



## London Development Agency Investment Strategy 2009-2011 CONSULTATION RESPONSE – RACE ON THE AGENDA (ROTA)

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### ABOUT ROTA:

ROTA is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee set up in 1997 to take over from GLARE (Greater London Action on Race Equality) originally set up in 1984. ROTA is a social policy think-tank focusing on issues that affect Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities. ROTA aims to increase the capacity of BAME organisations and strengthen the voice of BAME communities through increased civic engagement and participation in society. ROTA is the host and the accountable body for two regional networks:

- MiNet: the London focused BAME network, which joined ROTA in 2002 to strengthen the voice for London's BAME voluntary and community sector (VCS) in the development of regional policy;
- HEAR: London's only pan-equalities and human rights network, which joined ROTA in January 2005. Its focus is on issues affecting London's equality and human rights VCS organisations.

ROTA provides policy infrastructure support to BAME and equality organisations and other stakeholders, and influences social policy at regional and national level by:

- Providing voice and representation of issues identified by the BAME and equality VCS through memberships at key policy boards and decision making body, by supporting members of MiNet and HEAR to sit on policy boards, brokering relationships between policy bodies and equality representatives and by speaking at events and the media.
- Carrying out and publishing in-depth research that creates an evidence base for policy.
- Holding regular networking and policy events bringing together the VCS and key regional and national stakeholders to discuss current priorities, disseminate best practice and find solutions.
- Producing free and accessible publications such as Agenda, Supplement and policy e-newsletters
- Working in partnership with BAME and equality VCS organisations, the other London regional networks and with regional networks in the rest of England.
- Providing training on policy areas such as hate crime, equalities and regional governance.

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## IS OUR OVERARCHING APPROACH RIGHT?

According to GLA 2008 statistics, with over 7.5 million residents, London has the second largest population of any British region - only exceeded by the South East - and accounts for 12.4 per cent of the UK population. In addition:

- London is home to over 40 per cent of the national ethnic minority population
- It is also home to 40 per cent of the national migrant population (the population born outside the UK).
- London's ethnic minority population is expected to increase from 33 per cent (2006) to 39 per cent by 2026.
- All ethnic groups are projected to increase over the next twenty years except the White ethnic group which has a projected small decline of 0.1 per cent.
- Over the next 20 years, six London boroughs will join Brent and Newham as authorities with at least half of their resident population from a BAME group.

The LDA investment strategy needs to pay attention to the needs associated with the demographics of London and the forecasted trends. Further consideration will need to happen in relation to policies, practices and structures that need to be put in place to tackle local issues relating to all London's communities. This is particularly acute given the recession and current economic downturn. It is also expected that the recession will create new social problems and discontentment in communities and meeting these emerging needs also needs to be a high priority for the LDA moving forward.

LDA investment must be balanced in that it must recognise past under-investment in BAME communities. In regards to the LDA investment strands of Growth, Skills and Jobs, which are welcomed by ROTA, we would suggest that the LDA Investment Strategy be strengthened and targeted with a specific remit for BAME groups. Investment should be given in order to identify and support London's BAME communities which are typically the most excluded and under-represented from democratic processes and structures, the job market and educational institutions as a direct consequence of the discrimination that they face. Mainstream services whilst widespread do not possess the expertise of the specialist organisations which exist in the BAME Third Sector, which must also be recognised. These organisations cater to the needs of the disenfranchised sections of BAME communities and they should be supported and recognised for providing a service that is not available from mainstream services.

## IS THE POLICY CONTEXT ANALYSIS CORRECT?

The focus on the importance of both skills and employment, and the relationship it bears to other social areas such as health and crime, is welcomed. However, there is no discussion of the level of employment or of the

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issues of representation that are raised in the Single Equality Bill and the Equalities Review. As these documents states, 'equality' is a cross cutting theme, and therefore inequality in job progression and earning gaps should have been discussed. Blanket aims about the numbers of people in employment fail to capture such inequalities. And yet it is these same inequalities that are represented when labour and education link to health, crime and other social policy concerns.

Furthermore, the breakdown offered of skills and qualifications could have been broken down to equalities areas. It would be useful when developing a strategy to know if the skills and qualification statistics corresponded with the employment statistics, especially those regarding managerial employment. Until we are clear on drivers behind under-performance, then any success will be limited. Also, the challenges to gaining skills are a lot broader than those cited in the document, 'childcare, cost of living, housing, transport, poor skills' – there needs to be due consideration of structural challenges that will impact on the work of the LDA

## HAVE WE MISSED IMPORTANT POLICY CONSIDERATIONS?

Unfortunately, the Third Sector appears to have a low priority in the proposed strategy document as a whole, with charities seldom mentioned. Given the track record of the Third Sector in achieving many of the outcomes outlined in the document, this is disappointing. This is particularly true for the Equalities Third Sector and BAME organisations, led by and for those with direct experience of inequality and discrimination. Equality organisations play a unique and vital role in addressing the causes and affects of inequality, including poverty. A significant proportion of the 40,000 VCS organisations that are registered in London are classified as equality bodies. For instance, MiNet's latest survey showed that there are over 4,500 BAME groups in London while HEAR's Gaps and Solutions Report counted over 2000 women's organisations.

