

Ladies Gaelic Football & Camogie Government Grant Support Scheme

Evaluation September 2019



wgpa



THE
CAMOGIE
ASSOCIATION



Introduction and Context

The Ladies Gaelic Football & Camogie Government Grant Support Scheme (hereafter referred to as 'the grant scheme') was launched in January 2017. Its purpose is to provide funding that will support an enhanced playing and training environment for inter county Camogie players and Ladies Footballers. The grant scheme has been operational for 3 years (2017, 2018 and 2019).

This report sets out a summary of an independent evaluation of year 3 of the grant scheme (2019). It builds on the objective evaluation carried out on years 1-2 (2017-2018).

The objectives of this report are:

- To examine the effectiveness of the grant scheme in contributing to an enhanced playing and training environment for inter county Ladies Footballers and Camogie players.
- To assess the progress of the key features and strengths and monitor the actions undertaken to address the weaknesses of the grant scheme.
- To support the Scheme Implementation Group (SIG) to determine future priorities for the continued strategic development of the grant scheme.

The report and its findings are informed by consultation with 488 players, managers and county board members (treasurer/secretary/chair). These findings are presented in pages 6-14 and culminate in a series of recommendations to guide the future direction of the grant scheme. The earlier sections offer an overview of the grant scheme, its structure, aims and objectives.

Overview of the Grant Scheme

Funds are provided by the state, administered through Sport Ireland and distributed collaboratively by the Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA), the Camogie Association and the Women's Gaelic Players Association (WGPA) 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. The grant scheme operates in line with the annual competitive season for both ladies Football and Camogie. The annual competitive season consists of two competition structures:

- **The National League** - usually taking place between January and May
- **The Championship** – usually taking place between May and September annually

Those who are eligible to apply for the grant can access funding until they are knocked out of the Championship. Thus, County teams are encouraged to plan early for both phases of competition (National League and Championship) to maximise the use of the grant scheme within their overall budget.

County teams can apply for funding across 3 priority areas including:

- 1 Injury Prevention and Medical Cover:** This support enables teams to invest in prehabilitation 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.
- 2 Maximising 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.

- 3 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 following infographic provides an overview of the headline statistics and figures for year 3 (2019) of the grant scheme. Included in the infographic are details relating to overall spend, number of grant awards, most common uses of the grant scheme etc. The information contextualises later sections of the report.

55

The number of County teams accessing grants (32 Football/23 Camogie)



320 Different service providers supported by grant scheme (physio the most popular)

€

€495,000 available in grants to County teams in 2019

935

Approximate number of volunteer hours attributed to the management and administration of grants



84 different sports facilities used and paid for by grant scheme

40%

Of Grant scheme spent on Maximising Player and Team Performance – the most popular use

€3.59

The average funds raised by Ladies Football and Camogie teams for every €1 invested by the grant

38%

Of Grant scheme spent on Injury Prevention and Medical Cover – the 2nd most popular use

Impact of the Grant Scheme

A web-based survey containing a mixture of closed and open questions was developed and distributed during the period June and August 2019. 488 survey responses were received from players, managers and County Board representatives.

- ✓ 375 players responded to the survey, 67% from Ladies football, 30% from Camogie and 3% dual
- ✓ Responses were received from 31 of the 32 Counties.
- ✓ 32% of player responses were from designated WGPA representatives. WGPA Reps are responsible for engaging with managers and County Board to share information with players regarding grant scheme process and use.
- ✓ Of all player responses, 16% were those in their first year of Inter County Football or Camogie, 28% have played for 2-4 years, 37% for 5-10 years and 19% have been playing Inter County for 10 years or more.
- ✓ 43 managers/coaches responded to the survey, 60% of responses were from Ladies Football and 40% Camogie
- ✓ 25 of the 32 Counties recorded a response to the managers' survey
- ✓ More than half (53%) of all responding are in their first year of managing at Inter County level. 20% are in their second year whilst only 4 respondents have been managing at this level for 10 years or more
- ✓ 70 responses from County Board representatives
- ✓ 72% from Ladies Football and 28% Camogie



Impact of the Grant Scheme

90%

Of respondents reported an increase in standard of **Injury Prevention and Medication cover**. 51% report it increased 'a lot', 39% report it increased 'a little', 10% reported no change and 0% reported decrease.

