



CANADA SOCCER

INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE FOR OUR SPORT

A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

As leaders, we are proud to stand behind this plan. It reflects the voices of our community, the expertise of our partners, and the dedication of those who believe that soccer can and must be a sport for every Canadian.

Our role as leaders is to ensure this plan is not just published, but lived. That means holding ourselves accountable, embedding equity into our decision-making, and dedicating the necessary resources to create meaningful and lasting change. It also means listening – to players, coaches, officials, staff, and communities across the country – and ensuring their perspectives shape how we move forward.

This plan lays out clear goals and actions. Our responsibility is to champion them at every level of our organization, to model inclusive leadership, and to ensure that progress is measured and communicated with transparency.

We recognize that success will not come from one initiative or one team alone, but through collective effort across our entire soccer ecosystem. We commit to leading that effort.

Together, with our members, partners, and communities, we will build a game that truly reflects the richness of Canada – a game where everyone belongs, and everyone has the opportunity to thrive.



PETER AGRUSO
PRESIDENT & BOARD CHAIR



KEVIN BLUE
CEO & GENERAL SECRETARY



FOREWORD

At Canada Soccer, we believe the strength of our game is measured not just in wins, goals, or trophies, but in how many people it welcomes. Equity, diversity, and inclusion are not optional values, they are the foundation for how we grow soccer and shape its future across the country. Soccer is already the most accessible and global sport, but in Canada it has the power to go even further: to bring together people of every background, culture, gender, and ability into one game where everyone belongs.

We know the journey requires more than words. It's about creating real pathways, breaking down barriers, and addressing the inequities that exist in sport. From grassroots programs in local communities to development opportunities for underrepresented groups in coaching and officiating, we are committed to building structures that ensure fairness, representation, and access for all. Equity means removing obstacles. Diversity means reflecting the Canada we live in. Inclusion means everyone feels like they have a place on the pitch - and a voice in shaping the future of the game.

By embedding these principles into every level of Canadian soccer, we are doing more than changing how the sport looks today, we are building a legacy for tomorrow. A legacy where young players can see themselves represented in the heroes on the national stage, where families feel welcomed in the stands, and where communities recognize soccer as a place of unity and pride. This is our commitment: to create a game that doesn't just reflect the richness of Canada, but elevates it, making soccer a force for connection, empowerment, and change for generations to come.



CANADA'S FASTEST GROWING GAME



1M

NEARLY 1 MILLION PARTICIPANTS NATIONWIDE

Canada Soccer reports close to 1,000,000 active participants across about 1,200 clubs in all 13 provincial/territorial members—making soccer the largest participatory sport in the country.



POPULARITY AMONG YOUTH CONTINUES TO GROW

Soccer is the most frequently played sport by Canadian children aged 3–17, with about 16% of youth (roughly 1 million of 6.1 million children) participating in organized soccer.



FAVOURED IN DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Soccer is the most common sport among Arab Canadians (40%) and the second most popular among Black Canadians (31%), highlighting its role in engaging diverse communities.



SURPASSING OTHER SPORTS IN YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Approximately 767,000 youth aged 3–17 played organized soccer—making soccer the number one team sport among Canadian youth.



GROWING FAN BASE

As of 2022, more than 4 million Canadians tune in to major soccer events featuring Canada, with an increasing number beginning to identify as soccer fans.

Sources:

<https://canadasoccer.com/about-landing-page>
<https://www.sportsnet.ca/soccer/article/study-soccer-most-popular-sport-among-canadian-kids-post-pandemic>
<https://www.statcan.gc.ca/01/en/plus/6448-kicking-around-soccer-stats>
<https://worldfootballindex.com/2022/08/the-growth-of-soccer-in-canada-ahead-of-2022>

WHY IT MATTERS



SOCCER IS CANADA'S MOST ACCESSIBLE SPORT

As Canada's fastest growing sport and with strong popularity among immigrant families, soccer thrives when it reflects Canada's diverse communities. Ensuring equity means the game stays open and welcoming to all.



REPRESENTATION BUILDS BELIEF

When girls, newcomers, and underrepresented groups see themselves on the field, in coaching, and in leadership, it fuels participation and inspires the next generation of players and fans.



DIVERSITY STRENGTHENS THE GAME

Different perspectives bring new styles, ideas, and energy. Teams, clubs, and organizations that embrace diversity see stronger performance, richer culture, and more creativity on and off the pitch.



