

ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH:

A Tool for Developing Healthy and
Thriving Sports Organisations

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Introduction

For sport to continue to thrive in the UK, it is essential that sports bodies are effective and sustainable organisations.

The world of sport, and the one in which sport takes centre stage to inspire and enrich lives, are changing at a faster rate than ever before. The impact of Covid-19, as well as increasing financial pressures, regulatory responsibilities, technological advances, competition and fragmentation both from within and outside of sport, and expectations in meeting demands from fans and evolving societal needs, are among some of the major challenges that sports organisations need to contend with and address on a daily basis in order to survive and grow.

Since its launch in 2016, the [Code for Sports Governance](#) has helped to enhance governance standards across British sport. However, in the face of this uncertain and complex landscape, it has become ever more vital that sports bodies are able to exhibit organisational excellence and resilience across a multitude of areas, which include and go beyond governance. We believe this is integral not only to the long-term health of sport, but also to sustaining high-performance success.

As a result, one of the priorities set out in [UK Sport's 2021-31 Strategic Plan](#) is to build long-term organisational health across sports and the wider sector. We are therefore excited to introduce the '**Organisational Health Tool**' – our first, comprehensive step to better understand the health of National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and how we can best support them to be well-run, effective and sustainable organisations, operating within a connected and thriving sporting system.

The Tool consists of four **thematic areas**, which we believe underpin great Organisational Health:

Strategy and Growth

People and Skills

Standards and Risk

Relevance and Impact

Each of these areas is divided into a number of **components**. These components are not independent of one another but as a whole, they will help NGBs and other organisations to not only sustain but also transform themselves into healthy sporting enterprises, delivering success on and off the field of play.

The Tool is designed to be used in a number of ways:

- **As a support and self-reflective tool** to help sports bodies better understand their own organisational health, whilst improving their resilience and growth.
- **To help UK Sport build a cohesive picture** of each funded NGB through regular and trusted engagement, as well as the systematic collation and review of relevant data and insights linked to each of the components. This will shape our continuous understanding of organisational issues and developments impacting our funded partners; our ability to identify and react to risks, trends and opportunities across the system; and the type of advice and support we provide to individual organisations and across the system.
- **To inform bespoke development programmes or funding** that UK Sport will provide to NGBs to strengthen the health of their organisation. To deliver this, we will collaborate closely with our funded partners and the Home Country Sports Councils to ensure efficient and effective use of resources and share learnings that are beneficial across the sporting community.

The Tool has been developed by UK Sport's Sporting System Team, with input from external partners. **It is intended to be for – and used by – sports bodies, UK Sport and other partners.** It is purposely agile, in order to be adapted and evolve over time to ensure it remains relevant and valuable to sport.

Notably, the Tool is **not** a list of requirements for partners in receipt of funding from UK Sport to comply with, but a guide on what we understand would make sports bodies sustainable and successful in this complex landscape in which we all operate. The indicators for each of the components are listed as examples (rather than a definitive list) and some duplicate or overlap across different areas, given how interconnected many of these are.

UK Sport is determined to engage and work collaboratively with partners to support their continuous improvement and transformation. We are therefore excited to work with you in using the Tool; see how it benefits the sporting community and how it can be improved; and ensure it plays its part in helping us all grow a system which is healthy and thriving – for the good of sport and society.

UK Sport – Sporting System Team, September 2022



Strategy and Growth

Strategy and Purpose

Long-term vision and strategic plan for the organisation and wider sport – supported by their communities, insights and data-led, regularly monitored and fit for the future.

Failing to plan is planning to fail. Clarity of purpose, a long-term vision and tangible milestones are vital to ensure clear direction for any organisation, its workforce and the wider community that it works with. Knowing where we are trying to go as organisations and why are crucial to making progress in the right direction. Understanding this progress is critical to knowing whether we are having the intended impact in the right areas and allows for course correction if we are not.

Example indicators:

- A published strategy with short, medium and long-term goals.
- Clarity of strategic priorities and choices, and how well they link to the vision and purpose of the organisation.
- The extent to which the strategy is understood and supported by the people in the organisation (and wider sport); how well it drives executive planning processes; and how well this is tracked, with clear Board ownership and monitoring of its delivery.
- Alignment of values, systems, processes and resources with the purpose.
- The extent to which the organisation's strategy is informed by data and insights, including level of understanding of the current and future landscape, and its impact within the sport.
- The strength of the organisation's identity and how that informs its future strategy and purpose.

Strategy and Growth

Growth and Innovation

Sporting enterprises with commercial acumen and entrepreneurial mindset – using data and insights to inform and deliver innovation and growth.

Growth in sport doesn't just happen by accident. There are many factors that fall within and outside of our control which make growth more likely. In order to make the most of these opportunities, it is important to be insight-led, agile and responsive to change – cultivating a curious and innovative culture and developing solutions with an outcome in mind.

