



**ROWING
IRELAND**

Club Culture Toolkit

Club Culture – through a gender lens.

Methods and guidelines to assist rowing clubs in achieving a great club culture and improve gender equality.



What is club culture?

Club culture is what is experienced by the members of our sport within their club on a daily basis. This is the look and feel experienced when someone enters the club house, it is the interaction between members, the decisions made, the resources allocated. It is the 'feeling at the club' and 'how we do, what we do'.

How do we define club culture?

- Culture is the expression of the club's values, actions and attitudes.
- Culture is how things are done in the club and how the values of the club are espoused in its actions.
- Culture is how the members of the club interact with each other.
- Culture is the attitudes of the club members to each other and to those outside the club.
- Culture is grounded in a shared vision and a set of identified actions/goals.
- Culture develops organically or actively – culture has the greatest chance of being a positive culture when it is built actively in a collaborative way.

Becoming a sport with a great culture, generally means a club with great leadership. It is about having a vision and values that are transparent and understood by all, whether that is a performance or recreational club.

This toolkit for action will allow clubs to develop their own club culture. It provides effective strategies and solutions to refresh a club culture. It provides recommendations on how to positively influence club culture and thus ensure greatest lifelong participation with the club and the sport.

What *is* club culture





Why have we created this toolkit? — Our Insight

In 2022 Rowing Ireland undertook a broad piece of research which was participated in by 1115 members of the rowing community in Ireland.

We wanted to understand how club culture influences gender inclusivity and equality in rowing clubs in Ireland. We wanted to understand how club culture can be influenced to create a positive inclusive environment for all members.



Key findings

1. There remains a gap between the genders in terms of perceptions and attitudes. With the exception of female senior rowers, there is consistently a gap between how comfortable females feel in the club environment, with how the male cohorts feel.
2. The biggest perception gaps between male and female coaches, and the greatest issue emerging from the report would appear to be the inequality perceived by female coaches and how they are treated by peers and leadership in the club.
3. Of all the female cohorts, female senior rowers perceive themselves to have respect from leadership and others in the club, equal to that of their male peers. This may be reflective of the success of senior female crews in competitive environments.
4. There continues to be a perception gap between the genders at junior level. While the perception gap in older cohorts such as female committee members and coaches might be assumed to be age-related and thus a legacy issue that would change in time, the fact that there continues to be an issue at junior level would suggest that this is not the case, and proactive interventions, such as the toolkit, are necessary.
5. The other strong cultural dynamic in Irish rowing clubs is between the 'performance/competitive' and 'recreational/fun' rowing. This dynamic impacts the culture in the club and also impacts the gender dynamic, and indeed may be a stronger cultural force in some clubs than any gender bias – so for example in a strongly performance oriented club a winning senior female crew will gain a dominant cultural force within that club.
6. There is a statistically significant difference between men and women, across all roles and ages, in their perceptions and experiences of their club from a gender bias perspective. 1 in 3 women are not comfortable giving feedback to the club leadership, compared to 1 in 5 men. This should be a consideration for leadership, in



how they gather feedback and respond to it when received. Creating an environment where there is psychological safety in sharing feedback and challenging conversations can be had in a respectful and constructive manner.

7. Large numbers of the overall cohort agreed with the statement that 'male and female members get equal access to the best equipment', but proportionately more males than females did so. 57% of the females within the overall cohort agreed with this vs 72% of the male respondents within the overall cohort. 58% of the females within the committee member cohort agreed with this statement vs 74% of the male committee member cohort, only marginally bigger numbers.
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58% of the females within the committee member cohort agreed with this statement vs 74% of the male committee member cohort

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Why have we created this toolkit? — Our Purpose

This toolkit is informed by evidence collected and is intended to provide clubs with guidance on how to influence culture positively for better member experience, including greater gender equality and positive lifelong participation in the sport.



