



# Club *of the* FUTURE

*More than Sport.*



Government of South Australia  
Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing



# South Australian sport and recreation clubs

*More than sport.*

4,000

sport and recreation clubs



South Australia is home to more than 4,000 sport and recreation clubs, which play a significant role in the lives of all South Australians by providing physical activity, sport and recreation.

Not only are sport and recreation clubs responsible for enhancing participation, they also play a critical role in creating safe, inclusive environments for all members and must be economically and legally sound. There are a number of essential aspects which must be delivered by club administrators when operating a club, however the provision of sport and recreation has evolved to encompass more than simple activity delivery. Clubs provide the opportunity to facilitate and maintain social connections, which has contributed to the evolution of the sport and recreation club environment.

In many communities, the local sport and recreation club is a social focal point for families and members. In times of need, clubs act as a refuge for members, providing shelter and support. This has been particularly evident during bushfires when sporting clubs acted as recovery centres and accommodation for affected community members.

Due to the broader benefits of community sport and recreation, specifically the mental health and social benefits, sport and recreation is being included in 'social prescribing'. Social prescribing involves medical practitioners referring patients to non-medical activities, ranging from health and fitness programs to social clubs and meditation. This practice is becoming more common in Australia, with a focus on prevention and early intervention for chronic health issues in order to reduce the impact on the health system. As social prescribing continues to grow, sport and recreation clubs will play a key role.

It's impossible to ignore the impact of sport and recreation clubs and their place in the social fabric of Australia.

**What does your club want to be known for in the future?**



# Vision for the 'Club of the Future'

The *Club of the Future* guide will address the key trends and issues outlined in [Game On](#) and will guide South Australian clubs to adapt to current and future needs to ensure they continue to thrive. The *Club of the Future* guide will support clubs to explore innovative ways to deliver quality experiences, share resources, services and facilities, increase affordability and promote contemporary approaches to volunteering. This will assist clubs to adapt to the needs of current and future generations.

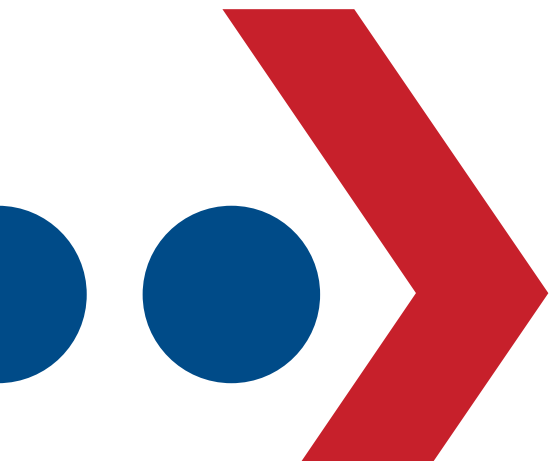
A *Club of the Future* will be innovative, technology savvy and sustainable, identifying ways to work smarter but not harder. This guide has been developed to challenge current models and support South Australian sport and recreation clubs to recognise areas of future focus to ensure they are demonstrating best practice and meeting the changing needs of the South Australian community.

Four key focus areas have been identified to equip South Australian clubs to adapt their operations for the community now and into the future.

## Key focus areas:

-  **Heart of the Community**
-  **Volunteers and Workforce Valued**
-  **Shared Resources and Facilities**
-  **Healthy Finances**

It should be acknowledged that the club development environment is complex and pursuing efficiencies across the four key focus areas alone may not address all the challenges confronting clubs. Focus areas may also change overtime to align with evolving priorities of the community.



# Key trends impacting South Australian sport and recreation clubs

Prior to COVID-19, sport and recreation groups (specifically, local clubs) were already facing challenging times.

Key trends emerged showing South Australians are moving away from traditional organised sport to a more flexible, unstructured engagement in sport and physical activity.



## Broader and more diverse population:

There is a greater need for clubs to be more inclusive for all South Australians.



## Family and work pressures:

People are experiencing increased pressures managing their time and finances.



## Decline in volunteering:

The labour input of South Australian volunteers in sport is estimated to be valued at \$272 million annually.



## New technology:

As physical activity levels decline, screen-viewing behaviours increase.



## Experiences and personalisation:

The flexibility of unstructured play is becoming increasingly important.



## Climate Change:

More awareness for environmental sustainability in sport is needed due to changing climate conditions.



## Key Focus Area #1

# Heart *of the* COMMUNITY

Many sporting clubs are the social focal point for their community, with South Australians increasingly recognising the broader benefits of clubs for their positive contribution towards mental and physical health, crime prevention and social development. People who feel welcome and included are more likely to remain connected to their club and 'give back'.

