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*EXECUTIVE MASTERS IN SPORTS ORGANISATION MANAGEMENT*



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**“Relationship-Building between National Olympic Committees  
and Governments in Oceania”**

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This project is dedicated to my parents; Ilaisa Qasenivuli Cavu and Lusiana Oli Cavu.

**Meli Cavu**

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## **Abstract**

Relations between National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and Governments range from being amicable to contentious through Olympic history. In the Oceania Continent, NOCs have a particularly strong reliance on Government due to the narrow corporate and philanthropic landscape. This research presents the importance of innovation in building and maintaining harmonious relations; in this instance, through relationship-building and its requisite soft skills and approaches. The project studied the phenomenon of harmonious relationships, through scrutiny of NOC sharing of experiences with Government and their careful navigation of the complexity of politics, in order to maintain autonomy.

Some key findings emerging cover the sustained relevance of human, in-person communication as critical to fostering care and depth in relations, and how this can be complemented by digital tools and approaches; the need to understand culture, tradition, and history in various contexts so that sport delivery and experiences may be maximised.

The project uses information, lessons learned, and new thinking to advance a working version of a Relationship-building Toolkit, for use by NOCs to build and maintain harmonious relations with governments. The research advances Pacific ways of communicating and being to explain Oceania, and offer a pathway for making sport stronger.

## **Resumé**

Les relations entre les Comités Nationaux Olympiques (CNO) et les gouvernements varient d'amicales à contentieuses au cours de l'histoire olympique. Sur le continent océanien, les CNO sont particulièrement dépendants du gouvernement en raison de l'étroitesse du paysage corporatif et philanthropique. Cette recherche présente l'importance de l'innovation dans l'établissement et le maintien de relations harmonieuses ; dans ce cas, par l'établissement de relations et les compétences et approches non techniques requises. Le projet a étudié le phénomène des relations harmonieuses, en examinant le partage d'expériences des CNO avec le gouvernement et leur navigation prudente dans la complexité de la politique, afin de maintenir l'autonomie.

Certaines des conclusions clés qui en ressortent couvrent la pertinence durable de la communication humaine, en personne, comme essentielle pour favoriser l'attention et la profondeur dans les relations, et la façon dont elle peut être complétée par des outils et des approches numériques ; la nécessité de comprendre la culture, la tradition et l'histoire dans divers contextes afin que l'offre et les expériences sportives puissent être maximisées.

Le projet utilise les informations, les leçons apprises et les nouvelles réflexions pour faire avancer une version de travail d'une boîte à outils pour l'établissement de relations, à l'usage des CNO pour construire et maintenir des relations harmonieuses avec les gouvernements. La recherche fait progresser les modes de communication et d'action du Pacifique pour expliquer l'Océanie et offrir une voie pour rendre le sport plus fort.

## **List of Abbreviations**

AOC	Australian Olympic Committee
BUPGG	Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance
CISNOC	Cook Islands National Olympic Committee
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
FASANOC	Fiji Association of Sport and National Olympic Committee
GB	Government Bodies
GNOC	Guam National Olympic Committee
IOC	International Olympic Committee
NF	National Federations
NOC	National Olympic Committee
NOCSI	National Olympic Committee of the Solomon Islands
NSOs	National Sporting Organisations
NZOC	New Zealand Olympic Committee
ONOC	Oceania National Olympic Committees
OS	Olympic Solidarity
OSP	Olympic Solidarity Programme
P	Partner
PNGOC	Papua New Guinea Olympic Committee
PNOC	Palau National Olympic Committee
RAT	Rapid Assessment Toolkit
RBT	Relationship-Building Toolkit
UD	University of Delaware
UMAP	Understanding, Managing, Assessing, Planning (Toolkit)
USOPC	United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee

## List of Figures

<b>Figure #</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
Figure 1	Map of Oceania	9
Figure 2	Mrkonjic's Types of autonomy of sport organisations	13
Figure 3	How IOC Olympic Solidarity aids NOCs in Autonomy	18
Figure 4	Threats and counterstrategies connected to sports autonomy	19
Figure 5	BUPGG – An enabler of autonomy in NOCs	21
Figure 6	Hurtado's insights on collaboration between NOCs and Sports Ministries	25
Figure 7	Hurtado's recommendations from the study on collaboration between NOCs and Sports Ministries	25
Figure 8	Hurtado's recommended Next Steps from the study on collaboration between NOCs and Sports Ministries	26
Figure 9	Summary of items from primary interviews with NOCs	31
Figure 10	Summary of items from primary interviews with Government Bodies	34
Figure 11	Summary of items from primary interviews with Partners	35
Figure 12	Relationship-Building Toolkit (RBT) Framework for NOCs and their Governments	44

# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgement</b>	2
<b>Abstract</b>	3
<b>Resumé</b>	4
<b>List of Abbreviations</b>	5
<b>List of Figures</b>	6
<b>Table of Contents</b>	7
 <b>Introduction</b>	 8
Importance of NOC-Government Relationship	8
The Study	10
Research Question	10
 <b>Literature Review</b>	 12
Autonomy	12
Types of Autonomy	13
Autonomy in Practice	14
Autonomy – The Olympic Movement	16
IOC Mechanisms and Tools for NOC Autonomy	17
Dialogic Relationship-Building	22
Soft Skills in Relationship-Building	23
ONOC-USOPC Strategic Assessment Reports	23
 <b>Data collection and results</b>	 27
Data Collection Strategy	27
Sampling	27
Primary Data Collection – (A) Interviews	28
Coding	28
Primary Data Collection – (B) Focus Group	
 <b>Discussion</b>	 37
Status of NOCs with Governments	37
Position of Government Bodies on NOCs	39
Position of Partners on Relationship-building	40
Revisiting the Research Questions	40
 <b>Recommendations</b>	 47
Policy	47
Management	47
 <b>References</b>	 50
 <b>Appendices</b>	 53

## Introduction

Sport is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world. The Business Research Company's annual research, which produces the Sports Global Market Report placed the value of the global sports market at USD486.6 billion in 2022. This market is expected to grow to USD623.6 billion by 2027.<sup>1</sup> It is acknowledged that sport is one of the innovative means to Pacific Islanders gaining livelihoods, education, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities at regional and international levels. However, sport at national and community levels could be stronger – this necessitates National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) working closely with Governments.<sup>2</sup> While there are anecdotal accounts of both positive and negative NSO-Government partnerships in Oceania, there is no research providing an evidence-base, nor any, on *relationship-building*, which is requisite to a relationship.

### Importance of NOC-Government relationship

Oceania NOCs depend on Government for significant funding, and all rely on Government for the national enabling environment of sport. Government is the critical partner for funding, capital infrastructure development, provision of sports facilities, policy development, physical education in schools, tax breaks and concessions, harnessing donor partners, and linking sport to national commitments to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). Therefore, even if NOCs do not have an active relationship with their Government or choose to work independently, there is a heavy reliance on Government to provide the enabling environment for a national sport ecosystem.

According to the President of the Oceania National Olympic Committees (ONOC), Dr Robin Mitchell (2023)<sup>3</sup>, “Of all 206 members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), there are about thirty to forty that are self-sufficient, in the sense that they have a good corporate programme...so for [other] NOCs it is very important to be working with Governments because they have resources.”

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<sup>1</sup> The Global News Wire (2023) <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2023/04/04/2641027/0/en/The-Sports-Industry-s-Worth-Is-Expected-To-Reach-623-Billion-By-2027-At-An-Annual-Rate-Of-5-As-Per-The-Business-Research-Company-s-Sports-Global-Market-Report-2023.html>

<sup>2</sup> And other Partners such as corporates, academia, philanthropies.

<sup>3</sup> Mitchell, R. (2023), Interview by author. 10 April.

Mitchell says that while Governments may not have sufficient resources for sport, it is still important in terms of what NOCs can access for their use. (2023). This points to the fact that NOCs can harness resources and opportunities through, and with Governments, including expansion into the corporate sector and via bilateral and multilateral partners in Oceania.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 1 illustrates Oceania is a vast aquatic space and the distance between countries and flight networks exponentially increase the cost of delivering sport – an added reason why NOCs need to have harmonious relations with Governments.

Figure 1: Map of Oceania<sup>5</sup> | Source: University of Texas in Austin.



Mitchell also cautions that, “The most important in this relationship is to be apolitical – the NOC has to fulfil its role within the Olympic Charter and this also helps when there are Government changes so funds are still given.”

This refers to the IOC requirement for NOCs to be autonomous. Thompson, A. et al states, “Autonomy refers to sports organisations’ ability to determine their own structures, governance

<sup>4</sup> In Oceania this includes DFAT (Australia), MFAT (New Zealand), the European Union (EU), and others such as UN agencies, and the Governments of Canada, Sweden, Japan, Korea, India, China, and the United States (US).

<sup>5</sup> [https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/australia/oceania\\_ref\\_2012.pdf](https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/australia/oceania_ref_2012.pdf)

and sports rules, for instance, it is a fundamental principle of Olympism and is entwined with good governance.”<sup>6</sup>

According to ONOC (2022), “Sport is a global industry that the Pacific Islands can stake strategic claims in, for economic, social, and cultural development, but good governance is key to sport organisations contributing to achieve this for sportspeople and economies.”<sup>7</sup>

## **The Study**

This study explores the relationship status of National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and Governments in Oceania, focusing on relationship-building. It also proposes the development of a Relationship-Building Toolkit (RBT) for Oceania NOCs by extending a Framework and several samples of components as a demonstration.

## **Research Question**

### **Primary Question**

The research question is: How can NOCs in Oceania build and maintain harmonious relations with their Government?

Under this lead question, there are four secondary questions that give shape to the chapters ahead.

### **Secondary Questions**

1. What is the status of NOC-Government relationships in Oceania?
2. Can relationship building with its requisite ‘soft’ skills and approaches be strategically used by NOCs to strengthen their relationship with Governments?
3. What kind of a relationship-building tool can be developed as a support to NOCs?
4. What are some important areas or components that any such tool should include?

This study is important for the Oceania NOCs, especially its Pacific Islands member NOCs because sport is not prioritised against competing national and regional challenges such as noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), the existential crisis of climate change, and violence

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<sup>6</sup> Thompson, A. et al citing Chappelet, 2016; IOC 2021.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oceanianoc.org/press/well-governed-sports-organisations-critical-for-sport-development-in-oceania>

against women and girls, three areas where Pacific Islands take an unhealthy lead in globally. This translates to narrow and diminishing resources to access for sport, requiring considerable effort and new strategies to build and maintain relationships with Governments. Hence, this study focuses on relationship-building which champions the usage of soft skills in building of relationship. The approach and the subsequent RBT also have the potential to be transferred to any relationship between two parties in the sporting sector. The RBT is designed using principles, features and elements of Dialogic Engagement.

Understanding relationship-building and having a Toolkit (RBT) for NOCs will, when prioritised and used well, allow NOCs to build harmonious relations with Governments. This can lead to improved resource mobilisation, potential for national games and its improvement, non-Olympic athlete support, healthy and active communities, which can contribute to stronger national outcomes in health, education, climate, gender, and livelihoods under the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among other benefits.

This section has presented the context and rationale for examining NOC-Government relationship-building and the importance of NOCs working with Government.

## Literature Review

This chapter provides a scoping of existing literature. It defines autonomy and explores existing tools that the IOC and the wider Olympic Movement have to assist NOCs work with their governments. It also explores the issue of autonomy of NOCs<sup>8</sup> as this sits in the space with NOCs and Governments. The review also covers literature on Pacific Islands NOCs and their collaboration with Government as groundwork to primary research data collection in the next section.

### Autonomy

The IOC Charter calls for NOCs to maintain autonomy in their countries but there have been no studies on ‘relationship-building’ as a process specific to creating and maintaining harmonious relations with Governments. The IOC has, however, several mechanisms and tools that can contribute to the joint achievement of autonomy and the building of NOC relationships with Governments. The focus, therefore, is ‘How’ to go about building that relationship with governments.

The autonomy of NOCs is elaborated as it sits in the space with NOCs and Governments. This section also covers literature on Pacific Islands NOCs and their collaboration with Government.

Donnelly (2022)<sup>9</sup> says that Hans Bruyninckx pointed, “Sports... take place in a sort of separate [autonomous] sphere, detached from normal rules and regulations in society”.[3] Autonomy refers to “the ability of a sports body, without undue external influence, to establish, amend and interpret sporting rules, to select sporting leaders and governance styles and to secure and use public funding without disproportionate obligations; this autonomy is commonly justified as an important tool through which the values inherent to sport can be safeguarded from political, legal, and in the modern era, commercial influences”.

