

Hong Kong Empowerment Fund Programme Prospectus

London February 2024

1. Summary

The Greater London Authority (GLA) is committed to supporting Hong Kong Civil Society in London. In our third year supporting the London voluntary and community sector, we are happy to launch the Hong Kong Empowerment Fund.

The Hong Kong Empowerment Fund is established to support Hong Kong Civil Society in London to deliver integration support to the Hong Kong British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) community in London. It aims to fund projects that empower BN(O) individuals to develop knowledge and confidence, so as to be active in their communities and feel fully part of British society.

The Hong Kong Empowerment Fund targets equity-led non-established or newly established groups and organisations run by and/or for Hongkongers. We welcome applications that deliver integration support and activities for BN(O)s, with a focus on embedding BN(O)s into the local community and building sustainable support networks. It also aims to empower Hong Kong Civil Society by encouraging newly established and/or smaller grassroots groups and organisations to work in collaboration, either with each other or with more established organisations, to provide support to BN(O)s in London and create a legacy for their work.

There are two types of grants available:

- **Growth grants: up to £15,000** – open to non-established and newly established groups or organisations run by and/or for Hongkongers and their partners.
- **Collaboration grants: up to £50,000** – open to two or more non-established, newly established and/or smaller grassroot groups and organisations working in collaboration and partnership. A lead partner must be identified in the application, and this must be a legally constituted group.

Equity-led organisations and groups applying for this fund should define and clearly evidence how their proposed project will address needs of Hongkongers and have a positive impact on the lives of new arrivals from Hong Kong. We particularly welcome applications from community-led projects.

2. Background and context

Following China's imposition of the National Security Law on the people of Hong Kong in July 2020, the UK government introduced a new immigration route on 31 January 2021 for Hong Kong BN(O) status holders, providing them and their family members with the opportunity to live, work and study in the UK. The visa scheme was expanded in November 2022 to allow adult children of BN(O) status holders to apply to the route independently from their BN(O) parents. According to the government's immigration statistics¹ published on 23 November 2023, there have been a total of 190,997 applications for the BN(O) route since its introduction up to the end of September 2023, out of which 184,700 people have been granted the visa and 135,400 people have already arrived in the UK.

While it is difficult to know the exact number of BN(O)s residing in different areas across the country, estimates and research findings have shown that London is one of the most popular locations where BN(O)s choose to live in the UK. According to a survey conducted by Hongkongers in Britain in 2021², and a nationwide study conducted by the University of Liverpool in 2022³, between 22.2% and 23.5% of BN(O)s arriving in the UK may choose to reside in London. Many living outside of London may commute to the city for work, education or community spaces.

By combining data extracted from the statistics on School Placements for Children from Outside of the UK⁴ published by the government on 13 October 2022, and the Census report published by the Independent Schools Council in January 2023, estimates have been made on the distribution of school children across the 33 London boroughs, as shown in diagram 1 on the next page. Boroughs with higher numbers of BN(O) school children suggest higher popularity among BN(O) families with children.

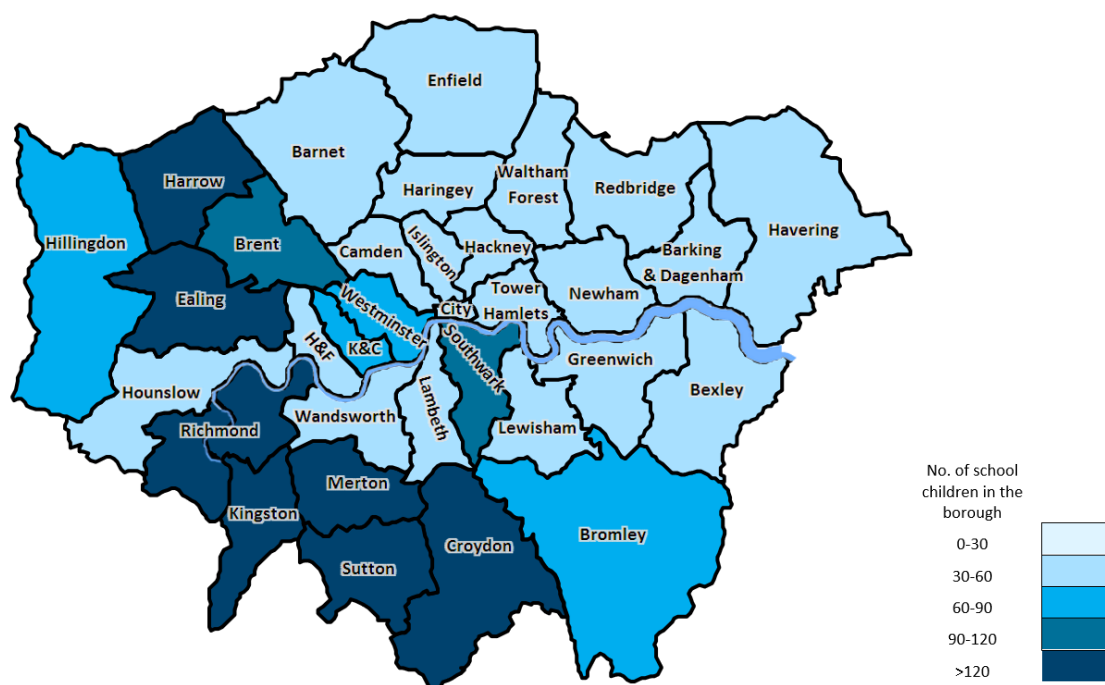


Diagram 1. The map of London showing the distribution of BN(O) school children across the 33 boroughs.

