



COMMUNITY SPORTS SECTOR

SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

March 2025



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Community Sport Councils Ontario
is a non-profit organization
**building community sport
with a vision of healthier,
more physically literate
communities across Ontario**

Introduction



Community Sport Council Ontario Message

Community sport in Ontario is undergoing a transformative period as the province faces shifting demographics, evolving social dynamics, and a growing need for inclusivity and accessibility in its sport offerings. Recognizing the critical role that community sport plays in fostering healthy, vibrant communities, Community Sport Councils Ontario (CSCO) has undertaken a comprehensive research initiative aimed at deepening our understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by the community sport sector.

This report presents the findings of primary research conducted across various stakeholder groups, including Community Sport Councils, Accessible Sport Councils, and their affiliated community sport clubs, which together represent thousands of community-based sport organizations, making up 63.4% of the data collected. Additionally, we gathered insights from community-based sport leagues and associations (19.5%) and other related groups, such as Community Sport Hall of Fames, Youth Advisory Committees, and Provincial Sport Associations (17.07%).

The purpose of this research is to advance the CSCO's understanding of the current landscape of community sport in Ontario, with the ultimate goal of informing policy decisions, contributing to strategic priorities, and shaping future initiatives that support the growth and sustainability of the sector. The research process was supported by an expert advisory team drawn from nonprofit, business, education, and community sectors, and received valuable placement assistance from the University of Toronto's Kinesiology and Physical Education program. This collaborative approach has ensured that the findings of this study are not only comprehensive but also reflective of the diverse perspectives within the community sport ecosystem.

The need for this research is rooted in the recognition that Ontario's community sport system is complex and fragmented, requiring a thorough and data-driven examination to identify gaps, challenges, and opportunities. With shifting public health priorities, evolving government policies, and growing calls for more inclusive, accessible sport offerings, it is essential to understand the real-world impacts on community

organizations and their ability to provide services to Ontarians. This research seeks to explore how the community sport sector can adapt to these changes, capitalize on emerging opportunities, and ensure that sport remains a tool for social cohesion, health, and well-being for all.

Our hypothesis is that a comprehensive, collaborative approach to addressing the challenges faced by community sport organizations will lead to more effective policy recommendations, greater alignment across stakeholders, and a stronger, more unified sport system in Ontario. The research design incorporated both qualitative and quantitative research via a survey tool to seek responses from the community sport network in Ontario. The insights gleaned from this process will serve as a foundation for the development of actionable strategies that respond to the needs of Ontario's sport community and contribute to the sector's long-term sustainability and success.

Through this report, we hope to provide a clearer picture of the current state of community sport in Ontario, highlight key challenges, and present evidence-based recommendations that will guide the sector towards a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable future.



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Collaborative Partners

Matt Dent from Bison & Bison, Deb Cummings from Cummings & Goings, and Jodie Fothergill.

Advisory Team

CSCO Board of Directors and select Community Sport Council Leaders, Heather Mitchell from the Toronto Community Sport Collective, Jeff Carmichael from the Sport For Development Group in Toronto, and David Black from the Toronto Baseball Association. A special thanks to Dr. Julie Stevens, Professor of Sport Management at Brock University for her thoughtful feedback, constructive criticism, and unwavering support. Overall, the group insights have been instrumental in shaping the direction of this study.

Research Participants

Community Sport Councils, Accessible Sport Councils and their community-based affiliate Members, local Sport Leagues & Associations, Community Sport Advisory Committees, Community Sport Hall of Fames, Provincial Sport Bodies and Agencies/Companies engaged with the community sport sector in Ontario. Your willingness to share your experiences and perspectives has provided the foundation for this research, and your contributions have made this study richer and more meaningful.

Executive Summary




The future of sport and recreation in Ontario is now. It's time for our communities to adapt, evolve, and embrace the way forward. As Ontario becomes more diverse, our community sport system must evolve to reflect the changing demographics and the new Canadian Sport Policy (2023–2033) that promises a positive future for all.

The new normal is here. How do we embrace it? How do we, as a community, ensure that sport and recreation remain at the heart of our province's culture? The answer lies in unity and action. The Community Sport Sector in Ontario needs a louder voice and a more significant role in shaping the future of sport.


That means the grassroots sport sector isn't just vital—it's essential to the fabric of Ontario's identity! But we face challenges. Our system is mostly fragmented. We need to rebuild, strengthen, and support the core of community sport to ensure it's accessible and inclusive for every Ontarian. This is where the Sport in Ontario Collective (SOC), led by the

CSCO, comes in. By bringing together Government at all levels, Community Sport Organizations and Agencies & Provincial Sport Organizations, Public Health, Education, Municipal Parks and Recreation and the Community, together we can create a comprehensive, collaborative approach to address gaps, enhance services, and advocate for strategic investments.

We need to come together as a sports community to make our case clear: community sport is not just a luxury—it's a necessity. From grants for infrastructure to research that informs better decision-making, Ontario's sport sector requires consistent, coordinated support.



"It's time to invest in the future we want – one that's diverse, inclusive, and open to all."



Research Methodology

The research is aimed to gather insights from Ontario's community sport sector through an online survey, focusing on identifying gaps between world best practices and actual practices in sport organizations in Ontario. The results will help propose recommendations to improve community sport practices.

The survey, developed using Google Forms for easy access and data management, targeted a wide range of stakeholders, including Community Sport Councils, Accessible Sport Councils, Sport leagues, Associations, and Provincial Sport Associations.

Survey questions were created after reviewing over 500 international abstracts on community sport, identifying 27 themes, and narrowing them down to 15 for better focus and specialization. The survey questions were used to collect comparative data on the best practices in sport organization operations from around the world with those practices currently being used by Ontario based sport organizations.

Participation was voluntary and confidential. The survey ran from March 2024 to September 2024, allowing ample time for responses and thorough data collection. The goal of this research is to identify gaps between current and ideal practices, providing strategic recommendations to enhance the operational effectiveness of Ontario's community sport organizations.

Research Project Objectives

1. Connect with the community sport sector in Ontario to gain a snapshot of sport organization operational health.
2. Review and analyse responses received from the community sport sector in Ontario.
3. Identify gaps in best practices in operational health between world best practices and the practices of Ontario based sport organizations.

4. Determine levels of agreement between world best practices and the practices of Ontario based sport organizations.
5. Make recommendations on sustainability for the Ontario sport sector.
6. Develop recommendations and action steps to address many of the challenges facing the sector to encourage recognition and discussion on possible solutions for Ontario based sport organizations.

Summary of Findings

There were a total of 123 responses to the survey from 41 communities, representing a diverse range of sport organizations and stakeholders within the province representing thousands of community sport organizations.

The tabulation and analysis of responses to the 15 themed questions was completed to identify the level of alignment of Ontario community sport organizations with best practices from Canada and the World. An assessment has taken place to observe whether there was a strong alignment and agreement in practices or an identification of a gap which exists where recommendations & actions can be made to better align with world best practices and to contribute to sport organization sustainability in Ontario.

Strong Alignment with World Best Practices (GREEN DESIGNATION)

- Sport is a tool that can build capacity in community sport organizations (82.11% agreed) developing leaders and supporting underserved sectors (Q.1)
- Community partnerships are essential to leverage community resources in the delivery of sport programs (Q.2)
- Community sport organizations need to be visible in the community to attract attention and engagement (Q.5)
- The Canadian sport policy should adapt to the changing demographics of the Canadian population (Q.7)
- Community sport has adapted to the new normal with 81.30% experiencing little restrictions (Q.8)

- Sport is inextricably tied to tourism (Q. 10)
- Offering youth sport programs is key to sport club sustainability shown by 78% of agreement in offerings (Q.11)
- Many community sport organizations would like to see a Community Sport Council or Accessible Sport Council. Research respondents agree by 87.8% that a community discussion could be beneficial to investigate this community advocacy opportunity (Q.12)
- Funding cutbacks-community use of schools - 1/3 of communities have not been cutback but have had increasing demands for services (Q.14)

Limited alignment with World Best Practices (AMBER DESIGNATION)

- Sport is a tool that can build capacity, but it is under utilized in communities as only ½ of organizations use sport in this way (Q.1)
- Sport program evaluations are used by 64% sport orgs in Ontario and 21% do not use evaluation tools at all (Q.3)
- Increased corporate participation in community sport results in wealth generation for all. (Q.4)
- Sixty percent of Community sport organizations reach out to corporations for support. Research shows corporate approaches are underutilized, limiting revenue generation for sport organizations (Q.5)
- Municipal relationships are key to community sport organization survival. 75.61% agreed sport orgs need to approach municipalities more often to build and enhance relationships. The research showed there was 21.95% lack of relationship with municipality (Q.6)
- Canadian sport policy-Ontario sport orgs need to adapt to demographic changes of policy & needs of communities (safe sport & underserved groups) but many groups do not have resources (Q.7)
- 81.30% of Ontario communities have reacted well and adjusted to the new normal with little restrictions-post covid however in many community's sport organizations have increasing difficulty accessing play space for local programming and have higher demands on services offered (Q.9)

- There is a limited alignment of sport groups partnering with the tourism sector and is an under-utilized opportunity (Q.10)
- Funding cutbacks of community use of schools has occurred as research shows 32.52% of groups experienced some cutbacks. Third of sport organizations have received cutbacks with increasing demands on services (Q.14)

Little alignment with World Best Practices (RED DESIGNATION)

- Accessing community space is more difficult now as 68.29% have challenges accessing the necessary community space for community sport organizations programs (Q.13)
- The new normal for our communities shows an increasing demand for sport programs by the public. There are many challenges that need to be addressed such as facility access, funding, volunteer management, adapting to our changing community, equity in sport, underserved sectors (adaptive sports, niche sports, BIPOC, Indigenous & New Canadians) and provincial priorities i.e. safe sport (Q.15)

Please note: A comprehensive list of recommendations can be found in the body of this report under each of the 15 World Best Practice Theme sections, Q 1 – 15 on pages 20 to 52. Each recommendation with action steps have been categorized into one of three designations:



GREEN DESIGNATION identifies **strong alignment** with world best practices.



