



PATHWAYS TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES: SUMMARY REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2024

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UBELE 
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THE PATHWAYS TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAMME (P2E) SUMMARY REPORT: 2022-2024

This report was first published in September 2024 for London Community Foundation (LCF)

The contents and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and the commissioning partner, The Ubele Initiative.



**The London
Community
Foundation**

JPMorganChase

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was commissioned by the London Community Foundation (LCF) through its Learning Partner, The Ubele Initiative. This report would not have been possible without the support from JPMorganChase.

The P2E programme was delivered in partnership with Action for Race Equality (ARE), without whom, the support programme would not have been possible.

Last, but by no means least, we thank the grantees, all 19 of them, for the work they are doing and the time they have given to the programme; often juggling real-time challenges with clients and striving to develop an organisation that is fit for the 21st Century. Without your voice, and willingness to be interviewed, it would not have been possible to complete the evaluation report.

In the final analysis, the sense made of the voices of those responding to the many questions remain with the author and hope I have done justice to what you have so far achieved and the overall achievement of the programme

INTRODUCTION

Funding to Black and racially minoritised led voluntary and community organisations (BRM) has been poor over many years. The pandemic threw up the precarious situation many of these organisation's face with evidence emerging that showed that many are underfunded and excluded from the funding market (Runnymede Trust, 2021[1]; Funding Alliance, 2021[2]). These reports have highlighted that the funds going into these communities range from £10,000 to around £50,000 per annum. These are insufficient sums to maintain and develop the medium to long-term sustainability of such organisations and this against a backdrop of increased disadvantage. Coming out of the pandemic many organisations feared that they may not survive and would be further disadvantaged in terms of sustainability, unless the funding landscape recognised the needs of these organisations.

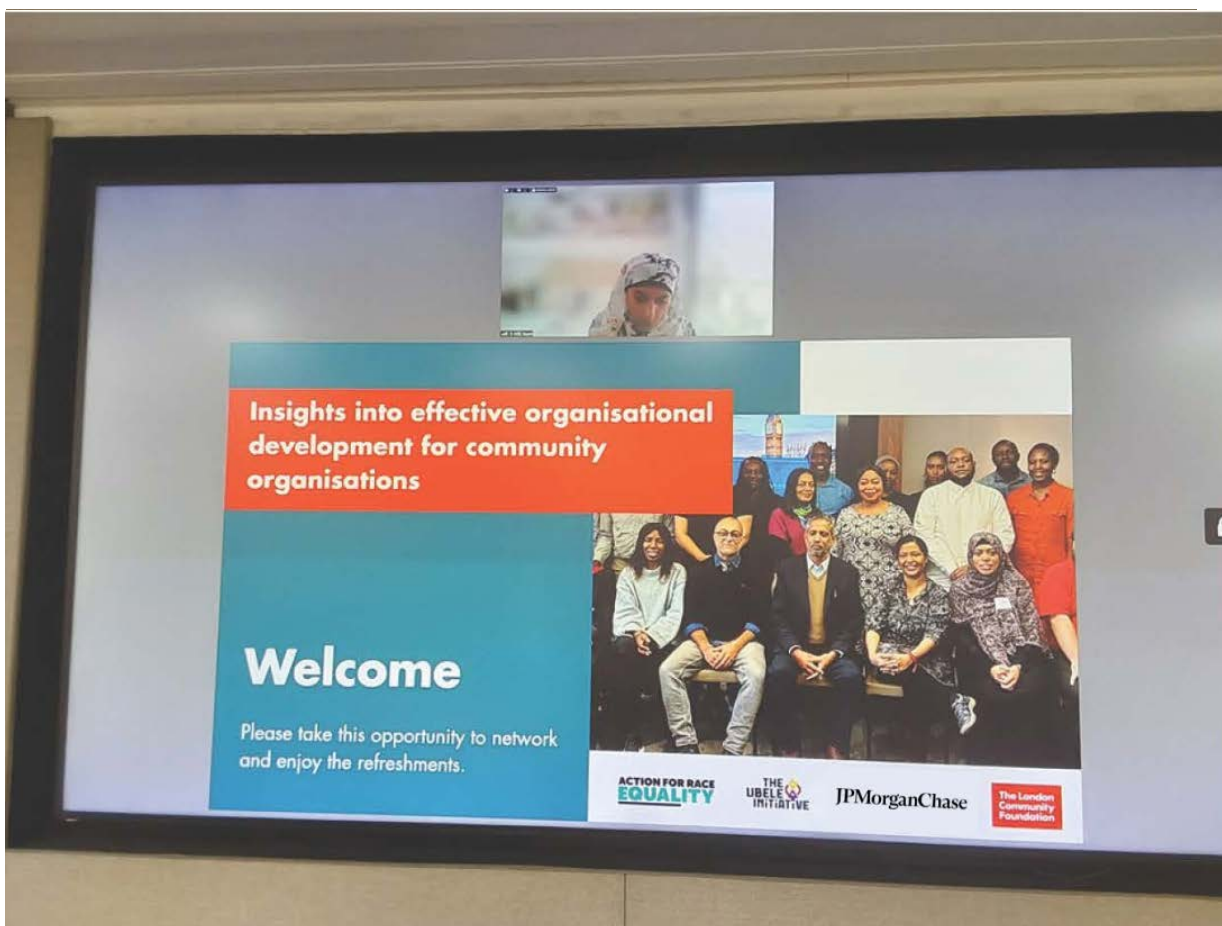
Against this backdrop, The Pathways to Economic Opportunities Programme (P2E) was established by The London Community Foundation (LCF), with support from JPMorganChase (JPMC), to invest in Black and racially minoritised (BRM) community led 'by and for' organisations providing specialist Employment, Enterprise and Financial Health (EEFH) services. The P2E programme was delivered in partnership with Action for Race Equality (ARE) as the 'Organisation Development' partner and The Ubele Initiative (Ubele), in the role of 'Evaluation and Learning Partner'.

