

Building Sport for Life: The Next Phase

The Irish Sports Council's Strategy 2009-2011

MISSION

The Irish Sports Council's mission, in partnership with our promoting Department, is:

To plan, lead and coordinate the sustainable development of competitive and recreational sport in Ireland

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CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

Ossie Kilkenny

I am proud to introduce this new three year strategy for the Irish Sports Council. It is an excellent organisation which in its short existence has achieved many things.

There are two critically important facts that must be highlighted. Firstly our research programme has proven that there are more Irish people participating in Irish sport than ever before. The same research programme has brought to light many challenges that we face, not all of them easily overcome. However, there is no doubt that we face the future in a relatively good position, with hundreds of thousands of Irish people of all ages regularly taking part in health enhancing sport.

Secondly, the wonderful achievements of our top athletes across many sports has proven that we can generate a return on investment in Irish elite sport. For many years we looked on in envy at more advanced sports systems and their medal winning exploits. Recently Irish boxers, Paralympians and others, competed successfully at the highest levels of international competition.

The Irish Sports Council was established in 1999 and immediately dedicated itself to developing sport in Ireland in a strategic and planned fashion. This document is our fourth strategic plan. During our nine years we have enjoyed enormous support from within the sports community. Everything we have achieved to date has been in collaboration with many sports organisations. Our approach to our mission is to work on a basis of collaboration, partnership and respect.

In particular we work closely with our colleagues in the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and I want to pay tribute to them for their ongoing support for the Council.

We carry out many functions and fulfill different roles. While we are a major funding agency for sport in Ireland we also provide many other services that support our two key objectives; increasing participation in sport and improving the standards of elite sport.

We have achieved what we set out to achieve in our last strategy. Key initiatives, namely the establishment of the Irish Institute of Sport and the complete roll-out of the National Network of Sports Partnerships, are in place for a relatively short time. The focus of the next three years must be on supporting these initiatives to ensure that we generate the positive outputs we have set out to achieve.

The Council took a considered view that the overall strategic direction of the organisation was valid. It was important that we steer a consistent strategic path in the light of a succession of policy advances since 2005. Furthermore the Council supports programmes which address the strategic priorities set out in the Programme for Government, the national agreement Towards 2016, and the strategy of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism.

In addition we were conscious of the impact on our own resources and those of our clients in the determination of this document. There is no need to invest significant time and money in a new strategy when there is a clear and shared vision on how we should proceed.

With that in mind we focused our energies on four key areas;

- o The evaluation of the last three's years work with specific reference to the targets we set ourselves,
- o The current environment of the sports sector and the organisation,
- o An assessment of the major issues that we face in the next three years,
- o The allocation of resources available to the Council in meeting our strategic objectives

As with all strategic planning processes, the published document is simply the final phase and it is the consultation, evaluation and debate carried out during the process which gives life and value to the strategy. We are satisfied that the document reflects the decisions taken by the Council on its direction over the next three years. I would like to thank everybody who had an input into the strategy process.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATEMENT OF STRATEGY

Background

Under Section 25 of the Irish Sports Council Act, 1999 the Council is required to prepare a three-year strategy statement for the period 2009- 2011 for presentation to the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism in December 2008.

This statement of strategy comprises the Council's key objectives, outputs and related strategies for the period. Essential to the process is a review of the programmes and activities over the past three years.

The Irish Sports Council made a number of crucial decisions at the outset of the process. The foundations of the previous strategies remain relevant and continue to underpin the actions of the organisation.

The broad strategic thrusts of the strategy should remain, namely the focus in increasing participation and improving the standards of elite sport.

The strategy sets out an overall vision for the Council and must be consistent with, and not duplicate the work of, other strategic developments in the last three years.

Key Developments during the strategic period

The Irish Sports Council has developed significantly over the course of “Building Sport for Life, 2006-2008”

- o A group within the Council has developed proposals on a comprehensive strategy for increasing participation in sport in Ireland. This document, developed in parallel with the strategy, sets out the Council’s vision for increasing participation in sport and physical activity in Ireland.
- o The Local Sports Partnerships are central to the Council’s plans for increasing participation in sport. In 2008 the Partnerships became a national network with 33 operational and covering every area of the country. A monitoring and evaluation framework, SPEAK, has been developed and the first report for 2007 has been published.
- o The Council’s Irish Trails Strategy developed in partnership with a number of national agencies focuses on the area of outdoor recreation and is particularly important given the benefits of walking and cycling as physical activities. Launched in 2007, that strategy led to the establishment of the National Trails Advisory Committee and National Trails Office, both charged with implementing the strategy.
- o The establishment of the Institute of Sport in 2006 was a key initiative within the high performance sector. The Institute will deliver essential services to athletes and coaches with the impact apparent from 2009.
- o A review of performances at the 2008 Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games will reflect the implementation of the recommendations and the achievement of targets set in the Athens Review (2005). Those targets were 6-9 finalists at the Olympics and 12 to 15 finalists at the Paralympics. Both targets were surpassed, converting to 3 medals at the Olympics and 5 medals at the Paralympics.

- o Anti-Doping is a multilateral and multinational issue. The Irish Sports Council supports WADA in its efforts to eliminate doping from sport globally. The new Irish Anti-Doping Rules will come into force from January 1, 2009.

- o The research programme in collaboration with the Economic and Social Research Institute, the CSO and other leading research institutions, has provided information on sport in Ireland. This information provides a foundation for the development of policy in sport.

- o Coaching Ireland, formally NCTC, launched its new strategy for coaching in September 2008. The area of coaching is critical to the development of sport in Ireland and was raised in many of the submissions to the Council. Coaching Ireland will operate on an all-island basis and the implementation of its strategy will meet the needs of coaching and coaches in Ireland. The Council endorses its new role and remit and will support its work in the implementation of its strategy.

- o The development of Coaching Ireland as an all-island body reflects the close collaboration between the Irish Sports Council and our colleagues in Sport Northern Ireland. Cooperation across a range of areas has been enhanced over the last strategy including governing body planning, high performance planning, anti-doping and research.

FOUNDATIONS

The Irish Sports Council

The Irish Sports Council was established as a statutory agency on 1 July 1999. Under the Irish Sports Council Act the Council's is mandated to undertake the following:

- o Encouraging the promotion, development and co-ordination of competitive sport
- o Developing strategies for increasing participation in recreational sport and co-ordinating their implementation by all Irish bodies involved in promoting recreational sport and providing recreational sport facilities
- o Facilitating good standards of conduct and fair play in both competitive and recreational sport
- o Combating doping in sport
- o Initiating and encouraging research concerning competitive and/or recreational sport
- o Facilitating research and disseminating information concerning competitive or recreational sport.

