



# The future of sport and recreation for disabled New Zealanders

2025

## Report overview

1 in 6 New Zealanders experience disability. In our commitment to improve outcomes for disabled people, Sport NZ, in partnership with Halberg Foundation (Halberg), Paralympics New Zealand (PNZ), and Special Olympics New Zealand (SONZ), initiated a strategic foresight process to better understand the current and futures challenges they face in sport and active recreation.

The strategic foresight process aimed to improve future resilience of organisations working in the provision of disability sport and recreation by:

- Challenging existing assumptions that may be shaping strategic decision-making in disability sport and recreation.
- Identifying emerging trends and transformations that may impact the future operating environment of disability sport and recreation.
- Exploring alternative future scenarios to broaden thinking and potential responses beyond a single assumed future.

Through surveys, workshops, and expert consultations, the process focused on a five to ten-year outlook to develop strategies for more effective and inclusive sport and recreation opportunities for disabled people in New Zealand.

The resulting report summarises and analyses the strategic foresight process. While not exclusively applicable to the partnering organisations, the findings aim to assign action items to appropriate entities within the sector, addressing the disparities in health, wellbeing, and quality of life outcomes experienced by disabled people.

This collaborative effort seeks to chart a path forward that acknowledges the diverse needs of disabled people and aims to improve their access to quality sport and recreation experiences, potentially impacting their educational outcomes, future employment prospects, and overall life trajectories<sup>1</sup>.



Image credit: Photosport

<sup>1</sup> Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty, (2012) Working Paper no 21: Child Poverty and Disability. Accessed from: <http://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Uploads/EAG/Working-papers/No-21-Child-poverty-and-disability.pdf>

## How to use this report

### Strategic alignment

Analyse how the scenarios and drivers align with or challenge your current strategy. Identify areas that may need adjustment or rethinking.

### Develop contingency plans

Create specific action plans for each scenario to ensure you can respond quickly if certain futures start to materialise.

### Identify early warning indicators

Determine key signals or metrics that would indicate which scenario is becoming more likely. Set up a system to monitor these indicators regularly.

### Assess organisational capabilities

Evaluate whether your organisation and constituency have the skills, resources and structures needed to thrive in different potential futures. Identify capability gaps that need to be addressed.

### Prioritise strategic initiatives

Use the scenarios to inform which projects or initiatives should be prioritised based on their relevance and potential impact across multiple futures.

### Refine risk management strategies

Update risk assessments and mitigation plans based on the identified drivers of change and potential future scenarios.

### Enhance organisational agility

Develop processes and systems that allow for quick adaptation to changing circumstances, as highlighted by the scenario analysis.

### Stress-test major decisions

When making significant strategic decisions, evaluate how they would perform under different scenario conditions.

### Foster a future-oriented culture

Encourage your employees and stakeholders to think longer-term and consider multiple possible futures in their decision-making.

### Challenge your assumptions

Use the report to identify and discuss assumptions you have about the future and assess and monitor the level of confidence you have in the assumption being accurate.

### Strategic conversations

Use the implications and critical questions from the drivers and scenarios to facilitate conversations with colleagues and the sector to extend your understanding of plausible future states and how you might respond.



## Key findings

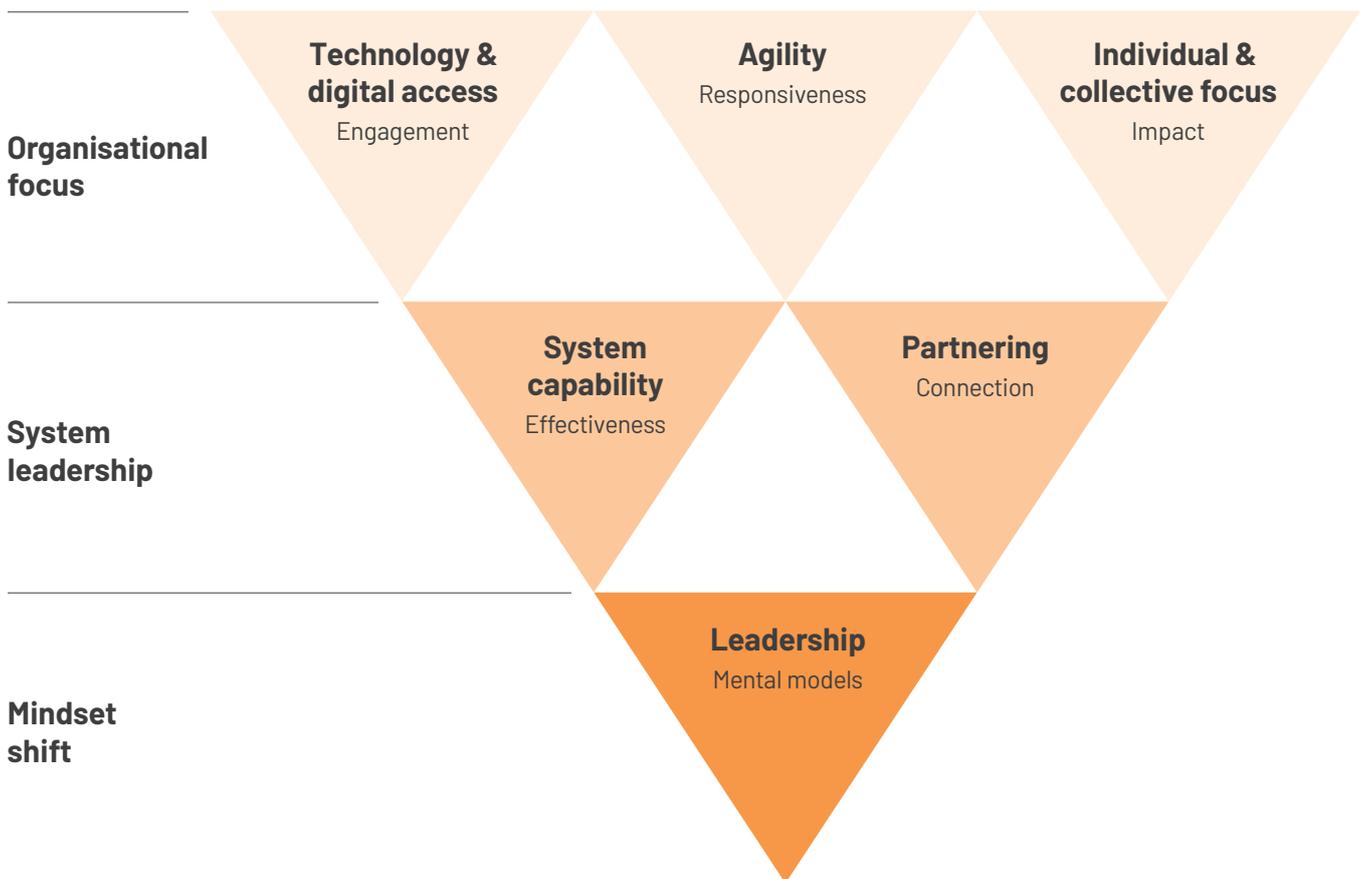
The disability sport and recreation sector in New Zealand, like society in general, needs to adapt to future uncertainties to remain resilient. Exploring various future scenarios is a useful means for anticipating challenges and identifying opportunities, enabling better preparedness. The process examined the current and future roles of organisations, including Sport NZ, Halberg, PNZ, SONZ, and regional disability sport organisations in meeting the sport and recreation aspirations of disabled New Zealanders.

Many findings corroborate earlier sector reviews, notably the comprehensive 2018 review of disability active recreation and sport,<sup>2</sup> indicating persistent challenges. Identifying the fundamental issues facing the sector is critical for effective problem-solving. These include recognising and addressing attitudinal and behavioural obstacles, openness to new approaches for reaching disabled New Zealanders and employing a more coordinated and collaborative delivery approach to negate disability being viewed as an ‘add on’ to already full mandates.

This process identified opportunities aligned with the 2019 Sport NZ Disability Plan’s<sup>3</sup> focus areas, notably in the areas of working in partnership, and building system-wide capability. These findings underscore the need for a proactive, collaborative approach to shape the future of disability sport and recreation in New Zealand, emphasising adaptability, inclusivity, and systemic improvements.

Critically, these opportunities and audience for this report extend beyond a focus on the disability sport and recreation sector and needs to include the wider sport and recreation sector.

### Six key opportunities for disability sport and recreation



<sup>2</sup> Cockburn, Atkinson; *Disability sport and recreation; 2018*

<sup>3</sup> *Sport NZ Disability plan, 2019.*

## Six opportunities detailed

### Leadership (mindset shift)

There is a significant opportunity for stronger leadership to transform the delivery of services and support to disability sport and recreation. This report reinforces challenges and opportunities raised in previous reviews of disability sport and recreation.

Sport and recreation leaders must challenge entrenched mental models about disability and be open to new approaches, engaging with unheard voices and implementing innovative solutions. This is particularly important in areas like neurodiversity, where our understanding has improved but our response has lagged.

Strong leadership is needed to question existing practices, advocate for the unrepresented, and drive meaningful change in how services are conceived and delivered. By focusing on these areas, leaders can work towards transforming the design and delivery of services and support for disability sport and recreation, ultimately providing better opportunities for disabled young people to participate and excel in sport and recreation activities of their choice.

Leaders must take the initiative to raise awareness about available opportunities, co-develop and co-produce inclusive strategies, and ensure active participation of individuals with diverse abilities in policy-making processes and resource allocation decisions.

### Opportunities:

- Implement extensive inclusion training for directors, coaches, volunteers, and stakeholders to enhance their understanding of disability awareness and inclusive practices.
- Continue to grow meaningful participation and leadership of disabled young people.
- Continue to actively grow involvement of disabled young people in the policy-making process to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are addressed.
- Advocate for better representation of the disabled community within the sport and recreation workforce (currently only 3.4%).
- Organise forums, surveys, and focus groups to continuously gather feedback from disabled young participants and non-participants, their families, and service providers to inform ongoing improvements.

### Sport NZ specific:

- Evolve and implement the 2019 Disability Plan.
- Integrate the Disability Plan across Sport NZ strategy and operations.
- Seek inclusive outcomes for disabled people from sport and recreation investment partners.
- Advocate for disability across local and central government.



## Partnering (system leadership)

Sport NZ has a significant opportunity to expand and diversify its investment partnerships to better impact disabled young people. While maintaining strong relationships with existing disability sport and recreation organisations, there is a critical need to broaden collaboration with a wider range of disability-focused entities.

By partnering with other organisations, Sport NZ can address a broader spectrum of disability beyond physical impairments, ensuring more inclusive representation. Current focus and investment are weighted toward physical impairments, but non-physical impairments are more prevalent among young people, especially those aged 0-14. These include learning, psychological/psychiatric, and speaking difficulties, often referred to as invisible impairments.

Collaborating with local government and community-based providers can create a more inclusive system by facilitating relationships at the community level and establishing communities of practice. Utilising established community systems, such as play advocates, sports organisations, regional sports trusts, and councils, can enhance the reach and effectiveness of initiatives.

To support this revised partnering approach, Sport NZ should consider implementing more flexible funding models that can support tailored, responsive solutions. This would allow for the development of programmes and initiatives that are better suited to the diverse needs of disabled young people.

