



SPÓRT ÉIREANN
SPORT IRELAND

High Performance Strategy 2021-2032



*Our athletes and the
people who support
them are at the heart
of everything we do.*

Contents

Forewords	4
Introduction	9
Impact of Covid-19	10
High Performance Sport in Ireland – Time for a Step Change	10
Historic High Performance Investment and Performance Outcomes	11
Current and Future Approach to High Performance Investment	14
High Performance Strategy Development	15
High Performance Strategic Working Group	16
Strategy Development Process	17
Key Findings from the Consultation Process	18
High Performance Strategy 2021–2032	21
Our Vision, Our Philosophy, Our Strategy	22
Our Values	23
Principles of Our Ambition	23
Our Targets	24
Our 7 Strategic Pillars	27
Strategy Implementation	44
Implementation Approach	45
Appendices	49
Appendix 1: Irish Sports Council High Performance Strategy Review	50

Foreword

Ireland is a proud sporting nation steeped in international success. As a nation many of our fondest memories are centred on Ireland's achievements on the global sporting stage. These achievements, generated by our high performance athletes have been a cause of both celebration and inspiration for the Irish public, and will continue to do so into the future.

Sport has the ability to unite people of all backgrounds and the success of our athletes and teams gives the nation a significant boost, while their performances act as a tremendous motivator for future generations. As Ireland emerges from this pandemic, those qualities are needed more than ever.

This is why the Government is committed to supporting Irish athletes in performing on the international stage. Talented sportspeople with the potential to compete with distinction internationally will be eligible for support. This includes individuals and teams from the smaller, lesser known NGB sports. This commitment is underpinned by the National Sports Policy 2018-2027, which shapes the future direction of sport in Ireland over the next decade.

Action 24 of the National Sports Policy tasked Sport Ireland with the development of a new long-term High Performance Strategy for Ireland. This new High Performance Strategy is ambitious and signals our belief and conviction that Irish athletes can compete successfully with the best in the world and win medals at the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and other major international competitions, on a consistent basis.

For Ireland to realise its ambition and potential, a collaborative approach across the sector is key. This will need to be underpinned by significant and sustained investment from Government and others in our athletes and high performance system.



Through the National Sports Policy, the Government is committed to double its annual funding for sport, from €112million in 2018 to €220million in 2027. This will include a move towards a multi-annual approach to provide greater certainty and stability to the system in the build-up to Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Recent success by Irish athletes and teams has been built on a systematic and strategic approach. The development of this excellent strategic plan further advances that approach and will augment the robust processes already in place. The development of a vibrant and thriving Sport Ireland Campus is a major statement of intent, both in reality and as a symbol of the commitment to providing world-class facilities for our athletes here in Ireland. The plans being put in place to significantly add to Campus infrastructure will make it a sporting destination of choice and worldwide renown in which we can all take justifiable pride.

The importance placed on good governance within high performance programmes' decision-making processes throughout the strategy is to be welcomed; good governance leads to good outcomes. Sport Ireland has been a leader in this space and continues to increase the capacity of the high performance system in this regard.

I would like to commend all those who provided input to the preparation of this strategy, in particular the members of the High Performance Working Group, Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland, National Governing Bodies, Olympic Federation of Ireland, Paralympics Ireland, Athletes' Commission, and representatives of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.



Jack Chambers TD,
Minister of State for Sport and the Gaeltacht

Foreword

High performance sport in Ireland has made substantial progress in recent years as evidenced by the consistent podium and top ten finishes achieved by Irish athletes and teams on the international stage. The public response to this success demonstrates a real appetite to see Ireland's high performance system continue to advance.

The progression of the high performance system is underpinned by the ongoing development of the Sport Ireland Campus, which has augmented its place as the epicentre of high performance sport in Ireland.

The expansion of the Sport Ireland Institute in terms of infrastructure, and the enhancement of the services and professional supports offered, has had a tangible impact on the preparation of our athletes.

There has been considerable work carried out by the National Governing Bodies of sport to progress their own programmes through the recruitment and retention of world-class personnel and putting in place robust processes to support their athletes.

With a partnership agreement now in place between Sport Ireland and both the Olympic Federation of Ireland and Paralympics Ireland, our athletes will be the best prepared they have ever been heading into the Tokyo and Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games.

It is timely that Ireland looks to the future and sets out a blueprint that will make sustainable improvements to the system and across our high performance sports.

Building on the strong recommendations of the Rio Review, and previous quadrennial reviews that provided strategic direction, the Government's National Sports Policy 2018-2027 tasked Sport Ireland with developing a new long-term strategy for high performance sport based on specific parameters. The Government's commitment to provide sustained and increased funding upon delivery of an ambitious strategy provided the strategy development with added impetus.

The Board of Sport Ireland acknowledges and values the continuing commitment of the Government to High Performance. Sport Ireland welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with the recently established Sports Leadership Group and other key stakeholders in developing a strategy that will advance Ireland's High Performance system.

This new vision and strategic direction for high performance sport in Ireland is ambitious and places increased emphasis on helping athletes achieve international success.

Sport Ireland looks forward to continuing to work with all stakeholders across the high performance community, fully implementing the strategy and supporting future generations of talented athletes.



Kieran Mulvey
Chairman, Sport Ireland



John Treacy
Chief Executive, Sport Ireland

Foreword

Ireland can be proud of the achievements of Irish athletes over the course of the last number of years across a wide variety of sports. Equally, we can be proud of the progress made in the high performance system to ensure that the right structures and people are in place for this success to be realised.

While considerable progress has been achieved to date, the competitive nature of international sport means that it is imperative that the Irish high performance system continues to challenge itself.

A robust and comprehensive period of consultation and research underpinned the development of this strategy. The process critically assessed how we are working with our sports and athletes in order to identify potential improvements in the system.

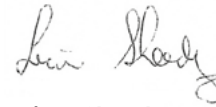
The process involved a number of specific stages including input from athletes and personnel across various areas of expertise, benchmarking against international comparators, and strong oversight from a High Performance Working Group that represented key stakeholders in the system.

The strategy sets challenging, yet achievable, targets and details clear actions across seven strategic areas which I am confident, once implemented, will have a positive impact on our sports and our athletes.

The Sport Ireland High Performance Committee is fully committed to overseeing the implementation of this strategy and continually reviewing its progress on a scheduled basis.

I would like to acknowledge the athletes and individuals working across the high performance system who offered their expertise throughout the development of this strategy. The feedback gathered was constructive, insightful and challenging.

On behalf of the High Performance Working Group, I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the development of this strategy and played a part in shaping the future of high performance sport in Ireland.



Liam Sheedy

Sport Ireland Board member and Chair of
Sport Ireland's High Performance Committee





Introduction

Impact of Covid-19

In launching the High Performance Strategy, we must reflect on the situation arising from the COVID-19 global pandemic which has affected all aspects of society including high performance sport.

For an extended period, international competition ceased in 2020; and the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games were postponed to 2021.

The high performance system demonstrated its resilience and adaptability to overcome the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Collaboration by all stakeholders was critical in navigating this crisis period.

As an Irish high performance system, we will emerge from the pandemic stronger and ready for the challenges ahead.

We are proud to deliver this long-term plan for the Irish high performance system and look forward to its implementation over the next three Olympic and Paralympic cycles.

High Performance Sport in Ireland – Time for a Step Change

Ireland is a proud sporting nation. We revel in the success of our athletes. We celebrate winning on the international stage. We aspire to be a successful sporting nation. We want to see more Irish athletes on podiums. We want to compete with the best in the world and win.

The high performance system in Ireland continues to evolve and mature. In recent years considerable progress has been made. The footprint of the Sport Ireland Campus continues to grow as new facilities and sports are introduced onto the campus. A range of performance support services are provided to athletes, performance directors and coaches across various programmes. There is an increased level of professionalism across high performance sport and better understanding of best practice models for national governing bodies. Results, at senior and junior levels, are improving with an increased portfolio of athletes producing performances that make them contenders in their respective sports.

The alignment and collaboration of key stakeholders – Sport Ireland, the Olympic Federation of Ireland, Paralympics Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland – is greatly improved. The government has made a commitment to increase funding for high performance sport to place

Ireland on a par with competing nations and treble the annual investment over the next decade. Dedicated sports capital funding programmes for high performance sport are being considered to provide continued investment in facilities and equipment across the high performance system.

The aim of this High Performance strategy is to be inclusive of those with talent whilst focusing resources on those with the most potential to succeed. Any sports person within Olympic and Paralympic sport with the potential to compete at world level will be eligible for support. Sport Ireland supports sportspeople in small or individualised programmes and this will remain as policy. We remain open and committed to supporting talent and recognise that some of our most successful sportspeople have competed for Ireland from some of the less recognised NGBs.

