



ELEVATE FUND EVALUATION

REPORT 2025

THE FUTURE IS YOUNG

ELEVATE
SHAPING & UPLIFTING FUTURES

 **COMMUNITY
FUND**

 **SPIRIT OF 2012**
INVESTING IN HAPPINESS


**QUEEN ELIZABETH
OLYMPIC PARK**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Elevate Fund, co-designed by the Elevate Board as part of the London 2012 Legacy Partnership Project funded by Spirit of 2012, with support from East Wick and Sweetwater and Foundation for Future London. The Fund was established to empower underrepresented young people and grassroots organisations in East London.

It set out with three clear goals: to drive personal development, enable youth-led social impact projects, and strengthen organisational capacity. In just its pilot year, the Fund has delivered against these ambitions with remarkable reach, depth, and innovation.

Key Outcomes:

28 PROJECTS FUNDED ACROSS THREE STRANDS:

YOUNG PERSON

CATALYST

BREAKTHROUGH

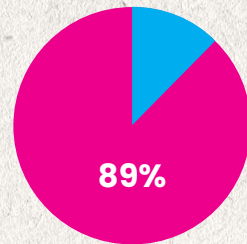
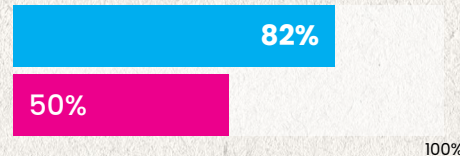
500+ YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGED

developing creative, entrepreneurial, and leadership skills.

500+

82% FIRST-TIME APPLICANTS

(50% overall, rising to 82% for Young Person Awards), building confidence and access to funding.



89% OF AWARDEES FROM GLOBAL MAJORITY BACKGROUNDS,

ensuring diversity and representation.

20% D/DEAF OR DISABLED AND 15% LGBTQ+ AWARDEES,

reflecting inclusivity at the heart of delivery.

20% d/deaf or disabled

15% LGBTQ+

30%

Pathways of Impact:



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Young people gained confidence, creative skills, and new networks.



SOCIAL IMPACT:

Youth-led initiatives tackled systemic barriers, from representation in media to affordable spaces for entrepreneurs.



ORGANISATIONAL GROWTH:

Grassroots groups strengthened their governance, reach, and ability to deliver lasting change.

INTRODUCTION

The Elevate Fund was developed as part of the London 2012 Legacy Partnership Project, funded by Spirit of 2012, to continue the legacy of the Games by ensuring opportunities for young people remain inclusive, accessible, and community-rooted. Unlike many traditional funding schemes, the Elevate Fund was designed and stewarded directly by the Elevate Board — a group of young leaders and community representatives — ensuring that decision-making reflected lived experience and local priorities.

At its heart, the Fund set out to challenge the systemic barriers that underrepresented young people face in accessing funding, developing their talents, and leading change in their communities. By offering flexible, tiered awards, Elevate was able to meet people at different stages of their journey: from personal development and enterprise testing to scaling organisational capacity.

The fund was set up to achieve the following outcomes;

INCREASE CONFIDENCE OF UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS APPLYING FOR FUNDING

INCREASE CAPACITY OF LOCAL COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

CREATE LONG-TERM WORKING RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPACT

INCREASE SKILLS AND ACCESS FOR LOCAL YOUNG PEOPLE TO ACHIEVE EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND PROFESSIONAL ATTAINMENT

INCREASE CONFIDENCE AND AGENCY FOR UNDERREPRESENTED YOUNG PEOPLE

This evaluation report offers a thematic summary of the outcomes and impact of the Elevate Fund, focusing on:

- The impact on the organisations delivering the activity
- The impact on the beneficiaries who participated in funded programmes

A mixed-methods approach was taken, drawing on application data, monitoring reports, case studies and feedback from participants and delivery partners.

