



THE FOOTBALL PATHWAYS PLAN BRIEFING

A WHOLE GAME PLAN TO MAXIMISE OUR POTENTIAL

FEBRUARY 2024



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Can you imagine what it would be like for Irish football if...

...we had teams that were in the final stages of every major tournament?

...we had a League of Ireland club regularly competing in the UEFA Champions League?

...every child in Ireland played at least 1 hour of football every single week?



Going Forward

We will bring the game together and develop a **whole game plan...**

That creates a **life-long love of football** through an active and rewarding involvement in the game...

To **maximise our potential** for boys, girls, men and women, on and off the field...

with an **integrated football system.**

INTRODUCTION

The plan will...

- Enhance the number & quality of first experiences
- Increase participation & retention (players, coaches, match officials, volunteers etc)
- Improve game-wide perception of Irish football
- Improve quality of talent (from children's to senior, and club to country level)
- Create sustained International success
- Build integration and cohesion within the game



AND THIS WILL LOOK LIKE:

- 1** Integration of football into **all levels** of education in Ireland
- 2** Pathways in **every part** of the country
- 3** Age and stage appropriate **development environments**
- 4** Increased **development time** for high potential individuals
- 5** Increased **numbers and quality** of players in Ireland and Europe
- 6** Effective system of **governance and quality assurance**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DIRECTOR OF FOOTBALL, MARC CANHAM



Football is the number one sport in Ireland with over 225,000 registered players, over 80,000 active volunteers and over 350,000 people participating in the game on a regular basis.

Great work happens at all levels of football in Ireland, through the efforts of hugely committed volunteers, coaches and administrators but the time has come to support these efforts in a more planned and systematic way by adopting a strategic long-term approach to the development of football in our country.

Ireland is a proud country of multi-sport at all levels, and football is proud to be part of a thriving sports ecosystem. We believe that this multisport culture is a fantastic base for all to participate in a sport they love and that football has a huge role to play in increasing participation, creating flexible pathways, and by inspiring our younger generation with performance at the elite level.

The Football Pathways Plan is the FAI's commitment to Irish Football to build a football

culture and structure that demonstrates how we will strategically, systematically, and inclusively grow the game so that every individual can achieve their full potential.

We have assessed the challenge facing the development of football in Ireland through deep analysis of data to understand where we are currently and how we benchmark against other footballing nations and sports. Along with research to understand what best practice looks like, as well as a comprehensive consultation process which has seen us engage with everyone involved in the development of football in Ireland.

It is clear that football in Ireland is not maximising its potential.

We need to change how we think about the development of football in Ireland. We must think bigger, think differently, and enhance our level of ambition.

We have the opportunity to come together and think long term about the development of football in Ireland and create a structure





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

which can be regarded as best in class across Europe, and which sets us up for the next 20 years and beyond.

An opportunity to integrate all levels across the game, from grassroots to national and international, which will allow us to maximise the full potential of the game.

We can and will create improved structures, a clearer and more consistent approach, and a plan for all of the game, designed to enhance the experience for all regardless of ability or area of focus from schools and clubs, through recreational, amateur, academy, and professional football.

Our plan will put football at the heart of everything we do with a core focus on Pathways, Participation, and Performance. The Football Pathways Plan is based upon a 12-year vision with clear actions in both the short, medium and long-term. Its goal is to increase the number of and quality of, participation experiences, to develop clearer, stronger, and more rewarding pathways, and to produce players, teams, and coaches, at club and country level, for boys and girls, men, and women, that are more successful.

Key to the delivery of the plan will be a collaborative and consultative approach, ensuring we listen and gather feedback on all elements of the plan at all times. We thank

everyone involved in Irish football that has contributed to the development of the plan thus far and we look forward to continuing that engagement and collaboration.

Our plan will be supported by a clear, active, and effective implementation plan that is measured, evaluated, and monitored on a yearly, quarterly, and monthly basis as well as seeking investment from our current strategic partners as well as new ones.

If we continue to see the current levels of dedication and commitment to all levels of the game and underpin that energy with a new focus on the wider pathways then we firmly believe there is a real and significant opportunity to create something special serving the here and now and future generations.

Our vision is to deliver a strategy that maximises the potential of Irish football, ensures a lifelong love of football across the widest spread of ages, demographics and abilities, rewarding an active involvement in the game, and so enabling us to deliver on our core purpose of better experiences for all in and around the game and ultimately developing more and better players for the game from the grassroots all the way through to our senior men's and women's teams.

INTRODUCTION

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, CHAIR AND CEO

FAI PRESIDENT, PAUL COOKE

Our proposed Football Pathways Plan takes a full view of Irish football and its potential for development and is designed to ensure that a clear pathway is in place for all young players, through their teenage years and into their adult lives. The FPP currently under consultation offers Irish football a clear vision so that from the moment our children first kick a ball, there is a place for them to participate and grow their love of the game, across all levels, no matter where they live in the country.



I firmly believe that this FPP plan we are now consulting with our members on, offers us an opportunity to create better structures by introducing a clearer and more consistent plan across all Irish football, one that is designed to enhance the experience for all our players regardless of their ability or area of focus, from the schools and underage grassroots game through to recreational, amateur, academy and professional football.

As President of the FAI, I fully endorse this Football Pathways Plan and would urge all involved with Irish football to consult with their members and favorably consider these proposals as we collectively adapt and evolve our approach for the betterment of our game and our players at all levels

FAI INDEPENDENT CHAIR, TONY KEOHANE

Irish football has huge potential for growth. Through the implementation of the Football Pathways Plan, we have the opportunity to enhance the experience for all involved in football, regardless of ability or area of focus, from schools and club, through to recreational football, amateur, academy or professional level. This plan aims to encourage a lifelong love of football for all those who take part.



We are building from solid foundations – with football already being the most popular and inclusive sport in Ireland, supported by a highly engaged and committed volunteer workforce across parents, players, coaches, match officials, affiliates, leagues, clubs and fans. It is clear from the consultation findings and from the sheer number of people who engaged in the consultation process that there is also a strong shared desire to improve our game at all levels.

The Board of the FAI is 100% behind Marc and team on this plan. It is clear what we need to do and the urgency with which we need to do it and he has our full and support as he sets out to deliver it.

INTRODUCTION

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, CHAIR AND CEO

FAI CEO, JONATHAN HILL

In our 2022-2025 strategy, Nurturing Football Pathways for All is one of our key strategic pillars and we are delighted to announce details of our Football Pathways Plan.

The plan gives us the opportunity to integrate all levels across the game, from grassroots to national and international, which will allow us to maximise the full potential of Irish football and create something special, serving the here and now and future generations.

This is the start of the journey. The end destination and overall vision is to implement a strategy that ensures a lifelong love of football, active involvement in the game, and enables us to develop more and better players and world class talent.

I would like to acknowledge Marc Canham and his team for the huge volume of work that has gone into developing this strategy. On behalf of the FAI, I would also like to thank everyone in Irish football who participated in the consultation process whose contributions and insights thus far, are greatly appreciated and whose ongoing collaboration will be key to implementing this plan.



THE FOOTBALL PATHWAYS PLAN

For the current and future football community in Ireland...

The Football Pathways Plan is our commitment to build a football culture and structure...

That demonstrates how we will strategically, systematically, and inclusively grow the game...

So that every individual can achieve their full potential...

Because a life-long love of football through an active and rewarding involvement will positively grow the game...





CONTEXT

CONTEXT

FOOTBALL SUPPORTS A STRONG MULTI-SPORTS NATION

Ireland embraces multi-sport at all levels and football is proud to be part of a thriving sports eco-system.

Football believes the multi-sport nature of our sporting Eco-System is an opportunity for all that participate in Sport in Ireland, and Football has a huge role to play increasing participation, creating flexible pathways, and inspiring generations with performance at elite level.

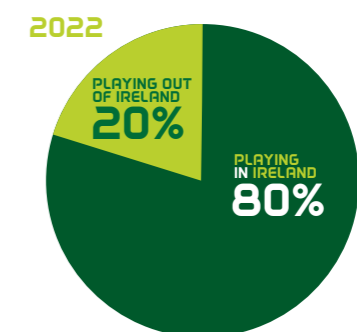
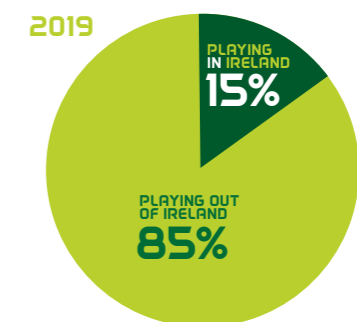


IMPACT OF BREXIT IS A CHALLENGE & AN OPPORTUNITY

Brexit has significantly impacted the pathways and development experiences for our young high potential players. This is both a challenge and opportunity to take greater ownership of the development of Irish players across the Men's and Women's game.

UEFA FACT: Players staying in their home country for longer have a better impact on the player, the family and mental health of individuals, the domestic football culture, and the funds to support football

UEFA U17 BOYS INTERNATIONAL SQUAD



CONTEXT

THE WORLD HAS CHANGED & FOOTBALL IS CHANGING WITH IT

- Football has evolved from a male dominated working-class game to become a truly global game for all, with **more people from more backgrounds playing and driving increased broader participation.**
- Professionalism and commercialisation within the game have grown at an exponential rate bringing more money into the sport, but also **changes in expectations of experience.**
- Athleticism, technical ability, and advancements in coaching practices have changed the game significantly towards a much **more engaging, high-performance sport.**
- At the same time, inclusion and diversity have become core drivers for growth that **engage a broader group of fans.**
- More people from different genders, cultures, races, abilities, and backgrounds are engaged in football than any other sport, be that as players, coaches, officials, volunteers, or administrators meaning that our **leadership should reflect our community.**

CONTEXT

FOOTBALL IS BIG, BUT STILL HAS POTENTIAL TO GROW

A HUGE POPULAR GAME



225,000
Registered
Players



100,000+
Un-Registered
Players



75
Leagues



1,100
Clubs



50,000
Safeguarding
Accredited Coaches



80,000
Volunteers



1600
Referees

BUT A FRAGMENTED APPROACH

There are currently 3 core levels of Football in Ireland – Grassroots, National and International, which includes:

UNDERAGE

(Grassroots and Academy - U16) - SFAI and LOI

INTERMEDIATE (adult)

Provincial FA's and leagues

YOUTH (U17-18)

(Provincial FA's and leagues)

PROFESSIONAL (adult)

LOI

JUNIOR (adult)

Provincial FA's and leagues

INTERNATIONAL

(underage and adult) – FAI and affiliates

SCHOOLS & THIRD LEVEL

Schools, Colleges, Third Level & Affiliates

FOOTBALL FOR ALL

Clubs and Affiliates



CONTEXT

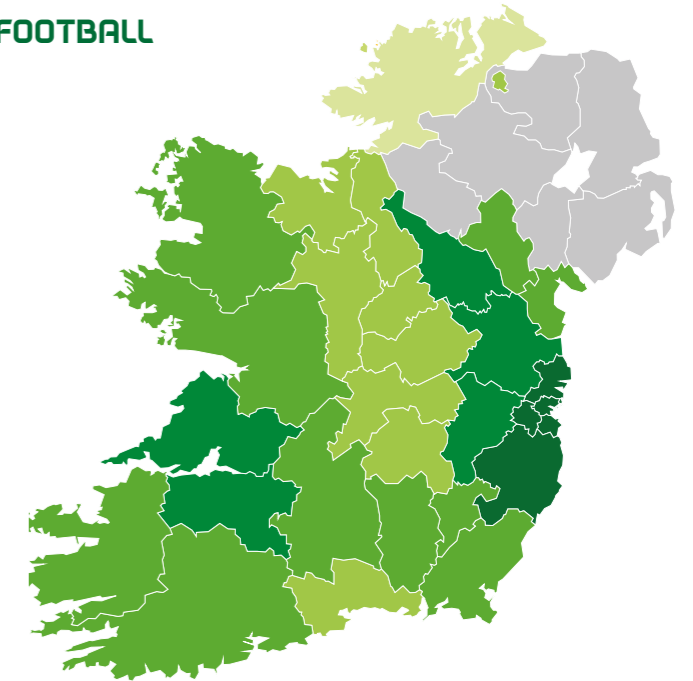
THE FOOTBALL APPROACH ACROSS THE COUNTRY

