



CHALLENGER SPORTS CAMPAIGN

"A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives." – JACKIE ROBINSON

EXTEND THE JOY OF TEAM SPORTS THROUGH INCLUSIVE GAME TIME

Young people delight in participating in a fun, safe, athletic environment. As players, coaches, and parents look for opportunities to deliver sports experiences to youth of all physical and learning capacities, the Martin Richard Foundation's Challenger Sports Campaign makes funding available to launch and run inclusive soccer, basketball, and baseball programs.

This season, strengthen a love of the game and build friendships on and off the field through an inclusive sports program in your city or town. The Challenger Sports Campaign's mission is to make accessible, inclusive sports programs available to community sports leagues. Young people with developmental or physical challenges may enjoy the benefits of competitive sports in a fun, safe, athletic environment alongside peer buddies.



"Kids with disabilities don't get to play sports - there just aren't enough opportunities for them. [Our Challenger Sports Program] allows kids to be friends first; help each other in baseball; and be teammates. That's the reason why they keep coming back.

When we start doing things like Challengers, we're going to have all sorts of players that are enjoying the game and loving baseball."

COACH PAT



Program success impacts participants in three common ways:

- ✓ Young people with disabilities experience a sporting community that they would otherwise be unable to access.
- ✓ The program is embedded in the sports organizations season after season.
- ✓ Strong bonds develop between athletes, Buddies, coaches, volunteers, and the entire community who rally around games and events.

Challenger Sports grants come with a robust set of guidelines for building an inclusive sports experience. Applicants are encouraged to review Challenger Sports Program Guidelines before applying.

What—and who—does it take to create and launch an inclusive sports program with the Challenger Sports Grant?

Like many sports, a Challenger Sports Program needs a full team and a game plan. In addition to challenged athletes, our model has four major players, whose roles and responsibilities are critical for meeting implementation and covering expenses.

THE TEAM

Buddies: Sports-involved and seeking community service, these athletes are recruited from local teams, leagues, schools, or other athletic neighborhood groups. Buddies help coaches implement adaptations to the team sport, and make and honor a season-long commitment to teamwork and friendship.

Program Champions: The applying 501(c)(3) organization or sports league designates a Program Champion who is responsible for overall program management, and who serves as the main point of contact for the applying organization and the Martin Richard Foundation. The Champion develops and communicates game schedules logistics to Buddies, Coaches, and Parents.

Coaches: Coaches work closely with Program Champions and Buddies to develop adaptive programming that is relevant to youth with disabilities on a case-by-case basis. Together, they train to recognize the diversity of individuals with disabilities and to ensure that true access to the desired sport is achieved for each participant.



"It's a way to bring different factions of the community together."

LEAGUE COMMISSIONER



"Even though it's an opportunity for the players, the Buddies benefit just as much. You learn how to be patient with kids, how to talk to kids and help them out."

MICHAEL M.



"I am a huge fan of baseball and because of my disabilities, I wouldn't be able to play regular baseball."

ANTHONY C.



Parents: Bring the fold-up chairs and get ready to cheer! Parents' main role is supporting their athlete with encouragement and cheering from the spectator seats. Parents are welcome to engage in various ways throughout the season but there is no expectation or responsibility to manage the Challenger Sports Program in which their child is participating.

GAME PLAN

Implementation of the Challenger Sports Program by the Program Champion includes oversight of any existing program infrastructure, and/or recruitment of coaches, participants, and Buddies when an existing foundation does not exist. The Champion engages parents of those children with special needs to support their child's participation throughout the season. The Program Champion should also be equipped with best practices to organize skill-building sessions, practices, and games that are meaningful for all participants in the program.

Expenses: Costs listed below are not exact and will vary based on the location, number of participants, and the organization. They are meant to provide a general sense of the costs associated with each sport:

Baseball: \$2,500 / Basketball: \$2,000 / Soccer: \$2,500

Who can apply for a Challenger Sports Grant?

The Foundation is ready to provide the resources to launch inclusive soccer, basketball, and baseball programs to established 501(c)(3) organizations—or have a working relationship with a 501(c)(3)—with supportive communities who are ready to collaborate on making the season a success.

