



Sport for Life

Volleyball British Columbia

Youth Club Competition Review

Final Report

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Version **Sep 12, 2025**

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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Project Description and Deliverables

Volleyball BC (VBC), the governing body for volleyball in British Columbia, has been experiencing very rapid growth in registrations and anticipates significant challenges in providing ongoing high-quality, province-wide club competition opportunities for youth aged 12 to 18 ('Train to Train' and 'Learn to Compete' phases of Long Term Athlete Development). Sport for Life (S4L), a leader in quality sport and physical literacy development, was contracted by Volleyball BC to lead a comprehensive review of the structures and systems of youth club indoor volleyball in British Columbia to provide recommendations for changes and adjustments to VBC's competition structure and a plan for implementation of structural and strategic/systemic changes that minimizes disruption during the transition.

The VBC Competition Review followed a detailed work plan which included an environmental scan and literature review, membership engagement planning, data gathering and analysis, targeted interviews and focus groups, development of recommendations and an implementation plan, and provision of VBC staff training. A survey was developed and distributed to VBC members, generating over 1,800 responses. Based on themes gathered from survey responses, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews were conducted with over 75 people (5 regions, athletes, coaches, referees, facility owners, and stakeholders (BC School Sports, Indigenous Sport Physical Activity and Recreation Council (ISPARC), and Volleyball Canada) to explore specific themes and topics. Sport for Life presented its recommendations to VBC staff, the Working Group, and Regional Development Coordinators, and this Final Report will be the basis of discussions with Volleyball BC toward the implementation of recommendations and the development of VBC-specific resources and training needed to support the launch of the new VBC competition structure.

1.2 Recommendations

Competitions run by Volleyball BC are generally well received by its membership but the organization is undertaking a strategic review and realignment of its competition structure in light of expected growth and its impact on delivery capacity, and to better serve athletes, clubs, and communities across the province. The review noted an openness by members to consider alternative competition pathways and formats, and a concern about travel required to attend competitions (cost, time, distance). The proposed changes are intended to emphasize meaningful competition, increase accessibility, respect athlete development, and lead to long-term sustainability. The recommendations are structured around five key pillars: competition structure & format, season scheduling, system leadership, stakeholder support, and innovation.

1. Competition Structure & Event Formats

- Two Distinct Competition Streams: ** Note: Care should be taken in the naming of these Streams*

- *Stream 1*: Focused on development, fun, and accessible competition culminating in Provincial Championships.
- *Stream 2*: Performance-focused, culminating in Provincials and Nationals thereafter.
- Tiered Competitions: Events will be tiered by skill and region to ensure meaningful matchups and reduce travel burdens.
- Event Formats:
 - *One-day events*: Prioritized for regional play and local teams.
 - *Two-day events*: Targeted for Super Series and travel-heavy tournaments.
- House League System: A province-wide inter-club house league system will be developed, featuring local festivals and culminating in a “Festival of House Leagues.”

2. Season Scheduling

- Maintain Season Length: Preserve the current season length while adjusting season start dates, and training to competition ratios in accordance with athlete development considerations (T2T and L2C) as needed to better support athlete health and well-being.
- Ranking Tournaments in February: Shift rankings later in the season to allow for early-season team development.
- Consider hosting separate Provincial Championships for each stream if demand exceeds event hosting capacity, and to provide more preparation time for teams attending Nationals
- Encourage clubs to consider alternate models for seasonal plans and flexible event entry based on commitment and ability

3. System Leadership & Operations

- Shift from Delivery to Support: VBC to focus on mentorship, sanctioning, and club capacity-building rather than directly delivering most events.
- Support clubs to host more events through templates, signage kits, and mentorship from VBC staff.
- Regional Development Coordinators: Train and deploy RDCs to grow club capacity, support coach recruitment/training, build enhanced partnerships and increase facility access.
- Travel Support: Introduce a ‘travel subsidy’ system to reduce financial barriers to competition.

4. Stakeholder Development & Engagement

- Athletes: Introduce off-court supports (e.g., mental performance, downtime management).
- Coaches: Develop a coach pathway strategy focused on increasing female coaches and leveraging new partners (e.g., RBC, Jumpstart).

- Referees: Improve referee training, compensation, and safety (particularly for new and/or young referees). Align officiating standards with Long-Term Development (LTD) principles.
- Parents: Educate parents about LTD and appropriate behavior through onboarding resources, expectations contracts and intake videos (in partnership with Volleyball Canada).
- Education & Partnerships:
 - Continued LTD training for clubs and coaches, given the sensitivities of the Train to Train and Learn to Compete stages (growth periods, fatigue, physical demands of training and competition, risk of injury, social emotional needs, technical needs, tactical development).
 - Stronger partnerships with BCRPA, BC School Sports, and third-party providers to expand scope and access to facilities.

5. Innovation & Future Growth

- Pilot local league-based competition for Nationals-bound teams, and a “JV-style” league for U18/19s and first-year university athletes lacking play time.
- Explore creating a West Coast women’s pro league to capitalize on growing interest in women’s professional sport.
- Sanction and engage third party providers to expand facility access, events and programming in alignment with VBC values and programs.

These recommendations aim to demonstrate VBC’s system leadership by emphasizing local access, capacity building, athlete-centered design, and stakeholder engagement. Volleyball BC is then well-positioned to create a more inclusive, sustainable, and developmentally appropriate volleyball ecosystem that serves participants at all levels.

1.3 Continue To Do

The existing VBC club competition system is generally well-regarded by members, particularly the Provincial Championships and large-scale events. The following are areas where VBC programs and activities are well-received and should continue to be delivered. Survey responses indicated high satisfaction with the following aspects of competition:

- **Fostering a Competitive and Exciting Atmosphere**
Athletes and coaches consistently praised the level of competition and energy at VBC tournaments, particularly at Provincials and Super Series events.
- **Supporting Player Development**
VBC competitions are seen as valuable platforms for athletes to improve their technical skills, gain experience, and develop confidence through gameplay.
- **Providing Organized and Professionally-Run Events**
Feedback highlighted the strong coordination and delivery of tournaments. The structure and overall management of events were seen as key strengths of the current model.
- **Encouraging Team and Community Building**
Many participants appreciated the opportunities for bonding, camaraderie, and social connection that competitions foster among teammates and clubs.

Maintaining and strengthening areas of success will be essential as VBC evolves its competition model. These elements contribute to a positive experience and are core to the retention of athletes, coaches, and referees in the sport.

2.0 Competition Review - Background and Process

These definitions are presented to ensure that readers and implementers of this report have a common understanding of key terms related to sport competition..

