



WA FOOTBALL COMMISSION

UMPIRING WA UMPIRING DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

2023

Table of Contents

1. DEFINITIONS	3
2. INTRODUCTION	4
2.1 Overview.....	4
2.2 Principles.....	4
2.3 Umpiring in Western Australia	5
3. NATIONAL UMPIRING DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY (FTEM)	7
3.1 Overview.....	7
3.2 FTEM Framework	7
3.2 Elite Umpiring Profile.....	8
4. UMPIRING WA DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY	10
4.1 Foundation (Community) Stage	10
4.2 Talent (Pre-Elite) Stage	11
4.3 Talent Identification Process	12
5. ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS.....	13
5.1 Regional Community	13
5.2 Interstate.....	13
5.3 Athletics.....	13
6. CONCLUSION.....	14
APPENDIX 1 – NATIONAL UMPIRING DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY	15
APPENDIX 2 – ELITE UMPIRING PROFILE CAPABILITY MATRIX	16
APPENDIX 3 – WAFL UMPIRING PROGRAM.....	17
APPENDIX 4 – TALENT IDENTIFICATION PROCESS FLOWCHART	21

1. DEFINITIONS

AFL	Australian Football League
FTEM	Foundation, Talent, Elite, Mastery (Framework)
PFL	Perth Football League
PNFL	Peel Netball and Football League
WAFC	West Australian Football Commission
WACFL	West Australian Country Football League
WAFL/W	West Australian Football League

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Overview

Umpiring WA's Umpiring Development Pathway is part of the National Umpiring Development Pathway, which has been created to provide Umpires, Umpire Coaches, and administrators a clearly defined pathway from non-elite participation, through to pre-elite talent development and on to elite high performance.

It is a true sport-for-all framework that facilitates lifelong engagement in Australian Football through umpiring.

This document is designed to explain the pathway with clarity, including clear criteria and expectations at all levels of the pathway.

2.2 Principles

There are several core principles that underpin the operation of the Umpiring WA Development Pathway.

- *Aligned* – our Development Pathway is aligned to the national framework to ensure that Western Australian Umpires can aspire to the elite level.
- *People first* – the interests of the individual are at the forefront of every decision we make. The development of great people is the key outcome for umpiring in Western Australia; the development of great Umpires is a bonus.
- *Umpire-centric* – the development needs of the Umpire are the key priority. The Development Pathway provides structure and challenge, aligning to the individual Umpire's stage of development with a long-term focus.
- *Flexible* – the Development Pathway has clearly defined strategies and processes that allow for a tailored approach to Umpire development. The pathway is also fluid so it can align with varying levels of engagement of the Umpires involved.
- *Innovative* – we are comfortable taking risks and challenging the status quo. The modern-day challenges facing umpiring require the ability to look at things differently.
- *Connected* – everyone has something to offer in the pathway. A pathway with complete alignment in strategy and process, where there is clarity of purpose, will underpin the future growth of umpiring at all levels of the game in Western Australia.

2.3 Umpiring in Western Australia

This section outlines the key umpiring stakeholders in Western Australia.

Western Australian Football League

The Western Australian Football League (WAFL/W) is the premier football competition in Western Australia catering for male and female players. In the male competition there are three grades - League, Reserves and Colts. In the female competition there are two grades – League and Rogers Cup. There are also underage development competitions for players from 14 years of age.

The WAFL appoints Field, Boundary and Goal Umpires to matches in the competition. Each Discipline is divided into three Squads (High Performance Team, Talent Academy and Development Squad). These Squads cater to the experience and development stage of the Umpires. The Umpires undertake a formal development program with weekly training sessions and significant expectations around their own personal development, such as off-season strength and conditioning training.

Senior Community Football

The most significant Senior Community Football competition in the metropolitan area is the Perth Football League (PFL). The Perth Football League is the largest independent community football league in Australia, administering competitions and programs, and providing support and resources for the benefit of 70 member clubs and more than 12,500 participants.

The Perth Football League is officiated by Panel, Pool, and Club Umpires. Panel Umpires are appointed to matches in A and B Grades. These Umpires undertake a formal development program with twice-weekly training sessions. The PFL are also introducing an Umpire Progression Squad to support the development of new Umpires into the Panel.

