

A BLUEPRINT FOR DELIVERING SOFTBALL IN NEW ZEALAND

At the 2010 AGM the Board presented some thinking around the development of a new approach to the delivery of softball, especially at community/grassroots level. It was identified at that time that a priority focus would be placed on local softball in order to grow and develop the game in what is an increasingly competitive environment, and that resource would be allocated to the RGDO network to facilitate that change.

The Blueprint for softball builds on this discussion and provides a framework for thinking about and taking action to improve the delivery of softball at every level. Player development is at the heart of the Blueprint, especially the need to align player development and programme delivery across the country, at all levels and for all ages. The Blueprint will also support a more integrated, systematic and coordinated approach to delivery.

Softball New Zealand will use the plan to develop and drive national programmes that support the development of community softball. Its key vehicle for doing this will be the RGDOs working with their respective associations.

Why is this important?

Sport and the environment in which it is played are constantly evolving and changing. It is fair to say that, for the most part, softball is losing ground against most other sports. We are being out-competed on many fronts by other sports in terms of:

- Access to financial resources;
- Numbers of players, administrators and volunteers;
- Support from funders and sponsors;
- Innovation and development of the game;
- Facilities;
- Emphasis on growth; and
- Media presence (amongst others).

Additionally, developing a Blueprint for the game that sits at the heart of our planning and activity throughout the country means that we will be able to be more aligned in what and how we deliver the game and recognise different ways that people want to participate in softball.

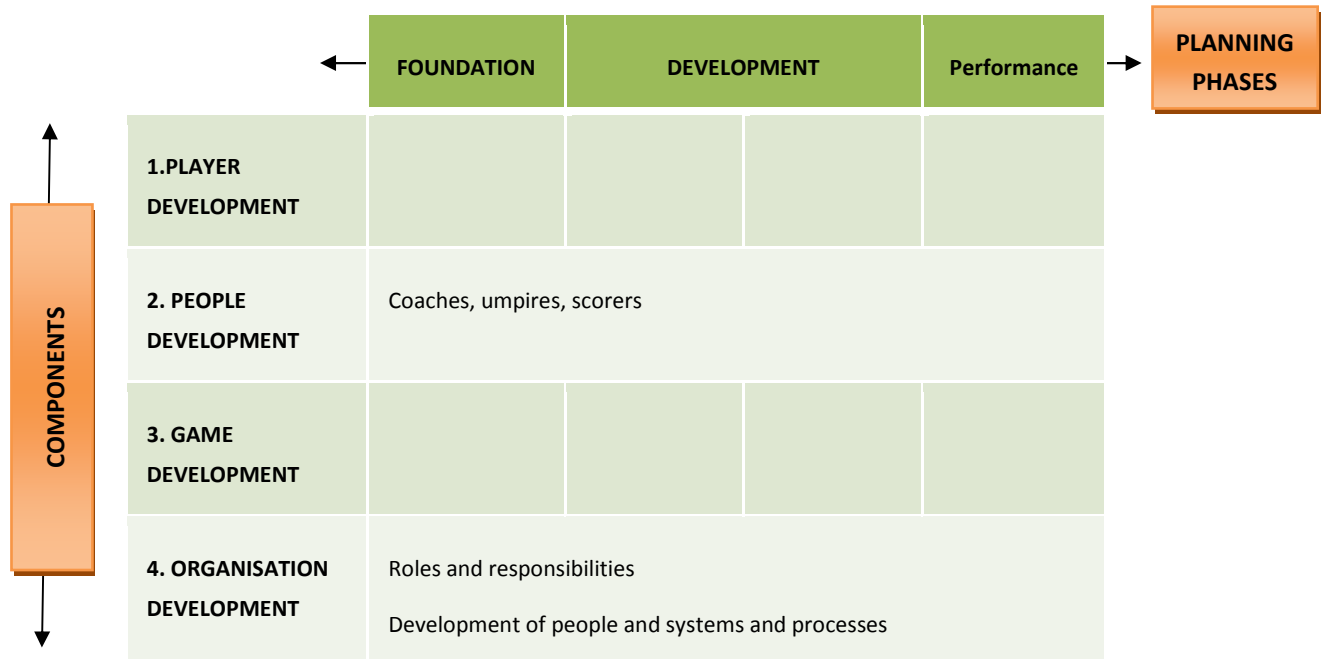
It will also allow us to package up different aspects of the game for funding and sponsorship purposes. For example, sponsors will have more assurance that they are getting a whole of sport package if there is consistency in approach throughout the country.

However, if we are to attract this sort of funding to our sport then we need to be actually making some progress in this space. This includes money from Government and community and gaming trusts where the emphasis is increasingly on community development.

The onus is on all of us to achieve different outcomes and respond to the changing environment in which we are all operating. The Blueprint will give us a common platform to work from.

Softball's Blueprint - overview

The purpose behind developing the Blueprint is to be able to grow softball by ensuring that players get a consistent and high-quality experience of softball at every level of the game. One of the best ways to ensure this is to have everyone working to the same plan and to the same standards of delivery.



The player development process is the central factor in taking a whole-of-sport approach. Without players we don't need coaches, clubs, competitions, associations etc. The Blueprint is built on understanding the player development process in softball i.e. the stages of development of players and the learning needs and opportunities that are required at each stage and meeting these.

In turn, the needs of players at different stages determine the coach approach and what coaches need to learn to be able to coach at each stage of the player development process as well as the development of umpires, scorers and other volunteers.

Different types of competition and game formats and facilities can also be determined based on the player development process. We already have a number of these in place – for example T-Ball for beginners.