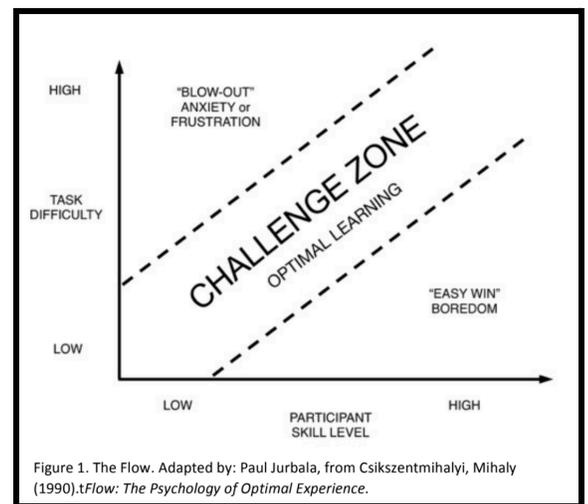
Competition Review is the analysis of competition experience, structure, rules, and calendar to determine whether they support the athlete development pathway outlined in the Long-Term Development framework.

Competition Restructuring is the process of selectively changing the competition experience, structure, rules, and calendar to address the issues and optimize the role of competition in serving athlete development. A primary goal of review and restructuring is to make competitions more meaningful for athletes.

Meaningful competition provides values-based competition experiences that support learning, reinforce the development of stage-specific skills and abilities, and match competitors so results are relatively close and unpredictable (no blow-outs).

2.1 Meaningful Competition

- **Meaningful Competition is aligned with shared and agreed-upon values.** Values-based sport is the foundation of meaningful competition. Culture, belonging, and safety are embedded and intentional.
- **Meaningful Competition provides experiences that support learning for competitors.** It supports a “we can get better” attitude that encourages athletes to improve during and after the event.
- **Meaningful competitions are structured to reinforce the development of LTD stage-specific skills and abilities. The expected level of performance matches the competitor's skill level.** Competitors are able to perform and test the skills they have learned and practised in the training environment.
- **Meaningful competitions** lead to relatively close and unpredictable results. Competitors are matched with others of a similar level of ability and challenged to be the best they can be at that moment in time. They believe they have a chance for success and remain fully engaged throughout the competition.
- **Meaningful competition is holistically athlete-centred, coach-led, and system-supported.** Competition contributes to the positive holistic development of all athletes. Coaches are responsible for maximizing the value of the competition by intentionally selecting competitions and setting appropriate competition goals matched to the stage and ability of the athlete. The sport system, including sport organizations, event organizers, coaches, and officials, is responsible for defining competition formats, rules, schedules, and eligibility to support the objectives of meaningful competition.



2.2 Competition Review - Process and Engagement

Volleyball BC is utilizing the expertise of Sport for Life, complemented by stakeholder engagement and feedback, to compile and assess recommended changes to the provincial youth club competition system and structure. The process has included an environmental scan of VBC and other volleyball systems across the country and internationally, staff/working committee interviews, stakeholder-specific focus group meetings, a membership survey, and subsequent analysis.

2.3 Step-by-Step Process (work plan)

The process and engagement of the VBC Competition Review includes the following components.

1. Formation of the S4L and VBC Staff Committee
2. Validation of the project plan
3. Environmental scan of club volleyball in British Columbia and other jurisdictions
4. Competition Review Survey 1
5. Recommendations based on Survey 1
6. Gap analysis and targeted consultations (focus groups, interviews with stakeholders)
7. Refinement of short-term and long-term recommendations
8. Presentation of recommendations to the VBC Working Group
9. Implementation plan (short-term)
10. Additional surveys or follow-up interviews as needed
11. Recommended action items and plans for long-term implementation

2.4 Volleyball BC Committees/Stakeholders

The VBC Competition Review process involves multiple committees and stakeholders, each playing a specific role in supporting and guiding the project.

VBC Staff Committee

This VBC Staff Committee is responsible for providing valuable background information and context, collaborating closely with Sport for Life (S4L) staff throughout the review process, and presenting the VBC Competition Review to other committees. Their efforts focus on ensuring alignment and communication between all involved parties.

VBC Working Group

The VBC Working Group is composed of representatives of the VBC Board, referees, coaches, and indoor volleyball clubs across the province. This committee acts as a key advisory body for this process, providing input and guidance to ensure the competition model aligns with the needs of its constituents.

Members and Stakeholders (5 provincial regions)

Feedback from members (athletes, coaches, referees, parents) and stakeholders (Volleyball Canada, other PTSOs) was gathered through surveys, interviews, and focus groups to ensure that diverse perspectives were considered in shaping the future of VBC competitions.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors was kept informed about the competition review process and its outcomes to maintain oversight at the organizational level.

Partners (Focus Group)

Partners including ISPARC and BC School Sports play a key role in supporting volleyball participation among underrepresented groups and aligning VBC's competition model with broader community engagement goals. Focus group meetings provided valuable information about inclusive sport development, potential funding and facility opportunities, and connections to community-based programs to help ensure that the competition structure is accessible to diverse populations.

Facility Owners (Focus Group)

Facility owners and operators - including the Richmond Olympic Oval, Tradex, schools, post secondary institutions and recreation centers - operate venues where VBC competitions take place. Focus groups provided critical input on facility and capacity limitations, which directly impact the feasibility of proposed competition model changes. Their involvement ensures that logistical challenges are addressed early and on a continuing basis.

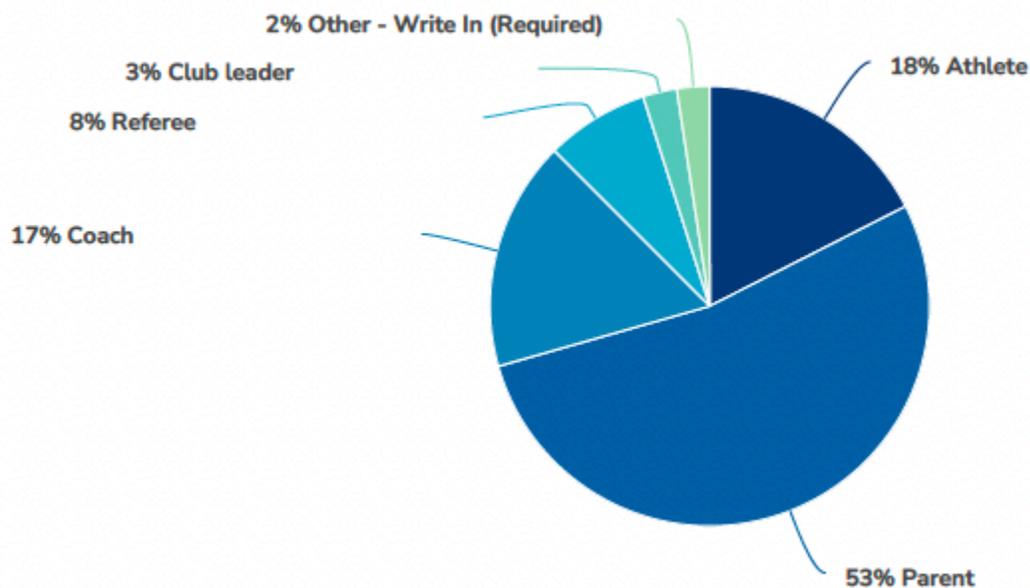
2.5 Community Engagement

Sport for Life met with VBC staff to identify relevant background documents and understand the context in which the competition review will take place. A working group was formed to review and validate the project work plan, provide ongoing advice, and map out timelines and plans ahead. This group created an Engagement Plan to identify key themes and issues for inquiry and compiled a list of stakeholders to receive an initial survey (Survey 1) to gather feedback and insights from the VBC community. The survey was created, tested, and made available to the public in February 2025.

