

# IRISH WINTER SPORTS STRATEGY

2022-2026



# INTRODUCTION

Winter sports in Ireland are represented by six National Federations (NFs), each recognised by their International Federation, and all members of the Olympic Federation of Ireland (OFI).

They include the Irish Ice Hockey Association, the Irish Bobsleigh and Skeleton Association, the Irish Curling Association, the Ice-Skating Association of Ireland, the Irish Luge Federation and the Snowsports Association of Ireland.

Recognising the influence and importance of Irish winter sports, this four year strategy sets out our strategic objectives, and defines the behaviours and actions that we will undertake in collaboration to achieve our goals.

The Olympic Federation of Ireland began the process of bringing together the Winter Sport NFs in October 2020. The collaboration framework was established to create a shared vision, values and strategic pillars. Administrators and athletes from Snowsports Association of Ireland (SAI), Ice Skating Association of Ireland (ISAI), Irish Ice Hockey Association (IIHA), Irish Curling Association (ICA), Irish Bobsleigh and Skeleton Association (IBSA) and Irish Luge Federation (ILF), contributed to the process of strategy development and planning workshops over six months. The strategic consultation process included a series of specific strategy development stages, significant stakeholder and National Federation engagement, as well as external oversight.

Within the Strategic Pillars set out in this strategy, there are certain areas where each National Federation will play a more active role subject to their own strategic priorities. For example, the Snowsports Association of Ireland, which traditionally provides the majority of Winter Olympic Athletes, will play a greater role in the development of Pillar 2 (State funding for Winter Olympic Pathway Athletes), while the ice-sport National Federations will be most active in pursuing the objectives of Pillar 1, the development of a permanent ice-facility.

The OFI wishes to support a strategic approach for the development of Irish Winter Sports, helping them to work together to achieve core objectives. This also aligns to the findings and recommendations in the OFI's 2018 Winter Sports paper where an emphasis on cooperation to achieve shared goals was identified.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2018, the Olympic Federation of Ireland (OFI) finalised the Irish Winter Sports Position Paper. Input from the Winter Sports highlighted that it was time to establish a formal framework for collaboration.

This Irish Winter Sports Strategy has now been developed to provide a strategic framework to support this vision for Winter Sport Federations.

The National Federations involved remain fully independent and operated. However, this Winter Sports Strategy allows for a collaborative approach towards agreed strategic objectives that stand to benefit the whole sector in Ireland.

Working in partnership with OFI, Sport Ireland (SI), Government, Local Authorities, and other key stakeholders, this new partnership among winter sports will focus on increased recognition and the development of funding and winter sports facilities during the lifetime of this strategic plan.



# VISION

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By working together, Irish winter sports will be better supported and resourced to achieve both participation and performance goals, helping to increase relevance and visibility among the public.

- External recognition and accountability
- Greater funding and support
- Facility development

Delivery of this vision will require:

- Collaborative and fair practices to ensure representation of all Irish winter sports National Federations
- Pathways to include NF volunteers and professionals so that they can support the execution of the plan
- Generation of shared financial resource to support delivery

