



Department of
Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries

22

Forming links

– junior sport policy



This booklet is part of a series covering the nine guidelines outlined in the Junior Sport Framework (JSF) as developed by the Australian Sports Commission (ASC).

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The guidelines cover topics to address the needs of young people in sport and include:

1. Long-term involvement.
2. Physical growth and maturation.
3. Sport pathways.
4. Forming links.
5. People making it happen.
6. Quality coaching.
7. Making sport safe.
8. The law and sport.

These booklets outline the main points of the guidelines to assist in the delivery of best practice in junior sport and to encourage young people to make a life-long commitment to sport.

A complete copy of the JSF is available on the ASC website: www.ausport.gov.au

Forming links

Young people receive their most effective and satisfying sports experiences when they experience goodwill and cooperation between all levels of stakeholders. These include:

- Sport organisations (national, state and local)
- Schools and school sports associations
- Government (local, state and federal)
- Commercial and non-profit providers (e.g. YMCA, disability sport agencies)
- Sponsors.

Successful liaison among all these groups helps the long-term participation of young people in sport through the pathways it provides.

The benefits of liaison

Consultation between sport providers means a coordinated and complementary approach to junior sport by:

- Identifying gaps and overlaps in delivery and cooperative approaches to them
- Allowing consistency in procedures such as competition groupings and rules
- Sharing costs, equipment, facilities and human resources.

These particularly assist young people in moving easily between school and club competitions.

The focus of this guideline is on schools and clubs, however, the same principles apply to all stakeholders.

Gaps and overlaps

Working together can prevent:

- An oversupply and duplication of activities
- Over-commitment of talented young people as a result of demands from more than one organisation.

Strategies to avoid gaps and overlaps

- Form local committees of stakeholders to assess the needs of young people in the area and how to most efficiently meet these
- Coordinate scheduling of school and community events and competitions at all levels
- Recognise groups that have established strong community links and benefited junior sport.

Achieving consistency

Ongoing communication among organisations (especially schools and sport organisations) can avoid inconsistencies in sports delivery (e.g. team selection, competition models, uniform requirements) due to differences in:

- Schemes for determining the age of competitors (age at date of competition, start of calendar year or start of school year)
- Age groupings for competition in one sport (under 12, under 14 or junior, intermediate, senior)
- Age groupings across different sports
- Types of activities, rules and formats (e.g. size of competing area, game duration, weights in rugby).

Strategies to achieve consistency

- Use the same criteria for activity and competition groupings (e.g. age, school level)
- Use the same types of activities, rules, formats and modifications (e.g. size of competition area, game duration)
- Hold regular meetings to maintain good communication among stakeholders.

Sharing resources

All groups should consider how they could combine or share resources to benefit young people.

Access can be increased and costs reduced with joint provision and dual use of:

- Facilities
- Sporting equipment
- Instructional resources
- Coaching and other human resources.

This is particularly important in regional and remote areas so as to make the best use of scarce resources.

Individual sports can also gain mutual benefit by liaising and sharing ideas and resources with each other.

How schools can help

Clubs benefit when schools allow use of their facilities for evening/weekend/holiday training and competition.

The school benefits through:

- A user contribution to facility and insurance costs
- Improved community relations
- Reduced vandalism through supervised use of the facilities.

How clubs can help

Clubs can help schools by offering to share their resources. The club benefits from:

- Development of the sport in the school with more young people able to play
- An easy transition for young people into community sport
- An opportunity to show young people how the club works, encouraging them to join.

Junior members of a club are important as potential long-term participants and as volunteers and future coaches, officials and administrators (see booklet 23 of this series, People making it happen – junior sport policy).

Strategies to share resources

- Identify how you can combine to share resources with other groups at all levels (e.g. national, state, regional and club)
- Exchange services across sports and organisations (e.g. coaching, refereeing, professional development for teachers)
- Offer the use of equipment and facilities
- Coordinate an approach to share costs such as maintenance and replacement of equipment
- Consider possible sponsorship conflicts
- Recognise individuals and groups that share their resources.