INCONSISTENT APPROACH TO UNDERAGE FOOTBALL

Football provision in each part of the country for the underage level is inconsistent, some examples below:

- Very little provision for U8-11 ages
- Weekly vs Biweekly games
- Football calendar on average 30 weeks of the year
- Saturday and Sunday football available in some areas and not in others
- Mixed seasons across the country
- Mixed application of playing formats

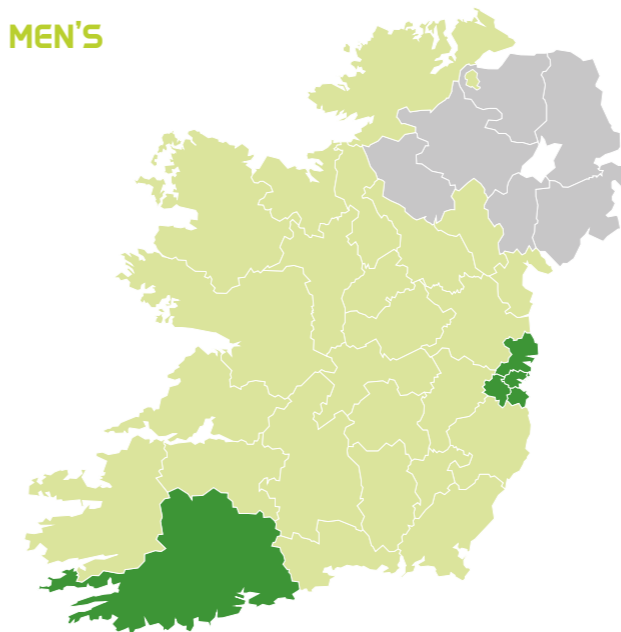
 DERRY CITY - PARTIAL PATHWAYS ALIGNMENT



LACK OF OPPORTUNITY FOR MEN IN SOME PARTS OF THE COUNTRY & LACK OF OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL ACROSS IRELAND

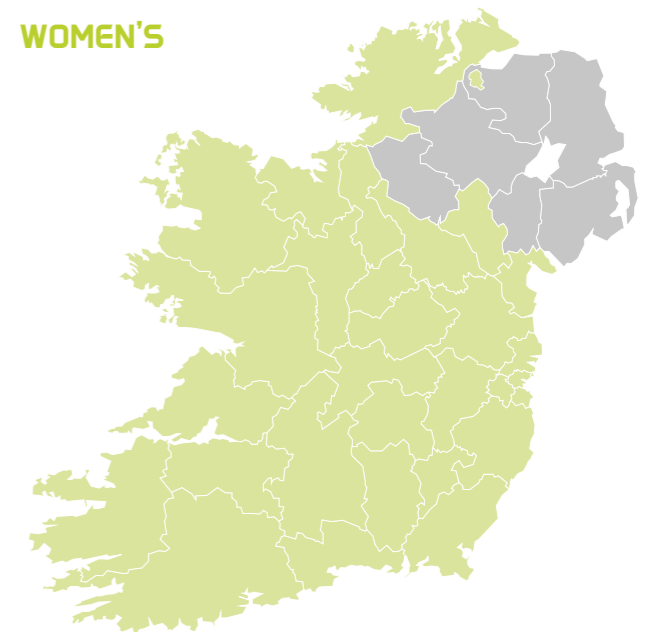
There are levels of football missing for the Men's & Women's game in large parts of the country and thus not providing a full pathway for clubs and players to participate.

MEN'S



 YOUTH, JUNIOR, INTERMEDIATE & LOI CLUB(S)

WOMEN'S



 LEVEL OF FOOTBALL MISSING

CONTEXT

FACILITIES INVESTMENT STRATEGY KEY TO GROWING OUR GAME

In 2023, we have committed to an ambitious Facilities Investment strategy. Our vision is to deliver better, more modern facilities across the whole of Irish football.

Investment into facilities needs long term funding from both public and private stakeholders.

Our 15 year vision will deliver 2500 projects across the game.



- 426m – Grassroots
- 390m – League of Ireland
- 47m – International



GRASSROOTS What we need

New and upgraded
Pitches &
Floodlights



New and upgraded
Clubhouses
& Changing
Rooms



LEAGUE OF IRELAND What we need

Fit-for-purpose
Facilities for
Academy &
Training
Grounds



Modern Fit-
for-purpose
Stadia



INTERNATIONAL What we need

New
National
Football
Centre



Stadia
Fit for
International
Competitions



A NEW CONSULTATIVE APPROACH

Consultation has been key to building the plan so far and will continue to be so....

PHASE 1
CONSULTATION
IMMERSION

What we have done:
What's working and what's not working

PHASE 2
CONSULTATION
STRATEGY & PLANNING

What we are doing:
The proposed strategy and approach

PHASE 3
CONSULTATION
IMPLEMENTATION

What we will do:
When and how should we and could we implement the plan



CONSULTATION TO DATE: SEEKING VIEWS FROM ALL LEVELS OF THE GAME

FAI (407 PEOPLE)

- Board
- All Staff
- Working Group
- Committees: Underage / Women's Football / International High Performance / Youth and Amateur / National League / Refereeing

Football Pathways Workshops (2,150 PEOPLE)

- Football Pathways Consultation
 - Workshop x 18
- Grassroots Conference
- 26 Online county workshops

11,000 HOURS

Online Surveys (300+ PEOPLE)

- Grassroots
- Amateur
- Academy
- Professional
- International
- Affiliates

The Game (180 PEOPLE)

- Affiliates, Leagues & Clubs
 - LOI Club Secretaries
- LOI Women's First Team Head Coaches
- LOI Men's First Team Head Coaches
- 1:1 Affiliate Consultations
 - General Assembly
 - Referees

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK: KEY INSIGHTS

“One season for all with all areas of the game playing the same calendar”

UNIVERSITY OF CORK, (10TH MAY 2023)

“The introduction of a funding scheme to assist clubs with owning basic facilities such as dressing rooms and toilets”

THE PARKWAY HOTEL, DUNMANWAY, (11TH MAY 2023)

“The FAI need to introduce social football from a young age, giving kids the opportunity to just turn up and play”

MOUNT ERRIGAL HOTEL, DONEGAL (12TH JULY 2023)

“Introduction of Futsal is needed, especially during the winter months. It will increase the number of touches, meaning it will lead to more development for players”

CLAYTON HOTEL, DUBLIN, (3RD MAY 2023)

“A Head of coaching is needed in every single club and all levels of the game.”

SETU ARENA, CARLOW (8TH JUNE 2023)

“Combine football & education so that players can play daily from a young age”

THE PARKWAY HOTEL, DUNMANWAY, (11TH MAY 2023)

“There is a need to improve the relationships with local schools, so that there is an opportunity for more football to be played.”

THE GRAND HOTEL, TRALEE, (15TH MAY 2023)

“Pathway between underage & senior LOI for player development and support”

THE PARKWAY HOTEL, DUNMANWAY, (11TH MAY 2023)

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK: KEY INSIGHTS



RESPECT

100%

believe we need to improve respect

■ YES ■ NO



FACILITIES

100%

believe we need to improve facilities

■ YES ■ NO

IRISH FOOTBALL

0% believe we can't get any better

22% believe we are on the right track

78% believe we have more work to do

OTHER

100% believe underage football should be about 'development'

90% believe underage football should be individual focused, as opposed to team focus



WAY WE PLAY

80%

want to play football in Ireland as 'build up through the thirds' or 'dominate in and out of possession'

■ BUILD UP ■ DOMINATE
■ COUNTER ■ DIRECT



CALENDAR

65%

believe we should play calendar football

■ CALENDAR YEAR



BOYS

28%

believe Boys LOI Academies should start younger

■ YOUNGER
■ OLDER
■ STAY AS IS



GIRLS

76%

believe Girls LOI Academies should start younger

■ YOUNGER
■ OLDER
■ STAY AS IS

CONTEXT

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK: A CLEAR ROLE OF THE FAI IS NEEDED

The FAI should protect and promote football by Leading, Governing, and Supporting throughout football.

LEAD

The FAI should lead with a consultative and collaborative approach with a clear a vision of what football can achieve

GOVERN

The FAI should instruct with clear direction and guidance based on the mandate it is given

SUPPORT

The FAI should enable the regions and the FAI employees and affiliates to deliver football

CONTEXT

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK: WHAT IS WORKING WELL AND WHAT ISN'T

The Football Pathways Plan will build on the foundations and positive areas of the game, whilst also clearly addressing the obvious problems.

WHAT IS WORKING WELL?

- Most popular team sport and most inclusive sport in Ireland; there is a game of football for everybody.
- Highly engaged and committed volunteer workforce demonstrated across parents, players, coaches, match officials, affiliates, leagues, clubs and fans.
- A consistent and shared desire to improve our game at all levels.

THE MAIN PROBLEMS TO SOLVE

- Not enough quality opportunities or facilities for people to participate, enjoy and reach their potential.
- Too disjointed an approach in how the game is played, coached and administered to develop the highest quality and depth of players and teams.
- Not a positive enough experiences to keep people in the game (be that playing, volunteering, coaching, officiating or administrating).

Overall, how can we collectively work together to help develop a whole game plan that will help overcome the issues in Irish football and maximise the potential and each-and-every person and the whole of Irish football?

If we address these issues with a whole game plan, we will all

MAXIMISE OUR POTENTIAL

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK: THE CHALLENGES

The consultation provided a wide range of views and information across all levels of the game which highlighted a number of key challenges for the game.

 <p>VISION Lack of a coherent, agreed vision for football development</p>	 <p>ATTRITION Too many drop off points causes attrition rates to be high</p>	 <p>PATHWAY Disjointed & fragmented pathways for players (and other roles)</p>
 <p>ALIGNMENT Stakeholders pulling in different directions</p>	 <p>TIME/DISTANCE No clear time/distance parameters and rules adhered to</p>	 <p>LEVEL Too many gaps in the pyramid & not enough appropriate levels of football</p>
 <p>DUPLICATION Too much duplication between stakeholders, leagues, clubs</p>	 <p>HOLISTIC Too much focus on competition, leagues, cups, and winning</p>	 <p>VOLUME High volume of organisations, leagues, clubs and affiliates</p>
 <p>ACCOUNTABILITY Previous plans not as successful as it could be as no accountability</p>	 <p>EDUCATION Football is not maximising its opportunity with education</p>	 <p>PROGRESSION Lack of progression pathways for individuals in football (playing and wider roles)</p>
<p>LEADERSHIP Need for stronger, clearer, and more definitive leadership from the FAI</p>		



**THE STATUS QUO WON'T HELP
US IN THE LONG TERM**

**IT'S ABOUT THE STRUCTURES
AND THE CULTURE**

**A BETTER STRUCTURE, A CLEARER
MORE CONSISTENT APPROACH, AND
A WHOLE GAME PLAN WILL HELP ALL
OF US WIN**

**OUR PLAN IS DESIGNED TO
ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE FOR ALL
REGARDLESS OF ABILITY OR AREA
OF FOCUS**

From schools and clubs, through recreation, amateur, academy, and professional football at all levels & from players to officials & coaches, and from volunteers to professional administrators

