



CLOSE THE GAP

WOMEN & GIRLS STRATEGY

Driving Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity Across the Game

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OBJECTIVE

Canada Soccer's Women and Girls Strategy is a formal commitment to closing the gender gap in participation and leadership — and increasing the visibility of women and girls in soccer across Canada.

THE CHALLENGE

Women and girls remain underrepresented in soccer, both in participation and leadership. Girls' involvement in sports trails behind boys and drops sharply by adolescence.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Soccer is Canada's most played sport, and interest in women's sport is surging.

STRATEGIC FOCUS - FIVE FACTORS GUIDE THE INITIATIVE:

- Increase Participation: Make soccer accessible for every girl and woman.
- Promote Women and Girls in Soccer: Celebrate their stories and amplify their voices.
- Increase Opportunities for Women in Roles: Open more pathways for women to lead and succeed.
- Increase Transparency and Trust in Governance: Lead with openness, equity, and accountability.
- Improve Development and Performance: Invest in growth, coaching, and long-term success.

OUTCOME

A stronger, more inclusive soccer system where every woman and girl in Canada can play, lead, and belong in soccer.



THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE



**NEARLY 4/10
CANADIAN GIRLS,
ARE NOT PLAYING
ANY SPORT AT ALL,
RISING TO 5/10
BY AGE 16**



**OVER 20% OF GIRLS
DROP OUT OF SPORT
DURING ADOLESCENCE,
WITH PARTICIPATION
SHARPLY DECLINING
IN THE LATE TEENS**



BUT DESPITE THIS TREND,

**40% OF GIRLS ARE
MORE INTERESTED
THEN EVER IN
PLAYING SPORTS,
AND 70% EXPRESS
INTEREST AS FANS**

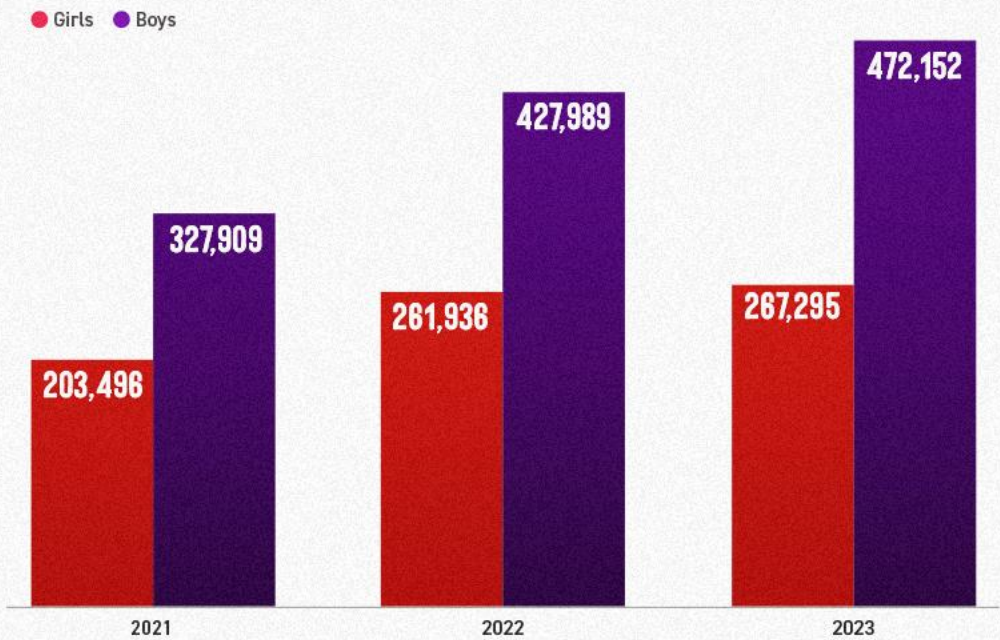




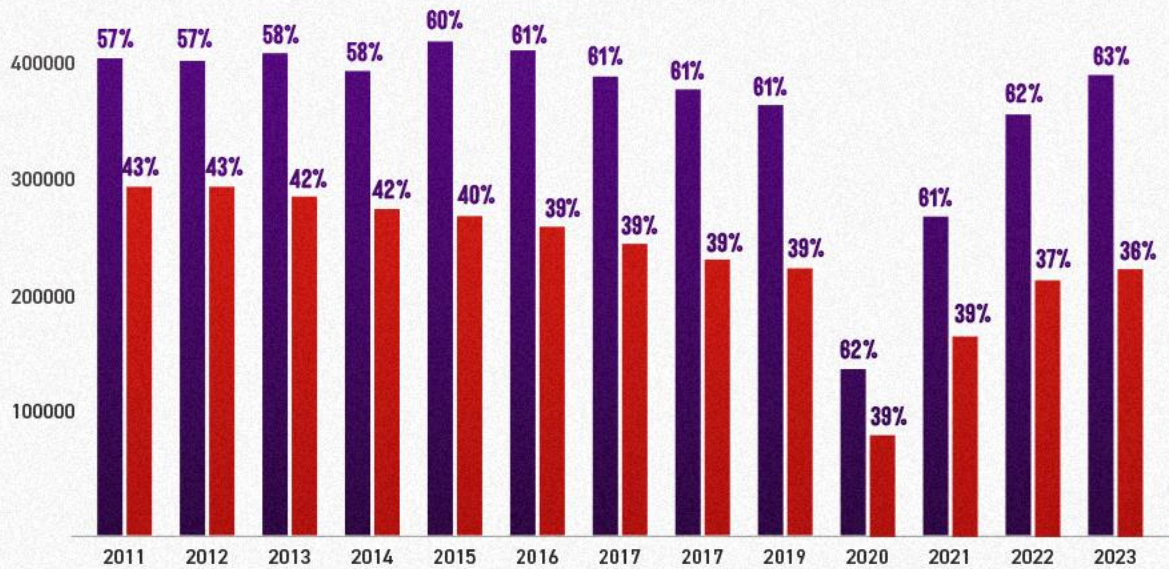
THE PARTICIPATION GAP IS WIDENING

We need to reverse this trend – to continue to see growth in boys/men but comparative growth in girls/women.

REGISTERED PLAYERS BY GENDER



PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER



WHY IT MATTERS

WHY IT MATTERS

REPRESENTATION DRIVES PARTICIPATION

When women and girls see themselves reflected on the field and in leadership, they're more likely to get involved – and stay involved.

EQUITY STRENGTHENS THE ENTIRE SYSTEM

Inclusion isn't just fair – it drives better decisions, builds stronger teams, and creates a more resilient soccer ecosystem at every level.

SOCCER IS GROWING – INCLUSION MUST GROW WITH IT

As Canada's fastest growing sport, soccer must offer pathways that meet the needs of all players, not just some.

SPORT EMPOWERS BEYOND THE GAME

Participation builds confidence, leadership, and lifelong health. For girls and women, that impact can be transformational.

CANADA SOCCER MUST LEAD THE WAY

As a national sport organization, we have both the influence and responsibility to raise the standard for equity across the country.



WHY NOW?



WHY NOW?

CURRENT MOMENTUM

GLOBAL VISIBILITY OF WOMEN'S SPORT IS GROWING

Canada's women's national soccer team is a global powerhouse – gold at Tokyo 2020, plus bronze medals in both 2012 and 2016 at the Olympics.

CANADA'S WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAMS ARE INSPIRING A GENERATION

The time to shape the future is now. Waiting means falling behind.

WHY NOW?

CURRENT MOMENTUM

TIMING WITH NATIONAL AND GLOBAL ALIGNMENT

Aligning with global best practices. FIFA, Canadian Women & Sport, and Sport Canada frameworks call for action.

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

We're consistently ranked among the top 10 in the FIFA world rankings.



THE PROCESS

DEFINING A CLEAR STRATEGY

WOMEN IN SOCCER SURVEY RESULTS

BARRIERS FOR WOMEN & GIRLS NATIONAL SURVEY CONDUCTED FOR CANADA SOCCER BY ABACUS

1

Overall, the women and girls we surveyed have had positive experiences and have felt supported throughout their participation in soccer.

2

There are some overarching feelings around men and men's soccer receiving more opportunities, education, respect, funding and resources within the soccer community.

