



The future of civil society support in London

Call for tenders

Deadline for response: 5pm on Wednesday 5th August 2015



Supported by the City of London Corporation's charity, City Bridge Trust

Dear Colleague,

The future of civil society support in London

Thank you for your interest in this project, and we hope that you will find all the information required in this project specification and the attached appendix.

We are aware that this project's timetable is challenging, both in terms of the deadline for submissions and also for the time-frame within which we hope to see the work completed. However this reflects both the importance, and urgency, of the issues to be investigated. Please also note that our expectation is that the successful applicant will be in a position to commence the project w/c 7th September, and that this should be reflected in your outline project plan.

The timetable is:

Deadline for responses –	Wednesday 5 th August – 5pm
Shortlisting –	W/c 10 th August (<i>all applicants will be notified of the outcome by Monday 17th August</i>)
Interviews –	W/c 31 st August
Project Commences –	W/c 7 th September

The project is being overseen by a cross-sector partnership, chaired by London Funders and involving representatives from City Bridge Trust, LVSC, GLV, specialist regional infrastructure, local government, the private sector and other funding bodies. A number of members from the reference group will be involved in the selection process, details of which will be provided in advance of the interviews.

We are also aware that this is a complex project, and that the successful bidder will need to have and demonstrate a good understanding of London, its civil society and local government (amongst a number of criteria) as well as a solid reputation and credibility to reach and engage with leaders across the public, private and civil society sectors. We are, therefore, open to partnership and/or collaborative proposals. Full details of our expectations can be found in the *What we're looking for from you* section of the specification.

Finally, if you have any queries about this call for tenders please don't hesitate to contact me either by email or phone.

We look forward to receiving your proposal.

Best wishes

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Director, London Funders

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Context

London needs a vibrant civil society in order to prosper, yet these are unprecedented times economically for London's communities. The voluntary sector, for example, is experiencing ever greater calls on its services whilst at the same time facing reduced funding. London local government has taken a 33% real cut in service funding from Central Government between 2009/10 and 2013/14 whilst deeper public sector funding cuts will come during 2015/16 and beyond.

In January 2015, the Commission on the Future of Local Infrastructure (established by NAVCA) published its report *Change for Good*. We therefore wish to build on the findings of that report, given London's unique characteristics and the current context.

We want to understand how civil society in the capital can best be supported in order to optimise its positive impact on Londoners. We believe that the challenges presented by the economic downturn also present opportunities to review and re-think how civil society is supported in London.

Summary

London Funders, with funding from City Bridge Trust, is seeking to commission research into the support needs (traditionally shorthanded to infrastructure needs) of London's civil society (including London's diverse voluntary and community sectors). This will include:

- detailed scoping to map out what is already in place, who funds it and what is vulnerable to funding cuts;
- how the expertise of the public, private and voluntary sectors in this area can be used for better effect;
- the scope for economies of scale and collaboration;
- how generalist and specialist provision can be balanced;
- what the gaps are (or are likely to be) and how they might be resourced (or not);
- identify opportunities for its development and how they might be resourced;

based on the specification below.

This specification has been co-produced with the leading regional voluntary sector infrastructure agencies, London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC) and Greater London Volunteering (GLV).

To maximise the impact of this work we are looking for the research and consultation phase to be complete by late autumn 2015, with a final report and recommendations made before the end of 2015.

The work we're looking to commission

Our starting premise is that in order to achieve a strong and vibrant civil society, just as any other sector in London (such as the business sector, or the retail sector) civil society needs access to

appropriate business, technical and enterprise support, as well as a 'voice' within the ongoing debate about London, its governance and the issues it faces.

We want to know how that support should be provided in London for the future, to meet the needs of front-line organisations, to make the best use of the resources available, and in the context of both a rapidly changing public sector spending environment, and the prospect of significant further devolution to and within London.

We're not looking to reinvent wheels – as you'll see from the appendix to this brief, there is already a wealth of information and research available on infrastructure in London, that we can provide to you and help with the context. We're looking to explore more clearly what works, what the best formulation of infrastructure is in London, and what needs to change to make sure that the support that front-line organisations and other stakeholders (including funders and investors, local and regional government) across London need is provided in a sustainable way.

