

# Research on Pathways for the High-Quality Development of Sports Social Organisations in Hunan Province

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**Abstract:** Sports social organisations serve as a vital vehicle for the national fitness programme and constitute a pivotal actor in advancing the modernisation of the sports governance system and governance capacity. Propelled by reforms to streamline administration, delegate powers, and improve regulation and services, together with the national fitness strategy, Hunan’s sports social organisations have made considerable headway. Yet they remain constrained by bottlenecks that hinder high-quality development, including imperfect governance structures, uneven service capabilities, insufficient resource integration, and lagging digital transformation. Grounded in the actual conditions of sports development in Hunan and drawing upon governance theory and public service theory, this paper analyses the current difficulties confronting such organisations. From six dimensions—organisational building guidance, governance optimisation, capacity enhancement, resource assurance, digital empowerment, and integrated development—it formulates implementation pathways for the high-quality development of sports social organisations in Hunan Province. The paper aims to furnish theoretical reference and practical guidance for building a province strong in sports and advancing the Healthy Hunan initiative.

**Keywords:** sports social organisations; high-quality development; governance capacity; national fitness; Hunan Province

## 1. Introduction

High-quality development constitutes the central theme of China’s economic and social advancement in the new era and defines the fundamental direction for deepening reform and upgrading the sports sector. As a nexus linking government, market, and society, sports social organisations play an irreplaceable role in promoting national fitness, cultivating sports culture, integrating societal resources, and assuming functions devolved from government [1]. In recent years, Hunan Province has assiduously implemented the national fitness strategy, issuing policy documents such as the Hunan Provincial National Fitness Implementation Plan (2022–2025) and the 14th Five-Year Plan for Sports Development in Hunan Province, whilst persistently advancing reforms to delegate power, streamline administration, and optimise services for sports social organisations. Consequently, the number of these organisations has grown steadily and their service domains have expanded continuously. According to a notice released by the Hunan Provincial Department of Civil Affairs in August 2025, as of 30 June 2024, 844 provincial-level sports social organisations (namely provincial sport associations) had passed the annual inspection, indicating that the number of provincial-level sports social organisations in Hunan had risen to over 844. City- and county-level sports federations have achieved full coverage, and grassroots sports clubs, fitness teams, and other spontaneous organisations have flourished. Benchmark organisations such as the Hunan Basketball Association and the Hunan Taekwondo Association have been recognised as “National Advanced Units for Mass Sport” and “5A-Level Social Organisations,” whilst community competitions like the “Xiang Super League” have emerged as nationally recognised models of grassroots sports branding.

Nevertheless, measured against the ambitious standards required to build a strong sporting province and the public’s increasingly diverse sporting expectations, the overall development of Hunan’s sports social organisations remains at a critical juncture in the transition from quantitative expansion to qualitative improvement. They still confront pronounced problems, including unbalanced development, imprecise service delivery, insufficient vitality, and irregular governance [2]. Against this backdrop, this paper systematically reviews the current state of these organisations, pinpoints the real obstacles to their

high-quality development, and explores development pathways that are both scientifically sound and well-adapted to provincial conditions. The study thus bears considerable theoretical value and practical significance for enhancing Hunan's national fitness organisational network, invigorating the vitality of social sports, and contributing to the "Three Highlands and Four New Missions" blueprint.

## **2. The Current Foundations for the High-Quality Development of Sports Social Organisations in Hunan Province**

### ***2.1 An Increasingly Refined Policy Framework and a Continuously Optimising Development Environment***

Hunan Province has integrated the development of sports social organisations into the overarching framework of building a province strong in sports and the Healthy Hunan initiative, establishing a policy support system structured around "top-level planning – specialised policies – implementation guidelines." The 14th Five-Year Plan for Sports Development in Hunan Province explicitly mandates "improving the network system of sports social organisations, deepening reforms to delegate power, streamline administration, and optimise services, and ensuring that they remain supervised after being decoupled from administrative organs" [3]. The Hunan Provincial National Fitness Implementation Plan (2022–2025) further stresses the need to "increase the scale of government procurement of services and encourage sports social organisations to extend their reach into urban and rural communities, thereby reinforcing grassroots fitness organisations" [4]. The Hunan Provincial Sports Bureau, the Department of Civil Affairs, and other relevant departments have jointly issued supporting measures covering social organisation rating assessment, credit-based supervision, and financial management, thus providing solid policy guarantees and institutional norms for the standardised and sound operation of these organisations.

