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**Terms of Reference for Markievicz Commission**

This Commission will make recommendations to support the Fianna Fáil party in reaching the statutory requirement of 30% of the party’s candidates being female in the next General Election.

The Markievicz Commission will be chaired by Professor Yvonne Galligan.

The Commission will build on the party’s 2013 Gender Equality Document.

In that regard, the Commission will:

- outline specific recommendations on how to target women to become involved in the party at all levels;

- in particular, make practical suggestions on how women candidates will be selected for the general election;

- make recommendations on how women can be identified and harnessed by the party as it prepares for the local elections in 2019. This will involve creating pipelines in various constituencies of women who are already active in their communities;

- examine challenges in urban as well as rural areas and how they can be tackled. Particular attention will be given to areas where the organisation structure is lacking;

- outline how the party can inform the members of the statutory obligation so that the process of ensuring a pipeline of potential women candidates can start immediately.

The Commission will report and outline its implementation plan to the Leader Micheál Martin TD by the end of 2014.
Membership

- Independent Chairperson: Professor Yvonne Galligan, Queen’s University, Belfast
- Dara Calleary TD, Fianna Fáil Spokesperson on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Seán Fleming TD, Fianna Fáil Spokesperson on Public Expenditure and Reform
- Senator Averil Power, Fianna Fáil Seanad Spokesperson on Education and Skills
- Senator Mary White, Fianna Fáil Seanad Spokesperson on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
- Seán Dorgan, General Secretary, Fianna Fáil
- Gillian Coughlan, Member, Fianna Fáil Ard Chomhairle
- Christabelle Feeney, National Youth and Equality Officer, Fianna Fáil
- Emer O’Donovan, Munster Organiser 2013/2014, Ógra Fianna Fáil
- Adrian O’Higgins, Policy and Research Officer, Fianna Fáil
- Laura Reid, Fianna Fáil Local Election Candidate 2014
Executive Summary

The Markievicz Commission was established by Uachtarán Fhianna Fáil Micheál Martin TD at the 75ú Árd Fheis in March 2014 with the purpose of advising on how Fianna Fáil might significantly increase female participation within Fianna Fáil and increase the number of female candidates for the Party in future national elections.

Fianna Fáil is proud of having a long tradition of representing the Irish people and values the diverse views and experiences of all who live in Ireland. In seeking to represent them, Fianna Fáil recognises the importance of increasing women’s representation so as to bring broader perspectives to bear on the economic and social challenges facing the country. To that end, the Party adopted a comprehensive Gender Equality Action Plan in 2013 to increase female participation in political and public life. Yet, despite having a proud tradition of leading the way in the area of gender equality in the political arena, Fianna Fáil currently has no female TD and has just two female Oireachtas members.

The experience of the local elections in 2014 where Fianna Fáil did not reach its own voluntary quota of running at least 30% female candidates nationally provided further impetus for the establishment of this Commission.

The Fianna Fáil Leader, Micheál Martin TD, in recognising the challenges the Party faces in relation to this important matter and in preparing for the legislative provisions contained in the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012., appointed Professor Yvonne Galligan of Queen’s University Belfast to chair the Markievicz Commission and formulate recommendations which would address the current underrepresentation of female Fianna Fáil members in the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The Markievicz Commission considered the terms of reference under three themes which form the chapters of this report: candidate selection, mentoring and workshops. Following presentation to An tUachtarán, the Report will be submitted to the National Constituencies Committee (NCC), the body within the Party responsible for managing the candidate selection process, for consideration in preparation for the 2016 General Election. The Commission is of the view that the principles of fairness and equality of opportunity should be at the core of any selection strategy, and that this strategy have a clear framework to guide selection decisions. In this regard, the key recommendations of the Commission are:

In the context of the forthcoming General Election, the National Constituencies Committee should work to field at least one woman candidate in half of the constituencies where the Party has no sitting TD and in half of those constituencies where the Party holds one seat and where it wishes to run more than one candidate.
Following on from the 2016 General Election, the Party should work towards selecting at least one woman and one man to contest the election in each constituency (except for constituencies with two incumbent male TDs, or in the future two incumbent male/female TDs).

