

# SYSTEM-LEVEL OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities from Sport New Zealand staff, sector stakeholders and everyday New Zealanders to move towards a more inclusive physical activity system



# Piki atu ki te taumata o tōku maunga, i te ihi o te whenua nei nō ōku tūpuna.

I climb to the summit of my mountain  
to see the lands of my ancestors.

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This report is a summary of a system mapping project commissioned by Sport New Zealand | Ihi Aotearoa, led by Innovation Unit.

Sport New Zealand is proud to be the kaitiaki of our country's play, active recreation and sport system.  
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Innovation Unit is a not-for-profit social enterprise that works to develop new solutions for social issues and create impact at scale.  
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#### Thank you to

- the everyday New Zealanders who shared their personal stories for this kaupapa,
- the sector staff for their openness and honesty to help us identify opportunities moving forward,
- Sport New Zealand staff for sharing their time, knowledge and insights, and
- Samuel Joseph for his beautiful illustration work to bring these stories and ideas to life.

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# Key findings of the report

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The global COVID-19 pandemic has created widespread challenges across Aotearoa and the globe. A silver lining of the pandemic is the opportunity it presents for us to pause and reflect on how we could create a better future together.

As kaitiaki of the play, active recreation and sport system, Sport New Zealand | Ihi Aotearoa was looking to understand how people experience the system and what could change to better serve the needs of all New Zealanders.

**By 'system' we mean the people, organisations, spaces and relationships that influence how people are active in Aotearoa.**

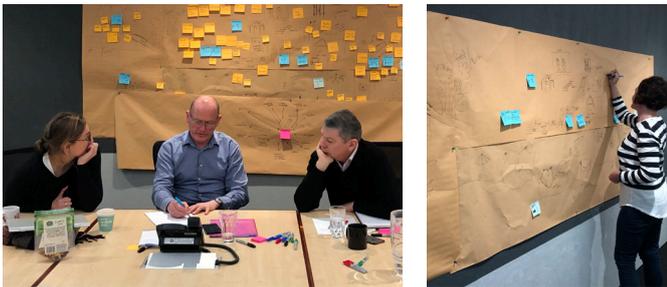
To do this, they commissioned Innovation Unit to talk to a diverse range of New Zealanders about their experiences of physical activity, as well as some people in the system who have an influence over others' access to physical activity opportunities.

For the purpose of this report, we have mostly referred to a 'physical activity system' (as opposed to the play, active recreation and sport system) due to the feedback we heard about this phrasing. See opportunity 01 (page 11) for more detail.

## What we did

### System mapping workshops

We started by holding a mapping workshop with Sport New Zealand staff in Wellington and Auckland, as well as an informal kōrero with the Rautaki Māori team, to understand internal views of the system.



*Sport New Zealand staff discussing and mapping the what, where, who and how of the play, active recreation and sporting system.*

### Rapid information review

We then conducted a rapid information review of relevant literature (see: References, page 25). This helped us to clarify questions and topics to guide our conversations with people outside the organisation.

### Interviews

Through Zoom, phone and face to face meetings, we then spoke with:

- 9 diverse New Zealanders about their experiences and perceptions of being active, and
- 11 sector stakeholders about their experiences of working with other organisations to support New Zealanders to be active.

With both groups, we also asked about the changes that they'd seen happen because of COVID-19.

It's worth noting that these conversations were not intended to represent all of the system, or all New Zealanders' diverse views of being active. The purpose was to talk with people who would have different perspectives from our own, to help us challenge assumptions and think about the future differently. We see this as just the start of many conversations with New Zealanders and the system.

## Who we spoke with

### Sector organisations

- Department of Conservation (1)
- Rugby Club (1)
- Oranga Tamariki (1)
- Healthy families (1)
- School Principals (1)
- City Councils (2)
- Regional Sports Trusts (3)
- University (1)

### Everyday New Zealanders

The nine people we spoke with

- spent different amounts of time being active per week: from approximately 60 minutes per day (4)
- to 60 minutes per week (5),
- identified as female (4), male (4) and trans-gender,
- ranged from 19-50 years old,
- were based in Wellington (5) and Auckland (4), and
- identified as Pākeha (4), Māori (4) and Pasifika (1).

### Further conversations

Although we have not attempted to represent all New Zealanders' views, below are some additional voices we would recommend prioritising at a later stage:

#### New Zealanders:

- Young women
- Rural
- Other ethnicities and backgrounds
- Older person (70+ years)

#### Sector:

- Commercial centre
- National/regional sporting organisations
- Public health organisation
- Sport New Zealand cluster partnership manager

# What we created

## Analysis

Using Miro, we brought all of the data together and looked for themes, tensions and opportunities between and across the different groups we spoke with.



Digital data analysis and synthesis using online whiteboard 'Miro'.

## Bringing it to life

To share the stories and opportunities, we worked with an illustrator to create the following tools.

### Perspectives map

A visual representation of some of the organisations, spaces, and relationships that influence peoples' experiences of physical activity, and perspectives from across the system. This is intended as an overview of the different opportunities and journeys.