The Council has a chairperson and ten ordinary members who are appointed by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism. In 2008, the staff establishment had grown to 31 and the budget was €57 million.

In accordance with Section 25 of the Irish Sports Council Act 1999, the Council is required to prepare a three year strategic plan for presentation to the Minister in December 2008. This is the fourth in a series starting with "A New Era for Sport", (2000 to 2002), "Sport for Life", (2003 to 2005) and "Building Sport for Life" (2006 to 2008).

The foundations which underpinned the previous strategies were strongly reaffirmed. The Council believes that the vision, values, mission and role accurately encompass the organisation and the challenges it faces.

Vision

The Council's vision is one where sport contributes to enhancing the quality of Irish life and:

- o Everyone is encouraged and valued in sport;
- o Young people see sport participation as an integral and enjoyable part of their lives;
- o Individuals can develop their sporting abilities and enhance their enjoyment, limited only by their talent and commitment; and
- o Irish sportsmen and women achieve consistent world-class performance, fairly.

Values

The following values underpin the Council's actions.

- Sport has the potential to enrich the lives of all and the Council will promote inclusiveness and integration in sport.
- The Council is an open, honest and accountable organisation, which bases its decisions on objective evidence.
- The Council is committed to measuring and reviewing its programmes and initiatives.
- The Council is open to innovation in the planning and delivery of sustainable improvements to sport.
- Working in partnership with other agencies is recognised as the best means of delivering desired outcomes. The Council value the strong relationships that have developed with the sports community on the island of Ireland.

- The key role of the volunteers in sport is recognised and valued. Volunteering in sport is a major contributor to social and community wellbeing in Ireland.
- Sport and physical activity makes a major contribution to the health of participating individuals and communities. The Council will continue to promote sport and physical activity on that basis.
- The Council is committed to the integration of the Lifelong Involvement in Sport & Physical Activity (LISPA) framework across all sports as the basis of all current and future development to promote lifelong engagement in sport and physical activity.
- The commitment and dedication of the staff of the Irish Sports Council is a contributor to the development of sport in Ireland.

Mission

The Irish Sports Council's mission, in partnership with our promoting Department, is:

'To plan, lead and coordinate the sustainable development of competitive and recreational sport in Ireland'

Role

The Irish Sports Council is the statutory development agency for sport in Ireland.

The focus of our efforts is on the achievement of our high level goals of increasing participation in sport and improving the levels of performance by our elite athletes in world-class competition.

Among the mechanisms for delivering on our role are:

- o Developing policies within our statutory remit;
- o Advocating on behalf of sport backed up by our research, information and communications activities;
- o Facilitating the development of sporting bodies through capacity and capability building within those bodies;
- o Targeted funding of organisations and individuals which places an emphasis on the achievement of value for money;
- o Direct implementation where necessary as has been the case to date in relation to the Code of Ethics programme;
- o Exercising a regulatory approach where such is required as in the case of anti-doping.

The Council will continue to look at these and other options in the next strategy in order to ensure that we deliver on the primary role as outlined above with our choices being determined by resource availability and by the aim of trying to add greatest value to Irish sport.

RESOURCES

In “Building Sport for Life” the Council stated that, in order to meet its objectives, the Council would need an annual budget of €50 million and a staff establishment of 34.

In 2008, the Irish Sports Council had an establishment of 31 staff and a budget of €7.327 million. That was based on the approval of 6 new posts and the provision of extra financial resources by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism. The Council hopes that its recommendation of an establishment of 34 will become a reality.

For 2009 the Council has been allocated a budget of €1.689 million. This represents a cut of 10% on the 2008 budget.

The Council’s priority over the next three years will be to ensure that investment in sport from the state sector is protected, grows where possible and is directed at strategic priorities.

CONTEXT FOR SPORT IN IRELAND

The Irish Sports Council is an agency that operates in a dynamic political, economic and social environment.

- O Sport has been represented at the Cabinet table since 1997. The Council will work to ensure that sport maintains its role and influence in Irish political life.

- O The Programme for Government 2007-2012 makes a commitment to ongoing support for the Irish Sports Council as the statutory agency for the promotion, development and coordination of sport in Ireland.
 - o In Towards 2016, the social partners recognise the important contribution which sports makes to the social and economic development of the country. It recommends the Government support the two key strategic objectives of the Council; increased participation and improved standard of performances at elite level.

 - o The Council enjoys an excellent working relationship with the Department of Arts, Sport & Tourism. The Council notes that in its Statement of Strategy 2008-2010 the Department shares the twin goals in sport in increasing participation and improving elite performance.

 - o The Council also recognises the need to build strong collaborative relationships with other Government departments including Health and Children, Education and Science, Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs Transport and Environment & Local Government.

 - o The Council will work towards multi-annual funding as this would be a major benefit to our client organisation.

 - o The Council welcomes all state support for sport and will work with Government to maximize its investment. It will work to ensure that the portion of its budget that is entirely at its own discretion will grow at the same rate as its non-discretionary funding.

- o The Irish Sports Council enjoys an excellent working relationship with Sport Northern Ireland. We will continue to promote close cooperation and an all-island approach where appropriate.
- o The Irish economy, in common with the international economy, experienced a very difficult year in 2008. The country is officially in recession and ongoing economic difficulties will have implications for every aspect of society, not least exchequer resources.
- o Economic conditions can have an impact on the various streams of income, (sponsorship, gate receipts, sales of rights) that sports bodies enjoy. Disposable incomes of individuals and families will be affected by the economic downturn and these may have a knock on impact on the revenues of sports organisations
- o There is an increasing number of professionals working in various capacities in Irish sport as the sector becomes an increasingly vibrant part of the economy.
- o That said, Irish sport is still heavily reliant on the contribution of volunteers at every level, a contribution that must be protected, valued and recognised.
- o Between the number of people who play and those who volunteer to support participation, sport is a major contributor to the generation of social capital in Ireland. The positive social aspects of sport have significance in other areas of public policy.
- o It is unarguable that sport and physical activity make a contribution to the good health of individuals and the community. Sport and health are now linked in the public mind.
- o Health includes mental and emotional health. It is recognised that sport and physical activity can make a positive contribution to this important element of personal and community wellbeing.
- o Ireland is a diverse society. Sport can be a driver for positive social change and a mechanism for greater inclusion of marginalised groups including the elderly, new communities, socially disadvantaged and people with a disability.

CHALLENGES IN SPORT

The Irish Sports Council, in completing its mission, must address a series of issues.

