**OVERVIEW**

A methodology for working with community clusters is proposed, based on the Scrum method used in software development.

The aim of the methodology is to help a small group of local sports clubs (Sported members) to work together to achieve a benefit or a set of benefits for their local communities.

A ‘by-product’ of the methodology is an increase in the capacity of each of the participating members. [The ‘by-product’ is not covered]

**SUMMARY**

Sported’s methodology is an agile framework. It is designed for teams (clusters) of three to nine members, who break their work into actions that can be completed within timeboxed iterations, called ‘sprints’, no longer than one month and most commonly two weeks. The team members track progress and re-plan in short focussed meetings called ‘scrums’.

**KEY IDEAS**

Sported’s methodology is an iterative and incremental framework for delivering improvements to communities. It defines a strategy where a cluster (a group of three to nine members) works as a unit to reach a common goal. It challenges assumptions of the traditional sequential approach to community improvements – which may often result in a series of ‘talking shops’ – and enables a cluster to self-organise by encouraging physical co-location or close online collaboration[[1]](#footnote-1) of all team members.

A key principle of Sported’s methodology is that clusters will change their minds about what they want or need and that there will be unpredictable challenges – for which a predictive or planned approach is not appropriate. As such, Sported’s methodology adopts an evidence-based empirical approach – accepting that problems cannot be fully understood at the start of a project, and instead focussing on how to maximise the team’s ability to deliver quickly and to respond to emerging requirements, and also to adapt to evolving needs, and changes in the communities in which the cluster members operate.

**ROLES**

There are three core roles in Sported’s methodology. These roles are, ideally, located in the same community to be able to deliver tangible benefits every sprint, and to be able to see the differences that each sprint make. Together, these three roles from Sported’s scrum team. While many other charities and not-for-profit organisations have other roles involved with defining and supporting project deliverables Sported’s methodology defines only these three.

CLUSTER OWNER

The cluster owner represents the cluster members and is responsible for any backlog and accountable for maximising the value that the cluster delivers. The cluster owner works with the cluster members to define the benefits that the cluster wants to deliver (typically case studies) and helps the cluster to prioritise them based on importance and dependencies.

In Sported’s methodology a cluster should have only one owner (although an owner can support more than one cluster). The role of the cluster owner is never combined with that of the scrum master. The cluster owner should focus on the ‘business’ side of delivering community benefits, should spend the majority of their time liaising with cluster members, and should not dictate how a cluster chooses to deliver benefits to their community.

Communication is a core responsibility of the cluster owner. The ability to convey priorities and to empathise with cluster members is vital to help steer the delivery of community benefits in the right direction. The cluster owner bridges the communications gap between the cluster members and Sported, serving as a proxy for Sported to the cluster members, and as a representative of the cluster to the overall Sport For Development community.

As the face of the cluster to Sported, the following are some of the communication tasks of the cluster owner:

Demonstrates the benefits to be delivered by the cluster to potential funders who may include local authorities, regional authorities, local companies, and locally based HNWIs

Works with cluster members to define benefits to be delivered and works with Sported to publicise benefits delivered to the community by clusters

* Communicates cluster status to Sported
* Organises regular cluster reviews
* Educates cluster members in Sported’s agile capacity-building processes
* Negotiates priorities, scope, funding, and schedule
* Ensures that all cluster issues are visible, transparent, and clear – to cluster members and Sported.

Empathy is a key attribute for the cluster owner to have – to put oneself into another’s shoes. A cluster owner communicates with different stakeholders who have a variety of backgrounds, jobs, roles, and objectives. A cluster owner must be able to see from these different points of view. To be effective it is wise for a cluster owner to know the level of detail the audience needs. The cluster members need thorough feedback and help with defining, in detail, the community improvements that they seek to deliver. Someone funding a cluster, or a group of clusters, may just need summaries of progress. Providing more information than needed may cause someone funding a cluster or a group of clusters to lose interest, and waste time. A direct means is most preferred.

