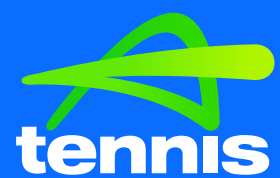




Women's **Coaching Toolkit**

Strategies to recruit, develop
and retain women coaches



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Introduction

This toolkit is designed to support coaching business owners and clubs in increasing the number of women coaches within their organisations. Research shows that greater gender diversity not only boosts the participation of girls and women in sport but also expands the overall talent pool - benefiting the entire organisation. The content in this toolkit has been researched and developed by Flinders University.

Special thanks go to the following people and organisations for their contribution and support:

Shane Pill PhD, Deb Agnew PhD, Pip Henderson, Jasmine Petersen PhD, Ivanka Prichard PhD, Kate Ridley PhD from Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia.

To all the women coaches who have contributed to the development of the toolkit.



Planning & preparing *for women in Coaching Roles*

If you're working to increase the number of women coaches in your organisation, you'll need to make a plan. Your plan should cover the steps of recruiting, developing and retaining women in coaching roles, so that you can recognise the wide range of benefits associated with having more women in these positions.

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Women coaches: Opportunity awaits

Introduction

At Wimbledon 2023, of the 128 women playing in the main draw, only six had a woman coach – and none of the 128 men were coached by a woman. But things are changing. At Indian Wells in 2024, at least 15 of the women playing singles and doubles listed a female coach, and the San Diego Open women’s final had all-women coaches behind both players – for the first time in history.

“San Diego was very cool, the first word that comes to mind is proud ... It shines a light on the idea that women can coach. And I’m not even saying women can coach women. Women can coach, period.”

NICOLE PRATT, WOMEN’S TEAM COACH AT TENNIS AUSTRALIA

The opportunity ahead

Tennis Australia is leading the way in helping to overcome barriers, create opportunities and recognise the benefits of having women coaches in all spheres. Our impact goes beyond our sport too, as many other sports are looking to bring more women into coaching roles.

Across the world, in most sports, it’s been common to see males in key roles in sports, including coaching roles and Board positions. However, people are increasingly recognising that there are great benefits available when women are also included in these roles.



Role models

Having women as role models in coaching positions normalises the presence of women in sport and boosts girls' confidence by showing girls that they belong in that sporting community.

Participation and retention of girls

Women coaches are important to encouraging girls to participate and stay in sport. While it might not matter to everyone, some women players are more satisfied with a woman coach.

Greater talent pool

Having more women coaches could benefit all players. When there are more women, there's a larger talent pool of coaches available so more people can learn to play tennis and have a greater choice about who to learn with.

More women in coaching positions can also help challenge gender stereotypes, by ensuring boys see women in coaching roles earlier in their sporting pathways.

Building a pathway to the future

When you work to bring women into coaching positions, you start a movement that builds a pathway to a future with a broader pool of talented coaches.

- Seeing other women in coaching roles communicates that this is a valuable, worthwhile and accessible future pathway for women.
- When women players have high-quality coaching role models, they can see this as a possible career option they may want to consider.
- Women players' report greater belief in their capacity to enter coaching when they have had a female head coach.
- Having just one high-quality woman coach can be more important than the total number of role models, but having more women coaches will help to normalise women in coaching roles.

“I think that a lot of people just wouldn't see that tennis could be a career ... I caught up with some girls that I went to school with ... so it's been a long time since I saw them. And when they asked me what I did, and I said that I was a tennis coach, they said, “Oh, that's really cool. And what do you do for a job?”

FEMALE MASTER CLUB PROFESSIONAL COACH

Getting Started

To begin, it's important to understand your current position regarding gender diversity in your coaching workforce and the support you provide to women coaches. This 15-question

self-assessment tool will help you evaluate where you stand and identify areas for growth. Please select the most appropriate response for each question.

Question	Response Options (Numbers indicate the score)
Your coaching business's approach to growing and supporting women in coaching is:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Something we haven't specifically focused on (1)<input type="radio"/> Something we're aware of but haven't formally addressed (2)<input type="radio"/> Under development with some informal targets (3)<input type="radio"/> Part of our strategic plan with specific goals (4)<input type="radio"/> Fully integrated into our operations with regular monitoring (5)
When tracking the gender balance of coaches in your business (i.e., number of men and women):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> We don't track gender balance of coaches in our business (1)<input type="radio"/> We have rough estimates of the number of men and women coaches in our business (2)<input type="radio"/> We maintain basic records of the number of men and women coaches in our business (3)<input type="radio"/> We track the number of men and women coaches in our business annually (4)<input type="radio"/> We track the number of men and women coaches in our business each term (5)
Your coaching business's approach to increasing the representation of women coaches is:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> There is no set target for the number of women coaches (1)<input type="radio"/> We have a general commitment by supporting gender diversity, but do not have a formal target (2)<input type="radio"/> We have an internal target but no official policy (3)<input type="radio"/> A specific percentage or number of women coaches is included in our strategy (4)<input type="radio"/> We have a formal target with active measures to recruit, develop and retain women coaches (5)

Question	Response Options (Numbers indicate the score)
<p>Investment in professional development of coaches is:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Not funded – Coaches self-fund their development (1) <input type="radio"/> Funded selectively – Support is provided on a case-by-case basis (2) <input type="radio"/> Minimally funded – All coaches receive at least some financial support (3) <input type="radio"/> Sufficiently funded – Sufficient funds are allocated for all coaches (4) <input type="radio"/> A strategic priority – Significant investment with a focus on supporting women coaches (5)
<p>In the past year, your coaching position advertisements have been:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Primarily shared through word-of-mouth (1) <input type="radio"/> Posted on our own website and social media channels (2) <input type="radio"/> Advertised on general job sites, like Seek (3) <input type="radio"/> Shared through multiple channels including tennis networks (4) <input type="radio"/> Strategically placed to attract a diverse candidate pool (5)
<p>When considering potential coaches:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> We wait for people to express interest (1) <input type="radio"/> We respond to suggestions from current coaches (2) <input type="radio"/> We sometimes approach elite players (3) <input type="radio"/> We actively identify potential coaches (4) <input type="radio"/> We have pathways to develop players from our business into coaches (5)
<p>When recruiting coaches our approach is:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Ad hoc – We do not have a formal approach to recruiting new coaches (1) <input type="radio"/> Qualification-focused – We prioritise coaching qualifications above other factors (2) <input type="radio"/> Experience-focused – We value playing experience over formal coaching qualifications (3) <input type="radio"/> Criteria-based – We follow standard selection criteria for all hires (4) <input type="radio"/> Structured and fair – We have formal processes to ensure objective and equitable assessments with a diverse selection panel (5)

Question	Response Options (Numbers indicate the score)
<p>When coaches need to adjust schedules for family commitments:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> They typically need to find their own replacement (1) <input type="radio"/> We try to accommodate if possible (2) <input type="radio"/> We manage case-by-case with no formal policy (3) <input type="radio"/> We have flexible arrangements available if requested (4) <input type="radio"/> We have a formal policy and proactively discuss and plan for flexibility needs (5)
<p>During coaching team meetings and discussions:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> We do not have any women coaches on our coaching team (1) <input type="radio"/> Women coaches rarely speak (2) <input type="radio"/> Women coaches contribute when directly asked (3) <input type="radio"/> Most women coaches actively participate (4) <input type="radio"/> Women coaches regularly lead meetings and discussions (5)
<p>Your coaching business culture around women in coaching is:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Not something we specifically consider (1) <input type="radio"/> Generally welcoming but not structured (2) <input type="radio"/> Supportive when challenges arise (3) <input type="radio"/> Actively inclusive (4) <input type="radio"/> Deliberately structured to promote equality (5)
<p>Mentoring is defined as “a relationship where a person with specific knowledge and experience provides guidance and support to a less experienced person”. In sports, mentoring is a widely used professional development strategy, and women coaches have consistently reported it as a positive influence on their coaching growth. When planning mentoring programs for coaches:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> We don't currently have a mentoring program (1) <input type="radio"/> We have informal mentoring that coaches arrange themselves (2) <input type="radio"/> We match new coaches with an experienced coach (3) <input type="radio"/> We have a structured program but struggle to find enough mentors (4) <input type="radio"/> We have an active program with both male and female mentors (5)