As part of your review you may find that there is work that is currently being delivered locally that would be more efficiently delivered sub-regionally, regionally or nationally. There may be work delivered at a regional or national level that would be much more effective if devolved to the local level. There may be work being done in other sectors (such as business support) that could equally support civil society, or there may be innovation from within civil society that could be of wider benefit within London. There may be inappropriate duplication of effort across the sector, there may be a lack of coordination, there may be a willingness but not the capacity to change, there may be innovations that need to be spread across a wider patch, there may be things we've just not thought about yet that could change our world. In short, there are many possibilities for how London's infrastructure could look, and we need you to help to map the way forward for us.

An equally important aspect of this work will be to engage strategic stakeholders in understanding and supporting the positive impact on London that an appropriately supported civil society can achieve.

The outcome of your work will be a report that will provide:

- A robust vision for infrastructure in London, based on an assessment of the current and emerging needs of front-line groups and a review of what's working across the capital;
- Recommendations about how infrastructure should be developed in London to meet needs and make best use of resources available from the public, private and voluntary sectors;
- Clear rationales for recommendations about what work should be delivered locally, sub-regionally, regionally, or nationally, and by which types of infrastructure organisations; and
- Credible evidence about the impact that investing in this work will have, that will help local authorities and other commissioning and funding bodies to recognise where their resources should be best targeted.

Your work will be informed by a close analysis of the current situation and the opportunities for development, which could come through a mixture of desk research and field interviews or focus group discussions with people from infrastructure agencies, front-line delivery organisations in the voluntary and community sector, funders, local authorities, businesses, and other decision-makers able to influence the future of infrastructure. The notes in the appendix to this document may give you an indication of the range of stakeholders you could engage with through this work.

Given the scale, diversity and reach of civil society organisations in London consideration should also be given to what will be the most cost effective mechanism to ensure the widest participation in this

review and how best to canvass their views on what support they anticipating needing over the next 5-10 years.

The support we're able to provide

Through the work you deliver we'll be scheduling in regular meetings with a reference group that you can use to consult with on your findings, help develop your thinking, and test out any initial ideas for development. The reference group will be chaired by London Funders and include City Bridge Trust, LVSC, GLV and representatives of specialist regional infrastructure, the private sector, and other funding bodies. We'll agree the frequency and dates of these meetings with you at the outset of your work with us.

The role of the reference group will be to provide access to networks and expertise, to act as a sounding board for the consultants, to sense check (but not edit) emerging findings and recommendations.

Whilst this project is intended to be truly collaborative, ultimately the 'client' for this piece of work will be London Funders, who will be responsible for final approval and sign-off of the report and its conclusions.

In addition to the reference group support, as you'll see in the appendix to this call for tenders there is a range of information about the infrastructure sector in London, and the needs of the organisations it supports. GLV and LVSC are able to provide further guidance, and access to other research and reports on the sector, to help you with this work. All parties involved in this project are ready to network you with colleagues in other organisations where this would be helpful to aid your understanding, including national bodies (e.g. NAVCA and NCVO) who are supportive of our work to build on the findings of the *Change for Good* report.

What we're looking for from you

We're keen to ensure that the recommendations you make will be accepted and acted on by those able to make investment in the sector, as well as sector organisations looking to develop their services to best meet community need. As such, we'll be looking for you to bring your solid reputation, credibility and track record to demonstrate to us that you'll be able to reach and engage leaders in every sector. We'll also be looking to see evidence of your thinking on how to balance the need to make recommendations within an appropriate understanding of the level of resources that may be available to achieve any change.

As we're not starting from a blank page we'll be looking for you to come to this work with some background knowledge and understanding in place, so you can hit the ground running and focus on building to the recommendations we are looking for. In particular we'll be looking to ensure you have a:

- Good knowledge of London, including (but not exclusively) it's demographics, it's diversity and the way that London is changing;
- Good understanding of civil society and its existing infrastructure in London;
- Good understanding of local government in London;
- Good understanding of what the private sector can offer;

- Good understanding of specialist infrastructure; and
- Good understanding of the public sector and opportunities there.

