



## Best Practices Guide for Athletics Alberta Clubs

Athletics Alberta is a registered not-for-profit sport organization and the provincial governing body for Athletics in Alberta. Athletics is defined as the sport body that encompasses three separate disciplines: Track and Field, Road Running and Cross-Country Running. As a provincial branch member of Athletics Canada, Athletics Alberta has the responsibility to promote, coordinate, sanction, and deliver programming at all levels for Track and Field, Road Running, and Cross Country Running in the province of Alberta.

As the provincial governing body, Athletics Alberta is responsible to its members. Member clubs are a vital part of this sport. This guide has been designed to assist our clubs - volunteers, administrators, and board members - in the development, management, and operations of their clubs.

### CLUB ADMINISTRATION

#### BEFORE YOU START

Before you register a Club as a non-profit, consider bringing together those people who want to be involved and determine what it is you are seeking to create.

- ☞ Is the proposed Club viable or would joining an existing Club make more sense?
- ☞ Who will administer the Club?
- ☞ What kind of volunteer commitment is everyone able to make?
- ☞ Will there be a particular club focus? (ie. Sprints, pole vault, para, cross country, etc)
- ☞ Will the board be governance or operational?
- ☞ What is your vision for the Club?
- ☞ Who do you hope to serve?

If the answers to these questions reflect a sound decision to move ahead with a Club, then keep reading!



## CLUB BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A good way to help determine if everyone is aligned with the same goals for the Club is to develop the Club's *guiding statements*: mission statement, values statement, and vision. These can be amended as the Club becomes a reality.

There are a number of great examples online if you need help with creating your guiding statements. The [Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues](#) has a vast library of reference tools for boards, including templates.

Recruiting board members can be challenging. A solid best practice is to *vary the expertise* of your board members. Try recruiting people with financial acumen, human resources expertise, administrative experience – along with people who have a good understanding of our sport. Further, try to recruit people who will not age-out of your board too quickly; parents of athletes are great board members but be mindful of who may leave when their child leaves your Club. Volunteer agencies are a great place to post a position as well. We have had good success with [Volunteer Connector](#).

Athletics Alberta suggests:

- ☞ Recruit board members with varied professional experience and backgrounds.
- ☞ Recruit board members who reflect the diverse population of our province.
- ☞ Steer away from having coaches or athletes on your board to avoid conflicts of interest.
- ☞ Recruit people who are able to provide operational support versus strictly governance/guiding support.

The [Alberta government](#) has some good resources to help recruit, retain, and create effective boards.



## GOVERNANCE

Nonprofits thrive on good governance. Governance is 'how' you do the business of your nonprofit Club. You will want to develop bylaws or, if you have them already, make sure they are appropriate and make sense for the work of your Club. There are many examples on the internet, including ours which you can [find here](#). The bylaws must also comply with the Societies Act.

Deciding whether your board of directors is a governance board or an operational board will be determined by how involved they want to be in the administration and business of your Club. For our purposes, given the volume of work and fluctuations of busyness in our calendar year, it would be prudent to have an operational board. With that type of board, the board members are involved in the day-to-day activities of the Club.

Athletics Alberta suggests:

- ☞ An operational board will give you more ability to run the day-to-day affairs of your Club.
- ☞ Ask a professional to review your bylaws to make sure they are effective and useful for your Club.

## POLICIES

Clubs will want to have policies in place that reflect its bylaws. Policies should be designed with Club operations in mind. Policies should be 'living' documents in the sense that as things change (eg. processes, best practices, recommended industry guidelines), the policies can be changed easily. Note that typically changes to bylaws require the membership to vote on them, usually at the annual general meeting, whereas policies can be changed simply by a board vote (as long as that process is in your bylaws).



Consider the following policies:

- ☞ Privacy (how do you keep information private, where, who has access, do you have photo release forms, etc?)
- ☞ Volunteer (how do you select volunteers, any formal requirements?)
- ☞ Financial (how is petty cash handled, does your banking require double signatures or one, etc?)

**Note** – as a member Club of Athletics Alberta, your Club is required to adhere to our policies. Therefore, your Club policies should reflect those of Athletics Alberta and not be in opposition, contravention, or defiance of our policies.

## **FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION**

Such an important part of nonprofit governance, financial administration can be the bane of many boards. That said, starting where you mean to finish is a good approach.

Start in an organized way; use an online bookkeeping system for ease of everyone involved – accountants can simply ‘dial-in’ to an online bookkeeping system to do reconciliations or reviews. Online bookkeeping systems also reduce the need for physical records that may end up in someone’s basement. A great online platform is [Quickbooks Online](#); there are others as well.

It’s fine to have financials done on paper as well, versus online. The crucial element is tracking how money is received and spent. It’s important to understand the financial responsibilities of nonprofit boards and the [Alberta government has a great resource](#).

Transparency about how you are spending athlete club fees and any other funding you receive is important to build trust with your board members and parents, coaches, etc. It is best practice to have the person who is responsible for the bank reconciliations/review and the people who sign cheques (2 signatures preferred) be different; this reduces the ability to be fraudulent with funds.



Athletics Alberta suggests:

- ☞ Budget for an annual financial review from an unbiased third party accountant.
- ☞ In Alberta, all nonprofits are required to file reviewed financial statements when they file their yearly annual return; ensure that happens when your Society's annual return is completed.
- ☞ Provide quarterly financial updates to your members. (ie. parents, coaches, board members)

Athletics Alberta has reserved the right to request financials from our Clubs at any time, as stated in our Club Policy. This option has been put in place for the benefit of everyone involved in our Clubs; should a claim be made against a Club's financial handling, Athletics Alberta can step in to review quickly when financials are up to date.

Further, we have requested that Clubs eligible for athlete funding have signed athlete club agreements; the athlete's application to be part of your Club is sufficient for this purpose.

Also, per the Club Policy, Clubs must have an athlete funding distribution policy. An example has been provided in the Appendix. Simply put, outlining how funds will be distributed is all that is required. The key here is transparency and consistency so there is no grey area when it comes to funding distribution.

Another step towards transparency is to have your Club fees posted publicly, as required in the Club Policy. A simple chart on your website is suitable to meet this requirement.

## **MEETINGS**

It's important to schedule regular board meetings and an annual general meeting because you are a not-for-profit entity. You cannot really do without meetings if you are a nonprofit, no matter how much you may want to. Further, meetings are a requirement of the Society's Act.

The Alberta government has created [a great resource](#) to help you hold effective meetings. In general, have a plan (agenda), quorum (enough people to pass a motion based on the dictates of your bylaws), and a reason for the meeting.



Meetings can be effective or ineffective; it's really up to you. [Good resources](#) are available to help you hold effective meetings.

Athletics Alberta suggests:

- ☞ Holding a planning meeting annually wherein you set the goals and objectives for your Club. Review those quarterly to make sure you're hitting your targets.
- ☞ Ensure your Club has a strong meeting facilitator who can lead your meetings well and keep them on track.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Reviewing the sustainability of your Club from various lenses is important. There is more to think about when it comes to managing a Club than basic administration, coaching, and the approval of parents.

Sports (and Club) sustainability could be measured by:

1. Social sustainability
2. Financial sustainability
3. Environmental sustainability

Social sustainability refers to the awareness of and openness to diverse populations, equity, fairness, and rights of your Athletes, parents, coaches, etc. Social sustainability also refers to the variety of abilities Athletes may present, including para Athletes.

Consider:

- ☞ Are you open to differing abilities?
- ☞ Do you discriminate based on race, culture, physical ability, biological sex, or other?
- ☞ How can you be more inclusive? Is there a way you can invite/support our Athletes in an equitable way?

Financial sustainability refers to the long-term ability for your Club to be solvent. Often the word 'nonprofit' is thought to mean deficit-laden or just barely breaking even. That's not true. You must be financially sustainable to have longevity as a nonprofit. Financial sustainability for your Club means not only having more income than expenses, it also means being able to support your Athletes with travel, coaching, specialized equipment or training tools.



Consider:

- ☞ Where does your Club receive funding/income? Can you apply for grants or other sources of income to be more financially sustainable?
- ☞ What is your financial risk? What could cause you to be financially in trouble? Can you circumvent your financial risk with preparedness? What does that look like in real terms?
- ☞ How can you reduce your expense load? Is collaborating with another Club viable/realistic/possible?
- ☞ Are there post-secondary student placement programs that you can apply for? Administrative assistant, bookkeeping/accounting, graphic design (think website, t-shirt/singlet design, etc) post-secondary students need placements annually. Emailing the dean of a particular program of study is a good way to get the information you need.

Environmental sustainability refers to the footprint your Club makes on the environment. There are adjustments that can be made to lower your Club's environmental footprint. [Racing to Zero YYC](#) is an organization that seeks to inform sports how to reduce their environmental footprint. The 'one and done' game doesn't work with this kind of sustainability – consistency is key. Even making a difference once a week by taking water in a refillable bottle is better than only doing it once.

Consider:

- ☞ Refillable water bottles.
- ☞ Carpooling to training facilities.
- ☞ Using livestreaming for competitions so spectators don't attend in person, and transportation footprints are reduced.



## COMMUNICATIONS

A vital part of your Club's operations, communications should be a priority. When you think of communications, think beyond simply conveying your sign-up dates, fees, etc – consider what your internal and external audiences need and want to hear.

Internal audiences are those that you already know and have in your field of influence. These people want to hear from you and expect to hear from you. Examples are: parents, coaches, athletes, board members.

Consider the following content for internal audiences:

- 👉 General info and reminders like practices, fees, policies, etc.
- 👉 Training tips from your coaches
- 👉 Athlete highlights
- 👉 Reminders of WHY your Club is beneficial to your athletes
- 👉 Relevant article reshares, event/competition news, etc.

External audiences are those that you seek to engage with. They may know of you peripherally or not at all. External audiences may be parents of athletes that aren't yet members, funding agencies, other Clubs, meet directors, etc.

Consider the following content for external audiences:

- 👉 General Club information and WHY your Club is exceptional.
- 👉 Things your Club does that differentiate you from others in a good way.  
(community volunteerism, etc.)
- 👉 Accomplishments, accolades, etc.

Athletics Alberta suggests:

- 👉 Consistency is key; ongoing communications helps create your 'brand voice' AND audience.
- 👉 Communicate to engage and inform. People love stories and that's how your audience wants to be engaged with; tell the stories, be relatable.
- 👉 Your Club values should come through in how and why you





communicate. This means if you value respect, content should be respectful. If you value inclusion, content should be inclusive.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is one way to communicate easily with your audiences, primarily your internal audience. People who 'follow' you are likely already part of your internal audience.

Different social media platforms have different effectiveness and reach. Generally speaking, Facebook is a good platform for parents, club admins, and coaches; you should have a Club page on Facebook. The catch is that someone with an existing personal Facebook account is required to set up a Facebook page – so be sure to have more than one page administrator. Sometimes when someone leaves a 'page,' they take the entire page with them because there is only one page admin; great idea to have a few to ensure continuity of the page.

Instagram is where your athletes typically play on social media. Twitter is often a duplication of Instagram and Facebook so you don't necessarily need a Twitter account. Twitter is also becoming less popular among social media platforms.

Posting to social media should be done by trusted and, ideally, savvy Club representatives. You may want to have more than one person with logins and the ability to post to your Club's social media; responses are also important on social media, so more than one person responding may work better for your Club than having only one person.

There are many workshops and courses online to learn how to use social media effectively.

Athletics Alberta suggests:

- 👉 Learn how to use social media effectively as it's an important, fun, and useful way to reach your audiences.
- 👉 Your Club values should be reflected in your social media posts.



## WEBSITE

Your Club's website is vitally important to both your external and internal audiences. Websites should be updated very regularly, house current and useful information for the end user of the site. A professionally developed and maintained website is important for the integrity and legitimacy of both your Club and our sport.

While best practices related to websites could be a manual of its own, consider the following:

- ☞ Simple, uncluttered, easy to navigate is best.
- ☞ Contact emails and phone numbers should be current.
- ☞ Programming and registration should be easy to navigate and obvious to find.
- ☞ Layout of the website and content should have the end-user in mind.  
What do they need to know and find?



## PROGRAMMING

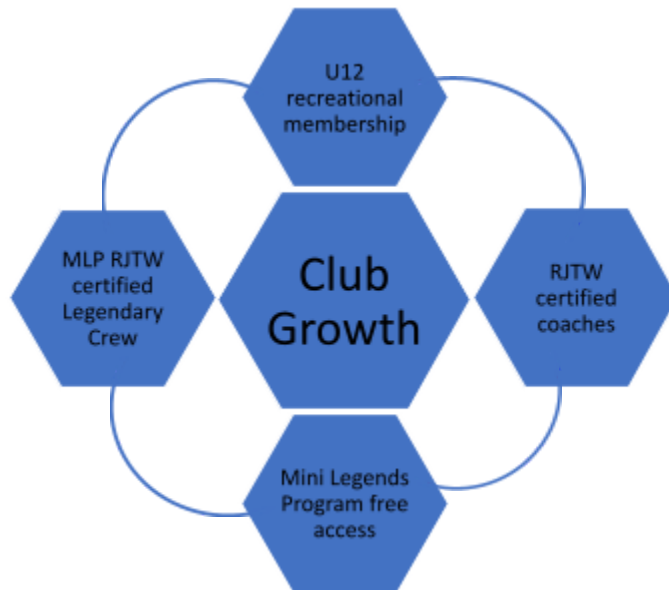
Your Club programming will be determined in large part by the availability of certified coaches. To that end, Athletics Alberta is developing coaches on an ongoing basis. Beyond the obvious programming that you, as a Club, will be providing your athletes, there are other opportunities that may not be in your immediate purview.

### MINILEGENDS & U12

The addition of the recreational membership (\$25 per annum) is one way to increase your Club athlete numbers. There are many school-aged children who would benefit from the coaching and programming structure of a Club but who aren't interested in competing. The rec membership is a perfect match for those children. Further, the rec membership is a good way to get potential longer-term Club members in the door, if you will, and expose them at an early age to the structure, coaching, and development opportunities Clubs provide.

While these U12 rec athletes can certainly take part in regular training, Athletics Alberta has developed an age-appropriate (and skill appropriate) program called [Mini Legends](#). Directed at children from 6-12 years old, Mini Legends (MLP) has lessons, videos, and all the tools you will need to provide physical literacy programming to your U12 rec athletes. More than that, Athletics Alberta has trained several Legendary Crew members across the province; these coaches know the MLP program and can deliver it easily. We can either provide trained leaders (Legendary Crew) or train your coaches in Run Jump Throw Wheel; certified RJTW coaches provide the MLP programming - which they are trained in as well. The Mini Legends program is available as a compliment to your existing programs and is no cost to our member Clubs.

Mini Legends Program access via Tracy at [grassroots@athleticsalberta.com](mailto:grassroots@athleticsalberta.com).



## RUN LIKE A LEGEND & U12

[Run Like a Legend](#) is a grassroots program of Athletics Alberta. The program consists of a fun and unique 5X1 km relay which can be done as a team or solo. Each person completes the same 1km loop or multiple loops for a team or solo total of 5km.

Clubs may find the Run Like a Legend to be a great goal for U12 athletes to work up to or compete in as a relay team.

Incorporating U12 and Mini Legends benefits to your Club:

- ☞ Increased number of Athletes equals increased revenue
- ☞ Programming (lessons, videos) provided at no cost
- ☞ Increased opportunities to retain long-term athletes, parent volunteers, etc.



## SAFE SPORT

It is imperative we operate our Association under the dictates of Safe Sport and as a member Club, you are responsible for following those dictates as well. Safe Sport [training is available](#) to your Club, including Coaches and Associates.

Moving forward, Safe Sport training will be a requirement for all Coaches in our Association. The Safe Sport training module is located in the Locker at [www.coach.ca](http://www.coach.ca) under the eLearning tab and in the Multi-Sport dropdown menu. This is a free module.

Further, all coaches are required to take the Making Ethical Decisions module followed by completion of the online evaluation. The MED module is located at [www.albertasport.ca](http://www.albertasport.ca) and the exam is located in the Locker at [www.coach.ca](http://www.coach.ca) under the eLearning tab and in the Multi-Sport dropdown menu. This module costs \$45.

These requirements reflect the seriousness with which our Association takes Safe Sport. A Whistleblower Policy and Safe Sport Complaint form have been developed and may be found [on our website](#). Safe Sport Officers (with mediation experience) have been selected from outside our sport to provide an unbiased platform for complaints to be vetted. The process is as follows and is outlined in the policy.

**WHISTLEBLOWER POLICY  
-A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE-**



Athletics Alberta is committed to ensuring all of our members feel safe when participating in our sport. If you feel unsafe (physically, emotionally, mentally) the Whistleblower Policy is how you let us know in a confidential way.



## COACHING

Coaching in Alberta follows the Athletics pathways of NCCP (National Coaching Certifications Program). How you decide which pathway to take is based on the ages of the athletes you wish to coach AND the level of athlete you are coaching. The chart below demonstrates the pathways and [this link will take you to a video explanation.](#)



## APPENDIX

[Edmonton Sport Council Nonprofit Resources List](#)

[Strategic Planning](#)

[Muttart Foundation's Drafting and Revising Bylaws for Not-for-profit Organizations In Alberta](#)

[Corporate registries bylaw checklist](#)

[Google Nonprofit status](#)





**YOUR CLUB**

**COACHES CONTRACT**

**This Personal and Confidential Agreement made this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 201 .**

**Is Between**

**YOUR CLUB**

**And**

**("COACH")**

YOUR CLUB desires to contract the services of the COACH to provide track and field coaching for its athletes.

Now, therefore, in consideration of the mutual agreements, the parties agree as follows:

1. Term of this Agreement is from **September 1, 2018** to  
(Note to Draft - Only primary coaches will be paid for the year.)



2. Each party can terminate this Agreement at a minimum one-month notice in writing
3. Nature of the Agreement: the COACH acknowledges and agrees that the services under the Agreement are provided as an independent contractor and YOUR CLUB shall not in any event be deemed as employer.
4. The COACH will work cooperatively with other coaches, the Executive Director and Administrator, who are the representatives of the Board, to fulfill the terms of this contract.
5. The COACH will provide the following services for YOUR CLUB, recognizing that the method and process for providing these services are entirely up to the coach's professional description. The COACH will:
  - Provide athletic coaching to athletes. This requires the presence of the COACH at the practices that his/her athletes are a part of. When unable to attend practice sessions, the COACH will be responsible for appointing designates and providing the workout for that day.
  - Conduct business in a professional and ethical manner consistent with Athletics Alberta and Athletics Canada standards and guidelines, as well as provisions outlined under YOUR CLUB's membership handbook.
  - Attend appropriate track and field meets agreed upon by the coaches, the Administrator, the Executive Director and the YOUR CLUB Board and assume responsibility for athletes attending those meets. This is an expectation for all meets that the Club is attending at which your group is competing. If a meet is in Calgary, then it is expected that all the coaches of participating athletes will be in attendance.
  - Assist with YOUR CLUB athlete recruitment as necessary, and build a training group, agreed upon with the Coaching Coordinator and Administrator, and it is adequate for the size to deliver the events coached.
  - Attend coach's meetings and other meetings as necessary.



- Attend the annual YOUR CLUB Awards Banquet
- Keep up to date with the development of track and field to benefit athletes.
- Participate in other YOUR CLUB activities as necessary. The YOUR CLUB Classic is a requirement as we are the host club. There are many opportunities for coaches to assist at this meet if they are not coaching. This is great PR for our club.
- Work within the various budgets approved by the YOUR CLUB Board.
- Completes a police record check as needed.
- Provide a driving abstract and proof of insurance if personally transporting athletes.

In consideration for these services, YOUR CLUB will pay an honorarium:

- The sum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for the period outlined, payable on a monthly installment of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.
- Ensure access to appropriate and adequate equipment and training facilities.
- YOUR CLUB will provide opportunities for coaching staff to pursue professional development activities.
- If attendance at either practices or meets is deemed to be insufficient, then the Coaching Coordinator and the Administrator, in conjunction with the Board, will coordinate an action plan for the COACH.



1. If during this contract there is a change in the number of days that the COACH directs and supervises practice sessions, then there will be an adjustment to the honorarium.
2. Provisions of any or all parts of this Agreement may only be amended or extended on written agreement of both parties
3. The parties hereby agree to the terms and conditions outlined above.
4. This Agreement shall be interpreted and governed by the laws of Alberta and applicable Federal laws.

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**YOUR CLUB designate**

**COACH**

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**Date**

**Date**