FUND OVERVIEW AND AWARDEES

The Fund was created with accessibility at its heart, aiming to reach young people, small social enterprises and youth invested organisations who had never previously received funding. It was designed to support individual personal development endeavours and to enable young people with social impact ideas to access funding to test concepts, launch projects, and overcome historic barriers to financial support acting as a catalyst for change.

By creating multiple layers of opportunity, Elevate ensured the Fund could meet young people wherever they are in their journey, strengthening the local ecosystem and building a foundation for sustained growth and success.

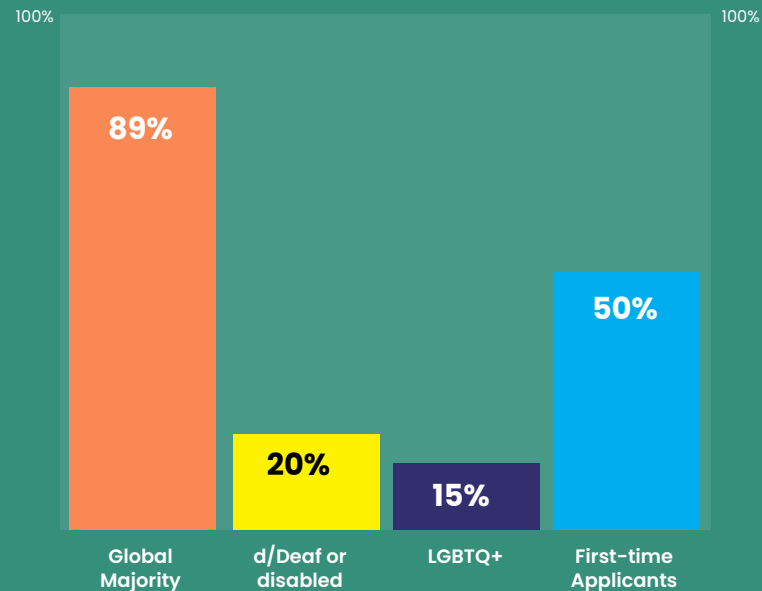
- UP TO £500**
Young Person Award:
MICRO-GRANTS OF UP TO £500 FOR INDIVIDUALS (16-30 YEAR OLDS) TO SUPPORT PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, ENTERPRISE, OR CREATIVE PROJECTS
- UP TO £2,000**
Catalyst For Change Award:
SUPPORT FOR EARLY-STAGE IDEAS TO ADDRESS A CHALLENGE IN THE COMMUNITY LED BY/OR FOR UNDERREPRESENTED YOUNG PEOPLE OR A SMALL SOCIAL ENTERPRISE – UP TO £2,000
- UP TO £15,000**
Breakthrough Award:
LARGER GRANTS FOR YOUTH-LED OR YOUTH-FOCUSED ORGANISATIONS TO SCALE THEIR REACH AND DEEPEN IMPACT – UP TO £15,000

Headline Reach and Diversity Data:

The application process for the Elevate Fund was intentionally designed to be as simple, inclusive and accessible as possible:

- Targeted email campaigns
- Social media promotion by Elevate Board members
- Promotion during outreach, workshops and community engagement sessions

As a result the fund received a diverse range of applications that truly reflected the communities of east London, they were as follows;



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Applications were targeted at young people living, working or studying in the growth boroughs of Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets, and Waltham Forest. While Newham accounted for 47% of applications, the remainder were fairly distributed across the other boroughs.

Awardees included:

YOUNG PERSON AWARD:

Aspiring actor, fitness trainer, emerging writer, videographer, sustainable engineering entrepreneur, creative practitioner, designers and more

CATALYST AWARD:

Supported new social enterprises; Connect 4 Change, Beyond Art, Respace, Tribe, Ebony Ink, along with individuals starting out on their social enterprise journey; Ann Kugima (film), Samuel Ikone (mentoring), Ann Kaguima (mentoring)

BREAKTHROUGH AWARD:

Urban MBA, Outrunners, Fight for Peace, Hype & Genius



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1 No Card
2 No Card
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IMPACT ON ORGANISATIONS

This section explores how the Elevate Fund supported not only community beneficiaries but also the young people and community organisations themselves. It recognises a gap in local investment in youth-focused organisations and highlights how the fund helped address that.

