

Increasing Sport Participation Among Members of Underrepresented Groups:

Evidence-based Ideas for Policy-makers

Why this resource?

You are probably passionate about sport and ensuring that others have the opportunity to enjoy it as much as you do. Imagine a world where you would like to participate but cannot due to your cultural, racial, or religious identity, your gender or gender identity, your physical abilities, your age, your household income, your sexual orientation, your unfamiliarity with Canadian culture and practices, or your geographic location.

You can help

This resource, along with its companion resources for Sport and Recreation Organizations and Local Practitioners, offers practical solutions for you to improve the chances that members of groups that may have been left out of sport in the past feel welcome, engaged, and support-



How to use this Resource

The ideas in this resource are aimed primarily at policy makers and funders who work at all levels of government. However that does not mean that ideas that are primarily targeted at one group are not at all relevant to another.

No one idea will create sufficient change, but over time, individual actions will accumulate and generate impact. Users are advised to start with those that are easy to do and add other relevant actions incrementally as they and their organizations are ready. All ideas can and should be tailored to the context.

Sport is about more than training and performance, and participation is about more than just the number of participants who show up to be counted. Quality, positive sport participation increases the chances of continued engagement, and includes experiential aspects related to inclusion and community integration including:

- **Autonomy, Mastery, and Challenge;**
- **Belongingness;**
- **Engagement and Meaning.**

The sections that follow present ideas for action organized around these concepts. As these are not exclusive, there are no clear cut boundaries and there is overlap between them.

Autonomy, Mastery & Challenge

Introduce basic skills and improve physical literacy for all ages, abilities and skill levels

- ◇ Fund programs on an ongoing basis to avoid interruptions in skills development and participation, particularly where the cost of fees is a barrier.
- ◇ Consider updating the Long-Term Athlete Development model to reflect entry at any age.
- ◇ Integrate [Sport for Life](#) principles into policies, procedures and programs.

Offer a Variety of Sport Experiences

- ◇ Develop size categories, such as in wrestling, rather than gender or age categories in activities where the size of competitors is a concern.
- ◇ Extend opportunities for people with disabilities beyond Paralympic pathways.
- ◇ Promote sports that embrace diversity and open them to all participants.
- ◇ Create culturally sensitive programming options.

Ensure Nearby Opportunities

- ◇ Fund and promote innovative ways to cover the costs of opening facilities outside of regular hours for sport opportunities (staffing, cleaning, security).
- ◇ Establish sustained and continued funding programs that support the upgrade, expansion, maintenance or placement of recreational facilities.

Provide Transportation and Address Costs

- ◇ Encourage private and not for profit investment in transportation.
- ◇ Ensure access to financial supports for all those who wish to participate.
- ◇ Ensure that subsidy programs provide long-term support.
- ◇ Investigate and implement respectful and dignified subsidy application processes.
- ◇ Consider the cost of transportation as part of the budgeting for programs at the design stage.

Belongingness

Adopt an Intersectoral Approach

- ◇ Coordinate and fund interdepartmental and cross jurisdictional partnerships across different levels of government. Work with partners in health and fitness, education, transportation, planning, justice, social services, settlement organizations and others.
- ◇ Establish new ways for federal, provincial/territorial and municipal jurisdictions to support and promote each other's efforts in serving underrepresented groups and increasing participation.
- ◇ Demonstrate the value of sport to partners including promoting sport for development themes.

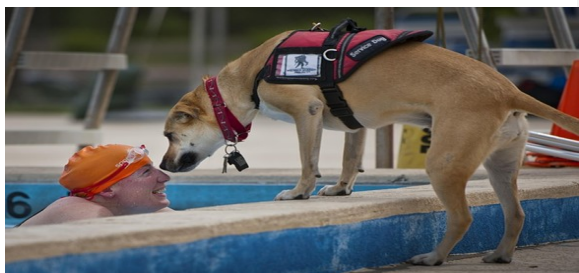
Celebrate & Promote Diversity

- ◇ Recognize, fund and educate about special days and events such as the Government of Canada's National AccessAbility Week, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, International Day to End Racism and Gay Pride celebrations.
- ◇ Encourage awareness and change attitudes towards people with disabilities through funding the Paralympic School Day and FUNdamentals programs.

- ◇ Consider the timing of cultural festivals, holidays, and religious observances when planning events and announcements.
- ◇ Fund Indigenous athletes and showcase their culture and traditions by supporting Indigenous Games at the competitive and recreational levels.
- ◇ Promote the understanding that different cultures define the distinctiveness of physical activity, sport and recreation in varying degrees.

