Designing sport experiences for participants, by participants

Month, Day, Year

viaSPORT
BRITISH COLUMBIA

BACKGROUND

Common gaps in sport program design

- **Gap:** Most sport programs have not been created with the unique needs of their diverse participants in mind.

- **Solution:** Empowering participants to design their own sport experiences can help ensure that their needs are met. This can:
  - Increase satisfaction
  - Increase retention
  - Improve sport programming

Human-centred design

- **Human-centred design** (HCD) empowers participants to design their own sport experiences. This helps ensure that programs meet their unique needs!

- HCD focuses on exploring participants'
  - Attitudes and motivation around sport participation
  - Experiences within sport
  - Ideas for making sport better

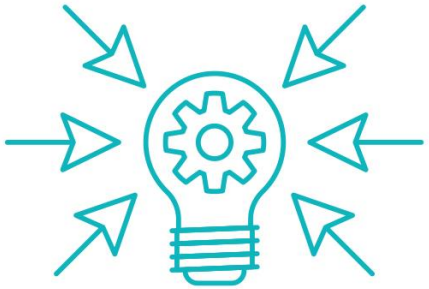
There is no one more knowledgeable about
the experience of sport participants than the participants themselves!

What is human-centred design?

- HCD encompasses a range of techniques designed to:
  - Learn about stakeholders' experiences
  - Leverage stakeholders' knowledge
  - Empower stakeholders to play a role in the decision making processes
- **Overall:** HCD helps create practical strategies that will fit stakeholders' needs

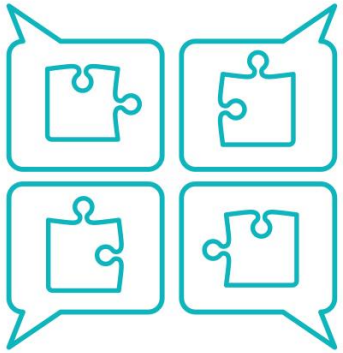
A roadmap for using HCD

STAGE 1



Co-Creation

STAGE 2



Co-Design

STAGE 3

Evaluation

What is co-creation?

- **Co-creation** encompasses various methods for developing empathy for a specific group.

- It creates opportunities for participants to talk and create freely around a theme, exploring ambiguous questions and complex problem spaces. This can:
  - Provide a deeper understanding of a problem or issue
  - Generate new insights

- Co-creation differs from surveys or interviews as it is not necessarily question and answer driven.

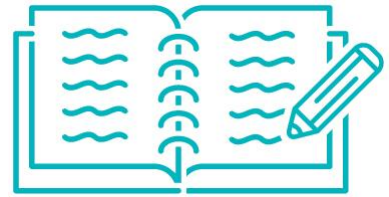
Sample co-creation questions

- Learning about your participants will help guide your discussions and uncover the reasons **why** your participants play.

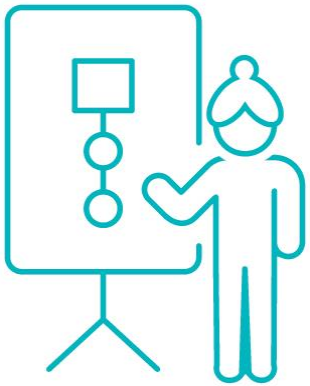
- Examples of questions to ask your participants include:
  - What motivates you to participate?
  - How does sport enhance your day-to-day life?
  - What problems or barriers do you face?
  - How would you describe your experiences in sport?
  - Why do you think your peers drop out of sport?

Sample co-creation activities

- **Example 1:** Use collective participant journals or notebooks to explore participants' motivations and values (i.e., Why do they participate? What keeps them coming back?)
  - Examine the common barriers and facilitators to sport
  - Use this information to help guide your design



- **Example 2:** Have participants work in a group with a facilitator to map their journeys into and through sport.
  - Discuss the issues they have encountered along the way.



