



ACTIVE FOR LIFE

COMMUNITY GYMS A STEP BY STEP GUIDE
for the establishment of not-for-profit
community gyms in rural and regional South Australia



Government of South Australia
Office for Recreation and Sport

be active.



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FOREWORD

The South Australian Office for Recreation and Sport (ORS) recognises the significant role physical activity plays in improving health, wellbeing and quality of life through its vision of ‘all South Australians enjoying lives enriched through participation in active recreation and sport.’

In rural and regional South Australia the establishment and operation of not for profit community gyms has become increasingly popular. Such gyms provide a low cost physical activity alternative to the mainstream sport and recreation opportunities that predominantly exist in regional areas. Due to the increasing success and awareness of these developments, the Office for Recreation and Sport began receiving requests from the public for information and support regarding the establishment of such facilities within their local community. During this time it was identified that a lack of public documentation was available to assist communities with such developments. Consistent with the Office for Recreation and Sport mission to ‘support and strengthen the capacity of the active recreation and sport industry,’ a commitment was made to address this area of need.

The following resource is the result, and aims to assist communities seeking information on setting up and maintaining a sustainable not-for-profit community gym in their local region. While the major focus is on indoor facilities, Section 5 provides a brief overview on outdoor fitness gyms as a possible alternative.

In compiling this resource, relevant information and data was gathered through consultations with key personnel and surveys of existing community gyms both in SA and interstate. The survey data collated from this consultation process has been vital in identifying the key points addressed in this resource.

It is hoped this resource will provide the relevant information, case studies, research and resource links to motivate and assist regional and rural communities throughout South Australia to consider a community gym as a means of providing alternative low cost physical activities.

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- **be active** Field Officers
- Sports Medicine Australia (SA Branch)
- Recreation SA
- Office for Volunteers
- Department of Education and Children’s Services
- Fitness Australia
- Local Community Insurance Services.

The Office for Recreation and Sport would also like to thank the people currently operating the following community gyms throughout South Australia and interstate who generously devoted their time to either provide feedback as part of the consultation process or respond to the survey:

- Ceduna Community Gym
- Crystal Brook Fitness Centre
- ‘Gym Works’ Cleve Community Fitness Gym
- Jamestown Gymnasium Centre
- Karoonda Community Gym
- Kimba Health and Fitness Centre
- Lock Community Centre
- Nunga Gym, Lower Murray Nungas Club, Murray Bridge
- Orroroo Community Gym
- Pinnaroo Community Gym
- Port Neill & Districts Community Sports Hub
- Quorn Gym
- Collingwood Community Gym (Victoria)
- Cunderdin Meckering Community Gym (Western Australia)
- Victoria Plains Community Gym (Western Australia)
- West Winds Community Gym (Tasmania).



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PREAMBLE

WHO IS THE RESOURCE FOR?

Provision of physical activity is an important strategy of the current government as a means of improving the health, quality of life and well-being of South Australians. It is a key priority of the State Strategic Plan.

Physical activity plays a significant role in preventing premature death and illness, and being active also helps to maintain a healthy weight, promotes positive mental health and contributes to social connectedness.¹

The Office for Recreation and Sport (ORS) has identified regional delivery as a priority area for action for physical activity initiatives. It is recognised that not-for-profit community gyms can be an important part of the equation in providing opportunities for regional and rural South Australians to increase their physical activity levels.

Recent research indicates there has been an increase in physical activity participation rates nationally and this has been the result of increased participation in non-organised activities such as walking and aerobics. This supports evidence indicating that the most likely place for physical activity to occur is in the local neighbourhood.²

Therefore, the motivation for establishing a rural community gym has been driven by (among other things), the following key influences:

- passionate community residents with an interest in physical activity
- community sporting teams looking to improve training facilities

- local authorities wanting to offer greater opportunities for their communities
- health or fitness professionals wanting to improve the quality of life for the community
- education authorities interested in increasing physical activity for children and youth
- isolated communities without access to commercial fitness centres.

While there may be the passion, interest or motivation to establish a community gym, it is unlikely this will be matched by the experience or expertise in the community to take on this challenge. This resource will provide the basic skills, knowledge and research to go with the desire, interest and enthusiasm. Many of the findings were gleaned from close consultation with existing facilities and experts in the field of sport facility management and operation.

RESOURCE STRUCTURE

While this resource aims to assist both new and existing operators of community gyms in the establishment and management of such facilities, it is not meant to be a prescriptive tool on every aspect of community gyms as each circumstance and community will be uniquely different. Additionally, the full complexities of operating facilities of this nature cannot be comprehensively covered within one document; therefore, the resource sets out to guide the critical aspects, stages and common elements of community gyms. Additional reading will be listed throughout the resource with references highlighted and, where necessary, appendices attached. The information contained in this resource is structured into five sections, four of which are outlined below focusing on indoor community gyms with the fifth section providing an overview on outdoor community gyms.



Figure 1: Resource Structure

¹ *Physical Activity among South Australian Adults, summary report*—Sept 2007, a joint initiative of SA Health, Office for Recreation and Sport and Attorney General's Department and the Physical Activity Council.

² *Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sport Annual Report, 2008 Australian Government, Australian Sports Commission, Department of Health and Ageing.*

SECTION ONE: DEFINING COMMUNITY GYMS

1.1 WHAT IS A COMMUNITY GYM?

A community gym is a facility that offers or makes available equipment and/or programs that encourage levels of deliberate physical activity predominantly in areas that would generally not support a commercially viable operation.

There is no one model for a community gym as the type and layout must take into consideration a range of factors, many of which will be discussed in detail throughout this resource.

1.2 INDOOR COMMUNITY GYMS

The makeup, programming, partner involvement, management and location of indoor community gyms vary within each community, as does the cost of establishing and managing such a gym.

Table 1 provides an overview of the structural characteristics of existing community gyms throughout South Australia and interstate.

Each of the areas identified in Table 1 as well as other key considerations in the establishment of an indoor community gym including operational costs, risk management, research and planning are discussed in greater detail throughout this resource. In addition to this a number of featured case studies from currently operating community gyms highlighting specific aspects of operation that encourage good practice or innovation to increase patronage or improve management are also integrated within the following sections.

It is anticipated that together, this information will provide you with a comprehensive insight into what a not for profit indoor community gym may look like and the features and processes to be considered when investigating or undertaking the establishment and management of such a facility.



