



# The People's Millions Evaluation Summary



## The People's Millions: Final evaluation findings

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Written by Hilary Leavy

Photography Mark Campbell, Shaun Fitzpatrick,  
Jim Hodson, Martin Jenkinson,  
Caroline Mardon, Simon McComb,  
Kate Peters

### Further copies available from:

Email [enquiries@biglotteryfund.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@biglotteryfund.org.uk)  
Phone 0845 4 10 20 30  
Textphone 0845 6 02 16 59  
Our website [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

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# Executive summary

The People's Millions is a grants programme which gives the public a say in how Lottery money is spent in local communities throughout the UK.

In September 2007 we appointed Leisure Futures Ltd and Cranbrook Films to carry out an evaluation of The People's Millions Programme. This summary is our interpretation of the evaluation report which is available on our website at [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

- ▶ A good spread of projects were funded through the programme in 2007, covering each of the People's Millions themes.
- ▶ The most important factor in determining a project's success in winning the People's Millions competition was their publicity campaign and ability to mobilise supporters to vote for the project.
- ▶ The number of votes cast has increased significantly year on year, from 180,000 in 2005 to 553,000 in 2007.
- ▶ The average number of votes cast per winning project was just under 5,400.
- ▶ An estimated 65 to 70 per cent of telephone votes were cast by supporters, compared to 30 to 35 per cent by the viewing public who voted after watching the film about the project during the ITV regional news.



## Introduction

- ▶ The benefits of being involved in the programme for applicants include free publicity that has helped to raise the public profile of projects and enabled them to attract new funding or support. The process has also had a positive impact on local community engagement and spirit.
- ▶ There is a perception among projects and stakeholders that applications from towns stand a greater chance of winning than projects in more sparsely populated rural communities, although this is not the case.
- ▶ There is no particular pattern in terms of certain types of projects winning more than others, with the exception of schools who were disproportionately successful in 2007.
- ▶ All stages of the competition process, from the entry form through to the transmission of the project films on the day of the vote, were rated at least 'good' across the sample of project co-ordinators surveyed.
- ▶ Over 80 per cent of respondents in the 2007 project sample of finalists felt that enlisting supporters and the public in the People's Millions voting made a difference to who won an award.

In 2005 the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) teamed up with ITV to launch The People's Millions. The programme gave ITV viewers across the country an opportunity to vote for projects in their community to win a grant from the Big Lottery Fund. A diverse range of projects have been funded, including play parks, sensory play areas, woodland regeneration and even sound sculptures. Since then 229 awards have been made, totalling £13.6 million.

The People's Millions programme funds a wide range of community-based projects (both rural and urban) that aim to achieve one or more of the following:

- making the local environment cleaner, safer or greener
- improving the local natural environment
- improving the design, appearance and accessibility of local amenities
- providing opportunities or facilities for enjoying the local environment or local amenities.

Big Lottery Fund is also interested in funding projects that:

- get people involved in their local community
- help people who are most in need
- are original and imaginative.

## Aim of the evaluation

The aim of the evaluation was to assess the effects of public involvement in The People's Millions on grant decisions and on the prospects, operation and effectiveness of participating projects.

The main focus of the evaluation was on the influence and outcomes of public involvement, both on the programme as a whole and on the operation and impact of individual projects.

The evaluators carried out

- semi-structured interviews with BIG staff
- semi-structured interviews with Regional Committees (21 'public members', four ITV Heads of News and four Regeneration experts)
- semi-structured 'pre-vote' telephone interviews before voting day, follow-up post-telephone interviews and visits to a smaller number of finalists, all from 2007 projects
- semi-structured telephone interviews with 10 runner-up projects and visits to 4 runner-up projects from 2006
- semi-structured telephone interviews with 10 winning projects and visits to three winning projects from 2005
- programme data analysis
- voting analysis.

The methodology was designed to ensure coverage of all the UK ITV regions (with the exception of Thames Valley which did not take part in the programme in 2005 or 2006). At least one public member of each of the Regional Committees was interviewed (including those in Scottish, Wales and the Ulster ITV regions). For further details on the methodology please refer to the full report on our website [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

## The view from projects

The evaluators interviewed a total of 63 projects from across the three years that the programme had been running.

The People's Millions project got the Trustees together and gave us a sense of purpose. It beefed up our volunteers and helped with the morale of the team. Also, since we won people are looking at us in a more positive light. For example, it has got an organisation we work with considering becoming a partner with us, providing services at cost to us while they get corporate social responsibility benefits.

### **An arts project, Granada ITV Region**

The overall response, from both successful and unsuccessful applicants, was that taking part in The People's Millions competition was a positive and enjoyable experience.

The evaluators asked past applicants to reflect on a number of themes including:

- ▶ The Application Process and Officer Support
- ▶ Media Training
- ▶ Filming
- ▶ Pairing of Finalists
- ▶ Success Factors
- ▶ Impact of Public Involvement on decision-making
- ▶ Impact of Public Involvement on projects
- ▶ Fairness of the process
- ▶ Public Involvement in more lottery programmes

# Application process and officer support

Ninety seven per cent of respondents rated the application process as either 'very good' (38 per cent) or good (59 per cent). In general, those who had been through the process found that the written guidance materials and telephone support and visits from Big Lottery Fund Grants Officers at the stage two application stage were very good.

