



The future of Softball NZ

A REPORT FOR SOFTBALL NZ

Why explore the future?

Softball NZ (SNZ) is interested in how it might best position itself to be fit for purpose and sustainable into the future. Its Board and senior management are conscious of the rapid speed of change occurring across society, and how this will impact the environment in which it works.

Therefore, it agreed to partner with Sport NZ to explore possible and plausible futures that may play out, to enable it to shape its strategy and strategic thinking through understanding the issues and challenges shaping the future.

Process facilitated by:
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Topics covered included:

- The future as predicted, versus the future as a learning journey (identifying and testing the assumptions held by SNZ that are influencing how its strategic issues are being considered)
- The 'used future' examining what traditional practices need to be challenged to create new futures
- Emerging disruptions and transformations ahead
- Scenarios to illustrate alternative futures to consider a much wider range of contexts in which SNZ may be operating and to generate new insights into possible future developments
- Consideration of novel ideas and risk reduction to enable a level of anticipation, and therefore preparation, for the inevitable surprises that SNZ will encounter.

These topics underpin a new approach to having conversations about the future and identifying narratives to underpin a period of rapid change. To do this, it is important to imagine a range of alternative scenarios for the future. This can give us greater confidence that we are taking the right actions today – fit for a future we want, and adaptive for the changes and disruptions we will experience in the coming decade.

This document summarises the SNZ strategic foresight conversation from the development of an initial baseline perspective to the elaboration of four potential scenarios.

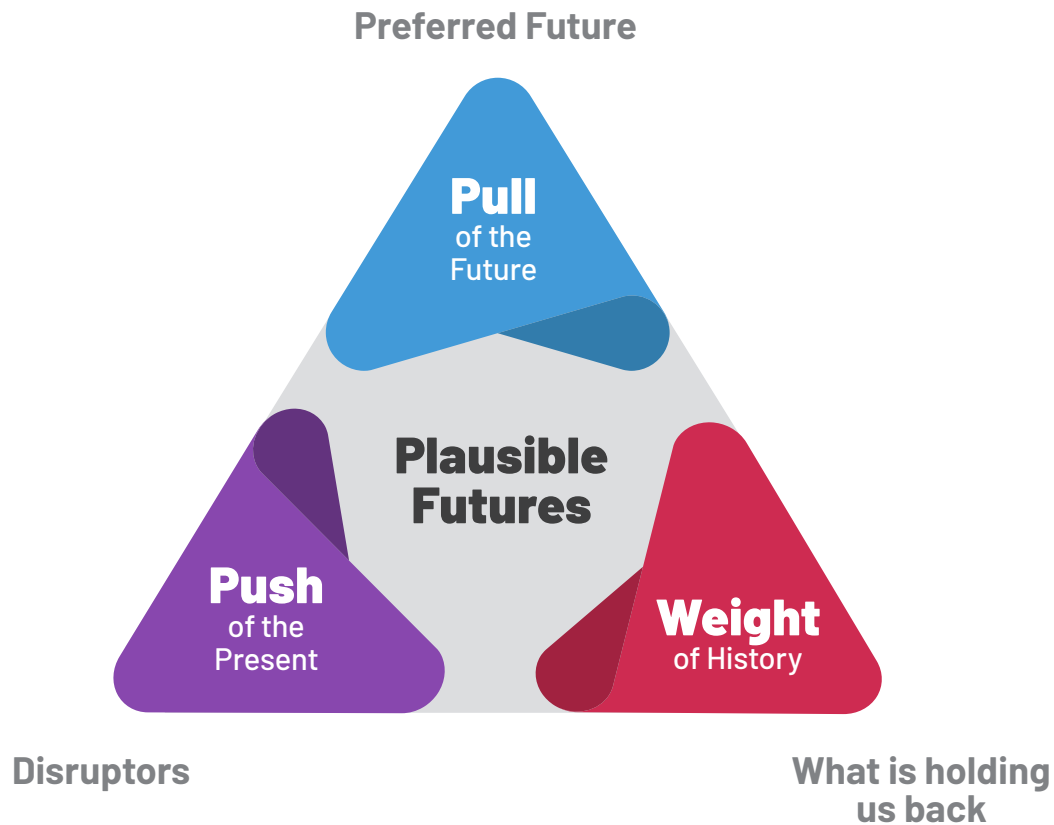
This involved two facilitated workshops involving the SNZ Board, Associations, senior management and stakeholders.

A five to 10-year time horizon was used.



Underpinning approach – futures triangle

The workshops used the *Futures Triangle* developed by Sohail Inayatullah to map the past, present and future to help explore the space of plausible futures.



The basic idea is that there are three dimensions that shape plausible futures: the weight of the past; the push of the present; and the pull of the future. The tension and interaction between these three forces creates a possible future space, inside the triangle. The workshops used the triangle to explore the following questions:

Weight of history

- What is holding us back, or getting in our way?
- What are the barriers to change?
- What are the deep structures that resist change?

Push of the present

- What trends and disruptors are pushing us towards particular futures?
- What quantitative drivers and trends are changing the future?

Pull of the future

- What is pulling us towards particular futures?

Four possible and plausible future scenarios for SNZ were created from the disruptors viewed as the most impactful and uncertain for softball.

If you would like to read more about the futures triangle, Sohail Inayatullah's paper on [Six pillars: Futures thinking for transforming](#) is recommended.

What SNZ thinks will happen in the future

One of the challenges with foresight is becoming overwhelmed with what's changing and struggling to make sense of the implications. It is easy to get misled by extrapolating from obvious trends and developments. A common approach is to develop scenarios that explore plausible future states. The baseline future is one possible future. This is the future the softball community assume will occur.

The basis of SNZ's baseline future was identified via a survey completed ahead of the first workshop by a cross-section of the softball community. The survey questions are designed to draw out a common understanding of perceived opportunities, threats and aspirations for the future of softball in New Zealand. This provided the basis for the baseline future – the future participants assume will occur. (Survey responses are provided in Appendix 1).

The purpose of the “baseline future” is not to predict what the future of softball will look like in 5-10 years, but to help identify the obvious issues, and stimulate conversations around how the softball community could respond.