AMBER DESIGNATION identifies **limited alignment** with world best practices.



RED DESIGNATION shows **little alignment** with best practices.

COMMUNITY SPORTS COUNCIL ONTARIO

14 Key Sustainability Recommendations

01

Build partnerships with diverse communities to leverage resources



02

Leverage economic and health benefits of sport



03

Form more strategic partnerships



04

Establish continuous evaluation and improvement processes



05

Secure local and corporate support to increase funding support for sport



06

Organize sporting events to increase visibility & viability of sport organization



07

Strengthen Municipal collaborations with shared resources



08

Adapt sport programs to changes in community demographics



09

Ensure Post-Covid sustainability



10

Strengthen collaboration between Tourism and Sport organizations



11

Promote inclusivity and accessibility of community sport programs



12

Advocate for increased funding and facilities by lobbying all levels of government



13

Engage the community whenever possible with public sessions, networking events



14

Develop sport leadership opportunities - youth and volunteer leadership



From Research to Action

Implementing these recommendations and action steps may enhance sustainability, inclusivity and community impact for community sport organizations in Ontario. The next steps in the implementation of any possible actions and initiatives will need:

1. To prioritize key actions and identify immediate, short-term, long-term initiatives based on sport organization resources.
2. Allocate resources efficiently-develop a budget plan and a strategy to support initiatives.
3. Engage key stakeholders of all types-provincial, municipal, business and community leaders to build collective ownership of these Ontario based initiatives.
4. Track progress-use evaluation metrics to measure success and adapt strategies when necessary.

The CSCO Board is providing initial backbone support for the 'Sport in Ontario Collective' with the intent to unite all sectors to review findings, evaluate recommendations and take actionable steps. The Collective will be initiated in Spring 2025 as an inclusive conversation that is open to all sport stakeholders, at all levels of sport, in Ontario.

Survey Methodology



The research aims to gather insights and feedback from the community sport sector in Ontario through a comprehensive online survey questionnaire. The study focuses on identifying operational gaps between established best practices and the actual responses received from sport organizations. The results of this research have been analyzed to propose strategic recommendations aimed at closing the gaps and improving practices in the community sport sector.

The research utilized a survey methodology for data collection, with an online survey as the primary instrument for gathering input from stakeholders within the Ontario community sport sector.

- **Survey Development:** The survey is designed using Google Forms, ensuring ease of access, completion, and data management. It is specifically developed to solicit input from a wide range of stakeholders within community sports organizations.
- **Target Respondents:** The survey reached out to stakeholders across the community sport sector in Ontario, including Community Sport Councils, Accessible Sport Councils and their community sport club members, Sport Leagues & Associations, Community Advisory Committees, Community Sport Hall of Fames and other community groups including Provincial sport Associations.
- **Survey Structure and Question Development:** The survey questions were developed based on a thorough review of over 500 abstracts related to community sports. From this review, 27 themes were identified. These themes were subsequently reduced to 15 combined themes for better alignment and focus in the development of the survey questions. The question statements reflect best practices within community sport management and operations. These best practices serve as the benchmark for comparison with responses received from Ontario sport organizations. The aim is to assess how closely actual practices align with ideal standards.
- **Survey Participation:** Participation in the survey is voluntary and confidential, ensuring ethical integrity and protecting the anonymity of all participants. The survey was conducted online, allowing for a wide reach and ease of participation.

- **Survey Timeline:** The survey was launched in late March 2024 and closed on September 15, 2024, to allow sufficient time for participants to respond and for a comprehensive data collection process.

This research methodology is designed to systematically gather, analyse, and interpret data from Ontario's community sport sector, using an online survey to collect stakeholder input. In this study ChatGPT was used to summarize large amounts of ideas from survey respondents and researchers to expand basic theories for consideration in this research project. Through a robust gap analysis, this study aims to identify discrepancies between current practices and established best practices, with the goal of offering strategic recommendations to enhance the operational effectiveness of community sport organizations across the province.

Survey Results



The following pages present the research results for all 15 survey questions, each broken down into six areas:

- World Best Practice Theme to be surveyed
- Question statement based on many combined themes of best practices
- Relevant themes
- Research findings from Ontario sport organizations
- Gap statement
- Recommendations for the community sport sector

A total of 123 responses were received from 41 communities, representing a diverse range of sport organizations and stakeholders within the province representing thousands of community sport organizations.

A review of all 15 survey question responses has been completed to identify the level of alignment of Ontario community sport organizations with best practices from Canada and the World. An assessment has taken place to observe whether there was a strong alignment and agreement in practices (green designation) or an identification of a gap that exists (amber designation or red designation) where recommendations & action steps can be made to contribute to sport organization sustainability in Ontario.



Eleven questions were observed to have a **GREEN DESIGNATION** (Q1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14) showing an alignment in operational best practices.



Eight questions were observed to have an **AMBER DESIGNATION** (Q1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 14) showing a gap with opportunities for enhancements.



Two questions were observed to have a **RED DESIGNATION** in practices (Q13, 15) showing a large gap with opportunities for enhancements.

Note: For a complete list of all question designations and corresponding recommendations please refer to Appendix 3 (p. 73-75) for information.

World Best Practice Theme: Question 1

GREEN DESIGNATION

Sport is an effective tool at building capacity in both advantaged and disadvantaged communities.

Question Statement

Does your organization use sport to build capacity (developing leaders, supporting underserved sectors in the community and increasing financial stability) for your organization?

Relevant Themes

Theme 1: Sport is an effective tool at building capacity in advantaged and disadvantaged communities; Theme 5: Sport can be a tool to enhance human resource development within communities; Theme 24: Sport is a valuable tool to decrease strain on social services and healthcare systems.

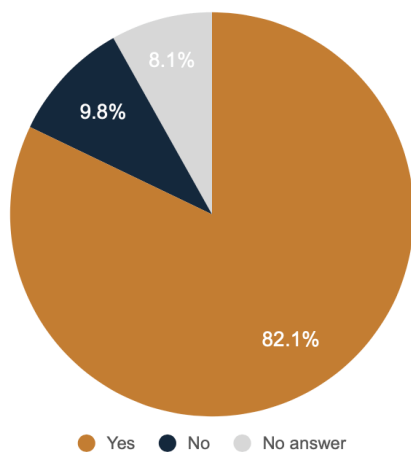
Gap Statement

No initial gap observed. A high correlation with world best practice theme statement of results from the Ontario sport organizations (82.11%) indicated an agreement with the multiple capacity building benefits for these organizations. However, when building leaders and supporting underserved sectors, only 56.10 % of respondents agreed that sport has limited ability to build capacity.

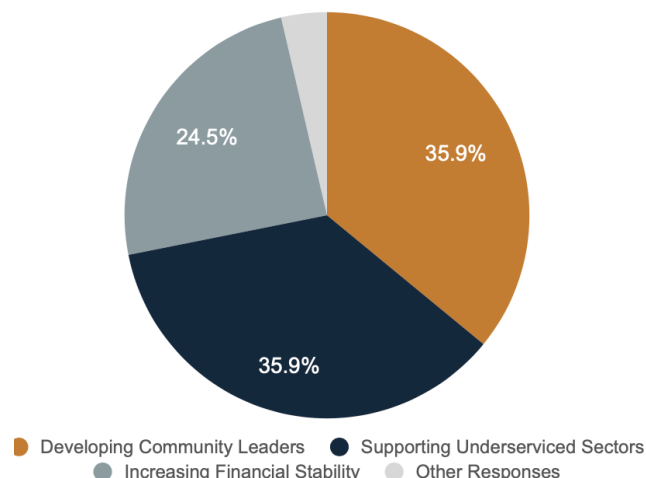


Research results from Ontario Sport Organizations

Do sports organizations use sport to build capacity?



How does sport build capacity?



Recommendations for Ontario's Community Sport Sector

Sport enhances capacity by providing training in leadership, coaching, event management, and administration, while fostering soft skills like communication and problem-solving. It is recommended that sport organizations leverage volunteer training to boost operational efficiency with local support. Sport programs for youth and marginalized groups promote social integration and mental health, with partnerships improving access and equity. Targeted programs for women, girls, and minorities can advance gender equity and rights. Economic stability is supported through job creation, local business growth, and tourism-driven events, with collaboration with local tourism offices helping secure grants and promote events.

Sources that informed this section: D'Souza et al. 2019; Jones et al. 2018; Marlier et al. 2014; Misener and Doherty 2013; Wade et al. 2016; Whitley et al. 2015. Full citations can be found in the bibliography.

