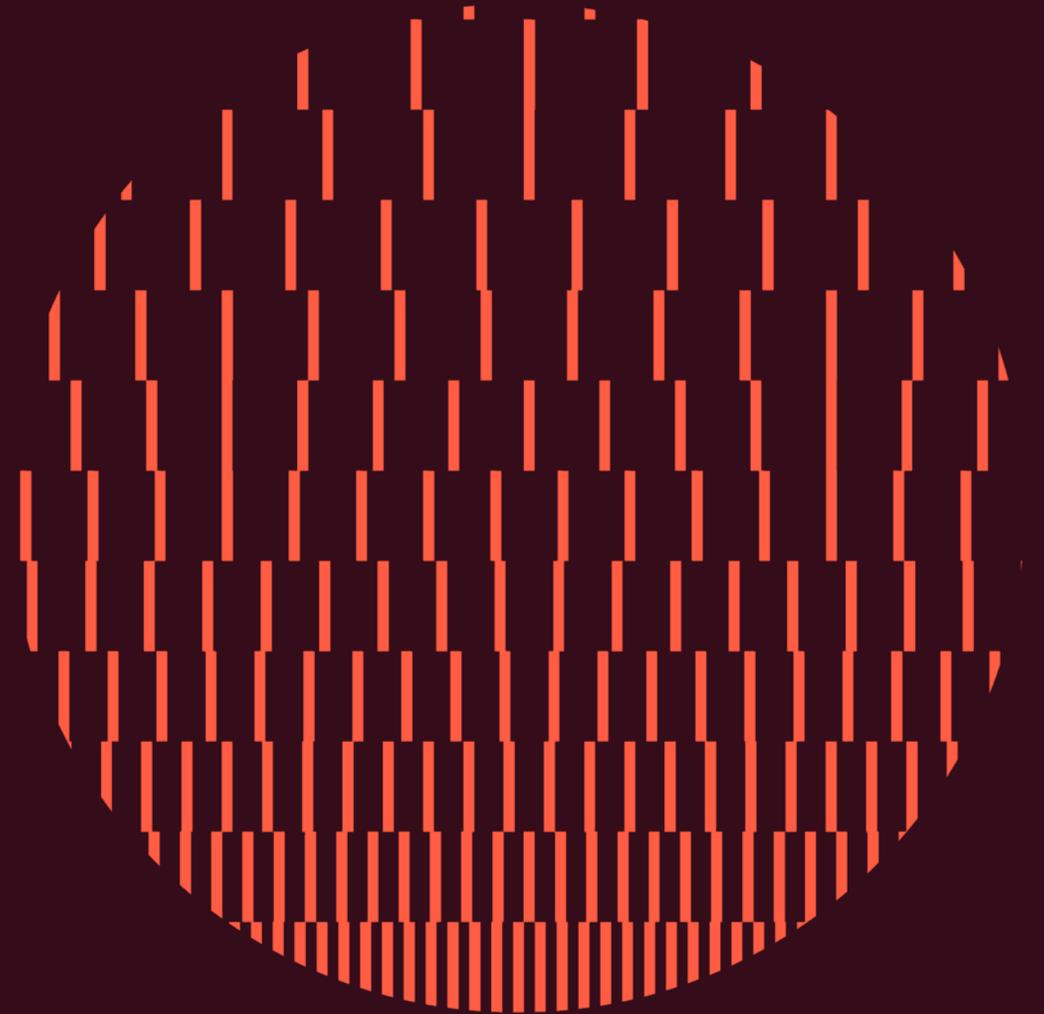


■ CLIENT
Football Integration
Development Association (FIDA)

■ DATE
11 December 2025

FIDA Standalone Women's Competition Business Plan

IMPACT CO.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our offices stand, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge their continuing relationship to this land, its waterways and seas and the ongoing living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded.

This always was and always will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land.



RECOGNITION OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

We recognise the individual and collective contributions of people with lived and living experience, as well as their families, carers, and supporters.

Through listening to and acting on the voices of people with lived experience, those who provide services, those who fund services, and most importantly, those who use services, we will find the information we need to move towards the health and wellbeing systems that Australia needs.

Every person's story we hear, and every experience shared, helps to develop our understanding of the systems that are required to best meet the needs of Australians with lived and living experience, their families, carers and supporters.

ABOUT THE FIDA STANDALONE WOMEN'S COMPETITION BUSINESS PLAN

About FIDA (Football Integration Development Association)

FIDA is a charitable entity dedicated to advancing social welfare, education and health within the intellectual disability community through creating Australian Rules football programs that foster greater participation.

