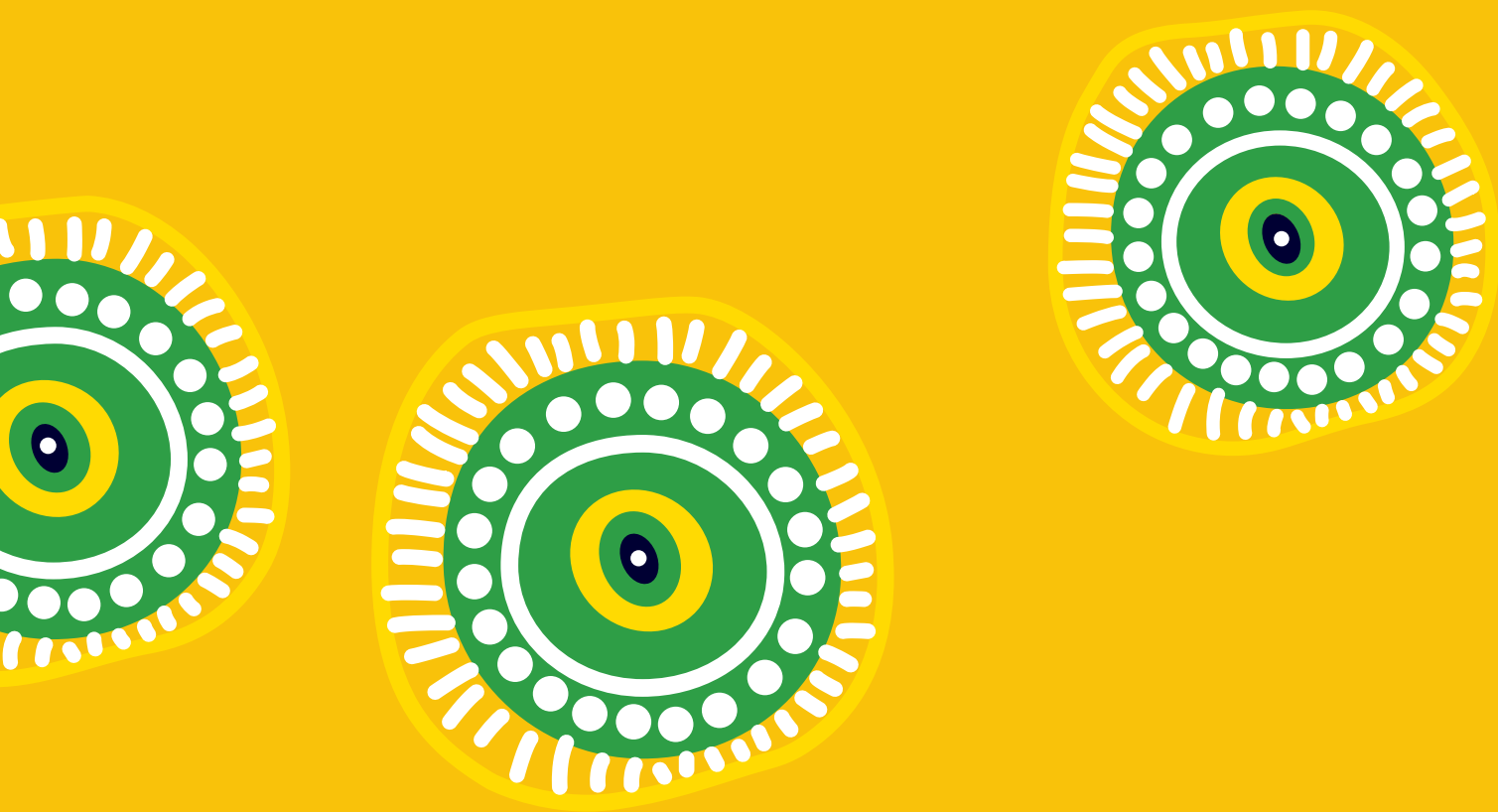




WOMEN IN HIGH
PERFORMANCE COACHING

A FOUR YEAR JOURNEY AND NEXT STEPS 2021-2025





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This is a summative report of the four-year project led by the AIS HP Coach Development Team. This narrative outlines the process, journey and key insights gained from 2021-2025.

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December 2025

Australian Sports Commission Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where its offices are located, the Ngunnawal people and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation, the people of the Yugambeh Nation and the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation.

The ASC extends this acknowledgment to all the Traditional Custodians of the lands and First Nations Peoples throughout Australia and would like to pay its respects to all Elders past, present and future.

The ASC recognises the outstanding contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make to society and sport in Australia and celebrates the power of sport to promote reconciliation and reduce inequality.

CONTENTS

SECTION 1 — INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Using a complexity-based approach	3
1.2 So how then does one work to make progress on a complex challenge?	4
1.3 Leveraging the Ecological Systems Model	5
1.4 How has the WiHPC project implemented this approach?	6
SECTION 2 — INITIAL EXPLORATION	7
2.1 Listening to the voices	8
Survey 1: Six drivers of experiences of representative coaches	10
2.2 Identifying points of leverage	10
2.3 Engaging the system	13
2.4 Reviewing and learning	14
2.5 Establishing priorities for the following phases	16
SECTION 3 — SETTING A CLEAR COURSE	17
3.1 Listening more closely	18
Survey 2: Understanding the influence of gender and learning environments in high performance sport	19
Survey 2: Recommendations for Learning and Development	20
3.2 Applying leverage	22
3.3 Engaging the system	22
3.4 Reviewing and learning	26
SECTION 4 — GETTING TRACTION	27
4.1 Listening more closely	28
Allyship: Next steps	30
4.2 Applying more leverage	30
4.3 Extending influence further into the system	31
4.4 Reviewing and learning	34
SECTION 5 — SCALING UP	35
5.1 Structured impact	36
5.2 Ripples	37
SECTION 6 — DEEP DIVE: REALISING THE POTENTIAL FROM INTEGRATED, INCLUSIVE COACH DEVELOPMENT	41
6.1 Addressing recommendations from the Action Plan	42
6.2 Weaving the threads together – Identifying, developing and retaining Talent through a National Framework	46

SECTION 7 — WIHPC PROJECT OUTCOMES	49
7.1 What progress has been made?	50
7.2 State of play — summary	61
SECTION 8 — WHAT NEXT?	63
8.1 Recommendations and next steps	64
SECTION 9 — A LONG TERM VISION FOR WOMEN IN HIGH PERFORMANCE COACHING	65
9.1 Our Mission and Objectives	66
9.2 Strategic Levers	66
9.3 Immediate Focus Areas for the WiHPC project to December 2026	67
9.4 WiHPC Scorecard	68
SECTION 10 — APPENDICES	69
Appendix 1: SenseMaker surveys	70
Appendix 2: SenseMaker Insights Report	71
Recommendations	82
Appendix 3: The National Talent Development Framework for Women Coaches	83
Appendix 4: Engagement Table	86
Appendix 5: Links to Additional Reports	88

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION



Women coaches have been underrepresented in High Performance (HP) coaching in Australia since the beginning. In 2021, women were 9% of HP coaching cohort despite being about 50% of the playing cohort. As part of a broader program to address gender equity, the Australian Institute of Sport established the Women in High Performance Coaching project (WiHPC project) in 2021 to drive changes in the system to increase representation.

The WiHPC project objectives:

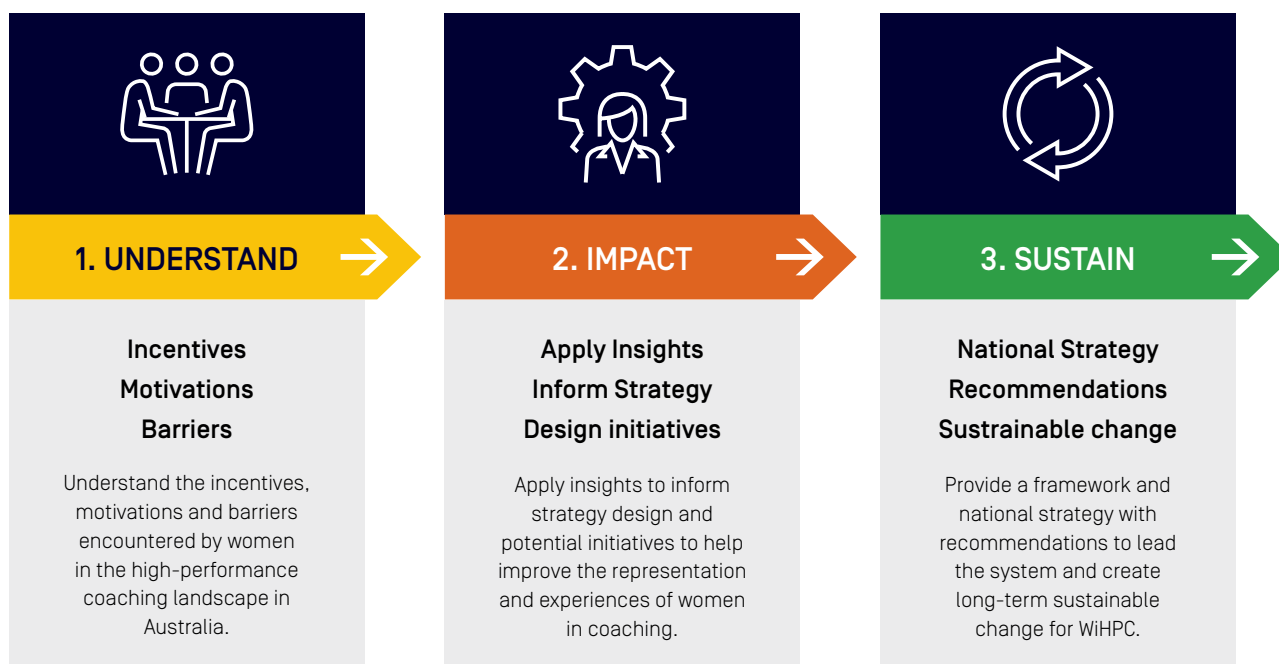


Figure 1: Objectives of the Women in High Performance Coaching project 2021

This summative report brings together in one place the work that has been done in the project from inception to November 2025 to address these objectives. It captures the successes and learning from that work and sets out recommendations for the Australian HP system and for the next phase of the WiHPC project. It has been written for several purposes and audiences:

- It has been written for the hundreds of coaches and administrators who have been involved in the project. The report provides a record of the work that they have contributed to and demonstrates the outcomes of their involvement.
- It has been written for senior leaders in the Australian HP system so that they can understand the progress that the WiHPC project has made against its objectives. The report also sets out clear recommendations for leaders at all levels of the HP system for the work that needs to be done in the next phase of the project.
- It has also been written for anyone who is seeking to drive change in complex systems, particularly those that are seeking to improve equity and inclusion. Although this project has focused on women in coaching, what we have learned through the work of the project is applicable in many other domains that seeking to drive better gender equity outcomes.

The report is extensive and has been broken into nine sections:

SECTION 1	Sets out the approach that was used for the WiHPC project. It explains the elements of a complexity driven way of working and links these ideas to the Ecological Systems Model which has informed the work of the project.
SECTIONS 2–5	Provide a year by year description of the work of the project. Each section is structured according to four themes, consistent with a complexity driven approach – listening to the system, applying leverage, engaging the system, and reviewing to set up the next stage of the work. Each section describes the most important aspects of the work that was done in the year and further details of the work are included in the appendices.
SECTION 6	A deep dive into the work that has been done to improve the effectiveness of coach development processes. It weaves a narrative through the work that has been done through the project and presents a National Coach Development Framework that sets out the elements of inclusive coach development and explains what needs to happen to integrate these principles into organisational practice.
SECTION 7	Sets out the achievements of the project from the understanding of the issues to the tools and resources that have been developed to the success in addressing recommendations and finally to the final outcome in improving representation of women coaches. It also brings together the achievements to set the scene for identifying the remaining constraints that need to be addressed in the next phase of the project.
SECTION 8	Picks up the remaining constraints and turns these into recommendations for the work that now needs to be done. These recommendations are broken up to reflect the accountability at different levels of the system: Leaders in sporting organisations, the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) and the Australian Sports Commission(ASC), and Leaders of the Australian HP sport system.
SECTION 9	Shows how the WiHPC project can address these recommendations and sets out priorities for the project for 2026 along with a Scorecard to provide accountability for the work.
APPENDICES	Further detail on the material that is discussed in the body of the report.

1.1 Using a complexity-based approach

The work that we have undertaken in the Women in HP Coaching (WiHPC) project has been driven by a complexity-based approach. Challenges such as getting more women into HP coaching are certainly not simple and they are more than complicated. With *simple* challenges, there is an obvious solution – often one that is well known. We have solved these types of problems before, and it is clear what we need to do. When we implement the solution, the problem goes away. With *complicated* challenges, analysis will yield an answer. Building a bridge is a significant challenge, but a trained engineer can make the calculations. The bridge is built and the problem is solved.

Complex challenges are different. There is no obvious answer (if there was, we would have dealt with the challenge a long time ago) and analysis won't produce a solution that will make the challenge go away. Complex challenges usually have multiple stakeholders with differing views; some of these views are likely to be deeply entrenched and perhaps enculturated or unquestioned; there are usually multiple systems interacting with each other; and not all the aspects of the problem will be immediately obvious. When an intervention is made in a complex system, the system will adjust or respond; the problem may change, or it might resurface in other places; and the system response to the intervention may create new challenges. In a complex system, there is no solution. What we need to focus on is making progress. That doesn't mean that we should let ourselves become complacent, nor should we accept unfair or unjust situations. **Making progress means having courage, being persistent and taking a long-term view on steering the system to a better place.**

1.2 So how then does one work to make progress on a complex challenge?

Change programs in complex spaces often fail because people in authority think they know what the problem is and spend money on the things that they think matter. They are then surprised when the hoped for change doesn't eventuate.

A complexity-based methodology suggests a different way of working.

1.2.1 Listening to the voices

Rather than assuming that we know what is happening, we need to listen to the lived experience of people in the system, particularly those who are most impacted.

The best way to do this is through conversations, either individually or in workshops. The more system participants we can listen to, the richer our understanding will be. It's important to take care in designing the environment so that people feel safe to share their experiences. Good workshop design will provide a mix of pair, small group and whole group conversations to allow for all voices to be heard, and to create opportunities for ideas to be combined or to collide.

In addition to listening through conversations, there is value in canvassing a wider group through surveys. The best surveys combine the collection of data with the collection of stories. Numerical data provides detailed (but narrow) data, narrative provides rich data, particularly where those contributing the stories also have the opportunity to provide their own interpretations of why the stories are significant.

1.2.2 Identifying points of leverage

Rather than spend money on the things that the people in authority think matter most, we need to work with the people in the system to identify the best points of leverage to move the system to a better place.

The first step here is to try to map the system, using the insights that have emerged from listening to the voices. With a map, we can see the scope of the challenge and the interconnectedness between the pieces. From this mapping, an understanding of the places to intervene will emerge. These points of leverage might be small nudges (such as bringing groups of stakeholders together, or creating networks); development of tools to address constraints or pain points; increasing visibility of bright spots in the system; or more significant system interventions such as changing funding arrangements.

1.2.3 Engaging the system

Rather than impose the change on the system, we get better traction by engaging the system in understanding the issues and taking ownership for driving the change.

One of the most powerful actions here is to "get the problem in a room" – to bring together as many system participants as possible to help them understand what has been learned from listening to the voices in the system, to help them see the system as a whole and to understand where the points of leverage are. Effective long term change happens through lots of small initiatives, a step at a time. Much effective change happens at small scale, where nudges, toolkit adoption and small behavioural shifts can happen more easily. However, there comes a time in any system change process where those who are working at the grassroots need the active support of leaders in the system, particularly where sponsorship and funding are involved. This is critical for the sustainability of the work. Finally, it is important to understand the system's capacity for change. It is usually more effective to engage the system in a thoughtful number of interventions that can be digested, rather than overloading individuals or organisations.

1.2.4 Reviewing and learning

Rather than implementing a solution and hoping for the best, we need to acknowledge that we are seeking to make progress.

The process is iterative and requires cycles of activity, observation, reflection, redesign and re-engagement. Interventions will have consequences, intended and unintended. The system will respond in expected and unexpected ways. It is useful to ask questions such as:

- What has worked? And how can we amplify it?
- What constraints are still in place? How can we address or remove them?
- Are there new points of leverage that we didn't notice before?
- What new issues have emerged?
- What new opportunities have presented themselves?

1.3 Leveraging the Ecological Systems Model

To support this complexity driven approach, the WiHPC project team utilised the Ecological Systems Model developed by Nicole La Voi and Julia K. Dutove (2012).¹ Image 1 below sets out the four levels of barriers and support for women coaches.

The Ecological Systems Model provides a valuable framework for contextualising the experiences of women coaches, revealing how personal, interpersonal, organisational, systemic, and socio-cultural factors collectively influence their experience. Its complexity allows for the identification of opportunities for strategic actions or “nudges” that span all layers of the system. Using the Ecological Systems Model to map the project team’s evolving understanding of issues assisted with the identification of points of leverage and the design of interventions.

The Ecological Systems Model

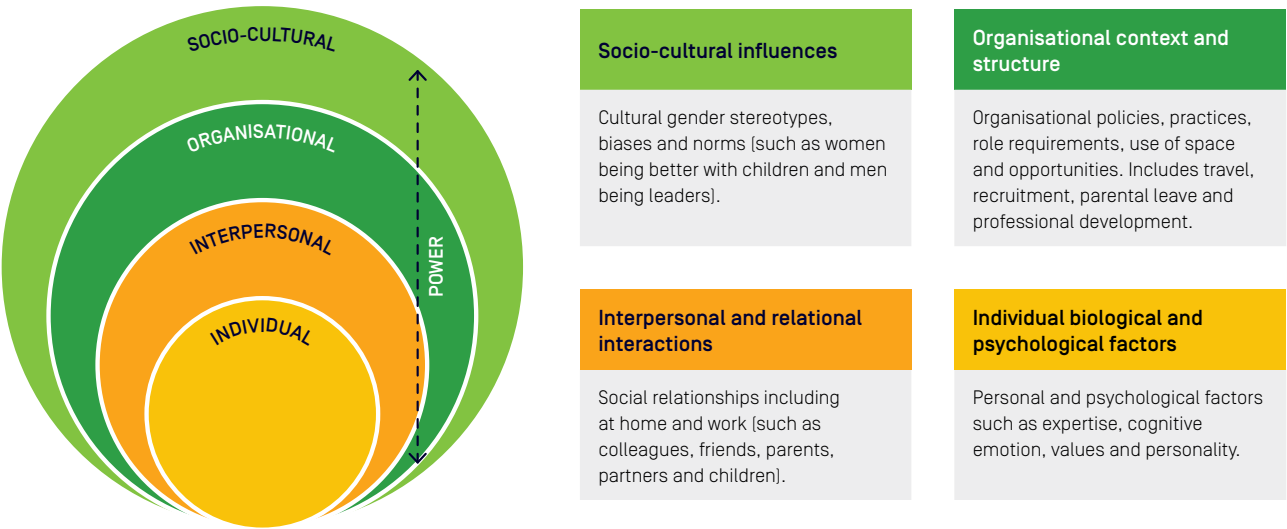


Figure 2: The Ecological Systems Model



1 LaVoi NM, Dutove JK. Barriers and supports for female coaches: An ecological model. Sports Coaching Review. 2012; 1(1):17-37.

1.4 How has the WiHPC project implemented this approach?

The design of the WiHPC project has been shaped by this complexity-based approach and informed by the Ecological Systems Model. There have been four phases to the work so far:

- **Initial exploration** (October 2021 to November 2022)
- **Setting a clear course** (January 2023 to November 2023)
- **Getting traction** (January 2024 to November 2024)
- **Scaling up** (January 2025 to November 2025)

Each of these phases has included opportunities to listen to the voices in the system, to synthesise what has been heard to identify points of leverage (often informed by the Ecological Systems Model), to engage the system to drive change, and then to review and reflect to set up work for the next phase. The phases have built on each other, developing deeper understanding of the issues, carefully building out solutions for pain points and nudging the system to change. As the work has progressed, the set of tools, solutions and frameworks has become more robust – and the need to engage senior leaders to drive the change has become clearer.

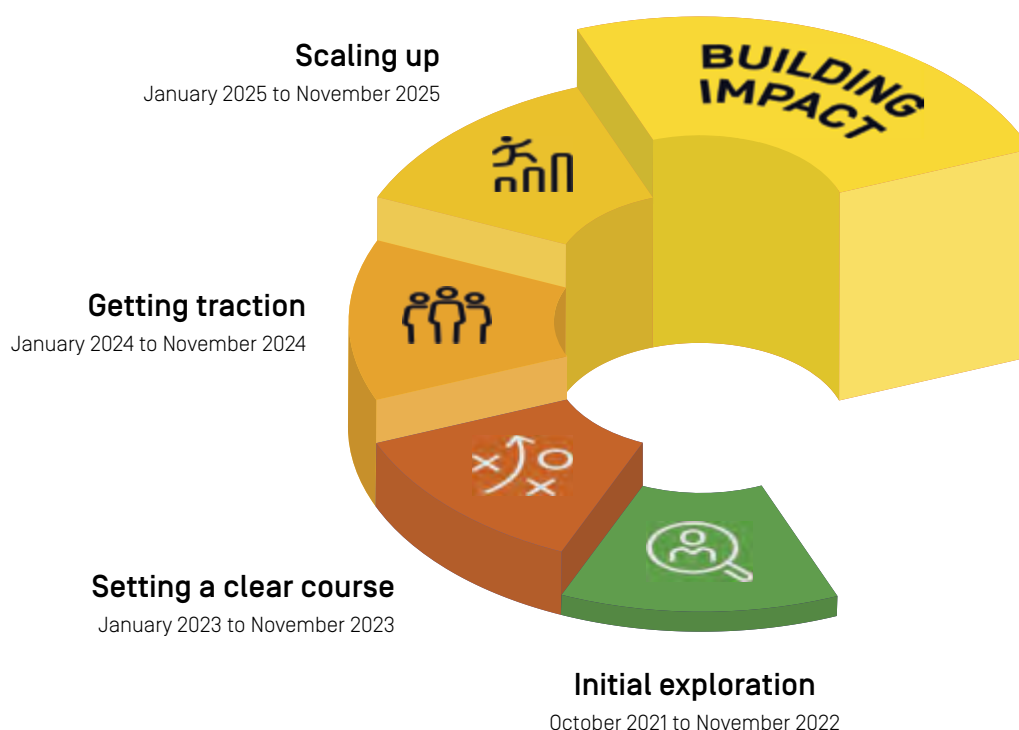


Figure 3: Four phases to impact.



SECTION 2

INITIAL EXPLORATION



Initial exploration

October 2021 to November 2022

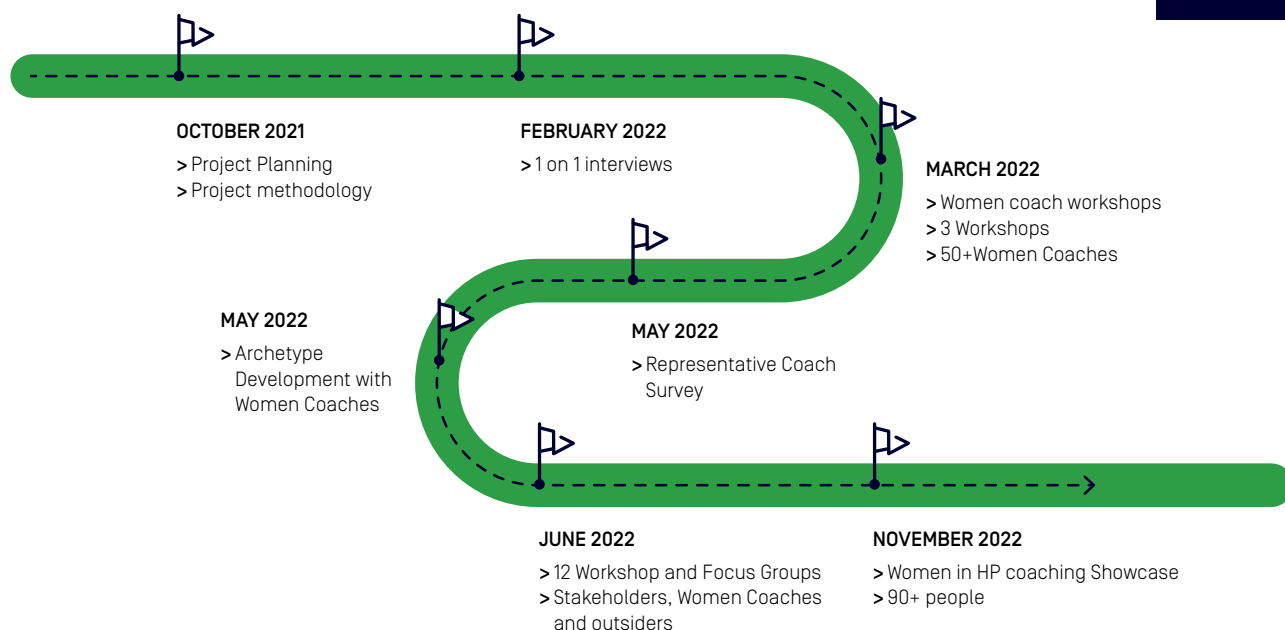


Figure 4: Initial exploration [October 2021 to November 2022]

2.1 Listening to the voices

The first step in engaging with the people who are impacted in the system was undertaking interviews with five women coaches. These interviews identified a set of issues that shaped the workshops that were the major focus for the first phase of the project.

High level insight	Rationale and comment
HP coaching is selfish	Requires international travel, coaching before and after school, family relationships are challenged.
System issues create challenges	Job sharing is unavailable and not fostered, career transitions are challenging, transferability is not considered, financial constraints are present with lower pay, mentorship is not easily accessible.
Cultural issues inhibit development	Bullying is present, there is an expectation of being available "24/7", raising issues labels you as a troublemaker, tokenism is present, often you are the only woman coach, the environment is highly competitive.
Sports & geography greatly varied	Everyone is different.
Development opportunities limited but highly valued	Learning and development is highly valued for the content and for the networks that they create.
System fixes & cultural change	Most of the issues identified won't be solved with training courses or programs, they relate to the environment and system within which women HP coaches work.

Table 1: Preliminary insights from 1:1 Coaching interviews.

2.1.1 Workshops

During the first half of 2022, the WiHPC project conducted over a dozen workshops involving more than 100 participants to allow women coaches and others in the system to tell their stories, listen to the stories of others and work together to make sense of these narratives.

- **Women Coaches:** The majority of our effort went into creating spaces for women coaches to share their stories. These workshops were carefully structured to provide opportunity for participants to speak in pairs, in small groups and in plenary sessions. The activities also provided mechanisms for the groups to pool their insights and extract common themes and patterns.
- **Young coaches:** Based on our experience of the multi-generational workshops with women coaches, we engaged with groups of young coaches (male and female) to understand if there were generational differences in the perception of women coaches and to learn how young male coaches perceived the system.
- **Early leavers:** Our conversations with the women coaches made it clear that we also needed to hear the perspectives of those who had entered the HP coaching system but had left (or been pushed out) before making significant career progress. These workshops highlighted the system and, often more significantly, the behavioural issues that drove early exit.
- **Athletes:** The HP coaching system exists to maximise the potential of our athletes, so their voices are important. The workshops included a range of current and former elite athletes. The conversation focused on their perception of being coached at HP levels by women and moved naturally to the special value that women HP coaches provide.
- **Bright spots:** Through our workshop conversations, it became clear that there were already many powerful things happening to support the careers of women in HP coaching. We also investigated places where sports that might appear to be similar have very different outcomes in female coach representation.
- **Outsiders:** One of the important ways of identifying levers for change in a system is to look outside to similar systems to learn what works there. In our workshops we included experienced professionals from HP domains that had traditionally been dominated by men, but had managed to significantly improve the representation of women at elite levels.

All of these workshops produced important insights into the issues in the HP coaching system, and importantly we learned, in their own words, how these issues impacted women HP coaches.

The Ecological Systems Model provides a useful frame for capturing the high level insights from the workshops.

Early workshop insights

AUGUST 2022



The Ecological Systems Model

Women in Sports Coaching (LaVoi, 2016)

Socio-cultural influences *Cultural issues inhibit progress*

- > Perceptions and narratives @ coach stereotypes
- > Maternal and gender biases
- > Sexism
- > Inappropriate language and behaviours
- > Leadership diversity is needed to influence under-represented groups.

Organisational context and structure *System issues are at the heart of challenges*

- > Hiring, evaluation, retention practices and policies
- > Tokenism, marginalisation and wage inequality
- > Limited upward mobility
- > Lack of family friendly policies
- > Managing career detours, transitions and transferability of skills
- > Quotas with care!

Interpersonal and relational interactions *Deepen understanding the career journey for women*

- > Reverse mentoring
- > Reduce the friction e.g. The Boy's Club
- > Enhancing the detours e.g. Women's Network, Allyship, Mentoring.

