



IRFU

STRATEGIC PLAN

2018 - 2023

Irish Rugby: Building success, together

OUR VALUES



Irish Rugby aspires to act in a responsible manner and show leadership throughout the game by empowering the rugby family to make informed decisions and demonstrate these behaviours in all rugby related activities.

SPIRIT OF RUGBY

The Spirit of Rugby Charter sets out how the Irish Rugby family aspires to live its values through its actions in each aspect of the game from grassroots to professional rugby. The values and standards of all involved, from player, coach, volunteer to spectator are vital to the work and reputation of the game. Our values are our moral compass, on and off the pitch.

SPIRIT OF RUGBY

RESPECT

For all those involved in the rugby family, the wider community and self.

Gratitude to coaches, officials, volunteers and other leaders in the game. Discipline while playing the game. Respect for the physicality of the game and commitment to the safety of the player as paramount.

INTEGRITY

Actions on and off the pitch that are open and transparent.

We aspire to always have the best interests of the player and those involved in the game, especially youth players, at heart. In rugby we aspire to do the right thing and endeavour not to be bystanders.

INCLUSIVITY

Diversity of opinion and culture means working together to be a vibrant, respectful organisation.

Rugby is a sport of choice for all, it transcends barriers and differences of race, gender, religion and sexual orientation. Players that have a positive life-long experience of the game can remain within the Irish Rugby family throughout their lives, fulfilling roles that enable them to be the best version of themselves.

FUN

A passion for the game, on and off the pitch, rugby is a source of joy for all.

Everyone has an equal right to learn, play and administer the game and should be respected for the age and stage of development that they are at; especially youth players.

EXCELLENCE

Strive to be the best that we can be.

There may be others who play better, make better decisions and perform under pressure better, but we complete each task knowing that we could not have done more for ourselves, our team, club or school; we are comfortable in the knowledge that we are doing our best.

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INTRODUCTION

2018—2023

The Irish Rugby Football Union has long recognised the importance of planning and accountability in its approach to sustaining and developing the game of rugby across the island of Ireland. Circumstances and societal expectations are ever changing. The needs of, and opportunities for, our game reflect these evolving conditions. It is against this background that the IRFU, as the governing body for rugby in Ireland, consulted with its various stakeholders and relevant outside agencies, researched trends and considered the learnings from previous strategic assessments in its quest for improvement.

The result is the presentation of our fourth Strategic Plan, covering the period 2018–2023, and aptly titled: Irish Rugby: Building success, together.

The period of our previous Strategic Plan was one of significant success for Irish Rugby with the standout achievements seeing our senior men's team standing at No. 2 in the World, the securing of a men's grand slam and three Six Nations Championship victories, across our men's and women's teams. Our women's team qualified for the Women's Rugby World Cup Semi-Final in 2014, while our U20s progressed to the 2016 World Rugby U20 Championship Final. These achievements were accompanied by historic wins over New Zealand for our women, U20s and men's teams and the development of strong teams across women's and men's Sevens. At provincial level, Connacht secured their first Guinness PRO 12 Championship and Leinster enjoyed success in the 2018 European Champions Cup and Guinness PRO14 Championship.

The period of our previous Strategic Plan was one of significant success for Irish Rugby.

2018—2023

Off the field, Ireland staged a hugely successful Women's Rugby World Cup in 2017 and the IRFU lead the way in relation to player welfare issues such as concussion education and awareness.

The higher profile of rugby has resulted in an increase in participation, especially through Age Grade and the use of modified formats.

All cause for optimism, but of course we recognise the many challenges the game faces and we have sought to address these in this Strategic Plan as part of our effort to ensure the game, over the next five years and beyond, will be put on an even stronger footing for the generations to come.

The game continues to expand at every level and central to this expansion is funding. Currently, our professional teams, at National and Provincial level, account for 93% of the game's revenues, of this some 80% is generated by the men's international team.

This stark statistic is reassuring and concerning in equal measure; the former as it recognises the phenomenal attraction of our senior international team to television rights holders, sponsors and supporters alike, while the latter highlights the

extremely narrow base from which every other strand of the game must be funded.

Apart from the critical importance of success at the elite level, this strategic review correctly places significant emphasis on a number of key strands, identified by the IRFU as central to the future well-being of rugby in Ireland.

- Championing our core values of Respect, Integrity, Inclusivity, Fun, Excellence
- Delivering a vibrant club and school network
- Building a strong base from which to expand the women's game
- Keeping rugby at the forefront of communities across the island of Ireland
- Strengthening our commercial base
- Continued prudent financial management

In presenting this strategic plan we wish to acknowledge the ongoing support of Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland, whose funding has allowed the Union and the Provinces to deliver critical participation programmes which are key to achieving our goals.

We thank our clubs and volunteers for everything they do for rugby, and those who participated so enthusiastically in the many facets of this strategic plan. Responsibility for developing this plan rests with the Irish Rugby Football Union but its success is in the hands of the entire rugby family, from those performing at the pinnacle of the game to those organising mini rugby on Sunday mornings and the vast army of passionate rugby people at every level in between.

This Strategic Plan is about continuing to put the steps in place to allow the diverse dreams of all within the Irish Rugby family turn to reality. We invite you to share in this exciting odyssey of challenge and opportunity for rugby in Ireland.