Survey Distribution:

- **Recipients:**
The survey targeted athletes, parents, coaches, club leaders, and referees, ensuring that a wide range of perspectives were captured.
- **Circulation Channels:**
 - The survey was promoted through the VBC website and VBC events during February 2025.
 - To maximize visibility, posters with QR codes were displayed at tournaments. This approach significantly boosted exposure and led to a high response rate.

1,800 survey responses were received, of which 613 were fully completed and 1,182 were partially completed. Further information about the survey is presented in subsequent sections of this report.



Consultation with the VBC Working Group

The VBC Working Group was engaged throughout the survey development process to provide expert input and ensure that critical aspects of BC competition were addressed.

Focus Groups

To build on the findings further, specific focus groups and targeted sessions involving over 75 individuals from the 5 regions (club leaders, coaches, athletes, referees, facility operators, and stakeholders) were coordinated to ensure that all voices are represented, providing a comprehensive understanding of the community's perspectives and needs.

By combining broad survey distribution with targeted consultations and focus groups, VBC and Sport for Life aimed to gather valuable input to create an inclusive and comprehensive competition review approach.

2.6 Volleyball BC Competition Structure

The current competition structure of Volleyball BC is designed to support athlete development across various stages of Long-Term Development (LTD). Key features of the existing environment include:

- **Tournament volume:**

Volleyball BC delivers more than 150 sanctioned indoor youth events each season across multiple age groups (U12–U18). These events engage thousands of athletes and serve as the foundation for skill development, meaningful competition, and community engagement throughout the province.
- **Tournament formats:**
 - **One-Day tournament format**

Most early-season and younger age group competitions follow a one-day format. These events are valued for their cost-efficiency and reduced travel burden. They typically include round-robin play and modified playoff structures to ensure all teams participate meaningfully.
 - **Two-Day Super Series Events**

Super Series tournaments are a staple of the competitive season for older and more experienced teams. These events provide extended match play, a more structured schedule, and higher competitive intensity. They are used for seeding and ranking purposes.
 - **Provincial Championships**

The Volleyball BC Provincial Championships is the culminating event of the season, bringing together teams from all regions to compete over multiple days. The Championships are tiered by skill level and age group to ensure competitive balance and create a memorable experience for all athletes.

- **Competition formats:**
 - **Triple ball for younger age groups (U13/U14):**
Volleyball BC implements Triple Ball for younger age divisions to promote longer rallies, more touches, and an improved learning environment. This format is aligned with LTD principles and is known to improve skill development and game understanding.
 - **Fair Play Guidelines:**
Younger age categories often include fair play policies that encourage equitable participation and balanced court time, supporting well-rounded athlete development and long-term engagement.
 - **6v6 Traditional Format (U14-U18):**
As athletes progress, tournaments transition to traditional volleyball rules, following Volleyball Canada (VC) regulations. The standard 6v6 format is used from U14 through U18, emphasizing competitive play, tactical development, and advanced skill refinement.

- **Performance Rankings**
 - **Seeding process:**
Volleyball BC uses a performance-based seeding system that tracks results from regular season events to guide tournament placements. This helps maintain balanced competition and enables appropriate tiering throughout the season.
 - **Ranking and tiering divisions:**
Teams are assigned to different competition tiers based on performance data, ensuring meaningful competition for all levels. Promotion and relegation between tiers takes place throughout the season to reflect progression or development needs.

- **Community and inclusivity:**
Volleyball BC fosters a respectful and inclusive competition environment. Emphasis is placed on sportsmanship, accessibility, and community building. VBC supports emerging clubs, rural regions, and lower-ranked teams with access to competitions and developmental opportunities.

- **Developmental Pathways:**
VBC events are aligned with Long-Term Development principles and aim to nurture both athletic performance and personal growth. The competition structure prioritizes gradual skill acquisition, age-appropriate challenges, and opportunities for social-emotional development.

2.7 Environmental Scan

A scan of the sport landscape was conducted to understand relevant practices from other provincial sport organizations. This scan focused on Soccer BC, BC Hockey, Tennis BC, and Basketball BC, sports that share similar participation bases and developmental frameworks.

Key findings from the environmental scan of other sports and formats are below:

- **Development Pathways and Competition Structure**
 - Tiered League Systems:
 - All four sports implement tiered league or division structures to support athlete development and ensure competition level is matched to ability. Soccer BC and Basketball BC have robust A, B, and C tiers; BC Hockey uses Recreational, Rep, and Academy pathways; and Tennis BC offers ranking-based tournament tiers.
 - Modified Formats for Younger Athletes:
 - Soccer BC uses small-sided games (e.g., 4v4, 7v7) for U6–U12 to increase touches and decision-making.
 - Basketball BC encourages smaller court setups and lower hoops for younger players.
 - BC Hockey uses half-ice hockey at younger ages to promote puck handling and game awareness.
 - Tennis BC utilizes progressive equipment (smaller courts, slower balls) in its U10 “Progressive Tennis” model to build fundamentals.
 - "No Standings, No Scores" Philosophy in Early Ages:
 - Soccer BC, Tennis BC, and BC Hockey do not emphasize results in younger divisions, focusing instead on fun, learning, and inclusion.
- **High-Performance Programs and Athlete Development**
 - Clear Talent Pathways:
 - Soccer BC offers B.C. Soccer Premier League (BCSPL) for elite players and aligns with national team scouting.
 - BC Hockey has tiered development programs leading to Junior and collegiate levels.
 - Tennis BC supports provincial athlete development squads and links with Tennis Canada’s national programs.
 - Basketball BC operates Regional Training Centres and the Centre for Performance program for high-potential athletes, while several private academies exist.
 - Multi-Sport encouragement:
 - All four sports promote multi-sport participation in early stages to prevent burnout and encourage holistic development.
 - Age-appropriate Training Guidelines:

- Each sport seeks to align structure with Long-Term Development principles, emphasizing stage-appropriate training loads, rest periods, and competition volumes.
- **Competition Delivery and Scheduling**
 - Regionalized Competition Models:
 - Soccer BC and BC Hockey operate regional leagues before advancing to provincial tournaments.
 - Basketball BC offers regional club play with centralized provincial championships.
 - Tennis BC hosts both regional circuits and province-wide events based on ranking.
 - Event-Based and League-Based Models:
 - Basketball BC and Soccer BC use a hybrid model of weekend tournaments and league play.
 - BC Hockey leans more on league play, with tournaments concentrated at key seasonal points.
 - Tennis BC structures events around age and skill level, offering year-round opportunities.
 - Facility Partnerships:
 - Tennis BC and Basketball BC leverage school gyms and community centres, often through partnerships.
 - BC Hockey works closely with municipalities to secure rink access.
 - All sports identify facility availability as a barrier to program growth.
- **Policies and Player Wellness**
 - Equal Playing Time Policies:
 - Soccer BC, BC Hockey, and Basketball BC implement equal playing time guidelines in younger age divisions.
 - Mandatory Coaching Certifications:
 - All four sports require NCCP-aligned coach education and certification, with additional modules for ethical conduct and athlete safety.
 - Rest & Recovery Protocols:
 - BC Hockey and Tennis BC include seasonal rest periods and workload management to reduce overuse injuries and athlete burnout.
 - Inclusion and Equity Initiatives:
 - All four organizations are taking steps to ensure sport is welcoming and accessible, particularly through financial aid programs and gender equity strategies.

