



Developing a strong evidence base to support your funding application

Why do I need an evidence base?

When writing an application to a public, lottery or trust funder an applicant will always be required to prove the need and that the concept is right to address that need. The need will be the issue, for example a poor quality facility or the lack of activity for young people in the area, and the concept will be the method to solve the issue. You may have a clear view on the issue and what is needed, but you will need to prove it.

What kind of evidence do I need?

Funders are rarely prescriptive on what you need to collect, leaving the ball firmly in the court of the applicant. A good way to start to consider your options is thinking about the type of evidence, and the scale of evidence.

The type of evidence

The type of evidence will depend almost entirely on the need of your project and your concept, therefore it is worth thinking about combining different categories of evidence as follows:

Qualitative evidence – non-statistical evidence, for example anecdotes, notes from conversations, quotes from interviews, answers to open ended survey questions, and quotes from relevant documents.

Quantitative evidence – statistical evidence, for example figures and percentages derived from surveys, questionnaires, polls, or from relevant documents.

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The scale of evidence

The scale of evidence required should be seen in relation to the scale of project. If you are applying for a grant into the hundreds of thousands, your evidence base will need to be substantial and varied. For a £1,500 project, the expectations will be lower.

There is no rule of thumb for deciding the appropriate scale so you should consider whether the scale of your evidence is likely to convince the funder. If, for example, you are applying for a £60,000 grant that aims to provide activity for 250 people a year for two years, surveying 40 people is unlikely to be seen sufficient to prove demand.



How could I build evidence to support my concept?

When considering how to build an evidence base, it is useful to think about two layers of evidence. The best project applications combine these levels of evidence to provide a compelling case.

The first layer is strategic evidence. This is most likely to be linked to the ‘need’, and available through bodies such as Local Authorities, Governing Bodies of Sport, Sport England, Government and London Sport.

The second layer is localised evidence. This is more likely to be linked to the concept that you have developed to address the need. Why not start by exploring [London Sport’s physical activity and sport profiles by borough](#). Below is an example of strategic and localised evidence:

Need identified (issue)	Strategic evidence	Concept established (how to solve the issue)	Localised evidence
“Older people in the area are not active enough.”	Census information; Local Health profiles; Sport England Active Lives Data	Set up a social sports club for older people in the local community centre	Market research asking 50+ residents what they think of the idea and the specifics – timing, activities, costs etc.
“The old pavilion at the park could be a great community fitness centre, as there is nothing that offers this in the community.”	Local Health profiles; Sport England Active Lives Data; Local Authority facilities strategy	Set up a low-cost community-run gym and studio in partnership with a local community group.	Formal support from the council / a commitment to an asset transfer on a long lease; an assessment of other facilities in the local area and what they offer; a survey of households within half a mile

How to find strategic evidence

Every project will exist in a geographical area, and for projects that focus on a local area, there are a number of core sources of information where you can find strategic evidence:

- Census data on your local area – to describe the demographic makeup
- Local Area Health Profiles, normally for a ward, through your Local Authority’s Public Health Department, London Sports’ physical activity and sport borough profiles
- Sport England’s Active Lives survey data for your county
- Sport, physical activity and / or leisure strategies through your local Authority (if available)
- For facilities projects, an indoor facilities strategy or playing pitch strategy through your Local Authority (if available) and the Local Plan.

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How to build localised evidence

This level of evidence is about proving that your project concept will work. In almost all cases this will require speaking to your target audience locally. An exception could include where you have a waiting list or clear evidence of being approached by a lot of people, but this information should be supplemented with greater evidence directly from future customers if possible.

Ways of gathering evidence include:

- A questionnaire distributed in the local community
- A survey that is undertaken with your target audience
- Interviews with participants or those who engage with them (youth leaders or carers for example)
- Focus groups or group sessions discussing the concept
- Piloting or trialling a concept – e.g. a taster
- Finding examples of similar projects that have worked, ideally in the local area.

Focusing on 'inactivity'

Remember that for a funder such as Sport England, they will want you to provide evidence that your project will target physically inactive people into activity, over and above any demographic targeting. If conducting a survey or questionnaire it is therefore vital that the majority of people you speak to are inactive, and that this is captured. Two example questions that will help you establish this are:

Over the past 7 days, how many times have you undertaken vigorous sport and physical activity for more than 30 minutes at a time?

On a typical or usual week, how many times do you undertake vigorous sport and physical activity for more than 30 minutes at a time?

Further information

If you need further support in this area, then London Sport may be able to help. Contact Caroline Brooks, Funding Manager, in the first instance – caroline.brooks@londonsport.org.

For an introduction to quantitative and qualitative research methods, see <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/learn/quantitative-and-qualitative.html>

For guidance on designing a questionnaire, the following website is a useful introduction: <http://www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/questionnaires/>



Case Study

In early 2017 Knights Community Gym was successful in achieving £9,700 of funding from Sport England Small Grants for the project Roe Girls Can! (An introduction to Martial arts, Dance and fitness). KCG is a small charity based in the Roehampton area of Wandsworth, South West London.

Roehampton is a relatively deprived area composed of a number of council estates. The founder of Knights Community Gym, a qualified Kickboxing instructor, had established that despite his experience of many people locally being inactive, varying Kickboxing classes to provide a mixture of martial arts, dance and fitness had provide popular with females.

The idea was to expand this mixed concept, but in order to gain funding the organisation had to prove the extent of the need and that the concept was right.

They gathered strategic evidence on the area to prove the extent of the health issues caused by inactivity, focusing on females. They also found census information to understand the extent of their market for the classes.

Secondly, they conducted a community survey with local females, particularly targeting female parents attending local schools. Each person was asked whether they did any physical activity or sports at present, whether they would be interested in the classes, how much they would pay, when they would like the classes to be held, and where they would like them.

In total, they spoke to 100 females, of which 86 were not exercising more than 15 minutes per week. 90% of these females were between 16 and 27 years old, and should be regularly participating. All participants indicated that they would be willing to attend a mixed martial arts and fitness session, with 10% having attended a similar type of activity in the past.

This evidence provided a clear indication that the project could be successful, but also crucially provided details on when and where to hold sessions. A project was developed that will provide 4 independent sessions in community locations on each estate, with an overall target of 80 people.

Photo: The Knights Community Gym team at a community festival





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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.

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