

Annual Impact Digest 2024-25



BIG ALLIANCE



Who we are and what we do

ELBA AND BIG ALLIANCE

East London Business Alliance (ELBA) is a social mobility and regeneration charity with over 35 years of experience bridging the gap between business and community. We channel corporate time, skills and resources into east London to tackle poverty and fight inequality. Our diverse programmes drive real change through education, employment and community development. Last year over 16,000 people from over 80 business organisations gave their time and commitment to helping the community.

BIG Alliance (BIG) is a project delivered by ELBA and a collaborative initiative in partnership with Islington Giving and the Macquarie Group Foundation, dedicated to providing support and assistance to the Islington community. This collaborative effort focuses on harnessing resources, expertise and community engagement to address key issues, promote social inclusion and create positive, sustainable change in Islington. Through a wide range of programmes and initiatives, BIG Alliance aims to empower residents, foster resilience and enhance the overall quality of life in this vibrant London borough.



Contents

- Forewords.....4
- Our impact in numbers.....6
- The depth of our impact.....8
- How we work: our Theory of Change.....10
- Our approach to impact measurement.....12
- The business case for employer-supported volunteering.....14
- Deep dive: our impact on skills-building and social mobility.....18
- Quick looks: BoardBuilders.....24
- Quick looks: Team Challenge.....28
- In the pipeline.....30

Forewords

JULIE HUTCHINSON

At ELBA and BIG Alliance, we know that real change happens together - we witness the power of partnership every single day. We see it when a volunteer helps a young person navigate their first career steps. We see it when business skills help a community organisation thrive. We see it when employees return to their desks with a renewed sense of purpose and empathy.

Our work is about mutual transformation and this year's Digest is a celebration of that shared journey. If there is one theme that defines it, it is reciprocity. At a time when community cohesion can feel frayed and stretched, the simple yet radical act of connecting across divides has never been more powerful.

However, this year's Digest is also a challenge to us all to push further. We are at an exciting juncture of engagement and believe that the future of social impact lies in the richness of exchange - where we are all architects of change, learning as much as we each contribute. Looking forward, we know that our collective impact will need to focus on bridging the gap between business expertise and community needs in ways that are truly sustainable and systemic.

Thank you to every business partner, community leader, local resident and volunteer represented



in these pages. You are proving that when we align our skills and resources, the change we create is transformative. Thank you for being part of this movement.

Let's see how much further we can go.

Julie Hutchinson
Chief Executive Officer
ELBA and BIG Alliance

DR CARMEN NICOARA

Impact is a word that gets thrown around a lot - often meaning very little. But without rigour, without methodology, without asking hard questions, impact becomes a comforting story we tell ourselves. Real impact is measurable change. It asks: For whom? At what cost? What did we learn that changes how we work next year?

This year's Impact Digest is our attempt to be rigorous about change. And rigour, I have learned, changes everything. First: we have started highlighting the impact on those who volunteer. For years, we primarily measured community benefit. We largely overlooked how volunteering transforms employees themselves. This Impact Digest changes that. When 100% of business volunteers report wellbeing improvements, when 89% develop substantive skills, when 90% deepen their understanding of community challenges - these are not peripheral benefits. They are central to why this work matters. Second: we have moved beyond feeling-based assessment. "Did organisations feel supported?" is less useful than "What specifically changed in their capability, their capacity, their partnerships?" This rigorous measurement shows us what is genuinely working and where we have gaps. Third: we have invested in methodology. Bespoke Theories of Change for each programme. Mixed-methods evaluation. Difficult questions about what we are not measuring that we should be.

Why does this matter? Because when you commit employees, funding and senior leadership to social change, you deserve evaluation frameworks that show whether transformation is actually happening. You deserve to understand not just what changed,



but how and why.

With this in mind, in 2026 we will be launching The Impact Practice - a new consultancy service designed to support organisations through tailored, rigorous impact design and measurement. It grows directly from what we have learned across Young Minds, Brighter Futures (YMBF), Enable, Evolve and CoRe: impact cannot be captured through one-size-fits-all metrics. It must be built, thoughtfully and collaboratively.

More details will come next year. For now, if you have any questions or would like to talk further, please reach out to me at carmen.nicoara@elba-1.org.uk

Warmly,

Dr Carmen Nicoara
Head of Research and Impact
ELBA and BIG Alliance

Our impact in numbers

COMMUNITY OUTPUTS

36,163

Beneficiaries directly reached or supported (i.e. through workshops, 1-2-1 sessions, mentoring)



171

Beneficiaries placed into work



872

Beneficiaries trained



277

Community organisations supported (i.e through capacity building workshops, mentoring sessions)



BUSINESS OUTPUTS

16,006

Business volunteers engaged



82,203

Hours of business volunteering



£230,971

Toy Appeal donations



The depth of our impact: beneficiaries, community organisations, business volunteers

IMPACT ON BENEFICIARIES (I.E. YOUNG PEOPLE, LOW-INCOME EMPLOYEES AND THE ELDERLY)

BEHAVIOUR/ATTITUDE
CHANGE



Reported some immediate change in their behaviours/attitudes (i.e. developed their business awareness, knowledge of, confidence in, or curiosity about a topic, such as a particular sector of work).



Reported some substantive improvement in their behaviours/attitudes (i.e. improved their ability to stay positive overall, or developed their motivation or growth mindset).

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT/
CONFIDENCE CHANGE



Reported some immediate change in their career journeys (i.e. experienced an increase in their personal effectiveness, including digital and presentation skills).



