



## **SPORT CLUBS YOUTH4SUSTAIN**

Vademecum: Sport Clubs and Youth for  
Sustainable Development

#SportClubsYouth4Sustain

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## Introduction

The presented Vademecum: Sports Clubs and Youth for Sustainable Development is part of the Erasmus+ project "Sport for Sustainable Development of Youth and Sports Clubs" [101184287] - #SportClubsYouth4Sustain.

Sport has a unique power to inspire change and bring people together. In the face of global challenges like climate change and social inequality, sports clubs - big and small - are increasingly seen as platforms for sustainable development. This Vademecum (guidebook) is designed to support youth and first-time sport club managers (as well as experienced administrators) in making their clubs more sustainable, inclusive, and well-run. It aligns with European priorities such as the *EU Green Deal* and the promotion of education in and through sport for skill development. The guide also draws on the methodology and concepts from the Erasmus+ project "*Sport for Sustainable Development of Youth and Sports Clubs*" (acronym #SportClubsYouth4Sustain), which focuses on building eco-entrepreneurial competences in young people and sport staff through sport.

The document is organized into ten chapters covering key areas of club management and sustainability. Each chapter provides practical insights, examples, and strategies - from developing *eco-entrepreneurial skills* in youth, to managing finances, to creating a sustainability action plan for your club. Whether you are a teenager helping to run a youth sports team, or a seasoned club manager, this Vademecum offers guidance in an instructional and supportive tone. You will find clear explanations of concepts like *Education Through Sport (ETS)*, *EntreComp* and *GreenComp* frameworks, as well as best practices from European sport organizations leading the way in sustainability. We've also included tables, checklists, and bullet points to make the content easy to scan and use.

By integrating environmental and social responsibility into sports, clubs not only "do the right thing" but also often discover benefits like improved club reputation, new funding opportunities, and a stronger sense of community among members. Sports clubs can be powerful role models in their communities - showing that teamwork, responsibility, and innovation off the field are just as important as performance on the field. We hope this guide empowers you to take action and become a true agent of change through sport, making your club both successful and sustainable for the future.



## **Chapter 1. Eco-entrepreneurial skills development (ETS, EntreComp & GreenComp)**

Sustainable development in sports starts with people - especially young people - having the *skills and mindset* to drive change. Eco-entrepreneurial skills refer to a combination of entrepreneurship competences and sustainability competences. In other words, it's the ability to create and implement new ideas (like an entrepreneur) *with an eco-friendly, sustainable approach*. This chapter explains how to develop these skills in youth and club staff using the *Education Through Sport (ETS)* approach and by integrating two key European competence frameworks: EntreComp (for entrepreneurship) and GreenComp (for sustainability).

### **1.1 Education Through Sport (ETS) approach**

Education Through Sport (ETS) is a methodology that uses physical activity and sports as a *tool for structured learning*. Rather than teaching in a classroom, ETS embeds educational content into sports games, drills, and activities. The idea is to learn by doing, leveraging the fun and engagement of sport to build competences and attitudes. In our context, ETS is used to develop eco-entrepreneurial skills - for example, a game or team challenge might be designed to teach teamwork, leadership, and environmental awareness all at once.

Key principles of ETS include: participation, experiential learning, and reflection. A typical ETS activity will involve a play session followed by a debrief where participants connect the experience to real-life lessons. This approach is powerful for youth development because it is interactive and fun, and it helps youth relate abstract concepts (like sustainability or entrepreneurship) to concrete experiences. ETS has been endorsed by organizations like the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA), which created the "*Move and Learn*" manual to help coaches and youth workers implement non-formal education through sport. By using ETS, sports clubs can teach young members things like leadership, initiative, and environmental stewardship *implicitly* as part of training sessions or camps, rather than through lectures.

Practical example: Imagine a relay race where each team must also sort recyclables at a midpoint station - this could simulate teamwork under pressure (*entrepreneurial skill*) and convey a lesson about waste management (*sustainability concept*). After the race, the coach leads a discussion: What strategies worked for your team? How does this relate to taking initiative and being organized? Why was the recycling task important? Such an activity could build skills like *planning and management, working with others, and valuing sustainability* without feeling like a formal lesson.

### **1.2 The EntreComp framework (Entrepreneurship competences)**

EntreComp, the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework, is a reference framework developed by the EU to describe what it means to be entrepreneurial. It doesn't just apply to business founders - it defines entrepreneurship as a *transversal skill* useful for life and work, involving creativity, initiative, and the ability to turn ideas into action. EntreComp outlines 15 competences in three areas: *Ideas & opportunities, Resources, and Into action*. For example, competences include *Taking the initiative, Planning and management, Working with others, Coping with uncertainty & risk, and Learning through experience*. These map well to skills that sport can teach – think of a team captain (initiative and working with others), or adapting strategies during a match (coping with uncertainty).

In this project's context, five EntreComp competences (from the "Into Action" area) are emphasized: Taking the initiative, Planning and management, Working with others, Coping with uncertainty/ambiguity/risk, and Learning through experience. Sports clubs can foster these by giving youth real responsibilities and opportunities to lead. For instance:

- *Planning and management*: Have youth members plan a small tournament or event schedule, managing tasks and time.
- *Taking the initiative*: Encourage youngsters to propose and lead a new project (like starting a recycling program in the club).
- *Working with others*: Use team-based drills that require cooperation, or assign group projects like designing a club newsletter together.
- *Coping with risk and uncertainty*: Sports naturally involve uncertainty (you never know how a game will go). Coaches can highlight this and discuss how to stay focused and positive when things change unexpectedly - a lesson in resilience.
- *Learning through experience*: Create a culture where *reflection* is routine - after matches or events, discuss "What went well? What can we improve next time?" so that youth learn to view experiences (even failures) as learning opportunities.

By intentionally linking these experiences to the EntreComp competences, clubs help young people build an entrepreneurial mindset - being proactive, resourceful, and resilient - which is valuable not only in green initiatives but in all areas of life.

### 1.3 The GreenComp framework (Sustainability competences)

GreenComp is the European sustainability competence framework. It was developed to define the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to live and act sustainably, supporting the goals of the European Green Deal. GreenComp is meant for all learners (of any age, in formal or informal settings) and identifies key competences that help people contribute to a sustainable future. The framework is organized into four competence areas: embodying sustainability values, embracing complexity in sustainability, envisioning sustainable futures, and acting for sustainability. Each area contains specific competences. For example, under "*Embodying sustainability values*," some competences include valuing sustainability, supporting fairness, and promoting nature. These relate to developing a caring attitude for the environment and society - essentially, the values side of sustainability. Other GreenComp competences involve systems thinking, problem-solving for sustainability, and promoting collective action.

In practical terms, introducing GreenComp to a sports club context means encouraging attitudes like respect for nature, solidarity, and responsibility. A club can integrate GreenComp by:

- Educating members on issues like climate change and fairness (e.g., a short workshop or sharing articles about how sports are affected by climate issues).
- Leading by example in club operations (reducing waste, recycling, saving energy) to reinforce *valuing sustainability*.
- Encouraging fairness and inclusion - for instance, ensure everyone gets to play (supporting social fairness) and maybe organizing mixed teams or events with diverse participants.
- Connecting sports to nature, perhaps by holding some training sessions outdoors in natural settings or organizing a tree-planting day (promoting nature).

By developing these competences, young people in the club not only learn *about* sustainability but practice *living it*. They become more likely to carry those values into their careers and communities, multiplying the impact.

### 1.4 Integrating EntreComp and GreenComp: Building eco-entrepreneurial skills

Now that we have both frameworks, the magic happens when we combine entrepreneurship and sustainability competences - producing what we call *eco-entrepreneurial competences*. The SportClubsYouth4Sustain project specifically matched certain EntreComp skills with GreenComp skills to cultivate youth who can innovate for sustainability. For example, pairing "Taking the initiative" (EntreComp) with "Valuing sustainability" (GreenComp) means empowering a young

person to *launch a green project* - say, initiating a club recycling program – out of personal conviction that sustainability matters. Similarly, “Working with others” paired with “Promoting nature” could translate into a team-based environmental action like collaborating to clean up a local park or sports field.

The Education Through Sport approach is the *glue* that holds this integration together. Each learning activity or module can be deliberately designed to hit both an entrepreneurial skill and a sustainability value. In the project’s methodology, Module 1 was specifically about Eco-Entrepreneurial competences through Sport, combining EntreComp and GreenComp via sport games. For instance, one activity might involve a scenario where teams act as “eco-entrepreneurs” pitching ideas to make their club greener (thus exercising creativity, initiative, teamwork, and sustainability knowledge all at once).

Consider a *bootcamp* setting: Youth participants could be split into groups and tasked with developing a mini-project by the end of the camp - such as a plan to reduce the club’s carbon footprint or an idea for a community sports event promoting cycling to school. Throughout the bootcamp, they do sports challenges that teach teamwork and resilience (EntreComp skills) and attend short info-sessions on topics like renewable energy or climate action in sports (GreenComp knowledge). By the end, they present their projects. This mirrors what the #SportClubsYouth4Sustain project tested in its Eco-entrepreneurial sports bootcamps for clubs and youth.

#### **Tips for clubs to develop eco-entrepreneurial skills:**

- **Blend learning into play:** Use drills or games that also carry messages (e.g., a soccer drill where each goal earned gives the team a fact about climate change to discuss).
- **Highlight role models:** Share stories of well-known athletes or clubs engaged in sustainability or entrepreneurship. For example, discuss a famous player who started a green business or a club that became carbon-neutral - this inspires youth and makes abstract competences tangible.
- **Small projects:** Encourage young members to undertake small-scale initiatives (posters on saving water in locker rooms, organizing a car-pool week for the club, etc.). Support their planning and celebrate their initiative.
- **Reflect on experiences:** After any project or activity, ask the youth questions like “*What was difficult and how did you handle it?*” (links to coping with uncertainty), “*Who did you need help from?*” (working with others), “*Why do you think this initiative matters for the environment or community?*” (valuing sustainability). This makes the learning explicit.

By consciously developing eco-entrepreneurial competences, sports clubs equip young people to **be change-makers** who can both dream up new ideas *and* ensure those ideas contribute to a greener, fairer world. This foundation sets the stage for the rest of our guide – next, we will see what sustainable sport looks like in action across Europe, and how to manage club operations in a responsible way.

## Chapter 2. Best European practices in sustainable sport

*Aerial view of a tennis court surrounded by trees, symbolizing the integration of sport facilities with green spaces. European sports organizations are increasingly adopting sustainable practices like this to reduce environmental impact.*



Europe offers a wealth of examples and initiatives that demonstrate how sports can be run more sustainably. In recent years, environmental sustainability has risen up the agenda of sports organizations, from major professional leagues down to community clubs. This chapter highlights some of the best European practices and frameworks in sustainable sport, providing inspiration and models that local clubs and youth managers can learn from. We'll look at high-level policy recommendations, then real-world examples of clubs and federations implementing green measures, and finally consider how even small clubs can emulate these practices.

### 2.1 European policy and initiatives driving sustainability in sport

At the policy level, the European Union and various sport bodies have made strong calls for greening the sport sector. For instance, the European Green Deal (the EU's strategy for carbon neutrality by 2050) explicitly involves sport as a stakeholder in achieving climate goals. A *Green Sport Expert Group* under the EU Work Plan for Sport 2021-24 released a "Sport for the European Green Deal Playbook" with recommendations. Some key recommendations include: urging Member States to adopt national strategies for sustainable sport, tying public funding for sports bodies to sustainability outcomes, and urging sports organizations to *measure their carbon footprint and develop sustainability action plans*. In other words, top-down encouragement is pushing clubs to know their environmental impact (e.g., energy use, travel emissions) and formally plan how to reduce it.

Another driver is the United Nations Sports for Climate Action Framework, which many European sports federations and clubs have signed. Signatories commit to principles like reducing emissions and educating for climate action. This global initiative filters down to concrete actions (like cutting waste at events, or encouraging fans to use public transport).

Significantly, major sport governing bodies are integrating sustainability into their requirements. UEFA, for example, now requires every club in the Champions League, Europa League, or Conference League to appoint a Sustainability Officer and have a sustainability strategy addressing issues like equality, inclusion, child protection, and environmental footprint. This means over 500 top-tier clubs across Europe must actively work on sustainability and share best practices, creating a ripple effect that influences smaller clubs too. The UEFA *Strength Through Unity* strategy provides guidance on areas each club strategy should cover, from anti-discrimination to eco-friendly operations. While your local youth club might not be under UEFA

rules, these represent *best-practice standards* that any club can aspire to - for example, having a policy for environmental protection and a person responsible for driving sustainability. European sport associations have also launched projects like Green Sports Hub Europe (GSHE) (co-funded by Erasmus+) to share knowledge and develop practical tools for clubs. Engaging in such networks or even simply reading their guidelines can give club managers tested ideas to implement.

## 2.2 Case studies: Sustainability in action at sports organizations

Let's explore a few concrete examples of how European sports organizations are putting sustainability into practice. These cases range from elite organizations to broader initiatives, illustrating what "sustainable sport" can look like.

- **LaLiga (Spain)** - *Environmental Innovation Challenges*: LaLiga, Spain's top football league, recognized it needed to improve its environmental performance and launched an *Environmental Sustainability Challenge* in 2023. In a "pitch day" format, they invited startups and enterprises to present green solutions to club executives. This focused on areas like energy efficiency, waste reduction, water management, and sustainable infrastructure - core impact areas for any sports facility. By seeking innovative ideas (such as solar energy systems for stadiums or new turf that needs less water), LaLiga clubs signaled a commitment to integrate environmentally responsible practices into their operations. This approach also highlights the value of *partnerships*: sports organizations don't have to invent everything themselves; they can collaborate with green tech companies or environmental nonprofits to find solutions.
- **FC Barcelona (Spain)** - *Sustainability Strategy and Reporting*: FC Barcelona has made sustainability one of the three pillars of its 2021–2026 Strategic Plan, aligning with the UN 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. The club publishes comprehensive Sustainability Reports (for example, covering the 2020/21 and 2021/22 seasons) detailing efforts in areas like finance, society, and environment. They measure their carbon footprint and set specific goals – even recycling concrete from their stadium renovations for reuse in new construction, exemplifying circular economy in action. Barcelona's new stadium project *Espai Barça* was designed with sustainable architecture and earned a BREEAM certification (a high standard for green building). They've installed LED lighting and adopted renewable energy sources at facilities, reducing energy use and emissions. For a community club manager, the takeaway is: *planning and transparency*. Even if your club is small, you can create a simple sustainability plan and report to your members annually on what you achieved – e.g., "we reduced our electricity use by 10% by switching to LED lights," or "we planted 50 trees this year." This keeps everyone accountable and motivated.
- **Atlético de Madrid (Spain)** - *Renewables and Circular Practices*: Atlético, another leading Spanish football club, is notable for embedding sustainability into its identity and operations. By 2024 it achieved using 100% renewable electricity at its stadium and facilities, and it emphasizes recycling and reusing materials – for instance, repurposing old concrete from stadium works into new projects. The club's sustainability report shows integration of SDGs, GRI standards, and European environmental norms in guiding its efforts. They've implemented rainwater harvesting and efficient irrigation to save water, and cut down plastic use at games. Beyond environment, they also run strong social programs (education, inclusion, accessibility improvements for fans with disabilities) and uphold governance standards like anti-corruption and transparency. Atlético's case illustrates that sustainability in sports is multi-dimensional (ESG: Environmental, Social,

Governance) – not just green tech, but also community and ethics. A smaller club can mirror this by looking at its own footprint *and* its social impact. For example, a local club could switch to a green energy provider (reducing carbon), start a recycling program at games (reducing waste), run a yearly charity match or inclusive sports day (boosting social good), and maintain good governance (open elections, clean financial audits).

