



Shaping Fairer Futures Through Community-Led Change

Rooted in East London, inspiring change beyond

**FOUNDATION
FOR FUTURE
LONDON**

Strategic Plan 2026–2029



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Headland

MAYOR OF LONDON



Cover Credit. True Cadence

Above Photo. East London Dance. © Anne-Marie Michel



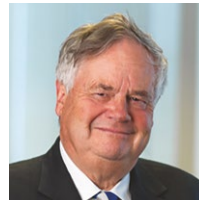
Executive Summary



Sarah Nelson
CEO



Baroness Lola Young
Co-Chair



Sir David Bell
Co-Chair

Foundation for Future London was born in East London, and East London remains at the heart of who we are.

This is where our relationships were first built, where communities shaped our approach and where we learned that lasting change happens when people are trusted to help influence decisions that affect their lives.

Over the years, we have worked alongside residents, grassroots organisations, young people, public bodies, funders, businesses and educational and cultural institutions to create opportunities, strengthen communities and ensure investment delivers meaningful local benefit.

That work has shown us something important: communities already hold the knowledge, creativity and leadership needed to shape better futures. But too often, decisions about

communities are made without the people most affected by them.

At a time of growing inequality, increasing pressure on public services and rising challenges for grassroots organisations, there is an urgent need for approaches that are more collaborative, more equitable and more rooted in lived experience.

This strategy sets out how Foundation for Future London will respond over the next three years.

We will continue to support communities to have greater voice, influence and access to opportunity. We will strengthen partnerships that bring together communities, institutions and investment in meaningful ways. And we will use what we learn through our work to help shape better practice and more inclusive approaches across London and beyond.



While East London will always be our home, the lessons learned here have relevance further afield one place. Increasingly, we are being asked to bring our approach into wider partnerships and new contexts, applying what we have learned to help create fairer outcomes elsewhere.

Foundation for Future London is distinctive not simply because of the programmes we run or the funding we distribute: it is our ability to bring people together, to connect communities with institutions, ideas with action and investment with real social impact.

We believe change happens best when it is shaped collaboratively.

That means listening properly, building trust over time, sharing power more openly and creating partnerships grounded in accountability and long-term commitment.



Weavers of Mampujan. © Anne-Marie Michel

**Over the next three years,
we will focus on:**

- Strengthening community power and participation
- Supporting grassroots organisations to thrive
- Delivering high-quality partnership programmes
- Turning learning into wider influence and change
- Ensuring investment creates meaningful and lasting local benefit

None of this can be achieved alone.

The future we want to build depends on collaboration between communities, organisations, institutions and partners who are willing to work differently and share responsibility for creating fairer futures.

We are proud of what has been achieved so far.

And we are excited about what comes next.

Because ultimately, our ambition is simple:

To ensure communities are not only part of change but have the power to shape it.

Sarah Nelson
CEO

Baroness Lola Young
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Co-Chair



Who We Are

Foundation for Future London is an independent charity that designs and delivers programmes in skills, culture and community development, helping funders, businesses and public bodies ensure investment benefits local people.

We bring together communities, organisations, funders and partners to create opportunities, strengthen local organisations and support neighbourhoods to thrive.

Unlike traditional funders or delivery organisations, we combine grant-making, partnership delivery and community engagement to help investment create lasting local benefit.

Our work began in East London, where we developed a model rooted in trust, participation and partnership. Over time, that work has grown beyond a single place. Today, we work across East London, wider London and increasingly with partners across the UK and internationally.

At the centre of our work is a simple belief: communities should not be consulted after decisions are made. They should help shape the decisions, investments and opportunities that affect their lives from the outset.



Purple Moon Drama. © Cheryl May Ndione

We do this by:

- Funding grassroots organisations and community-led initiatives
- Co-designing and delivering partnership programmes
- Supporting local leadership and participation
- Connecting communities with institutions and investment
- Generating learning that helps shape wider practice and change

Everything we do is grounded in collaboration, lived experience and practical action.



Culture Exchange.



Why This Strategy Matters

Across London and the UK, communities are facing growing inequality and pressure.

Many grassroots organisations continue to deliver vital support despite rising demand and limited resources. Young people face barriers to opportunity and progression. Public services are stretched. And too often, regeneration and investment fail to create long-term benefits for local communities.

Alongside these issues, there is increasing recognition that lasting change cannot be delivered through top-down approaches alone.

Funders, institutions and partners are looking for ways to work more collaboratively, more equitably and more meaningfully with communities.

This creates both a challenge and an opportunity.



Culture Exchange Premiere Launch. © Chris Baker

Foundation for Future London is well placed to respond because we combine:

- Deep community relationships
- Trusted partnerships across sectors
- Practical programme delivery
- Flexible and community-led funding
- Learning and evidence grounded in lived experience

Over the past several years, our role has evolved significantly.

