

Committee(s): Culture Heritage and Libraries Committee – For Information	Dated: 03/11/2025
Subject: Inspiring London through Culture Fund – Annual update 2024/25 & funding programme analysis 2020/21 to 2024/25	Public
This proposal delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes:	Diverse Engaged Community Vibrant Thriving Destination
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Simon Latham, Interim Managing Director of the City Bridge Foundation	For Information
Report author: Sheena Etches, Funding & Charity Management Lead, Central Funding and Charity Management Team	

Summary

The Central Grants Programme (CGP) provides a portfolio of four funding programmes that support the delivery of activities and services primarily within the Square Mile. The CGP's Inspiring London through Culture funding programme (ILTC) opened in October 2016. ILTC is managed on behalf of the Culture Team by the Central Funding and Charity Management Team (CFCMT). The ILTC has one funding round each year. This report provides an overview of projects funded through the ILTC in the 2024/25 financial year alongside a comprehensive analysis of the grants awarded by the ILTC over the last five years illustrating the contribution of the ILTC to delivering both Destination City and City of London's Corporate Plan strategic outcomes.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. Note the criteria for the Inspiring London Through Culture Fund at **Appendix 1**
2. Note the recent grants awarded from the Inspiring London Through Culture Fund 2024/25 at **Appendix 2**.
3. Note the analysis of the Inspiring London Through Culture Fund over the last five years, 2020/21 to 2024/25 inclusive, and its impact at **Appendix 3**.

Main Report

Background

1. The Inspiring London Through Culture funding programme (ILTC) is one of a portfolio of four open grant funding programmes that form the City of London Corporation's (CoLC's) Central Grants Programme (CGP). The ILTC opened in October 2016.
2. The ILTC awards grants to cultural projects and services that are being delivered for the benefit of communities or beneficiaries within the City of London. Projects must either have most or all benefits delivered within the geographic boundaries of the City of London or engage with the City of London's resident and/or worker communities (at any location).
3. ILTC applications must meet one or more of the fund's four core criteria – 'Promote access for all to participate in the City of London's cultural offer'; 'Enhance London's creative future through championing excellence in the development of innovative practice and/or skills'; 'Deliver positive social impact through culture and/or heritage in the City of London'; Support the development of the City of London's Destination City'. (See **Appendix 1**).
4. ILTC has one funding round each year.
5. The Culture Heritage and Libraries Committee delegates the award of grants to the ILTC Panel who meet annually. The ILTC Panel is made up of representatives from a range of Cultural Institutions across the City alongside the Chair and Deputy Chair of the CHL Committee and Officers from the Culture Team.
6. A comprehensive grant management service for ILTC and other City of London grant funding programmes is delivered by the CFCMT drawing on the team's expertise in the field of grant-making and in line with 'Open and Trusting' grant making practice. The CFCMT is a City of London-wide resource managing a number of other grant programmes on behalf of departments across the City of London including the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund.
7. Management of the ILTC process is aligned with the City's existing grant allocation process through the CFCMT. Applications to the ILTC undergo a process of due diligence, assessment and financial review by Funding Managers before sign-off by a Senior CFCMT Officer. Eligible applications are then presented to the ILTC Panel for delegated decision. At the ILTC Panel consideration is given to each proposal's alignment with the ILTC criteria, outputs and outcomes, value for money in terms of social, environmental as well as financial value and equality considerations.

Inspiring London through Culture Funding Programme 2024/25

8. In 2024/25 the ILTC received 25 applications in total – a 39% increase in applications to the ILTC from the previous financial year. This steep increase in the number of applications to grant funders is being experienced across the

sector as cultural organisations whose reserves were used during the pandemic struggle with increasing costs at a time when several major arts and charitable funders are realigning their funding priorities or closing.

9. The CGP has an annual City's Estate budget of £220,000 split across three funding programmes, and additional funds specifically to deliver the Destination City Partnership Fund. In 2024/25 the ILTC received an annual budget of £73,333 to allocate to eligible applications, 10 grants were awarded funding totalling £76,104. The overspend on this programme has been covered by funds written back in year and allocated to the programme.
10. The average value of grant awarded fell to £7,610 – the lowest average grant value over the last five years. (See **Appendix 3, Table 1**). A list of grants awarded and more detail on the projects funded can be found at **Appendix 2**.
11. In 2024/25, 10 organisations were awarded funding. 10 applications were rejected and 5 applications were withdrawn during assessment. Grant approval rate for the year fell to 40% - the lowest approval rate for the fund over the last 5 years. (See **Appendix 3, Table 2**).

Inspiring London Through Culture Fund Analysis of Grants Awarded over the last 5 years

12. Over the last five years, 2020/21 to 2024/25 inclusive, the ILTC has distributed £398,479 in 48 grants. Grants awarded have ranged from £1,200 to £10,000 with an average value of grant of £8,302. (See **Appendix 3, Table 1**).
13. Over the last 3 years (2022/23 to 2024/25) applications to the ILTC have increased by 67% and this trend is set to continue. For the 2025/26 ILTC round 28 applications have been received – a further 12% year on year increase. This year on year increase in the number of applications to cultural funders is being experienced across the sector as arts organisations whose reserves were used during the pandemic struggle with increased costs at a time when several major charitable funders are realigning their funding priorities or closing.
14. Over the last 5 years there have been a total of 107 applications to the ILTC. Over the last three years, at the same time as a steady year on year increase in the demand for ILTC funding, the average value of ILTC grant awarded has increased but the value of funds available has remained more or less constant. Consequently the annual approval rate has dropped from 53% in 2022/23 to 40% in 2024/25 with only 2 out of every 5 applications being awarded funding. (See **Appendix 3, Table 2**).
15. Over the five year period 39 unique organisations were supported through the award of ILTC grant funding of which 82% of successful applicants were awarded one grant each. (See **Appendix 3, Table 3**). 7 organisations received two or more grants each. (See **Appendix 3, Table 4**).
16. Over the last 3 years the percentage of organisations in each funding round that were new to the portfolio has increased year on year from 62% in 2022/23 to

70% in 2024/25 reflecting the Panel's aim to support a broad range of applicants and those new to grant funding.

