What do partners see as the biggest challenges facing the sector over the next 5 years?

**FUNDING** including public and commercial sources. This includes concern about certainty and stability of funding.

“The common theme is that we don’t have enough money to do what we want to do.” (NSO)

**PARTICIPATION IN SPORT** including declining levels of participation and club membership, the importance of sport in preventative health, the role of sport in schools and the importance of child participation.

“Beyond sport for sport’s sake. Education benefits and health benefits – that broader context.” (NSO)

**SECTOR LEADERSHIP** including clarifying who bears the responsibility for promoting the value of sport to government and the wider community.

“ASC are the only body that can represent national sporting bodies as we try to get a better deal out of government.” (SDSR)

**HIGH PERFORMANCE** including excellence and winning medals, but also strengthening the pre-elite pathway from grassroots to elite sport.

“The pathway is critical - the National Institute Network (NIN) is important in converting those talented athletes into elite athletes, but it only works if the junior pathway is there. The critical time to impact is at that junior level, and that requires an holistic view.” (NSO)

**INNOVATION** especially in terms of adapting to new social trends in participation.

“Tackling the changing nature of participation in sport and the move away from structured, formal, club-based, association-based participation in sport.” (NSO)

**PARTNERSHIPS** including both within and cross-sector collaboration.

“It’s imperative that the sport, health and education sectors work together and collaborate.” (NSO)

**ACCESS TO SPORT** including venues and facilities, availability of volunteers, and the cost of participation.

“Providing access to good physical activity...good coaches who are knowledgeable in all sorts of backgrounds, specialised equipment and proper facilities. Access for a reasonable cost is really important.” (NSO)

**GOVERNANCE** including sports integrity, NSO governance reform and member protection.

“Integrity and the value of sport is increasingly under question, and needs to be addressed.” (NSO)
The ASC's greatest priority

The ASC's single greatest priority, according to sector partners, is **stabilising funding** for the sector (29% overall, 33% of NSOs). This is about helping NSOs achieve greater commercial sustainability, as well as securing a larger share of government funding.

“Government support is shrinking in real terms; it needs to be a priority for the ASC to unlock government support, or help us find alternative sources of support. The other [priorities] are important, but this is the first thing.” (NSO)

The sector continues to see **high performance (HP)** as one of the ASCs' greatest priorities (24%). This is described as the founding purpose of the ASC, and central to its ongoing responsibilities. SDSRs (50%) are even more likely to say this than Australia's Winning Edge (AWE) NSOs (24%).

“From inception that’s been its major goal. I wouldn’t like to see them focusing on general active health and community at the sacrifice of HP sport.” (NSO)

A significant proportion of the sector (16%) also perceives the ASCs' greatest priority to be **promoting the general value of sport**, both to other government, and to the Australian population. Some sector partners perceive the ASC to be the only body that can perform this function effectively, although many NSOs believe they can contribute to the message through their particular sport.

The **preventative health** and **sport in education** spaces are viewed as top priorities by about one-in-ten sector partners overall (9% and 13%, respectively), but the sector is more divided about the ASC’s role.

The main reason for this lack of consensus is the view that other government agencies (namely health and education) should take the lead in these priority areas. This is particularly true in the child development / physical literacy space. However, some sector partners question whether health / education can and will take responsibility for preventative health / physical literacy and wonder whether the ASC is the only organisation that can fill the vacuum.

What is not questioned is that the ASC does have some kind of role working with the health and education portfolios, under their lead, whether as a major or secondary actor. Some sector partners perceive greater cross-sector collaboration to be the single greatest priority facing the sport sector over the next five years.

“Child development should be parents' and schools' primary responsibility, as part of a broader curriculum around a child's personal development. I don't think addressing physical literacy in absence of all other aspects of a child's life is feasible.” (NSO)

Encouraging sport participation among specific sub-sections of the population (such as women and girls, cultural and linguistic minorities, or regional and remote populations) is seen to be the primary responsibility of state and local governments working in conjunction with sports – organisations that are ‘closer to the coalface’. Here the ASC is seen to have major or secondary, but non-leadership role, by the majority of sector partners (NSOs for people with a disability).

