



Evaluation of the Inclusive Communities Grant Programme

**A report submitted to the West
Midlands Combined Authority**

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Acknowledgements

The research and evaluation was funded through the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund, funded by the UK Government. The research team are grateful for the support, guidance and information provided by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) throughout the project. We would also like to thank the Heart of England Community Foundation and United by 2022 for their support and involvement in the research.

THE INCLUSIVE
COMMUNITIES FUND



Funded by
UK Government

Commonwealth Games
Legacy Fund



West Midlands
Combined Authority

heart of england
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

UNITED BY 2022
LEGACY CHARITY

We would like to acknowledge the full research team across Ecorys, Fry Creative, Sported, University of Birmingham and Warwick Business School. Consulting: James Sennett, Jenny Molyneux, Hannah Woodbridge, Ravi Talwar, Rhiannon Cottrill, Jude Maher, Harriet Tucker, Sophie Hayes, Harry Norman (Ecorys), Richard Hawley, Fabio Thomas, Yasmin Damji (Fry), Sophie Tobin, Andrew Stead, Laura Henshaw (Sported), Shu Shu Chen, Qi Wang (University of Birmingham), and Mark Scott (Warwick Business School).

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Foreword

We are excited to share the evaluation of the Inclusive Communities Grant Programme, an essential part of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund. This programme has played a vital role in fostering equality, diversity, and inclusion across the West Midlands, aligning with the inspiring goals of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and our shared values at the West Midlands Combined Authority.

The Games Legacy Plan was designed to elevate the national and international profile of our incredible region while enhancing social, economic, and cultural benefits for everyone. Through the Inclusive Communities Grants Programme, we have been able to extend these benefits to reach more underserved communities, particularly those that may not have been directly engaged with the Games, and we could not be prouder of that.

Our region came together to deliver community activities valued at an incredible £11.8 million. Through projects in culture, creativity, sport, and physical activity, our not-for-profit sector was able to uplift our residents' mental health and social wellbeing, creating happier and healthier communities. This experience has allowed us to discover and connect with many of the amazing individuals and community organisations we have in the West Midlands, it has shown us just how important it is to understand, amplify and support our communities further, which we will do through our 'Inclusive Communities Approach'.

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone involved in this journey. We are deeply grateful to DCMS and MHCLG, for providing the funds, to the Heart of England Community Foundation for expertly administering the grant on our behalf, and to United By 2022 for their outreach efforts in connecting with all our diverse communities. We also appreciate the Inclusive Communities Grant Steering Group, who helped us to define our aims and objectives, and the Community Grants Panel for their invaluable local knowledge and experience in guiding our grant making process. Most importantly, we thank all the communities who participated in this once-in-a-lifetime grant programme. Your time, commitment, and dedication have made a significant difference and without you none of this would have been possible.

As we look ahead, we are committed to continuing to improving the lives of everyone in our region and invite all our stakeholders, community members, and government officials to join us in this mission. Together, let us all work together to amplify and support the vital work of our communities.

Claire Dhami
Head of Systems Change and Inclusion
West Midlands Combined Authority

A photograph of a group of men of diverse ethnicities gathered around a table, smiling and interacting. One man in a purple jacket and grey beanie is pointing upwards. Another man in a green jacket is holding a white paper plate. The table is covered with various food items, including a large tray of what looks like fried chicken wings. The background shows a painting on the wall.

Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

Context and Aims of Evaluation

The West Midlands Combined Authority commissioned an evaluation team led by Ecorys to evaluate the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund (CWGLEF). As part of this evaluation, Ecorys conducted a 'deep dive' evaluation of the Inclusive Communities Grant Programme (ICGP), which was delivered as part of the CWGLEF. The evaluation team included FRY Creative, Sported, the University of Birmingham and the University of Warwick.

Following an underspend on the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games budget, a total of £70 million of one-off funding was secured by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) as additional investment to the ensure the legacy of the Games. The funding made up the 'Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund' (CWGLEF) which aimed to build on the success of the legacy and address specific lessons identified in the evaluation of the Games. The CWGLEF allocated funding across four broad pillars including Inclusive Communities. The aims of the Inclusive Communities pillar included:

- ▶ Championing equality, diversity and inclusion
- ▶ Addressing race inequality
- ▶ Improving community engagement
- ▶ Developing approaches for social innovation

To achieve these aims, the Pillar had three constituent programmes, one of which was the **Inclusive Communities Grants Programme** (ICGP). This grant programme (the focus for this evaluation) was intended to empower communities to design, propose, and implement solutions to real problems felt in their own places and spaces, continuing the legacy of Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games to address physical activity and sport, mental health and wellbeing and arts, culture, and creativity.

In total, £11.8 million was awarded to not-for-profit organisations working in the West Midlands and was focused around three themes:

- ▶ Physical activity and sport
- ▶ Mental health and wellbeing
- ▶ Arts, culture, and creativity

This evaluation focused on understanding the implementation and delivery of the ICGP, which included understanding process and impacts elements. It set out to answer a series of research questions in relation to applications and awards, spend, impact and learning.

The ICGP was designed to maintain momentum generated by the Commonwealth Games, which provided support to community-based organisations across the West Midlands. WMCA appointed a Funding Steering Group comprised of local stakeholders and funding distributors to advise on the design of the ICGP. WMCA also appointed a grant administrator, Heart of England Community Foundation (HoECF) to administer grants.

Overall, a wide range of projects and activities were funded. To be eligible for funding, organisations needed to be not-for-profit, and delivering within the following areas: Birmingham, Cannock Chase, Coventry, Dudley, Redditch, Sandwell, Shropshire, Solihull, Tamworth, Telford and Wrekin, Walsall, Warwickshire, and Wolverhampton. National organisations with a presence in the West Midlands could also apply, providing the project would be West Midlands-led.

Funding allocations were developed using three criteria: population, deprivation (proportion of Lower Super Output Area in the 10% most deprived Lower Super Output Area nationally), and whether it was a constituent or non-constituent area. From this an average spend per authority was devised, with a minimum and maximum spend also. There were four types of grants available:

- ▶ Small Grants - £500 to £15,000
- ▶ Medium Grants - £15,001 to £75,000
- ▶ Large Grants - £75,001 to £300,000
- ▶ Small Works, Refurbishment, Renovation - £500 to £100,000

The funding was then distributed using the allocations and across the four types of grants.

Method

The evaluation took a mixed-methods approach to data collection. This involved utilising a wide range of data sources and tools to answer the evaluation questions:

- ▶ **Application data:** provided by HoECF and analysed to produce numerical breakdowns of the applications by key characteristics (such as geographical location of applicants and primary beneficiary groups). The analysis included comparing application statistics by successful and unsuccessful applicants.
- ▶ **Online survey:** conducted with unsuccessful applicants in Autumn 2024, capturing reflections on their experiences of applying for the grant, the impact of not receiving the grant, as well as suggestions for other similar programmes.
- ▶ **End of grant monitoring data:** Submitted by Grantees to HoECF by the end of January 2025. Responses from the end of monitoring data and the small end of grant survey were combined and analysed in Excel.
- ▶ **Case studies and qualitative interviews:** Grantees ensured a general balance across key project characteristics (local authority, ICGP theme, and grant type) but were not representative of all funded projects. The case studies comprised of an interview with the project lead (the same as the grantee qualitative interviews), a visit and observation of the grant funded activity, and feedback from project beneficiaries.
- ▶ **Feedback from stakeholders:** collected through interviews, focus groups and written responses.
- ▶ **Workshops:** undertaken to understand applicant and stakeholder perspectives. Findings have been combined with the other sources of qualitative feedback.

Mid-to-long term outcomes and impacts could not be observed during the evaluation timescales. Whilst project outcome data was assessed as part of the evaluation, it is too soon to draw on regional level data linked to the outcome areas.

Applications

The ICGP was promoted through a variety of channels and by a range of organisations. There was perception amongst some applicants and stakeholders that there was a lot of anticipation regarding the funding prior to launch, potentially leading to unrealistic expectations around the extent of funding available. First impressions of the ICGP by communities across the region were very positive, with grantees appreciating that the ICGP focused on specific underserved beneficiary groups.

A support programme run by United by 2022 was offered to organisations looking to apply for the ICGP, this included engagement events, webinars and 1:1 support sessions. There were suggestions that it

should have begun prior to the funding window opening. There was also feedback that greater clarity was needed over the ICGP eligibility criteria and scoring criteria.

The ICGP application window was open between November 2023 and January 2024. Both applicants and stakeholders were generally critical of the application form itself, describing it as repetitive, long, and prone to technical issues. Feedback highlighted that the form was better suited to bigger organisations with greater relative resource/capacity, and was not as accessible as it could have been. Another challenge was timing. Due to a high volume of applications, the window closed early. Stakeholders acknowledged they should have realised how oversubscribed the fund was likely to be and altered the design of the ICGP to mitigate for this.

A total of 1,358 applications were received, of which 388 received funding from the ICGP (equivalent to 29% of applications). The most popular grant to apply for was the medium grant for funding between £15,001 and £75,000 (41% of applicants applied for this) and the majority of applications were looking to fund activities related to improving mental health and wellbeing (84%). The award data showed no notable differences between the types of applications that were awarded ICGP funding and those which were unsuccessful in their application, however, unsuccessful applicants did feel that certain underserved groups had been overlooked.

Awards

The award process consisted of two stages:

- ▶ Sifting stage: HoECF review applications for eligibility
- ▶ Panel process: Applications reviewed by a panel and decision made.

Each panel comprised of representatives from funding bodies and community organisations from across the West Midlands. Feedback from stakeholders was that the funding allocations were challenging given the oversubscription of the ICGP and that strong applications were rejected simply because there was not enough funding. To alleviate this, some stakeholders felt the fund should have prioritised either only the constituent authorities of WMCA, or just the authorities where Commonwealth Games had taken place. This would have reduced the number of applications and made the awards process easier and quicker. Overall, those involved in the sifting and panel sessions felt that the process worked well.

The award process was also affected by the oversubscription and there were delays in notifying applicants of their outcome. This led to a variety of difficulties for applicants, including organisations needing to use charitable reserves or personal finances to fund planned activities, organisations having to offer a scaled back activities or not offering them at all, inflationary pressures and challenges with suppliers which damaged relationships, and stress and anxiety for applicant organisations' staff and volunteers due to the uncertainty. Unsuccessful applicants were disappointed about the level of feedback provided, as they felt it gave them little insight and knowledge of how to improve future funding applications. HoECF did not feel it was possible to provide detailed feedback to unsuccessful applicants given the large volume of applications and the limited timeframe. Equally, WMCA stakeholders and grant panellists acknowledged that the funding allocations between different local authorities sometimes meant strong applications could not be awarded simply because of funding allocations.

Spend of grant funding

A wide range of projects and activities were funded by the ICGP. Examples included: replacement and upgraded sports equipment, exercise classes and programmes for underserved groups, training for arts and culture practitioners so they can better support people with additional needs, investment in theatre groups, support for community kitchens and food parcels, and events and social activities to foster a sense of belonging and community spirit and overcome challenges related to loneliness and isolation.

59% of grantees said they used their grant to fund an expansion or to increase an existing activity of theirs, and around half (51%) used their grant to pay for a new activity for their organisation. A quarter of grantees (24%) had match funding for their project, typically from the Arts Council, the National Lottery Community Fund, local authorities, church dioceses, and individual donors. Two thirds of grantees (64%) said their final expenditure matched their approved budget, with around one in four (23%) having underspend and one in eight (13%) having overspend. Generally, grantees found the process of spending their grant straightforward, but the delivery timeframe was challenging, and they often needed to rush or condense their planned activity.

Outcomes and Impacts

Due to the evaluation timescales, it was too early to fully capture the impacts arising from the grant programme, but the evaluation drew on programme data, case studies and interviews to examine the range of outcomes that were delivered for supported organisations, the region overall and wider stakeholders. There was evidence that funding has already contributed to varying degrees, to the outcomes foreseen in the ICGP Theory of Change.

Drawing on programme data (end of grant submissions from grantees), we can see that the ICGP has brought about the following through funding community projects:

- ▶ 630,000 People reached
- ▶ 1,841 New volunteers
- ▶ 35,956 Additional volunteer hours (exc. small grant recipients¹)
- ▶ 681 New staff roles (full-time equivalent) (exc. small grant recipients)
- ▶ 76,418 Additional staff hours (exc. small grant recipients)
- ▶ 1,444 Qualifications gained (exc. small grant recipients)

The evaluation identified a direct contribution of the grant funding to **improved participation in physical activity**. Grants supported the running of activities and the provision of appropriate facilities, broadening access and reducing barriers to participation. In particular, the evaluation found that project activities were effective in delivering physical activities for underserved groups, and those who traditionally face barriers to participation. **Mental wellbeing** also emerged as a core outcome area. Case studies highlighted how funded projects gave participants more structure in their days and opportunities to meet people. The evaluation highlights that the ICGP made a positive contribution toward developing social integration and **developing greater inclusivity for community activities**.

Generally, interviews with both grantees and beneficiaries suggest that the grant programme has led to inclusive practices and boosted community participation, through funding organisations that deliver activities which support people from underserved communities and groups to strengthen their social ties and interaction. As a result of the ICGP, the evaluation also found that community organisations were upskilled in their development of funding applications, and more likely to achieve a positive outcome. The evaluation found that the ICGP brought about some regional level benefits but that it is too early to identify impacts in relation to growth and improved regional presence. It did however find that the experience of designing, delivering and participating in the ICGP brought about opportunities for learning and development that will benefit communities and organisations across the West Midlands into the future.

Conclusion

¹ Differences in the end of grant monitoring forms meant these questions were not asked of small grantees.

Across the range of projects reviewed, the evidence demonstrated a positive causal relationship between the activities funded by ICGP and the anticipated outcomes. Overall, the evaluation concludes that the design of the fund was largely appropriate in terms of the types of activities that could be supported, and the types of organisations that could be funded. This ensured that relevant outcomes linked to the aims of the ICGP were brought about for underserved communities, as a meaningful and inclusive legacy of the Games.

Based on feedback from stakeholders and output data, the evaluation concludes that there may have been merit in further targeting particular geographic communities through more specific eligibility criteria. The demand for funding from across the constituent and non-constituent authorities resulted in the early closure of the application window, with regrettable implications in terms of resourcing, and the potential exclusion of organisations and communities with high levels of need and capacity to contribute to outcomes. More targeted eligibility criteria – focusing on underserved communities - would have also meant that the levels of support and capacity building could have been better targeted to reflect need.

The above links to the consideration of whether the ICGP represented value for money. We conclude that the overall grant programme represented value for money in that its design ensured support for activities which were effective in bringing about outcomes as intended. There is however a question as to whether the ICGP overall was as efficient in its management and distribution of resources as it could have been. Greater targeting of the funding to underserved communities would have ensured that support and communication resources could be focussed more effectively, also having an implication for the depth and sustainability of the benefits delivered for those communities most in-need.



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01

Introduction

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1.0 Introduction

This report outlines the findings of the evaluation of the Inclusive Communities Grant Programme. The grant programme was delivered as part of the wider Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund (LEF), for which a meta-evaluation has also been undertaken across the same period (available as a separate report). The evaluation of the Inclusive Communities Grant programme seeks to provide a deep-dive review to understand the degree to which this strand of the overall LEF was delivered in line with its aims, and whether it brought about intended positive outcomes for local communities.

The evaluation was commissioned in 2024 by the West Midlands Combined Authority and has been delivered by a consortium led by Ecorys, and including Fry, Sported and experts at the University of Birmingham and University of Coventry.

This report is split into six sections:

- ▶ **1. Introduction:** which covers the aims of the evaluation, the context of the ICGP in relation to the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund and sets out details on the approach to the evaluation and methodology.
- ▶ **2. Programme background:** outlining the context of the Fund and the delivery and governance arrangements.
- ▶ **3. Evaluation Aims and Approach:** which details the research questions underpinning the evaluation and the methodological approach.
- ▶ **4. Findings:** setting out the evaluation evidence and findings.
- ▶ **5. Learning:** draws on the evaluation evidence to reflect on what learning can be derived for the future.
- ▶ **6. Conclusion:** reflecting on the overall findings.

Appendices to the report also set out:

- ▶ Annex 1: List of Awarded organisations
- ▶ Annex 2: Evaluation questions
- ▶ Annex 3: Funding allocation by authority
- ▶ Annex 4: Additional detail on methodological approach
- ▶ Annex 5: Detailed breakdown of applications and awards by key characteristics

02

Programme Background

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2.0 Programme Background

2.1 Introduction to Inclusive Communities Grant Programme

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games legacy aimed to promote **equality, diversity, and inclusion** across Birmingham and the West Midlands. Under this overarching goal, the Games Legacy Plan² set out five mission pillars that would underpin Legacy programmes maximising the impact and legacy of the Games. The intention of these programmes was to enhance the national and international profile of the region and **maximise the social, economic, and cultural benefits** of the Games. This included extending the benefits of the Games and its legacy to reach more underserved communities in the West Midlands, particularly those that may not have been directly engaged with the Games.³

Following a significant underspend on the Commonwealth Games budget, a total of £70 million of one-off funding was secured by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) as additional investment to ensure the legacy of the Games. The funding made up the '**Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund**' (CWGLEF) which aimed to build on the success of the legacy and address specific lessons identified in the evaluation of the Games. The CWGLEF allocated funding across four broad pillars including Inclusive Communities. The aims of the Inclusive Communities pillar included:

- ▶ Championing equality, diversity and inclusion
- ▶ Addressing race inequality
- ▶ Improving community engagement
- ▶ Developing approaches for social innovation

To achieve these aims, the Pillar had three constituent programmes:

- ▶ The **Inclusive Communities Grants Programme** (ICGP): This grant programme (the focus for this evaluation) was intended to empower communities to design, propose, and implement solutions to real problems felt in their own places and spaces, continuing the legacy of Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games to address physical activity and sport, mental health and wellbeing and arts, culture, and creativity.
- ▶ The **Trailblazers programme**: This programme supported five projects selected for their ability to address long standing matters of inequality across regional communities.
- ▶ The **Social Economy** programme focused on investment in business support programmes and local clusters to improve organisations' capacity to engage with major investment and address local need, linking social enterprises and trading VCOs with wider opportunities and markets.

A separate standalone report covering the meta-evaluation of the CWGLEF has also been produced.

² Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games (March 2021) - Legacy Plan

³ DCMS (2024) - Evaluation of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, One Year Post-Games Evaluation Report

2.2 Funding overview

The ICGP was a £11.8 million Community Grants programme funding projects related to the following themes:

- ▶ Physical activity and sport
- ▶ Mental health and wellbeing
- ▶ Arts, culture and creativity

The ICGP was inspired by the momentum generated by the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, which provided support to community-based organisations across the West Midlands across the duration of the Games. The ICGP was initiated by WMCA in order to allow some of this community support to continue, while recognising that there were more communities who could benefit from similar funding into the future, particularly as not all areas across the West Midlands had benefited consistently from the Games.

WMCA appointed a Funding Steering Group, comprised of local stakeholders and funding distributors, to advise on the design of the ICGP. The group shared their experiences and insight on all aspects of the grant funding process including governance, funding distributions, and grant administrator procurement. Beyond the initial advisory stage, the Funding Steering Group did not contribute to the delivery of the ICGP.

WMCA appointed a grant administrator, Heart of England Community Foundation (HoECF), to administer **£9 million of funding awards to organisations, community groups and clubs across the West Midlands**. The remaining £1.5 million was used to fund the appointment of the grant administrator, the evaluation of the programme, and the WMCA team who oversaw the contract management. In addition to the original £10.5 million budget, an additional £3 million was received from the then named Department of Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities (DLUHC) in March 2024. This additional £3 million was added to the £9 million being awarded to communities, to create an **overall funding pot of £11.8 million**.

To be eligible to apply for the Inclusive Communities Grant Programme, organisations needed to be not-for-profit (such as charities, community interest companies, social enterprises, sports clubs, and local authorities) and be delivering activities in one of the following areas: **Birmingham, Cannock Chase, Coventry, Dudley, Redditch, Sandwell, Shropshire, Solihull, Tamworth, Telford and Wrekin, Walsall, Warwickshire, and Wolverhampton**. National organisations were also welcome to apply, provided they already had an established West Midlands presence and that the project they would be delivering would be West Midlands-led. The rationale for including both constituent and non-constituent members of the WMCA was that it would support more organisations working in the vicinity of the Commonwealth Games.

Funding allocations were developed using three criteria: population, deprivation (proportion of Lower Super Output Area in the 10% most deprived Lower Super Output Area nationally), and whether it was a constituent or non-constituent area. From this an average spend per authority was devised, with a minimum and maximum spend also. The table in Annex 3 outlines the funding allocation by authority.

There were four types of grants available:

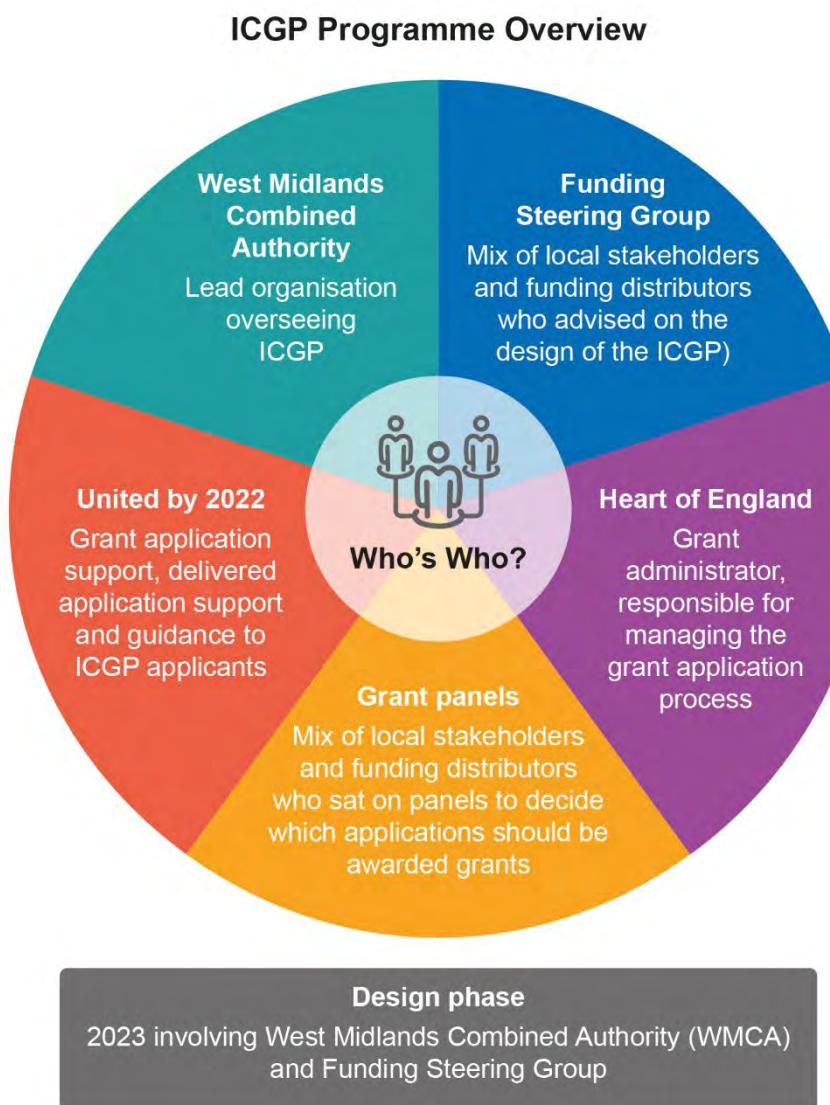
- ▶ Small Grants - £500 to £15,000
- ▶ Medium Grants - £15,001 to £75,000
- ▶ Large Grants - £75,001 to £300,000

- Small Works, Refurbishment, Renovation - £500 to £100,000

The funding was then distributed using the allocations and across the four types of grants. A full list of those awarded data can be found in Annex 1.

An overview of the ICGP is set out in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Overview of the ICGP



Source: ICGP evaluation team

03

Evaluation Aims and Approach

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3.0 Evaluation Aims and Approach

This section of the report sets out the aims of the evaluation and then the methodological approach.

3.1 Purpose and objectives of the evaluation

The evaluation aimed to understand the implementation and delivery of the Inclusive Communities Grant Fund programme (ICGP). This included understanding process and impacts elements, and addressing the research questions across the following areas:

- ▶ How the ICGP has worked to support and progress the Commonwealth Games legacy.
- ▶ Evidencing the outcomes and impact of the grant programme on communities across the West Midlands region (or the degree to which outcomes and impacts have been realised to date and are expected to be delivered into the future).
- ▶ Capturing and reflecting the process learning which can be applied to future grant programmes in the West Midlands – in terms of design, governance and delivery.
- ▶ Considering the degree to which the ICGP has brought about social benefits such increased community cohesion, Pride in Place and increased social capital amongst funded organisations and communities.

