



# **Guidance Document**

## **Sports Systems Investment**

### **New Governing Bodies**

#### **2025/26**

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## 1. BACKGROUND

Sport NI has been able to invest in governing bodies (and eligible umbrella organisations) over the past 10 years because of National Lottery investment.

In April 2022 the Corporate Plan for Sport NI ([The Power of Sport – Our Five-Year Plan | Sport NI](#)) was approved. Sport NI has evolved its approach to supporting the sports sector, recognising the need to invest in sport and physical activity through a wide range of partners.

As we implement this strategy, we will develop a range of approaches and opportunities to work with both existing and new partners. We will focus on those underrepresented communities highlighted in our Corporate Plan.

This guidance document details how Sport NI, through Lottery investment, will support governing bodies **NOT** currently in receipt of 'Sport System Investment – Governing Bodies' (SSIGB) funding.

## 2. SPORTS SYSTEM INVESTMENT – NEW GOVERNING BODIES

In recognition of the strategic role governing bodies play, the 'Sports System Investment – New Governing Bodies' is the third strand of the Sports Systems Investment to implement 'The Power of Sport'. This investment is to contribute to the delivery of:

- **Outcome 1: People adopting and sustaining participation in sport and physical activity.**

by (Sport NI Cornerstones):

- Building a positive and inclusive sports culture, recognising the rights of everyone to access and participate in sport.
- Retaining a duty of care to all those engaged in the Sporting System.
- Promoting wellness and well-being.
- Targeting sport in rural communities, in disadvantaged areas and with underrepresented groups.

We want to support Recognised governing bodies, not currently funded in the sector, to have stronger systems in place.

For 2025/26 we have placed a focus on contributing positively to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), and particularly for **women and girls in sport**. This is aligned to the **Be Seen, Be Heard, Belong** campaign <https://www.beseenbeheardbelong.co.uk/>.

### 3. ELIGIBILITY

Who Can Apply:

The applicant must be named on the UK Recognition list - <https://www.sportni.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Recognition-List-January-2025.pdf>

The maximum total amount available is **£20,000** – unless the applicant organisation was in receipt of SSI-NGB funding in 2024/25, where the maximum available is **£25,000**.

The following eligibility criteria also apply:

- The project, in the main, will benefit the inhabitants of Northern Ireland.
- The project and the related expenditure have not taken place yet.  
(Note: where funding was awarded in 2024/25, funding may be awarded towards continuing programmes from 1 April 2025 if the submission can demonstrate how it aligns to the current programme.)
- The applicant organisation has not applied previously for SSI-GB funding for 2025/26. This includes branches, where a parent governing body has applied previously and vice versa).

### 4. TIMELINES

**11 April 2025**

*Launch & open for submissions.*

**31 October 2025**

*Closing date for submissions.*

**31 March 2026**

*All projects completed.*

Rolling assessment of submissions, as and when received, between **11 April and 31 October 2025**.

We will endeavour to have assessments completed and awards notified within **5 weeks** of receipt of submissions.

### 5. PRIORITY INVESTMENT AREAS

Sport NI has identified priority investment areas as part of its investment in sports' governing bodies. These should be considered, along with the examples provided, in completing Section 9 of the submission.

***Note – you do not have to seek support in all three areas, just those where you feel that your organisation can make the biggest impacts to improve the organisation and what it offers.***

Priority Investment Area	Points to consider (examples)
<b>Retention and Growth</b> To create opportunities and environments that attract and retain participants in sport, members, spectators, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your ambition with regards to participation in your sport (not just members).</li><li>• How you will increase opportunities through sport, targeting underrepresented groups or communities, including women and girls, people with a disability and those in later life.</li><li>• How you will increase opportunities with a geographical spread, including rural communities.</li></ul>

