

Boards of Local Sports Partnerships

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General Introduction

The following material is appropriate to either of the structures within the LSP network. In the Company model some of these roles, responsibilities and guiding principles will form part of your Company Memo & Articles of association and are to some extent legally binding. In the other Co. Development Board sub committee structure these guidelines are good practice and can be included in any Board handbooks or support material which you produce.

It is very unlikely that your Partnership can run and develop on its own. You will need to work in partnership with your agencies, members, clubs, funders, sponsors, and other organisations sharing similar aims. An important part of the Board's responsibilities is to help create such partnerships.

In many sectors too many Boards make the mistake of becoming over-involved in the operational management of the organisation. The role of an effective Board is to operate at a more strategic level, planning for the future development of the organisation.

All members of the Board share in the task of directing the organisation in a conscientious manner and within the law. There is likely to be a turnover in Board members over time as members are elected, appointed, and stand-down. However, for their period of service on the Board, each member can be regarded as a 'custodian' of their organisation: they carry the baton from an earlier group to a future generation; when the baton is in their charge, the Board Member is responsible for ensuring the proper development and future security of their organisation.

1. The Role of the Board

The role of the Board of a Local Sports Partnership shall be:

- To oversee the development of a comprehensive support structure for sports development in the Partnerships County/City area.
- To ensure that those involved in sport in the County/City are properly included in the development of this structure
- To prepare a Sports Development Strategy.
- To access the necessary resources to enable this Strategy to be implemented
- To oversee the implementation of the Strategy
- To monitor progress and take action if necessary
- To report to the Irish Sports Council on progress and developments in their Partnership.

2. Responsibilities of the Board

The Board is responsible for all the activities of the Sports Partnership. These responsibilities can be divided into six main areas:

- To **govern** the organisation through the proper administration of its affairs
- To provide **leadership** for the organisation

- To plan the **strategy** for the development of the organisation
- To establish **partnerships** with other organisations who can help develop the organisation
- To manage the **people** involved in running the organisation
- To **implement** the strategic plans for the organisation and monitor their progress
- To ensure a realistic programme of **participation and performance in the organisation** as a consequence of the previous six responsibilities.

3. Guiding Principles

The Board of a Local Sports Partnership should conduct their business with due regard to the following guiding principles:

- Board Members should participate fully in the Board's joint deliberations.
- All members should be treated in an inclusive and equal way with each member having equal weight in the event of a vote.
- Members should act bona fide in the interests of the Board, constituent members and programme objectives. This includes a duty to act honestly and diligently.
- The work of the Board should be transparent and open to the public
- The Board should follow good community development practice in the performance of their duties
- Board members should respect the confidentiality of the discussion process leading to decision making
- A Board member should tell the Board at the earliest possible opportunity if s/he is directly or indirectly interested in any contract or transaction which the organisation proposes to enter
- Duty of Care- members should have a reasonable understanding of the Board, and exercise reasonable skill and care in the management of the Board's business. Examples of the responsibilities are:
 - » To exercise their powers in a prudent and business like way;
 - » To act honestly and in good faith in all their dealings as Board members;
 - » To take care that they do not make personal or money profits from any business they do as a Board.
 - » To take decisions jointly, and not on their own.

4. What is required of a Board Member?

Board members of a Local Sports Partnership will ideally be:

- Committed to the development of the area and its people.
- Willing to put effort and time into local development.

- Willing to accept joint responsibilities.
- Willing to report back to their particular sector/organisation through an appropriate/agreed structure.
- Committed to developing innovative and creative approaches to address the organisation's core strategies
- Committed to informing the local community of the Board's role in their development.

5. The Activities of the Local Sports Partnership

The following activities are included in the contract between the Irish Sports Council and the Sports Partnership Board/Local Authority regarding the purpose of the LSP:

- Allocation and distribution of funds for sport within the Partnership area.
- Administration and development of sport within the County
- Enhancement and improvement of coaching in sports within the County/City
- Promotion of local sports clubs
- Development and management of volunteer training programmes within the County/City
- Compilation and dissemination of information on sports bodies, programmes, initiatives and facilities within the County/City
- Engaging in research on sport within the County/City in keeping with its policy objectives
- Making arrangements for the better use of sports facilities within the County/City
- Provision within the County/City of links between relevant bodies including but not limited to schools, clubs, local community, national governing bodies of sport and the corporate sector
- Promotion of local sports competitions and events within the County/City

The LSP Committee shall in line with its objectives prepare a strategy statement, on a periodic basis to be agreed with the ISC, for approval of the ISC. Such a strategy statement will comprise the LSP's key objectives, the outputs expected from its activities over the period of the strategy, the performance indicators/measures used to assess achievement of the objectives and the use of resources in the implementation of the strategy

The LSP Committee shall in each year throughout this Agreement draw up, for the ISC's approval, an action plan based upon the forgoing strategy statement. This action plan should be updated to take account of any material changes in circumstances arising during the course of the strategy period and should be drawn up in a manner consistent with the strategy from which it is primarily derived

The LSP shall establish a consultative forum so as to enable interested parties to make a contribution to the deliberative process in relation to sports planning and development within the county. The LSP shall cause full and proper minutes to be kept of all deliberations and proposals made at meetings of the consultative forum and shall make such minutes available to the ISC for inspection on request.

