



**City Bridge Foundation -  
Standing with Londoners**  
Funding Policy 2025 - 2035

# Standing with Londoners

## Funding Policy 2025 - 2035

City Bridge Foundation has been serving London for 900 years. We own and manage five Thames crossings – including the iconic Tower Bridge – at zero cost to the taxpayer. Whilst much has changed over the centuries, the focus on London and Londoners has always been central to our work.

Over the last 30 years, we've become the capital's largest independent charitable funder, awarding over £840m to support the work of our partners. This includes an extra £200m that was made available during the pandemic and cost of living crisis – crucial additional support at a really difficult time for the sector and for Londoners. As such, we are acutely aware of the challenges facing many people across the capital.

We have consulted widely and reflected deeply on these challenges against a backdrop of growing need among London's most marginalised communities. This has informed our new funding policy, *Standing with Londoners*, which aims to maximise the impact of the resources we have to advance our mission. It builds on the experience and learning garnered whilst delivering our previous funding policy, *Bridging Divides*.

This has only been possible through transparent and purposeful collaboration, research and consultation with our sector partners and stakeholders, including through surveys, events, roundtables and one-to-one-conversations. We offer deepfelt thanks and gratitude to each and every partner who has helped inform this policy.

*Standing with Londoners* sets the direction of our funding over the next decade. It marks a critical step forward in City Bridge Foundation's journey as a social justice funder. This means our focus will be on changing the systems that keep people marginalised, while also addressing the issues communities face right now. Working towards a shared vision of a more equitable London, we aim to deliver impact through collaboration and co-ordination across London's civil society, charities, communities, funders, government and business. *Standing with Londoners* sets out a strengthened focus on social justice and is intentionally ambitious. This is still a high level framework, with new funding programmes to be developed to implement the policy, complete with eligibility criteria and clear signposting about how to access funding.

This is an exciting new chapter in our mission to support organisations and communities working on the frontlines of social justice in London – standing shoulder to shoulder with London's communities, its change-makers and visionaries.

**Sacha Rose Smith**  
Chief Funding Director

**Simon Latham**  
Acting Managing Director

**Nighat Qureishi**  
Chair, City Bridge Foundation Funding Committee

**Paul Martinelli**  
Chair, City Bridge Foundation Board

March 2025

# Our Vision

City Bridge Foundation was set up around 900 years ago for the maintenance of the old London Bridge. Originally named Bridge House Estates – still its legal name – its primary aim as a charity remains the maintenance of five bridges – Tower, London, Southwark, Millennium and Blackfriars.

Our over-arching strategy, *Bridging London 2020-2045*, sets out a clear and ambitious vision for a connected capital, which we will deliver by maintaining and promoting world-class bridges, developing and delivering world-class charitable funding, and embedding and encouraging world-class responsible business practices. Our cross-cutting strategic ambitions of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Climate Action are fundamental to everything we do.

We have always existed, and continue to exist, for the benefit of London and Londoners. Since 1995 City Bridge Foundation has allocated its surplus income for the benefit of disadvantaged and marginalised communities in London\*.

Our vision is of a capital that is truly connected, a city where all individuals and communities can thrive. It is a vision of social justice that infuses everything the foundation does and guides the world-class charitable funding we deliver, aligned with our values of service, collaboration, inclusion, innovation and ambition.

As London's largest independent charitable funder, over the next decade we will continue to evolve our approach, harnessing the foundation's resources, assets and networks to catalyse lasting social change.

\*References to 'London' and the 'capital' refer to 'Greater London'



# Standing with Londoners

## 2025 - 2035

Our funding policy, *Standing with Londoners 2025-2035*, marks a decisive step forward for City Bridge Foundation in two significant ways. Firstly, we will work in solidarity with London's communities and civil society – moving away from traditional power dynamics in funding and hierarchical notions of charitable giving. For us, solidarity means partnership and joint endeavour, bound by shared values and a common vision.

Secondly, we will strengthen our role as a social justice funder by prioritising the empowerment of communities in the capital directly affected by inequality and by focusing on tackling the systems at the root of the problem.