Through its efforts over 36 years, FIDA provides a sense of purpose, joy and belonging and works to build a community of inclusion where everyone's potential can shine on and off the field. The FIDA league includes an impressive and thriving community of over 800 players and 30 clubs situated throughout metropolitan and country Australia - approximately 10% of players identify as women, girls and gender diverse.

About the FIDA standalone women's competition business plan

FIDA has engaged Impact Co. to develop the FIDA Standalone Women's Competition Business Plan (the Business Plan). This document outlines the key steps to establish a standalone women's competition.

This project aligns with the objectives of the *Change Our Game Community Activation Grant* and FIDA's broader commitment to gender equity, inclusion, and participation in AFL for people with intellectual disabilities.

Statement of Purpose

FIDA is a non-profit organisation whose purposes are to:

- Initiate access for persons with an intellectual disability to the game of Australian Rules Football.
- Develop, manage and promote a football competition relevant to the skill level of persons with an intellectual disability.
- Create necessary skills and confidence in the participants so that integration processes can develop.
- Encourage existing generic community groups to include persons with an intellectual disability into their clubs.
- Promote integration to sport providers to encourage a receptive environment which will accommodate the needs of people with intellectual disability.
- Liaise and co-operate with all organisations that have comparable objectives.
- Consult with the AFL and relevant councils, individuals and organisations for people with disabilities regarding the competition's progress.



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01

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ABOUT THE PROJECT

About the FIDA Standalone Women's Competition Business Plan Project

FIDA engaged Impact Co. to create a Business Plan that outlines a roadmap for FIDA to build a standalone women's competition.

Through desktop research, focus groups, interviews and surveys, Impact Co. worked to understand:

- The current state of play for WTGD players within FIDA;
- Future aspirations for a standalone WTGD competition; and
- Gaps, challenges and enablers to support the development of a standalone WTGD competition.

This Business Plan outlines a roadmap to support FIDA and its partners in addressing current challenges and promoting the sustainable development of a standalone WTGD competition.

NOTE: Throughout the document, Impact Co. uses the term "WTGD" to respectfully refer to women, trans and gender diverse players; as such, we use "WTGD competition" throughout the document to recognise the place of WTGD players within the envisioned future FIDA game structure.

The following inputs were reviewed to support the development of the Plan:

19

internal FIDA and public documents

13

survey responses from and interviews with FIDA players

8

survey responses from and interviews with family members, carers and supporters of FIDA players

15

survey responses from and interviews with FIDA representatives, including coaches, volunteers and support staff

17

survey responses from and interviews with members of sporting organisations and disability inclusion organisations

NOTE: Several FIDA representatives are also family members/carers of FIDA players

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

VISION FOR A STANDALONE WTGD COMPETITION

Vision for standalone WTGD competition

Throughout the engagement period, a clear vision for a standalone WTGD competition was articulated by FIDA players, family members and carers, FIDA representatives and stakeholders alike:

Eligibility: Girls, women, trans and gender diverse players with intellectual disabilities and other support needs*

*There is an acknowledgement that ideally FIDA would transition to an 18+ eligibility criteria upon the creation of a junior/senior participation pathway and expand its eligibility criteria to include WTGD participations with other physical, behavioural and intellectual support needs

Game structure: AFL 9s with a gradual transition to adapted game play once there is a sufficient volume of players

Grading structure: A Grade and C Grade to facilitate full spectrum of participation

Fixture: Concurrent seasonal play with existing FIDA competition

Competition structure: Inter- and intra-conference competition

Key opportunities to address challenges and support WTGD participation

The following themes were identified through stakeholder interviews, focus groups and surveys as opportunities to address existing challenges and support WTGD participation:

Enhance protection of the physical, social, emotional and sexual safety of WTGD and marginalised players

“You need to be confident that your club is a safe place for women, girls and LGBTQIA+ people to be in the first place”

FIDA coach

Improve understanding and awareness of FIDA and its offering

Increase visibility of WTGD participation in FIDA

“It was a fluke that I knew about [FIDA]”

FIDA player

Enhance participation pathways to engage eligible participants

“By the end of the season, I’m burnt out. It doesn’t stop just because the football season is finished”

FIDA club representative

Strengthen club governance and volunteering structures to support growth

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW OF THE ACTION PLAN

While stakeholders were broadly energised by the idea of a standalone WTGD competition, they also recognised that work would need to be undertaken to support FIDA to achieve this vision.

Impact Co. has developed a staged action plan that acknowledges the key steps required to support WTGD participation and engagement as FIDA works towards its aspiration for a standalone WTGD competition.