Key areas of impact include:

Encouraging Leadership Self Determination

Several participants used funding to deliver activity for others marking a powerful shift from beneficiary to leader. This included:

- Hosting nursery workshops on creative learning
- Running podcast sessions with local schools
- Building community-based music spaces
- Leading art sessions for adults dealing with stress

Participants were trusted to lead and that trust paid off. Many used this first taste of funding to experiment with new forms of self-employment or enterprise, develop a creative brand, or build something with social value for their community.

Expanded Reach and Community Engagement

- Grantees used the funding to connect more deeply with communities and expand their networks. Examples of this include;
- Hype & Genius built connections with 27 organisations and 10 youth centres.
- Outrunners created partnerships combining physical activity with music and the creative industries.
- Beyond Art and Respace created welcoming community spaces to support creativity and wellbeing.

Capacity and Confidence Building

The funding helped organisations—especially small, grassroots, or youth-led ones—scale their work and grow professionally.

- Organisations developed better governance, digital tools (like TimeTree), and more accessible programming.
- Connect for Change created open registration systems and clear community usage guidelines.
- Many gained practical experience in evaluation, planning, and delivery.

In addition the funding enabled deeper collaborations and raised the profile of small organisations.

- Ann Kaguimas film brought in a professional post-production team, increasing creative quality.
- Tribe's digital content campaign gave voice to young people using professional production tools. The Elevate Fund didn't just fund delivery it helped build infrastructure, strengthen confidence, and increase visibility for community organisations.

IMPACT ON BENEFICIARIES

Over 500 young people engaged directly in Elevate-funded projects. The evaluation reveals that the Fund created meaningful outcomes at both personal and professional levels boosting confidence, wellbeing, skills and future opportunities.

Enabling Progression and Opportunity

Across the board, young people accessed experiences that unlocked new career and educational pathways:

• **Urban MBA:** 13 young people completed the business development programme; 8 gained a Level 3 or 6 qualification, and 6 participants launched businesses. One participant has already generated £800 in revenue.

• **Hype & Genius:** 90% of participants felt more confident in business operations. 76% created plans for multiple revenue streams, and 82% began using formal budgeting systems. Several participants registered as sole traders and took part in a pop-up shop with over 250 visitors.

• **SheCodes:** A young woman completed a front-end coding course, gaining skills in HTML, CSS and JavaScript and building employability in the tech sector.

• **Creative Freelancers:** Artists, writers and actors used the Young Person Award to invest in tools, training and visibility — including publishing work, developing art workshops for children, and pursuing performance qualifications.

In each case, a small grant unlocked new ambition bridging the gap between interest and action.

Boosting Confidence, Identity and Mental Wellbeing

Elevate-funded programmes provided a safe and affirming space for young people to explore identity, push boundaries and feel valued.

Fight for Peace

91% of participants felt more active, 93% more optimistic, and 94% said a coach helped them believe in themselves.

Outrunners

82% of young people reached or maintained a high level of confidence, 64% began identifying as “runners”, 81% said running had a positive impact on their mental wellbeing.

Beyond Art

Provided therapeutic sessions for adults and young people to express grief, stress and anxiety through art. One founder reflected how art helped her cope with the loss of her father — and that offering it to others gave purpose and healing.

Tackling Barriers Through Community-Led Action

The Fund empowered underrepresented young people across east London by supporting new projects that created inclusive, accessible pathways into creative industries and entrepreneurial spaces. Focused on tackling systemic barriers — such as limited access, opportunity, and representation — each initiative delivered tailored, community-led activities to inspire, skill-up, and connect young people.

Examples include:

• **Ann Kuguima:** Produced a short film with a diverse cast and hosted skills workshops.

• **Connect 4 Change:** Delivered mobile podcasting for youth expression and social commentary.

