

Gotcha BOCCIA

Paralympics New Zealand REGIONAL COMMUNITY PARA SPORT PILOT 1 REPORT

October 2023



Contents

CONTENTS	2
ABOUT THIS REPORT	3
BACKGROUND	3
PARALYMPICS NEW ZEALAND	3
BOCCIA NEW ZEALAND	3
PILOT PURPOSE.....	4
WHAT DID WE DO? THE JOURNEY TOWARDS LAUNCHING THE PILOT	4
CONSULTATION	4
CLARIFICATION.....	5
CO-DESIGN APPROACH	5
RESOURCES	6
HOW WELL DID WE DO?	8
ACTIVATOR RECRUITMENT AND EDUCATION.....	8
MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS	9
DELIVERY	11
MONITORING AND EVALUATION	11
WHAT IMPACT DID WE HAVE?	14
IMPACT ON PARTICIPANTS.....	14
IMPACT ON ACTIVATORS	15
WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNT FROM THE PILOT?	16
REFLECTIONS FROM PARAFEDS AND SIMILAR ORGANISATION.....	16
REFLECTIONS FROM BOCCIA NZ.....	18
REFLECTIONS FROM PARALYMPICS NEW ZEALAND.....	20
FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS	21
ENHANCED OPERATING APPROACH	21
ONGOING PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES	21
ONGOING PARA SPORT DEVELOPMENT	21
OTHER COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES.....	21

About this report

This report contains information specific to the Regional Community Para Sport Pilot, a component of the Collectively Stronger Together project which is part of the Paralympics New Zealand (PNZ) Strengthen and Adapt Plan. The pilot took place between November 2022 – August 2023 and tested the operating approach in developing a new Para sport in regions where they had not been offered previously, and engaged with new and existing organisations throughout the course of the pilot period. The Strengthen and Adapt investment was focused on allocating human resources and programme resources to co-design, promote, monitor and evaluate a community Boccia programme for a 20-week period (or 400 hours equivalent). The Parties collaborating on this pilot were:

- Paralympics New Zealand ("PNZ")
- Boccia New Zealand ("Boccia NZ")
- Disability Sport and Recreation Hawke's Bay ("Parafeds and similar organisation")
- Parafed Manawātū ("Parafeds and similar organisation")
- Parafed Taranaki ("Parafeds and similar organisation").

This report uses data collected from key stakeholders which included the above organisations, activators and participants. Survey data was collected before, during and after the pilot, whilst additional conversations via Zoom and in-person interviews were conducted to support findings and highlight areas of success.

Background

Paralympics New Zealand

PNZ is the National Paralympic Committee (NPC) for New Zealand with the vision 'Through Para sport, lives will be transformed'. The regional community Para sport pilot is aligned to PNZ's strategic outcomes of 'Equity is achieved when Para sport is recognised at all levels of sport in New Zealand' and 'A strong and sustainable pathway to the Paralympic Games'. PNZ believes collaboration with members and partner organisations to design, deliver and enable Para sport experiences across all levels of the pathway is integral to get more disabled people involved in Para sport.

Boccia New Zealand

Boccia is one of the fastest growing Para sports in the world and is among the more popular disability sports across New Zealand, as noted on a 2021 Parafed Network Community Footprint. Boccia is a sport that can be played for life, is accessible for older people and can be picked up at any age or stage.

Boccia NZ's strategic plan focuses on enhancing regional engagement, facilitating new club development and enhancing the capacity and capability of existing clubs /

groups. Boccia NZ's outcomes from their Sport NZ Disability Inclusion Fund initiative included supporting key delivery partners to establish, enhance and sustain a variety of participation opportunities for all disabled tamariki and rangatahi in school environments. This involved a provision of inclusive boccia kits that contain sport-specific equipment and a teaching resource originally developed by Disability Sport Wales and adapted by Boccia NZ. Therefore the regional community Para sport pilot was planned to help complement this work by offering Boccia to all disabled people in community club environments. Once established, these community club environments have the potential to continue operating ongoing Boccia programmes through facilitation or delivery by the Parafeds and similar organisation and local activator(s) that will be connected as part of the regional community Para sport pilot.

Pilot purpose

The objectives of this pilot included:

- Increased participation in Boccia;
- Enhanced operating approach for Boccia;
- Evaluate new and innovative Boccia game-based resources and activities;
- Address geographical gap in the provision of Boccia in regions across New Zealand.

What did we do? The journey towards launching the pilot

Consultation

At the completion of the community Para sport landscape mapping exercise undertaken by the PNZ Para Sport Community Manager in 2022, PNZ and Boccia NZ identified gaps and opportunities to establish and deliver Boccia in the regions of Hawke's Bay, Manawatū and Taranaki.