GOAL	STRATEGY	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
1. Strengthen foundations	1.1 Sustainable resourcing 1.2 Safety on and off the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen governance • Increase education • Increase volunteer base
2. Increase participation	2.1 Increase FIDA's profile and reach 2.2 Run WTGD-specific initiatives and programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand eligibility criteria • Assess brand recognition • Rollout targeted promotion • Strengthen partnerships • Pilot engagement trials

In implementing the recommended actions, FIDA will be able to:

Ensure all FIDA players feel safe, on and off the field, during and out of season

Provide localised and tailored opportunities for WTGD participants to engage with their community and access sporting spaces

Strengthen FIDA's governance to support its management team and Board to drive long-term strategic initiatives (i.e. the standalone WTGD competition)

Respond to risk appropriately, efficiently and effectively

Increase FIDA's recognition and reach across sporting and disability spaces

Create sustainable resources to drive sustainable growth

Work towards its ultimate vision of a standalone WTGD competition

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The recommendations are informed by Impact Co.'s engagement and research. work is underway to implement some of the recommended actions.

GOAL	STRATEGY	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
Goal 1: Strengthen foundations	Strengthen governance	1 Create an administrative support role within FIDA's management team. ★
		2 Create a WTGD Working Group to drive organisational efforts to increase WTGD participation.
		3 Review, refine and communicate an updated version of FIDA's Player Code of Conduct and by-laws. ★
		4 Review, refine and communicate safeguarding policies and reporting mechanisms. ★
	Increase education	5 Develop and deliver mandatory respect training for FIDA players and club representatives at the beginning of each season. ★
		6 Deliver compulsory safe tackling training.
	Increase volunteer base	7 Support clubs to diversify their volunteer pool to meet existing need.
Goal 2: Increase participation	Expand eligibility criteria	8 Expand FIDA's eligibility criteria to increase participation base.
	Assess brand recognition	9 Assess opportunities to increase FIDA's brand name recognition to create a clearer connection to football. ★
	Rollout targeted promotion	10 Rollout a targeted promotion campaign to promote FIDA across disability, sporting and education spaces.
	Strengthen partnerships	11 Strengthen FIDA's partnership with AFL/AFL Victoria.
		12 Work collaboratively with associated mainstream clubs, Auskick and partner schools to develop participation pathways for junior players. ★
	13 Support FIDA clubs to strengthen partnerships with local sponsors to enable them to run club-specific initiatives to increase WTGD engagement. ★	
Pilot engagement trials	14 Trial a series of WTGD-specific engagement initiatives across each conference.	

★ Actions identified by the Project Working Group as priority actions

02

CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

ABOUT FIDA

ABOUT FIDA

FIDA is more than a football league; it's a charitable entity dedicated to advancing social welfare, education, and health within the intellectual impairment community through Australian Rules football.

VISION

All people with intellectual impairment can safely participate in an appropriate Australian rules football competition.

PURPOSE

We strengthen an inclusive football community by building programs that offer synergies with the mainstream football experience.

IMPACT

Through our connection with AFL, sport and disability partners, FIDA provides our players and clubs with a sense of belonging and the opportunity to be valued and included as an independent member of the community.

Current statistics

800 Players*

30 clubs across Victoria offering mixed gender teams

4 conferences

**10% of whom identify as women or girls*

CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

MOTIVATIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH FIDA

After engaging with stakeholders, we found the following as key motivations for engaging with FIDA as players, volunteers and club representatives

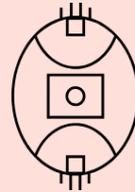


Being part of a team

A strong sense of community and an inclusive club culture, where players felt safe and accepted, are critical to supporting WTGD participation.

71% of survey respondents indicated that being part of a team and community motivated their involvement in FIDA.

57% of respondents indicated that meeting new people motivated their involvement.



Love of the sport

FIDA supports those who face access barriers to engaging with footy, enabling them to participate in the sport, from playing on the ground to volunteering in game-day positions.

71% of survey respondent indicated that love of the sport motivated their involvement in FIDA.

43% of respondents indicated that learning and improving skills motivated their participation.



Having fun and staying active

Throughout the project, it was clear that the social aspect of FIDA, more specifically, “getting out there and having fun” was a clear motivation for engagement.

71% of survey respondent indicated that having fun and staying active motivated their involvement in FIDA.

CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE WTGD ENGAGEMENT

The following key areas were identified as opportunities to address challenges and increase WTGD engagement.

Enhance protection of the physical, social, emotional and sexual safety of WTGD and marginalised players

Players, families, carers and supporters, and FIDA club representatives identified that concerns about the physical, social, cultural, emotional and sexual safety of WTGD players and players facing marginalisation on and off the field as a key impacting engagement for past, current and prospective players and volunteers.

This extended to appropriate infrastructure and equipment.

Improve understanding and awareness of FIDA and its offering

Several people felt that limited awareness about FIDA beyond existing recruitment channels and communities may be contributing to limited engagement.

