

Sport Wales Response

Follow up to Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee One-day Sport Enquiry – 20th October 2021

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Details of any financial losses or future funding streams that have been lost to the sector as a consequence of Brexit

Some high level examples:

- The loss of the Erasmus education programme is significant and also impacts on the sport sector. The recently established Masters Course at Swansea University on Sports Ethics and Integrity (a world’s first masters level course in this subject) has now moved to Leuven University for example.
- Certain structural projects benefitted from European structural funding e.g. Ebbw Vale Leisure Centre which was a project of significant scale, that would not have been possible through previous funding via Sport Wales.
- As we review the cumulative impact of covid and change in the UK-EU relationship we will also endeavour to review the financial consequences of this in more depth.

Information the project being undertaken with the Centre for Digital Public Services on how Sport Wales’ grant schemes might make more of an impact in certain areas.

In February 2021, Sport Wales approached the Centre to see how they could support us in developing our community investments system as well as our digital transformation journey. We recognised a need to involve people and understand their motivations when developing opportunities to be active.

The Centre uses the Agile model of delivery which has a number of stages (Discovery/Alpha/Beta/Live) and after some initial discussions, the challenge explored during the discovery phase was ‘how can Sport Wales increase the reach and impact of their community



investments’, and a partnership approach meant that we worked together with a number of team members from Sport Wales and another set of team members from the Centre.

This new way of working for Sport Wales meant that we don’t jump to solutions at the start, but instead started by discovering and understanding the needs of the users and the organisation through user research. It’s only once their needs are fully understood that we then try out ideas to fulfil their needs through iterative and incremental delivery. The involvement of the user is constant and paramount to the success of any solution, whether there is a digital element or not.

Discovery started on 12 July and lasted for 8 weeks. We’re already engaging and conducting research with both current users and non-users of the community grants through surveys and one-to-one interviews.

By the end of discovery, we had a clear understanding of which sports clubs, organisations or community groups should receive community grants, their needs and how Sport Wales and its grants can make a true difference to them. In practice, this means the user research will involve reaching out to successful applicants, unsuccessful applicants and those who never applied before (which are the trickiest to find).

A squad is a multi-disciplinary team, meaning there are a range of specialisms within the team to understand the organisational goals and blockers as well as understand the needs of users. The teams used a system of pairing two people on a piece of work, sharing knowledge on how to do it and allowing the other person to try it out.

Our methodology for Discovery

During discovery, we identified and researched 3 main user groups:

- current users that have successfully applied for funding
- current users that were unsuccessful when applying for funding
- potential users that haven’t applied for funding who could be eligible

Over 8 weeks, we conducted:

- quantitative research and received 228 survey responses (including 5 responses in Welsh), from successful and unsuccessful Sport Wales community investment applicants
- qualitative research and we spoke to 59 current and potential users of Sport Wales grants, as well as 18 interviews with community partners and local authorities

The team also looked at the internal needs of Sport Wales, such as:

- the current application process, including the eligibility criteria and application form to see where it could be simplified while still meeting all compliance and regulatory requirements
- the current digital reach of Sport Wales to community groups
- the current insight and evaluation process for the community grants

Designing bilingual services

Recognising the importance of this, we undertook the discovery phase bilingually, including survey design, interviews and blog posts from the start. This prompted us to think about how our applications are currently received in Welsh.

Understanding users and their needs

This was a key consideration from the start and throughout the 8-week discovery period. The first exercise involved the team trying to understand who their users were. Secondly, they wanted to understand the needs and desires of the users identified. Reflecting on this standard made the team check and challenge from the outset.

What did we find out in Discovery?

We learnt a lot from the people who participated in Discovery, including:

- they would like more support upfront when making their application (including human contact)
- they wanted clearer information available prior to starting an application
- the application form to be shorter and simpler
- they would like a wider type of support which is not just funding
- they would like feedback on their application to be more detailed and specific, so they can understand and improve their application in the future
- some users don't have the necessary documentation in place for their club (i.e., safeguarding policies), and don't know how to get them; this is a barrier for them applying
- generally, successful users have a positive experience with learning logs – how the clubs share the impact of the grants with Sport Wales – but they would like different options to share learning other than in the current written format

We have seen limitations on the current reach and understanding of community investments and we should expand our digital reach, especially to engage with those who would most benefit from receiving grant funding in line with our organisational priorities.

The team also tested the users' emerging 'pain-points' with other Sport Wales colleagues and concluded that there is room for improvement on the end-to-end process, which would cater to the needs of the users, as well as the requirements of Sport Wales to distribute public funds appropriately.

We also explored any potential technical issues that are contributing to users' frustration. Overall, these related to the system's inability to display pertinent grant data in "real time" to support the decision-making process and a number of manual processes which ideally should be automated.

What did we learn from speaking with other organisations?

As part of Discovery, we also gathered insights from other organisations who provide grants. We spoke with six public sector organisations and seven third sector bodies and can summarise what we've learned in 4 Cs.

