



Special Olympics Ireland Strategic Plan 2026 - 2028

Special Olympics
Ireland





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OUR MISSION

Our mission is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

OUR VISION

Our vision is an inclusive world for all, driven by the power of sport through which people with intellectual disabilities live active, healthy and fulfilling lives.



INTRODUCTION

● **Our Foundation For Success**

The 2026–2028 Strategy represents a focused period of consolidation and sustainability. It follows a time of significant change, during which several major initiatives were introduced under the 2022-2025 Strategy. While significant progress has been made, many of the new developments and investments remain in early stages of implementation, including the roll-out of the new membership system, key digital programmes, and organisational modernisation.

This shorter strategic period allows the organisation to embed these initiatives effectively, strengthen engagement with athletes, clubs, and volunteers, and ensure the systems and structures in place are sustainable for the long term. The strategy provides space for financial stabilisation and implementation of a new funding strategy in the context of the post-pandemic recovery.

● **A Bridge To Future Growth**

The next three years will serve as a bridge between past transformation and future growth - a phase to consolidate progress, strengthen our foundations, and prepare for the next long-term strategy. This strategy will focus on clarifying youth pathways, strengthening volunteer membership to increase capacity, embedding inclusion supports and leveraging technology to deliver sustainable growth.

2028 will mark the 50th anniversary of the presence of Special Olympics in Ireland, an important and significant milestone to be celebrated. Looking towards the next 50 years, we must consider and plan for societal and environmental factors, present and emerging, that will impact programme delivery, participation, access and growth.

KEY FACTORS & STRATEGIC FOCUS

Key Factors That We Know Now Include:



Rapid Technological Innovations



Evolving Societal Values



Environmental Sustainability

Strategic Focus

This 3-year strategic period will allow us to embed existing investments in technology whilst scoping and developing a digital strategy to help us embrace new technologies and digital solutions that will support our work, enhance our effectiveness and improve digital accessibility for our stakeholders.

Our focus will be on sustainable models of participation and inclusion for children and adults with intellectual disabilities in sport.



OUTCOMES

By 2028, We Will Have:

1. Increased participation opportunities through the development of inclusive clubs and pathways to enable young athletes to transition into juvenile sport and progress into adult sport participation.
2. Increased access to health and wellbeing opportunities and accessible health for our athletes.
3. A strong, more data-informed, and digitally capable organisation ready to advance the next phase of strategic growth.
4. A financially sustainable organisation with a more diversified income base.

These outcomes provide a clear focus for delivery and accountability during this bridging period.

Delivering On Sustainable Development Goals:



STRATEGIC GOALS & OBJECTIVES

● Participation

Goal A

Improve sports participation and health for children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

Objectives

1. Enhance opportunities for members by developing and adapting the sports and club programme to better meet diverse needs.
2. Explore and expand young athletes and youth sport participation and competition pathways.
3. Improve and promote health and well-being by investing in appropriate training, opportunities and support.



STRATEGIC GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Community Partnerships

Goal B

Open doors to inclusion by working with new communities.

Objectives

1. Connect with new communities to strengthen programme delivery.
2. Build a sustainable and inclusive volunteer network by identifying and upskilling current volunteers and by attracting and recruiting the next generation.



OBJECTIVES

Objective 1

Enhance opportunities for members by developing and adapting the sports and club programme to better meet diverse needs.

What will we do

- Strengthen club governance and sport delivery.

- Improved the effectiveness and flexibility of our sports programme to meet athletes' needs.

- Partner with National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of Sport to deliver more inclusive sport opportunities.

How will we get there

- Focus on quality through agreed standards, increased training, certification and continuous support.
- Increase Club Management Team training resources and materials.

- Continue to review the Competition Programme.
- Digitise and integrate Competition Event Entry Process.
- Empower and support volunteers to deliver competition.

- Activate Memorandums of Understanding with current NGBs.



OBJECTIVES

Objective 2

Explore and expand Young Athletes Programme and Youth Sport participation and competition pathways.

What will we do

- Increase access to sports participation for younger athletes.
- Establish a sustainable pathway for Youth Sport.

How will we get there

- Identify potential programme delivery options in schools.
- Develop a Youth Sport Pathway.

Objective 3

Improve and promote health and well-being by investing in appropriate training, opportunities and support.

What will we do

- Embed accessible health training as an integral part of health profession education within universities.

How will we get there

- Offer training on intellectual disability and on Special Olympics Ireland programmes to third level health students.
- Offer health profession students opportunities to engage with our athletes at workshops, screenings, events and in clubs.



OBJECTIVES

Objective 4

Connect with new communities to strengthen programme delivery.

What will we do

- Collaborate with sports communities such as NGBs, sport partnerships, sports inclusion disability officers and others to seek participation opportunities.

How will we get there

- Explore new inclusive opportunities with new NGBs.
- Seek new opportunities to provide additional participation for athletes in Special Olympics at local community level.

- Inspire and engage new communities in the programme to build long-term, mutually beneficial relationships.
- Develop new and existing partnerships.