The aims and objectives of the programme

The P2E programme aimed to contribute to building equity, inclusion and resilience of organisations operating within the charitable sector to improving economic outcomes for BRM communities facing racial and economic inequities. The delivery of this was seen through a two strands approach involving direct financial grant funding coupled with an organisation development (OD) package, based on a place-based investment strategy targeting BRM communities within priority London boroughs[3].

The specific objectives driving the design and implementation of the P2E programme were identified as:

- a) Contributing to building equity and inclusion (within the charitable sector) by partnering with BRM community-led organisations to design, deliver and evaluate the programme led by their experience and voice.
- b) Helping to build Employment, Enterprise and Financial Health (EEFH) resilience within the BRM communities in the capital.
- c) Supporting the financial and operational capacity of BRM community-led organisations working in EEFH space, by targeting specific communities (boroughs) for place-based investment.
- d) Providing a platform for expertise, experience and impact of organisations operating in the EEFH space as a key part of the EEFH sector and recovery from COVID.



[1] Runnymede Trust (2021), Shared futures: funders, funding and the BME third sector – conference summary.

[2] Race Equality Alliance (2021), A Quantitative Analysis of the Emergency Funding to the Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary Sector During COVID-19 <https://www.equallyours.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/QUANTITATIVE-ANALYSIS-BAME-31-03-21-2M.pdf>

[3] The priority boroughs were identified through the Phase 1 work which identified the following boroughs: Barking & Dagenham, Brent, Croydon, Enfield, Hounslow, Newham, Tower Hamlets, and Waltham Forest (see [place-based funding](#))

The P2E programme involved three approaches over two delivery phases:

1. Phase 1: A six-month pilot co-creation programme led by Action for Race Equality (ARE), which supported six (6) organisations with the view of designing the 2yrs programme. This commenced in 2021.
2. Phase 2 (a): Financial project/core cost funding of between £50,000 to £100,000 over 2yrs to 19 organisations with an overall value of £1.5m covering the period August 2022 through to June 2024.
3. Phase 2(b): Organisation development programme running alongside and in tandem with the financial support as part of Phase 2. The support consisted of (a) baseline organisational capacity assessment, (b) workshops (incl. action learning sets) and (c) 1-2-1 focused consultancy support based on their baseline assessment (see Year 1 report for details).

The evaluation approach

The overall evaluation and learning approach included analysis and review of primary and secondary qualitative research materials informed by quantitative monitoring data and qualitative information. This included:

1. Phase 1 desk-based research and market analysis on the Employability, Enterprise, and Financial Health sector in London boroughs, with specific reference to BME-led provision and communities.
2. Deployment and analysis of the organisational baseline assessment process, which included an action plan.
3. 1-2-1 structured (and informal) interviews using purposive sampling techniques to identify sample size (n=12 structured interviews conducted).
4. Online feedback questionnaire on the organisational development support strand of the programme (i.e. workshops, Action Learning Sets and 1-2-1 consultancy support) as well as final end-of-programme feedback on the overall impact and lessons learnt.
5. Analysis of LCF monitoring and summative evaluation reports from organisations.