Individual biological and psychological factors *Role Models, Individual support and upskilling*

- > Talent programs, networks, mentorship, allyship, sponsorship
- > Need to educate leadership @ early leavers, detours, transferability of skills.

Figure 5: Early Insights mapped with the Ecological Systems Model

2.1.2 Survey #1

In addition to the rich narrative data from the workshops, we also conducted a survey using the SenseMaker platform to provide additional data and to reach a larger pool of women coaches. The SenseMaker platform is unique in that it collects quantitative and qualitative data, and it also supports respondents to attribute meaning to the stories that they tell.

Responses were received from over 100 women, across more than 30 sports coaching at regional, state, national and international representative levels.

The survey identified six overarching insights across all qualitative and quantitative questions, for both positive and negative experiences.

Survey 1: Six drivers of experiences of representative coaches

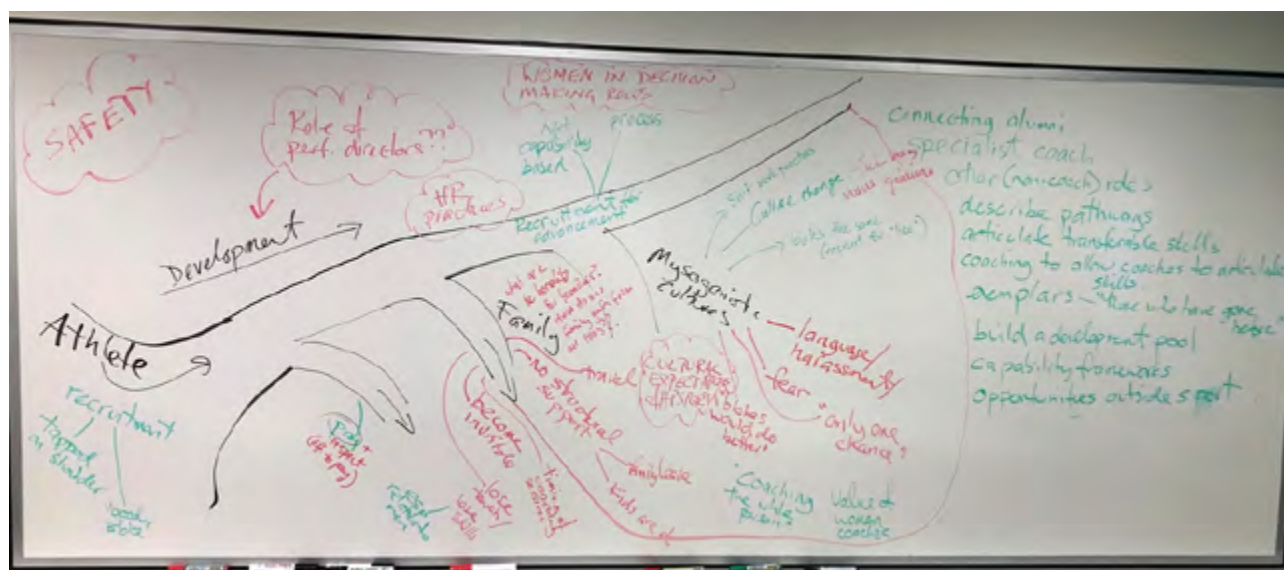
1	Independent of gender or role, behavioural issues are present at individual level and system levels...	Behavioural issues are present at individual level and system levels. Behavioural issues acted out against women coaches were noted consistently, including biases, poor conduct, aggressive behaviours, bullying and harassment.
2	To create champion women coaches, we need to see women coaches...	To create champion women coaches, we need to see women coaches. Having women visually within sport roles is important for the development of future coaches in the sporting system. Despite this, difficulties prohibit women from staying in the sport industry, leading to a lack of women in the system.
3	Making change will be complex, context dependent and individual...	Making change will be complex, context dependent and individual. Participants varied in terms of the type of change that they wanted to see in the future. Some participants identified change being necessary at the individual stakeholder level, particularly in the context of biases against women, with other participants more focused on making change at the system and organisation levels.
4	Level of experience shapes perception, as well as need	Experience shapes perception, as well as need. Consideration must be given to women coaches with less experience to create supportive environments as they begin their coaching journeys, with earlier coaches more likely to value concepts like mentoring, guidance and support as start their coaching careers.
5	Women seek challenge, opportunity and autonomy to grow.	Women seek challenge, opportunity & autonomy. As women coaches become more experienced, they require the same opportunities as men to be recognised and succeed. Women need exposure to everything in an effort to grow and develop [i.e. leading national programs, coaching members of the opposite gender, etc.].
6	Coaching is personal, internal and a part of identity...	Coaching is personal and a part of identity. As coaches become more experienced, intrinsic motivators become an important part of the role, including focuses on personal connection to athletes and a personal sense of self achievement.

Table 2: Survey 1 Insights. Six drivers of experiences of representative coaches.

2.2 Identifying points of leverage

Once all of this data had been gathered, the next stage of the process was to synthesise all of the inputs to identify themes, and importantly, points of leverage. An important part of any change process is to ascertain the points where pressure can be applied to change the behaviour in the system. Consistent with the approach that had been adopted for the project, the project team engaged with the people most impacted by the system – the women coaches – to make sense of the data that we had.

One of the most significant outcomes from Phase 1 of the WiHPC project was the mapping of what came to be known as the leaky pipeline. From the workshop conversations, it became clear that women coaches faced differing challenges at different points of their career journey. This insight was a significant contribution to later stages of the project, especially with regard to coach development. The leaky pipeline emerged from one workshop discussion. This photo captures the first mapping of the pipeline.



The leaky pipeline was refined in conversations in other workshops and resonated strongly with everyone who engaged with it. The diagram captured in one place the pain points that women coaches (and aspiring coaches) faced across their careers, and the corresponding points of leverage:

- The leaky pipeline was refined in conversations in other workshops and resonated strongly with everyone who engaged with it. The diagram captured in one place the pain points that women coaches (and aspiring coaches) faced across their careers, and the corresponding points of leverage:
- It was difficult to get into the HP system. How could recruitment practices be changed to provide opportunities for more women?
 - Development opportunities did not address the needs of women coaches, or were delivered in ways that discouraged women from participating. How could coach development be redesigned so that women were able to optimise their potential?
 - Young coaches and aspiring coaches did not see many examples of successful women coaches, so they struggled to see a career pathway for themselves. How could we make successful women HP coaches more visible as career role models?
 - There was no support for women when they paused their coaching careers to have a family. How could sports provide support for women during these career pauses?
 - Women struggled to re-enter the HP coaching system after having a family because of a perception that coaching had to be full time. How could coaching roles be re-perceived to create part time opportunities for women with families?
 - When women did return to coaching, it was difficult to manage family commitments alongside the travel so often required as part of a HP coaching role. How could sports support women to more effectively balance these competing needs?
 - Women who were successful HP coaches with categorised athletes struggled to gain appointments as podium coaches or head coaches. How could recruitment practices at this level be changed to provide those opportunities and address the gender imbalance that is currently in place?
- ## 2.2.1 Behaviour
- Sitting alongside all of these pain points is the most challenging element of all – bad (and in some cases appalling, misogynistic and abusive) behaviour by others in the HP system. Collecting the stories of those impacted by the current has often been extremely challenging as the incidents demonstrate some of the worst of human behaviour, and it is confronting to see that these things are happening in what should be professional environments at the elite levels of sport coaching in Australia. Some of these actions are accidental or unthinking, but in many cases these actions are intentional and intended to keep women out of HP coaching. Unfortunately, until these issues (and the perpetrators) are addressed, it will be difficult to make significant and lasting progress. And to be clear, it is not the role of the women coaches to address this – it is the role of

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2.2.2 Archetypes

Another significant outcome from the workshops was the creation of the System Archetypes. We noticed in the workshops with the coaches that the same archetypal characters appeared in most sports – the boys' club, the political ignoror, the blockers, the trail blazers, the tireless workers. On the basis of these conversations, we worked with Paul Telling (a graphic artist who had done similar work previously) to produce a set of images that captured each of these archetypes. The archetypes were co-developed with women coaches who had participated in the workshops. Draft versions were tested with different audiences. Consistently, we found that this approach resonated deeply with women coaches – it captured challenges and hopes that they shared and it allowed them to speak about their experiences in a way that they had not been able to do previously. Once the archetypes were finalised with the coaches, they were turned into posters.

The posters were printed in large format so that they could be used in workshops. We also utilised anonymised stories of the experience of coaches that had been gathered through the SenseMaker process. About 70 of the stories (positive and negative) were printed on individual cards. The powerful combination of the stories and the archetypes came together in storytelling workshops to support conversations about the real challenges faced by women coaches. The anonymised stories provided a (relatively) safe starting point for a conversation between a coach and an administrator. The archetype toolkit was an important contribution to the way that we engaged the broader system later in the project.

The Archetype Gallery — developed by the WiHPC Coaches

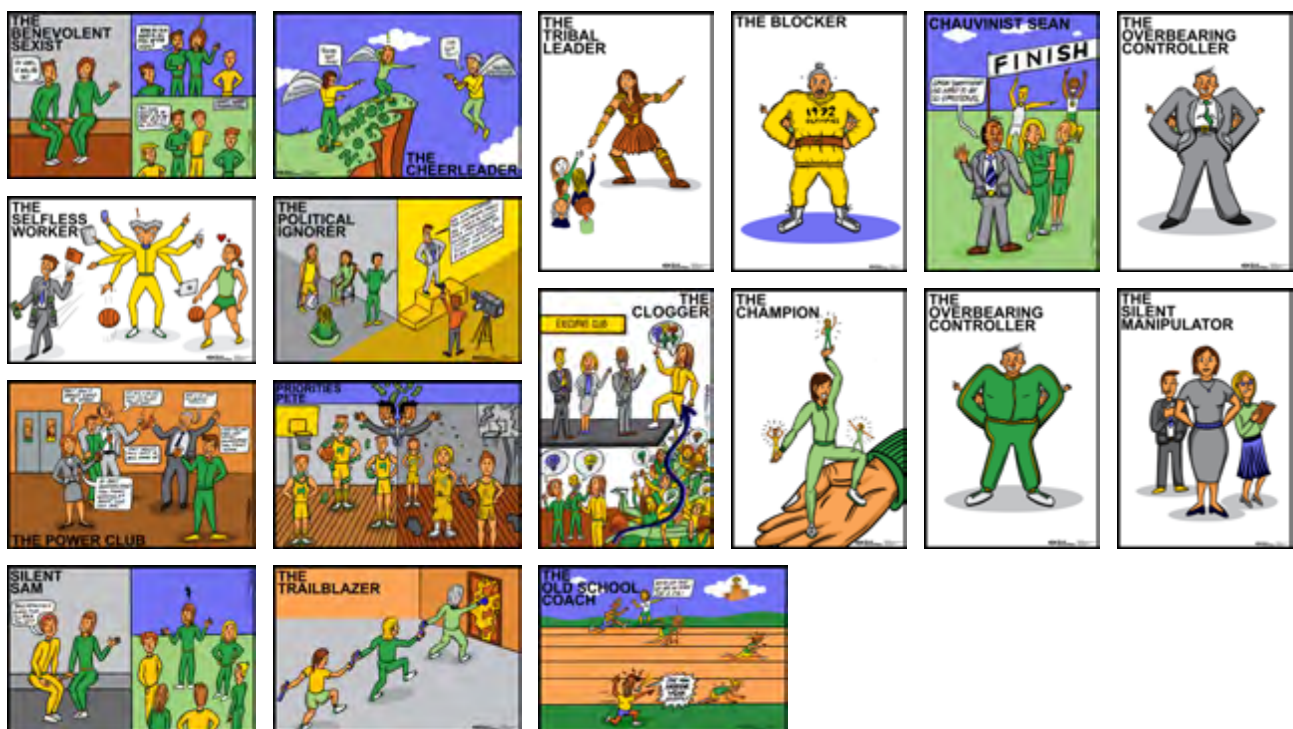


Figure 7: The Archetype Gallery, August 2024

2.2.3 Leveraging Bright Spots

Making progress on the points of leverage and on the need for cultural change is a not insignificant challenge. However, as is so often the case in complex systems, many of the answers are already there but people in system can't see it. Through our workshops with coaches, and in particular in the bright spots workshops, it emerged that there were already examples from the HP coaching environment of approaches and tools that could be applied to these points of leverage. In the Outsiders workshops, we heard of the consistent struggles of women in HP domains such as aviation, cinematography and the law. We also heard of approaches and tools that had driven progress in these environments that could be borrowed and contextualised, and then applied to HP coaching. With regard to problematic behaviour, the HP coaching system already has access to tools (such as cultural audits) to drive change and to bring an end to patterns of behaviour that prevent women from reaching their potential.

The application of these bright spots from inside, and from outside, to the HP coaching domain became one of the major areas of work for the Getting Traction phase.

2.2.4 Women's Coach Networks

Finally, it is important to note one final and significant point of leverage that emerged through the process. The workshops that we ran generated insights about the challenges and opportunities in HP coaching system. Because of the way that the workshops were run, and perhaps just by the fact that we were bringing together these elite professionals, the women coaches created bonds and naturally formed networks. With a few simple nudges (such as creating WhatsApp groups), the women coaches found support that they otherwise would not have had. HP coaching can be a lonely job, especially for women. It is even more important for newer coaches and those entering the Australian HP system from overseas. Perhaps one of the most important points of leverage from the project was the creation of networks that encouraged all involved to pursue their personal goals and to work collectively for the improvement of the system.

2.3 Engaging the system

The listening process by its nature started to engage the system in the project. By October 2022, we had involved over 120 coaches, 40 HP managers and directors and others from the Australian HP sport system. These workshop participants contributed to the development of insights and also helped raise awareness of the challenges through the conversations that they had with others about their involvement.

2.3.1 Significant engagement — the 2022 National Showcase

The most significant engagement with the broader system at this phase of the project was the Women in HP Coaching Showcase held in Melbourne on 8th November 2022. The Showcase brought together nearly 100 people from the Australian HP system – coaches, HP directors and administrators. The day began with an Archetypes activity, similar to that described above. Building on the triad conversations that had been led by women coaches in this Archetype process, the participants then worked at table groups to unpack the lessons of the opening session, and share their own stories.

The two sessions in the middle of the day highlighted the bright spots that had been uncovered in the listening phase. In each of the two sessions, participants had the opportunity to engage with three poster presentations that illustrated successful practices that had made a positive difference for women coaches. The poster presentations were delivered by representatives from 14 sports and organisations, covering topics such as mentoring, part time roles and longitudinal approaches to changing gender norms in coaching.

All of these posters captured real examples of initiatives that were actually happening. The purpose of these sessions was to stretch people's thinking about what might be possible and to engage the system in thinking about how these ideas could be replicated or scaled. The posters were made available to all participants at the end of the workshop in a digital sample bag and are available on the AIS website. Over the course of the day, Mentimeter (an online data collection tool) was used to gather insights from the participants. The final session of the day was shaped on the basis of the insights that were shared. Ten themes were identified from the comments and the group was given the opportunity to participate in a table conversation of their choosing. As work began, participants decided that there was overlap between some of the topics and settled on the following eight groups:

- AIS support for change
- Generational change
- Igniting local networks
- Building a talent pool
- Recruitment
- Parental support
- The power of language
- Working with the boys' club

A facilitator at each table collected the ideas that were generated. These insights were incorporated into the overall learning from this phase.

2.4 Reviewing and learning

Taking time to listen to the voices in the system, to analyse that data for points to leverage and then to engage the system in understanding and working with those ideas produced valuable insights into the ways that we might improve the representation of women in HP coaching.

The work that was done allowed us to articulate the drivers of low participation from the perspective of those who are impacted by the current system.

The insights from the project up to this point were captured under three broad headings:

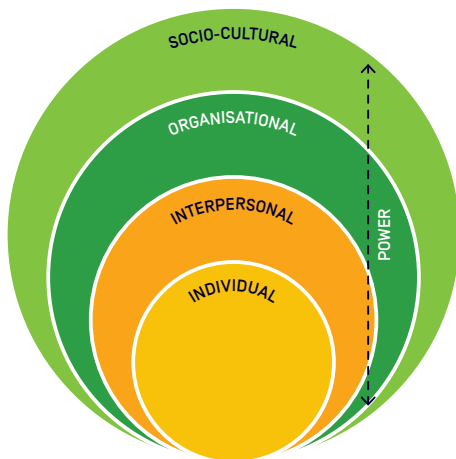
Theme	Outcome
Drivers of poor participation	Bad behaviours and toxic culture: Individual behaviours and cultural norms are the major driver of poor participation of women in elite coaching.
	Organisational barriers and outdated work structures: A cultural and systemic change towards more flexible, sustainable work requirements is essential.
	Substandard and inconsistent recruitment practices: Haphazard and poorly developed recruitment practices drive poor participation rates.
	Lack of coordinated development opportunities: Thoughtful and proactive coach development matters in building a capable and sustainable coaching workforce across the HP Sport System.
An urgent call for action to avoid broader system risks	Legal and reputational risk: Many sports and organisations have unrecognised legal exposure and current behaviours create significant reputational risk.
	Sustainability and funding: Individual programs and ad hoc funding creates some momentum, but systemic approaches are needed to embed sustainable change.
	Policy vs practice: Widespread gaps between policy and practice create instability and inefficiencies, and destroy trust.
	Inadequate and incomplete data: Incomplete system wide data and a lack of accountability limits our understanding of the current state and makes a coordinated approach more difficult.
Opportunities to leverage the 'bright spots'	Allies and leaders: Creating allies and champions of change is critical for success.
	Connections and belonging: Strengthening communities, networks and mentoring opportunities creates a sense of belonging.
	Stories of lived experience: Sharing the stories of lived experiences of those who are impacted drives change.
	Visibility matters: You can't be what you can't see: and you can't be what others can't see.

Table 3: Early Insights Themes

The Ecological Systems Model was a useful way of capturing some of the insights and move to designing ways of “nudging” the system to influence behaviour and outcomes.

Applying the nudges to the system

AUGUST 2022



The Ecological Systems Model

Women in Sports Coaching (LaVoi, 2016)

Socio-cultural influences

Cultural issues inhibit progress

- > Leverage media exposure, share narratives, raise awareness (using role models, young coaches, athletes)
- > Challenge coach stereotypes
- > Highlight bright spots and role models
- > Promote leadership diversity.

Organisational context and structure

System issues are at the heart of challenges

- > Ensure equitable and transparent hiring, pay, evaluation and tangible KPIs (Capability based recruitment)
- > Implement Talent Identification for Women, targeted development, retention, and re-engagement strategies at various stages of careers
- > Implement family friendly policies targeting career detours and transitions
- > Promote transferability of skills
- > Implement Cultural awareness and Respectful Behaviours Programs and Quotas with Care!

Interpersonal and relational

Deepen understanding the career journey for women

- > Engage and educate leaders through reverse mentoring and emotional intelligence
- > Deepen understanding of friction for men
- > Challenge inappropriate behaviours and mistreatment, Strengthen Networks, Mentorship, Allyship and Sponsorship for all coaches (esp. women).

Individual biological and psychological factors

Role Models, Individual support and upskilling

- > Continue Women's Programs and Scholarships* to build confidence and competence
- > Educate Leadership @ early leavers, detours, transferability of skills e.g. Reverse Mentoring

*Gendered and Ungendered Coach Development

Figure 8: Applying the Nudges to the system, August 2022

From conversations at the Showcase and in other settings, it was clear that many people in the HP system were keen to drive change, but were unsure of the steps that needed to be taken to get their sport to make progress. Given the deep understanding of the issues and the potential for leveraging bright spots, it would be possible to construct a road map to action that sports could use to take initial steps based on their current situation and to continue to move forward in a purposeful way.



2.5 Establishing priorities for the following phases

Having done the work and synthesised the insights from the Initial Exploration Phase, the project team needed to prioritise activity and develop a plan for the next phase. It was clear that there was much work that needed to be done. However, team resources were limited, and the system was only able to digest a limited amount of change.

It was therefore important to identify the pieces of work that would produce the maximum impact for the resources that were available. On that basis, four areas were selected as priorities for the following phase:

- Coach development:** One of the very strong messages from the women coaches, particularly those who chose to leave the system early, was that the HP coach development process in most sports did not meet the needs of women, and in some cases was extremely unfriendly to women when they tried to engage. At the same time, it was clear that the lever of learning was foundational for women to make progress in the HP system. Given the criticality of the coach development process for establishing a healthy pipeline of HP coaches (and therefore for making progress towards 2032+ targets), it was also identified as a priority.
- Toolkit development:** Given the potential for toolkits based on bright spots for driving system and behaviour change, toolkit development was given high priority. Three areas were selected based on feedback from the November 2022 Showcase: recruitment, parental leave and support, part time talent pool.
- Data collection:** One of the challenges that the WiHPC project faced was the lack of data on the HP coaching system. Even where data existed, the methods of collection were not consistent across sports, nor across time. The lack of data made it difficult (if not impossible) to establish a baseline, to measure progress, and to make comparisons to identify bright spots. Data collection was therefore easy to identify as a priority for the next phase.
- Visibility:** It is well established in the world of system change that “you can’t be what you can’t see”. In the listening work that we did, there was a clear message, particularly from the younger coaches, that it was difficult to see the potential of a career in HP coaching as they couldn’t see many positive role models. The issue is not that there are no role models, but that the successful coaches are not visible. In the HP space, it is also true that “you can’t appreciate or value what you can’t see”. Because successful women coaches are not visible in the system, the value that they bring is not noticed. This perpetuates the mythology that women can’t be successful HP coaches. Improving visibility of successful women coaches was identified as a priority for these reasons.

In addition, there were other pieces of work happening in the HP space that could be leveraged to support the WiHPC mission. The most significant of these were the development of capability frameworks, and the technology design to allow sports to construct and manage road maps to action.

While most of the effort would be going into these project focus areas, it was also agreed that the project could also drive progress supporting small nudges to the system, largely through making good practice visible more broadly in the system. It was very obvious to the project team that there was much good work being done and lots of good things happening but this was not visible in the broader HP system. Connecting people to share their experience was a vector of change that could not be ignored.

SECTION 3

SETTING A CLEAR COURSE



Setting a clear course

January 2023 to November 2023

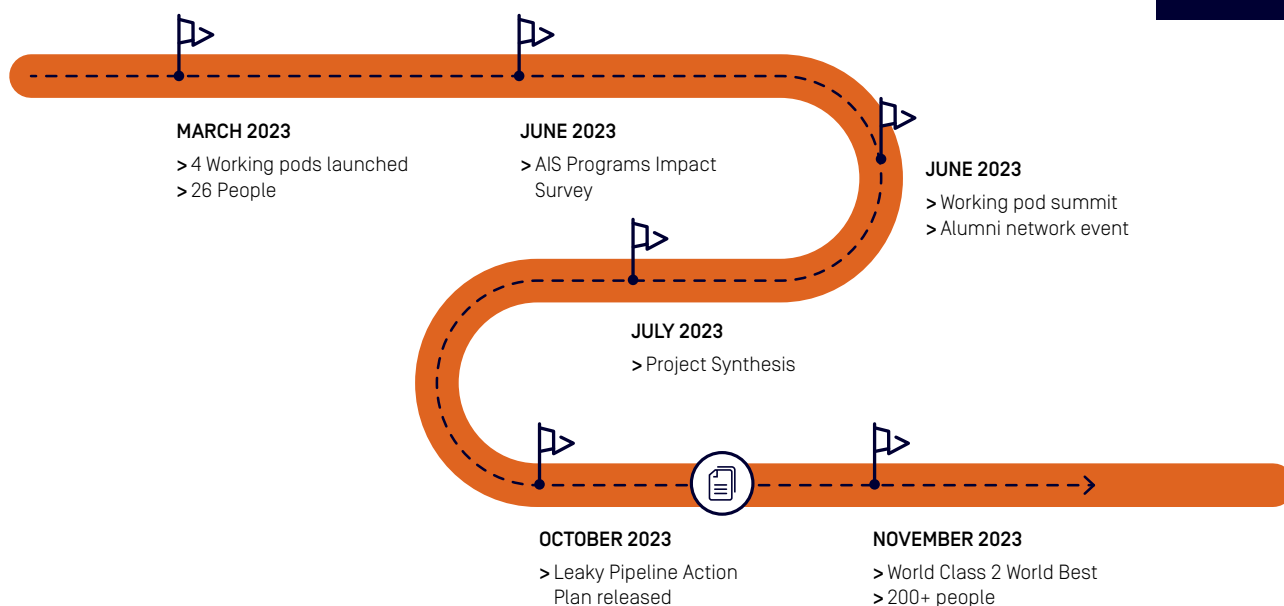


Figure 9: Setting a clear course (January 2023 to November 2023)

3.1 Listening more closely

In this phase of the project, the listening focused on three areas: coach development, toolkit development and data.

3.1.1 Coach development

Although we continued to listen to the voices in the system to better understand the experience of women coaches through conversations and workshop activities, the major focus for building insights into coach development was through a SenseMaker survey where participants of a decade of leadership and coach development programs were able to describe their experience through narratives and then to use those narratives to provide insights that could be analysed. Over 150 participants (male and female) from more than 40 sports responded to the survey. The insights from the survey were published in June 2023 in a report: *Looking back to move forward: Understanding the influence of gender and learning environments in HP sport*. The main insights from the report are outlined in the graphic below.



Survey 2: Understanding the influence of gender and learning environments in high performance sport

1	Connection	Connection was integral, independent of gender or learning environment. Connection was the most dominant theme, with the context for why varying at the level of the individual.
2	Learning Environments	There are subtle differences between gendered and ungendered learning environments for women. Women in programs with men viewed impact in terms of pragmatic outcomes, like using connection for personal growth and finding tools to elicit change. Connection was viewed differently, as a mechanism of inspiration for women in gendered programs.
3	Connection, safety and support	Importance of connection, safety and support is real as a part of the female experience. Whether determined through the outcomes of narratives through traditional qualitative methods, or identified as key themes through natural language processing, connection for safety and support was a unique characteristic of women's experiences.
4	Other factors beyond gender	Other factors beyond gender have a role in explaining differences in perception. Participants held different levels of system experience, and participated in different time windows (COVID19), with these factors influencing the nuance of perceived program impact.
5	Continuity is key...	Continuity is key... and expansion is better. Future programs would benefit greatly from running for a longer period of time to stimulate continued development. Additionally, providing accessibility to connect with other peers outside of programs would be of value.
6	Opportunities	Opportunities is a major issue for everyone. Despite the benefit of programs on individual development, one consistent issue was the difficulty in implementing learned knowledge into practice, given the lack of opportunities (particularly for progression) in the system.
7	Different response groups	There are different types of responders, due to latent factors (we can't see). Different exploratory machine learning methods identified different "response groups," independent of gender, experience and timing of programs. This indicates that other hidden factors may be influencing program needs, and these should be further explored for program refinement.
8	Strong trends with cohorts	There were very strong trends at the cohort level. Despite there being different response groups, there were very stable trends across all participants indicating some areas of fast opportunity for system changes across all genders.
9	Diversity of perspective = learning	Diversity of perspective enhances learning. The diversity of experience was an integral part of the learning process for participants, with the face-to-face connection serving as a powerful mechanism for personal growth.

Table 4: Survey 2 Insights: Looking back to move forward: Understanding the influence of gender and learning environments in HP sport.

Based on these insights, the report made three recommendations:

Survey 2: Recommendations for Learning and Development

1	 Options for gendered learning	There is a need for learning environment options for gender: The results of this survey have shown clearly, that the function of gendered programs for women carries a unique function and value as a part of learning, and this mode of gendered program delivery should be preserved.
2	 Which environments suits?	There is a need to understand “who” would benefit from being in a given learning environment: A next step beyond this evaluation would be to develop a process for identifying program options based on the needs of individuals. It is clear that some women will benefit more from gendered environments, while other women will benefit more from programs with men as fellow participants. Building a process to help link women with the right program for their specific needs should be a focus of the development of any future programs.
3	 Continuity and expansion	New programs should explore continuity and expansion: Regardless of gender, some key considerations for future programs are related to provision of more time for development and also building towards the development of a larger expanded community of practice, or mechanism of continued connection to peers as a part of continuous learning. Aligning any future development initiatives with the principles of continuity and expansion would greatly benefit the system.

Table 5: Survey 2 recommendations for future learning and development programs

3.1.2 Toolkit development

Consistent with the approach taken elsewhere in the WiHPC project, we engaged the HP coaching community – and women coaches in particular – in the development of the toolkits. For each of the identified toolkit areas, working pods of 8-10 coaches, sport administrators and coach development leads were established, with a designated leader to guide the process. Each pod was kicked off with a working session that included other members of the WiHPC project team and other AIS staff to scope the work and identify approaches. The working pods then worked independently with regular check-ins with the WiHPC team. Although each pod worked slightly differently, the general approach was to start with the bright spots that had been identified in the first phase; reach out into the system to identify other ideas and examples; synthesise all of these insights into a concise set of insights and recommendations; test this thinking with women coaches and others in their network; refine the ideas for final presentation.

The working pods came together in a workshop in June 2023 where the insights and recommendations were presented and debated. In the room were the members of each of the four working pods, other women coaches, education managers and administrators – over 40 people in all. The discussions led to refinements of the ideas, and very importantly to a better understanding of the issues and ways of driving change.