Table 1: Overview of Existing Indoor Community Gyms

Gym	Location	Est.	Associated Partners/Agencies	Management Structure	Programs	Tip
Ceduna Community Gym	Sports club	2007	Ceduna Indigenous community, community sporting committees, Ceduna Area School and Ceduna-Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service, Ceduna Regional Health Service		Free weights, weight machines, cardio machines, fitness classes	
Crystal Brook Fitness Centre	Disused kindergarten building	1999	Port Pirie Regional Council	Volunteer committee	Free weights, cardio machines, fitness classes	Good practice recommends that at least two people be present when the gym is in use
Gym Works Cleve Community Fitness Centre	Old football change rooms	2006	Cleve Sporting Bodies, Eastern Eyre Health	Volunteer sub-committee formed with support of Cleve Sporting Bodies Inc.	Free weights, cardio machines, fitness classes	Use volunteers to reduce staffing costs, leaving more funds for equipment replacement
Jamestown Gymnasium Centre	Purpose-built centre	2003	Jamestown Hydrotherapy Pool	Volunteer committee made up of volunteers and local council members	Machine weights, cardio machines	
Karoonda Community Gym	Old council depot at sports oval	2002	District Council of Karoonda East Murray	Council ultimately makes decisions but two community members are also entrusted to make decisions	Free weights, cardio machines, tai chi	Look for opportunities to offer special interest sessions eg healthy eating and exercise sessions
Kimba Health and Fitness Centre	Show pavilion	2009	District Council of Kimba	Volunteer committee of seven members Gym in process of becoming incorporated association	Free weights, weight machines, cardio machines, fitness classes, table tennis	Start small and build when you can
Lock Community Centre	Disused bank building	2009	Lock and District Community Sports Centre committee	Volunteer committee	Free weights, weight machines, cardio machines, fitness classes, swim classes	Offering incentives helps increase membership
Nunga Gym	Aboriginal community centre	2007	Lower Murray Nungas Club, Murray Mallee Community Health	Managed by Murray Mallee Community Health	Free weights, weight machines, cardio machines	Use the gym to provide a positive culture for the local community
Orroroo Community Gym	Town hall	2008	Regional health service, local council	Incorporated association	Weight machines, cardio machines, Pilates, Mature Movers classes	Consider becoming an incorporated body to be eligible to apply for government funding

Gym	Location	Est.	Associated Partners/Agencies	Management Structure	Programs	Tip
Pinnaroo Community Gym	Soldiers Memorial Hall	2006	Mallee Health Service	Mallee Health Service Not an incorporated association	Free weights, weight machines, cardio machines, fitness classes	Important to have a management committee responsible for oversight of the gym
Port Neill & Districts Community Sports Hub	Sports club		Community sporting clubs	Volunteer management committee of five members Incorporated association under Port Neill Community Sports Club	Free weights, weight machines, fitness classes	
Quorn Gym	Ambulance shed at hospital	2003	Quorn Hospital	Run and managed through health services Not incorporated	Free weights, weight machines, cardio machines	Don't reinvent the wheel; use advice from other gyms
Collingwood Community Gym (Victoria)	Housing estate building	2006	City of Yarra, Community Health Centre, Dept. of Housing	Paid manager on behalf of council Incorporated association under Yarra Leisure	Free weights, weight machines, cardio machines, fitness classes	
Cunderdin Meckering Community Gym (WA)	Town Hall	2008	Shire of Cunderdin	Managed by formally appointed committee of council comprising council representatives and volunteers	Free weights, weight machines, cardio machines	Consider using the gym as a point of social interaction among community members
Victoria Plains (WA)	Recreation hall	2009	Victoria Plains Shire Council	Council managed	Free weights, weight machines, cardio machines, fitness classes	
West Winds Community Gym (Tasmania)	Community centre hall	2007	West Winds Community Centre	West Winds Community Centre committee Incorporated association	Free weights, cardio machines, fitness classes	Offering child care will increase services and the appeal of the gym

1.3 COMMON ELEMENTS

In summarising the key characteristics of an indoor community gym, the following can be said:

- Indoor gyms are:
 - not for profit with a focus on fitness and physical activity opportunities for local residents
 - generally in an indoor community venue such as a school, health centre, community hall, etc.
 - normally operated by local community people who are volunteers
 - managed by a community body

- open at times that suit the needs of the community who use it

- focussed on providing programs and activities the community needs or wants rather than operating for a profit.

- Community gyms may therefore be used for:
 - fitness
 - rehabilitation
 - social networking
 - physical activity.

SECTION TWO: ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY GYMS

This section takes a closer look at the critical steps required when considering whether a community gym would suit your community.

2.1 HOW FEASIBLE IS YOUR GYM?

A successful community gym will be the result of careful and thorough planning well before it is up and running. Without adequate planning, the project may never even get past the planning stage or it is very likely to fail.

Therefore, it is vital that a feasibility study be undertaken before any progress is made towards funding and/or development. Without a clear direction, how will you know where you are going?

A feasibility study will address the issues involved in establishing and maintaining a gym and will enable those involved to make a decision about whether to proceed with the idea.

The feasibility study is a process for determining the viability of the initiative and will provide a clear direction for its development and delivery. It is also a process for making sound decisions and:

- is driven by research and analysis
- involves consultation with key stakeholders
- analyses and clarifies issues and areas of concern or uncertainty
- will involve basic modelling and testing of concepts and approaches.

There is no universal format for a feasibility study as each should be adapted and shaped to meet the specific needs of any given situation.

That is, the format of determining the feasibility of a public facility with a need focus compared to a private enterprise with a commercial objective will of course be very different. However, the steps and stages involved are similar and should include those highlighted in Figure 2.

Stage 1 Working Group	Identify key stakeholders and gather interest for the project. Form a working group to oversee the project.
Stage 2 Research	Research similar models, learn from their strengths and weaknesses and consider your stakeholder expectations.
Stage 3 Identify Need	Is there an expressed need for a gym in your community? Where else can people exercise?
Stage 4 Site Options	What sites are available and which is the best option and why?
Stage 5 Preliminary Costings	What will it cost to get up and running? Consider both capital (initial) and operational (ongoing) costs.
Stage 6 Operational Analysis	Determine potential risks associated with design, management and operation of the facility.
Stage 7 Business Case	Based on the findings from previous stages, develop a set of options for consideration. Which one is best?

Figure 2: Feasibility Study Approach

2.2 STAGE ONE: WORKING GROUP

Get interested community people on board as well as developing links with supportive agencies, organisations and individuals with access to funding, equipment and facilities. Approach the local school, council, health service, **be active** field officer, and sporting club. Establish a steering committee/working party to conduct a needs analysis, spread the workload and undertake the initial planning.

Establish initial aims of the facility, which may include:

- providing the community with an opportunity to become fitter
- developing better healthy lifestyle outcomes
- engaging socially with other community members
- increasing levels of physical activity
- rehabilitation.

2.3 STAGE TWO: RESEARCH

Undertake the following when researching the possibility of a community gym in your area:

- Determine the community need and demand
- Speak with other providers of similar facilities
- Speak with state and national industry organisations such as Recreation SA and Fitness Australia for advice, support and background information
- Determine likely user groups and what the gym will be used for e.g. fitness, rehabilitation, group exercise etc
- Identify who is likely to use the gym.

Basically, gather as much information as you can to determine what your gym will look like, how you can learn from others, and what to avoid or do to make your facility a success. Learn from others that have already started the journey or are running community gyms.

2.4 STAGE THREE: IDENTIFYING THE NEED

While the initial catalyst for the development of a community gym could come from a number of avenues including an expressed demand by the community, need must be warranted and quantifiable. Ultimately, some agency or person will be responsible for funding, managing and maintaining the asset; therefore, needs must clearly articulate the benefits of such a facility in your community. To properly identify a need for a community gym:

- Survey or personally canvas the community and ask members for their thoughts. Document this as both quantitative (numbers and statistics) as well as qualitative (personal views) evidence
- Hold a community forum or public meeting, which may also help in garnering community interest and excitement
- Undertake an audit of existing facilities and services in the area. Can people access programs your gym will offer?