City Bridge Foundation recognises that systems change is a complex and long-term process. As a funder, it is vital we offer support to people and communities impacted by injustices who need help now, balancing this with funding toward long-term prevention and solutions.

Our funding\* processes and practices will adapt to the needs of those whose work we seek to support. We will listen more, deepen our relationships and work alongside our strategic partners in London's communities, funded organisations and the wider sector.

\*The term 'funding' encompasses grant-making, collaboration, social investment and other activity to further the foundation's aim of supporting charitable causes across London.



# A Fairer London

## Four Visions

We have identified four visions for a fairer London around which we will shape and develop our future funding programmes. Within and across these four areas are some of the most critical issues facing London's most disadvantaged and marginalised communities. They are vital entry points to combat inequality and achieve social justice. In each we will seek to empower directly affected communities to play a central role in shaping the solutions needed, and to support those working to tackle the systems that cause the injustice.



**Climate and environmental justice** seeks to create fair and equitable opportunities for all communities to thrive in a changing climate – advocating for sustainable solutions that benefit everyone. It empowers those people hardest hit by climate change, environmental hazards and pollution, to organise and champion a fair, inclusive transition as London works towards its net-zero goals.



**Access to justice** is about working collaboratively with London's communities to ensure everyone can access their rights and find solutions to problems – whether through civil, legal or other processes – without facing barriers like cost, discrimination or complexity. It encompasses a range of issues, including housing, social security, employment, immigration and criminal justice.



**Racial justice** is about working to create a society where inequalities based on 'race' are not only addressed but transformed. An underfunded area in London, we will focus on collective action to address disparities in areas such as employment, housing, education, mental health, immigration and the criminal justice system.



**Economic justice** refers to the fair and equitable distribution of resources, opportunities and economic benefits in society, ensuring that all Londoners – regardless of their background or circumstances – can thrive. This could include approaches to tackling poverty, reducing income gaps and wealth inequalities.

