



SPÓRT ÉIREANN
SPORT IRELAND

Powering Sport

Supporting Professional Workforce Development in Irish Sport (2026-2030)



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Foreword from the CEO



Sport in Ireland has always been powered by people.

From the volunteers, officials and coaches who give their time in local clubs, to the administrators, development officers and leaders who guide organisations at every level, it is people who sustain, shape and strengthen our sporting system. Their dedication enables participation in local communities, supports athletes to succeed on the world stage, and ensures that sport continues to enrich lives throughout the country.

Over the past two decades, the professional sporting workforce in Ireland has grown in scale and sophistication. Increased investment, heightened governance expectations, stronger inclusion ambitions and rising performance standards have reshaped how sport is organised and delivered. With that progress comes opportunity along with a clear responsibility to ensure our workforce is equipped for the future. *Powering Sport: Supporting Professional Workforce Development in Irish Sport (2026–2030)* represents Ireland's first sector-focused workforce strategy for sport. It sets out an ambitious and practical roadmap to strengthen the foundations of our professional workforce, recognising both the scale of contribution already being made and the complexity of the environment in which sport now operates.

This strategy responds directly to the realities facing the sector: a highly competitive labour market, increasing governance and compliance demands, the need for structured career pathways, the importance of workforce diversity, and the expectation that sport organisations operate as modern, professional employers.

At its core, this strategy is about sustainability and excellence. It is about ensuring that sport in Ireland is supported by a workforce that is skilled, diverse, valued and future ready. It seeks to:

- Enable strategic workforce planning
- Strengthen recruitment, retention and recognition
- Build clear professional pathways and a structured continuous professional development system
- Advance diversity and inclusive leadership
- Expand Ireland's international contribution in sport

Importantly, this strategy does not stand alone. It aligns closely with the *National Sports Policy 2018–2027*, the *Sports Action Plan 2024–2027*, and Sport Ireland's wider work across governance, women in sport, disability, diversity and inclusion, coaching and high performance.

The consultation process underpinning this strategy was extensive and collaborative. I would like to thank the national governing bodies, local sports partnerships, representative bodies, and sector stakeholders who contributed their time, insight and candour. Your engagement has ensured that this strategy reflects lived experience and operational realities.

Delivery will require commitment, collaboration and sustained investment. It will also require continued partnership; respecting the autonomy and diversity of funded bodies while providing the leadership and support needed to build collective strength.

If we are to encourage more people to participate, to support excellence at every level, and to ensure that sport continues to serve Irish society, we must invest in developing those who deliver it. This strategy represents our commitment to doing exactly that.

Dr. Úna May

Chief Executive Officer, Sport Ireland

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Introduction

Sport in Ireland is, first and foremost, about people - the athletes who inspire, the hundreds of thousands of volunteers who give their time freely, and the grassroots clubs that serve as the heart of communities across the country. From local pitches and community halls to international arenas, sport brings people together, shapes our national identity, and delivers lifelong benefits for health, inclusion, and wellbeing.



Sport thrives when the people who deliver it are supported to thrive. A highly skilled workforce provides the structure, guidance, and leadership that enables volunteerism to flourish, ensuring that volunteers are valued, supported, and effectively integrated within the wider sport ecosystem.

Sport Ireland's strategy recognises that a thriving, well-organised, and well-supported sport sector is essential to encouraging more people to commence, continue, and achieve in sport and physical activity. Strengthening the workforce is a key component to realising that vision. By cultivating a professional, inclusive, diverse, and resilient workforce, Sport Ireland aims to strengthen the foundations of Irish sport - ensuring it continues to flourish, grow, and succeed from grassroots participation to the highest levels of performance.

The Irish sport sector is notable for its breadth and diversity - both in the work it delivers and the organisations it encompasses. From local sports partnerships (LSPs) and national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) to community clubs and commercial providers, the sector includes professional, voluntary, and blended models of work. This diversity is a unique strength, enabling sport to reach deep into Irish life and respond to wide-ranging societal needs. It does however present real challenges when it comes to designing and delivering a consistent, sector-wide approach to workforce development.

Today's sports administrators are navigating an increasingly complex landscape. Their roles stretch across high performance, sports development, education, community engagement, event management, health promotion, inclusion, safeguarding and governance. These responsibilities demand not only subject matter expertise but also leadership, adaptability, and interpersonal skills. Yet the professional identity of sports administrators and development personnel is not always fully recognised - either within or beyond the sector. For sport in Ireland to thrive, those working in it must be properly valued, supported, and developed.

As outlined in Action 33 of the *National Sports Policy 2018-2027* and Action 39 of the *Sports Action Plan 2024 - 2027*, Sport Ireland has been tasked with supporting the strategic development of the professional sporting workforce within NGBs, LSPs and other Sport Ireland funded bodies.

This strategic approach provides a roadmap for addressing key challenges and opportunities in workforce planning, diversity, professionalisation, recognition, lifelong learning, and international contribution. It aligns with Sport Ireland's commitment to increasing participation, fostering excellence, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the sector.

The development of this strategy takes place in a rapidly evolving environment with Ireland's employment rate at historical highs. This tight labour market is compounded further by increasing skills shortages, retention pressures, and a growing demand for flexible, purpose-driven careers.

These trends are felt acutely across the sector, where sporting organisations must now compete for talent across multiple private, public and not for profit sectors.



ACTION 33

Sport Ireland will lead in the development of a sports sector workforce strategy which addresses recruitment, increased professionalisation, development, validation and recognition, provision for Continuous Professional Development (CPD), diversity of leadership throughout the sector and Irish representation on international sports federations. We will support Sport Ireland's efforts to develop a long term strategy for education, learning and development.

A Workforce Fit for the Future

A strategically planned, highly skilled workforce is essential to delivering inclusive, quality sporting opportunities for all. This strategy recognises the diverse structures, governance and operating models across the sector - from large scale NGBs to local authority embedded LSPs, as well as charitable organisations, and volunteer-led bodies. It sets out a framework to:

- Strengthen workforce planning by equipping sports bodies with tools and insights that support sustainable staffing structures.
- Enhance career pathways and professionalisation, positioning sport as a viable and rewarding long-term profession.
- Recognise and validate the contributions of those delivering and supporting sport in a professional capacity.
- Shape a structured Continuous Professional Development (CPD) system, that fosters a culture of continuous learning and sector-wide improvement.
- Drive greater diversity and inclusion at all levels, reflecting Sport Ireland's commitments to ensuring that all people regardless of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation or economic background have the same opportunity to fulfil their potential.
- Expand Ireland's international contribution, by assisting sports professionals to develop the technical and leadership skills required to pursue roles within European and international sport federations.

People at the Heart of Irish Sport

Sport Ireland recognises the importance of athlete welfare, career transitions, and workforce wellbeing. This strategy adopts a people-first approach, ensuring that those working in Irish sport are supported, valued, and given the tools to succeed.

By investing in its people, sporting organisations can ensure that our sector is future-proofed, professionalised, and prepared to meet the evolving needs of Irish sport. This strategy represents a collective vision for a workforce that is resilient, diverse, and committed to excellence.





Interconnectivity with Existing Sport Ireland Policy & Plans

This strategy is not a standalone initiative but one that is deeply interconnected with Sport Ireland's wider policies and plans. The development of the sporting workforce reinforces and is reinforced by other areas of work. This includes the development of structured and/or professionalisation pathways for coaches and technical officials, along with the various policies advancing women in sport, diversity, inclusion, and opportunities for people with disabilities.

Over 250,000 coaches currently volunteer over one million hours each week to Irish sport¹, a remarkable contribution that underpins participation and performance across every community. Recognising the scale and value of this commitment, Sport Ireland's Policy on Volunteering in Sport outlines a strategic outcome to '*resource professional roles across the sport sector that will specialise in supporting the volunteer journey*'². This alignment between volunteer support and workforce professionalisation ensures that those who dedicate their time and expertise to sport are guided, valued, and sustained through appropriate structures, training, and recognition.