2.5 STAGE FOUR: SITE OPTIONS

When assessing the best site for a facility, consider the following options:

Local schools

Your first approach should be made to the Principal to discuss availability of the facilities for use and to negotiate suitable arrangements. It should be noted in some cases there may be some constraints on the use of school facilities by community groups and sporting organisations, which can be discussed with the Principal. There is a set of guidelines that have been produced to facilitate the use of schools by community groups in South Australia.³

Sports clubrooms/change rooms

A number of existing gyms use sporting clubrooms or change rooms. These facilities are often restrictive in size and suitability given the purpose they were established for. Access to such facilities will also be limited as they will be used by sporting teams for training, matches and possibly meetings.



The converted football change rooms which now host the Cleve Community Gym.

³ Use of departmental sites for other than departmental purposes (updated December 2008), Department of Education and Children's Services, Government of South Australia.

Council owned community halls

Often these are vacant for long periods so accessing them is easier and they are probably available at a lower cost. Councils are generally keen to optimise use of facilities and may provide a suitable short-term solution. Often these venues will already be set up for community use with toilets, space, car parking, etc.

Hospital/health centre

Hospitals or health care centres have significant benefits particularly related to the links with health and medical matters. They may also be better established with access to appropriate equipment while offering more space. Many existing gyms are paired with primary health care facilities. The link between rehabilitation programs and physiotherapy services provides an ideal synergy with a community gym. It should be noted that in some cases there may be some constraints on the use of these facilities because of regulations and/or policies relating to access and supervision requirements.

Discontinued retail store/business office

Some regional centres have vacant stores and offices that could be suitable as a community gym. Generally, these buildings will be smaller in size but they will have access to toilets, a kitchen and some car parking.

Purpose-built facility

The ideal situation is when a community is able to source funding (e.g. grant, donation, bequeath) to build a facility designed to suit the specific purpose. While the costs to establish such a facility may be more expensive than the other venues previously highlighted, it will generally provide a more modern atmosphere, appealing location and allow for more design options.

2.6 STAGE FIVE: PRELIMINARY COSTINGS

Full financials cannot be completed until the facility has been secured and equipment and staffing have been identified; however, for the purpose of preliminary feasibility, the following assumptions should be made in relation to the establishment, operations and maintenance of a community gym:

- Capital establishment will include:
 - building costs
 - equipment costs
 - fit out costs
 - legal and compliance costs (Incorporation).
- Operational costs entail:
 - staffing/volunteers
 - rent/hire/lease
 - utilities (power, water)
 - insurance/licenses/accreditation
 - child care (staffing, equipment)
 - administration (printing, signage, advertising)
 - updating legal and compliance requirements.
- Maintenance and replacement costs include:
 - general maintenance of equipment or building
 - replacements.

A community gym is generally run as a not-for-profit entity; however, not for profit does not necessarily mean subsidised. It can mean that any 'surpluses' (after all operating expenses) are returned to the business or service itself rather than being distributed to shareholders. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the gym operates, as much as possible, as a viable and sustainable venture with the operational considerations discussed in stage six explored.

Table 2 provides a summary of establishment and operational costs incurred by a number of community gyms currently in operation. The latter is not comprehensive of all gyms surveyed due to the amount of information disclosed.⁴

⁴ Information shown has been gathered from consultation with existing gyms and, given the information provided at the time of preparing this resource, is as accurate and exhaustive as possible.

Ceduna Community Gym							
Establishment Costs		Funds Sourced		Operating Costs		Fees and Charges	
Building	\$10,000 (redesigning)	Govt grants and self funded	\$100,000	Staffing	Nil (all volunteers)	Users	\$10 per visit Monthly price \$60 (concession available)
Equipment	\$50,000						
Fit out	\$40,000						
Gym Works, Cleve Community Fitness Gym							
Establishment Costs		Funds Sourced		Operating Costs		Fees and Charges	
Building	\$5,000	Govt grants, self funded and donations	\$40,000	Staffing	Nil (all volunteers)	Users	\$6 per visit Annual fee \$75 (\$60 seniors)
Equipment	\$20,000			Rent	\$1,000		
Fit out	\$5,000						
Crystal Brook Fitness Centre							
Establishment Costs		Funds Sourced		Operating Costs		Fees and Charges	
Building	Nil	Self funded	\$4,000	Staffing	Covered through user fees	Users	\$5 per visit Annual fee \$160 (concession available)
Equipment	\$4,000			Utilities	\$400		
				Equipment	\$400 (repairs)		
				Rent	Nil		
				Office Admin	\$100		
				Insurance	\$1,200		
Karoonda Community Gym							
Establishment Costs		Funds Sourced		Operating Costs		Fees and Charges	
Equipment	\$10,000	Govt grant and fundraising	\$10,000	Staffing	Nil (all volunteers)	Users	\$2 per visit \$50 annual use
Fit out (carpet)	\$500			Equipment Maint.	\$300		
				Rent	\$260		

Table 2: Overview of establishment and operational costs

Table 2 continued: Overview of establishment and operational costs

Kimba Health and Fitness Centre							
Establishment Costs		Funds Sourced		Operating Costs		Fees and Charges	
Building	Nil	Govt grant, fundraising and donations	\$32,000	Staffing	Nil (all volunteers)	Users	\$5 per visit Annual fee \$50 (\$30 for students/pensioners)
Equipment	\$28,000			Utilities	\$200		
Fit out	\$500			Equip	\$1,500		
Insurance	\$1,800			Rent	\$500		
Incorporation	\$150			Office Admin	\$500 (volunteer committee)		
Orroroo Community Gym							
Establishment Costs		Funds Sourced		Operating Costs		Fees and Charges	
Building	Nil	Local govt grant and self funded	\$7,500	Staffing	\$5,000 (1 Part Time Instructor and 1 Part Time Manager)	Users	\$5 per visit (\$3 concession) \$100 for half year (\$60 concession)
Equipment	\$6,000			Office admin/ insurance	\$2,000		
Insurance	\$1,000			Lease	\$1 per year		
Miscellaneous	\$500						
Westwinds Community Gym (Tasmania)							
Establishment Costs		Funds Sourced		Operating Costs		Fees and Charges	
Equipment	Donated	Govt grant, self funded and fund-raising	\$5,000	Child care	\$600	Users	\$5 per fitness class, \$2 for own exercise program \$2 childcare
Fit out	Volunteer labour			Rent	\$1,000		
				Equip	\$5,000		
				Staffing	Donations from gym users		

2.7 STAGE SIX: OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS

Some of the operational aspects of the facility are discussed in the following section, but consideration must also be given to:

- Who will be the main users of the facility?
- How will you market the centre?
- How much will you charge?
- Will the centre have staff, structured programs or solely free weights and machines for casual use?
- What times will the facility be open?
- What access is there to trained/qualified staff?

