



Australian Government  
Australian Sports Commission

# Roadmap:

An **all inclusive** approach to  
governance and leadership  
in Australian sport





## TOOL 5:

### How to lead with a systems change lens

Strong leadership is essential in navigating the complexities of systems change and steering towards transformational outcomes. Leaders in sports organisations must adopt multiple roles to drive change effectively, each role contributing uniquely to the process. These roles include:

#### **The Agitator**

**Role:** Bring the grievances of specific individuals or groups to the forefront of public awareness.

#### **Responsibilities:**

- Highlight problems effectively through appeals to reason, fairness, and emotion.
- Understand and respect all stakeholders' mental models and priorities, including supporters, opponents, and undecided individuals.
- Recognise that a message's impact can vary significantly depending on the audience, evoking different emotions and reactions.

#### **The Orchestrator**

**Role:** Coordinates action across groups, organisations, and sectors to scale the proposed solution.

#### **Responsibilities:**

- Design and lead the strategy for implementing change.

- Work closely with both supporters and initial opponents of the change.
- Adapt communication approaches to suit different audiences while maintaining a coherent overall message.
- Ensure the integrity of the movement is preserved.

#### **The Innovator**

**Role:** Creates actionable solutions to address identified grievances.

#### **Responsibilities:**

- Conceptualise and develop possible solutions.
- Communicate solutions in appealing ways to encourage support from individuals, groups, and organisations.
- Serve as bridges, leveraging personal power and experience across multiple sectors to foster collaboration and innovation.

Together, these roles form the backbone of effective systems change. The orchestrator is adept at aligning diverse stakeholders and coordinating collective action towards shared objectives. The innovator, pioneering novel solutions to dismantle entrenched dysfunction within the system. And the agitator, a voice for the marginalised, raising awareness of systemic injustices and catalysing public demand for change. In any pathway to systems change, all three are indispensable, converging to create a symphony of progress and possibility.

	<b>Agitator</b>	<b>Innovator</b>	<b>Orchestrator</b>
<b>Goal</b>	Articulate a critique and mobilise diverse parties around it	Develop an actionable solution and demonstrate its superiority to the status quo	Mobilise all parties around the solution and ensure its adoption
<b>Communicating</b>	Highlight a problem that needs to be solved	Connect the innovation to the problem and explain why it is a superior solution	Tailor the message to different constituents while maintaining overall coherence
<b>Organising</b>	Launch collective action against the status quo	Build a coalition of supporters behind the proposed solution	Broaden and sustain collective action toward change
<b>Evaluating</b>	Assess the extent to which agitation resonates with movement participants and establishes	Assess the extent to which the solution actually addresses the problem in a feasible way	Assess progress toward change adoption
<b>Traps</b>	Fragmented agitation and stalled solution	Blindness to negative consequences and impractical elegance	Mission drift and dilution

*Reference: Julie Battilana & Marissa Kimsey – Should you agitate, innovate or orchestrate, Stanford Social Innovation Review, sep 18, 2017*



## TOOL 5:

### Example Issue: Increasing Gender and Cultural Diversity in Leadership Positions

#### The Agitator

**Role:** Raises awareness about the lack of gender and cultural diversity in leadership positions and supports change.

#### Actions:

- **Highlight Intersectional Barriers:** Use data and personal testimonials to illustrate the compounded challenges individuals face at the intersection of gender and race in accessing leadership positions. Share stories from women of colour and other marginalised groups to emphasise the issue.
- **Engage Media and Public:** Launch a campaign that includes social media posts, op-eds, and interviews to raise awareness of the lack of diversity in leadership. Collaborate with influencers and organisations focusing on gender equity and racial justice to amplify the message.
- **Organise Events and Discussions:** Host public forums, panel discussions, or workshops that address the intersectional barriers to leadership. Create spaces for affected individuals to share their experiences and advocate for change.
- **Build Support Coalitions:** Form alliances with advocacy groups and organisations that support gender and racial equity. Leverage these partnerships to strengthen the campaign and push for systemic change within the sport organisation.

#### The Orchestrator

**Role:** Coordinates actions and strategies across multiple stakeholders to increase gender and cultural diversity in leadership roles.

