

Local Program Development Guide

Section 1 – Starting & Structuring Your Local Program

What is a Local Program and what purpose does it serve?

The Local Program is the heartbeat of Special Olympics. It serves athletes and their family members at the grassroots level on behalf of its Accredited Special Olympics (State / Provincial / National) Program through sports training, competition opportunities, and related activities. The Local Program brings our mission and vision to life. To learn more about Special Olympics, visit www.specialolympics.org.

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.

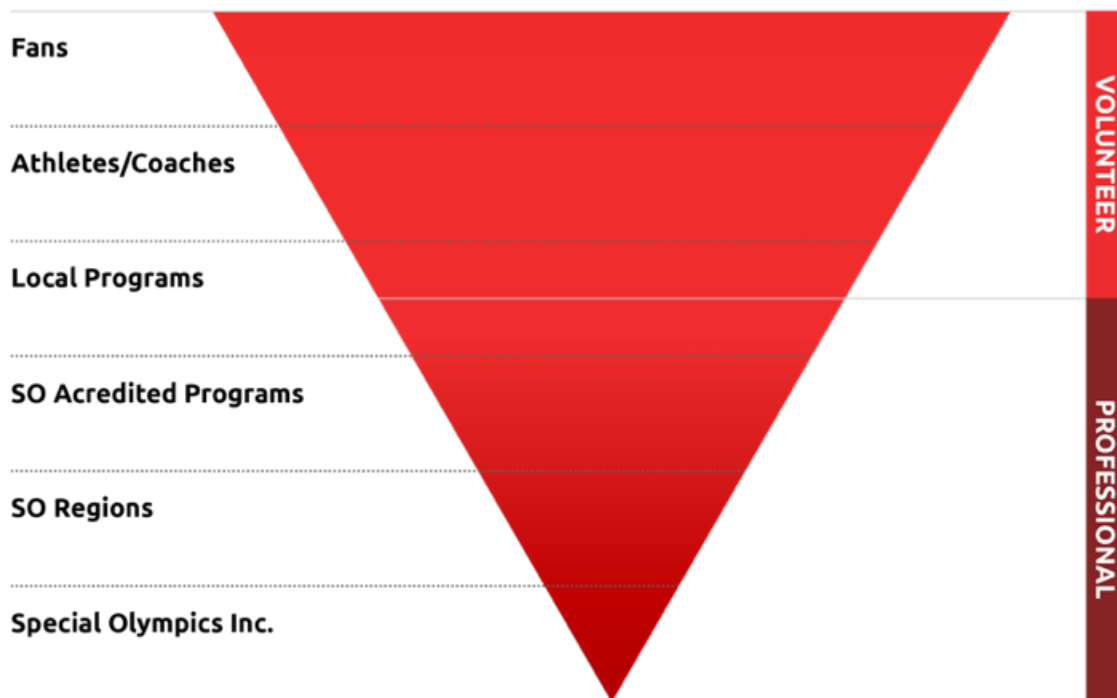
The **vision** of Special Olympics is to help bring all persons with intellectual disabilities into the larger society under conditions whereby they are accepted, respected, and given the chance to become productive citizens.

How do Local Programs fit into the overall structure of Special Olympics?

Each Local Program offers official Special Olympics sports training and competition opportunities for athletes (individuals with intellectual disabilities) and Special Olympics Unified Sports® partners (individuals without intellectual disabilities). A Local Program may originate from a variety of places:

- Geographic areas – Communities, counties, or other land boundaries
- Independent community Special Olympics clubs or teams
- Schools – Public or specialized schools, colleges or universities
- Sports organizations, such as Parks and Recreation Departments
- Organizations serving people with intellectual disabilities, such as independent living facilities or adult service providers

Special Olympics Local Programs' "inverted pyramid" approach (below) shows the importance of Local Programs and those who take part. The Local Program makes the first – and often, the strongest – impression about the Special Olympics movement. A strong Local Program is necessary to our success.



Who and what are the parts of this pyramid, and what is their role in the Local Program?

The Local Program begins with our athletes, includes a number of important people to support them, and the professional structure of Special Olympics that enables the success of the Local Program.

