

Guidelines for ISOs and NFs to Implement the INTERACT+ Theory of Action

Introduction: Moving from Theory to Action in Sport for All

International Sports Organisations (ISOs) and National Federations (NFs) play a crucial role in shaping the future of sports participation and inclusion. However, the traditional focus on elite performance and competitive sports has often sidelined broader social, health, and community-based objectives. The INTERACT+ project aims to bridge this gap by providing ISOs and NFs with the tools and strategic direction necessary to integrate more Sport for All alignment into their operations.

The INTERACT+ *Theory of Action* is a structured approach designed to guide sports organisations in achieving tangible change. This document outlines clear guidelines for ISOs and NFs to implement the Sport for All Theory of Action effectively based on insights from research and practice. These guidelines offer a step-by-step process to help ISOs and NFs develop strategies, build capacity, and foster sustainable impact.

Why Implement the INTERACT+ Theory of Action?

The global rise in physical inactivity and health inequalities underscores the need for a **systemic transformation** in the sport sector. ISOs and NFs must go beyond providing sporting opportunities—they must become *active agents of change*, using sport as a tool for **inclusion, health, and community development**.

By implementing the INTERACT+ Theory of Action, ISOs and NFs can:

- ✓ **Expand participation** by making sport accessible to all, including underrepresented groups.
- ✓ **Strengthen organisational capacity** to deliver sustainable programs.
- ✓ **Align with broader public policy objectives**, securing funding and stakeholder support.
- ✓ **Enhance public perception** of sport's role in health and social cohesion.

Understanding the INTERACT+ Theory of Action

A *Theory of Action* is a framework that connects inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts in a structured manner, providing a clear roadmap for implementation. In the context of INTERACT+, this model helps ISOs and NFs navigate the transformation towards Sport for All by addressing organisational challenges, fostering inclusivity and developing sustainable programs.

The core objectives of the INTERACT+ Theory of Action include:

- **Improving organisational capacity** to support Sport for All initiatives.
- **Promoting inclusivity and equity** in sports participation.
- **Enhancing collaboration** between sports organisations and other sectors.
- **Creating a lasting impact** on participation rates, health, and social well-being.

Key Steps for Implementation

1. Establish Strong Leadership and Governance

Appoint Quality Leaders and Staff

For successful implementation, leadership commitment is essential. ISOs and NFs must ensure that key decision-makers understand and support the transition toward Sport for All. To achieve this, there are a few key actions you can take:

- **Secure a joint board decision** to formally adopt a Sport for All orientation, ensuring alignment across leadership and reinforcing long-term commitment.
- Form a **dedicated committee** to design, implement and evaluate the program.
- Assign a **coordinator** to oversee Sport for All initiatives and ensure accountability.
- Conduct **awareness sessions** with executives, board members, and stakeholders.
- Integrate Sport for All objectives into the organisation's **strategic plan** and policies.
- Develop **clear guidelines and accountability measures** for federations and clubs.
- **Foster an engagement-friendly and welcoming organisational culture** that encourages inclusivity, participation, and open dialogue among all stakeholders.

2. Conduct a Situation Analysis and Needs Assessment

Before launching a program, organisations must **assess their readiness and identify gaps**.

- **Analyse the current landscape** of sports participation within your federation.
- **Engage stakeholders:** athletes, coaches, volunteers, and communities to understand barriers and needs.
- **Review past interventions** to identify best practices and lessons learned.

3. Define Clear and Measurable Goals

A successful Sport for All strategy requires well-defined objectives.

- Set **short-term, medium-term and long-term goals** aligned with the INTERACT+ framework.
- Ensure goals are **realistic, adaptable and responsive** to organisational capacity.
 - **Short-term goals** (increasing awareness, training staff).
 - **Medium-term goals** (implementing new policies, launching pilot programs).
 - **Long-term goals** (sustained participation growth, policy change at national/international levels).

These goals should align with the broader [INTERACT+ Capacity-Building Framework](#) and consider the **specific needs of different groups**, such as marginalised communities, youth, and people with disabilities.

