

Calling the Game

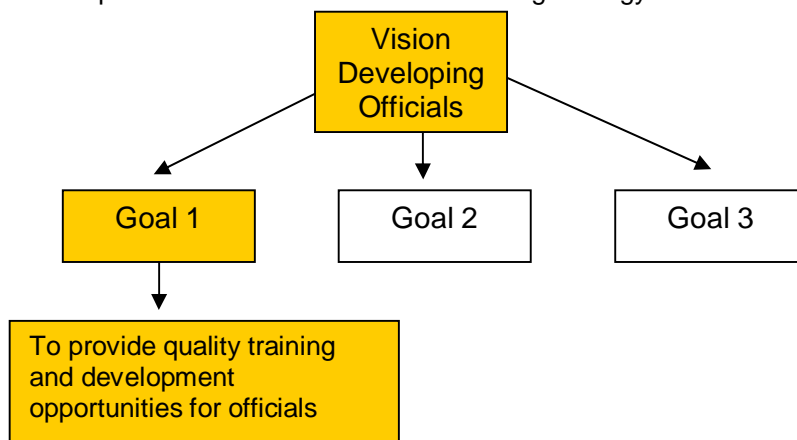
Developing quality officiating

INTRODUCTION

Sport is an integral part of life in New Zealand and officials are recognised as a significant part of our sporting infrastructure. Every weekend sports officials contribute their time, energy and expertise to enable participants at all levels to enjoy positive sporting experiences. Without the umpires, referees, judges, marshals, timekeepers, scorers and starters to control and direct play, national sports organisations would be under huge pressure to provide 'organised' sport for their members.

Provision of appropriate development programmes is critical to the success of any official and in the design of these programmes account must be taken not only of their development needs but also the environment in which they will operate in the future.

This paper outlines a national framework for developing sports officials and is being developed as part of the implementation of the national officiating strategy.



DEVELOPING SPORTS OFFICIALS

Introduction

Research shows that officials' entry into sport comes via four different paths.

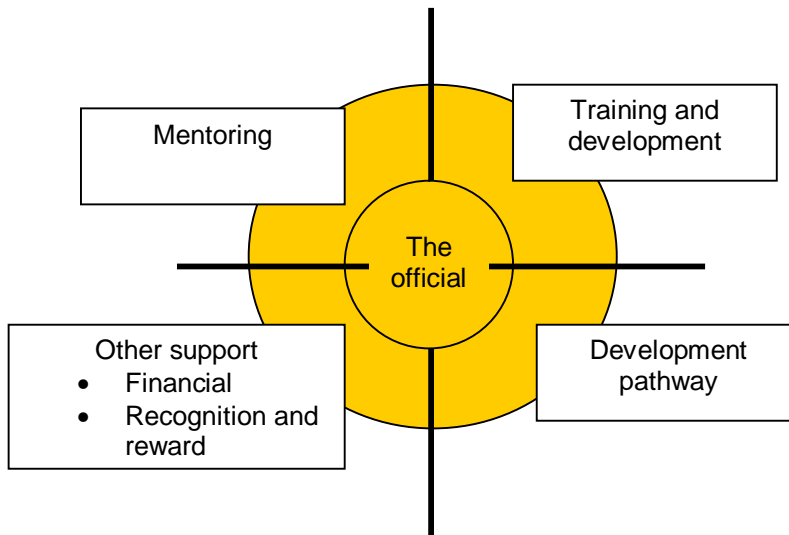
1. The retired athlete who moves into officiating when s/he no longer competes.
2. The participant who participates in a sport that requires large numbers of officials and where taking a turn at officiating is regarded as a duty for all competitors.
3. The young person who makes a conscious decision in their late teens to officiate as their preferred sporting role.
4. The sport identifies a person as having potential.

The level of organisational support directed at officials at any level and in any capacity is a critical aspect of both recruitment and retention.

Some of the challenges that discourage people from becoming officials include an increase in negative and abusive behaviour from spectators, athletes and coaches, and the financial cost of officiating. For some and the lack of knowledge, or absence, of clear pathways for development can affect retention.

A training and development system, on its own, will not solve all of the issues around recruitment and retention of officials but needs to be part of an integrated approach.

The diagram below identifies the elements of an effective official's development environment.



