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# How can squash facilities attract funding for their programmes?



Funding is a regular headache for anyone running squash programmes. How can you 'sell' the benefits of your programme to potential funders? How do you find funding sources? How do you approach them? Who does the presentations and paperwork (the stuff that squash coaches might typically lack the skills and time to do on their own)?

There's no-one better to ask than the [Nicol David Organisation](#) (NDO), which has attracted multiple corporate donors to sustain and enrich its work teaching squash and English to over 100 children every week at a three-court club in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur.

Mercedes Benz Malaysia, Coway Malaysia, JD Sports, Dunlop Malaysia, Berjaya Clubs, AIA Malaysia and Development Bank Malaysia currently support NDO's work, allowing them to pay the coaching team and provide subsidies for under-privileged children to attend classes twice a week all year round.



The organisation is the brainchild of eight-time world champion [Nicol David](#) and CEO [Mariana De Reyes](#), an ex-squash player, former sales executive and brand manager from Colombia.

Nicol is a national icon in Malaysia, and her fame helps open doors, but it is undoubtedly Mariana's business acumen and persuasive powers which get deals over the line. She has much advice to share for squash facilities who are looking to secure backing for similar initiatives.

**FIRST, GET THE PROGRAMME RIGHT...**

The most important guiding principle to attracting donations, says Mariana, is having a structured, well-marketed and impactful programme in the first place. "I believe that a good programme will always attract money," she states.



NDO has a 50/50 gender balance and impacts a high volume of children (they will reach 170 by next year). Some of these children will go on to become very competitive players in the Nicol David Academy and some struggle to hit the ball even after months of coaching.

Both these outcomes are valid - because squash ability is not their most important demonstrable impact. The key metrics are: giving children opportunities they wouldn't normally have in day-to-day life, offering them a safe space with positive female role models (coaches), a sense of belonging, being with friends, improving mental health and learning to speak English.

Analyse your own programme: as long as it has a clear structure with measurable positive impacts, it is ready for your sales pitch.

...NOW GO OUT AND SELL IT!

Research potential funders. These might be charitable foundations, funding pots from local authorities or large corporations with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding streams.  
Maybe your club has members who are connected to companies with CSR departments, or they might know about local funding opportunities?



CSR is essentially about corporations wanting to give back to a good cause and support communities in need. Those needs vary between communities. e.g. supporting children's mental and physical health, providing education, targeting under-served demographics (girls, disabilities, ethnically diverse, under-privileged etc), reducing crime by positively engaging at-risk children, or boosting employability. If your programme meets some or all of those needs, they are likely to match with companies' CSR priorities, so you need to be on their radar.

Now plan your applications and approaches carefully. Mariana says: "You must present your programme professionally - what are the key metrics? What is the weekly schedule of classes? Who is in charge? Is it sustainable? And can you demonstrate the impact on the children? It

must have structure - I am obsessed with structure! Do you link up with local schools, is it summer holidays, boot camps, and what else do you offer as well as squash?"

## FIND THE RIGHT SALES PERSON

Presentation is everything. Can you put together a good slide deck, with logo, staff wearing uniform, images and video, supported by effective social media - and can you deliver it with panache and personality?



Mariana, who has worked in sales for over a decade, is highly skilled in this area. She says: "There is where I feel many squash programmes fail. You have to have a business sense - a salesman type personality. There is so much opportunity if you go out and get it - but you have to have the right person.

"Nicol is introverted, so I am the saleswoman! I mingle, talk and connect. Nicol can open one door, but we still have to go through it. We do that with the programme, the metrics and the presentation. Everything has to look slick and successful. That's how we get the money."

## THE OPPORTUNITIES ARE OUT THERE

Lots of squash facility managers and coaches run programmes very happily without ever seeking support from external funding sources. But in doing so, they are operating with an invisible ceiling. They can never expand beyond their own resources. Being proactive is key.

Corporate, charitable, district or governing body funding can help multiply your impact and make your club more vibrant, diverse and financially secure. As Mariana says: "There's more money out there than you think - you have to go out there and get it!"