Of respondents reported an increase in standard of **Maximising Player and Team performance**. 63% report it increased 'a lot', 32% report it increased 'a little', 5% reported no change and no decrease reported

95%

87%

Of respondents reported an increase in standard of **Access to Training Facilities**. 49% report it increased 'a lot', 38% report it increased 'a little', 12% reported no change and 1% reported decrease

The analysis of findings identified:

- No major correlation between level of awareness of the grant scheme and perceived increase in standards, i.e. respondents were reporting an increase in standard whether they were aware of the grant scheme or not
- There are similar findings across respondents from different competition levels (Senior, Intermediate, Junior). Those at Intermediate level were more likely to identify smaller increases in standard (i.e. increased a little) than those at Senior and Junior level. More Junior respondents identified 'no change' to the standard of 'access to training facilities' than Senior and Intermediate respondents.
- Higher levels of attribution of the grant scheme to increase standards is correlated with a higher levels of awareness of the grant scheme.

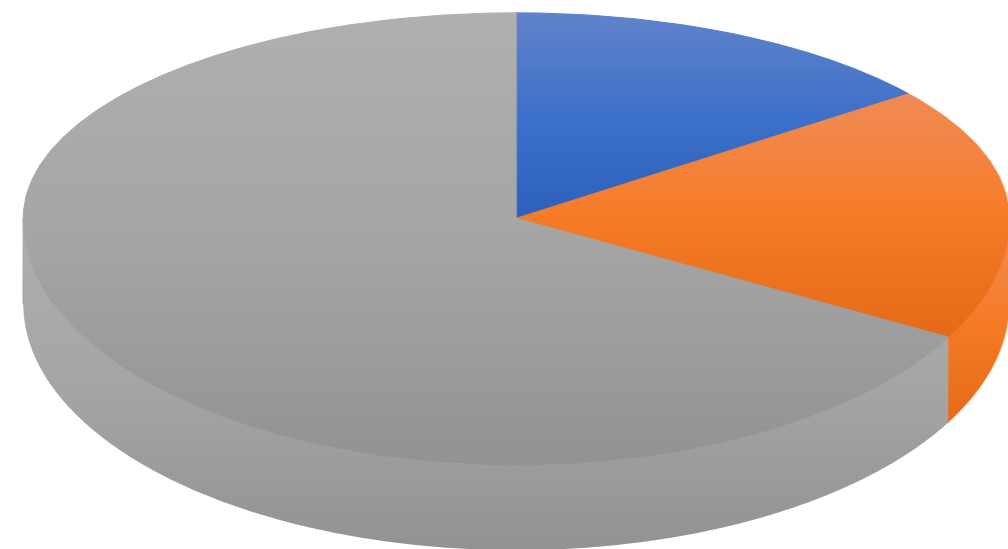
Awareness of the Grant Scheme

- 29% of players reported being aware of the scheme and being involved in the application process
- 33% reported being aware but not being involved in the process
- 38% of players are unaware of the grant scheme
- Most designated player reps are aware and have been involved (55%) or are aware but have not been involved (27%)
- 18% of designated player reps report being unaware of the grant scheme yet attended the mandatory workshops
- Only 4 of 43 managers/coaches were unaware of the grant scheme, the majority 72% are aware and have been involved
- Only 5 County Board representatives were unaware of the scheme, these are PRO's and Children's Officers. 73% are aware and have been involved



Main Benefit of the Grant Scheme

Respondents were asked to identify the most important impact of the grant scheme.



- Is a recognition by government of the elite status of the Inter County games
- Reduces the fundraising pressure on teams
- Enables teams to access services and provision that they would not have otherwise accessed



The grant has a definite positive impact, especially for smaller/ weaker counties who haven't the sponsorship or finances that would allow them to provide the resources required to bring a team up to elite standard. It helps to level the playing field

The professionalism with which we operate now is largely due the support from the fund, not just this year but the ongoing support year after year but sustained that professionalism.

The grant scheme has definitely had a positive impact in our county. It has allowed us to avail of better training facilities in particular during the winter months and bad weather, and also the opportunity to do collective gym sessions. The strength and conditioning and performance analysis areas are key to injury prevention, players physical fitness & conditioning and overall team performance, access to these personnel would not be possible without the aid of the grant scheme.

