

## Abstract

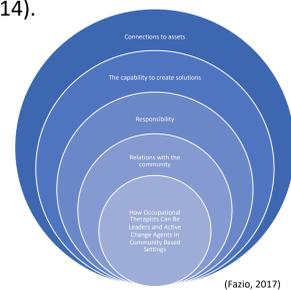
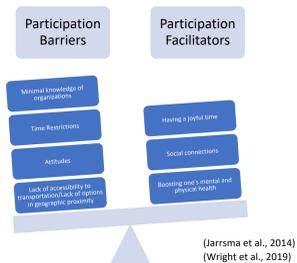
New England Disabled Sports (NEDS) is a non-profit organization situated in Lincoln, New Hampshire, that has served approximately 600 individuals with various physical and cognitive disabilities (New England Disabled Sports, 2021). The gap was that New England Disabled Sports does not have any existing outreach material to recruit volunteers (both disabled and able-bodied). This project focused on one of the major environmental barriers that individuals encounter before getting involved in an adaptive sports organization: Awareness of the existence and opportunities of the organization.

Occupational therapists are increasingly in community-based practice settings, such as adaptive sports, to advocate and support an individual's participation in meaningful occupations such as health management and social participation. The process of gaining understanding of organizational vision, mission, and goals, as well as integrating findings regarding facilitators and barriers found both in the literature and thematic analysis of stakeholder interviews, will be described.

## Background

Adaptive sports and exercise are key to the wellbeing of individuals. Physical activity has been demonstrated to have positive physiological, emotional, cognitive and social outcomes (Martin, 2013). However, despite the increasing number of adaptive sports organizations throughout the globe, there are still major barriers that inhibit individuals from participating in adaptive sports.

From an institutional perspective, elements such as "knowledge of individuals within institutions/organizations" were influential in individuals' opportunities and overall decision to participate in physical exercise (Martin-Ginis et al., 2016). Facilitators related to participating in adaptive sports have included the benefits of having a joyful time and boosting one's overall health, both physically and mentally. Facilitators within the environment included social connections one makes when participating in adaptive sports (Jarrsma et al., 2014).

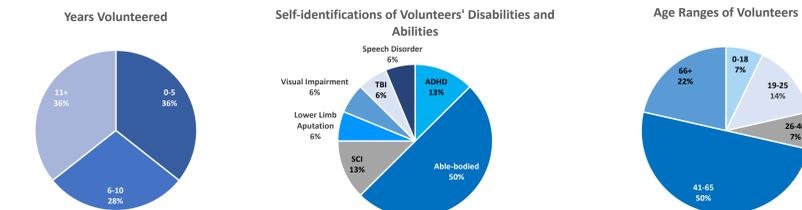


(Jarrsma et al., 2014)  
(Wright et al., 2019)

(Fazio, 2017)

## Methodology

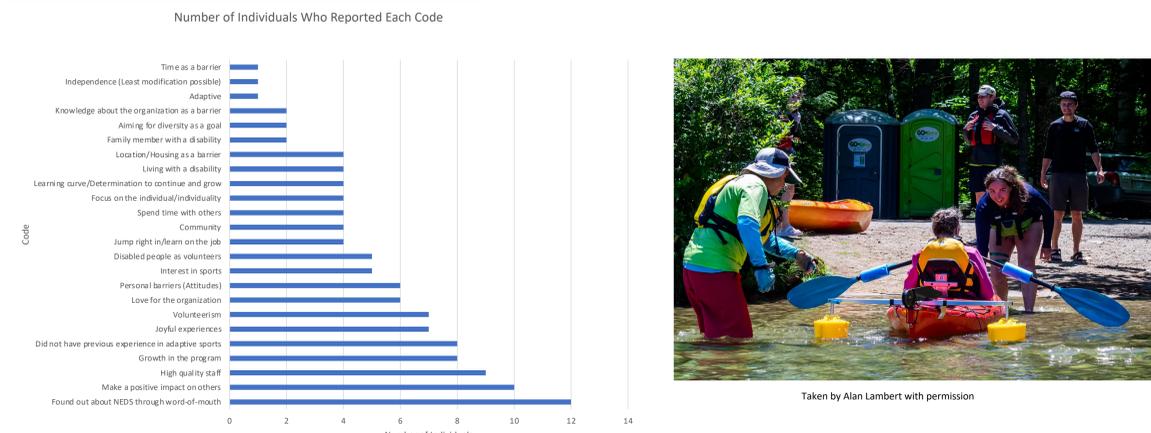
This project aimed to conduct interviews with members of the NEDS community to inform the content of the outreach material. A thematic analysis was conducted based on transcriptions of semi-structured interviews with 14 individuals to identify themes. From these interviews, all four NEDS staff were interviewed, three members of the board/grant committee were interviewed, and seven volunteers were interviewed. These interviews ranged from 5 minutes to 45 minutes based on individuals' responses. Several codes were identified and were grouped into a theme. These themes were also compared to the values of NEDS.



## Results

Evaluation Findings: The themes from the interviews were found to have reflected both NEDS and Move United's goals. Included below are also facilitators and barriers to participation gleaned from the interviews, as well as the theme of having limited knowledge of adaptive sports and the organization beforehand.