The learnings from Soccer BC, BC Hockey, Tennis BC, and Basketball BC reinforce the importance of:

- Tiered competition structures based on skill and developmental stage
- Modified, age-appropriate formats for younger athletes
- Regionalized competition to reduce travel burdens (cost, distance, time)
- Strong alignment with Long-Term Development principles
- Enhanced support for coaching, facilities, and athlete well-being
- A balance between league and event-based competition models
- Continually striving to increase the rate of meaningful competition

These findings support and validate Volleyball BC's ongoing efforts to refine its competition structure and align with best practices across sport sectors in British Columbia.

3.0 Survey Results

3.1 Demographic and General Information

1,800 people responded to the Volleyball BC Competition survey 1. Of these survey results, 1,187 were partially completed and 613 were fully completed.

Preliminary analysis and observations informed the development of this report. See Appendix A.

The breakdown of primary roles for survey respondents is as follows:

- Parents: 53%
- Coaches: 17%
- Athletes: 18%
- Referees: 8%
- Club leaders: 3%
- Other: 2%

As seen below, the survey attracted responses representing a good range of experiences.

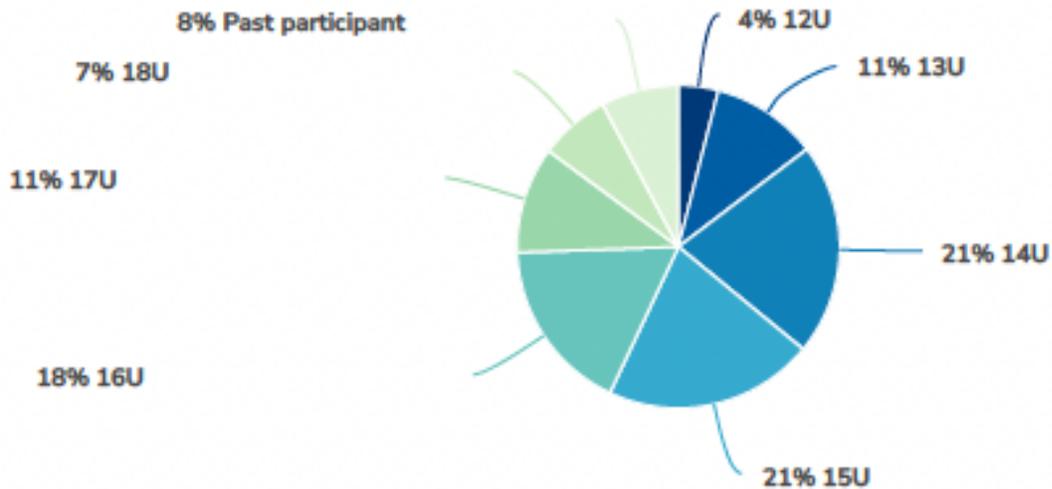
- Less than a year: 13%
- 1 -2 years: 21%
- 3 -5 years: 32%
- 6-10 years: 10%
- 10 - 20 years: 9%
- 20+ years 14%

The gender breakout of athletes (as reported by themselves or their parents) was as follows: 69.8% Girls, 23.0% Boys, and 7.1% Both.

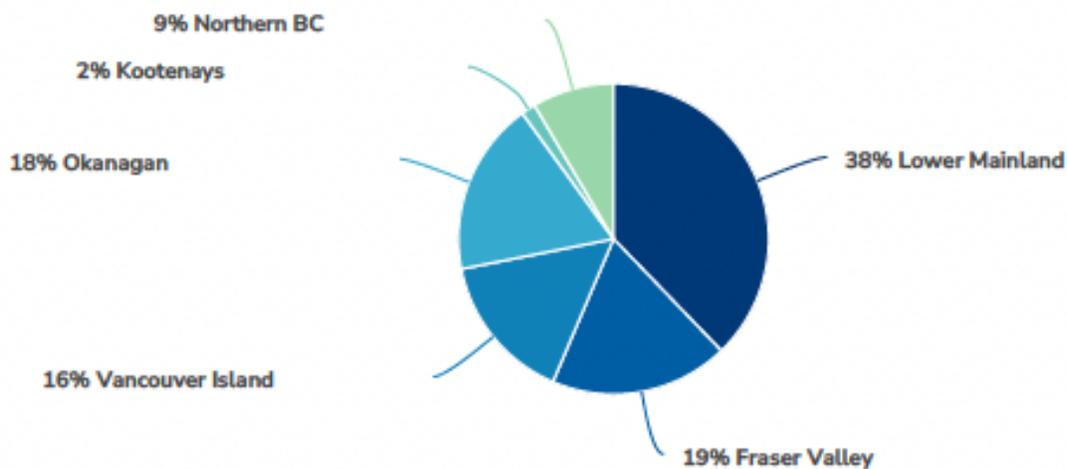
* Total of actual responses does not add to 100% as respondents may have indicated more than one role.

* Some feedback in the member survey related to areas is considered outside the scope of this competition review (e.g., the system of tryouts, coach certification).

The age groups represented were fairly evenly distributed, with most participants (59.9%) competing in the 14U-16U age groups.



Survey respondents were distributed across six regions of the province, reflecting a diversity of experience.



3.2 Events

Respondents shared that the types of VBC tournaments that are most enjoyed are:

- VBC tournaments (Super Series / Super Spike)
- Regional Championships
- Provincial Championship

3.2.a. Super Events and Regionals

61% of respondents rated their experience at Super Events (Super Spike / Super Series) as very good or excellent!

The experiences were described as overall positive and despite logistical concerns, many enjoyed the events and felt they were well-run. Several respondents highlighted that athletes enjoyed the camaraderie and team-building aspect of competitions.

There is a desire for more games or improved competition formats at these Super Series events and regional competitions. Some shared a desire for more consistent match play or better use of power pools and re-pooling. Others cited complex tournament formats and were at times confused about brackets, tiers, and rankings. Some noted frustration with late draw/schedule releases and last-minute venue changes. Despite the draw of these events, those Northern and Island teams observed the high costs to attend when factoring in travel, accommodation, and tournament fees and cited these as significant burdens.

Respondents expressed a desire for more timely information to better plan travel and accommodations. There were equity and fairness concerns where smaller or lower-level teams felt overlooked, and regional imbalances in matchups were noted.

3.2.b. Provincials

61% of respondents rated their experience at Provincials as very good or excellent!

