

Appendix F: Innovation Fund Highlight Report

Supporting ideas, responding to local need and innovation



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Introduction

Foreword

A key action within the council's previous Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy (2016-19) was to identify potential external funding sources which can be used to expand and diversify the resource base of local VCS organisations.

With a reduction in public sector funding, a method to diversify income was to encourage organisations to crowdfund. The council was also keen to encourage and support innovation in the Voluntary and Community Sector. This funding initiative was set up to enable the sector to pilot new initiatives and approaches to service delivery and support. Further details can be found on the [Space Hive Tower Hamlets](#) and the [Innovation Fund pages](#) on our website.

This report provides information about the scheme and tells the story of what has been achieved through Innovation Funding support since the launch in December 2017.

Overview

The Innovation Fund matches donation-based crowdfunding done through our crowd funding portal, where our funding contributes to those pledged by the crowd to support not-for-profit enterprises or projects. The Innovation Funding aims to:

- enable local VCS organisations to pilot new initiatives and approaches to service delivery
- make our limited grant budget accessible to VCS organisations when our other funding programmes are not open for new proposals or do not support the type of initiative
- bring about significant additional funds from the community and other sources

How the scheme works

Voluntary and Community Sector organisations that crowdfund through the portal can pitch to the Council for match funding for their projects for 50 percent of their crowdfunding target up to a maximum of £10,000.

Decisions are made by the Divisional Director, Strategy, Policy and Performance in consultation with the Chair of the Council's Grants Determination Sub-Committee, based on recommendations by an advisory panel consisting of the Chief Executive of the East End Community Foundation, the Head of Corporate Strategy and Policy and officers her team. Recommendations are based on a set of member approved criteria.

Summary of achievements

Since 2017, the Innovation Fund has supported a broad range totalling 21 initiatives with this resource. At the time of support, there were 1811 pledges of support from backers, contributing to projects we have supported and selected through our agreed criteria and processes. Spacehive are commissioned from 1st May 2019 to 30th April 2022 at a cost of £75,000 to provide the process and continued support to organisations through their crowdfunding journey.

| No. | Backed projects: | LBTH pledged £ | Total Raised £ | Award year |
|-----|--|-------------------|----------------|------------|
| 1. | 3 Defibrillators for Victoria Park by Victoria Park Friends | 1,541 | 5,991 | 2019 |
| 2. | Disabled People Work Hard and Get Fit by Ability Bow | 10,000 | 27,106 | 2019 |
| 3. | Bee-Spoke Learning Centre by Leaders in Community | 489 | 40,457 | 2018 |
| 4. | Save Betar Bangla Radio Station! by Betar Bangla | 9,925.50 | 19,161 | 2018 |
| 5. | Bethnal Green Memorial Projection by Stairway to Heaven Memorial Trust | 2,889.25 | 11,147 | 2018 |
| 6. | Boxing for the Community in London by Factory East Community Project | 2,283 | 8,813 | 2017 |
| 7. | Choose Love Mural E1 by Help Refugees | 1,263 | 4,930 | 2018 |
| 8. | Christ Church Isle of Dogs - Open to All by The Parish of the Isle of Dogs | 6,310 | 29,792 | 2019 |
| 9. | ELM II (East London Makerspace) by Rejuvenate UK CIC | 10,000 | 55,068 | 2018 |
| 10. | Fashion and Creative Hub by British Bangladesh Fashion Council | 10,000 | 40,600 | 2020 |
| 11. | Food for Tower Hamlets by First Love Foundation | 5,000 | 10,847 | 2020 |
| 12. | Help Bow Food Bank feed the community by Bow Foodbank | 2,384 | 15,277 | 2020 |
| 13. | Tower Hamlets Community Tea Dances by I am Tower Hamlets | 2,030 | 16,350 | 2019 |
| 14. | Inside Out: Aldgate Women's Oral Histories by Off The Wall Players | 3,838 | 15,167 | 2018 |
| 15. | #MakeCaves In Mile End Park! by Toynbee Hall | 8,079.50 | 16,332 | 2018 |
| 16. | Maximise The Canvas community space! by Gossip Projects Limited | 5,471.75 | 20,485 | 2018 |
| 17. | Mind The Gap by Leaders In Community | 984 | 1,895 | 2020 |
| 18. | Pop-up Compost by Public Projects Ltd | 1,142.25 | 4,508 | 2017 |
| 19. | The Somali Museum by Numbi Arts | 5,140 | 21,494 | 2019 |
| 20. | Transform Shoreditch: Cafe & Arts Space by Transform UK | 10,000 | 150,792 | 2018 |
| 21. | Transform The Common Room - Roman Road by Roman Road Trust | 9,860 | 81,701 | 2020 |
| | Total | 108,630.25 | 597,913 | |

