



Committee: Funding Committee of the City Bridge Foundation Board	Date: 10 September 2025
Subject: Chief Funding Director's Update Report	Public
Report of: CBF Chief Funding Director	For Information
Report author: Sacha Rose, CBF Chief Funding Director	

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 about *Standing with Londoners*, *Bridging Divides*, Transition Grant Management, Social Investment, Social Enterprise Support, the Anchor, Propel and Suicide Prevention funding programmes, plus updates on Equity Partners, the CBF Board Strategic Away Half-Day, Safeguarding Training, Learning Programme for Funding Team, Welcome Session for Bridging Divides Grant Holders, and Media Coverage.

Recommendations

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

- i) **Note the contents of the report.**

Main Report

Funding Updates

1. 30 Years of Funding – 2025 marks the 30th anniversary of the Charities (The Bridge House Estates) Order 1995, the cy-près scheme which governs CBF's funding, following the historic decision to broaden the charity's charitable purposes and allow for income surplus to that required for the maintenance of the Thames bridges to be used for other charitable purposes for the general benefit of the inhabitants of Greater London. The first meeting of the charity's funding arm, which would come to be known as City Bridge Trust, was held on 27 September 1995, with the approval of 11 grants totalling £168,350. As part of marking this occasion, the team have published this article looking back at the last 30 years, the impact of CBF's funding, and what the future holds.

[City Bridge Foundation | Celebrating 30 years of funding by City...](#)

2. Standing with Londoners – The Funding Team continues to deliver across multiple strategic and operational workstreams during a period of transition and restructure. The final phase of the implementation of the team restructure is underway. Since our last meeting in June the Programme and Partnerships team recruitment has concluded. This saw the appointment of four new Programme and Partnerships Leads (PPL) who will specialise as follows:



- Access to Justice – Stella Brown
 - Climate and Environmental Justice – Clara Espinosa
 - Racial Justice – Khadra Aden
 - Economic Justice – Abi Sommers
3. Programme and Partnership Managers have been recruited, alongside Senior Funding Officers and Funding Officers, and CBF are in the final stages of recruiting to the Strategic Transitions team.

Conversely, the charity has said goodbyes to several colleagues. August saw the departure of Sam Grimmett Batt, Caspar Cech-Lucas and Nat Jordan, while Shegufta Slawther and Sandra Jones will be leaving CBF in September.

4. A full team chart can be provided at the December Funding Committee when the Implementation phase has concluded.
5. Bridging Divides – CBF closed its open and responsive funding programmes to new applications for one year from 8 October 2024, following an earlier partial closure in July. This 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.
6. Following the closure announcement, CBF received a total of 928 applications, with a combined requested amount of £173.6 million. As previously reported, by mid-January 2025 this number had been reduced to 404 applications (totalling £60 million), with a further reduction to 85 applications (totalling £11.4 million) by May 2025. All remaining applications were scheduled for consideration at the final two Funding Panels in May and June.
7. As of 21 August 2025, all *Bridging Divides* applications have been assessed, and only a small number of applications remain in final internal stages:
- 5 applications (totalling £1.15 million) are undergoing final financial review.
 - A further 11 applications (totalling £2.69 million) are awaiting approval through the delegated authority process.
8. This will finalise all applications under the *Bridging Divides* programme. The scale and pace of this work over the past year has been significant, and we would like to record our appreciation for the team's professionalism, care and sustained effort in concluding this major phase of work.
9. Today's agenda includes a proposal for transition funding to support the sector as CBF moves from *Bridging Divides* to *Standing with Londoners*.
10. Transition Grant Management – CBF is currently navigating a transitional phase as it prepares to launch the first programme under the *Standing with Londoners* funding policy, while continuing to manage nearly 1,700 active grants



awarded through *Bridging Divides*. This figure includes a surge in applications received following the announcement of *Bridging Divides*' closure.

