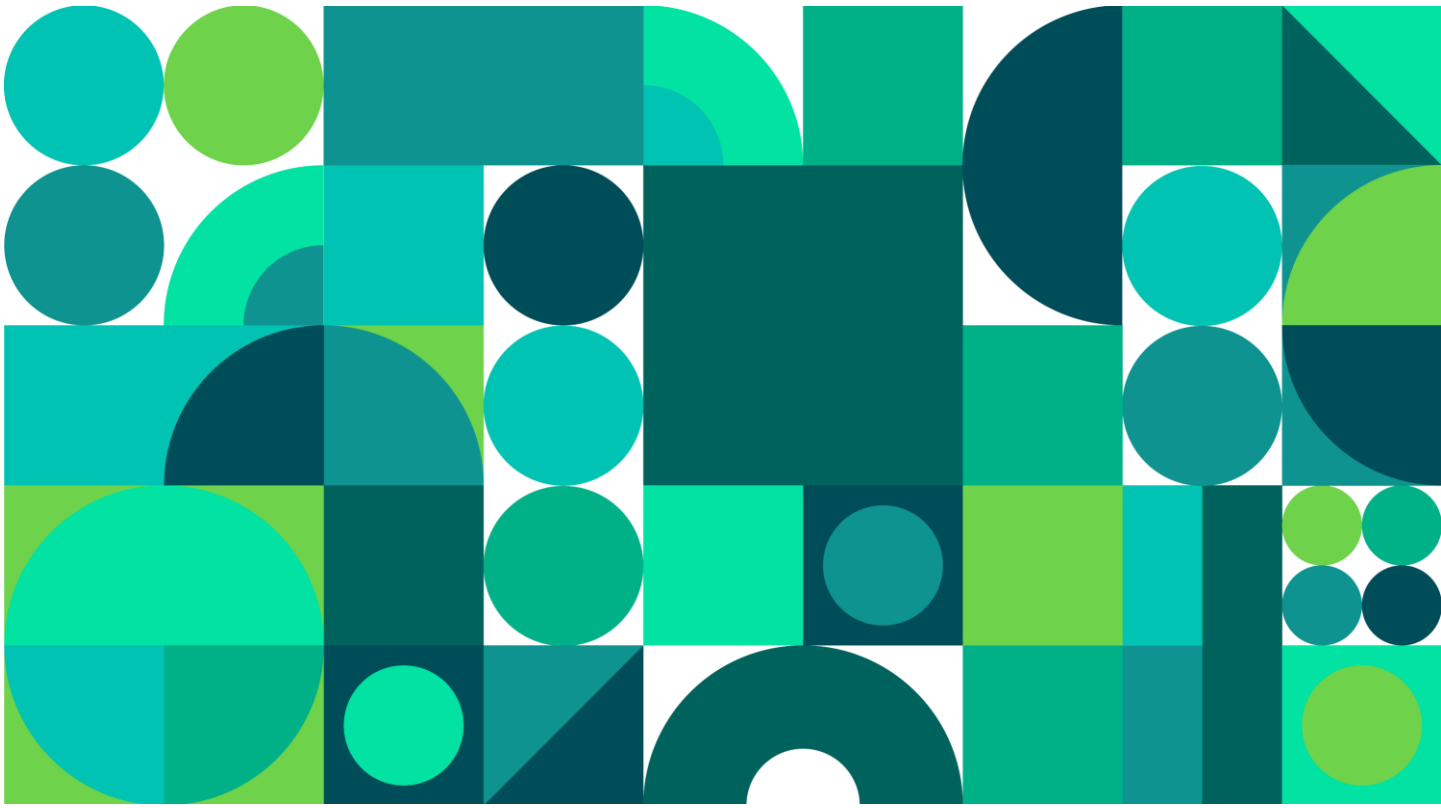


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GM Moving in Action – Community Investment Funds

Report by

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Community Investment Funds

Involving local people and building assets

On 11th October 2021, Walking Ambition and Evaluation team brought together audiences who were either currently or planning on developing community grants aimed to facilitate increased physical activity within communities. At this 'GM Moving in Action' workshop, four approaches to hosting and operating such grants were highlighted.

In 'Uniting the Movement'¹ Sport England describe effective investment models, as a key catalyst for change. Much of Sport England's narrative and was echoed by the contributors across Manchester especially around notion of *'simplifying access to available funding'*; *'making it easier for people and organisations with great ideas and significant potential to contribute to the aims of this strategy'* and crucially making sure funding reaches places, organisations and people not previously accessing.

