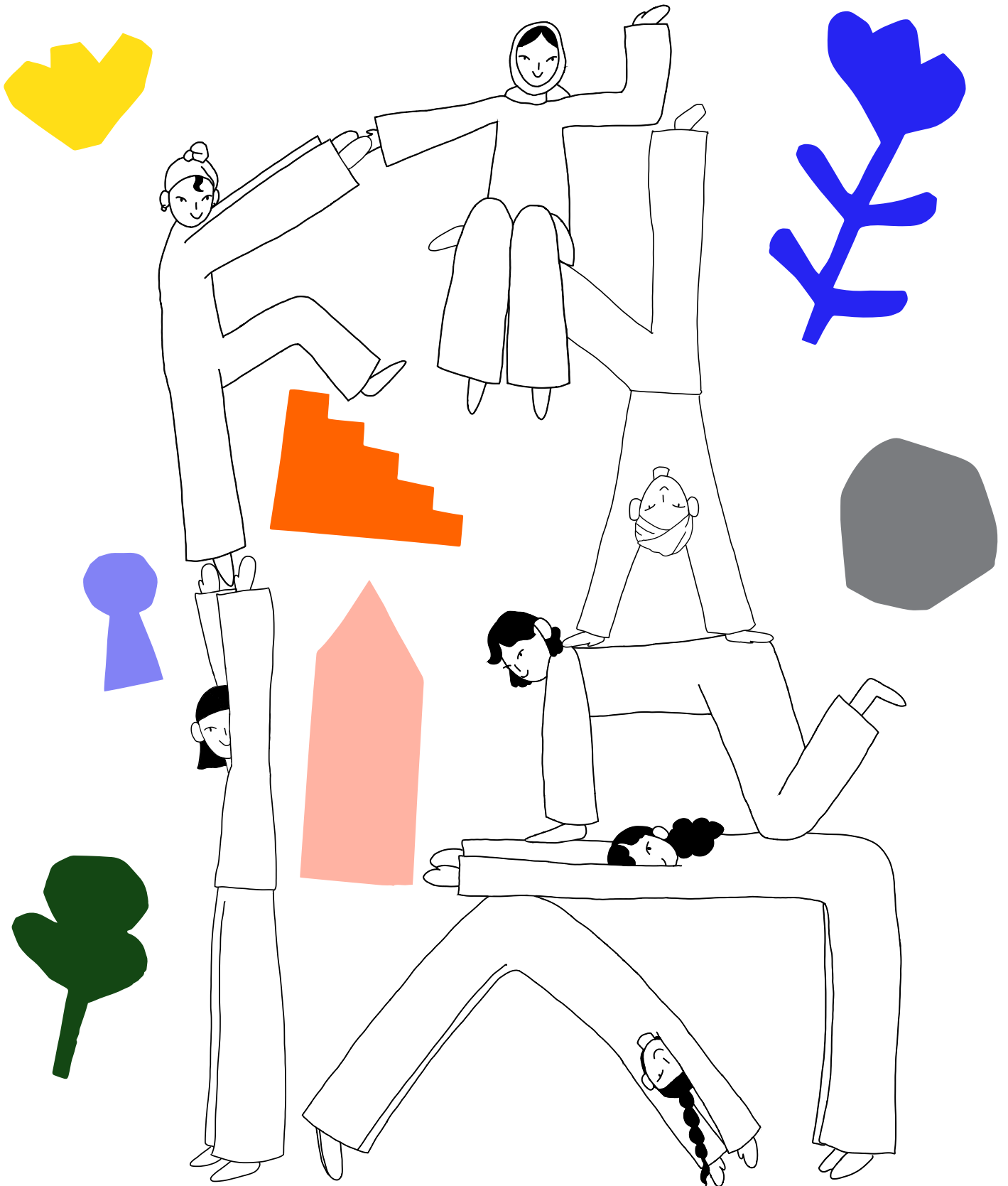


Crowdfund London

Five years of empowering communities through civic crowdfunding



Foreword

For all the bright lights of the big city, a good city is an assemblage of small moments, and London exemplifies this perhaps most of all. This vast, sprawling world city is defined, at its best, by its conviviality, diversity and inventiveness. London undoubtedly becomes greater than the sum of these parts, but only if those parts work for its local communities.

In this respect, crowdfunding has a particularly useful dynamic, drawing from the scale and heft of the crowd and representing individuality and inventiveness within it. When my Future Cities Catapult team was commissioned by the GLA to help scope out the ideas behind Crowdfund London, I drew heavily from my experience with a prototype I'd helped develop in Helsinki, which threw Kickstarter-like crowdfunding dynamics at urban development.

Brickstarter was a prototype for a possible municipal service: a tool for citizens to make tangible suggestions about urban improvements, gain backing for them, financial and otherwise, and helpfully manoeuvre them through bureaucracy into reality. The starting point was the sense that people know more about a place and its possibilities than planners do. They have dreams, small and large, for their neighbourhoods, yet they usually have no way to pursue them. Perhaps we simply had to make a platform to nurture those dreams, and help bring them to the street?

Learning from Brickstarter whilst adapting to the London context, we suggested that City Hall host an 'Open Ideas Platform', to source grassroots ideas from citizens, promote local ownership of regeneration processes, and build new social contracts between communities, local authorities and the GLA.

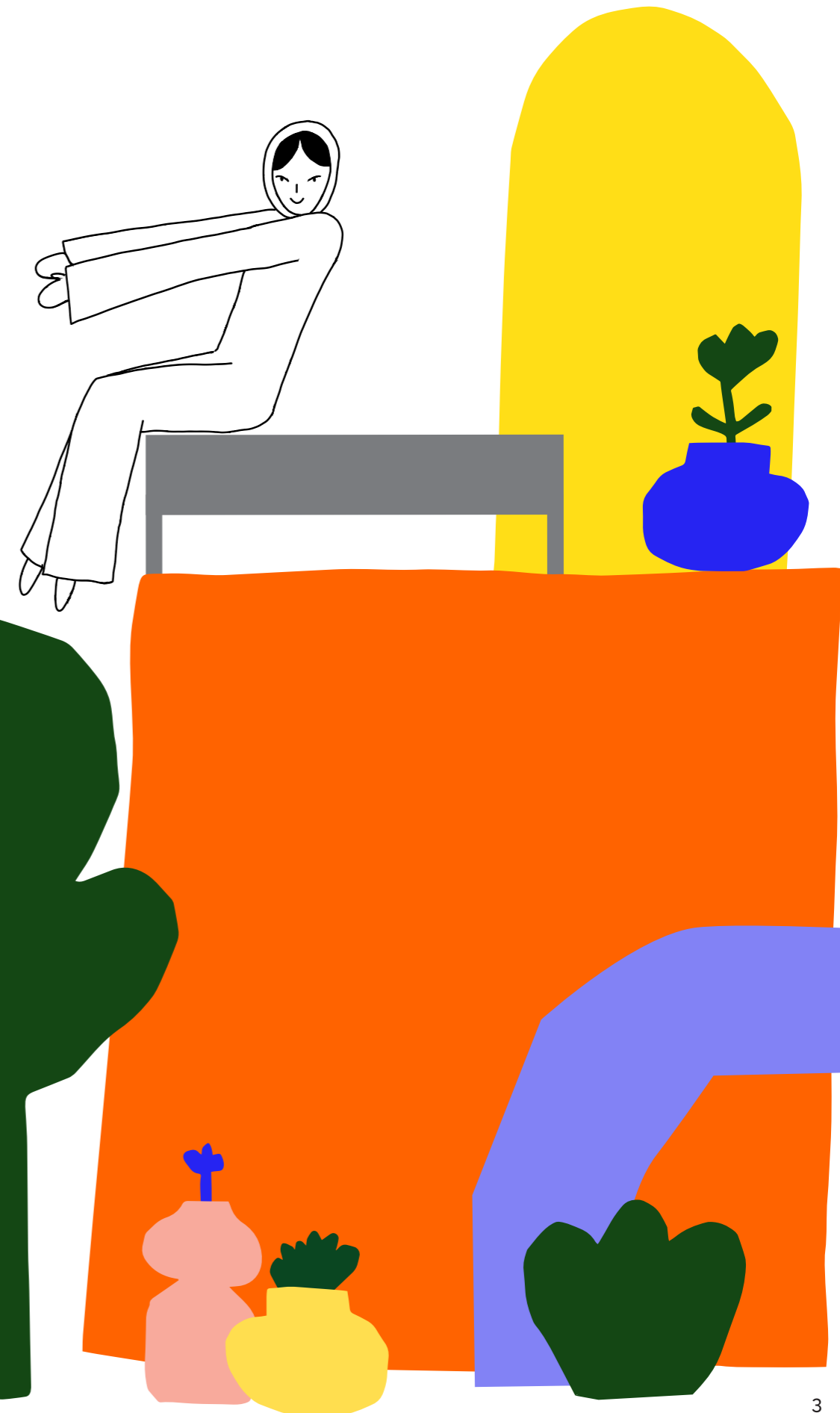
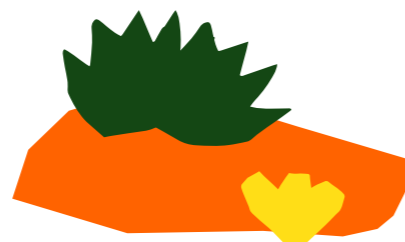
But it's easy to write a report. Ideas are cheap, practice is hard. Now we can see, after five years of operation, that the Regeneration Team, and

their partners in local authorities and the platform Spacehive, deserve huge credit for putting the Crowdfund London programme into practice. 'Learning by doing' admirably to become effectively the largest scheme of its type in the world.

Crucially, it has become a mechanism for making things happen; co-financing alongside support to cut through the bureaucracy that can often suffocate ideas. Engaging with the reality on the ground in the way Crowdfund London does, is about co-creating new social contracts between citizen and city. This new culture suggests true partnership, true collaboration and—with communities retaining ownership of their ideas—true participation; a new kind of city-making led by its numerous and diverse citizens, cultures, and natures.

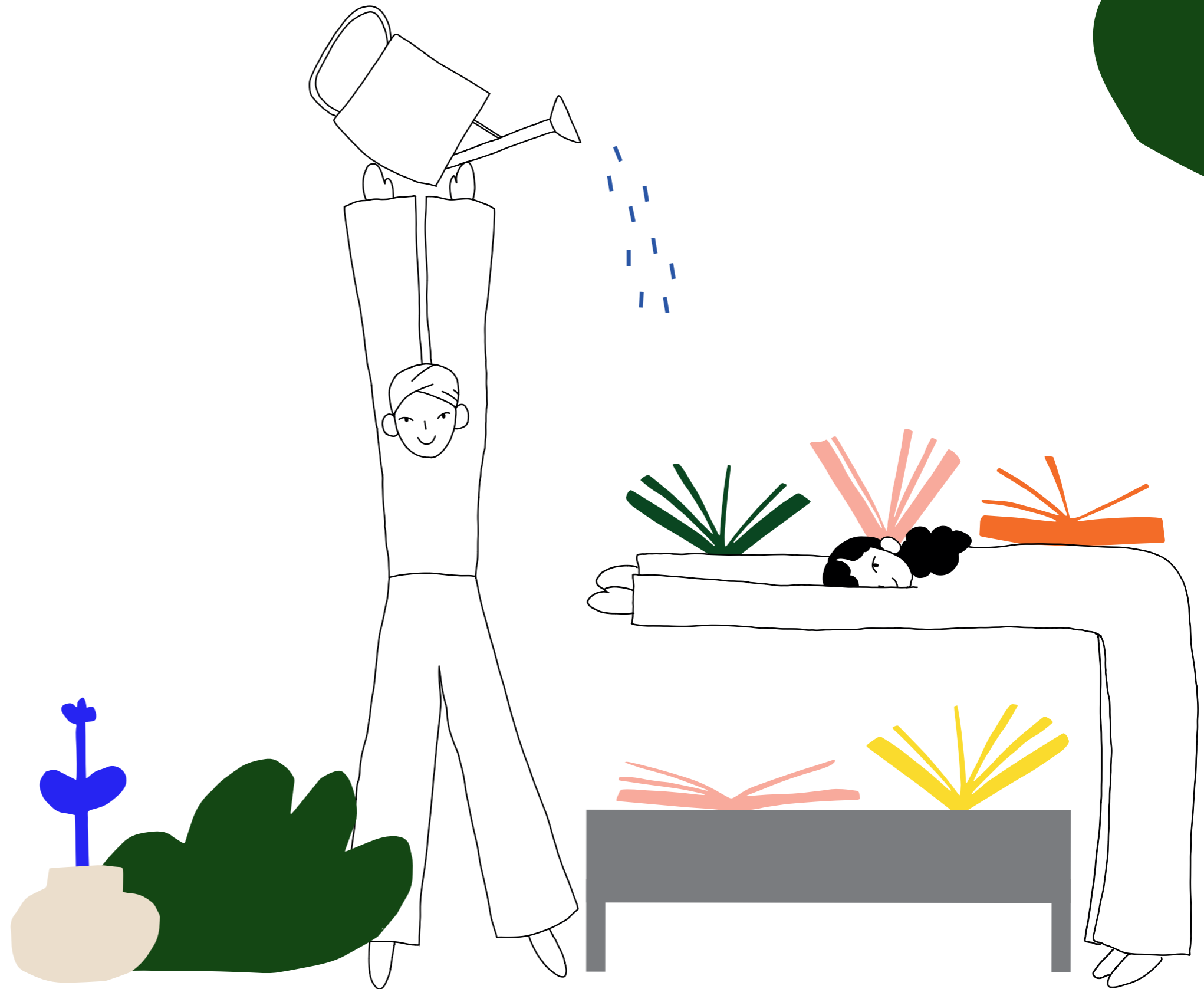
Crowdfund London has taken huge steps in that direction, but the city never idly sleeps; people will always dream about the possibilities around them, and will keep having ideas and pursuing passions, offering skills and bringing diverse perspectives. Crowdfund London provides a vivid example of where urban regeneration could go next, meaningfully engaging with the city's dreams. This lends a sense of rich possibility to the GLA's interactions with Londoners, but more importantly, for the assemblage of small pieces that make a good city; and that make London itself.

Dan Hill, Mayor's Design Advocate



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What got funded?

130

projects have been supported through Crowdfund London

Donation sizes:



£3,220

Smallest funded campaign

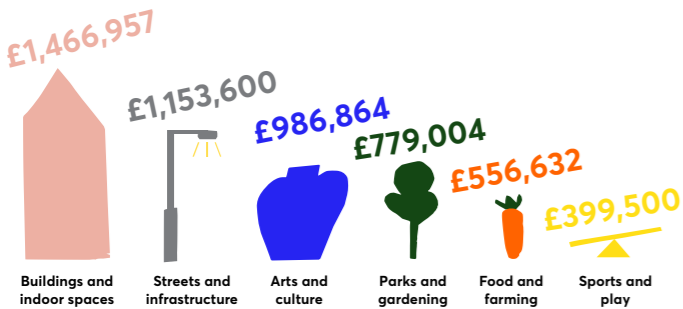
£42,429

Average funded campaign

£160,908

Largest funded campaign

Crowdfund London backed a broad range of projects

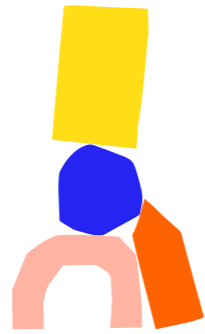


These campaigns have raised nearly

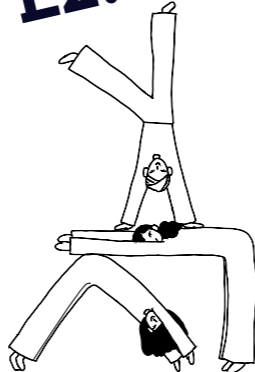
£4.85m

£2.41m

£2.44m



From Crowdfund London pledges



From a crowd of more than **20,000** backers

Gender of project leaders:



56%

Female



44%

Male

What difference did the GLA's pledge make?

