



# WORLD'S LEADING SPORT SYSTEMS

How Governance is Structured

# EXAMINING THE WORLD'S LEADING SPORT SYSTEMS

## Insights into the Governance of Sports

For the past decade, the Aspen Institute's Project Play initiative has facilitated a national conversation on how to build healthy children and communities through sports. We have created and activated frameworks to unlock innovation, investment and collaboration opportunities for the eight sectors that touch the lives of youth.

But governance matters, too. How we balance competing interests within the world's largest youth sport market. How we structure our sport ecosystem in a manner that promotes inclusive and effective decision-making. How we create the conditions for community organizations, schools, public institutions,

families and the private sector to better serve the 51% of youth who play sports – and provide more opportunities for the 49% who do not.

To inform that conversation, the Aspen Institute conducted a review of the sport governance structures in the United States and 11 peer countries. Nations selected were based on geographic, cultural and economic factors, as well as upstream performance in the Olympics and other international events. Our focus was on both process and results, with grades given for Youth Sport Participation based on the percentage who play and for Government Support based on expert assessments.

	Population	Youth Sport Participation <sup>i</sup>	Government Support <sup>i</sup>	Elite Sport Rank <sup>ii</sup>	Elite Sport Rank Per Capita
<a href="#">Australia</a>	26M	B-	C-	7	9
<a href="#">Canada</a>	38M	C+	B-	5	11
<a href="#">China</a>	1,400M	F	D	3	61
<a href="#">France</a>	68M	C	B	2	26
<a href="#">Germany</a>	83M	B-	B+	9	32
<a href="#">Japan</a>	126M	B-	B	8	41
<a href="#">New Zealand</a>	5M	B-	A	24	4
<a href="#">Norway</a>	5M	A	A-	11	1
<a href="#">Spain</a>	48M	B+	C	17	36
<a href="#">Sweden</a>	10M	B+	B	12	6
<a href="#">United Kingdom</a>	67M	D	B	4	28
<a href="#">United States</a>	331M	C	D	1	40

<sup>i, ii</sup> See following page for notes

Click on any of the above countries to find two-page PDF summaries of each governance structure. Five key insights that emerged from our global review can be found [in a blog](#) by lead researcher [Dr. Ashleigh Huffman](#), former chief of sport diplomacy at the U.S. State Department, and [Tom Farrey](#), executive director of the Aspen Institute's Sports & Society Program, the backbone organization for Project Play.

The summaries were informed by original and existing research available in the field, a review of official websites, and interviews and in-person meetings with experts in each country evaluated. Special thanks to the editors of the 2013 book, [Comparative Sport Development: Systems, Participation and Public Policy](#), which provided a foundation for the flow charts of sport governance in most of the countries, updated

and supplemented as needed by the Aspen Institute.

The catalyst for this research was the [Commission on the State of United States Olympics and Paralympics](#), which in early 2024 will produce an independent report for Congress with findings and recommendations on how to improve governance of Olympic and grassroots sports. The Aspen Institute hopes these summaries are helpful as policymakers, academics, journalists, and sport leaders consider ways to improve the design our sport system – not just at the federal but the state, city/county, National Governing Body (NGB), and community program levels.

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## NOTES:

<sup>i</sup> Most grades in Youth Sport Participation and Government Support categories are drawn from a 2022 report prepared by the [Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance](#), a not-for-profit comprised of researchers, health professionals and stakeholders who work together to advance physical activity in children and adolescents around the world. Report cards for the 57 countries evaluated are based on a harmonized framework and standardized grading rubric, as reflected in the [Global Matrix 4.0](#). A grade of C, for instance, means a country is “succeeding with about half (47-53%) of children.” The Government Support grade is given by experts in that country based on “evidence of leadership and commitment” by government “in providing physical activity opportunities or participation of children and adolescents through policy, legislation or regulation.” Note: Norway did not participate in the Global Matrix study, so the Aspen Institute consulted experts in that country to offer grade based on the same criteria. Additionally, to further foster comparison across sport systems, Aspen consulted experts in Germany and the United Kingdom to offer Government Support grades, which had been listed as Incomplete in the Global Matrix. Finally, for the U.S. grade related to Government Support, Aspen consulted experts engaged with Project Play.

<sup>ii</sup> The Elite Sport Rank and Elite Sport Rank Per Capita categories are drawn from [Greatest Sporting Nation](#), a website that analyzes elite international competition results in Olympic and other sports, not including those that involve animals or cars. The first category is a measure of the total number of athletes and teams in 2022 who performed well in competition, while the latter calculates results relative to a nation’s total population.

## GLOSSARY

**Lead body:** The primary government or government-designated entity responsible for regulating, overseeing or guiding the development of sport activities in a country. Except for the U.S., all countries in our study have such a body, which go by different names (sports ministry is a common one). The closest approximation in the United States is the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee, which is directed by the [Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act](#) to “establish national goals for amateur athletic activities” and “effectively oversee the national governing bodies” in charge of coordinating and developing sport down to the youth level.

**Sports Confederation:** An umbrella body, hosted or chartered by federal and/or regional government, to coordinate activity across the landscape of sport providers and stakeholders. Members of a confederation may include representatives of the Olympic committee, NGBs/NSOs/NSFs, community sport organizations, coaching groups, states/counties, and PE teachers, among other groups.

**National Governing Body (NGB):** The organization charged with the development of a given sport, along with the selection of athletes to represent a nation in the Olympic, Paralympic, and other international sports events. Some countries call such entities a National Sport Organization (NSO), National Sport Federation (NSF), or a National Sport Association (NSA).

**National Olympic Committee (NOC):** The entity that represents each of the 206 countries within the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Sports Federations. NOCs, [according to the IOC](#), “ensure the representation of their respective countries at the Olympic Games by sending competitors and officials as well as to promote the fundamental principles and values of Olympism in their countries, in particular in the fields of sport and education.” They may also nominate cities as candidates to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

**Sport club:** A non-school community organization that provides sport participation opportunities.

**Sport development:** Any activities that do not relate to elite athlete support, including but not limited to coaching education and recruitment, participation growth initiatives, program standards, DEI initiatives, school partnerships, and grants and other support for community programs.

# UNITED STATES

Capital: **Washington, D.C.** | Population: **330 million**

Lead body for sport development:

**U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee**



Government Support	D
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Elite Sport Rank	1
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Elite Sport Rank Per Capita	40
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**Youth Sport Participation Grade C**

*The United States is the largest sports market in the world, home of many of the most valuable professional franchises and the only nation with colleges providing major sports entertainment. The chase for financial and other rewards that flow to elite athletes and the programs that serve them increasingly shape the sport ecosystem down to the entry level, both creating and denying sustained participation opportunities for youth. Government supports largely through legislation that provides infrastructure funding and encourages equitable access by gender.*

As with most countries the Aspen Institute studied, the bedrock of the United States sport system is community programs and clubs, locally organized and often run by volunteers or paid staff. Unlike in most countries, schools also offer a menu of sport teams, mostly for students who are teenagers. But beyond state high school athletics federations that oversee interscholastic competition, there isn't much governance of youth sports.

Most state boards of education take a hands-off approach to school sports. No state government has the equivalent of Department of Sports and Recreation, unlike Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory that has [used its sports agency](#) to register youth-serving organizations, conduct background checks, and support communities with facilities grants. Rare are local government bodies like the Fairfax County (Virginia) Athletic Council, an advisory board with sport, city, school, and parks and rec representatives that sorts through field use policies and other thorny issues. It's a chaotic, if dynamic, environment that often leaves providers frustrated, and parents with little assurance of program quality.

The federal government's first attempt at sport governance was in 1978, with the [Amateur Sports Act](#). Rather than create an agency or quasi-government body dedicated to mass sport participation like other countries have, Congress outsourced the job to the U.S. Olympic Committee (now the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee) which was tasked with establishing national goals for amateur sport activities and overseeing the now 50-plus National Governing Bodies charged with coordinating amateur sport activities down the youth level.

But it was an unfunded mandate, and starting in the 1990s the USOPC began telling Congress it couldn't get Americans off the couch while also getting American athletes onto

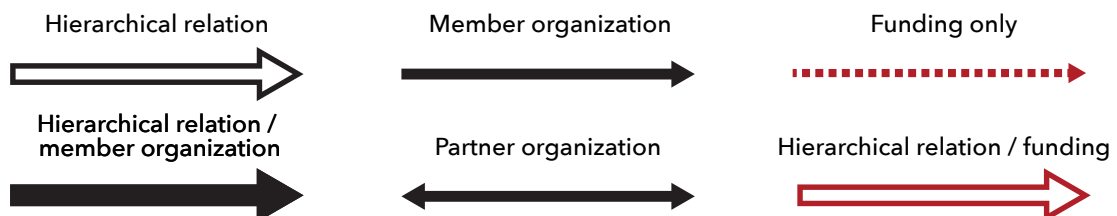
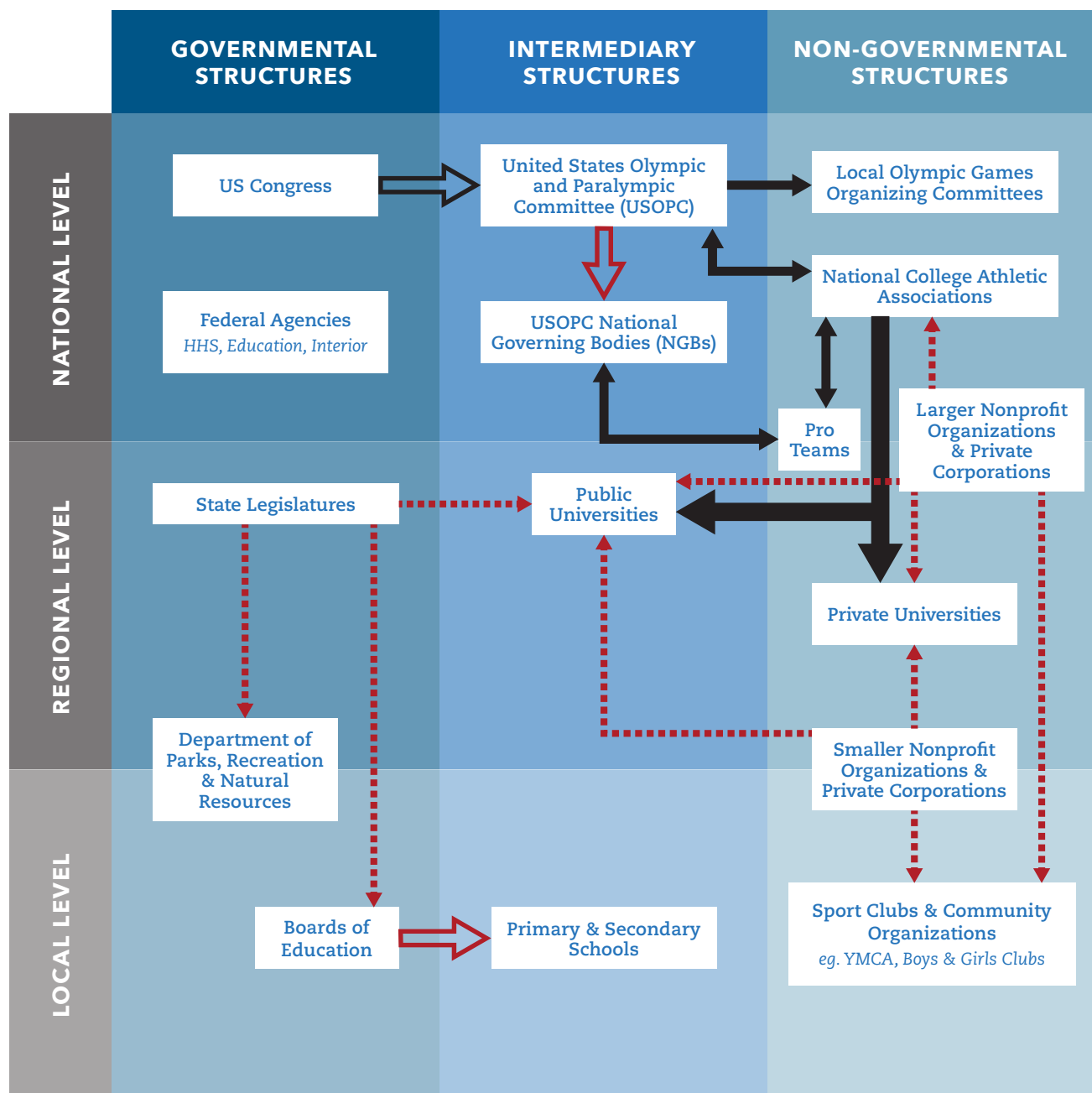
the Olympic podium. That's still the case today. The USOPC distributes more than \$100 million a year to NGBs, the vast majority for the training of high-performance athletes. Congressional oversight has been inconsistent at best, confined to occasional hearings flowing from various scandals.