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<sup>8</sup> By proxy, autonomy of sport in countries.

<sup>9</sup> Donnelly, P. (2022), ‘Autonomy, Governance, and Safe Sport’ in Safe Sport: Critical Issues and Practices, Stevens, J. (ed.), Centre for Sport Capacity, Brock University, Saint Catherines.

## Types of autonomy

Mrkonjic (2013)<sup>10</sup> provides the background to the IOC and the Olympic Movement's evolution of autonomy returning to its birth related to the rise of communism in Europe and it is noted that the term was added to the Olympic Charter in 1949, the year following the Second World War. Mrkonjic outlines seven types of autonomy relevant to sports organisations, including the IOC and these are presented in the figure below.

Figure 2: Mrkonjic's Types of autonomy of sport organisations<sup>11</sup>

Autonomy Type	Description	Features
Political	Historic understanding of the relationship between sports organisations and their socio-political environment.	Post-war political context (IOC, 1949 puts autonomy in Charter). Communist countries, and some to date, can leverage sport as a diplomatic tool or weapon. NOCs are apolitical but line is thin. Current Russia-Ukraine War and its attendant issues are case in point.
Legal	Private autonomy to adopt rules and norms that have legal impact in legal framework imposed by the State.	Under civil law for organisational construct. Under fiscal law for tax emptions or corporation law for contractual issues. In Europe, sports organisation rules potentially breach EU competition law and freedom of movement law. Commercialising sport brings sport under EU and national laws.
Financial	Sport depends on public financial support, government grants. Commercialisation leads to independence.	Broadcasting rights bring huge revenues and profits. IOC and its TOP Partners in unique setup run independent of its NOCs and IFs, of their NFs. Being default 'independent' bodies, risk of not operating in membership interest, weakening membership 'watchdog' function. Necessitates accountability mechanisms, at national level, by governments.
Pyramidal	Supreme governing bodies of sport (e.g., FIFA and IOC) at apex of vertical chain of commands to regional, national, local members.	Pyramid networks of hierarchical organisational structures. IOC with 5 Continental Associations, 206 NOCs plus IFs with their NFs are examples. Report to apex body. Commercialisation gives enormous power but rise of networked governance in sport is countering this. In Olympic Movement, giving voice and space to athletes through Athletes' Commissions and reps from NF to IOC level has improved welfare, post-sport career pathways, education, and entrepreneurship.
Functional	Production and use of technical rules for sports. Sports bodies devised their own legal system to settle disputes and not subject to national or regional laws (CAS sport arbitration).	IFs and their members produce technical rules, internal organisation (governance) rules. Tension exists on potential for double sanctions.
Supervised	Sport bodies exercise autonomy but, within the boundaries of national law and "demonstrate a clear commitment to transparency,	Requires great flexibility in managing national context and global sporting contexts and compliance to both.

<sup>10</sup> Mrkonjic, M., (2013), 'Sports Organisations, Autonomy and Good Governance', in Play the Game, Danish Institute for Sports Studies, Copenhagen.

<sup>11</sup> This snapshot focuses on Europe (EU) but has global relevance.

	democracy and protection of the values of the sport”.	
Negotiated	Autonomy of sport is diluted.	Occurs where autonomy is discussed in multiple-stakeholder forums integrating the opinion of many involved in an issue.
Autonomy and Good Governance	Complete autonomy is not possible in current context given above variations and features.	Diversity and complexity of sporting system demands a multi-faceted approach.

Mrkonjic snapshot above illustrates the multi-layered nature of autonomy and the long histories behind each type: how histories of countries and regions have impacted sport, and the resulting navigation of complexity to date. Political, legal, and financial autonomy impact on NOCs directly as they balance IOC Charter requirements with national laws. Pyramidal and functional autonomy are complex as NOCs report to the apex IOC; perhaps NFs face even greater challenges as they report to both NOCs, their IFs and to Government dependent on their donor portfolio. This is further complicated by the fact that most NFs and NOCs depend on volunteers to implement projects and activities, and existing staff tend to be in lower income brackets. While largely an executive responsibility, compliance to both IOC and national requirements still demands significant staff capacity and time. In the Oceania context, Supervised Autonomy is familiar as NOCs work to comply with both the IOC Charter and national laws.

Mrkonjic’s observation that autonomy and good governance are complementary is accurate in that NOCs that can achieve and maintain autonomy would be those that can withstand Government scrutiny. However, there is another angle to autonomy, or a degree of ‘autonomy’ or ‘independence’ that NOCs also need in order to play their ‘watchdog’ role which is outlined under Financial Autonomy and implied under Pyramidal Autonomy. This illustrates the position of NOCs between the IOC (creator/funder/Games-owner) and Governments (seeking scrutiny as funder/regulator/global political player). This tenuous space necessitates relationship-building for harmonious relations between NOCs and Governments.

### **Autonomy in practice**

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) Charter under Chapter 4 The National Olympic Committees (NOCs) Section 27.5 says, ‘In order to fulfil their mission, the NOCs may cooperate with governmental bodies with which they shall achieve harmonious relations. (p.60). Additionally, the NOCs must preserve their autonomy and resist all pressures of any kind, including but not limited to political, legal, religious, or economic pressures which may

prevent them from complying with the Olympic Charter (IOC, 2021)<sup>12</sup>. On the issue of the growing politicisation of sport, at its 8<sup>th</sup> Olympic Summit, the Summit called on public authorities and governments to respect the mission of the Olympic Movement to bring the world together in peaceful competition through sport (IOC, 2019). At the Summit participants restated their determination to convince governments to respect the political neutrality of the Olympic Movement, which must be strictly maintained in order to guarantee the universality of the Olympic Games and international competitions. In her article titled “The conundrum of political neutrality in sport”, Gillen (2019) reported on the 2019 Peace and Sport International Forum that took place in Monte Carlo a week after the 8<sup>th</sup> Olympic Summit. She concluded that “...It seems that it is only maintained when it suits. Otherwise, political breakthroughs created by sport are celebrated and regimes are able to use sporting events as a political tool, as long as they are well-organised and paid for.”

Wickstrom and Alvad (2017:7)<sup>13</sup> state that NOCs “must form partnerships with political organisations based on the recognition of the autonomy of sport.” They further state that the UN’s 2014 recognition of sport and the IOC leading the Olympic Movement as autonomous and independent through the adoption of the resolution, ‘Sport for development and peace’ is an important milestone.

According to Wickstrom and Alvad (2017:11), of the 205 NOCs in the 2017 Autonomy Index, nearly fifteen percent of all NOCs were “led by individuals who are formally connected to a national government”. The findings showed the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) had “by far the highest percentage of NOC leadership employed or formally connected to government institutions” at thirty-six percent, and the Oceania National Olympic Committees (ONOC) sitting in second position with almost twelve percent. (pp. 11-12).<sup>14</sup>

Of the seventeen NOCs within ONOC, almost twelve percent were “represented by an individual directly connected to the national government” and they also “serve as ministers in

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<sup>12</sup> International Olympic Committee, (2021) Olympic Charter, IOC, Lausanne. At <https://olympics.com/ioc/documents/international-olympic-committee/olympic-charter>

<sup>13</sup> Wickstrom, M.A. and Alvad, S., (2017) Autonomy in National Olympic Committees 2017: An Autonomy Index, Play the Game, Copenhagen.

<sup>14</sup> The European, African, and Pan-American Continental Associations carried ten percent, and the latter two carried seven percent respectively.

their respective countries' governments" (p.13). The almost twelve percent consisted of two NOCs and "among those not included is an NOC president who is serving as president of a national association for gambling operators" and "another recently ran for parliamentary election and is politically active in the ruling political party." (p.14).

### **Autonomy – the Olympic Movement definition and features**

According to the Fundamental Principles of Olympism [Preliminary Section of the Olympic Charter] Article 5 says that "Recognising that sport occurs within the framework of society, sports organisations within the Olympic Movement shall apply political neutrality. They have the rights and obligations of autonomy, which include freely establishing and controlling the rules of sport, determining the structure and governance of their organisations, enjoying the right of elections free from any outside influence and the responsibility for ensuring that principles of good governance be applied."

This means that sports bodies such as NOCs and National Federations (NFs) bear the responsibility for good governance which should organically permit the fostering of autonomy. Further, on the autonomy of sport, Chapter 2, Mission and Role of the IOC, the Charter says, "The mission of the IOC is to promote Olympism throughout the world and to lead the Olympic Movement. The IOC's role is: [5.] to take action to strengthen the unity of the Olympic Movement, to protect its independence, to maintain and promote its political neutrality and to preserve the autonomy of sport." Its connection to NOCs is made clearer in the next paragraph.

Chapter 4 of the Charter covering, the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) states that the "mission of the NOCs is to develop, promote and protect the Olympic Movement in their respective countries, in accordance with the Olympic Charter."

With relevance to cooperation with governmental bodies, it says, "In order to fulfil their mission, the NOCs may cooperate with governmental bodies, with which they shall achieve harmonious relations. However, they shall not associate themselves with any activity which would be in contradiction with the Olympic Charter."

Moving on, the Charter covers autonomy by describing what it is in practice: "The NOCs must preserve their autonomy and resist all pressures of any kind, including but not limited to

political, legal, religious or economic pressures which may prevent them from complying with the Olympic Charter.”

Therefore, in simple terms, the IOC defines autonomy as a NOC’s ability to “resist pressures” such as “political, legal, religious, or economic” which may affect NOC compliance with the IOC Charter.

In Chapter 28 of the IOC Charter, NOCs are provided a specific guideline on Composition: “Governments or other public authorities shall not designate any members of an NOC. However, an NOC may decide, at its discretion, to elect as members representatives of such authorities.”

In the above provision, however, it is interesting to note that NOCs are guided to use their discretion to “elect” as members, representatives of Government and public authorities. It does not use the term “appoint”.

Given the compliance requirements NOCs have to fulfil under the IOC Charter this literature review will next explore existing tools and mechanisms that help NOCs achieve and maintain autonomy.

### **IOC mechanisms and tools for NOC autonomy to aid relationship-building with Government.**

Firstly, the IOC supports NOCs by ensuring they are financially viable and can work to become sustainable. The IOC achieves this through the Olympic Solidarity Programme<sup>15</sup> which is drawn from the sale of broadcast rights of the Summer and Winter Olympic Games. All seven Strategic Objectives of the 2021 – 2024 Olympic Solidarity directly assist NOCs in achieving autonomy and support is provided through the World and Continental Programmes, a dual strand. Figure 2 illustrates how the OS Strategic Objectives contribute to NOC autonomy and independence when the World and Continental Programme of grants are accessed.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://olympics.com/ioc/olympic-solidarity>

Figure 3: How IOC Olympic Solidarity aids NOCs in Autonomy

No.	OSP 2021 – 2024 Strategic Objectives (SO)	Contribution to NOC Autonomy and Independence
SO1	Empower NOCs to keep athletes at the heart of the Olympic Movement.	<p>Oceania NOCs access both World and Continental programmes for athlete scholarships, games subsidies, travel, national and regional games support. Athlete 365 gives full holistic support to athletes.</p> <p>Permits Govt. support in other complementary areas.</p>
SO2	Ensure good governance, financial control and compliance.	<p>Oceania NOCs receive OS support and via ONOC for these areas. NOC get OS funds for OSEP courses in sport administration, management, finance training, and governance. ONOC pays for the position of Finance Officer, Sport Development Officer, and Sport Education Officer in Oceania NOCs.</p> <p>Reduces NOC need for Govt. support in these areas. Permits focus on special projects.</p>
SO3	Strengthen the Olympic Movement's solidarity funding model.	Translates to increased funding and support from OS to Oceania NOCs. Increases autonomy.
SO4	Align with the IOC's strategy for the post-coronavirus world.	<p>Oceania NOCs align through direct guidance from the IOC Agenda 2020+5. New focus areas under gender, diversity and inclusion, plus direct links to climate action and UN Sustainable Development Goals open new support for Oceania being on the frontlines. It also prepares NOCs in programming and strategies to bridge to their Governments in joint projects with donors.</p> <p>Provides NOCs direct linkages to open and build relationships with Governments.</p>
SO5	Enable NOCs to contribute to the promotion of the Olympic Values.	<p>Oceania NOCs access funding to celebrate Olympic Day, run programmes under Olympic Values Education Programmes or OVEP. These educate Govt. and communities on autonomy and independence also.</p> <p>NOCs directly use these avenues for awareness-raising in their countries.</p>
SO6	Provide individualised services to NOCs.	<p>Oceania NOCs receive this from both ONOC and OS directly. ONOC previously lobbied IOC for specific allocation called OlympOceania which NOCs used for purchasing land or a building for office and NF membership space. Directly removed Oceania NOCs dependence on governments for space.</p> <p>Positively impacted NOC autonomy and independence.</p>
SO7	Measure the real impact of the Olympic Solidarity programmes and funding on the worldwide development of sport.	<p>The move to design and implement a monitoring and evaluation framework to produce impact data and case studies at OSP level will serve to strengthen NOCs programming also.</p> <p>This rigour will assist NOCs withstand scrutiny from Govt. and increase profiles as credible partners to engage with.</p> <p>This will also increase Oceania NOCs' ability to unlock further grants from both World and Continental Programmes and deepen independence from Governments.</p>

However, as Mrkonjic (2013) postulated, this is a double-edged sword as NOCs as beneficiaries are less inclined to critique the hand that feeds them. The Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) exists as a balancing mechanism given it is the platform for NOC voice and action but this has not been studied independently.