By strengthening these connections, the strategy ensures that workforce development does not sit in isolation but actively contributes to a more inclusive, representative, and sustainable sporting system at every level. Sport Ireland's work on values in sport provides a unifying framework for how sport is delivered and experienced across the sector. This workforce strategy both reflects and is guided by those values, ensuring that efforts to develop and professionalise the workforce are rooted in coherence, integrity, and a shared sense of purpose.

Recognising the invaluable role of professional staff currently in the system, there is a strong emphasis on improving access to training, development, and long-term engagement opportunities. Equally, as sport evolves, so too must the structures that support those working within it. Ensuring individuals have the necessary resources, recognition, and progression opportunities is critical to sustaining a high-performing workforce. This includes supporting athlete career transitions, from competitive sport into leadership, coaching, technical official and other administrative roles.

By aligning with pre-existing priorities, this strategy contributes to a future where the workforce is well-governed, adaptable, and equipped to meet the evolving demands of Irish sport.

¹ [Over 250,000 coaches volunteer 1 million hours a week to Irish Sport | Sport Ireland](#)

² [Minister Byrne welcomes new Sport Ireland Volunteering in Sport Policy | Sport Ireland](#)

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Sector Overview

The workforce within Irish sport has undergone significant transformation in recent decades.

This overview explores key aspects of the current workforce, including its composition, strengths, strategic priorities, and the broader environment in which it operates. It also provides a summary breakdown of staffing across Sport Ireland funded bodies, offering insight into the people who support the delivery of sport at all levels across the country.



Evolution & Growth of Ireland's Sporting Workforce

Until the early 2000s, Irish sport operated with minimal professional staffing. Many NGBs organisational and governance structures were in their infancy. LSPs did not yet exist.

There was heavy reliance on a predominantly volunteer base to deliver all aspects of the sport, from daily operations to the development and delivery of programmes and the coordination of competitions.

While this model continues to successfully support participation and community engagement, it was acknowledged that such a system alone would place limits on achieving the national ambitions for sport. The need for a professional, skilled workforce became increasingly evident as societal expectations and the demands on the sector grew, including increased emphasis on sporting pathways, population wellbeing, governance, safeguarding, and broader strategic development.

The establishment of the Irish Sports Council (now Sport Ireland) in 1999 marked a turning point, ushering in a more structured approach to sport development. Increased state investment enabled the appointment of paid development officers and administrators within NGBs. Parallel to this, the Irish Sports Council initiated the creation of the LSP network and oversaw the recruitment of a national cohort of LSP Coordinators.

Following the economic challenges of the post-2008 downturn, the publication of the *National Sports Policy 2018 – 2027* signalled a renewed vision for Irish sport. This vision was accompanied by unprecedented levels of government investment and strategic development.

As a result, Irish sport has experienced a significant transformation including a growing, professional, structured, and sustainable workforce.

As of 2025, the Irish sport sector is a dynamic and evolving landscape, composed of both paid professionals and volunteers operating across a wide range of organisations supported by Sport Ireland investment.

Collectively, these organisations engage over **2 million members** through a network of more than **10,000 grassroots clubs**.

In terms of employment, Sport Ireland funded bodies directly employ over 2,000 individuals in administrative operations, sports coaching, community development, diversity and inclusion, governance and high-performance sport.

Many of these bodies have grown substantially, with financial turnovers now reaching several million euros. Increased growth has necessitated the establishment of chief executive and senior leadership positions, alongside professional staff in finance, governance, and operations. This professionalisation has enabled organisations to manage increasing complexity, deliver high-quality programmes, and provide strategic support to athletes, volunteers, and grassroots clubs across Ireland.

While many of the larger, well-established NGBs operate with dedicated professional staff, a significant number of small to medium-sized organisations continue to rely on a hybrid model of paid employees and volunteers to deliver core functions and daily operations. There are currently 22 Sport Ireland-recognised NGBs operating without any professional part-time or full-time staff.

LSPs, often embedded within local authorities, play a key role in delivering participation-focused programmes and they employ a mix of development officers, coordinators, and administrative staff to implement initiatives at community level. In addition to the paid workforce, a vast network of volunteers, tutors and casual part-time workers underpin the sector, contributing significantly to grassroots sport and community activation. This strong volunteer-led foundation remains essential to the delivery of sport across Ireland.



Current Composition

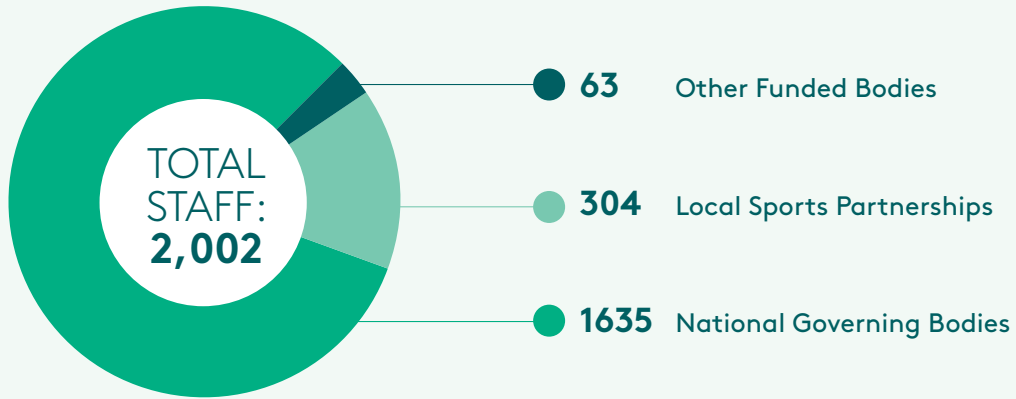
The composition of the sports sector workforce demonstrates significant breadth with staff drawn from academic, athletic, volunteer, and non-sport professional backgrounds. This blend reflects both the sector's strengths and its evolving recruitment practices.

- Over 80% of organisation respondents have recruited graduates from third-level sports programmes, highlighting the continued reliance on formal academic pathways to build sector expertise.
- 65% of organisation respondents employ staff who have progressed through direct sport pathways (including former athletes, coaches, and volunteers), highlighting the sector's ability to retain and redeploy talent from within its own ranks. An additional 46% have recruited from the broader sports ecosystem, demonstrating the fluidity and interconnectedness of roles across related domains.
- Almost half of organisations reported recruiting from non-sport related industries, particularly into corporate services, administration, and leadership roles. This demonstrates an opportunity to leverage external expertise to strengthen governance, business operations, and professional capacity within sport. It also has the added benefit of bringing independent, objective and diverse viewpoints from outside the sports sector.
- Approximately 12% of organisations actively sought overseas candidates, predominantly in high performance and Olympic-focused bodies, reflecting both the global nature of elite sport and the challenge of sourcing niche expertise domestically.
- Within LSPs, a small number of staff have transitioned from other areas of the local authority, signalling limited but notable opportunities for cross-sectoral mobility within public service structures.

