



**POLAR
PLUNGE**®

Community Event Planning Guide - 2025

A step-by-step guide to plan and host a
Polar Plunge event in your community

Questions? Please contact Meg Ishida at mishida@specialolympics.bc.ca

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What is the Polar Plunge?

The Polar Plunge for Special Olympics BC is a winter fundraising event that sees individuals jump into the icy waters (or experience cold waters in other methods!) while collecting donations from friends, family members, co-workers, local business, or their community in general.

This is a signature provincial event of the BC Law Enforcement Torch Run initiative benefiting Special Olympics British Columbia (SOBC).



About LETR & Special Olympics BC



The Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics BC is an innovative initiative powered by dedicated law enforcement personnel around the world who want to help Special Olympics athletes. BC LETR members raise funds and awareness for Special Olympics BC through events and initiatives including Torch Runs, Polar Plunges, golf tournaments, and overtime drives.

Special Olympics BC is dedicated to enriching the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities through sport.

Timeline

FEB 16 | Vancouver Island Polar Plunge

- Vancouver Island Polar Plunge at Gyro Beach (Saanich)

MAR 1 | Vancouver Polar Plunge

- Vancouver Polar Plunge at Kitsilano Beach

FEBRUARY

MARCH

Feb 15 to Mar 2 - VIRTUAL POLAR PLUNGE

Host your event anytime between Feb 15 and Mar 2*

Have your event date confirmed? Submit this [FORM](#) to receive you event page!

*Please feel free to host an event outside these dates as necessary but be advised that assistance and marketing efforts from Special Olympics BC can only be guaranteed during this timeframe.

Event Planning Stages

- Submit the [request form](#) to set up your event's registration/fundraising website
- Obtain permits and approvals as necessary
- Secure sponsorships

- Continue to finalize event details
- Continue to promote the event and recruit participants

Plunge
Day!



STEP 1

- Recruit Planning Committee and assign roles
- Determine event details (location, date)

STEP 2

STEP 3

- Begin marketing and promotions activities to recruit participants
- Confirm logistical and operational details of the event:
 - Schedule
 - Production requirements (i.e. tents, sound equipment, power generators, stage, signage)
 - On-site activations (i.e. breakfast, warming tent, bag storage, restrooms / changerooms)
 - Volunteer requirements
 - Safety requirements (first-aid, lifeguards)
 - Opening Ceremonies and awards

STEP 4

Sample Committee Roles

- **Chair / Event Lead**
 - Oversees the overall direction of the event and ensure planning remains on track
- **Logistics and Operations Lead**
- **Public Relations and Media Liaison**
- **Sponsorship Lead**
- **Volunteer Coordinator**
- **Participant Liaison**



Tip: One committee member can take on multiple roles! Some committees may consist of as few as two or three people.

Sample Event Volunteer Roles

- Registration/Check-in
- Photography
- Host/MC
- Set-up and tear-down
- Bag storage attendant
- Breakfast/hot beverage station
- Opening Ceremonies support

Plunge Location Ideas

- Bodies of water
 - Oceans, lakes, rivers, ponds
 - Tip: For oceans, make sure to check tide predictions!
- Outdoor pools, above-ground pools, inflatable pools, hot tubs
- Large containers
- Fire hose
- Car wash



Tip: Things to consider when selecting your Plunge location

- If a location has a permit application process and any restrictions
- Number of participants you expect and the location's capacity, including areas for pre-Plunge activities
- Parking availability
- Accessibility by public transit
- Restroom/change room facilities
- Visibility to the public / passersby

Fundraising

Individual community event pages will be set-up for registration and fundraising

- To obtain your event page, please complete this [FORM](#)
- Within your event page, people can register as a team or individual and will receive a personal fundraising page to collect donations online
- Registration will include: waiver, incentive prize selection
- A committee member can request to receive admin access to be able to: review reports, obtain participant contact information, make edits to the content on the main page, etc.



Tip: Incorporate fundraising initiatives into your event



Did you know? SOBC can set up an online auction website, at no cost to you!

- Consider a way for the general public to donate at the event
 - Cash donation boxes, QR codes to your event website
- Encourage your participants to collect donations from their personal networks
 - Provide fundraising incentive prizes and contests (see page 13)
- Raise funds for your event/team through other events, such as bake sales, Purdy's chocolate, Krispy Kreme sales, online auctions, raffles, etc.

