

AMERICAN FOOTBALL IRELAND

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2026



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Foreword

This strategic plan intends to give the management team and members of American Football Ireland (AFI) a focus for the development of American football in Ireland over the next five years and to build upon the existing achievements of AFI.

This strategic plan will form the basis for all tactical decisions for AFI, although this strategic plan is not exhaustive, nor is it intended to be.

The intention of the management team is to leave sufficient scope to alter the objectives within this plan in the event that additional elements, members' needs or funding streams are identified at a later date.

Irish Wolfhounds vs Belgium Barbarians, 2019
Charmaeducs Photography



Background

AFI is the National Governing Body for the sport of American Football in Ireland and is responsible for all regulatory, competition, performance and development aspects of the game. AFI's activities are many and varied, including the following:

- The organisation and promotion of all domestic competitions in Ireland across both contact and non-contact versions of the game.
- The organisation and promotion of the national teams in international competition.
- The promotion of the game to people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities and the provision of opportunities for their engagement and development.
- The regulation of the game on and off the field of play through oversight of its rules.
- The representation of the Irish game to national and international partners including sporting organisations, federations and commercial interests.





Mission Statement

AFI's mission, as the national governing body, is to promote and teach all aspects of American Football in a fun and positive environment while adhering to our core values.

Core Values

Integrity

We, as an association, aim to run the association with the utmost integrity, honesty and transparency at all times, through consistent and fair decision making and application of AFI's By-laws and constitution. We, as an association, are accountable to our membership.

Respect

We, as an association, aim to ensure respect between fellow teammates, coaches, clubs, officials and administration and support them in all and any endeavours. We believe in fair play and creating a safe and fun environment throughout the association.

Inclusivity

We, as an association, aim to create a diverse membership that doesn't discriminate against individuals or clubs. We aim to provide an inclusive and family friendly environment for all.

Excellence

We, as an association, aim to strive for excellence through constant review and development of all aspects of the association. We will set, work towards and aim to continuously achieve the highest of standards to inspire participation and further evolve the sport in the country at both club and national level.

Teamwork

We, as an association, aim to commit to working together to promote and combine the skills of all members in a coordinated manner to assist and develop the association at all levels and to help us reach the association's goals more efficiently. We will rely on each other and understand each individual has a part to play.

Causeway Giants vs NI Razorbacks, 2019
Keith Elgin Photography



Wexford Eagles vs Donegal/Derry Vipers, 2019
Keith Elgin Photography

This strategic plan is based on the following 4 key pillars:

Growth of overall membership - Increase the number of playing and non-playing members from 1650 to 3000.



Safeguard the future of our sport - Increase the number of members aged under 21 from 500 to 1000.



Be a leader in governance - Excel in Sport Ireland compliance. Have the necessary tools in place to be able to run the association as efficiently as possible.



INTERNATIONAL

Build our reputation with IFAF - To be included in proposed international games and championships each year at senior kitted, youth kitted and flag football levels.





Administration

Establish a communications team.

- To include at least 6 members with positions such as social media operators, graphic designers and video editors.

Employ full-time staff.

- For the administration and development of the association, to include a secretary and development officer.

Attain offices and storage space.

- At least one office for two persons and a large storage space for equipment within the Sport Ireland Campus.

Make the association more environmentally friendly.

- Reduce use of paper and plastics.

Senior Kitted Football

Increase the number of teams participating in senior kitted football.

- From 20 to 22 teams.

Increase the number of females playing senior kitted football.

- From 2 to 50 females.
- Hold an annual female only blitz.



Youth Kitted Football

Increase the number of clubs fielding a youth team in the annual youth league.

- From 7 to 12 clubs.

Implement a development pathway for youth players.

- Create a province-based youth development programme.



Flag Football

Grow flag football within the RoI and NI education systems.

- Introduce flag football to at least 30 schools at primary and secondary level.
- Create age grade All Ireland School Championships.

Establish an all-female flag football league.

- 10 teams with 200 female athletes participating.

Increase sustainability and reduce forfeits.

- 0 forfeited games in 2026.
- At least 90% of clubs from 2021 to still be competing in 2026.





National Programme

Develop the senior kitted team.