- o The Council and the Department of Arts, Sport & Tourism have been very successful in making the case for sport and bringing financial investment into the sector. It must work diligently over the next three years to ensure investment in sport is maintained and grows during this strategic period.

- o The Council's work in sports participation has the potential to provide benefits to the whole community. Its work in this area will require an input from and will provide a benefit to other sectors, notably health and education.

- o Everyone working in sport is endeavoring to translate interest in sport to participation in sport. Improving access to sport for everyone is a crucial element of the efforts.

- o The Council has to support the national network of Local Sports Partnerships with a range of programmes & interventions which they will deliver on our behalf. In addition it must work to ensure the maximum level of collaboration between LSPs and NGBs.

- o In line with Government policy and in accordance with the information arising from the research programme, the Council will focus its efforts on people from low participation groups and those who are from areas of disadvantaged.

- o The Council will work with governing bodies to put in place top quality governance structures. Recognition and eligibility are live issues for many sports organisations in the country.

- o Access to, and the quality of, coaching is an essential aspect of sport development. Coaching Ireland has an ambitious strategy that can make major improvements in this area in Ireland.

- o International elite sport is a hugely competitive arena. In recent years the Council has demonstrated that, through the targeting of investment at certain governing bodies of sport, Ireland can be successful at global level. The challenge is to continue the investment that produces the positive outcomes for Irish sport.

- o The Council is a leader in the sports sector in Ireland. It is recognised as such in the areas of research, anti-doping and elite sport. There is a need to communicate more clearly its position as an agency driving progressive change in the area of participation in sport and physical activity.

- o The Anti-Doping Unit will remain within the Council and not become an independent agency. It faces an ever increasing burden of work in support of WADA and the global fight against doping in sport.

- o The culture of voluntarism is an essential element of sport in Ireland. The work of volunteers needs to be supported and recognised. The Council will work to ensure that there is a balance between the need to have good governance and recruit professional staff and maintain the volunteer base and ethos of sports.

- o The Council will continue to build a top quality public service organisation. The Council must be true to the values in the strategy and make them relevant to its daily work.

EVALUATION OF “BUILDING SPORT FOR LIFE”

The Irish Sports Council submitted its third strategy “Building Sport for Life” to the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation in December 2005. That strategy set objectives for the Irish Sports Council.

Objective 1.

“To increase the number of people participating in sport in partnership with governing bodies, sports partnerships and other relevant agencies. The target is to increase adult participation rates by 1.5% over the life of the strategy. This increase will be sub-divided along the following lines: firstly, a reduction in the number of totally inactive adults; secondly, an increase in the number of adults meeting the recommended minimum level of health enhancing physical activity.

Objective 2.

Increase by 3% in the numbers of children taking part in some level of extra curricular sport and extra school sport combined”.

Adults

Final assessment of these objectives will be made when the 2008 Irish Sports Monitor results become available. However, data from the 2007 Irish Sports Monitor (ISM) and from other sources including CSO Quarterly National Household Survey Sports Module 2006, Mintel surveys and the Survey of Lifestyle, Attitudes and Nutrition (SLAN) allow some initial, if cautious commentary on these matters. It should be noted that differences in methodology, sample size, respondent minimum age, and definitions employed within the different surveys all limit the accuracy of the comparison possible.

The 2007 ISM report notes that 18% of the population was sedentary compared to a figure of 22% from the ESRI 2003 survey of sport and physical exercise (SSPE). The 2007 SLAN survey reported that 19% of adults aged 18+ took no exercise in an average week (effectively sedentary) compared to 28% in 2002. While methodological differences between and within the different surveys limit definitive comparison, the above suggests that there has been some reduction in the level of sedentarism at least in the recent years leading up to 2007.

On the question of adult participation levels, the ISM 2007 report indicated that the overall figure for participation in sport at least once a week was 33%, the same as that measured by the 2003 SSPE survey although methodological differences again limit direct comparison between the surveys. Meanwhile analysis of the QNHS 2006 sports data suggests that the proportion of the population participating in sport at least once a week was no less than 30% and certainly unlikely to be greater than 33% in 2006.

The 2007 SLAN survey reported that 41% of adults engaged in moderate and / or strenuous exercise 3 or more times a week for at least 20 minutes compared to 40% in 2002. A July 2008 report by Mintel notes that the number of people aged 16+ participating in sport in Ireland at least once a month increased from 1,238,000 in 2003 to an estimated 1,484,000 in 2008 with the 2006 figure being 1,421,000. Allowing for population increases during this period it is likely that the above “absolute” increase represents only marginal percentage changes either way.

A cautious analysis therefore suggests some decline in the numbers who are sedentary in recent years but very little change in the numbers participating. Marginal changes in participation rates have been noted in line with the international patterns where changes tend to occur slowly over time so that in the short term they are difficult to capture accurately.

Children

For children interim evidence from other sources is harder to come by. However, the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey provides some information of relevance. The 2006 survey reported that 53% of children engaged in physical exercise at least 4 times a week compared to 48% in 2002 – an encouraging indicator although having a different emphasis than the increased extra school sport and extra curricular sport in the Council's strategy.

The Council commissioned a schools-based survey in autumn 2008, the results of which will be used to assess progress against this objective. Initial results from this survey are expected in 2010.

Objective 3.

“The sports partnerships are charged with increasing participation and ensuring that the experiences in sport are positive. Essential to the achievement of objective one will be the national roll out of Local Sports Partnerships”.

This target was achieved. The national network of 33 LSPs was formally launched in April, 2008. From 2008 the SPEAK Report, the monitoring and evaluation framework, will have input from all the operational LSPs and will provide comparative data against the 2007 report.

Objective 4 & Objective 5

These two objectives set out below, address high performance sport and are assessed together.

“Measurably improve the performance of elite sports people in world-class sport through the implementation of the Athens Review and meeting the Athens Review targets of six finalists in the Olympic Games and twelve finalists at the Paralympic Games”

“Improvements in elite sport will also be measured at European and World Championships as well as developmental and junior levels. Targets will be set in Performance Plans agreed with the sports bodies”

This target was achieved. Team Ireland at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games met the targets set in the Athens Review, namely 9 finalists with 3 medals. Team Ireland at the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games met the targets set in the Athens Review.

In addition, the focus sports complete annual performance plans which set out targets for each year. Tracking of these targets shows that the sports have become very accurate in their assessment of their potential in each year. There has been success at world level in athletics, rowing, boxing, clay pigeon shooting Paralympics and international success in a number of other disciplines.

Objective 6

“Continue to publish research on sport that contributes to the understanding of the sector and that will inform effective policy and decision making. The target is to publish four pieces of research a year.”