Federal agencies make contributions. The U.S. Census Bureau collects data on sport participation, and an inter-agency group set a goal of [63% sport participation](#) by the year 2030. In 2019 the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services created a [National Youth Sports Strategy](#). The President's Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition promotes physical fitness. All lack the authority or budget to shift behavior in the sport ecosystem, relying mostly on opportunities like [supportive White House policy](#).

## WHAT WE LIKE

The 1978 Amateur Sports Act, the nation's first attempt at sport governance, is increasingly and widely recognized as flawed legislation. But six years earlier, with passage of [Title IX](#), the federal government got policy right in a big way - a statement of non-discrimination that vastly expanded sport opportunities for females in schools and which ultimately reshaped the entire sport ecosystem, at home and around the world. Most U.S. Olympic medals are now won by women, and teams that other countries send to events like the Olympics and soccer World Cup are often populated with athletes trained on U.S. college campuses. Another federal law, the [Land and Water Conservation Act](#) of 1964, allocated funds from Gulf of Mexico oil leases that has helped states, counties and cities build more than [45,000 sports and recreational spaces](#).

# Sport Governance in the United States



# NORWAY

Capital: **Oslo** | Population: **5 million**

Lead body for sport development:

**Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports**



**Government Support** A-

**Elite Sport Rank** 11

**Elite Sport Rank Per Capita** 1

**Youth Sport Participation Grade** A

Norway has among the world's most admired sport systems and cultures, with strong results in developing children and communities and many dominant elite adult athletes, both in winter sports like skiing and warm-weather events like beach volleyball, football (soccer) and athletics (track). Sport is recognized as an important institution in helping the country achieve its public health, citizenship development and other goals, an approach reflected in government policies.

Norway coordinates sport development through democratic processes and an umbrella entity, the [Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports \(NIF\)](#), which includes 55 sports federations, 19 regional confederations, 370 sports councils, the Olympic Committee, Paralympic Committee, and Special Olympics. The NIF equally represents the mass sport movement and the elite sport structure, with both stakeholder groups possessing 75 votes at the biennial General Assembly. Sport clubs are the backbone of Norwegian sport with more than 12,000 of them across the country, which are almost entirely run by volunteers.

The NIF is overseen by the Ministry of Culture's Department of Sport Policy, a government agency. The Ministry guides public funding for sport, administering 64% of gaming proceeds from Norway's national lottery and sports betting mechanism, Norsk Tipping, to the sports ecosystem, which receives roughly \$400 million USD annually for new projects. Most of that support goes back to communities to help train coaches, buy equipment, and build facilities sought by communities. The Ministry works with counties (states), the education agency, and the NIF to operationalize the national sport policy objective of "Joy of Sport for All."

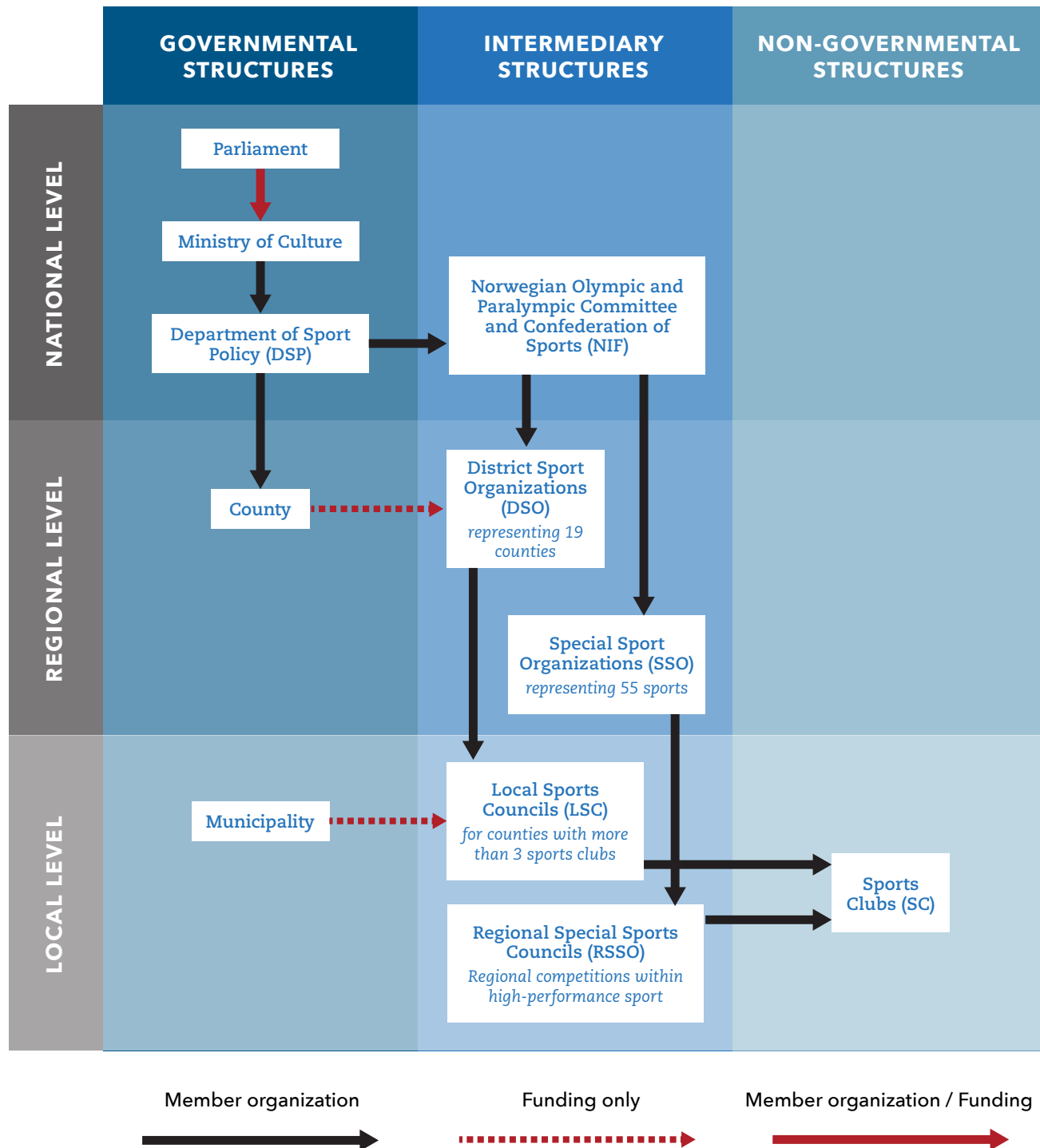
At every level of sport, the National Sport Federations are held responsible for building safe, fair, and inclusive environments for participants. Only sports facilities that meet universal design

requirements that encourage usability for all people, with and without disabilities, are eligible for government funding. Additionally, the NIF has set guidelines for anti-corruption, transparency of funds, gender balance, and inclusion of persons from various ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds as part of a prerequisite to receive funding, with a zero-tolerance discrimination policy to support this work.

## WHAT WE LIKE

Clubs at all levels, coaches, managers and parents are expected to adhere to the [Children's Rights in Sports](#), a statement updated by the General Assembly in 2007 that helps anchor Norway's globally respected sport system in the principles of inclusion, play, and social development. Before age 13, children play in clubs that prioritize local, low-cost competition and training that is developmentally appropriate. Only after that do promising child athletes enter the high-performance pipeline, via National Sport Federations and Norway's elite performance organization, [Olympiatoppen](#). Inspired by Norway, Aspen created a [Children's Bill of Rights in Sports](#) statement tailored for the U.S. which has been endorsed by more than 200 organizations, including the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee, and 300 athletes.

# Sport Governance in Norway



# SPAIN

Capital: **Madrid** | Population: **48 million**

Lead body for sport development: **National Sports Council**



Government Support	C
Elite Sport Rank	17
Elite Sport Rank Per Capita	36
<b>Youth Sport Participation Grade</b>	<b>B+</b>

Known internationally for its accomplished FC Barcelona and Real Madrid football (soccer) teams, as well as the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup champions, Spain also has produced top athletes in basketball, cycling, tennis and other sports. Its success flows from high youth participation rates and club academy coaches renowned for developing talent. The federal government has more of an influence on sport governance than countries in northern Europe.

Housed within the federal Ministry of Culture and Sport, the National Sports Council or the High Council for Sports ([Consejo Superior de Deportes, CSD](#)) is the government agency responsible for sport policy in Spain. The CSD is charged with the planning, promotion, and development of physical activity and sports while also serving as the connection between the government and Spanish Olympic Committee. The CSD works in coordination with local authorities, regional, state, and local governments, other ministerial bodies, universities and schools, and the private sector, including professional sports leagues, to execute strategies.

The [national sport policy](#), which includes objectives by the year 2030, aims to encourage sport and physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle for youth and adults. The plan prioritizes: (a) support for school sports, (b) support for university sports, and (c) promoting physical activity for all to combat a sedentary lifestyle. Although the directives for sport are highly centralized within the CSD, the execution of grassroots or community sports is largely done through the 17 autonomous regions. The 17 regional governments are tasked with regulating sport at different levels, managing their own sport services, overseeing the territorial federations and clubs, organizing competitions, constructing facilities, and certifying sport qualifications for high-performing athletes. Each region governs differently. By law, town councils serving populations of more than 20,000 inhabitants are obligated to provide sport services for their citizens.

