

# The Leaky Pipeline

## Why are so few women coaching at the HP level in Australia?

The coaching career path in the HP Sport System is marked by complexity and challenges, especially for women coaches.

## The departure issue

The stories we have heard from current and former coaches indicate that many women exit the Australian HP Sport System at different career stages. This results in a leaking talent pipeline and a profound gender gap in head coaching roles.

Understanding and addressing these challenges is vital to offer tailored support and ensure sustainable growth for women in HP coaching.

## The hidden talent pools

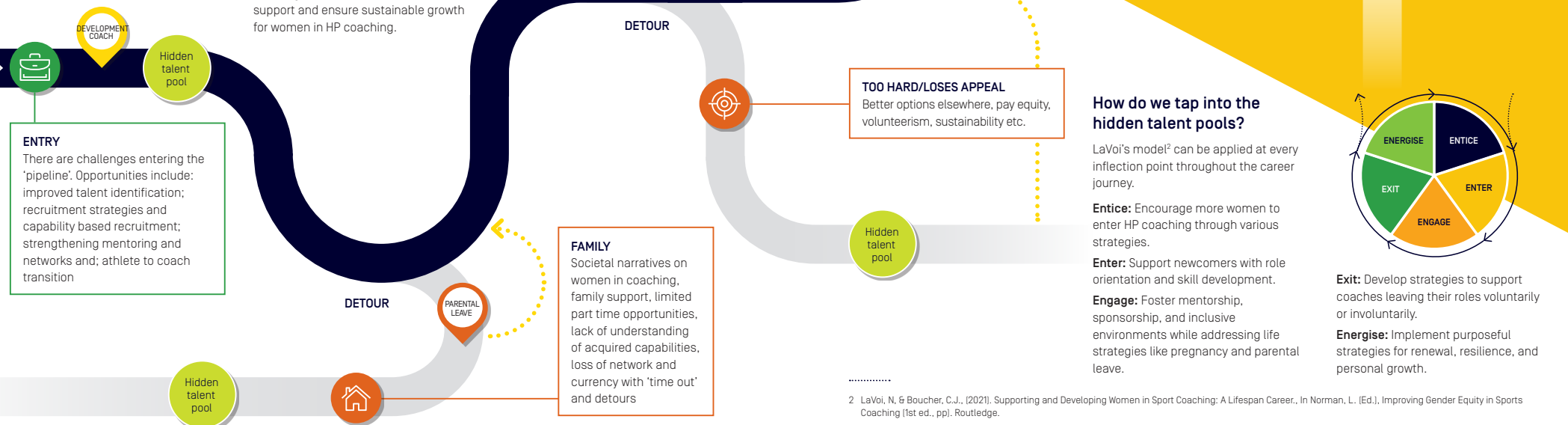
Identifying and re-engaging with coaches who have left the system would uncover hidden talent pools which represent a valuable and untapped resource for advancing gender equity in coaching.

## Toolkit: Hidden talent pools

To harness these hidden talent pools effectively, we need to be proactive:

- Look beyond current coaches and explore roles in sport that have transferrable skills. (e.g., cross sport from gymnastics to aerial skiing, intra-sport sport science to coaching.)
- Directly target individuals outside the coaching system who may lack awareness of how to engage (this includes current or former athletes).
- Shift the focus from solely nurturing the next generation of coaches to identifying those who have left coaching but might consider returning. This includes women with older children who are now more amenable to flexible schedules.
- Actively seek out alternative income sources for part time or volunteer coaches to sustain their engagement.

[Toolkit Link](#)



**ENTRY**  
There are challenges entering the 'pipeline'. Opportunities include: improved talent identification; recruitment strategies and capability based recruitment; strengthening mentoring and networks and; athlete to coach transition

**FAMILY**  
Societal narratives on women in coaching, family support, limited part time opportunities, lack of understanding of acquired capabilities, loss of network and currency with 'time out' and detours

**TOO HARD/LOSES APPEAL**  
Better options elsewhere, pay equity, volunteerism, sustainability etc.

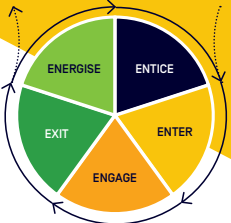
**BURNOUT**  
Whole of life (life after coaching), sustainability at HP Coaching for all

**TREATMENT**  
Unthinking disrespectful behaviour; intentional disrespectful behaviour

## How do we tap into the hidden talent pools?

LaVoi's model<sup>2</sup> can be applied at every inflection point throughout the career journey.

- Entice:** Encourage more women to enter HP coaching through various strategies.
- Enter:** Support newcomers with role orientation and skill development.
- Engage:** Foster mentorship, sponsorship, and inclusive environments while addressing life strategies like pregnancy and parental leave.



- Exit:** Develop strategies to support coaches leaving their roles voluntarily or involuntarily.
- Energise:** Implement purposeful strategies for renewal, resilience, and personal growth.

2 LaVoi, N. & Boucher, C.J., (2021). Supporting and Developing Women in Sport Coaching: A Lifespan Career., In Norman, L., (Ed.), Improving Gender Equity in Sports Coaching (1st ed., pp.). Routledge.