¹ [Safe and legal \(humanitarian\) routes to the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/safe-and-legal-humanitarian-routes-to-the-uk)

² [BNO Preferred Destinations Report - Hongkongers in Britain | 英國協會](#)

³ [Microsoft Word - A Study Report on Hong Kong Migrants Recently Arrived in the UK.docx \(liverpool.ac.uk\)](#)

⁴ [School placements for children from outside of the UK, September 2022 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#)

To support new arrivals on the BN(O) route to successfully settle in their new communities the UK, in 2022 the Government launched “[Hong Kong Welcome Programme](#)” led by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). The Welcome Programme includes several key elements:

- [Demand-led funding for Local Authorities in England](#) to support BN(O) status holders and their families with English language and destitution support. The amount of English learning support is currently set at **£850 per adult per financial year**, and claims can be made for both accredited and non-accredited English classes. (For more information on how to claim demand-led funding please see more information [here](#));
- An [online Welcome Pack](#) providing information on how to access services and understand life in the UK;
- A network of 12 “Hong Kong Welcome Hubs” across the whole of the UK to prepare for the arrival of the BN(O)s, established using the existing infrastructure of the Strategic Migration Partnerships;
- Nationally and regionally funded voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs) to deliver support and activities for social integration ([List of funded organisations](#) in 2023/2024);
- Funding for reporting services for BN(O)s who experience racism or any forms of hate.

Now in the third year of the Welcome Programme, £917,000 has been apportioned to the Greater London Authority to administer the London Hong Kong Welcome Hub through the London Strategic Migration Partnership (LSMP).

3. Fund objectives

The Hong Kong Empowerment Fund aims to support Hong Kong Civil Society in London to deliver integration support to the Hong Kong British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) community in London. It aims to fund projects that empower BN(O) individuals to develop their knowledge of British life and confidence in navigating its institutions, to be active in their communities and feel fully part of British society.

Through our ongoing engagement with the Hong Kong community, we know that many non-established and newly established organisations run by and/or for Hongkongers in London have developed trusted relationships with the BN(O) community and possess extensive understanding and knowledge of the community's needs. We are also aware many smaller grassroots groups and organisations may struggle with accessing mainstream funding sources individually.

Hence, two funding streams are provided in the Hong Kong Empowerment Fund:

- **Growth grant (up to £15,000)** is opened to equity-led non-established or newly established groups and organisations run by and/or for Hongkongers.

We welcome applications that deliver integration support and activities for BN(O)s, with a focus on embedding BN(O)s into the local community and building sustainable support networks. This may include, but not limited to, connecting BN(O)s with other migrant Londoners' communities, introducing and linking BN(O)s to mainstream services to access advice and support, and raising awareness of BN(O)s' support needs.

- **Collaboration grant (up to £50,000)** is opened to two or more equity-led non-established, newly established and/or smaller grassroots groups and organisations working in collaboration and partnership.

We believe to strengthen the Hong Kong Civil Society in London, working in collaboration and partnership is important amongst community groups and organisations. Whilst the process of forming partnerships may take time, a strong Hong Kong Civil society ultimately benefits the BN(O) community in the long run as community groups and organisations could share expertise, knowledge and best practice and avoid duplication of work. Hence, this funding stream is created to encourage organisations to collaborate and work in partnership, so as to provide support to BN(O)s in London and create a legacy of their work.

We acknowledge that like many newly arrived migrant groups, the BN(O) community have specific support needs and therefore we encourage applicants to clearly outline the need identified in the BN(O) community and explain how their proposed project responds to it. Applications that target intersectional groups within the BN(O) community are particularly welcomed, including but not limited to, older Hongkongers, Hong Kong children, young people and their parents, women, Hongkongers with disabilities, LGBTQI+ Hongkongers.

Applicants should propose projects that fit one or more of the following aims. Please note that one of the main assessment criteria is how well your proposed activities respond to the programme aim(s) you identified below, rather than the number of aim(s) selected.

- i) **Foster connections and a sense of belonging in the communities where BN(O)s settle**, this could include:
- Enabling BN(O)s to be a part of London's social and cultural fabric by celebrating Hong Kong identity, culture and heritage;
 - Encouraging BN(O)s to voice their opinions and shape solutions to community issues;
 - Building trusted support networks with local services and/or Hong Kong-led Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations (VCSEs);
 - Supporting BN(O)s to engage in democratic and civic life.

