



# **How to Develop an Effective Centre Coaching Program**

**A Guide for Little Athletics Centres**



## INTRODUCTION

This guide aims to assist Little Athletics centres to improve their centre coaching program by:

- Encouraging centres to take a considered, organised, long term approach to centre coaching.
- Providing a 5-step approach to long-term centre coach development.
- Identifying ways in which centres can more successfully attract and retain coaches.
- Providing various models on which centres can base their organisation of Centre coaching.
- Providing a list of hints for organising centre coaching.

## RATIONALE

A rationale for quality, organised centre coaching includes:

- The improvement / development of athletes' skills.
- The attraction / retention of athletes to the centre.
- The creation and maintenance of a positive centre image – professional and organised.

## PROBLEMS

The common problems associated with organising an effective centre coaching program may include one or more of the following:

- Attracting coaches to coach at the centre.
- Getting athletes to attend the coaching once it is made available.
- Retaining coaches at the centre.
- Getting coaches to attend coaching courses to gain more knowledge and become accredited.
- Finding the number of coaches required to conduct a quality program. Many coaching programs are under-staffed.
- A large coach / athlete ratio – coaches are overwhelmed with numbers.
- Recruiting the right person to drive the coaching program.

## GETTING STARTED

### STEP 1: Make the commitment

Developing an effective coaching program is a long term project that requires good organisation and patience. Don't expect it to take care of itself.

If it is to occur, the process firstly needs the strong and genuine support of the committee. It must become a regular topic discussed at committee meetings and be seen as a high priority.

Someone must be prepared to drive the program and be passionate about its success.

Once a genuine commitment is made to develop an effective, sustainable program, the project is well underway.

### STEP 2: What do you want?

The committee must have a clear vision of what they want the coaching program to look like. Answer the following questions:

- Why do you want a coaching program?
- What do you want the coaching program to achieve?
- How do you want the coaching program to work?
  - What organizational model will you use?
  - How many coaches do you want?
  - How many athletes do you want attending?

### STEP 3: Create a Centre Coaching Policy

Once you have sorted out what you want the program to look like, put in writing some simple guidelines that directs your Centre Coaching program. It can as basic as a single page that contains clear statements about how your Centre Coaching program runs. See the example in Appendix 1. This document should be approved at a Centre Committee meeting.

## STEP 4: Appoint a Coaching Coordinator

This person's role is to drive the Centre Coaching program. Make sure that they have a job description that clearly outlines their roles and responsibilities. See Appendix 2 for a sample Coaching Coordinator job description.

## CENTRE COACH DEVELOPMENT

### *A 5-Step Approach*

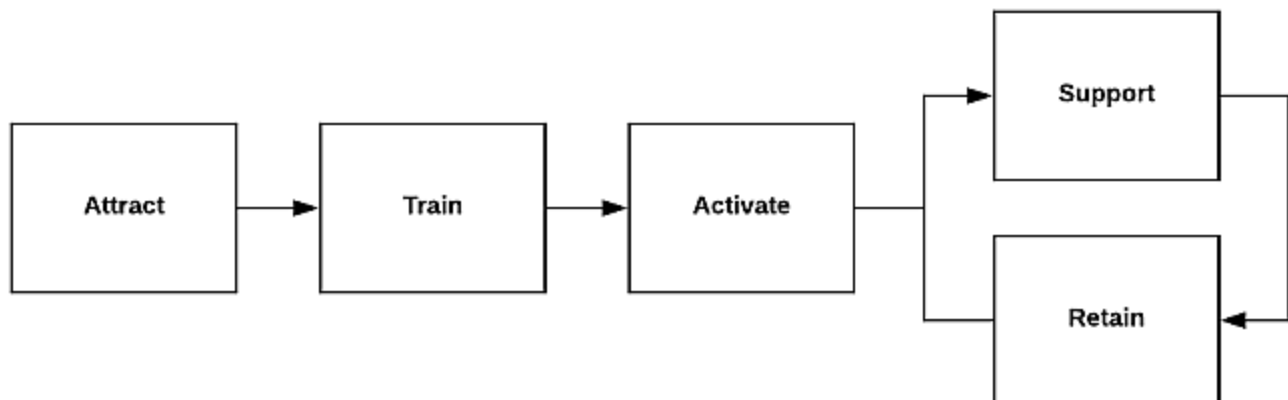
One of the most difficult tasks in developing and sustaining an effective coaching program is recruiting and retaining a sufficient number of coaches for your needs.

