



# **CALLS TO ACTION**

**DELEGATES' INSIGHTS: AN OVERVIEW OF FEEDBACK FROM  
FACILITATED CONVERSATIONS**

# SECTION OVERVIEW

The information presented in the following pages provides a summary of the feedback received throughout the various discussions. A total of 66 pages of notes were collected from the facilitated conversations at both the Sport for Life/SPARC Summit and ARPA's Leadership Summit. Using thematic content analysis, data from the notes were coded, categorized, and synthesized into themes.

Organized around these themes, the information presented in this section provides some ideas about how we might reimagine community grassroots sport. More specifically, it outlines eight tangible actions that will be required to improve the landscape of grassroots recreational sport across the province. Within each action, a few relevant quotes are provided. A detailed overview of all the data can be found on the SPARC Alberta website

– [sparcalberta.com](https://sparcalberta.com)



## ACTION #1

### Define quality, community grassroots sporting experiences

When discussing the requirements for quality, community grassroots sporting experiences, delegates outlined four criteria:

1. Quality grassroots sporting experiences must be accessible (physically and financially).
2. Quality grassroots sporting experiences must prioritize belonging, fun, and development over winning, travel and elitism.
3. Quality grassroots sporting experiences must be co-developed with children and youth.
4. Quality grassroots programs must be compatible, but separate from, our existing competitive sporting programs.

And while these four criteria are by no means exhaustive, they should be used as a starting point for defining the types of programs that will be included in this community grassroots sporting movement.

## Be Accessible

Improved access to facilities – more affordable, equitable, open availability (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

Needs to be financially accessible to all stakeholders (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

## Prioritize fun, belonging, and development over winning, travel, & elitism:

Flip the sport system. Focus on participation and skill development and fun (*Leaders Summit*)

Fun, participant centered, autonomy, choice, belonging (*Facilitated Conversation #1*)

Move away from competition to development (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

## Be compatible with, but separate from, our existing competitive sporting programs:

Develop pathways for both competitive and recreational growth (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

Inclusion doesn't need to take away from anything else. Both grassroots and competitive sport can co-exist (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

## Be co-developed with children & youth:

Asking the kids what they want, youth voice in the organizations (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

Participant-centered – what do kids want? (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

Giving participants choice and autonomy (*Facilitated Conversation #1*)

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# ACTION #2

## Develop a long-term, vision for community grassroots sport in Alberta

Recognizing that change takes time, delegates felt it was necessary to develop a long-term vision for community grassroots sport in Alberta. The purpose of this long-term vision was fivefold:

### Offer A New Vision/ Philosophy

Challenge groups to do better (e.g., setting social goals). (*Leaders Summit*)

Develop a new philosophy (*Leaders Summit*)

### What Is Meant By Community Grassroots Sport

Need clear definition of what grassroots sport is (*Leaders Summit*)

Define recreation better (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

### Clearly Identify Outcomes

Need clear consistent framework with measurable outcomes. How do we measure the human experience? (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

Identify outcome measures so we can report on data points (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

### Account For Urban & Rural Differences

Rural/Urban equity – how can we encourage success in rural areas too (*Facilitated Conversation #3*)

Need to recognize differences between big cities versus rural/small municipalities (*Facilitated Conversation #1*)

### Outline a Process for Securing Appropriate Resources

Leaders need to sit down and decide how to better distribute funds (*Facilitated Conversation #1*)

Who gets money? Grassroots versus high performance (*Facilitated conversation #2*)

How are professional sports organizations paying back? (*Facilitated conversation #2*)



## ACTION #3

### Develop new mechanisms to authentically engage with communities

The need to listen to communities when developing grassroots sporting experiences was shared by the majority of delegates. It was therefore suggested that new mechanisms be developed to authentically engage with equity-denied groups (including children and youth), utilize diverse leaders, and embrace the notion of “nothing about us, without us.”

