



TOGETHER FOR LIVERPOOL FOR GOOD

Black Led Roundtable Discussion 2nd April 2025

Facilitated by Joanne Anderson

Present:

Joanne Anderson
Sonia Basseby MBE
Alison Navarro

Innervision Consultancy
Chair LCVS
Race Equality Hub Programme Director
Liverpool CRCA
LJMU

Olatunde Durowoju

And 13 representatives of local and national funding organisations

Mairead Bailie
Paula Brown
David Costelloe
Steph Gregory
Emily Hine
Lucy Johnson
Rachael Jones
Becky Lazare
Jeff Scales
Ella Sips
Emily Swords
Lenka Vidamour
Georgette Wright

The National Lottery Community Fund
Livv Housing Group
CFLM
LCVS Senior Grants officer
The National Lottery Community Fund
BBC Children in Need
One Knowsley/The Pheonix Way
LCVS Community Development Administrator
CEO, LCVS
Lloyds Bank Foundation
BBC Children in Need
John Moores Foundation
The National Lottery Community Fund

Introductions, Joanne Anderson

Joanne Anderson introduced herself and gave a brief introduction to the purpose of the event in trying to address the solutions to the disparities for black people in society: health, education and access to employment.

Alison Navarro,

Alison Navarro talked about why she got involved in the research. Alison is the Programme Director of the Liverpool City Region Race Equality Hub whose background has largely been in

the voluntary and community sector and the CVS movement, particularly in London. Alison has seen, first-hand, the challenges and issues that have been identified in the report.

Alison suggested that the report provides interesting, powerful findings, but it was not a surprise. The areas of work Alison is involved with is largely around leadership, business support and employability. The opportunity for Black Asian Minority ethnic community members to live their best lives is still consistently undermined due to racism. Alison felt this report will enable us to reflect on that collectively, and to consider the actions we need to take.

Alison was particularly drawn to the observation that some funders tend to have specific programmes targeting black led organisations, and for good reasons. Alison feels the report provides a real opportunity for us to think about the collective action we want to take to disrupt business as usual, whilst the same time, recognising that targeted investment is required due to the chronic underinvestment in the black led sector.

Welcome and Opening Remarks from Sonia Bassey

Sonia identified that we know these things are happening, but it is very hard to convince people to do something differently without written evidence base. Part of the motivation for the research was to support funders and others with an evidence base particularly within the Liverpool City Region.

The situation is different in other parts of the country. Sonia joined LCVS as Chair in the wake of Black Lives Matters challenges in 2020 and wanted to do something meaningful to support the statements to galvanise change and how we go about doing that and how we partner with other organisations.

Sonia is extremely grateful to both the City Region Combined Authority and John Moores University for working with LCVS to ensure that this research could be realised. Sonia acknowledged that we have funders around the table who can support this agenda and having this discussion is a big step forward in addressing the challenges.

Presentation of research undertaken and key findings from Olatunde Durowoju

Olatunde expressed his gratitude to those funders who were part of this study and thanked them for taking the time and for sharing their experiences and knowledge on this topic.

Olatunde provided an overview of the process undertaken and the key findings. A copy of the presentation is attached to these notes.

Presentation of Recommendations Sonia Bassey

Sonia talked through recommendations for funders also reflected in the attached presentation. The full report will be circulated after the event which includes the three recommendations.

Questions and observations from Sonia:

- When was the last time application processes were reviewed on the basis of the barriers that they present?
- How much jargon is used? Review criteria and explore whether language used is a barrier
- How many ways can people apply for funding (video, storytelling, online form)?
- How many stages are in the process?
- How many events to promote and guide?
- How many black led organisations who apply are successful?
- What actions have you taken to review and improve approaches in the last 12 months?
- Think about some of those challenges and do things differently. Head hunt people to help increase representation. Take a risk and support organisations you wouldn't traditionally support. The recommendations for funders are designed to encourage change
- How do funders become more intentional? Do you promote success stories?
- Addressing accessibility issues and language barriers?
- Monitoring regimes - are processes disproportionate to the level of funding being applied for?
- LCVS increased diversity on grant assessment panels – there has been an increase in BLNOs applying and success rate has also gone up
- If we don't address the issues and adopt recommendations gaps will continue to grow.

Open Floor Discussion Chaired by Joanne Anderson

Summary of Key Findings

What have you tried and seen from the findings that might help?

