

WOMEN COACHING RUGBY TOOLKIT



**WOMEN
RUGBY**





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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Women Coaching Rugby Toolkit. This toolkit has been developed by World Rugby as an aid to unions and regions in recruiting, developing and retaining more women rugby coaches at every level of the game.

The drive for this toolkit has come from the Women in High Performance Coaching Report submitted to the Women’s Advisory Committee in November 2018. Although this report is concerned primarily with the lack of women coaching at a high performance level in rugby, many of the barriers to women who coach at a high performance level are faced at every level of rugby.

Therefore the interventions, approaches and innovative ways of working can be applied to the whole game. This toolkit also covers specific issues at the high performance level and details policies, programmes and approaches which can assist in getting more women coaching at the top levels of rugby.

The World Rugby toolkit is an adaptation, ‘rugby-fication’ of the SCORE toolkit which was developed with support from the European Union and Erasmus Foundation. The main partner in the writing of the SCORE toolkit was UK Coaching. World Rugby acknowledges and welcomes the support given by them in allowing us to use their work and adapt it to make it more relevant for a rugby audience and therefore supporting World Rugby in meeting its objectives for women into coaching.

WOMEN IN HIGH PERFORMANCE COACHING REPORT

In July 2017, World Rugby completed a survey involving 14 member unions and the six regional associations to establish a benchmark for the status of women in leadership positions.

The survey results showed that only one union (Hong Kong) had a woman head coach of a national team (in sevens or 15s) and that only four of the unions had women involved in a supporting coach role working with the national teams.

In line with “Accelerating the Global Development of Women in Rugby 2017–2025” (See strategy document [here](#).) and World Rugby’s objective of developing women in leadership roles including coaching and refereeing, a report was commissioned to meet the following objectives.

-  To develop a more in-depth understanding of the status of women in high performance rugby coaching roles globally.
-  To investigate the challenges and opportunities to increase the numbers and / or % of women coaching (women and men’s teams) at a high performance level.
-  To identify good practice programmes or strategies in place within rugby and other sporting codes which have been successful in developing high performance female coaches.
-  To provide recommendations and suggestions for consideration at a global, regional and union level to accelerate the development of women in HP coaching.

The development of this toolkit was one of the key recommendations in the Women in High Performance Coaching report. An Executive Summary of the Report can be found [here](#).



WHO IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?

Evidence and research shows that no real and lasting change will be effected if the leadership within sports organisations are not involved and committed to driving the change. This toolkit and the key messages within it are not just aimed at educators, trainers and coaching managers, but also at CEOs, board members, performance directors and other senior managers.

- **Key leaders and decision makers need** – to drive change in their union to get more women into coaching and support the growth and effectiveness of the coaching workforce; to assist in raising awareness and understanding of the current landscape and issues, set targets and aspirations, allocate resources and support achievement in these areas.
- **High performance directors and heads of coaching need** – to support development of strategies, succession planning and take proactive steps to identify, develop, deploy and employ women at HP levels; to develop and sustain a pipeline of female coaches to support enjoyment, progression and wellbeing of all participants.
- **Trainers and educators need** – to identify, recruit and develop female coaches through specific interventions which enable access to qualifications, experience and deployment/employment into coaching roles for women at all levels; to allow women to thrive within the game and to develop a diverse, effective and sustainable workforce.

“We are potentially missing out on a host of different ideas, different skills, different abilities, creativities, and decisions that come with having different faces round the governing body boardroom or on the sideline or courtside or poolside.”

Dr L. Norman, 2017, Article in Leaders in Sport

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

The toolkit is made up of a number of sections covering the most crucial areas of coach education, development and deployment. Though aimed at increasing the number of women rugby coaches, a lot of the information and tactics outlined in the toolkit can equally be applied to generic coach and workforce development.

The sections:

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Each section provides key information, ideas and suggestions, which are supported by links to further information. Some are contained within a number of additional documents in the Case Studies section but may also link to other sites for you to explore further.

We recognise that not all of the information will be relevant to you but hopefully the information and links will be useful for most unions, both now and in the future as you develop your coaching strategies and tactics and continue to look at developing an effective, diverse workforce which meets the needs of your players and rugby in your union.

INCREASING THE NUMBER OF WOMEN COACHING RUGBY: WHY DOES IT MATTER?

World Rugby’s vision is a sport for all – true to its values. Rugby leadership, on and off the field, should therefore reflect this. Women make up over 25% of the rugby-playing population, so should be represented in all areas and at all levels of the game. In addition to this core principle, there are many reasons to increase the number of women in coaching:

- More coaches with better qualifications and experience: More choice and support = greater player satisfaction and reduced workload for existing volunteer coaches.
- Additional skills: Participants and coaches have access to a wider skill set.
- Untapped resources: More inclusive recruitment practices will reduce shortages in club coaching.

- Untapped talent: There are many talented women coaches who are not progressing up through the performance pathways.
- Diversity improves organisational performance: Diverse leadership teams are more co-operative and imaginative; problem solving is easier, and the quality of decision making is better. This logically applies as much to coaching teams as to other leadership teams.
- Women are well placed to understand the psychological and social pressure female athletes may experience (though this shouldn’t limit women to only coach women and vice versa): The presence of women – with different traits, qualities and life and leadership experiences – might also help prevent the sort of “bullying” environments recently alleged within some sports at an elite level.
- Female role models: Young women want and need strong, confident female role models.
- Retaining players in rugby: Women who are coached by women are more likely to take up coaching than women who are coached by men. Women players need to be given better opportunities to stay in sport as a career, post-retirement.



WORLD RUGBY'S COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY

World Rugby underscored its own commitment to furthering gender equality at all levels of the organisation in 2017 by announcing sweeping reform of its Council with an ambition of at least one third women's representation.

- In a historic and unprecedented decision spearheaded by Chairman Sir Bill Beaumont, World Rugby increased the number of people who may sit on the Council – its highest decision-making body – from 32 to 49, with the 17 new representatives to be women.
- It was the first and very important step in World Rugby's wider strategy to accelerate women in rugby on and off the field and bring gender-balance to the highest levels of the game.
- For more detail see [here](#) and the Balancing the Board document which can be found [here](#).



WOMEN COACHING RUGBY: GLOBAL QUALIFICATIONS DATA

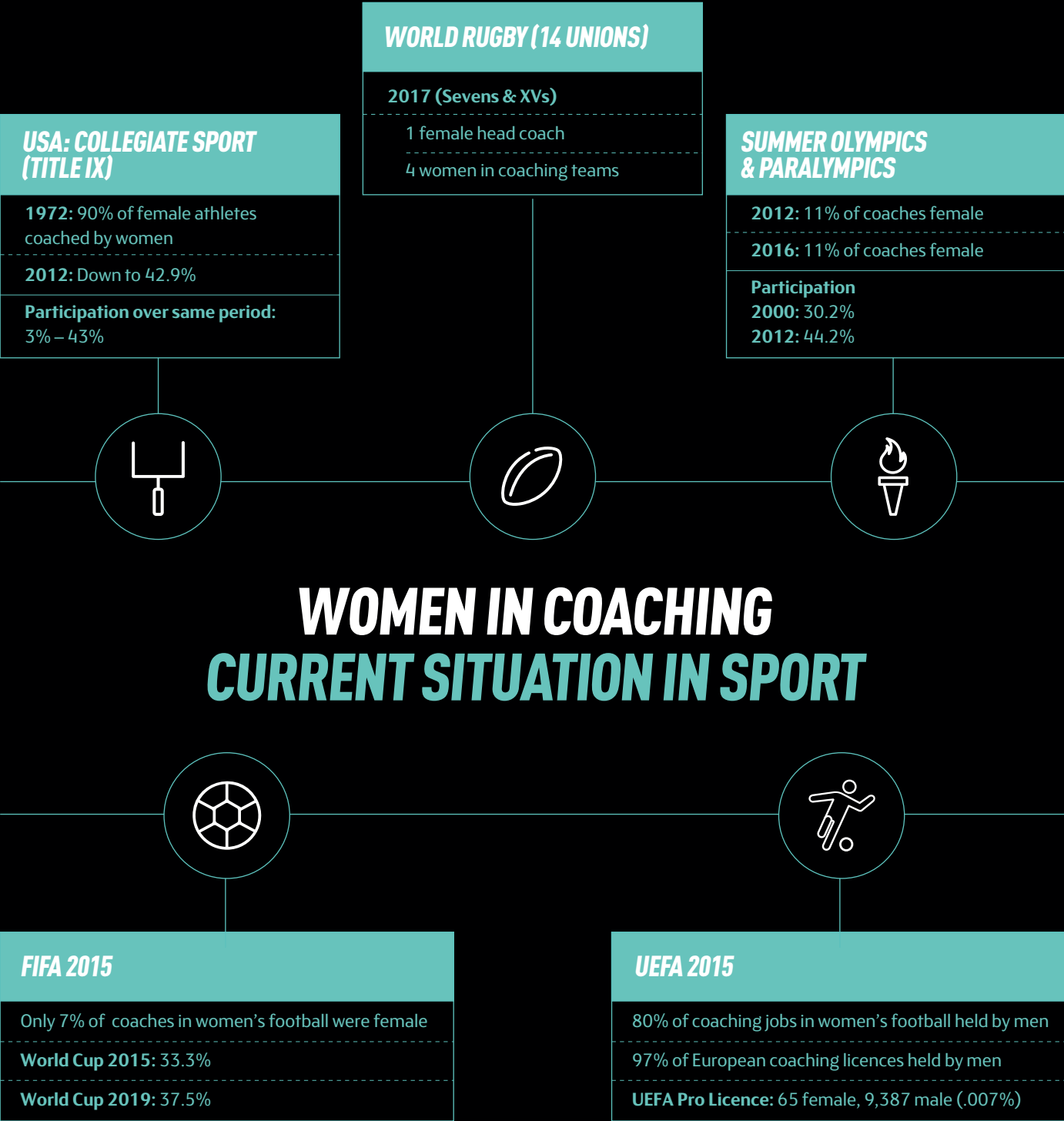
World Rugby administers a series of training and development opportunities for coaches. The following chart shows the percentage of women who have participated in these programmes. This is a cumulative figure from 2007 to 2018.

Qualification	Percentage of female coaches
Rugby Ready	18.4%
Level 1 XVs Rugby	13.4%
Level 2 XVs Rugby	4.9%
Level 3 XVs Rugby	2%
L1 Sevens Rugby	15.7%
L2 Sevens Rugby	13.9%
Coach Educators	7.4%
Trainers	8.2%

It is of concern to note that not many women are progressing to Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications in the XVs game, although Sevens rugby has a good transition rate to L2. When you are reviewing the current situation in your union ([see planning section](#)), it is very important to analyse what the reasons may be – and to ask the women involved why they don't progress with their coaching qualification.

“The best coaches should be the best people and, at the Olympic Games, there's no way that women should represent only 11% of the best coaches, as was the case at the 2016 Rio Olympics – clearly more work needs to be done here. When it comes to mindset, skillset and intelligence, there's no reason why a woman can't be just as good as a man, and hopefully things will change when women are given more opportunities.”

Andy Murray, (7th Mar 2020)
[Why Shouldn't Women Coach Men? theguardian.com](#)



NOT JUST A RUGBY ISSUE

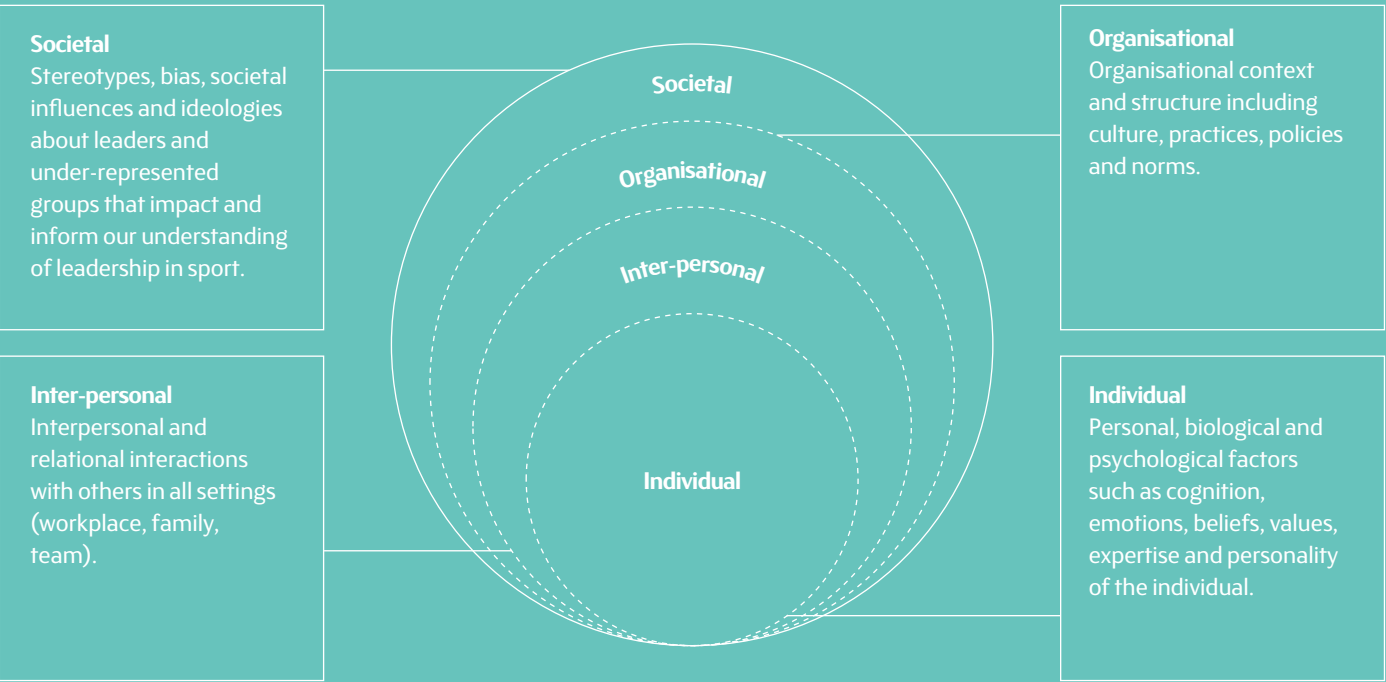
The lack of women moving into the higher levels of coaching is not just an issue for rugby. The response that rugby is a newer game for women, and women moving into HP coaching roles is just a matter of time, is probably erroneous. Football now seems to be making some strides forward (more than 37% of head coaches at the recent World Cup were female) – but this has been through proactive interventions.