This provides the backdrop for a new era in high performance sport in Ireland. This strategy sets out a shared vision that represents a step change in our approach to high performance sport planning. Through an extensive consultation process with stakeholders across the system Sport Ireland has identified a series of actions that will help Ireland achieve ambitious targets in the next decade.

Historic High Performance Investment and Performance Outcomes

Sport Ireland funding to high performance sports is channelled through high performance programme investment, International Carding Scheme and Sport Ireland Institute support services. Sport Ireland also provides high performance funding to the Olympic Federation of Ireland and Paralympics Ireland to support work associated with preparing Irish teams for the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Sport organisations that currently receive high performance programme investment

Athletics Ireland	Gymnastics Ireland
Irish Sailing Association	Pentathlon Ireland
Irish Athletic Boxing Association	Irish Judo Association
Swim Ireland	Cricket Ireland
Hockey Ireland	Canoeing Ireland
Paralympics Ireland	Triathlon Ireland
Horse Sport Ireland	Tennis Ireland
Irish Rugby Football Union	Badminton Ireland
Confederation of Golf in Ireland	Irish Taekwondo Union
Cycling Ireland	Irish Clay Target Shooting Association
Rowing Ireland	

Overall, the total high performance investment within the system has remained relatively stable since 2007 (see Figure 1). As a result of this investment and the work within the high performance sports, the number of medals achieved by Irish athletes at junior and senior level across European, World, Olympic and Paralympic competitions has increased consistently in each four-year cycle (see Figure 2 and Figure 3).

While this represents a relatively strong return on investment, the challenge for the system is now to deliver improved performances and sustainable success at the Olympic and Paralympic Games while still maintaining the current levels of medal achievements at pinnacle European and World level competitions on the pathway to the Games.

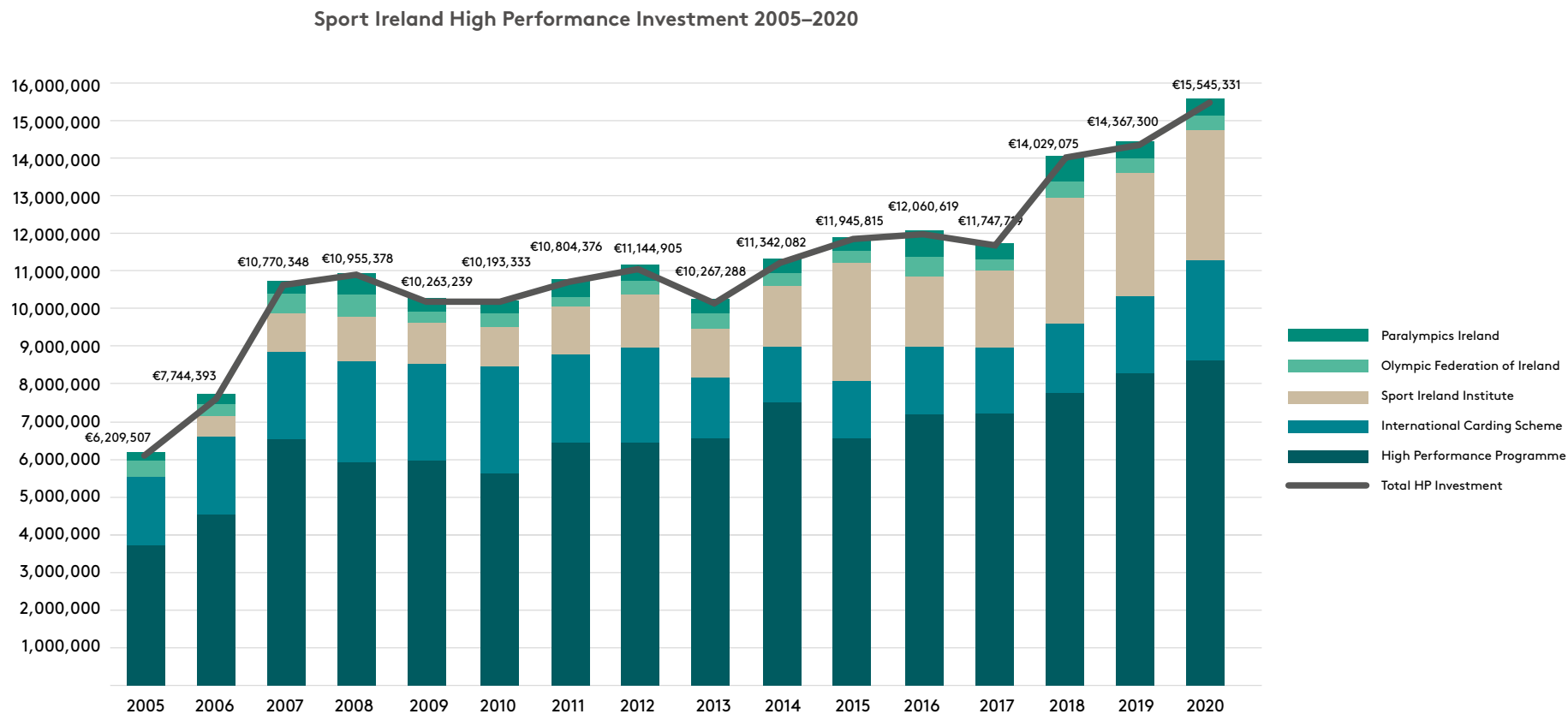


Figure 1. Sport Ireland total investment in high performance sport 2005–2020

Irish High Performance Medal Achievements 2005–2019

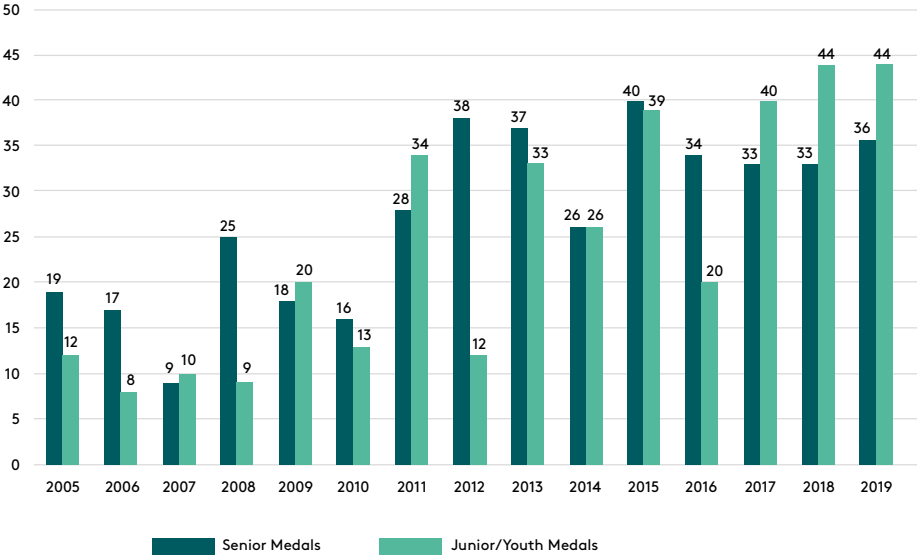


Figure 2. High performance medal achievements 2005–2019 – senior, junior/youth breakdown

High Performance Medal Achievements 2000–2019
Total medals at European, World, Olympic, and Paralympic level competition

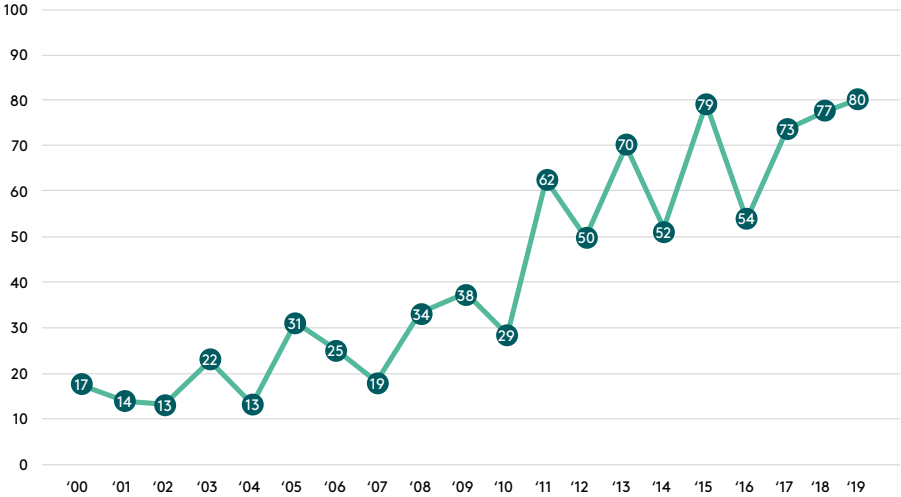


Figure 3. Total high performance medal achievements 2000–2019

Current and Future Approach to High Performance Investment

Ireland is a small nation relative to many of our competitors. Sport Ireland must ensure that we get maximum value from our investment in high performance programmes. This requires a focused approach with investment decisions being made based on likely returns.

