

A Guide to Obtaining Funding

Ice skating is an expensive sport and to get to the top requires a big investment from skaters and their parents, both in time and in money.

Funding is hard to come by and we wanted to give some assistance in terms of where and how you can obtain it.

NISA offers funding to athletes on the NISA Performance and Development Squads each season whenever possible through schemes such as the NISA Rising Star award, and also nominates athletes to external organisations such as UK Sport, Sport Aid, Scottish Sports Aid and TASS – nomination to these organisations is subject to stringent performance and result criteria and it's normally the case that an athlete will be contacted by NISA if we are planning to nominate them.

There are many other external organisations offering grants and award schemes to talented individuals that you can apply to directly, but the demand for funding is high and competition for awards is fierce, so you need to make sure that your application stands out.

Your most useful tool in obtaining funding is the internet, and we recommend that you begin by contacting your local council. Nearly all councils in the UK offer some form of support to athletes living in the local area, from free or heavily subsidised access to local sporting facilities, to cash awards for training, buying equipment and other expenses. For example, in Nottinghamshire where the NISA Head Office is located, the County Council has schemes for Rising Stars and Shining Stars which are run annually and offer cash awards to up-and-coming and established athletes:-

<http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/enjoying/sport/sportforall/funding/grants-for-individuals/>

Some organisations will be looking to support athletes from a specific locality, but others will accept applications from athletes anywhere in the UK. Many have specific criteria which must be met whereas others welcome general applications which they will consider on individual merit. It's always best to try and research the organisation online or telephone them to ask before submitting an application, so you can be sure you are not wasting your time in applying.

When you are writing an application, try to imagine receiving it from the organisation's perspective. Presentation is really important – check spelling and grammar and include photographs, copies of certificates, great competition results, etc. Try to present information in the most clear and concise way possible. Don't use skating terms which wouldn't be understood by a layperson, unless you are going to clearly define them the first time you use them. If there is an actual application form to complete, make sure this is comprehensively filled in with as much detail as you can. Also, check whether there is a deadline for applications – some organisations only award funding on an annual basis. You may want to provide examples of costs that you have to fund, such as monthly coaching fees, travel to international competitions, costumes etc. Then you'll need to explain your objectives and targets, in the short, medium and long term, so that the organisation can see where and how any money they may award will assist you to achieve your ambitions. Applications may fail if you

don't illustrate why the funding is needed, what the money will be spent on, and that you are able to plan and budget to succeed.

If you need any help in completing funding applications you can contact NISA and we will be happy to assist you, and provide our written support as your national governing body.

In summary, make sure you find out what funding is available to you and contact the relevant organisations before applying formally to gain information to prioritise your application. Get someone to look over it before you send it to ensure it makes sense and covers everything you want to get across. Try and make your application stand out and be as memorable as possible.

We've listed below some organisations you could try contacting to get you started:

Dickie Bird Foundation - <http://www.thedickiebirdfoundation.co.uk/> - assistance to young athletes under 16 who are disadvantaged by their financial circumstances to participate in sports.

Ron Pickering Memorial Fund - <http://www.rpmf.org.uk/grants.aspx> - the Fund is dedicated to assisting aspiring young athletes who have shown by their attitude and dedication that they possess the qualities which will ensure the growth and protection of sport.

Torch Trophy Trust - http://www.torchtrophytrust.org/torch_trophy_trust_bursaries.php - the Trust provides financial support to individuals wishing to undertake training to enhance their knowledge or improve their coaching skills in order to assist their club, organisation or community to develop their chosen sport.

Sports Development Foundation - <http://www.sportsdevelopmentfoundation.com/index.html> - assistance for children to progress their chosen sport at whatever level they choose, whatever their circumstances. Assistance can be given for coaching costs, equipment or kit purchases.

You could also try crowdfunding to raise money - crowdfunding is the collective effort of a group of individuals who pool their money, usually via the internet, to support other individuals (or organisations) to achieve their objectives over a wide range of activities, and is fast becoming a popular way for athletes to raise money. There are many crowdfunding sites on the internet - one of the biggest and best-known ones to start you off is <http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/> which actually has a section specifically for Sport.

Above all, remember that we are all working towards the promotion of figure skating in the UK and the success of Team GB figure skaters on the international stage, so if you are successful in obtaining funding please share the information with NISA and with other skaters to inspire and encourage.

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