



Applying for physical activity and sport facilities funding

Resources to help you with your funding

We provide a range of resources to help you find, apply, secure and sustain funding for physical activity and sport in London. Some of these are in the form of written bitesize guides, to help you with a specific stage in the funding process. When using this guide 'From idea to funding application,' you may also want to use it alongside any or all the following resources:

- [Finding funding for your physical activity project](#)
- [From idea to funding application](#)
- [The Do's and Don'ts when writing a funding application](#)
- [Writing a funding bid – top tips](#)
- [Developing a strong evidence base to support your funding application](#)
- [Applying for facilities funding](#)
- [Securing sponsorship](#)
- [Funding guide for individuals](#)

What's the opportunity?

Any organisation that is providing, or wants to provide, community facilities for physical activity and sport could gain funding for the development of those facilities, whether that be something entirely new or a refurbishment.

If you are considering applying for public, lottery and trust funding, this document provides some guidance.

What could my organisation receive?

Facilities projects can be expensive, but equally can provide huge benefits for local communities. It is not uncommon for very large grant awards to be made, though funders will rarely wish to be the sole funder. Key funders of facility projects include Sport England¹, the Greater London Authority (GLA), the London Marathon Trust (LMCT) and Local Authorities. Larger projects can receive hundreds of thousands of pounds if the benefits of the investment make it worthwhile.

¹ Sport England's Inspired Facilities Programme alone provided funding to 140 London facilities projects, with total investment of £7.5 million (Dec 2017)



What do I need to think about?

A lot! This is a complex area, but to make it easier you might want to think in terms of practicalities and technicalities. To achieve success in fundraising, we have highlighted below our practical and technical recommendations.

Practical recommendations

1. Establish the need and solution first

Start from what is needed on your potential project, rather than using a particular funder's criteria to determine what you do. Establish a clear project concept answering the following questions: What is needed? For whom? Where? When? How?

2. Clearly prove your need

Funders don't want to support a white elephant. If you have an idea for a facilities project then you will need to prove it is 'needed' by the local community that you serve. Evidence should be collated through robust market research with future customers. For ideas on how, see the guide [Developing a strong evidence base to support your funding application](#)

Speak to your local community

The more you place the community at the heart of your development and let them help shape your project, the better it is likely to be, and the easier it will be to apply for funding. Strong community involvement improves viability, making success more likely.

3. Consider that the larger the project, the more challenging fundraising will be

No funder is likely to fund a larger facilities project in isolation. It is much more likely that you will need to apply to several different funders, all of whom will have different timelines, processes and criteria.

4. Be realistic about timeframes and a project development budget from the outset

Most projects drastically underestimate the time it takes for a facilities project to come to fruition. For projects that require significant evidence gathering, approaching multiple funders, and securing planning permission, it is not uncommon for the project to last two to three years. It is important to recognise that you need to fundraise for the development of the project many months, sometimes years before you receive a grant. [Crowd funding](#) is a great way to raise money for these early stages and will also help verify your project amongst your target audience.



5. You are likely to need to have some funding that you can contribute

Funders usually have a requirement for 'match funding', which means that they are unlikely to fund the entire project themselves. Fundraising will be more challenging if your organisation has nothing at all to contribute financially. As a rule of thumb, consider whether you as an organisation will be able to contribute between a quarter and a third of the estimated project cost. If you have no budget at all then you could consider alternative fundraising strategies for establishing your potential contribution – see the guide [Securing sponsorship](#)

6. Achieve value for money

Remember that the cost of building in London is extremely high, and funders will want to see value for money for each £1 they invest. Finding the best value should therefore be a priority, both in terms of the design proposals, and the contractors you use. Sport England's website has excellent guidelines on recommended design approaches for a vast range of facilities.

7. Produce a business plan early in the process

Any new community facilities will require maintenance, management and eventually renewal. Funders will need to be assured that you have a realistic and sustainable plan to manage these facilities. It is in nobody's interests to develop a great facility that closes within a few years as it cannot be maintained and managed.

Technical considerations

1. The greater the security of tenure, the more funding you could access

Like all funders, those offering capital opportunities want to see maximum benefit from their investment. For facilities, this means the security of tenure, i.e. the rights for you to use the building for the purposes proposed, is crucial. If you own the land for your project then you are in a strong position, but if you have a lease then the rule of thumb is that the longer the lease the more funding you are likely to be able to receive. Some funders even state clearly the lease length needed for their grant thresholds. A typical lease length for a major grant over £100,000k can be 20 years+.

2. If the applicant organisation is a private company, your funding options will be more restricted

A significant proportion of charitable trusts will only fund registered charities and community groups. There are exceptions, for example Sport England and the Football Foundation, however even in those examples projects that are first and foremost about financial gain will not be funded.



3. You are likely to have to develop basic plans and outline costs without receiving any funding

Most funders will require that you have undertaken some basic feasibility work and have some initial costs (and ideally have some designs and floor plans) in advance of applying. This means that you are likely to have to bring in professional consultants from an early stage. For larger projects, sometimes architects will provide a pro-bono service to provide some very basic plans in return for a guaranteed commission. There are some grants available for feasibility studies and [crowd funding](#) has also been used to raise money for feasibility studies.

4. The earlier you can secure planning permission the better

If you require planning permission, it is best to secure it sooner rather than later in the project. Providing funding to a project that has not secured planning permission is a significant risk to a funder, even if a lot of community engagement has taken place. As such, any project application is strengthened if it is in place at first application stage, and the majority require it before a final award.

Further information and contacts

For further support from London Sport, contact funding@londonsport.org.

For further information, the Sport England web pages on facilities are a very useful source of information. [Facilities and planning | Sport England.](#)

SAPCA, the Sports and Play Construction Association, offers free technical support, and provides lists of approved contractors for common facilities. <http://www.sapca.org.uk/home>

Club matters <https://www.sportenglandclubmatters.com/>

Case Study

In 2015 London Sport worked with Streatham Youth and Community Trust (SYCT), a small community organisation based in a deprived part of Lambeth in South London, to gain funding to improve their Conyers Road facility. SYCT secured £156,000 in funding that would bring in a whole new adult audience whilst at the same time improving the facility for the young people that were already users. The two core funders were Sport England, through their Inspired Facilities Fund programme, and London Marathon Charitable Trust.

Angie Foran, Director, said: *“I was desperate to improve the facility and started thinking about seeking capital funding for the refurbishments. I had a few meetings with London Sport, which helped me to establish a focus for the refurbishment.”*

Key to the project achieving significant funding was:

- A long lease on a well-established community facility, minimising the risk for investors.



- Clear evidence of a need – a limited sporting offer but with a user base of young people who wanted to do more activity but couldn't due to facility constraints. This was supplemented with evidence of what the local adult community would want, and a commitment to try to meet this during the day when the centre is largely un-used.
- Clear sustainability and business strategy – a business plan was developed to understand how much income would be needed from the adult offer to maintain a daytime offer. This made the project sustainable whilst also opening up the facility to a new audience. This proved its viability.

Search for available funding

This free online funding search tool is available for you to search for the latest funding available to you.

Search for funding now – [Welcome | My Funding Central](#)

Explore physical activity and sport data and insight to support your funding application

Our free online insight and data tool is available for you to explore the latest physical activity and sport data and insight in London to support your funding applications.

[Explore insight and data now](#)

Any questions?

We hope you found this guide useful and best of luck with your funding application. For any questions related to this guide or about our funding support, please contact us below.

funding@londonsport.org

0203 848 4360

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