World Best Practice Theme: Question 2

GREEN DESIGNATION

Community partnerships are essential to leverage available resources.

Question statement
Which community organizations do you work with now?

Relevant Themes

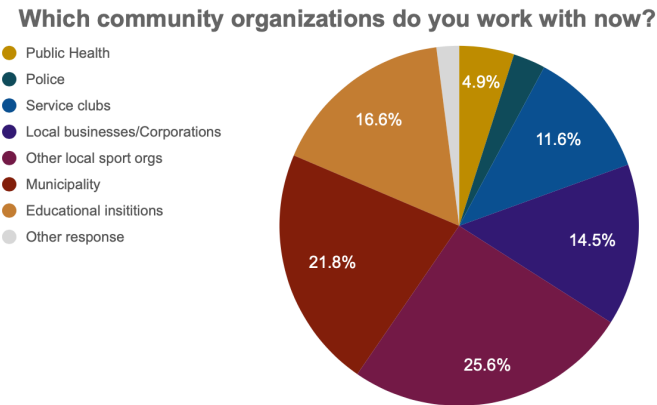
Theme 2: Correct support of community stakeholders leads to increased sport participation; Theme 3: Involving multiple community stakeholders leverages resources for community sport; Theme 4: Nonprofit need to establish community relationships to leverage community resources; Theme 13: Community sports partnerships are a big predictor of success within the community; Theme 21: Number and quality of relationships helps to increase sustainable practices of community organizations.

Gap statement

General agreement regarding the leverage importance of robust community partnerships by both world best practices and Ontario sport organizations. However, many sport organizations agree to the statement but limit their reach out to traditional community groups.

“Leveraging community partnerships is essential for sport organization sustainability”

Research results from Ontario Sport Organizations



Recommendations for Ontario's Community Sport Sector

Research shows that other sport partnerships or non-traditional partners such as municipal, healthcare, local businesses and service clubs are important to success. Examples of other community sport organizations are: Sport for Development charities, Special Olympics, Charitable NFP, Volunteer Centre.

This recommendation emphasizes the importance of strategic collaborations among community organizations in Ontario to leverage resources and enhance shared community impact. Key partners include local sport organizations, municipalities, educational institutions, businesses, and service clubs. Resource sharing with schools, businesses, healthcare providers, and police services is encouraged to support shared goals in community health and youth initiatives. Additionally, partnerships with social service agencies, community foundations, and employee groups can aid community projects. Community sport organizations should strengthen ties with nonprofits, government agencies, and corporations to unlock funding opportunities. Building a diverse stakeholder network and fostering proactive relationships are crucial for creating a sustainable, inclusive ecosystem that maximizes participation and ensures long-term success.

Sources that informed this section: Jones et al. 2018, Loomis et al. 2019, Millar and Doherty 2016, Millar and Doherty 2018, Millar and Doherty 2021, Whitley et al. 2015. Full citations can be found in the bibliography.

World Best Practice Theme: Question 3

AMBER DESIGNATION

To optimize the growth of community sports organizations, it is important that organizations evaluate their preparedness to increase capacity, highlighting the need to regularly evaluate their current practices and tools.

Question statement

Does your sport organization use evaluation tools? And if so, what are your most preferred tools?

Relevant Themes

Theme 6: Community sport organizations need to be ready to increase their capacity; Theme 7: Evaluation tools are needed to determine if community sport organizations are ready; Theme 8: Community organizations should regularly evaluate their practices to determine if they are running optimally and meeting needs of the community; Theme 9: Evaluation is needed to determine next steps in increasing ability to provide for enhanced services.

Gap statement

A gap is observed as only 64.23% of Ontario based sport organizations use evaluation tools in their ongoing program operations. 21.95% admit no use of evaluation tools at all.

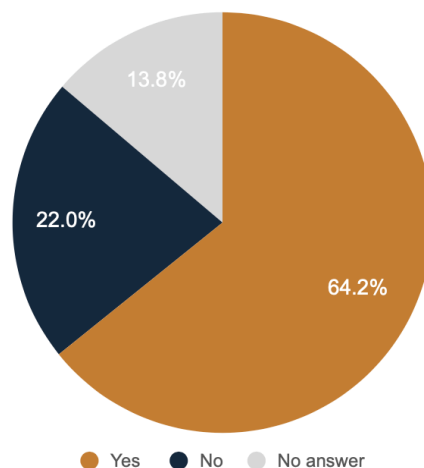
There is a perceived gap as just over half of Ontario based groups use program enrollment numbers and participant satisfaction surveys on a regular basis to increase sustainability of the program and its organization.



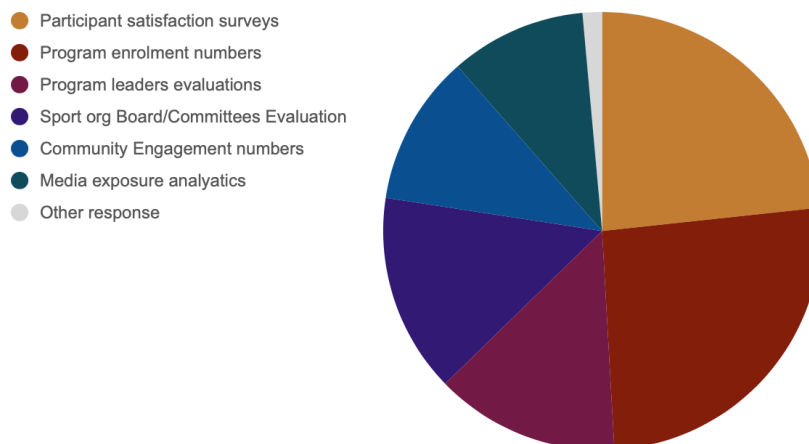
Conduct regular service
offering evaluations

Research results from Ontario Sport Organizations

Does your sport use evaluation tools?



Popular Sport Evaluation Tools



Recommendations for Ontario's Community Sport Sector

Ontario-based sport organizations should regularly use summative and formative evaluations with Key Performance Indicators and stay informed about community demographic changes. Key evaluation types include enrolment numbers, satisfaction surveys, board evaluations, and program leader assessments. These evaluations help ensure that sport organizations meet membership needs,

maintain quality, and sustain future programs. Relevant tools like surveys, interviews, observations, performance metrics, SWOT analysis, logic models, KPIs, benchmarking, cost-benefit analysis, and community impact assessments provide actionable insights for improvement. Other tools, like development learning tools and grant application feedback, can also support ongoing learning.

Sources that informed this section: Bingle 2019, Harris 2018, Jones et al. 2018, Marlier et al. 2014, Wade et al. 2016. Full citations can be found in the bibliography.

World Best Practice Theme: Question 4

AMBER DESIGNATION

Increased corporate participation in community sport results in wealth generation for all.

Question statement

Does your community sport organization benefit from local, provincial or national business support?

Relevant Themes

Theme 10: Corporate companies have a social obligation to increase sport participation; Theme 11: Increased corporate participation in community sport results in increase in wealth generation for all.

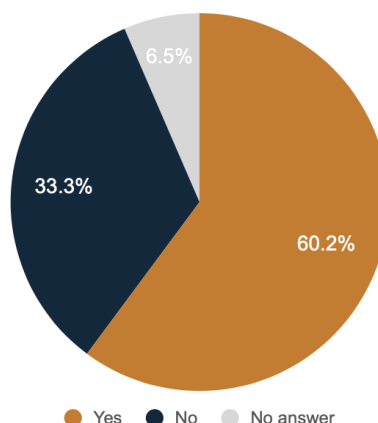
Gap statement

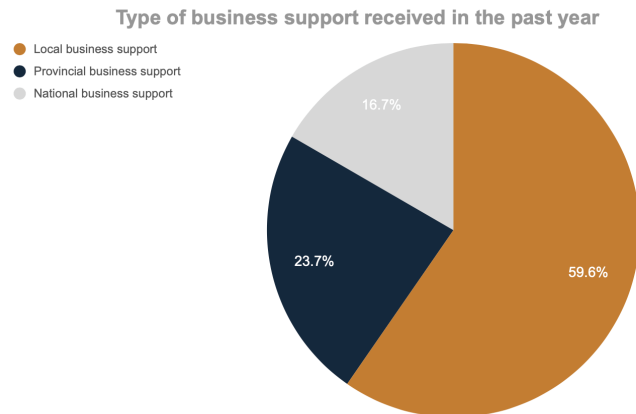
60% of Ontario based groups believe the statement is true.

“Sport organizations need to approach Provincial and National businesses to enhance revenue opportunities”

Research results from Ontario Sport Organizations

Does your community sport organization benefit from local, provincial or national business sport?





Recommendations for Ontario's Community Sport Sector

Community sport organizations are encouraged to approach all levels of corporate support (local, provincial and national) for their community sport programs as there is a perception that all businesses have a social obligation to support and invest in communities where they operate to build effective community relations. In most cases Provincial and National corporations have larger budgets so they should be approached for support.

Research identifies four corporate social responsibilities (CSR) as environmental, ethical, philanthropic and economic responsibility with additional responsibilities such as diversity and inclusion, governance and employee engagement. This builds on the triple bottom line of business sustainability or the three P's of "People, Planet and Product".

Sources that informed this section: Bingle 2019, Jones et al. 2018, Mesener & Doherty 2013. Full citations can be found in the bibliography.