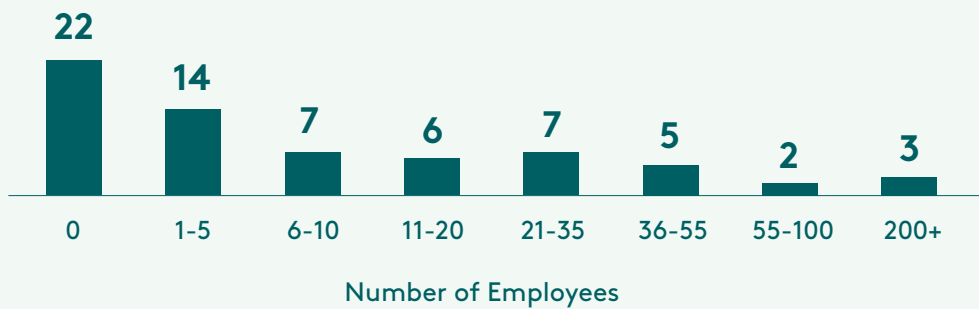
Collectively, these patterns reveal a workforce that is both grounded in sport and increasingly influenced by external professional skillsets. This mix presents opportunities to enhance sector capability, while also pointing to potential challenges around integration, retention, and the balance between sport-specific knowledge and transferable expertise.

Breakdown of Staff Employed Directly in Sport Ireland Funded Bodies

Number of staff in Sport Ireland Funded Bodies



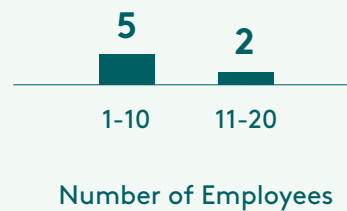
National Governing Bodies of Sport



Local Sports Partnerships



Representative/Other Funded Bodies



* Information based on 2025 core funding applications and other formal reports made by funded bodies.

Sector Strengths

Ireland's sporting landscape is supported by a dynamic and committed professional workforce that plays a vital role in driving participation, performance, and delivering positive outcomes for communities nationwide. In addition, 22 Sport Ireland-recognised NGBs operate entirely on a voluntary basis, with individuals dedicating significant personal time and resources to the development and delivery of their chosen sport.



Deep Expertise Across Disciplines: The sector is supported by a growing number of professionals across coaching, development, administration, and high-performance sport. These individuals bring deep expertise, formal qualifications, and a strong commitment to athlete and community development.



Dedication and Passion: Irish sport professionals are known for their dedication, often going above and beyond their roles to support clubs, athletes, and communities.



Non-Remuneration Benefits: Working in the sector offers numerous benefits, such as contributing to the health and wellbeing of the Irish population, enhancing social cohesion, being part of and attending major sporting events and fostering a sense of national pride.



Collaborative and Adaptive Culture: The workforce is known for its adaptability and collaborative approach often working together to respond to evolving social needs and priorities.



Commitment to Continuous Improvement: The Irish sport sector demonstrates a strong commitment to ongoing enhancement and excellence. This is evident in its focus on improving practices, strengthening systems, and consistently striving to elevate standards across all areas of sport.



Volunteer Network: Complementing the professional workforce is a vast and deeply embedded volunteer network. Up to 500,000 volunteers freely contribute their time, energy, and expertise on a weekly basis to sport. This combined effort of professionals and volunteers ensure that sport in Ireland remains deeply rooted in local communities. This community-first approach enhances participation, fosters belonging, and ensures that sport is responsive to local needs and values.



International Contribution: Many Irish professionals already hold influential roles within international federations, contributing to global sporting policy and practice. This international presence reflects the calibre of Ireland's administrators and enhances the country's reputation on the world stage.

Strategy Focus & Areas of Influence

This strategy primarily focuses on organisations funded directly by Sport Ireland. This targeted approach allows Sport Ireland to concentrate its efforts and direct resources on organisations within its influence and operating within established, sustainable and well-governed structures, ensuring interventions are both effective and appropriate.

Sport Ireland's primary role is to offer strategic guidance, targeted resources, and high-level support that enable organisations to build resilient, professional, and sustainable workforces. These efforts help them deliver for their communities, enhance the volunteer experience, and advance the effective implementation of government sport policy.

While Sport Ireland plays a role in supporting the development of professional staff within funded bodies, it is important to acknowledge the following contextual factors that shape workforce development across the sector:



Autonomy & Organisational Diversity

- Sport Ireland recognises that funded bodies operate as independent and autonomous organisations, each with unique structures, resources, and workforce needs.
- Workforce development across the sector must reflect this diversity, acknowledging the varying capacities of NGBs, LSPs, and other funded entities.
- Factors such as organisation size, scale, legal and governance models, play a significant role in shaping workforce strategies.



HR Arrangements in Local Sports Partnerships

- In accordance with long-established practices, HR-related matters for LSPs housed within local authorities will continue to be managed by the respective local authorities. Sport Ireland will actively collaborate with these authorities to support the workforce planning of the LSP along with the recruitment and development of funded sports personnel.



Financial Flexibility

- The ability to increase self-generated levels of income provides significant freedom and flexibility to organisations in recruiting and retaining staff.

Wider Sporting Environment

A 2021 [Value of Sport](#) report conducted by Sport Ireland identified that over 64,000³ people were employed across the wider sport-related sector. Around a third of these roles were in the community sport sector, including coaches, club administrators, and development officers working at grassroots level. This highlights the strong role of sport in local engagement and volunteer coordination.

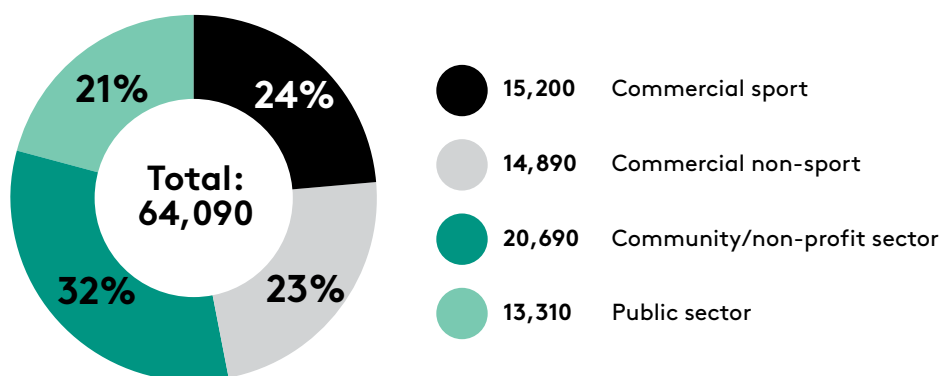
The commercial sport sector accounted for nearly a quarter of jobs, covering sport retail and manufacturing, gyms and fitness professionals and sports media. Another significant portion came from the commercial non-sport sector, such as construction, legal, finance and IT services that are commissioned by sport organisations but don't involve a sports specific product, as well as sponsorship.

Finally, the public sector made up just over one-fifth of employment, with roles in local authorities, education, and national agencies like Sport Ireland. These jobs support policy, planning, and delivery of sport at a national and regional level.

Those roles accounted for 2.8% of total Irish employment in 2018, up from 2.1% in 2008, reflecting the growing economic and social significance of sport within Ireland's expanding economy.

As both the economy and sport sector continue to grow, there is an increasing need for structured workforce planning, career progression pathways, and the sustainable development of people to ensure long-term success.

Sport-related Employment in Ireland (2018)



3 [Value of Sport | Sport Ireland](#)

Domestic Labour Market & International Environment

The development of this strategy takes place within a rapidly evolving domestic and international context. Like all sectors, sport will continue to be influenced by the broader economic and workforce environment, with its capacity to attract, retain, and develop talent shaped by these wider forces. Reports from the [CSO](#), [ESRI](#) and [OECD](#) highlight the following key points:

Domestic Labour Market

- Ireland continued year-on-year employment growth through Q3 2025 with total employment over 2.82 million⁴, although the annual rate of increase softened relative to earlier quarters.
- Despite global headwinds, Ireland's unemployment remains one of lowest unemployment rates in the European Union (EU) (circa 5%), indicating effective full employment⁵.
- Employment growth has been widespread, with employment outside the capital, Dublin, increasing modestly⁶.

