UNIVERSITY SPORT ACTIVATION FUND

18 Months Evaluation Report - June 2016

CONTENTS

accessible

sustainable

innovative

active

INTRODUCTION

This report provides a summary of the third set of reports from the 62 projects funded through Sport England's University Sport Activation Fund (USAF). The reports cover the period of delivery from October 2015 and March 2016. As of April 2016 projects are mid way through the three year cycle of the USAF programme.

The projects reported the numbers of students engaging in project activities and attendance figures, and were asked to describe their collection and use of information and insight, the most significant change achieved by their project and its impact, and any challenges. They were also asked to use an EAST framework template to highlight how they had made engagement in sport Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely for their students.

PROGRESS

The projects continue to make good progress with 166,275 new Higher Education (HE) student participants reported at this 18 month stage of delivery, achieving 77% of the overall three year participants target. Female students made up 47% of the total number, male students 53%, showing a further narrowing of the gender gap. The cumulative throughput figure midway through delivery was 1,043,517 attendances, 48% of their overall attendances target. (Charts showing the reported figures can be found at the end of this report.)

EASY
ATTRACTIVE
SOCIAL
TIMING

The EAST model

Projects were asked to provide examples of how they had engaged students and encouraged regular attendance in activities by making things Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely (EAST). Below are some of the newer ideas that have helped to make the programmes successful.

Making things EASY:

- Offering activities that are easy to pick up for 'new to sport' students e.g. volleyball, table tennis
- County-wide discounts on sports for students who commute to university from a wider area.
- Offering free santa suits for a Santa Selfie Run, promoting the Couch to 5K NHS backed programme.
- Many projects described offering activities at low/no cost, in convenient locations, at venues where inactive students will feel less intimidated, providing kit and equipment, requiring no or minimal commitment and enabling flexible attendance.

Making it ATTRACTIVE:

- Promoting sessions based on the number of calories burned
- 'Insta-worthy' high profile locations e.g. University Park Lake for kayaking
- Interactive photo campaigns with incentives/prizes
- 'My reason' campaign - new imagery and marketing materials designed to make the project more appealing to non-sporty students
- 'Tom Tries' marketing – a sports development assistant tries out different sports sessions and posts on Sports blog
- Targeting people at Freshers fairs who are interested in societies rather than sports clubs.
- Made short videos showcasing females-only 'non-traditional' activities being offered: cricket, weightlifting, wheelchair basketball
- Hired a 'Pong-Bot' to attract new table tennis players, which also improved the male:female balance
- Enabling students to take part with people similar to them e.g. Postgraduate Yoga, Beginners Sailing and Wakeboarding, Women's Climbing.

Making it SOCIAL:

- ZOOmba Project class – faces painted as zoo animals beforehand, based on an underground electronic music theme party originating in Ibiza; also a Moonlight Walk with glow sticks

- Social outings e.g. to the local ice rink

- #EngageEggHunt social media campaign – hidden eggs for students to find

- International Sports Day events – international students representing countries of origin

- Plotting the total distance of group runs e.g. Students Union to Venice

- Groups of students training together with a common goal, a charity 5K, with a shared commitment to achieve results

- Holding a sports event alongside an e-sport/gaming event

- Futsal teams travel together to the sports centre from their halls of residence, developing friendships

- Touch Rugby BBQ Fun afternoon to increase female engagement, also Netball v Basketball – mixing male basketball and female netball teams together

- Basketball hoop on a terrace with lots of passing traffic, highly visible – students play with friends and with people they don't previously know

- A 'bring a buddy' scheme as inactive students more likely to come with a more active friend

running from
the Students Union
to Venice

training with
a common goal

Getting **TIMING** right:

- Social media posts at times when students are more likely to be active, and using analytics to see when there is most activity

- Activities for international students later in the evening, a time that suits them as they tend to be less involved in the traditional student drinking culture

- Promotions linked to national sporting events and health campaigns e.g. Mental Health Week

- Word of mouth advertising of other opportunities during sessions, gets students to try something different

USING INSIGHT

Most projects have been able to compile data about their students that includes gender, age, ethnicity, type of residence, course being studied, year of study, student type i.e. postgraduate/ undergraduate, disability and nationality.