A cluster owner’s ability to communicate effectively is also enhanced by being skilled in techniques that identify stakeholder needs, negotiate priorities between stakeholder interests, and collaborate with Sported members to ensure effective implementation of actions agreed at cluster meetings.

CLUSTER

The cluster is responsible for delivering community improvements at each sprint (the sprint goal).

The cluster has from three to nine members (Sported members) who carry out all the tasks to implement the community improvements with the assistance and support and guidance of the cluster owner. There will be several different sets of skills represented by the cluster members, their own members, and volunteers brought in from ‘outside’.

In Sported’s methodology the grouping of cluster members, their own members, and volunteers brought in from ‘outside’ is referred to as a *delivery team* [[2]](#footnote-2).

SCRUM LEADER

In Sported’s methodology scrum is facilitated by a scrum leader who is accountable for removing impediments of the cluster to deliver the community improvements the cluster wants to deliver, and any other project goals and deliverables. The scrum leader, a Sported employee, is not a traditional team lead or project manager and acts as a buffer between the cluster and any distracting influences. The scrum leader ensures that Sported’s methodology is followed. The scrum leader helps to ensure that the cluster follows the agreed processes in Sported’s methodology, often facilitates key sessions, and encourages every cluster they work with to improve. Sported’s scrum leader helps one cluster to learn from the experiences of other clusters. The role is referred to as a servant-leader to reinforce these dual perspectives.

The core responsibilities of a Sported scrum leader include (but are not limited to):

* Helping the cluster owner manage the cluster in a way that ensures that the needed work is well understood so that the cluster can continually make forward progress
* Helping the cluster to determine the definition of ‘delivered’ for the cluster, with input from funders
* Coaching the cluster
* Promoting self-organisation within the cluster
* Helping the cluster to avoid or remove impediments to its progress, whether internal or external to the cluster
* Facilitating cluster events to ensure regular progress
* Educating key funders in the benefit of funding projects based on Sported’s methodology
* Coaching Sported staff in the benefits of encouraging self-organisation and cross-working.

One of the ways the scrum leader roles differs from a project manager is that the project manager may have people management responsibilities and the scrum leader does not. Sported’s methodology does not formally recognise the role of project manager, as Sported recognises that traditional command and control tendencies may cause problems.

**WORKLFOW**

SPRINT

In Sported’s methodology a sprint is a basic unit of development in scrum. The sprint is timeboxed – restricted to a specific duration. The duration is fixed in advance for each sprint and is normally between one week and one month, with two weeks being the most common.

In Sported’s methodology each sprint starts with a sprint planning meeting that aims to identify backlogs, identify the work for the sprint, and make an estimated forecast for the sprint goal. Each sprint ends with a sprint review and a sprint retrospective (what we’d have done differently if we’d known what we know now). These reviews show progress and identify lessons and improvements for next sprints. In Sported’s methodology sprint reviews emphasise what has actually been delivered to the community, rather than progress made to the next ‘talking shop’.

SPRINT PLANNING

At the beginning of a sprint the cluster holds a sprint planning event to:

* Discuss and agree on the work that is intended to be done during the sprint
* Prioritise things that haven’t been delivered so far and which might be delivered during the next sprint.
  + The delivery team select the most important things that they could deliver in the next sprint; once these have been agreed upon, in Sported’s methodology the delivery team vote on the most important things to be delivered to the community in the next sprint.

SPRINT REVIEW

At the end of a sprint the cluster holds an event which:

* Reviews what was planned to be delivered but which was not delivered
* Reflects on the sprint – three questions
  + What went well?
  + What didn’t go well?
  + What could be improved?

The event is facilitated by the scrum leader (a Sported employee)

1. Through Microsoft’s SharePoint, and similar team working tools. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The delivery team may include volunteers from local businesses, officers from local authorities, teachers at local schools, members of local emergency services (particularly the police), local representatives from the National Health Service, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)