The regional delivery network, in particular, clubs and associations are not only responsible for providing opportunities for participation but also developing softball in their region. Robust and capable clubs and associations will be able to facilitate this work by understanding the environment in which they are working, developing partnerships with schools, RSTs, councils, and other sports (amongst others) in order to make good decisions about how best to grow and retain their individual player base as well as developing aspects of the game in their respective areas or regions.

STAGES OF PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

The central plank in the Blueprint is the player development process. Everything else is based on the learning and development needs identified for players at different stages of their development.

The work done to date breaks this down into three different phases of development within which there are eight definable stages.

● COMPONENT 1: STAGES OF PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

PHASES	FOUNDATION	DEVELOPMENT	PERFORMANCE
STAGES	Play	Participate and compete	Late Perfect
	Discover	Early Perfect	Excel
	Learn		Mastery
WOS link	GROW	SUSTAIN	EXCEL

UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES OF PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Development age versus chronological age

Chronological age is not a good indicator of ability in softball. Every individual develops physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively at different rates. For example 14 year old boys may vary up to 60 percent in any of these areas. Developmental age measures a child's development in terms of body size or motor skill or psychological function over when they were born and this is a better indicator for understanding the needs of children and young people especially when it comes to learning in sport.

Player-centred

The learning and development needs of the player are paramount in the player development process. This does not mean that players dictate what happens or how development takes place. What it does mean is that coaches and others must recognise in the first instance that they are coaching people and not softball. So, in order to be successful, they must understand what drives and motivates their players to participate and learn. For example, children want to have fun, be with their friends and learn new things. If a coach can provide an environment where those things happen then children will enjoy softball and be more likely to continue their involvement.

Developmentally appropriate games

Adapting games and competitions to the ability of the players is an important part of a player development process. Players like to be successful. This is not the same as winning but it is about players being able to compete at their level of development and be challenged but not overwhelmed.

Entry and exit points

Participation and development of players is not a linear process. People will drop out and rejoin softball at different times for a whole lot of different reasons. The key thing is to make sure that while they are travelling through the development process and are part of the softball 'system' that they have great experiences and that when they are ready to rejoin that there are opportunities for them to do so.

Talent identification and development

This is an ongoing practice and not something that happens at one particular point in the development process. The emphasis is on detection and identification of potential and developing that to allow talent to be realised. In order to be successful as a sport this work must be done in systematic rather than ad hoc way.

Alignment

This is a critical aspect of long-term development in and through softball. Players will develop best when there is a coordinated approach that is consistent across the country and means that players have access to the same development opportunities regardless of where they live. It also means that everyone involved in the delivery of softball understands and focuses on their contribution to athlete development.

Holistic consideration

A key principle of the player development process is holistic athlete development. This means that the technical, tactical, physical, social, mental and emotional aspects of the player must be developed appropriately in order to develop the 'whole' athlete.

Quality over quantity

Players develop more effectively if provided with high quality opportunities that maximise learning and development rather than a high number of low-quality ones. When considering the provision of quality softball opportunities think '*better*' not necessarily '*more*'.

A broad base before specialising

We want to encourage our young players to experience a variety of different sports rather than specialise too early in softball. Softball players generally don't reach their peak until their 20s and a broad base of experiences in other sports will help to develop more rounded ball players. Early specialisation has been proven in research to lead to boredom and burn-out, overuse injuries and early retirement.

FOUNDATION PHASE

This is the preparation for and introduction to softball phase. The majority of children will transition through this phase at some time during their first seven years of life. It is where children develop confidence in movement, a willingness to try new things and to master basic movement patterns and skills.

FOUNDATION PHASE			
Stage	PLAY	DISCOVER	LEARN
Indicative age	0-4 YEARS	5-8 YEARS	9-12 YEARS
Objective	Having fun learning and mastering basic movement skills that are required to play softball.	Having fun applying basic skills to a softball-like game that introduces players to softball concepts.	Having fun mastering a broader range of softball-specific skills. Understanding simple tactics and experiencing all positions in the game i.e. not specialising.
Emphasis	Fun, enjoyment and challenge Basic movement skills i.e. running; catching, throwing, striking Learning through play	Fun, enjoyment and challenge Learning basic softball specific skills. Introducing basic tactics and rules Modified game Learning through play	Fun, enjoyment and challenge Mastering a broader range of softball-specific skills Understanding simple tactics and rules Modification where required
Learning and development needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun and safe environment • Enjoyment of movement • High levels of involvement • Action and success • Parental involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun and safe environment • Lots of opportunities to have bat and ball in hand • Action and success • Maximum participation • Modified equipment, distances, competitions, rules and length of training and games to match the ability of players. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun and safe environment • Understand the game and basic tactics • Personal challenge • Learn the requirements of a variety of positions • Social interaction • Different game and competition formats
Delivered by	Home/Parents Early childhood centres Teachers Informal play	Schools Clubs Teachers Junior coaches	Schools Clubs Teachers Junior coaches

DEVELOPMENT PHASE

This is a consolidation phase where players become clearer about their level of interest, ability and their aspirations in softball. In general this covers the transition from secondary school to club and caters for the recreational ball player as well as those with higher aspirations in the game.