3

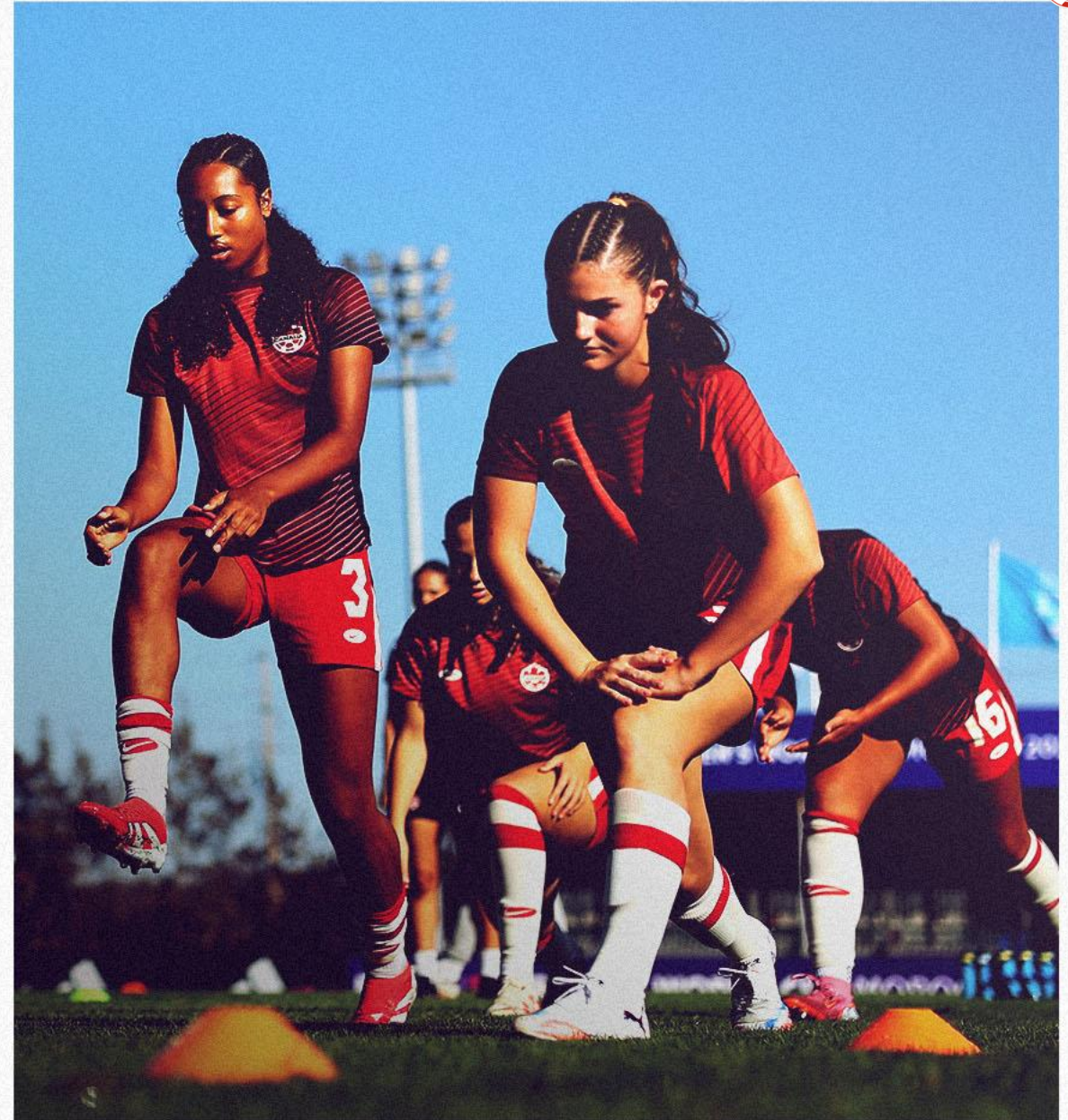
Women and girls would like to see more representation from other women in soccer in general, and in leadership and mentorship positions.

4

There is uncertainty surrounding future opportunities and advancements in soccer for women and girls, especially regarding established pathways to participating in a Professional Women's Soccer League.

5

Any and all initiatives to support women's and girls' involvement in and opportunities for advancement in soccer are welcomed.



OUR GOALS

INCREASE PARTICIPATION

PROMOTE WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SOCCER

INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN ROLES

INCREASE TRANSPARENCY AND TRUST IN GOVERNANCE

IMPROVE DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE

OUR PROCESS

1. ESTABLISH THE WORKING GROUP
2. DATA & LITERATURE REVIEW
3. EXTERNAL AUDIT OF GLOBAL STRATEGIES
4. SWOT ANALYSIS
5. GAP ANALYSIS
6. SECURE BUY-IN
7. DEVELOP STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK





OUR PROCESS

1 ESTABLISH THE WORKING GROUP

Diverse representation from across the system

KEY ACTIONS TAKEN:

- Identified core objectives and scope for the group.
- Recruited members from across the soccer ecosystem—clubs, athletes, administrators, coaches, and community leaders.
- Prioritized inclusion of diverse voices across region, level of play, and lived experience.
- Conducted discovery sessions to gather perspectives, define priorities, and surface shared challenges.