Figure 5 presents threats to autonomy and counterstrategies NOCs may use. Though placed against Political Autonomy, the core counterstrategy is Good Governance which impacts all modes of engagement and working with Governments.

Figure 4: Threats and counterstrategies connected to sports autonomy.

Nature of autonomy	Threat	Counterstrategy
<b>Political autonomy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instrumentalization of sport by state actors</li> <li>Political interference due to governance failures</li> <li>Cross-sectoral policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lobbying</li> <li>Proactive partnerships</li> <li>Sporting sanctions</li> <li>Governance improvements</li> </ul>
<b>Legal autonomy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EU law (internal market)</li> <li>National law (association law)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lobbying</li> <li>Lex sportiva and sports arbitration</li> <li>Settling disputes outside the Courts</li> <li>(Threatening with) 'exit'</li> </ul>
<b>Financial autonomy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dependence on member federations</li> <li>Dependence on public funding</li> <li>Dependence on only one commercial partner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing of media rights</li> <li>Marketing of sponsoring rights</li> <li>Engaging with several commercial partners</li> </ul>
<b>Pyramidal autonomy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bottom-up systemic pressure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-optation</li> <li>Seeking legitimacy from state actors</li> <li>Marketing of historic value of international competition</li> </ul>

Source: Meier and Garcia. 2020.<sup>16</sup>

There are existing tools within the IOC system that provide added support to NOCs in achieving autonomy. There are two tools that are directly available for NOC use to improve Governance, which ranks high as a mechanism for autonomy. These are the Olympic Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance or the BUPGG and the UMAP.

According to the IOC, it “has urged the reinforcement of the ethical and basic principles of good governance which have evolved towards an increased level of requirements, specifically with regard to transparency and checks and balances. Hence, the current set of Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance (BUPGG) has been updated in the framework of

<sup>16</sup> Meier, H., and Garcia, B., 2020. Collaborations Between National Olympic Committees and Public Authorities, Loughborough University, London, 2019.

Recommendation 14 of Olympic Agenda 2020+5 – “Strengthen the Olympic Movement through good governance” – with a view to adjusting them to the latest standards.”<sup>17</sup>

The IOC approved the latest version of the BUPGG in September 2022 and it strengthens “financial governance and various aspects of financial transparency (financial control, internal control & risk management, internal audit system and external auditor); institutional governance, clarification of the principle of accountability (not only financial), voting & election process, transparency; and Solidarity, social and sustainable development through sport, including the new perspectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).” (Ibid).

The BUPGG<sup>18</sup> is available to all NOCs and directly relevant to this study because its title is extracted from Principle 7 which is “Autonomy of the Olympic Movement – Harmonious relations with government authorities and external partners.”

Principle 7.1 states that “In this context, sports organisations should seek sources of financing compatible with the Fundamental Principles of Olympism and with a view to ensuring a diversification of revenues.”

Principle 7.2 covers cooperation with government authorities and partners, saying: “In particular, sports organisations and government authorities should work closely together and coordinate their actions, with mutual respect for each other’s jurisdiction and responsibilities, and without any undue interference, in order to: contribute to the development of sport at their respective levels; support and protect the athletes, and fight against doping and any form of manipulation, corruption in sport, and harassment, abuse or violence in sport, and protect youth from crime through sport.”

Principle 7.2 presents the specific areas for mutual cooperation with government authorities and other partners. Placed against the other principles in figure 4, it is clear how the BUPGG enables NOCs to achieve and maintain autonomy.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://olympics.com/ioc/integrity/universal-principles-for-integrity>

<sup>18</sup> <https://stillmed.olympics.com/media/Documents/Beyond-the-Games/Integrity/Bonne-Gouvernance-EN.pdf>

Figure 5: BUPGG - an enabler of autonomy in NOCs

#	Principle	How it enables autonomy
1	Vision, mission and strategy of sports organisations	The BUPGG ensures that governance, leadership, finance, conflict of interest, programming targeting athletes, commissions, communications, human resources, and ethical standards are recognised as critical, well-articulated and positioned from executive to operations and programmes and partnerships. A well-managed NOC that operates on integrity is better placed to achieve autonomy as it can withstand scrutiny.
2	Institutional governance	
3	Ethical and integrity standards	
4	Financial governance	
5	Support to athletes	
6	Solidarity – Social and sustainable development through sport	
7	Autonomy of the Olympic Movement – Harmonious relations with government authorities and external partners	

The second tool available in the IOC system as a support for NOCs to improve Governance and Performance is the UMAP<sup>19</sup>, a self-assessment tool for ‘Understanding, Managing, Auditing and Planning’<sup>20</sup> which is for NOCs and their NFs. UMAP evolved from the Readiness Assessment Tool (RAT) developed by Auvita Rapilla, current Secretary-General of the Papua New Guinea Olympic Committee (PNGOC). It was jointly developed for NOCs by Dr Leigh Robinson and Brian Minikin in 2012 and tested, developed on NOCnet in 2013 and launched into pilot phase in 2014.

UMAP assessments are run against eight pre-determined pillars: administration, external relations, finance, governance, human resources, marketing, services, and sporting environment. It is identified as a first step toward strategic planning, identification of areas for improvement, targeted use of funding, supporting funding requests, and for measuring trends and progress over time.

From the review of the two strategic-level governance-enabling publications by IOC, it is evident that there are existing tools to support NOCs in strengthening themselves in order to achieve autonomy. Both the BUPGG and the UMAP (which incorporates elements of the RAT), are strong and useful tools toward NOC relationship-building with Governments. However, it is noted that building of harmonious relations or relationship-building places significant emphasis on the development and use of soft skills to create harmony and working relationships that can be sustained over a period of time, even at the points of conflict. This is particularly important in Oceania where NOCs have significant reliance on Governments for

<sup>19</sup> [https://websites.mygameday.app/get\\_file.cgi?id=3070209](https://websites.mygameday.app/get_file.cgi?id=3070209)

both funding support and for creating an enabling environment for sports at community and national levels.

### **Dialogic relationship-building based on values and principles for mutual growth**

NOCs face varying challenges in different countries and relationship-building is a complex process. In this study, the dialogic theory of public relations and its constituent elements are proposed as useful.

Hebla and Rahal (2023)<sup>21</sup> state that in dialogic relationships, the purpose “is not to persuade or influence others to do what organisations want, but to build relationships that are not manipulative or self-serving, but mutually satisfying.” They add that “Dialogue assumes that organisations should be socially responsible entities that contribute to their environments and work to make society a better place, or, when organisations are not socially responsible, they are trying to become better.” (Ibid).

Hebla and Rahal attribute Kent and Taylor for introducing “the dialogic principles for relationship building through the web, where dialogue is viewed as an ethical process through which interactions between an organization and its publics take place.” Kent and Taylor (2021)<sup>22</sup> state that Dialogic engagement consist of eleven features: treat others as valued; interactions based in dialogue and turn-taking; repeated interactions; relationship based; trust; participants given autonomy to reach a flow or engaged state; activities mutually satisfying; collaboration may be initiated by either party; No agenda or manipulation; co-orientative; and rhetorical.”

The soft skills present in dialogic communications are necessary for relationship-building between NOCs and Government. Relationship-building needs to focus more on listening as individuals and organisations and the proponent of this practice is Macnamara (2016)<sup>23</sup> who advanced the framework for listening where he suggests four elements of the architecture of

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<sup>21</sup> Hebla, M.R. & Rahal, F. (2023), Dialogic Communication: An examination of National Olympic Committees' relationship-building online strategies, in Serbian Journal of Sports Sciences, Belgrade.

<sup>22</sup> Kent, K.L. and Taylor, M. (2021), Fostering Dialogic Engagement: Toward an Architecture of Social Media for Social Change, in Sage Journals, Thousand Oaks.

<sup>23</sup> Macnamara, J., (2016), 'Organisational listening: addressing a major gap in public relations theory, in Journal of Public Relations, CARI Journals, Lewes.

listening: culture of openness that seeks out input from stakeholders; a willingness to listen; organisational adoption of policies that allow for listening; and lastly, structures and processes for large-scale listening up.

### **Soft skills in relationship-building**

In relationship-building, a core feature is focus on soft skills. Avrane-Chopard, Potter, et al (2019)<sup>24</sup> say, “Soft skills, which are commonly defined as *non-technical skills that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with others*,<sup>25</sup> are vital to organizations and can impact culture, mindsets, leadership, attitudes and behaviours.” They advance that soft skills categories fall in advanced communication and negotiation skills; interpersonal skills and empathy; leadership and management skills; entrepreneurship and initiative-taking; adaptability and continuous learning skills; teaching and training skills.” In the Pacific context, relevant are, interpersonal skills and empathy, and adaptability and continuous learning skills.

### **ONOC-USOPC Strategic Assessment Reports**

The next series of publications are internal reports produced in partnership between ONOC and the USOPC whereby the latter engaged in a series of Strategic Assessments of Oceania NOCs. The USOPC Strategic Assessment of NOCs in the Pacific Islands collaboration with National Governments yielded interesting results necessary to explore in this review of literature. Michelle Hurtado (2020), author of the study, conducted the research for ONOC in 2019 to 2020 and presented it at the ONOC Annual General Assembly of the same year – the first virtual Assembly given the COVID-19 pandemic. The reports were shared with ONOC leadership but were not shared with staff, hence the research project’s inability to identify it as a key source of information for the literature review. In fact, the researcher only discovered the existence of the reports after primary interviews were complete.

Given this key literature was identified and read after the completion of the primary interviews, it was deemed appropriate to include it in the literature review where it provides an *almost* parallel study of Oceania NOCs and their Governments – specifically scrutinising collaboration.

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<sup>24</sup> Avrane-Chopard, J., Potter, J. and Muhlmann, D., 2019, ‘How to develop soft skills’, McKinsey & Company, New York. At <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-organization-blog/how-to-develop-soft-skills>

<sup>25</sup> My italics.

However, they are different in that this project examines the status of their relationship and examines relationship-building – the ‘how’ of collaboration. The Oceania NOC Strategic Assessments become the core literature as the initial scoping of prior coverage of the topic did not elicit similar results – in fact, there was an absence of literature touching on actual relationship-building between NOCs and Government.

Extracting from the NOC Assessment Reports by the USOPC, the individual condensed reports used the same clustering or themes. The review of its content is presented in the following themes: Top Priorities (for NOCs) and for Sports Ministries or their equivalents; mutual partnership improvement opportunities; relationship strengths; and a summary of joint potential next steps and recommendations.

From Hurtado’s report, the synergies between NOCs and Government top priorities are specific to Sport Development, Olympic Games preparation and attendance, Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD); and Training and developing pathways. There were overlaps in the following: provision and management of sports facilities; resources and support to National Federations; school sports policy (Physical Education); good governance in sport; sport integrity; grassroots programming; and the use of sport as a development platform. The last item refers to Sport for Development (S4D). (Ibid).

Emanating from Hurtado’s study are six mutual partnership opportunities between NOCs and their Governments. These are: facilities maintenance and support to National Federations; joint strategic planning to curb duplication of efforts; joint capacity-building for mutual reduction of costs; increasing available funds; clarifying roles and responsibilities; and increasing the frequency of meetings to share information. (Ibid).