Athletes

Individuals of all ages and ability levels are welcome to participate in Special Olympics. To be eligible to participate as a Special Olympics athlete, the individual must be identified as having an intellectual disability.

- Special Olympics Athletes are individuals eligible for training and competition at age 8, and there is no upper age limit.
- Children under age 8 are eligible to participate in the Young Athletes program, which introduces young children to sports activities through curriculum-guided play.

Each athlete must have a current medical form signed by a medical professional and a release form on file in order to participate in practices or competitions. Additional forms required may vary across Accredited Programs.

Unified Sports Partners

Unified Sports partners are individuals without an intellectual disability who participate in Special Olympics Unified Sports®. As with athletes, your Accredited Program can connect you with the necessary forms to become a Unified partner.

Families – Parents, Siblings, and Caregivers

Families are encouraged to participate at every level of Special Olympics, and are an essential component of most Local Programs. All family members of Special Olympics athletes are encouraged to participate in Special Olympics as volunteers, coaches, and Unified Sports partners.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Special Olympics, and serve as the primary source of support for athletes. There are a Volunteer opportunities include serving as a coach, Unified Sports partner, sports official, chaperone, committee member, fundraising volunteer, and more! Local Programs and services could not be provided without the support and commitment provided to the athletes by volunteers.

Special Olympics Professional Structure

The following levels of Special Olympics provide leadership and management for our movement, and exist to support our Local Programs in delivering the mission of Special Olympics.

- **Special Olympics Inc. (SOI)** is responsible for the overall leadership and management of all Special Olympics Programs across the globe — which supports more than 6 million athletes and Unified Sports partners in over 190 countries. With the support of more than 1 million coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics delivers 32 Olympic-type sports and over 100,000 games and competitions throughout the year.
- **Special Olympics North America (SONA)** is one of SOI's seven regions, and is responsible for implementing the policies and initiatives of SOI. SONA also supports and guides each of the Accredited Programs within North America (Canada, the United States, and the Caribbean).
- **Accredited Programs** - Each Special Olympics Accredited Program is a charitable organization that exists to provide sports training and athletic competition for persons with intellectual disabilities. It is accredited by SOI and is responsible for

following the policies and rules established by SOI in its delivery of services. It is known as a “Program” (with a capital “P”) of Special Olympics.

- **Sub-Programs** - Many Accredited Programs are divided into smaller geographic regions, called sub-Programs. Sub-Programs provide support, assistance, and competitive opportunities to Local Programs.

How do I build a quality Local Program?

Take pride in your Local Program by building a team of leaders who share the Special Olympics vision of excellence.

A Local Program Coordinator will lead and oversee essential programming, including building a Management Team of volunteers who will help manage crucial areas. It is important to know that the Local Program Coordinator is **never alone!** In addition to the Management Team you create, your Accredited Program will provide relevant and appropriate guidance, information, resources, policies, and procedures.

Who can I recruit as Management Team members?

Local Program management will come from a variety of backgrounds. The most likely candidates are those already connected to Special Olympics in some fashion:

- Current coaches, volunteers, and Unified Sports partners
- Parents and other family members
- Athletes

As your Local Program grows, you may find additional members within your community such as:

- Professionals with experience in key functional areas such as finance, public relations, fundraising, sports, etc.
- Community sports programs, civic groups, and fraternal organizations
- Military and police organizations
- Teachers, professionals, and paraprofessionals in school settings – from elementary through high school, as well as colleges and universities
- Professionals and young professionals in partnering agencies (chamber of commerce) and businesses

How is the Management Team structured, and what are the roles?

The Management Team provides leadership, administration, and oversight of the Local Program. At its core, the Management Team performs the necessary functions to allow sports training and competition to exist at the local level.

In the beginning, there may only be a select few Management Team members. As you discuss each member's skills and areas of interest, defined roles will become clear and allow you to start functioning as a team.