For further insight around women in coaching see [here](#) for the presentation by Dr Nicole M. La Voi at the Breakthrough Summit 2019.
“Letting Data Tell the Story on Women Coaches” (Breakthroughsummit2019)

WHY ARE SO FEW WOMEN COACHING RUGBY? BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

There are a range of inter-linking challenges which women face in coaching; these are exacerbated at the higher levels of rugby. These challenges need an holistic pro-active approach in order to increase the numbers of women coaching in rugby.

ECOLOGICAL MODEL DEFINITION OF LEVELS



This diagram is from an article by Dr Nicole M. La Voi, a leading academic on women’s coaching based at the Tucker Centre for Research on Girls and Women in Sport, University of Minnesota, USA – the first centre in the world dedicated to research on women and girls in sport. See [here](#) and the [Tucker Centre Case Study](#) for further information.

Dr La Voi uses an “ecological” model to provide a framework to categorise the challenges facing women coaches. The things that “get in the way” are complex and inter-linked – this model seeks to demonstrate these issues in an understandable way.

SOCIETAL ISSUES

- Cultural issues in some countries around the role of women make it difficult to be appointed into roles.
- Women can be “...over-mentored and under-sponsored...” They need access to power networks in order to be credible and visible.
- Sport reflects wider society: socialisation of both genders contributes to all the above issues; just as in business, where there is still a lack of females in leadership roles, rugby is no different.
- Gender stereotypes still exist around what is acceptable for women who work in high performance roles. In some cultures, women are still more likely to have their ability to commit to high performance coaching questioned by others if they have a family. Linked to this is that often there are different expectations of women, allied with their own choice in valuing their time with children and partners.

ORGANISATIONAL BARRIERS

- Recruitment processes: There exists at times an unconscious hiring bias within rugby organisations. Key decision makers often place more value on experience in the men’s game, and do not see the women’s game or women coaches as being at the same level.
- Opportunity to gain experience / deployment in meaningful roles: There are insufficient deployment opportunities for women at the highest level of the game, which means women cannot get the experience to meet the role profile criteria.
- Players’ perception of women high performance coaches: There is often a perception amongst players that male coaches are better than female coaches; they want the ‘best’ coach and value experience in the men’s game more, not necessarily recognising wider competencies required in the role.
- ‘Old boys network’: Women coaches do not have as well established formal or informal networks and peer support as male coaches.
- Paid jobs in women’s game: Male coaches now see professional opportunities in the women’s game and are being appointed to the roles.
- Culture in some coaching environments can be challenging: Traditions can be damaging (and count against new thinking and approaches), with women needing to adapt their behaviours to fit the system.
- Lack of role models: The lack of women role models in coaching – from grassroots level upwards – reinforces perceptions that rugby coaches are male.

INDIVIDUAL, INTER-PERSONAL ISSUES

- The confidence gap: Women can sometimes lack confidence in certain situations. This lack of confidence impacts on whether or not they put themselves forward for roles, whether they attend coaching courses which are dominated by men, and whether they recognise that their own skills and competencies make them a suitable candidate for a role.
- Lack of exposure to HP environments to gain knowledge and experience.
- Actuality and perceptions of coaching roles: time, commitment, the environment.
- Women are still expected to balance work and family demands.
- Pressure on those in the system: they represent all women, have to be better than anyone else, can feel isolated and are sometimes expected to do everything. They can also be marginalised when they are deployed in coaching roles. Research shows that those who do get through the system to the highest level have to be amazingly resilient and many suffer burn-out after a number of years and are lost to sport.

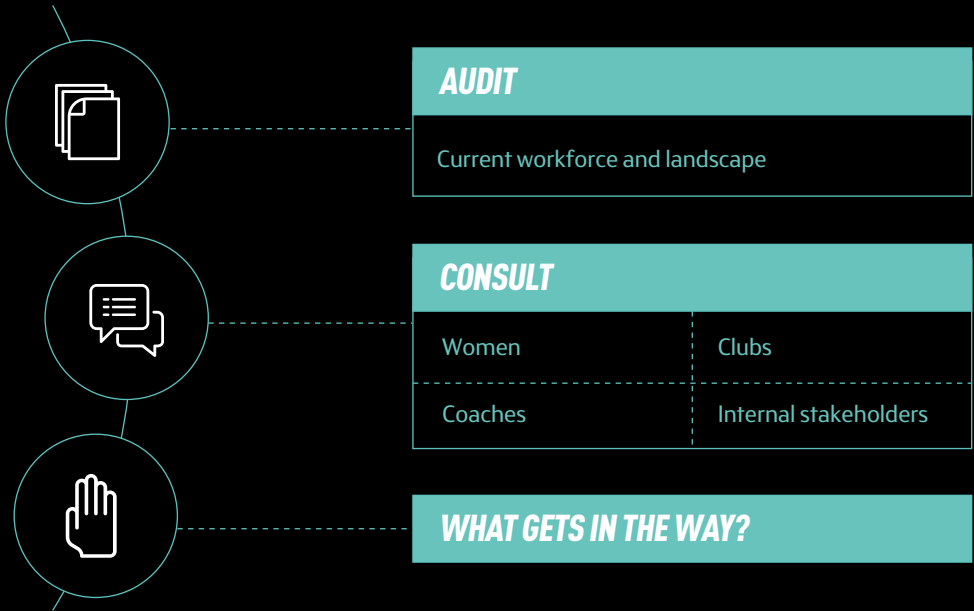
SO WHAT DO WE DO?

Proactive interventions and approaches are needed to help address the issues and get more women coaching. This toolkit will assist you in starting to make the change. Contained within it are some tactics and tools to address these issues so that you are able to get more women coaching rugby in your union and support them to progress along a coaching pathway to higher levels if it suits them.

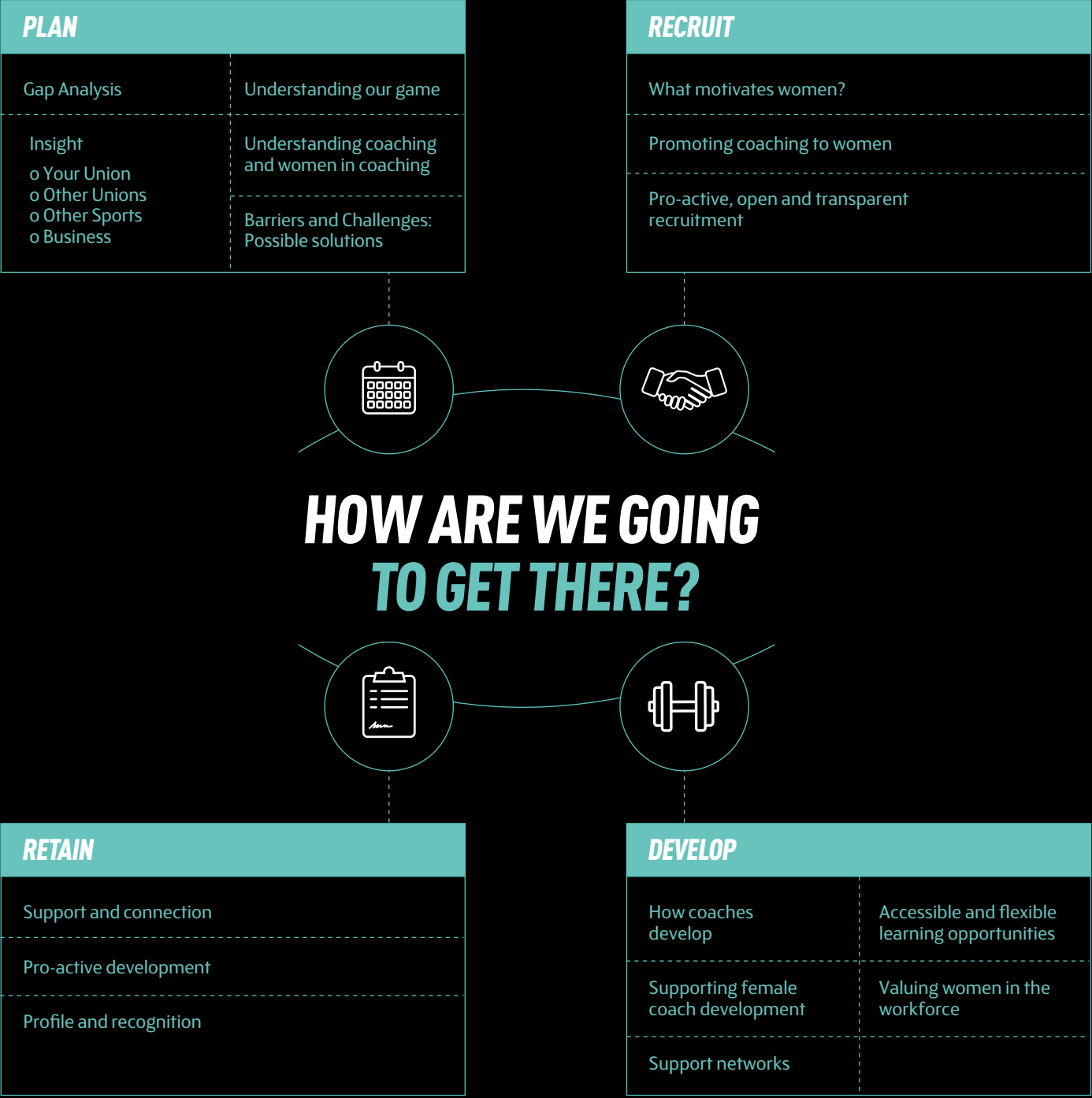
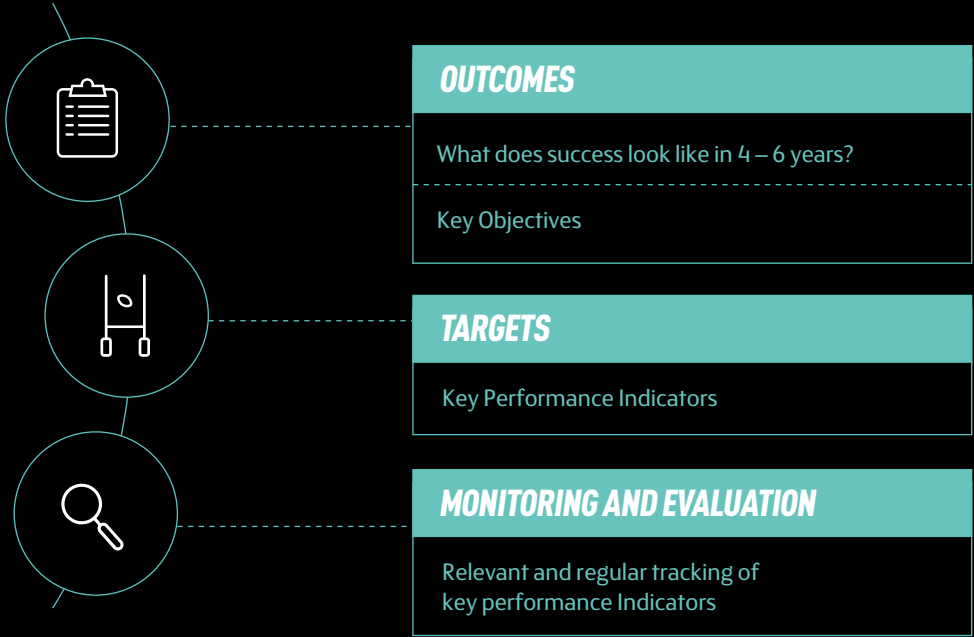
As with everything, it starts with planning...

DEVELOPING YOUR PLAN FLOWCHART

WHERE ARE WE NOW?



WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?
OUR ASPIRATIONS



PLANNING



DEVELOPING A PLAN TO INCREASE THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF WOMEN RUGBY COACHES

Planning and research is essential before making any changes to increase and develop the numbers of women coaching in your union. This will ensure that time and resources are used in the most effective way.

In order to increase the numbers of women rugby coaches, we have to take proactive steps to ensure that women can access qualifications and gain practical coaching experience, be appointed to coaching roles from community to high performance levels and then thrive once they are in these roles.

This toolkit looks at what changes you can put in place which will lead to long-term, sustainable change and gender equality within the future coaching workforce.

To make changes that are effective and sustainable you have to:



RAISE AWARENESS
Understand your current situation and let everyone know.



WORK COLLABORATIVELY
Who else in the organisation needs to be involved in the planning, development and delivery of strategies and tactics? Connect and integrate to maximise resources and reduce duplication.



TAKE RESPONSIBILITY
Recognise what you need to do to make this change.



TAKE ACTION
What are you going to do about it?

BUT WHERE DO YOU START?

“Research shows that women have to feel they can meet 100% of stated criteria on a role profile whilst men will apply if they feel they can do 60% of role.”

*Desvaux, Devillard-Hoelinger & Meaney (2008) cited in Sport Coaching UK factsheet (2015)

WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF WOMEN COACHING IN YOUR UNION?

AUDIT YOUR CURRENT COACHING WORKFORCE

Unless you know what you have, how do you know what you need?