WHAT OFFICIALS DO

According to the National Officiating Strategy the term 'official' refers to *any person who controls or directs the actual play of a competition by applying the rules of the sport to make judgements on rule infringements, performance, time or score.*

Officials must be fair-minded and courageous and are critical to the health of organised sport. Officials ensure that games are played fairly and by the rules, within the spirit of the rules and in a safe manner.

Officials then, in differing capacities, will complete some or all of the following tasks.

- maintain standards of play and ensure that game rules are observed;
- judge performances in sporting competitions in order to award points;
- impose scoring penalties;
- judge and monitor the performance of other officials;
- signal participants or other officials to make them aware of infractions or to otherwise regulate play or competition;
- inspect sporting equipment and/or examine participants to ensure compliance with event and safety regulations;
- keep track of event times, including race times and elapsed time during game segments, starting and stopping play when necessary;
- start races and competitions;
- resolve claims of rule infringements or complaints by participants and assess the penalty required as indicated by the regulations of the game;
- verify scoring calculations before competition winners are announced;
- direct participants to assigned areas such as starting blocks or penalty zones; and
- report to regulating organisations regarding sporting activities, complaints made and actions taken or needed such as fines or other disciplinary actions.

(Source: <http://online.onetcenter.org>)

CALLING THE GAME

Calling the Game (CTG) is a series of modules developed by the Hillary Commission to provide generic training for sports officials. CTG was based on the Australian Sports Commission's National Officiating programme and was developed with the help of a review group containing experienced sports officials.

Three modules were developed to provide training and development.

- People Management,
- Becoming a More Effective Official
- Fitness and Injury Prevention.

Alongside the modules a resource guide and presenters kit were developed to ensure consistency in delivery. In 2001 an additional resource, Legal Issues and Risk Management for Sports officials, was developed. This booklet highlighted the legal obligations of sports officials and how best they could meet these obligations and manage risk.

At the beginning of 2004 an initial review was undertaken to consider appropriate ways to update and develop *Calling the Game*. Further work was carried out in December 2004 and from these meetings a draft development framework has been developed.

A NEW TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Purpose

The proposed officials training and development framework (the framework) provides a structure for the delivery of officials' education within New Zealand. It identifies areas of learning for officials and officiating competencies and suggests a range of applied learning opportunities that can be made available for officials.

The framework will also guide national sporting organisations (NSOs) as they develop and/or enhance their officials' development and accreditation systems. While the framework remains generic there is flexibility for sports to ensure their specific needs are met.

Relevance to all officials

A significant challenge in creating a framework of this nature is to ensure its relevance to the training and development of all officials regardless of the capacity in which they operate. In carrying out their tasks officials require a range of knowledge and skills and the purpose of the training and development framework is to support this learning in order to produce high quality officials and excellence in officiating at all levels of development. The framework outlines the philosophy and direction that will underpin the development of officials in New Zealand and provide consistency and alignment across sports.

Development

Development can take place for two reasons: the first is to enable the official to move from one stage of officiating to another; and the second occurs within a stage so that an official can remain at their level of interest and ability but continue to develop as an effective official.

Implementation principles

Underpinning the development of the framework are four principles which will ideally be reflected in the implementation of training and development of officials.

The Framework needs to be based on what officials do but also be generic enough in nature to allow adaptation and adoption by individual sport specific organisations.

Equally, the framework must be able to cover the range of officiating roles within sport and must fit within a sport's general direction and support an organisations' goals and objectives. As well, an official's development programme should run parallel to a sport's athlete and coach development pathway.

The core principles for the framework are:

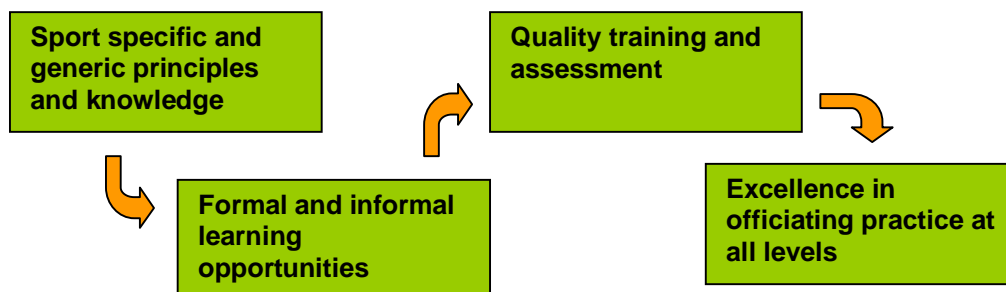
- The opportunity to learn and develop as an official is ongoing
- The purpose of training and development programmes is to bring about effective officiating practice
- Observation of practical officiating is the main means of assessing progress and checking understanding and effectiveness
- Ownership of officials training and development rests with national sport organisations
- There is acceptance that officials help to provide high quality performance and participation opportunities for athletes.