A five-step approach to managing this challenge is summarized below. It involves:

- **Attracting** individuals to coaching and encouraging them to become involved.
- **Training** these individuals.
- **Activating** these individuals as independent/established coaches.
- **Supporting** these coaches.
- **Retaining** these coaches on a long-term basis.

This approach to managing coaching development is represented in the diagram below: -

### **A diagrammatic approach to managing coaching development**



## STEP 1: IDENTIFY / ATTRACT

This first step involves finding suitable people to become your centre coaches. Some useful tips are:

- **Be proactive** – Coaches or potential coaches will rarely appear magically to offer their coaching services to you. You need to go out and actively recruit them!
- **Approach suitable people** – Look for people within your centre, including ex-athletes who you think may make a good coach...and ASK them if they would like to help out.
- **Advertise** – Let people know that you are looking to recruit coaches. Use newsletters, posters, handouts and your website if you have one.
- **Promote coach education** – Let people know that coaching courses and workshops are available for them to attend. The centre committee should pass on all information that is received about these events.
- **Promote Coaching** – Promote the work of any coaches that already assist at your centre. Share articles about them in your newsletter and via your social media channels, advertise successes that they have had.
- **Promote the Athletics Coach Accreditation Framework** – [The Athletics Coach Accreditation Framework](#) is designed to progressively introduce the coaching skills required to develop athletes from beginner to elite. In this way the coaching pathway mimics the athlete's pathway. The framework is designed to allow coaches of all levels to master their coaching, be it at the beginner level or the advanced level.
- **Show that you value coaching** – Take pride in your existing coaches (if you have any) and your coaching program. Look after your coaches. Resource the program properly. Make coaches and potential coaches feel valued. Showcase your coaches and recognize them.
- **Offer incentives for coaches** – What these incentives may be are up to you. It may be regular payment; it may be the payment of coaching-related expenses, courses and memberships; it may be the supply of coaching apparel.

**NOTE:** *Be prepared if someone accepts your offer to become a coach!*

## Coaching Information Kit

Develop a “Coaching Information Kit” that can be made available to prospective coaches (See Appendix 3 for a sample Coaching Information Kit cover letter).

The kit should include all details about the centre’s coaching program. Be up front about everything! Doing this looks organised and professional. It also helps to prevent later problems due to differing expectations.

Include in the kit:

- The centre coaching policy (See Appendix 1)
- A coaches job description (See Appendix 4)
- A code of conduct
- Coach education information

## STEP 2: Train

Despite recognizing that much learning occurs informally through experience, Little Athletics NSW highly recommends that all coaches gain formal accreditation.

The centre committee should have a procedure in place for encouraging and/or assisting all potential coaches to attend a recognised coaching course and gain formal accreditation.

The benefits for the coach include:

- Increased confidence and competence in coaching ability.
- An ongoing progressive improvement of knowledge and expertise.
- An improved awareness of safety issues.
- Improved communication skills.
- Improved enjoyment of the sport for both the individual and the athletes they work with.
- Increased status for the coach.

## **STEP 3: ACTIVATE**

Newly-qualified coaches often need good support to get them started and “off on the right foot”. A centre committee should be prepared to nurture a new coach.

### **Don't “throw a new coach into the deep end”**

It is important that a new coach begins coaching at a level at which they feel comfortable. Don't expect a recently-qualified coach to have suddenly gained “super-human” powers following a 1-day coaching course. Don't overwhelm them. Early experiences may make or break a coach.

A common problem for new coaches is to have to deal with too many athletes. Limit the numbers that they have to cope with.

A mentor system, where a new coach works with a more experienced coach, may be an idea worth considering.

### **Don't leave a new coach “on ice”**

Some individuals achieve coaching qualifications but never begin coaching! They may be too nervous; they may want to “read up just that little bit more” before starting to coach; no one may ask them!

It is important that a coach who has recently completed a course begins regularly coaching. This will harness their enthusiasm and maintain the natural momentum that occurs in the process.

One idea that may work if your centre has an existing coaching program is to conduct an induction/orientation of the coach. Ideally, this would be conducted by the Centre Coaching Coordinator. The induction should take place as soon as possible after the new coach's appointment. Such an induction may include:

- Discussion and clarification of the Centre Coaching Policy, Coach Job Description, and Coach Code of Conduct.
- Ensuring the new coach understands the Centre's expectations of them.
- A discussion of safety issues.
- A tour of facilities including the equipment shed.
- Introduction to the other centre coaches.
- Introduction to the committee members.
- Observing the other coaches in action.
- An outlining of communication avenues, how to raise issues, complaints, etc.
- An opportunity for the new coach to ask questions.

