CONIFA

2026 FOOTBALL STRATEGY DAYS

# Leading People, Events & Networks

CONIFA
Football Strategy Days
7-8 November 2026
Villa Cagnola | Gazzada Schianno
VARESE

## Building CONIFA's virtual operating and commercial engine: operational synergy × commercial value chain

An actionable framework to integrate dispersed global staff and local partners into one high-performing delivery network.

November 2026, Villa Cagnola VA



Dr. Fabio Puntillo
Global General Manager
CONIFA

# One virtual team, two missions

CONIFA



## 1 Operational synergy

Align staff and partners so tournaments run smoothly across borders, languages and time zones.



## 2 Commercial value chain

Turn territories, rights and data into sponsorship, media and hospitality revenue.



## The bridge: a virtual organization

CONIFA staff, host committees, member federations, local governments and commercial partners working to one plan, one calendar and one scorecard.

# Understanding Strengths and Weaknesses

## Who CONIFA is

- Non-profit for nations, regions, minorities, refugees and isolated territories
- Complements FIFA: a home for members that cannot join it
- Mission: friendship, culture, fair play and anti-racism
- Mostly voluntary and amateur system

## Challenges

- Lack of professional standards and organization
- Potential low brand awareness in hosting territories

## Strengths

- Social and Human values: celebrating differences and identities, empowers people, contributes to a better world through football.

## Management implication

Start with partner screening and capability injection, not only task allocation: **how can a virtual organization make any host able to deliver?**

Sources: CONIFA communiqués (Sept and Dec 2024); CONIFA management briefing.

# Turning Values and Limits into Assets

## CONIFA is for All

- CONIFA's audience is not just football fans belonging to their embers
- It talks, potentially, to **all humanity** because it shares common values, challenges and goals

## Building Partnerships and Virtual Organizations

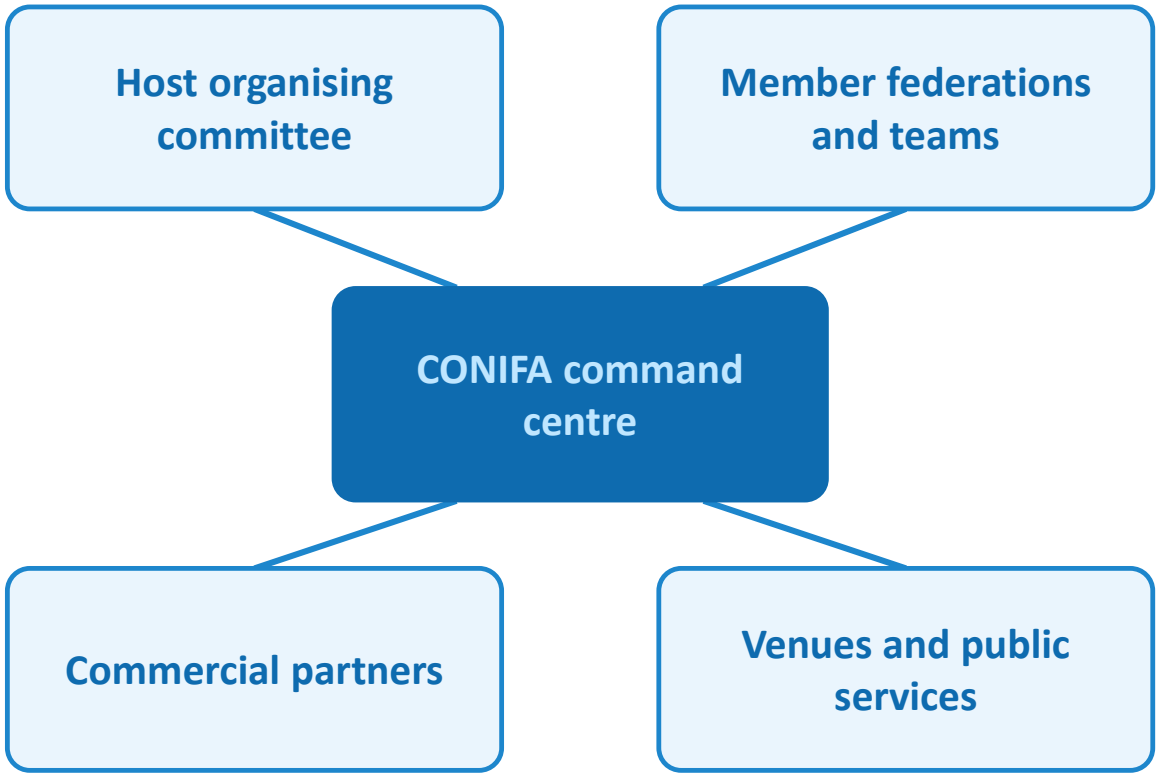
To overcome organizational and financial constraints look for:

> Public and private organizations and sponsors **Sensitive to social values** willing to team up

## Management implication

Start with partner screening and capability verification: **how can a virtual organization make any host able to deliver?**

# Building the virtual organization




## Operating rhythm

1. One RACI per workstream, signed by every partner
2. Weekly 30-minute stand-up across time zones
3. Shared playbook in English and the host language
4. Three-level crisis escalation, rehearsed before the event

# Operational synergy: four pillars

CONIFA



## Cross-Border Vision

One workflow and one standard across multicultural teams, channels and time zones.



## Global Collaboration

Shared accountability between federations, host committees and stakeholders.



## Tournament Efficiency

Logistics, travel protocols, multilingual operations and cross-border crisis response.



## Synergy Tools

Frameworks that help tournament directors run a fast, diverse workforce.

# Virtual organization design principles

## 1 Modular, not matrix

- Independent modules: venues, media, hospitality, crisis
- One lead partner and one CONIFA standards officer per module
- No dual reporting

## 2 Verify capability first

- Proof at host selection: staffing plan, local sponsor commitments, venue agreements
- A standard checklist, not fixes after the fact

## 3 An operating seat for partners

- Title sponsor holds an observer or advisor seat
- Joins key delivery reviews
- Raises sponsor value and adds outside discipline

# Three pillars in CONIFA's context

| Pillar | Meaning in CONIFA context | Concrete action |
|---|---|---|
| **Cross-border vision** | Multicultural workflows, multilingual communication, international standards aligned with local execution | Mandatory pre-training with a Host Operations Standards Manual |
| **Global collaborative accountability** | Balanced authority and responsibility among federations, local organizing committees and multinational stakeholders | A single accountability matrix: one owner per delivery package |
| **Tournament efficiency** | Global logistics, travel protocols, multilingual standard operations, cross-border crisis management | Pre-built crisis scenario library with tiered response triggers |

**Core logic: synergy is not more communication; it is standardization that lowers coordination costs in a virtual organization.**

# The organization guiding principles

CONIFA

## 1 WHAT

Every organization knows **what it does**.

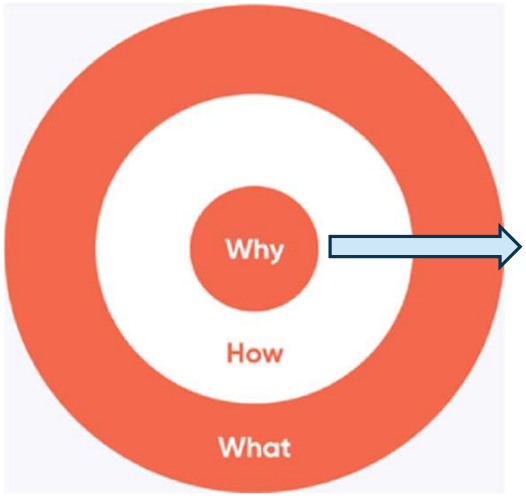
These are products they sell or the services.

## 2 HOW

Some organizations know **HOW they do it**.

These are the things that make them special or set them apart from their competition.

### The Golden Circle




## 3 WHY

Very few organizations know **WHY they do what they do**. WHY is not about making money.

That's a result. WHY is a purpose, cause or belief.

It’s the very reason the organization exists.

## 4 WHO

**Who we are doing this for?**

Whenever we ask people for something, we have to satisfy their expectations.