SARA MCCONAGHY LEAD, CANADA SOCCER WOMEN & GIRLS STRATEGY (DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, CANADA SOCCER)	BRYNN NASH ASSOCIATE, CANADA SOCCER WOMEN & GIRLS STRATEGY (COORDINATOR, PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, CANADA SOCCER)	
ALEX VALERIO (MANAGER OF CLUB LICENSING, CANADA SOCCER / MASTER COACH DEVELOPER)	CATHERINE LEVASSEUR (ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER, SOCCER QUEBEC)	DAVE NUTT (DIRECTOR, DEVELOPMENT, CANADA SOCCER)
DIANA MATHESON (WNT ALUMNI, FOUNDER NSL)	DRANN PEGORARO (LANG CHAIR IN SPORT MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH/ONTARIO SOCCER BOARD MEMBER)	TAYLOR PEISER (HEAD COACH, WOMEN'S SOCCER, CARLETON UNIVERSITY/COACH DEVELOPER)
LINDSAY MACASKILL (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SOCCER NOVA SCOTIA)	LAURA ARMSTRONG (SENIOR DIRECTOR, COMMUNICATIONS, CPL & CSB)	FARKHUNDA MUHTAJ (FOOTBALLER, CALGARY WILD FC)

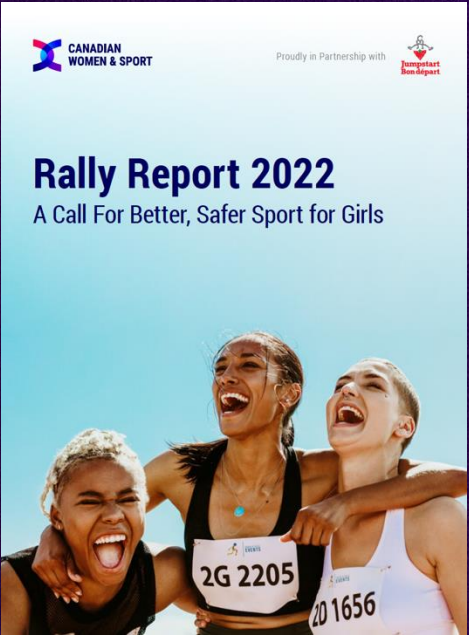
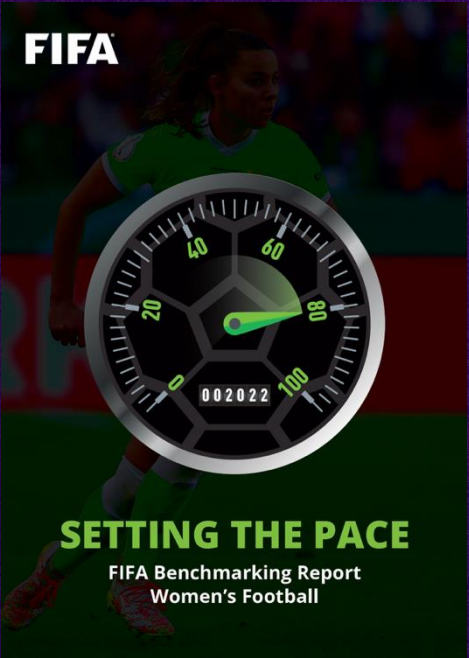
OUR PROCESS

2 DATA AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Registration trends, fall 2023 survey, global best practices

KEY ACTIONS TAKEN:

- Conducted a comprehensive review of historical and current registration data to identify trends across age, region, and participation levels.
- Launched a national survey to gather input from players, parents, coaches, and administrators.
- Audited literature from other leading organizations.



RAISING THE BAR



OUR PROCESS

3 EXTERNAL SCAN OF GLOBAL STRATEGIES

FA, US Soccer, Football Australia, FIFA frameworks

KEY ACTIONS TAKEN:

- Performed an extensive scan of global soccer federations to benchmark best practices.
- Identified recurring themes across federations, such as women in roles, governance and trust and accessible pathways.