This target was achieved. Publications over the period of the strategy include;

- 1) *Fair Play – Sport and Disadvantage in Sport*
- 2) *Ballpark Figures*
- 3) *Irish Sports Monitor – Annual Report 2007*
- 4) *Irish Sports Monitor – 2007 / 2008 Half-Year report*
- 5) *Sport for Older People Research*
- 6) *MORI Market Research Report 2007*
- 7) *MORI Market Research Report 2008*
- 8) *Interim Report on Women’s Mini-Marathon Research Project*
- 9) *Report on Lifestyle and Behaviour of adolescents in Waterford*
- 10) *Central Statistics Office – Quarterly National Household Survey Sport Module Report*
- 11) *SPEAK 2007 Annual Report on Local Sports Partnerships*
- 12) *Reports on conference proceedings from Physical Education, Physical Activity and Youth Sport Conference in University of Limerick June 2008*
- 13) *Report on proceedings from conference on Adapted Physical Activity in University of Limerick April 2008.*

Objective 7

“Build stronger understanding of the role of the Council, higher public profile and greater awareness of the outcomes delivered by the Irish Sports Council’s work”.

The MORI research and the media monitoring suggest that there is high public recognition of the Council and generally high approval ratings. Within that there are certain areas of concern. There is appreciation of work with governing bodies, elite athletes and anti-doping. Support for participation initiatives is strong. However there is also a lack of recognition of connection with Sport Partnerships. Many people also hold the mistaken view that the Council is involved in the development of facilities.

Objective 8

“Further strengthen the internal organisation so that it can deliver on the strategy”

Over the course of the strategy the Council has

- o Increased the establishment from 26 to 31 staff.
- o Increased the budget from €41 to €57 million.
- o Set up dedicated Units in the areas of Research and Communications
- o Brought the testing programme in house, functioning directly within the Anti-Doing Unit.
- o Established the National Trails Office
- o Established the Irish Institute of Sport

Objective 9

“Protect the integrity of sport through a world class anti-doping programme”

The Irish Sport Anti-Doping Programme is widely regarded as a top quality international programme, externally validated with continuing attainment of the ISO quality certification. .

WADA does not provide statistics which allows for international comparison. We have analysed statistics from countries with well established anti-doping programmes, such as Australia, New Zealand, Norway and the UK, to give a measure of where Ireland stands in relation to international standards. Ireland’s rate of testing of the population compares well internationally.

Objective 10

“Strengthen key relationships so that they are delivering to the Council strategy and meeting the objectives of the partner organisations”.

This reflects a core value of the Council. The Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism carried out a survey of Council stakeholders as part of its Value for Money and Policy Review. It indicated that there is a good working relationship with governing bodies and sports partnerships. This outcome is consistent with other surveys carried out in recent years.

The Council continues to work in collaboration with key partners such as the Health Services Executive and Sport Northern Ireland. An example of a good partnership producing an excellent result for sport was the project with the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and POBAL to access significant funding from the Dormant Accounts on behalf of the Sports Partnerships so that they could appoint Sports Inclusion Development Officers.

Validation

The Department of Arts, Sport & Tourism carried out a Value for Money and Policy Review of the Council in 2008. This review was validated by a consultant external to the Department. Part of this process was a rigorous assessment of the objectives of the Council and the measurement of the achievement of those objectives. In general terms the Value for Money Review was positive about the work of the Council and, where improvements were recommended, those have been taken on board in the development of this strategy.

The Value for Money Review also included a survey of sports agencies in Ireland. A number of NGBs and LSPs allowed the Council access to their survey details. With that data available there was no need to carry out another detailed survey for this document. All agencies were invited to make a submission to this strategy and a number were received.

STRATEGY 2009-2011

High Level Goals

The Irish Sports Council will pursue two high level goals over the next three years.

- The Council will focus its efforts on increasing the number of people participating in sport and physical activity.
- The Council will work to ensure Ireland's performances in elite international sport continue to improve.

PARTICIPATION

One of the two key strategic aims of the Irish Sports Council is to increase the levels of participation in sport in Ireland. This goal is shared by the Government and by our colleagues in sport. The primary reason for the Council seeking to increase the number of active participants in the country is to contribute to the health and well-being of the nation.

The Participation Unit of the Council is responsible for policies and programmes that can increase levels of physical activity. The Unit is informed by the research programme, which has had a clear focus on participation issues.

The key delivery mechanism for the Council will be the national network of Local Sports Partnerships. There are 33 Partnerships operating in every area of the country. They are charged with maximizing the resources invested at local level with the specific aim of increasing participation numbers. They target those members of the community who are least represented in sport, namely; older people, disadvantaged communities, women and people with a disability.

The Participation Unit will work with specific governing bodies to deliver large-scale participation programmes. The Council will ensure that governing bodies and sports partnerships, with a shared goal, will work well in unison for the benefit of the community and the sports.

The Council's recognises the important role of volunteers in providing opportunities in sport. The 400,000 people who volunteer in sport in Ireland each year are a precious resource that must be protected.

Quality coaching at every level of sport is essential in attracting and retaining people in sport. The Council will continue to support Coaching Ireland, welcomes its all-island remit and endorses its coaching strategy.

The Council's recognises growing interest in outdoor recreation activities such as walking and cycling in Ireland in recent years, and also recognises significant potential for increased participation in these activities. The National Trails Office will continue to implement the Irish Trails Strategy which aims to develop and expand the country's recreational trails network and increase awareness and usage of trails.

A group within the Council has developed proposals on a comprehensive, long term strategy for increasing participation in sport. This document, developed in parallel with the corporate strategy, sets out the Council's vision for increasing participation in sport and physical activity. A summary is included in Appendix A.

HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT

The Irish Sports Council is responsible for high performance sport in Ireland. The existing High Performance Unit will work with the new functions of the Institute of Sport to provide a comprehensive service to elite athletes

The Institute of Sport will remain within the structure of the Irish Sports Council. It will develop specific work plans that will enhance the work of the High Performance Unit and provide additional valuable services to our elite athletes.

The aim of the Irish Sports Council Strategy is to create consistent success at elite level, defined as producing Irish athletes in the finals at European, World, Olympic and Paralympic level.

In order to achieve this goal the Council invests in the current generation of world-class athletes and simultaneously developing junior talent through a structured competition pathway from schools to world level.

There have been a series of documents that set out the policy and practice in this area, notably the High Performance Strategy, (2001), the Athens Review, (2005), and the foundation document for the Institute of Sport (2006). These documents opened the way for a new approach to high performance sport and was supported by substantial state investment of €34 million from 2005 to 2008 and led the way to measurably improved performances at international level by Irish athletes.

