



SPÓRT ÉIREANN
SPORT IRELAND

The Business Case and Context for Gender Diversity on Boards

A summary of the learnings and insights from the
research undertaken October - November 2020

PART



#WomenInSportIRE



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Introduction

In 2019, Sport Ireland published its first Policy on Women in Sport, which expresses the organisation's commitment to women in sport. It builds on the significant work that has already been undertaken in this area and provides a blueprint for Sport Ireland's future work.

Sport Ireland is committed to increasing women's sustained involvement in sport as coaches, volunteers, club members, athletes, advocates, leaders, and participants from grassroots to the podium.

To realise this, Sport Ireland has outlined a number of key objectives, including, inter alia, progress towards greater gender balance in Board membership of funded bodies, and, provide a pathway for women aspiring to become leaders of funded bodies.

Over the course of the next few years, Sport Ireland seeks to identify and put in place the training and supports needed by different organisations to assist with the Governance Code adoption process.

In order to ensure gender diversity on Boards is emphasised within these supports, Sport Ireland sought to develop a resource that can be utilised by sports leaders in order to provide guidance on the recruitment and retention of women on Boards.

A process of research and consultation with the sector took place in autumn of 2020. This included participation from 398 members of the leadership of Irish sport in an online survey, as well as seven follow up focus groups with 62 respondents.

This Business Case and Context and the supporting Toolkit and Solutions for use by NGBs and LSPs are now provided to the sector.

This Business Case and Context document outlines the findings from the research and consultation, combined with international research, and explains the rationale and business case for gender balanced Boards – Part A.

The Toolkit and Solutions document (Part B) is for use by NGBs and LSPs to support them in building more gender balanced Boards. Please use the toolkit as a guide to put in place a gender diversity plan at Board level.



Current Status of Gender Balance on Boards

The National Sports Policy (dated 2017) has a target of 30% of Board positions held by women by 2027 on the Boards of funded sporting bodies. By 2020, 32 sporting bodies have met the target of 30% of Board members being women and 20 (of 29) of Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) have met the target.

At present (December 2020) eight NGBs have no women on their Boards and 17 in total have fewer than 15%. 17 other organisations have between 16–29% female representation and one other has over 80% female Board members – also indicating a lack of gender balance.

During the research for this work Sport Ireland conducted 33 in-depth interviews with internal and external stakeholders in the broad sporting community. They also conducted an online survey of 398 members of the sporting leadership community (Chairs, CEOs and Board members of NGBs and LSPs) as well as seven in-depth focus groups with 62 of those leaders. During this consultation a majority 56% stated that the 30% (National Sports Policy) target is not ambitious enough and that the sector should both exceed that target and do it sooner. Another 37% believe it is about right and will be reached. For 6% of respondents they felt this target was too ambitious.

Ireland's situation on this topic is not unusual and even where progress has happened elsewhere it is not universal or embedded. For example, the European Institute for Gender Equality looked at the 28 federations of Olympic sports in Europe and found that within them only 14% of decision-making roles are held by women¹.

In the recent publication *Gender Diversity in European Sport Governance*² “changes that have occurred have been small, not always sustainable, they have varied by country across Europe and have rarely transformed male-dominated organisations into places with a more gender-inclusive culture”.

The status quo remains and is noted³: “It has been proven, and is also visible to the naked eye in most cases, that nomination procedures in sport tends to be biased to male candidates.”

The *Gender Diversity in European Sport Governance* book also demonstrates that different forms of resistance against increased gender diversity are continually in play in the form expressions of ignorance, of neglect and of active protest. This may also exist in Ireland, and although organisations may believe no barriers exist and everyone is welcome at leadership level, the numbers portray otherwise.

The Charities Governance Code which NGBs and LSPs engage with puts forward a need for diversity in general on Boards. It mentions gender as one of those parameters for diversity but without any specific targets. However, in other parts of society the issue is higher up the agenda.

In 2016 the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) published the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (the 2016 Code). An Annex to this Code⁴ has since been published that puts more emphasis on the need for diversity at Board level. The Board of every State body must report annually on:

- the gender balance of appointments to that Board during the previous year
- where the Board stands on the 40% gender balance requirement and;
- the Board's approach to the promotion of diversity and inclusion.

Ministers are to be informed of the current gender balance on the Boards of State bodies at the time of considering appointments and re-appointments. The annual report of each State Board will now require an account of the approach being adopted for diversity and inclusion, including with regard to gender. Information on any progress and achievements is also required.