Use the following eligibility and grantee expectations criteria to see if your organization meets the requirements for a Challenger Sports Grant:

Eligibility: In addition to the designation of the Program Champion, applying organizations must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- ✓ Must be an existing 501(c)(3) OR have a well-established relationship with a 501(c)(3) that can support the implementation of the proposed Challenger sport
- ✓ Must currently serve young people through non-Challenger sport
- ✓ Must demonstrate willingness to recruit, train, and pair Buddies for each team
- ✓ Must be willing to work with local schools and organizations to recruit participants



"It allows me to meet new people and really show what I can do."

JESSICA M.



"As a parent of a child with special needs, we've come a long way—what was expressed 20 years ago, is not acceptable. I think that is because, as a greater community, we are educating our children at younger ages."

BRENDAN, COMMISSIONER, PARENT

"I knew nothing about what the Challenger division was. I got into it because I wanted to make sure they were playing decent baseball. I stayed because at that level, I realized it's not about the baseball."

COACH BILLY



- ✓ Must have the ability to secure safe practice space and playing fields for games
- ✓ Must be willing to share stories, videos and/or photos with the Martin Richard Foundation if selected

ARE YOU READY TO GET IN THE GAME? APPLY TODAY AT MARTINRICHARDFOUNDATION.ORG

If your organization or league meets these requirements and you have a committed team, complete and submit a grant application today. All applications must be affiliated with an eligible 501(c)(3) organization.

APPLICATIONS ARE ACCEPTED ON A ROLLING BASIS .

Here is what to expect during the application process:

1

APPLICATIONS



SUBMIT YOURS TODAY

Calling all coaches, teams, leagues and champions: Bring the joy of inclusive sports to your community! Build trust, friendship, and diverse teams. Coordinate with your 501(c)(3) organization and community members and apply for the Challenger Sports Grant at martinrichardfoundation.org

2

GRANT REVIEW



ALLOW UP TO 60 DAYS

Challenger Sports grant applications are reviewed by our Selection Committee. Programs are selected on feasibility and the potential to build and strengthen social skills through teamwork as well as their ability to ensure that their players are viewed as appreciated, respected and valuable members of the community.

3

GET IN THE GAME



PLAY THE SEASON

Selected Challenger Sports Programs are notified within 60 days. Teams play as soon as the ground is ready, and the season usually wraps up within three months. *Note: basketball leagues may carry their season over into the following calendar year.* MRF may visit your community to see you in action!

4

REFLECT & REPORT



SHARE YOUR IMPACT AT YEAR-END

All Challenger Sports Grant recipients are required to submit an on-line report at the completion of your season. We look forward to celebrating your success and the impact it had on you, your team, and your community!



CHALLENGER SPORTS PLAYBOOK

Extend the joy of team sports
to kids of all abilities.

INTRODUCTION

Let us help you increase access to sports for athletes of all abilities in your community. The lessons learned from our pilot program at the Dorchester Boys and Girls Club provide an excellent model that creates opportunities and a positive developmental experience by pairing challenged athletes with peer aged buddies. We encourage you to start your own version of our program!

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CHALLENGER SPORTS GRANT PROGRAM SPORTS AND FUNDING LEVELS

➤ Is there an application deadline?

No. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

➤ What is the maximum number of times an organization can apply for funding?

The Martin Richard Foundation will provide one start-up grant for organizations or sports league to implement a Challenger Sports Program in their community.

➤ What are the levels of funding?

- \$2,000 for basketball
- \$2,500 for baseball
- \$2,500 for soccer

➤ How do I know if I am working with an eligible 501(c)(3)?

Section 501(c)(3) is the portion of the US Internal Revenue Code that allows for federal tax exemption of nonprofit organizations, specifically those that are considered public charities, private foundations or private operating foundations.

You can confirm current federal tax-exempt status by calling the IRS at its toll-free number, 1-877-829-5500. Organizations like CharityNavigator and GuideStar are other good resources to research non-profit organizations.

APPLICANT CONSIDERATIONS

ELIGIBILITY

➤ What is the requirement(s) for training staff who will oversee the Challenger sports program? What is the estimated time commitment?