Over the following months, final versions of the prioritised toolkits were prepared for publication. Each toolkit contained a number of practical solutions based on actual experience within the HP system and case studies to demonstrate applicability. The toolkits were released with the Action Plan in November 2023.

The toolkit development work reinforced the finding from the first phase that there are many places where outdated mythologies are inhibiting progress. For example:

- There is a myth that HP coaching must be a full time role, when there are many examples of sports that have made part time roles work effectively.
- There is a myth that coaching skills are not transferable across sports, when there are many examples of coaches who have been highly effective in roles across a number of sports.

The work on the recruitment toolkit highlighted that in many organisations, recruitment processes are a major impediment to improving the representation of women in HP coaching. Processes are often poorly designed, not inclusive and prevent women from achieving roles that they are well qualified for. The Recruitment Toolkit provides clear guidance for setting up inclusive recruitment processes that allow women to be able to compete on an equal basis for roles.

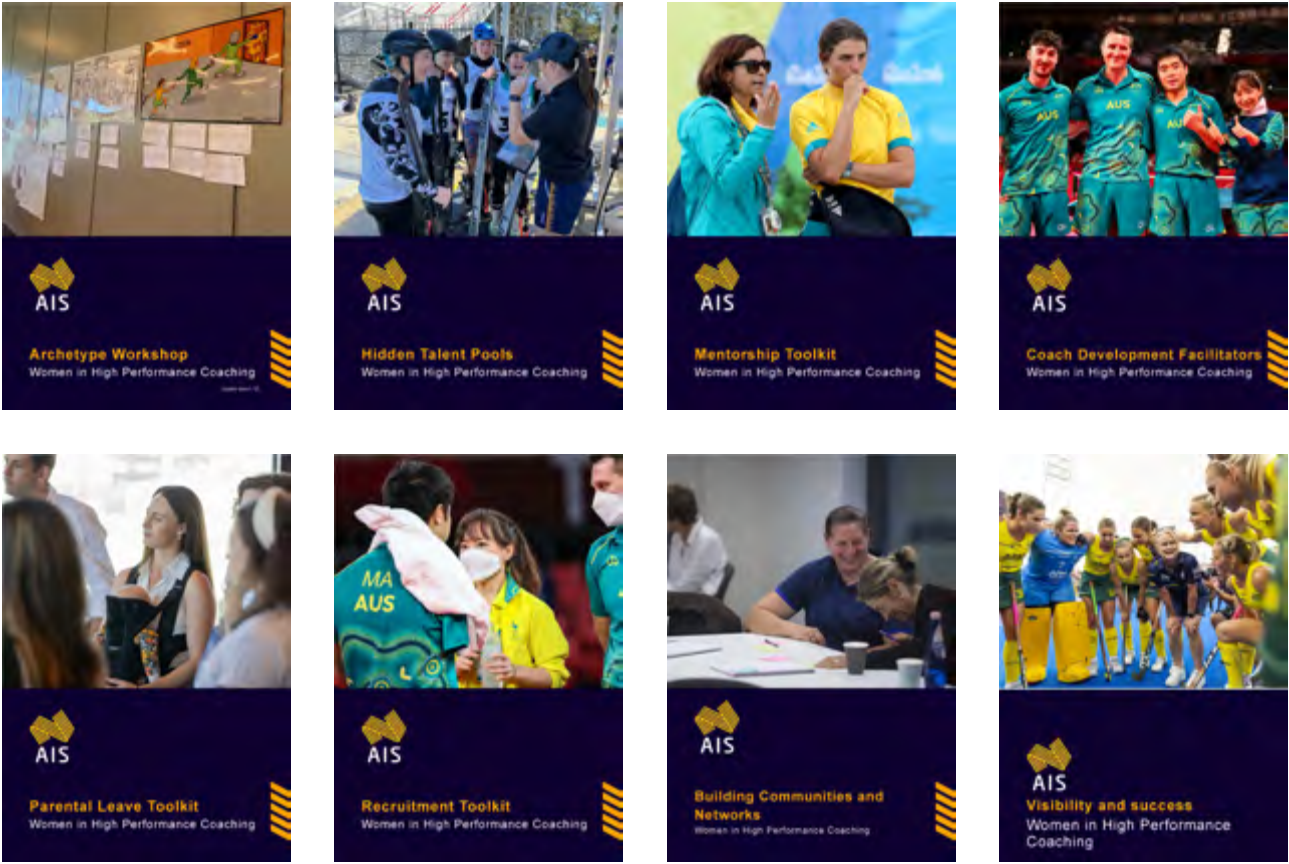


Figure 10: All WiHPC Toolkits as of September 2025



3.1.3 Data

Having coaches, HP managers and directors from a wide range of sports working together on the toolkits provided the opportunity to explore the coaching pipeline in more detail. This in turn prompted conversations about pathways for HP coach development, and this highlighted the lack of data across the system. The pipeline mapping activity that was conducted at this stage of the project highlighted there is no consistent development model across sports (varied structure, size and purpose), coach progression is non-linear and a supporting multiple paths through the coaching journey was critical to support greater representation of women coaches.



“By better understanding the coach pipeline and barriers for women coaches, we can now design and implement new strategies to gain, retain and provide pathway and high performance opportunities for women coaches in our sport.”

Gary Barclay, General Manager Performance Pathway,
Swimming Australia

Some preliminary data was gathered, but it highlighted the need for a specific initiative to gather data in a systematic way.

In 2022, Commonwealth Games Australia (CGA), the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) and Paralympics Australia (PA) were engaged to identify data sources and determine future reporting processes. This engagement highlighted the work that needed to be done with Games Partners to produce consistent, reliable data. For the data to be an accurate picture of actual coaching activity, it needed to reflect coaches coaching athletes, not just accreditation data. From the perspective of the WiHPC Project, it was clear that this data was critical for system understanding, leadership engagement and accountability.

3.2 Applying leverage

3.2.1 Toolkits

Once the toolkits were finalised, they were made available through the AIS website. Making the toolkits available was a significant point of leverage. It created the opportunity for sporting organisations to change their ways of working to address the drivers of low levels of representation in their own sports. At the same time, it became clear that more needed to be done to get widespread traction across the HP system.

3.2.2 Alumni event

Coinciding with the working pod summit, an event was held for the alumni of AIS coach and leadership development programs, including alumni from the long running AIS pinnacle programs for HP coaches. Forty people attended, including coaches, HP executives, managers and AIS leaders. The event allowed these senior coaches to reflect on the value of the AIS programs for their development, and to share this with other coaches. The conversation focused on understanding the importance of the networks, and how we could utilise these to deliberately support and enhance mentorship, sponsorship and allyship. Ideas from these conversations were a critical input for understanding the importance of networks for women coaches and for developing a deeper understanding of allyship.

3.3 Engaging the system

The most significant element of engagement with the system in this phase was The Leaky Pipeline Action Plan (Action Plan) which was released in November 2023. The Action Plan was launched to coincide with the World Class to World's Best event held in Canberra in November 2023. The event brought together athletes, coaches and administrators from the Australian HP system and was therefore a powerful opportunity to engage the broader system in the work of the WiHPC project. The event also garnered significant news coverage which brought the work of the project to public attention.



Figure 11: Fixing the Leaky Pipeline Action Plan

The Action Plan set out all of the learning and insights from the work to date and framed these around three main themes and twelve key insight areas. Refer to **Appendix 5** for the Action Plan.

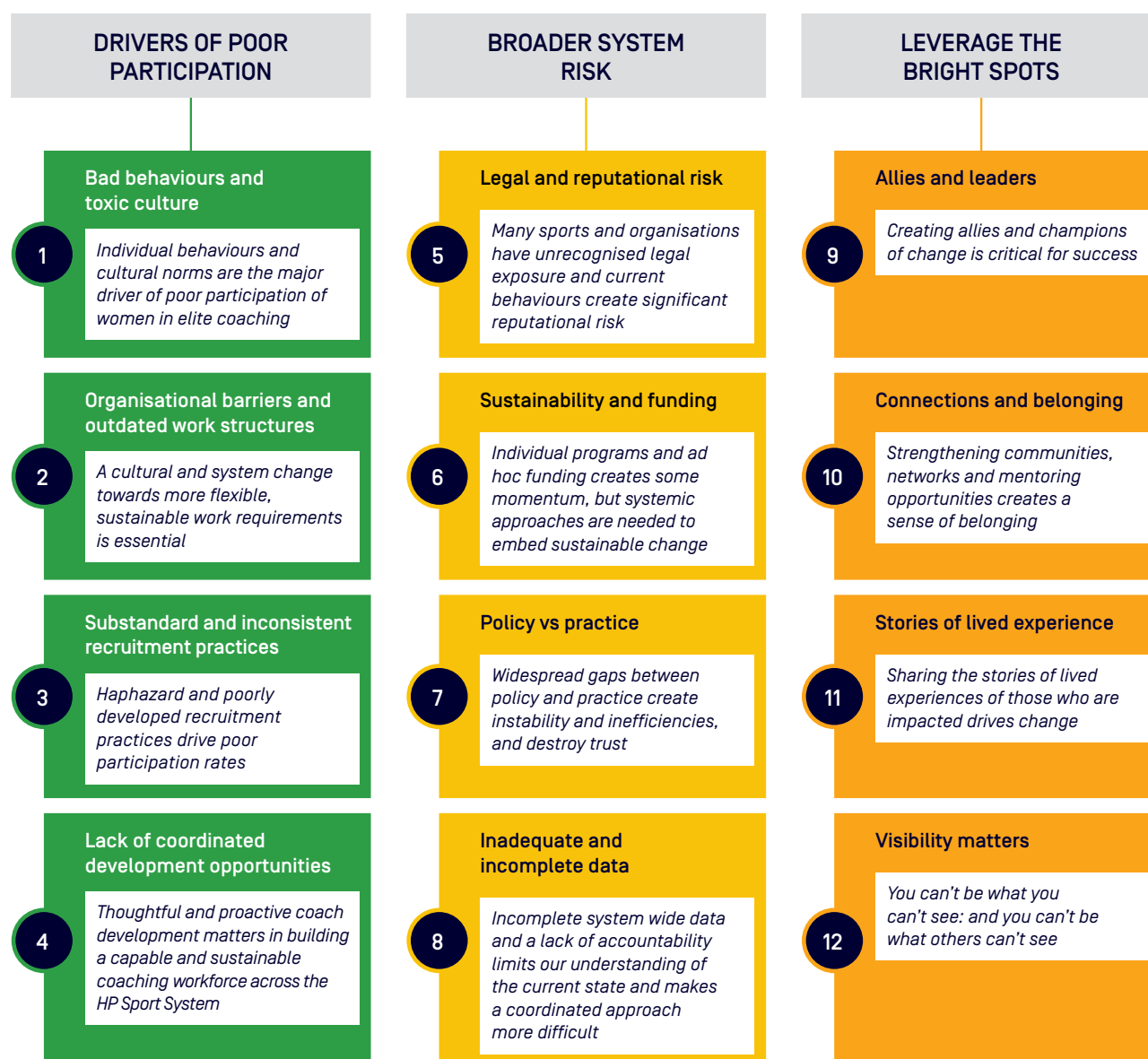
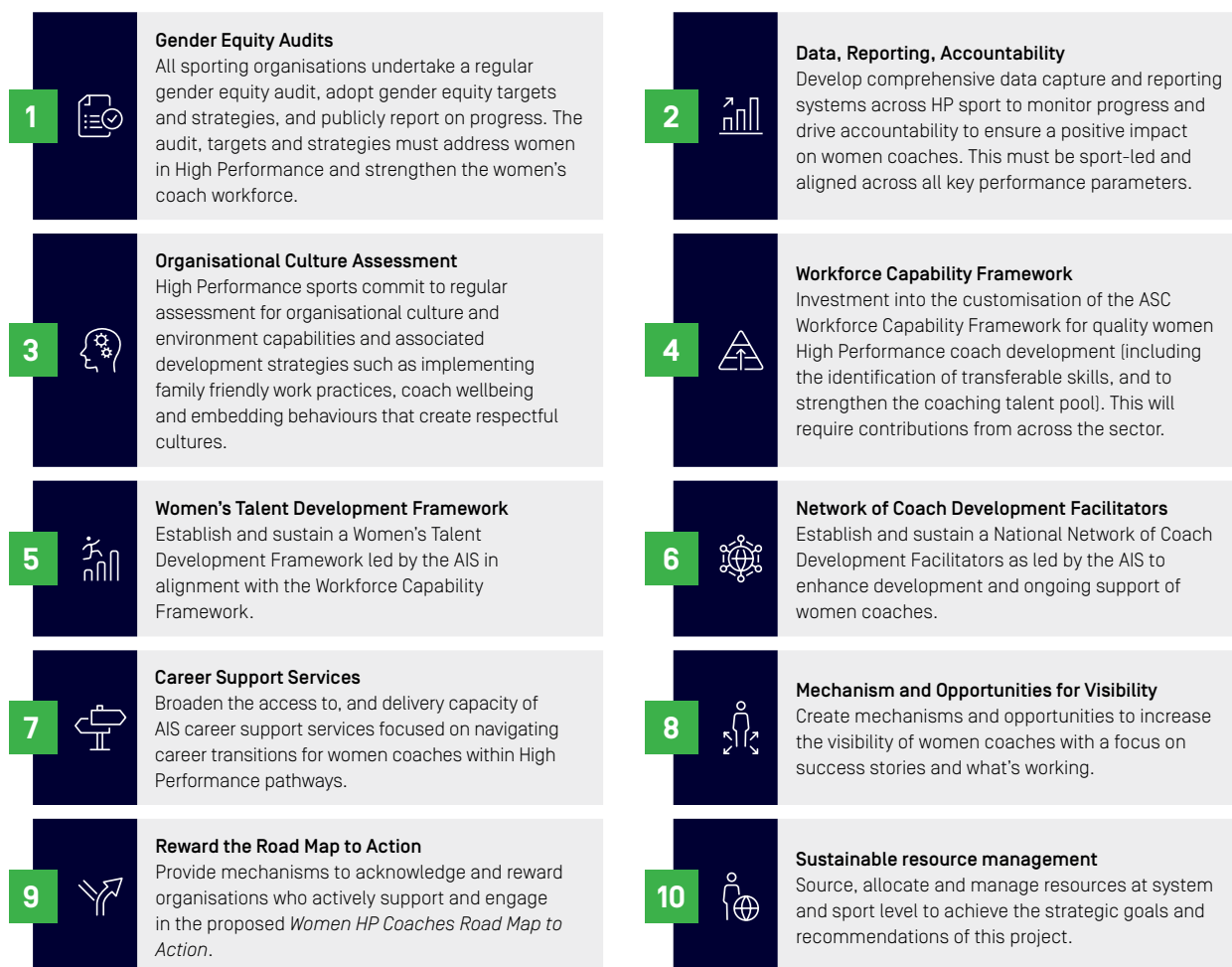


Figure 12: Three key themes and twelve project insights, October 2023.

Women in High Performance Coaching

10 Recommendations to support and enhance the experiences of Women in High Performance Coaching.

Based on these insights, the Action Plan made 10 recommendations to drive greater representation of women in HP coaching through a system wide approach and strategy.



[†]these recommendations are aligned with 2032+ Sport Strategy, National Sport Participation Strategy (in draft) and the National Data Strategy.

Figure 13: The Ten Recommendations for the WiHPC Action Plan, October 2023.

These 10 recommendations became the navigation points for rest of the WiHPC Project. By bringing the recommendations to the entire HP system at this peak event, it created awareness across the system of the challenges faced by women coaches. It also demonstrated opportunities for sporting organisations to drive change through the toolkits and other solutions that had been developed. The recommendations also made it clear that while the AIS had responsibility for some aspects of the change, leaders in sporting organisations also needed to take accountability if change was to happen.

Another important aspect of the Action Plan was the publication of a score card through which the WiHPC project and the HP system could be held accountable for delivering on outputs and driving progress to higher representation of women in HP coaching.

Scorecard 2024



Figure 14: Scorecard prepared for 12 monthly reporting

3.4 Reviewing and learning

Developing and publishing the Action Plan brought many things into focus.

First, the WiHPC project had developed a detailed understanding of the issues faced by women coaches. All of this work was brought together in the Leaky Pipeline. The Leaky Pipeline describes the typical career journey for a woman in HP coaching and, more importantly, identifies the major challenges along that path. Even though every coach's journey is different, there was strong acknowledgement that the mapping was valid and that the challenges were accurately described and real. This not only validated the work that was already underway (e.g. toolkits), the Leaky Pipeline set a clear agenda for the next phase.

Second, based on this detailed understanding, the Action Plan identified four areas as strategic levers for change:

- Behaviours, culture and environment
- Systems supporting diversity
- Strategies for development
- Visibility and storytelling

Good progress had been made on **"Systems Supporting Diversity"**. The toolkits development process reinforced that solutions to some of the system's issues already exist in the system, they are just not shared and therefore are not widely used. Documenting the bright spots from across the HP system and making these available through toolkits provided solutions to some of the most common challenges that women coaches faced. As well as providing practical solutions, the process drew attention to the need for policy changes in sporting organisations. The next step was to scale up the work and get traction for these solutions.

Good progress had been made on **"Strategies for Development"**. SenseMaker surveys and insights from workshops had provided a solid understanding of the challenges as well as insights into the critical factors for success. The next step was to consolidate and expand this understanding. The opportunity was to move towards influencing the HP coach development system that supported women to achieve their potential.

Good progress had been made on **"Visibility and Storytelling"**. The activities at the Showcase and the publication of the Action Plan has brought to attention some of the amazing work that was being done within the system. However, it was clear that much more needed to be done in this area. The next steps were to generate more media coverage of the achievements of women coaches, and very importantly, to intensify efforts to collect and publish reliable data on representation.

Only limited progress had been made on **"Behaviours, Culture and Environment"**. It was clear from the work thus far that behavioural, cultural and environmental issues were a major driver of poor participation. Insights from the SenseMaker surveys and workshops were clear. The publication of the Action Plan had brought these issues into focus. The Archetype toolkit provided a mechanism for organisations to facilitate conversations about the reality of these issues in their sport. Some audit processes were available to sporting organisations (such as the wellbeing health check) but take up was low. However, it was clear that more needed to be done to address this lever. This needed to be a major focus for the next phase of the project.

The building blocks were in place. The next step was to drive traction.



Figure 15: The Four Strategic Levers, November 2023

SECTION 4

GETTING TRACTION



Getting traction

January 2024 to November 2024

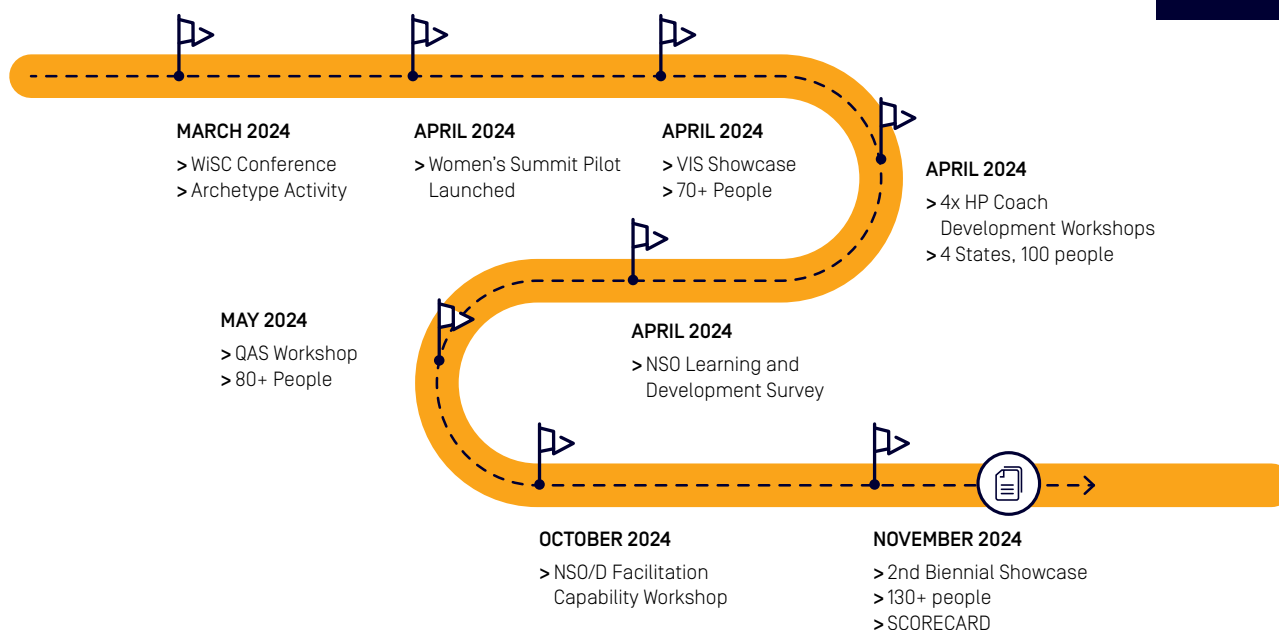


Figure 16: Getting Traction (January 2024 to November 2024)

4.1 Listening more closely

The listening work in this phase focused on those priorities that had been identified at the end of the first phase but not yet explored in depth.

4.1.1 Coach development

Consistent with the approach taken throughout the project, the team conducted workshops to provide opportunities for women coaches to talk about their own experiences. During April 2024, the project team ran four workshops in four states. More than 100 people from the coach development system participated. The workshops were designed to leverage the insights from the 2023 SenseMaker survey. They also generated the foundational ideas to influence the design and delivery of the HP coach development process to make it more inclusive and appealing to women coaches.

There were five important outputs from the workshops:

- A framework for positioning coach development within a National Sporting Organisation (NSO) or National Sporting Organisation for People with Disability (NSOD), emphasising the importance of the coach development beyond accreditation.
- An agreed set of principles for the design of inclusive coach development processes, with a strong focus on belonging, learner centred design and psychologically safe learning spaces.
- An understanding that trained facilitators were essential for delivering effective, inclusive development processes.
- A recognition of the role of allies in the coach development space and beyond.
- A reinforcement of the importance of leaders, specifically the role of leaders in integrating the development of coaches into other systems so that there are opportunities for coaches to apply their learning to support planned career development.

These workshops guided the development of deepening understanding of the HP coach development space and the impact on women coaches. This was undertaken through the following activities:

- Conducting a survey of women HP coaches to build upon anecdotal evidence of the learning and development experiences and deepen understanding of leverage points.
- Development and delivery of a workshop program with NSOs and NSO/Ds to build capability, test the initial insights into optimising development of women coaches and understand if the principles had applicability as good practice for all coach development, regardless of gender.
- Initiation of a gender mapping exercise of the HP coach development workforce in NSO/Ds to deepen insights into the gender of role holders within this landscape and potential leverage points to support women coaches.

4.1.2 Understanding the impact of Learning and Development environments

A third SenseMaker survey was conducted with a focus on the learning environments [formal, informal, non-formal and blended] provided by NSO/Ds. The insights from this survey were consistent with the themes that had emerged from the workshops:

- **There is a trifecta of learning and development:** Opportunities that target the trifecta of 1) fostering community and networks, 2) integrating knowledge and practical skills whilst 3) being immersed in a training or competition environment were seen to have the largest positive impact. The WiHPC project and Athletics Australia Coach Mentoring Program were given as exemplars of this approach.
- **Re-think formal learning:** Facilitators who can 'read the room' are needed. Learning is enhanced when existing expertise is valued. Experiences should be structured to connect theory to practice.
- **Being seen as a coach builds confidence in capability:** Women who felt well supported and valued for their expertise by their NSO/D and senior coaches had high confidence in their capability to coach. Those who felt undermined or not 'seen as a coach' reported frustration at the system and felt unworthy in their role.
- **Psychological safety matters:** The most effective learning environments supported experimentation and risk taking. Coaches valued opportunities to stretch their thinking. Psychological safety was also critical for creating a sense of community and belonging.
- **Effective and efficient experiences:** The juggle is real for women coaches. Targeted opportunities, rather than 'tick the box' learning and development are needed.
- **Continue championing for cultural change:** The system was seen as an inhibitor for career development. While the tide is turning, further work is needed to shift the mindset of some senior leaders and coaches within Australian sport.

4.1.3 Data

Although much of the effort in the Initial Listening phase was put into collecting narratives from the coaches impacted by the current system, numerical data was also seen as a critical input for understanding the system. However, from the beginning of the project, the WiHPC found it challenging to locate reliable data on the number of coaches in the system. Work in 2023 had identified the need to develop common language for gathering data about HP coach development. In the Getting Traction phase, a specific data collection initiative was undertaken to address this challenge. Picking up on the coach development priority that had been identified, the initiative focused on gender mapping of the HP coach development workforce in NSOs and NSO/Ds.

The project was quite resource intensive, requiring the development of common role definitions (Decision Maker, Program Convenor, Subject Matter Expert, Supporting Coaches in Practice) and then working closely with individual NSOs and NSO/Ds to collect the data.

The key insights from the initiative were:

- There is significant gender imbalance in the coach development workforce (35% female), especially in leadership roles (30% female).
- Front line roles (facilitators of group and 1:1 coach development) and program support roles are slightly more balanced (36% female).
- Diversity is not solely a resource issue, with some less well resourced sports having greater diversity.

Perhaps the most significant outcome from the initiative was that it triggered reflection in NSO/Ds about structures and future direction. As is so often the case in inequitable systems, being confronted with the data can be a powerful point of leverage.

4.1.4 Other initiatives to support Listening More Deeply

Reframing Allyship as Belonging

From the very first narrative gathering workshops, it became clear that male allies could make a significant contribution to driving system change. To bring together the learning from the workshops with broader research and experience, the AIS commissioned a report into the ways that allies could contribute to supporting women coaches and therefore to improving representation in HP coaching. The report defined male allyship as "Prosocial practice of males supporting, sponsoring, and amplifying the voices and interests of women coaches, and standing up against discrimination." The report went on to say:

"Allyship is not simply a lack of overt sexist behaviours or even merely good intentions. Rather, it involves intentional and sustained behaviours and actions aimed at enhancing the representation and experiences of women coaches. Such behaviours and actions may affirm the value of women as coaches but may also be displayed when actively speaking up against behaviours and actions that negatively impact women in the HP coaching landscape."

While the focus of the work was on male allyship, the report suggested that "allyship" could be reframed as "belonging" to encourage a broader perspective across the sporting system. Doing this could create a stronger and more diverse base of support for inclusion.

The report concluded that "Sustaining the momentum that has been generated by the outstanding work of the WiHPC team is vital. Involving more men in this is a necessary extension". Whilst there appear to be many avenues that could be explored, the most salient extensions of this project in the near-term are outlined below.

Allyship: Next steps

1	Extend across the HP system	Undertake workshops and further motivational interviews with allies, potential allies and women who have experienced positive impacts from allyship to further build out the positive supporting case. This could be extended across all aspects of the HP system beyond coaching.
2	Allyship Archetypes	Create a series of allyship archetypes (promoting allyship and inhibiting it) that encapsulate all levels of the system.
3	Promote and incentivise cultures	Further explore opportunities to promote and incentivise cultures of inclusive leadership.
4	Networks of Allies	Build a network of allies, both across the sector and potentially within targeted sports or organisations.

Table 6: Next Steps recommendations from the Allyship Report.

4.2 Applying more leverage

4.2.1 Leveraging other AIS projects

One of the biggest points of leverage for the project was linkage to work that was happening in other parts of the AIS. Three of the most significant linkages were into the work that was happening to develop capability frameworks; the opportunity to integrate a Road Map (to help sports identify their current reality and articulate a plan to drive progress) with the organisational platform; and to continue the development of the Win Well Gender Equity Framework (a key priority within the HP 2032+ Strategic Plan).

Capability Framework

During the work on the Recruitment toolkit, it became apparent that there was no clearly defined set of capabilities that a sport could use to determine a coach's suitability for a HP role. Developing this type of capability framework would also allow coaches to identify their current strengths and weaknesses, and therefore determine their development needs. Capability frameworks are used very commonly in organisations outside sport in this way. The project team determined that developing a capability framework for HP coaching was an important point of leverage for driving more equitable outcomes in recruitment and also for supporting coaches to seek out development opportunities that were best suited to their current development needs. In designing the HP Coach Capability Framework, the project engaged with other work happening in the AIS. In collaboration with the team working on a HP Leadership Capability Framework, the WiHPC project team were able to make significant contributions to the development of a common model for describing capability development across sport. The HP Coach Capability Framework is now integrated into the HP Leadership Capability Framework.

WiHPC Road Map

Engagement with leaders in sporting organisations made it clear that many did not know where to apply their limited resources to affect change in their systems. Based on experience that members of the team had in other domains, work began on articulating the steps that sporting organisations could take in the form of a Road Map. The Road Map needed to include some form of self-assessment based on key areas of activity in an organisation and a series of levels of performance in each of those areas. The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) has been developing a series of resources for sporting organisations to enhance organisational capability and happily, the WiHPC team was able to collaborate with the Game Plan team to integrate the Road Map into the online platform. This provided significant leverage as it meant that every sport would have access to the WiHPC diagnostic tools and the suggested next steps through a system that they would already be using.