11. To manage this dual responsibility, the CBF Funding Team restructure included the creation of a dedicated Transition Team. This allows colleagues focused on developing *Standing with Londoners* to do so, while ensuring continuity in grant oversight. A portion of the 1,700 grants - those aligned with our new approach, either through relevance to one or more Justice Areas or as strong examples of systems change - were identified for ongoing management by the newly created Programme and Partnerships Team.

12. Following a team-wide categorisation exercise:

- 500 grants will be allocated to the Programme and Partnerships Team.
- Just over 1,000 grants will be assigned to the Transition Team.
- The remaining balance consists of applications pending funding decisions at the time of data extraction from Salesforce. Most are expected to fall under the Transition Team's remit.

13. CBF recognises that many organisations within the Transition portfolio are delivering work that aligns with the aims of *Standing with Londoners*, even if their current grants do not. Officers are committed to ensuring these organisations are aware of future funding opportunities and that their existing grants are concluded effectively.

14. As the Transition Team is appointed, CBF will develop tailored engagement and support plans for this cohort, and explore opportunities to improve efficiency in grant management, including:

- Converting project funding to core costs,
- Streamlining monitoring requirements, and
- Offering access to Funder Plus and Enterprise Development support.

15. Social Investment – Officers are working on three potential investment recommendations for December Committee. Today's papers also include a draft portfolio risk framework, on which Member feedback is sought.

16. In the last quarter, the social investment team continued efforts to solidify CBF's profile within the social investment sector. This included activities to raise awareness of the social investment fund, deepen relationships with other social investors, and track emerging trends, challenges, and priorities within the sector - for both investors and investees.

17. Notable themes have included a focus on climate justice and the role of communities in the green transition. As part of this engagement, officers attended events such as "Just Transition with Community Changemakers" and "Financing the Future," the latter exploring the policy and investment landscape for environmental impact. Officers also contributed to collaborative investor convenings, including reviewing social investment showcase pitches ahead of an



event run by the Association of Charitable Foundations in October, and joining the Pathway Fund roadshow in London.

18. Engagement with investees included a site visit to Repowering London, where officers met Repowering staff and heard more about their experience of the social investment process. Officers also attended the Snowball annual showcase for investors, titled *World Changing Returns*, and participated in an investor roundtable for Big Issue Invest's Growth Impact Fund.
19. Other events reflected the theme of Equity and Inclusion, including attendance at two conferences: the Black Business Entrepreneurship Conference 2025 and Foundervine's conference, where officers were able to network and engage with social enterprises from diverse backgrounds. Another key theme was young people's engagement with social entrepreneurship, as well as how CBF's *Standing with Londoners* priority areas impact young people. Officers attended a child-lens investing event, which explored what it is and how to get started, as well as UnLtd's Funding Futures programme, which highlighted how young people are taking the lead.
20. Since the last Funding Committee, officers have reviewed 23 social investment enquiries. The total funding requested through these enquiries is £13.28 million, although five organisations have not yet disclosed a specific funding ask. Where figures are available, the average request stands at £737,777, with individual enquiries ranging from £150,000 to £5 million. At the time of writing, seven proposals are actively under consideration and are likely to progress to investment consideration. These total £7.08 million in requested funds, with an average ask of £1,416,000.
21. Recent enquiries reflect a strong focus on affordable housing and community infrastructure; climate action and environmental sustainability; advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion, including accessibility and racial justice; targeted support for refugees, survivors, and other marginalised groups; initiatives promoting youth engagement, arts, and wellbeing; and technology-driven solutions for social impact and economic empowerment.
22. Social Enterprise Support – Today's agenda includes a proposal recommending a funding award of £2m to the School for Social Entrepreneurs for a programme of enterprise grants coupled with capacity building support. This follows an internal piece of research conducted by officers which explored the gaps in London's enterprise support provision, and CBF's potential contribution to filling these. It is the outcome of an open call inviting proposals from experienced enterprise providers in London.
23. In July, officers submitted a response to a consultation by Access – the Foundation for Social Investment on the proposed use of dormant assets money to incentivise social investment to civil society organisations. Officers shared some of the insights from our internal research as well as our experiences as both a grant funder and social investor. These included how enterprise grants are most effective when coupled with technical assistance and capacity building, but this capacity building needs to be brokered with both care and thoughtful triage of the



needs of charities and voluntary groups receiving it. It should also be flexible, informed by need and, as much as feasible, bespoke.