The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods and theory-based approach. The design was framed around a set of research questions in relation to the following areas and which are set out in full in Annex 2:

- ▶ **Applications and awards:** understanding the diversity and success of grant applications, the impact on those who did not receive funding, and the experiences of those overseeing the grant process, and the organisational differences between successful and unsuccessful applicants.
- ▶ **Spend of grant funding:** covering the types of activities and projects funded by the programme, the beneficiaries and areas of the West Midlands that have benefited, and the practical experiences of grantees in terms of spending, partnerships, and matched funding.
- ▶ **Impact of grant funding:** on physical activity, wellbeing, cultural engagement, financial sustainability of supported organisations, relationships between WMCA and community organisations, inclusive practices, community participation, and the overall impact on the West Midlands region.
- ▶ **Learning:** for future similar programmes, how funding processes can be better designed to meet the needs of the West Midlands population, and how WMCA can further support inclusive growth and increase community participation.

The methodological approach is set out in further detail in the next section. The research questions for the ICGP deeper-dive evaluation also linked to the research questions underpinning the overarching meta-evaluation of the CWGLEF.

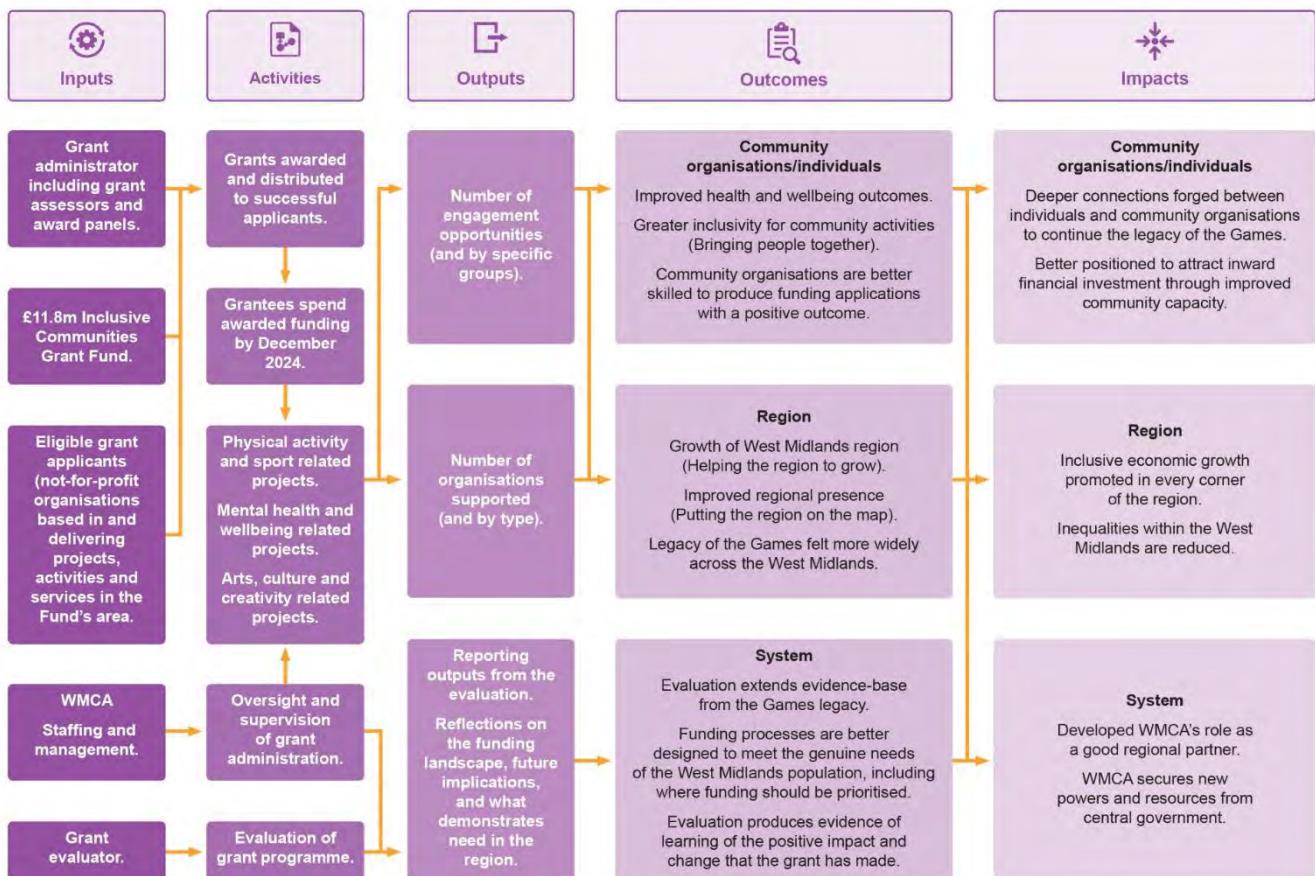
3.2 Methodology

The evaluation adopted a **theory-based approach** to understanding the degree to which the implementation of the Fund was delivered and brought about outcomes as anticipated. The Theory of Change for the ICGP is set out below and outlines **how the Fund was hoped to bring about changes over time**. As per the advice set out in HM Treasury's Green Book⁴, it is likely that the impacts of

⁴ The Green Book (2022) - GOV.UK

interventions will emerge over the longer-term and often outside of the timelines for evaluation. This is the case for the ICGP, and the evaluation has therefore focused on the degree to which outcomes can be captured at this stage and the sorts of impacts which might be expected into the future. Figure 3.1 below sets out the Theory of Change for the ICGP, which links to the Theory of Change for the wider CWGLEF programme. This evaluation report refers back to these intended outcomes and impacts to reflect on whether the ICGP has been delivered as intended and achieved the outcomes anticipated at design stage.

Figure 3.1: Theory of Change diagram – Inclusive Communities Grant Programme



Source: ICGP evaluation team

The evaluation took a mixed-methods approach to data collection, including a review of management information and programme data, alongside additional qualitative primary research with grantees and programme stakeholders. Below we set out some additional detail on the various approaches for data and evidence collection. Supplementary information on the methodological approach is included in Annex 4.

3.2.1 Application data

The application data was collated and shared by HoECF and then analysed by the evaluation team in Excel. This analysis produced numerical breakdowns of the applications by type of grants applied for, the geographical location of applicants, and target beneficiaries. The analysis included comparing application statistics by successful and unsuccessful applicants.

3.2.2 Unsuccessful applicant survey

The evaluation sought to capture learning from the application process and administration of grant funding. As part of this it sought to understand **perspectives of those beneficiaries receiving grant support but also those organisations which were unsuccessful** in their applications. A short online survey was circulated to unsuccessful applicants to understand their experiences of applying for the grant, the impact of not receiving the grant on their project and organisation, as well as suggestions for other similar programmes. An email invite was sent by HoECF in the last week of September 2024, and the survey was closed on 11th November 2024. **166 survey responses were received, which equated to a 17% response rate** (970 unsuccessful applicants were sent the survey). These results were analysed for numerical frequencies (where questions permitted) and open questions capturing written feedback were read and reviewed for common themes. The data has not been weighted or adjusted to make it representative of the overall population of unsuccessful applicants.

3.2.3 End of grant monitoring data

End of grant monitoring data was required from each grantee organisation by Friday 31st January 2025. This data was collected using an online form distributed by HoECF, with the form covering a range of topics including final grant expenditure, outcome data, experience of grant applications and future applications, as well as feedback and reflections on the ICGP. A total of **313 grantees had submitted their forms** by the deadline (75 grantees were outstanding), and these were shared with the evaluation team for analysis in early February. Small grant recipients were sent a shorter form to complete and these were issued prior to Ecorys being appointed as the evaluator. In order to ensure consistent data collection between the grant types, HoECF shared a **survey with small grant recipients** (on behalf of Ecorys) which covered key missing questions from their shorter end of grant form. This survey was open from the last week of September until 31st January 2025, a total of **108 grantees responded** (equivalent to 55% of small grantees). Responses from the end of monitoring data and the small end of grant survey were combined and analysed in Excel.

3.2.4 Case studies and grantee qualitative interviews

In order to have a more detailed understanding of the grantee projects and individual's experiences of successfully applying for and spending the grant, **six case studies and eight qualitative interviews** were undertaken. These interview and case study projects were not intended to be representative of all the funded projects, and instead a purposive sample was chosen to ensure a general balance across key project characteristics (local authority, ICGP theme, and grant type). This gave coverage across all four grant sizes, all local authorities (except Telford and Wrekin, as the invited projects declined to participate), and every grant outcome area (except for joint Physical activity and sport, and Arts, culture and creativity awards, as there were only 3 grants awarded).

The case study projects comprised of an **interview with the project lead** (the same as the grantee qualitative interviews), where possible a **visit and observation of the grant funded activity, and some feedback from project beneficiaries** either through a small focus group, photos or other written feedback. The case studies and grantee qualitative interviews took place between October and December 2024.



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3.2.5 Stakeholder data collection

In addition to the data collection activities with grantees and applicants, stakeholders involved in overseeing or delivering the ICGP were invited to share their reflections and feedback on the grant allocation and delivery processes. In agreement with WMCA, the following groups participated:

- ▶ One **joint-interview with the WMCA team** as the organisation with overall responsibility for the ICGP
- ▶ Two **joint-interviews with the HoECF team** as the grant managers and delivery organisation
- ▶ One **focus group with six grant panellists** who were involved in the awarding of grants
- ▶ One **interview with the Community Engagement Lead at United by 2022** who led the grant application support package
- ▶ **Written feedback from two members of the Funding Steering Group** who helped advise WMCA with designing the ICGP.

3.2.6 Workshops

A series of workshops were undertaken to understand applicant perspectives in Autumn 2024 ('How did the Inclusive Communities grant work for your organisation and community'). A workshop with small grantee organisations (under £15,000) was held on 16th October and another with medium and large grant recipients on 21st October (over £15,000). These partly sought to capacity-build organisations by sharing information on the evaluation and facilitate contact and exchange between grant recipients. The workshops were also a **forum for capturing feedback and experiences from applicants**, so to inform the process strand of the evaluation. The workshops covered similar topics to the qualitative interviews, and the reflections and findings from these workshops have been combined with stakeholder data collection and grantee qualitative interviews in the evaluation findings.

3.2.7 Limitations

A number of limitations should be held in mind when interpreting the evaluation evidence. The evaluation team engaged with a range of supported projects and beneficiaries and gathered qualitative perspectives. We should be aware that feedback of this kind may be **subject to optimism bias** and that project beneficiaries may have overstated the benefits of the projects. The case studies were selected as a **purposive sample and were not representative of the overall population** of funded projects. They therefore formed the basis for understanding how funding had brought about outcomes, rather than for comparative analysis between case studies. Finally, the key limitation affecting the evaluation is that having been undertaken across the implementation stage of the ICGP, the emergence of **mid-to-long term outcomes and impacts could not be observed during the evaluation timescales**. Whilst project outcome data was assessed as part of the evaluation, we did not draw on regional level data linked to the outcome areas, due to the timing of the evaluation but also the limited scope for project level grant outcomes to be identifiable within regional level data sets.

04

Findings



4.0 Findings

This chapter sets out the findings of the ICGP evaluation. We draw on the range of data sources and primary evidence collected to reflect on the research questions outlined in Annex 2. We firstly reflect on the degree to which the ICGP design and implementation reflected the intended aims of the programme, then move to consider findings in relation to **application and awards**, the **spend of grant funding**, the **impact of grant funding** and **future learning**.

4.1 Aims of the ICGP

The aims for the ICGP were informed by community feedback that the Commonwealth Games had not properly engaged with and benefitted all groups and communities across the region.

The evaluation evidence suggests that the ICGP was an **appropriate approach for championing equality, diversity and inclusion and improving community engagement by virtue of the range and nature of projects supported** with grants. The ICGP funded small and grassroots organisations who do not typically apply for grant funding or organisations doing more innovative and unusual work who might be seen as 'too risky' for typical funders. In this respect the grant approach was an appropriate mechanism for supporting the development of approaches for social innovation.

Our engagement with grant beneficiaries and programme stakeholders indicated that they shared a broad consensus that the aims of the ICGP were reflected in the programme's approach to design and delivery, **in particular through engaging with communities underserved by the Games**.

There was an additional aim referenced by a minority of stakeholders that the ICGP needed to respond to the funding challenges in the region. These included: the **Cost-of-Living Crisis**, as this had left organisations with smaller and fewer donations but increased demand for services; and the lack of funding available from local authorities, particularly in Birmingham with the issuing of the Section 114 notice.⁵ For this reason, **applicants were welcomed to submit applications for 'business-as-usual' activity**, and there was no requirement for the grant to fund new activity. This was seen as valuable by stakeholders.

In terms of the three thematic areas for the funding, physical activity and sport, and arts, culture and creativity were chosen due to their clear connection to the Games. Mental health and wellbeing was a priority for the combined authority at the time of the ICGP, hence its selection as the third thematic area. It was also seen to complement the other two thematic areas. The selection of the three thematic areas **ensured a broad range of project activity could be supported**, while still sufficiently focused to bring community level impacts.

4.1.1 ICGP design

WMCA stakeholders and members of the Funding Steering Group shared some key reflections on what they went well and less well in terms of the design of the ICGP.

The evaluation highlights that the ICGP was **designed and mobilised within a very short window, with processes for the administration and disbursement of funding developed in a streamlined way**.

⁵ A section 114 notice is a document issued by a local authority when it is experiencing severe financial issues.

Stakeholders involved in the management and delivery of the ICGP found the limited timeframe for designing and developing the ICGP a significant challenge. A decision was made to maximise the delivery window so to more quickly bring benefits for communities, the trade-off being that the design phase was expedited. In some ways, the evaluation highlights that this **seemed to catalyse the development of collaborative working relationships with WMCA, the Funding Steering Group and HoECF**. WMCA stakeholders and members of the Funding Steering Group commended the strong collaboration during this phase.

There is no evidence that the pace of the design process had a negative bearing on the nature or quality of the grant programme overall, apart from in relation to the impact on applying organisations who generally outlined that a longer-lead in period prior to a funding application window is helpful for project and resource planning. The evaluation finds that **while the condensed application window brought challenges, it was an appropriate trade-off overall** to ensure that grants could be disbursed into the hands of the community as soon as possible.

A strength of the programme's design was the **cross-boundary delivery of grantee projects**. WMCA stakeholders explained how an alternative design would have been to allocate funding to local authorities, based on population size, and give them full autonomy to spend the funding as they wish. This option was not chosen in part because the Combined Authority wanted to facilitate projects across local authority boundaries, which has been the case for the ICGP.

Another strength of the ICGP's design was felt to be the **flexibility afforded to grantees to have as much control and choice over how they spent their grant** as legally possible for the WMCA. This seems to have brought benefits in terms of **allowing organisations to propose activities which best meet local need, allowing new forms of activity and support to be delivered, including by organisations with a limited track-record** of working with grant funding.

4.2 Applications and awards

4.2.1 Promotion of the ICGP

The ICGP was promoted through a variety of channels and by a range of organisations. This included HoECF, United by 2022, WMCA, local councils in the region, and funding bodies like Sport England. The most **common sources for finding out about the ICGP were United by 2022 (19%), HoECF (17%), and the applicant's local council (18%)**.⁶ Additionally, applicants mentioned hearing of the ICGP via mailing lists, webinars, and digital campaigns. Grantees felt mailing lists were the best way to get information out about the ICGP and other similar grant programmes, as they reached a large number of people and reduced the burden on organisations having to actively look for grant funding opportunities.

There was also a common perception from applicants and stakeholders that the ICGP had been 'rumoured' long before it was officially launched, which led to **high levels of anticipation regarding the funding prior to launch**. In particular there were high, and perhaps unrealistic expectations around the extent of funding that would be available. Programme stakeholders felt that applicants' expectations may have been raised in part by a high-profile communications campaign by the Mayor.

⁶ Based on application data, open-text responses where organisations specified a particular organisation.

"There was a lot of talk around the Commonwealth Games and the legacy of the Commonwealth Games. I think that we heard that there was some money that the West Midlands Combined Authority had that we would potentially be eligible for." Grantee

"There was possibly a bit of a false narrative about the amount of money coming back into the region... 70 million back into the region, became a 20 million Inclusive Community pillar, you then have to pay the grant administrator, it soon becomes 9 million. It's a lot less money than it seems." WMCA Stakeholder

Programme stakeholders outlined that **first impressions of the ICGP by communities across the region were very positive, with a commonly held perception that the focus on inclusivity was particularly valued** by organisations in the region. Grantees appreciated that the ICGP focused on specific **underserved beneficiary groups**, including children and young people, and people from Asian communities who face barriers to participating in traditional sport.

"The word inclusive communities was beautiful to see, this is about inclusiveness, this is great." Grantee

Motivations for applying were broadly consistent across applicants, including, the need for **funding to continue or expand activities**, eligibility for the ICGP, and alignment of the ICGP and the Commonwealth Games Legacy with their project or organisation. Also, **small works grant applicants stated how the scarcity of capital funding grants** was a particular motivation for the ICGP, given there was a **specific funding pot for capital projects**. The likelihood of receiving funding was also a motivating factor for many applicants. Applicants described how the **large funding pot meant they had a greater chance of receiving funding**, and how many of them had been encouraged to apply by organisations involved in the ICGP, making them feel they had a strong chance with their application.

"We thought that it was it was right up our street, and it was something that would give us a kick start in in doing what we want to do." Grantee

"I suppose the reason we were looking for the grant was the number of hot meals we used to serve has grown hugely... 40/50/60 hot meals, now we're doing up to 140!" Grantee

4.2.2 Application support

A large **support programme** was offered to organisations looking to apply for the ICGP. This was run by United by 2022,⁷ contracted by HoECF, and consisted of several activities:

- ▶ **Engagement events** to encourage application from underserved groups, such as female black-led organisations and disability support organisations.
- ▶ A **webinar series** targeted and tailored to **specific organisation types** (such as schools) and grant types (like large grants). These consisted of United by 2022 explaining the background and purpose of the ICGP and advice and guidance on how to apply.
- ▶ Two **webinar recordings** (for a general audience) were posted on the United by 2022 website. These were to give flexibility to those unable to attend a webinar in real-time, and to give individuals the ability to listen to a webinar at a speed that suited them. These webinars were downloaded over 500 times.

⁷ United by 2022 is a charity whose aim is to continue the legacy of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

- ▶ One to one support through 15 minute sessions with United by 2022. These could be used in any way the applicant wanted, either to ask questions or have part of their application reviewed.
- ▶ Written guidance through the email inbox. The aim of this was not only to respond to questions but provide additional guidance. For example, an applicant asks if they are eligible due to being a faith-based organisation. United by 2022 responds not only to say they are eligible but also explains that the organisation needs to focus on their non-faith-based work in their application and that they should look to emphasise their community cohesion work.

As part of the application process, applicants were asked if they had received support or guidance with their application for United by 2022. Overall, 13% of applicants said they had (equivalent to 175 applications) and 25% of successful applicants had received support with their application. This indicates that the **support provided by United by 2022 was effective**, as **those who had accessed support had a greater chance of their application being successful**. This was also evidenced by the feedback United by 2022 received, as many **applicants said the support package was helpful**, reassuring and that it offered practical recommendations for their applications.

Despite the overall positivity about the application support package amongst applicants, there was some suggestion that the support package could have been improved further:

- ▶ Those who submitted their applications when the application window opened felt the **support offer was too late and that it should have started prior to the window opening**, as they were unable to benefit from the support on offer.
- ▶ There were **conflicting opinions as to whether the support was pitched at an appropriate level**. Generally, it was targeted to those who had never submitted a grant application before, and more experienced organisations felt there was no support offered to them. Equally, others felt more could be done to better support first-time grant applicants.
- ▶ **Greater clarity over eligibility criteria**. For example, some unsuccessful applicants were unsure why organisations operating in Bromsgrove or those with only two directors were ineligible for the ICGP.
- ▶ **Greater transparency over scoring criteria**, so applications could be better tailored. Unsuccessful applicants also felt this would help build trust and transparency where there were criticisms and suspicion of how award decisions were made.

The stakeholder interviewed from United by 2022 explained the **organisation received high levels of demand for support which was challenging to manage**. United by 2022 had to host additional webinars, as sessions were 'filling up' at a quick rate, and they were unable to meet the demand for one-to-one support sessions in the application window due to the high level of interest. Additionally, the **shortening of the application window accelerated the demand for support** from United by 2022. United by 2022 also had to adjust their planned support activities given the shorted timeframe, to make the focus of guidance being how to complete an application to a high standard in a limited time. United by 2022 was also unable to run their full programme of events, which would have included roadshows, community centre visits, and supporting unsuccessful applicants to reapply. Notably, a stakeholder from HoECF felt the support offer was too extensive and that it contributed to the oversubscription of the ICGP, they felt fewer support sessions would still have led to high levels of applications from a diverse range of communities. Stakeholders from WMCA also reflected that the **outreach and promotion of the ICGP probably diverted attention away from other funding opportunities and contributed to the oversubscription**.

"People wanted the opportunity to speak to people, which worked well... almost too well... the learning was to do less sessions". HoECF Stakeholder

Applicants also used other sources of support with their application including:

- ▶ Within their organisation through their wider team, volunteers, or beneficiaries themselves, to find out what was going well, less well and what they should apply for.
- ▶ Through national team colleagues, where part of a larger organisation, to get advice from those more experienced with funding applications.
- ▶ HoECF, particularly for technical queries, although there was conflicting feedback on whether the guidance provided was accurate.

Grantees were asked if they had received support in their end of grant data submissions. Of those who submitted responses, **one in three (33%, 84 grantees) said they had received support**, including 4% (11 grantees) who said they received a lot of support. Notably, **small grant grantees were less likely to have received support than other grant recipients** (22%, 24 grantees). Of the grantees who said they received support, around two thirds (64%, 54 grantees) were supported by HoECF, and just under a third (30%, 25 grantees) had support from United by 2022. One in five (19%, 16 grantees) received support from elsewhere.

Unsuccessful applicants who completed the survey were asked about the support they received. 28% said they had received at least some support (equivalent to 46 respondents), including 2% who said they received a lot of support (equivalent to 3 respondents). **Those who had received support were most likely to have received it from United by 2022** (50%, 23 respondents) **or HoECF** (30%, 14 respondents), and typically, they either attended a webinar (41%, 19 respondents) or received general help with their application (26%, 12 respondents). Overall, the **majority said the support was helpful** (89%, 41 respondents), with two in ten saying it was very helpful (39%, 18 respondents). Of the unsuccessful applicants who did not receive support (117 respondents), only around half said they would have liked support (53%, 62 respondents) and one in six said they would not have wanted support (18%, 21 respondents).

4.2.3 Reaching underserved communities

One of the **key aims of the ICGP was to reach those communities least served** by the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, as well as **those organisations and community groups who historically have been less likely to apply for grant funding**. Stakeholders at WMCA explained how this objective **underpinned their decision to appoint an independent grant administrator**, rather than using local authorities to distribute funding, as they hoped it would increase the diversity of applications.

“[There was] a general consensus that people felt the games weren’t for them.... it just felt that they benefited in no way, even though it’s taking place on the doorstep and actually disrupted their lives for quite a long time”. Grant Panellist

When reflecting on **whether the objective of reaching underserved communities had been achieved, there were mixed reflections from stakeholders**. Those from HoECF were positive about the reach of the ICGP, explaining how applications came from a range of community organisations including a large number of first-time applicants to HoECF, and how many of them went on to be awarded funding. United by 2022 shared similar reflections and added that many of the organisations awarded funding had attended support sessions offered by them, suggesting that this programme of support had been both beneficial and effective. They also noted how some of the larger, more experienced grant applicants were unsuccessful, which showed the funding had been instead awarded to smaller applicants.

However, grant panellists offered a contradicting view, as they **felt the applications did not represent the most underserved communities**, who typically lack the capabilities and capacity to produce and submit funding applications. To overcome this, grant panellists suggested the ICGP **should have been directed at micro-organisations or that larger organisations in the region should have worked with multiple smaller organisations to submit a joint bid their behalf**. Having said this, they did add that this latter suggestion requires time and for larger organisations to be prepared in advance of the funding launch, which probably was not possible given the ICGP timeline.

“[For some areas] it was completely devoid of applications because the infrastructure doesn’t really exist in a place like Handsworth... particularly capacity and capabilities”. Grant Panellist

The quantitative data on the diversity of applications and awards is limited. Applicants were not required to specify if it was their first-time applying to HoECF and the equality, diversity and inclusivity governance data was optional and anonymised. The only data available is regarding how experienced applicants were in applying for grant funding and the number of first-time applicants who were awarded ICGP funding. In terms of prior experience of applying for grant funding, there is little difference between those awarded grants (94%, 237 grantees) and unsuccessful applicants (87%, 144 respondents), as the vast majority of both groups had some experience of applying for funding prior to the ICGP. Equally, both of these groups had similar levels of success with their applications, with 59% of grantees (141 grantees) and 61% of unsuccessful applicants (88 respondents) saying they had success with over half of previous applications.

For grantees, 40% were first-time applicants to HoECF (equivalent to 156 grantees) and it was more common for small grant recipients to be first time applicants (56%, 87 grantees). There is no data to say how experienced they were at applying for other funding bodies.

4.2.4 Application process

The ICGP application window opened in November 2023 and was closed in January 2024. The process for applying for ICGP funding was **relatively straightforward**, with the only requirement being to **complete and submit the application form** on the HoECF website. The grantees interviewed explained how when deciding to apply, they simply checked their eligibility and then reviewed if the funding was appropriate for their planned activity, which in this case it was and so they applied. Some worked by themselves to complete the application form, others shared the responsibility with their wider team.

