



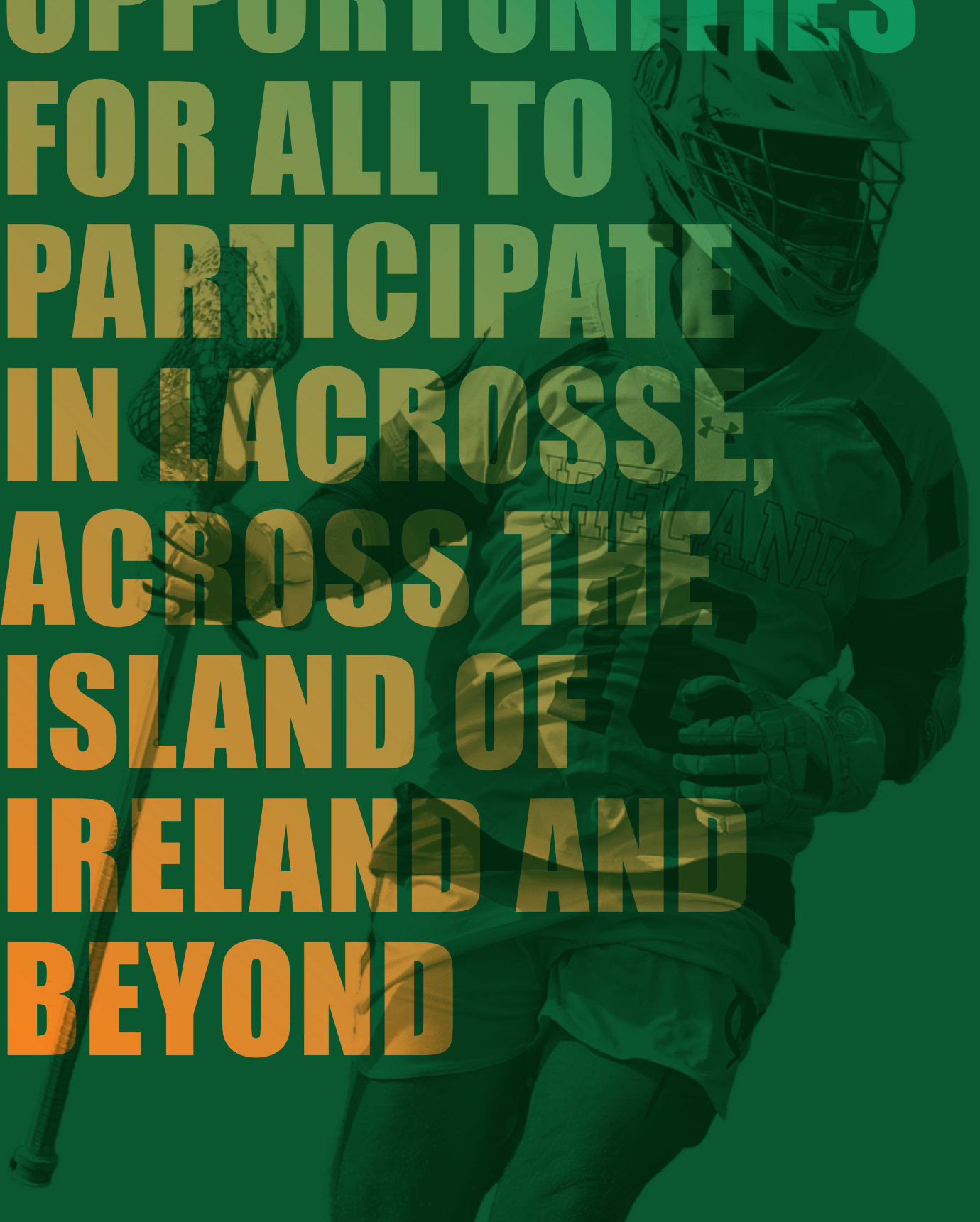
**IRELAND
LACROSSE**



STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2026

TOGETHER AS ONE

**PROVIDING
OPPORTUNITIES
FOR ALL TO
PARTICIPATE
IN LACROSSE,
ACROSS THE
ISLAND OF
IRELAND AND
BEYOND**



INTRODUCTION

We've got a new vision and a new plan for a new era for Ireland Lacrosse, and we're excited to share the details of it! And we need help from the Irish and lacrosse communities – acting 'I dteannta a chéile', 'together as one' – to turn these plans into a reality!

