



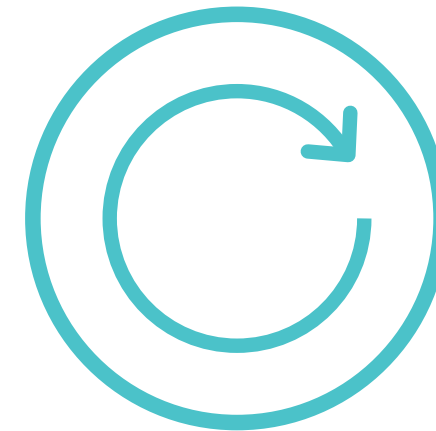
# MEN'S FOOTBALL PYRAMID RESTRUCTURE



# WHAT IS THE RESTRUCTURE?



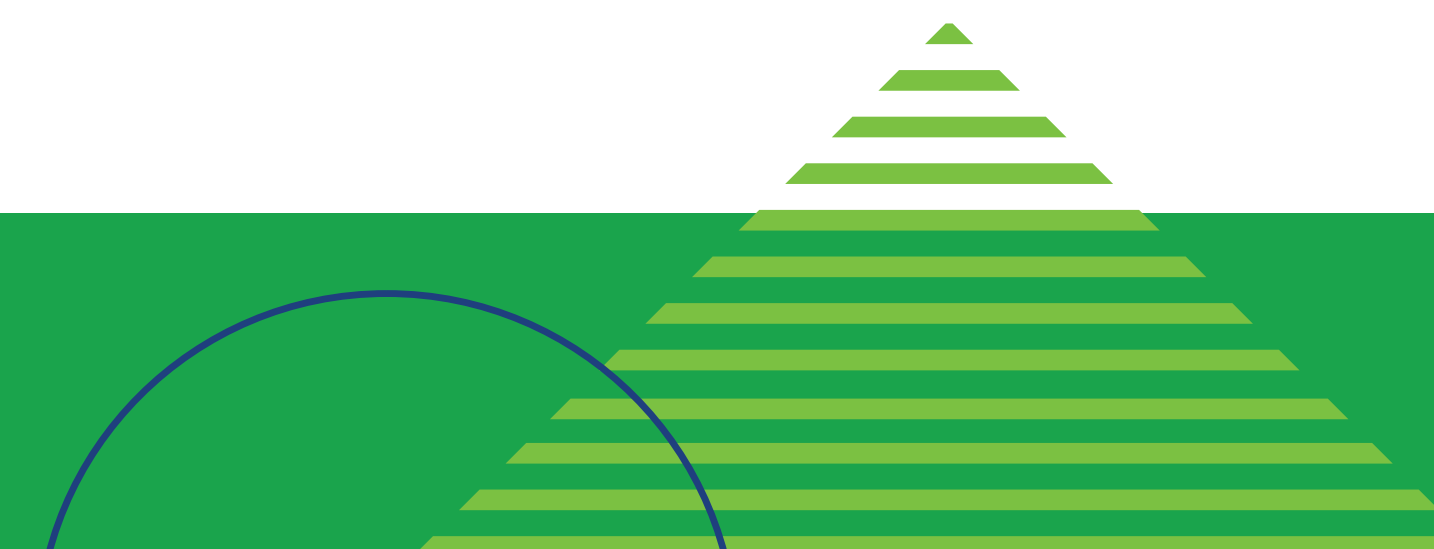
The Irish FA is undertaking a significant restructure of the men's football pyramid in Northern Ireland to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of the men's amateur game.



An opportunity to 'reset' the football pyramid and provide an improved pathway for ambitious clubs to be promoted to the top tiers of the amateur game, with the future potential for progression to the professional game.



Introduction of a new 'Conference' layer to allow clubs to compete at a national level directly below the NIFL Premiership and Championship.