Pool and Club Umpires are nominated by a club and appointed to matches in specific grades of the competition. These Umpires can access ongoing individual development opportunities, including umpire accreditation.

Junior Community Football

There are nine Junior Community Umpiring Clubs in the metropolitan area. These are linked together into three metropolitan Conferences (North, Central and South).

The Junior Community Umpiring Clubs recruit and develop Umpires that are appointed to junior community football competitions for male and female players in age groups ranging from Year 3 to Year 12.

The Umpires at this level are extremely varied in age and experience with inexperienced, teenage Umpires joining experienced, mature-age Umpires in officiating games. These Umpires undertake a formal development program with weekly training sessions.

Regional Community Football

There are a range of Regional Community Umpiring Clubs servicing junior and senior regional competitions in Western Australia. These Clubs are varied in their formality and composition. Some larger competitions maintain formal Umpiring Clubs with Umpires appointed to relevant grades and age groups. These Umpires undertake a formal development program with ongoing training. Other competitions utilise Club Umpires with a less formal approach taken to Umpire development.

3. NATIONAL UMPIRING DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY (FTEM)

3.1 Overview

The National Umpiring Development Pathway was established by the AFL in 2023 and is based on an athlete development framework developed by the Australian Institute of Sport. The FTEM (Foundation, Talent, Elite & Mastery) framework is internationally recognised and utilised by many national sporting organisations in Australia and overseas.

The National Umpiring Development Pathway aims to simplify a complex pathway, provide a common pathway and language, and facilitate open and regular communication between Umpires, Umpire coaches, and administrators.

A key feature of the framework is its flexibility, with Umpires able to move within the pathway according to their motivations and aims. Umpires therefore never drop out of the pathway but rather move to a competition that better suits their current requirements.

See [Appendix 1](#) for a diagram of the National Umpiring Development Pathway.

3.2 FTEM Framework

The National Umpiring Development Pathway is divided into three stages and 10 phases with further details of each stage provided below.

		Phase	Description
FOUNDATION	COMMUNITY UMPIRING	F1	Introduction to Umpiring
		F2	Active Umpiring
		F3	Commitment to Umpiring
TALENT (PRE-ELITE)	STATE LEAGUES & TALENT PROGRAMS	T1	Identification of Talent
		T2	Verification of Talent
		T3	Practicing and Achieving
		T4	Breakthrough and Reward
ELITE & MASTERY	AFL HIGH-PERFORMANCE	E1	Elite Representation
		E2	Elite Success
		M1	Sustained Elite Success

		Phase	Description
FOUNDATION	COMMUNITY UMPIRING	F1	Introduction to Umpiring <i>Umpires are exposed to umpiring and football via social environments e.g., playing at school, Auskick, etc.</i>
		F2	Active Umpiring <i>First and second year Umpires umpiring in community football</i>

			<i>where they learn the role of the Umpire and basic skills for their role.</i>
		F3	Commitment to Umpiring <i>Umpires who are committed to umpiring in Community Leagues – junior and senior football.</i>

		Phase	Description
TALENT (PRE-ELITE)	STATE LEAGUES & TALENT PROGRAMS	T1	Identification of Talent <i>Umpires are demonstrating early potential.</i>
		T2	Verification of Talent <i>Umpires are developing and verifying their potential.</i>
		T3	Practicing and Achieving <i>Umpires are committed to developing and refining their craft.</i>
		T4	Breakthrough and Reward <i>Umpires are preparing for elite transition.</i>

