



World Sailing

Sailing Programmes for Social Inclusion

Guidebook for building
socially inclusive sailing
programmes

sport / nature / technology



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Introduction

The Guidebook on Improving Social Inclusion through Sailing Programmes provides practical strategies for creating sailing programmes that promote social inclusion. By addressing barriers to participation and fostering a sense of belonging, these programmes can transform lives and strengthen communities.

The Role of Sports in Social Inclusion

Sports have a unique ability to bring people together. As David Thibodeau stated, “The most basic element of sport is people coming together to play. Sports break down barriers and build bridges where boundaries usually exist.”

When combined with education and intentional programme design, sports can help participants build social connections, develop confidence, and foster positive identities.

Why Sailing?

Sailing offers unparalleled opportunities for personal and social growth. It fosters teamwork, resilience, and environmental awareness while providing a space for individuals to challenge themselves and achieve new skills.

Beyond the individual benefits, sailing creates a unique shared experience that can break down social barriers and build connections between people from diverse backgrounds. For example, crewing a sailboat requires collaboration and communication, naturally promoting interaction and mutual respect. The shared experience of navigating the water, facing challenges together, and celebrating successes strengthens bonds and creates a sense of community.

Moreover, sailing can foster environmental awareness and stewardship, connecting participants to the natural world and inspiring them to protect it. This connection can be particularly powerful for individuals from marginalised communities who may have limited access to green spaces and outdoor activities.

Sailing programmes can also be designed to specifically address the needs of different target populations. For example, programmes for people with disabilities can incorporate adaptive equipment and specialised instruction, while programmes for youth from underserved communities can provide mentorship and leadership development opportunities.



Understanding Social Inclusion

Social inclusion aims to create opportunities for everyone to feel connected, valued, and able to participate fully in community life. Equal opportunities ensure that no one is excluded based on age, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, differing abilities, or other life experiences.

Barriers to Social Inclusion

Many people face challenges that make it harder to participate in social activities. These key barriers include:



Financial constraints

The cost of joining activities, buying equipment, or paying fees can be too expensive.



Limited access to facilities

Some people live far from facilities or have physical disabilities that make it difficult to get there.



Language barriers

People who do not speak the language of instruction well may struggle to communicate and feel left out.



Lack of awareness

People may not know about available programmes or opportunities.



Societal biases

Stereotypes and discrimination can make some people feel unwelcome or excluded.

To promote inclusion, efforts should focus on groups that often face these barriers, such as individuals with disabilities, underrepresented ethnic or cultural groups, women and girls, underserved youth, and economically disadvantaged communities. By addressing these challenges, we can create more opportunities for everyone to participate and feel valued.

Benefits of Sailing Programmes for Social Inclusion

Sailing programmes offer a unique and powerful platform for fostering social inclusion. From building confidence and promoting teamwork to enhancing physical and mental well-being, sailing provides a rich environment for personal growth and community connection.



Building Confidence and Teamwork

Sailing fosters confidence and teamwork by encouraging participants to collaborate, communicate effectively, and take on leadership roles. Navigating challenges on the water requires trust and coordination, helping individuals build self-esteem and develop a strong sense of accomplishment.



Accessibility and Adaptability

Sailing is accessible and adaptable, allowing individuals with physical disabilities to participate through the use of adaptive equipment such as specialised seats and harnesses. These modifications ensure that everyone, regardless of ability, can experience the freedom and excitement of sailing on equal terms.



Environmental Connection

Spending time on the water fosters a deep connection with nature, inspiring participants to appreciate and protect marine life and the environment.

Guidelines for New Sailing Programmes

Launching a new sailing programme with a focus on social inclusion requires careful planning and a deep understanding of the unique needs of the targeted participants.

This chapter provides a foundational framework for developing and implementing initiatives that not only introduce the joy of sailing but also foster a sense of belonging, empowerment, and community. From initial concept and resource allocation to programme design and participant engagement, these guidelines aim to equip organisers with the essential tools and considerations necessary to create a safe, accessible, and impactful sailing experience for individuals who may face barriers to participation.



Planning & Design



Programme Structure



Recruitment & Outreach



Training for Staff & Volunteers



Measuring Impact



Partnership & Collaboration



Sustainability & Scalability



Planning & Design

The planning and design phase is the bedrock of any successful social inclusion sailing programme.