# Case: U21 EURO 2023 co-hosting

**2**

co-hosting countries and federations: Georgia and Romania

**8**

stadiums in 5 cities: Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi, Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca

**316K**

combined attendance, a record for the tournament

**44,338**

crowd for Georgia v Israel, a men's U21 EURO record

## Takeaways for CONIFA

1. Two federations, one tournament, eight stadiums.
2. Recruit locally: English-speaking volunteers, joint UEFA and federation certificate.
3. Tie hosting to strategy: UEFA Grow support shaped Georgia's 2022-26 plan.

Sources: UEFA.com (attendance, Georgia hosting); Georgian Football Federation volunteer programme; UEFA host-city listing.

# Case: CONIFA World Cup 2018

**16**

teams from five continents, representing 334M people

**10**

non-league club grounds across Greater London

**48**

matches from 31 May to 9 June 2018

**Feb**

title sponsor announced, almost four months before kickoff

## Transferable lessons

1. Ten dispersed venues meant relying on venue teams and local volunteers.
2. An early title sponsor (Paddy Power) gave operations resource certainty.
3. Operated by a local team deeply connected to the sports and business sectors.

Sources: CONIFA news (Feb and Mar 2018); Kentish Football (May 2018); CONIFA management briefing.

# How to guide the (virtual) organization

## Through LEADERSHIP

Definition of the word leadership:

**Position/Office (top/senior ranking)**

**VS.**

**Capacity/Skills (to lead)**

# Leadership

**Leadership is a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, toward the achievement of a shared goal(s)**

## Key elements of this definition:

1. Leadership stems from social influence, not authority or power
2. Leadership requires others, and that implies they don't need to be "direct reports"
3. Leaders empower (not manage) others, leverage the collective intelligence
4. No mention of personality traits, attributes, or even a title; there are many styles, many paths, to effective leadership
5. It includes a purpose and outcomes

# The essence of Leadership

The Three **L's** of Leadership:

**Love** | **Listen** | **Leap**

## Leadership impacts and enables:

### Vision

(of a better life, world, ….)

### Mission

(how we contribute)

### Strategy

(how we achieve)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2dSzjIKtVcA&list=PLo6rxMc8TjCHL4JoQICtFJQDqqIyAHsRs&index=28
Maurice Cheeks helps Natalie Gilbert sing the National Anthem at Trail Blazers game

# Being a Leader

Can only experienced top managers be a leader?

**No (but experience helps)**

Do they need staff, peers, audience to express leadership?

**Yes, but leadership starts within ourself**

**The starting point: leading oneself**

**> Are we able to lead ourselves?**

# What makes a Leader

In addition to intellectual abilities and technical skills, effective leaders are alike in having a high degree of E**motional Intelligence** (passion + rationality)

The components of emotional intelligence are:

*self-management skills*

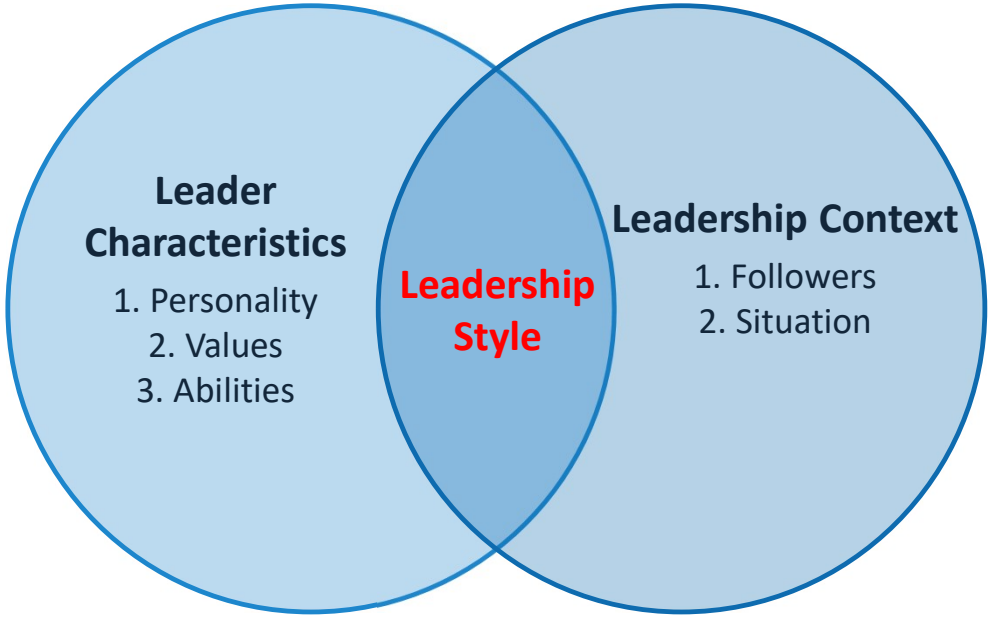
- **Self-awareness & Self-regulation**
- **Motivation**