### Opportunities:

- Collaborate with healthcare providers, schools, disability organisations and community organisations to expand reach and share resources.
- Co-design initiatives with disabled people.
- Regional disability sport organisations continue to work with local and regional councils and RSTs to improve access to local spaces and places.

### Sport NZ specific:

- Develop new relationships with organisations who deliver quality experiences to disabled people.
- Review and align expectations of existing sport and recreation partners to the Sport NZ Disability Plan.
- Leverage existing cross government relationships to promote the value of sport and recreation for disabled people.



## System capability (system leadership)

A systems approach is essential for promoting inclusivity in sport and recreation for disabled people. This approach involves aligning stakeholders to build a shared purpose, reforming policies to create a supportive framework, facilitating information sharing and innovation, networking for knowledge exchange, providing flexible funding to support systemic change, and prioritising continuous improvement through regular evaluation.

Implementation strategies include empowering regional disability sport organisations to lead local initiatives, launching public campaigns to shift societal perceptions, advocating for inclusive policies within national sports bodies, engaging less active disabled individuals, and developing leadership programs for disabled people. By addressing the root causes of exclusion, this approach fosters a society that views disability through the lens of ability and potential, ultimately improving access and overall inclusivity.

### Opportunities:

- Establish knowledge-sharing platforms and share best practices for inclusive programming.
- Advocate for inclusive strategies, policies and participation structures within national sport and recreation organisations.
- Implement public education campaigns on the benefits of inclusive sport and recreation.
- Use media partnerships to increase visibility and representation of disability across the sport and recreation sector.

### Sport NZ specific:

- Develop funding models that prioritise a strategic approach to inclusion and inclusive initiatives for disabled people.
- Undertake continuous monitoring and evaluation of participation levels and distil evidence-based insights to the sector.



## Technological and digital access (organisational focus)

To enhance future resilience, disability sport and recreation organisations must develop strong technological and digital accessibility expertise. Key areas include implementing assistive technologies, virtual/augmented reality, and AI-powered systems to improve participation and personalise experiences. Creating accessible digital platforms adhering to international standards is crucial for equitable access.

Utilising data analytics and AI for personalised coaching and performance tracking will better serve diverse needs. Cybersecurity and data privacy skills are essential to protect sensitive information. Integrating wearable technologies will help monitor health, safety, and performance.

Cloud-based solutions will enable efficient data management and remote access. Effective use of social media and digital marketing tools will raise awareness and promote inclusive programmes. Expertise in adaptive equipment and technologies specific to various activities is crucial.

Creating inclusive virtual training environments and e-sports platforms will expand participation opportunities. Addressing the digital divide by ensuring affordable and accessible technologies will promote inclusivity. Balancing evolving technologies with in-person interactions remains an ongoing challenge. By focusing on these areas, organisations can enhance accessibility, create engaging experiences, and remain relevant in an increasingly digital world.

### Opportunities:

- Partner with technology companies to create and distribute wearable devices specifically designed for disabled participants to enhance motivation and engagement.
- Utilise social media platforms and free content management systems to create an online presence, share information, and engage with participants.
- Adopt free, open-source solutions for event management, participant registration, and data tracking to improve organisational efficiency.
- Encourage participants, volunteers, and staff to create and share content about their experiences, which can be used for promotion and awareness-raising.
- Implement existing free or low-cost mobile apps to help disabled athletes and participants monitor their progress and access training resources.
- Explore development of virtual reality and augmented reality training modules for coaches, volunteers, and participants to improve skills and understanding of various adaptive sports and activities.
- Offer comprehensive training on digital accessibility best practice, including content creation, and assistive technology implementation.





## Agility (organisational focus)

The disability sport and recreation sector, like sport and recreation in general, must prioritise agility to remain effective and relevant in a rapidly changing environment. This strategic foresight process highlights several key reasons why agility is crucial. The sector needs to integrate new technologies like virtual reality, augmented reality, and AI-powered training systems to enhance accessibility and participation opportunities for disabled people. Changes in work patterns, economic conditions, and social attitudes require the sector to quickly adjust its programmes and delivery methods to meet evolving needs. With uncertain economic times and changing funding landscapes, organisations must be able to explore innovative funding models and partnerships to ensure sustainable operations. The sector must be flexible in creating programmes that cater to a wide range of disabilities, including emerging awareness of neurodiversity and invisible disabilities.

Agility is needed to form and maintain partnerships with various stakeholders, including healthcare providers, education institutions, and technology companies. The sector must be ready to offer hybrid models of participation, combining in-person and virtual experiences to maximise inclusivity. Continuous learning and adaptation are necessary to keep staff and volunteers skilled in the latest inclusive practices and technologies. The sector must be prepared to address emerging ethical issues related to technological enhancements and genetic engineering in sport and recreation.

By prioritising agility, the disability sport and recreation sector can better navigate these challenges, seize new opportunities, and continue to provide valuable, inclusive experiences for disabled young people.

### Opportunities:

- Create modular programme structures that can be easily adapted to different delivery methods (in-person, virtual, or hybrid).
- Implement a regular training programme for staff and volunteers on inclusive practices and emerging technologies.
- Continue to actively promote and foster a culture of innovation.
- Develop and deliver comprehensive training programmes for staff and volunteers of disability sport and recreation organisations, focusing on inclusive practices, emerging technologies, and agile management approaches.
- Foster partnerships between disability sport and recreation organisations and other stakeholders, such as healthcare providers, education institutions, and technology companies.
- Continue to conduct regular surveys and research studies to gather data on participation rates, barriers, and emerging trends in disability sport and recreation.

## Individual and collective focus (organisational focus)

Sport NZ, Halberg, PNZ, SONZ, and national and regional disability sport organisations acknowledge the need for improved efficiency and collaboration within the disability sport and recreation sector and across the sport and recreation sector. They recognise that this can be achieved without structural changes by implementing several key strategies.

Role clarity is essential, with organisations conducting workshops to define each entity's unique mandate and encourage specialisation. This approach will reduce duplication and allow focus on individual strengths. Strategic planning should be aligned across organisations to complement rather than compete. Platforms for sharing specialised knowledge can be created without diluting core focus areas.

Collaboration is crucial, with joint strategic planning sessions and regular inter-organisational meetings enhancing communication and identifying common goals. Sharing resources, expertise, and exploring coordinated funding strategies can maximise impact.

The sector must work towards a unified narrative by aligning diverse perspectives and developing a common understanding of challenges and goals. A universal message should emphasise how an inclusive sport and recreation sector benefits everyone. Public education campaigns can inform stakeholders about each organisation's contributions, and inter-organisational referral systems can be established for specific needs.

Strengthening regional collaboration networks and implementing leadership programmes emphasising cross-organisational skills can improve overall coordination. The sector should challenge the assumption that disability sport and recreation is a niche concern, positioning it as integral to the broader sport and recreation landscape.

### Opportunities:

- Align strategic planning across organisations to ensure complementary rather than competing efforts.
- Establish systems to refer inquiries or requests to the most appropriate organisation based on their defined roles.
- Identify opportunities for joint projects that leverage each organisation's strengths and resources.
- Explore ways to share resources, expertise, and best practice across disability sport and recreation.
- Strengthen regional networks to ensure consistent approaches and avoid duplication at the local level
- Develop strategies to effectively communicate the sector's unified message to all levels, from government officials to grassroots participants.
- Support the development and strengthening of regional networks to ensure consistent approaches and avoid duplication at the local level.



## Disability sport and recreation sector overview<sup>4</sup>

### Where have we come from?

#### 1937

The Physical Welfare and Recreation Act was passed, establishing the National Council of Physical Welfare and Recreation to provide advice on sports provision, including for disabled people. This marked the beginning of government involvement in disability sport, but largely reflected a medical model of disability and a deficit view focusing on “fixing” or improving individuals with impairments.

#### 1960s

Community-led disability sport organisations like Paralympics New Zealand and regional parafeds were established to provide dedicated opportunities, as national sports organisations and government neglected disability sport. The Halberg Trust was launched in 1963, to enhance the lives of physically disabled young New Zealanders through sport and recreation.

#### 1973

The Recreation and Sport Act created a new Ministry and Council for Recreation and Sport, and the Advisory Committee on Recreation for the Disabled (ACORD) was formed to advise on Halberg, PNZ, Parafeds and SONZ. This signalled a shift towards a social model of disability. However, ACORD's impact was limited, and Halberg, PNZ, Parafeds and SONZ remained marginalised.

#### 1970s

ACORD focused on professional development for those working in disability sport and produced resources like the film “The Fun Gap” to raise awareness. The Commonwealth Paraplegic Games in 1974 raised awareness but failed to drive sustainable change in the sport sector.

#### 1981

The United Nations International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981 was a call to raise awareness and understanding of disability and improve the lives of disabled people. One in 10 New Zealanders were identified as living with disabilities. Regional committees were established to promote their participation in ‘normal’ sport and sport deliverers became more aware of their needs. The impact of this campaign was short-lived.

#### 1982

Special Olympics NZ was formed and joined the Special Olympics movement founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver. The movement has grown to more than 3.7 million athletes in over 170 countries in all regions of the world, providing year-round sports training, athletic competition and other related programmes.

#### 1984

The Sport on the Move report under a newly elected Labour government signalled a change in direction, disbanding the Council for Recreation and Sport (and consequently ACORD) and establishing the Hillary Commission. Two key functions of the new Commission were to facilitate equal opportunities for participation by all New Zealanders and encouraging people to make the most effective use of their abilities and aptitudes.

#### 1998

The Hillary Commission released the “No Exceptions” strategy aimed at improving disability sport participation and opportunities.

#### 2001

The New Zealand Disability strategy was introduced to mandate government agencies to develop implementation plans to address its objectives.

#### 2002

The Hillary Commission's successor Sparc used the New Zealand Disability strategy as its disability implementation plan, but progress was hindered by a lack of capacity, resources, and buy-in from mainstream sport and recreation organisations. Sparc appointed its first disabled board member.

#### 2005

Sparc updated the “No Exceptions” strategy with principles aligned to the NZ Disability Strategy. The strategy promoted an inclusive sport and recreation sector that provides opportunity for all people to participate, including disabled people and reflected the internationally prevalent policy model of mainstream inclusiveness.

A National Advisory Board was established in late 2005 to advise on the implementation of the strategy, and a staff member was appointed to advocate for disability issues. Sparc's key partners in the implementation of the strategy have been the Halberg Foundation, Special Olympics New Zealand, and Paralympics New Zealand.

Work on the strategy focused on establishing a collaborative framework to provide a coordinated approach to delivering sport and recreation opportunities to the disabled; encouraging national sport organisations to establish disability action plans that better provided for inclusiveness within their sports; delivering training at regional level that targets teachers, coaches and club officials, promoting increased awareness of disability issues; and responsiveness to disabled people in educational and sporting settings, including encouraging local authorities and sports clubs to make existing and new facilities accessible to disabled people<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> McBean, Townsend, Petrie. *An historical analysis of disability sport policy in Aotearoa New Zealand*. 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Sport NZ board paper, 2008

## 2007

A Sparc progress review found the No Exceptions strategy was not being adequately implemented due to a combination of poor programme design, unclear objectives, and insufficient collaboration between sector organisations. It concluded the scope of the strategy was overly ambitious and unrealistic.