<p><b>Workforce Planning</b></p> <p>To develop an active, skilled and supported workforce which is representative of the population and has the capacity and capability to meet the demands of the sporting system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How you build a detailed understanding of your sport's workforce and its impact to support decision making and evaluation.</li> <li>• How you will take proactive steps to address under-representation to achieve a more diverse and inclusive workforce within your sport.</li> <li>• Embracing digital technology to enable and enhance the learning and connectivity of people within sport.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Good Governance</b></p> <p>To embed good governance practices within sporting culture.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How you comply with your adopted governance code.</li> <li>• How you will develop and embed inclusive, fit-for-purpose policies, procedures, and practices.</li> <li>• How you will consider the long-term development of your organisation, e.g. develop strategic plan, financial plan and/or operational plan.</li> </ul>

## 6. SUBMISSION PROCESS

Submission forms must identify a lead contact who will be responsible for submitting and managing the award, as well as an alternate contact should the lead be unavailable.

The submission should be signed by two representatives of the organisation, confirming its accuracy and that its submission to Sport NI is approved by those responsible for decision-making in the organisation.

Submissions and associated documentation must be submitted via email to [SSIGBnewgoverningbodies@sportni.net](mailto:SSIGBnewgoverningbodies@sportni.net). Hard copy submissions will not be accepted.

Following submission, it may be necessary for Sport NI to seek clarification from the organisation on the information provided. We will contact you for this, when required.

Submissions can be submitted from **11 April 2025** and will be assessed, and awards made, on a rolling basis until the funds are depleted or the closing date— **Friday 31 October 2025 @ 1pm** whichever is reached first.

## 7. HOW TO COMPLETE THE SUBMISSION PROPOSAL

Submissions can only be considered if received using the submission form, together with the relevant associated documentation.

Through the submission process we are encouraging organisations to have a focus on areas that need to be developed, help address inequalities and to better support inclusive sporting environments.

Text boxes are provided for your organisation to input information, comment and narrative. Please keep information concise and relevant to the information being requested - extensive and detailed narrative is **NOT** expected. Bullet point format is acceptable.

**Contact details** – the lead contact should be the person who will be engaging with Sport NI in relation to this award. An alternate contact is required in order that Sport NI has another contact, should the lead become unavailable.

**Eligibility** – confirm with an 'x' each of the eligibility criteria.

### **Section 1 – How many clubs are affiliated to your governing body?**

Please provide the number of clubs currently affiliated to your organisation – showing the total number across UK, Ireland and Northern Ireland (as appropriate) and broken down per county for Northern Ireland.

### **Section 2 – How many members are affiliated to your governing body?**

Please provide the total number of members affiliated to your organisation – showing the total number across UK, Ireland and Northern Ireland (as appropriate).

Please provide a breakdown of your current membership: between male, female, those who have indicated that they prefer not to say, under-18-year-olds, those with a disability and those from ethnically diverse communities. Does your organisation collect data on 'active' members – and how does it define an active member?

### **Section 3 – What is the average cost for a club member to participate in your sport?**

Please input an estimated cost to participate in your sport for both junior and senior participants and list the types of cost associated with participating e.g. kit, membership fees, equipment.

### **Section 4 – How many coaches are affiliated to your governing body?**

Please provide the total number of coaches affiliated to your organisation – showing the total number across UK, Ireland and Northern Ireland (as appropriate).

Please provide a breakdown of your current affiliated coaches: between male, female, those who have indicated that they prefer not to say, under-18-year-olds, those with a disability and those from ethnically diverse communities. Does your organisation collect data on 'active' coaches – and how does it define an active coach?

### **Section 5 – How many volunteers are affiliated to your governing body?**

Please provide the total number of volunteers affiliated to your organisation – showing the total number across UK, Ireland and Northern Ireland (as appropriate).

Please provide a breakdown of your current volunteers: between male, female, those who have indicated that they prefer not to say, under-18-year-olds, those with a disability and those from ethnically diverse communities. Does your organisation collect data on 'active' volunteers – and how does it define an active volunteer?

### **Section 6 – How many officials are affiliated to your governing body?**

Please provide the total number of officials affiliated to your organisation – showing the total number across UK, Ireland and Northern Ireland (as appropriate).