Delivery

Officials training and development will be delivered predominantly through the NSO/RSO/club network. Other approved providers who could deliver components of training and development as approved by NSOs could include Regional Sports Trusts (RSTs), tertiary education providers and the Academy of Sport network.

Delivery needs to be flexible and provide a variety of learning opportunities for officials. Many of these are identified in the table below and represent a mixture of formal and informal learning opportunities.

Delivery model for officials' training and development



Proposed Development Framework Structure

Areas of Learning	Key Competencies	Learning Topics	Learning opportunities	Performance Outcomes			
				Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<p>Applying rules and laws</p> <p>Managing games and competitions</p> <p>Managing people</p> <p>Preparing physically and mentally for officiating</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowing the rules and laws; Applying the rules and laws; Reading the game; Making decisions and judgements; Understanding and managing risk; Writing reports; Working as part of a team; Communicating with a range of others Managing conflict Managing performance (of other officials) Developing physical and mental fitness Self-reflection and analysis Using technology; Understanding the role of the official; Concentration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rules and laws of the game; Decision-making; Practical officiating; Legal responsibilities and risk management; Report writing; Developing communication skills; Conflict management; Performance management; Developing physical fitness; Developing mental skills for officials; Self-reflection; Role of the official. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tests/exams Theory sessions and lectures Seminars and conferences Case studies Observation Practical officiating assessment Role play Fitness training and assessment Self-report and analysis Mentoring Coaching Formal and informal assessment 	<p>Determined by the NSO</p>			

Levels of officiating

Four levels of officiating have also been identified and are based on the level of the participants involved. Level one focuses on the requirements to officiate beginners and/or children; level two focuses on more experienced players such as regular club or secondary school level players; level three is about officiating national provincial or national under-age athletes, and level four considers the requirements for officiating international athletes and competitions.

Level one officials are likely to be players, parents, or coaches. Often they will:

- be generally reluctant officials;
- need/want instant feedback, recognition and gratification;
- have a basic knowledge of the rules learnt mostly from their playing experiences;
- be unaware of the technical aspects of officiating such as positioning;
- lack people management skills and have difficulty dealing with conflict/ abuse;
- have low levels of confidence to officiate and are therefore easily influenced;

Level two officials will be considering, or are specialising in officiating. Often they may:

- be motivated to officiate – enthusiastic and developing a passion;
- wanting to be trained and become accredited;
- want to improve rule knowledge and develop technically;
- have a desire for coaching, feedback, mentoring;
- be competing with other officials for appointments;
- begin to develop self analysis capability around performance;
- experience roller coaster performances / appointments; and
- begin to mature as officials – technically and mentally.

Level three officials are experienced officials who:

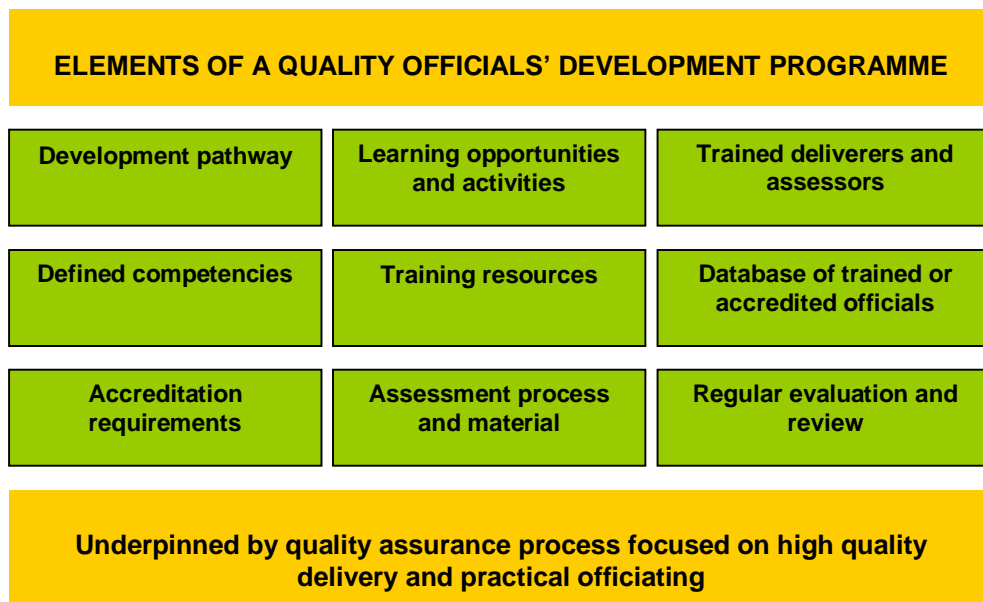
- have made a commitment to become a better official;
- are required to be consistently accurate;
- will be involved in tournament officiating;
- require excellent time management skills;
- need to be physically fit;
- have to handle pressure and handle others who are under pressure;
- may need to cope with having a public profile;
- understand and interpret skills/tactics of the game at this level;
- are required to be professional in their approach to officiating;
- require mentoring, coaching and recognition; and
- may link with high performance and/or professional teams in some capacity in a training capacity or for personal development.