## 2008

Sparc ended the No Exceptions strategy six months ahead of its June 2009 finish date, with the support of SONZ and PNZ. At the same time, it discontinued the advisory committee and the senior disability advisor role, with the intent of seeking advice through the office of disability issues.

The revised disability approach diffused responsibility across the sector, through Halberg, Special Olympics New Zealand and Paralympics New Zealand and increased funding to those entities. Halberg Foundation was given responsibility for investing into the disability sector – \$300,000 per annum. This approach aligned with the recently elected government’s decentralised approach.<sup>6</sup>

## 2016

The Office for Disability Issues launched a refreshed New Zealand Disability Strategy, which identifies the importance of physical activity for disabled people.

## 2018

Sport NZ research highlighted the lower participation rates, additional barriers, and physical literacy gaps faced by disabled people in New Zealand, while also demonstrating the health and wellbeing benefits of active participation for this population.<sup>7</sup> The report showed that one in four New Zealand adults (24 percent) identified as disabled; 11 percent of children under 15 years old (95,000 children) are disabled, with half having conditions present from birth; and 53 percent of disabled people have more than one type of impairment

Sport NZ commissioned a disability review following concerns about lack of leadership from the disability sector. The review found that New Zealanders with disabilities continued to have less involvement in sport and active recreation than their able-bodied counterparts. It also identified providers of disability sport and recreation expected Sport NZ to take on a stronger leadership role and that roles and responsibilities within the sector were unclear. The review promoted the need to establish enabling attitudes, and increase capability through knowledge-sharing, workforce development, and partnerships between disability and sport/recreation sectors.<sup>8</sup>

## 2019

In response to the review, Sport NZ initiated a Disability Plan to address the issues identified in the review, had investment approved to implement the plan and recruited a Disability Consultant to lead the implementation.

The main intent of Sport NZ’s Disability Plan is to transform opportunities in play, active recreation and sport for disabled people and create an equitable system where disabled people have equal opportunities to achieve their goals and aspirations. It seeks to build system-wide capability through investing in partnerships, funds, and programmes supporting disabled children. Seven million dollars was committed to the plan over three years.

A 2024 report on the implementation of the plan showed progress to have been modest. More staff dedicated to fostering an inclusive environment have been hired, and Sport NZ has strengthened relationships with Ministry of Disabled People (Whaikaha) and has established a disability inclusion fund. The persistence of ableist attitudes within sport and recreation organisations remain significant barriers and the gap between “opportunity” and take up is large.

## 2020

Sport NZ stopped putting No Exceptions Investment through the Halberg Foundation and was redirected to a Sport NZ disability fund aligned with its disability plan.

## 2020 – 2024

COVID-19 prompted a new government funding initiative Strengthen and Adapt to support the sector’s recovery, including the disability sport and recreation sector. Paralympics NZ were part of the first wave of organisations to benefit from the new funding, with Halberg Foundation and Special Olympics NZ part of wave two.

In September 2024 Sport NZ published progress on its disability plan. It promoted definitive steps towards becoming a more inclusive sector – more organisations are providing adapted activities, inclusion training, accessible facilities, and tailored events and programmes than ever before. However, it also acknowledged more work is needed to create better experiences for disabled people, as they continue to participate less often and have poorer experiences than their non-disabled peers.

6 Sport NZ board paper, 2008

7 [Active NZ Spotlight on disability December 2018](#)

8 [Cockburn, Atkinson: Disability sport and recreation: 2018](#)

## What we are currently seeing

### Increased value and visibility of paralympic sport

Disability sport is experiencing advances like those in women's sport, including a higher profile, more equitable financial rewards, and greater media coverage. Events like the 2022 Commonwealth Games have provided equal opportunities for both women and men, as well as medal events for Para sports.

### Global inclusion efforts

There is a worldwide movement to address equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in sport. This includes increasing Special Olympics Unified Sports opportunities and fostering closer collaboration between the IOC and International Paralympic Committee.

### Technological advances

Major improvements in prosthetics, wheelchair technology, and other assistive devices continue to transform the sport and recreation arena for athletes and participants with disabilities, enabling unprecedented athletic achievements (for those who can afford it). Specialised prostheses and sports wheelchairs made of lightweight composite materials have significantly improved performance and reduced injuries for amputee and wheelchair athletes. This technology advances will also assist accessibility and quality of experience in recreation. Access to this technology is expensive and therefore limited.

### Neurodiversity awareness

There is growing awareness of neurodiversity, with autism, ADHD, and dyslexia being positioned as normal variations in the human genome, rather than disorders to be cured. One-in-five New Zealanders are neurodivergent<sup>9</sup>. This growing awareness has yet to be reflected in sport and recreation resourcing or support.

### Physical activity in the school setting

Disabled youth in New Zealand have lower physical activity levels and are less likely to be involved in sport and recreation compared to their non-disabled peers. They experience barriers to participation across school and in the community, suggesting opportunities remain to improve the design and delivery of opportunities in a more inclusive manner<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Statistics NZ; 2013 Disability Survey

<sup>10</sup> Health NZ; 2022/23 New Zealand Health Survey

### Government funding and support

The 2024 New Zealand Budget allocated \$1.1 billion over five years to support disabled people and ensure the Ministry of Disabled People (Whaikaha) can continue delivering critical disability support services. This funding aims to address demand and cost pressures on various disability support services, including home and community support, respite care, and environmental support services. Furthermore, the government announced an independent review into the disability support system, including exploring the purpose of different funding streams within Disability Support Services and the appropriate level of flexibility for each.

### Ongoing challenges

While societal attitudes toward diversity and inclusion have become more accepting and progressive, prejudice and pushback persist. Cultural divides and a polarisation of views on societal values and social justice mean they are becoming increasingly politicised and complex issues to navigate, challenging organisations to create inclusive and equitable outcomes. There is also a social lag between cultural attitudes towards disability and progressive social legislation.

The maintenance of disability sport and recreation faces significant challenges, including limited funding and resources compared to mainstream sport and recreation, a lack of systematic linkages between outcomes, investments, and programmes, and the persistence of ableist attitudes within sport organisations.



## What the disability community think will happen in the future (based on those surveyed)

A survey of over 100 participants, mostly working in or members of traditional disability sport and recreation organisations, identified how people are thinking about the future of disability sport and recreation. This is what we generally think will happen if there is limited change, is not radically different from today, and is derived from what we see in the world around us.

Analysis of the survey identified the critical assumptions that are informing decisions and aspirations. Identifying these assumptions invites exploration about whether they are accurate and helping the sector progress or holding it back. Recognising assumptions as just that, rather than facts, is crucial for preparing for unexpected possibilities and addressing unforeseen challenges.

### If things are going well for disability sport and recreation, it is assumed:

		Implicit assumptions:
<b>Mainstream Integration</b>	Greater inclusion of disability sport and recreation opportunities and pathways within mainstream organisations, clubs, facilities, and community spaces is a major goal. National and regional sports bodies would be expected to have comprehensive diversity and inclusion plans, with disability inclusion woven into their standard operations.	There is the capacity and capability available to upskill mainstream organisations and facilities. Lingering stigma would be removed through the creation of more inclusive environments. Traditional sport (as opposed to recreation) is viewed as the most important channel.
<b>Pathways and opportunities</b>	Clear pathways from grassroots participation to elite competition need to be established, offering a diverse array of sport and recreation activities catered to different abilities and interests. This includes dedicated programmes, competitions, and events at local, regional and national levels.	The potential capacity and capability are available to establish clear pathways.
<b>Infrastructure and resources</b>	Significant improvements in accessible facilities, equipment, trained staff/coaches, funding, and other resources are necessary to support the growth and development of disability sport and recreation.	Commitment of resources to deliver accessible infrastructure, equipment, trained staff, and funding will lead to sector growth. Growing organisations is viewed as the objective rather than fostering more inclusive/accessible opportunities in 'mainstream' provision (e.g. local authorities, schools).
<b>Collaboration and leadership</b>	Enhanced collaboration, strategic alignment, and effective leadership across disability sport and recreation organisations, mainstream sports bodies, government agencies and community groups is crucial for driving positive change and ensuring quality delivery.	A co-ordinated approach across organisations will unlock efficiencies to enable more cost-effective development.
<b>Media presence and awareness</b>	Increased media coverage, promotion, and public awareness of disability sport and recreation will help raise profile, showcase achievements, and foster greater understanding and acceptance within society.	Media coverage and public awareness will enhance societal acceptance and improve the sector accessing resources.

## It is assumed the issues holding disability sport and recreation back are:

		<b>Implicit assumptions:</b>
<b>Funding and resources</b>	Lack of sustainable and reliable funding for disability sport and recreation organisations, programmes, and initiatives. Limited access to quality facilities, equipment, and venues that are accessible and adapted for disabled people. Heavy reliance on ageing volunteers and lack of funding for staffing and professional development.	<p>More money means more/better programmes.</p> <p>The sector is financially disadvantaged as opposed to non-disabled sport and recreation.</p> <p>Increasing facility access will increase participation.</p> <p>The ageing trend will ultimately reduce volunteers and staff, thereby impacting programme delivery.</p> <p>Investment in staffing and professional development will improve programme delivery.</p>
<b>Accessibility and inclusion</b>	Transport and infrastructure are physical accessibility barriers to participation. There is a lack of inclusive attitudes, awareness, and understanding within mainstream sport and recreation organisations. There are limited opportunities and pathways for disabled people, especially those with intellectual or invisible disabilities.	<p>Removal of physical barriers will increase participation.</p> <p>Others have access and disabled people need it and want it.</p> <p>Improving awareness and skill of sport and recreation organisations will increase inclusion for disabled participants and athletes.</p> <p>Increased opportunities and pathways for those with intellectual or invisible disabilities will see increased participation.</p>
<b>Collaboration and coordination</b>	There is fragmentation and duplication of effort among disability sport and recreation organisations, leading to inefficiencies. There is a lack of strategic alignment, communication, and collaboration between national, regional, and local organisations. Unclear roles and responsibilities among organisations, creating gaps in service delivery.	<p>A unified approach across organisations will unlock efficiencies to enable more cost-effective development.</p> <p>Service gaps and inefficiencies will be eliminated when roles are clarified.</p>
<b>Societal attitudes and awareness</b>	Persisting societal attitudes and lack of understanding about disability and inclusion. Limited visibility and awareness of opportunities for disabled people to participate in sport and recreation. Perception of sport as a "luxury" rather than a right for disabled young people.	<p>Removing negative societal views on disability will remove barriers to participation.</p> <p>A greater awareness of the opportunities in sport and recreation will ensure higher participation rates of disabled people.</p> <p>The broader population has a taken for granted view of what constitutes necessities, luxuries, and human rights.</p>
<b>Volunteer and personnel shortages</b>	A shortage of volunteers, trained coaches, instructors, and staff knowledgeable about adapting activities for disabled young people can impact the quality and accessibility of sport and recreational programmes.	<p>The demographic forces that potentially reduce volunteer availability can be overcome.</p> <p>Knowledge and confidence would improve attitudes toward inclusion.</p>

## Priority actions

		<b>Implicit assumptions:</b>
<b>Increase visibility and awareness</b>	Launch public awareness campaigns to challenge stigma and promote the benefits of disability sport and recreation, and improve visibility of inclusive opportunities across media platforms, schools and communities.	Negative societal attitudes and a lack of awareness about disability sport and recreation are major barriers.
<b>Foster collaboration and alignment</b>	Establish forums and alliances for stakeholders to collaborate, share resources, and align strategies, and clarify roles and responsibilities to reduce duplication and fragmentation across the sector. Encourage partnerships between disability organisations, sports bodies, and community groups.	Stronger stakeholder collaboration will lead to more efficient resource allocation and impactful strategies.
<b>Enhance accessibility and inclusion</b>	Advocate for improved accessibility standards and funding for facility upgrades, and provide inclusion training for coaches, instructors, and staff. Empower disabled athletes to take on leadership roles.	Continual advocacy, funding, and training efforts will enhance accessibility.
<b>Prioritise grassroots participation</b>	Focus on increasing participation through accessible local programmes and community initiatives and support existing grassroots providers delivering opportunities. Develop pathways for transitioning participants into mainstream sport and recreation.	Accessible local programmes are crucial for increasing overall participation. It is not all about increasing funding at the top.
<b>Sustainable funding and accountability</b>	Advocate for equitable distribution of funding based on community needs and impact, and hold funded organisations accountable for delivering inclusive and quality programmes. Explore policy to create accountability for inclusion across sport and recreation organisations.	Securing long-term funding and ensure proper utilisation of resources is essential.
<b>Capacity building</b>	Invest in education resources and training for coaches and instructors on inclusive practices and build capacity of schools and community groups to offer inclusive opportunities. Empower families and provide guidance on accessing suitable activities.	Sport and recreation organisations, local authorities, schools, and communities will develop the capacity to deliver inclusive programmes effectively.

