

> **How to:** Physical Activity Plans



A Guide for Local Government



Background

The number of local governments and other agencies who are developing and implementing Physical Activity Plans reflects the importance of increasing participation in physical activity across the community.

The Local Activity Grants is a joint initiative of the Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce, Western Australian Local Government Association and Lotterywest and has supported a number of local governments to create and implement Physical Activity Plans. Since 2003, a total of 124 projects have been funded across 98 Local Governments through seven rounds of funding. Through these efforts and those of the Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce and its partners, the number of Western Australia's adults participating in sufficient levels of physical activity increased to 59%. With over 40% of the population not participating in enough physical activity for good health, these concerted efforts must continue.

This guide has been developed by the Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce, to assist agencies who wish to develop their own plan and to learn from the lessons of local governments who are leading the way in making physical activity a priority in their community.





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Section 1

Physical Activity Plans – Your Questions Answered

What is a Physical Activity Plan?

A Physical Activity Plan is a strategic planning document that identifies physical activity as a priority for local government, and contains actions aimed at raising awareness and increasing participation in physical activity.

Currently over 40% of the Western Australian adult population is not sufficiently active for good health¹. Increasing physical activity requires a multi sectorial community wide response and commitment, and a Physical Activity Plan addresses how this can be done in the community setting. The plan may include specific data on local participation rates (if available) and attempts to address the low rates of physical activity.

A Physical Activity Plan identifies:

- existing resources that support people to be active;
- community needs and barriers to participation;
- strategies and actions that will increase participation in physical activity;
- measurable goals and a time frame for action; and
- priorities for action and lead agencies/groups.

Supporting the community to be physically active requires a whole of community response. A Plan should extend across all departments of local government and beyond to State government, private and community organisations.



Why have a Physical Activity Plan?

There are many health, social, economic and environmental benefits to be gained when members of the community are more active.

These include:

- saving an estimated \$144 million per year in health costs for WA, if a five per cent increase in activity can be achieved²;
- reducing the incidence of cardio vascular disease, diabetes, stroke, some cancers and overweight and obesity;
- addressing climate change by reducing green house gases and air pollution when people replace car trips with walking or cycling;
- contributing people having a better sense of community; and
- making communities safer as there are more people out and about.

What are the benefits for local government in developing a Physical Activity Plan?

A Physical Activity Plan:

- helps ensure departments work together across local government on physical activity initiatives;
- helps identify and build links with external agencies;
- helps to raise awareness of physical activity among staff and elected members;
- improves resource management through the identification of gaps and duplication;
- creates direction and priorities for physical activity in the future;
- supports the local government strategic plan with links to other plans such as disability access and inclusion, transport, leisure and recreation, TravelSmart, town and regional;
- targets local government spending on activities with the greatest chance of success due to extensive community consultation;
- provides a strong foundation and support for funding applications to State and Federal government agencies and other funding opportunities;
- supports the monitoring of progress in physical activity awareness, participation, environmental change and resource allocation; and
- helps create links between local governments on a regional basis.

¹Milligan, R., McCormack, G., Rosenberg, M. (2007). Physical Activity Levels of Western Australian Adults 2006: Results from the adult physical activity study. Perth, Western Australia: Western Australian Government.

²Stephenson, J., Bauman, A., Armstrong, T., Smith, B., and Bellew, B. (2000). The cost of illness attributable to physical inactivity in Australia: A preliminary study. Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care and the Australian Sports Commission, Canberra.

How does a Physical Activity Plan differ from a recreation or health plan?

A recreation plan is primarily the concern of the recreation, parks and gardens departments in local government. A Physical Activity Plan spans the breadth of local government. A Physical Activity Plan also differs in that it:

- recognises casual recreation or incidental activity. Recreation plans usually focus on facilities and services based around sport;
- recognises physical activity can take place in an unstructured or casual way. It is not just confined to sports grounds but also takes place in public open spaces, natural environments and streetscapes;
- is based on population/public health issues, whereas a health plan is usually focused on environmental health;
- often has a greater emphasis on programs and services than facilities; and
- can involve partnerships beyond sport and recreation including transport, environment, education and commercial sectors.

How does a Physical Activity Plan link to other plans?

A Physical Activity Plan can be developed in a number of different ways and local governments can choose a structure which will best link with the structure of existing council or other agency plans.

