



Coles Little Athletics Australia

Little Athletics Product Manager

About Little Athletics

Coles Little Athletics Australia is the peak governing and administrative body for Little Athletics in Australia, responsible for driving the strategic direction of the sport, working with State & Territory members to deliver on nationally led initiatives and programs. The aim is to develop children of all abilities by promoting positive attitudes and a healthy lifestyle through family and community involvement in athletic activities.

Summary

It has been recognised by the LAA Board, staff and Member associations the way in which a child experiences Little Athletics may no longer be optimal or relevant within the Australian sporting landscape and as such needs to be more appealing to a broader consumer base.

Athlete membership is declining, and the organisation holds one of the highest churn rates in Australia for participation at around 85% for children aged 9-10yo. Some of this can be attributed to our membership structure and the competition in the marketplace for comparable sporting experiences. But significantly with 34% of 5-15yo's reporting they had become bored or lost interest, the participant satisfaction in the Little Athletics experience is most likely the highest contributor to athlete decline.

In children aged between 5-9yo only 16% identified competition as the primary reason they are attracted to the sport. With the predominate mode of delivery at centres being competition this can explain the poor experience children and their parents have in those centres where tradition delivery is prime. Even those who take part for competition additionally seek skill development, training and social benefits from their experience in Little Athletics.

The Little Athletics product does not currently adequately provide opportunity to children under 5 years of age. Tiny Tots is delivered in some States and Territories, and anecdotal feedback indicates the potential appetite for physical development for children 3-5-year old's.

As a result of this environment LAA and Member Associations have indicated a desire and preparedness to address the issue.

LAA requires a Little Athletics Product Manager (PM) with expertise in sports product and delivery and commercial environments, including review and change management, to lead the organisation's 'Product' development body of work. The ideal candidate will be the primary interface between LAA, our external stakeholders and LAA's state and territory member associations. In this high-profile role, they will collaborate with numerous operational, development and product teams inside and outside.

LAA to identify, define and specify solutions that create the conditions for a product and delivery in the 3 to 12 age group that delivers a better experience for the athlete and their families/carers. The LAPM will build collaborative relationships, working closely with others to identify and resolve

barriers to success and to create and execute change. The successful candidate will experience a wide range of problem-solving situations, strategic to real-time, requiring extensive use of data collection and analysis, and will prepare and execute regular program updates to the LAA Chief Executive Officer and the LAA Board of Directors.

Little Athletics as a product is a highly regarded and recognised brand in the Australian sports participation landscape. Many elements of its delivery are relevant and contribute to its current levels of success but with refinement the product has potential to become a leading choice amongst Australian children.

In recent times there has been extensive research, consultation and discussion on how to address issues of retention and growth in the sport. It would be generally agreed by key stakeholders that Little Athletics has the potential to provide for;

- Foundational skill development for children.
- The opportunities in broadening the official participation base to include under 5yo in a way that involves and develops their love for fundamental movement skills through athletics.
- An enjoyable participant experience in physical activity.
- An experience pathway for elite and non-elite athletes.
- A curated developmental experience for prescribed audiences, including those who do not currently fit within the typical participant pool, and
- An appealing, rewarding and complete participation experience at centre/regional level without reliance on talent/elite pathways for validation.

This potential can be addressed through the evaluation and refinement of how the product is delivered through;

- Offering a complete suite of products that not only fill existing gaps in the marketplace but offer a graduated participant experience that is underpinned by consumer expectation for choice and is not tied to a linear talent/elite pathway.
- Entry level products for young children which develop physical skills (physical literacy) and are enjoyable;
- decreased time involved in the activities for each of participants; parents (carers) and volunteers;
- change in the competition focused culture;
- increase team and social offerings; and the inclusion of a virtual product
- streamlined carnival or formal event offerings;
- greater skill development with an emphasis on fun and game-based learning in the younger ages (up to age 11);
- gradual introduction to formal competition through ages 11-13's to ensure a smooth transition into the youth space;
- a business structure that promotes athlete focussed experiences through qualified and knowledgeable deliverers;
- programs or initiatives that promote individual improvement and progression rather than 'winning' as a measure of success.
- connection to all children through schools.

A considerable barrier to achieving change in the delivery network are the various key stakeholders who often have reduced understanding of the broader impacts for the sport. The engagement and consensus of the Member Associations is paramount in any successful intervention. In addition, the wealth of knowledge and practical understanding of those at the grassroots centres will also be a significant contributor to the process.

The work involved in the reconceptualising and refinement of the Little Athletics experience requires focussed attention and expertise.

Reports to: LAA CEO Direct

Purpose of Role

- Review, develop and ultimately implement a whole-of-sport little athletics product—including delivery (3 to 12 age group) at centre/club and association level throughout the country;
- Devise high-level strategic strategies that will promote the LA Product and increase participation and membership;
- Educate, train, manage and support participation/delivery staff who will be working within State and Territories.

Accountabilities

The ideal candidate for this role will be able to:

- Dynamically interact with stakeholders at multiple levels to define solutions and deliver LAA's contributions to the Product project scope of work, including reviewing of previous external reports- product development; finance models; operating models; technology; workforce, people and culture; organisational structures; and marketing communications.
- Identify and analyse data to isolate issues, develop solutions and prioritise opportunities.
- Plan and manage multiple parallel project streams.
- Optimise resource utilisation for the greater good of the project.
- Create, maintain and disseminate project information to stakeholders and senior management.
- Remain flexible to changing priorities and open to new ideas.
- Be a visible and vocal role model across LAA and the wider community, championing the vision of Little Athletics.
- Develop and deliver new initiatives in order to grow membership numbers;

Essential Criteria

Desirable Qualifications:

- 5+ years project/program management experience - extensive research, consultation, experience in the structures, culture and delivery of the athlete experience.
- 5+ years of experience leading project delivery for large, cross-functional projects
- Experience using problem solving and analytical skills to solve business problems and drive process improvements
- Understanding of sporting commercial markets and business structures
- Excellent verbal and writing skills for non-technical and technical audiences
- Demonstrated ability to deliver both strategic and tactical results across diverse cultures from inception to completion
- Ability to work effectively with tight deadlines in a fast-paced environment
- Attention to detail and proven ability to manage multiple, competing priorities simultaneously
- Demonstrated ability to work in ambiguous situations and across organisational boundaries
- An ability to effectively develop key processes and procedures that facilitate efficient planning, reporting and control processes
- Belief in the value of participating in and contributing to a collaborative team environment
- Bachelor's degree

The role will be Melbourne based in Albert Park but is open to negotiation for the right candidate.

Employer and Other Details

Applications will close on 1st February 2021 at 12.00pm.

All applications will be treated in the strictest confidence.

This is a full-time fixed term role, preferred date of commencement 15th March 2021 or earlier where negotiated for a period of 3 years. The employer and employee may agree to extend the term of this agreement.

Salary to be negotiated and dependent upon experience.

Format for Responses

To apply for this role, candidates must provide:

- a one page covering letter setting out your reason for applying and what you would bring to the role; and
- a resume of no more than 3 pages.

Andrew Johnston - Little Athletics Australia

Participation, Development and Projects Manager

(03) 9682 1511

a.johnston@littleathletics.com.au