



Small grants, big impact

Millennium Awards Impact Study 2002

“It developed my skills whilst helping my community to achieve a goal.”

The background of the page features a soft, warm-toned image of water ripples. In the upper right corner, there is a circular graphic element resembling a water droplet or a lens. On the right side, a glass is shown with a single water droplet suspended above it, creating a classic 'bullet' shape. The overall aesthetic is clean and fluid, with a color palette dominated by light pinks and oranges.

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Millennium Awards – impact study

The Millennium Awards Scheme is a unique £200 million programme of small grants to individuals provided by the Millennium Commission with National Lottery funds. The Scheme aims to provide at least 32,000 people across the UK with opportunities to improve their skills and to strengthen their communities.

To date, 25,000 Awards have been made throughout the UK to people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. The Commission has made a commitment of £100 million towards an endowment to continue the Millennium Awards Scheme in perpetuity.

Each individual Award recipient not only receives a grant, but also benefits in their own way through study, learning new skills, travel or opening up new horizons. Each will deliver a project that will contribute to and enrich their communities.

Awards are channelled through not-for-profit organisations with community networks and a track record in grant making. These organisations are known as Award Partners, and include charities, voluntary organisations and local authorities. Their experience, expertise and networks ensure that Awards reach the people who will most benefit from them.

This approach to funding by the Millennium Commission also provides individuals with more than just a grant. Award Partners provide practical support to individuals throughout their projects – from application to completion.

Objectives and methodology

The Millennium Commission has appointed an independent research team, Annabel Jackson Associates, to carry out an impact study of the Millennium Awards it funds. This booklet summarises the third of five impact studies to be carried out over the life of the Commission's Awards programme.

This year the study had three elements:

- A main survey of 527 Award recipients
- A longitudinal survey of 150 Award recipients who were interviewed last year
- A survey of 33 unsuccessful applicants.

The survey covered up to 34 Award recipients per scheme from over 60 schemes.

The key objectives of the study were:

- to quantify and analyse the impact, trends and effectiveness of the Millennium Commission's Millennium Awards Scheme year-on-year;
- to highlight individual Award recipients' good practice in order to guide and promote the role of future Award recipients;

- to share research on the Millennium Awards programme with the Government, the voluntary sector and businesses, illustrating the advantages and disadvantages of the Millennium Awards approach to the funding of individuals.

Methodology

Award recipients were asked in detail about the nature of their project, what support they had received, any problems they experienced, the personal and community impact, their plans for the future and their interest in joining together with other Award recipients in a Millennium Awards Fellowship.

The longitudinal aspect of the survey focused on what happened to the project after the Award, any problems Award recipients experienced in continuing the project and whether they felt the long-term effects of their project had been delivered and sustained.

A survey of unsuccessful applicants asked whether the project had gone ahead without the Millennium Award, whether other funding had been obtained, and whether the process of applying for Millennium Awards funding had been a useful experience in its own right.

The main survey – key findings

Scale of impact

As in the two previous years, the impact study shows the major impact Millennium Awards are having on recipients and their communities.

Award recipients' projects are reaching thousands of people. In line with last year, 90% of Award recipients said that their community project reached tens or hundreds of people.

Award recipients are achieving recognition for their work in the community. 59% received media coverage, including local newspapers, radio, specialist press and regional television.

For the first time, Award recipients were asked if their project would have gone ahead without the Millennium Awards grant: 71% said that it would not.

The study shows that Award recipients are continuing to benefit from high quality support from Award Partners. The number of Award recipients receiving support has risen slightly from 78% to 81% this year and 75% of Award recipients said that they did not need any additional support. However, the number of Award recipients saying they had a mentor is lower than last year and one gap in support was childcare although all Awards can include these costs.

“I previously never thought it was possible to get a project of this nature off the ground, but now people are sitting up and taking notice.”

Personal

The Millennium Awards Scheme is highly successful in developing Award recipients' personal skills. More than 70% of respondents said that the project improved their confidence or motivation. Team working skills, communication skills, leadership and negotiation skills were also developed by the majority of participants. 21% of respondents said that their literacy or numeracy skills were enhanced.

Other aspects of personal development mentioned were “an appreciation of what we have”, tolerance, patience, managing volunteers, survival skills, time management and understanding of “the grant jungle”.

- 73% of Award recipients said that their project made them more optimistic about the future and that they are now more likely to take part in community activity and training.
- Helping Award recipients get jobs is not an aim of the Millennium Awards programme, but many do: 12% said that their Millennium Award helped them get a job. Others thought their project might help them get a job in the future.
- As in last year's study, the huge majority (89%) of Award recipients said their community project was a success in terms of its effect on them. The percentage of people saying they would not have gained these benefits without the project has increased by nearly 10% to 64%.

Community

Millennium Award projects are particularly successful at raising awareness of issues, improving the quality of life for the community, strengthening links within the community and reducing isolation. The projects that involve organising an event are particularly strong in their community impact, for example in reducing isolation, increasing local pride and strengthening community links.

