



**SPÓRT ÉIREANN**  
**SPORT IRELAND**

**Recognition Criteria for  
National Governing Bodies of Sport**

**2024**

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## Introduction: Sport Ireland Recognition Programme Rationale

Established under the Sport Ireland Act 2015, Sport Ireland (previously the Irish Sports Council est.1999), is the statutory body responsible for planning, leading and co-ordinating the sustainable development of competitive and recreational sport in Ireland.

The National Governing Bodies of Sport recognised by Sport Ireland (“NGBs”) are at the centre of Irish sport. Sport Ireland is committed to developing a strong and diverse NGB sector that delivers for the sporting community in Ireland. NGBs are key delivery agencies for Sport Ireland in the achievement of its strategic and operational goals.

The work of NGBs should feed into and complement the strategic priorities identified by Sport Ireland in both the National Sports Policy and the Sport Ireland strategy. Sport Ireland currently recognises 65 NGBs of sport. The majority of NGBs receive financial investment and support services on an annual basis from Sport Ireland.

A key focus of Sport Ireland is to assist NGBs to develop sustainable and effective structures to facilitate increased numbers of participants and volunteers in sport.

The Recognition Criteria<sup>1</sup> provide a standard for sporting organisations that are not currently NGBs recognised by Sport Ireland to seek to meet in order to be in a position to apply to Sport Ireland for recognition, and in turn receive support and, where additional Sport Ireland criteria may be met, financial investment from Sport Ireland.

It is important for sporting organisations to understand that it not the role of Sport Ireland to establish or appoint NGBs or to regulate them. In addition, NGBs can exist and operate without being recognised and without applying to Sport Ireland to be recognised.

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<sup>1</sup> *All previous Recognition Criteria are replaced with and superseded by the updated criteria set out in this document which was ratified by the board of Sport Ireland on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2024*

Sport Ireland appreciates that there are wider benefits accorded to sporting organisations as a result of the recognition as an NGB both in Ireland and internationally and is cognisant of these benefits when deciding on an organisations application for recognition.

**Section 1. Recognition Process to be recognised by Sport Ireland as a National Governing Body (NGB)**

1. The recognition process set out in this document is provided for assistance purposes only and is not binding on Sport Ireland. Sport Ireland will review each request for recognition on an individual basis.
2. Sport Ireland will only recognise a single Governing Body for all elements of the Sport. This includes male/female, schools/third level activity etc taking place within the sport. Sport Ireland has no obligation to consider an application from an applicant body in relation to a sport which is similar to a sport of an existing Sport Ireland recognised NGB.
3. In the case that two or more applicant bodies are currently organising the development and regulation of a sport or sports which are similar (as determined by Sport Ireland), Sport Ireland will request those bodies to apply to Sport Ireland for recognition on the basis that they will co-operate with each other and/or merge/form an umbrella body for the governance of the sport or sports.
  - a. In a case where there is an existing NGB recognised by Sport Ireland organising the development and regulation of a sport or sports which is similar to the sport or sports in relation to which the applicant seeks recognition, Sport Ireland will request the applicant body to seek affiliation or develop a formal relationship with the existing NGB. This includes existing or similar sports that are part of umbrella Governing Bodies.
4. The applicant body will request a formal meeting with Sport Ireland to discuss its proposed application and the process prior to submitting a formal application for recognition as an NGB to Sport Ireland.
5. Following a formal meeting with Sport Ireland, an applicant body may apply for recognition by submitting such relevant supporting information as Sport Ireland may require (this includes a cover letter, a completed application form, along with the supporting evidence requested by Sport Ireland).
6. Sport Ireland will endeavour to confirm receipt of the application within 2 working days or as soon as reasonably practicable and will begin to process the application as soon as possible thereafter. It should be noted that whilst Sport Ireland endeavours to deal with applications expeditiously each application for recognition is judged on its own merits, meaning that the level of complexity of each application may determine length of the assessment period.
7. Once the application is processed, it will be presented to the committee established by the board of Sport Ireland to consider applications for recognition (the “Sport Ireland Grants and Eligibility Committee”).