FIFA GAME PLAN & TACTICS (WOMEN)

Pillar	Summary
DEVELOP & GROW	FIFA will support member associations in developing football locally to retain and grow female participation in football, and do all that is necessary to ensure that girls and women have clear pathways to play and grow the game
SHOWCASE	In order to improve the appeal of women's football to players, fans and commercial partners, FIFA will optimise its competitions to ensure that the best players and teams are showcased and that there is an effective means to develop the future stars of the women's game
COMMUNICATE & COMMERCIALIZE	FIFA will broaden the commercial value
GOVERN & LEAD	FIFA will broaden the decision-making at the regulatory framework of the women's game
EDUCATE & EMPOWER	FIFA will harness the highlight football's power around the world

Grassroots/Increasing Participation

Improving Performance

Diversity & Inclusion

Other

Women in all Roles

Governance, CSR, Transparency, and Trust

Communication, Digitalization, and Marketing

ENGLAND (WOMEN)

Pillar	Summary
EARLY PARTICIPATION	Every primary aged girl in school and clubs
ELITE DOMESTIC LEAGUES AND COMPETITIONS	Win at national level, viewership, new and
NATIONAL LEVEL - ENGLAND	Win a major tournament
COACHING	Exceptional coaches: representative of our
REFEREEING	All female referees a development opportunities from the grassroots to the elite level of the game
FOOTBALL FOR ALL	Identify, develop, and support local leaders to increase football participation from diverse and disabled communities
DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPATION	Every girl aged 11-14 to have equal access to participate, compete and excel in the game
CLUB PLAYER PATHWAY	An effective high-performance, inclusive player-centred pathway

FRANCE (WOMEN)

Pillar	Summary
OPTIMIZE SPORT PERFORMANCE	Develop and optimize training facilities, practice, talent detection and reinforce coaching expertise
PROMOTE FEMALE FOOTBALL	Strengthen amateur and elite female football in practice (players, coaches, referees) and in positions of power within clubs and bodies
ADOPT AN ECOLOGICALLY RESPONSIBLE POLICY	Place CSR at forefront of values
IMPROVE WAYS OF WORKING TOGETHER	Overhaul regional map and groupings has made it possible to streamline and pool management and collaboration in order to meet the clubs and members' needs
STRENGTHENING OUR COMMITMENT	Elite and amateur players, clubs, coaches, elected officials, and administrative staff: all members of French football family will be taken into account
ACCOMPANY THE AMATEUR WORLD	Budget for amateur football has doubled and funds are used for equipment, structure, training, competition assistance, transport, practicing or educational actions
REFERENCE POINT FOR INNOVATION	Carry out research and development for elite and amateur football using new technologies, particularly big data
ENHANCING INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH	International representative offices and international partnership agreements
IMPLEMENT RECREATIONAL FOOTBALL	Adapt football to people's changing lifestyles and offer new formats of play and membership





OUR PROCESS

4 SWOT ANALYSIS

Identifying what’s working, what’s missing

STRENGTHS

- PROGRESSIVE ATTITUDE
- RECOGNIZABLE HEROES AND LEADERS
- STRONG SOCCER HISTORY
- SUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP
- TIMING/MOMENTUM
- MAKING THE GAME ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL CANADIANS
- COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AT EVERY LEVEL
- SOCCER IS THE TOP PARTICIPATION SPORT IN CANADA
 - EXISTING WOMEN’S PROGRAMS
- STRONG WOMEN’S NATIONAL TEAM

WEAKNESS

- CAPACITY AND FUNDING
 - YNT TO WNT JUMP
 - SAFE SPORT ISSUES
- BOYS’ CLUB MENTALITY ACROSS REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
- LACK OF A SAFE, WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL
 - INCREASING COST OF SPORT PARTICIPATION
 - LESSER REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES (ESPECIALLY BIPOC)
- PERCEPTION OF THE ORGANIZATION AND BRAND
- SHRINKING TRADITIONAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE

OPPORTUNITIES

- GOVERNMENT AND MUNICIPALITIES PRIORITIZING EQUITY
 - UPCOMING WORLD CUPS
- GROWING EQUITY IN TEAMS (FUTSAL, ETC.)
 - LEAGUE 1 PATHWAY
- ADDED FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
- CANADIANS GROWING INTEREST IN PLAYING AT HOME
 - INCREASED DIVERSITY OF CANADIANS OVERALL
 - NSL
- BEST PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT
 - ALIGNMENT OF MA’S