Many projects have been able to capture levels of engagement in sport prior to students taking part in project activities. This has enabled the tracking of changes in levels of activities through formats such as surveys and attendance records. Projects have also reported the collection of data on volunteering and coaching.

The main data gaps and challenges centre around linking attendance at multiple activities/clubs and progression via exit routes to non-university provision, which will have helped to see the full picture of each students' engagement in sport. For many projects they were unable to track when a student had moved from project activities to a university club.

"[The Upshot system] will give us a much deeper and wider understanding of where our participants are coming from and participation levels amongst our current members in and outside of the programme. We are hoping that this will also help us to track whether the participants are staying active once they leave the programme as we have been engaging with the Student Union on this system, therefore if they were to join a club or society following the programme, we would be able to see this using this system. It would also give us a better idea of the types of students who are already participating to allow us to put a heavier focus on the inactive students."

<div align="right">Imperial College project</div>

The Manchester Metropolitan University project was one of a number projects to describe how they track students using their ID numbers and barcodes and use the insight to shape project delivery; they also incentivised students to complete 'activity cards' telling them their activity levels and what activities they wanted to be offered:

"Activators are tasked with scanning the bar code on all participants University ID cards before the sessions start. If participants forget their ID card a manual register is taken and the individuals unique university ID number is recorded. All students and staff need to be aware of this number in order to log into any University computer so it is highly unlikely that they will not know this number.

With the information captured we are able to compare the demographics of our Active Campus (the USAF project) participants against the University's overall demographics, highlighting any gaps in provision or areas where engagement is higher than expected. This insight then helps shape our programme moving forward. The data on the scanners also allows us to monitor the participants' throughput i.e. number of times they attend a session. With this information we are then able to highlight those students that have only attended 1 or 2 sessions and then contact them via email asking if they intend to return and the reasons why they have stopped attending.

The PMI data will also allow us to track transition from Active Campus to University club participation as the clubs also need to collect the ID numbers for all their members. This is a piece of work we intend to do once the BUCS season has finished and a summary will be included in the next report.

<div align="right">Manchester Metropolitan University project</div>

At Loughborough University the project's good working relationship and data sharing with the Students Union has provided access to student profiling that identifies the 'personality tribes' the students belong to. The project already analyses gym access to identify activities undertaken and duration of participation, and, once new scanning systems have been introduced, will use the Tableau data visualisation tool to interrogate data and generate dashboard reports. There is also a longer term plan to use the Map My Run app.

The University of Nottingham project similarly described the segmentation carried out by the students union, as well as measures to capture data from inactive students:

"We can access the HE survey data bi-annually and the UoN Students' Union also produce an insights report similar in style to Sport England insights. Here they profile students into segments, looking at the way they wish to engage with the Union, including sports clubs.

We have also recently tasked Sport Nottinghamshire (the County Sports Partnership) with training our student ambassadors / champions to carry out surveys on hand-held devices, targeting high footfall areas for students, e.g. Students' Union, Law School and Medical School café. The aim of these has been to gain more insight from non-sporty students, who are yet to take part in our programme, or sport in general at either University."

University of Nottingham project

In response to national insight and its own survey findings the University of Brighton project has changed the emphasis of its marketing and programme from a main focus on fun and the social side to increase its appeal to the many students who are motivated by health and fitness benefits. As surveys over three years have showed only small changes in activity levels the project is planning a short research exercise focusing on specific areas of sport participation.

"lifestyle changes which have benefited their health and had a positive impact on their student life"

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Some of the USAF projects reported how insight into students' perceptions, motivations and barriers to engagement in sport had led them to modify their offer to help change behaviour and get students more active.

The University of Hertfordshire project took great care to recruit and train activators to be able to gather insight informally from students. This has enabled the project to not only achieve a change in behaviour relating to sport but has also led to the personal development of the student volunteers.

