



## 2011-2015 STRATEGIC PLAN

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### **Overview**

*What is the Special Olympics 2011-2015 Strategic Plan?*

The Special Olympics 2011-2015 Strategic Plan is a document that defines 5-year (2011-2015) goals, strategic initiatives, high-level actions, and broad statements of success for Special Olympics as a global Movement.

*Why was a Strategic Plan created?*

The strength of Special Olympics as a worldwide organization depends on our shared commitment to a set of common goals and an ability to communicate these goals within the Movement and to communities at large in a consistent and well-articulated way. With over 200 Programs in over 170 countries, alignment across common goals and messages is not an easy task. The Strategic Plan is designed as a tool to help the Movement in addressing this challenge.

*Who is the Plan for?*

In short, the Plan is designed for all of us. The 2011-2015 Strategic Plan was designed by Program leaders, staff members, volunteers, and athletes from around the world in order to serve as a single guiding document and point of reference for the global Movement. This is a Movement-wide Plan, not an SOI Plan. It is the most sincere hope and intent of everyone who contributed to this document that the Movement-wide Strategic Plan will help Regional offices, Special Olympics Programs, and even local Special Olympics clubs as we all develop annual operating plans, budgets, and activities in the course of the five-year period.

*There are five Pillars in the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan. Does that suggest that each Pillar is equally important and equally prioritized?*

There is no implied Pillar prioritization. The current Strategic Framework that contains five Pillars (Advance Quality Sports Training & Competitions, Build Communities, Connect Fans and Funds, Develop Movement Leadership and Create Sustainable Capabilities) is strictly an organizing framework to help the Movement visualize, in a holistic manner, our key areas of focus over the next five years.

#### **Planning process**

*What prompted creation of the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan?*

By mid-2009, Special Olympics arrived at a critical juncture. The Movement's reach grew tremendously over the preceding decade. We now engage 3.5 million athletes in 170 countries. The Movement's 2006-2010 Strategic Plan paved the way for a new Movement-wide strategic planning effort that

needed to reflect the growing complexity and reach of the global organization. Given all of these considerations, the 2011-2015 strategic planning process was launched in July 2009 with a series of “focus” group discussions that involved Regional Advisory Councils and individual Program leaders from around the world. A comprehensive Mission Effectiveness Survey conducted in the second half of 2009, provided the rich factual foundation for the strategic assessment and highlighted some of the challenges that we will need to address in the next five years.

#### *Who participated in the planning process?*

The 2011-2015 strategic planning process was designed centrally at Special Olympics headquarters; however, content of the Strategic Plan primarily resulted from the inputs and recommendations given by Special Olympics leaders from around the world. Nearly 2,000 Program representatives completed the Mission Effectiveness Survey, hundreds of Program Directors, Presidents, CEOs and Board members participated in the “focus” groups. To help Special Olympics work through the process we formed a Strategic Planning Steering Committee that engaged nearly 20 Program leaders, Special Olympics staff and external partners, who communicated on a regular basis to provide for real-time course-corrections and feedback. At the forefront of content development were five strategic planning Working Groups that provided thought leadership and constant engagement from January to September 2010. Each Working Group consisted of 5-7 Program representatives, including Special Olympics athletes, and was responsible for developing goals and actions for one of the five strategic Pillars that currently constitute the backbone of our Plan. Most notably, over 600 delegates, representing critical stakeholders across all seven Regions, actively critiqued and provided feedback on the Plan during 2010 Special Olympics Global Congress in Morocco in June of 2010. Feedback was also solicited from Regional Advisory Councils and the International Advisory Committee, Movement leaders at the regional and international levels.