- How many coaches do you have in your union who are actively coaching?
- How many and what percentage of these coaches are female?
- What level of teams are they coaching?
- Where are they coaching?
- What qualifications do your women rugby coaches have?
- How many women coaches are paid, and how many are voluntary?

If possible, track this information over as many preceding years as you can. It can be integrated into the information you gather about all of your coaches or separately, with a focus on female coaches. It's a good idea to track both numbers and percentages of women against your overall numbers.

Can you see any trends in your coaching workforce that may help your future planning? How do your findings fit against other sports in your country, or against other rugby unions? Agree what information you need to collect going forward so you can track and assess your impact.

CONSULTATION

Speak to your women coaches. Sport and coaching is all about people. Unless you understand your coaches, you will not be able to provide what they need.

- Why do they coach?
- What do they enjoy about coaching rugby?
- What challenges have they faced as a coach?
- What would they change about coaching rugby?

It is also important to talk to women who have stopped coaching and find out why they stopped. If it is something the union could have done something about, what could you put in place to keep women coaching?

Ask yourself if your coaching pathways are genuinely accessible or if they unintentionally make it harder for women to be involved.

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO BE?

WHAT IS THE DESIRED FUTURE STATE FOR WOMEN COACHING IN RUGBY?

Once you have an understanding of your current (and hopefully, past) landscape and the make-up of your current coaching workforce from a gender perspective, you then need to be clear about where you want to be and why?

For example, the guidance from the European Union, derived from the EU Gender Equality in Sport Paper (February, 2014) identifies the following targets for female coaches:

- Women as volunteer and employed coaches should be 40% of the coaching workforce
- Women as coaches should be 30% of all the national team coaches.

World Rugby has set its own aspirations for women coaching rugby at a high performance level. By 2025:

- It will be normal for women to be appointed into head coaching positions at a high-performance level.

- Women will see themselves and be seen by others as just "coaches", not female coaches.
- At the 2025 Rugby World Cup women will make up at least 40% of coaching teams including head coach roles.
- The make-up of coaching teams in both men's and women's programmes will be more diverse.
- There will be a greater prominence of women coaching both male and female teams.

It's important to set realistic targets, and ensure they are meaningful to your own union. If you set your targets too high, it is possible that you will put measures in place which disenfranchise your existing coaching workforce, and create programmes that are not sustainable in the long term.

Choose a goal that you are comfortable can be attained with achievable changes to your existing coaching system. For example, you may set an initial target which corresponds with the percentage of women and girls participating in rugby in your union compared with men and boys. Once achieved, you can start working towards a more aspirational goal. Don't forget, more women coaching means more coaches in your union, regardless of how many play.



HOW ARE YOU GOING TO GET THERE?

WHAT ARE THE STEPS NEEDED TO MOVE FROM CURRENT STATE TO FUTURE DESIRED STATE?

You need to identify the gaps between where you are now and where you want to be; this is known as a **gap analysis**.

One of the most important parts of planning is setting goals. It is a way of focusing the implementation of the plan and a tool to monitor the project as it rolls out. Each of the three elements of **recruiting, developing and retaining** have to be planned and have short, medium and long-term goals.

When you are planning for the **recruitment, development and retention** of your women rugby coaches, think about the following and include in your plan.

WHAT INSIGHT CAN YOU LEARN FROM?

- What projects with a gender equality focus has your union run in the past? Can you learn from the findings?
- What projects have been run in other sports in the past few years that you could learn from? We have included some in our case studies or signposted you to them throughout the toolkit (see [Case Studies](#)).
- What organisations outside of sport can you learn from? Many private sector companies now run Women into Leadership programmes that could provide learning that is equally applicable to coaching.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND ITS POSSIBLE IMPACT ON WOMEN RUGBY COACHES

Many women face cultural barriers on a daily basis. This affects how they are perceived in society and also in rugby. If carried out positively, the steps sport makes towards gender equality will, over time, have an effect on how women are perceived in society.

You can start this change process by looking within your own union and its culture.

- Are you proactively welcoming to women?
- What is the perception of rugby in your country? Is it ‘a sport for men’?
- How many women work in the development of rugby?

- How many women are on your senior management team and board?
- How do you publicise rugby externally? Do you predominantly use images of men playing and coaching rugby?
- What policies and processes do you have in place that support and protect your coaching workforce? (for example: employment, health, anti-discrimination, anti-harassment/bullying policies).

Knowing your organisation and changing its culture and profile is not a short-term fix but recognising where women are under-represented in your organisation is a good starting point for making those changes.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEN’S SUPPORT IN DRIVING THE RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION OF FEMALE COACHES

Male advocates, sponsors and champions are needed in rugby to support and drive changes in process, policy and awareness, to ensure that women have real access to roles at the highest level to benefit rugby as a whole.

When you look at your current coaching workforce, are your male coaches sufficiently aware and confident to support their female peers developing as coaches within the game?

“It is important that the sports organisation advocates for its entire coaching workforce to support and welcome women as coaches. Unfortunately bullying and harassment in sport is commonplace, even more startling is the sexist behaviour exhibited by male coaches towards their female peers.” (Norman, L., & Rankin, AJ., 2018)

The United Nations (UN) launched an international campaign #HeforShe which resolves to promote gender equality by raising awareness among men so that they can play a role in supporting women. This campaign and its sentiments could easily translate into coaching.

The Tucker Centre in the USA has also developed a similar campaign – “Be an Ally” which is referenced here in the Case Studies section.

See also the [Recruitment section](#) of this toolkit.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION

It is vital in any plan to have monitoring and evaluation in place right from the start. Your audit will have identified the position your organisation is in **before** the plan starts. You may need to amend your current methods of data capture and tracking to ensure you start to collect the right information annually, so you can analyse whether your actions are making an actual difference.

Ensure you collect and analyse qualitative information e.g. questionnaires for participant feedback after courses, as well as just quantitative information, e.g. the numbers of people who attend courses and achieve qualifications. Can you put in place systems to track how many women actually go into coaching after courses, and capture data re how many coaches are actively coaching and the percentage of these which are female at each level?

IDENTIFY MEASURABLE MILESTONES

Set goals at the start of the plan to ensure it stays on track against the agreed plan. Set short, medium and long-term goals to build an overall change within the coaching workforce.

MEASURING SUCCESS

What will success look like? It should include a target in number form and also identify changes to the way you run your programmes; these can be used as case studies.

MEASURING IMPACT

It is important to recognise that the work you start to do in this area may not have any measurable impact until 12 months/2 years/5 years later but it is important to set your measurements in place from the start, so you can report on your achievements and learn from the plan as it goes along.

LEARN FROM WHAT DOESN’T WORK, AND CHANGE IT

Ongoing monitoring also helps you recognise what actions have been put in place which are not working. Learn from these and look to rectify them – how could you amend the approach to make it work?

PLAN; DO; REVIEW

Ensure you review and re-plan on a regular basis as part of your planning cycle.



AREAS OF FOCUS FOR YOUR PLAN

This toolkit looks into three specific areas that will help you develop your strategy for gender equality in your coaching system. Click on the following links to access each section:



RECRUIT



DEVELOP



RETAIN

CREATING YOUR PLAN

By completing the scoping element of planning, you are now in a great position to develop a plan that is appropriate to the needs of your sport and the women you will be recruiting, developing and, hopefully, retaining as coaches.

FUNDING YOUR COACHING PLAN

In many countries there is a focus from government or national sports agencies on developing women’s sports both for participation but also supporting workforce and leadership initiatives. Government or agency funding may therefore be available to help resource your plan and support your aspirations for women in rugby.

In addition, there are a range of regional and international agencies which may also provide funding towards your programmes for developing women coaches e.g. Erasmus+ in Europe (see [here](#)).

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) through its Olympic Solidarity programme makes funding available to National Olympic Committees which national sports federations can in turn access to develop coaching capacity, team support and development of national sports structures. In the 2017–2020 Olympic Solidarity cycle to date, 68 national rugby federations have accounted for 98 funding applications for Sevens rugby programmes, amounting to over USD\$2.5m in funding. Further information can be found [here](#).

It is well worthwhile exploring national, regional and inter-national funding support which can help you achieve your aims.

“It is not the way we say we get things done, such as strategies, policies or procedures. We need to examine how we really get things done: the values, rituals, shared assumptions, the traditions, the perceptions, the unwritten rules, the stories that circulate within our NGB. These create our organisational cultures...”

The pace of change in the make-up of the coaching profession is slow because it is an issue of cultural change, of deeply embedded ideas and behaviours within sport that have been so long in the making, they have become normalised...”

Dr Norman, L. (Nov 2017, Leadersinsport)

RECRUITMENT



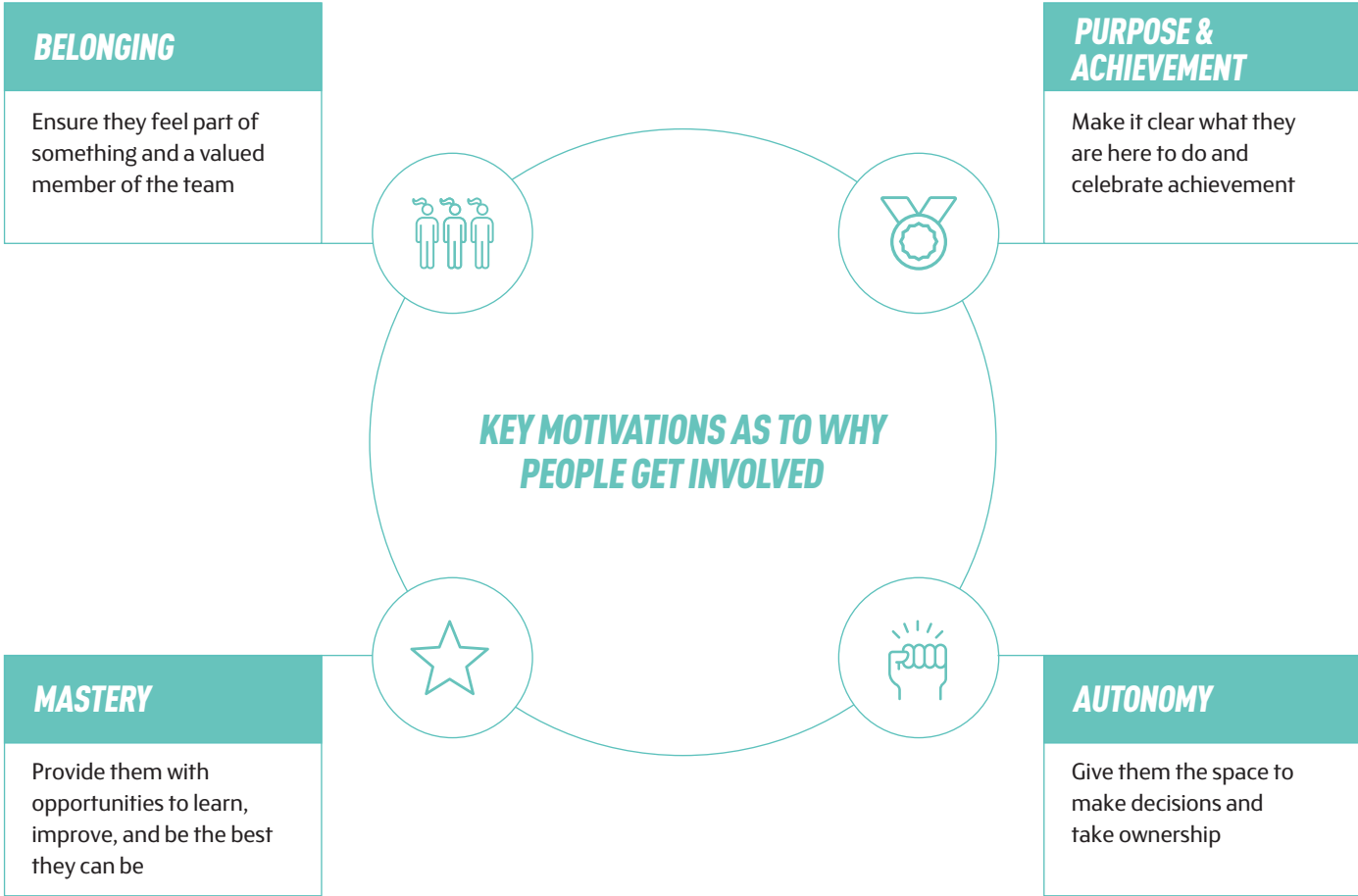
RECRUITING WOMEN INTO COACHING RUGBY

Coaching is a vitally important aspect of sport. Coaches have a big impact on people getting involved in rugby and staying involved. It is important that you have a diverse coaching workforce that can meet the needs of each one of your participants and that reflects your playing population and potential participants.

This section aims to provide information which will support effective recruitment of women into your rugby coaching workforce at all levels.

UNDERSTANDING WOMEN IN COACHING: WHAT MOTIVATES WOMEN?
Everyone has different reasons or motivations for becoming, and developing as, a coach. Each individual brings with them their life experiences, both within and outside of sport.

Understanding the values that women have in sport is important to recognising their motivations. Understanding these motivations can help in your recruitment strategy.