- Compete successfully at 1 European Championships before the end of 2026.

Create a sustainable under 20s kitted team.

- Compete successfully at 1 European Championship before the end of 2026.

Create sustainable men's and women's flag football teams.

- Both to compete successfully at 1 European Championship before the end of 2026.

Commercial

Attain association wide sponsorships.

- Headline sponsorships for the senior kitted leagues, youth league, flag football leagues and Irish Wolfhounds.

Attain association partnerships.

- Develop benefit in kind support to reduce operating costs.





Coaching

Review level 0 coaching course and online recertification.

- Ensure level 0 course and online recertification consistently meets latest guidance on areas such as player welfare, particularly concussion.

Develop and implement level 1 coaching courses.

- At least 2 courses approved by Coaching Ireland.
- Successfully deliver at least 2 courses to 15 coaches for each.

Train new developers and assessors.

- A total of 6 coach developers trained with a further 2 trained as assessors.

Improve administrative processes within the department.

- Appoint a Coaching Administrator.



Officiating

Make the department cost neutral.

- 2021 projected deficit of €7,450. Have no deficit after completion of all 2026 seasons (senior, youth and flag).

Increase the number of full-time officials.

- From 18 to 25 full time officials.

Increase the number of females officiating.

- From 2 to 20 females officiating.

Increase the number of trained whitecaps.

- From 11 to 14 trained whitecaps.

Increase AFI official's participation at IFAF competitions.

- Have AFI officials participate in at least three IFAF competitions by 2026.



Appendix 1: Targets Summary

Theme	Goal	Target	How This Will Be Achieved
Administration	Establish a communications team.	To include at least 6 members with positions such as social media operators, graphic designers and video editors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create role descriptions. • Targeted recruitment campaigns using social media. • Provide sufficient tools (e.g. software) so that creative abilities can be fully enabled.
	Employ full-time staff.	For the administration and development of the association, to include a secretary and development officer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create role descriptions. • Liaise with relevant funding bodies to attain sufficient funding for the position(s). • Work with Sport Ireland and SportNI to ensure recruitment and employment compliance.
	Attain offices and storage space.	At least one office for two persons and a large storage space for equipment within the Sport Ireland Campus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a business case to be presented to Sport Ireland. • Liaise with Sport Ireland to satisfy requirements.
	Make the association more environmentally friendly.	Reduce use of paper and plastics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become paper free by 2026 with increased utilisation of technology. • Reduce the need for plastic and look for other means to satisfy requirements e.g. replacing physical coaching identification cards with an online alternative.

Theme	Goal	Target	How This Will Be Achieved
Senior Kitted Football	Increase the number of teams participating in senior kitted football.	From 20 to 22 teams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey current clubs for feedback and suggestions. • Assess viability of current league structure for new teams and research options. • Further develop the 'New Team Toolkit'. • Develop a mentoring support network for potential new teams.
	Increase the number of females playing senior kitted football.	From 2 to 50 females.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted social media recruitment campaigns. • Promote the experiences of our current female players. • Survey current association female members to identify reasons for hesitation on playing American football and gather suggestions.
		Hold an annual female only blitz.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of development days for females only. • Yearly cycle of development days to conclude with a female only blitz.

Theme	Goal	Target	How This Will Be Achieved
Youth Kitted Football	Increase the number of clubs fielding a youth team in the annual youth league.	From 7 to 12 clubs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey current clubs for feedback and suggestions. • Assess viability of current league structure for new teams and research options. • Further develop initiatives to support youth teams e.g. funding. • Develop a mentoring support network for potential new teams.
	Implement a development pathway for youth players.	Create a province-based youth development programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of province-based development days for 15 to 18 year olds. • Yearly cycle of development days to conclude with a blitz of all four province teams. • Once the 15 to 18 year old model is successfully implemented, aim to create the same model for 18 to 21 year olds.