"As part of their role, our team of activators are responsible for identifying the behaviours of the least active students and feeding this in to inform the programme. An example of where this has been effective is at our gymnastics sessions. These sessions were attracting several students from the cheerleading squad who were experienced gymnasts displaying confidence and competence on the equipment. This made some less experienced students feel less-inclined to experiment in sessions for fear of being judged – some common themes in line with the This Girl Can campaign. As a result, the name of the sessions was changed to 'Gymnastics – beginners', with a suitable change to the description on the website. Furthermore, we took the time to liaise with the coaches and activator and asked them to adopt this change for these sessions, ensuring that all students felt comfortable within the environment.

An additional area we asked our activator team to focus on this year has been the importance of them not only interacting with students at sessions and gaining insight constantly, but to become more involved with planning and delivering more formal insight tasks such as focus groups, surveys, and using social media to spark discussions and debates. This has proved to be incredibly useful for the project and for their own personal development. Numerous activators have overcome a fear of public speaking and addressing large groups. They have said it's helped enormously with their degree courses, where they're often required to give presentations, and others who are seeking employment after university have said they feel far more confident in interviews and interacting in a professional environment. It has been rewarding for the project team to see [the activators] progress from observing focus groups and saying very little, to gain enough confidence individually and in small groups to steer focus groups to discuss the set outcomes."

University of Hertfordshire

The Edge Hill University project described how an insight-based approach has changed the behaviour of a small group of female students.

"Our Women Active pilot initiative used non-sporty messages, a free 6 week membership incentive and a link with the This Girl Can campaign branding to introduce a small group of inactive/non-sporty female students into regular participation. This involved recruiting student volunteers to support women into regular participation by accompanying them to a variety of activity sessions over 6 weeks.

The Women Active pilot enabled us to target students that have one or more of these barriers to participation and need that extra guidance to integrate them into regular participation. The 6 week programme introduced inactive women to activities that interested them and helped them overcome their barriers to participation. Volunteers were at the heart of the project, buddying up with the women to support them through a 6 week programme designed around their interests. We used a short online application process to find out the interests and motivations of the women. This also ensured we were targeting participants who are inactive.

A Facebook group was used to encourage the women to interact with each other and share their participation experiences.

The project will be linked to This Girl Can using it as an inspirational tool to get more women active. Participants who attended at least 5 times over the programme have access to a £20 discount off any Edge Hill Sport membership.

All of the students are now fully aware of what's available for them to take part in. They have tried different activities and have positive experiences they can reflect on taking part with other students. Many of the students have gone on to purchase a membership and are continuing participating on a regular basis. They have made lifestyle changes which have benefited their health and had a positive impact on their student life."

Edge Hill University

"removed the students' fear of
attending a new activity on their own"

"an accessible opportunity to engage in cycling,
a sustainable way to explore the local area,
an innovative way to access peer support services,
an active way to incorporate education"

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

Among the changes described by the projects were an increase in engagement by first year students and those living in halls, and a popular social cycling pilot project.

"Our Sport Development team supported Residential Advisors (RA's) training. RA's are an in-house team of second year, third year and postgraduate students who live in student accommodation. Their role is to offer support and advice about living in MMU accommodation and information about accessing services and support across the university. The RA's visit flats and townhouses regularly, providing a daily drop-in session from 6-7pm, delivering and promoting events, and running campaigns throughout the year. By delivering an RA team building exercise at the beginning of the year we were able to give the RA's a taster of an Active Campus session and actively promote the programme to them at the same time. Following the training several RA's took it upon themselves to promote an Active Campus session to their residents, during their visits they would simply suggest a meeting point within their halls and offer to accompany interested students across from their halls to the activity. This has removed the students' fear of attending a new activity on their own."

"Another explanation for the high engagement levels from 1st years has been our support of course inductions and the delivery of Active Campus taster sessions as part of the induction programme. In the past we have delivered course induction presentations that summarised the sporting offer and encouraged students to come along to one of our Active Campus sessions later that week. This method has worked to get the message across to those students who already have a keen interest in sport but through the newly established partnerships with courses, we are now able to secure slots on induction timetables. This means everybody on the course has to attend an 'ice breaker session' and we are able to engage with those traditionally 'hard to reach' students who would not have participated unless it was part of their academic timetable.