Local governments who have written a Physical Activity Plan suggest that it can be:

- written with the same objectives as the larger strategic plan;
- linked to a leisure plan/recreation plan;
- linked to a TravelSmart Plan;
- included in the recreation or leisure plan, although this can sometimes result in the plan being too broad;
- included in the healthy community aspects of local government strategic plans and other action plans within local government;
- linked to Walk WA: A Walking Strategy for Western Australian 2007 – 2020; and
- linked to the Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce strategic plan/objective areas.



Section 2

Preparing a Physical Activity Plan

At the start of the development process a number of key questions should be considered.

These include:

1. Do we require a working/steering group and if so, who should be on it?
2. Who should write the plan?
3. What is the title of the plan and what is its time frame?
4. How much time is required to write the plan?

Working Group

The input of a working or steering group to guide the development and implementation of the Physical Activity Plan can add considerable value to the outcomes of the plan. This group can guide the development, structure and processes involved in compiling the plan and support its implementation and annual review, following endorsement of the plan by Council. Project officers who have worked with such groups have described them as 'hugely beneficial'. Ideally the working group should have representation from a wide variety of local government staff and elected members, as well as external agencies. This can provide a broad variety of expertise.

The following representatives could be considered for inclusion:

- local government - social services, recreation, leisure, health, community development, club development, parks, planning and councillors;
- Government agencies – metropolitan and regional Departments of Health, Education & Training, Planning and Infrastructure, Sport and Recreation, Disability Services (local area coordinators), Police, Environment, Crime Prevention, and WA Country Health Service Population Health Units (health promotion officers);
- academics;
- community members and/or existing groups – Youth Advisory Committees, Ratepayers Associations, Seniors, Sporting Associations and interested individuals; and
- Divisions of General Practice.

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It may be possible to link the Physical Activity Plan working group to an existing group such as the TravelSmart Advisory Group or Interagency Forum, thus reducing duplication and work for agencies and community members.

No matter what the group is called or what its role is, it is important to develop a brief document that clearly outlines the groups terms of reference and time frames. This ensures that all stakeholders are aware of the requirements and obligations of their participation.

Who should write the plan?

Deciding who should write the plan will depend on a number of factors. Many local governments may have existing staff who have the skills and time to run the project. An existing staff member can usually move through the organisation and sometimes process paperwork quicker than a consultant.

Other local governments may consider engaging a consultant to develop the plan. A consultant working along side a staff member can help speed the process and also build skills and knowledge for the local government.

Whether a staff member or an external consultant is engaged, it is important to write a clear and precise brief to ensure the required outcomes are obtained. It must be clear that the outcome is to write a Physical Activity Plan, which includes all aspects of physical activity (e.g. promotion, programs, supportive environments, facilities) and is inclusive of all members of the community. It is not only a plan for people engaged in organised or structured sport.





Title and time frame

The plan could be either a strategic, business, action or implementation plan. The scope of the project will help determine the structure and title of the Physical Activity Plan, who writes the plan and how detailed it will be.

Points to consider include:

- strategic plans usually have a time frame of up to ten years, however five year plans can be more appropriate in rapidly growing areas;
- synchronising time frames of existing plans so that they coincide. e.g. if linked with a five year Leisure Plan, the Physical Activity Plan should also be for five years, or if the local government's Strategic Plan has three more years to run, the Physical Activity Plan should also be three years in duration;
- some plans are aligned to the Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce strategy i.e. to 2011;
- most Physical Activity Plans are strategic and have an action or business plan (one to two years) to underpin it;
- review is necessary each year to monitor progress and review actions and strategies;
- the reality of implementation means it can take longer than anticipated if the Council and staff are not fully supportive; and
- ten years can give departments and stakeholders flexibility to push time frames back.

Time allocation to write the plan

The length of time required to develop a Physical Activity Plan is usually between six and twelve months. This allows time to engage an external consultant or have a staff member develop the plan, collect the required data and engage the community in the consultation process.

Certain tasks in the plan's development can take several months. Auditing can be a time consuming activity, especially if audit tools need to be developed (see page 12). Community consultation can also take considerable time and is dependent on the methods used (focus groups, community surveys, public comment, workshops etc). Although these tasks can be conducted concurrently a number of months should be allocated to do this thoroughly.

Endorsement by Council can also take a few months, depending on whether changes to the draft document are required.

Section 3

Writing a Physical Activity Plan

Like any plan, accurate information is required to ensure the best chance of achieving aims and outcomes.