Sport in Spain is executed through clubs, groups of clubs, sport federations, or professional leagues. Embedded within the sport structure and operating throughout the whole of the country are the National Sport Federations. Sport federations are private entities with the responsibility to promote their sport specialty and to design and carry out plans for top performing athletes. There are 65 national sport federations in Spain, 30 of which can send athletes to the Olympics and thus report to the [Spanish Olympic Committee](#).

The Olympic committee, in coordination with the national sport federations, the Sports Council, and the Ministry of Sport, have created a plan of care to promote high-performance athletes. [The Program of Care to the Sportsman](#) is designed to provide comprehensive services (medical, education, performance, etc.) to the most elite athletes aiming for international podium success. The qualification process for elite athletes is highly structured and driven by national laws that govern elite sport.

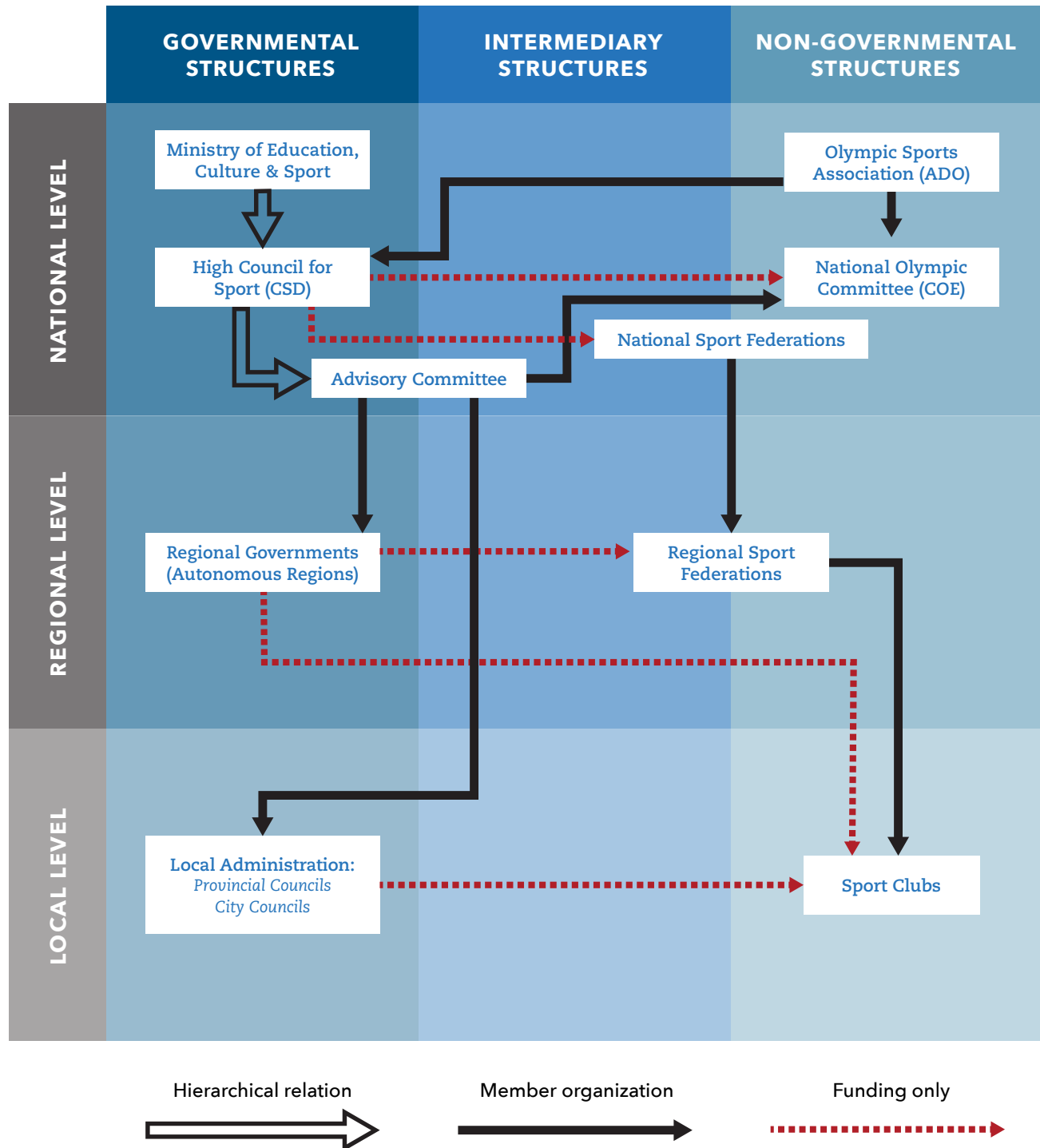
Spain relies heavily on public and private sector financing for sport. The 1992 Barcelona Olympics marked the first time the CSD accepted sponsorships. In 2021, the CSD granted €251 million (approximately \$276 million USD) to sport, health, and facilities — 95% more than in 2016. The government hopes sport will be one of 10 levers to revive the economy post-COVID.

Currently, there is no specific mechanism for athletes to report abuse. Allegations of illegal behavior are processed through Spain's police and judicial system.

## WHAT WE LIKE

Leo Messi. Xavi. Iniesta. Pau Gasol. Ricky Rubio. Alexi Putellas. Aitana Bonmati. All soccer and basketball stars that emerged from one club, FC Barcelona, which has developed game-changing talent in several sports through its **youth academies**. The club system in general is well-developed in Spain, divided into three legal types: 1) Elementary sport clubs that are simple organizations that offer local and regional competition are subject to limited regulation, 2) Basic sport clubs that join more ambitious leagues; and 3) Sport Limited Companies, private entities that play at a professional level and are subject to different regulations.

# Sport Governance in Spain



# SWEDEN

Capital: **Stockholm** | Population: **10 million**

Lead body for sport development: **Swedish Sports Confederation**



Government Support	B
Elite Sport Rank	12
Elite Sport Rank Per Capita	6
<b>Youth Sport Participation Grade</b>	<b>B+</b>

*As with other Scandinavian countries, the ideal of active lives is promoted by sport bodies and the government in Sweden where sport is delivered through a range of outdoor activities (e.g. skiing, orienteering) and team games (e.g. ice hockey, skiing, handball, bandy) based in clubs.*

Housed within the Ministry of Health & Social Affairs, The Ministry of Sport is the agency responsible for sport policy. The Ministry works closely with the [Swedish Sports Confederation \(RF\)](#), an umbrella organization that includes more than 70 National Sport Federations and 1,000 District Sport Federations representing 20,000 clubs. The RF is responsible for supporting, leading, and coordinating the Swedish sports movement on national and international issues. The RF is guided by the federal sports policy, [Strategy 2025](#), which aims to make “Swedish sports the best in the world” at all levels.

The elite sport movement in Sweden is organized by the Swedish Olympic Committee. [The Swedish Olympic Committee \(SOC\)](#) is the supreme authority for Olympic matters and is responsible for the recruitment, training, and oversight of national teams. Elite athletes train at a world-class national training facility outside of Stockholm called [Bosön](#). In recent years, the spending on elite sport has increased dramatically with a greater emphasis on attaining medals. For the 2026 Winter Olympics in Italy, the SOC has set a target of 20 overall medals with 5 medals being gold.

Government financial support for sports in Sweden amounts to more than SEK 2 billion or approximately \$187 million USD and is divided into three parts: (a) organizational support for the Swedish Sports Confederation and the national sports federations; (b) subsidies to local sports clubs based on the extent of their activities for children and adolescents;

and (c) various grants to sport federations and local clubs for time-limited and earmarked development projects. National government funding to sport is largely drawn from tax revenues but has also for brief periods been tied to state-controlled gambling and the national lottery. Additional government support comes from municipalities (an estimated SEK 10 billion or \$935 million USD annually), mainly in the form of publicly funded facilities and grants to local clubs.

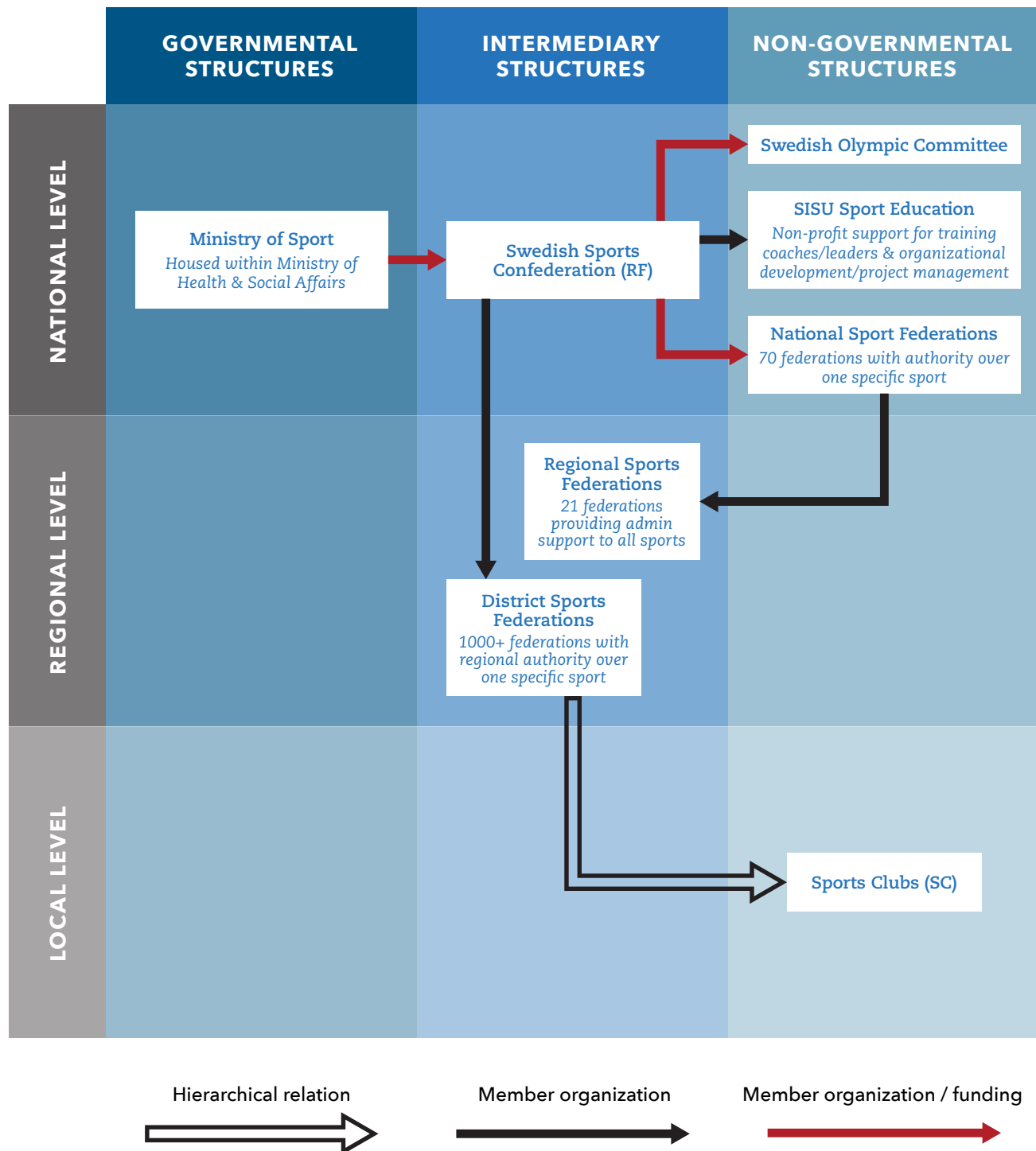
Reports of abuse and advice on safeguarding issues are directed to the [Sports Ombudsman](#), which consists of two employees and resides within the Swedish Sports Confederation. An anonymous whistleblower site has also been created to report issues via the web with follow-up action under an anonymous identity.

