



INNOVATION FUND

PROSPECTUS
AUGUST 2023

VRU

MAYOR OF LONDON
VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT



Introduction



London's Violence Reduction Unit is committed to encouraging creativity, experimentation and investing in community-led solutions to addressing the root causes of violence.

Communities everywhere are facing complex social challenges that defy simple solutions. We need new solutions that are both creative and collaborative.

That means supporting those who are closest to the issues with the resources they need to experiment to bring out change in their communities.

It's why we are launching the Innovation Fund.

We're investing £1.5 million to support up to 54 community-led organisations and groups to test new approaches and ideas to support vulnerable Londoners who are either at risk or have been involved in violence.

I'm really proud that, with the Mayor of London's support, we're investing further in our communities. A key part of our approach is about understanding what works and then providing support and the resources to help interventions to thrive. Through the Innovation Fund, the VRU will support organisations with online networking/ collaboration, capacity-building and other tools.

If that sounds like you, I'd encourage you to look through our prospectus and work with us because we firmly believe violence is preventable, not inevitable.

We look forward to working alongside you.

Karina Wane-Henry
Director of Strategy and Operations

Our delivery partners

The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) have appointed Rocket Science and Action for Race Equality (ARE) to oversee the administration of grants and to support the assessment of applications and the monitoring of the grants awarded.

Rocket Science:

Launched in October 2001, Rocket Science is an independent research and consultancy company with offices in London, Edinburgh and the North East. We are committed to making a difference to the lives of people and communities across the UK by supporting national and local government, its agencies, charities and the voluntary sector to deliver and improve their services.

As the lead delivery partner, we are responsible for supporting the VRU with programme design and delivery, capacity building support and the monitoring of grants.



Action for Race Equality (ARE):

Established in 1991, ARE is a national charity delivering programmes and empowering young people who are Black, Asian and of Mixed Heritage. We conduct action research, operate as a learning partner for funders and provide a voice to government for the groups we represent.

ARE will be delivery capacity building workshops and one to one support.



Summary

Our core mission is to tackle and address the root causes of violence.

In light of building capacity through smaller grassroots organisations, the Innovation Fund will enable community-led groups who are not receiving Mayor of London's Office (including MOPAC, Greater London Authority and/or VRU) in the current year 2023/24, to test new approaches and ideas to support vulnerable Londoners who are either at risk or have been involved in violence.

Grants of between £20,000 and £50,000 will be awarded, with an anticipated average size of c.£30,000 and support to build capacity.

To ensure that the Innovation Fund has maximum impact, we will be adopting a "funder plus" model. This means that, alongside grant funding, we will provide capacity building workshops and customised support to enhance delivery organisations' resilience and sustainability.

If you feel you are eligible, please read on for more detailed information about the programme.

APPLICATION JOURNEY



About the Innovation Fund

Background

The VRU's remit is to work with partners, stakeholders, and local communities on the delivery of the following strategic aims:

- To **reduce and stabilise violence** across London- violence is a concern for us all; we will all play our part to reduce it.
- To **increase feelings of safety** - recognising that London is one of the safest cities in the world.
- To put **community at the heart** of our work- only by doing so do we have a sustainable long-term approach towards reducing violence.

The VRU recognises the life-changing work that community-led organisations do to support people who are at risk of violence. Community-led organisations can generate creative, engaging, and empowering ways of doing things which we want to encourage and support. The Innovation Fund has been informed by discussions and feedback from consultation with youth sector practitioners, Voluntary and Community Sector (CVS) organisations and, most importantly, young people themselves.

Aim of the fund

The objectives of the fund are to:

1. **Encourage innovation** in the violence reduction space. We encourage creativity experimentation and piloting new programmes that deal with emerging issues relating to violence. By supporting novel ideas, the VRU intends to identify promising practice that can be piloted and potentially scaled up.
2. **Empower communities** by funding smaller, grassroots community groups, we support those who are closest to the issues with the resources they need to experiment and find new solutions that are appropriate to their own locality.
3. Further progress against the **VRU's core mission to reduce violence**, support London to feel safer and to build a partnership approach to sustainable solutions.

Funding package

We want to provide you with resources and support and have adopted a "Funder Plus" model, comprising grant funding alongside a suite of capacity building workshops, action learning sessions and 1 day of customised support to enhance your organisation's resilience. Our full package of support is detailed below:

Funding

We will be awarding up to 8 grants per quarter providing grants between **£20,000 and £50,000**. The average grant award will be around **£30,000**.