8. The Sport Ireland Grants and Eligibility Committee will consider the application against each of the minimum requirements outlined in this document and make its recommendation on the application for recognition as an NGB to the board of Sport Ireland.
9. The Board of Sport Ireland will make a final decision on the matter.
10. Sport Ireland will notify the applicant body of the decision. If the application is unsuccessful the applicant body has a right to appeal in accordance with the appeal process set out at Section 4.
11. Sport Ireland will publish, annually, a list of its recognised NGBs.
12. Sport Ireland reserves the right to suspend or withdraw recognition from an NGB where in the opinion of Sport Ireland, acting reasonably, it is appropriate to do so. Examples of where it may be appropriate for Sport Ireland to withdraw recognition from an existing NGB include, inter alia, the following cases – (i) where the NGB can no longer demonstrate to the satisfaction of Sport Ireland its adherence to the Recognition Criteria; (ii) Sport Ireland is of the view that the NGB is non-compliant with any of Sport Ireland’s terms and conditions of funding and/or investment; (iii) the NGB ceases to remain affiliated to the Sport Ireland recognised umbrella NGB for the sport or sports; (iv) the NGB is insolvent or is unable to pay its debts as they fall due; (v) Sport Ireland is of the view that the NGB has fallen into disrepute.

*The phrase ‘disrepute’ for these purposes includes but is not confined to misconduct of a serious nature that is not covered by specific offences set out in the Sport Ireland Recognition Criteria. In each case Sport Ireland shall be the sole arbiter as to whether the NGB is in disrepute. The following are examples of what Sport Ireland may view as “falling into disrepute” (a) conduct that is unbecoming of a recognised NGB; and/ or (b) criminal conduct or other misconduct; and/ or (c) conduct that is or could be harmful to the interests, values and reputation of the sport; and/ or (d) conduct that does bring or could bring Sport Ireland and the Sport Ireland Recognition Process for NGBs into disrepute; and/ or (e) any breach of Sport Ireland policies; and/ or (f) committing any act, or permitting or suffering to be done, anything which has a negative impact on the image or reputation of Sport Ireland and/ or the NGB or otherwise brings either of them into disrepute. The above examples at (a) – (f) do not represent an exhaustive list of examples but are merely provided to illustrate the types of circumstances in which Sport Ireland may find an NGB to be in disrepute.*

13. Recognition by Sport Ireland of an applicant body as an NGB does not automatically confer the right to be allocated Sport Ireland funding. Sport Ireland funding may be provided to support a recognised NGB at Sport Ireland’s discretion and in line with Sport Ireland’s strategic priorities and investment criteria.
14. It should be noted that the current Recognition Criteria apply to all new organisations seeking recognition as an NGB.

## Section 2. Criteria for Recognition of an applicant body as an NGB by Sport Ireland

### 1. Definitions:

In relation to these Recognition Criteria, unless the context otherwise requires, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

“**Competitive sport**” means all forms of ***physical activity*** which, through organised participation, aim at—

- (a) expressing or improving ***physical fitness***, and
- (b) obtaining improved results in competition at all levels.

“**International Federation**” means the international federation for a Sport recognised as such by Sport Ireland and which is a full member of the Sport Accord structures. (previously the Global Association of International Sport Federations - GAISF).<sup>2</sup>

“**Irish Anti-Doping Rules**” means the anti-doping rules adopted by Sport Ireland.

“**Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity Framework**” means the framework for lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity as set out in Appendix B.

“**NGB**” means an existing National Governing Body for a sport in Ireland.

“**Recreational sport**” means all forms of ***physical activity*** which, through casual or regular participation, aim at—

- (a) expressing or improving ***physical fitness*** and mental well-being, and
- (b) forming social relationships.

“**Sport**” or “**Sports**” means sport as defined in the Sport Ireland Act 2015 and includes Competitive Sport(s) and Recreational Sport(s);

“**Sport Dispute Solutions Ireland (SDSI)**” means the not-for-profit dispute resolution service for Irish Sport offering mediation and arbitration.

“**The Governance Code for Sport ("the Code")**” means the code of governance applicable to all Sport Ireland recognised/funded bodies.

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<sup>2</sup> Please note that the Sport Accord membership process for International Federations is currently being restructured. The Sport Ireland Recognition Criteria will in turn be updated to reflect any final changes.

## 2. Criteria for recognition:

The following are the minimum criteria for recognition by Sport Ireland as a National governing Body of Sport in Ireland (the “Recognition Criteria”). The onus is on the applicant Body to provide ALL relevant information at the time of application.

1. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that the relevant Sport comes within the definition for Sport (as set out in the Sport Ireland Act 2015) and that the Organisation meets all the minimum criteria outlined in this Section.
2. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that it is recognised as the single national governing body for that sport in Ireland by that sport’s International Federation and that such recognition by the International Federation extends to all aspects of the relevant Sport in Ireland, including its disciplines and events. This International Federation must be a full member of the Sport Accord structures.