Work by Spacehive

Overview

Tower Hamlets council partnered with Spacehive for an initial pilot scheme in 2017, which was then extended into a three-year programme, running from the 1st of May 2019 to the 30th of April 2022. The programme involves a bespoke crowdfunding microsite and wrap-around support for the community groups who are crowdfunding. The programme costs £25,000 per year.

Main delivery elements of the programme

1. Governance and Assessment process

Spacehive worked with the Council in 2017 to create the initial criteria and assessment process for the programme. This ensures relevant due diligence is followed while also ensuring the process is flexible enough to support crowdfunding campaigns. When pulling this together, Spacehive shared best practice from other civic crowdfunding programmes including the Mayor of London.

In 2019, when starting the three-year programme, Spacehive, using the learnings from the initial pilot, worked with the council to amend the initial assessment process. Before each assessment, Spacehive compile a list of the projects, downloads the pdf pitches, and shared additional information with the council on the projects. During assessment, Spacehive liaise with the groups on behalf of the council, reducing the resource needed on the council side as much as possible.

2. Delivery of two funding rounds a year

Spacehive run two funding rounds a year, one in the Spring and one in the Autumn. This involves marketing the round to stakeholder groups and the general community, running events, and supporting the projects who come forward with project ideas.

Spacehive provides marketing resources to the council to send out, including email content and social media posts. They also provide marketing resources with key stakeholder groups such as the Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service (THCVS) and Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets, who share the information with their groups. Spacehive attends relevant sector events to promote the programme.

Spacehive also conducts direct marketing and engagement. They have an ever-growing database of local groups and individuals who have expressed interest in the programme or who have been involved in the programme previously, whom they directly contact. They target smaller and new groups, who have not engaged with the programme before, ensuring they are also supported to get involved.

As part of the rounds, Spacehive holds two workshops a year in community venues (covid means these will be delivered online). Previous project creators are invited to speak, sharing learnings and advice. Groups are encouraged to network and develop links with other attendees at the event. Projects are then supported from the workshops, through to the deadline for pitching and throughout their campaigns.

3. Providing bespoke support to the community

Following each round, Spacehive identifies wards where there has been less engagement, and groups who might need more support to get involved. They use this to create a specific engagement plan to reduce gaps identified. During each round, Spacehive runs a series of clinics for groups who need extra support for next steps to run their campaign and agree manageable targets. By setting the projects up for success, the groups gain confidence to try something new, they build new skills to approach other funders.

In terms of running the campaigns, Spacehive provide bespoke marketing advice, and brainstorm local groups and organisations which they could engage and link in with for their project. A good example of this is the Somali Museum who managed to engage a lot of local art groups and businesses through the advice they received at a clinic.

4. Broader eco-system engagement

While Spacehive have built a lot of links with local third sector organisations, a key area that still needed to grow was business engagement. At the start of 2020, Spacehive and the Tower Hamlets council lead officer developed a plan to engage East London Business Alliance (ELBA) and council officers in Procurement and Economic Development teams to create a business engagement strategy for the programme. The first phase was to book in a joint meeting with all the key individuals but before this was fully confirmed, the Covid pandemic hit and this was put on hold. This is an important area which needs to be picked up in 2021, as we emerge from the Covid pandemic. Efforts to engage businesses in the current food bank campaign being run by the council on Spacehive will also help raise business awareness of the programme and this can be built on.

Covid Response

When the Covid pandemic hit, Spacehive quickly put some key elements in place to help communities respond to the crisis.