Global Trade & Geopolitical Uncertainty

- Recent shifts in global trade policy, particularly towards economic self-sufficiency and the introduction of tariffs, provides a degree of uncertainty for many export-oriented economies like Ireland.
- Global economic growth projections have been moderated due to ongoing geopolitical and market uncertainties, which may influence the Irish economy and labour market.
- The sustainability of public investment could be affected by volatility in multinational profit streams and the evolving landscape of global tax policy.

Future Skill Needs

- Skills shortages persist, exacerbated by demographic pressures and infrastructure constraints.
- Global digitalisation and green transition trends are increasing demand for skills in the areas of:
 - Artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and data analytics
 - Green technology and sustainability
- Ireland must upskill its workforce to remain competitive and resilient to external shocks.
- Ability to innovate will be important for navigating change, driving progress and creating value in a rapidly evolving technological and environmental landscape.

Structural Vulnerabilities

- Labour constraints and housing shortages may limit Ireland's capacity to absorb new workers and investment.
- These issues may be compounded by population growth and inward migration, necessitating additional investment in housing, transport, and childcare.

4 [Tánaiste and Minister Burke welcome latest figures showing further employment growth in third quarter of 2025](#)

5 [Minister Burke welcomes record year for the Irish labour market - DETE](#)

6 [Tánaiste and Minister Burke welcome latest figures showing further employment growth in third quarter of 2025](#)

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Strategy Consultation & Development Process

This workforce strategy was developed by Sport Ireland, in consultation with the sport sector. Its development was overseen by an internal Sport Ireland steering group and assisted by an independent consultant. The consultation process involved a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods designed to provide rich and in-depth analysis of workforce development needs of the professional sector.

The strategy was developed in two stages.



Key steps in **phase one** included:

- A review of all relevant national sports policy and strategy documents.
- A review of international literature in sports workforce development with a particular focus on the work carried out by Sport England, Sport New Zealand, the National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark and the European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE).
- Issuing of an in-depth survey to relevant stakeholders, including representatives of NGBs, LSPs and other funded bodies.
- A review of a broad range of economic, labour force, skills and not-for-profit workforce reports.

Phase two involved the analysis of the 57 survey respondent organisations and completion of more detailed one-to-one interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders including:

- Department of Culture, Communications and Sport
- Sport Ireland Senior Management Team and staff members
- External representatives of the Disability Sport Working Group
- External representatives of the Sport Ireland Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Group
- Senior leadership and HR leads in NGBs
- LSP Coordinators
- The Federation of Irish Sport
- Workforce development leads in Sport Northern Ireland, Sport England and Sport New Zealand
- The Department of Children, Disability and Equality's Special Rapporteur for the National Action Plan Against Racism
- Third level education sector



4

Key Insights & Workforce Realities

Following the extensive consultation and development process outlined above, together with Sport Ireland's long-standing engagement with the sport sector, a number of key insights have emerged. These insights reflect the lived operational realities of the sport sector workforce and identify specific areas where targeted support can build capacity, address current challenges, and support future growth.

The strategy has been developed to respond directly to sector needs and to align with evolving priorities.



Insight Area One: Domestic Labour Market

High Employment: In line with many Irish businesses, sports organisations are affected by the current tight labour market. These challenges are further compounded by increasing retention pressures and rising general operating costs.

Employment Law & Tax Treatment: Given the sector's reliance on contractor-type arrangements to deliver key sporting programmes and related services, there is a potential exposure and unquantified risk to the sports sector arising from the evolving employment law and tax landscape.

Insight Area Two: Investment & Resources

Public Funding: The annual nature of public investment can limit some organisations' ability to take a strategic approach to workforce planning and development.

Income Diversity: Organisations capable of generating diverse income streams enjoy greater freedom and flexibility in recruiting and retaining staff.

Insight Area Three: Workforce Planning & HR Processes

Formal Workforce Planning: While some good operational planning exists within organisations, a large number of funded bodies still lack formal long-term workforce plans.

HR Function Development: Generally, the HR function and resources in the majority of NGBs requires development. In contrast, LSPs within local authorities have access to established HR resources and processes.

Duplication of Effort: Smaller NGBs may experience duplication of efforts, services, and tasks particularly in areas like administration, IT, finance, and managerial functions.

Proportionate Support: Different supports are needed based on the size or stage of development of a sporting body. Medium-sized organisations may face development issues as they grow and scale, such as implementing various policy areas (e.g., GDPR, gender policy, audit and finance). Smaller organisations with fewer staff and lower turnover are challenged with administration and daily operating processes. They also lack the capacity to run large scale programmes to grow participation levels.

Business Model Transition: There is currently no formalised development programme to assist organisations transition from being exclusively volunteer based to those with professional staff.

Insight Area Four: Recruitment, Retention & Recognition

Staff Retention Challenges: Staff retention can be a challenge for NGBs and LSPs, particularly due to increases in the cost of living. Staff may leave for more secure roles in other sports organisations or public and private sector organisations where career prospects and conditions may be perceived as more attractive.

Pay & Conditions: Perceived conditions in sport sector organisations can pose challenges for both recruitment and retention, particularly regarding the hours of work, rates of pay, and career development potential.

Maternity/Paternity/Parental Supports: There is no consistent approach by sporting organisations, particularly NGBs, in relation to the provision of maternity/paternity/parental supports. Staff (particularly females) may leave, or avoid working in sport, for more secure roles in public and private sector organisations where career prospects and conditions may be perceived as more attractive.

Female Leadership: Although gender representation across the overall workforce of Sport Ireland funded bodies is broadly balanced, a marked underrepresentation of women persists within senior decision-making and leadership positions. This pattern is consistent with the findings of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), which has identified a sustained gender imbalance in leadership roles across major European companies, particularly in positions that exercise significant authority and strategic influence.

Reliance on Public Funding: Small to medium-sized organisations may have a greater reliance on public funding to support core costs and are often unable to provide structured pay increases or additional benefits.

Talent Management Support: Organisations identified a growing need for support in areas such as talent searching, screening, onboarding and the integration of new employees.

Establishing Clear Pathways: Pathways and progression routes through sport bodies are not always clearly defined.

Supporting Graduate Transitions & Promoting Careers in Sport: There is currently no centralised programme to support the transition of both sport and non-sport graduates into the sporting workforce. Much of the work to date is done at a localised level and on an ad hoc basis. Similarly, there is no coordinated programme to promote a positive vision of a career in sport.

Transition Programmes: Athletes, coaches, and volunteers often possess skills, experiences, and networks that could translate into professional, administrative, or leadership roles within the sports sector. This represents an opportunity to enhance capacity and long-term sustainability by continuing to harness these transitions.

Recruitment from Non-Sporting Backgrounds: Organisations in the sport sector are drawing talent from outside traditional sporting domains. This trend is introducing new skill sets and broadening organisational capabilities in areas such as finance, HR, marketing, and business development.

Workforce Appreciation: Stakeholder feedback highlights a growing need to better acknowledge and appreciate the professional workforce. The importance of staff wellbeing and a positive work environment is increasingly cited as essential to maintaining high levels of sporting activity and workforce retention.

Professional Recognition of Sports Management: As sport continues to be a growing sector within a growing economy, enhancing the recognition of sports management as a career pathway is important.

Workforce Cohesion: Fostering strong, respectful relationships between professional staff and volunteers is essential to a cohesive and effective sport workforce and strengthens the overall delivery of sport. Collaboration and mutual appreciation help ensure that both professionals and volunteers are valued and aligned toward shared goals.

Insight Area Five: Insights & Data

Limited Research & Data: There is a clear lack of detailed research and data on the sporting workforce in Ireland. The absence of centralised information regarding pay, benefits, staff engagement, staffing demographics, and movement hinders the sector's ability to understand workforce dynamics, forecast future needs, improve retention, and offer competitive compensation.