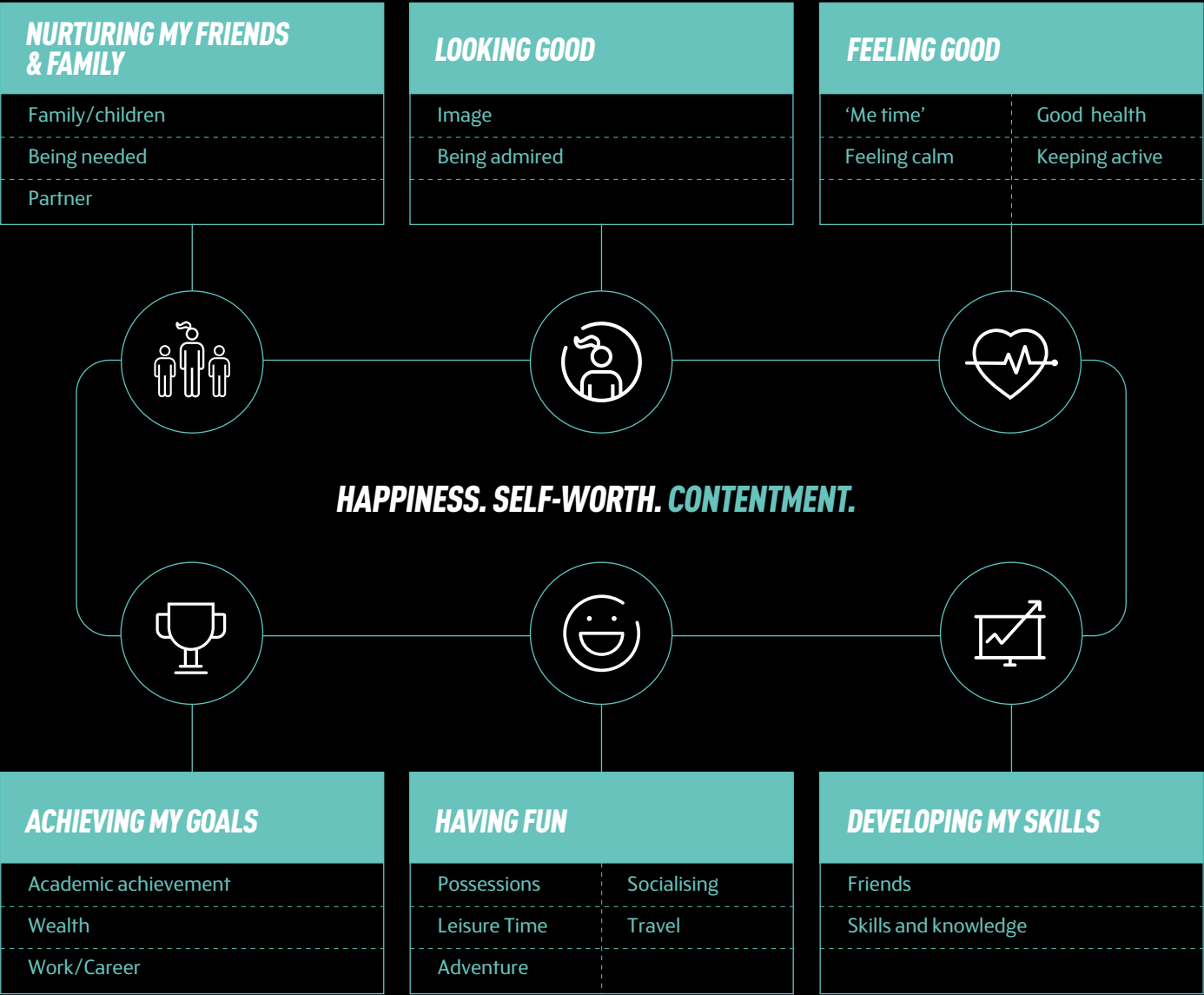


A COMPLEX VALUE SYSTEM

UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATIONS AND VALUES THAT UNDERPIN WOMENS INVOLVEMENT IN SPORT

Recent research from Women in Sport (UK) has identified values that motivate women to take part in sport:

Although these values can be specifically attached to women participating in sport, they can also work as motivations into coaching.



Source: Adapted from Women in Sport (2013) "Understanding Women's Lives in 2013 and the Role of Sport and physical Activity" in Go Where Women Are, 2015, Sport England

APPEALING TO WOMEN...

What could you put in place to attract more women to get involved in coaching?

CHANGE THE OFFER TO SUIT THE WOMEN YOU ARE TARGETING
Promote it based on the key motivating factors for women.

SEEING IS BELIEVING. MAKING COACHING THE 'NORM' FOR WOMEN
Role models are a powerful marketing tool for women in coaching. It can reinforce the message that coaching could also be for them.

USE POSITIVITY AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO SUPPORT YOUR COACHES
Help women recognise that the skills they already have are valuable in coaching. Provide support for their rugby development and put mechanisms in place which provide ongoing motivation and encouragement (for example: providing effective lines of communication, local coaching networks and mentoring) as it shows you value and care for them.

MAKE IT EASY FOR WOMEN TO GET INVOLVED: RIGHT TIME, RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT WELCOME, RIGHT COMPANY, RIGHT GEAR
Address both practical and emotional barriers together, to ensure that neither outweigh the motivation to get involved. A more convenient crèche facility may only attract those who feel confident with the activity or who are in a sporting environment already.

Due to the rugby coaching workforce currently consisting predominantly of men, the likelihood is that courses and coach development learning events will be attended mainly by men. This may be overwhelming and uncomfortable for some female coaches and be a barrier to them either attending in the first place, or returning after the lunch-break. There are different ways to address this that you might consider:

WOMEN-ONLY COURSES

Many sports, including rugby, have provided women-only courses. These are useful as a first step onto the ladder to "get them in", removing the fear some women have which prevents them joining existing courses. Then you can further build women's confidence during the course.

Women-only courses may be needed in some countries to deal with cultural issues. This is where you need to develop your research and understanding of the barriers in your own union and assess where such approaches are relevant for you and your potential female coaches.

An example of the reasons for, and benefits of, running a women only course can be seen in the Case Study from the Hong Kong Rugby Union [here](#).

MIXED GENDER COURSES & LEARNING EVENTS

However, at some point it is important that women are encouraged into gender neutral environments. This transition can be managed and supported if you focus on the needs of the individual. Monitor your attendees at these learning events and take the time to proactively invite female coaches to the session.

There are great benefits from mixed courses and events:

- Sharing different approaches to coaching
- Learning from each other's personal experiences
- Reducing the instance of gender-based negative attitudes as relationships can be developed in a neutral environment where everyone is learning together
- Building the visibility and credibility of female coaches
- Developing the networks for female coaches.

Women should coach in both the male and female game, as men do, so at some point it is important to open female coaches up to wider environments and experiences. If this is managed correctly for the individual, then the confidence and self-efficacy of the women will also be enhanced.

APPEALING TO WOMEN...

PROVIDE A COACHING JOURNEY WITH SUPPORT

Another way to support the recruitment and development of female coaches would be to provide pre-course evenings (and ongoing mentoring support before, during and after the course) for potential female coaches. You can then provide information on what the course will involve, build confidence for the women to step into the actual course and reduce any anxiety by ensuring there are other women on the course with them.

After the course, look to signpost and support female coaches into active coaching roles and continue the support through mentoring, peer support and ongoing, continuous professional development opportunities.

COACHING JOURNEY



PRE-COURSE SUPPORT



COURSE



COACHING EXPERIENCE



CONTINUE TO LEARN AND DEVELOP

...WHERE CAN YOU FIND COACHES?

HIGH PERFORMANCE RUGBY

If you want to change the under-representation of women coaching at the high performance level with national squads at tournaments, World Cups and Olympics, you need to look at both your existing pool of coaches as well as your elite players. Women who have competed at a high level in your sport are a good option as they have a strong knowledge of the technicalities of the sport and an understanding of a high performance environment. Several unions are delivering strategies which identify appropriate players who possess the potential to be a coach and are engaging them onto the coaching pathway before their playing careers come to an end.

For more detailed examples see the RFU Case Study [here](#) and USA Rugby Case Study [here](#).

However, being a talented athlete does not necessarily equate to being a good coach.

So ensure that you are supporting and developing the pool of female coaches coming up through your coaching pathway. Their experience, knowledge and strong interpersonal (soft) skills may make them highly suitable candidates.

COMMUNITY RUGBY

If you want more women coaching rugby at a community level, then looking at players, organisers and teachers within your clubs, universities, colleges and schools is very important. All those involved in the game are potential coaches. Many women will not put themselves forward but a “tap on the shoulder” may help them believe they can do it. Speak to these women and girls. They may not only wish to get involved themselves but also know their community and can act as influencers in getting more people active and motivated.

Consider approaching players coming to the end of their playing careers or those who have a long-term injury, and get them onto the first steps of the coaching ladder.

And don’t forget **young leaders** – girls at schools or clubs could be the ones to target to help support coaching younger players (and also refereeing or other roles) whilst they are still playing. It will also get them on a pathway early so by the time they finish playing it is a natural step into coaching and they will already have the confidence to take on a coaching role.

Set up informal sessions in local clubs, talent groups, academies, etc to explain what coaching involves and the skills many will already possess which will make them suited to coaching. Advertise the event around the club or venue and use images of girls and women coaching.



PROMOTE COACHING TO WOMEN

USE YOUR EXISTING FEMALE COACHES AS ROLE MODELS

FILM

Create a short film (max 4 minutes) which promotes coaching. Use active women rugby coaches and get them to explain what coaching involves. At the end of the film, add appropriate links to more information and contact details so any interested women have someone relevant to talk to in your organisation. Post the film on your website, Facebook page, Twitter and other social media. Look to post it out on channels that women access.

CASE STUDIES

Develop case studies to tell a story and get a message across in a way that people can identify with. Use pictures of the female coach and use her story to help create an emotional link with the reader, with such content as:

- How did she get into coaching?
- Who does she coach/has she coached?
- Why does she coach?
- What is the best part of coaching for her?
- Did she overcome any challenges in becoming a coach or developing as a coach?

The idea is that the women reading this story can relate to this coach and think “I’m like her, I can do that.” As such, always follow this case study with details on what next steps the reader can take to get into coaching. Make the access to further information as easy as possible. If possible, direct her towards a person to speak to.

The links below are to female coaches in a range of sports – sharing their motivations and stories:

- [Women in Coaching: THE FACTS](#)
- [Meet 8 Women Coaches who will Fire You Up](#)

USE OF IMAGES AS A MARKETING TOOL

Images can be very powerful so ensure any information, adverts and articles reflect the women you are aiming to recruit.

Look at the images you currently use. What message might they send to women? Do they convey a sense of welcome?

Spending time & funds to build up a bank of positive images of women coaching and participating could pay dividends in the long term and help your union market itself as one that welcomes and values women in all aspects of your game.

PERSONAL INVITATIONS TO COACH

Women who are successful in sport or coaching have often talked about the ‘nudge’ received to push them to try something new. Being invited to try something provides women with a sense of belonging and support which promotes a sense of self-confidence to give it a go.

“There’s no obvious route for a young woman to go into coaching, and so few examples of women enjoying rewarding coaching careers that even those who really want to be coaches plan something else for their futures. Gender should not be the main factor in hiring a coach, but we’re missing a lot of great coaches when we turn so many outstanding females away.”

Beth Ali – Director of Inter-collegiate and High-Performance Sport, University of Toronto, (Cited in Kidd, B. 2013)

PROACTIVE, OPEN AND TRANSPARENT RECRUITMENT

Paid coaching roles should have a transparent application, shortlisting, interview and feedback process in place to ensure all candidates are given a fair chance of being successful. All-male, closed coaching networks and recruiting from within at this level are no longer acceptable when considering the merits of a gender equal coaching workforce.

In addition, only considering internal candidates will not always provide the best person for the job. No-one should just be given a job or role because they happen to know the person recruiting. It can lead to an exclusive approach to recruitment and will generally reduce the pool of skills within any given group.

However, there is no problem in encouraging or inviting someone to apply for a coaching role or job as long as the same process of shortlisting and interviewing is applied to all applicants. A proactive, open and transparent process of recruitment will not only ensure that you are getting the right person for the job, but it will demonstrate fairness and good practice to your participants and stakeholders. As mentioned in the introduction, some of the major barriers to women gaining roles at a high performance level are linked to recruitment processes – these can apply to community coaching as well. So all the guidance below – for unions, provinces, regions, academies, clubs – on proactive, open and transparent recruitment is pertinent. But it is especially important to recruiting for roles at a HP level.

It is therefore important that key decision makers within your union are aware of the guidance below and apply best practices when making coaching appointments, if we are to address the lack of women coaching at higher levels of the game.

PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE ROLE

Women want details prior to applying for a coaching role or taking their first step into coaching. This can be done by:

- Posting information on your website
- Promoting information through various social media channels (add a hashtag # so you can monitor interest and field questions)
- Linking with women’s clubs and coaching networks to advertise the post
- Word of mouth: inform your existing coaches and players and get them to talk to their own social circle.

JOB DESCRIPTION (OR ROLE PROFILE) AND APPLICATION PROCESS (IF RELEVANT)

Research has shown that women look at a job description and won’t apply unless they can do 100% of the role, whilst men will apply if they feel they can do 60%. This is known as **the confidence gap**¹. This also leads to the 7-year rule, where men roughly apply for a job seven years before they are ready, and women apply seven years after they are ready.

Rather than long application forms, welcome letters of application, which allow women to highlight their achievements and experience, and phone calls where prospective applicants can talk through the role and have a person to person discussion about their suitability for the role.

It is important that you add a point of contact with an email address and phone number and advise that this person is available to discuss the role further.

¹ Desvaux, Devillard-Hoelinger & Meaney (2008) cited in SCUk factsheet (2015)

PROACTIVE, OPEN AND TRANSPARENT RECRUITMENT

WORDING IN JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND ADVERTS

Research in engineering, another male-dominated industry, showed how changing the wording in the job description can reduce the unconscious bias towards male recruitment. Importantly, the research did show that the changing of words didn't lead to a reduction in males applying.

The links below provide further information in how to review and change your job descriptions and adverts to reduce gender bias and widen your talent pool:

- [How to take gender bias out of your job ads](#)
- [10 Ways to Remove Gender Bias from Job Descriptions](#)

Glassdoor also reported in 2014 that the diversity of an organisation is one of the five key factors that attract / deter people from applying. Promoting diversity in all communications will attract more interest from skilled people.