In giving effect to this framework, the Markievicz Commission recommends that:

- The National Constituencies Committee ensures a woman candidate is run in half of the constituencies where the Party has no sitting TD and in half of those constituencies where the Party holds one seat and where it wishes to run more than one candidate.

- In doing so, the NCC may direct constituencies to select a woman at selection convention.

- To reach the minimum 30% candidate gender threshold, the Party should select between 20 and 27 women candidates depending on the overall number of candidates put forward.

- A structured mentoring programme be put in place to aid the Party in fulfilling the 30% candidate gender quota.

- Candidate workshops begin immediately to encourage, identify and support women who may be successful in seeking the Party nomination for the general election.

In the longer term, a number of other measures need to be put in place to sustain the flow of women candidates.

- The Party should commit to a voluntary candidate gender quota of at least 30% for future local elections to create a pool of potential candidates of each gender in national elections.

- The Party should promise in its election manifesto to put forward a Bill to this effect, ensuring a candidate gender quota is introduced at local government level so as to secure the supply of experienced women candidates.

- The party nationally and locally should strongly encourage the co-option of women into local politics as vacancies arise between now and the next local elections.
Given the role of the Seanad in contributing to increasing women’s political representation, Fianna Fáil will explore, in the context of Seanad reform, options for securing a gender-balanced Seanad.

A close and ongoing scrutiny of the stages of the political process should be undertaken to determine at which points women get filtered out of the process.

Fianna Fáil must continuously examine party rules, processes and party campaign supports in order to ensure there is no gender bias that would affect participation within the Party.

Fianna Fáil Head Office should organise a workshop for CDC Chairpersons, Secretaries and Directors of Election on the selection strategy, and the importance of promoting women’s candidacies.

To develop a sustainable pool of potential women candidates, the gender composition of local area representatives and party national executive representatives should be at least 30% female and at least 30% male.

Constituency members, where it is likely that a female candidate must be selected should be informed of this strategic decision well in advance of the selection convention.

In some constituencies, there are more potential women candidates than it is possible to run. The Party should investigate the possibility of encouraging these candidates to consider relocating to neighbouring constituencies, subject to very careful analysis.

Party strategists and selectors must broaden their networks and rethink recruitment processes in order to encourage an increased female participation within Fianna Fáil.
Chapter 1: Candidate Selection

In order to further empower the Fianna Fáil membership, the Árd Fheis in 2012 adopted a One-Member One-Vote (OMOV) model giving every Party member a say in the nomination and selection of candidates in Local, National and European Elections. Members now have a central role in deciding party strategy through this process.

Fianna Fáil must now ensure that gender balance in candidate selection for all future general elections complies with the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012. This Act will, for the first time, require political parties to run at least 30% of candidates who are female. This percentage will subsequently increase to 40% in following general elections. Failure to reach this threshold will result in a loss of 50% of state funding to the political party concerned.

The debate about quotas has been a long-standing one, with many arguments for and against the measure as a means of addressing women’s underrepresentation.¹ Indeed, many of the most eloquent speakers against quotas have been women who have succeeded in securing their own election through the status-quo system. However, the fact is that the alternative to quotas is to continue with an approach which gives us a deeply distorted politics. While parties cannot decide who is elected, they have always been able to decide who is put forward for election. The extent of women’s exclusion from politics can be seen in the historical record.

1.1. The historical background

This law puts a focus on candidate selection, and encourages the creation of conditions under which Fianna Fail has a strong supply of women ready to take the step into national politics. The historical record indicates the extent of the challenge to the Party to ensure a continual pool of women available to contest for national politics. The eight general elections spanning almost three decades show that women made up 15% or less of Party candidates (Table 1).

Table 1: Fianna Fail Candidates by Gender, 1982-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Election</th>
<th>Total Candidates (number)</th>
<th>Men (number)</th>
<th>Women (number)</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982 (ii)</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The low numbers of women candidates has resulted in few women representing Fianna Fáil in the Dáil since the 1980s (Table 2).

