**CEO Forum**

**7th April 2021**

**3SIF co-production**

**Session 1: purpose, needs and priorities**

**Working in groups, delegates were asked to consider:**

1. **What 3SIF could or shouldn’t fund?**
2. **How can local needs be identified?**
3. **How should local needs be prioritised for 3SIF?**
4. An interesting (and very valid) point raised was the need for LBHF to clarify the purpose of 3SIF, it is
   1. To support a vibrant, secure and thriving local VCS sector or
   2. Primarily to deliver the council’s objectives and priorities (e.g. children & families, health & wellbeing, older people etc.)

Option (a) would support an approach of using 3SIF to fund core costs of local VCS organisations, whilst (b) would drive a projects and services led approach.

1. The option for 3SIF to fund core costs was raised by several attendees. Core costs can often be very difficult for charities to fund raise for – as most funders are project/service focused.
2. Longer term funding was raised by several groups, particularly for core costs – a two-tier approach could be considered: shorter term for projects, longer term for core costs. Longer term funding would enable

* groups to secure longer term discounts, Lock in utilities
* Attract and retain high quality staff – often staff are dis-incentivised if contracts are short term/temporary.
* Enable the sector to be attractive employers in a competitive jobs market
* Enable the sector to pay competitive salaries – at least London Living Wage – and attract the best staff.
* Better strategic planning

1. A clearer commissioning strategy across LBHF, which sets out an expectation and process of prioritising local providers and the VCS for the provision of contracted services
2. A longer term 3SIF longer term strategy would enable organisations to plan better in advance
3. Good proven successful projects need to be replicated rather than re-inventing the wheel. Informed by poverty index [IMD]/need of underfunded/diverse communities.
4. Unrestricted, so it’s “needs focused” and can change when needs change.
5. Partnerships working. Less duplication. Services the community relies on ensuring existing effective services stay alive.
6. Hammersmith and Fulham beneficiary focus, more grassroots. Fund organisations that are agile, adaptive, and responsive to change. Preventative as well as reactive services.
7. Prioritise funding for groups that demonstrate an active role in the community and take into consideration the feedback from their clients.
8. We need to make sure we reach all groups within the borough.
9. Transparency of contracts: ensuring 3SIF agreements allow flexibility and targets/activities/outputs and outcomes can be adjusted.
10. This shouldn’t be used to fund statutory services or to make up shortfalls in funding for commissioned services.
11. Fund shouldn’t go to second tier organisations
12. Needs can be identified by showing practical results. Making life better for people.
13. It was noted that services and organisations that started up during the pandemic are at risk of closure without ongoing support. Some groups felt their hard work is not recognized by LBHF. Food poverty and digital inclusion are high priority for many residents.
14. Better understanding of needs is required particularly in cold spots Data e.g. Old Oak and College Park.

**Session 2: application, assessment and evaluation**

**Working in groups, delegates were asked to consider:**

1. **How could the application process be made easier and simpler?**
2. **How could the assessment process be made easier for LBHF and less time consuming**
3. **What suggestions do you have for how contracts and agreements could be better monitored and evaluated in the future**

Attendees were provided with a summary of the former 3SIF application and assessment processes, and a summary of the current monitoring systems used by LBHF

* + - 1. Previous application was far too long and complex.
         * The idea of an expression of interest system, where groups submit a short synopsis of their idea, including likely cost could be considered. LBHF could assess these far quicker and then invite organisations they are interested in to submit a full application. Several other funders do this.
         * The application complexity should be proportionate to the amount of funding you are requesting. If you’re asking for £100k, fair enough, it should be detailed, but it shouldn’t be the same level of complexity if you’re only asking for £30k.
         * Follow current Best Practice from grant funders e.g. London Funders. Simple questions; what is the need? How will you meet it? Do not ask for information you will not use. Be clear on the information/data you actually want and need.
      2. Consider different ways that groups could apply, e.g. use of video applications, face to face meetings etc. would be a more effective way for groups to present their proposal.
      3. It would be helpful if Council officers were available to speak to organisations about their ideas before writing an application in case what they’re suggesting isn’t likely to be well received.
      4. Do not ask for innovative projects – sometimes tried and tested is what continues to be needed
      5. Noted that the application was inaccessible for those with additional needs or language/cultural barriers or less experience of funding applications. Need to ensure support is available to help groups submit a persuasive and well-considered application. Perhaps provide standard responses for stock questions that groups can edit, cut and paste from
      6. Clearer overall process so organisations can see where they fit. Having to identify which service area your proposal fitted into was tricky – particularly where a service might deliver outcomes across more than one service specification.
      7. Avoid times like Christmas and ‘Eid for groups to write their funding applications.
      8. Give opportunities to write about core funding needs and future growth. Need very clear priorities so that organisations are not wasting their time on unsuccessful applications.
      9. A long time from application closing date to when the final decision was announced. Could this be shortened?
      10. Very frustrating for some groups who were offered less funding than they had requested – as they had budgeted for the service they had designed. Being asked to go back and reconfigure it for less money meant that it wouldn’t be the service we felt was needed to deliver the outcomes.
      11. Perhaps one idea for assessing would be to score each application as to how they are meeting the outcomes and compare across all applications in that service area.
      12. More clarity and transparency is needed on how the final decisions are made.
      13. Monitoring needs to be checked by council so that organisations that aren’t meeting their targets have their funding stopped/given a warning.
      14. Monitoring forms must not be too time consuming. Council need to acknowledge the time it takes to do monitoring and evaluation, and recognize that the time and capacity to do this well also needs to be resourced.
      15. Council staff should come to organisations and see in person. Council staff are invited to events, but they don’t attend – if they could see our service in action and meet our clients, they’d have a much better idea of the work we do and what we achieve.
      16. Noted that there have been very little monitoring visits over the last few years – but it was explained that staffing in LBHF had been significantly reduced.
      17. Groups need to know all monitoring requirements at the time of applying, not have it imposed afterwards.

