

Club Development Plan

Introduction

Do you ever feel that your club is rudderless? Ambling along happily, but lacking focus and direction? This might be wonderful for the club and present membership and why rock the boat when all is going well? But, if you think the club lacks direction what must potential new members and possible funding agencies think when you approach them?

A club development plan can help your club focus on its present activities; think about how they can be improved and how you will go about improving them. The plan is relatively easy to produce and needs to be short and concise, so people read it. As we highlight in this section, a development plan can be of great advantage to your club.

What is a Club Development Plan?

A club development plan is a short document listing your clubs ambitions and plans over a period of time. By producing a development plan your club will benefit as follows:

- It will provide a clear direction for your club's growth. Forward planning is after all a key to achieving success.
- Members will understand and support (through consultation), the direction in which the club is going.
- It will identify goals in particular sections and help you focus your activity, e.g. develop race training and learn to sail programmes.
- Development plans assist with the recruitment of new members.
- The plan can be circulated to ISA Training Centres, schools and community groups to develop new links and help attract new members.
- The plan can be used to keep local, regional and national partners informed of your aims, e.g. Irish Sports Council, your Local Authority and the ISA.
- Having a club development plan can be used to demonstrate how your club is meeting the criteria of funding agencies and potential sponsors.

Sounds like a lot of hard work

Your plan should be short and concise. There is no right or wrong way to produce a development plan for your club and the task need not be an onerous one. There is no point in writing a long detailed document which few people will read.

The plan itself should be realistic and achievable. It is far better to reach a small number of targets than set yourself impossible targets, which will only de-motivate those involved when they are not reached. The plan should also be a living document that can be adapted to change both within the club and to work within regional and national schemes.

Writing the Plan

To produce a club development plan the club members and committee will need to ask themselves the following questions about the club:

The objective is to set realistic targets with clear priorities and time-scales.

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to get?
- How will we get there?

Where are we now?

Outline your club's current situation. You could include a short analysis of the club's strengths and weaknesses, and an overview of the opportunities and threats in the foreseeable future.

It would be good to carry out a SWOT analysis to identify:

- The **S**trengths, e.g. security of tenure, good range of volunteers, junior training, etc.
- The **W**eaknesses, e.g. low membership, poor links with recognised teaching establishments, poor rescue facilities.
- The **O**pportunities, events, funding, volunteer training.
- The **T**hreats, rent increases, low water levels.

Where do we want to be?

This needs to cover the club's main objectives over a 3-5 year period, throughout the sports development continuum. This can be divided into the following basic sub headings:

- Foundation getting new members started, introducing beginners.
- Participation keeping going, keeping them interested.
- Performance and Excellence getting better, helping new and existing members reach their full potential.
- Administration and Communication running the club and keeping everyone informed.
- Coach and Official Education for example volunteer training and recruitment.
- Facilities and Equipment development and improvement of.

How do we get there?

The next stage is to break down each objective into specific targets to be achieved in the first year and agree targets for future years. The club committee should review and update these targets regularly, once a year as a minimum.

Sports development plans are dynamic documents and are constantly moving forward through a process of:

- Plan
- Review action

The Action Planning Process/ Implementing the Plan

Each target should go through the action planning process before it is included in the plan. This will help identify all the steps required to achieve it:

- What needs doing?
- Who should be involved?
- What time scales should be set?
- What resources will be required?
- What will it cost?

Distributing the Plan

The club has ownership of the plan and as such all members should have access to it. Send copies to all relevant local organisations, for example, your local sports partnership, county council, sports inclusion development officer and your relevant ISA Regional Development Officer.

Key Points

- Keep it short (two to three pages) and relevant.
- Make sure it is understood and supported by the membership.
- Make sure that your objectives are measurable, achievable and set to a timescale.