

Chapter 6.1

Supporting athletes

Benefits of this chapter

In order to help athletes achieve national, international and even Olympic honours, much support needs to be given to encourage individual athletes to reach their potential.

Making it possible for athletes to participate in competitions at a local, national and international level is an important part of developing aquatics in your country. Your federation can support all levels of athletes, from grassroots to elite levels by organising and planning athlete support initiatives. This chapter will take a closer look at some programmes which your aquatics federation can develop.

Introduction

Ongoing support may be one of the most important factors influencing sports performance. The encouragement and support of an athlete is a key factor to building confidence and can lead to success in high-pressure sporting events.

As a National aquatics Federation, it is important to provide your athletes with the foundation and support that will enable them to succeed. But where do you start? How can your federation provide the necessary support for your athletes?

Over the years many aquatics federations have been organising programmes to support their athletes, since winning medals on the international scene is seen as a key indicator of achievement most of these programmes are focused on supporting elite athletes and targets medal success in quadrennial segments.

From development grants to training camps, support of athletes comes in various ways. It is important that your aquatics federation find the right system to achieve your goals of winning in water.

Getting started

Resource availability

Supporting the up and coming young aquatics athletes as well as the elite athletes within your federation can be costly. Knowing which resources are at your federation's disposal can make it easier to support your athletes and achieve your goals of success.

Locating resources and creating partnerships where your federation can receive funding or access resources can be a challenge; however as discussed in Chapter 8 – National Partnerships, there are various means in which your federation can take advantage of.

Since most aquatics federations do not generate income, the aim of your federation should be to secure sponsorship by drawing upon every fundraising opportunity and partnership available (All by keeping in mind the overall strategy and vision of your federation of course!).

FINA's development programmes can help provide the resources to develop your federation – See Chapter 8 – FINA Programmes for more information on how to apply for specific programmes.

Setting targets

Once your federation knows what resources are available, deciding on the targets your federation would like to aim for in the future should be your next thought. Whether it is initiating development programmes for your grassroots divers or training camp programmes for your national water-polo team, your federation should review your annual targets and performance expectations.

An important aspect when setting up the targets of your aquatics federation is to make a clear outline of those initiatives which are a priority. As a National Federation you must remember to keep the balance between the emphasis on sporting elites and the wider promotion of participation in aquatics. Sport is

not just about medals and a celebrity culture, but about the benefits of taking part. So when setting your development goals remember that both world class aquatics and mass participation are important.

Supporting your athletes

The support of your athletes can be in a variety of forms. From providing access to the right facilities, the proper coaching, the right nutritional knowledge, travel grants, etc, each programme you initiate contributes to the pursuit of excellence of your aquatics athletes, enabling them to pursue their dreams.

Most programmes you will initiate will be providing support to your athletes in the forms of athletic support or financial rewards. For this reason it will be important to set out programme objectives for each of the initiatives you want to develop.

Key factors to consider:

- 1/ Who may apply?
- 2/ What are the requirements of eligibility of your aquatics programme?
 - a/ Age
 - b/ Citizenship
 - c/ Qualifying status
- 3/ How does the programme/grant work?
 - a/ What are the deadlines for application?
 - b/ When does the programme start and end?
 - c/ What does the programme include?
 - d/ How many athletes will your federation approve?
- 4/ How are applications evaluated?
 - a/ Are there any additional documents which need to be included in the application?
 - b/ Who reviews the application process?
 - c/ Where the applications should be sent?
 - d/ When will applicants be notified?