Question	Response Options (Numbers indicate the score)
<p>When women coaches express interest in advancing their qualifications:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> We expect them to manage their own development (1) <input type="radio"/> We provide information about available courses (2) <input type="radio"/> We offer some financial support if requested (3) <input type="radio"/> We have a budget set aside for development (4) <input type="radio"/> We actively create and fund development pathways (5)
<p>Networking refers to building meaningful connections that can enhance collaboration and career development. Your coaching business approach to coach networking is:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Coaches network informally if they choose (1) <input type="radio"/> We occasionally organise social events (2) <input type="radio"/> We run regular coach meetings (3) <input type="radio"/> We facilitate participation in networking opportunities created by Tennis Australia (4) <input type="radio"/> We have dedicated programs for women coaches to connect (5)
<p>Professional development opportunities are:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> The individual coach's responsibility (1) <input type="radio"/> Something we share if we become aware of them (2) <input type="radio"/> Available on request (3) <input type="radio"/> Regularly offered to all coaches (4) <input type="radio"/> Tailored to individual coach needs and goals (5)
<p>Shadowing is a practical strategy, similar to mentoring, that can be an effective way to develop women coaches. Coaches can observe and follow a more experienced coach for a set period, learning directly on the job. Shadowing opportunities for new coaches in your coaching business are:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Not currently offered (1) <input type="radio"/> Available if coaches arrange them (2) <input type="radio"/> Provided when requested (3) <input type="radio"/> Regularly organised (4) <input type="radio"/> Part of our structured development program (5)

Scoring

15- 29 points

Plenty of opportunity:

Your low score suggests a strong opportunity to build a more inclusive and effective environment for women coaches. To move forward:

- Explore the Planning module to create a strategic approach to engaging women coaches.
- Use the Recruiting module to diversify your candidate pool and attract more women.
- Complete the Retention module to build structured supports that help retain great coaches.
- Review the Development module to implement a more intentional approach to coach development.

These steps will help create a more equitable and supportive coaching culture.

30-44 points

Making a start – but there's work to do.

Your current approach across planning, recruiting, support, and development appears informal and could benefit from more structure and intentionality. To strengthen your efforts:

- Use the Planning module to build a measurable and strategic plan to engage women coaches.
- Explore the Recruiting module to formalise inclusive recruitment practices and reach a broader candidate pool.
- Complete the Retention module to create a supportive environment that helps retain women coaches.
- Review the Development module for ideas on how to enhance coaching development pathways for women.

These actions will help you move from good intentions to meaningful impact.

45-59 points

Good job – you're on the way!

You have laid a solid foundation for gender equity in coaching, with basic systems in place across planning, recruitment, support, and development. There's now a great opportunity to strengthen and formalise your approach. To build on your progress:

- Use the Planning module to enhance your framework and make it more strategic.
- Explore the Recruiting module to deepen inclusive practices and broaden your reach.
- Complete the Retention module to strengthen support systems and create a more inclusive environment.
- Review the Development module to expand opportunities for women coaches and build a more structured pathway.

These steps will help you move from a good start to a truly impactful and sustainable approach.

60-75 points

Strong results – you're leading the way!

You have demonstrated a comprehensive and strategic approach to gender equity in coaching, with strong systems in place. You're well-positioned to be a leader in this space. To amplify your impact:

- Share your Planning success publicly to inspire others and position your club as an industry leader.
- Celebrate your Recruiting achievements and highlight the intentional strategies behind your inclusive practices.
- Showcase your Retention efforts, including family-friendly and inclusive policies, and consider mentoring other organisations.
- Extend your Development approach by supporting local networks and mentoring opportunities beyond your club.

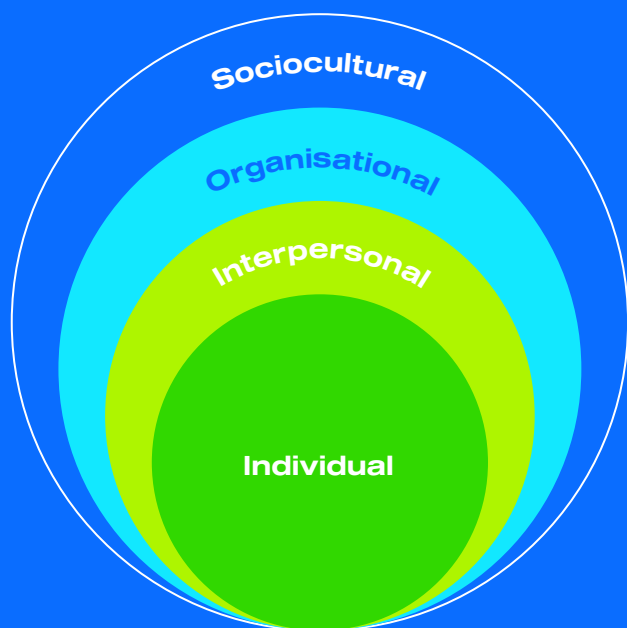
Keep up the great work – your leadership is helping shape a more inclusive future for coaching.

Understanding enablers and barriers

Factors influencing women coaches

If you want to encourage women to take up coaching roles, you need to understand what's going to enable them to get involved – and what's stopping them.

Women tennis coaches in Australia, working with researchers from Flinders University, reported a range of factors they believed either supported or impeded their coaching careers. These factors may be at individual, interpersonal, organisational and/or sociocultural levels.



Sociocultural

The sociocultural factors identified were all barriers:

- Gender norms
- Gendered appointments
- Marginalisation
- Stereotypes

Organisational

The positive organisational factors include:

- Policies
- Development opportunities
- Organisational support
- Formal mentoring programs

The barriers include:

- Remuneration
- Unclear career pathway
- Job instability

Interpersonal

Having women coach role models is a positive enabler of other women coaches.

Barriers include:

- Family/work life tension
- A lack of respect from players and colleagues.

Individual

Two individual barriers were identified:

- Insufficient confidence in their own coaching ability
- Burnout.

It's not just tennis

While these findings come from research with women tennis coaches in Australia, they are consistent with research with women coaches from other sports. For example, women basketball coaches reported similar barriers, including:

- Conflicting priorities
- Attitudes towards sport and gender and hypermasculine cultures within sport
- Inconsistent hiring practices.

Supportive mentors and a focus on the coaches' development and wellbeing were identified as key supports. The influence and attitudes of administrators (athletic directors) could be either a barrier or a supportive factor.

In another study, women coaches from a range of team and individual sports identified that their career has been impacted in positive or negative ways by:

- Social connections (or their entourage)
- Role models
- The level of organisational support
- Precarious working conditions
- Motherhood
- Their experience as an elite player.

“I've spoken to quite a few women who are just beginning their coaching journey. I said, “How many women in the team that you coach for?” and they go, “I'm the only one and there's ten men.”

FEMALE CLUB PROFESSIONAL COACH

Try a question

Now you've seen some of the benefits, barriers and enablers of women in coaching, let's try a question.

Imagine that you're speaking with a friend, Sarah, a university student who loves playing tennis in her spare time. She mentions that she'd love to do more with tennis, but she needs to get a full-time job. You want to encourage her to consider coaching as a career path.

Which of the following points would be most relevant to share with Sarah based on the current landscape of women in tennis coaching?

1. Organisations like Tennis Australia are actively creating new opportunities and pathways for women coaches
2. You need to have been an elite player to become a successful tennis coach
3. Being a woman coach helps challenge gender stereotypes and shows young players that women belong in the tennis community
4. Having more women coaches increases the overall talent pool, which benefits everyone by creating more opportunities for players to find coaches they connect with
5. Women coaches can help increase participation and retention rates among female players
6. A tennis coaching career is now a stable, highly-paid position with clear advancement paths

Feedback

There are many benefits for the individual and the entire tennis community when we have more women coaches, and it builds the future of our sport.

Answers: 1, 3, 4, 5

Planning for success

Steps to success

As you've seen there are great benefits to ensuring women are involved in coaching positions. Perhaps your club or organisation's current status needs work – if so, you now need to create a clear plan for increasing the number of women tennis coaches and also retain the women coaches in your business. You'll need to think about the targets you would like your club or organisation to achieve.

1. Determine targets

The first step is to identify the specific targets you would like to achieve regarding the gender diversity within your club or organisation. By clearly articulating these goals and writing them down as part of your planning, you can easily identify when you have been successful.

2. Set interim milestones

It's a good idea to outline interim milestones that break larger, more aspirational targets into smaller goals over shorter timeframes. These milestones can also help you:

- Measure progress over time
- Ensure improvements are on track
- Maintain enthusiasm and motivation
- Support accountability.

3. Identify strategies

Next, you'll need to identify the strategies you want to apply to change the gender diversity of roles within your club or organisation. The other sections in this toolkit provide guidance on best practices when it comes to recruiting women to coaching positions, developing coaches and retaining women coaches within coaching positions.