Win Well Gender Equity Framework

A key priority from Horizon 1 of the HP 2032+ Strategy was to create a framework to impact upon Gender Equity within the HP landscape. In 2021, the Gender Diversity project began with interviews of 20 women in leadership roles across the HP landscape and four working groups. Insights from these activities shaped early work of the project team. In 2024, AIS Performance team built upon existing work to create a draft framework to impact gender diversity across the HP landscape. The initial focus was on leadership roles such as:

- HP Directors
- Pathways Managers
- Performance Support Managers
- Wellbeing and Engagement Managers and
- Head Coaches.

As the WiHPC project team is embedded into the AIS Performance division of the ASC there is strong complementarity between the work of the two teams.

4.2.2 Researchers

From the beginning, the project has integrated insights from academic research into its work. Research articles were circulated amongst team members and a few academic frameworks such as LaVoi and Dutove's Ecological System Model (2012) were significant contributions to the design of the project. Researchers from leading Australian universities attended some of the workshops in the early stages of the project, and researchers were important contributors to the Showcase in November 2022.

In the Getting Traction phase, the project engaged researchers more proactively. Over twenty researchers, including members of the AIS research, science and innovation teams, attended a workshop where they had the opportunity to learn more about the project and to share their views on ways that academic research could contribute to project outcomes. The outcome of the workshop was a prioritised list of research topics that matched the researchers' areas of interest with identified issues. The list also contained suggestions on places where research could help in the evaluation of project outcomes such as toolkits.

4.3 Extending influence further into the system

By the beginning of 2024, the WiHPC project had well validated insights into the drivers of low participation. The Action Plan was very well received across the sector and there was acknowledgement of the value of the recommendations that had been made. From the work that had been done to this point, the project had created a pool of resources (especially toolkits) that could be adopted by organisations to support their work in driving change.

The opportunity was to drive awareness and application more broadly. This work was undertaken in several ways.

The project team ran sessions at the Women in Sport Conference (WiSC) held in Sydney in March 2024. The sessions were focussed on the Action Plan, with a focus on insights and recommendations. One of the sessions was presented by Helene Wilson from the New Zealand HP system, establishing common issues and promoting a discussion of ways that the New Zealand and Australian systems might work together. The Archetype toolkit activity was conducted which brought awareness of the work to a global audience.

Between April and November 2024, the project engaged with nearly 200 coaches and other HP staff through events organised by the State Institutes of Sport and State Sporting Organisations (SSOs); specifically the Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS), Queensland Academy of Sport (QAS) and South Australian Sports Institute (SASI). These events were the first time that the WiHPC project had engaged with State organisations. At these workshops, activities were conducted using the Archetypes toolkit and participants learnt about the insights and recommendations from the Action Plan. Each of the State Institutes then discussed the implications of the Action Plan for their organisation and worked on ways of driving improvement in the representation of women in their HP system.

4.3.1 Showcase 2024

The major system engagement in this phase was the second biennial showcase held in November 2024. The showcase was attended by more than 130 people, including coaches, HP directors and, very importantly, CEOs and Board Chairs from sporting organisations and the ASC.

The day included addresses from the ASC Board Chair (Kate Jenkins AO) and senior leaders at the ASC; updates on the WiHPC Project; and panel discussions with coaches, athletes and experts from outside the world of sport. The events on the day linked to the National Gender Equity in Sports Governance Policy which was launched in September 2024. This policy provided an overarching framework for sports and located the WiHPC project within a broader set of activities across sport.

One of the most significant sessions was a walk-through activity based around The Leaky Pipeline. In each of two spaces at The Hangar at Essendon, a large graphic of The Leaky Pipeline was affixed to the floor. At each of the pivotal points of the Pipeline, a station was established. Each station contained descriptions of the challenges that women coaches typically faced at this point of the coaching lifecycle. Each of the personas was based on (anonymised) stories that had been collected during the project. The validity of the personas was demonstrated by the number of coaches who approached the project team to ask if they were the basis for one of the personas – often several coaches asking about the same persona. The relevant toolkits, support and development opportunities that had been created through the WiHPC project were available when participants engaged at the station. A team of presenters (mostly women coaches) managed each station. Participants walked through the Pipeline in small groups, engaging with the presenters at each station to discuss the challenges and learn about the support that was available. The attendees then came together at mixed tables to reflect on what they had learned and the implications for their own sport.



Figure 17: Women Coach Personas, created from narratives and stories

Over the course of the day, participants had the opportunity to work collaboratively on some of the typical challenges faced by women coaches. In the afternoon, participants again engaged with the personas in an activity that encouraged them to use the resources and toolkits that had been developed to address specific issues that organisations faced in sporting women coaches during their development. (The personas were utilised in an ongoing way in the project due to the level of resonance with the women coaching community.)

The day also provided the opportunity for CEOs and Board Chairs to work together on the high level challenges that sports faced in creating gender equity in the HP system. Engagement with senior leaders is a critical element of driving change in the system. Sports need this high level support to drive cultural change and to allocate resources to make a difference in representation rates.

The major insights from the day were [grouped under the four levers identified through the project]:

Systems supporting diversity and belonging

- Systemic support and structural change remain priorities, involving the implementation of audit and tracking systems for women's coaching talent.
- Allocate sustainable funding linked to targets/KPIs to enable recruitment, development, and support, connecting individual and organisational systemic changes.
- Provide funding and logistical support for family travel to competitions and events to reduce coaching pipeline exits due to family challenges.

- Address recruitment challenges and implement strategies that promote transparency, inclusivity and support for new recruits.
- Enable leaders and organisations to prioritise, lead and achieve gender equity

Behaviours, culture and environment

- Strong community networks and peer support are essential for supporting women in coaching, especially during challenging times
- Consider providing dedicated wellbeing resources and support for coaches such as a wellbeing "buddy" system.
- Create a sustainable environment that is culturally supportive and psychologically safe to ensure everyone feels they belongs and can thrive.

Visibility and storytelling

- Increase visibility of women in high-performance coaching to provide role models and inspire others, demonstrating that advancement is possible.
- Develop a scalable framework that collaborates with state and national levels to support and reward organisations driving cultural transformation.
- Develop systems of accountability that profile and report progress

Strategies for development

- Ensure the development of women coaches remains a priority by assigning it to someone's portfolio.
- Create a framework and scalable solution to identify coaching talent and support their entry, development, retention and re-entry. This includes (a) offering retiring top athletes with people skills an accelerated pathway into high performance coaching and (b) integrating retention and re-entry strategies with recruitment strategies.
- Engage with coaches individually to understand their unique challenges, opportunities, expectations, and needs.
- Link individual level interventions with environmental and organisational support.

The insights from the Showcase validated the work of the project to that point, and provided further insights into ways that progress could be made. By engaging all levels of the HP system, it demonstrated the potential (and perhaps the necessity) for leaders of the HP to drive the change that was required.

Work continued on increasing the visibility of women coaches in the HP sporting system. Videos of coaches were filmed at workshops for distribution through the AIS website and through social media. Work began on filming a series of stories of women HP coaches, including coaches who had medal winning athletes at the Paris Olympics. The series, now known as "Stories from the Field", was released in 2025.

Following on from the engagement of people from HP environments outside sport in the early workshops, the project team continued to build relationships with leaders driving change in other sectors to listen to their experiences, share perspectives and gather insights. The AIS commissioned a small series of thought leadership pieces that linked insights from women driving change outside the sport system with the work that was happening within the WiHPC project. These pieces were published on social media and are available on the AIS website.

The WiHPC also engaged with the global HP sport and gender equity communities. The WiHPC Project Lead spoke at conferences and participated in events in New Zealand, Asia and Europe. This engagement created strong links with the global HP community, allowed lessons from those working in similar spaces overseas to be brought into the WiHPC project and provided opportunities for the team to share the great work that was being done in Australia. Events included:

4.3.2 Visibility

Date	Conference	Presentation Title
14-17 November 2022	8th IWG World Conference on Women & Sport, New Zealand.	Developing the next generation of women HP coaches (joint presentation).
25-29 September 2023	Brazilian Olympic Committee (COB) Annual EXPO, Brazil.	1. Athlete Development Frameworks (joint presentation). 2. Australian HP Coach Development. 3. Women in Sport 360 (panel).
29 November–3 December 2023	14th International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE) Global Coach Conference, Singapore.	1. Plugging the Leaky Pipeline, Women in HP Coaching (Keynote). 2. Women in HP coaching: A systems approach. 3. Inclusive design, learner centred, social and experiential learning examples in HP Sport in Australia (joint presentation).
18-20 November 2024	INSEP International Conference Women and Performance, Paris.	Leading system change for Women in HP Sport: The Leaky Pipeline Action Plan.
10-14 February 2025	Ex Aequo Program: Enhancing Women within HP Sport, Italy.	5 day program delivered at the AIS European Training Centre (ETC) in Gavirate, Italy.
23-26 June 2025	ASEAN Conference on Gender Equity in Sports, Malaysia.	A Global Lens: Empowering women in Coaching: Where are the women coaches?
30 September 2025	International Canoe Federation Slalom World Championships: Women's Symposium.	Leading system change for Women in High Performance Sport.

Table 7: International Conference engagements 2021-2025

4.4 Reviewing and learning

The insights from the Showcase validate the work that had been done in the project up to that point. The four levers (Behaviours, culture and environment; Systems supporting diversity and belonging; Strategies for development; Visibility and storytelling) were reinforced as a useful frame for the changes that were needed. In particular, feedback from Showcase participants called out the need for structural change and the value in allocating resources to support that change.

The Showcase deepened engagement with senior leaders in the sector. The participation of the ASC Chair and members of the board, along with CEOs provided an opportunity to share the insights from the project with those who have most influence on funding. This is particularly important given the recognition that making progress on some recommendations requires high level system support.

In most organisational environments, senior leaders are somewhat isolated from people on the front line. The Showcase provided an opportunity to make those connections, not just with those from their own sport, but a range of women coaches from across the HP system. The more of these opportunities that can be created, the better senior leaders will understand the lived experience of HP coaches.

Good progress was made on visibility and storytelling, both at the national level through the “Stories from the Field” initiative and on the international stage. Presentations and discussions at global HP events indicated that the work that the WiHPC project had done was the equal of any similar work that was being done in other HP systems, and judged by the comments of others, was in some instances world leading.

Working in collaboration with other AIS initiatives gave greater leverage to the work of the project and highlighted the opportunities to strengthen our work and connect the Action Plan and strategy for further collaboration.

The success of the gender mapping initiative showed the power of reliable data for holding a mirror up to the system. As noted above, being able to see the data caused some NSO/Ds to reflect on their current practices and seek to address imbalances.

Allyship report brought focus to the importance of allies and extended this to belonging which is consistent with insights from coach development and other parts of the project.

Some of the most significant progress was made on the coach development system. The project had produced a deep and detailed understanding of the impact of the current system on women coaches. The workshops that were conducted in 2024 developed a philosophy for inclusive learning programs and the principles for the design of these programs. A cohort of Coach Development Facilitators was emerging, and very importantly, there was a growing group of HP system leaders who understand and value the inclusive learning philosophy so that they can support its implementation.

By the end of the Getting Traction phase, the major building blocks for driving system change were in place:

- The activities at the Showcase demonstrated that the project had developed and curated the resources that were needed to support women coaches at each stage of their journey.
- Senior leaders from the HP system had been more effectively engaged with the project.
- Linkages with other AIS projects had provided ways to get greater leverage from the project’s work.
- Progress had been made on visibility. “Stories from the field” was well underway and on track to launch in 2025.
- The data from the gender mapping project provided the first consistent HP system view of the current state (and had prompted some sports to reflect and act).
- A system approach to allyship had been initiated.
- The Coach Development Facilitators and Leaders work had a clearly articulated philosophy and design principles to grow the network of facilitators and allow sports to create more inclusive programs.

All of these elements were ready to be scaled up.

However, the project team was also aware that there were still constraints that needed to be addressed.

- Reliable data was still not available at the system level.
- Many sports had not engaged deeply with the project. Even where coaches and HPDs were involved, support at senior levels in some cases was minimal.

Scaling up the elements that were in place and addressing these constraints would be the work of the next phase.

SECTION 5

SCALING UP



Scaling up

January 2025 to November 2025

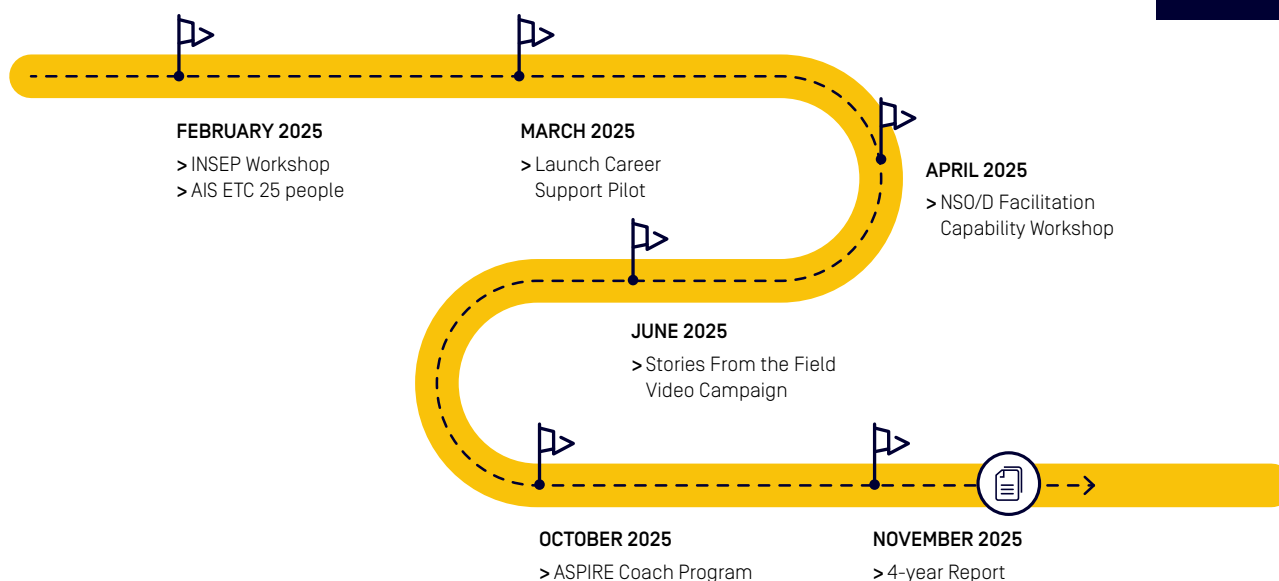


Figure 18: Scaling up (January 2025 to August 2025)

The Scaling Up phase was the opportunity to increase the impact of the work that had been done in the project. Some of the scaling happened through structured events, and as is always the case with complex change, some of the scaling happened through small nudges, connections and emergent activity (which we refer to as ripples).

5.1 Structured impact

5.1.1 Visibility

Work continued on the "Stories from the Field" campaign. Filming was completed and the videos were released over an eight week period starting in July 2025. The release occurred through the ASC website, supported by social media.

5.1.2 Coach development — Enhancing Capability

The work on coach development in the previous phases produced a successful model for an effective, inclusive facilitator training experience for organisations and individual facilitators. Participants on the pilot program rated the experience highly and provided suggestions for further improvements. These suggestions were incorporated into a revised program – Supporting and Developing Coaches in HP – that will be delivered twice during 2025. Overall, it is expected that the program will have enhanced the individual and organisational capability of over 80 coach facilitators from 32 sports and 41 organisations to deliver HP coach development programs that empower women to realise their potential in environments that are safe, challenging and inclusive.

In addition to the coach facilitator program, there is an ongoing piece of work to better understand the ideal placement of gendered and non-gendered development opportunities for women coaches over their coaching lifecycle. The work done so far, backed up by the findings of the SenseMaker surveys, maintains that gendered development opportunities for women must be maintained, but need to be better understood. Work is also continuing on determining the optimal mix of gendered/ non-gendered opportunities, and the ideal placement/timing of these opportunities. A draft toolkit has been produced and is in testing phase. The *Women only learning* toolkit provides considerations for developing women coaches and a checklist and planning framework to assist sports in designing gendered learning opportunities to produce maximum impact.

At this stage of the project, the project team is confident that there is an effective and inclusive program design and a repeatable program for developing coach facilitators who can influence the learning and development landscape for women coaches in HP. There will always be room for improvement and feedback from participants and facilitators will shape this ongoing refinement. Unfortunately, it remains the case that one of the biggest constraints is the lack of opportunities and support for women coaches after they have participated in development opportunities. Addressing this will be a critical element of the next stage of the project.

More detail on the coach development process is included in Section 6.

5.1.3 Coach development — Pipeline

The coach development process is a critical driver of change. However, the potential of this can only be realised if there are aspiring coaches who are able to participate in the program. If the HP system is to deliver more women coaches to fill podium and related roles by 2032, more women need to be included at the beginning of the development funnel now. A key initiative in this space in 2025 is the ASPIRE Coach Program, developed using three years of insights from the WiHPC project. The program is targeted at women coaches at the early stages of their HP coaching journey. One of the roadblocks that was identified through earlier work in the project was the challenge of needing nomination from a sport in order to participate in development opportunities. For a variety of reasons including embedded systemic bias, it has been difficult for aspiring women coaches to obtain these nominations, particularly when they are unknown at the national level. To address this, coaches were able to self-nominate for the program.

The program received 95 applicants from 43 sports, providing the basis for a healthy pipeline to support the journey to 2032. Every unsuccessful applicant has been offered a 6 month learning initiative, the ASPIRE Coach Talent Pool, which involves 47 coaches in virtual workshops to build connection, enhance skills and provide understanding of the HP landscape.

In a first for the Australian HP system, the facilitator team is all female and they are all women coaches. As well as providing excellent role models for the participants, the choice of program leaders also strengthens the cohort of women coach development facilitators. The 2025 program (being delivered for 38 coaches) will have six core facilitators and an extra six facilitators will join each day, providing visibility for the participants of women who have built successful coaching careers. Photos of each of the coaches will be added to the Leaky Pipeline graphic to illustrate career pathways, even though they are different in each sport. To support engagement with the global network, ten coaches from New Zealand will be attending, along with three expert facilitators.

5.1.4 Engaging with the global network

The Australian HP system is not alone in seeking to improve the representation of women in coaching roles. Many other countries are striving for similar goals. Members of the project team have engaged regularly with colleagues from other countries to share experiences, insights and learning.

A notable example of this was a program led by the AIS Performance team and hosted at the AIS European Training Centre (ETC) in Gavirate, Italy. France's National Institute of Sport, Expertise, and Performance (INSEP) initiated an Ex-Aqueo project with funding from Erasmus. They collaborated with the AIS and Sport Ireland Institute, recognised leaders in Gender Equity, to support their staff through a 5-day training program. In addition to the sharing of information, the goal of the engagement was aimed to support INSEP participants to build internal collaboration and create an Action Plan to impact gender equity within INSEP. Fifteen staff with diverse roles from within INSEP attended the workshop which was led by six HP Leaders from INSEP, AIS and Sport Ireland. The workshop leveraged frameworks, toolkits and processes from the work that had been done by the WiHPC project team, the AIS Female Performance and Health Initiative (FPHI) and complementary material from the Sport Ireland Institute.

5.2 Ripples

Complex systems are always evolving. Every intervention in the system will have impacts and consequences, some intended, some unintended. Even little nudges can have a profound impact. People sometimes liken this to dropping pebbles in a pond, where the ripples wash out from the initial point of contact and can have an impact some distance away. As the waves from different interventions interact, they can create patterns and produce changes in ways that might not have been foreseen initially. Part of the art of working with a complex system is to look for these ripples and seek to scale up the ones that are having a positive impact, even if that positive impact was not planned. The following section describes some of the positive ripples that have emerged from the interventions created by the WiHPC project.

5.2.1 Individual and organisational impact

One of the positive ripples from the early workshops was the impetus for individuals and individual sports to start to drive change. The table below captures some of the ripples that the project team is aware of, although there are almost certainly others.

RIPPLES: Organisational Impact Studies

NSO/D	Initiative triggered from the WiHPC Project activities	Dates
Australian Athletics	Trigger: A cascading series of programs over 4 years was initiated by Di Huxley, Performance Coach Developer at Australian Athletics [AA] after attending the very 1st WiHPC Women's Coaching Workshop in March 2022. They are: • Women in HP Coaching Initiative, 2022. • Women's Mentorship Program, 2023-24. • Women's Coaching Conference, 2025 • Women in HP Coaching Initiative, cohort 2, 2025	2022-ongoing
Swimming Australia	Trigger: Gary Barclay, General Manager Performance Pathway for Swimming Australia initiated contact with the WiHPC project team and was engaged in the first Showcase and subsequently the Pipeline Mapping working group in early 2023. Gary reported that this afforded him a better understanding of the coach pipeline and barriers for women coaches. A review of review of current interventions for women in coaching in Swimming and resulted in the following: • Review of previous Women in Leadership programs (2021). • A Nationwide Survey for coaches, specifically women coaches. • Launch of the W32 Program (annual program for aspiring women coaches to transition into pathway coaching). • A targeted approach to support women coaches stepping into National teams. • A National Women in Coaching Strategy, 2025.	2021-ongoing
Rowing Australia	Trigger: Rowing Australia (RA) received two consecutive Women Leaders in Sport (WLIS) Grants which supported leadership development for women coaches and a targeted toolkit for clubs to support gender equity. RA supported the 1st WiHPC Showcase and have continued to build a targeted strategy to support women coaches across the sport. They have also held targeted 1 day workshops for leading women HP coaches (2024) and 4 women lead a Community of Practice to support next generation of women coaches.	2020-ongoing
Squash Australia	Trigger: Squash Australia (SA) have been actively engaged with the WiHPC project since the early days. Most significantly, they shared a case study of targeted support for maternity leave for key coaching staff (2022). After attending the HP Coach Development Workshop Program in 2024 Shaun McEachin, the National Lead, Sport Development for SA initiated a review of their coach education framework utilising the ICCE Quality in Coaching (QIC) Model. A key factor identified in this review was a targeted need to address gender equity in coaching in squash. This continued into ongoing work within the organisation.	2022-ongoing
Diving Australia	Trigger: After attending the first WiHPC workshop in March 2022 Vyninka Arlow, National Pathway Coach for Diving Australia (DA) created a community of practice (CoP) for women coaches working in the pathway for diving. The "Diving GALS Gang" meets regularly and has provided targeted support and mentorship for the next generation of women coaches. They are showcased in our case studies and the impact is highlighted by two coaches now leading a State diving program.	2022-ongoing

NSO/D	Initiative triggered from the WiHPC Project activities	Dates
Snow Australia and OWIA	Trigger: Snow Australia and the Olympic Winter Institute of Australia (OWIA) have been collaborating to build a united coaching framework. After attending the HP Coach Development Workshop Program (2023) they have finalised a framework that aligns with the HPCD Coach Development Framework and maintains the uniqueness of winter sports. This work continues to build and align.	2023-ongoing
AIS ETC and INSEP	Trigger: Fiona de Jong is the AIS Lead of the European Training Centre (ETC). She led the INSEP (Institut National du Sport, de l'Expertise et de la Performance) submission to Erasmus. This resulted in the following activities: • An Ex Aequo Project for INSEP was initiated in collaboration with Sport Ireland, Sport Ireland Institute (SII) and the AIS (July 2024–February 2025). • AIS and SII presentations at the INSEP Women in Performance Conference (November 19 and 20, 2024) • A five-day training program for INSEP staff and addition guests (26 total) on gender equity in HP (February 10-14, 2025).	2024-25

Table 8: Ripples at the Organisational Level



RIPPLES: Individual Impact Studies

NSO/D	Initiative triggered from the WiHPC Project activities	Dates
Boccia Australia	Trigger: Bruna Accurso (Boccia Coach) attended the 1st AIS Experiential Learning Program in 2023, an early initiative of the WiHPC project. She was a carer/coach for Boccia. After the first Pre-Tour workshop, she approached her sport to create a part time coaching role in the pathways area. Bruna has now transitioned into a fulltime role as a National Generation 2032 Coach (2025-26).	2023-ongoing
Table Tennis Australia (Para)	Trigger: Throughout 2021-2024 Maggie Meng, National Para Pathways Coach for Table Tennis Australia was undertaking targeted professional development. An Individual Coach Development Plan (ICDP) had been designed and developed, providing upskilling in identified areas connected to her future role as Head Coach. This was part of a deliberate coaching succession plan designed by Para Table Tennis. In consultation with the WiHPC project lead, Maggie has been engaged in 1:1 executive coaching and the Women's Summit Pilot program and the Women's Talent Coach Program. These have provided her a targeted network of support stepping into the Head Coach role at the beginning of 2025.	2022-ongoing
Part Adelaide Football Club ALFW and Golf Australia	Trigger: Lauren Arnell, Head Coach of Port Adelaide Football Club AFLW team was involved in a workshop in 2023 with the WiHPC project lead. This initiated ongoing conversations and engagement over subsequent months. When Lauren was expecting her first child, the project lead connected her with Golf Australia National Pathways Coach, Stacey Peters. Golf Australia had showcased their maternity leave and travel support for women coaches through both Showcases and our case studies. Lauren articulated the invaluable support she gained (as a first-time mum) through a simple dinner conversation provided "some of the best advice" for a woman coach undertaking maternity leave in a critical leadership coaching position.	2023-ongoing

Table 9: Ripples at the Individual Level**5.2.2 Cross sport collaboration**

Sometimes it is the connections between sports that create the ripples. Following their participation in many WiHPC activities and workshops, leaders from swimming, rowing and athletics were invited to connect through an NSO/D collaboration group. It had become increasingly obvious that Rowing, Athletics and Swimming were driving change within their sports. The sports were at similar maturity points in this process and had a great deal to gain by sharing and potentially collaborating with each other to continue to drive change for women in HP coaching. With the view to create a proof of concept, the group meets quarterly (twice face to face) and the focus is very much on the needs of the group and the learning and support that they can provide for each other. The objective has been to identify opportunities to collaborate, share current strategies and outline potential projects where they could work together. They have similar but different challenges and are working together on plans and interventions. Two initial projects have been identified: exploring the impact of mentorship; and creating purposeful interventions to enhance the power of allyship for supporting women coaches.



SECTION 6

DEEP DIVE: REALISING THE POTENTIAL FROM INTEGRATED, INCLUSIVE COACH DEVELOPMENT



One of the most significant levers for change in the representation of women in HP coaching is the way that coaches are developed. The progress that has been made through the WiHPC project is a notable example of the power of taking a complexity based approach to change. While the details of influencing the HP coach development process have been included in the sections above, it is useful to bring this narrative together to provide a start-to-finish view, and to demonstrate the impact that this way of working can have.

This deep dive also highlights the challenges that lie ahead in the next phase of the WiHPC Project. The work that has been done so far produced an extremely high quality program that has been successfully piloted and is now iterated to impact upon Education Managers, HP and Pathways Managers. The work that has been done so far also brings to attention the significant systemic challenges that must be addressed, including structural barriers that limit opportunity; deeply entrenched bias that denies women roles that they are more than capable of succeeding in; and bad behaviour that forces talented women coaches to leave the system.

The WiHPC project has been led by the AIS HP Coach Development Team, and developing coaches has always been a priority for this project. Initial work showed a stark contrast in the experiences of women in development programs. Many women coaches spoke about the lack of development opportunities and the unsuitability of programs that they had the opportunity to attend. Others spoke in glowing terms of the development that had taken part in – the connections that they had made, the reflective practice that led to significant moments of development; and the support that they received from others in their sport.

It was clear from this initial work that coach development was a significant point of leverage, but a detailed and nuanced understanding of the system was needed to identify opportunities and create sustainable change.

One of the Working Pods created as part of the project in 2023 was designed to map the coaching pipeline across a range of sports. From this work, it was clear that there was no one “coaching pathway”. Not everyone wants to be a HP coach, and not everyone has the capability and the motivation to be a HP coach. It is an intense, highly competitive environment that is rapidly changing. The financial rewards are usually not high (especially compared to roles with similar skill requirements in the corporate world).

Development Experiences

During this work, there were numerous discussions of development experiences for coaches. It was clear that there were significant differences in development processes, and therefore in development experiences, across the sector. There was little sharing of practices, no consistent language for describing the coach development workforce, and no data on the make up of that workforce.

Development Pathways

Furthermore, in many sports, the development pathway is opaque if not invisible. It is unclear to developing coaches how they can make progress with their coaching careers.

Coach development often focused on technical accreditation pathways. In sports with predominantly male coaching cohorts, even accreditation workshops can be daunting or intimidating for women.

A comment that crystallised the thinking of the group came from a senior administrator who had been a HP coach. She told a story about physical safety, describing where in her neighbourhood she felt safe to run compared to where her husband felt safe to run. At the end of the story, she made this point: “Women are always more careful about the spaces that they walk in to. Are HP coach development environments safe spaces for women to walk in to?”

There is little understanding of informal coach development that is needed for coaches to take a HP leadership role.