Additionally, some felt that a lack of obvious affiliation between “FIDA” and “AFL” or “football” may be causing some confusion.

Increase visibility of WTGD participation in FIDA

Several players felt that limited visibility of WTGD participation in FIDA may be impacting WTGD engagement at player, volunteer and club representative levels.

Many stakeholders noted that a lack of visibility and representation may be translating to prospective participants thinking FIDA is still a “boys club”.

Enhance participation pathways to engage eligible participants

Stakeholders reported that there was significant player drop-off as players transitioned from AusKick to adult competitions due to incomplete participation pathways (i.e. dedicated seniors all-abilities clubs for U18s) and a lack of clear linkages to all-abilities inclusive football (i.e. FIDA).

Strengthen club governance and volunteering structures to support growth

Several stakeholders noted that while FIDA’s player base has grown rapidly, its accompanying resources and volunteer base has struggled to keep pace.

Limited management team resources, and a rapid and high turnover of club governance members and volunteers has contributed to a lack of continuity in leadership and often means that “you can’t consistently implement” strategies and processes at a governance level (i.e. accountability processes, long-term strategies).

In response to the above,, two key goals to support FIDA to address these sustainably: strengthen FIDA’s foundations and increase participation.

03

TOWARDS A WTGD COMPETITION

TOWARDS A WTGD COMPETITION

VISION, CONSIDERATIONS AND MARKERS OF SUCCESS

Vision for standalone WTGD competition

Throughout the engagement period, a clear vision for a standalone WTGD competition was articulated by FIDA players, family members and carers, FIDA representatives and stakeholders alike:

Eligibility: Girls, women, trans and gender diverse players with intellectual disabilities and other support needs*

*There is an acknowledgement that ideally FIDA would transition to an 18+ eligibility criteria upon the creation of a junior/senior participation pathway and expand its eligibility criteria to include WTGD participations with other physical, behavioural and intellectual support needs

Game structure: AFL 9s with a gradual transition to adapted game play once there is a sufficient volume of players

Grading structure: A Grade and C Grade to facilitate full spectrum of participation

Fixture: Concurrent seasonal play with existing FIDA competition

Competition structure: Inter- and intra-conference competition

Key considerations in developing a WTGD competition

- When asked, 43% of survey respondents reported that they liked mixed gender teams, 48% of survey respondents reported that they did not mind mixed gender teams, and 9% of survey respondents reported that they did not like mixed gender teams.
- Several FIDA stakeholders, including players, were concerned that recruiting and retaining sufficient WTGD players to make it necessary to develop a WTGD competition would take many years.
- There were also concerns about existing strain on volunteers (both within team management structures and for game-day roles), inappropriate infrastructure (i.e. changing rooms and bathrooms) and limited resources (i.e. funding/grants) posing significant barriers to increasing participation and promoting sustainable growth.
- Positive, welcoming and truly inclusive club culture is required to ensure WTGD and players experiencing marginalisation feel safe and can fully participate.
- Several stakeholders noted that increasing the involvement of WTGD participation must include players, coaches, umpires, volunteers and administrators to support positive role modelling.
- Multi-grade play is required to ensure players across the participation spectrum with different goals and aspirations for their play are appropriately supported.
- Not all clubs will have the capacity (i.e. resourcing) or capability (i.e. ability to create a safe space for players) to field a WTGD team and not all players will want to participate in a WTGD team, as such the option of maintaining mixed play for players aged 18 and over should be considered.

TOWARDS A WTGD COMPETITION

OVERVIEW OF THE ACTION PLAN

While stakeholders were broadly energised by the idea of a standalone WTGD competition, they also recognised that work would need to be undertaken to support FIDA to achieve this vision.

Impact Co. has developed a staged action plan that acknowledges the key steps required to support WTGD participation and engagement as FIDA works towards its aspiration for a standalone WTGD competition.

GOAL	STRATEGY	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
1. Strengthen foundations	1.1 Sustainable resourcing 1.2 Safety on and off the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen governance • Increase education • Increase volunteer base
2. Increase participation	2.1 Increase FIDA's profile and reach 2.2 Run WTGD-specific initiatives and programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand eligibility criteria • Assess brand recognition • Rollout targeted promotion • Strengthen partnerships • Pilot engagement trials

In implementing the recommended actions, FIDA will be able to:

Ensure all FIDA players feel safe, on and off the field, during and out of season

Provide localised and tailored opportunities for WTGD participants to engage with their community and access sporting spaces

Strengthen FIDA's governance to support its management team and Board to drive long-term strategic initiatives (i.e. the standalone WTGD competition)

Respond to risk appropriately, efficiently and effectively

Increase FIDA's recognition and reach across sporting and disability spaces

Create sustainable resources to drive sustainable growth

Work towards its ultimate vision of a standalone WTGD competition

GOAL 1: STRENGTHEN FOUNDATIONS

GOAL 1: STRENGTHEN FOUNDATIONS

ACTION AREA 1.1: SUSTAINABLE RESOURCING

Throughout the engagement period, it was clear that many felt FIDA's rapid growth had not correlated with sufficient growth in available resources and infrastructure to meet player needs. FIDA club and organisational representatives shared concerns about the existing strain on resources being further intensified if a rapid increase in WTGD participation was not met with an increase in resources and infrastructure.