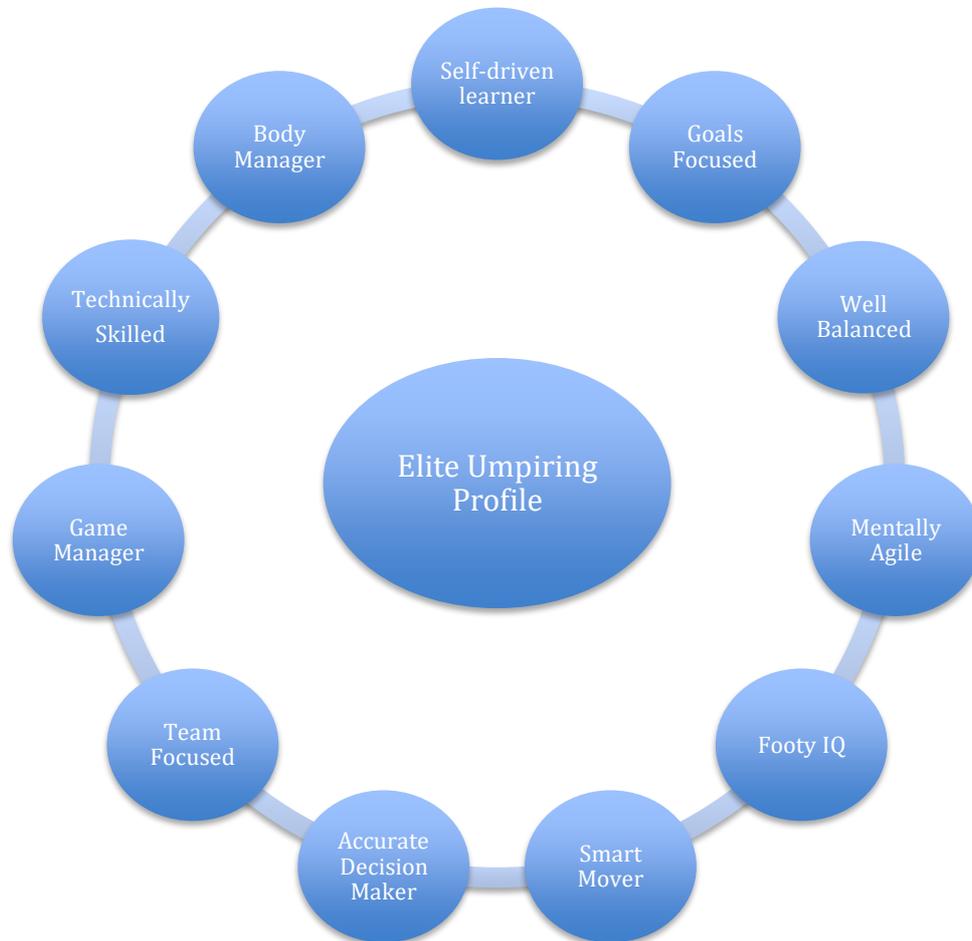
		Phase	Description
ELITE & MASTERY	AFL HIGH-PERFORMANCE	E1	Elite Representation <i>Umpires achieve elite umpiring status through selection for the AFL list.</i>
		E2	Elite Success <i>Umpires achieve success through selection to umpire in AFL finals matches.</i>
		M1	Sustained Elite Success <i>Umpires achieve sustained success through multiple AFL finals selections.</i>

3.2 Elite Umpiring Profile

The AFL National Umpiring Development Pathway includes an “Elite Umpiring Profile” – a list of 11 attributes that underpin sustained success for an Umpire. The

development and progression of these attributes have been defined at each phase of the Pre-Elite and Elite pathways.

See [Appendix 2](#) for the Elite Umpiring Profile Capability Matrix which outlines these attributes in greater detail.



4. UMPIRING WA DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

4.1 Foundation (Community) Stage

The Foundation (Community) stage of the National Umpiring Development Pathway consists of Umpires that are actively umpiring with Community Umpiring Clubs (junior and senior).

The primary purpose of Community Umpiring Clubs is to engage Umpires in the game and promote long-term commitment to umpiring.

Community Umpiring Clubs' key priorities are:

- **Grow:** recruiting Umpires to engage more Umpires in the game and help meet the servicing needs of the competitions.
- **Train:** providing learning opportunities for all Umpires.
- **Transition:** providing opportunities for Umpires to be the best they can be so they can progress to higher levels in Community Umpiring and beyond.
- **Retain:** providing inclusive and enjoyable environments to engage Umpires in the long-term.

The majority of Community Umpires are motivated to umpire for reasons such as a love of Australian Football, fitness, and friendship. Some Community Umpires aspire to umpire at a higher level, including in the elite AFL competitions.

Community Umpires with aspirations for the Pre-Elite Pathway (WAFL & Talent Competitions) are encouraged to nominate for formal talent identification as per the process outlined in [section 4.3](#) below.

