



Chapter Four – Club Development and Planning

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In Association with





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Chapter Four - Club Development and Planning

1. The GAA Club

The GAA is a strong and vibrant Association because it has dedicated voluntary officials at club level committed to the promotion and development of our games, with a strong sense of pride in and loyalty to their local community. These values are at the heart of the GAA family, old and young, male and female, Player's, officials and supporters all equal. The games of Hurling and Gaelic Football, Camogie, Ladies Football, Handball and Rounders set us apart in the sporting world.

The club is the basic unit of the Association. In common with all other units in the organization it shares the responsibility of ensuring that the objectives of the GAA are achieved. These objectives are laid down in the Official Guide in the charter which states that the Association's basic aim is to "strengthen the National Identity" and, to achieve this, requires that the Association shall:

- Foster and develop the national games of Hurling and Gaelic Football and handball
- Promote the Irish Language
- Support traditional Irish Culture dancing, music and song and cooperate with other organizations with similar aims
- Assist in promoting community development
- Support Irish Industry

Without its clubs and energetic volunteers the GAA is nothing. The GAA club is the bedrock of every Irish community and has provided an organized structure from which community spirit is generated. They provide the structure through which the GAA itself flourishes.

In the last one hundred and twenty years the growth of the Association has been truly phenomenal and it is safe to say that there are few areas in which the GAA has not yet had an influence. Today every small parish has its own GAA headquarters centred around the playing or the social centre. The spade work to provide this network of playing and social facilities was voluntary. Remuneration was never expected as these people, the real unsung heroes of the GAA, were doing a work of love.

It's vital our clubs continue to grow and reinvent themselves to ensure that this structure is reinforced. The GAA is a strong and vibrant Association because it has dedicated voluntary officials at club level committed to the promotion and development of our games, with a strong sense of pride in and loyalty to their local community.

The voluntary worker at club level is the source of this richness. so it is vital in these challenging and changing times that we as an Association take a critical but measured look at our resources, structures and future direction.

2. Club Development and Planning

At club level a fresh approach to thinking and planning is therefore needed to meet the challenge of the future face on. There is evidence that this approach is already accepted by some clubs and progress is being made. Every club



can improve in some degree and this must be a constant objective. Working to targets within an overall plan is the best motivating factor.

To enable the GAA to achieve its full potential and meet the challenges of the 21st century it is essential to have a strong effective clubs as the basic unit of the Association.

Consequently the Association through its Policy and Planning Committee has developed a project in GAA Leadership and Administration in association with the four Provincial Councils. The steering committee over the last number of years has comprised of experienced GAA Club, County and Provincial administrators who have over a period of time developed a number of excellent training and development programmes. There is a strong recognition from both the Uachtarán Seán Ó Ceallaigh, Uachtarán Tofa Nioclás Ó Braonáin and the Árd Stiúrthóir Liam Ó Maolmhíchil that there is a need to offer a first class, professional service to our members.

The uniqueness of this project is such that key members of Cumann Lúthcleas Gael who have years of experience both on and off the field have developed the programmes. Professionally trained facilitators who have also vast experience in the activities of Cumann Lúthcleas Gael deliver the programmes. The key objective of the programme is to support Clubs and Club activity.

The aim of the programmes developed is to provide Club Officers and County Officers with an opportunity to:

- Be effective team leaders through acquiring and employing vital leadership skills
- Be effective members of the Club Management team
- Understand the role and importance of the Club in the local community
- Understand the role and responsibilities of key officers and Club Committees
- Understand and promote the aims and distinctive ethos of the Association

There are a number of training and development programmes available for members of the Association:

- **Club Officers Programmes:** Cathaoirleach, Rúnaí, Oifigeach Caidreamh Poibli - The aim of these programmes is to give people the opportunity to learn the skills to become an effective leaders in their role as Club Officers
- **Club Development Programme:** this programme has been devised to assist GAA Clubs to plan and develop for the future through a simple framework which allows them to access their strengths and weaknesses and target areas for improvement.
- **Pre-AGM Programme - the aim of this programme** is to help Clubs plan and prepare in advance for the AGM so that the best decisions are made and the most appropriate people are nominated for the positions held in a Club.
- **Club na nÓg Programme** - Aim of Programme is to enhance structures at underage level that will provide for greater involvement enjoyment and participation of very young and young players in Gaelic Games. The Programme consists of Club officials from underage units being brought together to discuss issues affecting support for and development of games in the clubs and receiving inputs on best practice.
- **Bord na nÓg Programme** - objective of this programme is to train and develop Bord na nÓg officers to be more effective and efficient in their role.