PNZ initiated calls with one governance representative at Disability Sport and Recreation Hawke's Bay, and three staff across Parafed Manawatū, Parafed Taranaki, and Sport Hawke's Bay who were driving regional strategy to ensure disability and inclusion is embedded throughout all programmes in the region. During that time, Disability Sport and Recreation Hawke's Bay was in their first year of establishment and were still to formalise an operational plan but all the aforementioned organisations supported the pilot ideas in principle.

PNZ then consulted with Boccia NZ to gain a better understanding of the sport, their expectations, existing documentation, and resources to help develop a Project Brief. Boccia NZ's overall vision for the pilot was to enhance Boccia capability and capacity in the Hawke's Bay, Manawatū and Taranaki regions. This meant developing a fundamental skills and games programme that participants could experience over a 6-week period at a community level, which could be sustainably supported by a number of activators and future funding models.

PNZ also consulted with Stacey Roche (Paralympian #134) and Greig Jackson (Paralympian #146) to ensure athlete voice was included in planning. This consultation sought to understand how they began their journey in Boccia, their motivations and barriers to participation, and their views on how Boccia could be promoted within the community.

Clarification

The key stakeholders were presented with a Project Brief, which outlined:

- Purpose/Objectives
- Outcomes
- Description
- Approach
- Marketing and Communications Plan
- Timelines
- Resources
- Budget
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
- Relevant Insights/Considerations.

One of the early apprehensions of some organisations was the expectation to administer resources into a fixed 20-week period. It was agreed that the pilot's outputs could be fulfilled over a longer period, and the investment broadly factored in 400 hours of work per Party allowing flexibility and time for recruitment, induction and onboarding purposes.

Following the clarification of time commitment, PNZ shared a Service Delivery Agreement with Boccia NZ, the Parafeds and similar organisation, to confirm the commencement of the pilot partnership between all the Parties.

Co-design approach

Using a co-design approach, the Parties considered and progressed the following ideas together to help shape the pilot outcomes:

- An online resource link via Sharepoint to share brainstorming notes, meeting minutes, documents and templates relating to the pilot;
- Future partnerships with tertiary providers or polytechnics to engage students to support future programmes in their sport-related practicums;
- A community Boccia resource manual that is mobile and print friendly (an interactive and teachable mobile app was also discussed but that was determined to require additional resources, time and funds);
- Parallel and inclusive activities in order to engage and support people with different impairments and wide age ranges within the programme;

- An equipment wish list along with a stock take of existing inventory to allow for the use of traditional and adaptive equipment for Boccia in each region;
- The terminology ‘activator’ used throughout the pilot to describe anyone who initiates the session plans, and delivers activities or games that develop basic skills and knowledge for Boccia. The activator also maintains the positive engagement of participants. This term removed any perception that the programme required coaches with sport specific qualifications, expertise or skills to deliver the sessions. It enabled the recruitment of individuals who were willing to create a fun, safe, and inclusive environment for Gotcha Boccia in the community.

Resources

The Parties collaborated to develop a structured framework for the resource manual including the following:

- Introduction and Acknowledgements
- What is Boccia
- Fundamentals of Boccia
- How to Play
- Boccia Classification and Player Pathway
- STEP Principles for inclusion
- Equipment
- Session 1: Accuracy
- Session 2: Power
- Session 3: Rebound / ricochet
- Session 4: Strategy / tactics
- Session 5: Communication and teamwork
- Session 6: Game sense.

Further research of existing and publicly available target game resources was undertaken via World Boccia, Sport New Zealand, Sport Australia, Paralympics Australia, VicSport, Disability Sport Wales. Boccia NZ then began providing detailed input and diagrams for the content, based around 6 session plans. This content included a description of each skill, warm up activities, skill activities, a game activity, and activator tips and instructions that allowed for adaptations and progressions. At the same time, the Parties began to consider the branding (e.g. logos, colours, programme name, marketing terminology) and sought feedback from various members of the community (disabled people and non-disabled people). The Parties settled on Gotcha Boccia as the programme name, with Having A Ball as its tagline.

A trial run of activities from the resource manual took place on 1 February 2023 with the support of competent Boccia players in Canterbury. This allowed Boccia NZ to review valuable verbal feedback on a range of non-traditional Boccia equipment, for example:

“Skittle Chaos was a very fun, dynamic and exciting activity...but not for players who may struggle with over-stimulation.”

“Allowing for all players to propel at random times means more time on task, but ramp players may fall behind having to take a longer time to set up.”

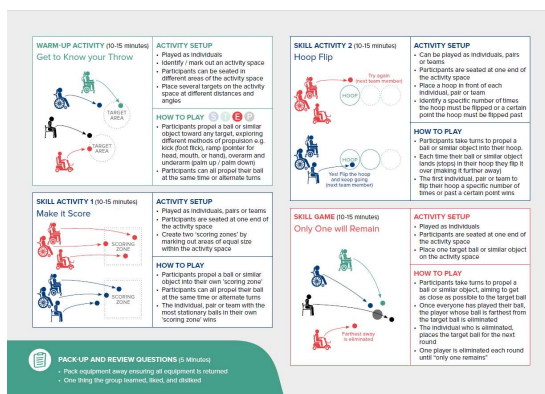
“The bean bags and koosh balls are much lighter and better for smaller hands.”