Data collection – community profile and context

Prior to writing the plan it is important to collect data for a community profile. This can include reviewing:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data for current community profiles and projections;
- ABS data overlaid on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping system to determine localities which may have large populations at risk of low physical activity levels e.g. people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD), low socio-economic status (SES) groups;
- local government reports and policies;
- other plans from your local government. Analysis to identify linkages between policy and the Physical Activity Plan should be undertaken;
- reports from external agencies e.g. Physical Activity Taskforce Survey fact sheets, Regional Development Commissions, Public Health Units; and
- strategic plans, policies and links local government departments already have with physical activity.

Data collection from other agencies including other local governments, State and Federal government agencies, community organisations and research organisations can add value to the plan. Information can include:

- Physical Activity Plans and resources from other local governments, especially those with similar communities e.g. isolated, rural, high number of CALD, youth populations, neighbouring local governments. Search and share information on the WA Local Government portal www.councils.wa.gov.au; and
- research from overseas and/or interstate initiatives.



Review of existing resources

There is a wide range of resources in all communities which support and encourage people to be active. Many of these are under utilised and/or unknown as few local governments or agencies have all this information in one location.

A summary or audit of these resources is an important part of the plan development. When combined with community input, this information helps to identify gaps and to determine the needs of the community. It also provides a base to measure change that comes about as a result of the development and implementation of the Physical Activity Plan.

Auditing can take some time and careful consideration should be given to the purpose of the audit and what use the data will have. The resources that require auditing will also be determined by the extent of information available and how up-to-date this is.

The table on page 12 suggests resources for auditing you may wish to consider and some methods and tools that can be used. Identifying tools that will help collect the data and who can help to collect this information is important. Existing staff, community volunteers or university students can assist in the data collection process and it is essential that they are trained or briefed to help ensure accuracy and consistency of information.

There are a number of audit tools available to collect data on the various types of facilities and programs. The existing tools and resources listed may be used as is, or adapted. If tools are developed to meet specific needs, they should be piloted prior to use on a wide scale. Wherever possible, gather quantitative answers (e.g. using closed questions), which will enable easier data collation and analysis.



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Auditing guide

What to Audit	Details	Method	Existing Tools	Standards
Community facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation centres • Swimming pools • Halls • Club rooms Sports courts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews, photos usage patterns • Asset management plan • Community survey – user groups • Financial audit, percentage usage audits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset Management Guide – DSR • City of Fremantle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Against own LG facilities • Standards Australia
Private facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gyms • Squash courts • Scout/Guide halls • PCYC • Golf clubs • Yacht clubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce business lists • Questionnaire • Physical audit 		
Public open space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks • Ovals • Beach and river foreshores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community questionnaires • User surveys • Physical audit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • POST – Public • Open Space Tool – UWA • Park User Satisfaction • Benchmark Survey 	
Paths and trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk/ cycle / dual use • Recreational trails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical audit • Community questionnaire • Path user forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk Friendly Assessment Guide- DSR • Bikeability checklist • Walkability checklist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards Australia • Disability Standards • Aust Roads • Main Roads WA Policy • Liveable Neighborhoods- DPI
Other community facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education – primary and secondary schools, TAFEs, Universities • Childcare • End of trip facilities – cycle storage, change rooms showers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community questionnaire • Physical audit • Interviews 		
Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government • Government agencies • Private 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone surveys • Local papers • Websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer assisted telephone interview (CATI) 	
Community organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting venues • Activities • Membership number/ demographics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing mail out list • Questionnaire / letter • Yellow pages • Notice boards • Word of mouth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey tools 	
Sporting groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities • Training • Schedules • Membership number/ demographics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing mail out list • Questionnaire • Letters • Yellow pages • Notice boards • Word of mouth • LG lease agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey tools 	
Skills (regional areas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Known leaders • LG staff • Community members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some information can come from needs assessment • Skills register 		



Community consultation

Involving the community in the development of the Physical Activity Plan is vital. It can determine what types of physical activity people like to participate in and what barriers currently exist that restrict their participation.

There are many methods that can be used to obtain this information. Usually a combination of different methods is required to reach different community groups. Needs assessments should not only focus on groups who are using existing facilities or participating in activities (e.g. sport clubs) but seek information from people who are more likely to be inactive such as people who are socially isolated, have low incomes or transport difficulties.