The applying organization or sports league must submit their training and implementation plan prior to funding. Organizers and adult volunteers should have a clear understanding of the anticipated needs of their population of athletes. Parents, teachers and youth professionals are a good source of information both in the planning stages and once the season opens. Decide how you will educate yourself, your adult volunteers, and your Buddies to assist athletes with physical disabilities as well as cognitive disabilities such as autism, Down Syndrome and traumatic brain injury or conditions like ADHD.

Research and planning will take some time up front. Once the season opens, time commitment for the Program Champion is 3–4 hours per week during the season.

PROCESS

➤ When will I be notified about the status of my application? How will I be notified?

You will be notified of the acceptance of your application within 60 days of your application via email and receive funding via US Mail.



GRANTEE FUNDING: AMOUNTS AND TIMING

➤ When/how will I receive the funding, if my organization is selected?

A check will be issued to the existing 501(c)(3) that will support the implementation of the proposed Challenger Sports Program and will be sent via US Mail at the beginning of March. Funding levels are \$2,000 for basketball; \$2,500 for baseball and soccer.

➤ Do I need to secure other community partnerships?

Along with the commitment from interested organizations and sports leagues, this effort requires support from local businesses and community groups to help support the inclusive efforts and continued expansion of Challenger Sports locally. In addition to the overhead and training costs associated with running a Challenger League, there are equipment and space costs that need to be covered to make these programs successful and accessible to the young athletes and their families. Community-wide engagement is critical to the sustainability of Challenger Sports programs and MRF encourages lead organizations to seek out support from community groups who provide special education and services to the targeted population (i.e., Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, the public-school system).

IMPLEMENTATION BEST PRACTICES

➤ How do I determine the need in my community for an adaptive and inclusive sports program?

Speak with teachers and/or youth development professionals in inclusive classrooms and after school programs in your community. Determine interest from parents known to you who may be able to gauge interest from their own parent support systems.

➤ How do I determine which sport is the best to serve my population?

The sport that has the best existing league practices in place for non-Challenger sports teams may be the best option as much of the needed infrastructure will already be in place. However, don't be afraid to take on a new challenge!

➤ How are participants recruited to the Challenger sports program?

Participants may be recruited from local community programs serving children with special needs or the local public-school system.

➤ Is there an age requirement?

Age requirements may follow the general guidelines of the traditional sports league. However, it is important to remember that skill sets will vary among challenged athletes and sessions geared for children aged 5–12 do work well. It is recommended that a second division be held for teen players up to age 22.



➤ How do I secure safe practice space? How do I secure safe playing space for games?

Challenger Sports Leagues do not require space different from traditional league play. However, challenged athletes may be easily overwhelmed or over stimulated in a crowded, busy environment. Try to ensure that fields or gyms are secure and/or the Challenger Sports League boundaries are easily defined.

➤ How do I create an inclusive sport environment for athletes with a range of disabilities/capacities?

It is important to realize that all players will have a different skill set and your league must be prepared to offer adjustments as needed. Examples include:

- Batting from a T-ball stand in baseball
- Switching to a foam bat and ball as needed
- Creating an alternative basketball “net” using rubber pails for basketball
- Avoiding the use of loud buzzers in the gym
- Use small group clinic activities for basketball and soccer

➤ What should challenged athletes and buddies wear?

At minimum, challenged athletes should receive a town/league t-shirt and (baseball) cap. It is recommended that Buddies receive a distinct uniform t-shirt to ensure that they are recognizable during games.

GRANTEE REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

➤ How will photos, videos and stories be shared with the Martin Richard Foundation? What will these photos, videos and stories be used for?

Photos, videos and stories will be shared with the Martin Richard Foundation in an end-of-season report for use in the Foundation’s annual report. Leagues must ensure parental permission for athlete photos.

THE TEAM

BUDDIES, COACHES, AND PARENTS

➤ How are buddies recruited?

Buddies are sports-involved young people who seek to provide a community service and are recruited from nearby teams, schools, or the local community. They should be interested in helping coaches implement adaptations to the team sport.

