

London Marathon Survey Results

Love the London Marathon

Introduction

Small charities wouldn't need large numbers of places given to them to make a massive difference to the fundraising. Even 5 places where runners got sponsorship of £2K each would mean £10K for a small charity which would be a massive part of their yearly fundraising target.

This report summarises findings from the **London Marathon Foundation – Support for Smalls** survey, which explored how small charities prioritise funding models and how LMF could best use its influence to support them.

It presents quantitative results alongside illustrative qualitative comments that explain why respondents value particular approaches. As with all of our surveys, we make the voices of the charities themselves heard, including ideas they suggested themselves.

The aim was to offer LMF a range of ideas that small charities would value, which they may wish to consider.



Maybe have a 'supporting small charities' year? I worked for a big charity that was the LM charity for the year and the impact was impressive.

Key Findings

This would be an amazing campaign for LMF to advocate for the small charity sector.

- **Unrestricted grants** are the highest funding priority, with **84%** rating them highly (Top Box).
"Unrestricted funding would allow us to focus on delivering our work rather than constantly chasing restricted pots."
- **Multi-year grants** are also strongly supported (**76%** Top Box), reflecting the importance of stability and forward planning.
"Multi-year funding gives us confidence to plan services and retain skilled staff."
- Administrative simplicity is critical: **81%** rate a **very simple application process** highly.
"We are a very small team and need funding processes that are proportionate to our capacity."
- Trust-based funding with lighter reporting requirements is valued by **68%** of respondents.
"Simple reporting would free up more time to work directly with beneficiaries."

- In terms of LMF’s influence, **greater access to places for small charities** emerges as the strongest priority (75% Top Box).

“Even one place can make a meaningful difference to our annual income.”

- Match funding** is seen as a powerful way to increase the impact of individual runners (71% Top Box).

“Match funding would help our supporters feel confident that their efforts go further.”

- Visibility-building ideas (storytelling, marketplaces, partnerships with running clubs) are widely supported, particularly where they help connect runners with lesser-known charities.

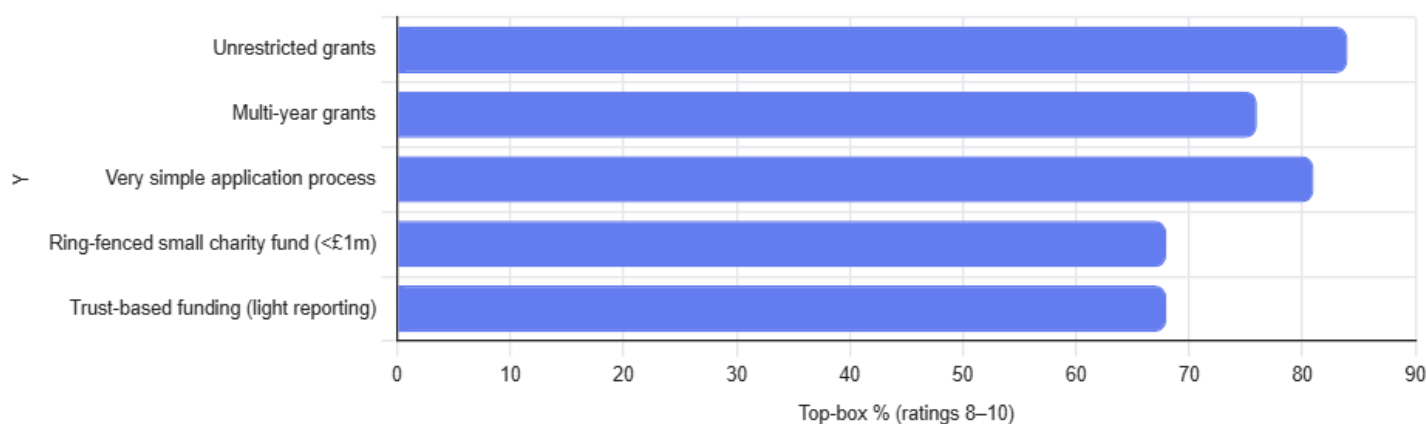
“People are often keen to support local or specialist causes once they discover them.”

- Overall, respondents emphasise **flexibility, proportionality, and predictability** as the most important principles for supporting small charities effectively.

Please consider small charities, we may be small but we’re feisty!