Level four officials are high performance officials who:

- are very committed/competitive;
- are required to be totally professional in their approach;
- can perform on the road (travel aspect);
- can cope with language and/or cultural challenges;
- may have a public profile;
- can manage pressure on and off the field;
- are focused on performing at international level; and
- are able to develop relationships and maintain them.

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

The proposal is that NSOs will use the framework to create development programmes for their officials. Included in this will be the creation of policies and procedures that provide for the systematic development, delivery and assessment, and quality assurance of programmes.



Training resources

Training resources will be generic and sport specific in nature. There will be some opportunity for SPARC and SFRITO to work collaboratively to develop generic resources that can be tailored for delivery in a sport specific situation. NSOs will develop their own material also.

There will be instances where training material developed for coach development programmes may also be suitable for use in an officials development programme. Not only does this reduce duplication, it also creates opportunities for coaches and officials to train and learn together.

Trained deliverers and assessors

The effectiveness and quality of official development will be determined in large part by the quality of the trainer and the assessor. Training deliverers and assessors (umpire/referee coaches) is a major priority for the official development process. SPARC will maintain a relationship with SFRITO that recognises the potential for sports to enter into a training agreement with SFRITO and link to SFRITO practical assessor training programmes if they wish.

Assessment

Assessment is a check that learning has taken place and will be competency based assessment and is used to help officials identify areas of strength and weakness or be recognised for their current competencies. The key to the assessment approach used is that it is fair, valid, appropriate and non-threatening. An example of valid assessment would be that practical officiating should be assessed through observing practice rather than writing about how the practice might be carried out.

The rigour applied to assessment should be based on officials' needs. For example, an official who wants to simply improve their own understanding of the rules could be assessed in a different way to an official who wants formal recognition of accreditation to advance employment or appointment prospects, or the official who wants their learning recognised through credits on the National Qualifications Framework.

In some situations, having no formal assessment may be appropriate. For example, assessment relating to a briefing or seminar for beginning officials could be as simple as orally checking understanding as part of the learning process and providing informal feedback on officiating practice. Any certificate awarded would be for satisfactory attendance/ completion.

Some situations will require more formal assessment and where possible the emphasis of the assessment should also be based on the effectiveness of the official in applying their learning in a practical context.

Approaches that would be suitable include:

- observation and supplying verbal and/or written feedback from an assessor;
- observing simulations, role plays, videos or demonstrations;
- informal feedback collected from coaches and players;
- peer review; and
- evaluating mentor reports

Other valid forms of assessment include:

- written or online responses to assessment tasks;
- responses to case studies;
- oral questioning/interviews; and
- self-evaluation

If a sport chooses to work with SFRITO to align unit standard assessment to their officials' development programme, the key is to define the learning programme first then work with SFRITO to match appropriate unit standards to the programme.

Accrediting officials

Determining an accreditation scheme is the responsibility of the NSO. Where possible accreditation schemes should support continuous learning regardless of the level at which an official is operating. Schemes also need to encourage re-accreditation or renewal of existing qualifications, based on ongoing professional development, reassessment of competency (for higher levels), adherence to a Code of Ethics and updating of health and safety requirements.

Accreditation schemes also need to recognise current competency and officiating knowledge, bearing in mind that the best assessment of an official is through their practical application of this learning.