Reported some substantive improvement in their employability¹ skills (i.e. 70% developed elements of these skills, whilst 87% developed their confidence in utilising these skills appropriately in the work environment).

QUALITY-OF-LIFE/
WELLBEING IMPROVEMENT



Reported some immediate improvement in their overall wellbeing (i.e. gained social interaction such as meeting people they otherwise would not).



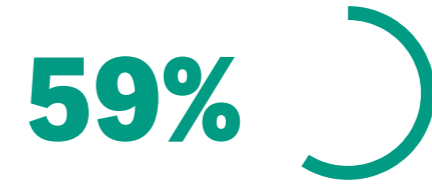
Reported some substantive improvement of the quality of their lives (i.e. were offered a job or passed a test).

1. Eight essential SkillsBuilder skills: Listening, Speaking, Problem solving, Creativity, Staying positive, Aiming high, Leadership, Teamwork

IMPACT ON COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS



Reported some substantive improvement in their capability (i.e. improved their staff or volunteers' knowledge and/or ability, improved their operational processes or management systems).



Reported some substantive improvement in their capacity (i.e. reached or engaged new clients, employed more staff/took on more volunteers, introduced new services/products).



Reported some substantive improvement in their organisational and financial sustainability (i.e. improved their financial system and administration, improved their fundraising strategies, diversified their sources of income).

IMPACT ON BUSINESS VOLUNTEERS

BEHAVIOUR/ATTITUDE
CHANGE



Reported some immediate change in their behaviours/attitudes (i.e. improved their knowledge of the third sector and its challenges, as well as of the challenges faced by young people in particular).



Reported some substantive improvement in their behaviours/attitudes (i.e. worked on and re-built their self-confidence).

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT/
CONFIDENCE CHANGE

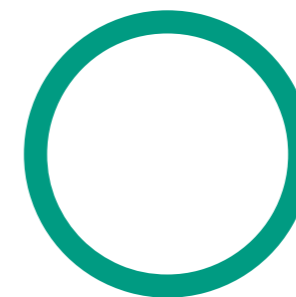


Reported some immediate change in their skills (i.e. felt more confident in their ability to draw on and apply their business skills in the charity sector).



Reported some substantive improvement in their skills (i.e. negotiation and influencing, decision making, strategic planning skills or prioritisation).

QUALITY-OF-LIFE/
WELLBEING
IMPROVEMENT



Reported some immediate improvement in their overall wellbeing (i.e. experienced a positive feeling of doing something rewarding, giving back to the community, or meeting new people and broadening their network).

How we work: our Theory of Change

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE: DEFINING, DECONSTRUCTING AND EVALUATING IMPACT IN EAST LONDON



Our approach to impact measurement

OUR EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

At ELBA and BIG Alliance, we engage in an ongoing monitoring and evaluation process that helps us understand how each intervention is working, what effect it is having, and how it is influenced by internal and external factors. Operating independently from delivery teams, the Head of Research and Impact leads the design and implementation of the organisation's impact evaluation methodology, which includes the following key components and steps:

- Three anchor frameworks (discussed in the next section) - UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), The Skills Builder Universal Framework, and Business for Societal Impact Framework (B4SI);
- Baseline data collection - before implementing a programme, we collect baseline data to understand the current state of the issue we are addressing. This data will serve as a point of comparison for measuring change;
- Bespoke, project-based Theory of Change - we develop a Theory of Change that outlines the causal pathways through which each of our projects is expected to create impact;
- Data collection methods - depending on the characteristics of the projects and the needs of the beneficiaries, we employ a range of methods, including surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations or data from existing sources;
- Iterative learning - we continuously collect data and update our impact assessment as programmes evolve from pilot stages into long-term activities. This step is an integral part of our adaptive management approach to impact measurement;
- Ethical considerations - each impact

evaluation is governed by clearly defined ethics protocol, which includes informed consent, confidentiality and the overall protection of vulnerable beneficiaries.

OUR ANCHOR FRAMEWORKS

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In light of COP26 (2021), ELBA and BIG Alliance have set out to measure the positive impact our community-based, hyper-local actions have on carbon reduction, supporting nature and building resilience. Although we work at a hyper-local level, we believe that these 'small scale' actions can have a global impact when corporations pull in the same direction, which is why we use the SDGs as an anchor framework for positive change.

SDGs are a set of 17 targets established by the United Nations (UN). These targets act as a framework for achieving growth that not only benefits the people and the planet now, but ensures that growth and impact is maintained in the future.



The Skills Builder Universal Framework

The Skills Builder Universal Framework is a tool designed to assess and build a variety of essential skills in education and employment. Back in 2020, ELBA was part of the Trailblazer partnership, which pioneered the use of the new framework. Today, we use the Skills Builder within all corners of our work.

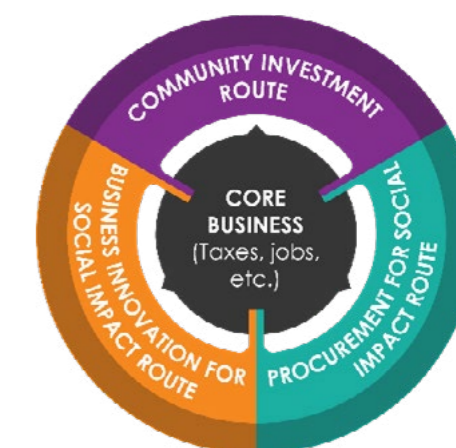
This new framework supports ELBA and BIG Alliance in explaining the value of our programmes to key stakeholders, including current and prospective programme participants, funders and supporters. We use the framework to identify how programmes can be optimised to further develop the essential skills of our beneficiaries. In addition to this, Skills Builder represents a reliable measure for the effectiveness of our programmes.



