

Athletics New Zealand High Performance (ANZ-HP) Athlete Development Strategic Approach

Introduction

High Performance Athlete Development (HPAD) has been identified as critical to sustaining High Performance (HP) success. The Athletics New Zealand HPAD strategic approach was developed after a consultation and planning process with key stakeholders from Athletics New Zealand, High Performance Sport NZ (HPSNZ) and coaches within Clubs and Athletics New Zealand.

The HPAD strategic approach aligns to the HP programme strategic approach but is specific to preparing and supporting identified athletes (including para-athletes) demonstrating the potential to succeed in the HP environment. This approach will provide the direction for greater sustainability of the HP programme; better preparing and supporting athletes with the potential to perform on world stage.

The HPAD strategic approach will identify athletes demonstrating the greatest potential to perform and focus on holistic development of athletes based on the fundamental elements (FE) of developing performance.

1. **Physical skills**
2. **Mental skills**
3. **Life Skills**
4. **Environment**

In the 2017-2020 Olympic cycle, Athletics New Zealand will support effective development of athletes' abilities in the four key areas (stated above) by using existing HPAD Programmes as well as the event group plans:

Pathway to Podium (P2P) – P2P support for emerging athletes is a blend of education-based workshops, individual support, and Athletics NZ led HPAD/Event Group camps for athletes and their coaches. P2P provides a chance for athletes to develop and demonstrate their abilities.

Performance Potential Squad (PPS) - Is a key Athletics New Zealand programme that will provide a mix of programme and individualised support and provide opportunities to assist with the development of an athletes identified needs; and confirm if an athlete is prepared to enter the high performance environment and become carded.

HPAD and Event Group Plans - Offers athletes and coaches specific event development opportunities via camps or initiatives.

Vision

Our vision:

“Lead a world-class High Performance Athlete Development programme that prepares athletes for High Performance success”

As a HP programme we aspire to be “a highly respected, multi-medal winning team driven by a world-leading programme”. To support this aspiration, and better enable sustainability, we must ensure that we identify and optimise the development of athletes with the potential to achieve international podium results.

The Athletics New Zealand HPAD strategy will facilitate the development of identified athletes and coaches and provide appropriate support.

Our beliefs:

To help achieve our vision we believe that it is necessary:

- To select and support athletes who demonstrate performance potential and ability to maximise ongoing development;
- To facilitate a collaborative and development/performance-driven approach to HPAD;
- To provide adequate and appropriate resource to deliver future sustainable success;
- To incorporate and promote a performance culture and continuous learning;
- To educate and clearly communicate HP requirements to all athletes and coaches

HPAD Priorities

- 1. Proactively develop priority and targeted event groups**
- 2. Develop an evidence based approach to athlete identification and development**
- 3. Enhance athlete training environments**

1. Proactively develop priority and targeted event groups

A proactive approach to developing priority and targeted event groups will further enhance the 2020 HP targeted event group strategy. We believe that by having a targeted event group strategy we can more effectively develop athletes and the coaches that will enable us to deliver long term sustainable success on the world stage.

Priority Event Group - Throws

Throws are the priority event group and our goal is to be recognised as the number one throws nation in the world by the 2024 Olympics. To achieve this goal we will:

- Proactively recruit and develop throws athletes & coaches
- Enhance, develop and promote throws-specific development/performance training environment/s
- Increase the collaboration of athletes and coaches
- Increase the exposure of identified athletes and coaches to performance training environments and/or facilitating athlete transitions if required
- Develop a throwing facility in South Auckland

Targeted Event Group – Middle Distance

Middle distance has a proven track record of success. To sustain and develop success in this event group we will:

- Enhance and promote Middle Distance specific training environment/s
- Increase the collaboration of athletes and coaches
- Increase the exposure of identified athletes and targeted coaches to development/performance training environments and/or facilitate athlete transitions if required
- Have a priority approach to supporting targeted emerging Middle Distance athletes and coaches.

Targeted Event Group – Pole Vault

Pole Vault has quickly established itself as an event of opportunity for success. To sustain and develop further success in this event group we will:

- Enhance, develop and promote Pole Vault specific training environment/s
- Increase the collaboration of identified athletes and targeted coaches
- Increase the exposure of identified athletes and targeted coaches with development/performance training environments and/or facilitate athlete transitions if required
- Have a priority approach to supporting targeted emerging Pole Vault athletes and coaches.

