

Participation Strategy 2023 – 30

This strategy will focus on the areas that Swimming Waikato can impact to achieve increased growth and participation in swimming.

In the development of this strategy, Swimming Waikato has actively gathered input from various stakeholders, including our Member Clubs, Swimmers, Volunteers, and key agencies within the Waikato and Counties Manukau sports and active recreation industry. Incorporating the feedback received, we have adopted a comprehensive approach to our strategy, aiming to foster a cohesive swimming community.

Our Vision

Everyone Can Swim!

Key Priority

To significantly grow the number of people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds participating in swimming, at all levels

Our Participation Pillars

- Swimming Community
- Swimming Awareness
- Swimming Programs
- Swimming Partnerships

Societal Context

The significance of swimming in both the physical and social spheres, as well as its impact on the overall physical and mental well-being of individuals, cannot be underestimated. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has greatly disrupted the way people participate in swimming, with pool closures during the initial phase of the pandemic severely affecting swimming engagement. This has particularly impacted young people, who missed out on the opportunity to learn swimming through established programs.

The decade long decline in school swimming, accompanied by limited on-site pool availability, has been a persistent trend. The reasons behind this decline are complex, but our insights indicate a strong desire for swimming opportunities within the school setting. While we celebrate the growing availability of sports and recreational options in New Zealand, it is evident that swimming, in terms of both modernizing our offerings and expanding our reach beyond current members, has not kept pace.

Swimming Waikato and our member clubs must enhance our efforts to engage those who may not consider joining local learn-to-swim or club programs and look to better highlight the many benefits that swimming can offer, at all levels and abilities.

This strategy will also strive to ensure that those communities that have been underrepresented within our aquatic community are given opportunities to access local swimming opportunities.

The Starting Point

Over the past several months and years, Swimming Waikato has implemented various programs for schools, community groups, swim clinics, and Have-a-Go events. Additionally, we have been actively involved in promoting water safety and supporting our Club & Competitive Member Clubs.

In 2021, a new water safety department was established, emphasizing the expansion of water safety initiatives in schools and other settings. In 2023, efforts were initiated to enhance support for participation swimming, with the goal of integrating school water safety programs with club activities and beyond. This approach aims to establish clear pathways for individuals to develop a lifelong connection with aquatic opportunities, irrespective of their age, ability, background, or interests.

By consolidating all participation programs, this Strategy strives to offer innovative solutions and opportunities throughout the region, enabling people to swim and engage in aquatic activities.

- Swimming is the most participated sport across the life cycle of all sports
- Swimming is the fifth most popular activity outside of school for rangatahi (behind walking, running, gym and cycling) - Voice of rangatahi survey, 2022
- 42% of tamariki would like to do more swimming outside of school - Voice of tamariki, 2022
- Swimming is the 3rd most popular physical activity for adults to try in the next 12 months – Active NZ Survey, 2021.
- We have a rising older age population and Swimming is a sport and physical activity that is particularly suited to older people
- Swimming is not just a sport but a valuable life skill.
- New Zealand is an Island Nation with one of the largest coastlines in the world
- Swimming is a gate-way sport for other sporting activities (Triathlon, Waterpolo..).

Defining Swimming

Swimming is a lot more diverse than we may first think:

Swimming Waikato define swimming as ‘a form of physical activity in the water that people engage in whether for social connections, exercise, health and physical activity, challenge, mental wellbeing, skill development, competition, fun, or many of these reasons combined’.

To achieve our vision of **'Everyone Can Swim'** we have set four participation pillars which will guide us to support our mission:

1. Swimming Community

- Act as an enabler and support those with an interest in swimming to connect to a club, group or a community through participation and membership opportunities, education, and information; this is particularly important for our underrepresented communities.
- Provide membership packages which add relevant value and support to the member.
- Continue to better understand the needs of our diverse swimming community and move beyond a one size fits all approach.

2. Swimming Awareness

- Improve the profile of swimming and provide a clearer understanding of the many benefits associated with swimming as a recreation and sporting activity.
- Create awareness and clarify Swimming Waikato's role and relevance in swimming and water safety with partners and the wider public.
- Provide easily accessible information on swimming opportunities that not only targets our existing swimming membership but that updates those in our community that might be curious about getting involved for the first time.

3. Swimming Programs

- Continue to develop, deliver, and grow innovative programmes and events in swimming for all ages, abilities, gender, or background that meet the needs of the general population to achieve the objectives set out in this participation strategy.
- Ensure synergy between all Swimming Waikato programs, with clear pathways from water safety and learn to swim into aquatic club swimming
- Increase available support and resources for the delivery of stroke development in schools

4. Swimming Partnerships

- Develop and strengthen relationships with relevant strategic partners and advocate for swimming to be integral in their planning and strategies.
- Develop and strengthen partnerships and relationships with the Local Sports Partnerships, Local Authorities, Pool Operators, and other key delivery partners and to support them in delivering swimming programmes in communities across our Member Regions.
- Sustain existing and seek new commercial partnerships to promote swimming.

Measure of Success

- To have programmes available for all age groups to participate in swimming which considers the needs of our diverse range of communities in Waikato and Counties Manukau.
- Stroke Skills resources are made available to all Primary, Intermediate and Secondary Schools in the Region for the much-needed development of swimming within schools
- Offer a free Recreational Membership to be created, providing useful updates on swimming opportunities and resources to keep our extended community in the know.
- In collaboration with our Member Clubs, provide a minimum of 6 Regional Have-a-Go Clinics for Primary School aged children annually.
- Hosting of two annual Disability Swimming Clinics
- For the wider definition of swimming and swimming participation i.e. Swimming Waikato's role in relation to it, to be understood and recognised.
- Introduction of a swimming participation officer to support and coordinate the development of further participation opportunities.
- Continued strong relationships and working partnerships with all 10 Districts in Waikato and also in Counties Manukau, as well as with our National Swimming Federation, RSO's (Sport Waikato, CLM and Counties Sports), and other Stakeholders.
- Further collaboration and links with local learn to swim providers alongside our member clubs, linking graduating swimmers from early development into fundamental club swimming in a delicate manner
- Annual review of website to ensure its up to date, relevant and easily used by a varied user-group, including those not familiar with swimming as a recreation or sporting activity.