Business for Societal Impact (B4SI) Framework

B4SI Framework is the globally recognised methodology used by hundreds of the world's leading companies to articulate and measure the positive impact they have in the world. At its heart, the B4SI Framework is a simple input output model, enabling any social impact activity to be assessed consistently in terms of the resources committed and the results achieved.

As our business partners apply the B4SI Framework to understand the difference their contributions make to their business and society, so do we utilise it as one of our anchor frameworks that enable us to align our evaluation practice with our funders' needs.



The business case for employer-supported volunteering: from short- to long-term



over three decades proving that structured partnerships work. Our Eagles programme has supported 487 young people into professional careers over 20 years, with 36% now in senior positions and 31% earning £60,000+. Our Team Challenge activities have engaged tens of thousands. But research now shows us the opportunity: 13 of 14 business partners we interviewed aspire to longer-term volunteering, such as skills-based or project-based, yet barriers prevent the transition.

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS

ELBA/BIG Alliance Research (August 2024) – interviews with 14 business partners revealed:

- Employees who volunteer demonstrate faster career progression and higher performance ratings.
- Volunteering is strategically deployed for culture-building in hybrid workplaces (one CEO called it "socialising with a good impact...").
- Clients scrutinise CSR credentials before renewing contracts; talent explicitly cite volunteering as a job-choice factor.

Why the barriers exist:

- Limited visibility on what longer-term volunteering looks like.
- Hybrid working requires flexible, shorter options.
- Impact measurement feels complicated.

WHY NOW? WHY THIS MATTERS FOR BUSINESS LEADERS

While the community benefits of Employer-Supported Volunteering (ESV) are well-established, its role as a strategic business asset is increasingly clear. Yet, a persistent gap remains between potential and practice: corporate investment often fluctuates, and many organisations continue to prioritise one-off team-building days. While these events have their place, an over-reliance on short-term activities can overlook the transformative impact of skills-based or project-based volunteering - opportunities that are essential for addressing the long-term capacity crisis within the community sector.

At ELBA and BIG Alliance, we have spent

- Skills-based, project-based or governance-based activities feel riskier than team challenges.

ELBA and BIG Alliance are proposing a draft *Theory of Change for ESV*: a structured journey with six stages that deepens community impact while developing volunteers' capabilities.

The ESV Theory of Change - long-term impact

- Thriving, resilient communities with increased access to opportunity.
- More responsible and community-connected businesses.
- A culture of civic engagement embedded in work and society.

The ESV Theory of Change - the proposed stages in the ESV journey of change

STAGE	ACTIVITY	TIME COMMITMENT
1	Team Challenge - group volunteering (clean-ups, food banks, digital inclusion)	One-off to regular
2	Supporting social mobility (career talks, office tours, employability workshops)	Half-/full-day
3	Mentoring and coaching (1:1 or group relationships)	Bespoke, regular
4	Training and workshops (pro bono expertise: finance, strategy, HR, comms)	Bespoke
5	Strategic support (leading campaigns, developing strategy)	Bespoke, ongoing
6	Trusteeship and governance (board roles, policy shaping)	Strategic

The ESV Theory of Change - outcomes (short-to-medium term) for volunteers (employees)

FOR VOLUNTEERS (EMPLOYEES)		
Key outcome areas	Indicators	Measurement tools
Skills development/ improvement and personal growth (see "Volunteering skills growth matrix" for a proposed breakdown of skills based on volunteer journey stages)	% of volunteers reporting skills development/personal growth	Pre/post self-assessment surveys (aligned with B4SI or CIPD frameworks)
	% linking volunteering to professional skill development	360° feedback from peers/managers (if volunteering is part of PDP)
Increased job satisfaction and pride in employer	Net Promoter Score (NPS) or satisfaction with volunteering experience	Case studies or reflective logs
	Retention rates of volunteers compared to non-volunteers	Digital platform engagement analytics (participation rates, frequency)

FOR EMPLOYERS		
Key outcome areas	Indicators	Measurement tools
Improved employee engagement and morale	Increase in employee engagement scores	Annual internal staff surveys
Improved talent attraction and retention	Correlation between ESV participation and retention/promotion	Attrition rates comparison: ESV participants vs general workforce via Human Resources Information System (HRIS)
Stronger team cohesion and culture	% of volunteering aligned to business values or CSR priorities	Internal Net Promoter Score (NPS) (i.e. "How likely are you to recommend this company as a place to work?")
Enhanced employer brand and reputation	Team feedback on cohesion/teamwork (pre/post event)	

FOR COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS AND BENEFICIARIES		
Key outcome areas	Indicators	Measurement tools
Increased capacity, capability and sustainability (esp. small community organisations)	% of community organisations reporting improvements in key outcome areas	Community partners impact surveys (annual + where relevant, after some volunteering interactions)
Improved services or reach to end users	No. of community organisations accessing skills-based volunteering vs team challenges	Stories of change (case studies for both organisations and individuals)
Enhanced governance, leadership and strategy	No. of end-beneficiaries supported (primary and secondary)	
Tangible benefits to beneficiaries (quality of life/wellbeing, behavioural change, skills improvement/development)	Feedback from community organisations on volunteer usefulness and fit	

STAGE OF VOLUNTEERING JOURNEY	SKILLS FOCUS (IMPROVEMENT / DEVELOPMENT)
Group volunteering	Empathy, teamwork, social awareness
Social mobility in schools	Communication, cultural competency
Mentoring and coaching	Emotional intelligence, active listening, long-term commitment
Training and workshops	Consulting, adaptability, sector knowledge
Strategic support	Strategic thinking, leadership, stakeholder engagement
Trusteeship	Governance, risk management, financial oversight, public speaking, advocacy, influencing others

INVITING BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

This framework is intentionally in draft form. We need your input:

- What resonates in your organisation?
- What barriers prevent movement beyond team challenges?
- What support would you need at each stage?
- How should we measure success together?