#### *What were the key milestones in the planning process?*

- Mid-Summer 2009: official launch of the planning process
- August 2009; establishment of the strategic planning Steering Committee
- Fall 2009: strategic planning “focus” groups with Regional Advisory Councils and Movement leaders; implementation and analysis of the Mission Effectiveness Survey results
- January 2010: creation of the five Pillar-specific Working Groups
- February 2010: publication of Version 1.0 that represented the first consolidated collection of Working Group inputs
- May 2010: publication of Version 2.0 – the first attempt at a full-scale planning document that served as the basis for discussion at the 2010 Global Congress
- June 2010: Global Congress in Marrakesh, Morocco - a forum that provided over 600 Movement leaders from over 120 Programs with opportunities to actively discuss and provide input on the Plan
- August 2010: publication of the updated Version 3.0 of the Plan—including business cases and responsibilities for SOI Headquarters, Regions, and Programs

- October 2010: Executive Committee of Special Olympics Board of Directors expressed support for the Plan and five-year approaches to funding for key strategic initiatives
- November 2010: Special Olympics Board of Directors officially approves 2011-2015 Strategic Plan
- December 2010: final publication of the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan

*How were key prioritization and sequencing decisions made?*

Throughout the planning process, Working Groups and the Steering Committee emphasized the importance of the holistic approach and the need to make progress in all five Pillar areas. This balanced approach is at the core of the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan, and we deliberately did not make prioritization decisions at the Pillar level. However, because of objective financial, informational and structural constraints it would not be prudent to launch all strategic initiatives at once and pursue all goals for five years at equal levels of intensity. As a result, following the Global Congress in Morocco, Special Olympics staff and members of the Working Groups worked diligently to understand financial and organizational requirements behind all strategic initiatives and key actions. Based on this body of work, Special Olympics management was able to share with Special Olympics Board members a detailed map of proposed resource allocations by strategic initiatives and key actions as well as a multi-year approach to actions that need to be taken in each area. It is our shared belief that this methodology enabled us to allocate substantial resources across all five Pillars maintaining the balanced approach, yet we will be able to execute the plan within real-world financial and organizational constraints. If you would like obtain more information about prioritization and sequencing, please refer to the “Strategic Choices and Financial Summary” section of the Strategic Plan.

*Who formally adopted this Plan?*

Special Olympics 2011-2015 Strategic Plan was formally adopted in its entirety (including strategic assessment, the 5-Pillar Strategic Framework, Strategic Initiatives, goals, high-level actions and recommended division of responsibilities among various levels of the Movement) by a Resolution of the Board of Directors of Special Olympics on November 16, 2010.

**Plan implementation**

*How will we measure our success as a Movement? Are there sets of concrete metrics and a clear Vision Statement for where we want to be by 2015?*

The 2011-2015 Strategic Plan, by design, does not provide a single vision statement for all areas. However, the Plan attempts to offer a defined position with respect to our shared understanding of Special Olympics athlete experience and proposes vision statements for all 5 Pillar areas, as well as forward-looking descriptions of all strategic initiatives. It is a shared belief expressed at the 2010 Global Congress and in the course of our work on the Plan that there should be clear measurable parameters of success set for all Pillars of the Strategic Plan as well as strategic initiatives. Collectively, top-level goals by Pillar will be consolidated into a strategic Scorecard and shared with the Board of Directors twice a year. Throughout the Movement, Special Olympics will rely on the annual Census and related processes

to collect information and monitor progress against goals of the global Strategic Plan. For more details, please refer to the “Implementation Support” section of the Strategic Plan.

*How will the Movement-wide Strategic Plan connect to the planning work for my National/State or local Special Olympics Program?*

If you are in the process of developing or finalizing an operational (1-year) or a strategic (multi-year) plan for your Program, we encourage your team to consult, debate, and adopt themes that have emerged through the Movement-wide strategic planning process. Special Olympics Regional offices have started to work with individual Special Olympics Programs to provide additional support, guidance and materials with the view of translating global strategic themes into Program-specific plans. This work will continue and intensify throughout 2011 to engage Programs around the world and ensure inclusion and translation of the themes developed for the global Strategic Plan in the Program-level planning efforts. If you conduct planning efforts for a local Special Olympics club or group of teams, please work with your National/State Program representatives to make sure that priorities and actions proposed in the global Strategic Plan are reflected at the most local level.