MIXED GENDER REVIEW AND INTERVIEW PANELS

The starting point for women being represented more equally in coaching is for sports organisations to aim for gender equality in their senior management team and boards. These are the key decision-makers in the sport and should be role models for the rest of the organisation. Greater representation by women at decision-making level should allow for greater representation throughout the workforce, including coaching.

Ensuring more women are present on review and interview panels will make an already tense situation less intimidating for female applicants, and the diversity will bring a different viewpoint to the decision-making process.

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

It is crucial for decision-makers to recognise the possible impact of “unconscious bias”, which affects us all in recruiting new staff. People tend to recruit people who look and think like them. Awareness and positive action to limit unconscious bias in recruitment is therefore important in ensuring access to roles for women. A diverse interview panel can also help limit issues of unconscious bias.

For more detail on unconscious bias please see the useful infographic [here](#).

“Ultimately the reason for a lack of women having the top jobs is because the people hiring for these jobs tend to hire in their own image – hence a lack of diversity in the men’s and women’s game. The aim is to ensure the same opportunities are present for both men and women in both the men’s and women’s game, but it seems to be one rule for one and not the other. Should every coach in the men’s game be a man? No. Should every coach in the women’s game be a woman? No. Both sides of the game should be open to the best coach. That, at the moment, is not the case.”

Farenet.org Report on FIFA Women’s World Cup (2019)

MONITORING APPLICATIONS

Irrespective of the level of coach you are recruiting, make sure you record details of all applications submitted, including monitoring data relating to the person applying for the job. This will help you understand what interest you are receiving from different demographic groups, and therefore what you can do to support applications from under-represented groups.

The monitoring data you collect following a recruitment drive should feed into your overall coaching workforce data.

Please note, only collect data on your coaching workforce that is going to be used to inform or change your recruitment process.

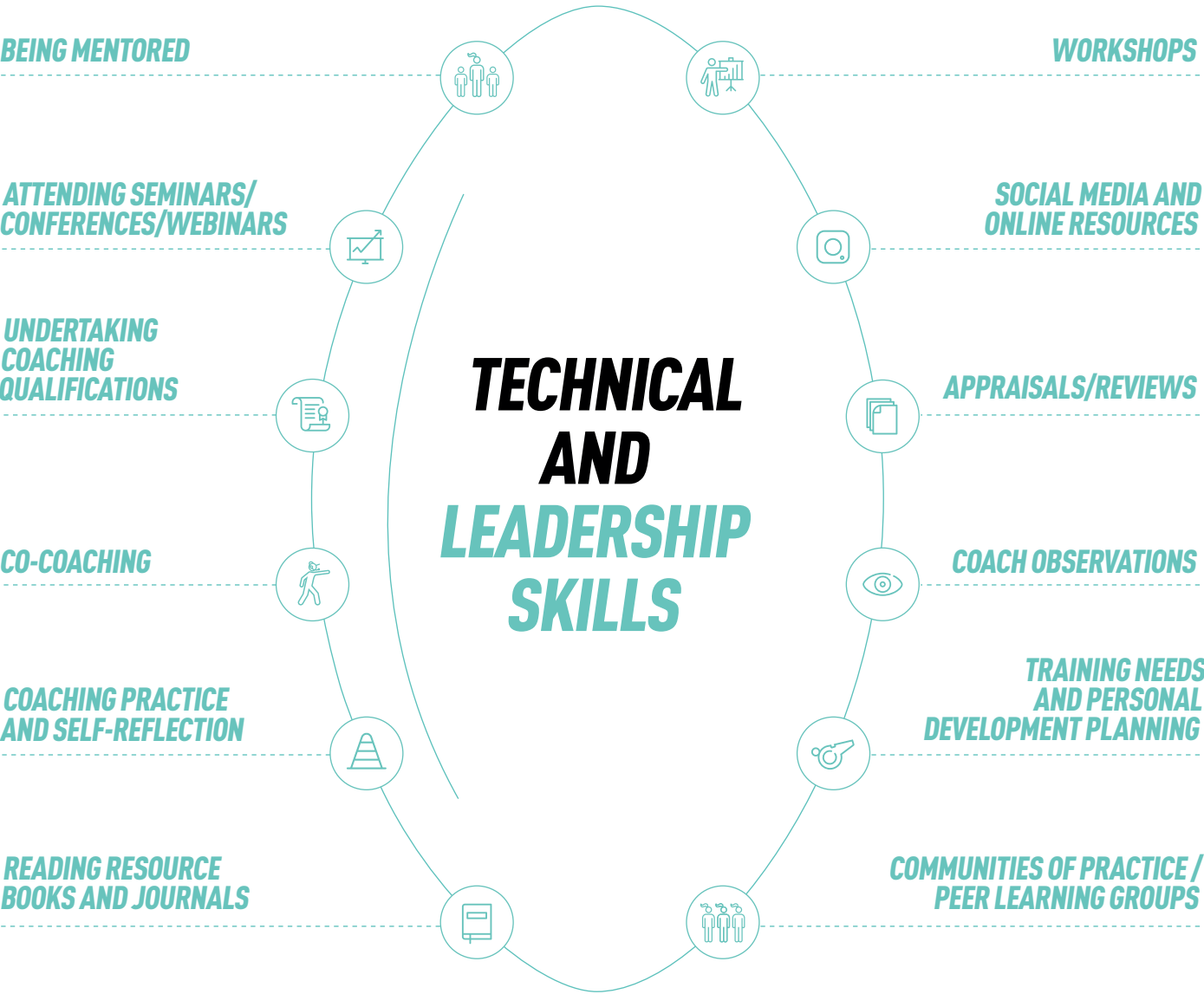


DEVELOPMENT



DEVELOPING WOMEN RUGBY COACHES

HOW CAN COACHES DEVELOP THEIR TECHNICAL AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS?
There are many ways a coach can develop their skills, for example:



How a coach learns depends very much on their own personal approach to learning. Women face barriers both to becoming a coach but also when developing as a coach. By considering different learning styles and thinking carefully about your coach education, development programmes and resources, you will likely create an improved set of education tools not only to meet the needs of female coaches but for all coaches and your wider workforce.



HOW CAN YOUR UNION OVERCOME THE BARRIERS AND SUPPORT WOMEN TO DEVELOP INTO GREAT RUGBY COACHES?

There are three key elements to ensuring your women rugby coaches are supported appropriately:



PROVIDING AND PROMOTING SUPPORT NETWORKS



PROVIDING ACCESSIBLE AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES



ENSURING THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE VALUES WOMEN IN THE COACHING WORKFORCE



PROVIDING AND PROMOTING SUPPORT NETWORKS

Women value having access to support; this can either be one to one or in a group environment. One way to develop women directly is by providing mentors.

MENTORING

Mentoring is widely acknowledged as an increasingly more powerful and important aspect of developing people in sport, including leaders, officials and coaches.

There are a variety of definitions about what mentoring is. Across all the different definitions, mentoring is characterised by an intense ‘caring’ and ‘guiding’ quality. A key principle of mentoring coaches is that the coach remains at the centre of their own development and the mentor supports as required. A mentor doesn’t claim to have all the answers, but seeks to work with the coach to help them find the answers themselves.

As we have detailed earlier, key issues for many women include confidence, gaining experience in the field (especially at a high performance level), and access to informal and political/power networks. Having a mentor who can help check, challenge, advise and support a female coach can be a really powerful tool in addressing the issues and often opening doors to people and opportunities.

Setting up an effective mentoring programme within your organisation can be costly and is labour intensive, so you may need to prioritise how you use such resources.

CONSIDER TARGETING:

- Those who are just starting their coaching journey – prior to any course starting, appoint a mentor to work with a small group of interested women (see [recruitment section](#)), doing some pre-course work and mentoring the whole group, before, during and after the actual course. This is cost effective and has the added benefit of starting to develop a peer mentoring group which can transition into a wider network for the female coaches
- Coaches with potential to progress to the next level or who are aiming to coach at a HP level, who will benefit enormously from having a mentor for a period of time.

You would not have a mentor for every coach all the time – but select when it is suitable. The benefits of providing someone who can build a professional relationship with your coach and be able to recognise what individual support they may need are invaluable.

Further information on mentoring can be found in the Case Studies section [here](#).

ACCESS TO ONLINE COACHING GROUPS / NETWORKS

Less resource intensive for your organisation is being aware of local, national and international coaching networks available to female coaches and raising awareness of them to your coaches. Social media is a very powerful resource for women. For examples of several networks which can support female coaches see the Case Study section [here](#).

World Rugby has recently developed a **Global High Performance Women’s Rugby Coaches Database** for women who are coaching, or have the potential to coach, at a HP level. The database will be used to track the coaches and their progress, develop the female coaching network, provide support and information on relevant topics, communicate regularly on coaching news, programmes and initiatives, and ensure they receive information on any coaching roles.

Could you look at developing a similar network in your union – and/or link your coaches with both female and mixed coaching networks in your country (not necessarily just in rugby)?

CONFERENCES AND FORUMS

Face to face networking events are important. Though technology increasingly saves us time, social gatherings foster quality relationships and meaningful exchanges. Building relationships and a sense of belonging are both important values to women. Providing access to an event where women can meet other women who they have something in common with can help develop their self-confidence and build networks of ongoing support.

As we increasingly recognise the importance of diversity in a coaching workforce, it is also important to recognise that female coaches should not just engage with other female rugby coaches in an exclusive network. Female coaches want to learn from other coaches (of both genders), in other sports and other countries.



PROVIDING AND PROMOTING SUPPORT NETWORKS

DIRECT CONTACT WITH COACHES TO FEEDBACK ON THEIR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Having direct contact in place between your union and your coaches will help you identify more readily what development your workforce needs. It will also help you identify which of your coaches are still actively coaching, which will help your ongoing workforce monitoring. Keep in touch through regular emails and newsletters to update the coach on developments within your organisation and opportunities available to them. Conducting surveys can provide direct feedback, supplying you with insight into what your coaching workforce needs to develop them and retain them within your sport.

By showing you value your coaches, you are fostering a sense of belonging and support which is vital to your female coaches.

“One participant [coach] believed her governing body has hindered the progress of coaches in climbing the coaching ladder through failing to embrace alternative coaching philosophies and other measures of effectiveness... “One of the biggest [barriers] is the organisation you are working for... They see your performance as a coach in terms of scores on the board, whether you have won or lost. So you are a good coach if you have won and a bad coach if you have lost. I can’t remember anytime anyone has come to quality assure my coaching. I can’t remember anytime when anyone has sat on the side and done an evaluation of my coaching. That for me, is a fundamental flaw in the system... I am not convinced I have seen enough of what that continued professional development is going to look like. At the moment I think it is left to chance and I don’t think the structures to quality assure and evaluate coach effectiveness are good enough.” (Participant 4)

Norman, L., (2008)



PROVIDING ACCESSIBLE AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES THAT ALLOW PERSONAL GROWTH, NOT JUST FOCUSING ON TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL SKILLS

Coaching is wider than just knowing, and being confident in, the technical and tactical aspects of rugby. A coach engages regularly with people and is often seen as a leader requiring exceptional leadership skills and qualities. As such they need to be confident in their own interpersonal and relationship-building skills.

Look at providing learning opportunities, particularly for female coaches, which:

- Develop self-confidence
- Build networks
- Develop self-reflection skills
- Promote the coach’s wellbeing (physical and mental/emotional).

However, achieving ‘traditional’ coaching qualifications and accessing training is important for female coaches for a number of reasons:

- They have a sense of achievement which develops their self-confidence.
- It helps them build essential skills that can lead to leadership and/or employment opportunities.
- It provides evidence that they are qualified and safe to coach.
- They can then evidence their coaching achievements to other coaches and athletes. Many female coaches feel they need to be able to prove their level of coaching to gain the respect of their peers and participants.

Whilst we must respect the importance a woman places on attaining qualifications and attending training courses as a way of developing their own self-confidence, it is the work of the union or club to not tolerate a culture of sexism which often exists within coaching, whereby a female coach is not valued as highly as a male coach. A female coach should not have to prove herself to be respected by others.

COACH PLACEMENTS, INTERNSHIPS AND CO-COACHING

By linking together women coaches with other coaches in your workforce, you can provide hands-on experience of what coaching entails at any level. Co-coaching can provide a great opportunity for new female coaches to find out what coaching entails and see if it is for them without committing right from the start. Providing a first step into coaching is useful in allowing women to build up their confidence slowly and recognise that they do have the necessary skills.

Likewise, placements or internships at the higher level will not only build knowledge and experience in the female coach, but it will also expose them to the often closed networks of high performance and elite coaches, whilst building the credibility of female coaches among other coaches, management and players. This exposure and experience will prove invaluable in building a woman’s confidence, to push them to apply for higher-level coaching jobs when they arise. For an example of an Internship Programme see the Commonwealth Games Case Study [here](#).

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Spending time with coaches individually is important to identify what development they need. Developing a training needs analysis (TNA) and personal development plan (PDP) with them will help them feel valued and supported, as well as providing a log of what development opportunities are needed and being accessed.

Although the TNA and PDP will be completed by individual coaches, it can also be done in groups, with either a leader facilitating the group or peer-to-peer support. Whoever supports the coach, it is not about telling them what to do, but guiding them to self-discover and develop their own plan.





PROVIDING ACCESSIBLE AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

MODULARISE LEARNING IN DIFFERENT FORMATS

Traditionally coach education training programmes take place in blocks. These training events often take coaches away from their homes and families overnight, sometimes for many days.

Female coaches may view this time away from their home lives as a barrier to developing their coaching skills. Women still remain, on the whole, primary carers for their children and other family members so time away creates logistical problems which can not only make it difficult for women to attend the event, but can also create stress which could affect their ability to concentrate on their learning and achieve their potential.

