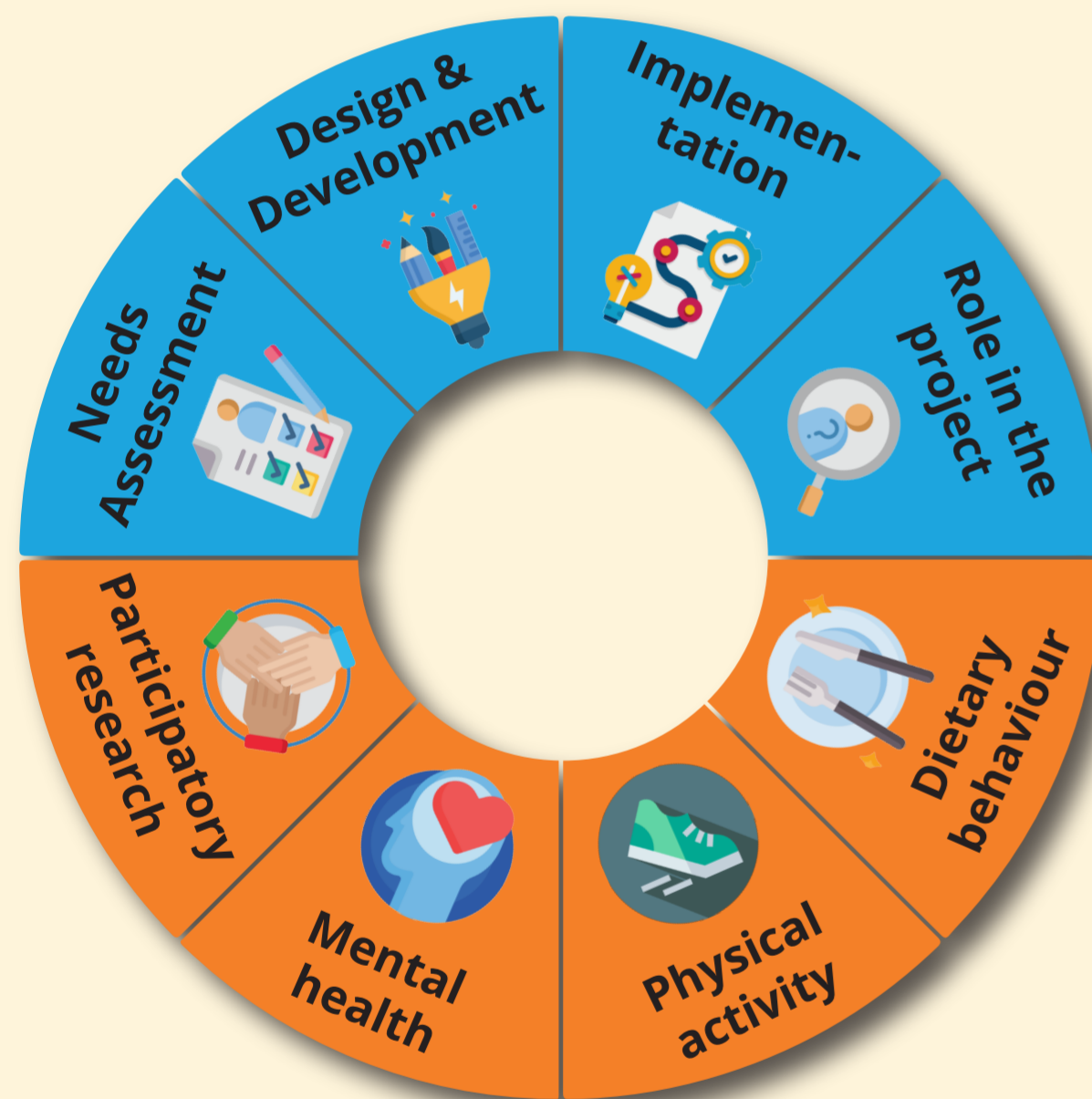


LIFTS - Insights Stakeholder Interviews

LIFTS is a 5-year research project funded by NWO aiming to promote sustainable healthy lifestyles among practical school (PrO) students in a participatory way using appropriate technology.

This infographic presents the results from interviews that were conducted between January and June 2024, with staff members of 3 PrO schools and partners in the LIFTS project who are experts in the field of health promotion, technological innovation, or the PrO context. The purpose of the interviews was to get familiar with the PrO context, build relationships with the schools and project partners, and identify health challenges and opportunities for the project.



A thematic analysis of the interviews led to two type of topics:

1. Recommendations for the different phases of the LIFTS project & the intended role of the stakeholders (blue).
2. Domain-specific knowledge of the stakeholders on the different aspects of the LIFTS project (orange).