Several concerns about sustainable resourcing were raised by stakeholders, including:

- Limited volunteer pools and growing volunteer fatigue at team management and game-day level.
- FIDA's management team structure, availability and burdensome administrative tasks diverting attention away from their core roles, capacity to support clubs, respond to all grant/funding/business case opportunities, and drive meaningful and long-term partnerships.
- High turnover of FIDA's governance translating to a lack of consistency and continuity and therefore ability to drive long-term change across the organisation.

Recommended actions to address sustainable resourcing are outlined overleaf.

"By the end of the season, I'm burnt out. It doesn't stop just because the football season is finished"

FIDA club representative

"Not just running a football league, we're running a program with (sic) complex people"

FIDA management team member

"Some other clubs **don't have enough support from the wider community** and this can become an issue during some games"

Family member

"We have so much admin that we have miniscule time to do anything else"

FIDA management team member

GOAL 1: STRENGTHEN FOUNDATIONS

ACTION AREA 1.2: SAFETY ON AND OFF THE FIELD

It was clear that before efforts to increase WTGD participation begin and a standalone competition is developed, more robust safety and risk management mechanisms and processes must be established to ensure the physical, social, emotional, cultural and sexual safety of players on and off the field.

Several stakeholders felt that physical, social, emotional and sexual safety concerns are key challenges impacting WTGD engagement for players and volunteers alike. While there was recognition that FIDA is making concerted efforts to address this, more robust, accessible and transparent safety and risk management policies and processes are required to promote timely and consistent approaches to reporting misconduct and applying penalties where the FIDA Code of Conduct or by-laws are breached.

FIDA players, families, carers and supporters and club representatives felt that limited communication about acceptable standards of behaviour, limited visibility of reporting processes, and perceived limited action when FIDA's Player Code of Conduct is breached (including monitoring breaches) contribute to misconduct issues. Additionally, that cultural issues within broader sporting and AFL culture (including misogyny, racism, homophobia and transphobia) are contributing to these behaviours.

It was clear that initiatives to address behavioural and language issues must be prioritised before efforts to increase WTGD participation are underway to ensure WTGD players are entering safe spaces.

Several stakeholders noted concerns about the safety of WTGD players as part of the mixed competition, including the significant age ranges in teams and notable differences in stature for some players, and emphasised the importance of junior participation pathways to support safer play.

"You need to be confident that your club is a safe place for women, girls and LGBTQIA+ people to be in the first place"

FIDA coach

"No accountability in clubs and no safe guidelines to be held accountable to"

FIDA player

"We're not here to date you, we're here to have fun and play football"

FIDA player

"Sexual violence is the highest in that group [women with intellectual disabilities]. You don't want to send them somewhere or put them in that place"

Family member

"I'm going along to be helpful and I'm getting coffee requests and dating requests"

FIDA team manager

GOAL 1: STRENGTHEN FOUNDATIONS

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS [1/2]

STRATEGY	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	
Strengthen governance	1	<p>Create an administrative support role within FIDA’s management team. Embedding an administrative support role will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the administrative strain placed on FIDA’s existing management team members (i.e. completing core administrative tasks, support with training logistics, support clubs with inquiries as appropriate, support management team to deliver and develop grants and funding pitches). • Enable FIDA’s management team members to redirect their focus to their core roles and drive long-term change and strategy, including driving efforts to improve existing policies, procedures and processes, and increase WTGD participation.
	2	<p>Create a WTGD Working Group to drive organisational efforts to increase WTGD participation. The WTGD Working Group should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consist of WTGD-identifying players, family members, champion club representatives and FIDA management team members. • Plan, inform and support the development and implementation of WTGD engagement strategies and policies impacting WTGD players (i.e. reporting processes).
	3	<p>Review, refine and communicate an updated version of FIDA’s Player Code of Conduct and by-laws.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The updated FIDA Player Code of Conduct should align with the AFL Community Handbook and Victoria’s Fair Play Code and include a commitment to creating a harassment-free environment and an inclusive culture within the support, including how FIDA will allocate roles and responsibilities to support this. • Standards of behaviour, expectations and responsibility for adhering to the FIDA Player Code of Conduct should be clearly communicated to players, families and carers, and clubs at the start of and throughout the season, both verbally and through appropriate formats (i.e. video, easy-to-read, pictorial).
	4	<p>Review, refine and communicate safeguarding policies and reporting mechanisms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure safeguarding policies and reporting mechanisms are publicly available and accessible in multiple formats (i.e. written, easy-to-read, pictorial, video) and locations (i.e. online, in club rooms). • Ensure safeguarding policies and reporting mechanisms include clear descriptions of who people can reach out to (at club and FIDA-levels) and disciplinary action that will be taken and/or sanctions that will be enforced where there is a violation of FIDA’s Code of Conduct (i.e. fines, suspension, lifetime bans). • Ensure FIDA management team and club representatives have the training and resources (i.e. FIDA-club shared incident trackers) to support informed and timely responses where violations of FIDA’s Code of Conduct has occurred, including reporting to appropriate regulatory bodies.

