

GET HER IN
THE GAME



NATIONAL RECREATION
AND PARK ASSOCIATION



Invite Youth
Voice



Create an Action Plan

Once you identify opportunities to modify policies and practices to better support girls in your programs, develop an action plan with specific activities and clear timelines. An action plan helps agencies dedicate resources, maintain accountability and track progress toward goals. Defining objectives using the SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time bound) acronym is a helpful way to identify actions that advance youth sports goals and establish clear targets and timelines. strategies:

- ✓ Seek input from girls about what sports they want to play – and when and where – to design offerings that are more accessible and exciting. Be intentional about engaging girls who are normally left out of sports.
- ✓ Partner with schools and other established youth organizations like the Boys & Girls Clubs, 4-H, Girl Scouts, youth groups, etc. that already have trusted relationships with young people to seek input on programs.



Panelists discuss the power of sports for girls at the She Belongs: Girls in Sports Summit. Photo courtesy of Douglasville (Georgia) Parks and Recreation Department.



- ✓ Create open forums, youth advisory councils and informal drop-in sessions to reach youth who might not be connected to formal groups, ensuring a broad range of perspectives are heard and valued. Invite them to shape program design, support facility planning or develop marketing campaigns. These leadership opportunities help girls develop essential skills, build confidence and see themselves as part of a broader movement.
- ✓ Host tailored events for girls that feature positive women role models, athletes, leaders and community members. Use events to discuss important topics that girls are interested in – on and off the field.
- ✓ Provide stipends, community service hours or leadership credentials to girls who serve on advisory councils, support focus groups or speak at events.
- ✓ Gather feedback outside of traditional sports spaces, like art classes or after-school programs. Even small opportunities, like quick surveys or informal conversations can provide valuable insights. Use creative activities like games, art, group discussions or interactive activities to gather insights.
- ✓ Redefine sports. Park and recreation agencies offer a wide range of sports opportunities. Showcase the variety of sports experiences through marketing materials, language and testimonials.



Panelists share their experiences connecting girls to the power of sports at the She Belongs: Girls in Sports Summit. Photo courtesy of Douglasville (Georgia) Parks and Recreation Department.



- ✓ Offer sports sampling events or incorporate sports programming into other offerings (arts, theatre, educational enrichment) to expose more girls to sports and build interest.
- ✓ When collecting input from girls, ensure transparency and follow through on commitments so girls see that their contributions matter.
- ✓ Offer training to staff on youth-led facilitation to ensure adults are prepared to share space, not just gather feedback. Assign staff or youth coordinators to build relationships, lead engagement efforts and ensure that acting on youth input is built into your planning cycles.
- ✓ Involve older girls as junior coaches, referees, program assistants or peer leaders.
- ✓ Consider the needs of families. Offering age-appropriate activities for younger children – especially in the same space – can make it easier for older girls with caregiving responsibilities to participate.



Youth listen to panelists at the She Belongs: Girls in Sports Summit. Photo courtesy of Douglasville (Georgia) Parks and Recreation Department.

The City of Douglasville (Georgia) Parks and Recreation Department listened to what girls wanted – not just a place to play, but also to hear real stories, see representation and feel inspired. As a result, the department hosted a Girls in Sports Summit aimed at showing girls they have a place in the sports world on and off the field. The summit features female professionals from local professional teams and current collegiate athletes to talk about sports and life lessons such as time management, discipline and balancing academics with athletics.