



# Special Olympics Michigan Strategic Plan 2017 – 2021



*Approved by the Board of Directors  
June 3, 2016*

**Special Olympics Michigan**

Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, MI 48859 Tel (989) 774-3911 Fax (989) 774-3034

[www.somi.org](http://www.somi.org) Email [somi@somi.org](mailto:somi@somi.org) Twitter @spolympicsmi

*Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation for the benefit of persons with intellectual disabilities*



## **Mission**

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

## **SOMI Vision:**

Use sport to open hearts and minds towards people with intellectual disabilities and create inclusive communities throughout Michigan.

## **The Process:**

Special Olympics Michigan chose to become an early adaptor of the Global Strategic Plan having had success with the last Global Strategic Plan. One board member and two staff served on Global committees that helped shape the plan and provide input and feedback. In Michigan we began sharing the new developing Global plan early and created a committee to work on development of the SOMI plan to intentionally fall one year behind the SOI Global Plan.

Chairman Robert Chadwick chose two Board members to lead the SOMI process. Juliet Dragos and Jim Ayres became the Strategic Plan committee Chairs. They picked a team of current and former board, staff, area directors and Emerging Leaders for their team. Members on the committee are board members: Robert E. Chadwick II, Juliet Dragos, Jim Ayres, Kelly Frick, Jody Brylinsky, Julie Conn, Matt Simon, Jacqui Putney-Bunt (athlete) and former board member Terry Cramer; Area Directors: Anne Goudie and Megan Horrocks; emerging leaders: Sara Bolster and Michelle Palma; and staff: Lois Arnold, Ann Guzdial, Alison Miller, Roger Yob and Aaron Mills.

They developed a statewide survey that was filled out by close to 500 people. Dr. Jody Brylinsky and WMU students took the lead on this. The Board of Directors had a retreat and gave feedback in September and Area Directors and their management team met on the plan in November 2015. The full Board of Directors again reviewed the plan and goals in December of 2015 when the survey results were shared.

The committee met monthly beginning in January 2016 to discuss the plan. Each board committee reviewed sections of the plan pertaining to their committee focus. The full board reviewed the progress in February of 2016. Area Directors had the opportunity to invite their management teams to the April Conference for input. All area Directors were asked to bring an athlete and Parent/Family member from their management team to the conference. The President’s Advisory Council also devoted time discussing how to best implement the plan in areas, especially in the building leadership capacity. Athletes at the April Conference will had a detailed breakout session on the plan. This input will go back to board committees and the full board in June 2016 for approval of the plan.



## **Assumptions – The assumptions form the basis for developing SOMI Strategies into the future.**

### **SOMI**

- The focus of this plan will be on improving opportunities for existing athletes vs. growing the # of athletes
- Area Directors and coaches are volunteers as opposed to paid staff
- Volunteer and staff turnover can be an issue
- Coaches training/ working with our athletes is the best way to reach our athletes and influence their health and fitness
- Unified focus will increase participation with schools and colleges
- Health and wellness focus will take additional resources
- Uncertainty in funding of Project Unify both from SOI and the State of MI

### **SOI**

- Funding for Project Unify and Health Initiatives will not increase, in fact it may decline
- Direct Mail and Telemarketing revenues are declining
- Inclusive programs like unified sports is a focus
- Athlete Leadership becomes a bigger priority
- World Games in Austria 2017
- 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Special Olympics and USA Games in Seattle 2018

### **Growth**

- The program overall will not grow substantially, growth is not a focus

### **Environmental**

- Economic environment will remain bullish vs. economic recession
- Event revenue will rise and fall – some events will be replaced or be eliminated
- New and existing digital fundraising platforms will continue to evolve
- Political environment will remain supportive of social service/health programs
- Social media platforms and technology are always evolving
- A person's status as a government official or celebrity can potentially change from year-to-year
- Funding for project unify will go down while participation increases



## Goals

Special Olympics has two major five-year goals. They are completely connected, and reaching both goals, not one or the other, is critical to implementing this plan and achieving the vision.