	FOUNDATION (COMMUNITY)		
	COMMUNITY UMPIRING CLUBS		
	Active Umpiring (First- and Second- Year Umpires)	Commitment to Umpiring (Umpires in Community Leagues)	
		Participation	Aspiration
An Umpire is:	Learning the role of the Umpire and the basic skills for their role	Committed to umpiring in Community Leagues	Committed to umpiring in Community Leagues with aspirations for the Pre-Elite pathway
Regular Training Environment:	School program / club-based umpiring in a training	Attendance at umpiring training with appointment to	Attendance at umpiring training with ad-hoc

	environment / non-competitive matches	regular competitive matches	appointments to talent development matches
Capabilities Required:	N/A	N/A	Potential demonstration of early talent indicators at a basic level
Capabilities Assessed:	N/A	N/A	Formal talent identification testing

4.2 Talent (Pre-Elite) Stage

The Talent (Pre-Elite) stage of the National Umpiring Development Pathway consist of Umpires that are appointed to matches in the WAFL and Talent Competitions.

The primary purpose of the State League (WAFL) program is to identify Umpires who demonstrate potential (according to the Elite Umpiring Profile) and support their commitment to developing and refining their craft.

See [Appendix 3](#) for further information about the State League (WAFL) program.

	TALENT (PRE-ELITE)		
	WAFL & TALENT COMPETITIONS		
	Development Squad	Talent Academy	High Performance Team
An Umpire is:	Demonstrating early potential	Developing and verifying potential	Committed to developing and refining their craft
Regular Training Environment:	Specific group learning and competition exposure	Specific group learning and competition exposure	Individually focussed learning and increased competition exposure
Capabilities Required:	Demonstration of early talent indicators at a basic level or higher	Consistent demonstration at an intermediate level or higher of the elite umpiring profile	Consistent demonstration at an Advanced level or higher of the elite umpiring profile
Capabilities	Training	Training	Training

Assessed:	environment and match observations	environment and match observations	environment and match observations
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4.3 Talent Identification Process

Aspirational Community Umpires are encouraged to progress to the Talent (Pre-Elite) stage through a formal identification process that is designed to support the long-term development of the Umpire.

Community Umpires undertake this identification process by engaging in personal development opportunities through their Community Umpiring Club and by umpiring in community and talent development matches throughout the season.

Community Umpires are invited to participate in this process via nomination from their Community Umpiring Club.

See [Appendix 4](#) for a flowchart that summarises the above process.

5. ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

5.1 Regional Community

The National Umpiring Development Pathway is inclusive of all umpiring sectors to maximise the opportunities for Umpires to achieve their full potential.

Umpires in Regional Community competitions are impacted by a range of demographic challenges, including the vast distances between the country leagues.

The primary talent identification opportunity for Regional Umpires is participation in the NutrienAg Country Championships or other WACFL representative fixtures.

Although it is highly recommended that Regional Umpires attend the NutrienAg Championships, it is understood that this may not be feasible in all circumstances. If an Umpire is unable to attend, the Umpire (through their Community Umpiring Club) should arrange alternative consideration.

5.2 Interstate

Interstate Umpires that move to Western Australia and were engaged in the Talent (Pre-Elite) stage of the National Umpiring Development Pathway are supported to continue to umpire at the appropriate level.

This will be assessed through obtaining information about the Umpire including:

- the level of competition that the Umpire has most recently umpired;
- engagement in talent programs/academies;
- aspirations in umpiring; and
- any other relevant information.