INCLUSION UNLOCKS GROWTH

Equitable development pathways, from grassroots to national teams, ensure no talent is left behind. Inclusion is not just fairness; it's essential to growing the game in every community across Canada.



SOCCER CAN LEAD SOCIAL CHANGE

As Canada's most diverse sport, soccer has a unique platform to model equity and inclusion for the country. By embedding EDI, the game doesn't just reflect Canada - it helps shape a stronger, more united future.

A large, dark, close-up image of a soccer ball, showing the texture of the panels and the stitching, serves as the background for the text.

**“SOCCER IS THE PEOPLE’S GAME,
AND WE ALL BELONG.”**

CHRISTINE SINCLAIR

INCLUSION INCORPORATED REVIEW



As part of Canada Soccer's ongoing commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, we partnered with Inclusion Incorporated, a leading consultancy specializing in building inclusive systems and cultures. Their expertise has been instrumental in guiding our process – from benchmarking against global best practices to engaging constituents and auditing our policies and programs, and guiding the framework development. This collaboration ensures that our EDI framework is not only aspirational but also practical, measurable, and aligned with the lived experiences of the diverse communities we serve.

SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

- 1 Growing awareness, uneven confidence:** Most respondents recognize the importance of equity, diversity and inclusion, but fewer feel confident in how to apply it within their role.
- 2 Barriers still exist:** Participants highlighted access, representation, and system bias as the main challenges to creating an equitable soccer environment.
- 3 Desire for clearer pathways:** Strong appetite for more resources, policies, and education that make inclusion tangible at both grassroots and leadership levels.
- 4 Value of training and tools:** Respondents indicated that foundational training and practical tools are critical to shifting culture and ensuring accountability.
- 5 Culture of belonging as a priority:** The strongest driver of inclusion cited was fostering a sense of belonging across players, coaches, officials and fans, with emphasis on ensuring diverse voices are represented.

OUR GOALS

PRACTICE TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

EMBED AN EQUITY LENS

INCREASE ENGAGEMENT & SUPPORT

STEPS TAKEN

1

FOUNDATIONAL TRAINING

2

EDI AUDIT

3

ESTABLISH THE WORKING GROUP

4

CONSTITUENT FOCUS GROUPS

5

DEVELOP STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



OUR PROCESS

1

FOUNDATIONAL TRAINING

Setting the base for lasting change

KEY ACTIONS TAKEN:

- Introduction to inclusion session to level set leadership and staff with key terms and outline priorities.
- Examined systemic “isms” and microaggressions in sport environments and provided tangible strategies to mitigate bias.
- Explored traits of inclusive leadership and their role in workplace culture. This highlighted the impact of leadership on employee inclusion experiences.
- Equipped leaders with tools to practice inclusive leadership daily.



OUR PROCESS

2

EDI AUDIT

Internal analysis of EDI factors

KEY ACTIONS TAKEN:

- Established Global Diversity Equity and INclusion Benchmark to measure organizational maturity in EDI.
- Conducted an Inclusion Index as a survey based tool to offer data-driven insights to track progress over time.
- Executed an event audit through an equity and inclusion lens – identifying opportunities to make gatherings more welcoming and impactful.
- Examined internal policies, guidelines, and communication for inclusive language and practices.



OUR PROCESS

3

ESTABLISH THE WORKING GROUP

Diverse representation from across the system

KEY ACTIONS TAKEN:

- Identified core objectives and scope for the group, focusing in from 73 items.
- Recruited members from across the soccer ecosystem.
- Prioritized inclusion of diverse voices across region, level of play, and lived experience.
- Conducted discovery sessions to gather perspectives, define priorities, and surface priorities.



OUR PROCESS



CONSTITUENT FOCUS GROUPS

Interviews conducted within the ecosystem

KEY ACTIONS TAKEN:

- One-on-one qualitative interviews were undertaken between June and July 2024.
- One focus group was facilitated in July 2024.
- Interview participants were asked to reflect on their experiences with Canada Soccer and about the organization's culture and opportunities they think exist for Canada Soccer in creating an inclusive environment.





OUR PROCESS



DEVELOP STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Defining the path forward

KEY ACTIONS TAKEN:

- Set Goals & Pillars by defining a clear vision for EDI with core pillars like representation, access, inclusive culture, and accountability.
- Consulted constituents, audit policies and events, and aligned structures with global DEI benchmarks.
- Established the action plan and metrics (e.g., participation, leadership diversity, inclusion index scores) to track progress consistently.