## WHAT WE LIKE

**Sweden’s national strategy is guided by values:**

(1) joy and community, (2) democracy and participation in governance, (3) everyone’s right to participate, and (4) fair play. The clubs are predominately run by volunteers and are designed to serve children, young people, adults, and the elderly with sport and physical activity opportunities. Swedish sport has adopted the motto “as many as possible, for as long as possible.” The belief is more Olympic success will occur if sport is an inherent part of Swedish values and life goals.

# Sport Governance in Sweden



# AUSTRALIA

Capital: **Canberra** | Population: **26 million**

Lead body for sport development: **Australian Sports Commission**



**Government Support** C-

**Elite Sport Rank** 7

**Elite Sport Rank Per Capita** 9

**Youth Sport Participation Grade** B-

*Sport in Australia has been baked into the national identity since the early Colonial era, defined by its embrace of both organized sports (Australian Rules Football, soccer, rugby, cricket, netball, tennis) and unstructured activities (surfing, biking, skateboarding, among others). The nation has found some success in effectively structuring its ecosystem, in which community-driven organizations are supported by public investment and federal and state sport bodies.*

The Australian Government's Ministry of Sport, housed in the Department of Health's Office for Sport, is the primary entity responsible for guiding sport development. The Ministry of Sport oversees the [Australian Sports Commission \(ASC\)](#) and the [Australian Institute of Sport](#), the entities responsible for the mass sport movement and the elite sport system, respectively. The ASC supports and invests in sport at all levels. The ASC works across local, states and territories, as well with sport institutes/academies, sport clubs, schools, recreation centers, national sport organizations (NSOs), and the Australian Olympic Committee to create opportunities from grassroots community level to high performance. Australian governments at the federal, state/territory, and local levels annually invest more than AU\$1.3b (\$887m USD) in sports to encourage community participation, high performance, new infrastructure, major events, and a more robust sports industry.

[Sport 2030](#) is the national policy that guides sport in Australia. The goal of this strategy is for Australia to be the world's most active and healthy sporting nation, known for its integrity and sporting success. The four priorities are: building a more active Australia, achieving sporting excellence, safeguarding the integrity of sport, and strengthening Australia's sport industry. NSOs are responsible for the development of their sport in Australia and work closely with the ASC to achieve the Sport 2030 goals. Funding is only provided to recognized NSOs with current strategic plans that align with the National Sport & Active Recreation Policy Framework, which guides cross-jurisdictional cooperation of public policy and program development for the sport and

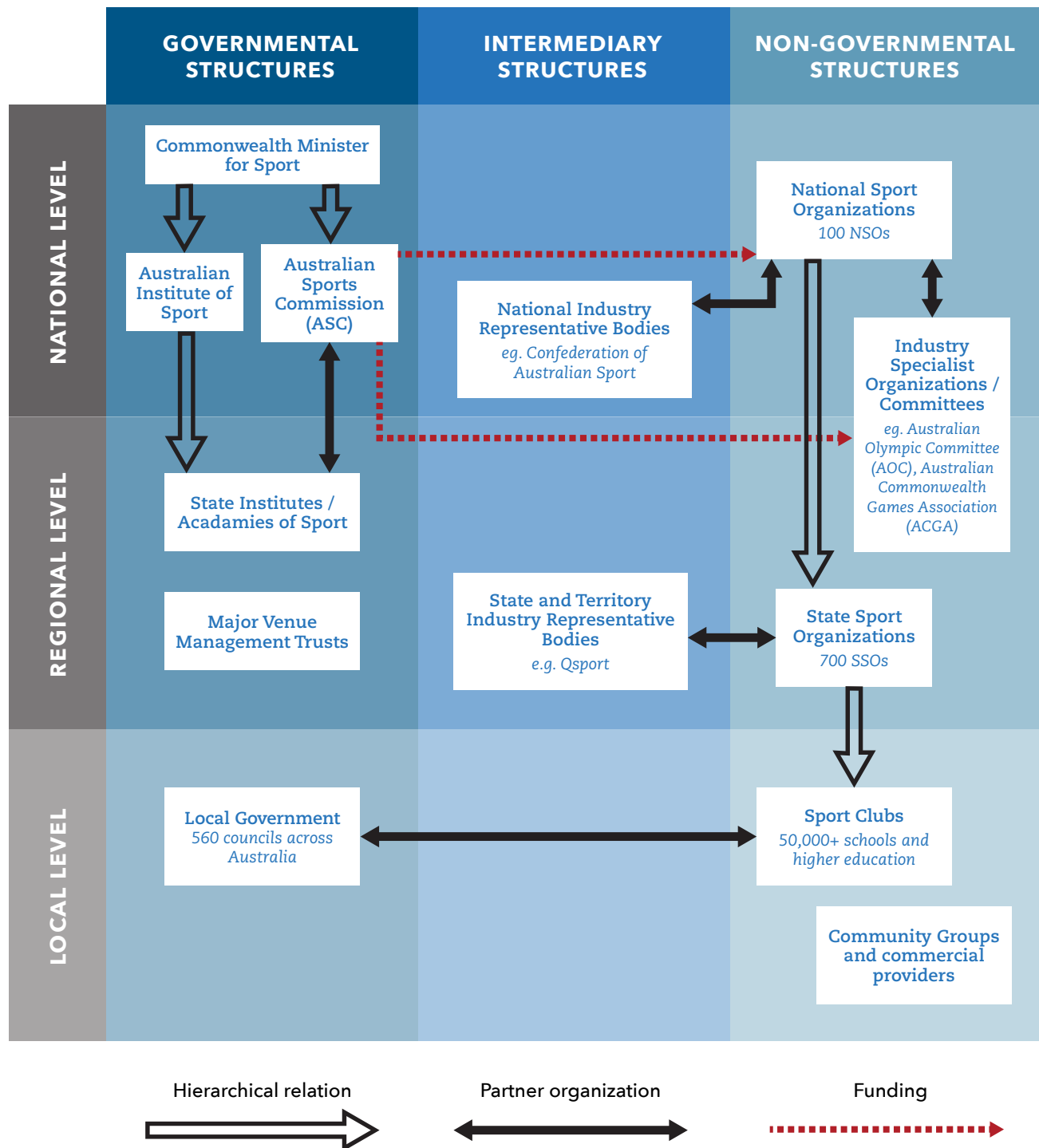
active recreation sectors; the framework includes a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. NSOs report to the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) and to the ASC.

The [Australian Olympic Committee](#) is the private, not-for-profit organization that funds, selects, and sends teams to represent the nation in the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Its [objectives](#) include encouraging "the development of sport for all for the health, wellbeing and other benefits to all individuals in Australia" and "the development of high performance sport as the pinnacle of the benefits of sport participation." [Sport Integrity Australia](#), a separate government funded entity, handles all issues of fairness and safety in Australian sport, including anti-doping, competition manipulation, safeguarding, and sports wagering.

## WHAT WE LIKE

The [Australian Sports Federation](#) is the nation's leading non-profit sports fundraising organisation and charity – and the only organisation in Australia to offer **Deductible Gift Recipient status for sport**. This tax-deductible benefit, according to the ASF, has helped distribute hundreds of millions of dollars to thousands of Australian sporting organisations, clubs and athletes. The ASF also provides tools, resources and individual support, to help organizations from the grassroots to elite sport realize their fundraising goals.

# Sport Governance in Australia



# GERMANY

Capital: **Berlin** | Population: **83 million**  
 Lead body for sport development:  
**German Olympic Sports Confederation**



**Government Support** B+

**Elite Sport Rank** 9

**Elite Sport Rank Per Capita** 32

**Youth Sport Participation Grade** B-

*Known for its embrace of football (soccer), gymnastics, tennis, swimming and other sports, the largest country in Western Europe employs a de-centralized structure to achieve its national aims for sports. Government supports sport for all efforts, but autonomous, member-funded local clubs hold significant influence in the delivery of programs and are represented at the highest level of decision-making with sports-specific federations and the Olympic committee.*

[The German Olympic Sports Confederation \(DOSB\)](#) is the non-governmental entity that oversees German sport, responsible for advancing the mass sport movement as well as elite performance pathways. A merger of the German Sports Confederation and the German Olympic Committee, the DOSB oversees the 66 National Sport Federations, 16 regional sports confederations, and 17 sports associations, as well as 27 million memberships in 91,000 sports clubs where more than eight million volunteers provide 450 million hours of labor. Among the confederation members: German Sports Youth, the umbrella federation of organizations serving youth through age 27; it includes sport clubs at the regional and national federation levels.

The DOSB receives €293million (\$322 million USD) in annual funding from the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, the agency responsible for sport policy in Germany. The federal ministry works in coordination with the 16 states via the Ministries of Culture or the Interior to oversee sport in their respective regions. The federal government promotes world-class German sports, while the states and local government have the responsibility of promoting recreational sport for all. The government executes this work in coordination with the DOSB.