Crowdfund London backed projects received more backers from the crowd

Average number of backers:



Crowdfund London campaigns were more likely to reach their funding target

52%



of non-Crowdfund London crowdfunding campaigns reached their target

90%

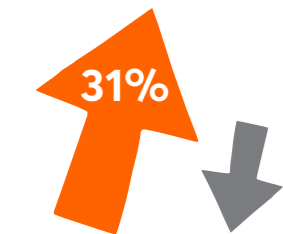
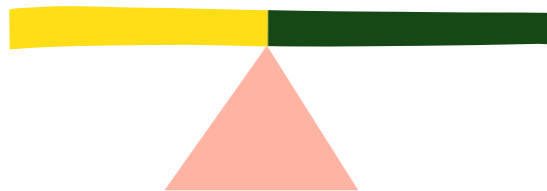


of Crowdfund London backed campaigns reached their target

Crowdfund London pledges matched pound for pound by the crowd

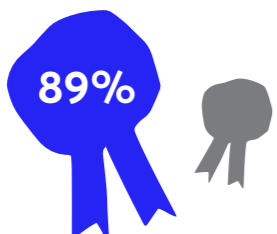
£1

£1



31%

of projects increased their funding target because of the GLA's pledge



89%

of projects said the support they received from Crowdfund London was very important or essential to their success

What impact has crowdfunding had on projects?

77%

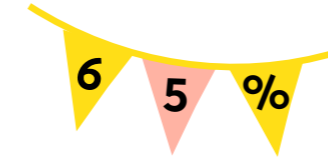


of fundraisers feel more confident

72%



of projects have found new partners or collaborators



of projects were able to fund a project that they couldn't find funding for elsewhere



were able to raise funding faster than they would have been able to from other sources

Project teams significantly improved their skills

Pitching



63%



52%

Fundraising

Community engagement



52%

74%

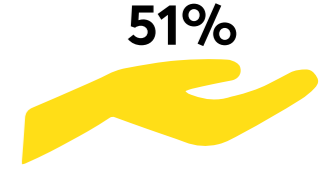


received offers of help or voluntary work with the project



65%

received help promoting the campaign or project



51%

received feedback or advice on project design

What impact did projects have on their communities?

65%

brought people together from different parts of the community



56%

collaborated with local community groups



What impact did projects have on their communities?

500,000

people have benefited from projects

120

members of paid staff have been hired or retained

7,000

volunteers have participated in projects



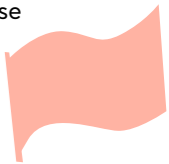
72%

increased community cohesion



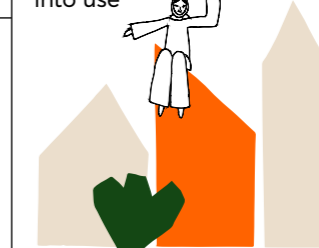
67%

increased sense of civic pride

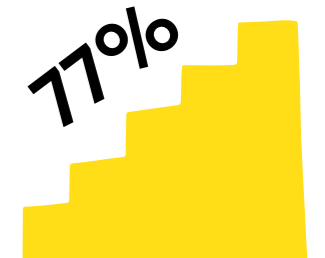


30

vacant buildings have been brought back into use



Increased their communities sense of self-determination



Crowdfund London projects

1. Tottenham Fast Food
2. BANTER
3. Queen's Park HighStreet: The Harrow Road
4. Turf-Fit!
5. Adelante Advances Market
6. Opening Up Creative Hackney
7. Roehampton Spills
8. Centrepont Cafe
9. WeKnitWaterloo
10. Unique Sudbury
11. EnfieldThinks
12. ReNewNewEltham
13. Do Up Our Alley
14. Making a Makerspace
15. ARThouse on the High Street
16. The Museum of Futures
17. Harlesden Working Together
18. LITERALLEY
19. Merchant of Venice: Barking Town centre
20. A shared space for stories in Tottenham.
21. Making Wembley Wonderful
22. Converting Water Tank to Art Space
23. TWIST POP-UP ON STATION RISE TULSE HILL
24. Blossoming Rose: Rosehill Traders Market
25. Hello Hoxton High Street
26. The Peckham Coal Line urban park
27. Our Kilburn—Digital Noticeboard
28. Good Food Catford
29. Green Trafalgar Road
30. Sustainable Bridges Makerspace
31. A New Creative Hub for Wood Street
32. Ten Grand Arcade
33. The Renovation of Wanstead Playground
34. Creating an event space for Fitzrovia
35. The Community Kitchen
36. Freshwell Mobile!
37. Seeing the Wood for the Trees
38. Melting Pot @ London Sculpture Workshop
39. Colour in Romford
40. Raise the Roof at Lordship Hub
41. Punch and Juicy Market Place
42. Workshop fit-out and programme of events
43. Weavers Kids Cafe and Community Pizzeria
44. Old Kent Road studios
45. Peckham Lido
46. V22 Workspace Creche
47. Kitchenette Karts
48. Well Street Market
49. Pengelicious
50. Paxton Primary allotment
51. The Big Park Sleepover 2016
52. The Phoenix Garden Blooms
53. Uplift Salcombe Gardens Shops
54. The Eel Pie Island Museum
55. Creative Community Space For Catford
56. The Brixton Pound Cafe
57. Camden Highline
58. Art Academy takeover Newington Library
59. Creating the Shine Cafe, Turnpike Lane
60. Hoxton Hall Youth Music Shout Out!
61. Southall Light Show
62. A new neighbourhood hub for the Elephant
63. Chalton Street Market
64. RIOgeneration
65. Tottenham's Café Connect
66. A space for art and nature
67. Sayes Court: The Future of the Garden
68. Crystal Palace Library of Things
69. Cricklewood Library
70. Croydon's Anthem for Peace
71. Sustainable Food at Sustainable Bankside
72. Ladywell Self-Build Community Space
73. Horsenden Grape and Honey Farm
74. Our Village Garden Triangle
75. Create a Suburban Farm for Tolworth
76. Teenage Markets come to Barnet
77. Tottenham Cafe Connect Goes Outdoors!
78. Wolves Lane—Wood Green's mini-Eden
79. Build Up Hackney
80. The Farm Café and Workshops
81. Mather House: studios with childcare
82. A village hall for Clapton Common
83. Urban Room Old Kent Road
84. Keep London's legendary Bubble Club OPEN
85. Create a brand new school football pitch
86. D-Lab East
87. Bridges to the Crystal Palace Dinosaurs
88. Dream Garden SW11
89. Seymour Place Community Hub
90. The Calthorpe Living Lab
91. A Green Space at St Mary's Open to All
92. Friends Rejuvenation of Gipsy Hill
93. Bee-Spoke Learning Centre
94. The Flower Bank Hub
95. Union Chapel—Sunday School Stories
96. TATI: Brick Lane community cafe
97. Rotherhithe Illuminated!
98. Revivify Manor Park! Phase 1
99. Community Kitchen For Twickenham

100. Community Herb Garden
101. Transform the Walled Garden, Croydon
102. Maximise The Canvas community space!
103. Grass Routes Minibus
104. Atlantic Pacific @ Royal Docks London
105. Greening Daubeney Primary School
106. Step Up To Work—think FOUNDATION
107. Let's Build!
108. The Old Bath Community House
109. An Outdoor Classroom for GROW
110. ACTON UNFRAMED
111. Ravenscourt Park Community Glasshouses
112. Memoirs Through Murals
113. The Cornerstone—A Community Landmark
114. Hub for the Homeless at The Upper Room
115. Camberwell Banners
116. Build A Man Shed for vulnerable men
117. A Vibrant new community space in Hackney
118. Fashion and Creative Hub
119. GoVanGogh
120. LEWiSHAM School of Muralism

121. Multi-media space 4 Young People
122. New life for Community Arts Upton Park
123. Save Streatham Hill Theatre Phase 1
124. Sowing Stitches
125. Streatham Community Woodland Project
126. Transform the Common Room Roman Road
127. Walala Parade Public Art for Leyton
128. Wild about Wildlife Restoration Project
129. Lexi Hub Appeal
130. Community Cultural Quarter

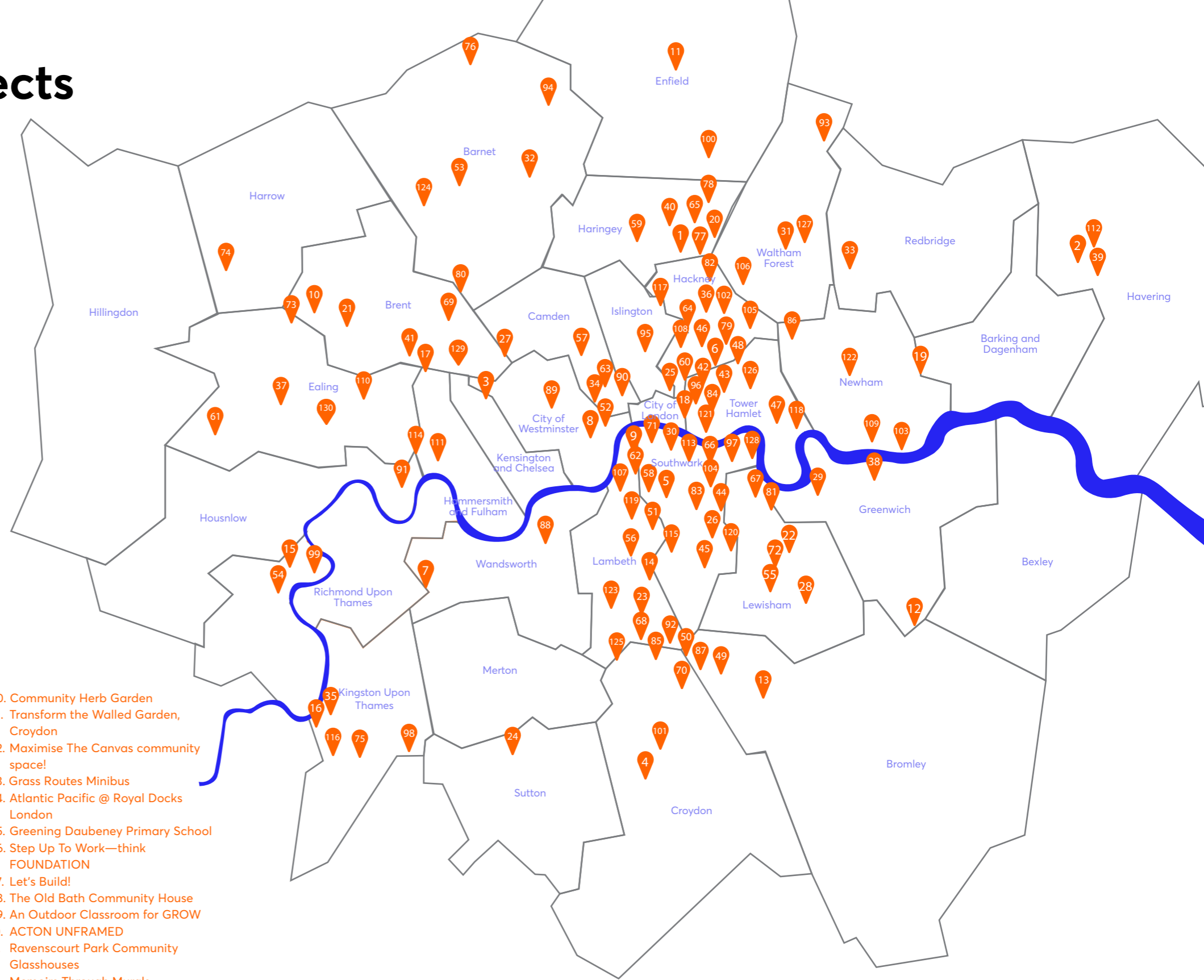




Photo: Southall Light Show. Image courtesy of the Kollektive.

Introduction

Across the world, city governments are experimenting with new ways to better support community-led initiatives and involve citizens in how decisions, such as how public money is spent, are made. Crowdfunding is one of several digital tools that are driving this shift.²

Crowdfunding allows organisations to fund new projects or business ideas through a large number of small contributions pledged by the public (the 'crowd'). Over the last decade, crowdfunding has grown rapidly from an experimental and relatively rare fundraising tool to a mainstream way to finance start-ups, charities and community groups.

The Mayor of London has been at the forefront of empowering communities through crowdfunding since launching Crowdfund London in 2014. Since then Crowdfund London has been used to pledge money and support to a wide range of community-led projects from street art, to community gardens, and cinemas. Through this process they have teamed up with nearly 20,000 Londoners raising £4.85 million for 130 civic projects, making it one of the longest-running and largest initiatives of its kind.

Crowdfund London has been part of the Greater London Authority's (GLA) wider Good Growth Fund which aims to strengthen local economies, support community development and create a more inclusive city that works for all. The programme has used the process of crowdfunding to help surface and support new grassroots ideas, promoting transparency and encouraging local communities to get involved.

Through Crowdfund London, the GLA has on average matched community contributions pound for pound. The aim of this has been to get more people to support projects, by reducing risk and making projects more legitimate. Importantly, projects haven't only received financial contributions from the GLA, but also expert advice, guidance and

other practical support to improve project design and help with delivery.

Ultimately, Crowdfund London has explored how crowdfunding can change the relationship between communities and City Hall and how they work together to improve neighbourhoods and the city as a whole. It has provided a unique opportunity to understand what this type of funding means for the people and communities it supports and how it is different from other, more traditional approaches to funding.

Several other city funders—including The Mayor of Los Angeles, the City of New York and Manchester City Council—have run relatively small-scale crowdfunding initiatives. But Crowdfund London is matched in scale only by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's 'Public Spaces, Community Places' programme—which since 2014 has pledged over \$8 million to more than 250 community projects raising money through crowdfunding.

This report takes stock of the lessons learned through Crowdfund London and its impact, drawing on interviews and surveys of the projects that have taken part and an analysis of data from Spacehive, the crowdfunding platform. It first introduces how Crowdfund London was set up and the types of projects and groups that it has supported, then delves deeper into the value created by the programme. Impacts have been grouped under the six overarching themes listed below. They are explored in detail in 'The impact of Crowdfund London' chapter.

Empowering communities

Ensuring that a more diverse group of people can take part in, and benefit from, decisions made about their local area.

Building connections

Running fundraising campaigns and projects as a community, helping neighbours get to know one another and strengthening their sense of local identity.

Testing new ideas

Supporting innovative projects that struggle to get funding from elsewhere.

Learning by doing

Helping community groups to learn valuable skills for fundraising, engaging their community and developing projects in public spaces.

Creating shared resources

Supporting projects to develop shared spaces, resources and activities which local people feel ownership over and which help them to work together as a community.

Expanding horizons

Helping local groups push the boundaries of what can be achieved in the community and giving them the mindset, tools and resources to make them successful.



Photo: Build Up Hackney. Image courtesy of Build Up.

The report builds on lessons from the projects and how they were supported by the GLA. It aims to give practical insights into how crowdfunding can help city governments, and other funders, to gain more funding for community projects—while also unlocking the benefits of community-led projects and involving communities in local decision-making. For people interested in how Crowdfund London could help support their community project in the future, this report explains how the programme has worked, alongside providing inspiration and important lessons from others who have been through the process.

