



Committee: Funding Committee of the City Bridge Foundation Board	Date: 2 December 2025
Subject: Chief Funding Director Update	Public
Report of: Sacha Rose, 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 funding updates about *Access to Justice*, *Communities for Children*, Strategic Transition Awards, the transition portfolio, Propel/Collaboration Circle, Anchor, social investment and social enterprise development. There are EDI updates on racially equitable investment, the racial justice community of practice, and the racial justice audit of grants. The report includes impact and learning updates covering the progress of the service design and end-to-end review, the learning programme for the team and operations.

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. Access to Justice – The first round of the Access to Justice (ATJ) programme was soft launched on CBF's website in late October, featuring headline information to alert the sector of upcoming funding, followed by formal launch on 10 November, coinciding with the release of the full funding guidelines and criteria. This was followed by a webinar with 300+ attendees, and the offer of pre-application calls throughout November and December.
 - a. Access to Justice webpages are available here:
<https://www.citybridgefoundation.org.uk/funding/access-to-justice>
 - b. A downloadable PDF of the Funding Guidelines including eligibility criteria are available here:
<https://www.citybridgefoundation.org.uk/assets/documents/Funding-guidelines-Access-to-Justice-Round-One.pdf>
2. It is expected that CBF will make 20-25 awards in this initial round, with awards being made in early 26/27. This will also serve as a live test of the charity's new streamlined processes and the implementation of End-to-End review recommendations, laying the groundwork to scale up and accelerate delivery in future rounds.



3. Officers are progressing work on wider *Standing with Londoners* roll out an implementation for 2026/2027, distributing £25m. Following CBF's 'Blueprint for Programme Design', officers will work closely with key stakeholders and partners to refine the focus of CBF's offer under each justice area, ensuring co-design and that equity and impact is prioritised. Further details along with an indicative timeline is provided in Agenda Item 12 – Standing with Londoners: Update on Roll Out and Implementation.
4. Communities for Children – The December 2023 Funding Committee and March 2024 Board approved a £1.09m award over four years to BBC Children in Need to support the London delivery of *Communities for Children* (formerly the Child Poverty Impact Model). Now a £15m+ multi-funder initiative and the first of its kind in the UK, *Communities for Children* tackles child poverty through place-based, systemic change in ten UK locations with each area receiving up to £1.5m over five years via a lead organisation. It builds local partnerships that enable community leaders, voluntary organisations, and young people with lived experience to co-design and deliver practical solutions to the root causes of poverty. The programme aligns strongly with *Standing with Londoners* through its focus on collaboration and systems change. Unlike traditional grant-making, the programme invests in collaboration, innovation, and systems change to break cycles of intergenerational poverty. It also aims to influence local and national policy and amplify community voices.
5. The programme was launched in September 2025 with an introductory blog [here](#). CBF is working to help shape the programme model and the focus areas for London delivery.
6. Impact Economy Business Roundtable at 10 Downing Street – Following the launch of HM Government's 'Office for the Impact Economy' by the Prime Minister on Monday 10 November, the CBF Chief Funding Director was invited to a roundtable on Thursday 20 November to discuss how the Government could partner effectively with impact funders.
7. Strategic Transition Awards – The September 2025 Funding Committee agreed to reserve up to £10m for a programme of Strategic Transition Awards (STAs) supporting the sector for the period between the closure of Bridging Divides and the full opening of Standing with Londoners. The same meeting endorsed the first STA, £1.1m to the Samaritans, to develop its regional approach and partnership working in London. This award was approved by the CBF Board.
8. A further £2m recommendation for work supporting d/Deaf and disabled Londoners is included on the agenda for today's meeting. Officers will bring the remaining STA recommendations to the next meeting of the Funding Committee or (where individual awards are for £500,000 or less) under delegated authority.
9. Transition Portfolio – During August and September, the Funding Team conducted a comprehensive review of all 1,637 active and pending *Bridging Divides* grants recorded in Salesforce, assessing alignment with the *Standing with Londoners* funding policy. The aim was to ensure that grants aligned with the new policy could



be held by the Programme and Partnerships Team for ongoing management, while those less aligned would be overseen by the Transition Team.