➤ How are buddies trained? What is the estimated time commitment?

The Program Champion should identify one volunteer or coach experienced in working with children with various types of disabilities to work with Buddies regarding best practices in interaction and engagement (i.e., no touching, speak softly, patience, avoid overwhelming encouragement to participate). Buddies should circle with the identified volunteer or coach prior to each game or session to review



objectives of the day and expected participants to ensure athletes are paired appropriately with Buddies.

Time commitment includes regular season schedule and at least one separate training day. Buddies should be expected to make and honor a season-long commitment for continuity and friendship.

➤ What is the recommended number of Buddies per team/sport?

Each athlete should be paired with at least one Buddy. Occasionally, athletes require an adult Buddy or an adult/peer Buddy team due to their disability.

➤ How are coaches recruited?

Coaches are recruited from nearby teams, schools, or the local community. They should be interested in implementing adaptations to the team sport.

➤ Are coaches trained? What is the estimated time commitment?

The Program Champion should identify one volunteer or coach experienced in working with children with various types of disabilities to work with coaches regarding best practices in interaction and engagement (i.e., no touching, speak softly, patience, avoid overwhelming encouragement to participate).

➤ What is the recommended number of coaches per team/sport?

Two coaches are recommended for each team.

➤ Can parents be Buddies?

Parents of challenged athletes are encouraged to support their children as spectators and cheerleaders during all sport activities. Parents may have the opportunity to be more engaged throughout the season; however, they should not be expected to manage the program in any way. However, some parents feel more effective filling the role as needed.

➤ Can parents be coaches?

Overall, parents are encouraged to support the athletes as spectators. However, the Challenger Sports Program does function well when spearheaded by at least one parent with experience.

➤ How is the Program Champion determined/designated?

The Program Champion may 1) self-identify to the organization or sports league that will be implementing the Challenger Sports Program or 2) be appointed by the said organization or sports league.

➤ What is the weekly time commitment of the Program Champion?

The Program Champion is required to develop programming that is relevant to athletes with disabilities on a case-by-case basis. He/she must ensure that true access to the desired sport is achieved for each participant. The Champion will also be responsible for developing and communicating game schedules and related logistics to parents, Buddies, and coaches. An estimated 3–4 hours per week during the season may be required.



GAME PLAN

➤ How much field / court time per week is needed?

2–3 consecutive hours is usually sufficient time to hold two sessions of Challenger Sports with the first half dedicated to the younger division and the second half dedicated to the teen division.

BASEBALL-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

This information is taken from our Dorchester Pilot Program. Of course, other cities and towns may want to enhance or modify the practice.

➤ How often do Challenger teams practice?

The Dorchester Pilot Program does not hold weekly practice as in traditional sports leagues. At the start of each season, challenged athletes participate in 2–3 sessions of Spring Training Clinic (weather and/or gym space permitting) where they learn basic skills and practice for the upcoming season. Since the Challenger Sports games are fun-focused and casual, coaches and parents find that one weekly game is sufficient.

➤ Do Buddies practice with participants during Spring Training?

Yes. Buddies are present whenever challenged athletes are playing. Spring Training serves as a learning experience for new Buddies and a reconnection to athletes in the program for veteran Buddies.

➤ How many games are there? How long is the season?

Weather permitting, Challenger Sports may run six to eight weeks for the regular season with two additional weeks for Spring Training.

➤ How many Buddies can participate?

At times, the Dorchester Pilot Program has had more Buddies than challenged athletes! Buddies are not turned away and may serve as bench managers, cheerleaders, or equipment managers if all challenged athletes are accounted for.

➤ How many Challengers can participate?

In its fifth year, the Dorchester Pilot Program now has forty challenged athletes in its younger division and twenty-five challenged athletes in its teen division. It's okay to start small and build your program slowly. You decide what works well for your athletes and coaches.

BASKETBALL-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

This information is taken from our Dorchester Pilot Program. Of course, other cities and towns may want to enhance or modify the practice.

➤ Do the teams practice?