In your response to this call for tenders we'll be keen to see evidence of the above, and are also keen to speak to two referees for work that you consider to be comparable in scale or ambition to this piece. We'll be looking for you to be clear about who will be working on this project, and the skills, experience or background they will bring to the work (including if you intend to engage any associates for elements of the project). As well as evidence of your track record, we'll need an outline project plan from you that indicates how you see the time being used to balance the needs for research, consultation and report-writing, within the resource available to deliver this work by the end of 2015.

What funding is available for this work?

This stage of work is being funded by City of London Corporation's charity, City Bridge Trust (London's largest independent charitable foundation) who have indicated that a budget of circa £40-45,000 could be available, based on the quality and content of the proposal.

How to apply

If you have any queries about this call for tenders please do not hesitate to contact David Warner, Director at London Funders, by email to david@londonfunders.org.uk. As this work is being co-produced with LVSC and GLV David may refer your query on to another partner for response, but will be your main point of contact for any queries.

Your bid is requested by 5pm on 5th August 2015, by email to becky@londonfunders.org.uk. Shortlisting will take place during W/c 10th August and successful parties will be invited to interview W/c 31st August (as part of your tender response please indicate to us who would be attending for interview if chosen, and if there are any days in week commencing 31st August 2015 that would be problematic for you to attend).

Please note, that we will be expecting the successful tenderer to be in a position to commence work on this project W/c 7th September and this should be reflected in your outline project plan. Our expectation is that initial and emerging findings and recommendations should be available by the end of October 2015, with a final report ready by the end of December 2015 at the latest. You may also want to note that there is a joint LVSC/GLV regional conference planned for the 29th September and if required an opportunity to utilise this as part of any consultation process could be provided.

Appendix – Context for this work

What do we mean by infrastructure?

The Commission on the Future of Local Infrastructure, hosted by NAVCA, produced the *Change for good* report which defined infrastructure support as: “The purpose of local infrastructure bodies is to provide services, support and advice to, and promote, local charities, community groups and social enterprises that deliver social action. A good infrastructure body will offer the right mixture of support, challenge, leadership, resource, skills and knowledge. It will also help to foster relationships between the local voluntary sector, public bodies and local business. They also promote social action and make sure local communities have a voice.”

Within this broad definition of infrastructure we recognise three distinct groups of infrastructure providers: volunteering infrastructure, usually provided by a Volunteer Centre (VC); organisational development infrastructure, usually provided by a Council for Voluntary Service (CVS); and specialist infrastructure, working with specific groups or parts of the sector, for example supporting distinct communities or equalities organisations.

GLV define volunteering infrastructure as organisations that deliver the core functions covered by NCVO’s “Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation” framework, which are: strategic development of volunteering; good practice development; developing volunteering opportunities; voice of volunteering; and brokerage. In the main these functions are delivered on a local authority level by a Volunteer Centre (as an independent charity, or integrated with a CVS), though in some boroughs these functions are delivered in whole or in part by other providers - Groundwork London, for example, provide volunteer brokerage services in five local authority areas. Volunteering infrastructure works both with individuals (potential and existing volunteers) and volunteer-involving organisations, in delivering these functions.

LVSC define organisational development infrastructure, delivered through a CVS or equivalent, as providing support to the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors within an area, typically a London borough. This support typically comprises: capacity building; networking; and voice/representation. In the broader sense, this range of activities enables a CVS to deliver the full range of infrastructure functions defined by NAVCA, which are to: provide specialist expertise, information and support and develop the skills local people need to run successful organisations and groups; spread good practice, prevent duplication of effort and support joint working; help groups find funding and make effective use of resources; promote equality and diversity by fostering a wider understanding of the needs of disadvantaged and under-represented groups; make sure policy makers understand the needs of local voluntary organisations and community groups; help public bodies engage effectively with local voluntary organisations and community groups; provide a forum for local voluntary organisations and community groups; and encourage more people to volunteer and get involved in voluntary and community action. CVSs work primarily with organisations in delivering these functions.