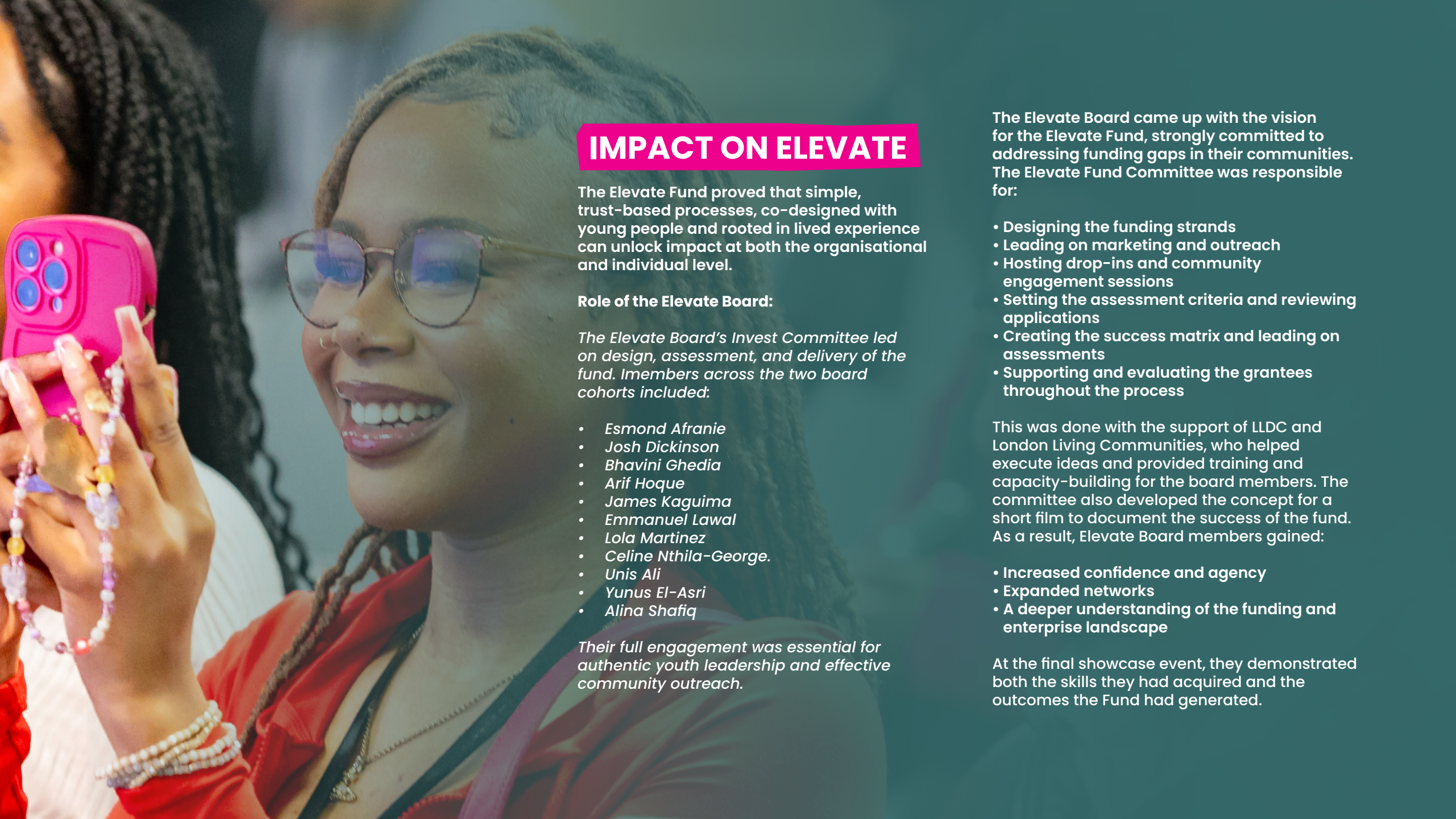
• **Respace:** Transformed a studio into a creative community hub with jam sessions and mentoring.

• **Samuel:** Led 1:1 mentoring through creative project development.