These strategies are not prescriptive, but will provide you with inspiration and insights about what could work well within your context. You'll need to work with others in your club or organisation to find the best strategies for your needs. You might need to consult with:

- Other coaches and staff
- Committees or the Board
- Community members.

When you've agreed on the strategies you plan to use, you'll need to identify who is responsible for implementing them.

4. Set a timeframe

Change takes time, so you need to set realistic timeframes for reaching your goals. Having a clear timeframe also makes it easier to monitor and evaluate progress, and encourages accountability and motivation.

5. Communicate your strategies

It's important to make your organisation's standpoint on gender-equity public. This gives your strategies visibility, and ensures there is accountability for actions.

A proud and public statement from organisational leadership can help set the tone within the organisation and can influence the attitudes, level of commitment and motivation from others. This also helps to hold everyone accountable to support the strategies and reach the targets. Strategies can be detailed in newsletter and email bulletins, annual reports, online via social media.

Monitoring and evaluation

Setting targets and progress milestones are not 'set and forget' processes. To understand how you're progressing towards your goals, you need to undertake continuous monitoring and evaluation.



Monitoring

Monitoring involves ongoing processes of collecting data relating to your objectives and considering how these compare to the identified goals.



Evaluation

Evaluation involves systematically assessing the outcomes of your actions and approaches, as well as the processes that either contributed to, or hindered, your success in achieving these.

Checking in on the plan

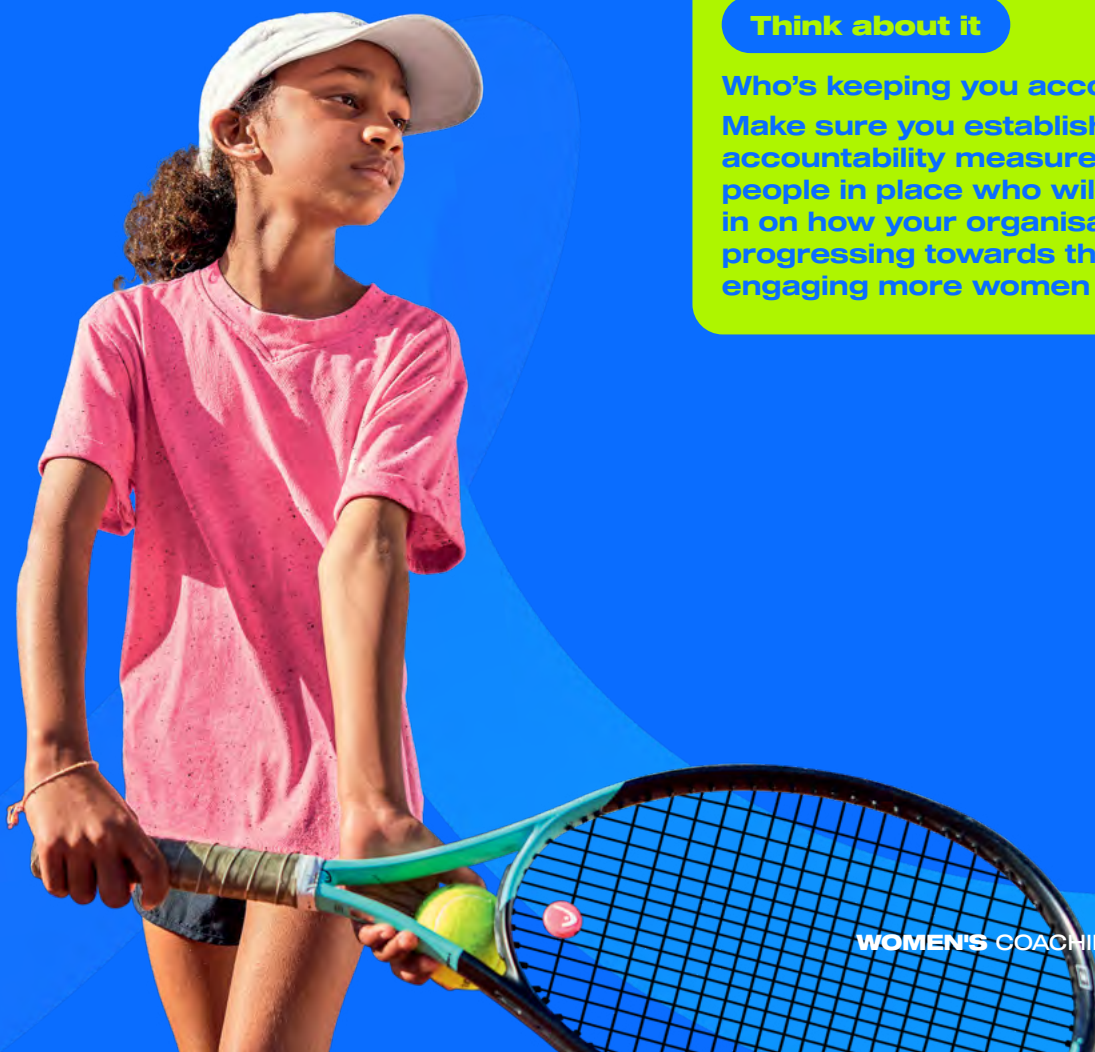
Having a clear list of targets and milestones with scheduled due dates provides the opportunity to accurately measure progress. Monitoring and evaluation processes can involve scheduling appointments with your committee, business partner or even yourself to consider what progress is being made.

Here are some questions to ask:

- Are we able to collect the data that will help us answer the question of whether we have reached our target? If not, what do we need to do?
- Are we on-track to reach our milestones or target by the agreed date?
- If we are on-track, what is working and why? Are these efforts sustainable? If not, what is our next plan?
- If not, why not? What are the barriers to our success? How can we overcome these and what do we need to do differently to get on track?

Think about it

**Who's keeping you accountable?
Make sure you establish accountability measures and have people in place who will check in on how your organisation is progressing towards the goal of engaging more women coaches.**



Summary

Involving women in coaching roles has so many advantages for clubs and tennis organisations. It creates:

- A bigger talent pool, helping you offer more coaching to more people
- A more diverse group of coaches who enable you to reach new markets and engage young women in tennis for longer
- A future coaching workforce, as other young, talented women start to see coaching as a viable career.

You can gain from these opportunities, but you need to recognise the barriers and enablers of women coaches, and make a plan to overcome them. You've learned about how to build your plan, so make sure you explore other areas of this toolkit to learn about specific strategies for recruiting, developing and retaining women coaches. Check out the Women's Coaching Action Plan template to get started.

See the sample Action Plan below.

Women's Coaching Action Plan Template

Section	Goal	Actions	Metrics
Attract	Raise awareness and interest in coaching among women and girls.	Promote coaching pathways through social media, local clubs, and schools. Share stories of successful female coaches to inspire others. Host 'Come and Try Coaching' days for women and girls. Partner with community groups, especially CALD and Indigenous networks.	Number of women attending introductory coaching events. Engagement rates on promotional content.
Recruit	Convert interest into formal coaching roles.	Offer scholarships or fee subsidies for coaching courses. Create flexible entry points (e.g., assistant coach roles, short courses). Ensure inclusive language and imagery in recruitment materials. Collaborate with local clubs to identify potential female coaches.	Number of women enrolled in coaching courses. Diversity of new recruits (age, background, region).
Support	Provide tools, networks, and environments that help women thrive.	Establish mentoring programs with experienced female coaches. Provide access to professional development and leadership training. Create safe, inclusive coaching environments. Offer flexible work arrangements (e.g., part-time, job sharing).	Satisfaction scores from women coaches. Participation in PD and mentoring programs.
Retain	Keep women engaged and progressing in coaching roles.	Recognise and celebrate achievements (awards, spotlights). Provide clear career pathways and progression opportunities. Regularly check in with coaches to understand challenges. Address barriers like burnout, isolation, or lack of advancement.	Retention rates year-on-year. Number of women advancing to higher coaching levels.

Recruiting *Women Coaches*

To recruit more women coaches to your organisation, you may need to try different strategies in the recruitment process. This can require more creative and active recruitment approaches that help you reach beyond the existing networks where you might not reach women candidates.

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Introduction

The recruitment challenge

In Australia in 2025, more than 1,100 experienced women were registered as coaches. This means that plenty of experienced and capable women are already working as coaches, but they are in the minority. One reason for this is because recruitment practices can unintentionally, or even intentionally, favour men.

There are a range of decisions along the recruitment pipeline where gender bias can be introduced, making it harder for women to break through. Gender-inclusive recruitment practices can help level the playing field by focusing on how to reach, attract and fairly evaluate women candidates.