Please provide a breakdown of your current affiliated officials: between male, female, those who have indicated that they prefer not to say, under-18-year-olds, those with a disability and those from ethnically diverse communities. Does your organisation collect data on 'active' officials – and how does it define an active official?

## **Section 7 – How many people participate in your sport in Northern Ireland?**

Please input data related to your sport's participation figures - outside of the club/NGB environment. This is the number of people who currently do your sport **NOT** through your governing body structure. Please list the environment where the sport takes place (e.g. school; the number of people participating in that environment and the data sources used to collect those figures.)

***Note – Sections 1 to 7 do not form part of the assessment of the submission and are for data gathering purposes only.***

## **Section 8 – Alignment**

Organisations are required to provide information on their current strategic priorities and goals and demonstrate how they align with Sport NI's Corporate Plan the 'Power of Sport' [http://www.sportni.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/sSportNI-Corporate-Plan-2021-26-2\\_compressed.pdf](http://www.sportni.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/sSportNI-Corporate-Plan-2021-26-2_compressed.pdf), specifically Outcome 1 (Corporate Plan, pages 23-29) and the cornerstones (Corporate Plan, page 20).

**Outcome 1 People adopting and sustaining participation in sport and physical activity,** should be completed by all.

**The Cornerstones** table should be completed for the **most appropriate Cornerstone only**. You do not need to provide details against all Cornerstones – just the **one** that is most relevant.

## **Section 9 - Development Areas & Financial Requirements**

Within this section you should provide details on the priority investment area(s) you are seeking investment towards, including the impact you wish to achieve, how you will achieve it, how it will positively impact Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and how much it will cost.

Please note that you are not required to apply for funding towards delivery in all three priority investment areas, just the areas where you wish to focus currently.

The **'WHAT'** element should explain the expected impact against the Sport NI priority areas – what difference this project will make.

The **'HOW'** element should provide explanation and information on the way in which you plan to achieve the 'WHAT'. The elements should be clearly costed here.

### **'Equality, Diversity & Inclusion'**

Sport NI recognises that the foundation of the Sporting System is to get people active, through physical activity. Sport NI will work with its partners to create a **more inclusive and supportive sporting culture** that ensures that key elements of the Sporting System are delivered, such as improving accessibility for all. Sport NI expects its partners, including funded organisations, to similarly reflect this aspiration.

Within the 'EDI' element, applicants should provide further detail on the proposal and how this positively promotes and impacts EDI across multiple under-represented groups to include for example and not limited to:

- Children and young people
- Disability
- Areas of social deprivation
- Ethnically diverse communities

- Tackling racism and sectarianism in sport.

The SSI-NGB 2025-2026 programme particularly welcomes projects & programmes targeting women and girls in sport. Within the EDI element of the application, we encourage submissions that can positively impact EDI for women and girls **to be seen, to be heard and to belong** in sport. <https://www.beseenbeheardbelong.co.uk/>

Projects are expected to demonstrate specific targets and outcomes focused on women and girls.

Please note the EDI element of the submission does not apply to the Good Governance section.

*Where investment is required to fund a staffing resource, applicants should include reference to the job title and direct impact on priority investment area.*

The following are examples of how this section could be completed:

<b>Retention &amp; Growth – To create opportunities and environments that attract and retain participants in sport, members, spectators, etc.</b>	
<b>What impact will investment have in this area?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase female club membership by 20% by 31 March 2026.</li> </ul> <p>Baseline: 300 active club members: 100 of these are females. Target: Increase to 120 female club members by 31 March 2026.</p>	
<b>How are you going to achieve it?</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Run 3 female-only 'taster' club session programmes over a 6-week period at 3 different venues. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o venue hire (£500x3)</li> <li>o Equipment packs (£300x3)</li> <li>o External coaching costs/development officer time (£300x3)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>1,500</b></p> <p><b>900</b></p> <p><b>900</b></p>
<b>How this will positively impact Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and under-represented groups, including children &amp; young people, people from areas of social deprivation, disabled people and tackling racism and sectarianism in sport?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing needed support and inclusive practice for under-represented groups playing the sport for the first time.</li> <li>- The 3 'female only' club programmes will be delivered in areas of social deprivation and rural areas.</li> </ul>	
<b>How will this positively impact Equality, Diversity and Inclusion specifically for women and girls in sport?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing female-only sessions through three pilot initiatives in partnership with local clubs.</li> <li>- Creating an inclusive and safe space for x20 females to participate and engage in the sport for the first time.</li> <li>- Provide additional signposting to local women's groups and clubs for further female sport participation.</li> </ul>	



