

# FINAL REPORT UEFA RGP



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## TOWARDS MORE EFFECTIVE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION FOR NATIONAL FOOTBALL FEDERATIONS THROUGH CAPABILITY-BASED MANAGEMENT.

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## **TOWARDS MORE EFFECTIVE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION FOR NATIONAL FOOTBALL FEDERATIONS THROUGH CAPABILITY-BASED MANAGEMENT.**

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# 1. Executive summary

## Practical impact for UEFA and European Football

From a practical perspective, this study delivered tangible value for both UEFA and its member associations. The development of a reference Capability Structure and Capability Map provides NFAs with a stable internal view of the organizational domains involved in strategy execution. This helps translate strategic ambitions into concrete areas over which meaningful responsibility can be taken (Versteeg & Bouwman, 2006), thereby bringing greater focus to strategic management processes. Through selected Capability-Based Management (CBM) analysis and visualization techniques, which were introduced, applied, and evaluated in the study, strategic ambitions can be translated into clearer decisions, actions, responsibilities, performance indicators, and priorities for these organizational domains. This supports clearer prioritization, improved internal alignment, and more consistent decision-making across strategy cycles, while addressing common NFA challenges related to stakeholder alignment, prioritization, accountability, resource visibility, and internal coherence.

For UEFA, the outcomes of the research offer a complementary, practice-oriented approach that can strengthen the existing strategic management framework. CBM enhances the actionability of strategic guidance by providing a common structure that represents NFAs in their totality, while still allowing individual federations to tailor the structure to their own size, maturity, and context. The broader implication is that CBM could become a practical support mechanism for improving strategic management across European football and for supporting UEFA's ambition to foster professional, well-governed, and future-ready football associations. It could help UEFA organize knowledge-sharing initiatives, structure federation development programs, support maturity discussions, and create reusable toolkits for strategy execution. Used in this way, the contribution of CBM is not limited to individual federations; it may also support a more systematic learning infrastructure across UEFA's member associations.

## Academic contribution of the research

This study addresses a well-documented challenge in sport governance: the gap between strategy formulation and strategy execution within National Football Associations (NFAs). While existing academic literature confirms the importance of strategic management for sport governing bodies, implementation remains one of the most difficult phases of the strategic management process. However, limited scientific literature provides concrete mechanisms to address this challenge in the specific context of football associations.

By introducing CBM into the NFA context, this study extends existing strategic management frameworks by making strategic ambitions and future visions more explicit, structured, and actionable. CBM supports this through a systematic translation and analysis approach, grounded in a shared, modular, domain-based structure. The research integrates insights from strategic management, enterprise architecture, and sport management and governance, and applies them through a multi-method research design that includes design science research, qualitative interviews, and intervention-based evaluation.



In doing so, the study contributes to the academic state of knowledge by offering a more structured and systemic approach to translating strategic ambitions into concrete decisions, guiding principles, and subsequent actions for configuring organizational resources in line with strategic ambitions. This remains an underdeveloped area in scientific research on National Football Associations.

Additionally, the developed Capability Structure provides a foundational taxonomy for future research. It can be used to position future studies against specific organizational domains, making it clearer which aspects of NFA management are being studied and where research gaps remain. This can help both researchers and practitioners follow developments in the field more systematically and connect future findings to concrete domains of football association management.

## 2. Introduction

European football operates in an environment that is becoming increasingly complex. UEFA's *Grow Strategic Framework* explicitly recognizes that national associations are expected not only to deliver football activities, but to do so through increasingly professional, structured, and future-oriented management practices. This includes clearer strategic roadmaps, stronger governance, and more systemic approaches to implementation (UEFA, 2019). UEFA has explicitly acknowledged this evolution through its *Football Federations of the Future* initiative, which calls for clearer internal structures, and more professional management practices within national associations in order to remain sustainable, credible, and future-ready.

For National Football Associations (NFAs) or Federations<sup>1</sup>, who usually consist of clubs and regional associations and who are responsible for a wide variety of tasks related to the domestic game and national teams (Berthoud et al., 2021), this is no easy challenge. They are expected, like other National Sport Associations, to balance sporting success, fan entertainment, financial sustainability, regulatory compliance, social responsibility, digital transformation, and evolving divergent stakeholder expectations (O'Brien, 2022). And often, all the previous simultaneously and with limited resources, with a tendency for National Sport Associations to be lacking the necessary capabilities for Strategic Thinking (O'Brien, 2023), while balancing a wide variety in stakeholders and their expectations (Berthoud et al., 2021). UEFA's strategic ambitions, as reflected in its long-term vision and guidance documents, clearly acknowledge this growing complexity, which again emphasizes the need for more mature, professional, and structured management practices within NFAs to face these challenges effectively.

One of the most persistent challenges in this context is not merely the formulation of strategy, but its translation into effective action. Both UEFA Grow (UEFA, 2019) and the FIFA Handbook for Football Association Leadership (FIFA, 2025) underline that strategy only creates value when it is translated into clear priorities, responsibilities, and operational decisions across the entire organization. While organizations might have well-articulated strategic visions and multi-year plans, ensuring that these ambitions are effectively implemented across the organization is not guaranteed, as noted by (Draebye, 2021). Draebye further emphasizes in his work that strategic management systems can only be effective when the intersections between analysis, planning, execution, and control are properly functioning. A specific illustration of this is provided by

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<sup>1</sup> The terms Association and Federation are used interchangeably in this document.

(Corak et al., 2014), who indicate that while NSAs in Croatia (including but not specifically singling out the Croatian NFA) are capable of articulating strategic goals and objectives, comprehensive strategic planning and consistent execution remain underdeveloped. (Bayle & Robinson, 2007), who studied strategy and management practices in relation to organizational performance of National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of Sport in France, mention that without clear objectives and lack of clarity on how resources should be applied, the effective performance of such an organization is inhibited. This illustrates that when an organization misses a clear plan to align resources with strategic objectives, the organization will underperform and is most likely to fail in meeting its projected ambitions.

Capability-Based Management (CBM) (Van Riel, 2025) is a practice focused on mitigating the abovementioned challenges and making strategic management actionable. By introducing a stable, domain-based view of the organization (called a Capability Structure) that complements existing strategic frameworks, CBM allows organizations to focus on what an organization must consistently be able to do in order to deliver value and achieve its strategic objectives (Van Riel, 2025; Van Riel et al., 2025), rather than focusing on purely operational improvements, individual projects, or short-term initiatives.

Against this background, this study is positioned as a practical response to a widely recognized problem: how can NFAs make strategic management more actionable, coherent, and resilient over time? Our study addresses this problem from the perspective of CBM, which we investigate as a viable solution approach to bridging strategy formulation and execution through a strategy implementation process focused on systematically defining and analyzing organizational domains.

The outline of this report is as follows. Section 3 presents the research objectives, while Section 4 provides the background and literature review. The research methodology to address the research questions is presented in Section 5. Section 6 covers the scientific research findings, while Section 7 discusses the practical application of the findings, and Section 8 presents the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are covered. The final section, Section 9, discusses the impact and contributions of the study and provides a more detailed overview of its value for the academic field, UEFA, and National Football Associations.

For readers mainly interested in understanding how the findings of this study can be applied in practice, such as practitioners working at NFAs, it is recommended to focus on Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9. Sections 5 and 6 provide a more detailed account of the research design, methodology, and findings, and are especially intended for readers interested in the scientific basis of the study.

### 3. Research objectives

This study was designed to meet a clear ambition: to provide UEFA and its member associations with a practical, reusable foundation for strengthening strategic management. At the same time, it does not assume that there is such a thing as *the* National Football Association. NFAs differ in size, maturity, available resources, governance structures, stakeholder environments, and strategic priorities. Therefore, this study deliberately included associations from different countries and organizational size categories to explore whether a capability-based approach can provide value across different NFA contexts. Where relevant, these contextual differences are

reflected in the findings and practical guidelines. However, given the limited number of participating associations, these distinctions should be interpreted as indicative rather than conclusive; the effective value of CBM in different NFA settings will need to be further researched and validated through application in practice.

Specifically, this study pursued two related objectives to achieve this:

- 1. To develop and validate a reference Capability Structure for National Football Associations**, providing a shared, domain-based view of what NFAs may need to be able to do to fulfill their purpose and mission. This reference structure should aim to be representative for all European NFAs and is therefore deliberately constructed as a union of capabilities across participating NFAs, rather than as an intersection of only those capabilities that are present in every federation ( $A \cup B \cup C$ , rather than  $A \cap B \cap C$ ). In other words, it reflects the set of capabilities that may be relevant to any NFA. Individual federations can therefore tailor the structure to their own context by deciding which capabilities are in scope, out of scope, or not currently relevant. This makes the artefact reusable across NFAs of different sizes and maturity levels, while still allowing smaller or more focused federations to adapt it pragmatically to their own needs.
- 2. To identify Capability-Based Management analysis techniques that may strengthen Strategic Management in an NFA context**, enabling federations to apply relevant analysis and visualization techniques in concrete strategic and operational decisions. The study explores how these techniques are perceived to support strategic management challenges in different NFA contexts. However, the relationship between contextual properties of an NFA, such as size, maturity, resources, or governance complexity, and the perceived value of specific CBM use cases should be interpreted cautiously. Given the limited number of participating federations, this study did not aim to establish causal relationships between context and use-case effectiveness. At most, the findings indicate exploratory patterns of perceived usefulness that can inform further application, refinement, and validation.

Together, these objectives aim to strengthen the strategic management system of NFAs by making strategy more actionable, more internally coherent, and more resilient over time. This directly supports UEFA's broader ambition of fostering professional, well-governed, and future-ready football associations across Europe.

Accordingly, the central research question which guided this study is formulated as follows:

- **RQM (Main Research Question):**  
How, and to what extent, can Capability-Based Management contribute to addressing strategic management challenges across the phases of strategy analysis, planning, implementation, and evaluation & control within National Football Associations?

To operationalize this overarching question, three sub-research questions are defined:

- **RQ1 (Capability Structure):** To what extent can a generic capability structure be identified for national football Associations to support strategic management activities?
- **RQ2 (Strategic Management Challenges):** What specific challenges do national football Associations experience in the practice of strategic management across the phases of strategy analysis, planning, implementation, and evaluation & control? (Draebye, 2021)

- **RQ3 (Value of CBM as part of a Strategic Management System):** How is Capability-Based Management to mitigate the identified strategic management challenges, encountered by National Football Associations, and thus to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of strategic management activities across the four phases?

## 4. Background and literature study

### Literature study: approach

This section describes the applied literature study approach applied between August and November 2025. For readability purposes, this section provides an overview of the approach and results. Specific detailed information is left out of this section and presented in the annex, which can be found at the end of the document.

#### *Applied approach*

To identify relevant research, three categories of search terms were combined: (1) references to football governing bodies (e.g., associations and federations), (2) terms related to strategy and its execution (including strategic management, planning, and implementation), and (3) terms referring to football/soccer and the broader sport context. These terms were selected to ensure that the retrieved literature specifically addressed how football and sport federations define, manage, and implement strategy in practice. The search intentionally included non-football sport associations, based on the assumption that insights from broader sport-management research may be transferable to the context of National Football Associations (NFAs). Searches were conducted across multiple academic databases, including Scopus and Web of Science. The detailed search logic applied can be found in the annex.

Only results published in English were retained. After screening abstracts for relevance, only five academic studies were retained. An additional ten publications were identified through snowballing, a technique that involves reviewing the reference lists of the selected papers. Google Scholar was used to locate these. Of these ten, only five were kept after reviewing the abstract.

While all retained sources provide insights into the challenges and relevance of strategic management in National Sport Federations, they largely focus on problem identification and offer only limited to no guidance on how these challenges can be addressed in a systematic way (Bayle & Robinson, 2007; Corak et al., 2014; Gajda et al., 2020; M. Garmamo et al., 2024; M. G. Garmamo et al., 2025; O'Brien, 2022, 2023; Tadesse et al., 2023). One source found (Gulak-Lipka, 2020) mentions the relevance of Balanced Scorecards, a framework developed by Kaplan and Norton, but again offers no further practical guidance towards a better strategic management practice for NFAs. These results indicate that academic research specifically addressing the actionable side of strategic management within National Football Associations remains scarce, revealing a clear research gap from a scientific perspective.

Given this limited academic coverage, the literature review was extended to a multivocal literature review following guidelines of (Garousi et al., 2019). A Multivocal Literature Review (MLR) systematically combines peer-reviewed academic research (“white literature”) with relevant practitioner-oriented sources (“grey literature”), such as industry reports, white papers, professional publications, and other applied materials from e.g. UEFA and FIFA. This approach

enables a more comprehensive understanding by integrating theoretical insights with practical perspectives from the field and the search was done through Google and Google Scholar, focusing on (but not limited to) search terms such as “national association strategic management”, “national federation strategic management”, which yielded only one outdated result. Additionally, the UEFA Academy Online Library was consulted for non-publicly available documents. And with success, as grey literature was found in this source which provided more concrete guidance on how to improve Strategic Management at National Football Associations. The complete set of results and the applied scoring mechanism can be found in the annex.

## Strategic Management challenges in National Football Associations

Challenges in Strategic Management are not limited to NFA’s. (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000) listed six silent killers of strategy implementation, of which three focus on the leadership competencies of management and three are focused on a lack of a clear alignment within the organization. These last three are: a lack of clearly defined strategies and conflicting priorities; poor vertical communication; and poor effective coordination (for strategy implementation). These three ‘killers’ seem to originate due to a lack of clear structures and a systemic approach to Strategic Management. Additionally, (Hrebiniak, 2006) lists obstacles to effective strategy implementation. The six most important obstacles include: poor or vague strategy; not having guidelines or a model to guide strategy implementation efforts; poor or inadequate information sharing among individuals/units responsible for strategy execution (implying impaired horizontal and vertical communication); and unclear responsibility or accountability for implementation decisions or actions. Again, these seem related to the beforementioned lack of clear structures and a systemic approach to Strategic Management.

In the light of these challenges, UEFA provides a clear and valuable framework for strategic management within football associations (Draebye, 2021; UEFA Grow, 2022). It emphasizes the importance of structured strategic analysis, clear prioritization, and alignment with external stakeholders such as clubs, leagues, players, fans, sponsors, and governing bodies. Draebye’s work further proposes a strategic management system that explicitly connects environmental strategic analysis (phase 1); strategy formulation (phase 2); planning, communication & implementation (phase 3), and performance monitoring (phase 4). This is shown in figure 1.

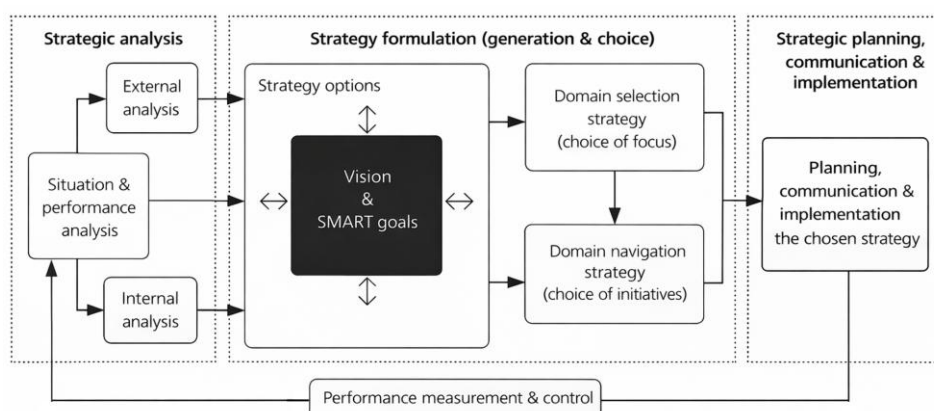


FIGURE 1 - STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (DRAEBYE, 2021)

The process is further aligned with the guidance provided by FIFA (FIFA, 2025), who identified four stages related to strategic management: Situation Analysis, Set the Direction, Develop the Plan,

Deliver the Plan. The guidance of these references varies: (Draebye, 2021) mostly provides a framework and an indication of what needs to be done. (FIFA, 2025) adds limited guidance on how to do this, by adding templates for practical use, where (UEFA Grow, 2022) goes even a bit further and offers a more elaborate process description with realistic examples of the different actions involved.

However, despite their value, both practice and literature suggest that NFAs often struggle to operationalize these frameworks in a consistent and sustainable manner, even though the importance of such a strategic management system is well understood and accepted. While strategic objectives are often clearly articulated, federations face increasing difficulty in translating them into coherent internal priorities, operational choices, and sustained execution across the organization. An issue that UEFA itself highlights as a key development challenge for modern federations (Draebye, 2021; UEFA Grow, 2022). When consolidating these sources, four recurring overall themes stand out.

**First, strategy formulation and execution tend to be loosely coupled.** Although strategic plans are commonly translated into multi-year programs or project portfolios, the underlying logic linking strategic objectives to concrete organizational capabilities and their required resources is often implicit rather than explicit. As a result, implementation becomes fragmented, progress is difficult to assess beyond high-level indicators, and strategic priorities are frequently renegotiated during execution. This challenge is documented in more general sport management literature, where empirical studies show that strategy implementation is perceived as more difficult than strategy formulation (Corak et al., 2014; Gajda et al., 2020). Organizational performance depends not only on strategic intent, but on the alignment between strategy, governance, integration mechanisms, and operational realization and thus the effectiveness of Strategic Management of Sport Associations has an impact on their overall performance (Bayle & Robinson, 2007; Tadesse et al., 2023).