### Leadership & Organisational Structure

3. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that it has a written constitution (or in the case of a Company Limited by Guarantee a memorandum and articles of association), that is adopted by the members of the applicant body and approved by those participating in the sport in a fair and transparent manner.
4. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that it has a leadership structure that is elected by the membership / established in a fair and transparent manner.
5. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that it has been validly established whether as a corporate legal entity in good standing under the Irish Companies Act 2018<sup>3</sup> or otherwise pursuant to other relevant and applicable legislation for at least three (3) years prior to the application for recognition.
6. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that it has unqualified independent audited financial statements for each of the last three (3) fiscal years. The audited financial statements should satisfy Sport Ireland (at its sole discretion) of the organisations current & future liquidity, solvency and overall financial health.
7. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that its headquarters is located in Ireland and that the applicant body operates from Ireland. The applicant body should also have been based in and operating from Ireland for at least the three (3) consecutive years immediately prior to the application for recognition.
8. The Organisation should evidence a minimum of 40% representation of each gender in the membership of their Boards.

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<sup>3</sup> If the organisation is a body corporate incorporated in Ireland prior to 2018 the NGB must satisfy Sport Ireland that it was incorporated under previous Companies Acts.



### **Promotion, Development & Membership**

9. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that the promotion and development of the Sport is the core and primary objective of the applicant body.
10. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that it is committed to providing its members with technically, ethically sound and safe sport coaching programmes and content based on the Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity Framework (as outlined in Appendix B).
11. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that it has a multi-year strategic plan, ratified by its board of directors or management committee. This strategic plan should identify measurable outcomes across the full range of sport development and be based on the Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity Framework.
12. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that it is responsible and accountable in Ireland for providing its members with technically and ethically sound, safe sport programmes and services accessible to all. The applicant body's commitment to providing technically and ethically sound, safe sport programmes in Ireland must be demonstrated through its policies, programmes, procedures and practices.
13. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that it has a formal policy or policies in place in relation to equity and access for athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers and leaders in the Sport. There should be a particular focus on females, persons with disabilities and other underrepresented groups as identified in National and Sport Ireland policies.
14. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that it is able to evidence membership levels in excess of 1,500 individual members. These members must be actively involved in and / or fee-paying members of the applicant body.
15. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that it has registered clubs throughout Ireland and spread out over a wide geographical area.
16. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that it has an established annual subscription income from its members.

### **Dispute Resolution & Compliance**

17. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that it has a formal disciplinary policy in place for use by it and its members and officials.
18. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that it has an internal appeals process in place which is consistent with established principles of due process and natural justice and contains a provision that allows unresolved disputes to be referred to the alternate dispute resolution services of Sport Dispute Solutions Ireland ("SDSI").
19. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that it has formally adopted the Irish Anti-Doping Rules.

20. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that it complies with (and can evidence compliance with) current legal obligations with regard to safeguarding children and young people and implements best practice in this area in line with Sport Ireland's Safeguarding Guidance for Children and Young People in Sport.
21. The applicant body must satisfy Sport Ireland that it currently complies with (and can provide independent evidence that it is compliant with) the Governance Code for Sport ("the Code")

<b>Section 3. Probationary Period</b>
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1. An applicant body that successfully completes the initial recognition process will be given probation status as an NGB for two years prior to securing full recognition as an NGB by Sport Ireland. This means that if that NGB ceases to comply in any respect with the Recognition Criteria it can be notified by Sport Ireland that it no longer is recognised by Sport Ireland as an NGB of that Sport.
2. During the probation period Sport Ireland reserves the right to monitor an NGB's activities and to assess its ongoing compliance with, and adherence to, the Recognition Criteria.
3. During the probation period an NGB will not be eligible for Sport Ireland funding but will be required to provide any reports required by Sport Ireland.
4. During the probation period an NGB may have access to Sport Ireland Coaching to help develop their coaching plans and pathways.
5. During the probationary period an NGB may have access to other non-funding support structures of Sport Ireland (such as Sport Ireland OD&C, Safeguarding, Anti-doping etc.) to assist it in its path towards full recognition.

## Section 4. Appeals Process

An applicant body may appeal a decision by Sport Ireland not to offer them recognition status.