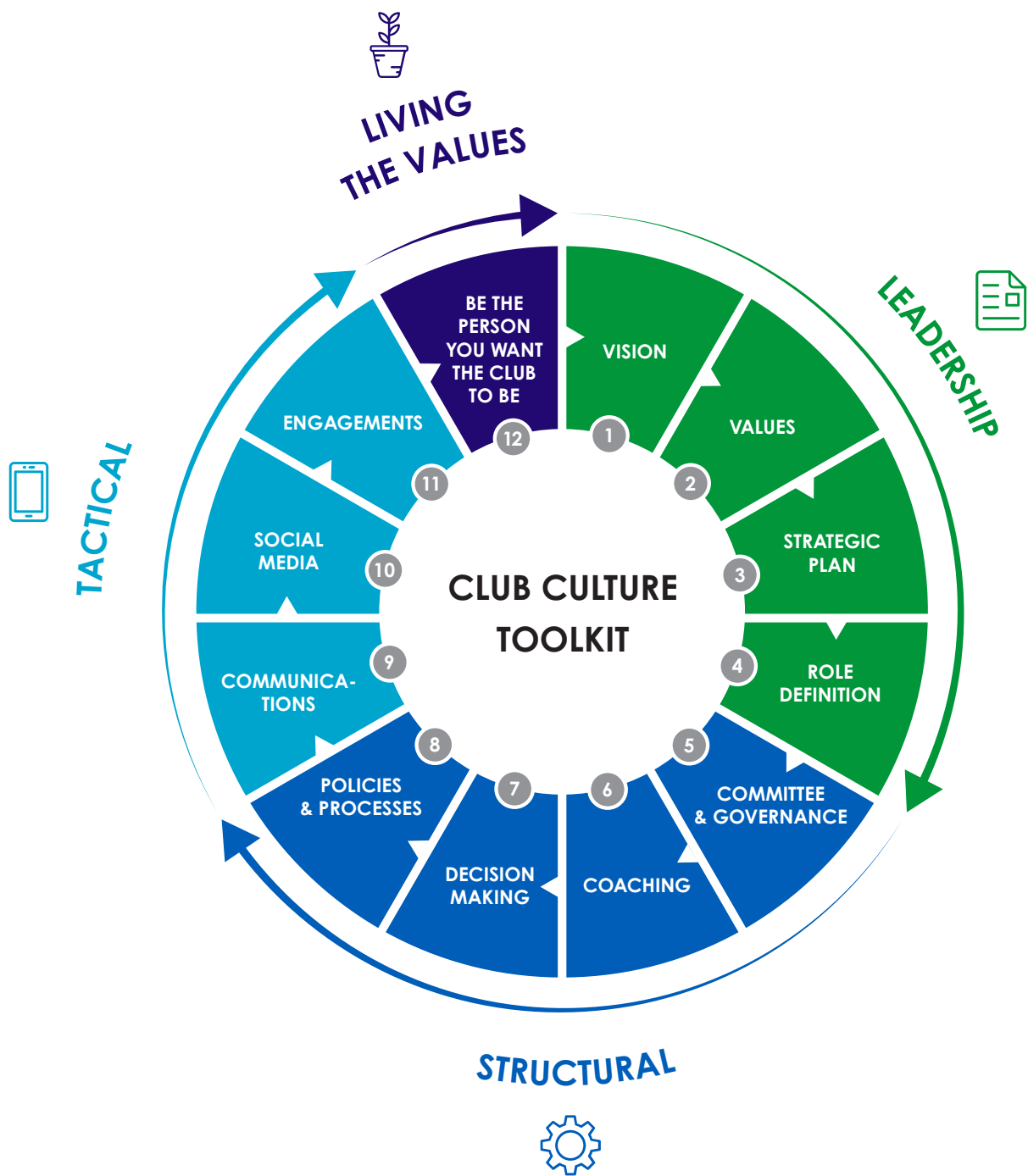
What are the benefits of working towards an optimal club culture?