The officer who visited us was very friendly and encouraging and made us feel good about getting as far as this stage.

## **Pensioners' club, London ITV Region**

The People's Millions application process is the best I have come across in all my experience of bidding for funding from the Lottery and from others.

## **Local authority, West ITV Region**

It was very constructive. The site visit was intensive but not 'big brother'. I couldn't fault our officer. He was always available and gave clear appraisals.

## **Arts project, Granada ITV Region**

# Media training

Media training was offered to all shortlisted and reserve applications. This comprised of a three-hour training session with the aim of:

- ▶ Supporting projects in engaging with the public to put forward their case in the best light to receive funding
- ▶ Promoting good news about BIG and the National Lottery
- ▶ Raising the profile of BIG's grant making.

The ITV Regions provided media training which was well received by the applicants. The training covered areas such as:

- ▶ The importance of preparing a small number of points to convey simply and clearly
- ▶ Speaking delivery techniques
- ▶ Learning how to stand appropriately
- ▶ Confidence building aspects such as meeting the person who would be filming on the day and sharing doubts and fears with other projects in a similar position.

Our local community police officer went. He came back fired-up, informed and confident.

## **Youth project, West Country ITV Region**

# Filming

A news team from the ITV Region arranged filming of a short clip of each project to be screened over the week of the competition. A film crew visited the project to film the short piece and projects had the opportunity to include supporters and beneficiaries in the film.

The evaluators found that, overall, those interviewed were less enthusiastic about the filming than the media training, with an average rating of 'fair'. However, many expressed positive comments about the experience of filming, and in particular the friendly and accommodating approach taken by the interviewers and crew.

The film crew worked well with our mixed client group of adults and children. They played with the children and worked at our pace.

## **Community project, Meridian South ITV Region**

It's difficult for a News Team to do this kind of filming but they represented our project well, struck the balance we were looking for and got on well with the young people from the estate who were there on the day.

## **Play project, London ITV Region**

Those who expressed particular dissatisfaction with the filming were projects who finished as runners up.

Suggestions for improving this element of the process included providing applicants with guidance and information on how the filming would be conducted right from the outset, rather than at the short-listing stage. This would allow projects to be better prepared for the filming.

# Pairing of finalists

When applications are shortlisted a number of factors are taken into account:

- geographic spread
- rural and urban balance
- the type of activities

When it came to pairing, BIG tried to ensure that the projects selected were well balanced and that the public were given the opportunity to compare 'like with like'.

Three quarters of projects who responded to the survey from the 2007 sample said they were happy with the pairing with another organisation that went out on the ITV Regional News. A small number felt unable to express an opinion one way or another and just seven per cent felt they were paired inappropriately.

Overall, those who were interviewed were sympathetic to the difficulties that the decision-making committees face in pairing projects, given the wide range of projects and organisation types eligible to enter, and also because the competition is open to applicants from urban and rural areas.

# Success factors



The evaluators asked interviewees to identify the factors they considered critical for achieving success. The following were the four most frequent factors cited by respondents.

## 1) Marketing to supporters

I think our efforts at getting supporters to vote was much more important than how we came across on TV.

**Community theatre project, West Country ITV Region**

## 2) Visual appeal of the TV presentation

The TV viewers have got to like it, feel empathy and see the benefits for people.

**Play project, London ITV Region**

## 3) The type of project organisation

We are a voluntary group in a small village and were up against a Borough Council and still won. I put it down to one person on our Working Group who's a great motivator and convinced people we needed the money more.

**Park renovation project, Tyne Tees ITV Region**

## 4) Location factors (such as urban vs. rural or whether the project was on the border of different ITV regions)

Many projects felt that their location could potentially disadvantage them. The evaluators found that those in rural communities assumed that projects based in larger metropolitan areas could harness more support, whilst projects in urban areas assumed that rural projects could galvanise the local community to support their bid.

One concern we had was the project we were competing with is city-based and has a larger constituency of potential voters who are easier to access. For us it was a 180 mile round trip to distribute the poster with the voting number in the villages on the day.

**Environmental project, West Country ITV Region**

Area allegiances are important to success in The People's Millions. These are particularly strong in rural communities.

**Winning rural project competing against a city-based project, West Country ITV Region**

The evaluators found that the perception that projects in urban areas do better than projects in rural areas does not stand up. They found no evidence to support this.

# Impact of public involvement on decision-making

Those interviewed were asked whether public involvement in The People's Millions makes a difference to the decision making process. Over 80 per cent of respondents in the 2007 project sample felt that it does make a difference, with most of the others unable to decide.

The evaluators found that those interviewed recognised the difference between The People's Millions and traditional funding programmes was their ability to persuade the general public and supporters to vote for the project.