These learning events could be modularised and delivered a day at a time over a longer period, with elements of learning delivered online. As technology develops, the number of different formats in which learning can be delivered is growing all the time. Individual learners are able to identify the ways in which they best learn, and can access learning.

Face to face contact is still important to female coaches but modules can be delivered online which compliment a specific learning programme by remaining both responsive and personalised. Webinars and online forums can still provide interaction while reducing the need for travel and going to the expense of booking costly venues.

THE TUTOR/TRAINER WORKFORCE

As with coaching, tutor and training workforces are predominantly male. Developing, deploying and promoting female tutors or trainers at learning events could help encourage female attendance.

A mixed gender team of deliverers at a learning event will provide diversity in how the content is being delivered, which will create a more effective learning environment for all coaches. See USA Rugby example – in Case Studies [here](#).

PRE-COURSE/ EVENT INFORMATION

A further barrier for women accessing learning events is not knowing what to expect. By providing information about the programme, you are more likely to welcome more female coaches at the event. This information can be made available on the website, but think also about sending out personalised information inviting them to attend, and supply the following:

- Date, time and location of the event
- The schedule of events including a breakdown of classroom-based learning, practical exercises and assessments taking place
- What the learning outcomes will be
- Information about when the ‘downtime’ and on-course breaks are
- Who is leading each session (with contact details if possible)
- What clothing and equipment is needed
- Details of accommodation (if relevant)
- Who else is expected to attend the event
- Who to contact about logistical information.



ENSURING THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE VALUES WOMEN IN THE COACHING WORKFORCE

As discussed in other parts of this toolkit, the approach your union takes towards promoting the value of female coaches and proactively welcoming female coaches to develop is of paramount importance.

PRO-ACTIVE IN THE SUPPORT YOU PROVIDE

Keep in touch regularly with your female coaches and be interested in their development. Ensure there is a workforce available to support them and provide access to networking opportunities both inside and outside sport. Advocate the importance of attending these events. A lack of self-confidence and need for a ‘nudge’ to attend these events can easily be overcome by personal support from your organisation.

A central online network of your female coaches, mixed with face to face events, will ensure that a two-way line of communication continues and you have a better understanding of the development needs of your coaches and they feel supported and part of the sport.

ALLOW TIME TO COACH AND REFLECT

Coaches, especially at the high performance level, may not get time to focus and reflect on their own coaching as they are managing other coaches, writing coaching programmes and juggling home life at the same time.

Providing support to cover administration tasks, for example, would free up time to allow the coach to coach and reflect on their practice. Once they have had time to reflect, they will be in a better position to recognise their own development needs.

Your organisation should recognise and value the importance of coaching and reflection time, and advocate the need for it by the coach.

Some female coaches have reported that having gained a high performance role, they are then expected to do everything and are provided with far fewer resources than men’s squads. So make sure you do not set up your female coaches to fail; ensure there is clarity around their role and responsibilities and seek to provide the support they need.

PROVIDE INFORMATION RELATING TO OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE UNION OR WIDER COACHING OPPORTUNITIES

Coaches should be a valued part of the wider organisation. You should be keen to support their development. Female coaches do struggle with juggling coaching, work and family life, to an extent that being a coach is no longer tenable for them.

Provide information to your coaches about job vacancies that come up within your organisation and, if applicable, support their application.

POSITIVE IMAGERY IN DEVELOPMENT MATERIALS

Women need to see that they are valued in the organisation for whom they coach. To that end, images of women, alongside men, playing and coaching rugby should be used in all your publications, and promotional and educational resources. Female role models within your union should be promoted and celebrated.

If you used more images of women than men, would men stop wanting to be coaches? The answer is very likely no, but it could have a significant impact on how women perceive coaching (and your union) and would encourage them to get involved.

RETENTION



RETAINING WOMEN RUGBY COACHES

Keeping women coaches in rugby is built around providing opportunities that engage and excite them in an environment that values them, recognises their contribution and supports them to develop.

Many of the things that help women develop as coaches will also be the things that retain them in coaching – so a number of the principles below will have already been outlined in more detail in the [Development section](#).

[There are] “...detrimental mental and physical health outcomes and career implications that female coaches often endure and experience as a result of their minority status in the workplace. These outcomes include, for example, alienation, feeling highly visible and subjected to scrutiny, having to over-perform to gain credibility, feeling pressure to conform to organisational norms, and enduring increased risk for gender discrimination in the forms of sexual harassment, wage inequities, and limited opportunities for promotion.”

cited in LaVoi & Dutove, Barriers and Supports for Female Coaches (2012)

SUPPORT AND CONNECTION

PROVIDING AND PROMOTING SUPPORT NETWORKS

As detailed in the Development section, providing coaches with a mentor, helping them develop a small group of peer mentors, and linking them to wider networks of coaches, both male and female, gives them access to support when they need it. This will help women rugby coaches be resilient and assist when they may need advice, support and encouragement to stay in the game.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF LIFE TRANSITIONS ON WOMEN RUGBY COACHES

The life transitions that women go through take many forms and can have an impact on their coaching. Think of those life-changing moments and how women could be supported to stay in coaching or to take a break and return with confidence. Many of these life transitions affect men as well (although women still carry out the majority of the caring duties) so systemically considering these life events within your union will help both women and men to stay involved in rugby.

A woman rugby coach may come across one or more life transitions during her rugby coaching career. Each union/club will have its own policies as to how significant life transitions are supported. This hopefully will ensure the coach can take time off and return to her post when it is appropriate to do so. Specific policies will be needed to ensure women can return to coaching following pregnancy and maternity leave.

At the outset, managing transition means identifying what short-term support can be given or offered. This may be all that is needed, or it may be the first step to a more long-term situation. If the non-coaching gap is in months rather than weeks, the coach should continue to be included as part of the club, academy, management team etc without feeling pressured. If you are aware the coach is to take a long-term break, discuss with them the best way to keep them involved and in touch. Reassurance is important; the coach should not feel guilty about putting themselves or others before their rugby in these situations.

SUPPORT AND CONNECTION

RETAINING PLAYERS INTO RUGBY COACHING

Where you are targeting players coming to the end of their careers, to be future coaches, you may need to consider that some may need some time away from a big commitment, especially if they have been playing at an elite level. Ensure you speak to them before they finish and develop a personal plan for their re-integration into rugby as a coach. Maintain contact so you can have a clear, agreed pathway into coaching, which may involve a support role first with less commitment.

Many potential female coaches have been lost to rugby over the years because of a failure to follow up with ex-players and encourage those with the motivation and appropriate skills for coaching back into the game. This is also applicable to other workforce roles within rugby such as refereeing, support services (e.g. strength and conditioning, medical), management and administration.

SENSE OF BELONGING

Keep in touch with your women rugby coaches and keep them involved in coaching surveys, local and national networks and ask for feedback on how you, as an organisation, are doing in supporting coaches. Coaches feel valued when they belong to a group and their position is recognised.

RAISE THE PROFILE OF WOMEN RUGBY COACHES – CREATE ROLE MODELS

A role model can be described as a person who serves as an example of the values, attitudes and behaviours associated with a role.

In sport and coaching, women tend to identify most with “someone like me.” It is vital that you not only celebrate and promote your high performance female players and coaches, but also the women who coach rugby at a community level.

Being acknowledged by your sport and promoted as a role model is very powerful. A role model is likely to stay in coaching if they feel their coaching is valued. *See an example from RFU [here](#).*

Coaches are accessible role models to sports participants. They motivate people to play sport, be active and keep coming back. So it is also important that you support and promote your coaches if you want to retain your players.

Remember:

- Boys are predominantly coached by men: that will shape their perceptions of a women’s role in sport from an early age.
- Girls need to have a coach that can empathise with them and support them to stay active throughout puberty – a time when sporting activity levels drop off dramatically.

For more information on developing Role Models see the [Recruitment section](#).

MEN AS COACHING ADVOCATES

As we have discussed, men make up the majority of the coaching workforce. They therefore have an important role in advocating for more women rugby coaches and to support women coaches. For example, these could be:

- Participants they coach
- Mothers of children they coach
- Women within their social circle
- Women coaches in their clubs or organisation.

Advocates can also be male role models in sport and coaching and can use their media status to promote the value of coaching to women and the value of women in coaching.

Recognising the unequal distribution of power around the world, in 2014 the UN launched the [HeforShe campaign](#).

The Tucker Centre’s “She Can Coach” Campaign has a number of resources and approaches which can help support your interventions. (See Case Study [here](#))

They produced a [useful infographic](#) on how men can support women into coaching.



PUBLIC RECOGNITION AND AWARDS

Recognising the work the coach does is important; it can be what motivates them to continue. Recognition can take many different forms, it doesn’t have to be complicated or costly. The simplest is to say thank you; this can be linked to events and/or via social media.

Presentation of certificates for training or qualifications can be made at local community events, with articles on websites, social media or in newspapers.

Receiving nominations and awards for coaching is a very exciting way for female coaches to be recognised by your sport, your industry or other women.

Consider having a dedicated annual award for a woman rugby coach who has achieved great results. There are two points of view here. Firstly, having a women-only award raises the profile of women in general and creates those positive role models we want and need. On the other hand, this may appear to marginalise or treat female coaches as ‘special cases’ (why shouldn’t they win a coach of the year award?)

Both points of view have merit and it depends largely on where women are within your union. Often, sports bodies will start with separate men’s and women’s coaching awards. Then, over time and as more nominations appear, this can be merged into a single award. See the example [here](#) from New Zealand Rugby, which though related to a player, rather than a coach, demonstrates the impact that can be made.

In both cases being nominated, regardless of winning, can build self-esteem for the coach and start to create those positive role models that coaching needs. The publicity it can produce can be priceless and can help raise the profile of women coaches.

Build in sufficient time and resources to:

- Investigate the various awards that can be linked to coaching
- Decide how coaches should be nominated and by who
- Generate publicity around the nomination
- Proactively support the nomination of female coaches
- Monitor the number of nominations you receive and the winners from each category.

This will help to identify how the profile of female coaches in your sport is increasing.

POLICIES AND PROCESSES

The occupational wellbeing of your coaches is of paramount importance. Not only because it relates to the good health and wellbeing of your coach but it also impacts on the retention of your workforce. The policies you put in place show that you respect your coaching workforce and want to protect them.

Policies and employment laws will differ from country to country but the focus of this section is recognising the importance of valuing your workforce and highlighting your organisation as one that promotes that value. Are you an organisation that both men and women want to coach for?

SUPPORT AND CONNECTION

HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF YOUR WORKFORCE

What is the expectation of your coaches? Are you ensuring they are not working 24/7, and 365 days a year? Most of your volunteer coaches will have another job on top of their rugby commitments. Whilst the expectation of coaches and the environment at a high performance level can be relentless, it is often unhealthy and maybe not always conducive to delivering high performance.

What duty of care do you have for your coaches and the rest of your workforce and how are you proactively managing and monitoring this? Women, and possibly many men, are put off from applying for roles at the top level because of sometimes unrealistic expectations around availability, the amount of time away from home and the poor work-life balance.

Most organisations are now looking at the whole issue of duty of care and the wellbeing and health of their workforce. Rugby needs to get ahead of the game on this issue, which can affect all staff and players. One of the issues identified for those women who are appointed to HP roles is the risk of burn-out. This is probably true of male coaches also. It is important to address such culture in the medium to long term.

Coaches must also be protected and supported in their role, irrespective of the level at which they coach. Does your organisation have an anti-bullying/harassment policy in place to protect coaches from both players, parents, and other coaches?

For paid coaches, do you provide (where applicable in your country):

- Pension schemes
- Maternity/paternity/adoption leave policy
- Fixed term employment contracts
- Health benefits.



FLEXIBLE WORKING
What provision do you make for flexible working?



CO-COACHING / TEAM COACHING
Do you support and promote co-coaching or team coaching to share the commitment needed from all your coaches?