COMMUNITY PHASE		
Stage	PARTICIPATE AND COMPETE	EARLY PERFECT
Indicative age	13 YEARS +	
Objective	Ongoing learning and mastering of softball-specific skills to play softball at higher levels of competition and involvement	Recognition of talent or aptitude for performance phase. Development of requisite skills for elite softball
Emphasis	<p>Transitioning between school and club</p> <p>Expanding the range and mastery of softball skills.</p> <p>Specialising in two or three positions</p> <p>Ability to cope with increased competitive demands of the adult game</p> <p>Facilitating the individual goals of players in terms of attainment and progress</p>	<p>Advancing softball skills towards elite softball requirements</p> <p>Develop coping skills for managing complex and pressured game situations</p> <p>Work ethic, dedication and responsibility for performance</p> <p>Team work and team culture</p>
Learning and development needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun, enjoyment and challenge • Physical fitness requirements • Exposure to different levels and types of competition to match ability and interest • Receiving more specialised coaching • Developing tactical understanding of the game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun, enjoyment and challenge • National and international (youth level) softball experiences • Specialised coaching and support • Ability to reflect honestly on performance • Goal setting • Mental and physical skills to match level of competition
Delivered by	<p>Secondary schools</p> <p>Clubs</p> <p>Associations</p> <p>Teachers</p> <p>Youth coaches</p> <p>Representative coaches</p>	<p>Secondary Schools</p> <p>Clubs</p> <p>Associations</p> <p>Teachers</p> <p>Youth coaches</p> <p>Club coaches</p> <p>Representative coaches</p> <p>National youth coaches</p>

EXCEL PHASE

This is the high performance phase where players are introduced to the high performance development process in order to ready them for international performances i.e. Junior and Senior White and Black Sox players.

EXCEL PHASE			
Stage	LATE PERFECT	EXCEL	MASTER
Indicative age	18 YEARS+		
Objective	Ongoing recognition of talent or aptitude for performance phase. Ongoing development of requisite skills for elite softball	Refinement of advanced softball skills and tactics. Refine softball and position specific development Consistency of performance	World-class performer in position and under the highest level of pressure Exemplify professionalism of the highest quality on and off the diamond
Emphasis	Fun, enjoyment and challenge Creating a high-performance culture and environment Goal setting, self motivation, confidence and mental toughness Ongoing development of elite softball skills and aptitudes	Creating a high-performance culture and environment Fun, enjoyment and challenge Goal setting, self motivation, confidence and mental toughness Teamwork and fit with team culture	Fun, enjoyment and challenge Creating a high-performance culture and environment Presence
Learning and development needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to different levels of competition pressure • Specialised coaching and support • Structured feedback • Access to specialised support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to international competition pressure • Specialised coaching and support • Structured feedback • Access to specialised support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A consultative relationship with team management • A high performance environment that supports excellence
Delivered by	Clubs Associations Teachers Youth coaches Club coaches Representative coaches National youth coaches High Performance Sport NZ programmes/initiatives	Clubs Associations Teachers Youth coaches Club coaches Representative coaches National youth coaches National senior coach and manager High Performance Sport NZ programmes/initiatives	National coach, management and team environment Individual player

Stages of player development are represented in the diagram below.

STAGES OF PLAYER DEVELOPMENT



STAGES OF COACH DEVELOPMENT

At each stage of the player development process it is expected that coaches:

- Understand that their key role is to **help the participant learn**;
- Support and **understand the needs of their participants**;
- Develop their **own coaching philosophy, model the Coaching Code of Ethics** and appropriate values;
- Provide **planned, organised, varied and enjoyable sessions**;
- Create a **positive social environment** and culture;
- Ensure that the **physical environment is safe**;
- **Vary their communication and learning and skill acquisition approaches** to:
 - cater for a range of learning styles;
 - match the age and stage of development of the participants; and
 - meet participants' individual learning and development needs.

• COMPONENT 2: STAGES OF COACH DEVELOPMENT

PHASES OF COACH DEVELOPMENT	FOUNDATION	DEVELOPMENT	PERFORMANCE
ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT STAGES COVERED	Play	Participate and compete	Late Perfect
	Discover	Early Perfect	Excel
	Learn		Mastery
WOS link	GROW	SUSTAIN	EXCEL

The tables below provide more detailed information about the three phases of coach development. The learning and development needs of coaches at each phase must be in line with the learning and development needs of the players who will be at different stages in the development process.

FOUNDATION COACHES

The participants they coach

Foundation coaches support children and young people to have fun while learning how to play softball.

Usually the participants are having their first experiences of organised sport with the majority of them being primary school-aged children.

Across the participants there will be a wide range of physical, technical and social skills

The learning and development needs of the participants they coach

PLAY

- Fun and safe environment
- Enjoyment of movement
- High levels of involvement
- Action and success
- Parental involvement

DISCOVER

- Fun and safe environment
- Lots of opportunities to have bat and ball in hand
- Action and success
- Maximum participation
- Modified equipment, distances, competitions, rules and length of training and games to match the ability of players.

LEARN

- Fun and safe environment
- Understand the game and basic tactics
- Personal challenge
- Learn the requirements of a variety of positions
- Social interaction
- Different game and competition formats

Desired attributes of Foundation coaches

Ideally Foundation coaches will be able to:

- Nurture a love of softball
- Focus primarily on fun, everyone participating and basic skill acquisition
- Understand the needs of young participants
- Introduce the concept of fair play
- Understand they are in the business of not only creating better young softballers but also better young people.

Who are the coaches?

Foundation coaches are usually:

- Parents
- Primary school teachers
- Older students – secondary and tertiary
- Current and former high performance athletes

Coach development opportunities

Currently Foundation coaches have access to the following learning and development opportunities.

- Coach T-Ball Unit
- Junior Softball Induction Unit
- Essential skills Unit

DEVELOPMENT COACHES

The participants they coach

Development coaches support a wider range of participants including primary school-aged children, secondary school students and adults. They can be coaching in the school and/or club setting, generally non-elite and potential elite level participants such as district or regional youth representatives.