Philip Boone



David Murray

OUR VISION

Irish Rugby:
Building success,
together

OUR MISSION

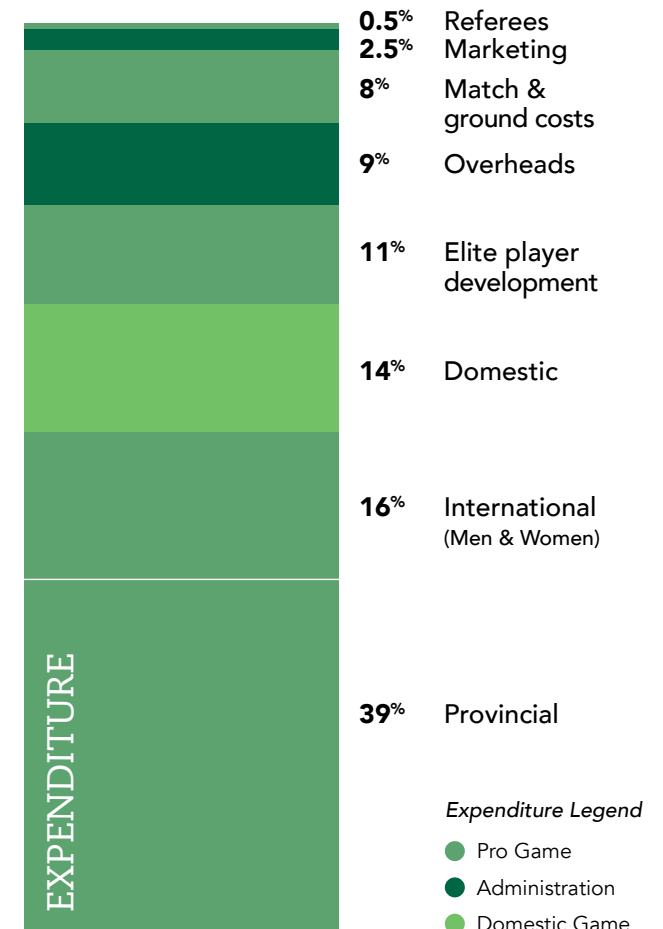
To develop and grow the game through:

- Excellence in performance
- Quality experiences
- Effective engagement
- Great people
- Strong leadership

FUNDING THE GAME

Our professional teams at a National and Provincial level continue to be the financial engine of the game in Ireland, accounting for over 93% of our revenue base.

The Men's International team generate 80% of our income and only 12.5% of our expenditure. The surplus generated through the Men's International Team provides the investment income to support every strand of the game and its development.

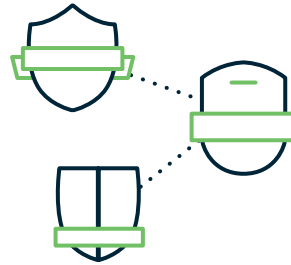


OVERVIEW OF OUR STRATEGY

Rugby: Our Core Business



Delivering Performance:
Producing winning teams



Developing the Game:
Delivering a vibrant club and school network



Women in Rugby:
Building a strong base to grow the women's game

SUPPORTING ENABLERS: ALLOWING US TO DELIVER OUR CORE BUSINESS



Keeping rugby at the forefront of Irish communities



Strengthening our commercial base



Prudent financial management



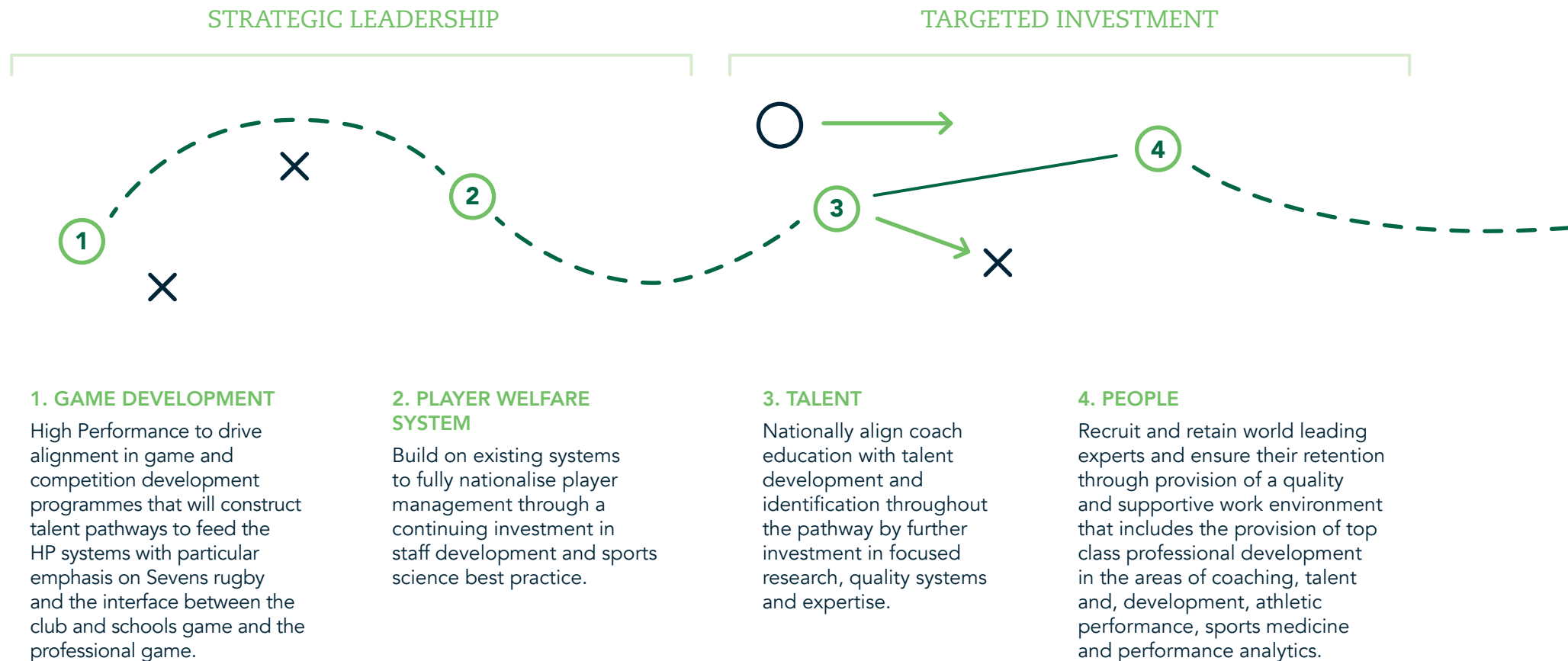
Right people, right time, right place - living our core values