1. Relaxed their eligibility – the Spacehive platform is designed to support civic projects but during Covid they relaxed this, allowing direct charitable campaigns, such as food banks, to crowdfund on the platform.
2. Waived Fees - Spacehive waived fees for all projects from March 20th to June 20th 2020, acknowledging that this was a difficult time for groups to crowdfund. Spacehive continues to waive fees for projects raising money for those most vulnerable in our community. The council's current food bank project does not have any Spacehive fees attached.
3. Supported projects who have had to put the delivery of their project on hold due to Covid restrictions and others who have had to adapt their project to fit with the ever-changing guidelines. Spacehive have been on hand to guide projects through this process, encouraging them to forward plan and think about how the Covid regulations might change.

Directly supporting Covid-19 campaigns

Along with providing support to all projects running campaigns in Tower Hamlets, Spacehive has directly supported two food bank projects in the borough to hit their target ([Bow Foodbank](#) and [First Love](#)). These projects were referred to Spacehive by the council. Spacehive is also directly supporting the council to run [its own foodbank](#) campaign in the run up to Christmas.

For all three of these campaigns, Spacehive has directly created the project pages, liaising with the project creators on the wording and the imagery of the campaigns, and providing guidance on the set up of the payment platforms. They have also provided marketing guidance and marketing assets to help get the word to the communities and local businesses. Spacehive have also helped facilitate pledges from businesses onto the campaigns where they are not able to pledge online.

All the additional support during Covid has been above and beyond what is included in the contract with Tower Hamlets council. During the time, when council resource has had to be focused elsewhere, Spacehive continued to deliver all the main elements of the contract.

Achievements

Key Facts and case studies

Innovation Fund contributions have supported initiatives ranging from small community projects to larger regeneration focused ventures. The result, as at 20th January 2021, is £597,913 of pledged funding being achieved to support successful pitches since the scheme was launched in December 2017.

This has resulted in:

21 initiatives supported

1811 backers contributing to supported projects

£489,278 of inward investment from other sources

our contribution was 18% of the total funds drawn in by crowd funding

Case Study: Make It! Toynbee Hall



Young people on Make it! built their own crowdfunded indoor cave for the community to use all year round.

On Thursday 26 April 2018, the cave was officially opened. This is now open for the public to use for free in a bid to promote a healthier and more active lifestyle for young people.

Back in February they began a crowdfunding a campaign to build an indoor caving experience inside a shipping container at Mile End Urban Adventure Base in a project called Make Caves. The idea for the cave, designed and constructed entirely by the young people themselves with expertise provided by local charity Build Up Foundation, was in response to growing number of playgrounds being shut down and the lack of inspiring play facilities in Tower Hamlets.

A container was moved into the centre of the park and young people worked alongside experts in caving to build the cave and to decorate the container with their own graffiti, so they made their mark in the long term. In order to ensure that the cave was sustainable, all usage and management of the space was handed over to Tower Hamlets Outdoor Centre once the construction of the cave was completed. The resource is used by Tower Hamlets Schools as well scouts and guides groups and other community organisations. The centre is in almost daily use throughout spring and summer and in less often but still regular use in the winter.

Case Study: Creation of night-time photographic projection screened onto Stairway to Heaven Memorial



The Memorial Service to mark the 76th anniversary of the Bethnal Green tube shelter disaster took place on Sunday 3rd March at 2pm at St. John on Bethnal Green Church. Over 200 people attended and heard the names of all 173 victims read out while the same number of candles were lit on the altar. See more details at [Stairway to Heaven Memorial Trust](#).

"This is brilliant, it really shows what the memorial is all about and how these young lives were cut short that night. It makes the memorial almost come alive and say REMEMBER ME."

Case Study: Apiary for Brownfield Community Garden



Leaders in Community supported young people to expand the apiary in the Brownfield Community Garden in Poplar

- Purchased 100 bee suits for children and adults
- Course delivered to 54 young people with 30 training days provided
- 14 local people involved in the delivery of the course
- 10 young volunteers volunteered their time on the project
- Sold 670 jars of local honey, making £1200
- 385m² area of green space improved

Case Study: Bow Foodbank



In January 2020, Bow Foodbank would see around 100 clients a week on a fortnightly cycle, so there were approximately 200-220 adults regularly attending. Clients were registered, and were entitled to a set number of visits fortnightly.