The learning and development needs of the participants they coach

PARTICIPATE AND COMPETE

- Fun, enjoyment and challenge
- Physical fitness requirements
- Exposure to different levels and types of competition to match ability and interest
- Receiving more specialised coaching
- Developing tactical understanding of the game

EARLY PERFECT

- Fun, enjoyment and challenge
- National and international (youth level) softball experiences
- Specialised coaching and support
- Ability to reflect honestly on performance
- Goal setting
- Mental and physical skills to match level of competition

Desired attributes of Community coaches

Ideally Development coaches will be able to:

- Nurture a love of softball and encourage continued participation in softball
- Focus on skill development and tactical understanding while continuing to emphasise fun and maintaining a balance between competition and enjoyment
- Reinforce the concept of fair play
- Identify the more talented participants capable of moving into the late perfect and excel stages
- Continue to emphasise not only the development of better ball players but also better people

Who are the coaches?

Development coaches are usually:

- Parents
- Primary and secondary school teachers
- Older students – secondary and tertiary
- Current and former high performance athletes
- Club coaches

Coach development opportunities

Currently Development coaches have access to the following learning and development opportunities.

- Junior Softball Induction Unit
- Essential Skills Unit
- Competitive Athlete Unit
- Junior Representative Competitive Athlete Unit
- U17 and U19 Competitive Athlete Unit

PERFORMANCE COACHES

The participants they coach

Performance coaches support a smaller range of athletes who have shown extra ability and have moved onto senior regional and/or national representation.

The learning and development needs of the participants they coach

LATE PERFECT

- Access to different levels of competition pressure
- Specialised coaching and support
- Structured feedback
- Access to specialised support services

EXCEL

- Access to international competition pressure
- Specialised coaching and support
- Structured feedback
- Access to specialised support services

MASTERY

- A consultative relationship with team management
- A high performance environment that supports excellence

Desired attributes of Performance coaches

Ideally Performance coaches will be able to:

- Nurture a love of competing and aspiring to be the best you can be
- Focus on skill development and refinement, tactical understanding and decision-making in a competitive environment
- Understand the needs of athletes within the high performance environment
- Encourage their athletes to maintain acceptable sporting ethics
- Be able to identify athletes capable of performing at the highest levels of competition
- Understand they are in the business of creating better athletes and better people
- Create an optimal performance environment that allows teams and individuals to perform at their best.

Who are the coaches?

Performance coaches are usually:

- Experienced community coaches who have shown ability in coaching more talented athletes
- Former elite players who have shown a desire to become involved in coaching
- Professionals who coach for a living

Coach development opportunities

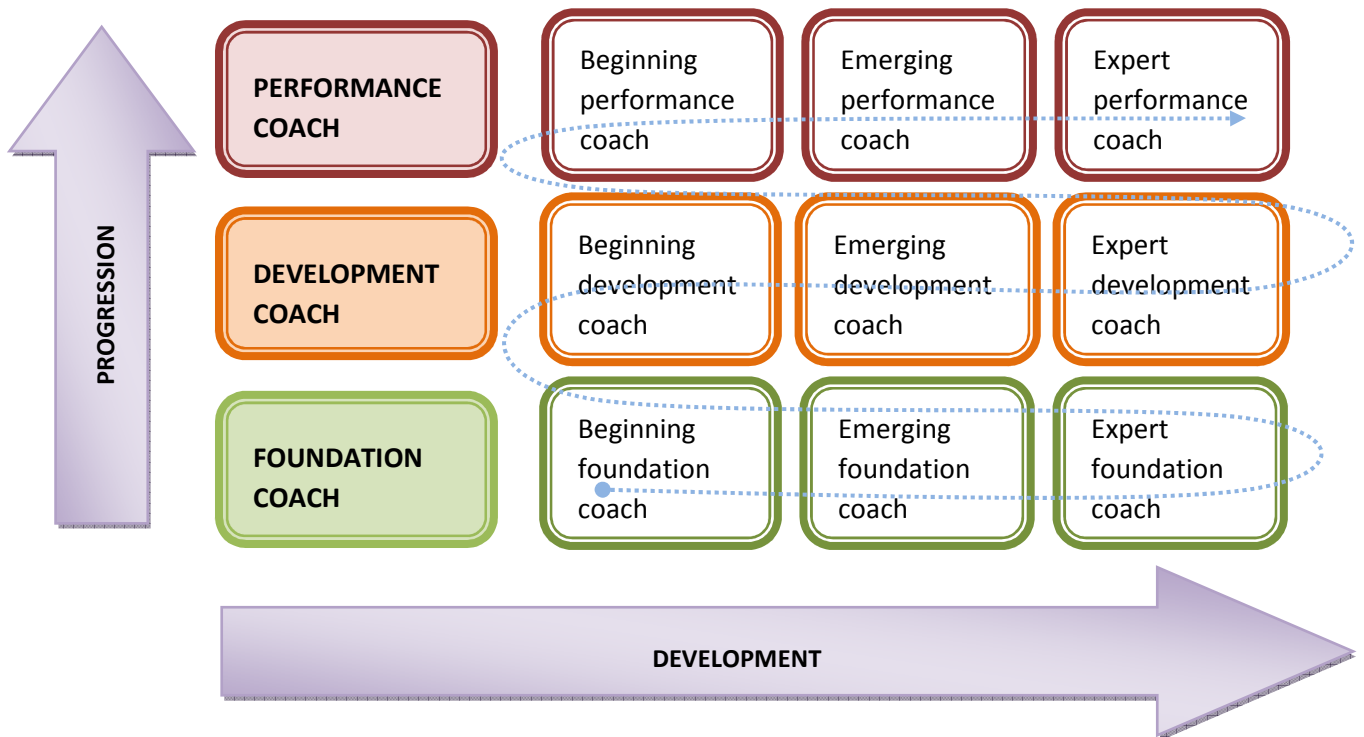
Currently Performance coaches have access to the following learning and development opportunities.

