

Community Sports and activity learning cluster tender

Updated March 2020 – this tender is an amendment to one released in February, updating the deadline for submission and expected start of the cluster in response to the Covid-19 situation. All other details remain the same. Any proposals submitted prior to this notice being issued can be revised and resubmitted to enable a level playing field.

Background:

Local Trust, our partners and people in Big Local areas are passionate about what we're doing. We believe that Big Local has the potential to support residents to increase their skills and confidence and make a lasting difference to where they live. We think Big Local is new, different and exciting; building on previous community-based regeneration programmes and putting power and control in the hands of those who live in the areas. Critically, our ambition is not simply to deliver a programme, but to shape and influence policy and practice through shared learning from Big Local.

We are passionate about trusting local people to make the decisions that make their areas even better places to live. Big Local is the project that puts money into the hands of residents living in Big Local areas, who have the power to use £1million up to 2026 to work on the priorities that are important to their community. Each Big Local area has a partnership, made up of local residents, that oversees and implements Big Local in that community.

Local Trust support the partnerships implementing Big Local with a programme of learning and networking, and one element of this is through thematic learning clusters. These learning clusters are a place for people working on Big Local to build their knowledge, skills and confidence in a specific topic, drawing on learning from within and outside of Big Local. The attendees of these peer learning groups attend a series of events that builds their understanding of the topic, gives ideas for them to take back to their partnership, with the aim that at the end of the cluster the whole partnership has greater confidence and capacity to work on that issue.

You can see examples of existing clusters here: <https://localtrust.org.uk/big-local/learning-clusters>.

Objectives:

The objectives of the learning cluster are to help Big Local partnerships:

- See where and how they can add value with community-led sports and activity projects
- Identify where sports could help them achieve their goals
- Share best practice and different experiences
- Develop ideas that they could take back to their areas to test out
- Understand the wider context both in terms of different kinds of local stakeholders, key partners and considerations to be aware of if they begin working in this area
- Think about creating a lasting, practical and sustainable legacy through this work
- Leverage partnerships in their local areas or nationally to support their plans

Structure

Local Trust does not deliver learning clusters directly. We hire a facilitator or facilitators with extensive experience of the topic to develop an overall curriculum for the cluster, develop and deliver the individual sessions, bringing in relevant speakers from within and outside of Big Local as appropriate.

Each session should be designed in a way that introduces new ideas or information to the group, draws out the learning from among the participants, and discusses interesting case studies or projects that participants can learn from and potentially adapt for their work.

The curriculum should develop participants' learning on the topic in reference to an overall learning journey, but also be responsive to the interests and needs of participants both at the outset and throughout the cluster. Once the contract is signed and people have begun signing up for the cluster, the facilitator should speak to one person from each area that signs up to understand their learning needs and their current experience. The facilitator will then propose any amendments to the curriculum that will ensure it is tailored to the group.

Learning clusters are usually between 20-30 people, with one or two people attending from an area. We limit all clusters to a certain number after discussion with the facilitator. Generally, the same group of people will attend all sessions of the cluster. Attendees will have a wide range of experience in the topic, ranging from no experience up to those who have done similar things before. There will also be a mixture of volunteers and people working in the sector, so the curriculum should reflect this and ensure everyone gets something from it.

Subject to contract negotiations and the Covid-19 crisis, we anticipate the first session happening in Autumn 2020. We've found that having the first session running over two days allows the group to form and build connections. There would then be three more 1-day sessions over the course of around a year.

Draft overall curriculum

We are looking for the facilitator to propose a draft overall curriculum for the cluster, including an outline learning journey and how they would break the topic down over the four sessions. Many Big Local areas have already established sports leagues locally, and we are not looking for a cluster that is focused solely on setting up sports groups, developing coaching skills or focused on establishing or running sport facilities. There are several elements that we would like to see included in the cluster.

The curriculum should respond to the following key points

- How community sports and activities can be tools to respond to priorities, such as: health and wellbeing, social isolation, youth engagement, or community cohesion among others;
- How sport and activity projects can be made more inclusive and bring together more diverse groups of people than those usually engaged by community sports programmes;
- The content shared through the curriculum should show the diverse range of different kinds of community sports and activity projects that are possible;
- Many Big Locals have already engaged with community sports and activity, how can we inspire even more ambitious projects, while still providing guidance at a foundational level for others within the cluster?

