

How to Grow & Sustain Your Local Program

Planning for Growth

As a Local Program grows, it will have to evolve in order to serve athletes in a quality manner. The goal of all programs is that growth be tied to athlete demand and interest. As more athletes join a Local Program, more sport opportunities will need to be added, practice facilities will need to be larger, the budget will have to increase, and the coach and volunteer base will need to grow. For this reason, it is better to plan for growth when launching a Local Program in order to best accommodate the Local Program's needs as they are discovered.

Enhancing Existing Sports

Consider adding additional training opportunities and sports performance standards to the Local Program to encourage increased performance. Expand the Local Program from just one skill-focused training session per week by adding a second training session focused on fitness and conditioning. Focusing on health to enhance the existing sports programs will assist your athletes in their health and well-being. It is a global initiative of Special Olympics for all athletes to participate in two high quality sports opportunities per week such as practice, walking clubs, SOfit, nutritional classes, etc.

Adding Unified Sports® Options to Already Existing Sports

By partnering with schools, churches, or other community organizations, the Local Program can grow by giving volunteers the option of becoming Unified Sports® partners to train and compete alongside Special Olympics athletes.

Adding New Sports

In order to better gauge the popularity of the sports offered by your Local Program and the Accredited Program, regularly surveying the athletes, coaches, Management Teams, and families is encouraged to obtain the best information and feedback.

In order to make effective decisions in adding a new sport or Program, the following need to be taken into consideration:

Interest

- Determine community interest by hosting a sports demonstration night for local athletes, Unified Sports® partners, and coaches. Introduce basic sports skills and determine the community's interest for adding a program or sport
- Brochures within schools, community boards, group homes, and other areas that serve individuals with intellectual disabilities are helpful for increasing awareness and determining interest

Facilities

- Partner with local recreation centers, high schools, and sports organizations in order to obtain access to facilities used for training and competition

Coaches

- Host a volunteer orientation for all new volunteers and introduce coaching opportunities
- Recruit and strategically place coaches where they will best fit

Other Volunteers

- Host or participate in volunteer fairs and trainings within targeted communities to create interest for the Local Program's needs
- Create a volunteer job description for each available position in order to provide specific requirements and job functions for volunteers

Budget

- When determining the Local Program's needs, be sure that the budget provides information about how much revenue the Local Program will need to sustain and/or grow. A copy of a budget is located on the SOWI website under Local Program Management.
- Collaboration with your Accredited Program will help determine the Local Program's budget and ensure that the Program is staying within the parameters of the organization