# IRISH FA STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE PILLAR



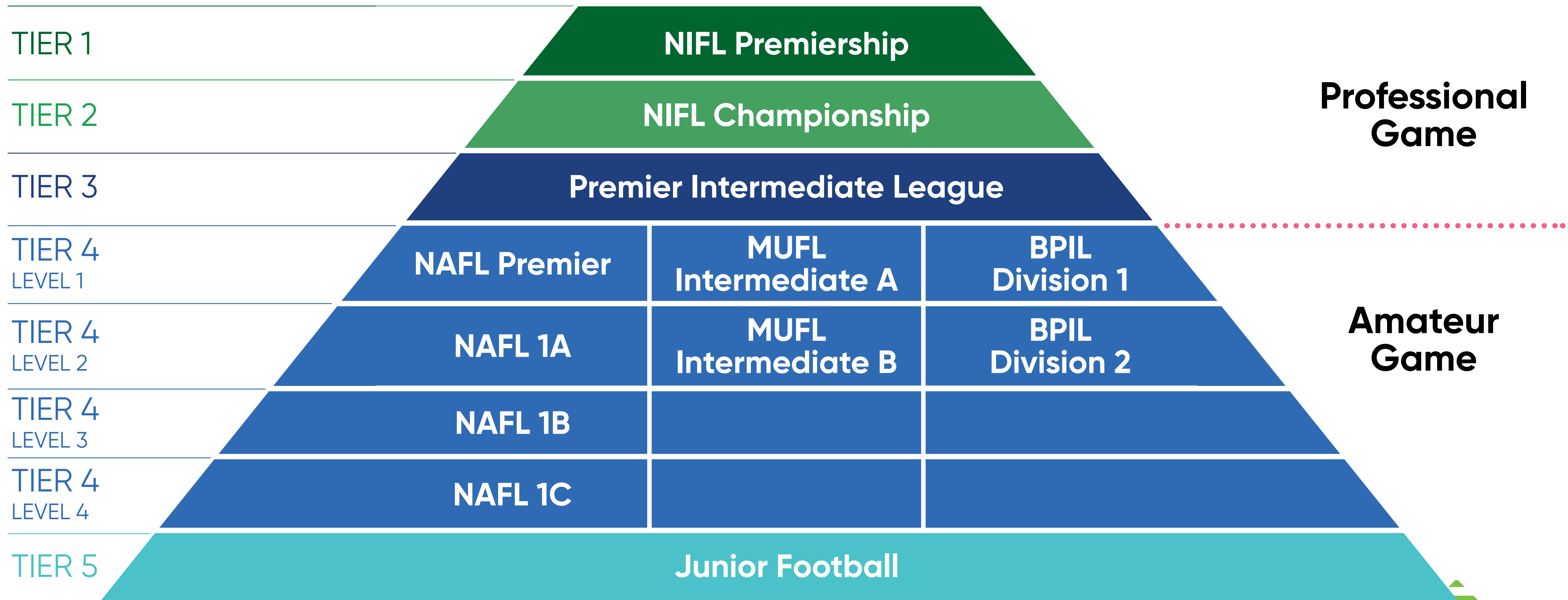
In the Irish FA Corporate Strategy 2022–2027 the following strategic objective has been set;

**'TRANSFORM THE FOOTBALL PYRAMID TO CREATE A CLEAR PATHWAY FOR AMBITIOUS CLUBS.'**





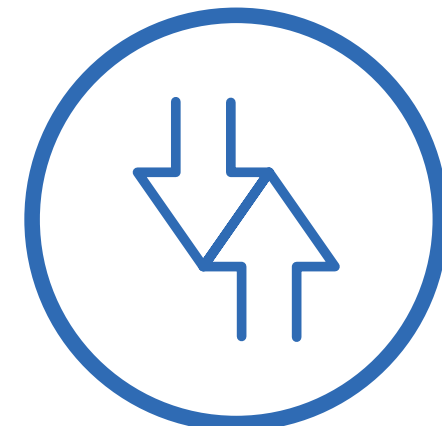
# CURRENT PYRAMID STRUCTURE



# THE CASE FOR CHANGE



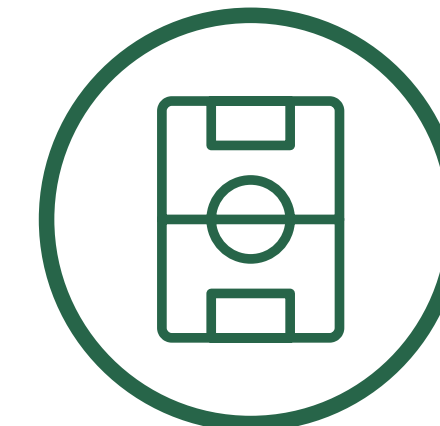
Following a consultation process, the Irish FA has identified a need to develop consistent league formats (number of teams and matches) and fixture calendar for the top tiers of the amateur game.



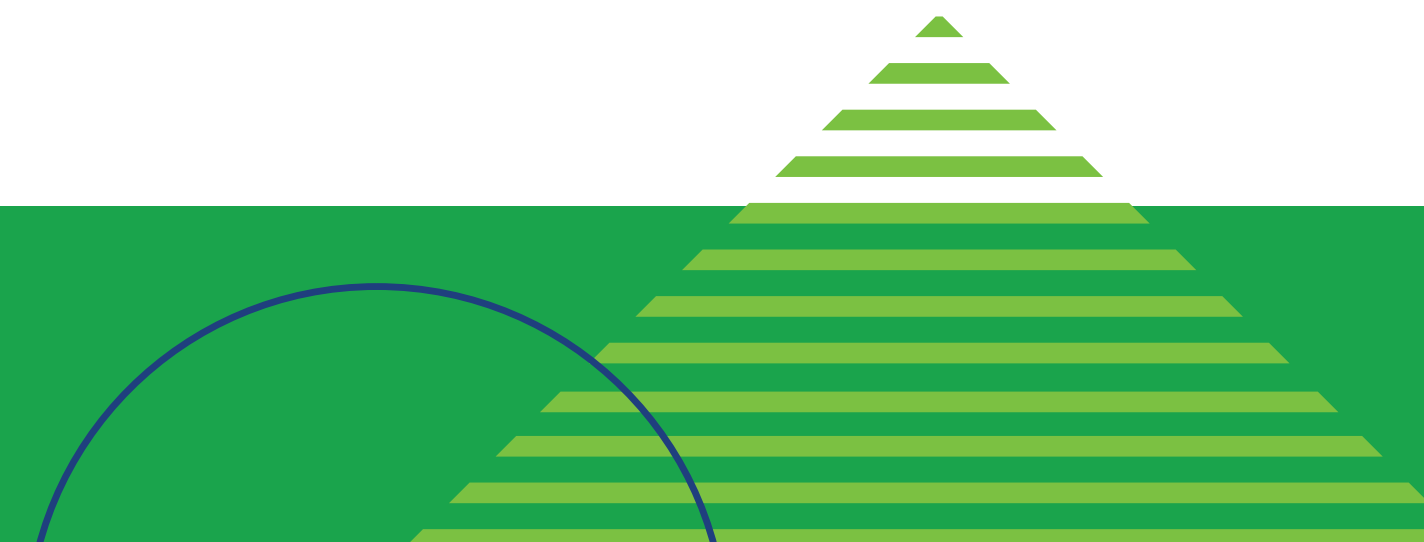
To establish a dependable mechanism for promotion and relegation across the highest levels of men's amateur and professional game.