The grant scheme has enabled us to access pitches that we would not otherwise have had access to, it has provided us with physio & S&C that we did not previously have. It has meant that we feel like we are getting closer to the top teams in terms of being able to improve our training & recovery. The grant has played a big part in the growth of game & rise in standards.

The grant has enabled our team to take our whole approach and management of the Senior squad to the next level. Where before I felt that it would be impossible to ever see our county team develop enough to be able to compete at the top grade, this now feels achievable as I feel we are able to somewhat avail of professional services and facilities that we otherwise would never have. What the grant enables us to avail of, feels like a reward for the immense effort and commitment that our players put into representing their county for otherwise little else in return.

The grant has allowed the team access to the same facilities, the same professional setup as the county men. This in turn has led to positive discussions about the prestige of playing Senior county, at a recent development squads evening. We believe the grant will ensure greater participation and retention of players in Ladies Gaelic Football, increasing the desire of younger players to want to play Senior football. As they are looked after on and off the field and they are now, with the help of the grant and professional input, being pushed to be the best they can be in every aspect of the game

We have access to resources we did not previously have, and still would not have, if we did not have the grant.
1) Injuries get assessed and treated in time. 2) Tailor made S&C programmes are being given instead of generic ones. 3) Players are learning from previous experiences, both positive and negative - through video analysis





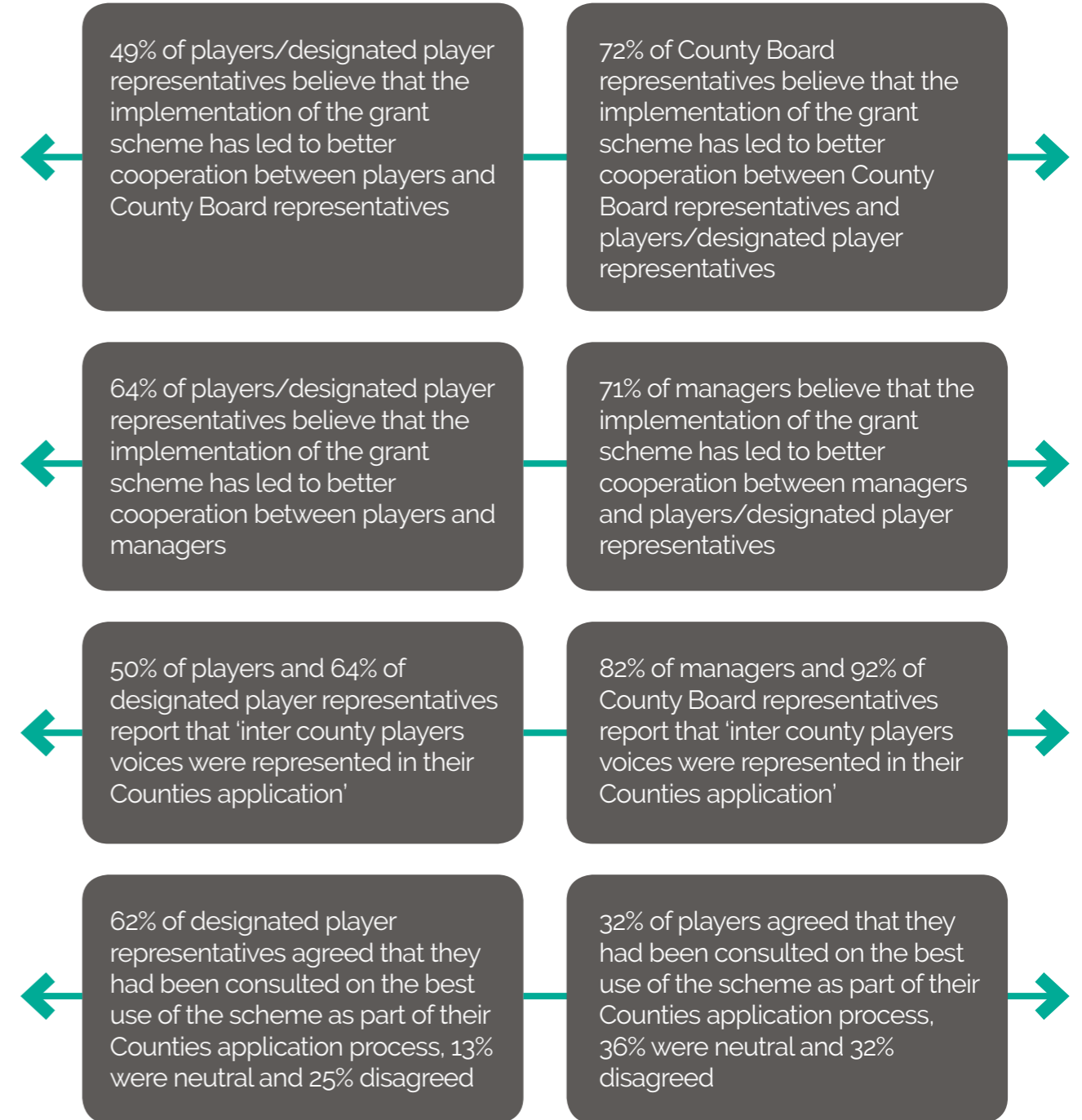
The Grant scheme has allowed us to develop massively over the last number of years, preseason S&C (strength and conditioning) and Gym facilities has led to better conditioned athlete that has in turn played a huge role in injury prevention. The facility side of the grant allowed us to become a permanent fixture in [facility] which means no late change in venues due to cancellations or other teams taking priority.

