LILLEHAMMER YOUNG LEADERS PROGRAMME

**Olympic City:** Lillehammer  
**Country:** Norway  
**Edition of the Games:**  
1994 Olympic Winter Games  
2016 Youth Olympic Winter Games

**DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT**

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<th>2014-2016</th>
<th>Youth: 15 to 19 years old</th>
<th>Empowering young people</th>
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<td>WHEN</td>
<td>FOR WHO</td>
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The Young Leaders Programme is a long-term educational initiative that trains the Norwegian Youth of today to be the national sports leaders of tomorrow.

The programme was a cooperation between the Local Organising Committee of the 2016 Lillehammer Winter Youth Olympic Games (LYOGOC) and the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF). The LYOGOC was gone shortly after the Games, but NIF does the follow-up work with these young leaders and is also the umbrella organisation for the sports clubs and federations these young leaders are activated.

The programme was specifically aimed at youth between the ages of 15 and 19 nationwide and used the exposure and energy provided by the hosting of the Youth Olympic Games in Norway. The goal was to make sure these young leaders are a part of Norwegian sports during and after the Games.

The Young Leaders programme began with a series of classroom courses where over 200 participants learned the basics of sport organisation and administration. These courses covered personal skills such as teamwork, leadership and interpersonal communications, as well as technical areas such as national and international sport systems, the role of athletes and the use of social media, for example.

Once the classroom sessions were complete, the participants were then given the chance to hone their new skills in practice. Each young leader was assigned to a local sports club in various communities around Norway, giving them the chance to apply what they had learned to a local context.

The third stage required putting everything into practice during the Lillehammer 2016 Games themselves. Each participant was appointed as a lead volunteer across the various different departments responsible for the delivery of the Games. All of the skills and experiences generated in the 2 years leading up to the Games were put into practice, generating valuable experience at the highest level for all those involved.

The final stage consisted of these young leaders returning as ambassadors for local sport across Norway, armed with the knowledge and experience generated during the programme. These young
leaders can apply the real-world lessons learned to sport in their own communities, driving the development of Norwegian sport for the next generation.

OBJECTIVES

Promote social and constructive behaviour

The Young Leaders programme placed a high premium on giving participants the adequate social skills needed to maximise their contribution to their local community. Sessions were specifically designed to help develop leadership and teamwork skills bringing the group together as a friendly but functioning unit. Workshops on self-confidence and self-motivation helped build respect amongst the participants, both of each other and themselves. The programme introduced these future leaders to volunteerism and the concept of working together as a team for social interests, something that will benefit Norwegian sport and society at large well into the future.

Develop human capital and generate social cohesion

The programme has a large technical aspect to the subject matter covered. This involved educating the young leaders in the details and specificities of sport systems, both nationally within Norway, as well as across the world of international sport administration. Using the Games as the perfect stage upon which to combine the theory learned in the classroom with practical experience on the ground, every participant involved walked away with a huge amount of knowledge, ready to be applied and shared with their communities.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Internal & External Stakeholders

Local Organising Committee of the Youth Winter Olympic Games (LYOCOG)
The Norwegian National Olympic and Paralympic Comity and Confederation of Sports (NIF)

National Sports Federations
Local sports clubs
Regional Administration for Sport
Local bank sponsor
Finance and Cost
The total overall cost of the programme was approximately $90,000. This included the costs of 5 communal gatherings of all participants over the course of the two-year programme.

Use of the Olympic Brand
The Olympic Brand was heavily incorporated. As it was run by the Local Organising Committee, the Young Leaders Programme featured the Olympic Rings and other branding elements related to the Games on much of its promotional material and in almost all of its activities.

Human Resources and Time
The programme required the work of two full time staff over the 18 month period leading up to the Winter Youth Olympic Games.

EVALUATION
Feedback forms were gathered from participants after every gathering of young leaders, generating data for each stage of the programme. The organisers plan to obtain further feedback at various milestones into the future to evaluate the longer term benefits generated.

KEY CHALLENGES

Finding the right communication channels
Communicating with younger people proved to be a bigger challenge than expected. The initial method of communication adopted by the organisers was via e-mail but it was soon discovered that most of the youth targeted did not check it regularly and were not prone to respond. This resulted in difficulty in establishing communication with the participants at the beginning of the programme.

The organisers soon learned that the solution was to use social media as the primary means of staying in contact with the programme attendees. A closed Facebook group was created and this saw much higher engagement and response rates almost instantly.

Reducing resistance from local clubs
The second stage of the Young Leaders programme sent the young participants into sports clubs around the country to practice the new skills they had learned. However, the new ideas and fresh approach that were brought by the young leaders was not always welcomed with open arms. Often senior club officials were sceptical of change and lacked the empathy to relate to those much younger than them.
In order to pre-emptively avoid this situation, the organisers began to make advance contact with the key individuals in the clubs partaking in the programme, providing some basic guidance on how they can relate to the young leaders and what they were trying to achieve. This proved to be a very effective step as often simple misinformation was the heart of this resistance.

**KEY LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Facilitate rather than educate**

Organisers found that it cannot be taken for granted just how much knowledge the young people have compared to previous generations. Access to information for the connected generation is incredibly easy and as a result, they are very engaging and expressive when they are interested in something. An approach that is overly instructive or didactic therefore is lost on the youth. A more facilitative, consultative approach is that prioritises task ownership and user responsibility is far more effective for the current context.

**Share information**

Social media soon took a central role in the operations of the Young Leaders programme, even though this was more of a running development than a planned one. Organisers found that participants were far more responsive with each other, as well as far more responsive when information was peer-generated and shared amongst the group. Organisers encouraged the participants to share their photos, stories and thoughts online with one another regularly. This helped to generate a buzz around the initiative and forge a community atmosphere, as well as providing a useful barometer to gauge how the programme was progressing at every stage.

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https://www.olympic.org/lillehammer-2016