Improve playing standards below the senior professional leagues - best v best of amateur football.



Improve the quality of football facilities and spectator experience via enhanced ground criteria and invest €1million in club facilities.



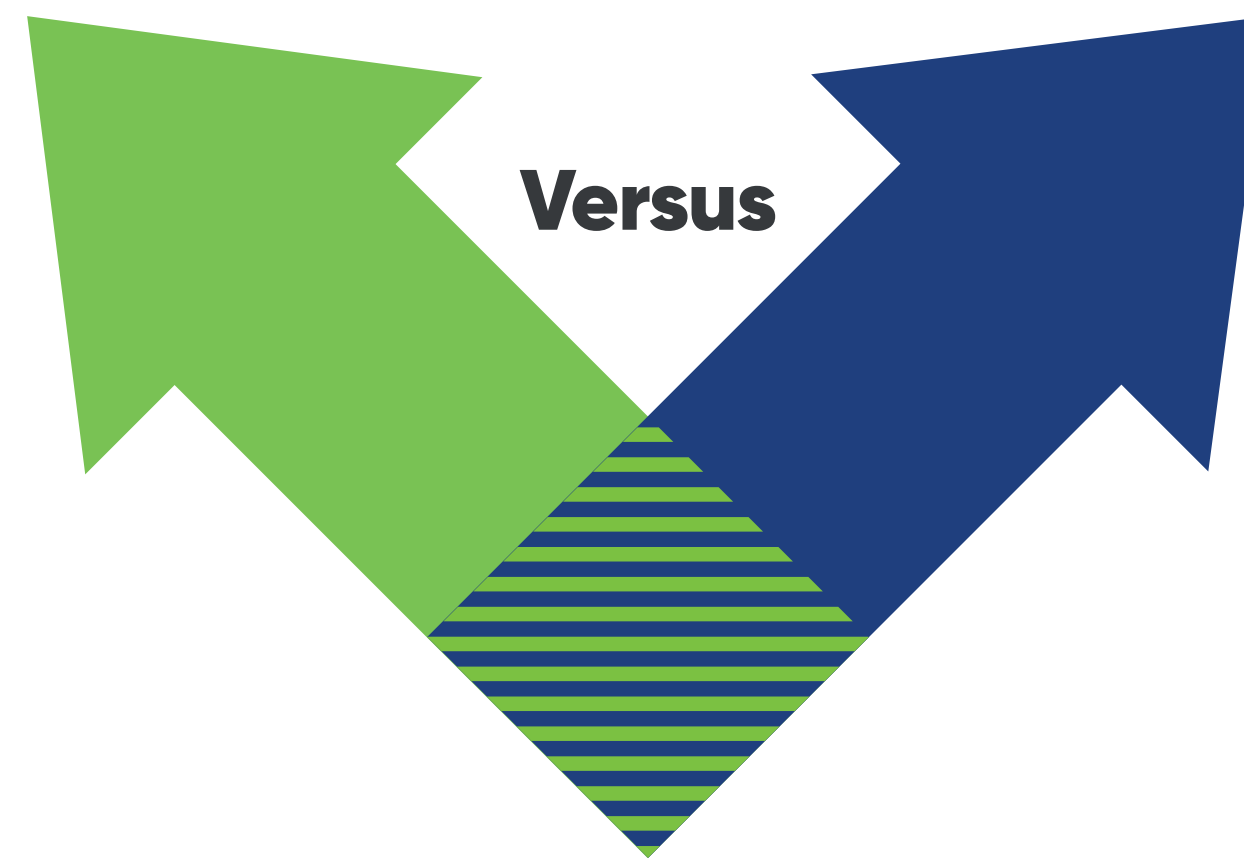
# AN OPPORTUNITY FOR AMBITIOUS CLUBS



Opportunity to reset the men's football pyramid and allow clubs and players to compete at the level that best suits their ambitions and capacity.

