

Mayo GAA Strategic Action Plan

Q&A document

This Questions & Answers document is produced to provide background information on a number of key elements of the Mayo GAA Strategic Action Plan. It aims to allow members of Mayo GAA make an informed decision about the Plan at the next meeting of Mayo GAA Board. The key elements listed below represent the recommendations about which we have received most queries from clubs, county board members, media, supporters, and others. This document should be read in conjunction with the actual plan, which also contains quite a bit of detail.

Produced by: Steering Committee of Mayo GAA Strategic Action Plan

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To obtain a copy of the actual plan, go here: <http://bit.ly/fFHJ4A> (with thanks to www.MayoGAABlog.com for hosting the plan here)

Any further queries – please contact any member of the Steering Committee:

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General Questions

General Question 1 (GQ1): Why was this Plan produced – and who gave you the mandate to produce it?

Mayo GAA Board asked Liam Horan to chair, and assemble, a group to carry it out. This followed Mayo's exit to Longford in last year's Qualifiers, and sundry other disappointments at national level. Mayo GAA Board is also obliged to submit a five-year Strategic Action Plan to Croke Park.

GQ2: You mentioned 'all duck or no dinner' in various media interviews? Why should Mayo GAA accept all or nothing? Can we not pick the best parts and reject the ones we don't want? Our aim has always been to put our report in front of a full meeting of Mayo GAA Board. This was explicitly stated at the outset. We consulted widely throughout the process, and invited contributions from all and sundry. However, once we finalised our Plan, it was never our intention to amend it again – it would then no longer represent our view on the way forward for Mayo GAA. We wished to produce a truly independent report, as per our remit.

However, we have no control over what happens when the Plan is presented to a full meeting of Mayo GAA Board. The Executive committee of Mayo GAA Board, for example, have indicated they are happy with about 70 per cent of the Plan, and may well table a motion to that effect. Clubs, as we understand it, will have the power to make proposals too – for example, a club could propose that the Plan be accepted in full, or it could support an Executive proposal favouring 70 per cent of the Plan, or it could make a proposal suggesting acceptance of whatever number of recommendations it wishes.

We will attend the next meeting of Mayo GAA Board to outline why we believe the full Plan is worthy of support. Our full Steering Committee will be available at that meeting to answer any questions that arise. But, as we say, the ultimate fate of the Plan rests with the delegates at that meeting, as it should.

GQ3: Will it cost a small fortune to implement this Plan, and will that cost be passed onto the clubs?

In short, no. We have proposed two full-time appointments to be borne by Mayo GAA Board – a Commercial Director and a Director of Football Coaching. The costs are outlined later in this document.

Points to note about the Commercial Director:

- This person should not only be self-funding, but should also generate considerable extra revenue for Mayo GAA;
- This person will be responsible for overseeing our proposal to target the Mayo Diaspora as a consistent source of income for Mayo GAA;
- The level of work proposed for the Commercial Director is above what any volunteer, or voluntary committee, could be expected to carry out – hence our suggestion that it be a full-time appointment;
- A target-driven contract of employment should govern this appointment. If certain targets are not reached, the contract should be declared null and void. In this way, Mayo GAA can limit its exposure.

GQ4: The timelines mentioned seem to be very tight – are they feasible?

The timelines mentioned in the report are starting dates, and, in the nature of the implementation of any Strategic Action Plan, they are fluid. However, they are listed to indicate the broad outline of when we feel the work should be carried out.

GQ5: Why should clubs support this Plan?

We believe it holds a number of benefits for clubs, particularly in the following areas:

- In the past, Mayo GAA has not invested time and energy in detailed strategic planning – we believe this Plan provides a 'road map';
- In the short-term, this Plan will lessen club's exposure to the McHale Park debt through generation of new revenue streams;
- In time, we believe this Plan, if properly implemented, will allow Mayo GAA to be financially self-sufficient through the fundraising models proposed, and, in so doing, reduce financial levies on the clubs. This will allow clubs to focus on their own fundraising for their own benefit;

- An opportunity to improve key areas of functioning at all levels in the county, through emphasis on: Coaching, Games & Player Development; Community & Economic Development; Urbanisation; Rural Depopulation; Hurling; Structures & Governance; Public Relations, Marketing & IT; and Schools;
- The objectives of the Plan are clearly set out so no club need be worried about its intent;
- This Plan was carried out in full consultation with Mayo GAA and with the expertise of individuals from all walks of life;
- At the moment, there is no alternative plan of this scale available. We also see this Plan as a starting-point for future development, and one that will hopefully be added to as time goes on.

