

# GENDER EQUITY POLICY

## ORGANIZATION: Provincial Women's Softball Association

### Definitions

1. The following terms have these meanings in this Policy:

- a) *"Gender"* - The socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that society assigns to masculinity or femininity.
- b) *"Gender Equity"* – The fair allocation of resources, programs, and decision-making to all individuals without discrimination on the basis of gender identity. Gender Equity also involves addressing any imbalances in the benefits available to individuals of different gender identities. For the purposes of this policy, when we consider gender equity issues, we are referring to the experiences of girls, women, and those who identify as women.
- c) *"Individuals"* – Individuals employed by, or engaged in activities with, the Organization including, but not limited to, athletes, coaches, convenors, officials, volunteers, managers, administrators, committee members, parents and guardians, spectators at events, and Directors and Officers of the Organization.
- d) *"Gender Identity"* – Is each person's internal or individual experience of gender. It is their sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from their birth-assigned sex. Gender identity is fundamentally different from person's sexual orientation.

### Requirements for Gender Equity

2. Gender Equity requires:

- a) Ensuring that everyone has access to a full range of opportunities to achieve the social, psychological and physical benefits that come from participating and leading in sport and physical activity;
- b) Providing everyone with a full range of activity, program and leadership choices that meet their needs, interests and experiences;
- c) Examining organizational practices and policies to ensure they do not hinder participation or leadership based on gender.

3. Gender Equity does not require:

- a) Making the same programs, education, training, resources and facilities available to all individuals. Some may be the same as those offered to one gender, some may be altered, and some may be altogether different to satisfy the requirements for equity.

### Benefits of Gender Equity<sup>1</sup>

4. The Organization recognizes the following benefits of gender equity:

- a) Attracting more girls and women to sport and physical activity enhances the revenue base and increases the market segment to which the sport appeals;
- b) Fully representing the population base and tapping the resources of every member results in a larger, stronger and more effective organization;
- c) Skilled girls and women can provide the organization with an important larger talent pool of

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://womenandsport.ca/gender-equity/what-is-gender-equity/>

- administrators, coaches, board members and officials;
- d) Being inclusive of all individuals in sport attracts public interest and private investment which in turn attracts more members to the organization;
  - e) Taking the lead in promoting girls and women brings prestige, a stronger organizational reputation and support to the organization;
  - f) Working together, all genders can learn to build equal partnerships, increase knowledge sharing and improve the safety of sport for all;
  - g) Providing opportunities for parents and children of girls and women to get involved can enhance both family relationships and the sport or activity;
  - h) Sport and physical activity can provide opportunities for people to understand and respect their bodies which fosters a healthy lifestyle and mitigates health issues;
  - i) By fulfilling its legal responsibility to treat everyone involved in the organization fairly and making a commitment to gender equity, the organization will be better able to mitigate risk.

### **Purpose**

- 5. The purpose of this Policy is to ensure the Organization is committed to Gender Equity in its operations, programming, and governance.

### **Operations**

- 6. As part of its commitment to having gender equitable operations, the Organization will:
  - a) Ensure that girls and women are portrayed equitably in promotional materials and official publications, and that gender-inclusive language is used in all communications;
  - b) Ensure that individuals have no barriers to participation on the basis of gender in the Organization's programs, training, and other opportunities;
  - c) Encourage gender-balanced representation on the Board of Directors and on all committees by working to ensure that no more than 60% of the elected positions on the Board of Directors and two-thirds of elected/appointed positions on Committees are from one gender;
  - d) Handle any instance of discriminatory behaviour on the basis of gender according to the Organization's *Code of Conduct and Ethics* and *Discipline and Complaints Policy*.

### **Programming**

- 7. As part of its commitment to equitable programming for Individuals, the Organization will:
  - a) Commit to the equitable allocation of resources, financial and otherwise, and the provision of services for girls and women;
  - b) Ensure that the achievement of equitable opportunities is a key consideration when developing, updating, or delivering programs and policies;
  - c) Provide opportunities for leadership development for girls and women;
  - d) Collect gender-based data to monitor and evaluate the participation of Individuals from girls and women;
  - e) Ensure Individuals are neither disadvantaged nor denied access to programming on the basis of gender.

### **Human Resource Management**

- 8. As part of its commitment to the use of equitable human resource management practices, the Organization will:

- a) Aim to achieve a gender-balanced representation of staff, administrators, coaches, directors, officials, and volunteers;
- b) Adopt, whenever possible, flexible work practices such as flex-time, job-sharing, and home-based offices;
- c) Use interview techniques that do not discriminate based on gender; and
- d) Adopt a pay scale reflecting equal pay for work of equal value for its employees.