Both applicants and stakeholders were **generally critical of the application form itself**, with common criticism being that it was repetitive, long, and that it had technical issues (such as the website crashing, applications not saving automatically, and the necessity to upload documents as PDFs). The length of the application form was challenging from the perspective of applicants, as they often have limited capacity, and felt that the form took a long time to complete. Unsuccessful applicants also detailed how the application form was better suited to bigger organisations, who have more resource or even bid-writing teams to complete the application. Applicants and HoECF noted the length and complexity of the application form is not specific to the ICGP, as funders need to show ever more justification for their due diligence and decision-making process.

“They just seem to ask the question but in a different way, as if they’re trying to catch you out”. Grantee

Another **concern around the application form was its accessibility**. A group of applicants reported that the use of an online form was not appropriate for everyone, particularly a programme aimed at supporting underserved communities who often have additional needs. For example, those who do not

have computing skills or those who are neurodiverse and struggle to complete written forms. Moreover, some applicants simply felt they were unable to sufficiently capture the nuance and need of their project in a written form and that project visits or video or photo submissions would have worked better for them. A stakeholder from United by 2022 recognised these concerns but felt there are complexities with video and photo applications, as community panels often do not have the trained panellists to score these applications. Instead, they suggested two main changes to the application form to improve accessibility. The first was to **allow submissions in community languages**, as many of the people working with underserved communities do not speak or are unable to write in English. The second was to **revisit the flow of the application form, to make it more sequential and easier to approach for new grant applicants**. For example, starting with 'Tell me about your organisation' and other organisational questions, and then moving onto questions related to the project like 'What is the project that you want to do?'.

"I think you get a better feel of what the organisation about rather than just reading the sheet because sometimes it's hard... you can build a rapport with them". Grantee

Despite these challenges, some grantees were positive about the application form, describing it as 'relatively straightforward'. They explained how the form's requirements were similar to other grant funding applications, and so they were familiar with what was required, although they did acknowledge that those unfamiliar with grant making might be more likely to struggle.

A significant **challenge to the application process was timing**. The original intention was to have the application window open for several months, and to process and award applications on an ongoing basis. However, due to the high volume of applications received in the first few weeks which meant the ICGP was already significantly oversubscribed, the **decision was made to close the application window early**. All of the stakeholders interviewed reflected that this was a difficult decision, and it led to a lot of upset and disappointment from communities. United by 2022 tried to support organisations by guiding them to other funds with longer deadlines and helping them with their applications for these. Applicants fed back that the communication around the early closure of the application window was insufficient, with one describing it as a "closely guarded secret". One of the grantees interviewed explained that they applied for a smaller grant due to the shortened application window, as they felt there was insufficient time to put in a large grant bid. Also, applicants explained that they were unable to make their applications inclusive of beneficiaries as the shortened timeframe made it difficult to properly include project beneficiaries in writing the application.

Stakeholders felt they should have realised how oversubscribed the fund was likely to be and altered the design of the ICGP to mitigate for this. Applicants fed back that an expression of interest (EOI) stage would have been beneficial for the ICGP, as it would have made it easier to manage oversubscription, by having an additional screening stage, and would have reduced burden on organisations, as they would not have had to submit the full application unless they had passed the EOI stage. Alternatively, if they had been informed that the fund was likely to be heavily oversubscribed, they may have looked for funding elsewhere where they would have a greater chance of being successful.

Additionally, as much of the application window coincided with the Christmas and New Year period, applicants reported that this made it challenging to complete the application as seasonal leave has an impact on the resource needed to prepare the information for their application, including quotes from contractors for Small Works grants.

A total of **1,358 applications were received, of which 388 received funding from the ICGP** (equivalent to 29% of applications). The most popular grant to apply for was the medium grant for funding between £15,001 and £75,000 (41% of applicants applied for this) and the majority of applications were looking to fund activities related to improving mental health and wellbeing (84%). Around a third of applications planned to conduct their funded activity solely in Birmingham (32%), which

was to be anticipated given it is the local authority with the largest population in the region. Also, as stakeholders explained, the issuing of a Section 114 notice⁸ by Birmingham City Council, prompted more organisations to submit applications from Birmingham as there was a general concern about future funding in the city. The table below highlights the applications received by key characteristics, and a full breakdown of applications by characteristics is available in Annex 5.

Table 4.1: Application data by characteristics

| Characteristic | | Percentage of all applications |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Grant type | Small Grants | 37% |
| | Medium Grants | 41% |
| | Large Grants | 9% |
| | Small Works Grants | 13% |
| ICGP theme ⁹ | Physical activity and sport | 51% |
| | Mental health and wellbeing | 84% |
| | Arts, culture and creativity | 43% |
| Location of planned activity | Birmingham (Only) | 32% |
| | Cannock Chase (Only) | 1% |
| | Coventry (Only) | 8% |
| | Dudley (Only) | 4% |
| | Redditch (Only) | 1% |
| | Sandwell (Only) | 4% |
| | Shropshire (Only) | 3% |
| | Solihull (Only) | 4% |
| | Tamworth (Only) | 1% |
| | Telford and Wrekin (Only) | 2% |
| | Walsall (Only) | 3% |
| | Warwickshire (Only) | 8% |
| | Wolverhampton (Only) | 5% |
| | A combination of local authorities | 22% |

Source: HoECF application data

4.2.5 Award process

The award process consisted of two stages. The first was a **sifting stage, where a team at HoECF reviewed applications** for eligibility, and those eligible were given a red, amber, green (RAG) rating dependent on how high the community need was. The second stage was the **panel process, where grant applications were reviewed by a panel and a decision was made** on whether or not to award them ICGP funding. Each panel comprised of representatives from funding bodies and community organisations from across the West Midlands. The purpose being to ensure the panels were representative and that those awarding funding had good understanding of the region and local need. Panel members could sit on multiple panels, and their level of involvement was often determined by their availability. In advance of the panel sessions, panel members were sent the applications to give

⁸ A section 114 notice is a document issued by a local authority when it is experiencing severe financial issues.

⁹ It was possible for applicants to select more than one option, hence why percentages total more than 100%.

them an opportunity to review these ahead of time. Each panel session was allocated a budget, this was to limit how much they could fund within their session to ensure there was enough funding available to the outstanding panel sessions.

Feedback from stakeholders was that the **funding allocations were challenging given the oversubscription of the ICGP** and that strong applications were rejected simply because there was not enough funding. To alleviate this, stakeholders felt the fund should have prioritised **either only the constituent authorities of WMCA, or just the authorities where Commonwealth Games had taken place**. This would have reduced the number of applications and made the awards process quicker.

Overall, those involved in the sifting and panel sessions felt that the **process worked well**. Stakeholders from HoECF acknowledged the commitment and thoroughness of grant panellists, as well as reflecting how the diversity of the panellists and their connections to communities in the West Midlands ensured a variety of opinions and good discussions on whether applications should be awarded.

"We had to make some good decisions which were difficult at times... Theres only a certain amount of money". Grant Panellist

"There was a good spread of geographic knowledge and thematic knowledge, different funders, different stakeholders, different organisations, so everybody bought their own views and thoughts and experience, and I think that that helped". Grant Panellist

There were **no notable differences between the types of applications that were awarded ICGP funding and those which were unsuccessful in their application**. The only instance where applications were disproportionately more likely to be unsuccessful was the location for the planned activity. However, this is consistent with the design of the ICGP, as the **location of planned activity had specific targets for the funding allocations**. Large and Small Works grants were also more likely to be rejected than the average application (88% and 80% respectively, versus 71% overall). Annex 5 has a full breakdown of the awards by key characteristics. Despite the award data showing no notable differences in the types of organisations awarded, **unsuccessful applicants did feel that certain underserved groups had been overlooked**.

As with the application stage, the oversubscription of the ICGP and the early closure of the application window affected the award process. The original intention was to inform applicants of their outcome within 8 weeks of submitting their application. However, due to number of applications received in such a short period, **it was not possible to review and respond to each applicant in the 8 week timeframe**. Applicants reported that the delays were not properly communicated to them, and unsuccessful applicants felt the lack of communication gave them false hope, as they interpreted the delay as a sign that their application would be approved.

Grantees were not asked about the delay to the award notification, but unsuccessful applicants who responded to the survey were. Over half of unsuccessful applicants (54%, 90 respondents) were notified about the outcome of their application more than 12 weeks after submission; and **nine in ten unsuccessful applicants (88%, 133 respondents) said the delays had an impact on their project planning or delivery**, including 47% who said it had a severe impact (equivalent to 78 respondents). When asked about how the delays impacted them, there were a range of issues.

For those that proceeded with their project whilst awaiting a decision:

- ▶ They ran a **scaled back or smaller activity** than was planned.
- ▶ They funded their activities by **using their organisation's charitable reserves**, or by using personal finances and overdrafts available to them as volunteers. They hoped they would be

successful with their application and so would be able to recover costs. Given they were ultimately unsuccessful, this has left some organisations and individuals financially stretched.

For those who did not proceed whilst awaiting a decision:

- ▶ They were **unable to plan for service delivery in 2024** and so were unable to apply for other funding.
- ▶ Inflationary pressures have **increased the costs needed to deliver** their activity.
- ▶ **Financial problems for suppliers**, as they had expected to receive contracts at a certain point and had scheduled in the work. This in turn has damaged relationships between organisations and suppliers.
- ▶ Where they had spoken to communities and beneficiaries about planned activities, relationships were damaged when these could not be delivered.

Both groups highlighted that awaiting grant decisions brings some level of stress and anxiety for staff and volunteers due to the uncertainty.



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4.2.6 Unsuccessful applicants

970 applications were unsuccessful, which equates to 71% of applications. Of these unsuccessful applications the overwhelming majority were unsuccessful as their project was felt 'not to be a priority for the fund' by the awarding panel (69%, 672 applications). Other reasons for application rejection was the fund being oversubscribed (7%, 65 applications), insufficient funds being available (6%, 60 applications), and ineligibility (5%, 53 applications). The table below details the reasons for rejection given to unsuccessful applicants by the awarding panel.

Table 4.2: Unsuccessful applications rejection reasons

| Rejection reason | Number of unsuccessful applications | Percentage of unsuccessful applications |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Not a priority for the fund | 672 | 69% |
| Fund Oversubscribed | 65 | 7% |
| Insufficient funds available | 60 | 6% |
| Ineligible | 53 | 5% |
| Insufficient demonstration of need | 25 | 3% |
| Does not meet the criteria | 24 | 2% |
| Panel Decision | 22 | 2% |
| Not organisationally sound | 18 | 2% |
| Insufficient information | 11 | 1% |
| Poor Quality | 7 | 1% |
| Insufficient Capacity | 2 | <1% |
| Not applicable | 2 | <1% |
| Excessive annual income | 1 | <1% |
| Incomplete Application | 1 | <1% |
| No supporting documentation | 1 | <1% |
| Not good value | 1 | <1% |
| Not well planned | 1 | <1% |
| Organisation has high reserves | 1 | <1% |
| Outside geographic area | 1 | <1% |
| Retrospective funding | 1 | <1% |
| Sustainability Concerns | 1 | <1% |

Source: HoECF application data

Unsuccessful applicants were **disappointed about the level of feedback provided**, as they felt it gave them little insight and knowledge of how to improve future funding applications. Equally, as many received feedback that their application was awardable but there were insufficient funds for them to be awarded, they have been left feeling confused and unsure what they could have done to be awarded funding. HoECF **did not feel it was possible to provide detailed feedback to unsuccessful applicants given the large volume of applications and the limited timeframe**. Equally, WMCA stakeholders and grant panellists acknowledged that the funding allocations between different local authorities sometimes meant strong applications could not be awarded simply because of funding allocations.

"We weren't able to give reject[ion] reasons because it was the fund was oversubscribed...we were trying to be fair and the many of the times it was because there was no money... it could have been a great application". HoECF Stakeholder

HoECF offered **unsuccessful applicants signposting to other grant funds**, but these were only small grant funds. United by 2022 supported some of the unsuccessful applicants by reviewing their rejected applications and providing feedback through their Trailblazers programme. **Sported in conjunction with WMCA are also offering a support programme to unsuccessful applicants**. Grant panellists stated that whilst these packages of support are good in principle, they do not overcome the challenge of not being able to offer grant funding to these underserved community organisations.

Since being unsuccessful in applying for ICGP funding, only 4% of unsuccessful applicants (equivalent to 6 survey respondents) have been able to fully carry out their planned activity. A further 36% have been able to partially complete it (equivalent to 59 respondents) and 61% have been unable to proceed with it (equivalent to 101 respondents). To fund the planned activity, unsuccessful applicants have had to use personal funding, organisational reserves, or increase membership fees for beneficiaries, and many have either scaled down their intended delivery or only funded necessary elements, such as replacing only broken equipment. **Unsuccessful applicants described how this has limited outcomes for the communities they work with**, and there was a sentiment that beneficiaries are disappointed and feel that 'typical' projects received funding, whilst they have been forgotten.

For some unsuccessful applicants, they had been unable to maintain the connections with the communities they hoped to work with, or they have received complaints that they are not supporting their communities like they used to. For the organisations themselves, they reported having to reduce headcount or they have been unable to take on new staff. Those who covered the costs of their activity through charitable reserves face financial vulnerability and some organisations face closure. Unsuccessful applicants also experienced low morale and a lack of confidence to apply for future funding.

Over half of unsuccessful applicants have applied for funding since their ICGP application (57%, 94 respondents), with most having been successful with at least some of their funding applications (77%, 72 respondents). They have applied for a wide range of funding, although the most common sources are the National Lottery Community Fund, the Postcode Lottery, the Arts Council, local authority funding, or WMCA funding. These unsuccessful applicants did not say they did anything differently on their successful grant applications, and where they had made changes, it was typically to apply for a smaller amount in the hope they would be more successful or to tailor their approach to better suit the funder's requirements.

4.3 Spend of Grant funding

4.3.1 Types of expenditure

A wide range of projects and activities were funded by the ICGP. Examples included:

- ▶ **Physical activity and sport:** replacement and upgraded sports equipment, exercise classes and programmes for underserved groups like disadvantaged young people and families or young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and training and funding for qualifications for sports club volunteers.

- ▶ **Arts, culture and creativity:** festivals, dance workshops, cultural celebrations, new museum exhibitions, investment in theatre groups, music projects for vulnerable young people, training for practitioners so they can better support people with additional needs and purchasing of arts and music equipment.
- ▶ **Mental health and wellbeing:** mental health workshops and support for young people, programs to tackle men's mental health and support for people with addiction issues, training for local people inc. digital skills/financial management, support for community kitchens and food parcels, befriending services for refugees, asylum seekers, and young carers, events and social activities to foster a sense of belonging and community spirit and overcome challenges related to loneliness and isolation, and community gardening and other projects to get people out into nature.
- ▶ **Small works** examples: Refurbishment of facilities, including kitchens, toilets, and sports halls, and installation of new doorways, electric heaters, and intruder alarms.

When looking across grantees, 59% (149 grantees) said they **used their grant to fund an expansion or to increase an existing activity** of theirs, and around half (51%, 130 grantees) used their grant to **pay for a new activity** for their organisation. Just one in six (185, 45 grantees) used it to maintain an existing activity with no increase or expansion.¹⁰ One in three grantees (34%, 85 grantees) used their grant to **cover day-to-day expenses or core costs for their organisation**. This proportion rose to around half of medium grant recipients (48%, 52 grantees).

For unsuccessful applicants, survey data collected what they would have spent their funding on. For just under half, it would have **funded a new activity** for their organisation (46%, 77 respondents) and for two thirds it would have **expanded an existing activity** (66%, 110 respondents)¹¹. Around three in ten unsuccessful applicants had planned to use the funding to cover day-to-day expenses for the organisation (48 respondents).

A quarter of grantees (24%, 61 grantees) had match funding for their project, with small grant recipients the least likely to have match funding (14%, 15 grantees). Match funding came from a range of sources, such as the **Arts Council, the National Lottery Community Fund, local authorities, church dioceses, and individual donors**, with amounts varying from £100 up to £3.9million. By having match funding, grantees were able to reach more beneficiaries or extend the length of their project. Grantees with match funding also felt the **diverse funding streams gave their project more security and stability**, as well as enabling them to build **stronger partnerships with the funding organisations** which will help with future funding needs.

Grantees who participated in interviews reflected on the barriers to applying for match funding, particularly for **smaller organisations or those new to grant applications**. They explained how they **lack the capacity and knowledge to apply for match funding**, and so they "didn't know how to navigate this". Additionally, grantees reported they were often ineligible to apply for match funding, including because their organisation is small and less experienced in grant management and so is deemed high risk. This aligns with the small grantee survey findings, as only 9% (9 grantees) of those who did not have match funding had tried to apply for it. Overall, there was a consensus that greater support or guidance on match funding would be welcomed.

In addition to match funding, **some grantees delivered their projects as part of a consortium or in a partnership with other organisations**. These partnerships were varied, but common examples included local community organisations like The Active Wellbeing Society, Birmingham Voluntary

¹⁰ This question was multiple-choice, as grantees could spend their grant on multiple projects, hence the percentages equate to more than 100%.

¹¹ Respondents could select more than one option, as they could have been planning to fund multiple activities, hence the percentages equate to more than 100%.

Service Council, and Black Country and Birmingham Trees for Life. As well as large institutions and sports clubs in the region including Birmingham City University, Birmingham City Football Club and the Aston Villa Foundation. These organisations **supported grantees with training, resources and promotion of their projects**. Other partnerships included working with health services like Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust and Forward Thinking Birmingham to ensure beneficiaries had access to the support and services they required.

Two thirds of grantees (64%, 197 grantees) **said their final expenditure matched their approved budget**, with around one in four (23%, 72 grantees) having underspend and one in eight (13%, 41 grantees) having overspend. These are self-reported figures, and HoECF are assessing each end of grant submission to fully account for final expenditure.

Grantees who reported a difference between their planned and actual expenditure were asked to explain why this had occurred, and typically it was due to one of following reasons:

- ▶ Costs being lower or higher than expected. This could have been due to inflation, which was particularly common for small works grantees who were dealing with construction costs, or because the expected demand for the project was higher or lower than expected.
- ▶ Unforeseen expenses, such as additional health and safety requirements or staff sickness meaning additional temporary staff costs.
- ▶ Underspend due to delayed award and so project delivery has concluded later than originally anticipated, and contractor costs are still being submitted.

Generally, grantees found the process of spending their grant straightforward, as they had carefully planned their expenditure and delivery during the application process. However, there was a majority held view that the **delivery timeframe was challenging for spending their grant, particularly with the delays between submitting their application and receiving their first grant payment**. The impact of these delays included:

- ▶ **Needing to use other financial sources**, such as their organisation's reserves or donations, to cover additional costs.
- ▶ **Rushed or condensed delivery**, as grantees needed to deliver their planned project in a shorter timeframe (i.e. 6 months instead of 9 months). In some instances, this led to renegotiations with contractors or delays and difficulties recruiting and retaining volunteers. It was also a particular issue for grantees with projects during the academic year, as the delays meant they had to postpone delivery from the Spring term to the Summer term and into the next academic year (Autumn 2024).

Other common issues grantees had with spending the grant included:

- ▶ **Difficulty securing venues** for activities, particularly at evenings and weekends when venues have pre-existing bookings.
- ▶ **Adverse weather conditions** stopping activities or sessions, which meant they had to rearrange activities.
- ▶ **Lack of capacity in staff teams**, particularly where they were experiencing staff absence, which often led to staff taking on additional responsibilities.
- ▶ **A lack of interest or uptake** in their activities. To overcome this, grantees changed their marketing approach, reached out to partner organisations to find beneficiaries, or worked with communities to reassure them about the project and encourage them to participate; this then led to oversubscription and projects had to adapt to meet or manage demand.

- ▶ Submitting additional detail to HoECF about **planned changes to expenditure**, which was seen to be time consuming.
- ▶ For small works grantees specifically, they reported facing **unexpected costs** during builds, often due to additional work being needed on their facilities or settings.

The grantees interviewed did not receive support with managing their grant spend but they did not feel support was needed. This was either because they had prior experience of spending grants and reporting expenditure, or because they had carefully planned their expenditure at the application stage.

4.3.2 Grant management experience

Stakeholders at HoECF **felt their experience of managing the ICGP went well**, as there had been no significant challenges and no instances of underspend by grantees. There were only a small number of issues related to grant expenditure, but these were grantee specific and not widespread. For example, one grantee needed to redistribute a £1,000 of funding as they were no longer able to deliver an aspect of their project, and another grantee who was installing a lift, had to wait until 2025 for the work to be completed due to a delayed delivery of a particular part.

Grantees were required to submit end of grant monitoring data to HoECF so final grant spend could be monitored and accounted for. This was in addition to interim monitoring forms for small grant recipients and monitoring visits for other grantees. Furthermore, grantees awarded over £45,000 received their payments in a minimum of two instalments. For future grant instalments to be released, grantees were required to submit monitoring reports. HoECF stakeholders explained that in **some instances this monitoring process slowed the speed at which they could issue payments, but they felt it was still important to carry out thorough checks and reduce the risk of underspend by grantees** at the end of the programme. Grantees fed back that this process was onerous, with some describing how the slow turnaround from HoECF to review reports meant they were often outdated by the time they received a response.

Overall, **HoECF found these monitoring processes effective, and they did not identify any issues of grantee underspend**. However, HoECF stakeholders would have preferred the ICGP be longer in length, as the 12 month delivery period meant they had little flexibility around offering extensions to grant-funded activities (although this was not needed for this programme).

“I think it would have just been nicer if they’d had that breathing space to really take their time and deliver and make it even more impactful”. HoECF Stakeholder

“The best way to get the most impact from this investment...we probably would have done this project over 18 months to two years”. Member of Fund Steering Group



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4.4 Impact of grant funding

We move to consider the degree to which the ICGP has delivered **outcomes and impacts** as intended, drawing on programme data, funded project case studies and interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries. Due to the **evaluation timescales**, it is too early to fully capture the impacts arising from the grant programme. However, we do examine the range of outcomes that have been enabled or delivered to date for supported organisations, the region overall and wider stakeholders. In doing so, we refer back to the outcomes set out in the **Theory of Change for the grant programme**.

The evaluation undertook 6 deep-dive case studies of funded projects. Each was visited by members of the research team who spoke to project staff and beneficiaries. Each case study highlighted that **funding had contributed to bringing about a range of positive outcomes**. Case study overviews are included in this chapter.

There was evidence that funding was contributing to varying degrees, to all of those outcomes foreseen in the ICGP Theory of Change including in relation to:

Community organisations/individuals

- ▶ **Improved health and wellbeing outcomes** (improved participation in physical activity, Increased mental wellbeing)
- ▶ **Greater inclusivity for community activities** (improved social connections in communities)
- ▶ Community organisations are better skilled to produce funding applications with a positive outcome

Region

- ▶ Growth of the West Midlands region (Helping the region to grow)
- ▶ Improved regional presence (Putting the region on the map)
- ▶ Legacy of the Games felt more widely across the West Midlands

Systems

- ▶ Evaluation extends evidence-base from the Games legacy
- ▶ Funded processes are better designed to meet the genuine needs of the West Midlands population, including where funding should be prioritised
- ▶ Evaluation produces evidence of learning of the positive impact and change that the grant has made

There was also **evidence of the reach and impact** of ICGP funding in end of grant submissions from grantees¹²:

- ▶ 630,000 People reached
- ▶ 1,841 New volunteers
- ▶ 35,956 Additional volunteer hours (exc. small grant recipients¹³)
- ▶ 681 New staff roles (full-time equivalent) (exc. small grant recipients)

¹² Based on end of grant monitoring data, which at time of reporting, 310 out of 388 grantees had submitted. These figures are self-reported by grantees and have not been verified.

¹³ Differences in the end of grant monitoring forms meant these questions were not asked of small grantees.

- ▶ 76,418 Additional staff hours (exc. small grant recipients)
- ▶ 1,444 Qualifications gained (exc. small grant recipients)

4.4.1 Outcomes for Community Organisations and Individuals

There are a range of ways in which the ICGP contributed to **improved health and wellbeing outcomes**. This includes improved **participation in physical activity**, and also **increased mental wellbeing**, outcomes which link to the overall Inclusive Communities Pillar evaluated as part of the overall evaluation. Another key outcome area for community organisations and individuals is '**greater inclusivity for community activities**'. Progress toward these outcomes is set out below.

4.4.1.1 Improved Health and Wellbeing

The evaluation points to a **clear causal relationship between the grant fund and improved participation in physical activity**. This was a direct focus of a proportion of funded projects and the evaluation evidence indicated that **beneficiaries across a range of communities took part in sport and physical activities of various kinds** as result of grant funding. This was mainly either due to grants supporting the running of activities or through supporting the provision of appropriate facilities, thereby facilitating participation. In particular, the evaluation has found that project activities were effective in delivering physical activities for underserved groups, and those who traditionally face barriers to participation, for example through disability or social isolation. Our case studies in particular highlighted the role of grant funding in providing swimming classes for children, whilst another saw grant funding improving football pitch facilities and widening access to a greater number of players from underserved communities.