- **European Club Association (ECA)** – *Guiding Clubs on Sustainability*: The ECA (which represents professional football clubs across Europe) released a sweeping Sustainability Strategy positioning football as a driver of sustainable change. It's structured with timelines (goals for 2025, 2027, 2030) and has become one of ECA's top priorities. Key components include governance changes (e.g., clubs appoint sustainability managers, integrate sustainability in training and risk management), risk management focusing on climate and human rights risks, transparency & reporting (encouraging clubs to adopt standards like ISO 20121 for sustainable events and to publish sustainability reports), and communications (sharing success stories, an annual ECA Sustainability Award to incentivize innovation). It also outlines environmental focus areas aligned with global goals: promoting the "4Rs" (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recover) in operations, cutting travel emissions to hit a 50% GHG reduction by 2030 in line with UNFCCC Sports for Climate Action, sustainable event management, and sustainable infrastructure (energy-efficient, accessible facilities). For a grassroots club, ECA's strategy is a treasure trove of ideas – it basically lists all the areas you might address. Moreover, it shows the importance of setting short, mid, and long-term goals and reviewing progress.
- **Global Sustainability Benchmark in Sports (GSBS)** – *Highlighting Success Stories*: GSBS is a nonprofit that ranks sports organizations on sustainability performance, highlighting success stories to inspire others. In 2024, for example, it published a Top 10 sustainable sports organizations list. This kind of benchmarking motivates clubs and leagues to improve. LaLiga, Barça, and Atlético (mentioned above) have all been recognized in such contexts. The existence of awards and rankings means there's recognition and maybe competitive pride at stake – which can be a powerful motivator in the sports world! A small club might not make a global ranking, but you can still apply the concept locally: perhaps an environmental award by your city's sport council, or simply striving to be "the greenest club in our region".

### 2.3 Sustainable practices for grassroots and youth clubs

While the examples above focus on large organizations, *sustainability is just as relevant and achievable at the grassroots level*. In fact, local clubs can often implement changes faster and with more community involvement. Here are some **practical sustainable practices** that youth and community sports clubs across Europe have adopted:

- **Energy efficiency at facilities**: Clubs that own or use facilities can cut energy usage by switching to LED lighting, installing motion sensors, and improving insulation of locker rooms or gyms. Some clubs partner with local authorities or sponsors to install solar panels on rooftops of sports halls. Lower energy use not only reduces carbon footprint but also saves money on electricity bills - a win-win for financial sustainability.
- **Waste reduction & recycling**: Make recycling bins available and labeled in club facilities and during events. Eliminate single-use plastics by encouraging refillable water bottles (perhaps gifting or selling club-branded bottles to members). If the club runs a cafeteria or snack bar, use biodegradable or reusable cups and plates. Organize "cleanup drives" after games - youth can help collect litter on the field or in the stands, teaching responsibility. Some clubs in Europe have banned plastic entirely on match days, proving

it's feasible. Also consider composting organic waste if you have sports grounds (grass clippings, food waste).

- **Sustainable transportation:** Encourage members to carpool, bike, or use public transport to get to training and matches. A club can set up a carpool coordination system for parents or provide bike racks at the clubhouse. During the European Week of Sport, some clubs hold "Walk/Bike to practice" days to instill these habits. Fewer cars to your venue means less emissions (and often less parking hassle).
- **Green events:** When hosting tournaments or events, take inspiration from guidelines for sustainable sports events. This can include: going paperless for registrations and schedules (use apps or screens instead of printouts), choosing venues with good public transport links, offsetting carbon for any unavoidable travel, providing local/seasonal food and vegetarian options for catering, and ensuring thorough waste management. Many youth sport events now also include a short educational component - for example, a local environmental group might set up a booth or activity for kids between games.
- **Inclusive and fair practices:** Sustainability isn't just environment - it's social. Grassroots clubs can lead on inclusion by ensuring *girls and boys have equal access* to play, welcoming children from different backgrounds, and adapting sports for those with disabilities. For example, a club might start a mixed-gender league, or run an "open day" to invite refugee youth to join training. Engaging your club in *community service* (like charity fundraisers or volunteering) also builds social sustainability – showing that the club cares about more than just sports results.
- **Education and engagement:** Use your role as a community hub to spread awareness. Some clubs organize talks for their members - e.g., an environmental expert parent might give a quick talk on climate change and sports, or a nutritionist could talk about sustainable diets for athletes. Youth can create posters and/ or social media posts on what the club is doing (more ideas in Chapter 5). Participating in campaigns such as the *EU Green Week* or local Earth Day sports events can put your club on the map as a community leader. For instance, a club could host a friendly match or fun run during EU Green Week to promote a message (plant a tree for every goal scored, etc.).

**Engaging youth:** Remember that young members are often very passionate about protecting the planet. Empower them to take charge of some of these initiatives. Perhaps create a "Green Team" of a few interested volunteers (teenagers or young coaches) who lead the club's sustainability actions and come up with new ideas. This not only generates creative projects (youth have great ideas!) but also builds their leadership skills (tying back to Chapter 1's entrepreneurial competences).

## 2.4 Learning from networks and programs

Don't reinvent the wheel - there are many resources out there. European sports umbrella organizations like **ENGSO (European Sports NGO)** and its youth wing have toolkits (e.g., *guidelines for sustainable local sports events*). National Olympic Committees and Sport Federations often publish sustainability guides and case studies on their websites. There are also EU funding programs (Erasmus+ Sport, for instance) that support projects on grassroots sport and sustainability - just like SportClubsYouth4Sustain. By getting involved in such projects or at least reading their outputs, you gain access to innovative methodologies and a network of like-minded clubs.

In summary, the best practices in Europe show that sustainable sport management is becoming the norm. Whether it's through formal strategies and officers (top-down approach) or community-driven initiatives (bottom-up approach), the direction is clear: sports clubs are expected to

contribute to environmental and social wellbeing. Big clubs provide inspiration and open-source their strategies, while small clubs prove that grassroots action can make a real difference. As a club manager or youth leader, you can be proud to be part of this movement - and as the next chapters will cover, many aspects of sustainable club management (like sound finances, good governance, etc.) go hand-in-hand with these environmental and social efforts.

### Chapter 3. Financial management for sports clubs

Financial stability is the backbone of any sports club's sustainability - both in the ecological sense and the organizational sense. Managing finances responsibly ensures that your club can continue operating year after year, and also frees up resources to invest in new initiatives (like that energy-efficient lighting, or a youth development program). This chapter covers the fundamentals of financial management for sports clubs, including budgeting, revenue and fundraising, controlling expenses, and aligning finances with your club's sustainable development goals. The guidance here is meant for non-profit community clubs or youth clubs, but many principles apply to larger clubs as well.

#### 3.1 Budget planning and management

Every club should start each year or season with a budget - a plan that estimates your incomes and expenses. A budget is essentially a financial roadmap that helps you avoid overspending and ensures you allocate funds to your priorities. Here's how to approach budgeting:

- **List all income sources:** Common revenue streams for sport clubs include membership fees (subscriptions from players/families), registration fees for events or leagues, sponsorships from local businesses, fundraising events, merchandise sales, concessions, and possibly grants or subsidies from local authorities or sport bodies. If your club is part of a school or university, you might have some institutional funding. Make a conservative estimate for each source. For example, anticipate membership numbers and fee levels; if you have sponsors, confirm their contribution for the year; if planning a fundraiser, set a realistic goal.
- **List all expenses:** Typical expenses include facility rental or maintenance costs, equipment purchase and replacement, team uniforms, competition fees (league entry, referees), travel costs to away games, coach or staff stipends (if any), insurance (we'll talk more about that in Risk Management), utilities (electricity, water for any facility), and administrative costs (website, printing, etc.). Don't forget smaller items like first aid supplies or refreshments for home games - they add up. Also consider one-off costs you know are coming (e.g., this year we need new goalposts or to repaint the clubhouse).
- **Ensure income  $\geq$  expenses:** Ideally, plan for a slight surplus (income higher than expenses) as a buffer. If you find expenses exceed projected income, you either need to increase income (find more funds) or cut costs. A balanced budget keeps your club out of debt and panic. If you do anticipate a shortfall, address it early - perhaps organize an extra fundraising event or seek a new sponsor, rather than waiting until the bank account is nearly empty.
- **Use a spreadsheet or template:** It helps to organize this in a simple table. Many club management resources provide sample budget templates. Below is an example of a simplified annual budget for a youth club:

| Category               | Income (EUR) | Expense (EUR) |
|------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Membership fees        | 5,000        | -             |
| Local sponsor donation | 2,000        | -             |

|                        |              |                   |
|------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Local sponsor donation | 2,000        | –                 |
| City council grant     | 1,000        | –                 |
| Fundraiser event       | 500          | 200 (event costs) |
| Merchandise sales      | 300          | 150 (merch costs) |
| Equipment purchases    | –            | 1,000             |
| Facility rental        | –            | 3,000             |
| League fees            | –            | 500               |
| Coach stipends         | –            | 1,200             |
| Insurance              | –            | 300               |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>8,800</b> | <b>6,350</b>      |

- *Sample budget:* Incomes total € 8,800 and expenses € 6,350, leaving a planned surplus of €2,450 that can serve as a cushion or be reinvested (e.g., saving for next year's equipment or facility improvements).
- **Monitor throughout the year:** A budget isn't "set and forget." Assign someone (treasurer or finance officer) to track actual income and expenses against the budget. If mid-year you see, for example, that membership is lower and fee income is €500 below expected, you can react - maybe step up a membership drive or cut a discretionary expense. Regular financial reports to the club committee (say monthly or quarterly) keep everyone informed and accountable.
- **Reserve fund:** If possible, build a reserve (savings) for unforeseen expenses or future projects. Even if it's small, having a reserve can save the day if, say, equipment gets stolen or a sudden repair is needed. Aim to carry over some funds year to year instead of always zeroing out.

### 3.2 Revenue sources and fundraising

Increasing or diversifying revenue can enhance financial sustainability. Here are common sources and tips to maximize them:

- **Membership fees:** This is usually the core income for amateur clubs. Set a fee structure that is fair and affordable for your community, but sufficient to cover basic costs. Some clubs have tiered fees (e.g., discount for siblings, or a higher "supporter" tier for non-playing members who want to donate). Ensure timely collection - clear communication at signup about how and when to pay (and offering installment plans or online payment options) can improve compliance.
- **Grants and subsidies:** Investigate what funding is available. Local governments often have sports development grants or youth activity funds. National sport federations or Olympic committees might have grants for equipment or coach education. The EU's Erasmus+ Sport program funds transnational projects – even if you don't lead such a project, you might partner with an organization that does, which can indirectly benefit your club with training opportunities or equipment. Environmental grants could be applicable too if your club undertakes a green initiative (e.g., a grant for installing solar panels or planting trees around the field). Writing grant applications takes effort, but even small grants can be very helpful – and the process forces you to plan projects well.
- **Sponsorship and donations:** Local businesses often like to support sports clubs as it boosts their community image. In exchange for a donation or covering a specific expense, they might get their logo on team jerseys or a banner at the field. When seeking sponsors, emphasize your club's values and community reach (e.g., "we have 100 families involved, we organize beach clean-ups, etc."). That can attract companies who want to be

associated with positive social impact. Also consider in-kind sponsorships: a sports store might give you a discount on balls, a print shop might print your flyers for free – those reduce expenses. Don't overlook individual donors; sometimes alumni of the club or community members might give a gift, especially if it's linked to a cause ("support our youth team's travel to the championship").

- **Fundraising events:** These can build community spirit as well as raise money. Classic ideas: charity matches (sell tickets or snacks and donate a cut to charity, while keeping some funds for the club), bake sales at games, sponsored runs (players gather pledges for each lap they run, etc.), quiz nights or bingo nights, car washes, crowdfunding campaigns online for specific projects. Make it fun and involve the youth – people are more willing to give when they see enthusiastic kids explaining why the club matters to them. Also, tie fundraising to your sustainable mission when possible: e.g., a "recycle-a-thon" where people bring recyclables and the proceeds from recycling centers go to the club, or a tree-planting pledge where donors sponsor each tree planted by the team.
- **Merchandise and services:** Selling club merchandise (jerseys, scarves, water bottles, etc.) not only raises money but also advertises your club. Just be cautious to not overstock items that may not sell. Taking pre-orders can help gauge demand. Some clubs also raise funds by offering services – for instance, renting out their facility when not in use (a clubhouse could be rented for community meetings or birthday parties), or running sports clinics for a fee. If you have coaches who can do a summer camp for kids from outside the club, that could generate income and attract new members.
- **Ethical and green funding:** Given your focus on sustainability, you might attract unique funding: perhaps an eco-friendly company sponsoring your green initiatives, or participating in programs where clubs get rewards for environmental actions. In some countries, sports clubs that reduce their utility usage or implement renewable energy can get rebates or incentives – check with local environmental agencies.
- **European funding opportunities:** Sport clubs and their youth administrators are encouraged to explore European funding programmes as a way to support club activities and development projects. The Erasmus+ programme, for example, is the main EU funding source dedicated to sport and youth initiatives, offering grants for collaborative partnerships, educational exchanges, and not-for-profit sports events. Successfully securing an Erasmus+ grant can provide a valuable financial boost, enabling clubs to implement sustainability-focused projects and international partnerships.

Remember to always comply with legal regulations when raising funds and to ensure it's legal and properly permitted, and/or when applying for EU funding such as Erasmus+, ensure eligibility and reporting obligations are met. Transparency is key and let members know how much was raised and how it's used. In such a way they will trust the club more and be likelier to help next time.