4. Design an Actionable Implementation Plan

Ensure Alignment with Club Responsibilities and User Needs

- Adapt programs to **fit the existing structure** of federations and clubs.
- Offer **flexible, progressive implementation** to allow for growth and adaptation.

Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns

- Increase program visibility through **media coverage, events and digital campaigns**.
- Conduct **awareness training** for leaders, coaches, and volunteers.

5. Build Capacity Through Training and Partnerships

- **Deliver structured training** for coaches, volunteers, and staff to support inclusivity.
- Establish **mentorship programs** to share expertise across organisations.
- Form partnerships with **schools, NGOs, governments, and corporate sponsors**.

6. Policy and Governance Improvements

- Integrate Sport for All principles into **federation constitutions, policies and regulations**.
- Create **guidelines for clubs and regional bodies** to ensure alignment with Sport for All strategies.
 - Example guidelines can be found in the [INTERACT+ Pledge](#).

7. Implement, Monitor and Adapt

Measuring the effectiveness of the initiative is critical for long-term success. ISOs and NFs should:

- Pilot programs on a **small scale**, evaluating effectiveness and scaling gradually.
- Use **evidence-based adjustments** to improve program delivery over time.
- Regularly **collect and analyse data** on program impact and community feedback.
- Establish **key performance indicators (KPIs)**, such as increased participation rates and improved access to sports for underrepresented groups.
- Conduct **regular assessments and feedback loops** to refine strategies.

- **Celebrate success** by recognising achievements, sharing impact stories, and showcasing progress through events, social media, and reports to inspire continued engagement.
- Share **success stories and best practices** to inspire further adoption.

To make informed decisions and improve programs, ISOs and NFs must track their **progress and impact**. Measuring **participation rates, retention numbers, and feedback from participants** provides valuable insights into what’s working and what needs improvement.

Data collection should include both **quantitative and qualitative** insights. While **registration numbers, gender breakdowns, and club membership growth** offer measurable indicators, **participant feedback and personal stories** provide the human perspective necessary for refining programs.

Challenges and Solutions

While implementing the INTERACT+ Theory of Action, ISOs and NFs may encounter various challenges. Below are some common obstacles and practical solutions:

Challenge	Solution
Lack of leadership commitment	Engage decision-makers with clear data on benefits.
Resistance to change	Provide education on the added value of Sport for All.
Limited financial resources	Leverage partnerships and seek funding opportunities.
Unclear program execution	Offer structured guidelines and phased implementation plans.

For women, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups, **cultural and social norms** can create further barriers. Many women feel uncomfortable participating in mixed-gender environments, while some individuals with disabilities struggle to find inclusive opportunities. **Designing gender-specific sessions, ensuring adaptive sports equipment, and training coaches in inclusive practices** are essential steps in addressing these challenges.

Expected Outcomes and Long-Term Impact

By following these guidelines, ISOs and NFs can achieve:

- **Increased participation** in sports, particularly among marginalised communities.
- **Enhanced governance and accountability** in Sport for All programs.
- **Sustainable partnerships and funding opportunities.**
- **Long-term social and health benefits** for communities worldwide.
- Long-term **policy and governance improvements** in sport organisations.

The ultimate impact will be a **more inclusive, healthier and socially connected sporting environment**, where Sport for All becomes an integral part of national and international sports structures.

Conclusion

The successful implementation of the INTERACT+ Theory of Action by ISOs and NFs will require dedication, strategic planning, and continuous improvement. By integrating these guidelines, organisations can contribute to a global movement that ensures **sport is accessible to everyone**, regardless of background, ability, or status. The transition from passive physical activity providers to active Sport for All advocates is not just a necessity, it is an opportunity to reshape the role of sport in society for generations to come.

Now is the time to **move beyond theory** and take action. By implementing these guidelines, ISOs and NFs can **transform sport into a truly inclusive, welcoming and lifelong experience** for all.