• **Tribe:** Designed workshops for creative professionals exploring career sustainability.

• **Ebony Ink:** Created an affordable space for beauty entrepreneurs.

The collective impact ranged from improved mental wellbeing and academic performance to increased representation in arts, tech, and fitness industries.

A smiling woman with glasses and a red jacket is holding a pink phone with a beaded necklace. The background is a blurred crowd of people.

IMPACT ON ELEVATE

The Elevate Fund proved that simple, trust-based processes, co-designed with young people and rooted in lived experience can unlock impact at both the organisational and individual level.

Role of the Elevate Board:

The Elevate Board's Invest Committee led on design, assessment, and delivery of the fund. Members across the two board cohorts included:

- Esmond Afranie
- Josh Dickinson
- Bhavini Ghedia
- Arif Hoque
- James Kaguima
- Emmanuel Lawal
- Lola Martinez
- Celine Nthila-George.
- Unis Ali
- Yunus El-Asri
- Alina Shafiq

Their full engagement was essential for authentic youth leadership and effective community outreach.

The Elevate Board came up with the vision for the Elevate Fund, strongly committed to addressing funding gaps in their communities. The Elevate Fund Committee was responsible for:

- Designing the funding strands
- Leading on marketing and outreach
- Hosting drop-ins and community engagement sessions
- Setting the assessment criteria and reviewing applications
- Creating the success matrix and leading on assessments
- Supporting and evaluating the grantees throughout the process

This was done with the support of LLDC and London Living Communities, who helped execute ideas and provided training and capacity-building for the board members. The committee also developed the concept for a short film to document the success of the fund. As a result, Elevate Board members gained:

- Increased confidence and agency
- Expanded networks
- A deeper understanding of the funding and enterprise landscape

At the final showcase event, they demonstrated both the skills they had acquired and the outcomes the Fund had generated.

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the delivery of the fund, Elevate and LLDC have had the opportunity to provide reflection on the fund, highlighting what works well, the challenges and recommendations for a future fund.



Accessibility Works:

THE SIMPLIFIED APPLICATION LED TO 50% FIRST-TIME APPLICANTS (82% IN THE YOUNG PERSON AWARD STRAND).



Diversity Targets Were Exceeded:

89% OF APPLICANTS WERE FROM GLOBAL MAJORITY BACKGROUNDS, 15% LGBTQ+, AND 20% D/DEAF OR DISABLED.



Layered Support Matters:

OFFERING THREE ENTRY POINTS ENABLED THE FUND TO MEET PEOPLE AT DIFFERENT STAGES, ALLOWING FOR MORE WIDESPREAD IMPACT.



Trust and Flexibility Drive Innovation:

PARTICIPANTS WERE EMPOWERED TO EXPERIMENT AND LEAD, PARTICULARLY IN CREATIVE, ENTERPRISE, AND TECH SPACES.



Time Constraints:

DESIGNING THE FUND TOOK SIGNIFICANT TIME, LEAVING LESS THAN SIX MONTHS FOR DELIVERY. THIS SHORTENED WINDOW LIMITED THE DEPTH OF OUTCOMES, PARTICULARLY FOR LONGER-TERM ORGANISATIONAL AND BENEFICIARY IMPACT. RECOMMENDATION: THE AWARD TO BE OVER A 12 MONTH PERIOD TO ALLOW FOR DEEPER IMPACT AND OUTCOMES



Evaluation Frameworks:

AN INITIAL EVALUATION TRAINING SESSION TOOK PLACE WITH CATALYST AND BREAKTHROUGH GRANTEES, BUT MANY STRUGGLED TO MEET EXPECTATIONS. MORE TRAINING, TEMPLATES, AND WORKED EXAMPLES WOULD BE USEFUL IN FUTURE ROUNDS. RECOMMENDATION: STRENGTHEN GRANTEE SUPPORT BY OFFERING CLEARER TEMPLATES AND EXAMPLES (E.G. PROJECT ACTIVITY TIMELINES, SAMPLE EVALUATION FRAMEWORKS).



