BSC Planning Workshop – 25/11

Discussion analysis – key themes

The Building Strong Communities planning workshop took place on Wednesday 25 November, with over 200 participants taking part. As part of the session, breakout groups discussed three questions to get an understanding of how civil society organisations currently engage with and support communities to participate actively in decision making, how the mission team can support and strengthen the continuation of this work and what are some of the key ways in which we can collaborate to make best use of the limited resources available.

Below is a detailed analysis of each of the three questions, with summaries of the top themes that came out of each question discussion.

Detailed Analysis of Questions

1 - What do you and your organisation do that means that communities can get involved in decision making and play active parts in their communities

1-Involvement and Engagement opportunities to help shape and design services (123)	- Ensure community voice reflected in programme design through various participation opportunities e.g. Forums/Strategies/Networks/Feedback/peer research/surveys/consultations/advisory boards etc. - Engagement programmes are designed by and for the communities/users, often user-led - Time committed to building space for users/communities to be part of designing/delivery of processes and to give their feedback on how things are working and what more they need - Engagement methods include f2f, newsletters, social media channels, videos..
2-Empowering communities to take the lead (96)	- Programmes to build capacity within communities, to empower to tell own stories/advocate/lead/decision making– Various methods including community champions/skills training/community-led programming/community organisers/peer support - Various vehicles for doing this including – training/hosting networks/online/face2face - Creating spaces to listen to and learn directly from communities and community leaders – allowing these conversations to direct how the organisation responds e.g. accessibility/activities/support services - Empower communities by sharing information and signposting to support available depending on their needs.
3-Community-led decision making (46)	- Boards are user-led or have users/community representatives as members – actively seek Trustees from the user-group/community - Community needs/insights/lived experience are central to decision-making - Service user-led decision making in how programmes are shaped, designed and delivered

	• Training offered to members of the communities to give them the skills needed to become trustees etc. • User-led advisory boards informing the decision making of organisations • Remunerate members of the communities/users who are part of decision-making boards.
4- Volunteering and participation (43)	• Volunteer-led organisations/programmes/projects • Some organisations have programmes which enable volunteers to progress into decision-making roles and involve volunteers in decision-making/advisory panels • Offer training and development opportunities for volunteers so that they become skilled volunteers developing skills which can be applied in employment • User-led support groups, led by volunteers from the user group/communities
5- Cross-sector Collaboration (37)	• Work in partnership with statutory bodies, other voluntary sector organisations and businesses in various ways to ensure service users/communities are best served • Build trusting working relationships cross-sector to best support communities and ensure their needs are responded to – ensuring consistent communications across the sectors • Share opportunities available to communities from across different organisations/sectors • Play back voices of communities to statutory organisations, ensuring they are listening to the needs/insights of people
6-Supporting frontline/community organisations (34)	• Offer capacity building work to frontline/small community organisations • Host forums and share information with these organisations to facilitate networking opportunities, sharing insight and enabling peer learning • Advocate on behalf of these organisations, championing their contribution. • Give support/ training in delivering services e.g governance/digital support/provide physical space
Other themes identified	Support in accessing services (14); Involving communities in funding applications/decisions (14);Insights/Knowledge on communities needs (14)

2 - What does the Building Strong Communities team need to do to support and strengthen your ability to work with and for communities?

1 - Connecting, Convening and Facilitating networks/partnerships (94)	• Connecting 3rd sector organisations to identifying opportunities for collaboration and support the brokerage and development of partnerships • Convening and facilitating networks & forums (thematic, place-based, communities and general) to share knowledge, good practice and identify opportunities for joined up working and avoid duplication.

	• Utilising existing local/regional structures/networks • Share good practice in partnership working between all parts of Civil Society (specialist and general, large and small etc.) • Coordination role of the Building Strong Communities Mission – ensuring convening across diversity of civil society.
2 - Funding (48)	• Funding – (longer term funding; flexible funding; funding available to all sizes of organisations) • Centralised information of range of funding available • Support with access to funding e.g. Funder collaboration/bid writing/capacity building in diversifying funding streams/identifying appropriate funding/supporting new groups to access funding • Support funders to design funding pots and allocate funding based on insights/data
3 - Sharing good practice/resources (44)	• Platform/Hub to share good practice about what works across range of topics (engagement, digital exclusion, community development, influencing, advocacy etc.) • Sharing lessons learnt from programmes/services including where things have failed • Sharing good practice through case studies, networking opportunities, buddying systems etc. • Sharing resources/toolkits that organisations can access and use in their work • Resources includes expertise, contacts, connections, skill swaps, asset sharing • Space to sense-check proposals/project ideas