In SNZ's baseline future, it is assumed there will be:

- Improved participation given the growing appreciation of softball as a sport for everyone, that brings communities together and facilitates inter-generational connections
- A plateauing in the number of elite competitors, due to limited regional, national and international opportunities
- Increased tension placed on the continued importance of elite success for the ongoing profile and financial sustainability of softball vs a discontinuation of the desire to recreate the 1980s version of softball in New Zealand.
- Similar funding models to support softball, with resources primarily available through existing / traditional channels
- A reduction in the number of associations to improve capability and efficiencies
- Changing levels of activity and demand through greater competition for leisure time, disruption to traditional ways of working and virtual sports becoming more popular
- A heightened role for well-run community sports clubs to build social cohesion given an environment of decreasing trust in institutions and government, and increasing polarization of opinion



The softball community recognised the following issues could disrupt the future they assume will occur:

- There may be a decline in interest in sport and recreation as other leisure pursuits emerge to engage attention. E-sports could capture some of this attention.
- In the face of seemingly more pressing issues (e.g. global conflict, climate) sport and recreation will no longer be considered as important to the support of physical and mental wellbeing or elite success.
- Ongoing economic challenges could restrain funding for the sport and recreation sector. Even without such an external shock, funding models could change and alter present revenue streams.
- Younger generations may view volunteering in a different way than their parents, impacting the traditional expectations of volunteering.
- The connection between elite success and participation may come under greater challenge, resulting in increased scrutiny on where Softball NZ places its focus.
- an increased challenge to attract and retain talent given continued workforce supply issues, changing attitudes to volunteering, and an increased desire from people to use their time differently

There are probably no surprises to those within the softball community in this baseline future scenario. It reflects what many people and organisations in the sector are contemplating now – how do they compete with virtual sports, how are they going to deal with climate change, how are they going to ensure they have adequate participants and funding levels going forward, how do they address current inequities in the system, and what the long-term effects of Covid-19 will be.

A baseline future is what we generally think will happen if there is no change. It is not radically different from today and is derived from what we see in the world around us. Creating a baseline future is a good way of emptying the mind of the most pressing worries. Only then can we step back and think of alternatives. Getting those concerns and fears out in the open can help identify not only what you want to avoid but some of the characteristics that you want to work towards.

Moving beyond baseline future

The baseline future is a collection of predictions of the future context within which the SNZ strategy will be pursued. The quick discussion within the workshop immediately highlighted the potential alternatives that could emerge to influence the strategic environment. This underlines the need for the move away from prediction to instead consider the most useful questions. A few emerged in the baseline future discussion including:

- To what extent do plans assume the current delivery structure is appropriate?
- Given the importance of volunteers to softball's delivery, is it safe to assume younger generations view volunteering in the same way as their parents or grandparents?
- How important is elite success to the profile and relevancy of softball?

These questions are unlikely to surprise those engaged within SNZ and are likely to form the basis of current strategic discussions. The variety of perception or response to these questions emphasises that no single future can be assumed. An exploration of how respective scenarios may challenge these questions leads to more robust strategic dialogue. It is easy to get misled by extrapolating from obvious trends and developments.

To avoid this, a common approach is to develop scenarios that explore plausible future states. Developing these scenario narratives can be achieved through the combination of uncertain disruptors to form stories of the future.

Sport NZ has identified 31 phenomenon as causing the most disruption to the future of sport and recreation in New Zealand - [Disruptors](#). Of these, softball identified the following as potentially most disruptive to softball.



Most impactful disruptors to softball

The following future disruptors were highlighted as potentially the most impactful for SNZ. Each are linked to reports.

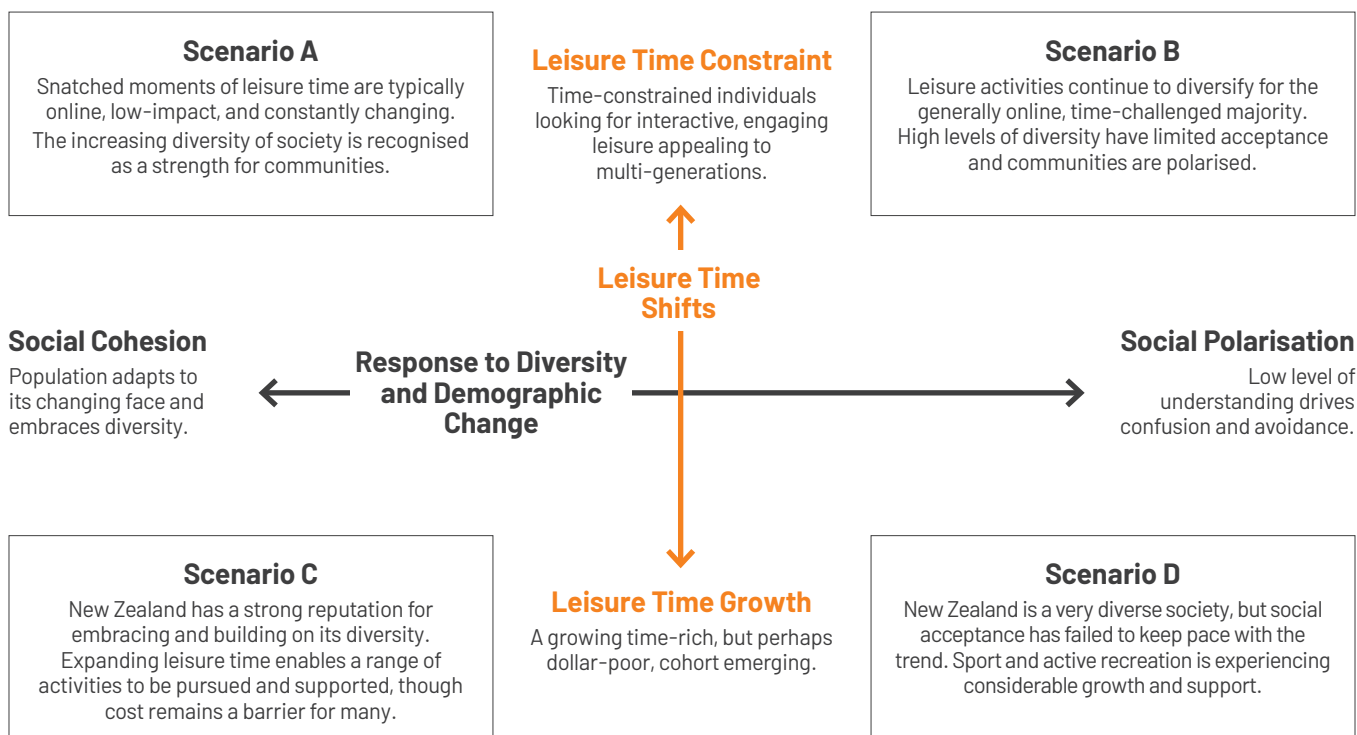
<u>Inequality</u>	Socio-economic inequalities, while primarily associated with financial measures, also include the digital divide determining access to digital products and services so vital to full participation in contemporary New Zealand.
<u>Workforce changes</u>	The play, active recreation, and 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.
<u>Status of public funding</u>	Managing the government's finances will be challenged by a multitude of global and domestic challenges arising from the pandemic aftermath, geo-political tensions and climate demands. Potential moves between orthodox and heterodox economic policies will determine future funding status.
<u>Social Resilience</u>	Changing patterns of social resilience that are associated with levels of trust, changing social values and world views. Reflects debates within New Zealand around the collective support of common norms and rules.
<u>Gaming, augmented and virtual reality</u>	Online, virtual and augmented reality sports will grow as both participant and spectator activities. Will it complement or detract from softball activity?
<u>Data privacy and surveillance</u>	Increasing internet usage is highlighting the ongoing tension regarding data privacy. Online providers collect and store personal data to provide services, but often beyond the user's expectations and undermining personal autonomy
<u>Space and place dynamics</u>	Trends in urban land use may change, either positively or negatively, the availability of suitable sport and recreation venues. Urban and rural development impact community resilience through climate change mitigation, transport access and housing availability.
<u>Athlete participation and wellbeing</u>	The pressures on athletes 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.
<u>Social licence</u>	Pressures on the Government to change priorities to address key issues may result in spending on the sector becoming more discretionary if sport is no longer regarded as a universal good. Athlete activism, opposition to travel and emergent social issues all contribute to the creation of an increasingly complex environment that the sector will need to navigate.
<u>Sustainable business models</u>	Future funding models will be heavily influenced by changes to broadcasting and sponsorship agreements that continue to reflect evolving consumer preferences, participants' ability to pay, and changes to gambling proceed distributions.