Here you will find the outline of the crucial steps involved in laying a solid foundation, from defining programme goals and identifying target participants to designing accessible and engaging activities. Careful planning ensures that the programme is not only enjoyable but also effectively addresses specific needs and promotes the inclusion of all participants.

Defining Goals and Objectives

Think about what specific outcomes you hope to achieve through your programme. For example, you might aim to increase participation of individuals with disabilities in sailing, promote cross-cultural understanding, or empower youth from marginalised communities.

To ensure success, make your goals **SMART**:

- S**pecific > Clearly define what you want to achieve.
- M**easurable > Identify how you will track progress and success.
- A**chievable > Set realistic goals that are within reach.
- R**elevant > Ensure the goals align with your programme's overall purpose
- T**ime-bound > Set deadlines to stay on track and evaluate progress.

Needs Assessment

Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify the specific barriers and challenges faced by your target population. Begin by understanding the demographics of your local area to gain insight into the community surrounding your club or centre. This will help you better tailor your programme to meet the unique needs of those you aim to serve.





Programme Structure

A well-defined programme structure is essential for creating a consistent, reliable, and impactful sailing experience. This chapter explores the practical aspects of organising your sailing programme, ensuring smooth operations and maximising participant engagement. From scheduling and logistics to equipment provision and activity design, a clear structure will foster a safe, inclusive, and enjoyable environment for everyone.

Programming

Activity Design

Develop a structured curriculum that begins with safety and basic sailing skills, then gradually introduces advanced manoeuvres and techniques.

Add activities like knot tying, navigation challenges, and marine conservation workshops to expand the learning experience beyond just sailing.

Focus on hands-on activities where participants can actively practice skills, such as steering the boat, tying knots, and plotting courses, to encourage practical learning.

Include group activities that build teamwork and friendship, like sailing relays, guided knot tying, navigation games, and team challenges.

Design activities that can be modified to suit different physical and cognitive abilities, such as using assistive equipment, offering alternative instructions, and providing extra support when needed.

Skill Development and Progression

Set specific learning goals and milestones to monitor participant progress, ensuring they advance through key skills and concepts at a steady pace.

Provide tailored instruction and support to accommodate different learning styles and paces, ensuring each participant progresses effectively.

Give participants regular chances to practice and apply their skills through drills, hands-on exercises, and real-world sailing scenarios.

Implement a recognition system, such as certificates, badges, or skill levels, to motivate and reward participants for their progress and achievements.



Timing & Scheduling

Session Duration and Frequency

Plan session length and frequency to balance participant availability, attention spans, and programme goals for effective learning and engagement.

Provide flexible scheduling options to accommodate different availability, ensuring accessibility for all participants.

Schedule sessions with weather and seasonal changes in mind, ensuring safety and optimal learning conditions.

Consistent Schedule

Maintain a consistent schedule to provide structure, routine, and predictability for participants.

Share the schedule clearly and send timely reminders to keep participants informed and prepared.

Build in flexibility to adjust for unexpected events, like weather delays, while keeping the programme on track.

Transport and Accessibility

Accessible Transportation

Provide accessible transportation options to accommodate participants with mobility limitations, ensuring everyone can attend comfortably.

Offer transportation assistance to participants who may have difficulty accessing the programme location, ensuring everyone can participate.

Provide clear information about transportation arrangements and detailed directions to ensure participants can easily find the location.

Venue Accessibility

Choose a venue that is fully accessible to all participants, including those with physical disabilities, ensuring easy access and safety for everyone.

Ensure the venue has accessible pathways, ramps, and restroom facilities to accommodate all participants comfortably and safely.

When possible, choose a venue close to public transportation and other community resources to make it easier for participants to access the programme.





Supplying Equipment

Safety Equipment

Ensure the availability of high-quality, well-maintained safety equipment, such as life jackets, helmets, and first-aid kits, to prioritise participant safety.

Make sure all participants are properly fitted with the appropriate safety gear, such as life jackets and helmets, before any activity.

Perform regular inspections of all equipment to ensure it is safe, functional, and in good condition for use.

Sailing Equipment

Offer a variety of sailing equipment that caters to different skill levels and abilities, ensuring everyone has the right tools for their experience.