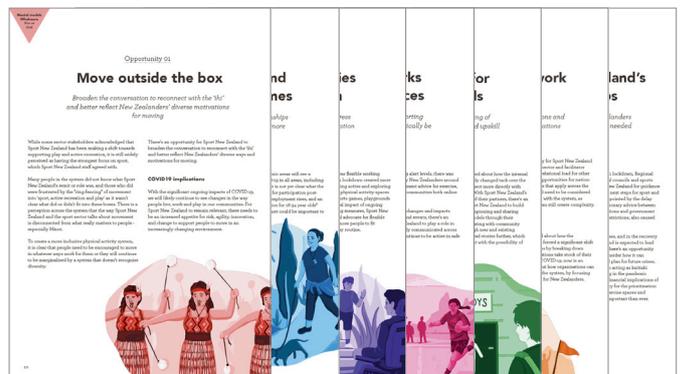
## Journeys

We chose to illustrate the journeys of six of the everyday New Zealanders we spoke with to showcase some of the diverse ways they experienced physical activity over their lifetimes. One additional story (Tracey and Mason) was added using existing data from a Sport New Zealand report on Play in Ōtautahi. Pseudonyms have been used to keep interviewees anonymous.



## Opportunities

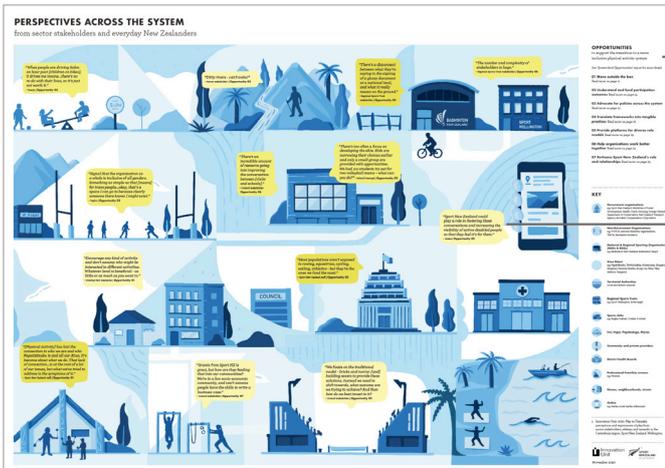
Lastly, the seven opportunities outlined in this document highlight actions Sport New Zealand might consider taking at a system level to support the shift towards a more inclusive physical activity system.



# How to use these tools

## 01 Start with the Perspectives map

Browse the Perspectives map to get a view of the big picture. Read the quotes and opportunities. Ask yourself, which of these voices do I not hear often?



## 02 Dive deeper into the detail

Where you find quotes or opportunities that pique your interest, dive deeper into the detail of the relevant journeys and opportunities documents.



## 03 Reflect, share, do things differently

Reflect on what was surprising. What challenged your assumptions, or reaffirmed hunches you had? How could you spend time with people who have different backgrounds and experiences from you more often? What additional questions does this raise for you?

Share and discuss your thoughts with your colleagues. Plan what you will do differently in your work to address the opportunities and play your part in creating a more inclusive physical activity system.