In keeping with the positive results of last year's study, 85% of Award recipients said the project was a success in terms of its effect on the community.

More than 40% of Award recipients organised a new service of some kind. Campaigning, organising events, passing on skills and training were less common but still significant activities.

The Scheme

46% of Award recipients said that they would change nothing about the Millennium Awards Scheme. However, Award recipients still believe the Scheme and their individual projects need better publicity.

Other possible improvements were:

- help with fundraising through other bodies
- extended funding from the Millennium Commission beyond the period of their Award
- more support
- a simpler administration process for reporting and accounting with faster payments and fewer restrictions on how the money is spent.

Longitudinal study

Introduction

The aim of the longitudinal survey is to track Award recipients over time to see if impacts are sustained.

The longitudinal survey demonstrates that the benefit of Millennium Award projects is long lasting for the individual and their community. 66% of Award recipients said that they have taken part in some form of community activity since their project and feel more a part of the community.

- 89% of Award recipients said that the community benefit of the project continued beyond the time of the Award, mainly because people carried on running the project voluntarily.
- 52% of Award recipients said that they continued their project beyond the Award grant and 60% said that their project is still continuing.
- 29 of 150 Award winners interviewed said that they obtained further funding for their project with the median sum raised being £4,500. Six raised £10,000 or above, one of whom raised £165,000.
- 78% of Award recipients said that in the long term the project increased their confidence. 70% said the project increased their motivation, 61% said that their team working or communication/public speaking skills have improved, and over 40% said that their negotiation and leadership skills have improved.
- 47% have taken part in training or education since the project and 23% said that the Award helped them get work.

“Millennium Awards give people an opportunity to work together towards a common aim.”

- More than 40% of Award recipients said that their project had a long-term impact in raising awareness of an issue, improving the quality of life, reducing isolation, increasing local pride and strengthening links within the community.

Where Award recipients are interested in linking with other Award recipients as part of a Fellowship, they place no limit on the length of their participation; almost half would like contact to continue their involvement with it for ever. This response in itself underlines the depth of impact from Millennium Award projects.

Unsuccessful applicants

Thirty-three applicants who were unsuccessful in their application for a Millennium Award were interviewed. Only four of these carried out the project without the Millennium Awards money, two of these with funding from charitable trusts. 39% did not do any of the project and 26% are attempting to do the project now.

65% of applicants said they found the process of applying for funding helpful in giving them insight into the funding system. A smaller number of applicants helped clarify the objectives of their projects.

Conclusions

The third Millennium Awards impact study reinforces the positive findings from the previous two surveys. Both personal and community impacts are far reaching.

The personal impact of Millennium Awards is immense. The figures for job creation are high and this third study looked in more detail at this issue. There are at least three common ways in which Millennium Awards projects increase employability:

- Having their ideas invested in and managing their projects builds people's confidence
- They enable Award recipients to distinguish themselves from other job applicants in an interview by talking about their project
- They help develop contacts and skills.

In many cases Award recipients are taking on tasks or reaching sections of the community that statutory bodies and institutions find difficult: discouraging the young from taking drugs, reducing bullying, integrating people with disabilities into society, encouraging racial tolerance, enthusing children about learning, helping individuals to deal with the emotional impact of long-term illness, raising awareness of domestic violence, increasing civic pride in former mining areas, teaching people about the environmental impact of litter or training ex-offenders.

The Millennium Awards Scheme is unusual because it allows individuals to carry out projects in the way that they wish to do: it is demand-led rather than policy-led. These findings confirm that the Millennium Awards Scheme has a unique place in the UK's grant funding system. Unlike funding from other bodies, Millennium Awards offer:

- flexibility in terms of what can be funded
- support combined with money
- a focus on a specific project
- a link between individual and community benefit
- a sense of a Fellowship with other Award recipients.

The longitudinal survey provides new insights into the longevity of impacts. The percentage of Award recipients still continuing with their project is high. Furthermore, 89% of Award recipients said that the community benefit of the project continued beyond the time of their Award.

This third impact study provides further compelling evidence that small grants help Award recipients tackle large issues and make a big difference to communities right across the UK.

Case studies

The Millennium Awards Scheme has a number of strengths illustrated through the diversity and long-term benefits seen in the following case studies.



Courtesy of Chris Healy Northern Woman magazine

Fashion for all

A former Vogue model and dancer with Legs & Co., Patience Bradley used her NIVT 'Changing Lives, Changing Communities' Award to design and make 38 outfits especially adapted for wheelchair users and people whose disabilities mean they must have specially tailored clothing. The models then had the opportunity of taking part in a free fashion show in Templepatrick.

Although well accustomed to modelling glamorous clothes herself, this was Patience's first experience of designing and making them. After interviewing 100 people with disabilities to assess their needs and wishes, she carefully and cleverly designed all of the outfits to boost the confidence of the models. Having put on 'mainstream' fashion shows previously, Patience launched into this project with great enthusiasm and has been undaunted by the many new challenges. She says: "My project started off in a simple way, and I was convinced I was one of hundreds fulfilling this need. However, I soon discovered I was one of only a few, and as demand has grown I have been working all day, every day on my project. It has led to me starting my own business in this field."