Over the coming months, ELBA and BIG Alliance will host roundtables and workshops to refine this Theory of Change. We are not prescribing - we are co-creating.

ESV can move from CSR's periphery to the core of business strategy - not through obligation, but because the case is real.

Join us in reshaping employer-supported volunteering. Contact Dr Carmen Nicoara, Head of Impact and Research, at carmen.nicoara@elba-1.org.uk to engage with the draft Theory of Change for ESV and shape its future.



Deep dive: our impact on skills-building and social mobility

ENABLE - BREAKING BARRIERS: EMPLOYMENT, UPSKILLING AND SOCIAL MOBILITY IN EAST LONDON



ENABLE is a skills-building and social mobility programme launched in 2017 by ELBA, with funding from HSBC, to bridge employment gaps in east London. Over six years, it has supported 1,400+ beneficiaries, equipping them with communication skills, confidence and professional networks to navigate employment challenges.

CONTEXT: UNEQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND PERSISTENT BARRIERS IN EAST LONDON

East London has long been a region of economic contrasts: a hub of business growth and regeneration, yet home to some of the most entrenched inequalities in the UK. Despite major investment in areas like Canary Wharf and the Olympic Park, the benefits of economic expansion have not been evenly distributed, leaving significant gaps in employment, skills development and social mobility. Key structural barriers to employment in east London include:

- Low access to career progression: many residents are in low-paid, insecure jobs with limited pathways for advancement.

- Skills and confidence gaps: employers increasingly demand communication and interpersonal skills, yet individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds often lack access to professional networks and mentoring.
- ESOL challenges: a significant proportion of east London residents do not speak English as their first language, creating additional barriers to securing sustainable employment.
- Impact of the COVID pandemic: the economic downturn disproportionately affected low-skills and service-sector workers, many of whom were forced into unemployment and had to transition into unfamiliar industries.

THE UNIQUE VALUE OF ENABLE

At its core, ENABLE addresses the fundamental challenge of communication - a complex set of skills that underpins every stage of the employment journey. Over the past six years, the programme offered more than 75 tailored modules, grounded in the Oracy Skills Framework, that range from practical job readiness skills like CV writing and mock interviews, to deeper confidence-building exercises such as public speaking and stress management.

ENABLE's true value lies in its adaptability and inclusivity. By partnering with community organisations such as Luminary Bakery, Newham Renewal Project and Working Well Trust, ENABLE has reached individuals with diverse needs, from mothers returning to work

to individuals living with autism or recovering from mental health challenges. Its workshops don't just impart skills; they create safe spaces where participants feel seen, heard and valued. This combination of skill-building and tailored support is what makes ENABLE uniquely impactful.

THE ROLE OF EMPLOYER-SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING (ESV)

A cornerstone of ENABLE's success is its innovative use of employer-supported volunteering. The programme's corporate volunteer model plays a dual role: corporate volunteers deliver workshops and mentoring while also breaking down social and psychological barriers for participants. For beneficiaries, interacting with professionals from the corporate world demystifies what can often feel like an inaccessible environment. As one volunteer noted, "Just being there and showing participants that they are valued has a huge impact".

The benefits extend to the volunteers themselves. By stepping outside their professional bubbles, they gain new perspectives

and develop a deeper connection to the communities they serve. This two-way exchange creates a ripple effect, fostering greater understanding and social cohesion between corporate and local communities.

IMPACT ON BENEFICIARIES

ENABLE's impact on beneficiaries extends beyond numbers, transforming lives by addressing the root causes of unemployment and underemployment in east London. Through its focus on confidence, employability and wellbeing, the programme has empowered over 1,400 individuals to overcome barriers, reimagine their futures, and thrive in ways that ripple across their communities.

Confidence and communication

Confidence is a cornerstone of ENABLE's approach, underpinning its goal to equip participants with communication skills for both professional and personal growth. Across six years, over 90% of beneficiaries consistently reported feeling more confident and capable in their communication abilities after attending ENABLE workshops.



Key outcomes:

- Practical tools for confidence-building:
 - » Workshops on public speaking, body language and effective communication (e.g. STAR interview techniques) have helped participants feel more prepared for professional settings. One participant noted *“The STAR technique was really helpful in preparing and giving a nice structure... It massively boosted my confidence”*.
- Breaking psychological barriers:
 - » ESOL learners, refugees and individuals recovering from trauma, such as women at Luminary Bakery, reported significant improvements in their ability to communicate in new environments.
 - » Beneficiaries from Working Well Trust reflected on the shift in their mindset, with one saying *“I now know my strengths and can communicate them confidently”*.

This focus on confidence and communication has had a compounding effect, enabling participants to approach job applications, interviews and workplace interactions with newfound self-assurance.



Employment outcomes

ENABLE's primary focus has been on building employability skills, equipping participants with communication tools, confidence and sector-specific knowledge to enhance their career readiness. While securing employment was not a formal programme KPI in the first three years, ENABLE introduced structured follow-up in Year 4 through the Communication Coach programme, allowing for long-term tracking of participant progress.

