



**Northern Region  
Football**

# **NRF GENDER EQUITY CHARTER**

**BUILDING AN EQUITY  
ACTION PLAN**

A guide to creating meaningful change for Girls  
and Women in your football club.



# Contents

Introduction	3
- The Equity Charter	3
- Purpose of this document	3
Glossary	5
<b>SECTION 1: Understanding the Landscape</b>	<b>6</b>
The Landscape of Women's Football	7
- Why having more girls and women benefits your club	7
- What stops girls and women getting involved	8
- What motivates girls and women to be involved	8
<b>SECTION 2: Equity Action Plan Suggestions</b>	<b>9</b>
Action Plan Framework	9
- Leadership, Governance and Planning	10
- Participation and Development	12
- Value and Visibility	16
- Resources and Opportunities	18
- Facilities	20
References and Resources	22
<b>APPENDIX 1: Gender Equity Action Plan Template</b>	<b>23</b>





## Northern Region Football

# Introduction

There's never been more growth in Girls and Women's football. FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 and the Ford Football Ferns' win over Norway were a historical milestone for women's sport in Aotearoa New Zealand, and created interest in women's football like never before.

However, girls and women still experience football within traditional environments and structures that don't always meet their needs.

Now's the time to take this once in a generation opportunity to truly deliver equity and inclusivity for the Girls and Women participating in our game. Football clubs are at the heart of our communities and are the starting point for everyone in their football journey. It's crucial to recognise that each club faces unique challenges in various areas of the game – membership, volunteers, facilities, resources.

## The Gender Equity Charter

Access For All is part of Northern Region Football's purpose – partnering with our clubs to deliver the Gender Equity Charter is a key part of this mahi.

The Charter is designed to allow clubs to tailor their own path to gender equity, building on the work that's gone before to define what success looks like in your club environment.

The Equity Charter asks clubs to commit to fostering an inclusive environment for girls and women in football within five pillars that play a significant role in the experiences of girls and women in football clubs:

1. Leadership and Governance

2. Participation and Development

3. Value and Visibility

4. Resources and Opportunities

5. Facilities

## Purpose of This Document

As part of joining the Equity Charter, clubs have committed to changing the experience for girls and women participating in football at their club. This document helps you construct a Club Equity Action Plan, regardless of where you're at on the journey.

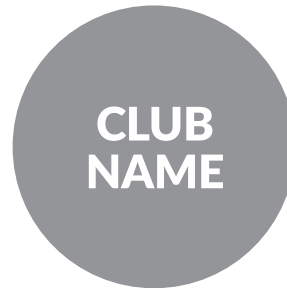
Some clubs have front-footed this shift, others are ready but are unsure where to start. The action plan's ideas and suggestions are designed to guide and support you to improve and progress.

**Section One** looks at the current landscape for girls and women in football, and across women's sport.

**Section Two** has considerations and guidance for clubs to develop their Equity Action Plan, building on the five Equity Charter pillars.



**Northern Region  
Football**



# NRF Gender Equity Charter

*Our Commitment to Equity*

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## **CLUB NAME**

commits to creating an equitable environment for girls and women in football.

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### **WE COMMIT TO:**

- ✓ Leadership, governance, and planning that reflects and supports gender equity.
  - ✓ Equitable participation and development opportunities, including juniors and youth girls-only football.
  - ✓ Make girls and women visible, showing their value in our club.
  - ✓ Equitable resources and opportunities for girls and women.
  - ✓ Fit for purpose facilities that meet the specific needs of girls and women in our club.
- 

*Signed in 2023*





# SECTION 1:

## Understanding the Landscape

Insights into the current landscape for girls and women in football, and in sport more widely.