2.8 STAGE SEVEN: BUSINESS CASE

With plenty of information now gathered, it is time to put forward a business case to identify the options for progressing your gym. This will include an assessment and summary of the previous five stages and should include a 'next steps' section to identify:

- how funding is envisaged
- timelines for development
- a review period
- what partners will be included that may assist in:
 - sourcing funding
 - providing a facility
 - supporting volunteers/staff
 - access to qualified professionals (fitness leaders, health workers, recreation officers)
 - accessing equipment
 - accessing potential members/users
 - supporting management
 - advice and information.

Possible partners could include:

- education authorities (school, TAFE) health agencies (hospital, health centres, regional health service)
- medical professionals (physiotherapists, chiropractors, nutritionists)
- local government (council)
- regional government and non-government agencies (Indigenous agencies, police)
- community centres
- regional development board (business development, feasibility study)
- sporting associations/organisations.

CLEVE COMMUNITY FITNESS GYM establishing partnerships

The Cleve Community Fitness Gym operates out of the local football club change rooms under the management of the Cleve Sporting Bodies Inc.

In partnership with the regional health agency, Eastern Eyre Health, the gym has established programs for corporate fitness/health classes and the Cleve Area School. Special-needs students from the school access the gym on a weekly basis.



A local exercising at the Cleve Community Fitness Gym



SECTION THREE: MANAGING AND SUSTAINING COMMUNITY GYMS

This section takes a closer look at some of the key aspects to reduce risk while offering a wide range of affordable services and programs for users of the facility.

3.1 RISK MANAGEMENT

Reducing the likelihood of accidents and the subsequent safety of users, staff and the general public is of paramount importance and must not be overlooked. A risk management checklist that identifies the likelihood of incidents, their severity (if they occur), and what can and should be done to minimise risks would be a good start. Once this has been undertaken, it is critical to ensure that everyone with a responsibility for use of the gym is made aware of risks and what to do in the event of an incident. A good resource to read regarding reducing and managing risk in the fitness industry is Recreation SA's Code of Practice, which provides good advice and guidance on how to manage a community gym.⁵

Insurance alone is not a failsafe method of managing your gym and the owner or operator has a legal responsibility to ensure the safety of all people that use or access the facility. While there is no one means of ensuring that any gym or business is fully protected, a number of key areas should be considered (see figure 3) and measures employed to reduce risk, such as:

- utilising appropriate equipment and maintenance practices
- adhering to industry standards
- employing appropriately qualified staff and volunteers
- inducting and/or supervising users
- taking out an insurance policy
- establishing legal agreements and relationships.

Some key principles for reducing risk in community gyms include:

- training and protecting gym users, staff and volunteers
- having a person or committee that takes responsibility for reducing risks
- encouraging users, staff and volunteers to be proactive in promoting a safe environment in the gym
- implementing systems to support risk management practices (e.g. reporting hazards, incident reports, emergency evacuation plan)
- ensuring all users complete a PAR-Q (Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire) and a risk assessment statement when joining the gym. Gym staff should review these documents and ensure any concerns are addressed with the relevant gym user and health professionals prior to commencing use of the gym
- establishing and documenting gym policies and procedures so that all who use the gym have access to them either at the gym or online
- creating and documenting a safety checklist and a signage checklist for the gym including a signed maintenance log for each piece of equipment.⁶

Equipment	What equipment should you use and how should it be looked after and maintained?
Standards	What are the areas of good practice and standards as set out by state and national bodies?
Staffing	What training and qualifications do staff and volunteers need?
Users	How will users be managed and how do they access your facility?
Legal	What legal aspects are there to ensure your gym is managed appropriately?

Figure 3: Risk Considerations

⁵ www.recreationsa.org

⁶ www.rmia.vic.gov.au

3.1.1 EQUIPMENT

A good community gym will offer its users a range of options depending on certain factors such as:

- the size of facility
- available capital funding for the gym's establishment
- available human resources and associated skills and qualification levels
- the knowledge and expertise of the fitness personnel.



A sample of the range of equipment available at the Orroroo Community Gym.

Table 3 lists the range of possible equipment categories for consideration and the advantages and disadvantages for each.

The purpose of the gym equipment	Advantages	Disadvantages
Free Weights (e.g. dumbbells, barbells, kettle bells, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low cost• Easy to use• Offers variety and versatility• Need smaller area to workout• Suitable for most people• Easy to access and set up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Injury risk if training alone• Need another person to act as a spotter• Need to adjust to suit individual requirements• Can be confusing knowing what to do
Weight Machines (e.g. pin loaded, pulley, resistance weights)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safer than free weights• Can train alone• Generally easier to use• Better choice for beginners starting strength training• Saves time compared to adjusting free weights• Good for rehabilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High cost• Take up more floor space• Only designed for average-sized person• High-injury risk through poor practice• Pulley cords can be stripped and need replacement
Cardio Machines (e.g. treadmills, exercise bikes, climbers, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most effective for working out• Good for the heart• Safe and easy to use• Low risk of injury• Appropriate for exercising when limited time available	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High cost• Take up more floor space• Not easily moved• Can be difficult to adjust
Fitness Classes (e.g. aerobics, step, pump, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Little equipment required• Safe and easy to run• Suits all ability and interest levels• Can be done in limited space	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Needs a qualified instructor• Requires access to power source for music

Table 3: Equipment examples and considerations

Fitness Australia's role is to ensure appropriate standards are complied with in the fitness industry in Australia. Even with limited budgets, Fitness Australia recommends that second-hand equipment not be accepted or purchased as it may not be suitable for heavy use in gyms and it may have been designed for domestic home use only.

Therefore, it is recommended that prior to accepting donated equipment or purchasing second-hand equipment, you check that your insurer will cover you in the event of a claim arising from the use of that equipment.

Fitness Australia also recommends that local suppliers be used where possible when purchasing equipment and local agencies sourced when equipment needs servicing. This assures that the equipment meets the required standard and, should anything go wrong with the equipment, you have a point of contact.

If your gym is buying or hiring fitness equipment, think about safety and durability. Make sure you are dealing with a reputable company and that the appropriate safety and warranty checks are carried out and documented.⁷

In addition to purchasing appropriate equipment, you will need to make sure it is properly maintained to reduce risk of injury to the user, maintain its performance and enhance the life of the asset, which in the long-term will save you money. The following provide some guidelines as to what to do in relation to the maintenance of your equipment:

- Equipment should be set out to ensure that all exercise areas contain safe working spaces and that user numbers do not hinder the safe and effective use of the training equipment. User numbers may need to be restricted if space is limited.
- All equipment should be mechanically sound and installed and operated in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and standards.
- All equipment should be routinely serviced. Maintenance checks should be undertaken on a daily or weekly basis according to the manufacturer's recommendations and gym usage. A signed logbook to document this process should be kept for each piece of equipment.

3.1.2 STANDARDS

In setting up a gym it is crucial that the good practices and standards that have been adopted by the relevant state and national bodies are taken into consideration. While the following are not statutory requirements, they are nonetheless good practices established by key industry bodies.

