



Management Response to the Australian Sports Partnership Program (ASPP), Mid-term Review

Commenced in September 2018, the Australian Sports Partnership Program (ASPP), now branded as Team Up, continues the Australian Government's long history of investing in sport for development in the Indo-Pacific region. Its goal is to build new partnerships and strengthen existing ones in the Indo-Pacific to support all people to realise their full potential through grassroots and community sport.

To achieve this goal, the program has three mutually reinforcing end-of-program outcomes:

- sport programs attract and retain women and girls and people with a disability, as well as boys and men;
- sport organisations are safe, inclusive and accessible; and
- Australia and its partners in the Indo-Pacific use sport to strengthen relationships and build closer collaborations.

Operating in seven Pacific Island countries, Fiji, Nauru, PNG, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, the 10-year investment is supporting over 35 partnerships involving 15 different sports and more than 70 partners based internationally and in Australia.

In 2023-2024, at the halfway point of the Team Up investment, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) commissioned an independent, mid-term review (MTR). The MTR assessed the extent to which funding provided through Team Up is promoting Australia's national interests in the Pacific through sport for development programs in an efficient and effective manner. Oxford Policy Management (OPM) undertook the MTR from October 2023, with the report completed in April 2024. The findings and recommendations were intended to inform adjustments to the Team Up program to ensure it continues to meet its objectives and inform future program iterations, including synergies with *PacificAus Sports*.

DFAT welcomes the findings of the MTR and agrees with OPM's overall assessment that Team Up is an 'extraordinary' program making solid progress towards the three end-of-program outcomes while recognising the program could be even better. Based on the MTR, DFAT accepts, or partially accepts, 14 of the 18 recommendations and notes the remaining four. DFAT acknowledges the recommendations to inform future iterations of the program and synergies with other DFAT funded programs.



Recommendations

Review Recommendations	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Indicative Timeline
1. Build a strategy for Team Up inclusion of people of all abilities, in collaboration with partners.	Agree	<p>While there has been some great work on inclusion, it is time to take stock of success and challenges to date and take a more strategic approach. This would involve mapping and understanding the support system for people with all abilities in each nation and how best to engage.</p> <p>Leveraging the Paralympic Games, the media and imagery of inclusion, could also play a part in the strategy to influence sports for development and Team Up program outcomes.</p>	<p>Work is underway to build a strategy for Team Up inclusion of people of all abilities, including to leverage the Paralympic Games. Efforts are being made to collaborate with the Pacific Disability Forum and Oceania Paralympic Committee.</p> <p>We will refresh the inclusion strategy captured in the program design to reflect the need to engage more with regional and in-country organisations. We will explore elevating all abilities efforts in Pacific pathways to Brisbane 2032, including Los Angeles 2028 and other major games that support para-athletes.</p> <p>As part of the strategy refresh, we will map the support system for people of all abilities in each nation to understand how best to engage. This will be done in conjunction with the mapping exercise being conducted for safeguarding support providers (Ref. Rec. 3). In addition, the Team Up Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) and Safeguards Adviser will engage with DFAT's</p>	Mapping to start Q4, 2024



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			Disability Inclusion team to ensure alignment and showcase Team Up within DFAT.	
2. Ensure that sports for development partnerships focused on raising awareness of gender-based violence/family and sexual violence are closely aligned with referral pathways (as they may lead to increased reporting).	Agree	Recommending that people go to the police is not enough in some countries. A significant risk may present itself if the desire to report increases but the full spectrum of referral pathway actors is not explained to victims, or those actors are not engaged with the program.	<p>Raising awareness of gender-based violence is a key focus of Team Up's safeguarding capacity development work and partnership with UN Women through the Oceania Impact Network. We will continue to strengthen the connection between in-country partners and service providers following the example of Get into Rugby Plus Fiji and other programs.</p> <p>This will remain a key focus for new and current partners. We will explore ways to ensure all referral pathways are shared.</p>	Ongoing
3. Develop a plan with partners for ongoing rollout and sustainable delivery of safeguarding knowledge, skills and practice.	Agree	Safeguarding training and practices need constant reinforcement, supported by the Team Up inclusion strategy. Work so far has been strong and focused on child protection and women and girls. Constant vigilance will be needed to identify possible	<p>We will continue to develop safeguarding capacity of partners and develop a plan attached to the ongoing rollout and sustainable delivery of safeguarding knowledge, skills and practice.</p> <p>The plan will align with Team Up's broader safeguarding efforts and compliment the inclusion strategy (Ref. Rec. 1).</p>	Q1, 2025