Key outcomes:

- Gaining employment:
 - » Year 4: 3 beneficiaries secured full-time employment; 1 secured an apprenticeship opportunity.
 - » Year 5: 19 beneficiaries secured employment.
 - » Year 6: 3 beneficiaries secured employment.
- (Note: No employment outcomes were formally tracked in Years 1–3)
- Tailored support for different needs:
 - » Refugees at the Newham Renewal Project gained critical insights into the UK workplace culture and job market, while workshops for individuals with autism provided tailored interview techniques.
 - » Women, including survivors of gender-based violence, participated in confidence-building and workplace resilience workshops to help them re-enter employment.
 - Equipping returners to work:
 - » The programme has been particularly effective for women returning to the workforce after long absences. At Luminary Bakery, participants gained confidence in pitching business ideas as part of their training programme, with one woman stating *“This workshop gave me the courage to stand up and present in front of others for the first time”*.

By fostering confidence, skill-building and professional networks, ENABLE has empowered individuals to take meaningful steps toward their employment goals, whether through securing jobs, career shifts, or personal growth in the workplace.

Wellbeing and social connections

ENABLE recognises that unemployment often comes with significant emotional and social costs, such as isolation, low self-esteem and deteriorating mental health. By creating safe, supportive spaces for beneficiaries to engage with others and develop their skills, ENABLE has had a profound impact on their overall wellbeing.

Key outcomes:

- Mental health support:
 - » Stress management workshops have been a critical offering, teaching participants how to identify and manage stress in the workplace and beyond. A beneficiary stated *“This session gave me tools to help myself and others. It has given me confidence in approaching stress in the workplace”*.
 - » For individuals recovering from mental health challenges, ENABLE workshops have provided both practical support and emotional encouragement, with one client

stating *“For the first time in years, I felt like I was not alone”*.

- » Workshops and one-on-one coaching sessions emphasised self-reflection and goal-setting, enabling participants to feel more in control of their personal and professional trajectories. A beneficiary from Year 6 reflected *“I have acquired a new mantra: ‘Small things, many times.’ I now challenge myself daily and feel more positive”*.
- Building a sense of community:
 - » Many beneficiaries reported that ENABLE sessions provided a rare opportunity to connect with peers facing similar struggles. This was particularly impactful for participants from marginalised groups, such as refugees and individuals experiencing homelessness.

By addressing the broader emotional and social challenges faced by its beneficiaries, ENABLE has created a holistic model that fosters wellbeing alongside professional development.



IMPACT ON CORPORATE VOLUNTEERS

Corporate volunteers are at the heart of ENABLE's model, serving as facilitators, mentors and role models for beneficiaries. Over six years, 78 unique volunteers have contributed their time and expertise, supporting participants through workshops, 1:1 coaching and mock interviews. Their contributions have not only transformed the lives of participants but also fostered personal growth, strengthened Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and deepened connections with east London communities.

Personal growth

Volunteering with ENABLE offers professionals the opportunity to step outside their usual work environments and develop new skills while making a tangible difference. Volunteers consistently report that their involvement has been a deeply rewarding and eye-opening experience.

Key outcomes:

- Development of new skills:
 - » Volunteers frequently cite improvements in communication, facilitation and leadership skills. One volunteer shared *"I developed my ability to mentor and facilitate, which has been incredibly rewarding both professionally and personally"*.
- Empathy and community perspective:
 - » Many volunteers describe gaining a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by east London's diverse communities. One stated *"Listening to their stories and helping them has given me a completely new perspective on what resilience truly means"*.
- Confidence and fulfilment:
 - » The interactive nature of ENABLE workshops has allowed volunteers to build their own confidence while mentoring participants. One volunteer stated *"Walking into the room and seeing beneficiaries leave energised and smiling was an immense highlight for me"*.

These experiences create a sense of personal accomplishment, with many volunteers committing to long-term involvement in ENABLE's initiatives.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

ENABLE exemplifies how CSR initiatives can create meaningful impact by aligning corporate resources with community needs. The programme has provided a platform for companies like HSBC to support social mobility, while also enhancing employee engagement and satisfaction.

Key outcomes:

- Strengthening company pride:
 - » Volunteers consistently report feeling a greater sense of pride in their organisations for supporting programmes like ENABLE. A survey of volunteers revealed that 100% agreed their participation in ENABLE enhanced their motivation and pride in their company.
- Skills-building for employees:
 - » ENABLE's model has allowed companies to use volunteering as a tool for professional development. For example, communication coaching opportunities have helped volunteers refine their mentoring skills in both virtual and in-person settings.
- Long-term engagement with the community:
 - » Over six years, ENABLE has engaged 78 corporate volunteers, with many returning for multiple cycles of engagement, demonstrating the programme's ability to cultivate sustained commitment.

CSR initiatives, like ENABLE, not only enhance a company's reputation but also drive long-term corporate engagement, employee loyalty and alignment with corporate values, making it a sustainable and high-impact model for social responsibility.

Community impact

ENABLE's unique model creates a bridge between corporate professionals and east London's most underserved communities, fostering mutual understanding and reducing social divides.

Key outcomes:

- Breaking down barriers:
 - » For many beneficiaries, interacting with corporate volunteers demystifies professional environments and fosters a sense of possibility. One beneficiary shared

"Seeing someone from a corporate role give their time for me made me feel valued and capable".