The Dorchester Pilot Program does not hold weekly practice as in traditional sports leagues. The best practice in basketball has been to start with a clinic-style program where athletes learn basic skills by rotating through four stations within the gym. Therefore, additional practice sessions are not necessary. Since the Challenger Sports games are fun-focused and casual, coaches and parents find that one weekly session is sufficient.

➤ What type of activities are expected?

Best practice in the Dorchester Pilot Program for the younger division shows Buddies and athletes divided into small groups of four as they rotate through four activities such as:



- Dribbling (both standing still and walking)
- Shooting (adapted as necessary. You may find that a Rubbermaid yard waste barrel with a hole cut in the bottom works well for athletes with limited range of motion.)
- Passing the ball
- Depending on the attention span of the athletes, it has been a good idea to have a fun activity included such as a colorful parachute so that athletes who need a break, receive one.
- Younger challenged athletes usually begin playing a game for the last twenty minutes of their session by week three.

Teen players tend to use the first part of their session to refresh dribbling, passing, and shooting skills before beginning their game.

➤ Are there games?

Games are played at the end of each clinic session and last as long as coaches see fit. Length of games may change as the season progresses and the players become more skilled and excited about this part of the experience. Typically, coaches allow for at least 15 minutes of game time.

➤ How do the Buddies support the challenged athletes?

Buddies keep athletes focused on the task at hand and help them with drills or are partners during drills. They may verbally prompt them during games and offer affirmation and encouragement.

➤ How many Buddies participate?

At times, the Dorchester Pilot Program has had more Buddies than challenged athletes! Buddies are not turned away and may serve as cheerleaders or equipment managers if all

challenged athletes are paired with someone. They may also serve as role models or station managers.

➤ How many Challengers can participate?

In its fifth year, the Dorchester Pilot Program now has forty challenged athletes in its younger division and twenty-five challenged athletes in its teen division. It's okay to start small and build your program slowly. You decide what works well for your athletes and coaches.

SOCCER-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

This information is taken from our Dorchester Pilot Program. Of course, other cities and towns may want to enhance or modify the practice.

➤ How often do Challenger teams practice?

The Dorchester Pilot Program does not hold weekly practice as in traditional sports leagues. The best practice in soccer has been to start with a clinic-style program where athletes learn basic skills by rotating through four stations within set boundaries on the field. Therefore, additional practice sessions are not necessary. Since the Challenger Sports games are fun-focused and casual, coaches and parents find that one weekly session is sufficient.

➤ Are there games?

Games are played at the end of each clinic session and last as long as coaches see fit. Length of games may change as the season progresses and the players become more skilled and excited about this part of the experience. Typically, coaches allow for at least 15 minutes of game time.



➤ How long is the season?

Weather permitting, soccer may run 6–8 weeks. Fall soccer can be cold and rainy at times and many challenged athletes are not used to playing in adverse weather conditions. Be prepared to encourage families to dress for the weather and not worry about the uniform shirt if it poses a problem for their athlete.

➤ What type of activities are expected?

Best practice in the Dorchester Pilot Program for the younger division shows Buddies and athletes divided into small groups of four as they rotate through four activities such as:

- Dribbling the soccer ball
- Shooting (adapted as necessary. You may find that foam balls work well for some athletes. Feel free to toss a foam ball into play in order to let an athlete take a shot during a game—the Challenger Sports Program bends the rules at times!)
- Passing the ball
- Depending on the attention span of the athletes, it has been a good idea to have a fun activity included such as marching to bucket drumming or a colorful parachute so that athletes who need a break, receive one.
- Younger challenged athletes usually begin playing a game for the last twenty minutes of their session by week three.

Teen players tend to use the first part of their session to refresh dribbling, passing, and shooting skills before beginning their game.

➤ How many Buddies can participate?

At times, the Dorchester Pilot Program has had more Buddies than challenged athletes! Buddies are not turned away and may serve as bench managers, cheerleaders, or equipment managers if all challenged athletes are paired with someone.

➤ How many Challengers can participate?

In its fifth year, the Dorchester Pilot Program now has forty challenged athletes in its younger division and twenty-five challenged athletes in its teen division. It's okay to start small and build your program slowly. You decide what works well for your athletes and coaches.