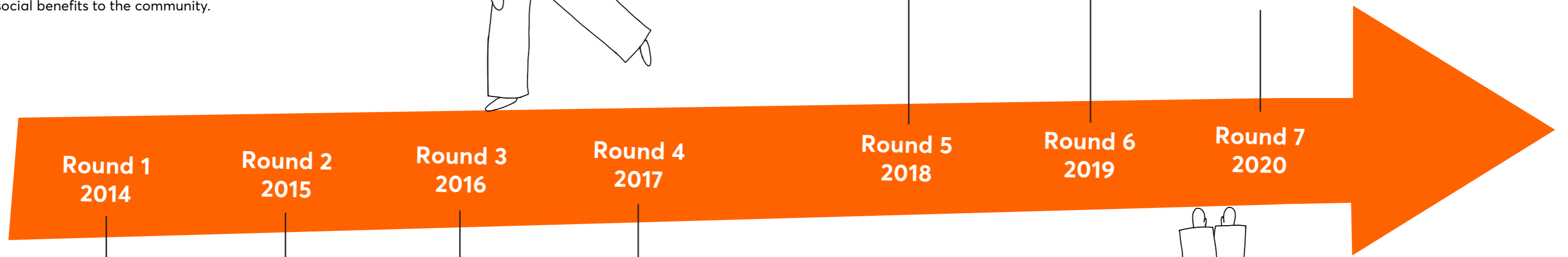
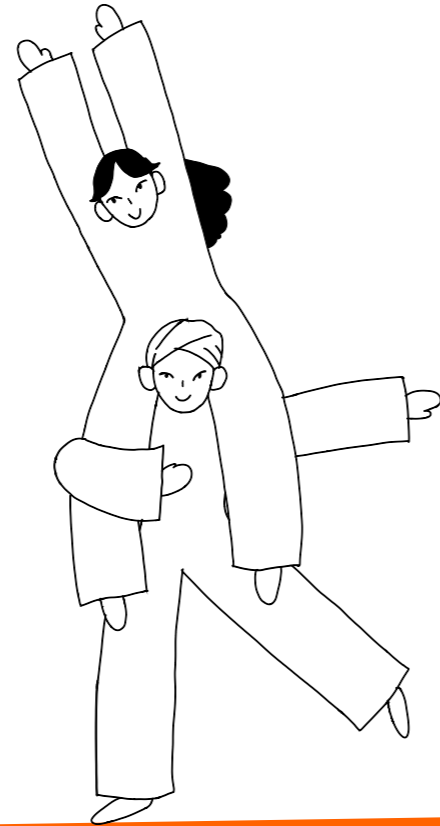


Photo: Punch and Juicy. Image courtesy of Punch and Juicy Liquid Foods.

Crowdfund London explained

Crowdfund London offers local groups, that crowdfund for ideas to improve their neighbourhood, the opportunity to receive up to £50,000 from the GLA alongside help in gaining visibility for their campaign, introductions to other important stakeholders (eg local councils, businesses and other community groups) and guidance on how to design, develop and deliver their project.

To be considered for support, projects need to demonstrate local support through crowdfunding donations and have a project plan in place which has the potential to bring economic, cultural or social benefits to the community.



24 projects funded	17 projects funded	13 projects funded
£525,000 pledged by GLA	£387,500 pledged by GLA	£323,500 pledged by GLA
£536,007 pledged by the crowd	£343,007 pledged by the crowd	£259,890 pledged by the crowd
Average campaign size £44,229	Average campaign size £43,026	Average campaign size £44,876

Spacehive introduced delivery and impact reporting through the platform

Introduced up front payment of up to £10,000

Began offering two levels of funding with different due diligence and reporting requirements

Introducing digital contracting

Round 1 2014

Crowdfund London Launched

17 projects funded

£318,600 pledged by GLA

£71,298 pledged by the crowd

Average campaign size £29,935

Round 2 2015

Introduced requirement that 25% of target is raised by the crowd

18 projects funded

£264,600 pledged by GLA

£271,766 pledged by the crowd

Average campaign size £29,793

Round 3 2016

Began running workshops with projects and updated online resources

19 projects funded

£215,000 pledged by GLA

£360,844 pledged by the crowd

Average campaign size £30,307

Round 4 2017

Maximum GLA pledge increased from £20,000 to £50,000

22 projects funded

£378,000 pledged by GLA

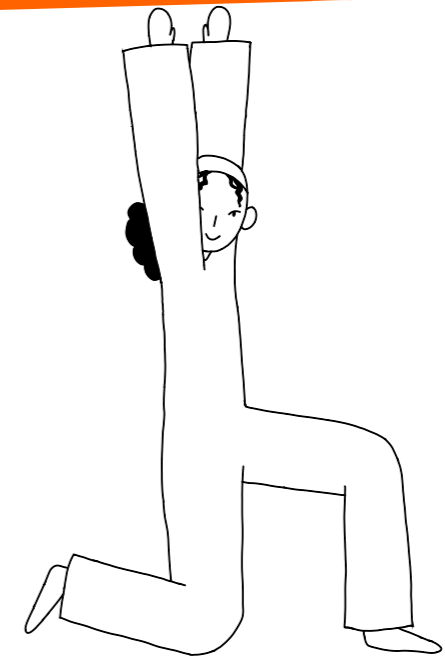
£591,111 pledged by the crowd

Average campaign size £44,050

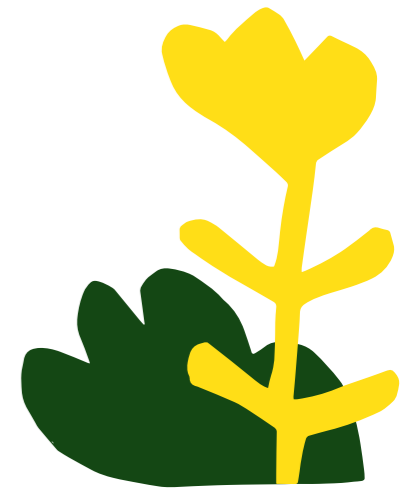
Round 5 2018



Round 6 2019



Round 7 2020



Each round of Crowdfund London has three main stages:

1. Create

The GLA, led by the Mayor, makes a public call for project ideas. It hosts a series of events for people interested in applying, to explain the process and what they are looking for, and to share expert advice and resources to help them design their project and broaden local engagement. Groups use the Spacehive crowdfunding platform to start planning their campaigns.

To be eligible to receive support through Crowdfund London, groups need to be, or become, legally registered (eg as a charity, community interest company, co-operative or community benefit society) or partner with an existing registered organisation. Local authorities can't apply, nor can profit-making enterprises with no social purpose.

2. Fund

Groups pitch their projects and start raising money from the public through the Spacehive platform. This encourages engagement and participation. Local people can contribute money (as little as £2) or their skills, or they can endorse the project. Once crowdfunding is underway, projects then pitch to receive support from the GLA.

The GLA makes a public pledge to selected projects midway through their crowdfunding campaigns to boost the profile of projects and help them build momentum to hit their fundraising targets. The GLA pledges no more than 75% of a project's total crowdfunding target—typically less than 50%—meaning that projects have to raise at least 25% of their target from their communities. This is important because it demonstrates to the GLA that their funding is going to projects that the community genuinely wants to go ahead.

3. Launch

If projects hit their crowdfunding target, they receive the funding pledged to them by the public and the GLA. Successful groups also receive expert advice, guidance and other practical support from the GLA to improve their project design and help with delivery.

Over the past seven rounds of Crowdfund London, the GLA conducted several studies³ to understand how the programme was performing and used lessons from this research to improve the programme's design. These changes included encouraging smaller-scale projects to apply by:

- accepting proposals from informal groups.
- having lighter touch due diligence.
- introducing digital contracting via Spacehive.

- requiring a single evaluation report at the end of the project rather than quarterly reporting (which was expected for larger values).

Following feedback, improvements were also made to the Spacehive platform—making it more suited to the needs of community-led projects and public funders. These included allowing:

- projects to request volunteers with particular skills and other resources (eg space or tools) alongside money.
- projects to continue collecting pledges after they hit their target, providing they explain how they would use the additional funding.
- project reporting (on delivery and impact) through the platform.

Backing a broad range of civic projects in London

Crowdfund London has supported community groups to develop 130 projects designed to improve local areas. These projects can be grouped into six broad categories (listed below). Projects typically covered more than one of these categories.

Given Crowdfund London's focus on improving neighbourhoods, the majority of projects could be classed as either buildings and indoor spaces or streets and infrastructure, and projects in these categories received the largest amount of GLA funding (figure 1).

Arts and culture



Projects covered a broad range of creative initiatives, including: making art more accessible to the public (eg public performances or murals); creating affordable spaces where the community could learn, practise, exhibit or sell a particular art form (eg art studios, galleries and markets); or promoting or preserving practices important to a particular group's cultural identity (eg cooking, dance or craft traditions).

Food and farming



Some of the projects used the 'power of food' to bring communities closer together. Some celebrated the cuisine of a particular cultural group (eg through cooking workshops or pop-up cafes). Others taught people how to grow and prepare healthy foods (eg offering growing or kitchen space alongside training) or provided healthier food options for people to buy (eg healthy food stalls, shops and restaurants). Several of these projects were kick-started through a collaboration with the GLA's food team, who provided extra funding and expertise.

Buildings and indoor spaces



Many Crowdfund London projects focused on refurbishing derelict or underused buildings for the benefit of the community, with at least 30 vacant buildings being brought back into use because of the programme.⁴ A wide range of underutilised spaces—including derelict farm outbuildings, vacant garages, empty shops, and an old bath house in need of repair—were transformed into community assets such as community halls, cafes or affordable studio spaces.

Streets and infrastructure



Several projects crowdfunded to improve streets and other outdoor spaces. This included creating new ways to help more people enjoy London's rich cultural history (eg lighting up historic buildings), providing equipment to make better use of outdoor spaces (eg stalls for outdoor markets) and projects which have made high streets and back lanes more attractive (eg through better signage, refurbishing shop fronts, or creating public art works).

Parks and gardens



Often educational initiatives, these projects included teaching communities about nature and sustainable food production (eg spaces for growing vegetables or creating habitats that encourage greater natural biodiversity in the city). Others raised money to transform disused outdoor areas into shared green spaces, making it possible for people to spend more time in nature as they move around urban areas (eg new walking or cycle routes), or when relaxing on their own or meeting friends (eg courtyards and gardens with seating).

Sports and play



Sports and fitness were at the centre of several projects, such as those that crowdfunded to create new facilities for the community (eg football pitches or swimming pools). Others ran fitness activities, such as yoga classes, bicycle workshops or social dance events, in flexible community spaces. Many projects focused on play in a broader sense (eg creating or refurbishing playgrounds and organising workshops, games and storytelling events).

Figure 1. Amount granted to different types of project by the GLA through Crowdfund London



What types of organisations has Crowdfund London supported?

Crowdfund London has helped kick-start a large number of new and small organisations, allowing them to get their ideas off the ground. Sixty-seven per cent of organisations were made up of ten or less people when they crowdfunded—and 55% were less than 5 years old. However, more established, larger groups were also supported through the programme. 12% of organisations had over 100 members and 7% had been running for more than 30 years.

The programme has enabled a wide-range of people—with different interests and time commitments—to get involved in improving their neighbourhoods. Projects were typically made up of a handful of core members who were responsible for managing the project, along with a more informal group of volunteers. Members were often a mixture of people with a specific area of interest related to the initiative (eg gardening, history or art) and local residents. For example, Rural Urban Synthesis Society—who crowdfunded to self-build a community space hub for sharing knowledge about self-building, community-led housing and sustainable living—is a mixture of architects, housing professionals and Lewisham residents.

The impact of Crowdfund London

This chapter explores the impacts generated by Crowdfund London. They've been grouped under six overarching themes: empowering communities, building connections, testing new ideas, learning by doing, creating shared resources and expanding horizons. In the following sections, each theme is explored in detail and brought to life with a case study.



Empowering Communities:

Diverse voices leading and participating in change

77%

of projects feel more confident and empowered as a result of crowdfunding for their project

44% / 56%

Male

Female

Gender of project leaders

81%

of projects wouldn't have set up a crowdfunding campaign had it not been for Crowdfund London

Development projects in the capital, and throughout the country, are often criticised for focusing too heavily on the short-term financial gains of private investors, rather than catering to the real needs of communities.⁵ Research commissioned by the GLA found that only 23% of people in London were satisfied that developments were meeting the needs of local people, and only 21% were satisfied with the opportunities they have to take part in planning and regeneration.⁶

Other GLA funding programmes aim to work with partners to improve the quality and outcomes of investments and see that more people benefit from them. But before 2014 there wasn't a dedicated platform for community-led ideas to surface. Crowdfund London was created to meet this challenge. Crowdfunding allows just about anyone to suggest an idea and for communities to decide which ideas they want to go ahead. This helps

projects to surface that are closely aligned with local needs and, in Crowdfund London's case, has put power over how public money is spent into the hands of local communities.

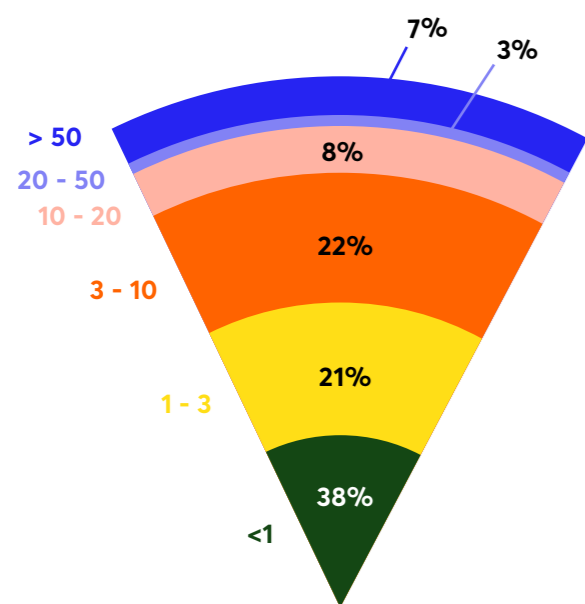
Nearly 20,000 people had a say in the future of their neighbourhood by backing Crowdfund London campaigns. The vast majority of backers were based locally to the project they supported, with 59% of backers living within three miles of the project they supported (figure 2). These local connections show a high level of public engagement in deciding which local projects communities would like to see happen. This shift of power to the community can lead to a more long-term sense of empowerment, with 77% of project leaders saying that their project increased their community's sense of self-determination.⁷

A common challenge for public funders is getting more projects to apply for support and avoiding



repeatedly giving funds to the same organisations. Crowdfund London has allowed the GLA to reach out beyond the group of 'usual suspects', with three in four projects not having previously applied for funding from the GLA—and supported projects were more likely to apply for other forms of GLA funding in the future. For example, since participating in Crowdfund London, 22% of projects went on to apply for a conventional grant from the GLA and a further 49% said that they are likely to do so in the future.

Figure 2. Average distance of backers from projects they backed (miles).



While it's possible for almost anyone to start a crowdfunding campaign, those leading Crowdfund London projects haven't fully reflected London's diversity. Specifically, project leaders were much more likely to describe themselves as being 'White British' than is representative of London's population⁸ and were more likely to be educated to degree level or higher.⁹ Encouragingly, the ethnic diversity of project leaders was higher in the more recent rounds of Crowdfund London than in earlier rounds¹⁰—but it still needs to improve. When it comes to gender, income groups and age, project leaders have been more evenly represented—with the exception of young adults (18-24 year olds) who were under-represented.¹¹

However, community groups are much more than their leaders—they're held together by a large group of volunteers, visitors and other participants. Many of the projects that raised money through Crowdfund London have brought together and catered to the needs of a diverse group of people. Of the projects surveyed, 50% engaged with, and included, under-represented groups.

While 18-24 year olds were under-represented as project leaders, 23% of Crowdfund London projects aimed to empower this group and 16% to support children and young people (under 18 years old). For example, Surrey Docks Farm crowdfunded to renovate a wildlife garden which will be taken care of by 40 young farmers aged 8–13.

Similarly, Build Up Hackney (see case study on page 30) crowdfunded to give young people in Hackney power over changes in their local community by designing and building a new outdoor community space.

Sixteen per cent of projects had the primary aim of supporting people belonging to a minority ethnic group. For example, artist-led organisation 'kollektive.', who crowdfunded to create site-specific light installations around Southall, said that they "engaged with diverse communities from ten different places of worship located on a quarter-mile stretch of road in Southall" as inspiration for some of these artworks.

