Between 2003 and 2008, the Physical Activity Taskforce, in partnership with the WA Local Government Association and Lotterywest, offered the Local Activity Grants program to 160 projects across 109 Local Governments. The Local Activity Grant program provided matched funding for Local Governments to encourage innovative approaches to increasing physical activity at the community level through policy development, program delivery, capacity building, workforce development and minor infrastructure. This document outlines the key success factors highlighted in the ‘Local Activity Grant Program Evaluation: Key Findings Report’.

The Local Activity Grant program recognised that addressing physical inactivity cannot be achieved by one agency alone and requires a whole of government, whole of community approach. Local Governments are well placed to promote physical activity as they are the only locally based structure with a mandate to influence the natural, man-made, social and economic environments in which people live. (Harris and Wills, 1997).

Local Government has an imperative to provide healthy and safe communities and is well positioned to take a holistic and proactive approach in the provision of public facilities and programs that promote physical activity.

There are a number of key principles which broadly describe best practice approaches for increasing physical activity. These principles outlined below provide a framework for incorporation into the strategic plans of Local Governments.

- A Whole of Local Government Approach
- Integrated Planning
- A Range of Programs and Services
- Built Environments that Support Physical Activity

A Whole of Local Government Approach

A whole of Local Government approach should be a philosophy that is incorporated within the council’s strategic direction and all relevant operational areas, ensuring physical activity is integrated into existing planning and decision making processes.

As per the Department of Local Government Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework and Guidelines, “An integrated strategic planning approach will enable more effective delivery of the local government’s strategic intention.”

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A whole of Local Government approach to physical activity achieves a range of outcomes for the community.

The Framework provides a process for Local Governments to “develop strategic planning systems that deliver accountable and measurable linkages between community aspirations, financial capacity and practical service delivery.”

The Framework:

- Recognises that planning for a Local Government is holistic in nature and driven by the community.
- Builds organisational and resource capability to meet community need.
- Optimises success by understanding the integration and interdependencies between the components.
- Emphasises performance monitoring so that Local Governments remain adaptive and responsive to changes in community needs and the business environment.

To ensure the best use of Local Government resources, physical activity should be considered in the context of the triple bottom line, as displayed above.

Physical activity can impact on outcomes across multiple work areas including public and environmental health; community development; planning and urban design; transport and road safety; recreation and leisure; club development; crime prevention; community safety; parks and gardens; economic development and tourism.

Consultation through a community profiling and needs analysis processes followed by strategic and project planning phases enables these areas to work together and achieve shared outcomes.

A Comprehensive Approach

A whole of community approach combining multi-level strategies targeting local policy and programs, public education, and the social, natural and built environment is required to increase physical activity at the community level.

Strategies should complement state-wide initiatives and campaigns, building on work already undertaken by other agencies and departments.
A Partnership Approach

Development of partnerships with State, Local and non-Government agencies, community groups and local business enables Local Governments to attract greater resources and funding, reduce duplication and elicit greater achievements.

Development of stronger relationships with external agencies eager to work in partnership with Local Government to improve physical activity, also increases available resources and provides opportunities to further develop relationships in the community.

Consultation with a range of State Government and non-Government agencies can help inform Local Government strategies and ensure alignment to broader strategic priorities.

There is also benefit to be gained by adopting a regional approach. Working in partnership with neighbouring Local Governments is particularly useful when planning for regional facilities and connectivity of path networks.

Integrated Planning

To ensure the most effective use of resources, it is recommended that Local Government use an integrated approach to planning for physical activity, in line with the whole of Local Government approach.

This involves:

- Using physical activity to meet other council objectives. For example, improving walking and cycling can help to reconnect communities, create a sense of place, put eyes on the street, improve perceptions of safety and reduce crime whilst reducing carbon emissions by replacing car trips.
- Incorporating opportunities for physical activity within other council plans. For example, Transport Plans can make provisions for walking and cycling for transport.
- Incorporating physical activity within the Strategic Plan and visioning documents.
- Working with neighbouring Local Governments and regional organisations to plan across the region.

Physical Activity Plans

A Physical Activity Plan is a strategic planning document that identifies physical activity as a priority for Local Government. It provides a framework and a set of objectives to assist Local Government to deliver services.

A Physical Activity Plan developed in isolation and as a stand alone document will be limited in its effectiveness and sustainability.

Physical Activity Plans that take a whole of Local Government approach and aim to incorporate physical activity within the strategic directions of the council and the operations of relevant internal Local Government departments, achieve far greater outcomes and are more sustainable.

A Range of Programs and Services

There is a need for a range and variety of locally accessible programs and events that complement the use of existing initiatives. These may be delivered either by the Local Government or with Local Government support to build capacity within other service providers and community groups.

Catering for the needs of the whole community must provide a balance between formal activity such as organised sport and recreation and informal activity including walking, cycling, swimming and dancing.

Community events provide a range of physical, health and social community development benefits and create opportunities to build community connectedness and a sense of place. The community event may be a new initiative or may expand on an existing project.

Targeted Community Opportunities

A number of population groups have lower levels of participation in physical activity including Aboriginal groups, culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) groups, women, parents with young children, older adults and populations in low socio-economic areas.

Many of these groups have unique characteristics and barriers to physical activity and may benefit from participating in activities tailored to their specific needs.
Consideration should be made to provide targeted opportunities for at-risk groups to overcome barriers to participation at whole community events and activities.

Community involvement throughout planning and implementation phases is critical. The community should be empowered to guide the delivery of services by engagement in consultation processes, participation in project committees and direct involvement as program leaders and deliverers.

Where possible, activities should complement and align to national and statewide media strategies and campaigns.

**Built Environments that Support Physical Activity**

There is an accumulating body of evidence which demonstrates the linkages between the design of the built and natural environment and impacts on physical activity population health.

There is a need to identify health as a more sustainable driver of the urban form and provide accessible infrastructure which maximises opportunities for the community to engage in both formal and incidental physical activity.

The provision of safe and supportive environments will provide sustainable physical activity opportunities and contribute to other Local Government community development objectives such as crime prevention and health and wellbeing. A broad strategic approach should be taken to integrate healthy design principles into town planning and urban design.

Currently, the Taskforce, in partnership with the National Heart Foundation, are developing a resource *Healthy Active by Design* to encourage the planning and design of active neighbourhoods and which will be a valuable resource for Local Governments.

**Information Sharing and Raising Awareness**

With 40% of the adult population not getting enough physical activity for their health, the work being done by Local, State and non-Government agencies to develop local opportunities to be healthy and physically active needs to be widely promoted.

Local Government can assist by increasing the community’s awareness, knowledge and understanding of the benefits of physical activity.

**Local Government Advocacy and Support**

The Physical Activity Taskforce works closely with Local Governments to support them in improving physical activity opportunities at a local level. If there are any issues relating to sport, recreation or physical activity that you believe the Taskforce should be aware of, or you would like to see addressed, please be in touch.

**Physical Activity Taskforce**

The Physical Activity Taskforce was established in 2001 to oversee the development and delivery of a whole of government and whole of community approach to increasing physical activity levels in Western Australians. It comprises government, non-government, academic and local government agencies.

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