Nineteen (19) organisations were funded from BRM communities based in London delivering services in one or more of the targeted boroughs: Barking & Dagenham, Brent, Croydon, Enfield, Hounslow, Newham, Tower Hamlets, and Waltham Forest.

- The overwhelming majority of funded organisations were based in boroughs in East London (68%):
 - 68% of funded organisations covered East London (Waltham Forest, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Barking and Dagenham)
 - 21% of funded organisations covered North-West and North London boroughs (Enfield, Hounslow and Brent)
 - 11% of funded organisations covered South London boroughs (Croydon)
- As the place-based rationale included a focus on those boroughs with high BRM population experiencing economic hardship, such as, for example, high unemployment and in receipt of benefits, it was important to assess whether those beneficiaries were being supported through the programme. The largest ethnic minority community being served by the organisations funded were those from the Black African and Caribbean communities (53%), with 26% reflective of the Asian communities while 16% indicated supporting 'all ethnic' communities. This indicates that the programme was reaching those it was intended to support.

Other main characteristics of the 19 organisations were:

- Sixty-three percent (63%) of the funded organisations were registered charities (i.e. company limited by guarantee or charity incorporated organisation), 26% were companies limited by guarantee without shares and 11% Community Interest Companies (CIC). As the eligibility conditions were set as charitable organisations, the organisations funded were in line with expectations as to what constitutes a social enterprise within the broader 'charitable' organisation type of company formation.
- Coming into the programme, 619 paid and unpaid workers were identified across the 19 organisations. Thirty-one percent (31%) of organisations employed paid staff: 12% full-time and 19% part-time with most organisations having volunteers as their frontline workers (69%).

All the programmes funded were consistent with the primary aim and focus of the P2E programme:

- 8 organisations delivered employment programmes.
- 2 organisations delivered enterprise and business start-ups.
- 7 organisations delivered financial health and advice.
- 2 organisations provided ESOL classes to migrants and refugees.
- All organisations received capacity building support delivered through the organisation development programme provided by ARE and the JPMorganChase Inspire Leadership programme.

The OD programme consisted of:

- Baseline assessment using the Capacity Assessment Schedule (CAS) developed by FW Business Ltd, which helped to identify areas of support based on the assessment (i.e. informing the 1-2-1 consultancy and workshop design)[1].
- Workshops of 2hrs minimum
- Action Learning sets (ALS) which sought to build on the strength and skills of those organisations in scope to the programme[2].



[1] The CAS is a derivative of the McKinsey Organisational Assessment Tool (OCAT), developed by FW Business Ltd over the last 10 years, working with a range of voluntary and community organisations to refine the tool and the process. It is intended as a self-assessment tool for organisations to identify gaps and required capacity building for their organisation, and to measure progress against initial or target benchmarks. The CAS is broken down into five broad categories deemed to be important considerations for organisational development activities: Governance and Leadership, Operations and organisational management, Human Resources, Procedure, systems and infrastructure and Programme design, content and delivery.

[2] See the ARE's report on the OD programme for specific details.

Between 2022 - 2024, the 19 organisations received organisation and leadership support through:

- 16 workshops and peer-learning sessions of 2hrs minimum per session (i.e. 32hrs guided learning hours)[1] . These included:
 - Inspire Leadership Training: In partnership with JPMorganChase, topics included: Bias and Inclusion, Organisational Swot Analysis, Leadership Characteristics, Situational Leadership and Receiving Effective Feedback.
 - Building Resilient Teams: Strategies for identifying and preventing burnout
 - Writing Better Bids and Diversifying Income
 - Evaluating and Measuring Impact
 - Budgeting and Finance
 - Communications and Social Media
 - Budget Forecasting and Cashflow
 - Microsoft 365 Office: Utilising Teams, SharePoint and other Apps
 - Sustainability Beyond the Programme
- 500 hours of 1-2-1 consultancy support
- Access to Resources via the intranet platform created as part of the 'community of practice' approach.
- Networking events
- Sector news and information (i.e. four Blogs and five resource materials linked to the workshop themes produced)

Impact of the programme

Based on the short to medium term monitoring and evaluation process, the following outcomes illustrate the impact of the programme:

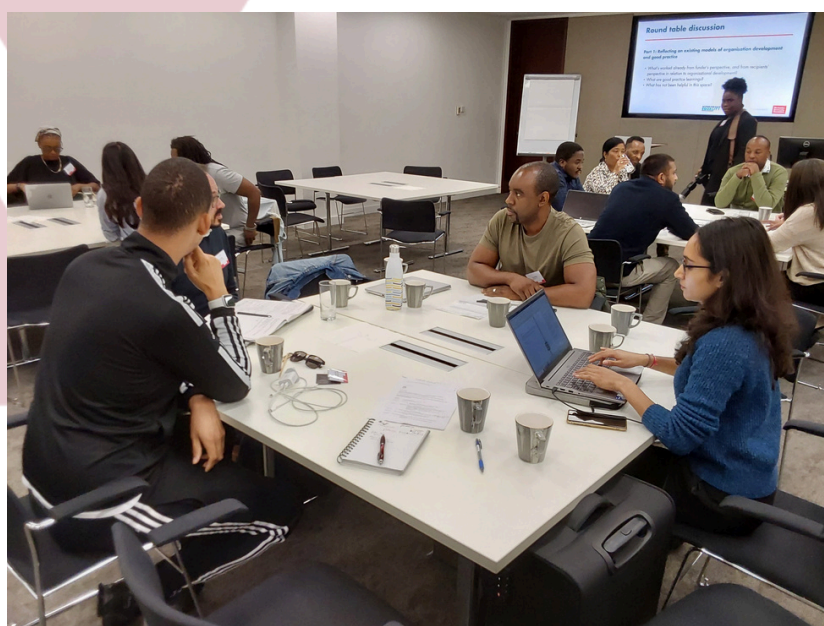
- Thirty-six percent (36%) of participants across all projects were unemployed at the start of their engagement with 53% receiving benefits.
- Organisations reached 7,526 beneficiaries, a 152% increase on the expected year-end outturn of 2,985. Of these, 1,117 (15%) were first-time participants. This reflects well on the project's ability to engage new beneficiaries because of the funding. Not only this, but the fact they are 'new' suggests also the growing need for such a programme.
- Organisations used the funding to contribute to core costs, specifically towards rent, utilities and staffing (i.e. new appointments made as well as retention of existing staff where previous funding was due to expire).
- Thirteen (13) organisations (or 68% of total cohort) were able to leverage £1.3m, which represents 87% return on the grant invested.

- Sixty-one percent (61%) of participants identified as female, while 42% of organisations indicated working with Black/Back British ethnic communities and 23% identifying as disabled.
- Eighteen (18) organisations provided information on the age range of beneficiaries they worked with, from which we noted that 90% were over the age of 19. This is perhaps not surprising on two fronts. First, not many organisations that were funded worked with young people as their primary focus (only 4) while the others worked almost exclusively with adults or women, as in the case of many of the East London projects working with Bangladeshi women.

The impact of the support processes left some long-lasting impressions whilst at the same time changing the practice of some of the organisations, enabling them to access additional and further funding to continue their project after funding comes to an end.

“Organisational development has helped in many ways, it allowed us to step back, listen to each other and take time to reflect, leading to improved teamwork through better communication and understanding improved understanding of rights and responsibilities better working arrangements new ideas and funding review of contracts review of governance updating of constitution more positive outlook for the future.”

“We found the Pathways model has been successful for our organisation. It has allowed us to align our grant-funded project with our long-term organisational goals. The combination of grant funding and organisational development has enabled us to deliver high quality effective programme alongside improving our internal processes, strategic planning capabilities, and sustainability.”



A welcomed feature of the overall organisational development support programme was the baseline assessment, which many found useful and 'refreshing'[1]. The overall average score at the start of the programme was 2.53, which equated to an organisation operating at the level of Basic Capacity (Level 2) and at the end of the programme, the average score for the 13 organisations that completed the re-assessment was 2.58 (2% increase). While on the surface this may not seem significant, some areas reflected significant change while others remained static, due in the main, to organisation capacity and size. For example, some re-assessed organisations showed significant improvement across the five imperatives by 21%, with a major impact on Human Resources (36% improvement), which reflected the focus of development for many organisations.

The 1-2-1 Consultancy Support was slow to pick up and took longer than expected to get fully underway. This was in part due to difficulties in recruiting consultants.



[1] The Year 1 report provided an overview of the framework and the levels at which organisations are assessed.

"We believe that the needs that we projected through our initial assessment are on the way to being met. Our consultant has drafted a full plan of what she will be doing with us and started on the first sub-project which is the strategic plan. We have had a full meeting on getting our points across and this is being carefully drafted into the plan for us to revise again before we finalize. The final draft will be sent to us by the consultant. The main take-away was to see a concrete strategic plan being prepared that we can continue to build on in the future every year or two years."