The steps in the process

In this section, you'll look at the steps in the process to recruit women coaches, and how you can ensure they're free of gender bias:

1. Reaching women
2. Attracting candidates
3. Selection process.



Reaching women

Getting the message out

A key first step in avoiding unintentional discrimination against women is making sure they're aware of available opportunities. This means employment opportunities must be advertised in places – both online and in person – where women are likely to see them.

When you're looking for women coaches, you need to start by getting the message out to the right people. You may need to be active in sharing your role opportunities with a broad candidate pool, making sure you encourage people to apply.

Coaching staff

Your next coach might already be working for you! Think about whether any of your current coaches are looking to advance their coaching careers by coaching additional hours or moving from part-time to full-time.

Players

Experienced players may see coaching as the next step in their tennis journey, and involving retiring players as assistant coaches can be a great entry point into coaching.

Elite players often have a strong foundation for coaching careers, so targeting these players can be a smart approach. Encouraging players early in their playing careers to consider coaching as a future path could help build a strong pool of potential coaches.

Players' families

Skills developed by parents and caregivers – like planning, management, communication, organisation, teaching, scheduling and relationship-building – can transfer well to coaching roles in sport. This makes parents an 'untapped group' of potential coaches.

Club and community members

If local club members aren't interested themselves, they might know others in their community who are. You can ask them to share your vacancy, expanding your reach to find potential candidates.

Players from other sports

Like parents and caregivers, players from other sports may have transferable skills that make them strong coaching candidates.

Which of the following strategies do you currently use in recruitment?

- Advertising
- Inviting people to apply
- Offering opportunities to likely candidates

If you're not using all these opportunities, you may be missing great candidates.

Recruitment strategies

A range of recruitment strategies can help you to connect with more women candidates.

Advertising

Targeting recruitment efforts at groups that are underrepresented can promote greater equality. Narrow advertising campaigns for coaching positions may only reach a limited audience. A broad search across multiple channels will ensure a wider visibility of upcoming opportunities.

To reach more people, including more women, consider going beyond word-of-mouth and advertise on:

- jobseeker platforms and online job boards (like Sportspeople)
- social media sites
- business websites, regular newsletters, email bulletins, and in online community groups.

Partnering with local educational institutions can also help reach students and their families.

Invitations

In addition to broad recruitment, inviting and encouraging women to apply for roles can make a real difference. Many top women coaches have said that a simple ‘tap on the shoulder’ encouraged them to apply.

This matters because some women may not see themselves as a good fit for coaching. Reaching out shows that you value diversity and inclusion, helping more women feel confident about taking on coaching roles and overcoming this barrier.

Long-term thinking

You might also want to take a long-term approach to developing future coaches and leaders by working with junior players at earlier stages.

This could include:

- offering coaching and accreditation opportunities to young players
- identifying potential coaches among current team members and encouraging them to consider coaching as a career.

“I started playing tennis when I was five and I absolutely loved it. I was playing at a quite high-level back then, but my shoulder just wouldn't recover ... I was away from tennis for a little while, but in that time, I realised how much I loved the sport. I wanted to get back into tennis again, but I knew I couldn't compete at a high level anymore. The coach I trained with as a junior said to me, “Would you like to come and do some coaching with me?”

FEMALE MASTER CLUB PROFESSIONAL COACH

Try a question

A local club wants to expand their coaching team and is particularly keen to increase the number of women coaches. They currently have three coaching vacancies but have received very few applications from women.

Which of the following strategies would be most effective in reaching potential women candidates?

1. Quietly spread the word among the current male coaching staff only, to maintain the club's professional standards
2. Approaching some of the club's experienced senior players who are nearing the end of their playing careers to gauge their interest in coaching pathways
3. Post the job advertisement on multiple platforms including social media, job boards, and the club's newsletter, emphasising that women candidates are encouraged to apply
4. Directly reach out to some of the parents who regularly help with team organisation and have shown good leadership skills during volunteer activities
5. Wait for qualified candidates to approach the club independently to ensure only serious applicants come forward

Teaching feedback

Finding great candidates is possible if you're proactive and work to make sure your open roles are seen by as many people as possible.

Answers: 2, 3, 4

Summary

If you have open roles, and you're keen to build the diversity of your coaching team, you may need to try advertising in different areas, and reaching out to people to encourage them to apply.

As you reflect on the list of recruitment strategies, think about who you know – is there anyone in your network who you could start talking to now? Even if you're not looking for new coaches, by encouraging talented people early, you may be preparing them to apply next time there's a role available.



Attracting candidates

Getting the message out

Even if women are aware of coaching vacancies, you also need to make sure that what you're offering is an opportunity that appeals to them.

Here are some ideas you may not have thought about:

- Does the language of your advertising suggest it's for male candidates?
- Are position descriptions tailored to men's experiences?
- Does your advertising show that women are an important part of your organisation?
- Does the organisational culture appeal to women?
- Are the working conditions flexible to accommodate responsibilities outside work?
- Are you planning for candidate development with learning and development opportunities?

- Will women feel valued and appreciated in your organisation?

Let's look at each of these considerations.

Recruitment material

It's important to be mindful of gender-coded language in job ads and position descriptions to avoid unintentionally discouraging women from applying for coaching roles. Gender-coded words are those subconsciously linked to a particular gender. For instance, words like 'dominant' or 'leader' are often seen as masculine and tend to appeal more to men, while words like 'support' or 'interpersonal' are typically seen as feminine and associated with women.

Job ads, especially in male-dominated fields, may unintentionally use more masculine wording, which can make women feel they don't belong in these roles and discourage them from applying. This could mean missing out on strong female candidates.

Below are examples of the feminine versus masculine wording for the same job ad.

Specifics	Descriptions
Company description	<p>Feminine: We are a community of engineers who have effective relationships with many satisfied clients.</p> <p>Masculine: We are a dominant engineering firm that boasts many leading clients.</p>
Qualifications	<p>Feminine: Sensitive to clients' needs, can develop warm client relationships.</p> <p>Masculine: Superior ability to satisfy customers and manage company's association with them.</p>
Responsibilities	<p>Feminine: Help clients with construction activities.</p> <p>Masculine: Determine compliance with client's objectives.</p>

Position descriptions

Gender biases and stereotypes can also creep into position descriptions unconsciously. In some coaching examples, roles have been ‘tailored to men’s experiences, qualifications, and life circumstances,’ which can discourage women from applying.

To help spot subtle gender-coded language, you can use online tools like gender or bias decoders. The Gender Decoder is an evidence-based tool that can help you identify potentially biased wording in your position descriptions or other materials.

Marketing material

Using inclusive images in promotional material can help women feel more welcome and connected in sports settings.

VicSport’s Change Our Game

Communication and Marketing Reference

Guide gives you practical advice for creating inclusive marketing and communication.

Organisation culture and work conditions

Several factors make an employer more appealing to women, including a good work-life balance, opportunities for growth, and a workplace that values and respects women.

Work-life balance and flexible work conditions

Work-life balance is a key priority for adults working in Australia. Women often seek employers who support it, stay with employers who maintain it, and leave when work-life balance is lacking.

Flexible work options can enhance work-life balance, showing genuine support for women in coaching roles by offering flexible, responsive employment conditions. It’s also essential to recognise that the ‘typical’ family unit no longer exists. Family structures are diverse, and women still often carry primary caregiving responsibilities.

Family commitments are often the reason women leave coaching. Offering flexible options like co-coaching, can help women with caregiving responsibilities consider and stay in coaching positions.

“In the past when I'd gone for interviews at tennis clubs, I felt like before I've even gone for the interview, that maybe they were looking for a male coach... there was a job position ... and the ad said, “Qualities the coach must possess,” and it said, “He must possess ...”

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Learning and development opportunities

Learning and development opportunities are particularly important to women. Studies show that women rate these opportunities as critical to their careers more often than men (72% vs. 66%) but are less likely to have access to them (46% vs. 55%).

Research with women coaches across five Australian sports found that nearly 90% believe access to personal and professional development is essential. Giving women coaches access to these opportunities and supporting them to take part, can make a real difference.

Appreciation and valuing women

Organisations that genuinely value and appreciate women's contributions are more appealing to women considering coaching roles. Publicly highlighting female role models can significantly impact girls' participation in sport.

Showcasing women role models within your organisation can also inspire other women to consider coaching and increase the likelihood of attracting female applicants.

“I know there's a lot of clubs, venues, centres out there that are still 90%, and they get called ‘the boys club’. You know, a girl goes in there for a job, they last about three months because it's the boys’ club.”

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Some tips

Fostering a culture of allyship is essential to attract and retain women in coaching roles.