# Opportunities

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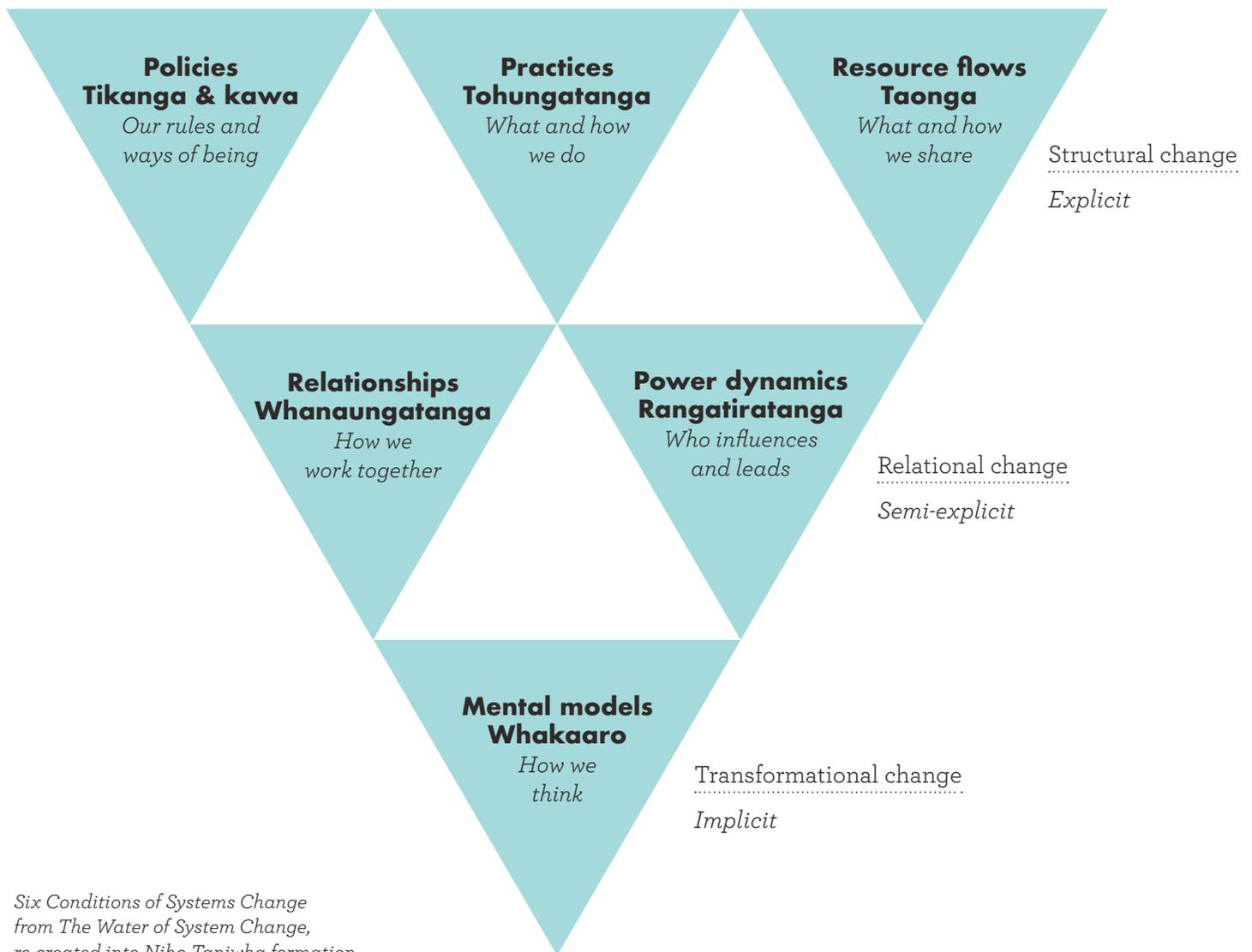
The following seven opportunities highlight actions Sport New Zealand (and in some cases, alongside other organisations) might consider taking at a system level to support the shift towards a more inclusive physical activity system.

These opportunities come from what we heard from Sport New Zealand staff, sector stakeholders and everyday New Zealanders and are based on the *'Six Conditions of Systems Change'*.

# Shifting the system

Systems are complex and ever-changing. To create change at a system level (i.e. instead of more siloed programmes, services, or product-related solutions), there are six essential conditions that need to change<sup>17</sup>.