"Finding them [workshop sessions] to be useful in getting information from different organisations to help and projects to be adapted; learning from each other about best practice etc, networking and empowering. We have been provided with a unique element [organisation development] and not just given the funding and ongoing business development and support."

The Inspire Leadership programme, coordinated and delivered by JPMorganChase, was especially impactful on participants on two fronts: intensity and focus over the two sessions alongside the quality of the facilitators, wealth of knowledge and depth of information (the workbook was highlighted as something they'd be able to use over time). The following comments sum up well the general views from participants:

"There are a lot of actions I hope to implement. Facilitating feedback in a positive manner is top of the list. Understanding how to deliver what could be considered negative feedback was very important."

"I'm all about personal growth and I want to better myself in all areas of my life in order to reach my full potential this course added great value to me, and I am very grateful for being able to participate on the course."

"The Inspire programme was good and background in casework – needed leadership training as not natural role and social work and case work. I found it helpful and opened my eyes around leadership styles and learning. The funding has enabled me to focus on key roles like finance, advice and bid writing. It has also allowed trustees and leaders to go on training together."

Challenges encountered

The main challenge that organisations said they faced was managing the size of the funding they received. For several organisations, especially those that were in receipt of funding around the £100,000 mark, who up to that point were receiving on average around £50,000 per annum prior to participating on the programme. For them the challenge was recruitment and being able to manage the sudden uplift of funding in the initial stages. However, the flexibility in the support around expectations over the first six months of operation was seen to be invaluable and welcomed, which eased their anxiety.

"Adapting to rapid growth and increased demand for our services managing the logistics of setting up and optimizing our new Wenlock Street hub; balancing the needs of diverse collaborations and partnerships. Unexpected positive outcomes [included]: the overwhelming success of our digital certificates, which have become a valuable asset for participants; the formation of a strong, engaged alumni network that actively supports new cohorts; the speed at which we've been able to integrate into and serve the wider community, surpassing our initial projections. The learnings [for us]: the importance of flexibility in programme delivery to meet diverse needs; the value of physical space in fostering community and collaboration; the power of alumni engagement in enhancing programme impact and reach and the need for scalable systems to manage growth effectively."

Another area of challenge encountered by organisations working with migrants and refugees without recourse to public funds reflected the concerns - though magnified - around the cost-of-living crisis. The cost-of-living crisis brought more demand to those services than was anticipated which meant organisations had to manage the support they were providing against short term and low levels of funding while bills had increased (with a knock on effect of associated sectors seen as passing on the surcharge at their end). The issues and concerns raised highlighted the need for more funding and more support with these organisations with respect to advice, guidance and information support sessions:

"Post-pandemic challenges of high inflation and the cost-of-living crisis resulted in increased office rental requiring us to move to new premises and increase our spend on changing our marketing materials. Demand for one-to-one employment sessions and digital workshops surged, requiring our part-time staff to commit extra hours as users increased from our target of 81 to 419 over two years. Lack of funding prevented many users from applying for overseas qualification assessments hindering their employment prospects. The grant enabled us to raise funds for weekly employment workshops for over 50s..."

Time commitment to the OD programme and attendance was seen as another challenge for some. This was reflected in the attendance rate, which dwindled markedly towards the end of the programme with the first year showing an average attendance rate of 70% dropping to 51% in the second year. This decline was partially attributed to workshop fatigue and increased engagement with the 1-2-1 consultancy support[1]. For those organisations who found it hardest to attend, the concerns were in relation to capacity due to them being a small organisation (i.e. largely those funded around the £50,000 mark). The following comments from two organisations sums up well the challenges they were encountering:

“Time commitment required for the workshops and one-to-one consultancy sessions. Balance in these activities with our ongoing responsibilities of brokering delivery was difficult. To mitigate this, we schedule sessions during the busy period and ensure that all team members can commit to the long-term benefits of development activities. This allowed us to secure commitment of managing workload effectively.”

And another remarked that:

“The real challenge is finding the time and the space to attend and put the effort into taking the actions that will bring about the change. What would have helped to move forward is for time and space set aside to be able to do the work on the ground so we can embed the organisational development learning; so that the momentum and will, desire, and motivation isn't lost or put on the backburner as we deal with the often pressing and urgent challenges we are having to deal with.”

What are the key learning points arising from the programme?