World Best Practice Theme: Question 5

GREEN/AMBER DESIGNATION

Grassroot sport clubs need to be made visible to increase participation legacies.

Question statement

Which local activities has your sport organization used to build community engagement and increase visibility of your organization?

Relevant Themes

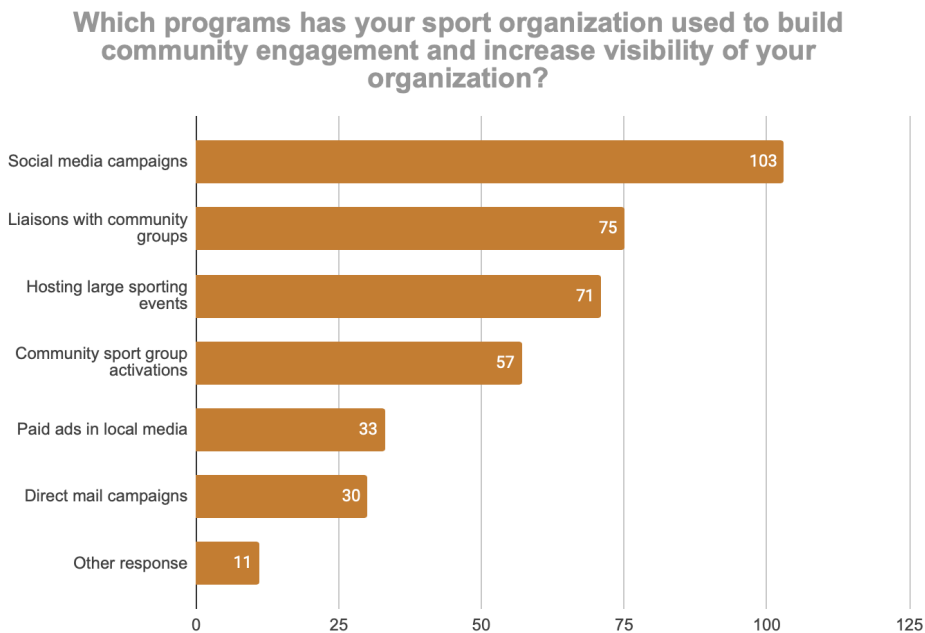
Question five was developed from the following themes; (12) Grassroot sport clubs need to be made visible to increase participation legacies, (16) Increased visibility of grassroots sport offerings increases community engagement, (19) Community sport is responsible to carry out impacts of mega sport events, (20) Focus should be built for community sport to increase impact of mega sport events.

Gap statement

General agreement that increasing visibility will lead to higher community engagement! 83.74% of Ontario based groups use social media, 64% liaise with other community groups and 59.35% host large sporting events to attract visibility & engagement



Research results from Ontario Sport Organizations



Recommendations for Ontario’s Community Sport Sector

Community sport organizations are encouraged to host large events to boost visibility, community engagement, and long-term participation. These events attract participants, teams, visitors, and spectators, benefiting local businesses like hotels and restaurants. An economic impact study should be conducted to assess the event's benefits to the community. The Ontario Ministry of Sport offers grants for hosting international events and supporting the Ontario Summer/Winter Games and Parasport games. Local municipalities may also offer funding through accommodation taxes (4% on rentals under 30 days). Organizations should connect with local tourism boards to access available grants.

Sources that informed this section: Philip et al. 2023. Full citations can be found in the bibliography.

World Best Practice Theme: Question 6

GREEN / AMBER DESIGNATION

Collaborative relationships with local Municipalities are crucial to a sustainable future for community sport.

Question statement

Do you feel your sport organization has a valuable relationship with your local municipality? And how often do you meet with your local Municipality?

Relevant Theme

Question six was developed by combining two themes from world best practices: (14) Relationship with municipality impacts community sports ability to increase capacity in community, (15) Partnership with municipality increases awareness of programs offered.

Gap statement

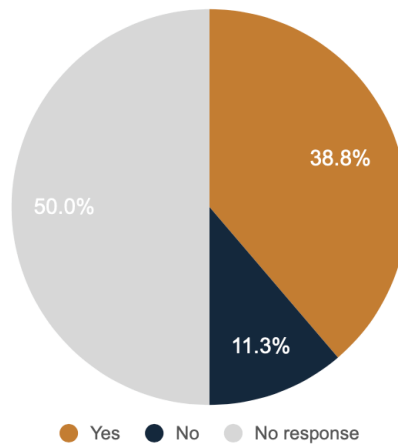
Positive agreement of 75.61% from Ontario respondents agreed that a collaborative relationship with local Municipality can enhance capacity and foster awareness of community sport club programs offered.



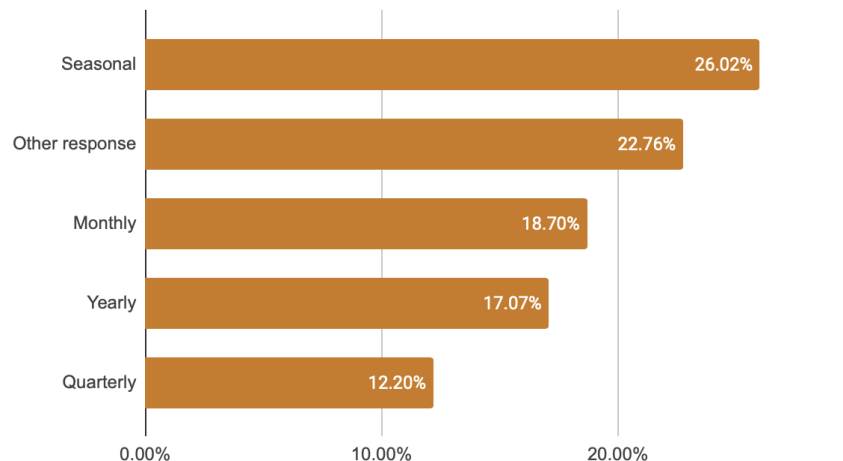
Municipal collaboration is critical to organization access to community space and success

Research results from Ontario Sport Organizations

Do you feel your sport organization has a valuable relationship with your local municipality?



How often do you meet with your local municipality?



Recommendations for Ontario's Community Sport Sector

Community sport organizations should foster positive, trust-based relationships with municipalities to offer complementary sports programs. Research shows seasonal meetings (26.02%) are most effective, while some organizations have irregular or no Meetings. Sharing program offerings with municipalities helps avoid duplication and competition. Organizations should also engage with

municipalities on municipal recreation and facility master plans to ensure their needs are met. Strong relationships can lead to resource sharing, cooperative ventures and advocacy roles for Councils, supporting community development initiatives like grants, play space access and youth leadership.

Sources that informed this section: Doherty & Cuskelly 2020; Millar & Doherty 2021. Full citations can be found in the bibliography.

World Best Practice Theme: Question 7

GREEN/AMBER

DESIGNATION

Successful community sport organizations will continuously evaluate and update their sport program offerings to reflect the needs of the changing demographics in their community to foster greater rates of inclusion and relevance of sports.

Question statement

Should the new Canadian sport policy adapt to reflect the evolving demographics in Canada with opportunities for all levels of sports participation in our communities?

Relevant Theme

Question seven was based on one theme (17): Should Sport policy reflect ongoing demographic changes in surrounding social networks.

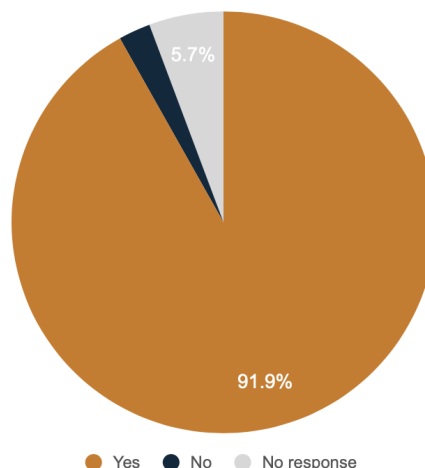
Gap statement

Research shows a high correlation 91.87% of respondents agreed that Canadian sport policy should adapt to changing demographics of the Canadian population.

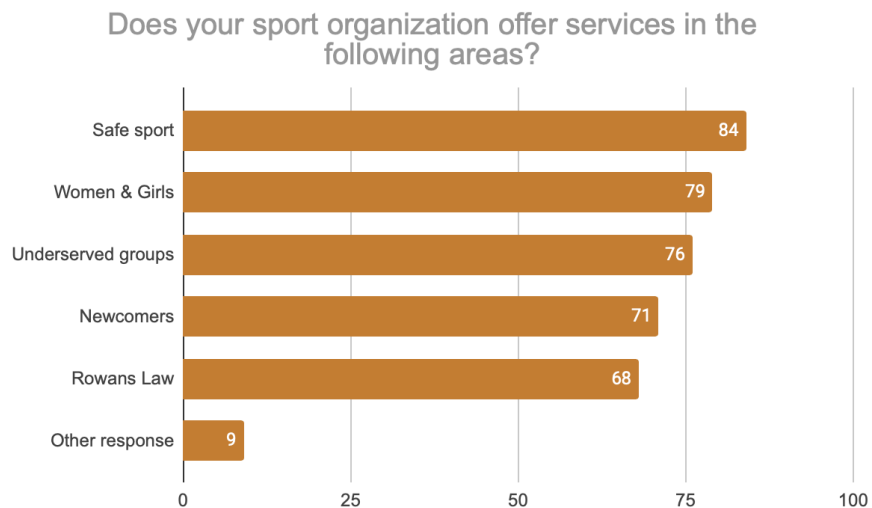
“Canadian sport policy needs to adapt to demographics and changing community landscape”

Research results from Ontario Sport Organizations

Should the new Canadian sport policy adapt to reflect the evolving demographics in Canada with opportunities for all levels of sports participation in our communities?