<b>How much investment are you seeking?</b>	<b>£3,300</b>	
<b>How much of the investment is focused specifically on women and girls?</b>	<b>£3,300</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Workforce Planning** – To develop and active, skilled and supported workforce. To meet the demands of the sporting system (e.g. coaches, officials, volunteers, club committee members).

**What impact will investment have in this area?**

- Increase the number of level 1 coaches by 50% by 31 March 2026.

Baseline: 100 level 1 coaches:

Target: Increase to 150 level 1 coaches by 31 March 2026.

**How are you going to achieve it?**

- Deliver two Level 1 coaching courses targeting x25 club coaches per course. Course is delivered over two days – theory & practical.
  - o Venue hire (£250x2)
  - o External facilitator/tutor fee (£500x2)
  - o Day 2 practical assessment delivery and equipment hire (£300 x 2)

**£500**  
**£1,500**  
**£600**

**How this will positively impact Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and under-represented groups, including children & young people, people from areas of social deprivation, disabled people and tackling racism and sectarianism in sport?**

- Each Level 1 coaching course will be completed by 5 disabled coaches. This is an accurate reflection of the current disabled coaching workforce within the sport.
- 10 disabled coaches (20% of participants) will be upskilled to a level 1 standard.

**How will this positively impact Equality, Diversity and Inclusion specifically for women and girls in sport?**

- Level 1 coaching practical assessments will be delivered to local clubs and their female youth membership aged 10-16.
- One practical assessment will enable 20-25 females to access free coaching from a newly upskilled coach and engage in the sport within their local club setting.
- Female coach delivery will further promote participation and visibility of female leadership.

<b>How much investment are you seeking?</b>	<b>£2,600</b>	
<b>How much of the investment is focused specifically on women and girls?</b>	<b>£600</b>	<b>23%</b>

**Good Governance** – To embed good governance practices within the sporting culture of the organisation.

**What impact will investment have in this area?**

- EDI training and upskilling for board members.
- Creation of Club Inclusion Academies to cover good club standards to include safeguarding, governance, environment and culture, policies and processes.

**How are you going to achieve it?**

- EDI online awareness and knowledge training for x6 board members (£50 pp).	<b>£300</b>
- Develop an <b><i>Inclusion Academy resource</i></b> for x10 clubs and share this with clubs for them to start the process of becoming an Inclusion Academy.	<b>£1,000</b>

**How much investment are you seeking?**

**£1,300**

The total investment table should be completed by adding up each of the areas where investment is being sought. The total should not exceed £20,000 – unless the applicant organisation was in receipt of SSI-NGB funding in 2024/25, where the maximum available is £25,000.

**Section 10 – Supporting Documentation**

The following governance-related documentation is required to be submitted with the submission form:

- Governing document - Constitution or Memorandum and Articles of Association, depending on the type of organisation applying (e.g. a Limited Company will have a Memorandum and Articles).
- Signed AGM minutes for previous 2 years
- Signed Accounts/Income & Expenditure Account (depending on what 'sort' of accounts the organisation produces) for previous 2 years.
- Safeguarding Policy (as approved by the Board).
- Safeguarding Checklist completed and attached.