But the majority of projects supported through Crowdfund London (67%) aimed to benefit the community as a whole, rather than a specific group. Other than those mentioned above, projects that did concentrate on supporting a specific group focused on unemployed people (19%), people with disabilities or health problems (16%), people experiencing financial hardship (12%) and older people (over 65 years; 12%).

"[Crowdfund London] is participatory. The Mayor is just one person backing the campaign, Ivan down the street is another person backing the campaign. They are the same. It's psychologically levelling; subtle, but significant."

Louise Armstrong,
Peckham Coal Line



Photo: Cafe Van Gogh. Image courtesy of James O Jenkins.

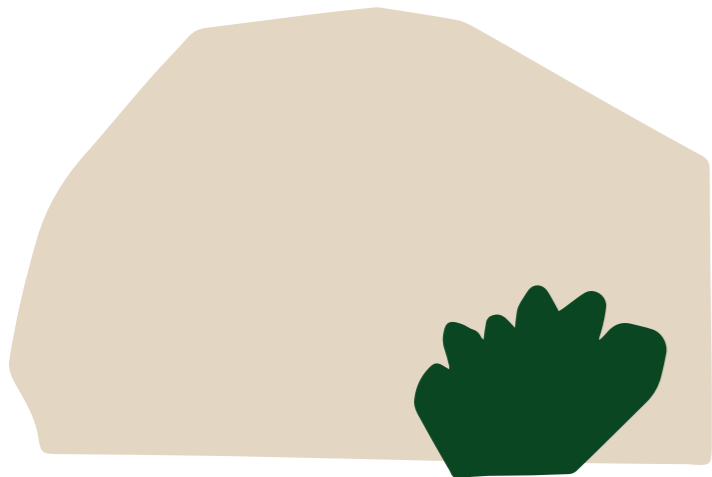
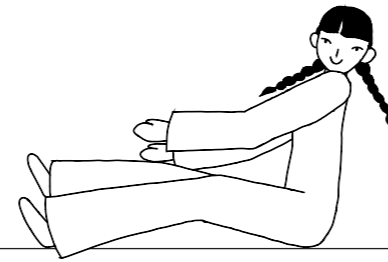


Photo: Fircroft Trust Man Shed. Image Courtesy of Fircroft Trust.



Case study: Build Up



Campaign name:

Build Up Hackney

Location:

Flanders Way, Hackney

In 2018, Hackney Quest—an organisation that provides positive activities for the community's young people—found that young people in the community did not feel that they were involved in, or benefiting from, the way their area was changing. In response to this, Build Up and Hackney Quest set up Build Up Hackney with the aim of empowering young people in Hackney to lead change in their local community by designing and building a public space.

They secured the backing of Local Trust's Wick Award and were looking into other grant funding opportunities when they came across Crowdfund London. The team was sceptical at first as they felt they didn't have connections to wealthy backers, but the potential of receiving a pledge from the GLA gave them the confidence to give it a shot. In the end, they raised £49,512 from 241 backers, including a £30,000 contribution from the GLA and in kind £8,600 Wick Award funding. The Wick Award also provided an additional £15,000 of grant funding to the project outside of the crowdfunding campaign.

In 2019, following the success of their crowdfunding campaign, a team of 26 young people designed and built a community space on Flanders Way, Hackney. They designed the space via a series of workshops

Total amount raised through crowdfunding:

£49,512 (£30,000 from the GLA)

Number of backers:

241

with designers and architects and presented their ideas to Hackney Council. Young people and volunteers from the local community then spent two months over the summer building it. Located in a previously neglected thoroughfare, the public space is now regularly used by the community and features a circular seating area with integrated swings, new lighting, brightly coloured bins and an exciting playful border with integrated cast iron artwork. The project won the Hackney Design Award for Inclusive Design 2020 and was commended or shortlisted for several other prestigious awards.¹²

Build Up, initially called Risk Agency, was founded in 2014 by construction company Adventure Playground Engineers. The organisation aims to help young people (aged 8–23) to step outside their comfort zone and develop life skills through practical construction training in their local community. Young people's isolation and exclusion within their own neighbourhoods has shaped the charity's development, and it now aims to build the power of young people to shape where they live and change who can make decisions about London. Since its inception, Build Up has involved over 1,000 young people and built 25 public and community spaces across London, including playgrounds, gardens and outdoor classrooms.

76
young people
involved

102
volunteers



They found that while the process of setting up and running their campaign was similar in terms of workload to that of securing grant funding, it required less specialist skills. And unlike traditional grant funding, crowdfunding helped them connect with the community, partners and backers, draw publicity to the project and build momentum. They also said that the flexibility of the process was hugely beneficial to the team as it allowed them to expand on their initial plan and fund a London Living Wage work placement for two young people.

Through projects like Build Up Hackney, Build Up has supported community cohesion, encouraged participation and created spaces that local people can have ownership of. A survey run by Build Up found that 91% of young people that participated said they had taken on a responsibility or led an activity. The projects have also improved their confidence and sense of agency, with 100% of young people involved feeling they are more able to influence their local area.

“The project has made me think that I can do more for my community. Build more spaces. After school people can go [to the Flanders Way space], hang out with their friends. And in the future, I’ll be like: ‘Oh, I made a big change there, and I can make more changes in the future’. I can do more for myself.”

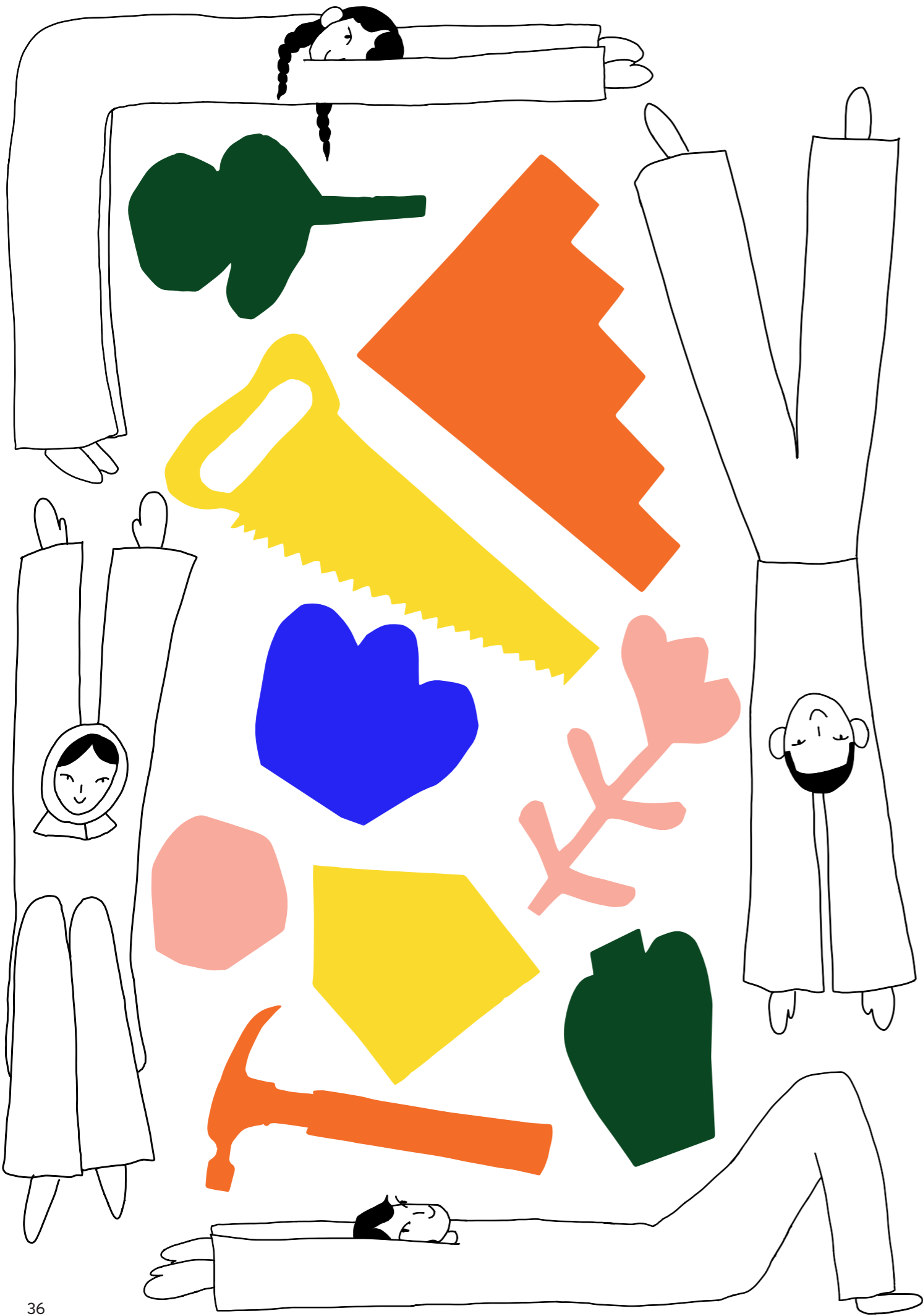
Aiden, local young person



Photo: Build Up Hackney. Image courtesy of Build Up.



Photo: Build Up Hackney. Image courtesy of Build Up.



Building connections:

Bringing local people together

65%

of projects brought people together from different parts of the community

72%

of projects increased community cohesion

60%

of projects helped decrease social isolation in their community

Research has shown that having regular contact with neighbours has a positive impact on people's wellbeing.¹³ However, getting to know your neighbours can be hard, particularly in big cities, and the impact of isolation on health and well-being is a challenge throughout the country. Research by Eden Project Communities found that 35% of Londoners didn't know the names of any of their neighbours,¹⁴ and another study found that 27% of people in London were socially isolated.¹⁵

Crowdfunding can play a part in addressing this challenge by bringing local people together around a common cause and bolstering local civic pride. Two out of three Crowdfund London projects said that their initiative brought people together from different parts of the community and in total projects created opportunities for an estimated 7,000 people to get to know others through volunteering.¹⁶ One example of this is the Rural

Urban Synthesis Society who, reminiscent of barn raising traditions, crowdfunded to bring together a group of local volunteers to build a community space in Lewisham.

Alongside volunteering, many projects looked to build social cohesion through events, or by providing spaces that are open and accessible to every part of the community. In total, approximately 500,000 people have benefited from Crowdfund London projects.¹⁷

Many projects focused on celebrating local culture and history, strengthening local identity in the process—with 67% of projects saying that they increased the sense of civic pride in the community. For example, the Eel Pie Island Museum CIC crowdfunded to create a museum celebrating the musical history of Eel Pie Island, which in the 50s and 60s was home to the infamous 'Eelpiland' club

that hosted rising superstars such as The Rolling Stones, Rod Stewart and Eric Clapton as they started their careers.

Running a crowdfunding campaign can help attract people with valuable skills to community projects, who contribute to the work in a variety of ways. This can range from taking part in one-off events or helping out with painting work, to becoming integral members of project teams or joining the board of trustees. An example of the latter is the Friends of Crystal Palace Dinosaurs, who crowdfunded to build a bridge to improve public access to the life-sized dinosaur sculptures in Crystal Palace Park. They found several new volunteers through their crowdfunding campaign, including someone with professional experience in building large scale infrastructure for paleontology projects, who later became a trustee for the organisation.



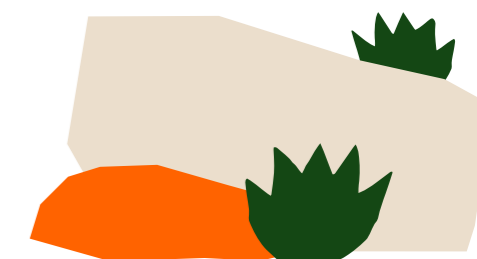
Photo: RUSS Ladywell Self-Build Community Space. Image courtesy of Graziano Milano.

“The museum has become a welcome ‘place to be’ for many of our volunteers, who may otherwise be sat at home. It’s great to see how they blossom and come to life, especially as they talk about their own experiences of Eel Pie Island in the 60s.”

Michele Whitby,
Eel Pie Island Museum CIC

“[People] have said they spend more time speaking to other people now, they’re more proud of the area and feel excited that change could be positive not just negative.”

Huan Rimington, Build Up





40

people volunteered at events

Photo: Louise Armstrong, co-ordinator at Peckham Coal Line. Image courtesy of Postcode Films.

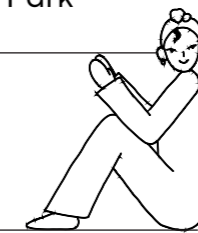
Case study: The Peckham Coal Line

Campaign name:

The Peckham Coal Line Urban Park

Location:

Peckham, Southwark



Total amount raised through crowdfunding:

£75,757 (£10,000 from the GLA)

Number of backers:

928

The Peckham Coal Line is a community-led initiative aiming to create a new park that reconnects Peckham's neighbourhoods via new walking and cycling routes.

The park will create new green space and support local businesses by increasing local footfall. Developed and designed in partnership with the local community, the 900m route runs along disused railway sidings through the heart of Peckham, celebrating Peckham's industrial heritage and building connections between communities in Queens Road Peckham and Rye Lane.

Peckham Coal Line was started in 2014 by a group of passionate residents, whose idea gained momentum locally and in the media. They quickly realised that if they wanted to put this idea into practice, their first step was finding out whether the initiative was achievable, how much it would cost, who would manage it and who would be able to use it.

They set up the Crowdfund London campaign to raise money to run a feasibility study and determine how the Coal Line would be built. To achieve their goal, they ran a mix of online and offline events, including tea parties, walks, themed weeks and

cycling events. They even partnered with a local brewery to create a special beer 'Coal Line Porter' to help raise money towards their campaign. The project was backed by 928 local residents, businesses, councillors, the local MP and the Mayor of London, raising £75,757 to fund the study.

The crowdfunding campaign helped them "turbocharge the project and take it to the next level" by providing them with clear structure and timelines and helped them build connections with stakeholders and get institutional buy-in from the council and local leaders. The team feels that, unlike traditional grant funding, the process allowed them to retain their authenticity, didn't force them to shapeshift and created energy, buzz and excitement about the initiative.

Since securing the money, they delivered and published the study and have started the next phase, that of bringing the sites to life. They held events with local people, including school children, businesses and residents to gather views and explore different options and secured the support of Southwark Council, Network Rail and the GLA.

In 2018, the project was included in the New Southwark Plan, safeguarding its future in local



Photo: Peckham Coal Line. Image courtesy of Rachel Ferriman.

“Thousands of people have walked around the streets together, the act is powerful. It has contributed to new connections physically and digitally.”

Louise Armstrong, Peckham Coal Line

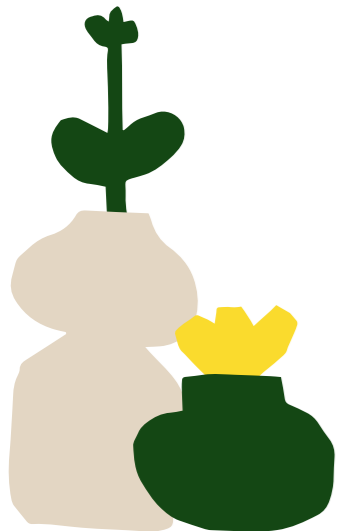


Photo: Peckham Coal Line. Image courtesy of Peckham Coal Line.

planning policy. They have recently secured a £50,000 grant from the GLA and £100,000 from Southwark Council Section 106 money for works at Bidwell Street, working to give Queens Road residents better access to nature. They also have plans to create a new public space in the next one to two years.

The Coal Line will have the greatest impact when it's completed. But the initiative has already helped build connections and contributed to the social fabric of the local area. The volunteers have gained new skills, relationships and friendships—some have even started their own business together.



Photo: The Clitthelhouse Farm Project. Image courtesy of Clitthelhouse Farm.