THREATS

- GOVERNMENT CHANGES/DECREASE IN FUNDING FOR SPORT
 - CHANGES TO OTP FUNDING
- CULTURAL AND SOCIETAL BARRIERS
 - POVERTY RATES INCREASING
- PERSISTENT BIASES AND MYTHS IN SPORT
- A FUNDAMENTAL MISUNDERSTANDING OF WHAT EQUITY AND INCLUSION LOOK LIKE



OUR PROCESS

5 GAP ANALYSIS

Identifying what’s working, what’s missing

KEY ACTIONS TAKEN:

- Mapped current strengths and areas for improvement across Canada Soccer-led initiatives.
- Evaluated the level of strategy, funding, resourcing, data and measurable goals.
- Prioritized key opportunity areas, including entry-point access, coaching development, and long-term player support.

CURRENT PROGRAMS & POLICIES		STRATEGY	FUNDING	RESOURCES	DATA	MEASURABLE GOAL
GRASSROOTS / INCREASE PARTICIPATION	PARTICIPATION					
	Soccer in Schools					
	COACHES					
	Telus She Can Coach					
	ORGANIZATIONS					
	Club Licensing					
	Guide to Accessibility and Inclusion					
	Coach Strategy targets Women					

CURRENT PROGRAMS & POLICIES		STRATEGY	FUNDING	RESOURCES	DATA	MEASURABLE GOAL
IMPROVING PERFORMANCE	NATIONAL TEAM					
	YOUTH NATIONAL TEAMS					
	NDC / EXCEL					
	PROFESSIONAL SOCCER					
	EXTENDED NATIONAL TEAMS					
	Futsal					
	Para					
	Enational Team					
	OFFICIALS					
	Elite Development Program					
	COMPETITIONS					
	National Championships					
	PDP Championships					
	Canadian Championships					
	Legue 1 National Championship					
	Grassroots Standards					