Promoting Your Event

Within your Agency:

- Agency-wide emails
- Putting up posters around the agency
- Presentations during briefings
- Tip: Get your Chief or Senior Management to endorse the event to encourage participation

To the Media:

- Pre-event promotion through the media (local newspapers, radio, television, websites)
- Event-day media coverage
- Sample press release is available in the additional resources section

To the Public:

- Local businesses
- High schools, colleges, universities
- Sports teams
- Service clubs (i.e., Rotary, Lions)
- Special guests (Mayors, MLAs, MPs, local celebrities) – Sample special guest invitation letter is available in the resources section

On Social Media:

- Via your personal and your agency's social media accounts
- Social media graphics and suggested posts are available in the additional resources section

Connecting with Local Athletes & Volunteers

- Local Special Olympics athletes and volunteers may be interested in registering as a Plunger and/or volunteering
- If there is an Opening Ceremony, it is strongly encouraged to have an SOBC athlete speak to share their Special Olympics story
- Contact Meg to get connected to the appropriate SOBC volunteer in your community to facilitate SOBC athlete/volunteer engagement and participation



Sponsorship vs. Donations vs. In-Kind Support

A **sponsorship** is typically a cash contribution from a company or organization in exchange for brand and/or logo recognition as part of an event. A **donation** is typically a cash contribution from an individual, company, or organization in exchange for a tax receipt. Public recognition is never guaranteed for a donation, but can be given after the donation is made.

In-kind support refers to goods or services donated (at no cost or at a reduced cost) to support an event. This may be in exchange for brand and/or logo recognition as a sponsor of an event OR for a tax receipt. Note that if an in-kind donor is considered a sponsor, they are not eligible for a tax receipt.

When thinking about sponsorship opportunities, consider what aspects of the event can be sponsored or provided in-kind.



Tip: A sponsorship package template is available in the resources section!

Examples of sponsorship opportunities:

- Event Sponsor (cash sponsorship, AV, tents, or staging rental donations or discounts,)
- Breakfast Sponsor (cash sponsorship used to purchase goods, or in-kind support)
- Coffee Sponsor (cash sponsorship used to purchase goods, or in-kind support)
- Warming Tent Sponsor (cash sponsorship)
- Contest Sponsor (cash sponsorship used to purchase goods, or in-kind support)

Safety Considerations

General Safety Considerations

- First-aid attendants
 - St. John Ambulance
- Lifeguards or in-water support
- Plunge 'waves'
 - How many people per 'wave' is safe?

Other health and safety considerations:

- Availability of hand sanitizer throughout the event area
- Availability of trash/recycling bins for waste disposal
- Secure area for belongings

Contests and Prizes

Utilize contests and prizes to increase participation and fundraising!

Examples of Contests

- Prize draws to encourage fundraising or participant registrations
 - Weekly draws: Everyone who collects \$50 in donations this week is entered into the draw. Every team/captain who adds two new members this week is entered into the draw.
 - Social media contests: Everyone who reshares a social media post to help promote the event is entered into a draw.
- At the event: Costume contest, top individual fundraiser, top team
- Each event committee is responsible for sourcing these prizes for their event

Incentive Prizes

- Incentive prizes are provided by Special Olympics BC
- Prizes are selected by participants during registration and will be delivered via Canada Post to individuals after the Polar Plunge season
- Participants will have the option to opt out of receiving a prize so that more of their funds raised goes to support Special Olympics athletes
- Entry level: min. \$75 raised | Level two: min. \$250 raised | Plunge Hero: \$1,000 or more raised

Sample Schedules

Time	Activity
8:00am	Committee arrival and set-up begins
9:00am	Volunteer Arrival
9:15am	Volunteer orientation/briefing
9:30am	Volunteers take places
10:00am	Registration Opens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants arrive • Bag Check and Changing Stations are available to all Plunge participants. • VIP Warming Tent is available. • Participants may enjoy the pre-Plunge activities (i.e., snacks, hot beverages, vendor giveaways, displays.)
11:00am	Plunge Opening Ceremony begins
11:15am	Plungers marshalled to Plunge Area
11:20am	First wave of Plungers enter water <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remaining groups follow
11:45am	Plunge waves begin to conclude <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change clothes, warm-up, collect their belongings, and depart
12:15pm	Tear-down begins

Sample Opening Ceremony Run of Show

Time	Activity
11:00am	Opening Ceremony begins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MC – welcome and introduction, thank sponsors, introduce first speaker
11:01am	First special guest speaker <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • i.e., LETR member
11:03am	MC introduces second speaker
11:04am	Second special guest speaker <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • i.e., SOBC athlete
11:07am	MC announces top fundraisers (hand out awards, if applicable)
11:10am	Costume competition (if desired)
11:13am	Safety announcements
11:15am	Plungers marshalled to Plunge Area
11:20am	Plunge time!

Resources

Ready to get started? To obtain your event page, please complete this [FORM](#)

Once available, these resources can be downloaded from:

<https://specialolympicsbc.sharepoint.com/:f:/s/SOBCStaff/EokEoO-h5whFvzfEnhAmaO8B70qG7fPL1UFJ0BMZ0y-w1A?e=lWA9Oe>

Including:

- Sponsorship package template
- Press release template
- Opening ceremony scripting
- Event poster template
- Social media graphics and sample social media posts
- Email templates (special guest invitation, recruitment, fundraising, thank-yous)
- Photos:
 - 2023: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/specialolympicsbc/albums/72177720306609888>
 - 2024: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/specialolympicsbc/albums/72177720315303063/>
- LETR and SOBC brand guidelines

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