We are no longer only a place-based grant-maker. We are increasingly a community impact partner, helping communities, institutions and investment work together more effectively to create fairer outcomes.

Our new strategy reflects that evolution.

It reaffirms our commitment to East London while recognising that the model we have built has growing relevance in other places facing similar challenges.



Our Impact

Since 2021, Foundation for Future London has:

- Invested more than **£11 million** into communities
- Supported over **600** grassroots organisations
- **70%** of funded organisations reported improved access to larger institutions and decision-makers
- Engaged more than **26,000** young people including **11,000+** who participated in careers and learning programmes
- Enabled **22,000+** people to access training and skills opportunities
- Supported over **1,800** people into work experience, apprenticeships and internships
- Helped more than **1,000** people into employment
- Enabled **2,300+** people to receive one-to-one mentoring and careers support
- Reached over **475,000** people through cultural and learning activity

We have also expanded our role through partnerships with NHS trusts, local authorities, commercial partners, developers, cultural institutions and national programmes.

This work has demonstrated that the approach developed in East London can help create impact in many different contexts, while remaining rooted in community voice and local relationships.



© Future Hackney, Dalston's Radical History.



Purple Moon Drama. © Cheryl May Ndione



Our Vision

A future where every community has the power, opportunity and investment to shape its own future and thrive.



Open City Awards © Jasmine Noble

Our Mission

Our mission is to connect communities, partners and investment to deliver community-led change through funding, collaboration and partnership building



Dalston's Radical History - The Strip. © Wayne Crichlow



Our Model

Everything we do starts with listening.

We work closely with communities, grassroots organisations and local partners to understand priorities, barriers and opportunities.

From there, we bring together the relationships, funding and partnerships needed to respond.

We then design and deliver programmes that are practical, community-led and focused on meaningful outcomes.

Finally, we design and deliver programmes alongside communities and partner organisations, sharing responsibility, ownership and learning.



Safer Spaces Community Event. © Anne-Marie Michel

Our model combines four connected areas of work:

1. Community Insight

We build understanding through lived experience, engagement and long-term relationships.

This helps ensure our work reflects real local priorities and needs.

2. Investment and Partnership

We connect communities with funders, institutions, businesses and public bodies.

Our role is to align people, resources and ideas around shared goals and meaningful outcomes.

3. Delivery

We design and deliver programmes in partnership that create practical impact.

This includes grant-making, youth opportunity, skills, culture, sustainability, environmental and health equity, social value and community-led partnership programmes.

4. Learning and Influence

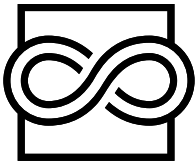
We generate learning, evidence and insight from our work.

This helps improve practice, strengthen partnerships and contribute to wider conversations about equitable development and community-centred change.



Values & Principles

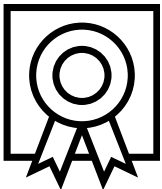
Values



Inclusive



Collaborative

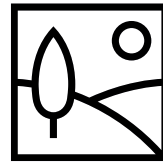


Trusted

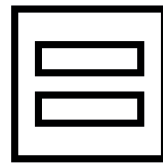


Authentic

Investment Principles



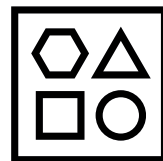
**Environmental
Sustainability**



**Fairness of
Opportunity**



**Economic
Inclusivity and
Sustainability**



**Inclusion,
Diversity
and Equality**



Strategy



**National Policy
and Advocacy**

Consultancy



Our Strategic Priorities

1. Strengthening Community Power and Participation

We will place community voice and participation at the centre of our work.

We want residents, grassroots organisations and local leaders to have a stronger role in shaping decisions, programmes and investment in their communities.

This means moving beyond consultation towards genuine collaboration and shared ownership.

We will:

- Strengthen our community listening and engagement
- Grow opportunities for local leadership and participation
- Embed co-design across programmes and funding
- Improve how we understand and respond to community priorities
- Ensure lived experience informs decision-making more meaningfully

What Success Will Look Like By 2029

- More programmes designed with communities from the outset
- Stronger local leadership and representation
- Increased participation in decision-making
- More residents and grassroots organisations involved in programme and funding decisions.
- Clearer evidence that community voice is shaping outcomes



The Open Art Club . © Franck Allais



Our Strategic Priorities

2. Delivering High-Trust, High-Impact Funding

We will strengthen and grow our community-led approach to grant-giving.

Grassroots organisations are often closest to local challenges and best placed to create meaningful change, yet many continue to face barriers to sustainable funding and long-term resilience.

Our approach combines funding with practical support, relationships and partnership building.

