

Big Local – More than just the £1 million

Summary of research on additional resources in Big Local

The Big Local programme is much more than the £1 million to each Big Local. Big Local brings together the local talent, ambitions, skills and energy from individuals, groups and organisations who want to make their area an even better place to live. The money is there as a resource and a catalyst to bring new and existing community assets and resources together.

We know Big Local areas draw in a range of resources beyond the £1 million and, in many cases, substantial amounts. We know that Big Local partnership members give of their own time to meet, make decisions and deliver their Big Local plans. Anecdotally, we also know that many areas receive resources in-kind like services, equipment and facilities, and additional funds through grants or match-funding. For example, Greatfield Big Local volunteers contributed over 1,300 volunteer hours (valued at almost £40,000); CELL Big Local (Northumberland) has brought in over £70,000 of external funding to improve Lyne Dene riverside; and Grays Riverside Big Local received in-kind advice from a local architect to design a pocket park.

These examples show how some areas track extra resources but it is not a requirement of Big Local areas to record match or additional funding, volunteer hours or 'in-kind' support. In fact, especially at this early stage of the Big Local programme, much of the additional resources going into areas has not been captured at all.

While we can give examples of **additional resources** being levered in, how much and what types of additional resources do partnerships draw in across the 150 areas? Do these resources make a difference? Are they always a good thing?

To help us answer some of these questions Local Trust is planning a set of research projects over the next few years specifically about additional resources. For the first of these, we commissioned Resources for Change and Rocket Science to take a systematic look at the types and amount of resources levered and to give us a greater understanding of their impact and implications of drawing in additional resources. This is what they found.

Big Local areas are drawing in additional resources

95%

of Big Local areas said their area received some form of additional resources



93%

of areas drew in additional in-kind resources

- **108** areas received free or discounted premises
- **104** areas received knowledge and advice
- **102** areas received marketing and publicity
- **99** areas received organisational support
- **87** areas received materials



89%

of areas drew in volunteer time from people who were not partnership members

5,700 **volunteer days** across 69 areas over the last 12 months – at least **82 days** / area.

- Local volunteers contributed their time in **83%** of areas
- Staff from the **LTO** and **partner organisations** gave additional support beyond what they are contracted to do in almost **two-thirds** of areas



76%

of areas drew in additional financial resources

At least **£1.8 million** in additional financial resources averaging **£26,000** per Big Local area.

- **81** areas received grants
- **68** received financial donations
- **59** areas generated income
- **55** areas other types of financial support

These are encouraging signs

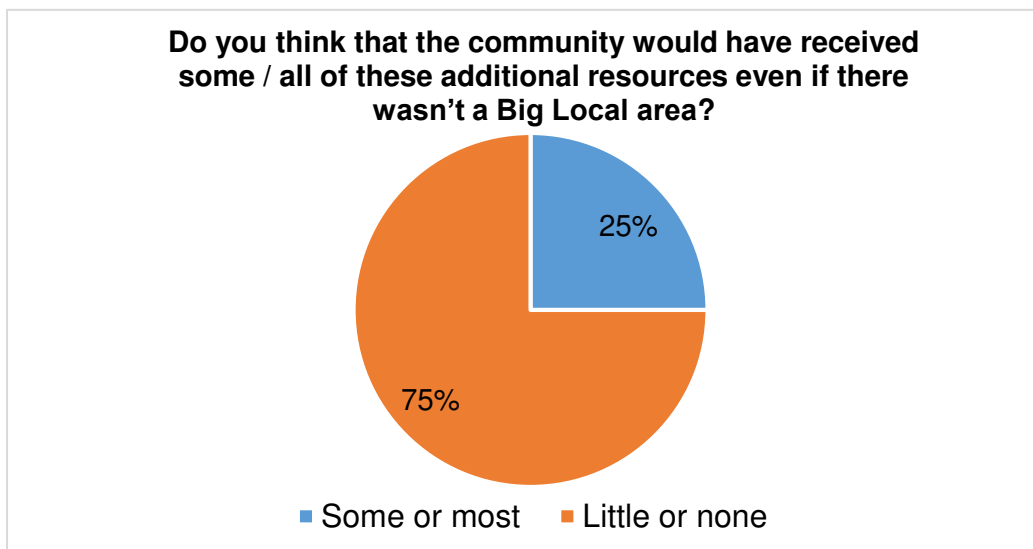
One of the aims of Big Local is to build on an area's existing strengths and assets. The types and amount of additional resources drawn in demonstrates that areas are indeed building on the existing resources, skills and community assets in and around their area.