Following a group discussion and ranking exercise, changing leisure patterns and social licence were the drivers chosen to develop several future scenarios. They were chosen based on potentially high impact and levels of uncertainty.

<u>Changing leisure patterns</u>	The influences which will shape the future of leisure in New Zealand. Including disruption in adjacent sectors that start to obscure the boundary between leisure activities. The range of leisure experiences will diversify as individuals are enabled to tailor their activities to suit their preferences and available time.
<u>Increasing diversity Ageing population</u>	The future is ageing Pākehā and growing (and younger) Māori and Pasifika populations. As the structure of the population changes, especially with the ratio of dependents/working adults, it will have implications for leisure time and patterns. Increasing diversity is likely to generate a far more kaleidoscopic context for the provision of PARS programmes. It will also increasingly bring to prominence alternative worldviews that will challenge historically dominant perspectives.

Alternative futures

To identify possible and plausible alternative futures for SNZ, four scenarios were created based on the opposite of two uncertainties playing out – shifts in leisure patterns and the response to diversity and demographic change. It should be noted these scenarios will likely not happen exactly as described. They provide an opportunity to explore a plausible strategic context that could be encountered. The aim is to use them as prompts to highlight what may need to be considered over the coming period.



The full narratives for each scenario are provided in Appendix 2.

Thinking in scenarios enabled SNZ to consider different strategic contexts and anticipate some of the elements to be considered if the future evolves in different ways.

To do this, the group was split into groups with each assigned a scenario to address with the following questions:

- What are the key implications for SNZ if this eventuates?
- What is the biggest risk / opportunity this presents?
- What capabilities would SNZ need to mitigate / take advantage?
- Do you regard the scenario as more or less plausible? What assumption supports your view?

The teams also gave each scenario a name to reflect what they perceived as the key essence of the narrative.

In exploring these scenarios, it is also worth considering how the other drivers noted may play out in these contexts. For example, “how would changes in funding models be impacted in the given scenario?”

Overall, the aim is not to judge whether the scenario will occur, but to consider what SNZ would do if it did.

Scenario A: Change-up

Snatched moments of leisure time are typically online, low-impact, and constantly changing. The increasing diversity of society is recognised as a strength for communities.

Key Implications

- Increased competition for constrained leisure time
- Impact on current softball delivery model
- Opportunities available close to home more attractive
- Impact on capacity and availability of volunteers
- Evolving definition of sport

Biggest Opportunity/Risk

- Move away from traditional delivery model to one that is more strongly community based – ‘invited play’
- Reframe definition of member and volunteer
- Replace a one size fits all approach with deliberate local tailoring to meet specific needs of different communities
- Explore shorter options to fit with participants constrained time, including virtual options
- Promotion of game as sport for all taking advantage of community desire to celebrate diversity
- Use of technology to promote opportunities and connect with new participants
- Explore new spaces for modified delivery models – e.g. schools
- Failure to accept societal changes and lose participants to other pursuits
- Increased competition from new leisure time pursuits

Necessary Capabilities

- Innovation and ‘fresh eyes’
- Community connections
- Social marketing
- Technological nous
- Consumer insights

Plausibility

High plausibility – aspects already in play – working from home



Scenario B: Hit and run

Leisure activities continue to diversify for the generally online, time-challenged majority. High levels of diversity have limited acceptance and communities are polarised.

Key Implications

- Growing prevalence of life online, influencing connections that are narrowing
- Reduction of time threatens prescriptive and time-heavy activities
- Current club product is not the only way people will form to play, and therefore softball needs to look past just clubs
- Likely declining commitment to the traditional game and joining a club

Biggest Opportunity/Risk

- Become free form in the way clusters occur - breakdown of club boundaries, flexible formation on whatever basis.
- Teams can form as they will (mixed gender etc)
- A cluster approach may be preferred in a fragmented world. A diamond with gear supplied and a tribe turns up and simply plays leaving the gear available for the next tribe/interaction.
- Associations looking forward, not back
- Not one size fits all - tailor by location/region
- Volunteers are completely burnt out and stretched beyond limits and the thought of managing more players and more teams throughout a 26-30-week season is daunting and drives people away from supporting the delivery of the game. A better opportunity would be to consider bite size samples of delivery. Term 4 - term 1 delivery through the summer for example.
- Softball demographic fails to understand changing environment and fails to respond
- Failure to address cost as a barrier - equipment focused in a demographic that can't cope with that cost
- Tyranny of distance is a major barrier - regionally and in South
- Being conscious of not overloading volunteers - appreciating balance between theory vs reality

Necessary Capabilities

- Open mindset - need to look past previous or existing delivery models
- Open dialogue - more discussion, exploration and questioning
- Volunteer framework - mindful of having tools to implement
- Flexibility - teams and competitions
- Technology to support volunteers
- Educate the associations / clubs - those at the coal face in new models e.g. youth councils to challenge and ensure relevance

Plausibility

High to moderate plausibility. Aspects of scenario such as leisure time constraints evident today.



Scenario C: Bases loaded

New Zealand has a strong reputation for embracing and building on its diversity. Expanding leisure time enables a range of activities to be pursued and supported, though cost remains a barrier for many.

Key Implications

- Community cohesion sports stronger driver for range of available leisure pursuits
- Funding channels more abundant, notably for pursuits aligned to wellbeing
- Access to more volunteers
- Greater casualisation of time



Biggest Opportunity/Risk

- Position softball as the natural sport for connecting communities and embracing diversity
- Introduction of non-gender binary opportunities
- Join with other sports to provide community hub
- Explore options for removing cost as a barrier e.g., provision of gear
- Explore adaptive versions of softball to align with varying participant interests
- Be highly attuned to increasing competition for leisure time
- Be cognisant of the need to scale to provide a quality experience for increased demand

Necessary Capabilities

- Strong communication and storytelling
- Innovative mindset
- Consumer insight
- Relationship management

Plausibility

Moderate. Desirable but unlikely. Feeling that more leisure time unlikely to be available to large proportions of community.