The relationship strengths that do not crossover into items listed in the previous paragraph include independence and autonomy of both organisations; sport education; access to facilities; policy development (sport, high performance, physical education, physical activity); and the capacity-building of National Federations. (Ibid).

Figure 6 are Hurtado’s insights into areas of opportunity in the collaboration between NOCs and Governments in the Pacific Islands. Note that Communication, Autonomy and

Independence, and Sport Education were identified as strengths, with the first two items needing urgent attention. The following slides presented as figures 6 to 8, are from Hurtado's presentation to the ONOC General Assembly (Virtual) in 2020.

Figure 6: Hurtado's Insights on collaboration between NOCs and Sports Ministries (Government), 2020.



These areas of opportunity can become core strengths if both NOCs and Governments take the time and effort to focus on relationship-building – the focus of this research project.

Figure 7 below are recommendations proposed by Hurtado (Ibid) focus under the headlines of improvements to Governance and Management (Strategic Planning) and Roles and Responsibilities; Communications (Engagement); and Programme Development and Resource Mobilisation (Programme Delivery Plan).

Figure 7: Hurtado's recommendations from the study on collaboration between NOCs and Sports Ministries (Government), (Ibid).

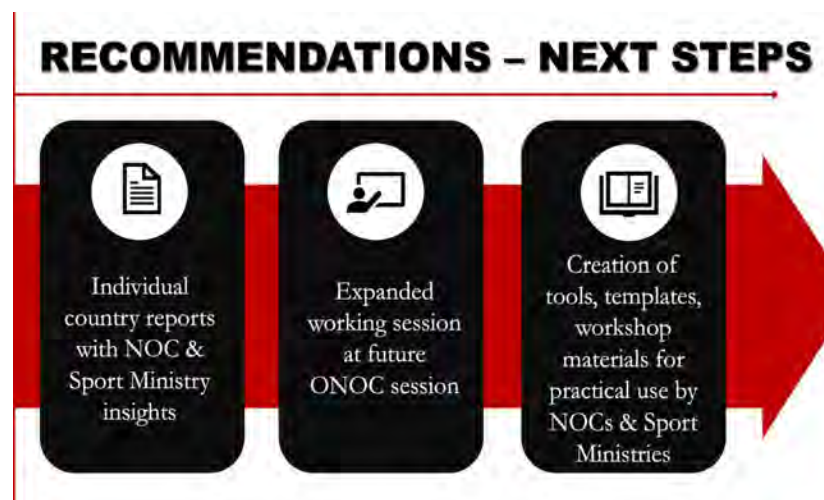


The next is on Hurtado's proposed Next Steps presented as Figure 8 below. Of relevance to this research project is the fact that Next Step or Action three (third in image) is 'Creation of tools, templates, workshop materials for practical use by NOCs and Sport Ministries'. It was positive to note that this research and its resulting relationship-building toolkit which will be

discussed in the final chapter are a response to Hurtado's recommendation, albeit without knowledge of the prior findings and recommendations.

It is equally positive to note that in an area deficient of literature on relationship-building, Hurtado's 2020 research and subsequent reports on Oceania NOCs offers a baseline that this research and future ones will grow.

Figure 8: Hurtado's recommended Next Steps from the study on collaboration between NOCs and Sports Ministries (Government), (Ibid).



In summary, the Literature Review shows that while the IOC lists NOC autonomy as part of compliance, it has also progressively produced tools that contribute to autonomy should NOCs proactively use these. It is also worth noting that at least two of these, the RAT and UMAP, were initially proposed and developed through student projects in the MEMOS programme.

## **Data collection and results**

This study used qualitative research to solicit feedback from NOCs on the status of relationship with Government bodies; and vice-versa from Government with NOCs. It also included strengths and challenges, the type of tool required for relationship-building, and what the design and components could include. The components of the Relationship-Building Toolkit (RBT) will be extracted in two ways: (a) from direct mentions and remarks from interviewees; and from, (b) an assessment of the gaps and concerns emanating from results and for which possible remedies or support can be found or designed.

### **Data Collection Strategy**

The strategy for data collection was ‘Talanoa Framework’ which determined the engagement approach. Interviews were conducted using a set of guiding questions which were implemented to guide the ‘Talanoa’ method with interviewees. Talanoa is a form of Pacific conversation and discussion which is Pacific-style consensus-building through non-confrontational, inclusive features championing silence and listening skills as opposed to speaking skills. It pays equal attention to the spoken and the unspoken. “Talanoa’s fluidity renders it flexible to the complexities of the holistic, interconnections of Pacific cultural systems and the nuances between various Pacific ethnic cultures. Therefore, although often criticised for its lack of structure, it is argued that Talanoa provides a space (va) for changing cultural practices and participant involvement through veiwekani (relationship building), vakarokoroko (respect) and veitokoni (reciprocity).” (Cammock, R. et al, 2021:121-122).

Although the interviews were conducted online through the Zoom platform, the Talanoa method was applied in recognition of the existing relationship between interviewees and the researcher (interviewer), and sufficient time and space embedded in conversation to encourage deeper feedback, which did emanate.

### **Sampling**

According to Mujere (2021), “A sample is group of people, objects or items that are taken from a large population for a measurement, [and]...sampling is the act, process, or technique of selecting a suitable sample, or a representative part of a population for the purpose of

determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population.” In this study, there was a sampling of 10 interviewees to provide a glimpse into the subject of relationship-building between NOCs and Governments.

The samples were as follows:

Six National Olympic Committees (NOCs), two Government Bodies, and two Partners. In the NOCs sample, there were interviewed: 2 Presidents, 3 Secretaries-General, and 1 Chief Executive Officer.

Under Government Bodies, 2 Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) were interviewed, and under Partners, there was 1 CEO and 1 Programme Manager.

The study chose to select only a triangulated sample to elicit a multiple-perspective response. The 6 NOCs comprise almost one-third of Oceania NOCs and the other two sets of interviewees could add value to the study by providing input in the first such exercise focused on Oceania.

### **Primary data collection - (A) Interviews**

The data was drawn from primary sources through a combination of direct interviews in-person, online via Zoom, and through email correspondence. The interviews involved triangulation of sources to increase the integrity of results. There were two layers of triangulation used: firstly, through triangulation of informants (interviewees) so that three angles or perspectives were attained, to gain specific insights from each stakeholder; and also, to permit a reading of commonalities to inform the design and content of the proposed toolkit.

### **Coding**

Since the research employs a qualitative approach and method with the one-on-one interview taking precedence for primary data collection, the project used coding to analyse the data. Coding was an appropriate method to analyse the interview feedback from NOCs, Partners, and Government authorities – from the one-on-one interviews.

Miles and Huberman (1994) state that ‘codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning’ and that ‘codes are usually attached to chunks of varying size: words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs’.

The primary data from interviews were analysed using the following process:

### **1. Data preparation and organisation**

All video interviews were stripped into audio format and put through Otter software for transcribing. Given differences in culture, language and pronunciation, Oceania faces the challenge of the Otter software not identifying words and names so editing the transcripts through multiple reruns of the video and audio interviews followed.

### **2. Review and exploration of the data**

Multiple readings were conducted over a period of time so as to ensure mental breaks and fresh eyes necessary to gain a clear and objective reading in order to take notes on emerging ideas and themes – critical to the task of identifying thematic areas.

### **3. Creation of initial codes**

An important note is that a combination of inductive and deductive coding (Saldana 2009) was used in analysis through coding. Deductive coding was used in that interview questions contained several themes to emerge thoughts and opinions in areas such as relationship-building and partnership. The remainder were drawn out through inductive coding as the data spoke for itself through themes that emerged.

### **4. Review of codes and revision of themes**

Systematic and repeated readings led to re-clustering of phrases, sentences, and paragraphs into even narrower selections which are presented next.

### **5. Presentation of cohesive themes**

The final themes which are cohesive and have successfully umbrella-ed or presented overarching roofs for the comprehensive data are:

- a. Governance<sup>26</sup>
- b. Communication<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> In this context, referring to the proper running of NOCs and NFs through proper legal registration, legal documentation (Charter, Constitution) a board, elections, annual meeting and reporting to national law and IOC compliance requirements.

<sup>27</sup> In this context, referring to digital and non-digital communications but championing in-person interaction and engagement.

- c. Finance<sup>28</sup>
- d. Relationship-building Toolkit (the need and components).<sup>29</sup>

The summary results are presented in the following series of tables:

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<sup>28</sup> In this context, the access to, funding sources and acumen to achieve these for projects and programmes.

<sup>29</sup> Relationship-building in this context refers to soft approaches through the use of dialogue, and consensus to manage complex relationships; focused on events, projects and functions such as social gathering to know leaders of institutions and grow credibility through information sharing and media stories, etc.

Figure 9: Summary of items from primary interviews with NOCs

## NOCs

ENTITY	STATUS WITH GOVT.	COMMUNICATION	GOVERNANCE	FINANCE	OTHER
<b>AOC (MC)</b>	<p>Have a good relationship. We advocate for increased investment in sport. Have a good relationship with Federal, State and Territory governments. Four out of six State Governments are partners with us and leashed to educational programmes in schools.</p> <p>Government ministers like sport because of visibility opportunities but challenge remains with AOC to deepen appreciation of sport as linked to education and health outcomes.</p> <p>Need for government to do research, support athletes as distinct from sport (as individuals). AOC has relationship with AIS and programmes for remote and indigenous communities.</p> <p>No MOU.</p>	<p>Spend a lot of time talking to Ministers and their staff. Put a lot of effort into building that relationship.</p> <p>No schedule, talk when need arises, and tends to be before budget time through meetings. Spend a couple of days in Canberra. Meet new ministers, start building new relationships, meet ministers for foreign affairs and trade plus for Pacific (this is aside from for sport). Have to meet in person before phone can be used when the need arises.</p> <p>Always keep them informed. Invite them to events and functions. Meet both Government and Shadow Ministers (Opposition) as well. Meet crossbenchers and independents also. Important to have the balance.</p> <p>AOC established Parliamentary Friendship Group** and Olympians engage with all levels and political representatives.</p>	<p>Autonomy is not an issue. Government runs sport but its agencies and departments need to respect that sports knows what they are doing. So the issue is both autonomy and respect but dysfunctional sport organisations cannot get that respect. Respect has to be earned.</p>	<p>Advocacy for increased investment in sport.</p> <p>There isn't a need for much funding but central services that could be shared by all sport would be ideal.</p> <p>AOC receives zero funding from Government. Key part of being separate.</p>	<p>Government needs to understand Sport Diplomacy.</p>
<b>CISNOC (OL)</b>	<p>We have a very good relationship with Government in the Cook islands and I honestly cannot see anyway that it could be improved. However, relationships always need to be respected and not taken for granted. We need to work on building the relationship all the time. I believe the foundation for any relationship is trust. We have created, supported, and delivered multiple events and programmes over the past four years. We have worked with our Government Ministries across the board to assist and support their programmes. Simply, we became relevant. We were charged with the responsibility of developing the National Sports &amp; Physical Activity Policy for Government. We have acted as a defacto Ministry of sport. In short CISNOC has created an active, engaged country through its endeavours.</p>	<p>Our level of interaction and connectivity with Government has assisted us in becoming the organisation we are. We have cultivated relationships with every Head of Ministry, all cabinet Ministers (in particular the Minister of Sport and the Prime Minister), and most members of parliament on both sides of the house. We have meetings with the Minister of Sport as part of his portfolio meetings. I am also able to contact him and his office whenever the need arises. We are able to arrange meetings with the Prime Minister as required. We have ongoing meetings and regular contact with the Secretaries of Health and Education. This keeps us connected. These individuals can fully appreciate the power of sport as a vehicle to drive their agenda. Regular updates with the Secretary of Internal Affairs who holds the Youth portfolio occur. I am able to talk to any Heads of Ministry of office or Ministerial office and talk to them. These connections and relationships are vital.</p>	<p>We are not always going to agree but the nature of our relationships allow us to disagree. However, as Cook Islanders we will always be respectful, honest, transparent with each other and act with integrity. Our government officials and members respect this and expect this. They accept we are apolitical; they accept we have to maintain our neutrality but in return expect us to be loyal and fulfil our obligations to the country. We expect to be held accountable to the country but also be respected for being true to our values. We are in a partnership with our members and government. Daily focus on this notion will keep the relationships and cooperation growing.</p>	<p>We are grateful for everything our government does for us and any return is positive. In an ideal world, and thanks to COVID this is difficult, funding would be increased but this is taxpayer's money and we have to ensure that any funds received are effectively used.</p>	<p>The most notable sport for development programme we have inspired has been the most focussed sporting event as well – the Cook Islands Games. Sport is a major contributor to economic and social development. Its role is recognized by the Cook Islands Government with Ministers and Senior officials commenting on the contribution sports make to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals, and communities, as well as to health, education, and social inclusion objectives. The Cook Islands Games represents a celebration of our inclusive society. It bridges community participation and sports excellence and offers Cook Islanders from all ages and islands the opportunity to be part of the Cook Islands exciting sporting landscape.</p>