5.3 Athletics

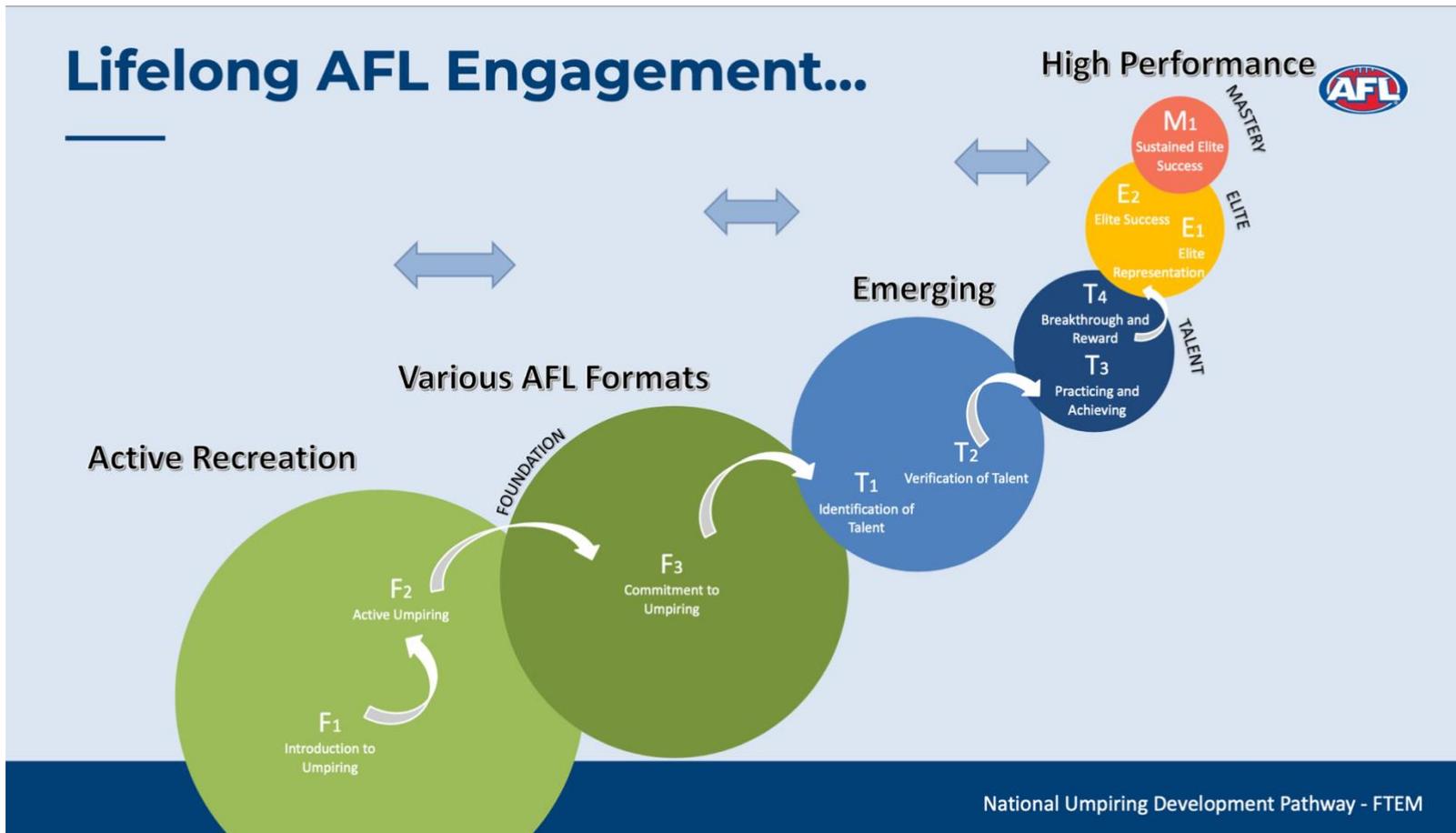
Umpiring WA maintains an informal partnership with Athletics WA with a focus on promoting boundary umpiring opportunities. Athletes with a competitive running background are recognised as meeting the physical attributes of a Boundary Umpire. Umpiring WA collaborates with athletes to balance both their athletics and Boundary umpiring commitments.

6. CONCLUSION

The National Umpiring Development Pathway is an inclusive system that offers opportunities for a diverse range of Umpires.

Umpiring WA welcomes and supports the opportunity for every Umpire across the state to realise their ambitions in the pathway.