### 3.3 Expense management and cost control

Controlling costs is the flip side of raising revenue. It's not glamorous, but every euro saved is a euro that can be used elsewhere. Some cost-control strategies:

- **Prioritize needs vs. wants:** Focus spending on what's essential for delivering your sports activities safely and effectively. Luxuries come later if you have surplus. For example, safe equipment and facility rental are non-negotiable, but do you need to buy the latest designer jerseys every year? Perhaps a new kit every two years is sufficient, or seek a sponsor to cover that cost.

- **Get multiple quotes:** When purchasing goods or services (equipment, facility rentals, transport for away games, etc.), compare prices from multiple suppliers. Often, sports federations have partnerships with equipment providers that give club discounts - leverage those if available. Or neighboring clubs might join together to buy in bulk at lower cost per item.
- **Volunteer power:** Labor can be a big cost (coaching, cleaning, admin). If your club is volunteer-run, great - take care to avoid volunteer burnout (see Chapter 6 on Human resources). If you normally pay some staff, consider if volunteer assistants or interns (perhaps sports management students) could supplement. Just be sure that critical roles like qualified coaches or safety personnel are appropriately staffed – you shouldn't compromise quality or safety just to save money. Also, when volunteers do tasks like facility maintenance or event staffing, it saves hiring outside labor. Many clubs have parents take turns in roles (e.g., one week a parent is on canteen duty, another is linesman, etc.) - it builds community and cuts costs.
- **Energy and resource savings:** Sustainability efforts often save money. Reducing energy and water use at your facility lowers utility bills. Going paperless saves printing costs. Reusing equipment or buying second-hand where safe (some sports gear can be pre-owned) cuts expenses. Conduct an "audit" of where money leaks – maybe you're paying for storage space you don't need, or extra garbage pickups that could be reduced with better waste management.
- **Avoiding penalties:** This might sound odd, but clubs sometimes lose money through fines or penalties (e.g., a team not showing up to a game might incur a league fine, or filing something late to authorities). Being organized and compliant (we cover legal admin next chapter) helps avoid these unnecessary costs. Similarly, ensure you renew any critical registrations or insurances on time to prevent lapses (accidents without insurance could be financially catastrophic).
- **Contingency planning:** Try to anticipate irregular big costs. For example, every 5 years we'll need new rowing boats, or soon the clubhouse roof will need fixing. Start setting aside money beforehand. If something is beyond your reach cost-wise, make a plan – could you apply for a special grant or a community fundraiser when the time comes? This foresight keeps you from panic-spending or taking high-interest loans.

### 3.4 Financial record-keeping and transparency

Good financial management includes keeping clear records of all transactions. Use a simple accounting system (even if it's an Excel sheet or a notebook ledger) to record every income and expense with date, amount, description, and category. Keep receipts and invoices, especially if you'll be reporting to donors or grant agencies how money was used.

Most clubs have a Treasurer role – this person should ideally not be the same as the person approving spending (segregation of duties helps prevent mistakes or misuse). Have the treasurer present a brief financial report at committee meetings: current balance, recent major transactions, any issues. At least annually (often at the AGM), present the accounts to the members. Transparency builds trust; members are more likely to pay fees or donate if they see the money is managed responsibly.

For non-profit clubs, it's good practice to have an annual financial statement. In some jurisdictions, if your income is above a threshold, you may need to submit accounts to authorities or even have them audited. Even if not required, having someone with financial knowledge (an accountant parent or a friendly local bookkeeper) review the books each year is a healthy habit.

Lastly, link your finances to your mission: allocate some of your budget to sustainability or youth development explicitly. For example, set aside a “Green Fund” in your budget – even if small – to invest in eco-initiatives (like buying recycling bins or organizing a workshop). This shows that your commitment is not just in words but also in financial priorities.

By keeping your club financially sound, you ensure that all the good work in other areas (coaching, community building, sustainability projects) can continue and grow. A club that plans and monitors its finances will be well-equipped to seize opportunities (like a surprise chance to travel to a tournament) and weather challenges (like an unexpected repair). It also positions you well to gain support – sponsors and grant-givers prefer clubs that demonstrate fiscal responsibility. In the next chapter, we will examine the *legal and administrative* side of club management, which closely ties into financial governance and overall sustainability of the organization.

#### **4. Legal and administrative documents for club operation**

Running a sports club isn’t just about what happens on the field; behind the scenes, there’s important legal and administrative work that keeps the club compliant, safe, and well-organized. This chapter outlines the key documents and procedures a club should have in place. It might not be the most exciting part of sports management, but it is absolutely crucial – getting your paperwork and policies right protects your club’s leaders, members, and reputation. Good administration also underpins effective governance and can even be a requirement for funding or competition eligibility.

##### **4.1 Club legal structure and registration**

First, ensure your club has a proper legal status. Many community sports clubs operate as *unincorporated associations* with a written constitution, especially if they’re volunteer-run and not large in budget. Others may choose to register as a *non-profit organization/association* or even as a *charity* if they have charitable aims, or as a *company (limited by guarantee or shareholders)* if they intend to enter contracts and own assets more formally. Each form has pros and cons regarding liability, tax, and regulations. For example, an incorporated entity can own property and sign contracts in its own name and generally protects individual members from personal liability for club debts, whereas an unincorporated club cannot.

Check your country’s laws: Do sports clubs need to register with a national sports authority or youth council? Are there minimum requirements (like number of members, bylaws, etc.)? Often, being registered/recognized unlocks access to insurance schemes or public funding. If unsure, a local sports federation or sports council can guide you on the best legal form for your club.

Once you have a legal structure:

- **Constitution or bylaws:** Every club should have a foundational document that states the club’s name, purpose, how it is governed, membership rules, and procedures for meetings and decision-making. This is often called a *Club constitution*. It’s basically the rulebook for running the club. Key points it covers include how the committee/board is elected, the roles of officers, how finances are managed, and what happens if the club dissolves. A well-drafted constitution ensures transparency and fairness – for instance, it should outline that annual general meetings (AGMs) are held to report to members and elect officers, how members can propose motions, etc. Many national sport bodies provide template constitutions which you can tailor.
- **Incorporation documents:** If you registered as a legal entity, you will have documents like a Certificate of Incorporation, and you’ll likely need to file annual returns or reports to maintain that status. Keep these records safe and up to date (mark deadlines on your calendar to file annual reports to authorities).

## 4.2 Membership and participant documentation

Since clubs revolve around people, managing membership records and agreements is fundamental:

- **Membership application/agreement:** When someone joins, have them fill out a form that collects necessary info (contact, any medical conditions to be aware of, etc.) and that includes agreement to abide by club rules and codes of conduct. For youth, a parent/guardian signs on their behalf. This could be combined with a *waiver* acknowledging the inherent risks of sport and consenting to, for example, medical treatment in emergencies. It's also wise to include consent regarding data/privacy (complying with GDPR or local data laws) - basically informing them what personal data you'll keep and how it'll be used (only for club purposes, not shared without permission, etc.)
- **Code of conduct:** Many clubs ask players, coaches, and parents to sign a code of conduct. This lays out expected behavior (sportsmanship, respect, no bullying or discrimination, etc.) and consequences for breaches. It provides a reference if you ever need to address misconduct. For youth clubs, having parents acknowledge a spectator code of conduct (no abusive yelling, respect referees) can also be useful.
- **Consent forms:** Especially for activities like photography (if you take team photos or local media covers an event), get consent from parents for minors. Also, if traveling, a parental consent form for trips away can cover permission for travel and emergency medical decisions. These might seem like overkill, but having clear permissions can avoid disputes later (e.g., a parent unhappy their child's picture was on Facebook – you can only post it if you had consent).
- **Data protection policy:** Under privacy laws, if you keep personal data of members (which you will), you should have a simple privacy policy stating what data you collect and how you protect it. For instance, you collect contact info for communication and health info for safety; you secure it (perhaps in a password-protected file or locked cabinet); you don't share it except with relevant coaches; and individuals can request deletion if they leave. Also ensure sensitive data (like health info) is only accessible to those who need to know (coach or first aid officer). If you have a website and you collect any data through it, be mindful of those regulations too.

## 4.3 Policies and guidelines (Safeguarding, equality, etc.)

Modern sports clubs are expected to have certain policies in place to ensure a safe and inclusive environment. These policies are often required by national federations or good governance codes.

Key ones include:

- **Child protection/safeguarding policy:** If your club involves minors, this is critical. It outlines how you ensure children's safety - from requiring background checks (e.g., criminal record/DBS checks) for coaches and volunteers working with kids, to having a designated Child Welfare Officer, to procedures for handling any allegations or concerns of abuse. It should align with national guidelines (many Sport Councils or federations publish templates). Make sure all staff/volunteers know the basics: for example, avoid situations of 1-on-1 with a child (especially in private), use child-friendly communication (no harassment or inappropriate contact), and how to report concerns. Regular training for coaches on safeguarding is advisable.
- **Health & safety policy:** Sports inherently carry risk of injury. A policy or at least a standard procedure should cover risk assessments for activities, facility inspections, first

aid provision, and emergency action plans. This ties into risk management, but document-wise: keep a record of risk assessments for events or new programs, incident report forms for accidents, and a log that equipment is regularly checked. Also, if your sport involves specific safety regulations (e.g., concussion protocols in rugby), incorporate those.

- **Equality and inclusion policy:** Clubs should commit to non-discrimination and inclusion. As noted, in many places it's a legal duty not to discriminate by protected characteristics (gender, race, religion, etc.). Your policy can state that the club welcomes all, provides equal opportunity in selection and participation, and has zero tolerance for racist/homophobic/sexist behavior. It can also outline steps the club takes to be inclusive (for example, offering need-based fee reductions for low-income families, or making facilities accessible for wheelchair users, or having both male and female representation in leadership if possible). This not only fulfills legal requirements but also improves club culture.
- **Anti-doping and fair play:** If you're in a sport where doping could be an issue, even at amateur levels, it's worth stating the club follows national/international anti-doping rules. Educate athletes (especially older youth) about banned substances and the importance of fair play. Likewise, a policy on ethical behavior (no match-fixing, respect for rules) aligns with good governance.
- **Environmental policy:** This might be newer for clubs, but given our theme, you could adopt a short environmental responsibility statement. It could say the club commits to minimizing waste, promoting recycling, reducing energy use, and educating members about sustainability. Though not yet commonly required, having this policy demonstrates leadership and can guide committee decisions (e.g., when purchasing, choose eco-friendly options).

For all these policies, writing them is only step one. Communicate them: give copies (or put them on your website or noticeboard) for members to see. Perhaps hold a start-of-season briefing for parents and players: "These are our club's values and policies - we ensure safety, we welcome everyone, we expect good conduct." And crucially, implement them. For example, if your safeguarding policy says two adults will supervise all youth practices, make sure you actually do that; or if your inclusion policy says you offer financial aid, have a system for it.

#### 4.4 Administrative records and procedures

Beyond policies, clubs should maintain certain records and follow administrative routines:

- **Meetings and minutes:** Document the important decisions. Keep minutes of Annual General Meetings and committee meetings. Minutes should record attendances, topics discussed, decisions made (especially relating to spending, new policies, disciplinary actions, etc.). They don't need to be verbatim transcripts, just an accurate summary. This creates an official record in case disputes arise ("we agreed on this fee increase last meeting, here it is in the minutes"). It's also helpful for continuity year to year, especially if leadership changes - newcomers can read past minutes to get context.
- **Financial records:** As covered in above, maintain financial books, receipts, and annual statements. If your club is an official entity, you may need to submit those to authorities or members. Good financial record-keeping is part of legal compliance (e.g., tax filings if any, or reports to donors).
- **Member registry:** Keep an up-to-date list of members (active players, coaches, volunteers) each season. Include contact info and any membership fee status. This is not just for communication - some clubs are legally required to maintain a register of members as part of their constitution (for instance, to know who can vote at the AGM). It's also

needed for insurance (to know who is covered) and for any reporting (some federations ask for numbers of members annually).

- **Licenses and permits:** Depending on your operations, ensure any required licenses are obtained. For example, if you play music at events or in classes, do you need a music license? If selling food and drink at a cafe, comply with food safety regulations and get permits. If you own a facility, there may be building safety certificates, fire safety inspections, etc. Keep all these documents filed and track renewal dates.
- **Insurance d:** Always have copies of your insurance policies (liability, accident, property, etc.) and know the coverage details. Further in this document it will be detailed what you likely need. For administration: keep the policy numbers, coverage limits, and insurer contacts handy. If an incident happens, you'll need quick access. Also note renewal dates and premiums in your budget.
- **Contracts/agreements:** If your club enters any contracts - e.g., hiring a coach under contract, or a lease for the field, or a sponsorship agreement - file those and note key terms (length, payment, termination clauses). Having a paper trail protects the club in case of disagreements. For paid staff, keep copies of their employment contracts or agreements that outline duties and pay. For volunteers, as mentioned, a simpler volunteer agreement can set expectations (hours, roles, confidentiality if needed).
- **Regulatory filings:** If your club is registered with any authority (company registry, charity commission, sports federation), diarize deadlines: annual returns, fee payments, etc. Missing these can lead to fines or dissolution of status. It's good to assign a specific committee member to oversight of compliance.

#### 4.5 Compliance and good governance

Adhering to legal and administrative requirements isn't just bureaucracy - it's part of good governance, which increases your club's credibility and longevity. Many countries or sports' governing bodies have a governance code or checklist for clubs. Common themes are:

- **Transparency:** Open decision-making, clear documentation, and sharing information with members (e.g., finances, policies, meeting outcomes).
- **Accountability:** The committee is accountable to members and possibly external bodies for following the rules and managing assets responsibly. This ties into legal duties if you're a formal entity (e.g., directors' duties in a company, trustees' duties in a charity).
- **Inclusivity:** Engaging members in key decisions, allowing them to vote on major changes, and reflecting diversity in leadership.
- **Integrity:** Avoiding conflicts of interest (committee members should declare if, say, their own business is being considered for a contract), maintaining ethical conduct, and having mechanisms like whistleblowing policies to report wrongdoing.

Ensuring compliance can seem daunting, but you don't have to do it alone. Use checklists (like the one in the Sport Governance Academy or from your national sport body) to periodically self-assess your club's governance. Many sports federations offer governance support and sometimes require certain documents for club accreditation (e.g., a national soccer federation might require every affiliated club to submit its constitution, AGM minutes, and proof of a child protection policy annually).