Provincials were described as an overall positive experience with many highlighting the events as well-organized, fun, and exciting. Respondents described provincials as a great opportunity for team bonding and memories that can be meaningful for players. Events such as these are seen to encourage young athletes to love the sport. Both athletes and coaches value the opportunity to play teams from across BC and experience a large-scale competition.

Key challenges observed with Provincials high expenses due to Hotel costs, parking fees, and entry tickets. Also, repeated travel to lower mainland venues adds a financial burden to out-of-region teams.

Parents expressed frustration with entry fees after already paying high club costs. They also have a desire to watch matches without the additional burden of scorekeeping or lining. A lack of seating/viewing areas in some venues and confusing site navigation were also identified as sources of frustration. Last-minute venue changes and schedules being released too late (impacting travel/hotel planning) and games ending late into the evening, at 10–11 pm, were described as key challenges.

Tradex is widely appreciated for space, atmosphere, and parking, and drawbacks expressed include feeling loud, hot, and crowded, and lacking adequate ventilation and seating space. The Richmond Oval is praised for its professional feel and design, but respondents expressed Issues with expensive parking, limited food options, and venue access. There were repeated complaints about limited or expensive parking at both venues. Some also noted inaccessibility for spectators with mobility issues. Other venue drawbacks expressed include limited, unhealthy, or expensive food options and restrictions on outside food despite long days and athletes' needs.

In regard to refereeing, some noted inconsistent or inexperienced officiating, overworked referees, especially at peak times, and seemingly incorrect calls affecting critical games.

3.2.c. Hosting

Many clubs are willing and interested in hosting club competitions. Numerous clubs expressed interest in hosting VBC-sanctioned events, and several already host playdays or unsanctioned tournaments. Respondents expressed that hosting allows them to take pride in showcasing their region and supporting the broader volleyball community. Northern clubs were particularly enthusiastic but expressed concern that lower mainland teams rarely travel north. It was suggested that hosting can be a fundraising or community engagement opportunity.

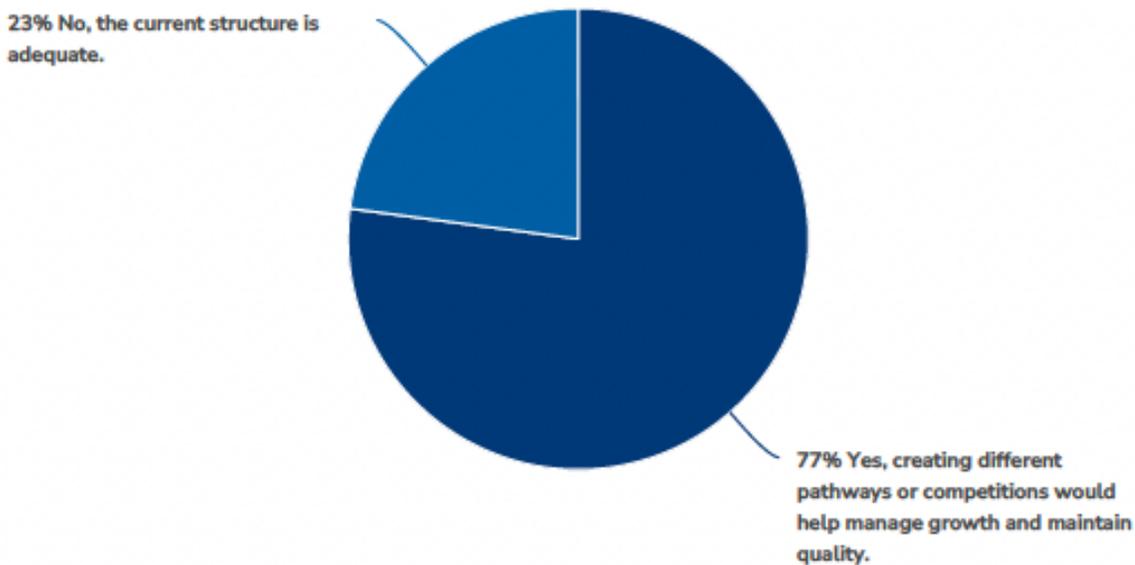
Other clubs expressed barriers to hosting, including a lack of consistent access to appropriate venues, citing that school gym rentals are costly, restricted on weekends, or unavailable during other sports seasons. Additional concerns are club capacity and volunteer burnout, as many clubs rely heavily on a small group of volunteers already stretched thin.

Some respondents shared that in order to host, they would need strong support and co-management from VBC on expectations, especially around scheduling, referees, draw management, and cost-sharing. Some noted that seasonal timing impacts the feasibility of hosting, and it would be more realistic if planned well in advance. While most clubs (57%) are organizing indoor tournaments, most respondents (80%) do not feel there is current or future facility development occurring in their regions that will benefit volleyball and provide playing space. This is an important consideration with respect to facilities and planning for any increase in events.

Most respondents (90%) feel that clubs could provide a good experience to teams as local hosts, and 58% of respondents shared that their club would be interested and able to host club competitions. Most respondents (61%) believe that VBC's current competition model meets the needs of athletes at their skill level (where 1- poor, 5- excellent)

3.2.d. Competition Pathways

77% of respondents believe that creating different pathways of competition would help manage growth and maintain quality.



Support for Tiered/Divisional Structures

- Strong support for expanding tiered divisions to match teams of similar skill and competitive goals
- Many referenced models from soccer, hockey, Ontario Volleyball, and USA Volleyball (e.g., Open, Premier, Club, AAA/AA/A)
- Tiering is seen as key to reducing blowouts and improving development, enjoyment, and retention

Promotion, Relegation, and Ranking Flexibility

- Support for promotion/relegation systems so teams can move up/down throughout the season based on performance
- Requests for more than 3 Super Series events to allow accurate and fair movement between tiers
- Concerns over current ranking tournaments heavily determining a team's season trajectory

Increased Access to Local and Lower-Tier Play

- Call for house leagues, developmental, or recreational tiers for less competitive or new teams, particularly in rural and northern regions
- League or regional formats reduce travel costs and increase local play opportunities.
- Frequent, shorter games are better suited for skill development at U12–U14.
- Emphasis on reducing costs and travel to keep more families and players engaged
- Tournament Formats Still Valued for Older Age Groups
- Higher-performance teams benefit from travel-based tournaments and playoff experience.
- Mixed models (league + tournament) allow for both development and competition.