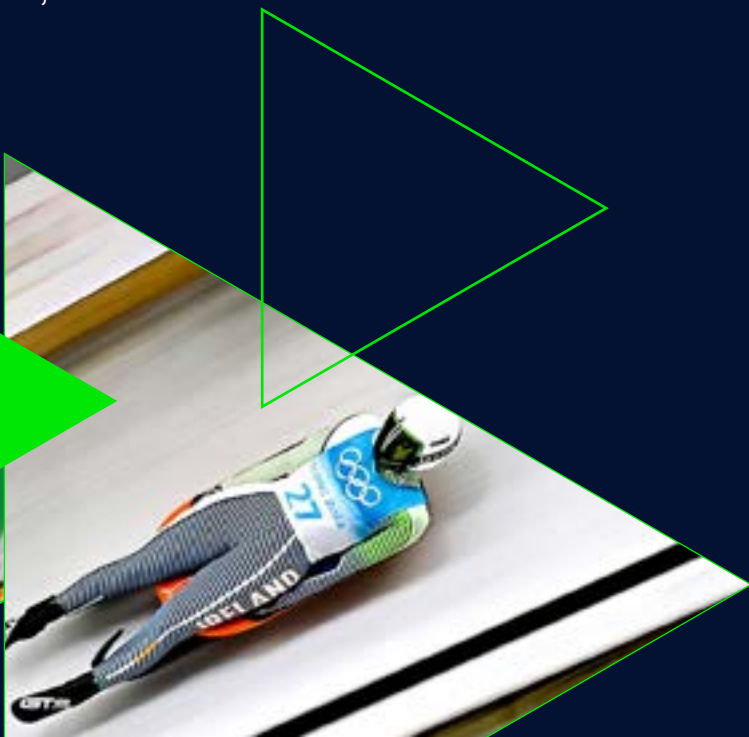
# MISSION

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To amplify the voice of winter sports in Ireland to achieve a shared vision of long term sustainability and success.

**We will do this by:**

1. Operating to the highest standards of transparency and accountability to the Irish public and our stakeholders.
2. Sustained commitment to reviewing and delivering on our goals.
3. Speaking with one voice to achieve our agreed objectives



# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## TRANSPARENCY

- Fair and honest practices in how we collaborate to ensure full transparency in decision making processes and management.
- Commitment to continuous improvement and review of how operations are conducted.
- Consistent communications with internal and external stakeholders.

## SUSTAINABILITY

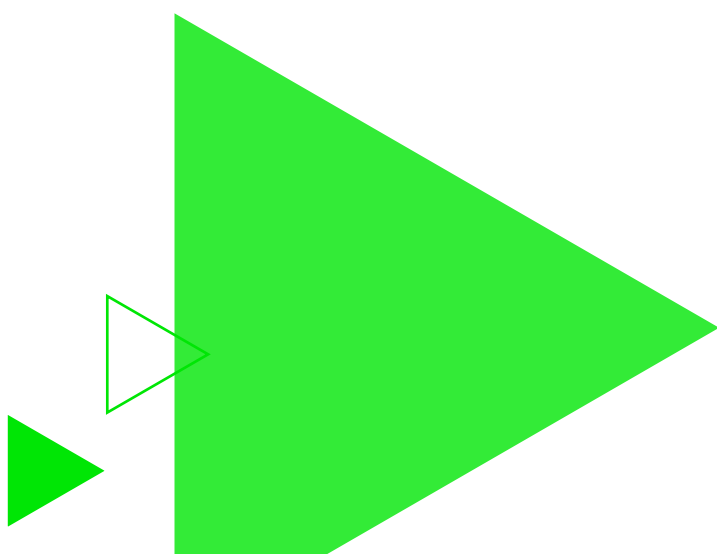
- Strong and consistent approach to positioning Irish winter sports in a more prominent role. This will include lobbying Government and funding agencies, and building strategic partnerships with both the public and private sectors.
- Focus on acquiring a range of community sport participation programmes and grant schemes being delivered and/or facilitated through various agencies and local partnerships.

## EQUALITY

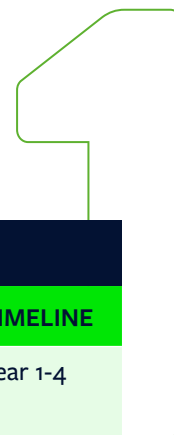
- Ensure inclusion, accessibility and equal opportunity for athletes, coaches and volunteers as representatives for their national federations. Empower the athletes' voice and understand what support is needed for athletes.