Life, like sport, is often defined by wins and losses. In the more recent history of Irish lacrosse, we have seen plenty of wins – development of new teams, establishment of the Irish Lacrosse League, and our success in winning the bid to host the 2020 World Lacrosse Men's U19 World Championship & World Festival. But we have also had losses – like the passing of Jimmy Carroll in 2016 and Richie Moran in 2022, the near-decimation of our teams and our league as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the postponement of the tournament we were due to host until 2022. But, as in life, it's not the actual wins and losses that really matter, but how you deal with both – how you remember them, value them, honour them, and then learn from them when looking to the future. And that's why the time feels right to do that now. And we're ready to make that happen.

I have been involved with Ireland Lacrosse for almost 20 years, since 2004. I helped found the Dublin Lacrosse club in 2005 and the University College Dublin (UCD) Lacrosse Club in 2006. I was a member of the Ireland men's national team from 2004-2011, and then again in 2015, 2017 and 2019. I was a Captain from 2005-2010. I have played in two World Field Championships, four World Box Championships, two European Field Championships, one European Box Championship and two Celtic Cups. I loved them all. I am second in the all-time list of games played for Ireland, behind Sean Gibson who is still going strong. I will be making my debut for the Éire Supermasters team at the World Festival in San Diego this summer. I worked closely with the

Irish Lacrosse Foundation for many years (led by Jimmy Carroll and Richie Moran) and continue to work with John Cavanaugh, Dick Pepper and Tom Prior who are closely involved in everything we do. I founded Ireland Lacrosse here in Dublin in 2009, along with John Frame (who is still on our Board) and others, and founded Ireland Lacrosse North America (our 501c3 in the USA), together with Jim Hoban, in 2016. I was involved in the establishment of the first Ireland women's national team in the modern era, in 2005, and I have done extensive research to uncover the incredible history of women's lacrosse in Ireland, which existed continuously between 1922 and 1970. I coached the UCD women's team for a short period, as well as the Éire women's box team.





Most recently, I initiated a process to appoint Head Coaches for a new Ireland Women's Box National Team and Ireland Women's 6s National Team, to ensure equality and parity between our men's and women's national teams.

I met my wife through lacrosse – she was on that 2005 team which won a European Newcomers Championship tournament in Copenhagen. And we have two small boys, aged 7 and 3 – all part of the Ireland Lacrosse youth development strategy! Through lacrosse, I have therefore become an international athlete, a national team captain, a coach, a referee, a founder, a treasurer, a CEO, a leader, and also a husband and a father. I owe a lot to the game of lacrosse, and I want to continue to give back to it.

While I have now spent more of my life in Ireland than I did in the USA, I grew up in New York. My mother, and both of my father's parents, were from Ireland. I fell in love with the game of lacrosse in 7th and 8th grade, but ended up at a Catholic high school that didn't have a team at the time. I was devastated that I lost the opportunity to play competitively, though continued to do so recreationally. When I went to Villanova University, I tried-out for the club team, but couldn't afford the fees when I got offered a spot on the team.

Wins and losses. Successes and failures. Creating opportunities to play, and not letting finances get in the way of participation. All of those things, combined with the expert guidance and support of our friends at 2into3, a generous grant from World Lacrosse, and input from the wide variety of Ireland Lacrosse stakeholders, have helped us create this new strategic plan. Join us on this new phase of our journey!