● Yes ● No ● No response



Recommendations for Ontario's Community Sport Sector

Community sport organizations will need to adapt to the changing demographics in their communities to ensure they offer relevant inclusive sport & recreation programs which are available to all, at all levels of participation. A renewed sport policy will help to identify sport priorities and provide guidance to the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Government in advancing sport for the next 10 years 2023–2033. The Canadian sport policy can highlight the need for collaboration among all levels of leadership to ensure enhanced participation, excellence, capacity and interaction in sport.

Canada is a diverse nation with shifting demographics, including Indigenous populations, growing immigrant communities, and a wider range of cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. To be effective, the sport policy must address these changes and promote inclusivity, equity, and access to sport for all groups.

Sources that informed this section: Doherty & Cuskelly 2020; Wade et al. 2016. Full citations can be found in the bibliography.

World Best Practice Theme: Question 8 **GREEN DESIGNATION**

How has community sport adapted to the new normal?

Question statement

How has your sports group adapted to these challenging times?

Relevant Themes

Question eight was developed from the combining of two themes; (22) Community sports have become adaptable to challenging times and (23) Community sport organizations are plagued by the same issues though solutions differ based on community needs.

Gap statement

Research shows that to better adapt to changes, more partnerships are needed, and organizations need to focus on inclusivity, build community engagement, explore diverse funding streams, increase volunteer base, increase gender equity, be committed to continuous improvement-evolving needs and flexible scheduling.

General adaptation by support organizations were focused on outdoor or virtual training, increased collaboration with local sport orgs, a focus on inclusivity, and building. Community engagement groups expanded revenue streams, enhanced volunteer support, improved gender equity and diversity, focusing on the needs of the organization's members.



Research shows sport organizations need to focus on innovation, collaboration and inclusivity

Recommendations for Ontario's Community Sport Sector

Feedback from sport organizations emphasizes innovation, collaboration, and inclusivity. To ensure post-COVID sustainability, a multi-faceted approach focusing on health, community engagement, financial stability, and adaptability is essential.

Key strategies include:

- **Health & Safety:** Regularly update protocols per local regulations, ensure clean and ventilated facilities, and consider outdoor options.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Diversify funding sources (grants, sponsorships, fundraising, membership fees) and maintain transparent budgeting.
- **Community Engagement:** Develop inclusive programs for diverse populations and establish feedback channels.
- **Flexible Programming:** Adapt to health guidelines and feedback, offering virtual options when needed.
- **Volunteer Engagement:** Build a strong volunteer program with recruitment, training, and appreciation.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Adopt eco-friendly practices and educate participants about sustainability.
- **Communication, Marketing & Partnerships:** Strengthen online presence and clear messaging to attract participants and supporters collaborate with community partners.

Sources that informed this section: Harris 2018. Full citations can be found in the bibliography.

DESIGNATION

Communities have recovered and are back to normal after COVID-19.

Question statement

Which of the following best describes the current status of your local sport organization with respect to COVID-19 restrictions from municipal facilities and schools?

Relevant Themes

Question nine was developed from one theme, (26), that not all community organizations are free from policy implications of COVID-19.

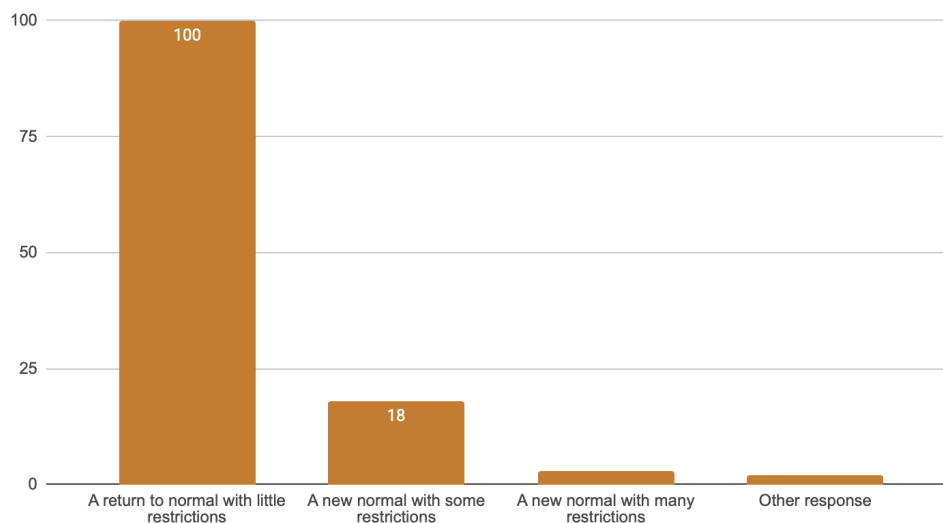
Gap statement

Research identifies Ontario is back to normal...a return to normal with little restrictions 81.30%, a new normal with some restrictions 14.63% and a new normal with many restrictions 2.44% with similar conditions around the world indicating a correlation in circumstances.



Research results from Ontario Sport Organizations

Which of the following best describes the current status of your local sport organization with respect to COVID-19 restrictions from municipal facilities and schools?



Recommendations for Ontario's Community Sport Sector

1. Develop a crisis management plan.
2. Offer flexible programming.
3. Use enhanced communication strategies.
4. Build financial resilience, Build strong community partnerships.
5. Provide essential training and development for staff and volunteers.
6. Embrace technology by the use of digital technologies (online communications, registration and virtual training during disruptions).
8. Focus on community wellness.
9. Monitor and evaluate.
10. Advocacy and awareness.

Sources that informed this section: Millar and Doherty 2016. Full citations can be found in the bibliography.

World Best Practice Theme: Question 10

DESIGNATION

GREEN/AMBER

The Tourism sector can be a valuable resource for community sport organizations.

Question statement

In what ways has your community sport group explored collaboration and engagement with the tourism industry to enhance participation and resource support?

Relevant Themes

Question 10 was developed from the consideration of theme no (18) that Sport is inextricably tied to tourism.

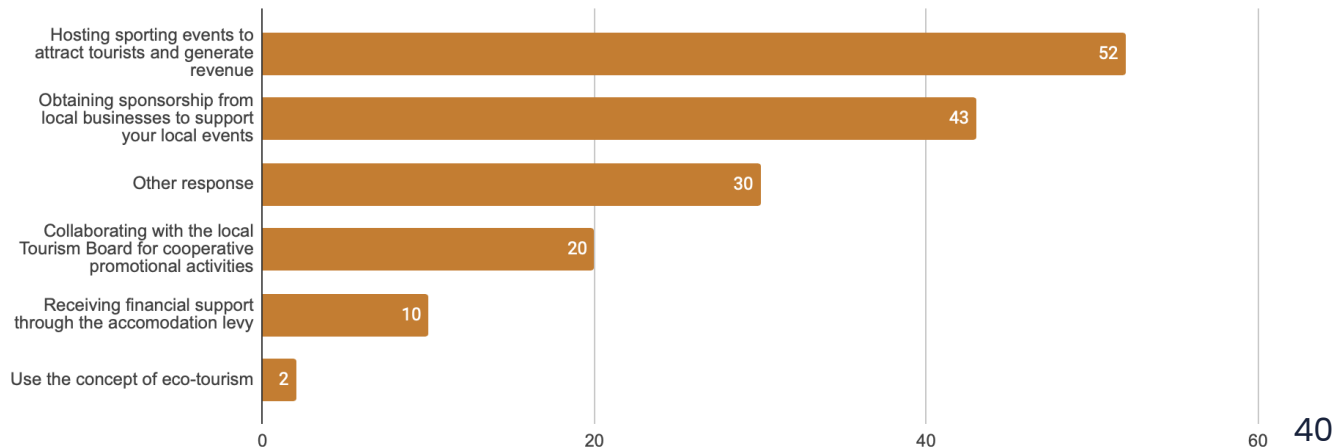
Gap statement

Research shows hosting sporting events 46.34% can be lucrative along with establishing partnerships with local hotels, businesses and restaurants (34.96%) and other community groups (20.33%) are important.

“Community sport organizations should collaborate with the tourism industry to increase their reach and influence”

Research results from Ontario Sport Organizations

In what ways has your community sport group explored collaboration and engagement with the tourism industry to enhance participation and resource support?



Recommendations for Ontario's Community Sport Sector

Exploring collaboration and engagement with the tourism industry can significantly enhance participation and resource support for community sport groups.

Consider the following strategies: Hold joint events and festivals, develop promotional partnerships, community tours and workshops, resource sharing (staff, facilities, programs) local sponsorships, engagement with local businesses, volunteer opportunities, focus on sustainable Tourism, feedback and improvement.

By implementing these strategies, community sport groups can leverage the tourism industry to boost participation, gain resources, and strengthen community ties, creating a vibrant and supportive environment for all involved.