GOAL 1: STRENGTHEN FOUNDATIONS

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS [2/2]

STRATEGY	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	
Increase education	5	<p>Develop and deliver mandatory respect training for FIDA players and club representatives at the beginning of each season.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver tailored respect and consent education to FIDA players and club representatives that cover topics including FIDA’s Player Code of Conduct, consent, sexual safety, asserting boundaries, how to intervene if you witness inappropriate behaviour, how to report inappropriate behaviour via FIDA’s reporting mechanisms and consequences where FIDA’s Code of Conduct is breached. • Mandate respect and consent training as a pre-season requirement for all FIDA players and club representatives. • Ensure FIDA players, club representatives and families, carers and supporters are provided with access to appropriate resources (see Appendix A) to support them to understand key concepts in the training.
	6	<p>Deliver safe tackling training to ensure all players are tackled safely.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support coaching volunteers to deliver safe tackle training to players to ensure WTGD players are tackled safely (where appropriate).
Increase volunteer base	7	<p>Support clubs to diversify their volunteer pool to meet existing need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage clubs to build the capability of players, families and carers to take on team management and game-day volunteer roles. • Encourage clubs to reach out to associated mainstream clubs to build their volunteer pool. • Partner with service clubs and organisations (i.e. Volunteer Victoria, Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs) to increase visibility of long-term and game-day volunteering opportunities.

GOAL 2: INCREASE PARTICIPATION

GOAL 2: INCREASE PARTICIPATION

ACTION AREA 2.1 INCREASE FIDA'S PROFILE AND REACH

FIDA players, volunteers and club representatives felt that FIDA's profile within football, disability and sporting spaces could be increased through targeted promotion and strategic partnerships.

It was clear that many players, families and club representatives who had engaged with FIDA learned about the organisation through existing players, friends, Facebook or longstanding connections to FIDA's existing recruitment networks.

FIDA players, volunteers and club representatives felt that a few factors were contributing to this, including:

- Limited promotion of FIDA beyond its existing networks;
- Limited understanding of FIDA and its offerings, including eligibility criteria for players;
- Lack of obvious connection between the "FIDA" acronym and "football" and "AFL" causing confusion; and
- Weak affiliation with the Victorian Amateur Football Association (VAFA) and AFL/AFL Victoria.

External stakeholders and FIDA stakeholders alike shared that increasing FIDA's profile and strengthening partnerships to facilitate broad promotion and recruitment will support FIDA in not only building its player base but its volunteer pool.

"Can be really frustrating when you're talking to people about football and what you do and **people who've been in the game for 30 or 40 years have never heard of FIDA**"

FIDA coach

"It was a **fluke** that I knew about [FIDA]"

FIDA player

"The **younger we get exposure to AFL, the more likely they are to stay rostered onto the game**"

External stakeholder

GOAL 2: INCREASE PARTICIPATION

ACTION AREA 2.2 RUN WTGD-SPECIFIC INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS

Key to building FIDA's WTGD participation base, increasing its profile and working towards its vision of a standalone WTGD competition is the introduction of ongoing WTGD-specific initiatives and programs to promote engagement.

FIDA players, club representatives and volunteers expressed hesitancy about standing up a WTGD competition without rolling out a series of WTGD-specific initiatives and programs to promote engagement throughout the year. It was clear that providing flexible opportunities to support engagement, including offering modified competitions with reduced numbers while growing the player base would set the league up for success.

Additionally, players made it clear that a targeted promotion strategy for and increased visibility of existing WTGD players would be required to ensure prospective players and families, carers and supporters knew that WTGD players were welcome in FIDA.