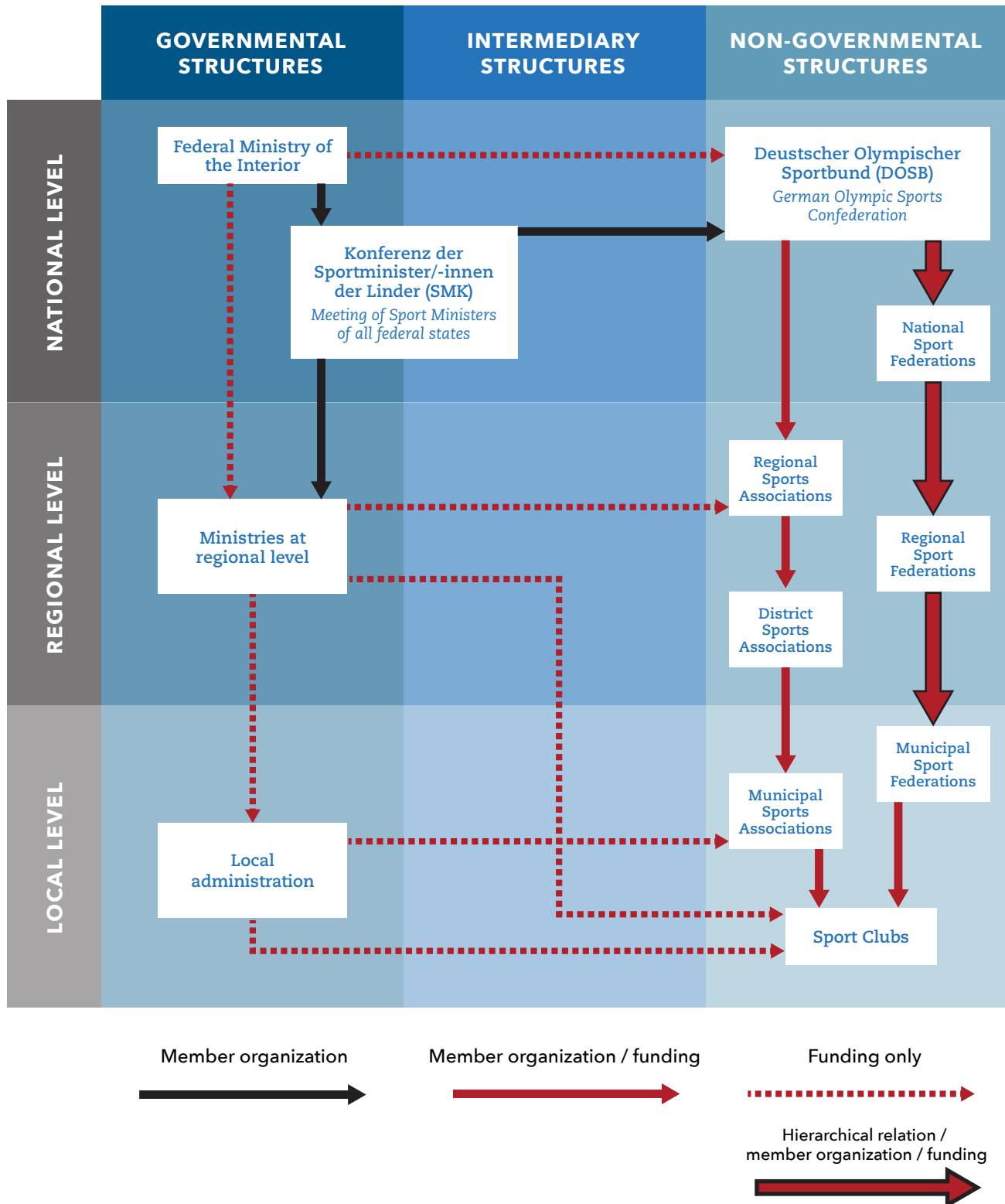
The guiding philosophies of the DOSB are “Sport is Good for Germany” and “Sport for All.” These slogans are operationalized through special initiatives and programs designed to promote

women, families, senior citizens, migrants, and persons with disabilities with the pathways needed for fitness and health. The DOSB is also responsible for coach training and licensing and has more than 600 different educational curricula designed for coaches, exercise leaders, club managers, and leaders of youth programs. The DOSB supports community sport through membership fees, receipts from lottery revenues, and marketing licenses. The DOSB, through its [Integrity Unit](#), is responsible for safeguarding of participants against violence or abuse, anti-doping, competition manipulation, and good governance.

## WHAT WE LIKE

**Most of the power in German sports rests with local sport clubs**, which in turn often become hubs for a range of other community activities such as festivals. Those 91,000 clubs and their associations form the backbone of Germany’s federated structure, which relies on interconnection, rather than top-down government control, to grow participation and advance sport from the grassroots to elite levels. This structure is more common in Northern European countries (e.g. Sweden, Norway, England) than in Southern European countries (e.g. Spain, Portugal, France).

# Sport Governance in Germany



# JAPAN

Capital: **Tokyo** | Population: **126 million**

Lead body for sport development: **Japan Sports Agency**



Government Support B

Elite Sport Rank 8

Elite Sport Rank Per Capita 41

Youth Sport Participation Grade **B-**

*Japan has a unique sports culture, shaped by historical ties to the martial arts and activities like sumo. But baseball and other Western sports are also popular. Like in U.S., school-based sports are popular, with programs starting around fifth grade and continuing through high school.*

Established in 2015, the [Japan Sports Agency \(JSA\)](#), housed with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, is the agency responsible for sport policy. The JSA exists as an administrative arm of the government and has a budget of ¥180 billion (or \$1.24 billion USD). The JSA aims to create a Japanese “society in which people are healthy in body and mind and lead a cultural lifestyle [of sport] throughout their lives.” Japan’s first national sports policy, the [Basic Act on Sport](#) was created in 1999 and revolutionized sport in the country by developing sport as an industry, as one of three priority areas to revitalize the economy.

Japan is a sports powerhouse, winning 27 gold medals in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, just behind China and the United States. Its funding system on sports development has been increasingly dual track since the 2000s. Although overall public sports spending surged by 68% amidst intensive preparation for the Olympic Games to ¥974 billion (\$6.7 billion USD) during 2013-2019, public funds represented just one-fifth (18%) of total income of 70-plus National Sport Associations in 2020, with the rest coming from business income (63%) and self-generated revenue (17%). Sports in Japan represent nearly 2% of the overall GDP.

The [Japanese Olympic Committee \(JOC\)](#) is a key partner in the sport system. The JOC, in coordination with the Japan Sport Association (JPSO), oversee the 40 National Sport

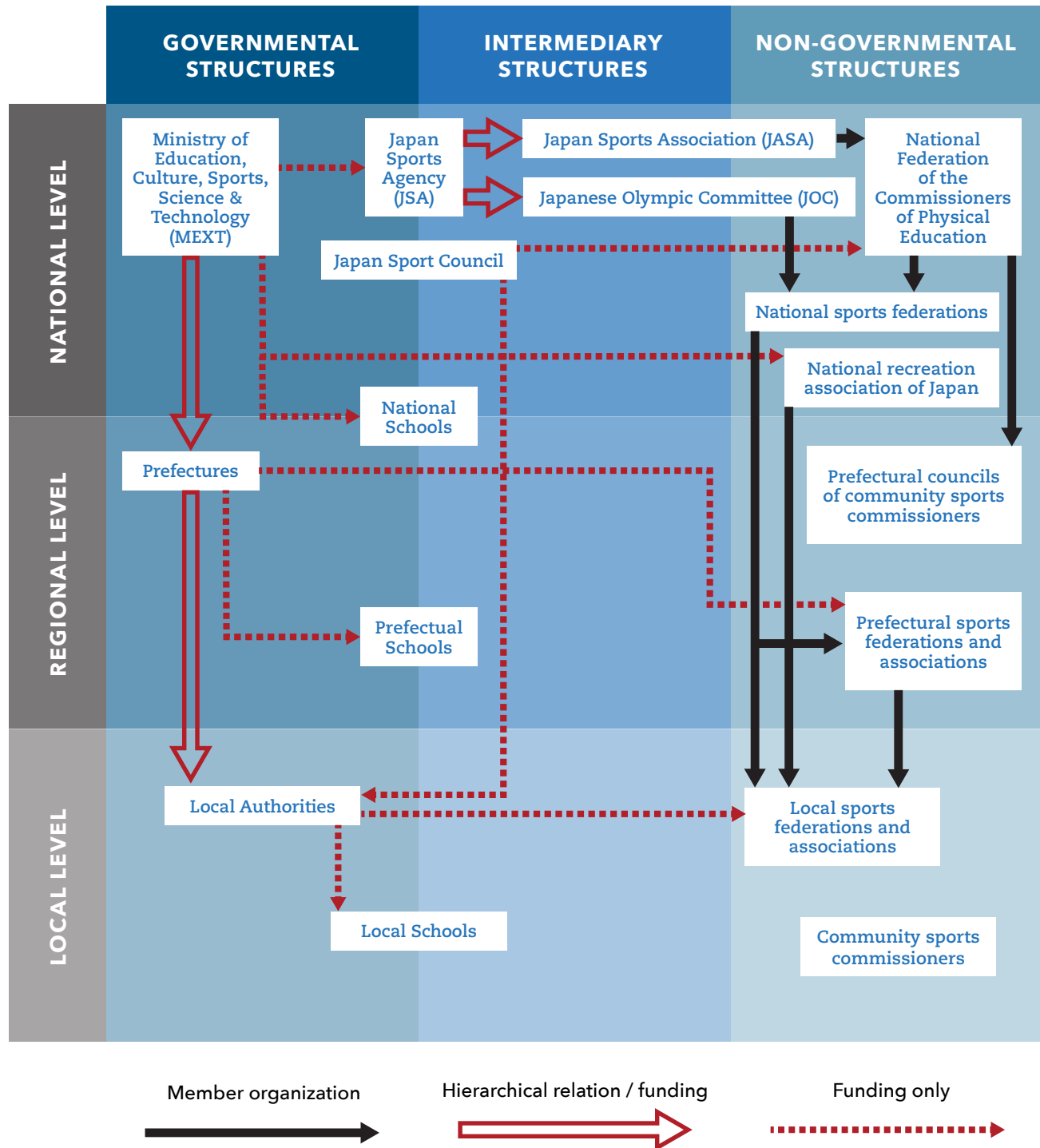
Associations (NSAs). The NSAs in coordination with JPSO and other local clubs, federations, schools, and amateur sport associations are responsible for the mass sport movement in Japan.

The JSA and other sport bodies supported the creation of a UNICEF Japan resource in 2018, the [Children’s Rights in Sports Principles](#) which articulates expectations for sport organizations, schools and coaches. The resource calls for the development of a governance system to protect children against risks. Despite a [major fallout in 2021 with child protection](#) issues in sport, it does not appear that Japan has created an established mechanism for reporting abuse.

## WHAT WE LIKE

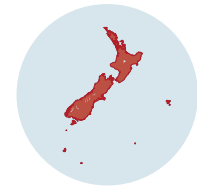
As part of the Basic Sports Act, National Sport Associations (NSAs) were tasked with developing business plans to generate new sponsorships and commercial opportunities. The government also offered **benefits for the private sector to invest**: matching grants to NSAs, tax deductions to donors, incentives for corporate-owned sports clubs, and newly dedicated lottery funds for local sports. Three-quarters of the profits from lottery sales are designated for subsidizing a range of sports projects. Community sports are largely funded by the Sports Promotion Lottery, which in 2022 generated approximately ¥14.8 billion (or \$101.8 million USD) in support.

# Sport Governance in Japan



# NEW ZEALAND

Capital: **Wellington** | Population: **5 million**  
Lead body for sport development: **Sport NZ**



Government Support	A
Elite Sport Rank	24
Elite Sport Rank Per Capita	4
<b>Youth Sport Participation Grade</b>	<b>B-</b>

*Sport in New Zealand largely reflects its colonial past, with sports like rugby, netball and soccer (plus the U.S.-introduced basketball, now the most-played game) as dominant. Geographically isolated in the South Pacific Ocean, the country has among the most well-organized models for sport delivery to youth, with national and regional governing bodies supporting local clubs.*

Housed in the Ministry of Culture & Heritage, [Sport NZ](#) is the agency responsible for national sport policy in New Zealand (or Aotearoa New Zealand, the Māori name). Sport NZ serves as umbrella for [Sport and Recreation New Zealand](#), its wholly owned subsidiary [High Performance Sport New Zealand \(HPSNZ\)](#), and the [New Zealand Sports Foundation Charitable Trust \(NZSFFT\)](#), in which Sport NZ has a controlling interest. Sport NZ promotes quality play, recreation, and sport that improve levels of physical activity and wellbeing for all New Zealanders. The country is governed by a [national sports policy \(2020-2032\)](#) with its simple vision to get every person active. The policy is executed in partnership with National Sport Organizations (NSOs), Regional Sport Trusts (RSTs), National Recreation Organizations (NROs), educational institutions, disability organizations, and local, regional and ethnic councils.