The Greater London Authority (GLA) has a statutory power to do anything that it considers will further the promotion of social development in Greater London. This includes the promotion and support of impartial civic and democratic participation – including through increased voter registration rates and raised awareness of the voting system changes, particularly among under-registered and under-represented communities – which will further social integration and cohesion across the capital. But the GLA's activities in this area must at all times be apolitical and must not be perceived to be associated with the personality of the Mayor of London, the promotion of any political party, individual politician or potential candidate. They must also be kept distinct from the functions of the Greater London Returning Officer, who must maintain both actual and perceived impartiality.

Importantly, and in any event, the GLA's democratic participation activities and published materials (including those published by grantees or other service providers) in this area must, at all times, be apolitical, objective, factual and neutral. They must not seek, or be capable of being perceived to seek, to affect public support (positively or negatively) for a political party or a candidate in an election; and they must comply with the GLA's Use of Resources Guidance and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity, and **no GLA-funded activity around democratic participation can take place during the pre-election period for the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections**. Any relevant materials produced after the pre-election period, should be GLA-branded and reviewed by GLA officers to ensure compliance with strict impartiality in design, delivery and communication.

The Mayoral election takes place on 2nd May 2024, and the pre-election period, which starts on **19 March 2024**, could impact project delivery, publicity and communications.

The General Election will happen at some time in 2024. If this was to take place during HKEF grantee's project delivery, there may be additional requirements that grantees need to meet during the pre-election period of General Election. HKEF grantees are required to seek further advice on their project plans and activities. The GLA reserves the right to request amendments to be made to grantees' project plan and delivery timelines, but we will discuss this with HKEF grantees in advance.

- ii) **Support BN(O)s to find suitable employment or to start/grow a business**, this could include:
- Enhancing BN(O)s' employability through workshops, 1-1 career support and/or coaching;
 - Supporting BN(O)s to identify gaps in their experience and/or qualifications and finding ways to address them, e.g. access further education, training and volunteering opportunities, transfer qualifications and/or obtain Certificate for No Criminal Convictions (CNCC);
 - Delivering bespoke employment support to meet BN(O)s' intersectional needs;
 - Supporting interested BN(O) business starters to improve knowledge and gain relevant experience, providing support and signposting to further resources;
 - Raising awareness of local employers and companies towards BN(O) visa holders' working rights and entitlements, and their working experience and employment profiles.
- iii) **BN(O)s' English language skills are improved**, this could include:
- Using a range of tested and innovative methods to empower BN(O)s by raising their awareness of their eligibility for adult education in London;
 - Improving BN(O)s' understanding of the various types of English language support available in the city;
 - Helping BN(O)s find suitable ESOL provision and offering advocacy and support to enrol on a suitable English language course.

Where a proposal includes an English language element

- The applicant should clearly outline the reasons why this activity cannot be funded in full or in part through the Adult Education Budget (AEB). This should include what activity has taken place prior to the bid to explore this alternative option. Please see [Annex 2: Adult education course, including ESOL, covered by AEB](#) for more information.
- Applicants will also be required to outline why the proposed ESOL activity cannot be funded in full or in part by the DLUHC's demand-led English language funding. This should include what activity has taken place prior to the bid to explore this option. Please see [Annex 2: DLUHC's demand-led £850 English language funding](#) for more information.
- Applicants should include information on what progression opportunities will be offered to adults to ensure they can retain and continue their learning once the proposed course comes to an end. Stronger bids will include progression tracking, and evidence of existing partnerships with local AEB providers and/or employers.
- If the applicant chooses to include provision of English language support in their proposed plan, please see [Annex 2](#) for more information and resources to ensure that all available funding options are fully exhausted.

- iv) **Instances of destitutions amongst BN(O)s are minimised and addressed**, this could include:
 - Raising BN(O)s' awareness towards their rights and entitlements to destitution support through producing culturally appropriate materials;
 - Providing advice and guidance to help BN(O)s minimise the negative impacts of cost of living and/or prevent destitution;
 - Capturing the extent to which BN(O)s are being affected by the cost of living;
 - Supporting destitute BN(O)s to access support and relieve destitution.

- v) **Enables BN(O)s to access council and other mainstream services and increase community confidence to navigate their new environment**, this could include:
 - Raising BN(O)s' awareness of their rights and entitlements to council and other mainstream services and support;
 - Supporting and advocating for BN(O)s to access services and support that they are entitled to;
 - Improving BN(O)s' knowledge of their local area and British ways of life, and how to obtain support that they are entitled to.