Theme	Goal	Target	How This Will Be Achieved
Flag Football	Grow flag football within the RoI and NI education systems.	Introduce flag football to at least 30 schools at primary and secondary level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with NFLUK and JagTag to explore potential partnerships. • Develop a schools training program to train teachers how to coach flag football and provide schools with flag football equipment. • Host school championships during the academic year.
		Create age grade All Ireland School Championships.	
	Establish an all-female flag football league.	10 teams with 200 female athletes participating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey current clubs for feedback and suggestions. • Further develop initiatives to support females in flag football e.g. funding. • Create a committee dedicated to the creation and growth of the all-female flag football league.
	Increase sustainability and reduce forfeits.	0 forfeited games in 2026.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the league structure to maintain competitiveness whilst significantly reducing travel time for teams. • Create team packs including guidance on recruitment, financing and sustainability. • Work with the communications department to generate more exposure.
		At least 90% of clubs from 2021 to still be competing in 2026.	

Theme	Goal	Target	How This Will Be Achieved
National Programme	Develop the senior kitted team.	Compete successfully at 1 European Championship before the end of 2026.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter into at least one of the scheduled European Championships (2023, 2025). • Fulfilment of all fixtures assigned.
	Create a sustainable under 20s kitted team.	Compete successfully at 1 European Championship before the end of 2026.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter into at least one of the scheduled European Championships (2023, 2025). • Fulfilment of all fixtures assigned.
	Create sustainable men's and women's flag football teams.	Both to compete successfully at 1 European Championship before the end of 2026.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter into at least one of the scheduled European Championships (2023, 2025). • Fulfilment of all fixtures assigned. • Raise awareness of flag football in Ireland at a local and international scale - host an international flag football competition.

Theme	Goal	Target	How This Will Be Achieved
Commercial	Attain association wide sponsorships.	Headline sponsorships for the senior kitted leagues, youth league, flag football leagues and Irish Wolfhounds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of AFI and grow the AFI social media following to increase attractiveness. • Develop relationships through invitations to AFI events.
	Attain association partnerships.	Develop benefit in kind support to reduce operating costs.	

Theme	Goal	Target	How This Will Be Achieved
Coaching	Review level 0 coaching course and online recertification.	Ensure level 0 course and online recertification consistently meets latest guidance on areas such as player welfare, particularly concussion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of course and online recertification by coaching tutors. • Changes to be sent to Coaching Ireland for approval, if needed. • Roll out of new changes once completed.
	Develop and implement level 1 coaching courses.	At least 2 courses approved by Coaching Ireland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with Coaching Ireland to discuss detail needed for Level 1 courses. • Courses to be developed by Director of Coaching and coaching tutors. • Provide a platform for registered and qualified coaches to provide input.
		Successfully deliver at least 2 courses to 15 coaches for each.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out of courses to interested level 0 certified coaches.
	Train new developers and assessors.	A total of 6 coach developers trained with a further 2 trained as assessors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortlist potential coach developers and approach. • Approach current coaching tutors to gauge interest in becoming assessors.
	Improve administrative processes within the department.	Appoint a Coaching Administrator.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update role description as required. • Targeted recruitment campaign using social media.

Theme	Goal	Target	How This Will Be Achieved
Officiating	Make the department cost neutral.	2021 projected deficit of €7,450. Have no deficit after completion of all 2026 seasons (senior, youth and flag).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of team provided officials and full-time officials to help significantly reduce travel costs. • Continually assess grants available to upgrade equipment and for personnel development opportunities.
	Increase the number of full-time officials.	From 18 to 25 full time officials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased use of social media for recruitment. • Increased visibility of officiating department on AFI website. • Development of a recruitment pathway for retiring players.
	Increase the number of females officiating.	From 2 to 20 females officiating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted social media recruitment campaigns. • Promote the experiences of our current female officials. • Survey current association female members to identify reasons for hesitation on becoming an official and gather suggestions.
	Increase the number of trained whitecaps.	From 11 to 14 trained whitecaps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a development pathway for full time officials to become whitecaps e.g. through a mentoring scheme.
	Increase AFI official's participation at IFAF competitions.	Have AFI officials participate in at least three IFAF competitions by 2026.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased collaboration with the IFAF officiating department and community. • Continue to upskill fulltime officials further to meet and maintain IFAF standards.

With thanks to Charmaeducs Photography, Terrance McCann Photography, Ian Humes Photography and Keith Elgin Photography for use of their fantastic images throughout this document.