**Second, NFAs seem to struggle with stakeholder alignment, prioritization, and internal coherence.** Interviews revealed persistent difficulties in aligning internal and external stakeholder expectations, often resulting in unclear prioritization of initiatives and competing interpretations of strategic goals. These challenges are compounded by organizational silos, where divisions pursue local optimization rather than shared objectives, leading to missed synergies and inconsistent execution. Similar patterns have been observed in prior studies of national sport organizations, which identify unclear accountability, weak coordination mechanisms, and insufficient information systems as structural barriers to effective strategy implementation (Bayle & Robinson, 2007). UEFA and FIFA guidance (Draebye, 2021; FIFA, 2025; UEFA Grow, 2022) acknowledge that without strong internal alignment and clarity of responsibilities, strategic ambitions cannot be translated into consistent action across the organization.

**Third, translating strategic pillars into actionable organizational priorities seems challenging.** UEFA provides clear and valuable guidance by articulating the key areas in which football associations are expected to create impact. The use of so-called domains (Draebye, 2021) or strategic pillars (UEFA Grow, 2022) aim to help federations structure their strategic ambitions, communicate priorities, and align around common objectives related to football development, governance, and stakeholder engagement. This model is shown in Figure 2 below.



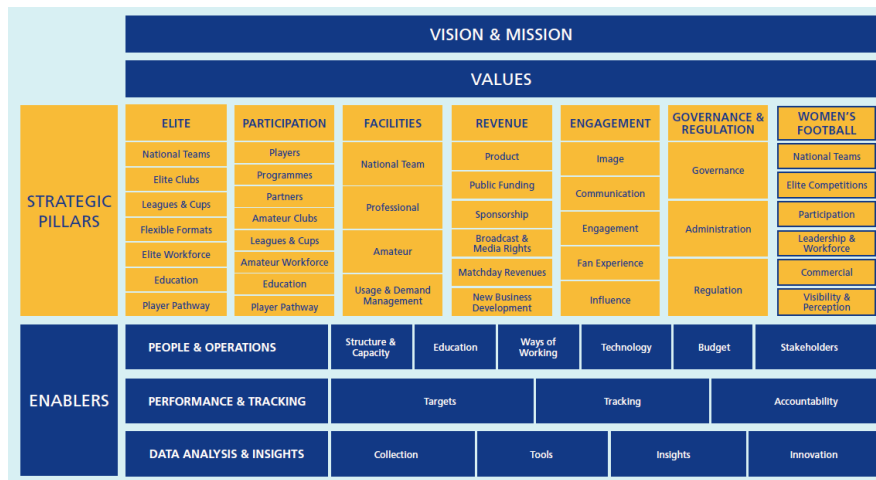


FIGURE 2 - STRATEGIC PILLARS AND ENABLERS

At the same time, these domains or strategic pillars seem to combine different types of strategic elements within a single concept. They seem to reflect a mix of externally focused domains, stakeholder groups, service lines, and desired outcomes. While this broad framing can be useful for an initial strategic orientation, it can complicate the translation of strategic ambition into concrete organizational priorities and responsibilities. The lack of a clear definition or even unified term (e.g. domains vs pillars) does not help. This makes it unclear what the scope of a domain or pillar is, of what it is comprised (e.g. resources) and how it is realized in practice.

This ambiguity and unclarity makes it consequently less clear how strategic objectives should be translated towards resource allocation and organizational design. Further, there seems to be a strong emphasis on outward-facing domains or pillars. This could cause that internal enabling domains (e.g. governance, financial management, IT management) receive less explicit strategic attention, even though they might be essential for consistent execution.

As a result, federations may experience a gap between strategic intent and operational reality: strategic priorities are clearly defined, but the internal structures and decision mechanisms required to deliver them are not always made explicit or managed in a systemic way. Addressing this gap is central to strengthening strategy implementation and is a key motivation for the research presented in this report.

**Finally, maintaining strategic relevance and continuity over time remains a persistent challenge.** NFAs typically operate within multi-year strategic cycles, but leadership changes, evolving external demands, and unforeseen events regularly disrupt execution. Interviewees confirmed that management turnover complicates long-term planning, as new leadership teams may reinterpret or redefine strategic priorities. Without a stable internal reference structure, each strategic cycle risks starting from scratch rather than building cumulatively on existing strengths. This observation aligns closely with broader strategic management research, which shows that failures in execution are rarely caused by poor strategic vision alone, but by systemic weaknesses in how strategy is implemented, monitored, and adapted over time.

It seems fair to conclude that these findings suggest that many NFAs have a clear understanding of *what they want to achieve*, but less clarity on *what they need to be consistently good at internally* in order to achieve it. And probably even more complicated: *how these capabilities should then evolve to support strategic ambitions in a dynamic and demanding environment.*

## Capability-Based Management as an key enabler for Strategic Management systems

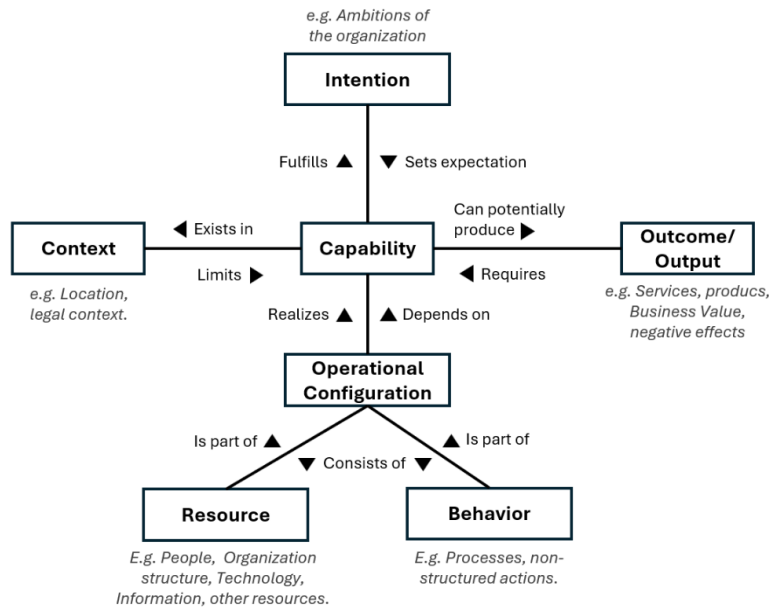
Capability-Based Management (CBM) addresses precisely the gap identified above by introducing a stable, domain-based view of the organization that complements existing strategic frameworks. Rather than focusing on organizational structures, individual projects, or short-term initiatives, CBM focuses on what an organization must consistently be able to do in order to deliver value and achieve its strategic objectives (Van Riel, 2025; Van Riel et al., 2025).

Formally, the concept of enterprise capability (Van Riel et al., 2025) can be understood as a conjunction of *ability* and *capacity* (Sandkuhl & Stirna, 2018). A capability refers to an organization's actual or potential ability to achieve specific goals, or intentions, within a given context, provided it can secure and configure the required resources. These resources may include people, information, technology, infrastructure, processes, and other organizational assets. In this sense, a capability does not only describe what an organization is currently able to do; it can also express what the organization intends or aspires to be able to do in the future.

The capability concept is also positioned on a higher level of abstraction than the business function concept, making it more stable over time. This makes the capability concept particularly relevant for strategic planning. Strategic intention sets expectations about the outcomes or outputs an organization wants to achieve, as well as about the operational configuration required to realize them. However, translating a vision into concrete expectations for outcomes and operational change requires a clear understanding of the capability domain involved, the specific context in which it operates, and the current configuration of resources supporting it. More practically stated, capabilities represent functional domains that connect strategic intent and expected outcomes with the configuration of resources needed to produce those outcomes in a given context. CBM introduces an intermediate layer which explicitly helps prevent a common problem in strategic management: jumping directly from ambition to individual projects, without first defining a proper strategic portfolio (Meskendahl, 2010).

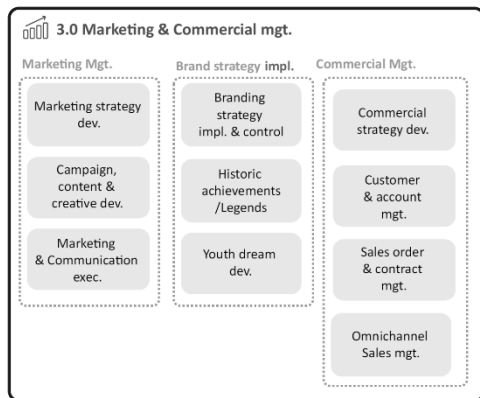
This logic aligns with Draebye's strategic management system. During strategic analysis, the organization assesses its context, intentions, current performance, and the existing operational configuration of relevant capabilities. During strategy formulation, strategic ambitions are translated into choices about which capabilities should be prioritized and what outcomes are expected from them. These choices may imply that a capability's output needs to change, for example by delivering a new or improved service, or that the output should remain stable while the underlying operational configuration is changed to become more efficient, scalable, or sustainable.

The resulting strategic choices then need to be translated into a transition path. This defines what must change in the capability's operational configuration, which resources are required, and which initiatives are needed to move from the current to the desired state. In Draebye's terms, this connects strategy formulation to strategic planning, communication, and implementation. The transition path can then be converted into an executable plan, taking into account available funding, people, resources, priorities, and constraints. In this way, CBM provides a bridge between strategic ambition and executable change by making explicit which capabilities are affected, what outcomes are expected, and what operational changes are required. This is conceptually shown in (Figure 3), based on (G. Koutsopoulos, 2024).



**FIGURE 3 – PROPERTIES OF THE CAPABILITY CONSTRUCT, RELEVANT FOR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT**

Examples of capabilities on the highest level of abstraction are e.g. Sales, Procurement, Logistics, Financial Accounting. Naturally, this highest level is too broad for configuring resources and thus will have to be broken down into smaller, lower abstraction level capabilities. By using capabilities as building blocks at different levels of detail, organizations can break down complexity into manageable domains, create a shared understanding of how functional domains



**FIGURE 4 - EXAMPLE OF A CAPABILITY DECOMPOSITION**

within the organization are structured, and address strategic and operational challenges at a scale that is practical and actionable for management.

An NFA-specific example of such breakdown can be found in Figure 4, where the marketing & commercial management capability is broken down into three sub-capabilities (Marketing Management, Brand Strategy Implementation and Commercial Management), which are further broken down into other sub-capabilities.

CBM uses these capabilities as a common reference point for strategic analysis and decision-making. By making capabilities explicit and visual, typically through a Capability Structure and a Capability Map, organizations gain a holistic overview of how their strategy is supported by their internal operating model (Van Riel & Poels, 2023). This allows federations to:

- translate strategic objectives into concrete capability requirements (what is expected in a future state, required to achieve our strategic objectives?);
- assess strengths, weaknesses, and gaps across these capabilities (what is the current state and thus what is the gap, when compared with the future state?);

- prioritize investments based on strategic importance rather than organizational silos (understand which capabilities contribute most to the realization of the strategic objectives); and
- maintain continuity across strategy cycles despite leadership or structural changes. As the structure remains stable and goals are made explicit based on this structure, it's easier to assess what remains stable and what needs to change in case of an altered strategic vision.

In order to do so, CBM presents multiple so-called use cases (Van Riel, 2025; Van Riel et al., 2023). These use cases consist of specific analysis and modelling techniques, based on capabilities, designed to support alignment, prioritization, and strategic decision-making. In this sense, CBM does not replace existing strategic management frameworks such as those described by (Draebye, 2021; UEFA, 2019; UEFA Grow, 2022). Instead, it proposes an alternative domain structure which aims to make the existing framework more actionable in two ways. First, by providing a clear internal reference structure that links strategic intent to organizational readiness. Strategic domains defined in existing frameworks might even be mapped to the proposed, broader capability structure. Second, by proposing the abovementioned use cases, with guidance on how to apply these.

This broader view of an NFA and the explicit inclusion of supporting capabilities is important for effective strategy execution. When federations focus predominantly on externally visible or “core” domains comparable to the primary activities in Porter’s value chain (Porter, 1985) there is a risk that supporting capabilities receive insufficient strategic attention. Capability-Based Management helps restore balance by explicitly linking strategic ambition to all relevant organizational capabilities, and subsequently to the operational resources that realize the capability in practice. This systemic approach should help strengthen the federation’s ability to define, implement and execute strategy in a consistent and sustainable manner.

## 5. Research methodology

### Overall Research Design

This study adopts a multi-method research design, structured around three sequential research questions, each addressing a distinct aspect of strategic management in NFAs. The overall design is mixed-method and exploratory in nature, combining Design Science Research, interview-based qualitative analysis, and intervention-oriented evaluation. This approach was selected to balance methodological rigor with practical relevance, in line with UEFA’s expectations for applied research that delivers actionable outcomes for federations. Accordingly, this study builds on the philosophical stance of Rescher’s methodological pragmatism (Altshuler & Rescher, 1979), where the search for ‘truth’ is a search for ‘utility’.

Rather than testing predefined variables in isolation, the study focuses on exploring, designing, and evaluating practical mechanisms that can improve strategy definition and implementation in real organizational contexts. This study is divided into three phases. Each phase builds on the outcomes of the previous one, ensuring cumulative learning and internal consistency across the research.



## Phase 1 - Research Question 1 (RQ1): Developing a Reference Capability Structure for NFAs

**Research design and justification.** RQ1 is addressed through a Design Science Research (DSR) approach (Gregor & Hevner, 2013). This methodology originates in the Engineering disciplines and has been adopted by other disciplines like Management Studies (Van Aken, 2004) and Information Systems (Peppers et al., 2007). DSR is particularly suited to this research question, as the objective is not only to observe or explain existing practices, but to design and validate an artefact that can be used in practice by NFAs. In this case, that artefact is a Reference Capability Structure. The study follows the iterative design process for generic capability maps described in (Van Riel & Poels, 2023) (Van Riel & Poels, 2023), with a small adaptation in the initial phase.

**Sample frame and selection.** Three NFAs participated in this phase of the research. They were selected based on their expressed interest in contributing to the study and their availability to participate in the research activities. The sample was intentionally composed to include associations with different organizational characteristics, particularly in terms of size. No generally accepted formal tiering system for NFAs exists to our knowledge. Existing organizational size classifications, such as the European Commission's SME definition, are designed for economic and administrative purposes. In that framework, staff headcount is used together with either turnover or balance-sheet total to distinguish between micro, small, medium-sized, and large enterprises (European Commission, n.d.). While such segmentation is useful for economic policy purposes, it is less suitable for distinguishing between football associations, as most European NFAs appear to fall within or near the medium-sized enterprise category when assessed using publicly available data. Moreover, publicly available data on NFA staffing and turnover are not always complete or directly comparable.

For this reason, an indicative size classification was used in this study, based primarily on the number of employees. The number of employees was considered relevant because it can serve as a proxy for the internal coordination load involved in strategy execution. As the number of actors and interdependencies increases, organizations need to process more information to coordinate coherent action and communicate decisions across a broader internal audience (Galbraith, 1974). However, employee numbers should not be interpreted as a direct indicator of maturity in strategy execution or related governance. It can be assumed that larger NFAs face greater coordination complexity and therefore require more mature strategic management practices, but this does not imply that they effectively have implemented such mature practices.

Based on the number of employees, our sample included one large-scale NFA, described in this report as a leading European football association, one medium-scale NFA, the Royal Belgian Football Association, and one smaller-scale NFA, the Romanian Football Federation. Table 1 presents the participating NFAs and their characteristics.

Label	NFA	Tier; based on number of employees	Country	Role or participant for phase 1
NFA <sub>α</sub>	FRF	Tier 3 (<200)	Romania	Data & Insights Manager
NFA <sub>β</sub>	RBFA	Tier 2 (200-400)	Belgium	Head of Data & Analytics
NFA <sub>γ</sub>	Not disclosed; a leading European Football Association <sup>2</sup>	Tier 1 (400+)	Not disclosed	Senior Strategy Manager

TABLE 1 - PARTICIPATING NFAs FOR PHASE 1

<sup>2</sup> To respect the requested anonymity of the participating NFA, the name and location are not disclosed.

For each federation, a single representative was involved in this phase of the study, in line with the process applied in (Bisswang et al., 2025; Van Riel & Poels, 2023). Selection criteria for these participants were strict: the individual needed to hold a management-level role, be directly involved in strategy definition or strategic analysis (e.g. data and insights, performance monitoring) and possess a holistic understanding of the federation as a whole. This ensured that feedback reflected organization-wide considerations rather than silo-specific views.

**Artefact development process.** Following the iterative development logic for generic capability maps described in (Van Riel & Poels, 2023), the NFA reference capability map was constructed through successive cycles of application, refinement, and validation. The full process applied is described below. Compared to the original process, one deliberate adaptation was introduced: before engaging in workshops to change, expand and validate the structure, participating NFAs were provided with an introductory session on CBM. This session aimed to establish a shared understanding of the capability concept and its possible applications, thereby improving the quality and depth of feedback during subsequent iterations.

The initial version of the Capability Structure used in this design process was based on an existing, validated Capability Structure for Professional Football Clubs (Van Riel & Poels, 2023). This starting point was chosen because parts of the sporting and organizational activities of professional clubs overlap with those of NFAs, particularly in areas such as volunteer management and specific commercial activities. The initial structure was further expanded and refined using insights from both academic literature and relevant grey literature, as the scope of NFA's is much broader.

This initial candidate structure was presented to participating federation representatives and compared with their organizational reality. Three iterative validation rounds were conducted with all associations, starting with the most mature and professionalized association. In each iteration, suggested changes, including missing capabilities, label refinements, scope clarifications, or structural adjustments, were logged and incorporated into a revised version of the structure. This revised version was subsequently validated with the participants and used as the starting point for the next iteration. The process continued until no substantive new capabilities or structural changes emerged, indicating sufficient convergence for the purpose of proposing a generic reference capability structure and map. In the final iteration, unanimous validation of the structure was thus obtained, with only minor remarks noted for clarification purposes.