To fight inequality and poverty and bring social justice these organisations and networks are in need of infrastructure support, voice and networking opportunities. The current policy and institutional framework demands greater collaboration among VCS organisations and an understanding of inequalities issues from a holistic perspective. Limiting the Third Sector to pre-employment support, volunteering and community work does not recognise the importance of BAME involvement in the development of good quality programmes and beyond. The BAME sector and the specialised services it provides have a key role to play in collaborating with employers, but require resources and capacity building that corresponds and understands their needs. General infrastructure support by mainstream providers has proved inadequate.

Forging partnerships is a reasonable way of delivering services. However, most BAME frontline organisations lack the capacity that will enable them to deliver work and contracts through consortia. This might vary from

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simple tasks such as drafting partnership agreements and budgets to service delivery and conflict resolution. There needs to be specialised infrastructure support at a London-wide level that pays attention to the BAME and equalities Third Sector needs.

Furthermore, ROTA would urge the LDA to consider an additional challenge with its own set of priorities and actions that will specifically address the significant challenges faced in achieving race equality and equality within the employment and skills agenda. Whilst we agree with many of the priorities and actions outlined in addressing the support that Londoners will need to achieve their potential but believe that in achieving these priorities the actions must consider particular approaches and methods that will strengthen outcomes for which it is striving to achieve.

In addition, the strategy could further consider the difficulties that people with severe barriers to employment experience and whilst the action targets those with severe barriers, there needs to be a commitment from employers to support these particular groups. There are examples of excellent work carried out by voluntary and community organisations in supporting groups with severe barriers such as offenders and ex-offenders yet they can no longer provide these services due to the withdrawal of funding. They express concern that the commissioning of prison and probation services will find small organisations 'squeezed' out by larger providers. There is failure to clarify how the shift from smaller scale procurement to larger scale commissioning of outcomes will affect engagement with third sector services. It is not enough to acknowledge the role of the third sector if proposed developments would limit the ability for local organisations to contribute. That coupled with the economic downturn make it crucial for the LDA to incorporate an element of grant funding as a means of flexible and innovative investment.

Finally, ROTA would like to stress that the integration of employment and skills through Local Area Agreements should consider the issue of low participation of the BAME sector on local strategic partnerships and the consultation on Local Area Agreements. We recommend that the LDA works with pan-London BAME policy infrastructure organisations such as ROTA and other forums such as the London Empowerment Partnership to develop genuine mechanisms of enabling BAME communities to participate in the shaping and delivery of services. The Olympics present us with a unique opportunity to collaborate for a common agenda.

## HAVE WE IDENTIFIED THE RIGHT MEASURES FOR OUR OUTCOMES?

It is important that any evaluation and monitoring framework pays attention to the quality of change and not merely its quantitative measurement. For instance, measuring impact is not specific enough when it comes to measuring employment or skills outputs. For example, the proposed draft seems to be more concerned with

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individuals being in employment rather than what type of employment they are in. The average wage for White Londoners is £13.46 per hour but for Bangladeshi Londoners it is £8.57, for disabled Londoners it is £11.45, for women £11.89 and £5.29 for young people. London's overall poverty rate is 27% compared to 52% for children in inner London and 69% for Pakistani and Bangladeshi children. Improving targets such as increasing employment rates is indeed important but so are targets such as how many BAME, disabled, refugee or other minority groups are in senior positions.

Furthermore, the targeted groups discussed on page 16 of the draft document are very broad – especially youth programmes and those on benefits. It might be more beneficial to see individual or specific needs/trends within those groups. Specific programmes, such as those offered by third sector agencies, on occasion with specialist knowledge often have success with those who generic programmes were not suited. We would recommend that the LDA incorporate social benefit clauses into their contracts, to ensure that each deliverer has to provide value most effectively in the broadest sense, rather than purely at the lowest cost.

## HOW CAN THE LDA AND OTHERS WORK TOGETHER BETTER?

It is of paramount importance that the Third Sector is included in this strategy as an actual, rather than potential, delivery partner and that the LDA's engagement with the Third Sector is as embedded across the organisation as other delivery partners. We welcome the Roundtable dialogues that LVSC has initiated with the LDA, at Chief Executive level as well as the Third Sector Group meetings, and we would encourage the continuation of this commitment. We would encourage the LDA to identify a Third Sector Champion that would liaise and communicate with Third Sector stakeholders. Finally, we would expect that the LDA and the Third sector to work according to the principles and Code of Practice outlined in the Compact and the BAME Compact.

ROTA is grateful for the opportunity to comment on the LDA's Investment Strategy.

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