Table 2: Fianna Fail TDs by Gender, 1982-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Election</th>
<th>Total TDs (number)</th>
<th>Men (number)</th>
<th>Women (number)</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>n.a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982 (ii)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 presents the stark challenge facing Fianna Fáil as it works to shift the party culture to becoming much more inclusive of women. It is also a general challenge to Irish political culture, as at no time have women comprised more than one-fifth of candidates in total, or 15% of TDs. The 2007 election, when women comprised 96 (20%) of the 484 candidates,

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marked the high point in women’s candidacies in the 12 elections since the early 1970s (Figure 1). It did not, however, result in more women being elected to the Dáil. The 2011 election, when 25 women were returned to the Dáil, is, to date, the best result for women’s office-holding. However, at 15% of TDs, it is far from being representative of women’s share of the population.

**Figure 1: All Women Candidates and TDs, 1973-2011 (number)**

1.2. **Women’s route to parliament**

The two classic pathways to the Dáil – experience in local politics and “family seat” transmission – were, in the past, followed by women and men to a different extent. For example, of the 14 women TDs elected in 1987, eight (57%) had been local councillors, compared with almost three-quarters (72%) of men. At the same time, seven (50%) of the female TDs were related to previous TDs, while only one-quarter (24%) of male TDs had this background. This pattern is different for the 14 new women TDs elected in 2011. Twelve of the 14 (86%) had previous local authority experience, similar to that of newly elected male TDs, 54 of whom had served as local councillors (87%).

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- 10 -
were related to previous TDs. Thus, new female politicians had a similar political experience profile to that of new males.

This observation points to the importance of local authority service as a training ground for national politics and a pool of potential TDs. It also draws attention to the necessity for women to run as candidates in local elections, and obtain experience of local government to provide a pool of candidates ready to take the step into national politics. As matters stand at the moment, women make up 19% of local councillors throughout the country. In 2014, 36 women councillors were elected for Fianna Fail, 17% of the total party representation on local councils.

It is imperative that attention be paid to local government as a preparation for national politics, as well as being a most important representative arena in its own right. Thus, Fianna Fail should encourage and support the selection of many more women for local politics. To assist in this regard, and ensure that women’s representation at local level provides a solid basis for future candidate selection, the Party should consider actively encouraging women to pursue co-option opportunities that might arise between now and the next local elections. While members of Fianna Fáil, locally, decide on such vacancies, the Party should devise a methodology which encourages nominations from prospective women candidates. The membership locally should be presented with a choice of both male and female candidates. The party nationally and locally should strongly encourage the co-option of women into local politics as vacancies arise between now and the next local elections. Such a practice would reinforce the importance of local government as a representative arena that requires women to share decision-making with men.

The Party should also promise in its election manifesto to table a Bill calling for the extension of the party quota legislation to local elections. Such legislative change would have a profound long-term impact on women’s participation levels in Irish politics and would be a major step in political reform required to transform this area.

At the same time, one must be mindful that local government is not the sole route to national politics. Indeed, electoral experience comes in many forms – through community and issue-based politics, service on school boards of management, trade union position-holding, membership of chambers of commerce, executive experience in professional bodies, and other civic, professional and associational leadership roles. These arenas provide women with decision-making experience, familiarity with power and opportunities to demonstrate their representative abilities. Having a background in business can also be very helpful to a woman seeking to carve out a political career, as strong business management skills and an entrepreneurial spirit are important assets in both local government and parliamentary politics. Additionally, holding a Seanad seat has served as a route to the Dail for many women. Thus, in seeking to develop women as potential
contributors to national politics, **Fianna Fáil should take a broad and generous view of what constitutes leadership and how it is demonstrated.** Given women’s relatively low representation in local government, it will be necessary to look beyond this arena to identify, attract and support women with strong leadership attributes to come forward for a Party nomination.

### 1.3 Addressing women’s political under-representation

The imbalance in gender representation in many community organisations is significant and it has a knock-on effect on the strength of different candidates during selection and election. For an under-represented group such as women, their prospects of being selected have been handicapped largely because they are women. Of course, there are ostensible reasons for their limited selection and election opportunities, including male incumbency, party support levels, constituency seat size, the personal profile of the candidate, and other factors. Yet, at the root of all of these constraints is the male dominance of Irish political life.

