

# Inter County Ladies Football and Camogie Government Grant Scheme

Interim Evaluation  
March 2018



wgpa



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# INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF GOVERNMENT GRANT SCHEME

This document sets out an interim, independent evaluation of the Government grant scheme for Inter County ladies' football and camogie players. The grant scheme provides financial support for the highest-grade adult teams in each code in each county in Ireland.

260 players, 13 player representatives, 34 managers/coaches and 61 County Board members contributed to the interim evaluation alongside contributions from the various associations and stakeholders. This interim report considers the impact of the scheme after 1-year. Section 1 provides an overview of the scheme, its evolution, context and aims and objectives.

# Overview Government Grant Scheme

On the 15th June 2016, the then Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Patrick O'Donovan TD, announced a two-year agreement, commencing in 2017, to provide support for Inter County Ladies Football and Camogie Players. Grant aid of €1,000,000 over two playing seasons (2017 and 2018), is distributed equally to all highest-grade county teams participating in National League and/or All Ireland championship competitions. Counties can only use the funds to engage industry accredited personnel.

Funds are provided by the Irish Government, distributed through Sport Ireland and administered collaboratively by the Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA), the Camogie Association and the Women's Gaelic Players Association through a Scheme Implementation Group (SIG) to support initiatives that will raise standards and provide an enhanced playing and training environment for Inter County players and teams.

Counties apply for funding against 3 core priority areas including:

## I. Injury Prevention and Medical Cover

This support enables teams to invest in pre-habilitation activity such as movement screening, mobility training and injury prevention services. It also enables teams to access appropriate physiotherapy and medical cover at games and training or to access specialist recovery services such as Cryotherapy and sports massage.

## II. Maximizing Player and Team Performance

This area seeks to create enhanced and consistent access to activities and services such as strength and conditioning programmes, specialist coaching, performance analysis (e.g. video analysis and player statistics), performance nutrition advice and psychological preparation.

**A MAXIMUM OF 80% OF THE TOTAL AVAILABLE GRANT EACH YEAR IS ALLOCATED FOR THESE TWO ELEMENTS.**

## III. Access to Training Facilities

The third investment area for teams, supports access to specialist training facilities such as: all weather, indoor and floodlit facilities as well as gym and pool use.

**A MAXIMUM OF 20% OF THE TOTAL AVAILABLE GRANT EACH YEAR IS ALLOCATED FOR THIS ELEMENT.**

The overall funding package also provides an element of administrative support, capacity building and evaluation.

## Evolution of the Government Grant Scheme

The announcement of funding was an outcome of more than 18 months of lobbying and engagement, which culminated in a joint proposal by the Women's Gaelic Players Association (WGPA), the Camogie Association and the Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA) to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. This proposal was underpinned by research conducted in 2014 entitled "Let's Make Things Better".

The findings of the report appear to be acknowledged and endorsed in the announcement of the scheme, Minister O'Donovan said **"I want to take this opportunity to recognise the valuable contribution that our Inter County Ladies Football and Camogie Players make to Gaelic games. Their success is important, not just at a sporting level, but also on the ground level where they inspire young women to become involved in ladies' football or Camogie and stay involved throughout school and into their adult life. The funding allocation shows the confidence held by the Government in the success of our Inter County Ladies Football and Camogie Players, and that it recognises the role of the teams, the volunteers and the supporters in forming strong community spirit throughout the country"**.

This sentiment was echoed by the then Chairperson of Sport Ireland who commented that **"Government support for Inter County Ladies Gaelic Football and the Camogie Association players, distributed through Sport Ireland, is an indicator of the recognition that exists at national level for the unique contribution the players make as the leading exponents of our indigenous national games, the contribution that players make to the economic and social fabric of the nation and their commitment to play the game at highest level possible"**.

Thus, the context, evolution and purpose of the scheme are coalesced into core objectives of raising standards and creating an enhanced training and playing environment for Inter County players, recognising their status as elite athletes and deepening the contribution of these players and teams to wider participation and issues of societal challenge.

# Structure of the Government Grant Scheme

The delivery mechanism and operating structure for the grant scheme is presented below.



A team led funding model is a key distinguishable characteristic of this scheme. Funding is allocated to County teams to fund an agreed set of activities, rather than as expenses to individual players.

At County level, administrators (County boards), management and players must work collaboratively to consult, plan and report on agreed initiatives that are eligible for funding under the scheme. The Scheme Implementation Group (SIG) reports to a National Steering Group that is a sub-committee of Sport Ireland and includes representation from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. The following table highlights the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders.

| STAKEHOLDER                               | ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES   |
|---|--|
| Department of Transport Tourism and Sport | Funder - provides funding for the grant scheme and participates on the high-level steering group for the scheme  |
| Sport Ireland                             | Administers grant aid from the Department to the various associations and leads the National steering group  |
| High Level Steering Group                 | Provides strategic direction, oversight and scrutiny on the grant scheme. Receives reports from the Scheme Implementation Group (SIG) on strengths, weaknesses and impacts and considers the future direction of the scheme  |
| Scheme Implementation Group (SIG)         | Comprised of an independent chairperson, scheme administrator (appointed in February 2017) and two representatives each from the Ladies Gaelic Football Association, the Camogie Association and the Women's Gaelic Players Association. The SIG oversees the implementation of the grant scheme including liaising with Counties, assessing applications, making grant recommendations and overseeing an independent evaluation |
| Associations (Camogie, LGFA, WGPA)        | Grant funding is filtered through the various associations and distributed to respective Counties. Responsibility lies with them for promoting the scheme within their respective codes and engaging with Counties   |
| County Board/Managers/ Player Reps        | Consulting with stakeholders in each county, developing and/ submitting applications, monitoring and reviewing spend in line with grant offers and eligibility criteria  |

## Application Process

Regarding the application process, eligible teams can access funding until they are knocked out of the championship. Teams are therefore encouraged to 'front load' the use of the fund to the earlier stages of a season (January – May). The following diagram highlights the intended process and timeframes for the annual implementation of the scheme.



It should be noted that the diagram reflects an intended process. In year 1, the scheme was not launched for applications until February 2017 with decisions in April. In year 2 the application process opened in December 2017 and decisions made in February/March 2018.

County Boards are tasked with developing a plan detailing how they will use grant funding to raise standards and create an enhanced training and playing environment in their County. This process must include consultation and input from players. A plan is drawn up in the form of a grant application and signed by the County Secretary, Team manager and Player Representative.

Each County team submits the application to the SIG who sign off and allocate funding. The process is not a competitive process in that the amount of funding allocated is fixed per County (€8,000 year 1). If applications are completed, signed and include eligible expenditure, they are signed off and agreed by the SIG. Counties are required to monitor spend in line with their application, including providing receipts, invoices and details of qualifications for relevant personnel (i.e. strength and conditioning coach).



## EVALUATION PROCESS

The scheme implementation group commissioned an independent and objective evaluation of the two-year Government Grant Support Scheme including an interim evaluation at the end of Year 1. The terms of reference set out several objectives for the evaluation report, these are presented in this section along with the approach adopted to meet key requirements.



**The terms of reference identified the following as its main objectives:**

- A.** To objectively evaluate the effectiveness of the Scheme in contributing to an enhanced playing and training environment for Inter County ladies' footballers and Camogie players
- B.** To identify and assess the key features and strengths /weaknesses of the Scheme
- C.** To support the Scheme Implementation Group to determine future priorities for the strategic development of the Scheme

**The evaluation should include:**

-  An objective examination of if, and how the Scheme has impacted on county players' and county teams' development across the Schemes three primary areas (Injury Prevention and Medical Cover, Maximising Player and Team Performance, Access to Training Facilities)
-  An objective examination of the perception of Inter County players on how the Scheme has impacted on their playing and training environment
-  An objective examination of the methods and activities used to deliver the Scheme
-  An objective examination of the systems used to track outcomes during the Scheme's implementation
-  An objective examination of the range of relationships amongst stakeholders/participants engaged in the development and implementation of the Scheme
-  An objective examination of the supports made available to participants in the Scheme
-  An objective examination of the governance and administration processes of the Scheme
-  An objective examination of the deployment of resources used to implement the Scheme
-  A review of the promotional activities (promoting sport as a healthy activity) performed by Inter County Camogie and Ladies Football teams
-  Provision of objective recommendations for future priorities for the strategic development of the Scheme.