# Our Framework for Change

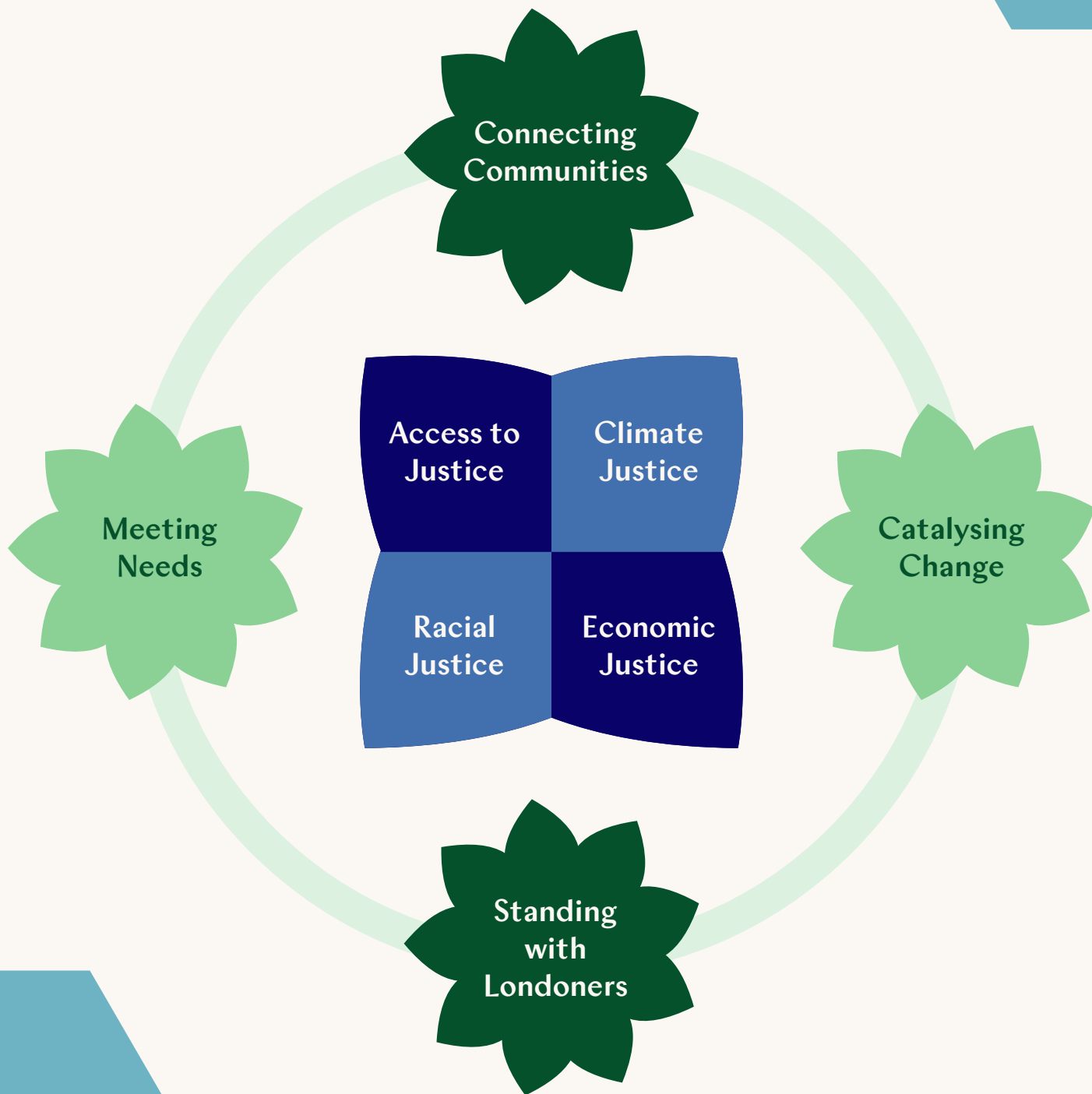
Achieving impact and change at scale requires meaningful, intentional co-ordination, partnership and collaboration. We cannot do it alone. Using a field building approach, we will work with people, organisations and change-makers to deliver social justice for all. 'Field building' is about working in a deeper and more intentional way, targeting our resources and funding to support a range of actors and activities to deliver change. We will identify key stakeholders working to address social justice issues and play an active role in supporting that field's mission and movements. Using grant-making, social investments, networks and our convening power, we will support the following activities:

- ✿ **Connecting Communities:** In order to create more joined-up systems of support, co-operation and collective power, City Bridge Foundation will connect communities. We will do this by supporting organisations to build the capacity and resilience they need to achieve their aims, including through leadership development, infrastructure support, convening and network-building.
- ✿ **Meeting Needs:** We will fund frontline work with an emphasis on advice and holistic support for London's most marginalised communities, prioritising service delivery that applies community insights and evidence to drive meaningful change.
- ✿ **Catalysing Change:** This involves starting, supporting or accelerating initiatives that aim to bring about social change. To do this, City Bridge Foundation will fund advocacy, campaigns, community organising, evidence gathering, research and strategic communications.

Across City Bridge Foundation, we will stand with Londoners, using our voice, assets and networks to advocate for social justice across our priority areas. We have a unique trustee in the City of London Corporation which will strengthen our ability to influence key stakeholders and mobilise resources across the capital to support those we fund to achieve their goals.



# Our Vision of a Fairer London



# Our Funding Offer

City Bridge Foundation will offer a range of funding and support options, prioritising organisations led by and for members of the communities they serve and efforts that deliver impactful outcomes for Londoners.