HPSNZ is responsible for elite sport. The organization is charged with three systemic areas of focus: (1) Performance Pathways, (2) Wellbeing and Engagement, including diversity metrics and mental health, and (3) Funding and Investment. HPSNZ measures success by: (a) medals and podium results, (b) non-podium performances such as placings and world rankings, (c) diversity and inclusion measures, (d) wellbeing measures for high performance environments, and (e) New Zealanders inspired by high-performance success. HPSNZ works with NSOs and RSTs to execute their elite sport agenda. HPSNZ received \$273 million or approximately \$164 million USD of funding from 2020-2024. The HPSNZ is funded through a combination of national and local government funds, proceeds from gambling, participants funds, and commercial/philanthropic endeavors. The HPSNZ works closely with the Olympic Committee, an independent charity

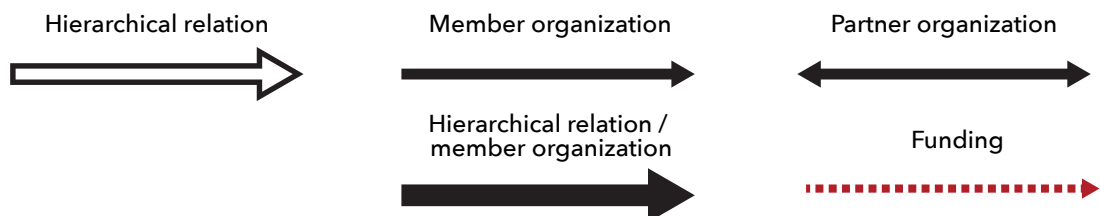
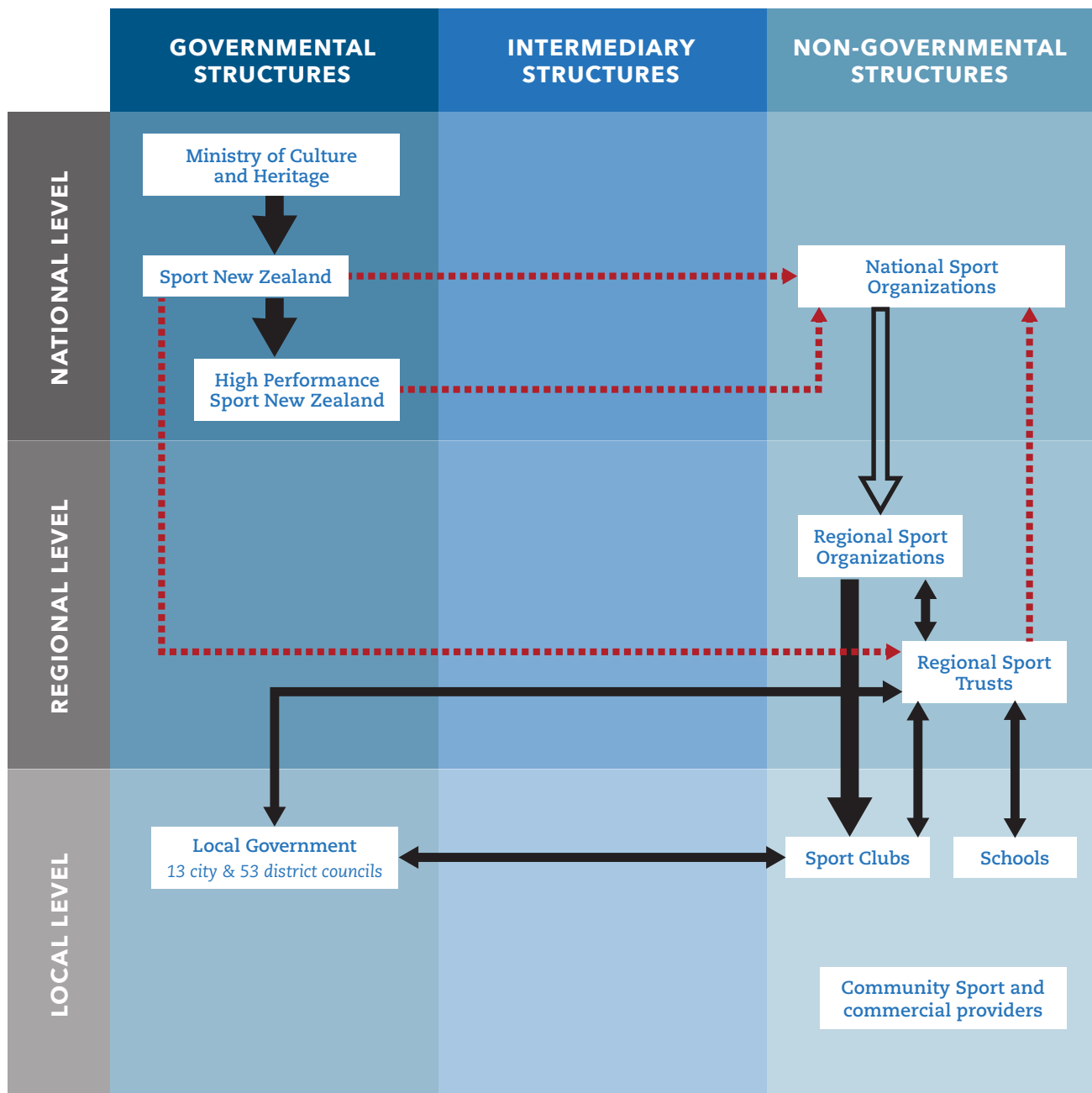
organization that relies on commercial funding and partnerships to select and lead the national teams.

[The Sport and Recreation Complaints and Mediation Services](#) is the independent agency responsible for mitigating complaints or disputes. The service is free and open to anyone involved in high-performance sport as well as community sport and recreation. The service is operated by Immediation NZ Limited, a contracted entity paid for by Sport NZ. The Olympic committee also has a safeguarding policy and hired a Safeguarding Officer to handle issues of inappropriate behavior or harm within the Olympic system.

## WHAT WE LIKE

Recognizing the importance of coaches and the challenge in working with them all directly, Sport New Zealand has built a robust [coach developer network](#). Housed across national, regional and local sport organizations, coach developers are sport professionals who provide on-site education, support and resources to the coaches in their community. The Sport NZ approach includes [residential training](#), where coach developers across different sports come together for a short but focused multi-day, off-site retreat to participate in expert-led workshops and connect with peers outside of their sport. Support for coach developers has been a strategic pillar of the [Community Sport Coaching Plan](#), which aligns to a national [coaching strategy & pathway, coach development framework](#) and [High Performance Coaching Plan](#). The Sport NZ approach has received attention from [experts](#) as a model for countries and sport organizations around the world.

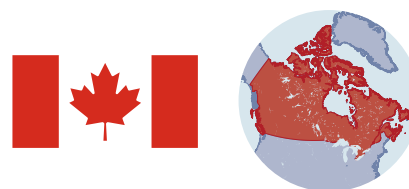
# Sport Governance in New Zealand



# CANADA

Capital: **Ottawa** | Population: **38 million**

Lead body for sport development: **Sport Canada**



**Government Support** B-

**Elite Sport Rank** 5

**Elite Sport Rank Per Capita** 11

**Youth Sport Participation Grade** C+

Canada's sport offerings, culture and system incentives are shaped in part by that of its neighbor, the United States, home to NCAA member universities that dispense financial aid and preferential admission to recruited athletes, as well as professional playing opportunities through the National Hockey League, National Basketball Association, and other leagues. At the same time, Canada draws sport governance ideas from its Commonwealth nations heritage -- and has been a world leader in promoting developmentally appropriate training of athletes.

In Canada, sport below the professional level is guided by [Sport Canada](#) and all three levels of government – federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal. Overseen by a sports minister housed in the Federal Department of Canadian Heritage, Sport Canada is an “arms-length” agency designed to “enhance opportunities for all Canadians to participate and excel in sport.” Sport Canada directs and funds sport with a focus on development programs, policy, and the hosting of major competitions. The federal government, through Sport Canada, largely focuses on high-performance sport; provincial and municipal governments oversee the mass sport movement, largely through clubs, nonprofit organizations, and school partnerships. The Ministry of Education is deeply involved in the school and physical education portions of sport delivery, and local governments are largely responsible for membership-based community sport clubs (e.g. YMCA).

Sport Canada oversees the 58 National Sports Organizations (NSOs) that are recognized as the representatives of their respective sport in and for the country. NSOs are responsible for governance of the sport, high-performance programming, selecting and managing the national teams, implementing initiatives to promote the sport, sanctioning national-level tournaments, providing professional development for coaches and officials, and proposing and supporting bids for international competitions. Sport Canada also invests in special initiatives, including seven high-performance sport centers and an Own the Podium Program focused on high-performance sport. The [Canadian Olympic Committee](#) works with the NSOs to prepare Team Canada for the Olympic, Youth Olympic, and Pan American Games, offering education, counseling, and mental health support throughout the athlete journey.