24. Officers will continue to consult on and explore a range of options for the use of a further £2m earmarked for enterprise grantmaking and support across the next couple of years.
25. Anchor Programme – In June 2025, Cohort One of the Anchor Programme visited Southall Community Alliance as part of an interactive learning day. The group first visited a new community centre built as part of the redevelopment of Southall before going to Western Road Urban Garden, an initiative delivered with Ealing Council, which aims to transform disused land into a vibrant, accessible space for community connection and food growing.
26. Over August, Anchor learning sessions were paused to account for the summer holiday period. However, during this time, Anchor learning partner TSIP has been developing an Anchor Programme ‘welcome pack’, which includes a summary of key programme themes, links to guest blogs and practical information for onboarding new staff in the event of staff changes at each funded organisation.
27. In September, one-to-one learning interviews will be held with each funded organisation, as well as a dedicated learning session to introduce Cohort Two to the Anchor Programme’s learning themes already explored by Cohort One.
28. Anchor Leads will be working closely with CBF’s Impact and Learning (I&L) team to review Cohort One’s first-year reporting and survey the experience of funded organisations using the bespoke Anchor Impact and Learning forms. These insights will help refine the I&L process before Cohort Two begin reporting on first year activities in early 2026.
29. As the learning partnership draws to a close at the end of October 2025, TSIP will prepare final outputs and a full programme report. To mark this moment, a final learning event will be held in early October 2025 at Camley Street Natural Park. This event will bring together the CBF Funding team, Anchor funded organisations, systems thinkers and leading trusts and foundations to reflect on the Anchor Programme’s learning journey and explore how long-term, transformative funding can drive systems change.
30. Propel – The Propel Long-Term Grants Programme launched for expressions of interest in April. Of the 131 eligible organisations, 108 submitted expressions of interest, and approximately 39 have been shortlisted to proceed to stage two, with an expectation of a 90% success rate at second stage. These were assessed jointly by collaborating funders, including CBF, the National Lottery Community Fund, the GLA, and Equity Partners, with all equity partners also participating in the assessment process as well as in the panel discussions.
31. The first stage-two cohort, covering 16 grants, will close in September, with two further cohorts to follow. The timing of each cohort will depend on the end date of organisations’ current grants, with three cohorts in total to be delivered through the Collaboration Circle (CC), a vehicle established by London Funders to



convene funders in the interests of collaboration. The programme remains on target for a minimum of 75% of final awards to be directed to equity-led or by-and-for organisations, in line with the Propel' strategic goals. At the July 2025 meeting of the CBF Board, the Board delegated authority for the sign-off of arrangements with CC to the Acting Managing Director of CBF, and arrangements are expected to be completed in early September.

32. Suicide Prevention – In July, we celebrated that David Breakspear, Kate James and Henry Zhang were granted the Freedom of the City, in recognition of their work as members of the Suicide Prevention Programme's Lived Experience Advisory Group. They were joined by Philip Pirie, another member of the group, who already had his Freedom. Sacha Rose, CFD, and Abi Sommers, co-lead of the Suicide Prevention Programme, attended the ceremony. David, Kate and Henry were nominated last year by Deputy Nighat Qureishi and Deputy Paul Martinelli in their respective roles as Chair and Deputy Chair of the Funding Committee.
33. With regards to programme delivery, the programme's learning partner Making Impact Matter (MIM) has now completed onboarding with all organisations funded under the programme. Work has begun to understand the organisations' existing impact measurement processes and needs. MIM will be holding an in-person event in September to bring the funded cohort together and further co-create the programme's theory of change and impact framework.
34. An assessment of funded organisations' suicide prevention training needs has been carried out with initial training due to be delivered in the autumn.
35. A funding recommendation for Samaritans is included at Item 14 on the agenda.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Updates

