WHY DO PEOPLE GIVE TO SPORT?
The Australian Sports Foundation (the Sports Foundation) conducted Australia’s first ever study into why Australians give to sport.

We partnered with Marketscape, a professional research firm, who delivered the research and prepared this report.

The findings from this research will be shared with sporting clubs and organisations across Australia to help them understand why donors donate and help them make the donor experience more enjoyable and rewarding.

The Sports Foundation already collects and analyses donation data which answers the WHO, WHAT, WHEN, and HOW MUCH questions. The current research together with future similar studies will continually enrich the Sports Foundation’s knowledge about sport donors and provide the WHY behind sports giving.

This report is the first of a series and provides fundamental insights about key donor motivations, needs and expectations related to sports giving and ideas about unlocking the growth potential for fundraising. Upcoming reports will focus on further research findings and other important topics regarding sports giving.
This study used a qualitative research methodology and involved a series of in-depth interviews with people who have donated through the Sports Foundation in the last twelve months. The interviews were conducted in February 2017 in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Canberra.
TO UNCOVER THE DEEP MOTIVATIONS BEHIND GIVING...

We partnered with researchers from Marketscape, who facilitated an exploratory and open-ended conversation with each participating donor, asking them to share their individual story and experience with sport and giving. These stories and experiences were analysed and key themes and insights were developed. A synthesis of these insights is presented in this report.

Due to the qualitative nature of this study and its small sample size, the findings may not be generalisable to the overall sports donor population, and should be treated as indicative. Nevertheless, findings from this research provide a strong foundation and framework for understanding sports giving in general.
Sport is good for our health, wellbeing and the community.

According to the United Nations Sports for Development and Peace, physical activity plays an important role in the development of overall health and prevents various diseases such as heart attack, mental illness and cancer. Playing sport is also an excellent physical activity and thus aids in improving the functional capabilities of body.

Sports are not only beneficial to young people, but also for older generations. However, it is always good to start early. Kids should be encouraged to start early and participate in sports at school or at social events. Many older people find improved alertness and social connectedness over time if they engage in sports.

Sport is known to provide psychological benefits such as bringing positivity and calmness into people’s lives, building self-esteem, confidence, and goal setting. Sport also provides a range of useful life skills such as developing discipline, building mutual respect, and encouraging teamwork.

However, according to Australia’s Health Tracker, two-thirds of Australians are missing out on the vital physical and mental health benefits of exercise, with 66% of adults reporting no or low physical activity. Physical inactivity costs Australia an estimated $600 million each year. More needs to be done to develop Australian sport and encourage people of all ages to participate.
We know that the success of Australian sport largely depends on the level of funding it receives.

While sports clubs and organisations receive funding from a number of well-established sources, they are becoming increasingly dependent on fundraising through donations to achieve sustainable growth. The truth is that Australian sport is currently underfunded and needs more financial support to survive, particularly grassroots and local clubs. If done well, fundraising can be a great source of much needed funding for clubs. Increasingly, fundraising for sport is becoming part of funding for projects – big and small...But what is driving Australians to give to sport? Moreover, what can clubs do to increase donations for important projects?
The success of fundraising campaigns depends on how well donors are engaged.

Donors play a vital role in the funding of projects for sport development. To be successful in fundraising, clubs need to put donors at the centre of their efforts. Understanding what motivates people to give to the sport they love is critical to every club’s success in fundraising. On the one side, this includes gaining insights about what donors deeply care about, their hopes, aspirations, desires, fears, beliefs, convictions and expectations.

On the other side, these insights can be used by clubs to create compelling campaigns that strongly resonate with donors, triggering their generosity.

At the Australian Sports Foundation, we set out to discover the WHY behind giving to sport and found that there is more than meets the eye. Our researchers facilitated informal discussions with donors and gathered important insights. This exercise was a great way to connect with our donors and hear their stories first hand.
KEY DONOR MOTIVATORS

1. Sports giving involves both our emotional heart and rational mind.

2. The success of fundraising campaigns depends on how well donors are engaged.

3. Giving to sport is like a boomerang – it returns powerful psychological rewards to donors.

4. Giving to sport affects people’s emotional well-being.

5. Giving to sport is very personal and is tightly linked to dedication and commitment to the sport and the club.
Co-creating fundraising campaigns with club members is the key.

Donors like to be present in their donation experience.

Satisfaction with the donation experience drives donors’ willingness to give again (or more).

The donor giving journey.

CONCLUSION
GIVING TO SPORT IS LIKE A BOOMERANG

It returns powerful psychological rewards to donors.