**Validity and reliability.** Validity was supported through iterative refinement, cross-federation validation, and explicit confirmation of agreement in the final round, until sufficient convergence was reached and no substantive new capabilities or structural changes were proposed, reflecting theoretical saturation (Gentles et al., 2015). In essence, each NFA was asked to explicitly agree to the addition of new capabilities or to changes proposed to existing ones. The guiding rule was that capabilities were not excluded simply because they were not relevant for one particular NFA. Rather, the reference structure was developed as a union of potentially relevant capability domains across NFAs, allowing federations of different size and maturity to validate the structure. In practice, they would be able to tailor the structure to their own context. Reliability was supported by following the transparent and replicable process described by (Van Riel & Poels, 2023) consistently across iterations, and by documenting all changes made throughout the different phases. The outcome of this phase consists of two artefacts: first, the Reference Capability Structure for NFAs, containing clear capability labels and descriptions; and second, the Capability Map, which provides a visual representation of that structure.

## Phase 2 - Research Question 2 (RQ2): Identifying Strategic Management Challenges in NFAs

**Research design and justification.** RQ2 focuses on deepening the understanding of strategic management challenges faced by NFAs. This phase adopts a qualitative interview-based research design, supported by systematic coding and analysis, followed by a survey. The purpose of this step is to ensure that subsequent interventions to address RQ3 focus on real and relevant problems rather than assumed or generic challenges.

### Phase 2a – Constructing the base list

**Data collection and sample.** Using the same participants as in the previous phase ensured continuity and allowed insights about challenges to be grounded in concrete organizational experience. This approach was deemed appropriate given the seniority and holistic perspective of the interviewees.

Label	NFA	Tier; based on number of employees	Country	Role or participant for phase 1
NFA <sub>α</sub>	FRF	Tier 3 (<200)	Romania	Data & Insights Manager
NFA <sub>β</sub>	RBFA	Tier 2 (200-400)	Belgium	Head of Data & Analytics
NFA <sub>γ</sub>	Not disclosed; a leading European Football Association	Tier 1 (400+)	Not disclosed	Senior Strategy Manager

TABLE 2 - PARTICIPANTS FOR PHASE 2A

The semi-structured interview script can be found below.

#### Questions for identifying Strategic Management Challenges in NFAs

##### Part 1: Questions related to the role of the interviewee (validation of the interviewee's relevance)

- What is your function and role within the organization?
- How are you involved in the process of strategy definition and implementation?

##### Part 2: Association-specific questions related to the Strategic Management practice, based on the UEFA Strategic Management System phases (Draebye, 2021)

- Can you identify the main challenges and barriers your federation faces when defining a strategic plan? Are these challenges more internal or external? (Phases P1 Strategic analysis / P2 Strategy formulation)
- What are the primary obstacles your federation encounters when implementing strategic plans? How do these challenges differ from those faced during the definition/planning stage? And what about following up on strategy implementation? (Related to phases (Phases P3 Planning, comm. & implementation / P4 Evaluation & control)
- What specific challenges arise when your federation implements and adheres to UEFA and FIFA guidelines? How do these challenges impact your strategic initiatives?

**Analysis approach and assumptions.** Interview transcripts were coded to identify recurring challenges related to strategy definition, implementation, and monitoring. Through this process, 11 distinct challenges were identified, relevant within the scope of this study. The coding process resulted in a clear verbatim trail, ensuring transparency and traceability from raw data to

identified challenges. Coding was done according to commonly accepted guidelines (Wicks, 2017).

### Phase 2b – Occurrence and severity of the challenges

**Data collection and sample.** Building on the base list constructed in phase 2a, a survey was used to assess the extent to which these challenges were recognized by participating federations in their own organizational context.

NFA $\alpha$  and NFA $\beta$  participated in the phase 2b survey as they were the federations that continued into the RQ3 case study phase. Their inclusion ensured continuity between the identification and assessment of strategic management challenges and the subsequent evaluation of CBM use cases. NFA $\gamma$  participated in phases 1 and 2a, but could not be included in the subsequent phases because the required number of relevant participants could not be made available within the timeframe of the third phase. Consequently, the phase 2b results should be understood as federation-level assessments from the two continuing cases, rather than as a complete follow-up across all three NFAs involved in phase 2a. The included participants are listed in Table 3.

Label	NFA	Tier; based on number of employees	Country	Participants (role) for phase 2, part b
NFA $\alpha$	FRF	Tier 3 (<200)	Romania	Data & Insights Manager, Professional Club Services Manager
NFA $\beta$	RBFA	Tier 2 (200-400)	Belgium	Head of Data & Analytics, Strategy Advisor, Chief Information & Digital Officer

TABLE 3 – PARTICIPANTS FOR PHASE 2B AND PHASE 3

The survey focused specifically on the occurrence and severity of strategic management challenges. Respondents were asked to evaluate each challenge from the perspective of their own federation, using a five-point Likert-type scale. Developed to measure attitudes, the typical Likert scale is a 5- or 7-point ordinal scale used by respondents to rate the degree to which they agree or disagree with a statement (Sullivan & Artino, 2014).

**Analysis approach and assumptions.** The purpose of this survey was not to statistically generalize to the wider population of NFAs, but to obtain a structured expert assessment of the occurrence and severity of each challenge within the participating cases. This is consistent with case-study research logic, where findings are interpreted through analytical generalization rather than statistical generalization (Yin, 2013). In this approach, empirical observations are related to theoretical constructs or patterns, rather than extrapolated statistically to a wider population.

Strategic management challenges are likely to be context-dependent: a challenge may be highly relevant in one federation while being less present, or even absent, in another. But besides the size and location of the NFA, no further specific context, or its properties, potentially causing a condition were captured. No conclusions can consequently be drawn related to the scale of the NFA, as the occurrence of a challenge could be related to other aspects of the NFA’s context (e.g. political climate).

The survey itself was completed by the NFAs without the interference of the researchers. Multiple participants participated in each NFA, but they sought consensus amongst themselves before assigning a score. This ensured that the scores reflected the consensus of the NFA as a whole after deliberation, rather than personal opinions.

**Validity and authenticity.** These were supported by grounding all identified challenges directly in the interview data and by maintaining a transparent link between transcripts, coding, verbatim evidence, and the final list of refined challenges. The use of relevant participants who are

involved in strategy definition, implementation, or monitoring strengthened the credibility of the findings, as the data reflected informed organizational perspectives. In phase 2b, the consensus-based scoring within each NFA aimed to reduce the influence of individual outliers and resulted in federation-level assessments of challenge occurrence and severity. Given the limited number of participating NFAs, the findings should not be interpreted as statistically generalizable, but as a structured and empirically grounded validation of the challenge set used as input for phase 3.

### Phase 3 - Research Question 3 (RQ3): Evaluating the Impact of CBM on Strategic Management Practice

**Research design and hypothesis.** RQ3 addresses the central hypothesis of the study: that the application of Capability-Based Management strengthens the strategic management practices of NFAs. Given the exploratory and applied nature of the research, this hypothesis is evaluated through intervention-based qualitative assessment rather than statistical testing.

**Selection of participants.** To answer Research Question 3, the study evaluated the perceived contribution of selected Capability-Based Management use cases to mitigate the strategic management challenges identified in phase 2. The participating National Football Associations were selected from the federations that had participated in the first phases of the research, covering RQ1 and RQ2, and that were available to participate in the RQ3 evaluation phase. This ensured continuity between the identification of the capability structure, the validation of strategic management challenges, and the evaluation of CBM use cases.

The participating individuals were selected based on their involvement in one or more phases of the strategic management system, as described by (Draebye, 2021). This criterion was applied to ensure that the participants had sufficient practical exposure to strategic analysis, strategy formulation, planning, implementation, communication, evaluation and control. As a result, the evaluation was conducted with respondents who, as a group, were able to assess both the strategic relevance and the practical applicability of CBM use cases in the context of their federation. In reality, the selected group of participants was identical to the group of participants that participated in phase 2b and were listed in Table 3.

**Workshop design & application.** For each of the two participating NFAs, a dedicated workshop was organized. Each workshop followed the same structure and consisted of three parts. First, the facilitator-researcher (first author of this report) introduced the fundamentals of Capability-Based Management. This included an explanation of the concept of business capabilities, the role of a capability map, and the meaning of CBM use cases as analysis, communication, and modelling techniques. This introductory part was necessary to ensure that all participants had a shared understanding of the basic concepts required to apply and evaluate the use cases. *This part of the workshop took approximately one hour.*

Second, the participants were introduced to a proposed sequence for applying CBM use cases in a logical order. The purpose of presenting this sequence was not to test or validate the sequence itself, but to provide context for the individual use cases and to show how they could relate to one another in practice. This sequence is explained further in section 7.

After this introduction, each use case was briefly explained and applied in an exploratory manner together with the participants. The application was performed on the Reference Capability Map developed in the earlier phase of the research (RQ1). Participants used post-its, markers, and color coding to apply different types of annotations to the map. These annotations helped

participants explore how the capability map could support analysis, discussion, prioritization, and communication around strategic management challenges.

During this part of the workshop, limited guidance was provided by the facilitator-researcher. The purpose was to allow participants to explore the use cases themselves, while ensuring that they did not get stuck or misunderstand the intended application. Participants were encouraged to discuss their interpretations and observations with one another. This interaction was considered important, as the use cases were not only evaluated as analytical techniques, but also as potential instruments for creating shared understanding and supporting strategic conversations. Additionally, by allowing the applicants to apply the use cases independently as a group, they would be better positioned to score the ease of application, as explained hereafter. This exploratory application phase took approximately five hours.

Third, after the exploratory application of the CBM use cases, participants completed a survey to evaluate the perceived usefulness and applicability of each use case, in relation to overcoming or mitigating a specific strategic management challenge. The survey was completed at the end of the workshop and captured through Microsoft Forms. Participants were asked to discuss the scores internally, without interference from the facilitator-researcher, and to reach consensus on the scores assigned. The resulting scores therefore represent a consolidated federation-level assessment rather than separate individual responses. This survey phase took between 60 and 75 minutes.

The survey included Likert-type questions to capture two dimensions. First, participants assessed the extent to which each CBM use case was perceived to help overcome or mitigate the identified strategic management challenges. Second, participants assessed how easy or difficult it would be to apply each use case in their federation after the workshop introduction. The first dimension measured perceived usefulness in relation to the strategic challenges, while the second dimension measured perceived ease of application. At the end of the survey, a control question was included to confirm whether the participants felt confident in the answers provided. In essence, the instrument is an adapted form of the studied concepts of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as described by (Davis, 1989).

The results of this survey were analyzed descriptively at the federation level. Given the limited number of participating federations and the exploratory nature of the workshop-based evaluation, the results are not intended to support statistical generalization. Instead, they provide structured expert assessments of the perceived usefulness and applicability of CBM use cases in the participating NFAs. This is similar to the approach applied for RQ2 and is in line with the guidelines of (Yin, 2013). These assessments are used to identify which use cases appear most promising for supporting strategic management practice at NFAs and which use cases may require further refinement, guidance, or contextual adaptation before they can be applied (if ever) for the stated purpose. The results of the survey are discussed in section 6.

**Formalizing the findings of RQ3.** To interpret the findings of RQ3 and relate them back to the central research hypothesis, this study uses the logic of CIMO: Context–Intervention–Mechanism–Outcome, as introduced by (Denyer et al., 2008). CIMO builds on the realist evaluation tradition of Context–Mechanism–Outcome reasoning (Pawson & Tilley, 1997), but explicitly adds the Intervention component. This makes it particularly useful for design-oriented research, where the aim is not only to understand a problem context, but also to assess how a proposed intervention may contribute to addressing it.

In this study, CIMO is not used to construct a full set of formal scenarios or propositions for every possible combination of challenge, use case, and federation context. Such an approach would create an excessive number of theoretical permutations, particularly given the number of identified strategic management challenges and evaluated CBM use cases. Instead, CIMO is used as a structuring logic for interpreting the empirical findings. The aim is to explain which strategic management challenges form the relevant Contexts (C), which CBM use cases function as potential Interventions (I), what plausible Mechanisms (M) may explain their perceived usefulness, and what Outcomes (O) they are expected to support.

The **Context** component refers to the strategic management challenges identified in phase 2. In this study, the general context is a European National Football Association facing one or more challenges in strategic management, such as unclear ownership, resource constraints, siloed delivery, inconsistent reporting, or difficulty communicating strategy.

The **Intervention** component refers to the CBM use cases applied and evaluated during the workshops. The use cases are not treated as isolated experiments, but as structured management interventions that may help NFAs mitigate specific strategic management challenges. The different use cases are explained in detail in Section 7.

The **Mechanism** component refers to the plausible explanation of why a use case may help mitigate a challenge. These mechanisms were not directly causally validated. Instead, they were inferred through abductive reasoning, based on the nature of the CBM use case, the observed workshop discussions, and the expert assessments provided by the participating NFAs. For example, responsibility mapping may help mitigate unclear ownership because it makes accountabilities visible at the capability level. In this study, the mechanism is therefore used to make sense of the perceived value of the intervention, not as a separate object of validation.

The **Outcome** component refers to the expected mitigation of a strategic management challenge. The outcome is not measured as a realized organizational effect, but as the perceived usefulness of a CBM use case in helping to overcome or reduce a specific challenge. The survey scores therefore provide an indication of the relative perceived effectiveness of the intervention. In interpreting the results, both the severity of the challenge and the perceived usefulness of the use case are relevant: the higher the severity of the challenge and the higher the perceived usefulness of the intervention, the stronger the relative expected outcome.

Consequently, the findings of phase 3 are presented as CIMO-structured insights rather than formal CIMO scenarios. These insights explain which strategic management challenges appear most relevant in the participating NFAs, which CBM use cases are perceived as useful interventions for mitigating them, and what plausible logic may explain this. This approach grounds the interpretation of the workshop and survey findings in an established design-oriented framework, while avoiding overstated causal claims or ungrounded formalization. The resulting insights should therefore be read as evidence-informed and practice-oriented interpretations that can guide further application, refinement, and validation of CBM in NFA contexts.

## Ethical considerations

While results are based on perception rather than objective performance metrics, this approach is appropriate for an exploratory intervention study. Ethical considerations are minimal; participation is voluntary, data is treated confidentially, and no sensitive organizational data is expected to be collected and certainly not published without explicit consent. All participants are informed about the research purpose and use of findings.

## 6. Research findings: Data & Conclusions

### Phase 1 - Research Question 1 (RQ1): Developing a Reference Capability Structure for NFAs

The outcome of phase 1 are the Reference Capability Structure and Capability Map. A complete trace of changes across all iterations has been documented. The visual Capability Map is presented in section 7, as part of the practical guidelines for NFAs. The complete capability structure and descriptions are included in the annex. The structured was named REF<sup>4</sup>, which stands for **REF**ference **F**ramework for **F**ootball **F**ederations.

### Phase 2 - Research Question 2 (RQ2): Identifying Strategic Management Challenges in NFAs

**Base list of challenges.** A total of eleven strategic management challenges were identified through the interviews and are presented in Table 4 below. Each challenge was derived from the interview data, then linked to the relevant phases of the strategic management process (Draebye, 2021) and related to broader strategic management challenges identified in the literature. The final column indicates how many NFAs referred to a challenge (or similar) during the interviews. To preserve the anonymity of the participants, unanimous attribution (e.g., 3 out of 3) is not explicitly disclosed.

ID	Refined challenge	Strategic management phase(s) (Draebye, 2021)	Related challenges (literature)	Number of NFAs that provided evidence in interviews for this challenge (out of 3)
1	<b>Difficulty aligning and prioritizing diverse internal and external stakeholder interests</b>	P2 Strategy formulation	Poor or vague strategy & conflicting priorities (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000)	2 or more
2	<b>Strong external influence and scrutiny complicating autonomous strategic decision-making</b>	P1 Strategic analysis / P2 Strategy formulation	Poor or vague strategy & conflicting priorities; Environmental complexity (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000; O'Brien, 2022)	2 or more
3	<b>Limited ability to maintain stable strategic priorities over successive strategic cycles</b>	P2 Strategy formulation / P4 Evaluation & control	Lack of a proper model or system; lack of control and follow-up (Draebye, 2021; Hrebiniak, 2006)	2 or more
4	<b>Fragmentation caused by unclear ownership and accountability for strategic themes or domains</b>	P2 Strategy formulation / P3 Planning, comm. & implementation	Unclear responsibility and accountability; Poor Effective coordination; Lack of clarity for execution (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000; Draebye, 2021; Hrebiniak, 2006)	1
5	<b>Unclear project definitions leading to sub-optimal</b>	P2 Strategy formulation / P3	Absence of guiding implementation models; Conflicting Priorities (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000; Hrebiniak, 2006)	1

	investment decisions and ‘pet projects’	Planning, comm. & implementation		
6	Difficulty estimating required financial and human resources for strategic initiatives	P3 Planning, comm. & Implementation	Absence of guiding implementation models; lack of suitable experience (Draebye, 2021; Hrebiniak, 2006)	1
7	Siloed delivery and missed synergies across organizational units	P3 Planning, comm. & implementation	Poor information sharing; Poor communication; Weak coordination mechanisms (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000; Hrebiniak, 2006)	1
8	Inconsistent use of performance indicators and reporting across domains	P4 Evaluation & control	Poor effective coordination; weak control systems (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000; Draebye, 2021)	1
9	Lack of a shared external framework to support benchmarking and learning across federations	P1 Strategic analysis / P4 Evaluation & control	N/A	2 or more
10	Insufficient methodological support from governing bodies for strategy execution beyond strategy definition	P3 Planning, comm. & implementation / P4 Evaluation & control	Absence of guidelines or clear models for implementation; lack of control and follow-up; lack of suitable experience (Draebye, 2021; Hrebiniak, 2006)	1
11	Difficulty communicating strategy in a simple, tangible, and actionable manner across the organization	P2 Strategy formulation / P3 Planning, comm. & implementation	Poor vertical communication; Poor or inadequate information sharing; Strategies are not known or fully understood by those responsible for carrying them out (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000; Draebye, 2021; Hrebiniak, 2006)	1

TABLE 4 – RESULTS PHASE 2A: SPECIFIC STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES OF NFA'S

**Severity of the challenges.** Respondents were asked to rate each challenge on a five-point Likert-type scale, focusing on the severity of the challenge. Scores ranged from 1 = not present to 5 = present and a major obstacle and are presented in Table 5.

