This SPORTS sheet is designed to provide guidance for governing bodies of sport, individuals, clubs, local authorities and other organisations wishing to either plan for the development of their sport overall or to concentrate on specific aspects.

As the "audience" for this SPORTS sheet is so wide-ranging, the information given is not designed to be prescriptive but rather to offer a number of principles and a suggested process, which those involved may wish to consider. Each organisation will have very different backgrounds and starting points from which to develop and the format of the SPORTS sheet is designed to take this into account.

Finally, this 'Sports Development Planning' SPORTS sheet aims to build upon a previous SPORTS sheet called 'A Development Plan Guide for Governing Bodies of Sport and Other Sports Organisations'.

**Why Plan for Sports Development?**

Before providing information on the principles and process of writing a sports development plan, it is worth stating some of the advantages of writing a plan. The following list gives an indication of some of the reasons why organisations may decide to undertake this process:

- **To provide focus and priority** - sometimes there is so much that you want to do that it helps to focus on specific issues and to plan in priority order;

- **To co-ordinate new and existing activity** - you may want to take on a new idea but still need to maintain existing work. This could also involve co-ordinating with other organisations;

- **To promote what you do** - a sports development plan is a great way of letting others know what you are doing and what you plan to do;

- **To access potential funding** - most funding organisations need to see some form of development plan before agreeing to funding. The plan will enable funding agencies to assess whether your plans meet their objectives and criteria (a good development plan can be adapted to suit different funding agencies needs);

- **To be realistic and develop over time** - this relates to the first point above, insofar as the development plan can identify a realistic way forward, over a set period of time.
Sports Development Audit

The starting point for any sports development plan is to undertake an audit. This audit can cover a range of information but its main aim is to assess the current position of the organisation in terms of the following:

- **"Internal" strengths and weaknesses** - what are the key strengths and weaknesses of the organisation, which could help or hinder development?

- **"External" opportunities & threats** - are there opportunities outside the organisation (initiatives, funding, support) which you could "tap in to" and are there any "threats" to the organisation from external sources?

- **Main achievements to date** - it is always good to be positive and the organisation's key achievements should be noted.

- **Facilities and committee structures** - what facilities do you have access to and are they suitable? Are the committee structures suitable or is there a need to alter them to enable further development?

- **Performers, coaches & officials** - Are there enough performers, coaches and officials, and are they of the desired quality?

- **Affiliated members and other volunteers** - is the current membership active or is there limited activity?

- **How do you currently promote yourselves?** - it is worth assessing how the organisation currently promotes itself.

- **Other information** - there may be other relevant information (such as other local clubs or facilities), which can also be included in the audit.

Partnerships

In most sports development work, there is a need to develop partnerships with different agencies, who may have access to other resources (human, financial and facilities) or who may have specific expertise. Therefore, it is important to identify both internal and external partners, who could help you to implement your plans. Dependent on your organisation the following could be internal or external partners:

- **Committee members**;
- **Clubs & affiliated members**;
- **Coaches, officials & other volunteers**;
- **Performers**;
- **National Governing Body**;
- **Local authorities and sports development units/officers**;
- **Facility managers**;
- **Potential sponsors & funding agencies**;
- **National organisations such as Sport England, the Youth Sport Trust, the National Coaching Foundation and the Central Council for Physical Recreation**;
- **Schools & School Sports Associations**;
- **Others such as the Youth Service, the Police, Social Services - the involvement of these partners will largely depend on what you are trying to achieve in your plans.**

Key Issues & Initiatives

It is vital that sports development planning takes account of current key issues and initiatives. In sport a number of organisations have undergone change, and there are numerous sports development initiatives offered, often through national sports organisations. Each organisation will have different issues, which could be related to any of the following (or indeed other issues relevant to your organisation):

- **Funding** - usually there is not enough funding for organisations to carry out their plans and there are a range of funding sources which are in some cases, approached inappropriately;

- **Work loads** - often, too few people in an organisation are trying to do too much and there is a need to identify others who can assist;

- **Lack of facilities in the right place** - for many performers travelling to appropriate facilities, which are available at the times they wish, can be a difficulty;

- **Working with Schools** - there is still a tension between physical education and sport, largely due to a lack of understanding of the issues which each face. In schools, there are currently particular pressures regarding the National Curriculum, priorities other than PE and sport, and a mass of Government initiatives designed to raise standards in schools.

- **National programmes and initiatives** - there are a range of programmes and initiatives run by the national governing bodies of sport and organisations such as Sport England, the Youth Sport Trust and the National Coaching Foundation, which may be relevant and helpful to your organisation.
Consultation

An important principle of any sports development plan is consultation with others. Internal partners should have the opportunity to comment on and endorse what you are trying to achieve and external partners should be made aware of your plans and begin to assess whether they can support your work. The consultation process may also identify a priority which has not been thought of previously.

In summary, it is important to consult so that:

- **Partners views are taken account of** - this is important if you wish to involve them later;
- **The plan is relevant** - not only to you but also to potential partners;
- **It can assist co-ordination and avoid duplication** - you may find out that another organisation is already delivering an element of your plan (e.g. coach education) and therefore you can “tap into” this existing work rather than duplicate it;
- **Funding is more likely** - this is particularly so if the funding partner is involved at an early stage and shares your objectives;
- **Potentially, other people who are prepared to assist can be identified**.

The other important issue to address, is who you are going to consult with and when. There are no hard and fast rules about this, as it very much depends on what you are trying to achieve. However, it may be worth targeting specific consultees rather than taking a “scatter-gun” approach, which can waste time and effort and may lead to you not getting the support you want.