- Senior representative Competitive Athlete Unit
- National Fastpitch Championship Competitive Athlete Unit
- NZ Junior development team Competitive Athlete Unit
- Junior Black/White Sox Elite Level Unit
- Black/White Sox Elite Level Unit.

Additionally Performance coaches have the opportunity to apply for development opportunities and support provided by High Performance Sport NZ.

COACH DEVELOPMENT

Coach development is not only about moving from the Foundation phase through Community and onto the Performance phase, it is also about coaches having the opportunity to excel within one of these phases. Therefore development within each of the coach phases is as important as progression from one phase to the next, if not more so. This concept can be represented as follows.



The importance of coaches

Coaches play a critical role in growing/maintaining participation levels, especially those coaching at the foundation and development levels of the game. Coaches are in a position to either turn people on or off towards softball depending on the environment they create around players to help them learn and develop and their ability to consider and respond to the needs of their players.

The first rule of thumb is that coaches are coaching people how to enjoy and play softball i.e. coaching people first and the game second. This means that the emphasis of coach development must be on developing coaches who can coach athletes, not just know a lot about softball.

Additionally coach development should:

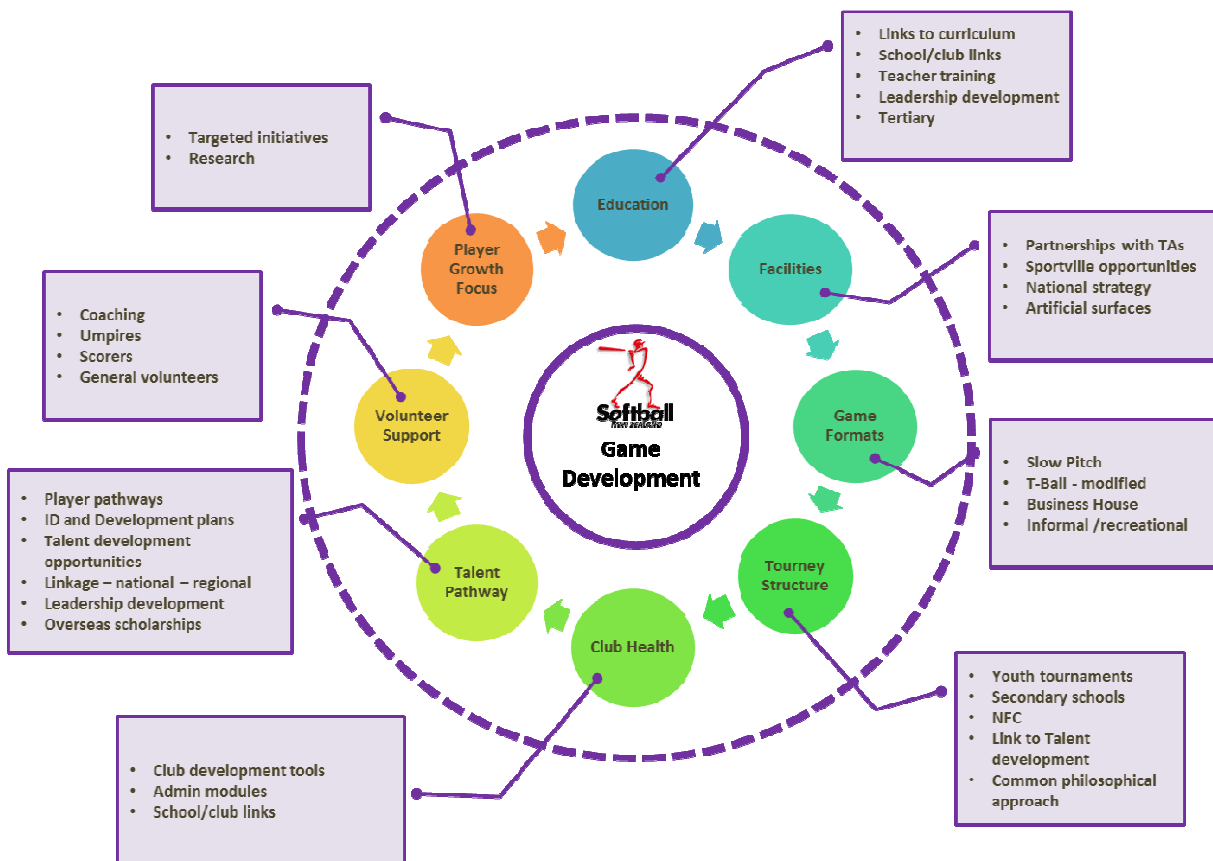
- emphasise practical coaching versus theoretical knowledge; and
- involve understanding of the learning styles and needs of individual athletes at different stages of development.

Coaches need to be familiar with the curriculum of learning at the different stages of player development i.e. what are the critical skills/learning that coaches need to develop within their players at each stage of development.

A curriculum of learning is attached as Appendix One.

GAME DEVELOPMENT

Game development describes all of the activities undertaken at every level within softball that underpin participation growth and increased volunteer support. The diagram below identifies the various aspects of game development for softball.