6. Staying informed

All Board members should take steps to ensure that they have all the information necessary to take decisions about the organisation. In practical terms, you should set time aside to read and reflect on Board papers and briefing notes before each meeting, meet with senior staff on a regular basis, read publications and websites about the organisation, and ask questions about issues which you don't fully understand in order to be satisfied that you have a sound grasp of the implications before reaching a decision. It is also very supportive to the LSP staff if you can attend a reasonable number of events, competitions and functions where you will meet "clients" of the Partnership.

7. Managing the people

People are your most valuable asset in the organisation and the Board plays a key role in ensuring that everyone makes the most effective contribution to the overall success of the organisation.

You will rely on a small number of paid staff to carry out much of the LSPs day-to-day activities, and a larger number of volunteers to run competitions and events, coach and train athletes, and run youth programmes. Both staff and volunteers will work better (and with more job satisfaction) if the Board ensures that it **recruits, retains and rewards** the right people. A key factor is the Board's ability to "get the best" from its staff, volunteers and members through proper recognition of individual contributions. This can be achieved if you develop consistent and fair **policies and procedures** which apply equally to both staff and volunteers.

8. Providing leadership

The Board is in a unique position to demonstrate leadership within your organisation through all its functions. By its style and through its activities, the Board sets the tone and direction for the future development of the organisation. Whilst these outcomes are often incidental consequences of the way in which the Board operates, there are several aspects over which the Board can take direct control.

In line with its responsibilities for planning strategy, the Board should be engaged in '**big picture**' **thinking**, rather than immersing itself in operational detail and minutiae. Big picture thinking is like viewing the landscape from a helicopter, rather than standing on the ground: you can see further in each direction, detect patterns, and understand how the component elements connect with each other. It is this overview function, and the ability to weigh and consider all the differing views, that demonstrates the Board's leadership role.

Outside the Board meeting, its members can continue to provide leadership by acting as **advocates and lobbyists** for the LSP. Many Board members will find numerous opportunities to advance their organisation when meeting with business colleagues, social contacts and other informal networks. The work of the organisation is not confined to the playing field and the committee room!

9. Implementing the plans

Strategies, policies and procedures do not turn themselves into results of their own accord. Some Board members will be directly involved in implementing these plans, but often they will be undertaken by paid staff, volunteers, clubs and individual members. The plan itself is only a paper document; the real proof comes from the targets and milestones reached in implementing the plans, and translating them into tangible outcomes in schools, clubs, competitions and arenas. The Board's task is to break down the plans into practical steps, monitor their implementation, and provide additional support when necessary.

When communicating strategic plans and policies, it is usually necessary to provide an overview of the end goals. But those who undertake responsibility for making these plans happen need more detailed **action plans** with targets and timescales on which to act. They also require a reporting mechanism to inform the Board about progress and problems so that Board members can regularly **monitor** how the plans are being implemented.

Strategies and procedures require regular review and adjustment in the light of changing circumstances and experience. Often, those in charge may want additional funding, support or training to carry out their tasks and a further duty of the Board is to assess these **support requirements** and make decisions when appropriate.

10. Ensuring participation and performance

If the Board is effective in fulfilling the previous responsibilities, there will be a thriving programme of the organisations activities at all levels within all target groups. The priorities for each LSP are determined by the development plan, which in turn has helped to secure the necessary funding. The staff and volunteers understand and enjoy their respective roles. A range of partners are working to support the Partnership in achieving its goals. Progress is routinely monitored and adjustments made where necessary. And operational problems are either forestalled by the widely accepted standards of behaviour, or dealt with through other mechanisms. These are the hallmarks of a well run Partnership and where each Board member can derive a sense of satisfaction from their time as a custodian and ambassador for the organisation.

Useful Contacts

<http://www.carmichaelcentre.ie/trainingandsupport/index.htm>

<http://www.chambers.ie/chambers.php>

http://www.enterpriseboards.ie/Your_Local_CCEB_map.aspx

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