With these considerations in mind, a candidate selection strategy for the next General Election needs to be developed. The election will take place in 40 new constituencies (and for a Dáil of 158 seats - instead of 166). Fianna Fáil is likely to have sitting TDs contesting in up to 18 constituencies. Table 3 gives a breakdown of constituencies, by size and incumbency status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Constituencies with sitting TDs</th>
<th>Constituencies with no TD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-seat</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-seat</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-seat</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012 requires that at least 30% of party candidates are women, and at least 30% are men at the next General Election. In numerical terms, this means that if Fianna Fáil runs 60 candidates, at least 18 of these must be women. If it runs 75 candidates, then 23 of them should be women, and so on (Table 4).
Table 4: Candidate Number Projections, 2012 Act

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Candidates Run</th>
<th>Women (30%)</th>
<th>Men (70%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Failure to reach this target, resulting in a loss of 50% of state funding, is not an option for any successful political party representing Irish society in the 21st century. Furthermore, in order for our TDs to be truly representative we must ensure that they reflect the make-up of society in all respects, including gender. After all, women make up 51% of the population and are not a minority group, so the 30% candidate gender quota is a modest move towards the fair representation of women in politics.

The more candidates the Party decides to run for the next election, the more women will be needed to fulfil the minimum 30% gender threshold. Meeting this figure presents challenges for the Party. The past record shows that the party will have to double the number and percentage of women selected to reach the legislated requirement. There are a number of ways to achieve this end.

One approach would be to require all constituencies except where there are already two TDs (Cork South Central and Galway East) to select at least one woman candidate in addition to the quota of men that would normally be selected. This would mean that women would not be unseating men. However, this scenario would present a number of challenges – it would risk running too many candidates and spread the party vote too thinly. There could also be difficulties in finding sufficient election-ready women candidates in a short period and election costs would escalate.

If a ‘woman additional’ candidate in every constituency’ is not the preferred selection strategy, then it is necessary to examine what approach might offer prospects for the selection of sufficient women to satisfy the gender quota requirements. An important point to consider, then, is the extent to which a party, in fielding greater numbers of women candidates than before, is prepared to select women for constituencies where there is a ‘potential gain’. In this regard, running women in constituencies where the Party has no sitting TD only may not yield the expected outcome which is an increase in the number of women in politics.

In framing this strategy, it is important to be acutely aware of the gendered nature of candidate selection. The experience of former female local election candidates is instructive in this regard.
The 2014 elections showed that there is a significant disparity in electoral chances between women selected at convention and those placed on the ticket after the selection convention. At the 2014 Local Elections, 58% of women who ran after coming through a selection convention won seats on their local council, while only 29% of women added to the ticket after the selection convention were successful in obtaining a council seat. This points to the importance of selecting women at conventions to contest the general election rather than imposing them at a later stage.

In addition, an effective selection strategy will also signal to women prospective candidates that they will be fairly treated in the conduct of the campaign. The vote management strategy, for instance, should treat women candidates fairly, and not work to their detriment. This will require close monitoring of constituency practices, and enforcement of the agreed election rules.

Other requirements for increasing women’s candidacies for the Party include the need for comprehensive election training, considered in more detail in Chapter 3, and the manner in which women candidates are supported in their constituencies. Fianna Fáil must ensure that when women run for election they have the full, and respectful, backing of party members.

Thus, the principles of fairness and equality of opportunity need to be at the core of a candidate selection strategy. Specifically, the following issues need to be addressed:

- Any barriers – attitudinal and practical - women experience when seeking selection should be overcome,
- the selection process should be conducted in a manner that represents the principles of equal opportunity and fairness;
- the campaign strategy should provide women with an equal chance of securing voter support.

These issues matter because of the historical signals sent to women that politics is not a place in which they can play a part (as the tables above show). The Party needs to counterbalance this long-ingrained perception with visible and proactive behaviours and practices that reassure women that their political ambitions are welcomed and respected. Therefore, selection strategy and procedures have to change in Fianna Fáil, as in other parties. A selection strategy that takes on board the necessity of encouraging women to come forward cannot be solely confined to the hard issues of deciding the number of candidates and where they should run. Such a strategy needs to also consider selection from its earliest stages, identify where and why women are disappearing from the electoral process, and take action to address this loss.
Voter expectations are that Fianna Fáil will give them a choice of female and male candidates across constituencies. Traditionally, the Party’s strongest support base has been in the West, and in rural constituencies. The arithmetic of party support should be seen to benefit women, and a number of these constituencies should be designated for women candidates.

