

MAYOR OF LONDON

Community Outreach Programme 2023-24

Overview of Findings and GLA Response

1. Background Information

The Mayor/GLA welcomes the key findings from the 2023-24 Community Outreach Programme (COP) Evaluation report which marks the successful delivery to Londoners, of the Skills for Londoners Community Outreach Programme 2023-24. The programme was committed to funding community organisations to work with Londoners to raise awareness of adult education and learning opportunities to gain the necessary skills to improve their lives.

The programme funded 28 community organisations with an annual turnover of less than £500,000 to deliver various activities that engage and support Londoners into adult education. The programme ran between October 2023 and August 2024 after additional funding became available to fund 15/28 organisations between May-August 2024. Furthermore, the programme was partly funded by London Multiply to ensure programme activity had a numeracy focus to help reduce negative perceptions and support Londoners to access numeracy provision.

The evaluation takes a case-study approach. Of the 28 projects funded through the programme, eight projects were selected as case studies for research purposes. The case studies were purposively selected to reflect this diversity, including projects with varied approaches, geographic locations, and areas of focus as well as different project sizes and funding amounts.

2. Key Findings

Projects successfully reached those in need, many of whom were long-term unemployed, and had never accessed education or training. Participants faced multiple barriers which prevented prior access to education and training, among them: lack of English skills, lack of awareness of opportunities, and lack of work experience.

All participants were referred onto relevant courses, and only three interviewed did not start or complete courses they were referred onto. Often, participants were referred onto several courses and expressed surprise at the breadth of courses available to them.

Participants were primarily supported with enrolment and assessment to courses but were also provided with significant help beyond this by projects. Participants found particularly helpful aspects of support to be referral to the courses themselves, certification obtained at the end of courses, short length of courses, mock interview support, and activities embedded within communities.

Participants reported a number of positive outcomes as a result of their engagement in projects. This included improved English skills, obtainment of recognised qualifications, improved knowledge of future careers and pathways to get there, and increased confidence in education and training. Participants also reported they had begun seeking employment, had secured jobs, and were looking to further upskill.

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Additional outcomes centred around the improved mental health of participants due to their engagement in projects. Many expressed how increased socialisation with peers had improved their mood and motivation.

3. Key Areas for Attention

1. The GLA should **support organisations to have established relationships and agreements with AEB/London Multiply providers** before delivery. There is also great potential for alignment of this project with the GLA-funded regional skills hubs to support partnerships and local network building. This would be most useful at the start of the programme, given the time it takes to build trusting relationships and the capacity issues described by the projects.

GLA Response: The GLA acknowledges the importance of early-stage relationship building between Community Organisations and key partners involved in the programme. The GLA has increased the focus of Stakeholder engagement as part of the Skills for Londoners Community Outreach Programme 2024-25.

To demonstrate the GLA's commitment to this, the following has taken place or is planned:

- The GLA imbedded 'Introduction Sessions' with all four No Wrong Door (NWD) Integration Hubs and the community organisations at onboarding stage.
- Facilitated all Mayoral-funded Skills Programmes, supported by the programme, to deliver presentations to community organisations early in the programme to increase understanding of Skills Programme offerings.
- Increased the number of in-person events across the lifetime of delivery with a minimum of one event to be focussed on partnership engagement.
- Sharing of contact details for all community organisations with Skills Programmes supported by the programme and NWD Integration Hubs early in the programme.
- GLA Provider Managers and GLA community outreach team to facilitate promotion of the community organisations internally and provide facilitated support to build connections with Skills Providers operating in local areas.

The approach outlined above will be under review throughout the lifetime of the programme and will provide platforms for knowledge sharing and collaboration, bringing together all stakeholders, including representatives from Mayoral-funded programmes.

The new Mayoral term has provided the GLA an opportunity to evolve the Skills for Londoners Community Outreach Programme for 2026-27, to create a programme with a new model of engagement between community organisations, Skills Providers, key strategic partners and businesses that are united in the goal of offering a more universal support package to Londoners. This opportunity will further accelerate the programmes offerings to better connect Londoners, who are deemed most in need, to both employment and skills opportunities.

2. There is scope for **adaptations to the paperwork to reduce administrative burden on grantee organisations**, as well as further communication on this. Several data fields are requested by the GLA to enable future research (such as impact assessments). The GLA should consider reviewing data requests further and ensure that it explain why information is collected.