### ***2.2 Gradually Maturing Organisational Networks and Expanding Coverage***

A five-tier, province–city–county–township–village sports social organisation architecture has taken initial shape across the province. At the apex, the provincial sports federation provides overall guidance, while single-sport associations cover mainstream disciplines such as basketball, football, badminton, and cheerleading. City- and county-level sports associations and clubs undertake regional competitions and grassroots promotion, and fitness stations, community-based fitness teams, and other spontaneous groups at the township (sub-district) and village (community) levels function as "capillaries," delivering the "last mile" of national fitness services. Youth sports clubs and community sports clubs have expanded rapidly, and the establishment of the Hunan Provincial Youth Sports Federation has effectively filled the gap in youth-specific sports services. Since 2020, the number of registered sports social organisations in Hunan has grown steadily, and the coverage rate of grassroots sports organisations has risen markedly, laying a solid organisational foundation for the broad implementation of national fitness.

### ***2.3 Steadily Enhanced Service Capacity and Emerging Brand Effects***

Hunan's sports social organisations have proactively assumed public service functions devolved by the government, playing an active role in areas such as competition organisation, fitness guidance, skills training, and physical fitness monitoring. The Hunan Basketball Association has built a well-developed competition and talent cultivation system, with over 2,500 registered referees and more than 1,200 registered coaches across the province. The Hunan Cheerleading Sports Association has followed a dual-wheel approach of "events plus training," staging over 20 competitions and training more than 50,000 participants within five years, benefiting over 100,000 young people. Event IPs such as the Zhuzhou "Factory BA," the Liuyang "Quan BA" (All-People BA), and the "Summit Hunan" mountain-climbing race have achieved deep integration between sport, culture, tourism, and industry, serving as important windows that project Hunan's image whilst catering to grassroots communities.

### ***2.4 Deepening Reform and Innovation, with Gradually Strengthening Development Drivers***

Sports social organisations across the province have fully completed the decoupling reform from administrative agencies, thereby unlocking endogenous development momentum. Government procurement of public sports services has become regularised and standardised, and the leverage effect of public finance in channelling private capital into the sports sector has become increasingly evident. A

number of outstanding associations have explored new operational models that embrace market-oriented practices, brand-based management, and digital services, effecting a shift from “government reliance” to “self-driven development.” In parallel, the ranks of sports volunteers have expanded steadily, and the management system for social sports instructors has been continuously refined, providing a solid human-resource underpinning for the high-quality development of sports social organisations.

### **3. Major Obstacles to the High-Quality Development of Sports Social Organisations in Hunan Province**

#### ***3.1 Imperfect Internal Governance Structures and Low Levels of Standardisation***

Some sports social organisations display a tendency to “prioritise registration over governance”: their charters exist in name only, the functions of boards of directors and supervisory boards are hollowed out, and democratic decision-making mechanisms are weak. Certain grassroots organisations lack internal management rules, maintain irregular financial practices, assemble loose staffing configurations, and suffer from a shortage of full-time professionals; excessively high proportions of part-time personnel mean that the degree of specialisation and professionalisation remains gravely insufficient. A minority of associations still bear a pronounced administrative imprint, exhibit weak service awareness, and inadequately safeguard members’ rights and interests, resulting in low public trust and social recognition that in turn constrains their sustainable development.

#### ***3.2 Uneven Service Delivery Capacity and Insufficient Precision***

Development gaps between urban and rural areas, and between different regions, are stark: urban organisations enjoy abundant resources and diversified services, whereas rural areas have fewer organisations, scant facilities, and limited service offerings. Service provision is heavily homogenised, concentrated in organising conventional competitions, while supply falls short in specialised domains such as scientific fitness guidance, sports-based rehabilitation, youth skills development, and age-appropriate services for the elderly. Coverage of target groups is incomplete, with insufficient targeted provision for people with disabilities, older adults, rural residents, and similar groups, making it difficult to adequately meet the public’s personalised, diversified, and high-quality sporting demands.

#### ***3.3 Weak Resource Integration Capabilities and Limited Sustainability***

Funding sources remain narrow, with excessive reliance on government procurement of services and fiscal subsidies; market-based fundraising, social donations, and membership dues account for only a small share, and the capacity for self-generated revenue is frail. Venue and facility provision is inadequate, public sports stadiums and gymnasiums are not sufficiently open to social organisations, and grassroots bodies lack fixed activity spaces. There is a scarcity of professional personnel, with insufficient reserves of coaches, referees, event operators, and organisational managers; the training system is incomplete, and mechanisms for career advancement and incentives are underdeveloped. The absence of cross-organisational and cross-sector collaboration mechanisms means that resources remain fragmented and duplicated, making it difficult to pool development strengths.