Why do we want to grow participation in softball?






This question can be answered from a number of different perspectives. For example, if we consider participation growth from a high performance perspective then, depending on the quality of our talent development programmes, the more people we have to choose from the higher the quality of player who eventually makes it into the team and the more success we can have on the world stage.


We could also consider growth from a value perspective. For example, if we believe in the value that softball offers children and young people and communities then the more people we have playing the game, the more value can be created.

A third view of growth is from the perspective of resourcing. The more people we have participating in softball, the greater the potential for more human and financial resources being made available to the game.

Another perspective on growth comes from thinking about how best to achieve it. Is it about recruitment or retention? It's actually about both with each focus requiring different strategies and emphasis. This will be explored in more detail later.

INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS OF GAME DEVELOPMENT

COMPONENT	BRIEF EXPLANATION
 <p>Player Growth Focus</p>	<p>From a growth perspective it makes good sense to concentrate on the female game. At the present time male players outnumber female players two to one. Taking a practical view, this means that there is greater potential for growth in the number of female players.</p> <p>Additionally, if we want to have two successful senior national teams then we need to create more depth of talent in the women's game, starting with building and retaining a stronger base of players.</p>
 <p>Volunteer Support</p>	<p>Without players we don't need volunteers. However, without enough volunteers we are unable to adequately service the needs of players. As participation grows so does our need for coaches, umpires, scorers, administrators and general helpers to support the increase in player numbers. As a sport softball is heavily reliant on volunteers. With that comes the responsibility to effectively manage and develop our volunteer workforce.</p>
 <p>Club Health</p>	<p>Clubs remain at the heart of our sport in providing opportunities for people to learn about and play our game. Having a network of healthy, robust softball clubs is therefore really important to the long-term future of our game.</p> <p>There are many opportunities available to strengthen our club network and there is role for clubs to play in linking with schools to ensure ongoing opportunities for young people to play the game past school.</p>
 <p>Tourney Structure</p>	<p>Softball is a tournament-heavy sport. This in itself is not a bad thing but our approach to tournaments needs to be aligned to ensure that they are fit for purpose, particularly at the youth level. Under-age tournaments are development opportunities and contribute to the talent development process within softball. It makes sense to expose as many young people as possible to the tournament experience and not 'cull' young players too early. One of the challenges with an emphasis on tournament play is that young people spend more time competing than training to play softball. Competing and trying to win tournaments is a short term focus that can often work against the longer-term player development goal.</p> <p>Tournaments should also provide development opportunities for coaches and be occasions to celebrate all that is good about our game.</p>
 <p>Game Formats</p>	<p>Not everyone aspires to a Black Sox or White Sox player. Not everyone wants to play Fastpitch. Having a range of different types of softball 'products' or game formats will increase our chances of making the game available to a wider range of participants. Slow pitch is one obvious format of the game we need to pursue further.</p> <p>The emphasis on different game formats is on exposing as many people as possible to the game and providing opportunities for quality softball experiences.</p>

 <p>Facilities</p>	<p>We must have a national picture of the facilities available to softball. Hence we must gather information about the facilities that are used throughout the country for softball. Types of information would include location, number and type of diamonds, off-season use, shared use with other sports, ownership etc to build a picture of the facility landscape. At the same time we should be looking at developing a national plan for facility development that would be focused on better and possibly more facilities. Having enough places to play is an important aspect of local provision and national and international hosting opportunities. Partnerships with local councils are important.</p>
 <p>Education</p>	<p>There is some potential for growing softball in both primary and secondary schools. This can create opportunities for clubs to partner with schools. As well there may be opportunities to partner with tertiary institutions using softball as a means of developing leadership skills and carrying out any practical requirements of some tertiary courses. This is a relatively untapped area in sport.</p>
 <p>Talent Pathway</p>	<p>Talent development is a core activity within any sport. Talent identification is a part of the talent development process. As with any process talent identification and development should take place over time, not at one point in time, to allow for individual differences in development. For example, at the present time we start talent identification at about under-15. However, research tells us the between the ages of 10 and 16 young people will vary in terms of their physical, social, cognitive and emotional development by as much as 60 percent. This has huge implications for talent identification if it only happens at under-15s.</p> <p>A talented athlete pathway in softball covers the following stages of athlete development: early and late perfect; excel and mastery. The purpose of a talent development pathway is to ensure ongoing/sustainable high performance success by increasing the depth and quality of talent within the sport. We must have a clearly defined pathway with multiple entry points to give ourselves the best chance of continuing to compete successfully at international level.</p> <p>Given that our talent pool is smaller than most other countries we compete against, that we are further away from our competition than most, and we have fewer resources than many others, we have to be smart to ensure we have the right structure, environment and personnel involved.</p> <p>Talent development and support for the talent pathway is a whole-of-sport responsibility, not just a national office role.</p>

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

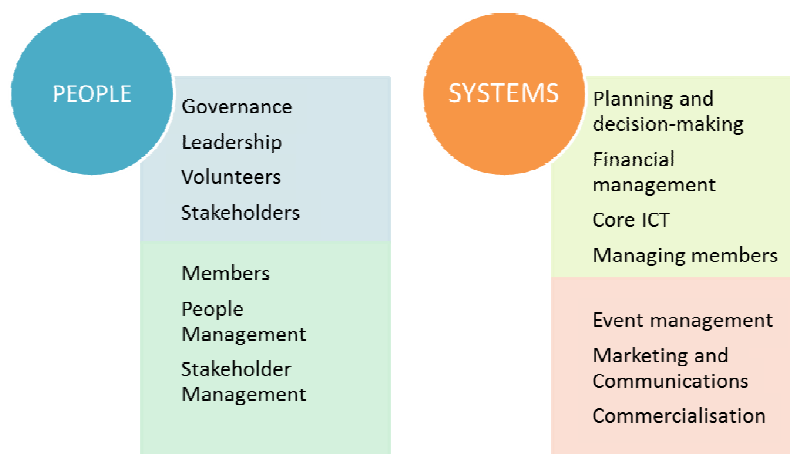
The blueprint requires an integrated delivery system in order to realise its success. Stakeholders involved in the delivery of the blueprint need to have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the system. Key roles and responsibilities involve provision of leadership; programme design and development; and delivery. Suggested allocation of these is outlined in the table below.