ARE YOU READY TO GET IN THE GAME?

Be a Great Buddy!

The participation of Buddies is vital to the success of this Challenger Sports model. The athletes participating are eager to get to know you and with your leadership and mentor skills, they will be able to access and excel in the sport!

- 1. Be a great buddy.** Your role is to help assist the athlete access the game and challenge them to their highest abilities. We encourage you to build a friendship with the athlete but we would also like you to be competitive together in drills and games.
- 2. Engage with your player.** Ask him/her questions or ask the coach or parents. Tell them a little bit about yourself—ask them about school or other activities they may enjoy. Try to make a connection with them. Once you are partnered with your athlete, be sure to engage with them as much as possible and avoid side conversations with the other buddies.
- 3. Ask first!** Your athlete may already have played the sport so ask them what they already know and have them show you what they have learned.
- 4. Hold the bar high.** Treat your players as true athletes. Fake or dramatic misses and diving can be looked at as condescending.
- 5. Safety first!** Try and stay with the same athlete throughout the season. Look for signs of fatigue or exhaustion and offer them water if needed. If your athlete displays inappropriate behavior such as hitting, bad language or consistently running away—don't overreact but do let one of the coaches know of the behavior.
- 6. Never give up!** Be creative and consistent in helping your athlete engage in the game. Learn about what the athlete likes/dislikes and see where they excel. Use leaders/coaches to help with engagement and don't be afraid to ask questions!!
- 7. Above all, have fun!**

"I know my brother would really have loved this. He loved baseball himself. He loved to give back to the community. I think he would be really proud of everyone. It's not only kids in Boston and Dorchester that need this. There are kids everywhere. No matter where they are, kids need to have a good experience and they should have the opportunity to experience sports in their childhood."

HENRY, BUDDY AND MARTIN'S BROTHER





Over \$250,000
Given To The Challenger Sports
Campaign Since 2014

DORCHESTER

Over 100 Players in 4 sports including baseball, soccer, basketball and swimming each year

250 Buddies participate each year in four sports

QUINCY

Over 25 players in 2 sports including baseball and basketball each year

Over 50 Buddies participate each year in 2 sports

CANTON

Over 25 players participate in baseball each year

Over 50 Buddies participate each year



OFFICIAL RULES AND AGREEMENT

In consideration of my application, I hereby for myself, my heirs, executors and administrator, waive and release any and all rights for claims and damages I may have against the Martin W. Richard Charitable Foundation and its employees, volunteers and consultants for any and all injuries suffered or sustained by me in said event and in the planning sessions for said event or travel to and from any of the preceding. I further attest and certify that I am physically fit and able for this event.

I understand that to the fullest extent permitted by law, the Foundation assumes no responsibility or liability for (a) incorrect or inaccurate entry information (b) any unauthorized access to, theft, destruction, alteration or misuse of community/private property as a result of the proposed project (c) any malfunction, failure or error of the proposed project.

I also grant permission for use of my name and/or photograph or voice in broadcast, telecast, print or any other account of this event without limitations for public relations and promotional purposes and agree to waive any compensation for such use.

NO PURCHASE OR PAYMENT OF ANY KIND IS NECESSARY TO ENTER OR RECEIVE A CHALLENGER SPORTS GRANT.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

- Please do not put Martin Richard's photo on a t-shirt or sticker.
- Please do not use Martin Richard's photo to fundraise.
- The group or organization applying for the grant must be either be the organizer or designated 501(c)(3) partner of the [sports team].
- The grant is not transferable to another group or organization.
- The organizer must abide by all rules/regulations in their town/city.
- The organizer agrees to photograph/video and record their project for use by the Foundation.
- All requested information must be provided for the application to be valid.
- The Martin Richard Foundation will notify the organizer with a decision by email.
- The potential grantee will be required to complete and return a Grant Agreement within five (5) business days of issuance of notification.
- Failure of the potential grantee to complete and return a Grant Agreement may disqualify participation in the Challenger Sports Program and payment.

*“A life is not important
except in the impact it has
on other lives.”*

JACKIE ROBINSON