6.1 Addressing recommendations from the Action Plan

By the time the Action Plan was prepared in late 2023, the potential for improving representation through driving changes in the Coach Development process was clear. The thinking was articulated in two recommendations within the Action Plan:

5. *Establish and sustain a Women's Talent Development Framework led by the AIS in alignment with the Workforce Capability Framework*
6. *Establish and sustain a National Network of Coach Development Facilitators as led by the AIS to enhance development and ongoing support of women coaches.*

The project to address this recommendation was conducted during 2024 and 2025. (Although some of this work is described above, it is included in summary form here to provide a clear sense of the project flow.)

The Coach Development Facilitation Project

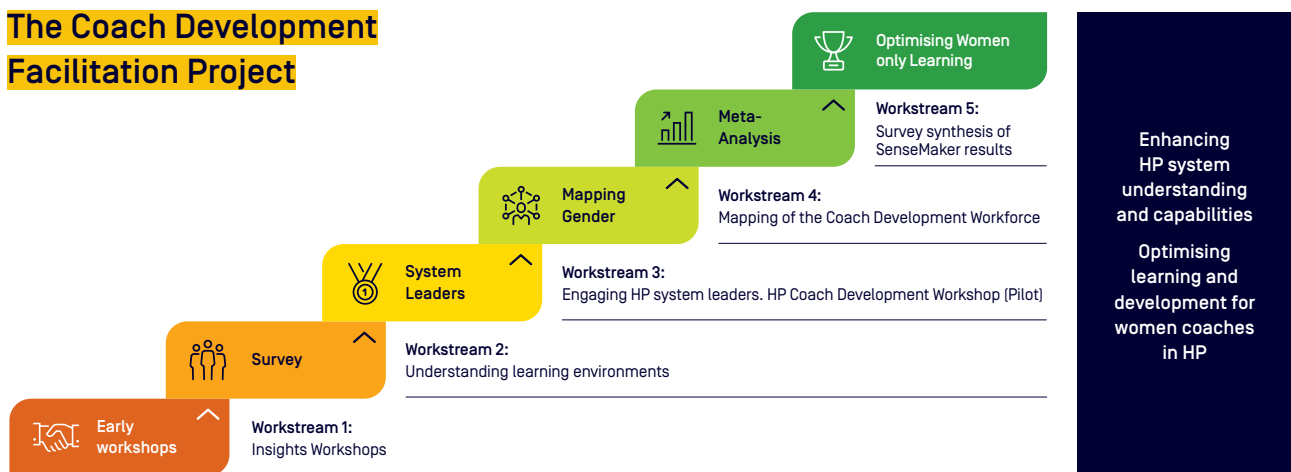


Figure 19: The Coach Development Facilitation Project

6.1.1 Workstream 1: Insights workshops

The first phase involved listening to the voices of over 100 coaches and coach developers across four workshops. The detailed synthesis of the output is contained in *Insights and Actions from National Workshops April 2024*. At a high level, the workshops:

- Articulated the critical components for impact when developing a Strategy in HP coach development.
- Set out the draft principles for Creating Optimal Learning Environments for Women Coaches.
- Developed a more nuanced understanding the role of the facilitator in developing HP coaches, particularly women coaches.

6.1.2 Workstream 2: Understanding learning environments

A SenseMaker survey was conducted in mid-2024 to better understand the learning environments provided by NSO/Ds and NINs in HP sport, and the impact of these learning environments on the women coaches.

The survey provided information about the experience of coaches, as well as the elements that were critical for the development process, including:

- The importance of fostering community and networks, most of which continued to provide support well beyond the program.
- How critical it was for coaches to make connections through face-to-face programs, and the value of storytelling, and mentorship in these settings.
- The way that coaching becomes part of an individual's identity, and the power of providing the coach with the chance to authentically describe and shape their own leadership style.
- The power of reflection as a leadership practice, for athletes and coaches, and the importance of incorporating reflection into coach development.

By the time that preparation began for the 2nd Biennial Showcase in 2024 the WiHPC Project team had a very solid understanding of the needs of women coaches at each stage of their development and had developed deeper understanding of interventions available to support their needs. The Leaky Pipeline walk-through activity (described in Section 4) demonstrated what was available at different stages. The table activity in the afternoon of the Showcase used personas of coaches at different stages to highlight their different needs. Through these activities, coaches and leaders in the HP system could see the tools that were available to support coaches throughout their career journeys.

6.1.3 Workstream 3: Engaging HP system leaders

A missing piece was people to implement a more inclusive approach to coach development: organisational leaders who understood and supported the importance of an inclusive approach to delivery; and facilitators who were capable of delivering programs in a way that welcomed women and supported their learning in an inclusive environment. The work that had been done demonstrated the importance and power of the coach development facilitator in creating a safe learning environment. The project team addressed this through the design and delivery of a three-day Coach Development Facilitators Program to enhance facilitation skills and build capability of HP workforce to support women coaches. The program included two newly developed e-learning courses prior to the workshop, facilitated in conjunction with the ASC Community Coaching and Officiating Team. All participants developed a six-month Action Learning Plan to consolidate impact.

The program was evaluated through a two-day workshop six months later, designed to consolidate concepts, share individual and organisational learning action plans. Further iterations are planned to refine the program and to continue to build organisational support and coach development

capability in the HP system. Two further iterations of the program are planned for 2025. The intention is twofold: to enhance the capability of HP leaders to optimise support and development of HP coaches; and to cultivate a network of Coach Development Facilitators who understand how to create psychologically safe environments where all participants, and women in particular, are able to build their capability and develop their authentic voices as coaches and leaders. While the focus here has been on *women* coaches, it became clear that what matters is creating psychologically safe, inclusive environments that will benefit everyone.

6.1.4 Workstream 4: Gender Mapping of the HP Coach Development Workforce

Another significant missing piece was data on the make up of the HP coach development community. As noted above, not only was there no data, but there was also no common language for describing the roles. In early 2024, the WiHPC project team embarked on a project to map roles to a common framework and to collect data using that framework. The role holders and responsibilities are outlined in the table below.

Coach Development Role	Tasks
Decision Maker	Responsible for the design and implementation of the HP Coach. Development Strategy including program pedagogical design and operational implementation.
Program Convener	Responsible for the HP Coach Development Program delivery. facilitation. This role is not a Subject Matter Expert (SME) rather an overall Program Facilitator focusing on operational implementation.
Subject Matter Expert [SME] [Frontline Facilitator]	Responsible for the HP Coach Development Program delivery. facilitation as a Subject Matter Expert (SME). This role delivers content related to a specific module within a course or program.
Supporting Coaches in Practice [SCIP] [Frontline Facilitator]	Responsible for supporting development of HP coaches in situ, i.e. Supporting Coaches in Practice.

Table 10: HP Coach Development Roles

Email engagement and 1:1 interview were undertaken with 21 HP funded sports. The main themes from the analysis of the data from 21 sports were:

1. There are significant gender imbalances in the Coach Development workforce – 65% of Coach Developers are male, and this increases to 70% in Decision Maker roles.
2. Entry level roles are slightly more diverse.
3. There are significant variations between sports.
4. The process of mapping itself triggered internal reflection within NSOs and NSO/Ds about their structures and future direction.
5. There is a desire among NSOs and NSO/Ds to elevate capability development as a priority alongside improving gender equity, recognising that inclusive environments are shaped by the behaviours of the people who lead them.

Work on collecting data is ongoing and will continue to provide insights, and also hopefully will continue to drive reflection.

6.1.5 Workstream 5: Survey synthesis of SenseMaker results

An analysis of the data gathered through the SenseMaker surveys highlights the systemic and behavioural changes that are needed before women can achieve the roles that they deserve. [More detail from the completed report can be found in the **Appendix 2.**]

The summary report concluded that:

- **Even when development programs were impactful, opportunities to apply that learning were often absent or severely limited.** Participants, especially women, repeatedly highlighted the lack of access to roles, resources, and visibility as barriers that curtailed real-world application of program insights.
- Program participants described profound personal growth and positive learning experiences, this was frequently set against the backdrop of a system in which **gender bias, behavioural misconduct, and subtle exclusion remain common, and often go unchallenged.**
- Structural barriers—insufficient pathways, inequitable resourcing, opaque hiring practices, and cultural gatekeeping—**meant that for many participants, development outcomes remained latent potential rather than realised performance.** This disconnection between capability and opportunity was frequently cited as a source of frustration, disengagement, or even withdrawal from coaching altogether.

- While participants felt more capable, more connected, and more authentic as leaders, many found that the broader **systems—policies, pathways, leadership structures, funding models—remained fundamentally unchanged.** For development to be meaningful and sustainable, many argued, it must be paired with structural reform and cultural evolution across the sporting ecosystem.

The insights from the collation of findings are clear. **It is imperative to ensure that activities that develop individuals must be directly integrated with the organisations where the coaches work, and the ecosystem they are connected to.** It is time to focus on the system, not just the individuals.

6.1.6 Workstream 6: Optimising opportunities for women only learning

Insights from narratives, workshops and the surveys have highlighted the need to deepen understanding of learning environment options for women. Gendered programs for women play a unique and necessary function that should be preserved. However, there is a significant lack of understanding of ‘who’ will benefit from a given learning environment and where such opportunities should be positioned to optimize their impact.

Many of the organisational women only learning programs are a result of grant funding. In some cases, this creates episodic interventions which might create short term value. However, unless the background work has been done to link the development opportunity with a longer term development plan, the impact cannot be sustained. Ideally this individual development plan is linked to a longer term organisational capability plan which (amongst other things) addresses representation of women at elite levels. At the very least, a simple conversation needs to be had with the women coaches themselves to locate the development program to broader opportunities. Anecdotally, this rarely occurs.

A new toolkit has been developed, providing a practical checklist for organisations to enable the optimisation of learning and development programs for women coaches.

Deliberate planning, design and delivery will not only allow us to maximise impact and optimise funding, but it can also build a more sustainable impact across the HP workforce. A combination of the timing, coaching capabilities, the environment and the connection to the organisational landscape are critical elements.

6.2 Weaving the threads together – Identifying, developing and retaining Talent through a National Framework

The WiHPC Project has been able to make significant progress in the area of HP coach development. By listening to the voices in the system, an important point of leverage was identified (coach development environments were not designed to support aspiring women coaches to realise their potential). The project team worked with people in the system to design and pilot a solution that addressed this issue (an inclusive coach development program that enhances organisational capability and creates a network of Coach Development Facilitators who are trained to deliver the program).

The project team identified another point of leverage (the lack of data on the make up of the current coach development workforce) and made progress in this area through the initial survey. In addition to providing an understanding of the scope of the challenge, the data collection process encouraged reflection in NSO/Ds and NINs that will drive change.

Work in these areas is not finished. The design of the three day workshop will continue to be refined through further iterations. The network of Coach Development Facilitators will continue to grow. Gathering further data will improve understanding.

This progress is significant and will support more women to realise their potential as HP coaches, but there are other major constraints that need to be addressed.

6.2.1 The National Talent Development Framework for Women Coaches

For the implementation of strategies to be effective and sustainable, what is required is adoption of a systemic framework for women HP coaches that entices, supports the entry of Development Coaches into HP coaching. It needs to enhance skills of all women coaches throughout the coaching pipeline (Performance Pathways Coaches, Transition, Senior HP Coaches and Head Coaches) with appropriate and targeted learning and support programs according to their developmental needs. And it needs to maintain connections and sustain talent development by supporting exits and energising coaches with retention strategies.

The Coaching Pipeline

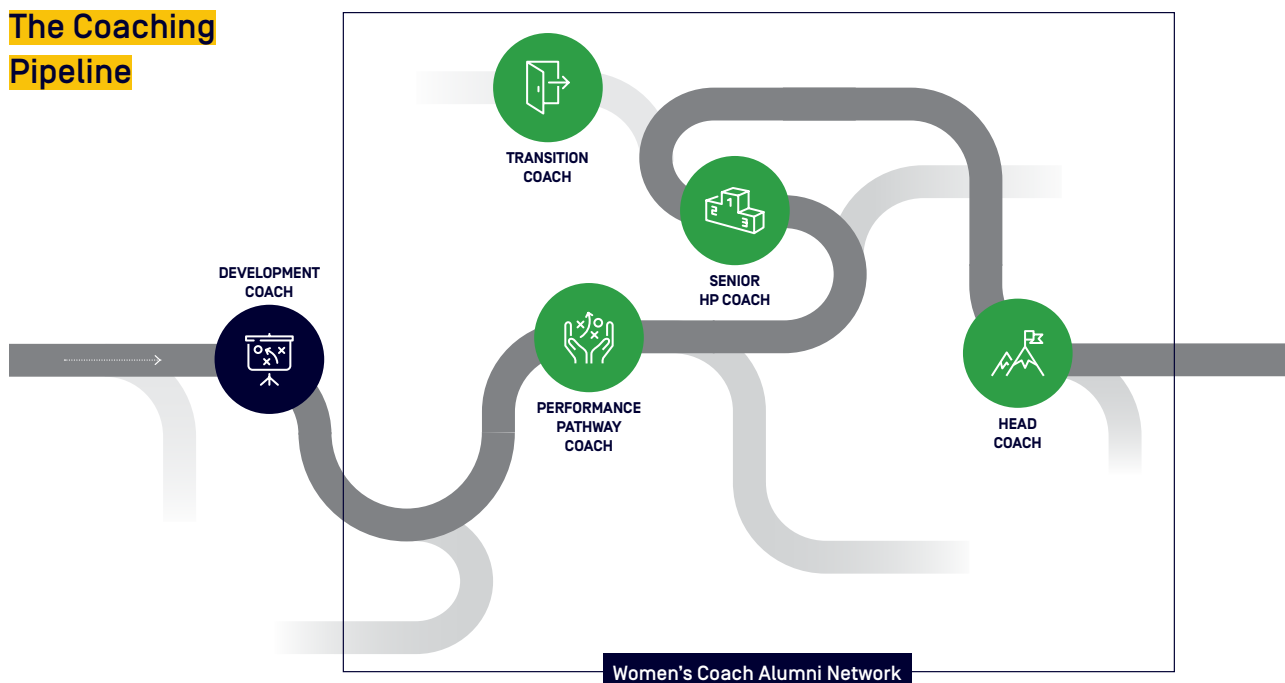


Figure 20: The HP Coaching Pipeline

A National Talent Development Framework for Women Coaches provides the following:

1. A visible learning pathway that will highlight development opportunities and help create a discernible, sustainable plan that outlines a potential learning journey for women coaches.
2. Connected community building that can be achieved through an alumni network enhancing connections, mentorship, allyship, and sponsorship opportunities among women coaches.
3. Targeted learning opportunities that will provide specialised learning at crucial stages in the coaching pathway, bridging gaps between existing programs and highlighting priorities to enhance key capabilities.
4. Organisational learning opportunities that are connected to the broader HP learning and development landscape, optimising cross sport collaboration and the AIS programs.
5. Workforce capability building that will be supported by a foundational capability framework which will strengthen the coach development workforce's ability to effectively support women coaches.
6. A broadening talent pool that will enhance skills and identify hidden talent within the women's coaching community.
7. A commitment to matching programmatic development opportunities with opportunities to apply the learning in practice.

More detail regarding the National Talent Development Framework for Women Coaches can be found in the [Appendix 3](#).

6.2.2 Organisational Implementation

Even if the coach development process enhances capability of individuals who are capable of podium coach positions, other factors in the current system mean that the desired level of representation of women in HP coaching will not be achieved. Without the organisational understanding of the value of inclusive design, initiatives will not be sustainable. As mentioned above, coach development processes that allow women to achieve their potential require organisational capability and commitment at the system level.

Aligning Development

Implementation of a national systemic framework requires organisational commitment to aligning development opportunities with the organisational environment. This involves connecting individual learning and development (L&D) opportunities with organisational support such as mentoring and a pathway to timely, practical application of the skills that have been learnt. This is a critical step for avoiding developmental dead ends.

Examples of this would be:

- Managing behaviours in the Daily Training Environment.
- Setting standards for productive, respectful interpersonal relationships.
- Role modelling of desired behaviours by organisational leaders.
- Establishing and communicating clear career pathways, with mentoring and support from HPDs and other senior leaders.

From a systemwide perspective, it requires adopting a fundamental principle of directly engaging organisational leaders, mentors and managers with the targeted programs delivered for women coaches. Examples of this would be

- Training mentors to support women coaches on tour (such as the ELP Program) or in situ.
- Engaging managers within longitudinal development programs to deepen understanding of learning outcomes, challenges of women and implementation of practice.

Building Capability

Understanding and supporting HP coaches, specifically women coaches need to be prioritised by organisations. Engaging HP Managers, Education decision makers and HP facilitators in the Coach Development Facilitator workshop will build internal capability for each organisation. It has been demonstrated that two people (ideally decision maker and facilitator) from an organisation attending the Coach Development Facilitator workshop program builds a shared perspective between facilitator and decision maker which is important for establishing sustainable ways of working within an organisation. Sports also need to create connections between national and state decision makers to ensure consistency of approach.

Understanding the position within the Leaky Pipeline

When seeking to plan, design and deliver a targeted program for women coaches, it is critical to identify where the program or intervention is positioned upon the Leaky Pipeline, and ensure you are providing the most appropriate learning program for the target group. The graphic below demonstrates the position of the AIS HP Coach Development Programs throughout the pipeline.

- The ASPIRE Coach Program (pilot) is for early entry coaches,
- the Experiential Learning Program (ELP) is for Performance Pathway Coaches undertaking their first international benchmark tour.
- The Women's Talent Program is for experienced National and NIN Head Coaches.
- The Career Support Program (Pilot) provides targeted support for transitioning women coaches throughout the pipeline.

Interventions and Programs to leverage gender equity change across the coaching lifecycle



Figure 21: AIS Interventions and programs throughout the Leaky Pipeline

In addition to these structured programs, mentorship programs have enormous impact upon individuals throughout the pipeline, providing both *support and enhancing development*. There are many examples of effective mentorship programs across the HP system. More needs to be done in the next phase to share these approaches and create a sustainable mentoring model.

To optimise system impact, encouraging organisations to map their interventions across the pipeline can ensure clarity and promote cross sport collaboration. There are many sports delivering programs that impact. What is also evident is the right learning and development needs to be targeted to selected individuals at the right time, within the right environment. The graphic below outlines the 4Rs. Right place + Right Time + Right Coach + Right Environment.



Figure 22: Right place, Right Time, Right Coach, Right Environment.

Optimising Funding

Program funding needs to be refined so that funding for individuals is tied to accountability for leaders to support program participants before, during and after development experiences. HPDs should commit to taking time to listen and support coaches to deepen understanding of individual strengths and needs. Application and support for women coaches needs to be more than enabling and supporting access to learning.

From a systems approach, funding can be optimised by connecting organisations who have similar needs and are conducting similar initiatives. We can also link funding for L&D programs to organisation gender equity audits and policy development (such as the Women Leaders in Sport (WLIS) Executive programs.

6.2.3 Addressing underlying systemic issues: behaviours and bias

The sections above set out processes, programs and frameworks that are needed to create an inclusive coach development model which will enable women coaches to thrive. Implementing this model will be a significant enabler for increasing the representation of women in HP coaching.

However, impact of the model will be seriously compromised if the disrespectful behaviours and gendered bias that confront women coaches are not addressed at all levels of the system.

The important work to realise the value of inclusive coach development is to fix the behaviours in the system.

SECTION 7

WIHPC PROJECT OUTCOMES



7.1 What progress has been made?

There are many lenses through which the outcomes of the WiHPC project can be viewed. Consistent with the approach that has informed the project, it is important to start with the voices of the women coaches – Have they been listened to? Have their concerns been presented accurately?

The next lens would be whether the concerns of the coaches have been synthesised in a way that allows them to be acted upon. Having done that synthesis, the next lens would be whether action has been taken on these levers for change – have initiatives been put in place to make progress on these issues?

Another lens is through the accountability mechanisms that were put in place as a result of this work. The first accountability mechanism was the scorecard which was released with the Action Plan – has the project delivered on its commitments. The second was the set of recommendations from the Action Plan – has the HP system addressed the system levers that had been identified. A related lens here is the engagement of the HP system with the project – which sports have been engaged and at what levels?

The final lens is results – has all of this work in the project made a difference to the level of representation of women in HP coaching?



7.1.1 The WiHPC project has accurately documented the issues faced by women coaches

As described earlier in the report, the work of the WiHPC project has taken a complexity-driven approach. One of the foundations of this way of working is to listen to the voices of the people in the system. Over the course of the project, we have engaged with 370 coaches and 300 others from the Australian HP system in 34 workshops. The workshops were designed to be psychologically safe spaces where people felt comfortable to share their stories. We have a high level of confidence that the views that we have collected are authentic and comprehensive.

Over the course of the project, more than 330 people have responded to surveys. The surveys were voluntary and anonymous. Again, we have a high level of confidence that the views that we have collected are authentic and comprehensive. There will be value in continuing to conduct surveys at appropriate times, and it is always useful to get more responses, but we are confident that our findings are robust.

Over the course of the project, the synthesis of issues faced by women coaches has been tested in multiple settings, including at the two national Showcases. The engagement with workshop sessions and anecdotal feedback supports the authenticity of the findings. Similarly, feedback from international presentation confirms the validity of the results.

7.1.2 The WiHPC project has identified the levers for change

The levers for change have been captured in two complementary ways: the Levers of Change diagram and the Leaky Pipeline.

Strategic Levers for change

Over a series of workshops, the insights into the issues faced by women coaches were synthesised to the four key levers that needed to be addressed to drive change. Early versions of the diagram included only the four levers. In progressing the work, it became clear that the diagram also needed to call out the criticality of leadership support if change is to happen.



Figure 23: The Four Strategic Levers of Change

These levers were a foundational element of the Action Plan and shaped the work of the project from that point.

The Leaky Pipeline

When working in complex environments, it is always important to map the system. A critical mapping for the WiHPC project was the Leaky Pipeline. The Leaky Pipeline diagram was the foundation for the Action Plan and became an anchor for the project. At the 2024 Showcase, the Leaky Pipeline was the mechanism for bringing together all of the work that had been done to address the career pain points for women coaches. It allowed participants to see and interact with the complete set of solutions that were available for HP organisations to increase the representation of women in HP coaching.

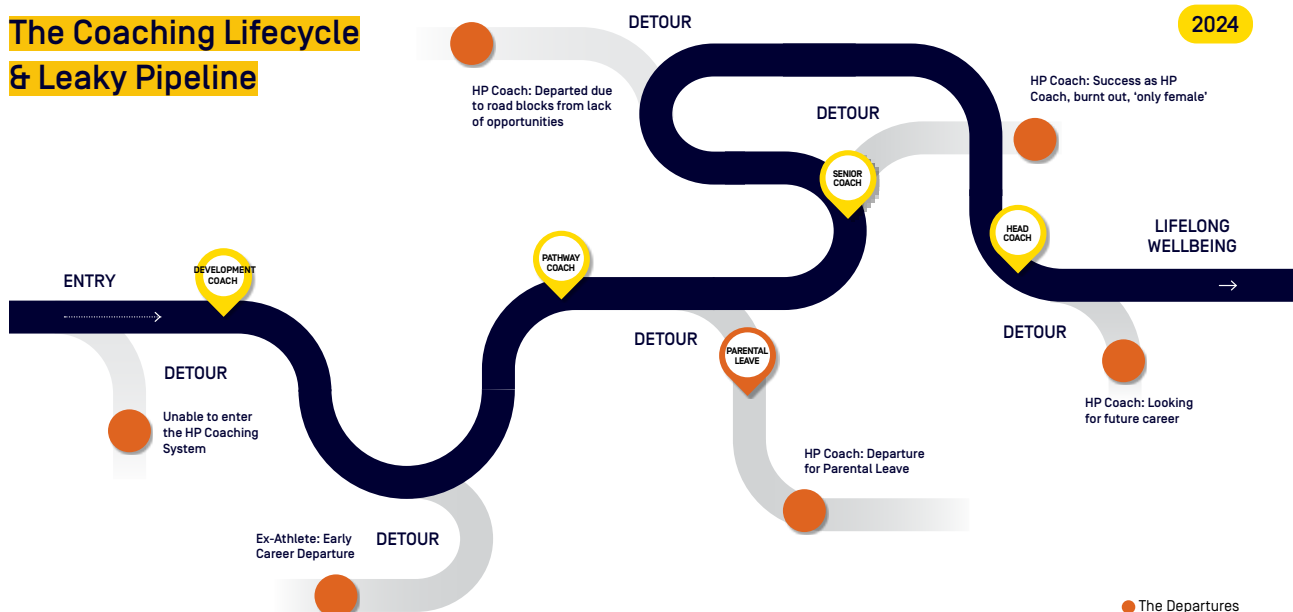


Figure 24: The Leaky Pipeline

Again, workshop, Showcase and international conference feedback supported the validity of these two ways of framing.

7.1.3 The WiHPC project has delivered tools and solutions for each of the levers for change

Having identified the levers for change, the next responsibility of the project was to design solutions for addressing the levers. As described above, many of these solutions already existed in the HP system and were documented through the Bright Spots workshops and the Working Pod process. Refer to the table below that maps the interventions, activities and programs across the four strategic levels for change.

Strategic lever	 Behaviours, culture and environment Targeted strategies, initiatives and actions to enable organisations to understand and influence respectful cultures, embed coach wellbeing and foster behaviours that positively impact upon the experience for Women in HP Coaching.	 Systems supporting diversity Specific strategies, initiatives, and actions to assist organisations establish both formal and informal workplace structures that foster inclusivity. This includes promoting transparent recruitment processes, implementing flexible work arrangements, ensuring job security, fair compensation, and providing equal opportunities to support all HP coaches.	 Strategies for development A visible and robust plan or framework that supports the learning pathway for women coaches. Development of thoughtful and proactive coach development to build a skilled and sustainable coaching talent pool across the HP system.	 Visibility and storytelling Create a platform to amplify the presence of allies and leaders spearheading change, share success stories – the 'bright spots' enhance networks and communities, and build accountability throughout the HP system.
Toolkits	• Archetype Toolkit • Parental Leave Toolkit	• Recruitment toolkit • Parental Leave Toolkit • Hidden Talent Pool Toolkit	• AIS Mentorship Guide • AIS WiHPC Mentorship Toolkit • Networks and Communities Toolkit • Women only Learning Toolkit	• Improving visibility, sharing success
Initiatives	• Allyship Archetypes • Cultural Diagnostics • Wellbeing Health Check • Wellbeing Measures Project	• Allyship Archetypes • Coach Development Facilitation • Career Support Program (Pilot) • AIS Female Performance and Health Initiative	• Allyship Archetypes • Coach Development Facilitation • Career Support Program (Pilot)	• Stories from the Field • AIS Photography Project
Frameworks	• HP Coach Capability Framework • National Talent Development Framework for Women Coaches	• HP Coach Capability Framework • National Talent Development Framework for Women Coaches	• HP Coach Development Framework • National Talent Development Framework for Women Coaches	
Programs	• Women Leaders in Sport Organisational Grants (WLIS) • AIS Respectful Behaviours Program	• Women's Summit Program (Pilot) • Women's Talent Coach Program • ASPIRE Coach Program (Pilot) • Women Leaders in Sport Organisational Grants (WLIS)	• Experiential Learning Program • Women's Summit Program (Pilot) • Women's Talent Coach Program • ASPIRE Coach Program (Pilot) • Women Leaders in Sport Individual Grants and Workshops (WLIS)	
Project reports	• WiHPC Leaky Pipeline Action Plan • 10 Recommendations • WiHPC Mid-Year Report 2024 • 2nd Biennial Showcase Report and recommendations • Allyship as Belonging Report	• Leaky Pipeline Action Plan • WiHPC Mid-Year Report 2024 • Women's Summit Pilot	• Leaky Pipeline Action Plan • Optimising Facilitation • HP Coach Development Facilitation • HP Workforce Gender Mapping • Allyship as Belonging Report	• Leaky Pipeline Action Plan • 2nd Biennial Showcase Report and recommendations • SenseMaker Insights Reports
In progress	• Road Map to Action	• Road Map to Action • Inclusive travel arrangements • Part time Talent Pool toolkit	• Road Map to Action	• Road Map to Action

Table 11: 2025 Initiatives in Action across the Four Strategic Levers of Change

7.1.4 The WiHPC project has delivered tools and solutions for all points of the coaching journey

The initial activity from the 2024 Showcase created an environment where participants could follow a graphic of the Leaky Pipeline which had been set out on the floor of the venue. At each of the key points in the typical development journey, coaches who had been involved in the project were available at stations to explain the support that was available. This activity (which was then the basis for other workshop sessions during the day) provided a practical experience of the comprehensive set of tools and processes that had been developed during the project.

In addition to these support tools, the WiHPC project has also invested in building a talent pool at the base of the pipeline through the ASPIRE program, which will provide in person development opportunities for 38 early career coaches and virtual development opportunities for another 47.

7.1.5 The WiHPC project activities can also be understood through the Ecological Systems Model.

The Ecological Systems Model has provided a valuable framework for contextualising the experiences of women coaches and interventions to address systems change. The interventions and activities we have developed over the past three years have been mapped utilising this model and are shown below.