- Despite challenges related to grant funding BLNOs remain more comfortable with this form of financing than social investment and attempts to engage such groups (e.g. through workshops) has proved challenging
- There have been challenges in recruiting representative investment panel members which would help to create a more even playing field for BLNOs and could introduce different mindsets for decision making. This also links to trying to recruit members with “lived experience”. Targeting recruitment by approaching specific individuals was identified as key. Paying representatives to undertake that role could remove a key barrier
- Funder due diligence can exclude or create barriers for some BLNOs for larger grant awards and they are more likely to have to focus upon smaller grants
- Funders need to be open to learning from other funders which have evolved their approaches to make them more accessible for BLNOs
- Funders signing up to report annually and publicly on this issue (how they are changing practices) would be beneficial - an annual equalities report
- Funders need to be more flexible in relation to the forms of application they are willing to accept - including video applications, and ensuring alternatives to an online form format
- A relational approach – experience with funders should be less transactional and more relational. Officers who could build personal relationships with BLNO would be beneficial and then funders will be more informed of their capacity
- Many funders don't record the specific ethnicities served by the organisations they are connecting with so how data is collected on applicants needs to evolve

Exploring Solutions and Best Practices

- A funder plus model; providing pre application support and access to capacity building once they have received funding. But a recognition that smaller, local funders don't have the resources to do this work.
- Key to ensuring black representation within the organisation – trustees, staff, panel members. Funders need to undertake a more holistic approach to organisational transformation as a foundation

- Support on impact measurement is a key area of support needed
- Need to simplify processes whenever possible but balanced against appropriate risk management
- Funders can hold onto bad stories and need to be conscious of subconscious bias resulting from a single adverse experience with a BLNO: *What we know, when it's black led organisations, is that the organisational intelligence is heightened, and people hold on to it.*
- Introducing a two-stage process with simplified first stage - enabling decisions to be communicated more quickly and reducing time wastage
- Gather more detailed diversity and ethnicity data which could be used to target preapplication support. This may include updating grant management software and systems which enable the monitoring of such information
- Dedicated funding programmes exclusively for black led/ serving organisations
- Case studies highlighting work of BLNOs - if we can see it, we can be it

Role of Support Infrastructure Organisations

- Being the connective tissue between funders and BLNO's – ensuring they are aware of and connected to funding opportunities
- Infrastructure organisations need to review their own approaches to DEI in a holistic way (e.g. building a membership but ensuring that is an inclusive process which recognises the uniqueness of BLNOs and other organisations serving minoritised communities)
- Capacity building services are crucial in enabling these organisations to access funding. But funders need to recognise the role local infrastructure plays and how challenging this work is to fund and provide resources for them to undertake that role at a local level
- Need to look at how we can work with funders to ensure that the money does reach into specific geographies and communities where there is underrepresentation.
- Funders should be more open to devolving pots of funding through local infrastructure organisations to local communities to enable more targeted programmes (e.g. Sport England Together Fund)
- Hosting Funding Fairs (through funder sponsorship) would be an opportunity to get funders more connected to such organisations to establish relationships.

Proposed Actions

- To explore how we work together as infrastructure organisations to better support funders to engage and reach out at a grassroots level and connect BLNOs to funding opportunities
- Explore a Funders Fair (possibly including sector awards) - word of mouth is the most popular means of BLNOs finding out about what is available. An event of this type could be useful in relation to funding awareness
- Small working group involving funders to explore how the money trickles down (based on quality data) and how to make it more accessible to the city region
- Review grant criterion to try to target the communities most in need including underrepresented groups (TNLCF, under Reaching Communities, has just published a new criterion. Emily Hine is happy to meet people to discuss this).
- Recognise how unconscious bias can affect decision making and how to reduce potential for this through process design
- A need to collate and share good practice in application processes which address barriers (including case studies and sharing where changes to application processes have dispelled the fears and myths around not being able to apply and be successful)
- The change will only happen if organisations and funders take a more holistic, whole organisation approach to transformation including strengthening approaches to DEI throughout the organisation and ensuring black representation at every level (Alison Navarro offered to speak to people about their approach to the Race Equality Hub and race quality operational network)
- Funding organisations could produce an annual equality report (to spotlight and encourage action on this issues)

Future engagement

It was agreed that another meeting would be scheduled for 12 months' time. In the meantime, attendees were invited to commit to sending Jeff Scales their commitment for the next 12 months, to be reviewed at that time.