*manage relationships with others*

- **Empathy**
- **Social Skills & Ethics**

# Leadership Styles

Leadership Style: a pattern of related behaviors a leader adopts to influence the team toward goal accomplishment



# Which Leadership Style?

## *Leadership is Situational*

1. Situational factors (motivation, capability of followers, relationship between followers and leader) determine the best action of leader
2. The Leader must be flexible to diagnosis leadership style appropriate for the situation and be able to apply the style
3. No one best leadership style for all situations
4. Leader personality affects the leadership mix

***Leadership style is also very "personal": expressed according to your personality***

# Role of Leaders

The real job of a leader is not about to be in charge,

**It is about taking care of those are in our charge**

**Leaders are not in control of the company's results** → **leaders are responsible for the people (management & staff)** → **who are directly responsible for the results**

Top management **does not produce products/services themselves, their staff do it**

Regardless of that, Leaders have to **share success with staff**

While they have to take **full responsibility for company failures**

# Role of Leaders



**The Orchestra Conductor does not play any notes**

He/she makes the solo players into an orchestra (**team building**)

by aligning them toward a common goal (**vision sharing**)

**The (great) orchestra conductor is a coach, role model, goal servant**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvbyoZJJYvo

# Building the team

**“Hire for attitude, train for skill”**

also stated as:

1. **Character before credentials**
2. **Attitude over competency**
3. **Hiring people for “who they are” first; “what they know” second**

**Unfortunately, very few recruiters can evaluate attitude and leadership**
**Most of them hire for skills first and, then, try to understand attitude**

# Leadership Behaviors

CONIFA

**3 good quotes:**



1. **Leaders Eat Last**

2. **The captain is the last to leave a ship in peril**
   (Put people first)

3. **Leaders do not have all the answers, they have all the questions**
   (Leverage collective intelligence)