The process of lodging an appeal is as follows:

1. The applicant body shall inform Sport Ireland in writing that it wishes to appeal Sport Ireland's decision not to offer them recognition status or to withdraw recognition status. This written submission must be received by Sport Ireland within 90 days of Sport Ireland notifying the organisation of the decision not to offer them recognition status or to withdraw recognition status as the case may be.
2. The written submission should clearly outline the basis for the appeal including why it believes the Sport Ireland decision is incorrect.
3. The written submission should also include supporting documentation that was not previously supplied to Sport Ireland in the original application to support the recognition claim. This supporting documentation must have been in place at the time of application.
4. Sport Ireland will confirm the receipt of the appeal to the applicant body.
5. Sport Ireland will process the appeal and present it to its appeals committee.
6. The appeals committee will review the appeal and make a recommendation to the board of Sport Ireland.
7. The Board of Sport Ireland will make a final decision on the matter.
8. Sport Ireland will then communicate the decision of the Board of Sport Ireland to the applicant body.
9. The decision of Sport Ireland shall be final.

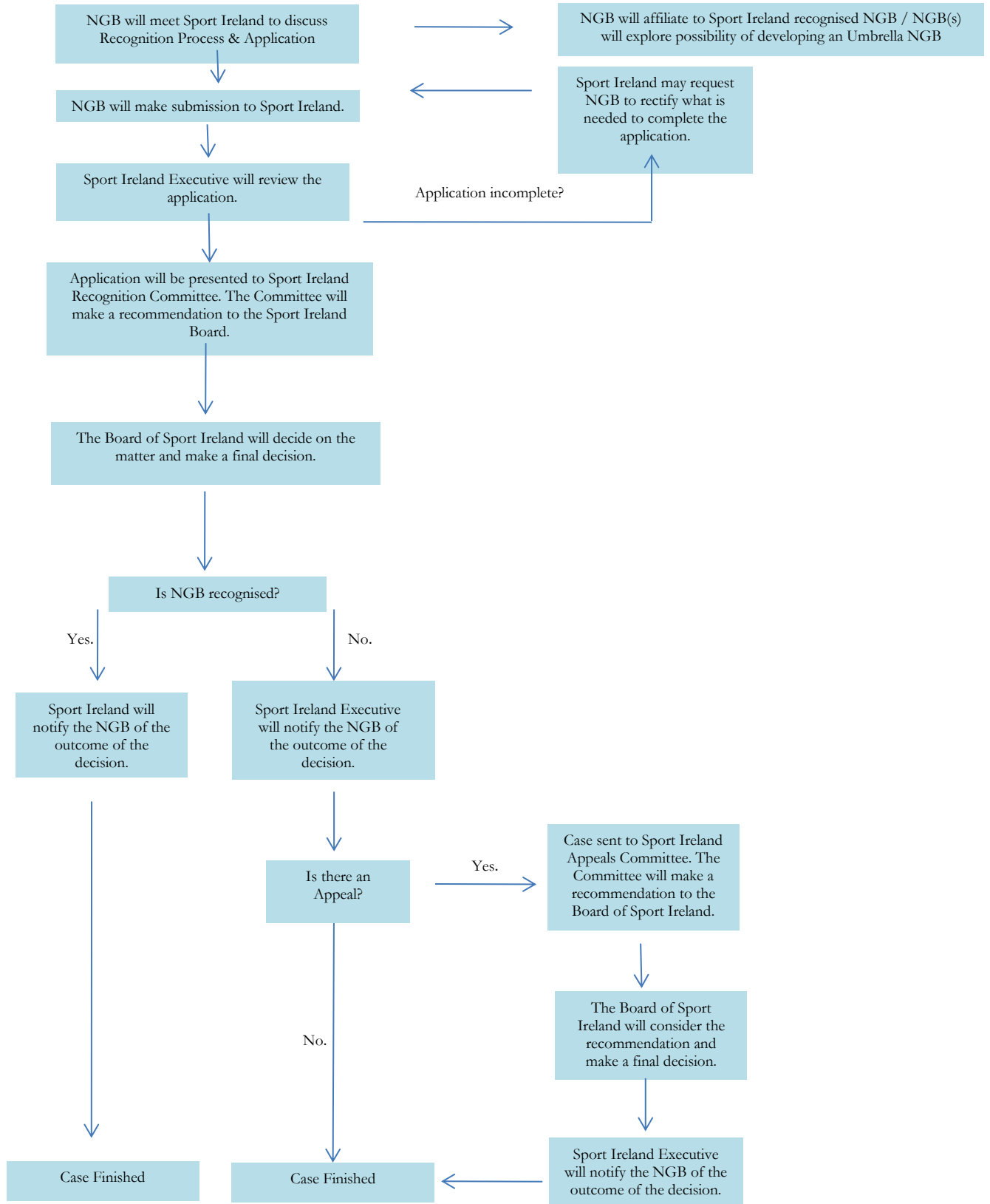
*The appeals committee will be made up of three members. Two of these members shall be Sport Ireland Board members. Such board members will not be part of the original submission for recognition put before the Board of Sport Ireland. To ensure that there are always two such Board members available, when a recommendation is being made to the board by the Sport Ireland Recognition Committee, two Board members will remove themselves from this process before the recommendation is put to the Board.*