Severity of the Strategic Management Challenge at the NFA	Score
Not present	1
Present, with little impact	2
Present, with noticeable impact	3
Present, and a substantial problem	4
Present, and a major obstacle	5

TABLE 5 – PERCEIVED SEVERITY OF THE CHALLENGES (SCORING OPTIONS FOR THE PHASE 2B SURVEY)

The survey results were analyzed descriptively at the federation level, not the individual level. As Likert-type items are ordinal, the scores were used as indicative assessments rather than precise interval-level measurements, as indicated by (Sullivan & Artino, 2014). This required a cautious interpretation of averages and dispersion, especially given the limited number of participating federations.

For the strategic challenges, variation between federations was not treated as problematic. A challenge may be highly relevant in one federation while being less present in another. Such variation was therefore interpreted as evidence of contextual differences between NFAs, rather than as inconsistency in the data. The analysis consequently considered both the average severity score and the number of federations rating a challenge as meaningfully present or severe. Challenges scoring 3 or higher were interpreted as present, while scores of 4 or higher indicated a substantial challenge.

The findings presented in Table 6 should therefore be read as a structured cross-case challenge profile. They show which challenges are recognized by the participating NFAs, how severe these challenges are perceived to be, and whether this evaluation appears to be shared across cases or is considered more context specific.

Challenge	NFA1	NFA2	NFA's >=4	NFA's >= 3	Interpretation
Difficulty aligning and prioritizing diverse internal and external stakeholder interests	4	5	100%	100%	Cross-case substantial challenge
Limited ability to maintain stable strategic priorities over successive strategic cycles	3	4	50%	100%	Cross-case relevant challenge
Siloed delivery and missed synergies across organizational units	4	3	50%	100%	Cross-case relevant challenge
Strong external influence and scrutiny complicating autonomous strategic decision-making	1	5	50%	50%	Case-specific substantial challenge
Fragmentation caused by unclear ownership and accountability for strategic themes or domains	4	2	50%	50%	Case-specific substantial challenge
Unclear project definitions leading to sub-optimal investment decisions and 'pet projects'	4	2	50%	50%	Case-specific substantial challenge
Insufficient methodological support from governing bodies for strategy execution beyond strategy definition	2	4	50%	50%	Case-specific substantial challenge
Difficulty estimating required financial and human resources for strategic initiatives	3	2	0%	50%	Case-specific relevant challenge
Inconsistent use of performance indicators and reporting across domains	2	2	0%	0%	Cross-case present, with Limited impact
Lack of a shared external framework to support benchmarking and learning across federations	2	2	0%	0%	Cross-case present, with Limited impact
Difficulty communicating strategy in a simple, tangible, and actionable manner across the organization	2	2	0%	0%	Cross-case present, with Limited impact

TABLE 6 - RESULTS PHASE 2B: PERCEIVED SEVERITY OF CHALLENGES AT NFAs

**Conclusions.** The collected data indicates that three challenges can be considered relevant or substantial in both participating cases. A further five challenges are considered relevant or substantial in at least one case. The remaining three challenges are present in both cases, but with limited perceived impact.

Given the limited number of participating NFAs, these findings should not be interpreted as statistically generalizable to the wider population of NFAs. Instead, they provide a structured view of the strategic management challenges experienced within the participating cases. The results show that 8 out of 11 challenges are considered relevant or substantial in at least one NFA, while the remaining three are still recognized as present in both cases, albeit with limited impact.

A relevant observation is that, even though in the discovery phase several challenges were mentioned by only one NFA, these challenges were then later deemed relevant by another NFA in the survey. This provides a confirmation that none of the initially identified challenges can be considered irrelevant within the empirical context of this study. This supports the use of the full set of 11 challenges as a valid base-set for the next phase of the research. The following subsection, focusing on phase 3, builds on this challenge profile by evaluating the perceived contribution of CBM use cases in mitigating these challenges.

## Phase 3 - Research Question 3 (RQ3): Evaluating the Impact of CBM on Strategic Management Practice

**Use cases tested.** CBM use cases can be formally described, applying a template as described by (Van Riel et al., 2023) and shown for use case 1 in Table 7. A more summarized overview is provided in Table 8 and a more detailed, yet practical description is provided in Section 7.

Use case	UC 1 – Strategic emphasis & Project mapping to for portfolio rationalization	
Use case goals & purpose	Determine which capabilities will be crucial for realizing the strategic ambitions of the organization.	
Use case description (How)	Based on the organization's strategic goals and ambitions, a cause-effect relationship model is created. This model identifies the capabilities that are strategically important for realizing these ambitions. In other words, it highlights the primary focus capabilities that contribute to achieving the goals. The purpose is to align the leadership team on where to allocate the project budget (CAPEX) and provide focus for portfolio management. If the strategic goals and ambitions are unclear or misaligned, attempting to apply this use case will make it explicit. Without well-defined goals and ambitions, it is impossible to identify the most relevant capabilities needed to achieve them. Furthermore, by mapping the impact of currently defined projects to the capability structure, two important insights can be created: 1. Are all projects in the portfolio contributing to realizing the strategic objectives and b. are there any 'blind spots', capabilities that need to evolve to realize the strategic ambitions, but for which improvements are not part of one of the defined projects' scope.	
Producer (Who)	<i>Creator</i> Analyst/Architect (facilitator) with input from key stakeholders (Leadership team, Senior IT manager, Enterprise Architects).	<i>Contribution</i> - Interviewing stakeholders, facilitating workshops - Supporting the creation of the goal derivation model - Indicating emphasis on the map - Indicating project impact on the map
Consumer (Who)	<i>Consumer</i> - Senior Management (C-level) - Board of Directors - Portfolio Manager - Middle management - Other stakeholders	<i>Interest</i> - Aligning on what domains should be the focus of the project/program portfolio - Identifying 'blind spots'
Mapped information (How)	A 'status' is assigned to the capabilities, indicating whether a capability is essential for achieving strategic ambitions. The status is determined by using goal motivation techniques. Projects are mapped as well, by indicating what capabilities will be impacted by which projects/initiatives.	
Reporting format (How)	Capabilities are assigned a colored border to indicate their importance. Project impact can be assigned a different indicator (e.g. a color).	
Preconditions	A capability map is present and accepted by the different parties. Strategic goals/ambitions should be clear and aligned.	

TABLE 7 - USE CASE 1 (COMPLETED TEMPLATE)

Use case name	Use case goals & purpose	Use case description (How)
Use Case 2: Strategic profiles.	Determine the desired strategic orientation of capabilities, for example whether they should be standardized, differentiated, or treated as innovation areas. This has a major impact on the operational configuration choices and investment levels for a Capability.	Assess capabilities against the federation's strategic ambitions and decide how each capability should be managed or developed. Add visual markers or color codes to the capability map to indicate the strategic profile of each capability.
Use Case 3: Resource Mapping.	Create visibility on which resources realize which capabilities. This is important for further impact analysis and a prerequisite for identifying gaps, overlaps, or misalignment in resource allocation.	Map relevant resources, such as people, IT applications, data/information, or other resources, to the capabilities they realize. This can be done on the capability map, but generally a matrix visualization is a better option.
Use Case 4: Outsourcing.	Determine which capabilities should be performed internally, externally, or through partnerships.	Identify capabilities that should be outsourced, or are currently outsourced and identify dependency considerations. Add markers to the capability map to indicate whether a capability is best kept in-house, outsourced, or organized through a hybrid/partnering model.
Use Case 5: Performance & quality assessments/Fit-Gap.	Identify gaps between the current state of capabilities and the desired level of performance, quality, or maturity required to achieve strategic goals.	Assess the current and desired state of selected capabilities and compare both to identify gaps. Use heatmap-style markers, scores, or color coding on the capability map to show where improvement is required and where initiatives may need to be defined.
Use case 6: (K)PI setting.	Define meaningful indicators to monitor capability performance and support strategy evaluation and control.	Identify relevant KPIs or performance indicators for selected or all capabilities, preferably linked to strategic objectives or expected outcomes. Add the indicators, targets, or measurement themes to the capability map so that strategic progress can be monitored at capability level.
Use Case 7: responsibility mapping.	Clarify ownership, accountability, and responsibility for capabilities to improve governance and execution.	Assign owners, accountable roles, or responsible teams to selected capabilities. Add names, role labels, or responsibility markers to the capability map to make clear who is responsible for managing, improving, or monitoring each capability.

TABLE 8 - SUMMARY OF OTHER USE CASES TESTED IN THIS STUDY

## Perceived contribution of CBM use cases in mitigating strategic management challenges

Participants completed a survey to evaluate the perceived usefulness and applicability of each use case, in relation to overcoming or mitigating a specific strategic management challenge. Table 9 shows the meaning of each value.

Perceived usefulness	Score
Not at all helpful	1
Slightly helpful	2
Moderately helpful	3
Very helpful	4
Extremely helpful	5

TABLE 9 - PERCEIVED USEFULNESS OF CBM USE CASES  
(SCORING OPTIONS FOR PHASE 3 SURVEY)

Perceived ease of use	Score
Very Difficult	1
Difficult	2
Neither easy nor difficult	3
Easy	4
Very Easy	5

TABLE 10 - PERCEIVED EASE OF USE OF CBM USE CASES (SCORING  
OPTIONS FOR PHASE 3 SURVEY)

Table 11 shows a visualization of the results, where relations are marked with a ++ when both NFAs gave a score of at least 4 (Very helpful). Where relations are marked with a t2 or t3, one NFA gave a score of at least 4 and t2 stands for tier 2 NFA, t3 for tier 3 NFA.

Additionally, the perceived ease of use has been included in the final row. Similar logic has been applied: a ++ when both NFAs gave a score of at least 4 (easy), a t2 or t3 indication when only one NFA gave a score of at least 4. Table 10 shows the meaning of each value.

Challenge \ Use case	Use Case 1: Strategic emphasis and Project mapping for Portfolio Rationalization	Use Case 7: responsibility mapping.	Use Case 2: Strategic profiles.	Use Case 3: Resource Mapping.	Use Case 4: Outsourcing.	Use Case 5: Performance & quality assessments/Fit-Gap.	Use case 6: (K)PI setting.
Difficulty aligning and prioritizing diverse internal and external stakeholder interests		t3	t2			t2	++
Strong external influence and scrutiny complicating autonomous strategic decision-making			t2				++
Limited ability to maintain stable strategic priorities over successive strategic cycles	t2	t2	t2	t2	t2	t3	++
Fragmentation caused by unclear ownership and accountability for strategic themes or domains	++	++		t2	++	t3	t2
Unclear project definitions leading to sub-optimal investment decisions and 'pet projects'	t2		t2	t2	t3	t2	++
Difficulty estimating required financial and human resources for strategic initiatives	t2		t2	++	t3	t2	t2
Siloed delivery and missed synergies across organizational units	++	t2	t2	++	t3		t2
Inconsistent use of performance indicators and reporting across domains	t3			t2		t2	++
Difficulty communicating strategy in a simple, tangible, and actionable manner across the organization	++	++	t2	t2		++	++
Perceived ease of use ➡	t2	++	t2	t2	++	++	++

t3 Tier 3 NFA scored this case 4 or higher

t2 Tier 2 NFA scored this case 4 or higher

++ Both NFAs scored this case 4 or higher

TABLE 11 - RESULTS PHASE 3 - PERCEIVED USEFULNESS OF CBM USE CASES: EXTENDED

In general, most relations have been scored at least at 4 by at least one NFA. However, as the data shows, not all use cases were perceived as equally useful across all challenges. The results point to a differentiated picture: some CBM use cases appear broadly applicable across multiple strategic management challenges, while others are more specific and useful only in particular situations.

## Evaluation of individual use cases: detailed analysis

This section analyses the results at the level of the individual CBM use cases. Building on the CIMO-structured interpretation introduced in Section 5, the focus is on each use case as an applied Intervention (I). For each use case, the analysis briefly discusses plausible Mechanisms (M) that may explain its perceived usefulness, and the expected Outcomes (O) in terms of mitigating strategic management challenges. These interpretations are based on the survey scores presented above and should therefore be understood as evidence-informed assessments of perceived value, rather than as validated causal effects.

The most consistently valued use case is **Use Case 6: (K)PI setting**. This use case scored 4 or higher for almost every challenge in the matrix and reached particularly high scores for inconsistent use of performance indicators and reporting, maintaining stable strategic priorities, communicating strategy, and aligning stakeholder interests. This suggests that defining indicators at the capability level is perceived as a strong mechanism for making strategy more measurable, traceable, and actionable.

Perceived ease of use was scored as 'easy' by both NFAs.

**Use Case 1: Strategic emphasis and project mapping for portfolio rationalization** also received high scores across several challenges. The data suggests that mapping strategic emphasis and projects onto the capability map is perceived as a useful way to create transparency about where strategy has an impact and where investments are being made. However, this use case scored lower for challenges related to external scrutiny and stakeholder influence, indicating that it is more useful for internal alignment and portfolio discussions than for addressing external strategic pressures.

Perceived ease of use ranges from 'neither easy nor difficult' to 'easy'.

**Use Case 5: Performance and quality assessments / fit-gap analysis** also appears to have broad relevance, although with some variation between federations. The scores indicate that participants saw value in using capability-level assessments to identify gaps, weaknesses, and improvement needs. At the same time, some relations showed disagreement between the two NFAs, which suggests that the usefulness of fit-gap analysis may depend on specific parameters.

Perceived ease of use ranges from 'easy' to 'very easy'.

**Use Case 3: Resource mapping** was perceived as particularly valuable for challenges related to estimating required resources and addressing siloed delivery across organizational units. This is consistent with the nature of the use case, as mapping resources to capabilities can make visible where people, applications, and other assets are allocated. The high scores for these challenges suggest that resource mapping may help federations better understand whether strategic initiatives will have an impact and thus what the effect will be on change effort, as well as discovering dependencies between initiatives. However, the use case scored lower for challenges related to external influence and strategic stability, indicating that its value is mainly internally and implementation-oriented.

Perceived ease of use ranges from 'neither easy nor difficult' to 'very easy'.

**Use Case 7: Responsibility mapping** received very high scores for fragmentation caused by unclear ownership and accountability and to improve communicating strategy. This is one of the clearest challenge-use case relationships in the table. It suggests that mapping ownership or

responsibility to capabilities can help clarify who is accountable for specific strategic themes, domains, or organizational outcomes. The use case was also considered relevant for three other challenges, but there is less of a pattern to be abductured. The contribution seems to lie primarily in accountability and coordination.

Perceived ease of use ranges from 'easy' to 'very easy'.

The results for **Use Case 2: Strategic profiles** are more mixed. The use case received relevant scores for several challenges, but several of these scores are marked by a large difference between the two federations. This suggests that strategic profiles may be valuable, but that their perceived usefulness is more context-dependent. They may be particularly helpful where federations need to make explicit choices about standardization, differentiation, or innovation at the capability level, but the results do not indicate the same level of broad and consistent support as for other use cases. An explanation might be that this use case in essence focuses on the competitive position of the organization and, although NFAs compete on the football field, they do less so as organizations as a whole.

Perceived ease of use ranges from 'difficult' to 'very easy'.

**Use Case 4: Outsourcing** received a quite specific pattern of scores. It was unanimously considered useful for the single challenge of unclear ownership and accountability. However, it scored lower for several other challenges. This suggests that outsourcing analysis should not be positioned as a general-purpose CBM use case for strategic management, but rather as a more targeted technique. Its value appears strongest when federations need to discuss which capabilities should be performed internally, externally, or through partnerships to clarify ownership.

Perceived ease of use was scored as 'very easy' by both NFAs.

### **Evaluation from the perspective of the challenges**

This section analyses the results from the perspective of the strategic management challenges identified in phase 2. Referring back to the CIMO-structured interpretation introduced in Section 5, these challenges represent the relevant Context (C) conditions in which CBM use cases may provide value. The analysis therefore focuses on which challenges appear more or less addressable through the evaluated CBM use cases, understood as potential Interventions (I). As before, these findings should be interpreted as evidence-informed assessments of perceived value, not as validated causal effects.

Looking at the results from the perspective of the challenges, some challenges appear more addressable through CBM use cases than others. The challenge of communicating strategy in a simple, tangible, and actionable manner received high scores across multiple use cases, particularly strategic emphasis and project mapping, responsibility mapping, performance and quality assessment, and KPI setting. This indicates that participants saw CBM as a strong communication and sensemaking mechanism. By visualizing strategy through capabilities, CBM appears to help reduce complexity and create a more shared understanding of strategic priorities.

Similarly, challenges related to unclear ownership, resource estimation, siloed delivery, and misuse of performance indicators all received several relevant or strong use-case scores. This suggests that CBM is perceived as particularly valuable in the transition from strategy to implementation: clarifying where strategic priorities land in the organization, who is responsible,

what resources are involved, which projects contribute to which capabilities, and how progress can be measured.

By contrast, the challenge of strong external influence and scrutiny complicating autonomous strategic decision-making received relatively low scores across most use cases. Only performance and quality assessment and KPI setting reached relevant scores. This indicates that CBM may have limited direct value in reducing external pressure or scrutiny itself. However, it may still help federations respond to such pressure by making decisions more transparent, evidence-based, and measurable.

The results also show that several high-scoring relations contain notable differences between the two federations. These differences should not be ignored. They suggest that the perceived value of some CBM use cases can depend on the organizational context, existing maturity, available data, or the specific strategic management challenges faced by the federation. Therefore, these findings should not be interpreted as universal prescriptions. Instead, they identify promising use-case/challenge combinations that merit further development and validation.

