

Working with Local Government

*A guide for sport and
recreation organisations*



Government of South Australia
Office for Recreation and Sport



Local Government Association
of South Australia

be active



Introduction

The aim of this resource is to assist sport and recreation organisations develop a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Local Government in sport and recreation provision. This guide is not meant to be inclusive of every aspect of a council's operation, but it aims to provide an overview of the common areas of council and club relationships.

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1. Role of Local Government

All levels of government have a role in enhancing the quality of life of Australians. This quality of life, or 'wellbeing', comprises a number of elements such as employment, health, housing, education and training, family and community, crime and justice, culture, sport and recreation to name a few.

Over recent years, sport and recreation has become increasingly recognised by Government as a 'conduit' to enhance quality of life outcomes for all people in the community. This recognition is particularly relevant at the local level where local councils collectively spend millions of dollars annually providing and supporting sport and recreation opportunities.

The benefits of participation in sport and recreation are many and include:

Health Benefits

- Sport and recreation have a positive role in reducing obesity.
- Participation can significantly reduce the incidence of chronic diseases such as heart disease, some cancers and diabetes.

Community Benefits

- People who participate in sport and recreation are less likely to commit crime and engage in anti-social behaviour.
- Sport and recreation provides a valuable opportunity for social interaction, strengthening family and friend networks and promoting positive community engagement.



Did You Know?

In 2000-01, total government funding for sport and recreation activities was \$110.21 per person. The Commonwealth Government contributed \$10.32 per person in 2000-01, while state and territory governments provided \$45.41 and local governments provided \$54.48.

The majority of the funding supported venues, grounds and facilities (\$1,292.2m or 61% of total funding) and participation and special events (\$527.8m or 25%). A smaller proportion of overall funding was provided for administration and regulation (\$205.8m or 10%) and other services (\$98.4m or 5%).

Local government contributed the majority of the funds for venues, grounds and facilities (\$997.5m or 77%), while the state and territory governments contributed the majority of funds for participation and special events (\$441.9m or 84%).

(source: ABS, 2002)

Understanding how sport and recreation clubs fit into the 'bigger picture' is an important step in understanding the benefits to your club of establishing a close working relationship with your local council.

As the closest sphere of government to the community, local government has the responsibility for the delivery of a range of community services. In order to do so effectively and efficiently, this is often carried out in partnership with government and non-government providers of these services such as sport and recreation providers.

It must be realised that sport and recreation clubs are only one of many types of providers that work with local government. Therefore, councils need to prioritise where, when, and how they channel their resources so as to provide the maximum benefit to the community.

2. Communication

The complexity, scope and reasons for council's involvement in sport and recreation as previously discussed, are diverse and varied. Although structures and responsibilities will differ from council to council, a number of staff will have an interest in the management and sustainability of your club. Examples include:

| Area | Role |
|-----------------------|---|
| Community Development | Consultation, Community Inclusion and Participation |
| Recreation Planners | Strategic Development of Sport, Recreation and Facilities |
| Property Management | Leasing and Licensing, Management Agreements |
| Asset Management | Building Maintenance, Planning, Capital Works |
| Strategic Planning | Policy and Planning for Future Needs |
| Parks and Gardens | Grounds Maintenance |
| Town Planners | Development and Statutory Regulations (Urban Planning) |
| Governance and Risk | Safety, Liability and Insurance |
| Traffic | Parking and Traffic Management |
| Finance | Grants, Budgets, Loans |
| Engineering | Built Form |
| Centre Managers | Provider and Manager of 'Space' Used by Clubs |
| Major Projects | Consultation and Planning of Major Initiatives |
| Customer Service | First Point of Contact |
| Elected Members | Community Representatives and Policy Approval |

Communication between your club and council is crucial and whilst council realises the pressures volunteers face in the day-to-day administration, **communication can be enhanced by:**

- Nominating a person on your committee as the Council Liaison Officer.
- Obtaining a PO Box so that your club's address stays the same even if your volunteers change.
- Establish contact and get to know the Recreation Planner or Officer.
- Inform/seek permission from the relevant person at council for any major initiatives, events or projects that your club intends to undertake.

Similarly, if you don't already have one, ask council for details (telephone and email) of all key staff who you may need to contact on a regular basis. As with your volunteers, council staff can also change roles or move on, but their positions often remain the same.

Other ways of communicating with your council include:

- Invite key council staff and Elected Members to official meetings (eg Annual General Meetings) and events such as club championships;
- Put council on your mailing list for newsletters or membership information; and
- If your council has one, become a member of your local area Community Recreation and Sport Network.

Remember that council is a key stakeholder in your club and likes to be kept informed.



3. Management Agreements

Leases, Licences and Permits - What's the Difference?

There are a range of agreements that can be established between councils and community organisations. Each type of agreement has its benefits and limitations. Common agreements include:

- **Leases** - provides the lessee with full use of the property whilst allowing the lessee to sub-lease to other parties.
- **Licences** - less than exclusive access and can involve shared use agreements. May be entered into for a specific time/day during a season.
- **Permits** - normally for a 'one off' event or activity.

Although leases may seem the best option for your organisation, you must always remember that council facilities belong to the community and councils have an obligation to ensure they are managed in a way that meets a broad range of community needs. Such a clause will generally be included somewhere in most Management Agreements.

While a shared use agreement may be difficult in the case of your clubroom, it doesn't prevent you from entering into sub leases with other community groups. A sub lease enables increased use of your facility, enables you to share your overhead costs, and ultimately increases opportunities for the broader community to participate in sport and recreation activities.

If you are considering sharing your facility, contact your council to ensure that you are not exposing your club to increased risk as well as enabling council to keep a track of who is using the community facility.



