



Australian Sports
Technologies Network
Powering Sports Innovation



ASTN and Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) launch Open Innovation Challenge to support wheelchair athletes

MELBOURNE – WEDNESDAY, 20 DECEMBER 2023: The Australian Sports Technologies Network (ASTN) has today announced that Australian sportstech startups have the opportunity to pitch their technology to the Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) under ASTN's Open Innovation Pathway Program, to help support wheelchair athletes.

The ASTN Open Innovation Pathways program provides companies, sporting organisations and clubs the opportunity to have access to new innovation and ideas.

ASTN and VIS will share one business challenge with participating startups to solve by piloting technology solutions or products. In return, the startups will have the opportunity to validate, test and/or integrate their solution with a key sports brand in the Australian market.

The ASTN and VIS Open Innovation Challenge is focused on uncovering solutions to help effectively and reliably monitor the day-to-day loads of wheelchair athletes, both in and out of training and competition.

For many able-bodied sports there are already technology solutions, tools and programs in the market to monitor the training, competition and day-to-day loads of athletes. However, this isn't the case for wheelchair athletes.

"General day-to-day movements and stresses of wheelchair athletes have a greater impact on their overall daily loads and fatigue, and negatively impact performance in training and competition. It is currently difficult to quantify training loads of wheelchair athletes on a day-to-day basis," said Sylvie Withers, Project Manager Innovation & Research, VIS.

"We're looking forward to working closely with ASTN to go outside the walls of VIS, access new innovation and start collaborating with startups to help solve our challenges and enhance wheelchair sports," added Withers.

The objective of the ASTN and VIS challenge is to:

- Define (and potentially standardise) what is considered and quantified as 'load' for wheelchair athletes and users;
- Effectively and reliably monitor loads of wheelchair athletes and users;
- Potentially separate and quantify training and competition loads vs day-to-day movement and activity loads of wheelchair athletes.

"Currently, VIS can somewhat measure the training responses, but there is no accessible marker of load to accurately prescribe or monitor training dose for wheelchair athletes – we're looking to change that," said Dave Crosbee, Director High Performance, VIS.

“We know that it is fairly unlikely that there is an existing commercial solution in the market to address our unique challenge. The solution will involve development or use of a wearable device or equipment-based sensor (used on wheelchair) that collects load data on specific biomechanical measures,” added Crosbee.

ASTN welcomes technology innovators and startups to present their concepts, minimum viable products (MVPs) and solutions to the VIS and ASTN for consideration, short-listing and potential piloting. ASTN and VIS welcome responses from all over the world and not only limited to sportstech but also adjacent industries. Startups working with technology with applications across sport, disability, mobility, medical, research and other adjacent industries, are encouraged to apply.

“By linking startups and entrepreneurs with sporting organisations or corporations, we can help to combine new innovation with an abundance of resources and access to markets and customers – it’s a win-win for everyone,” said Dr Martin Schlegel, Executive Chair, ASTN.

“Most of the knowledge exists outside the walls of an organisation and by bringing in new ideas and accessing new pools of talent, we can help unearth the ‘next big thing’,” said Dr Schlegel.

Expressions of Interests is now open for startups interested in participating in the program. Applications close 16 February, 2024. Further details about the business challenges are available here: <https://www.astn.com.au/open-innovation>

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Media Enquiries

For more information, or to arrange an interview with ASTN, please contact Tara Ballard on 0436 330 267 or Tara.ballard@astn.com.au

About Australian Sports Technologies Network Ltd

Australian Sports Technologies Network (ASTN) provides leadership in the commercialisation, development, and promotion of Australian-inspired Sports Technologies. Established in 2012, ASTN is today a world-leading pioneer with over 500 organisations in its national network across the landscape of Sports Digital, Sports Research, Stadium/Venues, Media, Entertainment, eSports, Human Performance, Fan Engagement, Sports Data, Artificial Intelligence in Sports, Sports Equipment, Sports Smart Apparel and Sports Universities. For more information, please visit www.astn.com.au.

About Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS)

The Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) was established in 1990 by the State Government to assist Victoria’s best athletes achieve national and international success. The VIS receives most of its funding from the State Government through Sport and Recreation Victoria, and additional funding from the Commonwealth Government through the Australian Institute of Sport and National Sporting Organisations, together with Paralympics Australia.

The VIS is based in its own facility at Lakeside Stadium in Albert Park which provides a state of the art training environment for athletes, including a training gym, pool and recovery facilities, sport science laboratories, treatment rooms and offices, along with specialist expertise in the sports sciences and the application of advanced research and development outcomes to sport in Victoria.