**Risk of not getting it right:** If clubs ignore legal requirements, they can face serious trouble - fines, loss of eligibility to compete, or even personal liability for club officers. For example, if you fail to have required child safeguarding measures and an incident occurs, authorities could suspend your activities and the reputational damage is huge (not to mention the harm to individuals). Or not having proper insurance and then facing a lawsuit from an injured player

could bankrupt the club and put leaders at personal financial risk. These scenarios underscore why this chapter matters. As a sport manager, you carry responsibility for people's safety and the club's integrity. Fortunately, by putting the right documents and policies in place - and keeping them updated - you significantly reduce these risks.

On a positive note, strong administration also means your club runs smoother. There's less confusion about "how things are done," so you can focus more on the fun part - sports! If a new volunteer steps in as Secretary or President, clear records and policies help them get up to speed quickly. Good documentation is like a playbook for the club's off-field management.

In conclusion, treat your club's documents as living tools: update the constitution if needed (e.g., if your club grows and needs a different structure), revise policies as new issues emerge (like adding a section on social media conduct, perhaps), and always ensure members know the rules that keep everyone safe and happy. With the legal and admin foundation set, we can move on to the dynamic aspects of running a club – starting with communications.

## **Chapter 5. Communication strategies for youth and sports clubs**

Communication is the lifeblood of a sports club. Whether it's keeping your members informed, attracting new participants, engaging the local community, or publicizing your sustainability initiatives, effective communication is key. For youth clubs in particular, good communication helps build a positive culture and manage relationships between coaches, young athletes, and parents. This chapter provides strategies for both internal communication (within the club) and external communication (with the public, partners, and media). It also considers the modern digital landscape and how to leverage it safely, especially given that many members might be minors.

### **5.1 Internal communication: Keeping everyone informed and engaged**

Internal communication includes all the ways you share information and maintain dialogue among club members, coaches, volunteers, and parents. Clear and timely communication inside the club leads to better coordination and a stronger sense of community. Here are some best practices:

- **Regular updates and meetings:** Establish a routine for updates. For example, a weekly email newsletter or message during the season can provide schedules, announcements, and congratulations (like "Team A won their game, well done!" or "Don't forget the club cleanup day on Saturday"). Many clubs use WhatsApp, Telegram or specialized apps for team communications. Choose a primary channel and let everyone know that's where to expect info. For governance, hold periodic coaches/volunteers' meetings to discuss any issues and ensure everyone hears news from leadership directly (rather than grapevine). An annual general meeting (AGM) for all members, as required by your constitution, is also a key communication moment - it's not just formal, it's a chance to celebrate achievements and get feedback.
- **Clear expectations and guidelines:** As highlighted in Chapter 4, share codes of conduct and policies with members at the start of each season. Also communicate practical expectations: for example, if training starts at 5 PM, what time should players arrive? If a child will miss practice, by when and how should parents inform the coach? Setting these norms early prevents misunderstandings. By being clear on guidelines and rules, you create a respectful, organized atmosphere.
- **Two-way communication and openness:** Communication isn't just top-down. Encourage input and questions from members and parents. You might have suggestion boxes (physical or digital surveys) for feedback on how to improve. Some clubs hold a "town hall" style open forum annually or mid-season for parents to voice concerns or

ideas. Ensure that youth members also have a voice - maybe through a youth captain's meeting or appointing a youth representative to the club committee. When people feel heard, they are more invested in the club. If issues are raised (e.g., a parent concerned about play time distribution, or a member suggesting a new activity), address them promptly and respectfully. Even if the answer is no due to some constraints, explaining the reasoning builds trust.

- **Use multiple platforms (appropriately):** Different groups may prefer different communication modes - some older members read emails, teenagers might respond more on messaging apps or social media. Use a mix but stay coordinated. A common approach: critical info (like schedules, policy changes) goes via official email or posted on an official noticeboard/website; quick updates ("training moved indoors due to rain") via text/WhatsApp; and general community engagement (sharing photos from an event, shout-outs) on social media groups. A closed Facebook group or Discord can serve as a community space for the club. Make sure someone monitors each channel so questions don't go unanswered.
- **Calendars and organization tools:** Provide a calendar of events well in advance. Families plan their time, so giving dates for the season (matches, social events, committee meetings) early on is helpful. Online calendars (Google Calendar or the team management apps) can allow members to see upcoming activities. For youth, also communicate key dates to parents (they often manage the transport and schedules). If using an app like TeamSnap or Spond, these often have built-in event schedules and RSVP tracking – which can dramatically reduce the chaos of who's coming or not.
- **Privacy and boundaries:** When using communication tools, remember safeguarding. For youth, avoid direct one-on-one messaging between coaches and minors. Always include a parent or guardian in communications, or use group messages. Set appropriate times for communication - for instance, not messaging players late at night. If using social media, maybe have a policy that coaches do not "friend" or privately message athletes on personal accounts, to maintain professional boundaries (use official channels instead). These measures protect both youth and staff by keeping communication transparent.
- **Language and tone:** Use a positive, respectful tone. In a youth setting, communications should motivate and reassure. Criticism or sensitive issues (like performance feedback) are better delivered in person privately, not blasted in a group chat. Make sure written communications are clear and not easily misinterpreted – without verbal tone, jokes or sarcasm can be misunderstood. If your club is multilingual or has members from different backgrounds, consider translating key communications or using simple language.

## 5.2 External communication: Telling your club's story

External communication involves how your club presents itself and interacts with the outside world - be it local community, media, sponsors, or the wider public. An effective external communication strategy can raise your club's profile, attract support, and highlight your good work (including sustainable development efforts).

- **Branding and identity:** First, ensure your club has a consistent identity. This includes a club logo, colors, maybe a motto or hashtag. Use these on your website, social media, and printed materials. It helps people recognize you. For example, if your club is Green Rovers FC and sustainability is a core value, maybe your logo or motto reflects that (a green leaf on the badge, or a slogan like "Playing for a Greener Future"). Branding isn't just for pros - it can unite your members and signal your values externally.

- **Website and online presence:** A website is often the first place someone (a prospective member or a journalist or a partner) looks. Ensure your site (or even a simple Facebook page if no site) is up to date with contact info, training times, location, how to join, and news. Highlight sections for your key messages: perhaps a page on your sustainability initiatives or community programs, so people see you're more than just sports results. Post news articles or short blogs about achievements (team wins, fundraising success, new policies). This content can be repurposed to social media as well.
- **Social media outreach:** Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X), and even TikTok can be great for engaging the community and showcasing the fun side of the club. Post photos from matches or events (with consent, especially for minors, per your policy), celebrate members' successes (e.g., "Player of the month"), and share your sustainability actions (pictures of your tree planting or solar panels installation, etc.). Social media can also be used to publicly thank sponsors ("Shoutout to our sponsor [Name] for providing new jerseys made from recycled material!"). Encourage members to like and share – it spreads visibility. However, manage these accounts professionally: assign a responsible person or team (maybe a media volunteer or a savvy young member under guidance) to handle posting. Have guidelines on what's appropriate to post. Interact courteously with comments and messages.
- **Local media and storytelling:** Don't underestimate traditional media. Local newspapers, radio, or community newsletters often love human-interest stories. Pitch your stories to them: *Youth Sports Club Goes Green*, *Local Team Wins Regional Cup*, *Sports Club Hosts Charity Tournament for Hospital*, etc. Write a simple press release or just call/email the local reporter with the community beat. Getting coverage can attract new members or sponsors who learn about you. Train a spokesperson (club chair or communications officer) to handle any interviews or quotes. When speaking externally, emphasize positive messages and club values. Also leverage the personal stories of members: maybe a profile on a dedicated volunteer or a talented young athlete – storytelling makes your club relatable and reinforces your mission.
- **Networking and partnerships:** Communicate with other organizations. Connect with schools (send flyers or do presentations to recruit youth), with environmental groups (offer to collaborate on events, which gives you exposure to their audience), with the municipality (invite local officials to your events or share your successes with them). Being proactive in communication can lead to partnerships - for example, a local eco-NGO might invite your club to a city sustainability fair, where you can show how sports and sustainability mix, gaining new friends and supporters.
- **Showcasing your sustainable actions:** Since this Vademecum emphasizes sustainable development, make sure to publicize those efforts. Create a section on your website or a hashtag for your green initiatives. e.g., #GreenTeamTuesday posts showing what eco-action the club took that week. If you implemented something like solar panels or waste reduction, consider writing a short case study and sharing it with umbrella organizations (they might feature it on bigger platforms). Not only does this recognize your members' hard work, it also positions your club as a leader, which can bring more opportunities (maybe an award nomination, or being asked to speak at a conference about sport and environment - yes, that happens!).
- **Crisis communication:** Hopefully it's never needed, but have a basic plan for handling negative incidents publicly. If something unfortunate occurs (e.g., an accident at the club, a disciplinary issue that leaks out), decide who will speak for the club and what the key

message is. Communicate facts you can, express appropriate concern or steps taken, and avoid speculation. For most small clubs, crises are rare, but being prepared is wise.

### 5.3 Engaging youth in communication

Because youth are central in these clubs, adapt communication to *engage young people actively*. Some tips:

- **Youth-led content:** Invite young members to contribute to communications. For example, a youth member could take over the club's Instagram for a day ("day in the life of a player") or write a column in the newsletter about their experience at a recent camp. This not only empowers them but also makes content more relatable to their peers.
- **Visual and interactive media:** Young audiences are drawn to visuals - photos, videos, infographics. Create short videos (easy to do on smartphones) of fun moments or interviews with players about why they care about the environment or what they love about the club. Gamify some communications: perhaps an online quiz about club history or a contest for the best poster design for the next event. These can boost engagement.
- **Communication education:** Teach your young athletes about respectful communication and media literacy. For example, hold a workshop on "Using Social Media Positively as an Athlete" - covering how to present themselves well, dangers of cyberbullying, etc. Also, ensure they understand the club's rules about social media (like not posting inappropriate content in club uniform, etc.). This educative approach means they'll hopefully mirror the positive communication style you want.
- **Inclusive communication:** Make sure information reaches everyone, including those who might have less access to tech (maybe a family with limited internet - have a phone tree or paper notices for them) or those with disabilities (if you have visually impaired members, use voice messages in addition to text). Inclusivity in communication ensures no one is left out.
- **Feedback loops:** Specifically ask youth for feedback on communications - do they feel well-informed? What would they like more of? You might find out, for instance, that teens don't really read emails but do read Instagram DMs - which could adjust how you reach them. Or they might want more say in what gets communicated externally about them.

### 5.4 Communication and advocacy for your causes

Since your club is involved in sustainable development, communication is also a tool for advocacy. You can raise awareness about bigger issues through the lens of sport. For example, during international days like World Environment Day or Anti-Racism Day, make a post or hold a brief activity and communicate about it: "Our club supports #WorldEnvironmentDay - our players biked to practice today to cut carbon emissions." This aligns with climate advocacy in sports, something even big organizations emphasize. It shows your club walking the talk and perhaps inspires others.

Finally, always maintain a supportive and positive tone in communications. People (especially youth) should feel that the club is encouraging and approachable. As one article summary put it: effective youth sports communication fosters positive relationships and a healthy environment. That's our goal - a club where everyone feels informed, heard, and part of a team off the field as well as on it.

## Chapter 6. Human resource management in sports organizations

“Human resources” in a sports club context refers to the people who make the club run: coaches, trainers, volunteers, administrators, officials, and sometimes paid staff. In youth and grassroots clubs, much of the workforce is volunteer-based (including perhaps the club managers reading this!). Managing these people well – recruiting the right folks, providing training, keeping them motivated and happy – is crucial. A club with enthusiastic coaches and volunteers will deliver better experiences for the youth and be more sustainable in the long run. This chapter discusses how to approach Human Resource Management (HRM) in sports organizations, focusing on volunteer management, staff development, maintaining a positive club culture, and ensuring welfare and safeguarding.

### 6.1 Defining roles and recruitment

Start by clarifying what roles your club needs to function effectively. Common roles include:

- **Coaches/trainers:** for each team or age group.
- **Team managers or assistants:** handling admin like collecting forms, communications for each team.
- **Club administration:** Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer (the core officers), plus perhaps additional committee members for areas like fundraising, communications, facilities manager, etc.
- **Officials:** referees, umpires (depending on sport, you might rely on external ones or train internal ones).
- **Support roles:** e.g., a Welfare/Safeguarding Officer, a First Aid/Medical Officer, Equipment Manager (person in charge of gear and uniforms), etc.
- **Event/logistics volunteers:** those who help in events, run the concession stand, drive carpool, etc.

Once you map the roles, assess where you have gaps or upcoming needs. Recruiting volunteers or staff should be proactive: don’t wait until the current coach quits with no replacement, for example. Here are strategies:

- **Tap into the membership community:** Parents and senior players are often the first source of volunteers. Some might be willing to coach (especially if training is provided), or have useful skills (an accountant parent as treasurer, a teacher as secretary, etc.). Make announcements about needed roles at meetings or in newsletters. Be clear about time commitment and tasks – people are more likely to step up if they know what’s expected and it feels manageable. Even micro-volunteering (“can you help grill burgers at the fundraiser for 2 hours?”) can eventually hook people into larger roles.
- **Wider community recruitment:** If skills aren’t available internally, extend your search. You can advertise volunteer opportunities on community bulletin boards, local volunteer centers, or online (sites dedicated to volunteer matching). For coaching, perhaps reach out to former players, PE students at a local college, or partner with a coach education program (they often need practicum placements for new coaches).
- **Diversity in recruitment:** Encourage a diverse group of volunteers. Sports clubs can always use more female coaches, coaches from different ethnic backgrounds, or individuals with different perspectives – especially if your membership is diverse, it’s great to have leadership reflect that. Sometimes it means actively inviting those who may not automatically volunteer due to social barriers (“We value female leadership – moms and older girls, consider coaching our younger teams, we will support you with training.”).
- **Volunteer agreements:** For any regular role, it’s wise to have a clear agreement or role description. This doesn’t have to be a formal contract (unless it’s paid), but a simple

outline: "Coach of U12 team – commits to two training sessions and one game per week, roughly 4 hours; responsible for player development and adhering to club coaching guidelines; reports to Head Coach or Committee." Both parties having this understanding in writing prevents later conflicts ("I didn't know I was supposed to attend the monthly coaches meeting!" etc.).

- **Background checks:** As part of recruitment, especially anyone working with children, implement safeguarding vetting. Many countries require volunteer coaches to undergo background checks. Even if not mandatory, it's strongly recommended to do some due diligence - ask for references, and maybe have an existing trusted coach sit in on a couple of their sessions initially. Of course, also verify qualifications if any (if you require a coaching certificate, first aid certification, etc., ask to see proof).