### **Ongoing Commitment to Gender Equity**

9. The Organization resolves to incorporate gender equity matters in its strategies, plans, actions, and operations and will regularly evaluate its progress.
  
10. If an Individual does not believe the Organization is demonstrating its commitment to Gender Equity as described in this Policy, the Individual may submit a complaint under the terms of the Organization's *Discipline and Complaints Policy*.

### **Policy**

11. This Policy is based on a template developed by Canadian Women & Sport and Sport Law and Strategy Group in December 2019 for use within the Canadian sport sector. The Organization is encouraged to contact Canadian Women & Sport every two years for policy updates.
  
12. Refer to the *Implementation Guide for the Canadian Women & Sport Gender Equity Policy* for guidelines on how to enact the policy requirements described herein.

**Policy Name:** Gender Equity Policy  
**Ratification Date:** October 18, 2024  
**Review Date:** October, 2027

# IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR THE CANADIAN WOMEN & SPORT GENDER EQUITY POLICY

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## **PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE**

This Guide outlines how organizations can adopt Canadian Women & Sport’s *Gender Equity Policy* (the “Policy”) and enact the requirements described in the Policy.

## **ADOPTING THE POLICY**

Canadian Women & Sport encourages organizations to review the Policy and ensure that the organization has the capacity to adhere to the policy requirements. The Policy was intentionally developed to be adopted by sport and recreation organizations of all types – national, provincial/territorial, and local – and sport and recreation organizations of all sizes. Your organization should be able to adopt all requirements.

Canadian Women & Sport encourages organizations to modify the Policy, but only if your organization is *adding to or improving* the requirements. For example, your organization may decide that it must always display images of individuals from all genders on the landing page of its website. The requirements of the Policy in this area are general and not as specific as this example.

Canadian Women & Sport encourages organizations to take a gender *equity* approach—as opposed to a gender *equality* approach—to the implementation of the Policy. Gender equality is the process of allocating resources, programs and decision making so that everyone has equal opportunities (for example, offering girls and boys soccer programs). Taking an equitable approach goes one step further by recognizing that different people may need different things to realize the same result and by ensuring programs and services are tailored accordingly to ensure the opportunities provided are truly equal for everyone. For more information on gender equity, Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization review [What is Gender Equity?](#) on the Canadian Women & Sport website.

Depending on the structure of your organization, your Board of Directors and/or your Members may be responsible for formally adopting the Policy. Canadian Women & Sport recommends the following messaging when proposing to adopt the Policy:

- Highlight the benefits of Gender Equity (as described within the Policy and on the Canadian

Women & Sport website)

- Explain that the policy requirements are not onerous and organizations with limited capacity can adopt them
- Share the [commitment to gender equity](#) by the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation
- Provide links to Canadian Women & Sport [resources](#) that support Gender Equity

If your Members or your Board have questions about the Gender Equity Policy before adopting it or would like a webinar/presentation on the benefits of Gender Equity, contact Canadian Women & Sport ([info@womenandsport.ca](mailto:info@womenandsport.ca)) to receive more specific advice.

Once you have adopted your Policy, your organization should consider appointing a Gender Equity Committee to oversee the Policy and ensure compliance.

## **OPERATIONS**

There are four policy requirements in the Operations section of the Policy.

- a) *Ensure that all genders are portrayed equitably in promotional materials and official publications, and that gender-neutral language is used in all communications.***

Canadian Women & Sport recommends that organizations regularly review their online and offline materials to ensure girls and women are represented. Also, organizations should portray images of girls and women in positions of strength and not display them in a submissive or vulnerable role.

For gender-inclusive language, Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization review [gender-inclusive writing tips](#) and always ensure correct pronouns are used. The positions on the Board of Directors should also not be gendered (e.g., use “Marketing Chair” instead of “Marketing Chairman”).

- b) *Ensure that Individuals from all genders have no barriers to participation on the basis of gender in the Organization’s programs, training, and other opportunities.***

Ensuring there are no barriers to participation based on gender is a broad, constant goal for all organizations to strive towards. It touches every aspect of the organization: governance and staff, coaching, officiating, programming, funding, awards, competition, etc. It is important to recognize that in many aspects of sport, girls and women have experienced historic discrimination and bias that has prevented them from accessing and enjoying the same benefits as boys and men. Equity helps to address that historical imbalance.