STRATEGIC PILLARS

PRACTICE ACCOUNTABILITY & TRANSPARENCY	EMBED AN EQUITY LENS	INCREASE ENGAGEMENT & SUPPORT
Canada Soccer integrates diverse lived experiences into decision-making, upholds accountability, and prioritizes transparent communication in its governance and operations.	Canada Soccer applies an equity lens to its policies, procedures, and processes to address exclusion and promote inclusion.	Canada Soccer develops guidelines, resources, mechanisms, and tools to enhance its understanding of experiences and support equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts across the soccer ecosystem.

THE RESULT

Through this process, it became clear that Canada Soccer must be intentional in defining its EDI vision, pillars, and goals, while also setting realistic metrics to measure progress. As a National Sport Organization, we have a responsibility to identify what is achievable, align resources to support these initiatives, and ensure that programs are both sustainable and impactful across all levels of the game.

THE CANADA SOCCER EDI 2025-2028 PLAN IS THE RESULT OF THIS WORK,
REFLECTING A THOUGHTFUL AND COLLABORATIVE PROCESS.

ACTION PLAN



**CANADA SOCCER COMMITS TO ENGAGING IN
COLLECTIVE IMPACT TO CREATE
EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR
INDIVIDUALS THROUGHOUT THE SOCCER
ECOSYSTEM.**

STRATEGIC PILLARS

1

PRACTICE ACCOUNTABILITY & TRANSPARENCY

Canada Soccer integrates diverse lived experiences into decision-making, upholds accountability, and prioritizes transparent communication in its governance and operations.

2

EMBED AN EQUITY LENS

Canada Soccer applies an equity lens to its policies, procedures, and processes to address exclusion and promote inclusion.

3

INCREASE ENGAGEMENT & SUPPORT

Canada Soccer develops guidelines, resources, mechanisms, and tools to enhance its understanding of experiences and support equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts across the soccer ecosystem.



STRATEGIC PILLARS

1 PRACTICE ACCOUNTABILITY & TRANSPARENCY

OVERVIEW:

Canada Soccer integrates diverse lived experiences into decision-making, upholds accountability, and prioritizes transparent communication in its governance and operations.

OBJECTIVES SUMMARY:

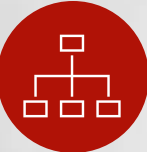
Canada Soccer has reporting and investigations processes that are culturally competent and trauma-informed

Leadership and governance structures and practices incorporate understandings of EDI

Canada Soccer works to make the public aware of its commitments and progress related to EDI work



PRACTICE ACCOUNTABILITY & TRANSPARENCY



OBJECTIVE 1: EDI STRUCTURE & IMPLEMENTATON

GOALS	ACTION	OUTCOME
Canada Soccer has reporting and investigations processes that are culturally competent and trauma-informed	Develop a flowchart to support the investigations process outlined in the Disciplinary Code	Flowchart is developed
Leadership and governance structures and practices incorporate understandings of EDI	Provide the Governance Committee with the EDI policy and document review to support the integration of EDI principles	Implementation of the recommendations from the governance review align with legal requirements and EDI wise practices

PRACTICE ACCOUNTABILITY & TRANSPARENCY



OBJECTIVE 2: LEADERSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY

GOALS	ACTION	OUTCOME
Leadership and governance structures and practices incorporate understandings of EDI	Senior staff performance evaluations include EDI considerations	EDI considerations are integrated into matrixes
	Senior leaders (staff) participate in an exercise that requires them to reflect on social identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability) and their impact on workplace dynamics and opportunities, as well as access to soccer	Understandings of different lived experiences increase among senior leaders (staff)

STRATEGIC PILLARS

2

EMBED AN EQUITY LENS

OVERVIEW:

Canada Soccer applies an equity lens to its policies, procedures, and processes to address exclusion and promote inclusion.