ENTITY	STATUS WITH GOVT.	COMMUNICATION	GOVERNANCE	FINANCE	OTHER
<b>GNOC (RB)</b>	<p>Complicated relationship based on personal politics. Current government removed support to NOC and is even interfering to assist other parties in taking over the NOC. NOC made decision in 1991 to break away ties with government and GNOC is now independent. Total financial independence has been critical to maintaining autonomy. All Team Guam outings are NOC-funded completely so there are no strings attached to anything.</p> <p>Sport does not come under any government entity. Some sports such as softball, baseball, and sometimes swimming, come under Parks and Recreation but there is no support and no staff to run programmes (no capacity).</p> <p>**MOU exists but cannot be located. But from a long time ago.</p>	<p>Currently, none.</p> <p>Conversations are open. Current Governments presents a good opportunity for engagement.</p> <p>In toolkit, outline the autonomy of sport and also the interest of Governments to step in - what they can and cannot do. Encourage government to always step in and help sports communities, not deter them.</p> <p>Repeat history-sharing at meeting tables as a reminder and as an important item for new and young people coming into national sporting arena.</p>	<p>Full autonomy due to complete financial independence.</p> <p>Zero government interference.</p> <p>Conflicts of interest are declared and managed.</p> <p>If takes this, Constitutional reviews need to be done to manage Government interference - GNOC had to.</p>	<p>NOC is financially independent.</p>	<p>Government owns all land where sporting facilities exist. On Guam, most sporting facilities are in schools and colleges, excellent standards and consitions so there is no need for building new facilities.</p>
<b>NZOC (LD &amp; NN)</b>	<p>Positive and strong. NZOC works hard on its relationship with Government - with Minister for Sport, Sport NZ, and HP tripartite.</p> <p>Collaboration Agreement with Government - MOU in place, as a result the outputs are better because there is a clear understanding of our roles and respect for each other.</p> <p>Mindful of changes in govt. so across-government relationship is important - both governments and portfolio changes within governments are important to look at and relationships built for that purpose. Very active in education programmes in schools. Transgender theme positive and still being navigated for rugby because of World Rugby stance.</p> <p>Been in board 10 years+ now. Relationship with Government has improved dramatically over last 3 years. Government has been supportive.</p> <p>Ministers seen the benefits of having a strong Olympic Team. There was tension around funding and funding The NZ Team but now covered in MOU. Challenge is in government seeing sport diplomacy as an important opportunity to recognise and invest in.</p>	<p>Have different views but respect each other. Lesson learned is to rely on relationship-building and open communication channels.</p> <p>Focus on face to face communications, direct dial telephone numbers, first name basis, and NZOC senior leaders have positive relationship with Government but operational level are to be included in public-facing communications. NOC and Govt meet at quarterly scheduled meetings.</p> <p>Meetings with Minister is twice a year on a formal basis and meet at all events - more than 10 events informally in 2022 at sporting events.</p> <p>Critical to the toolkit is not only engage with the Sport ministry but across all government with ministries or departments such as finance, education, health, foreign affairs, internal affairs - direct relationships. Go wider because Pacific NOCs receive substantial funding from their governments.</p> <p>Important to have measuring and reporting to show government they can trust our organisation, so they can report back to taxpayers of the country because it's the taxpayers' money that Government uses to fund sport, so it is important to closing that circle.</p>	<p>Autonomous.</p>	<p>In the Quad, under 10% comes from Government. Reliance is on Corporate Partners, increasing Philanthropies, and Games Income of about 20%. Changes in govt does not affect relationship but NZOC needs financial sustainability. Autonomy remains important.</p>	<p>Facilities are managed by councils and NZOC gives them space on that matter.</p> <p>Transgender theme positive and still being navigated for rugby because of World Rugby stance.</p> <p>Sport important in education and health sectors and in NZ there is growth toward trade and enterprise, foreign affairs, tourism, NZ Story, and NZ education.</p>

ENTITY	STATUS WITH GOVT.	COMMUNICATION	GOVERNANCE	FINANCE	OTHER
PNGOC (AR & AL)	<p>Described as one of cooperation, alignment, support, and mutual respect and benefit. Strengthened through signing of MoU between PNGOC and PNG Sports Foundation. Collaborate on Anti-Doping, Sports Dispute Tribunal, Sport Development and hosting international sporting events in-country. Mutual areas of cooperation outlined in the MoU (reviewed and addressed in October of each year) PNGOC sits in PNG Sports Foundation.</p> <p>Important to write letters, send reports, make visits to Government ministries and bodies. There are no clear guidelines or tools available to aid NOCs and Governments in their relationship with each other so a toolkit would be very useful.</p>	<p><b>Lack of communication:</b> At times there can be a disconnect between the PNG Sports Foundation and the office of the Sports Minister and the NOC which results in last minute requests for submissions. In the country the current Sports Minister is also responsible for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology and is often pressed for time and competing priorities and this can impact our submissions, priorities, events and missed opportunities for collaboration.</p> <p>In Pacific islands, communication takes place by relationships, kinship, and word of mouth. Through family ties, friendships, connections through school and work also.</p>	<p><b>Governance:</b> Whilst we are transparent in the use of funds at the Papua New Guinea Olympic Committee, it would be ideal to know the budgeting process at the government level to know what the PNG Sports Foundation (government agency of sports) is being allocated on an annual basis, and how much of that is to be allocated to the Papua New Guinea Olympic Committee.</p>	<p><b>Funding:</b> One of the biggest challenges facing the Papua New Guinea Olympic Committee is securing funding from the government to support our preparation and participation in our upcoming multi-sport events for a calendar year. The government may have competing priorities and limited resources, making it difficult to provide sufficient funding to the government branch of sports and the Papua New Guinea Olympic Committee. This results in little to no funding in any calendar year.</p>	<p><b>Political interference:</b> There is the issue of Members of Parliament being reshuffled and being assigned to different portfolios which is the theme under the current Prime Ministers regime. This then involves an orientation with whomever is assigned as the Sports Minister, resubmitting government proposals and budgets. The National Elections is also a factor for consideration as this can impact who stays on as Sports Minister, and whether that individual understands the sports movement in the country and how to progress it under the National Sports Policy.</p>
NOC SI (MR & MA)	<p>MOU between NOC, NSC and ONOC. Second MOU with NIS yet to come through. Third one with NOC and Sports Council also in development.</p> <p>National Sports Policy has been passed. Sport sits under the Ministry of Home Affairs. All SOL2023 facilities will be moved to NSC after Games, some to other institutions; appears disconnected and not well thought-through. Sustainance of facilities sits with the Government.</p> <p>Relationship between NOC and Government has not been good because of the nature of politics in SI. But current government has a good relationship. **SOL2023 bid in 2016 received bipartisan support from government so that was good.</p> <p>Government support comes through their procurement system which is slow and affects sports and games deeply.</p>	<p>Communication has been very important. Understanding of legislation was critical to building relationship. Sit together in a room and talk. Communicate and discuss openly on roles, boundaries, and responsibilities. Cannot move forward until these are communicated and understood.</p> <p>NOC is represented in NSC and the Council bridges to Government. Monthly meetings so the updates to Government are regular.</p> <p>There remain challenges because we plan but personalities and attitudes of people matter a great deal. MOU is good because it divides responsibility clearly - communicates it.</p> <p>Important to have communication and resolution of conflict in the toolkit as these affect us a lot. Some conflict is not with leaders but with operational teams, bureaucrats. NOC uses direct in-person communication to resolve conflicts. NOC has also used the strategy of elevating matters to higher authorities - for regional and international bodies to write directly to Government to address the issue within its system. Communication has had to be multi-fold in approach.</p> <p>NOC wants Government to secure a radio sport (and develop a radio app) that focuses on sports in communities, sharing information etc to bring equity to sport, at least in the aspect of access to information and knowledge.</p> <p>Nothing is more important than regular face-to-face meetings between the NOC and Government in order to maintain the relationship.</p> <p>"This is the only thing they (Government) wants from sports is to inform them of the various activities that are happening in sports in the country. Sometimes when information is provided, it is not enough [incomplete]. They come back and say: 'we provided the support but there is not enough information coming through and there is not enough update on the project.' So regular communication and updates to Government is very important." (MR).</p> <p>Current communications through the Games Organising Committee is good but this may discontinue after Games.</p>	<p>Transparency as an item important and this is achieved by regular communication updates.</p>	<p>Funding support is event-based. Sits between 30% - 60% in recent years. In Games years when it involves One Team Solomons it goes up to 60% and in non-games years it is at 30% support.</p> <p>Government provides direct cash incentives for athletes who medal at Games. Only one has received this to date.</p>	<p>Collaboration is centred around community sports in various provinces and SI is scattered. NOC wants to transfer the responsibility of provincial and community sport development to Government (as it sits with Games SOL2023 right now) and with NOC. Government is promoting sport and building facilities but people in islands need access to same level support as those in Honiara.</p>

Figure 10: Summary of items from primary interviews with Government Bodies

ENTITY	STATUS WITH NOC	COMMUNICATION	GOVERNANCE	FINANCE
<b>FNCS (PM)</b>	<p>Not as good as we would like it to be. Partnership should be about working together, not against, each other. Biggest issue is on the meaning of autonomy and how it works. Government's biggest challenge is on the state of governance in NFs (which are members of the NOC).</p>	<p>Existing miscommunication on the IOC expectation of autonomy which can be communicated and understood better.** [NOC can make a decision to include a govt rep on the Board and this would apply to the FNCS concern].</p> <p>FNCS believes in the absence of an MOU, the legislations or Acts under which sport operates communicates clear guidelines on roles and responsibilities. FNCS says it does not get invited to programmes and events unless they are a global observance.</p> <p>FNCS has made separate specific allocations to the Fiji NADO, Drug Free Sport Fiji (DFSF).</p> <p>Regular meetings used to occur but not since COVID-19 pandemic. Needs to be reactivated.</p> <p>Conflicts are resolved through mediation.</p>	<p>FNCS believes if government gives up to 70% of funding in some years, it should have a seat in the NOC Board to have oversight [through governance of NFs [which happens through the NOC].</p> <p>FNCS red flag is squared on governance matters at NF level in Fiji. It is sad that Fiji and other countries have not used the IOC Charter specification that says NOCs can invite government reps to sit in the Board.</p> <p>Conflicts of interest remain the biggest issue in sports governance and needs urgent addressing.</p>	<p>Up to 70% funding is given by Government in the years heavy investment needs to be made. Funding is annual and consistent. **Current 40% budget cut for sports will have impact.</p>
<b>NSC (AB)</b>	<p>MOU is critical because it will naturally arrive at the clearing of the issue of autonomy as NOCs can fall back on Government scrutiny or raising of issues of governance as Government interference or infringing on NOC autonomy.</p>	<p>The development of national sports policies, sports information databases, independent dispute resolution bodies, and independent bodies to address sports integrity, betting, sport manipulations, ethics (fraud), were important to achieving strong NFs, NOCs</p>	<p>Definition or some coverage of autonomy should be part of the toolkit when it is developed.</p>	

Figure 11: Summary of items from primary interviews with Partners

ENTITY	STATUS WITH NOCs	COMMUNICATION	GOVERNANCE	FINANCE
<p><b>B2032 Project (AM)</b></p> <p><b>Toolkit Inclusions (General)</b></p>	Important	<p>Under Relationship Management Must have Briefings and a Standard Presentation Kit</p> <p>Engaging with Cabinet Celebrating Success Collaboration</p> <p>Leveraging on government partnerships: their relationships with other entities. Team Fiji Campaigns; Lottery Launch; Direct and specific engagement.</p>	<p><b>Strategic Level:</b> collaboration on development of a National Sports Policy.</p>	<p><b>Budgeting and Financial Support</b> <b>Budget and Team Plan</b> to be completed with all partners collaboratively. Importance of building a business case. <b>Know the government process</b> and engage fully in it. <b>Undertake a staged approach</b> from NF-level all the way to funding authority.</p>
<p><b>PGC (AM)</b></p> <p><b>Specific to Games</b></p>	Important and needs formal frameworks to be managed well in order to produce desired outcomes	<p>Note that the timeline for PGs are between 7 - 9 years, from winning of bid to Games delivery. NOCs would be working with their government for longer prior to the bid.</p> <p>Communications is key to navigating changes in government. Relationship with Opposition Parties Ability to navigate political change Briefings to Parliament Visibility needs to be strategically managed** Focus on how NOCs can build formal relationships with their governments Critical to big and long-term engagements such as for Games hosting and other joint collaborations.</p>	<p><b>NOCs need to recognise the decade engagement</b> - length of time and the commitment to work during this period.</p>	

### **Primary data collection - (B) Focus Group**

There was also a simultaneous activity; the progressive collation of the RBT components in order to inform the design of the RBT Framework. This involved drafting of sections of the Toolkit to test structure and flow. There were two Focus Groups: one with Staff and one with Executive Board of the Fiji Association of Sport and National Olympic Committee (FASANOC). In the first Focus Group discussion, FASANOC Management and Staff provided the following feedback: the need for flow between sections; and while useful for NOC-Government relationship-building, could be applied in other organisations and contexts.