Overall, the results indicate that CBM use cases are perceived as useful for supporting strategic management practice in NFAs, especially in areas related to strategy communication, portfolio rationalization, accountability, resource visibility, performance assessment, and KPI setting. The findings support the view that CBM can contribute not only as a structural representation of the federation, but also as a practical set of analysis and communication techniques that help translate strategy into more actionable management discussions. At the same time, the results also indicate that the value of specific use cases is not uniform, or at least it is impossible to draw such conclusions based on this limited set of two case studies. These use cases should thus be adapted to the strategic challenge, organizational context, and maturity of the federation applying them.

## 7. Research findings: Practical application guidelines for NFA's on how to apply CBM

### How to read this section

This section translates the research findings into a practical guide for NFAs that want to start applying CBM. The purpose is not to prescribe one rigid method that every federation must follow. Rather, the aim is to show how a reference capability structure and a set of CBM use cases can help NFAs make strategy more tangible, improve strategic conversations, and translate strategic ambition into more actionable decisions.

All use cases described in this section can provide value and are based on the use cases described in (Van Riel, 2025). However, for a federation applying CBM for the first time, it is suggested to follow a sequence. This was also the logic followed in the workshops conducted during the study. The sequence matters because the output of one use case often provides useful input for the next. For example, before assessing whether a capability is performing well, it helps to know whether that capability is strategically important and what level of performance is expected from it and the current resources realizing the capability.

The use cases can be applied quickly, for example during a management workshop using post-its and color coding on a printed capability map. This already creates useful discussion and can reveal important insights. However, better analysis leads to better conclusions. A quick workshop can provide direction, but a more rigorous assessment will require more evidence, preparation, data collection, and stakeholder involvement.

Finally, CBM is a management practice, not an automatic tool. The quality of the results depends on who applies the use cases, how well the discussion is facilitated, how honestly participants assess the current situation, and how much evidence is used to support decisions. The capability map provides structure, but the value comes from the quality of the strategic conversation it enables.

### Starting point: adopting the NFA reference capability map or CapMap

The first step is to adopt the reference capability structure. A capability structure provides a domain-based overview of what an NFA does or may need to be able to do. The visual representation of that structure is the capability map, shown in Figure 5.

# REF<sup>4</sup> REFerence Framework for Football Federations, V1.2



FIGURE 5 - CAPABILITY MAP FOR NFAS

## Tailoring the Capability Structure and CapMap: scoping

The capability structure and capability map or CapMap (Van Riel, 2025) should be treated as a starting point, not as a fixed organizational blueprint. The reference structure was deliberately created as a broad structure that includes capabilities that may be relevant to the industry of NFAs. This means that not every capability will be equally relevant for every federation.

This is especially important for smaller or lower-tier NFAs. A smaller federation may not have the same scope, resources, or maturity as a larger federation. It may not organize all capabilities internally, and some capabilities may be irrelevant, outsourced, informal, or only relevant in the future. That is acceptable. The value of the reference map is that it helps the federation make these choices explicitly.

The adoption exercise should therefore start with three simple questions:

1. **Which capabilities are currently in scope?** These are capabilities the federation already performs or actively manages.
2. **Which capabilities are out of scope?** These are capabilities that are not relevant to the federation or are not part of the federation's current mandate.
3. **Which capabilities may become relevant in the future?** These are capabilities that the federation may need to develop later, for example because of strategic ambition, UEFA/FIFA expectations, further digitalization, women's football development, sustainability, or changes in stakeholder expectations.

It must be mentioned that the answers to these questions might change after executing use case 1 (Strategic emphasis and project mapping for portfolio rationalization). Each time the strategic objectives change, the scope of the organization must be reviewed.

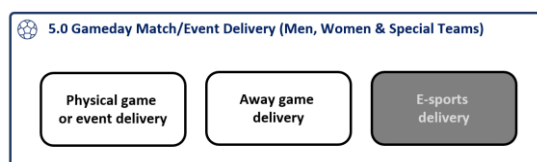


FIGURE 6 - EXAMPLE OF AN OUT-OF-SCOPE CAPABILITY

The most practical way to conduct this exercise is to indicate the outcome on the map, by removing or greying out capabilities that are out of scope, and indicating capabilities that may become relevant in the future. This is shown in Figure 6.

This exercise is not just administrative. It creates a first strategic conversation about what the federation actually does, what it does not do, and what it may need to develop. It also helps avoid an important misunderstanding: the capability map is not saying that every NFA must do everything. It helps each NFA decide what belongs within its own scope.

## Tailoring the Capability Structure and CapMap: Naming

Naming can also be adapted. A federation may use different words for the same domain. For example, one federation may refer to “club services”, another to “club support”. The name can be adapted if this improves recognition within the organization. However, the main structure should be respected as much as possible. If every federation changes the structure too heavily, the value of the map as a shared reference model for future benchmarking, learning, and collaboration is reduced. The practical rule is therefore: Adapt labels where needed, but avoid changing the structure unless there is a strong reason.

## Recommended sequence for first-time application

When applying CBM for the first time, it is useful to follow a standard sequence. This sequence is not mandatory, but it reflects a logical flow from strategic focus to operational understanding and then to planning and measurement. The sequence used in the workshops can be summarized as follows:

Step	Use case / activity	Main question
0	Scoping and adoption: initial run	Which capabilities are in scope, out of scope, or future scope?
1	Strategic themes and challenges	What are the strategic ambitions, priorities, and issues on the agenda?
2	Scoping and adoption: revisit	Are updates on the scope required?
3	Use Case 1: Strategic emphasis and project mapping for portfolio rationalization	Which capabilities are strategically important, and are current projects aligned with them?
4	Use Case 7: Responsibility mapping	Who owns or is accountable for each relevant capability?
5	Use Case 2: Strategic profiles	What do we expect from each capability: standardisation, differentiation, or innovation?
6	Use Case 3: Resource mapping	Which resources, such as people, applications, data, or budget, support which capabilities?
7	Use Case 4: Outsourcing	Which capabilities should be performed internally, externally, or through partnerships?
8	Use Case 6: KPI setting	How will we measure whether capabilities are delivering what is expected?
9	Use Case 5: Performance and quality assessment / fit-gap	How well do capabilities perform compared to current and future expectations?

TABLE 12 - A PROPOSED SEQUENCE FOR APPLYING CBM USE CASES

The rationale is straightforward. First, the federation clarifies what the capability map means for its own organization. Then it identifies where strategy has an impact, and potentially needs to revisit the scoping activity explained before. Next, it clarifies ownership and expectations. After that, it analyses the operational configuration of the most relevant capabilities. Finally, it defines indicators to monitor progress and assesses performance gaps.

This sequence helps prevent a common problem in strategic management: jumping directly from ambition to projects. CBM introduces an intermediate layer. Before defining or approving projects, the federation first asks: which capability domains are affected, what do we expect from them, who owns them, what resources support them, and how do we know whether they are performing? Only then, proper choices can be made that will lead to actionable plans.

## Applying the use cases

### *Scoping and adoption*

This step is explained above and for smaller NFAs, particularly important. It prevents the reference map from feeling too large or unrealistic. The output of this step is a federation-specific capability map. This becomes the working map for the next use cases.

## Use Case 1: Strategic emphasis and project mapping for portfolio rationalization

Use Case 1 focuses on answering a basic but powerful question:

*“Are we investing our attention, projects, and resources in the capabilities that matter most for our strategy?”*

The first part is **strategic emphasis**. Starting from the strategic themes or objectives, the federation identifies which capabilities are most relevant for achieving them. This is important because a strategic ambition can usually be realized in different ways; the challenge is to determine which route is most suitable and which capability domains are most affected.

This can be done in three steps:

1. **Identify the drivers of success.** Determine which factors would help realize the strategic ambition. For example, the ambition to have a full stadium at every home game may be driven by team performance, but also by the quality and pricing of catering, mobility options, safety, and the overall stadium experience.
2. **Translate drivers into concrete goals.** Define what needs to be achieved in more specific terms. For example, improving mobility satisfaction may require better public transportation options, sufficient parking capacity, safe bicycle parking, or clearer communication before and after the match.
3. **Translate goals into capability requirements.** Identify which capabilities are affected and what is required from them. This makes the impact of the strategy more tangible and helps clarify where change, investment, or further analysis may be needed.

Impacted capabilities can be marked with a thick border, a dot, or a number referring to the relevant strategic theme.

The second part is **project impact mapping**. Take the current project portfolio and map each project to the capabilities it affects. This shows where current initiatives are actually landing in the organization.

The combination of both views allows three important portfolio questions:

1. **Are all projects contributing to strategic ambitions?** If a project does not support a strategic priority, it may still be valid, but the reason should be clear.
2. **Are important strategic capabilities not covered by any project?** This may indicate a gap between strategy and implementation.
3. **Are some capabilities overloaded?** Too many projects affecting the same capability may create change fatigue, conflicting requirements, or resource bottlenecks.

The output is a capability map that shows both strategic focus and current project impact, as illustrated in Figure 7.

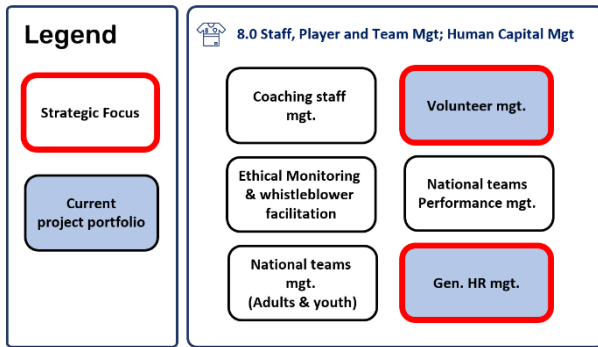


FIGURE 7 - EXAMPLE OF USE CASE 1 OUTCOME

This use case is especially useful for portfolio rationalization. It helps leadership teams move from a list of projects to a structured discussion about strategic coverage, overload, and investment focus.

*“Leaders most of the time don’t lack strategic thinking. It is that they often pursue too many strategic threads at once, making it hard for the organization to pull in one direction.”*

### Use Case 7: Responsibility mapping

Responsibility mapping clarifies who is accountable for each relevant capability. This is often one of the fastest use cases to apply, and one of the most useful.

*The central question is: “Who owns this capability, and who is responsible for improving or monitoring it?”*

Start with the capabilities marked as strategically relevant. For each capability, identify:

- the accountable manager;
- the responsible team or department;
- areas where ownership is unclear or contested.

This can be done directly on the capability map by adding role names or initials to capability boxes and is shown in Figure 8.

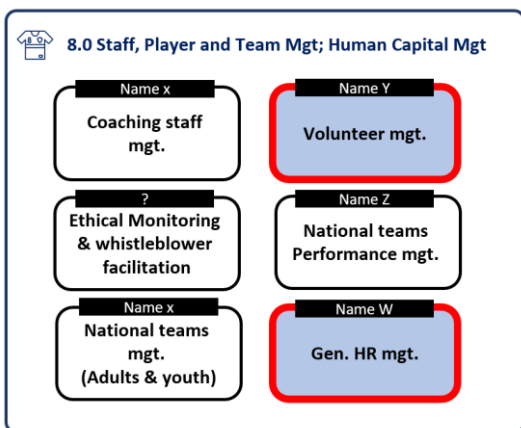


FIGURE 8 – EXAMPLE OF USE CASE 7 OUTCOME

Alternatively, it can be done in a matrix, with capabilities in rows and roles or departments in columns. A simplified version is where the accountable people are listed, as they should appoint and manage the team responsible.

The output should make clear where:

- accountability is assigned;
- accountability is missing;
- accountability is split across multiple actors;
- responsibilities overlap;

Accountability & responsibility mapping is particularly useful when federations experience fragmentation, unclear ownership, or siloed delivery. It creates a simple but powerful governance conversation. It also supports later use cases: if a capability needs to be assessed, improved, or measured, it should be clear who needs to be involved. Both to take the decisions and to do the work.

*A practical rule: “If no one is accountable for a capability, it is unlikely to improve in a structured way.”*

### Use Case 2: Strategic profiles

Strategic profiles help clarify what is expected from a capability. Not every capability needs to be excellent, innovative, or highly customized. Some capabilities simply need to be reliable and efficient. Others may be strategically differentiating. However, this has proven to be the more challenging use case, as federations don’t really compete on a business level in the same way as they do on the pitch with the national teams. Therefore, a simplified approach is presented here.

In the workshops, the strategic profile use case was applied using three main categories:

Strategic profile	Meaning
<b>Standardized</b>	Good practice is good enough. The capability should be reliable, efficient, and aligned with common standards where available.
<b>Differentiating</b>	The federation wants to go beyond the standard and create additional value, quality, or efficiency.
<b>Innovating</b>	The federation wants to experiment, create new approaches, or lead in this area.

TABLE 13 - STRATEGIC PROFILES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

Needless to say, innovating costs money and brings risks. Most capabilities of an NFA should be standardized, unless the federation believes it pays off to be a frontrunner or differentiator.

*The central question is: “Based on our mission and vision, is there a reason to differentiate from good practices or even spend additional resources on innovation?”*

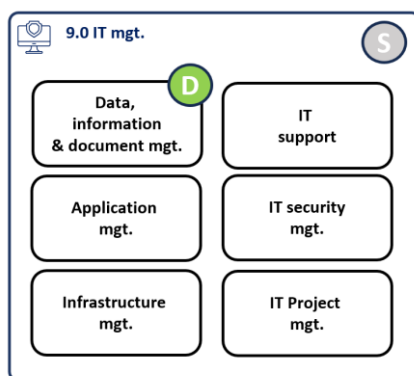


FIGURE 9 - EXAMPLE OF USE CASE 2 OUTCOME

On the Capability Map, this can be indicated in an easy manner. Use icons, letters, or color codes on the capability map. For example: S = Standardised, D = Differentiating, I = Innovating (Figure 9).

This use case is important because it sets boundaries. It prevents overinvestment in capabilities that do not need to be exceptional. It also protects strategically important capabilities from being treated as generic support functions. Strategic profiles are especially helpful before fit-gap analysis. A capability cannot be assessed properly unless the federation first knows what level of performance or ambition is expected.

### Use Case 3: Resource mapping

Resource mapping helps the federation understand which resources are used to realize which capabilities. In the workshops, this was mainly applied to IT applications, but the same logic can be used for people, data, budget, infrastructure or processes.

*The central question is: “Which resources are required to realize this capability?”*

Looking ahead towards use case 5 (Performance and quality assessment / fit-gap), resource mapping is a prerequisite for a more profound performance and quality assessment.

*The eventual central question is: “Which resources are required to realize this capability, and are they sufficient for what we expect from it?”*

However, in itself, resource mapping already holds a lot of value, even without a performance assessment or fit-gap analysis in mind. This use case can be started with a selected set of capabilities, preferably those marked as strategically important. Then map relevant resources to them and start looking for insights and patterns. For IT applications, this means understanding:

- Which applications realize this capability? (So impact in two ways can be identified).
- Are they core or supporting applications for the capability? (Indicated with C or S, as shown in Table 14).
- Are there duplicate tools? (Are there multiple applications covering the same functional scope?).
- Are there capabilities with no clear digital support? (These might good candidates for future digitization).

	IT Application 1	IT Application 2	IT Application 3	IT Application 4
Capability A	C	C	/	/
Capability B	/	/	/	C
Capability C	S	C	/	/

TABLE 14 - EXAMPLE OF USE CASE 3 OUTCOME

The output can be shown on the capability map, but this may become crowded. For detailed work, a matrix is better.

### Use Case 4: Outsourcing

Outsourcing analysis helps decide whether a capability should be performed internally, externally, or through a hybrid model.

*The central question is: “Should we organize this capability ourselves, or should we rely on external partners? And to what extent?”*

This use case is not relevant for every capability. It is most useful e.g. when a federation faces resource constraints, needs specialized expertise, or wants to focus internal capacity on core activities. For each selected capability, there are multiple things to consider. Questions you should ask:

- Is this capability strategically core?
- Do we have the required expertise internally?
- Can an external party deliver better quality, lower cost, or lower risk?
- Would outsourcing create dependency or loss of control?
- Are there confidentiality, integrity, or governance risks?
- Is a partnership model more suitable than full outsourcing?

To keep it simple, we distinguish between two options: fully outsourced (all resources and responsibilities are covered by a supplier) or Hybrid/Partnership (specific resources, joint

responsibility). Decisions for these capabilities can be marked on the map using simple indicators; O for Outsourced Capabilities and H for Hybrid or Partnership forms.

Outsourcing analysis can also be connected to strategic profiles. A standardized support capability may be a good outsourcing candidate, while a differentiating or innovative capability may need to remain closer to the federation. The output should not simply be a list of outsourcing candidates. It should be a structured sourcing discussion linked to strategy, risk, capability expectations, and available resources.

### Use Case 6: KPI & target setting

KPI setting translates capability expectations into measurable indicators. This use case supports evaluation, control, and learning.

*The central question is: “How will we know whether this capability is performing as expected?”*

Start with the capabilities that are strategically important or where performance concerns were identified. For each capability, define a small number of meaningful indicators. Avoid creating too many KPIs. The goal is not to measure everything, but to measure what matters. For each relevant capability, ask questions such as:

- What outcome should this capability produce?
- What does good performance look like?
- What should be monitored regularly?
- Which indicators are already available?
- Which indicators are missing?
- What targets do we aim for?

For example:

Capability	Expected outcome	Possible KPI
Club support services	Clubs receive timely and useful support	Club satisfaction score
Ref. & VAR training & certification	Sufficient qualified referees are available	Number of active certified referees
Safety mgt. & crowd control	Safe and well-organized events	Number of incidents per event

TABLE 15 - EXAMPLES OF CAPABILITY KPIS

The capability map can be used to show which capabilities have KPIs and which do not. This creates a useful management view: not just “what are our KPIs?”, but “which strategic capabilities are we actually able to monitor?”. Additionally, the current levels of those KPIs can be shown as colors on the capabilities, based on the targets defined.