#### Actions:

- **Develop a Comprehensive Strategy:** Design a strategy incorporating diverse voices across the organisation, including those representing various genders, cultural backgrounds, and other intersecting identities. Ensure the strategy includes specific goals for increasing representation at different leadership levels.
- **Align Stakeholders:** Bring key stakeholders, such as board members, executives, diversity advocates, and community leaders, to collaborate on implementing the diversity strategy. Facilitate regular meetings to ensure alignment and address any emerging issues.
- **Communicate Inclusively:** Create a communication plan that addresses different audiences within the organisation. Use multiple channels and formats to ensure the message about the importance of diversity and inclusion resonates with individuals from various backgrounds.
- **Monitor and Evaluate:** Set up systems to track progress towards diversity goals. Collect data on the representation of different identity groups in leadership roles and assess the effectiveness of implemented strategies. Make adjustments based on feedback and outcomes.

### The Innovator

**Role:** Develops and implements innovative solutions to increase gender and racial diversity in leadership positions.

#### Actions:

- **Create a Mentorship Program:** Design a mentorship and leadership development program specifically for individuals from underrepresented gender and racial groups. Ensure the program includes targeted support, networking opportunities, and skills training.
- **Develop Inclusive Recruitment Practices:** Innovate recruitment and promotion practices to ensure they are inclusive and equitable. This might include revising job descriptions, implementing blind recruitment processes, and creating pathways for diverse candidates to enter leadership roles.
- **Pilot New Initiatives:** Launch pilot projects or initiatives that test innovative approaches to increasing diversity, such as leadership incubators, sponsorship programs, or diversity-focused leadership training workshops.
- **Assess and Refine:** Evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives by gathering feedback from participants and analysing data on leadership diversity. Use this information to refine and expand successful programs and address any identified gaps or challenges.

### Integrating Roles for Effective Systems Change

Together, these roles form the backbone of effective systems change in sport organisations:

The Orchestrator aligns diverse stakeholders and coordinates collective action towards shared objectives.

The Innovator pioneer's novel solutions to dismantle entrenched dysfunction within the system.'

The Agitator gives voice to the marginalised, raises awareness of systemic injustices, and catalyses public demand for change.

All three roles are indispensable in any pathway to system change, and people can move from one role to the other as required. They converge to create a symphony of progress and possibility, ensuring that leadership and governance in sports organisations are inclusive, equitable, and effective.



## TOOL 5:

### Systems Change Leadership: Navigating Complexity with Strength and Vision

Along with the roles Leaders can play in systems change, there are also key tenets to successful systems change as outlined below:

#### 1. Proximity to the People and Problems:

This involves being physically, emotionally, and intellectually close to the communities and individuals affected by the issues you are trying to change. They prioritise building relationships and trust within these communities, recognising them as partners rather than mere beneficiaries.

#### 2. Leaders engage with individuals most affected by the issue as assets

Leaders recognise the inherent assets and strengths within communities and individuals impacted by the issue. They foster an environment where diverse talents, expertise, and skills are valued and utilised in developing solutions. This approach shifts the focus from fixing deficiencies to leveraging existing strengths, empowering stakeholders to participate actively in the change process.

#### 3. Collective Leadership:

Effective systems change requires collaboration and shared leadership among multiple stakeholders. Leaders cultivate a culture of collective leadership, where decision-making is distributed and diverse perspectives are valued. They foster networks and partnerships across sectors and disciplines, recognising that no single individual or organisation can drive systemic change alone.

#### 4. System Awareness:

Leaders deeply understand the system they seek to change, including its structures, relationships, and dynamics. They conduct thorough diagnoses to identify interconnected systemic conditions, recognising that problems are often multifaceted and interrelated. This awareness enables leaders to navigate complex systems, anticipate unintended consequences, and identify leverage points for intervention.

#### 5. Navigating Opposing Forces:

Leaders acknowledge and openly discuss opposing forces within the system, including stakeholders invested in maintaining the status quo. They develop strategies to navigate resistance and foster constructive dialogue, seeking common ground and aligning interests where possible. This requires resilience, negotiation skills, and a willingness to challenge entrenched interests to pursue systemic change.

#### 6. Addressing Transformative Levers:

Beyond addressing structural aspects of the system (such as policies and resource flows), leaders focus on deeper transformative levers. This includes addressing power dynamics, relationships, and narratives that shape the system, recognising that lasting change requires shifts in underlying paradigms and beliefs. Leaders engage in storytelling and narrative-shaping to challenge existing narratives and inspire collective action towards a shared vision of change. By embodying these key elements and traits, leaders can effectively engage with systems change, fostering inclusive, sustainable, and transformative outcomes.







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