**IT'S NOT ABOUT THE 1%
OR ABOUT 99%
...IT'S ABOUT THE 100%;
THE WHOLE GAME PLAN**





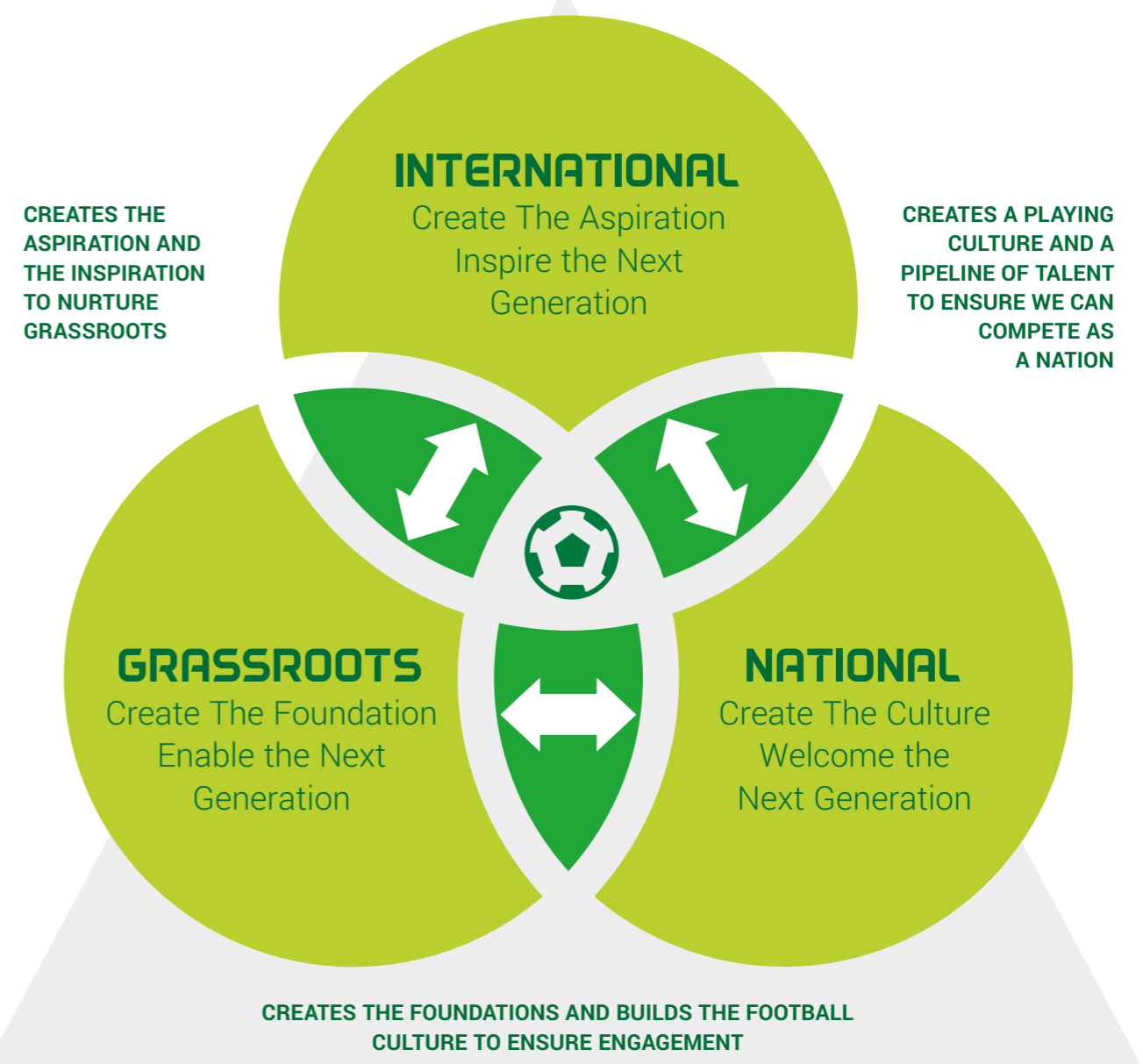
OVERALL APPROACH

OVERALL APPROACH

THE IRISH FOOTBALL PLAN

FOOTBALL AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO - AN INTERGRATED FOOTBALL ECO-SYSTEM.

The Football Pathways Plan is a 'whole game plan' for all levels of Football in Ireland. No one part of the game is more important than another, and to maximise our potential we need to consider each part of the game equally. Putting 'Football at the Heart of everything we do' will enable the opportunity to create an integrated eco system where all parts of the game work together in a collaborative and cohesive manner.



OVERALL APPROACH

A JOINED-UP STRATEGY

In order to achieve this we will have a clear overall approach that helps deliver the purpose of building a football culture and structure that allows every individual to achieve their full potential:

01

VISION:

A clear vision of what we want to achieve with and through football in Ireland that can be shared with and understood by all.

02

STRUCTURE:

The right structures, process, and approaches to enable the game to develop by giving clarity and focus on the right way forward.

03

CULTURE:

The right culture that allows the game to flourish by welcoming all and ensuring the experience delivered is always positive.

01 VISION: A LONGER-TERM, HIGHER ORDER VISION WITH A CLEAR STRATEGY

To be the leading participant sport where anyone and everyone means having a longer-term aim of building a life-long rewarding involvement in the game. The experiences, of it being a fan, player, coach, volunteer etc, should be second to none.

Open to anyone and everyone means a welcoming home for all who want to be connected to and involved, in any way, to football.

All delivered with 3 simple missions around Participation, Pathways & Performance



VISION

A **life-long love of football** through an active and rewarding involvement in the game that **maximises our potential** on and off the field

OVERALL APPROACH

02 STRUCTURE: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH WITH GREATER SUPPORT

- A **clear pyramid** with promotion and relegation at all levels.
- A **new development approach** and philosophy for players and coaches.
- An enhanced **Club Mark programme** to support player and club development.
- A **stronger support programme** from the centre and in the regions.

And....

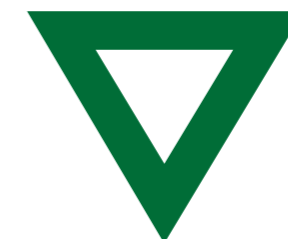
- **Integration of all areas of Football at the FAI**, encompassing Education (Schools and Third Level), Grassroots (recreation to amateur), Academy level and Professional (LOI to Elite) to better lead and support the growth and development of the game.
- The plan will inform how football needs to evolve to be fit for purpose to grow/develop and govern football.

03 CULTURE: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH WITH GREATER SUPPORT

To develop a **meaningful connection to people** and create **positive participation experiences** in Ireland we need to do this in a way that is **relevant to Irish culture...**

A culture celebrating the 'most diverse and inclusive sport in Ireland' – **with more girls, more social backgrounds, more ethnicities, more cultures, and more backgrounds** than any other team sport in Ireland.

...FULL OF
PASSION & JOY



...BEING RESILIENT
& PROGRESSIVE

...SHOWCASING OUR TOGETHERNESS &
WELCOMING SPIRIT

ULTIMATELY WE WANT FOOTBALL TO BE...
THE MOST WELCOMING SPORTING ENVIRONMENT FOR ANY AND ALL PARTICIPANTS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE FUTURE

Our strategy is underpinned by a series of guiding principles that guide the short-term and long-term delivery.

- 1 FUTURE FOCUSED**
Develop a structure & culture driven by the vision to meet current & future needs
- 2 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**
Develop a structure & culture that supports the delivery of short, medium and long-term objectives
- 3 CLEAR PATHWAYS**
Develop a structure that creates pathways for all to achieve their full potential
- 4 FULL COHESION**
Develop a structure that joins up all parts of the game internally and externally
- 5 SUSTAINABLE PROGRESS**
Develop a structure that creates a sustainable platform for future and ongoing progress
- 6 COMPLETE INCLUSION**
Develop a structure & culture that has parity of opportunity for every person whomever & where-ever they are
- 7 TRUE TO THE IRISH DNA**
A strategy, plan and actions that are true to our Irish DNA

OUR APPROACH IS UNDERPINNED BY 3 CORE AREAS:

The strategy has been informed by the key areas and will continue to do so throughout the lifetime of the Football Pathways Plan.

WHOLE GAME PLAN APPROACH UNDERPINNED BY 3 KEY AREAS

PILLAR 01
DATA:
Where we are now?

Benchmarking against other footballing nations and sports

PILLAR 02
RESEARCH:
What does best practice look like?

Academic research on issues & opportunities

PILLAR 03
CONSULTATION:
What the game has told us

The views of the people in the game at all levels

A 12 YEAR VISION...

With clear actions for the short and long term planning



APPROACH: LONG AND SHORT-TERM PLANNING

A planning cycle has been developed that is based on an Annual Planning Process whereby each year the short-term 3-year plan is reviewed, and the long-term 12-year plan is reviewed every 6 years.

	SHORT TERM PLAN	LONG TERM PLAN
2024	START	START
2025		
2026	REVIEW	
2027	PLAN	
2028		
2029	REVIEW	
2030	PLAN	REVIEW
2031		
2032	REVIEW	
2033	PLAN	
2034		
2035	REVIEW	
2036	PLAN	REVIEW



THE STRATEGY

THE STRATEGY

THE STRATEGY: OUTCOMES & ACTIONS FOR EACH PILLAR

Everything delivered in the 'Football Pathways Plan' will be done to **increase** the number of, and **quality of, participation experiences**, to develop **clearer, stronger and more rewarding pathways**, and to produce players, **teams and coaches**, at club and country level, for boys and girls, men and women, that are **more successful**.



**EVERY PERSON HAS A ROLE,
EVERY CLUB HAS A ROLE
EVERY MOMENT HAS A ROLE**

THE LONG TERM STRATEGIES

Based on feedback from the consultation, nine long-term strategies have been identified.

 <p>PARTICIPATION</p>	 <p>PATHWAYS</p>	 <p>PERFORMANCE</p>
<p>'To create Positive participation experiences for all':</p> <p>Develop a range of programmes and experiences that enable positive participation for all in Irish football</p>	<p>'To develop more & better (players and) pathways into & through the game':</p> <p>Develop a clear set of pathways to enable people to play and/or participate in football in all areas & at all levels</p>	<p>'To develop Winning Senior Teams at Club & Country Level':</p> <p>Develop higher performing teams (playing & technical) at all levels and for all aspects of the professional game</p>
<p>OPENING UP MORE OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>Drive Inclusion and increased opportunities to enable more people to participate more often</p>	<p>STARTING & STRUCTURING THE JOURNEY</p> <p>Create engaging 'first-kick' experiences and clear journeys for everyone</p>	<p>CLEAR PLAYING & COACHING PHILOSOPHY</p> <p>Build a clear playing and coaching philosophy that permeates through all levels of Irish football</p>
<p>IMPROVING THE EXPERIENCES</p> <p>Create an improved 'game plan' with a play first philosophy to enhance the experience</p>	<p>BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN KEY-STAGES</p> <p>Create a clear bridge for individuals to progress from early stage football development</p>	<p>ELITE INFRASTRUCTURE & DEVELOPMENT PLAN</p> <p>Build a high performance / elite infrastructure for training and coaching</p>
<p>RESTRUCTURING FOR BETTER ALIGNMENT</p> <p>Re-structure football department, regions, & the pyramids to ensure there's the right level of football available to everyone</p>	<p>INTEGRATING ACADEMY & GRASSROOTS</p> <p>Create the best development environments for young players integrating LOI and Grassroots</p>	<p>YOUTH IDENTIFICATION & DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Create a stronger more integrated talent programme for a journey from youth through to adult</p>

STRATEGIES



THE FIRST 3 YEARS – 2024 TO 2026 PRIORITY ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

Based on all the data, research and consultation we have identified nine priority actions for the first three years of the strategy.

 PARTICIPATION	 PATHWAYS	 PERFORMANCE
CREATE A NEW GAMES PROGRAMME <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create an aligned football calendar from January to December 2. Create age and stage appropriate formats 3. Build creative and flexible opportunities to play 	BUILD AN ADULT FOOTBALL PYRAMID <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build a Tier 3 for the Men’s pyramid and a Tier 2 for the Women’s pyramid 2. Expand the FAI Cup to include more tiers and teams 3. Introduce a new FAI Amateur Cup 	DEVELOP A NEW ‘IRISH ID’ FRAMEWORK <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a clear playing and coaching approach for all international teams 2. Build a new Talent ID, Recruitment & Retention function 3. Create a Performance Support and Education function
EXPAND CLUB & LEAGUE MARK PROGRAMME <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand Club Mark and League Mark development 2. Create a Club / League Playbook 3. Introduce a Head of Football role in every Clubs/League 	CREATE A PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER & NEW PLAYBOOK <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree charter for player pathway progression 2. Refresh playing formats and build new Coaching Curriculum 3. Create “Me and My Ball” campaign 	INCREASE CONTACT TIME & DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase number of LOI scholarships 2. Increase number of TY Football programmes 3. Engagement with multi-sports
RESTRUCTURE OF FOOTBALL GOVERNANCE <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build new Regional FAI Football divisions 2. Creation of One rule book & One registration period 3. Enhance Volunteer support programmes 	CREATE AN AGE & STAGE ALIGNMENT WITH EDUCATION <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deliver a Women’s & Girls Football Strategy 2. Build a new Education & Development Strategy 3. Create a Women and Girls Leadership Academy 	INITIATE A NEW NATIONAL CENTRE & PRE-ACADEMY STRUCTURE <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build a new Integrated pre-academy structure 2. Create a Football hub for international teams, education and development and games programme 3. Build a National Academy programme for Girls - 12-16
SUPPORTING ACTIONS Formation of Technical Leadership Group / New Elite Coach programme / Create Always Green Alumni / Develop a Youth Leaders Group / Embed FFA into Club Mark / Referee development		

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Collaboration and the way forward

Each action will follow a four stage consultation process with clear review periods identified in the roll out phase.

