



GMSC Participatory Grantmaking Decision Learning Journey Report

In early 2023, GM System Changers invited organisations within the GM System Changers community to participate and design how a pot of 400K fund would be spent. Below are the organisations that initially signed up for this community collaboration project. Representative from both Funders(Lankelly Chase and GMCA) were present at the beginning to observe this historical piece of work.

- ❖ SAWN
- ❖ Northern Heart and Soul CIC
- ❖ Inspire Women
- ❖ Elevate Young Minds
- ❖ Black Youth Forum
- ❖ Wonderfully Made Woman
- ❖ Wrap around partnership
- ❖ Global Arts
- ❖ Our Agency
- ❖ Middleton Cooperating
- ❖ Geeks for Social Change
- ❖ Elephants Trail
- ❖ De Butterfly
- ❖ Policy makers Bury
- ❖ Theatre in Flow
- ❖ Womens Voices
- ❖ Caring and sharing Rochdale
- ❖ Rekindle school
- ❖ RebeccaNeverBecky
- ❖ OBADO
- ❖ Blossom Foundation
- ❖ ZIWO
- ❖ 42nd Street



Our Purpose and Desired Outcome:

- Show how we can work together as a 'team' that crosses organisational boundaries and perspectives, and how we can have fun working together a shared purpose.
- To test, learn and grow more equitable, participatory, and sustainable approaches to funding and commissioning in Greater Manchester that has tackling inequalities and community-led approaches at the heart.
- To support the critical connections between changemakers in communities and those working across the system who want to, know how to and will be free to contribute to a liberated Greater Manchester which is healed by justice, equity, and inclusion and where everyone can live a good life.
- To liberate and distribute resource to people in communities, organisations and networks who are challenging injustice and creating the conditions for healthier systems to emerge, enabling good lives for all.

Method:

- We agreed that we meet regularly and have reflection throughout so everyone can feel and experience how it feels to working together despite our different thinking and build a decision-making power together we have never done.
- We agreed to be open, honest, and fair. Value everyone's opinion and contributions. Every voice matters.



What's how principle of Partnership?
Our Values

- ✓ Determined
- ✓ Open
- ✓ Reflective

Creating the space Reflection

This space has a vibe ('where are your cultivating pockets of freedom?') this is how this space makes me feel, not getting too bogged down when things go wrong, how can we spread this practice?

This space makes me feel great - is that selfish? Reminds me of why I do this work. It's opened doors for me!

This space allows me to remove my wig, we are all passionate, our stories are connected and resonate at some level - the changes will come eventually, it might be a long process.

This space is a place which centers me, a place to just be and explore. I never know what will happen, but I feel like I trust the room!

A very real and tangible space, not theoretical, there is a real point to what is happening here.

Bearing all our agreed principles in mind, we proceed into the Design Process.

How do we make the decision? We entered the GROAN Zone



1. Who should we focus on when there's so much need? Drop in the ocean in terms of need.
2. What does multiple disadvantages look like for different communities and what's the right language?
3. How can we support us coming together to do more of this through this funding? Build in community, connection, solidarity, and strength.
4. Is this sustainable funding? Is it going to be part of the problem we are experiencing as community groups?
5. Are we funding ourselves and our communities too.
6. Some yet 'this is hard! No wonder we get frustrated with funders.
7. Themes started to emerge around strengthening what we already have, keeping it in GM, communities experiencing racism and intersecting inequalities who are also facing multiple disadvantages,

the gaps – focus on sustainable systems change, continue to fund what is already running.

8. Lot of frustration at the system – and influencing systems change and collective power to lobby came up strongly.
9. Split the fund – one to focus on building community, solidarity, infrastructure, influencing across communities, identifies, boundaries. The other for grassroots ‘spaces’ of liberation, healing, wellbeing, and action.

After exploring different views, polarities and uncertainty, the group finally agreed and decided to create two funds to meet the needs and aims that emerged from our discussions...

1. The GM Systems Changers Liberation Fund is to support activity that creates connections between groups. We are keen to see collaboration and spaces that cross organisation silos.
2. The GM Systems Changers Solidarity Fund is for direct work in specific organisations, to enable them to continue to provide much needed support to marginalised communities.

Decision: Create two working group to design each of the funds, plus an overall holding of the process which will link representatives from both groups:

1. Spaces for liberation design group
2. Spaces for solidarity design group
3. Overall process design circle

Timeline: Timelines were carried and put in place.