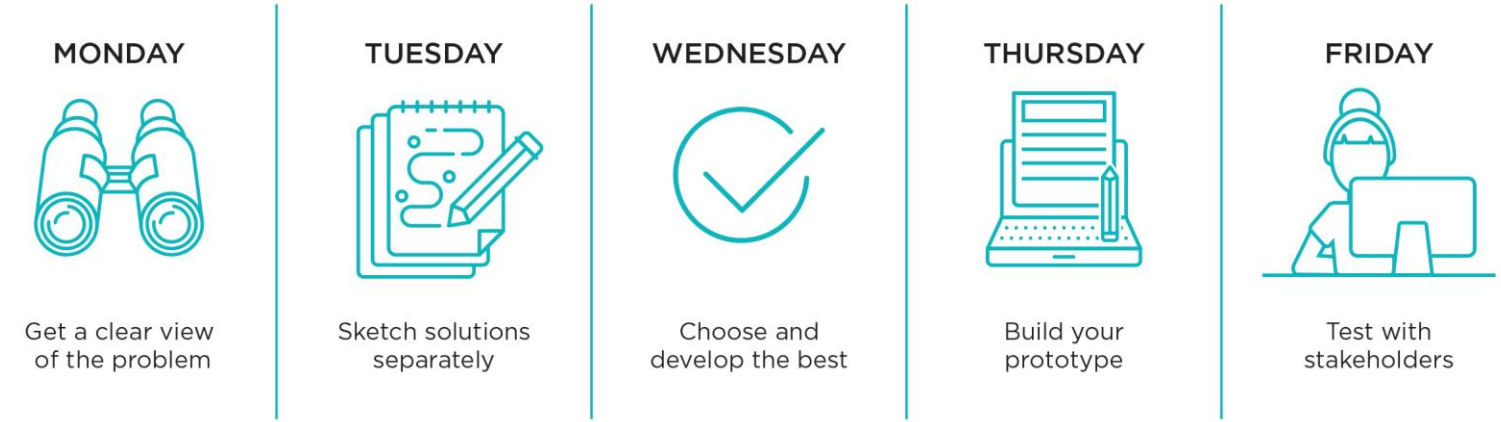
What is co-design?

- **Co-design** brings participants into the design phase itself.
  - Here, participants are given creative tools and processes that let them imagine their own ideas and solutions.

- Co-design is usually facilitated by a trained designer, who uses their knowledge to guide a group through a series of steps that follow a “design thinking” process.
  - The group is encouraged to generate multiple possibilities and refine them into practical solutions.

The co-design process

1. **Understand**—the needs/desires of the participants and the environment you are trying to create
2. **Ideate**—identify possible solutions
3. **Decide**—on a solution to test and determine how to implement
4. **Test and evaluate**



Using design sprints

- Invite key stakeholders to the table to work with the participants.
    - Bring the group up to speed on the initial findings, review results and divide the group into smaller design groups to begin the Design Sprint process.
- Things to consider:
    - Include members of different stakeholder groups (e.g., coaches, parents, sport administrators) in each design group.
    - Include a mix of individual and group activities to ensure the participation of both introverts and extroverts.
    - Encourage participants to ask, “how might we…”

Sample co-design activities

- **Example:** Have participants and stakeholders work with a facilitator to generate ideas and select concrete solutions to the barriers participants' identified.
  - 2-3 sessions, approximately one week apart, to keep the momentum
  - The goal is to narrow the focus of each session to identify a solution or approach that you can feasibly implement within your program.

- **Questions should focus on:**
  - Starting discussions around emerging themes
  - Exploring values, attitudes and emotions
  - Building empathy between the groups

Engaging in evaluation

- It is important understand how participants reflect on the design process. This can help to improve the process for the future.

- It is also helpful to evaluate whether participants like the result and are excited to implement or see it solving their concerns.

- It can even be valuable to evaluate each session in the design process to help guide future sessions.

Sample evaluation activities

- Questions to consider when conducting your evaluation:
  - How many participants are satisfied with their experience?
  - Did the experience result in something new that you are excited to try?
  - How many participants plan to return next year?
  - Did you enjoy the process? Were you satisfied with the number of sessions?
  - Did you feel the right stakeholders were engaged?