OBJECTIVES SUMMARY:

Employment practices support the recruitment and retention of a workforce that is reflective of the broader soccer community

Individuals employed by or affiliated with Canada Soccer are provided with equitable access to opportunities

The principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are integrated into all policies, procedures, and processes



EMBED EQUITY LENS



OBJECTIVE 3: RECRUITMENT, RETENTION & DEVELOPMENT

GOALS	ACTION	OUTCOME
Employment practices support the recruitment and retention of a workforce that is reflective of the broader soccer community	Post all open positions to job boards that provide employment services to different equity-denied groups	All open roles reach a more diverse pool of candidates Diversity of applicant pools increase
	Develop an EDI learning module as part of the staff onboarding process	Every staff member starts with a shared foundation of inclusion
	Integrate EDI considerations into job descriptions	Job descriptions consider how people with/of different identities, lived experiences, cultures, and backgrounds may perceive job-specific criteria Applicants have an improved understanding of what they can expect in Canada Soccer's hiring process

EMBED EQUITY LENS



OBJECTIVE 4: INCLUSIVE CULTURE

GOALS	ACTION	OUTCOME
The principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are integrated into all policies, procedures, and processes	Review and revise Code of Conduct and Ethics through an EDI lens	Code is developed Staff have a greater understanding of expectations of behaviour
	Develop and implement a Trans and Non-Binary Inclusion Policy to remove systemic barriers to participation	Policy is developed and implemented
	The Board Nomination Process will be revised to incorporate equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) criteria, ensuring clarity and transparency in how these factors are considered to promote fair and inclusive decision-making	Selection matrix is updated to reflect EDI considerations
Individuals employed by or affiliated with Canada Soccer are provided with equitable access to opportunities	Create formal processes for staff, board members, coaches, athletes, etc. to indicate needs and requests for travel including accommodation requirements, accessibility requirements, washroom/changeroom access, and rooming requests	Processes are developed and shared Understandings of the unique needs of individuals increase and a great number of needs (e.g., regarding accessibility, well-being) are met

EMBED EQUITY LENS



OBJECTIVE 5: ESTABLISH RESOURCES

GOALS	ACTION	OUTCOME
The principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are integrated into all policies, procedures, and processes	Develop and implement an EDI Policy	Policy is developed and implemented
	Develop an Accommodations Policy	Policy is developed and implemented
	Continue to develop an Employee Handbook using accessibility and equity lenses	Employee Handbook is increasingly reflective of EDI and accessibility wise practices
	Identify and apply for grants and funding to support the implementation of EDI-related projects	There are more resources available to support the implementation of ongoing EDI programs, initiatives, activities, etc

STRATEGIC PILLARS

3 INCREASE ENGAGEMENT & SUPPORT

OVERVIEW:

Canada Soccer develops guidelines, resources, mechanisms, and tools to enhance its understanding of experiences and support equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts across the soccer ecosystem.

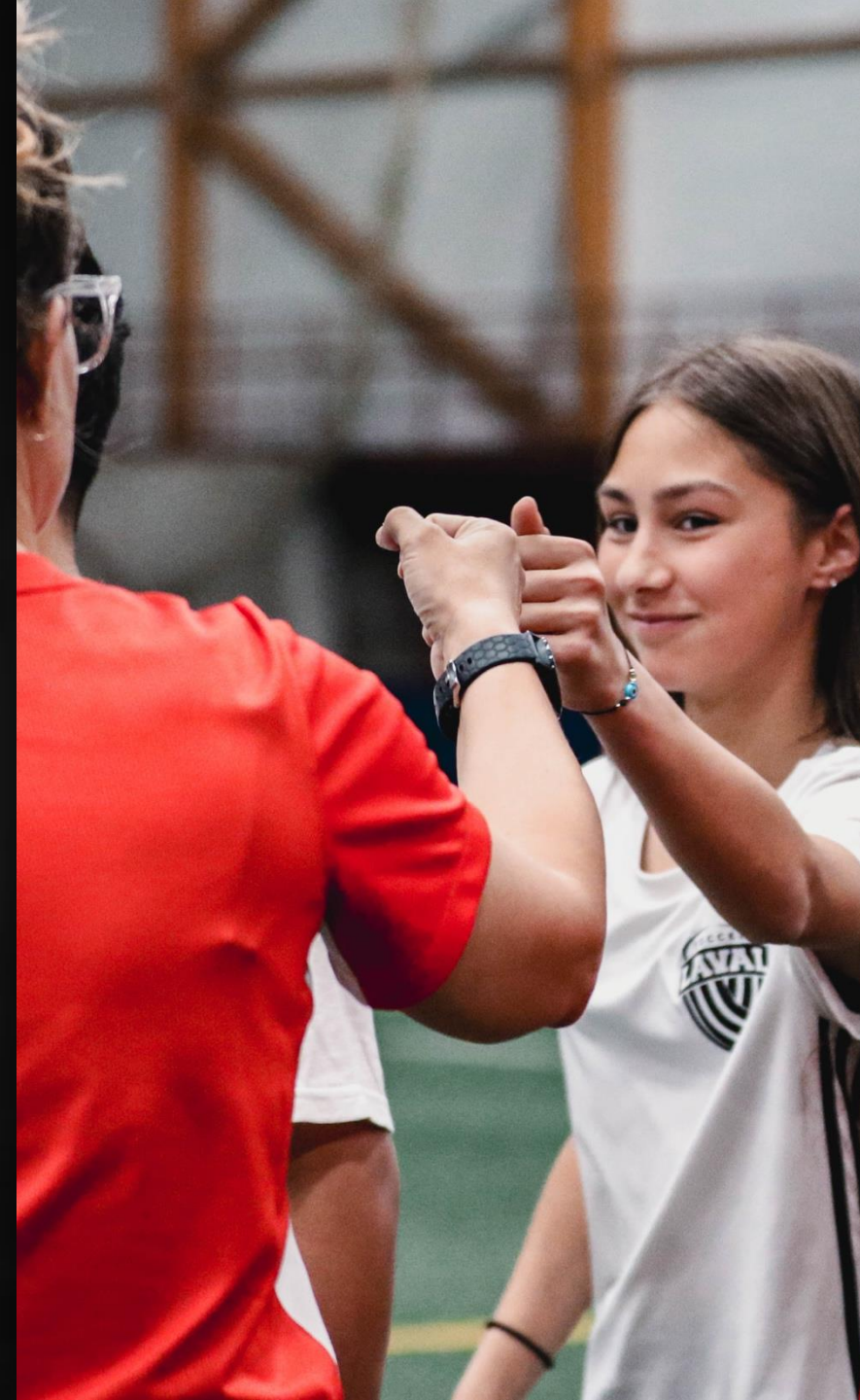
OBJECTIVES SUMMARY:

Canada Soccer tracks and understands diverse experiences to support data-driven decision-making

Canada Soccer develops guidelines, resources, and processes that centre equity and address exclusion

Canada Soccer increases engagement and consultation across the organization and soccer community

Canada Soccer creates programming and partnerships that consider diversity





INCREASE ENGAGEMENT & SUPPORT



OBJECTIVE 6: TRUTH & RECONCILIATION

GOALS	ACTION	OUTCOME
Canada Soccer creates programming and partnerships that consider diversity	Develop an Indigenous Working Group to support Truth and Reconciliation work within Canada Soccer and determine recommendations and next steps.	An individual/group is engaged to guide Canada Soccer's Reconciliation efforts Reconciliation is a priority for Canada Soccer
Canada Soccer develops guidelines, resources, and processes that centre equity and address exclusion	Develop event guidelines that incorporate Reconciliation (e.g., land acknowledgements, connection with Indigenous communities), accessibility, and equity considerations	Guidelines are developed and consistently utilized by Canada Soccer Guidelines are shared with PTSOs



INCREASE ENGAGEMENT & SUPPORT



OBJECTIVE 7: FRENCH & COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

GOALS	ACTION	OUTCOME
Canada Soccer develops guidelines, resources, and processes that centre equity and address exclusion	Develop internal standards regarding French communication and material requirements	Guidelines/standards are developed
Canada Soccer increases engagement and consultation across the organization and soccer community	Build reciprocal relationships with community groups who support, serve, or creating soccer programming for equity-denied groups	Mutually beneficial relationships are developed and maintained with community groups
	Actively engage with players on equity, diversity, and inclusion by sharing resources, offering support, and working closely with coaches to foster an inclusive environment	Communication is improved. National team programs understand the priorities and perspectives of Canada Soccer as an organization and feel supported with EDI

MEASURING SUCCESS

IN 2028, CANADA SOCCER WILL COMPLETE ANOTHER GDEIB AND INCLUSION INDEX TO COMPARE AND CONTRAST AGAINST THE ONE CONDUCTED EARLY 2024. THIS WILL SERVE AS A BASELINE AND INDICATE PROGRESS MADE.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE FUTURE

UNITING THROUGH THE GAME

- Build an inclusive pipeline that inspires every community to play and stay in the sport
- Unlock Canada's full potential by elevating diverse talent from grassroots to the world stage

SHAPING THE FUTURE

- Position Canada Soccer as a global leader in equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Drive generational change that leaves a lasting legacy of fairness and opportunity

A SPORT FOR EVERY CANADIAN

- Ensure every player, coach, official, and fan sees themselves reflected in the game
- Foster a culture of belonging where soccer is celebrated as a movement for unity and pride