Giving comes from the heart. Donor motivations are mostly subconscious and emotional, deeply rooted in the inner self, i.e. their early life experiences, personal beliefs, values, goals, desires, hopes and needs. While donors give to help make a difference, like a returning boomerang, they receive a range of psychological rewards such as feeling good when they give, personal satisfaction, sense of belonging to their club, improved health and wellbeing, and leaving a legacy. Donors can also be motivated by the potential to use the new facility or equipment they have donated to.
Why I donate...

“I’M INVESTING IN SOMETHING I BELIEVE IN – IT’S A LONGER TERM RETURN.”

“I FEEL LIKE I’M CONTRIBUTING TO SOMETHING THAT WILL GO WELL AFTER I’M GONE – IT MAKES ME FEEL GOOD.”

“I’M GETTING A SOCIAL EXPERIENCE – THE CLUB IS A BIG PART OF MY LIFE, IT’S LIKE A MEETING PLACE.”

“FROM GIVING TO SPORT YOU SEE SOME RESULT, YOU SEE YOUR TEAM SUCCEED, YOU GET SOME SATISFACTION OUT OF IT… WHEN YOUR TEAM WINS YOU FEEL GOOD ABOUT IT.”
GIVING TO SPORT AFFECTS PEOPLE’S EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

The psychological benefits of giving include the good feeling derived when people “do the right thing”, the pleasurable feeling of moral satisfaction, the desire to view oneself as compassionate and kind and attaining an emotionally positive experience, also known as the “warm-glow effect” or “helper’s high”. In contrast, not donating when people think they should can lead to guilt and can harm one’s self-image. Indeed, giving to sport can lead to positive emotions such as warmth and happiness, while refusing to do so can lead to negative emotions, such as guilt. Beyond short-term emotional perks, giving has several long-term benefits as well.

People like to think of themselves as kind and giving. Thus, giving to sport doesn’t just help the causes being supported, it also helps the givers by making them happier, improving their self-esteem, their self-identity, and helping them feel more connected to their club and the rest of the world. Giving to sport can have positive effects on donors’ overall well-being.
“THE CLUB NEEDS MY DONATION TO SUCCEED – TO WIN MORE GAMES THAN THEY LOSE, I GIVE SO I CAN SEE THEM SUCCEED – I GET MORE PERSONAL FULFILMENT.”

“... I FEEL LIKE I'M CONTRIBUTING TO SOMETHING THAT WILL PROSPER. BY DONATING, I AM HELPING PEOPLE.”

**Why I donate...**
We found that giving to sport is very personal and is tightly linked to dedication and commitment to the sport and the club.

Donors like to be *present* in their giving experience by being personally connected with the cause and beneficiary. The likelihood of donating again will largely depend on the meaning people find in the cause, the strength of donor-club relationship and the degree of donor satisfaction with their club. A key contributor to that is delivering an enjoyable club experience, including consideration of what the donor cares about the most, getting them involved in co-creating the fundraising project, and keeping them updated on project progress and outcomes.
Why I donate...

“GIVING SOMETHING BACK, SENSE OF DEBT, APPRECIATE WHAT SPORT HAS DONE FOR ME, IN RETURN IT’S LIKE A THANK YOU FOR THE IMPACT IT’S HAD ON MY LIFE, IT’S A GIFT.”
So, what does the typical giving journey look like? What is important to donors? And, what can sporting clubs do to offer an enjoyable giving experience? Our research sheds light on this...
THE DONOR GIVING JOURNEY

BEFORE GIVING
 Clubs create campaigns based on donor motivations

WHY DONORS GIVE
Motivations based on beliefs, convictions, values, needs, interests, emotions, goals
- Helping athletes in need and underprivileged groups
- The club needs my donation to succeed
- Contributing to health and wellbeing
- Supporting local sport development & contributing to development of young talent
- Building stronger communities/ contributing to the fabric of society
- Personal growth/ character building
- Gratitude for what the sport has done for me/ giving back
- Reliving my youth by living vicariously through others

DURING GIVING
 Clubs create the donor experience

MAKING A DONATION
Driven by donor motivations and club engagement
1. Identifying and selecting a worthy cause to support
2. Choosing how to donate (e.g. direct to club, via ASF, etc.)
3. Deciding how much to donate can be influenced by tax deductibility and other factors
4. Making a donation

WHAT DONORS GET OUT OF GIVING
 Driven by donor motivations and club engagement
- Feeling good about giving/ personal satisfaction
- Feeling appreciated, valued and recognised
- Social benefits – e.g. greater sense of belonging and connection with other members and players
- Enjoyable overall club experience – e.g. stronger relationship with club
- Experiencing tangible outcomes from giving – e.g. using improved infrastructure and equipment
- Leaving a legacy

AFTER GIVING
 Clubs help deliver rewards for donors

Key decision point
Whether to give

Key decision point
Whether to give again!
HOW SHOULD CLUBS ENGAGE WITH DONORS PRIOR TO GIVING?