1 European Institute for Gender Equality, (2018) Gender Equality in Sport

2 Elling, Agnes; Hovden, Jorid and Knoppers, Annelies (2018) Gender Diversity in European Sport Governance

3 Sotiriadoum Popi; De Haan, Donna and Knoppers, Annelies (2017) Understanding and redefining the role of men in achieving gender equity in sport leadership

4 Department of Justice and Equality (2020) Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies: Annex on Gender Balance, Diversity and Inclusion

The Benefits of Balanced Boards

There is a widely accepted and compelling business case for more diverse Boards and leadership teams.

Gender-balanced leadership delivers benefits for company performance through access to the entire pool of talent, diversity of thinking and perspectives, and increased understanding of and responsiveness to consumer requirements⁵.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2020 Annex to the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies states that 'Women and men working and governing as equals leads to outcomes that deliver positive benefits for Government and society'.

Improved diversity can lead to positive changes in the behaviour of all Board members, improving corporate governance, culture and risk management.

In the Institute of Directors in Ireland's 2019 survey on Diversity in the Boardroom, 80% of respondents agreed that Board diversity leads to enhanced Board effectiveness. 77% believe that it leads to improved company performance. 66% of respondents agreed that they feel responsible for advancing diversity on their Board, demonstrating that likely future progress is in the hands of those who value the benefits diversity brings.

In Ireland 60% of director or senior level executives agree that diversity at Board level generates a great level of ethical behaviour⁶.

In focusing in this area Sport New Zealand⁷ highlight seven consequences of having a heterogeneous Board:

- Enhanced dialogue
- Better decision making, including the value of dissent
- More effective risk mitigation and crisis management, and a better balance between risk-welcoming and risk aversion behaviour
- Higher quality monitoring of and guidance to management
- Positive changes to the Boardroom environment and culture
- More orderly and systematic Board work
- Positive changes in the behaviour of men

"We have had nothing but positive experiences of opening up the pool of talent – new voices have added hugely to our Board."

'I can't recommend broadening that net highly enough – we were surprised at the calibre of people from outside the sport and outside the usual pool who were willing to serve of our Board.'

Quotes throughout this report are from leaders in sport in Ireland and were given in the consultation phase in surveys and focus groups.



5 Balance for Better Business, (2019) Second report for the Government of Ireland

6 Institute of Directors (2017) Tone from the Top Boardroom Ethics in Ireland

7 Sport New Zealand (2020) Increasing Board Diversity Global Women

Best Practice Framework

If sports organisations believe that better balance is beneficial, necessary and to be sustained; a number of large and smaller changes may be necessary to effect change.

Based on research conducted internationally and within Ireland, summarised in the following pages, a Best Practice Framework has been developed. This framework is designed to provide examples and suggested actions that organisations may implement to help create or maintain gender equal Boards.

Leadership can adapt the culture relating to gender equity through changes in structure and tactics, which in turn impact the culture of an organisation in this regard. All three areas are inter-connected and changes may be needed in all, but will complement each other to create the desired change.



In outlining the Framework the following describes insights from the consultation process held in autumn 2020 with sports leaders in Ireland as well as findings from international research.



TACTICAL – INSIGHTS FROM THE IRISH SPORTS SECTOR

Practicalities

When asked which of the following practical steps does your (NGB/LSP/sporting body) Board take to make membership more accessible to women respondents answered:

- 79% Timing of meetings e.g. evening times
- 29% Dates of meetings e.g. during school holidays
- 34% Format of meetings
- 39% Duration of Board term

'Organisations should be reviewing their meeting formats and timings to make them available to both genders taking into account the pressures people face with family and work. This will increase availability of required people of both genders with the skills required.'

'Zoom has added a new level of flexibility and may make scheduling and engagement easier in the future'

CASE STUDY: TACTICAL CHANGE DONEGAL SPORTS PARTNERSHIP

- When seeking nominations to the Board of Directors, Donegal Sports Partnership since its establishment in 2001 asks each nominating agency to put forward two nominees - a male and a female to be considered for selection.
- Selection is made based on several parameters, a mix of experience, skills, gender and empathy with participation sport and the work of the DSP.
- This rule has resulted in a better balanced Board and a better understanding of gender diversity in sport among Directors and across the organisation as a whole.
- There have been periods over the lifetime of the DSP when the gender balance is more swayed towards male than female for several reasons.
- The current make up of the Board of Directors is eight male and four female with two of the executive positions Chairperson and Treasurer being held by Female Directors.

