



SOUTH LONDON BOTANICAL INSTITUTE

BUSINESS PLAN 2021-2026: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The South London Botanical Institute (SLBI) aspires to be a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can develop and share a passion for plants and improve their knowledge of how to protect the natural environment and act to tackle climate change.

The purpose of the SLBI Strategic Business Plan 2021-2026 is to embed the SLBI – a unique botanic garden and resource in an inner-city setting - more firmly into both local and scientific communities through four aims:

- To retain our current audiences and broaden our audiences in line with local demographics.
- To make the SLBI's building and collections more physically and intellectually accessible.
- To maintain existing and build new partnerships and collaborations locally, regionally and nationally to fulfil our aims.
- To make the SLBI more financially resilient and sustainable, reducing dependency on grants.

We have six principal strategies to deliver these aims. We will:

- Enhance our blended programme of face-to-face and online events to ensure a range of activities which are exciting, appealing and accessible to all.
- Raise income from individuals and from trusts and foundations to enable us to deliver low-cost learning and engagement.
- Invest in marketing and communications to extend our reach and appeal.
- Implement a commercial fundraising strategy.
- Invest in the building to make it more welcoming and accessible and as one of our ways to reduce our carbon footprint.
- Introduce an annual audience satisfaction survey, to include demographic/socio-economic/geographical information.

Given the uncertainties surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, we have taken a pragmatic approach, balancing recovery with growth. We are assuming little or no access to the building, other than the garden, until early 2022. The Business Plan is designed to be responsive to changes in circumstances through frequent review, particularly in Year 1. Budgets, targets, activities and other actions may be adapted or modified as a result of review, including bringing actions forward if we are able to use the building fully before 2022.

Year 1 will be a recovery and preparation year, prioritising:

- Developing a digital marketing and communications strategy.
- Developing a maintenance and management plan for the building.
- Setting a baseline for measuring and improving our carbon footprint.
- Refurbishing the kitchen to improve potential for room hire.
- Expanding our programme of digital and socially distanced activities.

Year 2 will be a year of consolidation and growth, prioritising:

- Building audience numbers and increasing diversity.
- Reducing our carbon footprint and improving accessibility to the building.
- Increasing the number of commercial hires.

Year 3 will prioritise:

- Improving professionalism regarding the care, development and commercial use of the collections.

Years 4 and 5 priorities will include:

- Building on the successes and lessons of earlier years.
- Further improvements to the building if required.
- Developing a new Business Plan.

We have set measurable annual targets for both activities, audiences and income so that we can monitor our progress and evaluate our impact. These targets include number of visitors (adults and school children), number of subscribing members, number of room hires, amount raised in donations and the ratio of grant funding to other income. We will also seek qualitative feedback on our activities and aim to collect the demographics of our audiences.

Taking a cautious approach towards the resources required, the SLBI will focus on investing in the building and in digital, marketing and commercial strategies, employing the current levels of staff, with additional marketing. We expect to call on up to £70k from reserves in the first two years, while our earned income is lower than usual (£60k-£70k pa.), and to recover some of that investment by the end of the 5-year period. Judicious use of reserves at this stage will maintain our services and community engagement levels and allow investment in our future.

There will also be continued high dependence on grants for the first two years, for core costs as well as project delivery. The Business Plan will reduce, not remove, the need for grants, enabling the SLBI to focus applications on subsidising delivery and extending audiences.

This Plan is unlikely to meet all the challenges ahead, but it will leave the SLBI in a stronger and more resilient state and lay the groundwork for future growth and development.

It will further our mission as more inclusive and wide-ranging programming and a more welcoming building encourage more people to discover plants. Lives will be enriched through varied opportunities for learning, engagement, participation and volunteering. Our focus on attracting young people to botany and increasing awareness of climate change and inequality in our programming will share knowledge across generations, support young people to consider plant-focussed studies and careers and inform discussions about the role of plants in the future of the planet.