

London Together Learning Guide I: Engaging with Target Audiences

April 2020

Produced by:

inFocus

With funding/support from:



MAYOR OF LONDON



Introducing the Guide

London Together is a £3 million Sport Unites partnership financed equally by the Mayor of London and Comic Relief. London Together invests in sport for change approaches that aim to improve social integration in London. The 3-year fund launched in 2018 and a list of the projects funded through rounds 1 and 2 of London Together can be found here.

Across the course of the project, the Mayor of London and Comic Relief have worked with the consultancy inFocus to bring together the different projects into a 'learning community' to explore key topics in relation to Sport (including different forms of physical activity) and Social Integration. In the first year of the initiative, the guides are based on the theory of change and learning questions shown to the right, with the questions chosen by the projects themselves. This is the first of a series of guides that bring together the experiences and advice from the different projects.

It is important to note that not every guide will include information that is relevant in every context, and they are not a definitive 'check-list' of what every project should do. Rather, they are intended as 'food for thought' for anyone planning a sport for change project, particularly one focused on social integration.





1

Understanding your target audience

- ▶ Is there information available that can help you to identify or demonstrate: the people most in need of your support (your ideal target audience) and their individual needs and support required to engage with your project
- ▶ This information could come from partners or networks that work closely with your target audience.
- ▶ Local councils / boroughs can also be a useful source of data/research on local communities and where your project might be of most benefit.
- ▶ Your existing participants can be a valuable source of information about the target audience and who would most benefit from your project (this can also help to increase their 'ownership' in the project).
- ▶ Your organisations experience working with the target audience, and learning from the evaluation of activities, can also help to build understanding



2

Reaching your target audience

- ▶ 'Word of mouth' can be a powerful tool, particularly when engaging with existing participants to see if they can help to recruit friends/family that would benefit from attending.
- ▶ Former participants can work as ambassadors to share their 'journey' through activities, what to expect, and how it helped them.
- ▶ Finding partner organisations or individuals that are already trusted and respected by your target audience is a common way to recruit. These organisations may also be running activities that could act as a platform for recruitment.
- ▶ Promotional events or taster sessions can provide a relaxed environment to engage with potential participants.
- ▶ It is important to match the mode of communication and outreach to your target audience. A social media presence is critical with some audiences, while with other audiences phone-calls or face to face contact are a better option.



3

Sustaining engagement

- ▶ It is important to ensure that the timing and location of activities is as accessible as possible, for example, through running projects in locations that participants are familiar with.
- ▶ Using a mix of activities that give space for those prioritising non-sporting outcomes or the social aspect of a project is also advisable.
- ▶ Every individual is different and will have different support needs, which could change across the course of activities. Thinking through the extent you (or partner organisations) can meet these needs is important.
- ▶ For participants that could be vulnerable or lacking in confidence, a positive first experience is particularly important. There are a variety of steps that can be taken to help ensure that you can keep engaging with participants beyond the first session.

See part 2 for more details

Utilise learning from working with your target audience

There are a range of factors to consider when engaging with a target audience across the course of delivering a Sport for Social Inclusion project.

The diagram to the right includes a range of considerations when planning to engage with the target audience for your project, from understanding target audiences through to promotion and sustaining engagement.

Examples of the three stages: 'We Stand Together' project



Our example of the three stages on this page is from Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA)'s We Stand Together: project. The project aims to release the untapped potential of sport as a driver for change in refugee communities. 'Activators' are equipped with key life-skills through volunteering and trained in community outreach to engage people from their community into sport and physical activity. Through partnerships with refugee organisations and mainstream sports providers the project aims to strengthen the process of social integration in Croydon.

1 Understanding your target audience

- ▶ CVA initially focus on identifying individuals from refugee backgrounds, with the aim of building up their trust, skills and networks in a supportive environment. The refugees who are emerging are by no means a homogenous group. They come from different countries, have vastly different language skills, experiences and goals – but the common denominator is their passion for sport – and a desire to help others.
- ▶ The project helps these refugees to become 'Activators'. The activators provide CVA with valuable information on their community and experiences of refugees.
- ▶ CVA work with community partner organisations who can help provide additional knowledge and understanding of the refugee community who utilise their services. For example, CVA are also able to use data from the Refugee and New Communities Forum, with engagement of over 40 refugee community organisation, who have provided invaluable guidance and support in helping us to better understanding our target audience, including primary research with over 50 refugees with lived experience of trying to socially integrate in Croydon.

2 Reaching your target audience

- ▶ 'CVA also train 'Activators', volunteer participants from refugee communities that then use their network to recruit participants. Activators usually come through local partner organisations, starting as participants on CVA programmes and then becoming more involved and training to be Activators.
- ▶ CVA work with community partner organisations such as a women's wellbeing group, who then refer target audience to their services.
- ▶ Project participants volunteer to facilitate and promote activities to peers as Activators. This can involved attending CVA community events where participants interact and promote CVA projects to local community.
- ▶ Activators are given autonomy to promote their project in the way they think is most suitable. This can include using flyers placed in partner organisations or social media. Activators mainly utilise WhatsApp groups help to maintain social networks.