### **Goal 1 - Improve Opportunities for Athletes to Perform at Their Best**

Special Olympics will improve the quality of programs, and broaden access to them. This means strengthening our focus on sports programming, supported by our health work, so that athletes are fit and healthy, master skills, build confidence and self-reliance and perform at their best on and off the field. As we do this, Special Olympics will use its expertise to be a leader on how to achieve inclusion in and through sport, and improve access to the effective programs we have, more than creating new ones. Athletes will have increased, year-round opportunities to participate, and improved quality will help us attract new athletes. Special Olympics will also seek targeted growth, especially in places where our presence is low.

#### **A. Improve the Quality of Sports Programming**

- Set higher expectations for everyone, and emphasize coaching as key to high quality.
- Focus on schools, Universities/Colleges and local communities, including sports clubs.
- Develop fit, skillful athletes who are prepared to compete and improve performance.
- Promote a year-round approach that includes more training and local competitions.
- Establish partnerships at all levels to support sports programming.

#### **How we will do it**

- 1) Strengthen sports programming and coaching to improve and increase opportunities in three local Special Olympics program settings – schools/ disability service organizations, universities/colleges, and community-based activity such as Special Olympics ‘clubs’ or integration with mainstream clubs.
- 2) Promote year-round, life-long fitness and involvement through family recruitment and education, digital and online tools and new resources for sport practice, at-home training, local competitions and community activity.
- 3) Enhance our position as an authentic sports organization through new partnerships with organizations which support sports programming, such as National and International Sports Governing bodies, to share expert resources and gain access to funding and education programs for coaches and officials.

#### **SOMI Strategies to Improve Opportunities for Athletes to Perform at their Best**

1. Implement a consistent Coach Education System statewide that provides health and wellness education for coaches, athletes and families.



2. Develop partnerships with sport organizations, University Health Programs, Health Clubs and community health partners to offer education to help bridge the gap for year round fitness by sharing resources.
3. Develop an at home year round fitness programs for athletes and families that will include the capability to track progress.
4. Study and seek targeted growth in underserved segments of population (aging and young athletes in area programs).
5. Build a stronger volunteer, partner and funding base for area programs by reaching out to schools for integrated programming.
6. Develop and implement a mobile resource which targets coaches training, certification data, medical forms, sports rules, and nutrition and exercise tracking.

Area: Create an area blog for coaches, families, and athletes to share information.  
Utilize on line resources to share with coaches, families and athletes.  
Implement area coach and family training to encourage health and wellness.  
Offer volunteer opportunities to local health agencies, colleges and schools to get involved at the local level.  
Partner with local health clubs, colleges or schools to assist with training during the off season and track progress of athletes.  
Extend practice by 15 minutes to do STRIVE Assessments, provide nutrition information, and exercise programs.  
Develop an Athlete health portfolio that could be goal specific and offer assistance to reach the goal.  
Communicate transition opportunities to schools and group homes to retain older athletes and offer opportunities that include skills, bowling, bocce, and horseshoes.  
Offer athlete mentoring and coaching for older athletes.

## **B. Increase Inclusion Through Unified Sports and Young Athletes, Particularly in Schools, and Through Expanding to New Areas**

- Increase access to Unified Sports for all age groups but especially in schools.
- Create flexible ways to expand the Special Olympics Young Athletes program.
- Continue to grow, especially in developing countries where access to programs is low.

### **How we will do it**

- 1) Increase the number of schools, colleges, universities, local sports clubs and youth organizations participating in Unified Sports. This will help to find new people and resources, increase training and competition, and provide greater visibility. This includes evolving from "Project UNIFY" to global expansion in "Unified Schools" – schools that engage in Unified Sports and foster a uniquely open, inclusive education environment. We will also improve Unified Sports rules and guidance to enhance consistency.
- 2) Grow Young Athletes, allowing for flexibility to deliver the core program in different ways while providing greater technical and material resources to Programs around the world.
- 3) Increase our presence in cities and areas where our presence is minimal to create new communities of acceptance everywhere.