#### Provide Opportunities To Listen To Equity-Denied Groups

People aren't listened to. We need to listen to what they want  
*(Facilitated Conversation #1)*

Need to engage with groups with lived experiences to understand what they need  
*(Facilitated conversation #3)*

#### Utilize Diverse Leaders

Leverage community leaders  
*(Leaders Summit)*

Ambassadors to connect with youth in a less formal way  
*(Facilitated Conversation #2)*

#### Embrace the Notion of “Nothing About Us, Without Us”

Fix with not for *(Leaders Summit)*

Not top down directive, listening to the intended audience  
*(facilitated conversation #2)*





# ACTION #4

## Leverage local infrastructure

While the need for new, innovative approaches was commonly discussed, many delegates felt that much of the required infrastructure already existed at the local level. Therefore, rather than focusing on developing new spaces it was suggested we reexamine how we are using the spaces we already have. More specifically, it was suggested we begin to utilize schools through programs like intramurals and non-cut sports teams. It was also suggested that public spaces such as parks and streets could be used in more creative ways.

The need to reexamine how we use our municipal recreation facilities was also commonly discussed. The three areas that delegates felt should be examined included:

- 1. Facility allocation** (What sports get to utilize the space?)
- 2. Cost** (How much are we charging to use the space?)
- 3. Program categories** (Can we rethink age, gender, and ability categories?)

## Utilize Schools

Shift focus to afterschool in schools  
(Facilitated Conversation #3)

Get into schools (Leaders Summit)

## Rethink processes for facility allocation

Leverage post pandemic opportunities to redefine allocation and user priority (maybe less hockey and more play) (Leaders Summit)

Municipalities can change allocations  
(facilitated conversation #2)

## Examine fees at municipal facilities

Because the municipal focus is on the bottom line change is challenging (facilitated conversation #2)

Reduced financial barriers to facility rentals for youth programming/ rec (Facilitated conversation #3)

## Rethink age, gender and ability categories

Mixed gender programming  
(Facilitated Conversation #1)

Full family participation (Facilitated Conversation #1)

Gender/Flex groupings to allow more participation  
(Facilitated conversation #3)

## Innovative use of public spaces

Innovative use of space (e.g., block parties, let youth create their own spaces) (Leaders Summit)

Know how to utilize space to encourage more sport participation (facilitated conversation #2)

## ACTION #5

### Utilize new and existing partnerships

Diverse partnerships were considered to be an essential element for any groups working to improve the landscape of community grassroots sport across the province. The need to rethink collaboration within the sector was the area that was most commonly discussed. Specifically, it was suggested that there was a need to stop competing with one another and begin to share resources and ideas. It was also suggested that corporate partners and partners from outside sport and recreation (e.g., health and education) would be necessary to advance any new vision for community grassroots sport.

Youth were another group that delegates thought should be partners in this process. Recognizing the need for more coaches and leaders, it was suggested that youth could be given school credit for coaching younger kids, while simultaneously governing and running their own sport and recreation experiences.

### Rethink collaboration within the sector

Need to (re)engage the entire sector (*Facilitated Conversation #1*)

Need to stop fighting amongst ourselves (*facilitated conversation #2*)

Rec and sport can work together. Partnerships must exist (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

### Engage with corporate partners

Some good corporate partners to support programs, equipment, etc. (*Facilitated Conversation #1*)

Find out where the money is and engage (*Facilitated conversation #2*)

### Engage with other sectors

Needs cross-sectional representation (*Facilitated Conversation #3*)

Wellness and health need to be seen as part of sport (*Facilitated Conversation #3*)

Look outside the sector (*Facilitated Conversation #3*)

### Treat youth as partners

Get young people engaged through volunteer coaching (*Leaders Summit*)

Athlete to volunteer (giving back) by still being involved with sport as they age and becoming a volunteer/coach. (*Facilitated Conversation #1*)



## ACTION #6

### Take Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Seriously

The need to provide meaningful opportunities for equity-denied groups was a theme that was emphasized throughout the Summit. Recognizing the ways colonization and racism have shaped our sporting systems, delegates called for diversity in leadership positions (e.g., hiring equity-denied folks to run organizations, coach, and sit on boards). They also stressed the importance of having equity, diversity, and inclusivity as guiding principles for all programming across the sport and recreation system.