## Six Conditions of Systems Change | Niho Taniwha

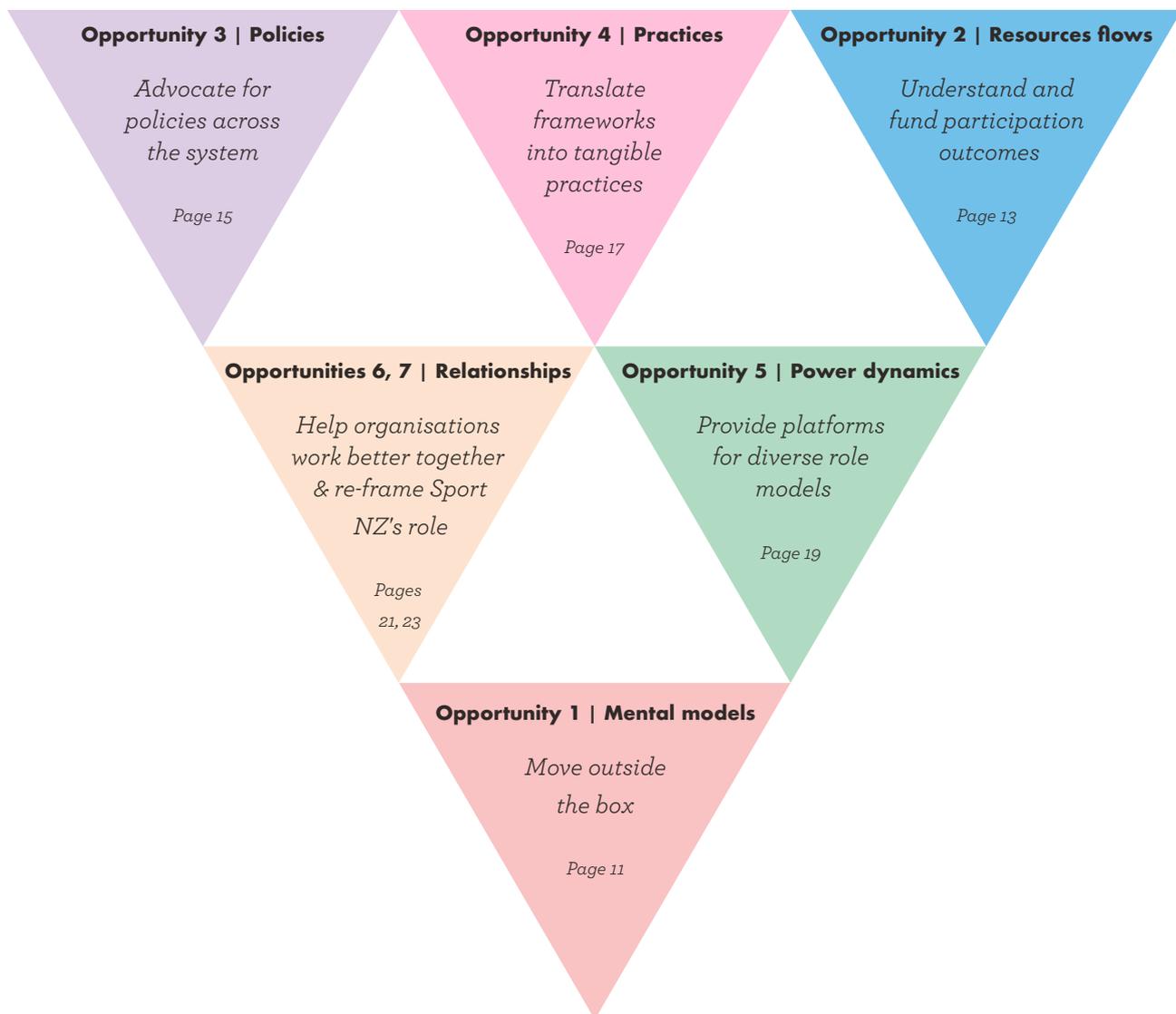


*Six Conditions of Systems Change from The Water of System Change, re-created into Niho Taniwha formation with Te Reo Māori words by Canaan Tuhura of Healthy Families Rotorua.*

## Summary of opportunities

We used the six conditions to help us identify opportunities at a system level. Below is an overview of the seven opportunities, and how they relate to the six conditions for systems change. See the page number to read each opportunity in more detail.

### Opportunities to create a more inclusive physical activity system



## Opportunity 01

# Move outside the box

*Broaden the conversation to reconnect with the 'ihi'\*  
and better reflect New Zealanders' diverse motivations  
for moving*

Some sector stakeholders acknowledged that Sport New Zealand has been making a shift towards supporting play and active recreation. However, it is still widely perceived and agreed by Sport New Zealand staff that the strongest focus of the organisation remains on sport.

Many people in the system did not know what Sport New Zealand's remit or role was, and those who did were frustrated by the "ring-fencing" of movement into 'sport, active recreation and play' as it wasn't clear what did or didn't fit into these boxes. There is a perception across the system that the way Sport New Zealand and the sport sector talks about movement is disconnected from what really matters to many people - especially Māori.

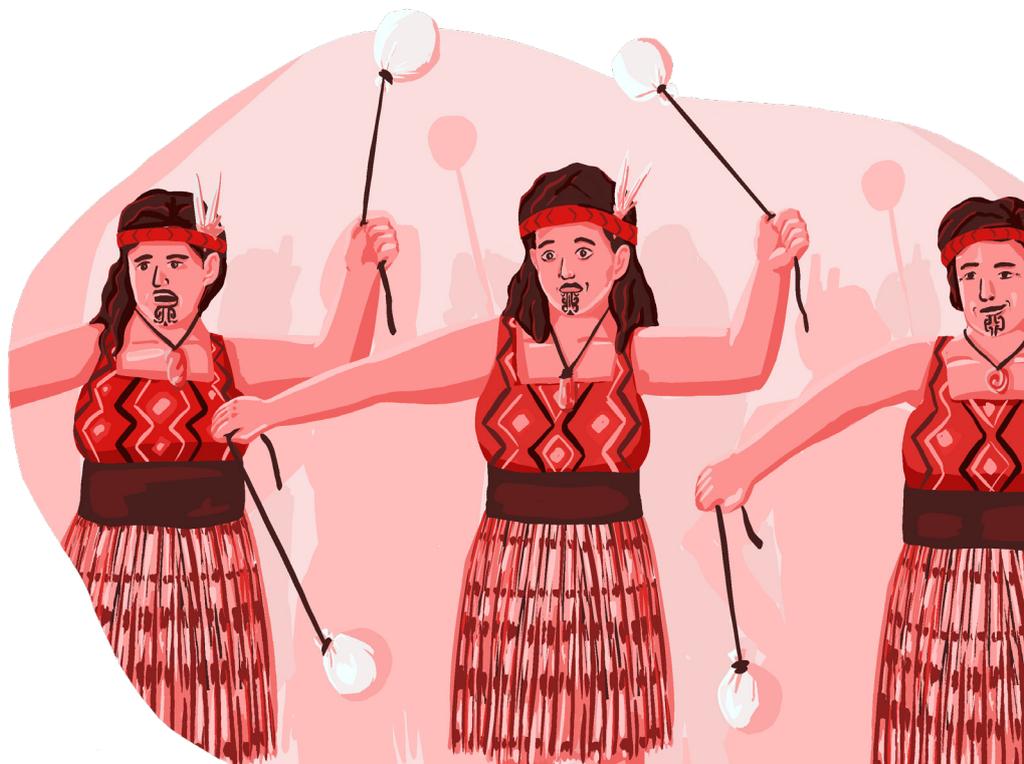
To create a more inclusive physical activity system, it is clear that people need to be encouraged to move in whatever ways work for them or they will continue to be marginalised by a system that doesn't recognise diversity.