This a huge impact on player development and also reduces stress levels

Overall, I feel the grant scheme is excellent and a huge help to us on and off the field. we would be lost without it and would regress at a serious rate if this ever becomes unavailable. the girls are the real winners in this scheme and that is exactly how it should be



Experience of the Grant Scheme



- ✓ Players (63%), designated player representatives (75%), managers (88%) and County Board representatives (96%) report that the implementation of the grant scheme in their respective County has been positive
- ✓ A greater proportion of players (37%) report either neutral or negative experiences of the implementation of the grant scheme compared to designated player representatives (25%), managers (12%) and County Board representatives (4%)
- ✓ 92% of County Board representatives and 82% of managers report that the grant scheme has 'improved approaches to season planning'



Overall, we found the grant hugely helpful, it is also a great way to interact with the players and get a feel for what they need and want to achieve the most there can and to improve themselves as players. And also helps them understand why they can't get everything they look for as they see the budget constraints.

The grant has been very positive for the evolution of inter county ladies' football, and the education of county board officers who would have viewed certain requests in the past for certain resources as being excessive and unnecessary. But once the scope for the grant was introduced and the diversity of the services one can apply for explained, it made it easier to make requests of county boards for items previously deemed unnecessary

I definitely think this is the first year it has been even remotely used to its full advantage and has definitely made a great impact to our team. I feel a lot more respected due to the things we have been offered with the grant.

This was my first experience of the grant scheme and all our meetings and consultation at County level was positive and our view and requirements where listened to and carried through on.

Gets people and players taking about finance more and we see what counties are using to improve their play, so it motivates the managers and county board to supply more for players. I hope we can utilize it more as each year goes by.

It has been useful in that it has this year brought face to face meetings about between the player reps, management and county board and the players' views were listened to. I think the money goes very quickly but it's a good start.

Overall have definitely noticed a significant improvement in facilities and support available to me as an inter county player but I am unaware of what areas have/have not been funded by the government grant scheme and was not consulted about this at any point

Team not really consulted. I'm sure it's had a great impact but players at the workshop as a tick the box it seems. Not consulted afterwards unless just with captain



The grant has had a somewhat positive effect. It has raised the standards slightly in our county. Players are consulted but the county board still decide on everything. A lot depends on the management and their willingness to use certain services. It could be used to much better effect if players decided where best to use money and were listened to.

We had a very positive grant experience in our county. We worked together player, manager & county board. As players we felt that were listened to and respected and it opened the door to many conversations that needed to take place.

Better link between players and management, provided forum to discuss needs and desires. More physio & improved s&c. Girls have never been better prepared for championship, grant has definitely contributed to this.

It's been very positive. Player, management and county board representatives all agreed on something which everyone was happy with.