Sport Ireland currently supports 21 sports and there is a broad acceptance that there should be greater prioritisation and focus. At present 80% of the funding goes to the top 10 funded sports. As sports have evolved their high performance programmes, Sport Ireland has also developed its understanding of the different investment needs across the sports. For example, some sports have more intensive international competition calendars at senior level than others and incur increased travel costs as a result. Sports with a greater population of high performance athletes are more likely to need increased performance support services and programme investment. The coach-athlete ratio is different across sports which impacts on the level of investment in personnel. Team-based sports tend to be more expensive compared to individual-athlete sports. Some sports require more regular capital investment than others for equipment upgrades or development of facilities on campus. The commitment to increased future funding will enable Sport Ireland and priority sports to invest specifically in areas that are most important to the needs of the sport so that they can deliver targeted outcomes.

An agreed set of principles will support the decision-making process to identify our priority sports while providing a basis for medal potential athletes outside of priority sports to be supported and setting out clear direction for all sports to raise their status. By building on the solid foundations that have been laid to date and providing deeper investment in priority sports, Ireland can develop a high performance sport system capable of delivering consistent, long-term, repeatable success on the international stage.

The commitment to increased future funding will enable Sport Ireland and priority sports to invest specifically in areas that are most important to the needs of the sport so that they can deliver targeted outcomes.





High Performance Strategy Development

High Performance Strategic Working Group

Development of the strategy was overseen by a High Performance Strategic Working Group (the “Working Group”). The Working Group was chaired by Liam Sheedy (Sport Ireland Board member) and comprised of representatives from Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland, the National Governing Body sector, the Olympic Federation of Ireland, Paralympics Ireland, and the Olympic Federation of Ireland Athletes’ Commission.

Working Group terms of reference

The Working Group will contribute in the following areas to successfully complete their role and responsibilities:

- Convene as a group on at least three occasions to review, discuss, advise on and, ultimately, approve the proposed content of the strategy
- Provide input to the design of the stakeholder consultation process in organised group sessions
- Critically analyse and advise on the content of the strategy in organised sessions and individual meetings
- Approve a draft of the new high performance strategy which will be prepared for review by Sport Ireland’s High Performance Committee and the Board of Sport Ireland



Strategy Development Process

It is important to develop a high performance system that works in an Irish context and aligns to our specific circumstances. To ensure contemporary knowledge of the Irish system and international high performance sport was captured, independent experts, Brian MacNeice (Kotinos Partners) and Maeve Buckley (Leading Sport), were appointed to support the project and lead a consultancy process with key stakeholders across the system.



- **Focus groups with knowledge experts** - (154 participants across 22 sports) on the following areas: Athletes, Governance and Business models, Coaching/Performance Environment/Talent Pathway, High Performance Sport Facilities, Integration with regions, Performance Directors, Sports Media and PR, Performance Support Services, Integration with higher education institutions
- **Research** - analysis of international academic and industry publications on the systems, structures, policies, and philosophies of high performance sport
- **In depth 1:1 engagement** with key stakeholders and international experts in high performance sport to benchmark initial ideas and concepts for the strategy

Key Findings from the Consultation Process

The consultation process identified key strategic areas where focused investment can deliver a step change in sports across the Irish system. Specifically, the following areas were highlighted by key stakeholders (in no order of importance):

- Coaching
- Athlete-centred focus
- Performance support services
- Governance structures and decision-making processes
- How high performance sport is financed
- Role of higher education institutions within the system
- Exposure to high-quality competition/events
- Innovation in sport
- High performance facilities and equipment
- Effective partnerships within the system





Coaching

High performance systems are highly reliant on quality coaching systems and structures to ensure sustainability and repeatable success. Many top nations are well advanced in creating a culture of professional coaching within their systems. Ireland is under-resourced in terms of full-time, professional coaches who can train and develop high performance athletes. This is a major opportunity area which if Ireland gets right will enable us to realise our full potential as a high performance nation.

Athlete-centred focus

Sport Ireland will ensure the high performance sport system works to a clear set of values which puts athlete welfare at the forefront. The Irish high performance system must place an emphasis on providing comprehensive support to athletes and ensure that their experience of the system is positive beyond their sporting involvement. This will include support around education, dual career options, transitioning from junior to senior ranks, carding schemes, scholarships, retirement planning, National Governing Body (NGB) relationship management and other relevant areas. Put simply, our athletes should experience a positive system that provides holistic support based on their needs during and after their sporting career.

Performance support services

Sport Ireland Institute and Sport Northern Ireland Sports Institute have created a comprehensive base for the provision of performance support services to athletes. Performance support services provided by an integrated multi-disciplinary professional team are essential to enable athletes and coaches achieve their full potential.

It takes time for service support providers to embed themselves in sports, build relationships with athletes, coaches, and performance directors, and maximise impact on performance. Currently, our performance support providers lack capacity to comprehensively focus on priority sports. More focused investment can create increased capacity so deeper levels of support can be provided in priority sports.

Governance structures and decision-making processes

We need to create excellent structures to ensure oversight and decision-making processes are best practice across our high performance sports, especially for sports to be considered to be priority programmes. NGBs should have absolute clarity on how high performance is defined and how it is differentiated from the development/participation agenda within their sports. Good governance is non-negotiable in high performance sport.

How high performance sport is financed

There must be a sound underlying and sustainable business model for each high performance sport programme. An optimum balance of state funding versus self-generated funding should be reached on a sport specific basis. To date, sports are largely reliant on the public purse for high performance funding. The government is committed to increasing investment in high performance sport significantly. However, this needs to be matched with a commitment from each sport to self-generate and invest its own funds into their high performance programmes. The current funding structure in some of our key sports is not sustainable. In addition, funding (public and NGB generated) of teams needs particular consideration as the funding demands are different and can be more challenging in team-based sports.

Role of higher education institutions within the system

Higher education institutions across the country have facilities and programmes that can play a critical role in high performance sport. They also could play a key role in service delivery, coaching, sports science and medicine, research and regional delivery of national programmes. At present the provision of high performance sport across the higher education sector lacks coordination and strategic direction. If this can be addressed the sector could play a major role in the high performance ecosystem in Ireland, as is the case in many other countries.

Exposure to high-quality competitions/events

Top class competition is intense. Athletes and coaches need to be exposed to the highest levels of international competition at the right time in their performance pathway to increase their ability to perform and be comfortable in the white heat of world class events. Winning athletes are those that can deliver on the big stage when it matters. In many sports, our athletes are not exposed to top class international competition frequently enough and are then expected to cope with the pressures of Olympic, Paralympic, World, or European level events and deliver personal best performances.

Innovation in sport

High performance sport is a rapidly evolving industry with nations continually seeking new ways in which success can be achieved and sustained. As a small nation we need to always look for a competitive edge with integrity wherever we can find it. We should be prepared to think, act and behave innovatively. We have the advantage of being a small, agile nation with access to world-leading technology companies and academic expertise.

This brings opportunities to collaborate on projects and develop knowledge on how our sports can progress and achieve success. By exploiting these opportunities and applying solutions to the day-to-day practice of athletes and coaches, Ireland can become a world leader in performance sport innovation.

High performance facilities and equipment

Elite sport facilities can underpin a daily training environment that ensures that both athletes and support personnel flourish. However, there are challenges to maintaining and operating these as exclusive high performance facilities. The Sport Ireland Campus is a significant asset to Ireland. As the campus evolves, additional facilities must address the changing needs of high performance athletes. In addition, there is potential for regional facilities to play a more prominent role within the system, possibly through partnerships with higher education institutions to create centres of excellence. In terms of equipment, some sports rely on high performance equipment to train and compete on an optimal basis, and investment in such resources needs to be part of the overall investment package supporting the high performance system.

Effective partnerships within the system

Ireland is a tribal nation, with a history of single sport development and single use facilities. Collaboration between Sport Ireland, Sport Ireland Institute, Sport Northern Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland Sports Institute, the Olympic Federation of Ireland and Paralympics Ireland has improved considerably in recent years. For Ireland to succeed on the international stage further strategic alignment and collaboration across the system is required. As a small nation we can make this a powerful, systemic strength.