There was evidence that funded projects broadened access to physical activities by **reducing the cost or other barriers for participants**. Beneficiaries at a funded swimming project appreciated that services provided by organisations with ICGP were accessible for them to attend, particularly with young children. Another project using the grant to improve football pitch facilities explained how there aren't many free activities available to children in the area, so being able to provide these sessions was something that families can engage with easily. Similarly, swimming classes were not generally felt to be accessible for all families since often carry a high cost, and there was a great benefit where the grant supported the provision of this on an extracurricular basis in schools. This case study project also indicated the hope that by increasing children's participation in swimming, there would be a knock-on impact for parents engagement with swimming – with low swimming ability amongst adults identified as a challenge in the region.



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Case Study 1

Case Study 1 is an independent living facility for individuals over 50, housing over 35 residents in Birmingham. In addition to providing accommodation for elderly people, a wide range of activities, including themed nights, food and drink events, bar games, quizzes, and organised holiday trips are provided for residents.

The project received ICGP funding (£4,000) which was used to purchase a TV and Wii for residents to watch TV, outdoor garden furniture, and a dartboard. Additionally, the money supported a residents' visit to Blackpool in the summer of 2024. Prior to the funding, all events were funded by volunteers. The project applied for a small-grant which enabled them to subsidise and fully-fund a range of activities for older people who would otherwise not be able to access and afford them.

Feedback from the project highlighted that residents who had not socialised before were coming out of their flats to engage in the funded activities. The project has acted to reduce loneliness amongst residents and has made a wider contributing to community cohesion. Staff emphasised that without this support, *"these residents would be disappointed. They would have nothing to do and no trips to look forward to. We would have to scale it back significantly."* Often, the activities provided by the service were the only ones residents were involved in. Project staff pointed to the long-lasting impacts beyond the life of the funding, as they feel that funding has enabled residents to build relationships and gain the confidence to socialise in the future.

The funding also enabled volunteers, who previously tried to fund the activities themselves, to apply for funding to cover the costs of activities. The funding has therefore relieved the financial burden on the volunteers.

The feedback from beneficiaries and project staff highlights that this project improved participation in physical activity, increased mental health well-being, **enhanced social connections within communities and greater inclusivity.**

As one of three ICGP grant themes, both grantees and stakeholders anticipated **mental wellbeing** would be improved through ICGP funded projects. This has largely been realised, with **grantees reporting increased mental wellbeing for their project beneficiaries.**

In particular, project outcomes included boosted wellbeing and a reduction in loneliness, due to beneficiaries having more structure in their days and opportunities to meet people as a result of participation in activities. Beneficiaries across a range of projects expressed how activities had led to reduced loneliness and provided more opportunities to socialise, which suggests the projects supported by ICGP helped to reduce social isolation and create a stronger sense of community and belonging. One funded project provided activities in an assisted living home, with residents sharing that *"without it (the funded activities) ...we would be doing nothing...we are a little family it's lovely"*. This project also spent the grant on a day trip for residents in Summer 2024. The organisation said, *"they [beneficiaries] absolutely love a trip"* and it helps *"give community spirit...reducing isolation"*. Being able to provide these trips meant that the organisation could provide opportunities for beneficiaries to get to know one another, therefore reducing social isolation.

Similarly, beneficiaries who used a new developed football pitch shared that they enjoyed seeing their friends at football. Without the football sessions, they shared that they *"would have nothing to do and would likely be stuck at home"*. Another organisation provided opportunities for beneficiaries to learn

bushcraft and survival techniques in a local forest. Many beneficiaries attending shared that they loved the opportunity to **meet new people, and that they had made some new friends**. These findings suggest that the services funded have had a positive impact on beneficiaries and have helped to address **improve social connections between service users**, with benefits around mental wellbeing and community inclusion.

Grantees working in projects related to mental wellbeing described how ICGP funding has enabled them to **expand provision, which in turn has boosted outcomes**. For example, one project was able to expand their service offer to veterans with new activities such as beekeeping and archery. They found the veterans mental health improved after participating in the activities, with reduced levels of stress and anxiety. Closely related to increased mental wellbeing are outcomes associated with greater inclusivity. This is explored further in section 4.4.1.3 which considers improved the role of the funding in contributing to greater inclusivity, in part through developing social connections in communities.

Those responsible for overseeing project or activities within **grantee organisations** also reported improvements in their mental wellbeing. This was an **unforeseen outcome** for the programme, with these individuals highlighting how **receiving ICGP funding boosted their morale and motivation to continue their work**.



Case Study 2

Case Study 2 is a project based in Coventry and Warwickshire that connects people with nature for improvement to mental health and well-being, self-development, and to develop employability skills. The service shapes participant involvement through nature-based activities and practices.

The project received the small sized grant fund and have spent CWG funding on running 2 new activities - a young's peoples programme and a women's group, both which use nature base practice to improve mental health and wellbeing. These activities include 'wild' art and design, bushcraft and survival skills to help develop teamwork, communication and leadership skills.

Despite initial difficulties running the sessions at the designated site, they mitigated this by holding some sessions at allotments closer to the city. This has allowed service users to connect with biodiversity in an easily accessible location and provides a safe space for women to meet and chat.

The project has identified significant benefits for individuals experiencing mental health issues, those with neurodiversity, and those from low-income backgrounds. The activities provide opportunities that these individuals have not been able to access before, leading to direct improvements in confidence and peer support. The activities have also encouraged individuals to access wider services, such as mental health support.

Without the funding, the group wouldn't have been able to run regularly, which would have an impact on the level of support provided to women attendees, many of whom are bereaved individuals who benefit from consistent support.

The feedback from beneficiaries and project staff highlights that this project has brought about the intended ICGP outcomes of **improved health and wellbeing** (through increased participation in physical activity and increased mental health) and has strengthened **inclusivity of community organisations**.

4.4.1.2 Greater inclusivity for community activities

The evaluation highlights that the ICGP made a positive contribution in terms of developing greater inclusivity for community activities.

Funded projects provided a range of services which increased access to services including provision for underserved groups. For example, one grantee organisation was able to **purchase inclusive sports equipment with the funding, which enabled them to offer more inclusive sports sessions and spread awareness of diversity in sport with young people** they work with. As reflected above, many funded projects made activities more accessible for participants through reducing barriers to access (such as relating to cost and childcare).

Many projects reported that funded projects had demonstrated a capacity to **foster the development of understanding and social connections between participants. This had benefits in terms of the individuals supported** (for instance the mental health benefits explored previously) but also in contributing to inclusion benefits more widely. The case studies highlighted **projects enabling participation in physical activity** that also brought about outcomes and benefits in terms of developing social connections and inclusion. This was achieved through enabling engagement by those with disabilities who faced specific barriers to participation, through funding support resource or specialist equipment. For example, one project provided young children in the community with a range of physical and neurological disabilities access to adapted bikes. Staff explained that it can be very difficult to get funding for this provision, and that the ICGP was supporting the inclusion of children who wouldn't be able to access the activities otherwise. A knock-on benefit of these initiatives were that other participants became more aware of inclusion needs.

Another organisation offering counselling services expressed how funding had helped them to provide support for people to discuss and talk through their problems on a regular basis. This organisation reported **direct improvements with confidence and peer support amongst beneficiaries** due to their engagement with the service. They also mentioned that having more people engaging in the service is good for the development of their organisation, as the service users are giving positive feedback to help develop the service. Generally, interviews with both grantees and beneficiaries suggest that the grant programme has led to **inclusive practices and boosted community participation**, through funding organisations that deliver activities which **support people from underserved communities and groups to strengthen their social ties and interaction**.



Case Study 3

Case Study 3 is a charity supporting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It provides support and advice on issues including domestic abuse, addiction and poverty. The project runs a soup kitchen, breakfast drop-in session and offers one-on-one advice and signposting from a support worker.

ICGP funding was used to expand the scope of services available to individuals, cover general costs for a new woodworking class, including materials, tools, and refreshments such as tea, coffee, and food. The funding also paid for staffing for both the men's and women's talking groups, which focused on addressing the causes and effects of homelessness, including mental health issues, addiction, and isolation. It also helped cover petrol costs for the minivan, which was used to take service users to broader community initiatives and outings.

By investing in woodwork tools, the funding has meant that a range of activities could continue into the future beyond the life of the grant. In the long term, the project hopes to have attendees create products that can be sold to raise funds for the organisation, helping to ensure its sustainability. The project workers emphasised that the skills participants are gaining from the activities are beneficial, both for improving their confidence but also developing transferable skills to help them access and participate in the workforce.

The funding has had a range of positive outcomes and impacts for those accessing the service. Since attending the groups, project workers highlight that service users have "*massively come out of their shell*". The staff highlighted how one attendee, who initially communicated solely by text due to shyness, now confidently "*talks to anyone*" after participating in the activities. Feedback from service users is positive, with one individual outlining that taking part offers "*a reason to get out of bed*", with another sharing that "*If I hadn't discovered [the men's group] ... I wouldn't be here today... I used to be suicidal*". This underlines the contribution that the services have made in terms of combatting loneliness and poor mental health.

Without the funding, they wouldn't be able to offer counselling services and provide a men's and women's talking group which often supports individuals to take up counselling. The talking group has played a beneficial role in providing a support network for service users. One participant shared that: "*we care for each other*" while those who have emigrated to the UK shared that they see the talking group as family.

Lonely men, who were a low proportion of the service users attending before the ICGP funding, have now increased to account for 70% of service users since the introduction of the men's group.

The feedback from beneficiaries and project staff highlights that this project has brought about the intended Inclusive Community Grant Programme outcomes of improved health and wellbeing through **improved participation in physical activity, increased mental health well-being and strengthened social connections within communities**.

4.4.1.3 Community organisations are better skilled to produce funding applications with a positive outcome

There is evidence that the ICGP helped community organisations to **become better skilled to produce funding applications with a positive outcome**. This was partly through the experience, learning and capacity building linked to the ICGP application process. There is also evidence that the ICGP helped to **develop the long-term sustainability of social economy organisations that support**

disadvantaged groups and communities, which the Inclusive Communities Pillar was overall hoped to address.

Grantees reflected that their experience of the ICGP has enabled them to **think more about long-term strategy and sustainability**. They reflected on their experiences of applying for the funding and the **skills and capacity needed to apply for and deliver projects like this**; acknowledging that for future funds good planning and preparation is key to securing funding and then delivering a high-quality service. Moreover, grantees explained how the ICGP funding has **boosted the profile of their organisation**, due to the widespread publicity of the Fund. This in turn has led to them **forming new partnerships** and collaborations with other local organisations, as well as seeing an increased level of interest from prospective project beneficiaries. It is hoped that this momentum and publicity will enable grantees to attract more investment in the future.

"It feels like having the logos and everything has been brilliant organisationally... we've made some really valuable partnerships". Grantee

At time of reporting, 64% of grantees (equivalent to 161 grantees) had applied for further funding. This proportion was consistent across the four different types of ICGP grant, with no grant type more likely to have applied for further funding than the others. Of that 64%, 86% (equivalent to 139 grantees) had been successful with at least some of these applications, including 28% (equivalent to 45 grantees) who had been successful with all of them. Again, there were no notable differences in the levels of success between the four grant types. The most common sources for further funding included: the **Arts Council, National Lottery Funding, Sport England, National Government, local authorities** and other local councils, and a range of foundations.



Case Study 4

Case Study 4 is a community charity dedicated to supporting young people with the aim of reducing gang-related violence and crime. The project offers a variety of sports sessions, including football, cricket, badminton, boxing, martial arts and general fitness classes. For younger children, they also run activities such as tug of war and parachute games. The charity also organises focus groups on topics such as drug awareness, featuring guest speakers. They refer individuals to local Youth Services, which approximately 30% of attendees have utilised.

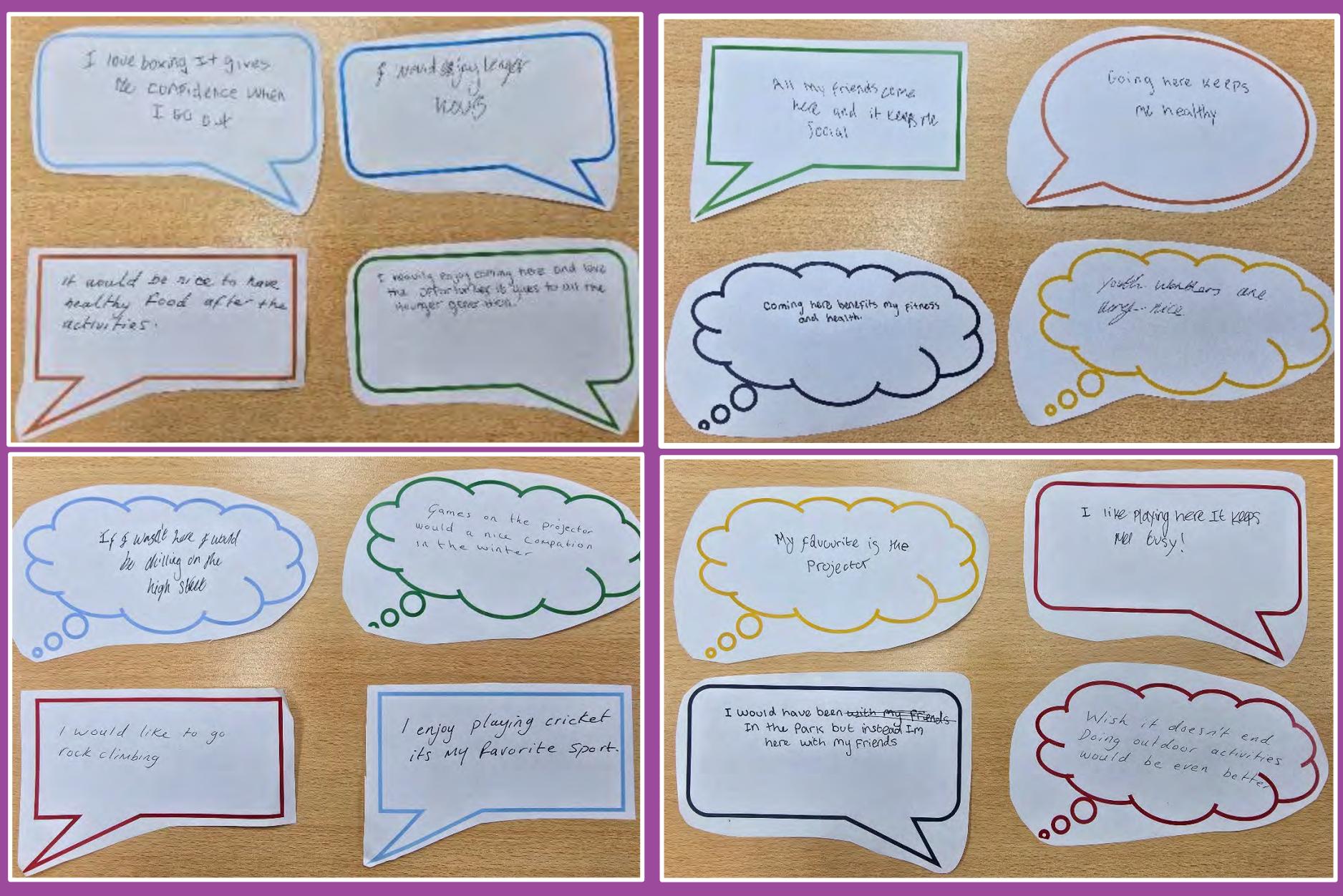
The project received Inclusive Communities Grant Project funding to cover the costs of coaches and operational expenses, ensuring that all activities remain free of charge for young people. Although no new activities were introduced, the funding allowed the continuation of existing programmes.

The project staff highlighted that the participating children are making friends and connecting with positive role models. The activities are playing a diversionary role and keeping the young people from getting involved in gang violence. The children have befriended each other and now meet up outside of the organised groups, including those who were previously involved in opposing gangs. The charity also enabled hosted a knife amnesty event where many attendees handed in knives, which filled a bucket. The project support has therefore acted to reduce the risks of offending and the incidence of knife crime.

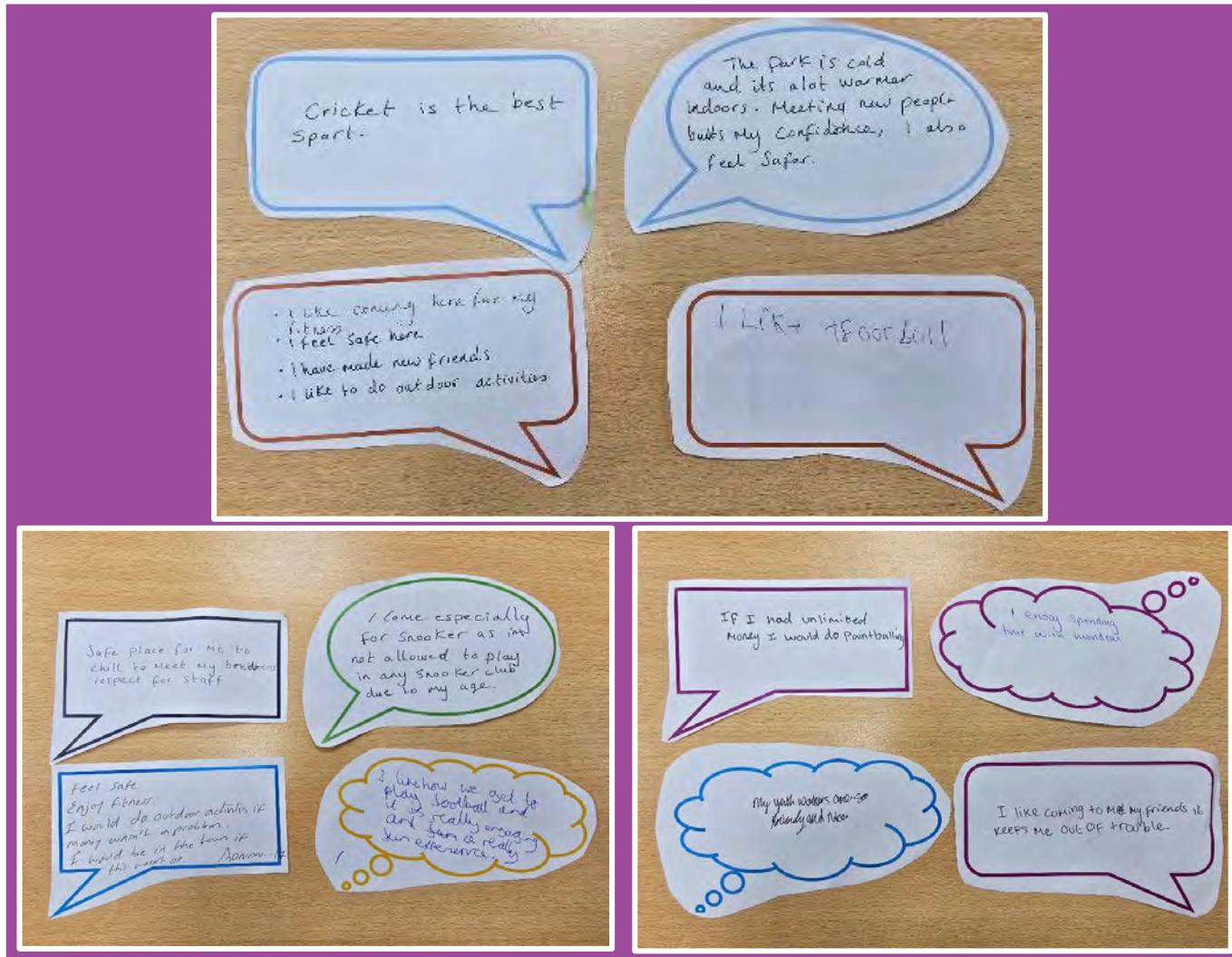
Without the funding, the project would not have been able to cover the cost of office space to run the events, nor the costs of the coaching staff who are a key success factor in reducing the risk of young people getting involved in violent crime.

The feedback from beneficiaries and project staff highlights that this project has brought about the intended Inclusive Communities Grant Programme outcomes of **improved health and wellbeing** and **greater inclusivity in community activities**. Ultimately, the project is also contributing to the intended Inclusive Communities Grant Programme **impact** of 'deeper connections forged between individuals and community organisations to continue to legacy of the Games'.

EVALUATION OF THE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES GRANT PROGRAMME



EVALUATION OF THE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES GRANT PROGRAMME



Copyright: Grantee organisation

4.4.2 Outcomes for the Region

The evaluation considered the extent to which the ICGP programme had an impact on the West Midlands region, in terms of economic growth (helping the region to grow) and improved regional presence (putting the region on the map). Programme level stakeholders were reticent to confidently claim that such outcomes had been achieved, highlighting that it was **too early to see that the ICGP had fed into achieving outcomes** which might reasonably be expected to emerge over the longer term.

The evaluation found that the ICGP was successful in ensuring that the legacy of the Games felt more widely across the West Midlands. This reflected the range of organisations and communities supported. The case study evidence suggests that a **range of outcomes and benefits achieved at the project level will each contribute to positive outcomes for the overall region**. Alongside benefits for organisations and service users, research identified a contribution to outcomes such as improved community cohesion, community safety and physical health and wellbeing within the community. While project outcomes cannot necessarily be aggregated to determine regional level outcomes and impact, we know that all projects are delivering impacts which align with and feed up to regional level aims.

Many projects and beneficiaries reported **increased community cohesion and connections broadened** across the region. One organisation spoke about how the grant has enabled all Scout groups in the district to access new activities, regardless of socioeconomic status, as well as fostering community engagement as families have discovered and used facilities such as a local golf course. Another organisation felt that their event (which the funding supported) helped reduce barriers of access around “age, their abilities, their ethnicity, religious beliefs”, suggesting the funding has helped support inclusivity as well as cohesion amongst different groups. Another grantee had started to work with a partnership which helped bring parents together and become more involved in community groups, enabling a sense of belonging and safety between neighbourhoods. Improved **community safety** was another positive outcome suggested by organisations, in particular one which a knife amnesty for young people.

In the long term, the funding could contribute to better health and levels of physical activity for beneficiaries, as many of projects focused on health and activities for service users. A couple of organisations mentioned wanting to contribute to wider health equality. The hope is that the funding will contribute to a more active cohort who will be able to inspire and encourage people within their communities to take up additional physical activity.

Whilst anecdotal feedback from projects indicates that benefits will be felt at regional level, there is no evidence or data to reflect that increased community cohesion has been felt at regional level as a result of the funded activities. This means we cannot measure the degree to which wellbeing and community cohesion has been boosted at a regional level.



Case Study 5

Case Study 5 is a community development trust that operates a range of social enterprises, including a café, onsite conferencing and office facilities, nurseries, and sporting facilities. Their main goal is to improve the quality of life within the local area and "*enhance resilience*", supporting between 1,500 and 2,000 people annually. A part of the sporting facilities are 3 caged 5-a-side multi use games area football pitches that were provided with Sport England funding over 20 years ago.

The majority of the grant (£35,959) was used to resurface one of the multi use games area pitches that had become unusable due to the poor quality of its surface. After the resurfacing, there was a noticeable improvement in the pitch's condition and safety – it was brighter, less slippery, and had a thicker surface. In contrast, the other pitches, which couldn't be upgraded, were only patched up with replacement multi use games area material where they had previously been thinning. However, staff pointed out that these repairs are temporary and won't last much longer, meaning those pitches will eventually need to be closed.

Some funding was approved to launch and promote improved the community sports facility in July 2024. No grant was allocated for sports sessions and paying coaches, however the refurbished pitches attract bookings for these sessions. Other funding avenues fund free sports events for children from low-income areas to take part in a football session, which is facilitated by the upgraded football pitches

The upgraded football pitch is "*very well utilised and highly valued by the community and local football league.*" It has attracted more users to the space and encouraged greater levels of physical activity in the community. By offering football facilities at a much lower rental cost, it provides many individuals with their only opportunity to access such amenities. The improved accessibility of the pitches has positively supported both the mental and physical health of local residents and contributed to reducing anti-social behaviour in the area. These outcomes and impacts will be sustained into the future since the infrastructure upgraded will outlast the Inclusive Communities Grant Programme funding,

In particular, the free children's coaching sessions provide a valuable outlet for children, many of whom have few other activities to engage in. The programme offers several benefits for the children. It gives them the opportunity to socialise with peers their own age, learn new skills, and play on a floodlit pitch. It also provides an alternative to young people congregating on the streets, which brings risks for their safety and involvement in crime. The football coaches also serve as positive male role models, which is particularly important for many of the children who lack such figures in their lives.

While the resurfaced pitches haven't directly attracted new organisations, they have allowed the community centre to maintain important connections within the local area. For example, one local professional football team runs a multi-sport activity session for the local community, which might not have been possible without the pitches.

Without the funding, the project would have been forced to close the football pitch, significantly reducing the number of people who could access the space. This would have left young people with

This project therefore contributed to the intended ICGP outcomes of **increased health and well-being**, and **increased inclusivity in community activities**. It has also helped to contribute to the impact of developing ‘deeper connections forged between individuals and community organisations to continue to legacy of the Games’.

4.4.3 Outcomes in relation to Systems

In relations to outcomes related to systems, we can see a contribution to the following intended benefits as having emerged from the ICGP and associated evaluation:

- ▶ Evaluation has extended the evidence-base from the Games legacy
- ▶ Evaluation has produced evidence of learning of the positive impact and change that the grant has made (see also the next section of this report)
- ▶ Funded processes are better designed to meet the genuine needs of the West Midlands population, including where funding should be prioritised.