Q2: Funding Model Options

Question 2: Funding model priorities



Top Box results (8–10)

- Unrestricted grants: **84%**
- Very simple application process: **81%**.
- Multi-year grants: **76%**.
- Prioritise small charity applications: **76%**.
- Ring-fenced small charity fund: **68%**.
- Trust-based funding (light reporting): **68%**.
- Prioritise applications from marginalised groups: **46%**.
- Allocate some funding to local London infrastructure bodies to strengthen sector support: **14%**.

“Very important” (10/10)

- Unrestricted grants: **63%**.

- Very simple application process: **55%**.
- Multi-year grants: **52%**.

Interpretation

Respondents prioritise **flexibility and sustainability**.

- Unrestricted funding is closely linked to staffing and organisational resilience.

“Core funding helps us maintain essential services and retain experienced staff.”

- Administrative burden is consistently described as a key constraint.

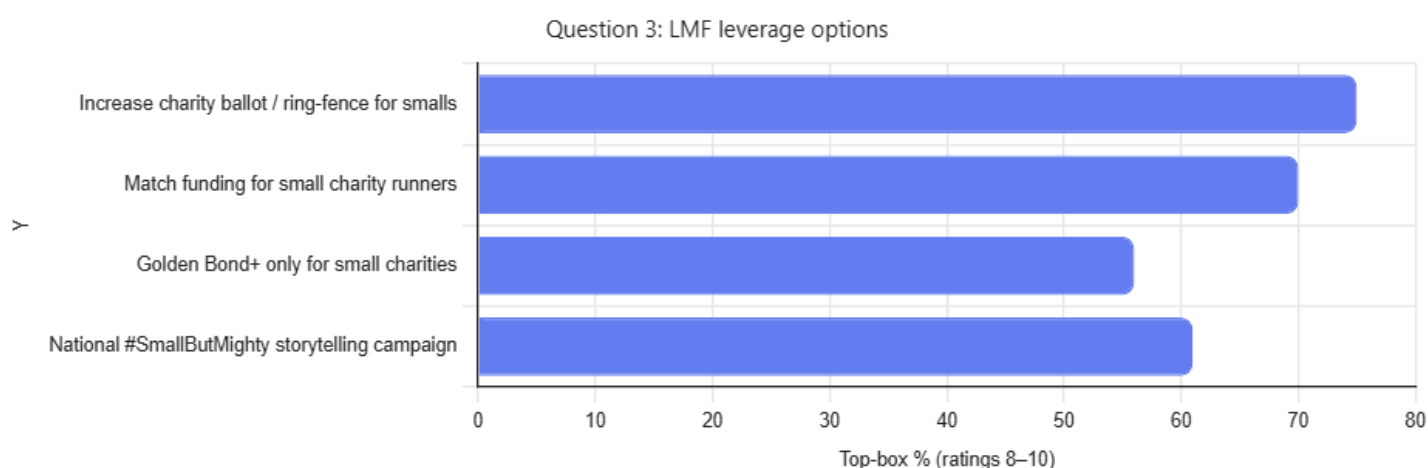
“We don’t have dedicated bid writers, so simple applications make a big difference.”

Implication

- Funding aimed at small charities is likely to have the greatest impact when it is **unrestricted, multi-year, and proportionate**.

Q 3: The Ability of LMF to Leverage its Power

That it would be good for LME to offer small charities the option of joining forces for a joint stand at EXPO. Its too costly for charities with just a few runners but it adds so much value for runners to feel like theyre part of something significant right from the point they collect their packs.



Just to have one place a year would be great, we rely on people getting a ballot place and choosing to run for us but this doesn't happen every year.

Type: 1–10 rating scale

Top Box results (8–10)

- Increase charity ballot / ring-fence for small charities: **75%**.
- Match funding for small charity runners: **71%**.
- Invite running clubs to partner with local charities: **68%**.
- National storytelling campaign (#SmallButMighty or #LoveYourSmalls): **61%**

- Shared brand assets and marketing toolkits for small charities — **58%**
- Centralised small charity marketplace: **54%**.
- Mentorship from large charities for small charities with similar causes — **46%**.
- A system to offer/request grandstand tickets — **35%**.

I would love to run in the London Marathon for the charity I fundraise for, Teen Action.

“Very important” (10/10)

- Increase charity ballot / ring-fence for smalls: **50%**.
- Match funding for small charity runners: **41%**.

Interpretation

- Access to places is widely seen as the most impactful lever for supporting small charities.