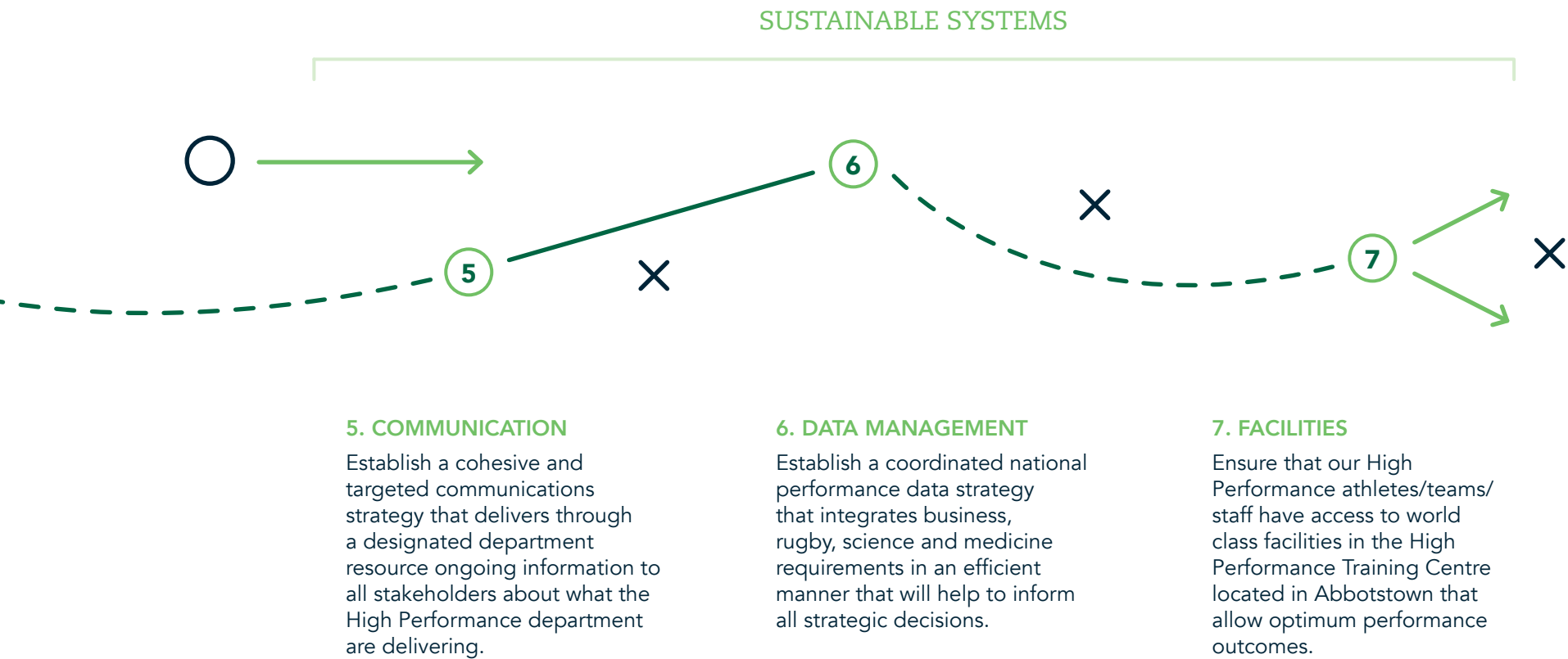
DELIVERING PERFORMANCE: PRODUCING WINNING TEAMS



High Performance Programme



High Performance Programme





Core Principles

Our vision is to drive a performance system that delivers developmental and competitive excellence.

We can only deliver our vision by adopting a truly high performing culture, which means:

WINNING MENTALITY

Our aim is to win at all times - creating winning teams and winning players is central to why we exist – This should always be our primary focus.

NO COMPROMISE

The standard of OK is not OK! – we will always strive for the highest standards possible in everything we do.

CHALLENGE

We must always question if we are doing things as well as they can be done. We will robustly review on a continual basis every aspect of the performance programme – making the tough calls when they need to be made.

SHARED GOALS

Everyone working within the performance programme will be aligned to common goals – we will adopt a 'One Team' mind-set working towards those goals – people will be made accountable with clear KPIs for delivery.

EXCELLENCE

We will benchmark ourselves to the standard of best in the world. This will be grounded in fact, based on research.

