to inspire future careers in STEM. CBF will provide educational engineering content linked to our bridges whilst schools provide basic equipment and supervision, with the activity accommodating up to 60 pupils.

Impact and Learning

30. Welcome Sessions – In March 2025, City Bridge Foundation delivered the first of its bi-annual online welcome sessions, engaging over 230 newly funded organisations. These sessions are designed to strengthen understanding of City Bridge Foundation's mission and values, provide an overview of the grant management process, and outline the range of support available to grant holders. These are also an opportunity for grantees to meet peers and ask questions about the grant management process.
31. 'Lunch and Learn' Series – As part of the forthcoming Funding Team learning programme, a series of 'Lunch and Learn' sessions has been introduced to supplement core learning content. The first session was held in March 2025 and focused on the application of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in the funding



landscape. The session included contributions from the 'AI for Grantmakers' peer-learning group, as well as insights from Rosie Sowa (National Lottery Community Fund), who shared current approaches and learnings from the use of AI within their organisation.

32. Spotlight Talks Series: Approaching AI – The fourth session in the Spotlight Talk series took place in May 2025 and engaged over 130 attendees from external organisations. This session explored the potential of AI to improve efficiency and support capacity within the charitable sector. The Spotlight Talk series continues to provide a platform for funded organisations to share experiences, approaches, and learning, in line with the CBF's objectives to foster sector-wide collaboration and knowledge exchange.

Finance

33. For the year ended March 2025, provisional total grant awards net of revocations was £78.66m, against a budget of £80.61m. This is subject to finalisation through year end procedures. Grant awards were £1.95m below budget due to delays and other issues in anticipated grants commitments across various programmes.

34. The table below shows grant awards under different programmes compared with grants budget in 2024/2025:

2024/2025 Programmes	24/25 Grant Budget (£m)	24/25 Grants Awarded (£m)	Variance (£m)
Bridging Divides Responsive Grant making	46.00	46.69	0.69
Suicide Prevention	10.00	10.14	0.14
Bridge Programme	0.75	-	-0.75
Funder Plus (formerly Bridge Programme)	-	0.12	0.12
Additional One Year and Closure Related Funding	-	5.98	5.98
Propel	6.00	4.66	-1.34
Anchor programme	13.86	10.75	-3.11
Social investment – Test & Discover	4.00	0.32	-3.68
Total Grants	80.61	78.66	-1.95

35. Most of the changes relate to Additional One Year funding, underspend on Social Investment, explained below, and underspend on Anchor programme partly used to alleviate spending pressure in other areas of funding.
36. The changes on Social Investment programmes were due to the work to update CBF's governance and the delay to the start of the enterprise development review which is part of recommendations included in the Future Funding Policy.
37. The approved grants budget for 2025/26 is £42.20m. Some of the grant spending originally planned for 2024/25 is now forecasted to be awarded in 2025/26 under Surge Funding and Standing with Londoners programmes, due to the closure of



programmes and announcement of the new policy. Grants awarded in April 2025 were £3.75 million.

38. The table below shows 2025/26 grants budget compared with 2024/25 grant awards:

2025/2026 Programmes	25/26 Budget (£m)	24/25 Grants Awarded (£m)
Bridging Divides Responsive Grant making	15.00	46.69
Suicide Prevention	-	10.14
Funder Plus (formerly Bridge Programme)		0.12
Additional One Year and Closure Related Funding		5.98
Propel	14.47	4.66
Anchor programme	-	10.75
Social investment	1.73	0.32
Bridging Divides responsive Grant making (final grants awarded following closure)	11.00	
Total Grants	42.20	78.66

Communications Updates

39. Media Coverage – In January, February, March and April there were 91 items of City Bridge Foundation media coverage, of which 37 related to funding, 13 were about Tower Bridge, 36 about bridges generally and five on the foundation generally. There was widespread coverage of the launch of the foundation's new funding policy, Standing with Londoners, including articles in [Third Sector](#), [Charity Times](#) and [Civil Society](#); and first-person articles by the Chief Funding Director in [Charity Times](#) and the Acting Managing Director in [Governance & Leadership](#).
40. Meanwhile, [Fundraising magazine](#) also carried a two-page interview with the Chief Funding Director about the new policy, while a double-page article on the same subject by a Funding Director appeared in [Charity Finance](#). Other coverage included a [frontpage](#) story in the [Hackney Gazette](#) on the foundation's funding for HMDT Music for its work with children with special educational needs, coverage in [Islington Gazette](#) on funding for Girls Into Coding, and a piece on [London Live](#) on funding for Epping Forest Heritage Trust.

Conclusion

41. This report provides a high-level summary of CBF activities since the Funding Committee last met in February 2025. The Funding Committee is asked to note the content of the report. Further information on any of the updates given in this report can be provided to the Funding Committee orally in the meeting or in written format in advance of or as a follow-up to the meeting.

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