

## SONJ ESG STATEMENT

Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles are central to Special Olympics New Jersey's (SONJ's) [mission](#) and who we are. In fact, SONJ was founded based on these principles in 1968 when it started sports programming for individuals with intellectual disabilities. So ESG principles are not new for SONJ.

### Social

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are at the heart of all that we do at Special Olympics New Jersey as we strive to promote unity and create a world where everyone belongs. We respect and celebrate all abilities, backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives. We appreciate that greater diversity and inclusion creates a strong, innovative organization that values each individual as we develop a global community.

In providing year-round sports training and athletics for children and adults with intellectual disabilities (ID), it is SONJ's [Vision](#) to foster inclusive communities for people with and without intellectual disabilities through innovative [sport](#), [health](#), [wellness](#) and [leadership opportunities](#) for Special Olympics athletes, their families and society as a whole. Our [Strategic Goals](#) include social justice for people with disabilities, health and wellbeing for those with ID, strengthened communities, the empowerment of women, education, gender equality, and the reduction of inequalities and the breaking down of barriers for people with ID.

As noted in our [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#) statement, Special Olympics was founded on and promotes a more inclusive world, respecting and celebrating diversity and the unique gifts of all individuals. SONJ is invested in the health and safety of all Special Olympic participants -- Athletes, Unified partners, and volunteers -- and works to create a safe, positive, and inclusive environment for all. It is the Policy of SONJ that no participant should ever have to fear negative, threatening, discriminatory or adverse reactions or treatment by other athletes, coaches, or volunteers because of a participant's differences, including gender expression or identity. All eligible athletes, Unified partners, and volunteers should have the opportunity to participate in Special Olympics athletics/activities in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity, irrespective of the gender listed on the participants' medical or registration records and without subsequent medical or mental health care consultation.

### Environmental

SONJ is committed to promoting and supporting environmental sustainability as the environment is the bedrock upon which we build a more inclusive world. The quality of our local and global environments affects everything from the health and well-being of those we aim to uplift to the availability of public and green spaces on which we connect and grow our communities.

It is SONJ's intent to help support and achieve the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs). The UN calls the 17 SDGs "a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future." This vision aligns seamlessly with SONJ's Mission and Core Values to promote unity, inclusion, and equity throughout the community. Specifically, SONJ supports the sustainability of cities and communities as well as the provision of universal access to safe (free of harassment), inclusive and accessible public spaces, through its programming, which offers quality services to citizens of all abilities.

SONJ is not only focused on utilizing existing physical, technological, and human infrastructure to ensure a sustainable and effective use of community resources but also has taken steps to increase sustainability at its own facility. SONJ's Roof Solar Panel Project at Special Olympics New Jersey Sports Complex will simultaneously decrease the organization's carbon footprint and its energy costs over the long term, and new electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, as well as the purchase of new hybrid vehicles, will allow staff and the organization to utilize EVs. Looking forward, SONJ will work to identify additional practical and creative ways that can support both its Mission and the UN SDGs.

### Governance

SONJ Leadership is committed to managing the organization and approaching all challenges with the utmost integrity. Integrity, one of SONJ's [Core Values](#), is to execute the mission of Special Olympics with transparency, honesty, and the highest ethical conduct. As such, the SONJ Board of Trustees works with management to implement the policies, program, and sound fiscal management of the organization, and to encourage good management practices in carrying out the duties of the organization. SONJ partners and participants are also required to adhere to the organization's high ethical standards and comply with SONJ's Codes of Conduct. Further, the SONJ [Athlete Leadership Council](#) is empowered to provide SONJ Leadership with athlete opinions and recommendations regarding the organization. The Council is comprised of a selection of athletes from across the State and represents the voices of the athletes themselves in organizational discussions.

As part of SONJ's commitment to transparency, SONJ publishes strategic planning information and financial reports [here](#). Providing this information for public review helps to ensure that funds and resources are being used to fulfill our [Mission](#).

### Conclusion

Through the power of sport and community, Special Olympics New Jersey has changed the lives and hopes of thousands of individuals with intellectual disabilities throughout New Jersey, as well as their families and the communities in which they live. Through its commitment to the responsible Environmental, Social, and Governance statement outlined above, SONJ looks to a bright future.