#### ***3.4 Lagging Digital Transformation and Low Smart-Technology Adoption***

Most sports social organisations still follow traditional operating models, with correspondingly low levels of digital and information-technology application [5]. The construction of online service platforms lags behind, and functions such as membership management, event registration, fitness guidance, and training exchanges remain underdeveloped. The integration of digital technology into sports services lacks depth, and innovative models—intelligent event operations, personalised fitness-plan delivery, and online-offline integrated services—are largely absent. Data governance capacity is weak: user data, service data, and operational data are fragmented, making it difficult to optimise service provision and enhance operational efficiency through data analysis.

#### ***3.5 Inadequate Regulatory Systems and Insufficient External Oversight***

The regulation of sports social organisations evinces a bias toward “emphasising registration whilst neglecting supervision,” and mechanisms for ongoing and ex post oversight remain under-developed [6].

An integrated regulatory framework has yet to be formed, with insufficient coordinated supervision among sports, civil affairs, and market-regulation authorities, leaving blind spots in oversight. Systems for credit-based supervision, dynamic evaluation, and information disclosure are inadequately enforced, and penalties for violations lack bite. Channels for social scrutiny are obstructed, public willingness to participate in oversight is low, and third-organisational evaluation mechanisms are unsound, making it difficult to exert effective external pressure that would impel organisations to develop in a standardised manner.

#### **4. Implementation Pathways for the High-Quality Development of Sports Social Organisations in Hunan Province**

##### ***4.1 Strengthening Organisational Building Guidance to Consolidate the Political Foundations of High-Quality Development***

We should uphold and reinforce the overall leadership over sports social organisations, embedding organisational building provisions into charters, integrating them into governance, and interweaving them into the delivery of services [7]. We should refine the organisational system within sports social organisations, ensuring that cells are established wherever conditions permit, thereby achieving full coverage of both organisations and work. We should innovate organisational building models and promote a “building + core business” integration mechanism that tightly couples organisational building activities with competition delivery, fitness services, talent cultivation, and other central operations. We should strengthen the education and management of members, giving full play to the role of organisations as bastions and members as vanguards, so as to guide sports social organisations in fulfilling their public-welfare mission, serving broader development interests, and contributing to the Healthy Hunan initiative.

##### ***4.2 Perfecting Internal Governance to Fortify the Organisational Basis for High-Quality Development***

We should strengthen the modern social-organisation system by refining an internal governance structure centred on the charter [8], standardising the operating mechanisms of the general assembly (or representative assembly), the board of directors, and the supervisory board, and reinforcing democratic decision-making, democratic management, and democratic oversight. We should enhance institutionalisation and standardisation by bettering internal management rules relating to personnel, finance, assets, archives, and information disclosure, so as to improve the transparency of organisational operations. We should foster a professionalised and qualified workforce by recruiting and cultivating versatile management talent and specialist technical personnel, and by improving systems for remuneration incentives, professional title appraisal, and skills training, thereby raising the professional competence of staff. We should carry out rating assessments and model-organisation initiatives that use evaluation to spur improvement and drive the standardised, benchmark-based, and brand-centred development of sports social organisations.

##### ***4.3 Enhancing Service Capabilities to Activate the Core Drivers of High-Quality Development***

We should optimise the structure of service provision, steering it from “singular” to “diversified” and from “mass-oriented” to “precision-oriented.” We should, Focusing on national fitness demands, develop an “one association, one brand” event system and strengthen home-grown event IPs such as the “Factory BA,” “Quan BA,” and “Summit Hunan.” We should broaden service areas by augmenting professional supply in scientific fitness guidance, youth sports training, sports services for the elderly, and rehabilitation-focused exercise for people with disabilities. We should shift the focus of services downwards, encouraging general sports federations and single-sport associations to extend their reach to the township (sub-district) and village (community) levels, nurture grassroots fitness organisations, and complete the five-tier national fitness organisational network. We should strengthen the volunteer service system, enlarge the contingent of social sports instructors, and build recognised national fitness volunteer-service brands.