We also know that ‘how’ we fund is as important as ‘what’ we fund. This means:

- **Our grants:** We will prioritise long-term, core and unrestricted funding wherever possible and appropriate. However, micro-grants and project-based funding will also be available.
- **A more equitable funder:** We will adapt our processes where possible, responding to the diverse needs of our applicants, offering time and support to ensure we are accessible to all. We recognise that operating a one-size fits all approach doesn't address the needs of those who experience systemic inequality. An equitable approach requires us to direct more time and resources to those who need it most, as opposed to simply distributing it evenly. We will also reach out to communities and organisations that have been overlooked historically.
- **High service standards:** We will offer pre-application calls, and constructive feedback to groups that are unsuccessful. We commit to seeking regular feedback from our applicants and funded organisations about their experience of engaging with us, in order to improve our service.
- **Assessment process:** We will streamline our application and assessment processes to be faster, more efficient and more inclusive: introducing a two-stage application process, reducing the burden on those who are unsuccessful. We are also exploring opportunities to integrate lived experience into our funding practice.
- **Collaboration:** We will develop partnerships across different sectors, working collaboratively with other funders, joining or leading funding initiatives that draw on our collective strengths and assets to work together.





## Social Investments and Social Enterprise

In addition to grant-making, City Bridge Foundation has designated funds for social investment as part of our overall investment strategy. This repayable finance aligns with our *Standing with Londoners* policy, furthering the four justice visions and framework for change set out above. Social investment helps us support work that might not otherwise easily find grant funding. This can include capital projects, transitions to new business models, or managing cashflow gaps.

As a social investor, City Bridge Foundation aims to minimise disadvantage and marginalisation by empowering London's communities to build the resources necessary for thriving, full and prosperous lives. We are a patient, flexible, and impact-led investor, collaborating with others to address inequities in the social investment market.

Recognising that earned income is the biggest source of revenue for charities and social enterprises, we also support enterprise development to strengthen sector resilience.

## Funder Plus

City Bridge Foundation's Funder Plus offer (previously called the Bridge Programme), has long provided essential support to help organisations build resilience and adapt to changing circumstances. Funder Plus will evolve to align with our justice visions and reflect the skills, capabilities, and systemic approaches needed to address London's most pressing challenges.

Funder Plus will embed our cross-cutting themes of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Climate Action, while maintaining a focus on critical areas such as suicide prevention training. Our offer will continue to adapt to meet the needs of funded organisations and the wider sector, including: skills development, peer-based learning, environmental sustainability and strengthening connections between stakeholders across a movement.

## Crisis and Emergency

Recognising our responsibility as London's largest independent charitable funder, we will work with key partners to define our role as crises and emergencies arise, seeking to be agile and responsive, and applying our learning from previous crises including the Grenfell fire, Covid-19 pandemic and cost-of-living crisis.

In times of crisis, we will use our networks and convening power to collaborate with other funders to ensure resources are deployed effectively and where appropriate, pro-actively allocate funds in cases of significantly escalating situations that pose substantial risks to the wellbeing of Londoners and the sector.

## Learning

Our impact and learning approach will be dynamic and equitable to match the changing needs of London's communities. We will collaboratively design theories of change to identify the shifts we want to see – and how we will achieve this. We will collect and analyse data and commit to learning throughout the 10-year policy.

We will provide regular learning events for funded groups, our colleagues and wider stakeholders to enable networking and to share challenges and successes. This approach will help evolve our funding programmes and continually improve the knowledge and skills of all partners working towards this common purpose.

# Our values

## Service:

We stand for London and Londoners in everything we do

## Collaboration:

We connect to learn and achieve more together

## Inclusion:

We work towards equity, diversity and inclusion for all

## Innovation:

We embrace new ways to drive positive change

## Ambition:

We challenge ourselves to deliver the best for our communities



# Next Steps

We have bold ambitions as a social justice funder and will continue to learn and adapt over the next ten years to serve London and Londoners. As we move into the implementation phase of this funding policy, we will continue to work with partners over the coming months and years to refine the focus of our funding programmes, always ensuring equity and effectiveness is a priority.

We recognise that London's civil society and communities face a challenging economic and financial environment. We are committed to being as transparent as possible about our future priorities and programmes as they are developed, with clear guidelines for potential applicants on eligibility criteria and processes.

This funding policy marks a significant step forward in our evolution as a funder. Through it, we commit to standing with Londoners and our partners working on the frontlines of social justice. Together we will help realise our vision of a fairer, more sustainable capital.





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