S3 Solutions was appointed to complete the evaluation in November 2017. The following represents the steps taken in compiling this interim evaluation report.

**STAGE**

**1**

Initiation meeting with the Scheme Implementation Group (SIG) to agree Evaluation Framework & approach

**STAGE**

**2**

Development and distribution of web based survey to all participating counties (administrators, managers, player reps and players)

**STAGE**

**3**

Focus group workshops with all participating counties at grant scheme workshop events in Limerick, Enniskillen and Dublin

**STAGE**

**4**

Facilitated reflective discussion with the Scheme Implementation Group (SIG) and representatives of the various associations

**STAGE**

**5**

Direct consultation with statutory representatives and other stakeholders

**STAGE**

**6**

Development of draft report, further discussion with stakeholders and completion of final report

This interim evaluation process was undertaken during the period 9th November 2017 – 28th February 2018.

## Evaluation Reflections

The primary focus of the Interim evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of the scheme against core objectives of raising standards and enhancing the playing and training environment. The report includes an initial assessment of processes, methods and systems used. Several changes have already been implemented by the SIG during the 2nd year application process. These will be considered in greater detail in the final evaluation.

County Boards and teams experience a natural turnover of players, administrators and coaching staff at the end of each season. Some of those participating in this evaluation may not have experienced Inter County Football or Camogie prior to the grant scheme and therefore have no baseline experience with which to measure change. The research and consultation phase of this interim evaluation coincided with this natural turnover (November- February)

Efforts have been made to ensure the validity and reliability of findings through multiple method consultation (surveys, focus groups and interviews). As with any survey data, errors due to question non-responses may exist. The number of respondents who chose to respond to a survey question may be different from those who chose not to respond, thus creating bias. The multiple method consultation process was extended on two occasions to enable further engagement and sampling. Thus, the consultation process reached a point of theoretical saturation and the concepts in the thematic analysis are well developed.





## **GRANT SCHEME HEADLINES AND FACTS**

Year 1 of the Government Grant Scheme ended in December 2017, the following section presents some of the key headline statistics for the scheme during year 1 spend. An analysis of the allocation of funds and use of grant aid overall is also included in this section. This contextualises consultation data presented later in the report

84% of players & 90% of managers' report the grant scheme as contributing to an increase in the general standard of the Inter County game

70% of players report increases in the extent to which they view themselves as an elite athlete

46% of players and 67% of County Board Members/Managers report improved unity of purpose/relationships in the County

66% of players and 92% of managers' report increased standards of injury prevention

55 County teams accessed grant support (23 Camogie, 32 Football)

60% of players and 90% of managers' report increased standards of specialist coaching (i.e. goalkeeping)

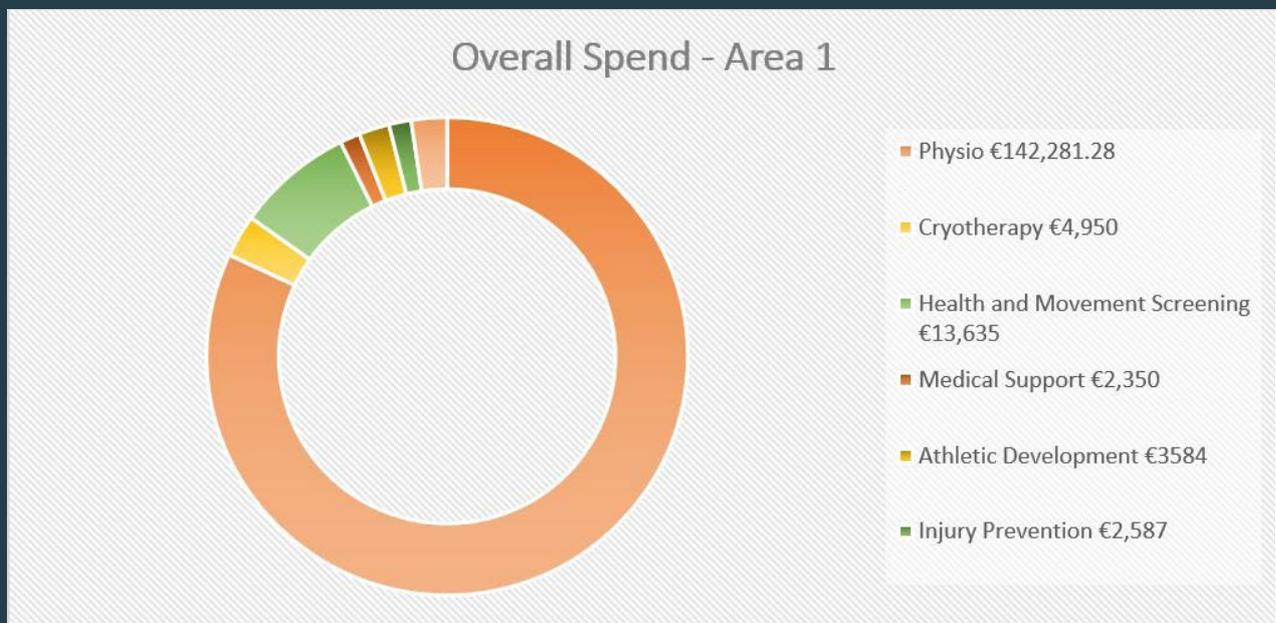
Physio at matches and at training (33%), strength & conditioning (17%) were the most common uses of grant aid

## Overall analysis of spend

The following charts provide an overall allocation of funds across each of the priority areas to all participating Counties across both codes. The total grants allocated in year 1 was €425,159.76. This represents an underspend of €24,840.24 against the €450,000 available as direct grant aid in 2017, this relates to the withdrawal of County teams from competition and has been reallocated to year 2.

### Injury Prevention and Medical Cover

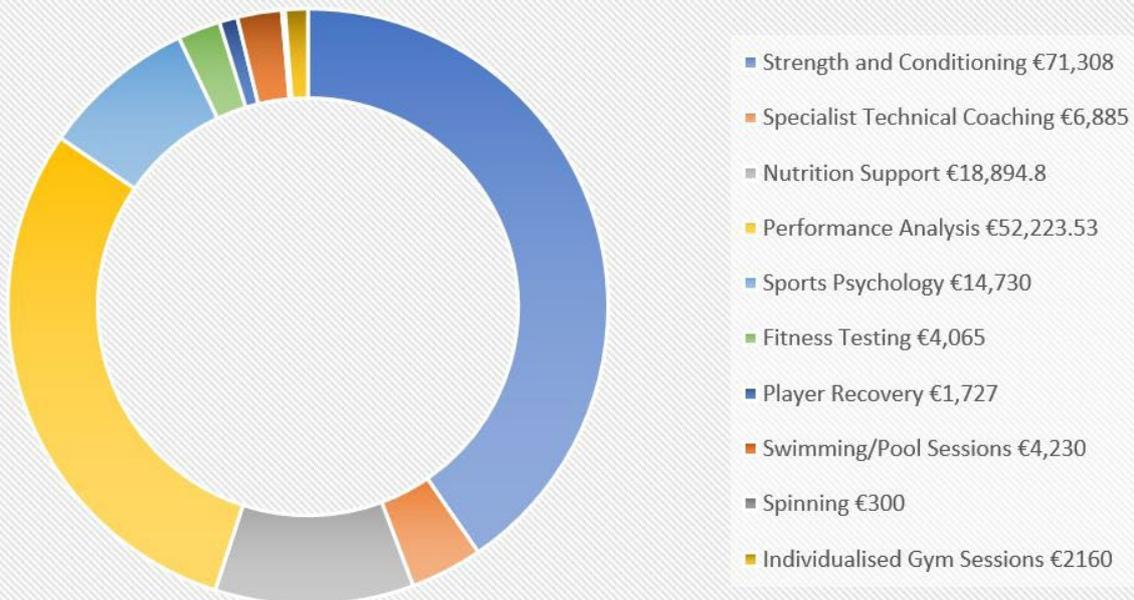
This support enables teams to invest in pre-habilitation activity such as movement screening, mobility training and injury prevention services. It also enables teams to access appropriate physiotherapy and medical cover at games and training or to specialist recovery services such as Cryotherapy and sports massage. The Total amount allocated to area 1 was €173,547.93, 41% of the overall grant allocation. Access to physiotherapy both at matches and at training accounted for 82% of all spend in area 1.