There is a sense in which organisations in receipt of funding need to realistically appraise themselves of the services they provide and the focus necessary to deliver an impactful and quality service. Evidence obtained from the sustainability workshop held as part of the evaluation process, suggests that for many organisations, sustainability meant more funding. As a result of the workshop and exploration of what drives sustainability, it soon became clear to participants that sustainability is far more than just securing financial support. Other factors that would need to be considered include good governance, targeted support, clarity of vision and strategy, and of course, relevance to the target audience. And of course, these were some of the key areas covered by the ‘baseline assessment schedule’ and through the OD course programmes (i.e. the modules offered). Developing these strands will take time and, depending on how fast (or large) the organisation wishes to grow, is likely

[1] See ARE’s OD report for further details.

to require support that is not necessarily financial in the first instance, such as, for example, partnership working or mergers, as appropriate and relevant. It may mean, for some organisations, their capacity to grow beyond a particular size is limited and therefore focusing on delivery at that level may be more effective and impactful than trying to grow faster or bigger.

Extending the lessons learnt around organisational size and capacity, in some cases, as 1-2-1 interviews revealed, organisations were developing systems and procedures to not only manage the funding received but had to embrace recruitment and selection concerns. For some, having the resources to appoint someone was new and this was fraught with challenges that they had not envisaged (see above challenges).

There was evidence of some organisations needing to fully grasp action planning and strategic planning, and as such, some of the organisations augmented the OD support workshop sessions with other support opportunities that spoke directly to either long standing needs or emergent ones. For example, one organisation providing information, advice and guidance, told us about trying to gain two kitemark recognition (Investor in Volunteers and the London Youth Quality Mark) and how the funding enabled them to complete the process. They said: "funding has freed up capacity to enable us to undertake the process." [1-2-1 interview].

Another organisation, also providing information, advice and guidance around employment, talked about the baseline assessment and how they worked with their 1-2-1 consultant: "Since undertaking the baseline assessment, we have reviewed 23 policies and worked with our consultant to make sure they are fit for purpose; we refreshed our work around skills audit of our board members and relooked at new board membership." [1-2-1 interview]

Through 1-2-1 interviews we were able to work through programme plans with participants to enable them to more appropriately articulate the work they were doing to enable them to better provide monitoring and evaluative answers. What we found was:

- Many organisations had not factored into their thinking an 'exit' strategy for when the current funding comes to an end.
- Activities were misaligned against outcomes and outputs. Measurable outputs, for example, were not as robust as they could be to support an impact evaluation process. At the application stage, these concepts and expectations perhaps could be more explicitly stated and highlighted.
- All participating organisations failed to show or demonstrate how the 'core funding' element that they received enhances the current as well as the future direction of the organisation. For example, what would be the added value of appointing a particular member of staff within the project and how would the organisation (and project) benefit as a direct result of that post? The added value beyond the appointing of a staff, would benefit from better articulation at the application stage, which would require some careful tweaking around expectations of specific posts that core funding could be set against (e.g. % of CEO time or finance officer, for instance). There is a sense in which the notion of core funding is poorly defined and perhaps a more nuanced definition and expectation could accompany any core funding opportunities within programmes.
- Of those who offered employability and employment focused programmes, it was difficult to see how they would support the participants in employment such as having in post job placements or job brokerage roles. If they did not employ a specific project worker, they were not able to demonstrate this, while those that did employ an extra member of staff were able to demonstrate this.

One of the challenges that most organisations in the charitable sector face – small, medium and large - is the question of what constitutes success. Support was provided to the participating organisations through the organisation development programme as well as on-site visits by ARE and LCF staff and 1-2-1 structured interviews conducted. One of the emergent insights was that 'funding bodies' rarely offer examples of what success would look like. However, JPMorganChase does offer a matrix of success indicators, which were refined and adapted for the P2E programme. This meant that the monitoring questionnaire deployed by LCF sought to ascertain outcomes and impact using the adapted matrix. We asked participants, for example, not only outturn indications of beneficiary take-up but also sought to understand the types of beneficiaries they were working with, age, gender, employment status and whether they were able to 'leverage' in additional funding because of participating in the P2E programme. One of the areas of exploration was to better understand how organisations tracked and captured evidence of outcome and outputs, as this would enable us to have confidence in the outturn reporting.

From our approach, of 13 responses to our end-of-programme questionnaire, we found that 54% (7) of organisations were able to provide evidence of how they secured feedback to inform their impact assessment. Some responses from our analysis included:

"Some verbal, some written via end of project feedback forms with 95% of respondents indicating beneficiary satisfaction rating, though only 7 were able to indicate how they were able to capture feedback."

"[we] received 24 responses out of 32, with over 80% of respondents rating the programme as excellent to very good."

"All 56 were satisfied with our service. Feedback collected via our advice form has a section where young people can rate the level of advice from 1 to 5 (1 = low / 5 = excellent), all our scores have been mostly 4 and 5's...."