Testing new ideas:

Creating space to trial and grow innovative grassroots ideas

65%

of projects were able to fund a project that they couldn't find funding for elsewhere

90%

of Crowdfund London campaigns reached their target, compared to 52% of non-Crowdfund London campaigns

51%

of projects received feedback and advice from the crowd through their campaign

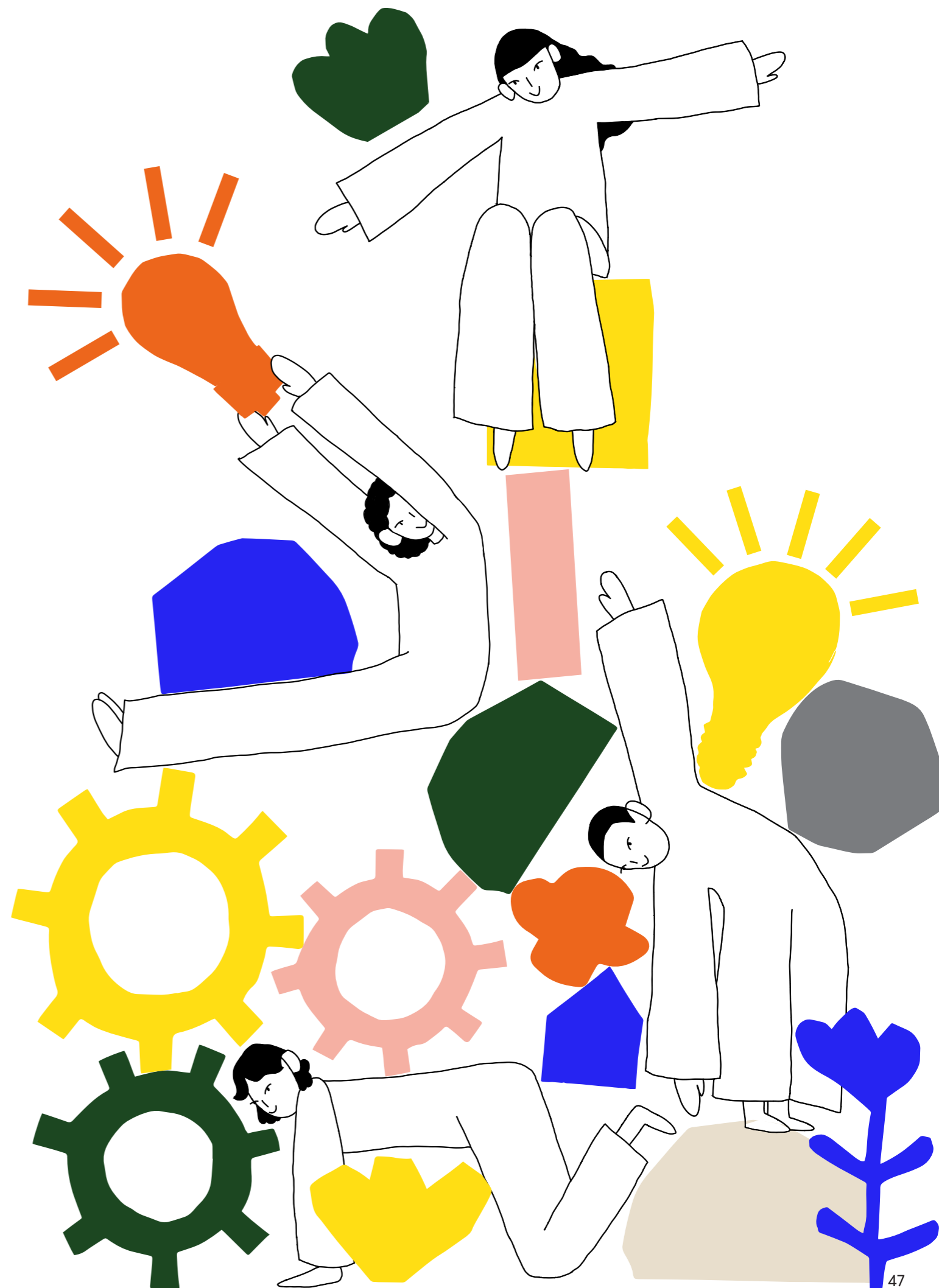
One-size-fits-all approaches are rarely effective at addressing local challenges. Crowdfunding allows groups to design, test and refine innovative projects with the communities they aim to serve.

Through crowdfunding, community organisations can raise funding for projects that are thought of as too risky, sit outside or fall between the cracks of what public funders normally support.¹⁸ Sixty-five per cent of Crowdfund London projects weren't able to find funding for their project elsewhere.

As well as being an alternative route to funding, crowdfunding is often faster and more flexible—often making it a better fit for small and innovative community projects. The average length of a Crowdfund London campaign was just under 13 weeks from start to finish—in most cases, less time than it takes to apply and hear back from traditional grant funding applications. This has

allowed organisations to quickly raise money to prototype their ideas, with 77% of projects saying that they were able to raise funding faster than they would have been able to from other sources. Having flexibility in how they could spend the money allowed projects to adapt and pivot if their initial idea didn't work as planned.

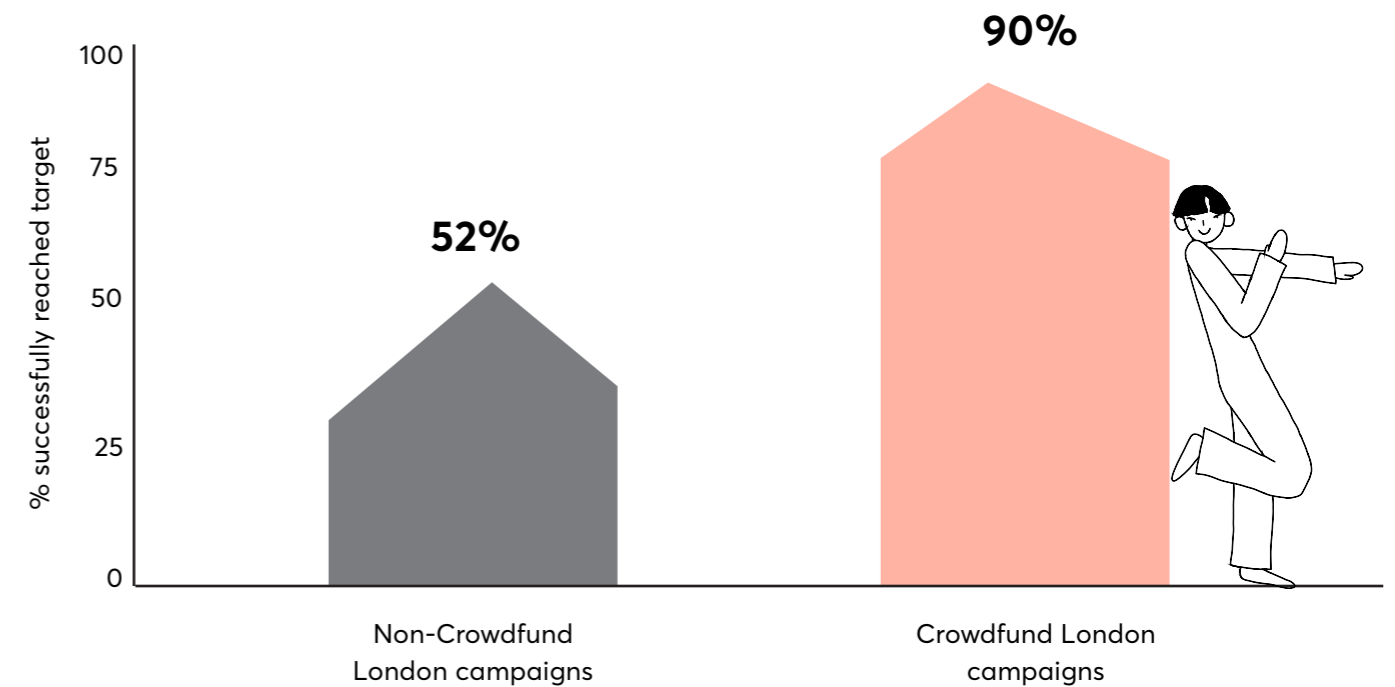
Crowdfund London campaigns that received a pledge from the GLA were significantly more likely to successfully reach their funding target than other crowdfunding campaigns on Spacehive (figure 3).¹⁹ As well as being more likely to reach their target, campaigns endorsed by the GLA also attracted a significantly higher number of backers—their average number of backers being 151, compared to 73 for other campaigns on Spacehive.²⁰ One project leader reflected that: "The GLA funding the project significantly upped its profile, added legitimacy to the project and attracted more funders".



“If it wasn't for the money we raised from crowdfunding, we wouldn't be doing all the things we are doing now, full stop. It didn't have all the restrictions which gave us lots of flexibility, that was a huge thing and allowed us to do all the other things we are doing now.”

Maher Anjum,
OITIJ-JO Collective

Figure 3. Success rates for Crowdfund London campaigns vs. non-Crowdfund London.



Crowdfund London campaigns didn't receive funding from either the GLA or the crowd unless they hit their funding target. This meant that project teams didn't commit any time or money to a project, beyond the resources they put into the fundraising campaign, until they had support from the crowd. This prevented them from wasting time and money on projects that the community weren't interested in and that would be less likely to succeed. This opportunity to test the community's appetite for a project encouraged experimentation and made more innovative and unfamiliar projects less risky.

Crowdfunding campaigns are also an opportunity to harness knowledge from the community. Fifty per cent of the projects said they received feedback and advice on their campaign from members of the crowd, allowing them to shape and fine-tune their projects to meet the needs of their communities.

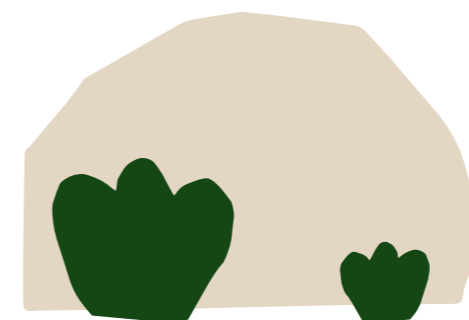




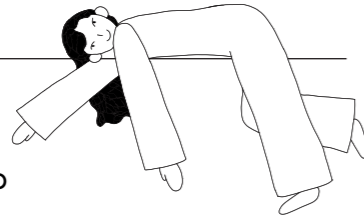
Photo: Brixton Pound Cafe. Image courtesy of Brixton Pound CIC.



Photo: Colour in Romford. Image courtesy of Things Made Public.

Case study: The Flower Bank

Campaign name:
The Flower Bank Hub



Total amount raised through crowdfunding:
£67,890 (£30,000 from the GLA)

Location:
New Barnet, Barnet

Number of backers:
205

The Flower Bank is a community florist aiming to reduce waste by turning end of shelf life flowers into floral arrangements. The arrangements are made by young offenders in Haringey and Barnet and delivered to care homes, day facilities and community buildings.

Ursula Stone came up with the unique idea for The Flower Bank whilst studying floristry at Capel Manor College. She was shocked by the amount of waste in the flower industry and was determined to help find an innovative solution to combat it.

The Flower Bank started in 2016 at Ursula's kitchen table, when she received her first flower donation. In the following years, she secured pockets of funding from UnLtd (the foundation for social entrepreneurs), the National Lottery and Barnet Council, which allowed her to take the project forward. In January 2017, she started working with young offenders in Haringey to create and deliver weekly designs for care homes, day centres and community buildings in north London. More recently, she started to replicate the scheme with Barnet young offenders.

As the project expanded, Ursula realised that she needed to move her activity to bigger premises, secure her first shop and become a community

hub for floral training and re-skilling volunteers and young offenders.

She didn't have previous experience, a group of volunteers, or years' worth of accounts, which made her ineligible for traditional grants. She started asking around about funding opportunities, heard about Crowdfund London and attended an information session. She found a space, ran her crowdfunding campaign and raised £67,890 to cover the deposit required to secure the shop, run classes and talks, buy a fridge to reduce waste and provide young offenders with work experience. This has allowed Ursula to test her idea on a larger scale. The Flower Bank has been thriving since signing the lease and receiving the keys in May 2019.

She started flowerbombing to raise awareness of her crowdfunding campaign, by leaving bunches of flowers in Barnet, Haringey and central London for people to take home and enjoy. She would post photos of the mystery location via social media and the people finding the flowers would post photos of themselves using the campaign's hashtags. The response was overwhelmingly positive, and Ursula has been flowerbombing since.

The Flower Bank also delivers flowers to residents



Ursula Stone, Founder, The Flower Bank, New Barnet

Photo: Ursula Stone, founder of The Flower Bank. Image courtesy of Postcode Films.



in day centres and care homes who love 'the flower lady' and for whom flowers trigger a lot of positive emotions and joy. By taking part in these sessions, residents step outside of their comfort zone, gain confidence and feel less isolated. Raising money through Crowdfund London allowed Ursula to deliver this innovative project which is now going from strength to strength.



Photo: The Flower Bank. Image courtesy of Ursula Stone.



Photo: The Flower Bank. Image courtesy of Ursula Stone.

"We had no backup, no volunteers, or years' worth of accounts, but had enormous enthusiasm. Crowdfund London enabled us to get on the ladder."

Ursula Stone, The Flower Bank

Learning by doing:

Developing lifelong skills for project teams and local people



86%

of projects said that running a crowdfunding campaign significantly improved their team's skills

55%

of projects provided training and skills development opportunities

25%

of projects had a primary aim of supporting unemployed people

Getting any community project off the ground needs a diverse set of skills, including fundraising, engaging communities and writing planning applications. Crowdfund London has provided opportunities for groups and individuals to develop real-life experience and skills which can benefit them and their communities.

Most project leaders had no previous experience of crowdfunding and some had no experience of fundraising more generally. While many found running a crowdfunding campaign to be hard work, project teams were able to quickly pick up the new skills they needed. The most common skills that projects said they improved were pitching their project, community engagement, fundraising and social media (figure 4).

The learning went beyond crowdfunding. More than half of project teams didn't have prior experience

of delivering a project in the public realm (a project the public has access to at least some of the time). Projects evolved as teams gained more experience, ran into new challenges and learnt more about their communities.

Fifty-three percent of projects provided training and skills development opportunities within their communities. Many of them ran workshops, courses or volunteering activities where people could learn new skills and gain additional experience—anything from beekeeping and bicycle maintenance to cooking and construction skills.

Other Crowdfund London projects provided affordable work or retail space, giving members of the community access to the facilities they needed to develop new skills or work on their own projects. Chipping Barnet Town Team crowdfunded to set up a weekly market with a sound stage for young

people wanting to sharpen their entrepreneurial and performance skills. It had a lot of successes—including three sports students from the University of Hertfordshire who created a low sugar, gluten free, vegan energy bar and sold them at the market. Bob Burstow, from Chipping Barnet Town Team, explained: “In the first market they sold all their stock in 40 minutes. They started delivering through Amazon, pitched successfully to TK Maxx and on the strength of that approached East Coast Mainline”. While Crowdfund London has provided an opportunity for people to develop new skills, most teams running projects already had some of these necessary skills before crowdfunding—79% of project teams already had skills in community engagement, 70% in project management and 49% in fundraising. While this is positive for the people with these skills, it may be off-putting for others.

To help open up Crowdfund London to groups that didn't have necessary skills, the GLA produced a handbook with advice on how to shape a crowdfunding pitch and run a successful campaign. It also ran several workshops in each round of the programme, giving people feedback on their project idea and offered ongoing support and guidance as teams developed their projects. Several interviewees said that they found these workshops, resources and support extremely useful in giving them the skills and confidence to run their campaign and develop their projects.

Figure 4: Projects' responses to the question: "To what extent has taking part in the crowdfunding campaign improved you or your team's skills and personal development in the following areas?"