It was clear that engagement initiatives must be accessible for those in regional and rural areas and factors like travel distance, cost and transport should be accounted for in planning efforts. For example, one player suggested buses could be provided and where funding is not available, volunteer-coordinated carpooling and public transport options could be communicated.

Several stakeholders, including players, coaches and sporting organisation representatives noted that keeping initiatives as central as possible to bring people together with sufficient notice to allow carers and support workers to manage logistics would be critical to supporting engagement in a range of areas.

“Need to take that positive step towards the potential in having the standalone women's competition but **they need to highlight women's sport and women's FIDA players** where they can have that one day dedicated just to female players because there is enough female players out there to play that they can run that...even if it is that **AFL 9s structure on that smaller field like they do with that non-tackle, that really does need to happen in order to move forward**”

FIDA coach

“**Bring game opportunities to those regionally** who don't have a lot of players”

External stakeholder

GOAL 2: INCREASE PARTICIPATION

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS [1/2]

STRATEGY	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
Expand eligibility criteria	<p>8</p> <p>Expand FIDA’s eligibility criteria to increase participation base.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several FIDA players shared that while they had not technically met FIDA’s eligibility criteria they had additional support needs they felt had or would not be met in mainstream clubs, including behavioural support needs due to trauma or neurodivergence and were granted exemptions by FIDA which facilitated their engagement. • Some stakeholders suggested that lingering stigma about “disability” as a label may be preventing some eligible WTGD participants from engaging with FIDA.
Assess brand recognition	<p>9</p> <p>Assess opportunities to increase FIDA’s brand name recognition to create a clearer connection to football.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several suggestions for terminology were identified, including “all abilities” and “football”.
Rollout targeted promotion	<p>10</p> <p>Rollout a targeted promotion campaign to promote FIDA across disability, sporting and education spaces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target promotion to diverse recruitment channels, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mainstream and specialist primary and high schools; ○ VAFA clubs, including those with junior teams; ○ Other mainstream and all-abilities sporting leagues (i.e. netball, soccer, basketball); ○ Disability organisations and NDIS providers; ○ Local councils and community sporting spaces; and ○ Local and community media, public talks and conferences. • Increase FIDA’s participation in community events (i.e. festivals, sporting events, school events) to increase visibility. • Ensure promotional materials make FIDA’s eligibility criteria and the inclusion of WTGD players obvious.

STRATEGY	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
Strengthen partnerships	<p>11</p> <p>Strengthen FIDA’s partnership with AFL/AFL Victoria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities for AFL to elevate FIDA’s profile through different campaigns and initiatives (i.e. playing half-time exhibition matches at AFL and AFLW games, promoting FIDA at the Toyota AFL Open, organising AFL and AFLW players to attend and promote FIDA events).
	<p>12</p> <p>Work collaboratively with associated mainstream clubs, AusKick and partner schools to develop participation pathways for junior players.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support FIDA clubs to develop partnerships with associated and nearby mainstream clubs (including junior clubs) to develop reciprocal participation pathways (i.e. to support players to play in spaces they feel most comfortable). • Trial run a small pilot of footy clinics at partner schools to promote FIDA to girls and gender diverse young people who may be disengaged from football. • Work with Auskick to create participation pathways to FIDA clubs to promote continued engagement for those eligible.
	<p>13</p> <p>Support FIDA clubs to strengthen partnerships with local sponsors to enable them to run club-specific initiatives to increase WTGD engagement.</p>

GOAL 2: INCREASE PARTICIPATION

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS [2/2]

STRATEGY	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
Pilot engagement trials	<p data-bbox="369 611 1184 668">Trial a series of WTGD-specific engagement initiatives across each conference.</p> <ul data-bbox="369 678 1210 1049" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="369 678 1210 792">• Work with coaching and team management representatives from champion clubs in each conference to design WTGD-specific initiatives (see options on next page) to promote clubs and encourage active engagement.<li data-bbox="369 806 1210 863">• Ensure trials are accompanied by appropriate promotional plans to encourage participation.<li data-bbox="369 878 1210 963">• Collect participation numbers, feedback from participants, volunteers, coaching staff and families, as well as photos for reporting and future promotion.<li data-bbox="369 978 1210 1049">• Based on participation numbers and engagement feedback, identify how to scale initiatives (i.e. increasing number of sessions, replicating in other locations).