# Leadership Behaviors

## Good Leaders vs Bad Leaders:

### Good leaders leverage people's:

- Passion
- Good Will
- Ethics
- Altruism

### Bad leaders leverage people's:

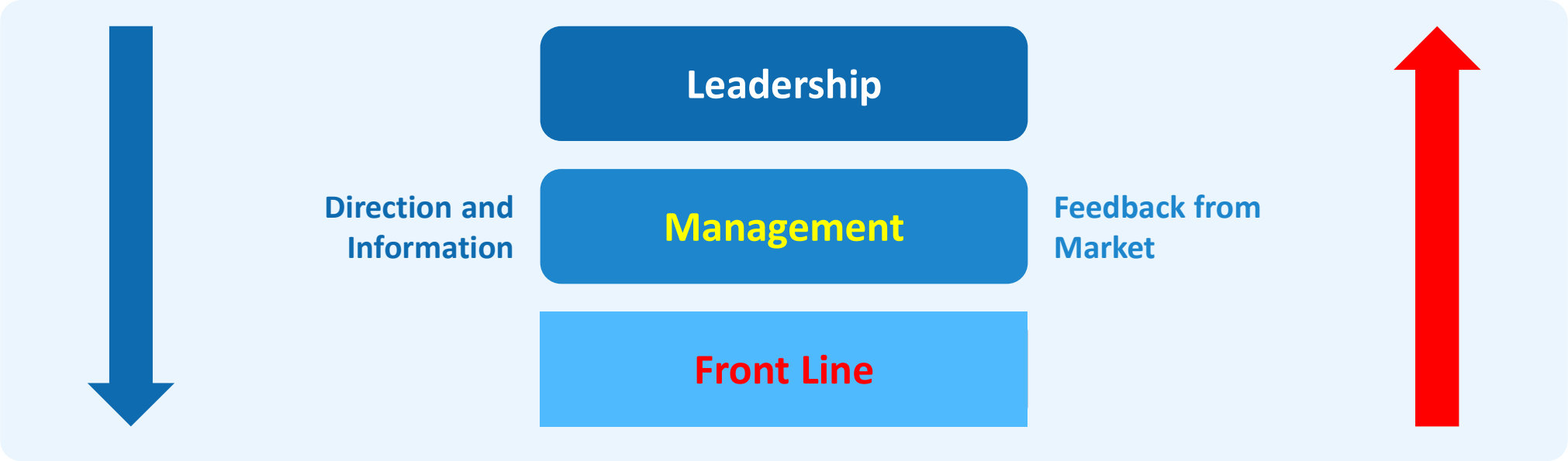
- Fear
- Hate
- Insecurity
- Egoism

# Leadership and Management

| | Leadership | Management |
|---|---|---|
| ***Agenda*** | **Establishing Direction**<br>Develop future vision<br>Develop change strategies to achieve the vision | **Planning/Budgeting**<br>Develop detailed steps/ timetables for results<br>Allocate necessary resources |
| ***Network Development for Agenda Achievement*** | **Aligning People**<br>Communicate directly by words & deeds to those whose cooperation needed<br>Influence creation of coalition/teams that understand & accept vision and strategies | **Organizing/Staffing**<br>Develop necessary planning, staffing, delegation structures<br>Provide policies/procedures for guidance and methods/systems for monitoring |
| ***Execution*** | **Motivating/inspiring**<br>Energy to overcome barriers (ex. Political resource, bureaucratic) to change by satisfying basic needs | **Control/Problem Solving**<br>Monitor results vs. plan in detail<br>Identify results/plan deviations and plan and organize to correct |
| ***Outcomes*** | **Tends to Produce**<br>Change often dramatic<br>Provides potential for very useful change (ex. New products) | **Tends to Produce**<br>Order/predictability<br>Key results expected by stakeholders |

# Leadership and Management

## Turning Strategy into Actions: the Circular Flow



# Commercial value chain for CONIFA




| Map | Package | Sell | Activate | Measure |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Score regions by fan reach, spend and sponsor fit | Bundle sponsorship, media and hospitality rights | Global brands, rights distributors and premium buyers | Deliver with the host committee and local partners | Report media value and ROI; renew on evidence |

## Global-local optimization

At every step, ask two questions: what does the world buy, and what does this host region uniquely offer?

