

THE POWER OF PEOPLE, PARTNERSHIPS AND PLACE

**Lessons from Six Years
of London's Giving**

Executive Summary



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The Giving Movement emerges from a recognition that the complex task of achieving real change in communities at a time of uncertainty, austerity and a feeling of individual powerlessness can only be achieved by collaboration across the public, private and voluntary sectors. This report summarises the lessons from six years' working with emerging Place Based Giving Schemes in London.

"As Chairman of Heart of the City, a partner of London's Giving, I am delighted to endorse the work of place based giving schemes in London. Giving comes in all shapes and sizes and the message is clear – we can all give. And it's not just about money – getting involved in your community as a resident or as a business volunteer is so valuable. By coming together in a place to tackle local needs with time, money and goodwill, we can do so much more collectively than anyone of us can do alone."

Sir Harvey McGrath

What is a Place Based Giving Scheme?

A Place Based Giving Scheme (PBGS) is a partnership, initiative or organisation which brings new resources and approaches into a borough, uses existing resources more effectively, and creates better solutions through working together. Key activities include some or all of fundraising, volunteering, in-kind giving, grant-making, capacity-building, influencing and convening.

Now there are 13 active schemes in London, and seven in development. Between 2017 and 2019 London's schemes have generated £4.49m in income and an additional £1.1m of value through volunteer and in-kind giving.

Every scheme is different, but what they have in common is their approach. The main conclusion London's Giving has reached from six years of walking alongside developing PBGSs is 'it's not what you do, it's the way that you do it'.

We have identified five key principles that underpin a PBGS:

- Recognising that **everyone has something to give**: time, talent and resources
- Building a **shared understanding of local aspirations and needs**, not driven by donors or funders
- **Listening to local people and encouraging them to participate in decision-making**
- **Collaborating with partners** to find better ways to improve places
- **Independence** from any one stakeholder; all partners have an equal voice

The Lifecycle of a PBGS

We have identified four distinct phases from when a PBGS is first conceived to the time it is sustainable as outlined below:

The Initial Planning Stage

Interested stakeholders should consider the borough's assets, needs, potential partners and their capacity to establish and manage a successful partnership. This will shape the vision and ambition of the giving scheme.

Finding the right staff and partners at the outset is key. Often, there is just one person dedicated to the development of a giving scheme, and it is not possible for them to have all the skills necessary to get a new initiative with multiple stakeholders off the ground. At this stage, consult with the broadest range of potential partners and perspectives possible. They may include businesses, local authorities, residents and infrastructure organisations.

Consultation, engagement and participation of local people begins now and continues throughout the lifecycle of a PBGS to build a shared understanding of need and to ensure plans are responsive and effective.

Lessons & Recommendations

For partners

- When recruiting staff, be realistic about what one person can achieve and think about the sort of support and oversight they will need
- Involve the broadest range of partners with local knowledge and expertise
- It takes time to get people involved and to build trust
- Listen to and include local people from the beginning
- Be realistic about what your borough can achieve with its assets, and be creative about how you use them

For funders

- A proportionate and long-term financial investment in capacity is required to run a scheme with reach and impact. The ideal mix for a nascent scheme is core-funding for staff plus a fund to enable work in the community to start as soon as the focus is agreed.

The Developing Stage

The principle of partnership is at the structural core of a PBGS's ability to do more, do better and include everyone. The majority of London PBGSs achieve partnership working by establishing multi-sectoral Boards or advisory / steering groups. They provide impetus, strategy and a range of skills and expertise.

The majority of London PBGSs are hosted by an established organisation, typically a CVS, grant-making trust or local authority. They are run by small delivery teams (usually just one person at the start). A few have become independent organisations such as CIOs or CICs. There are many benefits to being hosted, including the existing knowledge and relationships brought by hosts, but Boards will benefit from regularly reviewing the issue of independence.

Local authorities have been key partners in the development of PBGSs in London, playing a range of roles including incubator, funder and convenor. They can bring unique knowledge and assets, but can also have negative associations among local people and community organisations.

It is important for partners of a PBGS to establish a clear, evidence-based focus. This takes time and requires a participative and iterative approach. Consultation and engagement are key here, and schemes may decide to commission independent research to supplement existing knowledge and data.