- vi) **Support well-being and mental health needs of BN(O)s**, this could include:
 - Creating safe spaces for BN(O)s to engage in activities that improve their physical and mental health and connecting them to existing mainstream services for longer-term support.
This may include but is not limited to, those with intersectional needs such as women, older people, people with disabilities, members of the LGBTQI+ community, children with special education needs and their parents;
 - Reducing BN(O)s' sense of loneliness, social isolation and homesickness through means such as, but not limited to, networking opportunities and peer support groups to connect BN(O)s who arrived in London across the last few years with wider local communities;
 - Supporting BN(O)s experiencing trauma to access specialist trauma-informed support that meets their cultural and linguistic needs;
 - Working with local services and VCSEs in London to share best practice and build a common understanding of the background and specific needs of BN(O)s;
 - Bringing together voices from the BN(O) community to explore and share their integration stories through their own narrative, to build a sense of belonging and/or to raise awareness towards the community's needs and experience.

- vii) **BN(O) feel safe, and able to report hate crime and have this addressed**, this could include:
 - Creating a conducive space to allow BN(O)s to build cross-community understanding with their local communities;
 - Improving local services and VCSEs' understanding of BN(O) diaspora, their identity, and safety and support needs;
 - Increasing BN(O)s' awareness and understanding of hate crime, how to report it and relevant support available.

The list above is **not exhaustive**. We recognise that community groups and organisations may identify specific needs to the BN(O) community, and we welcome applications that identify and evidence needs that are not mentioned above as part of their project proposal.

4. Outcomes and impacts to be measured

The GLA is interested in learning about the positive impact that groups and VCSEs we fund make on BN(O)s lives and on the organisations themselves. We also recognise that throughout project delivery, groups and organisations may face challenges and difficulties, and while the GLA grants team will provide support, we are also interested to learn how funded groups and organisations tackle barriers themselves. Therefore, we ask funded groups and organisations to complete two monitoring reports, one in the middle and one at the end of their project delivery period, to capture the impact of their work. Funded groups and organisations will receive via email the reporting templates and guidance documents towards the start of each reporting period.

We ask funded groups and organisations to monitor the impact of their work according to the specific aim(s) they intend to address through their project. Below are some suggested monitoring indicators in relation to each funding aim. This list is **not exhaustive**, and we welcome applicants suggesting new indicators and concrete ways on how they can measure the impact made.

- i) **Foster connections and a sense of belonging in the communities where BN(O)s settle:**
 - Participants feeling more connected to their local community;
 - Participants feeling more motivated to share their opinion and engage meaningfully in their community;
 - Participants feeling safe to celebrate and express their social and cultural identity;
 - Participants feeling their local community is a culturally inclusive space;
 - Collaboration and development of a network of local VCSEs working with Hong Kong-led organisations.
- ii) **Support BN(O)s to find suitable employment or to start/grow a business:**
 - Participants' increased understanding of employment practices and policies in the UK;
 - Participants being supported to transfer qualifications, find employment, or start/promote their own businesses;
 - Participants' motivation and confidence in finding employment that matches their skill level and/or career aspirations;
 - Increased awareness of local employers and companies towards BN(O) visa scheme, BNOs' working rights and entitlements, working experiences and employment profiles.
- iii) **BN(O)s' English language skills are improved:**
 - Increased number of BN(O)s accessing suitable and appropriate English language support via AEB route and/or DLUHC's demand-led English language support;

Where delivery of English language classes is included in the project plan

- Participants' increased confidence in using English in their daily lives;
- Participants providing positive feedback to their learning experience;
- Participants' improvement in English language skills, which can be assessed through formal or informal ways;
- Participants being able to progress to other courses to support their learning and/or career aspirations.

iv) Instances of destitution amongst BN(O)s are minimised and addressed:

- Participants' increased understanding and awareness towards BN(O)s's rights and entitlements to destitution support;
- Participants feeling empowered to make informed decisions to prevent destitution;
- VCSEs and/or Hong Kong-led Civil Society groups being able to develop culturally appropriate translated information on destitution support and resources available.
- Participants are supported to engage with local authorities to seek support where available under statutory duties, or to apply for a change of conditions if required (please see [here](#) for more information).

v) Enables BN(O)s to access council and other mainstream services and increase community confidence to navigate their new environment:

- Participants' increased awareness towards council and mainstream services;
- Participants' increased knowledge of their local area and British way of life;
- Participants' increased confidence in accessing resources and services they are entitled to;
- Participants' increased confidence in navigating in their local area.

vi) Support well-being and mental health needs of BN(O)s:

- Participants' increased understanding and awareness of mental health issues;
- Participants' decreased sense of loneliness and homesickness;
- Participants feeling empowered and safe to share their experiences to destigmatise talking about mental health;
- Participants noted improvements to their physical and mental wellbeing;
- Increased understanding and/or willingness to access mainstream mental health and well-being support;
- Increased understanding towards BN(O)s' background and support needs by local services and VCSEs;
- Practices adapted to take into consideration of BN(O)s' support needs.

vii) BN(O) feel safe, and able to report hate crime and have this addressed:

- Participants feeling safe in their local area;
- Increased cross-community understanding between BN(O)s and their local community;
- Participants' improved understanding and awareness towards hate crime and support available for victims of hate crime;
- Intervention and support being developed to meet the needs of BN(O)s with intersectional needs;
- Participants feeling increased trust towards hate crime reporting channels.