- Stayed the same
- Somewhat improved
- Significantly improved
- Don't know

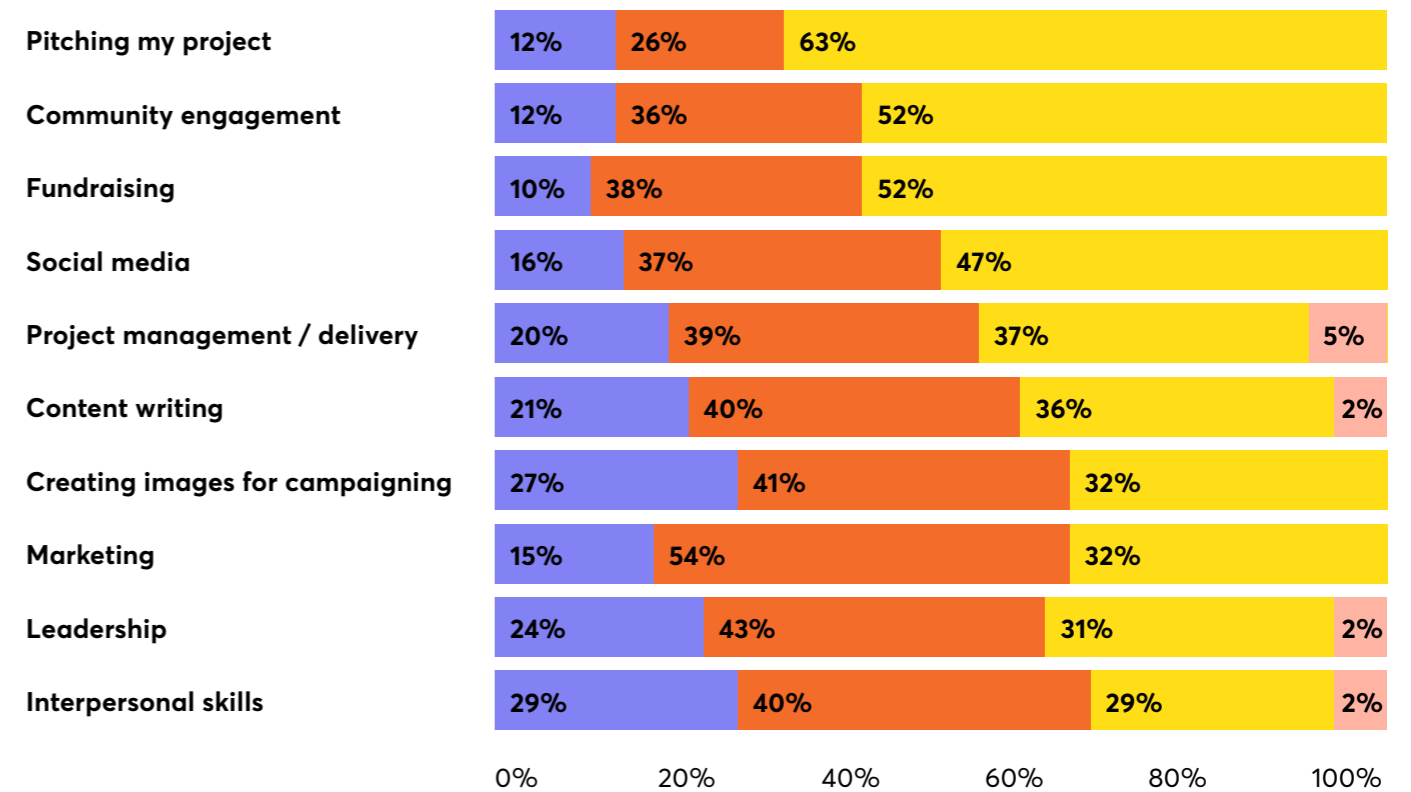


Photo: Barnet Teenage Market. Image courtesy of Barnet Teenage Market.

“Some light installations drew intimate and hyperlocal audiences, providing a cultural experience on their doorstep. Inspiring discussions set off trajectories for successive artworks.”

Kŗṣaṇa Kanadia, kollektive.



Photo: Maher Anjum, co-founder and director of OITIJ-JO Collective. Image courtesy of Postcode Films.

16

women trained in food safety

52

attendees to cooking and catering workshops

Case study: OITIJ-JO Collective

Campaign name:

TATI: Brick Lane community cafe

Total amount raised through crowdfunding:

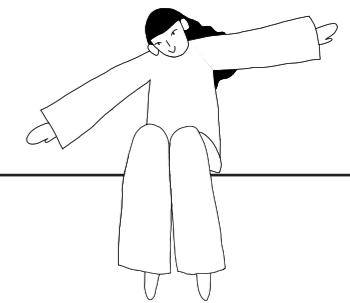
£13,317 (£7,500 from the GLA)

Location:

Brick Lane, Tower Hamlets

Number of backers:

117



In 2018, as an increasing number of South Asian restaurants on Brick Lane were closing down,²¹ the idea for TATI, a women-run Bangladeshi cafe and social enterprise was born.

The OITIJ-JO Collective, a non-profit cultural organisation based in Tower Hamlets, saw that authentic Bangladeshi food, with traditional recipes—passed down through generations by mothers and grandmothers—was all but missing in the area. They were keen to work with women and young people to offer home-cooked Bangladeshi dishes, share the story behind the food and promote Bangladeshi hospitality, culture and culinary artistry.

OITIJ-JO, made up of five creatives—a photographer, marketing professional, architect, artist and producer—initially came together in 2012 to organise a three-day festival in London's South Bank, showcasing Bangladeshi art, craft, fashion literature and music.

OITIJ-JO aims to promote Bangladeshi traditions, culture, arts and crafts in the UK and to support Bangladeshi women and youth in developing lifelong skills and confidence.

They had a clear idea of how the cafe was to be run,

but struggled to secure funding to get the idea off the ground. They heard about Crowdfund London through their network, and attended a meeting at City Hall. Although the process of applying seemed complex and daunting, they decided to give crowdfunding a chance.

Maher Anjum, co-founder and director of OITIJ-JO shared that they found the process involved much talking to individuals, pitching to backers and explaining what crowdfunding is. However, this process helped them realise their initial plan needed rethinking. After securing £13,317 through Crowdfund London in November 2018, they decided, instead of setting up a permanent cafe, they would run pop-ups and provide catering for events and other cafes. They tested out a few ideas in the first half of 2019, before starting catering in October 2019. The flexibility to adapt their initial plans as they learnt what would work (and what wouldn't) was essential to the success of the initiative.

TATI's initial workshops in April 2019 attracted over 50 women. Now there is a core group of 12 members aged 30–60, some of whom have never worked before. Maher shared that, as well as helping the women gain new skills, the initiative has given them a major boost of confidence. Many felt that,

“When we did a test kitchen, all the women showed a high level of self-confidence, that they can do things and feel at ease with their own ability; they all feel like they have something to give now.”

Maher Anjum,
OITIJ-JO Collective

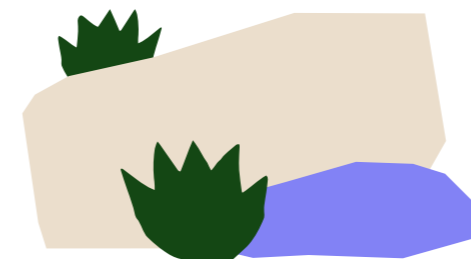


Photo: TATI Community Cafe. Image courtesy of Postcode Films.

although Brick Lane has become known as 'Bangla Town', it is a place dominated by men. Through TATI, the women are now part of a space that, historically, they have been excluded from.

Since working at TATI, some of the women have started ventures of their own. One of them now runs her own kitchen in another cafe. She was offered this job following her work with TATI. Maher reports that this lady told her: "If it wasn't for TATI, I wouldn't be here".

Though this is just one example, it emphasises the cultural, as well as economic, contribution TATI is already making. For many Bangladeshi women in the UK, life is made ever more difficult as they are denied the scope to explore their talents in the wider world and prevented from being economically active. TATI aims to change this process for as many women as possible.





Creating shared resources:

Expanding local ownership and collaboration through shared spaces and activities

30+

vacant buildings have been brought back into use by Crowdfund London projects

56%

of projects have brought disused outdoor spaces back into use or improved outdoor spaces that were previously in use

56%

of projects were able to collaborate with other local community groups

In 2018, more than 22,000 commercial properties in London had been empty for at least six months.²² Boarded-up vacant buildings are not only an eyesore, they risk being a wasted opportunity, with many having the potential to become important new spaces for the community.

From gardens to 'libraries of things', shared spaces open up important resources to people that may not otherwise have access to them. They provide opportunities for neighbours to meet one another, learn about local history and start their own community projects or businesses. As The Community Brain director, Robin Hutchinson, put it: "If we can give people the space to be brilliant and the support and permission to be brilliant, they will be brilliant."

Crowdfund London projects have brought more than 30 vacant buildings back into use, turning previously

unused spaces into valued assets that the whole community can benefit from. Rather than falling into private hands, these spaces have been transformed into community cafes, museums and workspaces open to everyone.

Fifty-six per cent of projects either brought disused outdoor spaces back into use or improved previously in use outdoor spaces. Christ Church CofE Primary School in Battersea is one example of this—it created an outdoor learning space with garden beds, a pond, a puppet shed theatre, seating and a greenhouse for the school and wider community. Similarly, Friends of Gipsy Hill transformed disused land next to Gipsy Hill Station into a public green space. Projects like these are of great value, particularly in large cities like London where one in five people don't have access to a private or shared garden.²³

Helping fund a local project can increase a community's sense of ownership and long-term engagement with it. More than half of projects had more visitors and offers to volunteer as a result of crowdfunding. A survey conducted by the arts and cultural organisation, Things Made Public, who crowdfunded to produce four street art murals on Romford High Street, found that 97% of people preferred the town with the murals. Sarah Walters from the organisation pointed out that, unlike is often the case with murals: "Not one of the murals has been spray painted or attacked in any way". This impact has been felt across the programme, with projects reporting that communities felt more civic pride because of their project.

Shared spaces provide locations where community groups can collaborate and start new community projects. Half of Crowdfund London projects said that the money they crowdfunded allowed them to provide space for other local community groups and 56% said it allowed them to collaborate with other local community groups. The Flower Bank founder Ursula Stone reflected how she is "now working with far more groups than I could have imagined. Having a base has meant that the community can contact me".



Photo: Bee-Spoke Learning Centre. Image courtesy of Bee-Spoke Learning Centre.



Photo: The Phoenix Garden. Image courtesy of The Phoenix Garden.

"When we did a test kitchen, all the women showed a high level of self confidence, that they can do things and feel at ease with their own ability; they all feel like they have something to give now."

Guy Davies, The Brixton Pound CIC



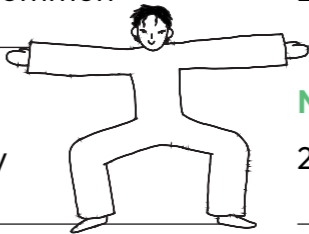
85
people participated
in litter picks

200
bike repairs made

Photo: Mike Abrahams, co-director of Clapton Commons. Image courtesy of Postcode Films.

Case study: Clapton Commons

Campaign name: A village hall for Clapton Common	Total amount raised through crowdfunding: £46,443 (£25,000 from the GLA)
Location: Clapton Common, Hackney	Number of backers: 244



Liberty Hall is a former toilet block on Clapton Common in Hackney which—after 30 years of sitting empty—has been transformed into a flexible shared space, community kitchen and meeting place by a group of local people called Clapton Commons. Initially home to a community cookery school, the hall now also hosts a variety of activities and services, including a coffee kiosk and bike repair station.

In 2013, Mike Abrahams' mum was in her 90s and looking for someone to help her go on daily short walks. After unsuccessfully finding volunteers via the local parish, Mike and the parish priest William Taylor didn't give up. They were convinced there were local residents who could support not only his mum but other people as well. The issue was that neighbours didn't know each other, so people in need of support weren't connected to the resources already available in their community. Mike, William and a group of neighbours set up Clapton Commons with the aim of building relationships in the community.

They quickly realised that one of the barriers to their mission was the fact that there was a lack of spaces where local people could come together. When Hackney Council invited expressions of interest for the abandoned toilet block on Clapton Common,

the group knew they could turn the building into a thriving community asset that could help alleviate social isolation and health inequality and came up with the idea of Liberty Hall. They planned to partner up with social enterprise Made In Hackney, who, part of the time, would run a community kitchen out of the space. Hackney Council spent £236,000 to restore the building, but Clapton Common had to secure a additional funding to fit out the interior of the building. They decided to try crowdfunding despite initial hesitation, and their campaign raised £46,443 via 244 backers through several events, including gigs and supper clubs.

Since opening in August, Liberty Hall has offered a range of activities and services, including a community kitchen, community-operated coffee kiosk, weekly bike repair clinic, flower stall and volunteers helped build a community garden.

In April 2018, local residents and supporters came together to celebrate the success of their crowdfunding campaign and graffitied a 'thank you' mural on the building hoardings signed by many of the project's backers. In May 2020, they replaced the 'thank you' mural with a 'memori-wall' remembering, celebrating and grieving local people—nominated by friends and family—who passed away during the first COVID-19 lockdown and therefore couldn't

be traditionally mourned. Mike explained how this created a real sense of community ownership and that it was then he knew that they "saw it was theirs".

Reflecting back on their experience, Mike shared that although the process took twice as long as expected and the amount of work that went into it was significant, they wouldn't have achieved what they had without raising the funding they needed in this way.

Photo: Liberty Hall. Image courtesy of Clapton Commons.

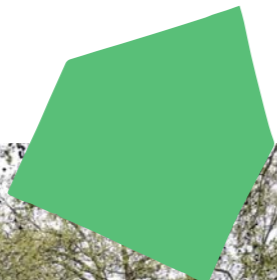


Photo: Liberty Hall. Image courtesy of Mike Abrahams.

"Loads of people came forward with amazing ideas. What happens in the building is a result of that work."

Mike Abrahams, Clapton Commons



Photo: Twist Pop-up Market, image courtesy of Twist Pop-up Market.

Expanding horizons:

Unlocking a sense of possibility and ambition

31%

of projects increased their crowdfunding target because the offer of a pledge from the GLA made them more ambitious

77%

of projects increased their community's sense of self-determination

73%

of project leaders have already or planned on starting another community project in the future

Crowdfund London has given local groups the skills, resources and confidence to expand what they previously thought was possible and be more ambitious in their goals. This has not only helped projects successfully deliver the projects they crowdfunded for, but also equipped them to run bigger and better community projects in the future.