## 6.2 Training and development

Providing training and development opportunities for your club's human resources yields multiple benefits: better skilled coaches/staff, higher morale because people feel the club is investing in them, and it can improve retention. Some approaches:

- **Coaching courses:** Encourage (and fund, if possible) your coaches to attend training courses. Many sport federations offer certification courses (Level 1, Level 2 coaching badges, etc.). Also look at sports science workshops, first aid courses, or specialized training (like coaching kids with disabilities, or nutrition basics). Having certified coaches not only improves quality but is often attractive to parents and funding bodies. Budget some money each year for coach development – it pays off in quality.
- **Workshops:** You can host internal workshops too. For example, invite a guest instructor for a day (maybe a high-level coach from the region) to run a clinic for all your coaches. Or share knowledge within: one coach good at sports psychology can give a talk to others on motivating youth; your safeguarding officer can brief all volunteers on child protection protocols annually. Chapter 5's mention of communication and social media training for athletes can be mirrored for staff – e.g., a short seminar on "positive coaching communication" or "mental health awareness for coaches."
- **Mentoring:** Pair up less experienced volunteers with veterans. A new coach could assist an experienced coach for a season to learn the ropes. A new committee member (say a new treasurer) might shadow the outgoing treasurer during the budget process. This passing of the torch is crucial in volunteer orgs and keeps knowledge within the club.
- **Recognition as development:** Sometimes just recognizing good work is part of development - it reinforces what is valued. E.g., an "Coach of the Year" award or even a thank-you write-up in the newsletter about a volunteer's contributions can boost motivation. Passion is what drives people in community clubs (since it's not salary), so keep that flame alive by showing appreciation.
- **Career/skill benefits:** Highlight to volunteers how their work with the club can build their own skills – leadership, event management, communication – which are transferable to their jobs. For young volunteers, point out it's great experience for their CV or university application. This makes volunteering a two-way street (giving back to community and personal growth).

## 6.3 Retention and motivation of volunteers/staff

One of the challenges in clubs is keeping volunteers engaged long-term and preventing burnout. Here are strategies:

- **Share the load:** Don't let a few people do everything - it's a recipe for burnout. Use committees and sub-committees to distribute tasks. If one person is consistently overloaded, actively seek helpers for them. Sometimes volunteers won't say "I have too much", so check in and offer to delegate some duties. Creating small task teams (e.g., a 3-person "field maintenance crew" instead of one person lining the pitch every week) also adds social fun to the work.
- **Positive club culture:** Foster a welcoming, fun environment among your volunteers and staff. People often stay in volunteering because of camaraderie. Organize occasional social gatherings for coaches/volunteers - even a casual barbecue or a thank-you dinner at season's end. Celebrate successes as a group ("we pulled off a great tournament, awesome job everyone!"). A culture of support - where volunteers feel they are part of a team, not just lone workers - is crucial.
- **Feedback and inclusion:** Ask volunteers for their opinions on club matters, not just the board members. Inclusion in decision making (when appropriate) makes them feel ownership. For example, involve coaches in setting the club's sporting philosophy or selecting equipment. Solicit feedback: maybe a simple survey "What did you enjoy this season? What was challenging?" and act on suggestions. If a coach says "I really could use an assistant," try to find them one rather than ignoring it.
- **Conflict resolution:** Occasionally, conflicts or misunderstandings arise (maybe between a coach and a parent, or between two volunteers). Handle these promptly and fairly. Provide support to your volunteers – e.g., if a parent unfairly yells at a coach, the club leadership should step in to mediate and back the coach as needed. A volunteer who feels hung out to dry will quit. Have a clear grievance procedure and make sure people know they can come to the committee with problems. Deal with issues per your policies, always with respect and confidentiality.
- **Recognition and rewards:** As mentioned, recognition is powerful. Thank people often, and publicly when appropriate. Some clubs have formal awards nights or give small tokens (like a club hat or a gift card) to volunteers as thanks. Even a personal handwritten thank-you note from a club captain or a group of players can deeply touch a volunteer. Recognizing long service (e.g., 5-year, 10-year milestones) can encourage others to stick around too.
- **Understand limits:** Recognize that volunteers have other commitments (jobs, family). Be flexible and understanding. If someone needs to take a break or reduce their hours, see if you can accommodate that rather than lose them entirely. Maybe a coach can switch to an assistant role for a while if life is busy, instead of quitting outright. By being empathetic, you increase the chance they'll stay involved in some capacity rather than burn out.

#### 6.4 Safeguarding and wellbeing for human resources

We often think of safeguarding in terms of protecting children (which is paramount), but also consider the wellbeing of your coaches and volunteers.

- **Workload and stress:** Coaching or managing a youth team can be stressful at times (dealing with competitive pressures, parents, etc.). Provide a support system – maybe a head coach or club manager regularly checks in with each coach to see how things are going. Encourage a culture where coaches can share challenges and help each other (for instance, a WhatsApp group for coaches to exchange tips or just vent after a tough game!). If a volunteer seems overwhelmed, step in to assist.

- **Training in wellbeing:** Provide training in areas like mental health first aid or stress management, if possible. This can help coaches manage their own stress and also be alert to signs of stress or mental health issues in their athletes. There's increasing awareness in sports about mental wellbeing – your club could be progressive by making it a point of discussion.
- **Zero tolerance for abuse:** Ensure that your volunteers and staff are also protected from abuse or harassment. Sadly, sometimes coaches or referees face verbal abuse from angry parents or spectators. The club should have policies to address this – e.g., spectators who violate the code of conduct by harassing officials or coaches may be warned or ultimately asked not to attend. Stand by your people. Similarly, within the club, if there were ever bullying or harassment of a volunteer by another (it can happen even among adults), treat it seriously. Everyone has the right to a safe and respectful “work” environment, even if it’s unpaid work.
- **Child-adult boundaries and protection for volunteers:** While safeguarding youth, also protect your volunteers from false allegations by enforcing the policies like not being alone with a child, keeping communication transparent, etc. These policies (Chapter 4) exist to keep both children and adults safe. Make sure volunteers understand them so they don’t inadvertently put themselves in a grey area. For example, a well-meaning coach giving a kid a ride home alone might be doing a favor, but it’s better to avoid that scenario or ensure parental permission and some documentation. Educate volunteers on these situations.
- **Insurance for volunteers:** Mentioned in legal/documents, ensure your insurance covers volunteers (liability insurance often does). Volunteers should know they are protected in case something goes wrong, and they should not personally bear costs of accidents. For example, if a volunteer gets injured while working for the club (like falling off a ladder while fixing a banner), the club’s insurance should cover their medical costs. If you have employees, you’ll legally need employer’s liability insurance, but volunteers are usually included in club liability policies - double-check and inform them.

## 6.5 Fostering a positive and inclusive culture

HR management isn’t just paperwork and policies – it’s also about *leadership and culture*. Club leaders should model the positive values we want in sports:

- **Lead by example:** If the club preaches sustainability, show that in how you treat people – e.g., fairness, respect, and valuing each person’s contribution. For instance, club leadership should also volunteer alongside others in club clean-ups or events occasionally, demonstrating all hands on deck. When youth see coaches and managers acting with integrity and enthusiasm, it reinforces those values.
- **Empower youth leadership:** Consider creating pathways for youth to take on leadership roles. Many clubs have junior coach programs where older youth help coach younger teams. Or a “youth committee” that can organize a social event or run the club’s social media (with oversight). This investment in youth leadership not only helps the club (extra hands) but builds the next generation of coaches and managers. It ties back to eco-entrepreneurial skills: give them chances to exercise initiative and responsibility within the club. Perhaps they could even have a representative attend part of club board meetings to give input.
- **Continuous improvement:** Encourage a growth mindset in your human resources. Just as athletes train to get better, volunteers and staff can always learn. Debrief after events or seasons: what went well, what can we do better? Perhaps adopt some practices from

the corporate world like brief annual self-reviews or peer reviews for coaches – nothing too formal, but a moment to reflect and set personal goals (“next year I want to earn a higher coaching certificate” or “I want to improve how I plan training sessions”). The club can then support those goals.

In summary, a sports club thrives when its people are thriving. By paying attention to recruiting good people, equipping them with skills, acknowledging their efforts, and taking care of their wellbeing, you create a virtuous cycle: happy coaches create happy athletes and parents, which makes volunteers feel their work is meaningful, which keeps them engaged. This human energy is what will fuel all your other objectives, from competitive success to running sustainable initiatives. With a strong team off the field, your team on the field will benefit immensely.

## **Chapter 7. Risk management in club operations**

Every sports club faces risks - from an athlete spraining an ankle during practice, to a sudden financial shortfall, to even reputation risks if something goes wrong. Risk management is the process of identifying potential risks and taking steps to minimize or handle them. It might sound pessimistic to imagine what could go wrong, but it's a crucial part of responsible management and actually builds confidence when done well. In sports clubs, risk management spans a wide range: safety of players, legal compliance, financial stability, environmental risks (like extreme weather affecting events), etc. This chapter will guide you through creating a risk-aware culture and practical measures to keep your club's operations safe and sound.

### **7.1 Identifying risks in a sports club**

The first step is to systematically identify risks. Sit down with your team (committee, coaches, maybe some parents for perspective) and brainstorm what could potentially go wrong in various areas of the club. Common categories of risks include:

- **Physical safety risks:** Injuries to players, coaches, or spectators; accidents at the facility (someone trips on damaged ground or is hit by a stray ball); extreme weather conditions (heatstroke on a very hot day, lightning strikes during a storm).
- **Child protection risks:** Possibility of a child being harmed (abuse, bullying) within the club environment if proper safeguards aren't followed.
- **Facility and equipment risks:** Fires, theft, or vandalism at your clubhouse; equipment failure (a goalpost collapsing if it's not maintained, for instance); hazards like unsafe surfaces or lack of safety padding.
- **Financial risks:** Losing a major sponsor or funding source, unexpected costs (like urgent repairs or legal fees), embezzlement or fraud if proper financial controls aren't in place.
- **Legal/Compliance risks:** Failing to comply with laws or regulations - e.g., not having the proper permit for an event, breach of data protection, or discrimination claims if you don't follow equality laws. Non-compliance can lead to fines or shutdowns.
- **Reputation risks:** Negative publicity or community backlash (perhaps due to misconduct by a member, a serious accident, or environmental damage like leaving a public park trashed after an event).
- **Operational risks:** Key person dependency (what if your only qualified coach quits mid-season?), technology failures (if you rely on an online system for registrations and it crashes), loss of data (records destroyed).
- **Environmental risks:** Especially for outdoor sports, consider climate-related risks: extreme heat, cold, storms, air pollution on a given day affecting health, etc. Also, the club's contribution to environmental risk – e.g., what if your club's travel to matches is

contributing heavily to carbon emissions? (This is more of a long-term risk to society that you might want to mitigate for ethical reasons.)

A helpful tool is to create a Risk register – a table where you list each identified risk, the likelihood of it happening, the impact if it did happen, and current controls in place. For higher risks, you'll plan additional actions.

## 7.2 Risk assessment and mitigation strategies

For each risk identified, assess its likelihood (probability) and impact (severity). This can be qualitative (low, medium, high) or numeric. This helps prioritize. A high-impact, high-likelihood risk (e.g., players getting injured because first aid and safety rules are lacking) is top priority to address, whereas a low-impact, low-likelihood risk (say, website hack defacing your site) might be lower priority.

Mitigation means actions you take to prevent the risk or reduce its impact. Let's break down some key areas with mitigation measures:

- **Player and participant safety:**

- *Preventive measures:* Ensure coaches are trained in safe techniques and injury prevention. Maintain equipment (e.g., make sure goalposts are secured, floors aren't slippery, mats are in place where needed). Implement warm-up and cool-down routines to reduce injuries. Have a policy for extreme weather: e.g., "if lightning within 10 km, suspend play for 30 minutes" or "cancel training if heat index above X or air quality index is poor."
- *Preparedness:* Always have a first aid kit at every training and game. Have a trained first-aider present (could be the coach if trained, or a dedicated medic for larger events). Know the procedure for serious injuries (who calls ambulance, which hospital to go to, have emergency contacts for all players). For events, perhaps coordinate with local medical services. Conduct periodic risk assessments of your facility – walk around and note hazards (a broken fence with sharp edges? Fix it; a spot where water pools and could cause slips? Address drainage or mark it). There are checklists from sport bodies for event safety and facility safety – use them.
- *Insurance:* Ensure you have adequate sports injury insurance or that your members have coverage. Public liability insurance is a must – to cover any claims if someone is injured due to negligence. For example, if a spectator is hit by a ball and injures their eye and alleges the club didn't put up nets that could have prevented it, liability insurance would help handle that claim.

- **Child protection:** (We mention again because it's a critical risk area.) Strictly enforce safeguarding policies: two-deep leadership (no one-on-one situations), background checks, codes of conduct. Educate children on speaking up - maybe have a confidential way a child can report something (like knowing they can talk to the Child Welfare Officer). If a concern arises, have a clear process to involve authorities. It's better to err on the side of caution. The impact of not managing this risk is huge (harm to a child and legal consequences), so mitigation must be strong.

- **Facility and event safety:**

- *Facilities:* If you own or manage premises, do regular safety audits. Check fire extinguishers (and have fire evacuation plans and drills if building is used frequently). Control who has keys/access to prevent theft or vandalism. Good lighting in parking areas for night events improves safety. If you host games, have procedures for crowd management (if it's a large crowd, maybe barriers or security

for certain sports). Keep facilities clean and hygienic (reduces disease transmission risk - relevant in times like pandemics).

- *Events:* Use a risk assessment template before big events (like a tournament). Identify if you need marshals, first aid station, safe spectator areas, etc. Inform participants of any rules (like “no glass bottles in the venue” to prevent injuries). If doing something novel (e.g., a fun adventure race fundraiser), consider getting participants to sign a waiver acknowledging risks.

- **Financial and fraud risks:**

- Use financial controls: always have dual signatories or approvals on payments above a small amount, and never have just one person solely control finances. Regularly review financial reports in the committee. This deters embezzlement or misuse of funds. Keep money (cash from events) secure and deposit promptly. For fraud from outside (phishing emails, etc.), ensure the treasurer verifies unusual requests (scammers sometimes impersonate club presidents asking for wire transfers – have a rule like “no financial transactions based on just an email, always double-check by phone”). Maintain some reserve funds for emergencies to reduce risk of insolvency. Also consider what you’d do if a key sponsor leaves - diversify income as discussed in Chapter 3 to avoid over-reliance on one source.
- Financial risk also involves budgeting conservatively (as discussed) to avoid ending in the red. And if the club ever does face a shortfall, have a plan: e.g., emergency appeal to members or a temporary dues increase (with member approval) – not desirable but better than going bust.