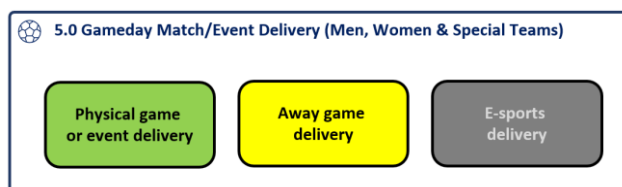


FIGURE 10 - EXAMPLE OF USE CASE 6 OUTCOME

E.g. capabilities where all targets are met, can be colored green. Capabilities where some are met, can be colored yellow and the underperforming ones can be colored red. An example is shown in Figure 10.

KPI & target setting was one of the most consistently valued use cases in the study. This is logical: many strategic management challenges become harder when priorities, ownership, and

performance are not measurable. Capability-level KPIs & targets help translate strategy into something that can be followed up over time.

### *Use Case 5: Performance and quality assessment / fit-gap*

Fit-gap analysis evaluates how well a capability currently performs compared to what is expected from it. This use case can be applied lightly or deeply.

*The central question is: “Are our capabilities good enough for what we want to achieve?”*

In the simplified version applied during the workshops, participants assessed selected capabilities across three operational dimensions: people, data & technology.

A more complete version could also include: infrastructure & other resources, financial resources, and processes, which is a bit different from resources.

For each selected capability, ask:

- What do we currently expect from this capability?
- What will we expect in the near future? (This can be related to the KPIs & targets).
- What does this mean for the related resources?
  - Are the people, skills, and capacity sufficient?
  - Is the data & information quality good enough?
  - Are the IT systems and tools fit for purpose?
  - Are the processes clear and reliable?
- Is the capability in general underperforming, in line, or overdesigned and consuming too many resources?

The results can be plotted on the capability map using traffic-light colors or markers for each operational dimension (e.g. People, Technology, Information). If you prefer to keep things less complicated on the map and keep the detailed information elsewhere, an overall assessment marker can be provided. In any case, Table 16 provides an example.

Score / marker	Meaning
<b>Good (Green)</b>	Capability is fit for current and expected needs.
<b>Attention point (Yellow)</b>	Capability has weaknesses but is still manageable.
<b>Underperforming (Red)</b>	Capability is not fit for current or future expectations.
<b>Not applicable (Grey)</b>	Capability is not in scope.

TABLE 16 - PROPOSED MARKERS FOR CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT

This use case is one of the most important bridges between strategy and implementation. It moves the conversation from “this capability is important” to “this is what needs to change”. It also provides input for roadmap and portfolio decisions and can help to effectively get to transition and project plans.

However, the confidence level of the assigned assessment score depends on the depth of analysis. A quick workshop or expert opinion gives a useful first view. A more robust fit-gap analysis requires interviews, data, process insights, system assessments, and possibly quantitative performance indicators, but might not always be feasible given resource and time constraints. It is up to the NFA to decide how deep they want to go.

## What if the proposed sequence is not followed?

Although the proposed sequence is recommended for first-time application, federations may not always have the time, resources, or management attention to apply all use cases. In that case, it is better to select use cases based on the most urgent challenge.

The survey results suggest that several use cases are broadly valuable, but not all use cases are equally relevant for every problem. Table 17 provides a practical starting point, keeping in mind that the results from the survey should be seen as an indication, not an absolute truth.

If the main challenge is...	Start with...	Why
Strategy is too abstract or difficult to communicate	Strategic emphasis and KPI setting	These use cases make strategy visible and measurable at capability level.
Too many projects, unclear priorities, or suspected pet projects	Strategic emphasis and project mapping for portfolio rationalization	This shows whether projects contribute to strategic priorities and where the portfolio is overloaded.
Unclear ownership or accountability	Responsibility mapping	This quickly reveals who owns which capability and where accountability gaps exist.
Difficulty estimating resources for strategic initiatives	Resource mapping and fit-gap analysis	These use cases show which resources support capabilities and where capacity or quality gaps exist.
Siloed delivery and missed synergies	Project mapping, responsibility mapping, and resource mapping	These expose overlap, fragmented ownership, and duplicated or disconnected resources.
Inconsistent reporting or weak performance follow-up	KPI setting, responsibility mapping and fit-gap analysis	These help define what should be measured, who is responsible and where performance gaps exist.
Need to clarify different levels of ambition across domains	Strategic profiles	This helps decide where good practice is enough and where differentiation or innovation is expected. This also avoids mirco-management, by providing clear guiding principles.

TABLE 17 - CHALLENGES AND MOST EFFECTIVE USE CASES

## 8. Limitations of the current study

### Limitations

As with any applied research conducted in real-world organisational contexts, this study is subject to several limitations. These limitations are largely related to feasibility, access to key stakeholders, and the willingness and availability of NFAs to participate. They do not invalidate the results of the study, but they do require a realistic and nuanced interpretation of the findings.

First, the identification of strategic management challenges was based on exploratory semi-structured interviews. This approach allowed for rich, context-sensitive insights, but a broader or more formalised method, such as a Delphi study involving a larger panel of experts, could have resulted in a more exhaustive or systematically validated list of challenges. Consequently, the documented challenges should be considered non-exhaustive. Nevertheless, the interviews provided sufficiently robust and relevant input to inform the subsequent research phases.

Second, the empirical scope of the study was limited to three European National Football Associations in the first phases of the research and two NFAs in the final workshop and evaluation phase. A larger and more diverse sample would further strengthen the generalizability of the findings. The selected federations do, however, represent different organizational tiers and levels of maturity, providing meaningful variation across cases and is expected to yield valuable insights applicable to a broader range of associations. The study also does not allow causal conclusions about the relationship between NFA size, maturity, or context and the perceived usefulness of specific CBM use cases. Future research should therefore continue this study with a larger population of NFAs, which could lead to stronger evidence, more refined contextual insights, and more robust conclusions.

Third, the evaluation of Capability-Based Management in this study primarily focused on perceived value rather than objectively measured performance outcomes. This was a deliberate choice, given the exploratory and intervention-based nature of the research and the longer time horizons typically required for strategic changes to materialize. Future research could complement these findings with longitudinal measurements of performance indicators to assess longer-term effects. At the same time, such measurement would remain challenging, as performance improvements in strategic management are usually the result of multiple interacting factors, making it difficult to isolate the specific contribution of CBM.

Fourth, the participating NFAs and respondents were selected partly on the basis of availability and willingness to participate. This may have introduced a selection bias, as federations and individuals interested in strategic management or capability-based approaches may be more inclined to participate. The findings should therefore be interpreted as insights from engaged and relevant cases, rather than as representative evidence for all UEFA member associations.

Fifth, the phase 3 survey results were based on federation-level consensus scores rather than individual responses. This approach was useful for producing consolidated organizational assessments, but it also means that individual differences in perception are not visible in the final data. The consensus process may have reduced individual bias and was a deliberate choice, but it may also have masked disagreement between participants within the same federation.

Finally, the CBM use cases were introduced and applied during workshops of limited duration. While this was sufficient to create a first understanding of the use cases and to support structured expert assessment, it did not allow each use case to be applied with the full depth that would be expected in an actual implementation. The perceived value scores should therefore be understood as assessments after an initial guided application, not as evaluations after full organizational adoption.

## Recommendations for further research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several recommendations for future research can be formulated.

First, future research should validate the identified strategic management challenges and the perceived value of CBM use cases with a larger and more diverse sample of NFAs, while building on a more formally defined tier-classification for NFAs. This would allow for stronger conclusions about which challenges are broadly shared across federations and which are more dependent on specific contextual factors, such as size, maturity, governance structure, and available resources. A larger sample could also make it possible to investigate whether certain types of NFAs benefit more from specific CBM use cases than others.

Second, additional research could refine and formalize the individual CBM use cases. The workshops showed that several use cases are perceived as valuable, but their practical application may differ depending on the federation's maturity, data availability, management practices, and strategic priorities. Future studies could develop more detailed methods, templates, facilitation guidelines, and decision rules for each use case. This would help federations apply the techniques more consistently and would make it easier to compare results across cases.

Third, the NFA capability structure itself offers an important basis for future research and practice. The structure can serve as a reference framework for capturing and sharing good practices between federations. For example, future research could use the capability structure to capture relevant KPIs, processes, roles, information objects, systems, governance practices, or maturity indicators for specific capabilities. This would allow the creation of a good practices framework, allowing knowledge exchange between federations to take place at a more concrete domain level, rather than through generic comparisons between federations.

Finally, the capability structure may also provide value for academic research as a taxonomy for organizing future studies on football federation management. Researchers could use the structure to identify which capability domains existing research has focused on, where knowledge is concentrated, and where important gaps remain. For example, research on refereeing, club support, grassroots development, commercial management, data management, governance, or stakeholder management could be positioned within the same reference structure. This would support a more cumulative research agenda for NFA management by making it clearer which organizational domains are being studied and how different research streams relate to one another. When applied to this study, it would be assigned to domains 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6 and 1.7 of the reference structure/proposed taxonomy, all belonging to the higher-level domain 1 – Federation strategy management.

## 9. Impact and contributions

### Theoretical contribution

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the limited body of knowledge on strategic management in National Football Associations. While existing research and practitioner guidance recognize the importance of strategic analysis and strategy formulation in sport governing bodies, less attention has been paid in scientific research on how strategy is translated into execution in practice. By applying a Capability-Based Management perspective to the NFA context, this study extends existing strategic management thinking by introducing a structured way to connect strategic ambition, organizational domains, operational configuration, and execution challenges.

The theoretical contributions are directly linked to the three research questions. In relation to RQ1, the study developed and validated a reference Capability Structure and Capability Map for NFAs. This artefact provides a shared, domain-based view of what football associations may need to be able to do, while still allowing individual federations to tailor the structure to their own scope, size, and maturity. The structure may also serve as a taxonomy for future academic research on NFAs, allowing studies to be positioned against specific organizational domains such as competition management, club support, refereeing. This can help clarify which domains

are already well studied and where research gaps remain. This, however, has not been tested yet and is a recommendation for future research.

In relation to RQ2, the study identified and assessed a set of strategic management challenges faced by NFAs. This provides a problem framework that clarifies where strategy execution difficulties occur and creates an empirical basis for evaluating possible interventions. In relation to RQ3, the study evaluated a set of CBM use cases. These use cases were interpreted through CIMO-structured insights, explaining which CBM interventions are perceived to help mitigate specific strategic management challenges.

More broadly, the study bridges insights from strategic management, enterprise architecture, and sport governance. It shows how capabilities can function as an intermediate layer between high-level strategic intent and concrete implementation decisions. In doing so, the research contributes to a more actionable understanding of strategy execution in NFAs, particularly by showing how strategic priorities can be linked to capability domains, responsibilities, resources, performance expectations, and indicators.

## Contribution to practice for NFAs

From a practical perspective, this study provides NFAs with a reusable foundation for strengthening strategic management and strategy execution. The reference Capability Structure and Capability Map can help federations create a shared understanding of the organizational domains involved in executing strategy. Because the structure can be tailored to the scope, size, and maturity of each federation, it can be used by both larger and smaller NFAs as a practical starting point for strategic conversations, organizational analysis, and capability development.

The study also provides a set of concrete CBM use cases that NFAs can apply in practice. These use cases support activities such as translating strategic priorities into capability focus areas, mapping projects to strategic domains, clarifying ownership and accountability, identifying resource gaps, assessing capability performance, defining KPI structures, and discussing outsourcing or partnership options. In this way, the research offers more than a conceptual framework: it provides practical analysis and communication techniques that federations can use in workshops, planning cycles, portfolio discussions, and management reviews.

For individual NFAs, the practical contribution lies in making strategy more tangible and executable. CBM helps federations move beyond broad ambitions by asking which capability domains are affected, what is expected from them, who owns them, what resources are required, how current performance compares to expectations, and how progress will be measured. This can support more focused decision-making, clearer prioritization, improved portfolio rationalization, stronger accountability, and better communication across the organization.

In general, the outcomes of this study aim to support more consistent strategy execution in NFAs without requiring fundamental changes to governance or organizational design, as the study aims to extend the existing strategic management frameworks provided by UEFA and FIFA.

## Implications for UEFA and European Football

For UEFA, the findings suggest that a capability-based reference structure could provide a useful foundation for supporting federation development in a more structured and comparable way. The capability structure offers a common language for discussing how NFAs operate, while still respecting the diversity of federation size, maturity, resources, and national context. This is

important because the study does not assume that all NFAs should operate in the same way; rather, it provides a shared reference model that can be adapted to different contexts.

At the European football level, the reference Capability Structure could support benchmarking, peer learning, and the exchange of good practices between federations. For example, good-practice examples related to KPIs, processes, roles, information objects, governance models, maturity indicators, or digital solutions could be linked to specific capabilities. This would allow federations to learn from one another at the level of concrete organizational domains, rather than through broad and generic comparison.

The CBM use cases also offer UEFA a possible way to strengthen support beyond strategy definition. Several participating NFAs indicated that strategic support is often more available during strategy formulation than during implementation. A capability-based approach could help address this gap by providing practical methods for translating strategic priorities into capability focus areas that are more clearly bounded, operationally specific, and actionable than the existing pillars. These focus areas can then serve as a basis for identifying resource implications, clarifying accountability structures, defining performance indicators, and developing implementation roadmaps. And rather than introducing a new strategic framework, the outcomes of the study are intended to function as a complementary addition that helps member associations make existing guidance more actionable.

The broader implication is that CBM could become a practical support mechanism for improving strategic management across European football and thus support UEFA's ambition to foster professional, well-governed, and future-ready football associations. It could help UEFA organize knowledge-sharing initiatives, structure federation development programs, support maturity discussions, and create reusable toolkits for strategy execution. Used in this way, the contribution of CBM is not limited to individual federations; it may also support a more systematic learning infrastructure across UEFA's member associations.

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## Annex

### Literature study scoring and results

#### Search queries applied

##### Search Query for Scopus

TITLE-ABS-KEY(("association" OR "federation") AND ("strateg\* implement\*" OR "strategy execution" OR "strateg\* management" OR "strateg\* plan\*") AND ("football" OR "soccer" OR "sport\*"))

##### Search Query for Web Of Science

(AB=(("association" OR "federation") AND ("strateg\* implement\*" OR "strategy execution" OR "strateg\* management" OR "strateg\* plan\*") AND ("football" OR "soccer" OR "sport\*"))) OR TI=(("association" OR "federation") AND ("strateg\* implement\*" OR "strategy execution" OR "strateg\* management" OR "strateg\* plan\*") AND ("football" OR "soccer" OR "sport\*"))

## Applied scoring

The quality criteria we will use for the different sources/references to document both challenges and recommendations for the strategic management process of NFA's are shown in the Table 18.

Criterion (AACODS)	Description for NFA Multivocal Literature Review	Score (0-2)
<b>A – Authority</b>	Is the document published in an academic outlet (e.g. Journal, Conference proceedings) or written/endorsed by a recognized body (e.g., Association, UEFA, gov agency)?	0-2
<b>A – Accuracy</b>	Are claims supported by data, references, or transparent reasoning? Contains verifiable facts, metrics, or evidence?	0-2
<b>C – Coverage</b>	Is the scope clear and sufficient (e.g., whole Association vs isolated project)?	0-2
<b>O – Objectivity</b>	Does it appear balanced, or is it clearly promotional?	0-2
<b>D – Date</b>	Is it recent enough?	0-2
<b>S – Significance</b>	Relevant to strategic management in NFA's?	0-2

TABLE 18 - AACODS CRITERIA FOR MLR SCORING

To operationalize the structured quality assessment of grey literature, this study adopts a rubric-based evaluation approach. Rubrics originate from educational measurement and assessment research and are designed to support transparent, consistent, and replicable judgment of complex qualitative artifacts by making evaluative criteria and performance levels explicit (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007; Moskal & Leydens, 2001). Although rubrics are often associated with student assessment, their underlying logic is not limited to educational settings and applies more broadly to situations in which subjective judgments must be structured and auditable. In the context of a multivocal literature review, the use of an analytic rubric aligned with the AACODS criteria enables systematic and proportionate appraisal of grey literature sources, as well as scientific literature. Rather than claiming to produce a definitive quality score, the rubric is intended to generate a plausible and transparent assessment that supports careful interpretation of the evidence and allows for comparing grey and scientific literature. Finally, from a research reproducibility perspective, the explicit rubric structure provides a clear and auditable basis for applying the same evaluation logic across sources. The created rubric can be found below in Table 19.

Criterion	0 – Does not meet	1 – Partly meets	2 – Fully meets
<b>Authority (AU)</b>	No identifiable author or organization; source lacks institutional legitimacy.	Author or organization identifiable but with limited or unclear authority (e.g., blog, individual practitioner).	Produced or formally endorsed by a recognized authority (e.g., National Association, UEFA/FIFA, government body, established research institute). Published in a scientific outlet, indexed by a relevant database (e.g. Scopus, Web of Science)
<b>Accuracy (AC)</b>	Claims are anecdotal, unsupported, or speculative; no evidence, data, or references provided.	Some claims are supported by examples or limited data, but methods or sources are not fully transparent.	Claims are supported by clear evidence (data, references, documented reasoning); assumptions and limitations are stated or inferable.
<b>Coverage (CO)</b>	Scope is unclear, very narrow, or fragmented; key aspects of the topic are missing.	Scope is stated but partial (e.g., focuses on one function or initiative without broader organizational context).	Scope is clearly defined and sufficiently comprehensive for its stated purpose (e.g., organization-wide strategic management framework).

<b>Objectivity (OB)</b>	Clearly promotional, advocacy-driven, or one-sided; alternative views not acknowledged.	Mixed tone: partly descriptive but with noticeable promotional or normative bias.	Balanced and reflective tone; limitations, trade-offs, or challenges are acknowledged.
<b>Date (DA)</b>	Potentially outdated for the study context (>10 years old or made redundant by more modern findings).	Moderately recent but may not fully reflect current context (5–10 years old).	Recent and contextually relevant (published within last 5 years, or still actively in use if older).
<b>Significance (SI)</b>	Marginal or tangential relevance to strategic management in NFA's.	Relevant to some aspects of strategic management in NFA's, but not central.	Directly relevant and informative for strategic management challenges in NFA's.