GQ6: In your overview, you say that Mayo GAA may have to raise an additional €9m this year for McHale Park. The county board executive seems to be disputing this. Do you stand by this figure? That is our estimate, based on the figures we received. We note that Mayo county board executive said the figure is €772,000 at their most recent meeting. Either way, it is a substantial sum of money and we believe new sources of revenue must be found to alleviate the burden on Mayo GAA, most notably its clubs, for the years ahead.

GQ7: It has been stated at county board level that some of your recommendations breach rules. Do they, and, if yes, what's your response?

We have asked for written clarification of what specific rules our Plan may breach. The only written clarification we have received concerns Recommendation SG1 (Page 16), where we suggest that Mayo GAA explores "feasibility and desirability of direct elections for the position of county chairperson..."

We believe it is possible to explore this without breaching rules.

However, we would also refer readers to Page 6 of our report where we say that "in instances where our recommendations may potentially be in conflict with GAA rules, Mayo GAA should change, or lobby to change, those rules."

It is our view that Mayo GAA should be at the forefront of innovative developments. If rule changes are necessary, we feel we should lobby for them.

GQ8: Why is there no mention of refereeing, primary schools, Scór, and a variety of other topics?

The areas we looked at were agreed in advance with Mayo county board. We suggest that the areas mentioned above, and a number of other areas, be looked at in the near future, and hope that this will be the case.

Key recommendations (Pages 10, 11)

KRQ1: Why do you feel a financial review of the last three years is needed?

We believe a financial review of the period 2008-2010 is necessary to assist the formulation of a five-year financial plan. This review is critical to gaining a full understanding of the board's finances: the financial commitments, the sponsorship/business arrangements, and sundry other areas that are crucial when running what is now a multi-million euro enterprise.

KRQ2: Why is the Non-executive Advisory Group needed?

We believe this group will aid the successful functioning of Mayo GAA. It will act as an advisory body alongside the senior officers of Mayo county board, and be a sounding-board for any major decisions.

Now, more than ever, we need individuals with expertise in marketing, business strategy, fundraising and finance to help guide the county through these most difficult times. We believe there are many outstanding individuals who reside inside, and indeed outside, the county who are willing to assist, so we need to develop a structure along the lines of a Non-executive Advisory Group to allow them get involved.

Furthermore, it is now recognised best practice to have a Non-Executive element to boards of various types, as they provide an independent overview of how the affairs of an executive are managed. This Non-executive Advisory Group will add considerable weight to our global fundraising campaign.

As a county we should not fear this approach: we should embrace it and welcome an opportunity to get some more outstanding people involved.

KRQ3: Why is a Director of Football Coaching needed, what will that person's role be, and do we not have a similar position already in Mayo?

The role of the current Games Manager is a very important one for Mayo GAA, and we do not see this a replacing that position. Instead, we see it as complementing that role so that areas not covered under the remit of the Games Manager would be covered by a Director of Football Coaching.

Our Steering Committee feels that the time has now arrived for Mayo to take control of its own destiny and to become a leader in the area of Coaching and Games Development. In order for this to happen, we feel we need to appoint a full-time Director of Football Coaching. In our opinion, anything less would not deliver the necessary results. We need to go where no county has gone previously in this area.

We are proposing a Director of Football Coaching who will develop a specific football coaching strategy for Mayo GAA, and take responsibility for its implementation. In preparing the strategy, the Director will take guidance from Connacht and national strategy, as well as looking at what other counties and, indeed, other sports do.

For Mayo GAA to deliver the success we all crave, we have to first accept that what we are doing is not delivering the results at national level, and then look at how we can improve what we are doing in order to achieve our objectives.

Specifics of this role would include:

- Put together a plan for success at county level. Monitor this plan. Set goals for players and managers;
- Work with Mayo county board in sourcing resources and sponsorship or in the provision of funding;
- Organise regular meetings with coaches of county teams;
- Provide a mentoring system for club coaches;
- Foster relations with local authorities to promote/ develop GAA initiatives;
- Liaise with county fixtures planners in the provision of high-quality games scheduling;
- Support a variety of initiatives including career opportunities, community involvement, LEADER programmes, FAS initiatives, access to local employment service, further education etc;
- Liaise with Mayo Sports Partnership;
- Liaise with personnel from our proposed Mayo Gaelic Football Academy;
- Get expertise of senior inter-county players – maybe encourage them to act as mentors to players.

KRQ4: How much will a Director of Football Coaching cost?

This would be a matter for Mayo county board, but we would envisage an annual salary of approximately €45,000, plus approximately €20,000 provision for expenses. We envisage strong backing from Mayo supporters

all over the world for a role that would seek to develop the skill level among Mayo footballers to a level that would serve the county well in the future.