As part of the evaluation, two events were hosted by WMCA and Ecorys on 21st March 2025 (in-person) and 24th March (online) to provide an opportunity for funded organisations and stakeholders involved in the design and delivery of the ICGP to reflect together on the learning that may be drawn for the future. These events provided a forum to consider the way in which the evaluation can act to extend and contribute to the broader evidence base around Games legacy. Stakeholders also reflected on the opportunities for learning from the experience of the ICGP, especially in relation to how funding processes can aim to best reflect the needs of the Region and its diverse communities. In particular, representatives considered learning around accessibility – and how all community members, including those with disabilities and additional needs can be fully supported and enabled to be part of the Region’s events and associated legacy.

The experience and learning from the ICGP also has the capacity to inform future approaches and interventions designed to meet need across the Region. The design of the fund has broadly allowed for appropriate types of activity to be funded which reflect and meet need, also which deliver a range of positive outcomes. There is some learning in relation to the targeting of funding, and in relation to ensuring that processes support efficiencies and value for money, which can inform future approaches. These are considered further in Chapter 5 (Learning).



Case Study 6

Case study 6 is a water safety programme that aims to increase the number of children who are water safe. Water safety amongst young people is a risk in the local area, due to the geographical proximity to several bodies of water.

In addition to the regular pool-based sessions for Year 5 and 6 students as part of the Year 5 PSHE curriculum, the funding has enabled the service to incorporate water safety lessons into PE classes for Years 2 to 6. It has also facilitated the introduction of half-termly swim safety assemblies. They have "swim safety champions" who model proper swimming practices. The funding has also supported workshops to help parents better understand water risks and safety. The lessons include dry-side training on water hazards and the importance of avoiding trips and falls, how to use a ball as a flotation device and swim across the pool, how to float on one's back and call for help, and how to assist someone out of the water using a stick or pole.

The programme was effective in highlighting the importance of being able to learn how to swim, but also how to be safe in and around water.

The service has been successful, gradually increasing awareness of its availability to schools and leisure centres to reach a broader range of children. *"More and more schools are getting on board... We've had quite a lot of TV coverage... Leisure centres are fully on board and are starting to promote it."* Approximately 18,000 people have directly benefited from the service funded by the ICGP. The project has observed improved confidence among children and better safety profiles. Staff are also feeling more confident in delivering water safety-themed lessons. As one staff member put it, *"I think it's been absolutely huge in terms of the scale of impact it has had and will continue to have."*

This project contributed to the intended Inclusive Communities Grant Programme outcomes of **improved participation in physical activity and increased mental health and wellbeing**.

05

Learning



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5.0 Learning

This section draws on the input and feedback collected from stakeholders across the course of the evaluation to reflect on the learning that can be drawn for the future. The final chapter of the report then distils conclusions in relation to future similar interventions.

5.1 Lessons learned for grantees

Grantees feeding into the evaluation expressed that they had taken on board learning of various kinds through their involvement in the ICGP, both in the application and the project delivery phases. Grantees generally expressed that they realised the importance of having **sufficient time to research and complete their application**, which is an area they would prioritise for future grant funding opportunities. This included working with the funder to better understand the grant objective, thinking about anticipated outcomes and how these might be evidenced, and ensuring the size of the grant is proportionate to what their organisation can deliver. Additionally, grantees emphasised that confidence is essential when applying for funding, as organisations need confidence to apply despite risks and also to treat rejection as a learning experience.

When reflecting on delivery of their grant funded projects, grantees shared a variety of ways in which they feel they would develop their approach if they were to have a similar opportunity in the future:

- ▶ Improving **capacity to make delivery smoother** and less stressful, through upskilling volunteers, recruiting more staff, and/or by having stronger relationships with other community organisations and charities who can assist with delivery.
- ▶ Having **better oversight and management of the grant expenditure**, either through better record keeping, or by seeking professional advice on grant management.
- ▶ **Planning contingency for delays and unexpected costs**, and more generally having a longer project length. This would give grantees a longer time to liaise with contractors/venues, and conduct statutory requirements, like health and risk assessments.
- ▶ Using **feedback from project beneficiaries** to review and adapt delivery.
- ▶ Taking a longer-term view around strategy and creating a strategy for their organisation (where this is not in place). This was felt important to ensure that applications for relevant funding and plans for blending funding sources fits into a wider strategic approach.

5.2 Lessons learned for stakeholders

HoECF explained how the ICGP has given them more confidence in their ability to manage a large grant programme. In turn, this has enabled them to understand how to "evolve our [sic] processes" and has given them a 'boost' in terms of their ambition and how much they can support the local community. HoECF stated they have "taken a lot of learning" from the ICGP and have held internal evaluation to understand successes, challenges, and learning. Three key lessons emerged for HoECF from the ICGP, such that they would action the below in a similar future grant fund:

- ▶ Have greater staffing capacity in place, particularly assessors and panel members and administrative support.
- ▶ Have a dedicated email for ICGP-related matters, to better manage communications and queries.
- ▶ Avoid advertising as widely to reduce undue demand.

WMCA shared one key learning from ICGP, and that was to have a longer delivery window for grants of this size, as they felt it was too rushed to set up, deliver, and fully evaluate the ICGP in the 19-month timeline.

5.3 Suggestions for future funds

Stakeholders, grantees and unsuccessful applicants provided a range of suggestions for future funds. Recommendations included:

- ▶ Ensure the eligibility criteria for the funding is proportionate to the funding pot available. For example, limiting geographical eligibility will reduce demand, make it easier to process and manage applications, and decrease the number of unsuccessful applications.
- ▶ For funds related to legacy programmes and events, targeted or ring-fenced funding to the geographical areas most connected to the original programme will provide a clearer legacy. Similarly, where possible the funds should be launched and promoted alongside the original programme or events, to ensure the legacy elements are tied into the original programme.
- ▶ Offer ring-fenced or guaranteed funding for particularly underserved groups or programmes, as that will ensure they cannot be overlooked or missed. Arts and Culture programmes and projects for people from ethnic minority groups were specifically listed by stakeholders and grantees.
- ▶ Have longer timelines and build in flexibility and capacity to handle any delays, both for organisations managing the grant fund and for grantees spending and delivering projects. This will make it easier for grantees to evidence outcomes and impacts from the fund. Also, where possible, providing long-term funding opportunities as it offers more security to grantees and enables them to run longer programmes.
- ▶ Encourage more partnerships in the community space, both between community organisations and between funders and community organisations. This will enable funders to know which groups could most benefit from funding, and ensure any communications are targeted in the right place. Equally, by encouraging small community organisations to work together, they can jointly apply for funding, rather than competing against each other. Dedicated funding opportunities for consortiums of small organisations would be welcomed.
- ▶ Have simpler and more concise applications for small organisations, and wherever possible ensure consistency with other funding applications. As well as, providing detailed application guidance and examples to help applicants understand the requirements better.
- ▶ Have a clear communications strategy around updates on the status of applications. This will reduce burden on the grant administrator and provide clarity for applicants.
- ▶ Develop or improve the support packages offered to grantees and applicants by:
 - ▷ Scheduling events at different times, as not everyone can attend events during the day.
 - ▷ Having a substantive support offer during the grant expenditure phase, so grantees can be helped to overcome challenges related to issues like project management.
 - ▷ Facilitating networking and collaboration opportunities for grantees to share best practices and learn from each other, as this brings together grantees and fosters a sense of community.
 - ▷ Having a support offer available to unsuccessful applicants immediately after the outcome of their application. This will enable them to be supported with any immediate concerns and reduce negativity and upset.
 - ▷ Provide a central bank or library of other current funding opportunities.

- Following the funding, have publicity around the success of the funding and the impacts felt in communities. This could be a central database online where each grantee provides a short case study of their project. This would create a legacy of the fund and would enable grantees to evidence their projects in future applications. Equally, it would help with transparency by evidencing to unsuccessful applicants and others what happened with the funding.



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06

Summary and Conclusions



6.0 Summary and Conclusions

The evaluation of the Inclusive Communities Grant Programme (ICGP) has provided valuable insights into its implementation, delivery, and impact. The programme successfully supported the Commonwealth Games legacy by funding a diverse range of projects aimed at enhancing physical activity, mental wellbeing, and cultural engagement across the West Midlands. Overall, the processes, governance and systems in place allowed for funding of **£11.8 million to be distributed to 388 organisations**.

The evaluation revealed that the **ICGP effectively reached underserved communities, with many first-time applicants receiving funding** and benefiting from the support provided. This support resulted in improved health and wellbeing for project beneficiaries through regular access to sports, arts, and creative activities. The programme effectively increased access to services, with grantees launching new services and expanding existing ones. This led to higher participation levels and improved facilities, which in turn created better environments for beneficiaries, volunteers, and staff.

The evaluation indicates that the ICGP made significant strides in achieving its anticipated outcomes across various areas. Drawing on a contribution analysis approach, we can say with a **high degree of confidence that the grant support contributed to outcomes**, also considering attribution and other plausible explanatory factors for the positive outcomes reported. Especially prominent in the feedback from the supported projects was that the funding had brought about **health and wellbeing outcomes, especially** in relation to increased levels of physical activity, and improved mental wellbeing amongst those participating in funded activities. Support also directly brought about outcomes in relation to **greater inclusivity for community activities**, particularly through reducing barriers to participation, promoting inclusive practices and developing social connections within communities.

Across the range of projects reviewed, the evidence demonstrated a positive causal relationship between the activities funded by ICGP and the anticipated outcomes. Overall, the evaluation concludes that the **design of the fund was largely appropriate** in terms of the **types of activities that could be supported, and the types of organisations that could be funded**. This ensured that relevant outcomes linked to the aims of the ICGP were brought about for underserved communities, as a meaningful and inclusive legacy of the Games.

The evaluation has reflected on what may have been improved in relation to the design and delivery of the ICGP. Based on feedback from stakeholders and output data, we conclude that there may have been merit in further targeting particular geographic communities through more specific eligibility criteria. **The demand for funding from across the constituent and non-constituent authorities resulted in the early closure of the application window, with regrettable implications in terms of resourcing**, and the potential exclusion of organisations and communities with high levels of need and capacity to contribute to outcomes. More targeted eligibility criteria – focusing on underserved communities - would have also meant that the levels of support and capacity building could have been better targeted to reflect need.

The above links to the consideration of whether the ICGP represented value for money. We conclude that the overall grant programme **represented value for money in that its design ensured support for activities which were effective in bringing about outcomes** as intended. There is however a question as to whether the ICGP overall was as efficient in its management and distribution of resources as it could have been. **Greater targeting of the funding to underserved communities would have ensured that support and communication resources could be focussed more effectively**, also having an implication for the depth and sustainability of the benefits delivered for those communities most in-need.

Below we draw on the evaluation evidence to summarise findings by the evaluation questions.

Applications and awards

To what extent have grant applications been received from a range of organisations, working in different parts of the West Midlands, with different target beneficiary groups?

The ICGP received a total of 1,358 applications, of which 388 were awarded funding. The applications came from a variety of organisations, including charities, community interest companies, social enterprises, sports clubs, and local authorities. The evaluation highlighted that the ICGP was successful in reaching a diverse range of organisations and target beneficiary groups, with many first-time applicants receiving funding and benefiting from the support provided. However, there were some challenges related to the length and complexity of the application form, which may have affected the ability of certain underserved groups to apply.

What are the organisational differences between those who were successful and those who were unsuccessful in terms of being awarded grants?

Successful organisations often had better capacity and capabilities to produce and submit funding applications. They were more likely to have received support or guidance with their application, which increased their chances of success. For instance, 25% of successful applicants had received support with their application, compared to only 13% of all applicants. On the other hand, unsuccessful applicants often lacked the capabilities and capacity to produce and submit funding applications. They were less likely to have received support or guidance with their application. Additionally, unsuccessful applicants felt that certain underserved groups had been overlooked, and they often faced challenges related to the length and complexity of the application form.

Are there any types of organisations, areas of the region, or target beneficiaries who have been more or less successful in their application to receive grant funding?

Types of Organisations: There were no notable differences between the types of organisations that were awarded ICGP funding and those who were unsuccessful in their application. However, Large and Small Works grants were more likely to be rejected than the average application (88% and 80% respectively, versus 71% overall).

Areas of the Region: The location of funded activity was spread across constituent and non-constituent areas. This is consistent with the design of the ICGP, as location of planned activity had specific targets for the funding allocations.

Target Beneficiaries: Unsuccessful applicants felt that certain underserved groups had been overlooked, although grantee organisations did work with a range of underserved communities. The limited equality, diversity and inclusion data from applications, makes it difficult to fully assess whether there are target beneficiaries who were more or less successful with their funding applications. The evaluation highlighted that unsuccessful applicants often lacked the capabilities and capacity to produce and submit funding applications.

What has been the impact for those organisations who have not received grant funding? Any alternative sources of funding, changes for future grant applications, impact on operations, etc.

Unsuccessful applicants faced several challenges and impacts on their operations. Only 4% of unsuccessful applicants were able to fully carry out their planned activities, while 36% were able to partially complete them, and 61% were unable to proceed with their planned activities. To fund their planned activities, unsuccessful applicants had to use personal funding, organisational reserves, or

increase membership fees for beneficiaries. Many had to scale down their intended delivery or only fund necessary elements, such as replacing broken equipment. This limited the outcomes for the communities they work with, and beneficiaries were often disappointed. Some organisations faced financial vulnerability and potential closure due to the lack of funding. Unsuccessful applicants also experienced low morale and a lack of confidence to apply for future funding. However, over half of unsuccessful applicants (57%) have applied for funding since their ICGP application, with most having been successful with at least some of their funding applications. They applied for a wide range of funding sources, including the National Lottery Community Fund, the Postcode Lottery, the Arts Council, local authority funding, and other WMCA funding.

What have been the experiences of those involved in overseeing and assessing the grant application process? What has worked well, less well, any adaptations, and any learnings for the future?

What has worked well:

The diversity of the grant panellists and their connections to communities in the West Midlands ensured a variety of opinions and balanced discussions on whether applications should be awarded. The application support provided by United by 2022 was effective, as those who had accessed support had a greater chance of their application being successful.

What has worked less well:

The limited timeframe for designing and developing the ICGP was a significant challenge for programme staff. The application form was criticised for being repetitive, long, and having technical issues. It was felt to be better suited to bigger organisations with more resources. The early closure of the application window due to oversubscription led to a lot of disappointment from communities.

Adaptations and learning for the future:

Stakeholders suggested that future funds should have a longer delivery window to allow more time for setting up and delivering the programme.

An expression of interest (EOI) stage was recommended to manage oversubscription and reduce the burden on organisations. The evaluation concludes that this would be recommended in similar future interventions where there is the likelihood of demand exceeding the available resource.

Greater clarity over eligibility and scoring criteria was suggested to help build trust and improve the application process.

How has value for money been considered during the awarding of grants?

The evaluation highlighted that the ICGP was designed to ensure that funding was allocated to projects that could demonstrate a clear need and potential for impact. The application process included a sifting stage where applications were reviewed for eligibility and given a red, amber, green (RAG) rating based on community need. This helped to prioritise applications that were most likely to deliver value for money.

Overall, the evaluation found that the ICGP was successful in delivering value for money by funding projects that had a clear need and potential for impact, and by supporting organisations that could demonstrate their ability to deliver positive outcomes for their communities. Value for money and efficiency of support could have been enhanced through further targeting of the funding through restricting geographical coverage, since level of applications far outstripped the scope of the fund to support.

Spend of grant funding

What types of activities and projects are being funded by the programme? Any particularly common uses of spend? Any innovative uses of spend?

The Inclusive Communities Grant Programme (ICGP) funded a wide range of activities and projects across three main themes: physical activity and sport, mental health and wellbeing, and arts, culture, and creativity. Examples of the types of activities and projects that were funded included:

Physical activity and sport:

- ▶ Replacement and upgraded sports equipment
- ▶ Exercise classes and programmes for underserved groups like disadvantaged young people and families or young people with special educational needs and disabilities
- ▶ Training and funding for qualifications for sports club volunteers.

Mental health and wellbeing:

- ▶ Mental health workshops and support for young people
- ▶ Programmes to tackle men's mental health and support for people with addiction issues
- ▶ Training for local people including digital skills and financial management
- ▶ Support for community kitchens and food parcels
- ▶ Befriending services for refugees, asylum seekers, and young carers
- ▶ Events and social activities to foster a sense of belonging and community spirit and overcome challenges related to loneliness and isolation
- ▶ Community gardening and other projects to get people out into nature

Arts, culture, and creativity:

- ▶ Festivals, dance workshops, cultural celebrations, new museum exhibitions
- ▶ Investment in theatre groups, music projects for vulnerable young people
- ▶ Training for practitioners so they can better support people with additional needs
- ▶ Purchase of arts and music equipment

Small works examples:

- ▶ Refurbishment of facilities, including kitchens, toilets, and sports halls
- ▶ Installation of new doorways, electric heaters, and intruder alarms

Common uses of spend:

- ▶ 59% of grantees used their grant to fund an expansion or to increase an existing activity
- ▶ Around half used their grant to pay for a new activity for their organisation
- ▶ One in six used it to maintain an existing activity with no increase or expansion
- ▶ One in three grantees used their grant to cover day-to-day expenses or core costs for their organisation.

Innovative uses of spend:

Some grantees delivered their projects as part of a consortium or in partnership with other organisations, which included local community organisations, large institutions, and sports clubs in the region.

In supporting many first-time applicants, the ICGP was able to diversify the type of activity traditionally supported by grant programmes.

Match funding from sources such as the Arts Council, the National Lottery Community Fund, local authorities, church dioceses, and individual donors, allowed grantees to reach more beneficiaries or extend the length of their project.

Who has benefited from grant funded activities in terms of target beneficiaries and areas of the West Midlands?

Target Beneficiaries: The ICGP reached a diverse group of beneficiaries, including children and young people, people with disabilities, diverse communities, refugees and asylum seekers, LGBTQ+ individuals, and disadvantaged families. This was evidenced by the range beneficiary groups that grantees worked with; and was achieved through the use of a local grant administrator and diverse community grant panels to award funding, and the large outreach and support programme at the application stage. However, some stakeholders felt more could have been done to reach the most underserved communities, for example by targeting micro-organisations. The programme funded activities such as sports sessions, mental health workshops, arts and cultural events, and community gardening projects, which were designed to address the specific needs of these groups. For example, the purchasing of inclusive sports equipment for participants with disabilities, or establishment of a dedicated arts programme for the local Bangladeshi community.

Areas of the West Midlands: The geographical distribution of the grant applications and awards covered constituent and non-constituent authorities of the West Midlands Combined Authority. The ICGP can be commended in relation to its breadth of coverage across communities with a connection to the Games. Whilst the programme ensured that the benefits of the grant funding were felt across the region, the evaluation evidence does suggest that more restricted eligibility and targeted support could have increased the depth of outcomes delivered by supported organisations. This also may have acted to reduce the number of applications in order that the application submission window could have remained open for the intended duration.

How has spending of grants been in practice for grantees? What has worked well, less well, any adaptations, and any learnings for the future?

Spending of Grants in Practice: Grantees generally found the process of spending their grant straightforward, as they had carefully planned their expenditure and delivery during the application process. However, there was a majority-held view that the delivery timeframe was challenging for spending their grant, particularly with the delays between submitting their application and receiving their first grant payment.

What has Worked Well:

Grantees appreciated the flexibility afforded to them to have as much control and choice over how they spent their grant, which allowed them to propose activities that best met local needs. Grantees also reflected that their experience of the ICGP enabled them to think more about long-term strategy and sustainability.

What has Worked Less Well:

The delivery timeframe was challenging, particularly with the delays between application submission and first grant payment. This led to rushed or condensed delivery, renegotiations with contractors, and

difficulties recruiting and retaining volunteers. Grantees faced issues such as difficulty securing venues for activities, adverse weather conditions stopping activities, lack of capacity in staff teams, and lack of interest or uptake in their activities. The process of submitting additional detail to HoECF about planned changes to expenditure was found to be time-consuming.

Adaptations and Learning for the Future:

Grantees suggested having better oversight and management of grant expenditure, either through better record-keeping or by seeking professional advice on grant management.

Planning contingency for delays and unexpected costs and having a longer project length to give grantees more time to liaise with contractors and conduct statutory requirements.

Using feedback from project beneficiaries to review and adapt delivery.

Taking a longer-term view around strategy including through creating strategies at organisation level to support strategic approaches to funding applications and using different funds collectively to fund projects and programme.

How have partnerships and matched funding worked in practice for grantees? What has worked well, less well, any adaptations, and any learning for the future?

Partnerships: Many grantees delivered their projects as part of a consortium or in partnership with other organisations. These partnerships were varied, but common examples included local community organisations like The Active Wellbeing Society, Birmingham Voluntary Service Council, and Black Country and Birmingham Trees for Life. Larger institutions and sports clubs in the region, such as Birmingham City University, Birmingham City Football Club, and the Aston Villa Foundation, also supported grantees with training, resources, and promotion of their projects. Other partnerships included working with health services like Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust and Forward Thinking Birmingham to ensure beneficiaries had access to the support and services they required.

Matched Funding: A quarter of grantees (24%) had match funding for their project, with small grant recipients being the least likely to have match funding (14%). Match funding came from a range of sources, such as the Arts Council, the National Lottery Community Fund, local authorities, church dioceses, and individual donors, with amounts varying from £100 up to £3.9 million. By having match funding, grantees were able to reach more beneficiaries or extend the length of their project. Grantees with match funding also felt the diverse funding streams gave their project more security and stability, as well as enabling them to build stronger partnerships with the funding organisations, which will help with future funding needs.

What has Worked Well:

Partnerships with local community organisations, larger institutions, and sports clubs provided grantees with valuable support, resources, and promotion for their projects. Match funding allowed grantees to reach more beneficiaries, extend the length of their projects, and build stronger partnerships with funding organisations.

What has Worked Less Well:

Grantees reported barriers to applying for match funding, particularly for smaller organisations or those new to grant applications. They often lacked the capacity and knowledge to apply for match funding and were sometimes ineligible due to being deemed high risk.

Adaptations and Learning for the Future:

Facilitating scope for partnership development through a longer lead-in window or EOI process.

Impact of grant funding and programme

To what extent has there been impact from the grants programme across the anticipated outcomes?

There is a positive causal relationship between the ICGP and the intended outcomes. This is particularly the case in terms of increasing health and wellbeing.

The evaluation points to a clear contribution to improved participation in physical activity, broadening access to physical activities by reducing barriers for participants. This was a direct focus of a proportion of funded projects, and the evaluation evidence indicated that beneficiaries across a range of communities took part in sport and physical activities of various kinds as a result of grant funding. This was mainly either due to grants supporting the running of activities or through supporting the provision of appropriate facilities, thereby facilitating participation.

As one of three ICGP grant themes, both grantees and stakeholders anticipated mental wellbeing would be improved through ICGP funded projects. This has largely been realised, with grantees reporting increased mental wellbeing for their project beneficiaries. Closely related to increased mental wellbeing are outcomes associated with reduced social isolation and loneliness. Additionally, those responsible for overseeing projects within grantee organisations reported improvements in their mental wellbeing too.

To what extent have more underserved communities felt the legacy of the Games?

The evaluation highlighted that the ICGP was an appropriate approach for championing equality, diversity, and inclusion and improving community engagement by virtue of the range and nature of projects supported with grants. The programme funded small and grassroots organisations that do not typically apply for grant funding or organisations doing more innovative and unusual work. This helped develop approaches for social innovation and ensured that the benefits of the Games' legacy were felt by more underserved communities.

To what extent has the grant programme contributed to the improved financial sustainability of supported organisations?

The ICGP has enabled grantees to invest in their projects, services, and facilities to improve long-term sustainability. For example, some grantees used the funding to install solar panels, which has enabled them to reduce energy costs and improve financial sustainability. Another grantee organisation trained volunteers to take on some responsibilities of paid staff, making it easier for the organisation to manage resources and capacity in the future. Additionally, those in receipt of small works grants have fixed issues like leaky roofs or poor lighting, which will reduce their maintenance costs in the future.

Grantees also reflected that their experience of the ICGP has enabled them to think more about long-term strategy and sustainability. They highlighted how the ICGP funding has boosted the profile of their organisations, due to the widespread publicity of the Fund. This in turn has led to them forming new partnerships and collaborations with other local organisations, as well as seeing an increased level of interest from prospective project beneficiaries. It is hoped that this momentum and publicity will enable grantees to attract more investment in the future.

At the time of reporting, 64% of grantees (equivalent to 161 grantees) had applied for further funding. This proportion was consistent across the four different types of ICGP grant, with no grant type more likely to have applied for further funding than the others¹. Of that 64%, 86% (equivalent to 139 grantees) had been successful with at least some of these applications, including 28% (equivalent to 45 grantees) who had been successful with all of them. The most common sources for further funding included: the

Arts Council, National Lottery Funding, Sport England, National Government, local authorities and other local councils, and a range of foundations.