The insights from the above prompted Boccia NZ and PNZ to consider how activators could be educated, with a possible opportunity to focus on game adaptations through a coach development process. A photographer was also engaged during the session to capture a range of images to be utilised in the resource manual. PNZ worked with a designer to develop the final resource manual, along with relevant marketing and communications content. An E-Text version of this resource manual was then made available thanks to recommendations and support from Blind Sport New Zealand and Blind Low Vision New Zealand.

Discussions about equipment led to Boccia NZ connecting with Packaworld to support the pilot with a custom-made inflatable U-shape frame for Boccia, allowing for a quicker and easier set up of the Boccia court outline. Following a stock take of traditional Boccia and supplementary equipment by Parafed Manawātū and Parafed Taranaki, it appeared that all regions required very similar items. Therefore, a decision was made to standardise an equipment order across all regions, where each region received the following items:

- 3 x Boccia Superior Classic sets (16 medium balls)
- 2 x Complete Referee Kit
- 2 x First Ramp for Boccia
- 2 x 60cm Extension for First Ramp for Boccia
- 1 x U-shaped inflatable frame
- 3 x sea anemone balls
- 3 x kush balls
- 1 x set of 6 bean bags
- 2 x emoji balls
- 1 x beach ball
- 9 x flat hoops
- 1 x foam bowling set (1 large foam ball, 10 skittles).

Boccia NZ also received a custom-made inflatable U-shape frame to support its future activations.



Left image: A page from the Gotcha Boccia resource manual which outlines a session plan relating to Accuracy. Right image: A page from the Gotcha Boccia resource manual which outlines activities and games along with an explanation on how to set up and play each section.

How well did we do?

Activator recruitment and education

PNZ drafted a template job description and advertisement to support the activator recruitment process with the Parafeds and similar organisation. A few Parties used the content to promote activator opportunities to contacts at Eastern Institute of Technology, Massey University, Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki and volunteering centres. PNZ also drafted consent forms and survey forms that were then distributed to all Parties, activators and participants.

PNZ took snippets of the Boccia NZ's Level 1 coach and referee education content from Google Classroom to support Boccia NZ in the development of an Activator Quick Reference Guide, a 2-page document outlining activator roles and responsibilities, effective communication, preparing, planning, and delivering of Gotcha Boccia. This was accompanied by a one-hour activator online education workshop which Boccia NZ delivered on 19 April and again on 12 July 2023. The online education workshop covered an overview of the Gotcha Boccia resource manual and variety of equipment, how the resource manual is intended to be used, what additional support is available, and provided an opportunity to ask questions.

Practical training sessions for Gotcha Boccia activators were then offered on 6 May (Palmerston North) and 15 July (Hawke's Bay). During the practical training sessions, each activator had an opportunity to experience a traditional Boccia game, as well as deliver Gotcha Boccia activities in role-play situations. The activators found the opportunity to practice their planning, delivery and adaptation skills very valuable. They discussed group management techniques to manage any potential challenges. The activators also agreed on a follow up plan with each other to check in on any learnings for their own sessions.

At least three activators from Hawke's Bay, Manawatū, Taranaki took part in the practical training sessions and went on to support the 6-week Gotcha Boccia

programme in their respective regions. Having more than one trained activator per region enabled activators to build confidence by co-delivering with peers, and enabled the Parafeds and similar organisation to provide continuity of programme should an activator become unavailable in the future.



Image above: Gotcha Boccia resource page open on a computer screen, with ten people in the background having a discussion.

Marketing and communications

New knowledge and skills were shared amongst the Parties, including understanding the purpose and creation of QR codes, social media tiles, and paid advertisements. The Parafeds and similar organisation created their own participant registration forms, and PNZ ensured that documents published for shared use and the public were as accessible as possible. This process included ensuring the powerpoint template for marketing flyers exported image and text as separate items; and having 'Alt Text' entered for the images.

The Parafeds and similar organisation utilised Gotcha Boccia as a tool to connect and build new relationships whilst promoting the pilot. Whilst all their members were sent information about the programme, additional local, regional and national organisations were contacted, listed in the table below.