**Session 3: Fast Track Small Grants and other support from LBHF**

**Working in groups, attendees were asked to consider:**

* **The LBHF Fast Track Small Grants scheme and how it could be improved**
* **What other support could be provided to the VCS from LBHF.**

**FTSG**

1. Felt application is too long. Good examples of funding applications from other funders during Covid – one or two straightforward questions. Would be helpful if online or in person workshops could be held. As with Covid, the opportunity to get feedback on whether an idea is likely to be fundable.
2. It isn’t fast at all – it’s taking months from submitting an application to getting an answer. The process needs to be made much quicker.
3. Visit FTSG projects to get a better sense of how they’re going – no monitoring visits done at the moment.
4. Ensure training and support is available to groups to help them apply – particularly where they have less experience at fundraising.
5. Use to fund new initiatives or to try new things out.
6. FTSG “graduates” developed to be in a better place to apply for larger funds (e.g. 3SIF) in the future.
7. Prioritise organisations who are smaller and need support. [Less than 200 K revenue].
8. Decision making could be more inclusive – have a panel, including an independent VCS representative.

**Other support**

* + - 1. Communication and social media support was suggested by several attendees, as this is an ever more important activity that groups need to do, but don’t have the expertise to undertake. Help to promote VCS orgs and services to residents, to make better use of social media etc.
      2. Property and space – office work and event space –
         * make more council premises available for VCS organisations – peppercorn rent where possible.
         * Could the council’s property dept also support VCS orgs with their premises issues – whether providing low cost repairs and maintenance, help with risk assessments, statutory health and safety checks etc?
         * Ask developers to prioritise VCS support as part of their Section 106 or CIL. E.g. Education City = council to ask for a space for Voluntary Sector organisations
      3. Better engagement with council departments
         * suggested service area meetings with LBHF services, the services they commission, grant fund and other VCS services operating in the same field would be incredibly helpful.
         * Encourage LBHF staff to visit local VCS orgs to get a better understanding of what we do and what we offer.
      4. Parking costs – especially for services that need transport in order to support a vulnerable client – LBHF charges make the service prohibitive. Many organisations getting more parking fines where cameras are used rather than parking wardens. You can tell a parking warden that you’re just dropping off shopping for a housebound person, and they’ll usually give you a minute, but where its cameras, you just get a ticket. Reduced cost for parking permits for services that really need transport to support vulnerable clients
      5. IT support – could H&F’s IT dept offer IT support and advice to local VCS orgs. Can LBHF provide IT equipment to VCS orgs?
      6. LBHF staff volunteers. LBHF has a volunteering policy in place, but it could better promote and encourage volunteering to support local VCS orgs.
      7. Introductions: facilitate introductions between VCS and local businesses and encourage them to support us. EG. Collecting donations at football matches, corporate sponsorship for events etc.
      8. More networking opportunities – with council staff, local businesses etc, and for small groups to form links between each other to develop partnerships.
      9. Allow VCS to purchase off LBHF contracts for things like stationery – they probably get it far cheaper than VCS as they purchase in such bulk.
      10. Contract with VCS organsiation more – make commissioning process better consider VCS and local providers. Commissioners and procurement officers don’t always know or understand the VCS, so they’re not considering us properly in their procurement practices.
          * Example given: HCGA have great relationship with highways dept who get HCGA to plant up biodiversity beds across the borough. They pay HCGA so it is win, win. Great example of LBHF and voluntary sector partnership.
          * However, HCGA also have an ongoing struggle with Environment Department: HCGA manage three community gardens that are council land. Council do not