## Performance Pathway

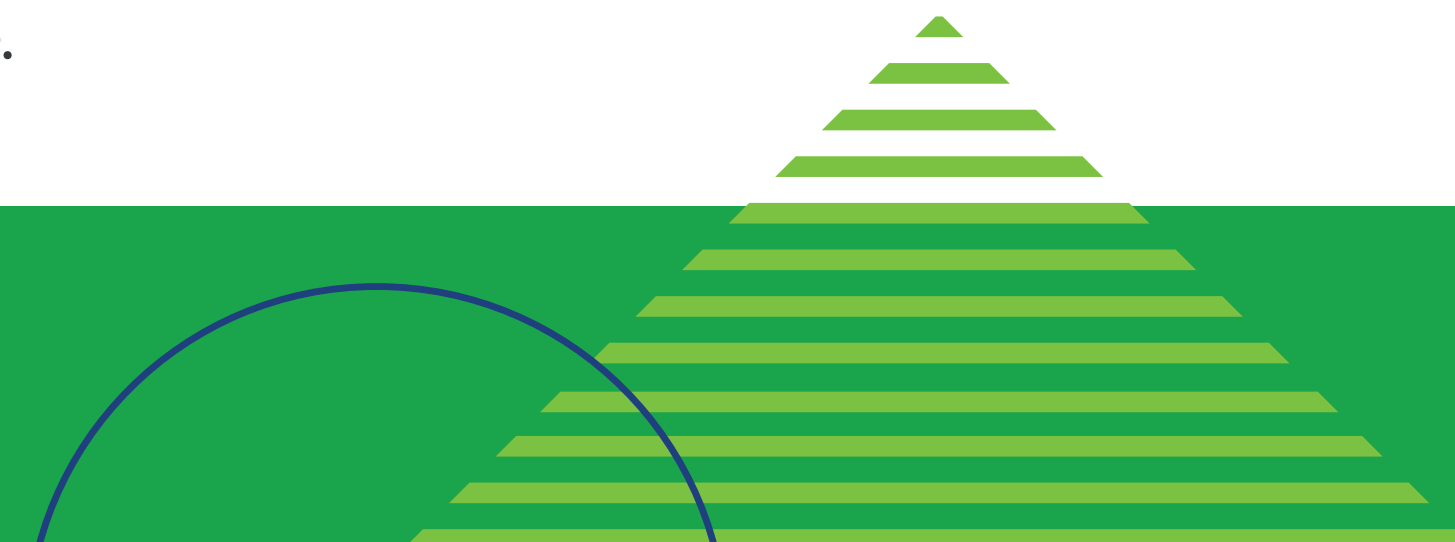
Aspirations to progress through the pyramid and continually compete at the highest level of competition possible and play on a national basis.



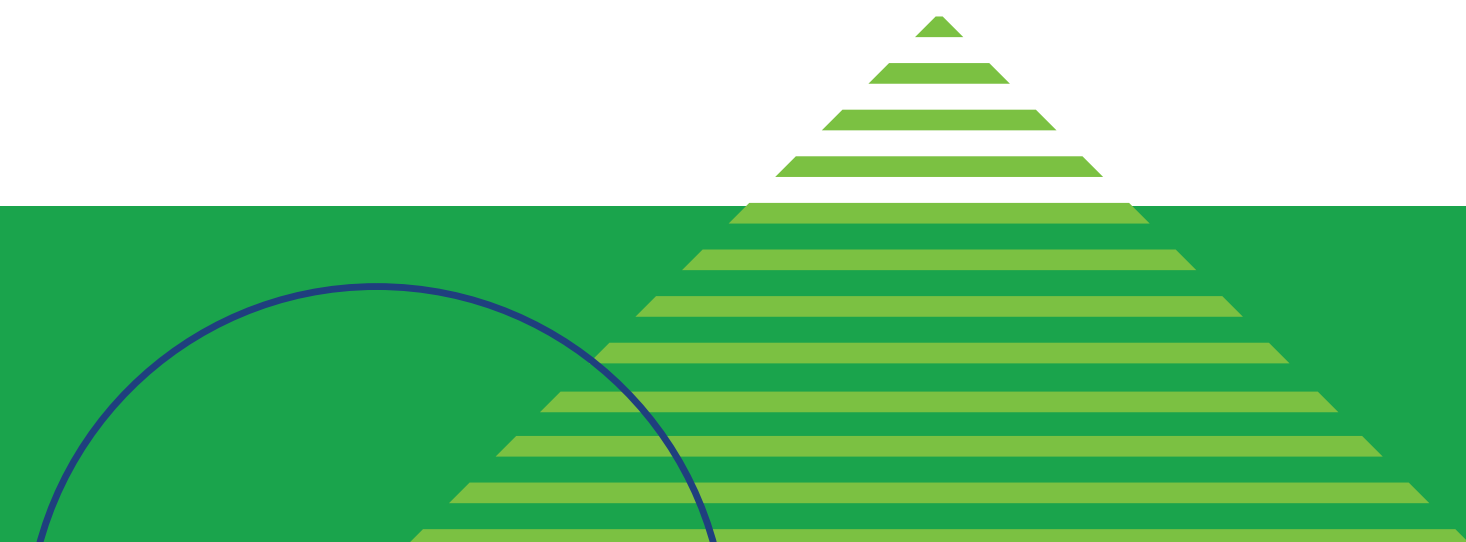
## Everyday Game

The Everyday Game is designed to provide regular, competitive football on a regional basis for teams and players with a philosophy based on participation.