WOMEN IN HIGH PERFORMANCE COACHING

Ecological systems model

Interventions and Activities 2022–2025



Figure 25: Interventions and activities mapped utilising the Ecological Systems Model.

7.1.6 The WiHPC project has made strong progress against its scorecard

To drive accountability in the WiHPC project, a Scorecard was created as part of the release of the Action Plan in 2023. Progress on the elements of the Scorecard can be seen opposite. Strong progress has been made on most of these elements, and this progress is described in detail in the sections of the report above.

Areas where progress has been slower are:

- **The National Data Strategy continues to be difficult.** Planning is underway, but a robust data repository will require cooperation from all parts of the HP system, not all of whom are currently incentivised to support this initiative. As mentioned, many times in the sections above, a robust data source is critical for driving visibility and accountability.
- **Strong initial progress was made with researchers.** Progress in 2025 has been a slower and other initiatives have been prioritised.
- As explained below, recent data shows strong improvement in the representation of women in some parts of the HP system. This progress is encouraging, but more needs to be done to drive improvement.



Reporting	Scorecard 2024	2025	2025 Comments
Develop and implement a Women's Talent Framework	  	  	Additional toolkits for Gendered learning programs and New Programs across the coaching lifecycle now available. Developing a sustainable funding plan.
Develop and implement a National Network of Coach Development Facilitators	  	  	Network founded and broadened to include 80+ participants. Program iterated.
Assist in the development of the National Workforce Capability Framework to ensure needs of WIHPC are met	  	  	HP Coach Capability is aligned with the HP Capability Leadership Framework. WIHPC Gender audit of the HP Coach Development workforce completed.
Ensure the National Data Strategy allows for appropriate granularity on key factors that impact on WIHPC	  	  	Formal WIHPC Report: Gender Representation of Head Coaches in HP Funded Sports (Sept 2025)
Drive networks and communities to ensure development and support mechanisms of connection and belonging	  	  	Need to support and encourage more networks and communities with NSO/Ds. Women's Coach Network to launch early 2026.
Implement a 12-month campaign to elevate visibility of women coaches	  	  	Release of the "Stories from the Field" campaign, ASPIRE Coach Program release.
Continue to develop, refine and evaluate the utilisation and impact of toolkits, resources and other WIHPC initiatives by NSOs	  	  	Limited resources to drive engagement with toolkits. Connect to incentives and the Road Map Toolkit.
Engage with researchers to support evidence-based interventions	  	  	NA in 2025
% of Women Coaches at Olympic and Paralympic Games (Summer and Winter) and Commonwealth Games	  	  	Status Quo
% of Women Head Coaches leading National Teams	  	  	Progress from 9.7% to 26.3% from 2023 to 2025

Table 12: 2023-2025 WIHPC Scorecard Progress

7.1.7 Some progress has been made on the recommendations from the Action Plan

The Action Plan established ten recommendations for driving change. A summary of progress against each of these recommendations is set out in the table below.

The recommendations where limited progress has been made are those that require support from leaders across the HP system. Building this support will be critical for the future success of this work.

Recommendation		Update
1	All sporting organisations undertake a regular gender equity audit, adopt gender equity targets and strategies, and publicly report on progress. The audit, targets and strategies must address women in HP and strengthen the women's coach workforce.	Progress: Limited, Whole of Sport Leadership required - Audit completed on the HP Coach Development workforce (WIHPC) - National Gender Equity in Sports Governance Policy - AIS WIHPC 2024 Scorecard
2	Develop comprehensive data capture and reporting systems across HP sport to monitor progress and drive accountability to ensure a positive impact on women coaches. This must be sport-led and aligned across all key performance parameters	Progress: Limited, Whole of Sport / HP Sport Leadership required - WIHPC; Gender Representation of Head Coaches in HP Funded Sports - Sept 2025 - Road Map to Action has the ability to capture data - AIS WIHPC 2024 Scorecard
3	HP sports commit to regular assessment for organisational culture and environment capabilities and associated development strategies such as implementing family friendly work practices, coach wellbeing and embedding behaviours that create respectful cultures.	Progress: Developing - HP2032+ Win Well Strategy - HP 2032+ Wellbeing Measures Project AIS Cultural Diagnostics – HP sports - Archetype Workshops and Toolkit - Coach wellbeing research 2025 - Optional learning & development recommendations - Recruitment Toolkit - Best Practice Inclusion Guide - AIS Talent Acquisition Guide
4	Investment into the customisation of the ASC Workforce Capability Framework for quality women HP coach development (including the identification of transferable skills, and to strengthen the coaching talent pool). This will require contributions from across the sector.	Progress: Developing - HP Coach Capability Framework - HP Leadership Capability Framework - Hidden Talent Pool Toolkit
5	Establish and sustain a Women's Talent Development Framework led by the AIS in alignment with the Workforce Capability Framework.	Progress: Good Progress, Developing - Talent Development Framework - Currently delivering impact programs across the coaching lifecycle - Toolkit for organisations delivering Gendered learning programs - Communities and Networks Toolkit

Recommendation		Update
6	Establish and sustain a National Network of Coach Development Facilitators as led by the AIS to enhance development and ongoing support of women coaches.	Progress: Very Good Progress, Developing - HP Coach Facilitators Project report with Network established - HP CD Workshop iterated for HP Managers and Pathways Managers - Key Recommendations and Principles for learning & development programs
7	Broaden the access to, and delivery capacity of AIS career support services focused on navigating career transitions for women coaches within HP pathways.	Progress: Good Progress, Developing Career Support Program Pilot in progress with 6 month report.
8	Create mechanisms and opportunities to increase the visibility of women coaches with a focus on success stories and what's working.	Progress: Good Progress, Developing - WiHPC "Our Stories" - Improving visibility and sharing success Toolkit - AIS photography project - Elevating visibility of system and sport data
9	Provide mechanisms to acknowledge and reward organisations who actively support and engage in the proposed Women HP Coaches Road Map to Action.	Progress: Limited, Whole of Sport Leadership and funding required Funding support for the Road Map to Action Collaboration group
10	Source, allocate and manage resources at system and sport level to achieve the strategic goals and recommendations of this project.	Progress: Limited Completing Women's Talent Programs 4 year report

Table 13: 2023-2025 Progress on the Ten Recommendations

These recommendations have served the work of the project well. The themes that were identified here set out the major pieces of work that needed to be done. As noted above, progress has been made on most of these items. Looking ahead to the next phase of the project, most of these recommendations remain valid, although many will need to be updated to reflect new insights from the work that has been undertaken since these recommendations were written and identified priorities. The next iteration of the recommendations will also need to call out more clearly where accountability lies. There is much important work that the WiHPC team in conjunction with others at the AIS can do. However, sustainable change will require system leaders to accept accountability for the aspects of the system that only they can drive – particularly with regard to behaviour, systems and policies.



7.1.8 The WiHPC project has engaged extensively with the HP ecosystem

Sustaining high levels of representation of women in HP coaching requires the engagement and commitment of the entire HP sector. The table below shows the engagement of individuals across the sporting sector and those outside this system. The numbers are indicative of the number of engagements each year. There are some participants who have been engaged throughout the four years with multiple touch points.

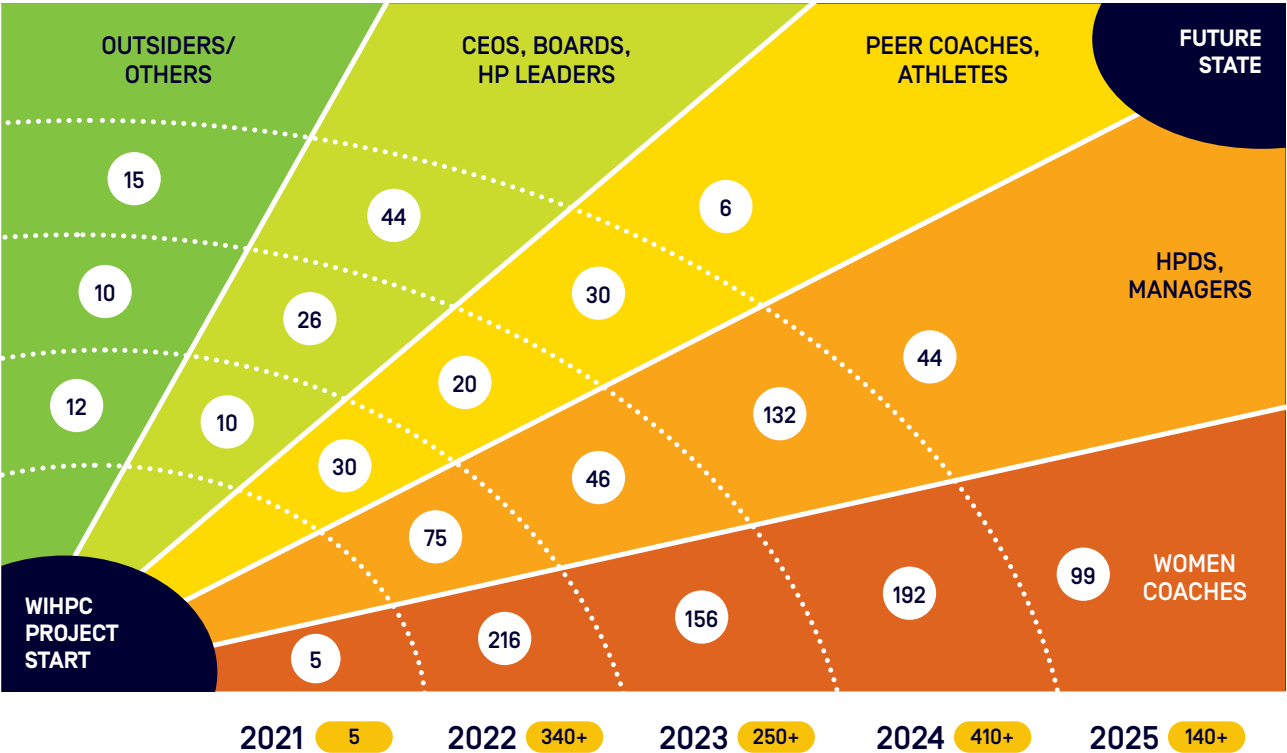


Figure 26: Engagement numbers throughout the WiHPC Project

7.1.9 A Road Map is in place to support sporting organisations to drive change

When organisations need to drive change such as that required to increase representation of women coaches, one of the big challenges is knowing where to start. To assist organisations to make meaningful plans in this area, the project team has developed a Road Map which allows organisations to self-assess their current state, identify steps that need to be taken and locate the resources that are available to support the change program.

The Road Map sets out seven areas that the project has identified as important steps in the change process. For each of these areas, there are links to the toolkits and resources that have been developed by the project team and by the broader national and international communities. The Road Map is designed to be a living document that can be reviewed and revisited over time. It will be available through the ASC website and through the ASC Game Plan platform that all HP sports have access to for other planning. Testing of an interactive toolkit has been done with targeted sports and will be available to all sporting organisations.

Women in High Performance Coaching — Road Map

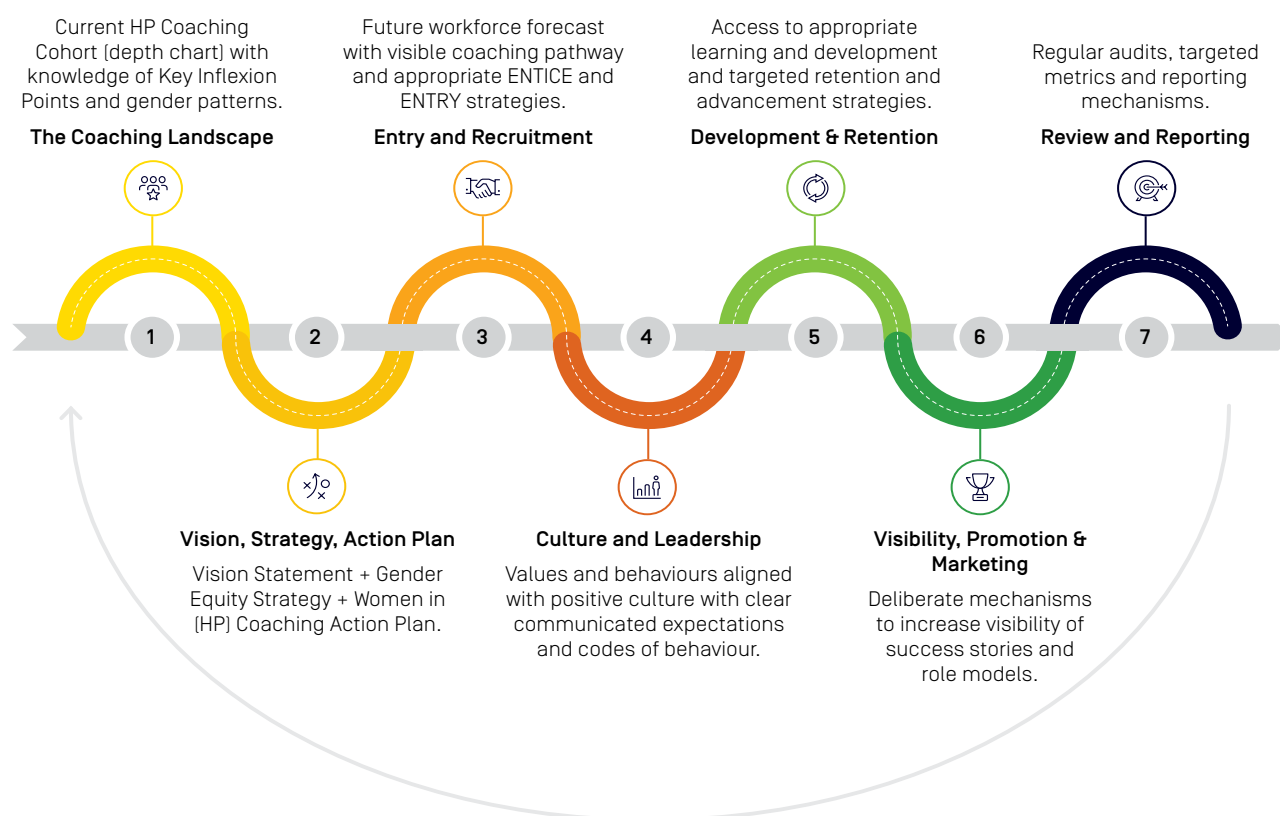


Figure 27: The WiHPC Road Map to Action

7.1.10 The WiHPC project has made a significant contribution to a substantial increase in the representation of women in HP coaching

The biggest test of the impact of the WiHPC project should be in the representation of women coaches. In 2022 the AIS launched the WiHPC initiative to improve gender representation among head coaches in our HP funded sports. Since then, the proportion of women in these roles has more than doubled, growing from 9.7 per cent in 2022 to over 20 percent in 2025.

This progress reflects the combined impact of the AIS HP Coach Development Strategy, the WiHPC events, initiatives and reporting, structural changes in the HP landscape, and the introduction of the Para Uplift.

This result would not have been possible without the hard work and active support of people from across the HP ecosystem – the coaches, the allies and the leaders within the system.

It is also worth noting that the collation and publication is itself a significant milestone. An important step forward was taken with the publication of results at the 2024 Showcase where for the first time, data was published that reflected coaches coaching athletes rather than accreditation data. Since that time, members of the WiHPC team and others in the HP system have worked extremely hard to bring together accurate coaching data for the entire HP system. This will be extremely useful for the next phase of the project as it will allow success to be measured, effort to be prioritised, and, very significantly, it will allow leaders in the system to be held to account.

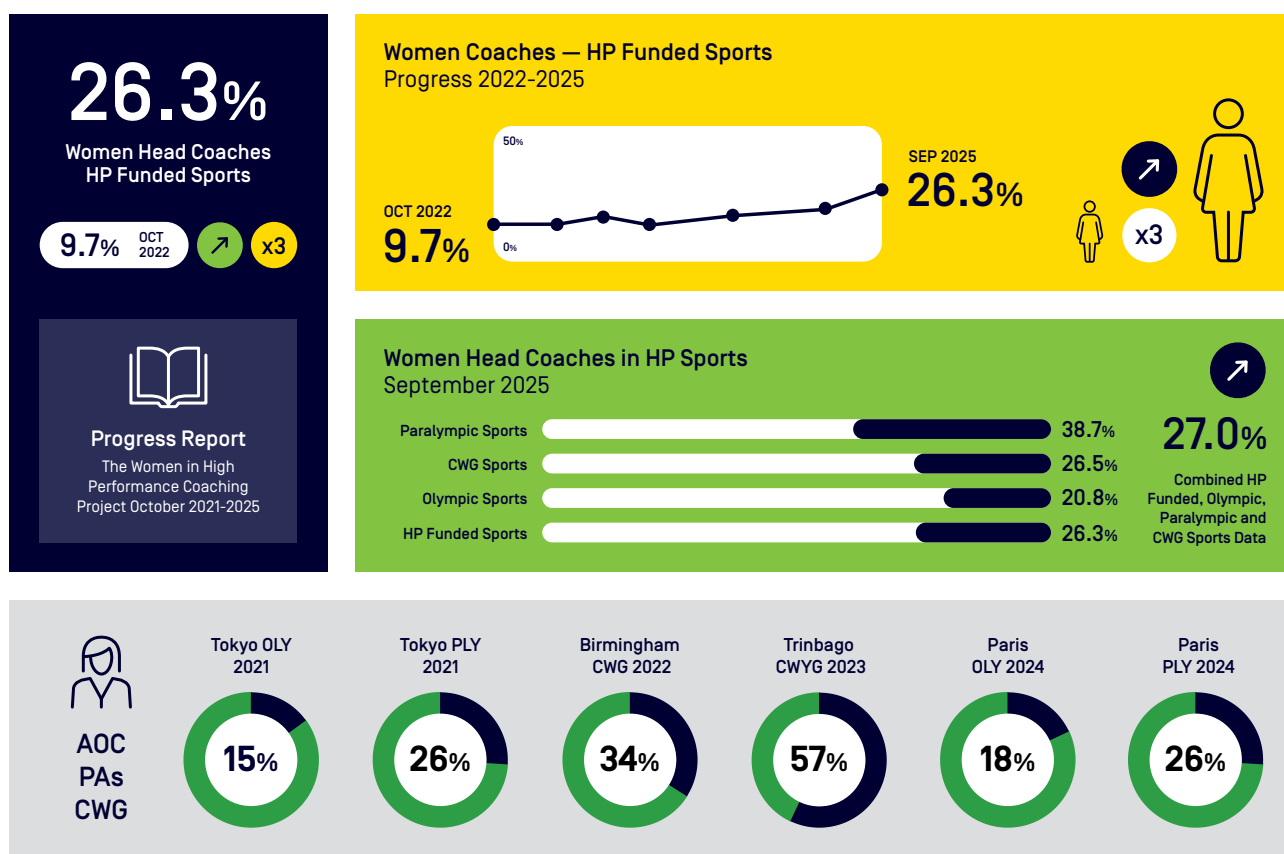


Figure 28: WiHPC Data Report – October 2025

7.2 State of play — summary

7.2.1 What progress has been made?

- **Forces:** We have a detailed understanding of forces that drive the low participation of women in HP coaching. This understanding comes from listening to the women coaches who impacted by the current system and others who are active in the system. The same messages were heard from hundreds of voices across the HP landscape.
- **Strategic Levers:** Based on this understanding, the impediments to representation fall into four areas: Behaviours, culture and environment; Systems supporting diversity and belonging; Strategies for development; Visibility and storytelling.
- **Resources:** Toolkits, initiatives and programs are in place to address each of these levers. More toolkits are under development.
 - > Although the toolkits are available, take up has been low. The issue is getting visibility and traction. This will need to be resourced in the next phase to the project to realise the full value of the work that has been done.
- **Leadership Accountability:** The experience from the project shows that leadership accountability is critical for driving change and underpins all of these levers. There is considerable variation in the level of leadership support across the system. Engaging leaders to actively acknowledge the current reality within their sport and actively support initiatives to drive change needs to be a focus in the next phase of work.
- **Coach Development:** Significant progress has been made with the Coach Development Facilitator process. A National Talent Development Framework for Women Coaches has been created. The design principles for inclusive coach development environments have been identified. A program for building a cohort of Coach Development Facilitators and HP leaders who can deliver and support these inclusive programs has been designed and delivered. Mentorship and Networks have been identified as a high priority for both support and development. Work in this area needs to continue to be supported.
- **The Leaky Pipeline** has been adopted as a way of understanding the coaching journey. Key pain points have been identified. Personas have been developed to help coaches and organisations understand the issues at each of these points. Programs and toolkits are available to support coaches at each of these points.
- The **Career Support Program** has been linked with critical points in the Leaky Pipeline and a pilot is underway.
- The **Road Map to Action** is in pilot – it is a critical piece for catalysing action within sporting organisations and creating accountability for change. Organisations can evaluate themselves against benchmarks and

design strategies for improvement. It also provides sporting organisations with a structured process for driving change, with links to the relevant toolkits and frameworks.

- **Visibility:** Progress has been made with visibility. Australia has produced many amazing women HP coaches, but even people in the system don't know. The "Stories from the Field" initiative has started to address this. Work on visibility needs to be continued, through the media and in individual sporting organisations.
- **Data:** Significant progress has been made on data. Although the current data collection process is labour intensive, the data structures and sources are now in place to support more regular reporting. The next phase of the project needs to add depth to this data, making it more granular and more visible.
- **Approach:** Most importantly, the WiHPC project has demonstrated that a complexity driven approach can have impact. The October 2025 numbers show that the representation of women in HP funded sports has more than doubled. One of the principles of driving change in complex environments is to identify things that are working – and keep doing them.

7.2.2 What constraints are still in place? What else needs to be done?

Uptake of the Road Map to Action

- **Uptake:** Although almost all of the necessary toolkits and support are in place, take up has been slow. A focus of the next phase needs to be on completing the remaining toolkits and driving adoption.
- **Engagement:** Many sports have engaged with the project, many more have not. In particular, there has been a lack of leadership buy in from a number of sports. To drive further improvement, senior leaders across the system need to engage with gender equity and with the representation of women coaches.
- **The Road Map to Action** presents a great opportunity to drive adoption and spur leaders into action. The Road Map requires leaders to develop strategy, review their workforce needs and examine the appropriateness of policies. At the very least, resources need to be made available to engage and support sports with the development of a Road Map. Publicly reporting Road Map status for sports would provide another form of encouragement.

Leadership accountability

- **Leadership:** To drive this, support is needed from National and System bodies (e.g., CGA, AOC) and executive leaders to secure influence and alignment to the system goals.

- **Allyship:** Throughout the project, allyship was seen as a crucial element in supporting women in the HP system. The work on allyship validated its importance and provided a framework for growing more allies as support inclusiveness and belonging. Allies are important at all levels of the system. Leaders in the HP system need to call out the value of allyship and grow the number of allies in their organisations.
- **Limited Incentives:** There are currently limited incentives to encourage organisations to change. Public reporting of data would be one way to achieve this. For example, being confronted with the data about the coach development process within their sport has been a wake up call for NSO/Ds, and has galvanised many into action. This illustrates the power of using data to hold up a mirror in order to prompt action. It also demonstrates the need to drive visibility of the issues and accountability for changing the system to produce more equitable outcomes. An even stronger incentive would be to link funding to progress on representation.
- **Positive incentives** (carrots rather than sticks) are also effective at encouraging change. For example, the WLIS program offers organisational grants to align interventions with needs, target users, and provide implementation support by working with applying organisations to ensure they are targeting the right people and doing the right thing. This links work to grant structures and supports people in the operationalisation of their work.
- **Funding:** Funding is needed to support nudges and ripples, especially collaboration between sports [the Swimming, Rowing, Athletics initiative describe above is an example].
- **Accountability:** In approaching the work that is needed in the next phase, it is important to be clear about where accountabilities sit: with the WiHPC project team, with the AIS, with leaders of sporting organisations, or with leaders at the whole-of-system level.
- **Representation:** Funding for sports needs to be tied to hitting targets or improvements in representation throughout the coaching pipeline.

Culture, Behaviour and Environment

- **Culture and behaviour** are the anchors of belonging. In many sports, current accountability mechanisms do not efficiently identify and prevent behavioural issues, for example in everyday training environments. It is at this level that many of the issues that women coaches experience occur. CEOs and Boards must be held accountable for organisational behaviour standards. CEOs and Boards are often distant from field environments [e.g., training sessions], meaning what happens on the ground can go unnoticed. Mechanisms are needed to translate top-level standards to daily practice where issues occur. Gender equity bodies such as the ASC Diversity Equity and Inclusion team need to support this. The annual mechanisms being established through the Wellbeing Measure project are an important step in this direction.

Data, Reporting and Visibility

- **Data:** The effort that the AIS team has put into the collection of data using a consistent methodology is a significant step forward. In addition to reporting on final outcomes (women Head Coaches), work needs to be done to collect data on lead indicators. These indicators would include pipeline measures, workforce planning data and data from the Road Map to Action.
- **Making Sense of Insights:** The SenseMaker surveys have provided valuable insights into the lived experience of coaches. Continuing this work will allow qualitative evaluations of progress from the perspective of the coaches involved. In complex environments, qualitative data provides a richer understanding of the experience of those in the system. Maintaining visibility of this over time is critical for understanding progress through the eyes of those impacted.

HP Coach Development

- The **National Talent Development Framework** for Women HP Coaches is now established. However, like many other aspects of the project, investment in the next phase needs to focus on adoption to create a sustainable coach development ecosystem.
- **Coach Development:** Significant progress has been made in Coach Development, with the iterations of the Coach Development Facilitator program in place. Resourcing will be required to build a network of Facilitators to support sustainable delivery of inclusive Coach Development processes. To embed this, one of the most important tasks in the next phase will be engaging with HP educators and leaders to integrate the Framework into organisational practices. Of particular importance is the creation of career pathways and opportunities to allow coaches to apply what they have learned through the development process as part of a structured career development plan.
- **Strategic Workforce:** Sports need to take a long term look at strategic workforce needs through the lens of gender balance, with development programs linked to real opportunities.
- **Support Program:** Pending the results from the pilot, the Career Support Program needs to be extended to support coaches at career transition points.
- **Mentorship, Allyship and Network** building are important contributors to coach success. Investment into supporting these areas needs to be continued.
- **Women Coach Programs:** Funding for programs needs to continue, particularly ASPIRE and the Women's Talent Coach Program which is important for bringing aspiring coaches in at the beginning of the pipeline to create a strong cohort of women coaches for 2032.

SECTION 8

WHAT NEXT?



8.1 Recommendations and next steps

Based on this analysis of the constraints that remain in the system, there are ten recommendations for driving the next stage of the project. These recommendations are consistent with the ten recommendations from the Action Plan and have been updated to reflect the progress that has been made in the project so far and other initiatives that are underway in the HP system. To make the accountability for these recommendations clear, they have been structured to reflect where in the system the accountability should sit.

8.1.1 Recommendations for the Leaders of sporting organisations

1	Gender Equity Audits — Utilise the ASC/AIS resources to undertake regular gender equity audits, adopt gender equity targets and strategies, and publicly report on progress.
2	Road Map to Action — Utilise the ASC and AIS resources to actively engage with the Women in HP Coaching Road Map to Action, resources and Toolkits.

8.1.2 Recommendations for the AIS and the Australian Sports Commission

3	Contribute to development of a consistent HP coaching data picture — Collaborate with relevant AIS and ASC teams to align gender-mapping approaches and maintain visibility of progress and reporting.
4	Align ongoing work with Win Well/system priorities — Maintain connection between the WiHPC activities and HP 2032+ Horizon 2 outcomes, sharing progress and insights with key stakeholders.
5	Provide evidence to support future investment and policy — Gather data, insights and key indicators to inform funding, recognition and workforce policy decisions to support the ASC and AIS leadership and NSOD Stakeholders.

8.1.3 Recommendations for the HP Coach Development Team

6	Finalise and drive engagement with the Toolkits — Release the full toolkit suite, promote application across NSOs through the Road Map to Action and integrate learnings into AIS coach education resources.
7	Optimise Coach Development — Enhance the network of facilitators through mentorship and capability-building programs to deliver inclusive learning across both gender-specific and mixed programs.
8	Lead and deliver sustainable programs and initiatives for Women Coaches — Continue to lead and deliver coordinated and impactful programs and initiatives align with the National Talent Development Framework.
9	Visibility and Storytelling — Extend the 'Stories from the Field' campaign and highlight examples of inclusive practice and success to inspire women and reinforce belonging.

8.1.4 Recommendations for the Leaders of the Australian HP sport system

10	National Gender Equity in Sports Governance Policy — Organisations will be required to report annually through the Sports Governance Standards self-assessment on their status against Gender Equity Targets and their systems that ensure gender equity.
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SECTION 9

A LONG TERM VISION FOR WOMEN IN HIGH PERFORMANCE COACHING



The work that has been done through the Women in High Performance Coaching project demonstrates that progress can be made in the representations of women. While significant advancement has been made, there is still much that remains to be done. The Fixing the Leaky Pipeline Action Plan set out the work that needed to be done to drive change. Addressing the recommendations in the Action Plan has produced results. To continue to contribute to the HP2032+ strategy, the learning from the work so far needs to be brought together in clear statement of the ambition for Women in High Performance Coaching.

