



Canadian Association For the
Advancement of Women
and Sport and Physical Activity

Trail Considerations for Engaging Girls and Women

Design - Think Safety

- Safety is a concern for girls and women when it comes to using trails. To attract women and girls, ensure trails are well lit and if possible are equipped with emergency telephones.
- Build trails with a variety of exit points. Using old railways lines might be practical, but if there are long stretches that do not connect to roadways or sidewalks this could be present safety concerns.
- Design trails to avoid blind corners and weaving sections through trees. A relatively straight trail that allows the walker, cyclist or in-line skater to clearly see what is directly in front of them is safest.
- Maintain trails to increase visibility. Cut long grass, trim hedges/trees, and thin-out wooded sections.
- Locate bicycle racks in well-lit, accessible areas. While bicycle racks in the basement of buildings may seem practical for protecting bicycles, many women feel uncomfortable being alone in these areas.
- Design trails to be accessible for everyone. A wide, well-lit path with access to a number of services (e.g. telephone, washrooms, etc.) is beneficial for people with disabilities, children, women and men.
- The presence of official people also increases safety. Plan to engage local police, volunteer interpreters, volunteer first aid or even volunteer "friends of the trail".
- Maps along the way let people know where they are, where exist points are located and where important services can be found.

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Promotion Considerations

- When promoting and marketing trails, facilities, events or infrastructure, highlight some of the design considerations mentioned above such as emergency telephones, lighting, exit points, public washrooms, available services (e.g. washrooms), parking lots, etc. that address safety or other concerns for women and girls. Providing a map of your trails with icons for lighting or marked blind corners are things that would be very helpful for women.
- Provide trail descriptions including difficulty levels, terrain (flat, hilly, very steep), attractions and services, etc. Women like to know what they are getting into before starting and will make decisions to participate or not based on the information provided.
- When promoting trail use to females, encourage group activities. Social aspects appeal to women and they will be safer traveling in pairs or groups. If women choose to use trails on their own, encourage them to let someone know where they are going, when they are leaving, and when they expect to return.
- Some marketing may exclude females. To sell programs to females, use female-friendly language, images, role models, etc. to promote your sport and physical activity opportunities. Advertise in different sections of your organization's promotional material as many girls and women will not be looking in the sport or recreation section. You might also want to develop separate brochures for female programs. Advertisers in grocery stores, at malls, in schools, etc. – where girls and young women are.
- **Female Friendly Language** - When producing or approving print materials, interacting with colleagues and staff, or speaking to community members and participants, consider the following:
 - Parallel words such as: women and men, girls and boys.
 - Neutral words such as: they, instructor, coach, leader, partner, everyone.
 - Modifiers (unbiased adjectives and adverbs) such as: talented player, thoughtful coach; not- handsome, sexy, etc.
 - Balance- use both men and women in examples and include both sexes in non-traditional roles.
- **Visual materials**: When producing or approving visual materials for your organization, be aware of:
 - **Equality** - portray both sexes equally as participants and leaders;
 - **Frequency** - show both sexes with equal frequency and in ways that depict them as equals;
 - **Sexuality** - portray both sexes with dignity and modesty in all matters, especially with regard to clothing, body position, and camera angles;
 - **Other variables** - portray different types of women and men- visible minorities, athletes with physical disabilities, aboriginal, different age groups, and different body types.

RESOURCES

Contact CAAWS for active female images and clipart for your organization's promotional material.

Email: caaws@caaws.ca



Policy Considerations

- Gender equity involves addressing organizational practices and policies that may hinder the participation of girls and women. To get started answer the following questions: Is access to prime time slots and prime trails equal for males and females? Is there an equal resource budget for males and females? What is the rate of participation by females and males in co-ed programs and for female only programs? What types of activities are offered for males and females? Are females being excluded or stereotyped (pictures/language) in promotional materials?

Programming Considerations

- Promote female-only or family events about cycling safety, inline skating or walking programs. These provide skill-building opportunities and introduce girls and women to trails in a fun environment. Social and educational events at trail heads or interpretive centres will bring women and their families to the area, where they can be encouraged to walk, blade and cycle.
- Encourage group activities to attract women as this experience can create a supportive and cooperative environment for participants in which, they learn it is OK to make mistakes, that the group is there to support them, and that they can depend on others.
- Trails provide physical activity opportunities that can address the many barriers girls and women face related to income levels, family commitments, and safety concerns. Ensure they know about the trails and the surrounding services to increase their active living choices.
- Partner with community organizations & corporate groups such as the Running Room to encourage their use of the trails so participants become familiar with the resources in their neighbourhood.
- Females are interested in physical recreation pursuits and are more likely than males to want to increase their rate of participation. This provides a wonderful opportunity to program to this population. Just because there are no women and girls participating in your programs, it does not mean they are not interested, consider incorporating some of the ideas listed above before ruling out half of your possible market.