## Maximizing Player and Team Performance

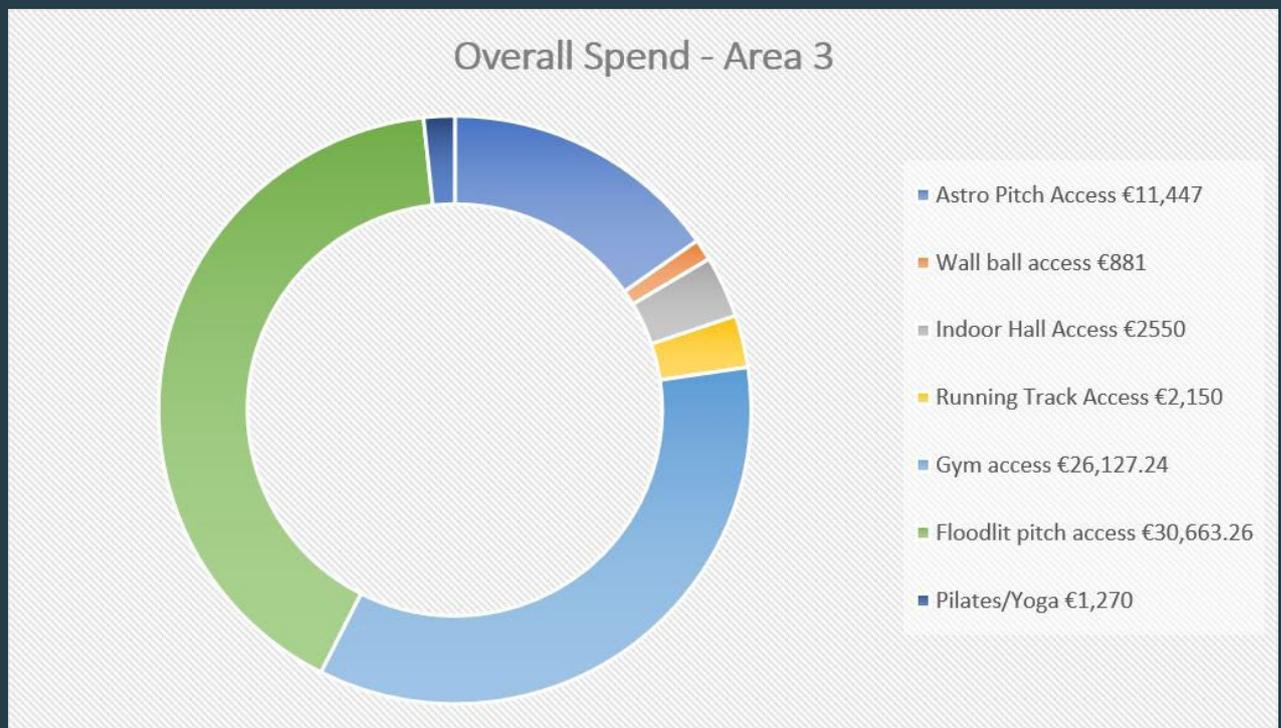
This area seeks to create enhanced and consistent access to activities and services such as strength and conditioning programmes, specialist coaching, performance analysis (e.g. video analysis and player statistics), performance nutrition advice and psychological preparation. Counties can only use the funds to engage industry accredited personnel. €176,523.33 was claimed by Counties for support under area 2, accounting for 42% of the overall grant allocation. Access to strength and conditioning (40%) and performance analysis (30%) were the most popular services accessed under area 2.

Overall Spend - Area 2



## Access to Training Facilities

The third investment area for teams supports access to specialist training facilities such as: all weather, indoor and floodlit facilities as well as gym and pool use. A total amount of €75,088.50 was invested in this area, accounting for 18% of the overall grant allocation. Access to floodlit pitches (41%), gym access (35%) and astro pitches (15%) made up the majority of this area.





## GRANT SCHEME IMPACT

The interim evaluation has been informed by engagements with players, player reps, county administrators, managers, the Scheme Implementation Group (SIG) and other key stakeholders. A web-based survey was developed and distributed, gathering 367 responses. A mixture of closed and open questions were included to measure the extent to which the scheme has enhanced standards across various facets of the Inter County game.

In addition, a series of focus groups, interviews and facilitated discussions were hosted to augment survey findings. More than 280 individuals contributed to these discussions.

The primary focus of the consultation was to explore the effectiveness of the grant scheme in contributing to raising standards and providing an enhanced training environment, aligning with the scheme aspirations and terms of reference for the evaluation. This section sets out the key findings.

## Overview of consultations

A mixed method consultation approach was used to gather data from beneficiaries and stakeholders. A survey was selected as a key data collection tool to ensure all players, administrators and managers had an opportunity to input to the evaluation process. The web-based survey was distributed via County Secretaries to the 55 participating county teams. 260 players, 13 player representatives, 34 managers/coaches and 61 County Board members responded to the survey.

In addition, more than 280 players (including player reps), managers, County Board members, association representatives and SIG members participated in focus group discussions and individual interviews. These were facilitated at 3 grant information workshops in Limerick, Enniskillen and Dublin (December 2017 – January 2018) and subsequent focus group sessions with SIG members.

-  64% of respondents to the survey associated mostly with Ladies Football and 36% with Camogie, this is proportionate to the number of participating teams in each code.
-  At least 1 response was received from every County, with 40 the highest response rate from a single county and 27 the highest response rate from a single team.
-  100% of managers & administrators and 81% of all players indicated that they are aware of the Government Grant Scheme
-  Players report that physio at matches (87%), physio at training (76%), Strength and conditioning (70%) and access to facilities such as floodlit pitches (65%), gym (42%) and synthetic pitches (40%) were the most common uses of grant scheme.
-  Managers and administrators perceived strength and conditioning as the most common use of the scheme (80%) ahead of physio at training (78%) and physio at matches (69%).

## Thematic Analysis

For clarity and ease of reference, the analysis has been presented under the following key themes:

-  Raising standards
-  Effectiveness and Experience of the Grant Scheme
-  Grant scheme process and priorities
-  Indirect Impacts
-  Connectivity and collaboration

## Raising Standards

The core objective of the fund is about raising standards and improving the standard of playing and training environments. Respondents to the survey were asked to rate perceived increases or decreases in standards as a direct result of services/support accessed in the 2017 season. The following represents the views of players/player reps and managers/administrators for comparison:

**84%**

of players report that the standard of the Inter County game generally has increased slightly or increased greatly

**66%**

of players report that the standard of injury prevention provision has increased slightly or greatly

**63%**

of players report that the standard of welfare support has increased slightly or greatly

**60%**

of players report that the standard of specialist coaching has increased slightly or greatly

**53%**

of players report that the standard of training facilities has increased slightly or greatly

**90%**

of managers/administrators report that the standard of the Inter County game generally has increased slightly or increased greatly

**92%**

of managers/administrators report that the standard of injury prevention provision has increased slightly or greatly

**88%**

of managers/administrators report that the standard of welfare support has increased slightly or greatly

**90%**

of managers/administrators report that the standard of specialist coaching has increased slightly or greatly

**73%**

of managers/administrators report that the standard of training facilities has increased slightly or greatly

A clear majority of those engaged reported an increase in standards in the Inter County game. The standard of injury prevention, standard of specialist coaching, standard of player welfare and standard of the Inter County game generally were reported as having experienced the greatest increases.