2. Develop an evidence based approach to athlete identification and development

Athletics New Zealand will compile evidence to better understand the factors that contribute to successful athletics performances. From this information a clear process will be developed to identify, select, develop and support athletes.

Profiling High Performance Success

By monitoring athlete performance tracking and ongoing development of abilities Athletics NZ have identified the fundamental elements (FE), areas critical to ensuring an athlete's holistic development to maximise performance development and future potential. To enhance our ability for more effective athlete identification, individualised development and targeted support we need to further understand and define these elements.

Table 1: fundamental elements (FE)

Fundamental Element	Description
Physical Skills	Athletes must develop and show the physical potential and ability needed to achieve high performance success in their chosen event.
Mental Skills	Athletes must develop the mental skills, behaviours and processes to function optimally when dealing with the challenges of training and competition.
Life Skills	Athletes must develop the life skills to effectively support the demands of training and life whilst preparing for life after sport.
Environment	An effective environment provides the right experiences, challenge and support to maximise an athlete's ongoing development.

Informed Identification/Selection Process

We will select and support athletes by using a defined selection approach that will provide a clearer understanding of the performance, and additional criteria, required for emerging athletes to be selected into key development programmes.

- **Pathway to Podium (P2P)** - Selection is for emerging athletes (16-20 years old) showing capacity for future athletic potential, demonstrated by current event performance; an elevated rate of progression; good physical literacy combined with an appropriate training history and demonstration of a learning mindset.
- **Performance Potential Squad (PPS)** – Athletes to be selected must demonstrate their capacity for future athletic potential by demonstrating an elevated rate of performance progression and their ability to effectively identify and develop skills across the fundamental elements.

Approach to Athlete Development

There is no one ideal 'pathway' to succeed in the HP environment but there are usual performance progressions and an importance to identify individual needs to maximise ongoing performance development. The FE in Table 1 will form the evidence base to better understand the current state of an identified athlete and what is required to enhance development through:

- highlighting an athlete's strengths and areas for development;
- guiding the athlete and coach when creating a development plan;
- educating about progression requirements to assist with the setting of performance goals;
- ensuring the athlete is in the event they are most likely to achieve their greatest success.

Identifying what is most important for an athlete to reach their performance potential will enhance Athletics New Zealand's capability to provide guided support and enhance development

opportunities via existing programmes (P2P, PPS), camps (HPAD and Event groups) and Athlete Performance Support.

3. Enhance Athlete Training Environments

An athlete's development is highly influenced by their environment. To effectively develop, emerging athletes need to be exposed to a training environment that promotes a performance culture and provides quality coaching and leadership, appropriate facilities and athlete performance support.

A strength of Athletics New Zealand is the flexibility in our approach to quality training environments. Moving forwards, Athletics New Zealand will have a greater role in ensuring the right athletes are developing in an appropriate training environment.

Understand

Enhance

Expose

Transition

Understanding the athlete's current environment

A broad range of training environments exist across New Zealand, with varying quality in key components – coaching, facilities, APS, training partners etc. It is critical Athletics NZ better understands the environments our athletes are developing in.

Enhancement of the current training environments

Athletics New Zealand will look to better understand enablers and limiters in existing training environments. Predominately enhancement of training environments will be by;

- Improving the quality of coaching and leadership through development of identified coaches by utilising existing programmes (Event Group Plans, Performance Coach Qualification (PCQ), Performance Coach Advance (PCA), PPS and P2P) and facilitating collaboration between Athletics New Zealand HP and identified coaches.
- Providing APS based on the identified support needs, education and development for selected PPS athletes.

Exposure to existing performance training environments

By utilising existing performance training environments (e.g. Shot Put in Christchurch, Pole Vault in Auckland), Athletics NZ will create opportunities to expose athletes and coaches to performance training environments periodically or permanently.

Transitions

Circumstances may require an athlete to transition to another training environment. Athletics New Zealand want to ensure that athletes are exposed to the environment suited to maximising their athletic potential; and will provide guidance to athletes and coaches throughout this process.