### The Landscape of Women's Football

**30 Million** girls and women play football around the world [8]

**#1**  
Football is the most popular team sport in New Zealand across all genders.

**#2**  
Football is the second most popular team sport for girls and women in New Zealand behind netball [8,9]

**5%**  
increase in 2022 in girls and women participating in football in New Zealand from 2021 [1]

**27%**  
increase in 2022 in girls and women participating in futsal in New Zealand from 2021 [1]



## How Having More Girls and Women Benefits Your Club:

- Diversity of perspectives in decision making provides better quality outcomes for your club. [12]
- Increased eligibility and appeal to potential sponsors and funders. There are many funders with specific outcomes relating to girls and women
- A more appealing and welcoming environment for whole families [11]
- More players, supporters, volunteers, and workforce
  - Women can have an influential role in their families [11]
  - Children are more inclined to participate in physical activity if their parents also participate [11]

## How Girls and Women Benefit From Playing Sport:

- Girls who play secondary school sport are more likely to perform better academically [3]
- Girls and women who play sport have higher confidence and self-esteem than those who don't [3]
- Girls and women who play sport experience lower levels of depression, anxiety and stress [11]
- Girls and women who play sport have a more positive body image and experience more positive psychological wellbeing than those who don't [3]
- Four hours of physical exercise per week can reduce the risk of breast cancer by up to 60% [3]
- Lower risk of cardiovascular diseases, obesity and other chronic illnesses [11]





## What Stops Girls and Women Getting Involved?

- Time commitment and constraints [9,11]
- Lack of money for fees, equipment, clothing required [11]
- Lack of access to information [11]
- Fear of judgement of ability, appearance etc [9]
- Confidence in own ability [9,11]
- Social judgement [9]
- Low self-esteem [9]
- Concerns for safety [11]

## What Motivates Girls and Women to be Involved:

- Sense of belonging [10]
- Sense of achievement/ feel good moments [9]
- Improvement of physical health and fitness [9,10]
- Social connections [9,10]
- Increase self-confidence [9]





# SECTION 2:

## Equity Action Plan Ideas & Suggestions

### Action Plan Framework

We recognise our clubs are at unique stages of their journey to equitable environments in football. This guide is designed to prompt ideas and actions for clubs at any stage of this kaupapa.

The ideas are grouped under the five Equity Charter pillars, split into essential and recommended actions in each.

#### ESSENTIAL ACTIONS

#### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Essential actions are ideas most likely to deliver high impact change to the landscape for women and girls in your club, like increasing the representation of women on the club board or committee.

Another example is implementing a code of conduct and complaints procedure, which is essential for club members' safety.

Recommended actions are also important, but may not be possible or make sense to complete without essential actions happening first.

For example, acknowledging the full history of women's football at your club may be easier to accomplish after appointing a Women and Girls Football Development Lead to champion this work.

We recognise there's an extensive list of ideas and actions to consider when reviewing how your club is tracking in creating equity for women and girls in your environment. Each situation is different, and it will take careful consideration and collaboration to find the right path forward for your club. Appendix One's action plan template allows you to build a timeline for putting these ideas into action, in the short, medium and long term.

### How to complete self-assessment

This guide is designed to help you assess your club against these standards, and the next actions required to get there. There is a column alongside each action for 'completed', 'more work to do' or 'yet to start', with room for notes on a timeframe.

Then, you can develop an action plan in more detail using the Action Plan Template in appendix one.

## Leadership, Governance and Planning

**Equity Charter Commitment: “Leadership, governance, and planning that reflects and supports gender equity”**

Leadership sets an organisations’ strategic direction and makes sure that it happens. Governance holds the organisation’s leadership accountable for carrying out the strategic direction.

Research has shown that gender diversity in leadership and governance results in better performance. Different perspectives create the ability to address a wider range of issues and generate more innovative solutions. [12]

Benefits of women in governance roles [12,13]:

- Diversity of thought
- Higher education and qualification
- Representation of women in leadership roles
- Preference for co-operation in teamwork environments
- Higher sensitivity to human needs

The National Sports Club Survey 2021 [14], conducted by Auckland University of Technology (AUT) focused on girls and women-friendly environments. The survey showed that clubs with diverse representation on their boards and committees are perceived as more welcoming by potential members, and are better at providing gender appropriate uniform and apparel compared to those without.