## Section 5. Additional Points to Note

1. Where in the opinion of Sport Ireland an organisation meets several, but not all of the above criteria, the organisation may be recognised as a body suitable for the provision of financial or other assistance where one of the following criteria is met:
  - The organisation's activities and responsibilities are in relation to the promotion, development and coordination of sport and the achievement of excellence in sport; and/or
  - The organisation's activities are focused on developing strategies for increasing recreational participation in sports.
2. Sport Ireland funding will be used to support an NGB in line with Sport Ireland's strategic priorities and investment criteria. Sport Ireland may amend these priorities and criteria from time to time as it requires.
3. An NGB which is of a smaller scale and resources, may receive Sport Ireland funding primarily to support leadership and/or core operations. Such NGBs are expected to demonstrate to the satisfaction of Sport Ireland that they are fit for purpose and comply with core governance, ethical, legal, operational, risk management and taxation/fiduciary policies to a standard acceptable to Sport Ireland.
4. Sport Ireland may, at its discretion, provide additional investment (where it deems it appropriate and where it is available) to a certain NGB for projects and programmes which contribute to improving participation, performance, leadership and/or operations in that Sport.
5. Sport Ireland has the absolute right, at its sole discretion, to withdraw, reduce, suspend or terminate funding to an NGB where there is evidence of non-compliance by that NGB with the investment criteria by Sport Ireland. Sport Ireland reserves the right to audit an NGB to ensure it is in compliance with Sport Ireland funding terms and conditions.
6. Sport Ireland requires the management of an NGB to establish and adhere to appropriate annual internal auditing and compliance policies to demonstrate to its members that the Sport is being led, governed and managed appropriately by the NGB.
7. Sport Ireland requires an NGB to address without delay and appropriately any weaknesses or issues identified in its internal audit or identified by Sport Ireland. Failure by an NGB to take such steps may impact on future funding from Sport Ireland.
8. Sport Ireland reserves its right to subject an NGB and/ or any organisation or member of an NGB to a fit for purpose audit if it has cause (in Sport Ireland's opinion acting reasonably) to believe that the Sport is in disrepute or that the NGB is not complying with its responsibilities and obligations as an NGB.

9. Sport Ireland seeks to monitor trends, issues and developments in Sports which the NGBs may need to take account of from time to time. It is each NGBs responsibility to itself monitor trends, issues and developments in its Sport and to take such steps to take account for same as are reasonably necessary.

