



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Announcing the 2019 Grassroutes Community Sport Innovation Challenge:
\$250,000 in 2019/20 to fund *innovative* community sport initiatives that enhance access,
active participation and more positive sport experiences**

We all know the high price of being inactive and disengaged. We also know the central role community sport can play in building character, social connectedness and enhanced health & wellness. Yet far too many Albertans drop out of community sports at an early age and others are unable to participate due to various constraints and barriers. The 2019 Grassroutes Community Sport Innovation Challenge (Challenge) is offering grants of up to \$50,000 to deserving organizations/municipalities/others with fresh ideas for getting more people involved in sport more often, all life long. Here's a chance to test your best ideas and help take community sport delivery to new levels of engagement.

The Challenge is a major initiative of Makadiff Sports (a not-for-profit organization) and was created to spur innovation and improvement in community sport. "We see a compelling need to enhance community sport development," says Doug Mitchell, Makadiff Sports chair, noting that only one in five Alberta children and youth get enough physical activity every day. "It's our hope in this, the fifth year of the Challenge funding being made available, that even more diverse and creative community sport innovation grant applications will be submitted. We truly need to shift our mindsets about the manner in which we offer our community sport engagements and, more importantly, be more earnest in understanding the outcomes we are striving to achieve."

Last year, nine (9) Challenge initiatives were funded. Makadiff Sports is again providing the Challenge with \$200,000 to be shared among winning entries in 2019. The Challenge is open to Alberta's incorporated sport bodies, municipalities, school jurisdictions, indigenous communities and agricultural societies. For this 2019 edition, the window for grant submissions opens April 29 and closes June 3, 2019 at 5 p.m. MST. Winning entrants will then have until September 28, 2020 to test their ideas and report on what they've accomplished. Based on videos submitted as part of those final reports, the 'big ideas' that are judged to show, amongst other things, the greatest potential for long-term impact and portability will receive a further PRIZE BONUS of up to \$50,000 to extend and expand its/their reach.

The Challenge is a golden opportunity NOT to be missed—and the time to apply is coming up fast. Please broadcast this "community sport grant funding" news through your networks and urge Alberta's changemakers to put their best ideas to the test. Their big ideas could be chosen for the kickstart needed to make a big impact in their community—and beyond.

More information and submission guidelines are available at www.makadiffsports.org



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BACKGROUND

What's behind the Challenge?

Only one in five Alberta children and youth get enough physical activity every day. Many join community sport teams, but drop-out rates are rising due to inflexible schedules, high costs, cultural barriers and excessive focus on win-at-all-cost competition rather than collaboration, socialization and fun. Increasingly, people are looking for flexible, social, less structured ways to get involved in community sport. Meanwhile the impacts of physical inactivity continue to escalate, diminishing quality of life and overburdening our healthcare system.

In light of those realities, there is growing concern that we need to be more intentional about ensuring that community sport reflects our best values and gives everyone opportunities to participate. An informal needs assessment of community sport development and delivery undertaken by the not-for-profit Makadiff Sports organization begins to identify what needs to happen if community sport is to meet its potential to promote positive values, build character, enhance health and contribute to community building. Key concerns that merit attention are outlined below.

Equip everyone to confidently choose ways to be active through sport all life long.

- Ensure that everyone feels welcome in community sports, including newcomers and those living on low incomes.
- Start young. Embrace younger ages with fun activities that teach physical literacy and offer multi-sport skill experiences. Understand that early experiences in sport are critically important.
- Engage youth in shaping public policy, strategies and activities rather than simply providing for them.
- Put particular effort into critical transition points when participation drops most, including the vital transition from primary to secondary school.
- Pay special attention to local sport needs in remote, isolated and indigenous communities.
- Focus on the local sport participation needs and nuances of seniors; women and girls; and seek out inter-generational sport opportunities.
- Renew community sport facilities and related infrastructure, particularly to remove specific barriers that limit access to participation.

Shift from a top-down "elite sports" to a bottom-up "sport-for-all" mindset.

- Balance challenge and competition with social goals, including socializing and fun.
- Offer more flexible, less structured ways to get active through sport, possibly after school.
- Be open to out-of-box approaches and emerging sports, including those brought by newcomers to Canada.
- Give everyone opportunities to meaningfully participate.
- Make sure community sport reflects our best values.
- Market sport in an inviting, non-threatening way, using non-traditional media and means.

Dedicate more resources to quality assurance initiatives.

- Refocus community sport (especially for ages 4 to 12) to meet healthy child development objectives.
- Ensure that community sport is safe, fair and ethically sound.
- Expand the size and capacity of community sport volunteers, who remain the primary sport providers in Alberta communities.

Employ more fluid, collaborative, creative and integrated sport delivery models.

- Make sure your community has an integrated community sport development strategy or plan that reflects local needs, conditions and aspirations.
- Create clear, coordinated pathways into sport participation by nurturing highly localized, joined-up networks involving key sport,



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recreation, education, health and transportation agencies and authorities.

- Seriously consider using the “Canadian Sport for Life” model to achieve integrated and seamless grassroots/grassroutes community sports participation and delivery.
- Use community development approaches both to benefit the community and to equip everyone to be active all life long.
- Consider the regionalization of sport services.
- Employ improved governance models focused on joined-up, partnered planning and action.
- Foster an enhanced sense of community identity, spirit, pride and culture through community sport.

New Thinking ... local innovation

All of the above factors, and more, challenge Alberta to consider new community sport investment opportunities and programming options.

How can grassroots community sport transform itself in more dynamic and innovative ways to ensure that our citizens, and particularly children and youth, become physically literate and skilled in multiple sports? How can we enable local groups to expand access to active sport participation and engagement, so that people of all ages, cultures and abilities, rural and urban, experience positive and sustained health outcomes while learning life-enhancing values and behaviours?

The 2019 Grassroutes Community Sport Innovation Challenge offers an opportunity for organizations/municipalities/school jurisdictions/ others engaged in grassroots community sport across Alberta to invest in innovative ideas for getting more people more active in sport from early childhood to their most senior years. Makadiff Sports intends to showcase the many routes to community sport participation while propelling innovations that offer new and/or enhanced local sport delivery options and sport participation opportunities.

We challenge creative minds all across this province to put their best ideas forward. It's a golden opportunity for changemakers to make a difference through sports, kickstarting tangible improvements in how sport is delivered in their communities—and beyond.



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