Our Headline Targets: Men's Rugby

XVs

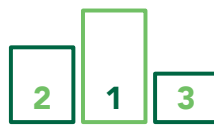
International team



World Cup
semi-final or better
in 2019 and 2023



2 or more
Six Nations titles



Consistently be
ranked in the top 3
teams in the world

Provincial teams



Teams consistently
in knockout stages
of European Cup



2 or more
European titles



2 or more
Pro 14 titles

7s

Senior team



Qualify for
Tokyo Olympics
2020



Qualify for the
World Rugby
Sevens Series



Finish the World
Rugby Sevens
Series in top
8 consistently



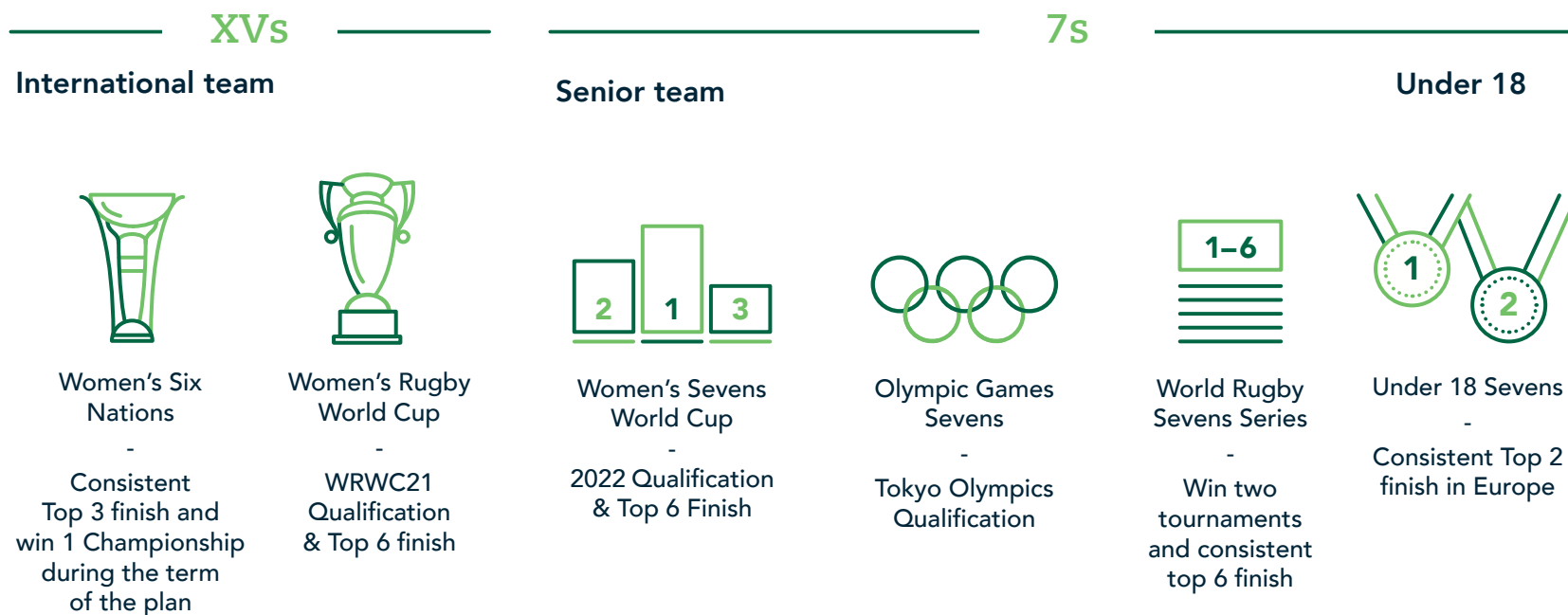
Finish in the top
3 consistently
in Europe