Summarized results are presented in this infographic. A more extensive report is available upon request.

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Needs Assessment

Partners recommended considering the existing workload and burden of schools. LIFTS should adhere to the needs and wishes of the school environment, creating support throughout and building trust among the staff. For PrO students, it seems to be crucial to gather in-depth knowledge on and with them, involving them in co-creation. In addition, partners suggested involving other stakeholders from the community, like caregivers, health professionals, and health advisors.

Practical tips:

- Collect data from all school levels;
- Tailor tools to the students;
- Scheduling activities during quieter periods (calendar Q1 and Q4).



Design & Development

To ensure sustainability and effectiveness, partners highlighted the need for contextually relevant, engaging, and tailored interventions. They pointed out that a collaborative approach involving various stakeholders is critical and suggested using interactive experiences to make health interventions appealing to students. Ultimately, the primary goal for health interventions aimed at PrO students should be to transition them from low motivation and health literacy to active participation through fun, social connections, and a sense of agency.

Practical tips:

- Prioritize fun and engagement
- Remember that students learn by doing
- Use iterative prototyping



Implementation

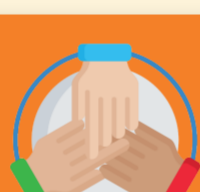
Partners identified 3 key themes for the effective implementation of a health intervention at schools. First, a focus on implementation is essential not only at the end of the project but also in early stages. Second, a strong support base within the schools and the community is required to maintain momentum during the project, and afterward. Third, LIFTS should focus on long-term impact and change, engaging with policymakers to channel the required resources.

"It would be a shame if something were developed that does not contribute structurally, and then, it might be better to use the project funds to simply provide free fruits and vegetables to a couple of practical schools for a year."



Role in the project

Interviews with stakeholders revealed a more extensive set of partners feel connected to the design & development and implementation phases than to the needs assessment phase. Collaboration can be in many forms: providing advise in different stages of LIFTS, sharing insights (e.g. existing interventions), support in design/development, facilitate connections, and disseminating results. The schools indicated that their students can have a variety of roles in the project. The role of a student should always be aligned with their ability to contribute, e.g. those comfortable with leading and speaking out could have more key roles. The role of teachers is twofold: help to manage the alignment of research activities with their courses, plus support while research activities are performed.



Participatory research

Interviews with staff members at PrO schools revealed several important themes about participatory research. First, student participation was discussed, pointing out motivating factors, such as clarity, rewards, and opportunities for personal growth, while also noting demotivating aspects like a lack of interest in healthy lifestyles and lengthy activities. Second, input for adapting research methods was gathered. They should be creative and visual, avoiding complex texts and focusing on sensory experiences. Lastly, the staff identified expected outcomes of student participation, such as increased empowerment, ownership of the project, and greater awareness of healthy lifestyles, which can help boost their confidence.

Practical tips:

- Keep it simple;
- Creative methods in small groups are better than individual interviews or assignments;
- Sometimes it can be good to have teachers present.



Mental health

- Students tend to find conversations on mental health challenging.
- There are interventions available to help students discuss mental wellbeing topics, like training programs and thematic lessons.
- Known barriers to flourish in wellbeing include feeling ashamed, poor sleeping habits, lack of knowledge about harmful behaviors like vaping, peer pressure, and a culture that discourages vulnerability. Not all barriers can be overcome with an intervention.

Practical tips:

- Focus on 'promoting a good wellbeing' instead of 'preventively intervening on wellbeing'.
- Multiple people should be involved to promote mental wellbeing in schools, including teachers, support staff, and health advisors.
- Create a safe environment to talk about mental health topics.



Physical activity

- Some students do sports, even via sports clubs, but the overall sports participation is low, with girls exercising less frequently.
- Barriers to physical activity include lack of motivation, socioeconomic factors, and lack of discipline.
- Students rely heavily on social support, where a safe environment may encourage more movement.

Practical tips:

- Offer daily sports and activities at schools and organize regular tournaments or outdoor activities.
- Train community coaches to better engage with these adolescents.
- Design interventions that focus on enjoyment and social interaction.



Dietary behaviour

- Many students skip breakfast and lunch. They eat after school hours.
- Many students consume unhealthy snacks and drinks
- Cultural background plays an essential role in eating habits
- There is no fixed curriculum for nutrition education in PrO schools; teachers need to design their lessons.
- Focusing on social and physical environments is important for successful dietary interventions.

"If attractive healthy options are available, consumption will increase regardless of motivation."