



PLAY
TENNIS
FUND

TOP TIPS FOR
A SUCCESSFUL
APPLICATION



WRITING A PLAY TENNIS FUND APPLICATION KEY THINGS TO CONSIDER

Since the Play Tennis Fund opened in May we have received over 100 applications from tennis clubs, venues and coaches from across the country. Many of these projects have been excellent, but we wanted to share with you a few handy tips to help you in writing a strong application.

1. Is there a clear need for the project?

At the outset of developing a funding project it is essential to consider whether there is actually a demonstrable need for what you are aiming to deliver. Of course it is important in your application to the LTA to be able to evidence the need and impact your project will have on tennis, but it also potentially saves you wasting your time in trying to develop a project that is only going to have minimal impact on tennis in your area.

Listed below are some common examples of the reasons venues that have succeeded in gaining Play Tennis Funding have cited in demonstrating the need for their project (often backed up with further evidence to support these statements):

- “Our club’s junior sections are in decline with teenagers dropping out of club tennis, and we’re looking to reinvigorate our junior section through this project.”
- “There is no clear pathway from tennis in the local schools into our venue, and through this project we’re aiming to create a closer relationship with the schools to encourage teenagers into playing tennis regularly at the venue.”
- “Over recent years we have noticed a steady downward spiral in our membership numbers of young adults (18 -25yrs old). We think it is important to safeguard against the future of our club by looking at new ways to attract younger adults.”

2. Do you have a good understanding of what will appeal to the target audience?

It is important in your project from the outset to really get to grips with what will hook your target audience into tennis and keep them interested in the game

and your club/venue/coaching programme. In the Play Tennis Fund we have seen a number of projects that have been designed around the best interests of the club or coach with little indication that they have actually considered the needs of the teenagers or young adults that they are attempting to reach.

Projects that have most successfully engaged new teenage players into tennis have understood that they are looking for fun, social activities that they can do with their friends, that isn’t too serious and doesn’t require a long-term commitment or sign-up. They’d rather just play (with some light-touch coaching) than have a heavy coaching orientated session. Good projects have utilised some of the following to help them appeal to young people:

- touchtennis
- Team Tennis
- Enhanced social/off-court offer aimed purely at teenagers – some have provided Xbox and pizza in the clubhouse directly after the tennis has finished.
- More relaxed coaching and organisation, with some of the best projects integrating the teenagers themselves into helping to coordinate and deliver the sessions.

Projects that are designed to meet the needs of young adults (18- 25yr olds) often focus on establishing groups of like-minded, similar aged and similar ability individuals. It is significantly important that the sessions are scheduled at a time that fits into their working week, and whilst they are not averse to coaching they want to play and feel like they’ve had a work-out – and for this reason Cardio Tennis can be a popular option. Good projects recognise that new players in this age-group are put off by long-term membership commitments.



"get to grips with what will hook your target audience into tennis and keep them interested"



“the success of projects more often than not hinges on the quality of the marketing and promotion of it”

3. Do you have a clear & effective plan for marketing your project to the target audience?

The success of the project more often than not hinges on the quality of the marketing and promotion of the activity that effectively reaches the target audience and encourages them to attend the new sessions. When developing a marketing plan try to envisage the best methods for engaging your target audience in the project – where are they likely to see it and what will make them want to take part. Putting an advert in the local paper or promoting through the club's website is not normally enough on its own to attract the attention of young people. The better Play Tennis Fund projects have incorporated some or all of the following marketing techniques to promote their tennis initiatives. But there may also be some further creative local opportunities that you can take advantage of.

- Social Media & Digital Promotion – using Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and encouraging local connections to share

through their social media networks. Purchasing Facebook 'boosts' is a relatively cheap and effective way of promoting to a targeted age group within a specified area.

- Promoting through Partners Networks – establishing external networks with partners (such as schools, business communities etc) and gaining their buy-in to promote to their audiences. But clubs should not overlook their internal networks (their members, coaches, sponsors etc) who can be effective in spreading the word through their connections.
- Community Promotion – high quality flyers are handed out in person in likely locations for the target audience (e.g. the high street, coffee shops, leisure centres, supermarkets etc). This is a broad brush approach to marketing but can be effective in certain circumstances, particularly if accompanied by an exciting display and if the people representing the tennis venue are similar aged to the target audience.



4. What happens to the participants at the conclusion of the project?

Arguably the most important aspect that the LTA wants to see from applications is what happens once our funding grant has been used up – what lasting impact has it made on local tennis participation? This is the hardest element of any funding programme, how do clubs and venues continue to sustain activities and participants when the funding runs out?

It is essential that the applicant considers the exit routes from the project right from the outset and that the project is established to create a smooth pathway to whatever the long-term sustained tennis activity is. In most cases tennis clubs will want the players to eventually become members of the tennis club, so whilst offering discounted memberships is helpful in achieving this don't forget that becoming a member is only the start of the journey to retaining them and that you need to consider how you can help them become settled at the club and that there are suitable programmes and appropriate social groups for them to continue enjoying their tennis.

Considering the target audience of the Play Tennis Fund, not all of the participants will want to become members of the venue for a range of different reasons. Has your project considered how you can realistically provide something to keep these players retained in tennis? Is there pay and play opportunities or short-term memberships that you can think about offering them? In most cases once the grant funding runs out normally to sustain the activity the financial contributions need to come from the participants, and for this reason we would normally advise against offering entirely free tennis activity. A small charge (even 50p) gets participants understanding that there is a fee attached to the activity and comes as less of a surprise when the price increases. But it is important to inform the participants well in advance of potential fee increases and to explain the reasons for it. Listed below are some examples and tactics that other clubs have used to help retain and sustain their tennis activity at the conclusion of their funding project:

- Discounted club memberships and short-term membership offers (e.g. 12 week memberships)

- Pay & play opportunities at allocated times (either free play / or coached programme) with the focus on the group of players who were part of the funded project to continue playing together.
- As part of the funded project selecting several of the keenest participants to undertake a Tennis Leaders course so that at the end of the project they can continue to facilitate social tennis activity for the group voluntarily.

5. Have a clear & logical plan for developing & delivering your project

When writing your application make sure it clearly and concisely informs us what and how you intend to deliver. Provide confidence to the LTA that once you receive the grant funding there is a logical and coherent plan for delivering the project. You have considered the order and timescales of the actions that need to be taken to ensure that the project will be delivered successfully. Be realistic, particularly in your timings, applicants are often too ambitious in when they expect to start the project; give yourself a healthy amount of time to plan and prepare the project before you start delivering. Overall through your delivery plan help the LTA understand clearly what their grant funding is contributing towards and what will be delivered.

6. Is the project accompanied by a realistic budget and accurate targets?

Often the budgets that accompany applications to the Play Tennis Fund can be best described as 'wish-list' budgets, with applicants including various items and costs which are either excessive or unnecessary. Try to make sure that your budget accurately reflects the costs of what you are planning to deliver, otherwise the LTA will reduce the grant requested accordingly.

Think hard about the likely impact that you hope to achieve through this project and consider whether the project represents value for money when you are considering the targets and KPIs for the project. Whilst the targets have to be realistic and achievable, if they are too low then the LTA will question whether it is worth investing in.

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