*What other expectations does the Strategic Plan set for Special Olympics Programs?*

Overall, the Movement-wide Strategic Plan was developed with a clear understanding that Special Olympics Programs around the world have unique goals and characteristics and work in a wide range of environments, social, economic and political structures. Consequently, the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan is designed as a point of global alignment, a common yardstick, a shared set of aspirations, but not a mandate. Special Olympics encourages Programs worldwide to embrace themes, aspirations and goals of the Strategic Plan. Only some Programs are equipped to meet all planning targets in the five-year period. However, it is our hope that in the next five years Programs everywhere will be able to make progress across all Pillar areas and across many of the identified strategic initiatives. As a first step, we hope that Programs will use the Plan to guide development of their own plans, operating budgets, and on-going projects. Each strategic initiative details a recommended division of responsibilities that highlights contributions expected from Special Olympics headquarters, Regional offices and Programs. Based on these recommendations for each initiative, Programs are encouraged to review and as much as possible contribute to the collaborative efforts across strategic initiatives. It is important to consider that all targets and actions in the Plan were developed based on the input from Program leaders and thus reflect realistic expectations and assessments of today’s leadership. While few Programs can achieve all goals, the aggregate of our efforts should allow us to achieve all Movement-wide goals.

*What tools are available for promoting and communicating about our Plan?*

We understand that within the lifespan of the Strategic Plan (2011-2015) Special Olympics leaders and constituents will have different levels of interest and communication needs. While the full Strategic Plan will continue to serve as the best reference point for complete sets of goals, proposed actions and roles, Special Olympics will work actively throughout 2011 to develop multiple communication tools that will be designed to facilitate sharing of common messages within the global Movement and with external supporters, donors and friends. We will continue to sharpen our Plan-related messages, brief comments (“elevator” speech) and other communication tools. Strategic Plan communication toolkit

will be finalized in the first half of 2011. The following communication tools are currently available to Special Olympics Programs:

- *One-Page Plan Summary*: This is one-page table that summarizes key aspects of the Strategic Plan for easy reference.
- *Program Guidance Summary*: A leadership guide for Special Olympics Program Staff and Boards to help understand and build plans locally.
- *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)*: We have been collecting a set of common questions that have been asked about the Plan and interpretations of the document. These questions and answers are included in this document.

### **Next steps**

*Is this the end of the planning process?*

Our Plan is a “living and breathing” document. In practical terms this means that periodic progress reviews with Special Olympics Board of Directors may result in adjustments and modifications to our goals, strategic initiatives, and proposed actions. These adjustments can result in upward as well as downward revisions of the goals in response to the success (or challenges) of individual initiatives or changes in the global economy and external environment. That said, the release of the Final Version of the Strategic Plan signals the end of our formal 2011-2015 Plan development process. Special Olympics will launch a full 2016-2020 strategic planning process and corresponding “focus groups” and constituent discussions in the run-up to the 2015 Global Congress. Between early 2011 and 2015, Special Olympics will communicate our shared progress on the way to executing 2011-2015 Strategic Plan with Programs, Special Olympics Board and other key stakeholders.

*How can I personally support achievement of the 2011-2015 strategic goals?*

While we all contribute to various aspects of the global Special Olympics Movement and can impact the work only at certain levels of the worldwide organization, there are several ways in which we all can facilitate shared success by 2015:

- Read and critically assess 2011-2015 Strategic Plan focusing on current situation assessment, vision statements for the Pillars and five-year goals.
- Engage in strategic discussions with peers within your own Program and with friends from other Special Olympics Programs. Jointly try to ask and address questions raised by the current Plan. What strategic initiatives are the most impactful in our area? What support do we need from other levels of the Movement? What will we do every year to ensure progress by 2015?
- Contribute to data collection efforts that help all of us measure progress against strategic goals, for example, through annual Special Olympics Census, Healthy Athletes post-screening data collection, Games Management System (GMS) updates.
- Connect with your Special Olympics Program office, Regional Advisory Council or Regional office to receive strategy updates, ask questions and obtain clarifications.
- Host your own facilitated Strategic Plan implementation update discussions.

*My questions still aren't answered. Who should I contact?*

More detailed information is included in the Final Strategic Plan. Questions can be sent to your Special Olympics Program office, Regional office or Regional Advisory Council. If you still have unanswered questions, please send them to [strategicplanning@specialolympics.org](mailto:strategicplanning@specialolympics.org)