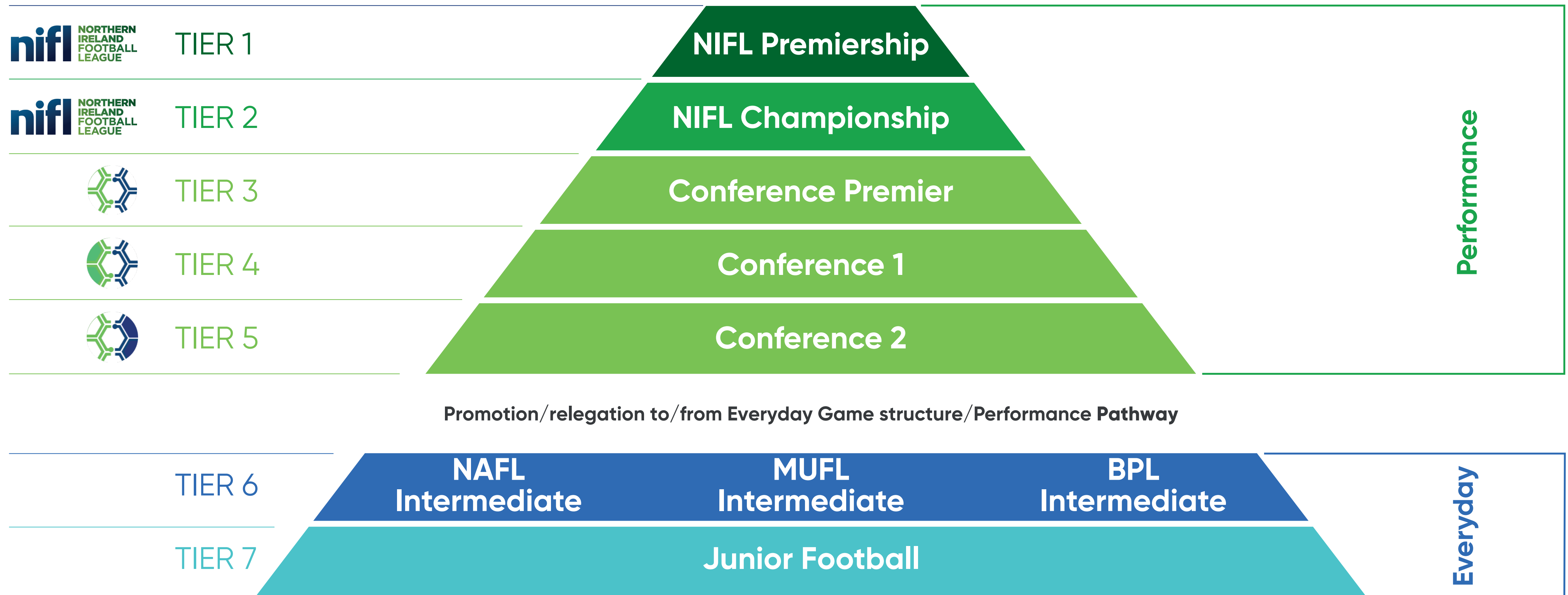
Clubs will be requested to self identify if they consider themselves as a performance club who wish to participate in the **Performance Pathway** or are a club with a philosophy based on participation wishing to remain within the **Everyday Game** structure.