Manchester Metropolitan University

After successful delivery of small group 'freshers' cycles' during October the University of Plymouth project formed a partnership with British Cycling to deliver a Higher Education Ride Social pilot project.

"9 volunteer staff/student volunteers, including 5 females and 2 with a disability, have been trained as Ride Leaders and are responsible for organising, promoting and delivering group rides. In order to target currently in-active students and non-cyclists the Ride Leaders have offered rides with various 'themed' rides including:

Climate Change Cycles *– Cycles to coincide with University Climate Change campaign. A volunteer from the Geography Society co-planned a route to include local points/areas of interest in relation to climate change and gave information/opened discussion at each point on the cycle.*

Peer Support Cycles *– Peer Supporters are students who are trained by the University Counselling department to provide a listening service to students. Students can book an appointment with a peer supporter and meet for a chat. One of the Ride Leaders is also a trained Peer Supporter. Peer Support Rides offer a different format in which to access the peer support service with peer supporters present on the ride and able to engage with students taking part in more active and less formal way than a face-face meeting.*

Photography/Art Cycles *– Cycles have been organised involving cycling to an area of interest with an expert in art/photography who leads a session in a non - physical activity, taking the emphasis off the cycling.*

'This Girl Can' Cycles *– As part of 'This Girl Can' day a female only cycle was fully subscribed and has since been offered as a regular group ride. The routes are short, the pace steady and involve stopping at coffee shops along the way.*

The innovative approaches to the group rides adopted by the Ride Leaders have helped to engage with a broad range of students. Making participation easy and accessible through being able to offer bike hire has been important. Giving the ride leaders ownership of promoting and delivering their own rides has been successful.

The partnerships formed have not only provided students with an accessible opportunity to engage in cycling, but also a sustainable way to explore the local area, an innovative way to access peer support services, and an active way to incorporate education."

University of Plymouth

CONCLUSION

Half way through the three year USAF, projects have engaged 166,275 HE student participants, more than double the number expected at this point, with throughput of over one million attendances.
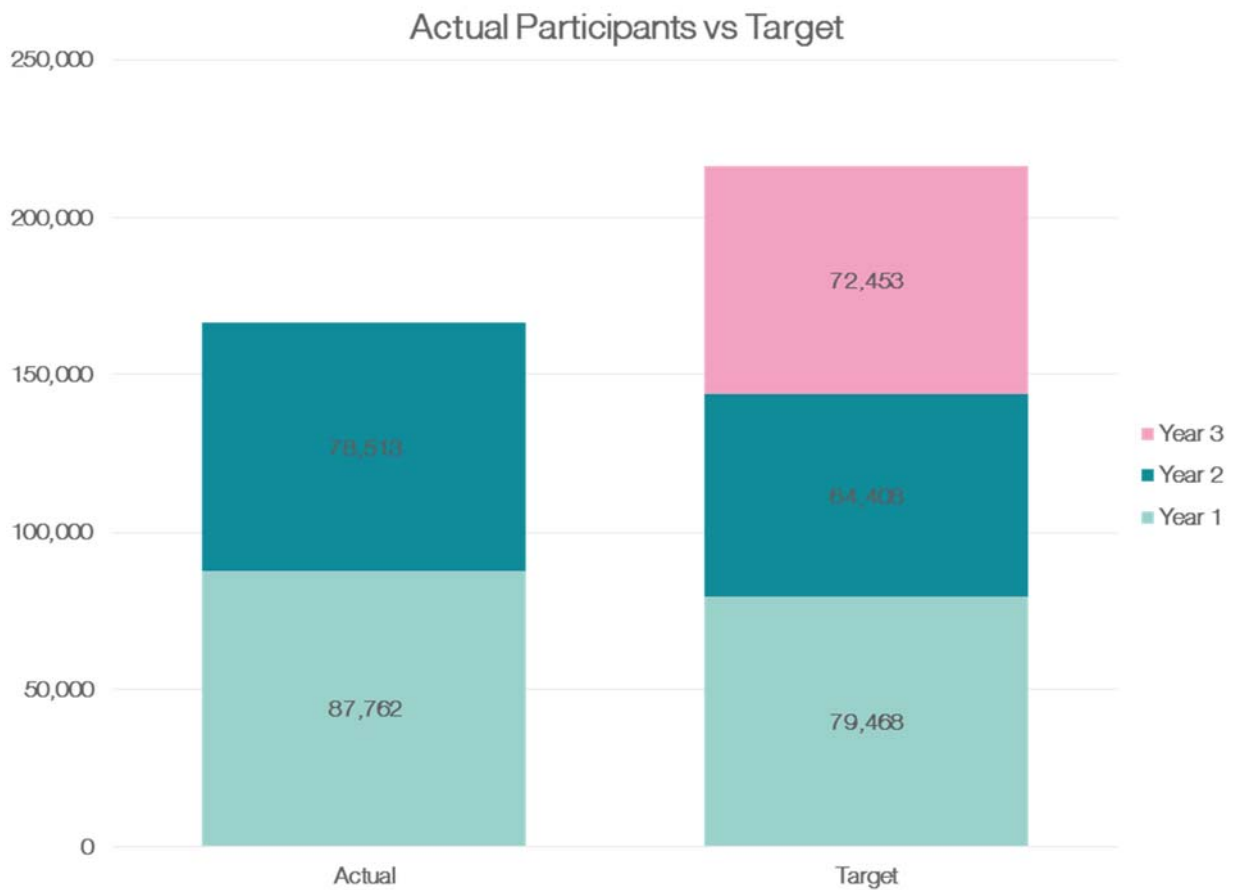
Projects have shared how they are making taking part in sport and physical activity easy, attractive, social and timely, reporting innovative approaches that have helped to attract and retain students.