“The value of sport is best represented collectively by the ASC; Australian sports individually can never do that.” (NSO)

**“They focus on HP, we focus on participation, healthy active communities are the responsibility of other groups – or create another arm of the ASC that is dedicated to that and not competing with HP” (SDSR)**

“We need to encourage people to participate in physical activity and sport. And if the ASC doesn’t do it, my question is: who is going to do it?” (NSO)

“Specific jurisdictions probably have a better idea of their specific conditions and needs, while the ASC’s knowledge is more broad and general.” (SIS/SAS)
Where can the ASC add the most value?

1. The greatest value-adding activity that the ASC can do is continuing to provide strategic services to build NSO capacity and capability (43% overall, especially AWE NSOs and SIS/SAS).

2. Partnering with federal and state Departments of Education and Health is mentioned by 18% overall, and particularly SDSRs, as top value-add.

3. Advocacy of sport to other governments is third (16% overall), and especially among SIS/SAS.

“NSO strength is critical for Australian sport. They need the support and the advice that the ASC can give them. Their strength and capability needs to be built. And if they get that right, that will help all jurisdictions and sports.” (NSO)

“The whole sport system is a joint enterprise including all levels of governments, NSOs etc. If we think in narrow terms, it doesn’t work. Partnerships are critical.” (SDSR)

“The value of sport and investment in it by government is not understood well enough. They need to be the advocate, not the band aid.” (SIS/SAS)

Most sector partners think the ASC should be doing more of most things, or at least maintaining current levels of activity.

“NSO strength is critical for Australian sport. They need the support and the advice that the ASC can give them. Their strength and capability needs to be built. And if they get that right, that will help all jurisdictions and sports.” (SDSR)

“The opportunity is to grow sport in schools. It puts sport in a stronger position for investment when it is more than just ‘sport’, but is part of education and health outcomes - and we need to sell that more.” (NSO)

“There’s no else doing it, and no else effectively capable of doing it. Others have vested interests, and they are the only body to effectively represent the interests of sport per se. They don’t do it as well as they should.” (NSO)
Where do NSOs need the most support?

On average, NSOs give themselves:

**B+** Managing organisational finances  
- Complying with governance principles  
- Dealing with integrity issues

**B** Whole-of-sport strategic plan  
- Using evidence to inform strategy

**B-** Recruiting, retaining, educating and supporting coaches

**C+** Supporting innovation  
- Recruiting, retaining, educating and supporting officials  
- Digital connection

**C** Having a strategic plan for developing commercial sustainability

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**NSOs self-rated performance over the last 12 months**

- A: Managing organisational finances
- B: Adhering to NSO Sport Governance Principles
- C: Dealing with integrity issues in your sport
- D: Having a whole-of-sport strategic plan that is aligned across states
- E: Using evidence to inform planning and strategy
- F: Recruiting, retaining, educating and supporting coaches
- G: Creating an environment and culture that encourages innovation
- H: Ensuring people within your sport are digitally connected
- I: Recruiting, retaining, educating and supporting officials
- J: Developing commercial sustainability through a strategic plan
What the sector wants from the ASC over the next 5 years

Sector partners were asked to describe, in one or two words only, what they are most looking for from the ASC. A total of 168 different words were given, with leadership, collaboration, support, advocacy, partnership, stability and consistency among the most recurrent. Comparing word clouds across different sub-groups also suggests subtle differences in expectations and hopes.

AWE NSOs

Non-AWE NSOs

SIS/SAS

SDSRs

“We would love to work in partnership with the ASC/AIS just like we do with sports - with shared investment, objectives and roles - and with joint celebration of success.” (SIS/SAS)