Concern for Over-Expansion or Complexity

- Some cautioned against over-complicating the model with too many tiers or events
- Concern that adding more pathways without resources (facilities, refs, funding) could reduce quality or strain organizers

Equity and Inclusion

- Advocated for inclusive systems where non-elite athletes still have meaningful pathways to play
- Emphasis on LTAD principles, participation, and retention, especially for athletes who mature later or can't afford elite pathways

Scheduling Improvements

- Consistent calls for earlier release of schedules, draws, and venues to help clubs and families plan logistics and costs
- Desire for smaller, single-day tournaments, more regional events, and less dependence on 4-court venues

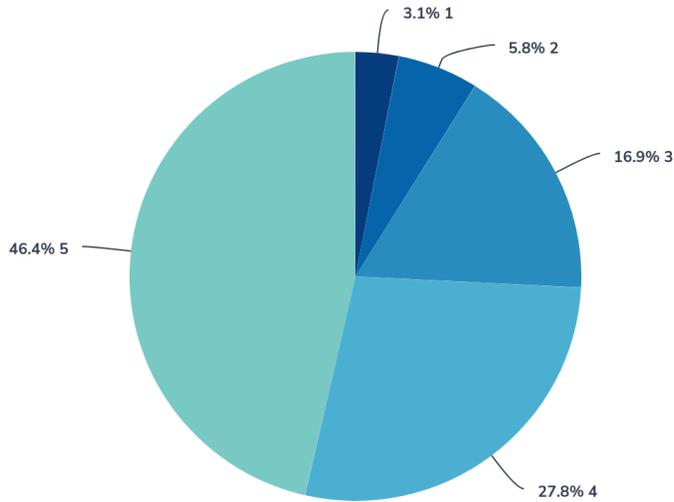
Format Adjustments

- Suggestions to adjust substitution rules (e.g., allow unlimited subs, add 2 liberos) to prioritize inclusion and development over strict competition
- Calls to align top-tier schedules with Nationals to avoid long breaks post-provincials

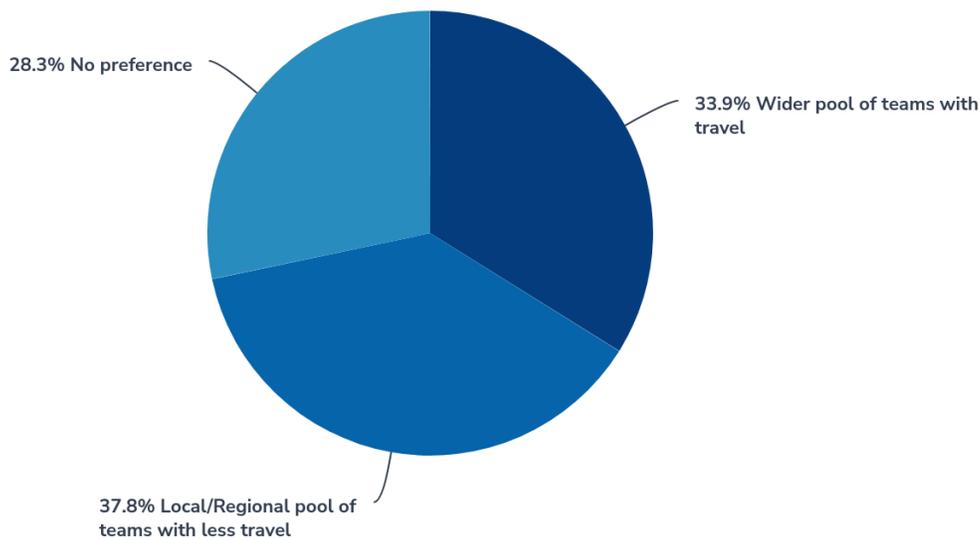
Regional Challenges

- Smaller or rural communities noted barriers to participation due to travel costs and fewer local opportunities; these recommendations provide valuable data and informative points.

74% of respondents shared that event location and travel distance are Important or Very Important to the competition experience. **Scale: 1 is Not Important, 5 is Very Important**



The survey asked, would you prefer to travel to play in tournaments with a wider pool of teams or to play locally/regionally with a smaller pool of teams?



3.3.a. Factors that respondents most enjoyed about the VBC Club Experience

- Competition & Level of Play
 - High-level, challenging competition that pushes athletes to improve
 - Opportunities to compete against teams from across BC and beyond
 - Tiered tournaments ensure teams are well-matched
 - Exposure to provincial, national, and high-performance competition
 - Intensity and excitement of game days (esp. Provincials & Super Series)

- Team Camaraderie & Friendships
 - Strong sense of team bonding and belonging
 - Lifelong friendships are formed between athletes and families
 - Athletes enjoy being part of something bigger than themselves

- Player Development & Coaching
 - Noticeable skill growth and personal development over the season
 - Access to professional, caring, and knowledgeable coaches
 - Structured practices and well-run training opportunities
 - Opportunities to develop emotional resilience, teamwork, and confidence

- Well-Run Tournaments & Events
 - Tournaments are generally well-organized, with clear communication
 - Exciting environments at big events like Provincials
 - Thoughtful scheduling, venues, and structure (e.g., Super Series)

- Community & Culture
 - Positive, respectful atmosphere among clubs, players, and families
 - Feeling of being part of a larger volleyball community
 - Supportive parent and volunteer engagement
 - Opportunities to network with coaches, refs, and other families

- Travel & Broader Experiences
 - Traveling to new cities and exploring BC
 - Weekend tournaments become bonding time for families and teams
 - Fun extras like team dinners, hotel stays, and team swag

- Personal Growth & Life Skills
 - Athletes learn perseverance, sportsmanship, and how to handle pressure
 - Club experience teaches goal setting, communication, and self-discipline

- Many respondents commented on how volleyball helped their child grow “as a person.”

3.3.b. Factors that respondents do not enjoy about the VBC Club Experience

- **Scheduling & Communication**
 - Tournament schedules are released too late (often days before)
 - Frequent schedule changes
 - Poor communication from VBC and clubs
 - Short notice makes travel planning difficult
 - Limited advance info on venues, affecting hotel booking
- **Travel Burden**
 - Excessive travel, especially for Northern, Island, and Interior teams
 - Tournaments concentrated in the Lower Mainland
 - Inconvenient or last-minute tournament locations
 - Unsafe winter driving conditions
 - Lack of local tournament opportunities
- **Costs & Accessibility**
 - High costs for travel, accommodations, and registration
 - Lack of financial support for remote teams
 - Clubs nickel-and-diming families (e.g., added service fees)
 - Barriers for lower-income families and rural athletes
 - Not enough recreational or lower-cost options
- **Tryout Process & Team Selection**
 - Stressful and condensed tryout timelines
 - Political, biased, or unclear selection processes, coaches selecting teams based on relationships
 - Lack of transparency or fairness in player selection
 - Not enough teams to accommodate demand
- **Competitive Structure & Rules**
 - Ranking system seen as flawed or unfair
 - Inconsistent or overly complex rules (e.g., substitutions, Libero use, triple ball)
 - Short season length and lack of regular league play
 - Teams penalized for missing Super Series events
 - Discrepancies between school and club volleyball rules
- **Governance & Club Operations**