The Council's investment strategy supports athletes directly and, critically, allows for the Performance Planning system with focus sports. The establishment of the Institute of Sport in 2006 will result in a world-class support structure to elite athletes.

The Council was delighted at the success of the Irish teams at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. The proximity of the next Games, London 2012, provides certain opportunities. However we will retain our focus of success at European, World, and age levels and welcome success by our athletes in those arenas.

Other Areas of Strategic Council Activity

Governing Bodies

The Irish Sports Council has always placed the National Governing Bodies of Sport at the heart of Irish sport. The relationship with the governing bodies is critical in the delivery of programmes such as the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, the Irish Sport Anti-Doping programme, the High Performance Programme and various participation initiatives such as Women in Sport. Governing bodies directly receive more than 60% of the Council's annual budget in investment.

We recognise that not every sports organisation has the capacity to deliver on increased participation or support elite athletes. We acknowledge that we have a responsibility to continue to service the needs of these organisations through grant-aid and practical support services.

Many sports have the potential for significant advances based on the addition of relatively small resources. The Council believes that resources should be targeted at organisations that can deliver major benefits. We have to have a flexible approach to investment so that, over time, we can redirect resources away from areas which have benefited most in the past and are now better able to sustain themselves into the future.

The Council will work with governing bodies on their governance processes and procedures. This programme will be rolled out with a view to creating strong governing bodies that are fit for purpose and deliver on public investment in them.

We will work with our colleagues in Sport Northern Ireland to introduce a single planning funding model to those sports that operate in an all-island basis.

The recognition of governing bodies is an ongoing challenge. The Council will ensure that its policies in this regard are fair and inclusive. A new eligibility regime is being developed. This will bring greater clarity to the area of eligibility and make a significant contribution in the development of good governance in Irish sports organisations.

Anti-doping

The Irish Sport Anti-Doping Programme, operated by the Irish Sports Council, is regarded nationally and internationally as an outstanding programme. Through its work in testing, education and research, it has enhanced the reputation of Irish sport. It protects the health of athletes through the deterrence and detection of abuse of drugs in sport. The reality is that doping will remain an issue as long as global sport remains competitive and rewarding.

The next challenge for the Council is the implementation of the latest revision of the WADA rules. The new Irish Anti-Doping Rules will be implemented from 2009.

The services offered by the Anti-Doping Unit expanded with sample collection now carried out under a revised system implemented fully from within the Irish Sports Council. The Unit continues to enhance the services provided to athletes to ensure their full understanding and compliance with their obligations under the programme.

There will be a focus on education and the outreach programme. It is extended to athletes not liable to testing, for example younger athletes coming through the junior and development ranks.

Research

The Council's research programme set out to develop a deeper understanding of the behaviour of Irish people in sport in terms of participation in sport as a physical activity and as a social activity. Specifically this was intended to inform the policies, programmes and actions of the Council and its partners.

The research programme of recent years has been well received within the sports community and it has met its goal of improving the understanding of the dynamics of Irish sport. It has made a specific contribution through an explanation of the benefits of sport to the economy, society, health and education of the population.

The programme has had a specific focus on participation and related issues. There have been interesting projects undertaken in the areas of anti-doping and high performance with the potential for future work that can make a contribution to policy development in those areas.

The Council will continue to build its relationships with the wider research community and to building productive partnerships in the sector. It is committed to the development of a research programme based on the production of quality research publications.

Communication

Following approval of “Building Sport for Life” the Council established a Unit with a specific focus on communications.

The first priority is to increase the awareness of the general population of the benefits of physical activity and the opportunities that currently exist in Ireland. Research indicates that the international experience is that large scale campaigns can make a difference in engaging the population in physical activity.

The Communications Unit worked closely with sports and athletes over the recent past in raising their profile and working to ensure real achievements were properly understood and celebrated. The direct support to boxing, rowing, sailing, Paralympics and others was appreciated by athletes, their sports, the media and the wider community.

Notwithstanding the amount of media space dedicated to sport, there remains a need to promote the broader sports agenda. The role of the Council, the policies and programmes it promotes and the impact it has had on the sports community are not widely understood.

Internal organisational development

Finance

The Irish Sports Council is responsible for investing significant amounts of state funds. The Finance Unit is responsible for ensuring that all procedures and processes comply fully with appropriate best practice governance requirements.

Human Resources

It remains a core value of the Council that the contribution of its staff is valued and appreciated. A human resource plan is in place to ensure that colleagues are recognised for their contributions, can avail of training and development supports and that the organisation is aware of their career development requirements.

The human resource plan will ensure that the Council staff is suitably trained and qualified to deal with the new challenges presented by the activities of the Council and the wider sports sector.

Governance

The Council will continue to maintain high standards in relation to its corporate governance framework through strong oversight and review of the strategy implementation process, its reporting arrangements to the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, the development of a strong internal control environment, ongoing value for money assessments of its programmes, risk management, internal audit and other mechanisms.

Relationship development

The Council is ambitious for sport and seeks to be more influential than its resources would normally allow. In order to make the maximum impact the Council sets great store by working in partnership with other agencies.

One relationship in particular is vital for the Council to be successful. It must enjoy a strong relationship with the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism. The Council values the support it receives from the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and from colleagues in the Department.

The Department is able to use its influence within Government to leverage increased funding and support for the Council's strategy. In return the Council will deliver on its key strategies.

The Council will also need to develop good working relationships with a number of other government departments including Health & Children, Education & Science, Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs, and Transport

The majority of our daily work is carried out in collaboration with governing bodies and sports partnerships. This work is based on shared values and is conducted in partnerships that will be continued throughout the life of this strategy.

The Council also sees the need to develop new links with new partners outside the sporting sector who can help deliver on objectives.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the Statement of Strategy is to make a positive and measurable impact in the key operational areas of the Council's work. The assessment of that impact will be through the measurement and review of the Key Performance Indicators. Therefore, the key objectives can be read as those Indicators set out in detail in this section.

MEASUREMENT AND REVIEW

The Irish Sports Council is committed to the review and measurement of its activities. We will measure our activities and outputs with the final outcomes subject to certain factors.

- o The external environment remains favourable to the growth and development of the Council.
- o The Council continues to develop as a strong organisation and builds productive partnerships throughout the sports sector.
- o As a state agency the Council carries out a number of compliance and other activities and will ensure that non-strategic issues do not absorb significant Council time and other resources.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Governing Bodies

The Council will work on the development of governing bodies of sport so that they have the capacity to deliver key strategic objectives. Fifteen (15) governing bodies will be targeted for a governance enhancement programme, equivalent to five in each year of the strategy. This represents 25% of the governing bodies who rely on the Council for support and funding.