These assumptions probably do not surprise those within the disability sport and recreation sector. It reflects the underpinning assumptions many people and organisations in the disability sport and recreation sector make, that then form the basis of plans.

Making assumptions about the future is natural and necessary. However, there are no facts about the future. What has always been true might not continue to be true.

Recognising the assumptions we hold can be the foundation for renewed hope and a sense of possibility. If we leave room for the idea that what we think will happen might not come to pass, we can prepare for a range of possibilities and consider how we might create what does not yet exist.

## Most impactful disruptors to disability sport/recreation

Sport NZ has identified a number of phenomenon as causing the most disruption to the future of sport and recreation in New Zealand - [see the disruptors](#). Of these, disability sport and recreation survey representatives identified the following as potentially most disruptive to the sector.

<b><u>Workforce changes</u></b>	The play, active recreation and sport sector will be subject to the same forces (e.g. demographic) shaping other workplaces. Challenging for the paid sector, these will prove particularly challenging for the key volunteer support groups.
<b><u>Social wellbeing policy</u></b>	Governments determine the direction of social wellbeing policies (e.g. social assistance, housing etc.) and can affect sport and recreation participation.
<b><u>Individual wellbeing</u></b>	Health trends in New Zealand, often associated with lifestyle patterns, indicate chronic morbidities (e.g. diabetes) will be a significant concern over the coming decades. Sport and recreation are likely to become more important as health systems look to continue evolving beyond disease response to wellbeing support.
<b><u>Social Resilience</u></b>	Changing patterns of social resilience that are associated with levels of trust, changing social values and world views. For example, there is increasing awareness and acceptance of neurodiversity. Reflects debates within New Zealand around the collective support of common norms and rules.
<b><u>Status of public funding</u></b>	Managing the government's finances will be challenged by a multitude of global and domestic challenges arising from the pandemic aftermath, geopolitical tensions, and climate demands. Economic policies will determine future funding status.
<b><u>Inequality</u></b>	Socio-economic inequalities, while primarily associated with financial measures, also include the digital divide determining access to digital products and services so vital to full participation in contemporary New Zealand. Those with a disability often face access and financial barriers.
<b><u>Governance response</u></b>	Reforms in health, local government, and education government agencies, for example, all have the potential to influence Halberg, PNZ, SONZ and regional disability sport organisations.
<b><u>Disposable income</u></b>	Focused on the economic position for New Zealand households given the wider economic context. Levels of income and trends of indebtedness are key factors in New Zealander's ability to participate in sport and recreation.
<b><u>The changing nature of work</u></b>	Even before the pandemic, the idea of a stable career and retirement was threatened by changing job patterns and increased longevity. Together with more transient employment contracts and the emergence of automation, the future of work is looking increasingly complex.
<b><u>Athlete and participant wellbeing</u></b>	The pressures on athletes and participants continue to intensify with implications for both physical and mental health. It will remain a critical dimension to the future competition environment with psychological awareness, changing social context, and appropriate use of technologies (e.g. biometric data) all part of the mix.

## Alternative futures

To identify possible and plausible alternative futures for disability sport and recreation, the four futures framework is used.<sup>11</sup> This describes four broad categories of how the future may unfold.

- 1. Growth**  
Continued development along current trajectories.
- 2. Collapse**  
Sudden breakdown of systems and ways of being.
- 3. Discipline**  
New forms of control and restraint imposed to prevent collapse.
- 4. Transformation**  
Emergence of entirely novel systems and ways of being.

These four futures encompass the range of possibilities people envision for the future. The disruptors identified by participants in the process as the most impactful and uncertain, were weaved through the four scenarios.

<hr/> <p><b>Growth</b></p> <p>The sector has embraced technology and is providing data-driven insights and promoting active lifestyles.</p>	<hr/> <p><b>Discipline</b></p> <p>The sector focusses on regional communities, reducing travel, promoting localised engagement, using eco-friendly equipment and facilities.</p>	<hr/> <p><b>Collapse</b></p> <p>The sector shifts to low-cost community-supported activities due to resource scarcity and economic instability.</p>	<hr/> <p><b>Transformation</b></p> <p>The sector is rapidly transforming due to technological advances enhancing human capabilities.</p>
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The full narratives for each scenario are provided in Appendix 2. In considering the narratives, the participants were asked to consider:

- What implications the scenario has for participants, providers and stakeholders?
- What steps disability sport and recreation can take to develop greater resilience to the challenges?
- How can disability sport and recreation work to support the development of the more positive outcomes?
- What actions disability sport and recreation can take to ensure its plans are effective across multiple scenarios and not predicated on one?

**Overall, the aim was not to judge whether the scenario will occur, but to consider what disability sport and recreation would do if it did.**

<sup>11</sup> Created by renowned futurist Jim Dator who specialises in understanding and developing alternative futures.

## Scenario A: Growth

New Zealand's sport and recreation sector has embraced technology, is providing data-driven insights and promoting active lifestyles. Digital solutions ensure financial inclusion and accessibility, while continuous learning platforms aid skill development. Environmental concerns have led to sustainable operations, and global connectivity fosters international collaboration and competition, celebrating athletic excellence and cultural exchange.

### Key Implications

#### Bridging the digital divide

While digital advances like virtual reality, personalised training programmes, and remote coaching can enhance accessibility and inclusivity, the digital divide threatens to exclude those with limited access, finances, or technical skills.

#### Sustainable funding for accessible programmes

With the anticipated increase in demand for accessible rehabilitation and injury prevention programmes due to climate change and strained healthcare systems, securing sustainable funding will be crucial.

#### Holistic wellbeing approach

There will be a growing focus on preventative healthcare and active lifestyles.

#### Collaboration and advocacy

There will be an increased need for collaboration and strong advocacy leadership within the disability sport and recreation sector and into other sectors.

### Opportunities

#### Virtual and augmented reality

These technologies can be used to break down geographical barriers, offer remote coaching, and provide tailored training experiences for disabled athletes and participants.

#### Personalised training programmes

Technology can enable the creation of customised training regimens that cater to individual needs and abilities of disabled participants.

#### Remote coaching

Digital platforms can facilitate coaching and instruction from a distance, making activity more accessible to those in remote areas or with mobility limitations.

#### Holistic wellbeing focus

Disability sport and recreation programmes can be positioned as essential contributors to physical and mental health, social wellbeing and provide a sense of purpose, aligning with the growing emphasis on preventative healthcare.

#### Cross-sector collaboration

There is an opportunity to foster partnerships across government sectors like health, housing and education to promote inclusive practices.

#### International knowledge-sharing

Collaborating with global organisations can drive innovation and promote cultural exchange through sport and recreation.

#### Adaptive programming for ageing populations

Catering to the needs of older adults who may need to work beyond traditional retirement ages.

#### Creative funding models

Exploring partnerships with healthcare organisations, corporate sponsorships, and crowdfunding initiatives to secure sustainable funding, and ensuring existing funding is deployed for maximum affect.

#### Inclusive engagement strategies

Using real-life stories and lived experiences to connect decision-makers with the actual impact of policies and programmes on people's lives.

#### Multi-level engagement

Reaching out to stakeholders at all levels, from government agencies to families and individuals, to gather diverse perspectives.

#### Improved accessibility in feedback mechanisms

Finding ways to include voices of those typically left out of surveys and traditional feedback channels, and include them in programme and service design.

#### Enhanced training for coaches and organisers

Providing better resources and preparation for accommodating participants with diverse needs.

## Necessary Capabilities

### Technological expertise and adoption

- Workforce proficiency in using and maintaining virtual reality, augmented reality, and AI-powered training systems.
- Ability to implement and leverage data analytics for personalised coaching and performance tracking.
- Skills to develop and manage accessible digital platforms and mobile applications.

### Digital accessibility and inclusion

- Expertise in designing user-friendly interfaces for people with diverse impairments.
- Knowledge of assistive technologies and their integration into sport and recreation equipment and facilities.
- Capability to provide digital literacy training and support for participants.

### Adaptability and flexibility

- Ability to create flexible programming that accommodates diverse schedules and commitments.
- Skills to design and implement hybrid in-person/virtual participation models.
- Capacity to quickly adjust operations in response to changing health guidelines or societal shifts.

### Collaboration and partnership building

- Skills in establishing and maintaining cross-sector partnerships (e.g with councils, healthcare providers, technology companies).
- Ability to facilitate knowledge sharing and best practices across organisations.
- Expertise in navigating cultural differences for international collaborations.

### Creative funding and resource management

- Proficiency in diverse fundraising strategies, including grants, sponsorships, and crowdfunding.
- Skills in financial planning and sustainable resource allocation.
- Ability to develop innovative revenue streams and cost-saving measures.

### Global advocacy and political engagement

- Knowledge of international disability rights and sport governance.
- Skills in policy analysis and development related to disability sport and recreation.
- Ability to engage with policymakers and influence decision-making processes.

### Storytelling and impact communication

- Expertise in creating compelling narratives that highlight the impact of disability sport and recreation on participants and their whānau.
- Skills in using various media to share stories and experiences of participants.
- Ability to translate complex data into accessible and engaging content.

### Stakeholder engagement and participatory approaches

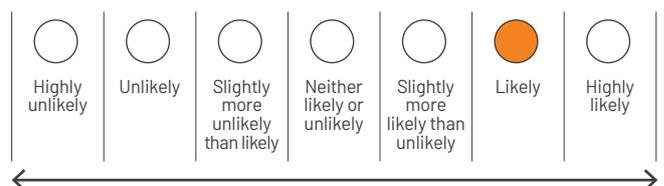
- Proficiency in organising and facilitating inclusive stakeholder consultations.
- Skills in developing and implementing participatory decision-making processes.
- Ability to engage with diverse groups, including those typically underrepresented.