Understanding Intersectionality

In taking steps to becoming more inclusive, it is important to acknowledge that many group members identify with one or more additional groups at the same time (for example, an Indigenous woman, or a new Canadian who has a disability, or a transgender older adult living with limited economic means). This identifying with more than one group is called intersectionality. Individuals sharing a common identity may differ importantly in terms of ethnicity, language, age, religion, gender identity, sexual identity, generation, migration history, socio-economic background and other sociodemographic and individual variables. The interaction of these play a significant and complex role in sport participation. An important factor in inclusion and engaging participants is understanding the multiple intersecting and overlapping identities that may contribute to their feelings of exclusion from sport, and, more importantly, getting to know their individual needs.



Engagement & Meaning

Share Information

- ◇ Develop and promote an online portal with an associated app that distributes information about programs, locations and sessions, such as Accessibility Inventories to increase awareness of accessible opportunities, and free and low-cost opportunities.
- ◇ Distribute various participant payment and subsidy options.
- ◇ Create and share templates and guidelines for shared use policies, ways to equitably allocate space and outlines of roles and responsibilities of users and providers of spaces with school boards and other community organizations.
- ◇ Provide information that addresses liability and insurance issues including cost effective ways to fund liability protection.
- ◇ Educate organizations and communities to view diversity as an asset in the selection of coaches, leaders, volunteers and athletes.
- ◇ Create registers or databases of women in professional or volunteer management in sport at the local, regional, and national levels so that female candidates are made visible for further recruitment. Consider extending this action to other groups.

Inspire Positive Media Coverage

- ◇ Encourage media coverage of elite level sports where members of underrepresented groups are participating (e.g., Paralympics, Special Olympics, National Aboriginal and Indigenous Games, Canadian Women's Hockey League) and of non-mainstream sports (e.g., Cricket, Futsal).
- ◇ Generate coverage through traditional and social media to create public awareness of programming that targets members of underrepresented groups.
- ◇ Promote good news and success stories about topics such as community involvement, creating leaders, a successful athlete from the target group or refugee participation.
- ◇ Provide templates for story ideas and media strategies for inclusivity.
- ◇ Encourage photo opportunities with members of the target communities participating in sports.
- ◇ Develop media guideline templates to be used to counter negative stereotypes, increase equity of sport representation and encourage the promotion of positive role models.
- ◇ Increase coverage of women's elite events to normalize women playing sport. Tell stories of real women who play sport using images that challenge existing idealised and stylised images of women.



Good Governance

Establish & Implement Supportive Policies

- ◇ Develop templates and tool kits for inclusive policies, guidelines, statements, action plans and procedures regarding codes of conduct and behaviour expectations, building access, shared use of facilities and equitable access that can be easily adapted and readily adopted by sport and recreational organizations and local school boards.
- ◇ Make diversity support in sport environments part of funding requirements, including requiring policies to prevent and combat discrimination, bullying, harassment, gender-based and other violence, sexism, abuse, racism and homophobia.
- ◇ Encourage policies governing the participation of trans athletes that offer a positive sporting experience, free of discrimination and allow people to participate in sports consistent with their gender identity.
- ◇ Require gender mainstreaming in policy and program development.

Gather & Share Good Practice

- ◇ Broadly share information about programs and policy actions that are working and the recommendations of existing reports.
- ◇ Support mechanisms for knowledge mobilization such as Communities of Practice, tools and resources.

Evaluate & Monitor

- ◇ Collect national level data on the participation rates of members of underrepresented groups and their barriers and facilitators for participation in sport and share the results broadly. Monitor progress in increasing these rates over time.
- ◇ Host meetings with stakeholders to get feedback on how to improve the promotion and understanding of your resources, programming and inclusion efforts and adjust as needed.
- ◇ Create mechanisms that solicit regularly scheduled feedback on policy and programs from the general public and from targeted groups.
- ◇ Support the evaluation efforts of organizations who are working to support sport participation for members of underrepresented groups.

Helpful Resources

[“Sport for Life for all newcomers to Canada: Creating Inclusion of Newcomers in Sport and Physical Activity”](#)

[CAAWS Gender Equity Playbook](#)

[No Accidental Champions: LTAD for Athletes with a Disability](#)

[Responsible Coaching Movement](#)

[KidSport Canada](#)

[Jumpstart](#)

[ICC's Playing Together info](#)



This document is a supplement to the *Policy and program considerations for increasing sport participation among members of under-represented groups in Canada* (available at www.sirc.ca) report that provides the results of a comprehensive literature review. This resource provides ideas from the literature that sport practitioners, recreation providers, policy makers and other sector stakeholders could consider using to create a more welcoming and inclusive sport environment for women and girls, Indigenous Peoples, persons with a disability, recent immigrants, new Canadians, socio-economically disadvantaged Canadians, older adults, members of the LGBTQ2IA+ community, Canadians living in rural, remote and isolated regions, members of other groups and all Canadians who feel left out.

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