Sport & tourism have a reciprocal relationship as sport can drive tourism, and tourism can support the growth of sport in communities. Opportunity for community collaborations of sport groups, tourism boards, municipalities, host event organizers and the hospitality industry can support the growth in tourism and sport, driving increased investment, visibility, and engagement from a broader audience.

Sources that informed this section: Dynicki et al. 2021; Trendafiova et al. 2016. Full citations can be found in the bibliography.

World Best Practice Theme: Question 11

GREEN DESIGNATION

Youth sport programs provide an important framework for positive youth development and will assist in sport organization sustainability.

Question statement

Does your sport organization have a youth sport program and what value does it bring to your sport organization?

Relevant Themes

Question 11 was developed with the use of theme number (25) that youth sport provides a valuable framework for positive youth development.

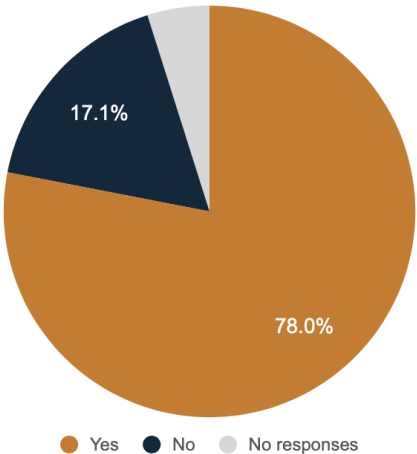
Gap statement

There is a general agreement from world best practices and Ontario based sport organizations that having a youth sport program is very beneficial to increase physical activity and positive youth development.

“Youth sports programs are essential for sports organizations' sustainability”

Research results from Ontario Sport Organizations

Does your sport organization have a youth sport program?



Recommendations for Ontario's Community Sport Sector

There are significant benefits to community sport organizations that institute a youth sport program. Youth gain physical development, health benefits, motor skills, social skills, emotional growth, and lifelong personal skills like discipline and time management.

Community engagement also increases as families become more involved, fostering pride. Youth programs drive economic activity, create jobs for coaches and staff, and promote diversity and inclusion.

These programs can provide pathways to future opportunities, such as scholarships and skill development. Additionally, youth programs cultivate sustainable membership, ensuring the long-term success and reputation of the organization, attracting support from sponsors and volunteers. In summary, youth sport programs not only benefit participants but also strengthen the community sport organization and the wider community, fostering healthier, more connected communities.

Sources that informed this section: Dynicki et al. 2021; Trendafiova et al. 2016. Full citations can be found in the bibliography.

Community Multisport Councils can strengthen community sport enabling increased participation opportunities for all in an inclusive, safe and equitable manner.

Question statement

Do you believe community sport organizations across Ontario need a local community advocate (i.e. Community Sport Council or Accessible Sport Council) to represent sport and recreation at the grassroots level to ensure sport is equitable, accessible and safe for all?

Relevant Themes

Question 12 was developed by researching Community Sport Organization operations in Ontario and other provinces in Canada (Alberta and British Columbia) and in the United States. In Ontario over 40 Community Sport Councils and Accessible Sport Councils exist and in Alberta there are many sport connection centers and in British Columbia the province has a network of regional sport development centers. All Councils are unique to their communities and regions which offer a variety of programs and services based on local resources and needs.

Gap statement

There appears to be an alignment of World and Canadian best practices with Ontario sport organization responses mainly due to an agreement from communities who want to enhance sport & recreation services in their area. In many cases Community Sport Councils have been initiated as a legacy of hosting a major sporting event i.e. 2023

Canada Summer Games in Niagara-initiation of Sport Niagara or used to bring

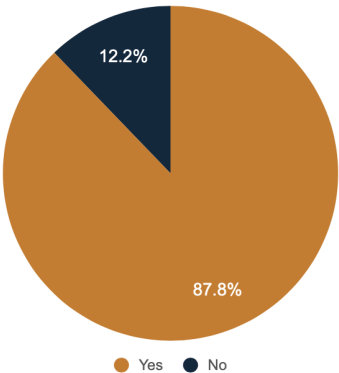


87.80% of the sector agree
Community Sport Councils can
enhance community sports
opportunities for all

together the non-profit sport community to solve local issues impacting sport development in the region.

Research results from Ontario Sport Organizations

Do you believe community sport organizations across Ontario need a local community advocate to represent sport and recreation at the grassroots level?



Recommendations for Ontario’s Community Sport Sector

Communities looking to enhance their sport and recreation services should initiate a town hall discussion with elected officials, municipal staff, and local sport groups to assess needs. The CSCO offers a Sport Council planning tool and a 10-step guide to help build a Community Sport Council. Municipal support is crucial, and exploring cooperative ventures can increase awareness of the sport organization’s value and the local sport clubs.

Sources that informed this section: Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport; Macrae 2017. Full citations can be found in the bibliography.

World Best Practice Theme: Question 13

RED DESIGNATION

Accessing affordable community space is essential for community sport groups to run their sport & recreation programs.

Question statement

Has your community sport organization experienced challenges accessing community space to run your sport & recreation programs?

Relevant Theme

Question 13 was developed assessing the need for accessing affordable community space for grassroots sport programs which is crucial to run community sport & recreation programs.

Gap statement

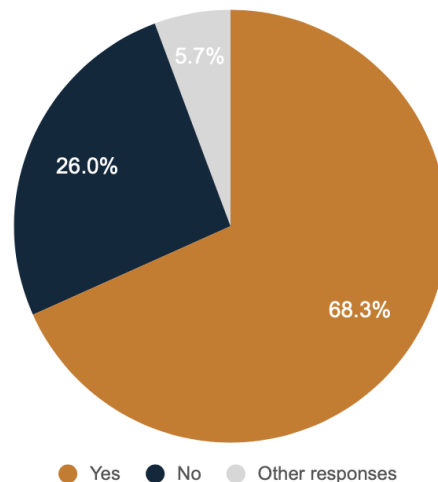
There is a large gap here between the world best practice benchmarks of available affordable space and the ability of Ontario based sport groups to access community space for their sport & recreation programs. The survey results show nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Ontario groups surveyed believe they've had difficulty accessing community space for their recreation & sport programs.



Access to affordable
community play space is
becoming more difficult now

Research results from Ontario Sport Organizations

Has your community sport organization experienced challenge accessing community space to run your sport & recreation programs?



Recommendations for Ontario's Community Sport Sector

Build relationships with your local municipality and school board to access community spaces like gyms, parks, and libraries at nonprofit rates. Partner with other community groups, such as non-profit sports organizations, faith-based groups, and international groups, to offer complementary programs. In the "new normal," consider outdoor programming, partnerships with schools and universities, virtual programming, or using private spaces. Stay informed about municipal booking systems, funding, and advocacy opportunities. A Community Sport Council can assist with advocacy efforts.

Sources that informed this section: Dynicki et al. 2021; Edwards 2015; Elmoose-Østerlund et al. 2021; House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts; Macrae 2017. Full citations can be found in the bibliography.

DESIGNATION

Community sport organizations need support to enable the running of after school programs so they can offer important community sport programs.

Question statement

Has your sport group experienced any community cutbacks in funding by the Ministry of Education (through Community Use of Schools Funding) limiting your community sports program availability to offer meaningful school-based programs?

Relevant Themes

Question 14 was developed using one theme that being, the need for government support to assist in the provision of school-based sport & recreation activities in communities.

Gap statement

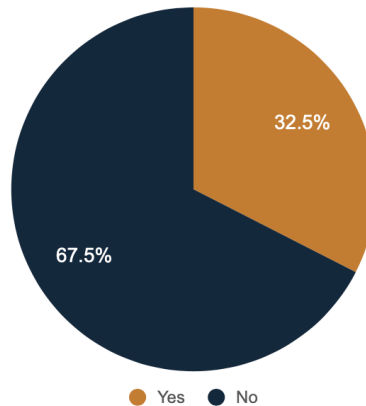
Research shows a low correlation between community use of school support (67.48%) and impacts to community sport organizations. The impact to community sport organizations in Ontario is limited as the community use of schools funding has remained the same even though the demands are greater in recent years, post covid.



67.52% of sports groups face rising program demands, but no funding increases in community use of schools

Research results from Ontario Sport Organizations

Has your sport group experienced any cutbacks in funding from Community Use of Schools?



Recommendations for Ontario's Community Sport Sector

Reach out to your school board and share your program information with them showing your increasing demand for programming. Engage your local MPP to advocate for better funding for community programs through the Community Use of Schools (CUS) program. If you have a community sport council in your community, connect with them and see if other groups are experiencing the same challenges, collaborate on joint advocacy initiatives to amplify your concerns and highlight a broader community need.

Sources that informed this section: Edwards 2015. Full citations can be found in the bibliography.

World Best Practice Theme: Question 15

RED DESIGNATION

Community sport organizations are plagued by the same issues though solutions differ based on community needs.

Question statement

Do you have any additional comments for us to consider as we compare organizational best practices with our community organization operational practices so we can make recommendations on the sustainability of the community sport sector in Ontario?

Relevant Themes

Question 15 was developed using a general open question on recommendations from the Ontario community based sport organizations based on the themes highlighted in the research.

Gap statement

Collaboration at the community level is key to community-based solutions.

Research Results from Ontario Sport Organizations

Collaboration and Support: There is a strong emphasis on the importance of collaboration among community sports organizations to address challenges like facility access and volunteer shortages. Successful partnerships can enhance resource sharing.