It is critical that consultation continues through the lifetime of this plan. All the concepts (on pages 50 to 94) under each pillar: Participation, Pathways and Performance, will have individual timelines for implementation with opportunity for the game to contribute via the ongoing consultation process.



THE STRATEGY

A NEW DEVELOPMENT APPROACH FOR THE GAME

We have identified a new development approach which focuses on 'play' and 'early engagement'. All actions within the 'Football Pathways Plan' will aim to build towards the development of a new 'Football Pathway' for Irish Football.

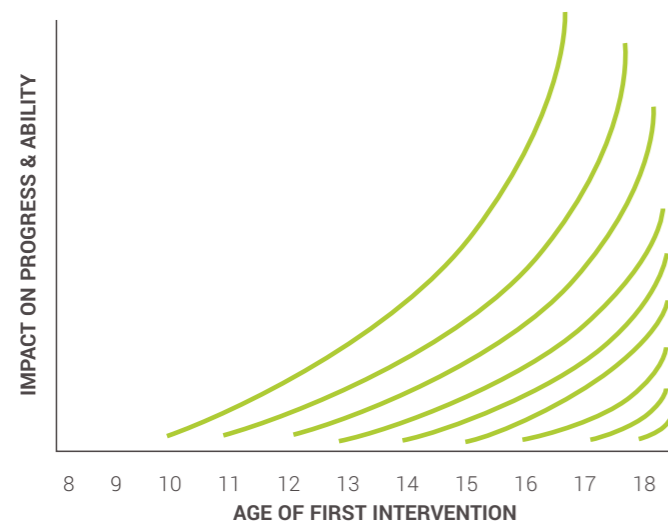


EARLY ENGAGEMENT

Increased development time (quality & volume of coaching and game time) has been proven to improve players (and ultimately coaches).

Therefore, it is imperative that people have more development time from an early age.

Talent ID and specific development programmes will be critical in ensuring that the opportunities for progress are maximised.



THE STRATEGY

A NEW FOOTBALL PATHWAY FOR ALL LEVELS

Football should be enjoyed by all that play and participate and football activity should be available for every age and stage. The Football Pathways Plan aims to align the football development, academic development and child development and provide football that nurtures a life long love and active and rewarding involvement in the game.

AGE	ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT PHASE	CHILD DEVELOPMENT PHASE	FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT PHASE	STRATEGY	FORMATS	LEVELS
19+ YEARS OLD	THIRD LEVEL	DUAL CAREER (PATHWAYS)			11v11	INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL EUROPEAN FOOTBALL TIERS 1 TO 6 FOOTBALL (INC' THIRD LEVEL PROGRAMMES)
17-19 YEARS OLD	THIRD LEVEL	SPECIALISATION	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	ME AND MY PROFESSION	11v11	TIERS 1 TO 6 FOOTBALL ACADEMY 'SCHOLARSHIP' YOUTH FOOTBALL
15-16 YEARS OLD	TRANSITION YEAR	LATE SPECIALISATION	YOUTH DEVELOPMENT	ME AND MY POSITION	11v11	ACADEMY FOOTBALL GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL FAI FOOTBALL SCHOOLS
12-14 YEARS OLD	JUNIOR CERTIFICATE	ENGAGEMENT		ME AND MY TEAMMATES	9v9 to 11v11	ACADEMY FOOTBALL GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL FAI FOOTBALL SCHOOLS
8-11 YEARS OLD	SENIOR PRIMARY	EARLY ENGAGEMENT & SAMPLING	INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT	ME AND MY SKILLS	5v5 to 7v7	ACADEMY FOOTBALL (PRE ACADEMY) GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL FAI FOOTBALL SCHOOLS
5-7 YEARS OLD	JUNIOR PRIMARY			ME AND MY BALL	2v2 to 5v5	GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL FAI FOOTBALL SCHOOLS
<5 YEARS OLD	PRE-SCHOOL					

↑ FOOTBALL IS THE ONE AND ONLY SPORT

SPECIALISE AFTER MULTIPLE SPORTS

↑ FOOTBALL IS A HOBBY



PARTICIPATION

The consultation highlighted specific feedback under each pillar of the strategy.

FEEDBACK

Football doesn't always feel as welcoming as it should and the current approach results in people no longer participating in the game, either as a player, volunteer, or coach etc.

ISSUE

The current structure and culture does not encourage the creation of a games programme that engages and supports all.

RESPONSE

A restructure of the game bringing more support into the sport through both Club and League Mark, and the creation of a more engaging and inclusive games programme.



PARTICIPATION PRIORITY ACTIONS TO CONSULT AND DELIVER FOR FIRST 3 YEARS

CREATE A NEW GAMES PROGRAMME

1. Create an aligned football calendar from January to December
2. Create Age and stage appropriate formats
3. Build creative and flexible opportunities to play

EXPAND CLUB & LEAGUE MARK PROGRAMME

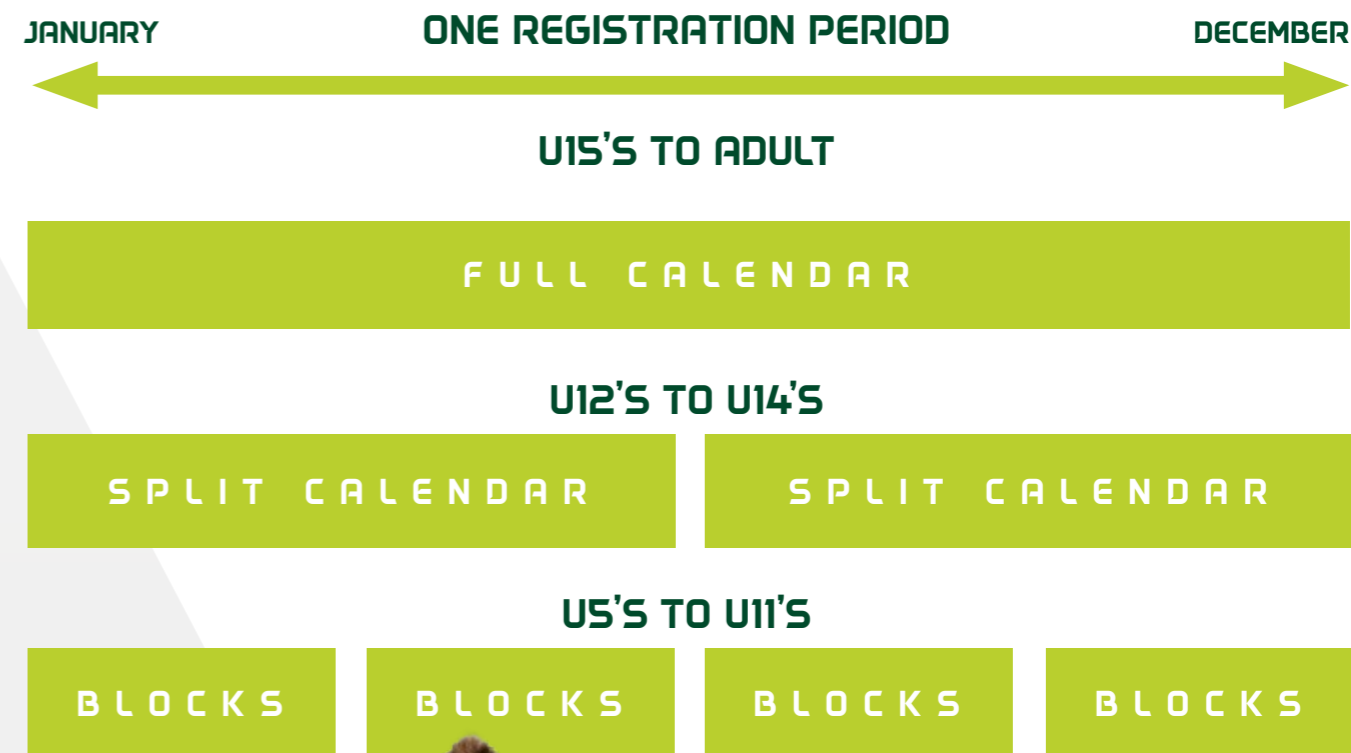
1. Expand Club Mark and League Mark development
2. Create a Club / League Playbook
3. Introduce a Head of Football role in every Club/League

RESTRUCTURE OF FOOTBALL GOVERNANCE

1. Build new Regional FAI Football Divisions
2. Creation of One rule book & One registration period
3. Enhance Volunteer support programmes

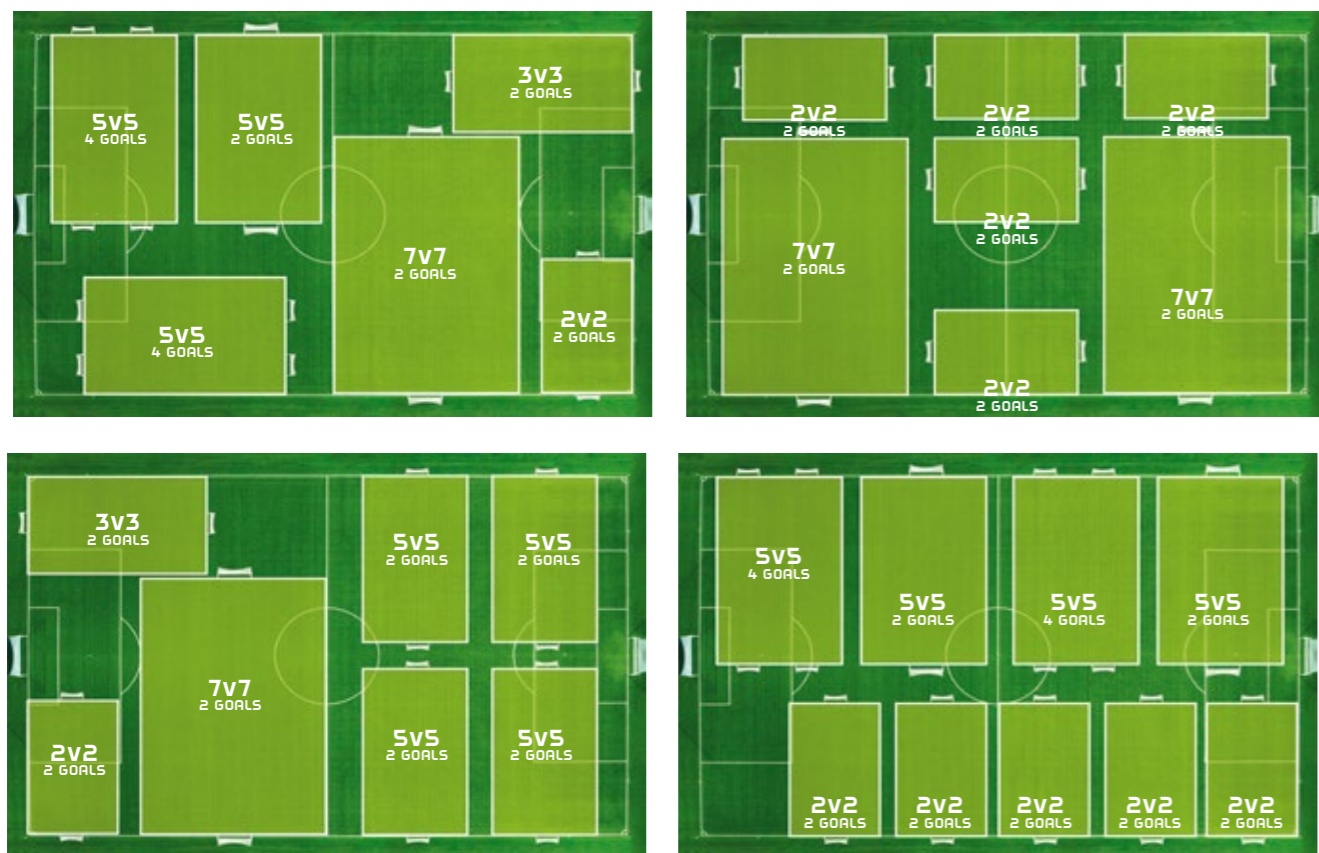
PARTICIPATION ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER: CREATE A NEW GAMES PROGRAMME

1. BUILD AN ALIGNED FOOTBALL CALENDAR – JANUARY TO DECEMBER



**PARTICIPATION ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
CREATE A NEW GAMES PROGRAMME
2. CREATE AGE AND STAGE APPROPRIATE FORMATS**

There are flexible formats in which football can be organised and played to maximise the experience and playing time for all children and adults.