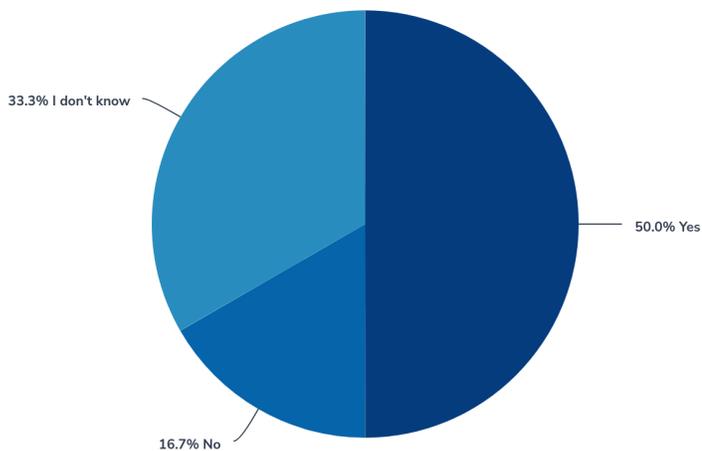
- Lack of transparency and democratic practices in some clubs
- Clubs with poor leadership, disorganization, and culture issues
- Inconsistent application of rules or SafeSport standards
- Lack of club support and staffing in smaller communities
- Facility & Venue Concerns
 - Poor venue conditions (e.g., Harry Jerome: bad parking, acoustics, and seating)
 - Inadequate washrooms and janitorial services
 - Lack of spectator seating and food access
 - Inconsistent rules and signage around food tables
 - Small gyms and low ceilings unsuitable for play
- Equity & Athlete Experience
 - Limited opportunities for less competitive or remote athletes
 - Lack of Fair Play and insufficient playing time for all team members
 - Limited exposure for BC athletes on the national stage
 - Mental health concerns related to high-pressure environments
 - Too much focus on elite pathways, not enough on fun and development
- Refereeing & Officiating
 - Inconsistent and undertrained referees
 - Volunteer line judges and scorekeepers lacking training
 - Referee abuse and poor retention of new officials
 - Referees overworked or underpaid
- Parent, Coach & Spectator Behavior
 - Rude or aggressive behavior from parents and coaches
 - Overly intense or toxic club culture
 - Poor sportsmanship and lack of accountability
 - Coaches yelling at or mistreating athletes

3.3.c. Season Length

Most respondents (58%) felt the competitive regular season length is appropriate; however, a notable portion of respondents (38%) expressed the desire for a longer season. Many respondents support the current season length (January - May) because it strikes a good balance with school, family life, and other sports. They feel the existing current structure allows time for athletes to recover, focus on academics, and participate in beach volleyball or other sports afterward.

Value	Percent	Responses
Shorter	4.9%	31
Good as is	57.6%	364
Longer	37.5%	237
		Totals: 632

51% of respondents believe VBC's competition system should have different formats. For example, a League-based format for younger/ Division 3+ teams (more development-focused) and a tournament-based model for 18U Division 1 teams (performance focus).



A significant number of respondents would like to see the season:

- Extended into June to allow more development and gameplay.
- Start earlier (Nov/Dec) to increase preparation time.
- Include more tournaments or games (beyond just Super Series and Provincials).

Many respondents cited that longer seasons are beneficial for team bonding, development, and competitive readiness, especially compared to other provinces like Ontario and Alberta, which benefit from longer prep time. Those in support of a longer season also expressed frustration with scheduling and compressed timelines, specifically short preparation time before tournaments, for example, with early January ranking events. Extending the season aligns with some respondents' desire for more spaced-out tournaments, improved planning, and earlier tryouts with more flexible scheduling.

Others expressed opposition to a longer season and shared concerns about burnout, overtraining, cost, conflicts with other sports or academics, and maintaining manageable schedules. Parents and coaches wish to protect multi-sport participation to support overall athletic development and mental health. Some felt extending the season could deter volunteer coaches due to increased demands.

There is strong support for not overlapping club season with school volleyball season, while some suggest allowing early training (low intensity) during the school season for better preparation. Still, others feel that overlapping could help reduce scheduling pressure and help non-school players get earlier exposure to clubs.

Some respondents expressed an inconsistency in early training across regions and clubs, noting that some clubs allow early training, while others don't, causing inequity.

4.0 Recommendations

Volleyball BC's competition structure has many strong attributes and is well supported by the majority of participants. To address growth and better support athlete development, club sustainability, and organizational capacity, Sport for Life recommends:

4.1 Core Recommendations

1. Competition Delivery, Structure, and Format

- a. Develop diverse competition streams - a stream for teams seeking fun, friendly competition and skills development culminating with Provincial championships (*Provincial/Volleyball for Life*) and a stream for teams more oriented toward performance & competing at National Championships (*National/Performance*). The titles of the streams will need to be carefully chosen.
- b. Focus on creating competition opportunities that serve the majority of clubs (volunteer, not for profit); the 'for profit performance-oriented clubs will seek and find the level of competition they need (US, AB, etc)'.
- c. Create tiered competition structures that accommodate varying skill levels and team objectives (i.e., recreational play versus performance-focused) and deliver 'cost-effective' localized events which reduce expense, unsafe travel (Jan-Mar), and the need to be 'points chasing'. Ensure province-wide competition includes remote communities (they feel forgotten) and inclusive programming for equity-deserving groups.
- d. Maintain VBC delivery of Provincials and large-scale events, but consider having fewer (or no) 'mandatory' events in light of the strong membership concerns regarding significant costs and time associated with travel, and introduce regional events run by clubs that can act as qualifiers/ranking events for provincial championships. A self-levelling system, as in Alberta, allows for appropriate and meaningful competition while enabling clubs to choose events and a 'seasonal plan' according to their commitment level and interests.
- e. Lead creation of a province-wide club 'house league' system (as in Ont/OttawaMavericks) that attracts and caters to the new participant seeking fun and friends, and culminates in a "Festival of House Leagues" run by VBC (which leverages facilities and PTSO expertise) and regional house league festivals and playdays (1 day - 3 match guarantee). VBC should assist the clubs in creating festival/tournament environments that mimic those of VBC events.
- f. The promotion and relegation system is working, which assists with Meaningful Competition. Consider using the final Super Series tournament for seeding going into Provincials (e.g., Nova

Scotia).

- g. One-day events are preferred for local or league play, and two-day events are preferred for Super Series, Provincials, or any event requiring significant travel.

2. Scheduling

- a. Maintain the length of the VBC competitive season but hold the VBC Provincials for each stream at different times of the year (i.e., April for National stream; May for Provincial stream), noting that 70% of VBC teams do not go to National Championships. Extending the Provincial stream season into May allows for a later start to competition and more time for development. Make changes to rules, coach qualifications, and playing time in accordance with the stream & level of competition.
- b. Schedule Provincials to allow more time between the end of Provincial championships and the start of National championships (a 3-4 week gap is seen as too long by many respondents).
- c. Shift the timing of ranking tournaments to February to allow more time for team and individual development to take place (as in AB and MB). Holding ranking tournaments in January forces teams to focus on winning right away (given the stakes) and may not be conducive to development. Ranking tournaments may not be needed for the Provincial stream & could instead be Super Series events (as in AB Premiers).
- d. Current start dates for training and competition generally respect LTD principles & stages (T2T and L2C), and allow for multisport activity and pose less risk of burnout and injury. Teams with higher ambitions (and older) should be allowed to begin their season slightly earlier.