For Sport New Zealand to remain relevant, there needs to be an increased appetite for risk, agility, innovation, and change to support people to move in an increasingly changing environment.

There's an opportunity for Sport New Zealand to broaden the conversation to reconnect with the 'ihi' and better reflect New Zealanders' diverse ways and motivations for moving.

*\*"The ihi describes the ability of someone. It's the kind of x-factor the performer has ... it's hitting you in the heart and the hair is standing up on the back of your neck and you're thinking, 'wow, this is amazing.'"*

- Māori Language Commission chief executive Ngahiwi Apanui, See: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/106816674/the-words-in-te-reo-maori-that-english-doesnt-have>



*"This is far more than just activity. It goes way deeper, right into your core. It's the stuff that passion comes from and drive and energy - all of those really powerful things that get you moving...It's really important to go back to the core of what that name is all about...it's way more than, 'we're going to play sports' or 'we're going to do some fitness activity'. That stuff doesn't fit at the core for Māori."*

– Sport New Zealand staff

*"We think active transport is already happening without us, we put those things into a box and say it isn't our box, but actually the outcomes are diverse."*

– Sport New Zealand staff

*"There's no logic to the ring-fencing of 'PARS."*

– Council stakeholder

*"When does active rec become not active rec?"*

– University stakeholder



*"Encourage any kind of activity and don't assume who might be interested in different activities. Whatever level of activity is beneficial - as little or as much as you want to."*

– Everyday New Zealander

*"I'm really interested in how trans communities can use movement more as a way of connecting with your body."*

– Taylor

## Opportunity 02

# Understand and fund participation outcomes

*Move away from traditional funding relationships and strategies to support a shift towards a more inclusive system*

While some sector stakeholders acknowledged the shift in Sport New Zealand's research and funding focus towards participation, Sport New Zealand staff accepted that there is still a bias towards competitive and performance based sports with low levels of participation.

Meanwhile, schools who are trying to move from a focus on competition to participation face significant challenges in providing enough opportunities for every young person to get involved. Even if there are opportunities to participate, families still have to overcome significant financial and cultural barriers.

Staff and sector stakeholders both saw a need to move away from traditional funding relationships and strategies, towards more genuinely innovative solutions.

As the current sport system has been designed by - and predominantly still privileges - pākeha men, a move away from historical ways of working is essential to support a shift towards a more inclusive physical activity system where the vision 'Every Body Active' is possible.

This should include more engagement with and emphasis on those aged 18-34 (especially those in lower socio-economic areas) who will be disproportionately affected by the recession we're now in. Their ideas and interests will be essential for building a strong and resilient physical activity system in an ever-changing environment.



*"I've seen a considerable shift in the research focus in recent years with Sport New Zealand which has been awesome and that investment approach has followed. Deprivation being a key indicator and a focus on modern Pasifika communities and urban areas, has been really good."*

– Council stakeholder

*"We haven't changed who we fund in a long time. We've just always funded them."*

– Sport New Zealand staff

*"Organisations, initiatives and activities have to be formally recognised to get funding. This can mean that we don't fund real innovation."*

– Sport New Zealand staff

*"We have some highly funded, but low participation activities. Most populations are not exposed to rowing, equestrian, cycling, sailing, athletics, but they're the ones we fund the most."*

– Sport New Zealand staff

*"There's too often a focus on developing the elite. Kids are narrowing their choices earlier and only a small group are provided with the opportunities. We had 110 students try out for two volleyball teams - what can you do? We're working against years and years of engrained practice around sports."*

– School Principal

## Opportunity 03

# Advocate for policies across the system

*Influence policies across the system to address attitudinal and physical barriers to participation*

Sector stakeholders and everyday New Zealanders spoke about the wide range of policies and laws at every level in the system that can have a strong influence on participation. For example, including accessibility in strategic plans and implementing universal design in physical and online spaces, through to regulations around play spaces, speed limits, and gender-diverse inclusion within schools.

Some people shared how job flexibility enables them to be active or support others to be active, while others talked about how important the health of the environment is to participation - such as water quality for swimming in rivers.

There is an opportunity for Sport New Zealand to influence policies across the system to address attitudinal and physical barriers to participation in the diverse spaces people want to be active.

An example of this could be advocating for workplaces to continue the flexible working catalysed by Covid-19, as a way to enable more people to fit movement into their everyday routine.