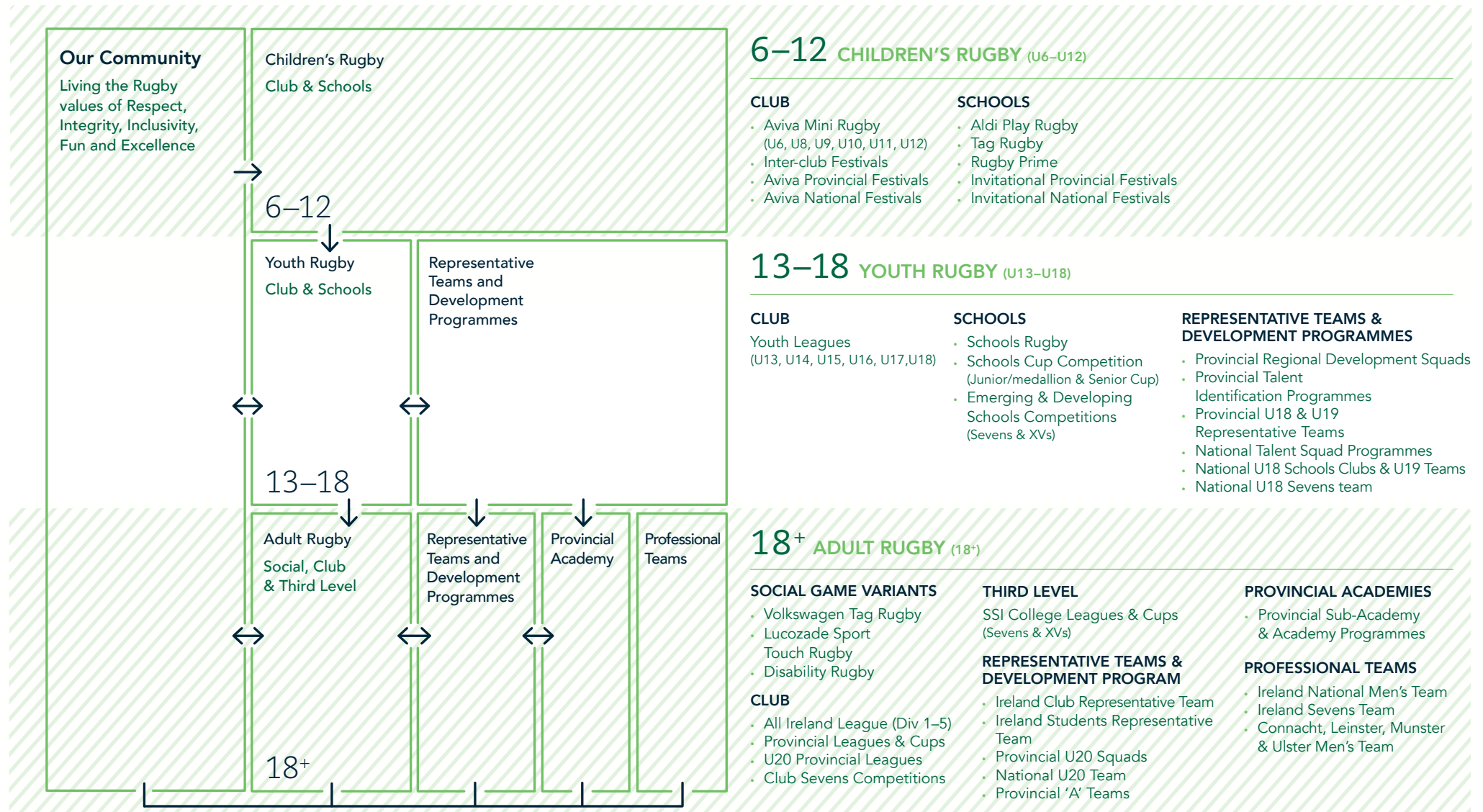
Finish top 2 in
Europe consistently



Our Headline Targets: Women's Rugby

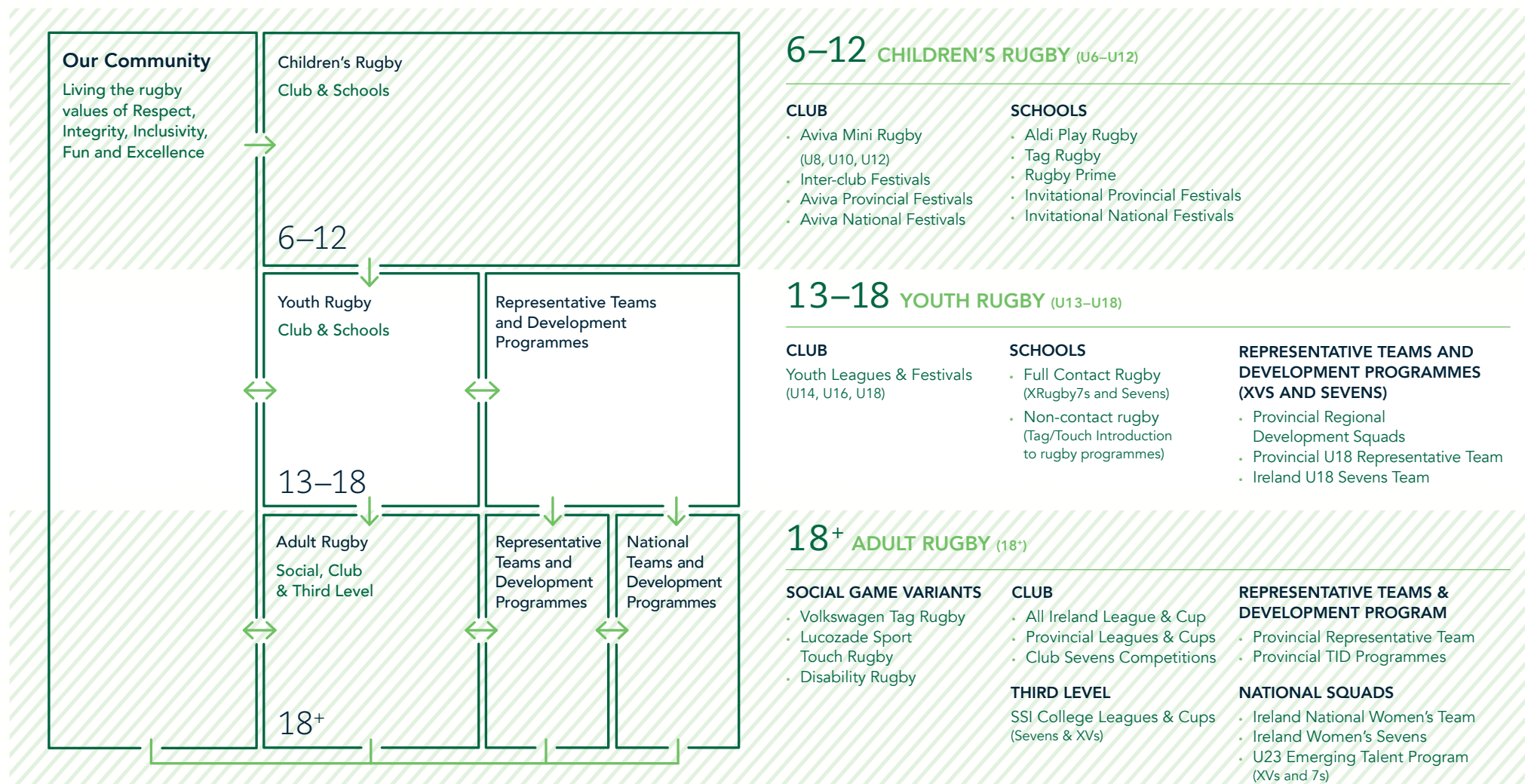


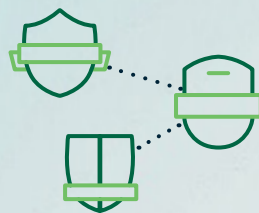
IRFU Player Pathway: Male Game





IRFU Player Pathway: Female Game





DEVELOPING THE GAME: DELIVERING A VIBRANT CLUB AND SCHOOL NETWORK



Core Principles

Our philosophy is to optimise the quality of experience provided for male and female age-grade rugby players.