High Performance Strategy 2021–2032



OUR VISION

Ireland consistently achieving podium success on the world stage inspiring the nation and future generations



OUR PHILOSOPHY

Our athletes and the people who support them are at the heart of everything we do



OUR STRATEGY

This is Sport Ireland's High Performance Strategy which will be delivered in partnership with the broader high performance community

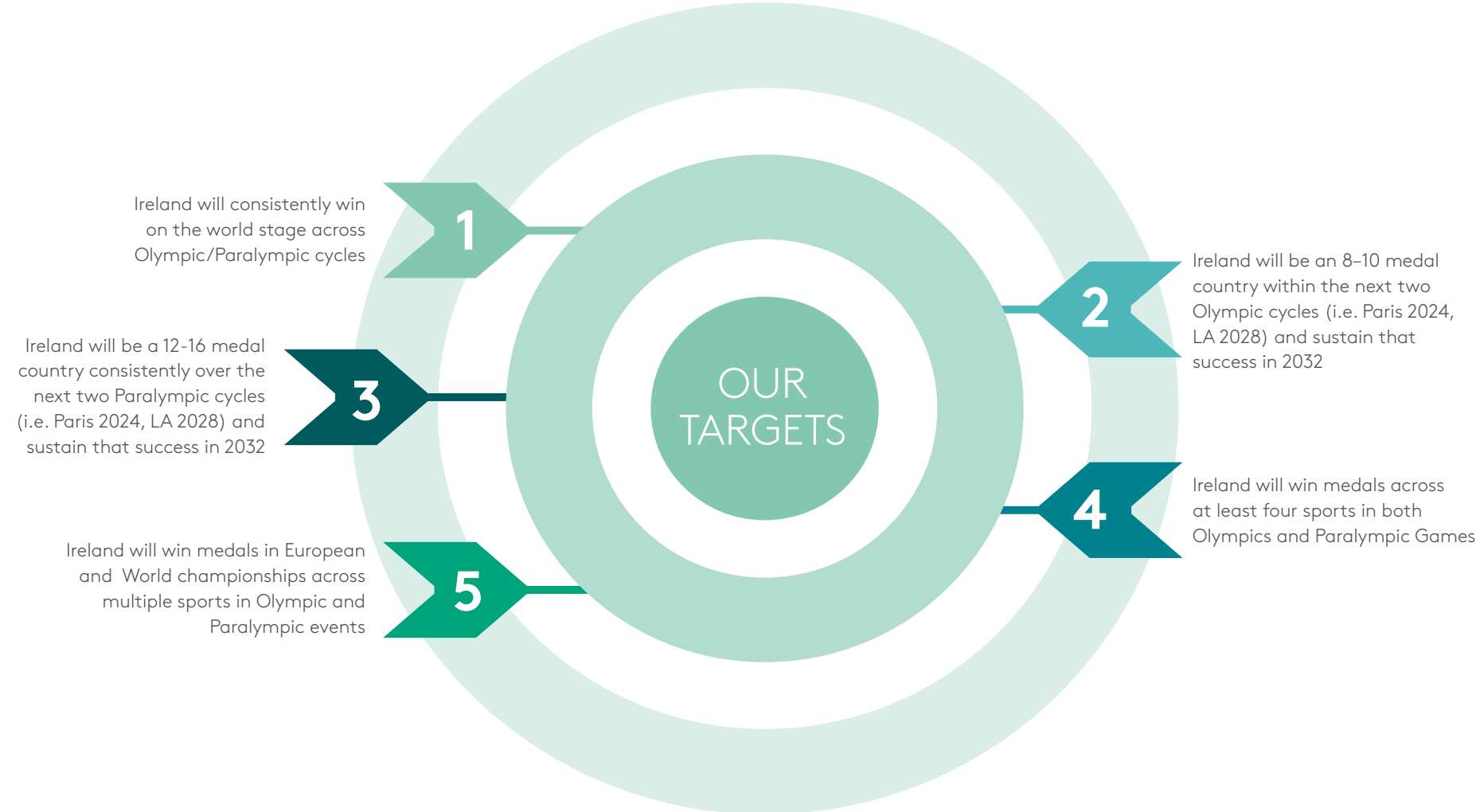


‘We’ refers to Sport Ireland and the broader high performance community with Olympic and Paralympic athletes at the centre.

Principles of Our Ambition

- Ireland’s high performance system will reflect the contemporary values of our nation, and we will develop solutions that meet our needs and unique circumstances.
- We value our Paralympic and Olympic athletes and medals equally.
- Our ambition is measured by world standards. We aim to compete and win at pinnacle world level events.
- We will adopt a values-based approach – we will focus on the health of the system and ensure people are valued, supported, and rewarded.
- We want to win and win in the right way – not a win at all costs approach and no shortcuts.
- We will set individual process and outcome targets across each sport that are challenging, meaningful and grounded in realism.

Our Targets



Rationale behind the targets

The performances of Ireland, and international comparators such as Denmark and New Zealand, at the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games would suggest that medal outcomes are heavily influenced by the number of events that athletes are competitive in (i.e. events where athletes are capable of achieving a Top 10 or reaching a final and challenging for a medal) and their ability to deliver medal winning performances in these events at the Games (see Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1. Recent Olympic Games performances – Ireland, Denmark, New Zealand

Ireland			
Olympic Games	Top 10s	Medals	Conversion rate
Beijing 2008	9	3	33%
London 2012	14	6	43%
Rio 2016	16	2	13%

Denmark			
Olympic Games	Top 10s	Medals	Conversion rate
Beijing 2008	18	7	39%
London 2012	30	9	30%
Rio 2016	30	15	50%

New Zealand			
Olympic Games	Top 10s	Medals	Conversion rate
Beijing 2008	32	9	28%
London 2012	40	13	33%
Rio 2016	45	18	40%

Table 2. Recent Paralympic Games performances – Ireland, Denmark, New Zealand

Ireland			
Paralympic Games	Top 8s	Medals	Conversion rate
Beijing 2008	23	5	22%
London 2012	45	16	36%
Rio 2016	52	11	21%

Denmark			
Paralympic Games	Top 8s	Medals	Conversion rate
Beijing 2008	21	9	43%
London 2012	17	5	29%
Rio 2016	23	7	30%

New Zealand			
Paralympic Games	Top 8s	Medals	Conversion rate
Beijing 2008	27	12	44%
London 2012	36	17	47%
Rio 2016	53	21	40%

Over the past three Olympic cycles, Ireland has proven itself as a nation that can deliver an average of 3-4 medals at the Olympic Games. On the basis of full implementation of this strategy, Sport Ireland has set ambitious targets to move Ireland from a 3-4 medal nation to an 8-10 medal nation at the Olympic Games by 2028.

In terms of the Paralympics Games, Ireland has consistently achieved podium success, delivering an average of 10-11 medals per Games in recent cycles, and compares strongly against nations of similar population (see Table 2). Paralympic sport operates in a different context to Olympic sport and encounters additional factors which can influence medal potential. For example, a nation's medal potential can be influenced by changes to athlete classification or the availability and identification of talent within a much smaller athlete population. Moreover, the sheer number of events across key Paralympic sports, such as Swimming, Athletics and Cycling, presents significant opportunities for Ireland to target new events at future Games. Based on these factors and increased resources available within the system, this strategy aims to continue Ireland's track record of success at the Paralympic Games and targets 12-16 medals in Paris 2024 and LA 2028.

In order to achieve the Olympic and Paralympic medal targets, a dual approach is required which is focused on increasing the number of events where Irish athletes are competing for medals and improving how we support and prepare athletes so that they can deliver more podium performances at the Olympic and Paralympic Games (see Table 3 and Table 4).

Table 3. Future Olympic Games targets

Olympic Games	Estimated number of events where Irish athletes should be competitive (i.e. Top 10s/Finals)	Olympic medal target
Tokyo 2020	10-15	3-4
Paris 2024	16-19	5-7
LA 2028	20-24	8-10

Table 4. Future Paralympic Games targets

Paralympic Games	Estimated number of events where Irish athletes should be competitive (i.e. Top 8s/Finals)	Paralympic medal target
Tokyo 2020	22-28	8-10
Paris 2024	29-36	12-16
LA 2028	29-36	12-16

The key pillars in this strategy will underpin this approach by targeting resources at priority and medal potential sports and improving the capability and capacity of the system to develop and support our athletes. The intended outputs of this approach will be to enhance our athletes' ability to compete with the best in the world across more events thus creating increased medal opportunities in these events at the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Our 7 Strategic Pillars



* Including: Government, Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland, National Governing Bodies, Olympic Federation of Ireland, Paralympics Ireland, higher education institutions

1

Strategic Pillar: FOCUSED PERFORMANCE INVESTMENT



Principles

- Sport Ireland will be ambitious and set clear priorities for investment.
- The criteria for evaluating Olympic and Paralympic sports will be defined and used to support our decision-making around a more focused investment model. This will be in place by the Paris cycle.
- Sport Ireland will periodically review the prioritisation of sports to reflect progress and changes over time.
- Talented, medal potential athletes in non-priority sports will be supported to maximise their potential.