Building links

All organisations should develop a strategy for networking with others for mutual benefit. Bringing together the experience of all sport providers will help to find common solutions to common problems.

Schools can also provide information on where and how to access local sport programs. In addition, teachers and senior students are a valuable resource to support administration, coaching, refereeing etc. across school and club sport.

Everyone has a vested interest in providing better sporting opportunities through:

- A systematic and coordinated delivery of junior sport
- Young people having a pathway for ongoing sports participation
- Young people being able to increase their understanding of a range of sports and to specialise in specific sports.

All levels of government assist in providing sport opportunities for young people.

Accessing their expertise and resources in building links and delivering programs is helpful for improving outcomes for young people.

Role of schools

Schools are an important provider of the building blocks of sport as well as sporting competition.

Through schools' physical education and sport, the message can be promoted to young people and parents of the:

- Physical, psychological and social benefits of sport for young people
- Need to encourage participation in sports their children enjoy
- Relationship between early participation and life-long involvement in sport
- Range of ways to be involved (e.g. coach, official, administrator).

Strategies for schools forming links

- Identify, and liaise with local sporting organisations to find, whether or not the sport is currently played in the school.
- Coordinate sporting programs to avoid clashes.
- Promote, support and recognise strong links across organisations.
- Set up a database of contacts and programs.
- Provide a checklist of requirements for clubs trying to get access to schools (suitability checks etc.).
- Encourage the joint use of facilities.

Role of clubs

Clubs play a key role in providing:

- Education for young people in basic skills and knowledge about their sport
- Expertise (e.g. coaching clinics)
- The opportunity to take talented young people on to elite levels of performance and competition
- The framework to enable young people to continue in the sport beyond their school years as a player and/or in sport delivery (as a coach, official or administrator)
- Support to schools when state development officers provide programs in the school.

Clubs can give school teachers and other clubs practical assistance to introduce their sports effectively. This could include training and support materials for the sport providers who go into schools.

Sports can also work with other sports to share ideas and resources for mutual benefit.

Clubs also provide a valuable social network for young people to meet others with a shared interest in sport.

Strategies for clubs forming links:

- Identify what your club is able to offer your local school/s or other clubs
- Appoint a key contact person for your club
- Make contact with other organisations and establish how best to work together
- Keep a database of key contacts
- Contact your state sporting association and local and state governments to see what support they offer
- Ask schools if you can have registration days at their sports venue
- Provide a professional service (e.g. be organised, on time and have enough equipment) so other organisations want to build links with you
- Request that state development officers tell you when they are conducting programs in schools and follow up on this opportunity
- Evaluate your links and work towards improving participation of young people in sport.

Key message

Links among organisations allow a comprehensive sports experience for young people. Working together:

- Facilitates the systematic and coordinated delivery of sport with best use of facilities and resources
- Provides a smooth transition between school and community sport, helping to keep participants involved long-term
- Links among stakeholders can improve gaps and overlaps in junior sport delivery
- Consistency of procedures (e.g. age groupings, rules) can be improved through cooperation and collaboration
- Sharing resources (e.g. facilities, equipment and personnel) benefits young people
- Organisations offering different sports should liaise to see what ideas they can borrow and how they can help each other
- Schools play an important role in introducing and promoting sport to young people and their parents/carers
- Clubs provide particular expertise in sports and offer pathways for young people to continue in sport in the long- term as a player and/or coach, official or administrator
- Contact government departments to access their expertise and resources in building links and delivering programs
- With collaboration and consultation, sport providers can enhance the big picture of sport delivery so:
 - all young people will make a long- term commitment to sport
 - talented young people will continue on to elite levels of sport.

Key points – forming links

When schools and community organisations work positively together in providing sport, young people benefit.

Further reading

Booklet 21 Sport pathways – junior sport policy.