Recruitment

When asked what activities NGBs/LSP could undertake to ensure sustained change 55% mentioned pro-active recruitment of women through broader advertising of roles and networking.

'We have widened the net massively and have found much better candidates than when we had limited ourselves to our own small community.'

'As an LSP we have to take whoever the partner agencies send us but we can ask them to nominate a man and a woman.'

Training & Retention

59% of respondents suggested that LSPs/NGBs should provide leadership training for women and other under-represented groups.

'Policies are not sufficient if there is no opportunity to train those on Board(s) and those applying.'

'As part of the WIS funding applications, an amount should be allocated towards training/mentoring of females to encourage more to get involved in different roles.'

'It may be necessary that in future all Board members would be provided with compulsory training courses provided at reasonable times that encourage people to take up the daunting task of being a Board member.'

Role Models & Mentoring

The need for role models was emphasised in focus groups including the need to see role models of those who have broken through to leadership positions. 61% of NGBs/LSPs proposed mentoring programmes.

Sport Ireland currently operates the M-Power Mentoring Programme which includes both staff and Boards from the sector as mentors and mentees.

'Promotion of existing leadership positions held by women and visibility will help encourage participation – make sure you show your female leaders in photos, annual reports, press releases etc.'

In any situation where you in a minority it helps to have a mentor

TACTICAL – GENERAL OBSERVATIONS FROM OTHER CONTEXTS

Practicalities

Practical details around Board involvement are barriers often cited by both women and men – in particular time constraints can be a barrier to volunteering for all. 41% of women agreed and this was the third highest barrier to involvement.

Recommendations from other jurisdictions include considering the practical aspects of being a Board member that may not work for everyone. For example, Women in Sport UK recommends that amongst the practicalities of Board meetings to be reviewed would be better agenda management. This would include timings of meetings, consideration of scheduling meetings during school holidays and work schedules. They recommend creating a fixed time limit for Board meetings, which also ensures that only the most important items are brought to the full Board and are generally also decided on more efficiently.

Recruitment

The Department of Justice and Equality in its State Boards report states that nominating bodies are more likely to nominate males in male dominated sectors. They also note that one of the factors that creates an imbalance in the number of applications received from women (where there is open recruitment) is the overly narrow specifications on skills that exclude potentially qualified females. They suggest a broader set of criteria for Board membership to attract non-traditional candidates. There is also the suggestion that skills are divided into essential and desired skills as it is unlikely that one individual would have all the long list of skills often found in such advertisements.

To cast the net more widely than may have been traditional, they suggest outreach to professional bodies and women's networks to ask them to put forward nominees from among their members. They also suggest inviting women retired from the professions to register to volunteer at senior level.

An interesting approach has been adopted by the European Commission that everyone in Ireland became familiar with when Ireland needed to put forward nominations to replace our EU Commissioner in the summer of 2020. In July 2019 President von der Leyen said she wanted all EU members to nominate a man and a woman for all future EU commissioner roles. In asking Ireland to put forward two qualified nominees she asked for both "a male and a female nominee" – a fact noted widely by the media at the time. This approach of asking for both a male and female nominee has been recommended by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in the Irish context and is already in operation in other organisations.

In recruitment it is also emphasised that there is a need to specifically mention the desire by the organisation for diversity in its leadership and to use gender inclusive language.

UK and Victoria (Australia) sport bodies have examined Board recruitment in detail and recommend transparent recruitment where roles are widely advertised within the sport (but beyond the usual insider groups) as well as outside of the sport. They propose that skills are required over longevity (in the sport) and that this is not limited to the recruitment of independent Board members but of representative Board members also.

Training & Retention

The issues of retention and training are relevant to any Board member at all stages of their careers – not just to new Board members or to women. A welcoming introduction to the new role is needed for all, for those with and without a long history in the sport. In this and in all areas the dominant culture is of note.

Induction of all new Board members is essential to help them understand their role and responsibilities. Induction should include awareness of the values, aims and processes of the organisation as well as practical information including the following:

- Description of Boards, committees and structures
- Names and contact details of peer Board members
- Supports for Board members
- Skill development opportunities
- Copy of the constitution and strategic plan
- Information about expenses and honorariums – with equal opportunities for all
- Forward calendar of meetings and timings
- Buddy/mentoring opportunities
- A request for feedback on the induction process

Role Models & Mentoring

The Department of Justice and Equality in their State Boards report notes the "incumbency advantage" among men for Board positions. It proposes mentoring and shadowing programmes for others to gain experience.