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- **Facilitator’s Development Programme**-this programme has recently been developed by a number of key people. The aim of this programme is to give people the skills to design, develop and deliver training and development programmes
- **County Officers Planning Programme**-this programme is delivered to County Officers to help them plan and develop their work for the year.

Anyone attending a training programme will find that there is a sharing of knowledge and best practice between the participants. The occasions are usually a great learning experience but also a great opportunity to network and socialise.

3. A Guide to the Club Development and Planning for Clubs

What is a Club Plan: It is when Club Officers, Committees and Members meet on at least two occasions and undertake a strategic analysis and examination of all Club activity, structures and facilities and decide the future directions and objectives of their club and outline how they can be achieved. **In short a club decides its priorities and sets its own objectives towards achieving them.**

Facilitator: The role of the independent facilitator is to act as a conduit for the flow of ideas and solutions from the members while drawing on his/ her experience and knowledge to ensure the meeting explores positive ideas and deflects negative and personal thinking. **This is done in the Strictest of Confidence.**

Mission: A brief statement explaining the purpose of the club and why it exists

For Example:
To promote Gaelic Games in the community for people of all ages and maximize participation

Goal: Statements that explain the broad directions of the club

For Example:
To increase playing and non-playing participation in the club

Objectives: The specific clubs results the club wants to achieve in each of the key areas

For Example:
To increase the number of fully paid members by in the club by 20% before 2006 club AGM



Action Plan: Plan showing how the club is going to achieve its objectives and the timeframe involved

For Example

Objective	Action (what)	Responsibility (who)	Timeframe (when)	Resources (€)
1. To increase the numbers of Fully paid members in the club by 20% before 2006 club AGM	Identify members of community who support club but are not active members encourage them to join club	Club Membership Subcommittee	By 1st August of current year	€xxx budget
2.				
3.				

Session 1.

Who are involved in the Process?

Ideally the process should involve as many interested participants as possible. Numbers will vary depending on the size and current position of the club. It's equally possible to develop a Club Plan with small or large numbers but the greater the numbers the greater the rewards. To encourage as many members as possible to participate the club Secretary is asked to write to all members. A standard letter is used for this purpose. The letter stresses the importance of the course, the benefits to the club and the need for the club to plan. The letter also outlines what's going to happen in Session 1 and 2 and includes the individual member club analysis questionnaire that they are expected to fill out in advance of Session 1. In filling out the questionnaire in advance the participants are forced to start the planning process.

For Example

- Players
- Officials
- Managers
- Coaches
- Committee members
- Parents
- Supporters
- Other interested community members
- Representatives of other local voluntary organisations



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Who will deliver course?

At least two trained experienced independent Facilitators should facilitate, encourage full participation of all members, help guide the programme to positive outcomes and assist the club in Planning for the Future.

Why Plan?

Because not planning for the future is not recognizing or accepting the present **ON AND OFF THE FIELD**

Planning can help your club to:

- look objectively and honestly at the current position of the club
- cope with changes
- clarify its purpose and status in the community
- determine priorities for improvement
- decide where it wants to be
- work out how to get there
- agree the best method of delivery
- monitor progress

How do we achieve this?

Club planning is best achieved by

- critical review
- honest assessment
- self analysis
- objective targeting
- positive direction

Where do we start?

Proper effective planning is only possible when your club recognizes and accepts where you are at present!!

It's important that members take an active role in the shaping of the clubs future. Participating in a planning workshop will allow them to do this. Clubs were set up to help communities, so why not involve and give them a say in the future development of the club. The members will feel they've contributed to shaping the clubs future and will in turn be more likely to help carry out the plans.

To commence our Club Planning we need to look at:

- Individual member club assessment
- Club officer workload
- Leadership and teamwork
- Sub-Committees



Club Planning Discussion/Workshop

Planning workshops are an opportunity to involve the entire group and in particular those individuals who may not be willing to stand up before an audience. Workshops enable these people to participate in a meaningful way among a small group. Together the participants can find ways to improve the club. Participants are asked to consider and look at the current position of the club under the following headings.