Additional Impact of the Grant Scheme

As a result of the support provided by the government grant scheme:



76% of players identified an increase in the extent to which inter county females are respected as elite athletes by the sporting population - only 41% felt respected by the sporting population in the previous evaluation

More Senior (88%) and Junior (83%) players report an increase here than Intermediate (76%)

63% of players identified an increase in the extent to which inter county females are respected as elite athletes by the general population - only 17% felt respected by the general population in the previous evaluation. More Junior (72%) report an increase here than Senior (64%) or Intermediate (64%)



65% of players identified an increase in the extent to which they view themselves as elite athletes.

Levels of awareness of the grant scheme correlates with perceived feelings of being an elite athlete. A considerably lower number of players reported an increase when they have low awareness of the grant scheme compared to those with high awareness.



72% of County Board Representatives reported enhanced skills as a result of managing and administering the grant. Knowledge of grant funding process (44%), better planning process for adult team (22%) and improved communication skills (18%) are the main impacts

61% of players responding have taken part in promotional activities as an Inter County Player with 71% receiving no form of payment or expenses and 35% of activities requiring players to take off work to attend



Summary Findings

- ✓ A clear majority of all respondent groups report increases in standards across all three priority areas of the grant scheme. Maximising team and player performance (i.e. strength and conditioning) appears to have recorded the largest perceived increase in standard, followed by injury prevention, followed by facility access.
- ✓ There is consistency across the respondent groups on the most beneficial usage of the grant scheme: strength and conditioning, physio at matches and training, performance analysis and access to gym/floodlit pitch appear to be the main uses. This also aligns with the perceived increases in standards.
- ✓ The level of awareness of the grant scheme is lower amongst players compared to the other respondent groups – although no correlation exists between level of awareness of the scheme and perceived increase in standards.
- ✓ Attribution to the grant scheme is (self-evidently) correlated with level of awareness. Managers and County Board Members offer the strongest attribution to the grant scheme. Where there are higher levels of awareness of the scheme, there are higher levels of attribution to increased standards.
- ✓ There is consensus across all respondent groups that the most important aspect of the grant scheme is that it enables players and teams to access services and provision that they would not otherwise have accessed. This is reinforced strongly through qualitative statements provided by players which consistently highlighted accessing services and facilities that would not have been otherwise possible.
- ✓ The experience of the grant scheme varied greatly on a team by team basis and there are no apparent trends per code, per competition level or per county.
- ✓ Overall, players have a more negative view of the process than managers/county board members regarding their perceived input and influence into decision making. There is a considerable variance between the views of players and of other respondent groups regarding players involvement in the process. The level of awareness within full teams of players is still not where it should be..
- ✓ Qualitative statements indicate that a highly consultative process leads to greater sense of togetherness and spirit within a team. Conversely, a lack of involvement of players appears to generate frustration and disharmony.
- ✓ A clear majority of players report increases in the extent to which they are viewed as elite athletes by the sporting population and by the general population – this is 'as a result of the support provided by the government grant scheme'.
- ✓ A clear majority report increases in the extent to which they view themselves as elite athletes 'as a result of the support provided by the government grant scheme'.
- ✓ Increased intrinsic feelings of being an elite athlete, as well as increased perception of how the sporting and general population view Inter County players, correlates with an increased awareness of the grant scheme.

- ✓ A considerably lower proportion of players and designated player representatives that are unaware of the grant scheme report increases in perceptions of being respected as elite athletes across all three response areas than those who are aware.
- ✓ Almost three quarters of County Board members report improved skills within the County Board as a result of managing and administering the grant scheme. Improved skills include greater knowledge and understanding of funding, better planning for adult season and increased communication between administrators, management and players.
- ✓ Numerous areas of improvement have been suggested during the consultation process including a more efficient way to provide pre and post application support, practical considerations relating to the timing and payment of grants as well as enhancements to the amount of funding available.

The consultation findings, both quantitative and qualitative outline a clear causal relationship between the inputs (i.e. grant funding) and outputs (i.e. access to services and facilities). The evidence suggests that in many cases this access would not have been achieved in the absence of the grant scheme or to a much lesser extent. The findings indicate that the access to services and facilities has resulted in perceived increases in standards, as well as improved relationships, enhanced organisation & planning, improved communication, enhanced feelings of elite (amongst players) and improved skills amongst County Board.

These outcomes align with the original intention of the grant scheme.







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