**“ VERY POSITIVE AND EXCELLENT INITIATIVE. ALLOWS THE TEAM TO BECOME EVEN MORE PROFESSIONAL. ALLOWED TEAM TO IMPROVE STANDARDS (PLAYER) ”**

For most players, this increase in standard is aligned to the increased access to professional services such as physiotherapists at training and at games, to dedicated strength and conditioning coaches, sports psychologists and performance analysis as well as access to improved facilities. The link between greater access to professional services and improved standards appears self-evident, the impact of the grant scheme therefore appears to be in creating the access, particularly where it would otherwise not have been there.

The findings indicate that managers/administrators perceive greater increases in standards compared to players. This may reflect a greater understanding and awareness of what the grant scheme provided within specific Counties, and therefore an understanding of ‘what would not have been available’ in the absence of grant funding. The highest levels of attribution to the grant scheme were aligned to increased standards of injury prevention and increased standards of specialist coaching.

**“ THE GRANT SCHEME ACKNOWLEDGED OUR SENIOR INTER COUNTY PLAYERS AS ELITE ATHLETES. COUNTY MANAGEMENT WERE FORCED TO LOOK AT WAYS TO ASSIST OUR ELITE PLAYERS WHICH THEY WOULD NOT NECESSARILY HAVE CONSIDERED BEFORE. COUNTY COACHES AND EXECUTIVES WERE PROVIDED WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRY AND TEST SERVICES TO ASSIST OUR TOP PLAYERS AND PROMOTE OUR COUNTY TEAMS THAT THEY COULD NOT NECESSARILY HAVE AFFORDED PREVIOUSLY (ADMINISTRATOR) ”**

In comparing their access to services and facilities in 2017 with the 2016 season, 43% of the players and 59% of administrators/managers’ report that they did not access these services in the previous season (2016). Two key reasons were provided to explain this, including: “did not have the finances/resources” or “did not have a team”.

Relating to access to services prior to the grant scheme, most administrators and managers (67%) reported in the survey that they would have had some access to the same services in 2016, but not at the same level.

Only 2 County teams report that they would have had the same access, whereas 14 teams (28%) report that they would not have had access at all in the absence of government grant scheme.

In addition to improved standards on the field, the grant scheme appears to have contributed to improved off field standards:

-  **70%** of players have reported increases in the extent to which they view themselves as an elite athlete
-  **63%** of administrators and managers reported increased professionalism of the County Board
-  **61%** of administrators and managers reported increased skills within the County Board

**“ MORE FUNDS ALLOCATED TO THE SCHEME IS THE BIGGEST PRIORITY. OUR PLAYERS READ OF THE GRANTS TO OTHER SPORTS AND THIS SCHEME, THOUGH VERY WELCOME APPEARS TO BE JUST A TINY STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION- ONWARDS AND UPWARDS HOPEFULLY (ADMINISTRATOR) ”**

The perceived increases in ‘being viewed as an elite athlete’ include high levels of attribution to the grant scheme from players. This is similar for increases in professionalism and skills, with reference to the processes required to access, administer and spend the grant as key contributors to increased professionalism and skills within the County Board.

The attribution of impact appears stronger in Counties that self-report as “lower grade” or “weaker” compared to those that are perceived as “higher grade” or “stronger”. This is reflective of a dramatic increase in access to services, in many cases accessing services or facilities for the first time compared to Counties who have already been exposed to these types of high performance initiatives. *“I am aware of the grant scheme, but I have not noticed much changes over the last 12 months”*. It is likely that this difference in perception will reduce should the grant scheme continue.

Despite general overall recognition of an increase in standards, one of the consistent themes emerging from the consultation process was the notion of **“a step in the right direction”**. A considerable proportion of players appeared to reflect on **“a new phase/stage of Inter County football”** that focuses on high performance. This is reflected by one player who indicates: **“Great initiative. Would feel lucky to be a team that is at a stage where high performance is the next stage of development and are therefore able to utilise this grant to higher degree while a lot of other counties are struggling to provide the necessities for their teams. Enabled us to develop a relationship with our county board and enlighten them about what is necessary to progress.”**

Others in recognising the **‘step in the right direction’** also suggested that it is now **“impossible to go back to where we were”**

This aligns to an overarching finding that recognises the direct correlation between increased resources, leading to increased access to services, and therefore increased standards.

This is reflected in significant numbers of respondents who then indicated additional funding or increased resources as a critical next step for the scheme.

Notable mentions were made regarding the impact of the scheme on player ‘turn out’ or ‘drop out’. The increased access to professional coaching, injury prevention and facilities appeared to be a key contributor to increased attendance. Meaningful references were made to increased internal competition between members of the same team, feelings of “not wanting to fall behind” are derived from the extra strength and conditioning sessions for example. Furthermore, this competitive edge is perceived to transfer to County level and ultimately Inter County games. A broad consensus is that the increased competition contributes to increases in standards overall.

**“** WHILE WE ACCESSED SOME OF THE SPORTS SCIENCE SUPPORTS BEFORE LAST YEAR, THE FUNDING ALLOWED US TO ROLL IT OUT IN A MORE CONSISTENT AND PROFESSIONAL WAY THIS YEAR. AS EVERYTHING WAS AGREED BETWEEN THE 3 PARTIES BEFOREHAND, THERE WAS BETTER ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ENSURING THE ACTION PLAN WAS IMPLEMENTED. A MORE ENJOYABLE PLAYING EXPERIENCE, FELT MORE VALUED AS A PLAYER & IT FREED UP MONEY FOR THE COUNTY BOARD TO SPEND ON OTHER THINGS E.G. WE RAN AN UNDERAGE DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY IN NOVEMBER FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER **”**

**(PLAYER)**

“ “ VERY POSITIVE AND EXCELLENT INITIATIVE. ALLOWS THE TEAM TO BECOME EVEN MORE PROFESSIONAL. ALLOWED TEAM TO IMPROVE STANDARDS ” ”

“ “ RECOGNITION OF LADIES FOOTBALLERS AND CAMOGIE PLAYERS AS ELITE ATHLETES. OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE A MORE LEVEL PLAYING FIELD BY ALLOWING ALL COUNTIES THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACCESS SUPPORTS SUCH AS S&C AND PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS ” ”

“ “ AS ONE OF THE COUNTIES POSSIBLY CONSIDERED WEAKER THAN THE REST, THE GRANT PROVIDED US WITH SUPPORTS AND SERVICES ALLOWING US TO IMPROVE PLAYERS INDIVIDUALLY AND THEN AS A UNITED TEAM. THE PSYCHOLOGIST MENTALLY BROUGHT US ON AND SO DID OUR STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING COACH AMONG MANY OTHER THINGS, BUT THESE SERVICES WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE FUNDING WE RECEIVED. ” ”

“ “ I FEEL IT CONTRIBUTED TO BETTER TRAINING FACILITIES AND ALLOWS PLAYERS GREATER ACCESS TO THE DIFFERENT SPORT SCIENCE ELEMENTS OF THE GAME INCLUDING VIDEO ANALYSIS, RECOVERY METHODS, STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING. AREAS THAT MIGHT BE CONSIDERED MORE WITHIN THE FUTURE, ARE LOOKING AT TRAVEL EXPENSES. BUT DEFINITELY A VERY POSITIVE STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. ” ”

“ “ IT HAS RAISED THE PROFESSIONALISM OF THE SPORT. IT HAS ALLOWED COUNTY TEAMS WHO PREVIOUSLY HAD NO ACCESS TO STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING, GYMS, AND PHYSIO AT TRAINING TO GAIN ACCESS. IT HAS DIRECTLY INFLUENCED THE RATE OF PLAYER TURNOVER IN JUST ONE YEAR. THIS WILL THEREFORE IMPROVE THE LEVEL OF COMPETITION IN THE CHAMPIONSHIP AND LEAGUE. IT HAS MADE PLAYERS FEEL MORE LIKE ATHLETES AND THEREFORE TRAIN MORE LIKE ATHLETES. IT HAS ALSO BEEN A MODEL FOR THE POWER OF INDIVIDUALS TO MAKE CHANGE. ” ”