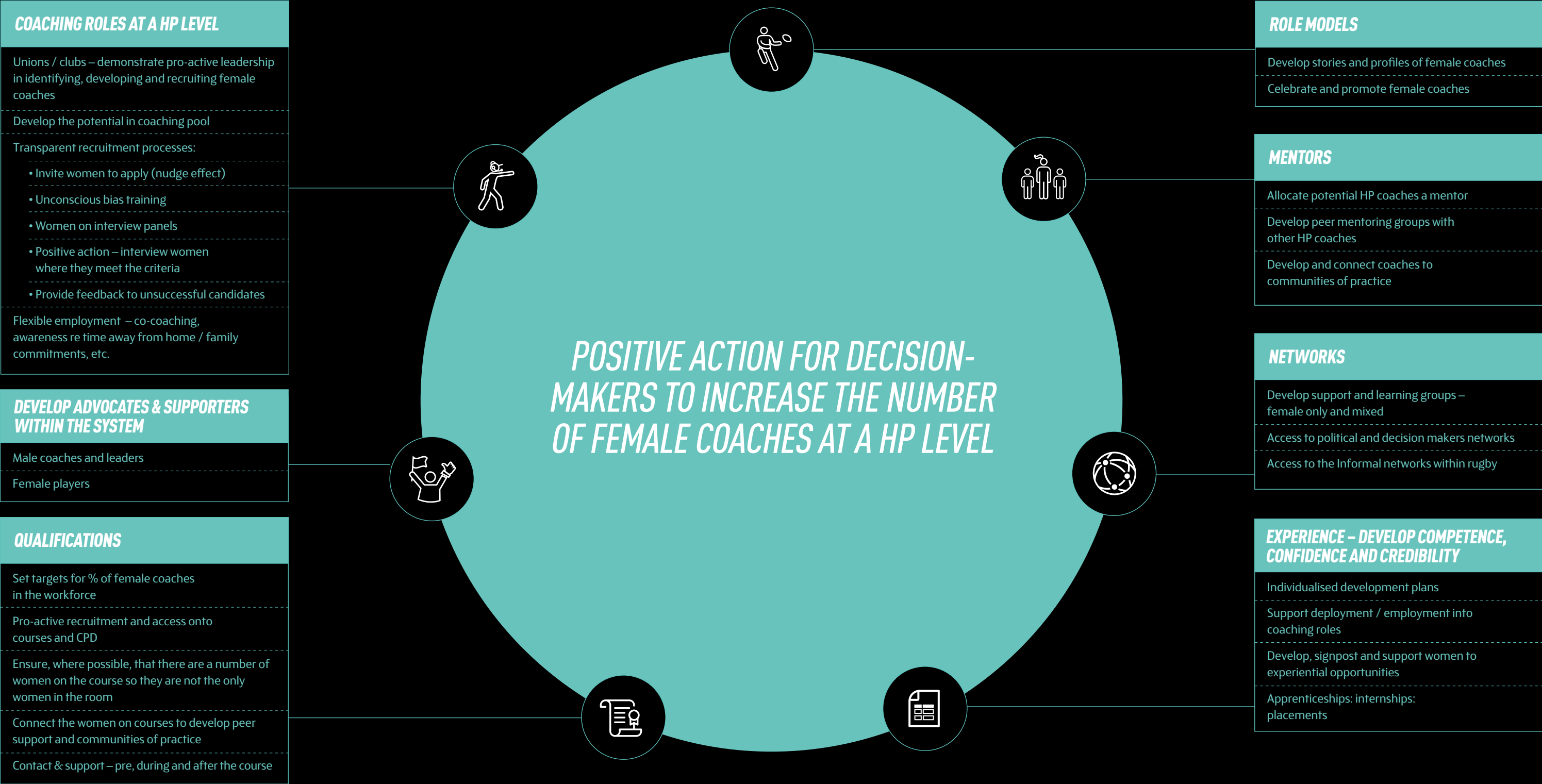
FAMILY VISITS
Do you allow family visits while your coaches are on tour?

“Build a support network, it doesn’t have to be a lonely place.”

Giselle Mathar, Head Coach, Wasps Ladies and Barbarians
(Speaking at Women’s Sports leadership Academy High Performance Coaches, November 2019)



WOMEN INTO HIGH PERFORMANCE COACHING





CASE STUDIES & INFORMATION

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CASE STUDY

RFU – THE FEMALE COACH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The RFU have established a specific action plan within their wider coaching programme to support female coaches in progressing along the coaching pathway and to provide an ongoing supply of high performing female coaches.

The programme is a three-tiered approach which involves:

- Recruiting six female coaches per year into the RFU level 4 coaching award
- Recruiting twelve female coaches per year into the RFU level 3 coaching award
- Recruiting 100 women per year (the 100 club) into formal education programmes to complete the England Rugby Coaching award (Level Two).

For the 100 Club, the RFU ensures courses have 50% female tutors and a minimum number of women on the course.

All coaches at RFU levels 3 and 4 have a clear education, development and deployment plan suited to their capabilities and potential.

This is a joint project led by RFU Coaching Department and Women’s High-Performance Team.

TARGETING HIGH PERFORMANCE PLAYERS

The RFU approach was to develop more female HP coaches by identifying current international and Tyrrells Premier XVs players, who were nearing the end of their playing careers.

They used U18s Centres of Excellence as well as club teams to deploy coaches in order to gain further coaching experience.

The pre-requisite for coaches was that they had to already have a L2 qualification.

For those not meeting this criteria the RFU provided specific L2 courses as well as linking them to pro-courses within men’s game.

THE PROJECT

Dec/Jan: Identify candidates

Mar: Invite applications. In order to ensure women got access they opened a priority booking window for females.

Mar: Pre course preparation and confidence building for female coaches – allocated mentors with minimum of 5 visits / contacts with the coach prior to course. Including E-learning.

Over relevant time period: L3 course

Post course: all continue with a mentor. Individual development plan. Deployment at a club; Centre of Excellence or with County.

The Impact
Level 3

- 2017/18: 1 female achieved L3
- 2018/19: 11 females achieving L3
- 2019/20: 20 women currently on L3 course

Level 4
2018/19 had 6 female coaches whilst currently there are 5 women in the 2019/20 cohort.

FEMALE EDUCATORS

Alongside this the RFU have been proactively recruiting female educators into their rugby education workforce – over the last 18 months the policy has been to recruit only female educators wherever possible. The initial goal is to reach a workforce balance that enables there to be at least one female educator on every course delivered, so it becomes the norm rather than the exception.

Although they aren’t there yet, they are changing attitudes. More educators will be transitioned into trainers as they gain experience in the role.

DEVELOPING THE PIPELINE

Level 2
Number of female candidates has grown:

- 2017/18: 91 women
- 2018/19: 284 women

Though this is also due to other factors as well as the specific RFU initiatives:

- Growth in womens game
- Coaching Role models in rugby
- Events – currently getting 50/50 split of men and women players and coaches at rugby events – raising visibility of women in rugby. Also social media impact from women is strong.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The RFU are working pro-actively and collaboratively with other organisations to support female coaches. For example – UK Coaching and their Women into High Performance Coaching Programme <https://www.ukcoaching.org/events/programmes>

RED ROSES COACH APPRENTICESHIP PILOT:

Rationale

- International player heading towards retirement – transition them before they finish
- Targeted coach – already a Community Rugby Coach and so experienced in coaching
- Plus coach is already full time with RFU – so can fit this work into their work programme.

Description:

- Develop the coach and their experience by exposing to different HP environments, All experiential learning. Examples: West Brom Football Academy; Birmingham City; GB Boxing; Rugby League; Cricket
- Undertaking L4 qualification
- Also using apprentice coach as a role model to raise visibility of females in coaching and leadership positions: Delivering at conferences – e.g. UK Coaching and RFU events.

Impact

- Coaching roles :
 - Developing player programme with Newcastle Falcons men
 - Coaching role with a Tyrrells Premiership side as well as playing.
- Still looking at longer term impact and key lessons e.g. how can RFU replicate with other players / coaches.



CASE STUDY

USA RUGBY

USA RUGBY: TRAINING AND EDUCATION TARGETS

- The Training and Education staff at USA Rugby have specific training quota targets set to align female coaching numbers to the percentage of women playing at a geographical level.
- Intentionality and culture – way we do things round here...
- They have developed a range of support programmes, including women only coaching courses to drive an increase in the number of female coaches.
- Tried to ensure that the courses had a female educator involved.
- Identified first female trainer (referees) in north America which provided a women’s voice/ viewpoint at decision making levels.
- Promotion showed images of women leaders.
- Womens national teams receive coach and referee training – aiming to get them on pathways early.

THE IMPACT

- NIRA (collegiate initiative) 13 out of 19 head coaches are women.

Referee/Coaching/Medical/S&C courses for 2019:

- 82 appearances by female educators which is 33% representation. The attendance of female participants has risen on some courses to 28%.
- 28 of 62 participants in the Immediate Care in Rugby (pitchside medical) were women.

USA RUGBY HIGH PERFORMANCE LEVEL

PROJECT SOAR

At a high-performance level there is a programme for both men and women coaches called Project Soar. Coaches on this programme have access to a digital curriculum, a series of webinars, summits and shadowing opportunities. Coaches on Project Soar are deployed where possible to national age group positions.

LONG TERM COACH DEVELOPMENT

The programme is aligned to a long-term coach development programme which has set criteria for entry and specific delivery at each level from foundation through talent, performance to elite & master.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

The USA has deliberate succession planning underway to appoint women into high performance coach positions wherever possible.

THE IMPACT

Project Soar 2019 Review

In 2019, USA Women’s HP conducted 3 strands of programming to support the development of women coaching in High Performance. Below are the 3 strands, with highlights.

- Shadowing
 - Shadowing program ran across all age groups including U18, Collegiate All American and Senior.
 - Ran a Super Series Specific shadowing program when coaches came in for 3 day period, observed a match, observed WNT staff match debrief process, team review and training sessions leading into following match.
 - Ran a shadowing program with the W7s program where coaches were able to immerse for a week with W7s with an all access pass to the staff and training environment.
- Webinars
 - Ran two strands of webinars throughout the spring of 2019 – 7s & 15s strand. Both strands included webinars from Head Coaches and physical performance staff.



- Deployment
 - Women in coaching Age Grade positions
 - U18 – Michaela Staniford, Martha Daines, Josie Ziluca, Sue Whitwell, Kate Zackary
 - U20 – Sylvia Braaten, Emily Record
 - CAA – Katie Dowty, Tiffany Fa’ae, Stacey Bridges
 - D1/D2 – Koma Gandy Fischbein
 - Women in coaching positions – Senior Programs
 - W7s – Emilie Bydwell (PAN AM Games Head Coach)
 - W15s – Jamie Burke, Jenny Lui, Kate Daley
 - Senior Support Coaches – Mel Denham, Ros Chou, Kelly Griffin

OTHER 2019 HIGHLIGHTS

- 4 staff members had the opportunity to attend the World Rugby Academy – Coaching + S&C (Michaela, Jamie, Kate and Sylvia).
- Sylvia Braaten promoted to being the Lead S&C for WNT 15s for 2020.

- 2 staff members participated in December MLR.World Rugby Development Conference (Kate and Sylvia).

2020 GOALS FOR USA WOMEN IN HP COACHING INITIATIVE

- Select key prospects for succession planning and provide increased support, mentorship and opportunity
- Select 1–2 women to develop more specifically for 7s program
- Ensure that all W7s players have opportunity to receive L200 & 300 certification
- Build out bespoke W7s coach development program and choose 1–2 pilot athletes
- Better leverage USOPC coach development opportunities to accelerate the development of high potential women.

CASE STUDY

RUGBY EUROPE

SYLKE HAVERKORN

PRO-ACTIVE SUPPORT TO FEMALE COACH

- For Rugby Europe one of the “successful stories” is about the Dutch Coach Sylke Haverkorn.
- Sylke was an international player with the Netherland XV Team.
- She followed the World Rugby Coaching pathway and completed Level 1 and Level 2 Coaching course.
- In 2018 she finished World Rugby Level 3 Course in Marcoussis (France).
- In 2019, Turkey asked Rugby Europe to recommend a female coach to develop their womens national 7s team.
- Rugby Europe proposed Sylke and after 2 preparation camps she became the Head Coach of Turkey’s Womens 7s Team in Rugby Europe Trophy (second division of Rugby Europe).
- The team performed very well and the girls from the team really loved working with her.
- Sylke also achieved the World Rugby level 1 in Sevens coaching qualification.

SYLKE’S PERSPECTIVE

- Sylke has recently been appointed as head coach for women’s rugby in Holland – for both Sevens and XVs rugby.
- She has been coaching at the highest level of men’s rugby for the last two years taking her team to successfully win the Country Championship.
- She credits her success to the support of Rugby Europe in putting her forward for qualifications in the role with Turkey. She also cites the mentorship support she received from Andy Egonu.
- But also she recognises that she also demonstrated her own resilience and determination in challenging herself through gaining qualifications and taking roles where she was the only woman.
- She says “don’t be afraid to ask men for support – that is how I got Andy as a mentor, don’t let anything hold you back” and believes that as more women get into the top level coaching roles then these role models will allow women and girls to aspire to coaching at higher levels of the game – both male and female.

“Confidence is your most powerful weapon. Once you’re confident in your own abilities, nothing can stop you.”

“Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you.”

“Choose People Who Lift You Up. Find People Who Will Make You Better.”

Sylke Haverkorn, Dutch National coach



“Sylke’s strength as a coach is her ability to motivate and challenge the team to work hard. Her positivity gets us to always try harder.” – Majella, RUS1

“To me, Sylke is the ideal coach because she is a coach with a broad vision who also sees the individual. That way, our players as well as our teams get better.” – Sara, RUS2

“Sylke’s organisation and coaching skills is there to function a high performance environment. Her willingness to engage and deliver a structured plan is of the highest quality. Always looking to be a better coach.” – Andy Egonu, headcoach DIOK

“Never in my career has a coach made me feel so comfortable and in that position, allowed me to perform to the highest degree. Innovative, academic and extremely motivated. Sylke pursues everything to the highest standard meanwhile fostering a close team environment and bond.” – Ross Bennie Coulson, captain DIOK, national team player

HONG KONG RUGBY UNION WOMEN ONLY LEVEL 2 COURSE

OVERVIEW

A long term strategic objective for the HKRU is to develop more female coaches and in turn see them coaching within the community.

They are working to introduce quotas and increase the number of Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 coaching and Strength & Conditioning coaches. They are also looking at developing female specialist positional coaches such as a kicking coach and Tight 5 specialist coach.

BACKGROUND

Usually they would hold approximately three to four Level 2 coaching courses in a year (English language and Cantonese language course) In the past 5 years:

- The number of women attending the courses was around 5 per year
 - Total 25 female coaches over 5 years
- The number of men attending the courses was around 40 per year
 - Total of 200 male coaches over 5 years.

This meant that in 5 years we had qualified a total of 12% female coaches and 88% male coaches.

RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

The Women's Development Manager consulted with the coach education team as to why they had produced such a small level of female coaches, despite running courses for 5 years. Several meetings were held to brainstorm ideas about why there were such a low number of sign ups.

They came up with several reasons, however a key reason was that perhaps women were not comfortable/ confident to register for a course where they felt they were in the minority.

They decided to hold the first ever female only Level 2 course and ran a female-only bilingual Level 2 course on the 9th, 10th and 11th August 2019. They allocated 6 coach educators to run the course, of which 4 of the educators were women. Promotion of the course was done through their traditional course promotion methods of emailing clubs and schools as well as utilizing social media platforms.