GOAL 2: INCREASE PARTICIPATION

WTGD ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES IDENTIFIED BY STAKEHOLDERS

WTGD Come and Try Carnivals (to mirror existing success with Tackle Free Carnivals)

- Work collaboratively with champion clubs in each conference to pilot conference-wide WTGD Come and Try Carnivals throughout the year, with champion clubs rotating hosting duties.
- Ensure there are sufficient volunteer resources to provide small group supervision and support, including recruiting existing WTGD players and volunteers to support with different elements of the day (i.e. leading sections).
- Begin with ice breakers, warm-ups and skills drills to support new attendees to develop familiarity with the ground and game rules.
- Adopt an AFL 9s round-robin format and ensure all attendees are given a chance to participate.
- Ensure all Come and Try Carnival attendees complete an end-of-day survey to give them an opportunity to provide feedback and provide their contact details if they would like to remain engaged with similar initiatives moving forward.
- Ensure all Come and Try Carnival attendees receive a FIDA information pack and warm invitation to join their local club, including contact details for club representatives if they have any questions.
- Slowly transition ownership of WTGD Come and Try Carnivals to each conference.

WTGD Open Days and/or Training Nights

- Work collaboratively with champion clubs in each conference to pilot WTGD Open Days and/or WTGD Training Nights.
- Encourage attendees to bring friends, families and supporters to attend.
- Ensure there are sufficient volunteer resources to provide small group supervision and support, including recruiting existing WTGD players and volunteers to support with different elements of the day (i.e. leading sections).
- Begin with ice breakers, warm-ups and skills drills to support new attendees to develop familiarity with the ground and game rules.
- Use an AFL 9s round-robin to ensure all attendees are given a chance to participate.
- Offer a club meal (i.e. lunch or dinner) to encourage attendees to socialise with existing WTGD participants.
- Ensure all attendees receive a FIDA information pack and warm invitation to join the club, including providing contact details for club representatives if they have any questions.

Inter-conference WTGD competitions

- Once there is a sufficient volume of WTGD participants, run inter-conference WTGD competitions by recruiting players from clubs, WTGD Come and Try Carnival attendees and WTGD Open Day/Training Night attendees (i.e. Western Conference v Metropolitan Conference).
- Adopt an AFL 9s round-robin format and ensure all attendees are given a chance to participate.
- Ensure all competition attendees complete an end-of-day survey to give them an opportunity to provide feedback and provide their contact details if they would like to remain engaged with similar initiatives moving forward.
- Consideration is required to ensure appropriate transport is organised to support interested participants (i.e. carpooling, buses, public transport groups).

WTGD standalone competition

- Identify which clubs have sufficient volume of and interest from WTGD players to play in two WTGD teams (i.e. A Grade and C Grade) – several stakeholders suggested beginning with AFL 9s rounds to promote the game.
- Facilitate matches between WTGD teams within each conference at appropriate stages throughout the season (i.e. rounds could be staggered throughout the season).

Note: A strategy to stand up a standalone WTGD competition will need to be revisited once a sufficient volume of participants has been engaged in FIDA to ensure the competitions meet the needs of conferences.

04

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

RESOURCE LIST FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

The resources below were identified by Impact Co. during the initial desktop review and may be useful resources for FIDA as it seeks to implement the recommended actions.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	RELATED RESOURCES
<p>3 Review, refine and communicate an updated version of FIDA's Player Code of Conduct and by-laws.</p>	<p>Women & Girls Community Football Charter (AFL) AFL Women & Girls Community League Best Practice (AFL) National Community Football Policy Handbook (AFL) Fair Play Code (Sport and Recreation Victoria)</p>
<p>4 Review, refine and communicate safeguarding policies and reporting mechanisms.</p>	<p>Guidelines for the inclusion of transgender and gender diverse people in sport (Australian Human Rights Commission, Sport Aus and MPPS) Quick wins for an inclusive club (AFL) Everyone's Game: A Toolkit for Advancing Disability Inclusion in Sport-based Life Skills Programming FIFA Disability Football Toolkit Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in Sport: A Handbook for Policy Makers and Sports Practitioners (UN Women)</p>
<p>5 Develop and deliver mandatory respect training for FIDA players and club representatives at the beginning of each season.</p>	<p>Tackle Your Feelings Safer Me, Safer You SECCA Cognitive Disability Education and Support courses (Sexual Health Victoria)</p>
<p>6 Deliver safe tackling training to ensure all players are tackled safely.</p>	<p>Injury prevention in women's rugby league starts with trust and safe tackle technique (ABC)</p>
<p>10 Rollout a targeted promotion campaign to promote FIDA across disability, sporting and education spaces.</p>	<p>Girls Community Football Acquisition & Retention Research Summary (AFL)</p>
<p>12 Work collaboratively with associated mainstream clubs, NAB AFL AusKick and partner schools to develop participation pathways for junior players.</p>	<p>Girls Community Football Acquisition & Retention Research Summary (AFL)</p>
<p>14 Trial a series of WTGD-specific engagement initiatives across each conference.</p>	<p>Everyone's Game: A Toolkit for Advancing Disability Inclusion in Sport-based Life Skills Programming</p>