### Facility and equipment management

- Expertise in universal design principles for active spaces and places.
- Knowledge of adaptive sport and recreation equipment and maintenance requirements.
- Ability to conduct accessibility audits and implement necessary modifications.

## Plausibility 6

This scenario was viewed as plausible given several of the challenges exist today and a belief of growing recognition for the disability sport and recreation sector. There were doubts about improved collaboration and the speed of future progress.



## Scenario B: Discipline

New Zealand's sport and recreation sector embraces sustainability by focusing on regional communities, reducing travel, promoting localised engagement, using eco-friendly equipment and facilities, ingrained environmental ethics, virtual participation enabling wider networks, and promoting inclusive wellbeing through responsible lifestyles.

### Key Implications

#### Emphasis on local and regional focus

With sport and recreation opportunities shifting towards catering to local communities, reducing travel needs, and promoting localised fan engagement and access to local recreation, disability sport and recreation providers will need to prioritise regional outreach and community-based programming.

#### Sustainable and eco-friendly practices

The sector's embrace of minimalism, responsible consumption, durable and repairable equipment, eco-friendly apparel, and resource efficiency throughout facility lifecycles necessitates disability sport and recreation providers to adopt sustainable practices.

#### Investment in accessible technologies

With technological advances playing a pivotal role in enhancing accessibility and inclusivity, assistive technologies and virtual and augmented platforms become more important.

### Opportunities

#### Leveraging technology for accessibility and inclusion

Invest in assistive technologies, virtual and augmented reality platforms, and reliable digital resources to enhance participation, enable remote engagement, and provide personalised training, while bridging the digital divide and implementing disciplined information sharing to connect communities without isolation. Explore innovative ways technology can foster inclusive community connections while ensuring equal access and maintaining human interaction.

#### Fostering collaboration and coordination

To optimise the sport and recreation ecosystem, we should strengthen partnerships between organisations, establish clear roles, maximise resources, create pathways for athletes, implement cross-government collaboration, and encourage knowledge sharing across sectors. This comprehensive approach will streamline efforts, eliminate duplication, and foster a more inclusive and efficient environment for participants of all abilities.

#### Promoting sustainable and eco-friendly practices

To promote sustainability in the sector, organisations should implement waste reduction strategies, develop equipment sharing programmes, provide environmental education, and align with broader societal trends towards

responsible lifestyles, all of which can enhance the industry's value proposition and appeal to environmentally conscious participants and stakeholders.

#### Addressing workforce capability and training

Invest in specialised training programmes to nurture a skilled workforce adept at delivering inclusive programming, navigating diverse needs and changing technologies, while focusing on resource efficiency requirements in workforce development.

#### Advocating for inclusive physical and mental wellbeing

To promote holistic well-being, organisations should leverage preventative healthcare initiatives and develop accessible active lifestyle programmes, while educating disabled people about the value of physical activity and ensuring that all health and wellness offerings are inclusive and accessible to everyone.

#### Exploring innovative funding models

To secure financial stability, collaborate with healthcare organisations and seek corporate sponsorships for accessible programmes, while leveraging community-based initiatives and developing sustainable funding models to reduce reliance on government support; simultaneously, address resistance to user-pays systems, particularly among disabled people, to ensure equitable access to services.

#### Enhancing decision-making and planning processes

Implement inclusive co-design approaches that involve all stakeholders, especially youth voices, adhering to the principle of "Nothing about us without us" while adopting a long-term view in planning and balancing diverse perspectives in scenario development.

#### Improving efficiency and resource management

Implement a disciplined approach to decision-making that focuses on value for money and reducing waste, while fostering a sense of pride in building through this more structured methodology. This approach will not only improve efficiency but also cultivate a culture of excellence and fiscal responsibility within the organisation.

#### Addressing ethical considerations

In disability sport and recreation, it's crucial to prioritise ethics across all aspects while ensuring inclusive decision-making processes. Additionally, it's important to carefully balance technological advancements with their potential impacts on disability prevalence, maintaining a thoughtful and ethical approach to progress in this field.

## Challenges

### Bridging the digital divide

To prevent the exacerbation of existing inequalities, it is crucial to ensure the affordability and accessibility of advanced technologies (such as AI, VR, and online platforms) while addressing barriers like limited access, finances, or technical skills.

### Balancing technology and physical activity

Preventing technology from replacing social opportunities in sport and recreation, and maintaining a healthy balance and integration between screen time and physical activity.

### Securing sustainable funding

Navigating uncertain economic times and explore creative funding models (healthcare collaborations, social investment in health and wellbeing).

### Workforce training and capability building

Investing in specialised training programmes for inclusive sport and recreation, fostering cross-sector knowledge sharing, and adapting to changing technologies and resource efficiency requirements are essential strategies for advancing the field.

### Addressing changing work-life balance

Supporting staff in managing evolving work patterns and ensuring their wellbeing while meeting programme demands.

### Educating the benefits of being active

Developing effective communication strategies to highlight the importance of physical activity, tailoring messages for different demographic groups.

### Fostering collaboration and strategic alignment

Building partnerships across and beyond the sector, aligning efforts with national and regional organisations and advocating for inclusive opportunities on a broader scale.

### Implementing inclusive decision-making

Incorporating youth voices and insights in planning processes and adhering to the principle of “Nothing about us without us.”

### Adopting co-design approaches

Moving away from top-down decision-making, and actively involving stakeholders and participants in programme and policy design.

### Cross-government collaboration

Developing and implementing agreed policies across government departments and overcoming bureaucratic barriers to inter-departmental cooperation.

### Maintaining flexibility

Developing adaptive strategies to respond to unforeseen challenges and balancing long-term planning with the ability to pivot when necessary.

## Necessary Capabilities

### Technological and digital accessibility expertise

- Develop proficiency in assistive technologies, virtual/augmented reality platforms, and digital accessibility standards.
- Create accessible online resources, websites and mobile applications.
- Implement sustainable and eco-friendly technology solutions.
- Train staff on effectively utilising inclusive technologies.
- Adapt programming and facilities to address environmental impacts.
- Explore innovative solutions for accessible outdoor recreation.

### Community engagement and collaboration

- Build strong community outreach capabilities and local partnerships.
- Foster cross-sector collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- Develop coordinated service delivery models.
- Engage in co-design approaches with diverse stakeholders, especially youth and disabled people.
- Implement inclusive decision-making processes.

### Inclusive programming and education

- Create specialised curricula for diverse needs.
- Develop adaptive programming capabilities.
- Integrate environmental education and ethics into activities.
- Build education and awareness around physical activity benefits.
- Design inclusive marketing and communication strategies.

### Strategic planning and management

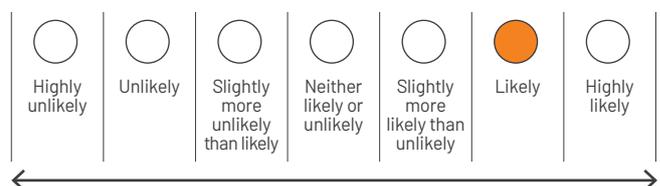
- Cultivate long-term strategic planning skills.
- Develop sustainable funding models.
- Implement facility lifecycle management practices.
- Foster adaptability and innovation in operations.
- Build advocacy and leadership capabilities.

### Workforce development

- Nurture a skilled workforce adept at inclusive programming.
- Train staff on sustainability practices and resource efficiency.
- Develop change management and adaptability skills.
- Promote continuous learning and cross-sector knowledge sharing.

## Plausibility 7

The scenario reflects the growth of inclusion and some of the elements that are keeping things the way they are.



## Scenario C: Collapse

New Zealand's sport and recreation sector shifts from traditional resource-intensive activities to low-cost community-supported ones due to resource scarcity and economic instability. Central funding is limited but the sector fosters social cohesion. Programmes integrate resilience training to prepare for crises, prioritising vulnerable populations with rigorous standards ensuring adaptability and inclusivity. The sector collaborates with health professionals for support services and targeted cultural strategies. With variable technology access, informal education maintains expertise through rigorous training. Organisations may take governance roles facilitating local cooperation, reflecting resilience, teamwork and adaptability.

### Key Implications

#### Increased reliance on community-based solutions and local partnerships

With limited central funding, disability sport and recreation providers will need to forge stronger local collaborative networks with schools, community centres, and individuals with specialised skills. This community-driven approach is crucial for bridging gaps in accessibility and programming for disabled people.

#### Emphasis on resilience, wellbeing, and social connection through sport and recreation

As mental and physical health markers decline, especially in vulnerable communities, disability sport and recreation programmes will play a vital role in promoting physical activity, social interaction, and a sense of purpose. These programmes will become cornerstones of community wellbeing initiatives, providing safe and inclusive spaces.

#### Exploring new avenues like virtual worlds for participation

While virtual worlds present isolation concerns, they offer opportunities for people with mobility and communication limitations to participate in adapted virtual experiences and competitions designed specifically for disabled athletes and participants. Providers must explore these new avenues while addressing potential risks.

#### Navigating complex cross-sector partnerships and funding sources

In a financially strained environment, disability sport and recreation providers may need to engage in novel partnerships across sectors, even with non-traditional stakeholders. However, they must carefully evaluate motives and conditions attached to funding opportunities from such partnerships.

### Opportunities

#### Leveraging community partnerships and local networks

Forge collaborative partnerships with schools, community centres, and disability agencies, engage individuals with specialised skills to support programs, and create community-driven networks to bridge gaps in accessibility and programming.

#### Promoting wellbeing and social inclusion

Use sport and recreation programmes to boost physical and mental health in vulnerable communities, foster resilience, social interaction, and a sense of purpose through sport participation, and position disability sport and recreation as a cornerstone of community wellbeing initiatives.



**Exploring virtual and adaptive technologies**

Use virtual and augmented reality to break down geographical barriers, leverage adaptive equipment to offer personalised, accessible experiences, and expand training and competition opportunities through technology.

**Advocating for inclusivity and changing attitudes**

Use disability sport events to influence social change, raise awareness about disability through strategic advocacy efforts, and work towards changing societal perceptions and attitudes.

**Developing a skilled and adaptable workforce**

To enhance accessibility and inclusivity, organisations should invest in rigorous training programmes for staff and volunteers, focusing on building confidence in delivering quality experiences across various impairments while emphasising informal education and knowledge sharing within the organisation.

**Cross-sector collaboration and creative funding**

Explore novel partnerships with non-traditional stakeholders, develop creative funding models to secure sustainable resources, and streamline funding processes by demonstrating community impact.

**Emphasising social connection and unity**

Disability sport and recreation not only highlights the unique social bonds formed among participants but also serves as a powerful vehicle for community integration, celebrating the resilience and adaptability of the disability community.

**Linking physical activity, health and education**

Strengthen connections between disability sport, healthcare, and schools, position recreation programs as key components of holistic health initiatives, and advocate for increased physical education opportunities in special education.

**Empowering people as drivers of change**

Support and amplify the voices of disabled people in programme design, encourage disabled individuals to take on leadership and volunteer roles, and use personal stories to advocate for resources and inspire participation.

**Challenges****Bridging the digital divide**

Ensuring equitable access to virtual reality, augmented reality, and online platforms by making technological advancements affordable for disabled people across socio-economic backgrounds to prevent further exclusion due to lack of technological access.

