

CHECKLIST FOR CHANGE

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE
PIPELINE TO GENDER
DIVERSITY IN
SPORT LEADERSHIP

LEADING THE SECTOR TOWARDS LASTING CHANGE

Our *Trophy Women?* research is about the present. We describe the progress that has been made towards a truly inclusive sport sector at the most senior levels, and laud some of the successes.

In contrast, the *Checklist for Change* is about the future. Building on recent progress, we call on all sports organisations to encourage and push for senior level female representation, and establish recruitment and promotion systems that give a fair chance to any deserving candidate.

Our proposed *Checklist for Change* lays out the core elements to which sports organisations should aspire, to build upon successes so far, and promote the benefits of having more women on boards and at executive level. Having a more equitable balance of men and women at senior levels of sports bodies is a clear win for us and for most in the sports sector. But it is worth spelling out the key benefits:

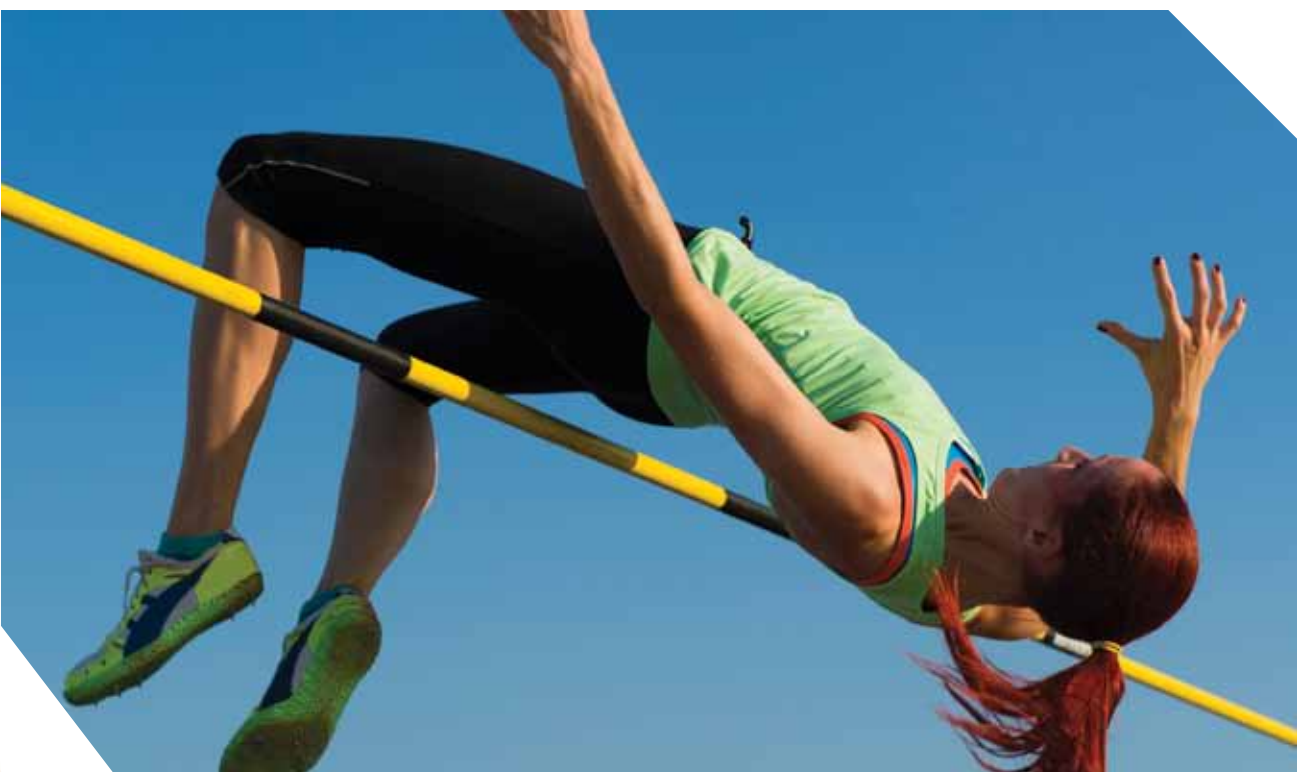
- Boards benefit from a more gender-diverse membership by adding to the variety of skills and experiences on offer. More women, and indeed a more diverse membership overall, can help boards be more forward-thinking and creative

- Encouraging women to enter sports organisations below board level will not only help to bring fresh skills and thinking to sports management, but also bring insights on how to engage more women and girls as participants and spectators of sport.