The challenge is to find methods to reach these groups. Methods could include:

- conducting focus or discussion groups with groups identified as at risk in the literature e.g. seniors, business people, young mums;
- mail outs or newspaper insert surveys (these usually have low return rates);
- organising a 'come and try' day for different target groups and talk with those who attend. e.g. exercise class for new mums, social dancing for seniors, break dance workshop for teenagers;
- visiting schools to get youth input;
- linking with crèche facilities to get mothers involved;
- attending community groups (e.g. Probus, service organisations, University of the Third Age, cultural groups) to give a presentation and encourage discussion;
- a phone survey;
- an email or online survey of a workforce;
- intercept surveys in public places e.g. shopping centres; and
- asking community members to prioritise their needs to identify which ones will encourage greatest participation and which should be actioned first.



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Writing the plan

The Physical Activity Plan is drafted after compiling and analysing the data that has been collected.

The format of the plan will depend on some of the decisions made earlier, such as whether it will be a strategic or action plan and how it will link to other plans from your local government.

Plans are frequently broken into outcomes or areas of need as follows.

1. Communications and information - increase awareness of the issue and resources available.
2. Service and program development – this can include facility programming.
3. Facilities – development, management and maintenance.
4. Access, equity and safety.
5. Partnership development.
6. Capacity building – skills and knowledge development of volunteer and paid staff.

More detailed strategies or priorities can be included under the above headings. In addition to identifying outcome areas and strategies, the following should be identified:

- lead agency, department or stakeholders;
- time frame (short, medium or long term) and / or priority (high, medium or low);
- resource implications; and
- key performance indicators.

The above information can be captured or summarised in a matrix as illustrated below.

Strategy	Actions	Lead dept/ agency	Timeframe	Stakeholders	Indicators

Feedback and consultation

Once drafted, the plan needs to be circulated to the working group, local government staff, government agencies and made available to the community for feedback and comments.

The plan can be promoted via the media, websites, council newsletters, email, public notices and be available for comment in the library. A period of one month is usually suitable to allow for comment.



Section 4

Implementing the Plan

The development and production of the Physical Activity Plan can help place and keep physical activity on the agenda of local government. Like any plan, the Physical Activity Plan's outcomes will only be achieved if those who have produced and endorsed the plan feel some ownership and keep it alive.

Having the Council endorse the Physical Activity Plan is vital for its implementation, as resources will be required to action the strategies outlined in the plan. This will require the support of elected members, local government departments and staff.

Council endorsement and commitment begins from the concept stage and requires effort throughout the plan's development. It should not take place as the last step of the planning process.

Strategies that can help achieve ownership and endorsement of the Physical Activity Plan are outlined below.

How can you assist local government staff/departments to own and deliver outcomes?

- Meet with departmental staff and councilors to raise awareness about physical activity issues and their relevance.
- Conduct a staff event (e.g. pedometer challenge) whilst the Physical Activity Plan is being developed to encourage interest and participation in physical activity.
- Develop the plan so that local government is a facilitator rather than a provider of all of the strategies and actions.
- Act as a champion for physical activity and advocate within your local government and the community.

How do you resource the plan?

- It is essential to talk to senior managers to get a budget allocated to the planning process itself, and the plan's subsequent implementation.
- Have an elected member chair the working group or committee.
- Allocate tasks, timelines, etc to individual departments within local government.
- Involve management on the working group or committee as attendance at meetings can lead to some financial or staffing commitments being made.
- Seek external funding or matched funding.

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- Where possible, combine local government and external agency resources.
- Link Physical Activity Plan objectives to the local government Strategic Plan. This leads to the Council directing departments to participate.

How can the plan be kept alive?

- Include key performance indicators and review the plan annually. Report back to Council and staff on the progress of the plan.
- Work with elected members, community and all local government staff to ensure the plan is implemented.
- Actively involve councillors and staff members in the process e.g. reference group, attending focus groups/community consultations.
- Make use of existing groups in the community. Put physical activity on the agenda of each of those groups.
- Develop community ownership of the plan and involvement in the review process.
- Promote the plan to peers as often as possible.
- Enter the plan or strategies from the plan in award schemes e.g. Local Government Awards.
- Promote successes to the community and media.

Top ten tips for an effective Physical Activity Plan

1. Involve the Council and community earlier rather than later. Identify some champions.
2. Set realistic timelines for the research, consultation, writing and obtaining Council endorsement of the plan.
3. Plan ahead – Write a brief that reflects what you want from the plan.
4. Check credentials and other products from consultants before employing.
5. Provide feedback to the community and agencies with whom you consult.
6. Keep the working group involved.
7. Keep the staff and elected members informed throughout the process.
8. Ensure local government staff manage and stay involved in the project.
9. Allow appropriate levels of resourcing.
10. Celebrate and promote achievements and success.