Michael Kennedy
CEO, Ireland Lacrosse



A BRIEF HISTORY OF LACROSSE IN IRELAND

The Early Years

The origins of lacrosse in Ireland lie with the establishment of the Ards Lacrosse Club in Newtownards, Co. Down (just outside Belfast) in 1872.

Four years later, William George Beers, the man credited with modernising and codifying the game in his native Canada, led a trip across the Atlantic that included members of the Montreal Lacrosse Club as well as a team of Kahnawake (Mohawk) players. The tour started in Belfast with a number of exhibition games by these teams before moving on to England where, amongst other games, the teams put on an exhibition for the Queen at Windsor Castle. Several similar trips followed as the game developed further in Ireland,

and an Irish Lacrosse Union was formed in 1879 to support this development and to manage the new Irish Men's National Lacrosse Team.

In 1886, the Irish Lacrosse Union accepted one of many invitations to travel to Canada and the United States. This trip was led by John Sinclair and Hugh C. Kelly (of Belfast and Ballymacarrett, Co. Down respectively), the latter of whom was captain of the Irish team at the time, a pioneer of the game in Ireland, and Deputy Sheriff of the County Down. The trip lasted nearly two months and included many games on the East coast of the USA and in Canada. In newspaper reports of this trip from across the Atlantic, it notes that there were upwards of thirteen club teams playing regularly in Ireland.

Men's lacrosse flourished in Ireland at the end of the 19th century and into the beginning of the 20th. In these years, two trophies were awarded for lacrosse in Ireland – the Irish Championship Flag and the Irish Challenge Shield – and these trophies still exist and are held in Newtownards, the erstwhile spiritual home of lacrosse in Ireland as the first town to have established a lacrosse club in 1872.



Newtownards, Irish Championship Flag and Irish Challenge Shield winning team, 1892.



Belfast Ladies, 20 February, 1930.

Women's Lacrosse after the Turn of the Century

Women's lacrosse emerged in Ireland in the 1920s. Richmond Lodge, which was an all-girls school in Belfast, began playing the game at least as early as 1922. On Monday, the 29th of November 1926, at 2.45pm, at Trinity Hall in Rathmines in Dublin, the (suitably named) Dublin Pioneers ladies lacrosse team held its first practice.

By the 1930s, the Dublin Pioneers and the Belfast Ladies Lacrosse Club (founded by the alumni of Richmond Lodge) were the only two senior



Ireland U19 Women, 2019.



Ireland U21 Men, 2022.

women's club lacrosse teams. However, they were joined by girls' schools including Richmond Lodge in Belfast and Manor House School in Co. Armagh, and other schools based around the greater Dublin area – the French School in Bray (Co. Wicklow), the Hillcourt School in Glenageary (Co. Dublin), Alexandra College in Milltown (Dublin), the Hall School in Monkstown (Co. Dublin) and Glengara Park in Dun Laoghaire (Co. Dublin).

In 1930, the Irish Ladies Lacrosse Association was founded, as was the first ever Irish Women's National Lacrosse Team which played its first competitive match in a tournament in April of that year at Merton Abbey (southwest London) which featured Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England.

The Modern Era

Men's lacrosse in Ireland emerged in 1872 and died out in the early 1900s, with women's lacrosse then emerging in the 1920s and then subsequently dying out around 1970.

The Irish Men's National Lacrosse Team was re-established to compete in the 2001 European

Championships tournament in Penarth, Wales. The men's senior team has continued to participate in major tournaments since that time. An Irish Men's Box National Team was added in 2007, an Irish Men's Under-19 National Lacrosse Team was added in 2016, and an Irish Men's 6s National Lacrosse Team is currently being formed.

In 2005, the Irish Women's National Lacrosse Team was re-established and entered in the 2005 European Newcomers Tournament in Copenhagen, Denmark, finishing in 1st place, a remarkable feat. The women's senior team has likewise continued to participate in major tournaments since that time. In 2019, an Irish Women's Under-19 National Lacrosse Team was formed, and an Irish Women's Box National Lacrosse Team, and Irish Women's 6s National Lacrosse Team, are currently being formed.