PITCHES

5v5 - 40m x 25m
7v7 - 55m x 35m

GOALS

5v5 - 2m x 1.2m
7v7 - 5m x 2m

Examples of pitch set ups that shows how to divide a full size pitch to maximise playing time and variety of experience.



PARTICIPATION ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER: CREATE A NEW GAMES PROGRAMME 3. BUILD CREATIVE & FLEXIBLE OPPORTUNITIES TO PLAY

Providing more football, more often and more variety is key to delivering the best possible football experience for all that wish to play and participate at any level, age and stage.

DATES	5-11	12 -14	15-16	17-18	ADULT (19+) Amateur, National and Professional
	'ME & MY BALL'	'ME & MY TEAMMATES'	'ME & MY POSITION' 'ME & MY PROFESSION'		-
01	JANUARY	FUTSAL	FUTSAL		OFF SEASON
	FEBRUARY	CORE LEAGUE PROGRAMME	CORE LEAGUE PROGRAMME		OFF SEASON
	MARCH	CORE LEAGUE PROGRAMME	CORE LEAGUE PROGRAMME		SEASON STARTS
02	APRIL	CORE LEAGUE PROGRAMME	CORE LEAGUE PROGRAMME		IN SEASON
	MAY	CORE LEAGUE PROGRAMME	CORE LEAGUE PROGRAMME		IN SEASON
	JUNE	CORE LEAGUE PROGRAMME	CORE LEAGUE PROGRAMME		IN SEASON
03	JULY	BLITZES MINI LEAGUES	BLITZES MINI LEAGUES		IN SEASON
	AUGUST	FOOTBALL CAMPS (FAI / CLUB)	FOOTBALL CAMPS (FAI / CLUB)		IN SEASON
	SEPTEMBER	BLITZES MINI LEAGUES	BLITZES MINI LEAGUES		IN SEASON
04	OCTOBER	MINI LEAGUES	MINI LEAGUES		IN SEASON
	NOVEMBER	MINI LEAGUES	MINI LEAGUES		SEASON ENDS
	DECEMBER	FUTSAL CHRISTMAS	FUTSAL CHRISTMAS		OFF SEASON

Note - Formats for illustrate purposes only at this point. This will be developed in collaboration with the game. Leagues will work the FAI and Clubs to develop the games programme formats for each block.

PARTICIPATION ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER: EXPAND CLUB & LEAGUE MARK PROGRAMME 1. EXPAND CLUB MARK AND LEAGUE MARK DEVELOPMENT

CLUB MARK

- Expand our Club Mark to ensure that every affiliated club has the appropriate structures, governance and coaching in place to support the growth and development of the game.
- Support, recognise, reward clubs as they progress through levels of Club Mark accreditation.
- Support clubs as they develop strategies for on and off pitch development.



LEAGUE MARK

- Create a governance and operating framework to support our Affiliates and to formally accredit our leagues.
- Recognise, reward and support our Affiliates and Leagues as we fully embed Club Mark, create an innovative games programme for our young players, and a football pyramid for our adult players, to create an eco-system for Irish Grassroots Football.
- Support the work of our volunteers and provide leadership across all levels of our game.



PARTICIPATION ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER: EXPAND CLUB & LEAGUE MARK PROGRAMME 3. INTRODUCE A HEAD OF FOOTBALL IN EVERY CLUB & LEAGUE

Building capacity in Clubs and Leagues, supported by the FAI, is key to the sustainable delivery of Football at all levels.

- A Head of Football for every Club and League in the country
- A large coaching community that will attend a monthly development programme, attend conferences and events
- Head of Football to:
 - Oversee deliver of FAI Playbook
 - Delivery of Club CPD (FAI accredited where possible)
 - Affiliate tutor status to be able to deliver FAI courses
 - League to oversee games programme supported by the FAI



HEAD OF FOOTBALL

HOW WE
PLAY

HOW WE
COACH

HOW WE
SUPPORT



**PARTICIPATION ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
RESTRUCTURE OF FOOTBALL GOVERNANCE
1. BUILD NEW REGIONAL FAI FOOTBALL DIVISIONS**

There are a wide range Football Development areas that require focus and attention to maximise opportunities and pathways at all levels of the game.



FAI, Clubs, Leagues and Affiliates working together to better support the improvement and development of the game at a regional level.

FAI REGIONAL BASED FOOTBALL DIVISIONS



PARTICIPATION ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER: RESTRUCTURE OF FOOTBALL GOVERNANCE 2. CREATION OF ONE RULE BOOK & ONE REGISTRATION PERIOD

Working collaboratively with our Affiliates, Leagues and Clubs, the creation of one common rule book and registration period will allow for greater alignment across the game. Once adopted, the common rule book will provide clarity on all footballing matters, allowing for efficient and consistent competition and games programme management.



PARTICIPATION ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER: RESTRUCTURE OF FOOTBALL GOVERNANCE 3. ENHANCE VOLUNTEER SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

Our National and Regional staff will play a key role in directly supporting those who volunteer in the game at Club, League and Affiliate level. We will provide education, materials and most importantly, our time to bring this plan to life and ensure that those who work tirelessly off the pitch can have positive experiences in the game.





PATHWAYS

PATHWAYS

The consultation highlighted specific feedback under each pillar of the strategy.

FEEDBACK

Players (and wider roles) want and need the best possible pathways and development experiences to achieve their full potential.

ISSUE

The current structure does not provide enough quality or volume of development time to reach the highest levels of domestic, European and International football, and structures facilitate attrition as opposed to staying in the game for as long as possible.

RESPONSE

A newly defined pathway which aligns academic development, child development and football development, including levels of football for all individuals to play (and participate in) football for their whole life.



PATHWAY PRIORITY ACTIONS TO CONSULT AND DELIVER FOR FIRST 3 YEARS

BUILD AN ADULT FOOTBALL PYRAMID

1. Build a Tier 3 for the Men's pyramid and a Tier 2 for the Women's pyramid
2. Expand the FAI Cup to include more tiers and teams
3. Introduce a new FAI Amateur Cup

CREATE A PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER & NEW PLAYBOOK

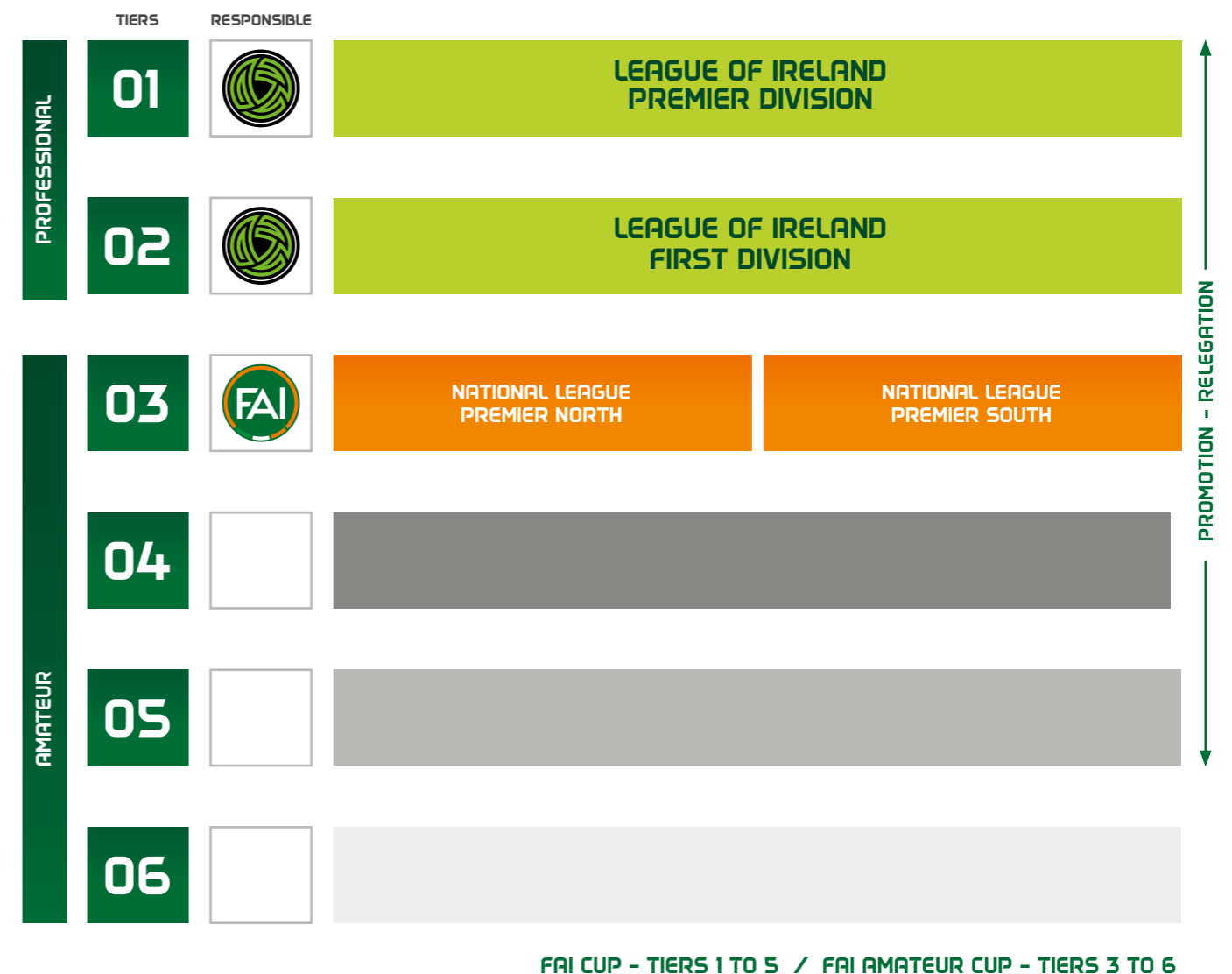
1. Agree charter for player pathway progression
2. Refresh playing formats and build new Coaching Curriculum
3. Create a Me and My Ball campaign

CREATE AN AGE & STAGE ALIGNMENT WITH EDUCATION

1. Deliver a Women's & Girls Football Strategy
2. Build a new Education & Development Strategy
3. Create a Women and Girls leadership Academy

PATHWAYS ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER: BUILD AN ADULT FOOTBALL PYRAMID 1. BUILD A TIER 3 FOR THE MEN'S PYRAMID & A TIER 2 FOR THE WOMEN'S PYRAMID

Creating clear progression opportunities and clear pathways for clubs, players, coaches and match officials is key to the success of Football In Ireland in the short-term and long-term.



**PATHWAYS ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
BUILD AN ADULT FOOTBALL PYRAMID
2. EXPAND THE FAI CUP TO INCLUDE MORE TIERS & TEAMS**

The creation of a new Adult football pyramid for the Men's and Women's game will enable:

- Expansion of the FAI Cup
- More tiers of football
- More Clubs and teams
- Compelling matches between different tiers of football
- Exciting and competitive matches



**PATHWAYS ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
BUILD AN ADULT FOOTBALL PYRAMID
3. INTRODUCE A NEW AMATEUR CUP**

The creation of a new Adult football pyramid for the Men's and Women's game will enable:

- Creation of an FAI Amateur Cup
- More tiers of football
- More Clubs and teams
- Support existing amateur cup competitions at different levels
- Opportunity to compete and be successful at the appropriate level
- Exciting and competitive matches



**PATHWAYS ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
CREATE A PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER & NEW PLAYBOOK
1. AGREE A CHARTER FOR PLAYER PATHWAY PROGRESSION**

A clear set of guiding principles to coordinate the relationship between Grassroots Clubs and LOI Academies for the benefit of player pathways.