Specialist infrastructure will deliver some or all of the volunteering or organisational development infrastructure functions, but for defined groups or communities. The groups supported by specialist infrastructure may be defined by community (e.g. supporting the development of the sector working with women) or by organisational type (e.g. supporting organisations delivering advice services). It should be noted that some specialist infrastructure providers may offer a broader range of services, with “infrastructure” being one part of their service offering – as such, they may not primarily

identify as an infrastructure agency (e.g. a campaigning organisation that provides limited support to other campaigning groups in furtherance of its aims).

Who is delivering infrastructure support in London?

In producing this specification document, GLV and LVSC have undertaken a mapping exercise of the infrastructure providers in London, which is summarised below. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive, and we will work with the successful bidder to provide further detail on the sector – this list is intended to help you in understanding the range of infrastructure providers who may need to be engaged as part of this work.

Local

Across London’s 33 boroughs (including the City of London) there are:

- 17 boroughs where there is an integrated volunteering and organisational development infrastructure organisation (e.g. a combined Volunteer Centre and Council for Voluntary Service) providing all local infrastructure services (these are coloured orange on the map);
- 14 boroughs that have independent organisational development infrastructure and separate volunteering infrastructure (coloured yellow on the map); and
- 2 boroughs that have a volunteering infrastructure service but no organisation providing all organisational development infrastructure functions (coloured purple on the map, being Newham and the City of London).



Alongside borough-based infrastructure providers are also a range of groups operating at a hyper-local or neighbourhood level, including projects recruiting volunteers in regeneration areas, or working with specific communities to increase individual and organisational capacity.

Sub-regional

A number of partnerships of infrastructure organisations operate at a sub-regional level, normally in groupings that are co-terminus with those used for the “Change Up” process of infrastructure partnership working, for example: the South London Partnership covering the six boroughs in outer

South London; the East London Partnership covering the ten boroughs in East London; the West London Network covering seven boroughs (which also includes non-infrastructure agencies in the partnership). These are normally operated by local infrastructure organisations working in partnership, rather than being whole “organisations” in their own right, but several are legally constituted and able to manage contracts or services through these separate entities.

Regional

The lead regional infrastructure bodies are LVSC and GLV. Together they also facilitate regional meetings of the local and specialist providers to increase coordination and sharing of expertise and innovation, e.g. CVS Directors Network, Strategic Volunteering Network, London Employer Supported Volunteering Network. Both LVSC and GLV have links to other regional bodies (e.g. Team London, London Sport) to act as representative and communication channel between local and regional infrastructure in different sectors.

Specialist

LVSC facilitate the London Voluntary Sector Forum, a gathering of pan-London organisations, including those part-funded by London Councils, that provide infrastructure services to specific parts of the sector in the capital. Members include Age UK London, LASA, ROTA, Women’s Resource Centre, Inclusion London, HEAR, Shelter, Advice UK London, REAP, Refugee Council, Latin American Women’s Rights Service, Homeless Link, Children England and Stonewall Housing.

Alongside the members of London Voluntary Sector Forum, we have mapped a range of specialist infrastructure agencies that support defined parts of the sector. These include London Youth, London Play, Black Training and Enterprise Group, Centred (formerly Kairos in Soho), Faiths Forum for London, Council for Somali Organisations, Greater London Forum for Older People, Interactive, London Sport; and the Interlink Foundation. This list is not exhaustive, but is intended to illustrate the diversity of the specialist infrastructure sector.

National

At the national level are a range of providers who deliver infrastructure services that may be accessed by organisation in London – from representative voice to national government, through to training and conferences, or networking with others in a specialist sector. These bodies include many general providers as well as groups working with particular communities, such as: NCVO, NAVCA, ACEVO, Media Trust, Institute of Fundraising, Women’s Aid, Evelyn Oldfield Unit, LGBT Consortium, Jewish Volunteering Network, Clinks, Irish in Britain, Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, Victims Alliance, Reach, the FSI, Small Charities Coalition, Directory of Social Change, and many more. There are also federation bodies who support the front-line agencies in London that are in their membership, for example the Law Centres Network or Age UK.