.
Application criteria and process was designed by the 2 groups with all intentions to make the application process open, simple and collaborative. The application process was approved by the overall team and the fund application was shared amongst grassroots organisation across GM

The Application Process:

Applicants had an option to a written application, face to face and online meetings to present proposals.

--- number of applications was received and --- was successful

Successful and unsuccessful applicants were notified.

The successful applicants were invited for a robust one to one conversation before we put together grant agreement as part of our mutual due diligence process. The purpose is for us to understand more about each other and manage any risks in the partnership between GM SC and applicants.

The Due Diligence Process:

Lankelly Chase and the core group members of the GM System Changers and one of our facilitator/GM System Changer community made up the panel for the due diligence process.

The process was a very vigorous, intense, and thorough process on the side of the administration and teamwork from the Lankelly Chase team and the GM System Changers. There are so much learning and big eye opener to see how much work was behind the scenes.

The conversation process with the grantees was an informal 30-minute conversation to confirm details about successful organisation or collective, and for them to ask anything they would like to know about the funding.

Once all information was confirmed and up to date. An agreement letter was sent to applicants for signatures.

Funds were successfully released into the successful applicant's bank account.

Final Reflection/Feedback

Does participation in this GMSC PGM meet your expectations of joining the group?

- Yes – I've never done anything like this before so was fascinated about how we would work, what we would do and the decisions we'd make.
- Yes, I had the opportunity of meeting other groups, I wouldn't have otherwise met outside GMSC-PGM. I learnt a lot from sharing knowledge and widening my perspective on what other services are offered in other organisations.
- Yes, I wanted to learn and participate in the process and this I was able to achieve, with a renewed mindset on funding application process.
- The collaborative environment, insightful discussions and opportunities for learning have been incredibly enriching. I have gained valuable insights that have surpassed what I initially anticipated when joining the group.
-

Was the size of the group appropriate to work together?

- Yes, it felt like so many people at the start, but we soon found our way.
- Yes, it was, and we demonstrated that we could come together, although the group was big, there were times we split into smaller groups.
- I think the size of the group was large when trying to make big decisions but worked well when we broke into smaller groups and divided tasks.

What do you think about the time spent so far on designing this project?

- The original brief of distributing the 400k in 3months always felt very ambitious – so it's good we have extended – and as we have been on the journey things have morphed/changed.
- I think the amount of time spent on designing was consistent with this work, considering that this was our first time to do it

- It was a bit stretched and this was due to the groups not reaching an agreement, but it was well worth it.
- The overall time frame has been good, but the last phase felt a bit rushed and I struggled with lack of digital skills!
-

What do you think about working with mix of participants from different community/grassroot organisations for the first time?

- It has been good to connect and learn more about each-others work.
- This was the highlight of co-production and collaboration, I really liked the mix and from my experience, it never felt as if we were meeting for the first time. I think the shared experience of marginalisation contributed to this.
- Although I have previously been part of a consortium of 9 partners it was great to meet and work with some organisations that I had no knowledge about such as Rekindle, who are doing magnificent work in the community. Their work could greatly benefit many of the families we work with. The mix of participants is also a great opportunity to collaborate with some organisations.
-

Did you feel equally engaged in every session?

- At first I felt a bit like an outsider as it felt like lots of people knew each other really well – but maybe that was part my imposter
- For me yes, I was equally engaged throughout. Everyone was given a chance to engage and share their knowledge.
- I did feel equally engaged in most of the sessions but less so in the last phase. I also felt some people had established relationships through collaborating on projects, and I didn't always feel part of the team.
-

Did you learn anything new?

- Great facilitation to get the group to decisions, the jam board tools for decisions – maybe useful for final allocation decisions???
- producing a grant making document
- The importance of writing a good application.
- Yes, of course. How we as community activists can come together and dismantle systems of oppression and inequalities by

strengthening relationships as a group and working towards a collective decision-making process/es

Is this process currently of good relevant to our community needs?

- yep, linkages to my work with Inspire and other work – love listening to the wisdom in the space and being with likeminded people.
- Yes, the process allows everyone to be involved and take ownership.
- Yes, by creating structures that understand community needs and involves people with lived experiences will benefit systems to have a better understanding of marginalised communities and how best to support them.
- The process will also enable organisations to strengthen community activism and help organisations deliver vital services in the community.
-

Do you think this design can be widely applied in the future?