Insight Area Six: Professionalisation, Skills Development & Continuous Professional Development

Skills & Needs Analysis: The education, learning, and development needs of NGBs and LSPs vary based on the size, scale, and maturity of the organisation. Specific tools, such as a skills matrices or formal learning needs analyses tailored to organisations of different sizes and scales are not currently common practice.

Continuous Professional Development: The majority of bodies surveyed provide development opportunities to their staff, which is an important benefit to the workforce. Many of these organisations draw down or augment these supports with education, training and CPD programmes offered by Sport Ireland.

Barriers to Engagement: While cost is a factor, limited time and lack of flexible, accessible learning opportunities emerged as leading barriers to staff engagement in CPD programmes.

Centralised Learning Management System (LMS): Without a robust learning management system and digital infrastructure, organisations face significant challenges in delivering flexible, blended and scalable training. This gap not only limits access to diverse learning formats but also hinders the ability to track learner progress and evaluate the impact of development efforts.

Developing Leadership Skills: The role of the senior leader (i.e. CEO/COO/Coordinator/General Manager) is crucial in driving transformation and change within sector organisations. In an ever-evolving environment it is essential that these individuals possess the skills to manage a broad range of functional areas.

Changing Nature of Sport: The future of sport and the nature of working in the sport sector are evolving. While there are pockets of innovative practice within sport, a more widespread and systemic approach is needed.

Essential Competencies: Specific skills are needed to support organisations generate the resources to deliver against their strategies. The development of competencies such as sponsorship, marketing and commercialisation is increasingly important for sector organisations.

Emerging Key Skills: Innovation, artificial intelligence (AI), digital transformation, green and sustainability practices are identified as key emerging skills for the sector.

Communities of Practices: Communities of practice have been highlighted by the sector as a way to enable senior and aspiring leaders to share knowledge, exchange best practices, and collaboratively solve problems.

Professional Body Partnerships: Relationships with professional industry and accreditation bodies remain under-developed. This can limit the sector's ability to enhance professional development opportunities, strengthen career pathways, tap into extensive professional networks, and attract highly skilled professionals who may have interest in working in the sports sector.

Education & Skills Providers: Third-level institutions and public/private training providers represent a significant source of expertise and specialised training relevant to the sports workforce. With over 100 third-level sport and exercise-related courses available⁷, opportunities exist to improve and formalise the flow of information on current and future skill needs, enabling more tailored and relevant education and training provision. The establishment of these relationships also help to elevate the status of sports education by increasing its visibility, strengthening its credibility and reinforcing its recognition as a valuable and professional learning pathway.

⁷ [Where to Study - Irish Sport and Exercise Sciences Association](#)

Insight Area Seven: Workforce Diversity

Diversity in Irish Society: 2022 Central Statistics Office CSO figures highlight that 22% of Ireland's population identifies as Black, Asian, White non-Irish or Other ethnicities⁸. The CSO data also shows that 22% of the population experienced at least one long-lasting condition or disability⁹. In addition, the 2024 Irish Sports Monitor (ISM) found that 32% of adults with a disability and 56% of respondents aged under 45 years from Black, Asian and Other backgrounds participated in sport on a weekly basis¹⁰.

This growing diversity of Irish society provides a significant opportunity to introduce people from diverse communities and underrepresented backgrounds into sport, expanding and diversifying the sector. Some of the most significant advantages of a diverse workforce is the boost it provides to innovation and creativity. Different cultural backgrounds or life experiences can bring unique perspectives and problem-solving approaches, leading to more innovative solutions and ideas.

Challenges in Workforce Diversity: While many organisations are addressing diversity in sports and communities, workforce diversity presents unique challenges. These include understanding how and where to recruit, how to increase diversity in applications, addressing specific skillset requirements, and the necessity for third-level degrees for many roles. Office space accessibility and additional support during onboarding and remote work integration are also concerns, particularly for those with additional physical needs. Ensuring individuals can maintain certain benefits and other important supports, when entering employment can play a crucial role.

Insight Area Eight: International Contribution

Based on the responses received, 26 NGBs reported a total of 89 individuals holding positions within their respective international federation (IF).

Having voices that are shaped by, and reflect, Irish sporting experiences present at the international federation level has been highlighted as important for several reasons:

Perspective & Engagement: It provides an opportunity to share Ireland's unique sporting perspective, helping to ensure that Irish experiences are heard and considered in the development of international sport.

Networking & Collaboration: It facilitates connections with other countries and international bodies, fostering opportunities for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and best practices sharing.

Promotion of Irish Sport: Contribution at this level helps to raise the profile of Irish sport on the global stage, potentially attracting international events and investment.

Alignment with Performance Objectives: Presence at international levels can directly support high performance targets and strategic outcomes.

Development Opportunities: Access to international training, development programmes, and resources that can enhance the skills and capabilities of Irish administrators.

Cultural Exchange & Job Satisfaction: Engaging at the international level promotes cultural exchange and can enrich the overall employment experience for sporting administrators working in Ireland. These elements can act as good retention and development strategies, often unique to those working in sport.

8 [Ethnic Group/Background Census of Population 2022 Profile 5 - Diversity, Migration, Ethnicity, Irish Travellers & Religion - Central Statistics Office](#)

9 [Press Statement Census 2022 Results Profile 4 - Disability, Health and Carers - CSO - Central Statistics Office](#)

10 [ISM 2024 | Sport Ireland](#)

5

Workforce Development to Date

Recognising the growing importance of a professional and inclusive workforce in sport, Sport Ireland continues to provide a comprehensive framework of support through its specialised units and strategic programmes.





These initiatives aim to build capacity, enhance governance, and foster excellence across all levels of sport in Ireland. Some of the relevant work carried out by Sport Ireland with the sector includes:

Organisational Development & Change: The Organisational Development & Change (ODC) Unit was established specifically to strengthen the capabilities of funded organisations. It supports professional staff and volunteer board members in NGBs, LSPs and other funded bodies through tailored development programmes, sector specific networks, drawdown services, learning opportunities and accredited qualifications.

Governance: Sport Ireland's Governance Unit provides support to sporting bodies to assist adherence to best practices in transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership. It promotes the *Governance Code for Sport*, offering training, guidance and resources to sporting organisations.

NGB & Participation: The NGB and Participation Units within Sport Ireland play a vital role in enabling NGBs and LSPs to build and sustain their organisational capacity. Through core and targeted funding streams, these units support the employment of operational, developmental, and strategically important personnel who are essential to the delivery of sport across Ireland.

Investment through these units supports key leadership and management roles such as CEOs, COOs, partnership coordinators and directors of participation, as well as programme-focused positions like sports development and community sports officers.

By investing in these roles, Sport Ireland helps ensure that organisations have the expertise and resources needed to deliver inclusive, impactful, and strategically aligned sport programmes nationwide.

High-Performance: Sport Ireland's High-Performance Unit plays a central role in investing in high performance staff and coaches across identified NGBs. Through strategic investment and tailored supports, it helps ensure that professionals working in elite sport are equipped to deliver at the highest level.

The Sport Ireland Institute complements this by offering targeted programmes for performance directors (PDs), coaches, and other key personnel, focusing on leadership development, CPD, and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

It also delivers a Dual Career Programme, which supports athletes in developing their employability, personal growth, and professional skills throughout their sporting careers.

Strategic Leads in Women in Sport, Disability, Diversity & Inclusion: Sport Ireland has appointed dedicated strategic leads to champion inclusion and equity across the sports sector. This includes the provision of targeted support, resources, investment and best practice advice to the professional sporting workforce across Ireland.

Anti-Doping, Safeguarding & Coaching: These specialised units play a critical role in supporting the professional and voluntary workforce across the sports sector. Each unit provides tailored training, accredited learning opportunities, and structured CPD programmes designed to meet the specific needs of practitioners working in their respective areas.