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		backlash being experienced by women and girls who participate.	We will also explore options to extend this to <i>PacificAus Sports</i> partners.	
4. Provide for partnership brokering and strong due diligence processes in the co-design process for any new sports for development partnerships.	Agree	Partnership brokerage and co-design should remain a fundamental component of the program – noting that partners come with varying strengths and scale. This includes ensuring that lead partners and the Team Up team work together in the design phase to ensure that most resources are focused on the delivery of the program at the grassroots, community level.	COVID-19 pandemic restrictions affected the Team Up Phase one co-design process due to limited to no face-to-face interactions. However, partnership health checks are part of the annual report and partnership brokering resources were part of the co-design process. Learnings from Phase one co-design process will be factored into any future co-design to ensure there is efficient distribution of resources with a focus on delivery of the program at the grassroots, community level.	To be factored into future Team Up co-design
5. Develop a community of practice approach.	Agree	Many of the challenges and opportunities faced by program partners are common across sports or within each country context. There is an opportunity to strengthen capacity, capability and outcomes for all through a community-of-practice approach including 1) greater collaboration across Australian	We will endeavour to develop a community of practice approach for both in-country Pacific partners and domestic Australian stakeholders, together with thematic community of practices.	Q2, 2025



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		stakeholders, lead partners and key non-government organisations or sport expert bodies; 2) greater collaboration between sports and programs within each country or location.		
6. Encourage and support Pacific lead partners with Australian sport system technical support.	Agree	As the Pacific sport partners grow in capacity and capability, further development of local lead partners should be encouraged. The Australian sport system (national sport organisations or lead agencies and organisations) can facilitate non-financial partnership support through the provision of technical support.	<p>We will continue to work with national sport organisations or lead agencies to provide local lead partners with Australian sport system technical support where this is not already being provided already.</p> <p>A mapping exercise of the status of collaboration between partners will be undertaken, in collaboration with PacificAus Sports, to ensure coordination of technical support.</p>	Q2, 2025
7. Prepare sustainability strategies that embody the principles of considering environmental, social and governance (ESG) sustainability	Agree	Such strategies help the implementation team and partners engage in a conversation and set out principles and approaches to further focus their efforts towards leaving a solid and appropriate footprint at the end of the investment period.	We will develop a sustainability strategy in collaboration with stakeholders.	Q3 2025



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8. Continue to manage the DFAT Sports Section – GHD Team Up implementation partnership intentionally, applying partnership principles and approaches.	Agree	The most productive partnerships are intentional in the way two (or more) partners work together to achieve shared outcomes and it is important to do so at any stage of a partnership. This helps ensure that a great partnership stays great.	Improved communication arrangements have been implemented to enhance communication and information sharing and to ensure roles and responsibilities clarity in the true spirit of partnership (e.g. weekly DFAT/GHD meetings).	Ongoing
9. Move fast and accept the International Olympic Committee (IOC)/Olympism 365 co-funding offer – all of it.	Partially Agree	Olympism365 is the IOC’s strategy aimed at strengthening the role of sport as an important enabler for the Sustainable Development Goals. Its priority aligns with Team Up’s strategic goals.	DFAT appreciates IOC’s high regard for Team Up. Team Up has already received matched funding from IOC to its annual Play for Equity Fund. DFAT will consider a proposal from GHD that details how best to utilise the additional co-investment on offer from the IOC’s Olympism 365 strategy for sport for development initiatives.	Q4 2024
10. The Team Up Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning (MERL) team presents the MERL tools to DFAT and facilitates a discussion on data	Agree	This will be an important part of Team Up’s program management refresh. It is important to understand DFAT’s data needs and collect them from partners accordingly. This exercise will help Team Up update the MERL framework and ensure it is current and meets DFAT’s standards.	An exercise to review the reporting and data collection requirements to ensure DFAT’s reporting and data collection requirements are met whilst not being too onerous on partners will be undertaken. Program resourcing requirements for both Team Up and PacificAus Sports (where appropriate) will be reviewed and the MERL and Media & Communications teams will be part of that review.	Q2 2025 (subject to completion of Sport Diplomacy Strategy 2030 review)