## **SOMI Strategies to Increase Inclusion through Unified Sports and Young Athletes**

1. Partner with Educational Programs to expand and promote inclusive sports. Examples include: SO College Reach, Special Education Departments (future teachers) and ISD's.
2. Establish accreditation for SO College that will include volunteer service, unified sport participation and fundraising requirements.
3. Develop procedures for consistent rules and league play guidelines for all Unified Sports Programs.
4. Conduct Young Athlete Health Fairs for athletes and families at state, region and area events.
5. Increase opportunities for regions and areas with low athlete participation by developing one unified program a year.



6. Invite corporate partners to participate as unified partners at events to increase awareness and grow participation in Unified Sports.

Area: Assist with relationship building with schools, ISDs, Colleges and other sport organizations and offer program opportunities and volunteer opportunities at the local level.  
Share Unified Sports best practices with other areas  
Offer Open Houses at local games/events to share the program with new athletes and families.  
Utilize Social Media channels to promote local programming.  
Implement a system to introduce new athletes to the program.



### C. Grow our Health Program to Support Athlete Participation in Sport and Society

- Help athletes, families and coaches to improve athletes' fitness and general health through expansion of our Healthy Athletes and Healthy Communities initiatives.
- Work with governments, non-governmental organizations, universities and the private sector to encourage them to provide better healthcare for people with intellectual disabilities.

#### How we will do it

- 1) Work with athletes, families, coaches, health care providers, communities and local programs to grow Healthy Athletes and Healthy Communities by:
  - Expanding and stewarding partnerships to provide follow up care
  - Integrating fitness and wellness opportunities
  - Improving use of digital technology
  - Generating support for inclusive sport activities and health work
- 2) Partner to increase access to health services by:
  - Engaging Governments to raise awareness and resources, and advocating for changes that provide for the health of all citizens.
  - Developing partnerships with international organizations, NGOs, foundations and corporations to ensure their programming is inclusive of people with ID and increase resources for Special Olympics.
  - Working with Universities to improve curricula, health volunteering opportunities and continuing education.
- 3) Support the expansion of inclusive health/fitness/sport programming by:
  - Educating institutional/organizational leaders
  - Creating materials for ongoing leadership education
  - Stimulating innovation (e.g. focusing on mental health)
- 4) Engage Special Olympics at local/national level to raise awareness by:



- activating athletes as self-advocates and peer health coaches, and activating family/community ambassadors
- recognizing and rewarding community leaders

### **SOMI Strategies to Grow our Health Programs to Support Athlete Participation in Sport and Society**

1. Expand Coach training programs to also incorporate health and wellness education and create an at home program for families that will include tracking capabilities.
2. Create a Health & Wellness Committee with volunteer professionals in the health field who understand Special Olympics population to inform and develop best practices for implementation in the field.
3. Create a Health and Wellness position at the state level to expand healthy athlete program and implement health and wellness programs statewide for coaches and athletes.
4. Require Health & Wellness Representative on every Area's Management Team.
5. Partner with vendors to offer healthy meals at events, including snacks.
6. Gain membership to the Michigan Governors Council Board to advocate for change for health for all members of the community.

Area: Appoint a health and wellness coach to the management team.  
Provide healthy meals and snacks for athletes, partner with local vendor to donate product.  
Implement Coach Training Programs at the area level that includes health and wellness and family at home training.  
Invite community role models to promote health and wellness to the athletes.  
Create a competitive health and wellness program with an incentive program for coaches and athletes.



### **Goal 2 - Build Positive Attitudes Towards People with Intellectual Disabilities**

Attitude change must be a deliberate outcome of Special Olympics. We create change from others engaging with and witnessing our athletes as they participate in sports. It is essential that Special Olympics continuously works to improve awareness of what people with ID can achieve. We need people to see our athletes competing, and athletes leading the way as the face and voice of our movement; that is what opens hearts and minds and ultimately promotes inclusion in friendships, communities, health, education and jobs.

#### **D. Improve External Awareness through Public Relations, Celebrities and Government Engagement**

- Work with media, social media and celebrities to publicize Special Olympics.
- Highlight athletes' talents and use athlete leaders as the voice of our movement.
- Adapt our message for different audiences. Make sure that far more people hear about, take part in or watch our activities from local communities to the global stage.