5. Eligibility criteria

Applications for **both** Growth Grant and Collaboration Grant should meet all the following criteria:

- Applicant organisations should be **equity-led** with at least 75% of the organisation's Trustees and 50% of the staff members having lived experience of the issues they seek to address through their proposed projects.

Example 1: If you are a non-established community group and/or do not have formal organisational structure (e.g. you do not have a Board of Trustees or paid staff team), you can still be an equity-led if a majority of your group members the lived experience of the issues they seek to address within your group.

Example 2: If you are an organisation that advocates for rights of women or LGBTIQ+ within a migrant community, your organisation is equity-led if it has 50% of staff and 75% of trustees from migrant and/or migrant LGBTIQ+ or migrant women backgrounds.

- Proposed projects must meet **one or more than one aims** of the Hong Kong Empowerment Fund listed in Section 2 of the Prospectus.
- Proposed projects should be **delivered in London** and/or online and aimed at the BN(O) community in London.
- Proposed projects will take place over a **six-month period**.

All proposed projects ideally should be **community-led**. This means the design, planning and/or delivery should involve the people that the group/organisation serves and supports.

This element can be elaborated in the application by explaining how the applicant has consulted the BN(O) community to identify the need, design relevant interventions and/or involve BN(O) individuals in project delivery. It could also include elaboration of previous experience working with the BN(O) community. The consultation process prior to application submission does not need to be formal and should not be part of your project plan. However, it is essential that projects reflect the priorities of the community.

Each non-established, newly established or smaller grassroots group or organisation can apply for **either** Growth Grant or Collaboration Grant. There are additional criteria that applicants for either Growth Grant or Collaboration Grant will need to meet which can be found below:

Growth grants: up to £15,000

- Available for non-established, newly established or smaller grassroots groups or organisations run by and/or for Hongkongers and their partners.
- Have an annual turnover of £200,000 or under in their last published annual financial accounts.
- Where the proposed project is to be delivered by an organisation that is not legally constituted, you must partner with a sponsor organisation. (Please see requirements below).
- All applying organisations or sponsor organisations (if you are applying as non-established group) must have at least two Trustees/Directors/Management Committee members who are not related and have a charitable dissolution clause within their governing document.

Sponsor organisation requirements (only applicable to non-established group applicants)

Sponsor organisation must be a constituted group and fulfil one of the following criteria:

- Registered Charity
- Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIO)
- Community Interest Company (CIC)
- Charitable Company (limited by guarantee)
- Constituted Group/Organisation
- Excepted or exempted charity
- Community Amateur Sports Club
- Community Benefit Society

Sponsor organisations should also:

- Agree to accept the money on behalf of the unconstituted group and will pay out the fund from their own bank account;
- Be responsible for the grant funding terms and will need to jointly sign the grant agreement with the GLA and the unconstituted project delivery group;
- Have adequate and appropriate policies and procedures in place, including policies for Safeguarding, insurance, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and complaints (where services include advice provision);
- Support the non-constituted group to ensure their project delivery adheres to the sponsor's policies and procedures. This may also include attending meetings with GLA grants officer.

Collaboration grants: up to £50,000

- Available to two or more organisations working in collaboration and partnership.
- One lead partner should be identified in the submitted application.
- Lead organisations will need to confirm they have adequate and appropriate policies and procedures in place, including policies for Safeguarding, insurance, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and complaints (where services include advice provision). Partner organisations will adhere to the Lead Organisation's policies and procedures during the project delivery period.
- Lead organisations should be a constituted group and fulfil one of the following criteria:
 - Registered Charity
 - Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIO)
 - Community Interest Company (CIC)
 - Charitable Company (limited by guarantee)
 - Constituted Group/Organisation
 - Excepted or exempted charity
 - Community Amateur Sports Club
 - Community Benefit Society
- Applicants should provide a clear and detailed outline of how roles and resources will be divided and allocated amongst partnering organisations.
- All groups and organisations involved in the partnership project should agree and sign the application form.

What we won't fund as part of this programme

Organisations/Entities

- For-profit organisations.
- Local authorities.

- Schools or formal educational settings (however, we are happy to accept applications from small community education groups, e.g. library homework club, ESOL conversation clubs, after school projects etc).

Projects

- Project activities that generate profits for private gain, or activities that are charging a fee that will cause a significant financial barrier to participation.
- Projects and provision that can be funded by another income stream. For example, adults arriving via the Hong Kong BN(O) visa route are entitled to £850 per adult for ESOL formal or informal provision and ESOL related expenses including childcare, travel expenses, digital devices and more via their local authority. In addition, Hongkongers on the BN(O) route and other long-term routes in London are now eligible for provision funded by the Adult Education Budget, which funds the majority of ESOL in London, on arrival. We will not fund activities which can be funded by either of these funding streams. Where applicants believe costs cannot be covered by existing funding streams, a robust rationale will be required.
- Projects that practice or promote religion or any activities actively promoting certain belief systems. Faith based organisations can apply but the activities funded under the Hong Kong Empowerment Fund must not fall under this stated exclusion.
- Projects that are partisan political, any activities promoting certain political systems or lobbying for interest groups. Projects funded by GLA should be strictly impartial and non-party political. Projects should not advocate or campaign for a certain political party.