A small Management Team may only have a couple members, and divide duties like the following example:

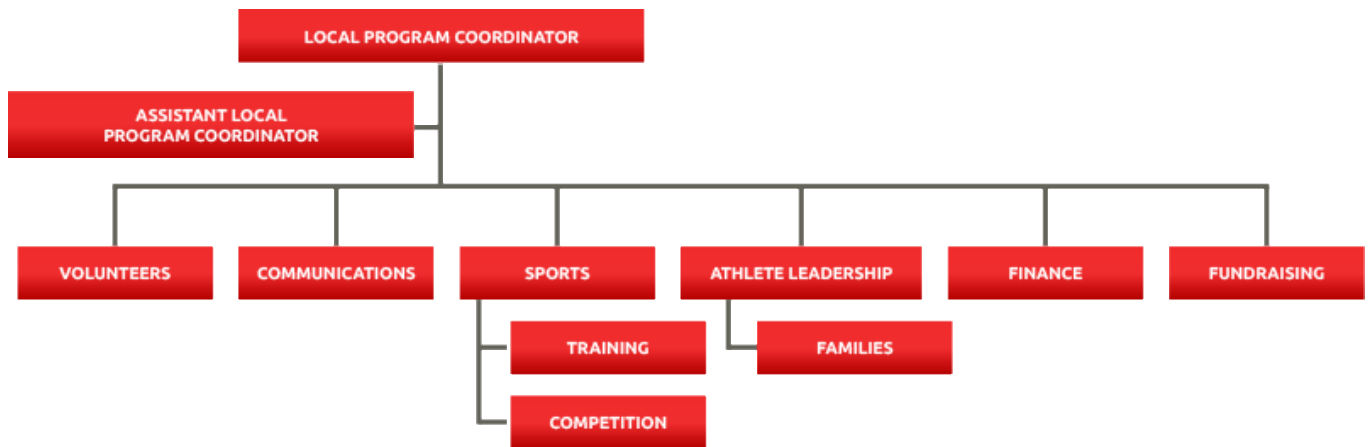
Sample Management Team #1



As the Local Program grows, you can divide duties among new members so that each person can have a specific focus area. Below are sample structures that Management Teams have used. It is important to note that this is your Local Program. As such, you may opt to customize this approach to reflect your Local Program's focus areas for delivering the mission, and the abilities of your Management Team members.

Sample Management Team #2

Sample Management Team #3



What should I expect in each of these roles?

The following duties are included as an example of what should be managed in each role for your Local Program. Consult additional Local Program resources as needed for each role, or contact your Accredited Program with additional training needs. The following pages contain sample job descriptions for various Local Program Management Team roles, as well as training checklists you can consult and customize for your specific needs. Please confirm any adjustments needed to these resources with your Accredited Program. More resources for Local Programs can also be found at <http://resources.specialolympics.org>.

Local Program Management Team Position Descriptions

Local Program Manager

The Local Program Coordinator is responsible for providing strategic leadership and management. The Local Program Coordinator plans, organizes, directs, and coordinates programs and services for athletes in their Local Program in accordance with established policies to achieve the goals, objectives, standards, and mission of Special Olympics. The completion of responsibilities will be performed by the Local Program Coordinator and Management Team members who have been empowered to lead and complete the specific functions outlined below.

Sports & Competition Coordinator

The Sports & Competition Coordinator administers the planning and delivery of a Local Program's quality training and competition events for Special Olympics athletes and Unified Sports® partners. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Coordinate sport-specific training and competition for any available sport offered
- Recruit qualified coaches, and ensure all are properly trained and certified
- Recruit athletes and Unified partners, and ensure all have valid medical forms / volunteer forms on file
- Secure safe, secure, and appropriate facilities and equipment
- As needed, secure lodging and transportation for competitions

Administrative/Operations Coordinator

The Administrative/Operations Coordinator ensures that all Special Olympics paperwork, policies, and procedures are adhered to, primarily related to athlete and volunteer participation. The Administrative/Operations Team also oversees all data input into the Games and Volunteer Management Systems.

Finance Coordinator

The Finance Coordinator and their team are responsible for all aspects of the financial administration for the Local Program. They also ensure that special events and fundraisers are following the Accredited Program's financial guidelines.

Fundraising Coordinator

The Fundraising Coordinator oversees plans to raise the funds necessary to support the Local Program through sponsorships/partnerships and the execution of fundraising programs and events. All efforts are managed according to guidelines established in the Special Olympics General Rules, and by the Accredited Program.