“ AS ONE OF THE COUNTIES POSSIBLY CONSIDERED WEAKER THAN THE REST, THE GRANT PROVIDED US WITH SUPPORTS AND SERVICES ALLOWING US TO IMPROVE PLAYERS INDIVIDUALLY AND THEN AS A UNITED TEAM. THE PSYCHOLOGIST MENTALLY BROUGHT US ON AND SO DID OUR STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING COACH AMONG MANY OTHER THINGS, BUT THESE SERVICES WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE FUNDING WE RECEIVED. (PLAYER) ”

“ THE LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT OF PLAYERS APPEARS TO INFLUENCE THEIR AWARENESS OF THE IMPACT OF THE GRANT SCHEME AND THEREFORE ATTRIBUTION OF THE SCHEME TO ANY IMPACT. WE HAVEN'T ACCESSED THE POOL SO FAR THIS YEAR, BUT FOR THE MOST PART LAST YEAR WE HAD TO PAY OURSELVES, WE DON'T GET EXPENSES FOR TRAVELLING HOME FROM COLLEGE OR WORK IN OTHER COUNTIES DURING THE WEEK AND WE FUNDRAISE/PAY FOR ANY GEAR WE RECEIVE OR TRAINING WEEKENDS WE GO ON ”

“ I THINK OVER TIME AS THE STANDARD AND PROFILE OF INTER COUNTY FOOTBALL CONTINUES TO IMPROVE THERE WILL BE MORE OF AN OPPORTUNITY TO USE THE GRANT SCHEME FOR SPECIALISED PRODUCTS AND SERVICES. CURRENTLY TOO MUCH OF THE FUNDING IS ALLOWED FOR PHYSIO WHICH MAKES IT EASY FOR COUNTY BOARDS TO JUST CLAIM THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT FOR PHYSIO. I FEEL PHYSIOTHERAPY IS A MINIMUM REQUIREMENT THAT SHOULD BE PROVIDED FOR PLAYERS AT THIS LEVEL AND SHOULD NOT BE INCLUDED IN THE CRITERIA UNDER THE GOVERNMENT GRANT SCHEME ”

“ IT'S A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, BUT THERE IS STILL A LONG WAY TO GO TO MEET STANDARDS THAT ARE REQUIRED AT INTER COUNTY LEVEL NOW ”

“ FROM TALKING TO OTHER COUNTIES, IT SEEMS VERY POSITIVE, BUT I DIDN'T NOTICE HUGE DIFFERENCES IN MY COUNTY ”

## Effectiveness and Experience of the Grant Scheme

One of the key distinguishable characteristics about this grant scheme is that it is to be used by teams collectively, rather than paid to individuals as per the male game. Thus, adequate engagement and consultation between managers, administrators and player reps to design and develop the application for grant aid was set out in the guidance as one of the requisites of the application process.

Respondents were asked to report on the grant scheme process in their respective Counties using a set of Likert scale questions in the survey, the key findings include:

**55%**

of players agree or strongly agree that they understood what they could and could not apply for

**57%**

of players agree or strongly agree that they were aware of the application process and were consulted as part of the process, 30% disagree or strongly disagree that this was the case

**57%**

of players agree or strongly agree that players voices were represented in the decision-making process

**71%**

of players agree or strongly agree that the grant scheme priorities are applicable and relevant, only 5% disagree and 23% are unsure

**90%**

of managers/administrators agree or strongly agree that they understood what they could and could not apply for

**98%**

of managers/administrators agree or strongly agree that the completion of the application form was a collective effort involving county board representatives, managers and players

**90%**

of managers/administrators agree or strongly agree that players voices were represented in the decision-making process

**96%**

of managers/administrators agree or strongly agree that the grant scheme priorities are applicable and relevant, only 4% disagree

The findings highlight a disconnect in the perceived experience of players generally and that of managers/administrators. This experience appears to differ on a team by team basis, no specific trends have emerged by County or by code. Several clear trends have emerged during the thematic analysis;

- 1** High levels of awareness of the scheme, yet low levels of engagement in its design creates frustration amongst playing members. "The grant itself is a huge positive to Inter County teams but the implementation of funds was a negative experience within our county". This polarises the administrative and playing sides of the County, leading to perceptions/and misperceptions regarding the use of the grant such as "We received nothing more than we would any other season. In my opinion our county board used the €8,000 as part of their normal annual budget and not in addition to their annual budget for the Senior Ladies team".

**“ IT IS DEFINITELY A GREAT INITIATIVE BUT HOW GOOD THE IMPACT IS DEPENDS ON HOW EACH COUNTY BOARD AND MANAGEMENT USE IT AND PERSONALLY DIDN'T SEE A MASSIVE IMPACT IN OUR COUNTY UNFORTUNATELY ”**

- 2** The level of involvement of players appears to influence their awareness of the impact of the grant scheme and therefore attribution of the scheme to any impact. In one County, 100% of managers/administrators reported the grant scheme as having a major contribution to improved injury prevention standards for example. Conversely, less than one third of players in this County recognise the government grant scheme as having a 'major contribution' on any improvement to injury prevention. Further, in Counties that appear to have implemented a highly consultative and engaging process, participation in the evaluation activities (surveys and focus groups) was evidently stronger.
- 3** Where Counties appear to have co-designed the grant application and negotiated use of the grant with players, it has contributed to a greater unity of purpose and morale in that County. This manifests in players reporting greater understanding and empathy for the job of county administrators, whilst those on the administrative side of the County report having a greater appreciation for the requirements to compete at the elite level.

**“ VERY POSITIVE, INCREASED ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN PLAYERS REPS/PLAYER/MANAGEMENT. ALLEVIATED SOME PRESSURE FOR CONSTANT FUNDRAISING RAISING, ALLOWED US ELITE PLAYERS GAIN ACCESS TO ELITE FACILITIES. INCREASED MORAL IN THE SQUAD AS A RESULT AND INCREASED OUR OVERALL APPRECIATION FOR THE WORK THAT THE WCPA DO FOR US ALSO ”**

# Grant Scheme Process and Priorities

All respondents were asked to reflect on the strengths, weaknesses and the preferred future direction of the scheme. Practical and logistical suggestions to improve and enhance the grant scheme process were identified consistently by those engaged. 102 Qualitative statements were provided via web-based survey and further anecdotal feedback gathered through focus groups and interviews, the following represent the common trends:

## Grant Scheme management and administration

For the associations, recognising that this is the first grant scheme of its kind and for many of the County Boards, it may be the first time they have accessed a grant, leads to an acknowledgement and acceptance of 'teething problems'. The associations underestimated the time commitment required to administer the grant scheme and report considerable time spent meeting, designing and developing processes, assessing applications and liaising with Counties. The introduction of a grant scheme administrator in February 2017 (appointed by the Camogie Association on behalf of the SIG) has proven to be a crucial appointment and has resulted in increased efficiency in terms of communication, organisation and administration of finances and grant applications.

## Timing, Consultation and Quality of Application

A challenge for Counties is the timing of applications and workshops which typically coincide with natural turnover of personnel, appointing new management teams or electing new members to County Boards. The associations also acknowledge that County Boards are led and administered by

volunteers, so time constraints are already a challenge for many. In addition, the grant scheme is only one aspect of the annual work plan relating to senior County teams, not to mention Minor teams and underage development programmes.

In year 1, one of the most common themes across qualitative statements and anecdotal feedback was the need to enhance communication at County level and improved consultation and engagement with players in the design and development of applications. In addition, the timeframe between submission and assessment of applications and the actual allocation of funds "took too long" according to most Counties, this led to an element of uncertainty about what monies would be available and, in some cases, contributed to an underspend for County teams that faced an early exit from the Championship.

The evaluation has established that the overall quality of application in year 1 was low and at times lacked imagination in the use of funds. It is acknowledged that the timing constraint was a key contributor to this and for many, it may have been the first time completing an application. Several of those consulted also suggested that these may be contributing factors to a lack of consultation and engagement with players regarding the co-design of applications in year 1 in their respective County.