The Mayoral election takes place on 2nd May 2024, and the pre-election period, which starts on 19th March 2024, could impact project delivery, publicity and communications. **No GLA-funded activity around civic and democratic participation should take place during the pre-election period for the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections i.e. from 19th March 2024 to 6th May 2024 (both dates inclusive).** Any relevant materials produced after the pre-election period (i.e. 6th May 2024) should be GLA-branded and reviewed by GLA officers to ensure compliance with strict impartiality in design, delivery and communication.

The General Election will happen at some time in 2024. If this was to take place during HKEF grantee's project delivery, there may be additional requirements that grantees need to meet during the pre-election period of General Election. HKEF grantees are required to seek further advice on their project plans and activities. The GLA reserves the right to request amendments to be made to grantees' project plan and delivery timelines, but we will discuss this with HKEF grantees in advance.

- Projects for retrospective costs, including any costs incurred in community consultation and/or submitting your application.
- Projects involving large-scale capital costs or routine repairs and minor improvements to community buildings.
- Loan repayments.
- Recoverable VAT. Please note if you are not VAT registered, you will need to include VAT costs as part of the funding you request for your programme.

6. Prospective programme timeline

| Activity | Timeframe |
|---|--|
| Application stage 1: Written Application opens | Tuesday 27 th February 2024 |
| Information session | Wednesday 6 th March 2024 at 12noon |
| Application stage 1: Application closes | Wednesday, 27 th March 2024 at 9am |
| Stage 2: Interviews | 10 th – 19 th April 2024 |
| Inception meeting with successful applicants | May 2024 |
| Project delivery, mid-project and end of project check ins: | End of May 2024 to November2024 |
| End-of-project report submission | December 2024 |

Funding payments will be made according to milestones agreed with grantees and details will be attached to the signing of grant agreement, attendance of mid-project meeting and submission of end-of project report.

7. Application process

Successful applicants will be selected following a competitive application process. For both Growth Grant and Collaboration Grant applications, there are two stages of assessment; written application and interview.

I. Written application

All applicants are required to submit an online application.

For **Growth grant**, applicants should respond to all questions in the [Growth Application Form](#).

For **Collaboration grant**, applicants should respond to all questions in the [Collaboration Application Form](#).

All applicants are also required to submit some organisational documentation preferably at the written application stage. If applicants are unable to provide any of the following documents, they may provide a written statement demonstrating how they intend to have these in place prior to the activities commencing. Their planned approach will be clarified at interview if shortlisted, and the deliverability of this will form part of the decision-making process. Project activities will not be permitted to begin until all these policies are in place.

The documents are:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Two letters of recommendation from a trusted authority (e.g. a church, minister/pastor, GP, charity etc) or anyone in a civic position to vouch for your group. The letter should outline why they believe your group is a good fit for our grant.
- Confirmation of the organisation's annual turnover in the last financial year.
- Confirmation that the applying organisation/sponsor organisation has a bank account requiring two signatories.

II. Interview

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an interview in which the Hong Kong Empowerment Fund scoring panel may ask for further clarification on the proposed project aims, activities and monitoring and evaluation process, the identified BN(O) communities' needs and the applicant's understanding on working with newly arrived migrants, including children and vulnerable adults, in the UK.

Interviews are scheduled to happen between 10th – 19th April 2024. Applicants invited to the interview stage will be notified at least one week before the proposed interview date via email. The interview will take place virtually for approximately 1 hour. There will also be a chance for applicants to ask GLA questions and clarifications. Based on the results of both stages, the scoring panel will decide on a list of provisionally successful applicants.

Hong Kong Empowerment Fund information session

We will be holding an information session so that organisations can hear more about this opportunity and have the chance to ask questions. This will take place virtually and will be recorded and shared for the benefit of those who can't make it. The session will be held on Wednesday 6th March 2024 at 12noon. Please register your interest via this [link](#) here. The recording will be shared with all those who expressed interest through registration.

Technical support

If you have issues with submitting an application online and require technical support, please get in touch with Groundwork London team at HKEmpowermentFund@groundwork.org.uk.