#### **How we will do it**

- 1) **Social Media/Media:** Everyone from local level to global level will need to create PR and media content that engages people outside the movement and gets their attention. As part of this, Special Olympics will work with media partners, athletes, celebrities and youth to improve how we make year-round use of social media and digital marketing. This will help Special Olympics to reach



far wider audiences with relevant messages, personal experiences and campaigns such as “Play Unified” that are tailored for each Region.

- 2) **Celebrity Support:** We need to continue building a pool of highly talented celebrities to play external ambassador roles at all levels, including at local level. We will create opportunities for them to interact personally with our athletes to demonstrate real connection and reduce stigma.
- 3) **Government Relations:** We will engage governments to make changes to improve the lives of people with ID and support Special Olympics in their own country but also overseas through development assistance. Our first step will be to engage these influencers through personal interaction with our athletes, including at local program level. These unique occasions, supported by data to show our impact, will allow influencers to witness our athletes’ courage and accomplishments and so better appreciate their contributions and needs.

### **SOMI Strategies to Improve External Awareness through Public Relations, Celebrities & Government Engagement**

1. Create human interest stories to put a face to SOMI activities utilizing a wide range of athletes (age, gender, ability and disability, etc.)
2. Increase utilization, activity and visibility of Global Messengers (share their stories more in print and by video).
3. Utilize celebrities, college athletics or professional sports athletes paired with athletes to raise awareness and connect with foundations. Pair with Detroit Lions or Pistons. Reach out to celebrity and professional sport foundations.
4. Encourage greater interest and support of government officials by inviting participation in events.

### **E. Connect the Movement so we Harness our Power and Speak with a Collective Voice**

- Use the latest technology to gather data on Special Olympics members: athletes, families, volunteers, etc., so we can improve communication and coordination.
- Share messages so we can communicate externally in a consistent way.
- Create opportunities for athletes and families to tell their stories and challenge their communities to see people with intellectual disabilities differently and appreciate their talents.

#### **How we will do it**

- 1) Implement a new digital system to collect people’s data, improve how it is used and respond quickly when new people interact with us so we can turn their passion into action. This will require collaboration at all levels to improve access to technology to collect, share and connect data on existing and new athletes, families, youth, volunteers and others who engage with us. We will provide training and support so that everyone can move to the new system.
- 2) Use the latest technology to make it easier for the members and supporters of our movement at all levels to connect and share ideas and best practices.
- 3) Enable athlete leaders and families to speak with one voice, driving social transformation through telling their powerful stories. Engaging and connecting everyone in this way will mean that when it comes to fighting for recognition, rights or resources, we can speak as one global organization that will be hard for media, governments and other policy-makers to ignore.

### **SOMI Strategies to connect the Movement so we Harness our Power and Speak with a Collective Voice**

1. Create event specific apps for major state events (include schedules, maps, documents and other items important to attendees, families, coaches and volunteers) to enhance families experiences and encourage them to attend. Another app could include athlete information and forms as well as information that coaches and area directors need.
2. Create social media campaigns, using groups such as Emerging Leaders and SO Colleges, to help reach younger demographics.



3. Create messaging that drives social transformation through telling powerful stories about athletes, families and communities so people with intellectual disabilities can be appreciated for their talents.

#### **F. Maximize External Impact of Games and Competitions to Showcase Athletes' Abilities**

- Improve how games and competitions are run to deliver a great athlete experience.
- From world to local levels, promote games and competitions as the primary Special Olympics vehicle to highlight athlete abilities and develop positive attitudes.
- Attract live and virtual audiences to witness and experience the transformative power and joy of sport.

#### **How we will do it**

From local competitions through to World Games, we need to:

- 1) Deliver higher quality Games and competitions that prioritize athletes:
  - Enhance resources, processes, training and transfer of knowledge to improve how we run Games and competitions at all levels
  - Improve all aspects of competition management, from advancement to divisioning and consistent implementation of sports rules
  - Take proactive steps to attract/manage bids at Regional/World levels
  - Reposition GOCs as "Local/Host Organizing Committees" (L/HOCs)
- 2) Promote Games and competitions more effectively to achieve mass market external awareness and attract new supporters/influencers such as media:
  - Increase sports coverage related to competitions and athlete stories
  - Highlight athlete performance and personal bests
  - Refine the divisioning process, scheduling and information flows to make it easier for media and audiences to follow athletes and teams
  - Seek specific outcomes related to new supporters and influencers
  - Pay more attention to follow-up and long-term legacy from events
- 3) Attract larger attendances through activities at Games and competitions:
  - Greater opportunities to connect with Athletes: autographs, demos, clinics, Unified Sports Experiences
  - Spectator experiences, live entertainment and digital engagement
  - Deliberate tactics (e.g. campaigns/tickets) to target new spectators
- 4) Improve fundraising to ensure Games and competitions stay within budget:
  - Develop fundraising toolkits and revenue generation ideas for L/HOCs
  - Clarify World/Regional Games fundraising responsibilities
  - Align Games with global strategic plan and reduce costs where possible

#### **SOMI Strategies to Maximize External Impact**

1. Create (shoot and edit) a high definition video of the major state competitions to distribute to statewide media outlets.
2. Produce feature stories/videos to share across social media to generate excitement for current competitions and major fund raising events, such as polar plunges.
3. Create videos summarizing major state competitions to help maintain excitement following competitions.
4. Create a Special Olympics Michigan commercial that could air on various TV stations throughout the state featuring athlete's performance to drive people to attend Games and competitions. Plan for production costs, including time and labor, to develop a quality product.
5. Offer Regional Training on Games Management with the focus on sport specific events.
6. Build relationships with schools, universities and event centers to secure high level competition sites at all levels.
7. Seek in kind donations for facilities, food vendors, equipment vendors, and supplies.



## **Support Goal: Capacity Building**

To achieve our major goals, an important support goal underpins implementation of this plan. Securing adequate resources is vital to the success of Special Olympics over the next five years. The aim is to align existing and new partners with our strategies, and combine increased resources with dynamic leadership to deliver the best possible impact for people with ID.

**Athletes:** If we want the world to be inclusive, Special Olympics athletes can and should contribute in ways beyond the sports field. This means involving athletes as volunteers, coaches, officials, fund raisers, staff and as Board members. It means developing more athlete leaders, and ensuring they are actively engaged in meaningful roles at all levels. When we do that we will learn from our athletes, and they in turn will teach the world the true meaning of inclusion

**Families:** The families of Special Olympics athletes are critical to this plan. They understand the meaning and benefits of inclusion, and provide a critical voice we need to move our priorities forward. Special Olympics needs to engage more family members in new ways, for example becoming volunteers, supporting home exercise, helping to raise more resources, and telling their stories.

**Youth:** Young people with and without ID are important because they are the future of Special Olympics. They also are more open to inclusion – they understand and embrace it. They bring the creativity and energy we need to change the world. To be successful, Special Olympics needs to create systems for engaging young people beyond youth to lifetime involvement. We also need to reach young people in new ways and engage them in our vision and goals.

### **1. Build Capacity through Generating More Resources**

- Improve collaborative fundraising between SOI and Programs.
- Increase corporate partnerships, refine and expand digital fundraising, and enhance our global development work, in particular through partnerships.

#### **How we will do it**

- 1) **Collaborative fundraising:** We will enhance joint-fundraising efforts between Programs and SOI through a tiered plan for market development. All Regions/Programs will be given tools and training to improve fundraising capacity, collaboration and innovation. Targeted Regions/Programs will get additional resources to build towards self-sufficiency. We will enhance our work with longstanding major funder, the Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR).
- 2) **Digital fundraising:** This will be expanded and refined so that both SOI and targeted Programs can improve digital fundraising around the world. Current digital partners, industry experts and emerging technology will be used to maximize the potential of digital channels to grow revenue and increase and retain donors in order to maximize their lifetime value.
- 3) **Major individual donors:** Special Olympics will build stronger, more impactful relationships with individuals who have the capacity to make major gifts. Our aim is to use statistical modeling to hone in on prospective major donors and develop opportunities based on their interests and behavior. Tools and best practices will be shared so that we can make this a sustainable revenue source.
- 4) **Corporate partnerships:** We will target corporate partners identified by Programs and SOI, and seek opportunities to build alliances with international companies that filter to Program and local levels. As part of this we will create a revenue share program and define clear roles and responsibilities. A more comprehensive approach will also be taken to raising in-kind support.
- 5) **Global development/Government Relations:** In collaboration with Programs we will work with existing and new partners such as governments, bilateral and multilateral donors, development banks, and national/international NGOs to finance our inclusive sports and health work. We will



work with governments to promote adoption of policies and investments that provide opportunities for people with ID and ensure these opportunities are sustainable in the long-term.