TABLE 19 - SCORING RUBRIC FOR SCIENTIFIC AND GREY LITERATURE

Scores across the criteria are added to each other, providing a score between 0 and 12. A low score does not imply an immediate exclusion, but rather demands nuance of the value of the source and consequently caution in drawing conclusions. A 0 score on any of the individual criteria does warrant an exclusion, as it seriously hampers the credibility or relevance of the source.

### Scored results – Overview of results from Web Of Science and Scopus search

Source	Initial nr. Of results	Number of results withheld (title)	Number of results withheld (abstract)	Focus on NFAs	Focus on NSAs	Solutions for Strategic Management practice improvement?
Web Of Science	29	2	1	0	B	0
Scopus	131	9	5, of which 2 were duplicates from the previous search (A, B)	0	A, B, C, D, E	0

TABLE 20 - RESULTS FROM WEB OF SCIENCE AND SCOPUS SEARCH

### Scored results – Detailed results from Web Of Science and Scopus search

ID	Title	Journal/outlet	Authors & Year	Relevance	Score	AU	AC	CO	OB	DA	SI
A	Strategic planning in Gauteng grassroots football clubs	South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation	(Boya & Venter, 2023)	Limited, provides an overview of the Strategic Planning Process at Non-For-Profit organizations and challenges discovered in grassroots football clubs, which might be transferrable, but mostly relevant as an indication of these challenges in sports industry.	11/12	2	2	2	2	2	1
B	Strategic Plan and Performance of Selected Ethiopian Sports Federations	Research in Sport Education and Sciences	(Tadese et al., 2023)	Relevant. The paper stipulates that their results imply that the success of sports organizations can be significantly impacted by a well-developed strategic plan. "Strategic planning does have a significant relationship with the performance of sports federations." However, they provide no guidance on how to improve strategic management practice.	12/12	2	2	2	2	2	2
C	The Relationship Between Strategic Management, Organizational Structure, and Good Governance in Sport in Selected Ethiopian Olympic Sports Federations	Journal of Global Sport Management	(M. G. Garma et al., 2025)	Limited. It underwrites the relevance of Strategic Management in NSAs. "This study suggests that strategic management has a significant direct impact on good governance in sport".	11/12	2	2	2	2	2	1
D	Organizational Culture, Strategic Management,	Pamukkale Journal of	(M. Garma	Limited. It underwrites the relevance of Strategic	11/12	2	2	2	2	2	1

	and Good Sports Governance in Selected Ethiopian Olympic Sports Federations: Does Organizational Size Matter?	Sport Sciences	mo et al., 2024)	Management in NSAs. This study amplifies the need to engage in strategic management for good sports governance practices in Olympic sports federations.							
E	Application of the balanced scorecard in polish sports associations	Journal of Physical Education and Sport	(Gulak-Lipka, 2020)	Limited. It underwrites the relevance of Strategic Management in NSAs. "Strategic planning and controlling processes should be implemented on all levels to ensure professional efficiency and long term sustainability of sports organisations".	9/12	2	2	1	2	1	1

TABLE 21 - DETAILED RESULTS FROM WEB OF SCIENCE AND SCOPUS SEARCH

### Scored results – Detailed results from Snowballing search

Search result	Title	Journal/outlet	Authors & Year	Relevance	Score	AU	AC	CO	OB	DA	SI
F	Strategic Management Issues of Croatian National Sport Federations	7TH international scientific conference on Kinesiology	(Corak et al., 2014)	Strategic Management Challenges for NSAs in Croatia.	11/12	2	2	2	2	2	1
G	A Framework for Understanding the Performance of National Governing Bodies of Sport.	European Sport Management Quarterly	(Bayle & Robinson, 2007)	Strategy and management practices in relation to organizational performance of National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of Sport in France.	11/12	2	2	2	2	2	1
H	Strategic paradigms in international and national sport federations.	Book: A Research Agenda for Sport Management	(O'Brien, 2022)	Diversity of Strategic Challenges for NSAs.	12/12	2	2	2	2	2	2
I	Strategic Thinking in Sport Management	Unspecified. Edited article.	(O'Brien, 2023)	Challenges with Strategic Thinking in NSAs.	11/12	1	2	2	2	2	2
J	EMPLOYEES ASSESSMENT OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN SPORT FEDERATION	Ad Alta: journal of interdisciplinary research	(Gajda et al., 2020)	Indication that employees of Sport Federations rate the strategic analysis as best done in their federations, while strategy implementation is poorly evaluated.	11/12	2	2	2	2	2	1

TABLE 22 - DETAILED RESULTS FROM SNOWBALLING SEARCH

### Scored results – Detailed results from Grey Literature search

Search result	Title	Source	Authors & Year	Relevance	Score	AU	AC	CO	OB	DA	SI
K	Introduction. Football Association Management: an introduction	UEFA Academy - Handbook of Football Association management	(Berthoud et al., 2021)	Definition and context of a National Football Association.	11/12	2	2	2	1	2	2
L	Chapter 2: Strategic Management	UEFA Academy - Handbook of Football Association management	(Draebye, 2021)	Chapter devoted to Strategic Management for NFAs.	11/12	2	2	2	1	2	2
M	FIFA Handbook of Football Association Leadership	FIFA	(FIFA, 2025)	Contains a section on Strategic Management for NFAs.	11/12	2	2	2	1	2	2
N	Developing a national association strategy.	UEFA	(UEFA Grow, 2022)	Document devoted to Strategic Management for NFAs.	11/12	2	2	2	1	2	2

TABLE 23 - DETAILED RESULTS FROM GREY LITERATURE SEARCH

# REF<sup>4</sup> Complete Capability Structure

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ID	Levels			Description
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	
1	Federation strategy management			
1.1		Strategy Development		Developing and maintaining the overall strategic direction of the federation, including positioning the sport within the national context, organizing clubs to strengthen the sport's presence in the country or region, and implementing actions to maximize community impact and engagement
1.2		Insights and research management		Outside-In analysis. Watching and analyzing trends and changes in the same or similar markets (e.g. same sport market, different country).
1.3		Brand strategy development		Developing the Federation Brand as a whole.
1.3.1			Core values definition	Establishing the fundamental principles and beliefs that define the identity and direction of the brand, aligning them with the organization's vision and mission.
1.3.2			Brand experience analysis	Evaluating and measuring how the brand is perceived by the public, assessing its impact and reputation in the market, and identifying opportunities to enhance brand perception and engagement.
1.4		Innovation management		Managing innovation and new initiatives, either optimizations of current activities or outside of the current core activities.
1.5		Project Portfolio management & Business Planning		Managing the investment portfolio: where to spend (or cut) budget? (Important strategy implementation capability)
1.6		Self-evaluation		Implementing this capability means making sure the federation is able to self-evaluate and assess. There are processes in place to do so, people are assigned as responsible and accountable and the right information is collected and analyzed for this purpose. Findings and results are structured and reported.
1.7		Enterprise Architecture management		This capability involves designing, implementing, and overseeing the organization's overall architecture, ensuring alignment between business strategies and IT infrastructure. It includes managing the integration of systems, processes, and technologies to optimize performance, support strategic goals, and ensure scalability and efficiency across all functions.
1.8		Touchpoint and Channel management		Enhancing service delivery and overall experience by developing and optimizing various touchpoints across multiple channels, ensuring seamless and engaging interactions for all stakeholders, including customers, partners, and other key audiences. This includes both commercial and service-related interactions to foster effective communication and engagement.
2	Products and Services development & management			
2.1		New merch & sportsgear development		
2.1.1			New merchandise development	Creating new merchandise items such as mugs, posters, and other fan-related products. This can be managed in-house, through joint ventures, or fully outsourced.
2.1.2			New sportsgear development	Designing and producing new sports gear including match kits, training kits, shirts, jackets, etc. This can be conducted in-house, in joint ventures, or fully outsourced.
2.2		New B2C Ticketing development		Developing innovative ticket formulas to enhance the experience for consumers, including new types of tickets and packages tailored to fan needs and preferences.
2.3		New B2B & hospitality offering development		Creating new business-to-business arrangements and hospitality offerings, including premium seating, exclusive services, and corporate packages to attract and retain business clients.
2.4		New Sponsorship/Partnership offering development		Developing new sponsorship and partnership arrangements and options, providing various levels of exposure and engagement opportunities for brands and partners to collaborate with the federation.
2.5		Media rights management		Managing the sale and distribution of broadcast rights for competitions, ensuring maximum reach and revenue from media partnerships.
2.6		Developing new content and media products		Creating new content and media products to engage fans and audiences, including digital media, broadcasts, and interactive content.
2.7		Developing non-physical or virtual products		Exploring and creating virtual products such as NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens) and other digital assets to offer innovative and collectible experiences for fans and stakeholders, e.g. Applications for grassroots football players.
3	Marketing and Commercial Management			

3.1		Marketing Management		All capabilities below are relevant for the multiple products and services the NFF has to offer: - Merchandise & sports gear (e.g. Mugs, mousemats... / e.g. Jerseys, sweaters, socks...) - B2C Tickets (Tickets/ticket packages/seasonal tickets, including parking for consumers.) - B2B Hospitality and Arrangements (tickets/ticket packages/seasonal tickets, including parking and special services like hospitality arrangements for Businesses) - Gameday products and services (food and drinks; up- and cross-selling) - B2B Sponsorship Programs (ad space and other sponsorship programs like banners, billboards, shirts, matchball...)
3.1.1			Marketing strategy development	Crafting a detailed plan that outlines the marketing goals, target audiences, positioning, and tactics to effectively promote the federation's products and services and achieve long-term objectives.
3.1.2			Campaign, content & creative development	Designing and developing marketing campaigns, including the creation of content (text, video) and visuals (image, video), to engage the target audience, promote brand messaging, and drive interest and participation.
3.1.3			Marketing & communication execution	Implementing and managing marketing and communication activities across various channels, ensuring consistent messaging, timely delivery, and effective engagement with the target audience. Digital and non-digital. Relevant channels (non-exclusive): Website management Social Media management Digital APP management
3.2		Brand strategy implementation		
3.2.1			Branding strategy implementation & control	Implement the strategy for growing the brand. This includes the relation with and impact on the community.
3.2.2			Historic achievements/Legends	Develop the narrative, manage the legends (old merchandise, books, ex-player involvement, museum...)
3.2.3			Youth dream development	Develop the narrative of youth players realizing their dreams through the organization.
3.3		Commercial Management		
3.3.1			Commercial strategy development	Crafting strategies to meet sales targets and drive revenue growth across different products and services.
3.3.2			Customer & account management	Building and maintaining relationships with customers and business accounts to ensure satisfaction and long-term engagement.
3.3.3			Sales order & contract management	Overseeing the process of sales orders, from initial customer interest to contract negotiation, signing, and fulfillment (& support following up on payment).
3.3.4			Omnichannel sales management	Webshop, on site... Both for tickets and other products.
4	Product delivery & material management			
4.1		Procurement		
4.1.1			Supplier management	Manage supplier selection and contracts
4.1.2			Tender management	Managing tenders by inviting bids for a project of purchase order, accepting formal offers, selecting the best offer...
4.1.3			Purchase order management	Creating and approving purchase orders
4.1.4			Framework agreement management	Managing framework agreements for procurement
4.2		Inbound logistics & stock		
4.2.1			Goods receipt validation	Matching purchase orders to delivery slips and/or invoices.
4.2.2			Materials for sales management	Stocking and managing products for sale such as merchandise, food, drinks...
4.2.3			Materials/consumables for internal use management	Stocking and managing materials and consumables such as shirts, socks, medication...
4.3		Merchandise & sports gear delivery		
4.3.1			Fanshop/Webshop management	The sales and delivery of merchandise and sports gear through the fanshop or online webshop, ensuring that fans can easily purchase and receive their desired items either in-person at a physical store or online.
4.3.2			Delivery to buyer	Handling the logistics of delivering merchandise and sports gear directly to the buyer's specified location, such as their home or office, ensuring timely and accurate fulfillment of online or remote orders.
4.3.3			Delivery to sales partners	Managing the distribution of merchandise and sports gear to sales partners and retail outlets, ensuring that products are available for purchase in various locations and through multiple channels, thus expanding market reach and accessibility for fans.
4.4		Sustainable solutions management		Implementing and managing eco-friendly practices throughout the product delivery and material management process, including the procurement of sustainable products and the use of environmentally responsible delivery methods to minimize the organization's ecological footprint
4.5		Virtual, Interactivity & connectivity off-site		Delivering digital content and interactive experiences to engage fans and stakeholders remotely, providing innovative solutions such as virtual events, interactive platforms, and real-time connectivity to enhance engagement beyond physical locations.
5	Gameday Match/Event Delivery (Men, Women and Special Teams)			

5.1		Major Event Bidding & Delivery		Coordinating and managing all activities by which football federations prepare and submit proposals to host tournaments, ensuring compliance with all requirements and enhancing the chances of a successful bid through strategic planning and stakeholder engagement. Followed by delivering a tournament if won.
5.2		Physical game or event delivery		Games, concerts (at national venue), celebration events, fan parks for away games
5.2.1			Event registration	Closely related to ticketing, registering is a formal part of event organization; after selling a spot, a person or organization needs to register, and then the tickets can be issued.
5.2.2			Issuing tickets	Providing the actual tickets to the game or event through various methods such as digital cards, smartphones, print-at-home options, or on-site printing.
5.2.3			Access control	Implementing physical access control measures to manage entry and exit points at the venue, ensuring only authorized personnel and attendees can enter.
5.2.4			Accreditation/area control	Allowing staff and individuals with badges to access specific areas within the venue, ensuring secure and organized access.
5.2.5			Safety management & crowd control	Managing the safety of attendees and participants by implementing crowd control measures and ensuring a secure environment. (including Red Cross/First aid, stewards, fire brigade etc.)
5.2.6			Hospitality	Receiving B2B/high tier fans and customers, providing additional services such as guided tours and opportunities to meet the players, enhancing their event experience.
5.2.7			Catering	Providing catering services for B2B/high tier customers as part of the hospitality offering, including food and beverage options.
5.2.8			Media facilitation	Providing a good and safe place for media presence, including designated spots and press conference areas, ensuring smooth media operations.
5.2.9			Side entertainment & ceremonies	Organizing additional entertainment activities such as cheerleaders and half-time events (e.g., kiss-cam, opening ceremonies) to enhance the overall event experience for attendees.
5.2.10			Media & Big screen options	Managing big screens on-site and other media experiences to enhance the event's visual and informational delivery to the audience.
5.2.11			Stadium communications management	Overseeing stadium communication systems, including the stadium speaker system, to ensure effective communication with attendees.
5.2.12			Countdown management	Coordinating the timeline leading up to, during, and after the event, ensuring all activities and segments are executed as planned.
5.2.13			Interactivity & connectivity on site	Providing interactive and connectivity options for attendees, such as Wi-Fi and mobile apps, to enhance their engagement and experience.
5.2.14			Virtual delivery	Offering virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR) experiences, along with regular video delivery or broadcasting, to extend the event's reach and engagement.
5.2.15			Preparing the field/pitch/venue	Ensuring the field, pitch, or venue is properly prepared for the game or event, meeting all required standards and conditions.
5.2.16			External operations	Organizing all activities required outside the stadium before, during, and after a game, including traffic management, parking, and external security measures.
5.2.17			Operate stalls	Organizing stalls to deliver food and drinks to the fans on match/event days
5.2.18			Mobile vendors	Organizing vendors with bags/carts/... to deliver food and drinks outside of the stalls
5.2.19			Digital currency/cashless & cash payments	Providing a cashless option for the fans to use. In some cases, non-digital options are provided. Either through manned stalls or through automated machines.
5.3		Away game delivery		
5.3.1			Organizing on the road games	Coordinating and managing exhibition matches played in various locations to engage with fans, including arranging venues, travel logistics, accommodations, promotions, ticket sales, and ensuring compliance with all regulatory and safety requirements for a successful and well-attended event.
5.3.2			Organizing away ticketing & packages (for fans)	Making sure the right fans get the right tickets to away games. Making sure fans get to the away games. Safeguarding safety of away fans
5.4		E-sports delivery		
5.4.1			Squad selection	Identifying and selecting talented players to form competitive e-sports teams, ensuring a diverse and skilled lineup capable of excelling in various tournaments and competitions.
5.4.2			Coaching & preparation	Developing and implementing training programs to enhance the performance of e-sports players, including strategic coaching, practice sessions, and mental preparation to optimize team readiness for competitions.
5.4.3			Technical delivery	Managing the technical aspects required for e-sports participation, including setup and maintenance of gaming equipment, ensuring robust internet connectivity, and providing technical support during tournaments to ensure smooth gameplay.
5.4.4			Operational delivery	Entering tournaments, hotel arrangements, travel.
5.5		Venue tours		Organizing and conducting guided tours of stadiums and sports facilities, offering fans and visitors an inside look at key areas such as locker rooms, VIP lounges, press rooms, and the pitch, while providing historical and educational insights to enhance their appreciation of the venue and its significance.
5.6		Heritage management		