Outreach Coordinator

The Outreach Coordinator, as an extension of the sports and communication functions, is focused on recruitment. The Outreach Coordinator works with schools, transitional programs, families, community sports programs, adult vocational settings, group homes, and governmental organizations in order to connect eligible athletes and volunteers with the Local Program.

Communications Coordinator

The Communications Coordinator is responsible for coordinating internal communications (email / text lists, for example) among the Local Program and its Management Team. The position also leads the promotion of Local Program activities through all forms of media.

Volunteer Coordinator

The Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for recruiting, registering, and training all Local Program volunteers for their intended duties. They ensure adequate staffing of volunteer roles, that volunteers meet eligibility requirements mandated by their roles, and comply with all Accredited Program policies and procedures.

Unified Champion School Coordinator

The Unified Champion School Coordinator develops and implements Special Olympics Unified Champion School programs in schools within a geographic area. They recruit, educate, and mentor school personnel to develop and implement Unified Champion Schools components and Young Athletes™ in schools, and facilitate the progression of participants into community programming as needed.

Athlete Leadership Coordinator

The Athlete Leadership Coordinator ensures that the Local Program has representation by athletes in its Management Team and overall operations – including recruiting and training athletes that take part. This role also ensures that the Local

Program participates in opportunities for Athlete Input Councils, workshops, and related athlete leadership programming offered by the Accredited Program.

Young Athletes™ Coordinator

The Young Athletes™ Coordinator recruits community and school-based young athletes, registers, assists with securing equipment, and troubleshoots culminating event activities. They work with the Administration Team in registering these Young Athletes™. The team also ensures the training of all Young Athletes™ Coordinators.

Family Services Coordinator

The Family Services Coordinator is responsible for encouraging family involvement in Local Program activities. Providing local resources and educational workshops, managing hospitality areas at local competitions, and arranging social/networking activities are among the opportunities available to engage families in this role.

Wellness/Fitness Coordinator

The Wellness/Fitness Coordinator is responsible for coordinating year-round fitness, health promotion, and access to health and fitness resources for athletes, families, caregivers, and volunteers.

Local Program Management Team Training Checklist

The following represents a sample checklist to train individuals for various jobs. It identifies the requirements of each position including roles and responsibilities.

All Positions

- Special Olympics Mission
- Special Olympics General Orientation
- Special Olympics Structure: Accredited Program; North America; Special Olympics, Inc.
- Protective Behaviors

- Concussion Education

Local Program Coordinator / Assistant Local Program Coordinator

- Policies and Procedures
- Volunteer Screening (Class A Requirements)
- Storage / P.O. Box / Phone
- Finance Procedures
- Public Relations (PSAs, press releases, emergency/crisis communication plan)
- Insurance information for facilities, rental vehicles (certificate)
- Risk Management, including Incident Report Forms
- Contracts (process for approval)
- Sign-up Procedures per Sport Season
- Volunteer & Games Management software
- Travel Procedures and Needs
- Facilitating monthly meetings (sample agenda)
- Procedure for providing info to potential new athletes and volunteers

Medicals (Applications for Participation)

- Class A Volunteer Requirements (volunteer screening)
- Athlete Medical Requirements*
 - Ensure medicals are complete. If complete, make a copy – submit original or copy to Accredited Program and keep the remaining version for your files. If not complete, DO NOT accept. Send back and get corrections.
- Secure storage and back-up storage of medicals (digital)

Before the Start of the Season

- Determine which athletes will need renewals
- Send renewal request letter and blank medical form (personalized for the Local Program) to athletes requiring renewals for the upcoming season
- Work with Management Team to ensure all involved have valid medicals

