

Provincial Championship Groups (Football)

Format

- The Provincial Championship Groups are an amalgamation of the existing Provincial competitions, the pre-season tournaments and the National League.
- As per the Taskforce’s original Flip model, the Provincial structures are adjusted so that there are two Groups in Leinster & Ulster, one in Munster and one in Connacht. (See Box 1).
- Longford are invited (or mandated) to join the Ulster championship.
- The Provincial Championships would run in February and March on a round robin basis, each team playing each other once.
- The Top teams in Leinster Group 1 & 2 play each other in Provincial Final. Top teams in Group 1 & 2 of Ulster play each other in the Provincial Final. Top two from Munster play each other in the Provincial final. Top two from Connacht play each other in the Provincial final.
- Final positions in the Provincial Leagues determine seeding for the All-Ireland series.
- No replays, extra time to be used & if required, some form of shootout would decide the winner

Benefits

- It maintains the Provincial structure, while also enhancing their importance by linking them to the All-Ireland series.
- It maintains local rivalries, offering a chance to play your neighbours at least once a year.
- It’s provides simplicity, equality & certainty for the scheduling of games.
- All counties are guaranteed a minimum of 4 games and a maximum of 6.
- Most of the games would be competitive as there is an incentive to finish in the Top two and an incentive to place as high as possible for seeding purposes.

Challenges

- Convincing Longford to move from their current Provincial competition. We believe the benefits to Longford would far outweigh any perceived negatives.
- The groups could be re-named ‘Districts’ or ‘Conferences’ to distinguish their identity
- New York would no longer play in the Provincial championship or the subsequent All-Ireland series. The GAA should devise other mechanisms to showcase our sport & culture abroad e.g. Tier 2 All Ireland winners to play New York in an annual Presidents Cup.

Box 1 – New Provincial structures

Leinster		Ulster		Munster	Connacht
Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2		
Dublin	Kildare	Monaghan	Tyrone	Kerry	Galway
Meath	Louth	Cavan	Donegal	Cork	Leitrim
Offaly	Westmeath	Armagh	Fermanagh	Clare	Roscommon
Carlow	Laois	Down	Derry	Tipperary	Sligo
Wicklow	Wexford	Antrim	Longford	Limerick	Leitrim
				Waterford	London

All-Ireland Football Series

Format

- The 8 Provincial Finalists are Top seeds for 8 groups of 4 teams, with an open draw based on the final Provincial league standings.
- Each team plays each other once.
- The top 2 teams from each group progress to the Last 16 of the Tier 1 championship (Sam Maguire) and the bottom two teams of each group progress to the Last 16 of the Tier 2 championship (name TBC).
- No replays would be allowed and after extra time, some form of shootout would decide the winner.

Benefits

- It would be consistent with the Uachtarán's vision to pursue a Two-Tier option next year, paving the way for a revised version in 2021.
- There's no ambiguity about when county teams will play. It removes the uncertainty, which currently exists with the Qualifiers.
- Every county team is guaranteed 3 games in the All-Ireland Series
- Every season, all teams have a chance to compete for Sam Maguire.
- The All-Ireland winners will play only 7 weeks beyond the first teams to be eliminated from inter-county competition, ensuring that all county players are afforded an equal opportunity to play regular and meaningful matches during a defined window.
- "Weaker" counties would have the opportunity to play against "stronger" counties.
- Seeding is dependent on performance in the Provincial Groups, offering fair and transparent competition.
- It provides opportunities to play counties that might not normally meet, throwing up interesting matches across the country.
- Supporters could buy season tickets for the Provincial Groups and/or the All-Ireland series, providing the GAA with a stable and lucrative income stream.

All-Ireland Football Play Offs

Format

- Tier 1 & Tier 2 play a straight knock out competition from the Last 16 to the All-Ireland finals
- No replays would be allowed and after extra time, some form of shootout would decide the winner.

Benefits

- Re-introduces the drama of knock-out competition to the Quarter Final stage.
- The maximum amount of county games the All-Ireland finalists would have to play is 12
- At times, the Tier 1 and Tier 2 matches could be played together at the same venue, offering a bonanza of games to promote. And they may be able to share the same weekend in Croke Park. And the TV schedule could be aligned, so that games from both Tiers are shown, even if the games are at separate venues.

Challenges

- The All-Ireland Football final would be played before the Hurling final, which might be an issue for some.

U20 – Hurling & Football

Format

- To be played at the same time as the Provincial Football Groups and Hurling League, offering several weeks to complete the tournaments
- No U20 player will be eligible to play for their senior county team in the Provincial Championship Groups or Hurling League

Benefits

- It re-asserts the Developmental nature of the U20 competition, offering elite young players the opportunity to showcase their talents, without the risk of burnout
- U20 matches could be played as curtain raisers to the Provincial Group & Hurling League games, allowing young players the chance to play in front of large crowds, giving the GAA further marketing opportunities
- Those in their final year of U20 could be eligible to play for their senior county team in the All-Ireland Football and Hurling series later in the year.

Club Season

Format

- There are two significant windows for ALL club players in the country, regardless of success, to play with their county players. i.e. April & May and August/September.
- Games from October onwards depend on how successful a club team is.
- No replays would be allowed for any club games, including County, Provincial and All-Ireland finals. Extra time would be used and if necessary, some form of shootout would decide the winner.

Benefits

- ALL club players, regardless of success in the knock-out stages of their county championship, will have a defined season from February to September which provides certainty, meaning and regularity.
- With certainty of fixtures, County Boards can actively and effectively promote their county competitions, generating more interest and income e.g. selling club season tickets, offering stronger engagement with local sponsors, etc.
- With a guaranteed schedule, clubs will be better able to develop their talent over a number of seasons, which will ultimately benefit the county team as new talent emerges.
- ALL clubs in the country would be guaranteed to have up to 16 weekends with their county players.
- For counties who don't progress to the All-Ireland Playoff's, county players will be available for League games from early July
- With meaningful club and county games played on a regular basis across the summer, it will decrease the incentive for players to travel abroad for the summer.
- Clubs will have their county players for the majority of League and all championship games

Challenges

- County boards **must** be mandated to play at least 4 club league games (3 per code for Dual Counties) in June & July, so that non-County club players are not idle during these months. This is very difficult at the moment, because counties cannot know at the start of the season when and where they'll be playing, relative to their competition. The new structures provide certainty, allowing countries to plan and play accordingly.
- County Boards **must** ensure they use the 16 guaranteed weekends with county players for meaningful matches i.e. League or Championship.
- The Governance Taskforce currently being discussed should have the capacity to effectively sanction counties who do not use the schedule properly.