Hawke's Bay	Manawatū	Taranaki	National
Adaptive Whakauru Tahī Charitable Trust	Local schools	Choices NZ - Taranaki	Blind Sport New Zealand
Altogether Autism	Mana Whaikaha	Conductive Education Taranaki	Achilles New Zealand
CCS Disability Action - Napier	Manawatū Basketball	IDEA Services - Taranaki	Blind Low Vision New Zealand
Central Hawke's Bay District Council	Manawatū District Libraries and Supermarkets	Kia Roha - Your Way	Cerebral Palsy Society of New Zealand
Disability Resource Centre Hawke's Bay Trust	Massey University Recreation Centre	Life Skills Taranaki	Disabled Persons Assembly New Zealand
Enliven Disability - Presbyterian Support East Coast	Palmerston North Hospital	Special Olympics North Taranaki	First Port

Hastings Sport Centre	Special Olympics Manawātū	Sport Taranaki	Halberg Foundation
Hawke's Bay Regional Aquatic Centre	Sport Manawātū	Taranaki Secondary School Sports Association	Invictus Games
Hearing Education Hawke's Bay	The Youth One Stop Shop		Little People of New Zealand
IDEA Services - Hawke's Bay			Muscular Dystrophy New Zealand
Mosaic Community Care			New Zealand Spinal Trust
Napier City Council			NZ Rugby Foundation
PolyActive Limited			Peke Waihangā - Artificial Limb Service
Riding for the Disabled - Napier			Special Olympics New Zealand
Rowan House - Napier			Sport New Zealand
Sport Hawke's Bay			Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People
Strive Rehabilitation - Hawke's Bay			Women in Sport Aotearoa
Swimming Hawke's Bay - Poverty Bay			
Te Whatu Ora - Hawke's Bay District Health Board			
The Paul Hunter Centre			
Workbridge - Napier			

All Parties used consistent branding, messaging, and tools to promote on their Instagram, Facebook pages and websites. Examples of six social media tiles can be seen below:



Delivery

The delivery of the 6-week Gotcha Boccia programme launched on the following dates:

- 10 May in Taranaki (Paritutu Bowling Club, 445 Saint Aubyn Street, Moturoa)
 - Unique total number of participants: 10
 - New/inactive number of participants recruited: 4



Image above: Gotcha Boccia in Taranaki

- 18 May in Manawatū (Massey Recreation Centre, Orchard Road, Fitzherbert)
 - Unique total number of participants: 10
 - New/inactive number of participants recruited: 4



Image above: Gotcha Boccia in Manawatū

- 26 July in Hawke's Bay (HB Community Fitness Centre, 42 Percival Road, Hastings)
 - Unique total number of participants: 18
 - New/inactive number of participants recruited: 9



Image above: Gotcha Boccia in Hawke's Bay

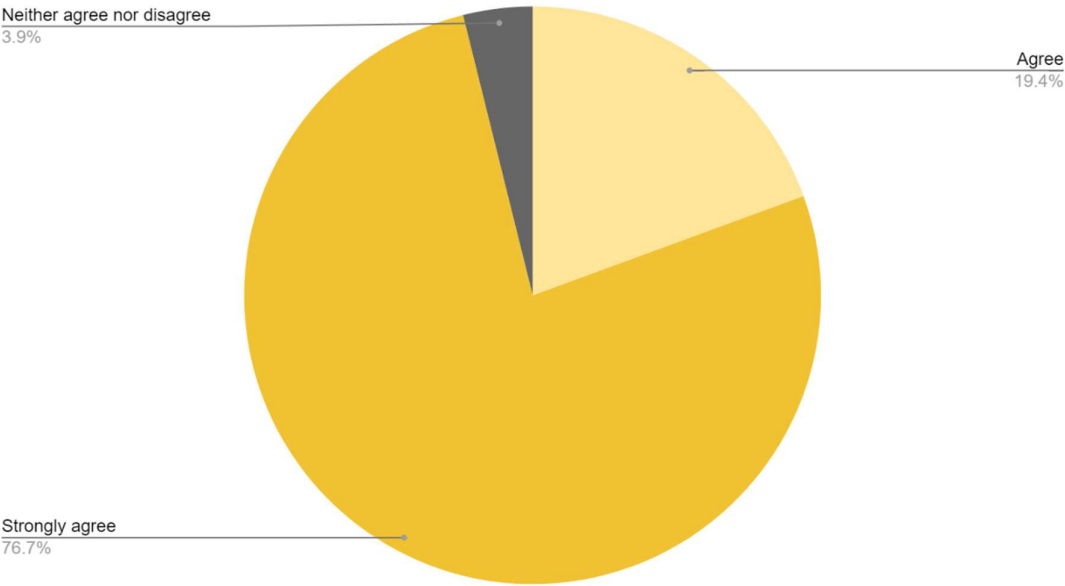
All participants who experienced Gotcha Boccia across all three regions had a physical, vision, or intellectual impairment.