Management obligations regarding supervision

- Instructors who deliver fitness programs and supervise gyms that are open to the public should be registered fitness instructors and have appropriate qualifications at Certificate III level (Gym Instructor). Personal trainers require Certificate IV level qualifications.
- All persons supervising a gym should have a current Senior First Aid Certificate with annual CPR updates.
- There should be an appropriately qualified employee supervising at all times.

Centre standards

- There must be a fully equipped first aid kit located in an easily accessible position. All staff members must know its location.
- All equipment must be installed and operated in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- All equipment must be serviced as required to ensure continued user safety.
- All exercise areas must have adequate safe working space.
- User numbers must be monitored to allow safe and effective use of the training equipment.

Age restrictions

- There must be a clear policy displayed in the gym specifically relating to age limits and supervision that covers all users of the gym. Once the minimum age entry requirement has been defined, management must continue to follow those limits.
- Persons younger than 16 years of age should not be permitted to use the gym unless they are supervised by a suitable person and have had a written program prepared for them by qualified personnel.

⁷ Equipment suppliers www.fitnesssuppliers.com.au



A male exercise group take part in an organised training session at the Cleve Community Gym.

ORROROO COMMUNITY GYM **community support and staffing**

Operating from the Town Hall in Orroroo and leased for a minimal annual fee, the gym was established with funding from various grants and financial support from the local council and community businesses and individuals. The strength of the gym is the staff, which is involved in both the fitness programs as well as the overall management of the centre. This includes both part-time paid and volunteer staff, some of which have appropriate fitness qualifications.

The gym believes becoming incorporated is a vital step to enable the organisation to access relevant grants, but it also recognises the value of gaining support of the local council and community agencies (health services) in running a sustainable community gym.



The entrance to the Orroroo Community Gym based at the Town Hall with support from the District Council of Orroroo Carrieton

3.1.3 STAFFING

It is recommended that the gym be supervised by qualified fitness leaders. While this is not a legislative requirement in South Australia, it is certainly the preferred option and users would certainly benefit from having such qualified personnel available. Upon becoming qualified, the individual would then become recognised by the relevant industry body (Recreation SA or Fitness Australia) and that would also cover the individual for their required insurance needs through the particular insurance schemes for fitness leaders.⁸

It is also recommended that staff and personnel in the gym hold relevant first aid qualifications. Again, this will assist in making your gym a more professional and well-managed facility and safer for users.

If paid staff are employed, a minimum standard or small workplace first aid kit marked with an approval number issued by the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration should be provided. A list of the contents required in a workplace first aid kit can be found in SafeWork SA's First Aid Code of Practice.⁹

It is highly recommended that the first aid kit include an asthma kit and that supervisors have completed an asthma awareness course.

It is also highly recommended that the supervisor have direct access to a phone for emergency use.

3.1.4 USERS

Managing the users of your gym falls into a number of categories, including obtaining information about pre existing health issues and ensuring that gym access is managed and its use supervised.

A. MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

Another key risk factor in gyms relates to the medical needs and suitability of your users. Sports Medicine Australia has produced a number of resources and policies that gyms are encouraged to adopt. These are information articles covering exercise, infectious diseases, pregnancy and exercise, fitness testing, injury prevention, etc, as well as relevant forms such as:

- Medical profile – to be used by all gym users prior to commencing in the gym
- Athlete medical screening – to be used to identify suitability of certain individuals using the gym.

⁸ www.recreationsa.org

⁹ www.safework.sa.gov.au

For further information on these matters, contact Sports Medicine Australia- SA Branch.¹⁰

B. ACCESS

When to allow and how to manage access is a critical aspect of your gym's operation. Many gyms allow unsupervised access and, while this is understandable given their part-time nature or capacity to employ qualified staff, it is a risk and is not a preferred or recommended approach.

Research of existing community gyms has found that a number of systems that allow members to access the gym are being used. These range from key cards, members-only pins, keys, etc. While these options may suit the needs of individuals, it is recommended that the following systems be employed to ensure that only persons who are current members of the gym have access to the centre:

- **Induction:** All gym users must have completed an induction program before using the gym. The induction program may be delivered by the gym supervisor/coordinator or it may be available as an online program.
- **Buddy system:** No person is allowed in the gym unless a 'buddy' is present who has been inducted and is familiar with the gym procedures and policies.
- **Sign on/off:** To access the gym, users must register (sign on) prior to using any equipment and must sign off when finishing/leaving the gym.

C. SUPERVISION

Your gym must ensure that persons who use or supervise your facility know how to operate the equipment and are adequately trained. This should occur as part of an induction program for any new gym user and will assist in the safe and proper use of the equipment.

Good practice recommends that at least two people be present when the gym is in use. These people do not need to be instructors, but they should be people who have been inducted by the gym and termed a 'gym buddy'. Other possible supervision options can be found in Table 4.

3.1.5 LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Management of the gym should conduct a thorough risk analysis to identify potential areas of risk. Once they are identified, the gym should seek specific advice where necessary and take action accordingly.

A. INSURANCE

Investigate what insurance cover is required for all aspects of the gym (e.g. staff, equipment). Check any existing insurance cover to ensure that it extends to the operation of the gym. It is recommended that the following types of insurance cover be considered:

- **Public Liability Insurance:** Indemnifies against an occurrence that arises from negligence by other members or by paid or voluntary workers engaged by the gym.
- **Professional Indemnity:** Covers the provision of first aid or other medical services, professional advice provided by coaches, instructors and trainers (paid and unpaid).
- **Personal Accident (Members):** Covers accidents arising from participation in an activity.
- **Personal Accident (Volunteer Workers):** This is where volunteer gym supervisors are engaged. This additional insurance covers financial compensation should such a person sustain personal injury while working for the gym.

Option	Comment	Issues
Unsupervised	Alone in gym	Safety, legality
Buddy system	Another person present	Reduces risk
Volunteer staff present	They may not be directly supervising	Person may not be qualified
Supervised by volunteer	Preferred practice	Possibly restricts hours of use to when volunteers are available
Supervised by qualified staff	Best practice recommendation	Ideal situation
Instructor running class	Also preferred option	May not suit some users who prefer to do other fitness activities

Table 4: Gym Supervision Options

¹⁰ www.smasa.asn.au

- **WorkCover:** If paid staff are employed in the gym, then the gym must register with WorkCover and hold appropriate workers compensation insurance.¹¹

It is also important to ensure that any contracted fitness instructors or personal trainers delivering services within the gym hold their own public liability and professional indemnity insurance and that gym management sights proof of this.

No matter what type of person is engaged, volunteer, paid or contract, it is recommended that they receive a letter of appointment outlining the conditions of engagement, their role and a copy of any other guidelines or policy documents relating to the gym.

B. VOLUNTEER PROTECTION ACT

If your gym uses volunteers as supervisors, then the Volunteers Protection Act provides a level of protection for the volunteer so that they may feel more comfortable in fulfilling their volunteer obligations.

The legislation establishes an environment to prevent a volunteer from incurring personal civil liability for any acts or omissions done in good faith when performing community work organised by a community organisation.