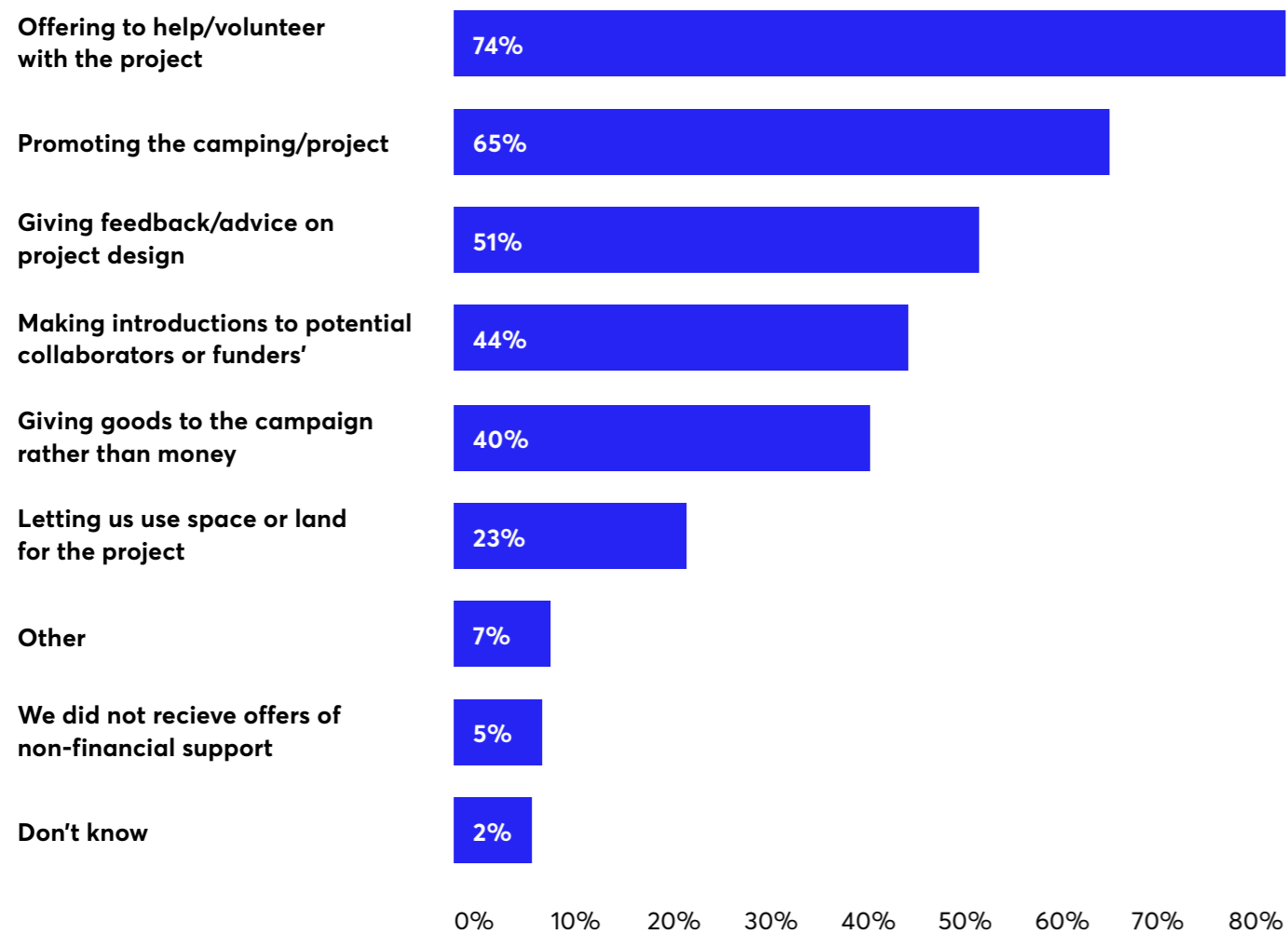
The opportunity to receive a pledge from the GLA made projects more ambitious in their fundraising targets—31% of projects increased the size of their target because of it.

Analysis of data from the Spacehive platform suggests that projects were right to be more ambitious. Crowdfund London campaigns had significantly more backers and were significantly more successful in reaching their targets than other crowdfunding campaigns (see figure 3 for more information). This suggests that Crowdfund

London has promoted larger, more ambitious, and potentially more impactful community projects. This finding was mirrored by several interviewees, Kṛṣṇa Kanadia from kollektive said: "We have felt encouraged to pursue bold and ambitious ideas in the Crowdfund London programme and continue to build on the foundations laid in our project".

Alongside money, crowdfunded projects received non-financial contributions from backers including offers to volunteer for the project, feedback and advice, introductions to potential funders or collaborators, and the use of space or land for the project (figure 5). The Spacehive platform facilitated this by allowing projects to ask the community to contribute specific items they needed alongside money. Friends of Crystal Palace Dinosaurs used the platform to ask for items to auction to raise funding for their project. Guns N' Roses guitarist, Slash, signed and donated his famous top hat to

Figure 5: Projects' responses to the question: "Did you receive any offers of non-financial support from your backers?"



the auction. Born in London, Slash is an avid reptile collector and has fond memories of visiting the reptile sculptures as a child.

Spacehive also allowed backers to pledge in-kind support to projects. Tonkin Liu architects and Arup engineers pledged pro-bono work to Friends of Crystal Palace Dinosaurs to design the bridge they crowdfunded. Their design won a coveted prize at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition for architectural and engineering excellence for use of materials.

As well as crowd contributions, projects gained other benefits from crowdfunding, including: media coverage (63%), new collaborators (72%), more

visitors or participants (58%) and subsequent funding (65%). These additional benefits contributed to 77% of projects feeling more confident and empowered as a result of the campaign they ran. Louise Armstrong from Peckham Coal Line explained how "the process enabled relationships with stakeholders and an opportunity to get institutional buy-in". Alongside the GLA, Southwark Council, Sustrans (the walking and cycling charity) and several local businesses supported Peckham Coal Line through their crowdfunding campaign.

Crowdfund London has given several projects the confidence to raise money in this way again. Four organisations have participated in Crowdfund London multiple times,²⁴ with each campaign

"Our Crowdfund London experience increased our confidence and created a larger platform for our voice and message to be heard and respected."

**Leyla Laksari,
Living Under One Sun**

building their project into something more ambitious. Wood Street Walls, for example, initially raised £39,041 from 161 backers (including £18,000 from the GLA) in 2015 to transform a disused public building into a new studio and community space for local artists. Then in 2020, they raised an additional £38,005 from 285 backers (including £25,000 from the GLA) to create a large public artwork in Leyton with artist Camille Walala.

The impact of Crowdfund London and the projects it has supported doesn't end there. The skills, networks, engagement and resources that groups developed as a result of the programme will help community projects in the future. Since taking part in Crowdfund London, 27% of project leaders have already started another community project and 46% said that they are likely to do so in the future. Brixton Pound Cafe said that after developing a new high-tech currency, they plan on getting a cafe space twice the size of the one they crowdfunded for. Similarly Space for Stories, who originally crowdfunded to create a shared performance space in Tottenham, said they were in the process of starting a new community space in Hackney.

Photo: Wood Street Wall's Walala Parade by Camille Walala. Image courtesy of Tim Crocker Photography

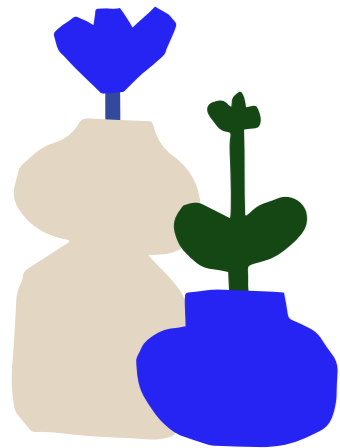
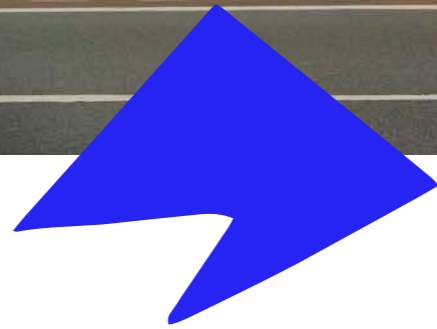
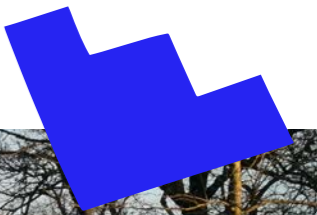


Photo: Crystal Palace Dinosaurs. Image courtesy of Jonathan Bone.



Case study: The Community Brain



Campaign names:

The Community Brain has run three Crowdfund London campaigns: The Museum of Futures, The Community Kitchen and Create a Suburban Farm for Tolworth

Number of backers:

141 in total

The Community Brain grew out of a passion for supporting communities and wanting to improve their wellbeing, resilience and cohesion through the arts, education and local history. Their initiatives—The Museum of Futures, The Community Kitchen and Tolworth Suburban Farm—have all been supported by Crowdfund London and have since been improving health and happiness by bringing communities together, creating opportunities to volunteer outdoors and teaching people how to grow fresh food.

They first crowdfunded to set up The Museum of Futures, a sustainable community space which they opened in a vacant shop in Surbiton with the aim of bringing the community together to develop shared visions for the area. The museum provides a supportive and creative environment for "expanding engagement and collaboration, where local people can explore personal hopes and ambitions with minimal risk". Although initially, they thought the project might fail, their idea got a lot of traction once their campaign went public. With backers excited and ready to contribute from day one of the

Total amount raised through crowdfunding:

£67,658 raised in total

Location:

Surbiton, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

campaign, they were able to raise £27,000 (£20,000 of which was contributed by the GLA) to make The Museum of Futures a reality.

The campaign resulted in several local people, not just donating to the campaign but, becoming actively involved in the project. These new volunteers brought genuine passion for, and knowledge of, the local area and The Community Brain's mission and were able to help create a shared vision for how The Museum of Futures' space should be used.

This vision included the idea to create a community kitchen for small local businesses and the wider community to explore sustainable-food business models. The kitchen was made possible through a second round of Crowdfund London in which they raised a further £23,000, of which £17,000 was pledged by the GLA. It is used to run workshops, skills exchanges, and food industry advisory surgeries, as well as providing people access to industry-standard equipment and professional support. Although they had a clear plan of how



Photo: Robin Hutchinson, Director of The Community Brain. Image courtesy of Postcode Films

160

start ups have used these spaces



Photo: Farm of Futures. Image courtesy of The Community Brain.

they wanted to run the kitchen, their crowdfunding campaign brought in volunteers with interest and expertise in the food industry who helped further educate the team, shape the plans and identify what the next steps might be.

Building on the success of the first two crowdfunded initiatives, they raised £17,500 via a third campaign, with a pledge of £5,000 from Crowdfund London, to create a suburban farm in Tolworth. The farm aims to showcase the potential of suburban farming, teach people how to produce their food sustainably and grow food for the Community Kitchen. Reflecting on their experience of crowdfunding for these three initiatives, Robin Hutchinson, director of The Community Brain, shared that the process helped them not only raise the funds they needed but more importantly, helped them connect with people wanting to contribute their knowledge, expertise and time to help grow the initiatives. Looking back at what has made their crowdfunding campaign successful, Robin emphasised the importance of sharing the idea as much as possible, about what you are planning and how funds are going to be used: "People want to understand

tangibly what it is that you're going to be doing; this isn't strictly about them parting with money, but also the interest they invest in your initiative. It means that when you want to do other things, you already have an audience that's ready to go". He also highlighted the importance of not being overprotective with ideas, but instead sharing them at the earliest stage possible to allow others to weigh in and shape that idea: "Before you think you might go down the crowdfunding route, share the thought and see if it resonates with others".

The Community Brain are now using their experience to support others who are interested in crowdfunding their initiatives, by offering them advice and guidance.



"Most people want good to triumph over bad, want equal opportunities, joy and selflessness. Crowdfunding is a huge part of that; it's like buying a ticket to a show you want to be a part of."

Robin Hutchinson, The Community Brain



Photo: Museum of Futures. Image courtesy of The Community Brain.

The value of civic crowdfunding

Crowdfund London has helped kick-start a broad range of grass-roots projects that have made a real difference in the communities they serve. Its innovative approach to combining crowdfunding with public funds has created a new way for public institutions and communities to work together to improve public spaces.

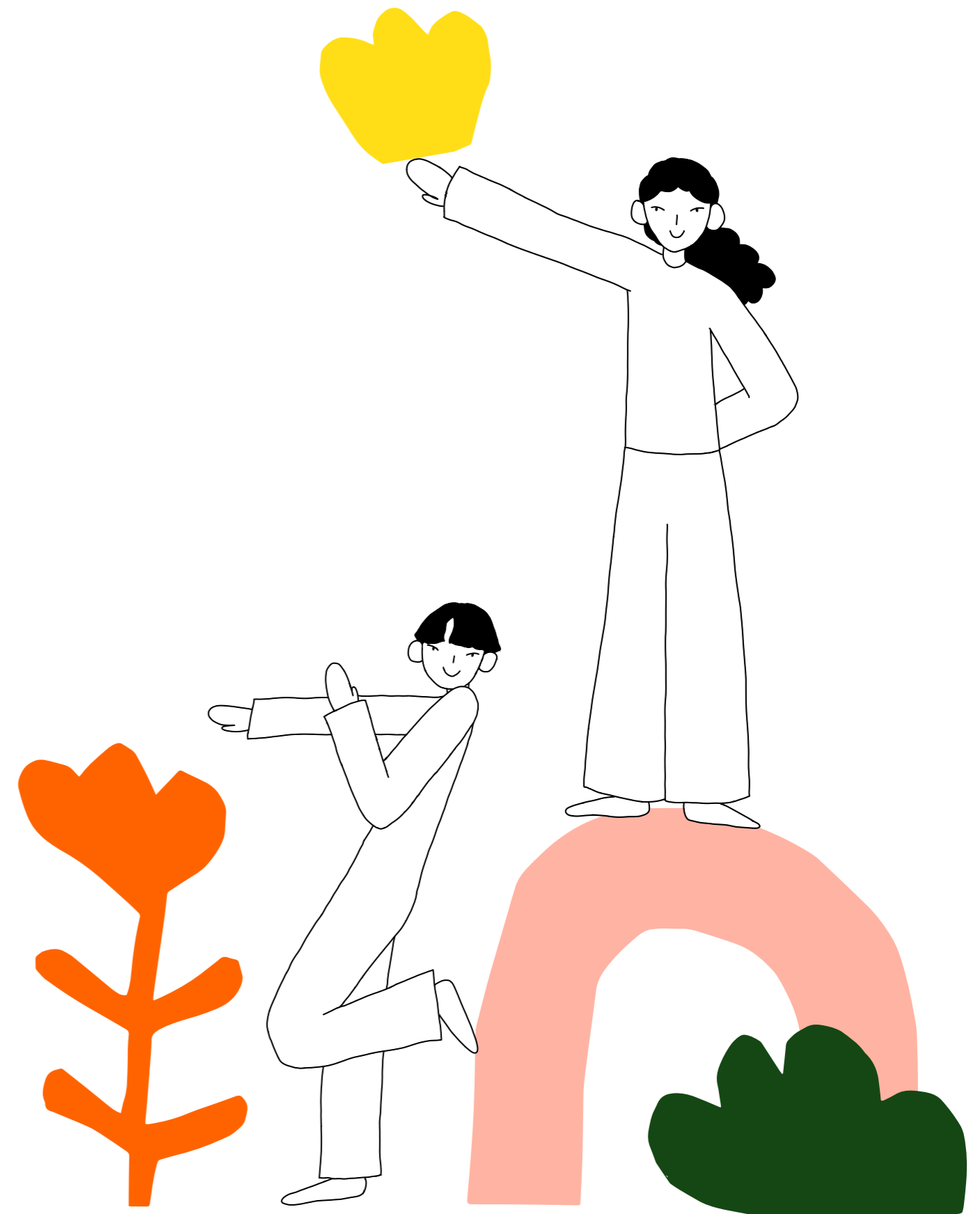
The financial impact of the programme has been significant. Individual donors and local businesses have matched every pound of public funds, leading to more than £4.85 million being invested in 130 community projects. However, it is the nonfinancial benefits that have had the biggest impact on projects and the communities they support.