Multiple recommendations were received in relation to moving to an online application. Many of those consulted identified the need for mandating consultation and engagement, this could possibly emerge as a justification or scoring criteria in a County's application for funding.



### **Grant Scheme Priorities and Criteria caps**

The consultation established broad agreement that the priorities identified (injury prevention, maximising performance, training facilities) were appropriate, however mixed views emerged in relation to caps placed on funding criteria. This is particularly prevalent amongst Counties self-reporting as 'weaker' or 'lower grade' who suggest that needs a led approach is required to 'bridge the gap' or 'level the playing field' with "higher grade" or "stronger" Counties. The case is proposed by several Counties that at a specific stage in their evolution (some teams only newly formed), that certain services are not yet required or prioritised and therefore flexibility

should be allowed to use a greater proportion of funds under one criterion.

Conversely, many of the Counties indicated that the 'cap' required them to think about the various areas of performance that could be enhanced and in many cases Counties 'tried out' or 'tested' services for the first time (i.e. performance analysis, athletic development). A significant number of references were made to including additional criteria within the grant eligibility, this included: training and capacity building (i.e. training local individuals to complete performance analysis training), equipment, nutrition and potentially moving toward individual player expenses, particularly for travel to and from training.

## Workshops and mentoring

Consistent references were made to the benefit of the funding workshops and therefore the need for more, smaller workshops with the inclusion of mentoring and technical capacity building in the design and development of the application/supports should be added. It is felt that this would allow for more intimate conversation, advice and guidance on the development and submission of applications.

## Measuring impact

Relating to measuring and tracking outcomes, the SIG is reliant on the external, independent evaluation to implement measures to track outcomes and impact. A lack of specific baseline data for the scheme in relation to Counties perceptions of standards and training environment has resulted in the evaluation using baseline data from the 2014 Let's Make Things Better report (WGPA). It is also recognised that teams are at different stages in their evolution and therefore it is difficult to compare the extent of improvement (if any). Stakeholders suggest that as/if the scheme evolves and develops, it would benefit from the development of a series of metrics or the evolution of an agreed set of minimum standards that enable an exploration in increases in standards on a team by team basis.

It should be noted that at the time of this interim report, the year 2 application process is coming to an end and year 2 awards being allocated to Counties. Several changes have already been implemented by the SIG to address some of the challenges identified by Counties, these include: introduction of earlier application process and delivery of additional grant workshops. Early anecdotal feedback from SIG representatives suggest a notable improvement in the quality of application and diversity of services proposed by County teams.



# Indirect Impacts

The objectives of the grant scheme are clearly set out in relation to raising standards and improving the playing and training environments. However, the feedback from consultations has identified a range of indirect impacts of the scheme.

## Self esteem/Confidence and Role Models

A recurring theme throughout the consultation process was the increases to self-esteem and Self-confidence experienced and reported by players. This is reflected both in the significant (70%) proportion of players who report increases in the extent to which they view themselves as an elite athlete and anecdotally through focus group data. In relation to attribution, the consultation identifies several key trends regarding the source of this impact:

- 1 Recognition** – several references to the source of funding (i.e. government support) were regarded as an endorsement of esteem by players, administrators and managers: “Apart from extra funding which was vital, the grant scheme gave an impression of elitism and professionalism to our players, allowing them to see that they were regarded as top sportspeople by our government”.
- 2 Professionalism** - In both open-ended survey questions and through focus group engagement, players associate “access” to professional coaches and service providers with status and feelings of “elite”. The perception of enhanced professionalism has contributed to enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence: “It has raised the professionalism of the sport. It has allowed county teams who previously had no access to strength and conditioning, gyms, and physio at training to gain access. It has directly influenced the rate of player turnover in just one year. This will therefore improve the level of competition in the championship and league. It has made players feel more like athletes and therefore train more like athletes. It has also been a model for the power of individuals to make change”
- 3 Role Models** – During focus group discussion, several Counties reflected on the “trickle down” impact of the grant. Players and coaches provided anecdotes about Minor teams showing significant increases in enthusiasm and motivation as a direct result of observing the seniors participate in strength and conditioning classes with a qualified coach. Players also acknowledge the “increased status” they felt within the County, emerging as role models for younger players and contributing to an increase in aspiration, this in turn generated enhancements to their own self-esteem.

## Profile/Perceptions and Decision Making

A key driving force behind the implementation of the grant scheme was the research conducted in 2014 entitled "Let's Make Things Better". The introduction of the grant scheme was largely underpinned by negative perceptions amongst players within the Inter County game regarding how they viewed themselves as elite athletes, how they were viewed by the general population and how they were viewed by the sporting population. These were reported in the 2014 'Lets Make Things Better' research report. The introduction of government support was regarded as a potential catalyst that would challenge these perceptions and create a greater recognition for the status of the game. The consultation process has revisited baseline findings from this research to assess potential change

|  | <b>STRONGLY AGREE/ AGREE</b> | <b>NOT SURE</b> | <b>DISAGREE/ STRONGLY DISAGREE</b> | <b>BASELINE 2014 (WHERE APPLICABLE)</b>         |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Inter County female players are respected as elite athletes by the sporting population | 41%                          | 18%             | 41%                                | 47% agreed and 38% disagreed                    |
| Inter County Female players are respected as elite athletes by the general population  | 17%                          | 28%             | 55%                                | 21% agreed 68% disagreed                        |
| Inter County Female game has a greater profile now than it did 2 years ago             | 95%                          | 2%              | 3%                                 | 3% agreed that game got enough coverage in 2014 |
| Inter County players are involved at decision making at county board level             | 25%                          | 34%             | 40%                                | 5% agreed and 77% disagreed                     |
| Inter County players are involved at decision making at national level                 | 19%                          | 43%             | 38%                                | 3% agreed and 73% disagreed                     |
| I often feel stressed or overwhelmed as an Inter County player                         | 56%                          | 19%             | 25%                                | 80% agreed                                      |



Apparent personal/intrinsic increases to self-esteem and self-confidence are not reflected in players perceptions of how they are viewed externally. The survey findings demonstrate that there remain negative perceptions about how the Inter County game is viewed by the wider sporting and general population, this despite widespread agreement that the Inter County game has a greater profile than it did 2 years ago. This potentially reinforces the notion of the scheme as 'a step in the right direction' and a recognition that the scheme, and its impacts are still very much in its infancy.

The responses indicate considerable increases in the perceptions amongst players of their involvement in decision making at county level and at national level compared to the 2014 baseline. Despite improvement, only ¼ of players agree that Inter County players are involved in decision making at County Board level. This suggests a need for greater levels of engagement and involvement with players. It should be noted that only 10% of player reps responded to the survey. Player reps are party to the funding application in each County and therefore greater engagement from player reps may have affected this finding.

Players were also asked to identify the extent to which the scheme has helped build relationships between the various levels of the County setup.

- ✔ 46% of players strongly agree or agree that there is an enhanced unity of purpose between players, administrators and managers.
- ✔ 67% of county board members and managers report improved relations between the playing and administrative components of the County.

Despite considerable improvements to baseline data (2014) regarding players perception of their role in the decision-making processes at local level, the scheme could have anticipated an even greater improvement given the prominence of consultation in the application guidance. These findings are however only reflective of one year of the scheme, further incremental improvements would be expected in this area.

A range of qualitative statements were provided that further highlight some of the perceived added value or indirect benefits of the scheme. These statements reference impacts on self-esteem, sense of feeling valued, player turnover and drop out.