Women in Sport UK cites gender neutral mentoring (not limited to women mentoring women) as essential. It also mentions the need for role models at all levels – at senior level but also at the stepping stone roles en route.



STRUCTURAL – INSIGHTS FROM THE IRISH SPORTS SECTOR

Constitution

When asked if the constitution of the organisation specifies gender diversity respondents replied:

- 52% No
- 23% Yes
- 25% Don't know

Asked if constitutional change would be needed to allow for a wide range of pathways into Board level? (For example, where the current pathway requires a number of years serving at both club and regional level, before national level, making the route to Board prohibitively long for many people). Replies were

- 58% No
- 24% Yes
- 19% Don't know

33% suggested that organisations would benefit from support with constitutional reform to achieve this change.

'Up to 50% max of Board members can be co-opted and this offers flexibility to be diverse without change to the constitution.'

'For some organisations it may be time to have a separate Board and operational committee – then you can have the Board be more strategic and skills-based and the committee be more operational and be from the members.'

'We changed our constitution to reduce the size of Board and bring in skills from outside the sport community and it has been hugely successful.'

'Nine of us LSPs are limited companies and could have gender balance enshrined in our constitutions. Those who are sub-committees of their local authority cannot but can still invite gender balanced nominations.'

Term limits are under discussion at NGBs as part of the Governance Code - changing terms and introducing new shorter terms will allow for greater flexibility in turnover of Board members.

CASE STUDY: STRUCTURAL CHANGE OLYMPIC FEDERATION OF IRELAND

- New leadership – new Chair and new CEO in 2017/18
- The OFI leadership and Board had an ambition to exceed the target set by the International Olympic Committee of 30% minimum of each gender and sought to reach 40% minimum of each gender on the Board.
- Review of the constitution as part of an overhaul to modernise included this ambition and was passed by the members.
- Members nominate a candidate to the Board and if the 40% minimum of either gender will not be achieved mechanisms to make this happen will be put in place – if necessary appointing a person with a lower number of votes if this will create the balance required.
- At end 2020 the OFI achieved a fully gender balanced Board, with 50/50 representation of either gender.
- Further information about this process is available at <https://olympics.ie/about/governance/constitution/>

CASE STUDY: STRUCTURAL CHANGE TRIATHLON IRELAND

- In 2018 Triathlon Ireland decided to move towards achieving greater balance on their Board to better serve their sport, based on clear evidence that a gender balanced Board performs better.
- Following a 12 month thorough consultation process, members voted in the required Constitution changes at the 2019 AGM, by overwhelming majority.
- They were moving towards a skill based Board and included the ambition of reaching 3:3:3 (3 male, 3 female, 3 either) on their Board of nine people.
- Gender balanced Boards and committees are embedded at the sports Continental and World Federations, so there was a simple template to follow.
- The Board made up of 8:1 with two vacancies arising when they decided to cast the net widely and advertise for two females to be appointed to the Board with particular skills.
- Advertising for the roles made it clear that the two highest polling female candidates would be appointed.
- This was a “blunt instrument” approach - but built on a number of years investment in Women in Sport Leadership development and networks, which combined has balanced the Board as it set out to do.

Policy

When asked if their organisation has a gender diversity policy respondents from the sporting Boards answered:

- 50% Yes
- 30% No
- 19% Don't know

Regarding whether their organisation has a target for gender balance organisations answered:

- 39% Yes
- 32% No
- 27% Don't know

'LSPs have to include organisations of much diversity - big sports, small, community, disability. Gender would be another factor to consider in that.'

Pathways

Of the 398 respondents of the survey the following were their paths to their current roles:

- 61% Nominated/elected by members of structures within the sport
- 18% Appointed by the Board based on skills, experience or other attributes
- 10% Approached by existing member
- 6% Co-option
- 3% Via application for a vacancy
- 6% Via a representative agency

In summary the vast majority (71%) are appointed through a pathway that requires long-standing and connections within the sport thus limiting the pool of those who qualify via this route.

Some organisations have a role called "the Ladies Rep" on the Board and in some cases this is seen as the gender balancing role to represent the interests of the female members in a male dominated sport. This may be the only female on the Board of the organisation.