This report has explained how the projects are gathering and using information and insight about their students to help inform and shape delivery. The previous report at the end of Year 1 concluded that the challenge for the programme in Year 2 would be to transition greater numbers of students from enjoying occasional activity to more regular engagement in sport with their peers. The 18 months report has found encouraging signs that projects have risen to that challenge. The development of systems to track activity outside project sessions looks set to help fill the data gaps at some institutions and improve the evidence base for the programme's impact on students' sporting behaviour.
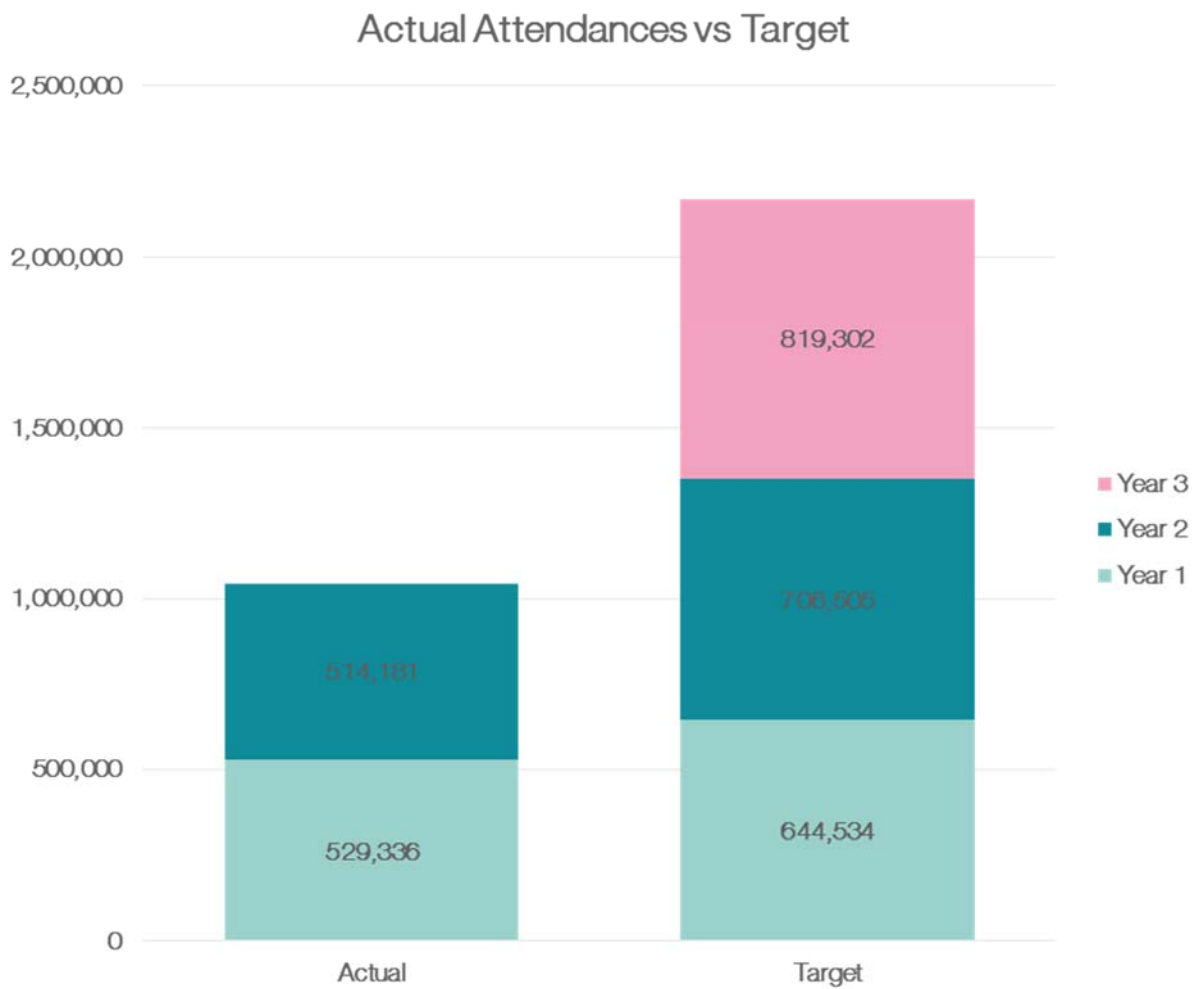
APPENDIX