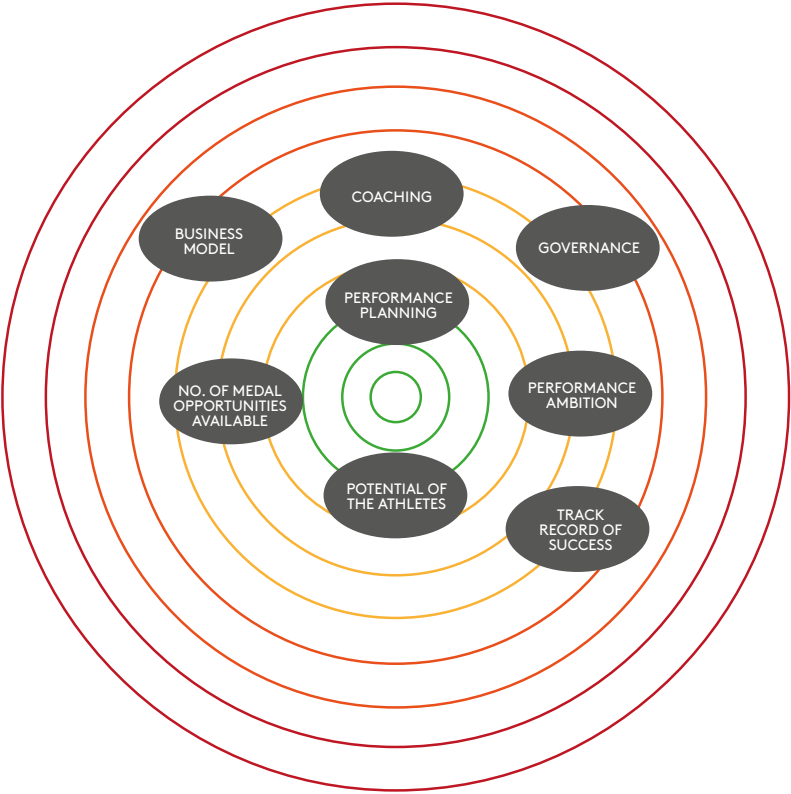


Key actions

1. Sport Ireland will categorise the sports within our system and prioritise investment proportionally to these sports. Clear criteria will be used with the aim of delivering specific high performance related outcomes. The criteria for assessing the status of each of our sports will be based on parameters that underpin successful programmes. An indicative set of criteria is outlined below.
 - a. Performance ambition of the sport
 - b. Profile of athletes with high performance potential within the sport
 - c. Effectiveness of the performance planning within the sport
 - d. Experience and capacity of coaches within the sport
 - e. Quantum of medal opportunities available to the sport
 - f. Track record of success of the sport
 - g. Governance and decision-making processes within the sport
 - h. Business model underpinning the performance programme.

Over the next decade, Sport Ireland, through investment prioritisation, planning, and assessment processes, will work with high performance sports to improve their programmes across specific criteria. Each sport will aim to move their status in each investment criteria towards the centre of criteria targets, as illustrated in the example across.

2. NGBs will undertake regular horizon scanning to ensure that upcoming talented athletes can be identified and supported.
3. Sport Ireland will ensure there is provision for supporting Olympic and Paralympic medal potential athletes outside priority sports and set clear detail as to what that is.



2

Strategic Pillar: ATHLETE PERFORMANCE & HOLISTIC SUPPORT



Principles

- The high performance system will provide supports throughout the key points of an athlete's career where his or her needs include:
 - World class coaching
 - NGB support
 - Dual career options
 - Carding scheme
 - Scholarship programmes
 - Performance support services
 - Transition planning (junior to senior athlete)
 - Post athletic career planning and support
- Sport Ireland will establish an Athlete Welfare Policy for adoption by NGBs
- Athletes will take ownership of their journey and be supported in self-managing their performance lifestyle.

Key actions

1. The Carding Scheme will be advanced to benchmark against international best practice, including specifically:
 - a. Increased ownership and management of carding within the NGBs
 - b. Maximum total investment
 - c. National Governing Body vs Sport Ireland allocation
 - d. Multi-annual carding schemes – managed internally by NGBs with oversight from Sport Ireland
 - e. Athlete agreement contracts with the National Governing Body
2. Sport Ireland Institute to be resourced further to enhance athlete life skills support, including advice on education, financial planning, balancing academic load, dual-career planning and accessing athlete-friendly employment schemes with both public and private sector organisations.
3. NGBs will lead on athlete welfare and develop effective ways to recognise and address athlete issues.
4. The NGBs will develop long-term competition planning across all priority sports to ensure that athletes get the optimum exposure to competition stress conditions and become more comfortable in top level competition environments.
5. Sport Ireland will develop a clear policy on how team sports will be supported in terms of direct athlete investment, athlete support services and National Governing Body input.
6. Sport Ireland will introduce Culture Reviews to support NGBs in delivering optimum environments for athletes.

3

Strategic Pillar: WORLD CLASS COACHING & SUPPORT SERVICES



Principles

- Coaching is the building block of all elite sport. Sport Ireland will appoint a High Performance Coaching Lead.
- An athlete-centred approach with open communication and knowledge sharing between coaches and support providers is paramount.
- Talented Irish coaches will have opportunities within our system and support will be provided to them in terms of technical, mental, physical and financial resources.
- Sport Ireland Coaching has shared responsibility with the NGBs for coaches working with developmental and junior level athletes.
- Sport Ireland Institute has shared responsibility with the NGBs for supporting coaches with senior athletes going to Olympic or Paralympic Games.
- Our system will operate to world class standard, drawing on international expertise where appropriate to drive high performance coaching and support services.
- The Sport Ireland Institute will be resourced further to enhance performance support services for athletes and enable deeper provision of support to priority sports.

Key actions

1. Sport Ireland, in partnership with the NGBs, will increase the professionalisation of high performance coaching to ensure it becomes a viable career option for talented coaches in our system.
2. Sport Ireland will develop a comprehensive business plan to advance the capacity of high performance coaching across the system. This will include:
 - a. A review of the coaching model required for working with high performance athletes
 - b. Ensuring all our NGBs have appropriate coaching courses for high performance sport
 - c. Providing a professional development programme for coaches working with international athletes at junior and youth levels
 - d. Undertaking a gap analysis in the specialist knowledge required for Paralympic coaching
 - e. Undertaking a salary benchmark for coaches in our high performance system
 - f. Creating a development framework for high performance coaches based on their needs including exposure to international systems, competitive intensity, shared learning across the system and learning from high performance environments outside sport.
3. The Sport Ireland Institute will deliver a world class standard of performance support services to our priority sports and high performance athletes (outside of priority sports) through the following actions:
 - a. The adoption of a centralised model with supporting regional hubs for the provision of performance support services
 - b. Building collaboration across the system – NGBs, Higher Education Institutions, private sector
 - c. Creating best practice knowledge-sharing networks around support service provision.

4

Strategic Pillar: BUSINESS STRUCTURES & PLANNING



Principles

- High performance will be defined within each sport to ensure that it is understood by all in leadership and governance roles.
- High performance programmes must be led by an expert with oversight from a High Performance Committee (HPC, or other delegate authority i.e. High Performance Advisory Group) that consists of independent members.
- Governance standards will be in place around all high performance programmes and those standards will be based on the stage of development/maturity and structure of the sport.
- Multi-annual funding enables longer-term high performance planning over Olympic/Paralympic cycles.
- Funding should be linked to delivery of high performance outcomes.
- While sports differ in their ability to raise external funding, high performance programmes should be treated as a business and business plans must reflect this.
- Investment from government in high performance sport should be dependent on an element of matched funding from NGBs.

Key actions

1. Sport Ireland will set target standards of governance practice around our high performance sports programmes with funding released based on adherence to the following minimum standards criteria:
 - a. There is a full-time paid performance team in the sport
 - b. The Performance Director (PD) role must be separate from the coaching role
 - c. The sport must have a HPC, which supports and empowers the Performance Director and to ensure that people with the requisite expertise are making decisions affecting high performance programmes.
 - d. Independent high performance expertise must be in place on the HPC
 - e. There must be independent directors on the board of the sport
 - f. Clearly delineated relationships must exist between CEO, HPC, PD and board
 - g. Sport Ireland can propose independent experts, from a Sport Ireland panel, who can be placed on the board/HPC to embed good practice and expertise
 - h. New board/HPC members entering the high performance system will receive training
2. NGBs will undertake the following actions:
 - a. Compliance with the governance code
 - b. A focus on embedding good practice up to a certain date beyond which compliance on minimum standards must be achieved to receive funding
 - c. NGBs should generate a minimum 20% of the funding for their HP programme plan themselves
3. Sport Ireland will support NGBs through the following actions:
 - a. Setting up a best practice HPC forum to share expertise and knowledge amongst HPC members from across sports, meeting on a regular basis e.g. quarterly
 - b. Encourage and support NGBs in terms of gaining positions on their European and World Federations, to influence high performance decisions
 - c. Explore the development of alternative funding streams, including a Foundation model, similar to a government bond, which seeks funding from corporate donors to match to the high performance system and support on a collective basis Ireland's performance sports i.e. 'Team Ireland' and the possibility of an American-Irish funds programme, specifically for high performance sport

Model of High Performance Governance

Sport Ireland will require sports to demonstrate that they have appropriate levels of corporate governance, leadership, ethical standards, financial management and administration to be eligible for high performance investment. The governance of high performance sports will be assessed against the following model of best practice:



Board composition and capability

- The NGB board must be structured to provide the balance in terms of professional skills, diversity, term limits and experience to provide appropriate strategic direction and oversight to the executive.
- There should be provisions in the constitution to appoint at least one member of the board as a champion for high performance sport.
- Any gaps in knowledge on the board with respect to high performance sport should be addressed through procedures for appointing and training for new board members.