3 Sustaining engagement

- ▶ New participants are supported and guided by the Activators. Other participants have chosen to take coaching qualifications and have returned to support the project.
- ▶ CVA removes barriers by keeping informal sessions free, either by using parks and public spaces or by working in partnership with others (such as local leisure centres).
- ▶ CVA works to address the individual needs of each participant, for example through providing one to one support from volunteers to address language barriers.
- ▶ Participants also decide on the session format and how much or how little they want to be involved. For example, the participants on the football project mostly chose to have a friendly match rather than working on specific drills.

Part 2: What are the key factors involved in sustaining participant engagement?

The London Together projects work with individuals from a wide range of backgrounds within a community, including individuals that are vulnerable, marginalised, socially excluded and socially isolated.

In this section we look in more detail at different factors that help to ensure project activities are inclusive and accessible. This helps both to engage participants in activities, then keep engaging them beyond the first session.

Participants may be unable to travel to particular venues, for example, if the location is unfamiliar to them, associated with activities they may not be comfortable with and feel are 'not for them' (such as a sporting venue), if they have health issues that make travelling difficult, or there is pressure from a family member not to travel. London Together projects have found different solutions for this:

- ▶ Running projects in locations that participants are familiar with, such as schools, mosques or churches, and more likely to be supported by family to attend. This means the project will be closer to participants and 'on their doorstep'. Another example could include running activities in the communal areas of housing schemes.
- ▶ Using non-sport venues so that the tone is not intimidating to those who may not usually be physically active, and also so that there is no prior association with the space and who it is for/not for.
- ▶ Thinking carefully about the right time to engage with participants, or offering different times to suit different schedules.
- ▶ Providing travelling expenses, particularly to attend the first activities within a project.



Finding the right location and time

Participants will attach different importance to different types of activity within your project, and it's important to make sure you give equal importance to different types of activity and the mix of sporting and non-sporting activities.

- ▶ While sport/physical activity can provide a 'hook' to attract participants to attend the project, and support is often embedded within sporting activities, for some participants, non-sporting activities may be the priority. For example, for one London Together project their assumption was that their exercise classes would attract women into the programme in the first instance, then into advice sessions, while actually the advice given at the sessions was often more important as participants wanted to address personal or family issues before having fun in the exercise class.
- ▶ It can be beneficial therefore to start slowly with the sporting/physical activities for those prioritising non-sporting activities, for example, starting with lighter physical activities such as stretching and signing before moving into other sports.
- ▶ For many London Together projects, ensuring there is room for social activities is also important, for example, making sure there is unstructured time for participants to interact, such as mealtimes or refreshment breaks.



Getting the right mix of activities

Every individual is different and will have different support needs, which could change across the course of activities. Thinking through the extent you (or partner organisations) can meet these needs is important. This might include:

- ▶ Working on the individual needs of participants, for example, building up skills and confidence, before integrating with others in the project or wider community. This could also involve one-to-one support through staff, mentors or peers at the start of a project to go through a needs assessment/goals setting to understand their individual needs and set goals.
- ▶ Providing activities for free, including equipment (for example through donated equipment), as costs can be a barrier for participants.
- ▶ Running outreach activities to engage with the family of participants (such as parents if working with children) to ensure they understand what the project involves and addressing concerns about their family member's participation.
- ▶ Providing support one to one support from volunteers, and pathways to ESOL courses, for participants that are limited in written and spoken English.
- ▶ Building flexibility into when activities run (see previous page) and how often participants are expected to attend, recognising that some participants will be juggling different priorities and it can be an intimidating prospect to make a long-term commitment to attend.

Meeting individual needs



For participants that could be vulnerable or lacking in confidence, a positive first experience is particularly important, particularly if they have had negative experiences with sporting activities in the past. The steps below can help to ensure that activities in a project are more inclusive and encourage participants to keep attending:

- ▶ Creating a welcoming, relaxed environment, starting slowly with new participants and easing them into sporting or physical activities to build rapport within a group and with facilitators. For example, starting out with more social sessions or playing games in the early stages to build trust.
- ▶ Existing participants can be enlisted to help to support new participants that are joining for the first time. For example, assigning a participant as a 'peer mentor' to support participants to fill out forms and 'show them the ropes' when they first join.
- ▶ Thinking about when and how to engage participants in data collection activities for monitoring. Collecting this at an early stage can create mistrust, particularly with participants (such as refugees and asylum seekers) that may be wary of what the information will be used for.
- ▶ Using a range of sports / physical activity options and running 'taster' sessions to try different sports can also be helpful to ease participants into project activities.
- ▶ Ensuring that sessions run on time, and as scheduled, is also important in building trust.

Making the right start

