

Event 2: Participant-centred sport products and experiences

1 of 5

Panel Q&A

Questions to Erica Randle, Centre for Sport and Social Impact

Sourcing feedback from inactive groups can be very challenging. What would be your advice for obtaining insights from these groups given feedback is so important to the design process?

This is a big question, and it depends on why you are doing it (what the experience or product is that you are designing) and who your target market is. There is a big difference between inactive (people doing nothing at all) and somewhat active people (not meeting the PA guidelines). There is also a continuum of how people engage with sport, and with your sport – think about the four cohorts we went through, it would be harder for certain sports to go target the long-term disengaged, a better target market would be those that have played sport at some stage in their life, or those that are doing some physical activity.

Start with what is already out there and build from that (do not try and re-invent the wheel), and if you are not sure what is out there reach out to those who may know (Sport Aus, HealthWA, VicHealth, CSSI @ La Trobe, SPRINTER etc). Check also with your state, association, and club affiliates.

You may want to collect your own data when learning about what people think of your specific sport or potential ideas. Some ways are:

- For representative population data we have used panel services who will send your survey out to get a broad sample, or they can target participants based on your needs (e.g., location, age, background). You can work with a research group to support you in this (to develop the survey and analyse the data).
- If it is a targeted area or market then some options are to use the existing channels that you have through your own membership, sponsors, or partner organisations. For example, when we completed the research for Hockey Victoria (that they based the new social hockey products on) we surveyed and interviewed the parent/guardians of junior players as part of the market research. This was a good target market for hockey because these were people that had some connection to hockey but did not play. We also surveyed and interviewed players who were about to retire or leave the sport – retention is important, and from this data we were able to develop products that could create a pathway for these people to stay engaged in hockey.
- If you are moving through a co-design process, you may want to access a small group to generate and test ideas. Again, efficacious strategies are those that optimise your existing channels. If you are designing a new female focused product, it might be about recruiting people through your existing members (sisters, partners, friends) or through your sponsors or partners, or accessing the fanbase of professional teams.
- To maximise results, you can incentivise (e.g., each survey response goes into the draw to win a prize, or people are paid to attend a focus group).
- If funds are tight, you could work with a university or TAFE and give students a project to do based on your needs. These could be sport management, outdoor education, health, or research students.



How universal are the design ideas which came through your research? Would these be consistent and applicable to other cohorts of participants other than youth?

Yes, good pick-up – there are common themes throughout all groups – the deliverer will almost always be the most important person to the experience no matter who you are delivering too; co-design or using insights to design is applicable across the board; and creating a socially safe space is important across the board as well (think elite teams and their sharing sessions).

We put together the six Doing Sport Differently Principles for VicHealth based on the work we completed for Sport Australia and VicHealth (youth and adult populations). They were originally designed to guide thinking of how sport can engage fewer active people (people not meeting physical activity guidelines), however since we have put them out, we have found that they have a much broader application. We often see these themes come up time and time again when researching engagement and retention – people stay in sport if they have the social connection, and they will leave if they have a bad experience.

What I would say specifically for youth – this is a transition period for them, not just for sport but for all areas of their life. Stress can come from school, family, friends, and work. They are also trying to work out who they are, everything is changing. So, we need to consider the ways in which we signpost and move them through from children's sport into something much different that is youth sport, and then get them to stick around long enough to transition them into adult opportunities.

What we have found is that those 'middle' opportunities between children's sport and adult sport may not always be suited for youth. When working with the 19 sports developing new ideas for youth specifically through Vichealth, these were the top 5 design process tips we found that led to a successful design:

1. A working group to co-design the program (participant insights and feedback on ideas).
2. A working group to co-design the processes for delivery, data collection, communication, feedback, and improvement (these could include a deliverer to get the training and recruitment right, someone from a youth community group that can provide ideas on communication channels etc.)
3. A strong group of program advocates/sponsors (these can help with connecting, recruiting, and engaging youth).
4. A clear program identity and clearly articulated value propositions for each cohort and program stakeholder group; and
5. An understanding of the target market (difference between active and less active young people or past participants vs. those new to the sport).

Are you aware of examples where sports have taken the learnings from your research and applied them successfully to improve their recruitment or retention of youth participants outside of the school environment?

Yes, we have worked directly with quite a few, and then there have been the sports that were originally involved in YPP that took the findings and applied them to their other youth products. Some examples:

In VicHealth's recent [Growing Participation in Sport](#) program, 19 sports were funded to develop programs or improve existing youth experiences based on the findings. Some specific examples from that program include Gymnastics Victoria who have used a co-design process to develop their youth products and included design elements such as having independent goals, youth deliverers, and creating safe social spaces. Triathlon Victoria transitioned their school based Try2gether program successfully to out of school by following the design principles, and Bowls Victoria have had some great success in welcoming youth into bowls clubs through their program as well.