The benefits include:

- Enhanced pride in and loyalty to your club.
- Improved finances and cashflow through increased membership and alumni loyalty.
- Easier to attract new members
- Easier to fill volunteer positions in the club.
- Improved decision making outcomes
- Better representation of society in your club.
- Positive perception of your club locally and nationally .
- A club better equipped for the future
- Higher likelihood of success as a club
- Less attrition of members
- Less friction in the club

The Toolkit — 12 steps

The club culture toolkit involves 12 steps, as shown below.





The Toolkit — In Detail

Having a good club culture is an ongoing process of either development or maintenance. A positive club culture, once developed, must always be nourished to be maintained that way — this does not need to take much time, but it does take attention. There are a number of areas where a difference can be made, grouped under the three categories of leadership, structural and tactical. We appreciate that committees and club already have a lot going on, so we have tried to make the following easy to action.

We explain the twelve steps:



Leadership

1. Vision — The biggest part of a club that defines its culture is its vision of itself. Clubs should have a vision of how they want to be perceived and what their priorities are. A club can have both recreational and competitive elements — it's about defining priorities within the club. This avoids misunderstandings and people finding themselves in the wrong environment.

➤ Actions

- Define what type of club you are and where your priorities lie e.g. recreational, junior etc.

- Clearly share that vision within the club and outside the club as well.

2. Values — Values outline how you will behave as a club to your various stakeholders, including members. Core values could include things like integrity, excellence, accountability, passion, transparency, etc. Inclusiveness should be a core value for those clubs seeking to build a club which is more aligned with today's society. These should be living values — every interaction in the club should echo those values.

➤ Actions

- Define the club values (ideally as part of the club planning process).
- Ensure the values of the club are stated in the strategic plan and also in the club constitution.
- Ensure that all decisions are made in the context of the club values. It is vital that the club lives its values in everything it does.

3. Strategic Plan — If a club has a simple strategic plan of what it wants to be and how it wants to develop, this will help set and define the culture.

➤ Actions

- Build a strategic plan (this should help to build

consensus in the club, as club members work together on building the club).

- Ensure the strategic plan is communicated and well shared internally, as well as externally e.g. on the club website. This should help members and non-members alike understand if the club is for them.

4. Role Definition — Many people have a role within a club and it should be clear what those roles are and where the leadership lies. In some clubs the leadership role lies with the President of the club, in other clubs it lies with the captain or coaches. Ideally clubs will define in simple terms what the key roles are within the club, and who has responsibility for what.

➤ **Actions**

- Define the roles within the club, including the leadership roles.
- Suggested roles to define include:
 - President
 - Committee Member
 - Head Coach/Captain
 - Coaching Team

Structural



5. Committee and Governance — It is important that the committee is representative of those in the club – that there is a gender balance and age balance. It is proven that gender equality on committees leads to better decision making and better outcomes for organisations. Ideally there should be a junior representative on the committee, if there are junior rowers within the club. The composition of who makes up the committee should be shared with all the club members, as well as how the committee is formed. It should be clear to all club members how a member is selected for the committee. What does a good committee look like?

➤ **Actions**

- Ensure that your committee has the following:
 - Clear communications within the committee and from the committee to the club.
 - A junior representative on the committee.
 - Clear communications within club and on the club website about who is on the committee.
 - Transparency within the club about how the committee is selected.



- Good gender balance and diversity on the committee.
- Regular, minuted meetings.
- Clarity on decision making within the committee.

6. Coaching — Rowing coaches give an inestimable amount of volunteer hours and energy to support their athletes and clubs. The role often extends into committee and club management duties. It is important that coaches feel supported and valued by the club.



More female coaches are needed in clubs across the country, for multiple reasons.



More female coaches are needed in clubs across the country, for multiple reasons. Gender balance in coaching supports a diversity of thought and experience; appeals to a broader range of athletes; and can act as role models for future coaches in the club. More female coaches, means more coaches, supporting an increase in capacity in clubs. Good gender balance means good gender balance across all leadership roles, and it is clear that coaches are very significant leaders within clubs. Yet it is also clear that female coaches perceive a bias within clubs and it is not yet a comfortable environment within the clubs for them.