Example indicators:

- The use of research, data and insight to make informed and future-focused decisions across the organisation.
- How appropriate, sophisticated and holistic the use of data is, i.e. how member, fan, stakeholder information is collected, stored, profiled and utilised to provide insight, optimise experiences for target groups, and grow audiences – linked to relevant KPIs.
- The extent to which a growth mindset and a culture of risk appetite and innovation exist within the organisation (i.e. ability to seek out new opportunities; confidence in tapping into networks to inform new plans and structures; use of technology).
- The extent to which a learning culture exists within the organisation (i.e. how proactive it is at seeking new solutions to problems, how effectively it learns from latest thinking (inside and outside sport) to maximise its impact).
- How attuned the Board and Senior Leadership Team are to relevant sporting, events, commercial, economic and political trends that might impact the organisation and wider sport, and how these relate to commercial opportunities (e.g. sponsorships, TV/media deals, commercial assets, private equity).
- The capability and capacity of the organisation to explore, secure and maximise major events and commercial opportunities, as well as manage its risk appetite.

Strategy and Growth

Alignment and Influence

A well connected, integrated, strategically aligned organisation with strong partnerships locally, nationally and internationally, which support and enhance the key components of the strategy, as well as the sustainability and growth of the sport.

Working in collaboration with key local, national and international partners is vital if sports bodies are going to make real headway in tackling the big issues and challenges across their respective sports and within our sporting system. Collectively, we can have a much bigger impact and make better use of our limited resources. Organisations playing effective connecting roles at the centre of the sporting system – and working in partnership – widen their collective reach and impact and allow for greater diversity across our networks.

Example indicators:

- Existence of a cross-sport strategy, behind which the relevant component parts of the sport at local, national and international level coalesce, with relevant engagement plans and communications.
- The integration of high performance and major events programmes into the organisation's strategy, operations and culture, maximising benefits for the sport as a whole.
- The level of alignment and connectivity throughout the sporting pathways, especially where elements are owned or administered by different home nations.
- The strength of relationships and strategic alignment with key partners and sponsors (including Home Country Sports Councils, UK Sport, Home Nation NGBs, and British bodies) that support the delivery of the organisational and sport strategy.
- The strength of the organisation's relationships and voice within the respective European and international federations, informed by wider developments in the landscape and aligned with the organisational strategy.

People and Skills

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Highly diverse, accessible, inclusive organisations – open to challenging themselves and being challenged. Fully committed to continuous improvement to make their sport more representative of their sporting communities and wider society.

It is essential that organisations and the sports which they are a part of are reflective of society in the UK. We all need to be able to think, talk and act confidently about inclusion in all areas of our work and to proactively seek diversity of thought in decision-making processes. More diverse organisations perform better. The people who will successfully lead in the sector will be those who can demonstrate that they are able to harness diversity, whilst being passionate, committed and active in driving change in this area.

Example indicators:

- Availability, structure and quality of relevant Diversity and Inclusion Action Plans or Improvement Plans in place – aligned to the organisational strategy and aimed at fostering inclusive cultures and diversity of thought and background within an organisation – with visibility of progress.
- The profile and demography of the Board, Senior Leadership Team, staff, volunteers, members, athletes and participants.
- The organisation's process and ability of systematically gathering, analysing and utilising diversity data and how this informs action.
- The decision-making processes and policies, e.g. the organisation's recruitment practices, and the steps taken to seek and ensure that these are inclusive to proactively generate a diverse mix of candidates.
- EDI is championed from the top; the organisation is and feels inclusive, 'walks the talk', and is committed to the delivery of projects and training that drive greater diversity.

People and Skills

Leadership and Culture

Inclusive, trusted, high performing culture and leadership, fully aligned with organisational purpose and values – with positive tone set from the top.

Strong, skilled, and diverse leadership is an essential element of a high performing sporting system. However, leadership is not confined to hierarchies. Inclusive, values-driven leadership behaviours should be seen across all levels. Leaders in our sporting community should feel supported, able to develop and in turn able to lead in a strategic, impactful and inclusive manner. As leadership organisations, we are responsible for leading in the right way by influencing and shaping cultures that develop positive and welcoming environments, where people and sport thrive.

Example indicators:

- The strength of the leadership spine.
- The expertise, diversity, skills, personal attributes and cohesion of the Board and Senior Leadership Team to lead the organisation on behalf of the workforce, sport and communities they represent.
- The quality of communication from the top and how staff and volunteers feel connected to the leadership.
- Staff surveys and relevant member/athlete engagement/culture health check findings and how they are used to inform change and future delivery.
- The extent to which leaders 'live' and promote the organisation's values and culture, and how this is reflected in recruitment practices and performance reviews; how empowered and supported staff are by senior leaders.
- The quality of decision-making with appropriate processes and behaviours, including the confidence to make good and bold decisions for the long-term benefit of the organisation and wider sport.