COMMUNICATION

Coordination of movement and transition of players into and through the pathway

COLLABORATION

An agreed set of protocols between stakeholders regarding movement of players

CONNECTION

Creation of partnerships between Grassroots Clubs and LOI Academies

COACHING

Agreed coach development initiatives between Grassroots Clubs and LOI Academies

CONTACT TIME

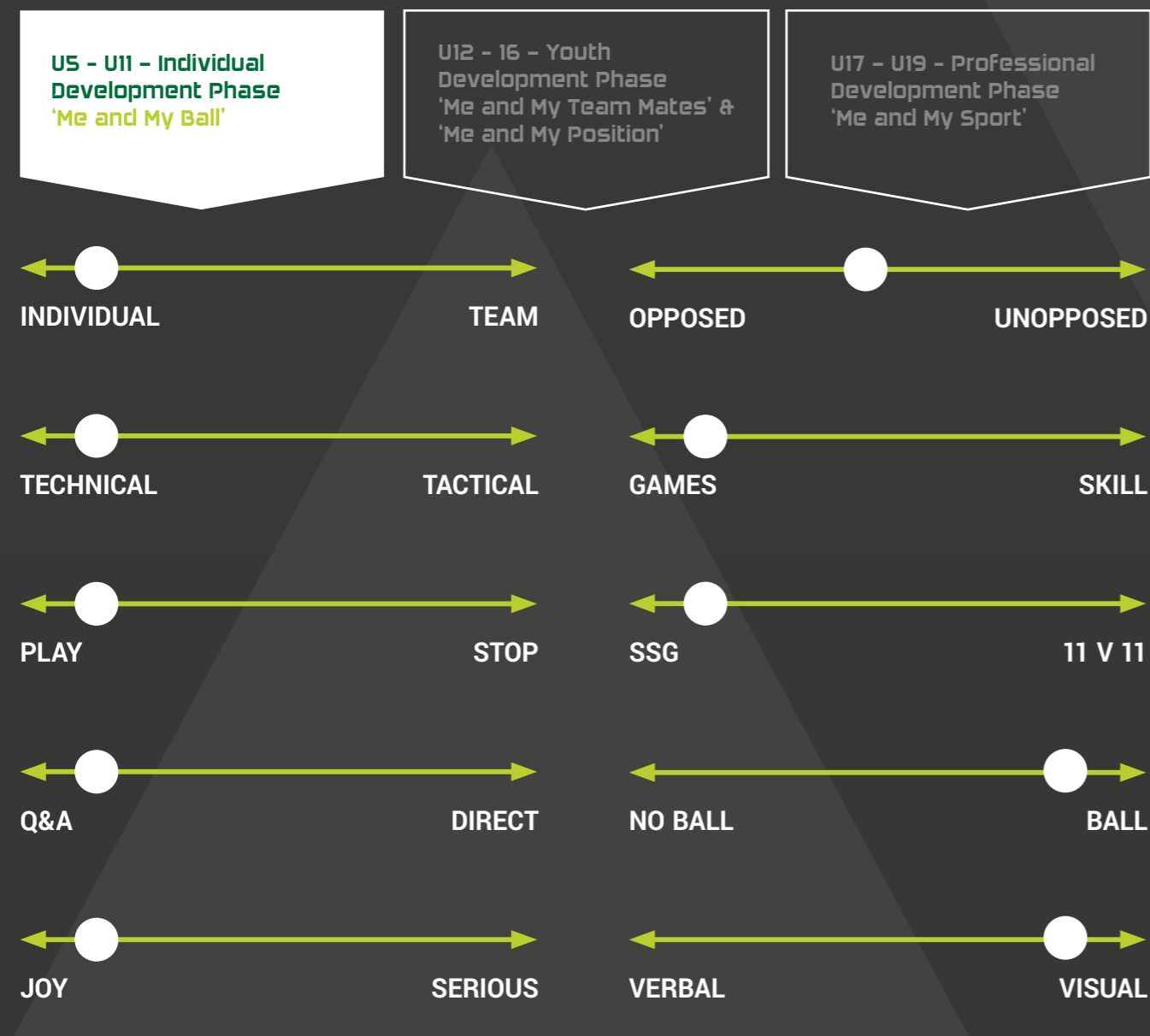
Creation of individual development plans for high potential players between Grassroots Clubs and LOI Academies

COMPETITION

Creation of joint games programme opportunities for grassroots clubs and LOI Academies

PATHWAYS ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
CREATE A PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER & NEW PLAYBOOK
2. REFRESH PLAYING FORMATS & BUILD NEW COACHING CURRICULUM

Age and stage appropriate coaching is important to creating the best possible environment for children and adults to play and reach their full potential.



PATHWAYS ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
CREATE A PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER & NEW PLAYBOOK
3. CREATE "ME & MY BALL" PROGRAMME

'A football for every 5-11 year old in the country'

Within the 5-11 age range, we believe the focus should be on 3 key principles:

- 1. Play** - focus on joy, enjoyment and children designing their own activity and challenges.
- 2. Early engagement** - focus on engaging (not specialising) children in football at the earliest age possible.
- 3. Individual development** - focus on individual skill development (skill acquisition) across technical skill, physical literacy, social and psychological development.



**PATHWAYS ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
CREATE A PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER & NEW PLAYBOOK
3. CREATE 'ME & MY BALL' PROGRAMME**

A new FAI 'Playbook' will provide a framework to deliver the new 'Football Pathway', including:

- The focus of our coaching curriculum at each age and stage
- Playing formats at each age and stage
- Practical tools and resources for Clubs, Coaches, Parents, Leagues and Heads of Football
- How we support players, coaches and match officials to create a positive learning environment
- A framework for a new coach development curriculum for the game



PITCHES
5v5 - 40m x 25m
7v7 - 55m x 35m

GOALS
5v5 - 2m x 1.2m
7v7 - 5m x 2m

An example pitch set up that shows how to divide a full size pitch into skill set ups for 'me and my ball'

**PATHWAYS ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
CREATE AN AGE & STAGE ALIGNMENT WITH EDUCATION
1. DELIVER A WOMEN'S & GIRLS FOOTBALL STRATEGY**

The 'Women and Girls Football Strategy' will capitalise on the momentum of Ireland's first ever participation in the FIFA Women's World Cup and help us achieve and extend our strategic objectives.



**PATHWAYS ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
CREATE A PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER & NEW PLAYBOOK
2. BUILD A NEW EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

The new development approach – from Participation to Pathways and on to Performance will be to integrate football at every level of the education system in Ireland. The focus of development will be on the individual in a holistic 360 degree way rather than simply viewing individuals in a narrow cast way - this will focus on Professional, Personal, and Interpersonal skills.

**EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
FROM PRIMARY TO THIRD LEVEL**

The new development approach – from **Participation to Pathways and on to Performance** will be to develop the individual in a holistic 360 degree way rather than simply viewing individuals in a narrow cast way - this will focus on Professional, Personal, and Interpersonal skills.

**PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**

Enhancing the capabilities:
Technical Skills
- from playing to coaching
- from operations to finance
- from first aid to physiology
- etc

**PERSONAL
DEVELOPMENT**

Enhancing the Individual:
Personal Skills
- Physical Development
- Mindset Development
- Emotional Support
- etc

**INTERPERSONAL
DEVELOPMENT**

Enhancing the Culture:
Interpersonal Skills
- Team Working
- Leadership
- Mentoring
- etc



PATHWAYS ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER: CREATE A PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER & NEW PLAYBOOK 3. CREATE A WOMEN AND GIRLS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Develop a continuous supply of female leaders through virtuous continuum of **GROW, BUILD, ACCELERATE** process

- **GROW** future leaders through early intervention with schools and youth programmes
- **BUILD** capacity of existing females in Irish football to step up and progress in Leadership roles
- **ACCELERATE** progression of high potential females in Irish football to senior leadership roles:
 - Increase % of Females in International and Club Head Coaching and Management Roles
 - Increase % of females on organisational, club and affiliates Senior leadership Teams & Executive Governance positions
 - Provide progression pathway to education and employment in football for females
 - Holistically develop female leaders in football





PERFORMANCE

The consultation highlighted specific feedback under each pillar of the strategy.

FEEDBACK

We want to see more and better quality Irish players, clubs and international teams succeeding consistently.

ISSUE

Players aren't achieving their full potential, because structures around them aren't good enough and because the development system and the support structures aren't good enough.

RESPONSE

New player and coaching 'game plan' that includes playing & coaching playbook & new coach development structures and programmes to support.



PERFORMANCE PRIORITY ACTIONS TO CONSULT AND DELIVER FOR FIRST 3 YEARS

DEVELOP A NEW 'IRISH ID' FRAMEWORK

1. Create a clear playing and coaching approach for all international teams
2. Build a new Talent ID, Recruitment & Retention function
3. Create a Performance Support and Education function

INCREASE CONTACT TIME & DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES

1. Increase number of LOI scholarships
2. Increase number of TY Football programmes
3. Engagement with multi-sports

INITIATE A NEW NATIONAL CENTRE & PRE-ACADEMY STRUCTURE

1. Build a new Integrated Pre-academy structure
2. Create a Football hub for international teams, education and development and games programme
3. Build a National Academy programme for Girls - 12-16

PERFORMANCE ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER: DEVELOP A NEW 'IRISH ID' FRAMEWORK 1. CREATE A CLEAR PLAYING & COACHING APPROACH FOR ALL INTERNATIONAL TEAMS

From an early age we need to develop a clear philosophy on how we can play as a nation in a way that can A) bring out the best in all of our players and B) help us to succeed on a club and country level. Whilst there is some harmonisation in global playing styles, the way we train and play can be nuanced to bring out the best in the Irish.

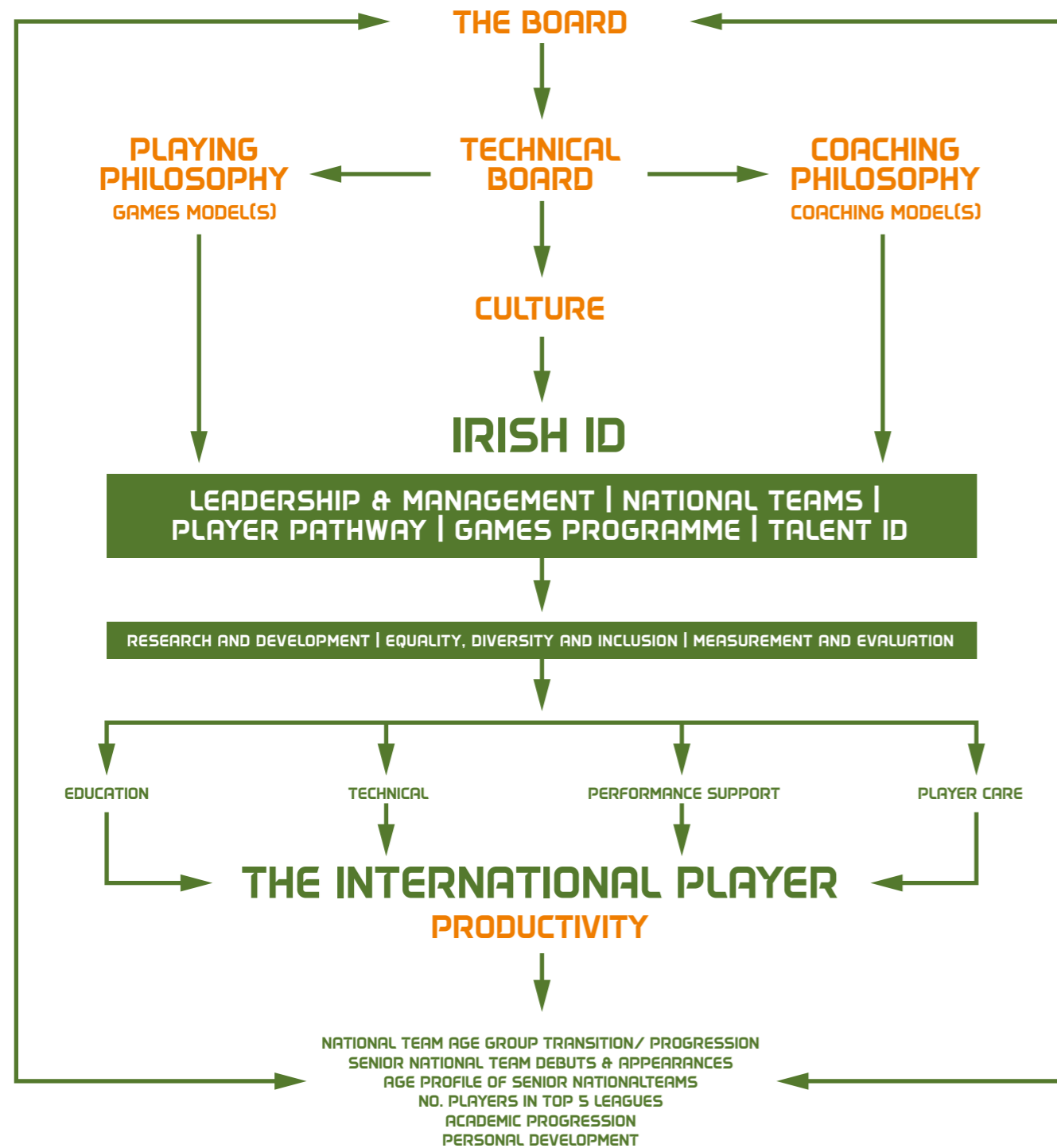
THE GREEN LINE

- Consistency and alignment throughout the pathway
- Clear identity and approach to playing and coaching
- Supporting every player during and beyond playing



**PERFORMANCE ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
DEVELOP A NEW 'IRISH ID' FRAMEWORK**
**1. CREATE A CLEAR PLAYING & COACHING APPROACH
FOR ALL INTERNATIONAL TEAMS**

A long-term vision for all international teams (youth to senior) that outlines:



**PERFORMANCE ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
DEVELOP A NEW 'IRISH ID' FRAMEWORK**
**2. BUILD A NEW TALENT ID, RECRUITMENT
& RETENTION FUNCTION**

Developing modern, innovate and robust systems of Talent ID, Recruitment and Retention will be key to identifying high potential players in Ireland, Europe and Internationally.

