

Steps to Diversifying Our Athletes and Volunteers

It's time to reach out to a variety of cultural groups in your community and highlight their opportunities in the Special Olympics (SO) movement. Who lives in your region? How can you connect with them? They may be your next athletes and volunteers!

1. Find out who lives in your region from an ethnic origin, visible minority and religious standpoint by checking Statistics Canada data. Then set recruitment goals for the group(s) you will target (e.g. increase representation by athletes from South Asian backgrounds by x% or recruit # in the next year).
2. Now how do you connect and get individuals from the cultural group to commit to being athletes or volunteers in the SO movement?
 - i. Reach out to key individuals who are well-respected in their cultural/religious community. They may be willing to champion involvement in SO, connect you with their network, as well as educate you on how intellectual disabilities are viewed within their community.
 - ii. Approach cultural, newcomer and/or religious organizations to create partnerships (e.g. partner with a Chinese cultural centre).
 - iii. Find out what sports are most played by the cultural group that you are trying to engage. See *"Sports for Growth"*. Ask about cultural sporting leagues.
 - iv. Tell prospective volunteers about the benefits of volunteering like gaining transferable skills valued in the workplace, increasing social networks, improving language skills and giving back to the community.
 - v. And remember in some cultures and/or religions, having coaches who are female will open doors to girls getting involved. Provide accommodations to uniforms (where possible) that are culturally sensitive and safe.
3. Apply the *"Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Image Filter"* to SO materials to ensure the photos that you choose are sending a welcoming message,
4. Refer to *"Inclusive Language for Internal and External Communications"* and the *"Accessible Language for External Communications"* to make sure that your message is on target.




Community





Educate yourself
about diversity
and inclusion

Consult a
Multifaith
Calendar when
planning events

5. When you are planning important events and programs, be sure to check a **Multifaith Calendar** (available online) so that there is no overlap with an important cultural or religious celebration (e.g. Kwanzaa, Ramadan, Diwali, Lunar New Year, etc.)
6. Recruit athletes and volunteers through approaches that:
 - i. Target a cross-section of society such as schools, CEGEPs, post-secondary job and volunteer fairs, health centres, sporting associations (e.g. provincial/territorial associations) and local community centres.
 - ii. Target a specific group through outreach to cultural/religious organizations and cultural/religious sporting leagues. When possible, ensure that one (or more) of the people recruiting is a member of that group.
7. Track progress towards the goals that you set (e.g. Consider putting optional fields on your registration forms where athletes and volunteers can provide you information about their cultural background so that you can track progress).
8. Once you've won them over and they've joined the SO community, you want to keep them. It's time for you to educate yourself about diversity and inclusion in general, and your own hidden bias specifically. This is how you create an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and able to fully participate and contribute.
9. Share diversity and inclusion best practices and lessons learned across Chapters.
10. For more information including the "*Strategy for Engaging Diverse Cultural Communities*", "*Sports of Possible Special Interest for Particular Communities: Chinese, Indian, Filipino and First Nations, Métis and Inuit Backgrounds*", "*Cultural Diversity & Inclusion Image Filter*", and "*Language Guidelines for Inclusion and Accessibility*" contact info@specialolympics.ca