- **Legal/compliance risks:**

- Keep a compliance calendar for things like registrations, insurance renewals, venue lease renewals, etc. Missing a renewal could mean you’re operating uninsured or unregistered – big risk.
- Stay informed of any changes in laws affecting sports (e.g., new data protection rules, concussion legislation, or facility safety codes). Assign someone, perhaps the Secretary or a legally-minded volunteer, to periodically review compliance. The club’s affiliation with national federations often brings updates – heed those newsletters about “new child safety guidelines” or “updated sport rules,” etc.
- Mitigate legal risk by following the documentation guidelines from Chapter 4: have the right waivers, contracts, and policies. If everyone signs a liability waiver, it doesn’t remove all risk but can provide some legal protection by showing they acknowledged risks of the sport.

- **Environmental and climate risks:**

- If your area is prone to certain extremes (e.g., very hot summers, heavy winters, floods), plan accordingly. For heat, schedule trainings in cooler parts of day or ensure water and shade are available. For storms, have cancellation policies and communicate them (like a phone tree or app notification) so people aren’t caught in dangerous weather. For cold, ensure proper gear and maybe indoor alternatives.
- Consider long-term adaptation: if climate patterns are changing (hotter, wetter, etc.), might you need to invest in things like better drainage for fields or sun shades?
- Also, mitigate the club’s environmental impact to reduce contributory risk: e.g., monitor and try to reduce carbon footprint of club operations (could be part of

sustainability strategy). While one club is small in global terms, taking action is part of the collective risk reduction for climate change.

- **Pandemic/epidemic risks:** We learned from COVID-19 that sports can be heavily disrupted by pandemics. It's wise to have some reference in your risk plan about health crises: following government and federation guidelines on when to pause activities, how to resume safely (sanitization, distancing if needed). Having a continuity plan (like shifting to online fitness sessions for members) can keep the club community engaged even if normal play stops for a while.

### 7.3 Developing a risk management plan

After identifying and evaluating risks, create a Risk Management Plan. This can be a simple document or table that lists each significant risk and outlines what the club will do about it. It should assign responsibility – e.g., who ensures first aid kits are stocked (maybe the equipment manager), who will do the annual safety audit (maybe a Safety Officer or a small subcommittee), etc. Include procedures for when an incident happens:

- **Incident response:** For various scenarios have a basic action checklist. For injury: e.g., Coach stops play, First aid gives treatment, if serious – call ambulance, inform parents, fill out injury report form after. For a fire: evacuate, call fire dept, headcount at assembly point, etc. For allegations of misconduct: ensure child's safety, report to child welfare officer who then contacts authorities and suspends accused person pending investigation, etc. Having these written down means in a panic situation people can refer to a known procedure rather than improvise. It also shows later that you acted systematically.
- **Emergency contacts:** Maintain a list of important contacts as part of the plan – emergency services, poison control (if needed), utility companies (if gas leak or such at facility), key club personnel and phone numbers, etc. Give relevant people (coaches, event organizers) a copy or quick card of these.
- **Communication in a crisis:** Plan how you communicate during emergencies. As noted in Communication chapter, designate a spokesperson if media are involved. Also internally, decide how to inform members of a serious incident (accurately but without unnecessary panic). If, say, a club vehicle had an accident on a trip, you'd want a clear plan to inform families, and who liaises with authorities.
- **Monitoring and review:** Risk management isn't one-and-done. Schedule periodic reviews - perhaps the committee reviews the risk register annually or after any major incident. Learn from near-misses or new situations. For example, "Last tournament, we realized we needed more traffic control to avoid a parking lot accident – let's include that next time." Or if fortunately everything is running smoothly, still have an annual risk discussion: "Are there new risks? Maybe our social media presence is bigger, do we risk someone posting something problematic? Let's make a policy for that." Keep the plan updated.

There is a concept of building resilience – making the club capable of absorbing shocks. Financial reserves, cross-training volunteers (so if one is out, others can fill in), and good relationships (like with your facility owner, local government, and community) all contribute to resilience. For instance, if your practice hall suddenly closed, having goodwill with another local club might allow you to borrow space.

### 7.4 Insurance and risk transfer

Insurance is a critical part of risk management – it transfers some risk to an insurer for a premium. We touched on it, but to recap key insurances a sports club should consider:

- **Public liability insurance:** Covers third-party injuries or property damage. If a spectator or passerby is hurt or property damaged (like a ball breaking a neighbor's window), this helps cover legal claims. Most federations mandate clubs carry this.
- **Accident insurance for members:** Often available through sport bodies. It can cover medical costs or a small lump sum for injuries to players or volunteers during club activities (since they might not be fully covered by state healthcare or personal insurance). It's a nice benefit to provide, and some federations include it when you register members.
- **Property insurance:** If you have your own facility or valuable equipment (gymnastics gear, boats, etc.), insure them against fire, theft, vandalism, natural disasters.
- **Directors and officers (D&O) insurance:** For larger clubs or those incorporated, this covers the club leaders against personal liability for decisions they make on behalf of the club (except in cases of fraud/negligence). It's something to consider if you have significant operations, as it can protect volunteer board members in lawsuits about governance.
- **Event insurance:** For one-off big events, you can get specific insurance (like weather insurance if a cancellation would cost a lot, or additional liability if you expect huge crowds beyond normal).

Work with an insurance broker or the offers from your sport federation to tailor coverage. Remember, insurance doesn't prevent bad things, but it ensures that if bad things happen, the club isn't financially ruined and victims get compensation more easily.

## 7.5 Building a safety culture

Beyond formal planning, strive to create a culture where safety and risk awareness is everyone's responsibility. Encourage coaches, players, and parents to speak up if they see something unsafe ("Hey, this goal net has a big hole, a kid's head could get stuck – let's fix it" or "We need to shovel this walkway, it's icy."). Empower people to pause or modify activities if they feel risk is too high ("Lightning spotted, let's all go indoors now" - everyone should feel that's the norm, not to continue dangerously).

Include players in this culture: teach them about hydration to avoid heat illness, encourage them to report injuries and not hide concussions, instill respect for rules that exist for safety (like no horseplay around equipment). For youth, frame it positively: taking care of each other is part of being a good team.

Finally, document incidents and near-misses. If an injury or an almost-accident occurs, note it and analyze later how to prevent recurrence. Many clubs have an incident log book. This not only helps fix issues but also may be required for insurance or legal reasons.

In summary, risk management might seem like focusing on negatives, but in practice it creates a secure foundation that allows the fun and positive aspects of sport to flourish. When you have confidence that risks are managed - kids are safe, finances are stable, the club won't get nasty surprises - you and your members can enjoy the activities with peace of mind. Plus, demonstrating good risk management (like having safety policies, insurance, etc.) can be a selling point to parents and sponsors: it shows professionalism and care. With risks under control, we turn next to *governance and leadership*, which ties closely into many of the topics we've touched here.

## Chapter 8. Governance and leadership principles

Good governance and strong leadership are what keep a sports club true to its mission and running effectively. While earlier chapters touched on specific governance elements (like legal docs, communication, human resources), this chapter focuses on the big picture: how a club is directed and led. Governance refers to the structures, rules, and processes for decision-making and oversight in the club. Leadership is about guiding people towards the club's vision. For youth and community clubs, applying sound governance principles might seem formal, but it's key to ensure fairness, accountability, and long-term success. This chapter outlines core governance principles and leadership practices relevant to sports organizations, and how even a small club can implement them.

### 8.1 Club governance structures

A typical sports club governance structure at minimum has a Governing committee or Board (often elected by members) which includes the main officers (Chair/President, Secretary, Treasurer, etc.) as described in Chapter 4. This committee makes strategic and high-level decisions, ensures the club meets its obligations, and appoints people to operational roles (coaches, subcommittees).

Principles for setting up a good structure:

- **Clearly defined roles:** Each committee member or role should have a clear remit. For example, the Chair leads meetings and represents the club externally, the Secretary handles administration and meeting records, the Treasurer manages finances, etc. If you have additional roles like Vice Chair, they might oversee a specific area (e.g., development programs). Some clubs have captains or players' representatives on the committee to give the athlete perspective. Define any subcommittees (e.g., a Disciplinary Committee for handling any serious conduct issues, or Events Committee for organizing competitions). When everyone knows their job, things don't fall through the cracks.
- **Checks and balances:** Even in a small club, it's wise to not concentrate too much power in one person. For instance, financial oversight by more than one person (as noted in risk management) is a check. Decision-making should ideally be collective or at least consultative, not one person's whim. Many clubs require that major decisions (like spending above a certain amount, or changing bylaws) be approved by the committee or even all members at an AGM. This democratic approach prevents misuse of authority and builds trust.
- **Elections and term limits:** Hold regular elections (usually at the AGM) for key positions, as per your constitution. This allows renewal and ensures leaders remain accountable to members. Some clubs use term limits (e.g., a Chair can serve max 4 years) to encourage new blood. Others allow re-elections indefinitely but rely on the election process to replace if needed. Make sure elections are fair – announce them in advance, allow nominations, maybe have secret ballots for contested positions.
- **Constitutional adherence:** The governance structure should follow what's in your constitution or bylaws. If practice diverges (e.g., you added a new position like "Volunteer Coordinator" but it's not in the constitution), consider formally amending the constitution to reflect how the club actually functions. This avoids confusion and ensures legality.
- **Meetings and decision processes:** The committee should meet regularly (say monthly or quarterly) and as needed for urgent issues. Use agendas and minutes (Chapter 4 described this) to keep things organized. Many decisions can be made in those meetings. For urgent matters between meetings, define a process: maybe an executive group of 2-

3 can make interim decisions, or use email consensus. However, use such shortcuts sparingly and later ratify them formally to stay transparent.

## 8.2 Principles of good governance in sport

There are widely recognized principles of good governance which sport organizations are encouraged to follow (e.g., the Olympic Movement and EU have published guidelines). Let's cover these in accessible terms for a club:

- **Transparency:** Openness in how the club is run. This means sharing information with stakeholders (members, parents, community). Examples: publish annual reports or at least communicate key decisions and club achievements at the AGM or in newsletters. Financial transparency is a big one – as noted, presenting accounts and being open about how money is spent builds confidence. Even at committee level, keeping clear records (minutes, documented policies) means that if someone asks “how was this decision made?”, you can show the rationale. Transparency also means no hidden agendas – if the club is pursuing a particular direction (like investing heavily in one team), that should be openly discussed, not done in backrooms.
- **Accountability:** Those in leadership must account for their actions and accept responsibility. In practice, this is enforced by mechanisms like elections (leaders can be voted out if members are unhappy), reporting (leaders explain their decisions in meetings), and external accountability (if you receive a grant, you report to the funder on usage, etc.). It also involves setting performance measures: e.g., the committee might set goals (increase membership by 10%, achieve a sustainability certification, win X number of games, etc.) and then evaluate themselves against those goals. If something goes wrong (say financial mismanagement is discovered), accountability means addressing it (maybe stepping down, or implementing corrective measures) rather than covering up.
- **Participation and inclusiveness:** Good governance ensures the *stakeholders* have appropriate input. In a club, members are key stakeholders, so giving them a voice is crucial - via AGMs, voting rights, surveys, etc. Inclusiveness also means representing the diversity of your membership in governance. Do you have both genders on the committee if your club is co-ed? Do you involve youth in some capacity? Perhaps have a parent representative for youth teams. Inclusive governance leads to better decisions because it considers different perspectives and is seen as more legitimate. It also ties to equality obligations (no discriminatory barriers to being in leadership).
- **Integrity and ethical conduct:** The club's leaders and members must uphold high ethical standards. This includes being honest, avoiding conflicts of interest, and adhering to the spirit of sport (fair play, respect). For example, if a committee member runs a sporting goods store, and the club needs to buy equipment, integrity requires that person to declare the conflict and perhaps not be the sole decision-maker on that purchase (to ensure the club gets the best deal, not just giving business to the insider). Having a conflict of interest policy is wise: people should declare and recuse themselves in such cases. Anti-corruption is usually more a concern in big sport organizations, but at a club level it could be as simple as not taking personal favors from vendors or not accepting bribes (imagine someone offering money to play more minutes – unlikely, but setting the tone that you can't “buy” such favors is important). Ethical codes (like anti-doping, anti-harassment, which we discussed) also fall here – the governance should ensure those codes are in place and enforced.

- **Strategic vision and leadership:** The committee should engage in some level of strategic planning – thinking beyond the immediate season. Good governance means setting a direction: e.g., “In 5 years, we want our club to have an established girls program, a renovated clubhouse, and be carbon-neutral.” Leadership is about formulating that vision (perhaps with member input), and then rallying people to achieve it. Use tools like the Simon Sinek “Golden Circle” – start with *Why* (purpose of your club, beyond just winning games). For instance, your club’s “why” might be “to empower youth and promote healthy, sustainable living through sport.” The *How* could be your values and methods (community engagement, inclusive programs, education through sport), and the *What* are the actual services (training, competitions, events) you deliver. Communicating this vision clearly helps align everyone’s efforts and attract support.
- **Effectiveness and performance orientation:** This principle means the club should aim for efficiency and results in pursuit of its goals. Meetings shouldn’t be endless and unproductive; use good chairing practices to keep focus. Set objectives (increase membership, raise X funds, reduce injuries by Y%, etc.) and measure them. It’s akin to how a business or professional organization is run, albeit scaled to volunteer capacity. Monitor key aspects: membership growth, financial health, athlete satisfaction, etc. If something is lagging (say membership is dropping), a well-governed club will analyze why and take action (improve marketing, check if coaching quality is an issue, etc.).
- **Adaptability and innovation:** Sport and society change, so governance must adapt. A classic example is how clubs had to adapt governance to the COVID-19 pandemic – holding virtual meetings, adjusting rules, etc. Or adapting to new technology (using online registration, social media). Encourage a mindset that is open to new ideas (maybe a member suggests starting an esports wing or a new sport format – rather than dismiss, evaluate if it fits your mission). Innovation can help sustainability too (as we’ve seen with green initiatives). A rigid club that says “we’ve always done it this way” may decline over time.

