



What Makes a Strong Community? — Civic Strength Content Call and Micro Grants Scheme

Delivered by Big Ideas for the Greater
London Authority | Summary Report

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A short report on the delivery of the Community Group Funding Opportunity for the Greater London Authority Community Insights Hub

Big Ideas was commissioned by the Greater London Authority (GLA) to deliver a Community Group Funding Opportunity in support of the Community Insights Hub, an online space designed to connect community expertise directly to policy making. The programme invited community-led organisations from across London to answer one question through creative content: what makes a strong community?

Fourteen groups were awarded grants of £750 to produce films, photography, artwork and written Story Templates exploring Civic Strength, drawing on the Civic Strength Index, co-designed with Londoners and developed by the Young Foundation for the GLA.

The resulting content profiles outstanding organisations working to strengthen the communities they serve, and will help inform policy makers' understanding of what communities need.

The Community Groups

Groups were selected to reflect a geographical and thematic spread across London, prioritising organisations led by or working with Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, children and young Londoners, faith communities, Londoners on lower incomes, and D/deaf and disabled Londoners. Fourteen groups took part:

The Abbey Centre	A community hub in south Westminster improving health and wellbeing for residents facing significant health and wealth inequality.
Age UK Waltham Forest	A charity supporting older people in Waltham Forest, including a dedicated group tackling loneliness among local veterans.
Akwaaba	A volunteer-run drop-in social centre in Hackney supporting migrants, refugees and asylum seekers regardless of immigration status.

The ARC (ARC Collective)	A grassroots community space in Islington, run by and for local residents, from food bank clients to volunteers.
AuLaw Farm	An urban organic farm in Kingston upon Thames that connects Hong Kongers who have resettled in London with the wider community through gardening.
BikeStormz	A London-wide cycling movement, "bikes up, knives down", engaging young people as a positive alternative to youth violence.
Deaf Unity	A deaf-led charity working across London to support deaf people, especially young people and graduates, into education and employment.
Elizabeth House	A multi-purpose community centre in Islington offering an after-school club, food hub and activities for families and older residents.
Green Shoes Arts	An arts charity in Barking & Dagenham delivering creative projects that build confidence and social connection for people of all ages.
Micro Rainbow	A London-wide charity providing social inclusion activities to reduce isolation among LGBTQI asylum seekers and refugees.
Nisa-Nashim	A Muslim-Jewish women's network, based in London, building friendship and social cohesion between the two faith communities.
Spitalfields City Farm	An urban city farm in Tower Hamlets offering educational and volunteering opportunities to a multicultural local community.
Surrey Square Primary	A primary school on the Old Kent Road in Southwark whose Family Zone supports families facing high levels of income deprivation.
Tottenham Food Bank	A food bank in Haringey providing emergency food parcels and practical support to families facing food insecurity.

Delivering the Programme

Big Ideas acted as intermediary between the community groups and the GLA, drawing on five years of experience administering small to micro grants on the GLA's behalf. The engagement pathway combined discovery calls, a content meeting for each grantee, and ongoing remote support, before all creative content was collated, edited for accessibility and passed to the GLA.

The partnership with the GLA was collaborative throughout, with regular check-ins and a responsive approach to the inevitable delays that come with community-led delivery.

A £750 grant supported groups for their time and to buy in specialist support such as photographers, videographers or facilitators.

Key Impact

Voice and recognition: 14 community groups, many representing underserved Londoners, were funded and supported to tell their own stories in their own words, gaining a platform on the GLA's Community Insights Hub.

Reflection and organisational value: the process gave groups a rare reason to pause and reflect on their own impact — one group is now feeding the project into an internal review of its local work.

Accessible funding model: £750 grants, paired with hands-on support from Big Ideas, were enough to compensate groups for their time and to buy in specialist help such as photographers, videographers or facilitators.

Strong working relationship: the partnership between Big Ideas and the GLA remained collaborative and responsive throughout, with regular check-ins helping to absorb the inevitable delays of community-led delivery.

A varied, authentic body of content: groups produced a genuinely diverse range of films, photography and artwork, giving policy makers first-hand insight into what strengthens communities across the city.

Conclusion

The Civic Strength content call demonstrated appetite among London's community groups to tell their own stories in their own words, and confirmed that modest,



well-targeted grants can unlock high-quality, authentic content when paired with hands-on support from an experienced intermediary. Big Ideas is confident further rounds of this programme would attract strong interest from groups across the city, including several who were unable to take part this time, among them Money A&E (Newham), Clapton FC's Comms and Community Outreach Team, the Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade, and Age UK Croydon.