The Act provides no protection for an organisation. In fact, the Act transfers personal liability from the individual to the organisation; therefore, choosing the right people and providing them with the correct training is vital.

C. LIMITING LIABILITY

At the time of printing this document, legislation, which addresses the use of waivers to limit liability, was before the state and federal parliaments. As a result, it is recommended that you review the most current and relevant acts regarding limiting liability if utilising this guide to establish a community gym.

D. SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

If young people (younger than 18) are allowed to use the gym, then from 1 January 2008 the gym is obliged under the Children's Protection Act 1993 to ensure that all children are safe from harm and, as far as practicable, are cared for in a way that allows them to reach their full potential.

Under the amendments to the Children's Protection Act 1993, the gym is required to develop and adopt a child-safe environments policy that includes:

- providing guidance on appropriate standards of conduct for adults in dealing with children and defining appropriate standards of care for ensuring the safety of children
- putting in place a process for the recruitment and supervision of staff that may have contact with children in the course of their employment.

For users younger than 18 years of age, it is recommended that community gyms use the *Kids in gyms* guidelines as a reference before allowing any child to use a gym.¹²

All staff/volunteers are considered to be mandated reporters and are legally obliged to report any suspicion of child abuse, which may be formed in the course of their duties at the gym.

For more information contact the Office for Recreation and Sport.

3.2 OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

In addition to your legal requirements, the following may assist in the better management and programming of your facility to ensure optimum use and access by as many people as possible within your community.

3.2.1 HOURS OF OPERATION

For most gyms, hours are determined by the amount of use anticipated.

Factors for consideration include:

- When is the facility available? It may be a shared-use facility (sports change room) or a school gym.
- When is supervision able to be provided?
- What is the affordability of opening up for extended periods given costs of utilities, staffing?
- What are the conditions of hire/rent/lease arrangements?
- What is the demand from the community (generally after hours and on weekends)?

¹¹ www.workcover.com

¹² www.chw.edu.au

3.2.2 WHAT PROGRAMS WILL WE OFFER?

This will again vary with certain factors such as the type and amount of equipment, supervision, staffing, numbers, access and interest. Here are some suggestions for consideration:

- If you're limited with funds and space, stick with free weights as machines are expensive, take up a lot of room and offer limited exercises. Free weights are cheaper and, with good knowledge and training, are more versatile. There is, however, a greater risk using free weights and so supervision is recommended any time free weights are being used.
- If your focus is rehabilitation, machines are a better option since they offer the most support. However, users of the facility and equipment should always follow medical advice from their doctor.

It is also important to consider the needs and demands of your community by offering programs targeted at specific groups who may be looking to use the gym. Such groups might include:

- older adults
- retirees
- women only
- talented athletes
- people with a disability
- young mothers
- men
- people from different cultural groups
- work groups.

There may also be an opportunity to establish a partnership with some of the local sporting clubs from the community wanting to use the gym as part of their training and/or recovery sessions.



The Nifty Fifties Group Class in Cleve get some instruction on use of the equipment.

For the gym to remain viable and functional, it will be important to meet community needs but also to continually investigate potential user groups and program opportunities.

The purpose of setting up the community gym is not about having the best looking, most modern, expensively fitted out community gym. It is about providing a facility that suits the community's needs and assists members in achieving their physical fitness goals.

3.2.3 WHAT OTHER SERVICES ARE NEEDED?

Anecdotal evidence from existing gym operators suggests that organisations that provide child care facilities are more likely to attract increased participation and membership. This means that the community generally will benefit as individuals become more active.

A specific resource has been written on crèche guidelines for sport, recreation and fitness organisations and it is recommended that this resource be referred to for further detailed information.¹³

In addition to actual services offered, gyms may capitalise on the sale of drinks and health foods and, where feasible, access to small kiosks or vending machines. Again, this can be both time consuming and expensive to establish, but the long-term gain may prove more financially beneficial to the gyms' operations and should be considered.

WEST WINDS COMMUNITY GYM low cost crèche service

This gym is in a community hall as part of the community centre at Woodbridge in Tasmania. Established in March 2007, a key feature of the gym is the availability of a crèche/child care facility in an adjoining room.

There is a minimal cost of \$2 to access the child care facility and there is no limit on the number of children that can be accommodated. Such a move encourages parents, especially mothers, to attend a gym in their local community.

¹³ Crèche Guidelines for Sports, Recreation and Fitness Organisations, Government of South Australia – Office for Recreation and Sport

A number of the successful community gyms currently operating provide additional services to the community through specialist programs. You might consider offering the following:

- a personal trainer who conducts private sessions at the gym – an agreement would need to be reached about hire costs, hours available etc.
- special themed classes at particular times of the year such as Christmas
- health programs focusing on particular community issues such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, etc.

3.2.4 HOW MUCH DO WE CHARGE?

To an extent, fees will be determined by the cost to run the facility and the overall aims of the gym. For example, is it expected to break even, make a profit, or will it be subsidised

by an external agency as a stakeholder in the venture? Additionally, you may need to consider your target user groups' ability to pay and the introduction of subsidy cards for people on low incomes.

Most community gyms offer a low, attractive fee structure to cater for the community as the intention is not to operate as a commercial business. However, it is important to look at how to operate without always relying on external funding or donations. A suggested fee structure could be:

- gold coin donation or \$5 fee per visit
- annual fee that ranges from \$50 to \$100.

You could also consider a range of fee options such as per visit, daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually etc. and offer special fees for concession, students, families and frequent users.

When developing a fee, payment and membership structure, it is recommended that you refer to the Fair Trading (Health and Fitness Industry Code of Practice) Regulations 2007 to ensure legal compliance with the structure of membership agreements as well as fixed-term and periodic payments.¹⁴

CEDUNA

Christmas Challenge concept

This gym is located in the Far West Sporting Complex. It is owned and operated by the local Indigenous community whose aim is to increase physical activity and fitness opportunities for the Indigenous people in and around Ceduna.

The gym has attempted to attract increased patronage particularly within the Indigenous community by offering special programs such as the Christmas Challenge.

The concept rewards users with an extra day's gym membership for free or at a reduced cost if a certain amount of weight is lost over a designated period through involvement in gym activities. This incentive program has worked very successfully and is a creative way to get longer term involvement and commitment to the gym.



Exercise time at the Ceduna Community Gym.

VICTORIA PLAINS

membership and fee structure

The Victoria Plains gym is operated by the Victoria Plains Shire in Western Australia. People wishing to use the gym must become members and pay a membership fee. There are various membership options ranging from a standard monthly membership to annual membership and family membership. Fees are reviewed annually as part of the Shire's budget process. All gym members are required to adhere to the terms and conditions developed by the Shire administration. These terms and conditions cover such items as:

- membership access
- conduct and behaviour
- clothing attire
- proper use of equipment
- gymnasium rules
- occupational health and safety issues
- hours of operation
- current charges and price increases

¹⁴ South Australia – Fair Trading (Health and Fitness Industry Code of Practice) Regulations 2007.
www.legislation.sa.gov.au

SECTION FOUR: PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

This section looks at the importance of planning and reviewing. Strategic planning and reviewing your service delivery will assist in making your gym a smooth operation that retains and attracts users for years to come.