At the second Focus Group, Board Members provided the following feedback: the value of personal relationship and the human touch in organisational and institutional settings (response to slow, in-person products and interactions); the value of strategic communications that includes both digital and non-digital products and systems (response to the focus on in-person meetings, events, semi-social gatherings, and recognition of cultural mores to build respect and trust); and how the assessments, in demanding evidence of the existence of documents and strategies (locations online or hard copies) and demanding evidence of media, social media, website, and publications promoting NOC-Government relationship, set up a solid evidence-based repository NOCs could use to leverage Government and to build trust and credibility. The feedback on flow, and a scoring system for assessments have been addressed.

# Discussion

This section extrapolates on the Summary Results drawn from the previous section on Data Collection and Results. Taking each finding extracted through a critical reading of the Results Tables presented with short quote extracts, notes and summaries, this section discusses each and examines against the backdrop of NOCs working in a complex Oceania space to deliver sport, in some cases, from community to elite Olympic levels. Again, this puts into perspective the need NOCs have, to successfully navigate the very small spaces which they share with Government.

## **The status of National Olympics Committees (NOCs) with Governments**

### **NOC1 is financially-independent, autonomous, and engaged with Government.**

NOC1 reports a good relationship with Government with multiple, strategic avenues of communications, including being in direct phone contact with key ministers and senior staff, meetings before budget time, and keeping Government informed of NOC activities and sport in general. It uses a whole-of-government approach by engaging with both Government and Shadow Ministers, Opposition, backbenchers and Independents. It is active in a Parliamentary Friendship Group, encourages Olympians to participate in Government initiatives such as education and community events, advocates for sport, and challenges Government to consider sport research, sport diplomacy, and being more inclusive of remote and indigenous communities.

This demonstrates that NOCs that are autonomous and financially sustainable can still have an excellent working relationship with Governments. As NOC1 shows, being autonomous means being able to lead advocacy for sport and for other sporting bodies and athletes that may not have a stronger voice. The case also shows that being autonomous can still mean engaging at a deep level with Government through concerted and deliberate effort, and for the wider sporting sector in countries.

### **NOC2 | Acting as a default Ministry of Sport.**

NOC2 receives Government funding, reports a seamless relationship with Government and says it operates as a default Ministry of Sport for the country. It developed the National Sports

and Physical Activity Policy and reports the NOC-Government relationship cannot be improved in any way given the depth of interaction. It communicates directly with the Prime Minister and all Government Ministries. Both parties have delivered joint events and programmes. NOC2 reports being apolitical and neutral but Government expects it to be ‘loyal and fulfil obligations to the country’.

NOCs emerging from recently independent nations such as those in the Pacific face the conundrum of being hosted, then separating from Government. For a case such as this, it will be useful to explore the possibility of separation and becoming autonomous. In this case, Macnamara’s (2016) framework for listening could be applied. The four elements of the architecture of listening: culture of openness that seeks out input from stakeholders; a willingness to listen; organisational adoption of policies that allow for listening; and lastly, structures and processes for large-scale listening up should be practiced. For this reason, a customization of this framework will be incorporated into the Toolkit as a resource.

### **NOC3 | Self-sufficient, autonomous, and zero engagement with Government.**

NOC3 is financially independent and reports a complicated relationship with Government. Initially established and hosted by Government, it has broken ties. NOC3 reports Government cut funding and attempted to take over the NOC through other parties. It reports conversations with current Government open but none have occurred. NOC3 declares full autonomy due to financial independence, and conflicts of interest are declared and managed. Constitution had to be reviewed to achieve current status. There is no sport ministry or department in the country. Most sport facilities exist in schools and colleges. Government own all the land sport facilities are on.

The pressing concern in this case, is that the country has no Ministry of Sport, and that Government owns all land where sports facilities are built. There could be many NOCs who have variations of such a relationship where personality and histories of conflict have led to historical impasse. This is where Kent and Taylor’s eleven features of dialogic engagement can become useful. In these situations, using the eleven features of dialogic engagement would be most appropriate: treating others as valued; interactions based in dialogue and turn-taking; repeated interactions; relationship based; trust; participants given autonomy to reach a flow or engaged state; activities mutually satisfying; collaboration may be initiated by either party; no agenda or manipulation; co-orientative; and rhetorical.

### **Position of Government Bodies on NOCs and other NSOs**

This section summarises the results from Government, which were in the form of Government Bodies (GB). The study chose to interview Government as the other party with NOCs as a form of triangulation of sources to increase data/information integrity.

### **GB1 and GB2 | Autonomy of National Sporting Organisations (NSOs)<sup>30</sup> to be defined in the proposed Relationship-Building Toolkit to avoid miscommunication and potential abuse of the ethical principle.**

GB1 and GB2 share similar ideas and concerns which are documented in a cluster. Both say that NSOs conveniently cite their autonomous position when they label Government scrutiny into their Governance as interference. They state Governance as the biggest issue in NFs and NOCs. Conflict of interest is a pressing concern and the lack of NOC scrutiny on member NFs. Both GBs also say a formal agreement such as an MOU is critically important for establishing boundaries, and demarcating roles and responsibilities.

### **GB1 and GB2 | National laws are substitute for MOU and Government Bodies should be given space in NSO Boards to monitor beneficiaries with Governance challenges.**

They state that in the absence of MOU, legal acts and legislation provide guidance on ethical standards; and that when public funds are expended on sport and NSOs, by up to between sixty to seventy percent, then it is only fair that NOC Executive Boards consider a seat for Government, particularly for monitoring NFs facing challenges in Governance.

### **GB1 and GB2 | National sport policies, data, and independent bodies to monitor the sector are common goals requiring cooperation from multiple stakeholders.**

GB1 and GB2 highlight the importance of national sport policies and sports information databases as common goals with NOCs and other Partners. They also iterate the critical importance of establishing and managing well, independent sporting bodies to address sport integrity, betting, sport manipulation, disputes, and ethical standards.

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<sup>30</sup> NSOs in this study are the NOCs and NFs which are being referred to in this context.

## **The position of Partners (P) on the relationship-building between NOCs and Governments (*Including their interest*)**

### **P1 and P2 | The Relationship-Building Toolkit (RBT) for NOCs is a need in Oceania, particularly, for NOCs that depend on their Governments for significant resources.**

Partners agreed the RBT is a need for NOCs in Oceania and will allow them to diversify their resource mobilisation efforts. It was also deemed important because NOCs also functioned as Pacific Games Associations (PGAs) and they worked in partnership with Governments to bid to host the Pacific Games (PG) and Pacific Mini Games (PMG).

### **P1 | The RBT should have a strong focus on Communications.**

P1 and P2 think it ideal to have sections on relationship management, how to do briefings, compiling standard NOC presentation kits, guide to cabinet engagement, guide to joint campaigns and lotteries, how to build a business case for engagement, budget preparation. It was also important for NOCs to know the Government machinery and undertake a staged approach.

## **Revisiting the Research Question**

This study began with the primary question: How can NOCs in Oceania build and maintain harmonious relations with their Government? In an extended way, this study offers a multi-layered answer through four secondary questions and their responses as progressively built through this research. The short response is that NOCs in Oceania can build relationships with their Governments using the soft skills of relationship-building which features soft skills. The concept of relationship-building and requisite soft skills take shape from the concept of dialogic engagement where two organisations engage for mutual growth, and engage from a position of humility and patience, permitting organisational growth and maturity. These are not possible under current communications models but will require the Toolkit to provide the steps, guidance, and templates to support NOCs hoping to build relationship with Government.

Attached to this is the knowledge that there is merit in the design and use of a Relationship-Building Toolkit (RBT) Toolkit and this study presents a Framework which outlines the sections relevant to the Oceania context. It also presents a few sections to demonstrate what such a Toolkit should include. However, the full completion of the Toolkit will remain an item in the Recommendation section for prioritisation and action in 2024.

## **Responses to the four secondary questions as a pathway to relationship-building and its Toolkit**

### **Secondary Question 1: What is the status of NOC-Government relationships in Oceania?**

This study has shown that NOCs in Oceania have varied relationships with their Governments, and that while all report it as largely positive or good, closer scrutiny shows there is more structure, strategic intent, maturity, and planning and resourcing required to achieve success.

There is a range from NOCs having full financial independence and autonomy still managing a close relationship with Government and lobbying for the sector as a whole, to NOCs that have full financial independence and autonomy and zero engagement with Government. For the latter, there is no sport ministry in the country. Then there is another ground where NOCs act as default Ministry of Sport for a country and there is the possibility of lack of autonomy given the requirement to be loyal to Government. The issue of Governance remains a challenge for most Oceania NOCs despite the tools and support provided by the IOC.

Autonomy is a tenuous issue, judging from the Government Bodies' comments on NOCs practice of citing it when facing scrutiny from Government. The toolkit does offer some standard as its early section is a series of assessments requiring NOCs to provide concrete evidence of documents, strategies and reports with links and locations that are verifiable. This layer may enable executives to take firmer steps in delivering on their oversight and due diligence roles. It also acts as a safeguard from Government or any other external or internal scrutiny.

### **Secondary Question 2: Can relationship building with its requisite 'soft' skills and approaches be strategically used by NOCs to strengthen their relationship with Governments?**

This study has answered in the affirmative. Through the spectrum of NOCs, Government Bodies and Partners consulted, the response was an encouraging 'Yes' – it was even more encouraging to see Government Bodies and Partners also give a nod with details to recommend components that would assist both parties. This has been discussed earlier in this section.

**Secondary Questions 3 and 4: What kind of a relationship-building tool can be developed as a support to NOCs? What are some important areas or components that any such tool should include?**

This study has used overall feedback and recommendations, and also the Literature Review to advance a Relationship-Building Toolkit Framework which it presents here. It presents an outline of section and what each comprises. This is presented as a first-step toward finalisation and use which will come in the next section on Recommendations.

The primary approach and design of the Toolkit will draw heavily from the theory and practice of dialogic engagement where mutual organisational growth occurs; however, it is one party that must lead the process. Given the Toolkit is for NOCs (in initial stage), the NOCs will be in the lead role to learn about, practice internally, and then reach out using the principles and features of dialogic engagement.

Sections 3-7 of the Toolkit are internal assessments and planning for relationship-building and they draw from dialogic engagement.

When Macnamara's (2016) four elements of the architecture of listening are laid as groundwork for the toolkit, it will show as follows:

1. Culture of openness that seeks out input from stakeholders:  
Making constitution, charter, annual reports, audited accounts, games reports, special project reports publicly available through the NOC website and through hard copy delivery to Government and other stakeholders.
2. A willingness to listen:  
Creating physical in-person events and spaces encouraging Government bodies to engage in meetings and public or semi-public events where dialogue can occur through panel discussions, keynote speakers and Q&As, and engaging with athletes and NFs.
3. Organisational adoption of policies that allow for listening:  
These are policies that allow organisational listening both externally and internally. Some examples include providing emails and comments sections in NOC websites for public feedback, active social media platforms that both share information, and solicit

comments. Any sharing of reports or publications should include a feedback component to permit responses from Government and others.