## PROGRESS

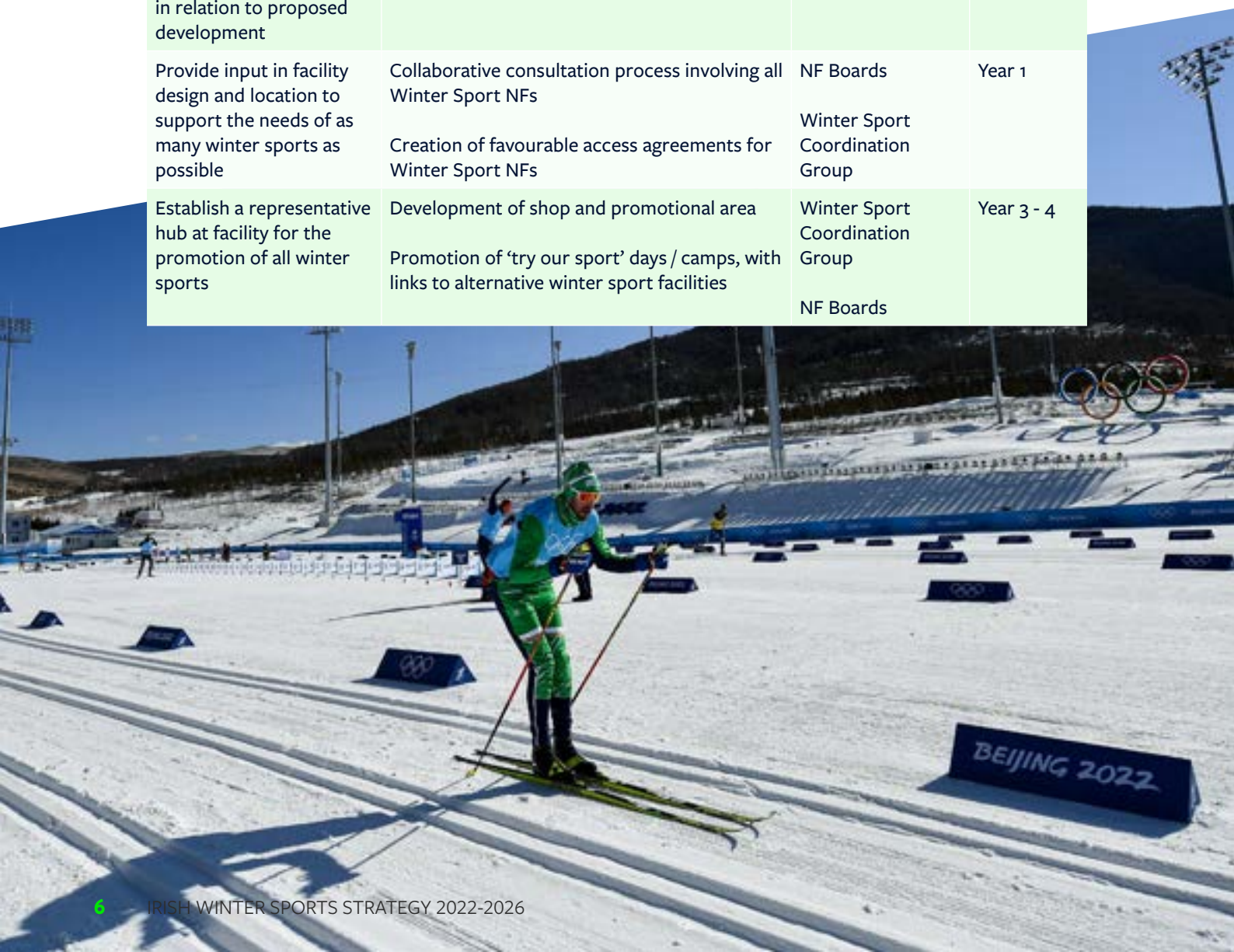
- Ensure quarterly review meetings to monitor progress and to deliver on shared goals.
- Cultivate a volunteer network across all winter sports through education; including programmes for technical officials, classifiers, competition managers, and committee members.



# STRATEGIC PILLARS



PILLAR 1: FACILITY DEVELOPMENT			
OBJECTIVE	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
Support the development of a permanent Winter Sports Ice Facility in Ireland	Work together to attract funding and to support a sustainable financial model	NF boards	Year 1-4
	Combined lobby to ensure Government support	Winter Sport Coordination Group	
	Help to secure land acquisition	OFI	
	Assist in planning permission process		
Support pilot initiative for ice facility at strategic locations (e.g. National Sports Campus) to enhance proof of concept	Development of support framework from Winter Sport Coordination Group around temporary / short term ice facilities.	Winter Sport Coordination Group	Year 2-4
Sharing of information / reports / feasibility studies within the group in relation to proposed development	Timely sharing of information among group at quarterly Winter Sport Coordination Group meetings	Winter Sport Coordination Group	Year 1-4
Provide input in facility design and location to support the needs of as many winter sports as possible	Collaborative consultation process involving all Winter Sport NFs	NF Boards	Year 1
	Creation of favourable access agreements for Winter Sport NFs	Winter Sport Coordination Group	
Establish a representative hub at facility for the promotion of all winter sports	Development of shop and promotional area	Winter Sport Coordination Group	Year 3 - 4
	Promotion of 'try our sport' days / camps, with links to alternative winter sport facilities	NF Boards	