High Performance

In high performance sport the Council agrees annual targets with the focus high performance sports. From 2010 these targets will be published each year for all international championships grades. Governing bodies will draw up performance plans and will be accountable for the delivery of the plans. Examples for 2009 include;

- IABA, the achievement of a medal at the AIBA Senior World Championships in September
- Swim Ireland, the achievement of 8 top 16 finishes and 6 top 6 finishes for the European Short Course Championships in December
- IHA, the senior men's team to win the World Cup qualifier in Argentina in November

Olympic and Paralympic performance is one measure of achievement in the area of elite sport with the London 2012 Games due to take place after this strategy period. The targets set in the Athens Review were for sustainable achievement in the long term with 9 finalists in the Olympics and 15 finalists in the Paralympics with 33% converting into medals. That target was reached in Beijing which may allow the Council set a higher target for London as the cycle progresses.

The Beijing Review sets the following targets.

Within the Olympic Games:

- A repeat of the medal success of the Beijing Games (Three)
- An increase in the number of finalists, or equivalent (Nine)
- An increase in the number of sports represented at the Games which improve their performances from the previous Games (Nine)

Within the Paralympic Games:

- A repeat of the medal success of the Beijing Games, including the number of gold medals won (Three gold, five overall)
- An increase in the number of sports which win medals (Three)
- An increase in the number of individual athletes who win medals (Four)
- An increase in the number of sports represented at the Games which improve their performance from the previous Games (Nine)

Anti-Doping

The Anti-Doping Unit will ensure the number of anti-doping tests remain in line with international averages. The Unit will ensure that standards are in line with international best practice and the Council aims to be recognized as fully Code compliant with WADA. It will seek to be recognized as 'proficient' under all headings of the ANADO Quality Development and Recognition Programme.

The Anti-Doping Unit will ensure the number of anti-doping tests remain in line with international averages. In 2008 982 tests were carried out in 37 sports under the National Programme, with 65% of tests taking place out of competition. 132 tests took place under the User Pays programme, bringing the total number of tests to 1,114 for 42 sports organizations.

WADA does not compile comparative figures but research indicates this Ireland is line with international average among sample countries surveyed. It is generally ahead of countries with larger populations (e.g. USA, UK) and in line with countries of similar populations (e.g. New Zealand, Finland, Norway).

Participation

The *Participation Strategy* that forms part of this document sets out a number of deliverables over the next three years. The focus is on building the necessary structures which will allow participation initiatives to succeed over the medium to long term. The implementation of these seven actions is the Key Performance Indicator for the Council.

- Create a national level structure to oversee the Participation Strategy (2009)
- Negotiate partnership agreements with key actors to co-deliver programmes (2009)
- Create a template for LSPs to report on and deliver participation programmes (2009)
- Revise funding mechanisms to NGBs to take account of participation (2010)
- Adopt National Physical Activity Guidelines (2010)
- Create a brand and awareness campaign Develop measurement and evaluation systems to track data on participation across the range of programmes (2010)
- Engage with the Department of Education & Science to agree joint programmes (2011)

Participation targets must be set in the medium to long term. The key target figure is to increase the percentage of the adult population participating in sport from 33% to 45% by 2020. That said the Council would envisage initial increases within specific target groups such as teenage girls and people with a disability, within the timeframe of the strategy.

Note: A participant is defined from the Irish Sports Monitor as someone aged 16 or over who “participated in sport (excluding walking) for at least 20 minutes during the previous 7 days”

The target for adults is to reduce the numbers who are sedentary from 18% to 13% by 2020. This target can only be reached through a multi-agency approach to physical activity, in particular targeting low activity groups.

Note: Sedentarism is defined from the Irish Sports Monitor report refers to anyone aged 16 or over who “did not participate (20 minutes) in recreational activity during the previous 7 days and does not cycle or walk regularly for transport.”

Appropriate targets to increase participation in children’s sport and physical activity will be set based on current research work being undertaken in this area. These targets will be published during 2010.

The Council will lead and support Sports Partnerships and measure their activities and outputs through the SPEAK Report. The most recent SPEAK report (2008) has shown that:

- 69,843 people took part in locally delivered participation programmes
- 7,896 women and girls took part in Women in Sport programmes
- Over 14,000 clubs/groups received advice and support from the LSP network

The target is to grow these numbers in line with the overall participation target. The target will be adjusted to take account of the increased number of Partnerships active, now standing at 33 compared to 29 in 2008.

Other Council Activities

The Council will report annually on progress against these performance indicators.

- The Council will continue to produce quality research each year.
- The Council will continue to increase awareness of its work, especially in association with programmes, events and organisations that the Council supports. Two specific measures include expanding the information activity of the LSPs (67,000 people seeking information in 2008) and expanding the media support programme for high performance focus sports from four (CUSAI, IABA, ISA and IARU) in 2007 and three (IARU, IABA and PCI) in 2008.
- The National Trails Office, in conjunction with the Council's Research Unit, will monitor awareness and usage level on Irish trails to assess their contribution to participation in outdoor activity.
- The Council will continue to build key relationships based on partnership and in line with the strategic direction of all involved. It will establish service level agreements with key stakeholders to build and maintain key relationships.
- The Council will maintain the high level of compliance, which is expected of all state agencies regarding financial procedures, personnel and customer service.

REVIEW

The strategy plan will be subject to a six monthly review process to be carried out by the board of the Irish Sports Council.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Irish Sports Council would like to acknowledge the cooperation of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism in the development of this strategy.

The strategy project team would like to thank every individual and group who took the time to offer inputs to the strategy development process. The staff of the Council made an important contribution to the strategy process.

The following organisations provided written submissions. Please note the Federation of Irish Sports made a presentation based on the views of 13 national governing bodies of sport.

- Federation of Irish Sports
- Mary Upton, TD
- John Considine, UCC
- Mountaineering Council of Ireland
- Irish American Football Association
- ILAM
- Age & Opportunity
- Paddy Doran, Coach
- Irish Gymnastics
- Irish Waterski Federation
- Gay and Lesbian Network
- NSPCC Northern Ireland

In addition the Council would like to thank those organisations who agreed to allow their submissions to the Department's Value for Money Review as an input to the strategy.

APPENDIX A

IRISH SPORTS COUNCIL PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

Context

Following research and consultation with stakeholders, the Irish Sports Council acknowledges that it must play the lead role as a catalyst to promote greater participation in sport & physical activity in Ireland. It also acknowledges that in order to do this effectively and well it will be necessary to build and sustain active partnerships with other key players such as Government Departments, statutory bodies and sports organisations. The primary reason for the Council seeking to increase the number of active participants in the country is to contribute to the health and well-being of the nation.