#### Ensure diversity in leadership positions

*(though equitable processes not tokenistic processes)*

More representation in coaching, leadership “see it to be it” *(facilitated conversation #2)*

White influenced industry, we need more opportunities to ensure diversity at higher tables *(facilitated conversation #2)*

System representation – people of color in positions of power *(facilitated conversation #2)*

#### Make equity, diversity and inclusion guiding principles for all programs

Our system is working only for white people  
*(Facilitated Conversation #1)*

Is it safe for all bodies? Coaches don’t have knowledge or sometimes the willingness to be adaptive and/or inclusive. *(Facilitated Conversation #1)*

All sports should create diversity/inclusion policies  
*(Facilitated conversation #2)*





# ACTION #7

## Develop mechanisms for capacity building and training

The need for education and training was considered an essential element of delivering quality sports development programming. There were five categories of training that were discussed:

- 1. Coach training** – It was suggested that a centralized, accessible coach certification program would be a worthwhile investment. Topics that could be included were child and youth development, EDI and safe sport, concussion safety, and trauma informed practice.
- 2. Elected official training** – It was suggested that if elected officials had a better understanding of the benefits of community grassroots sports, they would be more likely to make policy decisions that would increase access.
- 3. Practitioner reflection** – The need to create spaces to reflect (at both an individual and a societal level) on the historical injustices and learn about reconciliation and EDI was seen as an essential element of training and education.
- 4. Training in non-profit basics** – It was suggested that local sporting organizations would benefit from training in non-profit management (e.g., HR, social media, grant writing)
- 5. Other capacity building supports as they arise** – Other supports that were thought to be beneficial included parent training, processes for policy development, and the development of coach and organizational directories.

### Centralized, accessible coach certification

More accessible training for coaches and officials  
(Facilitated conversation #3)

Volunteers must be trained to deliver quality and safe sport (Facilitated Conversation #1)

Trauma informed coaching (reach out to experts from other industries) (Facilitated Conversation #3)

### Spaces to reflect on historical injustices / reconciliation

People want to engage in EDI but do not know how to do it.  
Need resources and training (Facilitated conversation #2)

Use TRC calls to action as a start (Leaders Summit)

Nobody is asking about the history. Need to learn and acknowledge our harmful history  
(Facilitated conversation #2)

Self-reflection needs to be part of the education  
(Facilitated conversation #2)

### Elected official training

Update elected officials' course (Leaders Summit)

Education! At every level (parents, coaches, participants, municipal officials) (facilitated conversation #2)

### Training in non-profit basics

Lack of knowledge about running organizations  
(Facilitated conversation #2)

Training for grant writing or have a professional available to help orgs (Facilitated conversation #3)

Social media training/ discussions on how to deal with the public realm (Facilitated conversation #3)

### Other capacity building supports as they arise

Parent education needs to continue to grow  
(Facilitated Conversation #1)

Tangible policy for on the ground workers  
(Facilitated Conversation #3)

Directory of organizations / database  
(Facilitated conversation #3)

## ACTION #8

### Support, share, and promote research

The need to ensure decisions are guided by research was discussed by some delegates. The specific activities that delegates thought would be useful in this area were gathering relevant data, sharing the findings of this data through a series of knowledge translation activities, and researching and sharing existing/promising practices with local groups.

Delegates also stressed the need to develop mechanisms to effectively communicate the value of sport and recreation and begin to position sport participation as part of a broader project that is connected to a number of other (seemingly unconnected) policy areas such as minimum wage and childcare.

#### Gather data (qualitative and quantitative)

Getting the data to drive change to show the importance of sport to those who don't understand  
(Facilitated conversation #3)

Lack of qualitative and quantitative data  
(Leaders Summit)

Gathering feedback from users. Rec survey for EDI  
(Facilitated conversation #2)

#### Develop ongoing mechanisms for knowledge translation

Accessing the research – Finding out how to translate knowledge (Facilitated conversation #2)

More round tables, both locally and provincially  
(Facilitated Conversation #3)

More touch points through the year to connect and tell stories (Facilitated Conversation #3)

#### Research and share existing/ promising practices

Look to best practices – don't reinvent the wheel  
(Facilitated conversation #3)

Looking outside the sector (Facilitated conversation #3)

Don't need to reinvent the wheel if there are already people doing good work  
(Facilitated Conversation #1)

#### Communicate the value of sport in the broader political context

We are in a crisis. We need stronger advocates. We need to communicate the value of sport  
(Facilitated Conversation #1)

Need ministry of sports provincially and nationally to fight for groups/have a voice (Facilitated Conversation #1)

Active lobby program. Physical activity is part of a "health" care system (Facilitated conversation #3)