► **Actions**

- Use the [World Rowing Women in Coaching Toolkit](#) to identify, support and develop female coaches in your club.
- Pay particular attention to how female coaches are supported within your club and set club goals to build your cohort of female coaches.

7. Decision Making — Is your club top down decision making or a consensus model, where every member has their say? Does your club have informal structures, where decisions are made in the pub after training? A number of elements in decision making impact the culture and how it is perceived by members.

► **Actions**

- Ensure the club is open and transparent when it comes to its practices and how it operates, by publishing decisions on the website or having an open forum meeting.
- Ensure formal governance structures are in place e.g. minuted meetings.

8. Policies & Procedures — Does the club have written policies around how things are done e.g., the buying of boats? Written policies and processes can be very helpful in a club to help ensure that there is consensus and

clear rationale in how things are done, which in turn builds culture. One of the policies could also include detail on the pathway through the club of new rowers and of performance vs novice etc., so that there can be no misunderstanding around that. Suggested policies include:

➤ **Actions**

- Ensure your club has policies on:
 - Boat buying procedure.
 - Definition of roles within club.
 - Pathway of rower through the club.
 - Disciplinary and grievance procedure.



Tactical

9. Day to Day Communication — What are the daily interactions in your club like? How do people speak to each other? What is the feeling like when people turn up to training or walk into the clubhouse? Communications is about the day to day and how people speak to each other and how they interact with each other. It is important to regularly challenge your biases and recognize any perceived biases in the club. These inherent biases can have an impact on how we communicate and interact and can greatly impact a person's sense of enjoyment and

belonging within a club.

➤ **Actions**

- Ensure that all your club communications underpin the values of your club.
- Ensure that all the communications externally about your club, or internally to your members, are consistent in their messaging.
- Ensure that any posters, flyers, press releases and your website do not contradict your values.

10. Social Media — It is likely that the club's social media is the main touchpoint for both members and external stakeholders (prospective members, parents, etc). This can be a positive way to reinforce your values and remind your membership of their importance.

➤ **Actions**

- Ensure that the tone of voice of your social media is appropriate for your culture.
- Ensure that your values are reiterated often on your social media channels.

11. Engagement — What are the activities the club undertakes to show its values in action? Are there ways that the culture can be further developed across the membership of the club and that the values can be shown to be real? For example,

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How do
people
speak
to each
other?
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in junior clubs, each parent is asked to stay once and support at training, so that they gain a greater understanding of what is involved. Mixed rowing events can be held, fun events where people get to respect each other and understand each other's position. There are lots of engagement ideas – the value lies in the club members working together to build out these ideas, and through that the culture will become even stronger.



Living the Values

12. Be the Person You Want the Club to be! — Each one of us must take responsibility for our behaviors and actions and how we treat others within the club. We must be the person we want the culture to be. In each of our daily interactions we need to embody the behaviours we want in the club. We need to call it out when others are not living the values of the club.

Leadership comes from the top of the club, so the President and other senior figures, need to set the tone and the culture. Club culture is a big job and the commitment to it from the top is critical. Leadership sets the tone of inclusion and consensus decision making, the ethos, the values and the leadership.

► Actions

- Call out what is unacceptable behaviour in your club and tackle it.
- Define what is not acceptable in your club and share that with all members.
- Club leadership should sign a 'commitment to culture' pledge, that in turn is shared on social media, in posters, flyers, and with coaches, to show the commitment to developing a positive culture is shared across the club. Communicating the pledge of commitment is also critical in building consensus.

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We must be the person we want the culture to be

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Suggested Best Practice Templates

Sample Vision — A vision outlines the ambition of the club. It clearly outlines where you are heading. Your vision should engage all stakeholders, excite and motivate them to actively support your club in achieving your vision. It must be clear and ambitious but realistic.

A vision statement; in one sentence, it describes a clear and inspirational long-term desired change, resulting from a club's efforts and activities.