We will:

- Increase investment into grassroots and community-led organisations
- Develop funding opportunities shaped by community need
- Strengthen support for organisations around capacity and sustainability
- Improve how we capture and communicate impact
- Explore more sustainable and equitable approaches to local investment

What Success Will Look Like By 2029

- More grassroots organisations accessing funding and support
- Increased organisational resilience and confidence
- Stronger local partnerships and networks
- More equitable access to opportunity and investment
- Funding that is more flexible, trusted and community-informed



A New Direction & Play Nice - Day Dreamers.



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Our Strategic Priorities

4. Turning Learning into Wider Change

We will use what we learn through our work to improve practice, influence systems and contribute to wider change.

Our ambition is not only to deliver impactful programmes, but also to help shape better approaches to investment, regeneration and community engagement.

We will:

- Strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning
- Develop evidence, stories and practical insight from our work
- Share learning through events, briefings and partnerships
- Create opportunities for shared learning, collaboration and partnership building
- Contribute to wider discussions about equitable and community-centred change

What Success Will Look Like By 2029

- Stronger evidence informing future programmes and partnerships
- Increased influence through participation in policy, funding and regeneration discussions
- Wider sharing of good practice through events, publications and partnerships
- Greater recognition of community-led approaches and lived experience



Safer Spaces Consultation. © Chris Baker



How We Work

Everything we do is guided by four core attitudes.

1. Be Bold

We are confident and ambitious in advocating for fairer outcomes, meaningful participation and equitable investment.

2. Be a Bridge

We connect communities, organisations and institutions in ways that build trust, understanding and collaboration.

3. Be a Builder, Not Just a Broker

We do more than connect people and funding. We help create the conditions for long-term success through delivery, support and partnership building.

4. Break Boundaries

While rooted in East London, we will continue to apply our learning and approach across places, sectors and communities where they can create positive change.



Culture Exchange launch with HRH The Princess Royal.

© Anne-Marie Michel



Measuring Our Impact

We are committed to understanding and demonstrating the difference our work makes.

Our approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning is designed not only to measure activity, but to understand what is changing, for whom and why.

We will continue to track:

- Community participation and influence
- The reach and impact of funding
- Progression into employment, training and opportunity
- Partnership quality and collaboration
- Organisational resilience and sustainability
- Learning and wider influence

We will combine data, lived experience, co-designed community feedback and independent evaluation to ensure our learning is credible, useful and grounded in real experiences.

Most importantly, we will use this learning continuously to improve our work and strengthen the impact we create with partners and communities.



Skate Gals & Pals CIC and Broad Bikez CIC.



Conclusion: Working Together

The future we want to build cannot be created by one organisation alone.

It depends on collaboration between communities, grassroots organisations, institutions, funders, businesses and public partners who are willing to work differently and share responsibility for creating fairer futures.

Foundation for Future London will continue to play its role by bringing people together, building trust, supporting local leadership and helping ensure that investment creates meaningful and lasting social value.

We are proud of where we come from.

And we are clear about where we are going.

Because ultimately, our ambition remains simple:

To ensure communities are not only part of change but have the power to shape it.

Rooted in East London, inspiring change beyond



Great Get Together.



I think out of all the funders, FFL is definitely the best funder that we've worked with because of their engagement. You can call or email them, and they will respond.

They will give you their time and advice... There's more need for funders to be more engaged, like FFL is. It just humanises the playing field.

Sometimes you might feel like you're on the playing field playing the match, and they're the chairman, and you never really get to see or have a conversation with the chairperson.

But with FFL, you can. I value all of their support and everything that they do for the community.

J. R Joseph, CEO, Sirlute



When we saw how FFL works, so positive, open and transparent, that gave us the confidence to go back to the sector and challenge it. It's a two-way relationship. Yes, we need the funding, but they need us too... this project and FFL's ethics – it has to be studied.

**Abdirahim Hassan,
Founder, Coffee Afrik**



Everybody else seemed to have an agenda and be very protective of their territories. FFL was very open. They broaden conversations, open access and break down some of those silos.



The Open Art Club. © Franck Allais



I think it helps that FFL have also been part of Creative Newham's story right from the very beginning. I think they invest just as much in ideas as in people. And I think that's really important. It's not transactional, it's relationship-based.

There are all these kinds of complementary outcomes and outputs that have come in as a consequence of the initial trust and investment from Foundation for Future London.

Sanaz Amidi
Chair, Creative Newham



The work that FFL has done in other areas can help inform what they're doing in London.



What the Foundation does is incredible – rooted in and focused on regenerating East London.



We also wanted to say an enormous thank you for your support through all of this. Your confidence in us has kept us going, and your encouragement and advice have lifted us up when times have been very challenging. And of course, without the funding FFL has provided, there is no way we would be able to do this!

Amy & Peter,
Friends of Joiners Arms

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