Scenario D: Bunt, sacrifice

New Zealand is a very diverse society, but social acceptance has failed to keep pace with the trend. Sport and active recreation is experiencing considerable growth and support.

Key Implications

- Sport mirrors society and is increasingly tribal
- More time for leisure brings new providers to the market
- Pressure on green space
- More opportunities for those that can afford it

Biggest Opportunity/Risk

- Position softball as a community connector – accessible and willing to join with others
- Actively explore joining with other sports – acknowledging community desire to counter prevalence of polarisation
- Connector status promoted to funders
- Explore product adaption to allow softball to be played in variety of spaces
- Build collaboration and co-design with local deliverers to reflect local demands
- Potential volunteer flight risk
- Cost and tribalism reduce softball membership to non-sustainable levels
- Demand for reduced green space reduces softball's access

Necessary Capabilities

- Innovation to explore product adaption
- Story-telling and advocacy
- Relationship management
- Communication and demonstration of values

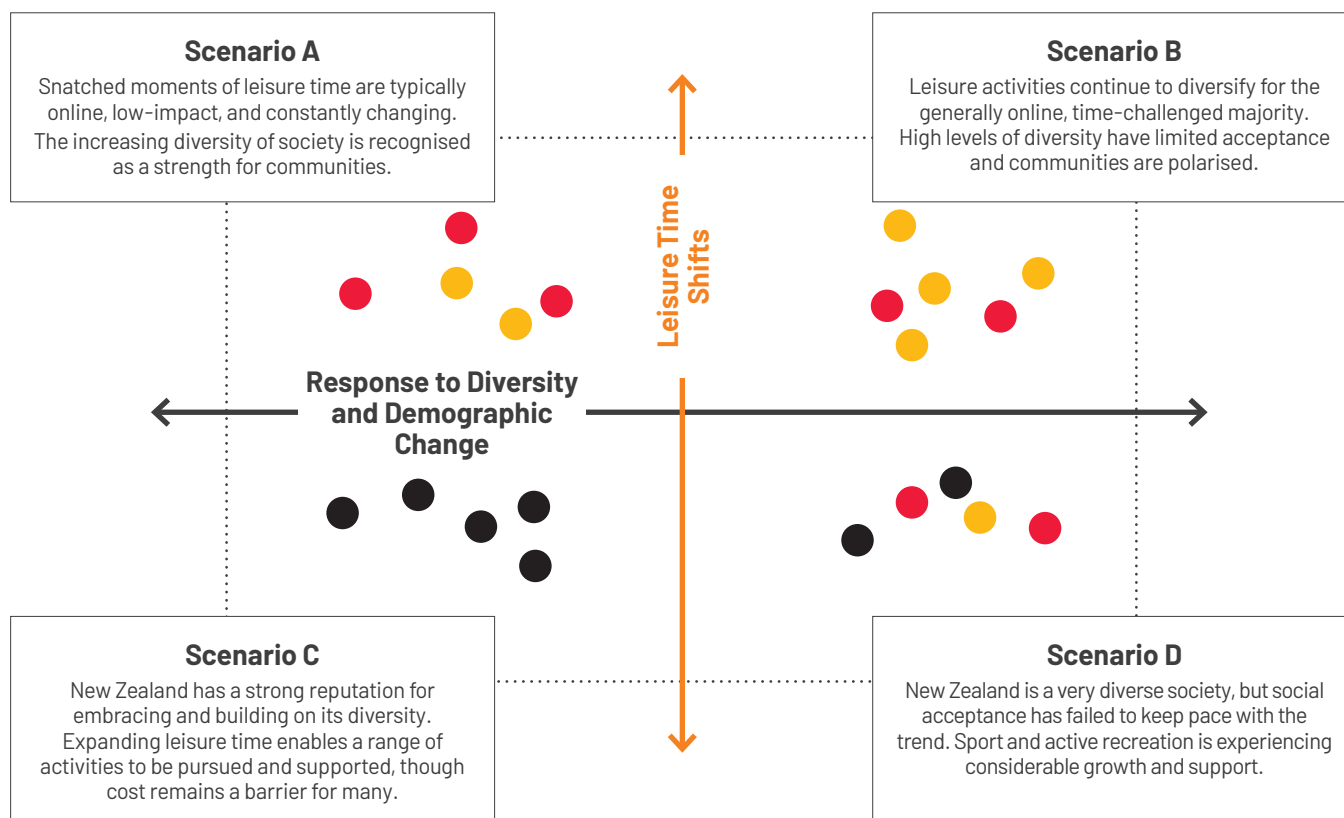
Plausibility

Moderate to high – Diversity challenges likely. Belief that immigration will increase.



Scenario Outlook

Participants identified the most preferred scenario (black), the scenario most reflected in the present (yellow), and what they believe to be the most likely future (red).



The scenario outlook exercise is qualitative and biased by the group perspective but is a useful mirror for reflection.

- There is a reasonable spread of views that the present (yellow) is reflected across three different scenarios. This highlights that perceptions of the current context within the group are not clear-cut and reflect significant levels of ambiguity. This is healthy as it implies a spread of perspectives that can be explored with ongoing critique of assumptions.
- The highly aligned preferred future is reflective of the team's values but acknowledged as unlikely. That said, a useful question for SNZ is to what extent does a considered action align to this ideal, or does it need to reflect an alternate reality?
- There is a wide variety of views on where the future context lies (red), with three scenarios featuring. This recognises the uncertainty about whether people will have more or less leisure time and if society will become more cohesive or polarised. This emphasises the need to consider all scenarios when making strategic decisions and should prompt greater exploration of reference points / data that validate the emergence (or otherwise) of the scenarios.

The scenarios provide a link between the developing New Zealand environment and the strategic conversation within SNZ. Having reflected upon them, and the strategic questions they prompt, it is useful to consider what early indicators point to their emergence.

The Preferred Future

Given the consideration of the range of future possibilities, a fundamental question remains:

What future does SNZ wish to make happen?

