

IVAR

Institute for Voluntary
Action Research

Working in Place

*Framework
summary*



Research in partnership with
London Funders



01.

What does 'place' mean?

<i>Street</i>	<i>District</i>
<i>Neighbourhood</i>	<i>Town</i>
<i>Ward</i>	<i>City</i>
<i>Village</i>	<i>Region</i>
<i>Borough</i>	<i>County</i>

It's important to develop a rationale for working in a specific place, thinking carefully about appropriate (and realistic) geographic scale, in order to fulfil, and deliver on, your ambition.

When identifying an appropriate geographic remit for place-based approaches, you will need to ensure that the area you focus on is meaningful to all relevant stakeholders.

02.

Why are you considering, or using, a place-based approach?

Different place-based approaches can be used to meet different purposes – funders often use a combination of approaches for a range of reasons. Being clear about your starting point and communicating any shifts in thinking to partners, grantees and residents along the way will help with relationship building, trust and engagement.

Our research has found six overarching drivers for choosing to work in place:

1. To target a particular issue
2. To address cold spots
3. In response to changes in policy/external context
4. To test a model or approach
5. As a way of targeting areas of high deprivation
6. Because you are by definition a 'place-based funder' with a specific geographic remit/focus

03.

What contribution are you seeking to make?



Understanding the contribution you hope to make will be closely linked to why you wish to work in a place-based way. Think about what you hope will happen. For example, are you looking to provide funds for services/projects that support people in the area, or are you looking to make investments towards systems change?

04.

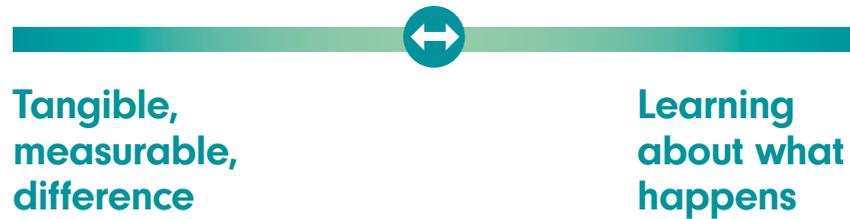
What is your attitude towards risk and uncertainty?



This question focuses on your tolerance of failure/uncertainty. Place-based working takes time and outcomes may emerge slowly. Risk is about much more than due diligence and will need considering from multiple perspectives, for example: programme level; organisational level (for yourself as funder and for key partners); officer; lead; trustee; resident. It may be helpful to frame your place-based approach as exploratory and see 'progress' as a long-term journey.

05.

What is your position on impact?



'Success' means different things to different funders. Place-based approaches can be an opportunity for learning and trying new ways of working. But this also means thinking about success in a different way: if you are embarking on exploratory or community-led work there may not be a predetermined end point to measure against, and different processes and monitoring systems will need to be in place.

06.

What is your existing knowledge of the area?



Consider what you know, how you know it and what you might need to find out. There are different ways of doing this and it often depends on the scale of contribution. Some common elements from our research were:

- Scoping work – for example: consulting with the community; commissioning research; analysing existing data sets/statistics
- Talking to people living and working in the area – including other funders
- Visiting in person

07.

What duration of involvement is required?

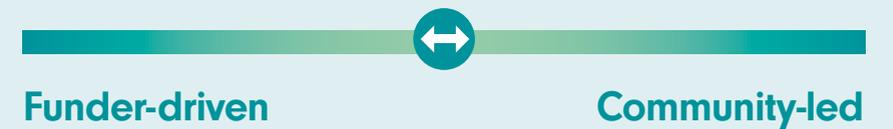


Consider how long you need to work in a place. Are you committing to working in an area in the long term or using geography to focus your work within a time limit? What are the implications for how long you need to be there and how to exit? Funding over multiple years can help give confidence to communities, enable a sense of security for organisations, and allow adaptation to new ways of working and building relationships.

Your involvement is likely to look different at different points of the approach/ programme. You might be a funder at some points, a facilitator at others, embedded initially, and then at arm's length during delivery. It is important to reflect regularly about what is needed during the process.

08.

Where will control sit?



In answering this, you need to consider what is required to meet the overarching aims of the approach as well as the fit with your organisational values. Will the work be community-led or driven by what you – as a funder – have identified to focus on? Think about who has defined the need and response.

Reflect on your organisational values and assumptions regarding working with residents or communities – is your organisation focused on building assets and sharing power? How will this play out in a place-based approach? This question will need to be considered for multiple aspects of the place-based approach. Specifically, where will control sit in terms of: design; decision making; priority setting; grant-making?

09.

What will your role be?



Place-based working can be an opportunity to try new roles and reflect on what would best add value at different points in a programme. When working in this way it is crucial to communicate clearly about the role you intend to play and be aware of the implications this might have for others involved.

10.

Who will you need to work with?



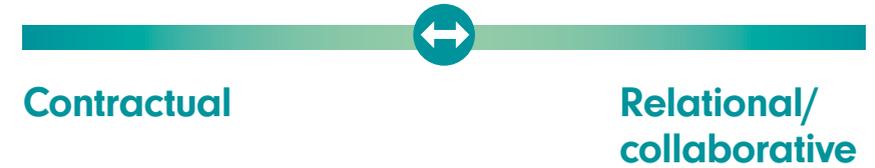
Relationships and partnership working are a central feature of place-based approaches – whether in terms of having a trusted source of local information/ insights or the co-design and delivery of initiatives. Place-based working is often about sharing power, respecting local knowledge, and a degree of pragmatism.

Partnerships work best when there is an alignment of values and senior 'buy in'. Our research highlights four routes that might help an external funder to begin working in a place:

- Working with or through community anchors and community foundations
- Identifying and supporting local leaders
- Going in where other funders are working (or wish to work)
- Working with statutory agencies

11.

What kind of relationships are required?



Once you are clear about who you need to work with (in the first instance), think about the way in which you are going to work.

What kind of relationship will help you to meet your motivation and desired contribution? Contractual (traditional grant-making), engaged (an informed and supportive grants process) or relational/collaborative (where you are working alongside grantees and other partners)?

12.

What commitment of staff and trustee time/ effort is needed?



The commitment of staff and trustee time required in a place-based approach links closely with the choice of geographic focus, overall motivation and style of approach. Place-based working can be resource intensive; to engage meaningfully, and to work in a cooperative, exploratory way, takes time as well as skills.

The more engaged your approach, or the greater contribution you hope to make, the greater the level of staff resources, time and effort that is likely to be required.

Using the findings from our research,
this summary has been developed to support
funders in the planning and implementation
of place-based approaches.

The full report *Working In Place*
can be found at ivar.org.uk



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