



## **Invitation to Tender: Research Project Athlete and Coach Experience of Paralympic Gateways & Pathways in Ireland**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Paralympics Ireland are seeking a consultant/consultancy or academic research group to undertake a contemporary qualitative research project. We want to better understand the lived experiences of athletes and coaches that are currently involved in the Para pathway in Ireland so that we can identify what makes a positive development experience.

Our ambition is to ensure that those who are engaged in Para sport have the best possible developmental experience; the opportunity to fulfil their potential and importantly continue to stay engaged in Para sport at the appropriate level.

### **2.0 Background**

Paralympics Ireland is the National Paralympic Committee (NPC) for Ireland, recognised by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), and is responsible for preparing and managing the Irish team at the Paralympic Games which are held every four years in parallel with the Olympic Games.

Our mission is to support Irish Para athletes to reach finals and deliver podium places at the Paralympic Games. We provide support and advice to individual sports' National Governing Bodies (NGBs) in their delivery of a high-performance pathway for disabled athletes ensuring that the next generation of Irish Paralympians will be amongst the best prepared and most successful Para athletes competing in future Paralympic Games.

Paralympic sport offers sporting opportunities for athletes with Physical, Vision and Intellectual impairments and these can be divided into 10 eligible impairments, for more information on Paralympic Sport and eligible impairments please visit our website [Paralympics Ireland](http://Paralympics Ireland).

### **3.0 Purpose**

Paralympics Ireland wants to better understand the lived experiences of athletes and coaches entering or currently within the Para sport pathway in Ireland. We have recently been awarded funding to conduct this research from Rethink Ireland on behalf of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Rethink Ireland is a social innovation fund that supports the most innovative non-profit organisations working in communities across the country.

The purpose of the research is to better understand what a positive experience means for Para athletes and coaches in Ireland. We are seeking to create and support consistently better experiences that are more attuned to the holistic needs of the athletes and coaches in Para sport pathways. Ultimately, we want to:

- Deliver actionable insights which can inform policy and practice for the current and next generation of Para sport athletes and coaches.
- Develop better recruitment and retention practices.
- Determine what makes a positive sporting environment.
- Define what the key elements of the sporting environments that promote athlete and coach wellbeing.

There has been little in the way of cross-sport qualitative research focussing specifically on the experience of Para athletes in Ireland, and so we will endeavour to collaborate with Sport Ireland, National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and disability sport organisations on the dissemination of the insights emerging from this research work.

#### **4.0 Context**

Paralympics Ireland has recently broadened their approach by supporting NGB's to develop their Paralympic pathways and has recruited a Paralympic Pathway Lead to assist and support NGB's on this journey. This work stream has led to the creation of the PTSB NextGen athlete recruitment campaign ([PTSB NextGen Overview](#)). This is a regional based programme that creates opportunities for people to engage directly with specific Para sports within their region. This campaign has been focused on creating a positive athlete experience and providing a follow-up opportunity to engage with Para sport at the appropriate level.

Through this campaign we have been able to gather some valuable insight and data into the athletes' experiences and engagement opportunities. However, outside of the single day recruitment events, there is little insight or research on Para athlete experience to understand the barriers, challenges, and opportunities within Para sport in Ireland.

#### **5.0 Aims of the research**

The main aims of the research are:

- To better understand and explore the lived experience of athletes and coaches in Para sport in Ireland.
- To better understand and explore what makes a positive development experience for Para athletes and coaches in Para sport in Ireland.
- To identify the barriers, challenges, and opportunities that athletes and their coaches are likely to encounter on a Para sport pathway.
- To understand the impact of Para sport on the wellbeing of Para athletes and coaches.
- To inform actionable insight that supports the development of future strategies and practice.
- To learn how the various stakeholders can collaborate more effectively to deliver positive development experience.

#### **6.0 Deliverables**

We will take the steer of the provider on research methodology and optimum population engagement however to help with scoping we consider the following as key:

- Minimum of 20 interviews with athletes with a range of impairments across a variety of Para sports in Ireland.
- Minimum of 10 interviews with coaches of Para athletes.
- A minimum of four regional focus groups across the four provinces in Ireland to understand differences and similarities within the provinces/counties.
- Survey to reach as many Para athletes and coaches as possible to understand experiences in Para sport.
- Collect demographic data: Age, gender, ethnicities, type and nature of the impairment, regions, and other demographics.
- A project and relationship management plan (service level, KPIs etc to be scoped at early meetings).
- A robust and repeatable method for collating, analysing, and monitoring insight.
- An interim and final report outlining the research process, the findings, and subsequent conclusions.
- Recommendations including areas for further research and dissemination tactics.

#### **7.0 Competency and Expertise Requirements**

The successful tenderer will:

- Have a proven track record of mixed methods research including surveys, focus groups and interviews.
- Have experience working with national and regional organisations.
- Experience in synthesising a large range of information and conducting thematic analysis.
- Experience generating easy to understand and accessible information sheets, presentations, and scientific publications.

Given the nature of the work and the timeframes of the project we are ideally looking for applicants who have specialist knowledge in some or all the following: disability, culture, leadership and development, organisational and/or performance psychology, talent/people development (esp. young people), inclusive practice.