10. From this review, 1,062 grants were initially identified as suitable for the Transition Team. Following a detailed assessment of aged grants and a data cleansing exercise, this number has since reduced to 651. Officers anticipate a further reduction to 484 grants by April 2026 as older grants reach their end dates.
11. Updates will be provided for the Committee on the steps being taken to ensure transition portfolio organisations receive high-quality support, and on how we are capturing learning from their work to inform our funding practice.
12. Propel / Collaboration Circle – Final grant agreements between City Bridge Foundation and Collaboration Circle were in place at the end of September 2025. Assessments for the first Cohort of Long-Term Grants took place during the autumn, with the Propel Funding Committee approved grants to 11 organisations to the value of £10.2m (three organisations were unsuccessful). The next Cohort of applications will be received in December with assessments taking place in early 2026.
13. Anchor – In September, one-to-one learning interviews were 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.
14. In October, an Anchor learning event took place at Camley Street Natural Park. This event brought 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. Anchor leads have started a learning group with some funders to continue discussions on key learnings around long-term core funding.
15. 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.
16. Social Investment – As of September 2025, CBF has committed approximately £7.07 million, representing 32% of its social investment allocation, with a portion of this capital still subject to legal completion. A further £2.5 million of investment recommendations is included in today's papers, alongside a pipeline of warm prospects totalling £6-7 million, with recommendations expected in early 2026. These opportunities focus on affordable housing and community-led green infrastructure.
17. Since the last Funding Committee meeting, two investments have been approved under delegated authority and 24 organisations have been considered for social investment, with nine yet to confirm a funding ask. For the remaining fifteen, total requests amount to £14.34 million, averaging £956,000. Pipeline themes include disability inclusion and neurodivergence; specialist housing for disabled, refugee,



and racially minoritised women affected by domestic abuse; activation of “meanwhile” spaces for community use; and employment pathways for young people and refugees.

18. Officers have engaged in a range of sector events to strengthen CBF’s profile, inform pipeline development, and support investment recommendations. This included attending Foundervine pitch events and Accelerator Showcases, which provided insight into the organisation’s support for business owners and informed the associated investment proposal. Officers also attended Resolution Ventures’ WorkerTech portfolio event, engaging with ventures in the fund and gaining insight into the ecosystem convened by the fund manager.
19. CBF officers participated in activities led by ACF’s Social Impact Investors Group (SIIG), including sessions on climate investment, child poverty, and the quarterly Social Investment Showcase. One officer also chaired a peer learning session for foundation representatives exploring deeper engagement with social investment.
20. Engagement on equity and inclusion included attendance at BUD Leaders’ roundtable on equitable funding, an event on the Future of EDI in Social Investment, and Do It Now Now’s networking event for Black-led social enterprises and charities. Officers also attended the Fair4All Finance “Delivering Financial Inclusion Together” conference, which explored strategies to expand access to fair finance.
21. The Social Investment Analyst and Relationship Manager attended the Social Enterprise World Forum in Taipei, participating in a workshop on social investment best practice and hearing from global foundations on trust-based approaches to funding. The Associate Director for Social Investment and Enterprise also attended the opening of West Ham United Foundation’s community venue, a project supported by a £600,000 investment from CBF.
22. Social Enterprise – The £2m pilot programme of enterprise grants and support approved at September’s Board and Funding Committee meetings and being delivered by the School for Social Entrepreneurs, remains open for applications to London VCSEs until mid-December. The 60 recruited groups will receive up to £19k each in start-up and match trading grants, paired with capacity building support to increase their earned income.
23. Locality, a current funder-plus provider for CBF, have been awarded a small development grant to undertake a survey of and conduct interviews and focus groups with CBF-funded organisations, to gauge current levels of earned income among the cohort, and explore opportunities and barriers to developing this further. The results will inform the design of a programme of enterprise development focused exclusively on CBF’s portfolio of over 1,000 grant holders, as a tailored layer of support additional to their grant. CBF will co-produce the programme; prioritising support for the Strategic Transitions sub-cohort will be one of several considerations. A full proposal will be brought to the Funding Committee in 2026.