Programme level charts showing the quantitative data reported by the USAF projects.

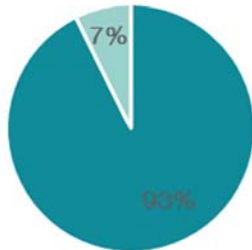Mid way through delivery, projects have already achieved 77% of their overall participants target

Actual Participants vs Target

	Actual	Target
Year 3		72,453
Year 2	78,513	64,408
Year 1	87,762	79,468

Mid way through delivery, projects have achieved 48% of their overall attendances target

Actual Attendances vs Target

	Actual	Target
Year 3		819,302
Year 2	514,181	706,806
Year 1	529,336	644,534

The participant mix is very close to what was expected

Participants by Type

7%

93%

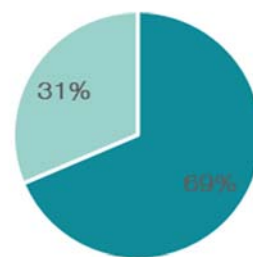■ HE Student   ■ Other (inc Staff)

Participants by Gender

47%

53%
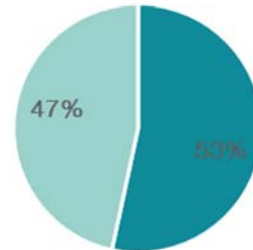
■ Male   ■ Female

Participants by Age
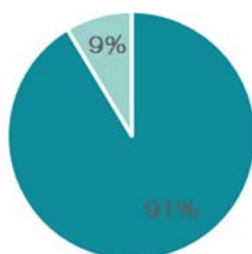

14%

86%
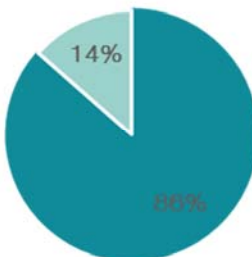
■ 14-25   ■ 26+

Participants by Ethnicity

31%

69%

■ White   ■ BAME

Participants by Disability

9%

91%

■ No disability or LLI   ■ Disability or LLI

The proportions of BAME and disabled participants are both slightly higher than expected. The proportions of female and 26+ participants are both slightly lower than expected.