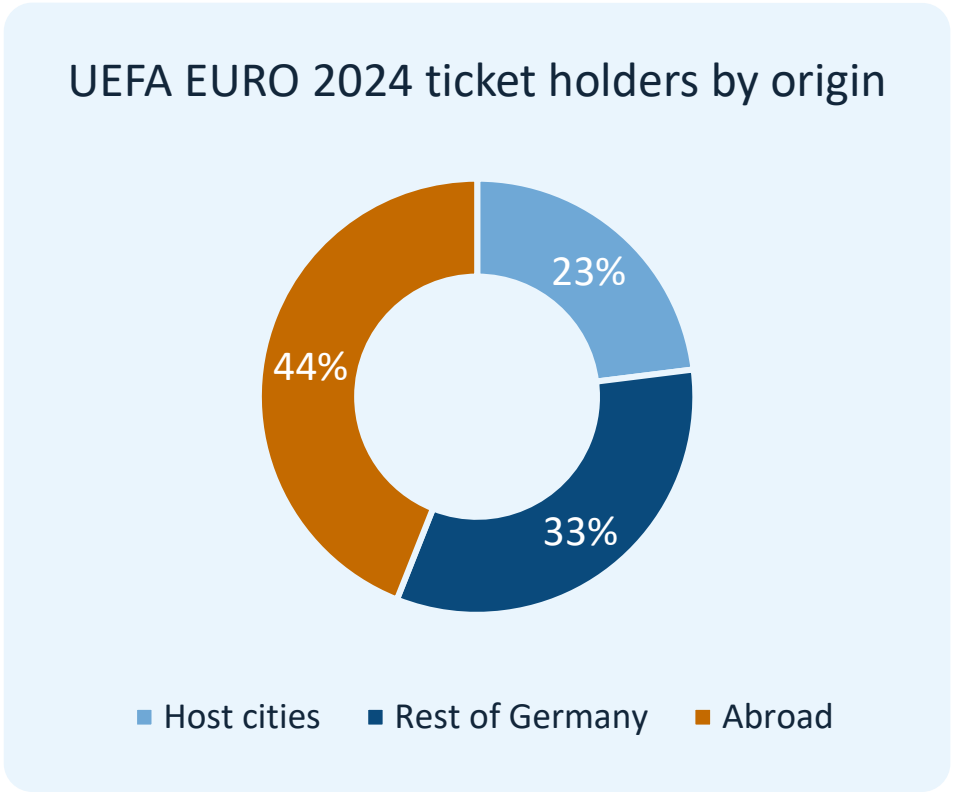
# Value chain rebuilt for CONIFA

Traditional chain: rights holder → host → sponsors and media → consumers. CONIFA restructures it:

| Value chain stage | Core activity | Responsible in the virtual organization |
|---|---|---|
| **Rights packaging** | Convert the “World Football Cup of the unrepresented” narrative into sellable assets (the event is not yet a product) | CONIFA central and commercial partners |
| **Local activation** | Translate global sponsor rights into host-community activation | Local organizing committee and CONIFA regional reps |
| **Media distribution** | Multilingual, multi-platform content, especially for diaspora communities | Media partners and CONIFA communications |
| **Data capture** | Audience data, sponsor exposure, community growth metrics | CONIFA central, managed uniformly |

**Key insight: value lies in community precision and narrative uniqueness, not in event scale.**

# Territorial mapping: who travels?




## Traveling international fans

Hospitality, travel and accommodation partners, ticket bundles, diaspora media.

## Local host demographics

Regional brands, community sponsors, family and school programmes, local media.

Hypothesis to test: diaspora communities abroad can play the role of the 44%. Source: UEFA and Nielsen Sports (2024).

# Case: EFL sponsorship value

English Football League: tiers 2 to 4, 72 clubs, about 22M admissions across its competitions (2022-23).

## Sky Bet: title sponsor of three leagues

**+20%**
a year at the 2019 renewal

**2029**
five-year extension to 2028-29

Rights span league titles, play-offs and in-stadium branding, plus a £1M-a-year community fund.

## Vertu: title sponsor of the EFL Trophy

**~£3M**
prize pot for League One and Two clubs

**100%**
of matches live on Sky Sports (2024-25)

Vertu moved three dealer brands under one name (200+ outlets); the trophy carried it.

**Value loop: sponsor funds clubs, clubs gain revenue and community reach, the league renews higher.**

Sources: EFL, club and Vertu announcements, iGB, Sportcal. Sponsor fees and private ROI are not public.

# How sponsors judge fair value

**Fair value = measurable exposure + tangible benefits + brand fit, benchmarked against comparable deals**

### 1 Media value equivalency

Logo time on screen priced at ad rates: broadcast spot cost, social CPM.

### 2 Audience and reach

Attendance, TV and streaming viewers, social reach, audience profile.

### 3 Brand lift

Awareness, consideration and sentiment versus a control group.

### 4 Comparable deals

Price versus similar properties: assets, audience, reputation.

### 5 Business return

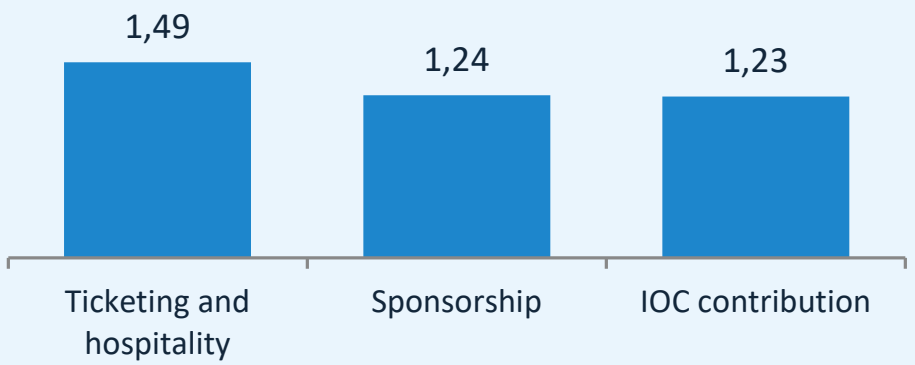
Leads, hospitality use and sales, judged as ROO, then ROI against the fee.