Sports

- Athlete Medical Requirements
- Athlete Training Requirements
- Advancement Criteria: Regional > State > USA Summer Games > World Games
- Athlete: Coach Ratio Requirements
- SO Sports Rules, Accredited Program Rules, NGB Rules and where to find them
- Uniform and Equipment Requirements / how to obtain what is needed; use of logo
- Volunteer Class A Requirements
- Coach Education Requirements and Opportunities
- Unified Sports® – philosophy
- Sports Calendar – Deadlines and where to find them
- Pre-Season Coach Meeting Agenda
- Seasonal Sign-up Procedure
- Code of Conduct for Athletes, Unified Sports® partners, coaches, and families
- Secure storage of medicals (print/scanned and digital) as back-up
- Finance Procedures, approval for spending, and/or cash advance for travel
- Public Relations, including emergency communication plan
- Insurance info for facilities, rental vehicles (certificate), and fundraising events
- Risk Management
- Incident Report Forms
- Reserving Facilities / Contracts
- Volunteer Management System software
- Games Management System software
- Travel Procedures and Needs
- Communicating with Coaches
- Procedures for dealing with misconduct of athletes, partners, coaches, volunteers, and/or families
- Ensuring equipment and uniforms are distributed prior to competition and collected immediately after
- Emergency/crisis communication plan
- Procedure for providing info to potential new athletes and new partners
- Procedure for providing info to potential new volunteer
- Procedure for moving a Class B Volunteer into a data management system

Volunteers

- Class A Volunteer Requirements (volunteer screening)
- Class B Volunteers – Day of Volunteering (requirements and restrictions)
- Risk Management
- Athlete Medical Requirements
- Secure storage of medicals (print/scanned and digital) as back-up
- Finance Procedures as it relates to expenses
- Volunteer Management System
- Games Management System, including information regarding volunteer eligibility
- Procedure for providing info to potential new athletes
- Procedure for providing info to potential new volunteers

Before the Start of the Season

- Determine which volunteers will need application renewals
- Update information and request renewals
- Ensure that new volunteers complete Class A Volunteer required paperwork

New Volunteers: Becoming Class A Volunteer Approved

- Complete Class A Volunteer application form
- Complete Special Olympics General Orientation (optional), Protective Behaviors, and Concussion Training
- Volunteers must be Class A Volunteer approved before undertaking any responsibilities with athletes
- Ensure all coaches have a valid Class A Volunteer form
- Check athlete eligibility
- Social security number (SSN) – Individual must provide SSN for background check

Finance / Fundraising

- SO and Accredited Program Policies and Procedures related to fundraising restrictions
- LETR, Tip a Cop, Polar Plunge, and Revenue Share
- Memorials – including how SO Program handles acknowledgement to family of deceased and the donor
- Program's Special Events
- Thank Yous and Receipts
- In-Kind Donations and Procedures
- Finance Procedure as it relates to expenses, deposits, and cash on site
- Roles of fundraising: Class A or Class B Volunteer requirements
- Public Relations – including PSAs, press releases, emergency/crisis communication plan, use of logo, and social media
- Insurance info for facilities, rental vehicles (certificate)
- Contracts (process for approval)

Communications

- Policies and Procedures
- Risk Management
- Finance Procedures related to expenses
- Public Relations – including PSAs, press releases, emergency/crisis communication plan, and use of logo
- Contracts (process for approval)
- Sign-up Procedures per Sport Season
- Thank you notes
- Newsletters / mailings
- Social media

Local Program Growth and Sustainability

As a Local Program grows, it will have to evolve in order to serve athletes in a quality manner. 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. It is wise to plan ahead for growth so you are best prepared for your Local Program to reach its full potential.

Enhancing Existing Sports

Consider adding fitness training to the existing Local Program schedule. This approach can improve the fitness and conditioning of your athletes, and creates healthy habits that extend beyond your sports season.

Adding Unified Sports Options to Already Existing Sports

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

Athletes, coaches, and families may have interest in new sports beyond what is currently offered. In order to make effective decisions in adding a new sport or Program, consider the following:

Interest

- Aside from surveying athletes, a sports clinic or demonstration would allow you to introduce basic skills for a new sport, and determine the true interest.

Facilities

- Discuss training and competition options with local recreation centers, schools, and sports organizations to determine available facilities for your Local Program

Coaches

- Survey your coaches' interests and skills in a new sport, and determine if there are additional volunteers or coaches in your community that are capable of a) effectively training in a new sport, and b) helping to avoid overloading your existing coaches and volunteers

Budget

- Include information in your budget about how much revenue the Local Program will need to sustain and/or grow. Plan out how much fundraising will be required to grow, either through fundraising or donations

- Consult your Accredited Program to confirm the Local Program's budget and that the Program is staying within the parameters of the organization