Brexit has afforded us the opportunity and responsibility to create a greater focus on player development and pathways, and identification and development will be critical to maximise the opportunity developing the highest quality of players for our domestic game and International teams.

**IDENTIFY
TARGET HIGH
POTENTIAL**

**RETAIN
PROVIDE THE BEST
DEVELOPMENT**

**RETAIN
CREATE BETTER
OPPORTUNITIES**



**PERFORMANCE ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
DEVELOP A NEW 'IRISH ID' FRAMEWORK
3. CREATE A PERFORMANCE SUPPORT
AND EDUCATION FUNCTION**

A new Performance Support function for the FAI will:

- Create a new Performance Support strategy across all levels of the game – Grassroots, National and International
 - Deliver joined up strategies across a wide range of Performance Support areas such as: Football Fitness, Sports Science, Performance Analysis, Psychology, Nutrition, Strength and Conditioning, Research and Development
 - Create a framework to physical Development at each age and stage, including physical literacy, fundamental movements skills and athletic development
 - Identify key development differences between the male and female athlete and apply appropriate strategies to support
 - Deliver an age and stage appropriate curriculum that is embedded within the FAI Coach Development curriculum
-



**PERFORMANCE ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
INCREASE CONTACT TIME & DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES
1. INCREASE NUMBER OF LOI SCHOLARSHIPS**

It is critical to create full time football and education programmes within the new pathway. The ages of U17 to U18 are particularly important in the development of professional footballers.

We have an ambition to create a new full time football (football and education) scholarship from the ages of U17 to U19 in every League of Ireland (LOI) Club.

- Full time training and education (Education Monday to Friday)
- Each individual must be on an education pathway as well as a football development pathway
- Players will receive a bursary as part of the scholarship - the fee's will cover cost of expenses and training costs



**PERFORMANCE ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
INCREASE CONTACT TIME & DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES
2. INCREASE NUMBER OF TY FOOTBALL PROGRAMMES**

The transition year within the Irish education system provides a unique opportunity to:

- Create increased development time for high potential players
- Increase the number of full time Football and Education combined programmes
- Provide holistic development opportunities for **high potential players**
- Introduce a wider curriculum that support players pathways and for wider roles



**PERFORMANCE ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
INCREASE CONTACT TIME & DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES
3. ENGAGEMENT WITH MULTI-SPORTS**



Creating positive engagement and collaboration within our unique and hugely successful Irish Multi Sport eco-system is an area to maximise for Irish Sport and Irish Football, and will bring:

- Opportunities to share best practice and learning across sports
- Regular communication and collaboration between all sports in Ireland
- Support the development of all participants

**PERFORMANCE ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
INITIATE A NEW NATIONAL CENTRE & PRE-ACADEMY STRUCTURE
1. CREATE AN INTEGRATED PRE-ACADEMY STRUCTURE**

ACADEMY MARK

Supporting Clubs and Leagues via an accreditation system is key and expanding that approach to Academies will be important to seek continuous improvement in:

- Regular and consistent independent assessment of operating criteria and standards
- Standards of coaching and games provided for high potential players
- Numbers and quality of full time staff
- Improved facilities
- Enhanced programmes across a wide range of development and performance areas
- Enhanced football and education alignment
- Individual development of high potential players
- Embedding a duty of care programme for players and staff



<p>01 ACADEMY U14 to U19 Girls and Boys Pre Academy & Affiliate</p>	<p>02 DEVELOPMENT U14 to U19 Girls and Boys Pre Academy & Affiliate</p>	<p>03 FOUNDATION U14 to U19 Girls and Boys & Affiliate</p>	<p>04 AFFILIATE Grassroots Club Girls and Boys U9 to U16s</p>
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PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER





PERFORMANCE ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
INITIATE A NEW NATIONAL CENTRE & PRE-ACADEMY STRUCTURE
1. CREATE AN INTEGRATED PRE-ACADEMY STRUCTURE

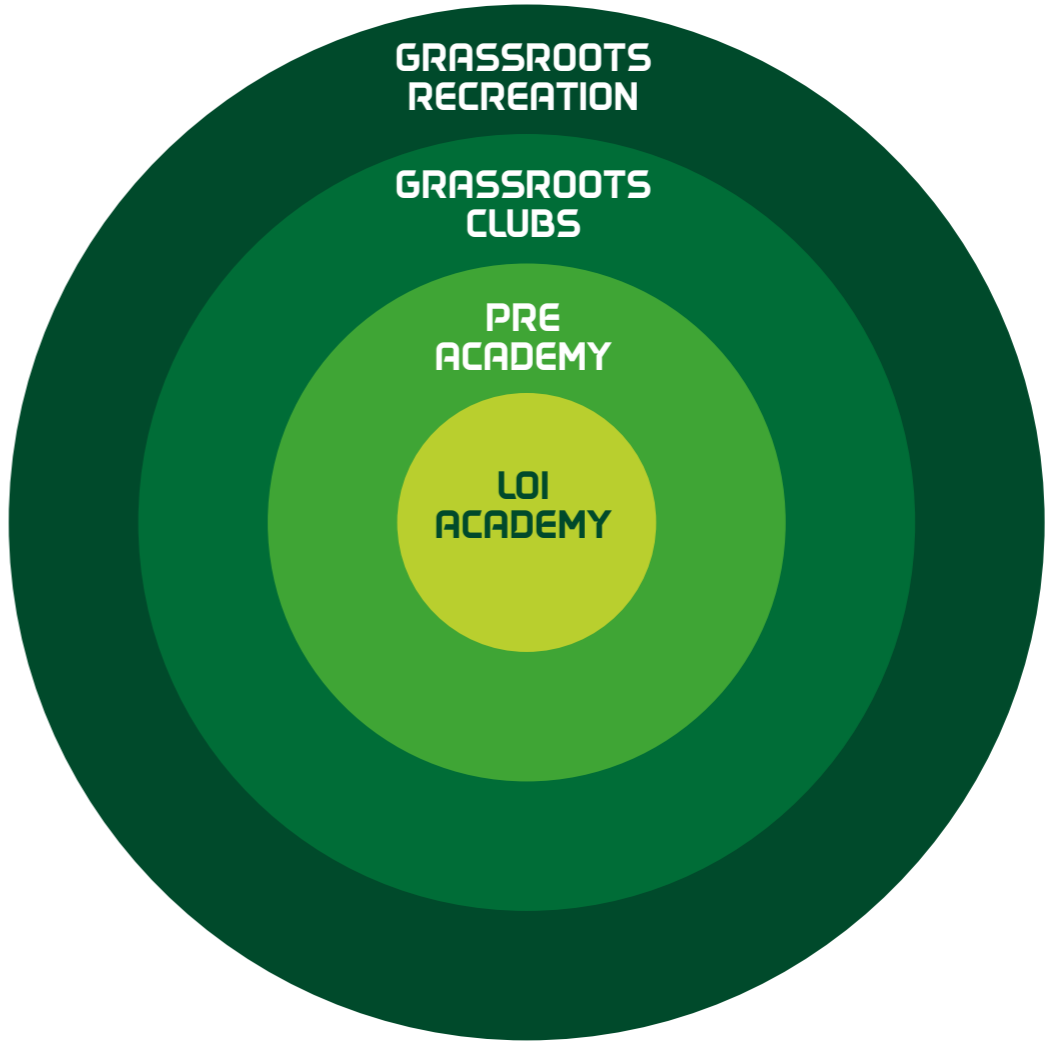
Developing a joint approach between the FAI, Grassroots Clubs and LOI Academies to support player pathways and development between the ages of U8-13 will be key to increasing development time (coaching and game time) for players.

Focus

- Boys - 'Build capacity' - evolve the structure by empowering LOI Clubs to take greater ownership on the development of high potential boys from a younger age
- Girls - 'Grow opportunity' - A new association led player development structure to support high potential girls from a younger age

Guiding Principles

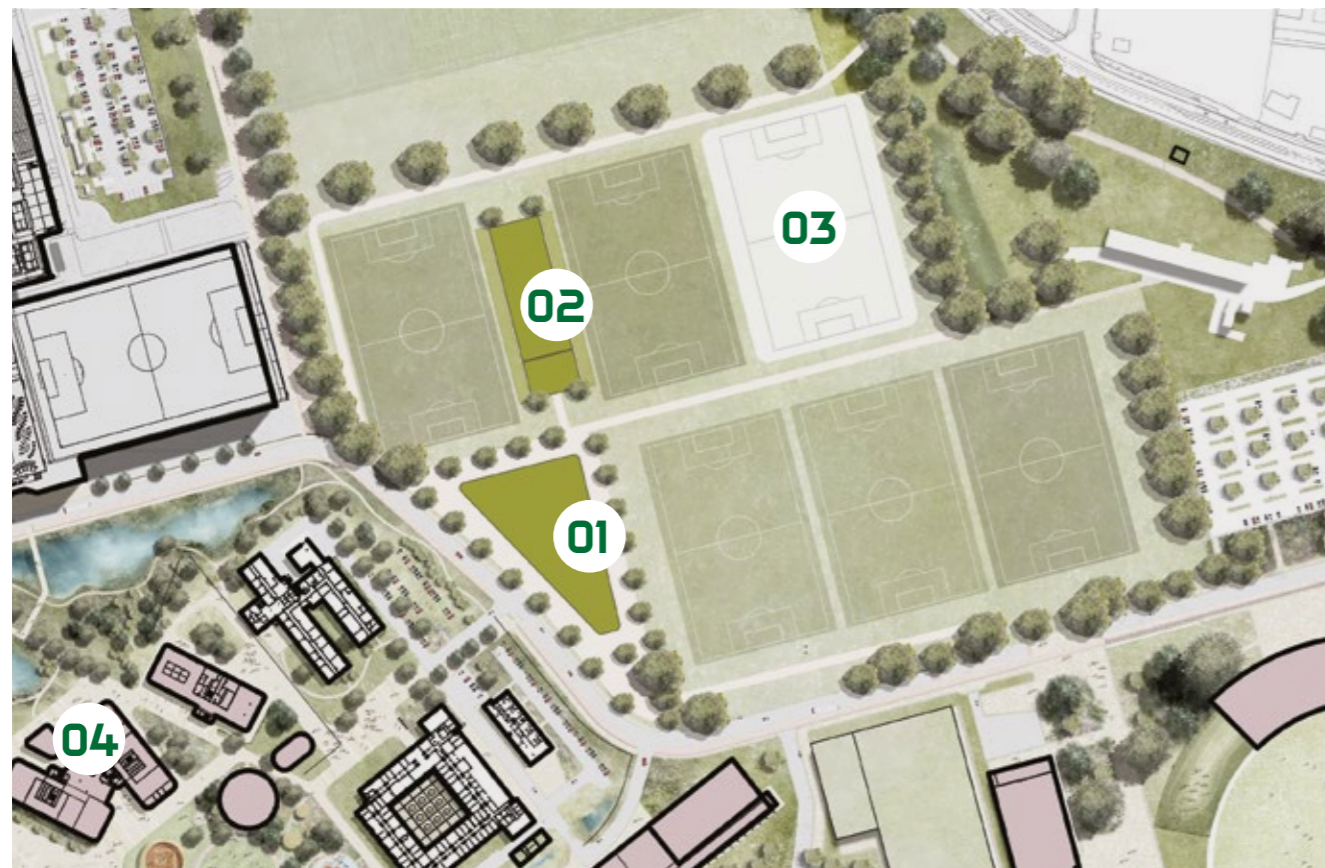
- Increase development time (coaching and game time)
- Build an integrated and interconnected structure between LOI and Grassroots Clubs