#### 4. Structures and processes for large-scale listening up

Given dialogic engagement and relationship-building pays attention to details of consultation, conversation, and feedback for mutual support and growth, creating a “listening” will champion sharing of information, communications, and knowledge in the form of data, case studies, media stories, features, interviews, thematic day observations, workshops, seminars, field visits, collaborative planning, harmonisation of calendars, and celebrating success and achievements.

However, for ONOC and its member NOCs, the ultimate show of dialogic engagement with Governments of the Pacific Islands, would be to prepare a Relationship-Building Toolkit at regional level with its partner, the Pacific Islands Forum (for Pacific Leaders) as a companion to the RB Toolkit for NOCs.

A core part of the design of the framework comes from the FASANOC Focus Groups which sought clearer flow between the proposed toolkit sections and on how it differs from existing IOC tools such as UMAP and the BUPGG. However, a key difference in the assessment components of the Relationship Building Toolkit Framework is that the proposed toolkit seeks evidence in for each item, seeks commitment in time and personnel (exact name) of person who will locate or upload identified gap items over a specific duration. It will therefore challenge NOCs, NFs or any user to make concrete and evidence-based readings of the state of its governance, management, operations, partnership, and relationship with their Government. This will lead to specific actions that build upon each other to begin the use of soft skills and approaches that is ‘relationship building’.

**Figure 12: Relationship-Building Toolkit (RBT) Framework for NOCs and their Governments**

This RBT Framework is designed on the principles, features and elements of Dialogic Engagement.

#	Section	Component	Rationale and Notes
1	<b>Preliminary and Background</b>	What is the toolkit and whom it is for.	Establishes the need for the toolkit and its place in the Olympic Movement, esp. in Oceania.
2	<b>Autonomy and Independence of NOCs</b>	The IOC Charter and linkages.	Establishes context.
3.	<b>NOC-Self Assessment – Documentation</b>	Existing strategic, operational and programme documents.	Establishes credibility as it will demonstrate existence of strategies and plans plus their periodic mandatory reporting.  ** RAT, UMAP, and BUPGG link these with only change being the need for material evidence to confirm completions, use and reporting.  Gap area tools provided in Resources Section.
4.	<b>NOC Self-Assessment - Communications</b>	Existing strategies, plans, and periodic reports plus all digital products (website, social media, etc.).	Provides evidence of relationship or lack of, between NOCs and Government plus gap areas for action.  Gap area tools provided in Resources Section.
5.	<b>Assessment of Government</b>	Existing government policies, strategies, plans and periodic reports, including communication and media products.	To measure engagement with NOCs and the National Federations.  Gap area tools provided in Resources Section.
6.	<b>Prioritisation</b>	List of gaps and needs plus their levels of urgency by the NOC.	Gap area tools provided in Resources Section.
7.	<b>Action Plan</b>	Plan of Action to build relationship with Government.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specific goals</li> <li>- Timelines</li> <li>- Capacity Resources</li> <li>- Financial Resources</li> <li>- Resource Mobilisation</li> <li>- Monitoring, Evaluation, learning and Adaptation</li> </ul>	This can then be included into existing Strategic, Operational, and or Annual plans to facilitate Resource Mobilisation.  Gap area tools provided in the Resources Section.
8.	<b>Resources</b>	<b>How To</b> (sources and templates, including links to partner or Open Access guides).  How to:	These tools and guides to be signposted from inside the toolkit text per section.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plan a meeting.</li> <li>- Take notes in a meeting.</li> <li>- Write effective emails.</li> <li>- Improve conversational skills.</li> <li>- Improve telephone etiquette.</li> <li>- Write a press release highlighting an NOC and government partnership.</li> <li>- Create a Communications and Media Plan to highlight an NOC and Government relationship.</li> <li>- Plan and implement joint Communications between NOCs and Governments</li> <li>- Create a newsletter.</li> <li>- Measure the performance of newsletters and other communications products.</li> <li>- Organise a field or site visit.</li> <li>- Contribute effectively to a national budgetary process.</li> <li>- Lobby for sports at community or national level.</li> <li>- Conduct effective joint strategic planning or reciprocal reviews.</li> <li>- Conduct joint data collection, analyses, and sharing.</li> <li>- Plan and conduct joint workshops and training events.</li> <li>- Have difficult conversations.</li> <li>- Manage conflict between NOCs and Governments.</li> <li>- Create common goals for shared outcomes.</li> <li>- Lobby Government for tax concessions in the sporting sector.</li> <li>- Position NOCs and sport in National Health, Education,</li> </ul>	
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		<p>Environment, Climate, and other SDGs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Manage joint monitoring, evaluation, learning and adaptation (between NOCs and Governments).</li> <li>- Improve NOC relationship and harmony with National Federations for national lobby and advocacy.</li> </ul>	
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## Recommendations

### POLICY

Priority	Recommendation	Action	Lead	Resources	Timescales	Budget	Critical success factors
1	<p>Policy Implementation.</p> <p>ONOC Articles of Association, 3. Objects, 3.1. (r): <i>To do all such other acts and things incidental to the attainment of these objectives, including cooperation with private or <b>government organisations</b> providing that ONOC will never associate itself with any activity or undertaking which would be in conflict with the principles of the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Charter.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Revise ONOC Articles of Association to strengthen language by separating private and government organisations.</li> <li>● Recognise and advocate for the implementation of revised Article 3.1 (r) at Board level.</li> <li>● Table implementation of Article as an urgent agenda item at the Board level, to enable resourcing for 2024.</li> </ul> <p><i>*ONOC Executive has a minimum of two meetings every year, 1 in Q1 and 1 in Q4.</i></p>	ONOC Executive Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Time</li> <li>● Legal Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Q4, 2023</li> <li>● Q4, 2023</li> <li>● Q4, 2023</li> </ul>	USD 5000	Board commitment

### MANAGEMENT

Priority	Recommendation	Action	Lead	Resources	Timescales	Budget	Critical success factors
1	That ONOC play a more active role in encouraging its NOCs to build or strengthen relationships with its respective Governments.	Recognise and advocate for the implementation of revised Article 3.1 (r) at the Annual General Assembly.	ONOC Secretary General	Travel expenses (2 x 17 NOC Leaders 2 x 17 Government Reps)	● Q1, 2024 (March)	USD 100,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1-day workshop prior to the Annual General Assembly</li> <li>● Agenda item on the 2024 ONOC Annual General Assembly</li> </ul>

Priority	Recommendation	Action	Lead	Resources	Timescales	Budget	Critical success factors
2	That ONOC finalises the APEX Relationship Building Toolkit (RBT).	Pilot the toolkit in 3 Oceania countries, through OSEP.  Scope available Toolkit resources with existing partners	Chief Sport Education Programme Officer	Travel Expenses (KIR, SAM, and SOL)	● Q3 – Q4, 2023	USD 20,000	● Commitment from NOCs for NOC Visit and towards pilot exercise
3	That ONOC makes a regional case to Olympic Solidarity, strengthening NOC Services.	Seek <i>Special Projects</i> funding from Olympic Solidarity for the digitalization of the APEX Relationship Building Toolkit (RBT).  Deliver digitalised version through the ONOC Learning Management System.	ONOC Secretary General	Funding for digitalization of APEX Relationship Building Toolkit (RBT)	● 2024	USD 100,000	● World Programmes Special Projects funding. ● Develop non-digital APEX Relationship Building Toolkit by Q4, 2023
4	That OSEP Regional Master Educators (RMEs) deliver training on the effective use of the APEX Relationship Building Toolkit at national level.	Train OSEP RMEs to deliver training at the annual OSEP RME Workshop.	Chief Sport Education Programme Officer	OSEP RME Training costs	● 2024	USD 40,000	● Funding for Annual OSEP RME Training
5	That OSEP develops a Micro-Qualification on relationship building, during the term of the MoU, 2021 – 2025, with the Pacific Community.	Approval of 2024 OSEP activities and budget by ONOC Education Commission.  Select ONOC Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) to develop the Micro-Qualification.	Chief Sport Education Programme Officer	Travel Expenses (ONOC Sport IAC Members, SPC Rep, OSEP Staff)	● 2024	USD 50,000	● ONOC Sport Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) Expertise ● Stakeholder endorsement of the micro-qualification ● Uptake of micro-qualification by Training Providers
6	That the ONOC Communications Department be resourced to undertake communication activities around this area. Relationship Building should sit with ONOC Communications.	Budget allocation for ONOC Communications department.	The ONOC Executive Board	Budget	● 2024	USD 200,000	● Approval by the ONOC Executive at its meeting in Q4, 2024.

Priority	Recommendation	Action	Lead	Resources	Timescales	Budget	Critical success factors
7.	The ONOC Management activates the ONOC Secretaries General Workshop recommendation that was adopted at the 2022 Annual General Assembly: that ONOC make a case for the funding of 1 Comms Officer in each Oceania NOC (Priority being the 15 Pacific Island Countries).	<p>Option 1: ONOC Management makes a business case for 1 X 15 Comms per NOC.</p> <p>Option 2: ONOC Executive Board to extract the required funding from ONOC Administration Grant.</p>	ONOC Secretary General	Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2024</li> </ul>	USD 300,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approval of Option 1 by Olympic Solidarity.</li> <li>Approval of Option 2 by ONOC Executive Board.</li> </ul>

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## Appendices

## Appendix 1: Interview Questions for NOCs

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Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. The purpose of this study is to collect in-depth, qualitative data from NOC officials about their experiences, perspectives, and beliefs. Your participation in this interview will involve answering a series of questions around 3 key areas, namely, **Relationship Management**, **Collaboration Initiatives – Sports Development** and **Collaboration Initiatives - Sports for Development**. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time. Please note that all data collected will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this research study. Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

### Research Topic:

#### **“Relationship Building between National Olympic Committees and Governments in Oceania”**

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### **A) Relationship Management**

1. How would you describe the current relationship between your NOC and the Government? Why do you think it is like this?
2. What do you see as the key challenges or issues that need to be addressed in order to improve relations between your NOC and the Government?
3. How have you previously engaged with the Government to promote sports and physical activity in your country? How did that work out?
4. How do you handle conflicts or disagreements that may arise between your NOC and the Government?
5. How do you think you can co-operate better with your government to support your work?
6. What kind of communication mechanisms are currently in place between your NOC and the Government? How effective are these? What could you do better?

#### **B) Collaboration Initiatives – Sports Development**

7. What kind of support or cooperation would you like to receive from the Government to help improve sports development in your country?

8. What kind of joint initiatives or projects have you worked on with the Government in the past? How have they gone? What could be improved?
9. How does your NOC measure the impact of sports programs on the communities it serves?

### **C) Collaboration Initiatives – Sports For Development**

10. Can you describe the role that your National Olympic Committee plays in promoting sports for development in your country?
11. Can you describe a successful sport for development program implemented by your NOC and its impact on the community? Does Government know about it?
12. Does your NOC collaborate with government agencies, to support sports for development initiatives? How is that working out? How can it be improved?

## Appendix 2: Interview Questions for Government

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Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. The purpose of this study is to collect in-depth, qualitative data from Government officials about their experiences, perspectives, and beliefs. Your participation in this interview will involve answering a series of questions around 3 key areas, namely, Relationship Management, Collaboration Initiatives – Sports Development and Collaboration Initiatives - Sports for Development. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time. Please note that all data collected will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this research study. Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

### Research Topic:

#### **“Relationship Building between National Olympic Committees and Governments in Oceania”**

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### **For Government Reps:**

##### **A) Relationship Management**

1. How would you describe the current relationship between your Government and the NOC in your country?
2. What do you see as the key challenges or issues that need to be addressed in order to improve relations between your NOC and the Government?
3. How have you previously engaged with the NOC to promote sports and physical activity in your country? Or how has the NOC engaged with you?
4. What kind of support or cooperation does the Government provide the NOC to help improve sports development in your country? Is this effective? How could this be better?
5. What kind of communication mechanisms are currently in place between your Government and the NOC? How effective are these? How could they be better?
6. How do you handle conflicts or disagreements that may arise between the Government and the NOC?

## **B) Collaboration Initiatives – Sports Development**

1. What role do you see sports and physical activity playing in your country's development, and how can the NOC help to achieve these goals?
2. What kind of joint initiatives or projects have you worked/are you working on with the NOC? How successful are these?
3. What kind of capacity building initiatives would be helpful/have been in improving relations/outcomes between the Government and the NOC?
4. How do you measure the success of your collaboration with the NOC?
5. NOCSI is hosting the 2023 Pacific Games. What all are you doing to ensure that your Government and NOCSI have a good working relationship so that you host the best Games ever? How is that coming along? What could be done better?