5.6.1			Museum management	Overseeing the operations of a sports museum, including the preservation and display of historical artifacts, organizing exhibitions, managing visitor experiences, and ensuring the museum serves as an educational and engaging destination for fans and the community.
5.6.2			Patrimonium management	Managing the federation's heritage and historical assets, including maintaining archives, curating historical records and memorabilia, and promoting the organization's legacy to preserve its history and foster a sense of pride and continuity among stakeholders.
6	Federating competitions			
6.1		Federating leagues & competitions		ALL competitions
6.1.1			Agent management	Overseeing the registration, certification, and regulation of player agents, ensuring compliance with legal and ethical standards, facilitating communication between agents, clubs, and players, and resolving disputes to maintain the integrity of player representation.
6.1.2			Transfers and club affiliations management	Overseeing player transfers and club membership to maintain compliance with league regulations.
6.1.3			Competition schedule management	Planning and organizing match timetables to ensure a seamless flow of the competitive season, cup competition or friendly games. Preparing for and responding to unexpected events that may disrupt the normal course of competitions. Includes escalation procedures in case of games that need to be replayed, cancellation due to weather...
6.1.4			Competition rules management	Establishing and updating the rules of the game to uphold fairness and the spirit of competition. Maintaining high standards for playing conditions, equipment, and facilities across all professional matches.
6.1.5			Match Integrity Monitoring	Defining, implementing and enforcing measures to prevent match-fixing and maintain the integrity of the sport.
6.1.6			Player Welfare and Safety Protocols	Ensuring player health and safety through comprehensive protocols and measures.
6.1.7			Data Management and Analytics	Utilizing data to track competitions and enhance strategic decisions.
6.1.8			Sport tribunal	Overseeing and managing the processes for handling disciplinary actions within the federation, ensuring that all incidents are reviewed fairly and in accordance with established regulations to maintain the integrity of the sport.
6.1.9			Disciplinary enforcement	Implementing and enforcing suspensions and other penalties as determined by disciplinary procedures, ensuring compliance with sporting regulations and maintaining discipline within the federation.
6.1.10			Licensing & Sanctioning	Regulating club licensing and enforcing financial rules to ensure all teams compete fairly and sustainably.
6.1.11			Award management	Coordinating the recognition and distribution of awards and titles in professional competitions.
6.1.12			Professional education programs management	Developing, coordinating, and administering educational programs for professionals within the football industry, including coaches, and administrators, to enhance their skills, knowledge, and qualifications through workshops, courses, certifications, and continuous learning opportunities.
6.1.13			Grassroots Education Programs	Providing educational resources and training opportunities for amateur clubs and their coaching staff.
6.1.14			Club support services	Providing professional support and consulting services to professional football clubs.
6.2		Managing Referee Department		
6.2.1			Referee & VAR operations	Supervising the operation (and application) of the Regular Referee team and the Video Assistant Referee system to support correct decision-making.
6.2.2			Referee & VAR recruitment & retention	Managing the recruitment process for referees and Video Assistant Referee (VAR) officials, including identifying, attracting, and selecting qualified candidates, and implementing strategies to retain these officials by providing support, development opportunities, and ensuring job satisfaction to maintain a high standard of officiating within the sport.
6.2.3			Referee & VAR training and certification programs	Conducting training sessions and certification programs to maintain a high standard of officiating.
6.2.4			Assignment and scheduling of referees	Coordinating the assignment and schedule of referees to ensure qualified officials preside over each match.
6.2.5			Referee performance review, feedback systems and pathways mgt	Implementing a system for evaluating referees and providing constructive feedback for improvement.
6.2.6			Referee wellbeing	Implementing programs and initiatives to support the physical, mental, and emotional health of referees, including fitness training, psychological support, stress management resources, and creating a positive work environment to ensure their overall wellbeing and optimal performance.
6.2.7			Technological support systems for refereeing	Utilizing advanced technology to assist referees in their decision-making and enhance their performance on the field. Incorporating and overseeing technologies like VAR and goal-line technology to support officiating and enhance the game.
7	Customer/Fan services and relationship management			
7.1		General fan relationship management		
7.1.1			Fan profile/ID management	Managing and maintaining digital profiles and IDs for fans to track engagement, preferences, and interactions, enhancing the overall fan experience and relationship.

7.1.2			Personalization & Fan Data Analysis	Utilizing fan data to tailor experiences and communications, analyzing behaviors and preferences to deliver personalized content and improve fan engagement. The organization needs to be able to measure the fan engagement and be able to predict the retention ratio/grade. <b>Supporting capability for digital marketing.</b>
7.1.3			Community engagement	Presence of the federation in the community (e.g. schools, children institutions etc.)
7.1.4			Loyalty program	Loyalty program for fans, including saving 'miles' to spend in the club shop, encouraging yearly renewals of season tickets and so on.
7.1.5			Fan Club management	Managing relations with fan clubs.
7.2		Customer Interaction & Support (Questions & Complaints)		Managing complaints and questions of fans.
7.2.1			Multichannel Support	Offering comprehensive customer support through various channels, including email, phone, and chat, to ensure accessible and timely assistance for fans and stakeholders.
7.2.2			Feedback and Resolution	Collecting and analyzing customer feedback to address issues and improve services, ensuring that all complaints and inquiries are resolved efficiently and effectively.
8	Staff, Player and Team Management; Human Capital Management			
8.1		General HR Management		Includes general administration of employees & education.
8.1.1			Employee Recruitment, Onboarding & Offboarding	Managing the recruitment and integration of new employees into the organization and ensuring smooth transitions when employees leave. This includes orientation, organizing for training, paperwork, and exit interviews to maintain a consistent and efficient HR lifecycle.
8.1.2			Compensation & Benefits Administration	Overseeing the administration of employee compensation, including salary processing, benefits management, and ensuring compliance with tax laws and organizational policies to provide timely and accurate payments and benefits to employees.
8.1.3			Employee Relations & Support	Facilitating effective communication and relationships between employees and management, addressing workplace issues, providing conflict resolution, and ensuring a positive work environment. This includes implementing employee support programs and maintaining a strong organizational culture.
8.2		Ethical Monitoring & whistleblower facilitation (INTERNAL)		ADULT: Whistleblower facilitation for adults needs to be provided and is a different focus than that for youth players. YOUTH: Establishing systems to oversee and evaluate youth programs, and providing safe and confidential channels for reporting concerns or misconduct, ensuring accountability and promoting a culture of transparency and integrity.
8.3		National teams management (Adults & youth)		
8.3.1			Pipeline management	Collaborating with leagues and other stakeholders to ensure a steady flow of eligible players for national team selection. This includes monitoring player development, managing eligibility requirements, and encouraging dual-nationality players to choose to represent the country.
8.3.2			Scouting & selection management	Identifying and evaluating players for national team selection. Managing the entire selection process, including talent scouting, assessments, and finalizing the roster for national teams.
8.3.3			Team tactics mgt	Developing, implementing, and adjusting game plans and tactical strategies for the national team. This includes preparing for specific opponents, selecting formations, and optimizing player roles to enhance team performance.
8.3.4			Group dynamic & star management	Managing team cohesion and chemistry, fostering positive relationships among players, and integrating high-profile players into the team structure. This involves promoting a healthy team culture and addressing interpersonal dynamics to optimize team performance.
8.3.5			Event and tournament registration	Coordinating the process of enrolling and securing participation in major events, such as the World Cup. This includes submitting necessary documentation, adhering to deadlines, liaising with event organizers, and ensuring compliance with eligibility and regulatory requirements.
8.3.6			Organizing for (away) games	Planning and managing the logistics for away matches, including travel arrangements, accommodations, scheduling, and ensuring compliance with competition regulations. This ensures a seamless experience for the team and staff, contributing to optimal performance during away games.
8.4		National teams performance management		
8.4.1			Performance tracking & measurement	Tracking the performance of the entire national team and players.
8.4.2			Performance analysis	Analyzing the performance of the entire national team and players.
8.4.3			Team Training	Scheduling and executing national team trainings.
8.4.4			Opponent scouting	Analyzing and assessing the strengths, weaknesses, tactics, and key players of upcoming opponents to develop effective strategies and training plans for the national team. This information is used to tailor game preparation and enhance team performance against specific opponents.
8.5		Coaching staff management		Managing the recruitment, development, and performance of coaches to ensure alignment with organizational goals and support player and team success.
8.6		Player Management (adult & youth)		These capabilities can be organized in such a way that the organization is able to support and manage different types of teams (e.g. men's team, women's team, disabled team...)

8.6.1			Individual Training	Providing tailored training programs for each player, focusing on their specific needs, skills, and development goals to enhance their overall performance and well-being.
8.6.2			Medical, fitness & nutrition Management	Overseeing the health, fitness, and nutritional needs of players, ensuring they maintain peak physical condition and receive appropriate medical care and dietary support.
8.6.3			Contract management	Administering and overseeing player contracts to ensure clear agreements and maintain healthy professional relationships.
8.6.4			Player liason & guidance	Offering comprehensive support to players, both on and off the field, by assisting them with onboarding, navigating personal and professional challenges, and ensuring compliance with regulatory and contractual obligations. This role focuses on promoting players' well-being, managing lifestyle and health, and providing tailored guidance to help them balance their careers and personal lives effectively.
8.6.5			Travel & security for all games	Coordinating all logistical and security arrangements for player travel, including transportation, accommodations, and safety measures, to ensure a smooth and secure experience during both home and away games.
8.6.6			Youth safeguarding	Establishing and enforcing policies and practices to protect young athletes from harm, ensuring their safety in all environments, and supporting their physical and emotional development.
8.6.7			Youth guidance and education	Providing guidance and support to young players to help them achieve a healthy balance between their sports commitments, education, and personal life, promoting their holistic development and well-being.
8.7		Volunteer Management		
8.7.1			Safety Stewards	People who make sure events and matchdays are going safe and well on the floor. They need to be organized and managed.
8.7.2			Other event volunteers	Volunteers e.g. for medical assistance. They need to be organized and managed.
8.7.3			Club volunteers (Grassroots & Semi-pro)	Volunteers for guiding youth teams and taking up the administrative tasks. They need to be organized and managed.
9	Information Technology (IT) Management			
9.1		Data, information & document Management		Can be a very elaborate capability, but in its core, it's important that data and information are managed and structured, in line with IT solutions and the IT strategy.
9.2		Infrastructure Management		Can be a very elaborate capability, but in its core, it's important that the IT infrastructure such as the network, servers, computers etc. are managed and structured, in line with IT solutions and the IT strategy.
9.3		Application Management		Can be a very elaborate capability, but in its core, it's important that applications are managed and structured, in line with IT solutions and the IT strategy.
9.4		IT Project Management		New IT solutions should be built through project management. Having a PMO or PM practice is an important part of realizing successful IT implementations.
9.5		IT security Management		Overseeing and implementing measures to protect the federation's IT infrastructure, systems, and data from cyber threats and unauthorized access, ensuring compliance with security policies and regulations, and maintaining a secure digital environment.
9.6		IT support		Providing technical assistance and support to users within the federation, resolving IT-related issues, maintaining hardware and software, and ensuring smooth operation and user satisfaction across all technology platforms.
10	Financial Resources Management/Finance & controlling			
10.1		Cost accounting		Analyzing and allocating costs and revenues to specific functions or activities within the organization. This process helps in making informed financial decisions, optimizing resources, and improving financial performance based on precise data.
10.2		Forecasting		Estimating future financial outcomes based on historical data and market trends to guide financial planning, budgeting, and strategic decision-making.
10.3		Accounts Receivable & billing		Managing the process of invoicing customers and collecting payments, ensuring accurate and timely recording of all transactions to maintain healthy cash flow.
10.4		Accounts Payable & payments		Managing the payment processes for vendors and service providers, ensuring that all invoices are accurately recorded, approved, and paid on time.
10.5		Employee payments		Administering the payroll process to ensure all employees are paid accurately and on time, including the calculation and distribution of salaries, benefits, and deductions.
10.6		Financial Accounting & Tax Management		Maintaining the organization's financial records in compliance with local accounting standards and tax regulations, preparing financial statements, and managing tax-related matters.
10.7		Asset Accounting		Recording and managing the organization's fixed assets, including acquisitions, disposals, and depreciation, to ensure accurate financial reporting and investment tracking.
10.8		Subsidies Management		Overseeing the application, receipt, and compliance of subsidies and grants from external sources, ensuring proper utilization and reporting in line with regulatory requirements.
10.9		Cash & Treasury Management		Managing the organization's cash flow and liquidity to optimize the use of funds, minimize financial risk, and ensure the availability of cash for operational needs and investments.
11	Asset/Infrastructure Acquisition, Construction and Management			
11.1		Rolling assets & machines		Cars, pitch machinery etc. needs to be maintained and managed.

11.2		General premise & campus management		
11.2.1			Building maintenance	Overseeing the upkeep and repair of all buildings within the campus, ensuring they are safe, functional, and aesthetically pleasing, and addressing any structural or operational issues promptly.
11.2.2			On-prem security management	Implementing and managing security measures to protect the premises, including surveillance, access control, and coordination with security personnel to ensure a safe environment for all occupants and visitors.
11.2.3			Training pitch/field maintenance	Maintaining and managing the training facilities, including pitches and fields, to ensure they are in optimal condition for use by athletes and teams, addressing any wear and tear, and implementing necessary improvements.
11.2.4			Parking maintenance and management	Providing and maintaining parking facilities, ensuring they are accessible, well-organized, and secure, and managing the flow of vehicles to accommodate staff, players, and visitors.
11.2.5			Catering and leisure area management	Overseeing areas where food and beverages are provided or sold, and ensuring spaces where players and others can relax are well-maintained, comfortable, and equipped to meet their needs.
11.2.6			Hotel & guest management	Managing accommodations and services for guests, including the operation of on-site hotels or guest houses, ensuring a high standard of hospitality and comfort for visiting teams, officials, and other guests.
11.3		Stadium management		
11.3.1			Pitch/field maintenance	The main pitch of field needs to be maintained and managed.
11.3.2			Seating maintenance	The seating area for fans needs to be maintained and managed.
11.3.3			B2B area maintenance	The B2B/VIP area for fans needs to be maintained and managed.
11.3.4			Catering area management	The catering area and kitchen for fans needs to be maintained and managed.
11.3.5			Commercial area management	The commercial area (stalls, shops...) for fans needs to be maintained and managed.
11.3.6			Other	Screens, lighting, MRO (Maintenance, Repairs & Operations)
11.4		New venue/Expansion project management		New venue solutions/areas should be built through project management. Having a PMO or PM practice is an important part of realizing successful expansions or new ideas.
11.5		Rental contract management		Facilities/buildings/... are often rented. This needs to be managed properly.
11.6		Energy & consumables		Electricity, water, other facilities
11.7		Sustainability management		Providing an eco-conscience and friendly event environment (LED, Green energy use...)
11.8		Accessibility and traffic control		Together with local government and law enforcement, the accessibility and traffic streams towards venues need to be managed. Parking needs to be organized etc.
12	Enterprise Risk, Compliance, Remediation, and Resiliency Management			
12.1		ESG strategy		Sustainability is an important topic for sports federations. Setting out a clear strategy with clear objectives and how to achieve these, is an important capability.
12.2		Risk management		Identifying, assessing, and mitigating potential risks to football federations, ensuring the safety, integrity, and smooth operation of all activities and events.
12.3		Compliance		
12.3.1			Regulation management	Overseeing the development, implementation, and enforcement of internal regulations and standards within the football federation, ensuring compliance with governing bodies' rules, monitoring adherence, and updating policies to reflect changes in the regulatory environment.
12.3.2			Legal	Ensuring that all activities, policies, and operations within the football federation adhere to relevant laws and providing guidance on legal issues, managing legal risks, and handling any legal disputes or proceedings. Anti-bribery actions.
12.4		Ethical governance		Making sure that there are procedures for inclusion and diversity, against racism and other negative actions. Providing controls on ethical finance, whistleblower procedures and mechanisms against power abuse.
12.5		Equality and Diversity Initiatives		Promoting inclusion and combating discrimination to foster diversity within the professional football community. E.g. Say no to racism, gender equality, inclusiveness of (mentally, physically...) challenged people
12.6		Legal, case & litigation management		The legal department/Lawyers, making sure that full compliance with legal guidelines are met.
12.7		Contract Management		Overseeing the entire lifecycle of contracts within the football federation, including drafting, reviewing, negotiating, executing, and storing contracts, ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, and managing renewals and terminations to maintain clear, enforceable agreements and mitigate risks.
12.8		Statute Management		Overseeing the creation, maintenance, and enforcement of statutes and regulations governing the football federation to ensure legal compliance and organizational integrity.
12.9		Internal audit		Conducting systematic evaluations of the football federation's operations, financial practices, and compliance with policies and regulations, identifying areas for improvement, ensuring accountability, and providing recommendations to enhance efficiency and integrity within the organization.
13	External Relationships & Stakeholder Management & Sports Diplomacy			

13.1		Clubs Management		Facilitating and maintaining positive relationships with football clubs, overseeing communication and collaboration, addressing club concerns, coordinating support and resources, and ensuring alignment with federation policies and objectives to foster a cooperative and thriving football community.
13.2		Press Management		Managing relations with the media/press.
13.3		Sports federations		Managing relations with other sports and/or other country federations (e.g. other national football federations, same country but other sports, or international federations like UEFA and FIFA).
13.4		Unions		Managing relations with the unions.
13.5		Governments		Managing relations with national and international governments.
13.6		Authorities		Managing relations with the fire brigade (1st line), Police (2nd line), Hospitals (3rd line).
13.7		Community		Managing relations with the local community/city/village/...
13.8		Academics		Managing relations with the academic sector.
13.9		Commercial partners & alliances		Managing relations with different commercial partners and alliances with 3rd parties.
13.10		Other partner & stakeholder management		Managing relations with other stakeholders and parties, not covered by the other ones.
13.11		Communications Management		
13.11.1			Strategic communications planning	Developing and implementing long-term communication strategies to align with organizational goals, enhance public engagement, and effectively convey key messages to target audiences.
13.11.2			General Communications Management	Overseeing and coordinating all internal and external communications to ensure clear, consistent, and effective messaging across the organization and with stakeholders.
13.11.3			Crisis Communications Management	Preparing for and managing communication strategies during crises to ensure timely, accurate, and effective dissemination of information, protecting the organization's reputation and maintaining stakeholder trust.