Responsibility and Ownership

Within each Management Agreement, different levels of responsibility will be allocated to both council and your club. Commonly, councils accept responsibility for maintenance and request a percentage is repaid by your club based on usage. In most instances this is heavily subsidised, but the amount varies from council to council.

Councils will normally provide you with a facility that meets your basic needs. Any plans for improving the facility must be approved by council. Depending on the extent of the work to be carried out, improvements may remain the property of council once your Management Agreement expires. If you are unsure of your responsibilities with regards to improvements, contact your council and/or refer to your Management Agreement.



4. Operational Management

Administration

Councils understand that your club's business is your business. However, council's view of community groups as 'providers' to the community means that your business is of interest to them. View it this way: if you owned a business and franchised or leased a part of it to a second party, you would have a vested interest in how well that business was performing. For example, you would like to know:

- What image is being portrayed to your customers?
- Is a quality service being delivered?
- Is the person suitably qualified to carry out the job?
- Can your lessee pay his/her bills on time?

Your council is likely to have strong links with state government agencies such as the Office for Recreation and Sport and, in some instances, state associations and peak bodies which all offer training courses in club and volunteer management, coaching, sports medicine, disability access, and various general day to day administration. Contact your council to enquire about what training it offers and/or support in order to assist in the development of your club.

Growth and Development

Like you, councils want your club to be sustainable which may mean maintaining or increasing a strong membership base. However, you need to be aware that your success and growth may also have the potential to be detrimental to your facility.



That is, facilities can only cope with so much usage and you need to be aware of the impact that increased membership may have on the size and location of your building, as well as factors such as your sports surface and other facilities. Early planning or identification of your club's future needs will help alleviate wear and tear on facilities, help budget and funding planning, and ultimately help you and your organisation grow in a sustainable manner over time.



5. Planning

The importance of planning cannot be overstated - without planning it is difficult to know where you are going, how to get there and how to know when you have arrived.

Many councils and funding agencies now require applications for significant development to be supported by a plan that identifies your club's short, medium and long-term goals.

The main areas to consider when planning include:

- **Know your Community** (what does your local community look like and want?)
- **Have a Shared Vision** (where appropriate, link your club's plan with the Strategic Plans of both your council and your State Association)
- **Trends** (what trends will affect your activity or recreation in general?)
- **Membership** (where are you now and where do you want to go?)
- **Facilities** (what do you need to get there?)
- **Resources** (how are you going to do it?)
- **Timelines** (when do you want to do it?)
- **Monitoring** (how are you going to keep on track?)
- **Evaluation** (how will you know when you have done it?)



When implementing the plan, be sure that council has received a copy well in advance of any proposed development. Better still, invite a council staff member along to your club's planning session so that they can provide input. Whilst this is not a guarantee of funding or final endorsement, alerting and involving them well in advance of your intentions will obviously give your proposal much more substance and likelihood of support in the long term. Similarly, budgets and funding sources may be identified and planned for well in advance.

The Office for Recreation and Sport and the Australian Sports Commission have resources available to assist your club to manage an effective and efficient planning process. For more information visit their websites:

Office for Recreation and Sport - www.recsport.sa.gov.au

Australian Sports Commission - www.ausport.gov.au



6. Financial Support

Most councils offer some form of financial assistance to community groups. This may include:

- Community Grants (for equipment and program support)
- Sponsorship Schemes (to support participation in high level events)
- Cultural Events (for initiatives that promote community harmony)
- Minor Capital Works (funding for minor works to enhance fixed structures)
- Capital Works (larger scale funding for infrastructure development)

Again, funding will vary from council to council but most will have some form of assistance available to community groups.

The state government also provides a number of funding avenues from small scale initiatives to major, regional facilities. To establish what funding is available and what you may be eligible for, contact your council.

As already stated, your chances of securing funding will be increased if it has been strategically identified in a club and/or State Association plan and brought to the attention of the likely funding agency well in advance of submission. Likewise, initiatives may be further supported if linked to your own avenues of fundraising over a period of time.



Conclusion

Local Government is the closest sphere of government to the community and has a wide responsibility to deliver quality services. Your club is a key provider of community services and should work toward aligning its own objectives with those of your local council. Not only will this benefit the broader community, but also the viability of your organisation now and in the future. Councils and your club all have a number of pressures placed on them to deliver quality services so let's work together.....as a community!

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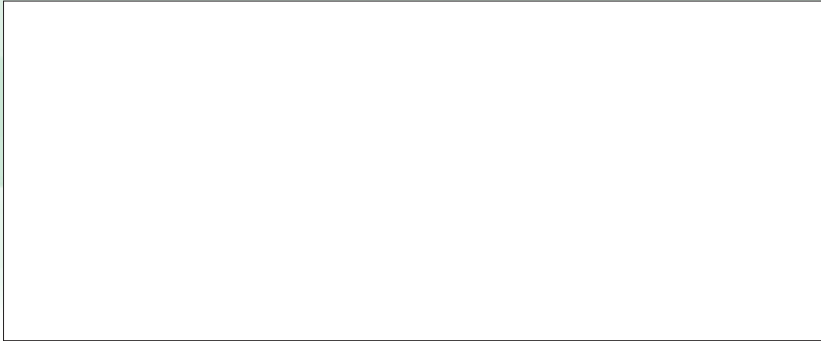


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Your Council Contact and Information



Useful Websites

Local Government Association - www.lga.sa.gov.au

Office for Recreation and Sport - www.recsport.sa.gov.au

Sport SA - www.sportsa.org.au

Recreation SA - www.recreationsa.org

Australian Sports Commission - www.ausport.gov.au

Play By The Rules - www.playbytherules.net.au

be active - www.beactive.com.au

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