# RESTRUCTURE OF PERFORMANCE PATHWAY

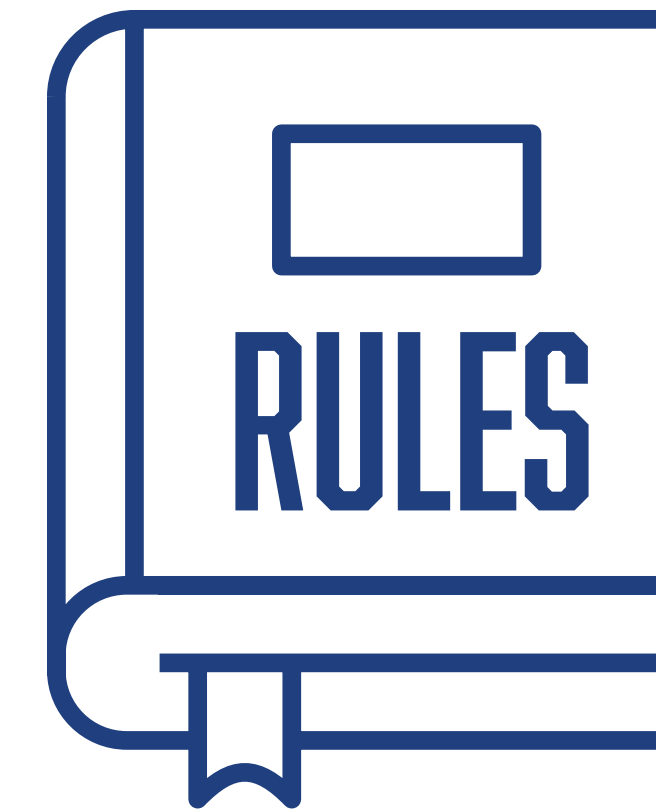


# RESTRUCTURE OF MEN'S FOOTBALL PYRAMID



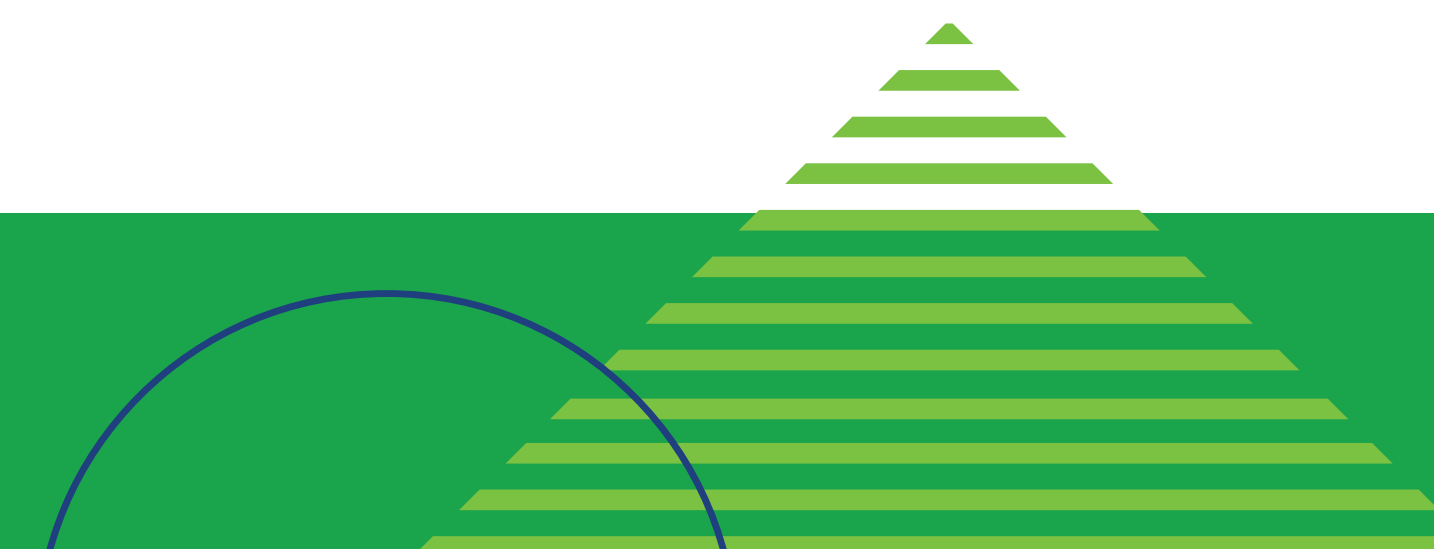


# IMPLEMENTATION



The Irish FA will support the appointed league operator who will confirm the application process for interested clubs and the composition of leagues for commencement of Season 2026/27.

The Conference layer will be governed by agreed rules and regulations which will modernise and standardise the approach of all leagues within the performance pathway.



# PREFERRED LEAGUE OPERATOR



## Progress to date

- Expression of interest for league operators
- Application process completed
- Appointment of league operator
- Co-design