Organisational leadership

- The NGB board and executive must have absolute clarity on how high performance is defined within the sport and the standards required from athletes and personnel to compete and win at European and World level.
- The key senior leadership positions of CEO and National Performance Director must have the skills and experience to lead the NGB and the high performance programme.
- There should be clear delineation of roles and responsibilities with the Performance Director reporting to the CEO and the CEO reporting to the board.

High performance committee structure and function

- The NGB must have a high performance committee in place, which advocates on behalf of the Performance Director's strategic direction, while still providing constructive challenge to the Performance Director's decisions.
- The high performance committee should report to the NGB Board while maintaining delegated authority to make decisions related to the high performance programme.
- The high performance committee must comprise at least one independent member with high performance expertise and at least one board member.

Policies, procedures and processes

- The NGB must develop and publish clear policies and procedures to underpin all key decisions related to athletes and the high performance programme overall.
- The NGB must document how it intends to safeguard equality and ethical standards related to the culture and practice within the high performance programme.
- Periodic performance reviews must take place and should strike the appropriate balance between development of the people and processes in the high performance programme and the delivery of competitive results.
- The NGB must have robust financial planning and management processes in place to generate, allocate, and monitor different sources of funding in the high performance programme.
- The NGB must have strong reporting processes in place to satisfy all stakeholders in the high performance programme.

5

Strategic Pillar: PARTNERSHIPS



Collaboration and alignment across the system involving Government, Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland, National Governing Bodies, Olympic Federation of Ireland, Paralympics Ireland, higher education institutions, primary and secondary education.

Principles

- Collaboration and alignment is a key performance principle of the new strategic plan, and an underpinning value of all the work.
- We must create opportunities for higher education institutions to collaborate within the high performance system where there is shared commitment to support athletes and co-invest in the high performance space. Each university/college will have different types of relationships with the high performance sport system, therefore separate contracts or service level agreements should be agreed between higher education institutions and Sport Ireland, with clear recognition on how their business needs are met by these agreements.
- We recognise that the learning of fundamental movement skills and skills acquisition at developmental levels, especially through primary and secondary education, greatly impacts the development and potential of our athletes further along the performance pathway.

Key actions

1. Collaborate with higher education institutions to develop a partnership between Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland, NGBs, the Olympic Federation of Ireland and Paralympics Ireland. This collaboration will explore:
 - a. Opportunity for institutes/universities to become Centres of Excellence for specific HP sports and to become branded outposts of the Sport Ireland Institute, offering regionalised HP services, linked to QQI
 - b. Government driven principles to support dual career athletes with flexibility around academic load
 - c. Higher education institutions become a much greater partner in the transition from junior to senior athlete
 - d. Creating links between sports science faculties within higher education institutions and the sports
 - e. Co-funding high performance coaching and technical expertise based at the higher education institution
 - f. Creating links between research faculties and the sports
 - g. How sports scholarship programmes can be leveraged and accessed in the context of this partnership.
2. Establish frequent networking and information sharing sessions between HP interest groups, such as HPCs, PDs, coaches, etc., aligned between Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.
3. Alignment with the Sports Leadership Group to address key areas of strategic importance to the high performance system, including, for example, high performance facility development, primary and secondary school sports education and policy development.

6

Strategic Pillar: WORLD CLASS FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT



Principles

- Facilities plan will be nationally coordinated, multi-sport and linked to higher education institutions.
- High performance facilities will be accessible and have options for living facilities for athletes, coaches, support staff.
- Regional high performance centres will be unlocked through collaboration and linked to specific sports.
- Multi-annual capital funding is critical for equipment-intensive high performance sports.
- The development of facilities is future proofed and includes the views of those who will be using them.



Key actions

1. Build out the master plan for the Sport Ireland Campus, as per the Government's commitment to its completion, to include the following:
 - a. Assessment of needs and planning around large-scale builds on-site, e.g. competition arena
 - b. Accommodation for athletes
 - c. On-site village to include best practice needs for athletes, including a canteen, transport on-site, access points, etc.
 - d. Collaboration group between the sports and the Development Director of Sport Ireland Campus to meet regularly and share knowledge on best development for the Campus
 - e. Continued phased development of the Sport Ireland Institute
 - f. Exploration of opportunities that might exist for hosting international events at the Sport Ireland Campus.
2. Sport Ireland will work with the Government to ensure the capital infrastructure policy is linked with the high performance strategy, and to develop a facilities plan, specifically with the following criteria:
 - a. Alignment at national level with Project Ireland 2040
 - b. Creation of a capital funding scheme specifically for high performance sport
 - c. Influence over high performance capital funding decisions is reliant on maintaining high standards of corporate governance
 - d. NGBs to be the recognised body to apply for high performance capital funding
 - e. National infrastructure plan aligned with assessment of need – audit of existing facilities
 - f. Central alignment to local authorities
 - g. Visibility on release dates of capital over a multi-annual cycle
 - h. Investment capital to be visible along with programme, carding, and support services
 - i. Alignment and collaboration with higher education sector
 - j. Assessment of viability of links to secondary school high performance academy concept close to the Sport Ireland Campus.
3. Sport Ireland will collaborate with the higher education sector to access regional performance facilities and develop those regional hubs that already exist, e.g. National Rowing Centre, by exploring how they can become hubs for multiple high performance sports.
4. Sport Ireland will explore options to involve the private sector in high performance facility development and partnership funding.

7

Strategic Pillar: RESEARCH & INNOVATION



Principles

- Opportunities exist for research and innovation projects to add value to all pillars of this strategy including Athlete Performance, Coaching and Support Services, Business Structures and Planning, Partnerships, and Facilities.
- By continually analysing our practice and learning from high performing teams and organisations both inside and outside our system we will enhance our knowledge of what works for us.
- High performance sports will be encouraged to identify performance challenges within their sport in order to generate and develop research questions – a spirit of innovation will be fostered by identifying constraints in the system and experimenting with ways to bridge performance gaps.
- We will prioritise projects that are most likely to impact on athlete performance and in medal potential sports.

Key Actions

1. Sport Ireland will create partnerships with universities and the private sector to conduct applied research and development projects in areas such as performance analysis, sport science, sports medicine, data analytics, sport technology and coaching.
2. Sport Ireland will expand on the PhD student model currently utilised to pursue research projects and create opportunities for capable practitioners to work and develop within the system.
3. NGBs will be encouraged to collaborate on research projects that are focused on adding value to the day-to-day practice of performance directors, coaches, support staff and athletes.
4. Sport Ireland will develop and resource a long-term plan of how data science can add value to high performance sport in our country, particularly in the following areas:
 - a. Injury prevention, training optimisation, and performance enhancement
 - b. Performance intelligence on what it takes to win
 - c. Monitoring and evaluation of high performance investment
 - d. Evidence-based decision-making within our high performance system.
5. An innovation and research hub will be established at the Sport Ireland Campus to generate ideas, identify research priorities and share learnings within our high performance community.
6. Sport Ireland and NGBs will develop data rich communication and PR strategies to enhance the understanding and reputation of our high performance sport system.

A close-up, low-angle shot of a swimmer's head and shoulders above water. The swimmer is wearing a black swim cap and black goggles. Water splashes around their face, creating many small, bright blue droplets. The background is a blurred view of the pool and other swimmers. The image is framed by a large, dark teal diagonal shape that occupies the right half of the page.

Strategy Implementation

Implementation Approach

The focus of the strategy will shift to an action orientation following launch and publication of the strategy. A detailed implementation plan up to 2023 will be developed to address the actions within each strategic pillar with subsequent implementation plans developed at staged points up until 2032. The strategy implementation approach will be centred around three elements:

1. An effective **organisational structure**, with clarity of roles and responsibilities and high-quality information flow across the programme of activity and diverse stakeholders involved.
2. Strategy implementation **review and reporting processes** using standardised templates/tools to manage the scheduling of projects, allocation of resources, communication of progress, monitoring of key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets, and alignment of decision-making throughout the implementation phase.
3. **Key performance indicators and targets** to provide clarity of focus for all projects/initiatives to ensure they are structured from the outset to meet the objectives and people are aligned on the achievement of outcomes.

1. Organisational structure

Sport Ireland's High Performance Committee

The High Performance Committee will assume responsibility for overseeing the successful implementation of the strategy. The committee will meet on a six-monthly basis to review progress with external experts invited as required to advise on implementation of specific strategic areas.