Make sure the equipment is user-friendly and accessible for all participants, regardless of their skill level or experience.

Regularly maintain equipment to keep it in good working order and provide training to participants on how to use it safely and effectively.

Adaptive Equipment

Invest in adaptive equipment, like specialised seating, steering systems, and communication devices, to ensure participants with specific needs can fully participate and enjoy the programme.

Consult with experts and participants to determine the most suitable adaptive equipment, ensuring it meets individual needs and enhances the experience.

Provide training and support on the use of adaptive equipment.





Recruitment & Outreach

Effective recruitment and outreach are essential for cultivating a diverse and engaged participant base. In this section, we will highlight key strategies for attracting potential participants and generating enthusiasm for your sailing programme. The focus is on nurturing relationships with community organisations, customising communication to resonate with specific audiences, and establishing accessible enrolment processes. By doing so, we can ensure that the opportunity to experience sailing is made available to those who will gain the most from it, particularly those from underrepresented or underserved communities.

Targeted Outreach

Create outreach strategies focused on your specific target population. Partner with community organisations, schools, and disability advocacy groups to expand your reach. It is important to remember that parents and guardians often influence the activities their children participate in, so be sure to engage them as well.

Culturally Appropriate Materials

Ensure your marketing and outreach materials use culturally sensitive and inclusive language and imagery to resonate with a diverse audience. For example, include images of people from different cultural backgrounds, and use language that respects various identities, such as highlighting accessibility for individuals with disabilities or promoting inclusivity for all genders.

Accessibility

Make sure your programme information and registration process are accessible to all, including people with disabilities. Provide materials in multiple formats, such as print, online, and audio, to cater to different needs. Additionally, consider offering materials in multiple languages to ensure inclusivity for diverse communities.

Transportation Assistance

Consider offering transportation support to participants who may face challenges getting to your programme. This can help remove a significant barrier and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate.