17. Over the last five years 56% of grants awarded were to small organisations with an annual turnover of less than £500k. Just under a third (31%) of all ILTC grants awarded over the last five years were to 'very small' organisations with an annual turnover of less than £100k. (See **Appendix 3, Tables 5 & 6**).
18. Over the last 5 years ILTC grants were awarded across a wide spectrum of artforms. 27% of grants were awarded to music projects representing 25% of the total value of funds awarded (£98,274 investment), 13% of grants were awarded to theatre projects representing 13% of the total value of funds awarded (£51,924 investment) and 13% of grants were awarded to film projects representing 12% of the total value of funds awarded (£48,002 investment). (See **Appendix 3, Table 9**).
19. However, ILTC investment in the visual arts over the period was notably low with only 4% of ILTC funded projects from the visual arts representing 5% of the value of grants awarded (an investment of £18,500). Similarly, given the abundance of key heritage sites and collections across the City of London ILTC investment over the last five years in heritage related projects was also low – only £17,710 investment across 3 projects. (See **Appendix 3, Table 9**).
20. Over the last 5 years 98% of grants awarded 'Promoted access for all to participate in the City of London's cultural offer'. The ILTC also contributed to the delivery of the City of London's Destination City policy (63% of all ILTC funded projects). (See **Appendix 3, Table 10**). In comparison with other arts/culture project grants a relatively low percentage of grants awarded through the ILTC (only 27% of grants awarded) championed excellence in the development of innovative practice and/or skills.
21. The ILTC delivered against five of the six CoL Corporate Plan strategic outcomes. For example, the City of London Corporate Plan strategic outcome 'Vibrant Thriving Destination' with 69% of all grants awarded contributing to 'providing a world-leading culture and leisure offer' and 44% of grants awarded contributing to 'increased visitor spend'. (See **Appendix 3, Table 11**). The ILTC also strongly delivered the City of London Corporate Plan strategic outcome to create 'Diverse engaged communities' with 60% of grants awarded contributing to 'increasing community cohesion' and 40% of grants awarded contributing to 'reducing social isolation'.
22. The ILTC grant programme delivers activities and services for a range of beneficiary groups. Many projects target more than one main beneficiary group. 69% of ILTC funded activities over the last 5 years were for general beneficiaries, 29% of all funded projects benefitted children under the age of 11, 25% benefitted young people aged 11-25 years and 25% benefitted people from minoritised ethnic groups. (See **Appendix 3, Table 12**). Perhaps due to the generalist nature of the ILTC Fund only a handful of projects over the last 5 years have had a beneficiary group focus for those from the LGBTQ+ community, people with physical disabilities or older people.

Future delivery

23. The CFCMT is in the process of reviewing its small grant programmes, which will include a review of the Inspiring London Through Culture programme at align with the City of London's new Cultural Strategy. The CFCMT will provide a substantive update to this committee in due course.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

24. **Financial implications** – CFCMT Officer time to manage the ILTC will be met by the CFCMT central team budget.
25. **Resource implications** – Officer time to manage the ILTC and review its impact will be provided by the CFCMT as part of the Team's responsibility for the CGP's management.
26. **Legal implications** – None.
27. **Strategic implications** – The delivery of the ILTC providing cultural activities and services for communities in the City of London aligns with Destination City and to the City Corporation's own Corporate Plan and stated aims of providing creating diverse engaged communities and vibrant thriving destination.
28. **Risk implications** – All ILTC grants are managed and monitored by Funding Managers within the CFCMT to mitigate risks in project delivery through provision of ongoing advice and support.
29. **Climate implications** – None.
30. **Equalities implications** – The purpose of the ILTC is to fund cultural projects and services delivered for the benefit of communities or beneficiaries within the City of London which 'Promote access for all to participate in the City of London's cultural offer' and/or 'Deliver positive social impact through culture and/or heritage in the City of London' leading to increased community cohesion.
31. **Security implications** – None.

Conclusion

32. The Inspiring London Through Culture Fund is an impactful grant funding programme that contributes to the delivery of both Destination City and the City of London's Corporate Plan strategic outcomes. The ILTC funds projects and activities across a wide spectrum of artforms and strongly supports small organisations with a turnover of less than £500k to deliver cultural projects in the City of London.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Inspiring London through Culture Fund Criteria
- Appendix 2 – Inspiring London through Culture – Grants awarded 2024/25

- Appendix 3 – Inspiring London through Culture Fund Analysis of Grants awarded 2020/21 to 2024/25

Sheena Etches

Funding and Charity Management Lead

Central Funding and Charity Management Team

E: sheena.etches@cityoflondon.gov.uk