*If applicant was in receipt of SSI-NGB funding in 2024/25 then please only provide this if there have been changes to the version(s) previously submitted. For minutes and accounts, only the immediate prior year is required.*

**Section 11 – Signatures**

The submission should be signed by two representatives of the organisation, confirming its accuracy and that its submission to Sport NI is approved by those responsible for decision-making in the organisation.

**8. ELIGIBLE COSTS**

We aim to be flexible in our approach to support organisations to continuously improve and develop fit for purpose systems and structures. Our intention is to provide organisations with

the flexibility and freedom (within reason) to use our investment in ways which allows for the greatest impact and addresses inequalities. Items that we will not invest in:

- Capital items – including those works associated with any form of facility upgrade or construction, any works that require statutory approval and/or building control approval and funding development or professional fees associated with obtaining a planning permission, building control approval or development under any stage of the RIBA Plan of Work.
- Retrospective costs
- Entertainment costs, food and beverages (unless incidental to an activity, e.g. refreshments provided as part of a coaching session).
- Secondary, further or higher education e.g. A Levels, Degrees, etc.
- VAT that can be recovered from HM Revenue and Customs.
- Activities promoting religious or political beliefs.
- Donations/fundraising events or activities.
- Costs incurred before Letter of Offer issued.
- Insurance, affiliation, entry fees or membership fees.

Note that ‘Equipment’ (single items costing more than £1,000, and distinct from ‘Capital’ items above) is now eligible.

Sport NI requires invoices to evidence any expenditure, which can then be traced to an equivalent payment from the nominated bank account i.e. showing that the invoice had been paid.

## 9. ASSESSMENT

Assessments will be conducted by Sport NI staff and awards made against the available budget at the time of assessment. As this is a rolling programme, the available programme budget will reduce over time as awards are made. Submissions may be rejected on the basis that the budget has been exhausted.

It will be at the discretion of Sport NI as to how much is awarded for any project and it is the responsibility of organisations to demonstrate in their submissions how the proposals align with Sport NI’s objectives, Cornerstones and priority areas for investment.

## 10. AWARDS

Awards will be made by an emailed Letter of Offer. This must be accepted by returning a Form of Acceptance. Sport NI staff will meet with award recipients to explain the claims process and any other relevant information to assist with the successful delivery of the project. A detailed project plan must be submitted and agreed with Sport NI in advance of any payments being made.

## 11. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Sport NI wants to ensure that the investment impacts those underrepresented groups within Northern Ireland. We will need to be able to evaluate what we do and how we do it, so we can understand and demonstrate the longer-term change in the overall sport system.

To achieve this, Sport NI will work with organisations to clearly understand how the investment is ultimately supporting the wider, long-term outcomes that we know sport and physical activity contributes to.

Key to this approach will be understanding the effect of interventions in sports using the Outcomes Based Accountability framework.

- How much did we do? – Quantity.
- How well did we do it? – Quality.
- Is anyone better off as a result? Quantity and quality of effect or outcome for the user of the service.

Sport NI will work with you to address this over the course of our investment.

Sport NI will also be collecting data in relation to membership, coaching, officials etc. during this investment.

## 12. OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

- Any misleading statements (whether deliberate or accidental) given at any stage may render the submission invalid, and you may be liable to return any money already paid out.
- Information submitted will be held by Sport NI in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. All government departments share information on projects to enable them to prevent fraudulent applications and to co-ordinate the processing of complementary applications. Information provided by the applicant may be made available to other departments or agencies for the purpose of preventing or detecting crime.
- Any direct or indirect approach by an organisations, its officers, servants, contractors, personal or professional representatives or advisors made to members of Sport NI, its committees or officers which, in the view of Sport NI or their advisors constitutes an attempt in any way to influence the outcome of a submission will, at the absolute discretion of the Council, render the submission ineligible for further consideration.
- Any data gathered by Sport NI in relation to this programme will hold in accordance with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Organisations should note that in accordance with the Act, information regarding both successful and unsuccessful submissions may be made available to the public via the World Wide Web and a variety of publications and is disclosable under Freedom of Information (FOI) or Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) requests.