Sport NZ has set a target of 40% gender balance on boards and committees of sports organisations.





SUGGESTED ACTIONS	ACTION CATEGORY	COMPLETE	NEEDS WORK	NOT STARTED	TIMEFRAME
40% women (self-identifying) on club committees/board.					
Review Constitution – Identify any restrictive rules that might create obstacles to attracting and appointing women.					
Discussion at Board/Committee level around current gender representation in leadership positions.					
Actively invite women candidates for vacancies.					
Ensure women are represented on selection panels.					
Develop and implement a Girls and Women's Football Strategy.					
Review current Girls and Women's Football Strategy.					
Integration of Girls and Womens outcomes into wider club strategy.					
Appoint a Girls and Women's Football Development Lead					
Construct a Girls and Women's Football Committee and integrate this into the organisational structure.					
Implement an Inclusion Policy/ Code of Conduct. Actively address consequences for sexism, including a complaints and dispute resolution process.					
Have a process for club members to follow if they have issues or complaints.					
Tailor roles to suit availability where required.					
Connect women to or encourage women to connect with a mentor.					
Provide governance training for all current and aspirational committee members.					
Allow flexibility in working conditions (i.e from home, hours) where applicable to make roles more appealing to those with family commitments.					

- ESSENTIAL ACTIONS**
- RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

# Participation and Development

**Equity Charter Commitment: “Equitable participation and development opportunities, including juniors and youth girls-only football.”**

We've divided this commitment into two parts – participation and development.

**Participation** is at the heart of community sport. Ensuring players have a quality experience should drive decision making in this area.

Same sex and mixed teams both have pros and cons. Mixed teams are common in primary school years and can be beneficial for developing soft skills like social skills and resilience. However, as individuals get older, there is more desire to play in same sex teams for various reasons – including psychological differences, physiological changes, and social preferences. [5]

Providing young girls the opportunity to play in girls-only teams can allow them to experience football in a safe and nurturing environment without fear of judgement from boys. In a survey, one in three girls reported that boys make fun of

them or make them feel uncomfortable during sports practice [4]. Girls often have different wants and needs from a team sport than their male counterparts, with some needs that should be considered individually:

- Safety of all participants
- Fair opportunity
- Motivation to play
- Skill level
- Individual level of competitiveness

Girls-only environments allow young girls to be themselves, as they are more comfortable and confident in their actions and more willing to try new things. Women-only environments also support women leaders because it's a more supportive environment.





## NRF Competitions in 2022:

**65%** of clubs (50) in the NRF region had girls or women's teams in at least one competition or grade.



One in five football players in NZ are female.

NRF COMPETITIONS 2022	GIRLS / WOMEN	BOYS / MEN / MIXED	TOTAL
Competitions/ Grades Offered <i>*Excl in-house*</i>	17 16.5%	86 83.5%	103
Junior Team Entries (U9 - U12)	115 13.7%	725 86.3%	840
Youth Team Entries	78 20.5%	302 79.5%	380
Senior Team Entries	91 18%	420 82%	511

**Development** refers to the upskilling of women in coaching and refereeing roles now, and growing the number wishing to move into these roles. Coaches and referees are a fundamental part of football, and an opportunity for retiring players to stay connected to football and their club community. There are two parts to the development of women in coaching and refereeing.

## Growing the number of women coaching and refereeing

- 18.5% of coaches in the NRF region are girls or women
- Many girls who have played football from a young age have never or have only recently experienced having a woman coach
- In 2022, these women coaches came from just 23 clubs, equating to 30% of clubs who have women coaches
- 13% of community referees are girls or women
- 11% of Level 1 accredited referees are girls or women

Community football is largely run by volunteers, and the struggle to attract coaches is a real and common problem facing clubs every season. More women in coaching roles across all levels means a larger pool of total coaches to draw from.