- I hope so BUT needs really strong facilitation and patience to keep it together.
- Yes, it can be applied or used as a template.
- It gave grassroot organisations the chance to see how big funding bodies assess and view applications and the process and time that goes into it.
- Yes, this design could be widely applied because the process we went through brought people from a range of services to come together and develop a system that has strong connections in the community and people were also aware of the inequalities and challenges faced by marginalised communities.

Would you as participants recommend this design as a way of working?
All yes.

I would, because working like this gives clarity, direction and what is lacking in addressing community needs.

Do you have any suggestions to improve the design/process?

- Perhaps the time taken, maybe things were not as clear from the beginning hence the going back and forth and the time it took.

- Always thinking about linkages and who not in the space- who is missing or what do the people in the space link to for bigger conversations??
- Pronoun for identity should be taken seriously and into consideration.

What words coming to mind when you think about the process of this design?

- Human
- Collaborative
- Fascinating
- Equality
- diversity.
- Learning
- change
- Liberation.
- Innovative
- Transparent
- equitable
-

What did you enjoy most about this process?

- Making new connections
- The thinking process, bringing together diverse perspectives into one agreeable outcome.
- Enjoyed the journey I have just been through.
- Learning and understanding different ways of working
- The support and sensitivity I received from Folashade, Viv and Carrina
- Teamwork and building relationships.
-

13. What did you find most challenging about this process?

- I found that coming to an agreement is not a straight line, instead it involves a lot of understanding different people's experiences and beliefs, values.
- Learning and making new friends.
- I think inviting communities missing from the process will help us to identify gaps in service provision and improving the final decision-making process.
- I felt the Liberation Fund had more members involved in the first stage of the process that decided on the funds whereas the Solidarity

fund only had 3 people. I know everyone was able to contribute via google doc I don't think we were all confident contributing to that process.

- The most challenging about this process was working through a fair and equal system on distributing the two funds and judging organisations. I felt the video calls were difficult both for people applying and some members. I also felt some groups who had established relationships or working on projects had better understanding of the organisations.
-

How could the learning/collaboration experience be improved?

- Sometimes dis-jointed with who can be there, arrival times, leaving early -but not sure that can be changed really.
- I think for now, we can continue with the process we have used.
- I think to improve learning/collaboration we must bring organisations who have never worked together so that we can all learn and share what we do and build a stronger community.
-

What's your personal stages learning and overall learning- What you have learnt?

- I think to improve learning/collaboration we must bring organisations who have never worked together so that we can all learn and share what we do and build a stronger community.
- Pace of the work must be right for the group, that this work is quite special and unique.
- I have learnt a lot in this short period of time. The diverse services provided by organisations. I learnt that collaboration is best practice.
- My personal stages of learning have been a journey of curiosity and exploration. Initially, it involved absorbing and grasping new concepts and ideas and then implementing what I had learned. My learning has taught me the value of adaptability, continuous improvement and appreciating diverse perspectives.

Is there anything else that you would like to share?

- I am very grateful for this experience, and I would like to see us building stronger communities and collaborating on projects and equal distribution of wealth to create a fair and just society.

'Reflections from the facilitation team'

- Overall, there was a lot of learning from doing the process, seeing what steps emerged and listening to the feedback and reflections. We now have a map of the steps we went through, although likely next time it would be different again!

- Various other PGM groups shared that they had taken around 12 months to complete a pgm process. We started with an intention of 3 months together, and then extended to 9 months.

- Although there were already connections and trust between the group, a lot of time was needed at first to explore dynamics in the group and build trust in this context where we would be making decisions about money together that would affect organisations sustainability. There were other conversations that would have been interesting and useful that we didnt have time for.

- A key factor in the final decisions around was that previous funding by Lankelly Chase had come to an end and some organisations were struggling to be sustainable. Therefore, the group decided that was a priority, with only some of the money going towards new and collaborative initiatives. If the process had happened after the decision about support grants it is likely the process and outcome would have been very different.

- As the number of projects applying and funded by the solidarity fund was so big, it was a hard process to do collaboratively with a large number of people with different levels of experience with grant funding and finance. A smaller group took on this task and ideally, we would have spent more time after their work making decisions and coming to agreement together. This is something that would need to be reviewed if we did something similar in the future.

- A key learning was the amount of work that goes into administering the process after the intention and design of the fund is agreed is significant,

and much more time for this needs to be factored in. It's also important to get super clear and specific about any due diligence needed by the funder.