- Fostering connections:
 - » Volunteers often leave sessions with a stronger connection to the communities they serve. One volunteer stated *"When I was growing up, east London felt so far away from the corporate world. ENABLE has allowed me to close that gap and give back to my community"*.
- Ripple effects:
 - » The presence of corporate volunteers has had a profound effect on both beneficiaries and their communities. By sharing their expertise, volunteers empower participants to succeed, while also inspiring others in the community to pursue their goals.

ENABLE's model has proven that corporate volunteering is not just about giving back; it's about creating lasting relationships that build stronger, more cohesive communities.

LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Key learnings:

- Tailored interventions drive impact: personalised workshops and small group sizes ensure that beneficiaries with diverse needs - including those facing mental health challenges or language barriers - achieve meaningful outcomes.
- Corporate volunteers are crucial:

engaging professionals not only empowers beneficiaries but also fosters empathy and skill-building among volunteers, enhancing the programme's dual impact.

- Flexibility ensures resilience: the hybrid delivery model has demonstrated adaptability during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring uninterrupted support for participants.

Future vision:

- Scale the model: expand/further develop ENABLE's curriculum and tailored interventions to new target groups, such as refugees in Islington or young people with disabilities.
- Innovate curriculum: introduce new modules addressing evolving needs, such as digital literacy and financial planning, to further equip beneficiaries for modern job markets.
- Deepen and future-proof partnerships: forge new collaborations with sectors facing skills shortages, such as technology, green or healthcare industries, to connect beneficiaries to emerging career opportunities.

A STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY FOR FUNDERS

ENABLE has proven its impact and is ready for scale. Future funding will allow the programme to expand its reach, innovate its curriculum, and build lasting pathways to employment for disadvantaged communities.



Quick looks

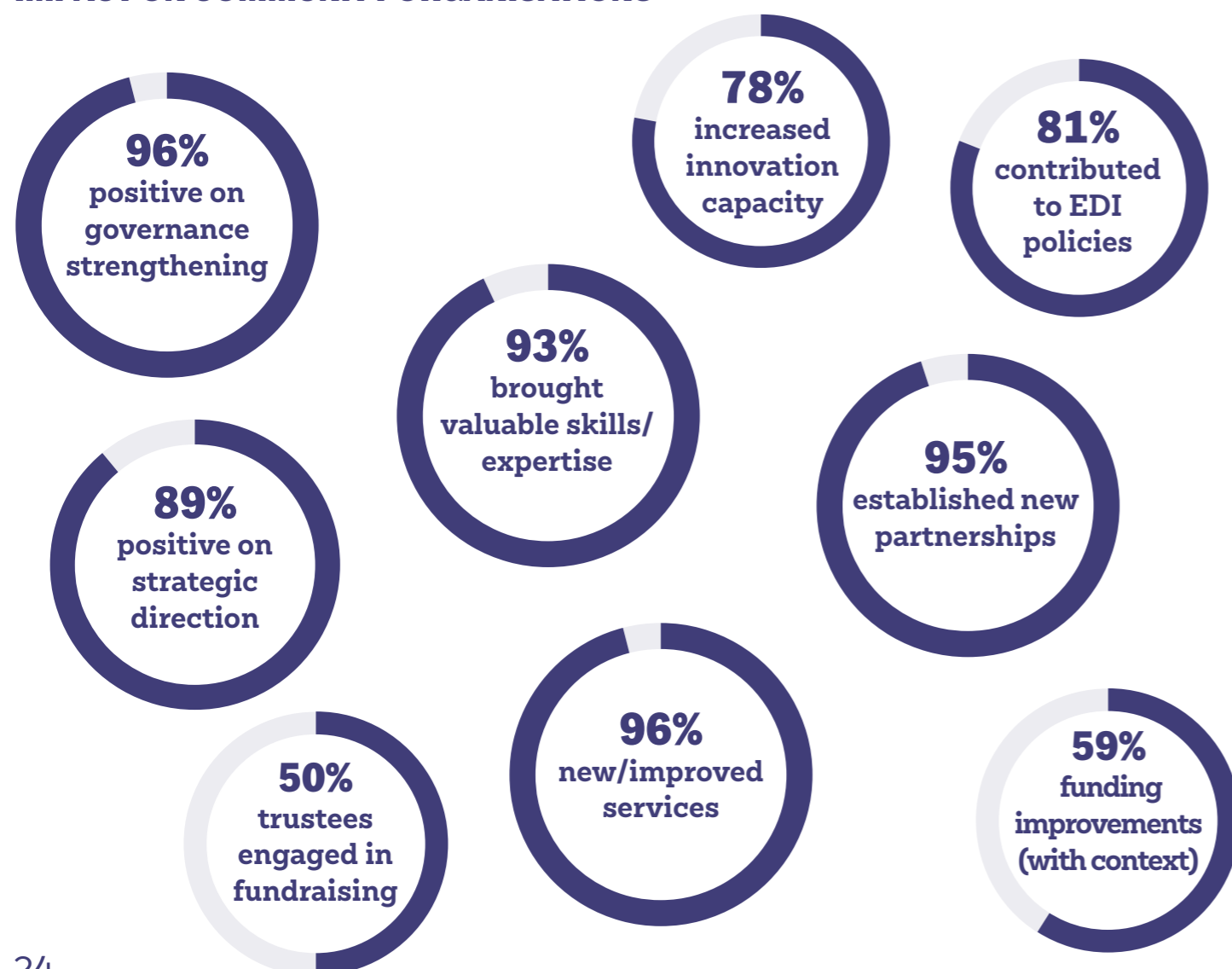
OUR IMPACT ON CHARITY GOVERNANCE: BOARDBUILDERS



ELBA and BIG Alliance's BoardBuilders programme places business volunteers as trustees on charity boards in east London and Islington. The programme addresses a critical gap: small community organisations struggle to attract diverse trustees with requisite skills and experience. This evaluation assessed impact 1+ year post-placement, surveying 27 community organisations and

24 trustees using mixed-methods analysis (quantitative ratings and qualitative responses) against the programme's Theory of Change.