The timing of consultation can also vary, i.e. do you consult at an early stage or much later on in the process? Generally, the following needs to be taken into account, when considering with whom you consult and when:

- **Internal & external partners** - relevant people within and outside the organisation should be consulted;
- **Consultation before drafting a plan** - whilst useful this can lead to a “free for all”, which will make it difficult to prioritise;
- **Consultation on draft headings for the plan** - this can set a framework but it needs to be flexible enough to cater for other issues;
- **Consultation at final draft stage** - this could lead to priorities being missed out and a re-write of the plan may be necessary;
- **Consultation on the final plan** - this can lead to a lack of commitment from partners, as they've had no involvement in developing the plan.

Setting Priorities

Once consultation has taken place and relevant comments have been addressed, it is important to set some clear priorities which you aim to achieve. The key points to consider when setting priorities are as follows:

- **Be realistic** - it is impossible to do everything at once, so set the most important priorities first;
- **Phase priorities if necessary** - it may well be necessary to phase priorities over a period of time and the plan could have a life-span of 1, 3 or 5 years, for example. In all plans, appropriate timescales should be set and priorities assessed according to progress;
- **Start small** - this can allow you to get an early success and build confidence. This in turn could encourage other people to get involved as they see that progress has been made;
- **Identify lead people** - a lead person should be assigned to each priority, if possible, as this not only shares the workload but also leads to ownership. The lead people need to meet regularly to assess progress and discuss any difficulties being faced.

Writing & Implementing the Plan

It is vital to identify who is going to write and implement the plan. There are different ways of approaching this and the following guidance may be helpful:

**Who should write the plan?**

- **A single person or a small group of people** - the advantage of a single person, is that the plan will be written in the same style and is likely to “hang-together” well. Using a small group can lead to different styles but enables the work to be shared, with different people writing different sections. If a small group is used, a single person can still co-ordinate this work and write the plan in one style or format;
- **Use existing expertise** - the decision to use a single person or a group may be determined by existing expertise within the organisation. However some people may not recognise themselves as experts and are likely to need encouragement to be involved;
- **Use external consultants** - these can be used if you have the money available and limited time and you are looking for a professionally presented plan. However, you will still need to provide information and the consultant should be chosen carefully to ensure that the quality of the content is more important than the quality of the presentation.
Who should implement the plan?

- **Identify lead people** - it will be important to identify lead people for each priority to share the workload and assist with "ownership" of the plan. The lead people do not necessarily have to directly implement their priority but could play a co-ordinating role, leaving the direct implementation to others e.g. coaches;

- **Timescales** - the timescales for each priority need to be realistic, to enable progress to be made. Some priorities may be easier to achieve than others, and working with partners can either speed up or slow down the progress, dependent on their involvement and commitment to the plan;

- **Communication** - progress should be communicated both within the organisation and to external partners at regular intervals. This can be done through newsletters, meetings, and the media.

Summary

In summary, there are some common processes which can be undertaken, when planning for sports development. These processes are:

- **Audit existing work and activity** - carry out a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis, highlight key successes as well as issues and initiatives for the future;

- **Identify both potential "internal" and "external" partners** - these people and organisations could be crucial to the plan;

- **Carry out consultation** - identify who to consult with, how consultation will be carried out and when it will take place;

- **Set priorities** - ensure priorities are realistic and phased over a period of time. Achieving something simple early on can build confidence;

- **Write and implement the plan** - identify who will write, implement and monitor the plan and wherever possible share out this work load;

- **Monitor the plan** - identify how progress will be monitored and when it will be updated;

- **Promote the plan** - don’t forget to inform and update internal and external partners on progress and where possible use the local media to promote successes.

Monitoring Progress

Monitoring progress has been mentioned before in this SPORTS sheet and it is important that a system is in place to carry out this function. The monitoring process is vital, in terms of keeping the plan “alive” and updating priorities and targets according to the progress being made. The key to this is to identify who will monitor the plan and how frequently:

- **Who should monitor the plan?**

  commonly, monitoring is often done through an existing committee or a designated group, set up specially for the purposes of monitoring, reviewing, updating and promoting the plan. The advantage of a separate group is that specific time can be spent on the plan, rather than it being part of an existing committee’s agenda. However, if a separate group is set up, it should have a link with and be able to report to a main committee;

- **Frequency of monitoring**

  the frequency of monitoring can depend on a number of factors. If an existing committee is carrying out the function, it could be a regular item on the agenda. In the early stages, however, monitoring may need to be more frequent but as progress is made, this may become less frequent. It is however, recommended that monitoring of plans should take place at least twice per year;

- **Feedback on outcomes**

  dependant on the system in place, feedback on the outcome of monitoring should be given to a main committee. Feedback to partners, sponsors and, wherever practical to the local media, will also be important.

And Finally...

- **Planning for Sports Development isn’t and shouldn’t be seen as rocket science**!

- **There is much existing knowledge and expertise in sports organisations** - use it!

- **Spend some time planning to plan** - don’t rush into it!

- **It may seem like hard work initially but the results will be worth it**!

Kent Sport and Physical Activity provide a range of information, advice and assistance for sports organisations across the County.
For further advice or assistance with sports development please call 01622 605054/55

Produced by
Kevin Day, with assistance from Suzanne Gough
Kent Sports Development Unit
Kent County Council, 123 High Street,
West Malling, Kent, ME19 6ND

© Kevin Day Kent County Council 2000. This document or any part of it may not be reproduced, photocopied, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the written permission of the author and Kent County Council.