Appendix 1 – High Performance programme key learnings

Based on the annual HPSNZ NSO performance review process, campaign pre-brief / de-brief process as well as feedback from the HP team, the following key learnings helped to shape our future high performance strategies:

Targeted Event Groups

- Targeted event groups ensure prioritisation of limited resources that enable development of coaches and athletes that can have the greatest performance impact;
- It is crucial for the programme to retain capacity to support high potential individuals that emerge in a non-targeted event group;
- Rigorous athlete carding and selection criteria support a targeted approach.

Focus on Coaching

- Employing/contracting coaches dedicated to the HP programme and athletes has a significant positive impact on development and performance;
- Coach development strategies (e.g. PCQ, CAP, and CCLP) establish standards and create an environment of continuous improvement;
- Coach capability to lead campaigns and develop/implement quality campaign plans is a critical element for preparing for and enabling world-class performance.

Culture & Collaboration

- A growing belief that purposeful collaboration can be our competitive advantage;
- Team cohesion between athletes, coaches and support staff is critical;
- Proactive engagement and associated support with overseas based athletes and coaches contributes to performance and team cohesion.

Right People

- With the right people working together we **can** enable athletes to compete and win on the world stage.

Resources

- It takes significant and targeted long-term investment into people, time and facilities to make a difference.

Appendix 2 - Specific challenges to HPAD

In addition to the HP programme key learnings the following challenges specific to athlete development were identified as limiting Athletics NZ's ability to support an athlete's preparation for HP.

Athlete progression (Pathway)

Providing an athlete development pathway or progression model for Athletics is a challenge. The unique nature of our sport means that there is no lineal progression to an athlete's development. Every athlete is an individual with differing strengths and weaknesses and every event requires very different physical attributes and development timeframes. So a 'one size fits all' approach does not provide enough specific and appropriate support.

Athlete performance support (APS)

There is currently a limitation to how the HPSNZ APS model can be utilised to educate and support athletes outside of the carding system. The current support model limitations need to be challenged to allow the greater flexibility in the delivery of APS support. Support needs to provide benefit to identified athletes and coaches based on a case by case and stage appropriate need.

Athlete and coach 'talent' pool

There is a perception that NZ is lacking the depth of talented athletes required to create a culture of competition and the appropriate challenge needed to develop the sport and produce successful athletes. It is also suggested that NZ do not have enough professional and capable coaches that can not only find the athletes but instil a performance training environment of challenge and learning.

Performance training environments

Closely tied to the challenges around access and support as well as depth of athlete and coach talent pool it is mentioned that in NZ we do not have many training environments that can offer what is required to effectively develop our athletes.

Appendix 3 – HPAD Strategic Approach outcomes

Strategy	Initiative	Description/KPI
Develop priority and targeted event groups	Throws Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop throwing centre for collaboration and development at Bruce Pulman Park in South Auckland. - Develop Christchurch throwing facility.
	Middle Distance Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide more opportunities for athletes to train together - Early engagement to ensure appropriate athlete development - Provide information on other training environments (including NCAA system) to ensure athletes make an informed decision
	Pole Vault development	Improve current training facilities, employ assistant PV coach
Improved athlete identification and development	Fundamental elements development	Identify and support the factors most critical to maximising an individual's potential for future success.
	Implement a clear identification process	Implement a clear identification process for P2P, PPS, and Carding that consider performance, development of the fundamental elements and potential for future growth.
	Enhance Pathway to Podium (P2P)	Refine the structure and processes of the programme including; Identification requirements, programme description and how the programme links to Athletics NZ
	Enhance the Performance Potential Squad (PPS)	Refine the structure and processes of the programme to best support and develop identified athletes to be prepared for success in the high performance environment
	Informed and appropriate progression	Create an Athlete progression model for Athletics NZ, including: Appropriate development and competencies; Competition pathways; Funding opportunities; Development Programmes; Event future; and transition guidance.
Enhance athlete training environments	Utilise HPAD programmes to educate athletes and coaches	Provide athlete and coach education, exposure to Performance training environments and provide appropriate identified support
	Training environment options and advice	Ensure athletes that are considering new training environments make informed choices to move into the most appropriate environment for their development (NCAA colleges/Australia/NZ domestic relocation).