Allyship

Building a genuine culture of allyship is essential in recruitment and other strategies. Women are less likely to take on roles if they feel their appointments are merely tokenistic. Authentic allyship fosters an inclusive environment, encouraging women to pursue and remain in coaching positions.

Examples

Women coaches inspire future generations. However, when players see gender bias and stereotypes affecting women in coaching, they might be discouraged from pursuing coaching roles themselves. These experiences have both immediate and long-term impacts. It's important to create positive experiences for everyone to encourage more women to take up and stay in coaching roles.

Try a question

Kerry is the HR manager at a local sports club looking to hire new coaches. The club has historically struggled to attract female coaching applicants. Kerry is reviewing their current recruitment process and materials.

Which of the following changes would likely make their coaching positions more appealing to women candidates?

1. Changing position description language from, "The ideal candidate will be a dominant leader who commands respect" to "We're seeking a coach who builds strong relationships and develops players effectively".
2. Including photos of only male coaches in their marketing materials because they're the most successful in the organisation and it demonstrates the organisation's prestige.
3. Implementing a co-coaching program that allows coaches to share responsibilities and create more flexible scheduling options. (Correct)
4. Adding a statement that reads, "He must have at least 5 years of coaching experience" to emphasise the responsibilities of the role.
5. Creating a formal mentoring and professional development program specifically designed to support coaching staff growth.
6. Showcasing success stories of current female coaches on the club's website and recruitment materials.

Answers: 1, 3, 5, 6

Teaching feedback:

To attract more women candidates, Kerry could:

- Replace gender-coded masculine language ("dominant," "commands") with more inclusive language that focuses on skills and outcomes
- Explain the work-life balance offered through flexible scheduling options
- Describe learning and development opportunities as we know these are highly valued by women candidates
- Demonstrate that the organisation values women's contributions and provides visible role models.

Summary

To recruit more women for coaching roles, you and your organisation will need to carefully consider how you frame opportunities to show that women are welcome. You'll also need to consider whether you're reaching women who could apply, encouraging them to apply, and offering an attractive role and career opportunity. In the next topic, you'll consider the next stage of the recruitment process – selecting the right person.

Selection process

Getting the right people

The way you conduct the selection process is vital for ensuring you create opportunities for women candidates. First, you need to make sure you've done all you can to get the right people involved.

Candidate pool

If your pool of applicants lacks diversity, it's important to examine your advertising and recruitment processes. Consider the following questions:

- Was the recruitment strategy broad enough to reach a diverse range of potential applicants?
- Was the job advertised for a sufficient period to allow diverse groups in the opportunity to learn about the vacancy?
- Did the wording of the job advertisement inadvertently appeal to some groups more than others? Could it have discouraged certain groups from applying?

Addressing these questions can help you identify and rectify potential barriers and help to make your recruitment process more inclusive.

Selection panel

A diverse selection panel that includes women is essential for fair recruitment. Panel members should:

- Understand gender stereotypes and equity issues
- Avoid hiring based on similarity
- Recognise and address unconscious bias in their decisions

This approach promotes a more inclusive hiring process.

Addressing attitudes

Unconscious biases, like stereotypes, can lead to decisions based on assumptions rather than facts, if left unchallenged.

Unconscious biases are the automatic attitudes and perceptions that can influence your decisions without realising their effect.

Factors like age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, parental status, sexuality, or gender can influence decisions, positively or negatively.

Women coaches have reported facing 'unequal assumptions of competence,' with male coaches often presumed to be more capable. Gender biases like stereotypes about family obligations or unwillingness to work irregular hours can affect women's chances of securing coaching roles. Research also indicates that women are sometimes held to stricter standards than men during recruitment.

Make a plan

You've learned about the different aspects of recruitment that can affect whether women apply for coaching roles, and whether they see themselves in your organisation.

Now you need to make a plan to review and adapt your recruitment processes.

Use the Recruitment cheat sheet on **Page 27** to support you through your recruitment process.

Summary

If you've struggled to bring more women coaches into your organisation, you'll need to try something new. The same strategies you've used in the past may not be sufficient. Instead, look at how you can implement broad and inclusive recruitment strategies:

- Expand your reach – Use diverse advertising channels to ensure your opportunity is visible to a wide audience.
- Appeal to women – Craft job advertisements that highlight aspects appealing to women, like flexible working arrangements and learning and development opportunities.
- Ensure fair selection – Assemble a diverse selection panel that includes women to promote fairness and inclusivity in the hiring process.

These new strategies can create exciting opportunities to access new coaching talent and expand your organisation's reach within the community.

Recruitment cheat sheet

Consider the questions below to support you in the recruitment process.

Reaching women

Have you thought about your candidate pool?

Consider women in your organisation who might be interested in a coaching role or people in your sporting community who might know potential candidates:

- current coaching staff
- players
- players' families
- club and community members
- players from other sports
- potential strong candidates you could reach out to and invite to apply.

How will you advertise?

To get wider visibility, you might want to advertise on multiple channels to make sure the word gets out to a diverse group of candidates. For example:

- jobseeker platforms and online job boards
- social media
- business websites, regular newsletters, email bulletins, and in online community groups
- local educational institutions to help reach students and their families.

What opportunities could you offer to appeal to candidates?

Consider what you could offer to develop future women coaches and leaders like:

- accreditation opportunities for young players
- career opportunities for current team members.

Attracting women candidates

Will your opportunity appeal to women?

- Is the language and imagery in your advertising and job description gender-neutral?
- Does your organisation support women in coaching positions?
- Do you offer the organisational culture and work conditions that are important to women like work-life balance, flexible working arrangements and learning and development opportunities?

Selection process

Is your candidate pool diverse enough?

If your pool of applicants lacks diversity, consider:

- Was the recruitment strategy broad enough?
- Was the job advertised for a sufficient period to reach a diverse group of candidates?
- Could the wording of the job advertisement have discouraged a certain group from applying?

Does your selection panel reflect a fair and inclusive hiring process?

A diverse selection panel that includes women is essential for fair recruitment. Panel members should:

- Understand gender stereotypes and equity issues
- Avoid hiring based on similarity
- Recognise and address unconscious bias in their decisions.

Developing *Women Coaches*

The first few years of a coach's career are critical for ensuring that each person builds their skills and confidence. We know that women coaches thrive when they feel supported and valued, and it increases the likelihood that they will stay for the long term. When women feel they have the tools, opportunities, and support to succeed, they're more likely to embrace the challenges of coaching and build lasting careers.

This toolkit introduces a range of strategies to help you develop and support women coaches.

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Introduction

Building up women coaches

Confidence and self-belief are key factors in shaping women's coaching experiences and a supportive network plays a crucial role in fostering their development. Let's take a look at each of these factors.

Confidence

Confidence plays a major role in whether women coaches start, stay in, or leave coaching in sports like tennis. Women coaches say their confidence grows with skills and knowledge, experience (the more they coach, the more confident they feel), and constructive feedback from players, parents, and other coaches.

Their confidence is also boosted when they achieve good results, reach goals, and build successful teams. Opportunities to improve through training, hands-on experience and exposure further strengthens coaches' belief in their abilities.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a more specific form of confidence and refers to the coach's belief in their ability to make a difference. It's about how much coaches believe they can positively influence their players' learning, performance and competitive results.

With a strong sense of self-efficacy, the coach believes they have the resources, the ability to use those resources effectively and they are motivated to complete tasks. A coach's sense of self-efficacy affects their choices – what activities they take on and whether they stay involved in coaching.

Coaches with higher self-efficacy are more likely to advance their careers and remain in the profession. Factors that build self-efficacy include experience and preparation, previous successes (like strong win-loss records), positive perceptions of player and team abilities, and support from players' parents and the community.



Support

Women coaches often describe feeling isolated, excluded, marginalised, lonely and disempowered. However, having a strong support network can significantly improve their career development. Women frequently identify other women, family members and organisational staff as key sources of support. These networks are especially important in male-dominated sports environments, where the challenges can be even greater.

Think about it

In your own career journey, what has helped you to build confidence, self-efficacy and a supportive network?

Approaches to coach development

Developing coaches involves supporting their participation in coach education and professional development, alongside a range of activities designed to enhance their knowledge, skills, confidence, and networks. Since there is no one-size-fits-all approach to coach development, it's essential that you collaborate with coaches and adapt to their preferred learning styles, rather than enforcing a prescriptive method.