“ MAINLY POSITIVE FROM THE INPUT OF STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING. WE HAVE NEVER HAD ACCESS TO THIS BEFORE. PLAYERS DERIVED MORE PERSONAL BENEFITS FROM PLAYING COUNTY THAN BEFORE. I.E. STRUCTURED PERSONAL FITNESS. THIS HAD A DIRECT IMPACT ON OUR PLAYER TURNOVER FOR 2018 WHERE WE SAW ONLY 2 PLAYERS LEAVE AND ABOUT 7 NEW PLAYERS JOIN. WE IN ----- HAVE ALWAYS SUFFERED WITH PLAYERS DROPPING BUT I BELIEVE THE GRANT SCHEME HAS RAISED THE PROFESSIONALISM AND ENJOYMENT OF THE SPORT. ”

“ HAS HELPED IMPROVE THE PROFILE OF LADIES GAELIC FOOTBALL. HAS ENCOURAGED MORE GIRLS TO WANT TO PLAY COUNTY FOOTBALL AS THERE ARE MORE RESOURCES AVAILABLE AND PLAYERS ARE LOOKED AFTER BETTER THEN BEFORE. I THINK IT IS RAISING LADIES FOOTBALL AND CAMOGIE TO A HIGHER LEVEL IN THE SPORTING WORLD. ”

“ IN GENERAL, IT IS GREAT TO BE GETTING RECOGNITION FROM THE GOVERNMENT FOR ONCE. FOR THE TEAM, IT'S GIVES GREATER ACCESS TO THINGS THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN LESS COMMON DUE TO FINANCIAL RESTRAINTS, E.G. SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY, NUTRITIONIST, VIDEO ANALYSIS. ”

“ VERY POSITIVE, INCREASED ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN PLAYERS REPS/PLAYER/MANAGEMENT. ALLEVIATED SOME PRESSURE FOR CONSTANT FUNDRAISING RAISING, ALLOWED US ELITE PLAYERS GAIN ACCESS TO ELITE FACILITIES. INCREASED MORAL IN THE SQUAD AS A RESULT AND INCREASED OUR OVERALL APPRECIATION FOR THE WORK THAT THE WGPA DO FOR US ALSO. ”

# Connectivity and Collaboration

Several examples have emerged from the consultation process that reference the enhanced levels of collaboration and connectivity between and within counties and associations. The original proposal for funding (submitted to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport) was a strategic collaboration between the Ladies Gaelic Football Association, the Camogie Association and the Women's Gaelic Players Association.

The stakeholders reflected that this partnership has continued effectively in respect of the delivery mechanism for the grant scheme. Previous formal engagements between the associations were reasonably limited, but the management of this scheme has created the space for shared professional learning. The relationship has strengthened to the extent that the associations now collaborate and consult to help solve practical participation challenges in various counties.

The context underpinning the grant scheme is that of acknowledgement from Government of the elite status of the Inter County game and a recognition of its contribution to the fabric of Counties and communities. This is a shared narrative that players, administrators, managers and associations are proud of, the spirit of this approach is reflective of the decision to allocate funds collectively to teams as opposed to awards to individual players, there is wide consensus that this was the right model.

The shared sense of ownership regarding the progression and recognition of the Inter county game binds codes and counties together. This is reflected in a collective commitment to maximise the impact of the scheme, this was self-evident at the year 2 grant workshops, indicating that the grant

scheme itself has stimulated further efforts to improve standards across the Inter County game.

County Administrators also indicated that there are limited opportunities for Counties to come together and despite having competing interests during league campaigns and in the championship, the grant workshops provided space to share knowledge and experiences in relation to season planning, consultation and engagement processes and on technical components of the game.

The consultation process also highlighted a desire to enhance technical knowledge on how best to use grant and other funds to incorporate strength and conditioning, video analysis, psychology and injury prevention into a season plan. There appears to be appetite for a capacity building component that enhances standards both on and off the pitch.

## Conclusion

The consultation process sought to explore the impact of the grant scheme against its underpinning objectives and aspirations. The findings demonstrate considerable perceived increases in standards, particularly in relation to injury prevention and specialist coaching with high levels of attribution to the government grant scheme. The survey has highlighted a disconnect in the view of players and administrators/managers, highlighting communication and co-design as a key area for development. It should be noted that this experience is different on a team by team basis and does not reflect the experience of an overall County or Code.

The 2014 research which provided a launchpad for the development of the grant scheme, provided baseline data against which comparisons have been made. The findings highlight significant improvements in feelings of self-worth as elite athletes amongst players and despite challenges with process, overall players report having increased involvement in decision making at County level and at National level.

This section offered a range of qualitative statements that capture the individual and collective impact of the scheme as perceived by players, administrators and managers. It also offers a range of suggested areas of consideration for the future development of the grant scheme.

Further detail on the impact of the grant scheme is available in a promotional video produced by the SIG. Scan the code opposite to view the video:



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides concluding thoughts on the key learning points and considerations for the grant scheme as it enters year 2 of the grant. A series of 5 key recommendations are provided for consideration by the Scheme Implementation Group (SIG) and National Steering Group





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## Progress in 2017 against Scheme terms of reference

The following table provides a summary of the thematic analysis against the core evaluation objectives from terms of reference.

| EVALUATION OBJECTIVES   | COMMENTARY  |
|---|---|
| <p>To objectively evaluate the effectiveness of the Scheme in contributing to an enhanced playing and training environment for Inter County ladies' footballers and Camogie players</p> | <p>Relating to the grant scheme, we can attribute increased access to services and facilities that would not have been achieved in its absence. This is the case for a significant majority of the participating counties.</p>  |
| <p>To identify and assess the key features and strengths /weaknesses of the Scheme</p>  | <p>The result is a direct contribution to increased standards across key components of the game (injury prevention, standard of specialist coaching, facilities, player welfare) as reported by players, managers and County Board members. The evaluation process has also established a range of indirect impacts resulting from the implementation of the scheme including increased players feeling valued as elite athletes, improved engagement with training and preparation, enhanced competition between and within County teams, trickledown effect on motivation and enthusiasm of Minor players and greater collaboration between associations.</p> |
| <p>To support the Scheme Implementation Group to determine future priorities for the strategic development of the Scheme</p>  | <p>The distinguishable component of the grant scheme is that it is paid to County Boards who collectively should co-design the application and therefore use of the grant. The impact of the grant scheme is more apparent in teams that have successfully implemented this process. Enhancing communication and consultation in the co-design of applications is an area of learning for the grant scheme. The scheme is in its infancy, this is a new initiative with no pre-existing structure to oversee its implementation.</p>  |
|   | <p>Despite delays in assessing and allocating funds in year 1, the scheme has been managed effectively by the various stakeholders, assisted significantly by the appointment of a scheme administrator in February 2017. Several suggestions are provided to improve the logistical and practical roll out of the grant - many of these have already been implemented by the Scheme Implementation Group in the roll out of year 2 funds. The management of the scheme has contributed to a continuation of positive working relationships between associations.</p>   |

# Theory of Change

For clarity and ease of reference, the following theory of change seeks to summarise the emerging impact of the grant scheme in year 1. No previous evaluation of LGFA or Camogie has been commissioned or introduced, therefore the statements included in the theory of change diagram are based on information derived from two sources: 1) the consultation process informing this report, 2) 2014 let's make things better research report.

