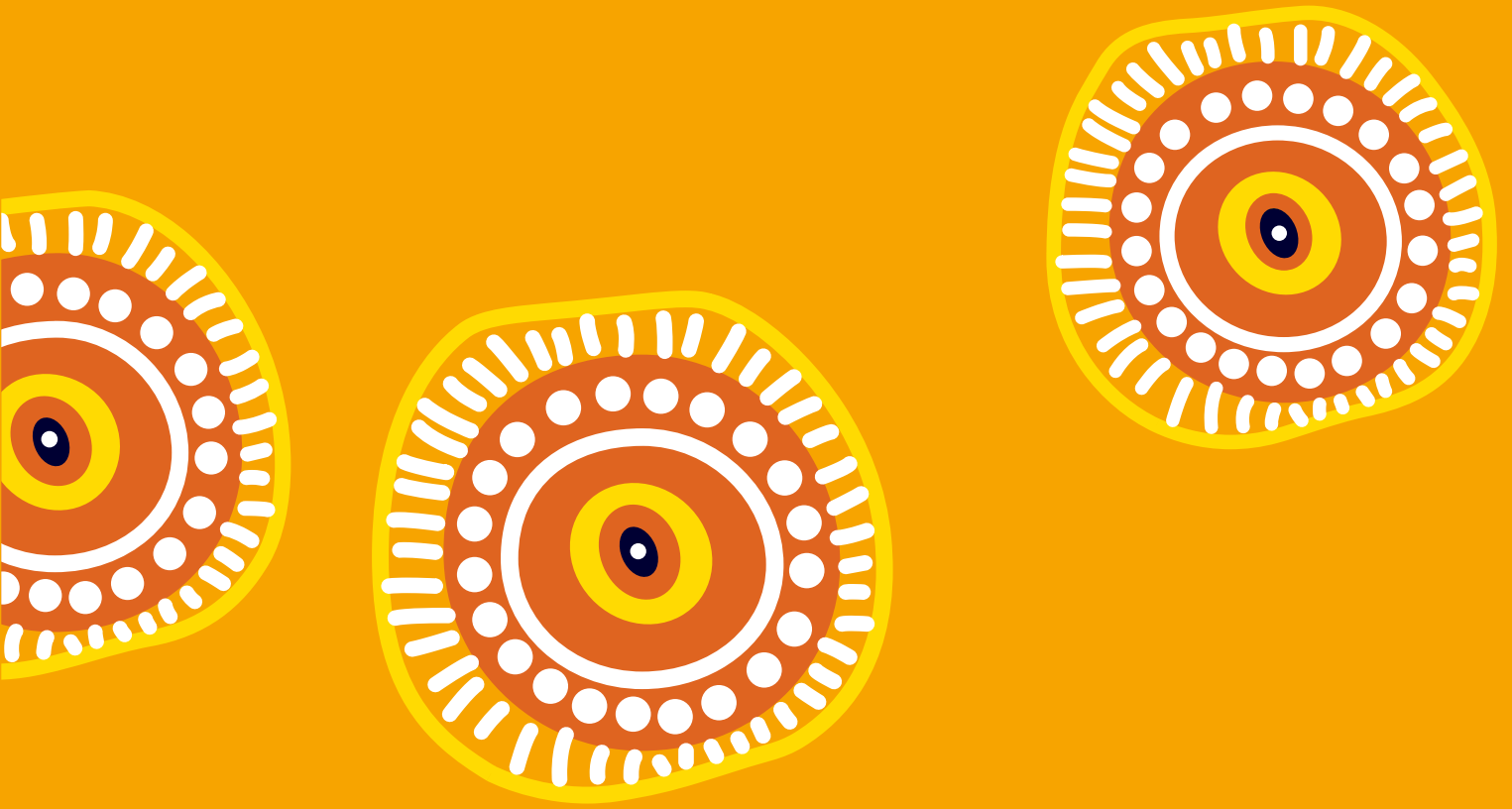




Coach Development Facilitators

Women in High Performance Coaching





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.

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A National Network of Coach Development Facilitators

Women in High Performance Coaching (WiHPC) Recommendation 6:

Establish and sustain a National Network of Coach Development Facilitators to enhance development and ongoing support of women coaches.

Objectives

The AIS High Performance (HP) Coach Development Team aims to identify, develop, attract, and retain world-class coaches to enhance the experiences and success of Australian athletes. Simultaneously it aims to build capability and capacity via system collaboration, integration and organisation that supports the sports that the coaches work within.