Throughout the year, demand increased almost every week. Bethnal Green opened in early 2020 and has also seen more clients needing help. By the end of October, the combined client base was approaching 800 adults and 1500 children.

Case Study: Iranian refugee and artist Majid Adin, and world-renowned artist Lakwena, created two huge murals in Hanbury Street.



" This project was all about bringing people together. Throughout my journey to the UK, people have shown be great kindness and love. I wanted to bring a community together to celebrate our common humanity. It doesn't matter what age, faith, sexuality or nationality you are, when we work together and show compassion and kindness toward each other we can do brilliant things."

Case Study: Increased flexibility for community use of Christ Church Isle of Dogs



Changing the seating to enable wider community use

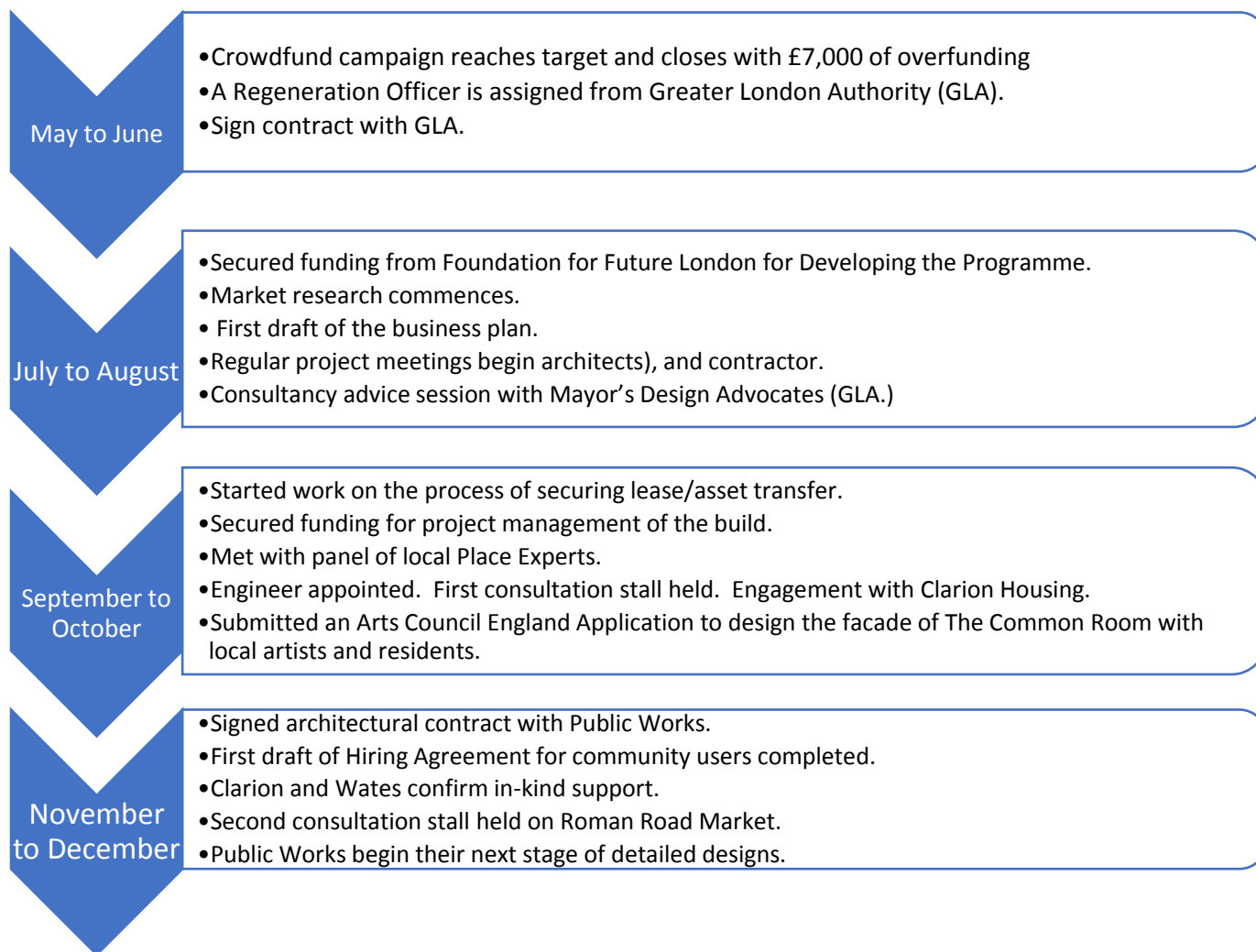
- Chairs have been delivered and in use
- Using the chairs in separate stacked piles to avoid cross contamination by COVID-19.