Monitoring and evaluation

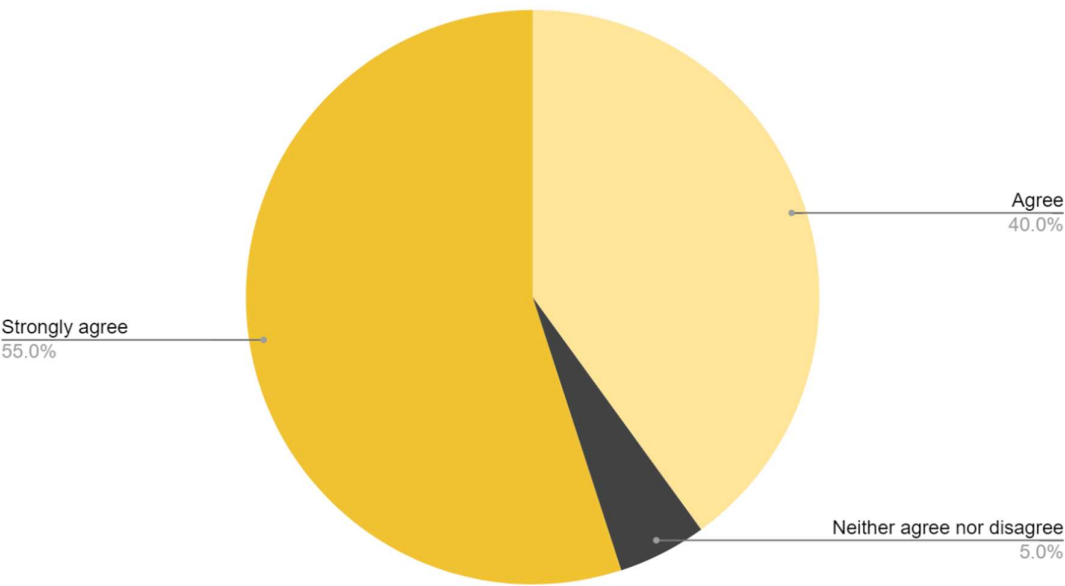
The Parafeds and similar organisation led the collection of activator and participant survey responses on a weekly basis. Charts below show a total of 103 participant and 20 activator responses were collected from surveys following each session. Participants were asked to rate their enjoyment of the session's activities, whereby over 96% agreed or strongly agreed. Activators were asked to rate the ease of

delivering each session, to link in with an understanding of their confidence as an activator. Findings show that a total of 95% either agreed or strongly agreed.

I enjoyed participating in today's activities



I found today's activities easy to deliver



Participants and/or their caregivers provided the following reflections about the sessions:

“Great fun!”

“Can’t wait to get here.”

“Gotcha Boccia is simply the best.”

“Great game that is very inclusive.”

“Great facilitation and enjoyed the variety of games/activities we did.”

“Great to see the incremental benefits/improvements each week.”

“I wish this activity was continuing, don’t want it to end.”

It was also clear that participants appreciated how well the activators built relationships and delivered during the programme, with comments such as:

“I liked how the activator explained the process and broke the skills down.”

“Great coach, everyone was so happy!”

“Easy to understand, explained well.”

Participants found the most challenging aspect of the programme was sitting still, staying on task for long periods and listening to instructions. Although there were initial concerns from the Parties over group management for participants with a variety of impairments, the activators reported no challenges on this matter in their survey responses. Many participants attended the programme with a caregiver who supported their ability to stay on task (e.g. they had the flexibility to walk away from an activity at anytime and go back into the session whenever they chose), and the activators were able to adapt their facilitation style and session plans to ensure every participant felt included. For example, a participant with intellectual impairment was observed to have started the programme only being able to stay on task for 5 minutes, then progressed to staying on task for two activities (i.e. approximately 20-30 minutes) midway through the programme, and had made a new friendship by the end of the programme.

Boccia NZ and PNZ co-hosted a ‘Zui’ for activators in Manawatū and Taranaki on 6 June. ‘Zui’ is a fun term coined and suggested by a Gotcha Boccia activator as a play on the words Zoom (online communications platform) and Hui (meeting). This was intended to provide activators an opportunity to share their experiences and learnings with others, ask questions, provide feedback on the resource, and to hear about participant experiences through survey responses at the midway point of the programme. Activators adapted session plans 75% of the time. Activators learnt that they could “go with the flow, enjoy the session even if it does not go to plan”. Activators also provided the following comments on what they liked:

“The way it flowed and easy to deliver.”