Women in coaching are better equipped to understand the psychological, physiological, and social needs of female players. In turn, this will enhance women and girl players' experience, and offer access to coaches and role models of the same gender.





## Supporting the growth and development of women in coaching and refereeing roles

Women are under-represented in coaching at all levels, but the highest gap exists at the high-performance level. This may be due to a perception that women across any leadership role are less effective than men in the same position [16]. Attributes seen as masculine aligned to the 'ideal coach' create challenges for women with coaching aspirations [16] and means women are often restricted to the grassroots level.

The key barriers for women taking on refereeing are:

- Lack of information and knowledge about refereeing
- Lack of time and interest
- Fear of abuse
- Lack of knowledge about opportunities to referee girls and women's games

The lack of women in these roles means there are limited role models for women aspiring to coach or referee at a high level. The lack of role models means that successful women coaches and referees are often seen as the exception - more women in higher level roles will assist in shifting this perception.

Research has shown that women generally feel they need to meet 100% of criteria and feel fully qualified before putting themselves forward for a role [3,15]. Men generally feel they need to meet only 60% [15]. To increase the number of higher-level qualified women coaching and refereeing, it's important to actively develop these individuals so they feel they can go for higher level roles.





SUGGESTED ACTIONS	ACTION CATEGORY	COMPLETE	NEEDS WORK	NOT STARTED	TIMEFRAME
Seek to understand the experience of all players, coaches, referees (i.e., end of season survey, actively seek feedback, suggestion box).	Essential				
Develop a recruitment plan and timeline. Identify grades where you don't currently have girls only options and start an expressions of interest ¼ of a way through the current season and follow up with them in the pre-season.	Essential				
Deliver or co-deliver women only coaching/ referee courses.	Essential				
Support girls and women to attend coaching and development opportunities. This can be through funding applications or sponsorship.	Essential				
Where compensation/reimbursement occurs in high level football, provide equal reimbursement for expenses incurred for top level players.	Essential				
Share resources (e.g <a href="#">NRF Resource Library</a> ) to support coaches, staff, and parents in providing quality experiences for girls and women, including promotion of education opportunities like courses.	Recommended				
Quality coaches are available to girls and women's teams and actively promoted.	Recommended				
Offer alternative participation opportunities that are club-led. These can be club based or community based – girls and dads' event, girls and mums' event, Girls only holiday program, hosting fantails, walking football, or kickin' it hubs.	Recommended				
Consider working alongside a neighbouring club so that you can provide a girls/women's opportunity until clubs can build their own player base.	Recommended				
Consider working alongside a school to deliver a joint club and school team.	Recommended				
Social women's teams that have flexibility around training and have family friendly environments.	Recommended				
Childcare is available during training and playing times.	Recommended				
Identify women in coaching and approach them to become coach developers for club/ region. This includes targeting them to attend coach developer courses.	Recommended				
Shoulder tap girls/women to participate in coaching, refereeing and club operations roles.	Recommended				
Provide education opportunities around creating positive, inclusive environments.	Recommended				
Seek to be proactive in addressing barriers to participation.	Recommended				



ESSENTIAL ACTIONS



RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

# Value and Visibility

**Equity Charter Commitment: “Make girls and women visible, showing their value in our club.”**

**Visibility** is about highlighting the things clubs value. Public visibility of girls and women in football at clubs provides these possibilities:

- Inviting and welcoming environment to non-members and the public
- More attractive to a larger pool of potential funders
- Existing female members are more likely to recommend your club to their friends and family

Seeing confidence, leadership, and achievement of other women in sport empowers the next generation. If women athletes are visible on social media and other platforms, more will want to be part of a team or take up a new sport. Role models help young girls aspire and show them they can succeed in their passions.