Through expert-led education and capacity-building initiatives, these units help ensure that staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and ethical standards required to deliver safe, effective, and high-quality sport experiences.



6

Enablers & Resourcing for Impact

The development of this workforce strategy has identified a set of key enablers that outline the conditions, supports, and mechanisms necessary to activate and sustain progress across the sport sector. Informed by extensive consultation and research, these enablers form the foundation for translating strategic intent into meaningful and measurable action. Together, they underpin the creation of a thriving sport sector that enables people to participate, perform, and prosper at every level.



Workforce Steering Group

To effectively activate these enablers and support the development of the Irish sporting workforce, it is essential to prioritise the strategic investment, implementation, and monitoring of a comprehensive workforce strategy. This approach ensures alignment with national objectives and enhances the capacity of publicly funded organisations to deliver impactful sporting and policy outcomes.

The Sport Ireland workforce steering group will act as a leadership group overseeing the implementation of this policy. The strategy will be supported and implemented through the work of all Sport Ireland units and staff.

To ensure this policy can be measured, each proposed action will be assigned a success indicator and will be monitored as deemed appropriate. These success indicators can only be assigned when the required resources are made available.

Resources Required

To effectively advance national government policy and meet the evolving needs of a professional workforce, new and additional actions will require corresponding levels of additional investment.

Strategic resourcing is essential to ensure that emerging priorities can be addressed with the depth and scale they demand, and that the sector is equipped to deliver on its expanded role in national development.



Strategic Investment: Sustained and targeted investment is essential to build and retain a skilled, diverse, and motivated workforce. This includes implementation of multi-annual core investment. Increased annual support is also required to ensure the sports sector remains competitive in recruitment, retention, and development across all levels of sport delivery.



People & Programmes: A strong workforce strategy must focus on empowering individuals through inclusive leadership, clear career pathways, and well-structured programmes that reflect the evolving needs of the sector.

Additional and targeted government investment will be required to develop and support graduate programmes, leadership development, inclusive workplace opportunities and high-quality structured CPD.



Research & Resources: Ongoing research and data-driven insights are critical to inform workforce planning, identify emerging trends, and allocate resources effectively. This ensures that strategies remain responsive, evidence-based, and future-focused.

Additional and targeted government investment will be required to develop an expanded pool of workforce and HR supports for the sector.

The commissioning of a series of sector-wide workforce studies to provide benchmarks and data-driven recommendations will also need to commence.

Enabler Area One: Investment & Resources

To effectively support the sport sector, Sport Ireland can focus on strategic investment and resource allocation. This will help organisations plan for the long term, enhance financial stability, and improve their capacity to attract and retain talent.

Strategic Funding Models: Implement multi-annual investment for NGBs and LSPs to enable strategic workforce planning and development.

Diversified Income Strategies: Continue to explore and encourage initiatives that help funded bodies develop diverse income streams, enhancing their financial stability and their flexibility in recruitment and retention.

Enabler Area Two: Workforce Planning & HR Processes

A strategic and structured approach to workforce planning is essential for the long-term sustainability of the sector. Given the wide range of operating models, Sport Ireland can support funded bodies by:

Formal Workforce Planning: Providing specific supports and resources to help organisations develop formal workforce plans, conduct skills and diversity audits and better understand their learning and development needs.

HR Function Development: Offering specialised support to develop HR functions within funded bodies, ensuring they have access to the necessary resources and expertise.

Centralised HR Hub: Continuing to grow and expand Sport Ireland's central hub for HR resources.

Transition Support: Offering a phased and targeted support programme to assist identified organisations transitioning from volunteer-based to professional staff structures.

Enabler Area Three: Recruitment, Retention & Recognition

The ability to attract and retain talented individuals is critical to the long-term success of Irish sport. Sport Ireland can assist funded bodies in addressing recruitment, retention and recognition challenges with:

Graduate Transitions: Developing structured programmes to integrate sport and non-sport graduates into the workforce to build a skilled and diverse talent pipeline.

Careers in Sport Promotion: Supporting sector-wide campaigns to promote careers in sport and highlight the opportunities available within funded organisations.

Centralised Career Development Portal: Establishing a centralised platform that empowers individuals to navigate their career journey by identifying key skills and competencies, accessing targeted learning resources, and exploring career pathways and growth opportunities.

Non-Remuneration Benefits: Emphasising the intrinsic benefits of working in the sports sector, such as contributing to public health, social cohesion, and community development.

Supporting Female Leadership: Continuing to implement tailored leadership development initiatives (i.e. targeting females/males/all who influence governance, structures and processes) to increase the representation of women in senior decision-making roles across sporting bodies.

Maternity/Paternity/Parental Supports: Providing information, guidance and resources to the sector such as scalable baseline standards and policy templates to support a consistent, fair, and inclusive approach across sporting organisations, proportionate to their size and resources.

Returning to the Workplace: Developing targeted programmes, resources, and processes to support the re-entry of individuals into the workforce following career breaks. This should place particular emphasis on women, while also addressing the needs of other groups, undertaking career transitions.

Resources & Toolkits: Providing organisations with support and material to better develop their understanding around diversity and enhance employer branding, staff engagement and workplace wellbeing and culture.

Flexible Work Models: Encouraging and promoting flexible and innovative employment models, such as shared service roles, job-sharing and remote work opportunities, to attract and retain skilled professionals.

Workforce Appreciation: Providing guidance on how to implement appreciation, engagement and wellbeing programmes that highlight, acknowledge and support the contributions of the professional workforce.

Enabler Area Four: Insights & Data

Sport Ireland will address the lack of detailed research and data on the sports workforce through:

Data & Insights: Commissioning a series of sector-wide workforce studies to provide benchmarks and data-driven recommendations.

Benchmark Pay & Conditions: Commissioning specific research and benchmarking initiatives to ensure competitive salaries, benefits, and working conditions are aligned with sector standards.

Enabler Area Five: Professionalisation, Skills Development & Continuous Professional Development

For the sector to attract and retain top talent, it must offer clear and sustainable career pathways along with a structured CPD system.

Sport Ireland can assist with:

Competency Frameworks & Career Pathways: Developing sector-wide competency frameworks to outline progression routes and succession planning needs for various roles, from entry-level to senior leadership.

Continuous Professional Development: Developing tailored training, education and CPD programmes aligned to competency frameworks, with a strong emphasis on prioritising skills and adaptability over static job role development. This includes coaching, mentoring, and leadership development programmes.

Emerging Needs & Strategic Shifts: Undertaking regular high-level learning needs analysis to identify emerging skills gaps, adapt to strategic shifts, and support continuous development within the sector.

Centralised Learning Management System (LMS): Investing in the implementation of an LMS offering flexible, on-demand training in technical, management, and leadership skills.

Commercial Competency Development: Encouraging the development of key competencies such as sponsorship, marketing, and commercialisation to help organisations generate necessary resources.

Digital Transformation, Innovation, AI & Sustainability: Providing specific training and resources to integrate digital transformation, innovation, artificial intelligence and sustainability into sports management and operations.

Communities of Practice: Continuing to deliver communities of practice to enable senior and aspiring leaders to share knowledge, exchange best practices, and collaboratively solve problems.

Professional Body Partnerships: Partnering with third-level institutions and public and private training providers to access industry experts and high-quality training programmes. Use these partnerships to communicate current and future skill needs, ensuring tailored and relevant training and raise the profile of sport education.

Enabler Area Six: Workforce Diversity

A strong and diverse workforce pipeline is essential for the future of Irish sport. Sport Ireland can drive this through:

Sector Training Programmes: Continuing to implement disability awareness, diversity and inclusion training programmes to foster an inclusive workplace culture and improve understanding of diverse perspectives and needs.