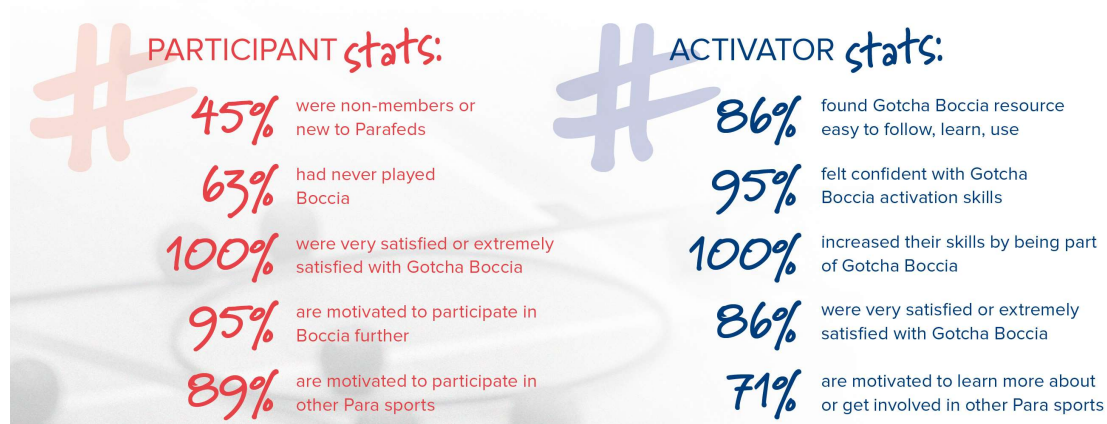
“That the participants were often laughing about being super close or knocking each other’s balls.”

“Each week challenges the participants further and adds new learnings.”

PNZ led an in-person interview with staff at the Parafeds and similar organisation, as well as with a few activators and participants in each region. The case study video below captures the development of Gotcha Boccia and is available to be used as a promotional tool in the future: <https://youtu.be/cqsB3SZ6iR8?si=qcQK1vZiBhTx50LX>

What impact did we have?

Findings from post-pilot surveys with participants and activators are highlighted below:



Impact on participants

Through post-pilot surveys and interviews, 19 participants and/or their caregivers shared their experiences, favourite memories, and feedback from Gotcha Boccia. Some participants even changed their perceptions of Boccia, by comparing the excitement and challenge of hitting their targets to playing soccer. The following comments highlight the impact on participants:

“Participating and having fun. Learning social skills. Awesome friends and kids here.”

“Gotcha Boccia was well run and super inclusive. George was accepted with all his ‘loud’ quirks. George (is) listening and concentrating for longer periods of time.”

“Gotcha Boccia has changed my life, I can physically participate in. Positive people and support.”

“Doing this has been a real positive experience for me.”

“I’m blown away by how able Sam is able to really focus and concentrate on connecting and moving his hands, but he is also able to express himself even though he is non-verbal, to say where he wants it to go and how he wants it to go.”

“It’s helped me achieve something other than just sitting and doing massively nothing.”



Left image: A child in a wheelchair getting ready to propel a ball smiles at an activator who is holding onto a ramp for the child. Right image: A group of participants and caregivers appearing surprised and happy while watching a ball propelling forward.

Impact on activators

Through the post-pilot surveys and interviews, 7 activators shared their experiences, favourite memories and feedback from Gotcha Boccia.

"It's one of those games that anybody can play."

"Togetherness with a diverse group of age, disability and skill level."

"Samuel laughing with joy because he's enjoying himself and winning at sports for the first time."

"Someone that you might think is less able, is really coming through and being part of the team and loving it."

The programme had an impact on growing activator confidence and skills in delivering Boccia. Following evaluation of the new resource manual for Gotcha Boccia, 86% of respondents found it easy or very easy to follow, learn and use. This was complemented by 80% of respondents who found the combination of Boccia NZ's online and practical activator sessions very effective or extremely effective.

"I have a lot more respect for the skills of disabled athletes."

"I'm more confident presenting to people, teaching them something, and seeing them get better is heartwarming."

"It has improved my confidence with interacting with people who have different disabilities."

"I did get a lot out of it and was amazed at how it could easily be adaptive."

"My favourite part is seeing some of the participants get better each week, improving on their skills and their social aspect – some of these kids don't always get opportunities to do things like this."

"It's been a big learning curve for me – I've learnt to let go and just have fun, be less rigid, and adapt in the best way you can."



Left image: An activator leads a warm up activity where participants in chairs shrug their shoulders. Right image: An activator points toward a target area to encourage a child smiling and grasping a Boccia ball with two hands.

What has been learnt from the pilot?

Reflections from Parafeds and similar organisation

Through the post-pilot surveys and interviews, staff at the Parafeds and similar organisation shared their experiences, favourite memories, and feedback from the pilot. One Parafed was Very Satisfied with Gotcha Boccia overall, and two Parafeds were Extremely Satisfied with Gotcha Boccia overall.

The Parafeds and similar organisation are all likely to utilise Gotcha Boccia as an ongoing programme for their region to ensure there is a pathway for disabled athletes in Boccia within the community. Being part of the regional community Para sport pilot increased their skills, knowledge and confidence, due to the coordinated operating approach in establishing a community Boccia programme.

“Scott from Boccia New Zealand was a great asset in educating us around the game itself and given us a free range to come up with ideas and our own experiences to bring into the resource which we had input to. Really proud to be part of that but equally learning off other people!”

“Boccia is the start of it but it’s been springboarding into other ideas and thoughts, now we are looking at friendly rivalries between regions.”

“There is scope for the programme to continue.”