### 6 Brand fit

Audience quality and alignment with the sponsor's values and goals.

Media value alone overstates worth: it counts exposure, not effect. Sources: Relo Metrics, Elevent, Optimy, The Sponsor.

# Case: Paris 2024 value creation




**€4.48bn**

total revenue, against €4.45bn of spending

**€26.8M**

surplus, with spending up 17% on the bid budget

**+€150M**

sponsorship above the bid-phase forecast

**12.1M**

tickets sold across the Games

**Sponsorship (€1.24bn) nearly matched ticketing (€1.49bn): a revenue pillar of its own.**

**For CONIFA: sell deep community reach and narrative co-creation, not Olympic-style exposure.**

Sources: Paris 2024 Summer Olympics final budget release (Dec 2024); Sportcal; Francs Jeux.

# Data-driven growth scorecard

| Metric | What it proves | Source |
|---|---|---|
| **Media value** | Brand exposure on broadcast and social | Logo-recognition tools |
| **Reach** | Live audience, streams, fan-zone visits | Broadcaster and platform data |
| **Fan origin** | Travelling versus local fans | Ticketing and surveys |
| **Hospitality yield** | Revenue per premium guest | Sales and CRM |
| **Sponsor renewal** | ROI and willingness to pay more | Partner reviews |

## Uniqueness becomes advantage

1. Diaspora communities: travel and ticket packages
2. Distinct identity stories: premium media content
3. Host-region brands: local partner tiers

# Working Roadmap: 12 to 18 months

| Phase | Timeline | Key deliverables | Owner |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Diagnosis** | Months 1–3 | Review 2018 synergy lessons and 2024 failure root causes; produce Operations Standards Manual v1.0 | CONIFA secretariat and external advisor |
| **Partner screening** | Months 4–6 | Publish host capability assessment framework; start due diligence on candidate hosts | Operations director and commercial development |
| **Commercial packaging** | Months 4–8 | Design tiered sponsorship packages: community reach, narrative co-creation, local activation | Commercial development and media partners |
| **Virtual organization launch** | Months 9–10 | Sign module leads; deploy standards officers; first full-network rehearsal | Tournament director |
| **Stress testing** | Months 12–15 | Tabletop crisis exercises and a mid-term commercial delivery audit | All module owners |
| **Delivery** | Months 16–18 | Tournament execution and real-time data capture | Full virtual organization |

**Be present and be flexible (but not too much)**
**Bigger is better than smaller, smaller is better than nothing (be realistic)**

# Key risks and mitigation

| Risk | How it shows up | Mitigation |
|---|---|---|
| **Inflated host capability** | Resources promised at bid stage fail to materialize | Require bank credit references and pre-signed venue agreements; no letters of intent |
| **Misaligned partner expectations** | Sponsors benchmark CONIFA against FIFA or Olympic standards are dissatisfied | Define deliverable metrics before signing (community reach, co-created content, local activation events), not vague exposure |
| **Missing participating CONIFA members** | Poor communication, lack of firm confirmation | Ask for a written contract and a refundable deposit |
| **Central capacity bottleneck** | A small secretariat cannot manage many modules at once | Launch 2–3 core modules first; outsource or defer the rest; accept “imperfect but controlled” delivery |

# Conclusions

1. CONIFA's advantage is not scale: it is the irreplaceability of its community and the exclusivity of its narrative based on human values and people's needs and goals.

2. The virtual organization is the only viable model under resource limits, but it depends on front-loaded partner verification, modular accountability, and having a shared vision and mission.

3. The value chain starts with packaging rights partners cannot get elsewhere (uniqueness, deep community reach, co-created narrative), not with "finding sponsors".

4. Be honest with yourself and the partners about what you can do and offer
   Professionalism is non-negotiable
   Ask for help and support whenever needed