By 2024, there will be eight national teams – four for women and four for men – operating under the auspices of Ireland Lacrosse.

In the 2009-2010 season the Irish Lacrosse League (ILL) was established. This league features men's and women's teams such as the Dublin Lacrosse Club, University College Dublin (UCD), University of Galway (UG), University College Cork (UCC) and Queen's University Belfast (QUB), with new teams emerging in various parts of the country. A new women's Schools Cup took place in March 2019 and, following the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2022, and in 2023 the objective is to also include men's teams in the Schools Cup for the first time.

Ireland Lacrosse also operates the Éire programme, for men and women, and in all of the disciplines – field, box and sixes – and across multiple age levels. The Éire programme provides a platform to enable players who may not be eligible to play for the Irish national teams, but who wish to represent and connect with their Irish heritage by being part of the Ireland Lacrosse family. The Éire teams compete in multiple events and tournaments, including in Ireland, the UK, Europe, USA and elsewhere.



OUR VISION

Embedding the spirit and sport of lacrosse in Ireland

We believe that it is critical to the success of Ireland Lacrosse – and engagement with all of its players, coaches, referees, friends, fans and family – that we start with the promotion of the spirit of the game. We are deeply grateful to the indigenous people of North America for sharing this game with the world, and we recognise the origins of the game with them, who believe themselves that they have received the game from the Creator. They play the game for the Creator, and as a medicine game, where it's not just about wins and losses, but the spirit in which the game is played in accordance with the principles of friendship, respect and sportsmanship. And we would further echo World Lacrosse's message of lacrosse as 'indigenous made, globally played'.

The spirit of the game is also embodied in the often-heard motto of 'Grow the Game' and we strongly subscribe to this. That means we are guided in our mission, values, priorities, goals and strategic actions by the need to identify ways to promote participation, even when it may be at the expense of performance. This applies especially on the island of Ireland, where we hope that promotion of the spirit of the game will not only encourage people to get involved as players, coaches, referees and umpires, and administrators, but where we can foster a love for the game which will encourage people to get involved as leaders.



OUR MISSION

Ireland Lacrosse provides opportunities for all to participate in lacrosse, across the island of Ireland and beyond, from beginner to elite

Ireland has changed dramatically in recent years, and Ireland Lacrosse reflects the deep and meaningful history of relationships between Ireland and the USA, Canada, UK and elsewhere, as well as diversity within Ireland in terms of race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender identity, sexual identity, people with health conditions or impairments, and other social status. Like many other sports, including rugby and field hockey, we are also an all-island body, respecting in particular the origins of the game in the environs of Belfast.

We know, and have lived, the tensions that can exist between participation and performance, but we neither treat these as mutually exclusive nor as directly connected. In accordance with the Government of Ireland National Sports Policy 2018-2027, we will “aim to elevate Ireland to the top of the table globally for both participation in sport and high performance.”

We also embrace Ireland’s outward-looking approach to the world, seeking to connect people in Ireland with those outside of Ireland in pursuit of our shared priorities and goals. The bigger our family is, the stronger it will be, and the more we can achieve ‘together as one’ – ‘I dteannta a chéile’!



OUR VALUES



Ambition

We have achieved so much, and we are ready to achieve more.

Since lacrosse was re-established in Ireland at the start of the twenty-first century, we have grown significantly. It has not always been a straight and steady upward trend, and the COVID-19 pandemic has certainly limited our achievements, but it has not limited our ambition. And this strategic plan is enabling us to match this ambition with solid, detailed actions.



Community

Our vision, to embed the spirit and sport of lacrosse, is rooted in the tremendous value we place on community.

We believe players and leaders will join us in our journey because of the community we have created, with contacts far and wide across the globe, all united in our connection to the Irish lacrosse community. We recognise that the members of this community, our people, are our greatest asset.