The ease of including people with any impairment types was also a positive outcome.

“Engaging with the participants and their whanau, gaining their respect, and they wouldn’t be back here if they weren’t having a good time, which is a testament of the programme.”

“Liked encompassing all abilities to participate.”

“Liked the ability to make it ours, our way.”

All three organisations were Very Likely to recommend working with PNZ on a regional community Para sport pilot.

“It has raised awareness of Disability Sport and Recreation Hawke’s Bay, it has given us a new set of skills that we can use with our members. It has opened up new opportunities for our members and new participants to the game.”

A common reflection from Parafed Manawatū and Parafed Taranaki was the need to improve the marketing and promotion of the programme.

“I learnt a lot about advertising and emailing lots of people which I wasn’t used to, and also connecting with so many different groups of people whom I don’t normally get to connect with so that’s been awesome.”

Although Parafed Manawatū and Parafed Taranaki established new external connections as part of the pilot, they would like to have done more to achieve a greater reach whilst strengthening existing relationships using the Gotcha Boccia programme (e.g. some were yet to reach out to local councils or school groups). As a result of the regional community Para sport pilot, Parafed Manawatū and Parafed Taranaki will seek to train more activators and have more extensive and targeted marketing and promotions for their programmes.

In contrast, Disability Sport and Recreation Hawke’s Bay felt that their marketing and promotions on social media was a success in driving participation and engagement. They created an event page on Facebook, pinned the programme details to the top of their Facebook page, and engaged participants with several welcome emails and reminders to registered participants which created some excitement. They also took a more formal approach by having a check-in sheet and name tags to help people get to know others quicker and handed out participation certificates at the end.

“It was awesome as the weeks went on to see the friendships start to form and the participants begin to cheer each other on and celebrate their wins each week. In hindsight this is of course leading by example, or modelling the behaviour we wanted replicated.”

There was a perception that Boccia may be seen in competition with Bocce which is also very popular within many schools and regions, hence the pilot partners were keen to change the perception that it doesn’t have to be one or the other when both can be offered as a choice. A key contributor to the success of the Gotcha Boccia programme in Hawke’s Bay was the engagement of a parent of an individual who participates in Special Olympics as one of the programme’s volunteer activators. This person influenced a few participants with intellectual impairment and their whanau to take part in Gotcha Boccia. Many participants in Hawke’s Bay are now engaged in both sports. However, survey results from participants with intellectual impairments required careful interpretation as survey questions were above the level of participant comprehension.



Image above: Ten Gotcha Boccia participants sitting side by side in front of a Disability Sport and Recreation Hawke's Bay banner.

Reflections from Boccia NZ

Boccia NZ felt that the keys to success for Gotcha Boccia were keeping high levels of engagement with activators and having a simple resource that kept participants 'hooked'. Scott Martin, General Manager of Boccia NZ believes that based on all the feedback, the programme could even be sustained for an 8-week period.

“One of the things that has surprised us is that Gotcha Boccia is appealing to all disabled people, regardless of their experience in Boccia and sport in general because the session plans are shorter and more dynamic in quality.”

The Parafeds and similar organisation were highly involved in ensuring activators had everything they needed to deliver on a week-to-week basis, whilst PNZ and Boccia NZ checked in on activator feedback. The regular encouragement and positive reinforcements from national and regional organisations were greatly appreciated by the activators.

Boccia NZ valued the simplicity of the resource as it enabled them to attract new participants who started with fun skills-based game activities, then progressed to full Boccia game scenarios toward the end of the programme. They felt that this structure helped prevent drop-off rates as seen in some historical programmes where participants started on full Boccia games requiring a number of rule-based explanations.

Boccia NZ learnt that they could do much more around marketing and communications for their programmes because of the Parties spending time to develop creative messaging, templates, and networking lists beyond what they were familiar with. This gave Boccia NZ the opportunity to reinvigorate and seek new national-level relationships with the likes of Cerebral Palsy Society of New Zealand, Muscular Dystrophy Association of New Zealand, and the New Zealand Spinal Trust. As a result, the interested parties also shared relevant content through their channels such as the one from Cerebral Palsy Society of New Zealand below on Facebook.



Another learning came through the online activator workshop and practical training sessions. Boccia NZ gained a different perspective on effective education by just ensuring they put energy into how the group interacts with participants and with each other, and worrying less about covering sport-specific content (less is more). As a result they see an opportunity to engage and support a higher number of Gotcha Boccia activators to help grow their reach across New Zealand.

“Training a wider group of activators has been able to help us support community Boccia environments so that disabled people can participate more regularly.”