## **STEP 4: SUPPORT**

A Centre should encourage and assist their coaches to improve their knowledge, skills and qualifications on an ongoing basis.

Ideas by which a centre could provide support to its coaches may include:

- Providing support for them to achieve higher coaching levels
- Sending them to workshops and seminars conducted by various organizations
- Assisting them to attend coaching conferences

## **STEP 5: RETAIN**

Once you have "activated" a qualified coach at your Centre, the next task of the committee is to retain this coach's services over the long term. Below are some issues of which Centre committees should be aware when attempting to retain coaches:

### **Centre/Coach Communication:**

Keep your coaches up-to-date with things. Keep the communication lines open. Regularly check to see how the coaching program is going. Show that you respect their knowledge by asking their opinion about relevant issues. Make sure that you give them a say.



## Coaching Conditions:

Make sure that your coaches have sufficient equipment and facilities to conduct a good program. Make sure that your centre is looking after its coaches.

## Payment of Coaches:

Your centre will need a firm policy about whether or not it [pays its coaches a fee](#) for their services.

## Recognition of Coaches:

Don't take your coaches for granted. Make them feel valued. Some ideas about how to recognize your coaches include:

- A personal thank you
- A thank you card
- A certificate of appreciation
- Present an award to your coaches on presentation night
- Arrange a media article that recognises their efforts
- Publish an article about coaches in the centre newsletter or social media
- Buy your coaches centre or apparel
- Nominate your coaches for awards
- Ask your coaches for contributions to your centre newsletter
- [Pay or reimburse](#) your coaches
- Consult your coaches about what equipment they need
- Ask for your coaches opinions about relevant matters

## ORGANISING CENTRE COACHING

Below is a comparison of three coaching organisation models. One, or a combination, of them may be suitable for your centre to adopt.

<b>MODEL</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>
<b>Traditional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used by a number of Centres.</li> <li>• Coaches work independently of each other.</li> <li>• Coaches may coach on different days/times.</li> <li>• Coaches may specialise in different events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individualised coaching.</li> <li>• Flexible therefore easier to attract coaches.</li> <li>• Easy to organise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May encourage early athlete specialization.</li> <li>• Friction/competition between coaches?</li> <li>• Disjointed / inconsistent approach to coaching?</li> </ul>
<b>Circuit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A coach on each event – groups rotate</li> <li>• Suits a Centre with multiple coaches available at the same time and willing to work together.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures a multiple event approach.</li> <li>• Copes with large numbers.</li> <li>• Athletes can be kept in age or ability groups.</li> <li>• Suits novice coaches.</li> <li>• “Team” approach.</li> <li>• Children from whole family can attend</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs multiple coaches available at the same time and be willing to work together.</li> <li>• “Blanket” approach.</li> <li>• May not suit athletes as they become older/more advanced.</li> <li>• May not attract highly qualified coaches.</li> </ul>

## **Developmental**

- Coaches have specified roles. Each coach is responsible for a specific age group/developmental stage. Athletes are promoted to a new coach as they get older/develop.
- Based on other sports e.g. Swimming lessons
- Developmental approach.
- Unified, consistent, “team” approach.
- Coaches need not necessarily be available on the same day or the same time.
- Requires a lot of organisation and multiple loyal, cooperative, skilled coaches.
- Difficult to organise if traditional model is already in place.

## **GETTING THE ATHLETES THERE**

Develop a coaching information sheet / brochure / kit for athletes interested in being coached. This can be available in hard copy to hand to the enquiring athletes and parents, published in newsletters, and also posted on your Centre website, if one exists.

Ideas of what to include are:

- The Centre’s coaching policy, including its philosophy
- Times / days on which coaching is held
- How the coaching program is structured
- Information about the coaches
- Procedures for involvement. E.g. Is there a booking system?
- General content of the sessions
- Expectations of the athletes and parents involved
- Is there a cost for involvement?
- The correct athlete / coach etiquette
- A medical form?
- A contact for further enquiries.

## APPENDIX 1 – SAMPLE CENTRE COACHING POLICY

### Introduction:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that athletes at our Centre are provided with a quality coaching program that assists them to develop their skills and have fun at Little Athletics.

Our Centre believes that providing a well-organised coaching program for our athletes is of utmost importance. This policy provides the committee's stance on a number of coaching-related issues.

### Aim:

We aim to provide a coaching program for our members that is:

- Well-organised.
- Relevant to the age, experience and developmental stage of the athletes.
- Accessible
- Sustainable

### Philosophy:

Our Centre believes that:

- All young athletes should be encouraged to enjoy their training and have fun, while striving to achieve personal improvement.
- A multi-event, broad-based, all-round training approach that promotes sustained long-term development should be emphasized.
- Early specialization should be avoided.