Codes	Themes	NEDS value(s) that it reflects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborating with others to create a positive impact</li> <li>Joyful experiences (Fun, pleasurable, energized, positive feelings, happiness)</li> <li>Spend time with others</li> <li>Volunteerism</li> <li>Focus on the individual/individuality</li> <li>Adaptive</li> <li>Interest in sports</li> <li>Jump right in/learn on the job</li> <li>Community</li> <li>Learning curve/Determination to continue and grow</li> </ul>	Positive experiences in volunteering/Facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance lives</li> <li>Disabilities are not barriers</li> <li>Volunteerism</li> <li>Listen and learn from everyone</li> <li>Nurture personal development</li> <li>Independence, confidence, and fitness</li> <li>Equal opportunity</li> <li>Provide opportunities</li> <li>Community</li> <li>Active lifestyle and social development and increases prospects for education and employment</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Love for the organization</li> <li>High-quality staff (Supportive, passionate, encouraging, well-trained, patient, adaptive, dedicated)</li> <li>Growth in the program (Both from an organizational and individual perspective)</li> <li>Independence (Least modification possible)</li> <li>Living with a disability</li> <li>Disabled people as volunteers</li> <li>Family member with a disability</li> </ul>	Positive feelings towards the organization and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excellence</li> <li>Carefully planned educational setting</li> <li>Use public recreation facilities</li> <li>Conduct operations in a businesslike manner</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal barriers (Attitudes, personal supports, education)</li> <li>Time as a barrier</li> <li>Location/Housing as a barrier</li> <li>Aiming for diversity as a goal</li> <li>Found out about NEDS through word-of-mouth</li> <li>Did not have previous experience in adaptive sports</li> <li>Knowledge about the organization as a barrier</li> </ul>	Barriers for participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals with disabilities are recruited to fill leadership, staff and volunteer positions in the organization</li> </ul>
	Limited knowledge of adaptive sports and the organization beforehand	



Taken by Alan Lambert with permission



Taken by Mayah Haidar with permission

Information gleaned from thematic analysis on what should be incorporated in the outreach material:

- Discuss the places volunteers would go and an understanding of the activities they are participating in
- Discuss populations served: Making an emphasis on all disabilities and ages
- Incorporate NEDS values
- Incorporate quotes from videos representing the categories of, "Positive Experiences" "High Quality Staff" "Disabled Individuals as Volunteers" "Quotes that Represents NEDS as an Organization"
- Incorporate the facilitators found from the thematic analysis in interviews
- Aim to recruit volunteers who identify as disabled, aim to recruit younger volunteers
- Create a three-minute video aimed to be "eye-catching" and create a six-minute video aimed to be a longer version with additional information

**Short Video:** Create a one-to-three-minute video aimed to be "eye-catching" Discuss populations served: making an emphasis on all disabilities and ages Discuss the places volunteers would go and *broad* understanding of the activities they are participating in Incorporate NEDS values Incorporate quotes from videos representing the categories of, "Positive Experiences" "High Quality Staff" "Disabled Individuals as Volunteers" "Quotes that Represents NEDS as an Organization" Incorporate the facilitators found from the thematic analysis in interviews Aim to recruit younger volunteers through clips showing young adults participate in NEDS activities

**Long Video:** Create aimed to be a longer version with additional information Discuss populations served: making an emphasis on all disabilities and ages Discuss the places volunteers would go and *in depth* understanding of the activities they are participating in Aim to recruit volunteers who identify as disabled through clips of Wendy's video and Peter's interview Aim to recruit younger volunteers through interviews with NEDS summer interns

**Athlete to Volunteer Video:** Aim to recruit volunteers who identify as disabled



Additional Information about Video Creation Process:

## Discussion

An evaluation report summarizing the findings of the thematic analysis was given to the vice president of the New England Disabled Sports board of directors. These findings highlight and corroborate barriers found in the literature to participation in adaptive sports such as knowledge of the organization, personal barriers, and location/housing as a barrier. This report will inform the board of directors and staff as evidence to address any barriers in volunteer recruitment to make adaptive sports accessible for everyone. This report also demonstrates that the themes found from the interviews were found to have reflected the values and goals of NEDS. Facilitators have also been supported by the research including having joyful experiences, socializing with others, and being a part of a community. These facilitators were used in the outreach material to illustrate to potential volunteers the benefits of being involved in an adaptive sports organization.

An evaluation report was given to the NEDS staff that included the thematic analysis and the finalized video files. Thus far, the outreach material has been used to apply for the New Hampshire Electrical CO-OP grant. Additionally, videos and photographs taken were posted on the official NEDS Facebook and Instagram accounts throughout the summer. The outreach material has also been shared to other community-based organizations in the northern New Hampshire region.

## Conclusion

Occupational therapy practitioners' clinical reasoning, therapeutic use of self, health literacy, universal design, and in-depth understanding of both occupation-based as well as client factor levels of individuals' capacity brings value to community-based settings. Braza et al., (2018) identified that outreach needs to start by promoting "awareness of opportunities to engage (in physical activity) in an integrated and meaningful way" (p. 166). Consistently consulting with, listening to, and working with the community for whom an outreach program is being created is essential.

Throughout this experience, there was active involvement in coaching adaptive sports sessions, writing notes, creation of social media posts, participation in grant meetings, and participation in collaborative meetings with the staff. Occupational therapy's involvement in volunteerism in adaptive organizations can both create a positive contribution and advance awareness of the field.



## References



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