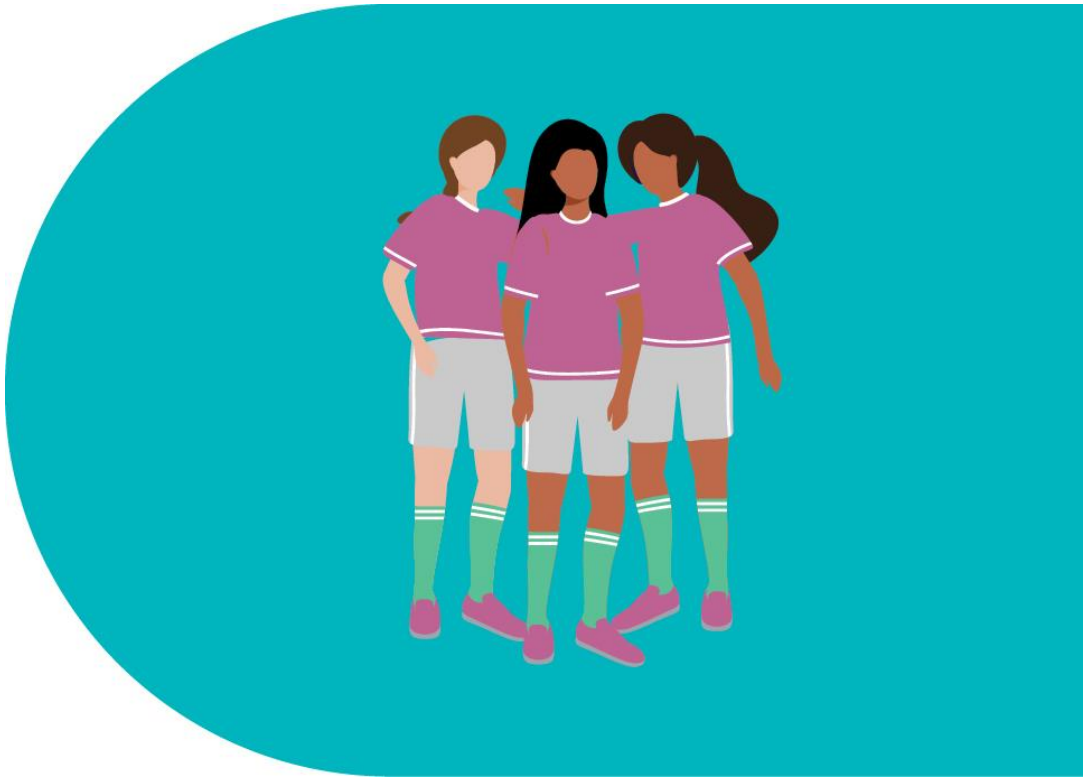
Considerations for HCD

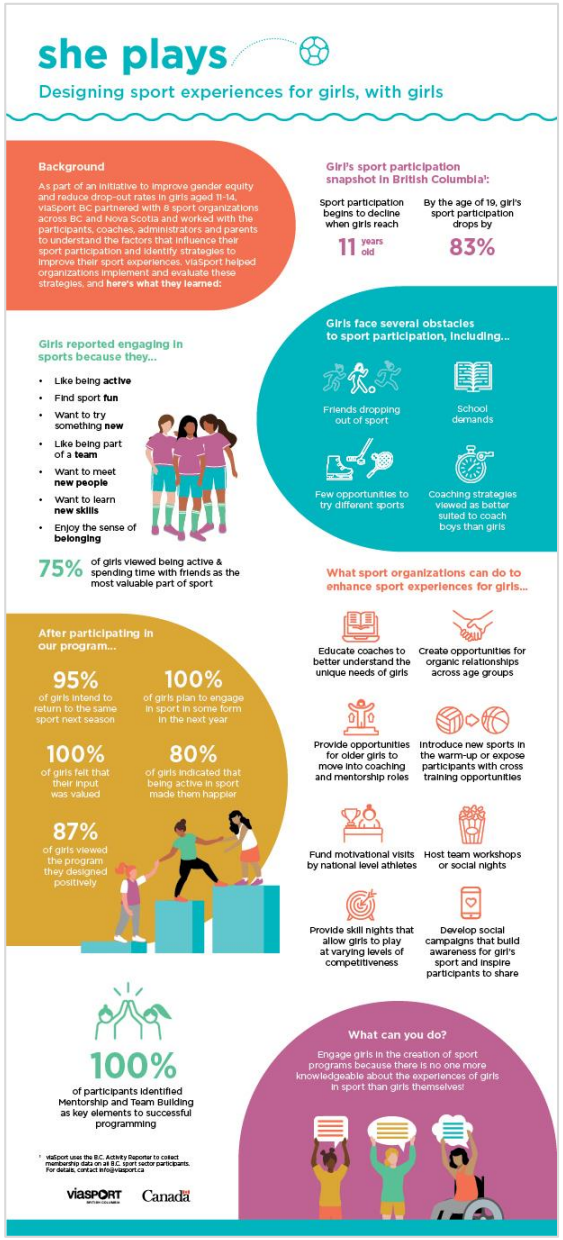
- Activities and discussions may need to be adjusted to respond to specific community needs through the co-creation and co-design phases.
    - This can make it more difficult to extrapolate results and generalize. However, it may be useful to consider issues that arose across several groups to guide the process.

- To be successful and sustainable, sport programs should consider the perspectives of **all** stakeholders who impact an athlete's sport participation. Examples of stakeholders include:
    - Parents
    - Coaches
    - Sport administrators

What we learned through HCD

- Organizations should continually assess whether programming is meeting not only participant needs, but community needs. Remember:
  - Communities have different needs
  - Different sports have different needs/opportunities/challenges
- By putting participants at the center of programming design, organizations can identify what participants need to feel supported, and included which is critical to improving retention and participation.





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Designing sport experiences for girls, with girls

Additional resources and support

General link to the
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Contact viaSport at info@viasport.ca