Lessons & Recommendations

For partners

- The Board has a critical leadership role to play in a PBGS, catalysing the talents and experience of its members to co-create ways of changing lives in a borough
- A diverse and committed Board provides momentum to the process of laying foundations and defining focus
- Collaboration requires trust; it's worth investing time and effort to lay the building blocks for a shared vision, effective governance and leadership

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- The Board needs to balance the demands of the planning process with the importance of 'quick wins'. Becoming active in the community as soon as possible is important in engaging funders and partners, raising profile, galvanising support and developing credibility
- The task of defining a focus based on local need and proportionate to the borough's assets can be complex and may require independent research

For funders

- Be prepared for things not to go to plan. Schemes should be actively encouraged to innovate, improvise and work differently and this involves risks. Some schemes will try things that don't work, and some may stall and have to re-think

The Growing Stage

Essentially the business of a PBGS is:

- Getting – fundraising, engaging volunteers and securing in-kind gifts
- Giving – grant-making, brokering time and skills
- Connecting – working in partnership, convening, fostering conversation and collaboration
- Illuminating – amplifying the voice of local people and voluntary organisations, shining a light on a borough's needs and influencing change

These activities are underpinned by listening to local people and including them in decision-making, although the conversation now develops from 'what shall we do?' to 'how are we doing?' and as time passes 'what has changed for you, and how can we help?'

Any one of these things done well is useful, but there are plenty of experienced and highly-skilled organisations doing them already. The real value is the cumulative impact of doing these things in partnership with others; the trust relationships that are established, the understanding and expertise gained through one activity and applied to another, the new ideas generated by bringing together different skills and perspectives and asking residents what they want.

Lessons & Recommendations

For partners

- It's the cumulative effect of working collaboratively to give, get, connect and illuminate that creates the value of a PBGS
- Play to your strengths – money is not the only asset and everyone has something to offer
- PBGSs can give big business supporters access to grassroots impact and relationships they could not achieve on their own
- Most businesses in London are small and micro-businesses. Thinking creatively about how to engage them can create dividends, but it will require time and persistence
- PBGSs can connect and convene other stakeholders to avoid duplication and encourage partnership working
- Communication is key in raising awareness and resources and inviting participation, and is best focused on a few key messages delivered consistently

"In 2018, the Centre for London completed an extensive review of philanthropy in London, published as 'More, Better, Together: a strategic review of giving in London', which makes a number of recommendations for how we can achieve a step change in the giving of

time and money in the capital to bring about positive change for our communities. Our report included recommendations about increasing understanding of need, boosting employee volunteering, strengthening work with corporate funders, enhancing collaborations

between funders and work to promote city focused giving. It is clear that the London's Giving movement provides the opportunity to put these recommendations into practice".

**Ben Rogers, Director,
Centre for London**

For funders

- PBGSs can help funders to invest in activities they may not be able to do alone, including;
 - Reaching grassroots organisations and funding individuals
 - Supporting innovative and pilot projects
 - Engaging residents in decision-making
 - Leveraging their investment with assets from other partners
 - Deepening their knowledge of a place through consultation and engagement
 - Responding quickly to local events and conditions

The Sustaining Stage

A PBGS cannot respond to the changing needs of its dynamic community unless it engages in a process of continuous listening; asking local people what they need, inviting ideas and feedback and including them in decision-making. This not only creates more effective programmes but also gives the PBGS legitimacy as a hub of local knowledge.

Becoming a sustainable and well-known organisation creates new opportunities and relationships with residents, funders and other asset-holders which have the potential to grow year-on-year.

PBGSs can become crucibles of innovation; they create the conditions for new ideas and approaches to be formulated and tested, and when they have established connections and acquired trust in a community then these ideas can achieve scale and ambition.

Core funding is an ongoing challenge for those schemes who do not have a local funder to underwrite their costs on an ongoing basis.

Lessons & Recommendations

For partners

- Schemes that continuously listen to people through consultation and participation, and include them in decision-making, will innovate and be relevant because they are responding to real and current needs and aspirations and calling on the resources and ingenuity of the whole community
- The more successful a scheme is, the more people want to work with it, and the more opportunities present themselves

For funders

- Schemes without access to a long-term source of core funding will always be investing a proportion of their best assets, their leadership and passion and ingenuity, to ensure their existence rather than changing local lives. Funders need to recognise that core costs for schemes are essential to success

Looking to the Future

PBGSs in London have shared their experiences through the London's Giving network and built a wealth of knowledge about what works and what doesn't in place-based giving, which continues to accumulate.

London Funders will continue to create a sustainable future for PBGSs with tailored support, a strong network of mutual support and learning, and evidence for what they can achieve and how.

London's giving movement is part of a national and global conversation about the importance of place, citizen voice and cross-sector partnership to systems change. Pioneering and place-based approaches can transform our communities for the better.

The London's Giving website includes lots of practical information for giving schemes, an interactive map linking to websites for all the active schemes in London, news from the movement in London, news from the movement and links to other useful resources.

www.londonsgiving.org.uk

