Making the most of major sports events
Hints and tips

Several major sports events happen every year. They attract spectators from across the globe, engage an army of volunteers, and have a unique ability to inspire new and existing people within sport.

Getting behind major sports events, in your own or other sports, can offer multiple benefits including bringing people together, raising awareness, building new partnerships, generating extra income, celebrating successes, attracting new people, and many more. Thinking about taking on more than you usually offer may feel daunting at first, but the potential benefits to your organisation could be vast. Our hints and tips are designed to help you think about how to get involved and make the most of the magic of major sports events.

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Create a buzz and catch people’s attention

Decide which events you’d like to get behind and create a ‘buzz’ to catch people’s attention, build excitement and anticipation. There can be lots of benefits, and there’s numerous ways to do this, so be sure to do your research. Plan as far ahead as possible and try to capture people’s interest. Consider:

- Using teasers in your newsletters.
- Posting on your social media channels.
- Using posters.
- Using word of mouth to raise awareness.
- Running competitions.
- Promoting your activities to other local organisations, particularly those that already support the people you want to engage.

Ask people to spread the word as much as possible to build up the excitement. Think about people inside and outside of your organisation who can help you with this, like local councillors, young people, community leaders and businesses.

Make the most of your online presence

Posting on social media is usually free and can be a great way to engage and interact with new and existing people in the lead up to, during, and after major events. If you want to create your own social media pages or maximise their effectiveness, our ‘Using Facebook’ and ‘Using Twitter’ resources can help you. In the lead up to the event, you could create a hashtag, post teasers, share dates and start discussions to get, and keep, people engaged.
It’s important to consider what your online presence (website and social media pages) says about your organisation. Make sure you’re easy to find and that your contact details are clear, correct, and up to date, so people can get in touch. Consider putting someone in charge of quickly and politely responding to enquiries. Make sure the images and language you use reflect your values and culture and entice people in.

Be mindful that some people can’t access the internet or use social media so have a plan to reach and include them too. Explore using community papers, newsletters, or local noticeboards.

Host activities, events, and celebrations
Create opportunities that piggy-back on the magic and excitement of major events. Consider organising and publicising your own activities, events, or celebrations. There’s lots of ways to get involved including taster sessions, open days, watch parties, fan-zones, local competitions, or tournaments.

Major sports events, celebrated locally, can bring your volunteers, participants, and the wider community together. Keeping things local and low cost, providing a welcoming environment, and giving everyone a positive, fun, and safe experience can be a great publicity tool and help you to recruit new people. Regardless of what your organisation does to get involved, don’t be afraid to shout about your success and its impact, as this will help to raise awareness of your club or group!

When planning events, activities or celebrations, involve people by asking them what they would like to do and how they can assist in the planning and promotion. Consider creating a timeline of your activities or events and how you intend to promote them so that people inside and outside of your organisation are aware of what is happening and when.
If you’ve been trying to reach specific communities or groups for a while, major sports events may just be the catalyst you need to open new doors and get started. Lots of National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and the Organising Committees (OCs) responsible for delivering the major event, offer free, downloadable packs of ideas, session plans, and activities that you can use so check what’s available to help you.

**Build relationships with local organisations**

Major sports events offer significant opportunities to non-sporting organisations too. Getting behind them can benefit businesses, community groups, education providers and many more. Reaching out to like-minded local organisations can help you build lasting working relationships and help maximise benefits in the lead up to, during, and after major events. Don’t be afraid to ask! Be clear about what you hope to achieve and what you can offer in return. For example, if you want to host a watch party but don’t have any facilities, or an appropriate license or insurance, could you ask a local community venue to put this on for you? You’d benefit from being able to bring people together and celebrate and they’d benefit from extra income and new trade.

If you’re looking for sponsors, try and use major events as a conversation starter with local businesses. Before approaching local organisations for sponsorship, consider researching what their interests are and try to understand their values and how they work before making suggestions for partnerships. If you’d like new participants or volunteers, try speaking to education providers, businesses, and community groups about what you’re planning and how getting involved with your organisation can offer health, wellbeing, development, and wider social benefits to their people.
‘Buddy-up’ with others and get behind local participants and officials

If your organisation isn’t represented in any up-and-coming major sports events, there are still ways you can benefit and get involved. Reaching out to others during a time of celebration can be a productive way to make new connections. If you’re not sure where to start, ask people to help, look at local maps, do some research and speak to local people.

Consider working with neighbouring clubs or groups from other sports and ‘buddying-up’ with them to celebrate events. This can be a great way to forge new relationships and meet new volunteers, participants, coaches, and officials. Talk about how you can help each other with things like accessing facilities, marketing, or by sharing hints and tips on things like governance, raising funds and recruitment.

Find out if any local or regional participants, or officials, are taking part at major sports events. If they are, encourage your people to get behind them and celebrate their achievements. You could even try contacting them to tell them about your organisation and invite them to visit after the event to share their experiences.

Maximise the use of your facilities and spaces

If you’ve got your own facilities, hosting small scale events, or hiring them out can be good income generators. Watch parties, competitions, raffles, and other activities can be a beneficial way of generating income, either from entry donations, selling refreshments or engaging sponsors. Think of your space or facility as a community hub, and explore ways to engage a wider audience and maximise use through the major event and beyond. This will also help drive up awareness of your organisation and its offer with local people.
If you already share facilities with another sport or organisation, be sure to speak to them to find out what their plans are and explore opportunities to do things together. Remember that lots of clubs and groups don’t have their own facilities. Being open to hiring your facilities out, or collaborating with others, can be another good way to build relationships and generate extra income.

**Be cheeky!**

Nobody likes being told ‘no’, but when it comes to events, there’s no harm in being cheeky! If you never ask, you may never know. Reaching out to key organisations like your NGB, host venues, host authorities and OCs can be beneficial. Be sure to scope out what’s happening and what you’d like to be part of. Some major events have local activity or activation zones that your organisation could help at. Some offer tickets to NGBs and grassroots clubs and groups, whilst others may allow access to elite training sessions or qualifiers. The build up to major events is a busy time. You may not hear back from people quickly, or at all. Be prepared to persevere but also be patient. Sometimes opportunities present themselves at the last minute, so try and keep lines of communication open, you never know what might happen!

If you’re displaced from your regular venue to make way for elite participants or an event itself, be bold. Ask the venue, local authority, or OC if they can support you to find a new venue or perhaps compensate for the inconvenience with tickets to the event, a chance to attend a training session or an opportunity to meet the athletes and officials.
Be prepared!

It’s important to think through the logistics of your plan to ensure everyone has a safe and enjoyable experience. Give everyone a warm welcome, show them that your culture is positive and fun, and that you have an inclusive environment. Fully consider any health and safety, insurance, licencing, and safeguarding implications and try to minimise your impact on the environment by encouraging active travel and avoiding single-use plastics. Our ‘Becoming more environmentally sustainable’ guide can help.

Explore potential barriers that may stop someone getting involved with the activities your organisation runs and try to address these where possible. Things like ensuring your organisation is easily contactable and providing information on how to get to your activities and events can all help break down potential barriers and encourage more people to be part of whatever you’re planning.

Major sports events can be incredibly inspiring. They can create an immediate, unique, upswing in interest from new or lapsed participants, volunteers, coaches, and officials who may want to get involved with their local clubs or groups. Try and think through how you'll cater for any new interest, and how you want to market yourselves ahead of, during, or immediately after the event(s). Also consider the processes you can put in place to understand people’s needs and engage them quickly. Ensure you foster a sense of belonging and give them a positive, safe experience so they keep coming back.

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