Integral to empowering, enabling, and supporting coaches is building a coach development workforce that promotes diversity and belonging.

Developing a National Network of Coach Development Facilitators to specifically support women coaches will:

- Build capability of the current NSO Coach Development workforce,
- Create learning environments to better support women coaches,
- Broaden diversity in Coach Development workforce,
- Provide targeted facilitator training in situ with support,
- Provide talent transfer career options for coaches in HP.

Background

Developmental learning experiences provided for women coaches are highly valued. Insights from the recent Women in High Performance Coaching (WiHPC) retrospective survey of women-only learning programs report the importance of opportunity, and a learning environment that promotes connection, safety, and support being integral to learning and development of women coaches. Whilst the number and quality of programs targeting women has impacted significantly on those selected, it does not address the system and organisational culture challenges women coaches endure.

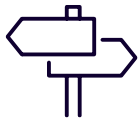
The introduction of a framework to support the development programs for women coaches is a significant step towards a system solution. Refer to the Talent Development Framework here: [Toolkits and Resources | Australian Institute of Sport](#).



Why is this project important?

Integral to a framework and targeted programs to develop women coaches is building the capability and a network of coach development facilitators who create the learning environments for women.

The coach development landscape and women coaches



Diversity with Coach Development

We must better understand gender diversity within the coach development workforce and create greater opportunities for women to lead and facilitate coach development.

Educational experiences such as coach accreditation courses are often the first touchpoint for women coaches. Not only are many of their participant cohort men, but anecdotally we are aware that many of the coach development educators and leaders are also men. This percentage only increases at the higher-level accreditation programs within the High Performance landscape.



Connection, safety and support

We need to ensure the learning environments provided to women coaches and facilitated by leaders who understand the needs of women coaches and build connection, safety, and support.

Insights from the recent Women in High Performance Coaching (WiHPC) retrospective survey of women-only learning programs report the importance of opportunity through selection, and a learning environment that promotes connection, safety, and support.

Without the extent of networks often leveraged by their male counterparts which can lead to 'fast tracking' through coach education programs, women coaches face greater progression challenges. This is often compounded for women coaches when they are endeavouring to enter the coaching pathway or reengaging after a break from coaching.



Talent transfer and retention

We need to provide opportunities for women coaches to transfer their knowledge and talent and remain in HP sport. One such opportunity is facilitating coach development for HP coaches.

Sustaining a career as a high performance coach is challenging for everyone, but more so for women for a variety of reasons. Lifestyle challenges and competing demands can make HP coaching long term unviable for many women. It is imperative that we retain their knowledge, skills and expertise to benefit the sport system and meet performance objectives. Offering alternative career pathways into coach development, through identification of transferable skills provides an opportunity to retain talent and enhance their impact across the system.



Targeted gendered learning opportunities

We need to better understand the needs of our participant cohort and ensure the needs of women coaches are understood and accommodated.



Recent insights from the AIS retrospective project on coach and leadership programs has highlighted differences in the impact of gendered and ungendered learning programs for the women participants. It is recognised there is a need for different styles of programs to be provided at appropriate inflexion points in coaching careers based on individual requirements.



Workforce capability building

We need to strengthen the capability of the coach development workforce to effectively support learning and development of women coaches.

High Performance coach development requires bespoke solutions. Providing opportunities for National Sporting Organisations (NSO) and National Institutes of Sport (NIN) to better understand the needs of women coaches and enhance their capability through a 2 day workshop will strengthen the capacity of the sports and individuals to directly impact on the experiences of women coaches.

Building upon what we do now

A phased and pilot approach

A phased approach to building capacity and capability of the HP coach development workforce to support women coaches has been undertaken over an 18 month period (February 2024 – June 2025).