**Balancing virtual and in-person experiences**

Addressing the limitations of virtual connections in providing quality social experiences and ensuring that the shift to digital platforms doesn't compromise the benefits of in-person interactions.

**Navigating complex cross-sector partnerships**

Carefully exploring new partnerships, evaluating potential conflicts of interest or conditions attached to funding opportunities, and balancing the benefits of partnerships with maintaining organisational integrity are crucial considerations when seeking to overcome resource constraints.

**Facilitating a cultural and societal shift**

Promoting community-wide knowledge and awareness of disability issues, addressing the 'doesn't sit with us' mentality in various sectors, and encouraging a whole-of-community approach to disability expertise and knowledge can be effectively achieved by leveraging disability sport events and programmes to influence social change.

**Adapting to changing disability demographics**

Responding to the increase in neurodiversity and decrease in certain physical disabilities and addressing the needs of an ageing population with increasing disability-related requirements. This includes partnering with the appropriate agencies.

**Continuing effective advocacy and storytelling**

Ensuring the voices and needs of disabled people are heard and addressed and using compelling narratives to maintain support and awareness.

**Adapting to increased mainstreaming of disabled people**

Supporting the transition of more disabled people into mainstream environments and ensuring adequate support and resources in integrated settings.



## Scenario D: Transformation

The global sport and recreation scene is rapidly transforming due to technological advances enhancing human capabilities. In New Zealand, biohacking technologies optimise performance, while wearables provide real-time feedback tailoring workouts. Augmented reality training simulations enhance skills for all. The blurring human-machine line driven by libertarian philosophy led to cyborg athletes and advanced prosthetics empowering the disabled. Virtual Reality revolutionised training. AI personalises wellness plans incorporating customised sport and recreation activities. As genetic engineering advances, the ethics of genetic optimisation for athletic performance are debated.

### Key Implications

#### The fragmented landscape of disability sport and recreation has become a well-oiled machine

Collaboration is thriving driven by a shared focus on long-term wellbeing. National, regional, and local organisations share knowledge and resources in unison, and funding streams are optimised, often from non-governmental sources.

#### The lack of trained professionals is no longer an issue

Expanded social provision has fostered the growth of training programs. Coaches, instructors, and volunteers now possess the expertise to cater to diverse needs and disabilities, with AI-powered insights informing the creation of personalised training plans and adaptive techniques.

#### Historic stigmas surrounding disability have gone

A widespread augmentation of athletes and participants with biophysical technologies has changed the narrative, and the public embraces a spectrum of abilities across sport and recreation, recognising all achievements as a testament to human potential.

### Opportunities

#### Diverse programme offerings

Develop a wider range of sport and recreation activities tailored to various impairments and ability levels, including programmes specifically designed for individuals with “invisible” impairments, to ensure opportunities are available on a level playing field for all participants.

#### Adaptable approaches

To enhance inclusivity in sports and recreation, it is essential to implement flexible activity modifications tailored to individual needs, create multi-disciplinary resources that support adaptable programming, and utilise technological advancements to make these activities more accessible.

#### Global connections

Foster international partnerships and exchanges in disability sport and recreation, leverage technology to facilitate global connections among participants and organisations and

organise international events and competitions to promote inclusivity on a global scale. Also scan the world and import and apply what’s good for New Zealand.

#### Partnerships and collaboration

Establish strong partnerships between disability organisations, sport and recreation bodies and government agencies, create a coordinated network to enhance programme delivery and reduce fragmentation and encourage cross-sector knowledge sharing and resource pooling.

#### Role clarification

Define clear roles and responsibilities for disability sport and recreation providers, develop a comprehensive sector strategy to address gaps and overlaps in service provision, and implement regular sector-wide meetings and forums to maintain alignment and collaboration.

#### Public education campaigns

Launch widespread public awareness campaigns on the importance and benefits of Halberg, PNZ, Parafeds and SONZ, use various media channels to showcase success stories and positive experience and engage celebrities and influencers to promote inclusive sports and recreation.

#### Stigma reduction

Develop targeted initiatives to counter discriminatory attitudes and misconceptions, promote positive representation of athletes with disabilities in mainstream media and encourage integration of Halberg, PNZ, Parafeds, SONZ and Sport NZ in school curricula to foster early acceptance and understanding.

#### Indigenous perspectives

Incorporate diverse cultural viewpoints, including indigenous perspectives, into programme development, respect and integrate traditional practices and connections to land in recreational activities and promote cultural exchange through disability sport and recreation programmes.

#### Balancing progress and tradition

Find innovative ways to embrace technological advances while maintaining important cultural connections, develop technologies that enhance rather than replace traditional sport and recreational activities and ensure that technological solutions are culturally sensitive and appropriate.

## Challenges

### Cost and financial barriers

Disabled people often face significant financial barriers to participation in sport and recreation, including the high costs of specialised equipment, expensive transportation requirements, prohibitive programme fees, support people and overall economic disadvantages associated with their conditions.

### Lack of awareness and discriminatory attitudes

Limited societal understanding of inclusive disability sport and recreation, prevalence of discriminatory attitudes and low expectations about the capabilities of disabled people.

### Lack of societal and human connection

Challenges in fostering meaningful connections in an increasingly digital world, balancing online engagement with in-person interactions and potential loss of cultural identity and connection to nature.

### Fragmented sector with lack of coordination

Gaps and overlaps between different organizations, unclear roles and responsibilities within the Halberg, PNZ, Parafeds, SONZ and Sport NZ sector and the need for improved coordination and collective leadership.

### Lack of clear pathways and opportunities

Limited visibility of structured pathways from local to elite levels and insufficient awareness of available opportunities for athletes with disabilities

### Governance challenges

Ensuring fair classification systems, upholding integrity in the face of technological advancements and balancing progress with cultural values and indigenous worldviews.

### Technology readiness gap

Disparity between available technology and organisational readiness and challenges in keeping pace with rapid technological advancements.

### Ethical dilemmas

Balancing the “should we” versus “can we” in technological implementations, addressing potential loopholes that could be exploited for competitive advantage and the environmental impact of technical developments.

### Mental health implications

Potential negative impacts of technology overuse on mental wellbeing, addressing the psychological challenges faced by athletes with disabilities and reserving mental health while embracing technological advances.

### Cultural integration challenges

Finding ways to incorporate diverse cultural perspectives into technological advancements and respecting and preserving cultural identities in an increasingly digital world.

## Necessary capabilities

### Staff training and development

- Train workforce in disability awareness and activity adaptation.
- Develop skills in effective communication with diverse participants.
- Improve technological understanding and adaptability.

### Partnership and coordination

- Build cross-sector partnerships to maximise resources and coordinate efforts to avoid duplication of services.
- Improve effectiveness of services and programmes to participants.
- Develop networking skills to connect with diverse stakeholders.

### Local access and visibility

- Lift the availability of coaching opportunities or local access to opportunities.
- Raise awareness about available opportunities.
- Improve marketing and communication strategies.

### Technological integration

- Keep pace with rapidly advancing technology.
- Adapt to new technologies in sport and recreation.
- Consider safety equipment needs in an “exoskeletal world.”

### Integrity and risk management

- Maintain sport integrity in the face of technological advances.
- Develop robust risk management strategies.
- Address potential ethical issues arising from technological enhances.

### Inclusive leadership and change management

- Lead inclusive transformation processes.
- Develop change management skills to bring everyone along on the journey.
- Address ableist attitudes and promote inclusivity.

### Holistic thinking and wellbeing focus

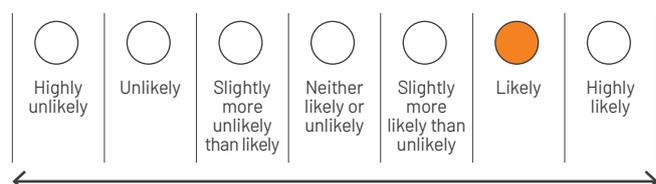
- Consider broader impacts of technological transformation.
- Integrate diverse worldviews, including indigenous perspectives.
- Maintain human wellbeing and connection to nature in an increasingly technological world.

### Education and skill development

- Collaborate with the education sector to respond to new advances in sport and recreation.
- Develop training programmes for emerging skillsets.
- Foster continuous learning and adaptation among staff and participants.

## Plausibility 7

Signs of technology advances, eSport, and the enhanced games suggest this scenario is likely. Having everyone on the journey was viewed as more of a stretch.



## Key capabilities

Each scenario will bring different opportunities and challenges, but there are a common set of capabilities that disability sport and recreation need to help them respond better to most of the scenarios. The follow capabilities were common across at least three scenarios.

<b>Adaptability and flexibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to create flexible programming that accommodates diverse schedules and commitments.</li> <li>• Capacity to quickly adjust operations in response to changing health guidelines or societal shifts.</li> <li>• Develop crisis management skills for effective operation in challenging situations.</li> <li>• Build capacity to pivot strategies in response to evolving community needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration and partnership building</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills in establishing and maintaining cross-sector partnerships (e.g., with healthcare providers, tech companies).</li> <li>• Ability to facilitate knowledge sharing and best practices across organisations.</li> <li>• Expertise in navigating cultural differences for international collaborations.</li> <li>• Develop coordinated service delivery models.</li> </ul>
<b>Technological and digital accessibility expertise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proficiency in using and maintaining virtual reality, augmented reality, and AI-powered training systems.</li> <li>• Ability to implement and leverage data analytics for personalised coaching and performance tracking.</li> <li>• Skills to develop and manage accessible digital platforms and mobile applications.</li> <li>• Create accessible online resources, websites, and mobile applications.</li> <li>• Implement sustainable and eco-friendly technology solutions.</li> <li>• Consider safety equipment needs in an “exoskeletal world.”</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusive leadership and empowerment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expertise in diversity and inclusion training for staff and volunteers.</li> <li>• Skills in community outreach and engagement to promote Halberg, PNZ, SONZ and regional disability sport organisations.</li> <li>• Ability to develop and implement effective advocacy campaigns.</li> <li>• Empower athletes to take on leadership and coaching roles.</li> <li>• Develop skills in guiding mainstream organisations to adapt to disability needs.</li> <li>• Build capacity for co-design and collaborative decision-making with local communities.</li> </ul>
<b>Community engagement and collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build strong community outreach capabilities and local partnerships.</li> <li>• Develop coordinated service delivery models.</li> <li>• Engage in co-design approaches with diverse stakeholders, especially youth and disabled people.</li> <li>• Implement inclusive decision-making processes.</li> </ul>
<b>Workforce development and knowledge sharing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement robust training programmes for staff and volunteers.</li> <li>• Facilitate cross-sector knowledge exchange and learning opportunities.</li> <li>• Build expertise in delivering quality experiences across various impairments.</li> <li>• Promote a culture of continuous learning and skill development.</li> </ul>
<b>Creative funding and resource management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proficiency in diverse fundraising strategies, including grants, sponsorships, and crowdfunding.</li> <li>• Skills in financial planning and sustainable resource allocation.</li> <li>• Ability to develop innovative revenue streams and cost-saving measures.</li> <li>• Enhance capabilities in identifying and securing diverse funding sources.</li> <li>• Build expertise in evaluating funding opportunities and associated conditions.</li> </ul>