- They are attracting local people who give their time, skills and other resources.
- They are partnering with local organisations and businesses to provide expertise, resources and goods.
- They are engaging with other funders and agencies to attract more money and make the £1 million go further.

It's great to see almost all Big Local areas drawing in additional resources especially as most areas are in the early years of delivering their plan and spending their £1 million. Based on the evidence from this research, as areas continue to deliver, the amount of additional resources can be expected to increase. What is also encouraging is the value Big Local areas place on additional resources beyond just getting more money. In fact, the research shows that **relationships and networks**, and **time**, are the most useful forms of additional resources. The value of relationships and networks enable things to happen, and contribute to sustainability. Volunteer time from stakeholders including partnership members, residents and local businesses provided the necessary skills, resources and momentum to make Big Local happen. Additionally, partner organisations and locally trusted organisation (LTO) staff provided additional time and support beyond what they were contracted to do.

The influence of Big Local in attracting additional resources

The research also showed how being a Big Local area contributed to attracting additional resources. Only a quarter thought they would get 'some' or 'most' of the additional resources had they not been a Big Local area. No respondents felt that the area would have received all the additional resources.



In fact, just being a Big Local area attracted additional resources. The £1 million Big Local investment was seen as a headline figure that encouraged stakeholders to contribute to the Big Local area and provide extra resources. It **put the partnership in a powerful position locally**.

“Money is a powerful tool and it’s [the £1 million] an iconic amount.”

However, it is not just the £1 million that attracts more resources. The main reason given for why Big Local areas draw in additional resources is because the **Big Local area is better able to articulate their needs and reach out to other organisations** – Big Local is seen as a relevant voice of the community. Other reasons given were that being a Big Local area provides a focal point for action in the community and raises interest and awareness.

Some additional resources may come with disadvantages

While there are plenty of advantages about leveraging in additional resources, the research also highlighted a few challenges. Sometimes additional resources led to more **bureaucracy and complexity**, **overstretched** volunteers and partnership members, or **raised tensions** within the community or with partner organisations.

The research also highlighted the potential of displacement. That is, the extra resources drawn in might have been to the detriment of other communities. Just over half of respondents in the research stated that they thought that ‘some’, ‘most’, or ‘all’ of the additional resources would have **gone to another area** but had come to the Big Local area because of the presence of Big Local.

Overall, additional resources make a positive difference in Big Local areas

While there were some disadvantages and potential displacement, the research clearly shows that Big Local areas thought **having additional resources is much more of an advantage than a disadvantage**.

- Additional resources contribute to long-term sustainability, improve project delivery, raise awareness of Big Local and improve collaborative working.
- They enable projects to happen that would not otherwise have happened and helped to make projects more successful.
- Thus, the additional resources provide benefits for the local community - in particular, improvements to local facilities and services. They also provide more opportunities for community involvement, which in turn lead to more development of skills amongst residents, greater social capital and more community cohesion.

What can help a Big Local area draw in additional resource?

Resources for Change and Rocket Science highlighted seven key characteristics of the Big Local areas that had attracted substantial additional resources, as summarised in the graphic below.



What does this mean?

Additional resources are sometimes viewed as something apart from Big Local: on the one hand, an area has its £1m Big Local investment and, on the other, it has all other resources. However, Resources for Change and Rocket Science highlighted that a more helpful way of looking at the resources in a Big Local area is to consider each Big Local area as having access to a **totality of resources**, not all of which are from Big Local. In their proposition the totality of resources of a Big Local area is seen as one part of an area's overall asset base and the benefits that an area enjoys come from a combination of the area's characteristics and the totality of resources available to it. This proposition fits well with the underlying ethos of Big Local as an asset-based community development programme.

Based on the findings and their analysis, Resources for Change and Rocket Science provided several recommendations for Local Trust and the Big Local programme. This includes looking holistically at the resources in a Big Local area and moving beyond the '£1 million funding' plus 'additional resources' perspective. They also recommend Local Trust take a 'programme position' about additional resources that, depending on this position, would influence the support and guidance to Big Local areas and how these could potentially help to develop and maximise the totality of resources in the community.

We are encouraged by the findings in the report, not only in terms of the range and amount of resources that Big Local areas draw in but also by the overwhelming view that the benefits far outweigh the negatives. Going forward, we agree with the recommendations and will position ourselves to support and encourage Big Local areas to draw in additional resources and will look to provide the necessary training and resources to support this position. Look out in the coming months for some of our new offerings of support to Big Local areas.