*"It's very hard to prepare new play spaces with so many restrictions."*

– Sector stakeholder<sup>3</sup>

*"What would make the biggest difference is to be explicitly invitational and welcoming, like putting us in your marketing collateral, and a section on your website about accessibility. Unfortunately, we don't have comprehensive accessibility legislation in New Zealand, so it's up to organisations to do the right thing."*

– James

*"Signal that the organisation as a whole is inclusive of all genders. Something as simple as that [means] for trans people...okay, that's a space I can go to because clearly someone there knows I might exist."*

– Taylor

*"When people are driving 80km an hour past [children on bikes], it drives me insane...there's no re-do with their lives, so it's just not worth it."*

– Everyday New Zealander<sup>3</sup>

*"Dirty rivers - can't swim!"*

– Sector stakeholder<sup>3</sup>

*"A lot of our experiences are not accessible for those who are less able. Until things like universal design are mandated, we're working with the willing."*

– Government stakeholder

*"The 9-5 work day needs to be seriously challenged, because otherwise everything gets pushed to the fringes in terms of physical activity...Lock-down was a real eye opener. It showed us that actually, if we were more flexible in our support for people to work, then we could exercise."*

– Council stakeholder



Opportunity 04

# Translate frameworks into tangible practices

*Work closely with National and Regional Sporting Organisations to ensure frameworks can realistically be translated into tangible local practices*

Those in the system who had some kind of relationship with Sport New Zealand perceived the organisation's role as providing high-level frameworks, strategies, and data. While those functions were broadly seen as useful, some saw a disconnect between Sport New Zealand's frameworks and the realities of implementing them at a local level.

These is an opportunity for Sport New Zealand to work more closely with National and Regional Sporting Organisations and local communities to co-design and test relevant frameworks and strategies. This will ensure their relevance to those most affected by them, and that they can be translated into tangible local practices.



*“Understanding the overarching strategy and how they bring that to life is really important for us.”*

– Council stakeholder

*“There's this disconnect between what they're saying in the signing of a glossy document at a national level, and what it really means on the ground when the rubber hits the road...”*

– Regional Sports Trust stakeholder

*“[Sport New Zealand] need to be pushing Regional Sports Organisations and National Sports Organisations to ensure they're leading by example, and using a framework that works.”*

– Council stakeholder



## Opportunity 05

# Provide platforms for diverse role models

*Increase visibility, empathy and understanding of minority groups' experiences of being active, and up-skill local leaders to be allies*

The everyday New Zealanders we spoke with talked about the opportunity for Sport New Zealand to provide more platforms for role models from minority groups, such as tangata whenua, Muslim women, and people with experiences of gender and ability diversity. By increasing visibility, empathy and understanding of different New Zealanders' experiences of being active, they hoped that attitudinal barriers to participation could be addressed, and more inclusive active opportunities could be made available.

Supporting and up-skilling local leaders, such as coaches, volunteers, principals, and advocates, to be allies for those who might face attitudinal barriers to participation was also seen as another area Sport New Zealand could influence.

With Sport New Zealand's online reach, and the reach of their partners, there's an exciting opportunity for Sport New Zealand to champion and share the stories of diverse role models through their existing platforms. Collaborating with community and online influencers through existing and new partnerships could help spread stories further throughout the system to challenge mindsets and change traditional thinking.



*“Sport New Zealand could play a role in fostering those conversations and increasing the visibility of active disabled people so that people feel it’s for them.”*

– James

*“There’s a real lack of representation of role models. For the four years I’ve been following [professional ultra and trail running], maybe two times I’ve seen representations of trans people. It can speak volumes.”*

– Taylor



*“Trusting coaches or managers or leaders will call out any homophobia or transphobia in the sports field or within training - having allies in that space.”*

– Taylor

*“The need is more at the individual level rather than organisations. For example, a Regional Sporting Organisation might be keen to learn about [trauma informed practice], but it’s about filtering it down to the coach who might have a kid having a meltdown in their team. Resourcing to train the volunteer-base can be huge for clubs to try and find the time on top of what they’ve already committed in volunteer time.”*

– Government stakeholder

## Opportunity 06

# Help organisations work better together

*Reduce the stakeholder management load for other organisations and provide opportunities for nation-wide conversations*

Stakeholders talked about the double-edged sword of working collaboratively with other organisations to enable more New Zealanders to be active. While it was seen as important for enabling positive outcomes for communities, working with increasingly diverse community providers and government groups comes with an increase in the time required for stakeholder management. Both local and central government stakeholders also spoke about internal barriers that can get in the way of working with other organisations, such as bureaucratic systems and processes, and colleagues' closed mindsets. A university stakeholder found it so difficult to influence change via traditional methods such as advising ministries that he instead adopted grass-roots approaches, such as writing blogs and social media posts about health promotion.