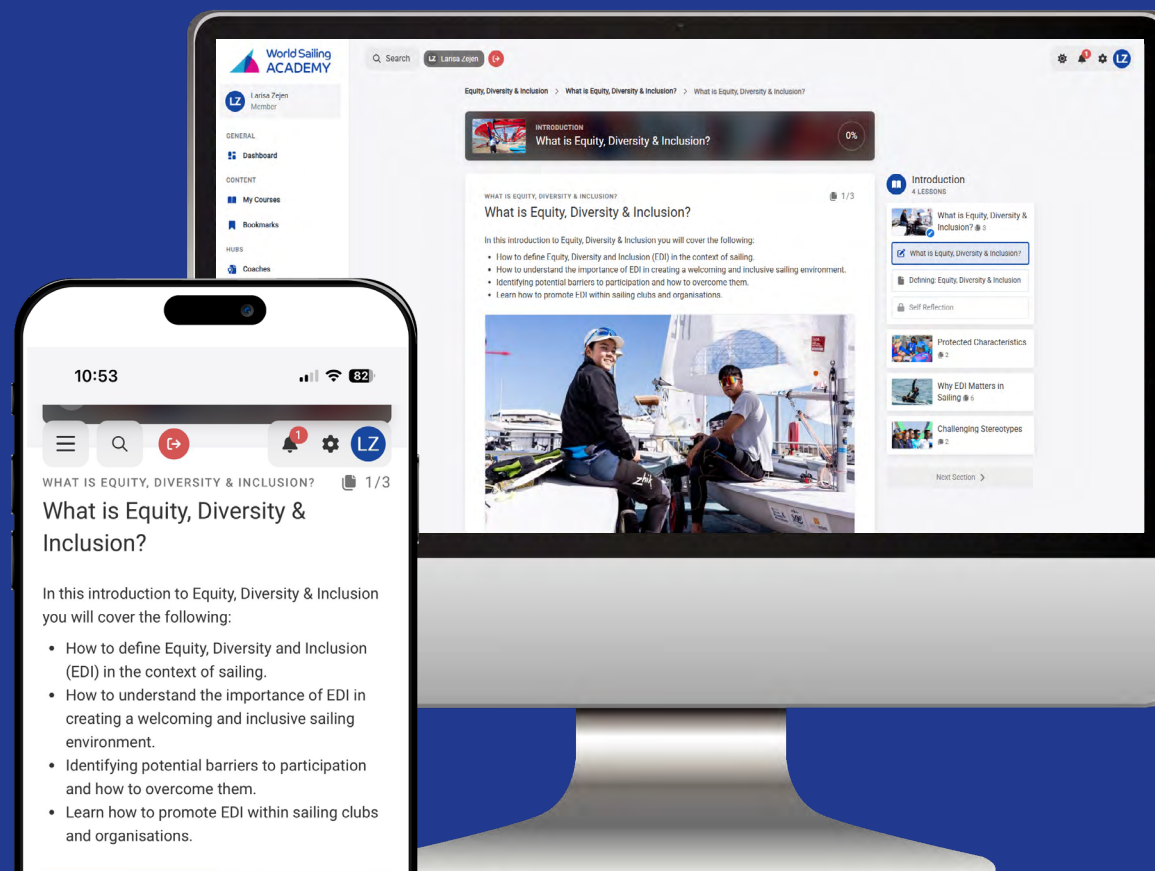


Training for Staff & Volunteers

The success of any social inclusion sailing programme hinges on the competence and compassion of its staff and volunteers. Here we will outline the essential components of a comprehensive training programme and emphasise the importance of equipping individuals with the necessary skills, knowledge, and sensitivity to create a safe, supportive, and enriching experience for all participants. Investing in thorough training ensures that your team is prepared to handle diverse needs, promote inclusion, and foster a positive learning environment.

There are many examples of different resources on the topics explained in this chapter, such as cultural competency training, disability awareness training, adaptive sailing techniques, conflict resolution skills, and leadership development. We encourage you to explore these resources and find the ones that resonate best with your programme's needs.

We invite you to complete the EDI online course available on the **World Sailing Academy learning platform** to further enhance your knowledge and skills in these areas.


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Cultural Competency Training

Train staff and volunteers in cultural competency to help them engage effectively and respectfully with diverse populations, creating a more inclusive environment.

This training can cover topics such as unconscious bias, inclusive communication, and cultural awareness.

Disability Awareness Training

Provide disability awareness training to help staff and volunteers better understand the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities and create a more inclusive environment. Training should cover topics such as accessible communication, adaptive equipment, and inclusive programme design.

Adaptive Sailing Techniques

Equip staff and volunteers with training on adaptive sailing techniques and the use of specialised equipment to ensure inclusivity for individuals with disabilities.

This includes learning how to use adaptive seats, harnesses, and joystick-controlled steering systems.

Conflict Resolution Skills

Train staff and volunteers in conflict resolution and effective communication to maintain a positive and inclusive programme environment. Skills such as active listening, de-escalation techniques, and mediation can help address misunderstandings and create a supportive atmosphere for all participants.

Leadership Development

Encourage staff to take on mentorship roles, helping participants build confidence, develop skills, and deepen their involvement in sailing. Providing leadership opportunities fosters personal growth and creates a supportive, inclusive environment.





Measuring Impact

Demonstrating the value and effectiveness of your social inclusion sailing programme is essential for securing ongoing support and ensuring continuous improvement. This subchapter provides guidance on developing and implementing a robust evaluation framework. It emphasises the importance of identifying key indicators, collecting relevant data, and analysing outcomes to assess the programme's impact on participants' lives and the broader community. By systematically measuring impact, you can showcase the programme's success, identify areas for enhancement, and advocate for its sustainability.

Data Collection

Track programme participation, gather participant feedback, and monitor changes in attitudes and behaviours to measure the impact of your sailing programme. Use methods such as:

Attendance Records

Monitor participation trends and retention rates.

Pre- and Post-Programme Surveys

Assess changes in confidence, teamwork, and sense of inclusion.

Participant Interviews

Collect personal experiences and insights.

Observation Logs

Note behavioural and skill development over time.

Parent/Guardian Feedback

Gain perspectives on the programme's impact outside of sessions.

Evaluation

Assess how well your programme is meeting its goals and objectives by reviewing participation data, feedback, and overall impact. Methods may include:

Comparing Goals vs. Outcomes

Measure progress against your original objectives.

Participant and Staff Surveys

Gather insights on strengths and areas for improvement.

Success Stories and Testimonials

Highlight personal growth and positive experiences.