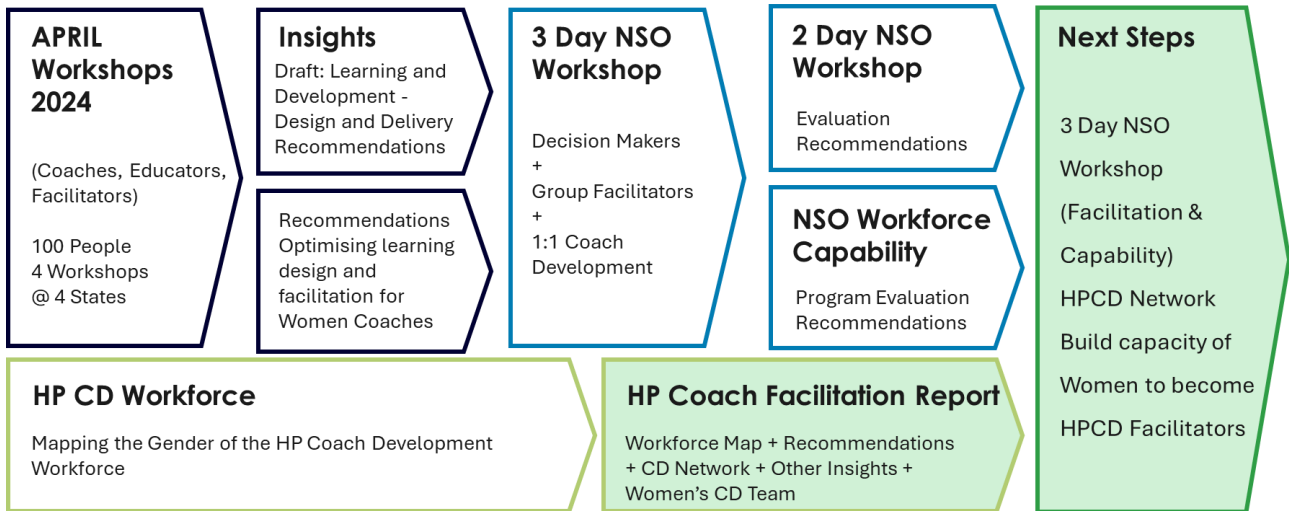
This has involved the following steps:

- Preliminary workshops with key stakeholders engaged in the design, delivery, and facilitation of learning and development for High Performance coaches.
- The design and delivery¹ of a three day coach development facilitators program to enhance facilitation skills and build capacity of the current and future workforces to support women coaches.
 - A follow up two day workshop to share individual and organisational learning action plans and evaluate the program.
- An audit of the high performance coach development workforce to identify trends and insights into creating a more diverse workforce.
- Identification and development of a nascent network of coach development facilitators.
- Development of a preliminary group of women coach development leaders.
- Recommendations for design and delivery of optimal learning and development environments for women HP coaches.
- Design of a learning and development program to build capability and capacity within the HP Coach Development Workforce.

¹ The ICCE has material and content that can be utilised to design this program, together with the knowledge of the HP Coach Development Team



HP Coach Development Facilitation + Capability



A National Network

Building a network that promotes co-facilitation, peer learning and resource sharing whilst building capacity will contribute to supporting a Women's Talent Development Framework.

Evaluation and monitoring

Evaluation and monitoring of this program with transparent reporting of impact is an integral component of the HP 2032+ Sport Strategy and imperative to drive a system approach to develop women coaches.

Links

Refer also to the Women's Talent Development Framework



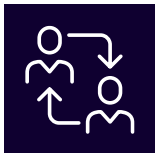
Appendix

Key WiHPC insights

As part of the WiHPC we conducted a retrospective analysis of the last decade of both women only and mixed gendered (or ungendered) programs.

We conducted a SenseMaker² survey to evaluate the role and function of women's only development programs for women coaches and managers, to better understand the nuance and difference that these programs provide in supporting the development of women in sport. The findings were contextualised relative to responses from men, and women who participated in mixed gender programs. This information will be used to support the development of future initiatives for the WiHPC and women coaches.

156 participants, across 44 sports participated in the survey. Participants were majority high-performance coaches but also included managers and performance support staff.



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.



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.



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.



Other factors

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 (i.e., COVID19), with these factors influencing the nuance of perceived program impact.



Continuity and expansion

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.

^{2 2} The survey was hosted through a SenseMaker platform, designed in conjunction with Cognitive Edge. Survey questions were developed through direct consultation with stakeholders from the AIS High Performance Coaching group.





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.



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.



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.



Diversity of perspective

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.

Considerations for Developing Future Programs



Gendered environment

There is a need for learning environment options for gender.

The function of gendered programs for women carries a unique and necessary function that should be preserved.



Who benefits?

There is a need to understand "who" would benefit from being in a given learning environment.

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 link women with the right program for their individual needs should be a focus of future programs.



Continuity and expansion

New programs should explore continuity and expansion.

Regardless of gender, some key considerations for future programs are relation to provision of more time for development, and creating longer term expanded communities of practice.

For more information refer to the Women in High Performance website: [Women in High Performance Coaching | Australian Institute of Sport \(ais.gov.au\)](https://www.womeninhighperformance.com.au)





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