As a result, the vision for our participation strategy is:

“A more active and healthy Ireland”

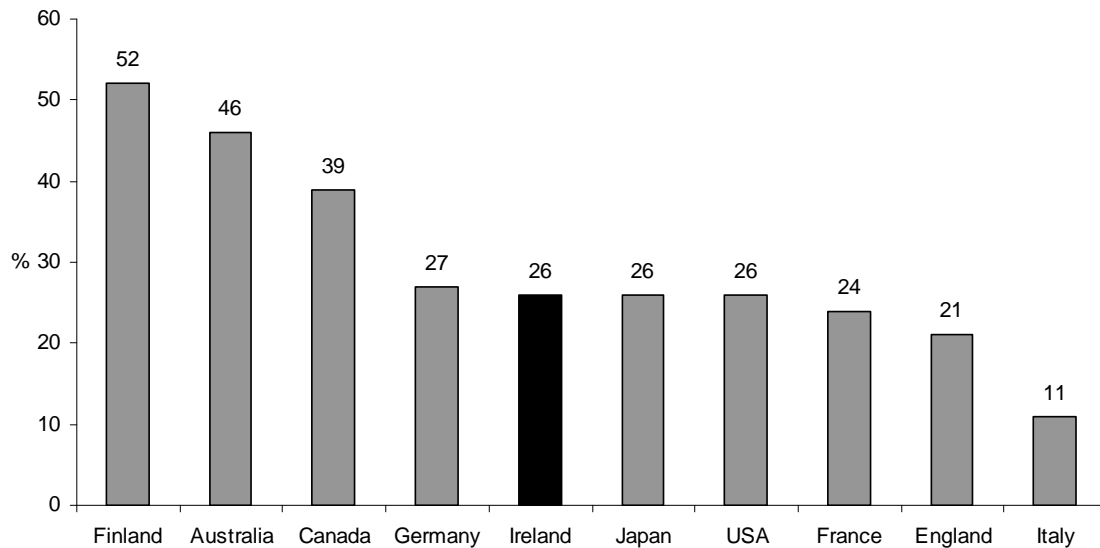
The mission for the strategy is defined as:

“Foster and encourage a culture of Active Participation, supporting opportunities for and access to sport and physical activity.”

A number of core concepts underpin the new strategy:

- Implementation of the Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity (LISPA) model across all sports
- All programmes should be underpinned by the Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children’s Sport in Ireland
- The Council re-frame its investment with a particular emphasis on ensuring performance, accountability and measurement based on agreed targets
- All our initiatives should be delivered in partnership and collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

Figure: International comparison of participation in sport and exercise by adults (proportion who participated in moderate to vigorous sport or exercise lasting at least 30 minutes on three days during the previous week)



Source: Carter et al. (2005) and ISM 2007

At present, Ireland ranks approximately mid-way between those countries with the highest levels of participation and those with the lowest. Our aim will be moved Ireland closer to the highest level participation countries such as Finland, New Zealand and Canada. In order to do this structures and systems need to be identified whereby health, sport, fitness and education professionals can work together to target physical activity provision to specific groups.

It is important to note that the ISC cannot deliver on all elements of the Strategy but will lead out on raising awareness of the concepts underpinning the strategy and on promoting it to a wide audience. When it comes to specific actions within sectors our role will be as a partner or support to ensuring delivery of programmes. There will also be a need to link in with the commercial sector in order to promote and deliver the range of programmes that will be offered to sustain and increase participation.

Conditions / Factors for Success

From the experience of the Council to date, and from analysis of international experience, we believe that there a number of conditions / factors which can assist the achievement of the most successful outcome, including:

- Establishing a set of attainable objectives which are actively supported by all the main stakeholders ;
- Recognising the need for a sustained drive over a long period, probably not less than ten years;
- Developing and implementing programmes, based on core values, solid evidence, developed in consultation with all key agencies, and implemented professionally, with ongoing monitoring of both outputs and impact;
- Engaging in a sustained and consistent communication and social marketing campaign, from and by an appropriate and credible source, underpinned by well established branding which conveys the essential values informing the initiative. The current Programme for Government contains a commitment along these lines to “promote a national advertising campaign highlighting the health benefits of sport and exercise”;
- Creating the necessary structures and systems, which are dedicated to enhancing participation, with a commitment to developing and sustaining partnership, and which represent good value for money;
- Ensuring clarity of roles and responsibilities throughout the implementation and review system;
- Delivering inspiring leadership at both central and local levels;
- Producing the evidence in support of investment, monitoring impact and evaluating performance.

Recommendations

1. Adoption of vision above
2. Adoption of the values and the principles above which will inform all initiatives to enhance and sustain participation.
3. Agreement of longer term and short term objectives outlined below.
The longer term is about target improvements which we see as being achieved by 2020. For sports participation we recommend a target figure of 45% of the adult population participating in sport (excluding walking) for at least 20 minutes during the previous 7 days. This figure is based on the baseline in the ISM 2007 report (33%) and the assumption of a 1% increase per annum from 2009 to 2020 (roughly in line with international norms).

Targets will be included in respect of sedentary adults and children also. Consultation with other key stakeholders should be undertaken before final targets are set, particularly any that deal with the broader concept of physical activity. It should be noted that the HSE is currently developing national physical activity guidelines which would clearly inform the setting of any targets in this regard.

In the short term, the key objectives over the next three years should be on capacity and relationship building, piloting programmes, development of a communications / social marketing programme, and engagement with NGBs and LSPs as part of the development of a refined funding model.

4. Structures and systems should be reviewed and strengthened including:
 - gain commitment to an appropriate role for each relevant Government Department in facilitating and promoting enhanced participation; in close partnership with the Department of Arts, Sport, and Tourism;
 - review and focus the role and capacity of LSPs as local drivers and advocates of enhanced participation, including their interaction with community bodies which are not primarily interested in sport but play an influential role in shaping interests and behaviour; seek to develop

quickly a template which would guide LSPs in planning and implementation;

- work with NGBs to identify their potential roles and contributions in promoting enhanced participation, and create suitable incentives for those who develop and implement successful strategies;
- develop and seek to gain agreement to a strategy for the involvement of commercial and private leisure interests, consistent with the values and objectives of the initiative;
- develop policies which support the optimum use of existing facilities and the best interests of the whole community in the development of new facilities; prior and extensive consultation with NGBs, LSPs and other key stakeholders should precede the adoption of such policies. These issues should be considered in the context of the sports facilities strategy;
- seek to gain agreement to a Government procedure which would require all proposals to Government to explain and assess the implications, if any, for enhanced participation, particularly by disadvantaged or disabled people;
- adapt the Council's internal capacity to drive and sustain the initiative;
- establish a sub-committee representative of the main stakeholders at national level, chaired by an inspiring independent person, who can devote sufficient time to the matter particularly over the next three years and act as a champion for the initiative; and
- maintain and enhance, as necessary, an ongoing research programme to measure both the levels of and attitudes to participation.