Respondents also felt that public involvement in the programme meant that small-scale community projects were favoured over large-scale agencies such as local authorities, primary care trusts and housing associations.

A number of interviewees raised the issue of the greater unpredictability and risk in the decision-making process that comes with public involvement, particularly for the 'professional' applicants. In other words, those familiar with the bidding culture are well versed in how to present a case on paper to their best advantage, whereas what will appeal to the voting public is much harder to predict. In this way, public involvement gives those projects less experienced in preparing funding applications a better chance, compared to a traditional application process.

# Impact of public involvement on projects

The overwhelming response among winning projects and runners-up was that taking part in The People's Millions was a positive and enjoyable experience. The main benefit identified was the higher profile and enhanced reputation that the organisation gained within their community and amongst their partners. This was true for both winners and runners-up.

Some organisations were able to use their higher profile to secure additional donations or volunteer support. For others it has meant they are now in a position to secure support from other organisations, such as local authorities, who had not supported them in the past. For example, a community group in the Anglia East ITV Region reported that they were now actively engaged with their local council, a change to the previous situation. Another group that was a runner-up in the 2006 round from the Yorkshire ITV Region has gone on to secure funding for its sensory



## Fairness of the process

garden project from the local landfill tax distributor. The organisation was invited to bid for the funding as a direct result of their exposure through The People's Millions.

Most of the projects entered The People's Millions competition with what the evaluators termed as their 'eyes wide open'. In other words, they were aware of the possibility of not winning. Many projects took the view that the risk of failure for the programme (once through to the second round phase) was no higher than a traditional paper-based grant application to a funder. The pragmatic view was that The People's Millions brought about publicity and exposure at low cost, irrespective of whether the project was successful or not. Some felt if they were unsuccessful then the work on the project plan could be used for alternative funding applications, whilst others felt the nature of the programme meant if they got to round two they had a greater chance to influence the outcome than in comparison to a traditional funding programme.

Projects that did not receive funding from the programme noted several factors about the competition that were less positive. These included raising expectations amongst the project's supporters and the resource implications of being involved in the process for smaller organisations.

In each ITV Region, over four evenings, a short film from each pair is shown and viewers in that region are given an opportunity to vote for who they think should receive funding. This is done on a 'head-to-head' basis; the project receiving more votes out of each pair is that day's winner.

When interviewed prior to the day of their vote, over half the 2007 projects considered The People's Millions a fair process, with sufficiently equal opportunities for projects to win. This fell to about a third of projects when re-interviewed after the public vote. One project felt the TV coverage misrepresented their project aims and another felt, as a rural project, they were unfairly paired with a city project. Two winning projects in the sample also expressed some concern about the numbers of votes cast per telephone line and one queried the pairing process.

There is also one bonus award in each ITV region, which is offered to the project that scored the most votes during the week but which did not win a head-to-head vote.

Some projects felt there should be some form of additional 'consolation award' for those who didn't win in recognition of the effort organisations had made to get to the final phase and to compensate for the staff and volunteer time required to get projects to the final round. When the Public Members of the Regional Committee were interviewed about the process, four fifths of those interviewed felt it was sufficiently fair to projects.

## Public involvement in more Lottery programmes

The evaluators found that the view of the majority of respondents was that The People's Millions is a sound model for public involvement. Few projects were aware that the public were represented on the Regional Committees. All considered this a good idea and one which BIG should publicise.

We believe absolutely that there should be more programmes with public involvement. It gives you an excuse to engage, something to talk about, it involves everyone in the organisation and it gets the community involved.

### **A community project, Granada ITV Region**

The evaluators looked at the patterns and timings of telephone votes cast for projects and found that mobilising local support is paramount for success. From the analysis of votes, supporters are more likely than the general public to make multiple phone calls. From analysing the number of votes per telephone line and the time of day the calls were made, the evaluators estimate that 65 to 70 per cent of votes are made by supporters and 30 to 35 per cent by members of the public. This underlines the importance for projects of campaigning and engaging with supporters to encourage them to vote as many times as possible. However, the public vote is not insignificant and projects still need to appeal to the public to gain their votes.

## Conclusion

The People's Millions is a successful and popular programme. In 2007 over 150,000 people cast almost 553,000 telephone votes. This was an increase of almost half on 2006.

A large part of the appeal of The People's Millions is the simplicity of the programme. Prospective applicants also like the fact that they are not required to find match funding and they have the flexibility to allocate money to revenue or capital costs according to their project plan.

Over 80 per cent of respondents in the sample of 2007 project finalists felt that the public involvement in the decision making meant that the 'best' or 'most deserving' projects do not always win.

The clear view from most projects, whether they were a winner or runner-up, was that they applied for funding fully aware of the risks of not winning but that the benefits outweighed any downsides. Benefits included free publicity to raise the public profile of the project, attracting new volunteers or funding and a more positive impact on local community engagement.

# What next?

The People's Millions is being continued and information and detailed timescales for forthcoming rounds are available on our website [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

Findings from the evaluation will be used to inform further rounds of The People's Millions and learning will be shared with future applicants.