"We use various simple ways to receive the feedback from our users: recording online, smart surveys, verbal and written feedback recording using photos and video interviewing. We have started to use QR Code surveys as well."

It is important that organisations can capture and record outputs and outcomes from the work they are doing, especially with respect to sustainability objectives as well as accountability to funders. Arising from the OD workshop on monitoring and evaluation, participant feedback reflected insights into what they took away from the session while at the same providing some insights as where they are in relation to having systems in place to measure and track impact:

"The importance of implementing questionnaire within our delivery which is a good indicator of performance of delivery."

"It is important to understand the difference between Outputs, outcomes and case studies."

"A measurement of where everyone is ...can be an issue sometimes for us."

"A case study is a journey of a person's development/improvement. When writing the case study, do not waffle too much, keep it concise and impactful. Output is a service or activity you offer to achieve your outcome."

"We already create impact reports, so we wanted more information on [return on investment] measurement."

"Producing compelling case studies, be more skilled at outlining outcomes / outputs in bids and keep monitoring and evaluation questions simple and concise."

On the overall benefit and learning from the OD programme, the following response provides perhaps the clearest indication of the overall impact of this strand of the programme, which goes towards viewing how the parts of the programme come together:

"The OD programme provided us with the tools and knowledge needed to improve our operations and better serve the community we are working with. Firstly, the workshops offered a platform for our team to learn best practice in various areas such as project management, coordination, engagement. We gained insights into innovative strategies that have allowed us to streamline our processes and optimize our resources. This has been particularly beneficial in managing the complexities of our job support programme and ensuring its impact. The one-to-one consultancy sessions were tailored to address some specific needs and challenges. Working closely with experienced consultants, we identified key areas for improvement and developed actionable plans to address them. For instance, we received guidance on presenting our data collection and impact measurement message. This has enabled us to better track participant progress and measure programme outcomes. The consultancy provided us with expertise in building partnerships with local businesses and third sector organisations. These relationships have expanded our network of support and opened a new opportunity for our participants. They have been able to secure my job placements, training opportunities, and resources for those we serve, thereby amplifying the impact of the programme. Moreover, the focus on staff development has been transformative. Staff received training in leadership and team dynamics, which has fostered more collaborative and motivated initiatives."

And another reported:

"This model of delivery and funding has been excellent, and we can confidently say that we have not seen other funders implement it in this way. Our involvement in the pilot P2E project was truly remarkable, allowing us to experience the process of co-developing and designing organizational development with sector organizations firsthand. Typically, we often feel compelled to participate in programs that do not deliver the tangible outcomes that civil society organizations seek in terms of building sector capacity. Following the pilot project, we witnessed the real value of collaborating with progressive second-tier organizations such as ARE and UBELE. These organizations fully understand what is needed to effectively and practically support the capacity needs of small, often under-resourced, and under-supported civil society organizations. We strongly recommend adopting a similar approach in future funding opportunities."

CONCLUSION

1. Not all impacts are comparable. The activities that some of the organisations delivered will have different types and levels of impact for different groups of people. None more so than in the case of the 13 organisations who were able to secure 87% increase above their funding to continue their work within their respective boroughs, while others saw increase onto their programmes.
2. Virtually all organisations were able to demonstrate their achievements, either through case studies or by sharing the outcomes of work they were engaged in. The beneficiaries reached overall exceeded what they were funded to reach by 152% with some significant successes reported.
3. The programme enabled and facilitated the creation of safe spaces for organisations to come together through the capacity support element as an integral aspect of the funding, even though there were challenges as indicated. Learning from across the programme was shared and used to adjust or redirect the programme in both the first and second phases.
4. Being able to share expertise and learning as part of the Action Learning Set (ALS) programme enabled peer learning and supported sharing of skills from an internal cohort perspective. It also means that when funding comes to an end, relationships will hopefully continue, and new pieces of work will have been encouraged and given the chance to take shape.
5. Networking and the opportunity to collaborate and learn from each other was evident through the collaborative, flexible and interactive approach of the OD programme. OD trialled a range of approaches and created useful learning materials and resources through the workshops and presentations.
6. Almost all organisations engaged had fostered a sense of presence and confidence within the communities they were working: "We work with Older Caribbean users, whose level of skills range widely. By creating new projects such as offering free school meals and a play scheme, we can put some of their skills to use as volunteers. As a result, we are seeing more people making enquiries because of the intergenerational approach." Another organisation, working with the Bangladeshi community in East London, offered a good insight into how their board members, drawn from the community, were impacted by attending the Inspire Leadership programme: "[they] found it helpful and opened their eyes around leadership styles and learning. The funding enabled us to send them on the programme where they learnt about their roles like finance and advice on bid writing. Allowing trustees and leaders to go on training freed up time for us to do other things."