THE IMPACT

They did not know what to expect in terms of registration numbers, however, were overwhelmed with the response of sign ups. **A total of 30 women registered for the course**, which was the maximum number. This is the first time they had reached full capacity of any of the previous Level 2 courses they had run.

They have effectively more than doubled the amount of qualified female level 2 coaches that they have had in the past 5 years. The course was reviewed with the coach education team and through surveys from all the course participants and overall feel they have had tremendous success.

This has now kick-started the concept of offering the option of female only courses across future programs.

TUCKER CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON GIRLS & WOMEN IN SPORT

The first of its kind in the world, [the Tucker Centre](#) is an interdisciplinary research centre leading a pioneering effort to examine how sport and physical activity affects the lives of girls and women, their communities and families.

They have developed a whole range of data, insight and resources which can help rugby in identifying its own interventions to increase the number of women coaching.

SETTING TARGETS AND TRACKING PROGRESS SCORECARD...

The Tucker Centre track progress on women in the NCAA (College Sport) in the USA through a regular Scorecard. See [here](#) for the detailed report.

- They are now working with the institutions to set a goal: to increase the number of head coaches for female sports from 42.1% in 2019 to 50% by 2024.

HOW THE SCORECARD IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

“The ...data in this report can be used by institutes, athletics administrators, conference commissioners, and sports coaching associations to advocate for women coaches, track progress or decline in comparison to peer institutions, evaluate the effectiveness of strategies aimed at increasing the percentage of women coaches, and hold institutions and decision makers accountable in creating a gender-balanced workforce – especially for women’s teams...

...It can also be used to start and continue discussions and educate and motivate decision makers to think differently about how they recruit, hire and retain women coaches.... This helps shift focus to decision makers and organizational change, and away from continual blaming of women for the lack of female coaches (e.g. women don’t apply, women lack experience, women aren’t interested in coaching, women ‘opt out’) which have dominated women in coaching narratives.”

See p11 of the Tucker Centre report.

TEN WAYS TO CREATE A DEPARTMENTAL CULTURE OF VALUING WOMEN

Women into Coaching Checklist (Adapted from LaVoi, N.M., & Wasend, M.K., 2018)

1. Resist blaming women for the lack of women coaches. Instead, challenge existing narratives and shift blaming narratives with evidence-based narratives.
2. Make explicit your belief that diversity can achieve better outcomes.
3. Be unapologetic in stating that women should have real choice and opportunity to coach men & women.
4. Make explicit the importance of female athletes having female role models.
5. “Our coaches should reflect the composition of our participants.”
6. Do not accept a homogenous candidate pool.
7. Make the expectation clear: If the head coach is male, he should strive to have female role models on staff.
8. Go with the female when male and female candidates are equal.
9. Take a chance on rising female talent.
10. Take advantage of **Targets of Opportunity** to hire women coaches:
 - When a male coach leaves/ retires/ is fired = hire a female coach
 - When a new squad / team is added = hire a female coach
 - When a female coach leaves / retires / is fired = hire a female coach.

WOMEN CAN COACH – THE TOOLKIT

This toolkit has a range of resources, some of which we’ve already highlighted. Click [here](#) to access the toolkit for further information and insight.

Look out for the following within the toolkit:

GAME ON: WOMEN CAN COACH CAMPAIGN

See the YouTube video [here](#) for information on the rationale for the campaign, dispelling myths and suggesting ways forward to recruit and retain female coaches.

BE AN ALLY

Infographic (How men can support female coaches).

THE COACHES PLAYBOOK

To help women get employed and be retained:

WE WANT A MALE COACH

Raising **players awareness** around female coaches.

WHY WOMEN COACHES MATTER

The case for why increasing the number of women in coaching is important.

OTHER EXAMPLES OF USEFUL RESOURCES:

POSTERS

Developed from discussions with women.

“INVITATIONS MATTER”

a flier to send to female athletes to get them to think about coaching.



COMMONWEALTH GAMES FEDERATION FEMALE COACH INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

GOLD COAST 2018 COMMONWEALTH GAMES AND VICTORIA GRANT, NZ RUGBY COACH

BACKGROUND

For the 2018 Gold Coast Games, the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) created and delivered the first ever Women’s Coach Internship Programme (WCIP).

OBJECTIVES:

- Build coaching capacity in the respective International Federation (IF).
- Provide female intern coaches with international exposure at a World Championship.
- Provide female intern coaches with enhanced professional development and learning opportunities to prepare them for future high-performance coaching opportunities.
- Connect all participating female intern coaches in an ongoing supportive network.
- Provide, through the NF and the National Olympic Committee (NOC), in-country post-World Championship opportunities to advance their coaching careers.

THE PROGRAMME

- Developed criteria and selection process.
- Twenty intern coaches from 11 sports and 12 countries were fully integrated with their National Federation’s (NF) Commonwealth Games coaching staff.
- Professional development sessions during the Games.
- Commonwealth Games Mentor Coach appointed .

CORE SUPPORT

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS DURING THE GAMES

A professional development co-ordinator was responsible for the development and delivery of a Professional Development programme during the Commonwealth Games (CG) to meet the needs of the coach interns. The purpose of this programme was to:

- Build a network of support among the intern coaches.
- Develop the leadership and communication skills necessary for high performance coaching.
- Increase the intern coaches understanding of international high-performance sport.
- Expose the intern coaches to other women coaches and sport leaders who are exemplary role models.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MENTOR ROLE

The NOC/NF had to assign a mentor coach for each intern coach. The mentor was likely to be a member of the CG coaching staff for the intern’s sport, preferably a respected coach within the sport, who was required to commit to the necessary time to be an effective mentor.

- The role of the mentor coach is one of facilitator – ensuring the intern has a substantive role and creating a safe, open environment in which she is provided opportunities to both learn and contribute. Building trust and rapport with the coach is a major part of the role of the mentor. The mentor coach was expected, if possible, to accompany the apprentice coach to the professional development workshops that took place during the CG.

IMPACT – STILL ONGOING...

- The women received hands-on international experience and, critically, were provided with an opportunity to display their talents in a Games environment in partnership with their team’s head coaches. Since the end of the 2018 Games, 95% of the intern coaches have received other national and international coaching opportunities.
- Intern coaches and mentors were interviewed onsite to gain knowledge about their experience and their pathway to help develop and improve future programming.
- Post-championships follow-up will be conducted every 3 to 4 months following the World Championship to track the progress and development opportunities of the intern coaches. The WCIP co-ordinator will facilitate ongoing communication between the intern coaches to ensure that the strong network of support developed during the WCIP continues.



VICTORIA GRANT (NEW ZEALAND RUGBY COACH AND COMMONWEALTH GAMES INTERNSHIP PARTICIPANT)

**Q. WHAT IS IT LIKE TO DEVELOP AND PROGRESS
AS A WOMAN COACH IN YOUR COUNTRY?**

A. It’s challenging. Rugby is a very male-dominated sport. As a player, I never had a female coach so it’s hard around role models in that area. It’s improving because there’s a big emphasis on women’s coaching and developing more women coaches so that’s why I’m here, and that’s cool. In the past two years New Zealand Rugby have put together a group of women coaches. They put on workshops for us annually to connect and try to get us to deliver workshops. Just having that programme is better for rugby in New Zealand; it’s huge.

Work/life balance is always difficult and I find people always ask me if I aspire to be the women’s national coach. I do, but what holds me back is being away 200 days of the year. I’ve got young kids and that’s reality.

**Q. WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH
COMMONWEALTH GAMES INTERNSHIP
PROGRAMME**

A. The network of female coaches was in itself an amazing experience. It was a real and honest environment that’s made by women for women. I enjoyed the networking with the other coaches and listening to their experiences.

Being apart of this program gave me hands on experience with my national team at a international multi sport event. This was invaluable for me as a coach as it enabled me to get to work with international level athletes. It also gave me insight into the inner workings of the management team. This is something that I wouldn’t be able to witness, or be a part of without the opportunity that that the CGW programme gave me.

KEY INSIGHTS FROM FOOTBALL

During the Women’s Football World Cup in 2019 a key piece of research was released. Below are some of the insights and actions which are also relevant to women coaching in rugby. Information has been taken from both the website article as well as the actual report.

[Sport and Dev.org website article, 9th Jul 2019¹](#)

KEY DATA AND TAKE AWAY MESSAGES: FEMALE FOOTBALL COACHES ARE VERY SUCCESSFUL

At the 2015 World Cup 33% of the head coaches were female which rose to just over 37% in 2019.

Despite the fact that, on average, less than a third of the women’s teams head coaches were female – 92% of the world’s leading tournaments (FIFA World Cups; Olympics; UEFA European Championships) since 2000 have been won by female coached teams.

SO WHY ARE FEMALE COACHES NOT MORE SOUGHT AFTER?

- Women coaches at elite level share:
 - Clear sense of commitment to their athletes and the game, self-confidence, resilience and self awareness as to their strengths and philosophies, and are very reflective and articulate of their experiences and when given the opportunity prove their ability.
- Yet they often report experiencing a lack of support, resources and commitment from those in power.
- They must work in an environment where it is generally believed that women coaches, female athletes, and womens teams are second class citizens to their male counterparts.
- Gender bias and discrimination surrounds their experiences. Being coached by a man is viewed as normal and women coaches are perceived as introducing uncertainty into the system.

TAKE ACTION! “KEY LEARNING FROM FOOTBALL APPLICABLE TO RUGBY¹”:

Locate your women coaches. First steps for FAs – find out who and where are your women coaches within your football systems. Map them at every point of the pathway. Know who you have in the system in order to build the pipeline and manage you talent.

Address the cultural symbols within your clubs and organisations. Who are in your posters, your marketing materials, your learning resources, who are put forward as ambassadors? Increase the visibility of women to normalise having a diversity of coaches.

Develop formal support and networks around women coaches. These need to be sustained, personalised, directly related to their work, meaningful, and connected to those individuals and opportunities that can make a difference to their CVs. Mentoring is important for emotional support, Continued Professional Development, and in many cases, for career advancement. Sponsorship is equally important – having the support of an influential decision maker within an FA that is a political voice of support for a woman, and who is directly tasked with their development and progression.

Expose both male and female players to being coached by a woman. Many of the coaches reported tensions when working with players, even female players, around their ability to coach. This may be because being coached by a man is “normal” and high-performance players in particular, do not want any uncertainty in training or performance. They need to develop trust with their coaches which may be more difficult for female coaches is they are viewed with suspicion and as “unusual”. Make women coaches the “norm” by increasing their visibility, promoting their worth, and increasing contact opportunities.

Manage Talent. As part of a talent management programme and framework, identify potential coaches amongst players that may be approaching mid-to end of their careers. Make it known to them about coaching as a possibility and provide development, experience and licensing opportunities. Shut the trapdoor between playing and coaching that many women fall through after their athletic careers. Connect the dots between playing and coaching.
DeHaan, D., Norman, L., La Voi, N. M., & Knoppers, A. (2019)

NETWORKS FOR WOMEN RUGBY COACHES

THE WOMEN’S RUGBY COACHES & REFEREES ASSOCIATION (WRCRA)

The [Women’s Rugby Coaches & Referees Association \(WRCRA\)](#) has been set up in the USA to advocate and support women in coaching and refereeing.

- An independent professional association for women rugby coaches called the Women’s Rugby Coaches & Referees Association (WRCRA) was established in 2017 in the USA.
- WRCRA is the professional organization for women’s rugby coaches and referees from all levels of play.
- It provides members with resources, training, mentorship, networking and access to professional pathways.
- WRCRA works with a wide range of organizations such as, USA Rugby, Rugby Americas North, Atavus, the Female Brain Project and The Alliance of Women Coaches.
- The WRCRA conducts an annual national gathering and monthly webinars [here](#).

THE FEMALE COACHING NETWORK

The [Female Coaching Network](#) is a global network for female coaches and has a range of articles, information and networking support groups through different social media platforms.

WOMEN AHEAD

[Women Ahead](#) – useful for mentoring as well as networking.

They also produced some interesting research [here](#).





MENTORING FOR COACHES

WHAT IS MENTORING?

- “Mentoring traditionally involves the provision of long-term support, guidance and advice from a mentor to a mentee (CIPD, 2010).
- To be a mentor then carries the connotation of being ‘a trusted adviser, a challenger and an encourager’ (Field and Field, 1994, p.65).

KEY MESSAGES ON MENTORING

- Mentoring is not telling the coach what to do, it is empowering them to find the solution.
- Mentoring is not just about the technical or tactical part of coaching, it should include those soft skills that are associated with coaching.
- Mentoring can be done across sports or even with someone outside of sport, this will depend on the support the coach needs.
- Supporting the mentor is vital, this is not just training, but helping them manage the relationship between the mentor and coach. It is important that the mentor and coach are given time to build their relationship. Both to have a clear and agreed understanding around:
 - Aims of the coach, via goal setting
 - Methods of support
 - Methods of communication
 - Action plan developed with timescales, how success will be measured and when reviewed.

MENTORING PROJECT EXAMPLES

- Lancashire RU (RFU) offer mentoring to head coaches in clubs to help them, see [here](#).
- FIFA also launched a female mentoring programme in 2018, see [here](#).
- World Rugby’s Female Leadership Scholarship – has a mentoring component to develop female leaders in rugby. Further information to follow when scholarship programme is reviewed.
- Womens Sports Leadership Academy High Performance Coaches Programme – the first pilot cohort started in Oct 2019 with female coaches from 6 Olympic Sports, including 7 rugby coaches. It has provision for both a leadership and sport specific mentor for the coach. Further information will be shared next year after the end of the pilot programme.

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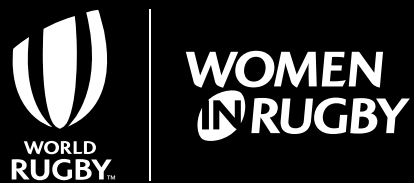
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