We will provide a full cost recovery approach to funding, including:

- Staff salaries
- Project activities
- Overheads
- Capacity building costs
- Expert support
- Equipment costs (i.e. small capital costs like IT equipment)
- Cost of living recognition to reduce barriers for engagement including support to programme participants such as travel to sessions on a needs basis and healthy foods during sessions i.e. fruits.

We will not fund the following:

- Activities that promote religious or political views
- Purely commercial ventures (for profit)
- Spending that has already taken place (retrospective funding)
- Activities where people are excluded on the basis of religion, sexual orientation, gender or ethnicity (unless the issue is group-specific)
- Core costs over 50% of the amount requested.

Capacity Support

Each successful organisation will be allocated **1 day** of free capacity building support and access to a range of thematic workshops including:

- Financial and business planning,
- Measuring impact
- Relationship management and more.

You will also have access to a team of specialists at the VRU who have a range of experience in public policy, research and advocacy. The strength of the programme lies in our co-producing plans with you and supporting you along the way.

Pre-Application

Our partners at Rocket Science will be providing helpline support throughout to answer any questions you have via email and telephone

Email: VRUIF@rocketsciencelab.co.uk

Tel: 0207 117 2534

How to apply

Working with our delivery partners, Rocket Science and ARE, we have reflected on recent grant programmes and listened to community-led organisations to understand the barriers they face when applying for support. Our aim is to make your experience of applying as straightforward as possible.

We want to make sure that potential applicants do not waste time. We will be **funding 8 projects each quarter**, and expect the fund to be highly competitive.

Who is eligible?

We will accept applications from organisations with the following legal structures – there must be a signed governing document in place appropriate to the legal structure which includes an asset lock (or equivalent clause), and the purpose of all funded activities must be charitable (not for profit):

- Registered Charity
- Exempt or Excepted Charity
- Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
- Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG)
- Community Interest Company Limited by Guarantee (CICLG)
- Community Benefit Societies (CBS). Ideally, the CBS will also be registered as charitable with HMRC, however this is not essential.

You must have **at least three unrelated members** legally responsible for the governance of the organisation; trustees/directors/management committee as appropriate to your structure. Please note that this refers to the highest level of governance, a management committee that sits below a board of trustees (e.g. charities, CIOs) or directors (CLG or CICLG) does not count towards this.

The organisation must have **submitted required financial information** to the Charity Commission/Companies House for **the last two completed financial years** and **must not have two years of net current liabilities** within the two most recent completed financial years.

If you do not meet this criteria you may be able to identify a larger organisation who does, who can act as your sponsor and apply with you to support your application.

Who is not eligible?

The following types of organisation are not eligible:

- Companies limited by shares (including CIC limited by shares)
- Statutory organisations, such as local authorities
- Statutory agencies in the criminal justice system, including Metropolitan Police Service
- NHS bodies
- Co-operative societies
- Unincorporated association/group.

There must be no personal benefit attached to the grant.

Organisations where trustees are paid are not eligible unless evidence of approval is provided from the Charity Commission and/or this arrangement is referenced in the governing document.

Networking and building capacity




You must commit to:

- Identifying need, matching this to activities/provision and measuring outcomes
- Networking and collaborating with grantees and the VRU to share ideas, solutions, and support
- Utilising social media where possible to promote your work
- Improving organisational sustainability through attending workshops, networking events, completing a diagnostic tool and utilising 1 day of capacity building support, and
- Openness and honest dialogue with the VRU and delivery partners to understand what works and more importantly what doesn't and why.

Outcome priorities

To achieve the long-term goal of reducing violence the work of the London VRU is organised into 'priority areas' (set out below). These areas represent short to medium-term steps we need to take and reflect the contexts within which violence occurs. We support children first/trauma informed approaches and our 'Systems and Sector' priority area, captures our research and policy advocacy work and illustrates the VRU's ambition to advance systems-level change.

When applying, applicants will have to select a priority area and demonstrate how their proposed project will advance this aim.

