



SAOF Strategy 2021-2025



Vision

To make Orienteering a vibrant, national sport accessible to all South Africans

Mission

Development Growth Excellence

These statements encapsulate the intent of our strategy. They reflect the belief that in order to grow the sport, development and roll-out of education pathways are required to reduce the inherent *barriers to entry*. Our mission also recognises that excellence, which includes being internationally competitive at the highest level, will not be possible without the foundation of development and growth of the participation base of our sport in all communities within South Africa.

Goals 2021

There are a number of dimensions over which to evaluate the health of our sport. These dimensions include number of members*¹, number of Member clubs*², geographic spread of active Member clubs, total participation levels, participation that is reflective of South Africa's demographics and international performance amongst others. Our 5-year goals against each of these dimensions are listed below. By measuring our progress against these goals we will be able to assess whether or not our efforts are effective.

Long-term Objectives: 2025

- 10000 Runs*³ annually at Orienteering Events*⁴
- 750 SAOF members
- Active Member clubs in 6 Provinces
- A single event with more than 500 Participants*⁵
- Year-on-year improvement in participants mirroring SA demographics
- Year-on-year improvement in club membership mirroring SA demographics
- First Woman A-final qualification. Men regularly qualifying for A-finals (JWOC or WOC)

Definitions

*1 Number of individual members of Member clubs. As per our constitution, Member clubs are either full or associate and they are clubs whose primary focus is orienteering.



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- *2 As per our constitution, Member clubs are either full or associate and they are clubs whose primary focus is orienteering.
- *3 Runs are defined as the number of cards / individuals groups are counted as 2 since this is the minimum number in a group)
- *4 An Orienteering Event is defined as any timed event with a Map and Navigation. This can include Foot O and MTB O.
- *5 Participants are as per *1 and *2, i.e. participants at a trail-running event with O elements don't count.

Introduction

This update to our strategy seeks to learn from our efforts over the past five years and to adapt our approach based on the experience gained.

In order to grow our sport we need to find the balance between efforts to strengthening our base organically versus efforts to grow the sport in new areas. In regions where active clubs already exist we need to find ways to help these clubs grow and thrive.

Based on our experience in recent years our approach to grow the sport in new areas can be summarised as containing three steps. These steps apply equally to clubs wishing to grow their membership base. The three steps are:

- **Expose lots of new people to the sport**
We need to continue to provide opportunities to make more people aware of our sport. The more people we can introduce to Orienteering, the greater the chance we have of finding those people who will become truly passionate about the sport.
- **Identify people who show passion**
Out of all the people that we expose to the sport we need find ways to identify those people who will become truly passionate about the sport. These are the people that “pull” for more. They are proactive in seeking more help and more information. We have learned that putting effort and resources into people who do not “pull” is invariably wasted.
- **Provide support**
Once we have found these people who are passionate about orienteering, we need to provide support in whatever form it is needed. This could be in the form of education opportunities, provision of materials, participation opportunities, recognition of their efforts, etc.



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Key Strategic Elements

In this section we provide a brief description of the key strategy elements that we believe need to be implemented in order for us to achieve our vision.

Working Together

The SAOF and its Member clubs are in a symbiotic relationship and as such we need to explore ways to work together to achieve our vision. Bigger clubs mean more volunteers to help the clubs host more events. The clubs also provide us with passionate, skilled people who are critical to the successful implementation of our projects. As such it is in our mutual interest to find ways for our existing clubs to grow their membership base.

Funding Certainty

Although the SAOF has been the beneficiary of a number of reasonable sized grants from SRSA in recent years, a number of factors have diminished the utility of these grants. The grants have been for a single year and as such it has been difficult to implement longer-term projects. In particular, it has not been possible to provide potential service providers with any income guarantees. Restrictions in how the funds can be spent have contributed to this difficulty. This has been further exacerbated by the fact that grant agreements and payments have often come partway through the financial year. This required accelerated project delivery in a compressed timeframe.

The availability of funding with less restrictive conditions would allow us to implement longer-term projects and to give certainty to potential service providers.