The federal government is the largest single investor in the Canadian sport system, providing approximately 233.4M CAD (\$176.4M USD) per year to support three specific programs: (1) The Athlete Assistance Program (CA \$33m/year) which gives direct financial support to selected

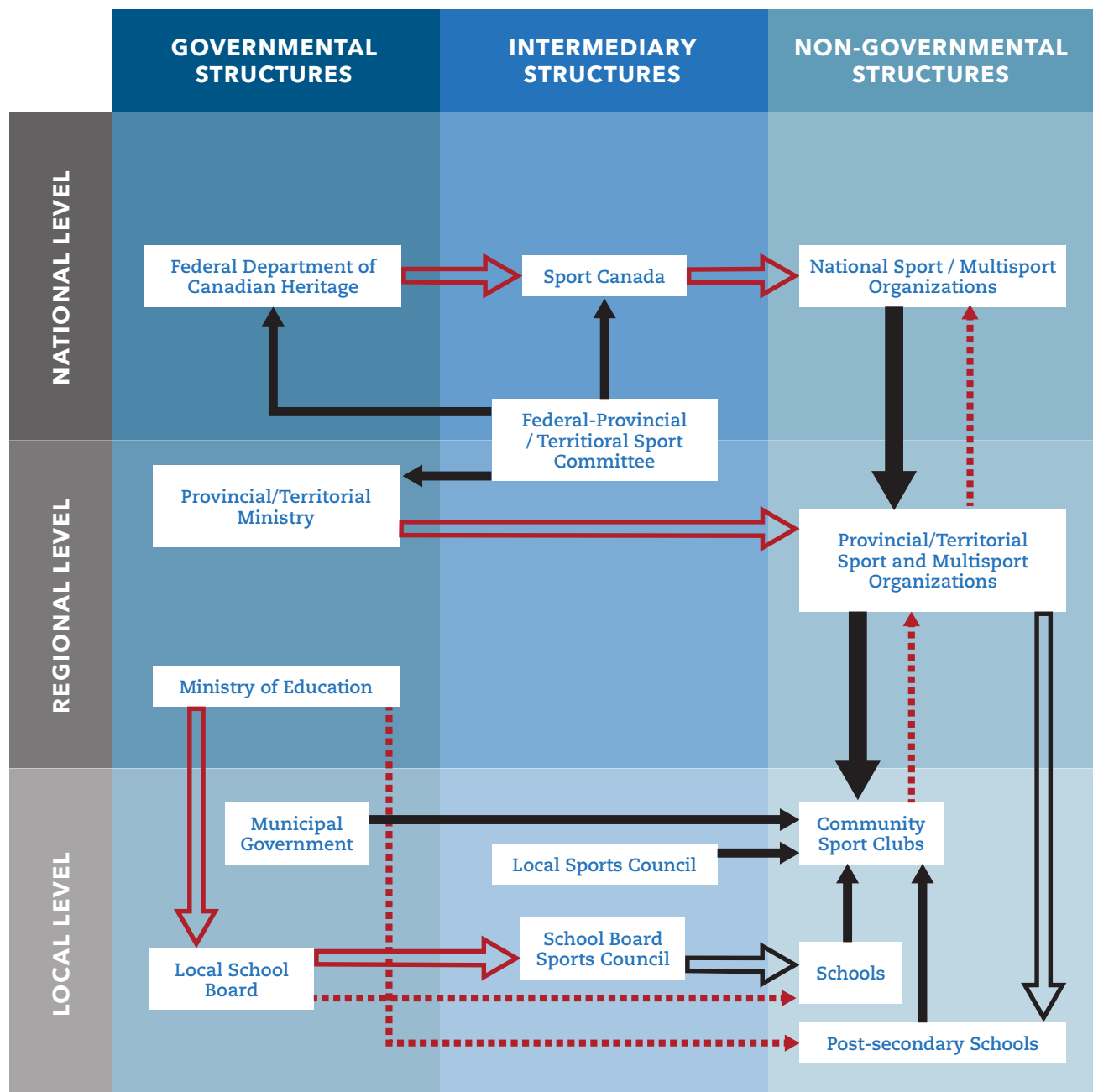
national team athletes, (2) the Sport Support Program (CA \$178.8m/year) which funds Canadian sports organizations, and (3) the Hosting Program (CA \$21.6m/year) to help sport organizations host the Canada Games and other international sports events.

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (OSIC) serves as the “central hub” of [Abuse-Free Sport](#). The Abuse-Free Sport website provides information to all Canadians about resources and tools to prevent maltreatment in sport, including legal services to file a complaint. NSOs risk losing Federal funding if they do not sign the OSIC agreement or comply with the OSIC requirements for a safe, positive, and enriching experience. In 2022, the federal government suspended funding to Hockey Canada for its handling of sexual assault allegations.

## WHAT WE LIKE

The entire sports ecosystem is guided by the [2012 Canadian Sports Policy](#) which embraces the Long-Term Athlete Development Model. Within this model, all Canadians are part of a five-phase model that includes: (1) introduction to sport, when fundamental skills, knowledge, and attitudes to participation are developed; (2) recreational sport, when youth participate for fun, health, and social interaction; (3) competitive sport, where they can systematically improve their performance as measured against others in safe and ethical competition; and (4) high performance sport, where they achieve world-class results through ethical and fair means at the highest levels of competition; and (5) sport for development, where sport is a tool for economic and social development and the promotion of positive values at home and abroad. Canada is [expected](#) to soon release an updated sports policy to run through 2033.

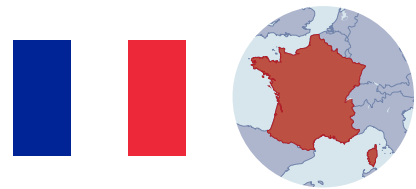
# Sport Governance in Canada



# FRANCE

Capital: **Paris** | Population: **68 million**

Lead body for sport development: **Ministry of Sports**



Government Support	B
Elite Sport Rank	2
Elite Sport Rank per Capita	26

## Youth Sport Participation Grade **C**

*Host of the 2024 Paris Olympics and Paralympics, France devotes the most money to sport in the European Union and is characterized by relatively high levels of top-down government control of the system. Youth sport participation rates lag other top countries, but a wide variety of sport options are offered, and strong efforts are made to train coach at many levels of its ecosystem.*

The highest governing body of sport in France is the [Ministry of Sports](#), which oversees the various regional levels of government responsible for sport as well as the [French National and Olympic Sports Committee \(CNOSF\)](#). The Ministry of Sport is responsible for national sport policy, including the [2006 Code du Sport](#), a comprehensive law regulating the interactions of all relevant sports actors (e.g. universities, national sport federations, CNOSF, schools, etc.), creating a highly centralized and state-oriented ecosystem of sport. All expenses combined, the annual funding for sport amounts to nearly €40b (\$44.2B US), buoyed by public funding, a growing share of private spending, and specific funding for major sporting events.

The CNOSF is responsible for selecting and leading the French delegation at the Olympic Games and other competitions overseen by the IOC. The CNOSF is comprised of 106 Affiliated Federations and Associate Members including the 36 National Olympic Sport Federations, 39 National Sport Federations, 14 Multisport Federations, 5 School and University Federations, and 12 Associate Members. The centerpiece of high-performance sport in France is the [National Institute of Sport, Expertise, and Performance](#), an elite Olympic and Paralympic training center under the Ministry of Sports that provides health care, training, nutrition, research, and educational opportunities for athletes. In 2019, the [National Agency of Sport \(NAS\)](#) was launched to work with the National Sport Federations and athletes to improve the country's position in the Olympic medal table. NAS will receive €284m (\$312 million USD), with some of that (€90m) going to high-performance but the lion's share going to sport-for-all and grassroots programs (€194m) and sport infrastructure (€129m).

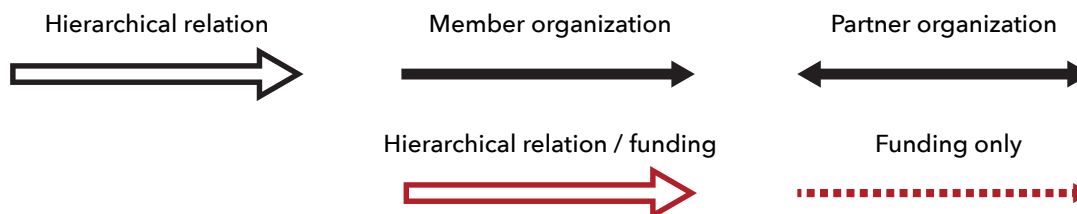
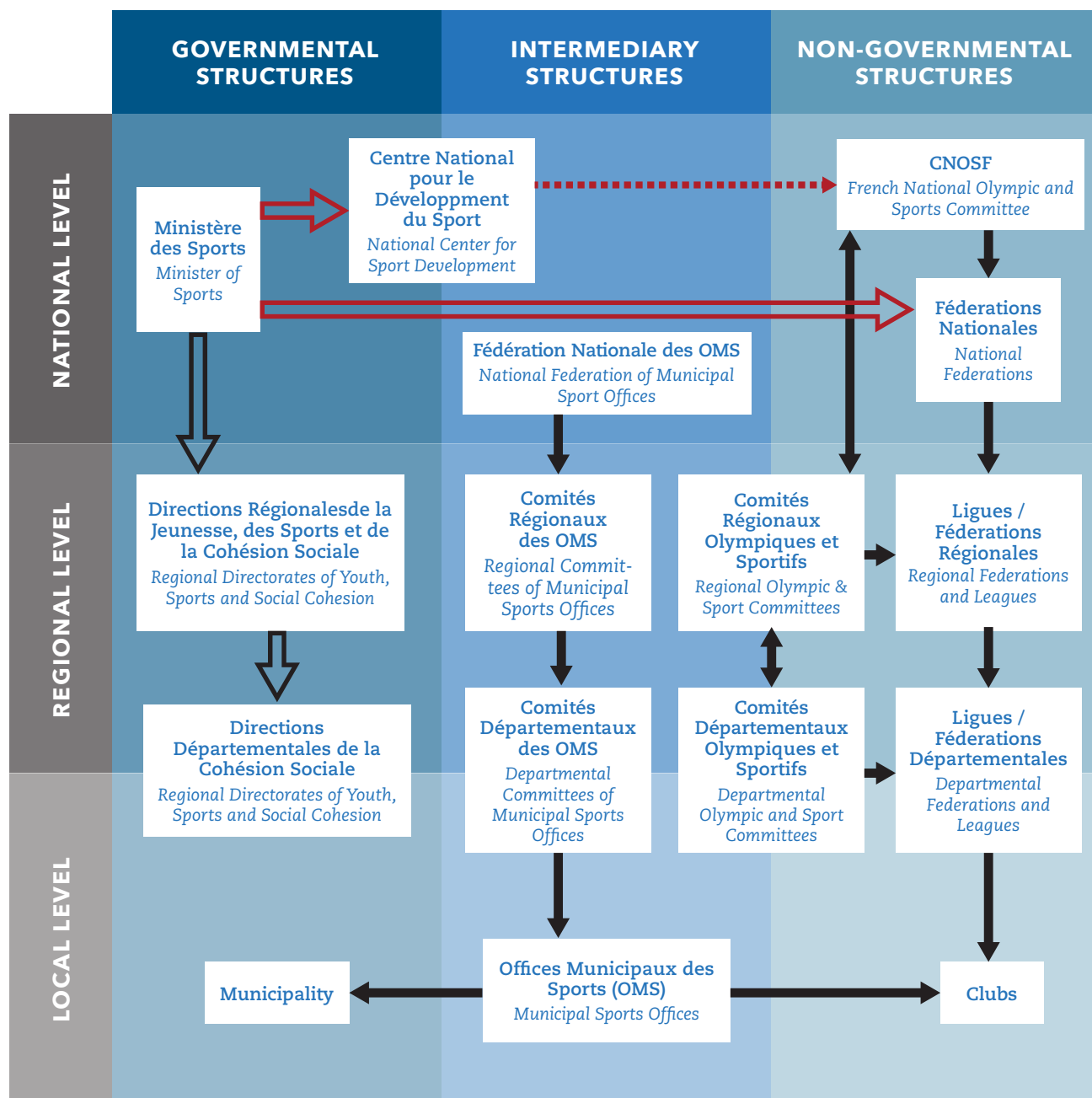
The Ministries of Sport, Health, and Education work with municipal and regional governments to oversee youth sports. In preparation for Paris 2024, the Ministries of Sport and Health created the [National Sport and Health Strategy \(2019-2024\)](#) to promote physical and sports activities. The plan is designed to get more youth moving, especially those with greater barriers to sport, including women and girls and persons with disabilities. In 2022, the Ministry of National Education made a joint commitment with the Ministry of Sport and the Olympic and Paralympic Games to enable every primary school student at least thirty minutes of daily physical activity in addition to the compulsory physical education requirements.