Organizations may get pushback when developing girl/woman-only programming. But such programming is often necessary if girls and women are to participate in a way that meets their needs. Co-ed environments work for some people but not everyone. Organizations need to listen and adjust so they can recruit and retain more girls and women as athletes, coaches, directors, officials, volunteers, and staff.

Canadian Women & Sport reminds organizations that girls are permitted to participate on boys' teams—even if a comparable girls' team is available—provided they have comparable skills.<sup>2</sup> Also, organizations can justify not allowing boys to play on girls-only teams if this would disadvantage the girls who require a girls-only environment so they can play.<sup>3</sup>

Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization review the Canadian Women & Sport publication [Actively Engaging Women and Girls: Addressing the Psycho-Social Factors](#) to better understand the barriers to participation in sport and physical activity that girls and women face.

Canadian Women & Sport also recommends that the organization review the Canadian Women & Sport publication [Sex Discrimination in Sport](#) to better understand sex discrimination issues and jurisdictions that oversee sex discrimination legislation.

- c) Encourage gender-balanced representation by all genders on Board of Directors and on all committees by working to ensure that at least 40% of the elected positions on the Board of Directors, and members appointed to committees are from the minority gender.**

Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization review the Canadian Women & Sport publication [Good Practices for Creating Gender-Equitable Boards in Sport](#). One best practice described in this resource is for the organization to include in its Bylaws the requirement for gender-balanced representation on the Board of Directors. Including this requirement in the organization's legal governing document mandates accountability for meeting it.

Canadian Women & Sport also recommends that the organization review the Canadian Women & Sport publication [Women on Boards: A Guide to Getting Involved](#) and provide that document to potential nominees.

Canadian Women & Sport recommends that organizations strive to achieve the following goals:

- Gender-balance in the delegations to external events
- Gender-balance in the speakers and presenters at conferences or meetings hosted by the organization
- Gender-balance in the chairing of committees

- d) Handle any incidence of discriminatory behaviour on the basis of gender according to the Organization's Code of Conduct and Ethics and Discipline and Complaints Policy.**

Canadian Women & Sport expects that all organizations will have a *Code of Conduct and Ethics* that requires individuals within the organization to comply with the *Code*. The organization's policies for complaints and dispute resolution (such as a *Discipline and Complaints Policy*) should provide for a procedurally fair mechanism to report and act on complaints.

Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization review its existing policies to ensure any references to the new *Gender Equity Policy* are included where applicable.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://sportlaw.ca/girls-playing-on-boys-teams/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/discrimination\\_full.pdf](https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/discrimination_full.pdf)

## **PROGRAMMING**

There are five policy requirements in the Programming section of the Policy.

**a) *Commit to the equal allocation of resources, financial and otherwise, and the provision of services for gender minorities.***

Canadian Women & Sport reminds organizations that they should provide funding, resources and supports, aiming to meet the requirements for gender equity and anti-discrimination. This implies that girls and women should be provided with the supports they need to experience the same benefits from sport that boys and men enjoy. In some instances, this may mean girls and women require more support than boys and men do, to address historical imbalances. Or they may require different supports.

As a specific example, Canadian Women & Sport suggests that organizations apportion equitably any grants or sponsorship funding between men's and women's programming or competitions. In some instances, this may mean the same funding. In other instances, it may mean providing more grants or sponsorship to women's programming to address historical imbalances in the support they have received. Similarly, if the organization hosts competitions or championships, it should not exclusively host competitions or championships for one gender but should alternate between men's and women's events. It should provide a similar host experience regardless of the gender of the competitors.

**b) *Ensure that the achievement of equitable opportunities is a key consideration when developing, updating, or delivering programs and policies.***

The organization should consider girls and women when developing and updating programming. It must recognize instances where girls and women are experiencing a structural disadvantage or need different approaches compared to boys and men.

The intentional creation of a welcoming, inclusive, and equitable environment is important to the achievement of equitable opportunities. To better understand how to create this environment, Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization review the Canadian Women & Sport publication [\*Actively Engaging Women and Girls: Addressing the Psycho-Social Factors\*](#).

Providing equitable opportunities can be a major change for many organizations. Every individual in a leadership position should be involved in embracing what may be a new direction. All leaders have a significant role to play as allies for increasing programming for girls and women. For ideas on how to engage allies, Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization review [\*What is Your Role\*](#) on their website.

Canadian Women & Sport also recommends that the organization be aware of sport-related programming opportunities or initiatives that can be adapted or integrated into existing programming. Some examples:

- [Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program](#)
- [Women in Coaching \(Coaching Association of Canada\)](#)
- [Keeping Girls in Sport eLearning Module](#)

To better understand your organization's gender equity strengths and gaps before developing, updating or delivering programs and policies, Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization complete a gender equity assessment using their [Gender Equity Self-Assessment Tool](#).