4.1 STRATEGIC AND BUSINESS PLANNING

A major issue with many community gyms is their lack of any strategic or business plan to assist in running the gym. Most gyms seem to operate in isolation of any future planning. When the gyms were surveyed, this was the most alarming area of weakness and one that most gyms would appreciate support in developing. In essence, a strategic plan can help those running the community gym to:

- prioritise goals and objectives
- establish performance and evaluation criteria
- assess progress
- ensure a professional approach
- secure funding and win sponsorship deals
- identify promotion and marketing strategies
- allocate resources more efficiently
- show potential new members what the gym can offer
- help volunteers better understand how to run the gym
- involve members in decision-making.

The plan should focus on the following questions:

- Where have you come from?
- Where are you going?
- How do you want to get there?

The plan should also be visionary and address the importance and relevance of strategies needed for the success of the gym in the next three to five years.

To assist you with the strategic planning process, we suggest you use the following framework as the basis of your plan and spend time reflecting on these things. By considering these questions you will be well on your way to putting together a plan.

- 1. Programs** – What programs and activities does the gym want to offer? Is the gym for rehabilitation purposes or for fitness or social networking? Identify the range of programs possible given the area, equipment, expertise and financial resources available.
- 2. Evaluation and Research** – Are the members happy with what is being offered? What feedback have you gathered? How are you able to determine client satisfaction? What are the needs of the clients?
- 3. Coordination** – Who else do you need to be working with? How might developing partnerships and links with other agencies improve the way the gym operates and what it offers to the members?
- 4. Policy** – What policies and procedures need to be developed to allow the gym to operate more efficiently and more professionally? How are these disseminated to gym users?
- 5. Supportive Environments** – What improvements need to occur to the physical set up and cleanliness of the gym? How can the gym be made safer for members? What can be done to make the gym more accessible and appealing to members? Have you considered offering a crèche? Does better lighting need to be provided to increase safety around and in the venue? What about privacy considerations and change facilities?
- 6. Awareness** – How is the gym being marketed and promoted? What opportunities exist to increase the community awareness of the gym?
- 7. Education** – What training is required for your volunteers and staff? How can you provide improved training opportunities for your staff and/or volunteers? What systems are in place to ensure members are involved in a safe environment? Are you educating your members in the most professional manner? What documentation is provided to members to help educate them about the use of the gym?

For a community gym looking to go through the planning process, it is recommended that this template structure be used as a guide. This template can be found in the References and Further Reading section.

Contact the Office for Recreation and Sport for more information on planning or look at the strategic planning resource online.¹⁵

¹⁵ www.recsport.sa.gov.au

4.2 DETERMINING SUCCESS?

There are a number of ways of knowing whether your gym is successful, but you must first determine how you are measuring success. Success could be measured by:

- Financial information: Has the centre kept within its subsidy levels, broken even or made a profit?
- Service: How many programs have been attended and how many users have come through your door?
- Customer satisfaction: What do your members think? A basic customer survey along with anecdotal evidence is a strong message regarding how you are doing.

Also consider:

- suggestion boxes or an ideas book for patrons to make comments
- regular forums/meetings with gym users
- planning sessions by management
- regular surveys/evaluation sheets disseminated to members/users.

Of course, these are only a few ways of determining the success of your gym.

In summary, the importance of reviewing your operations is just as critical as the feasibility study, the operation and management as well as the strategic plan itself, which should identify some of the targets and measures you would like to attain to make sure your gym is safe, enjoyable and adds to the social and physical wellbeing of your community.

KIMBA COMMUNITY GYM strategic planning and community consultation

The Kimba Gym was opened in 2009 and operates from a show pavilion in the heart of the Kimba Township. It is run by a volunteer committee with additional support from a number of part-time staff and volunteers who have experience in both the fitness industry and other associated industries.

Currently, the management committee is working on a project plan for the future direction of the gym and part of this process is the development of a strategic plan through regular consultations with the gym members. It is envisaged that the outcomes of the project will be improved operation of the facility and the compilation of a set of rules and regulations to guide the future direction of the gym.





SECTION FIVE: OUTDOOR COMMUNITY GYMS

5.1 COMMON ELEMENTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to the more obvious indoor gyms, which have been discussed in depth throughout this resource, there are a number of facilities throughout South Australia that encourage physical activity and exercise in a more unstructured outdoor setting. Outdoor gyms provide an attractive option as a means of encouraging increased exercise for people who, for various reasons, prefer being active outdoors.

Some advantages of an outdoor gym are:

- access 24 hours a day
- free for users
- easy to use
- suits all ages and fitness levels
- doesn't require capital cost of a building
- good for your health because of exposure to fresh air and sunlight.

Outdoor gyms generally comprise a series of gym items that focus on exercising particular muscle groups. The combination of these items provides for a total body workout including strength, conditioning and cardiovascular exercise. The equipment can be placed as a full unit encompassing a number of workout options or it can be separated as exercise stations dispersed along a pathway. The equipment can be designed to cater for various target groups such as young people, fitness groups or the elderly and may include items such as warm-up stations that complement existing paths. Outdoor gym equipment may not be suitable for use by children.

If considering establishing an outdoor gym, it must be noted that there is a significant cost associated with equipment purchase. This ranges from approximately \$2,000-\$4,000 for individual items up to \$15,000-\$20,000 for a set of equipment. Installation costs and rubber surfacing would add approximately 50 per cent to the total cost; therefore, a full set of outdoor gym equipment (approximately eight pieces) would be in the vicinity of \$30,000 and requires an area of between five to nine metres in diameter.

The equipment requires regular ongoing maintenance, similar to playground equipment (monthly inspections and repair and maintenance costs of approximately eight to ten per cent of the asset cost per year), and would require asset replacement in approximately ten years.

There are certain risks associated with outdoor gyms including:

- unsafe equipment due to incorrect installation, poor maintenance and/or vandalism
- children using the equipment
- lack of signage detailing instructions for proper use.

Generally, outdoor gyms are established on land owned by local government and are ultimately the responsibility of the council. If this is the case, relevant council approval will need to be sought. Proper management of the gym will involve regular inspections, constant maintenance and repairs and appropriate signage.

Those agencies responsible for the outdoor gyms need to consider if the value and benefit of providing such a facility outweigh the associated risks. Therefore, when considering the establishment of such a 'facility', the following should be considered:

- Has the local council been consulted and is it willing to take on the ongoing management and maintenance of the asset?
- What is the most appropriate equipment and location for the specific demographic group likely to access the facility (e.g. youth, older adults, young mothers, etc.)? It is important to place the equipment in suitable locations to ensure maximum use of the equipment and to justify the necessary expenditure.
- As there are many options for the type and location of equipment, community consultation is a key element in considering the installation of outdoor fitness equipment in open space areas.
- Are there sufficient resources to action the necessary risk management strategies relating to regular inspections, maintenance, etc?

- Currently there are no specific standards relating to the installation of outdoor gym equipment in Australia; therefore, it is important to ensure that when the gym equipment is installed it is done so with regard to Playground Standards requirements,¹⁶ especially entrapment, fall height, fall zones and impact attenuating surfacing.