Equity in Sports: Advocates call for government-supported collectives to create a more equitable sports system that reflects Canada's diverse demographics. This includes recognizing community sports as valuable Contributors to public health and well-being.

Facility Access: Access to facilities is a significant barrier for many community sports, and there's a call for increased municipal and provincial support to improve facility availability and affordability.

Volunteer Challenges: Many organizations rely heavily on volunteers, yet face difficulties in recruitment and retention. The need for training and support for volunteers is highlighted.

Funding and Resources: There's a need for better funding options for grassroots sports programs, particularly for organizations that may not qualify for existing grants.



Research shows sports groups should leverage community resources by boosting yearly collaborations

Inclusivity and Awareness: The research discusses the need for increased visibility and awareness of various sports, including niche and adapted sports, to encourage participation.

Community Needs: It stresses the importance of recognizing local demographics and community-specific needs, rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach to funding and infrastructure.

Youth Engagement: There's a consensus that engaging youth in sports is essential for their development and community connection, with calls for more accessible programs to support participation.

Overall, the research advocates for a more supportive and structured approach to community sports that prioritizes collaboration, inclusivity, and accessibility to foster a healthier society.

Recommendations for Ontario's Community Sport Sector

- Build strategic and inclusive community partnerships.
- Maximize economic and health benefits of sport.
- Establish and strengthen partnerships.
- Implement ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement.
- Increase local and corporate support.
- Host large events to boost growth and visibility.
- Strengthen Municipal collaborations for shared community assets.
- Adapt sport organization sport programs to changing community demographics.
- Strengthen collaboration between tourism and sport.
- Enhance inclusivity and accessibility of sport programs.
- Advocate for increased funding, infrastructure and policy support.
- Increase sport group community engagement and public awareness.
- Enhance Volunteer opportunities.

Sources that informed this section: Imbaya et al. 2019. Full citations can be found in the bibliography.

Research Findings



A review of all 15 questions has been completed to identify the level of alignment of Ontario community sport organizations with best practices from Canada and the World. An assessment has taken place to observe whether there was a strong alignment and agreement in practices (green designation) or an identification of a gap which exists (amber designation or red designation) where recommendations & actions can be made to contribute to sport organization sustainability in Ontario.

GREEN DESIGNATION

- Sport is a tool that can build capacity in community sport organizations (82.11% agreed) developing leaders and supporting underserved sectors (Q.1)
- Community partnerships are essential to leverage community resources in the delivery of sport programs (Q.2)
- Community sport organizations need to be visible in the community to attract attention and engagement (Q.5)
- Collaborative relationships with local municipalities are crucial to a sustainable future for community sport. (Q.6)
- The Canadian sport policy should adapt to the changing demographics of the Canadian population (Q.7)
- Community sport has adapted to the new normal with 81.30% experiencing little restrictions (Q.8)
- Communities have recovered and are back to normal after COVID-19. (Q.9)
- Sport is inextricably tied to tourism (Q. 10)
- Offering youth sport programs key to sport club sustainability shown by 78% of agreement in offerings (Q.11)
- Many community sport organizations would like to see a Community Sport Council or Accessible Sport Council. Research respondents agree by 87.8% that a community discussion could be beneficial to investigate this community advocacy opportunity (Q.12)
- Funding cutbacks-community use of schools - 1/3 of communities have not been cutback but have had increasing demands for services (Q.14)

AMBER DESIGNATION

- Sport is a tool that can build capacity, but it is under utilized in communities as only ½ of organizations use sport in this way (Q.1)
- Sport program evaluations are used by 64% sport orgs in Ontario and 21% do not use evaluation tools at all (Q.3)
- Increased corporate participation in community sport results in wealth generation for all. (Q.4)
- Sixty percent of Community sport organizations reach out to corporate for support. Research shows corporate approaches are underutilized, limiting revenue generation for sport organizations (Q.5)
- Municipal relationships are key to community sport organization survival. 75.61% agreed sport orgs need to approach more often to build and enhance relationships. The research showed there was 21.95% lack of relationship with municipality (Q.6)
- Canadian sport policy–Ontario sport orgs need to adapt to demographic changes of policy & needs of communities (safe sport & underserved groups) but many groups do not have resources (Q.7)
- 83% of Ontario communities have reacted well and adjusted to the new normal with little restrictions–post covid however in many community's sport organizations have increasing difficulty accessing play space for local programming and have higher demands on services offered (Q.9)
- There is a limited alignment of sport groups partnering with the tourism sector and is an under-utilized opportunity (Q.10)
- Funding cutbacks of community use of schools has occurred as research shows 32.52% of groups experienced some cutbacks. Third of sport organizations have received cutbacks with increasing demands on services (Q.14)

RED DESIGNATION

- Accessing community space is more difficult, 68.29% have challenges accessing the community space for community sport organizations programs (Q.13)
- Communities have an increasing demand for sport programs. facility access, funding, volunteer management, adapting to our changing community, equity in sport, underserved sectors (adaptive sports, niche sports, BIPOC, Indigenous & New Canadians) and provincial priorities i.e. safe sport (Q.15)

Recommendations



CSCO would like to thank all research study participants for their responses to the fifteen survey questions on operational best practices for sport organizations. The responses have been tabulated and analysed, and recommendations are now available to address the three levels of alignment designations (Green, Amber and Red).

CSCO is pleased to provide the following 14 recommendations and action step initiatives for consideration. CSCO looks forward to your review, engagement and ideas as it wants to assist you and your sport to build on all alignments of best practices (green designations) while addressing amber and red designations for the betterment and sustainability of all sport in Ontario.

Recommendations	Action step initiatives
Build partnerships with diverse communities (Q1-Green)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish connections and engage with both advantaged and disadvantaged communities to share resources and develop equitable opportunities in sport programming.• Expand human resources through networking and volunteer mobilization with diverse leaders, schools and local sport organizations to expand athlete participation.• Establish mentorship programs to build knowledge between experienced members and underrepresented groups.• Strengthen financial stability through collaborations with municipalities, social services agencies, businesses, and tourism sectors.
Leverage economic and health benefits of sport (Q2-Green)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highlight the economic impact of sport through case studies to attract funding and support. Connect with Sport Tourism Canada for economic impact resources to convince the local municipality of the economic value of sport.• Develop training programs to empower volunteers to enhance skills and leadership.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement programs that promote physical and mental health, especially for underserved groups.
Form strategic partnerships (Q3–Green)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with local organizations, social service agencies, schools, municipalities, and businesses to integrate sport into educational curriculums and after-school programs. • Work with other community nonprofits to leverage resources, local and provincial government, and corporations to secure funding where there are benefits for all.
Establish evaluation and improvement processes (Q3–Amber)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use more tools like surveys and Participant surveys, SWOT analysis, Key Performance Indicators to assess program effectiveness. • Gather feedback from participants, coaches, and stakeholders to refine program offerings.
Secure local and corporate support (Q5–Amber)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage businesses with corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives for financial and in-kind support. • Develop sponsorship packages that outline cooperative benefits for investing in community sports (i.e. activations). • Highlight case studies to identify impacts of sport programs and offerings to businesses and communities • Build mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and local businesses, i.e. SportForLife, Canadian Tire Jumpstart.
Organize sporting events (Q10–Amber)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host major sporting events to boost visibility and economic benefits. Connect with Government Ministry of Sport-Games unit to access Provincial Games opportunities (i.e. Ontario summer, Winter, ParaSport Games, Seniors Games).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with tourism boards and municipalities for funding and promotion using social, print, digital media to amplify event visibility and create awareness.
Strengthen municipal collaborations and shared resources (Q6–Amber)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build trust with municipalities for shared facilities and complementary programs perhaps even co-manage facilities and sport infrastructure. • Actively participate in municipal recreation and facility master planning to ensure sport organization offerings are represented in community development plans. • Advocate for sport friendly policies and in improved access to public spaces for training and event hosting.
Adapt sport programs to changes in community demographics (Q7–Amber)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify programs to align with shifting community demographics to be inclusive programming for newcomers, indigenous groups, parasport or other underserved groups. • Work with all government levels (Local & Provincial) to enhance sport participation and inclusivity and recognize their priorities on a yearly basis. • Acknowledge the Canadian sport policy framework and identify and recognize its priorities for implementation. • Provide flexible and adaptive programming to accommodate working families, seniors and people with disabilities.
Ensure Post–Covid sustainability (Q8–Green)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize community engagement, financial resilience, and volunteer support. • Invest in digital platforms and hybrid program options to enhance accessibility and engagement (live streaming, online training sessions). • Rebuild the volunteer workforce through recognition programs, incentives, flexible commitment options.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversify funding streams by exploring grants, crowdfunding, and hybrid event models (in-person and virtual).
Strengthen collaboration between tourism and sport (Q10–Amber)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with tourism organizations to co-host events and expand outreach. • Develop cross-promotional campaigns that link community sports with regional tourism initiatives. • Encourage sports competitions to attract local, regional and provincial and national visitors.
Promote inclusivity and accessibility of sport programs (Q12–Green/Amber)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design programs for diverse groups, including youth, seniors and persons with disabilities and ensure ODA compliance. • Ensure affordability and accessibility in all sport offerings to include equipment access and financial aid programs. • Support facility accessibility and provide specialized training for volunteers and coaches on inclusive best practices.
Advocate for funding and facilities (Q13–Red)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen relationships with municipalities, schools, and government for better funding and resources. • Most community sport facilities in Ontario were built in the 1960's and 1970's and need upgrading or retrofits. • Provide policymakers with evidence-based research on economic, social, health benefits of participation in local sport programs.
Engage the community Sessions, networking events (Q12–Green)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community sport Councils and Accessible Sport Councils can be an effective advocate to help coordinate and enhance local sport offerings to ensure an equitable, safe & inclusive sport community. • Conduct needs assessments and involve residents in program planning.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use storytelling and local athlete success stories to inspire participation and donor support of sport programs. • Raise awareness about the physical and mental health benefits of sport through public participation via community forums, Q/A sessions and networking to encourage public involvement in decision making.
Develop sport leadership opportunities-Youth and Volunteer leadership (Q11-Green)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create youth leadership programs, advisory boards and junior coaching opportunities. • Recruit, train, and incentivize volunteers to ensure long-term support through certification opportunities, recognition incentives and mentorships.

