Citizens Sports

Structural Standards Series

CS-SS-001
Version 1.0 — Structural Threshold Edition

The Nourishment Gateway

A Structural Diagnostic for Regenerative Sport Systems

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1. Scope

This standard establishes a binary structural threshold for assessing regenerative capacity within layered sport systems.

It applies to sport ecosystems that include one or more of the following layers:

- Community participation
- Amateur and club competition
- Development pathways
- Professional or elite competition
- Commercial broadcast or capital participation
- Governance authorities

This standard evaluates structural value circulation across these layers.

It does not assess competitive performance, brand strength, cultural influence, or short-term financial success.

It assesses architecture.

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2. Structural Problem

Modern sport systems are layered and interdependent.

Participation sustains talent density.
Volunteer labour sustains institutional continuity.
Clubs sustain access and identity.
Development systems sustain quality.
Professional tiers sustain visibility and revenue.

Each upper layer depends on the vitality of layers beneath it.

When value flows upward without proportional structural return downward, regenerative capacity declines.

This decline may be temporarily masked by:

- Media rights growth
- Private capital injection
- Event-driven liquidity
- Asset valuation increases
- Sovereign underwriting

Liquidity does not equal regeneration.

A system may appear commercially healthy while its participation base thins, volunteer load intensifies, and institutional resilience declines.

Extraction without structural replenishment produces instability over time.

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3. Conservation Principle

Layered systems remain stable only when value circulates in proportion to extraction.

In sport, extraction occurs when one layer draws from another without restoring the conditions required for that layer's continued function.

Extraction may take financial or structural form, including:

- Calendar compression that reduces community participation windows
- Centralisation that weakens club continuity
- Commercial concentration that bypasses grassroots reinvestment
- Governance structures that externalise development cost

Replenishment is structural return, not rhetorical support.

Structural return may include:

- Financial reinvestment
- Calendar protection
- Development cost internalisation
- Authority coupled to enforceable obligation
- Institutional reinforcement of the base layer

The absence of structural return produces thinning.

Thinning is gradual.
Instability is episodic.
Structural decline is delayed.

Delay often results in misinterpretation of temporary liquidity as long-term health.

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4. Nourishment Gateway Threshold

The Nourishment Gateway is a binary structural test.

It determines whether a sport system is regenerative or extractive.

Defined Term — Extractive Sport System

An extractive sport system is one in which professional or commercial layers consume the regenerative capacity of the ecosystem that sustains them.

4.1 Threshold Condition

A sport system passes the Nourishment Gateway when:

1. Value extracted from foundational layers is structurally returned in proportion sufficient to sustain and grow those layers.
2. Professional or elite expansion is bounded by the regenerative capacity of the ecosystem that supports it.
3. Governance authority is matched by enforceable structural responsibility for ecosystem sustainability.
4. Time is treated as a regenerative variable rather than an extractive instrument.

A sport system fails the Nourishment Gateway when one or more of the following conditions persist structurally:

1. Value flows predominantly upward without proportional structural return.
2. Professional scale or wage structures rely on subsidy detached from base-layer growth.
3. Governance authority is not coupled to regenerative obligation.
4. Commercial acceleration reduces long-term participation resilience or institutional continuity.

The Gateway does not assign scores.

It recognises a threshold.

A system either structurally preserves its regenerative base, or it does not.

Temporary commercial success does not override structural failure.

Modest commercial scale does not preclude structural health.

The Gateway separates visibility from viability.

Figure 1 — Ideal Sports Value Circulation Model
Illustrative representation of regenerative flow across layered sport systems. Value must circulate downward in proportion to extraction to preserve ecosystem capacity.

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5. Implications for Capital Allocation

Capital entering sport systems may encounter:

- Asset inflation
- Media rights escalation
- Franchise scarcity narratives
- Event-driven liquidity
- Structured private investment

These factors may increase short-term valuation while weakening base-layer regeneration.

When development costs are externalised to volunteers, educational institutions, or unpaid club infrastructure, professional layers may appear commercially efficient while drawing down unpaid structural capital.

The replacement cost of a depleted participation base is rarely priced accurately.

Wage structures exceeding endogenous earning capacity may be sustained by subsidy. Subsidy does not alter regenerative constraint.

The Nourishment Gateway provides a structural lens for capital allocation:

- Is growth coupled to regeneration?
- Is liquidity masking depletion?
- Is scale bounded by ecosystem capacity?
- Are development costs internalised or externalised?

Capital entering extractive systems may achieve short-term return.

Capital entering regenerative systems compounds capacity.

The distinction lies in value circulation.

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6. Implications for Governance

Governance bodies frequently initiate reform in response to visible instability.

Reforms may adjust leadership, format, or commercial strategy.

If architectural extraction remains unchanged, reform cycles accelerate depletion.

Authority without obligation destabilises ecosystems.

Passing the Nourishment Gateway requires governance frameworks that:

- Embed reinvestment discipline
- Protect participation time
- Bound professional expansion
- Internalise development cost
- Align authority with ecosystem responsibility

Policy adjustment without architectural realignment cannot restore regenerative balance.

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7. Limitations

The Nourishment Gateway does not prescribe a single model of sport.

It does not mandate structural form, ownership model, or competition design.

It establishes a threshold condition grounded in conservation logic.

Systems may differ in scale, geography, and commercial structure.

All remain subject to regenerative constraint.

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8. Regeneration as Design Choice

Sport systems are not exempt from structural constraint.

When foundational layers thin, professional visibility cannot indefinitely compensate.
When participation weakens, talent density declines.
When volunteer capacity erodes, institutional continuity fractures.
When value pools rather than circulates, resilience decreases.

The Nourishment Gateway establishes a threshold condition:

Systems that structurally nourish their base preserve and expand long-term capacity.
Systems that structurally extract from their base progressively reduce their own future viability.

Regeneration is architectural design.

Extraction is structural choice.

Long-term consequence is not accidental.

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9. Version Statement

Version 1.0 — Structural Threshold Edition

This edition establishes the binary Nourishment Gateway as a conservation-based diagnostic standard.

Future revisions may expand observable indicators, reporting protocols, or assessment guidance.

The binary structural threshold — regenerative or extractive — will remain unchanged.