### 8.3 Leadership styles and practices in clubs

Leadership in a community club context often means leading volunteers and young people, which requires a collaborative and inspirational style more than a top-down authoritarian approach. Here are some effective leadership practices:

- **Lead by service (Servant leadership):** Especially in volunteer settings, a leader is often most effective when they act as a servant leader – meaning they see their role as serving the members, enabling others to do their jobs well. For example, a club president might roll up their sleeves to help set up an event, showing they are part of the team. They listen to members’ needs and try to address them. This builds respect and loyalty. It contrasts with corporate hierarchy; in clubs, respect is earned by contribution and care, not by title alone.
- **Empowerment:** Good leaders delegate and trust others with responsibility. Micro-managing every drill or every decision is demotivating for other volunteers. Instead, give people autonomy in their area – like telling a coach, “You have our support to manage the team as you see fit within our values; let us know what resources you need.” Or letting a youth committee plan a small event their way, with just guidance on boundaries (budget, safety). Empowerment also means encouraging initiative (tying back to entrepreneurship competences in Chapter 1). If someone has an idea to improve the club, leaders should consider it genuinely and, if viable, let them try it out.

- **Communication and inspiration:** Leaders articulate the club's vision and values frequently – in meetings, in speeches at events, in newsletters. They ensure the "why" of the club is front and center, so people feel part of something meaningful. For example, remind coaches: "We're not just teaching football; we're helping kids develop teamwork and sustainability awareness – that's our bigger goal." Recognize and praise efforts publicly, which inspires others (e.g., "Thanks to Coach Maria for implementing the new recycling program with her team – that's the leadership we value."). When challenges arise, communicate honestly and positively about overcoming them.
- **Decision-making:** Leaders often have to make decisions or facilitate group decisions. Be fair and use good judgement. Consider input but also be decisive when needed. Explain decisions to those affected, especially if it's a tough or unpopular one (e.g., cutting a team due to low numbers – explain the rationale, perhaps offer alternatives like merged training). Strive for consensus in big decisions, but know when to call a vote or make an executive call after deliberation if consensus is elusive. Importantly, stick to the club's values and policies in decisions to maintain integrity.
- **Role modeling:** Leadership by example extends to living the club's values. If your club promotes respect and inclusion, the leaders must exemplify that – e.g., showing respect to referees, greeting new members warmly, handling conflicts calmly. If sustainability is a pillar, leaders should personally practice it (not littering, supporting green initiatives). Hypocrisy will be quickly spotted by youth especially; if a leader says one thing but does another, credibility is lost.
- **Mentoring and developing others:** A mark of a good leader in a club is preparing the next generation of leaders. That means mentoring young coaches, encouraging volunteers to step up to committee roles, and sharing knowledge openly. Avoid the trap of "indispensable leader" – if the club cannot function without you, that's actually a governance failure. Train others so that if you step down, the club continues smoothly. It's healthy to circulate leadership to prevent stagnation and burnout.
- **Conflict resolution:** Leaders often play a role in mediating conflicts – be it between members, or with external parties. Approach conflicts impartially, listen to all sides, and seek a fair solution. Use the club's code of conduct or policies as a guide. Sometimes a small dispute can be solved by reminding everyone of shared goals and respect. In more serious cases, follow formal process (e.g., a disciplinary panel). How leadership handles conflict sets the tone – if done with fairness and dignity, it strengthens club unity; if handled poorly or with bias, it can fracture trust.

#### 8.4 Youth leadership and democratic participation

Given our focus on youth, it is worth highlighting the importance of involving young people in leadership and governance. We have mentioned youth committees and representatives. Some clubs create a Junior Board or have a couple of youth member slots on the main committee (with or without full voting rights depending on age/legalities). This teaches youth about governance and gives them ownership.

Youth-led initiatives could be, for example: a group of older teens running mini-workshops for younger kids on topics like nutrition or environment (with oversight). Or a youth captain group that meets to give feedback on coaching or schedule issues (sort of like a student council in school). Taking their input seriously can lead to great ideas and also trains them in responsibility. Remember that a core aim from the SportClubsYouth4Sustain project is to empower youth to be actors of change. Letting them into governance and leadership roles is one of the best ways to do that. It moves them from passive participants to active shapers of the club's future.

On democratic participation: beyond just youth, ensure all members have the opportunity to participate in key decisions. That means properly announcing the AGM, encouraging attendance, perhaps allowing proxy or online voting if people can't physically attend (this became common with COVID and could continue for inclusivity). If big changes are proposed (like a merger with another club, or a large expenditure on a building), consider holding a consultation or EGM (extraordinary GM) to let members voice opinions and vote. When members feel their club is truly *their* club, they'll be more loyal and contribute more (volunteering, word-of-mouth recruitment, etc.).

## 8.5 Ethical and sustainable leadership

Linking back to sustainability: incorporate sustainability into your governance and leadership. Some advanced ideas:

- Add sustainability criteria to decision-making. For example, when approving a budget, the board could say "Does this align with our sustainability goals? Are we investing enough in eco-friendly options?" Or when choosing suppliers, maybe adopt a policy to prefer those with good environmental practices (if cost difference isn't huge).
- Possibly assign a *Sustainability Officer* or subcommittee in governance (like UEFA clubs now do by requirement). This person ensures the club keeps focus on its green commitments and liaises with external initiatives.
- Leadership can integrate sustainable development goals in club strategy – e.g., aim to contribute to SDGs (like SDG3 Good Health through promoting sport, SDG13 Climate Action through reducing emissions).
- Show moral leadership: speak out (appropriately) on issues that resonate with your club's values. If your club is anti-racist and something happens in the community, a statement or educational session can demonstrate leadership. Or join campaigns like #WhiteCard for peace through sport, etc. Clubs can lead socially, not just in sports scores.

In essence, leadership and governance in a sport club context is about stewardship – taking care of the club's mission, people, and resources responsibly so that the club can thrive and achieve its purpose. It's about balancing competitive ambitions with community values, and ensuring continuity through proper structure and planning. Even if you are a young leader or a novice manager, embracing these principles will help you run the club more smoothly and leave a legacy that others can build on.

With strong governance and leadership in place, we can now focus on planning for the future with sustainability in mind, which is exactly what the next chapter addresses.

## Chapter 9. Sustainability strategy and planning

Up to this point, we've interwoven sustainability concepts throughout various topics – from eco-entrepreneurial skills to best practices and governance. Now it's time to pull it all together into a focused look at developing a Sustainability Strategy for your sports club. A sustainability strategy is a plan that outlines how your club will operate in an environmentally (and often socially and economically) sustainable way. It sets goals, actions, and metrics. You might think, "We're just a small club, do we need a strategy for this?" – but even a basic strategy can clarify your commitment and guide practical steps. In fact, as noted earlier, sports organizations are increasingly expected to have sustainability plans as part of their overall strategy.

This chapter will guide you through creating a sustainability plan: assessing your current footprint, setting goals (aligned with broader frameworks like the EU Green Deal or SDGs), engaging people in the process, implementing actions, and making sustainability a continuous effort.

## 9.1 Assessing the club's environmental and social impact

Start with a **baseline assessment** of where your club stands in terms of sustainability. Think of it like a mini-audit of operations:

- **Energy use:** How much energy do your facilities use? If you have a clubhouse or field with lights, check electricity bills or meter readings. Are lights old and inefficient? Do you leave things on unnecessarily? Also, do you use any gas (heating, cooking in canteen)? Note the sources – any renewables in the mix? This data might be as simple as annual kWh used if you can get it. If you don't pay utilities (say the city does), maybe observe – are lights left on often, are heating thermostats controlled?
- **Water use:** Does the club use water for irrigation, showers, etc.? Are there any leaks or excessive watering habits? Water footprint might include how you maintain fields (sprinklers schedule) or if you have a pool (for swim clubs, huge usage).
- **Waste and recycling:** Look at your waste generation. How many bags of trash do you produce each week during season? Are recycling bins in use and are they actually being recycled by the facility? Do events generate lots of single-use plastics or food waste? Do you handle hazardous waste (batteries, old electronic equipment, etc.) properly?
- **Transportation:** How do members typically travel to practices/games? If most drive individually, your club's indirect carbon footprint from transportation might be the largest source. Note if there are any carpooling or public transport usage, or if the club has vehicles, their fuel use.
- **Purchasing and materials:** Evaluate what you buy – equipment (any eco-friendly options?), merchandise (are shirts made of sustainable materials?), cleaning products (biodegradable?), food for canteen (local sourcing?). Also, how often do you replace gear – could durability be improved? Inventory leftover or waste items (like old uniforms – can they be donated or recycled?).
- **Club culture and awareness:** On the social side, assess inclusivity and community engagement. Are there already some good practices (e.g., members doing volunteerism, or youth engaged in cause campaigns)? This feeds into sustainability broadly (sustainable development includes social aspects like health, education, equality).
- **Past initiatives:** Document any past or current initiatives related to environment or community (e.g., the club planted trees in 2021, or runs an annual charity fundraiser, or eliminated plastic cups last year). These successes provide a foundation to build on.

You might not have precise data for all these, but even estimates help. Consider using a simple checklist or the GSHE self-assessment tools if available to gauge areas of strength and weakness. Some clubs do surveys: ask members about their travel modes or if they have suggestions for green improvements. Engagement starts at this assess phase already.

## 9.2 Setting goals and objectives (aligning with EU and global frameworks)

Based on the assessment, set sustainability goals for the club. Goals give you targets to strive for, and aligning them with bigger frameworks can lend direction and credibility. For example:

- **Environmental goals:** These could be quantitative like "Reduce the club's carbon footprint by 30% in 2 years" or qualitative like "Eliminate single-use plastics in club operations by next season." It might involve a series of sub-goals: energy, waste, transport, etc. Be ambitious but realistic. If you know many parents drive SUVs to games, you may not cut transport emissions overnight – but you could set a goal "By next year, have 50% of team travel either carpooling or using low-emission transport" (if feasible). Another example: "Achieve a Green Club certification from [national sport body or local authority] within 1 year" if such programs exist.

- **Social goals:** If we consider sustainable development broadly, you might include goals like “Achieve gender parity in club membership or leadership by 2025,” “Launch an outreach program for disadvantaged youth next season,” or “Partner with a local charity to deliver an annual sports for good event.” Since Erasmus+ priority includes social inclusion and employability, you can tie those in.
- **Education goals:** Tie with EntreComp/GreenComp: e.g., “All coaches to incorporate one sustainability topic in training each month,” or “Develop an eco-entrepreneurship workshop for members by end of year.” If youth gain knowledge or skills, that’s a valid goal too.

### When aligning with EU frameworks:

- *EU Green Deal:* The broad goal is carbon neutrality by 2050. For a club, maybe align with intermediate EU targets (like 55% emission cut by 2030). But more concretely, refer to the sport sector playbook recommendations: e.g., your plan could say “In line with EU recommendations, we will measure our carbon baseline this year and establish an environmental sustainability plan for our club operations.” You could mention supporting local climate goals if your city has them.
- *GreenComp:* Use its competences to shape goals. For instance, one goal could be “Foster the GreenComp competences among our youth members – measured by at least 50 youth completing a sustainability workshop (valuing sustainability, etc.) and leading one green action.”
- *SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals):* They are global, but you can localize. For example, SDG13 (Climate Action) – your goal might be clearly climate-related. SDG12 (Responsible Consumption) – your goal on waste reduction fits. SDG3 (Health & Well-being) – your core activity already does this. If writing a strategy doc, it’s powerful to mention which SDGs you contribute to.
- *Sport-specific frameworks:* If your national federation or an international body has a sustainability strategy or pledges (like the Sports for Climate Action), you could align. Possibly sign on to the UNFCCC Sports for Climate Action Framework which has two tiers (signatories commit to a set of principles and eventually to specific targets). A goal could be “Sign the UN Sports for Climate Action pledge and develop an action plan to meet its requirements.”

Use the SMART criteria for goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound). For example, “Reduce facility energy usage by 20% within 1 year by installing LED lights and improving scheduling” – specific and measurable. Or “Divert 80% of waste from landfill by next season via recycling and composting systems.”

### 9.3 Developing the action plan

Goals are the “what”; the action plan is the “how.” For each goal, outline actions, assign responsibilities, timeline, and resources needed. It may help to create a table (some already partially provided in methodology content):

- **Energy efficiency actions:** e.g., “Replace all floodlight bulbs with LED by March (Facilities Manager: John to coordinate, need €500 budget; expected to cut electricity by X%). Adjust training schedule to maximize daylight use in spring/fall. Educate members to turn off lights/equipment after use (put up reminder signs by April). Investigate solar panel installation feasibility by end of year (Taskforce: Mary & Ali).”
- **Waste reduction actions:** e.g., “Install recycling bins (with clear labels) at clubhouse and field by next month (Volunteer: Sara). Set up club policy to ban single-use plastic bottles – encourage all to bring refillable bottles; provide each youth member a club-

branded bottle at season start (Sponsor-funded, to do by next season). Work with city to get a paper/cardboard recycling dumpster on site. Organize a 'Zero Waste Game Day' trial at home match in September (Green Team volunteers to plan). Compost orange peels and organic waste – start a compost bin behind clubhouse (Groundskeeper to manage)."

- **Sustainable transport actions:** e.g., "Launch a carpool program: create a WhatsApp carpool group for each team by next month (Team parents coordinate). Negotiate with local bus company for discounted rates if team travels by bus for away games (Club Sec to inquire by June). Install a bike rack at the training ground to encourage cycling (budget €200, Coach Leo to install by July). Recognize and reward teams that have majority carpooling – maybe a shout-out or small prize at end of season (Green team to monitor)."
- **Community and green awareness actions:** e.g., "Hold an annual Community Clean-up Day involving all members each Earth Day (April) – partner with local environmental NGO."
- **Governance integration:** e.g., "Add sustainability progress as a standing agenda item in committee meetings (Secretary to implement immediately). Provide an annual sustainability report to members (combine with AGM materials, first one next AGM). Appoint a Sustainability Officer on the committee (elect or designate by next AGM, role to oversee plan execution)."

As you assign tasks, consider creating a small sustainability team or committee if resources allow – even 2-3 passionate members (youth or parents) can drive the plan and keep momentum. According to ECA's strategy, integrating sustainability across governance and training was key, meaning everyone should see it as part of their role. But having point persons helps.

Make sure timelines are realistic and spread out, so you're not trying to do everything at once (and burning out volunteers). It might be a multi-year plan. Some clubs set phases: year 1 focus internal changes (lights, bins), year 2 expand to community engagement, year 3 bigger investments (like solar panels if feasible).