Boccia NZ aims to continue using Gotcha Boccia as an introductory programme to help groups or organisations establish regular Boccia programmes and help activators build confidence. Boccia NZ looks forward to elevating their collaboration with Parafeds and similar organisations to enable more community Boccia opportunities, especially where regions could also seek to build inter-regional pathways for participants to compete with different people and in different places. Boccia NZ will also investigate the possibility of defining a wrap-around support package to deliver more Gotcha Boccia which might include partnerships with Regional Sports Trusts to introduce the game via Healthy Active Learning teams, support activators via regional coach development opportunities, and develop some defined participation periods that lead into events such as Halberg Games, AIMS Games, inter-regional exhibitions.

“We are reaching new participants, including disabled people who have been previously inactive, we have established new connections with regional and national organisations like disability service providers and education institutions to support the coordination and promotion and resourcing of Gotcha Boccia.”

Reflections from Paralympics New Zealand

Good open communication, connection and collaboration were key elements to the success of this pilot. Due to staff changes at a regional level, it was crucial to ensure that more than one contact point within each organisation was engaged on the pilot to ensure that others within the organisation were either strategically aligned or engaged in the process. This operating approach was crucial to ensuring that there was limited repetition or duplication of effort, minimal delays and there were backups for meetings and queries when any one contact was unavailable.

Whilst the Parafeds and similar organisation were encouraged to develop and/or review policies drafted by PNZ such as health and safety, child safeguarding, equipment storage and insurance, this appeared to be at a satisfactory level as no organisation pursued further action or adaptations.

However, as activators discovered that Boccia equipment was spread across the playing areas and general thoroughfare, these became hazards that were identified only at the end of the programme. It is recommended that all Parties participate in a Risk Assessment process during the activator education workshop and training sessions to ensure a Risk Management System and Form is developed and made available for the programme.

The Parties found that each activator brought unique skills, experiences and flair that added value to the programme. The activators were a mix of people including youth members, practicum students, learning facilitators, parents, a Board member, and a registered nurse who volunteered to be part of the programme. Although it was recommended that activators be formally acknowledged for their time and services, the Parafeds and similar organisation did not disclose any compensation or gifting methods for activators.

PNZ settled on a longer pilot period than 20 weeks following consideration that most tasks required an extensive time to either establish an idea, progress a design, or complete a process. Some tasks were phased in parallel (e.g. design of resource manual and equipment purchase) but others had to be completed gradually (e.g. marketing campaign was only developed after the Parties had a better understanding of the look and feel of the resource). Timelines to deliver the pilot were also more flexible in Hawke's Bay due to devastation in the region caused by Cyclone Gabrielle in early 2023. It was agreed that a delay in this region was best based on challenges with recruitment, and facilities unavailable due to damage or being used as emergency shelters.

From a monitoring and evaluation perspective, PNZ learnt that survey responses from weekly surveys did not offer particularly rich feedback, but were enough to provide Boccia NZ, the Parafeds and similar organisation information to ensure that sessions and support mechanisms could be fine-tuned to suit participants and activators. It was also noted that activators and participants from Hawke's Bay preferred to complete surveys on paper form. Overall, the post-pilot surveys from participants and activators indicated that all respondents' are likely or very likely to recommend Gotcha Boccia to others.

Future developments

Enhanced operating approach

The Gotcha Boccia pilot has prompted the importance of identifying and sharing best practice health and safety plans among the pilot partners. This has already influenced the operating approach for PNZ's regional community Para sport pilot 2 and pilot 3 as the topic would be raised and brainstormed at an earlier stage of each pilot.

Ongoing participation opportunities

Following the Gotcha Boccia pilot, Parafed Manawatū is now providing weekly opportunities on Thursdays from 4.00pm-5.00pm at Massey University in Palmerston North, whilst Disability Sport and Recreation Hawke's Bay is extending its programme on Wednesdays fortnightly from 4.30pm-5.30pm at Greenmeadows East Community Hall in Napier. A total of 18 people are now participating in Boccia regularly in both regions.

Ongoing Para sport development

Having formed a strong relationship with Massey University, Parafed Manawatū will continue appealing to practicum students by offering a unique opportunity to be involved in Para sport programmes, attain further professional development and placements within the disability sport sector.

Parafed Bay of Plenty has indicated an interest to understand Gotcha Boccia's marketing and promotional plans along with training opportunities, as they seek to build a pipeline of community Boccia activators in to service parts of their communities such as retirement villages.

Information and resources for Gotcha Boccia are now available on the Boccia NZ website as they seek to promote and roll out the programme nationally, whilst also working with other national and regional organisations to share best practices and seek joint grant applications for further development of the sport.

Other collaboration opportunities

The Parafeds and similar organisation on the Gotcha Boccia pilot have indicated a desire to hold a Boccia tournament in the Central region. Sport Whanganui had also indicated an interest to be part of an organised activity between the Central regions.

There is also a desire for a Blind Sport initiative to utilise the collaborative operating approach, co-design process, and learnings from this pilot. The Community and Programmes Lead at Blind Sport New Zealand has since met with the Para Sport Community Manager at PNZ to kick start ideas for Blind Football.