

Funding sport in your community – have your say

Consultation on how National Lottery funding can support community sport

Sport England

A response from the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS)

September 2008

Introduction

1. The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) is the independent voice of the voluntary youth sector in England. A diverse network of over 170 national voluntary youth organisations and regional and local youth networks, NCVYS has been working since 1936 to raise the profile of youth work, share good practice and influence policy that has an impact on young people and the organisations that support them.
2. The NCVYS network reflects the diverse range of voluntary organisations working with young people at community, local, regional and national level. Most of our members offer opportunities to engage in challenging activities or develop creative talents. They also support young people to become active in their communities and offer opportunities for their voice to be heard. Some offer interventions to prevent or tackle specific issues such as homelessness or offending behaviour. Others offer counselling, advice, guidance and information. All contribute to young people's personal and social development; some also engage with spiritual development.
3. For more information on any element of this paper, please contact NCVYS's Policy Officer, Hannah Dobbin on 020 7278 1041.

Key comments

4. NCVYS welcomes the opportunity to comment on *Funding sport in your community – have your say* and the recognition of the importance of effective funding systems to support and maintain sport in communities. Investment in community sport is essential to support young people to get involved in sport and contribute to the ‘drop-off’ in sports participation for 16-18-year-olds. Both these factors can lead to improving excellence within sport at an elite level.
5. Different types of funding opportunities are a way to reach and engage a wide variety of voluntary and community youth sector (VCYS) organisations. Match funded schemes would decrease the pressure of meeting funding targets on smaller organisations but maintain a level of commitment to the project. NCVYS supports the option of small grants as these would encourage particularly smaller, local VCYS organisations to apply and such funding could make a significant difference to local communities.
6. Themed funding rounds should prioritise youth participation in sport, e.g. engaging young people in their local sports clubs, and supporting volunteers. Young people can gain invaluable transferable skills from participation in sport and may go on to become elite performers. Volunteers are crucial to enable many local sports clubs to continue to operate and offer sporting opportunities to communities.
7. VCYS infrastructure organisations¹ can facilitate communication and offer support to the VCYS. Sport England should utilise the reach and networks of infrastructure to promote funding schemes, share good practice and empower young people and communities to participate in decision-making.

A definition of infrastructure that can be applied to the VCYS is:

Infrastructure describes the physical facilities, structures, systems, relationships, people, knowledge and skills that exist to support and develop, co-ordinate, represent and promote front line organisations thus enabling them to deliver their missions more effectively. Infrastructure organisations are those whose primary purpose is to provide infrastructure functions or services to front line organisations. They are sometimes called umbrella organisations, second tier organisations or intermediary organisations.

(Home Office, 2004:15)

Types of funding

The provision of varied funding options, themed rounds, sustainable investment in community sports facilities, small grants and an innovation fund, gives VCYS organisations a better chance of applying and gaining financial support. In a changing commissioning environment, the option of small grants is particularly important as this is often the most appropriate way of funding small local organisations that lack the capacity to engage with complex tendering processes.

¹ Infrastructure definition given in text box taken from: Home Office (2004) *ChangeUp: Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework*. Available via: <http://www.changeup.org.uk/overview/introduction.asp>

8. The level of commitment required from partners is difficult to set as different sized organisations will be able to provide different levels of commitment, depending on capacity and other sources of funding. Setting a standardised financial benchmark might exclude smaller organisations from accessing funds and may prove difficult for smaller organisations to reach. The current requirement for partners to raise at least twice the Sport England grant is understandable as a means of demonstrating partner's commitment but this is often difficult for small organisations to meet. Match funding would reduce the amount that partner organisations need to raise and possibly enable more organisations to apply for funding, while continuing to show their commitment.

Recommendation 1: Sport England to provide match funding schemes to enable VCYS organisations to reach the necessary financial commitment.