36. Equity Partners – Earlier in 2025, following a competitive process, CBF recruited seven [Equity Partners](#) to act as critical friends and advisors to the Funding Team. Following a kick off meeting in May, they were brought together in July for an engaging workshop facilitated by Tyde Consulting to feedback on the Standing with Londoners Theory of Change and developing Access to Justice programme. Their views have been integrated into these pieces of work.

Strategy & Governance Updates

37. CBF Board Strategic Away Half-Day – The CBF Board's Strategic Away Half-Day meeting is scheduled for the morning of Wednesday 8 October 2025, with all CBF Board and Committee Members invited to attend. Refreshments and lunch will be provided, and transport to and from Guildhall can also be arranged for Members. An agenda and precise timings will be circulated closer to the meeting.
38. Safeguarding Training – A CBF Member training session on Safeguarding is scheduled following today's meeting, at 2:30pm. The session will be held in hybrid format and is open to all CBF Board and Committee Members. The session will explore what safeguarding means in the context of CBF, including how our policy



and procedures work, what risks may arise across different areas of our activity, and how governance roles help ensure accountability and safety.

Impact & Learning Updates

39. Learning Programme for Funding Team – The I&L team have been planning a learning programme for the Funding Team, to enhance the skills and confidence of colleagues ready to deliver Standing with Londoners. Topics are informed by analysis of the skills required for Standing with Londoners and feedback from colleagues on their needs.
40. Since June, the team has delivered Lunch & Learn sessions with [The Bridgespan Group](#) about Field Building, and with Trust for London about their [Racial Justice Fund](#).
41. Following a competitive process, change specialists [WrkWI](#) were commissioned to create a short Team Transitions programme with a working group of colleagues. The programme is being designed to support the team in navigating change, align and strengthen clarity in relation to the *Standing with Londoners* policy and deepen connection and trust as the foundation for team collaboration. It will start with a face-to-face, all-team day on 4 September and continue with two online follow-up sessions.
42. I&L have created an anonymous survey to further understand the team's knowledge and confidence levels to enable design of future sessions and measure distance travelled during the learning programme. This has been reviewed by the Head of People, Director of EDI and Associate Funding Director for Learning and Operations, and will be completed when all members of the team are in post.
43. Other confirmed learning sessions include processes training for the Access to Justice Team and EDI in funding with [Brap](#).
44. Welcome Session for Bridging Divides Grant Holders – In Autumn the team will hold the second of two online Welcome Sessions in 2025 for the final cohort of organisations funded under *Bridging Divides*. These sessions are designed to strengthen understanding of CBF'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.

Communications Updates

45. Media Coverage – In June and July there were 64 items of City Bridge Foundation media coverage, of which 38 were about Tower Bridge, including coverage on [ITV News](#), [MyLondon](#) and [LBC](#) about the lighting of the bridge to mark the England women's football team's Euro 2025 victory. There were 10 items of other bridge-related coverage, including [BBC London News](#), [BBC Radio London](#) and [Londonist](#) stories on the 25th anniversary of the opening of Millennium Bridge, plus two stories about CBF generally.



46. Meanwhile, there were 14 stories relating to the foundation's funding, including coverage in [Fundraising](#) of its role as a funder for the Racial Justice Fund and in [This Is Local London](#), where the foundations is referenced as a funder for the Parkside Community Centre, in Ilford, which is being refurbished.

Conclusion

47. This report provides a high-level summary of CBF activities since the Funding Committee last met in June 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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