Priority Areas	
	Children & Young People: Reducing Harm Improving identification of and support to prevent violence against children and young people at greatest risk of harm and exploitation
	Children & Young People: Positive Opportunities Expanding access to positive opportunities and providing development and support through training, apprenticeships, and employment & enrichment
	Families Developing stronger and more resilient families (to better support young people)
	Educational settings Promoting healthy relationships and reducing exclusions and dis-engagement in education
	Communities & Place Providing communities with the support and resources to deliver sustainable reductions in violence
	Systems & Sector Collaborating and working in partnership to deliver better services and improved outcomes for those affected by violence

What do we mean by innovation?

The VRU wants to identify and support creative, novel solutions to get off the ground.

By innovation we mean:

- Projects/ programmes that are not currently funded by the Mayor of London's Office,
- Projects/ interventions that are not currently being delivered or tested elsewhere,
- Projects/ interventions that have a good evidence base or qualitative insights/are being delivered elsewhere but which applicants are adapting to a London context or to a specific community or group,
- Projects/ interventions that have been co-designed/ co-developed with community stakeholders and/or young people,
- Projects/ interventions that utilise new technologies, new approaches or new tools to support young people,
- Projects/ interventions that respond to new changes/ trends and issues affecting those most at risk of violence,
- Projects / interventions that have been implemented at a micro-level and you want to scale/ spread to new groups or communities.

We will welcome applications from projects/ interventions at a range of stages – you should identify in your application which best describes your project:

1. **Seed Phase** – You've identified a problem and have a great idea to solve it, you want to further develop your theory and perform some initial tests. You need investment to take the first step!
2. **Proof of concept** - You've got a clearly developed project / intervention and want to see if it works. In other words, you've developed a 'minimal viable product' and want to implement it with a wider number of users to see how it does!
3. **Growth Phase** – You've got a project/ intervention that is working well and you want to reach more people and have a greater impact. You need investment to grow!
4. **Scale Up** – You've been providing a great new project/ intervention and you want to embed and sustain this. Maybe you need new skills, new staff or want to build new partnerships to help you expand. You need investment to help scale sustainably!

When to apply

Grant funding will be delivered across quarterly rounds:

	Round 3	Round 4
Deadline for applications	4pm, 29 January 2024	4pm, 11 March 2024
Assessment and due diligence	February 2024	March 2024
Decisions expected by	19th February 2024	15th April 2024

Eligibility criteria and programme priorities

A full outline of the eligibility criteria for this fund has been provided below, broken down into the categories of organisation, programme, experience and priority areas. You will need to meet the organisation and programme criteria to be eligible, so please read this carefully before submitting an application. We will use the priority section if the programme is over-subscribed.

<p>Organisation</p>	<p>Your organisation will be based in and supporting people in one or more London borough.</p>	<p>Your organisation is not receiving Mayor of London's Office (including MOPAC, Greater London Authority and/or VRU) in the current year 2023/24.</p>	<p>You will have a current child protection and/or vulnerable adults safeguarding policy that has been reviewed in the last 2 years and insurances in place.</p>	<p>You will have a bank account in the name of the lead organisation with a minimum of two unrelated signatories by the start of the grant.</p>	<p>Constituted not-for-profit organisations who can provide governing documents and a full set of accounts.</p>	<p>If you are a newly established or unconstituted group please use an established organisation as a sponsor to support your application.</p>
<p>Programme</p>	<p>You can apply for up to 50% of your annual turnover (up to £50,000). If your annual income is below £40,000 you will need to demonstrate capacity, experience and contingency plans to manage the risk of dependency.</p>	<p>You will be able to mobilise, and start delivery within a month of a grant offer being made.</p>	<p>You will be able to demonstrate how your delivery is working towards a VRU outcome priority and meets the innovation definition.</p>	<p>You will commit to attending capacity building workshops utilising 1 day of support and developing your social media presence.</p>	<p>You will work with the VRU evaluation team and collect sufficient output and outcome level data to demonstrate learning.</p>	<p>You will pay at least the London Living Wage (LLW) for any posts funded by a VRU grant.</p>
<p>Experience</p>	<p>You can demonstrate you are rooted in/understand the needs of the local community. For example, you could demonstrate that your organisation is equity-led.</p>	<p>You will have engaged with the local community and equity-groups in designing your model.</p>	<p>You can demonstrate an understanding of working with people at risk of violence.</p>			
<p>The following priorities may be taken into account if the programme is oversubscribed</p>	<p>Innovative test and learn approaches.</p>	<p>Provision for underserved groups (e.g. young women and girls, carers).</p>	<p>Impact driven projects.</p>	<p>Community focussed, partnership approach to long-term sustainable violence reduction solutions.</p>	<p>Providing a safe space for people.</p>	<p>Grassroots organisations.</p>

Key areas of interest for innovation

The Innovation Fund is designed to support equity-led, smaller, grassroots & community organisations with great ideas to tackle violence. The VRU has identified several key issues where we would welcome innovative and creative thinking. These are areas where the VRU's current provision is limited or where there is a gap in the evidence as to 'what works'.