- Engage communities in volunteering opportunities in events and programme activities to benefit athletes and support the local programme.

Objective 5

Build a sustainable and inclusive volunteer network by identifying and upskilling current volunteers and by attracting and recruiting the next generation.

What will we do

- Improve recruitment with a focus on diversity, training, development, retention, and succession planning for volunteers.

How will we get there

- Deliver Games legacy activities to retain Games Volunteers.
- Profile and communicate volunteering opportunities.
- Continue our focus on youth volunteering.

- Promote excellence in sports, health, youth and leadership work to build capacity.

- Provide ongoing learning opportunities that further professional development and performance.



STRATEGIC ENABLERS

Enablers represent the capabilities and resources that will contribute to the successful execution of the Strategic Plan. Within this Plan there are five identified enablers that are needed for effective execution, each with strategic objectives to meet our intended outcomes.

KEY ENABLERS



E1.

**Empower
Athlete Voices**



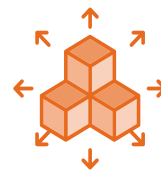
E2.

**Embrace Data &
Insights**



E3.

**Innovate
Through
Digitisation**



E4.

**Diversify, Grow
& Strengthen
Incomes**



E5.

**Drive
Excellence**



E1. Empower Athlete Voices

Enabling the voice and building the capacity of athletes and young leaders will help drive this strategic plan, and ensure they have meaningful leadership roles and play an active role in educating other change-makers.

We will:

- Engage and amplify athlete voices in our programme to increase awareness and abilities of people with an intellectual disability.
- Increase and build the capacity of athlete leaders through tailored training.
- Develop resources to support the Athlete Leadership training programme.
- Involve athletes across different areas to educate, inspire and attract new partnerships and collaborations, and to drive inclusion.
- Include athletes in the co-design of new initiatives and in leadership roles on committees and teams.
- Improve accessibility to information and communications for our athletes.





E2. Embrace Data & Insights

We want decisions to be grounded in real evidence, informed by stakeholder insights, and supported by accessible, high-quality data. This will build organisation-wide capability to measure impact, learn continuously, and demonstrate what truly works.

We will:

- Be evidence-led, and act upon the evidence.
- Collect and use critical stakeholder and evaluation data to improve decision-making.
- Build an organisation-wide data repository to improve accessibility, accuracy, decision-making, reporting and analysis.
- Build organisational capacity for impact measurement.





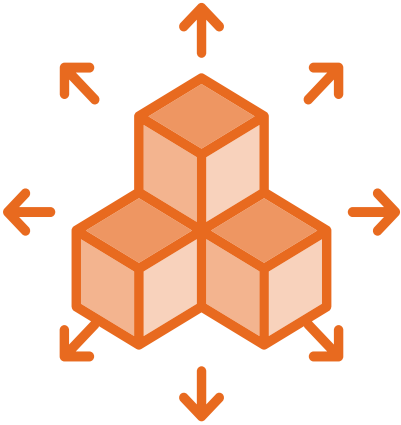
E3. Innovate Through Digitisation

Special Olympics Ireland will embrace digitisation to help us to increase the reach and effectiveness of our work using digital solutions that meet future demands of our existing stakeholders and enable us to connect with a wider audience.

We will:

- Embed existing technologies and expand digital platforms.
- Scope and develop a Digital Strategy.
- Increase digital training opportunities to improve quality, standards and consistency of programme delivery.
- Leverage and embrace digitisation to enhance stakeholder engagement and experience.





E4. Diversify, Grow & Strengthen Income Streams

Special Olympics Ireland will add new ways to raise funds. A strategic approach to generating fresh, diverse revenue will enable us to provide sustainable funding and quickly react to change.

We will:

- Inspire and acquire longer-term support and income by showcasing opportunities, like the Ireland/World Games, to secure multi-annual funding.
- Target areas of legacy, philanthropy, and individual giving.
- Grow and retain donors by fostering deeper relationships through tailored communications, conveying recognition and donor impact.
- Continue to build longer-term, mutually beneficial relationships with corporate partners.





E5. Drive Excellence (People & Practices)

Empowered people and an enabling working environment are crucial factors that determine the success of our programme and promote excellence in sports, health, youth and leadership work.

We will:

- Cultivate and support the growth of leaders across the organisation by providing ongoing, graduated learning opportunities that further professional development and performance.
- Improve internal communication and project management to support execution, collaboration and knowledge transfer.
- Support staff to explore and identify emerging technologies and digital solutions.
- Revisit and assess our organisational values to ensure they effectively shape and reflect our desired culture, and to align all key stakeholders around these shared values.





***Special
Olympics
Ireland***

Special Olympics Ireland is a company limited by guarantee and registered in Dublin, Ireland. Registered address:

Sport Ireland Campus,
Snugborough Road,
Blanchardstown,
Dublin 15,
D15 PC63.

Company No: 228545.

Charity Number: 20016883.

Charity Tax Number: CHY



www.specialolympics.ie