Creating a family friendly and inclusive environment will help to establish your club as a community hub. By catering for all ages and abilities, your club is creating positive role modelling for everyone to 'see it and be it'.



### What are the ways clubs can build a socially cohesive and connected club environment?

- Provide flexible training schedule times to cater for all.
- Provide options for uniform or equipment hire instead of purchase.
- Provide virtual training and engagement options for members.
- Work with community bodies to engage with unengaged and disengaged groups.
- Cater for adults who are beginners and re-entry participants.
- Take measures to reduce the club's environmental footprint with an aim to make the club sustainable long-term.
- Offer alternative social and recreation opportunities for all people to be involved with the club.
- Align the right coach to the cohort of players. For beginners the coach doesn't need to be the best technical coach but needs to demonstrate empathy, engage with participants and be adaptable.
- Have someone trained in Mental Health First Aid and ensure members of the community know how to reach this person.
- The club supports and advocates menstrual health and wellbeing safely and with dignity.





## What is social and modified sport?

Social and modified sport is less structured than traditional sport. It has fewer rules and more flexibility to cater to the needs of participants, of any age. It can be designed and delivered by your club or other individuals and groups.

Social sport places a greater emphasis on fun, social interaction and enjoyment rather than performance, results and competition.

Modified sports seek to engage people who are either time poor or who enjoy being active but want less emphasis on competition. Modified sports may also reduce the cost of equipment and venue access.

## Flexible uniform offerings

Uniform offerings need to be flexible, broad and culturally sensitive to cater to the varying needs and comforts of any playing cohort, but particularly girls and women. There is strong evidence to support that girls and women are more likely to feel self-conscious about their bodies when playing sport and seek more flexibility in their active wear and sport uniform choices.

In addition, sporting uniforms need to support menstrual health. Evidence suggests that white or light colour clothing or clothing that is too tight often is a deterrent for participation.

This could include a netball club offering a shorts and t-shirt playing uniform option, or for a football club, providing a long pants or tights option in their playing kit. The most important thing is that clubs consult with members to understand what it is that they want in their uniforms.

## Key Focus Area #2

# Volunteers *and* WORKFORCE VALUED

Volunteering gives people a sense of purpose and achievement, improves self-esteem and confidence and helps to combat stress, loneliness, isolation and depression. In addition, it's a great way to develop skills and potentially create career pathways. Volunteers are the lifeblood of community sport and it's essential for clubs to reward, recognise and retain them.



### What can sporting clubs do to capture new volunteers and support existing ones?

- Utilise digital content to pitch to and attract volunteers to your club.
- Explore alternative ways to recruit volunteers (university placements, corporate volunteering, etc).
- Provide professional and personal development opportunities for volunteers.
- Explore technology options to support volunteers in performing their duties.
- Use social platforms to communicate with volunteers.
- Use online community platforms for project management within the club to ease the burden on volunteers.
- Explore micro-volunteering.
- Explore virtual volunteering.
- Use online community platforms to seek volunteers or workers who fill gaps in their capabilities.
- Recognise the contributions of volunteers, and their families and partners who often pick up the slack at home in that person's absence.





## What is micro-volunteering?

**Micro-volunteering** describes a volunteer, or team of volunteers, completing small tasks that make up a larger project. It differs from normal volunteerism, as the tasks take only minutes to a few hours, and the volunteer does not make a long-term commitment.

As a form of **virtual volunteering**, the tasks are usually distributed and completed online via an internet-connected device, including smartphones. It typically does not require an application process, screening or training period, takes only minutes or a few hours to complete and does not require an ongoing commitment by the volunteer.

## What is corporate volunteering?

Corporate volunteering is when companies give their employees an allowance of paid time off annually, which they use to volunteer at a charity or not-for-profit of their choice. This enables staff to make a difference in as little as an afternoon and has plenty of potential for community impact.





# Shared Resources *and* FACILITIES

Collaborating to share resources, services and facilities is a mechanism for clubs to save money and create efficiencies. This reduces the overall costs of club operations, freeing up funds to invest back into the club and improve the end-user experience. Many facilities are ageing and need investment and clubs are competing for the same funds. A *Club of the Future* is co-located with other like-minded organisations and maximises its facility use. It also utilises technology to streamline processes and ease the burden on volunteers.