The club has a key role to play at the time when members are deciding whether to donate to the club.

Before people donate, they search for reasons to give and those are based on their subconscious personal beliefs, convictions, values, needs, emotions, and goals or the ‘self’. The fundraising campaign needs to be closely aligned with the donor self, so members find enough reasons to give for that particular cause. If they don’t find enough reasons to give to the club, they will look to give to other causes (often outside of sport) that closely align with their self.

To be successful, the fundraising effort needs to be donor-centric.

Donors look for the human aspects of giving - that’s why it’s so important to connect donors emotionally to the beneficiaries. Just communicating the physical outcomes of a project is unlikely to motivate people to donate – it is essential that clubs communicate the psychological rewards for donors and how their contribution will help improve the club experience and increase chances of winning. Being more personally involved with the club and knowledgeable about the inner workings stimulates people to give – the club needs to become more real to them.
Why I donate...

“WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE AT THE CLUB – LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE GET TOGETHER AND HAVE A GREAT TIME, FANTASTIC ENVIRONMENT; PEOPLE WHO RESPECT EACH OTHER. ”

“THE CLUB IS HOME AWAY FROM HOME, IT’S AN OUTLET FOR EXERCISE, MEETING PEOPLE, VERY SOCIAL.”
OUR RESEARCH REVEALED THAT DONORS ARE LIKELY TO CONSIDER DONATING TO A CLUB IF IT...

...shows that it cares about them as individuals.

...is able to connect with them on a personal level.

...has developed a commercially sound business plan to base the project on – this is expected to be a professionally developed plan and they also expect to be provided with transparency of the financial situation of the club and its future directions.

...has approached other sources of funding, e.g. city council, State/Territory Government for infrastructure projects.

...demonstrates that it is doing its best for the club to prosper and to increase chances for its players to win by supporting them.

...cares about improved health and wellbeing.
...advises of how much goes to what and how much gets donated within a period of time, how the fundraising activity is tracking as donors are likely to give towards the project more if they know the club hasn’t received enough towards the cut off date.

...is aligned to common civil society principles.

“SPORT IS A REALLY IMPORTANT INGREDIENT OF SOCIETY, IT’S A CONTRIBUTION TO THE FABRIC OF SOCIETY.”

...clearly communicates the Sports Foundation’s brand and how it will benefit them, e.g. due diligence process and high level of accountability in handling their money, tax deductibility aspect, reputation of the organisation among sport clubs and their members.
The design of a successful fundraising campaign involves careful consideration of members’ psychological needs and expectations.

Although there are visible or tangible outcomes from a project, there are also a host of intangible psychological rewards members expect to get when they donate their money or time to a club and become donors. Members’ perceived value of the tangible and psychological rewards determines their likelihood to give.
Some ways the club can show it cares for its members as donors, include:

**Co-creating major fundraising activities**
and projects with members to get their early buy-in and bring them on the journey - e.g. send a quick survey to all members, and hold co-creation sessions with members. As part of the co-creation process, encourage willing members to become fundraisers themselves using their networks. Donors who are emotionally involved with the club and strongly believe in the promoted cause would invest extra time and effort to raise additional funds for the project.

**Demonstrate strong alignment**
with the club’s values and donors’ personal values.

**Showing that the club cares about its donors**
individually and values them as an integral part of club prosperity.

**Presenting a believable and compelling story**
that resonates with donors (based on their motivations) and clearly communicates the purpose of the project through achievement of the expected tangible (physical) and intangible (psychological) outcomes for the members, club, and community. For example:

- The story could include a group of up and coming young players sharing their desire and potential to succeed in the sport but they need the support of members to get there.

- Include some real photos, emotive language, and/or short videos would help members connect more easily with the story.

- Touch on some of the members’ beliefs such as improving health and wellbeing, their passion for developing young players and helping people in need to bring the story closer to the member’s ‘self’ and make it sound more real.
HOW SHOULD CLUBS ENGAGE WITH DONORS DURING GIVING?

Once donors have made a decision to give and have chosen a cause to support, they expect to engage with the club on a very personal level.