### Coaches Qualifications:

Our centre believes that our members should have access to qualified coaching. Therefore:

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1. All of our lead coaches must be accredited and current financial members of Athletics Australia.
2. All coaches who assist with coaching at our centre must have at least attended an Introduction to Coaching (ITC) course.

## **Benefits to Coaches:**

Our centre is committed to supporting the development of our coaches. Therefore:

1. The centre committee will consider funding coaching accreditation for those coaches who commit to coach at the centre.
2. The centre will pay the cost of a coach's Athletics Australia membership, which includes professional indemnity insurance for that season.
3. The centre may also financially support a coach's attendance at further coaching workshops and courses.
4. The centre will provide all equipment necessary for training.

## **Cost to Participants:**

Our centre believes that athletes and parents should value the service provided by the centre's coaches. We also recognize that that a quality coaching program requires some kind of funding. Therefore:

1. Athletes attending the centre coaching sessions will be required to pay a nominal fee, approved by the committee.
2. The fee will be paid to the Centre, and not to the individual coaches.
3. The coaching fees collected will be put directly back into the coaching program.

## **APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION – CENTRE COACHING COORDINATOR**

### **GENERAL**

#### **Job Title:**

Coaching Coordinator

### **RESPONSIBILITY**

To organise, oversee and drive the Centre coaching program.

### **REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS**

#### **Reports to:**

Centre Committee

### **DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Centre Coaching Coordinator shall:

1. Be a member of the Centre committee.
2. Provide a coaching report at each Centre Committee meeting.
3. Organise the Centre coaching schedule.
4. Coordinate the recruitment of coaches to the Centre.
5. Coordinate the promotion of coaching within the Centre.
6. Monitor, support and regularly liaise with the Centre coaches.
7. Oversee the professional development of Centre coaches. Make coaches aware of development opportunities.
8. Monitor the amount and condition of coaching equipment and recommend further purchases as required.
9. Coordinate coaching-related contributions to the Centre's regular newsletter.
10. Promote Association information relating to coaching camps / clinics, etc.



## PREFERRED CRITERIA:

1. The ability to communicate effectively with both adults and children.
2. The ability to work closely with others in a team environment.
3. Sound organizational, management and leadership skills.
4. Enthusiastic, self-motivated and innovative.
5. Coaching accreditation.



## **APPENDIX 3: SAMPLE COACHING INFORMATION KIT COVER LETTER/EMAIL**

Thank you for your enquiry about becoming a coach at our Little Athletics Centre!

Our aim is to continue to grow and develop our Centre's coaching program. To do this we need to continue to recruit and develop coaches.

Enclosed/attached you will find:

1. A Coaches job description / expectations of the coach
2. Our Centre Coaching Policy
3. Our Coaches Code of Conduct
4. Coaching course information

If you are interested in becoming a coach, the committee will consider providing some financial support in recognition of your efforts.

If you would like to know more you can:

1. Speak with one of our centre coaches (easily identified in their "Centre Coach" polo shirts!)
2. Contact the Centre Coaching Coordinator in person, by phone or by email.
3. Fill in the form attached and return it in person to the Centre Coaching Coordinator or post it to:

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We hope that you will choose to join our team!



## **APPENDIX 4: SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION – CENTRE COACH**

### **GENERAL**

#### **Job Title:**

Centre Coach

### **RESPONSIBILITY**

To provide coaching at the Centre.

### **REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS**

#### **Reports to:**

Centre Coaching Coordinator

Centre Committee

### **DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

A Centre Coach shall:

1. Plan and conduct coaching sessions on behalf of the Centre.
2. Where possible, attend competitions to assist and support the athletes and parents.
3. Attend a formal induction prior to beginning coaching.
4. Attend an annual coaching team meeting, chaired by the Centre Coaching Coordinator.
5. Abide by the Centre's Coaching Code of Conduct.
6. Be committed, enthusiastic, punctual and reliable.
7. Be a positive role model.

## **PREREQUISITES:**

1. A minimum Level 1 Community coach accreditation required to lead activities. Attendance at an Introduction to Coaching Course the minimum requirement to assist with activities..
2. Posses a current relevant Working With Children Check.

## **PREFERRED CRITERIA:**

1. The ability to communicate effectively with both adults and children.
2. The ability to work closely with others in a team environment.
3. Sound organizational, management and leadership skills.
4. Enthusiastic, self-motivated and innovative.
5. A current First Aid certificate.