Elements of this were covered in responses to the survey and included:

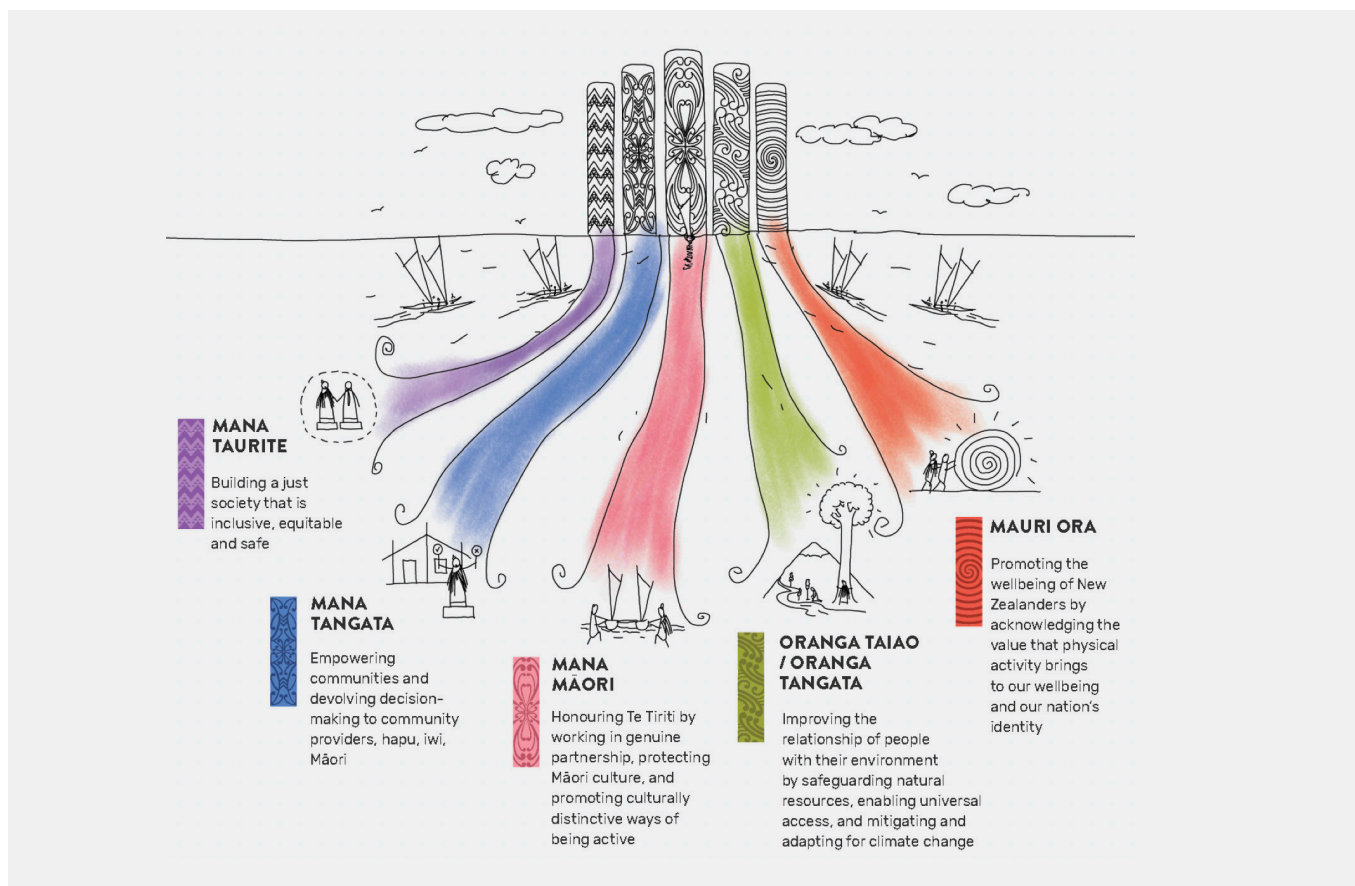
- Reinforcing softball as a sport for everyone, that brings communities together and facilitates inter-generational connections and inclusion
- An infrastructure that attracts and retains talented people
- A growing participation base and enhanced profile

An elaborated vision of SNZ's preferred future can then also be gauged against the changing external context represented either by the scenarios above, or additional trend analysis of specific areas.

Understanding how these fit within the broader context may also lead to discussions around SNZ's strategic objectives and the extent to which it wishes to influence wider discussions and developments that impact the lives of softball participants.

Sector's preferred future

Sport NZ, in conjunction with the wider sector, has developed a preferred future that guides its decisions and approaches and is offered as an exemplar. Sport NZ is encouraging the sector to take actions aligned to one of more of the five characteristics of the preferred future.



SNZ has strong alignment with four of the five characteristics, notably Mana Taurite given its accessibility and diversity. It is also aligned to Mana Tangata given its networks of clubs and associations, and its ability to connect people in communities. This is of particular importance in a time of decreasing trust in institutions and each other, and growing polarisation accelerated by information, disinformation, and misinformation.

Softball is a popular sport with Māori (Mana Māori) and contributes to the physical and mental wellbeing of all New Zealanders (Mauri Ora).

Weight of history

In workshop 1, softball identified some practices, structures and mindsets that are not aligned to its future aspirations and are therefore holding the sport back.

These included:

- A delivery model that relies heavily on volunteers, and a perception of volunteering that may have shifted – both in terms of availability of time and motivations for volunteering
- A belief that volunteer capacity will expand to meet new initiatives, when this in fact may cause burnout and a reduction of volunteers
- A belief that an increase in participation is the critical measure of success, when other factors such as quality of experience and diversity of participants might be other important measures
- A mindset that international success is critically linked to increased participation, when research suggests other factors like fun, alignment with friends, and accessibility or more impactful
- A traditional structure that may no longer be fit for purpose, notably when leisure pursuits are increasingly localised
- A one-size fits all mindset to a sport that possibly needs a more tailored approach to meet the interests of different audiences and communities
- An assumption that funding models are unlikely to change, when in fact they might
- An assumption that access to council facilities will continue when they may come under increasing pressure

It would be worth the softball community building on this discussion.

Summary of three triangle dimensions

- Just society
- Empowered communities
- Honoring Te Tiriti
- Wellbeing



Summary of Action Areas for SNZ

The scenarios highlighted several key action areas SNZ may consider in extending its strategic thinking and/or as part of its strengthen and adapt proposal. These, combined with the factors that are holding softball back, and its aspirations for the future form the basis for the following actions.

Mitigate Challenges

- Clarity and promotion of value proposition and changing environment to gain hearts and minds of softball constituency who may not be aware of need for softball to evolve.
- Build strong relationships with local government and school settings to respond to increased demand for green field space
- Explore product adaption to allow softball to be played in a greater range of settings
- Expand participant/volunteer insights and data analysis capability to respond to changing preferences to avoid losing participants/volunteers to other competing leisure options
- Explore less structured delivery models – e.g. a diamond with gear supplied and a tribe turns up and simply plays leaving the gear available for the next tribe/interaction
- Be mindful of scaling that is commensurate with capacity, notably volunteer capacity
- Co-create local opportunities to ensure new initiatives align with changing participant and community needs, attract new participants, and overcome current cost associated with travel
- Explore how increased agility can be built into delivery model to enable improved ability to respond and adapt
- Articulate the purpose of SNZ, addressing the connection (or otherwise) between community softball and elite performance.