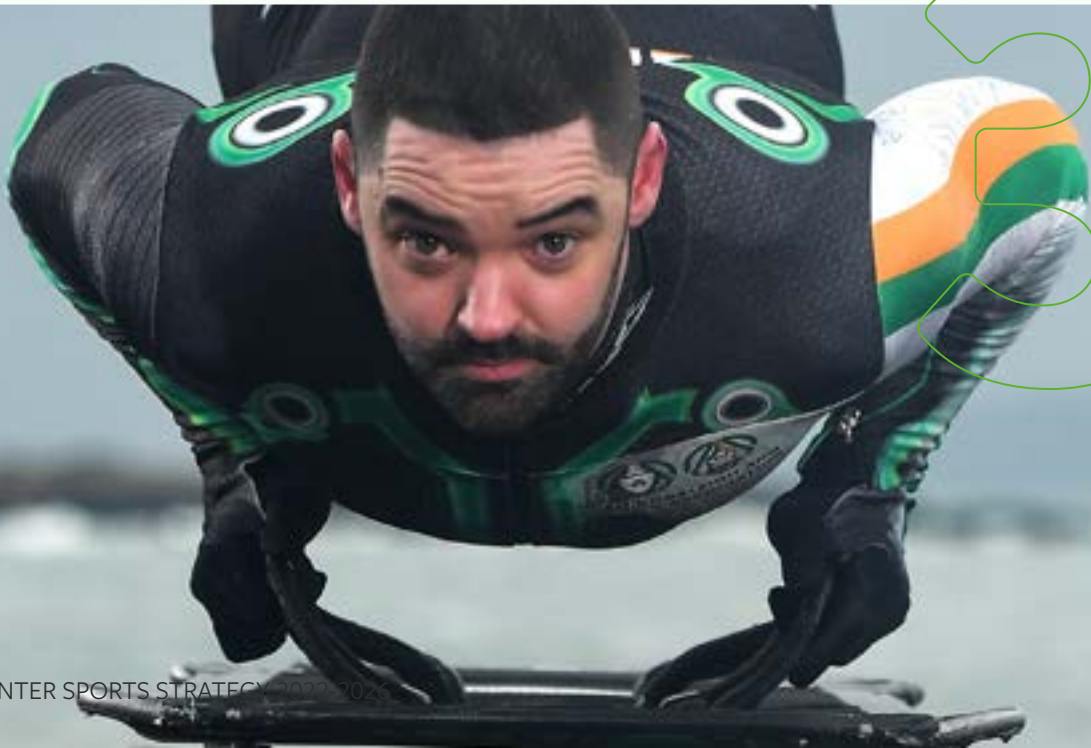


## PILLAR 2: ATHLETE CARDING, PARTICIPATION AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVE	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
State funding support for Winter Olympic pathway athletes	Carding mechanisms introduced to support and fund preparations of Winter Olympic pathway athletes	OFI Winter Sport Coordination Group	Year 2
Create formal agreement with the Sport Ireland Institute (SII) for the support of athletes targeting Olympic qualification	Creation of access agreement and protocols for drawdown of services	Winter Sport Coordination Group OFI	Year 1
Support talent transfer and performance pathways by strengthening relationship with SI Institute and NFs	Learn from best practice in other countries. Creation of targeted talent ID sessions.	Winter Sport Coordination Group	Year 2-4
Influence decision makers at funding agencies to include funding for winter sports participation programmes, activities and strategic plans	Formal mechanisms in place to resource and fund winter sports and Olympic pathway athletes. €200,000 annual investment target by year 4.	Winter Sport Coordination Group OFI	Year 1- 4
Work together with OFI to hold Winter Sport participation days	Development of annual Winter themed ‘Olympic Day’ Creation of participation opportunities in local communities Engage with OFI sponsors to create additional funding opportunities in build up to 2026 Olympic Games	OFI Winter Sport Coordination Group	Year 3-4
Partner with appropriate external institutions (e.g. Active Ireland/ Universities /NFs) to strengthen the development of recreational snow and ice sports.	Successful leveraging of elite athlete support to promote key messaging.	National Federations Winter Sport Coordination Group	Year 1- 4