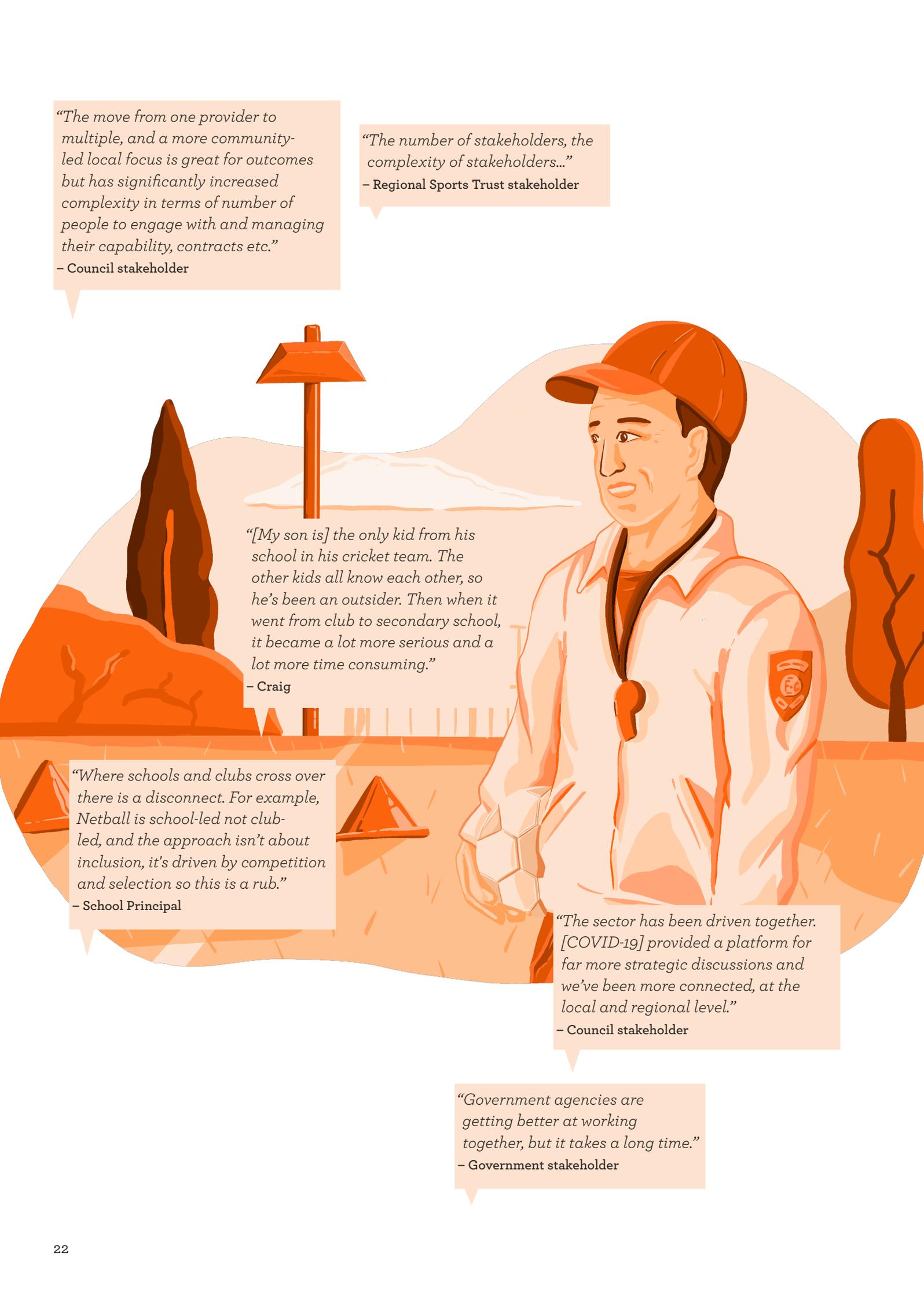
One particularly challenging relationship highlighted by both stakeholders and everyday New Zealanders was that of the tension between clubs and schools in providing opportunities for young people to participate in sports.

As organisations take stock of their ways of working in the wake of COVID-19, now is an opportune time to think about better ways of working together across the system. There may be an opportunity for Sport New Zealand to play a role in being a connector and facilitator in the system and provide opportunities for nation-wide conversations about barriers and issues that are applicable across the country. However, this would need to be considered in collaboration with the system, as structures such as clusters can still create complexity.



*"The move from one provider to multiple, and a more community-led local focus is great for outcomes but has significantly increased complexity in terms of number of people to engage with and managing their capability, contracts etc."*  
- Council stakeholder

*"The number of stakeholders, the complexity of stakeholders..."*  
- Regional Sports Trust stakeholder



*"[My son is] the only kid from his school in his cricket team. The other kids all know each other, so he's been an outsider. Then when it went from club to secondary school, it became a lot more serious and a lot more time consuming."*  
- Craig

*"Where schools and clubs cross over there is a disconnect. For example, Netball is school-led not club-led, and the approach isn't about inclusion, it's driven by competition and selection so this is a rub."*  
- School Principal

*"The sector has been driven together. [COVID-19] provided a platform for far more strategic discussions and we've been more connected, at the local and regional level."*  
- Council stakeholder

*"Government agencies are getting better at working together, but it takes a long time."*  
- Government stakeholder

## Opportunity 07

# Re-frame Sport New Zealand's role and relationships

*Support those who are enabling more New Zealanders to be active by focusing energy where it is most needed*

Sport New Zealand seems either to have very intense relationships, or be virtually invisible in other parts of the system.