Of the **73** clubs in the Northern Region:

**52** clubs have a senior women's team

**9** clubs have a Girls and Women's page accessible from the main menu or home page of their website

**20** clubs have images of Girls or Women's teams on the home page of their website

**36** clubs share images, results and/or fixture of girls or women's teams on their main social media

Research shows that by the time girls leave primary school aged 11 or 12, they're exposed to reasons why they do not belong in sport, sometimes daily, being told sport isn't a natural fit for them unless they are exceptionally good at it. A lack of role models has been highlighted as a barrier for girls and women participating in sport [11]. Increased visibility of women's football at local, national, and international level will show young girls a pathway for them in football.





SUGGESTED ACTIONS	ACTION CATEGORY	COMPLETE	NEEDS WORK	NOT STARTED	TIMEFRAME
Girls and Women imagery and achievements visible in clubrooms – consider the placement of these images as well (i.e., not by the toilets or in spaces where no one goes).	ESSENTIAL ACTIONS				
Include imagery of girls and women on the main club platforms like social media or websites.	ESSENTIAL ACTIONS				
Accessible, relevant, and up-to-date Girls and Women’s page on club website.	ESSENTIAL ACTIONS				
Equal representation of results, fixtures, coverage etc. on social media and websites.	ESSENTIAL ACTIONS				
Equal representation of girls/women and boys/men at awards events.	ESSENTIAL ACTIONS				
Public visibility of girls and women’s football contacts at the club.	ESSENTIAL ACTIONS				
Review internal and external policy wording to be gender neutral.	ESSENTIAL ACTIONS				
Club honor’s boards recognise contribution of girls and women.	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS				
Support from wider club at girls and women’s games	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS				
e.g., encourage men’s and women’s first teams to attend each other’s games where possible.	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS				
Acknowledge the full history of women’s football at the Club on website or other platforms.	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS				

- ESSENTIAL ACTIONS**
- RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

# Resources and Opportunities

**Equity Charter Commitment: “Equitable resources and opportunities for girls and women in football”**

**Resources** are mechanisms needed to function effectively. In football, resources can include but aren't limited to:

- Training facilities, including quality field space and changing rooms
- Gender appropriate uniforms
- Balls, goals, bibs and other equipment required for training
- Appropriately qualified coaches
- First aid and medical supplies
- Access to development opportunities
- Funding

Girls and women playing football in our region have experienced a lack of adequate playing equipment, uniform, etc. in comparison to their male counterparts. Some women's teams have been given second-hand men's uniforms to play in, unless they seek funding or supply women's fitted uniforms themselves. Large clubs (500+ members) do better at providing gender appropriate uniforms and apparel [14].

Women's teams' access to number one fields or changing rooms is often not prioritised.

**Opportunities** refers to a chance for advancement or progress. In the context of women in football, an opportunity is the ability to access development and upskilling.





SUGGESTED ACTIONS	ACTION CATEGORY	COMPLETE	NEEDS WORK	NOT STARTED	TIMEFRAME
Seek funding inclusive or specific for girls and women's football.					
Ensure all equipment is distributed fairly amongst teams regardless of gender. All equipment is of a good quality, fit for purpose and safe.					
Provide girls and women with a girls and women's fitting uniform and apparel options.					
Transition away from white shorts as part of the uniform.					
Recognition of high performing girls and women, consult what they want (e.g., men often receive a tie or pin).					
Provision of sanitary products in team and club first aid kits.					
Have a user-friendly and known system that enables managers to request new or more appropriate equipment when needed.					

- ESSENTIAL ACTIONS**
- RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

# Facilities

**Equity Charter Commitment: “Fit for purpose facilities that meet the specific needs of girls and women in football.”**

**Facilities** are the tangible connection point for footballers of all ages and abilities. Historically, women in football have experienced unequal access to facilities like clubrooms, fields and changing rooms. Providing welcoming facilities shows that women are valued members of your club.

