



Program
EXCELLENCE

Program Quality Standards

Sport Essentials Building Block

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Our Sport Essentials quality standards relate to:



- **Sport Development** – including quality, number and types of sport offered to athletes and unified partners (where applicable)
- **Athlete Development** – including training, retention, performance and overall development of athletes and unified partners (where applicable)
- **Coach Development** – including recruitment, training, certification, recognition and retention of coaches (including Unified coaches)
- **Unified Sports** – including types of Unified Sports models offered, number and quality of athletes in Unified Sports and quality of Unified coaches

For standards related to games and competitions, see the Games & Competition Essentials Building Block.

Program Quality Standards

The Program Quality Standards are a tool to help Programs develop and grow. They were a 'ground-up' initiative - created with input from Programs in all Regions. The standards are for Special Olympics Accredited Programs, specifically for Program Leaders. They enable Program Leaders to understand, manage, support and deliver activities to a high level of quality.

Using the standards:

The standards are grouped into 10 'building blocks'. Within each building block, most standards have three stages. Read them from left to right – starting with Stage 1 and moving in the direction of Stage 3.

You can use the standards to conduct a self-assessment, help set goals for your strategic and operational plans, track your progress and celebrate your growth.

The standards can help you set goals in your plan, but do not replace your Program's plan which should outline specific growth goals. You may also consider using the self-assessment tool we have created to help you.



Sports Essentials	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Sport Development (incl. Unified)	Program has a written annual sport development plan and seeks to recruit new athletes/partners every year	Program has a written three-year sport development plan that includes athlete/partner recruitment	Program improves athlete/partner recruitment every year in keeping with multi-year targets in the plan
	Program develops and builds relationships with Sport Governing Bodies	Program has formal partnerships with 25% of relevant Sport Governing Bodies	Program has formal partnerships with 50% of relevant Sport Governing Bodies
	Program offers at least three Special Olympics sports, one of which is a team sport	Program offers seven Special Olympics sports and Motor Activities Training Program	Program offers more than seven Special Olympics sports
Athlete Development (incl. Unified)	Program communicates the importance and impact of training and nutrition to all athletes, partners, coaches and families	Program has introduced a structured plan for athlete development (per SOI Athlete Development Model)	Program has fully implemented the Athlete Development Model
	Program assesses and tracks athlete and partner performance	Program tracks athlete and partner retention and facilitates progress	Program improves athlete and partner retention and promotes athlete ownership of assessment and training
	All athletes and partners in the Program train at least twice a week	Athletes and partners engage in some form of exercise every second day	Athletes and partners exercise daily
Coach Development (incl. Unified)	Key coach information is registered on a database: contact information, sport(s) coached, certification type and status	Program has a written, multi-year coach recruitment and retention plan that includes growth targets	Coach recruitment and retention improve year to year in alignment with multi-year targets from plan
	Program targets coaching staff of schools, youth leagues and sports clubs to work with Special Olympics	Program targets individuals that have formal sports training, education and/or certification	All head coaches are certified through local Sports Governing Bodies and recertification process is adhered to
		Program improves the ratio for sports with high athlete to coach ratios	Program implements the 'Athletes as Coaches' program
	Program provides regular, certified sport-specific teaching (per SOI Coach Development Model)	Program provides regular updates to certified coaches (e.g. rules changes, nutrition tips, new training drills, etc)	Program enables coaches to improve Sports Science knowledge (e.g. nutrition, psychology)
	Program implements a basic coach recognition plan	Program formally recognizes coaches that complete certification and re-certification requirements	Program recognizes coaches based on evaluation of performance
Unified Sports	Program offers one Unified Sports model	Program offers two Unified Sports models	Program offers all Unified Sports models
	10% of Program athletes participate in Unified Sports	20% of Program athletes participate in Unified Sports	35% of Program athletes participate in Unified Sports
	10% of coaches are certified as Unified Sports coaches	20% of coaches are certified as Unified Sports coaches	35% of coaches are certified as Unified Sports coaches