Nonetheless, focusing on principles and good practices alone may not deliver the required gender ratio among Party candidates. There is a need for a strategic framework that can deliver the obligatory outcome and also satisfy the will of the Party to be representative of all. This framework, based on equality of opportunity and fairness, would require that the National Constituencies Committee (NCC) should work to field at least one woman candidate in half of the constituencies where the Party has no sitting TD and in half of those constituencies where the Party holds one seat and where it wishes to run more than one candidate.

Following on from the 2016 General Election, the Party should work towards selecting at least one woman and one man to contest the election in each constituency where it runs more than one candidate (except for constituencies with two incumbent male TDs, or in the future two incumbent male/female TDs). Where a constituency chooses two women to run, it could be ‘matched’ by a constituency where two men can be chosen to run. In this way, the overall gender balance required by law is fulfilled and the widespread selection of all-male slates controlled.

Without an overarching strategic framework there is a risk that the Party will fail to select sufficient women, due to the weight of custom and practice that has seen men be massively over-represented in Fianna Fáil and in electoral politics in general.

We are aware that the NCC will consult extensively with both constituencies and prospective candidates. The NCC should seek to raise awareness levels of this issue within constituencies. It should seek expressions from women in each constituency and encourage local officers to meet the targets set out in this report. The NCC may – as part of its work – have to direct that women be selected in certain constituencies.

1.4 Recommendations:

In the first instance of the forthcoming 2016 general election, the National Constituencies Committee (NCC) should work to field at least one woman candidate in half of the constituencies where the Party has no sitting TD and in half of those constituencies where the Party holds one seat and where it wishes to run more than one candidate.
Following on from the 2016 General Election, the Party should work towards selecting at least one woman and one man to contest the election in each constituency where it runs more than one candidate (except for constituencies with two incumbent male TDs, or in the future two incumbent male/female TDs).

In giving effect to this framework, the Markievicz Commission recommends:

- That the National Constituencies Committee (NCC) should work to field at least one woman candidate in half of the constituencies where the Party has no sitting TD and in half of those constituencies where the Party holds one seat and where it wishes to run more than one candidate.
- In doing so, the NCC may have to direct constituencies to select a woman at convention.
- To reach the minimum 30% candidate gender threshold, the party select between 20 and 27 women candidates based on the overall number of candidates put forward.
- A structured mentoring programme be put in place to aid the Party in fulfilling the 30% candidate gender quota.
- Candidate workshops begin immediately to encourage, identify and support women who may be successful in seeking the Party nomination for the general election.

In the longer term, a number of other measures need to be put in place to sustain the flow of women candidates:

- Most TDs have experience as local councillors, and local council politics has traditionally provided a pool of eligible potential general election candidates. The Party should commit to a voluntary candidate gender quota of at least 30% for local elections to create a pool of potential new candidates of each gender in national elections. It would also ensure better local government.
- The Party should promise in its election manifesto to put forward a Bill to this effect, ensuring a quota be introduced at local government level.
- The party nationally and locally should strongly encourage the co-option of women into local politics as vacancies arise between now and the next local elections.
- Given the role of the Seanad in contributing to increasing women’s political representation, Fianna Fail will explore, in the context of Seanad reform, options for securing a gender-balanced Seanad.
- The selection process itself can obscure discriminatory practices that reduce women’s selection opportunities. Thus, a close and ongoing scrutiny of the stages of political process should be undertaken to determine at which points women get filtered out of the process. This will aid the party in identifying and addressing party-related blockages to women’s selection.
More generally, the Party needs to pay concerted attention to the electoral framework to maximise encouragement for women to put themselves forward for election. In this regard, **Fianna Fáil must continuously examine party rules, processes and party campaign supports in order to ensure that there is no gender bias that would affect participation within the Party.** In doing so, it should pay particular attention to the different contextual challenges presented by elections in rural and urban constituencies for women members. It also needs to reform local organisations to become more woman-friendly, with a local leadership that supports and encourages women to fully participate in Party affairs.