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collection, data use and reporting needs.			This exercise will take place after the completion of the Sport Diplomacy 2030 review to ensure a holistic understanding of DFAT's reporting needs.	
11. DFAT to endorse final six-month and annual Team Up reports for the Team Up team to share back to contributors	Agree	Sharing reports with partners would help them understand how their reporting is used. This could promote trust amongst all partners and stakeholders. It would close the reporting circle and show people on the ground how their information is being used.	Reports are regularly reviewed and endorsed by DFAT and will be shared with partners through Team Up newsletter. In the interests of transparency and helping partners understand how their reporting is used, we have developed products to showcase the information which is shared by partners (i.e. website page refresh, social media toolkits, Folktale Oscars etc). In addition, a reflection webinar with lead partners will also be considered.	Q3 2024
12. Start the process to award a second three-year extension to September 2028 for delivery of phase 3 of Team Up.	Noted	Team Up is a 10-year investment with a 4+3+3 contracting model. The first three-year extension has already been exercised with the current contract concluding in September 2025.	DFAT acknowledges the importance of continuity not only for the GHD Team Up implementation team, but also for the downstream program staff working in the national sporting organisations in the Pacific. DFAT will explore procurement options, ensuring they are in line with the Commonwealth	Q1 2025



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			Procurement Rules and that broader program and departmental objectives are also met.	
13. Develop a government engagement strategy to ensure all the key national government agencies/ministries, are aware of what Team Up is delivering in each nation.	Noted	It is important that the governments of each nation know about and are involved in what Team Up is doing. There should be no surprises for the various government departments of participating nations about Team Up delivery in their nations.	We will work with posts to establish the best method to demonstrate Australia's investment in sport (both Team Up and PacificAus Sports) in each country.	Ongoing
14. Ensure opportunities for Team Up programming are joined up and more coherent with, and take advantage of, other programs across all the participating nations	Agree	Team Up sports for development partnerships could be contributing to outcomes of other programs funded by the Australia government and vice versa.	Where appropriate, DFAT will ensure sport is included in country and Pacific regional Development Partnership Plans. We will also actively look for opportunities where DFAT programs or agendas could usefully include sport elements. Leveraging off other programs will also be part of the Team Up Sustainability Strategy.	Ongoing
15. Share resources across Team Up and PacificAus Sports	Agree	Both programs are Australian government's initiatives in sports in the Pacific. There are a lot of synergies	We recognise there are several synergies between Team Up and PacificAus Sports. We are keen to reduce duplication and ensure knowledge sharing	Ongoing



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locations. Work together more with PacificAus Sports.		that can be explored for both programs to achieve their respective objectives in a more efficient and effective way.	across programs. We are already sharing knowledge and resources with media and communications expertise to better tell the narrative of the programs.	
16. During the re-design of Team Up, consider bringing PacificAus Sports and Team Up under the one umbrella – could be Team Up Australia or PacAus Sports – Team Up.	Noted	The Team Up brand is strong and has been developed through a rigorous branding process with DFAT buy-in and endorsement.	We will consider bringing PacificAus Sports and Team Up under one brand umbrella to increase opportunities for influence and development. We have already developed a shared calendar of events to heighten awareness among DFAT posts and our partners. We will also ensure partners and participants of Team Up activities are aware of other sporting initiatives supported by the Australian Government.	Ongoing
17. Re-contract ABCID through a record of understanding with DFAT’s Office of the Pacific rather than through GHD.	Noted	DFAT funds Women in Sports and News (WINS) implemented by ABC International Development through Team Up.	DFAT notes the recommendation for ABCID to be re-contracted through an ROU and will explore this further. WINS uses Team Up’s reporting mechanism for planning and MERL. Maintaining status quo is potentially the most cost-effective way.	Ongoing
18. Start to identify potential Pacific implementation	Agree	Australia’s International Development Policy calls for more locally led efforts to drive change. Team Up can achieve	We acknowledge the importance of localisation and have already started reviewing the Team Up management structure.	Q1 2025



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<p>partners for lead delivery of future phases of Team Up. Identify the next cohort of possible lead partner federations.</p>		<p>this by channelling funding to more qualified local actors and localising its own management staff.</p>	<p>Similar to recommendation six, we will map out the current state of play and pathway to build capacity for partners. This could include providing webinar training on cultural competence and providing a platform for partners to share issues.</p> <p>Similar to recommendation 12, for future delivery of the Team Up program, we will start identifying a suitable Pacific organisation to partner with the managing contractor and prioritise programs with Pacific organisations as lead partners in efforts to increase localisation.</p>	