Next Steps



As we move forward with the next steps in the CSCO Sustainability Report research, we call on the entire Ontario sport community to join forces and support this critical initiative. The collaboration so far has already provided valuable insights into the operational health of our sector, especially in light of the challenges presented by the COVID-19 crisis. Now, we need your continued input to build on this foundation and create tangible, lasting improvements for community sport in Ontario.

The report will highlight key gaps and areas for growth, and your participation will help shape solutions that address these issues head-on. Through open feedback and active engagement, we can develop Ontario-specific strategies that strengthen the sustainability of sports programs, benefiting everyone from grassroots to elite athletes.

CSCO is proud to initiate the Sport in Ontario Collective, a conversation that will unite all sectors of sport to review these findings, evaluate recommendations, and move forward with actionable steps. This is an exciting opportunity to shape the future of community sports in Ontario. Together, we can build alliances, share resources, and create more opportunities for participation at all levels.

To make this initiative a success, we need the voices of all sport organizations—big and small. Your involvement, whether through digital surveys, online presentations, or in-person discussions at upcoming community sport conferences, is essential. This is your chance to make a lasting impact and help us work together toward a stronger, more sustainable sport sector in Ontario.

Let's unite as a community to turn these insights into action. Your support will be the key to driving positive change, and together, we can ensure a vibrant and sustainable future for sport in Ontario.

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Appendices



Appendix 1

27 Best practice theme list from a review of 500 abstracts in Canada and the World

- 1.** Sport is an effective tool at building capacity in dis/advantaged communities.
- 2.** Correct support of community stakeholders leads to increased sport participation.
- 3.** Involving multiple community stakeholders leverages resources for community sport.
- 4.** Nonprofits need to establish community relationships to leverage community resources.
- 5.** Sport offers a tool to enhance human resource development within a community.
- 6.** Community sport organizations need to be ready to increase their capacity.
- 7.** Evaluation tools are needed to determine if community sport organizations are ready.
- 8.** Community organizations should regularly evaluate their practices to determine if they are running optimally and meeting needs of community
- 9.** Evaluation is needed to determine next steps in increasing ability to provide for the community.
- 10.** Corporate companies have a social obligation to increase sport participation
- 11.** Increased corporate participation in community sport results in an increase in wealth generation for all.
- 12.** Grassroot sport clubs need to be made visible to increase participation legacies.
- 13.** Community sports partnerships are a big predictor of success within the community.
- 14.** Relationships with municipalities impact community sports ability to increase capacity in the community.
- 15.** Partnership with municipality increases awareness of programs offered.
- 16.** Increased visibility of grassroot sport offerings increases community engagement.
- 17.** Sport policy should reflect ongoing demographic changes in surrounding social networks.
- 18.** Sport is inextricably tied to tourism.

- 19.** Community sport is responsible for carrying out impacts of mega sport events.
- 20.** Foundation should be built for community sport to increase the impact of mega sport events.
- 21.** Number and quality of relationships helps to increase sustainable practices of community organizations → each leveraging one another's resources to make up for lack of resources .
- 22.** Community sports have become adaptable to challenging times.
- 23.** Community sport organizations are plagued by the same issues though solutions differ based on community needs
- 24.** Sport is a valuable tool to decrease strain on social services and healthcare systems.
- 25.** Youth sport provides a valuable framework for positive youth development .
- 26.** Not all community organizations are free from policy implications of COVID-19.
- 27.** Diverse approaches to community sport (ie., franchise model or collaborations among other sectors) will enhance ability to produce capacity within organization and deliver higher quality sport.

Appendix 2

15 survey questions used in sector research survey

Question 1: Does your organization use sport to build capacity (developing leaders, supporting underserved sectors in the community and increasing financial stability) for your organization?

Question 2: Which community organizations do you do work with now?

Question 3: Does your sport organization use evaluation tools?

Question 4: Does your community sport org. benefit from the Local, Provincial or Nat. business support?

Question 5: Which programs has your sport organization used to build community engagement and increase visibility of your organization?

Question 6: Do you feel your sport organization has a valuable relationship with your local municipality?

Question 7: Should the new Canadian sport policy adapt to reflect the evolving demographics in Canada to provide opportunities for all levels of sports participation in our communities?

Question 8: How has your sport group adapted to these challenging times?

Question 9: Which of the following best describes the current status of your local sport organization with respect to COVID-19 restrictions from municipal facilities and schools?

Question 10: In what ways has your community sport group explored collaboration and engagement with the tourism industry to enhance participation and resource support?

Question 11: Does your sport organization have a youth sport program and what value does it bring to your sport organization?

Question 12: Do you believe community sport organizations across Ontario need a local community advocate to represent sport and recreation at the grassroots level to ensure sport is accessible to all?

Question 13: Has your community sport organization experienced challenges accessing community space to run your sport & recreation programs?

Question 14: Has your sport group experienced any community cutbacks in funding by the Ministry of Education (through Community Use of Schools Funding) limiting your community sports program availability to offer meaningful school-based programs?

Question 15: Based on the best practice themes from the abstracts reviewed, do you have any additional comments for us to consider as we compare organizational best practices with our community organization operational practices so we can make recommendations on the sustainability of the community sport sector in Ontario?

Appendix 3

Best practice designation list

An assessment has taken place to observe whether there was a strong alignment and agreement in practices (**green designation**) or an identification of a gap which exists (**amber designation or red designation**) where recommendations & actions can be made to contribute to sport organization sustainability in Ontario.

GREEN DESIGNATION

- Sport is a tool that can build capacity in community sport organizations (82.11% agreed) developing leaders and supporting underserved sectors **(Q.1)**
- Community partnerships are essential to leverage community resources in the delivery of sport programs **(Q.2)**
- Community sport organizations need to be visible in the community to attract attention and engagement **(Q.5)**
- The Canadian sport policy should adapt to the changing demographics of the Canadian population **(Q.7)**
- Community sport has adapted to the new normal with 81.30% experiencing little restrictions **(Q.8)**
- Sport is inextricably tied to tourism **(Q.10)**
- Offering youth sport programs key to sport club sustainability shown by 78% of agreement in offerings **(Q.11)**
- Many community sport organizations would like to see a Community Sport Council or Accessible Sport Council. Research respondents agree by 87.8% that a community discussion could be beneficial to investigate this community advocacy opportunity **(Q.12)**
- Funding cutbacks-community use of schools – 1/3 of communities have not been cutback but have had increasing demands for services **(Q.14)**

AMBER DESIGNATION

- Sport is a tool that can build capacity, but it is under utilized in communities as only ½ of organizations use sport in this way **(Q.1)**
- Sport program evaluations are used by 64% sport orgs in Ontario and 21% do not use evaluation tools at all **(Q.3)**
- Increased corporate participation in community sport results in wealth generation for all. **(Q.4)**
- Sixty percent of Community sport organizations reach out to corporate for support. Research shows corporate approaches are underutilized, limiting revenue generation for sport organizations **(Q.5)**
- Municipal relationships are key to community sport organization survival. 75.61% agreed sport orgs need to approach more often to build and enhance relationships. The research showed there was 21.95% lack of relationship with municipality **(Q.6)**
- Canadian sport policy–Ontario sport orgs need to adapt to demographic changes of policy & needs of communities (safe sport & underserved groups) but many groups do not have resources **(Q.7)**
- 15% of Ontario communities have reacted well and adjusted to the new normal with little restrictions–post covid however in many community’s sport organizations have increasing difficulty accessing play space for local programming and have higher demands on services offered **(Q.9)**
- There is a limited alignment of sport groups partnering with the tourism sector and is an under-utilized opportunity **(Q.10)**
- Funding cutbacks of community use of schools has occurred as research shows 32.52% of groups experienced some cutbacks. Third of sport organizations have received cutbacks with increasing demands on services **(Q.14)**

RED DESIGNATION

- Accessing community space is more difficult now as 68.29% have challenges accessing the necessary community space for community sport organizations programs **(Q.13)**

- The new normal for our communities shows an increasing demand for sport programs by the public. There are many challenges that need to be addressed such as facility access, funding, volunteer management, adapting to our changing community, equity in sport, underserved sectors (adaptive sports, niche sports, BIPOC, Indigenous & New Canadians) and provincial priorities i.e. safe sport **(Q.15)**