

THIS IS ME®

Active Lives

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This is ME® encourages, supports, and celebrates women and girls of all ages getting out there and being active, in whatever ways work for them. This is ME® is about REAL women and girls doing REAL physical activity,

moving with confidence, achieving goals, having fun, and supporting each other.

What is the purpose of the project?

This is ME® was launched in 2017 in response to women and girls' declining physical activity participation. Sport Waikato engaged in 18 months of research and development, which included reviews of national and international research and campaigns (such as This Girl Can in the UK), focus groups, surveys, and customer and brand research with women and girls of various ages, ethnicities, backgrounds, and activity levels from around the Waikato region.

Despite wanting to be more active, women and girls find it difficult to find opportunities that are welcoming and inclusive and overcome the personal and practical barriers they experience.

Our research has shown:

- 65 percent of young women and girls want to do more physical activity
- 76 percent of women want to do more physical activity
- A significant drop off in participation occurs among young women aged between 15-17 years old
- 40 percent of females do not do enough physical activity to positively impact their health
- Only 51 percent of women feel that opportunities meet their needs

This is ME® is the result of a desire to listen to the voices and needs of women and girls and to celebrate all of the unique and diverse ways that females move their bodies their way. We want women and girls to be connected - to opportunities to get moving in their area, to positive messages about getting and staying active, and to other females just like them.

What were the enablers that proved successful in your project?

This is ME® is designed by and for the community and includes locally-led community and secondary school activations. In implementation, This is ME® is premised on community engagement and a locally-led approach, which involves working in partnership with communities towards goals, aspirations and opportunities that are identified and determined by them. This is ME® and its outcomes are strengthened by connections and engagement with diverse communities to protect the rich and varied cultural, social, environmental landscape that is the Waikato region. By working collaboratively, we are able to co-design strategies to help grow participation by women and girls in both community and school settings, while at the same time, enabling and inspiring local people to lead.

This is ME® remains committed to constant innovation – doing things differently, looking for new possibilities, and empowering our people and communities to influence and shape what This is ME® can and should achieve.

What impact did your project have?

This is ME® is about giving women and girls a voice in the activities they participate in and the mechanisms of delivery. Participants typically register high satisfaction levels, as well as a desire to participate again and recommend opportunities to others. Our impact is clearly reflected in our annual reports (see below), which demonstrate how the initiative measures against its three pillars:

UNITE DELIVERY PARTNERS

This is ME® unites delivery and cross-sector partners at local, regional, and national levels to increase the number of relevant, inclusive, and fun physical activity opportunities available to women and girls.

CHANGE THE CONVERSATION

This is ME® uses innovative approaches and digital platforms to empower and inspire women and girls to get moving, to connect them with activity providers and one another, and to challenge dominant messages about females and physical activity.

GROW PARTICIPATION AND CHANGE ATTITUDES

This is ME® connects individuals with opportunities to be active and have fun together and enables and engages local communities to lead and deliver local activations to effect positive change in the lives of women and girls.

What were the outcomes for women?

This is ME® prioritises and encourages communities, women and girls, and activity providers to lead and innovate in the creation of activations and opportunities to meet the participation needs of women and girls. In community spaces, This is ME® has seen strategic partnerships resulting in a modified form of cricket (Backyard Smash), and social, non-traditional opportunities to try cycling, golf, squash, and Ultimate Frisbee, as well as system changes such as adjusted membership options.

“It was a great series and I would definitely recommend it to friends. The casual nature made everyone feel comfortable and the format was great for beginners” – Golf series participant

We also want to encourage sector and cross-sector partners to contribute resources to further positive outcomes. For example, This is ME® partnered with period care brand AWWA to overcome period poverty and supply young women in a Te Kuiti based community group, Kotahi Aroha, with a reusable resource to help them manage their periods. Through a workshop, the young women (and their parents) were offered a safe space to talk about periods to normalise open dialogue.

“We believe everyone should have the opportunity to participate in activities that are good for their wellbeing, and AWWA want to help remove the barriers preventing some waahine from doing so,” Kylie Matthews, AWWA co-founder.

In school settings, This is ME® has facilitated student-led colour festivals instead of traditional cross-country competitions, afterschool movement activities (Stay and Play), and connections with community-based recreation activities such as boxfit, Fitminton (Badminton and dance), Zumba and yoga. Staff capability is continually enhanced, and young women are empowered to become the voices and leaders of structural change by co-creating, with and for their peers, movement opportunities as alternatives to traditional models of school sport and physical activity delivery.

"This is ME® has legitimised 'women only' sport and placed it at the centre of our school...It also signals [a] belief in the importance of providing opportunities that encourage our girls and address barriers that prevent their involvement in sport and exercise" - Alistair Cochrane, Principal of Waihi College

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