Other

Alongside the groups we have identified above, there are a broader range of organisations who would identify as being part of the infrastructure of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors. At our meeting for regional and local infrastructure bodies in London held in April, for example, In Kind Direct spoke about their work delivering support services to the sector in the capital through provision of resources to community-based organisations.

The state of infrastructure today

To capture our current thinking on infrastructure in London a joint event was held in April 2015, organised by LVSC, GLV and London Funders, bringing together representatives from infrastructure organisations working at a local, regional and national level, and from across the areas of specialism. This event considered the *Change for Good* report, with a panel discussion with the Chief Executive of NAVCA and the Executive Director of Volunteering from NCVO, as well as exploring innovations and good practice in London, with panel discussion and workshops drawing out the diverse range of ideas and experience within the infrastructure sector.

Building on this event, LVSC and GLV conducted a survey of key volunteering, organisational development and specialist infrastructure agencies in London, to capture information about the current funding picture, relationships with local authorities, and their thoughts on the challenges and opportunities for the sector. This snapshot survey was open for a limited time, but was completed by 25% of the members of London Voluntary Sector Forum, and local infrastructure providers covering just over half of London's boroughs.

One of the key measures we used to assess the strength of infrastructure was a self-assessment of how organisations saw their voice and representation function, with particular regard to their work with local authorities, recognising that there can often be a complex relationship when acting as the voice of the sector locally, whilst also receiving significant funding from the local authority. Despite this challenging position, 13.6% of respondents rated their relationship as "excellent", with a further 27.3% describing it as "very good" and 36.3% as "good". At the other end of the spectrum, 18% assessed the relationship as "OK" and 4.5% described it as "poor". When we asked whether this rating had stayed the same, improved, or got worse over the last year, the majority (72.7%) said it had stayed the same – there was then an even split from the other respondents, with half of the remainder saying the relationship had improved, and the other half saying it was now worse.

Our survey asked for thoughts on the challenges and opportunities for the sector, with respondents noting the challenging funding environment for themselves, but also the challenge of enabling front-line organisations to recognise the need to change and develop their services to meet the evolving external environment. The list of challenges and opportunities is extensive, and will be provided to the successful bidder to help shape initial research and contacts with the sector to explore the issues raised without needing to undertake this initial scoping work directly.

Respondents recognised that this is a challenging time for infrastructure organisations, but were rising to this challenge through innovating in service delivery, adapting their offer to best meet demand within the resources available, and working in partnership to increase their impact. Of our survey respondents, just over 90% identified an innovation, new way of working, or successful project or service that they would be willing to explore sharing across a broader area, and were ready to speak to the provider we commissioned to help shape our thinking about the future shape of infrastructure in London.

What about the sector they're supporting?

London's voluntary, community and social enterprise sector is as diverse as the city it serves. Research commissioned by LVSC and compiled by NCVO in 2013 found that there were 40,470 charitable organisations in London. This figure includes registered charities as well as Community Interest Companies, Industrial and Provident Societies and Companies Limited by Guarantee, but

excludes organisations such as Housing Associations or independent schools which may be registered charities but are generally not included in the traditional definition of the VCS. There are also a large number of unincorporated charitable organisations operating in London. When these are included, the true figure is likely to be in excess of 60,000. From the grassroots hyper-local and volunteer-led groups to the headquarters of the largest national and international charities, the sector in London employs around 250,000 people – 6.4% of London’s working population, and 38% of all charity employees in England and Wales. Alongside the paid workforce are an estimated four million volunteers, covering all roles from direct service delivery to Trustees shaping the strategic direction of the groups they are involved with.

The sector is constantly changing and innovating to meet the changing needs of London’s communities – at any one time GLV knows that some 14,000 groups are looking for volunteers through London’s volunteering infrastructure organisations, who collectively help to inspire some 90,000 people every year to find out more about being active as volunteers in our city.