Partnerships: Developing partnerships with relevant agencies, organisations, outreach programmes and educational institutions to reach underrepresented groups and create pathways into the sports workforce.

Inclusive Recruitment Support: Offering training and resources on inclusive hiring practices, supporting organisations in diversifying their talent pool.

Pipeline Programmes: Establishing a series of programmes that create access into the sports sector. Supplement these with coaching and mentorship opportunities to further support career development.

Career Progression: Providing support and resources to those who access the sport sector through pipeline programmes to develop their skills and expertise, enabling them to progress to leadership and/or decision-making roles in sport.

Accessibility Awareness: Providing training and the promotion of alternative employment models for organisations so they can better understand the facility, workspace and necessary accommodations required to support people with disabilities or chronic conditions entering the sports workforce.

Recognition & Support Programmes: Supporting programmes that recognise and celebrate the contributions of diverse employees to ensure their retention and career progression.

Enabler Area Seven: International Contribution

Expanding engagement within European and international sporting federations helps ensure that Irish sporting experiences and perspectives are part of broader conversations shaping the global sporting landscape. Sport Ireland can support this through:

Pathways for Administrators: Establishing a deeper understanding of the various pathways for Irish sports bodies to engage with international federations, including secondments and exchanges.

Leadership Pipeline Strategy: Providing leadership training, development and mentoring opportunities for identified sector employees to develop a pipeline of sports administrators who could take on international leadership roles.

Training & Education Supports: Encouraging individuals within Irish sporting bodies to apply for roles or attend key networking events within European and international federations.

Strategic Alliances & Advocacy: Strengthening relationships with relevant international bodies to promote Irish representation at decision-making levels.



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Workforce Development Plan (2026-2030)



Workforce Development Plan (2026-2030)

LEGEND

DCCS - Department of Culture, Communications and Sport

SI ADU - Sport Ireland Antidoping & Ethics Unit

SI Coaching - Sport Ireland Coaching Unit

SI Comms - Sport Ireland Communication, Corporate Affairs & Marketing Unit

SI D&I - Sport Ireland Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

SI Disability - Sport Ireland Disability Sport

SI Governance - Sport Ireland Governance, Risk, Compliance & Strategy Unit

SI HP - Sport Ireland High Performance Unit

SI Innovation - Sport Ireland Research, Evaluation & Innovation Unit

SI NGB - Sport Ireland National Governing Bodies of Sport Unit

SI ODC - Sport Ireland Organisational Development & Change Unit

SI Participation - Sport Ireland Participation Unit

SI Research - Sport Ireland Research, Evaluation & Innovation Unit

SI WIS - Sport Ireland Women in Sport

Strategic Pillar	Objective	Action	Lead(s)
Investment & Resources	Enable strategic workforce planning through sustainable investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Implement multi-annual 'Core' investment for NGBs and LSPs to enable strategic workforce planning and development. 	DCCS SI NGB/ Participation
	Support organisational flexibility through income diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Continue to explore and encourage initiatives that enable funded bodies to develop diverse income streams, thereby enhancing financial stability and increasing flexibility in recruitment and retention. 	SI ODC SI NGB SI Comms
Workforce Planning & HR Processes	Establish formal workforce planning across funded bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Provide tailored support, resources and best practices to develop and enhance formal workforce planning. · Facilitate skills audits and learning needs assessments. 	SI ODC
	Strengthen HR functions within funded bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Offer specialised support to build HR capacity in funded bodies. · Expand access to expert HR advice and tools. · Continue developing the central HR resource hub to support funded bodies. · Provide guidance to boards and executive teams of funded bodies on their legal responsibilities and best practices as employers. 	SI ODC
	Support organisational transition from volunteer-based to professional staffing models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Design and implement a phased and targeted support programme to guide identified organisations through the transition process. 	SI ODC SI NGB SI Governance

Strategic Pillar	Objective	Action	Lead(s)
Recruitment, Retention & Recognition	Build a sustainable talent pipeline into the sport sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Develop structured graduate transition programmes that integrate sport and non-sport graduates into the workforce through mentorship, training, and placement opportunities. · Develop sector-wide campaigns to promote careers in sport and raise awareness of opportunities within funded organisations. · Provide a centralised careers portal to streamline career information and improve access to talent across the sector. 	SI ODC SI NGB SI Governance
	Enhance the attractiveness and visibility of careers in sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Promote the non-remuneration benefits of working in sport, including contributions to public health, social cohesion, and community development. · Provide organisations with toolkits and resources to strengthen employer branding, staff engagement, and workplace wellbeing. · Encourage flexible and innovative employment models such as job-sharing, remote work, and shared service roles to attract and retain skilled professionals. 	SI ODC SI NGB SI Participation SI Comms
	Support inclusive workforce participation and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Continue to implement tailored leadership development initiatives (i.e. targeting females/males/all who influence governance, structures and processes) to increase the representation of women in senior decision-making roles across funded bodies. · Provide information, guidance and resources to the sector on maternity/paternity/parental supports. These may include scalable baseline standards and policy templates to support a consistent, fair, and inclusive approach across funded bodies, proportionate to their size and resources. · Develop targeted programmes and resources to support women and other identified groups returning to the workforce after career breaks. · Offer guidance and support for implementing recognition, engagement, and wellbeing initiatives that value the contributions of the professional workforce. · Promote inclusive hiring practices and career development pathways that reflect the diversity of the communities served by the sport sector. 	SI ODC SI WIS SI D&I SI Disability
Insights & Data	Strengthen workforce planning and competitiveness through sector-wide data and insights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Commission comprehensive workforce studies to establish benchmarks and inform strategic planning and staff forecasting. · Develop data-driven recommendations to support workforce development across funded organisations. · Commission research into the current pay and conditions across the sector. 	SI ODC SI Research

Strategic Pillar	Objective	Action	Lead(s)
Professionalisation, Skills Development & CPD	Establish clear competency frameworks and career pathways across the sport sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop sector-wide competency frameworks that define role expectations, progression routes, and succession planning needs from entry-level to senior leadership positions. 	SI ODC SI NGB
	Deliver tailored and future-focused CPD programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and deliver CPD programmes aligned with competency frameworks, prioritising adaptable skills through coaching, mentoring, and leadership development initiatives. Undertake regular high level learning needs analysis to identify emerging skill gaps, adapt to strategic shifts, and support continuous development within the sector. 	SI ODC
	Enable scalable and accessible sector learning through a centralised LMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in the implementation of a centralised LMS offering flexible, on-demand training in technical, management, and leadership skills. 	SI ODC SI Coaching SI ADU
	Build commercial and strategic capabilities within the workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training and resources in key commercial areas such as sponsorship, marketing, and business development to support organisational sustainability and growth. 	SI ODC SI NGB SI Comms
	Equip the workforce for digital transformation and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training and resources in the areas of innovation, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and sustainability. 	SI ODC SI Innovation
	Foster peer learning through communities of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand and support communities of practice that enable knowledge exchange, collaborative problem-solving, and continuous learning among current and emerging leaders. 	All SI Business Units
	Strengthen professional development through strategic partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish partnerships with professional bodies and accreditation organisations to enhance career pathways, attract skilled professionals, and support sector-wide standards. 	SI ODC SI NGB SI Innovation
	Align training provision with sector needs through education partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with third-level institutions and training providers to access expert-led programmes and ensure training is tailored to current and emerging skill demands in the sport sector. This may include aligning formal qualifications with the National Framework of Qualifications, where appropriate, to further raise the profile and recognition of sport education. 	SI ODC SI NGB SI Coaching SI Innovation