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GLA Response: The GLA is committed to streamlining processes and minimizing paperwork wherever possible. Following the Interim Evaluation report findings in April 2024, the GLA conducted a series of reviews on all paperwork, data sets and reporting requirements to inform the 2024-25 programme design. The paperwork and data requirements imbedded within the SfL Community Outreach Programme 2024-25 have been recognised to be essential due to the funding model of the programme. The SfL Community Outreach Programme is funded by both Adult Skills Fund and London Multiply, requiring data sets to be reported to the Department for Education. The process of submitting claims to the GLA has been kept to a minimum and allows the GLA to identify areas for improvement to support organisations at latter claims. Further work was conducted to highlight through programme paperwork, documents, commissioning, and market warming engagement to explain the reasons for the data to be collected as part of the new programme.

As part of the 2024-25 programme, grantees are required to complete an enrolment form containing participant data and a privacy notice with each participant. Grantees are required to collate this data and report to the GLA using a Participant Data Collection Template (PDC). The PDC requires grantees to report destination and referral information to the GLA, where relevant. The implementation of the PDC enabled the GLA to keep paperwork to a minimum of one form. The data imbedded within is required to ensure that the GLA has the relevant data it needs to meet its reporting obligations; to ensure compliance with data processing laws, a Privacy Notice is required for each participant counted as a start on the programme.

The requirements have been further outlined in the Programme's Delivery Handbook, published in draft at commissioning, and further discussed with community organisations at onboarding visits in September 2024 to help achieve a clearer communication on the programme requirements prior to organisations applying for funding.

3. The GLA should **offer more opportunities for clarification questions following project design** (such as Q&A sessions). A common understanding of expectations on process, outputs (particularly of recorded outputs) and paperwork would help grantees kick-off delivery.

GLA Response: The GLA published a draft version of the Delivery Handbook at commissioning for the 2024/25 programme, to provide an expectation of the reporting requirements for the programme for successful grantees and an opportunity to ask clarifications to the requirements as part of commissioning. Further information was imbedded into the Market Warming sessions delivered, within the formal responses to Questions received at commissioning and further support sessions were delivered to successful grantees at onboarding stage.

4. Future **programmes would benefit from timely starts and having all systems/paperwork in place**. This would allow projects to make use of key dates in the year, particularly enrolling Londoners onto learning provision with September start dates.

GLA Response: Following the receipt of the Interim Evaluation report received in April 2024, The GLA reviewed, prepared and finalised all delivery paperwork to ensure that finalised versions of the delivery paperwork could be issued on 02 September 2024 to ensure that any projects looking to start delivering at risk were in a position to do so whilst grant agreements were issued for signing and being processed.

5. There is **a need and appetite for longer-term funding**. The projects want to offer follow ups and 'wraparound'/'holistic' support. However, they require longer-term funding for this.

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GLA response: Opportunities for additional funding were sought within the 2023-24 programme and an opportunity to extend delivery and a continuation of activities for 15 community organisations between May-August 2024, was identified. The Skills for Londoners Community Outreach Programme 2024-25 has been designed with a longer delivery term between September 2024-August 2025, reflecting the academic year to mirror the delivery term of Skills Providers. The programme provides an opportunity for community organisations to apply for grants up to £35k, instead of £27k as seen in 2023-24 programme. Longer funding term with reflective increase of grant value, provides more scope to community organisations to support their target groups over a longer period. The 2024-25 programme has been designed to consider opportunities for growth into 2025-26, dependant on funding available. Community Organisations will also be asked to report the participants that they know to have 'started on a course' to help capture data for participants, organisations continue to support.

The GLA continuously reviews the impact that the Skills for Londoners Community Outreach Programme has on London and the Londoners it serves to identify opportunities to achieve a vision of enhancing the programme to better support Londoners to have the skills they need to improve their lives.

As the GLA works to set out plans for its programme of delivery within the Inclusive Talent Strategy supporting the 'Supporting Londoners to benefit from Growth' Mayoral mandate, its recognised that Community Organisations are uniquely placed to engage with the most disadvantaged Londoners who are most in need of support to access opportunities to embark of their journeys to improving economic stability.

The data and continuous review of the current programme will support the work taking place on the Inclusive Talent Strategy.