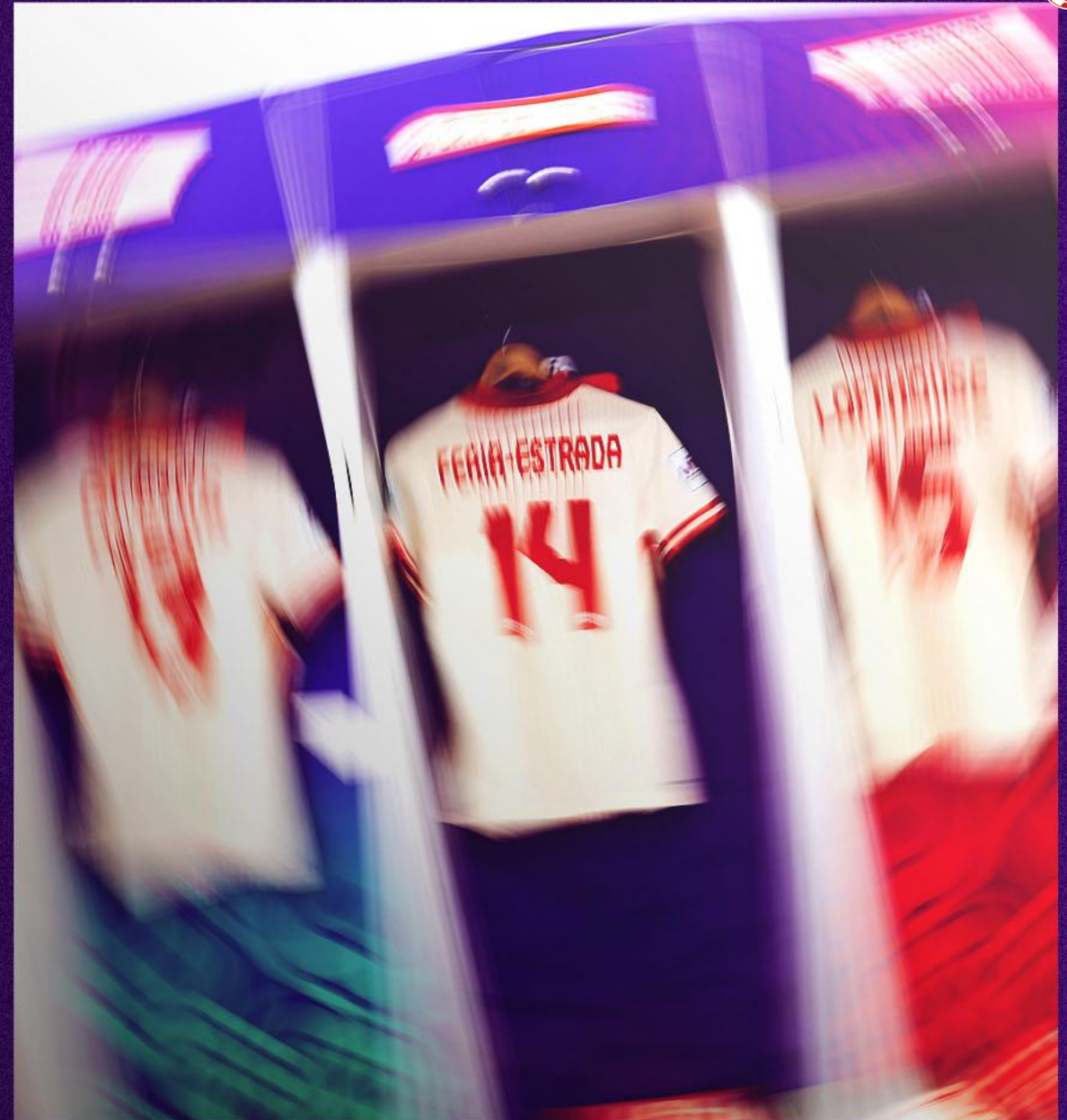
OUR PROCESS

6 **PRIORITIZE AND SECURE BUY-IN**

Getting the team on board

KEY ACTIONS TAKEN:

- Used an impact vs. feasibility matrix to assess and rank initiatives based on potential outcomes and resource requirements.
- Identified quick wins and long-term strategic priorities to balance momentum with sustainable progress.
- Secured formal endorsement and approval from executive leadership and the board to move forward with implementation.



THE RESULT

Following these steps, it became evident that Canada Soccer must be deliberate in focusing on responsibilities within its role as a National Sports Organization, while considering what is feasible to implement and how initiatives and programs will be funded and resourced.

**THE WOMEN AND GIRLS 2025-2028 PLAN IS THE RESULT OF THIS WORK,
REFLECTING A THOUGHTFUL AND COLLABORATIVE PROCESS.**



OUR VISION





SHE SHOOTS. WE SCORE

CLOSE THE GAP



GIRLS
ARE
~~FRAGILE~~
FEARLESS

CLOSE THE GAP

ONLY 1 IN 3 PLAYERS ARE GIRLS
THAT CHANGES NOW

CLOSE THE GAP

THE STRATEGY

OUR COMMITMENT

Canada Soccer is committed to advancing gender equity by increasing participation and quality leadership opportunities for women and girls at all levels of the game. Canada Soccer will bolster grassroots development and drive the high-performance framework to establish a world class ecosystem that guarantees widespread participation and excellence on the international stage.



STRATEGIC PILLARS

A thick, red, horizontal brushstroke underline that spans the width of the title text.

STRATEGIC PILLARS

GRASSROOTS/PARTICIPATION

Increase the engagement of girls and women to ensure their long-term involvement in soccer through innovative and accessible programs that reduce barriers to participation.

WOMEN IN ROLES

Increase quality opportunities for women to take on leadership roles in soccer by reducing barriers and promoting career development.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Create marketing and communications initiatives and campaigns that highlight the achievements of women and girls in soccer, promote gender equity, and engage diverse audiences through various platforms.

GOVERNANCE AND TRANSPARENCY

Implement governance practices that drive accountability, transparency, and trust in advancing women's involvement in soccer.

PERFORMANCE

Improve the overall development and performance of women players, coaches, and referees.



