Executive Summary

October 2019
Project Aims

To explore the appetite and feasibility for major sport event volunteers (and unsuccessful event applicants) to successfully transition from the event to community-level opportunities

Culminating in a report & best practice recommendations on how to maximise volunteer retention / pathways into community sport

We know that:
• There is a strong appetite to volunteer at major sports events, which are often heavily oversubscribed.
• Major events offer a fantastic opportunity to showcase sports volunteering & have the potential to engage new audiences
• Insight from major event hosts indicate that the quality of experience for volunteers is generally good, with high satisfaction with the experience
• Enthusiasm to do more volunteering after an event is often high
But there have been few studies to understand whether initial enthusiasm translates into action, and if not, why not
Overview of approach

Stage 1: immersion & data analysis

Stage 2: quantitative research

Stage 3: qualitative research

Stakeholder workshop

Stakeholder workshop

Shared via Goodform, Sport England and Stakeholder databases

Focus groups with event volunteers
1:1 telephone interviews with stakeholders
Major event volunteers are fairly balanced in gender. They tend to be older with 65% being 55 years old and over. 89% are white.

Lower socio-economic groups are under-represented based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation*.
Although not directly comparable, there are some similarities in demographics between major event volunteers and volunteers in community setting in Active Lives report (Nov 17/18).

In both, people from lower socio-economic backgrounds are under-represented.

- Gender: 59% Men, 41% Women
- Age: 33% Under 35, 36% 35-54, 32% Over 55
- Disabled or those with long term health condition account for 12%
- 85% are White British
- 11% are in lower seg (NS-SEC 6-8)

Community setting volunteer defined as:
- Taken part in a volunteering role to support sport/physical activity
- A person volunteered at least twice in the last 12 months
However, the areas where major event volunteers are predominantly located (London, Birmingham, Manchester) are areas which are more diverse in terms of SEG and BAME audiences...

...suggesting more could be done to ensure volunteers at major events more representative of the local community
A high proportion of major event volunteers have volunteered at more than one event...

Average number of events volunteered at: 2.03

51% volunteered at more than 1 major event (including London 2012)

10% have volunteered at more than 1 major event EXCLUDING London 2012

...and overall, major event volunteers rate their experience very positively

Rating of the major event(s) volunteering experience:

- 5 - very positive
- 4 - quite positive
- 3 - neither
- 2 - quite negative

Which of these major events have you previously volunteered at? n=1757 previous major events volunteers

Overall, how would you rate your major event(s) volunteering experience on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1=very negative and 5=very positive? n=1757 previous major events volunteers
Major events deliver both good volunteer experiences and improve perceptions, and, as shown by the following information, can also act as a pathway into grassroots...
At present, approx. 7% of people who volunteer at major events will go on to volunteer within community settings.

This highlights that major events are already playing a role in attracting volunteers to grassroots sport – but they could contribute more.
The insight generated from this report identifies a number of barriers that currently prevent a higher level of conversion than the 7% we see currently...

...but also suggests ways in which these barriers can be overcome to drive increased transition to community-level opportunities.
There is a general lack of awareness from major event volunteers about local volunteering opportunities...

Knowledge of the opportunities available within grassroots sport locally:

- 50% I know a lot about available local opportunities
- 41% I know a little about available local opportunities
- 9% I don’t know anything about available local opportunities

...so plugging this gap is likely to drive higher levels of consideration

Ways to encourage considering volunteering in grassroots sport:

- Clear information on available roles & time commitment involved: 50%
- Being aware of the opportunities that are available: 45%
- A range of options in my local area: 35%
- Quick & clear communication from the grassroots organisation: 29%
- Help in identifying opportunities that match my skillset: 23%
At present, some information is being shared to encourage major event volunteers to become involved in other volunteering opportunities…

…but it’s unclear how much of this relates to community-level opportunities as opposed to other major events

After volunteering at [major event], did you receive information about ongoing volunteering opportunities within the sport? n=1757 major events volunteers

**Receipt of information about ongoing volunteering opportunities:**

- **Yes**: 72%
- **No**: 15%
- **Unsure**: 13%

70% by email
- 3% in person
- 2% via post
- 1% by phone

“**Be inspired tends to be volunteering at national level.**”
Focus group participant; Leamington

“**I was never once asked in that process, did I want to volunteer at any local clubs?**”
Focus group participant; Leamington
A range of barriers are cited as preventing major event volunteers from making the transition.

Many of these can be overcome through improved communication, challenging perceptions and presenting the opportunities in a more appealing way.

Having considered volunteering in sport on a more regular basis, what prevented you from doing so? n=239 previous major events volunteers who considered volunteering in grassroots sport

- I volunteered outside of sport instead: 30%
- I have work, study or family commitments: 25%
- It involved more time than I could commit: 20%
- I was not contacted / asked to be involved: 18%
- There weren't any opportunities available that matched my interest/skills/experience: 17%
- The opportunities were not flexible enough to fit my lifestyle: 17%
- I did not know about what opportunities were available: 15%
- I now do other things with my spare time: 15%

“I do some volunteering at home for like dog charities and local hospices and things like that. So my time is taken up quite a lot really.”
Focus group participant; Leamington
We see overlapping motivations for volunteering at major events and within community settings – tapping into these may encourage transition.

Major events

1. To feel part of something
2. To feel good/get satisfaction from being able to help
3. For an exciting experience
4. For a once in a lifetime experience
5. I love sport generally
6. To give something back to that sport
7. I love that particular sport
8. To meet people/make new friends

Grassroots

1. To support the sport
2. Wanting to improve things/help people
3. I have enjoyed previous volunteering
4. Having the spare time to do it
5. For the chance to use existing skills
6. Someone asked me to give help
7. I felt there was need in my community
8. To meet people/make new friends
Those working for NGBs and major events also believe that there is an opportunity to transition more major event volunteers into local volunteer opportunities, but caveat that the opportunity is likely to lie with a specific minority of volunteers...

...which reflects the level of conversion we see from the survey results presented, and highlights the need to capitalise on opportunities to increase transition.
Stakeholders believe that they do currently signpost major event volunteers to local volunteering opportunities, but that this could be something that could be done better if barriers can be overcome.

Current barriers to greater promotion of opportunities:

- Internal resource limitations
- Silos between event organisers (focused on operational delivery of event) vs NGB staff (longer term focus)
- GDPR / other concerns around data privacy & ongoing communications
- Difficulty understanding to what extent any investment in supporting the transition would deliver ROI
- In some cases, a lack of planning around volunteer legacy ahead of the event itself
- For some smaller events, the majority of volunteers may already be recruited from within the grassroots
So we see that there are a number of interventions and strategies that could drive increased transition from major event volunteering to community level opportunities...
Recommendations

- Improve transparency and follow up for unsuccessful volunteers
- Create time-specific, finite opportunities for local volunteering
- Clearly defining volunteer roles is key
- Raise awareness of the volunteer shortage and where opportunities can be found
- Ensure that volunteer strategy and recruitment process has ongoing opportunity in mind
- Understand preferences and signpost appropriately
- Facilitate direct contact where possible
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