**PERFORMANCE ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
INITIATE A NEW NATIONAL CENTRE & PRE-ACADEMY STRUCTURE
2. CREATE A FOOTBALL HUB FOR EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT**

We believe a fit-for-purpose National Football Centre can be established within our existing campus footprint aligning to the Sport Ireland (SI) Campus vision, delivering a home for:

- Our international teams (Men’s and Women’s) U15’s to Seniors, to train and prepare for International Programmes and Major Tournaments
- Our education and development of players, coaches and match officials - the learning hub where we will deliver all coach development in the future
- The development of high potential players (boy’s and girl’s) from each region
- Showcasing underage Grassroots and League of Ireland (LOI) programmes and games programme events
- All high-performance support such as sport science, strength and conditioning, performance analysis, psychology, nutrition

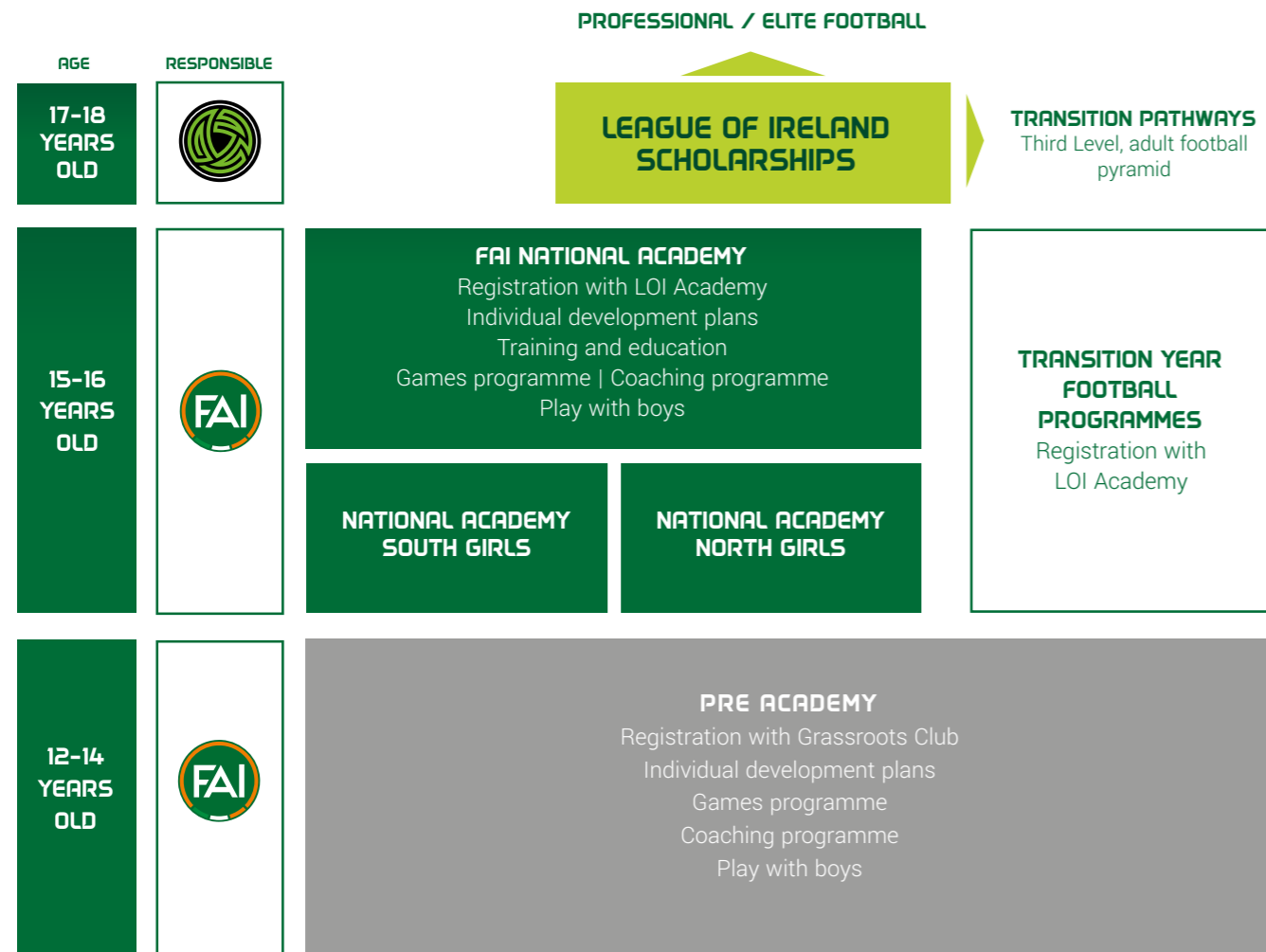


- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 01. National Football Centre | 03. 4G Pitch (ideally “Domed”) |
| 02. Two-sided spectator stand | 04. SI Shared Office Space (Sport Ireland Campus Masterplan) |



PERFORMANCE ACTION TO CONSULT AND DELIVER:
INITIATE A NEW NATIONAL CENTRE & PRE-ACADEMY STRUCTURE
3. BUILD A NATIONAL ACADEMY FOR GIRLS 12-16

Creation of a new National Academy for Girls supported by UEFA and FIFA. Increased development time (coaching, games, education) and diverse games programme;





IMPLEMENTATION & MEASUREMENT

IMPLEMENTATION & MEASUREMENT

Collaboration and the way forward

Each action will follow a four stage consultation process with clear review periods identified in the roll out phase.

- Regional and local consultation and briefings to stay connected to the delivery of the plan
- Every county over the first 3-year cycle

PHASE 1
CONSULT

PHASE 2
PLAN

PHASE 3
INITIATE

PHASE 4
ROLL OUT



IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS: WAYS OF WORKING FOR KEY ACTIONS

We will consult with the game as we lead the implementation of our actions, whilst ensuring we look to the future and adapt to the changing needs of Irish football.



IMPLEMENTATION & MEASUREMENT

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS: EFFECTIVE ENABLERS TO DELIVER THE PLAN

In order to effectively deliver the Football Pathways Plan in a collaborative and consultative manner, a number of enablers have been identified.

ONGOING CONSULTATION

A collaborative and consultative approach ensuring we listen and gather feedback on all elements of the Football Pathways Plan at all times

ACTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

A clear, active and effective implementation plan that is measured, evaluated and monitored on a yearly, quarterly and monthly basis

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Ensure all work associated within the Football Pathways Plan is underpinned by research and development and ensure decision making is evidence informed

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded into every action delivered within the Football Pathways Plan, including specific actions for increasing representation from underrepresented groups

PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

Developing a clear strategy to develop people to deliver to their full potential, utilising their knowledge, skills and expertise

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT

Seek a multitude of investment sources from our current strategic partners and pursue new funding opportunities from other sources

EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Develop effective partnership with football, sports and Irish stakeholders to maximise capacity and capability

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Ensure all actions and are measured, benchmarked and evaluated on a regular basis and embed internal, external and independent quality assurance in all FAI programmes

DIGITAL READY

Create digital ready solutions for all FAI programme and actions to enable capacity building and sustainability

IMPLEMENTATION & MEASUREMENT

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS: RIGHT RESOURCES TO DELIVER SUCCESS

The FAI will organise itself to ensure it best supports the wide range football development areas that require focus and attention to maximise opportunities and pathways at all levels of the game.



IMPLEMENTATION & MEASUREMENT

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS: WAYS OF WORKING

The FAI will organise its resources within a regional model to enhance the support of football development in each part of the country, and this will be delivered in collaboration with Clubs, League and Affiliates and all that play and participate in Irish Football.

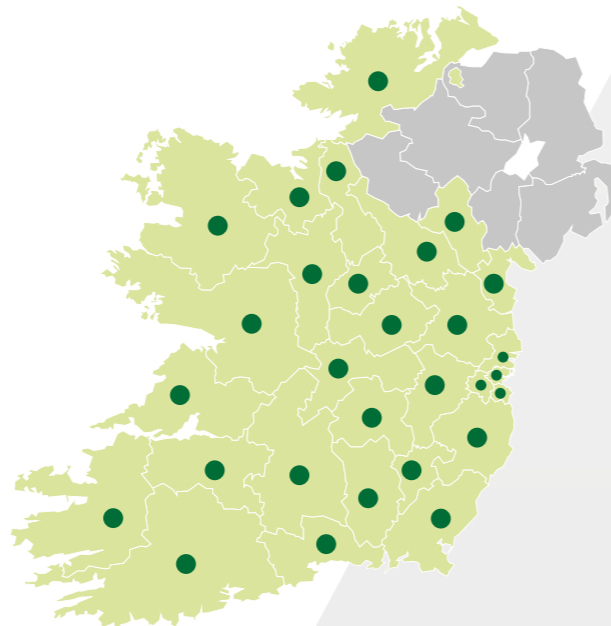
FAI REGIONAL BASED FOOTBALL DIVISIONS



IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS: ENGAGEMENT WITH THE WHOLE GAME

Regular and consistent communication and engagement around the country has been a key part of the approach for phase 1 of the consultation and will continue in phase 2 and 3.

- Regional and local consultation and briefings to stay connected to the delivery of the plan
- Every county over the first 3-year cycle



IMPLEMENTATION & MEASUREMENT

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS: KPI'S, MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

Specific Key Performance indicators (KPI's) will be developed in phase 2 of the consultation to support the overall approach to measurement and evaluation.





INVESTMENT

INVESTMENT

INVESTMENT APPROACH A 3 TIER MODEL

Investment will be required at different stages of the delivery of the strategy and will be secured within three key areas: FAI, Football Stakeholders, Government (and other sources).

FAI	FOOTBALL STAKEHOLDERS	NEW PARTNERS
€COST NEUTRAL	INCREMENTAL INVESTMENT	NEW INVESTMENT
Current budgets and resources used differently to more effectively align to FPP plan	Utilising funding from Football Stakeholders to fund projects	Sources from government (and existing funding mechanisms), private investors
EXAMPLE SOURCES	EXAMPLE SOURCES	EXAMPLE SOURCES
Existing Funding Budget and Resources	UEFA Hatrick FIFA Talent Development Scheme FIFA Amateur eco system analysis	Private Investment Government
EXAMPLE PROJECTS	EXAMPLE PROJECTS	EXAMPLE PROJECTS
FAI led player development Workforce and resources Club Mark / League Mark / Academy Mark	UEFA Hatrick FIFA Talent Development Scheme FIFA Amateur eco system analysis	National Football Centre Academy Development Full time football and education programmes Facilities Equipment (balls, goals etc...)



SUMMARY

SUMMARY

SUMMARY: 7 KEY MESSAGES FOR THE FOOTBALL PATHWAYS PLAN

We have identified 7 key messages to summarise the Football Pathways Plan.

- 1** A CONSULTATIVE & COLLABORATIVE APPROACH
- 2** A WHOLE GAME PLAN
- 3** SHORT, MEDIUM & LONG-TERM STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS
- 4** INCREASED PARTICIPATION IN ALL AREAS
- 5** CLEARER PATHWAYS FOR ALL
- 6** MAXIMISED POTENTIAL AT EVERY LEVEL & IN EVERY AREA
- 7** POSITIVELY EVOLVING ROLE OF THE FAI, THE REGIONS, LEAGUES, & CLUBS



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