8. Assessment process

Assessment criteria for written application and interview responses

The Hong Kong Empowerment Fund scoring panel will be reviewing all applications received based on the following assessment criteria:

| Criteria | We will be looking for |
|--|--|
| Strength of proposal to deliver activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear articulation of the proposed project's aim in relation to the programme's aims <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Projects must meet one or more of the aims of the Hong Kong Empowerment Fund listed in Section 2 of the Prospectus. ○ Applicant should clearly identify and evidence the need they observe in the BN(O) community and explain how their proposed project can meet this need • Realistic and clear project delivery plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clear plan for delivery with a realistic timeline over the six-month period including the month of event, number of events, topics of sessions and any relevant details. • Inclusion of embedding BN(O)s into the local community and building sustainable support networks as part of the project plan • Value for money |
| Projected Impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear plan on how they intend to measure outcomes of their project activities. This includes ensuring time and resources are allocated to monitoring and evaluation of the project. • Clear identification of the indicators that delivery team intend to utilise to measure progress made in reaching the identified overarching project aim(s). Applicants may refer to section 3 of the prospectus for suggestions of indicators. |
| Relevance of previous engagement with Hong Kong communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of understanding of the experiences of Hongkongers and the barriers they may face on arrival to London, according to their intersectional needs. • Examples of a proven track record in engaging with London's Hongkongers. • Relevant partnerships with other organisations or groups to support Hongkongers in London. |
| Extent of ability to reach members of the community and understanding of the issues. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly defined target audience number and profile, including estimated number of direct and indirect participants and what group(s) of BNOs are you targeting according to age, gender identity and/or other considerations. • Evidence that demonstrates ability to build trust and provide a safe environment for Hongkongers • Concrete outline of how the safety and security of participants will be managed. • Clearly identified methods of engagement with BNO Londoners and potential participants in the design, implementation and evaluation of this project |
| Likelihood of success | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated experience within the project's team lead and staff in project management, including provision of a list of staff who will be involved in managing and implementing the project outlining their relevant experience. • Demonstrated understanding of the basic regulations of community work in the UK, including having, or planning to have, the appropriate policies in place and the ability to manage risks accordingly for the nature of their project. • For collaboration grant applicants: clearly agreed division of work and evidence of previous experience working in partnership or clear agreement on how the partnership will operate. |

Responses provided in written application and subsequent interview will be taken into consideration. The scoring panel will then shortlist applications and request further feedback from the Hong Kong Empowerment Fund Advisory Group.

Hong Kong Empowerment Fund Advisory Group

A Hong Kong Empowerment Fund Advisory Group will meet to assess the grant applications shortlisted by the scoring panel. This group will be comprised of community leaders with diverse backgrounds with varying knowledge and professional and/or lived experience related to the Hong Kong BN(O) visa. The role of the Advisory Group is to advise on whether projects will be accessible, inclusive and relevant to Hongkongers.

The advisory group feedback will be taken into consideration, but the final decision on all funding will be sit the GLA.

Please refer to [Annex 1](#) for more details about the Hong Kong Advisory Group.

Provisionally successful applicants will be selected and contacted via email.

9. Due diligence

For all provisionally successful applications of Hong Kong Empowerment Fund, they are required to go through due diligence checks.

Due diligence is the investigation or exercise of care that a reasonable organisation is expected to take before entering into an agreement or contract with another party. This includes reviewing organisational and financial information of the organisation who is entering into the contract.

The Hong Kong Empowerment Fund utilises public funds which the GLA receive from DLUHC. Thus, it is essential that the due diligence checks are conducted on any groups and organisations that the GLA intends to fund, so as to protect public money, mitigate risks and ensure the success of the funded projects and funding programme.

In general, all provisionally successful applicants will be asked to provide the following documentation for due diligence checks:

- Governing documents
- Registration with Companies House or Charity Commission
- Most recent signed set of financial statements/accounts
- Business bank statement
- Public liability insurance

The above list is **not exhaustive**. You may be asked to provide further documentation depending on your project activities. Some of this documentation may be provided by your sponsor organisation if you are provisionally successful for the Growth Grant, or the lead organisation if you are provisionally successful for the Collaboration Grant. The GLA will provide further guidance about the due diligence process at a later stage.

10. Support for successful grantees

We are committed to supporting and empowering the Hong Kong Civil Society in London. Therefore, as part of the grant journey, all successful grantees will be invited to attend regular informal catch-up meetings with GLA grants officers. These catch-up meetings are for grants officers to understand the progress of grantees' project delivery. It is understandable that challenges and problems may arise during project delivery and GLA grants officers would like to proactively offer support where possible. More information on what to expect in these meetings will be provided during inception meeting with all successful grantees.

All successful grantees will be invited to join the Hong Kong Civil Society Incubator Programme. The incubator will be led by a partner that the GLA has commissioned specifically to provide support to successful grantees. The incubator partner will co-develop a programme of activities with successful grantees, which may include skills workshop and in-person networking sessions. The aim of this support is to help you make the most out of your grant, build a legacy from your work, and help you to grow further.

In Year 2 of the Hong Kong Civil Society Incubator Programme, a series of online skills workshop and in-person events were organised, and they covered a range of topics, including safeguarding, monitoring and evaluation and fundraising and grant bidding. These topics were selected based on the needs identified by the relevant cohort of grantees.