## How can clubs streamline their venue, processes and operations?

- Identify other local clubs that could partner to share resources.
- Explore relationships with non-sporting clubs.
- Utilise technology and software to create efficiencies.
- Use free online social platforms to build and share content.
- Make operations paperless.
- Partner with other sports and offer discounts on fees for dual memberships.
- Share knowledge with other clubs across various topics.
- Identify opportunities for collective purchasing power to lower costs, reduce inefficiencies and duplication of effort. Examples could be uniform and sporting equipment providers or bookkeeping services.
- Share marketing/communications responsibilities with other clubs and cross promote using each other's platforms.
- Explore environmentally friendly measures to reduce the cost of utilities, such as solar power.
- When new facilities are built or existing facilities are updated, universal design concepts are implemented.



## What alternative users can sport and recreation clubs partner with?

Sporting clubs often co-locate with other sporting clubs, which is a good starting point. Those user groups, however, primarily access the facilities between 4pm-9pm, leaving facilities to sit dormant for many hours of the day when other user groups could be utilising them.

Sporting clubs can be multi-purpose, providing space for yoga, pilates or fitness instructors, hot-desk workspaces for small businesses, playgroup or childcare groups, schools, community service groups, birthday parties and other functions and school-user groups.

## What is universal design?

**“Universal design** is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.” – Ron Mace, Northwest ADA Centre, 2021.

### Seven principles of universal design:

1. Equitable use
2. Flexibility in use
3. Simple and intuitive use
4. Perceptible information
5. Tolerance for error
6. Low physical effort
7. Size and space for approach and use

## Key Focus Area #4



# Healthy FINANCES

Clubs are encouraged to identify opportunities to increase revenue through innovative means with the goal of long-term financial sustainability. This security will provide assurance to members of the club's success and future stability. Traditional revenue streams such as sponsorships are being depleted and it's now time to maximise non-traditional funding sources.



## How can clubs establish alternative and sustainable revenue streams?

- Have a variety of revenue streams, not just traditional streams such as membership fees.
- Have different services and price differentiation to meet consumer needs and demands.
- Consider monetising its digital and physical assets.
- Hire the venue to external user groups at off-peak times to maximise usage and generate revenue.
- Establish an annual fundraising plan so that members know in advance about fundraising drives.
- Explore innovative and digital ways to fundraise such as online donation platforms or online lotteries/raffles.
- Explore non-traditional sports services that the club can leverage and create economies of scale (e.g. if the club can create its own content, it can then charge to create content for others).
- Complete a cost analysis to ensure that fees are affordable and the club remains sustainable.





## What are digital assets?

**Digital assets** are assets that your organisation owns and controls digitally. The most common forms of digital assets are audible content, documents, images, videos, communication platforms and networks. Digital assets can be used to generate income by selling key digital real estate and offering cross promotional activities and content. This could be offering a feature in your Facebook page's cover photo, advertising in your electronic newsletter or a feature/transition in any video content the club produces.

In the digital world, content is king and whatever content your club creates that attracts viewers has visual real estate that can create brand awareness and, in turn, generate a return on investment for brands. Platforms such as YouTube and Twitch offer partnership programs where they will share a slice of their ad revenue that your content generates. Your club could stream games or events and sell this space to sponsors.

## What does club sponsorship look like in a post COVID-19 world?

Looking at the commercial sponsorship sector since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been plenty of changes that have impacted sport. Clubs need to adapt and/or lower their expectations, as club sponsorship is projected to be 25% smaller for at least the next couple of years.

To grow sponsorship funding for your club, you must become *more than a sports club*.

Clubs who wish to attract and retain sponsors post COVID-19 should lead conversations with sponsors asking not what your sponsor can do for you, but what you can do for your sponsor. A successful sporting club often has a strong community connection supported by a strong social media presence. It is suggested that clubs showcase these assets to sponsors to show that your club can support brand awareness, which your community respects and trusts.

# Benefits for your club to be more than sport

The club sport environment is challenging and with key trends impacting us all, it is in the best interest of sporting clubs to take a diversified approach, helping them remain relevant and adapt to the needs of their community.

It is to be noted that the *Club of the Future* key focus areas can be addressed and implemented in isolation or concurrently, as each of the areas impact and influence the others.

A successful *Club of the Future* will be constantly evolving and future-proofing itself to make it sustainable in the long-term. It will also be financially stable, creating confidence in your membership cohort and supporting the retention of club members while also appealing to prospective members.



# What now?

Use this guide to start a conversation with your club committee about what your club could try differently.

Visit:



**Club of the Future Hub**

for more information including:

- **Case studies of clubs doing things differently and being more than sport.**
- **Examples of resources to support your club.**

**Share your examples of what your club is doing differently...**

Tag us in your club's stories:



@sarecandsport



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#clubofthefuture



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