5. In relation to Programme Development and Implementation, we recommend:

- initiation of a number of specific initiatives in the Education area, following agreement with the Department of Education and Science;
- development of a common countrywide programme to be spearheaded by LSPs
- a review of existing funding mechanisms and development of an integrated funding model to reward enhanced participation, while assuring a good experience for participants;

6. In relation to Communications, we recommend:

- developing an overall Communications Strategy, including development of a brand which can be promoted as a public service without attribution to any one agency;
- integrating this communications role into the responsibilities of NGBs, LSPs and other partners;
- presenting and disseminating in simple and attractive formats the results of research and specific examinations;
- publishing an annual report on Participation, linked to a high profile event or series of events;
- ensuring that accurate information on participation settings and opportunities is readily and extensively available; and
- conducting and publishing regular independent reviews of the economic, social, and health cost benefits of participation.

Next Steps - 3 years on

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	LEAD	TIMELINE
Creation of national level structure to oversee the Strategy	National Committee established with all key stakeholders involved	ISC D/AST	2009
Negotiate partnership agreements key actors to co-deliver programmes	Sustainable partnerships agreed and documented	ISC	End 2009
Creation of a template for LSPs to report on and deliver participation programmes	Template distributed and support given	ISC LSPs	End 2009
Revision of funding mechanisms to NGBs to take account of participation	Funding schemes revised and new incentives put in place	ISC NGBs	2010
Adoption of National Physical Activity Guidelines	Guidelines disseminated and adopted by all key delivery mechanisms	ISC HSE	2010
Creation of a brand and awareness campaign	Launch of campaign and brand and adoption by key agencies	ISC National Committee HSE	2010
Develop measurement and evaluation systems to track data on participation across the range of programmes	Robust measurement and evaluation system piloted and in place	ISC	End 2010
Engage with Department of Education & Science to agree joint programmes	Joint initiatives being delivered with Education sector at all levels	ISC D/ES	2011

APPENDIX B:

LISPA MODEL

LIFELONG INVOLVEMENT IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (LISPA) FRAMEWORK

ACTIVE LIVING

ACTIVE RECREATION

ORGANISED SPORT

HIGH PERFORMANCE

Training to Win

Training to Compete

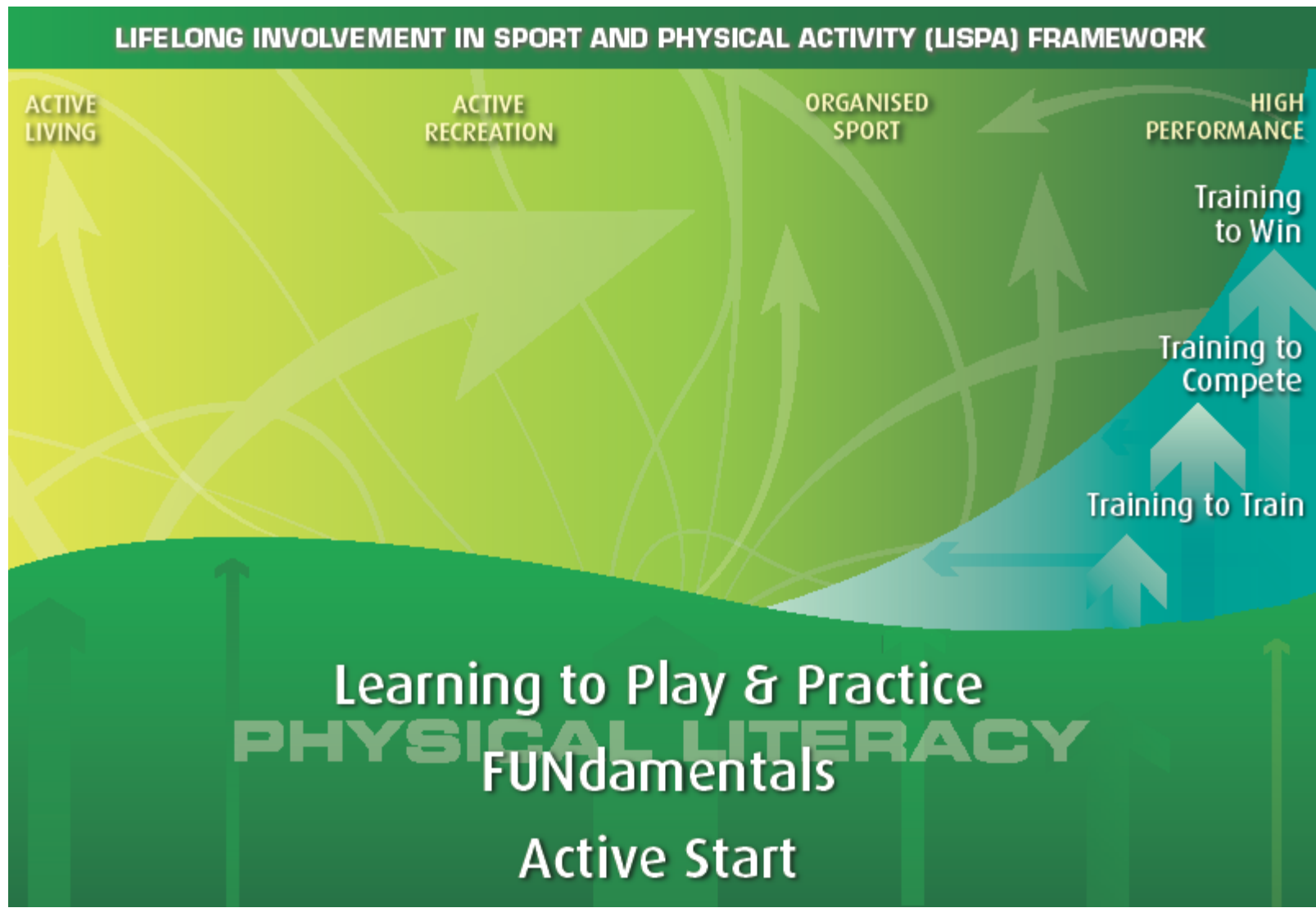
Training to Train

Learning to Play & Practice

PHYSICAL LITERACY

FUNdamentals

Active Start



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