KRQ5: One member of your Coaching & Games Development recently said that this recommendation was discussed, but not supported, at the level of his committee. Is this true? A broadly-similar Recommendation was agreed at the level of the Coaching & Games Development committee, and further fine-tuned by the Steering Committee, in conjunction with the chairperson of the Coaching & Games Development committee. Other members of the Coaching & Games Development committee have confirmed their satisfaction with the exact thrust of the published recommendation. Furthermore all recommendations which came from sub-committees were discussed at great length at Steering Committee level. Some of the recommendations were included without any amendments, some were included with amendments, and some were not included at all. This was a necessary part of the process to collate all recommendations into one coherent Plan.

KRQ6: Why is a Commercial Director needed, what will that person's actual role be, and how much will it cost? Having considered the financial state of the county, and the need to raise significant cash for the next ten years to pay for McHale Park, our Steering Committee feel that we will require a full-time, dedicated and experienced individual to oversee the global fundraising campaign. Let no-one underestimate the challenges which lie ahead for Mayo GAA to deal with its financial obligations. We believe there are a number of un-tapped revenue streams available to Mayo GAA – and we also believe that these will only be tapped by a full-time, professional person. The Commercial Director should have an expertise and experience in fundraising coupled with a strong background in Sales and Marketing. These revenue streams include:

- The Mayo Diaspora
- Businesses owned by Mayo people throughout Ireland
- Corporates who see in Mayo an opportunity to be associated with a high-profile brand name

Our Steering Committee fully understand that there is additional cost involved in appointing this person, but we see this as a critical investment in the future of Mayo GAA.

In GAA terms, 'brand Mayo' is one of the biggest in the country, and possibly the biggest in terms of global appeal given the large Mayo Diaspora. Now, more than ever, we need to develop Mayo's brand to assist in the global fundraising campaign which we need to undertake.

The salary for the Commercial Director would be a matter for Mayo county board, but we would estimate a basic salary of about €45,000 per annum, plus commission on income raised. There would also be travel and hotel costs for trips here and abroad. This could reach a figure of approximately €20,000 per annum.

It should be noted that commission should only be paid upon income generated. Thus Mayo GAA's exposure is limited.

KRQ7: Why do we need a Gaelic Football Academy for 18-22 year-olds?

Mayo's relative success at underage level over the last number of years provides us with many exciting players who will one day play for our senior team. However, great challenges exist in bringing players through the 18-22 year stage and many of our talented players fail to make it to the senior ranks for many different reasons. The purpose of this Academy is to make sure as many players as possible make the transition from promising minors to play senior football.

In addition to the appointment of the Director of Football Coaching, we see the Academy as ground-breaking in terms of player development.

The Academy will seek to develop players who are conditioned mentally and physically to prosper at senior level. The further development of their skills to compete at the highest level will also be a chief priority, along with an understanding of how they need to take responsibility for continuously developing their own skills throughout their careers.

There should be benefits here for the clubs of the players involved, as even if Academy players don't make senior inter-county players, they should become better players for their own clubs. At no point in the process will they

be removed from their own clubs, we hasten to add: the Academy will complement their existing club, college, and county involvement.

Needless to say we do not need to be reminded of the great disappointment Mayo team have experienced over the last 21 years. The following is a summary of Mayo's statistics in All Ireland football finals since 1989, compared to our competitors:

County	Played	Won	Lost
Tyrone	16	12	4
Kerry	21	11	10
Cork	16	10	6
Meath	11	5	6
Galway	9	5	4
Dublin	8	3	5
Armagh	4	3	1
Mayo	16	1	15

KRQ8: Who will make a Worldwide Mayo Supporters' Club happen?

The Commercial Director, directed by Mayo county board, and liaising with Mayo people around the world.

As we have set out earlier in this letter we see the formation of a Worldwide Mayo Supporters' Club as a critical component of the financial plan. We see units in cities such as London, Manchester, Leeds, New York, Boston, Chicago and San Francisco as key elements of our fundraising strategy. Taking a rough estimate of 15 cities, each raising circa between €30,000 and €50,000 per year, and allowing for other fundraising streams which will come under the remit of the Commercial Director, we believe this role can generate somewhere between €500,000 and €850,000 per annum for Mayo GAA.

This would remove much, if not all, of the burden which currently rests with the clubs, and also, we believe, create a powerful Mayo momentum that can be harnessed for the betterment of the GAA throughout Co. Mayo.

In summary we feel that our plan is good for Mayo GAA, good for its clubs, and a plan the county can march behind in years to come.