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<b>Facility and equipment management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expertise in universal design principles for sports facilities.</li> <li>• Knowledge of adaptive sports equipment and maintenance requirements.</li> <li>• Ability to conduct accessibility audits and implement necessary modifications.</li> </ul>
<b>Storytelling and impact communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expertise in creating compelling narratives that highlight the impact of Halberg, PNZ, SONZ and regional disability sport organisations.</li> <li>• Skills in using various media to share stories and experiences of participants with disabilities.</li> <li>• Ability to translate complex data into accessible and engaging content.</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholder engagement and participatory approaches</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proficiency in organising and facilitating inclusive stakeholder consultations.</li> <li>• Skills in developing and implementing participatory decision-making processes.</li> <li>• Ability to engage with diverse groups, including those typically underrepresented.</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusive programming and education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create specialised curricula for diverse needs.</li> <li>• Develop adaptive programming capabilities.</li> <li>• Integrate environmental education and ethics into activities.</li> <li>• Build education and awareness around physical activity benefits.</li> <li>• Design inclusive marketing and communication strategies.</li> </ul>
<b>Advocacy and social change leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop skills in raising awareness and challenging societal assumptions.</li> <li>• Leverage events and programmes to promote inclusivity within communities.</li> <li>• Build capacity for effective storytelling and communication of impact.</li> <li>• Position organisations as thought leaders and experts in disability matters.</li> </ul>
<b>Adaptability and inclusivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer diverse opportunities tailored to different impairments, abilities, and needs.</li> <li>• Adapt activities and use specialised equipment.</li> <li>• Include “invisible” disabilities in programme design.</li> <li>• Develop agility to respond quickly to new technologies and changing needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Staff training and development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train workforce in disability awareness and activity adaptation.</li> <li>• Develop skills in effective communication with diverse participants.</li> <li>• Build knowledge on the value and benefits of disability sport and recreation.</li> <li>• Improve technological understanding and adaptability.</li> </ul>
<b>Pathway development and visibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish clear pathways from local to elite levels.</li> <li>• Raise awareness about available opportunities.</li> </ul>

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## Summary of action areas for disability sport and recreation

The scenarios highlighted several key action areas disability sport and recreation might consider when reflecting on their approaches. When prioritising it is worth reflecting their potential to have the greatest impact across multiple futures, noting Halberg, PNZ, SONZ, regional disability sport organisations and Sport NZ will not have the capacity to adopt all actions. Some of the actions may be more relevant to wider providers of disability opportunities.

### Mitigate Challenges

#### Improve accessibility and affordability of technology

Ensure that advanced technologies like virtual reality, augmented reality, and personalised training programmes are accessible and affordable for people with diverse impairments and socioeconomic backgrounds.

#### Invest in workforce training and capability building

Develop specialised training programmes for inclusive sport and recreation, foster cross-sector knowledge sharing, and adapt to changing technologies and resource efficiency requirements. Make use of what's already there - start training support workers e.g. what can they do with the person that's fun.

#### Bridge the digital divide

Address barriers like limited access, finances, or technical skills to prevent exacerbation of existing inequalities in technology-enhanced sport and recreation opportunities.

#### Secure sustainable funding

Explore funding models such as local government and healthcare collaborations to reduce reliance on central government funding and navigate uncertain economic times. Leverage existing funding models e.g. Enabling Good lives.

#### Implement inclusive decision-making

Incorporate youth voices and insights in planning processes, adhering to the principle of "Nothing about us without us" and adopting co-design approaches that actively involve stakeholders in programme and policy design.

#### Foster cross-sector collaboration

Develop partnerships across the sector, align efforts with national and regional organisations, and advocate for inclusive opportunities on a broader scale.

#### Address mental and physical wellbeing holistically

Develop comprehensive programmes that cater to both physical and mental health needs, integrating mental health support and advocacy into sport and recreation programmes.

#### Promote social inclusion and change societal attitudes

Leverage Halberg, PNZ, Parafeds, SONZ and Sport NZ events and programmes to influence social change, challenge assumptions, and raise awareness about disability. Notably, this is about everyday disability engagement, connecting with people in your community.

#### Adapt spaces and places, programmes and influence attitudes

Ensure the provision of ramps, adapted bathrooms, and other physical accessibility features, while also creating flexible programming that caters to different impairments and needs. For the neurodiverse communities introduce signage, places for observation, retreat spaces, but ensure staff are trained to ensure they have the appropriate knowledge and attitudes.

#### Improve insights

Ensure that ongoing decision-making is informed by comprehensive insights into disabled people's participation and experience.



Image credit: Photosport



Image credit: Photosport

## Capitalise on Opportunity

### Leverage technology for accessibility and inclusion

Invest in assistive technologies to enhance participation, develop virtual and augmented reality platforms for remote engagement and create reliable digital resources for personalised training programmes.

### Foster cross-sector collaboration

Strengthen partnerships between national and regional organisations, establish clear roles and responsibilities to eliminate duplication of efforts and encourage cross-sector knowledge sharing.

### Enhance workforce capability and training

Invest in specialised training programmes for staff, nurture a skilled workforce adept at delivering inclusive programming and develop training to navigate diverse needs and changing technologies. This includes developing skills and attitudes with supported development and delivery; learning from people with lived experience and expert providers in the sector; incorporating sport and recreation into professional development of people working in care homes; and including in tertiary programmes.

### Advocate for inclusive physical and mental wellbeing

Leverage preventative wellbeing initiatives, develop active lifestyle programmes for holistic wellbeing and ensure accessibility in all health and wellness programmes. Story telling is important, promoting different kinds of success, and promoting the contribution of sport and recreation to wellbeing. It also includes integration of recreation in health programmes and initiatives; Sport NZ advocating to other government departments; and disability being integrated into all Sport NZ programmes, as has occurred with Māori and women and girls.

### Explore innovative funding models

Collaborate with local government and healthcare organisations for financial support for accessible programmes and leverage community-based initiatives for funding.

### Enhance decision-making and planning processes

Implement co-design approaches involving all stakeholders, include disabled youth voices and insights in planning processes and adhere to the principle of “Nothing about us without us”.

### Explore inclusion models

Build understanding on inclusion approaches. This includes discussion on integrated, parallel and alternative integration, and on segregation. It also includes building opportunities into existing suite of offerings, notably via local government, and building on the foundations of existing provision via examples such as golf, swimming, athletics, and many outdoor activities.

### Improve efficiency and resource management

Implement a disciplined approach to decision-making, focus on value for money and reducing waste and develop a sense of pride in building through a more disciplined approach.

### Address ethical considerations

Focus on ethics in all aspects of disability sport and recreation, ensure inclusive decision-making processes and balance technological advancements with potential impacts on disability prevalence.

## Appendix 1: Scenarios

### Scenario 1

## Growth

### Disability sport and recreation in a changing New Zealand

New Zealand's sport and recreation sector has undergone continuous and significant changes, with technology leading the way. Digital advances have enhanced the fan experience by providing bespoke content, virtual reality immersion, and data-driven insights for athletes, participants and coaches, creating a new level of excitement for sport enthusiasts.

Public health initiatives are closely linked to sport and recreation, using technology to promote preventative healthcare and active lifestyles for all New Zealanders. Digital financial solutions and investments in community programmes ensure financial inclusion, making sport and recreation accessible to diverse populations. This future envisions a New Zealand sport and recreation scene that is inclusive and accessible to everyone, where every participant feels valued.

Continuous learning has become central to the sport and recreation sector, with athletes and coaches honing their skills through online platforms and immersive virtual reality training modules. Increasing environmental concerns have also influenced sport and recreation operations to reduce environmental impact and support broader efforts to achieve a sustainable society.

Global connectivity has continued to expand and fosters collaboration and competition between athletes, fans, and sport organisations. This connectedness drives international sporting events celebrating athletic prowess, promoting cultural exchange, and strengthening global ties.

#### **Double-edged sword: technology and social disparity**

The continued development of artificial intelligence and virtual reality technologies has transformed non-physical accessibility. Personalised training programmes delivered via augmented reality and remote coaching through virtual reality are breaking down geographical barriers. However, the continuing information explosion and dominance of online leisure threaten to exacerbate the digital divide, excluding those with limited access, finance, or technical skills.

#### **A more fragile world, a more inclusive sector?**

Climate change is straining resources and healthcare systems, increasing demand for accessible rehabilitation and injury prevention programmes. This focus on wellbeing aligns with the sector's vision for inclusivity. Economic inequality, however, threatens to limit access to these very programmes.

#### **Collaboration is key: navigating uncertainty**

The constant uncertainty in the wider environment emphasises the need for collaboration and strong advocacy leadership. The sector has benefitted from increased social awareness of the benefits of sport and recreation and an understanding of the greater accessibility and inclusion needs of some participants to realise these fully.

#### **Future's working differently**

Changing work environments have presented both opportunities and challenges. For those now enjoying the increasing incidence of the four-day workweek, there is a greater opportunity for increased participation as participants and supporters. However, for others facing financial headwinds, the need to work longer hours and often multiple jobs, or unable to work, has restricted their ability to play and contribute. This also emerges as a factor for the ageing population, with many feeling compelled to work well beyond traditional retirement ages.

#### **Optimism amid uncertainty**

Despite the challenges, the sector's potential to contribute to social wellbeing is recognised. By embracing technological advances, fostering collaboration, and advocating for inclusivity and inclusion, the disability sport and recreation sector continues to navigate a constantly changing environment.

## Questions to consider:

### Bridging the digital divide:

How can we ensure that technological advances are accessible and affordable for people with all levels of impairment and their whānau across socio-economic backgrounds?

### Funding accessibility in uncertain times:

Given the scenario where increased demand for rehabilitation and injury prevention programmes is foreseen alongside potential economic strain, how can we creatively secure sustainable funding for accessible sport and recreation programmes despite a potentially fragile economic climate?

### Workforce participation and inclusion:

How can we address the changing work-life balance that fosters participation within the disability sport and recreation sector, including staff, volunteers and whānau?

### Mental and physical wellbeing for all:

How can we leverage a growing focus on preventative healthcare and active lifestyles to ensure accessible and inclusive programmes to promote the physical and mental wellbeing benefits to disabled participants?

### Global collaboration for shared solutions:

How can the disability sport and recreation sector and the broader sport and recreation sector collaborate with international organisations to share best practices and advocate for inclusive opportunities on a global scale?



## Scenario 2

# Discipline

## A focused future for disability sport and recreation

In line with broader society, New Zealand's sport and recreation sector is focusing on working within constraints for long-term social, financial, and environmental sustainability. This approach emphasises internal improvements and core values.

A core aim is supporting regional communities. Leagues and events have shifted towards catering to local communities, reducing travel needs, and promoting localised fan engagement and access to local recreation.

This is a natural outcome of the sector's embrace of minimalism and responsible consumption. Durable, repairable equipment and eco-friendly apparel have become the norm, alongside the growth of second-hand and sharing platforms. Facilities, too, are intent on minimising waste and maximising resource efficiency throughout a facility's lifecycle.

This only occurred through a sustained period of dialogue and collective understanding to the extent that sustainability education and environmental ethics are now ingrained in all aspects of sport and recreation, from training to events. Engaging participants, athletes and fans in environmental issues becomes commonplace, unfortunately helped by ongoing extreme weather events that have focused minds.