Capitalise on Opportunity

- Develop an innovative and forward focused mindset to explore alternatives to traditional delivery model, including models more strongly community based – ‘invited play’
- Position softball as the natural sport for connecting communities and embracing diversity
- Become free form in the way clusters occur – breakdown of club boundaries, flexible formation on whatever basis; teams can form as they will (mixed gender etc)
- Position softball as a community connector – accessible and willing to join with others
- Explore product adaption to allow softball to be played in variety of spaces, across different timeframes, and to align with varying participant interests. In doing so, reframe the definition of member and volunteer.
- Replace a one size fits all approach with deliberate local tailoring to meet specific needs of different communities
- Develop digital and social media capability to enhance communication and strengthen community network
- Use of technology to promote opportunities and connect with new participants
- Explore shared ownership and cost models to enhance accessibility to softball, aligned with the ‘Just Society’ value

Ongoing futures focus for SNZ board

This report provides a framework and some initial futures thinking that SNZ can build from. Most immediately, the report can inform SNZ's strengthen and adapt proposal for Sport NZ. Beyond that, it can help SNZ to develop better strategy through understanding the longer-term issues or challenges shaping its future.

Futures triangle

The future triangle is useful for kickstarting a process of thinking beyond the now. While it is a simple tool, it can support deep discussions about possible futures and be combined with other tools such as scenario planning to increase its complexity and depth. It is particularly useful in identifying the factors that may be holding you back.

Alternative futures

Softball can use the alternative futures with a wider audience to build on the implications, opportunities and challenges identified through this process. This will also assist with promoting greater engagement within the softball community in strategic thinking processes.

Alternatively, Softball could craft different scenarios to extend its thinking beyond the assumed future and generate new insights and a more resilient strategy.

Ongoing Assumptions

The process of evaluating the future strategic context is ongoing. Regularly surfacing and non-judgementally assessing underpinning assumptions is a critical element of this. For example, the workshops identified the assumption that New Zealanders will enjoy increased leisure time. This is unlikely to be true for significant parts of the population.

Appendix 3 provides an example of assumptions that the SNZ Board could adapt for monitoring on a six-monthly basis.

Metrics to Track

Tracking the changing SNZ's operating context is an ongoing task to assess whether the anticipated challenges and opportunities are more/or less likely to eventuate. Given the nature of the scenarios explored, and the deep levels of uncertainties they represent, the SNZ team may consider a limited set of metrics that provide pointers to what the future may hold.

Appendix 4 provides an example of how the SNZ Board might monitor its operating context.



Appendix 1

Survey responses

What would you identify as the critical issue for your organisation in the next 5-10 years?

- Retaining members (both genders) and remaining relevant within a NZ sporting context
- Retention of players @ key transitional stages:
 - t-ball to junior softball
 - junior softball to U17/U19
 - age group U19 to senior
- A bigger more diverse participation base, and a clear pathway for our athletes to be recognized.
- The uniqueness about softball is that we are a whānau sport, you can play our game at any age, ethnicity, size/shape or skill level (as you don't need to be athletic). Everyone can be involved at any part of the game (playing, coaching, umpiring, scoring, managing). We need to use this as our Point of Difference to other sports.
- The reason why, is we see our sport being at the heart of many communities, not just Māori, Pacifica but Asian and Pakeha also too. It's a way of bringing more people together and harnessing a multitude of backgrounds.
- For our sport to be successful, there also needs to be value and visibility, where opportunities are available on the world stage, not just here in NZ - and the people who participate see that there is an opportunity to be recognized.
- Changing Leisure Patterns, the ability to attract numbers and talent to our game is significant.
- The status of public funding and staff and volunteer capacity are key, no different from any other sport.

If things go well for your organisation, what would you expect to see in 5-10 years?

- Growth in playing and volunteer numbers
- Increased profile within the broader community
- Recognition of the sport at local and national level in media - and within the wider community.
- High performance teams being in top 5 in the world
- Facilities upgraded @ regional levels
- Retention of players increased by 25%
- A new way to train (coach) and increase the pool of top-quality pitchers to the game

- Recognition of the importance of our sport for Pasifika and Māori sport
- Recruitment and retention of volunteers is highly valued and part of a strategic pathway to success
- Our sport in the Commonwealth Games, and in the Olympics, alongside being one of the top 10 team sports in NZ to participate in, that receives regular funding from both Commercial gain (sponsorship and grants), Sport NZ and HPSNZ.
- My wish would also include a highly engaged audience who are proactive, and players who are being paid to play, incorporating offshore opportunities for not just our players, but our coaches and umpires too!
- A larger participation base, increased capacity and capability in all levels and areas of the game.

If things went wrong for your organisation in the next 5-10 years, what has occurred and what would you most worry about?

- Continuance of what is currently happening (and this is in no way a direct criticism of organisational structure or determined direction currently set.) in falling numbers, loss of national identity, etc.
- Potential and current players not seeing value in playing/ involvement in our sport
- High performance results lead to a significant drop in income streams
- Lack of volunteers to do the work needed to keep the sport running
- Not enough senior teams in the regional competition
- A massive downturn in participation numbers and the business of softball struggling. We're already seeing this in some of our Associations, where volunteers are tired and just can't keep going. COVID maxed out a lot of people, and so if we could find a way for a consistent delivery model that strengthens the administration of our game (including paid administrators/general managers and robust governance) we would be a step ahead
- Loss in participation numbers, funding and the ability to administer and run the game.
- A reduction in playing facilities would be a negative outcome.

Looking back 10-20 years, what are the key factors that have shaped your organisation to be in its current position?

- International alignment that has impacted our profile on international sporting stage which then impacts our profile domestically and with respect to Sport NZ/HPSNZ
- COVID-19 provides us with an opportunity to reshape the delivery of the sport
- Softball being “tied in with” Baseball through the International body and a range of changes that have been instituted in delivery of International events (especially at age-group level). – has been a negative impact through the “lack of expected success at International level”, male, female and at the various levels of competition.
- Constant battle for sufficient funding. We used to have Regional Development officers who would go into schools and teach kids the basic fundamentals of throwing and catching.
- A rose- tinted view of our standing and impact on that standing with the development of the men’s game. A distinct 2 tier approach to value of the women’s game and the men’s game
- The difficulties associated with needing to change the image of the sport in the eyes of the community
- Heritage and not telling Our Story (our Legacy/Whakapapa) – we were a sport that was successful, played in many regions and on TV at world class facilities, however there wasn’t a plethora of other sports to choose from back then – now there is.
- Strong Pathways and International competitions – we lost the strength of our competition, as we weren’t competitive enough. There has been no clear pathways
- NSO and Association Capability – The NSO not driving participation and development programmes across the nation, for both Players and participants
- There is a been stela focus on HP, but not grass roots from the NSO.
- Facilities – need a plan that is obtainable and workable.
- Capable and Aligned Delivery
- The lack and use of Technology in our environment to keep our members engaged
- Changing Leisure Patterns – The birth and growth of Touch had a significant impact on the participation numbers of softball. The increased number of registered sports and professional pathways has decreased our participation base.