APPENDIX 1 – NATIONAL UMPIRING DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY



APPENDIX 2 – ELITE UMPIRING PROFILE CAPABILITY MATRIX

National Umpiring Development Pathway (FTEM) Elite Umpiring Profile Capability Matrix				
	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
Self-Driven Learner	Is learning how to identify strengths and development areas.	Recognises some strengths and development areas independently but generally requires the feedback and intervention of their coach(es) to accurately identify all of these and to ensure they remain focused on their development plan.	Recognises their strengths and development areas with some assistance from their coach(es) and takes personal responsibility for their development plan and proactively identifies and seeks resources including coaches and subject matter experts to improve performance.	Recognises their strengths and development areas autonomously through honest self-reflection, takes personal responsibility for their development plan and proactively identifies and seeks resources including coaches and subject matter experts to improve performance.
Goals Focused	Is learning how to set goals and actions to improve performance.	Understands how to set goals and actions to improve performance and is developing the ability to assess what these should be as well as the ability to consistently complete the actions to achieve the goals.	Assesses development goals and actions with some assistance from their coach(es) and is motivated to achieve these by completing all actions committed to.	Regularly assesses development goals and actions autonomously and is highly motivated to achieve these by completing all actions committed to in a timely manner.
Mentally Agile	Is learning mental skills and strategies to remain resilient when faced with difficult challenges.	Understands and utilises some mental skills strategies and is developing their ability to be consistently resilient when faced with difficult challenges.	Utilises multiple mental skills strategies and consistently responds with resilience when faced with difficult challenges.	Consistently utilises performance psychology strategies and support services to ensure a resilient response when faced with difficult challenges and high-pressure stressful environments.
Well Balanced	Is learning how to manage time, establish routines and maintain a healthy life balance.	Understands the importance of and is developing the ability to manage their time and maintain a healthy balance of umpiring, work/study and family/friends.	Manages their time successfully and is fully engaged in multiple commitments including umpiring, work/study and family/friends maintaining a healthy balance between them.	Manages their time successfully remaining fully engaged in multiple commitments including umpiring/travel, work/study and family/friends and is maintaining a healthy balance between them despite increasing expectations in each.
Team Focused	Is learning the role they play within the team and how their behaviours may impact the group culture.	Understands how their behaviours may impact the group culture, is developing their role predictability to enhance team performance, and encourages their peers to be the best they can be.	Plays a predictable role within the team and contributes to a positive culture by committing to the group values and having genuine care for others.	Elevates team performance and culture by playing a predictable role within the team, providing constructive feedback and having genuine care for peers and coach(es) and role modelling the values of the group.
Footy IQ	Is learning how to recognise patterns of play to assist in with anticipation.	Developing the ability to read the play and anticipate what is most likely to happen next based on some experience and exposure to competitions and teams.	Uses preparation and their experience for understanding game context, player behaviour and team tendencies to successfully read the play and anticipate what is most likely to happen next.	Elevates team performance by using preparation and their extensive experience in multiple competitions for understanding game context, player behaviour and team tendencies to successfully read fast-paced play and anticipate what is most likely to happen next.
Smart Mover	Is learning movement and positioning skills to increase the likelihood of accurate decision making.	Developing their understanding and consistency of when and where to move to achieve optimal positioning to ensure accurate decision making	Understands when and where to move and generally achieves optimal positioning to ensure accurate decision making without relying on athleticism.	Understands when and where to move and consistently achieves optimal positioning in high-pressure fast paced games to ensure accurate decision making without relying on athleticism.
Accurate Decision Maker	Has a basic understanding of the laws of the game and is learning decision-making process.	Developing their decision-making accuracy (including non-decisions) and their ability to explain decision-making process concisely and accurately to others.	Delivers accurate decision making (including non-decisions) in most games and can explain the decision-making process concisely and accurately to others.	Elevates team performance by delivering highly accurate decision making (including non-decisions) in high pressure fast paced games and can explain decision-making process concisely and accurately to others.
Technically Skilled	Has a basic level of discipline-specific skills and is learning how to improve them in training and matches.	Developing their discipline-specific skills and their consistency in executing them in games.	Executes discipline-specific skills at a high level consistently.	Elevates team performance by executing discipline-specific skills consistently in high-pressure fast paced games to an elite level.
Game Manager	Is learning how to manage games and the processes that their role is responsible for.	Developing their game management skills and their consistency in executing the processes their role is responsible for.	Manages games and the processes their role is responsible for with composure, common sense and appropriate interactions.	Elevates team performance by managing high-pressure fast paced games and the processes their role is responsible for with composure, common sense and appropriate interactions.
Body Manager	Is learning how to manage their body and the required behaviours that help prevent injury and/or manage injury appropriately.	Understands the basics of managing their body for performance and is developing the consistent behaviours that help prevent injury and/or manage injury appropriately.	Prioritises sleep, hydration and nutrition to aid performance and demonstrates consistent behaviours that help prevent injury and/or manage injury appropriately.	Prioritises sleep, hydration and nutrition to aid performance despite multiple commitments and increasing expectations and demonstrates elite behaviours that help prevent injury and/or manage injury appropriately.