We recognise that one of rugby’s principal challenges is to retain Age Grade players; and if such retention can be maximised, the game will grow. Players of all ages have a clear choice as to whether to participate in rugby or not. The strongest influence on the choice they make will be the quality of the experience which they have within the game during their formative years. If the experience is positive, then they are likely to remain within the game; if negative, they will be lost from it.

Therefore, our priorities should be to build a system which provides the best sporting experience for young people in Ireland, and which gives them good reason to continue in rugby. In parallel the IRFU will work to establish competition formats across XVs and Sevens which will allow more players to transition to adult rugby and beyond. At the same time the IRFU will embark on a programme of facilities modernisation and development of a network of artificial pitches. The key drivers of this will be:

Ensuring age-grade coaches and teachers have the technical, organisational and interactive skills to provide an excellent playing and recreational experience	Ensuring that clubs, schools and other rugby environments which live our core values, are safe, welcoming and fit for purpose, in their physical, organisational and social infrastructures	Providing competition formats for age-grade and adult players which fulfil their expressed needs and expectations, in terms of the nature and frequency of competition, and the support structures provided	Building a structured season plan which allows players of all abilities to participate in XVs and Sevens pathways to achieve their aspirations within the game	Providing leadership and governance structures which support these principles
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Our Headline Targets

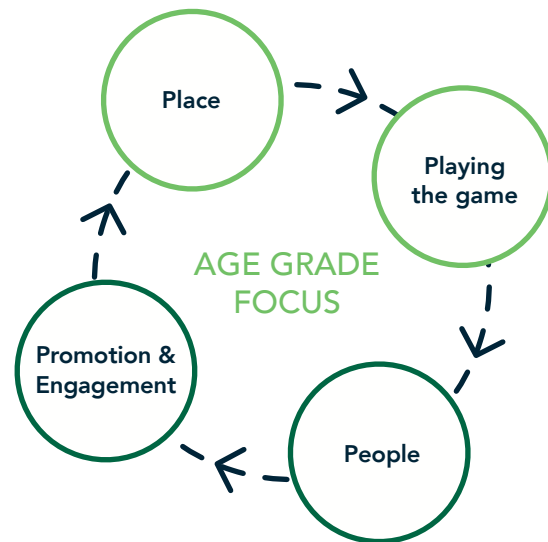


¹ Participants in rugby football across all formats. Goal is to maintain XV's participation levels with increased numbers through modified formats across male and female players.

² Teams in a branch competition, any format, playing 6+ games (i.e. XV's, 7s, VW Tag etc.), male and female inclusive



Rugby Development Programme



PLACE

Ensuring quality places to play

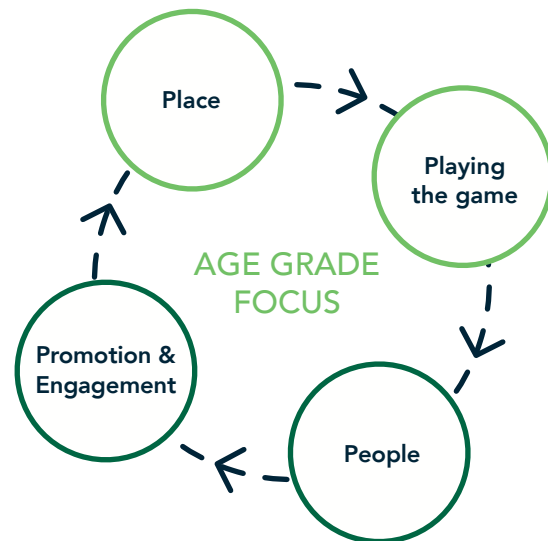
- Vibrant clubs and schools with the appropriate infrastructure and facilities
- Modernisation of clubs' social, training and playing facilities
- Provide club volunteers with support required to create a quality community club
- Continued investment in databases and CRM systems to optimise volunteer time in managing club activities
- Development of a network of artificial pitches to allow rugby to be played in all weathers and available to the community

PLAYING THE GAME

A quality player experience

- Competition formats which promote player development and our clubs within the community
- Competition formats for age grade players which fulfil their needs in terms of nature and frequency of competition
- Develop XRugby7s competitions for girls and boys in traditional and non-traditional rugby schools and 3rd level institutions
- Continue to promote Aldi 'Play Rugby' as a primary school entry point, with emphasis on a quality experience and onward transition to clubs and secondary school competitions
- Rejuvenate social rugby through the implementation of initiatives which allow players to play on their terms

Rugby Development Programme



PEOPLE

The best people creating a quality environment to play

- Establish a culture of collaboration, learning and professional development across all disciplines in Irish Rugby
- Recruit, retain and develop volunteers and staff for Irish Rugby
- Utilise digital learning to support the development of coaches, referees and volunteers
- Provide a high-quality rugby experience for all through coaching and refereeing education programmes
- Promote and recognise our volunteers as the rugby-makers within our system

PROMOTION & ENGAGEMENT

Promoting a quality rugby and community experience

- Expand the Spirit Programme to promote positive aspects of rugby (including values, health, teamwork, discipline, anti-doping, safeguarding etc.)
- Promotion of rugby department initiatives to recognise the army of volunteers across the country who develop the game
- Enhanced data capture and communication for non-traditional formats of the game to create a 'value connection' and promote pathways to the club game (i.e. Volkswagen Tag/Lucozade Sport Touch Fit/XRugby etc)

