

## Event 1: Using insights to understand your participants

### Questions to Dr Lindsey Reece, University of Sydney

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Where in the process do sports get data collection and the application of insights wrong and, what recommendation can you make for improving on this?

I rarely consider things wrong or right, there is just a way and you go with it. I emphasise this because when setting out on a data driven process it is not easy, and there will always be bumps along the way. If in doubt, give something a try. I often use the mantra - at first do no harm!

Data collection is also more in control than data application. In terms of the latter, it is fundamental to continue to collect data and insights in order to track and measure progress. It is also important to continually check in and revisit asking the following questions;

- Are we going as we planned? If yes/no, why?
- Are we delivering as intended?

Do not just wait until the end or think that a formal evaluation is the only time to evaluate your work. I have included some tips below:

- Try not to do everything. The best ideas are often simple and clear. The examples I gave all had a clear purpose, clear audience, clear stakeholders and clear evaluation.
- Be genuine and authentic in your approach. If you engage people as a 'tick box' exercise it can come across tokenistic and actually delay progress.
- Be bold, brave and ask for help!
- Integrate data and translation through your strategic planning so it gives the whole organisation, or team a purpose and intent.
- Empower people along the way to take ownership over the data, what it means and the stories it conveys. This way, it is never one person's job, it is everyone's.
- Consider diversity and inclusion in your approach. Often, common methods are skewed to specific populations who engage. Consider how best to be inclusive from the outset.
- Be patient. Sometimes these processes are slow burners, look for low hanging fruit of course, but be committed for the long haul.
- Data helps transparency and accountability.

How often do market insights need to be reviewed and updated to remain relevant?

Tricky one to answer and there is no right or wrong response. If you are ever in doubt and cannot find a more recent alternative, use it. Your narrative is strengthened by data. In academia, anything more than 10 years is seen as being older, but this is very subjective.

When using data/insight is it advisable to use any negative data to point out what or how you would address the problem differently OR just omit it entirely?

Of course, all data is important to consider when informing a decision. I am sure many of us would agree we often learn more from the complex situations that did not go as we thought.



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Ultimately, the selection of data is based on whether it supports the story you are trying to tell, the problem you are trying to solve or the solution you have. Let the data drive the process and the outcome.

An important consideration in data is the level of quality. A peer-reviewed publication will often be a higher quality and therefore you can have a greater level of confidence in the results compared to a blog, which is one person's opinion.

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**How can we get our organisations to value and fund data capture?**

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I interpret value and fund as two different things. Ultimately, it is chicken and egg. We need to produce the evidence and data to strengthen sport narrative to support future investment, but then we need investment to fund research/data insights.

We must advocate collectively for this and continue to champion collectively. One way to do this is to ask bold leadership to advocate on our behalf – Sport Australia are a key player in this. We could consider reviewing and leveraging from current structures/processes.

We need to invest as a sector in workforce training and capability to do this. We must integrate these skills into our current and future student programs. We live in a world where we compete for resources, and without a strong and data rich argument for sport we will potentially lose out.

Is there more we could do together to leverage investment that could help us also share learning and insights?

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## Questions to Michael Johnston, Hockey Australia

**How are Hockey using these insights as part of its product offerings to target these and other groups of participants and improve their overall experience in the sport?**

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We have done some work over the past few years in product development and one of the best examples of Hockey using insights has been in developing formats that are more social.

Hockey Victoria have been proactive in using funding received through VicHealth to understand what the opportunities look like for social interaction with the sport, and they used the funding and insights to develop a new product called Hockey Sixes.

Leveraging off this great work, Hockey Australia have provided support to roll out this program nationally and promote it as our national social product.

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**Can you provide an example where you have influenced your board using participant insights?**

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Having the data and insights to back up your work is critical. Part of the work that Hockey Australia has done this year has centred on a higher level of participation investment than the sport has previously ever had. As the national body, we now have the largest participation workforce that we have had for at least the last five years.

The marketing and budget that we were able to not only put towards our campaigns but also specifically towards supporting our Hookin2Hockey program were all driven by insights and fed through our 20/21 budget process including being validated by our finance, audit and risk committee and Board.

Like every sport, in response to COVID, this has been a critical time for Hockey to be recovering and getting people back into the sport and shoring up the financial stability of the organisation. Credit must go to our Board for having the commitment to invest in growing the game, when many

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others have looked to cut costs; we have gone the opposite way. We would not have been able to get that level of approval without the data sitting behind it.

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Noting that there can often be a competitive environment between states and the national body, how did you go about bringing everyone along on the journey to create a national campaign? Was there a system or project structure that lent itself towards your success?

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We are in a fortunate position in that the collaboration between the national body and the states has been positive. This has come over time with increased sharing of evidence and information to help drive better decision-making.

As an example, Hockey NSW had ideas about what could be done better and were bold enough to go do it. Part of the success of our relationship is having the courage to say, “We have either got it wrong or you are doing something better than we have been doing and we want to follow”. We did not just want to work with Hockey NSW within their jurisdiction; we wanted to apply their example nationally. We have been prepared to do this with all of our states in growing the game and it has been valuable in the times when we have been leading the work – as we have done with the marketing campaigns – to provide that back out to the states.

The success of this approach has been set out, falls back to our national participation and engagement plan; our whole-of-sport participation strategy and roadmap out of COVID to restore the sport to where we wanted it to be at the end of 2022. This plan was developed in consultation with our states and down to the grassroots to understand how we can use the participation drivers to get people into our sport, keep them involved, provide a quality experience and support our volunteer workforce.

One of the key outcome was the development of a marketing toolkit and resources for clubs and states to use. The development of these resources did not require special oversight or management as it was consistent with what we had each agreed to do within the participation and engagement plan.

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## Questions to Tom Hunter, Sport Australia

The life stage insights looked at physical activity levels, why is this an important metric for sports to consider alongside understanding basic sport participation levels?

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It's important for sports to understand and use data on population physical activity habits as well as sport participation habits for a few reasons:

- It can help with targeting a particular type of person that might be most suited to your sport by identifying people in different life stages with the right capability and fitness levels to be new participants.
- There are far more people engaged with physical activity so it is a wider population sample. The people who are currently already physically active could potentially take up a sport as one of their options to keep active.

Sport is a physical activity, the reasons people do or don't like particular physical activity and how much physical activity they do each week can be lessons for sports and sport offerings.

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## Reference Material

- **Participation Design Toolkit** | <https://www.sportaus.gov.au/participation>
- **Her Sport Her Way** | <https://www.sport.nsw.gov.au/hersportherway>