● INTRODUCTION ● WHAT WE'LL DO ● HOW WE'LL WORK ● HOW WE'LL KNOW IF WE'RE SUCCESSFUL

SPORT ENGLAND UNITING THE MOVEMENT

WHAT WE'LL DO | OUR THREE KEY OBJECTIVES | CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE

EFFECTIVE INVESTMENT MODELS

The right investment can play a vital role in creating new and improved opportunities for people to be active, enable innovation, encourage collaboration and reduce inequalities across sport and physical activity.

Achieving the ambitions of this strategy will be about more than money, and certainly more money than we'll have at our disposal.

As well as using our own funds carefully and creatively, we need to attract other sources of investment into sport and physical activity.

Openly available grant funding plays an important role, and so can increasing access to different forms of finance - from loan schemes to crowdfunding - which can be more relevant to new partners and prove more financially sustainable.

Our local delivery pilots have shown the value of us investing in capacity and partnerships.

New ways of distributing funding, and working with partners with the right connections, can help ensure funding reaches places, organisations and people that have not found our previous programmes easy to access or relevant to their needs.

LOCAL DELIVERY PILOTS

We began working closely with 12 places across England in 2017, learning about the unique barriers and inequalities to activity faced in each place, and addressing them together.

Sound investment decisions need to be underpinned by intelligent programme design and an understanding of the partners, sectors, places and context in which investment is being made.

OUR AMBITION

We want to make it easier for people and organisations with great ideas and significant potential to contribute to the ambitions of this strategy and to access the right forms of investment for them.

We'll make use of the full range of intelligence and insight available to design and deliver collaborative funding approaches that attract new investment, recognising that sometimes our resources are best applied to ensuring the capacity of others to deliver.

WE'LL FOCUS ON:

- Ensuring 'doing business' with us is a positive experience, meaning we're efficient, accessible, connected and proportionate in our processes and expectations, whilst accountable for public funds
- Simplifying access to available funding, including our open funds
- Continuing to diversify and develop our investment approaches beyond our traditional grant programmes, so our offers reflect the realities of the market, the needs of partners, and understand impact
- Enhancing our understanding of the operating environment and local context of the organisations we invest in
- Taking advantage of this 10-year strategy period to invest in capacity and capability that will underpin solutions to the big issues.

Uniting The Movement. Sport England. P36

Learning from the evaluation **GM Walking Ambition Community Investment Fund** (WA CIF) as part of the Walking Ambition wider evaluation was presented. A total of 89 awards were made totalling almost £223k to communities across 10GM.

¹ [Sport England - Uniting the Movement \(sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com)



GMCVO², the voluntary sector support and development organisation covering Greater Manchester, were recruited by WA to act as managers and distributors of the fund. The decision to outsource this role was based on their closeness to communities and perceived ability to introduce walking to non-traditional walking audiences or audiences not accustomed to receiving similar community funds notably termed the 'usual suspects'. This was testing the hypothesis that through distributing funds through the voluntary sector itself, more diverse communities would engage with the funding due to their trusted position and access into communities. The evaluation revealed that 40% of grantees were not previously known to GMCVO. As such it also **widened their reach** and acted as a secondary outcome.

Almost half (49.4%) of organisations successful in the grant application were based in the most deprived quintile with over a third (35.6%) in the most deprived 10% of areas nationally. The beneficiary audiences demonstrated a strong link to the LP targeted community profiles of those with Long Term Health Conditions and Families, Children and Young People.

Flexibility or process and output were cited as success factors with the award being less focused on numerical targets and rather a focus of targeted coverage. This targeted coverage was achieved through analysis of grant applications by geography and subsequent targeted workshop sessions led by GMCVO in the communities. This **relationship building phase** was important to understanding the support needed by grantee.

Practically a new approach to awarding the micro-grants (£1k under) involved an open '**rolling-grants**' process with a **quick decision turnaround** of within three weeks. Moreover, this learning and success has led to GMCVO replicating the approach with other funds they operate across Greater Manchester.

Of the projects that went on to be awarded grants after previously not receiving funding, **29.4% went on to receive more funding** the second time round. This is evidence of how the process upskilled and developing capacity in communities to be grant ready:

² www.gmcvo.org.uk

The development support offered through the partnership grants was a success in that it enabled smaller organisations to develop their ideas and processes to be funded a larger amount of money and it linked them in to existing local support. (Lead GMCVO).