**c) Provide opportunities for leadership development for gender minorities.**

For information, tools and resources on women and leadership, including workshop and webinar opportunities, Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization visit the [Canadian Women & Sport website](#) and/or subscribe to the Canadian Women & Sport [eNews](#), In the Loop.

Canadian Women & Sport also recommends reviewing the Assessment Tool provided in their publication [Towards Gender Equity for Women in Sport](#)—particularly the goal that relates to Leadership.

**d) Collect gender-based data to monitor and evaluate the participation of Individuals from all genders.**

The organization should track gender in their registration database for participants and leadership positions. The organization should regularly review participation and leadership numbers based on gender to identify any trends and to track progress towards gender-equitable participation and leadership.

**e) Ensure Individuals are neither disadvantaged nor denied access to programming on the basis of their gender.**

Canadian Women & Sport reminds organizations of their legal duty to not discriminate against participants based on their gender.

Canadian Women & Sport encourages the organization to include questions relating to the specific experience of individuals, based on their gender, in year-end surveys of participants, interviews and/or focus groups. Understanding the lived experience of participants is essential to making changes that will ensure programming is equitable and to ensuring that the organization is meeting its legal obligations.

## **HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

There are four requirements in the Human Resource Management section of the Policy.

Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization complete a gender equity assessment using the [Gender Equity Self-Assessment Tool](#) to examine various aspects of your organization, including human resources.

Canadian Women & Sport also recommends reviewing the Assessment Tool that was provided in the publication [Towards Gender Equity for Women in Sport](#)—particularly the goal that relates to Systems and Structures.



- a) Aim to achieve a gender-balanced representation of staff, administrators, coaches, directors, officials, and volunteers.**

In addition to ensuring gender-balanced representation on the Board of Directors and on committees (discussed in the 'Operations' section, above), Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization track the gender of all individuals who are hired by, or who volunteer with, the organization. The organization should improve its gender balance from year to year and aim for a gender-balanced organization.

- b) Adopt, whenever possible, flexible work practices such as flex-time, job-sharing and home-based offices.**

Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization review and update policies for human resources to include these policy requirements. They should also update Employment Agreements, with assistance from an employment lawyer, to provide options that are appropriate for the organization.

For ideas on creating an equitable work environment and adopting equitable practices when advertising for positions, developing equitable workplace practices, creating employee agreements, providing professional development opportunities and more, Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization review tools created by [Catalyst: Workplaces that work for women](#).

- c) Use interview techniques that do not discriminate based on gender.**

Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization explore using techniques that value the individual's gender rather than discriminate against it. Job descriptions should be gender neutral and inclusive. The organization should also consider the strengths of a blend of employees and volunteers that is diverse and inclusive of all genders. Canadian Women & Sport does not recommend gender-blind hiring or recruitment techniques because these diminish the lived experiences of individuals.<sup>4</sup> Instead, consider using structured interviews that ask the same questions of all candidates. Train those conducting interviews to identify their unconscious bias.

For guidance on how to develop job descriptions that are gender neutral and inclusive, Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization review the [Catalyst Blog](#).

To learn more about how to create interview questions and techniques that do not discriminate based on gender, Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization review [Eliminate Gender Bias from the Recruitment Process Tool](#), created by Catalyst.

To better understand how unconscious bias can impact your hiring practices and what you can do to help overcome it, Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization review tools created by [Lean In](#), in particular the exercises in 50 Ways to Fight Bias.

- d) Adopt a pay scale reflecting equal pay for work of equal value for its employees.**

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/06/opinion/sunday/job-interview-without-gender.html>

Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization audit its current salary structure and look for any issues related to inequitable pay. Canadian Women & Sport recognizes that individuals with more experience or time with the organization will be paid more for equal work done by new employees in the same role. However, the organization must not adopt a pay scale that includes gender as a metric.

To learn more about pay equity, Canadian Women & Sport recommends that the organization review [\*The Facts About the Gender Pay Gap in Canada\*](#), on the Canadian Women's Foundation Website.

### **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Canadian Women & Sport recommends that before adopting the Gender Equity Policy, each organization complete the Canadian Women & Sport [\*Gender Equity Assessment Tool\*](#). Organizations can record their score and re-take the Assessment Tool every two years to determine if their commitment to Gender Equity has created improvements in their organization.