People and Skills

People and Workforce

Highly skilled, experienced, diverse workforce fully engaged in the organisation's strategy and culture, empowered through dedicated talent identification, development programmes and wellbeing.

People are our greatest resource. To remain an influential, respected and world-leading sporting nation, we need to ensure that we attract, retain, support and develop the highest quality of people (paid and volunteers) to be part of our organisations from a diverse range of backgrounds. This isn't something which happens by accident.

Example indicators:

- A People Plan, or similar workforce planning and support processes.
- Staff structure and resource mapping/alignment to strategic need.
- HR expertise/resource/capacity; level of access by workforce to wellbeing support and personal and professional development.
- Turnover of staff; success in identifying, attracting, retaining and developing a diverse range of talented people (both paid and volunteer workforce);
- Alignment of people policies and structures with strategic priorities and the quality of feedback procedures in place to gauge workforce satisfaction, engagement, and wellbeing.
- The quality of culture, practices and processes in place to enable and support innovation, learning and sharing within the workforce; the extent to which teams and individuals at all levels seek to gain a greater understanding of stakeholders, best practice in and outside the sport, and activities conducted by the organisation.

Standards and Risk

Governance

Highest standards of corporate and sport governance with skilled and cohesive Boards and senior leadership teams, implementing and promoting best governance practice.

The Code for Sports Governance sets out the levels of transparency, diversity and inclusion, accountability and integrity that are required from those organisations who seek – and are in receipt of – UK Government and National Lottery funding from UK Sport and/or Sport England. Whilst the Code is the primary point of reference for many governance considerations, it is hoped that organisations would seek to surpass compliance and to strive for sector (or even world)-leading governance standards and culture throughout their work.

Example indicators:

- Progress against the Code for Sports Governance and any outstanding actions, including from self-assessments, external reviews and relevant assurance processes.
- A clear and comprehensive Annual Governance Statement (with clear public availability, visibility, accessibility, content).
- Board, committee and executive expertise and skills to lead and govern the organisation, with effective decision-making processes to manage change and risks.
- Inclusive Board culture within the organisation and effective relationship between Board, CEO (or equivalent) and senior leadership team; with UK Sport/Home Country Sports Councils; and with home nation bodies.
- Engagement and capacity of the organisation in relation to governance – from meeting compliance with the Code to driving culture change in how the organisation runs at all levels; appropriate processes and practices for cascading good governance within the organisation and sport.

Standards and Risk

Integrity

Systems and knowledge in place to embed and drive the highest standards of personal and organisational conduct.

Integrity is the foundation upon which sport is built, and can be classified as personal, organisational and competition. Demonstrating conduct that is honest and ethical; providing a safe, fair and inclusive environment; playing by the rules. These are things that help define sport and underpin its value to our society. Integrity is not just an issue for high-performance sport - enhancing integrity must be a whole-sport endeavour. We therefore believe in working in partnership to holistically improve standards in this area.

Example indicators:

- Codes of conduct articulating the expected standards of behaviour from all members of an organisation.
- Visibility and application of frameworks, policies, and processes (published and available) that relate to selection and deselection (including appeals), grievance and disciplinary, data protection, anti-corruption, anti-doping, equality and diversity, safeguarding, complaints, social media use and whistleblowing/protected disclosure.
- Conduct and other integrity standards maintained, enhanced, reviewed and actioned through appropriate internal and external assurance programmes, ensuring a safe and trusted environment where people feel able to come forward to raise issues.
- Effective oversight by the Board and Senior Leadership Team.
- Staff capacity and expertise dedicated to addressing and managing integrity and safeguarding issues; approaches to ensuring staff and athlete awareness of key policies is supported with education and training.
- Openness and engagement with UK Sport, Home Country Sports Councils and relevant specialist agencies on these matters.

Standards and Risk

Finance and Risk Management

Systems and knowledge in place to embed and drive the highest standards of financial and risk management.

Sound financial planning and management are amongst the most important foundations of a highly effective organisation. This requires robust financial policies, procedures and controls to be in place, but also extends to more strategic requirements, including long-term financial planning, a reserves policy and commercial and/or income strategy. The Senior Leadership Team and Board must be able to demonstrate their involvement and oversight of the financial management of the organisation.

Risk management is a closely aligned and equally critical area. A risk management plan which is embedded throughout the organisation is essential if risks are to be identified as early as possible and steps taken to mitigate the potential for these to adversely affect the business. The Senior Leadership Team and Board must be able to demonstrate their involvement and regular scrutiny of the risk management plan.