This includes receiving regular updates on the progress of the fundraising activity, including indications of how much has been collected to date. By being kept up to date, donors feel they are part of the process and this gives the club an opportunity to ask for a second round of donations, if needed.

Donors like to be present in their donation experience...

As the act of donating is very personal to donors, they like to be in control of the experience.

They like to be actively involved in their donation decisions, particularly who they give to, when and how much. Many donors tend to be spontaneous in their giving behaviour, typically responding to appeals that communicate an immediate need (and are closely aligned with their personal beliefs and interests). The majority of donors dislike ‘regular giving’ or ‘set-and-forget’ options for sports donations, as they find this takes the control of giving away from them. Most donors tend to make their donation decisions independently, without involving other family members. And often they may not share the amount they donate. This is different for donations made to other charities – in this instance, the decision is often joint and more planned. When donating to charities, donors are more open to setting up a ‘regular giving’ account with a charity, mainly driven by the lack of personal connection and low involvement with the beneficiary, and inability to feel their donation has made a real difference.
“I prefer to choose when I donate instead of regularly donating. It’s flexible, it’s my call, and it keeps me connected by receiving emails.

If it’s regulated — I feel disconnected. I like to be part of the decision to do it.”

The context of giving is also an important consideration.

Giving is a personal thing with a social aspect to it. Hence, giving at social functions makes members feel they are part of the overall giving experience, not just by themselves - it denotes everyone is involved and is contributing to the cause. At a social event, clubs can present more details about the project, the funding model, duration of the campaign and what the project will achieve. This presentation is expected to include the story and highlight the benefits to members, players and the wider community and the difference the project would make.

Donors seem more likely to donate at events where they can mix and mingle with players.

For instance, being invited to watch the players train and then have a BBQ with them could help them establish a more personal connection with players and motivate them to give. As giving is a subconscious decision, some members may prefer to give at the event, while others may like to give at another time, e.g. via the club’s website or the Sports Foundation’s website. Clubs should ensure members are aware of all the available channels to donate so members have flexibility and choice.

“Regular giving is too commercial — it’s usually an opt-out thing, its predatory.”
HOW SHOULD CLUBS ENGAGE WITH DONORS AFTER GIVING?

Satisfaction with the donation experience drives donors’ willingness to give again (or more).

For donors, the way they are engaged throughout the donation process and their satisfaction with the overall donation experience would drive their loyalty or willingness to give again to the club. As a result of giving, donors could experience a range of psychological rewards. Hence, engaging with them after they have given is important as this reassures them that the club still cares about them and values their support. Donors also like to feel greater sense of belonging, increased social connection, and appreciation.

As donating to their favourite sport is a very emotional experience, clubs can reinforce that their donation will make a difference for the club, the players and the wider community.

This could include the following:

- **Showing appreciation and individual recognition** of each donor’s contribution and making them feel a valuable part of the club. For smaller donations, it would be appropriate to send a ‘thank you’ letter/email, indicating appreciation and letting donors know what their money will contribute to. For larger donations, some donors expect to be recognised in donor boards, annual reports, etc.

- **Leaving a legacy** by offering donors, if they wish, the ability to leave something lasting as part of their donation for future generations.

- **Showing progress of donating** at the beginning of the season, at end of FY and at the annual dinner say how much was received so far and how much more is needed.

- **Providing regular project updates** on project progress, i.e. major milestones.

- **Demonstrating the benefits** experienced by club members, players, and community as a result of the project.
Why I donate...

“GIVING TO SPORT IS IMPORTANT TO ME PERSONALLY. FOR MY HEALTH, MY MENTAL WELLBEING, AND MY SOCIAL GROUPS. SUPPORTING ROWING IS SUPPORTING MY LIFE!

OTHER CHARITIES ARE IMPORTANT TO SOCIETY, GIVING TO SPORT IS IMPORTANT TO ME.”
CONCLUSION

In our research, we have identified the key motivations behind sports giving, the critical elements of the donation experience, and opportunities for sports clubs and organisations to grow their donation revenue through meaningful engagement with their members...
We found that to be effective, fundraising efforts need to include a focus on the donor, their motivations, needs, emotions and expectations. It is critical that donors are part of the fundraising journey from the start and remain an integral part to the end.

People that donate to their club are committed to its future and expect to be part of the value creation for the club.

Finally, to encourage more donations, clubs need to offer an enjoyable and memorable club experience which delivers psychological rewards to donors and motivates them to donate again (or more).
To find out more about fundraising for sport, or to start fundraising now visit:

ASF.ORG.AU