The Burnside Centre³ described their experience of the WA CIF from the perspective of a supported grant holder. Burnside were successful for both a small and medium grant and the funds were used to launching a new walking group. This was important as despite having many support programmes for their community, the centre **did not previously identify walking as an 'offer'**. The small grant was used to launch the group in terms of creating logo, equipment and travel costs. The medium grant was used to provide further equipment such as waterproof jackets, support refreshments and provide first aid training. The team felt **supported** by the application process and **valued the simplicity** of the monitoring and evaluation. The project has resulted in 45 walks being initiated, seven first aiders trained and one walking trip. The project plans to continue the programme beyond its initial funding and make use of the wider WA offer, linking in with Walk Lead Training and setting up a steering group.



Tackling Inequalities Fund⁴ also described a new and **simplified application process** with their key idea to be around **'shifting to conversations'**. The application was not only simplified but also allowed prospective grantees to record voice or video applications to describe their approaches as such removing barriers and bureaucracy for community members to access funds. **A panel approach** to selecting grantees was also adopted with a focus in building relationships in the communities. The panel was selected to be representative of the target communities and included GM BAME groups; 10GM; Coalition for Disabled People and Poverty Action.

Cycle and Stride (TfGM)⁵ is a fund with the remit of supporting twenty groups per year to encourage those most in need walking and cycling support. The fund was described as more than a fund with a desire to **support the organisations** for at least a year. The

³ [Burnside Community Centre, Langley, Middleton, Rochdale \(burnsidecentre.org.uk\)](http://burnsidecentre.org.uk)

⁴ [Tackling Inequalities Fund](#)

⁵ [Cycle and Stride](#)

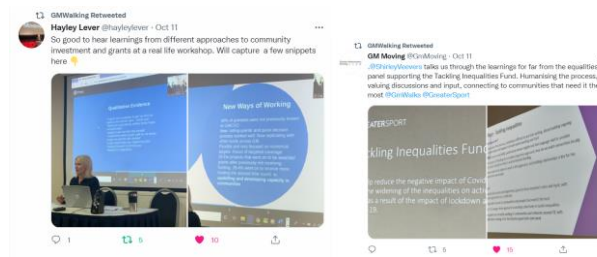
application process involved support calls where necessary resulting in refinement of applications for many. A **review panel** with broad experience then reviewed the application and either approved, requested further information or support or was rejected. Whilst this process proved effective in supporting communities the process was identified as resource intensive, often resulting in a long lead time from application to approval.

Local Pilot leads in Oldham & Rochdale⁶ described their approaches to operating community funds. Key learning from the LP was that of adaptability, sharing power and embracing side-effects.

For Bury their decision to **remove the need for any application** form was radical and innovative. This test and learn approach worked well but resulted in a great deal of support. As such the community have developed five set questions to be posed to the community or grantee. In Oldham the **panel approach** and notion of **sharing power** in award decisions is key. People on the panel described a feeling of discomfort in making decisions so rather than approve based on criteria the award would only be blocked if a valid opposition was put forward. Effectively redistributing the power narrative from gatekeeper to facilitator of funds.

Bury described their adapted approach to the fund in its focus on increasing physical activity through non-traditional means or **physical activity as a side-effect**. This approach to increasing physical activity by stealth can be seen in one project funded focusing upon taking pictures of nature. In this instance the focus of the community project was photography, and the side-effect is walking in nature or the local community.

The event was attended by 26 delegates with a range of roles including Local Pilot leads, walk leaders, Sport England, the community voluntary sector, GMM and Walking Ambition. The event attracted some social media noise and was seen as a success in creating a learning environment.



Walking Ambition alongside the Evaluation team are currently working on taking the learning from the event and creating a practical 'top-tips' guide for organisations seeking to set up or operating community funds. The guide seeks to help improve ways of working and approaches to effectively manage community investment funds with the ultimate aim to reach a diverse walking or physically active audience. The focus of practical advice will be structured around:

⁶ [Local Pilot](#)

- Adaptability in application; timelines; communication channels and impact measurement.
- Building relationships to gain trust with new audience and develop support structures.
- Sharing knowledge and learning and provide opportunities for connecting across the system.

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