24. Officers are currently exploring the potential for a programme of enterprise support targeting the Women and Girls and VAWG sector, as part of a Strategic Transitions Award. A further investment in enterprise support which aligns closely with one or more of Standing with Londoners' four justice areas will be recommended to Funding Committee in the second half of 2026.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Updates

25. Racially Equitable Investment – CBF agreed a £20,000 contribution, as a strategic initiative using remaining funds under Bridging Divides, towards the costs of work done by the Impact Investing Institute on racially equitable investment. The work has national scope and CBF's award is proportionate to the assumed London benefit. Joseph Rowntree Foundation is providing the balance of funds. The work has good alignment with the economic and racial justice visions under *Standing with Londoners*.
26. Racial Justice Community of Practice – This year, CBF joined the *Ten Years' Time* Racial Justice Community of Practice—an initiative bringing together Grant Making Trusts and Foundations across the UK to embed racial equity across investment, grant-making, governance, and operations. In support of this commitment, we have established a cross-organisational Change Team, co-sponsored by Sacha Rose, Chief Funding Director, and Nadia Khalaf, Chief Operating Officer. The team includes representatives from across the CBF staff group and is currently undertaking a series of assessments to inform the development of an accountability framework. This framework will set out key goals and activities to guide our racial equity work over the next three years, which we look forward to sharing more in due course.
27. Racial Justice Audit of Grants – CBF took part in this year's Funders for Race Equality Audit (Audit 5) and will be part of the results that they will soon publish. This will allow us to benchmark ourselves against our funding peers. Internally we are reviewing the data, which has highlighted that ongoing participation in the audit will give us excellent insight into the equity impact of our new funding policy. It has also highlighted several other topic areas for discussions, especially given the focus under Access to Justice on led by and for organisations, which is a key metric in the audit.

Impact & Learning Updates

28. Service Design and End-to-end Review Implementation – The first round of the Access to Justice programme is serving as a live test of new streamlined processes, embedding End-to-End review recommendations. Early feedback from applicants and partners will inform further refinements, with the aim to scale up and accelerate delivery in future rounds.
29. The team are progressing the remaining E2E recommendations, focusing on simplifying application and reporting requirements, and enhancing pre-application support (including pre application calls and the Strengths & Risks tool). Monitoring dashboards are being developed to track applicant experience and internal efficiency.



30. Impact and Learning – Programme teams have adopted justice-area-specific learning questions to guide funding decisions and sector engagement. Annual learning visits and structured conversations are replacing lengthy reports, reducing administrative burden while deepening insight into funded organisations' experiences. A workshop on learning reports and the new impact and learning approach for committee and board members was held on 14 October 2025.
31. The Funding Team continues to develop and apply a theory of change, providing a clear framework for how funding, collaboration, and learning activities are expected to deliver social justice for marginalised Londoners. This approach helps clarify goals, test assumptions, and inform programme design and impact measurement.
32. Learning Programme for the Team – The Funding team continue to participate in structured learning activities, including sessions led by external facilitators to support participatory learning and professional development.
33. The team participated in a BRAP Anti-Racism in Action training day on 17 November 2025, supporting the development of anti-racist principles and practice across the organisation.
34. A learning survey was conducted across the team providing a representative picture of skills, knowledge, and confidence across the team. The results will be used to shape and inform the training programme for 2026, ensuring future learning activities address identified needs and priorities.
35. An Equity Partners session is scheduled for 27 November 2025, dedicated to the development of our Funder Plus programme. The meeting will bring together our key equity-focused staff to discuss programme design, share insights, and plan next steps.
36. Media Coverage – Since the last Funding Committee meeting on 8 September 2025 there have been 115 items of City Bridge Foundation media coverage. The refurbishment of Blackfriars Bridge topped our coverage with 43 mentions, largely across BBC channels but also reaching an international audience.
37. In social investment news, CBF got 23 mentions for our support of West Ham United Foundation's multi-million-pound redevelopment of their community hub the Foundry, which is expected to expand the club's reach to more than 60,000 people a year through 35 programmes, delivering an estimated £75m of social value over the next five years.
38. Our funding of a new GreenSeas Trust recycling bin at Canary Wharf, to tackle plastic pollution, received nine items of coverage and our collaborative partnership with BBC Children in Need, Pears Foundation, The Hunter Foundation and the National Lottery Community Fund on the £15m Communities for Children fund to tackle child poverty received five mentions.



39. Operations – Salesforce remains central to operational delivery, supporting application tracking, coding, and reporting. The Funding Team conducted a comprehensive review of all active and pending Bridging Divides grants recorded in Salesforce, assessing alignment with the Standing with Londoners funding policy.

40. Data accuracy and user training are ongoing priorities to ensure consistent assessment and portfolio management. The CRM retender is scheduled for October 2026, with procurement strategy under review.

Conclusion

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