## BEFORE

No previous government funding for Inter County LGFA & Camogie

Absence of opportunity to engage/access statutory funding

Issues and concerns regarding standards/profile/status and perceptions of the game (Lets Make Things Better 2014)

Frustration amongst associations and players at lack of recognition and support despite required commitment

Varied approaches to interaction across counties relating to Inter County team development

Annual fundraising requirements created pressure and stress for County boards, management and players

Occasional difficulties with attendance at County training

Varying levels of funds available to individual Counties (fundraising and sponsorship)

Counties at varying levels of development (some did not have teams until 2016)

## GOVERNMENT GRANT SCHEME

Scheme Implementation Group established incorporating Camogie Association, LGFA and WGPA with independent chair

Central administrator appointed to administer scheme & reporting  
€425,000 distributed in 2017 in direct grant aid to Inter County Camogie and Football teams  
23 Camogie teams and 32 Football teams accessed grants up to €8,000 for the 2017 season

33% of funds spent on physio at training and matches, 17% to strength and conditioning, 12% to performance analysis, 7% to access gyms and floodlit/astro pitches

## AFTER

Increased access to professional services and facilities leading to

- Increases in standards of injury prevention
  - Increases in standards of specialist coaching
  - Increases in standards of player welfare
  - Increases in standards of the Inter County game generally
- Varying experiences of the grant scheme on team by team basis

Increases in the extent to which players view themselves as elite athletes

Increases in player input to decision making at County and National level

Increases in unity of purpose/togetherness in County teams with high levels of consultation

Increases in player attendance, self-esteem, self-confidence

Trickle down effect on motivation and enthusiasm of younger players. Seniors are role models

Increases in communication and collaboration between associations

## Recommendation 1

The consultation process identifies that where Counties have implemented a highly consultative process to co-design their application, stakeholders report improved morale, increased unity of purpose and the impact of the grant is better understood and more apparent

**RECOMMENDATION 1 – The SIG should consider options that ensure that all Counties adhere to the required consultation and engagement recommendations.**

## Recommendation 2

The degree of impact of the grant differs per team. In the absence of specific baseline data, it is difficult to compare the extent of improvement across teams and Counties. This evaluation has used data from the 2014 'Let's Make Things Better' report which are useful but does not include specific data on standards playing and training environment. The findings of this report and the observation of year 2 of the grant scheme may enable the development and evolution of an agreed set of minimum of standards for Inter County Football and Camogie teams.

**RECOMMENDATION 2 – Building on the original context and aspiration for the scheme, the SIG should consider establishing guidelines on what constitutes minimum standards for elite Inter County teams. These standards could form the basis against which County teams self-assess on an annual basis, enabling a more straightforward measurement of change as well as enabling a greater assessment of attribution against the grant scheme**

## Recommendation 3

If additional resources are secured from government to continue and enhance the scheme. The SIG should consider how these resources are best used to continue to raise standards and provide an enhanced playing and training environment. There are 55 County teams across both codes that accessed grant support. The County teams are at various stages of their development in relation to standards, many teams are only recently formed. Several key considerations include:

-  Potential for teams to purchase equipment (i.e. video analysis)
-  Potential contribution to player welfare strand such as player expenses, hotel stays, food
-  Education and capacity building (i.e. training individuals to provide specialist services such as video analysis, who may offer the service voluntarily for the team)



Removal of caps for specific areas (based on evidenced and established need)

Potential for proportionate funding (i.e. where a County has progressed to the final stages, that additional funding can be allocated).

**RECOMMENDATION 3 – The model of funding teams rather than individual players is the recommended model and should continue. Any individual player welfare contribution should be a strand of overall funds and not a replacement model. The SIG should consider how the eligibility criteria might evolve in lieu of any increased resource allocation. Several options should be prepared and prioritised.**

## Recommendation 4

The model adopted by the scheme is widely endorsed by stakeholders. The associations have demonstrated a commitment to collaborative working in their approach to scheme administration (including in the management of the evaluation process), all decision-making processes include input from all stakeholders. The SIG facilitates this process and should be retained in any future funding model.

The introduction of an administrative support for the SIG in February 2017 has contributed to increased efficiency and effectiveness in the management of the scheme. The requirement for administrative support will also increase should additional resources be secured.

**RECOMMENDATION 4 – Any future proposal for additional funds should include a proportionate resource for administration support for the SIG.**

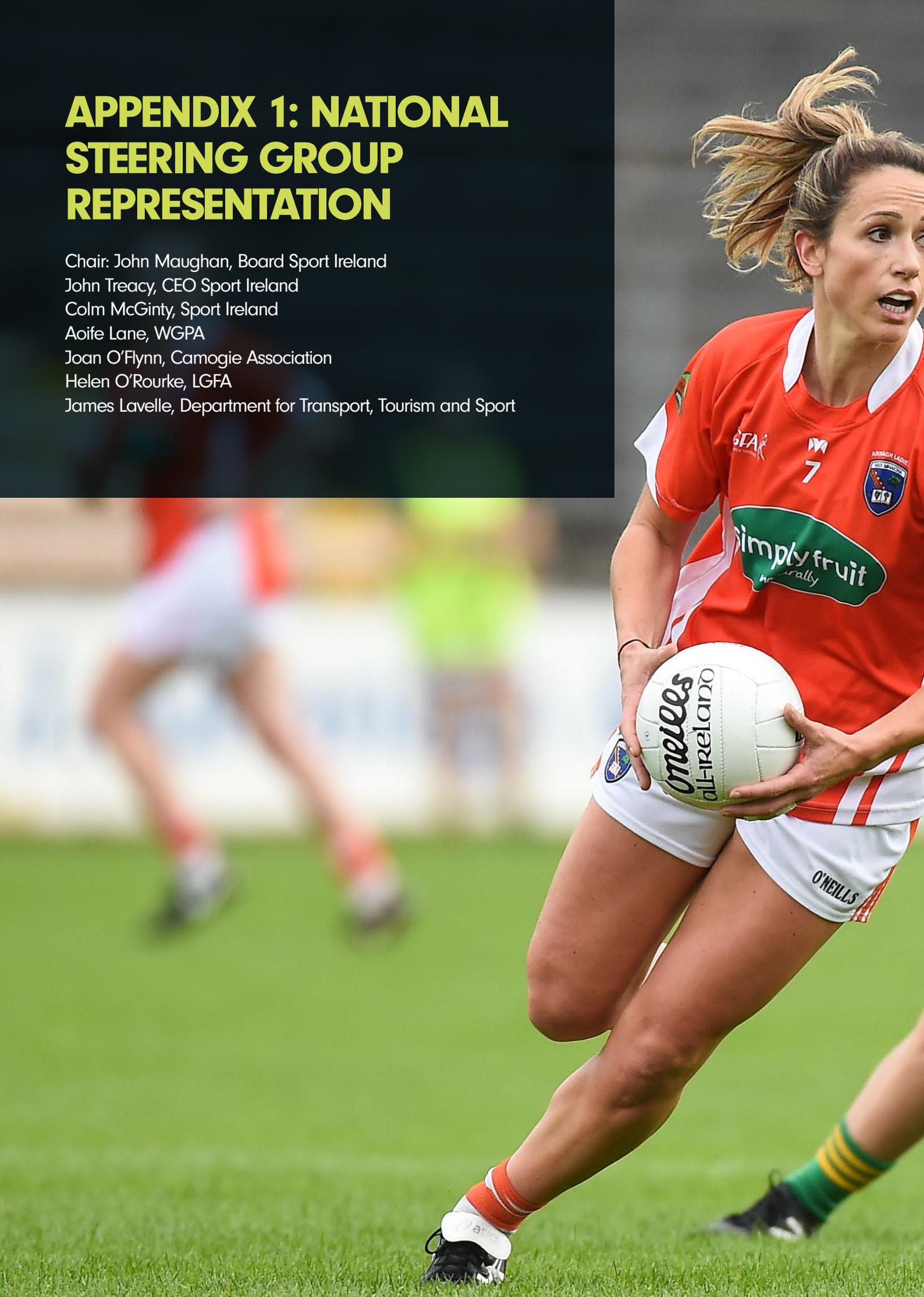
## Recommendation 5

The evaluation acknowledges that the scheme is in its infancy. Many of the participating Counties have only recently established teams and for many it is their first experience of managing grant funding. The evaluation acknowledges that it takes time to embed a new organisational culture. Many Counties will continue to experience challenges in terms of volunteer and player participation over the next number of years which may create underspends/reduction in grant access (i.e. if a team is unable to complete competitions etc).

**RECOMMENDATION 5 – Flexibility of approach is crucial in any continuation of the fund including an ability to allow a 'carry over' of grants to the following season.**

# APPENDIX 1: NATIONAL STEERING GROUP REPRESENTATION

Chair: John Maughan, Board Sport Ireland  
John Treacy, CEO Sport Ireland  
Colm McGinty, Sport Ireland  
Aoife Lane, WGPA  
Joan O'Flynn, Camogie Association  
Helen O'Rourke, LGFA  
James Lavelle, Department for Transport, Tourism and Sport







Brochure Design:

