



Boys & Girls Clubs of America & Special Olympics North America **Guide to Local Partnership Building**



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF AMERICA**

***Special
Olympics***



May 2023

Table of Contents

About the Boys & Girls Clubs of America x Special Olympics Partnership.....	1
Organizational Information.....	2
Starting & Planning a Partnership.....	4
Programming Implementation.....	7
Common Challenges & Solutions.....	10
Partnership Documentation & Agreements.....	12
Marketing and Communications Guidance.....	14
Key Resources.....	15
Contact Us.....	16



About the Boys & Girls Clubs of America x Special Olympics Partnership

Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) and Special Olympics North America (SONA) entered into an official partnership through the signing of a memorandum of understanding in August 2020. The melding of these two leading organizations will create new opportunities for systemic change for present and future generations of young people.

Top Objective: Support the creation and growth of local partnerships between Boys & Girls Clubs and Special Olympics Programs that will collaborate to provide inclusive programming in Clubs for young people with and without intellectual disabilities during out-of-school time.

Partnership Outcomes

1. Boys & Girls Clubs (BGC) become even more inclusive through the incorporation of Special Olympics Unified Sports®, youth leadership and healthy lifestyles.
2. Special Olympics athletes become fully integrated Club members.
3. Communities become more inclusive and accepting through the influence of Special Olympics athletes.

How this will happen

1. BGCA and SONA will provide resources, training, and technical assistance to BGC Organizations and Special Olympics Programs to support local partnerships.
2. With support from Special Olympics, BGCs will be empowered to implement Special Olympics programming within their Clubs during out-of-school time.

Partnership Landing Pages:

[BGCA Program Initiatives](#)

[Generation Unified Videos - BGCA](#)



Organizational Information

BGCA Overview:

The Boys & Girls Club Movement is a federated model with more than 1,000 local Club organizations that operate over 5,100 individual Club sites. Each organization operates as an autonomous 501(c)3. Club sites offer safe, fun, and engaging opportunities for youth, typically ages 6-18, to build healthy lifestyles, become leaders, serve their communities and develop a love of learning to prepare them for life and work post-high school graduation.

More specifically, many Clubs offer a variety of sports and recreation programs ranging from flag football to basketball to soccer to esports. Clubs also offer various programs that provide youth and teens the opportunity to build leadership skills and learn the importance of serving others, including Torch Club, a leadership program for youth 11-13, and Keystone Club, the ultimate teen program for 14 to 18-year-olds.

In a typical year, Clubs serve 3.6 million young people through membership and community outreach, from rural communities to metro areas, in schools and public housing, Native lands and U.S. military installations worldwide.

Find a Club near you [HERE](#).



SONA Overview:

The North America Region of Special Olympics engages over 500,000 sports participants from age 2 to adults through schools and local community programs. Each US state has a 501(c)3 Special Olympics Program office that is accredited by Special Olympics International (SOI).

The Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® strategy brings together youth with and without intellectual disabilities (ID) through Unified Sports, leadership and advocacy and, as of 2023, is operating in over 8,300 K-12 schools and universities across the US and Puerto Rico. Unified Sports combines an approximately equal number of individuals with and without intellectual disabilities on sports teams for training and competition.

Find a US Program [HERE](#).





Starting & Planning a Partnership

Starting

If you currently do not have a relationship with your local Boys & Girls Club Organization or Special Olympics Program, the first suggested step is submitting this [interest form](#).

From there, BGCA and SONA staff will coordinate to support an introduction and next steps.

Planning

Once a relationship is started and there is mutual interest and readiness to move forward, the detailed planning process can begin. Below is a list of suggested topics and questions to consider addressing during the initial planning meetings.

- What is the current state of inclusion and activities?
 - ◆ Do the Clubs already have members with an intellectual disability (ID)?
 - ◆ Do the Clubs have trainings or programs focused on inclusion?
 - ◆ Are there existing Unified Champion Schools in the geographic area that is served by the Club(s)?
 - ◆ What types of sports and activities does the Club already offer that might be a good fit to incorporate a Unified component?
- What inclusion support resources are available?
 - ◆ How can the local school system or special education department help with things like recruitment, training, coaching, and family engagement?
 - ◆ Is there a local Special Olympics community program in the area?

-
- What programming will be offered? (see section on programming implementation levels, pg. 7)
 - ◆ Will the programming take place entirely at the Club, or will there be offsite travel to other Clubs or Special Olympics events?
 - ◆ For offsite events, how will transportation be organized?
 - ◆ For onsite, what space is available in the Club and at what days/times?
 - What paperwork and risk management policies need to be applied based on the programming being offered?
 - ◆ Which organization's policies and insurance will apply in each environment where activities will take place?
 - What is the staffing and volunteer needs of your Program?
 - ◆ Who will be the primary point of contact for organizing the programming at both the BGC and SO Programs?
 - ◆ Who will be the adult coach and/or advisor for Unified Sports/activities?
 - ◆ What training and registration will be required for adult coaches/advisors?
 - ◆ What supplemental training might be needed to support Club-wide inclusion of youth with ID?
 - How will the programming be funded?
 - ◆ Will there be membership fees?
 - ◆ Will scholarships or income-based waivers be offered?
 - ◆ Is there existing funding from either organization that can be utilized?
 - ◆ Can any joint fundraising be conducted for sponsors or grants?

-
- How will participants be recruited and registered?
 - ◆ What strategies will be used to recruit new athletes and partners to the Club?
 - ◆ How will Unified participants be registered and counted by both organizations?
 - ◆ How will Clubs become registered with the Special Olympics Program?



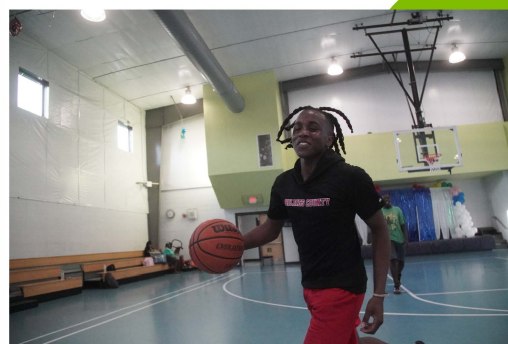


Programming Implementation

While the end goal is for Special Olympics athletes to become fully integrated Club members and for local partnerships to implement a robust set of inclusive Special Olympics activities, there are a variety of entry points and steppingstones to get there. Below are some common examples for consideration.

Entry Level: *short-term activities that require the least amount of resources and staffing*

- **Inclusion Tiles**: Meaningful inclusion can be a hard thing to put into words, and the Inclusion Tiles are a way to begin this conversation. Students and adults alike can use Inclusion Tiles. Hard copies of the Inclusion Tiles are available through Special Olympics Programs. There is an online game on Generation Unified as well as an accompanying [student guide](#) and [facilitator guide](#).
- **Unified Sports experience or “come and try” day**: A Unified Sports Experience is like Unified Sports, except that it’s a one-day or short series of recreational events. The primary goal is to provide an opportunity for people of different backgrounds to play together and learn from one another and inspire everyone to get involved with Special Olympics.
- **Keystone Club or Torch Club** organize awareness day/week in the Club such as [Spread the Word: Inclusion](#).



.....

Intermediate Level: *activities that require intermittent resources and staffing*

- Special Olympics athletes & Unified partners enrolled as Club members with opportunities to participate in Club activities
- Multi-week Unified Sports Recreation activity, such as a series of sports skills trainings or camp
- Multi-week Unified fitness & healthy lifestyles programming, suggested model includes:
 - [High 5 for Fitness](#): a set of resources for youth ages 8 – 21 to help you take control of your own fitness by making healthy choices
- Special Olympics athletes & Unified partners participate in regular Keystone or Torch Club activities
- Club members, Club staff and/or Club alumni participate or volunteer with local Special Olympics teams or events (teammates, coaches, day of event volunteers, fundraising)



.....

Advanced Level: *ongoing activities that require greater resources and staffing but have the deepest impact potential*

Unified Sports offered in a variety of settings and ages, such as:

- [Young Athletes](#): A sport and play program for children with and without intellectual disabilities (ID), ages 2 to 7 years old
- [Developmental sports](#): age-appropriate introduction to sports for children with and without intellectual disabilities, ages 6 to 12 years old
- [Training & competition team](#): organized team with adult coach that practices regularly for a full season, competes in a league with other teams and/or attends Special Olympics competition, ages 8+ (or as determined by the state SO Program)
- Ongoing Unified fitness & healthy lifestyles programming, suggested model includes:
 - [SOfit](#): offers individuals with and without intellectual disabilities a holistic, personalized education on physical activity, nutrition, and emotional and social wellness
- [Unified esports & fitness](#): A Club-approved video gaming team or program that combines an approximately equal number of students with and without intellectual disabilities and incorporates some form of Unified fitness or physical activity
- Create a Unified Keystone or Torch Club with Special Olympics athletes and Club members
- Unified youth leaders organize awareness day/week within their community



Common Challenges & Solutions

Challenge #1: There are funding barriers to implementing programming.

Solution: Finding the funding to support Unified programming may be more in reach than you expect. Club may be eligible for seed funding grants through their local Special Olympics Program, especially if the club is a school-based site. Programming could also be supported by membership fee revenue, especially when athletes are able to join as full Club members.

Challenge #2: There is limited access to physical rooms, courts, or space needed for programming.

Solution: Start by laying out all available spaces that each organization has access to. This will include traditional courts and rooms, but you should also consider multipurpose outdoor spaces, school courts and gyms, or even public parks and courts. Certain activities, such as Unified fitness programming is much more adaptable with space limitations when compared to sports like basketball or soccer.

Challenge #3: Existing Club programming conflicts with proposed Unified Sports programming.

Solution: There are a few possible solutions. The first is to view Unified programming as a complement to existing programming. For example, if your Club is currently running a basketball league, consider adding a new Unified division to that league. Another solution is to schedule Unified programming during an “off-season” time to prevent conflicts. Lastly, consider partnering with a third entity such as a local school or park to gain access to offsite space.

Challenge #4: There are limited staff members available to support Unified programming.

Solution: Implementing Unified programming does not mean you must bring on an entirely new staff member. Instead, focus the conversation on the staff members or volunteers that are available from each organization and find creative ways for how they can serve both organizations. For example, there may be existing Unified coaches who would be interested in open staff positions with a Club. There may also be existing Club staff who would be interested in becoming Unified coaches.

Common Challenges & Solutions

Challenge #5: Club staff feel unprepared to support youth with intellectual disabilities (ID).

Solution: Training for Club staff on how to create a safe & welcoming space for all youth can be found on BGCA.net and on [Spillet Leadership University](#). Special Olympics offers inclusive coaches education training through the [NFHS Coaching Unified Sports Course](#) (free) and the [ASEP Coaching Special Olympics Athletes Course](#) (small fee). There may be additional resources available through your state Special Olympics Program or other local community partners.

Challenge #6: The Club does not have the capacity to take on new members.

Solution: Even if a Club is currently at capacity and cannot accept new members, it may still be the right time to have the partnership conversation. In some cases, it is so the Club will be ready to launch when they do have capacity again. In other cases, it can help identify alternate ways for athletes to participate through the Club's community outreach efforts without becoming full members right away.





Partnership Documentation & Agreements

Below is a list of the types of topics that may be addressed as part of the partnership planning and documentation process or included within an official partnership agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU).

Given that each partnering scenario is different, every partnership document will differ in what is included. This list should be viewed as a menu of potential options to consider during the process. BGC Organizations and Special Olympics Programs may have an existing MOU template that can be utilized as a starting point.

- ❑ Purpose, vision, goals for partnership and duration that the document is in effect
- ❑ How goals and impact will be measured, and each party held accountable
- ❑ Expected contributions from each party; funding & sponsorship policies/protocols
- ❑ Risk management, liability & insurance responsibilities of each party
- ❑ Use of logos/marks/name, including any co-branding
- ❑ Organizational policies that will be in effect
- ❑ Staffing structure & responsibilities
- ❑ Applicable health and safety protocols or measures to be followed
- ❑ Facility usage & transportation
- ❑ Process of support and communication with schools/stakeholders/participants
- ❑ Growth and Sustainability plans
- ❑ Applicable indemnification, hold harmless, and/or dissolution language
- ❑ Signatory (who from each party will sign)

General Statements on Risk Management & Insurance:

It is recommended that a written agreement or memorandum of understanding be in place which clarifies which policies and insurance applies to all partnership activities and situations

It is important to determine who “owns” the event/activity by considering who has primary responsibility for all activities associated with the event, including:

- Location of the event/activity
- Venue responsibility
- Transportation
- Housing
- Supervision
- Financial responsibilities





Marketing and Communications Guidance

Logo Usage

State and local Special Olympics Programs may utilize their own logos as they deem appropriate, or develop a co-branded partnership lockup or the combined SO and BGCA co-branded lockup, as long as the branding guidelines of both organizations are followed. Individual Boys & Girls Clubs are also permitted to use their own logos as their guidelines allow. Partnership agreements should include logo usage guidelines for all parties.

All Programs & Clubs are prohibited from using the Special Olympics master brand logo, the Boys & Girls Club of America logo, or the combined Special Olympics & BGCA co-branded logo without express written permission from the respective organization(s).

Glossary

Boys & Girls Clubs and Special Olympics both use specialized language when referring to participants, products, and services. Identifying the differences in terminology for both organizations is an important step to ensure clear communication during the course of the partnership. Below are some common terms that may arise during initial partnership discussions.

Defined Term	Boys & Girls Clubs Term	Special Olympics Term
Program delivery organizations	Clubs	Programs
Participating BGCA youth without intellectual disabilities	Members	Unified partners
Participating youth with intellectual disabilities	Members/ Potential members	Special Olympics athletes
Youth on a Unified Sports team	Teammates	

Key Resources

Local partnership resources [Dropbox](#) including:

- National partnership one-pager & press release
- Local partnership press release template
- Photo & video files from Mississippi partnership

[Special Olympics Unified Sports Resources](#)- this page contains everything from training coaches, forming teams, and running competitions to communicating the benefits of Unified programming.

[Coaching Unified Sports](#) – 90-minute online training course for those looking to be a Unified Sports coach, offered at no cost through NFHS Learn

[Inclusive Youth Leadership Resources](#) – this page contains foundational resources for both youth and adults on inclusive youth leadership strategies.

[Family & Caregiver Engagement Guide](#)- this BGCA resource helps guide clubs in creating and implementing their parent & caregiver engagement strategy. The guide contains templates and tips for how to build open communication with parents & caregivers surrounding all club programming.

Contact Us

More Information

If you have additional questions or need support in establishing a local partnership, please reach out to your respective national point of contact.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America

Amanda Ruckel

Senior National Director, Partnerships & Growth

aruckel@bgca.org

Special Olympics

Brian Quinn

Director, Programming & Partnerships

bquinn@specialolympics.org