Please note – the following are examples, are not mandatory and are not intended to limit innovation in other areas. Applicants do not need to specifically address these issues if this does not apply to their project. **We expect you to tell us how and why your proposed project is innovative, not just within your organisation, but within your communities and the sector.**





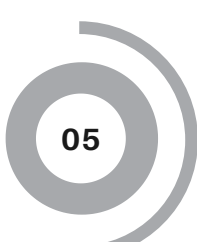
Children & Young People: Protecting children & young people at risk of harm or exploitation:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interventions focusing on reaching and supporting young people that are already involved/affected by violence and exploitation, including bespoke support for girls and young women. • Interventions to reduce weapons enabled violence – in particular, supports to stop knife carrying.
Children & young People: providing positive opportunities:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative approaches for engaging with under-served groups, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Girls and Young women ○ Trans youth & gender diverse ○ Young People with Special Educational Needs ○ Care experienced children and young people ○ Youth work • Innovative approaches that use the arts
Families: building resilient families:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative social justice approaches to violence reduction that focus on participation and access to CYP and their families. • Interventions focused on supporting young boys to develop healthy relationships. • Intervention support for Caregivers trauma, which is vicariously passed on. • Whole-family support
Educational setting:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interventions supporting students on college/ university campuses to feel safe. • Mental health support (pupils and teachers) • Post-16 careers provision for students in PRUs • Effective sex and relationships education, ideally young person-led • Improving educational outcomes for children in care
Communities & Place
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging local businesses in violence reduction initiatives • Providing positive opportunities and support for girls and young women through local capacity building • Community-led initiatives to tackle misogynistic and harmful attitudes

We encourage you to view and complete the eligibility quiz and supporting questions. All projects must be completed by the end of September 2025.

There are five key stages to the application process:

Application process

Deadlines
Round 3 **Round 4**

		Round 3	Round 4
	<p>Stage One - Eligibility</p> <p>By working through our online eligibility quiz and answering a set of straightforward questions, you can determine whether or not your organisation and project meet the core requirements of the programme or whether you should consider a partnership approach with a larger charitable organisation.</p>	4pm 29 January 2024	4pm 11 March 2024
	<p>Stage Two - Registration form</p> <p>If you are eligible, you will be invited to complete a short form to confirm your eligibility and to tell us more about your project.</p>		
	<p>Stage Three - Meeting</p> <p>If successful you will be invited to a 30 minute discussion to bring your project to life. We will ask several questions to understand more about you, your organisation, your project and the people you support.</p>	7-9 February 2024	25-27 March 2024
	<p>Stage Four - Due diligence</p> <p>If shortlisted following the meeting, a short due-diligence form will be provided for you to complete and ensure that you meet our internal checks, including finances, budgets, policies, potential risks and insurance.</p>	13-18 February 2024	4-12 April 2024
	<p>Stage Five - Decision</p> <p>Funding decisions will be made by a panel convened and chaired by the VRU. Once a decision about your proposal has been made, we will communicate the outcome to you.</p>	19 February 2024	15 April 2024

What happens if I'm successful or not?

Our delivery partner, Rocket Science, will notify all successful projects by email and work with you on your grant agreement and delivery milestones. You will be invited, along with the other grantees, to a welcome meeting to discuss your partnership with the VRU in more detail and to establish connections with other Innovation-funded organisations across London.

If you are unsuccessful at the eligibility check stage, you will receive an automatic notification letting you know. If you are unsuccessful at any other stage of the application process, Rocket Science will contact you and provide constructive feedback via email.

If you need to contact us:

If you have any questions about the application process, please call us on 0207 117 2534 or by email at: VRUIF@rocketsciencelab.co.uk