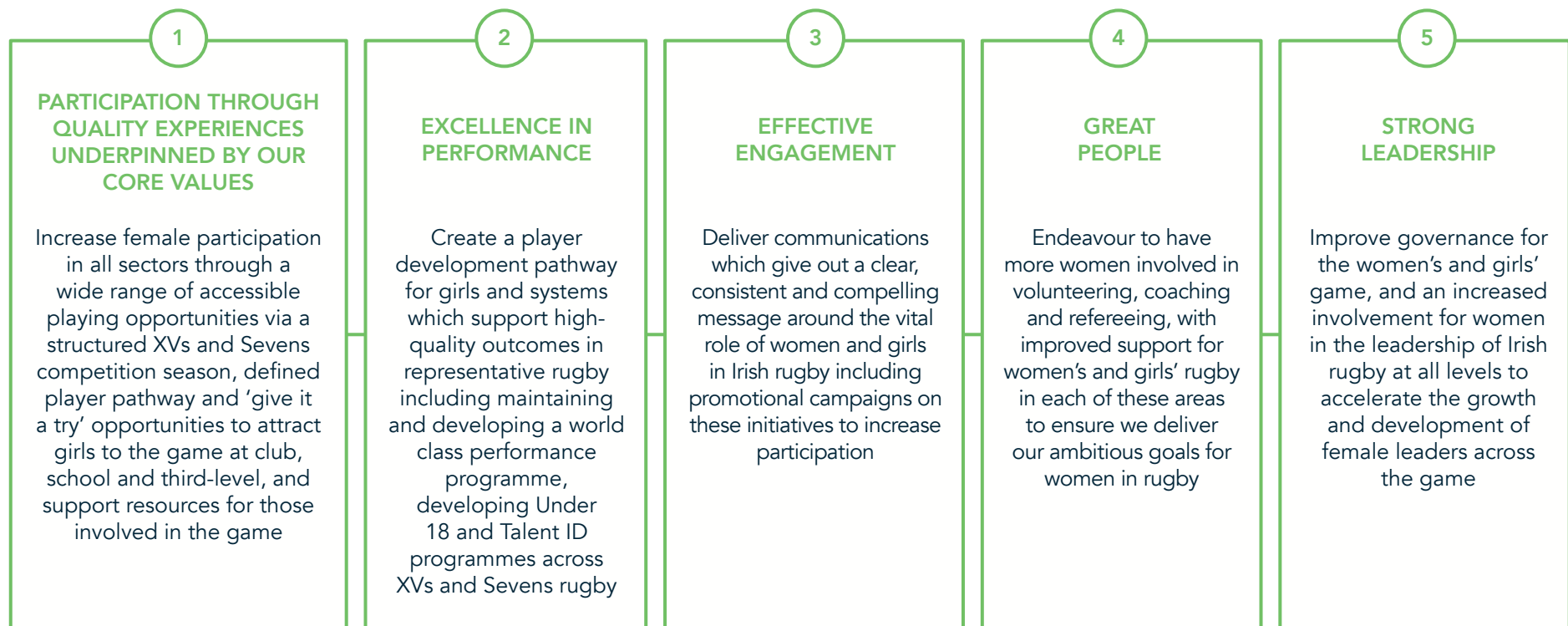


WOMEN IN RUGBY: BUILDING A STRONG BASE TO GROW THE WOMEN'S GAME



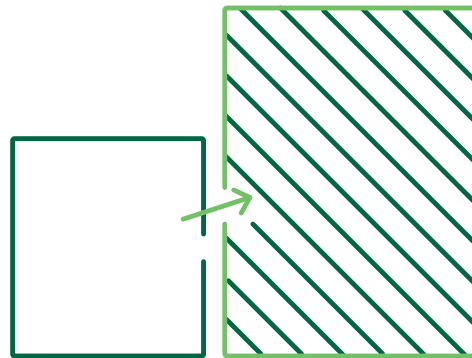
Women in Rugby

Our five strategic priorities for women in rugby are:



For more detailed information on the targets for the women's game see the separate 'Women's Action Plan' document.

Core Principles



- ▶ We will be a sport with equal opportunity and access for all
- ▶ 20% or more of our players, coaches, referees, volunteers and committee officials will be females
- ▶ Increase the opportunities to play the game through a defined pathway and establishment of competitions to reflect the needs and level of the players

To achieve our objectives for Women's rugby we recognise the need to build from the base to create a sustainable model for the game. This will involve attracting more girls into playing the game and providing more opportunities to try the game. We will focus on building participation levels in schools through XRugby7s and Sevens and transition them into the club game across U14, 16 and 18.

We will support clubs to establish girls-only mini rugby teams to increase participation. We will work with schools and 3rd level institutions to provide more opportunities for players to try rugby, in various formats.

We will seek to attract more volunteers (male and female) to service all of the above and encourage more females to become involved.

By bringing all of this together we can create and better service an improved player development pathway that will allow players to reach their full potential and increase the flow of players, at a higher skill level, through to the national panels. This will create a platform for consistent long-term performance for our national teams in the XVs and Sevens game.



Our Headline Targets



Adult players
(an increase on current
figure of 2,125)



Women's/Girls' teams
(an increase on current
figure of 190)



**Secondary schools
engaged in girls' rugby**
(an increase on current
figure of 87)



Youth players
(an increase on the
current figure of 2,500)



**Female players in
3rd level competitions**
(an increase on
the current figure of 553)



**Clubs with girls'
mini-rugby**
(an increase on
the current figure of 44)



Female coaches
(an increase on current
figure of 179)



Female referees
(an increase on current
figure of 12)

PLUS: XVs and Sevens season calendar established with opportunities to play both

Our Headline Targets

Exploit the commercial opportunities presented by the women's rugby programmes and initiatives

Consistent identity, voice and narrative for all women's rugby

Communications programmes on women's rugby initiatives



20%+ female representation on all IRFU committees



Equal opportunities regardless of gender, for selection to IRFU leadership training



30% females on IRFU National Youth Council



KEEPING RUGBY AT THE FOREFRONT OF IRISH COMMUNITIES



Rugby enjoys a prominent profile within the Irish sporting and cultural landscape. Both at home and abroad Irish rugby has an increasing following and impact. We will continue to build and develop this profile to ensure that we keep rugby at the forefront of Irish communities.