IMPACT ON COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS



Governance excellence as core outcome

Governance strengthening emerged as the programme's strongest outcome: 96% of organisations reported positive improvement in how trustees strengthened governance and decision making processes. Organisations described concrete improvements: "The two new trustees have been instrumental in improving governance related to Risk and Financial Management." Another noted trustees were "part of brand new working groups helping steer governance outside of regular board meetings." This directly validates the programme's primary theory: that improved governance enables organisations to manage risks and seize opportunities.

Similarly, 89% reported trustees positively influenced strategic direction, with organisations noting trustees helped them "re-think how we approach our financial strategy" and brought enhanced critical thinking to decision making.

Partnerships and services

Beyond governance, 95% of organisations established new partnerships or strengthened existing collaborations. Examples range from securing corporate sponsorships ("Funding

from Credit Suisse") to community connections ("Linked with local yoga studio for disabled children"). Simultaneously, 96% introduced new or improved services, positioning them better to respond to community needs.

Trustees as capacity-builders

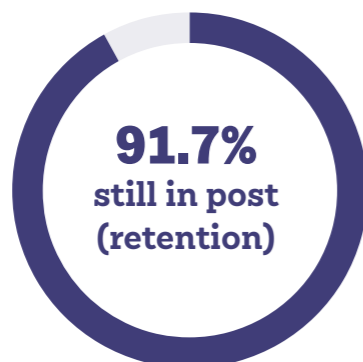
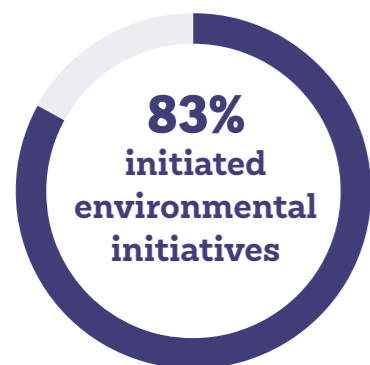
93% of organisations reported trustees brought valuable new skills and expertise, directly enhancing operational effectiveness. Additionally, 81% reported trustees contributed to new equity, diversity and inclusion policies, advancing governance quality and organisational culture. Seventy-eight percent noted increased innovation capacity - trustees helping organisations think differently about approaches and strategies.

The funding challenge

Fundraising presents a different picture. Only 59% of organisations reported funding improvements, with minimal organisations reporting significant gains. However, this reflects timeframe limitations rather than programme failure - major fundraising campaigns require 18-24 months minimum. Notably, 50% of trustees are already engaged in fundraising activities, establishing foundations for future impact.



IMPACT ON TRUSTEES



Professional development and retention

An exceptional 91.7% of trustees remain in post at 1+ year, validating successful matching. Trustees reported substantial professional development, describing applying "legal or financial knowledge in a professional environment," developing "enhanced team working and negotiation skills beneficial in my job," and gaining "strategic experience improving critical thinking."

Wellbeing and perspective shift

Beyond professional gain, trustees consistently reported wellbeing improvements from serving. They described gaining "insights into community challenges affecting my personal worldview" and "increased empathy for various community challenges." One trustee noted the experience provided "insights enriching my personal perspective." Critically, trustees documented applying community learning to professional contexts, demonstrating behaviour change extending beyond the charity itself.

Programme satisfaction

Ninety-six percent of trustees reported being very or quite satisfied with BoardBuilders, and

100% would recommend it to peers. Trustees appreciated the matching process and ongoing support, with one simply stating: "Thank you, it's a fantastic programme!"

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- Develop targeted fundraising mentoring, pairing trustees with fundraising expertise to organisations.
- Accelerate environmental implementation through structured peer-learning and explicit timelines.
- Document governance case studies positioning programme as a governance excellence leader.
- Enhance trustee support through peer-learning forums and mid-tenure check-ins.

BoardBuilders demonstrates strong early impact with 96% satisfaction from both beneficiary groups and governance outcomes, directly validating the programme's Theory of Change. While funding and service innovation require extended timeframes, strong retention (91.7%), partnership expansion (95%) and professional development position the programme as effectively addressing a critical community sector need.



Quick looks

OUR IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES AND VOLUNTEERS: TEAM CHALLENGE



Team Challenge is ELBA and BIG Alliance's flagship practical volunteering programme, delivering half and full-day team activities across east London and Islington. Teams engage in environmental conservation (clearing waterways, parks maintenance), community centre support (painting, events), school beautification (playground transformation, murals) and social volunteering (supporting elderly, digital skills). This evaluation captures immediate post-event feedback from volunteer team leaders across multiple cohorts, surveying participants within days of completing activities.

VOLUNTEERS' PERCEPTIONS OF IMPACT

Team Challenge delivers exceptionally high volunteer satisfaction. Feedback showed 81.8% of volunteers reported their volunteer experience made a positive impact in 2025, with the vast majority strongly agreeing. The 2024 cohort showed even stronger results: 96.3% perceived positive impact. This consistency across years suggests the programme reliably delivers meaningful volunteer experiences. The predominance of strong agreement (as opposed to reluctant endorsement) indicates genuine conviction about contribution and community benefit.