“Having even a small number of places gives us a chance to engage supporters and raise awareness.”

- Match funding is valued as a way to improve fundraising outcomes without increasing organisational workload.

“Match funding makes it easier for runners to reach their targets.”

- Visibility-focused ideas are viewed positively, especially when they help connect runners with charities aligned to their interests.

“Storytelling helps people understand the impact of smaller, community-based work.”

Implication

- Combining **access to places** with **financial and visibility support** is likely to maximise benefit for smaller organisations.

LMF has, and is a force for good in terms of people's health, creating community spirit and inspiring the nation.

Q 4: “For Those Areas You Rated Most Highly; Why Are These so Important to You?”

The marathon is well covered by the BBC (& other media), can the organisers help smaller charities to feature more in coverage on the day/post event interviews?

Type: Open text

Key themes

1. Capacity constraints

- *“With a very small team, we need funding approaches that are realistic for our size.”*

2. Importance of stability

- *“Predictable funding helps us plan services and support beneficiaries consistently.”*

3. Value of flexibility

- *“Unrestricted funding allows us to respond to real needs as they arise.”*

4. Visibility and connection

- *“Opportunities to showcase our work help us reach new supporters.”*

Interpretation

- Respondents consistently frame priorities around **making opportunities workable and sustainable** for small teams.

Just having more chance of just one place would be amazing - so many people want to run for us but we never have a chance

Question 5: “Add Anything Else You Wish to Say”

It would also be wonderful if smaller charities had the opportunity to apply to be the London Marathon Charity partner (for example, giving the opportunity to say two or more charities to share).

Type: Open text

Supporting insights

- Interest in **graduated or proportionate models** that recognise different organisational sizes.

“Approaches that scale expectations to charity size would be very helpful.”

- Appreciation for consultation and dialogue.

“It’s encouraging to be asked for our views and experiences.”

- Desire for learning and guidance alongside opportunity.

“Clear guidance helps us make the most of opportunities when they arise.”

Interpretation

- Respondents express a strong appetite for **constructive, supportive engagement** that recognises the realities of small-charity delivery.

Charity Excellence Grant Making Data

In a previous survey charities (not just smalls) were invited to tell us how grant makers could best support them. The top results are summarised in the table below (rating was 1 to 10).

We collated our data from this and other surveys to create charity led sector grant making standards: our [Grant Making Best Practice guidance](#).

Action	Average
More core funding	9.2
More multi-year funding	9.1
More funders providing feedback on submitted applications	8.7
Sector standards to provide consistent, simple, clear application information	8.5
More funders willing to discuss applications	8.4
Shorter wait times between applications to a funder	8.2
Limit information required to the minimum necessary	8.1
Funders more open in publishing grant making data	8.0

Other Charity Excellence Resources

[Small Charity Crisis - Vital and Under Threat.](#)

[Charitable Grant Making Best Practice.](#)

[Small Infrastructure Charity Crisis - Vital but Slowly Closing.](#)

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METHODOLOGY + CONFIDENCE + KEY NUMBERS

The survey was carried out at the end of May 2026 using Charity Excellence distribution channels with an estimated reach of 200k. The response rate was surprisingly high for such a limited survey.

The survey analysis and report drafting were carried out by the Charity Excellence AI Survey Bunny under the direction of a human.

As with all of our surveys, the comments made by charities themselves are used throughout the report to ensure their voices are heard.

Data source

- Dataset: *London Marathon Foundation – Support for Smalls.xlsx*

Respondent bases

- Question 1: 272
- Question 2: 288
- Question 3: 283
- Question 4: 222
- Question 5: 125

Calculation rules

- Percentages are derived from respondent counts and rounded to whole numbers.
- **Top Box** is defined as ratings of **8–10** on a 1–10 scale.
- Counts are used as the source of truth; counts are not displayed in findings.

Confidence note

- For proportions with bases around 280, an approximate 95% confidence interval is ± 6 percentage points.
- Results should be interpreted as indicative rather than representative of all charities.

Limitations

- Self-selected sample.
- Qualitative responses reflect those who chose to comment.

Question 1: “What is your annual income?”

Type: Single choice

Results (percentages):

- Less than £10k: **6%**
- £11k–£100k: **29%**

- £100k–£500k: **35%**
- £501k–£1m: **15%**
- £1m–£3m: **10%**
- More than £3m: **5%**