In terms of the ICGP funded projects specifically, grantees were generally positive they would continue beyond the life of the grant. This is largely because the grantees used the funding as a 'one-off' additional piece of funding to supplement what they were already delivering. Those who were unsure if their project would continue beyond the ICGP were dependent on securing additional funding, which they had been yet to achieve, or in some instances their organisation has been unable to recruit and retain volunteers to run the project in the future.

To what extent have relationships between WMCA and other community organisations changed as a result of the grants programme?

Increased Engagement and Awareness: Both WMCA and HoECF reported a range of profile and knowledge benefits. The ICGP positioned them to learn and understand more about the organisations supporting beneficiaries in the region. Additionally, organisations of various sectors, sizes, and across a range of communities developed a better awareness of WMCA and HoECF and the services and roles they play across the region.

Improved Relationships: Grantees felt connected to HoECF through the grant administration process, and WMCA made efforts to extend this further by ensuring that community organisations understood what the Combined Authority could offer them. This included support across areas including culture, mental health and wellbeing, and sport.

Role as a Regional Convener: WMCA learned that it can bring value through acting in the capacity of a regional convener.

Positive Sector Relationships: HoECF felt their relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) developed positively and that the experience of working to administer the grants would be a basis for future partnerships and projects.

To what extent has the grant programme led to more inclusive practice and increased community participation?

The ICGP has significantly contributed to more inclusive practices and increased community participation. The evaluation evidence suggests that the ICGP was an appropriate approach for championing equality, diversity, and inclusion and improving community engagement by virtue of the range and nature of projects supported with grants. The programme funded small and grassroots organisations that do not typically apply for grant funding which helped develop approaches for social innovation and ensured that the benefits of the Games' legacy were felt by more underserved communities.

Many organisations spent the funding on activities with the aim of developing social connections in communities, and the majority of funded projects reviewed as part of the evaluation indicated that grant funding had been successful in achieving this. For example, project outcomes included boosted wellbeing and a reduction in loneliness, due to beneficiaries having more structure in their days and opportunities to meet people as a result of participation in activities. Beneficiaries across a range of projects expressed how using the service had led to reduced loneliness and provided more opportunities to socialise, which suggests the projects supported by ICGP helped to reduce social isolation and create a stronger sense of community and belonging.

Additionally, the ICGP led to more investment in youth, sport, and inclusive organisations. The programme awarded £11.8 million of funding to 388 projects being run by community organisations. These organisations worked with a range of beneficiaries providing a variety of services. This investment

increased access to services including provision for underserved groups. For example, one grantee organisation was able to purchase inclusive sports equipment with the funding, which enabled them to offer more inclusive sports sessions and spread awareness of diversity in sport with young people they work with.

To what extent has the programme had an impact on the West Midlands region? In terms of economic growth, improved national and international presence, and ability to attract investment.

Programme-level stakeholders were reticent to confidently claim that such outcomes had been achieved, highlighting that it was too early to see that the ICGP had fed into achieving outcomes which might reasonably be expected to emerge over the longer term. However, the case study evidence suggested that a range of outcomes and benefits achieved at the project level will each contribute to positive outcomes for the overall region.

In contributing to more inclusive communities, it is plausible and likely that the ICGP has strengthened the degree to which the West Midlands attracts inward investment and has a positive reputation and international presence.

Are there any possible further impacts from the programme?

The evaluation highlights several unintended impacts that emerged from the programme. These impacts were not initially anticipated but have had a positive effect on the communities and organisations involved.

One of the key unintended impacts was the improvement in the mental wellbeing of those responsible for overseeing projects within grantee organisations. These individuals reported that receiving ICGP funding boosted their morale and motivation to continue their work.

Another unintended impact was the development of stronger relationships and partnerships between grantee organisations and other local entities. This collaboration has led to increased support, resources, and promotion for the projects, which in turn has enhanced the overall impact of the funded activities.

Additionally, the programme has fostered a sense of community and belonging among beneficiaries, which has led to sustained community engagement and participation in future initiatives. This sense of belonging has also contributed to reduced social isolation and loneliness, further improving the mental wellbeing of participants.

Overall, these unintended impacts have added significant value to the ICGP, enhancing its positive impact on the West Midlands region.

Future learning

What learning can be applied from this grants programme for future similar programmes run by WMCA?

Stakeholders reflected that a longer lead-in time for applications would be useful where there is the ambition of encouraging the formation of partnership applications. Otherwise, the main feedback is that a longer deliver window for grants of this size would allow sufficient time for a smooth process of set up and delivery. This would allow for contingencies, appropriate oversight of grant expenditure and the incorporation of feedback from project beneficiaries. The collaborative approach to designing, managing and administering the fund has been a positive feature, which could be replicated in the future and building on WMCA's role as regional convener.

How can funding processes be better designed to meet the needs of the West Midlands population?

To better design funding processes that meet the needs of the West Midlands population, several suggestions have been made. Ensuring the eligibility criteria for the funding is proportionate to the funding pot available can help manage demand and reduce the number of unsuccessful applications. For funds related to legacy programmes and events, targeted or ring-fenced funding to the geographical areas most connected to the original programme can provide a clearer legacy. Offering ring-fenced or guaranteed funding for particularly underserved groups or programmes can ensure they are not overlooked. Longer timelines and flexibility to handle delays can make it easier for grantees to evidence outcomes and impacts from the fund. Encouraging more partnerships in the community space and having simpler and more concise applications for small organisations can also improve the funding process. The evaluation concludes that a more targeted approach in terms of geographical coverage would have better represented value for money and met needs. This reflects that if resource and support was spread less thinly, then it may be more effective in bringing about deep and longer-lasting outcomes and impacts for those communities most in need.

How can WMCA further support inclusive growth and increase community participation?

WMCA can further support inclusive growth and increase community participation by developing or improving support packages offered to grantees and applicants. This includes scheduling events at different times to accommodate various schedules, providing substantive support during the grant expenditure phase, and facilitating networking and collaboration opportunities for grantees to share best practices. Having a support offer available to unsuccessful applicants immediately after the outcome of their application can help address immediate concerns and reduce negativity. Additionally, providing a central bank or library of other current funding opportunities and publicising the success and impacts of the funding can create a legacy of the fund and help with transparency.

Overall, the ICGP has succeeded in delivering a fund to extend a positive legacy of the Games across a diversity of communities, including underserved communities of the West Midlands. There are a number of areas across which WMCA can draw on the experience for its future work to support the region, either in the role of grant-giver, regional convenor or providing various services and support to the community. However, overall, the outcomes of the Fund indicate that it has met its objectives, while also forming a basis for positive impact to be emerge over the longer-term.



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Annex 1: List of Awarded organisations

| Grantee | Project Description |
|---|---|
| Large Grants | |
| Active Black Country Ltd | To deliver a water safety programme across 120 Black Country primary schools. |
| Aspiring Futures CIC | To develop early mental-health support hubs in Wolverhampton, as well as a range of sport and creative activities to promote well-being. |
| Belgrade Theatre Trust (Coventry) Limited | To produce a play and a co-created programme of community engagement activities with a focus on mental health support for black men. |
| Birmingham Pride (UK) Ltd | To support the annual Pride event and a year round programme of activities to support the LGBTQ+ community. |
| Community Together CIC | To develop a new community hub to reduce social isolation and promote meaningful peer-support connections. |
| InPower Academy CIC | To deliver accessible martial arts sessions across Wolverhampton and Dudley, to divert young people from the criminal justice system and offending behaviour. |
| Legacy West Midlands | A community arts programme centred in Birmingham with a focus on the Bangladeshi community. |
| Ordinary Magic C.I.C | A range of therapy and play sessions for children and families across Solihull. |
| POSITIVE YOUTH FOUNDATION (PYF) | To provide free, accessible sports activities for young people across Coventry. |
| ROSHNI BIRMINGHAM | To support a specialist counselling service for women who have experienced domestic abuse. |
| Saheli Hub | To provide a physical activity programme to tackle health inequalities in ethnic minority communities. |
| Sampad (South Asian Arts Development) | To support a therapeutic creative arts project for people with mental health problems in Birmingham and Solihull. |
| The Albion Foundation | To fund a community sport and fitness programme targeting ethnic minority communities. |
| WV10 Consortium c/o Bushbury Hill Estate Management Board | To provide a range of exercise, arts, and mental health support sessions to reduce social-isolation and improve mental health. |
| Medium Grants | |
| 786 Wolverhampton | For the delivery of free, weekly sessions aimed at BAME community members, including intercultural cooking, a stay and play, gardening, crafting, and family activities. |
| Aaina Community Hub | To employ a SEND coordinator to deliver a pilot project for families caring for a child or young person with SEND. |
| Access Sport CIO | To equip, train and support community clubs in Birmingham to set up regular activities for disabled and disadvantaged children and young people aged 5-25. |
| Access to Business | To provide one to one support and group sessions to individuals experiencing personal barriers which are preventing them gaining employment. |
| Acts of Random Caring CIC | A 2-night community event which will transform Gatis grounds into a magical light walk, with community-made art and light installations and includes a BBQ and refreshments, campfire, and locally made craft fair. |
| African French Speaking Community Support (AFSCS) | To provide music lessons and sports coach training to young people, as well as to deliver 3 family sports events and 2 cultural weekend events. |

| Grantee | Project Description |
|---|---|
| Allens Cross Community Association | To support staff salaries for course leaders, centre manager, assistant garden manager, and activities co-ordinator, which all connect to their community garden facility. |
| Anjali Dance Company | A project to improve access to the arts for people with learning disabilities. |
| APTITUDE ORGANISATION CIC | To deliver a youth work leadership project – training new volunteers ages 16-30 with a programme of sports leadership, mentoring, youth work and football coaching. |
| Art at the Heart C.I.C. | To facilitate a series of community/family events using two calendared cultural events: Holi and Diwali. |
| Arts In The Yard | To provide weekly arts and crafts groups for older residents of Garretts Green, monthly arts café sessions for newly arrived residents of Shirley, and two celebration events. |
| Arty-Folks | A 34-week programme of arts based activities and support for 50 young people. |
| Aspire4u CIC | Regular social events, support groups, soft and active exercise sessions, employability workshops, and wellbeing sessions for people with special educational needs and disabilities. |
| ASSIST | A therapeutic service for victims of domestic violence and abuse in Rugby and Warwickshire. |
| Aston Villa Foundation | An 8-month project that will use sport and peer mentoring to reach 120 young females who have been affected by poor mental health. |
| Autin Dance Theatre | A programme of outreach creative workshops in movement, wellbeing and storytelling. |
| Beacon Family Services | A contribution towards existing staff costs, as well as to hire a new family support worker. |
| Beatsabar Music Project CIC | To conduct five music workshops that will address specific community needs and promote inclusivity through music and technology. |
| Bedworth RFC | To fund equipment necessary to maintain the playing surfaces that the club uses, including a compact tractor, combination turf groomer, fertilizer spreader, finishing mower, and shipping containers to store equipment. |
| BID Services | To provide support and services to the d/Deaf community. |
| Birmingham Association for Mental Health (The) – Birmingham Mind (Working Name) | To extend and expand an existing Mental Health Wellbeing Hub currently being piloted by the applicant in Birmingham's Bullring. |
| Birmingham Bosnia and Herzegovina Community Association | Community activities for the Bosnian refugee community in Birmingham, including youth sessions, family activities, and day-time sessions for the elderly. |
| Black Country Touring | To deliver an inclusive arts programme, consisting of arts and nature-based workshops, 14 touring theatre and dance performances, and stay and play sessions. |
| BMYG Youth Work CIC / Youth Connect | To deliver a range of free-access youth activities for young people in Walsall, including sports sessions and specialized programmes. |
| Breathing Space Therapeutic Services CIC | To provide animal therapy services to children with additional needs, SEND schools, young carers and members of the community who are unable to travel to their site. |
| Brightstar Boxing Academy Ltd | To mentor other organisations to implement their 'more than sport' approach, to train delivery staff, to help build referral pathways, and to deliver a 12-week programme for young people's mental health. |
| British Cycling Federation | To create a fun, family-orientated cycling pathway within the Cannock Chase area, as well as an event and staff costs for a community coach to support families cycling. |

| Grantee | Project Description |
|---|---|
| British Triathlon Foundation Trust | To deliver a sports project in Walsall, aimed at local families and individuals to include swimming, cycling, running and walking. |
| Brownsover Community Association | To deliver a free, open access sports project for young people aged 8-19, which will include boxing, football and dodgeball as well as youth club and outreach activities. |
| Caldmore Village Festival Ltd | To provide classical concerts for children aged 0-5, theatre performances, a poetry project, weekly creative sessions for women from diverse backgrounds, and a community festival. |
| Calico Theatre CIC | To support individual artists, by providing a free space, services and mentoring support to create a project which drives social change in their community. |
| Carers Careline | To support the mental and emotional wellbeing of carers in Redditch. |
| Carers Trust HoECF | A Carers Counselling Service in Coventry and Warwickshire. |
| CASBA | To increase staff hours to provide an additional 37 hours per week to deliver one-to-one support and peer support groups to people with learning disability/difficulties in Birmingham. |
| CEIA (Community Empowerment In Action) | To deliver a range of physical activities to help BAME communities become active and improve their mental, health and wellbeing and thrive. |
| Centre Spot C.I.C. | To provide 3 new weekly youth sessions with a focus on sports, creativity and media, including: training courses, a community action project and two celebration events. |
| Community Council of Shropshire (Operating as Community Resource) | A community-driven initiative which connects trained volunteers with vulnerable adults in the Shropshire Council area facing isolation, loneliness, physical inactivity, and mental health challenges. |
| Connect Us Academy CIC | To deliver sessions for young people involved with the criminal justice system which combine boxing with the opportunity to meet others and develop social skills. |
| Cranstoun | To support an open access youth drop in centre in Dudley |
| Creative Active Lives CIC | To run two dementia friendly café sessions to increase awareness and understanding of dementia, reduce isolation, and improve the quality of life and mental wellbeing. |
| Deaf World | To expand their sporting activities to provide deaf and hard of hearing young people with opportunities to access and participate in sports they do not currently have access to. |
| Diversity Music Community 1 st CIC | To deliver intervention music workshops and a music mentoring programme, including 1:1 and group coaching sessions that use music to promote positive life strategies. |
| DORCAS (Daughters, Optimistic, Respect, Courage, Assurance & Support) | To contribute to the development of an existing health and well-being programme which seeks to address mental health and well-being within marginalised communities where FGM is prevalent. |
| Empower Poetry CIC | A weekend of spoken word poetry for existing members of its networks, most of whom are from BAME populations, providing a safe space for performers to connect, showcase their poetry and building confidence and an audience for their work. |
| Escape: Community Art in Action | For a 9-month Arts & Health Artist Residency, delivering a beneficiary-driven creative mental- health intervention. |
| Everyone 4 Sport CIC | An adapted sports programme for adults and young people with learning/physical disabilities who are experiencing mental health problems |
| Father Hudson's Society | To deliver football, photography, sewing, art therapy, and counselling sessions to refugees and asylum seekers in Sandwell. There will also be a weekly community cafe and ESOL programme. |

| Grantee | Project Description |
|--|---|
| Foundation for Community Dance (Trading as People Dancing) | A regular programme of dance classes for people living with Parkinson's. |
| Friends of Cotteridge Park | To provide physical activities for older people, including: a couch-to-5k running programme, social running sessions, and a community celebration event. |
| Geese Theatre Company | To enable members of a drug and alcohol support service to co-create a performance from their own stories, to be shared at a public event for family, friends and professionals. |
| Gilgal Birmingham | A contribution to three staff positions: a Mental Health Support Worker, a Mental Health Worker, and a Complex Mental Health Support Worker. |
| Glue Collective Ltd | For the development of an outdoor community garden to provide access to a range of play opportunities for children and young people. |
| Goodlife Community CIC | To deliver a project which will bring people together to creatively explore and appreciate a newly created pond in an urban environment in Dudley. |
| Halesowen/Dudley Yemeni Community Association | A contribution towards salary costs of youth project co-ordinator, youth workers, and volunteer expenses for an after-school youth programme. |
| Hands Together Ludlow | To fund a new Volunteer Coordinator to develop and expand volunteering opportunities and support those with low-level mental health to get involved. |
| Helping Hands Community Project | To part-fund the staff costs of three support workers, counselling costs and overheads of running the charity's two support services. |
| Highly Sprung Performance | An arts project for young people, using performance as a catalyst to inspire learning, conversation, advocacy and ultimately community change. |
| Home Start Birmingham North West | A contribution towards staffing and overheads to meet increased demand for their services, as well as weekly support sessions, and drop-in sessions for victims of domestic violence. |
| Include Me TOO | To provide opportunities for disabled children, young people and their siblings to access activities and experiences such as sailing, zip lining and horse therapy. |
| Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles | To provide a 4-stage inclusive cycling programme for children and young people with complex barriers. |
| Just Straight Talk CIC | Group and 1:1 support activities to reduce isolation aimed at older people, including: craft groups, wellbeing walks, men's groups, skittles group & coffee mornings. |
| KEC Church Centre | To improve and extend the charity's existing café services. |
| Kickstarts Dance CIC | To support the delivery of a youth club, 1:1 counselling for young people, and deliver training in local schools to improve mental health knowledge. |
| KIDS | To run 27 specialised activity days during school holidays based around the NHS 5 Steps to Wellbeing; connect; be active; keep learning; give to others; and be mindful. |
| Kids in Communication | To deliver a media-based volunteer training programme which enables young people to access peer support and learn new skills. |
| Ladies Fighting Breast Cancer | A contribution towards the running costs associated with the Ladies Fighting Breast Cancer choir. |
| Loconomy Limited | To support a community theatre project in East Birmingham. |
| Magical MC CIC | To deliver classes which combine physical fitness with sessions to boost mental health and social connections. |
| Make Some Noise | To support young people with SEND in local schools through music. |

| Grantee | Project Description |
|---|--|
| Martineau Gardens | To deliver a six-month programme providing therapeutic horticulture for people seeking asylum in the Birmingham area. |
| Menkind | A range of weekly educational and sports activities, including budgeting tools, government assistance, community resources and debt management. |
| Meriden Adventure Playground Association | To develop family sessions at an adventure playground. |
| Midland Langar Seva Society | To reduce the isolation of women over 60 from the BAME community through weekly social and creative activity |
| Mindful Life Counselling CIC | Counselling for young people aged 19-25. |
| Northern Star Community Arts | To support the delivery of activities for adults with profound physical and learning disabilities, LGBTQIA+ young people, and a comic design group for young people with poor mental health. |
| Nuneaton and North Warwickshire Equestrian Centre Riding for the Disabled | To expand their delivery of equine therapy and training. |
| Nurture Families CIC | To expand upon our existing yoga and mental health programme to include: antenatal and postnatal sessions for women and newborns, youth yoga, early childhood educator training, and infant massage therapy. |
| One Love Community Music and Arts CIC | To develop a social prescribing project, which will include the offer of an eight-week programme to people with mental health challenges, with support provided in areas such as arts and crafts, mindfulness, and meditation. |
| Open House Community CIC | To fully fund a 36-week programme of twice weekly sports/coaching sessions at Hawkesley Community Centre. |
| Options for Life | For the purchase of two 7-seater community vehicles to be used for the transportation of participants to OFL's day centre, and day outings. |
| Our Community Foundation | A sport, mentoring, and personal development programme for young people in Alum Rock, and their families. |
| P.A.L. Fitness & Education CIC | To expand the delivery of exercise referral classes and strength & balance classes for adults with long- term health issues. |
| PAPYRUS Prevention of Young Suicide | To deliver suicide prevention training across the West Midlands. |
| Parents Opening Doors (PODS) | Tailored assistance for disabled children and young people through physical support, recreational activities, and access to life skills education. |
| Plasma of Hope | Weekly football sessions, tournaments, and exercise sessions for people living with Sickle Cell Disease. |
| Powered by CAN | To deliver two youth clubs for young people between the ages of 10-14 years in Sandwell, which will include sports, arts activities, and wellbeing drop-in sessions. |
| Rape and Sexual Violence Project | To offer additional counselling sessions to adult and child survivors of sexual violence and abuse across Birmingham/Solihull. |
| Resources for Autism | A contribution towards existing adult social/support groups and a 'Reach Out' befriending/mentoring scheme |
| RicNic | A series of regular creative projects that offer free access to the arts for children, young people and families in Walsall. |
| Rights and Equality Sandwell | To run a project for women from diverse ethnic backgrounds with limited English proficiency through the art of sharing stories rooted in their childhood and preserving cultural values in the digital age. |

| Grantee | Project Description |
|--|---|
| RoSA | To deliver a project which focuses on clients affected by post-Covid trauma and exhibiting signs of poor mental health. |
| Saathi House | To develop the Saathi House Sports programme for women and young girls. |
| Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School | To hold a centenary celebration festival, including a fun fair, refreshments, live music and firework display. |
| Safeline Warwick | To part-fund the salary costs of two secondary school Prevention and Early Intervention coordinators. |
| SAHIL PROJECT | A combination of music classes, fitness activities, and self-sustainability initiatives to empower individuals and enhance their confidence and skills. |
| Sandwell & Birmingham Mela Limited | To create and deliver a Diwali Fusion Celebration event which combines Diwali and Guy Fawkes Night and aims to promote cultural diversity and understanding. |
| Sandwell African Caribbean Mental Health Foundation | To expand the iMatter youth service to include a drop-in service for young people at risk of involvement in anti-social behaviour in Sandwell. |
| Sandwell Deaf Community Association | Staff costs for a new engagement officer and strategic lead to build upon their delivery of activities for deaf people in Sandwell. |
| Severn Arts | To deliver a 6-month artist in residency project for the neighbourhood of Woodrow, Redditch. |
| Shropshire Inclusive Dance | To create new dance works, performed by young Shropshire-based dancers aged 11- 30 years, and to support 3 dance-makers with disabilities to realize their choreographic ideas through the creation of new digital works. |
| Shropshire Parent and Carer Council | A varied programme of sport, arts, and cultural community-based activity sessions in holiday periods, predominantly for young people with learning disabilities or autism. |
| Shropshire Wildlife Trust | A series of nature-connection activities, local walks, and volunteer training sessions to reduce feelings of isolation and improve mental health. |
| Sikh Women's Aid | To deliver counselling services to support 15-20 survivors of domestic abuse, and their children with 1:1 counselling sessions and twice monthly group sessions on emotional and mental wellbeing and resilience. |
| Solihull Carers Centre | To continue the delivery of online services for carers who cannot attend groups or training events. |
| Sports Key CIC | A community multi-sports programme for children and young people between the ages of 3-24 years, including football, yoga, and a Future Leaders Volunteer programme. |
| STEPWAY CIO | To develop an outdoor community project for veterans, family members and the whole community to learn new skills and promote inclusion. |
| Suited for Success | To fund the full running costs (including salaries) of the HOPE bus for 12 months. |
| SYA | To develop an inclusive outdoor play area at their new charity headquarters. |
| Team Pumpkin Amateur Boxing Club | A daily one-hour boxing and keep fit session every weekday for people who are not in work, education or training or who have mental health challenges. |
| Telford African and Afro-Caribbean Resource Centre (TAARC) | For a variety of community events which focus on wellbeing, physical activity, nature, and culture. |

| Grantee | Project Description |
|--|---|
| Telford and Wrekin Council for Voluntary Service | A contribution towards staff costs and the running costs of the Madeley Wellbeing Community Cafe. |
| Telford and Wrekin Interfaith Council | A parade and community carnival, as well as art workshops and skill sharing sessions run by professional carnival artists. |
| The Big Happiness Experiment CIC | To deliver a mental health coaching project giving non-English speaking people in Walsall the skills to become Community Champions and provide peer support within their own communities. |
| The Cavalier Centre Ltd | To run a club for our volunteers who have special educational needs and disabilities to take part in horse-based activities. |
| The Friendly Transport Service | To provide group trips, exercise activities, and swimming sessions for vulnerable and/or disabled members. |
| The Haven Wolverhampton | To deliver wellbeing support activities for women and children who have been subjected to domestic abuse. |
| The Highlife Centre Ltd | To deliver a programme of events championing African culture and establish an 'African Cultural Centre'. |
| The James Brindley Foundation Ltd | To expand a mentoring programme to help address increased demand in tackling the root causes of serious youth violence. |
| The Mary Stevens Hospice | To work collaboratively with care homes and day centres in the Black Country, offering a creative programme for patients and carer groups. |
| The Mason Foundation | To deliver a 6 month programme designed to provide opportunities for communities to be active together, providing a starting point for those with no baseline fitness. |
| The Movement Centre | A contribution towards staff costs for therapy assistants, as well as running costs for the premises. |
| The Notables | For two community events celebrating social inclusion and neurodiversity. |
| The O'Connor Gateway Trust | To create an aftercare project for people in recovery from addiction in the Cannock Chase area. |
| The Red Earth Collective | To expand upon existing social sessions for ethnically and culturally diverse people with lived experience of mental health issues. |
| The Sea Change Trust | To offer specialist group and individual psychotherapy to young people between the ages of 16 and 25, living in Shropshire. |
| Together Minds CIC | To deliver 3 cohorts of interactive workshops for adults with learning disabilities |
| TOP CHURCH TRAINING | To develop a community hub project in Dudley. |
| Up Foundation CIC | To deliver weekly sports sessions for 10-13 year olds, a youth hub pilot for 13-18 year olds, and employability advice. |
| ViewfinderUK CIC | To fund the 'Then and Now...Birmingham's Diversity on Screen' project, engaging with 20 young people through the process of film making. |
| Walsall Bangladeshi Progressive Society | Biweekly wellbeing workshops and sports sessions, including: badminton, football, rounders, chair aerobics. |
| Walton Tennis Club | To fund the purchase and installation of 24 LED lights at the club to replace the existing system to reduce maintenance costs, energy bills, and attract new members. |
| Warwickshire Association For The Blind | To provide a social space for visually impaired people and their carer/friend/family member to take part in activities which improve their physical and mental wellbeing. |
| Warwickshire Counselling Centre t/a Sycamore Counselling Service | To provide free counselling sessions for children and young people aged between 5 and 18. |