	STAGE	SOFTBALL NZ			ASSOCIATIONS			CLUBS		
		Lead	Prog Devel	Deliver	Lead	Prog Devel	Deliver	Lead	Prog Devel	Deliver
FOUNDATION	Play									
	Discover									
	Learn									
DEVELOPMENT	Participate/compete									
	Early perfect									
PERFORM	Late Perfect									
	Excel									
	Mastery									

Having robust organisations involved in the delivery of softball is also important. Stable and well-run organisations that can adapt to changing demand from existing and potential players will go a long way to supporting the player pathway and growth of the game. Critical to this are our clubs and local associations.

There are two aspects to organisational development: one involves having the best systems and processes within the organisation, the other concerns the capability of the people involved in running our clubs and associations.

ASPECTS OF ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



APPENDIX ONE: LEARNING CURRICULUM

FOUNDATION PHASE			
STAGE	Play	Discover	Learn
Focus	Fun and active	Fun and participation	Fun and mastery of basic softball skills
Technical skills	Focus on learning fundamental movement skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • throwing • catching • striking 	Fundamental softball skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • base-running • throwing • catching with glove • striking • ground fielding 	Pitching Batting (including bunting) Fielding fly balls and ground balls Base running (intro sliding) Catching
Tactical	Nil	Simple rules	Simple rules Basic tactics
Physical (fitness)	Nil	ABC's <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agility • Balance • Coordination • Speed 	Introduce general physical conditioning Importance of warm-up/cool down
Social	Playing with others Developing confidence and positive self-esteem	Playing with others Introduce fair play concepts Encourage positive attitudes and the importance of making a good effort	Teamwork Fair play Work ethic Respect for others Dealing with winning and losing

Cognitive	Using imagination	Using imagination Simple rules and ethics	Introduce elements of decision-making Rules and ethics
Game modifications	Minor games – softball related that emphasise basic skills	Introduction to T-Ball Rotate positions Equal playing time Use 11inch flexi ball	Teach all players to pitch Rotate positions Equal playing time Use 11/12 inch flexi ball Large home plate and strike zone Limit the number of innings pitched
Session planning	20-30 minutes Well-structured Modified activities Skill progressions High levels of activity Positive environment Learning through play	Up to 45 minutes Modified equipment and activities Appropriate skill progressions High levels of activity Positive environment Emphasis on learning through play	Up to 60 minutes Appropriate modifications to suit level of players Appropriate skill progressions High levels of activity Positive environment Emphasis on learning through play Players learn 2+ positions

DEVELOPMENT PHASE		
STAGE	Participate/Compete	Early Perfect
Focus	Fun, participation, learning, competing	Fun, learning, competing
Technical skills	Promote more technical types of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hitting • the short game (bunting) • sliding • pitching/catching • defence/team defence 	Develop all aspects of individual skill sets
Tactical	Emphasis on team work Develop tasks per position	Develop tasks per position Offence and defence Strategy
Physical (fitness)	Develop softball-specific physical conditioning Develop general speed, agility, and quickness and flexibility Introduce injury prevention	Introduce position-specific physical conditioning. Introduce softball-specific speed, agility, and quickness. Maintain speed, agility, quickness and flexibility Practice injury prevention
Social	Pride in teamwork Humility Expressing gratitude Fulfilling team role	Dedication and commitment Humility, gratitude Tolerance Inclusiveness Accepting and embracing discipline for the team
Cognitive	Develop goal setting, team cohesion, visualisation skills, emotional control, decision making during skills Introduce game plans, pre-game and game routines, coping	Refine goal setting, team cohesion, visualisation skills, emotional control, decision making during skills Develop game plans, pre-game and game routines, coping

Game modifications	strategies	strategies
		<p>Introduce the psychology of the inner game of softball</p> <p>Promote self understanding and demonstration of leadership skills</p> <p>Promote innovation and creation</p> <p>Promote decision making, advanced problem solving, social comparison, moral decision making & self evaluation</p>
Session planning	Use 12 inch standard softball	Adhere to the SNZ official rule book
	<p>Standard home plate and strike zone</p> <p>Rotate positions</p> <p>Equal playing time</p>	
	Up to 2 hours	Up to 3 hours
	Appropriate modifications to suit level of players	60 minutes plus of dedicate physical conditioning
	Appropriate skill progressions	Appropriate skill progressions
	High levels of activity	High levels of activity
	Positive environment	Positive environment
	Emphasis on learning through play	Emphasis on learning through play
	Players learn 2+ positions	Players specialise in one position and learn 1-2 other