STRATEGIC PILLARS

GRASSROOTS/PARTICIPATION

GOAL	TACTIC
INCREASE THE ENGAGEMENT OF GIRLS AND WOMEN TO ENSURE THEIR LONG-TERM INVOLVEMENT IN SOCCER THROUGH INNOVATIVE AND ACCESSIBLE PROGRAMS THAT REDUCE BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION.	Broaden program offerings Launch a grant pilot and assist provinces, territories, and clubs in securing funding to deliver non-traditional, inclusive soccer programs tailored to girls and women.
	Evolve coach education Expand coach training to include gender-sensitive modules addressing the intersection of culture, religion, and gender. Ensure equitable representation of women coach developers in workshop delivery.
	Grow She CAN Coach Continue scaling this national initiative focused on recruiting, developing, and supporting more women in coaching roles across the country.
	Explore She CAN Ref Assess the potential for a national referee program that inspires and trains women, while fostering a support network to boost retention and advancement.



STRATEGIC PILLARS

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

GOAL	TACTIC
INCREASE QUALITY OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN TO TAKE ON LEADERSHIP ROLES IN SOCCER BY REDUCING BARRIERS AND PROMOTING CAREER DEVELOPMENT.	Expand data collection Leverage the Club Licensing Program and annual Provincial and Territorial Member Association surveys to track women’s representation and diverse experiences in leadership roles—helping to identify and close key gaps. Reintroduce the internship program Relaunch Canada Soccer’s internship initiative to give girls and women hands-on experience in coaching, officiating, and sport administration. Support provinces, territories, and clubs in creating local placements. Explore a national networking summit Conduct a feasibility study for a women in soccer summit and continue participating in national women-in-sport events to share learnings and build strong cross-sector networks. Establish a community of practice Develop a structured space for women in soccer to connect, mentor, share knowledge, and advocate for gender equity across all levels of the game.



STRATEGIC PILLARS

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

GOAL	TACTIC
CREATE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS INITIATIVES AND CAMPAIGNS THAT HIGHLIGHT THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SOCCER, PROMOTE GENDER EQUITY, AND ENGAGE DIVERSE AUDIENCES THROUGH VARIOUS PLATFORMS.	Year-round content series Launch a national campaign highlighting the many pathways in soccer beyond playing—featuring women in coaching, officiating, and leadership roles. Collaborate with partners to deliver ongoing stories that reflect the diversity of the sport. Branded identity for women’s soccer Develop a dedicated visual identity—such as a title, hashtag, or icon—to unify and elevate women’s soccer content across platforms, ensuring consistent visibility and recognition. Recognition program Establish a formal platform to celebrate the contributions of women and girls across all roles—players, coaches, officials, administrators, and volunteers—by sharing their stories through Canada Soccer’s channels and partner networks.



STRATEGIC PILLARS

GOVERNANCE & TRANSPARENCY

GOAL	TACTIC
IMPLEMENT GOVERNANCE PRACTICES THAT DRIVE ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY, AND TRUST IN ADVANCING WOMEN’S INVOLVEMENT IN SOCCER.	Annual gender equity audits Conduct annual audits to assess gender representation on boards, committees, and within senior leadership roles. Proactively take measures to ensure diversity within women representation. Gender equity scorecard for national teams Monitor and evaluate the support provided to national teams through a comprehensive gender equity scorecard.



STRATEGIC PILLARS

PERFORMANCE

GOAL	TACTIC
IMPROVE THE OVERALL DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF WOMEN PLAYERS, COACHES, AND REFEREES.	Review player pathways Ensure the player development ecosystem offers diverse opportunities and integration between amateur and professional environments.
	Funding and support for youth national teams Secure funding for youth national teams to allow for international competition, exposure, and development in line with leading nations.
	Coach support Childcare and family support fund for mothers coaching in the national team system and coach education system.
	Develop an academy system Provide governance and leadership to support the development of a women's academy program.
	Referees Continued professional development through the elite development program for top women referees, assessors and instructors.
	Coach development Continued development for aspiring women coaches and coach developers through the AccelerateHER program and engagement in the FIFA Coach Developer Pathway to ensure women have the opportunity to progress in coach education.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

BE AN ADVOCATE

Use your platform and your voice. Champion women and girls in soccer by amplifying their stories, their wins, and their leadership — on your team, in your programs, and across your community.

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES

Take action to make space for women and girls — hire them, mentor them, nominate them, or invite them in. Small actions change the game.

SHARE STORIES

Celebrate and uplift the women and girls shaping our game. Help increase visibility by highlighting the achievements and experiences of the women and girls you work with.

MEASURE AND ADAPT

Equity starts with data and honesty. Review your numbers, share data, track your progress, and set new goals. Apply what you learn to drive meaningful change within your organization and across the industry.





CLOSE THE GAP