APPENDIX 3 – WAFL UMPIRING PROGRAM

The WAFL Umpiring Program consist of Umpires that are appointed to matches in the WAFL and Talent Competitions. The following is an overview of the program.

Development Squad

The WAFL Development Squads are for Umpires that are identified as demonstrating early potential to transition from the Foundation (Community) to Talent (Pre-Elite) stage of the National Umpiring Development Pathway.

Selection Criteria

To be considered for selection to the WAFL Development Squads, Umpires should meet the following criteria:

- Be 15 years of age or older;
- Hold the appropriate level of Umpire accreditation, or working towards it; and
- Have been assessed as displaying or progressing to the Basic attributes of the Elite Umpiring Profile (Appendix 2).

Program Overview

Training takes place from January to October with the Squad training twice a week during the pre-season and then once a week during the season.

Training includes a combination of strength and conditioning activities, education sessions and skill drills. There is also a strong focus on personal development through activities that target a range of skills relevant to umpiring.

As Development Squad Umpires are in a transitional phase in the National Umpiring Development Pathway, they are expected to maintain strong connections with a Community Umpiring Club. Umpires are encouraged to train once a week with their Community Umpiring Club and continue to umpire in Community Competitions.

Appointed Competitions

Umpires may be appointed to a range of competitions as per competition servicing requirements and the development needs of the Umpire.

These competitions may include:

- WAFLW
- WAFL Colts
- WAFL Futures
- Public Schools Association
- Perth Football League
- Other Community Competitions

Talent Academy

The WAFL Talent Academies are for Umpires that are developing and verifying their potential in the Talent (Pre-Elite) stage of the National Umpiring Development Pathway.

Selection Criteria

To be considered for selection to the WAFL Talent Academies, Umpires should meet the following criteria:

- Hold the appropriate level of Umpire accreditation, or working towards it;
- Be a Development Squad Umpire or be umpiring in senior age competitions; and
- Have been assessed as displaying or progressing to the Intermediate attributes of the Elite Umpiring Profile (Appendix 2).

Program Overview

Training takes place from January to October with the Academy training twice a week during the pre-season and season.

Training includes a combination of strength and conditioning activities, education sessions and skill drills. There is also a strong focus on personal development through activities that target a range of skills relevant to umpiring.

Umpires are also strongly encouraged to maintain involvement in their Junior or Senior Community Umpiring Club, which may include undertaking an administrative or coaching role.

Appointed Competitions

Umpires may be appointed to a range of competitions as per competition servicing requirements and the development needs of the Umpire.

These competitions may include:

- WAFL
- WAFLW
- Perth Football League

High Performance Team

The High Performance Teams are for Umpires that are committed to developing and refining their craft in the Talent (Pre-Elite) stage of the National Umpiring Development Pathway.

Selection Criteria

To be considered for selection to the WAFL High Performance Teams, Umpires should meet the following criteria:

- Previously been a member of a WAFL Talent Academy;
- Hold the appropriate level of Umpire accreditation, or working towards it; and
- Have been assessed as displaying or progressing to the Advanced attributes of the Elite Umpiring Profile (Appendix 2).

Program Overview

Training takes place from January to October with the High Performance Team training twice weekly during the pre-season and season.

Training includes a combination of strength and conditioning activities, education sessions and skill drills. There is also a strong focus on personal development through professional development activities that target a range of skills relevant to umpiring.

Umpires are also strongly encouraged to maintain involvement in their Junior or Senior Community Umpiring Club, which may include undertaking an administrative or coaching role.

Appointed Competitions

Umpires may be appointed to a range of competitions as per competition servicing requirements and the development needs of the Umpire.

These competitions may include:

- AFLW
- WAFL
- WAFLW
- Perth Football League

APPENDIX 4 – TALENT IDENTIFICATION PROCESS FLOWCHART