Example finance indicators:

- The financial policies in place; the extent to which they are comprehensive, up-to-date and operational.
- Regularity of external audits (e.g. annual); the content (e.g. number of control points) and the monitoring of action points by the relevant Finance and Audit Committee; the oversight by the Senior Leadership Team and Board, including their ability to make sound financial decisions.
- The extent to which long-term financial strategies are in place, and how aligned these are to the strategic plan.
- Adequacy and trends of turnover and reserve levels; levels, sources and trends of non-grant income – and whether commercial and earned income strategies exist and their strength.
- The strength of financial management within subsidiary companies and how this is cascaded within the committee.
- Partnership working with grant giving bodies; capacity, training needs and succession planning are in place for key individuals (paid and voluntary) responsible for financial management within the organisation.

Example risk indicators:

- Whether the risk policy is in place and approved by the Board.
- How clear risk management responsibilities are within the Board structure and whether the Board is accountable for risk management; how regularly risk management plan is considered by Board.
- How well staff and key volunteers understand the purpose and process of risk management.
- Whether risks are identified and mitigated within each team of the organisation and significant risks shared with the Senior Leadership Team.

Relevance and Impact

Relationships and Communications

A trusted and relevant organisation – communicating effectively with and listening to its athletes, participants and networks, whilst looking beyond into how the world and people within it are changing.

Sport organisations trusted to govern and administer their sport are responsible for, and answerable to, the people and organisations within their networks. It is therefore essential to connect and communicate with them on their level, listening to them, responding to their needs and understanding their different audiences, whilst also maximising the organisation's broader societal influence and long-term relevance.

Example indicators:

- The ability to engage and communicate through a variety of methods with key audiences; the content, quality, usability, and accessibility of the organisation's communications, including digital technologies.
- The engagement and communication with stakeholders – the strategy, tools and processes in place, and how effectively they are used to engage, listen to and respond to audience need.
- The reputation of the organisation and how this is managed (e.g. media relations, incident response and crisis communications plans).
- The understanding and use of the assets at the disposal of the organisation (including its heritage, brand, any high-profile events, and individuals); the ability to harness and amplify the voices of athletes and participants in order to promote, adapt and improve their sport and ensure its relevance.
- How trusted staff and volunteers are; their skill and ability to project a coherent and cohesive image of their organisation and what it stands for.
- A distinct sense of identity and custodianship, working for the present as well as for the future generation.

Relevance and Impact

Social Impact

Harnessing the power and platform of sport on society - including that of the organisation, its sport, its athletes and events.

So much of sport's role is to power positive change for people, and we know this is increasingly important to athletes, fans, and brands. It is vital that this is connected to an organisation's strategy and purpose, athletes and major events (where appropriate), and the wider sport. To drive this, social impact activity should be outcome-led, informed by the needs of the communities that it serves and monitored and evaluated to enable continued learning and development, as well as being proportionate and sufficiently resourced.

Example indicators:

- The level of understanding of the role of the organisation and its sport in addressing social issues and contributing to positive change.
- The level of clarity of approach to social impact being taken by the organisation to harness its assets and the outcomes it is seeking to achieve, including the logic underpinning this and the ability to tell a compelling story of impact.
- The connectivity of any social impact activity with the organisational strategy, its athletes, any major events being hosted in the UK, and any key stakeholders within the sport.
- The extent to which the organisation is able to identify proportionate and sufficient resource (staffing and financial) to deliver against its intended social impact objectives/outcomes
- The extent to which the organisation is able to identify and form effective partnerships (commercial and otherwise) that support them in driving positive change.
- The extent to which the activity being undertaken is monitored and evaluated, how learnings are identified and any resultant adaptations.

Relevance and Impact

Environmental Sustainability

A clear commitment to environmental sustainability, underpinned by an understanding of the organisation's environmental impact and plan for action.

Sport at all levels is already, and will increasingly be affected by climate change, as will the human beings that compete, coach, volunteer, participate, spectate and administer sport. Sport therefore has a responsibility to reduce its own environmental impact to ensure its long-term viability and relevance. Furthermore, sport has a platform and influence within society that gives it a unique and additional responsibility to act and to credibly influence the actions of others.

Example indicators:

- The extent to which the organisation has developed and published an environmental sustainability action plan (in line for instance with the UN Sport for Climate Action Framework), which is targeted, proportionate, resourced, and informs decision-making.
- The extent to which the environmental sustainability action plan considers responsible consumption and biodiversity, in addition to climate action.
- The extent to which the organisation has committed to upskilling and supporting its workforce and wider spheres of influence such as volunteers, members, and fans.
- The extent to which the organisation engages in knowledge sharing and transfer; and has considered the role of local, national and international partnerships to support the delivery of its action plan.