#### ***4.4 Bolstering Resource Assurance to Overcome Factor Bottlenecks in High-Quality Development***

We should build a diversified investment mechanism guided by the government, with participation from society and operation through market forces. We should increase fiscal support by optimising the catalogue and procedures for government procurement of services and by expanding both the scope and scale of procurement. We should widen fundraising channels by encouraging social donations and sponsorship, and by exploring market-based financing models such as tiered membership fees, service charges, and revenue-generating operations. We should integrate venue and facility resources, promoting free or low-cost access to public sports facilities for sports social organisations, and enabling grassroots organisations to use community rooms, cultural squares, and similar spaces to establish permanent activity sites. We should strengthen personnel development by establishing a three-tier (provincial, city, county) sports talent training system, delivering targeted training for coaches, referees, and administrators, and smoothing channels for talent mobility and career advancement. We should build platforms for resource sharing so as to promote mutual resource exchange, complementary strengths, and coordinated development among organisations, regions, and sectors.

#### ***4.5 Accelerating Digital Empowerment to Innovate Technology Pathways for High-Quality Development***

We should drive the digital transformation of sports social organisations and construct a new “Internet + sports social organisations” service model. We should build a comprehensive provincial-level digital platform for these organisations that integrates membership management, event operations, training registration, fitness guidance, and information dissemination, thereby delivering “one-stop” online services. We should harness big data, artificial intelligence, mobile internet, and other technologies to conduct user-need analysis, deliver precisely targeted services, and evaluate operational efficacy. We should foster online-offline integrated service scenarios and develop new business formats such as virtual competitions, cloud-based training, and intelligent fitness guidance. We should strengthen data security and privacy protection, standardise procedures for data collection, storage, and use, and thereby enhance digital governance capacity.

#### ***4.6 Deepening Integrated Development to Expand the Diverse Space for High-Quality Development***

We should advance an integrated “sport +” model, fostering deep integration between sport and culture, tourism, education, health, and rural revitalisation. We should drawing upon Hunan’s red culture, folk traditions, and rich natural landscapes, create distinctive products such as “sport + red-culture learning journeys,” “sport + folk-experience activities,” and “sport + eco-tourism.” We should deepen the integration of sport and education by supporting sports social organisations in entering school campuses to deliver youth sports training and competition activities, thereby reinforcing the foundations for elite athletic talent. We should promote the integration of sport and health care by partnering with medical institutions to provide physical fitness monitoring, exercise prescription, and rehabilitation training services. We should contribute to rural revitalisation by implementing the “Four Haves” rural sport initiative—ensuring villages have facilities, activities, organisations, and guidance—refining rural sports organisational networks, organising physical activities that farmers enjoy, and empowering rural governance through sport.

#### ***4.7 Perfecting the Regulatory System to Standardise the Operational Order for High-Quality Development***

We should construct a tripartite comprehensive regulatory system encompassing government supervision, industry self-regulation, and public scrutiny. We should strengthen inter-departmental coordination by clarifying the regulatory responsibilities of sports, civil affairs, finance, taxation, and other relevant authorities, and establish mechanisms for information sharing and joint enforcement. We should improve ongoing and ex post supervision by implementing “double-random, single-open” inspections and by reinforcing credit-based supervision, dynamic management, and differentiated guidance. We should enhance information disclosure systems, obliging sports social organisations to publish their charters, financial reports, activity records, and evaluation results in a timely manner, thereby making them subject to public oversight. We should bring into play the self-regulatory role of industry associations by formulating sectoral norms, service standards, and self-regulatory conventions that guide organisations toward integrity-based operation and standardised conduct. We should refine

third-organisational evaluation mechanisms by engaging professional bodies to conduct regular assessments and by strengthening the application of evaluation outcomes.

## 5. Conclusion and Outlook

Sports social organisations in Hunan have already entered a critical phase in the transition from quantitative growth to qualitative improvement. They possess the policy, organisational, and practical foundations conducive to high-quality development, yet they still face manifold challenges spanning governance, service provision, resources, technology, and regulation. To advance their high-quality development, it is essential to uphold leadership, proceed from Hunan's actual circumstances, take governance modernisation as the core, treat capacity enhancement as the lynchpin, rely on resource integration as the support, harness digital empowerment as the driving force, adopt integrated development as the path, and deploy effective regulation as the guarantee, thereby constructing a systematic, scientifically grounded, and operationally efficient development framework.

Looking ahead, as the initiatives to build a strong sporting province and a Healthy Hunan gain momentum, the province's sports social organisations should further strengthen their sense of mission, proactively adapt to a new era, new demands, and new scenarios, and continuously deepen reform and innovation. By steadily raising their levels of standardisation, professionalisation, digitalisation, and brand recognition, they can truly become champions of national fitness, communicators of sports culture, participants in sports governance, and practitioners of high-quality development—contributing the wisdom and strength of sports social organisations to writing a new Hunan chapter in the Chinese path to modernisation.

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