It is too early to say whether the outcome and impact indicated will be sustained, but they do highlight some key questions for funders and support agencies, such as Ubele, ARE and LCF to consider:

- What does success look like for the BRM sector? What are the desired changes in BRM organisations that we are looking for? Are these generalisable across and beyond the cohort or are they different for different organisation types and different ranges of charitable purposes or certain ones?
- What does 'sustainable' mean for BRM led community organisations? How will we know whether the funded organisations are more sustainable because of the financial and organisational support received?
- How soon can we expect to see changes in funded organisations? How long will it take for possible increased sustainability to become apparent?
- Can funded organisations generate income from a one-off investment to sustain their activities and organisation? What are organisations other finance needs (and other organisational imperatives) and how can these be supported over time?
- What are the changes that funders are aiming to achieve because of their 'equity funding' initiatives: is it to increase the overall size and value of the sector or to encourage and develop the sector to increase their likelihood of surviving long-term? Or is it to improve the quality of what the BRM community sector can provide to their communities and place?

These, and other questions on the development and sustainability of the sector, their impacts and how they develop after receiving funding, should be further explored if a second cohort is being considered. Picking up on some of these questions and this latter point, are some tentative recommendations that partners may wish to consider arising from the learning and evaluation approach indicated in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Programme design

- Reduce the amount of reporting to twice a year as opposed to quarterly, especially where small organisations with limited staffing resources are involved. The range of funding offered meant that some organisations funded at the bottom of the range were always going to struggle compared to those funded at twice their range, where they are more than likely to have the capacity to take advantage of the opportunities being offered. (i.e., to undertake the OD opportunities as well as responding to the quarterly reporting requirements of funders)
- Core funding option should be clearly spelt out and should perhaps be offered to organisations being funded at the lower end of the range (£50,000) to enable them to reach the capacity of those already funded to the upper end of the range (i.e. £100,000). In terms of funding equity (not to be mistaken for funding race equity or racial justice objectives), those smaller organisations would perhaps benefit more from being able to have substantial part time project coordinators than project workers, important as they are. It is this balance that could make a difference when considering sustainability instead of the lurch from one short term project funding to another, which tends to be the characteristics of the small/medium sized organisations.
- The 1-2-1 consultancy support had been beneficial for a small number of organisations and, was this aspect of OD support programme to be implemented, then careful consideration will need to take into account how best to manage the process and the allocation of consultants to organisations (e.g. not all organisations were at the same stage of development to benefit from 1-2-1 consultancies and therefore may not benefit from the sort of expertise that consultancies offer).
- Based on interviews and revisions to the action plans of organisations that were undertaken, it was evident that organisations should be expected to provide a clearly thought through and articulated action plan with a focus in their final year of any multiyear funding or sustainability considerations.
- The blend between direct financial support and organisation development support was not familiar, seen as not a regular feature of the funding programme that they were used to receiving. Funders should continue to invest in programmes that offer a blended approach to support, which could include pro-bono technical support and designated funds to build and strengthen the skills and capability of organisations (i.e. Inspired Leadership programme is a good example).

- Facilitate opportunities to create safe spaces for networking and collaboration. Support that would facilitate such opportunities can play a vital role in connecting leaders from different organisations, including through intermediary organisations, creating spaces for sharing best practices and knowledge.

Organisations in scope to such a funding programme

- Baseline assessments offer an organisation the opportunity to reflect on their practice as well as to help identify certain areas needing development. An aspect that arose from the process undertaken showed that areas such as strategic planning, vision and purpose are areas of development needs for organisations, as are areas such as financial resourcing of the organisation, connectedness and engagement and impact and effectiveness. There is much value in reflecting on practice and would recommend that organisations do undertake periodic self-assessments to ensure they remain current (and fit for purpose).
- Collaborative working (or consortium/bi-lateral partnership working) at a time when resources are scarce and/or are strongly contested, is strongly encouraged. To be sustainable this may become a strong feature of place-based funding. Given the diversity of organisations operating in boroughs where the needs are high, such as the East London corridor, in respect to employment, enterprise and financial health, it would be prudent to seek collaborative and complementary ways of working rather than competing for what may seem for the same type of beneficiaries (i.e. avoidance of the scramble to the bottom).



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