- Fianna Fáil Head Office should organise a workshop for CDC Chairpersons, Secretaries and Directors of Election on the selection strategy, and the importance of promoting women’s candidacies.
- To develop a sustainable pool of potential women candidates, the gender composition of local area representatives and party national executive representatives should be at least 30% female and at least 30% male.
- Local party members are closely involved in the candidate selection process, and often hold a strong long-term allegiance to specific candidates. Changes to the predictability of candidate selection – such as that instigated by the gender quota requirement – require early signalling to a constituency organisation so as to ensure optimum conditions for Party success in the forthcoming election. **Constituency members, where it is likely that a female candidate must be selected, should be informed of this strategic decision well in advance of the selection convention.**
- In some constituencies, there are more potential women candidates than it is possible to run. The Party should investigate the possibility of encouraging these candidates to consider relocating to neighbouring constituencies, subject to very careful analysis.
- The candidate gender quota is designed to stimulate party demand for women candidates so as to redress the serious gender imbalance in Irish politics. A long-term sustainable strategy for gender balanced candidate selection rests on a diverse recruitment process. **Party strategists and selectors must broaden their networks and rethink recruitment processes in order to encourage an increased female participation within Fianna Fáil,** thus providing the Party with the necessary substantial pool of potential women candidates for future elections.
Chapter 2: Mentoring

Engagement with the political process and seeking to run in a national election is a daunting task for any individual who has not sought office before. Political parties across the world have increasingly recognised that supports must be put in place to give candidates the necessary skills and confidence required to successfully run for election. This is especially true for women who find that politics is often a male dominated world.

Political mentoring is now a standard practice for encouraging women’s participation in electoral politics. Mentoring is often used as an aid to identifying and harnessing potential women candidates for general and local elections. Thus, the Markievicz Commission believes that a structured mentoring programme must be put in place to aid the Party in fulfilling the 30% candidate gender quota. A possible mentoring framework is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Mentoring Process

An effective mentoring programme rests on clear lines of communication and responsibility. In the mentoring programme envisaged for Fianna Fáil, there would be three tiers, the National Mentor Co-ordinator, the Regional Mentor Co-ordinator and the Mentor & Mentee.

The National Mentor Co-ordinator will be the Party’s Equality Officer and Regional Organisers will act as the four Regional Co-ordinators.

Regional Co-ordinators will take responsibility for monitoring the progress of mentees in their respective regions, while also checking in with Mentors to ensure that both parties are
happy with progress being made. Regional co-ordinators are responsible for allocating tasks, defining objectives and setting priorities, monitoring performance and giving feedback.  

The National Mentor Co-ordinator will meet with Regional Co-ordinators on a regular basis to ensure that all mentees are making progress and identify any weaknesses in the programme. The National Mentor will act as a support system for Regional Co-ordinators.

2.1 Setting Up Mentoring

Matching Mentors & Mentees
It will be role of the National Mentor Co-ordinator to work with Regional Co-ordinators to identify suitable mentors and mentees for this programme. Mentees will be prospective women candidates for the forthcoming General Elections, while mentors may be former national or local politicians with the necessary leadership skills to assist mentees.

Mentoring Contract
In order to ensure that all parties to the programme are safeguarded, there must be a contract. While this does not need to be formal, its aim should be to assist the mentees and mentors in articulating their goals to agree how they expect the other to act in relation to accessibility, confidentiality and level of engagement. The contract should outline how often mentoring sessions will take place and how they will be conducted.

Monitoring Progress
The length of each mentoring programme will vary based on whether or not the mentee decides to pursue their goals, whether they are successful at selection convention and contest the General Election. Ideally, the mentoring programme would last from the moment the mentee becomes interested in running for election until one month after polling day. It is the role of the National and Regional Co-ordinators to ensure that mentoring is ongoing, where needed.