On one hand, some Regional Sports Trusts felt that their relationship with Sport New Zealand was more time-intensive and one-way than they'd expect from a partnership. On the other hand, people in clubs and local and central government had very little contact with Sport New Zealand and were unsure of the organisations' role or purpose. Both Regional Sports Trusts and council staff wanted Sport New Zealand to be better connected with their communities to lessen the 'translation' role they play between the two groups, and to work with them to figure out what partnership should really look like, together.

Additionally, iwi were not mentioned by Sport New Zealand staff as part of mapping the physical activity system, however the Māori New Zealanders we spoke with had many examples of how their iwi was playing a strong role in supporting their whānau to be more active.

It is also clear that in times of crises, such as COVID-19, the system expects Sport New Zealand to lead the way at a national level. Staff from Regional Sporting Organisations, local councils and sports clubs who looked to Sport New Zealand for guidance during the Level 1 lock-down had high expectations that they would receive timely, consistent and comprehensive messages to address their concerns and questions.

There is an opportunity for Sport New Zealand to demonstrate its leadership as a kaitiaki in the wake of COVID-19 by ensuring there are ready channels for system-wide communication, for publishing information and for encouraging communities of interest to share questions and answers.

By redefining its role and diversifying its relationships in the system, Sport New Zealand could better support the people and spaces that will enable more New Zealanders to be active. This could help shift the system towards a future where every body is active.

*“Get more connected with our communities to understand implications and get feedback for initiatives like funding applications.”*

– Regional Sports Trust stakeholder

*“I’m aware of the funding, but Sport New Zealand are asking things they have no business to ask. Why is that data needed?”*

– Club volunteer

*“Sport New Zealand takes up a day per week every week: planning, preparing, reporting, explaining - it’s a considerable part of my role...we’re very thankful for the investment, but at times the balance of what you gain as a partner verses what you have to provide needs to be considered.”*

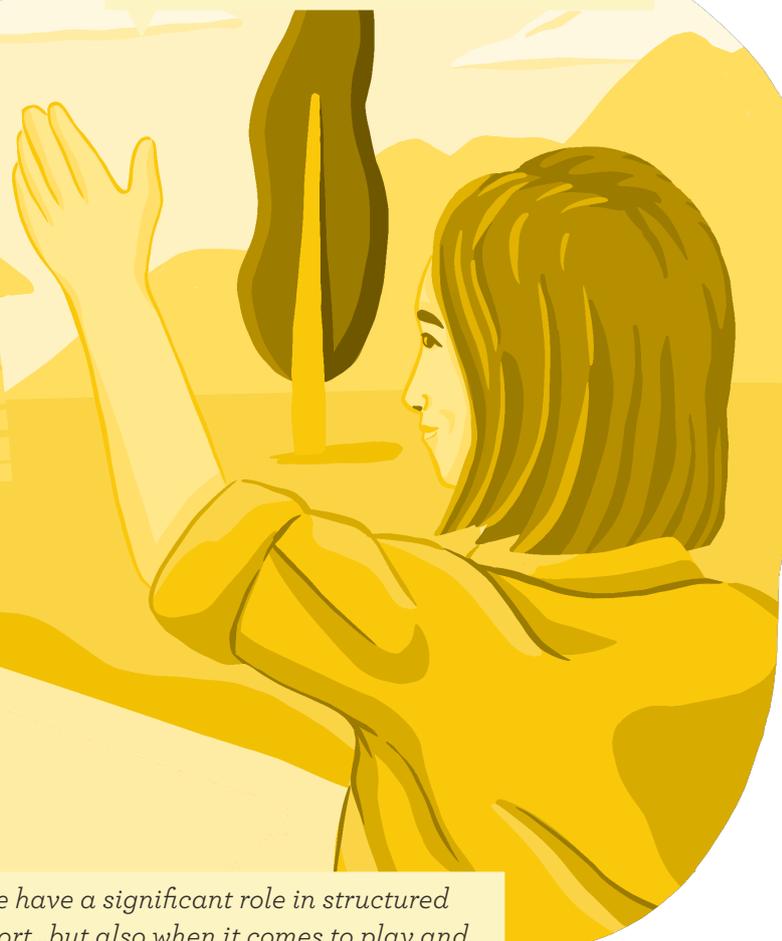
– Regional Sports Trust

*“I assume [Sport New Zealand] is the governing body of Regional Sports Trusts - no idea what else they do - something at a national level - something about high performance athletes?”*

– School Principal

*“Our relationships are with a tiny proportion of the system...We rely heavily on others to connect with communities.”*

– Sport New Zealand staff



*“We needed clear direction about how sports would be played - but there were so many varying messages. We didn’t hear from [Sport New Zealand] until two weeks after lock-down - and I appreciate the changing beast that is COVID - but we had clubs knocking on our doors from the first day with so many questions.”*

– Council stakeholder

*“We have a significant role in structured sport...but also when it comes to play and active rec as well. We hope Sport New Zealand can see Council as having more skin in the game, and how best to leverage our significant resource size and scale to support [New Zealanders] to be more active in a whole range of ways.”*

– Council stakeholder

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**"The key thing is investing in change. Not just investing in the same bricks and mortar, the same relationships, the same strategies."**

Council stakeholder