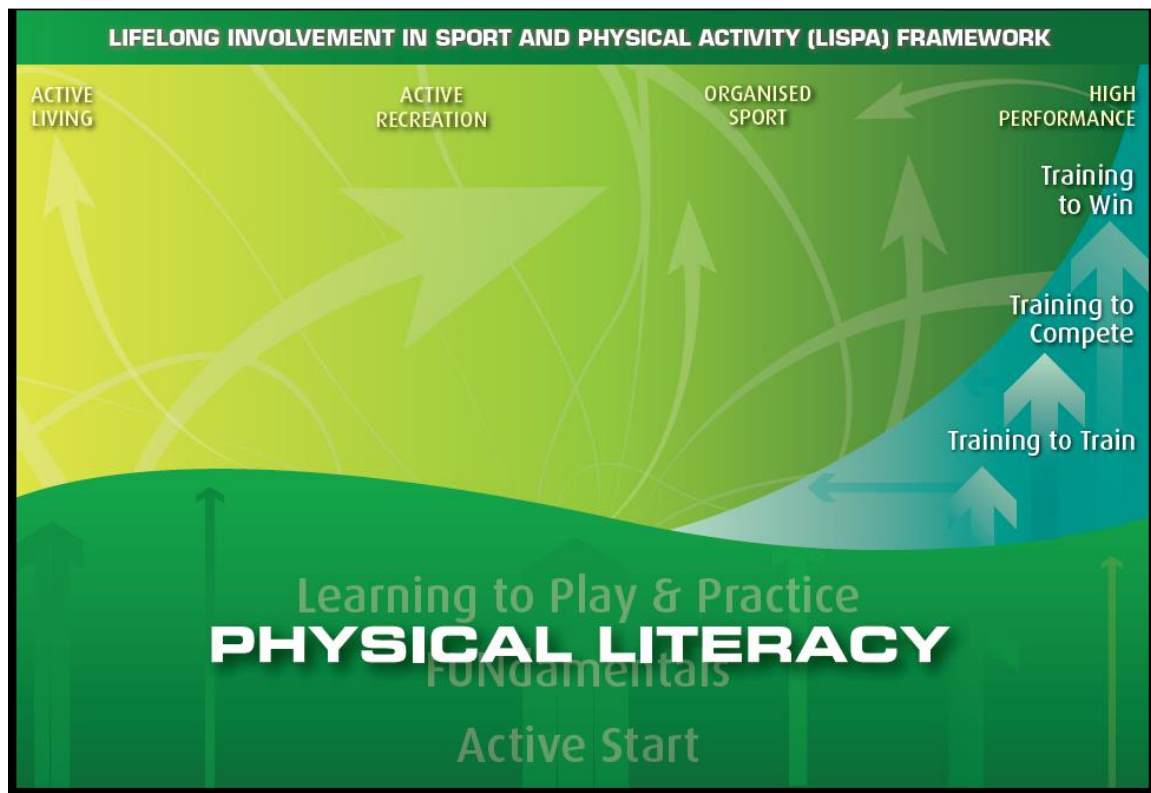
## Appendix A: The Recognition Process



## Appendix B: The Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity Model (LISPA)

The LISPA framework (Figure 1) incorporates the following:

- An introduction to physical activity and sport should focus on Active Start and the FUNdamental and Learning to Play and Practice phases for all. All three provide the foundation for both lifelong physical activity and performance sport.
- There are many opportunities for continued involvement and further development in physical activity and sport.
- Individuals may choose to stay involved at a recreational level or choose to specialize in sport and progress to elite performance.
- The LISPA framework incorporates the long-term player athlete development (LTPAD) pathway.



Movement through the LISPA framework

Active Start focuses on providing infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers with opportunities to participate in daily physical activity that promotes movement and communication and develops confidence and self-esteem. Unstructured physical activity and active play is recommended for several hours per day for toddlers and pre-schoolers.

The FUNdamental phase provides a positive, enjoyable and fun approach so that the child can develop a love of sport and physical activity. Fundamental movement skills such as running, jumping, throwing and catching, and confidence in water skills, are learned through play and basic, appropriate and enjoyable games. Participation in a wide range of physical activities is encouraged so that a child can experience the social and psychological benefits of being physically active.

The Learning to Play and Practice phase recognizes that not all individuals want to pursue organized sports. Therefore, those who do not will be equipped during this phase with many of the skills necessary to allow them to remain active throughout their lives. This phase still focuses on the social and fun element of sport and further develops fundamental and some sports specific skills.

Many opportunities are afforded for individuals to continue their involvement and include active living, active recreation, organized sport and high performance. Each opportunity aims to accommodate an individual's preference to the extent they wish to continue and develop their involvement. Opportunities are not necessarily discreet from each other, and individuals can occupy more than one at the same time and can move wherever and whenever appropriate. For example, an individual may be operating as a high performer in basketball and also choosing to swim recreationally twice a week.

The already established LTPAD pathway accommodates those involved in sport and those looking to strive to become an elite or high-performance player/athlete.

- Active Living: A way of life that values physical activity as an essential part of living, characterized by the integration of physical activity into daily routines, e.g., walking whenever you can, cycling to work, gardening etc.
- Active Recreation: The use of leisure time for activities that require moderate energy expenditure and produce health and/or social benefits, usually performed in a non-competitive setting, e.g., going to the gym, walking, jogging, swimming, social soccer / tag rugby etc.
- Organized Sport: Participation in sports that have a significant element of planned and purposeful physical activity with competitive goals. Organized sports participation involves competing at all levels including local, club, county, provincial and national levels, e.g., local leagues in basketball, county championships in hurling, regional competitions in swimming.
- High Performance: Long-term commitment to training and competing at the highest standard in pursuit of excellence at national and international levels.