Inclusion and diversity

Ireland Lacrosse welcomes people into our community from all walks of life, all backgrounds, all viewpoints, all abilities, and all identities, who share common goals, as articulated in this strategic plan.

Commitment to this value is essential to our community-building ethos and aspirations.



OUR VALUES



Excellence

We promote excellence in everything we do.

This means everything that happens on the field with our players, coaches and referees, within Ireland and at various events around the world, but also everything that happens off the field in relation to our activities, including our governance, policies and procedures, finances and our relationships with other key entities. We define and expect the highest standards of behaviour, mutual respect, and integrity.



Accountability

We act when our standards of excellence are not achieved, when we fall short of meeting our goals for inclusion and diversity, and when indifference or indecision can get in the way of our ambition.

We know, and have lived, the challenges of trying to achieve things with an entirely voluntary workforce, but we know accountability is critical to the development of people as leaders. Importantly, we will also hold all of our athletes and coaches, and other associated staff, accountable for what they do both on and off the field.



PRIORITIES & GOALS



PARTICIPATION



GOAL 1

Increase participation in lacrosse across Ireland, with a focus on young people

This is our most important goal for our most important priority. We will promote participation in lacrosse in schools and universities, among boys and girls and men and women. We will also further develop our post-university teams, and our Éire and Masters programmes. We see competitions such as the Schools Cup, Irish Lacrosse League, a Box league and a 6s league as important components of this.



GOAL 2

Increase homegrown talent

We recognise that higher-level training and competition will increase the level of talent of lacrosse players in Ireland. We will enhance our domestic training and competition, but also seek out opportunities to participate in training and events outside Ireland.



GOAL 3

Invest in domestic capacity to enable participation: coaches, officials, development officers, equipment

We know, and have lived, the difficulties with achieving grassroots lacrosse development when it is not a profit-making activity, but we will find other sources of income to enable us to invest in these critically important enablers for the promotion of participation and growth.



COMMUNICATIONS



GOAL 1

Increase national media coverage

Lacrosse is a sport that operates very much under the public radar within Ireland. Some progress was made in this regard when we hosted the 2022 World Lacrosse Men's U21 World Championship & World Festival, with extensive press coverage in the lead-up and during the event. We now have an opportunity to capitalize on this and will be putting in place a Communications Working Group to do that. We also intend to expand our involvement with various networks and associations with which our activities overlap.



GOAL 2

Increase social media following

Our social media following across all platforms is strong, but we believe it can be better and we will likewise give the Communications Working Group the responsibility for working out how this can be achieved. We see this, and the increase in national media coverage, as important mechanisms for serving the goals of priority 1, participation.



GOAL 3

Improve internal communications

We recognise that our internal communications have been poor, and we know that in order to stay true to all of our values – ambition, community, inclusion and diversity, excellence, and accountability – we need to make significant improvements in this area. We will be using the Ireland Lacrosse membership system to communicate with our stakeholders better and more frequently. We will also revise and update the Ireland Lacrosse website.





ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

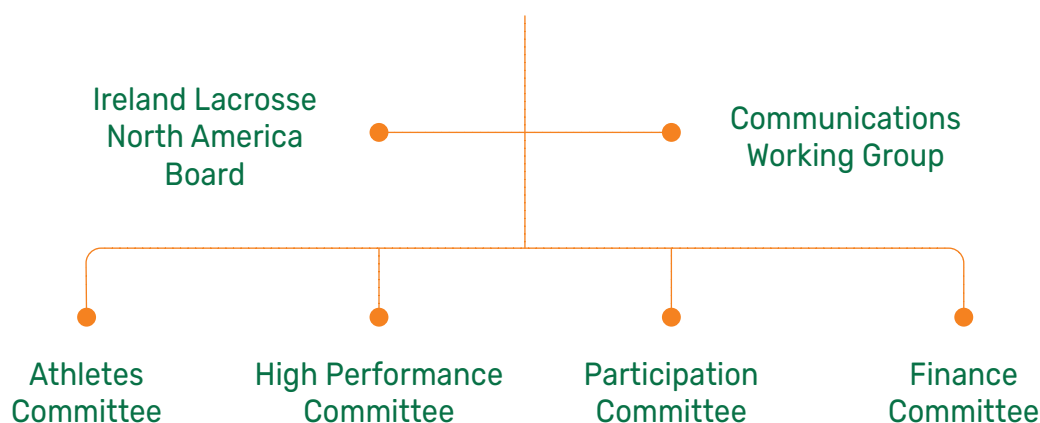


GOAL 1

Strengthen our organisational structure and governance

We have already commenced the process of re-structuring the governance and management of Ireland Lacrosse to align it more closely with this strategic plan and also best practice for sporting bodies within Ireland and also within the lacrosse sector more generally. An independent Chair of the Ireland Lacrosse Board has been elected, together with two other Board members. A number of committees and working groups will be established which will provide opportunities for new members to get involved. We will also review and update our Governance Manual and Book of Rules to ensure they are fit for purpose.

IRELAND LACROSSE BOARD





GOAL 2

Achieve NGB recognition in Ireland

Sport Ireland is the authority tasked with the development of sport in Ireland. This includes participation in sport, high performance sport, anti-doping, coaching and the development of the Sport Ireland Campus in Dublin. National Governing Bodies (NGBs) must apply to Sport Ireland for formal recognition; once that is achieved, they may apply for recurrent funding. For the majority of NGBs in Ireland, this recurrent funding typically constitutes half of the annual operating budget. This recognition is therefore critical for long-term sustainability. Ireland Lacrosse applied for this formal recognition in 2018 but it was not approved, principally on the basis that we did not have enough players, teams and clubs. Hence, participation is priority #1, and we intend to re-apply to Sport Ireland by the end of the lifespan of this strategic plan.



GOAL 3

Empower and retain volunteers

We know, and have lived through, and overcome, the challenges associated with running an organisation entirely comprised of volunteers, with key personnel spread across multiple countries and timezones. In order to retain volunteers, we know that we must make all of our activities enjoyable and rewarding. We will be providing more opportunities for volunteers to get involved, and take better care of their training, orientation and support needs.





GOAL 4

**Increase income
(including via teams,
events and tournaments)
to help achieve goals re:
participation**

In the absence of government funding, event and team participation has been the financial lifeblood of the organisation since its inception. We will therefore continue this activity, and expand it by creating new teams, including new national teams for men and women, and for field, box and 6s, and new Éire teams at youth, adult and Masters levels. The income generated from these activities will be invested in strategic priority #1, participation.



GOAL 5

Increase membership

We will take better care of our members, communicate better with them, and seek help and advice from them. We will expand the number of membership types to accommodate the diversity of our community. We will establish new teams and identify new events and tournaments to participate in, which will increase our membership, but also provide more participation opportunities.



GOAL 6

**Maintain a gender
balance across our
organisation**

We are committed to achieving gender balance across all aspects of our organisation. This includes governance and management, and teams and coaches. We will advertise and recruit for more female members of the Board, and ensure gender balance is achieved on all committees and working groups. We will work to establish a boys division for the annual Schools Cup.

GET IN TOUCH TO DISCUSS HOW YOU CAN HELP!



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Ireland Lacrosse has been fully registered with the Companies Registration Office in Ireland since 5 October 2009 (company registration number: 475980) and is also registered with the Office of the Revenue Commissioners as a Sporting Body with Tax Exemption under Section 235 of the Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997 (registration number 2925).

Ireland Lacrosse North America, Inc. has been fully registered with the State Corporation Commission of the Commonwealth of Virginia in the USA since 4 February 2016 and has been confirmed by the Internal Revenue Service as being exempt from Federal Income Tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (and has been assigned an Employee Identification Number (EIN): 81-0842200)).



EMBEDDING THE SPIRIT AND SPORT OF LACROSSE IN IRELAND





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