We will achieve this by:

Positioning Irish Rugby

Effectively positioning Irish Rugby in the minds of all stakeholders through an agreed brand strategy supported by an inspiring narrative and underpinned by our values

Leading the way in digital communications

Leveraging our strong digital platforms to ensure Irish Rugby engages with and communicates effectively with the global Irish Rugby audience

Promoting the values of the game

Capitalise on the IRFU Spirit of Rugby programme and other initiatives to promote the strong and distinct values of the game and reinforce these

Maximising the profile of our events and teams

Utilising our rugby events, teams and programmes — National, Provincial, Clubs and Schools — to create memorable occasions for all

Promoting the best of Ireland

By becoming synonymous with the game of rugby around the world, we can give the people of Ireland something to be proud of

STRENGTHEN OUR COMMERCIAL BASE

Irish Rugby's income needs to continue to grow to maintain the level of investment required at all levels of the game. The primary sources of commercial revenue include broadcasting, commercial partnerships, match related revenues (ticketing, gate receipts, hospitality etc.).

We must maintain and grow our commercial revenues, fan engagement and loyalty in an ever more challenging competitive environment.



We will achieve this by:

Further developing our rugby brands and developing a global platform

Undertaking a strategic review of our commercial model, core brands and marketing communications strategy, and invest in their development to ensure that we have iconic brands to support our domestic and international growth plans

Growing and optimising our commercial revenue streams

Broadening our commercial base nationally and internationally and aim to outperform commercial market growth rates in Irish sport. We will also aim to maximise game, event, and rugby programme activity to drive commercial growth

Innovating to develop a commercial digital strategy

Identifying opportunities to leverage the strong digital footprint of Irish Rugby from a commercial perspective

Enhancing our fan engagement strategy

Building on our understanding of rugby fans through market research and CRM tools. We will engage fans through compelling content and continue to explore ways to monetise our fan base through modern digital and media marketing practices



PRUDENT FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT



Whilst our revenues continue to grow so too do our costs. We must always ensure that our finances are managed in a prudent manner to safeguard the future of the game.

We will manage the business of rugby efficiently by:

Ensuring robust financial management is in place

Continuing to maintain financial sustainability and integrity with prudent financial management, planning and practices

Operating with transparent oversight

Maintaining transparent financial oversight across Irish Rugby

Effective financial resource utilisation

Utilising our financial resources in an efficient fashion

Building our infrastructure

Investing in our physical and IT infrastructure to support and further our administration and processes

As with planning across all aspects of Irish Rugby, the ability to deliver on proposed programmes will be subject to income fluctuations that may occur annually. In years where finances fall, investment will be adjusted accordingly.

RIGHT PEOPLE, RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME – LIVING OUR CORE VALUES

We rely on great people to help deliver our plans. Irish Rugby cannot survive without the countless hours of volunteer input that support the game at every level. These volunteers are supported by professional staff across each aspect of our organisation creating a rugby 'workforce' with the capacity to meet our ambitions for the next five years and beyond.

We will support our people by:

Supporting staff and volunteers to enable them to deliver

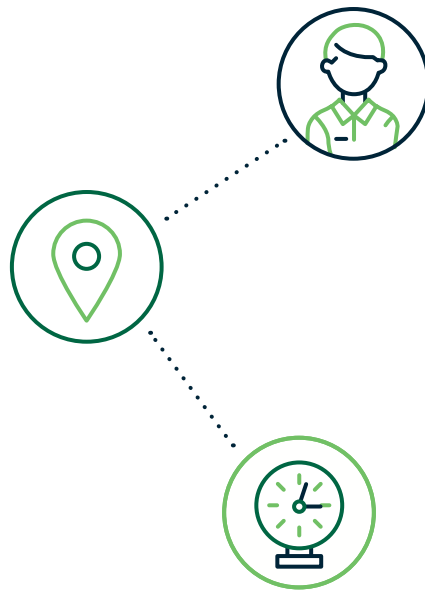
Providing the highest level of support, advice and service to all our stakeholders by:

- Embracing, recognising and celebrating the contribution volunteers make in supporting the game at all levels
- Embedding robust people processes throughout the IRFU
- Ensuring fit for purpose policies and procedures are implemented
- Delivering effective HR services to staff and volunteers

Championing player welfare

Continuing to invest in research and promotional activity around key player welfare issues such as player burnout, concussion, injury analysis and nutrition

RIGHT PEOPLE, RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME – LIVING OUR CORE VALUES



Developing a high performance organisational culture

We will deliver learning and development solutions to enhance skills and promote a high-performance culture by:

- Embedding the Personal Review Process for all staff
- Delivering a learning and development framework across the IRFU
- Promoting our values and behaviours with staff and volunteers

Providing effective leadership at all levels of the game

We will implement changes to Irish Rugby's governance model in line with modern sports best practice to ensure that the IRFU and the provincial branches can lead the game effectively at national and provincial level

Introducing an organisational scorecard to hold ourselves accountable on an annual basis against our key rugby and strategic targets

Developing our new High Performance facility at the National Sports Campus