### PILLAR 3: VISIBILITY

OBJECTIVE	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
Create Winter Sports Brand which reflects the identity of all winter sports	Development of Brand and successful launch	National Federations  Winter Sport Coordination Group  OFI	Year 1
Create annual communications and marketing plans for the Winter Sports Coordination Group	Communication and Marketing plans developed by end of Q1 in each year of the Strategic Plan  Connected socially to all relevant organisations and sporting communities  Development of quarterly news-letter	National Federations  Winter Sport Coordination Group  OFI	Years 1- 4
Enhance relationships to ensure that Winter Sports have a presence in Irish sport strategy and planning.	Creation of annual engagement opportunities within Irish Sport and among key funding and decision making bodies – Sport Ireland, Department of Sport, Local Sports Partnerships  Annual meeting with Government and political representatives	Winter Sport Coordination Group	Year 1-4
In partnership with the OFI, pooling of resources and information to promote the development and success of winter sport athletes and teams at local, regional, national and international level across all social media and digital platforms	Successful leveraging of elite athlete support to promote key messaging.  Opportunities for Winter Sports Ireland to explore sponsorship opportunities.	Digital Media and Communications	Year 1 -4







### PILLAR 4: GOVERNANCE

OBJECTIVE	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
Each National Federation to work towards compliance with Governance Code for Sport	Governance Code for Sport requirements established and progress monitored on six monthly basis.	NF boards / Governance Committees and representatives	Year 1-4
Communicate regularly with key funding stakeholders, both private and public, on progress in complying with Governance Code	Transparent breakdown on progress	NF Boards / Governance Committees	Year 1 - 4
Quarterly knowledge sharing and progress reports through Winter Sport Coordination Group	Creation of Coordination Group for Winter Sport	Coordination Group for Winter Sport	Year 1 - 4
	Appointment of Independent Chair	NF Boards	
	Minimum four meetings per annum	OFI	
	Meetings happen and action agreed with follow up		
	Progress report shared annually with key stakeholders		

# DELIVERY CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

## 7.1 Winter Sport Coordination Group

In order to begin Strategy Implementation, a Winter Sport Coordination group will be established. We recommend that this group contains one or two representatives per Winter Sport NF and would be chaired by the OFI. This body would meet online at least four times per annum and is intended to oversee strategy delivery and to report back to the Winter Sport NFs on progress.

The Winter Sport Coordination Group will establish an annual operational plans in line with the strategic pillars, the first of which will be completed by H1 2022.

The OFI will also allocate budget to the Winter Sports Coordination Group to help it to achieve some of the goals set out under the four strategic pillars of the plan. The Winter Sport Coordination Group will be tasked with recommending how to best use this financial resource. The recommendation will be submitted to the OFI for approval.

## 7.2 Shared Resource

One of the options available to the Winter Sports Coordination Group is to look at the use of a shared resource to help achieve some of the strategic objectives.

Initially, this would have a narrow scope, primarily around set-up and would focus on agreed service delivery.

However, it should be a longer term goal of the Winter Sport Coordination Group to consider employment of a permanent staff resource to drive ongoing operational requirements.

## 7.3 Communication / Marketing

A number of the objectives within this strategy relate to communications (Public relations and Public Affairs) as well as marketing for the Winter Sport Group. It is recommended that the Winter Sport Coordination Group establish a separate Communication and Marketing Working group, targeting volunteers with appropriate skill sets to look after this activity in cooperation with the OFI's Communication and Marketing functions.

## 7.4 Facility Development

Facility Development is a very significant strategic pillar for this plan. At this point in time, there are too many possible outcomes (private / public etc.) to provide anything more than top-line goals. Given the strategic importance of this area, and its impact on participation / visibility, it is recommended that a review of the strategic objectives for this area takes place annually during the life-cycle of the plan.





**TEAM IRELAND**  
**NOTHING IN OUR WAY**