## 8.0 Timeframe

The successful tender will be appointed on the week commencing 29<sup>th</sup> of April 2024 and it is envisaged that they will commence immediately. Tenderers are asked to note their availability with regard to a start date and the anticipated length to complete the contract.

We will require provisional data and insight by September 2024 for progress reporting.

This is our best estimate and there is scope to refine based on initial meetings.

May 2024	Initiation meeting and scoping
May – August 2024	Engagement sessions; Insight and data gathering
August – September 2024	Analysis/conclusions/recommendations
September – November 2024	Dissemination activity

## 9.0 Budget

Please clearly outline all fees inclusive of VAT. A detailed breakdown of costs associated with all elements of the project should be submitted. A current tax clearance certificate will be required. This contract will be awarded based on a fixed price contract, and as such, all costs must be quoted (and clearly indicated) as a fixed price in Euro. The successful tenderer is expected to work within the agreed budget. The budget for this project is approximately €35,000 (inclusive of VAT).

## 10.0 Expression of interest

The Expression of Interest should include the following information:

1. Name of applicant / organisation name, address and contact details.
2. A statement outlining the understanding of the brief (max 1000 words).
3. Personnel involved – details of all personnel who will be involved, including a CV which outlines their qualifications/experience.
4. Description of proposed project approach, methodology, actions, and timeframe (max. 1500 words).
5. Examples of two relevant previous projects along with a separate referee for each, including contact details, for both projects.
6. Detailed budget for the project (Figures must be inclusive of VAT).
7. Notification of any potential conflicts of interest.

## 11.0 Tender Evaluation Process

Potential consultants will be assessed both on their tender proposal and if required, a follow-up interview. They will be assessed against the following major attributes:

1. Interpretation of the brief (12.5%).
2. Proven capability and experience in research, consultation, and relevant field of work (25%).
3. Content and Quality of Proposed Plan and Methodology (25%).
4. Capacity to complete the work within the stated timeframe (25%).
5. Cost (12.5%).

### 11.1 Interpretation of the brief (12.5%).

- Good understanding of the brief and issues which this research is seeking to address.

### 11.2 Proven capability and experience in research, consultation, and relevant field of work (25%).

- An understanding of learning and development environments.
- An understanding of inclusive practice and the merits of diversity.
- Recent track record/experience relevant to the requirements of this research.
- Where necessary suitable academic or expert partners have been engaged/consulted to complement existing experience and expertise.

### 11.3 Content and Quality of Proposed Plan and Methodology (25%).

- The proposed research methods for the work, with explanation of why they are deemed the most appropriate to fulfil the research objectives.

- Any identified challenges with the work, including engaging the target audience and how you intend to manage the challenges.
- Proposed methods to maximise the numbers engaged in the research.

11.4 Capacity to complete the work within the stated timeframe (25%).

- Please describe your proposed approach to the management of the programme and the account.
- Please identify the key personnel that will be conducting each phase of the research project.

11.5 Cost (12.5%).

- This must include all costs and expenses for the work.

## **12.0 Shortlisting and Clarification Meetings**

Prior to selection, a shortlist of applicants may be invited to present or provide further information on their bid. An invitation to an interview will not indicate a contract has been awarded.

## **13.0 Insurance**

The successful tenderer must produce evidence of professional indemnity as part of the Tender submission, and this cover must be in place for the contract for work.

## **14.0 Conflicts of Interest/Registerable Interest**

Any conflict of interest involving a tenderer must be fully disclosed to Paralympics Ireland. Any registerable interest involving the tenderer and the Paralympics Ireland or employees, their relatives must be fully disclosed in the tender submission.

In the event of this information only coming to their notice after the submission of a tender and prior to the award of the tender, the conflict should be communicated to Paralympics Ireland immediately upon such information becoming known to the tenderer. Failure to disclose a conflict of interest may disqualify a tenderer or invalidate an award of contract, depending on when the conflict of interest comes to light.

## **15.0 Ownership of Material Resulting from this Work**

Paralympics Ireland will retain ownership of research, materials and/or documentation resulting from the development of this research project. All research, materials and/or documentation must be returned to Paralympics Ireland on request or in the event that the contract is terminated. No part of the research, materials and/or documentation may be used without the prior consent of Paralympics Ireland.

## **16.0 Contact**

Please return tender to the e-mail below, with all queries directed to same:

Closing Date: 19<sup>th</sup> of April at 5pm.

Paralympics Ireland: [brian@paralympics.ie](mailto:brian@paralympics.ie)

Phone: 087 409 4448

## **17.0 Glossary of Terms**

**Para athlete** – A general term for pro and amateur athletes with disabilities who play sport but have not competed at a Paralympic Games. An athlete is only a Paralympian once he/she has taken part in a Paralympic Games.

**Para sport** - Para sport will be defined to mean any sport in which people with a disability participate and which has classification rules compliant with the IPC Athlete Classification Code. The term 'Para' can only be used for sports that are recognised by the IPC.

**Paralympic sport** - A general reference to any sport on the Paralympic Games programme. This is only used when referring to the sport's involvement in the Paralympic Games.

**Lived experience** - is the knowledge and understanding you get when you have personally lived through something.

**Positive experience** – an experience meeting the individual needs of the participant.

**Para sport pathways** - the route relating to the development and progression of Para athletes in their sporting career.