Facility development can be an expensive exercise – it’s important when considering upgrades to gather input from potential users to ensure the developments are fit for purpose and the use of the facilities and investment is maximised.

Clubs in large traditional codes, including football, are not as good as others in providing suitable changing facilities for girls and women or

addressing safety concerns [14]. Women’s teams have experienced a lack of access to changing facilities, sometimes even resulting in them having to change in their cars.

Note: Aktive have created a Women and Girls Facility Guide which contains advice, suggestions, hints and tips that can support all codes to enable more women and girls to get active. You may wish to review this document also which is located on the [Aktive Resource Hub](#)





SUGGESTED ACTIONS	ACTION CATEGORY	COMPLETE	NEEDS WORK	NOT STARTED	TIMEFRAME
There is a regular cleaning schedule to ensure facilities are fit-for-purpose for all members.	ESSENTIAL ACTIONS				
Adequate lighting is provided around car parks, fields, indoor facilities and changing rooms.					
Surveillance systems are in place outside changing facilities and car parks.					
Thorough and equitable schedule- when shared facilities are required to be shared between members. This includes changing rooms, gym space, clubrooms etc.					
Future renovations of changing facilities to be gender neutral and accessible (i.e., no urinals, no open showers, private spaces, cubicles etc.).					
Fair allocation of training facilities (quality and field space).					
Family spaces and behavioral expectations are visible inside club facilities.					
Provision of sanitary disposal bins in toilets and changing rooms.					
Implement a system that ensures the safety of members getting to their cars after evening training and club events. E.g., buddy system, or club liaison present.					
Plans that encourage maximized use of facilities.					
Privacy is considered in the make-up of changing rooms and shower facilities.	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS				
Mirrors and shelving are provided around basins.					
There is privacy available for medical requirements.					
There is secure storage for personal equipment during training and games.					
Provision is met for child-care needs (e.g., changing tables, toys).					
Engage full membership in planning and design process.					

- ESSENTIAL ACTIONS**
- RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

# References and Resources

1. NZ Football Annual Report 2022
2. Aktive Women & Girls Facility Guide
3. Womens Sports Foundation
4. Womens Sports Foundation: Chasing Equity Executive Summary
5. Play by the Rules. Girls Playing in Boys Teams
6. Play Football
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8. Shanks,A. (2023). Shifting the focus from gender diversity and inclusion to belonging and gender equity in Aotearoa New Zealand community football organisations: How did we get here and where are we going?
9. Sport NZ 2021. Young Women Profile
10. Sport NZ 2017. The Value of Sport
11. Riot, n.d. Female Participation in Sport and Active Recreation: Exploring opportunities to enhance the well-being of women with young children
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13. Play by the Rules. (2016). Women on Board
14. National Sports Club Survey (2021)
15. Harvard Business Review. (2014). Why Women Don't Apply for Jobs Unless They're 100% Qualified
16. Murray et al. (2020). How the Perceived Effectiveness of a Female Coach is Influenced by their Apparent Masculinity/ Femininity



# Appendix A

DOWNLOAD THE WORD VERSION

## Equity Charter Action Plan

Use the table below to detail the key actions you will focus on for your club within the five equity pillars, and how they link to overarching themes/goals or areas of focus for your club.

Club Name: .....

Date: .....

12-month review date: .....

		OVERARCHING Club Area/ Theme/Goal	TIMEFRAME Short-term, Mid-term, Long-term	PERSON / TEAM LEADING THIS	RESOURCES NEEDED (e.g. finance, people, equipment, technology, facilities)
LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	Action 1:				
	Action 2:				
	Action 3:				
PARTICIPATION AND DEVELOPMENT	Action 1:				
	Action 2:				
	Action 3:				
VALUE AND VISIBILITY	Action 1:				
	Action 2:				
	Action 3:				
RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES	Action 1:				
	Action 2:				
	Action 3:				
FACILITIES	Action 1:				
	Action 2:				
	Action 3:				



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