Feasibility of the Young Person Award:

FEASIBILITY OF THE YOUNG PERSON AWARD: WHILE IMPACTFUL IN PRINCIPLE, THIS STRAND PROVED TIME-INTENSIVE WITH LIMITED MEASURABLE RETURN FOR ELEVATE. MANY RECIPIENTS DID NOT COMPLETE EVALUATIONS, AND THE FUND WASN'T MEANS-TESTED -MAKING ITS IMPACT DIFFICULT TO ASSESS. HOWEVER, IT FILLED A KEY GAP FOR SMALLER PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS NOT COVERED BY OTHER FUNDS. RECOMMENDATION: DISCONTINUE THE YOUNG PERSON AWARD IN FUTURE ITERATIONS.

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CONCLUSION

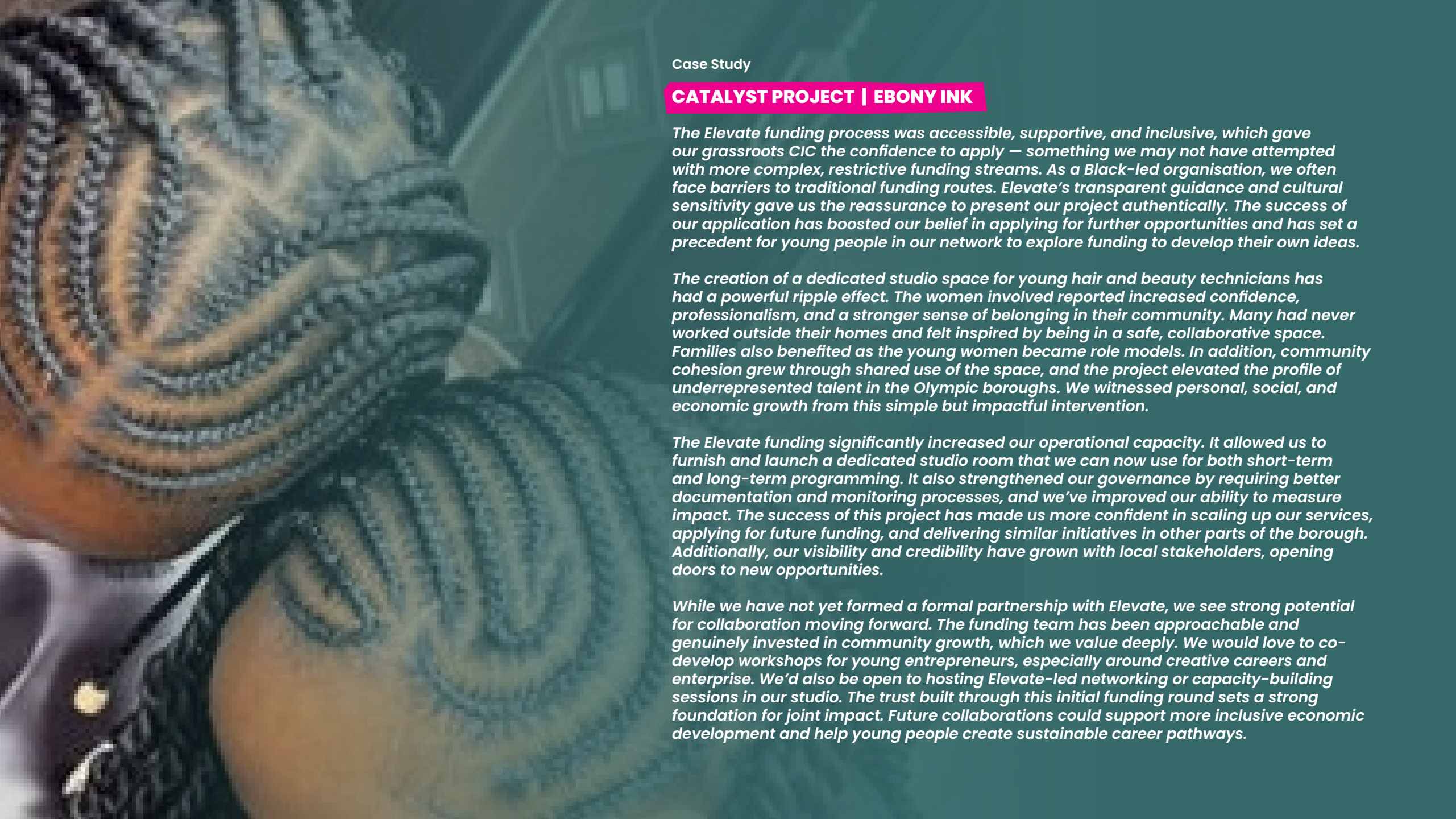
The Elevate Fund set out to do three things: nurture personal development, enable youth-led social impact, and strengthen grassroots organisational capacity. In its pilot year, it has achieved all three.