Retention and Engagement Rates

Track continued involvement over time.

Programme Adjustments

Use findings to refine and enhance future offerings.

Continuous Improvement

Use evaluation data to refine and enhance your programme. Identify what's working well and where adjustments are needed. This may include updating training, modifying outreach strategies, improving accessibility, or introducing new activities. Regular feedback and adaptation ensure the programme remains effective, inclusive, and impactful over time.



Partnership & Collaboration

Building strong partnerships and fostering collaboration are vital for maximising the reach and impact of your social inclusion sailing programme. This subchapter explores strategies for engaging with community organisations, local businesses, and other stakeholders. By leveraging the resources and expertise of diverse partners, you can enhance programme sustainability, expand opportunities for participants, and create a broader network of support.

Identify Key Partners

Find organisations that can support and enhance your programme, such as sailing federations, disability advocacy groups, community centres, and local businesses. These partners can provide resources, funding, expertise, or promotional support to help expand accessibility and reach a wider audience. Collaborating with the right partners strengthens the impact and sustainability of your programme.

Build Strong Relationships

Foster strong partnerships by establishing trust, clear communication, and shared goals. Maintain regular engagement, show appreciation for their contributions, and collaborate on initiatives that benefit both parties. Strong relationships create long-term support and enhance the success of your programme.

Collaborative Planning

Engage your partners in the planning and implementation of your programme to leverage their expertise and resources.





Sustainability & Scalability

Ensuring the long-term viability and expansion of your social inclusion sailing programme requires careful consideration of sustainability and scalability. This subchapter delves into strategies for securing ongoing funding, developing efficient operational models, and exploring opportunities for growth. It emphasises the importance of building a resilient programme that can adapt to changing needs and expand its reach to serve a wider community.

Funding

Create a sustainable funding plan to support the long-term success of your programme. Consider multiple funding sources, such as:

Grants and Sponsorships

Apply for grants from sports organisations, government programmes, or corporate sponsors.

Community Fundraising

Host events, crowdfunding campaigns, or donation drives.

Membership Fees

Offer flexible payment options that help generate revenue while keeping the programme affordable and accessible to people with different financial situations.

For example, sliding-scale pricing is a payment system where the cost of a service or product changes based on what someone can afford. People with higher incomes might pay more, while those with lower incomes pay less. This makes programmes more affordable for everyone, helping to include people from different financial backgrounds while still supporting the programme.

Partnership Contribution

Seek financial or in-kind support from local businesses and organisations.





Volunteer Recruitment

To attract and keep dedicated volunteers, it's important to create a strong plan. Start by providing clear role descriptions that outline responsibilities and expectations, making sure volunteers are matched with tasks that fit their skills and interests. Focus on reaching out to the community by recruiting from local schools, sailing clubs, and community organisations to build a diverse group of volunteers. Offer training and support to help volunteers feel confident and valued and provide mentorship to guide them. Show appreciation through awards, social events, or certificates of achievement to keep volunteers motivated. Lastly, offer opportunities for growth, such as leadership roles or skill development, to keep volunteers engaged and encourage them to stay long-term.

Programme Expansion

To grow your programme and reach more people, consider expanding to new places by partnering with other sailing clubs or community centres. Create programmes that include people with disabilities, different cultural backgrounds, and various ages to ensure everyone can participate. Start mobile or outreach programs that bring sailing to areas with limited access through pop-up events or traveling programs. Work with more organizations to increase resources, make the program more accessible, and improve its impact.



Conclusion

Building a more inclusive sailing community starts with awareness, commitment, and action. By identifying barriers, fostering partnerships, and implementing inclusive practices, we can create opportunities for people of all backgrounds and abilities to experience the freedom and joy of sailing.

This guide provides a foundation, but real impact comes from those who bring these principles to life. The following case studies highlight inspiring programmes from around the world that have successfully broken-down barriers and expanded access to sailing. These stories showcase creative solutions, dedicated individuals, and the powerful role that sailing can play in fostering inclusion, confidence, and community.

We encourage you to learn from their successes and apply these lessons to your own initiatives. Whether you're launching a new programme or enhancing an existing one, every step toward inclusion makes a difference. Together, we can ensure that sailing is a sport where everyone feels welcome, valued, and empowered.



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