2.2 Recommendations:

Given the wide acceptance of mentoring as an important support for women in politics, the Markievicz Commission makes the following recommendations:

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A proactive and comprehensive mentoring programme be established by the Party which will target and support potential female candidates in constituencies where there is a strong possibility for election success. To that end:

- Fianna Fáil should open a call to all former Fianna Fáil Oireachtas members, male and female, along with former local authority members, seeking their assistance in establishing and running the mentoring programme.
- Fianna Fáil should establish a Fianna Fáil Women’s Forum. This would offer support and assistance to all female members of the Party. They would gain invaluable experience and support from each other and from former female Oireachtas members and councillors.
- The Party’s Equality Officer to assume the responsibilities of the Mentoring Coordinator, keeping a record of mentors and mentees and linking the programme’s activities with the overall strategic goals of the Fianna Fáil organisation.
- The mentoring programme would reflect the realities contained in the diversity of constituencies recognising the different challenges faced by prospective women candidates in both rural and urban constituencies.
- The Party should work to implement longer term recommendations set out in the Fianna Fáil Gender Equality Action Plan 2013-2018 that have not already been dealt with in this report.
- The Party should establish links with other organisations and groups promoting best practice in ensuring gender balance in decision-making, to inform party practice and share learning across sectors.
- A full review should be carried out following the 2016 General Election to assess how the recommendations set out in this report were implemented and success of same.
Chapter 3: Workshops - Empowering Women to Become Political Representatives

There are five well established barriers which inhibit women’s participation in elected politics. These barriers address issues of a social, economic, affective and political nature, which have been shown to impinge on women’s political ambitions. They include: confidence, cash, candidate selection, culture and childcare. These issues should act as a base for workshops to be built for potential candidates.

Women are less likely to stand as independents or to be nominated as candidates by a political party. This is due to a lack of confidence in putting themselves forward, discriminatory cultural norms, insufficient cash and candidate selection procedures. We aim to improve the candidate selection procedures by foremost addressing the underlying issues which may prevent a woman from putting herself forward. By tackling some of the barriers mentioned above, Fianna Fáil aim to improve female confidence, reduce discrimination, improve available finances and educate candidates on the selection process.

3.1 Confidence
Confidence building workshops will serve as an opportunity for women candidates to network with each other and build trust amongst peers. Women will be further empowered with public speaking and media training, allowing them see themselves as potential candidates.

3.2 Culture
Politics is deemed a ‘male dominate sphere’ which ultimately discourages female participation. This is a persistent feature of Irish politics, with women continually under-represented in proportion to their share of the population.

Fianna Fáil will hold a workshop on campaign management/planning/ canvassing, which will include information on the supports available to both female and male members of the party who wish to stand for election. This will enable potential women candidates to realise that they will receive the same supports as male candidates and have equal footing on the campaign trail.

3.3 Cash
As cash is a serious factor in the running of a campaign, Fianna Fáil will hold a workshop on fundraising and budgeting, looking at SIPO regulations, how to fundraise for elections and how best to spend funds based on the candidate’s LEA/Constituency. Candidates will also be
informed about the printing facilities in HQ that are subsidised and will reduce campaign expenditure.

3.4 Candidate Selection
As part of the Campaign Management workshop, candidates will learn about the selection process and how to campaign for a selection convention. This will remove any mystery from the selection process and enable women to put themselves forward as informed candidates.

The role of candidate workshops in increasing women’s capacity to seek a nomination and acquire the skills to run an effective election campaign has been long proven.

Recommendations:

An initial one-day candidate workshop be organised to prepare women for the 2016 general election.

- This workshop should be open to all women interested in politics, both within and outside the Party.
- The workshop should provide women with the knowledge, skills and personal capacity to run an effective political campaign.
- Further workshops will be organised on specific relevant topics.
- A regular workshop series should be organised in advance of each general election to provide women candidates and potential candidates, and interested non-party women with the skills required to run an election campaign.
Appendices
Appendix 1 (Gender Quota Legislation)

Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012

Part 6, Section 42 deals with political funding and gender balance and states:

“(4B) (a) Payments calculated in accordance with this Part shall be reduced by 50 per cent, unless at least 30 per cent of the candidates whose candidatures were authenticated by the qualified party at the preceding general election were women and at least 30 per cent were men.

(b) Paragraph (a)—

(i) comes into operation on the polling day at the general election held next after section 42 of the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012 comes into operation, and

(ii) ceases to have effect on the polling day at the general election held next after the expiration of 7 years from the polling day specified in subparagraph (i).

(c) Payments calculated in accordance with this Part shall be reduced by 50 per cent, unless at least 40 per cent of the candidates whose candidatures were authenticated by the qualified party at the preceding general election were women and at least 40 per cent were men.

(d) Paragraph (c) comes into operation on the day after the day on which paragraph (a) ceases to have effect.”