Looking forward, what do you see as the priority actions your organisation should carry out now?

- Strengthen our profile domestically and internationally to better position ourselves
- Develop and deliver a cohesive and seamless (end to end) pathway for a softballer – which could also include volunteers e.g., officials, with multiple in and out points.
- Establishing financial sustainability which is less reliant on class 4 funding
- Develop/strengthen local delivery to rebuild the game within NZ. Establish methods/systems to ensure quality delivery of a determined programme aimed at developing people at all levels of the game – and in all contexts (club, Provincial, player, coach, official, etc)
- A realistic and honest assessment of the current situation. A clean sheet of paper for what we would ideally want our sport to look like in the future. An action plan for moving between the 2 but with the “sports speak”.
- Engage with our Associations and understand their priorities – four meetings every year.
- Facilitate a clear pathway for all our participants – inclusive of HP and offshore opportunities
- Enable a participation strategy to increase/retain our numbers – complete with programmes for the whānau – not just players but coaches, umpires and scorers too
- Enable technology to do the heavy lifting – CRM for monthly communications, social channels to entice/engage new participants, Sporty to train new scorers, online course for our coaches and umpires etc.
- Governance Best Practice for our Associations.
- Shared service models for Associations that are volunteer based
- Collaboration, alignment, and innovative thinking. Less politics from within.

Appendix 2

Scenarios

Scenario A

- The digital economy has continued accelerating, driven by online gaming and entertainment advances. Yet, despite technological advances, work dominates people's time. The multi-dimensional metaverses available today are far advanced beyond the 2D Zoom experiences of the early '20s. It means online social networks are as popular as ever, with the advances in visual technologies now enabling almost lifelike social interactions at a distance.
- The sharp increase in home working practices evident after the 2020's pandemics has continued, and the demands of work now seem to be a 24/7 juggle. Not surprisingly, people find it increasingly challenging to commit to regular leisure activities at specific times and places. The ageing population also compounds this for younger generations now faced with elder care responsibilities. As a result, the bias is toward home-based leisure choices, especially given the available range of affordable virtual reality tech.
- Online shopping continues to be a beneficiary of these trends, with most retail centres now hollowed out by the wholesale shift to the convenience of home delivery. For consumers, value for money and flexibility are prime drivers behind buying decisions in a volatile economic environment.
- Unemployment remains low as the working population ages and employers struggle to find staff. Financial pressures ensure people are working long hours and sometimes across multiple jobs. Lack of savings continues to drive the 'unretirement trend' that has depleted the number of elderly volunteers available to support activities outside the workplace. Attracting new people into New Zealand and local communities is a pressing concern. Any arguments over the benefits of immigration have largely fallen away, and the majority are keen to embrace diversity within their communities.
- All this pressure on individuals has underlined the importance of embracing the local community and supporting whānau. Consequently, locally driven initiatives are springing up to address this need and reconnect people in their communities. It is particularly relevant for those working long hours and where the boundary between work and leisure time has become extremely difficult to detect. The successful projects are close-knit with their communities and available on casual participation or drop-in basis.

Scenario B

- The labour shortages of the post-pandemic years led to significant investment in workplace robotics, from nurse assistants to agricultural robotics. However, this counter-intuitively had the effect of increasing demand for human staff, and those in employment are often working long hours.
- It's through digital platforms that people now find primarily find their community or their 'tribe'. But unfortunately, it's an environment rife with misinformation and mistrust that creates further barriers to understanding between social groups and diverse interests.
- With little leisure 'down-time', personalisation is the order of the day, with consumption of AI-generated music and video tailored to individual web-monitored brain patterns proving popular. In addition, a range of avatar-based services is available, from anticipatory online shopping to personal therapy subscriptions.
- There has been an explosion in virtual reality applications for all ages as high-carbon transport increases the cost of international travel. It has also become a core part of senior living communities, enabling them to improve life experiences, especially given the ongoing pandemic-related health challenges.
- Community spirit is in short supply, with resentment towards those who seem to have preferential access to facilities and resources. The decline of team activities and the primarily individualistic nature of leisure preferences has meant that space allocated to poorly patronised activities is under extreme pressure. Priority is given to community facilities that can adapt to many uses. As a result, most suburban team-sport pitches have either been repurposed or turned over to address the ever-present demand for housing.

Scenario C

- Given NZ's welcoming reputation and the need for more workers, migration has expanded significantly in recent years post-pandemic. The country is, therefore, not just a melting pot of people but also of the range of new community activities new arrivals have introduced and strengthened. In addition, there is evidence of strong support networks within neighbourhood groups that embrace the diversity of local needs.
- While outwardly welcoming, the international crises of the 2020s have led New Zealanders to develop a more inward-looking perspective that places greater emphasis on the wellbeing of all citizens. There is less talk of 'punching above our weight' on the world stage and more discussion to ensure everybody shares in the country's wealth.
- NZ is enjoying a resurgence of multicultural expression. People are open to new cultural experiences in their communities that offer variety and in which they can participate at a minimal cost. A standout has been the uptake in te reo, which is now commonly used in conversation. Moreover, governments of all political persuasions strongly support activities contributing to this goal.
- Time-wealthy individuals (now the majority) have driven the growth in demand for activities that enable social interaction within their local communities. In addition, as travel patterns have changed in response to emissions-reduction initiatives, buildings have been re-purposed to take advantage of the demands of these local community needs rather than remain reliant on drawing patronage from surrounding areas. For example, former big box retail spaces are now becoming innovative indoor leisure spaces for their local communities.
- With the older generation expanding, there has been a corresponding focus on the care economy. The pandemic's legacy and heightened environmental awareness have led people to value relationships and community over consumption-based status.
- Income has been a challenge for many over the last few years, especially for those without assets. It is no surprise, therefore, that the recent introduction of a 'KiwiWage' (a form of UBI) has proven extremely popular. It has enabled many to reflect on their life focus which now revolves less around the relatively few work opportunities and more through contribution to society and ensuring the strength of their whānau.

Scenario D

- Automation and an overall slowing economy have freed up the time of most New Zealanders, but their financial status determines the quality of that leisure. Inequality has continued to track at record levels, and those reliant primarily on wage income find it challenging to finance their leisure activities. Moreover, it underpins political tensions between the asset-rich older generations and a younger generation looking to get ahead financially.
- Global challenges continue to put New Zealand under pressure to keep migration high, which is proving to be a source of community friction. Migrants are again being blamed for taking up job opportunities, driving low wages and adding additional pressure to the housing market.
- The economic segregation of urban environments has become increasingly extreme as successive governments have been unable to reduce housing demand. In addition, urban density has increased significantly, and pressure on green space is acute. That which remains must demonstrate its utility to a broad section of community needs.
- Some associations are more adept at using this identity to access funds for their chosen activity at the expense of others, and spending on community projects is often highly contested.
- The success of more established activities has tended to concentrate resources and volunteer support in more affluent communities. In this way, the active recreation sector mirrors the compounding inequalities across New Zealand society. As a result, sport is no longer (if it ever was) an effective social leveller, and New Zealanders play with people that share their identities and perspectives.
- The competitive vibrancy of the more successful sports has resulted in considerable international success. On the other hand, it has led to some questions as to how the majority can be supported to make more effective use of their leisure choices and maximise the benefit of time.