Strategy Project Management team

The Strategy Project Management team will comprise of personnel from Sport Ireland's High Performance Unit with additional external support appointed as required. The team will be responsible for the day-to-day activities associated with the implementation of the strategy including the design of processes, tracking of progress, resolution of issues and communication/stakeholder management. The team will also coordinate project-specific working groups aimed at driving initiatives within the implementation plan and achieving actions set out in the strategy.

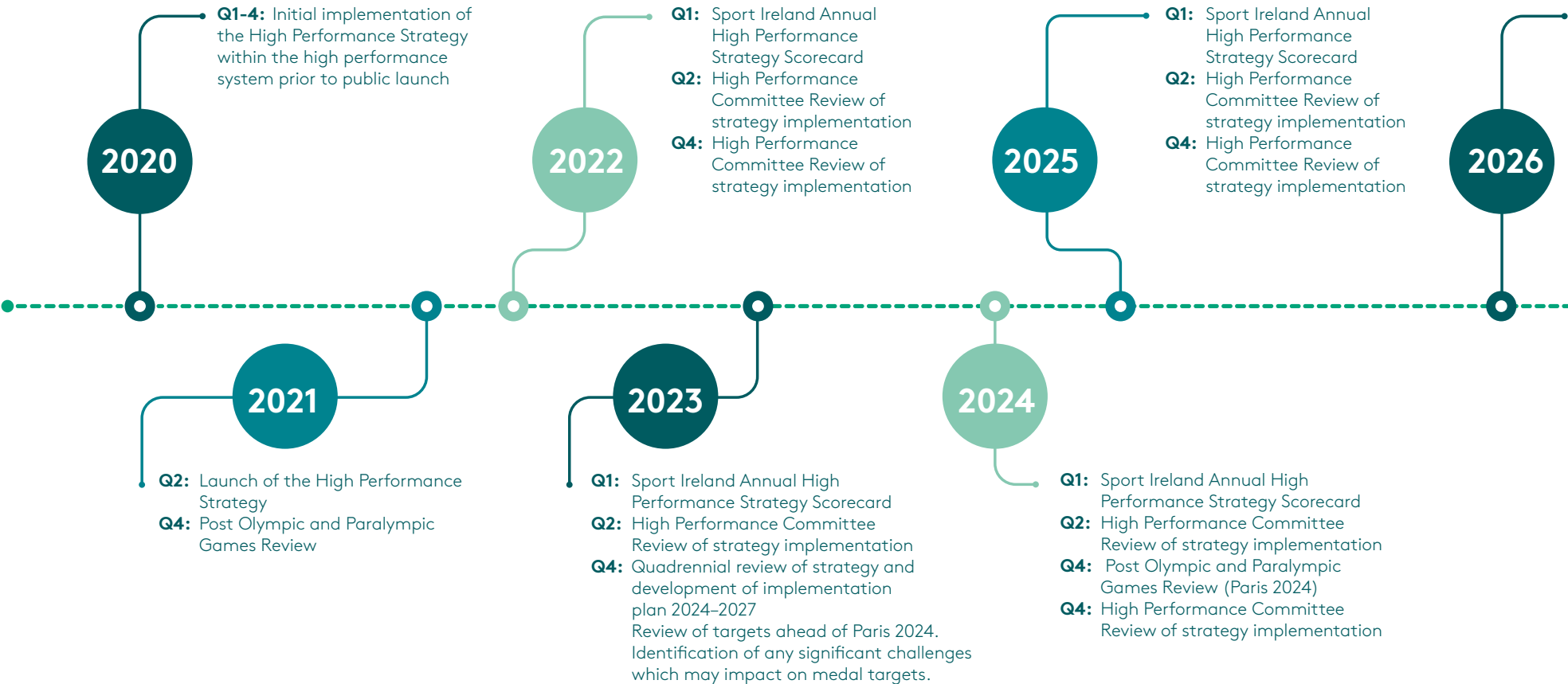
Central Communications Unit

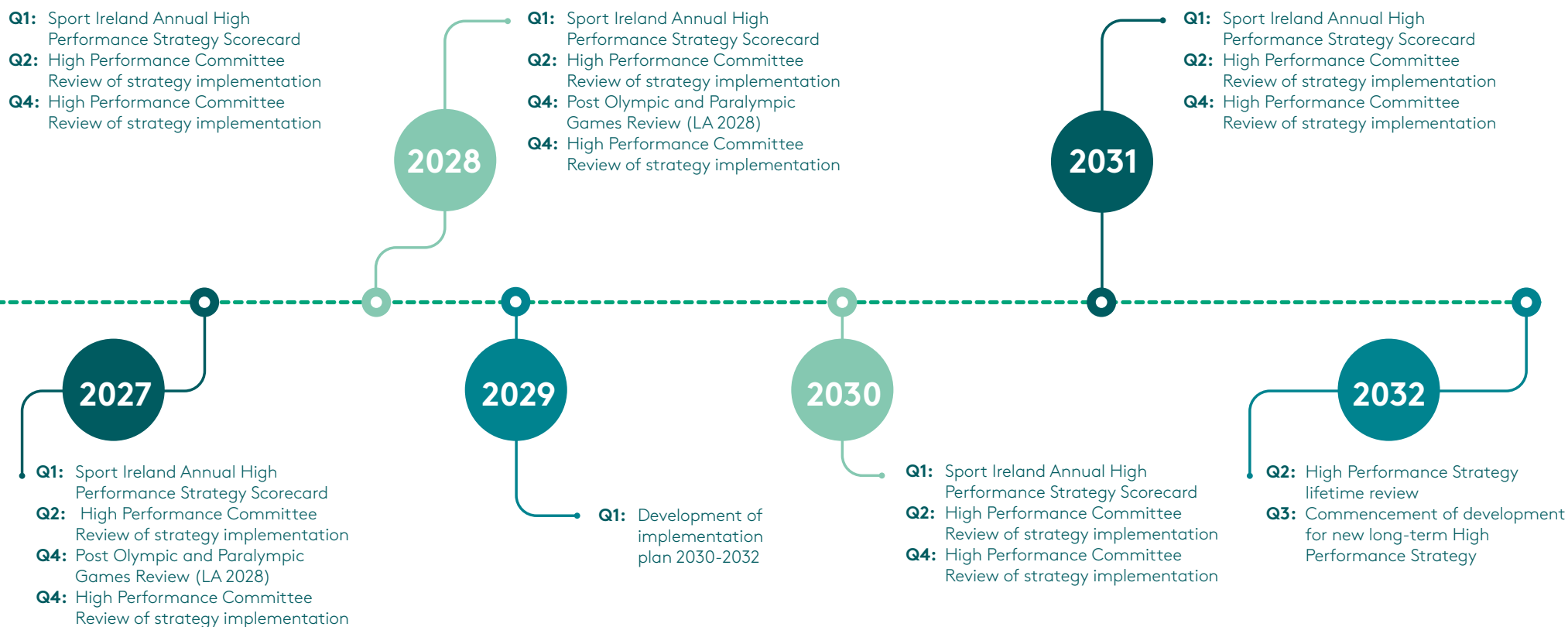
The creation of a Central Communications Unit in Sport Ireland specifically focused on high performance sport has been identified as an area of significant potential. The detail and full scope of this Central Communications Unit will be determined as part of the implementation plan 2021–2023 following consideration of alternative models. The proposed role of this unit will be to manage communications and public affairs around high performance sport, including:

- Driving all communications around the High Performance Strategy 2021–2032
- Managing public relations for all high performance sports and working closely with Public Relations Officers within NGBs
- Supporting the NGBs in delivering a more strategic approach to communications of high performance sport
- Ensuring the values and stories of the athletes and the sports are communicated publicly
- Building collaboration between media and NGBs
- Ensuring communications elements of strong governance are understood and communicated by stakeholders.

2. Review and reporting processes

Periodic reviews and annual reports will be completed to monitor and evaluate implementation of the high performance strategy. An indicative schedule of key points of review across the ten-year strategy is outlined below:





3. Key performance indicators and targets

KPIs, targets and timeframes will be established to address the actions under each strategic pillar to drive implementation of the high performance strategy. A detailed set of KPIs, targets and timeframes will be developed as part of the implementation plan 2021–2023 following publication of the strategy.