Through the Young Person Awards, individuals built skills, confidence, and networks that unlocked new creative and professional pathways. The Catalyst Awards empowered young leaders to design and deliver projects tackling systemic barriers in their communities, amplifying underrepresented voices and inspiring new models of inclusion. Meanwhile, the Breakthrough Awards invested in the sustainability of grassroots organisations, helping them to grow their infrastructure, expand reach, and better serve young people over the long term.

Taken together, these strands did more than distribute funding — they built an ecosystem of support that recognised potential, valued lived experience, and enabled young people to take ownership of change. The Fund has not only delivered measurable outcomes in participation, diversity, and organisational growth, but also demonstrated a replicable model of inclusive funding rooted in community voice and leadership.

The Elevate Fund shows that when young people are trusted, resourced, and placed at the centre of decision-making, the impact is transformative: for individuals, for organisations, and for East London as a whole. The challenge now is to build on this momentum, embedding and scaling this approach so that inclusive, youth-led funding is no longer the exception, but the norm.





Case Study

CATALYST PROJECT | EBONY INK

The Elevate funding process was accessible, supportive, and inclusive, which gave our grassroots CIC the confidence to apply – something we may not have attempted with more complex, restrictive funding streams. As a Black-led organisation, we often face barriers to traditional funding routes. Elevate's transparent guidance and cultural sensitivity gave us the reassurance to present our project authentically. The success of our application has boosted our belief in applying for further opportunities and has set a precedent for young people in our network to explore funding to develop their own ideas.

The creation of a dedicated studio space for young hair and beauty technicians has had a powerful ripple effect. The women involved reported increased confidence, professionalism, and a stronger sense of belonging in their community. Many had never worked outside their homes and felt inspired by being in a safe, collaborative space. Families also benefited as the young women became role models. In addition, community cohesion grew through shared use of the space, and the project elevated the profile of underrepresented talent in the Olympic boroughs. We witnessed personal, social, and economic growth from this simple but impactful intervention.

The Elevate funding significantly increased our operational capacity. It allowed us to furnish and launch a dedicated studio room that we can now use for both short-term and long-term programming. It also strengthened our governance by requiring better documentation and monitoring processes, and we've improved our ability to measure impact. The success of this project has made us more confident in scaling up our services, applying for future funding, and delivering similar initiatives in other parts of the borough. Additionally, our visibility and credibility have grown with local stakeholders, opening doors to new opportunities.

While we have not yet formed a formal partnership with Elevate, we see strong potential for collaboration moving forward. The funding team has been approachable and genuinely invested in community growth, which we value deeply. We would love to co-develop workshops for young entrepreneurs, especially around creative careers and enterprise. We'd also be open to hosting Elevate-led networking or capacity-building sessions in our studio. The trust built through this initial funding round sets a strong foundation for joint impact. Future collaborations could support more inclusive economic development and help young people create sustainable career pathways.