4.2 Additional Recommendations

1. General

- a. Communication - more transparent and timely communication of tournament costs, travel expectations, and seasonal plans to help families and administrators make informed decisions. Enhancing scheduling practices by releasing event details earlier.
- b. Leadership - shift its focus from direct delivery of competition to a broader role as a capacity-builder, sanctioning body, and system leader. Deploy Regional Development Coordinators to build local relationships, increase coach recruitment/training, and develop/support new and existing clubs. Redefine VBC's role in competition by supporting

club-hosted events rather than directly delivering the majority of competitions.

c. Community

- i. Athletes - incorporate more athlete-centered enhancements, such as increased downtime management between games and access to off-court resources like mental performance or skill development sessions.
- ii. Coaches - Create a coach development strategy to open more pathways for new coaches, including parents, student coaches, and especially female coaches. Leverage partnerships and sponsorships aligned with youth sport to support coach and athlete development (e.g., Canadian Tire Jumpstart, Timbits, RBC).
- iii. Referees - improving officiating standards (e.g., 2 refs/match), safety, compensation, and training. We also recommend collaborating to co-develop technical standards to ensure competition aligns with the LTD ratios.
- iv. Parents - proactively shape parent behavior and expectations through LTD educational campaigns, kickoff meeting resources, and video content.

- d. Adopt a capacity-building, oversight, and sanctioning role in the area of competition by shifting more delivery elements and responsibilities to the clubs.
- e. Directly deliver fewer VBC events and move toward 'sanctioning' local/regional events to be delivered by clubs with VBC mentorship/support for their delivery. Clubs that desire higher volumes of competition will find it outside of VBC competitions (e.g., US, Alberta, non-VBC events).
- f. Strengthen the club system by investing time and resources in club development (incentivize clubs to host, provide hosting support (e.g., Manitoba), support coach identification and training, invest in coach development, and house league creation).
- g. Provide mentorship to clubs, private providers, facility operators (ROO, Tradex, TCC), and stakeholders (ISPARC/NAIG) in the planning and staging of competition events, particularly for new clubs and Festivals. Capitalize on Volleyball BC's extensive event management experience and technical expertise to do so.
- h. Remove barriers for participation in VBC competitions by minimizing required travel to events where possible and by introducing a 'travel subsidy' system (similar to Ontario - \$100k returned to the club annually).
- i. Upskill and empower VBC Regional Development Coordinators to lead club development activities (local relationship building, creating new clubs, coach recruitment, facility access,

convening clubs to plan & share best practices). Provide club hosting kits (work plans, templates, signage) to support event hosting.

- j. Establish a VBC committee to collaborate with other PTSOs (e.g., OVA) in the development of resources and modifications of rules (libero, fairplay, triple ball, substitution, match length). Sport for Life defers these technical aspects to Volleyball BC and Volleyball Canada, who are the experts on such matters.

2. Facilities

- a. Expand VBC's facility base through stronger partnerships with post-secondary academic institutions, private operators & new builds (e.g., Tsawassen facility); consider co-location with other court sports such as pickleball, badminton, and basketball. Leverage the strong relationship with BC School Sports (CEO comes from the volleyball community) to access their facility and coach network, and build a relationship with BC Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA).

3. Officiating

- a. Ensure that referees are included in the changes proposed, and are appropriately recognized and supported (safety, perception, compensation, standards (2 refs per match)) for their critical role in the sport.

4. Resources

- a. Create a dedicated 'coach development' strategy that aligns with the stages of LTD and embraces coach qualifications, parent intake and training, providing practice plans (e.g., PlayBuilder), and ongoing coach support and education. An obvious goal is to increase the number of female coaches. Key sources of coaches are former players (e.g., university students), parent-coaches, and 'retired coaches' not willing to travel.
- b. Shape parental behavior and expectations through creation of a VBC video and accompanying materials that outline expected parental roles and conduct, parent opportunities (coaching, refereeing), LTD stages, and potential sanctions that can be used (mandatory) at kickoff and club intake meetings. BC School Sports and Volleyball Canada are good potential partners on this initiative.
- c. Provide ongoing LTD education to the clubs and coaches, including support for seasonal planning and, in particular, the importance of aligning the volume and frequency of competition, and appropriate ratios of training to competition (e.g., T/C = 70/30 at U14 level) at each stage (Early Train to Train, Late Train to Train, Learn to Compete).

5. Partnerships

- a. Leverage the growing demand and volleyball's brand-friendly youth demographic to attract sponsors to fund/support coach development, facility access, and broader athlete development (i.e., Timbits hockey, RBC, Canadian Tire Jumpstart, Rally Cap in baseball).
- b. Reach out to private providers (e.g., Urban Rec) to 'sanction' existing programs, access/share participant lists, and gain additional facility access to address the increased participant interest and new activities (house leagues, play days, festivals).

6. Innovation

- a. Creation of league-based competition for Nationals-bound teams in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley, leveraging the volume of strong local teams, availability of referees, local facilities, and proximity of clubs. Begin by piloting on the girls' side (higher numbers; build on the legacy of the Women's National Team center based in Richmond) and progress to the boys.
- b. Eventual creation of a West Coast women's professional league to capitalize on the growth and current popularity of women's sport, recent establishment of women's pro leagues/franchises in Canada (Women's pro volleyball league in the US: new WNBA franchise in Toronto, Northern Super League (soccer) and PWHL (hockey)), the relative proximity of Seattle, Portland, Eugene, and California, and the volume of great players coming through university/college/NCAA system and the WNT program.
- c. Pilot a league play competition for top U18/19 athletes who are in their first or second year of university programs but are not getting enough playing time, and for older club athletes who desire a higher level of play (and preparation for Nationals). JV style league.

5.0 Appendices

Appendix A - Survey

 VBC Survey.pdf

 Survey 1 results (with long answers).pdf - Full survey results (with long answers)

 Survey 1 results (without long answers).pdf - Survey results (without long answers)

 VBC survey 1_ High level summary & key themes.pdf

Appendix B - Environmental Scan

 VBC environmental scan

Appendix C- Additional Survey Feedback

 VBC Survey Responses - For reference

Appendix D - Recommended Annual Competition Map by Stage & Stream

VBC Annual Competition Map - by Stage & Stream

Stage	Month											
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
ET2T1					1	1	1	1	1			
ET2T2					1.5	1.5	1.5	1-2				
LT2TP					1.5	1.5	1.5	2	1-2			
LT2TN				1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1-2				
L2CP				1-2	1-2	2	2	2	1-2			
L2CN			2	2	2	2	2	1-2				

Legend - Stage		Legend - Stream	
ET2T1	Early Train to Train Provincial (12-14)		National Championships
ET2T2	Early Train to Train National (12-14)		Provincial Championships
LT2TP	Late Train to Train Provincial (14-16)		Tournaments (# = LTD tournaments)
LT2TN	Late Train to Train National (14-16)		Training (Low/No Tournament Play)
L2CP	Learn to Compete Provincial (17-19)		Offseason
L2CN	Learn to Compete National (17-19)		

VBC Competition Map (adapted from Volleyball Canada LTD 3.0 - Structural Tolerance)