

HOW TO START A CLUB

INTRODUCTION

Starting a sport club in your community may seem like a daunting task. The process is a complex one and needs to be carefully planned if the club is to succeed in the long term. The purpose of this section is to provide you with a basic step-by-step guide to forming a sport club from scratch. From undertaking a community assessment to deciding on club structure, the information provided should help assist your group as they work towards developing a viable sport club that will serve the needs of your community in the years to come.

WHY START A 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 be entry level, developmental, high performance, recreational or any combination of these elements.

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 a need?

Although people may feel that they just know a new sport and recreation organization is needed, or have a strong personal interest in developing a particular sport, this is not enough to accurately gauge the extent of potential demand for the organization or its likelihood of survival. In other words, you need some basic research to determine the likely success of the venture. It is important to have factual data against which other types of information (e.g. assumptions, opinions, input from community) can be evaluated. The information will also be invaluable when developing the organization prospectus and seeking funding assistance.

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?
- What is the demographics profile of the community (e.g. age, sex, occupation, 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?

All these questions should be examined before any concrete plans are further developed. The more the organizers are fully prepared and briefed about the community context in which the organization is expected to operate, the more likely it is that there will be a cooperation rather than opposition to the concept.

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 Manitoba [Community Profiles](#)
- Statistics Canada [Statscan](#)
- Provincial Sport Organizations (PSO's) [Sport Manitoba](#)
- Volunteer Center of Canada

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 schools 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.

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
- The internet
- Posters (community centres, schools, supermarket bulletin boards)
- 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. 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 are essential to keep the membership informed and on track.

CLUB ORGANIZATION & ADMINISTRATION

Your community has identified a need to form a new sport club. To be a successful well-run sport club you need a clear understanding of your organizations mandate, goals and objectives.

Club Structure

A club must operate under guidelines, which are set out by the membership. These guidelines are referred to as the **Constitution/Bylaws or Terms of Reference**.

A community organization can also choose whether or not they wish to become incorporated as a not for profit group. The benefits of becoming incorporated include:

- Limiting the liability of members from various debts and obligations for which the organization may become responsible
- Giving the organization permanency even though the members may change
- Incorporation structures the affairs and activities of the organization
- Funders often require that the organization be incorporated in order to be eligible for funding

A smaller sport club may wish to simply develop a Terms of Reference or Policy Statement outlining their club's structure.

Finances

Keeping track of a club's finances is critical to the ongoing success of a program. Areas that will need to be addressed include:

- Developing a draft budget
- Determine sources of income (membership fees, grants, sponsorship, fund raising etc)
- Determine expenses (facilities, equipment, training, travel etc)
- Developing an accounting system
- Developing financial policies for the club

Club Membership

Making new members aware of the benefits, rules and responsibilities when joining your club is critical. The following should be considered:

- What services will the sport club provide and what will be the cost of these services to participants?
- What are the benefits of being a member?
- What education/training opportunities exist and in what format?
- What participation opportunities are there, including social/competitive/non-competitive?
- What skill development opportunities are there? How can they be accessed?
- How wide-ranging are the activities? Do they cater for children, older adults, and people with disabilities? How do they cater for each of the groups?
- What resources are available? Does the club have any access to books, videos, kits or pamphlets? What equipment/facilities exist?
- What support services (such as child minding) are available?
- What social events/opportunities does the organization offer?
- Voting (define members, including voting members...)

Executive Positions

The number of executive positions required to form a board will be determined by the size of the sport club. In an incorporated club the number of positions will be identified in the Constitution or Bylaws. In a smaller organization these positions will be identified in the Terms of Reference.

It is important that all board positions are well defined by written job descriptions. A well-written job description gives direction to the officer. Job descriptions are also useful tools for the initial orientation and as a reference throughout the officer's commitment. Members of the nominating committee should provide the organizations job descriptions to interested volunteers

Election of Officers

The method of how an organization elects their officers is determined in the Constitution or Bylaws. Normally a Nominating Committee is formed to ensure that volunteers are recruited to fill vacant board positions and that a slate of nominees of those who are willing to run for a position is presented at the AGM.

Organizations may want to consider staggering the terms of office to ensure that not all positions come forward for re-election the same year.

NEXT STEPS

Inaugural general meeting

At least two weeks prior to the intended date, the interim committee should circulate to potential members the proposed constitution or charter, and notice of when this first general meeting will be held. Again there needs to be an attempt to use a wide variety of sources and types of media to promote awareness.

Volunteer Recruitment

Recruiting and maintaining an effective volunteer force is essential for the survival of any organization. Volunteers are the backbone of the organization and without their time and energy organizations fail to function effectively. You will need to address:

1. Recruitment Strategies
 - Organize a strategy for reaching potential volunteers
 - Develop a volunteer application form
2. Retention
 - Assess the organizations volunteer needs
 - Identify the skills required to meet the needs
 - Establish volunteer time commitments
 - Develop job descriptions
 - Develop an orientation/training manual
 - Design a system of evaluation
3. Recognition
 - Develop a volunteer appreciation program

Planning a coordinated recruitment strategy:

Reaching Potential Volunteers

The best way to find that new volunteer is to go out and look for them. This means area residents, students from local schools, parents of those participating in the programs. Personal contact is still the best way to recruit volunteers. A successful recruitment program will include:

- Advertising
- Public service announcements
- Flyers/brochures
- Telephone campaign
- Word of mouth
- Special events

The key to interesting a possible new recruit is to point out the advantages of the experience, e.g. developing skills, job experience and meeting new people. Let them know what is in it for them!