| Grantee | Project Description |
|--|---|
| Warwickshire Wheelchair Basketball Academy | To develop and expand their Junior Wheelchair Basketball provision which is experiencing increasing demand. |
| Wem Town Hall Community Trust | A Shropshire wide partnership programme that celebrates age, elder creativity, and social interaction, as well as a development programme supporting elders to access the arts. |
| West Midlands Anti Slavery Network | To strengthen the voices of survivors of modern-day slavery across the West Midlands by developing a Lived Experience Forum and ensuring that student voices are represented. |
| William Wilson Turner Foundation CIO | To stage a community play designed for elders in African and Caribbean communities. |
| Women Acting in Today's Society | To deliver a creative wellbeing project to support BAME, female survivors of domestic abuse. |
| Worcestershire YMCA LTD | To provide support and developmental opportunities to individuals aged 10-16, with an extension to accommodate those up to 25 with SEND needs. |
| You Can Flourish | To provide mentoring and wellbeing services to girls in Warwickshire. |
| Zebra Access CIO | To deliver a scheme of health-related activities for the Deaf community which will include: physical activity, arts and crafts, and mental health support. |
| Small Grants | |
| 1st Kingsbury Guides | To support 2 leaders to achieve their Outdoor Activities and Qualifications 2024. |
| 2-Tone Central Limited | To support a new exhibition and improve the marketing of the Coventry Music Museum. |
| 4th Knowle Sea Scouts | To replace equipment for water-based activities, including boats, kayaks, canoes, and a trailer. |
| 5Up CIC | An exercise programme for disadvantaged young people. |
| 9Up CIC | To support an exercise programme for families from disadvantaged households. |
| Active Redditch Community Hub | To provide all-male swimming sessions for those from deprived communities. |
| AFC Wolves | To expand a Girls Only Development Centre to provide inclusive football sessions for young female athletes. |
| African Community Heritage Hub Ltd | To support a music project for vulnerable young people. |
| Age Concern Stourbridge and Halesowen | To purchase a new commercial freezer for their community cafe. |
| Age UK Wolverhampton | To deliver Pilates and dance sessions for older people at a network of community venues. |
| Agrani Arts Cultural Society | To support a programme to raise awareness of poor air quality and encourage behaviour change in Aston. |
| Alvechurch FC Community Foundation | To develop a football programme for girls who are not engaged in sport. |
| Alveley Cricket Club | To renovate a pavilion to make it more welcoming, as well as improvements to the outdoor area, and a celebration event in the summer. |
| Ambleside Junior Football Club | To run a project to help children with Cerebral Palsy in Coventry & Warwickshire develop physical literacy through football. |
| AnyGirl Netball CIC | To deliver a female empowerment and leadership programme for young people aged 13-19 in West Bromwich. |
| Arden Active CIC | To deliver a sports skills development programme for 40 young people with learning disabilities aged 13-18. |
| ArtShack | A contribution towards staff costs for a qualified practitioner. |

| Grantee | Project Description |
|--|---|
| Ashanti Netball Club | To support the costs of a netball club. |
| Aspire and Reach | To run bi-weekly Karate classes for beginners according to their age group and technical ability. |
| Association of St Kitts and Nevis Descendants (ASKaND) | To run the St Kitts & Nevis Heritage Day, a celebration of their St Kitts-Nevis culture, including artistic performances, sports, and cultural workshops. |
| AWA Dance | To support a Festival and Dance workshop for young women in the West Midlands. |
| Balsall Common Festival Committee | To deliver the 'Picnic in the Park' festival in June 2024. |
| Balsall Heath CATS (Community Actions Team Supports) | To deliver a twice-a-month Saturday club over seven months, offering a regular place for CYP with disabilities to take part in fun activities. |
| Bangladeshi Women's Association Limited | For a community fun-day and gala, including cultural and sports activities, entertainments, refreshments, and operational costs. |
| Bearley Village Hall and a Sportsfield | To replace a broken table tennis table. |
| Beat It Percussion CIC | To provide taster sessions and information sessions, and 5 courses of 8 sound relaxation sessions. |
| Bell Green Community Association | To support the costs of a warm space project in Coventry. |
| Berkswell & Balsall Common Sports & Community Association (BBCSCA) | For the refurbishment of toilet facilities to allow greater accessibility for disabled users and parents with young children. |
| Birmingham Churches Together (BCT) | A contribution towards core costs, staffing and travel costs for a 1:1 befriending service for refugees and asylum seekers. |
| Birmingham Deaf Football Club | To cover the costs of training pitches, new kits, referees and transport for Deaf football sessions, and a youth training camp. |
| Birmingham Samaritans | A contribution towards travel costs for volunteers and the heating and lighting of the premises. |
| Birmingham Skate Spaces CIC | To expand and renovate an existing skatepark. |
| Birmingham Unicorns Cricket Club | To fund running costs, coaching and cricket equipment. |
| Bishop's Castle Town Council | To build a state-of-the-art Pump Track next to the existing skate park for use by young people in the community. |
| Black Country Coaches Club | To deliver sports sessions and 'youth voice' workshops specifically targeting those aged 14-25 with disabilities. |
| Black Country Festival | To highlight Black Country culture and history through 10 community events, including live music from local artists, local craft stalls, and food vendors. |
| Bromsgrove Bears Basketball Club CIC | A programme of basketball coaching sessions in community and school settings that will remove barriers (financial and fitness) for 200 people to accessing current provision. |
| Calvary Chapel | To support the cost of a Youth Worker in Kings Heath. |
| Cannock Chase Shed | Towards rent on their new and existing premises for one year. |
| Cannock Cricket Club | To deliver cricket lessons to children in the local community and schools, as well as a commonwealth games themed cricket tournament. |
| Carers Forward C.I.C | To deliver 20 activity days at local indoor play centres for children and young people. |

| Grantee | Project Description |
|---|---|
| Castle Bromwich Hall and Gardens Trust | To purchase equipment and create a covered area for people to take part in activities, increasing the charity's storage space for equipment with the addition of a new shed. |
| Central Edgbaston Bowling Club | A contribution towards the renovation of the club kitchen. |
| Changes Tamworth | Towards core costs. |
| Changing Our Lives Ltd | A photography project and exhibition for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities. |
| Chase Meadow Community Centre | To refurbish a damaged floor in the sports hall, replace a dividing curtain to increase activities in the hall and install wall-mounted basketball hoops. |
| CHOICES Community Interest Company | A contribution towards running costs to help deliver counselling and equine-assisted learning sessions. |
| City of Birmingham Hockey Club | To deliver free and subsidized training to the local community for hockey. |
| Clun Memorial Hall & Playing Fields Charity | To install new doorways to make backstage facilities more accessible, install a suspended microphone, and refurbish the existing main hall. |
| Coke Hearth Improvements Group | To build a new boules court and install a picnic bench. |
| Colebridge Young Peoples Club | To support the costs of a table tennis festival and coaching. |
| Collar and TIE Ltd (Trading as C&T). | To celebrate the history of Woodrow, a socially and economically challenged district of Redditch, whilst encouraging people to live more active lifestyles. |
| Community Advice Service (CAS) | To deliver a women's club, starting with a health and wellbeing plan, then sports and physical activity and social time. The project will also provide training for some women to gain coaching qualifications. |
| ConGens Group | To deliver weekly exercise classes, walks, health checks, and a computer cafe. |
| Connecting Communities Telford | For various planned activities throughout 2024, including: yoga sessions, swimming lessons, events for Mother's Day and Christmas, trips to Buckingham Palace, Cadbury World, and the seaside. |
| Coventry Roller Derby | To buy up-to-date, safe kits, helmets, and skates. |
| Creative Kindness | A contribution towards travel costs and equipment so they can deliver 3 additional weekly arts sessions. |
| Creative optimistic Visions CIC | To run a free-of-charge service of open access youth provision for young people aged 11-19. |
| Crossbar Foundation | To develop and deliver a weekly Girls Netball session for ages 11-19. |
| Cuppa Squad | Towards the costs of a project supporting people whose lives are affected by diabetes. |
| Day Centre for Polish Senior Citizens | A contribution towards running costs, as well as to develop English conversation sessions and buy equipment to develop physical activities. |
| Dudley Road Hospital Netball Club | A contribution towards indoor sports hall hire for informal netball sessions. |
| Earlsdon Primary School PTA | To run a Commonwealth Games Legacy Community Sports Festival and 3 community clubs – boccia, table tennis and parkour. |
| Elayos | A contribution towards core costs, enabling the support of vulnerable pregnant women and their babies in Birmingham. |
| Enlight Projects | To develop volunteer and peer mentoring programmes and create apprenticeships for young people interested in youth and community work. |

| Grantee | Project Description |
|---|---|
| Entrust Care Partnership CIC | To deliver a dance movement workshop for children aged 8+ years with additional needs or abilities. |
| Fantastic Journeys CIC | To train music practitioners to support people with additional needs. |
| Fearless Boxing Academy CIC | A 26-week boxing program, offering weekly 2-hour sessions for up to 30 at-risk youth participants per session. |
| Fillongley knit and natter | To decorate the village with knitted/crocheted creations to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day. |
| FNB Mentoring and Coaching CIC | To expand their delivery of support services for young Black and mixed-ethnicity boys to meet increased demand and ensure accessibility. |
| Friends of Georges Park | To deliver football and fit boxing sessions for groups of children, as well as an awards ceremony. |
| Friends of Gornal Field | To purchase additional safety equipment and tools, bird seed, and wildflower seed. |
| Futures Unlocked | To support a mentoring scheme to reduce future offending of offenders and ex-offenders. |
| Generation Impact CIC | To give access to 100 11-16 year olds and young carers to speak to a mental health and targeted youth worker. |
| Godiva Voluntary Medical Responders (Coventry & Warwickshire) | To provide mental health first aid training for the team, medical diagnostics, uniform and PPE, event equipment and vehicle safety electrical upgrades. |
| Grange Child Development | To deliver weekly activity sessions for children with disabilities, autism and behavioural issues in Birmingham. |
| Grow Family Services | A contribution towards running costs, equipment costs, and to provide therapy sessions for SEND children and their families. |
| Halesowen Carnival & Music Festival | To support an annual Carnival and Music Festival in Halesowen. |
| Hednesford Town Council | To cover room hire, refreshments and marketing for a community wellbeing and social hub. |
| Holbrooks Community Association | To replace the existing heating system, and to replace lighting with more eco-friendly LED lighting. |
| Inclusive Sports Academy CIC | To deliver a programme of trips for SEND young people which will give them the opportunity to attend events and activities in the community. |
| Insight Society | To support a programme of creative and physical activities for women who are visually impaired. |
| Jigsaw Events CIO | To allocate more staff hours to fill gaps in service delivery and organise a health and wellbeing day and wellbeing service. |
| Kingfisher FC | To support the training costs for a girls' football club in Redditch. |
| Kingswood Trust | To fund the 'Days in the Wood' project, to enable 660 deprived/disadvantaged children to access outdoor activity days. |
| KTF SOC CIC | To deliver a 30-week fitness and well-being project specifically for young people aged from 9-16. |
| Learn Active Coaching C.I.C | To deliver weekly exercise and nutrition sessions for people from Black and Asian ethnic minority backgrounds based in Small Heath. |
| Lets Enable CIC | To support an equine therapy programme for people with disabilities. |
| Lifegate Communities Limited | To fully fund the Lifegate Commonwealth Legacy Sports & Games Fair. |
| Little Hearts Matter | To continue providing online and in-person support for children with single ventricle heart condition and their families in the West Midlands. |

| Grantee | Project Description |
|---|--|
| Magic Touch Network CIC | To provide a range of activities and services including advocacy support, group therapy and training opportunities for women seeking employment or who are socially isolated. |
| Midlands Adaptive Boxing Organisation CIC | To deliver twice-weekly boxing sessions for people aged 11+ in the Black Country. |
| Midlands Wrekin Raiders Ladies Ice Hockey Club | To set up and run ice hockey sessions aimed at girls aged 7+. |
| Migrant Integration & Language Academy CIC | To organise a one-day Children's Day celebration event tailored for the Ukrainian refugee community in the Black Country. |
| Motive8 Youth C.I.C | To provide weekly football sessions, mental health workshops, social bonding activities, and peer- support groups. |
| Net Zero Stratford CIC | To employ someone on a part-time basis, to manage the community kitchen over the next six months. |
| New Chapters | To support the staffing costs of a recovery programme for people experiencing problems with addiction. |
| New Life Baptist Church Kings Heath | To install new electric heaters in three of main community activity rooms. |
| New Life Church | To employ a community worker to manage the delivery of the weekly boccia club, wellbeing trips and walks, community cafe and shop, winter warm space, school holiday activities & women's fitness club. |
| New Urban Era | To hold a two-day arts festival in Tamworth Castle Grounds, which aims to celebrate the heart and soul of the Tamworth community. |
| North Birmingham Methodist Hub | To replace the 8 windows on the lower ground floor, and purchase and install double-glazed windows and panels. |
| Northfield Baptist Church | For the renovation of windows and ceiling lights. |
| Nuneaton and Bedworth Unit 616 of Sea Cadet Corps | To buy new musical instruments for the band and to offer increased access for young people. |
| Nuneaton Thursday Cricket League | To purchase kits for the 8 founder member clubs of a brand-new Nuneaton & District Women's Development Cricket league for the 2024 season. |
| Oasis Community Hub Hobmoor | To deliver tennis and squash coaching for young people aged 12-18, with the aim of gaining a qualification and sharing their skills at the charity's holiday club. |
| Open Space Studios CIC | To expand upon existing health and well-being services to increase participation rates for young people, the elderly, and those with mental health challenges. |
| Oscott Elderly over 50s | To support a programme of activities for isolated older people. |
| Paperback Productions Ltd | To create a Community Theatre Group, which would rehearse over the summer and deliver a community performance of The Railway Children. Budget includes rehearsal space, designers, production costs, and actors' fees. |
| PCC of Budbrooke Parish (Known as St Michael's Church, Budbrooke) | To support the cost of an Outreach Worker in Budbrooke. |
| Pheasey Allotment Holders Association | To replace the container that is used for storage and as a meeting place. |
| Phoenix UTD CIC | To provide sports, creative activities, and mentoring to young people at risk of exposure to gang/crime involvement, most of whom will be from the local Somali population. |
| Pride in Tennis | To create an LGBTQ+ tennis network in the West Midlands. |

| Grantee | Project Description |
|---|--|
| Provision House | To increase emergency support capacity to a five- day service with at least two full-time members of staff and an additional one day of counselling per week. |
| Queen Street Allotment Association | To incorporate access for people with learning and physical disabilities and also increase access to on- site toilet and washing facilities. |
| Quirky Kids | To support activities for children and young people with disabilities. |
| Radio Lollipop Limited (Birmingham) | To buy a LolliTrollie - a hi-tech piece of equipment to help cheer up sick children in hospital. |
| Rainbow Life | For a weekly program of diverse sports activities, including fitness exercises, Zumba, dance, and cardio workouts. |
| Ramblers Wellbeing Walks Telford & Wrekin | To purchase an annual membership to Ramblers GB, to train walk leaders, and to advertise their activities to increase membership. |
| Recre8now | To deliver a six-week male-only programme for young people aged 14-16 in Birmingham, with a focus on developing self-esteem and confidence, addressing mental health issues and raising aspirations. |
| Redditch District Scout Council | To purchase physical activity equipment for use by Scout Groups in Redditch. |
| Ren Shin Kan Aikido Club | To provide Aikido, Yoga and Tai Chi classes to isolated people with low exercise levels. |
| Riverside Stourbridge Community Interest Company | To expand upon activities provided as a venue for the International Festival of Glass 2024, including workshops, music performances and participatory activity. |
| ROAM | To run outdoor play sessions, and to support new groups in Birmingham to set up their own outdoor playgroups across the city. |
| Rugby Triathlon Club | For a new promotional campaign, as well as to provide first aid, safeguarding, and coaching training for new coaches. |
| Rugeley and Armitage Camera Club | To update their equipment, with new exhibition and display stands. |
| S.N.A.P. (Special Needs Adventure Playground) Ltd | A contribution towards core costs for play facilities for children and young people with special needs and disabilities. |
| Safe Ageing No Discrimination CIC | Towards the production of leaflets, instructional videos and workshops promoting the inclusive processes of services towards the older LGBTQ+ community. |
| Sandwell Parents for Disabled Children | To provide a range of positive play and leisure opportunities to disabled children and their families. |
| Sandwell Visually Impaired CIO | To run a programme of exercise activities for visually impaired people, their families and friends. |
| She Beasts01 C.I.C. | A 12-week programme for a group of up to 20 girls identified by education as at risk or with poor body image, to build confidence, leadership, and self-belief. |
| Shine A Light Childhood Cancer Support | To deliver mental wellbeing support to children who are struggling with their cancer diagnosis, 1:1 counselling sessions for parents, and group counselling for families of children in remission. |
| Shropshire European Organisation C.I.C. | To provide several activities to bring the community together, such as yoga, football, and aqua gym sessions. |
| Sikh Nari Manch UK | To deliver health and wellbeing activities for women from the Sikh community. |
| Smart Works Birmingham | To support the running costs of an organisation supporting women into employment. |
| SNJ Charitable Trust | To support counselling and digital skills training. |
| Solihull Barons Ice Hockey Club Limited | To support a new safety system at the club. |

| Grantee | Project Description |
|---|---|
| Solihull Christian Fellowship | To support the costs of a community lunch project and food parcels. |
| Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness | To provide starter packs for homeless people recently arrived in new accommodation. |
| Solihull Down Syndrome Support Group | For weekly drama session for children and young persons with Down Syndrome and associated learning difficulties, including an end-of-term showcase. |
| Solihull Municipal Cricket Club | To support the development of girls' cricket. |
| Solihull Swimming Club | To enable volunteer teachers to attend level 1 teaching courses for their personal development and to support the Club long term. |
| Soundabout | To provide a face-to-face interactive music-making programme for young people with severe and multiple learning disabilities. |
| Sphinx Bowls Club | To purchase a lawnmower, a set of club bowls for new members to borrow and club accessories. |
| Sports for Youth Community Interest Company | To support weekly sports coaching sessions for disadvantaged young people. |
| Square Peg Activities Limited | To support the cost of services for young adults with disabilities. |
| St Chad's Rubery | To support a project tackling fuel and food poverty and isolation. |
| St Paul's Church, Foleshill | To refurbish the church kitchen, so that they can expand provision to the wider community. |
| St Peter's, Hillfields | A contribution towards total costs to upgrade their kitchen facilities from a domestic set up to a commercial kitchen. |
| Staffordshire Search & Rescue Team | Waterproofs and high visibility clothing |
| Standard Cricket Club | To provide a cricket tournament in local schools, coaching qualifications, coach expenses, and an end-of-programme event for participants. |
| Stour Health and Wellbeing Partnership | To expand their free, accessible programme of physical activities to include children and young people. |
| Stourbridge University of the Third Age (Stourbridge u3a) | To cover the cost of equipment and room hire to set up a twice monthly curling group. |
| Stratford upon Avon Foodbank | To recruit a part-time Volunteer Manager for 12 months. |
| Subtle Speaks CIC | To deliver four community events to onboard grassroots venues and spaces with a focus on education on sexual harassment in the workplace. |
| Sudden Productions | To work with a group of approx. 25 adults and adults with learning disabilities to create original, innovative & spontaneous theatre. |
| Surge Forward Music & Arts | To bring musicians from diverse cultural backgrounds for residencies in the rural Clun Valley in Shropshire. |
| Switch180 | To enable 100 young people to participate in a 'snow camp' programme, including skiing, snowboarding, and well-being sessions. |
| Tamworth and Lichfield sea cadets | To purchase new water-sports equipment, for equipment maintenance, and for an open day to attract new volunteers. |
| Tamworth Literary Festival | Towards the Music from the Edge project. |
| Telford Flyers | To purchase BMX bikes, helmets, and gloves for weekly community sessions. |

| Grantee | Project Description |
|---|---|
| Tennis Shropshire | To start a new programme of 'walking tennis' for individuals who might struggle to play regular tennis because of age, infirmity, or disability. |
| The Albrighton Trust | To deliver fishing lessons to 12 students from local SEN schools. |
| The Benn Partnership Centre | To cover the costs of entertainment, refreshments, and health and safety measures for a community carnival in Benn Ward, Rugby. |
| The Britannia Youth Organisation CIC | To support a sports coaching project for children and young people. |
| The Circle | To deliver a programme of activities to tackle men's mental health, including days out, a 3-day retreat, expert-led sessions, as well as marketing costs. |
| The Dorothy Parkes Centre | To install an intruder alarm, purchase an interactive activity table, and convert a meeting room into an office for new staff. |
| The FeastYouth Project | To support the costs of an interfaith youth project. |
| The Friendship Project for Children | Towards the costs of their Operations Team to continue to deliver befriending services for vulnerable and disadvantaged children |
| The Grub and Gab Club | To support the costs of providing hot food and food parcels in Coventry. |
| The New Saints FC Foundation Ltd | To continue a sports programme for young people in Oswestry at risk of exclusion and involvement in 'risky' behaviours. |
| The Old Needleworks Foundation | Staff costs for a Well-being Group Coordinator, to facilitate a weekly program of activities and interest groups within the Community Café space. |
| The Ramblers' Association, City of Birmingham Group | To increase affordability to fortnightly coach hire to take people walking in the wider countryside |
| The Saleem Foundation | To deliver mental health workshops, a weekly gardening club, and pay for gardening equipment, venue hire and refreshments. |
| The Salvation Army | To renovate flooring to make it suitable for a baby and toddler group. |
| The Smilers Club | To support a programme of trips and activities for vulnerable older people. |
| The Wellington Community Arts Venue Ltd | A comprehensive improvement project for their community arts venue to improve accessibility, inclusivity, and sustainability. |
| Three Spires Family Support Trust | To cover resources and salary costs of the Mental Health Lead and Artist in Residence, and the 2 weekly café-based creative art sessions. |
| Uniting Communities Foundation | For a range of activities, including a pop-up cafe, community lunch, community garden, and creative workshops. |
| Urban Devotion Birmingham | To sustain weekly drop-in activities facilitated through a mobile youth venue, conducting youth and community work in areas where community facilities are lacking. |
| Urban Goodies CIC | To extend the delivery project through the purchase of a van to provide surplus food and ready meals to people across Coventry who are unable to access their community fridge. |
| VOICE4PARENTS | To support holiday activity programme for children and young people with special needs. |
| Walsall Outreach | To support the continued delivery of the 2 weekly services, providing over free 100 hot meals to homeless, elderly and socially disadvantaged individuals. |
| Warley Amateur Boxing Club | To deliver additional weekend activities including women-only sessions, boxing tournaments, coach training for young people and volunteers, as well as to purchase new equipment. |
| Warwickshire Pride | A contribution towards the costs of staging the 2024 Warwickshire Pride festival. |

| Grantee | Project Description |
|--|--|
| Warwickshire Young Carers | To deliver a befriending service for young carers aged 16– 25. |
| Weddington Community Allotment Association | To construct additional raised beds for members with physical challenges, increased use of Brown Water by providing means for storage by plot holders, replacement of pedestrian gates for access to the site and preparation of small, shared plots for new and interested allotment holders. |
| Wellington Boxing Academy | To repair a fence and add a new secure gate and handrails for increased accessibility. |
| Wild Earth | A nature-based intervention to improve the health and wellbeing of the young people and adults in Coventry and Warwickshire. |
| Wildside Activity Centre | To resurface the entrance ramp to increase accessibility. |
| Willenhall Lock Stock | To support the costs of a local music festival. |
| Wilnecote Sports & Recreation Association | To deliver hard-ball and soft-ball cricket and coaching sessions at Kingsbury High School. |
| Windmill Community Church | To increase physical access to a newly renovated and opened community building. |
| Wolverhampton Elder Asians and Disabled Group | To fund the weekly Caring and Coping Project. |
| Wolves Play Cafe Community Interest Company | For a collaborative partnership between Wolves Play Cafe and Gatis Community Space, involving nature-based play, planting and cooking sessions. |
| Women of Wolverhampton | To delivery WOW and Well-being, which will offer an existing user group the opportunity to experience dance, yoga and art and textile sessions. They will host a celebration event. |
| Writing West Midlands Ltd | To increase the provision of creative writing events and activities in Birmingham. |
| Yemeni Community Association (Birmingham) | To deliver a youth programme for approximately 180 children and young people, including football, swimming, and camping. |
| Small Works, Refurbishments, Renovations Grants | |
| Albany Theatre Trust | To develop a new café and catering facility, complete the refurbishment of the bar, box office, auditorium and dressing rooms, and add access ramp automatic door systems. |
| All Saints Action Network Ltd | To resurface an all-weather (3G) pitch. |
| Aspire in Arts | To install a platform stairlift and refurbish their kitchens and music studio. |
| Cape Community Care Day Centre | To replace the existing roof of their community building, repair existing toilet facilities, and install a new disabled toilet. |
| Churches Housing Association of Dudley & District | To refurbish a communal area using trauma informed design to promote a sense of safety and calm, as well as to refurbish fitness facilities and create an outdoor space and vegetable garden. |
| Coombs Wood Sports & Social Club | To create two changing rooms with disabled facilities and to construct a new bowling hut. |
| Coventry Caribbean Association Ltd | To create a disabled WC facility and to upgrade their roof covering with suitable glass reinforced plastic. |
| Darlaston Town (1874) FC C.I.C Ltd | To repair and refurbish several areas within their core building and also to host a community open day once the work is completed. |
| Dorridge Scout Group | To replace the existing flat roof with a new flat roof with improved drainage. |

