LOTI Women's Digital Leaders Network Proposal

About LOTI
LOTI is a fast-moving city innovation unit. We specialise in helping boroughs work together to bring the best of digital and data innovation to improve public services and outcomes for Londoners. We work in the open. Read all about our activities at: https://loti.london.

The challenge
While levels of diversity and inclusion have increased significantly in many areas of local government life, councils' IT and digital functions still tend to be dominated and led by white men. Looking at just one aspect of this - the lack of gender balance - both the perception and reality that women are not reaching and being valued in senior positions in this field is deeply problematic. It's off-putting to women outside the sector who could provide real value working in local government, and also hinders the career development of women already working in council teams. As a result of this challenge, we're missing out on the ideas and contributions that a diverse team brings.

When we say women we include all women, non-binary folks, and gender-nonconforming people.

Our proposal
One of LOTI's most important areas of work is helping boroughs develop their skills and capabilities in the fields of digital and data innovation. Addressing the challenges outlined above is a key part of meeting that objective. Lots of different measures need to be put in place and sustained over a long time to make a significant change. This proposal sets out two concrete things that the LOTI community could do in the immediate term to take steps in the right direction.

- **Form a cohort to attend the UPFRONT confidence course.** The first is to recruit a cohort of women working in digital, data and IT teams across the LOTI network to take part in the highly regarded UPFRONT confidence course provided by Lauren Currie. The intention would be to have at least two people from each of LOTI's member organisations take part in the course, forming their own "bond". LOTI would fund the places of ~40 women to take part in the first cohort, ensuring there is no barrier to entry. We would warmly encourage boroughs to consider funding a second person from their own training budgets. The group would be backed up by three fortnightly sessions, held

during the six weeks of training, for participants to discuss how the things they learn apply to their own work and context and to the wider LOTI missions.

- **Establish a LOTI Women's Digital Leaders Network.** We propose establishing a dedicated network for women who work in digital, IT and data roles across the LOTI community. The network would be open to women of all levels of seniority, from apprentice to Chief Digital Officer. The aim would be to provide a forum through which members can collectively mentor each other (potentially through a matched process to make 1-2-1 connections), share their experiences across different levels of seniority and actively work to shape and address LOTI's key areas of work. The group would also have a major role in shaping what LOTI does next to build on this proposal and further develop the skills and confidence of their peers. The network could have an online space to connect using LOTI's Basecamp platform, and a regular series of online and in-person events to convene.

Costs
The advertised cost of the UPFRONT confidence course is £590/person.

Benefits
As well as supporting the career development of women working in LOTI borough digital, IT and data roles, we hope this network will help build relationships and trust across boroughs that can support future pan-London collaboration.

Key questions:
- What would be the most effective way to recruit participants from each LOTI member organisation?
- What format should the reflection sessions provided around the course take? Would these, in effect, be the first meetings of the network?
- What format would the network sessions take? How regularly would they be held? Do the sessions need to be led, or would they be group managed in a more unconference style?