The Youth are the Future

We firmly believe that a critical element of our long-term strategy to ensure sustainable growth of orienteering lies in exposing more children to our sport. We need to develop fun and engaging versions of our sport that appeal to children and their parents. Some success was achieved previously with the implementation of the *Young Orienteers Challenge* (YOC) skills development programme.



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Exciting Introductory Level Format

One of the challenges when introducing orienteering to new people is to present the sport in an easy-to-understand, exciting and accessible format. We need to encourage clubs to drive event format innovation.

Gaining Access to Schools

Orienteering is not a recognised school sport. We have found it difficult to penetrate well-resourced schools with an already full complement of traditional school sports. However, the Gauteng Schools League has shown that it is possible to gain recognition in such schools.

We have also experienced some success in rural schools. These schools are often quite welcoming to new sports. They do, however, have other challenges such as limited funding.

Previously we have tried to capitalise on the fact that orienteering is an elective option within the Life Orientation subject in the school curriculum. This approach has met with limited success.

Coach Education and Development

Good quality coaching at all levels is crucial if participants are to have a positive experience, and hence continue with the sport.

Our current coaching system is based on the British system with adaptations to align it with the South African Coach Framework. We will continue with the development of our coach education pathway under the SASCOC-lead South African Coach Framework. This will result in coaching qualifications that are at a recognised NQF level. Whilst our Level 1 (Coaching Assistant) qualification is complete, our next priority is the Introductory-Level, pre-Coach qualification. This course will build on our successful *Introduction to Orienteering* training course.

We will explore ways to make our *O in a Box* Level 1 and 2 resource packs more accessible and easier to use.

Officials Education and Development

A number of technical skills are required for successful hosting of higher-level events. These include Course Planning, Event Controlling, Event IT systems and Event Organising. Whilst we rely heavily on our member clubs to develop these skills amongst their members, we recognise the need to formalise this skills development pathway.



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Whilst we have a number of IOF accredited World Ranking Event Advisers, we need to explore ways of applying similar quality assurance principles to National and Provincial-level events.

High Performance

We believe that for many younger participants the possibility of international competition is aspirational. We believe that a strong focus on the High Performance element of orienteering is important to improve the attractiveness of the sport and to raise the profile of the sport.

The SAOF will continue to operate a National Squad system (senior elite, junior elite, youth and development). Talented athletes that are identified at club and regional level are selected into one of these squads. Squad members will be exposed to national and international level coaching and competition experiences. The squads will be coached by world-class, accredited, South African coaches.

Access to Facilities

Orienteering does not occur in a simple playing ground that is easily constructed, like other sports. In order to provide a continual challenge to participants, new areas must be mapped for orienteering events. This presents a number of challenges such as guaranteed access to the terrain, distance to the terrain and the need to update old maps. The SAOF will support the production of Strategic Maps, School maps in areas where there are no active clubs as well as training opportunities for the development of orienteering map-makers.

Strategic Maps

A strategic map is a multi-use, high-quality map of good orienteering terrain. The first use of the map would typically be for National or Provincial championships, or for International events, e.g. the Big Five O event. The second use would be for High Performance and/or development training camps. And the final use would be for club events. The SAOF will continue to support the generation of these maps since they have been shown to have great value.

School Maps

With the availability of high-quality imagery via Google Earth and Google Street View, it has become possible for experienced orienteering mappers to draw decent, first iteration, school maps without leaving home. The SA Schools Mapping project seeks to provide an orienteering map of each school in South Africa. We aim to continue with the SA Schools Mapping project as a means to identify keen schools / teachers who can then be provided with further exposure to Orienteering.

Mapper Development and Equipment

The making of orienteering maps is a time-consuming process that requires highly skilled mappers. The SAOF will continue to provide opportunities to train new people in the skills of making



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orienteering maps. Typically, only a small proportion of people who have been taught basic map-making skills. Hence it is important to identify keen mappers and then provide training and mentoring opportunities to enable them to improve their mapping skills.

In addition the specialised software required to make orienteering maps is expensive. Therefore the SAOF will seek ways to remove this as a barrier.

Craig Ogilvie

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South African Orienteering Federation