Appendix 3

Monitoring of assumptions

The following are an example of the assumptions typically made within the sport and recreation sector. A low level of confidence in the accuracy of an assumption should prompt organisations to adjust their planning or develop a 'plan b' (another term for alternative future).

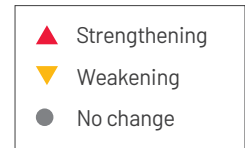
SNZ could use these assumptions to develop their own assumptions for monitoring. This should occur at least annually. See [The assumptions we hold about the future](#).

Assumption	Level of Confidence in Accuracy
Sport and active recreation will continue to enjoy strong cross-societal support (social licence)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Total funding levels to sport and recreation will not decrease	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Further development of the Te Tiriti relationship will foster a positive Māori experience of active recreation	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
The level of volunteer support for active recreation and sport will not decline	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Local government will not decrease its support for sport and recreation	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Climate impacts will have only a moderate impact on sport and active recreation	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
The cost of sport and active recreation will only be a moderate barrier to participation	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
The sport and recreation sector sufficiently adapts to change to remain viable and relevant	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Integrity management frameworks will adapt to emergent challenges and maintain public confidence in fair competition	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Attitudes to elite sporting events will remain positive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
An ageing population will not change the Government's priorities for active recreation and sport	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
The Summer and Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games retain their global appeal as pinnacle international events	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Government continues to view national identity/pride as the key rationale for investment in elite success	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Gaming, virtual and augmented reality have little negative impact on participation in sport and recreation	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Changing working life and leisure patterns do not negatively impact on participation in sport and active recreation	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Appendix 4

Monitoring disruptors

The SNZ board could introduce a regular monitor of the issues and events it believes could disrupt its planning. The STEEP categorisation is commonly used for this purpose. An indication that a possible disruptor is strengthening may prompt SNZ to seek more information or to consider how it might respond.



Political



- ▼ **Social wellbeing policy**
COVID-19 recovery, economy and climate dominating, although Govt still operating under wellbeing banner.
- ▲ **Status of public funding**
Inflation/cost of living/supply issues placing pressure on central and local government spending.
Budget reflects balancing short-term cost of living with longer-term climate change and health implications.
- ▲ **Evolution of Treaty Partnership**
Co-governance being used by some to stir up public alarm over the supposed threat it poses.
- **Health response**
Pandemic response continues to dominate health system under pressure. Could increase focus on physical fitness and healthy communities.
- ▲ **Governance policy initiatives**
Reforms across health, education and local government continue to gather momentum, and present engagement opportunities for us.

Social



- **Increasing ethnic, age and gender diversity**
Increased support and awareness for transgender and non-binary people.
- ▲ **Changing nature of work**
Rise of hybrid work – a blended model where some employees return to the workplace and others continue to work from home.
- ▲ **Social resilience**
Increasingly vulnerable to further lock-downs, other set-backs.
- ▲ **Changing leisure patterns**
Lockdowns accelerated/embedded reshaping of work, time for activity, home entertainment.
- **Changing demographics**
Annual growth rate continues to decrease with births declining 0.7% year on year, although life expectancy continues to climb. Urban populations growing faster than rural.
- ▲ **Individual wellbeing**
Impact on mental health from COVID-19 restrictions becoming more evident.

Economic



- ▲ **National outlook**
sitioning economy from overstimulated domestic demand to a rapid withdrawal of monetary stimulus in order to tame the inflation. Reopening of border may offset some of slowing in domestic demand.
- ▲ **Socio-economic inequality**
The bottom 40% of households account for just 3% of total wealth. 53% of wealth in hands of 10% of households. Māori households have 15% less income than non-Māori households. Gap not increasing but remains an issue.
- **Māori economy**
Approximately \$50 billion asset base and growing.
- **Disposable income**
Housing has biggest impact on income; rising cost of living also impacting.
- ▲ **Changing business patterns**
Increase in flexible workforce, and flexible working hours and arrangements, including telecommuting.

Technological



- ▲ **Gaming and interactive experiences**
Lockdown accelerating on-line tech; rise of virtual and augmented forms of entertainment.
- **Human augmentation**
Bionics, bio-engineering, genetic manipulation, wearables – potential upsides to physical activity but challenges to 'level playing field'. All developing rapidly.
- ▲ **Digital and surveillance**
The level of data is going to potentially overwhelm participants and coaches seeking to compete at the highest levels. Use and access to data will use ethical issues.
- **Increased automation**
Artificial intelligence (AI), robotics and other forms of 'smart automation' are advancing at a rapid pace and have the potential to bring great benefits to the economy, by boosting productivity and creating new and better products and services.
- **Advances in health and medical drugs**
Health and social services must be provided to increasing numbers of older people who are living longer. The health burden of long-term conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes, depression, dementia and musculo-skeletal conditions, is growing.

Environmental



- **Climate change consequence**
Warming and related weather disruptions threatens activity and societal expectations for change.
- ▲ **Climate change response**
Omissions Reduction Plan, informed by the Climate Commissions report. Criticised by some for lacking urgency and relying too much on technocratic rather than political solutions.
- **Space and place dynamics**
From August 2022 Kiwi's will be able build up to three story homes on most sites without the need for additional resource consent. Cost of building and supply issues resulting in deferred maintenance, and higher costs down the road.
- ▲ **Active Transport**
Permissions reduction plan includes \$350 million to fund transport services and infrastructure investments that reduce reliance on cars and support uptake of active and shared modes.

Sector



- **Social licence for sport and recreation**
Cycling review and white ferns selection point to increased negative public sentiment about the duty of care afforded athletes.
- ▲ **Athlete and participant wellbeing**
Divide within athlete community over representative body for athletes.
- ▲ **Workforce (including volunteers)**
Heightened competition for skilled labour; increased pay gap between not for profit and commercial sector; older volunteers deterred through fear of contracting COVID-19 (post loosening of restrictions)
- ▲ **Changes in geopolitical power**
Likelihood of sport being called on to strengthen relationship with Pacific neighbours to counter China's influence. Wimbledon example of sport events as platform for political protest.
- ▲ **Sustainable financial model**
Lotto review, increased focus on alcohol sponsorship, instability of gaming.
- **International travel**
while borders are reopening 90% of the world's population now lives in countries with travel restrictions. Health likely to be embedded in every aspect of travel with increased automation and face and body becoming passport.



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