Appendices

Appendix 1: Irish Sports Council High
Performance Strategy Review

Appendix 1: Irish Sports Council High Performance Strategy Review

Background

The inception and evolution of Ireland’s High Performance System has been guided by the vision and goals set out in the Irish Sports Council’s original *High Performance Strategy* which was published in 2001. The previous strategy was founded on the vision for Ireland to be “a nation achieving consistent success at World, European, Olympic and Paralympic levels”. The six strategic goals identified for the high performance system were as follows:

Strategic goal	High level objectives
Continuous improvement in Ireland’s sporting performance	Increased medal success at World, European, Olympic, Paralympic levels
Effective pathways for athletes	Development of clear and well supported pathways in relevant sports that help identify and develop talented young athletes through the domestic system into national level
Super-effective sports	Increase the capacity of sports to focus on high performance by delivering strong organisational structures and establishing coaching and administrative resources
Leading service expertise	Development of high-quality and integrated coaching, sports medicine and sports science services
A real quality infrastructure for athletes	Provide nationally coordinated and accessible athlete support that allows athletes to progress to the highest level
Recognition of the benefits of high performance sport in Ireland	Help people understand and engage in the vision through strong communication strategies and relating how success in high performance sport can benefit Ireland’s identity and standing in the world

Strategy review

In the original high performance strategy, progression in the system was targeted through six major strategic thrusts:

1. Build Irish Sport’s policy, resources and competencies
2. Create the Irish Institute of Sport National Performance Network and appropriate support services
3. Building real excellence in coaching
4. Invest in effective NGB structures
5. Establish clear pathways to the top
6. Communication, promotion, research and development.

In reviewing the implementation of the strategy, the high performance system has clearly advanced significantly since 2001 when the Irish system was still in its infancy. Advances in the system have been primarily based on rigorous independent quadrennial reviews following each Olympic and Paralympic cycle (i.e. Athens Review, Beijing Review, London Debrief, Rio Review). The published actions emerging from these reviews have enabled periodic evaluation of the original strategy’s implementation and consideration of its recommendations in the rapidly changing context of international high performance sport.

Based on this evidence, the recommendations set out in strategic thrusts 1, 2 and 4 have been comprehensively addressed, while under strategic thrusts 3, 5, and 6, progress has been made but there are still gaps in the system. The key achievements and existing gaps are identified below under each strategic thrust.

Strategic thrust	Key achievements and existing gaps
1. Build Irish Sport's policy, resources and competencies: To raise the resources required for high performance and to build the structure of people and facilities required to support the high performance strategy	Development of Sport Ireland policy on all matters related to high performance including HP Programme funding, carding, and monitoring and evaluation Establishment of Performance Planning Committees between Sport Ireland and the Olympic Federation of Ireland and Paralympics Ireland to support effective preparation and coordination of Ireland's Olympic and Paralympic teams Investment provision for both the Olympic Federation of Ireland and Paralympics Ireland to appoint professional administrative (e.g., CEO) and technical staff (e.g. Performance Director) Investment in the development of experienced and qualified people within Sport Ireland's HP Unit, NGB Unit and Sport Ireland Institute has enhanced the organisation's capacity to work closely with all relevant organisations within the high performance system Formation of Sport Ireland's Organisation Development and Change Unit and delivery of its programmes has contributed significantly to the development and learning of numerous senior management and operational staff working with high performance sports The creation and ongoing developments of Sport Ireland Campus now offers state of the art high performance facilities including: • Sport Ireland Institute High Performance Centre • National Aquatic Centre • National Diving Training Centre • National Horse Sport Arena • National Modern Pentathlon Training Centre • National Indoor Arena • National Gymnastics Training Centre • National Cross Country Track Further developments are already scheduled including: • National Indoor Arena Phase 2 • National Hockey Training Centre • National Velodrome Sport Ireland Act 2015 established a statutory requirement to provide for high performance sport in Ireland and brought together key agencies interacting with the high performance system (e.g. Irish Sports Council, Irish Institute of Sport, National Sports Campus Development Authority) into one organisation Stability in funding has been maintained on a year to year basis over multiple cycles. However, the lack of multi-annual budgets to date has restricted allocation of guaranteed multi-annual high performance funding to NGBs

Strategic thrust	Key achievements and existing gaps
2. Create the Irish Institute of Sport, its National Performance Network and appropriate support services: To provide top sportsmen and women in Ireland with world class and sharply focused support dedicated to achieving medals at World, European, Olympic and Paralympic competitions	Construction and development of the Sport Ireland Institute including building a state of the art High Performance Training Centre Recruitment of high-quality sports science and medical practitioners to support Irish elite athletes competing at European, World, Olympic and Paralympic level Development of a managed support service delivery model in partnership with the Performance Directors across the high performance sports Integration of Sport Ireland Institute team members within Irish Olympic and Paralympic teams for London 2012 and Rio 2016 Development of an athlete Performance Transition Programme and Life Skills Advisory Service Expansion of national performance support network with the inclusion of Sport Ireland Institute quality assured sport science practitioners Partnership with Olympic Federation of Ireland to deliver a Team Ireland's performance support programme, covering athlete life skills, sports science and medicine before, during and after the 2020 Games Progression of Sport Ireland's International Carding Scheme to a 2-year scheme starting in 2019. Eight sports, which have appropriate structures, policies and procedures, now manage carding within the NGB
3. Building real excellence in coaching: To build on coaching structures and drive higher standards in coaching and increase the number of active, suitably qualified coaches in Ireland	Investment in the recruitment and retention of full-time paid coaches within NGBs to work directly with national senior level athletes and teams. However, there is still limited full-time paid coaches within NGBs working with junior level athletes Sport Ireland Coaching (formerly Coaching Ireland/NCTC) has established coach education structures and advanced coaching delivery within sports at participation and developmental levels. However, many sports do not currently have the capacity to develop and support full-time coaches who are working with athletes at junior and senior international level Sport Ireland Institute has delivered comprehensive professional development to support the career progression of a community of high performance coaches across multiple sports (Pursuit of Excellence programme). The programme has evolved to now support the professional development of Performance Directors within the system (Sparkling Performance Programme)

Strategic thrust	Key achievements and existing gaps
4. Invest in effective NGB structures: To build NGB capacity to deliver in the area of high performance and related areas that interact with high performance teams	Increased professionalisation of staff in leadership (e.g. CEO), management (e.g. National Performance Director), operations (e.g. National Performance Coordinator), and coaching (e.g. National Head Coach) roles across the system Widespread adoption of a National Performance Director model to coordinate high performance programmes within NGBs Improved governance structures including the use of high performance sub-committees as best practice within NGBs. However, there is still a lack of understanding of high performance sport at board level and limited independent performance expertise within NGB high performance sub-committees Enhanced capability within NGBs to develop and implement effective strategies and performance plans around their high performance programmes
5. Establish clear pathways to the top: Identifying and supporting structures which enable young people to become involved in sport and allow them to progress to higher levels of performance	Improved national competition pathways and domestic structures have enabled identification of talented athletes at junior levels Enhanced understanding of the athlete pathway between developmental, national and international levels. However, appropriate coaching input, skills acquisition, competition exposure and sport-education balance for young athletes are still issues across many sports. There are still structural and resource issues in the system which impact on the integration between NGBs, third level institutions, clubs and schools who all play important roles in the development of young athletes. It is recognised that the delivery of programmes with young people at schools, club and grassroots level ultimately impacts on the development and potential of athletes as they progress further through the performance pathway

Strategic thrust	Key achievements and existing gaps
6. Communication, promotion, research and development: Effective communication of the vision for and importance of high performance sport in Ireland, both to the sporting community and wider population, and the ability to keep ahead through targeted research projects	Sport Ireland has continually communicated the vision and importance of Ireland’s high performance system through a growing number of events and online channels. Communication strategies have primarily focused on the following aspects of the system: • Increased number of athlete medal successes at European, World, Olympic and Paralympic level • World class training environment and performance support available at the Sport Ireland Institute • Facility developments at Sport Ireland Campus • Increased capability and professionalised nature of high performance programmes • Development of high performance coaching and performance director talent in the system While the reputation of high performance sport has been enhanced among key stakeholders (e.g. Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, NGBs, OFI, PI), challenges still remain in building the identity of high performance sport among the wider public due to the popularity of the three main field sports (e.g. GAA, soccer, rugby) and their dominance of media coverage Sport Ireland Institute and High Performance Unit have partnered with various third level institutions to access funding for PhD students to conduct applied research on various topics within high performance sport including: • Strength and conditioning • Nutrition • Psychology • Physiology • Life skills • Physiotherapy • Performance management

Summary

Overall, the current system is consistent with the vision of the original strategy and the strategic goals have largely been achieved. At the outset of the strategy, Irish success in world level competition was sporadic and largely based on the efforts of talented individual athletes who emerged within sports once in a generation and often moved abroad to access quality training environments. In the current context, the system can now offer athletes world class training environments and performance support in Ireland which has contributed to increased medal successes across multiple sports in each cycle since Sydney 2000 (see Figure 2 and Figure 3 on page 9).

While there are still a number of challenges in the system, such gaps present opportunities for the new high performance strategy to build on the progress made over the previous four cycles and to support continued systemic success for Irish athletes at European, World, Olympic and Paralympic level.





www.sportireland.ie
[@sportireland](https://twitter.com/sportireland)