In this section, you'll spend time looking at the three important ways you can support the development of women coaches:

- Mentoring
- Formal learning
- Networking



Mentoring

Defining mentoring

Mentoring is defined as “a relationship where a person with specific knowledge and experience provides guidance and support to a less experienced person.” In sports, mentoring is a widely used professional development strategy, and women coaches have consistently reported it as a positive influence on their coaching growth.

Mentoring plays a key role in helping coaches build knowledge, improve skills, clarify values, avoid burnout, and take care of their health. It also boosts confidence, improves communication, and encourages innovation in coaching.

Women coaches often say mentoring provides valuable social support and helps them connect with other coaches.

A recent study commissioned by Tennis Australia and conducted by Flinders University found that Australian women tennis coaches felt mentoring improved their understanding of coaching pathways. It also gave them the guidance, skills, and confidence they needed to succeed.

A mentor can help support development of women coaches in your organisation by:

- Giving feedback
- Offering reassurance
- Creating opportunities for growth
- Providing friendship, encouragement, and moral support
- Helping coaches identify their strengths and areas for improvement.

“I know there’s been a number of female coaches who never actually thought it was possible to have a family and coach because of the hours that we work and things like that. So, I’ve definitely mentored them and had those conversations on how I’ve gone through it.”

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Advocacy

A mentor can also take on the role of an advocate. In some North American sports literature, this is referred to as 'sponsorship'. However, in Australia, this term typically refers to advertising or brand deals, so we'll use the terms 'advocacy' and 'mentor-advocate' instead.

A mentor-advocate can actively support a coach's career by acting as their champion, spokesperson, or cheerleader. They can use their experience and connections in the organisation or industry to help the coach grow and succeed. By leveraging their influence, social networks, and reputation, mentor-advocates can provide direct support to less-experienced coaches.

A mentor-advocate can help support development of women coaches in your organisation by:

- Boosting the coach's visibility, such as inviting them to networking events and introducing them to key contacts
- Keeping them informed about job openings and professional development opportunities, and encouraging them to apply
- Recommending and endorsing them for promotions or other career advancements. value from mentoring?

“95% of our kids will go off to university ... and I just make a phone call to one of my Coaching mates at those places and say, “Look, I’ve got such and such coming down to uni” and they’re very appreciative because they know they’re trained well and they can slot straight in.”

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Shadowing

Shadowing is a practical strategy, similar to mentoring, that can be an effective way to develop women coaches. Coaches can observe and follow a more experienced coach for a set period, learning directly on the job.

Shadowing gives less-experienced coaches the chance to watch and analyse how experienced coaches work in real-time. This hands-on approach is vital for development, as it introduces coaches to new strategies and skills in areas like motivation, conflict resolution, performance, and confidence. It also helps coaches feel more prepared and 'performance ready'. Many coaches say observing others in action is one of their preferred ways to learn.

“I get new coaches out on court with me spending as much time out on court with me, because I feel like as a coach, even though I went and I did a lot of courses, some of the best learning I did was with my coach that I had as a junior.”

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Think about it

Have you been mentored at any point in your career? How do your experiences shape your view of mentoring?

Do you know anyone who may get value from mentoring?

Summary

We know that women coaches respond positively to mentoring, and it has been shown to enhance their understanding of coaching pathways while building their skills, confidence, and ability to succeed.

If your organisation doesn't have a mentoring program yet, you might want to consider implementing one to support and empower women coaches.

Formal learning

Formal professional learning

Ongoing access to professional development and coach education is essential for advancing women’s coaching careers. Encouraging participation in these opportunities and helping plan career pathways are key to their growth.

You can support development of women coaches in your organisation by:

- Identifying each person’s learning needs
- Finding suitable development opportunities
- Encouraging coaches to identify their own development opportunities
- Actively supporting their participation by removing barriers to attendance

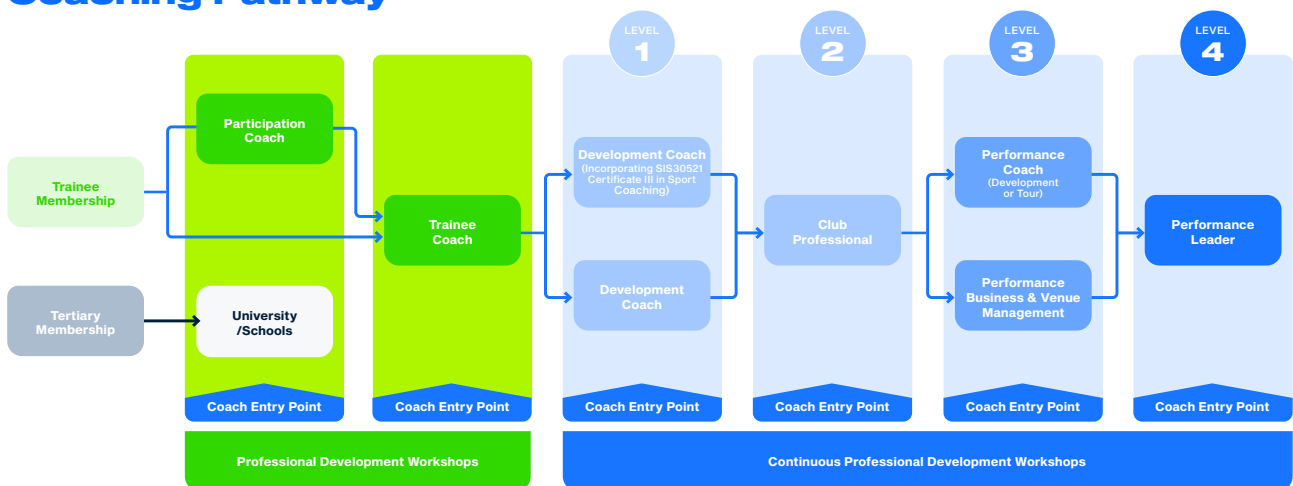
Creating career pathways

It’s essential to provide a clear career pathway for women coaches. Some reports suggest that women may be less likely than men to apply for positions unless they feel fully qualified, even if they have extensive experience and are confident in their abilities.

If qualifications or accreditation are essential for a coach’s career progression, and the coach wants to pursue formal learning, you should work with your organisation to find ways to support them to achieve this. Your support in this goal will help to develop your coach and create a sense of mutual commitment.

The Tennis Australia example below shows a detailed coach education pathway that outlines certification progress from community coaching to performance coaching roles.

Tennis Australia Coaching Pathway



Facilitating professional development

Professional development and coach education gives coaches the chance to reflect on how their practices align with new knowledge. This can boost confidence by confirming they are 'on the right track' or help them identify areas for improvement.

Women tennis coaches have expressed a strong desire for more professional development opportunities. These sessions improve their technical skills, tactical strategies, and provide valuable experience at higher levels. They also offer the added benefit of networking, allowing women to connect with industry leaders and role models.

When you support coach development through education and professional development, you will need to:

- Recognise that development needs vary between individuals and coaching roles. To support women coaches effectively, it's important to respect their preferences and tailor opportunities to suit their goals and interests.
- Identify factors that might affect each person's attendance and participation. Proactively working with coaches to address potential barriers shows genuine investment in developing women coaches.

Cost

The cost of coach education and professional development can be a barrier for some coaches. If cost is an issue, it's important to explore ways you can help to support them.

This might include fully or partially funding their attendance, finding a sponsor, or assisting the coach in applying for scholarships offered by Tennis Australia or state and territory associations.

Time

The time commitment for attending courses can be a challenge for some coaches. You can show support by encouraging and facilitating 'time off' for professional development.

This might involve arranging cover for their training sessions or compensating them for the time spent attending courses, especially if they miss paid coaching work to participate.

Women-only options

In male-dominated sports environments, many women coaches have expressed a preference for women-only professional development and coach education opportunities.

For example, women participating in a women-only coach developer training program reported that the strong connections with other women created supportive networks that significantly contributed to their professional growth.

If women coaches express this preference, you should do your best to support it in your organisation.

Think about it

What professional development opportunities were most valuable in your career?

What options could benefit people in your organisation? How can you overcome any barriers they face?

Summary

Focusing on professional development helps create an environment where women coaches can thrive and make a real impact in your organisation.

If you have women coaches on your team, think about how you can support them. Can you identify any development opportunities unique to them? Have you worked with them to create a personalised development plan? This approach will show you're invested in their growth and career success.

Networking

Benefits of networking

Networking not only allows coaches to share information, insights, and engage in professional discussions but also helps them build rapport and relationships with other coaches and industry professionals.

It's important to recognise that women coaches benefit from both informal and formal networks.

Coaches often put other responsibilities ahead of networking when schedules clash. To address this, make sure your management team and administrators truly support networking by recognising its value and actively encouraging coaches to get involved.