- A. Recruitment of members
- B. Administration and Communication
- C. Support from our catchment area

What Happens in the Workgroups?

At the end of the first session the facilitator will lead the participants through what they have to do as part of their homework for Session 2. The facilitator will divide the participants into three equal workgroups. The facilitator should carefully select the members of each workgroup. The facilitator should avoid a situation where the entire club executive occupies the group working on Administration in the club. The members of each group will concentrate on different areas of club activity and meet on at least two occasions together between the first and second session.

In the workgroups the participants will:

- Look at Administration within the club
- Look at Coaching and Games Structure in the club
- Look at Property and Facilities

Session 2

Firstly, the Facilitator should issue a feedback report to all the members based on their comments made in the individual member club analysis questionnaire. The feedback on the questionnaire is a useful guide as it invariably contains the answers and solutions to many of the questions that will be raised throughout the second session by the participants.

Secondly, the chairperson of each of the three workgroups will then report and give feedback on the work carried out on the specific area of club activity they were asked to concentrate on.

The facilitators will then lead the participants through some group discussion. This will give members an opportunity to comment on the feedback reports delivered. This is a brainstorming session, everyone should have an opportunity to give their opinion on the present position of the club and in doing so determining what are the clubs strengths and weaknesses in relation to areas of club activity such as administration, coaching, games, physical development and finance. This exercise also gives the members an opportunity to make recommendations on how areas of club activity can be improved and decide what challenges the club faces in the future.



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Remember it's at this stage the facilitator should be reminding the participants to think about:

**Where are they Going?
What they want to Achieve?
And Reminding them about Club Plan!**

At this point the participants will:

- Look at the changes that are happening in the community that will affect the club
- Identify challenges
- Look at how the club is currently working
- Decide how they would like the club to work in the future
- Identify actions responsibilities and resources that will be needed to make it work better
- Outline how and when these actions should occur
- Determine how to evaluate progress

Towards the end of the group discussion session the facilitator should encourage the group to decide and agree the club objectives and what areas of club activity require most focus and attention.

Down to Action

Using their skill and the experience gained from facilitating the course, the facilitator must now set up an Implementation Workgroup comprising of members from each of the three workgroups. The members of this group will be responsible for developing the club plan using the information gathered from the feedback reports and Group Discussions.

The task of the group is to determine specific objectives and prioritize the main areas of activity to address. The Implementation Workgroup should try to make their objectives:

- S** - Specific
- M** - Measurable
- A** - Achievable
- R** - Realistic
- T** - Timebound

Objectives

Priority

High

Medium

Low

1. For Example

To increase the number of fully paid up members by in the club by 20% before 2006 club AGM

High

Implementation Workgroup should outline how your club will reach its objectives. The task of the Implementation Workgroup is to identify what actions need to be taken to achieve each objective that the members decided on in the previous session. The group will also need to identify who will be responsible, what resources will be needed and what the timeline will be.

The members of the group should always keep the following questions to the forefront of their minds:-

What is required to reach the clubs objectives?

What resources will be needed – money, equipment, volunteers?

Who will be responsible for each activity and what will the timeframe be?

Objective	Action
Responsibility (who?)	
Timeframe (when?)	
Resources (what?)	
1. For Example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase the number of fully paid up members by 20% before 2006 club AGM Identify members of community who support club but are not active members encourage them to join club Club Membership Subcommittee €??? budget 	
2.	
3.	
4.	



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Conclusion:

A draft plan should be produced initially. It should set out clear achievable goals. The draft should be circulated to the general membership for comment in advance of a specially convened club meeting to decide if any changes are necessary. If any changes are necessary these should be made final and the final version adopted by the Club Executive. It's important clubs publicise the fact that they have a club plan and the members know what it will mean to the club and how it relates to them.

Once the plan has been finalised it is important that it is regularly reviewed. You should:

- Check your progress regularly in relation to what is set out in the plan. Always refer to it at Club Meetings.
- It is important to modify and update your plan
- Set up a Planning Committee in the club to review the plan and monitor its progress. Your club should be constantly planning.

These guidelines should be used by GAA clubs as a guide to assist them in the process of developing a **Club Plan** and one that includes the input of all its members **not just the management team**.

Remember
“Failing to Plan is Planning to Fail”

**To assess the current position of your club see appendix 4 and
chart the performance of your club under selected areas of club activity.**