As society becomes more aware of the needs of people with disabilities, and as the Disability Discrimination Act comes into force, there is going to be a growing demand for events and services such as these. Patience's work has not only boosted the self-esteem of 100 plus members of the disabled community whom she has involved, but has also challenged the wider community to tackle its own prejudices.



Comrie Millennium Footpath

Comrie in Strathearn, Perthshire has a long history of visitors enjoying its beautiful countryside walks. William Gebbie's Fieldfare Millennium Award project aimed to help him in his dream of creating a 10 km footpath through the area which could be used by wheelchair users and less able walkers. His Award

paid for IT equipment and training for him to carry out the project, some survey work, and equipment to make a video with members of his community. Thanks to the work he has done using his Millennium Award equipment and training, William has gone on to raise a further £15,000 towards developing the site. Improvements include a picnic area, a nature trail, sensory areas, viewpoints with seats, signs and information boards.

Despite some ongoing work on access and management issues, real progress has been made towards creating one of the first truly accessible country walks. Comrie has a large elderly population, many of whom are either not very agile on their feet or require assistance with mobility. Both the joint working on the project, and the end result, will bring people together.

William, who is disabled himself, says the development of this footpath has given him an important focus in his life and he has received tremendous support from the community: "I previously never thought it was possible to get a project of this nature off the ground, but now people are sitting up and taking notice. It has widened the number of people I communicate with."

Translating Gujarati songs

Champa Halai used her Bolton Citizens of Tomorrow Millennium Award to transcribe a collection of community songs in her native Gujarati and compile them into a book for her community. Many of these songs have been passed from generation to generation by oral tradition and, with increasing globalisation and internationalisation, there are fears the tradition could die out, and the songs with them. This new permanent record makes them available for the benefit of future generations.

Champa is very proud of the role she has played in bringing two generations of her people closer together and providing a definitive text. Hindu organisations across the country have been pleased to receive copies of her song book. She has reached young and old alike with her work, and has spent a lot of time liaising with her community, about the music of their culture. As Champa's own Gujarati has improved, she has gone on to run a class for Gujarati-speaking youngsters from across the region, brushing up on her IT skills in the process. Following up her enthusiasm to take the project further forward, Champa has made a tape of several of the songs.

For the Hindu population of this country Champa's work will have enormous emotional and cultural impact. Champa, a former student and now a teacher at Oldham Sixth Form College, said: "I wanted to make sure that the traditions of my parents' caste and religion were not lost between the generations. I feel there has been an awakening of interest in cultural issues within the community."



Arts and crafts on the move

With her Swansea Citizenship Millennium Award, Emma-Louise North was able to arrange and run a mobile arts and crafts workshop for mothers and toddlers in Swansea over a one-year period. During the course of the year the project grew to encompass older children and to reach out to venues such as parks. Her original intention had been to organise some 27 workshops, but in the end there were at least 50. She was helped by half a dozen self-employed local artists. Their

activities included paper making, lantern making, finger puppets, and a wide variety of arts, crafts and drawing.

Emma-Louise moved to Swansea from Cardiff three years ago. Although she has an applied biology degree and has previously been involved with the Cardiff City Farm, she was keen to get much more involved with community work, and this project has given her the opportunity to uncover her artistic side. She describes the year spent on the project as “a really great time”, and as a direct result has been able to make the leap to become a full-time self-employed professional artist.

By being able to expand beyond her original brief, Emma-Louise was able to reach a wide cross section of the community. In the parks she worked with children who might not normally enter a community hall or a play project, and she also linked up with Swansea Women’s Aid, providing their clients with the benefit of her arts experience. Throughout Emma-Louise endeavoured to involve parents and make all her skills fully transferable, so that the children could continue with their work when they returned home. In total more than 1,000 children benefited from the project.

London Anti Crime Education Scheme

Charles Young is an ex-prisoner who spent 20 years 'inside', some of it at Belmarsh high security prison in London. He has since gone straight, and used his Peabody Trust 'Champions for Change' Millennium Award to assist with presentations given by the London Anti-Crime Education Scheme (LACES).

By explaining the horrors of life behind bars to young people in schools and community groups, Charles hopes he can make them think now before they offend. His Millennium Award funded a projector, along with photographs and props, such as slop buckets, dinner trays and prison clothing, representing aspects of prison life. In his presentations, Charles shows how boring life is behind bars, and how little it resembles the glamorous image often portrayed in films or in television dramas.

Meeting a group of youngsters can be almost as intimidating for an ex-con as it is for youngsters to meet a hardened criminal. Through this project Charles has grown in confidence. The equipment has improved the professional air of his presentations, and he has now been asked to speak to further groups.

The impact of this cross-generational project on young offenders and those considered to be at risk of offending has been startling. The testimonies of those who have witnessed Charles's presentations – some of whom have parents or family members serving prison sentences – make moving reading. One reads: "I remember my Dad being taken away by people with badges... you changed my view of life."

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