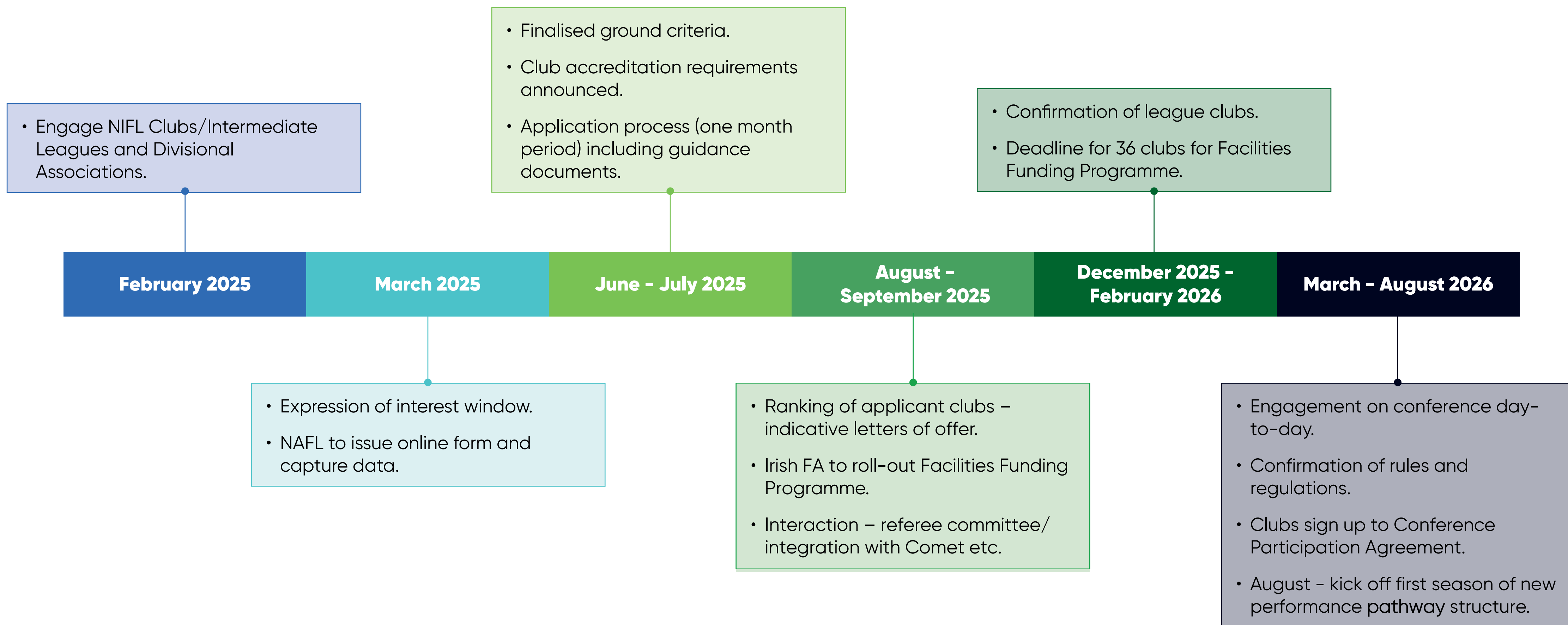
# LEAGUE OPERATOR

Introduction





# TIMELINE

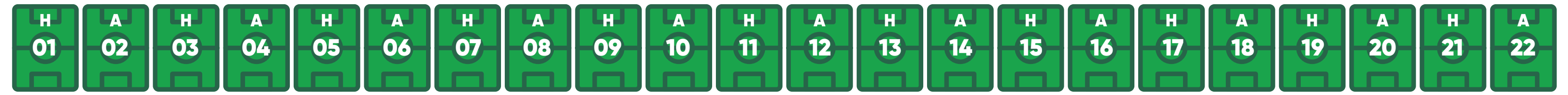


# COMPETITION STRUCTURE



**National Division of 12 (3)**

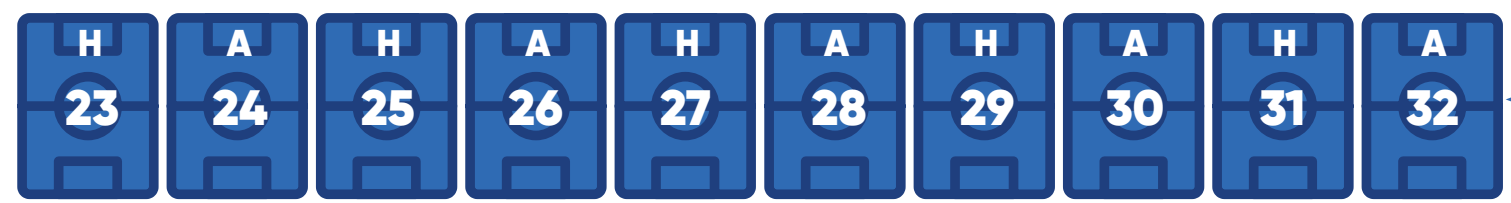
**32 match league season**



**22 matches**

**Promotion**

Top 6 play each other



Bottom 6 play each other



**Relegation**

# REGULATIONS – PROMOTION/RELEGATION



## Promotion

- #1 automatic.
- #2 enters a play-off.
- Conference Premier promotion subject to the championship licence criteria.

## Relegation

- #12 automatic relegation.
- #11 enters a play-off.
- Alternatively, relegation on the basis of lack of licence, club concerned would replace #12 at season end.

## Promotion/Relegation to/from Conference

- Relegation from Conference Division 2 to include one automatic relegation and one play-off.
- Promotion to Conference Division 2 is subject to a play-off between applicant clubs from NAFL, MUFL and BPIL.
- No applications, no Conference Division 2 relegation. Only one application, automatic promotion and relegation of Conference Division 2 #12.
- Returning to Intermediate.



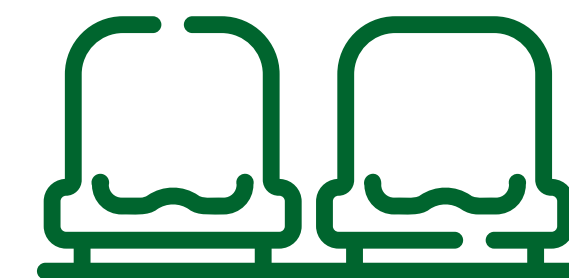
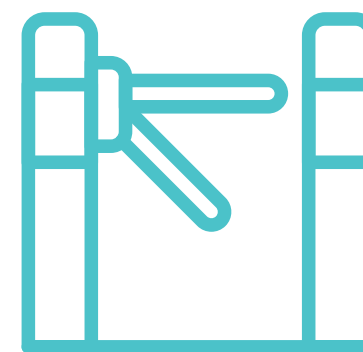
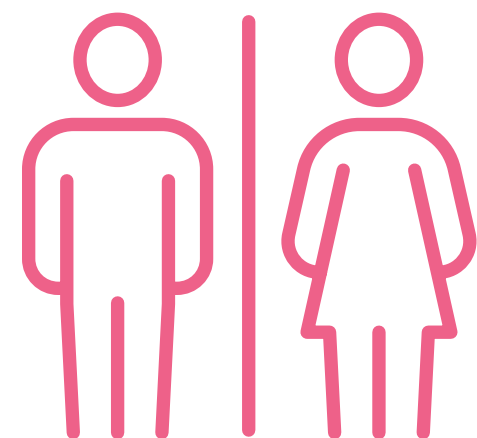
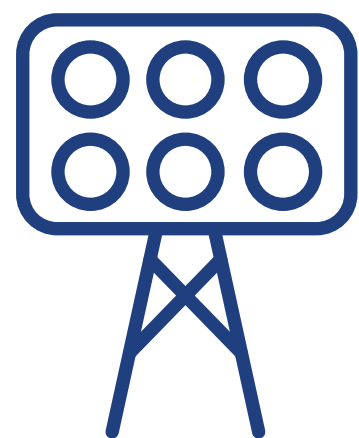
# GROUND CRITERIA