Establishing Local & Provincial Partnerships

Once a decision has been made to form a new sport club, it is also important to determine whether the organization should affiliate with a larger parent body. There are many advantages to affiliating with a Local/Provincial/National body. Depending on the nature of the proposed clubs future plans; affiliation should be investigated and subsequently discussed at a meeting. Some advantages of affiliation include:

- Giving members the opportunity to participate at provincial and national levels.
- Providing pathways for advancement in coaching, administration and officiating
- Cost savings for the organization in the area of insurance
- Access to knowledge, skills and experience passed on by the more senior body.

TOP TEN HINTS - Starting a Club

- 1) Spread the workload. Members will be more committed if their talents are used and it will reduce stress on your core organizing committee
- 2) Hold regular, interesting meetings in which decisions are made. Good meetings keep clubs or groups alive.
- 3) Draw up a club or group register of members' and volunteer's names, addresses, ages, occupations and other relevant information.
- 4) Plan for the future. Keep records from the outset - they provide a valuable resource as your club evolves.
- 5) Organize a permanent mailing address and phone number that can be attached to all correspondence, pamphlets and posters your club creates.
- 6) Provide an orientation and job description for your volunteers. People like to know what a job entails before they commit.
- 7) Contact your local Recreation Director or Recreation Department. They can be a valuable asset in helping you start a club in your community.
- 8) Provide training opportunities for your volunteer coaches. This ensures your athletes have the best coaching possible.
- 9) Develop a yearly budget. Know what your costs will be and develop a plan to secure any needed funds.
- 10) Acknowledge your volunteers! A simple thank you letter at the end of the season or after an event lets them know their efforts were recognized and appreciated.

TEMPLATES

A number of templates are available from Sport Manitoba to assist prospective clubs in their start up. These include:

- Sample Assessment Tool
- Sample Facility Letter
- Sample Meeting Invitation
- Sample Newspaper Announcement
- Sample Poster/Flyer
- Sample Meeting Agenda
- Sample Job Descriptions
- Sample Budget

For any or all of the above templates, please contact the Sport Manitoba office in your region.

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WEB RESOURCES

There is a wealth of information available on the internet on every subject imaginable. However, wading through the multitude of web sites to find useful information can be frustrating and time consuming. The web resources listed below will lead you directly to web sites with information specific to Starting A Club.

HOW TO START A CLUB – GENERAL ARTICLES

1. [NSW Sport and Recreation](#)
This Australian website from the State of New South Wales offers a section called "Running Your Club" and includes information on: Risk management, Volunteer Management and A-Z Fact Sheets on running your club.
2. [Leisure Information Network \(LIN\)](#)
The Leisure Information Network (LIN) website is dedicated to providing resources and sharing information on recreation, sport, culture and lifestyle enhancement. One article located on LIN pertaining to starting a club is produced by the Northwest Territories Municipal and Community Affairs and titled "Developing a Community Sport Association". To access this article: Go to the LIN website, click on the "Recreation Database" button, click on "Keyword Search" and type in "Community Sport Association" and click "Search".
3. [SPARC](#)
SPARC (Sport and Recreation New Zealand) offers a wide range of information on sport and recreation topics. For information specific to Starting A Club click on either "Running Sport 1 or "Running Sport 2" in the "Sports Administrators" section.
4. [Australian Sports Web](#)
The Australian Sports Web combines information from a variety of sport groups in Australia. For information specific to Starting A Club click [here](#).

HOW TO START A CLUB – EXTRA LINKS TO RELATED AREAS

FINANCES

1. [Resource Center for Volunteers](#)
The Resource Centre for Voluntary Organizations maintains an extensive collection of information resources for the volunteer community, including a library of print materials (books, articles and journals) and an audio visual library. The above link will take you directly to an article within this website called "Financial Responsibilities of Not for Profit Boards", that provides a basic explanations of accounting principles.
2. [Alberta Community Development](#)
Within the Alberta Community Development web site is a article entitled "*Financial Responsibilities of Not-for-Profit Boards*" which provides a detailed look at finances for non-profit organizations.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

1. [SPARC](#)

SPARC (Sport and Recreation New Zealand) offers a wide range of information on sport and recreation topics. Click on the above link to access an article, "*Marketing and the Media*" that explores some basic principles of marketing and different media types

2. [Leisure Information Network](#)

The Leisure Information Network (LIN) website is dedicated to providing resources and sharing information on recreation, sport, culture and lifestyle enhancement. A comprehensive article on public relations can be accessed by clicking on the above link.