Communication:

- Changing the tone and feel of all communication to show that organisations are ‘passionate about investing in communities’ and are seen as supportive, open and approachable
- Shifting from language such as ‘criteria and being eligible’ to ‘come and talk to us – we are interested in what you are doing’
- Pre-empting user needs and provide engaging, valuable content through videos, cartoons and imagery to add value

Customer service:

- Automated – signposting, support at each stage and at the end
- Human contact – the ability to talk to potential applicants and work with opportunities with potential to get them to a place where they are ‘investable’
- A team and approach that emulates effective and valued customer service
- Providing constructive feedback to applicants
- Transparency around amounts invested and the process that applications go through

Connecting with communities:

- Ensuring applicants feel their community is understood and represented within a decision-making process
- Building and testing with users
- Working through partners that have trusted relationships to explore their role and try some different ways of supporting and investing

Confidence:

- Where funding organisations may have concerns about a project, taking a flexible approach to ensuring applicants address these concerns if an investment is offered

Our biggest challenge during discovery?

Reaching potential users was one of our main challenges. We didn’t know who they were and knew we would have to rely on community partners to bridge the gap and help us make connections.

We spoke with 11 community partners and also seven local authorities, who we felt may be a conduit for distributing grants or may reach/know potential users directly) and as a result, we managed to speak with three potential users. The conversations with them reinforced some of the feedback provided by current users and is incorporated in the needs from users.

What’s next?

The team presented the discovery findings and recommendations to Sport Wales and other stakeholders, alongside a proposal for the alpha phase.

In October 2021, an alpha phase begun for a 12-week period which will look at:

- Building, testing and iterating a prototype of an end-to-end application process that meets the needs of users and delivers organisational outcomes.

- Working closely with digital communications, partners and other organisations to test how the reach of Sport Wales can become more effective.
- Working through how changes to the technical system can meet the needs of the organisation and users to a greater extent – including working with the current supplier to reduce manual processes and understand how the system can be iterated to meet the insight and evaluation needs of Sport Wales.

Details of different funding models for capital schemes

The Sport Wales Board has agreed the distribution of £7m Capital Funding from Welsh Government and also approved the development of a more strategic long-term view for any potential future capital funding priorities, recognising not only the Sport Wales strategic intents but also our new investment approach and regional sports partnership priorities. The following has been confirmed for the current financial year. All figures are initial indicative commitments which may be revised based on need as the work progresses.

1. BeActiveWales – capital projects

We will invest in the Be Active Wales Fund for ‘on-field’ capital projects such as equipment, surfaces, lighting, etc. Many applications consist of minor capital requests and this will allow for further promotion of this opportunity and will also enable a wider reach of the fund into other priority areas of support. An initial £700,000 has been invested from capital funding to the scheme, in addition to the significant revenue funding already available to the public. More information can be found here. <https://www.sport.wales/grants-and-funding/beactivewalesfund> To date around £355,000 has been committed to successful applicants from capital project applications.

2. ‘Place 4 Sport’ with crowd-funder

Sport Wales has launched our ‘Place 4 Sport’ public application scheme, utilising a crowd-funding partner. This allows support to be made available to the types of sustainable schemes that haven’t been prioritised previously e.g. off-field developments such as changing rooms, enhancements, adaptations, etc. An initial £300,000 has been committed to this pilot project. Further details of the fund can be found here. <https://www.sport.wales/grants-and-funding/crowdfunder>

3. Artificial Training Pitch (ATP) collaboration scheme

There will be continued investment in the existing ATP collaboration scheme. A recent cross-party debate in the Senedd emphasised how important further developments of this nature are across Wales. The proposal is to review the operation of the collaborative group from hockey, rugby and football to consider related developments and ensure improved efficiency and transparency. An initial £2.7m has been discussed for this strand of work subject to other priority developments and likely project timescales.

4. Elite facilities review

The Welsh Government commissioned review by Consultants KKP, conducted in 2017, identified several key projects, but some have not been progressed because of financial constraints. It is

proposed to assess whether any of these, or other previously identified schemes, are still achievable and affordable, whilst reviewing wider need. An initial £2.5m has been committed to this strand of work.

5. Direct investment in specific inequalities specialist partner(s)

Certain specialist partners will be invited to contribute to a pilot scheme based on their available capacity, willingness, networks, etc. These specialist partners will utilise the knowledge and experience of organisations such as the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action and AKD (commissioned by all Home Country Sports Councils to set out recommendations on tackling racism and racial inequalities). Potential future expansion with other partners will be explored following a review of the initial learning and impact. An initial £200,00 has been committed to this strand of work.

6. Longer-term strategic plan for capital investment

An internal project group has been established, led by the Assistant Director for National Sports Facilities. This working group will review any relevant existing reports that have been produced previously, followed by gathering of further insight (if required), before testing with all partners in the sector. This is to build a clear picture of the maximum impact of future investments for both community and performance sport.

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