Strategic Pillar	Objective	Action	Lead(s)
Workforce Diversity	Foster an inclusive and equitable workforce culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Deliver sector-wide training programmes on disability awareness, diversity and inclusion, and women in sport to build inclusive workplace cultures and improve understanding of diverse needs. · Provide training and resources to support inclusive recruitment practices, enabling organisations to diversify their talent pools. · Promote awareness of accessibility needs by offering training and guidance on inclusive workspaces and alternative employment models for individuals with disabilities or chronic conditions. 	SI ODC SI WIS SI Disability SI D&I SI NGB SI Participation
	Expand access and pathways into the sport workforce for underrepresented groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Develop partnerships with outreach programmes, educational institutions, and relevant agencies to engage underrepresented communities and create entry points into the sport workforce. · Establish targeted pipeline programmes to facilitate entry and early career development in sport. · Provide ongoing support and development opportunities for individuals entering through pipeline programmes to progress into leadership and decision-making roles. 	SI ODC SI WIS SI Disability SI D&I SI NGB SI Participation
	Recognise and retain a diverse workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Support initiatives that celebrate the contributions of diverse employees and promote their retention and career progression within the sector. 	SI ODC SI WIS SI Disability SI D&I SI NGB SI Participation SI Comms
International Contribution	Identify pathways and establish strategic relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Establishing a deeper understanding of the various pathways for Irish sports bodies to engage with international federations, including secondments and exchanges. · Build relationships with international bodies and collaborate with government and diplomatic channels to support representation efforts. · Advocate for Irish inclusion in decision-making forums and committees. 	SI HP SI NGB SI ODC SI Comms
	Develop leadership pipeline and capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Provide leadership training, development and mentoring opportunities for identified high-potential sector employees to support a pipeline of administrators who could take on international leadership roles. · Encourage individuals within Irish sporting bodies to apply for roles or attend key networking events within European and international federations. 	SI HP SI NGB SI ODC SI Comms

8

Appendices



Key Strategic & Policy Documents

National & International Sport:

[National Sports Policy 2018 – 2027](#)

[Embracing Ireland's Outdoors: National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2027](#)

[Sport Ireland Statement of Strategy 2023-2027](#)

[Sport Ireland Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)

[Launch of Statement of Commitment and Action to Disability Inclusion in Sport | Sport Ireland](#)

[Sport Ireland Women in Sport Policy](#)

[Sport Ireland Coaching Plan](#)

[Sport Ireland High Performance Strategy](#)

[Sport Ireland Policy on Volunteering](#)

[Sport Ireland ESF+ programme "Sport 4 Empowerment"](#)

[The Values Charter for Sport in Ireland | Sport Ireland](#)

[Sport Ireland Safeguarding Guidance](#)

[ISM 2024 | Sport Ireland](#)

[Workforce Planning Framework: Sport NZ, NZRA and Active Skills](#)

[Sport England: Working in an Active Nation 2019-2023](#)

[Sports Confederation of Denmark: Towards 2030](#)

[EOSE : 2023 Sport Employment Statistics in Europe](#)

[EOSE : 2023 Sport Employment Statistics in Europe \(Ireland\)](#)

Economic & Workforce

[National Skills Council](#)

[Census of Population 2022 - CSO - Central Statistics Office](#)

[Labour Force Survey Quarter 3 2025 - Central Statistics Office](#)

[Labour Force Survey Quarter 2 2025 - Central Statistics Office](#)

[Quarterly Economic Commentary, Summer 2025](#)

[OECD Economic Surveys: Ireland 2025 | OECD](#)

[SOLAS | Skills and Labour Market Research Unit | Research](#)

[Ireland's Talent Landscape 2025: Future Skills Challenges of Irish Business | Skillnet Ireland](#)

[Publications & Reports | The Wheel](#)

[Fostering-Ethnic-Diversity-and-Inclusion-in-the-Workplace.pdf](#)

[Gender balance in business and finance | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

List of Sport Ireland Recognised / Funded Bodies

Recognised National Governing Bodies of Sport

1. American Football Ireland
2. Angling Council of Ireland
3. Archery Ireland
4. Athletics Ireland
5. Badminton Ireland
6. Basketball Ireland
7. Boxing Ireland
8. Ból Chumann na hÉireann
9. Canoeing Ireland
10. Cricket Ireland
11. Croquet Association of Ireland
12. Cycling Ireland
13. Deaf Sports Ireland
14. Diving Ireland
15. Fencing Ireland
16. Football Association of Ireland
17. Gaelic Athletic Association
18. GAA Handball Ireland
19. Golf Ireland
20. Gymnastics Ireland
21. Hockey Ireland
22. Horse Sport Ireland
23. Horseshoe Pitchers Association of Ireland
24. Ice Skating Association of Ireland
25. Irish Amateur Wrestling Association
26. Irish Clay Target Shooting Association
27. Irish Ice Hockey Association
28. Irish Judo Association
29. Irish Lawn Bowls
30. Irish Martial Arts Commission
31. Irish Rugby Football Union
32. Irish Sailing
33. Irish Surfing
34. Tenpin Ireland
35. Irish Waterski & Wakeboard Federation
36. Irish Wheelchair Association Sport
37. Ladies Gaelic Football Association
38. Motorcycling Ireland
39. Motorsport Ireland
40. Mountaineering Ireland
41. National Aero Club of Ireland
42. National Community Games
43. Olympic Handball Ireland
44. Official National Amateur Karate Association of Ireland
45. Orienteering Ireland
46. Pitch and Putt Ireland
47. Racquetball Association of Ireland
48. Rowing Ireland
49. Rugby League Ireland
50. Snooker and Billiards Ireland
51. Special Olympics Ireland
52. Speleological Union of Ireland
53. Squash Ireland
54. Swim Ireland
55. Table Tennis Ireland
56. Taekwondo Ireland
57. Tennis Ireland
58. The Camogie Association
59. Triathlon Ireland
60. Trout Anglers Federation of Ireland
61. Tug of War Ireland
62. Twirl Ireland Federation
63. Vision Sports Ireland
64. Volleyball Ireland
65. Weightlifting Ireland

List of Sport Ireland Recognised / Funded Bodies

Representative / Other Funded Bodies

1. Age & Opportunity
2. Active Disability Ireland
3. Federation of Irish Sport
4. Ireland Active
5. Irish Special Schools Sports Council
6. Olympic Federation of Ireland
7. Paralympics Ireland
8. Pentathlon Ireland
9. Snow Sports Association of Ireland
10. Student Sport Ireland

Local Sports Partnerships

1. Carlow
2. Cavan
3. Clare
4. Cork
5. Donegal
6. Dublin City
7. Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown
8. Fingal
9. Galway
10. Kerry
11. Kildare
12. Kilkenny
13. Laois
14. Leitrim
15. Limerick
16. Longford
17. Louth
18. Mayo
19. Meath
20. Monaghan
21. Offaly
22. Roscommon
23. Sligo
24. South Dublin
25. Tipperary
26. Waterford
27. Westmeath
28. Wexford
29. Wicklow

Glossary

AI	Artificial Intelligence
DCCS	Department of Culture, Communications and Sport
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLG	Company Limited by Guarantee
COO	Chief Operating Officer
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CSO	Central Statistics Office
D&I	Diversity and Inclusion
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EOSE	European Observatoire of Sport and Employment
ERSI	The Economic and Social Research Institute
GDPR	The General Data Protection Regulation
HP	High Performance
HR	Human Resources
IF	International Federation
ISM	Irish Sports Monitor
IT	Information Technology
LMS	Learning Management System
LSP	Local Sports Partnership
NGB	National Governing Body of Sport
NSP	National Sports Policy
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PD	Performance Director
WFS	Workforce Strategy
WIS	Women in Sport







SPÓRT ÉIREANN
SPORT IRELAND

Sport Ireland Workforce Strategy: Powering Sport Supporting
Professional Workforce Development in Irish Sport (2026-2030)

Version 1: Published April 2026

Contact: odc@sportireland.ie