## **C) Collaboration Initiatives – Sports For Development**

1. Does your government value sports for development, i.e., recognising that sports can potentially be a tool for achieving social and economic development objectives? If yes, can you describe the role that your government plays in promoting sports for development in your country?
2. How does your government collaborate with the NOC in your country to support sports for development initiatives? How is that working out? How can this be improved?

## Appendix 3: Transcript - Owen Lewis, SG Cook Islands National Olympic Committee (CISNOC)

1. How would you describe the current relationship between your NOC and the Government? Why do you think it is like this?

I would describe the relationship between CISNOC and the Cook Islands Government as being a strong, respectful, working relationship built upon 5 key elements:

1. Trust
2. Connectivity
3. Respect
4. Relevancy
5. Being ourselves and our shared interest

In using the word Government I do not just mean our Prime Minister and his cabinet but look at it with a wider lens and include whole of government – Ministries, staff, the public service etc.

1. What do you see as the key challenges or issues that need to be addressed in order to improve relations between your NOC and the Government?

We have a very good relationship with Government in the Cook islands and I honestly cannot see anyway that it could be improved. However, relationships always need to be respected and not taken for granted. We need to work on building the relationship all the time. I believe the foundation for any relationship is trust. I don't think this is unique to the Cook Islands, but it does count for a great deal in the Cook Islands. Working with Government and its agencies (the public sector) has always been a challenge for many, but I believe our growth and "successes" in recent times has been borne out of complete trust in what we are doing, what we are saying, where we are going and the motivators of our actions. We have to remember this and work on this on a daily basis. You cannot park this concept and pick it up whenever you need to. Trust is a bi-lateral relationship—one trusts, and the other is the trusted. While the two are related, they're not the same thing. In the first instance we need to earn the right to be trusted and not expect/demand it. In earning that right we can then expect to reverse the relationship and also have trust in our stakeholders. This is ongoing. Positive relationships are also built on mutual respect. We have total respect for the Government and its leadership of the country and through our actions we believe we have earned their respect for our work. You can never rest on your laurels and so this is also an ongoing process.

2. How have you previously engaged with the Government to promote sports and physical activity in your country? How did that work out?

We have created, supported, and delivered multiple events and programmes over the past four years. We have worked with our Government Ministries across the board to assist and support their programmes. Simply, we became relevant. We were charged with the responsibility of developing the National Sports & Physical Activity Policy for Government. We have acted as a defacto Ministry of sport. In short CISNOC has created an active, engaged country through its endeavours. The most powerful tool created to date has been the Cook Islands Games. Out of respect we always strive for excellence. If we are going to do something we are going to do it to the best of our ability. We have the view that creating events of excellence and undertaking our work

with the pursuit of excellence is our way of giving back to the government and the community. Our image is raised and in turn their image is raised. We do things wholeheartedly and without expectation of a return. This has not only promoted sport but has engaged the nation in many other ways.

Amongst many other initiatives over the past three years we have achieved relevancy through:

- Assisting to fulfil the NSDP goals
  - Growing our development of sport and in particular the events that inspire and bring the “good feel” factor to our people (Youth Games, Annual Beach Games, Masters 6x6x6 Games, Cook Islands Games, MINistry Games)
  - Implementation of our Sport 4 Life programme, the Leaders walk
  - Supporting the NSF’s in their development and delivery of their programmes
  - Development of new international events and supporting the existing
  - Development of National sport & physical activity policy on behalf of government
  - Undertaking the beginnings of an economic impact study.
  - Supporting government agencies in their work and in doing so addressing the determinants of health by using sport as a vehicle
  - Research into the value of organised sport to health & wellbeing.
  - Facilitating the development of a National Sport & Physical Activity Policy
  - Hiring young, qualified Cook Islanders with energy and enthusiasm.
3. What kind of support or cooperation would you like to receive from the Government to help improve sports development in your country? We are grateful for everything our government does for us and any return is positive. In an ideal world, and thanks to COVID this is difficult, funding would be increased but this is taxpayer’s money and we have to ensure that any funds received are effectively used. In an ideal world our physical resources could be upgraded but that is also difficult during this time. One thing that would change the whole landscape and is also very manageable, but equally very difficult to create due to the pure machinery of government, is the ability to breakdown the silos and work as a whole of government. This would see a seismic shift in how work is done, how resources are maximised and how outcomes are derived. It would change the face of the nation.
4. How do you think you can cooperate better with your government to support your work’?

Our Minister, the Prime Minister, members of parliament, heads of Ministry, the Public Service Commissioner, officials in the public service are not only the figures that represent Government, but they are also all proud Cook Islanders. Our members are Cook Islanders. They are people with a common aspiration to be proud of their country and want the best for their fellow Cook Islanders. We recognise this and treat them as such.

We want relationships based on this principle and have worked hard to develop this. We are not always going to agree but the nature of our relationships allow us to disagree. However, as Cook Islanders we will always be respectful, honest, transparent with each other and act with integrity. Our government officials and members respect this and expect this. They accept we are apolitical; they accept we

have to maintain our neutrality but in return expect us to be loyal and fulfil our obligations to the country. We expect to be held accountable to the country but also be respected for being true to our values. We are in a partnership with our members and government. Daily focus on this notion will keep the relationships and cooperation growing.

5. What kind of communication mechanisms are currently in place between your NOC and the Government? How effective are these? What could you do better?  
Simply, we exist for our members. We have an open door policy and will attempt to assist & support them in all their work. Without our members we have no purpose and so communication has to be open and transparent at all times.

Our level of interaction and connectivity with Government has assisted us in becoming the organisation we are. We have cultivated relationships with every Head of Ministry, all cabinet Ministers (in particular the Minister of Sport and the Prime Minister), and most members of parliament on both sides of the house. We have meetings with the Minister of Sport as part of his portfolio meetings. I am also able to contact him and his office whenever the need arises. We are able to arrange meetings with the Prime Minister as required. We have ongoing meetings and regular contact with the Secretaries of Health and Education. This keeps us connected. These individuals can fully appreciate the power of sport as a vehicle to drive their agenda. Regular updates with the Secretary of Internal Affairs who holds the Youth portfolio occur. I am able to talk to any Heads of Ministry of office or Ministerial office and talk to them. These connections and relationships are vital.

In addition, in the development of our strategic plan in late 2018, we ensured that we were aligned with the Cook Islands National Development Plan (NSDP), the then Cook Islands National Youth Policy. Both these documents have now lapsed but we made sure that we were part of the reviews and consulted in the development of the new plans - The Cook Islands National Sustainable Development Agenda 2020+ and the Cook Islands National Youth Policy 2021-2026. This means that our work is also connected with the Government strategy documents

We are endeavouring to show all of government that sport can bring the nation together and traverse the whole of government. We created the MINistry Games 2021 bringing together all government departments in November 2021 for a Friday afternoon of competitive sport. This was well received and we are continuing this bi-monthly initiative in 2022. The Cook Islands Games 2020 & 2022 were events that truly inspired the nation and was a tonic during the early stages of the pandemic.

We will never turn down the opportunity to support our government and its Ministries. As an example, during our absence at the Tokyo Olympics 2020, the Ministry of Agriculture, and it is not often we have ever connected sport & Agriculture, held a school Market Day with the theme of “Growing a healthy sustainable future”. They sought our support to deliver this initiative and provide a message to our community to live a healthy lifestyle. Our troops that we left behind delivered as usual. They created activities and an information stall encouraging moving for better health. Initiatives like these connect us with Government and build the relationship and relevancy. As we said, we will never say no until such time that we cannot possibly do anything

6. What kind of joint initiatives or projects have you worked on with the Government in the past? How have they gone?

[See above](#)

7. How do you currently measure the success of your collaboration with the Government?

8. How do you handle conflicts or disagreements that may arise between your NOC and the Government?

[Maintaining professionalism, confidentiality and loyalty to the government of the day but creating the appropriate environments to question and voice concerns and staying true to our values – the Olympic Values - builds a respectful relationship!](#)

9. What kind of capacity building initiatives would be helpful in improving relations between your NOC and the Government?

[See above](#)

10. Can you describe the role that your National Olympic Committee plays in promoting sports for development in your country?

[See above](#)

11. Can you describe a successful sport for development program implemented by your NOC and its impact on the community?

[Several initiatives, but by no way all, are listed in question 2 above. However, and ironically, the most notable sport for development programme we have inspired has been the most focussed sporting event as well – the Cook Islands Games. Sport is a major contributor to economic and social development. Its role is recognized by the Cook Islands Government with Ministers and Senior officials commenting on the contribution sports make to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals, and communities, as well as to health, education, and social inclusion objectives. The Cook Islands Games represents a celebration of our inclusive society. It bridges community participation and sports excellence and offers Cook Islanders from all ages and islands the opportunity to be part of the Cook Islands exciting sporting landscape.](#)

[The latest iteration, Cook Islands Games 2022, saw 11 individual islands \(teams and athletes young and old\) compete against each other in 24 sports, with a trophy awarded to the overall champion Island, the Masters Champion, and the Youth Champion. This was the first time Youth participated formally in the Games. The Games not only present Cook Islanders with a chance to develop in sporting terms, but they also provide a medium for personal growth through learning about themselves, their ancestry and heritage and their unique island culture.](#)

[Games objectives include:](#)

- [● To promote Island pride: a celebration of sport; a celebration of our islands and our nation](#)
- [● To provide the country's athletes a competitive opportunity and an opportunity to pursue excellence and advance their sporting ambitions.](#)

- To provide athletes, competitive and social, a chance to participate in a healthy, active lifestyle through friendly competition.
  - To provide an athlete centred environment that promotes competition and fair play.
  - To enable our community to see our country's athletes perform
  - To provide a platform for young athletes to compete and develop
  - To provide an opportunity for our Mamas and Papas (Masters) to participate in organised, competitive sport and represent their islands with pride.
  - The Games will be "Smokefree".
  - The Games will be Environmentally Friendly
12. How does your NOC collaborate with government agencies, to support sports for development initiatives? How is that working out? How can it be improved?  
See above
13. How does your NOC leverage sports programs to promote social inclusion and gender equity in the communities they serve?  
We developed our Strategic plan 2019 – 2023 with the focus on being relevant and becoming an important part of Cook Islands society. This had to be achieved through a focus on promoting social inclusion, social justice or simply using sport as a tool for social growth. As such our goals were:  
Goal 1: To embed CISNOC in the nation  
Goal 2: To build a healthy and active nation  
Goal 3: To build an engaged sporting nation  
Goal 4: To build a proud and winning nation  
We needed the Government and the community to view as more than the agency that went on holidays to the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games and the Pacific Games. We need to sell the concept that as a true sporting nation we could achieve so much for the growth of the nation in its entirety. We need to show government and Cook Islanders the power of sport not as games but as a tool to improve and build a stronger society and country. Sport had to be seen for its social responsibility and needed to be relevant to our country & society as a whole.
14. What other partnerships has your NOC established to support sports for development initiatives?  
In addition to the whole of government, we have relationships with:
- Disability sector, NGO sector across the board
  - Chamber of Commerce
  - Private business
  - Our hospitality industry
  - The high Commissions of Japan, NZ and Australia
- I think it is fair to say we have cultivated relationships across all of Cook Islands Society.
15. How does your NOC measure the impact of sports programs on the communities they serve?  
The health & education statistics alongside the statistics around the quality of life of Cook islanders will be the biggest indicators of the impact of our work. Unfortunately this will be longitudinal and as such we will not see immediate results. We therefore measure impact through surveys, anecdotal evidence, outputs etc.

16. Can you share any challenges your NOC has faced in implementing sports for development programs, and how have these challenges been addressed?

There are three themes that can be considered challenges:

1. The Cook Islands “Blame Culture” – no one likes to be innovative or creative for fear of being blamed if it does not go well or fails. This means we are left to create things by ourselves and make things happen. It also means that we do not have the option to say no as when we are approached to assist with an innovative idea we need to show encouragement and support through our participation;
2. The Cook Islands “Can’t Do Anything Without Money” belief – modern Cook Islands society thinks they need money to do anything. There is a notion that nothing happens, can happen or will happen without money and paying for it. We constantly work to refute this notion and once again are proving that things can be done with limited resource but with genuine people wanting to see a good and just society;
3. Staff burn-out – we have a small staff and to combat the above we do everything ourselves. This is slowly changing but our staff are relied upon to do so much. They are young, resilient and full of energy but the batteries will deteriorate and we have to manage their lifespan!!