4- Communication and Engagement (40)	• Mission Comms/Engagement
	   o regular updates / clear contact point – consistency in comms
	   o Broaden communications across breadth of civil society from small community groups to large charities
	   o Engagement – webinars/enable civil society to lead your engagement
	   o Think about language used – Minimal viable bureaucracy
	• Wider Comms/Engagement
	   o Communicate – support available/opportunities/success stories
	   o Communicate offline – face2face/paper based
	   o Engage in multiple ways – forums/surveys/conversations
	   o Support Civil Society with their own comms/engagement plans
	   o Engagement is two-ways – have processes to feedback

5 - Capacity Building (30)	• Training (leadership, funding bid-writing, fundraising, digital skills, accessibility) • Capacity building for equity-led groups • Support Civil Society orgs access skilled volunteer support • Building resilience within the sector • Opportunities to share skills/knowledge across Civil Society – through skills-sharing/jointly procuring training/buddying with larger orgs etc.
Other topics noted	Data/insights (29); Reaching under-represented communities (26); Community-led (25); Mapping of services (22); Cross-sector working (21); Advocacy (19)

3 - We all have limited resources – how can we pool our collective resources to ensure the mission delivers its aim of building strong communities?

1 – Collaboration/Partnership(91)	Clear appetite for collaboration and repeated feedback of desire to not reinvent the wheel or create new networks where some exist, guidance and opportunity, coordination and for collaboration to extend from the GLA, local authorities, funders etc.as well as the sector. • Good practice / guidance for collaboration which treats small partners equally and involves trust and relationship building • What learnings from this year and LCRF can teach us about collaboration? • Collaboration cycle / opportunities e.g., strategy, advocacy, design, delivery etc. • Platforms to bring existing networks and capabilities in one place. • Collaborating on strengths, embedding culture of leaving rest to others who can. • Collaboration that focuses on supporting beneficiaries not organizational survival. • Collaborating outside of normal circles and with private sector/less obvious partners. • Collaborating on long term strategies. • Funders to design programmes that require mandatory joint proposals & bodies to use influencing and convening power to incentivize partnership and reflect in commissioning arrangements – threading collab throughout system. • Collaboration beyond boroughs and how to collaborate local with hyperlocal. • Collaboration that may mean mergers.

	• Collaboration around pooling back office resource to focus on delivery. • Collaborating on reporting techniques.
2 - Sharing resources / best practice (58)	Willingness to share but need for coordination of good will. • Potential for sharing of resources; ideas; lessons; and information • Need mechanisms for sharing resources and best practice, through forums and networks, platforms incl. online and opportunities to share skills across organisations • Culture – how to engender a culture of sharing in climate of lack of resources, who leads on this? • Sharing across georgraphic levels and thematic issues • How funders can learn from LCRF good practice of minimizing effort in applications
3 – Coordination / networks (48)	Clear recognition that coordination / networks are the prerequisite to collaboration. View that role of mission to convene / coordinate, orgs do not have resource to build or strengthen networks and seeking guidance. • Coordination – need for coordination to be ongoing and centralised throughout hyper local, local and pan-London, as the prerequisite to collaboration. • Resource required to coordinate / bring together networks, orgs don't have the capacity. • More infrastructure organisations to support delivery providers, convene, support strategy etc. • Coordinated funding • How to work towards the common aim of the mission through different networks with different remits.
4- Communication (40)	• Developing definition/framework for what a strong community looks like and how orgs can work towards/measure it – embed as common goal • Platform where for sharing information on funding/resources/services/events etc. • Language – positive framing not using deficit-based language • Mechanisms for community feedback. • Access to information for those digitally excluded e.g., flyers etc. • Communicating London services vs local services • Other mechanisms mentioned, panel meetings, platforms like Reddit, drop-in sessions,

5 – Mapping / Data Insights (33)	Number of mapping exercises needed around services and orgs in London and borough level. Tools for relaying this information required. • Mapping online directory of organisations and services available and target community, managed by GLA/funders. For use by organisations and users • Assessment of needs, mapping of skills / resources needed, and gaps to use in targeting support on these • Data sharing to ensure gaps in provision are addressed, avoid duplication etc.
Other topics noted	Funders (29); Grassroots / Local (16)