Section 5

Further reading and resources

Creating Active Communities – Physical Activity Guidelines for Local Councils.

NSW Department of Local Government, NSW Sport and Recreation, National Heart Foundation of Australia (NSW Division). 2001.

Exercise is Daily Life: Supportive Environments. Commonwealth of Australia, South Australia. Wright, C., MacDougall, C., Atkinson, R & Booth, B. 1996.

Factors influencing the use of Physical Activity Facilities: Results from Qualitative Research. Corti, B.G., Donovan, R.J. & Holman, C.D.J. 1996, Health Promotion Journal of Australia, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 16-21.

Healthy by Design: A Planner's Guide to environments for active living. National Heart Foundation of Australia (Victorian Division). 2004.

Promoting Physical Activity and Active Living in Urban Environmental: The role of local governments. Edwards, P. & Tsouros, A. 2006. World Health Organisation.

Shaping up 2nd Ed: Shaping urban communities to support public transport, cycling and walking in Queensland. QGPS Queensland Transport. 1999, Brisbane.

Supportive Environments for Physical Activity – Guidelines for Local Councils. National Heart Foundation of Australia, South Australia. 1999.

The descriptive epidemiology of a sedentary lifestyle in adult Australians. Owen N & Bauman A. 1992, International Journal Epidemiology, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 305-310.

Audit tools

Towards Walk Friendly Environments - Department of Sport and Recreation (contact DSR on 9492 9700)

Public Open Space Tool University of Western Australia
www.populationhealth.uwa.edu.au/go/C_BEH/reside/publicopenspace

Bikeability Checklist
www.bicyclinginfo.org/library/details.cfm?id=3

Walkability checklist
www.walkinginfo.org/library/details.cfm?id=12

How to: Physical Activity Plans

Department of Sport and Recreation www.dsr.wa.gov.au

How to guides

http://www.dsr.wa.gov.au/scripts/nc.dll?DSR.262248:STANDARD::pc=PC_162

- how to - community consultation
- how to - consultancy
- how to - feasibility
- how to - management plan
- how to - needs assessment
- how to - programming

Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce www.beactive.wa.gov.au

Case Studies - www.beactive.wa.gov.au/resources_localgov_casestudies.asp

- Case Study 3 - Peel Participate Play
- Case Study 4 - Fremantle Physical Activity Strategic Plan
- Case Study 8 - Get Active Wanneroo 10,000

How to guide - www.beactive.wa.gov.au/resources_localgov_howtoguides.asp

How to Promote Walking – a Guide for Local Government

Local Activity Grants - www.beactive.wa.gov.au/grants.asp

An initiative of the Taskforce and WALGA, supported by Lotterywest, offers matched grants for local governments and community groups to encourage new and innovative approaches to increasing physical activity.

Walk WA Strategy - www.beactive.wa.gov.au/whatswalkwa.asp

An initiative of the Taskforce and Department for Planning and Infrastructure to promote walking for recreation and transport throughout Western Australia.



Local Government Physical Activity Plans

Local Governments with endorsed Physical Activity Plans are listed below. A number of other local governments are currently developing plans. A selection of Physical Activity Plans are available on the Taskforce website at www.beactive.wa.gov.au/resources_localgov.asp.

City of Bunbury Contact: 08 9792 7000	Physical Activity Plan May 2006
Shire of Capel Contact: 08 9727 0222	Sport & Recreation Strategic Plan 2005 – 2015
Shire of Dardanup Contact: 08 9724 0000	Physical Activity Plan 2004 – 2007
Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup Contact: 08 9780 4200	Healthy Community Plan 2005 – 2008
Shire of Dowerin Contact: 08 96311202	Physical Activity Plan 2007 – 2010
City of Fremantle Contact: 08 9432 9999	Physical Activity Strategic Plan 2005 – 2009
Shire of Goomalling Contact: 08 9629 1101	Physical Activity Plan 2007 – 2010
City of Mandurah Contact: 08 9550 3777	Mandurah Active Recreation Strategy Plan 1999 – 2005
Shire of Nannup Contact: 08 9756 1018	Physical Activity Plan 2005 – 2008
City of Perth Contact: 08 9461 3333	Physical Activity Plan 2006-2009
Town of Victoria Park Contact: 08 9311 8111	Bike and Walk Plan
City of Wanneroo Contact: 08 9405 5000	Get Active Wanneroo 10,000

Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce

Perth, Western Australia.

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For further information go to

www.beactive.wa.gov.au

or phone 08 9492 9630