

THE 2022 BIRMINGHAM COMMONWEALTH GAMES AND FESTIVAL: CO-CREATING A LASTING LEGACY

Birmingham, United Kingdom—

- Birmingham City leveraged hosting the 2022 Commonwealth Games for long-term economic development opportunities, including upskilling the local workforce and increased foreign direct investment (FDI).
- Alongside the Games, the Organizing Committee launched a six-month cultural festival, co-designed with the local community across nine festival sites, which saw a boost to residents' pride in place, promoted local culture, and created a positive image of the area as a good place to live, do business, and visit.
- A total of 6.9 million people engaged with Games-related activities, including over 20 000 people benefitting from training opportunities linked to the Games. Overall, the Games was delivered with a GBP 70 million underspend which will be reinvested in the region.

Published on the 09/07/2024

- **Geographical scale**

City

- **Geographic scale**

City / metropolitan area

- **Keyword**

Place-based revitalisation | Reskilling and upskilling

- **Theme**

Culture, creative sectors and global events

- **Countries**

[United Kingdom](#)

What are the objectives?

When the City of Birmingham (UK) bid to host the 2022 Commonwealth Games¹, they aimed to use it as an opportunity to secure lasting change for the region. The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games was the biggest sport and cultural event in the UK since the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in London, and was the biggest event ever held in the West Midlands region. The Birmingham 2022 organising committee partnered with the UK Government, Birmingham City Council, West Midlands Combined Authority, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, West Midlands Growth Company, the Commonwealth Games Federation, and Commonwealth Games England to deliver an ambitious program of sports and

cultural events, alongside a comprehensive set of policy initiatives aimed towards leveraging the event for economic development.

The Legacy Plan for the Games, developed in close consultation with local communities, set out the lasting legacy the Games Partners hoped to achieve, based on a theory of change model which guided event planning and delivery. The plan included five mission pillars:

- **Bring People Together:** The Games will embrace and champion the youth, diversity, humanity and pride of the region and the Commonwealth.
- **Improve Health and Wellbeing:** Inspire, engage, and connect communities and athletes to realize their full potential and live happier, healthier lives.
- **Help the Region to Grow and Succeed:** Drive sustainable growth and aspiration, creating opportunities through trade, investment, jobs, and skills.
- **Be a Catalyst for Change:** Transform and strengthen local communities, working together to deliver new and improved homes, facilities, and transport links.
- **Put us on the Global Stage:** Deliver an unforgettable, global Games in Partnership, on time and on budget to showcase the best of Birmingham, the West Midlands, and the Commonwealth.
- **The plan included several pioneering initiatives,** including carbon footprint commitments, the integration of social value requirements in all tenders, and the most extensive community engagement programme in the history of the Games. It also had a strong focus on skills and employability, and in raising the profile of the City and Region to attract investment. The Legacy Plan also outlined a commitment to fostering community cohesion, inclusion, and pride in place, by leveraging the diverse cultural heritage of Birmingham. Central to this vision were programmes to engage youth, promote physical activity, and enhance mental well-being.

How does it work in practice?

The 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games showcased a wide array of activities aimed at engaging communities, promoting local culture, and raising the profile of city and surrounding region. Alongside hosting the Games themselves, the organising committee launched a six month festival, co-designed with local community groups. The Birmingham 2022 Creative City Grants Programme, supported by GBP 1.7 million of funding from Birmingham City Council, provided over 1 060 community groups the chance to work with artists to create new work for the festival. This initiative highlighted Birmingham's local talent and cultural heritage, fostering community engagement and boosting confidence among participants to pursue further creative endeavors.

Both the Games and the Festival provided skills development and vocational training opportunities through several programmes aimed at enhancing employability. One of the standout initiatives was the establishment of the Jobs and Skills Academy, which aimed to

connect the employment, volunteering, and training opportunities created through the Games to local people, in particular young people, those from disadvantaged groups, the unemployed, and people with disabilities. The Academy facilitated partnerships with various educational institutions and companies to provide targeted training free of charge to those meeting eligibility criteria, with training places directly linked to Games-time job roles in sectors such as security, stewarding, logistics, catering, cleaning, and waste. In addition to specific job placements, and free training programmes, the Academy also provided apprenticeships and promoted access to volunteering, through the OC Volunteer programme, recognising its value as a steppingstone to further employment.