COMMUNITY REACH AND SCALE

The programme serves considerable community diversity. Common community partners include More Life Home, Spitalfields City Farm, Stepney City Farm, Teesdale & Hollybush Tenants Residents Association and Victoria Park. The breadth of partnerships - across multiple community centres, farms, adventure playgrounds and schools - demonstrates ELBA and BIG Alliance's embedded relationships throughout east London and Islington's voluntary sector and business partnership base. The programme engages diverse business partners, ranging from financial services to creative industries.

QUALITY OF DELIVERY

Volunteer feedback reveals well-organised experiences. Teams described volunteers being "warmly welcomed", "allocated into groups" and working toward "clearly explained tasks". One noted: "Really well organised, great set up on arrival...tasks were varied and very achievable". Another highlighted "groundwork and prep before the event was meticulous". Such feedback suggests strong team leader training and community partner briefing by ELBA and BIG Alliance staff.

The fact that 68% of volunteers proactively offered suggestions for improvement (despite high satisfaction) indicates genuine engagement and willingness to support programme refinement. This represents constructive feedback rather than criticism, suggesting volunteers felt their input was valued and could make a difference.

KEY FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

Strengths:

- Exceptional volunteer satisfaction and recommendation rates (96-100% across years).
- Strong perceived positive impact (82-96% across years).
- Broad community and business partnership engagement.
- Well-executed logistics and team leader preparation.
- Engaged volunteers providing constructive feedback.

Opportunities:

- Document and share safety protocols across teams.
- Refine task design to balance volunteer engagement with end-user need satisfaction.

- Expand longitudinal follow-up beyond immediate post-event period to measure sustained volunteer engagement and career development impact.
- Capture demographic data on volunteers to understand reach and underrepresented groups.

CONCLUSION

Team Challenge demonstrates robust, immediate volunteer satisfaction with near-universal recommendation and strong perceived positive impact. With 82-96% reporting meaningful contribution and 98-100% recommending participation, the programme delivers on its core promise: practical, team-building volunteering that benefits communities and engages business volunteers meaningfully. The consistency of high satisfaction across the past two years suggests reliable, high-quality delivery at scale.

CASE STUDY - TEESDALE AND HOLLYBUSH TENANTS AND RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Margaret Cox, Chair of Teesdale and Hollybush TRA in Bethnal Green, earned community trust the hard way: door-to-door conversations on an estate of 13 residential blocks. When residents asked for growing spaces - refuge from concrete flats - Margaret campaigned. She built. She persisted.

Since 2008, ELBA has been there. Not imposing solutions, but providing reliable support through employer-supported volunteering (ESV) when vision met resource constraints. "ELBA and the business volunteers have been indispensable," Margaret says. "This partnership is mutually beneficial: we deliver community support, volunteers contribute meaningfully, and essential work gets done."

Business volunteers transformed derelict spaces into community

gardens where children play freely and neighbours become community. They've delivered festive hampers to elderly and isolated residents - four times as many as Margaret's small TRA could manage alone.

But the deeper impact is what ELBA via the business volunteers freed up for Margaret herself: "I don't have to spend time looking for help. ELBA provides what we need, freeing my time to plan and implement projects and ensure they're worthwhile."

Team Challenge works because business volunteers' time, skills and resources meet genuine community needs. A resource-strapped organisation could suddenly do more for vulnerable residents than seemed possible. The proof sits in Margaret's matter-of-fact recommendation: "I would 100% recommend ELBA. You always come up trumps."

In the pipeline

YOUNG MINDS, BRIGHTER FUTURES (YMBF)



Young Minds, Brighter Futures (YMBF) is BIG Alliance's flagship education programme, launched in 2023 in partnership with MUFG and City of London Academy Highgate Hill School. YMBF empowers secondary students through structured career exposure, cultural enrichment and skills development, equipping them with the confidence and capabilities to pursue their educational and career aspirations.

The programme operates across five strategic pillars: career readiness and employability; academic achievement and attainment; cultural capital and social inclusion; institutional sustainability; and business engagement. Core activities include: career mentorship and industry visits; skills workshops focused on communication and problem-solving; cultural trips and community engagement; GCSE guidance sessions; and pathways to work experience, internships and apprenticeships.

YEAR 2 EVALUATION AND ELBA IMPACT PRACTICE

The 2024-2025 academic year saw a rigorous impact evaluation of YMBF's Year 1 and 2, conducted by ELBA's new Impact Practice - a bespoke impact evaluation consultancy led by Dr Carmen Nicoara, Head of Impact and Research. This evaluation generated granular insights into student outcomes (career awareness, confidence, academic engagement), school sustainability indicators and CSR development.

Key learnings from Year 1 and 2 evaluation have informed the 2025-2026 academic year design, with enhanced tracking of cultural capital equity, refined GCSE guidance mechanisms, and strengthened sustainability planning through grant writing support and local partnership development.

ELBA IMPACT PRACTICE: A NEW SERVICE

Recognising growing demand for rigorous, bespoke evaluation in the business volunteering sector, ELBA has launched its Impact Practice as a standalone consultancy service. Drawing on lessons from YMBF and other programmes, the consultancy offers organisations tailored impact evaluation frameworks, mixed-methods research design, and strategic insights to strengthen programme delivery and evidence impact.

For business partners interested to find out more about the Impact Practice, contact Dr Carmen Nicoara, Head of Impact and Research, at carmen.nicoara@elba-1.org.uk.





Annual Impact Digest 2024-25



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