We offer this checklist as the start of the conversation, not the end. It is a temperature check for organisations, helping them to consider:

- how to better involve more women on the board
- sourcing and fostering female talent throughout sports organisations.

Here, we set out six core goals for National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and other publicly funded sports bodies to achieve. These goals are top-level by design; we aim to inspire action towards these broad goals, but will be working with partners across the sector to translate these top-line goals into detailed actions and resources. Based on our *Trophy Women?* research, we have deliberately decided against setting out a strict set of prescriptions, such as gender quotas for boards, as we feel there are more creative and positive ways to reach our goals together.



The sector needs to support flexible approaches to board recruitment and membership

Checklist for change: goals for the sector

1. Transparency across the board

All boards need to be open and transparent about their gender diversity throughout their organisations. This would include actions such as:

- publishing information about the percentage of women on their boards
- clearly outlining the justification for any differences in remuneration between board members, where applicable
- publishing information about the organisation's gender diversity at senior and middle management levels.

2. Flexibility in working practices

All boards should review their working practices, as a means to then promote a flexible approach to board membership. This might include:

- supporting flexible working
- holding meetings during conventional work hours
- offering financial support for childcare if evening or weekend meetings are essential.

3. Mentoring and role models at all levels

Sports organisations need to ensure the 'pipeline' is strong for women rising through the sport. This could include actions such as:

- ensuring progression routes are clear with 'stepping stones' to the top identified
- co-opting women onto Boards and committees, so they gain experience of these roles while the groups benefit from fresh perspectives
- providing training and mentoring to build skills and confidence
- promoting existing networks and organisations, such as Women in Sport's Women's Sport Network or Women on Boards, as means for women to gain skills and support

- providing varied female role models and case studies relevant to all levels of organisations, so it is clearer what stepping-stones exist to advancement. Rather than simply tales of 'superwomen', who many women on their way up see as unrealistic to emulate, these role models should be varied and relevant to women at different stages of their careers.

4. 'Fit-for-future' structures, terms and conditions

Sports boards should look carefully at their structures and policies, to ensure they are offering opportunities for progress, and bringing in fresh and innovative thinking. Examples of actions could include:

- ensuring succession planning is undertaken, and undertaken in an open and transparent way, based on merit
- fixed term limits for board members, to ensure new members and thinking continue to drive progress.

5. Proactive recruitment

For board members and senior managers, sports organisations should consider how to proactively reach out to talented female candidates, thinking carefully about both the channels and tone used to recruit. Women in Sport's vision is for a recruitment approach that is proactive and skills-based, so that the best candidates get a chance. This requires a careful review of what skills are required by the organisation, both now and for the future, to ensure a continuous flow of excellent and diverse talent all the way up. Actions towards truly proactive recruitment may include:

- ensuring roles at board level and below are advertised and recruited on the basis of merit, rather than informal chats or on a system of entitlement/seniority
- broaden and diversify recruitment practices to actively address new markets where prospective female candidates may be more prevalent, including outside of the sport sector

- focussing on transferable business skills appropriate to roles, rather than 'sportiness'
- using a variety of recruitment methods, such as job fairs, recruitment agencies and others.

6. Inclusive culture

Finally, while there have been great strides towards more inclusiveness and respect for women in senior positions in sports organisations, there remain some practices and perspectives that have had their day. We call on all sports organisations, particularly their board members and senior managers, to identify and challenge outmoded views of women's places in sport management. This could involve:

- ending the addition of board members simply because they have 'done their time', instead recruiting new members solely on merit
- identifying the impact of particular policies or approaches on women (such as board meeting times, as women are still more often the primary care giver), to ensure that conventional practices are not inadvertently creating barriers to women's advancement within sports organisations



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- encourage both men and women in sport to challenge sexism or other prejudices where they exist, and present a united front against entrenched or outmoded thinking.

What's next?

Above all, while this *Checklist for Change* lays out broad themes for the future, we do acknowledge the achievements made so far. These achievements have come from the dedicated efforts of both women and men throughout the sport sector. We salute the progress made so far by many NGBs and other sporting organisations, and are inspired by their examples to build an even better future for women in sport.

Over the coming months, Women in Sport would welcome the opportunity to work with CEOs, Chairs, Directors and governance experts within and beyond the sector to develop the detail behind these goals, create resources and support for organisations to help realise these goals and above all build momentum towards a truly inclusive sport sector.

We're in. Are you?



While we can feel proud of the progress made so far by the sector, we now need to look to a sustainable future in sport leadership