Below are some reflections and comments provided by participants of the Hong Kong Civil Society Incubator Programme:

'This skills workshop was very useful. As a new and young organisation, everything is so new to us. I was able to reflect what was presented with what we do on the ground. It was informative and timely.'

Participant's feedback on 'Monitoring & Evaluation' Skills Workshop

'The funders fair was a great opportunity to meet with funders and have 1-1 sessions with them. I learned how to convey our strong points to the funders and promote my organisation in a tailored and specific way.'

Participant's feedback on in-person funders' fair

'I liked about the session that it was participative and the thought-provoking discussions, lots of ideas sharing and food for thought in general. I learned how to engage with other organisations and communities safely in a relaxed approach.'

Participant's feedback on Engagement and Outreach session

Thank you for your interest in the Hong Kong Empowerment Fund. We look forward to hearing from you.

Annex 1 – Hong Kong Empowerment Fund Advisory Group

Conditions for recruiting advisory panel members and their function:

- We will contact Hong Kong community leaders, prioritising those with whom we have an existing working relationship, to get a sense of whether there is interest and capacity to participate in the grant assessment process.
- Panel members should be experienced community leaders who are aware of and are currently working closely to support the needs of recent Hong Kong BN(O) arrivals in London. These community leaders must have lived or learned experience of the HK BN(O) immigration route and are trusted by the Hong Kong community.
- Panel members will be expected to bring expertise and knowledge of on the ground activity to advise which applications would be the most inclusive and responsive to Hongkongers' immediate needs.
- Panel members will be required to make a recommendation on grant applications based on the following selected questions in the application forms and RAG scoring system:
 1. In what ways do you expect your project will benefit the immediate needs of Hongkongers particularly those most at risk of marginalisation?
 2. How will your project ensure the safety of Hongkongers?

| RAG-rating | |
|------------|--|
| Red | Uncertainty about level of trust Hongkongers would place in this project, and its ability to meet an urgent need |
| Amber | Hongkongers may have further questions around this project's aims Further due diligence or a conversation with the applicant to gain more information is recommended. |
| Green | Level of trust in this project should be high amongst Hongkongers. Shows clear understanding of Hongkongers immediate needs with a feasible plan to ensure their safety. |

The advisory group feedback will be taken into consideration, but the final decision on all funding will be sit the GLA.

Annex 2 Useful information and resources to support BN(O)s with English language

As stated in the [Fund Objective section](#), applicants who choose to include English language support in their proposed project are required to provide justification to explain why this element cannot be covered by AEB and DLUHC's £850 demand-led English language support. This is important as we do not want funding to be duplicated.

Below are some information and resources to support applicants to understand what English language support funding is made available currently for BN(O)s in London:

Adult education course, including ESOL, covered by AEB

- The Mayor of London has changed the AEB Funding Rules in London to improve access to adult education, including ESOL, for long term migrants and people who have no recourse to public funds, including [BN\(O\)'s](#).
- The AEB funds ESOL from Entry 1 (including pre-Entry) to Level 2. Courses can be full time to a few hours a week, and accredited or non-accredited. You can find out more about ESOL in our [guidance](#).
- Many AEB-funded courses are held in community venues. Your local [AEB providers](#) may be open to delivering an ESOL initial assessment session at your venue, and may even be able to run the course from the location, provided it is suitable and there are a sufficient number of learners.
- No Recourse to Public Funds does **not** exclude adults or children from accessing education.

DLUHC's demand-led £850 English language funding

- DLUHC's Welcome Programme includes demand-led English language funding which is currently set at £850 per adult per financial year. Claims for this funding must be submitted to DLUHC via local authorities (councils). This includes the council's adult learning service. Sub-contracting is permitted.
- There has been low uptake of the funding nationally. The funding can be used for formal and informal (including embedded ESOL, for example, ESOL plus a hobby, e.g., crochet) accredited, and non-accredited English language courses. Funding can be used for provision at any level, for example, sector specific courses such as IELTS and OET. It can also be used to support English language learning funded via other funding streams, for example, by covering costs where the learner is co-funded under AEB, childcare and/or digital costs.
- The Mayor of London has changed the AEB Funding Rules in London to improve access to adult education, including ESOL, for long term migrants and people who have no recourse to public funds, including [BN\(O\)'s](#).

Other useful resources about ESOL provision and English language support

- You can find out what ESOL provision is available in London, through all funding streams, using the GLA's [English classes in London](#) webpage and stay up to date through the [ESOL Newsletter](#).
- You can request advice on ESOL planning from your regional [ESOL coordinator](#), invite partnerships and support via the [ESOL Newsletter](#), and advertise ESOL related vacancies the [ESOL Jobs and Volunteering Bulletin](#).
- The Mayor of London's Community Outreach Programme has funded a range of community organisations to deliver projects which support Londoners into adult education, including ESOL. To find out more about their different and innovative approaches, visit the programme's [webpage](#).