9.1 Our Mission and Objectives

9.1.1 HP 2032+ Strategy

Coaching is a foundational enabler of Australia's High Performance 2032+ Sport Strategy (HP 2032+ Strategy), underpinned by the National High Performance (HP) Coach Development Strategy. One of three strategic focus areas is to support the development of sustainable coaching environments that attract and retain diverse coaching talent and maximise performance potential of our coaches and athletes.

9.1.2 Our Mission

The Women in High Performance Coaching (WiHPC) Project is a key initiative that seeks to increase representation, retention and visibility of women in high performance coaching by driving system change through the Leaky Pipeline Action Plan.

9.1.3 Our Objectives

The WiHPC Project has three objectives.

1. *Increase representation*

The initiative seeks to enhance the number and visibility of women in high performance

coaching roles, aiming for a more balanced and inclusive coaching ecosystem by 2032.

2. *Address systemic barriers*

WiHPC focuses on identifying and dismantling cultural and systemic structural barriers that hinder women's development and progression in coaching careers.

3. *Develop supportive pathways*

The project emphasises creating sustainable pathways for women coaches, including mentorship programs, flexible work arrangements, and targeted leadership development.

9.2 Strategic Levers

The work over the past four years has established a deep understanding of the lived experience of women coaches and of the levers for driving change.

The Leaky Pipeline captures the typical stages of the coaching journey for women coaches and identifies the pain points and opportunities along that journey. The Leaky Pipeline informs the work that needs to be done to support coach development. It also informs work that needs to be done to drive system change through toolkits and other resources.

The Levers for Change, again based on the lived experience of the coaches, identifies the four areas that need to be addressed to drive change in the HP system.

Together, these frameworks establish the most effective way to improve the representation of women in HP coaching to support the HP2032+ strategy.

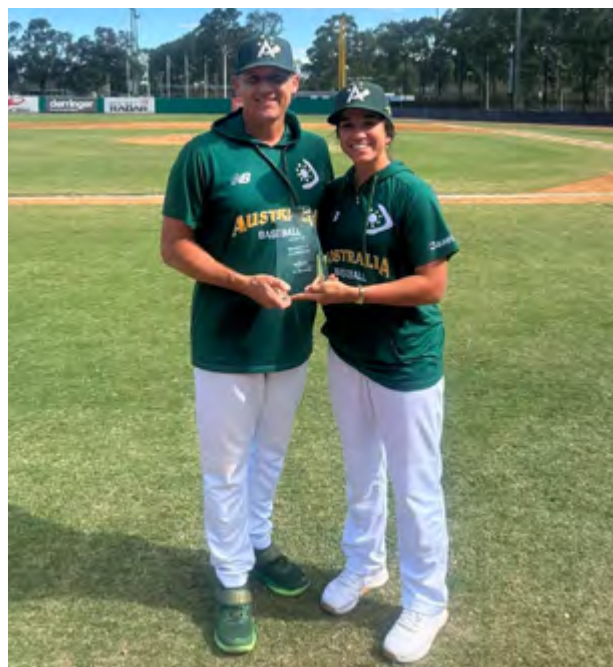




Figure 29: Beyond 2025

9.3 Immediate Focus Areas for the WiHPC project to December 2026

- Amplify the narratives around the WiHPC objectives and strategic directions for the project in the next 2 years.
- Finalise the Road Map to Action and build engagement with HP sports.
- Drive adoption and engagement with the WiHPC toolkits (networks, gendered learning, recruitment) through engagement with the Road Map.
- Proactively engage sports who have not been active in the work of the project so far; build deeper engagement in all HP sports.
- Prioritise exploration of allyship for women in the broader HP landscape.
- Review and align Women only Coach Programs across the sector and develop a sustainable funding model to propose to Ministerial and other Government stakeholders (4-8 year plan).
- Continue work on the data strategy, including improving data collection processes; collecting data at a more granular level; and identifying lead indicators and the processes for collecting this data.
- Update and socialise the National Talent Development Framework for Women Coaches.
- Finalise the gendered learning toolkit and package an integrated pipeline narrative for stakeholders.
- Continue to drive and support Networks, Allyship and Mentorship across the HP landscape.

9.4 WiHPC Scorecard

The WiHPC project has always believed that it needs to be accountable to the HP system, and the women coaches in particular. The next iteration of the Annual WiHPC Scorecard on the Progress of the WiHPC project is below. This has been updated from the 2023 Scorecard based upon the progress that has been made and the insights that have been gained from the project so far. The WiHPC Project Team will report on project progress each November.

Annual SCORECARD — WiHPC Project	
○ ○ ○	Support HP funded sports to complete and actively engage with the Women in HP Coaching Road Map to Action and relevant Toolkits.
○ ○ ○	Lead, deliver, iterate and align Women HP Coach Programs across the HP sector which address key pain points in the Leaky Pipeline.
○ ○ ○	Support NSODs to align programs, initiatives and funding with the National Talent Development Framework for Women Coaches and deepen understanding of impact.
○ ○ ○	Maintain and update the WiHPC Platform with resources and materials to support organisations and individuals driving change for WiHPC.
○ ○ ○	Lead initiatives to elevate visibility of women coaches through storytelling and impact.
○ ○ ○	Iterate and deliver the Career Support Program as recommended [from the Pilot] to address departures and exits from the Pipeline.
○ ○ ○	Enhance the network of facilitators through mentorship and capability- building programs to deliver inclusive learning across both gender-specific and mixed programs.
○ ○ ○	Continue to develop, refine and evaluate the utilisation and impact of toolkits, resources and other WiHPC initiatives by NSOs
○ ○ ○	Lead the collation and publication of representation data and lead indicators that demonstrate progress and impact of the WiHPC project.
○ ○ ○	Annually report on % of Women Coaches at Olympic and Paralympic Games (Summer and Winter) and Commonwealth Games.
○ ○ ○	Annually report on % of Women Head Coaches leading National Teams and increase depth of data reporting.
○ ○ ○	Maintain alignment with the National Gender Equity in Sports Governance Policy and the HP2032+ Win Well Gender Equity Framework.

Table 14: Annual SCORECARD — WiHPC Project

SECTION 10 APPENDICES



Appendix 1: SenseMaker surveys

The WiHPC project has made extensive use of SenseMaker, a survey tool specifically designed for understanding complex environments. The tool is narrative based. Respondents tell stories from their experience that are relevant to the topic being studied. They then make sense of their own story using graphical descriptors based on dyads and triads. Standard survey data (e.g. demographic data) can also be collected and incorporated into the analysis.

During the project, the following surveys were conducted.

Title	Participants	Outcome
Women in HP Coaching: Representative Coaches May 2022	106 participants 33 Sports	- Collect and collate contemporary normative data from the Australian HP sport system, to better understand the context surrounding women coaching in Australia and support the development of future initiatives within the WiHPC project. - Explore, summarise and diagnose the systemic and cultural forces (both fuel and friction) that impact on the coaching system utilising a mixed methods survey, which includes narratives from experiences within sport.
Looking back to move forward: Understanding the influence of gender and learning environments in HP sport May 2023	156 participants 44 Sports	- Collect contemporary normative data for the Australian high-performance system, on experiences of men and women who have participated in coaching, leadership or personal development programs, led by the Australian Institute of Sport. - Contrast the experiences of men and women who have participated in mixed gender programs and women who have participated in women's only programs. - Provide recommendations for the system related to considerations for the development of future programs. - In this program participants either participated in gendered (women's only) or ungendered (all gender) programs.
Experiential Learning Program (ELP) 1 April 2024	9 participants 8 Sports	- Evaluate the ELP program utilising the Values Creation Framework as the theoretical framework. It formed one piece of comprehensive 6-step evaluation. - Seek understanding of the context of impact from the ELP.
National Sporting Organisation Learning and Development: Understanding the learning environments provided by National Sporting Organisations in HP sport May 2024	52 participants	This report focuses on the evaluation of learning environments (formal, informal, non-formal or blended) provided by National Sporting Organisations for women coaches, through the use of a survey to better understand factors that contribute to both positive and negative experiences. Participants also provided insight to how learning environments can be shaped in future to best support their career growth and development. This information will be used in the planning and the development of subsequent initiatives focused on coach development within NSO/Ds.
Experiential Learning Program (ELP) 2 2025	8 participants 8 Sports	- Evaluate the ELP program utilising the Values Creation Framework as the theoretical framework. It formed one piece of comprehensive 6-step evaluation. - Seek understanding of the context of impact from the ELP and compare the two programs conducted 12 months apart.

Table 15: SenseMaker Surveys

Appendix 2: SenseMaker Insights Report

Theme 1: Connection as a Catalyst for Development

One of the most consistent findings across all four evaluation projects was the profound importance of connection as a vehicle for development. Participants described connection as the gateway to learning, growth, emotional resilience, and long-term engagement with the high-performance system.

Whether these connections were formed with peers, mentors, facilitators, or other women navigating the same terrain, they provided far more than just camaraderie. They enabled reflection, reduced feelings of isolation, fostered confidence, and created a space for honest conversations about challenges and ambitions in coaching and leadership.

1.1 Peer Support and Shared Experience

Connection fostered a sense of shared identity and solidarity—especially among women navigating male-dominated environments. Coaches described how programs brought them together with “people like me,” creating a validating environment for personal and professional growth.



“This group became the strongest support network I have in the sector to this day.”

WiHPC Program Review [2023] – Gendered

“I felt quite blessed to have such conversations with all those I met through this program... I felt like I was not alone in my thoughts.”

ELP Report [2025]

“We continue to connect with our cohort via WhatsApp, sharing roles, cheering others on and sharing life news. This connection has been so important.”

WiHPC Program Review [2023] – Gendered

“Learning from them and sharing stories... hearing people’s experiences are the best ways of learning.”

ELP Report [2025]

These connections often endured beyond the formal conclusion of the programs, evolving into self-sustaining communities of practice that supported participants through key transitions and decisions.

1.2 Connection as a Learning Tool

Connection was also central to *how people learned*. For many, the most powerful insights did not come from structured content delivery, but through listening to peers’ stories, sharing their own, and reflecting collectively.



“Sharing stories together face to face... made me feel more relaxed... it was a safe environment that allowed learning and you didn’t feel alone.”

WiHPC Program Review [2023] – Ungendered

“Discussing training programs and challenges with other coaches was enormously helpful. Even though they were from different sports, it did not matter.”

ELP Report [2025]

“The opportunity to form connections with coaches from other sports and discuss similarities, differences and ideas was irreplaceable.”

WiHPC Program Review [2023] – Ungendered

In gendered environments especially, learning through stories created emotionally resonant experiences that accelerated self-understanding.



“One of the things I learnt out of this process is that whilst we all have individual stories, we share elements such as overcoming barriers, self-doubt and uncertainty.”

WiHPC Program Review [2023] – Gendered

“It was such a great lesson in learning, in listening and being part of a group.”

WiHPC Program Review [2023] – Gendered

“I really enjoyed NIN training camps... It built camaraderie and was comforting to share stories about wayward athletes and managing with limited resources.”

WiHPC SenseMaker Report [2022]

1.3 Facilitators and Mentors as Connectors

Facilitators and mentors were also key actors in creating these connections. Their skill in fostering trust, modelling vulnerability, and prompting reflection was frequently cited as central to the learning experience.



“The support I got from the facilitators and participants has had a life-changing impact.”

WiHPC Program Review (2023) – Gendered

“Facilitator interaction – quality. The program I was part of had excellent facilitators that drew out the best in participants.”

WiHPC Program Review (2023) – Gendered

“The sessions from [name] helped with this. Also from my 1:1 with [name] — What I thought I was communicating was different to what I was actually doing.”

ELP Report (2024)

“I was paired with a mentor in my sport... this allowed me to learn and see first-hand what it takes to coach at the top level.”

WiHPC Program Review (2023) — Ungendered

1.4 Connection During Vulnerable Moments

Many participants noted that the value of connection was amplified during moments of uncertainty, pressure, or change. Feeling seen, validated, and supported—particularly by other women—was described as healing, energising, and often career-preserving.



“It came into my life at a time when I was mentally struggling... Connecting with other female athletes and sports leaders helped inspire me... I truly believe this program was imperative in saving my career.”

WiHPC Program Review (2023) – Gendered

“The support from [facilitator] and other organisers was amazing. They created a space for all the coaches to grow.”

ELP Report (2025)

“I experienced a group of eclectic but passionate coaches... It felt like I was not alone in my thoughts.”

ELP Report (2025)

1.5 Connection Bridges Opportunity

While connection was often described as intrinsically valuable, it also unlocked concrete opportunities—funding, mentoring, or role advancement.



“During the course we had a presenter... who I connected with very well. I have been lucky enough to work with her for the past year.”

WiHPC Program Review (2023) – Ungendered

“Program funding that I recently used toward a coaching development opportunity in [city] was an experience that personally was priceless.”

WiHPC Program Review (2023) – Ungendered

“in [sport] some people are located remotely or from a different state. When they come to events, as a coach I need to build the connection quickly. I was able to gather ideas around this.”

ELP Report (2024)

Summary of Key Takeaways

- **Connection is both process and outcome:** It fuels learning but also endures as a benefit in its own right.
- **Face-to-face matters:** In-person delivery was especially valued for fostering deeper, more lasting relationships.
- **Storytelling is transformational:** Narratives provided emotional validation, identity shifts, and peer wisdom.
- **Mentors and facilitators are vital:** Their guidance created safety, depth, and challenge.

Theme 2: Internal Change and Identity Shifts

While external skills and knowledge were important outcomes of the programs evaluated, many participants spoke even more powerfully about *internal change*—an evolution in how they saw themselves, their role in sport, and their capacity for leadership. These identity shifts were deeply personal, yet remarkably consistent across contexts.

For women in particular, especially those participating in gendered environments, these internal changes involved a move from **self-doubt to self-advocacy**, and from **insecurity to confidence and clarity**. Participants described experiences of “finding their voice,” reframing their value, and learning to lead in ways that aligned with their authentic selves.

2.1 From Uncertainty to Self-Belief

Several participants began their program journeys questioning their place in sport or their worthiness to lead. For some, imposter syndrome was a daily burden. Program experiences helped them name and reframe these feelings, often for the first time.

“I walked in asking why I was chosen. I walked out knowing exactly why I was there. The belief change I had in 6 months was something I didn’t think would occur.”

ELP Report (2024)

“It helped me realise how lacking in confidence I am, but it also helped me to understand myself better and why I am the way I am.”

WiHPC Program Review (2023) — Gendered

“I now feel more comfortable with my knowledge as a coach and feel I carry myself better with a simple change in body language.”

ELP Report (2025)

“The belief change I had in 6 months was something I didn’t think would occur.”

ELP Report (2024)

This verbal clarity often had flow-on effects for how participants led others, advocated for themselves, and communicated with peers or organisations.

2.3 Leading with Courage and Authenticity

Identity shifts also enabled a transition to more authentic and courageous leadership. Many participants began challenging previously held assumptions about what a leader “should” look like—often modelled on masculine or hierarchical templates.

“The strength of courageous and authentic leadership was my favourite lesson to take away... knowing that being vulnerable is OK was so valuable to learn.”

WiHPC Program Review (2023) – Gendered

“I was able to connect with my “athlete self”, and the experiences that I’ve gone through growing up in another country, culture, era and under different coaching methods ... Learning and self-development has taken on new importance.”

WiHPC Program Review (2023) – Ungendered

“This program empowered me to find my voice... I had a light bulb moment with the group one session and could see how I was holding myself back and this experience gave me the confidence to lean into my strengths and show up authentically.”

WiHPC Program Review (2023) – Gendered

“I’ve come to realize that the outcomes we achieve are not solely indicative of failure or success, but rather are part of a broader context ... [this] helped me shift the narratives I previously told myself.”

ELP Report (2024)

2.2 Articulating Leadership and Values

Another major element of internal change involved the development of language to describe leadership—both to others and to oneself. Many participants reported that programs helped them verbalise their coaching philosophy, values, and role clarity.

“My main impact was being able to actually verbalise behaviours (use words to describe behaviours). Just the vocabulary learnt during the course allowed me to better articulate and communicate behaviours.”

WiHPC Program Review (2023) – Gendered

“My individual success definition has changed slightly. I now value sharing and experience above technical knowledge.”

ELP Report (2025)

“The discussions around personal authenticity... I went home and made a cool image of different areas of my life and the five words that I believe are my current values.”

ELP Report (2025)

2.4 Reframing Self in Systemic Context

In several cases, identity shifts were catalysed by recognising disconnects between personal values and organisational cultures. These moments of clarity sometimes led to significant career or life decisions.

“

“When sitting in the circle and doing a deep dive, it was the first time I realised that my values and the organisation’s values didn’t align... I ultimately decided to leave that organisation after the program.”

WiHPC Program Review (2023) – Gendered

“I’ve recognised through this journey that my sense of reputational capital can sometimes be influenced by my ego... [reflection] provided me with the opportunity to challenge and grow beyond my existing self-perceptions and biases.”

ELP Report (2024)

“This course helped me identify my unique roles as an advocate and thought leader in sport... [it] empowered me to accept my role as a leader and mentor.”

WiHPC Program Review (2023) – Gendered

”

2.5 Identity Changes Are Not Just for Women

While the most vivid identity shifts came from women—especially in terms of confidence, leadership, and voice—it is likely that male participants also experienced growth, particularly in relational or reflective aspects of coaching. However, these themes were less prominent and not captured through direct quotes in the reviewed materials. This highlights both the design intent of the gendered programs and the need for further exploration of how all coaches, regardless of gender, experience personal transformation.

“

“They would prefer to call my husband or principal instead of speaking to me directly.”

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022) – insinuates a need for change.

”

Identity Shift Flow

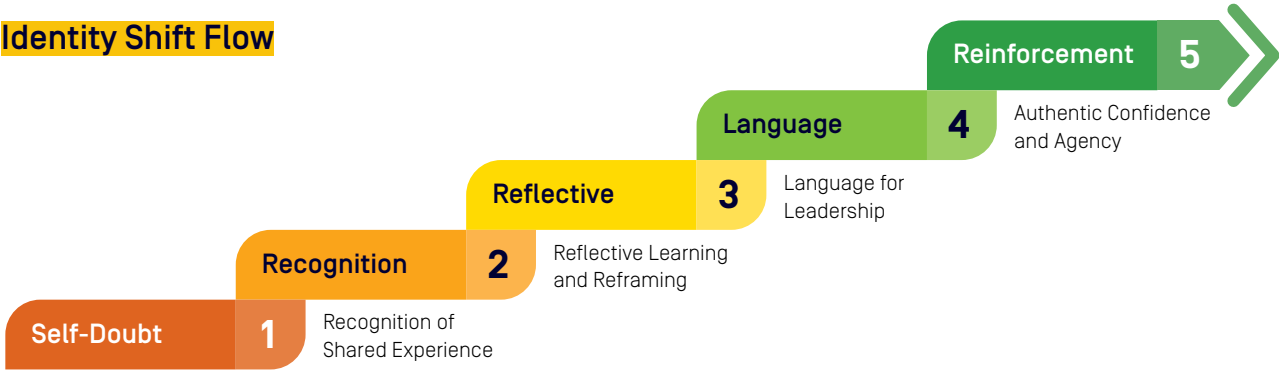


Figure 30: Identity Shift

Summary of Key Takeaways

- **Identity shifts are central to development:** Programs didn’t just teach skills—they helped people see themselves differently.
- **Language unlocks leadership:** Being able to articulate leadership, values, and boundaries gave participants a stronger voice.
- **Authenticity over conformity:** Participants were empowered to lead in ways that aligned with who they are—not outdated norms.
- **Change is contextual and personal:** Internal shifts often occurred at moments of vulnerability, reflection, or realisation.

Theme 3: Opportunity & Access as Structural Barriers

Across the four projects, a consistent constraint emerged—even when development programs were impactful, opportunities to apply that learning were often absent or severely limited. Participants, especially women, repeatedly highlighted the **lack of access to roles, resources, and visibility** as barriers that curtailed real-world application of program insights.

These structural barriers—insufficient pathways, inequitable resourcing, opaque hiring practices, and cultural gatekeeping—meant that for many participants, development outcomes remained latent potential rather than realised performance. This disconnection between capability and opportunity was frequently cited as a source of frustration, disengagement, or even withdrawal from coaching altogether.

3.1 Blocked Pathways After Growth

Participants frequently described returning from programs with enhanced skills and confidence, only to find there were few viable avenues to use what they had learned. In some cases, systemic inertia and cultural conservatism appeared to stifle progression.

Overarching Insight taken from Exec Summary:

Despite the benefit of programs on individual development, one consistent issue was the difficulty in implementing learned knowledge into practice, given the lack of opportunities (particularly for progression) in the system.

WiHPC Program Review (2023)

"I wrote a report for my Applied Learning Project about Talent ID, and this may be leading to an actual job!"

WiHPC Program Review (2023) – Ungendered (Note: This was a rare positive case, highlighting how infrequently applied learning led directly to opportunity.)

"Opportunity. There is a program which involves 7 coaches in [sport] which includes 6 women - great, but when there is opportunity to lead an Australian team... it's given to the only man."

WiHPC Program Review (2022)

Despite gaining skills and confidence, many participants encountered a system that offered few meaningful avenues to apply their growth—highlighting a persistent gap between development and opportunity.

3.2 Financial and Structural Constraints

Structural barriers weren't just cultural they were practical. Many participants cited the **cost of participation, unpaid labour, lack of maternity leave, and limited funding** as tangible obstacles to staying in coaching or taking on roles aligned with their development.

"The combination of low pay, long hours, no time in lieu or overtime arrangement and minimum maternity leave made it a career that I would have to continue to sacrifice too much to remain in."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

"I was a senior coach with World Championships and Olympic games experience. I wanted to scale back once I had children. The only job that I was offered was at the bottom of the pathway on a junior wage. So I chose to leave coaching."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

"I miss coaching, but my family life is much better."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

"Coaching at the local, state, national and international level – I have always had to volunteer my time and in some cases it has been at my own expense."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

These examples point to a coaching ecosystem that, despite investing in professional development, often fails to scaffold the practical and financial conditions necessary for retention and progression, particularly for women.

3.3 Gatekeeping and Access to Decision-Makers

Beyond resource limitations, several narratives revealed more subtle forms of exclusion. Women described **being overlooked, passed over, or deprioritised**—despite experience or qualifications.

"I was well prepared for the interview and felt it went well. However... it was a done deal as the other candidate had already been doing some work for one of the people on the panel."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

"When I apply for roles with my nickname [gender neutral] I always get more interviews / offers than when I have my full [obviously female] name."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

"It was considered as a female that I could coach kids only and not possible to coach seniors... despite having a successful domestic and international career [Olympian]."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

These experiences reflect not only bias but also informal systems of influence that protect the status quo, favouring familiarity over fairness, and insider access over transparency.

3.4 Region, Role, and Visibility

Geography and role-type also played a part in access disparities. Coaches based in regional areas, or those in less visible roles, found it harder to gain recognition or progression.



"Living in a regional area where you are not in the middle of seeing how fast things are progressing... you can get too comfortable, and this experience has opened my eyes."

ELP Report [2024]

"There are very few full-time roles for women in my sport."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report [2022]

"No venue had private areas for (breast) feeding, and most did not support me having a baby on the sideline."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report [2022]

3.5 Emotional Fallout: Frustration, Resignation, Exit

The gap between potential and opportunity had consequences. Some participants expressed disappointment and resignation. Others **withdrew entirely from coaching**, despite passion and capability.



"I miss coaching, but my family life is much better."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report [2022]

These outcomes represent not just individual stories, but system-level losses – talent leaving sport due to lack of structural support or cultural inclusion.

Systemic barriers limit the impact of coach development

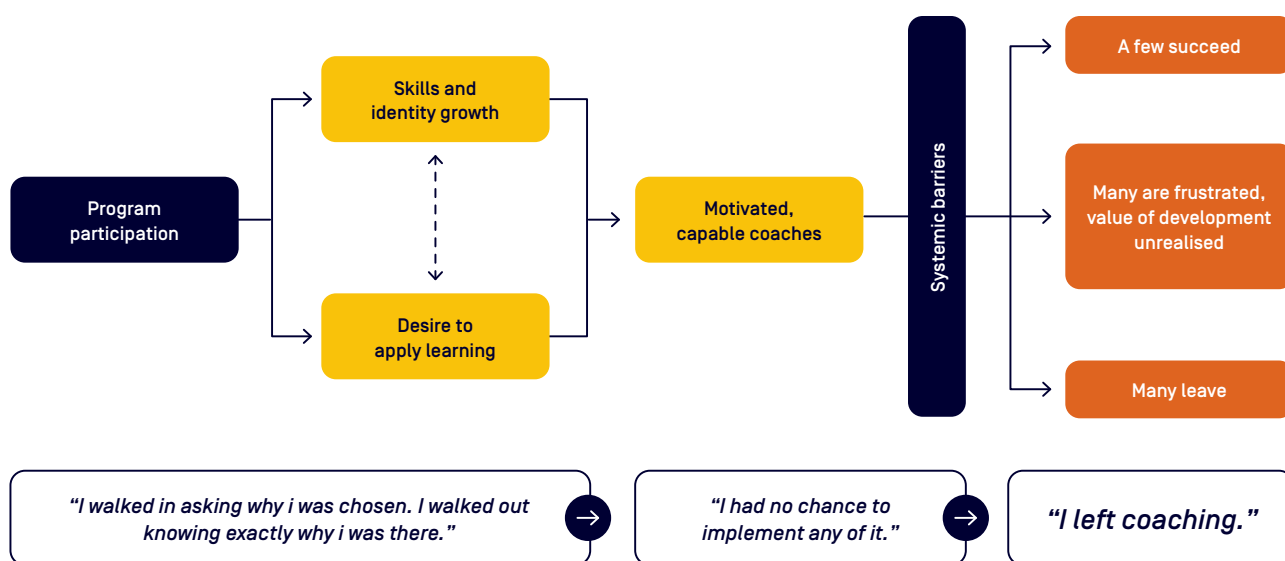


Figure 31: Systemic barriers that limit the impact of coach development

Summary of Key Takeaways

- **Structural issues undermine program impact:** Without visible pathways, learning remains unrealised.
- **Funding and role design matter:** Programs need to be paired with tangible support and fair employment practices.
- **Bias and gatekeeping remain strong:** Informal influence and systemic assumptions exclude qualified candidates.
- **Loss of talent is real:** Frustration and burnout result in disengagement—even among elite, experienced coaches.

Theme 4: Bias, Behaviour and Respect in the System

While many program participants described profound personal growth and positive learning experiences, this was frequently set against the backdrop of a system in which **gender bias, behavioural misconduct, and subtle exclusion remain common, and often go unchallenged.**

In many narratives, particularly those from the *WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)*, women shared confronting accounts of **microaggressions, stereotyping, sexual harassment, institutional neglect, and disrespectful conduct**, all of which shaped their daily working lives and constrained their progression. These issues weren't isolated, but systemic, appearing at club, state, and national levels across a wide range of sports.

This theme exposes the **underlying cultural scaffolding** of inequity, which development programs alone cannot address. Without structural reform and behavioural accountability, participants risk growing internally while remaining externally constrained by outdated and harmful norms.

4.1 Pervasive Bias and Stereotyping

Many women described how deeply embedded gender stereotypes impacted their roles, authority, and how others perceived their legitimacy as coaches or leaders.



"It was considered as a female that I could coach kids only and not possible to coach seniors [particularly males]— despite having a successful domestic and international career [Olympian]."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

"As a young female coach I was often told... 'You can't do that,' 'You don't work in an Institute'... 'You can't spot the athletes'... Often this feeling was a very subtle message."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

"They'd rather call my husband or principal instead of talking to me."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

"I attempt to appear more masculine and harder, to conform to the traditional idea of a men's coach."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

These examples underscore how bias operates not only through formal exclusion but also through **subtle social signalling** and deeply ingrained assumptions about competence and authority.

4.2 Disrespect, Dismissal and Delegitimization

Several participants reported being **ignored, talked over, or dismissed**, especially during interactions with parents, male peers, or senior figures in the sport system.



"None of my concerns or complaints are validated, it's like they didn't even happen."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

"When I try to offer solutions, they are shot down."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

"I find the other coaches take lead over me and are shown respect in their leadership through key actions while I am not inherently treated as a leader... they will mansplain, take charge, or not consult me in areas I might be able to help."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

These behaviours reflect more than individual rudeness, they represent **gendered patterns of gatekeeping** that delegitimise women's contributions and systematically erode their influence.

4.3 Harassment and Intimidation

In some of the most serious narratives, women reported **harassment, bullying, and aggressive behaviour**, often directed by male peers, superiors, or even parents of athletes.



"I was cornered within the dark end of the [training facility] by an aggressive father... he attempted to physically intimidate me."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

"Harassment, bullying and judging of me clearly directed as a female coach from those not involved."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

"I experienced male staff members (parents of my student athletes) screaming at me in my face about issues... as well as underhanded dishonest comments about my abilities to other parents to undermine my authority."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

"Comments made on appearance/behaviour (hormonal), inappropriate behaviour by male coaches."