These benefits include:

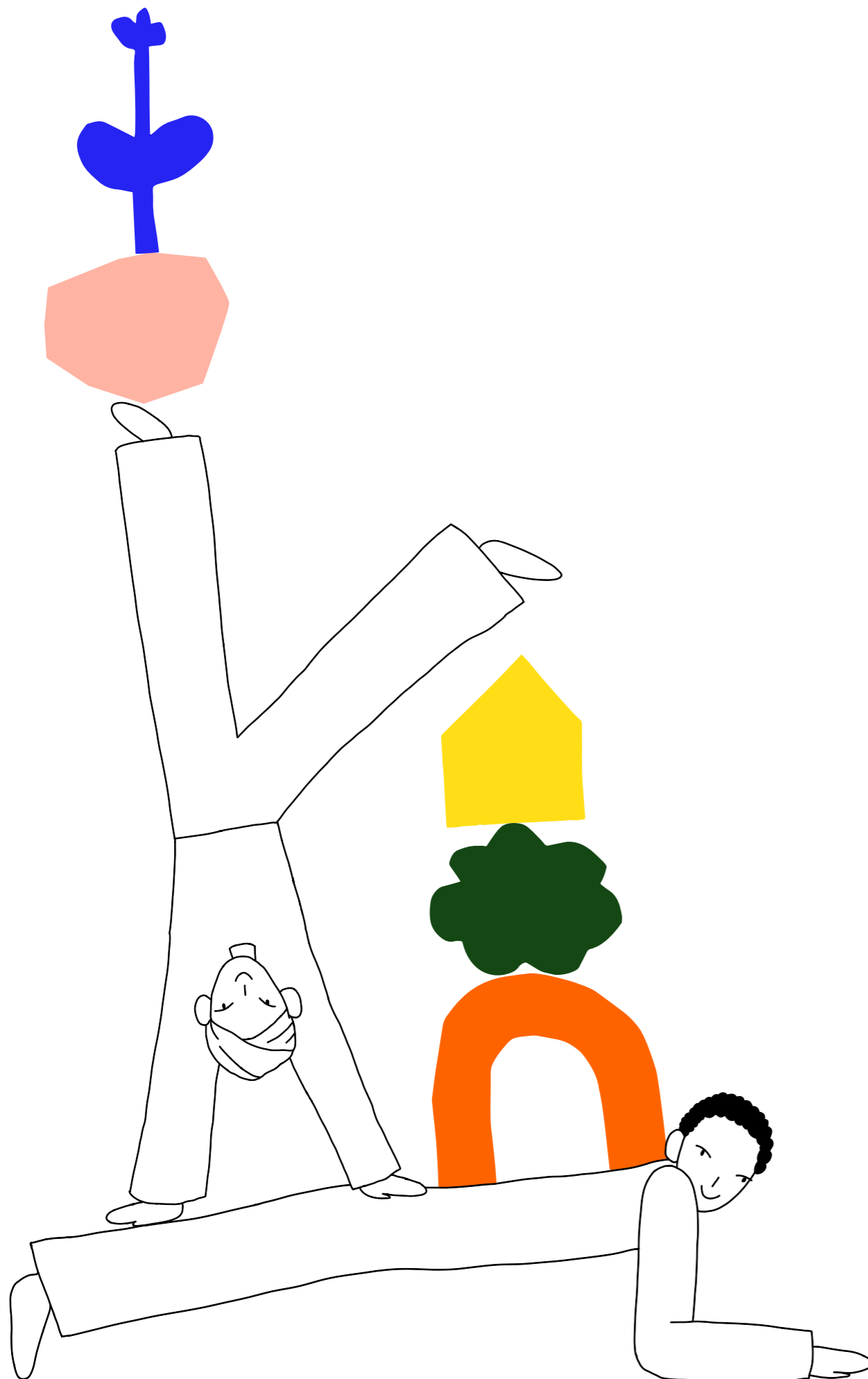
- Creating a platform through which anyone can suggest an idea and communities can decide which ideas they want to go ahead. This has given local communities the power to decide how public money is spent and put them in control of how outcomes are delivered. It has also helped the GLA reach out beyond the group of 'usual suspects' and support a new set of initiatives more closely matched to local needs.
- Helping neighbours get to know one another and strengthening their sense of local identity. Bringing people together through volunteering and celebrating local culture and history has helped bolster local civic pride and tackle social isolation.
- Providing a faster and more flexible route to funding which can be used to fund projects that are thought of as too risky, sit outside or fall between the cracks of what public funders normally support. In this way Crowdfund London has facilitated groups to test and refine innovative projects with the communities they aim to serve.

- Creating the opportunity for community groups to learn valuable skills—helping them to fundraise for, and develop, successful projects in the community, now and in the future. Also, many projects themselves provided training and skills development workshops, courses or volunteering activities to their wider communities.
- Supporting projects to develop shared spaces, resources and activities which local people feel ownership over—and which open up important resources to people that may not otherwise have access, and encourage collaboration in the community.
- Making local groups more confident and ambitious about what they can achieve in the community—both through the projects they created and crowdfunded for and in future initiatives—and giving them the tools, resources and profile to help them achieve what they set out to do.

Together, these benefits can help improve local wellbeing and create more resilient community groups, better prepared with the mindsets, skills and resources they need to survive and adapt to new challenges and local needs.



Future directions for civic crowdfunding



The insights gained over five years of Crowdfund London's continuous development provide lessons for the GLA and other public sector funders interested in new ways of using crowdfunding to engage with and support communities.

Mainstream the use of crowdfunding:

Crowdfunding initiatives such as Crowdfund London are often seen as one-off pilots with dedicated project funding and a finite life span. However, the impact demonstrated by Crowdfund London, and similar initiatives, show that there is value in embedding crowdfunding as a standard tool to support grass-root innovation and local engagement, alongside traditional grant-making approaches.

Focus on new challenges:

The benefits created by Crowdfund London highlight the opportunity in using this approach to solve a wide variety of city challenges. This both for long established challenges such as tackling climate change and unforeseen 'shocks' such as the COVID-19 pandemic—which has put increasing pressure on local groups both in terms of increased demand for services from their communities and decreased revenue streams. Crowdfunding has been lauded as the fastest way to get money and support for local responses to crises like this.²⁵ Therefore, it is promising that the GLA are replicating the Crowdfund London model as the basis of their new fund, Make London, which is supporting community-led ideas that help London recover from the COVID-19 crisis.

Invest in increasing diversity:

Many of the projects backed through Crowdfund London looked to support underrepresented groups. Yet a challenge for Crowdfund London, and other crowdfunding initiatives, is the underrepresentation of minority ethnic groups and younger people in running campaigns and delivering projects. Investment in future matched crowdfunding initiatives should seek to increase engagement

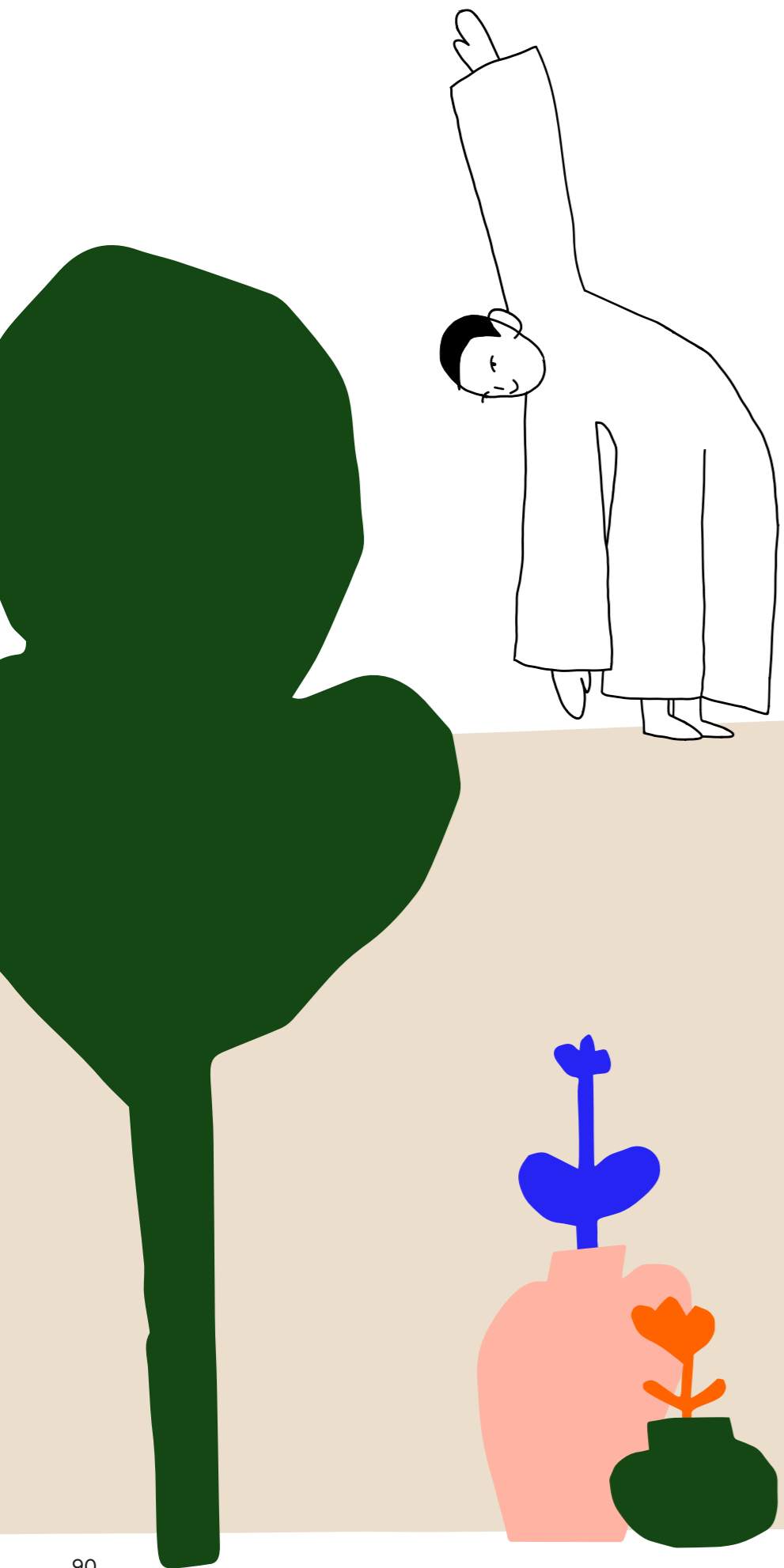
through more active outreach to underrepresented groups, including dedicated campaigns to target and involve specific underrepresented groups.

Broaden participation in decision-making:

People and communities that are wealthier, have more relevant expertise or larger social networks are always in a stronger position to benefit from crowdfunding. This limits its potential as a tool for more collaborative and inclusive decision-making. Increased investment into building awareness of crowdfunding and capacity building through all stages of project setup, fundraising and delivery, will be part of the solution to this challenge. But this could be accompanied by further experimentation with tools, such as participatory budgeting, that allow citizens to suggest and vote on ideas without having to use their own money or resources to get things done.

Increase sustainability ownership and long-term engagement:

Donations-based crowdfunding is great at getting new ideas off the ground. However, crowdfunded projects often struggle to raise larger amounts to scale their proven ideas, cover ongoing costs or establish robust governance structures. This puts limitations on the legacy they are able to have. Investment-based crowdfunding models, like community shares, allow projects to raise significantly larger amounts of funding and create deeper engagement and ownership between communities and projects. This can help create more sustainable community organisations with the potential to continue benefiting local people in the long-term.²⁶ City governments should consider the role that they can play in supporting community organisations to make the most of these tools through grants, co-investment, skills and capacity building. For the GLA this will mean building on the support they are already offering through their recently launched Boosting Community Business London programme.



Acknowledgements

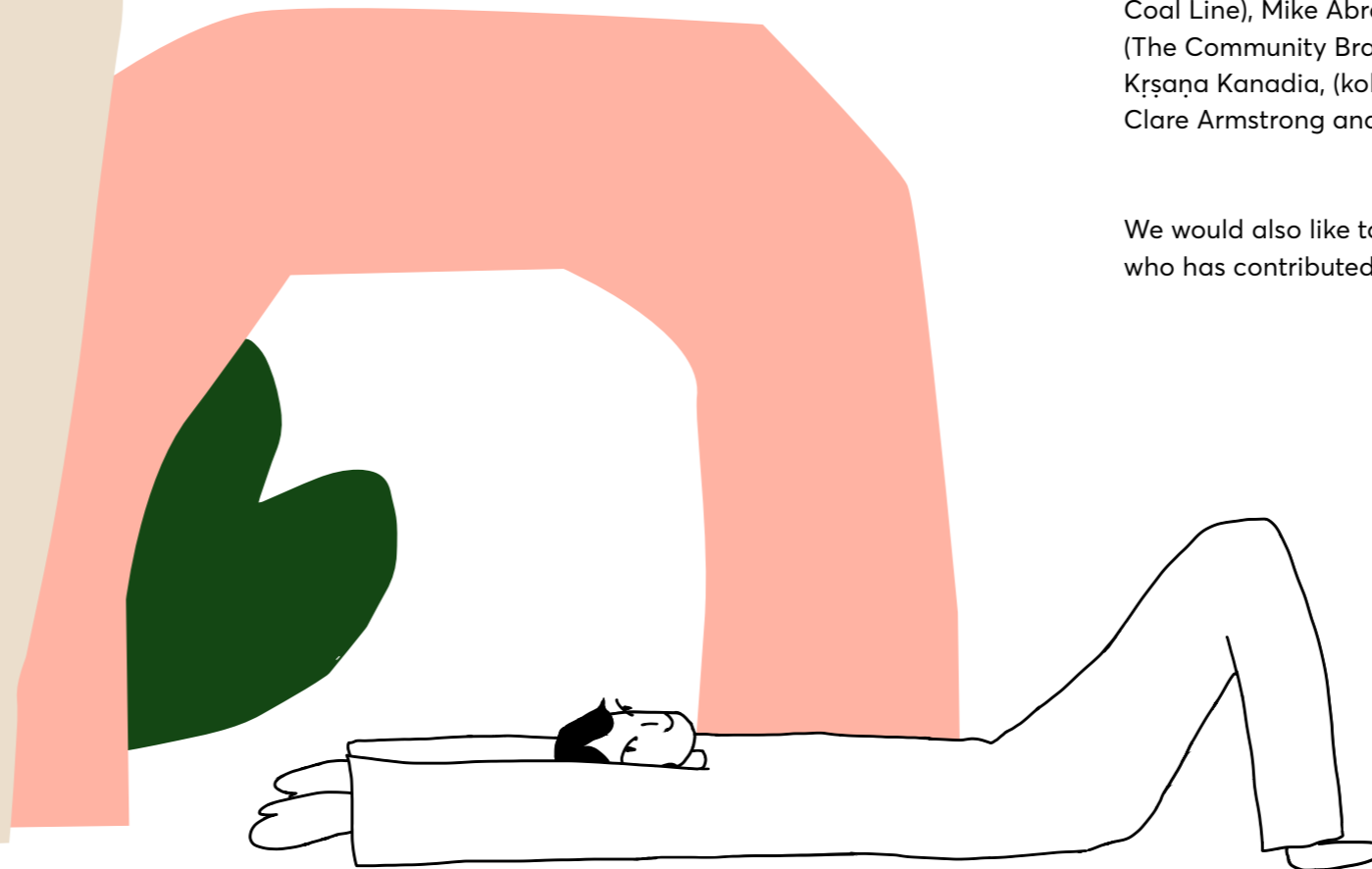
This report was written by Jonathan Bone, Peter Baeck, Codrina Cretu and Rosalyn Old from Nesta.

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Nesta is an innovation foundation. For us, innovation means turning bold ideas into reality and changing lives for the better. We use our expertise, skills and funding in areas where there are big challenges facing society. Nesta is based in the UK and supported by a financial endowment. We work with partners around the globe to bring bold ideas to life to change the world for good.

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About the Greater London Authority (GLA)

The Mayor of London is responsible for making London a better place for everyone who visits, lives or works in the city. The Mayor sets out a strategic direction and oversees a £17bn budget. Sadiq Khan has a vision of a 'city for all Londoners' underpinned by inclusive growth, social integration and active citizenship. The Regeneration and Economic Development team seek to deliver this vision through place-based investment programmes and research. Crowdfund London and the supporting community organisations to make the most of these tools through grants, co-investment, skills and capacity building. For the GLA this will mean building on the support they are already offering through their Boosting Community Business London programme.

[london.gov.uk](https://www.london.gov.uk)

About the London Economic Action Partnership

The London Economic Action Partnership (LEAP) is the local enterprise partnership for London. The LEAP brings entrepreneurs and business together with the Mayorality and London Councils to identify strategic actions to support and lead economic growth and job creation in the capital.

[lep.london](https://www.lep.london)

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