Learning

Networking allows women coaches to learn from each other by sharing knowledge about coaching practices and discussing practical and professional challenges



Sharing experiences

It provides a space for women to “talk shop” and exchange insights, creating opportunities for shared learning and growth.



Building social connections

Networking helps women coaches form social and professional connections, fostering a sense of belonging and support within the coaching community.



Greater confidence

Through networking, women feel more supported, visible, and influential. This boost in confidence can positively impact their career progression, encouraging them to take on opportunities they might otherwise hesitate to accept.



Make a plan

You've learned about different approaches to developing women coaches. If you currently have women coaches on your team, take a moment to reflect on their capabilities, strengths, and growth opportunities.

- Which of these development strategies might work best for each person?
- What will you do to develop those people?

Summary

Inspiring women coaches to grow starts with providing the encouragement, resources, and connections they need to believe in their potential and achieve career success. By focusing on these key strategies, you create a team culture where women coaches feel valued, supported, and empowered to thrive:

- **Mentoring:** A good mentor can make a world of difference by building confidence, sharpening skills, and expanding professional networks. They can offer

career guidance, advocate for their learners, and share practical advice to help navigate the challenges of male-dominated environments.

- **Formal learning pathways and professional development:** Offering tailored learning opportunities is a great way to support women coaches, helping them build technical skills and prepare for career growth. By tackling common challenges like cost and time and working together on personalised development plans, you show your dedication to their success and inspire them to stay for the long term.
- **Networking:** Creating opportunities for women coaches to connect with others in their field helps them share experiences, build confidence, and establish supportive relationships. These networks foster a sense of belonging, increase visibility, and open doors for career advancement.



Retaining *Women Coaches*

Having women coaches as part of your team can help to attract broader interest in tennis, and can help to build up all your players in positive ways. However, if you've put in the work to attract, recruit and develop your women coaches, you also need to create an environment that encourages and supports them to stay in your organisation for the longer term. In this module, we'll focus on what influences women coaches in their decisions to stay or leave coaching.

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Introduction

Think about why you stay in your current job – what factors influence your decision?

For most people, it's a mixture of positive features and the absence of negative factors. Positive things, like enjoying the role, and having conditions and support that facilitate work/life balance encourage you to stay in a role. Similarly, there are negative factors that can push you to leave a role – like being micro-managed, or working in an unpleasant culture.

By managing these factors – strengthening the positive and mitigating the negative factors – you can encourage women coaches to stay in their roles. At the same time, you're likely to improve the organisation for everyone.

In this module, you'll look at six reasons:

- Enjoyment and job satisfaction
- Perception of autonomy
- Perception of coaching competence
- Support and connectedness
- Quality of work-life balance
- Organisational culture.



Enjoyment and job satisfaction

Understanding this factor

The first factor that influences people to stay in their role is the enjoyment and satisfaction they get from doing their job. Enjoying the role is a major factor in women coaches choosing to stay. In contrast, feeling disrespected or unappreciated often drives women to leave coaching.

Positive emotions like enthusiasm, excitement, determination, and pride boost job satisfaction. When coaches feel satisfied, happy, and supported in their wellbeing, they're more likely to stay in their roles.

“The most amazing thing for me is having kids that I’ve coached come back as adults and continue playing the game – or even come back with their children and play. Knowing I’ve had impact on their lives – for me, you can’t get more satisfaction than that.”

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Care, competence and choice

Meeting the needs for ‘care, competence, and choice’ plays a key role in retaining women coaches. Building an organisational culture where people feel valued, respected, and appreciated is essential for retention. As a bonus, this approach also boosts confidence and productivity.

Care

Feeling ‘known, needed, valued, heard’ and feeling a sense of belonging

Competence

Developing coaches’ skills and abilities and providing opportunities for development

Choice

Coaches’ sense of autonomy, and an environment where they feel supported, and not controlled or micro-managed



Meeting coaches' needs

As an employer, it's important to actively engage with your coaches and get to know what drives them and the challenges they face. Take the time to find out what they enjoy most about their role, what they find rewarding, and how you can support and build on those positives.

Make it easy for your coaches to share feedback regularly – whether it's through casual chats, surveys, or meetings. Listen closely, respect their opinions, and most importantly, act on their suggestions. When they see their input leading to real change, it builds trust, respect, and a sense of belonging, which goes a long way in building loyalty and long-term retention.

Here are some useful conversation starters:

- What do you need to be happy in your job? What do you need to keep you happy?
- What do you need to be successful? What would help you be successful?

- What is top of mind for you right now? What are your concerns? What are issues that I can help you with?
- How can I support you? How can I better support you?
- What are your goals this year? What professional development opportunities do you need/want?

Think about it

Have you experienced an environment that considered your need for care, competence and choice?

How does your organisation currently perform on this factor? What difference could it make to your business?



Perception of autonomy

Understanding this factor

Autonomy refers to the sense of choice and control a coach feels over their coaching decisions. When women coaches perceive a lack of autonomy, it can drive them to leave. Importantly, this factor is not about just 'having autonomy', but the 'perception of autonomy' – that is, does each coach feel like they are permitted to act with similar levels of autonomy? Are women coaches managed more closely than others with similar experience?

Research demonstrated that while women coaches value having autonomy in their coaching decisions, they also appreciate clear organisational guidelines and structured processes to support their work

There's a strong connection between autonomy, job satisfaction, and burnout. When coaches feel they don't have enough autonomy, they can become more cynical, and feel less accomplished and more exhausted. On the other hand, offering flexibility and control over their work can significantly enhance job satisfaction and overall wellbeing.

As an employer, finding the balance between providing autonomy and maintaining supportive structures is key to retaining engaged and motivated coaches.

Meeting coaches' needs

If you want to create an environment that supports autonomy, start by using leadership strategies that empower and respect your coaches' independence. Talk to them and find out what matters most to them.

With this insight, you can adjust your approach to meet their needs for autonomy while ensuring there's consistency with your organisation's goals. Striking this balance can boost coaches' satisfaction, motivation, and loyalty in the long run.

Here are some useful conversation starters:

- What aspects of your role do you feel you have the most control over? Are there areas where you'd like more input or independence?
- How do you prefer to be involved in decision-making processes? Would you like more opportunities to lead or contribute?
- What types of decisions or tasks do you feel most confident handling on your own?
- Are there any guidelines or processes you feel limit your ability to make decisions? If so, how could we improve them?

Think about it

Reflect on your own experience of having – or lacking – autonomy in a work or personal situation.

What difference did it make to you?

What barriers to autonomy exist in your organisation?

“In our business, we just try and give coaches so much opportunity to go down whatever path they want, whether it be marketing, whether it be lesson plan writing, whether it be comms and systems or social media, like Pro Shop. I'm a strong believer when people are really truly enjoying what they do, that's how you get the best out of them as coaches.”

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Perceptions of coaching competence

Understanding this factor

Feeling competent is a key psychological need. Coaches need to believe they have the skills and abilities to succeed in their role.

The individual's perceptions

For many women, feeling confident and competent in their coaching abilities can be a challenge. Low self-confidence and doubts about their competence have often been identified as barriers to pursuing or continuing in coaching roles.

Other people's perceptions

It's important to recognise that women coaches sometimes face assumptions about their competence from others, including coaches and managers.

For example, male coaches might be seen as more capable simply because of outdated stereotypes, not actual ability.

It's important that organisations recognise and disrupt this type of gendered stereotyping.

Meeting coaches' needs

There are a range of activities that can enhance both perceived and actual coaching competence. For example, women coaches have reported that they appreciate opportunities to attend and participate in coach education or professional development sessions, and valued feedback and mentoring opportunities.

Here are some other practical things you can do to help build stronger coaches and create a more inclusive and empowering environment:

- Encourage and support participation in education and professional development opportunities.
- Work with coaches to address any barriers preventing them from attending these sessions.
- Provide constructive feedback to help individuals improve and grow in their roles.
- Facilitate mentoring relationships that can offer guidance and build confidence.
- Actively challenge gendered stereotypes that unfairly question the competence of women coaches.

“It's that confidence within yourself that you deserve to be there and you are really actually a tennis coach!”

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Think about it

What has helped you to build your perception of confidence? How has your organisation helped?

Support and connectedness

Understanding this factor

Having a strong support network can make a big difference in keeping women coaches in their roles. Support from administrators, supervisors, colleagues, friends, and family all play a part in their decision to stay.

Peer networks

Peer networks are especially valuable. They create proactive spaces where coaches can share ideas, talk through challenges, and support each other. These connections help build a sense of community and make the coaching journey more rewarding.