55% of respondents believe that NGBs/LSPs should put in place progression pathways to accelerate females (or other underrepresented groups) into leadership positions

'NGBs may find it difficult to move to a 30% target if provincial rules are not aligned with diversity requirements, so quick fixes may be a challenge.'

'The criteria need to change so there is more likely to be diversity.'

'It should be feasible to work towards 40% in the next 7 years. However, the representative structure of our committee is one reason preventing this from happening.'

Transparency

With regards to transparency:

- 54% believe that an annual self-assessment to Sport Ireland/government department on measures being taken to promote diversity should be mandatory
- 43% believe that enhanced transparency measures would be beneficial.
- 34% support a requirement for gender diversity policy and action plan in order to access public funding
- 31% propose a positive funding bias for NGBs that are on an accelerated path or who meet the funding requirement earlier

'NGBs often don't talk about it but if there are no accountability or actions sanctioned perhaps nothing gets implemented'

'All NGBs should have a date by which they should comply to the current 30% and if they don't then cut funding. It is not a big ask as it stands.'

STRUCTURAL – GENERAL OBSERVATIONS FROM OTHER CONTEXTS

Constitution

In some cases an organisation's constitution may in reality preclude the membership of women on the most senior Board. For example, where an organisation's pathway to this level, (with voting rights) include only those who have worked their way up from club, to provincial, and onto the national stage. Making longevity a required factor precludes those (females and males) who may not have time for this level of commitment at all stages of life but who have valuable benefits to offer nonetheless. Board constitution may also be limited to those from within the sport, precluding bringing in talent from wider society.

Policy

Policies and structures around Boards may require change in order for gender balance to be achieved, for example around term limits.

State Boards (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform) puts forward a recommendation for 3–5 year terms. Where serious imbalance exists it proposes that terms are limited to 2 years until such time as balance is achieved.

In bringing in policies around limiting terms, organisations allow for spaces to appear at Board level, that can then be filled by female candidates.

Pathways

Pathways are the route by which Board members get to be Board members, for example, what the stepping stone roles might be en route and how those roles are assigned. This might be, for example, the 'tap on the shoulder' to those well-known within the sport versus an open application that is advertised, or the route via club Board, then regional Board, and onto national.

World Rugby⁸ critically examined their pathways as part of the work to being genuinely inclusive and decided they would start with balancing the Board. They determined that starting at the top was symbolically powerful and signalled positive intent. They also focussed on reviewing structures, processes and policies to ensure they were not creating barriers to inclusivity within the pathways to senior levels of leadership.

Looking at pathways to senior leadership in companies in general in Ireland, The Institute of Directors in Ireland states that 42% of Board members are approached by an existing member of that Board, and 67% of Board members already knew up to three existing members before they joined the Board. 19% of current Board members were appointed independently.

Transparency

In this context transparency refers to the public declaration of the level of gender equality in leadership – by the organisations to its funders, to its members and in its annual report.

In 2016, Sport England made the decision to monitor sports progression in gender diversity on Boards. Annual reports produced since show progress towards diversity across sporting bodies in England.

The Irish Department of Justice and Equality to State Boards follow similar procedures as referenced above. In line with the latest Annex, State Boards in Ireland must report annually to the Minister on appointments to the Board and 'the key elements of the Board's approach to the promotion of diversity and inclusion' and in the case of gender imbalance 'the measures being taken to address urgently this situation and to promote better gender balance'.



CULTURAL – INSIGHTS FROM THE IRISH SPORT SECTOR

Culture through the Organization

Feedback from the survey among Irish NGBs and LSPs Board members demonstrates an openness in culture towards the balancing of Boards. Respondents noted the following in answer to the question of, what is the value of gender diversity?:

- 75% Better representation of our membership
- 70% Improved decision-making outcomes
- 61% Brings new points of view to the Board
- 40% Important not to get left behind – up to date with contemporary practice

There are some less enthusiastic and smaller numbers who claim “we do it because we have to” and “there is no real value.”

58% believe that the creation of an inviting culture should be undertaken to ensure sustained change.

“I believe this can and should be done a lot sooner – a proportionate tranche of SI funding to be withdrawn from those which don’t.”

“I feel we should aim higher, all organisations need a gender balance, not because it’s a quota, but because we need more views, alternative views, input from diverse backgrounds leads to further progress and growth within an organisation.”