EXCEL PHASE			
Stage	Late Perfect	Excel	Master
Focus	Fun, socially motivated, develop player autonomy	Player autonomy is refined	Morals and ethics are of the highest stand
Technical skills	Develop all appropriate team and individual skills sets	Refine appropriate team and individual skills sets	Innovative and development of individual and team skills sets
Tactical	Offence and defence strategy	Advanced offence and defence strategy	Innovative and development of new offence and defence strategy
Physical (fitness)	<p>Develop general physical conditioning, general strength and power</p> <p>Develop position-specific physical conditioning</p> <p>Develop softball-specific speed, agility, and quickness</p> <p>Maintain speed, agility, quickness and flexibility</p> <p>Practice injury prevention</p>	<p>Refine softball and position specific physical conditioning</p> <p>Refine softball and position specific strength and power</p> <p>Refine softball and position specific speed, agility, and quickness</p> <p>Refine speed, agility, quickness and flexibility</p> <p>Practice injury prevention</p> <p>Detailed and biomechanical testing</p>	<p>Detailed and biomechanical testing</p> <p>Optimise physical performance</p> <p>Promote innovative ways to further develop position specific strength and power, softball specific speed, agility, and quickness</p> <p>Practice injury prevention</p>
Social	<p>Moral decision making</p> <p>Healthy living</p> <p>Accountability</p> <p>Mental toughness</p>	<p>Moral decision making in heat of battle</p> <p>Healthy living</p> <p>Committing to continuous improvement</p> <p>Accepting and fulfilling role of team</p> <p>Accountability</p> <p>Mental toughness/determination</p>	<p>Moral decision making in heat of battle</p> <p>Healthy living</p> <p>Exploration of new and innovative ways to grow as a person/player</p> <p>Accepting and fulfilling individual role of team. Supporting the development of individuals within the team</p> <p>Accountability</p>

Cognitive	Psychology of the inner game of softball	Develop innovation and creation skills	Mental toughness/determination
	Refine game plans, pre-game and game routines, coping strategies and visualisation skills	Promote the making of appropriate life decisions	Refine self understanding and demonstration of leadership skills
Game Modifications	Develop self understanding and demonstration of leadership skills	Refine decision making, advanced problem solving, complex analysis, social comparison, moral decision making & self evaluation	High moral life decisions
	Promote innovation and creation	Develop decision making, advanced problem solving, complex analysis, social comparison, moral decision making & self evaluation	Detailed physiological testing
Session planning	Adhere to the SNZ official rule book	Adhere to the SNZ official rule book	Adhere to the SNZ official rule book
Session planning	Up to 3 hours specific softball training per week	Position specific training	Physical training programs employ the most advanced techniques and sport science technology
	60 minutes plus of dedicate physical conditioning	Players specialise in one position and the ability to play another position well	Critical evaluation/consultation between coach and players
	Include mental conditioning	Daily skill development, fitness training and mental training	Players to make decisions about their training regimen
	Instruction and preparation are individualised	Synchronisation between combinations, and increase speed of execution of play	Players to lead the direction of the team as a whole
	Emphasis on speed of execution of plays	Include statistical and video analysis to support individual and team development	
	Include statistical and video analysis to support individual and team development	Players are trained to peak for key events	

APPENDIX TWO: SOFTBALL DEVELOPMENT MODEL – Summary

STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT	FOUNDATION			DEVELOPMENT		PERFORMANCE		
	Play	Discover	Learn	Participate/Compete	Early Perfect	Late Perfect	Excel	Mastery
INDICATIVE AGE GROUPING	Under 5 years	5-8 years	9-12 years	13 – 18 years Adult		Competitive adult High Performance		
GAME FORMAT(S)	Fundamental skills	T-Ball Slo-pitch	T-Ball 9-aside	9-aside Other – e.g. slo-pitch		9-aside		
COACH DEVELOPMENT MODULE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach T-Ball Unit • Junior Softball Induction Unit • Essential skills Unit 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junior Softball Induction Unit • Essential Skills Unit • Competitive Athlete Unit • Junior Representative Competitive Athlete Unit • U17 and U19 Competitive Athlete Unit 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior representative Competitive Athlete Unit • National Fastpitch Championship Competitive Athlete Unit • NZ Junior development team Competitive Athlete Unit • Junior Black/White Sox Elite Level Unit • Black/White Sox Elite Level Unit. 		
COMPETITION STRUCTURE	Minor games and activities No formal competition	Local association competition						
		No formal tournaments Modified competition	Regionally-based tournaments	Club-based tournaments				
				Regional under age tourneys	SNZ National Tournament U16 and U 19	SNZ National Tournaments – Club nationals / NFC		
					Junior World Championships	Senior World Championships		
SNZ SQUADS	None	None	None	SNZ Development Teams (U16)		Junior White and Black Sox (U19)	Senior Black and White Sox	

APPENDIX THREE: UMPIRE AND SCORER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS

Currently

UMPIRE DEVELOPMENT		SCORER DEVELOPMENT			
		Equivalent player development stage			Equivalent player development stage
Level 1	Local Association grading	Foundation	Grade 1	Active scorer	Foundation
Level 2	Passed NZ Rules Examination		Grade 2	Passed NZ Theory (in last 5 years)	
Level 3	Passed NZ Qualifying Examination	Development	Grade 3	Passed NZ Theory /Qualifying practical	Development
Level 4	NZ Badge Holder		Grade 4	Passed NZ Badge Practical	
Level 5	Senior NZ Badge Holder		Grade 5	Promotion to these grades based on assessment at tournaments including capability to perform duties of team/official scorer; tournament chief scorer; tournament statistician; examiner of scorers obtaining their badge.	
Level 6	Regional International Umpire	Grade 6	Performance		
Level 7	ISF Certificate Holder	Grade 7			

Work needs to be done to align the current development of umpires and scorers to the overall stages of player development.