Case Study

CATALYST PROJECT | SAMUEL IKONE

Before this award, I had applied unsuccessfully for several funding streams. The Elevate Fund gave me my first successful opportunity, which was transformative. The process felt accessible and supportive, with clear guidance and encouragement, especially for underrepresented groups like mine. This funding allowed me to deliver a meaningful project that might not have been possible elsewhere, which has built my confidence to apply for future grants. After the success of this project, I feel better prepared to navigate other funding processes, having gained practical experience in budgeting, reporting, evidencing impact and overall running a funded project. Applying for funding when you haven't delivered a funded project prior can be a barrier in securing funding.

The Our Voices, Our Visions programme directly supported five young creatives in Newham with mentorship, resources and a showcase platform. Participants left with new creative skills, improved confidence and art/design toolkits to continue their practice. Beyond individual growth, the project supported their ideas and voices, encouraging visibility for underserved talent. Importantly, participants are now part of our growing creative network, where they can continue to access opportunities, connections and career development support.

Two participants from the programme with art practices were given the opportunity to showcase their work in our art exhibition titled "Refraction: Perspective Across Time," which featured 15 artists. The programme not only benefited the individuals involved but also strengthened our creative and cultural presence in Newham by celebrating its diverse creative talent. If the opportunity arises, we would love to continue Our Voices, Our Visions and expand its impact even further.

The Elevate Fund has increased our organisational capacity significantly. Delivering this programme required us to coordinate mentors, manage finances and report outcomes, which strengthened our administrative and project management skills. We also built new relationships with mentors and creative partners that extend beyond this single project.

Running a structured programme under Elevate's framework has helped us better understand processes such as reporting and evaluation, which we can apply to improve future projects. In many ways, it has acted as a capacity-building exercise that improved our confidence as an organisation and laid a stronger foundation for growth. The experience has improved our ability to plan effectively, engage with stakeholders, and demonstrate impact in a professional way. Also, it has boosted our confidence in approaching future funders and partners.

This funded project has been a strong initial step in building a relationship with Elevate. The support provided throughout the process was great, and I would welcome opportunities to collaborate further. I believe closer partnerships could be achieved through peer learning forums, or working groups where Elevate-funded organisations can share ideas and best practices.

I would be keen to explore how The SHAPES UK could contribute to Elevate's future projects, whether through creative workshops, project collaborations, mentoring, organising or facilitating creative networking events, or bringing more impactful arts to the community. I see great potential for a longer-term partnership with Elevate.





Testimonials

ELEVATE MEMBER | JAMES KAGUMA

My time on the Elevate board showed me what it truly meant to have agency. I was directly involved in co-designing the Elevate Fund, and our ideas were fully embraced, including creating the different funding categories to support people at different stages to make it more accessible & inclusive: the Young People's Award, Catalyst for Change Award, and Breakthrough Award. That experience made it clear that our contributions carried real weight and were shaping something meaningful. I also took part in face-to-face engagement, meeting young people where they were and speaking with the wider community across Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest, listening to their ideas and making sure they directly influenced funding decisions.

Elevate stretched me in ways that have been hugely valuable both personally and professionally. I built confidence in public speaking by representing the programme at events and on panels. I gained experience chairing meetings, working collaboratively within governance structures, and contributing to how Elevate presented itself as a brand to external partners. These opportunities strengthened my leadership, communication, and project management skills, all of which continue to shape my journey today

Reviewing grant applications and assessing proposal gave me practical experience in understanding budgets, sustainability, and impact. This built my confidence in financial decision-making and supported my own entrepreneurial journey. I also helped deliver capacity-building workshops for potential applicants, guiding them through the process and ensuring applications were as inclusive and accessible as possible. Seeing people leave those sessions with the confidence to apply was one of the most rewarding parts of my role.

Being part of the Elevate Fund gave me a much stronger sense of belonging in East London. Through community research, local workshops, and collaborations with organisations, I built lasting networks across the boroughs. The experience helped me feel connected not just to a programme, but to a wider ecosystem of young people, community leaders and organisations driving change in East London. Those connections, and the belief that young people's voices can and should shape decisions in their area, are something I'll carry with me long after my term on the board.



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