"They are exactly what we needed to cope fairly effortlessly with opening the church in a new way to allow for social distancing - they give us a lot of assurance, and I'm so proud of the campaign that we ran to raise funds for them."

Case Study: The Common Room

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After the successful Crowdfund London campaign, Roman Road Trust has begun the journey of transforming The Common Room. Progress in 2020 included:



Case Study: Mind the Gap



Secured equipment for the digital inclusion of older residents

" As part of our intergenerational project Mind the Gap, we have relaunched the Cook And Create challenge to stay connected with vulnerable elderly people in the community. We have prepared food bags filled with nutritious ingredients for the elderly to take part in the cooking challenge if they can while connecting with us through Zoom. This is where the tablets our committee raised money for comes into play! We aim to get more elderly people online especially those who suffer from loneliness and isolation."

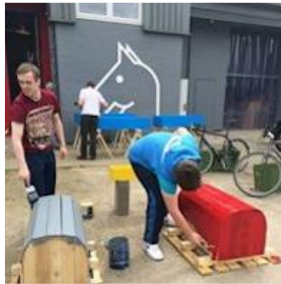
Case Study: Somali Museum



Somali Museum space to host History Lab for schools and inter generational workshops

- Secured funding to work 3 days a week
- Provided online workshops
- Organisational development including starting charity registration process, establishing partnerships and business plan
- Working on hiring facilitators and 4 Somali young project trainees
- Participating in Covid engagement of Somali community

Examples of other achievements:



Turned an empty basement in a tower block into a creative recycle workshop

3 defibrillators purchased and installed in Victoria Park located in the lobby areas of three park buildings:

- The Ron Cain Sports Pavilion
- The Pavilion Café Toilets
- The Hubin Victoria Park



Exercise sessions for residents who have disabilities or live with life-changing health conditions.

Developed online exercise resources during periods of covid related closure.

Reopened the gym when covid restrictions allowed for pre-booked gym sessions only.

Developing a new Fashion and Creative Centre which will provide training, support and network opportunities.





Fitted out of a new community café in Shoreditch

Transformed a Community Hub space available to the local community to hold events that improve the lives of others.

"The Canvas is a hub of happiness and an inspiring example of how a community venue can boost local wellbeing, enhance social cohesion, encourage kindness and transform people's lives."



Contributed to the prevention of the closure of Betar Bangla Radio Station. Unfortunately, this appears to have been a temporary solution. Companies House records show that Betar Bangla dissolved in November 2020.

4 free tea dances for older residents living with various disabilities including dementia



From 16-March 2020 to 14-April 2020, 607 people were helped with generous food hampers and support to manage a crisis.

Examples of additional outputs and impacts reported by organisations

"A new resource being used by TH schools, scouts and youth groups"

"excited a new generation of eco-conscious local young people"

"our graduates have gained vital skills and knowledge from this programme"

Examples of experience of using the method of funding

enabled youth workers to draw down funds, that otherwise wouldn't have been available for young people to create and run their own project

more control of how the money is spent than many other funding sources

leverage for personal contacts to support with small amounts of money and to be accountable to them for their investment

were able to learn how to manage an effective campaign with the advice of Spacehive, which has been very welcome

enabled us to deliver and reach a greater number

we succeeded with the challenges of hitting our target and getting the word out to local networks and contacts