



Preliminary steps taken before developing a new sport club

Definition of a Sport Club

A sport club is defined as a group that has been formed by individuals motivated by a common interest and a desire to participate in a sport. A club may focus on one or more labels in the Long Term Athlete Development model, ie. active start.

Benefits of forming a club include:

- Encouraging local and shared ownership of the sport
- Promoting and providing an organized form of sport at the community level
- Encouraging cooperation and teamwork among the clubs members
- Promoting and developing leadership
- Opportunities to affiliate with other sport clubs through a provincial, regional or municipal network
- Coordination of efforts to strengthen sport development
- Provides the sport with more permanency even though individual club members may change

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Is there need and supports established?

Due to the nature of physical impairment, majority of the population in the community will live closer to the resources. These resources tend to be held within major cities. There is going to be a need for sport clubs outside of these cities, as there are still several athletes and potential athletes that will not be living in an urban setting. An environmental scan is necessary to determine need. To gain this knowledge, the organizers will need to communicate with community members, other clubs within that sport and area, municipal governments, Wheelchair Sports Alberta and the able bodied Provincial Sport Organization if applicable (i.e. Athletics Alberta, Tennis Alberta, etc), facilities, nonprofits in the impairment community (i.e. Spinal Cord Injury Alberta, Cerebral Palsy Alberta Association, etc) and community businesses.

The organizers of a proposed club might address the following types of questions:

- What are the sport and recreation activity patterns, opportunities, participation trends and interests of the local community?
- Are there suitable facilities available at a reasonable cost and are they available?
- Is there any available sport chairs available in the community?
- Are there any certified coaches in the community?
- Are there athletes living in the community that are currently travelling to other sport clubs in the province?
- How much are similar clubs charging for membership fees in the area and sport?
- What is the demographics profile of the community (e.g. age, sex, occupation, impairment, income) and is the profile expected to change?

- What are the means of transport and public transport system and how far will people need to travel to attend the club?
- What is the potential for local business support and available grants?

These questions should be examined in detail. A club will have a difficult time achieving success without proper need and supports established.

Information Sources

It is important to realize that those responsible for trying to get the new sport club off the ground don't have to reinvent the wheel when it comes to finding the necessary background or context information. Most of it has probably already been collected, analyzed and summarized for a variety of other community development purposes.

There are a number of different agencies that have an information collection and analysis role and some may provide the information needed for little or no cost.

These organizations include:

- Province of Alberta
- Statistics Canada
- Provincial Sport Organizations (PSO's)
- Volunteer Center of Canada
- Injury Prevention Centre
- Provincial impairment organizations

Deciding to Proceed

Once the broader community background information has been collected and analyzed, it is time to relate it to the specific sport club you are considering and use it to make a decision on whether to proceed. At this point it is critical to discuss the concept with key community contacts (if this hasn't occurred already). These may include, for example, other sport and recreation organizations, provincial and regional sport organizations, local government recreation consultants, regional sport managers, and other community groups and school principals. This step provides the on-the ground reality check to determine whether the hard data matches community views, priorities, expectations and attitudes.

Initial Public Meeting

A formal meeting of all those interested in being a part of a new sport club, whether simply as players or perhaps as officials (e.g. committee member, fundraiser, coach) must be organized. Before announcing the meeting you need to decide what day, time and place appear to be optimal to get as many people as possible to attend. Decide a goal for attendance, what demographic of people you would like to attend (i.e.- if you want to initiate a Wheelchair Rugby club you need to ensure that some of your athletes will be able to classify).

It is critical that the meeting is widely advertised in a number of different ways using a variety of sources. These may include:

- Invitations (Some people should be personally invited to attend e.g. sport association and local government representatives, politicians, high profile guest speakers)

- The local papers (Using both media releases and paid advertisements)
- Community service announcements on radio and TV
- Social media, websites, newsletters. Accessing partners social media as well.
- Posters (community centres, schools, supermarket bulletin boards, hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, recreation therapist, prosthetic clinics, etc)
- Letter drops

Meetings are a method of communication, decision-making and the following up of any decisions made. Meetings can be ineffective and a waste of the members time if a few rules are not followed. Two components of a successful, effective meeting are:

- **Notice of Meeting** - all officers should be given at least 7 days advance notice of a meeting, which should include the location and time of the meeting, the purpose of the meeting, an agenda and any relevant materials required to deal with the agenda items (previous meeting minutes, reports).
- **Recording of Minutes** - without proper recording of the minutes many important issues can be lost and decisions not acted upon. Minutes should contain the date, time and place of the meeting, and a good practice is to keep an informed action items list with assigned people to tasks and deadlines. The purpose of the meeting, those in attendance and a record of all motions, recommendations made, a synopsis of the discussion. The proper recording of minutes is essential to keep the membership informed and on track.