### **SOMI Strategies for Building Capacity through Generating More Resources**

Target: 25% increase in revenue in five years.

1. Work strategically with corporate development teams, including areas, to identify corporate collaborative prospects and projects. Develop a strong and compelling Michigan strategy to capitalize on dollars available from corporate partnership possibilities.
  2. Maximize effectiveness of current digital fundraising and add new digital fundraising avenues.
  3. Broaden SOMI's development effort to include a more significant focus on corporate, individual, foundation, and planned giving. Continue to nurture and grow event fundraising. Implement new models of development, endowment fundraising, and other program sustainability models. Build an infrastructure to replace declining revenue.
  4. Work in Lansing to cultivate supportive legislative partnerships.
  5. A team of Board, staff and area directors will reassess the fund development model to support the needs of the organization, especially as it relates to areas and state funding needs.
  6. Work to enhance SOMI financial transparency and messaging.
  7. Identify, mitigate and manage the strategic and operational risk exposure of SOMI.
- 2. Build Capacity through Strengthen leadership, including athlete leadership (Governance Committee to address this with the Program committee for coach, AD and athlete leadership programs)**
- Continue to develop athlete, youth and program leaders using both dedicated and inclusive approaches, and improve program quality.
  - Ensure athlete and youth leaders get opportunities to lead at every level.

#### **How we will do it**

- 1) **Recruitment and talent development:** Improve how we recruit the right leaders and ensure diverse, representative leadership. We will strive for self-sustaining full-time leaders in Programs with high potential. We will take a collaborative approach to improve talent development, succession planning and working to ensure CEOs / National Directors are appointed with SOI support and guidance.
- 2) **Training and development:** Grow the Special Olympics Leadership Academy, which started with leadership development workshops, to include a wider range of in-person and online training and development opportunities for Program Leaders. As part of this, we will use training partners and use the great leaders we have (e.g. leadership councils) to mentor emerging leaders.
- 3) **Quality improvement:** Promote Program Excellence using the Program Quality Standards and Accreditation. These tools will be used to set a clear and consistent pathway for achieving and recognizing improvements in quality. We will also provide guidance on volunteer management and how to establish and support strong local/community level Special Olympics programs.
- 4) **Athlete Leadership:** We will broaden athlete leadership development work. Aside from enhancing courses and materials, we will integrate athlete leadership into Program Leadership training to ensure athlete leaders are embraced and provided meaningful roles. In this way they can 'learn by doing' and contribute to the success of all aspects of this strategic plan. We will continue to promote choice for athlete leaders in the roles they perform, and foster quality mentorship. We will also train youth leaders with and without ID on inclusion, building towards an "inclusive leadership" approach for all of these groups.

### **SOMI Strategies to Build Capacity through Strengthen leadership, including athlete leadership**

1. Evaluate staff support to areas and determine if the regional structure and staffing is appropriate.
2. Evaluate Area Management Structure and function to determine if it is the best possible support to provide services.



3. Expand Athlete Leadership Roles, supported by annual regional ALPS training and mentorship.
4. Use Emerging Leaders model for athletes and identify athletes to serve in SOMI structures (elections, officers, agendas, 4 meetings a year and annual goals development).
5. Implement ALPs University and conduct training twice a year.
6. Develop an Area Management leadership academy concept for assistant area directors and management team members who might succeed the area director in a leadership role.
7. Create area director conferences with content that will benefit and inspire area current and future leaders.
8. Create and implement annual Emerging Leader training to coincide with the board retreats no less than every other year.



### Global Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020 Graphic (the Track visual)