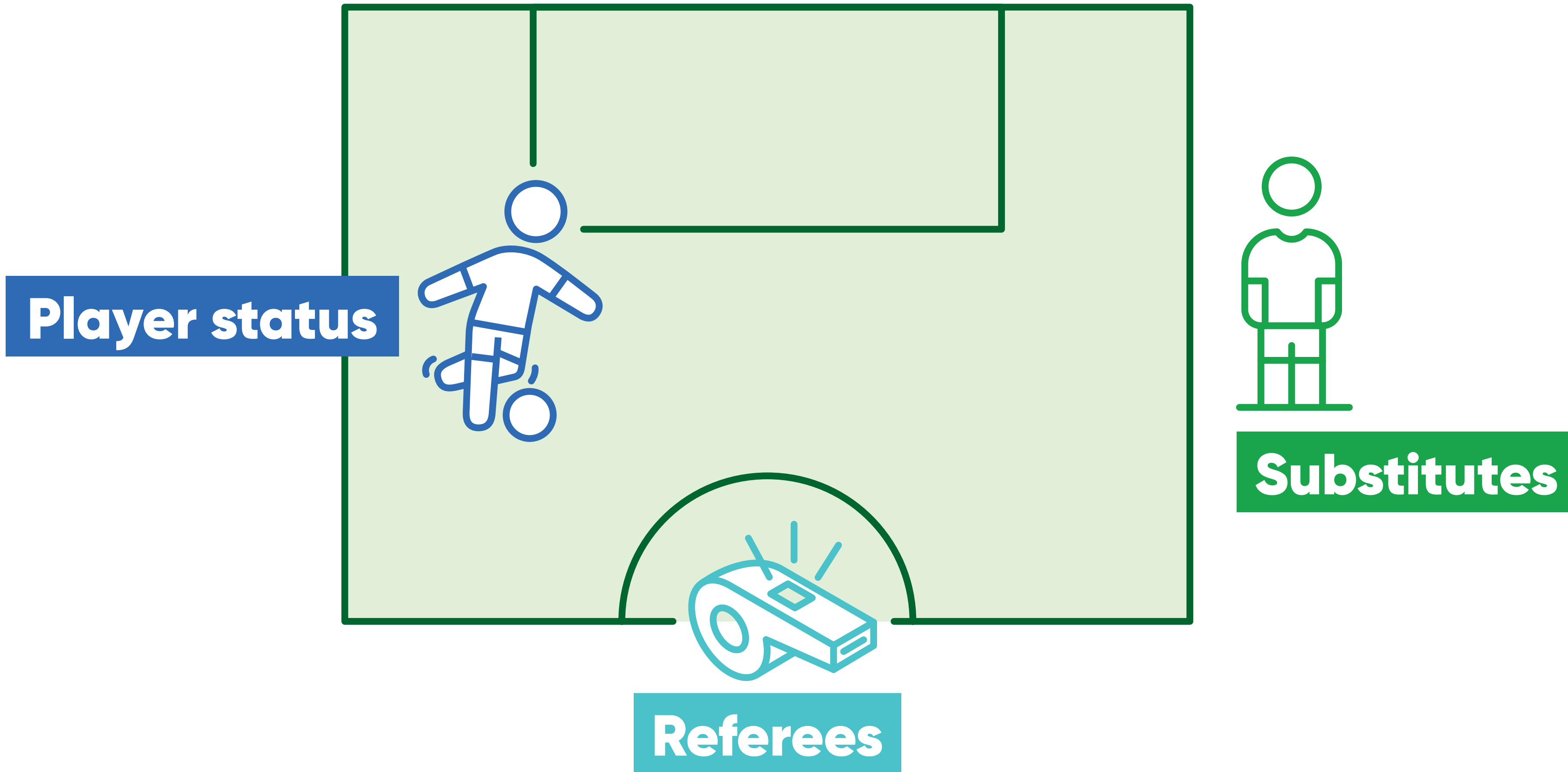
Enhanced updated  
ground criteria



Ground tenure



# KEY REGULATIONS



## Expressions of interest to be opened in March 2025 and include capture of the following data:

1. General club information
2. Club governance
3. Home ground ownership
4. Home ground facilities
5. Home ground development





# COMPETITIVE APPLICATION PROCESS



- **Opens June 2025**  
(For 4 x week period)
- **Closes early July 2025**
- **Conditional offers expected late August 2025**

Offers would be subject to ground inspection, obtaining license and other NI Conference criteria.

## Key areas of focus:

- Competitive performance
- Ground tenure
- Home ground development
- Club governance and structure





# Questions?