The Business and Tourism Programme (BATP) leveraged the global profile of the Games to boost economic growth and international reputation. With an investment of GBP 23.9 million, the BATP aimed to attract tourists, businesses, and investors to the West Midlands, highlighting the region's strengths in sectors such as future mobility, data-driven healthcare, and creative technologies. This programme included sales missions, showcase events, and targeted meetings with investors, creating a platform to forge new international relationships and secure long-term economic benefits for the region. As part of this plan, the West Midlands Global Growth Programme was set up to boost international trade by providing support to international companies wishing to enter UK markets via the West Midlands and helping West Midlands businesses export worldwide.

What has been the impact?

Despite the unanticipated impact of Covid-19, the 2022 Birmingham Games and Festival reached a wide audience and brought the community together. According to the "one-year post-Games" evaluation report, the Birmingham Games was attended by 2.8 million people and the festival was attended by 2.6 million people, with Games-related activities engaging a total of 6.9 million attendees, participants, volunteers, and employees. In a residents survey conducted immediately after the Games, 74% of Birmingham residents surveyed reported that the Games had a positive impact on how proud they are to live in their area. In a one-year post-Games residents survey, approximately 59% of Birmingham respondents reported that the Games had a positive impact on the extent to which their local area was a place where people from different ethnicities, backgrounds, and ages get on well together, a higher share than the 48% reporting this pre-Games.

In regard to skills, over 20 000 individuals were supported through the Jobs and Skills Academy, and apprenticeship and volunteering opportunities. This includes 3 300 people under 30 years of age who received training, 2 700 gaining new qualifications, and approximately 195 supported into Games-related employment through the Jobs and Skills Academy. When surveyed one-year post-Games, 29% of Jobs and Skills Academy participants who were unemployed pre-Games

were now in employment and 19% of volunteers surveyed reported that their volunteer experience led them to apply for new employment or training/education opportunities they might not have otherwise applied for. A survey of those who participated in the Festival found that 80% of respondents either gained new skills or improved their artistic skills as a result of their participation.

The event produced a direct economic impact on the city and region, which organisers hope will stimulate long-term growth. An economic impact assessment of the Games commissioned by the UK government estimated that the Games and Festival contributed approximately GBP 1.2 billion GVA to the UK economy between FY 2017/18 and FY 2023/24. It also estimated a 27% increase in FDI projects between the year before and the year after the Games, compared with a 4% increase in the rest of the UK. Overall, the Games were delivered with a GBP 70 million underspend, which will be reinvested into the local area through ongoing legacy programs.

What can other communities learn from this example?

For other communities aiming to secure lasting change within their region through hosting large-scale events, there are many lessons to be learned from Birmingham's experience hosting the Commonwealth Games 2022, such as how the city:

- Developed a strong theory of change from early on to help co-ordinate action amongst different partners and focus efforts towards achievable goals.
- Embedded the event in wider economic development strategies and leveraged it as an opportunity for skills development and investment.
- Looked to co-create events with the local community, giving ample opportunity for community engagement, to help the event have a positive impact for different local populations and to encourage a sense of ownership.
- Used sporting events as an opportunity to also develop cultural events, to engage a wider audience.

Further information

- [Evaluation of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games: one year post-Games report](#)
- [Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games: Our Legacy](#)
- [Birmingham 2022 Festival evaluations](#)
- [Birmingham 2022 Legacy Plan](#)

OECD resources

- OECD (2023), How to measure the impact of culture, sports and business events: A Guide Part I. <https://doi.org/10.1787/c7249496-en>
- OECD (2023), Impact indicators for culture, sports and business events: A Guide Part II. <https://doi.org/10.1787/e2062a5b-en>
- OECD/IOC (2023), Guidelines on the Effective Delivery of Infrastructure and Associated Services for the Olympic Games. <https://doi.org/10.1787/7e3f4805-en>
- OECD (2021), Implementing the OECD Recommendation on Global Events and Local Development: A Toolkit. <https://doi.org/10.1787/efa5cf5f-en>
- OECD (2018), OECD/LEGAL/0444 Recommendation of the Council on Global Events and Local Development. <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0444>

Note

1. First held in 1930, today the quadrennial Commonwealth Games is the world's second largest multi-sports event featuring athletes from the Commonwealth of Nations.