Through the Innovation Challenge we support sports to develop brand new ideas, the one I mentioned on the webinar as the Mountain Bike program for youth called, We will Ride in the Yarra Ranges – an excellent example.

We have also worked with GippSport (in regional Victoria) to address the decline in youth in the La Trobe Valley. The findings from that project mirrored those in the YPP, with some additional sport based contextual findings that I presented (such as trialling providing a non-graded option for netball; suing alternative sports to engage hard to reach youth; and provided clear pathways to transition youth into adult clubs).

Sports Community have completed a webinar and podcast series on clubs that have made changes based on the Doing Sport Differently principles as well (for both youth and adult clubs). You can find that [here](#).

With youth, there are many participants passing through a relatively small age-bracket and as a result we are seeing frequent changes in interests and attitudes. There is the risk that you develop a product that very quickly becomes dated as the cohort matures and a younger cohort comes through. How do sports stay on top of these changes or do you believe that your findings and design ideas hold true for any generation of youth?

Very good question. Basic sport structures have stayed the same for some time, but there are the fluctuating interests such as Tik Tok, Fortnite, Banana Big M, Archery gets a lift when Game of Thrones is on. But then there are some key principles when designing product that I do not think change too much – people will stay because they felt welcomed, valued, and socially connected; people will leave if they do not.

In addition to that each sport or product will have its own competitive advantages, it can add value in some way, if you can grasp onto what that is then that is your core business / product, things could be modified or changed around it, but the core stays true for some time. Once the proof of concept has been achieved, we would recommend ensuring that there is a continuous feedback loop for making improvements and most importantly asking people why they leave or do not finish a program.

Questions to Michael Procajlo, Rugby Australia

Can you tell us more about the co-design approach which Rugby AU employed and how important it was to include participants in the redesign of the product?

Get into Rugby

- The need for Get into Rugby was identified through market research involving Rugby Union bodies and clubs. At the time there had been no product in place.
- Product content was developed by coaches.
- The program was piloted and feedback sought from those involved – feedback from clubs as important as feedback from participants in finalising the product.

Touch 7s

- Rules were already developed by World Rugby.
 - Bespoke research and focus groups were undertaken to inform the final product – a notable example of this was in receiving clear feedback that Touch 7s needed to be social and not competitive to attract a broad audience.
 - The product was piloted in a similar way to Get into Rugby as the final product needed to be reflective of the feedback from clubs to be successful.
-



Rugby FIT

- The market need was first identified by a university researcher which included testing with focus groups etc.
- Insights are even more critical to the design and delivery of this product given it is further away from our core business.
- The product is currently being piloted with feedback and monitoring in place.

Can you tell us more about the development of the At Home Workouts? Whilst obviously a response to COVID-19, do you see an opportunity for this to become part of business as usual for Rugby AU and the development of further digital products?

The At Home Workouts were pieced together from various resources which were already available to us and were grouped into appropriate sessions which could be facilitated at home/ in the backyard or at the local park.

Off the back of its success, we are currently looking at building additional content in the form of a pre-season workout plan that would act as a 'prepare to play' piece encouraging people to make sure they are ready for the season ahead.

Questions to Tom Halliday, Sport Australia

Can I complete the Design Approach for all my products at once or do I need to complete it individually?

When using the design approach, it is recommended that sports limit their focus to one product at a time.

Whilst it is important that your suite of products are in alignment with your strategy and present a coordinated approach to engaging different participant cohorts, it is imperative that each product is designed and developed or reviewed and redeveloped individually to ensure that the core participant needs are met, and the initial problem statement or purpose of your product is addressed and satisfied.

Do sports need to go through the Design Approach as a complete process?

The short answer is no, and sports may choose to focus in on selected stages or actions based on their needs.

No two sports are exactly alike, and the problem, challenge or opportunity presented before them will be unique. The Design Approach provides a framework with recommended actions and questions to consider at each stage of the product design journey. Each sport is encouraged to review the Design Approach and assess how and where it can serve as a valuable resource and guide for addressing their needs.



How was the design approach modified to be sport-specific?

The Design Approach was developed in consultation and collaboration with VicHealth.

A problem identified was that there was an abundance of information on human-centred design but a lack of application towards sport participation contexts.

Gathering evidence of recognised best-practice, human-centred design principles, Sport Australia engaged stakeholders from across the sport sector to modify, test, refine and validate these principles to address participation-specific challenges and questions.

The final Design Approach presents a flexible yet reliable framework to guide sports through their product planning and designing. Case study examples available on the Participation Design Toolkit highlight the different ways in which the Design Approach has already been used by sports to meet their participation outcomes.

Reference Material

- **Participation Design Toolkit**
<https://www.sportaus.gov.au/participation>
- **Product Design Canvas**
https://www.sportaus.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/964184/Design-Canvas.pdf