But these are challenging times for the sector, as they deal with increased demand for services at a time of reduced availability of resources. Over the five year period to 2013 LVSC undertook a regular survey of the voluntary and community sector in London, publishing the data as part of the *Big Squeeze* series. This data helps to illustrate the challenges faced by organisations across London, which infrastructure organisations are working to respond to and support groups with. The following extract from the research summarises some of the data most relevant to an understanding of the sector:

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Has the economic or policy climate affected the communities you work with over the last year?	95%	97%	97%	89%	94%
Has demand for your services increased this year as a result of economic or policy changes?	71%	68%	81%	66%	82%
Not confident about being able to meet any increase in demand for services in the coming year	80%	75%	77%	50%	46%
Has your organisation changed the way it works to cope with any changes this year?	78%	93%	94%	90%	93%
Expecting a decrease to public sector funding in the next year	Not asked	53%	77%	53%	47%
Expecting a decrease in funding from trust funders in the next year	Not asked	38%	28%	26%	19%

It is interesting to note that in 2013 many responses were more optimistic in relation to future funding but the analysis feels that this probably reflects the fact that major funding cuts had already been made and that charities had made changes to structures etc. However, demand for services shows no sign of slowing down. This survey does not take into account the full extent of welfare reforms and the disproportionate effect this has had on Londoners.

The *Big Squeeze* provided clear evidence of an increase in demand for advice services to address the immediate impacts of welfare reform, unemployment and/or increasing poverty. It also suggests an increase in demand for support to address the longer term problems these issues produce, such as support to around housing and homelessness issues and direct support to alleviate poverty.

The *Big Squeeze* found that voluntary and community sector organisations working locally within a borough or neighbourhood may be more severely affected by budget cuts than those working across

a wider area. Local organisations reported increasing competition for local contracts from national providers in both the VCSE and private sectors along with increasing barriers to them bidding.

Whilst the last *Big Squeeze* report was published in 2013, follow-up work with organisations across London indicates that similar challenges remain. It will be important, however, to appropriately assess the key challenges facing front-line organisations through the work we are commissioning, to ensure that the support and services provided by infrastructure organisations are targeted at the issues and areas where they are most needed by organisations in the capital.

Funding environment

As part of this work we are looking to help make the case for effective investment in infrastructure, and as a starting point we asked infrastructure organisations as part of our survey to provide information about the current funding environment, to help inform the context of this work.

Traditionally, the biggest financial contributor to the work of infrastructure organisations has been local government, through funding volunteering and organisational development infrastructure at a local level, or pooling resources (for example through London Councils) to support pan-London or sub-regional work or the activities of specialist infrastructure. We asked respondents for information on their local authority funding for their “core” infrastructure work (recognising that many may also be in receipt of local authority funding for project work, or other activities alongside their infrastructure services). From this survey, the average local authority funding for “core” infrastructure work was £99,090 per organisation for 2015/16, though this covers a range from nothing through to £300,000. Some boroughs were going through the tendering process for their infrastructure contracts at the time of the survey, and so precise data was not available for every area. Looking at the same figure for the previous financial year (2014/15), the average core local authority funding was £105,652, so there had been a reduction of approximately 7% between last year and this. Reviewing this data shows, however, that some organisations maintained funding, and some saw very dramatic falls in income, so our “average” reduction masks a wide range of experiences.

Respondents were asked to name the other funders who were currently supporting their infrastructure work – City Bridge Trust were the most-named (with just under a third of respondents in receipt of grants for their infrastructure work), followed by the Big Lottery Fund (supporting around one in ten of the respondents), and London Councils. A significant number of respondents were in receipt of money from health budgets, with these variously coming from the local authority’s public health budget, direct from Clinical Commissioning Groups, or from the Department of Health – when combined under the “health” heading, just under a third of respondents indicated they were in receipt of funding from this source. Other funders named by a smaller number of respondents included John Lyons Trust, Milly Apthorp Trust, Cabinet Office, Legal Education Foundation, Team London, MOPAC, Trust for London, and the Health and Social Care Volunteering Fund.

Alongside direct funders there are, of course, a range of in-kind and other resources that are utilised by infrastructure organisations – including provision of accommodation, pro bono expertise, free or reduced-price business services – which also add to the ability of the organisations to deliver their work, and add value to the financial investments highlighted above.