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

The presence of these behaviours not only compromises safety, it also **drives attrition**, damages confidence, and perpetuates a toxic status quo.

4.4 Behavioural Double Standards

Narratives also pointed to **unequal treatment for the same behaviours**, with women more likely to be labelled “difficult” or “emotional,” while male counterparts were framed as “passionate” or “strong.”

“

“I was told by a parent [father] I was a woman coaching a man’s game and that I should go coach girls.”

WiHPC SenseMaker Report [2022]

These double standards reinforce a culture where **gender non-conformity is penalised**, and conformity to narrow gender norms is expected for acceptance.

4.5 Silence and Normalisation

A critical insight from several narratives was not just the behaviour itself, but how **normalized and unaddressed** it remained. This includes passive complicity, inaction from senior leaders, and the lack of clear avenues for reporting or resolution.

“

“The lead coach isn’t leading... and no one says anything.”

WiHPC SenseMaker Report [2022]

This silence signals a systemic issue. Without intervention, misconduct becomes an expected feature of the coaching environment, one that women must work around, rather than report.

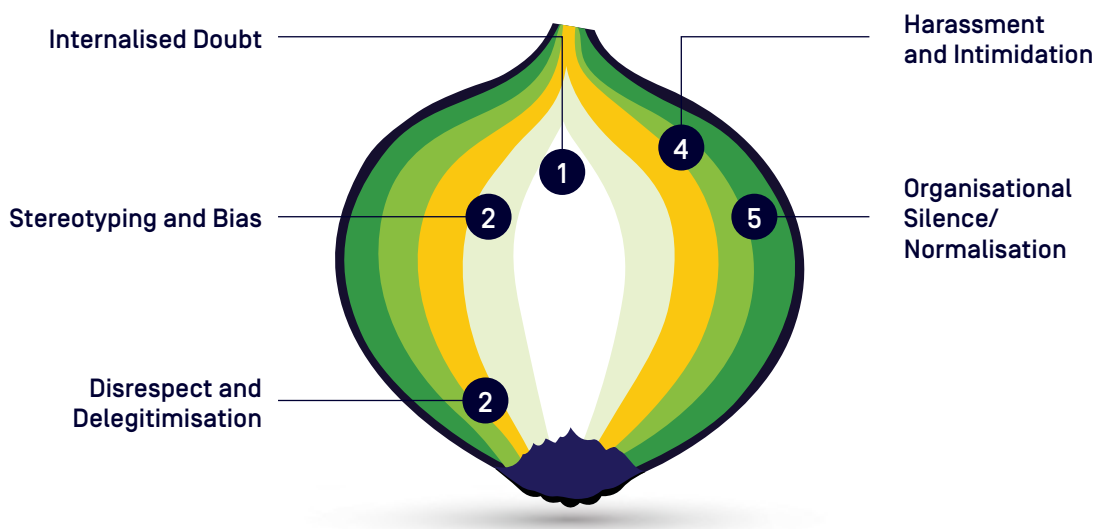


Figure 32: The systemic issues of Silence and normalisation

Each layer could include 1–2 quotes and a brief phrase summarising the experience. The schematic would show how deeper, more dangerous experiences are nested in environments where smaller behaviours are left unchecked.

Summary of Key Takeaways

- **Bias is not just cultural—it is operational:** It affects hiring, communication, and daily interactions.
- **Microaggressions accumulate:** Small dismissals, comments, or lack of recognition add up to major barriers.
- **Harassment remains prevalent:** Coaches—particularly women—are still subject to unsafe behaviour.
- **Silence sustains the problem:** Organisational inaction and passive tolerance allow harmful dynamics to persist.
- **Programs must be paired with accountability:** Without structural reform and behavioural expectations, development alone is not enough.

Theme 5: Reflection as Leadership Practice

Across the *Experiential Learning Programs (ELP)* and the *WiHPC Program Review*, reflection consistently emerged as a **central practice through which learning became meaningful, personalised, and impactful**. Participants described both structured tools [e.g., journaling, reframe techniques, debrief templates] and unstructured moments [e.g., group storytelling, post-tour self-assessment] as key mechanisms for internalising their growth and improving their leadership approach.

Reflection was not viewed as an add-on to learning, it was the **primary process by which new perspectives, self-awareness, and coaching improvements took root**.

5.1 Reflection as a Tool for Immediate Awareness

In the early stages of programs, reflection helped participants become aware of patterns in their thinking and emotional responses. It provided a language to interpret experience more constructively.

“

“I really enjoyed the day... breaking off into our mentor groups to discuss our coaching journey.”

ELP Report (2025)

“After the first session I left quite confused; however, the second workshop really solidified my reason for being there.”

ELP Report (2024)

These moments demonstrate how **reflection can convert confusion into clarity**, especially in peer environments where coaches unpack their experiences together.

5.2 Using Reflection to Refine Practice

As participants progressed, reflection tools became a way to embed learning in daily coaching life, supporting **feedback conversations, leadership growth, and athlete development**.

“

“I continuously use the reframe tool in my coaching and in my working life... I encourage my athletes to use reflective practices when debriefing their performances.”

ELP Report (2024)

“The program forced me to approach the coaching whilst on tour in a different way and be more reflective of the impact I was having.”

ELP Report (2024)

“I have tried to incorporate a bit more short but purposeful athlete reflection pre and post trainings.”

ELP Report (2025)

Participants weren't just learning about reflection, they were **deploying it with purpose**, both for self-regulation and athlete empowerment.

5.3 Reflection to Challenge Assumptions

Reflection also provided a safe yet powerful space to surface uncomfortable truths: about personal blind spots, ego, unproductive patterns, or limiting beliefs.

“

“I've come to realise that the outcomes we achieve are not solely indicative of failure or success... this helped me shift the narratives I previously told myself.”

ELP Report (2024)

“This program empowered me to find my voice... I had a light bulb moment... I could see how I was holding myself back.”

WiHPC Program Review (2023)

Reflection, in these examples, operates not just as an evaluative tool, but as a **mechanism for deeper identity work**, allowing participants to redefine success and realign their leadership approach.

5.4 Long-Term Reframing and Leadership Maturity

At the far end of the value spectrum, reflection helped participants **redefine how they see themselves**, their place in sport, and their long-term goals. This “reframing” was often profound, shifting from reactive to proactive, or from uncertainty to clarity.

“

“My individual success definition has changed slightly. I now value sharing and experience above technical knowledge.”

ELP Report (2025)

“This experience has opened my eyes... I need more experiences like that to maintain improvement and help others too.”

ELP Report (2024)

“This change has allowed my coaching relationships to grow over the past year.”

ELP Report (2025)

These reflections reflect a **maturing of identity**, where participants began to coach not only with greater competence but with greater intentionality and connection.



Figure 33: Value Creation Framework Reflection Map

Summary of Key Takeaways

- **Reflection was the bridge between insight and application:** It helped participants move from exposure to tools → behavioural change.
- **Structured tools worked well:** Participants highly valued tools like the reframe framework, peer discussion prompts, and feedback methods.
- **Reflection enhanced athlete engagement:** Coaches began using reflection not just for themselves, but as a developmental tool with athletes.
- **Leadership was redefined through reflection:** Many participants left with more grounded, authentic, and personally aligned definitions of success.



Theme 6: System Change vs Individual Empowerment

Over the course of multiple development programs, women in sport described transformational shifts in **confidence, identity, leadership ability, and reflective practice**. But alongside these personal breakthroughs was a sobering and consistent reflection: **individual empowerment alone is not enough**.

While participants felt more capable, more connected, and more authentic as leaders, many found that the broader **systems, policies, pathways, leadership structures, funding models—remained fundamentally unchanged**. For development to be meaningful and sustainable, many argued, it must be paired with **structural reform and cultural evolution** across the sporting ecosystem.

6.1 Empowerment Without Pathways

Even when participants experienced significant personal growth, they often returned to environments **not ready to accommodate or support their new selves**.

Taken from insights in executive summary:



Despite the benefit of programs on individual development, one consistent issue was the difficulty in implementing learned knowledge into practice, given the lack of opportunities (particularly for progression) in the system.

WiHPC Program Review (2023)

This gap between personal capability and systemic capacity not only limits the return on investment for programs, it also causes frustration, disengagement, or exit.

6.2 Representation and Role Models

A recurring message was that **representation matters**. Participants described how a visible presence of women in senior roles (or lack thereof) shaped perceptions of what was possible.



“To create champion women coaches, we need to see women coaches.”

WiHPC SenseMaker Report (2022)

These reflections affirm that **system change is not abstract**, it is felt daily in who is visible, who is listened to, and who is trusted in leadership roles.

6.3 One-Off Programs vs Ongoing Investment

Participants valued the programs, but **many voiced concerns about continuity, follow-through, and support beyond the program window**.

Taken from insights in executive summary:



Continuity is key... and expansion is better. Future programs would benefit greatly from running for a longer period of time to stimulate continued development. Additionally, providing accessibility to connect with other peers outside of programs would be of value.

WiHPC Program Review (2023)

Participants called for **longitudinal support, alumni networks, system leadership buy-in, and policy alignment**, rather than relying on single cohorts to carry the weight of cultural change.

6.4 Shifting from Exception to Expectation & not outsourcing empowerment

Another insight was the need to **move beyond the idea of “exceptional” women** breaking through a system not built for them, toward a model where inclusion and progression are **baked into the system**.

This shift requires **reimagining leadership**, recruitment, retention, and recognition – moving away from patchwork fixes toward sustainable equity.

Participants also noted that while development programs are powerful, they are not a substitute for **clear organisational responsibility** in making change happen.

In this light, personal development is necessary, but not sufficient without **parallel system reform**.

Summary of Key Takeaways

- **Individual growth must be matched by system reform:** Development programs change people—but people still work within unchanged structures.
- **Representation is critical:** Visibility of women in leadership enables belief and progression.
- **Sporadic efforts are insufficient:** Lasting change requires continuity, investment, and integration into policy and culture.
- **Equity is not about exceptions:** It is about rebalancing expectations and norms.
- **Change must be co-owned:** Empowering individuals without empowering their environments limits collective progress.

Recommendations

Overarching Insight

Across all programs, participants experienced significant personal and professional development—through meaningful connection, reflective practice, and deepened leadership capacity. These outcomes reaffirm the value of well-designed learning initiatives. However, for such development to create lasting impact, the broader sporting ecosystem must evolve alongside the individuals within it. Without parallel reform in structures, systems, and culture, even the most transformational experiences risk being contained rather than catalytic.

1. System-Level Reform

To embed the value of these programs at scale, systemic reform is essential.

First, role pathways must be redesigned with equity and transparency at their core. This means auditing current leadership and coaching tracks for fairness, visibility, and accessibility, then building alternative models that are flexible and inclusive. As one participant reflected, “Despite the benefit of programs... the issue was implementing learned knowledge with no opportunities.” *[WiHPC Review]*

Second, organisations must invest in visible representation. This includes setting targets for women in high-profile and high-performance roles across coaching, governance, and leadership. Visibility drives belief—not just among emerging coaches, but within the system itself. “To create champion women coaches, we need to see women coaches,” one participant emphasised. *[SenseMaker]*

Finally, a zero-tolerance approach to bias and behavioural misconduct is non-negotiable. Institutions must establish independent mechanisms for behavioural accountability, deliver consistent training on respect and inclusion, and ensure robust and trusted reporting pathways. As one story bluntly revealed: “They’d rather call my husband instead of talking to me.” *[SenseMaker]*

2. Program Design & Delivery

Even strong programs can be improved. Future iterations should refine their design with three priorities.

First, reflection and identity work should not be add-ons—they must remain core components of the learning process. Tools such as journaling, reframing, and storytelling need to be explicitly structured into delivery, because they are proven catalysts for deep change. One participant captured this beautifully: “Reflection has helped me grow beyond my self-perceptions.” *[ELP 2025]*

Second, peer connection and mentorship should be intentionally prioritised. This includes designing space for peer story-sharing, facilitated cohort dialogue, and structured mentoring. These networks outlast the formal program and anchor participants in a broader community. “This group became the strongest support network I have in the sector,” one participant shared. *[WiHPC 2023]*

Third, programs must be accessible in practice, not just in theory. Financial, geographic, and logistical barriers such as unpaid labour, childcare, or travel must be addressed through scholarships, stipends, and flexible modes of participation. As one candid story put it: “The combination of low pay and no maternity leave made it a career I would have to sacrifice too much to remain in.” *[SenseMaker]*

3. Post-Program Sustainability

For learning to translate into legacy, systems must support sustained growth beyond the final workshop.

One priority is to build long-term engagement models – structured alumni networks, follow-up workshops, and communities of practice that help participants continue developing, applying their learning, and supporting one another. “Continuity is key. Future programs need more time and connection beyond the program,” one participant advised. *[WiHPC 2023]*

Another critical strategy is to ensure that program outputs are linked to real opportunities. Organisations should coordinate internally to align graduate skillsets with tangible roles, board positions, or funded projects. Otherwise, as one participant warned, “My development will be wasted if there’s no place to apply what I’ve learned.” *[ELP 2024]*

Finally, it is time to evaluate not just individuals, but culture. Program success must also be measured by whether it shifts norms, policies, and patterns of inclusion across the sport. One powerful insight from the synthesis put it clearly: “We keep developing resilient women instead of changing the environment that makes resilience a survival skill.”

Appendix 3: The National Talent Development Framework for Women Coaches

The National Talent Development Framework for Women Coaches [The Framework] has been developed and refined over the past three years through workshops, forums and survey analysis with coaches, coach development leaders and high performance managers. The framework reflects the complexities of coaching in the Australian sporting system and considers the challenging transitions involved. There has been deliberate intent to understand the factors driving and hindering progress upon the Leaky Pipeline, by identifying the critical inflexion points in a high performance coach's career. We have endeavoured to integrate the Framework with the Australian HP Coach development framework and the current learning and development landscape.

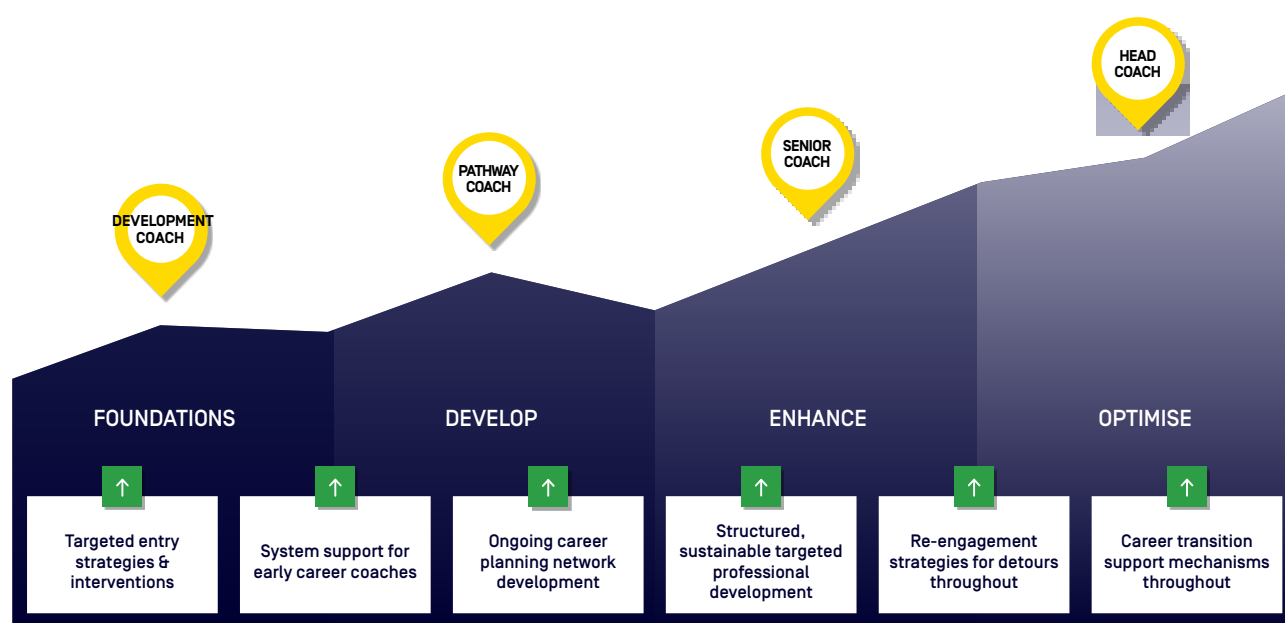


Figure 34: Understanding inflexion points and complexities of the HP coaching journey

Key principles in this development include:

- **Evidence-based design:** Ground the framework in key insights and evidence to ensure effectiveness and relevance.
- **Integration:** Integrate the framework with targeted offerings for women coaches, align it with the Australian HP Coach development framework and the leaky pipeline.
- **Inflexion points:** Deepening our understanding of key inflexion points enables us to strategically pinpointing resources and initiatives at appropriate stages in a coaches' career.
- **Career lifespan:** Evidence suggests that the needs for entry, development and retention throughout a career requires different strategies at different career points (LaVoi and Boucher, 2021).²
- **Gap filling:** Identify and fill gaps in existing opportunities, ensuring comprehensive support for women coaches at all stages of their careers.

² LaVoi, N. M., & Boucher, C. (2021). Supporting and Developing Women in Sport Coaching. In Routledge eBooks [pp. 177-197]. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003028642-14>

The Framework is founded upon the work of Nicole La Voi and Courtney J. Boucher (2021)³ who propose a model of stages of career progression. This model emphasizes each level of the environment impacts on developmental trajectories of coaches and their experiences. We have adapted their lifespan career approach for women coaches in the model below.

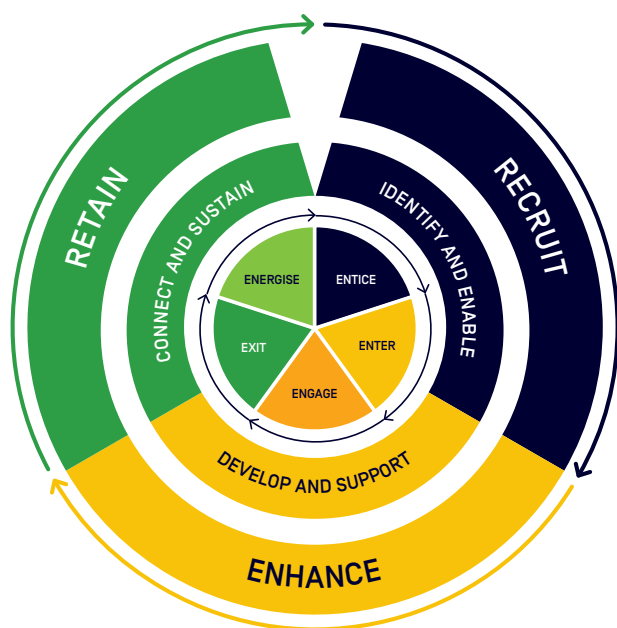


Figure 35: National Talent Development Framework for Women Coaches

This model enables us to identify and prioritise strategies to recruit, enhance and retain women coaches to be more effective and to optimise our endeavours in supporting their progression and development.



There are five phases in the model. [Refer to the graphic opposite].

Recruit

Recruitment of coaches requires identification (of talent) and enabling coaches to be in roles. This involves two phases; Entice and Enter.

Entice: encouraging more women to enter high performance coaching through various multifaceted strategies will differ at entry levels to the pipeline versus head coaching roles.

Enter: supporting newcomers with role orientation and skill development will look significantly different depending on role, experience, tasks required and identified capabilities of the coach.

Enhance

Enhancing the capabilities of the coach is often the area most focused on, but less understood.

Engage: This involves developing and supporting coaches by fostering mentorship, sponsorship, and inclusive environments while addressing life strategies.

Retain

Retention of coaches necessitates leaders and organisations to maintain connections and implement targeted strategies to sustain coaches in the HP landscape.

Exit: This requires the identification and development of strategies to support coaches leaving their roles voluntarily or involuntarily. It can include identification of transferable skills and support mechanisms (such as the Career Practitioner Referral Network (CPRN) and Mental Health Referral Network (MHRN)).

Energise: it is important for organisations to implement purposeful strategies for renewal, resilience, and personal growth. This might involve supporting transitions into other HP management roles or supporting mentorship training and other activities for lifelong learning.

³ LaVoi, N. M., & Boucher, C. (2021). Supporting and Developing Women in Sport Coaching. In Routledge eBooks (pp. 177-197). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003028642-14>

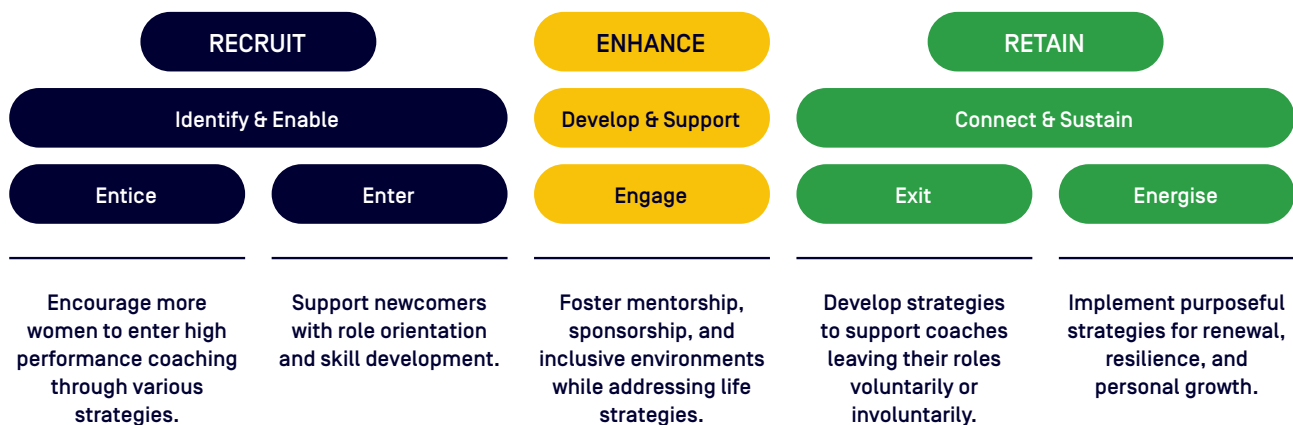


Figure 36: The five phases of the National Talent Development Framework for Women Coaches

Intervention points within a career lifecycle (e.g., Pathway Coach vs. Head Coach) will require a different strategy to recruit, enhance and retain coaches. To support women coaches to realise their potential, different strategies need to be developed for each stage and each point within the career lifecycle of a coach. The Framework endeavours to highlight targeted strategies for organisations in order to optimise

The definitions of the coaches are outlined below.

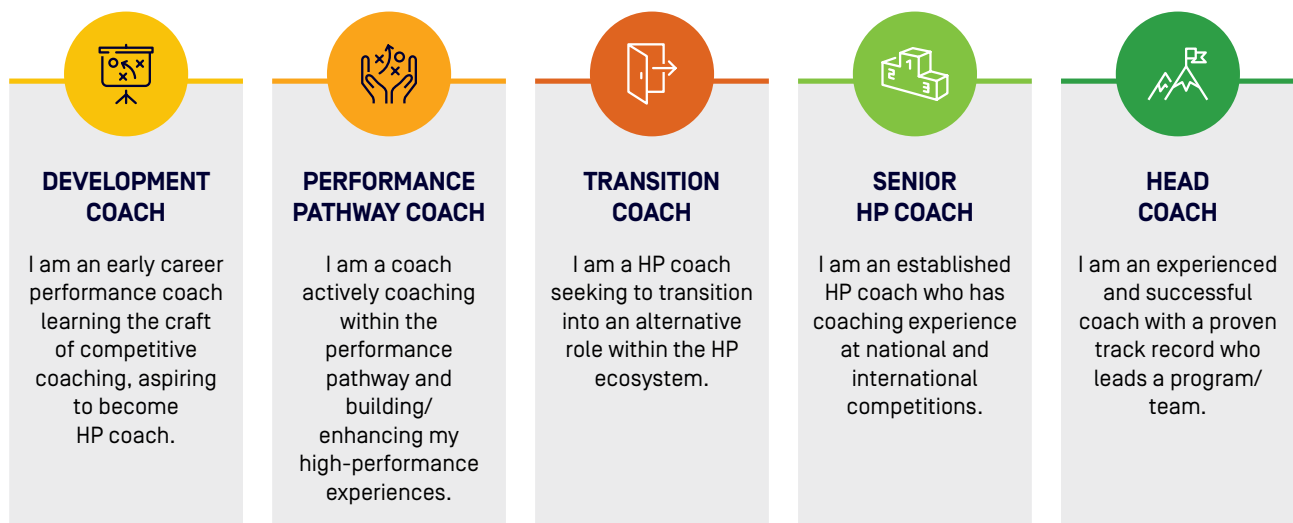


Figure 37: Coaching career lifecycles intervention points



Appendix 4: Engagement Table

The table below shows the engagement of sporting organisations in the project up to September 2025. The column on the right shows the overall impact for each sport. In some sports, engagement from coaches has been strong, but engagement from leaders has not been forthcoming.

Sport	NSO/D Engagement with the WiHPC project													Impact
	FoundationCoach	Initial workshops	2022 showcase	Working pods	Pipeline Mapping	Case Studies	Alumni and Summit	Programs: ELP, Women's Summit Pilot, ASPIRE, W Talent	Coach Development w'shops	CD Facilitator training	2024 showcase	Stories from the field		
Archery	Inv			Inv			●			●			Low	
Artistic Swimming							●	●●				●	Low	
Athletics	●	●	●●●	●		●	●	●●	●	●●	●●●	●●●	High	
Australia Rules	●	●	●●●	●	●	●			●	●●	●●●		Medium	
Badminton	●	●	Inv					●●	●	●			Low	
Baseball	●	●	●					●	●	●			Medium	
Basketball	●	●	●	●	●				●	●	●●●		Medium	
WC Basketball	●	●	●	●				●			●		Medium	
Boccia								●●	●	●	●	●●●	Medium	
Bowls	Inv				●					●	●●	●	Medium	
Combat	●												●	Low
Cricket	●	●	●	●							●		Low	
Cycling	●	●	●	●		●	●	●			●		Low	
Diving	●	●●●		●	●		●	●●	●	●●●			High	
Equestrian	●	●						●	●					Low
Fencing (Pathways)	●								●	●			Low	
Football	●	●	●●●	●	●					●	●●●		Medium	
Golf	●	●●●		●	●	●	●●			●●●			High	
Gymnastics	●	●	●●●				●	●	●●	●	●		Medium	
Hockey	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●●	●●●	●●●	Medium	
Modern Penthalon	●		●			●					●		Low	
National Rugby League	●									●				Low
Netball	●	●	●	●			●	●	●	●			●●●	Low
OWIA/SNOW	●	●	Inv	●		●			●	●●	●	●●●	Medium	
Paddle	●	●	●			●			●	●			●●●	High
Paralympics	●	●	●					●	●	●	●	●●●	High	
Rowing	●	●	●●●	●	●	●	●	●●●	●	●●	●●●	●●●	High	
Rugby 7s	●	●	●	●	●	●			●			●	Low	
Sailing	●	●	●	●			●	●		●			Low	
Shooting	Inv								●	●	●		Low	
Skate					●	●				●			Low	

Sport	NSO/D Engagement with the WiHPC project												Impact
	FoundationCoach	Initial workshops	2022 showcase	Working pods	Pipeline Mapping	Case Studies	Alumni and Summit	Programs: ELP, Women's Summit Pilot, ASPIRE, W Talent	Coach Development w/shops	CD Facilitator training	2024 showcase	Stories from the field	
Softball	●	●	●	●	●			●●	●	●●	●		Low
Sport Climbing								●	●		●		Low
Squash	●		●	●		●	●	●	●	●●	●●●		High
Surfing					●			●					Low
Swimming	●	●	●●●	●	●		●	●●●	●	●●	●●●	●●●	High
Taekwondo		●											Low
Table Tennis	●	●				●		●	●	●●	●●●	●●●	Medium
Tennis	●	●	●●●						●				Low
Triathlon	●	●	●	●	●		●		●		●		Low
Volleyball	●	●	●	●			●	●●	●	●●	●		Medium
Water Polo	●	●	●●●	●	●		●	●	●		●		Medium
Weightlifting													Low
Wheelchair Rugby			●		●						●		Low
VIS	●	●	●●●		●	●	●		●		●●●		High
QAS	●		●				●		●		●●●		High
NSWIS	●		●						●				Low
SASI	●		●●●			●	●		●		●●●		High
WAIS			Inv										Low
TIS													Low
AOC									●		●		
CGA			●			●			●		●		
Motorcycling					●								
Surf Life Saving Australia					●								

Table 16: National sporting organisation engagement.

Appendix 5: Links to Additional Reports

[WiHPC Fixing the Leaky Pipeline Action Plan](#)

[WiHPC Half Yearly Report June 2024](#)

[WiHPC Score Card](#)

[WiHPC Showcase Report](#)

[Toolkits and Resources | ASC](#)

[Women's Talent Development Framework](#)

[Our stories | ASC](#)



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