The following process is suggested when developing your vision:

- Set up a workshop with the Committee and key individuals from the club. It would be great to have an external facilitator to run the workshop.
- Depending on the number of people, split into small groups and ask them to develop the front page of your newspaper in 3-5 years' time (whatever the term of your strategic plan is). Develop the heading in the newspaper, the articles on the homepage and photo about your club – what does the front page say about your club.
- Within your group write the key words you want to see in your vision on A5 card. Display on the floor and debate.
- As a combined group, select the

key words that must be in the new vision statement.

- Now start to create a vision statement (one sentence) in terms of your future state. Identify a date when this vision is to be realised. For example, 31 Dec 2030.
- Take a break, then ask the Committee to review the vision statement within 7 days.
- Committee to confirm the vision statement.

Use this template to help you develop a vision for your club:

Vision Statement (Template)

First list the words you want to see in the vision statement:

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
- etc.

Now complete the sentences below:

- In 2030 our club will be _____
- By 2030 we want _____
- By 2030 we will have _____



Sample Values — Values are to outline how you will behave as a club to your various stakeholders.

The following suggested process should be adopted when developing your values:

- Set up a workshop with the Committee and key individuals from the club. It would be great to have an external facilitator to run the workshop.
- Depending on the number of people, split into small groups.
- Within your group, write the values you want to see in your club on A5 card. Display on the floor and debate.
- As a combined group, select the key values. It is recommended you select between 4-6 core values.
- Start to create a statement for each value selected.
- Take a break, then ask the Committee to review within 7 days.
- Committee to confirm the value statement.

Use this template to help you develop values for your club:

Core Values	Value Statement
Fair-play	We will manage and promote all aspects of rowing with impartiality and respect.
Integrity	We adhere to strong ethical, moral and sporting values.
Passion	We are passionate in every aspect of sporting endeavours.
Transparen-cy	We will promote and communicate our policies, processes and decisions, in a timely manner.
Excellence	Delivery of our programmes to the highest standards.
Teamwork	Commitment to our common goals, while showing concern and support for all.

Sample Club Strategic Development Plan — Below we have outlined the suggested steps in developing a strategic development plan for your club:

1. Who should be involved? Set up a project team involving the key personnel at the club.
2. Where is your club at now?



Conduct research various groups such as; your members, players, parents and coaches together with performing a situational analysis. A situational analysis consists of a SWOT, Stakeholder Analysis and Resources Analysis.

3. Where do you want your club to be in the coming years? Create a vision, mission, values and key goals (priorities).
4. How do you get there?
Create your SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound).
5. Writing and distributing the plan
6. Develop an external facing document which clearly sets out your direction of travel, goals and objectives. This external document will contain high quality photographs and will take the key information from the internal plan and present it in a professional structure. It is the club's plan so make sure all members, sponsors, coaches and parents have access to it.
7. How do you know if you are succeeding? Introduce regular monitoring of the plan regarding your progress against the targets set. This will ensure you continue to move in the right direction and help you to realise when you have achieved something.

Download the Strategic and Operational Club Development samples here at rowingireland.ie/downloads



Sample Pledge of Commitment

— Below we have outlined a suggested template for a pledge of commitment. Print off and have signed by coaches and committee members.

Pledge of Commitment (Template)
The Club Values (example):
Transparency Inclusion Excellence The Rule of Fun Family
Individual Commitment
I agree to embrace the Commitment to Culture for our club and will actively manifest the club values in our rowers, their families, our competitions, our clubhouse and ourselves.
Signed _____ Print Name _____ Date ___ / ___ / ___

Sample Policy and Process Documents

— Below you can find some of the policy and process documents that can be implemented in your club:

- Club Administration Roles document
- Volunteer induction template
- Anti Bullying Policy
- Coach description document
- Rowing Exit Survey template

Find examples of policy templates and role description templates here at rowingireland.ie/supporting-our-clubs/club-governance