Despite a [national scandal in 2021](#) regarding more than 400 adults in sport involved in the abuse or cover-up of abuse of young athletes, it does not appear that France has a specific system for safeguarding in sport and relies on the French legal child protection system.

## WHAT WE LIKE

The French government recognizes **sport "as medicine"** to promote physical activity in the broad population. Since 2016, physicians can write **sport prescriptions** for some patients that can be used to help cover the costs of training under **qualified coaches** affiliated with national federations (the American College of Sports Medicine **encourages** such health care/exercise models). The Ministry of Sport also has created **Pass'Sport**, a financial voucher of 50 euros for every child and young adult to cover or subsidize registration fees for local sport clubs.

# Sport Governance in France



# UNITED KINGDOM

Capital: **London** | Population: **67 million**

Lead bodies for sport development:

**Sport England, Sport Scotland, Sport NI, Sport Wales**



Government Support B

Elite Sport Rank 4

Elite Sport Rank Per Capita 28

Youth Sport Participation Grade D

*The United Kingdom has been instrumental in building the Olympic Movement and played a significant role in the spread of sport culture globally through the introduction of games like soccer (football), tennis, rugby and cricket. In recent decades, government has begun to take proactive efforts to improve community sport and boost participation rates among disadvantaged youth.*

The [Department for Culture, Media, and Sport \(DCMS\)](#) is the government body responsible for implementing sport policy across the United Kingdom, comprised of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The largest country is England, which like the others is guided by an entity, [Sport England](#), that provides oversight of the mass sport movement with financial support from DCMS. Established by Royal Charter in 1996, Sport England supports the growth and development of community programs for youth. Playing a similar role in their countries are Sport Wales, Sport Scotland, and Sport Northern Ireland. Concurrently, the government created the National Lottery, the key source of income for quasi-governmental organizations such as Sport England.

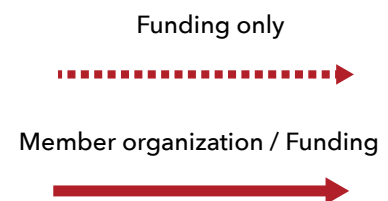
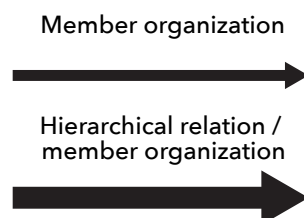
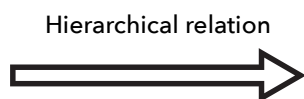
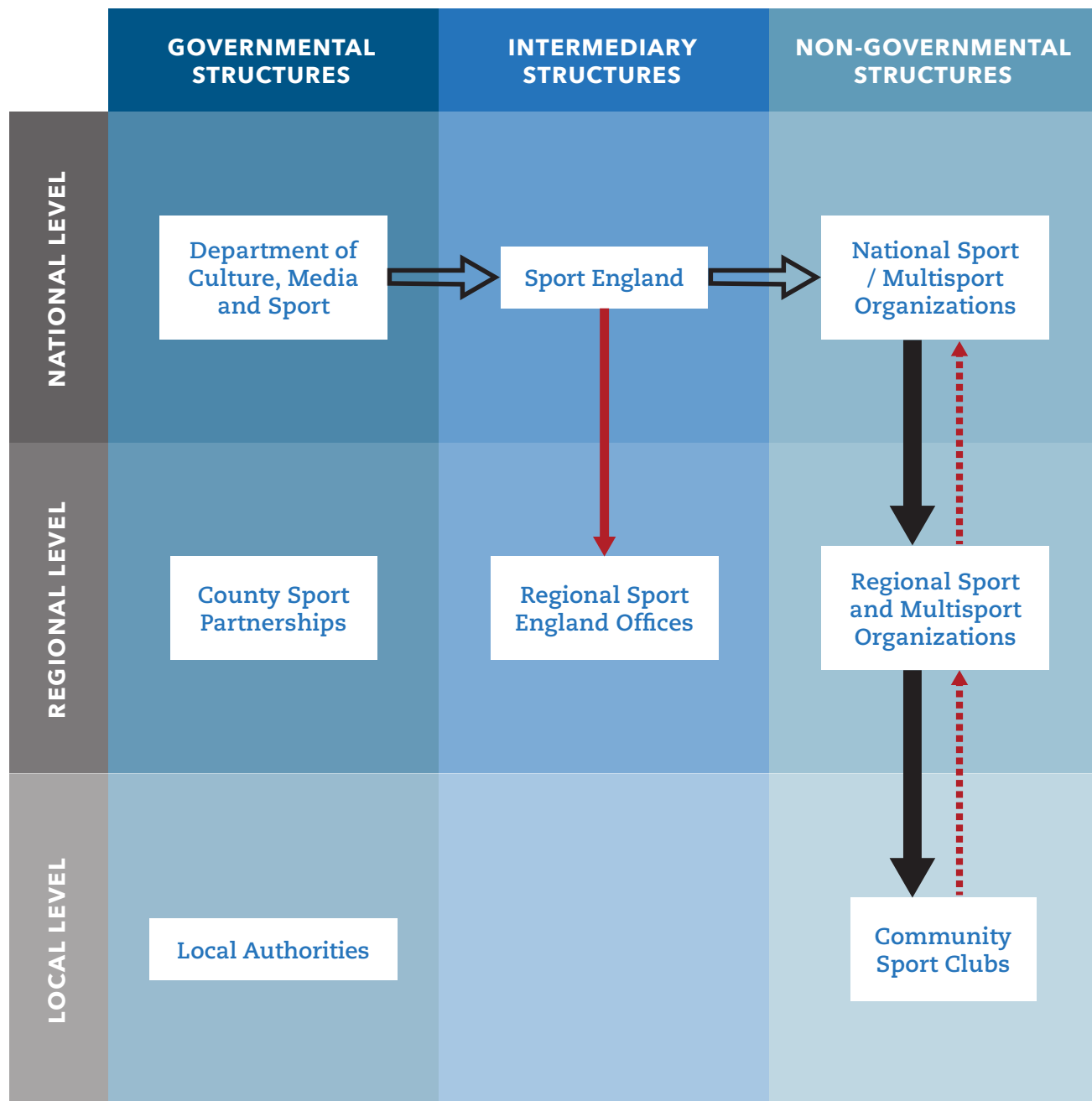
A separate governing body, [UK Sport](#) serves all the United Kingdom and focuses on the top end of athlete pathways, with no direct involvement in community or school sport. UK Sport funds every athlete considered to have a credible chance of winning a medal during a four-year Olympic or Paralympic cycle. Approximately 543m GBP (\$710m USD) is given to UK Sport annually through a mix of government and national lottery funding. Working alongside UK Sport is the [British Olympic Association \(BOA\)](#), the national Olympic committee responsible for selecting teams for the summer, winter, and youth Olympic Games. Its members include the national governing bodies of sports represented in the Olympics. The BOA is independent and privately funded, relying solely on fundraising and event revenues to cover its costs. The British Paralympic Association is separate and functions in a similar model to the BOA.

UK Sport and Sport England are responsible for the safeguarding and wellbeing of all participants. Due to a series of high profile issues, the government commissioned a Duty of Care in Sport Review in 2017, which set forth a new series of recommendations and compulsory changes. Additionally, [Sport Integrity](#) is a third-party service provider for elite athletes and staff with concerns for unacceptable behavior. Lastly, the British Elite Athletes Association, an independent representative for elite athletes, offers a confidential avenue to seek guidance and support regarding team culture, athlete representation, equality/diversity/inclusion, mental health, safeguarding, anti-doping, and national team selection.

## WHAT WE LIKE

Sport England exists to “give everyone in England the chance to benefit from sport and physical activity” and is guided by a 10-year strategic plan, “[Uniting the Movement](#).” The entity is funded by the DCMS and National Lottery and invests 250m GBP (\$317m USD) in community sport annually. Organizations that receive government support must abide Sport England’s **Code for Sports Governance**, which requires the submission of action plans designed to promote diversity and inclusion within the organization. Reporting includes information on program beneficiaries as well as staffing and administration, including boards.

# Sport Governance in England



# CHINA

Capital: **Beijing** | Population: **1.4 billion**

Lead body for sport development: **General Administration of Sport**



**Government Support** D

**Elite Sport Rank** 3

**Elite Sport Rank Per Capita** 61

**Youth Sport Participation Grade** F

*Sport is increasingly popular in China where government has invested heavily in recent decades to become a world power in Olympic and other sports, and to improve public health through increased physical activity rates. Getting more youth playing sports is a major challenge, one that is being addressed in part by a series of significant commitments to build sport facilities.*

In China, the General Administration of Sport (GAS) sits directly under the Central Government and is the government agency responsible for sport policy. The GAS is part of a centralized, top-down hierarchy that includes the Chinese Olympic Committee and the All-China Sports Federation. The GAS is guided by the [14th Five-Year Plan for Sport Development](#) (2021-2025), which seeks to build China into a global sports power. In 2023, the government will spend ¥23.3B (\$3.2B USD) on sport. The GAS oversees 20 sports management centers (including sports federations), the National Training Bureau and national teams, and the Provincial Sports Commission, which includes Provincial Sports Academies or part-time sports schools. The Olympic Sport Strategy is to engineer champions, and elite sport success is the overriding priority in the Chinese government. To avoid the misuse of money, increase funding efficiency, and maximize China's Olympic medal productivity, China has prioritized primarily skill-based sports and "small, fast, women, water, and agile" sports disciplines that are historically less competitive globally.

[China's sport system](#) receives supplemental funding from the national sports lottery and, increasingly, commercial endorsements. Historically, the sports lottery played a significant role in supporting major sports events in China, including the Olympics, the Paralympics, the Asian Games, and the National Games. The lottery also provides most of the funding for the National Fitness Campaign. With the support of the sports lottery, fitness projects have been extended to more than 600,000 villages, plus exercise tracks,

fitness centers, multifunctional community sports fields, and walk pathways throughout the country. By 2025, the national fitness public service system is charged with encouraging 38.5% of the country to regularly participate in physical exercise. Mass events, new facilities, use of existing school venues, and National Fitness Days are part of the national plan to encourage people to engage in healthy activities and sport. The sport-for-all movement in China is relatively new and largely ungoverned for youth unless they participate in a sports school or physical education class. However, the country is organizing itself for greater impact. In addition to the federal government, [cities](#) also create five-year plans to support sport development.

Currently, there is no safeguarding system in place for athletes to report abuse.

## WHAT WE LIKE

As China has become more of an industrialized country, physical activity rates have fallen, and obesity rates have risen. To counter those trends, government invests in building community venues that provide free or low-cost access to sports. In the three-year period ending in 2020, the number of national sports facilities increased 89.7% and the total area of sporting venues increased 33.4%. As part of its current five-year plan, another 1,000 venues are being built.

# Sport Governance in China