Adopting more disciplined approaches has led to some obvious reductions, such as minimising travel, but this has enabled organisations to refocus spending toward maximising support for local participants and athletes. Investment in research and development leads to innovative, eco-friendly sport and recreation technologies. Competing and participating virtually at a distance is now routine, and it has meant many have developed a wider network despite never having met in person.

The broader societal focus on responsible lifestyles has highlighted the role of sport and recreation in promoting inclusive physical and mental wellbeing, further strengthening the sector's value proposition.

### Moving forward together

Responsible social media regulation has contributed to a more tolerant political environment, fostering a more inclusive discussion for all sectors, including disability. The renewed focus on bicultural development has reinforced New Zealand's identity as a country that celebrates and welcomes diversity.

### A rising tide lifts all boats

A "slow and steady" economic approach has prioritised resource conservation and supported existing sustainability programmes. A desire for more equitable resource distribution has led to funding being targeted to smaller community initiatives while traditional recipients have experienced budget cuts.

### Building a more inclusive playing field

Technological advances have been the catalyst for change, playing a pivotal role in our journey towards accessibility and inclusivity. A focus on creating reliable information resources for disabled people seeking accessible programmes has led to greater use of assistive technologies that enhance participation. Financial support has helped overcome the digital divide, empowering individuals to engage in virtual e-sport and augmented physical activities that have opened exciting possibilities.

### Collaboration is key

An emphasis on efficiency and coordination across the government sector has led to streamlined service delivery from agencies. Improved communication fostered strategic alignment between national and regional organisations, eliminating duplication of efforts and ensuring a clear pathway for aspiring athletes and participants of all abilities.

### Continuous improvement to address challenges

Despite the positive overall environment, a few hurdles remain. Climate change provides continual challenges that have necessitated innovative solutions for accessible outdoor recreation. This has also been a driver for many to explore online worlds.

Workforce capability is also an ongoing concern that requires investment in training and education to nurture skilled individuals adept at navigating the sector's diverse needs, changing technologies, and focused on resource efficiency. It is a constant juggle.

## Questions to consider

### Ensuring equity in a localised system

While the narrative highlights a shift towards supporting regional communities, how will the sector ensure equitable access and resources for athletes and participants in geographically isolated or less-populated areas?

### Accessibility of virtual participation

The rise of virtual sports and e-sports is promising, but how will the sector ensure the applications of innovations are explored to benefit, and not exclude, marginal communities?

### Long-term sustainability of innovation

How will the sector ensure the long-term sustainability of new technologies, considering the potential for planned obsolescence and the cost of maintaining them for athletes and participants who rely on them?

### Future-proofing the workforce

A skilled workforce is needed here (and in other scenarios). How will the sector ensure ongoing training and adaptation for staff and volunteers to keep pace with changing technologies and the evolving needs of athletes and participants with a diverse range of abilities within disability sport and recreation? How can technology be used to improve skills?



## Scenario 3

# Collapse

## Navigating a turbulent landscape

In the face of a challenging global environment marked by resource scarcity, economic instability, and local self-sufficiency, New Zealand's sport and recreation sector demonstrates adaptability and resilience. A strategic shift is underway, replacing traditional, resource-intensive sport and recreation activities with low-cost activities that local communities can support. This shift is a response to the challenges and a testament to the sector's ability to evolve and meet the community's needs.

Central funding is very limited, but sport and recreation are also recognised for their critical role in fostering social cohesion. These activities cultivate a strong sense of community identity and provide much-needed opportunities for social interaction, stress relief, and mental well-being.

Sport and recreation programmes have also adapted to include life physical training that integrates essential resilience skills training, similar to the traditional focus on swimming skills. This prepares residents for potential food shortages, environmental disasters, and other threats. The sector prioritises initiatives that cater to vulnerable populations, including refugees and those with physical or mental health challenges. Rigorous standards are being developed for sport and recreation programmes to ensure adaptability and inclusivity.

Acknowledging the potential psychological toll of the ongoing crisis, the sector actively collaborates with health professionals to develop and offer robust support services. Sport and recreational activities also use targeted strategies to support communities' cultural heritage.

Access to technology is variable, which places a greater focus on informal education and knowledge sharing. This is crucial for maintaining expertise within the sector, and rigorous training programmes are being developed to ensure this knowledge transfer continues. With intense pressure on traditional structures to maintain basic community function, sport and recreation organisations are actively exploring the possibility of taking on a governance role to facilitate local cooperation and resource management. This reflects the sector's resilience, teamwork, and adaptability values necessary to support stressed communities.

### Increased reliance on community

Amidst the decline in centralised support, the disability sports and recreation sector has witnessed a significant shift towards community-based solutions. Local initiatives powered by collaborative networks have stepped up to bridge the gaps in accessibility and programming. The partnerships forged between schools, community centres, and individuals with specialised skills have fostered a culture of mutual support, underscoring the pivotal role of the community in this evolution.

### Resilience through recreation

Markers of mental and physical health have declined markedly across the population and particularly so in vulnerable communities. This has emphasised the need to maintain sport and recreation programmes to address these health challenges, improve social interaction, and give participants a sense of purpose. Such programmes have become a cornerstone of community wellbeing initiatives, promoting physical activity and social connection in a safe and inclusive space.

### Evolving participation

The rise of virtual worlds presents both challenges and opportunities. While isolation within these spaces is a concern, they offer new avenues for participation for those with mobility limitations. Adapted virtual experiences and competitions specifically designed with people with disabilities in mind have emerged as safe environments for disabled and abled body athletes and participants to connect.

### Funding and collaboration

In a financially stressed environment, collaboration has become paramount. Novel partnerships across sectors joining together non-traditional stakeholders are commonplace. The nature of some of these relationships has raised concerns about motives and intent in some cases. Still, organisations find it hard to turn funding opportunities down even when questionable conditions are attached.

## Questions to consider

### Ensuring equitable access

Community-based solutions are crucial, but how can we ensure equitable access to these programmes that are inclusive, especially for geographically isolated or under-resourced communities? How can we ensure these solutions are “quality”, especially in those areas with less resources?

### Sustainability of local initiatives

The success of community-led programmes relies heavily on volunteers and collaboration. How can we ensure the long-term sustainability of these initiatives to avoid burnout and maintain quality standards, particularly as demographic trends exacerbate the challenge? How can we incorporate community-led programmes into mainstream delivery?

### Balance between traditional and virtual participation

Virtual environments offer opportunities, but they also raise concerns about isolation and exclusion, especially for those who find them difficult to access. How can we promote virtual participation while maintaining the social and physical benefits of traditional in-person activities?

### Ethical considerations in funding

Collaboration is essential, but how can we navigate partnerships with different stakeholder objectives while securing vital funding for the sector’s programmes, particularly those catering to vulnerable populations?

### Knowledge transfer and training

Informal knowledge sharing is crucial, but how can we develop a more robust training system to ensure proper skill transfer and maintain expertise within the sector, especially with limited resources? How do we better use existing pathways such as private training enterprises, universities and polytechnics?



Image credit: Photosport

## Scenario 4

# Transformation

## Thriving on the field of dreams

A period of rapid advancement and enlightenment around enhancing human capabilities through technology and science continues transforming the global sport and recreation scene, and New Zealand's sector is transforming with it. Biohacking technologies are routinely integrated into recreational programmes, allowing participants to optimise performance and push human boundaries. Wearable technology measures provide feedback on biological signals and tailors workouts in real-time, while augmented reality training simulations enhance athletic and participatory skills and provide greater agency for disabled participants.

The blurring line between humans and machines is a technological advancement and a societal shift driven by a strong libertarian philosophy. Advanced prosthetics and exoskeletons are not just tools but symbols of empowerment, enabling disabled people to participate and compete at an unprecedented level. The emergence of cyborg athletes, first seen at the Enhanced Games of 2025, is not just pushing athletic performance beyond the limits of a human body but also inspiring a new generation of athletes, raising profound questions about the definition of 'human' in the world of sport.

Sport and recreation are no longer confined to the physical realm. Virtual Reality has revolutionised training and opened the doors to a whole new world of sport and recreation. As innovations hit the market, the possibilities are seemingly endless, and the thrill of this virtual frontier is unmistakable.

Sport and recreation now form the cornerstone of a personalised wellness ecosystem. Advanced AI analyses individual health data and customises holistic wellness plans incorporating personalised sport and recreation activities, nutrition, and mental health programmes.

As genetic engineering advances, fair play in sport is redefined, and doping is now regarded as discriminatory language. This has led to vigorous ethical debates over the role of genetic optimisation in athletic performance.

### Accessibility and inclusion unleashed

New Zealand has witnessed a remarkable transformation. Participation in sport and recreation is no longer a privilege but a birthright for all. Disability sport and recreation is flourishing with physical barriers a thing of the past, and attitudes to inclusion transformed. Universal accessibility design principles are now the norm, while existing venues have been retrofitted to ensure easy access for everyone.

### Coming together to win

The fragmented landscape of disability sport and recreation has become a well-oiled machine. Collaboration thrives, driven by a shared focus on long-term wellbeing. National, regional, and local organisations share knowledge and resources in unison. Funding streams are optimised, often from non-governmental sources, and a clear pathway for participation has emerged.

### Empowering expertise

The lack of trained professionals is no longer an issue. Expanded social provision has fostered the growth of training programmes, and coaches, instructors, and volunteers now possess the expertise to cater to diverse needs and disabilities. AI-powered insights inform the creation of personalised training plans and adaptive techniques for even those with modest capabilities.

### Shifting the narrative

Historic stigmas surrounding disability have gone as technology removes all constraints on human performance. A widespread augmentation of athletes and participants with a range of biophysical technologies has changed the narrative, and terms such as 'doping' are regarded as archaic and discriminatory. Educational campaigns and the success stories of para-athletes are commonplace. The public embraces a spectrum of abilities across sport and recreation, recognising all achievements as a testament to human potential rather than a niche pursuit.

### Celebration of talent

With inclusion, accessibility, collaboration, and expertise forming a solid foundation, participation rates soar. Increased funding from a sustainable economy fuels talent development. An information explosion fosters data-driven coaching, while virtual reality allows athletes and participants to train remotely with renowned coaches.

### World of opportunities

Gone are the days of limited options. A diverse range of sport and recreational activities are now available. Traditional sport and recreation activities have adapted for inclusivity, while innovative new activities catering to specific disabilities are taking centre stage.

## Questions to consider

### Ensuring equity in enhancement

With biohacking and genetic engineering, how can we ensure a level playing field where athletes and participants with or without these enhancements can compete fairly? What constitutes fairness in a world where human potential is amplified by technology?

### Crucial role of the human element in sport

As technology advances, how can we ensure that the human element of competition, strategy, and mental fortitude remains central? Does the increasing reliance on technology risk diminishing the essence of sport?

### Inclusivity in the design of future sport and recreation activities

While the narrative often focuses on overcoming physical limitations, how can we ensure all disabilities, including cognitive and sensory limitations, are considered in this future sport and recreation landscape?

### Psychological impact

This future presents a world of immense pressure to enhance oneself. How can we ensure the mental wellbeing of athletes and participants in a system that constantly pushes boundaries?

### Definition of sport

With virtual reality and potentially unimaginable future technologies, where do we draw the line between sport and pure simulation? What are the core values of sport that we aim to preserve, even in a transformed landscape?



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