One-on-one sessions

Regular one-on-one meetings with managers or senior staff can be a great benefit to women coaches. These interactions allow coaches to voice concerns, offer feedback, feel heard, and gain valuable support.

For your organisation, these discussions can provide important insights into potential challenges or barriers. They also create opportunities to collaborate on strategies that enhance the coaching experience and support long-term success.

“That's where I find Coach Connect has been great. You have a group of women that come together ... So I always feel like there's someone there I can reach out to ... It's incredible, it's great. It's exactly what I need.”

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Did you know?

Feeling supported may help coaches feel less isolated and more empowered. Sharing knowledge and experiences helps women coaches recognise that they are not alone in facing sexism, homophobia or discrimination, and can provide them with strength to resist or challenge people or organisations that perpetuate inequality.

When women coaches acquire new knowledge through training sessions, it may also help to prevent or reduce the likelihood that they will blame their own deficiencies. It may energise their efforts to succeed, helping them avoid burnout, attrition and the reduced quality of life and work that comes from a lack of support.

Meeting coaches' needs

Here are some practical ways you can foster strong connections and support women coaches:

- Encourage coaches to join activities that help them connect with other coaches, and offer practical support to make it easier for them to participate.
- Make regular check-ins a priority and set up consistent communication between coaches and key people in the organisation, like managers, owners, or committee members.
- Support coaches in creating career pathway plans by helping them identify goals and steps to achieve their professional development.

Think about it

Where do you find support in your organisation? What would improve the support and connectedness you feel?

Quality of work-life balance

Understanding this factor

A poor work-life balance is often highlighted as a major reason women leave coaching. While work-life balance challenges aren't exclusive to parents, motherhood has been identified as a factor that influences women's decisions to leave coaching, especially if they are trying to juggle work and parenting responsibilities.

To create realise the benefits of keeping women in coaching, organisations need to find ways to overcome these work-life balance challenges. In fact, an Australian study found that over 80% of women coaches believe more parent-friendly practices would help keep them in the game.

Tip

Many strategies that seek to create greater work-life balance for parents can also benefit all coaches.

Meeting coaches' needs

To make coaching more accessible for women and to encourage women to stay in the field, you'll need to consider flexible and creative ways to address the challenges of balancing work and life commitments.

This could mean offering things like flexible work arrangements or schedules that help coaches balance parenting and coaching, or creating family-friendly spaces where kids are welcome. For these efforts to succeed, they need to be backed by organisation-wide strategies and policies.

While women are more likely than men to feel the impact of family responsibilities on their coaching careers, many of these strategies could benefit all parent-coaches.

Here are some practical steps you could take:

- Work together with coaches to find ways to balance parenting and coaching careers.
- Develop clear policies that explain the support available for parent-coaches.
- Create family-friendly spaces that make it easier for coaches to blend their work and family life.
- Offer flexible scheduling options like job-sharing, part-time roles, or flexible hours to fit around parenting responsibilities.

“You feel like you should be there. And that's really hard for me as well, because I don't like to be that person that's not always there. But in reality, it can work if you have the right team and the right coaches and you're clear with your communication with parents and things like that.”

FEMALE HIGH PERFORMANCE COACH

Think about it

Do you struggle to balance work with other commitments? If you could have greater flexibility in your work, what difference would it make?

Organisational culture

Understanding this factor

To support and encourage women coaches in your organisation, you'll need to build a strong culture of equality. This can happen by advocating for fairness and setting clear expectations for how people should behave.

Advocacy

When sporting organisations highlight, celebrate, and raise the profile of successful women in high-performance coaching sends a strong message of respect and support for women in coaching. This can help women coaches to stay in the organisation and in their role.

Standards

Establishing clear standards for inclusive behaviour and supportive environments can help keep women in coaching roles. Male allies play a crucial role here, as they can significantly influence women's experiences – either positively or negatively.

You can reinforce these expectations into your organisation by embedding them into policies and strategies, while also promoting positive role models who lead by example.

Meeting coaches' needs

Here are some practical steps you could take to work towards creating and demonstrating an inclusive workplace that supports women coaches:

- Show that both male and female players can be coached by female coaches, breaking the stereotype that coaching is a male-dominated role.
- Foster a psychologically safe environment where coaches feel comfortable being themselves, speaking up, and contributing without fear of intimidation, embarrassment, or humiliation.
- Build a culture of visible male allyship by encouraging men, especially those in leadership positions, to actively and authentically support women.
- Make inclusion a key part of the organisation by building it into policies, documents, and communication, and promoting it as a core value.

Think about it

What kind of culture do you think creates the best environment for all participants – coaches, players and volunteers?

What factors have created a positive or negative culture in places you've worked?

Bringing it all together

Make a plan

Now you've seen six factors that can help to create an organisation that welcomes women coaches and helps them to succeed. By retaining women coaches for the long term, you're creating an opportunity for your organisation to benefit.

Remember that involving women in coaching roles has many advantages. It creates:

- A new talent pool, helping you offer more coaching to more people
- A more diverse group of coaches that enable you to reach new markets and engage young women in tennis for longer
- A future coaching workforce, as other young, talented women start to see coaching as a viable career.

As you've reflected on your own coaching experiences in each of these areas, hopefully you can see that these factors impact everyone. By making your organisation the kind of place that retains women coaches, you'll also be creating a great place for everyone who works there.

Summary

Now that you understand the barriers and enablers for women coaches, you're ready to put the recommended strategies and tools into action in your organisation.

Levelling the playing field for women coaches in tennis is about more than equality – it's about unlocking potential, inspiring future generations, and celebrating the talent and leadership women bring. By challenging stereotypes and creating equal opportunities, we can build a stronger, more inclusive tennis community.

Go to the Retention tips on **Page 48** to review the checklists presented in this module.



Retention tips

Enjoyment and satisfaction

Engage with your coaches to understand what they enjoy and find rewarding, and what they find challenging. Create opportunities for them to share formal and informal feedback regularly.

Try these conversation starters:

- What do you need to be happy in your job? What do you need to keep you happy?
- What do you need to be successful? What would help you be successful?
- What is top of mind for you right now? What are your concerns? What are issues that I can help you with?
- How can I support you? How can I better support you?
- What are your goals this year? What professional development opportunities do you need/want?

Perception of autonomy

Talk to each person to find out what matters to them, and how you can give them autonomy in their role.

Try these conversation starters:

- What aspects of your role do you feel you have the most control over? Are there areas where you'd like more input or independence?
- How do you prefer to be involved in decision-making processes? Would you like more opportunities to lead or contribute?
- What types of decisions or tasks do you feel most confident handling on your own?
- Are there any guidelines or processes you feel limit your ability to make decisions? If so, how could we improve them?

Perception of coaching competence

Find practical ways to help coaches build their own sense of competence, and to ensure the perceptions of others aren't shaped by stereotypes.

- Encourage and support participation in education and professional development opportunities.
- Work with coaches to address any barriers preventing them from attending these sessions.
- Provide constructive feedback to help individuals improve and grow in their roles.
- Facilitate mentoring relationships that can offer guidance and build confidence.
- Actively challenge gendered stereotypes that unfairly question the competence of women coaches.

Support and connectedness

Here are some practical ways you can foster strong connections and support women coaches.

- Encourage coaches to join activities that help them connect with other coaches, and offer practical support to make it easier for them to participate.
- Make regular check-ins a priority and set up consistent communication between coaches and key people in the organisation, like managers, owners, or committee members.
- Support coaches in creating career pathway plans by helping them identify goals and steps to achieve their professional development.

Work-life balance

Consider flexible and creative ways to address work-life balance challenges.

- Work with coaches to find ways to balance parenting and coaching careers.
- Develop clear policies that explain the support available for parent-coaches.
- Create family-friendly spaces that make it easier for coaches to blend their work and family life.
- Offer flexible scheduling options like job-sharing, part-time roles, or flexible hours to fit around parenting responsibilities.

Organisational culture

Build an organisational culture that advocates for and supports women coaches.

- Create opportunities for both male and female players to be coached by female coaches.
- Foster a psychologically safe environment where coaches feel comfortable being themselves, speaking up, and contributing without fear of intimidation, embarrassment, or humiliation.
- Build a culture of visible male allyship by encouraging men, especially those in leadership positions, to actively and authentically support women.
- Make inclusion a key part of the organisation by building it into policies, documents, and communication, and promoting it as a core value.

Women's Toolkit Supporting resources

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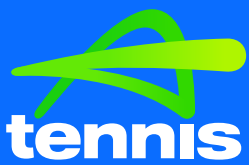
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