Ideas or examples of innovative projects

Throughout all the sessions we would like real life examples of projects that the attendees can learn from to inspire them for what they could do in their area. These could be a mixture of Big Local and non-Big Local; we can help with identifying speakers from within Big Local.

When developing the curriculum, it's important the facilitator understand that the participants of the cluster will go back to their areas and develop and inspire their own sports and activity projects –

they will not necessarily be the direct beneficiaries of those projects themselves. This is an important distinction and requires taking on a “train the trainer” approach.

Role of the facilitator

The facilitator will be an experienced professional who has extensive knowledge of community sports and activity. They will work across each event by:

- Having a short call with each area (at least one attendee) prior to the first event to tailor the curriculum to the needs of those who sign up;
- Developing the agenda and facilitation plan for each event;
- Identifying, securing and briefing speakers;
- Facilitating the events;
- Providing a short write up of each event for attendees, and a combined summary report across the whole series for internal and external use;
- Supporting attendees to take their learning back to their area and put it into practice.

The facilitator will provide a vital link between events to ensure the consistency of discussions threaded throughout, for example relating to legacy, and to respond to any developments in the groups’ needs as the cluster progresses. A member of the Local Trust team will support the facilitator in finalising the agenda, communicating this out to Big Local partnerships, and on the day. Local Trust can support with identifying and liaising with event venues if required, and will book participant travel & accommodation.

Applying

If you are interested in applying to deliver this work then please email your application in line with the guidance below by the revised deadline of **9am on the 27th of April** to programmes@localtrust.org.uk.

Please submit a proposal of no more than 8 pages that outlines:

- An overall curriculum for the cluster and the learning journey participants would go on;
- How you would deliver the cluster, including the approach you would take to delivering the sessions;
- Your experience and knowledge of community sports and activity, in particular relating to how this can be used in support of project objectives;
- Your experience of facilitating learning events, particularly to community groups and volunteers;
- The support you would need from Local Trust to deliver the series;
- A budget covering development, delivery and follow-up costs. This should not include venue costs or participant travel/accommodation, but should include an estimate of any speaker fees as well as materials and the facilitator’s time & expenses.

You can include CVs as appendices, which do not count towards the page limit.

Delivering Big Local events: tips for success

These tips are based on research conducted on the first set of learning clusters which Local Trust ran in 2018-2019. It can be used by facilitators, particularly those new to Big Local, to build on previous learning to deliver even more successful events.

Creating opportunities for networking and shared learning

An important reason for bringing Big Locals together for any event is to provide the opportunity to network and share learning. Networking opportunities are often noted in participant feedback as the most valued aspect of events and should be built into the day. Networking opportunities worked best when they were focused, but let Big Locals share details about their area, frustrations or challenges they're facing related to the topic of the event and constructively working together to identify potential solutions.

An evening meal before an event, especially if the majority of participants are staying overnight, was a great way to allow them to informally network ahead of the event. This meant that on the day, participants were familiar with each other and ready to focus on the content for the day.

Additionally, facilitators should include networking opportunities that work for both introverted and extroverted people, particularly considering sessions that require participants speaking to the entire group. Not everyone feels comfortable speaking in front of a large group, which means you may end up only hear from those who are confident enough to speak up.

Bringing in external expertise

Learning and networking events should balance networking between areas, content specific to Big Local and bringing in relevant external expertise. Big Locals are incredibly knowledgeable and have experience working on a wide range of activities and issues. External expertise, however, can often bring a new perspective or idea that Big Locals find extremely valuable.

One particular benefit that was noted in feedback was the benefit of external speakers that could integrate Big Local work into systems and policies more nationally and help them think of the 'bigger picture'. This is something that can be hard to achieve with just Big Local areas and helped participants think about the wider context of their work.

Considering different Big Local audiences

It is important to consider the different roles within Big Locals and who your audience is for the event. Partnership members are the decision-makers in Big Locals and need to know enough about a topic to decide whether they want to move forward with it or not, and often don't need technical knowledge. Workers are key to delivering Big Local activities and therefore require more technical knowledge to implement and run them. Some participants may also register for an event because they have a personal interest in the topic. Understanding who your audience is, or who you want to target, can help decide what content or expertise you want to include during the event.

This also applies when managing broad topics for events. Topics should be broad enough to capture the different interests and activities across Big Local areas, but they shouldn't be so broad that they do not have clear, shared learning objectives. To overcome this, it's important to understand participants' interest in the topic so that content can be developed that is relevant to the majority of people, both before the cluster begins and throughout to take into account how their interest may change through the course of the cluster.