| Grantee | Project Description |
|--|---|
| Dudley CVS | To carry out a complete refurbishment of all the toilets within the Brierley Hill Civic building. |
| Edgmond Bowling Club | To add a Garden Room to the existing provision to enable match viewing, smaller winter social activities and additional space for coaching. Insulation will be added to the existing Clubhouse's ceiling and double-glazed windows and doors will replace old ones. |
| Empathy for special children | For renovation costs, including improvements to accessibility, improvements to toilets, and the creation of a kitchen/café area, including decoration. |
| Family Care Trust | To fit out of their new kitchen, meeting rooms, main office, IT training room, project room and canteen room |
| G.A.P Entertainment C.I.C | To renovate their community centre, including refitting 2 WCs, a commercial kitchen, canteen, reception, classrooms and dance studio. |
| Gazebo Theatre in Education Company Ltd | To renovate their facilities to create a Community Cultural Hub and Theatre in the heart of Bilston, ensuring access and inclusion for their underserved communities and opportunities for creatives. |
| Heart Care (Walsall Rehabilitation and Healthy Living Trust) | To replace the existing flooring in their gym area which will include walking tracks for patients and for their refreshment area. |
| Henley Green Community Trust | To upgrade lighting to LED to reduce running costs and impact on environment, repair the surface of the Multi Use Games area, and install new outdoor lighting. |
| Ideal for All | To update their existing community and market garden in Sandwell, to improve accessibility, safety, and create more sensory experiences. |
| Lucky Tails Care Farm CIC | To install and operate a modular disabled toilet on their site. |
| Lye Town Football Club | To upgrade changing room facilities, including new flooring, seating, showers, a medical room, and facilities for match officials. |
| Maurice Chandler Sports and Leisure Centre | To renovate their existing changing areas, address external concrete issues, and install DDA doors. |
| Midland Sailing Club | To renovate our building to make it more heating efficient by insulating and repairing the flat roof, installing air-source heat-pumps, and replacing the single-pane metal framed windows. |
| Moseley Park And Pool Trust | To build a new inclusive, outdoor community activity area which will be wheelchair accessible. |
| Oldbury United FC CIC | For building renovations, currently consisting of eight small changing rooms, one communal shower unit, a sink in a very basic kitchen and two toilets. |
| Perkisound Charitable Incorporated Organisation | For a new modular building which will serve as a home to our community music groups and offer considerably more space than our current music cabin. |
| Phase Trust | To install an external platform lift to improve disability access, and to renovate the stairway access to the entrance of the community base. |
| Pitch 2 Progress CIC | To add 4 new shipping containers to their current 3 container youth centre, creating additional space for workshops, mentoring sessions and a new kitchen area. |
| Priory Park Amateur Boxing Club | To reconfigure and furnish an area within their facilities to provide three small classrooms, a separate kitchen and 'chill out area'. |
| Radford Community Association | To renovate their kitchen area and rear room to create a community café. |
| Small Woods Association | To refurbish the Green Wood Centre site, as well as repair leaking roofs, update toilet and shower facilities, and increase energy |

| Grantee | Project Description |
|---|---|
| | efficiency. Woodland pathways will also be improved to increase accessibility. |
| St Albans Community Association | To reconfigure, renovate and extend St Albans Community Association's existing building; creating a larger modern multi-use centre for the community. |
| Tamworth Amateur Boxing Club | To install bi-folding doors to improve accessibility. |
| The Leegate Centre CIC | To renovate and redevelop areas within the Community Centre to include new flooring, enhanced toilet and heating/hot water facilities. |
| The Pump (East Birmingham) Ltd. | To support work across all floors of the building, some exterior work, and some lighting in the outside area. |
| Three Trees Community Centre | To install a new commercial kitchen to make their workspace more accessible for community projects and volunteers. |
| Together For Change Coventry and Warwickshire | To refurbish and equip their kitchen and café area for the use of the local community. |

Source: HoECF application data

Annex 2: Evaluation questions

Applications and awards

- ▶ To what extent have grant applications been received from a range of organisations, working in different parts of the West Midlands, with different target beneficiary groups?
- ▶ What are the organisational differences between those who were successful and those who were unsuccessful in terms of being awarded grants?
- ▶ Are there any types of organisations, areas of the region, or target beneficiaries who have been more or less successful in their application to receive grant funding?
- ▶ What has been the impact for those organisations who have not received grant funding? Any alternative sources of funding, changes for future grant applications, impact on operations, etc.
- ▶ What have been the experiences of those involved in overseeing and assessing the grant application process? What has worked well, less well, any adaptations, and any learnings for the future?
- ▶ How has value for money been considered during the awarding of grants?

Spend of grant funding

- ▶ What types of activities and projects are being funded by the programme? Any particularly common uses of spend? Any innovative uses of spend?
- ▶ Who has benefited from grant funded activities in terms of target beneficiaries and areas of the West Midlands?
- ▶ How has spending of grants been in practice for grantees? What has worked well, less well, any adaptations, and any learnings for the future?
- ▶ How have partnerships and matched funding worked in practice for grantees? What has worked well, less well, any adaptations, and any learnings for the future?

Impact of grant funding and programme

- ▶ To what extent has there been impact from the grants programme across the anticipated outcomes in relation to physical activity, wellbeing and cultural engagement? How does this level of impact differ between grantees and target beneficiaries?
- ▶ To what extent have more underserved communities felt the legacy of the Games?
- ▶ To what extent has the grant programme contributed to the improved financial sustainability of supported organisations?

- To what extent have relationships between WMCA and other community organisations changes as a result of the grants programme?
- To what extent has the grant programme led to more inclusive practice and increased community participation?
- To what extent has the programme had an impact on the West Midlands region? In terms of economic growth, improved national and international presence, and ability to attract investment.
- Are there any possible further impacts from the programme?

Future learning

- What learning can be applied from this grants programme for future similar programmes run by WMCA?
- How can funding processes be better designed to meet the needs of the West Midlands population?
- How can WMCA further support inclusive growth and increase community participation?

Annex 3: Funding allocation by authority

| Authority | Minimum Spend | Average Spend | Maximum Spend | Min £/head | Max £/head | Proportion of allocation |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------------|------------|--------------------------|
| Birmingham | £1,011,260 | £1,803,245.00 | £3,148,475 | £0.88 | £2.75 | 16% |
| Walsall | £781,275 | £1,014,178.33 | £1,250,000 | £2.75 | £4.40 | 9% |
| Wolverhampton | £725,175 | £995,478.33 | £1,250,000 | £2.75 | £4.74 | 9% |
| Coventry | £1,000,000 | £986,945.00 | £1,011,260 | £2.90 | £2.93 | 9% |
| Sandwell | £939,950 | £1,067,070.00 | £1,250,000 | £2.75 | £3.66 | 9% |
| Dudley | £1,000,000 | £966,961.67 | £1,011,260 | £3.09 | £3.13 | 9% |
| Solihull | £594,825 | £868,695.00 | £1,011,260 | £2.75 | £4.68 | 8% |
| Telford and Wrekin | £523,920 | £678,015.00 | £1,000,000 | £2.82 | £5.39 | 6% |
| Redditch | £239,250 | £441,056.67 | £523,920 | £2.75 | £6.02 | 4% |
| Tamworth | £216,150 | £433,356.67 | £523,920 | £2.75 | £6.67 | 4% |

EVALUATION OF THE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES GRANT PROGRAMME

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------------|
| Shropshire | £560,000 | £657,940.00 | £889,900 | £1.73 | £2.75 | 6% |
| Cannock Chase | £276,375 | £453,431.67 | £523,920 | £2.75 | £5.21 | 4% |
| Warwickshire | £560,000 | £908,373.33 | £1,641,200 | £0.94 | £2.75 | 8% |
| | £8,428,180.00 | £11,274,746.67 | £15,035,115.00 | | | 100% |

Source: WMCA

Annex 4: Additional detail on methodological approach

Application data

Using the main sample file provided by HoECF, application data was collated and analysed by the evaluation team. This included producing numerical breakdowns by key application metrics, including the type of grants applied for, the geography of applicants, and target beneficiaries, amongst other possible metrics. This was conducted for both successful and declined applicants, enabling the evaluation team to compare and contrast the types of organisations whose applications for funding were successful / declined.

In addition to the analysis of the application data, Ecorys produced a short e-survey that was shared with declined applicants. This collected data on the impact of not receiving the grant, including any impacts on their intended activities or project delivery, whether they have since applied for other grants and the outcomes of these, any learnings from their experience, and any suggestions for similar future programmes. A survey was the preferred data collection method for this group as it minimises the burden on these organisations.

End of grant monitoring form

In June 2024, Ecorys reviewed the end of grant monitoring form developed by HoECF and Forever Consultancy. The end of grant monitoring form was shared with all large, small works and medium grantees. They had until 31st January 2025 to submit their forms to HoECF.

Ecorys was able to input into this form through reviewing the existing questions and suggesting additional questions where required for the evaluation. HoECF held workshops in late June 2024 to talk grantees through the form and answer questions on how best to complete it. This approach of a providing single form for both the grant monitoring and evaluation was taken to minimise the burden on grantees and to simplify and streamline the monitoring and reporting process.

In addition to the form outlined above, HoECF also issued a separate end-of-grant monitoring form specifically for small grantees. Ecorys was unable to input on this form as it had already been issued to grantees prior to the evaluation formally commencing. It was largely similar to the end of grant monitoring form issued to other grantees albeit with no coverage of the following:

- ▶ Questions on match funding or whether grantees have applied for any other funding.
- ▶ Details of any new partnerships or consortiums formed to deliver the funded project.
- ▶ An explanation of why the agreed budget and expenditure differs from what was put forward at application stage (if that is the case).
- ▶ An explanation of why the project will or will not continue after the grant (only a yes/no question is included in the form).
- ▶ What organisations expect to achieve in the future, any learning which they draw from the application and delivery process and / or changes to processes or delivery which will be made as a result.

Given that small grants equated to half of all awards (51%, 197 out of 388), it was important to boost the degree to which the evaluation captured reflections from small grantees. For this reason, an additional short e-survey form was shared with small grantees to capture those aspects outlined above which will not be collected via their end of grant monitoring form.

Case studies and Grantee qualitative interviews

In addition to the wider research conducted with all grantees, a small number of case studies and some additional qualitative research was conducted with particular projects. The case studies and grantee qualitative interviews did not seek to be representative of the overall population of funded projects and were therefore not intended to form the basis for direct comparison between projects. Instead, they represented a purposive sample of funded project to ensure a general balance across key project characteristics. For that reason, six case studies and eight grantee qualitative interviews were proposed. These supplemented the data collection tools being used with all grantees (application data and end of grant monitoring form). The intention of the case studies was to understand project experiences in detail and depth, while the breadth of coverage was boosted through supplementing with 8 additional interviews. The cases studies (6) covered all four grant sizes, every grant outcome area (except for joint Physical activity and sport, and Arts, culture and creativity awards, as there were only 3), and a mix of geographies (four largest constituent areas, the largest non-constituent area, and a region wide award). The grantee qualitative interviews supplemented this to cover additional local authorities. Overall, the design of the approach reflected a need to achieve both depth and breadth of coverage, along with the need to balance resource inputs (also mindful of the resource requirements linked to the wider meta-evaluation data collection).

The case studies and grantee qualitative interviews focused on understanding the degree to which outcomes have been delivered to date, and the degree to which they are expected to be delivered in the future. Case studies allowed us to consider the particular factors (whether internal or external) which support the effective delivery and emergence of anticipated outcomes. A theory-of-change approach was adopted for this strand of the work to determine the degree to which funded projects delivered on anticipated outputs and outcomes (ultimately feeding into the delivery of impacts over the longer term) and the experience of implementation in practice. This approach also drew on the theory of change to examine the degree to which project level implementation reflected the overall rationale behind the project intervention. This approach allowed us to consider the degree to which outputs and outcomes are being delivered (or are likely to be) as planned and the assumptions, dependencies and factors which need to be in place in order for positive outcomes to be achieved. The case studies and interviews also sought to understand whether any unforeseen outcomes (positive or negative) have come about as a result of the grant allocation to projects.

The focus of the case studies and grantee qualitative interviews is to understand, and draw learning from, the way that outcomes come about as a result of the proposed activities.

The six deeper-dive case studies involved:

- ▶ Interviews with project staff, partners or stakeholders involved in the project, each lasting around 45 minutes in length.
- ▶ Where possible, observation of activities in the setting to explore interactions and relationships between beneficiaries, staff, and volunteers.
- ▶ Interviews or focus groups, lasting around 45 minutes in length, with beneficiaries to explore individual stories of change, including potential to capture individual stories in creative and accessible formats.

For case studies, data collection activities took place in-person at grantees' settings where possible.

The grantee interviews were more light-touch than the deeper-dive case studies and consisted of just one interview or joint-interview with the individual[s] overseeing the grant or its projects. These took place virtually via Microsoft Teams or by telephone, depending on the participant's preference, and lasted around 45 minutes. The purpose of the grantee interviews was to supplement the data being

collected through the case studies and to ensure that a breath of project characteristics were represented overall.

The proposed sampling approach was based on three key criteria: type of grant awarded, location of grant organisation, and outcome area for the grant. The sample broadly aligned with the proportion of the awards for each group, with some small adjustments to enable a wider range of grantee types. The full breakdown is below, but it should be noted that each criterion will be applied in tandem, so it is not cumulative across the three criteria.

| | Count of awarded | % of total awards | | Case studies | Grantee qualitative interviews | Total in sample |
|---|------------------|-------------------|--|--------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Type of grant awarded | | | | | | |
| Large grants | 14 | 4% | | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Medium grants | 141 | 36% | | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Small grants | 197 | 51% | | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| Capital grants | 36 | 9% | | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Location of grant organisation | | | | | | |
| Birmingham | 88 | 23% | | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Cannock Chase | 11 | 3% | | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Coventry | 28 | 7% | | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Dudley | 34 | 9% | | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Redditch | 10 | 3% | | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Regional | 27 | 7% | | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Sandwell | 27 | 7% | | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Shropshire | 20 | 5% | | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Solihull | 25 | 6% | | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Tamworth | 10 | 3% | | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Telford and Wrekin | 19 | 5% | | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Walsall | 22 | 6% | | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Warwickshire | 39 | 10% | | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Wolverhampton | 28 | 7% | | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Constituent areas (combined, exc. regional) | 252 | 65% | | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| Non-constituent areas (combined, exc. regional) | 109 | 28% | | 1 | 5 | 6 |
| Outcome area of grant | | | | | | |
| Arts, culture and creativity | 29 | 7% | | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Mental health and well-being | 97 | 25% | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Mental health and well-being, Arts, culture and creativity | 52 | 13% | | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Mental health and well-being, physical activity and sport | 117 | 30% | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Physical activity and sport | 19 | 5% | | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Physical activity and sport, Arts, culture and creativity | 3 | 1% | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mental health and well-being, physical activity and sport, Arts, culture and creativity | 71 | 18% | | 1 | 1 | 2 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|--|---|---|----|
| Arts, culture and creativity (combined) | 155 | 22% | | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Mental health and well-being (combined) | 337 | 48% | | 4 | 6 | 10 |
| Physical activity and sport (combined) | 210 | 30% | | 3 | 4 | 7 |

Source: ICGP evaluation team

Stakeholder interviews/focus groups

In addition to the data collection activities with grantees, qualitative interviews/focus groups were also be conducted with stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in awarding and overseeing the ICGP. WMCA identified the following stakeholders for these interviews/focus groups:

- ▶ HoECF team (2 group interviews)
- ▶ WMCA team (1 group interview)
- ▶ Grant panellists (1 focus group with panellists)
- ▶ Community Engagement Lead at United by 2022 (1 interview)
- ▶ Funding Steering Group (written feedback collected electronically from 2 members)

The purpose of these interviews/focus groups was to allow reflection on lessons learned, and to provide evidence on broader strategic outcomes such as the Legacy's influence on systems development in relation to regional stakeholder and wider community relationships. Semi-structured topic guides were developed in advance to guide these discussions, which would be tailored by role and the nature of stakeholder involvement in the ICGP.

As part of the analysis, the evaluation team adopted a contribution analysis approach. This involved drawing on case study and interview evidence to assess the degree to which the ICGP contributed to the anticipated outcomes and impacts, also considering other plausible contributory effects. The process involved considering the plausibility that ICGP contributing to the anticipated outcomes, considering the strength of evidence for a causal relationship, and the other factors which may have also acted to bring about the same outcome.

The evaluation did not include a formal Value for Money (VfM) assessment but drew on the common principles through which value for investment is assessed as per Government (Green Book) guidance (economy, efficiency, effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and equity). The evaluation team used qualitative evidence from the interviews to reflect on the way that public resources were used to deliver programme objectives.

Annex 5: Breakdown of applications and awards by key characteristics

| | | Total | % of Total | Approved | Rejected | Approved % | Rejected % |
|--|--|-------|------------|----------|----------|------------|------------|
| Total | | 1358 | 100% | 388 | 970 | 29% | 71% |
| Grant type | Small Grants | 500 | 37% | 197 | 303 | 39% | 61% |
| | Medium Grants | 560 | 41% | 141 | 419 | 25% | 75% |
| | Large Grants | 120 | 9% | 14 | 106 | 12% | 88% |
| | Small Works Grants | 178 | 13% | 36 | 142 | 20% | 80% |
| Location of activity | Birmingham (Only) | 440 | 32% | 73 | 367 | 17% | 83% |
| | Cannock Chase (Only) | 12 | 1% | 10 | 2 | 83% | 17% |
| | Coventry (Only) | 114 | 8% | 25 | 89 | 22% | 78% |
| | Dudley (Only) | 57 | 4% | 30 | 27 | 53% | 47% |
| | Redditch (Only) | 17 | 1% | 10 | 7 | 59% | 41% |
| | Sandwell (Only) | 60 | 4% | 24 | 36 | 40% | 60% |
| | Shropshire (Only) | 41 | 3% | 17 | 24 | 41% | 59% |
| | Solihull (Only) | 49 | 4% | 18 | 31 | 37% | 63% |
| | Tamworth (Only) | 19 | 1% | 10 | 9 | 53% | 47% |
| | Telford and Wrekin (Only) | 28 | 2% | 17 | 11 | 61% | 39% |
| | Walsall (Only) | 45 | 3% | 20 | 25 | 44% | 56% |
| | Warwickshire (Only) | 113 | 8% | 37 | 76 | 33% | 67% |
| | Wolverhampton (Only) | 62 | 5% | 24 | 38 | 39% | 61% |
| | Combination of LAs | 300 | 22% | 72 | 228 | 24% | 76% |
| Application assistance from United by 2022 | Received assistance | 175 | 13% | 43 | 132 | 25% | 75% |
| | Did not receive assistance | 970 | 71% | 345 | 838 | 36% | 86% |
| Larger body | Part of larger body | 155 | 11% | 44 | 111 | 28% | 72% |
| | Not part of larger body | 1167 | 86% | 329 | 838 | 28% | 72% |
| | No response to question | 36 | 3% | 15 | 21 | 42% | 58% |
| Primary beneficiary group ¹⁴ | Black, Asian and minority ethnic ¹⁵ | 197 | 15% | 44 | 153 | 22% | 78% |
| | Carers | 6 | 0% | 5 | 1 | 83% | 17% |
| | Children and Young People | 346 | 25% | 97 | 249 | 28% | 72% |
| | Ex-offenders/offenders/At risk of offending | 4 | 0% | 3 | 1 | 75% | 25% |
| | Families/Parents/Lone parents | 67 | 5% | 22 | 45 | 33% | 67% |
| | Homeless people | 11 | 1% | 3 | 8 | 27% | 73% |

¹⁴ This was the primary beneficiary group listed in funding applications. Applicants were also asked to select more than one beneficiary group, and these groups are not represented in these figures. Therefore, the full intersectionality of the beneficiary groups is not accounted for in these figures (i.e. a programme that worked with children and young people and neurodivergent people).

¹⁵ Black, Asian and minority ethnic was the labelling given on the HoECF application form.

| | Total | % of Total | Approved | Rejected | Approved % | Rejected % |
|---|---|------------|----------|----------|------------|------------|
| LGBT groups | 13 | 1% | 6 | 7 | 46% | 54% |
| Local residents | 247 | 18% | 64 | 183 | 26% | 74% |
| Long-term unemployed | 3 | 0% | 2 | 1 | 67% | 33% |
| Men | 10 | 1% | 0 | 10 | 0% | 100% |
| Neurodivergent people | 16 | 1% | 6 | 10 | 38% | 63% |
| Not in education, employment or training aged 16-24 | 18 | 1% | 0 | 18 | 0% | 100% |
| Older People | 84 | 6% | 26 | 58 | 31% | 69% |
| People in care or suffering serious illness | 7 | 1% | 0 | 7 | 0% | 100% |
| People living in poverty | 45 | 3% | 7 | 38 | 16% | 84% |
| People with alcohol/drug addictions | 7 | 1% | 3 | 4 | 43% | 57% |
| People with learning difficulties | 25 | 2% | 16 | 9 | 64% | 36% |
| People with low skill levels | 3 | 0% | 0 | 3 | 0% | 100% |
| People with mental health issues | 66 | 5% | 26 | 40 | 39% | 61% |
| People with multiple disabilities | 56 | 4% | 24 | 32 | 43% | 57% |
| People with physical difficulties | 26 | 2% | 8 | 18 | 31% | 69% |
| Refugees/asylum seekers /immigrants | 35 | 3% | 4 | 31 | 11% | 89% |
| Victims of crime/violence/abuse | 14 | 1% | 7 | 7 | 50% | 50% |
| Women | 52 | 4% | 15 | 37 | 29% | 71% |
| ICGP Theme | Arts, culture and creativity | 133 | 10% | 29 | 104 | 22% |
| | Mental health and well-being | 325 | 24% | 97 | 228 | 30% |
| | Physical activity and sport | 77 | 6% | 19 | 58 | 25% |
| | Mental health and well-being, Arts, culture and creativity | 206 | 15% | 52 | 154 | 25% |
| | Physical activity and sport, Arts, culture and creativity | 7 | 1% | 3 | 4 | 43% |
| | Physical activity and sport, Mental health and well-being | 374 | 28% | 117 | 257 | 31% |
| | Physical activity and sport, Mental health and well-being, Arts, culture and creativity | 236 | 17% | 71 | 165 | 30% |
| | Physical activity and sport (Any mention) | 694 | 51% | 210 | 484 | 30% |
| | Any Mental health and wellbeing (Any mention) | 1141 | 84% | 337 | 804 | 30% |
| | Any Arts, culture and creativity (Any mention) | 582 | 43% | 155 | 427 | 27% |

| | | Total | % of Total | Approved | Rejected | Approved % | Rejected % |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------|------------|----------|----------|------------|------------|
| Year established | Prior to 1950 | 92 | 7% | 21 | 71 | 23% | 77% |
| | 1950-1999 | 308 | 23% | 96 | 212 | 31% | 69% |
| | 2000-2009 | 179 | 13% | 61 | 118 | 34% | 66% |
| | 2010-2019 | 489 | 36% | 146 | 343 | 30% | 70% |
| | 2020-2024 | 278 | 20% | 64 | 214 | 23% | 77% |
| | Incomplete answer | 12 | 1% | 0 | 12 | 0% | 100% |
| Number of beneficiaries | Less than 20 | 17 | 1% | 7 | 10 | 41% | 59% |
| | 20-49 | 113 | 8% | 40 | 73 | 35% | 65% |
| | 50-99 | 152 | 11% | 60 | 92 | 39% | 61% |
| | 100-199 | 227 | 17% | 67 | 160 | 30% | 70% |
| | 200-299 | 142 | 10% | 41 | 101 | 29% | 71% |
| | 300-499 | 128 | 9% | 29 | 99 | 23% | 77% |
| | 500-749 | 122 | 9% | 39 | 83 | 32% | 68% |
| | 750-999 | 58 | 4% | 14 | 44 | 24% | 76% |
| | 1000-1999 | 152 | 11% | 29 | 123 | 19% | 81% |
| | 2000-4999 | 130 | 10% | 31 | 99 | 24% | 76% |
| | 5000+ | 117 | 9% | 31 | 86 | 26% | 74% |

Source: HoECF application data