9. Young people's involvement in sport can benefit their social and personal development. Youth participation in sport, e.g. getting involved in a local club or county level team, can also link into many other current policy priorities such as youth crime, alcohol and obesity. Investment in facilities, coaches and support for young people to participate in sport is crucial to provide safe access and a safe environment for young people.
10. Volunteers drive the VCYS and building the capacity of local volunteering opportunities should be a key area for investment. Many local sports teams and clubs rely on volunteers to coach, provide administrative support and provide regular opportunities for young people to participate in sport. To enable volunteers to best use their time, they need to be adequately supported through clear and accessible funding processes.

Recommendation 2: Sport England to prioritise youth participation in sport and supporting volunteers as themes for funding rounds.

11. Sustainable investment in community sports facilities is essential to provide places for young people to participate in sports. Facilities should reflect local needs and community engagement in the development of facilities is vital in understanding what the needs are and how the community want the needs to be met. In particular young people's needs are often assumed, for example a skate park, however this may not be the case and consultation with young people together with local needs analysis to identify gaps in current service provision will ensure that individual needs are effectively met.
12. VCYS infrastructure and membership bodies have a wide reach to organisations that work with young people and to young people themselves. Local organisations, such as Councils for Voluntary Youth Services (CVYSs) can be utilised to engage the CVYS and young people in decision-making and communicate the needs of the community and the young people within it. Yet the experience of our members shows that often they find it difficult to engage effectively with Sport England's delivery structure.

Recommendation 3: Sport England to provide clear guidance to county sports partnerships on working with VCYS infrastructure to ensure communities and young people are consulted on what their needs are in order to guide investment in, and the development of, facilities.

13. The innovation fund would be beneficial to the VCYS as it often works with disadvantaged and hard-to-reach young people. Sport can be utilised as a means of engaging young people and often offers them an effective way of channelling their energy and dealing with problems. Consistency is important in the lives of young people, especially for those who may be in care, and investment in innovative, engaging sports projects could provide an avenue for regular support and activity.

Application and awards process

14. Capacity to deal with funding applications and processes can be problematic and time consuming for VCYS organisations, especially for smaller, possibly volunteer-led organisations. Therefore, any funding process needs to take account of these pressures and be applied in a simplistic and practical way that avoids bureaucratic processes.
15. Access to information about funding needs to be accessible to all organisations involved with young people and sport. Infrastructure organisations can provide these channels at both a national and local level ensuring that the VCYS is fully aware of any potential funding opportunities. Local infrastructure organisations, such as CVYSs, can also provide support for organisations going through funding processes.

Recommendation 4: Sport England to engage with VCYS infrastructure to facilitate communication with the VCYS about funding programmes.

16. As with the application process, evaluation and reporting for a grant award should be simple and straight forward as the capacity of VCYS organisations could be an issue in meeting reporting requirements. Smaller organisations might find a demanding reporting process too time consuming and difficult to achieve. Any reporting process needs to be realistic and achievable when set.
17. Sport England can play a vital role in sharing best practice and producing impact statistics. Again VCYS infrastructure organisations can work with Sport England through county sports partnerships and NCVYS to disseminate information and promote successful projects. This can also benefit the VCYS by providing an opportunity to demonstrate its work and achievements working with young people. Furthermore it can promote young people themselves and their successes through sport.

Recommendation 5: Sport England to engage with VCYS infrastructure to share good practice and promote young people's sporting achievements.

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1: Sport England to provide match funding schemes to enable VCYS organisations to reach the necessary financial commitment.

Recommendation 2: Sport England to prioritise youth participation in sport and supporting volunteers as themes for funding rounds.

Recommendation 3: Sport England to provide clear guidance to county sports partnerships on working with VCYS infrastructure to ensure communities and young people are consulted on what their needs are in order to guide investment in, and the development of, facilities.

Recommendation 4: Sport England to engage with VCYS infrastructure to facilitate communication with the VCYS about funding programmes.

Recommendation 5: Sport England to engage with VCYS infrastructure to share good practice and promote young people's sporting achievements.

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