CASE STUDY: STRUCTURAL CHANGE GOLF IRELAND

- In 2020 the coming together of the Irish Ladies Golf Union and the Golf Union of Ireland created Golf Ireland.
- A discussion group of four men and four women with an independent Chair created the overall proposal for the newly formed organisation.
- The Board of Golf Ireland will have a minimum of four of each gender on a Board of 13 Directors. (i.e. 4 male:4 female: 5 either gender).
- The role of President and President Elect will rotate between men and women.
- Regional Directors from the four provinces will include at least one man and one woman and the remaining two provinces can be of either gender.
- The six nominated directors will include a minimum of two women and two men with the remaining two being of either gender.
- Creating a culture that is equal and inclusive is a critical part of the new organisation with a strong emphasis on imagery and language.
- Clear language around the need for gender diversity is used in advertising roles.
- For example:
 - Please note Golf Ireland is an inclusive organisation which supports and promotes equality and diversity and all applications will be assessed on this basis.

CASE STUDY: STRUCTURAL CHANGE PARALYMPICS IRELAND

- Paralympics Ireland has a history of diversity at Board level representing multiple sports as well as co-opted members recruited for their skills.
- There is a culture of openness across the organisation including diversity among athletes, coaches, support teams and leadership.
- At Board level they create a culture and environment of inclusion, transparency and aligned purpose.
- Board positions are advertised widely - recruiting for specific skill sets, experience and gender balance.
- All advertisements include the wording Paralympics Ireland is an equal opportunities organisation and all applications will be treated in confidence.

Leadership from the top

52% of respondents to the survey believe intentional leadership led from the top of the organisation is needed.

"As the Chair it is my job, and the Board's job to make this happen for the good of our sport." It is my responsibility to drive it but it is also everyone responsibility (Chair)

Composition of a Board can be flexible. Onus is on the Chair and the Board to make this happen.

"Leaders need to go out of their way to approach diverse cohort for leadership roles. Needs to be a cultural shift in the leadership. For everyone we need more candour about what needs to be done and less politics."

There are findings from the survey and focus groups that suggest that not everyone or every sporting body is positively poised for change. For those organisations they see challenges within their context or culture. However, these can be overcome and are addressed in the Toolkit and in particular in the section 'Common Challenges'.

CULTURAL – GENERAL OBSERVATIONS FROM OTHER CONTEXTS

Culture change associated with gender equity has been studied in particular in sport. The research cited¹⁰ sought to develop insight into why change may be so slow in coming even though demographic diversity is purportedly highly valued in the sports community.

Organisations can engage in what sociologists refers to as 'speech acts' whereby organisations fend off criticism and claim compliance through use of politically correct speech around inclusivity, ("we are inclusive") but without altering values or practices and a failure "to appreciate systematic inequality and normativity."

Moral boundaries exist when the organisation create boundaries between the dominant and non-dominant group by perceiving those others to be unqualified, uninterested or lacking experience. This can happen in organisations where the pathways to leadership are set up in such a way that the non-dominant group is unlikely to gain that experience.

Tradition accounts for another reason for a culture to remain as is. In-group essentialism exists in an organisation when members advance an identity to justify the status quo: "how things are done here", "tradition". This would include the belief that male-dominated sports are best led by male dominated leadership and that the assertion that women may make up smaller numbers of participants is reason enough to maintain the status quo.

Finally, self-victimisation is evident when the organisation claims that correcting the inequality creates challenges that the organisation faces and hence they are unable to promote diversity, for example due to a lack of capacity or resources.

Apart from active resistance, culture can create less obvious barriers to women rising into leadership positions. Women in leadership in sport report feeling intimidated or treated dismissively.⁹ If the leadership environment is not welcoming and open women are likely to leave. Victoria State Government proposes that an organisation that wants to be successful in this area needs to develop a safe and inclusive culture, to present the organisation as diverse and inclusive in public forums and create a welcoming and informative induction process.

An example of countering culture and showing leadership is in the aforementioned World Rugby's move to Balance the Board. In this they made clear that it is "important to think about the prevailing culture and attitudes, and how they might be impacting the experiences of women".

9 Victoria State Government (2019) Change our Game - Recruitment and Retention – Guidelines for Women in Sport and Recreation
10 Spaaij, R. et al., (2019) "We want more diversity but . . .": Resisting diversity in recreational sports clubs, Sport Management Review (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2019.05.007>



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