#### 9.4 Engaging stakeholders and securing resources

A plan on paper needs buy-in and resources to come to life. Engage your stakeholders:

- **Members:** Present the sustainability strategy to members (at a meeting or via a nice summary email). Explain the why – how it benefits the club and aligns with values. People are more likely to cooperate (like following new waste rules or carpooling) if they understand the purpose and had a chance to voice ideas. Consider a catchy slogan or campaign within the club (like "Green Team 2025 – our road to sustainability!" to make it feel like a collective mission). Involve youth – maybe run a contest to design a poster or logo for the green campaign.
- **Volunteers for actions:** Identify who is enthusiastic; perhaps a parent with environmental expertise, or students needing project experience (maybe a local college environmental science student could help measure carbon footprint for a project). Delegate tasks as per plan and support them.
- **Management and coaches:** Ensure the club leadership and coaches are on board – they often set day-to-day tone. For example, coaches should enforce the refillable bottle policy at practice, or help coordinate scheduling changes.
- **External partners:** Seek help from outside. The local municipality might have grants or programs for sports clubs to become greener. Companies might donate equipment (a solar company could sponsor a panel installation in exchange for publicity). Environmental NGOs might run awareness workshops or provide volunteers for joint events. Also,

collaborate with other clubs – maybe form a local “green sports” network to share ideas and possibly resources (bulk buy recycling bins together, etc.).

- **Funding:** Some actions cost money – do a rough budget for your plan. You may allocate some club funds (the reserve or an earmarked amount each year). But also look for funding opportunities:
  - Grants: EU programs (Erasmus+ has small grants for sport & environment, local government sustainability grants, national sports eco-funds if they exist). Keep an eye on calls. Perhaps partner with an NGO or university to apply together if needed.
  - Sponsors: A local business focusing on green tech might love to sponsor your new LED lights or provide an electric vehicle for team transport, etc. Frame it as them being a hero for local community sustainability.
  - Crowdfunding: If you have a big ticket item (say, raise €10k for solar panels or a clubhouse retrofit), you could run a crowdfunding campaign appealing to community’s pride in the club’s green leadership.
  - Savings reinvestment: Emphasize that some changes save money (energy, waste) – these savings can be measured and reinvested in further sustainability efforts, creating a virtuous cycle.

Securing resources goes beyond money – it’s also about time and attention. Make sure that implementing sustainability isn’t always the last priority. By writing it into your strategy and club agenda, you commit time to it. If club leaders treat it as integral (not optional), volunteers will prioritize it too.

## 9.5 Implementation and monitoring

Once actions start, track progress. Set some Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor. These could be:

- kWh of electricity used vs last year (did it drop? by how much percent).
- Number of carpool rides or % members carpooling (maybe do a quick survey each month or ask team managers to note).
- Waste: count bags of trash vs recycling each week (if you have that data).
- Qualitative: Did we meet the goal of having no single-use plastic at events? (Yes/No).
- Youth engagement: X number of youth attended the sustainability workshop, Y number led initiatives.

It might be too much to measure everything precisely, but pick a few key metrics. The methodology suggests aligning KPIs with objectives and having data collection tools. Even simple logs or photos can evidence change.

Have the sustainability officer or team compile an update maybe quarterly. They can say “We’ve done A, B, C; energy use down 15%; working on D next.” Celebrate small wins (e.g., “We successfully implemented recycling at our tournament – 75% of waste was recycled!”). If something isn’t working (maybe people still bring plastic bottles), adjust approach (maybe distribute those club bottles earlier or set up a water refill station to make it easier).

**Reporting and continuous improvement:** At year-end or AGM, prepare a brief sustainability report or section in the annual report. List goals, what was achieved, and what’s next. This not only holds the club accountable (members see if targets were met) but also is great PR to show publicly (you could share it online or with the municipality – showing sports clubs contributing to sustainability goals). If certain goals weren’t met, explain why and roll them over with revised strategy (maybe timeline was too short, or needed more funds).

Remember to integrate sustainability with overall club strategy. It shouldn't stand alone and conflict with other aims. For instance, if a competitive team insists on separate cars to travel to away games because they all leave at different times, that conflicts with transport reduction – discuss solutions (maybe coordinate a common departure time or rent a minibus). Or finances: ensure your sustainability actions are budgeted so they don't accidentally cause a shortfall. With leadership support, find balance – perhaps sacrifice a bit of short-term convenience for long-term benefits, but also be practical.

Sustainability planning is an evolving process. Environmental technology and best practices also evolve, so update your plan periodically. Perhaps aim for some certification or external recognition to benchmark (like ISO 20121 for event sustainability, or an eco-label for sports facilities, etc., if those are accessible). External validation can motivate continued improvement.

By having a strategy, your club moves from ad-hoc efforts to a structured approach where each year you can check off achievements and raise the bar. It changes sustainability from a nice-to-do to a must-do part of how you operate. Ultimately, this planning not only reduces negative impacts but can enrich the club – you might attract green-minded new members, get positive media coverage, and generate pride internally.

Now that we have strategies and plans in place, in the final chapter we will look at how to evaluate and assess the club's performance, both in sustainability and more broadly, to ensure continuous improvement and accountability.

## **Chapter 10. Evaluation and assessment models**

How do you know if your sports club is successful in what it set out to do? How do you measure the outcomes of all these efforts – from skill development to financial health to sustainability initiatives? That's where evaluation and assessment come in. In a professional context, one might use complex models or hire auditors, but for a youth sports club we can keep it straightforward yet meaningful. This chapter discusses how to evaluate your club's performance and impact across various dimensions, and introduces some models and tools that can be adapted for a club context. Regular assessment helps you celebrate achievements, identify areas for improvement, and make evidence-based decisions for the future.

### **10.1 Why evaluate?**

Before diving into methods, it's important to understand *why* evaluation matters:

- It promotes accountability – to your members, funders, and community – showing you did what you planned (e.g., if you got a grant to run a program, you need to report on results).
- It enables continuous improvement – by seeing what works and what doesn't, you can adjust your strategies (Plan-do-check-act cycle).
- It helps in recognition and motivation – data on progress (like “we grew 20% in membership” or “90% of participants say they learned new skills”) can rally pride and further support.
- It supports sustainability – literally in terms of project continuity (good results justify renewing a program) and in institutional memory (documenting what you achieved so new leaders can learn from it).
- It aligns with a learning culture – just as athletes review game tape to improve, a club reviews its operations.

### **10.2 What to evaluate: Key areas and indicators**

Consider evaluating the club on multiple facets:

- **Sporting performance:** This could include win-loss records, but in a youth club it might be more about participation and improvement. Indicators: number of teams/championships, progression of players to higher levels, skill improvements (if measured somehow), etc.
- **Membership and participation:** Indicators: total number of members (and year-on-year growth), retention rate (% of players who return next season), demographics (did diversity improve? more girls, more age groups?), attendance rates at training/events.
- **Financial health:** Indicators: annual surplus/deficit, revenue diversity (no single source > X%), liquidity (cash on hand for X months of operation), budget adherence (were we within budget?), perhaps cost per member or per team as efficiency measure.
- **Satisfaction and feedback:** Use surveys or informal feedback from players, parents, and coaches. Indicators: % of members who rate their experience "good" or "excellent," qualitative comments about what they liked or want changed. You could survey e.g., "How satisfied are you with coaching, facilities, communication, etc.?" The Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a simple metric: asking "How likely are you to recommend this club to others?" on 0-10 scale - a high average or % of 9-10s suggests strong satisfaction.
- **Human resources & governance:** Indicators: number of active volunteers, volunteer retention, training hours provided to staff, whether key roles are filled or we have vacancies, how many committee meetings held (and attended well), member attendance at AGM (as a proxy for engagement).
- **Social and community impact:** If you do outreach, measure: number of community events held, money raised for charity, partnerships established, perhaps anecdotal stories of positive impact (e.g., "two of our youth coaches got jobs thanks to experience here").
- **Eco-sustainability goals:** From Chapter 9 – indicators tied to those: reduction in energy use, waste recycling rate, carbon footprint (if you can calculate e.g., by estimating travel emissions and facility energy). Also output measures: number of trees planted, number of sustainability workshops run, etc. Even attitude shifts: maybe survey "do you feel more knowledgeable about sustainability thanks to club activities?"
- **Competence development:** Since we emphasized education through sport, consider evaluating if youth developed skills/competences. This is tricky to measure directly, but proxies could be: number of youth who took on leadership roles, or a self-assessment survey where youth rate their improvement in areas like teamwork, initiative, knowledge of environmental issues, etc., after a season or program. You might use a simple before-after questionnaire for a particular program (e.g., an eco-entrepreneurship bootcamp: did participants feel they gained skills in project planning, did they show more eco-friendly behaviors after?).

You need not do all of these; choose what aligns with your club's objectives. Keep it manageable – a small set of key performance indicators (KPIs) that you track annually is better than an unwieldy list that no one updates.

### 10.3 Methods of evaluation

- **Surveys/questionnaires:** One of the easiest and most informative tools. Tools like Google Forms or paper surveys at year-end can gather feedback from members and parents. Keep them short to boost response rate. Include a mix of quantitative ratings and qualitative questions (e.g., "What was the best thing about this season? What could be improved?").
- **Interviews/focus groups:** Sit down with a few coaches, a few parents, or a group of older players for a chat about how things are going. This can bring deeper insight and

stories. For youth, focus groups can be engaging – ask them how the club has helped them, what they learned, etc. Keep it informal and friendly so they speak openly.

- **Observation and documentation:** Some evaluation is by observing – e.g., a committee member might drop in on a practice or event to see how organized it is, how engaged kids are. Or track during events things like “did all scheduled games start on time? were there any safety incidents?” etc. Document achievements (like training certifications gained by coaches, or improvements in facility).
- **Data tracking:** Use sign-in sheets for practices or events to calculate participation rates. Use financial software outputs for numbers. If you set up any management apps (some clubs use apps where attendance and stats are tracked), leverage those reports.
- **External evaluation:** Occasionally, getting an outside perspective can be valuable. For instance, ask someone from the federation to do a club audit or review, or if you have an experienced member not currently on the board to review the club’s plans and give feedback. Or compare with benchmarks from other clubs (if they publish annual reports, how do your numbers stack up for a club of your size?).
- **Structured models:** If you want more formal frameworks:
  - The **Balanced scorecard** approach can be adapted – normally it looks at perspectives: Financial, Customer, Internal Process, Learning & Growth. For a club, that could translate to Financial stability, Member satisfaction, Operational efficiency (e.g., training delivered, matches executed), and Development (growth in membership and personal development of members). A scorecard would have a few metrics under each. This gives a holistic view rather than just focusing on wins or money.
  - The **Logic model / Theory of change** is often used in program evaluation – it links inputs -> activities -> outputs -> outcomes -> impact. For example, input: coaches training; activity: new coaching techniques applied; output: improved training sessions; outcome: players improved skills and enjoyment; impact: healthier, empowered youth. While we might not fully quantify all that, thinking in that flow helps ensure you measure not just the input or output, but also outcomes (the actual changes achieved). For instance, not just “we held 5 sustainability workshops (output)” but “what did participants learn or do differently after (outcome)?”.
  - **Clubmark or quality club programs:** some countries (like Sport England’s Clubmark or other NSOs) have accreditation schemes where clubs meet certain standards and are evaluated on them (coaching quals, welfare, etc.). If your sport or country has one, consider aiming for it as a structured evaluation – the process of qualifying often requires evidence of good practice in all areas.

## 10.4 Using evaluation results

Collecting data is only half – what you do with it is crucial:

- **Share and celebrate:** Communicate the results to stakeholders. At the AGM, present key findings: “This year our membership grew from 80 to 100 (25% increase), 95% of parents were satisfied with our program, and we cut our energy costs by €200 by switching lights – well done team!” Use visuals like charts for impact. This not only shows transparency but also motivates everyone that their efforts yield results.
- **Address issues:** If evaluation shows problems – maybe “only 60% of members are satisfied with communication” – dig into why (maybe the survey comments say info was often last-minute). Then come up with an action: e.g., implement a communications

calendar or use a new app (tying back to Chapter 5 improvements). Show members you heard them by announcing planned fixes.

- **Adjust goals:** Perhaps you overshot or undershot some targets. Learn and recalibrate. If a goal was unrealistic, set a more attainable one next time (or break it into phases). If something was easily achieved, maybe set a higher benchmark next year.
- **Inform planning:** Feed evaluation into next year's planning (it's that Plan-do-check-act cycle). Your budget, training plan, event plan - all should consider the evaluation. For example, if evaluation says "many volunteers feel undertrained," you allocate more budget to training. Or if "youth want more tournaments," plan that in if feasible.
- **Documentation for support:** Use positive results in grant applications, sponsorship pitches, etc. ("Our club has doubled female participation in two years and was awarded a sustainability certificate - supporting us means supporting a proven successful and responsible organization.")
- **Long-term tracking:** Keep year-on-year data in a file to see trends. Maybe each year compile a short "club dashboard." This can alert you to declines (e.g., membership dropping three years in a row – time to investigate and act) or to positive growth that might require adaptation (rapid growth might stress resources, so plan expansions accordingly).

Remember, evaluation in a youth sports club shouldn't be about blame or creating a burden, but about learning and improving. It should be proportionate; don't overwhelm volunteers with too much form-filling or analysis. Focus on the aspects that matter most to your mission.

**Including youth in evaluation:** Since youth are central, involve them. Perhaps the youth leadership could run a peer survey – sometimes they'll be more honest with each other. Or do a fun evaluation activity: like asking kids to draw or write "what I learned this year" or "my favorite moment" and display those – it's qualitative feedback in a creative way. Youth might also help in data crunching if you want (learning to use Excel or so – could be educational for them).

Finally, consider external validation. If you can get an award (like the ECA Sustainability Award mentioned, or a local "Club of the Year"), that not only acknowledges success but also pushes you to maintain standards. It's not the goal in itself but a nice by-product of good performance.

In conclusion, evaluation closes the loop of our Vademecum journey: you set out with aims (educational, sustainable, organizational), you implement all these great practices and strategies, and through evaluation, you ensure that those aims are being met and continually refined.

## Conclusion & potential next steps

Managing a sports club for sustainable development is a multifaceted challenge, but also a deeply rewarding one. We have covered developing eco-entrepreneurial skills in youth, learning from European exemplars, ensuring robust management (financial, legal, human resources, risk), practicing effective communication, exercising good governance and leadership, strategizing for sustainability, and evaluating our progress. It's a lot of ground - but you don't journey alone. Engage your club's members, especially the young people, in this mission. Empower them with knowledge and responsibility, and they will inject energy and creativity into the club's development. Your club can be more than just a place to play sports; it can be a community hub, a learning environment, and a model of sustainability and inclusion.

By following the guidance in this Vademecum, sport club managers and youth leaders can confidently navigate both the everyday tasks and the long-term vision needed for success. Step by step, goal by goal, you'll build a club that not only scores on the field but also contributes to a greener, fairer society. That is the true spirit of *Sport Clubs and Youth for Sustainable Development*.

**Sources:** (The information and recommendations in this Vademecum draw on a range of resources including the SportClubsYouth4Sustain Erasmus+ project outputs, EU policy documents, and examples of best practice from sports organizations).



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