Consultation with agencies and community groups that have established community gyms has shown that:

- Outdoor gyms are best located in easy-to-access sites (close proximity to transport, walking and bicycle trails, and public places) and sites that already cater for active recreational activities such as linear paths, foreshores and major sporting precincts such as ovals or district parks. The equipment then compliments the use of the park and is more likely to be used by those participating in other recreational activities such as walking or jogging.
- It is recommended to install the first set of equipment in a major park or high-use recreational area as a trial to gauge the community's use before making further strategic decisions to install equipment at other locations.
- It makes sense to locate outdoor gyms in close proximity to public toilets and children's playgrounds. This maximises family participation and user convenience.
- A certain amount of space is required to prevent interference with other current activity zones.
- Lighting the area may be costly, but it will extend the gym's hours of use.
- The outdoor gym does not necessarily have to feature fixed equipment. Natural objects can also be incorporated.
- Any local council or owner of an outdoor gym should obtain their own legal advice in relation to liability and negligence claims resulting from injury.

5.2 EXAMPLES OF OUTDOOR COMMUNITY GYMS

There are a number of outdoor gyms that have been set up in both metropolitan and regional South Australia and these are highlighted below:

Burton Primary School

As part of the Healthy Eating & Active Living (HEAL) project in the City of Salisbury, the Adelaide Northern Division of General Practice has developed a new outdoor gym and fitness track on the oval of Burton Primary School.

The installation of the fitness equipment is just one of the strategies HEAL is using to reach its aim of reducing the levels of chronic disease associated with obesity in the City of Salisbury council area. The outdoor gym is a step towards changing the Burton community to be more conducive to better health by increasing the availability and accessibility to equipment.

Although within school grounds, the park is not fenced and is available to the community outside of school hours. The fitness track has been designed with elements that can be used by all ages.

Sturt Reserve – Murray Bridge

An outdoor gym has been placed at Sturt Reserve in Murray Bridge in a bid to get the community active. It provides the community with access to safe equipment that can be used by people of all ages and levels of fitness. It is free for users and is accessible 24 hours a day; thus, removing some of the barriers such as time and cost constraints to physical activity. The outdoor gym provides an opportunity for the community to participate in appropriate load-bearing physical activity as well as strength and balance exercises.

Sturt Reserve is an ideal choice as the hub recreational centre of unstructured activity in Murray Bridge. The Reserve is in walking distance of the centre of Murray Bridge and is accessible by car, bus, bicycle and wheelchair.



Some of the equipment at the outdoor gym at Sturt Reserve in Murray Bridge.

¹⁶ Australian Standard 4685. Parts 1–6 2004: Standards Australia International Ltd. Sydney NSW 2001.

The outdoor gym is located next to the existing children's playground, which allows parents to utilise the gym while their children utilise the playground, BMX track, skate park or Rage Cage. Toilets, lighting, drinking fountain and car parks are all located nearby.

Kent Reserve – City of Victor Harbor

Situated at Kent Reserve in Victor Harbor, this 'playground for seniors' combines the enjoyment of a playground with the health benefits of fitness equipment. The project was developed by the city of Victor Harbor, in conjunction with the Zonta Club of the Fleurieu Peninsula, and is supported by the **be active** Field Officer and the council's Recreation and Sport Advisory Committee.

The outdoor gym comprises eight pieces of equipment including a cross-trainer, a sit-up bench, a bike, an overhead press and a tai chi apparatus. The equipment adds a different element to the area, which now has recreational and fitness facilities for every age group including children, teenagers and adults.

Forestville Reserve – City of Unley

The Forestville Reserve in the City of Unley has recently been equipped with fitness equipment similar to that found in indoor gymnasiums, which provides the community with increased opportunities for outdoor activities.

The cardio equipment includes a cycle seat, stepper, crosser trainer and rowing machine. The strength equipment includes a butterfly press for chest exercise, an Ezy Rider, shoulder press and hip swing. Unley Council has identified six sites where fitness equipment could potentially be installed, starting with Forestville Reserve.

Fremont Park – Yorketown Road, Elizabeth

This park is a major reserve used for a variety of recreational activities. The equipment includes eight exercise items and a warm-up station. As the park is located close to an aged-care facility, the equipment has been very popular with older adults.

Northgate Fitness Trail – Northgate Development

Outdoor fitness equipment has been located in five reserves within the new Northgate development. The equipment comprises 16 items (two to four items per park) and creates a fitness trail throughout the development. The trail links five of the reserves within the area.

5.3 FURTHER INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

Should you require any further information and/or assistance in the establishment or management of your gym, including advice on where to seek funding for establishment, please contact the ORS on 08 7424 7677.¹⁷

¹⁷ www.recsport.sa.gov.au



Some of the outdoor fitness equipment at Kent Reserve in Victor Harbor.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

FEASIBILITY STUDY TEMPLATE

The following template has been provided to get you thinking about some of the key questions to consider when conducting a feasibility study for your gym.

Stage 1 – Identify a working group
Who are the interested community people to get on board to conduct a needs analysis, spread the workload and undertake the initial planning?
What community agencies may be useful in developing links with, and access to, funding, equipment and facilities?
What are the initial aims of the facility?
Stage 2 – Research
What information do you need to research?
Why set up a community gym?
What can you learn from other community gyms?
Identify who is likely to use the gym?
What might the gym look like?

Stage 3 – Identify the need

What does the needs analysis tell you?

What are the benefits of such a gym for the community?

What do we need in the gym?

What facilities already exist in the community?

Stage 4 – Site options

What potential sites are available?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of each site?

Which site has the most potential?

Stage 5 – Preliminary costs						
What is the community gym going to cost to establish, operate and maintain?						
Capital establishment	Building	Equipment	Fit out	Legal		\$
Operational costs	Staffing	Rent/hire	Utilities	Insurance/licenses	Admin	\$
Maintenance costs	Updating compliance costs	Repairs	Equipment replacement			\$
TOTAL						\$
Stage 6 – Operational analysis						
Who will be the main users?						
How will the centre be marketed?						
What fee structure will be introduced?						

What time will the centre be open?

What requirements will there be for staff/volunteers to be qualified

Stage 7 – Business case

What are the next steps required?

How will funding be sourced?

What are the timelines for development of the gym?

What partners will be engaged to assist in setting and running the gym?

What review process will be adopted?

STRATEGIC PLANNING TEMPLATE

In developing a strategic plan for your community gym, it is recommended you complete the following template. Spend time reflecting on these items with the key people involved in the management and operation of the gym.

Programs

What programs, activities does the gym want to offer?

Evaluation and Research

What systems will you put in place to measure client satisfaction, client needs, and opportunities for improvement?

Coordination

Who else do you need to be working with? How might this improve the operation of the gym and what it offers to gym users?

Policy

What policies and procedures need to be developed to allow the gym to operate more efficiently and more professionally?

Supportive Environments

How can the gym be made a safer and more inviting environment for members?

What can be done to make the gym more accessible and appealing to members?

Awareness

How will the gym be marketed and promoted?

Education

What training is required for your volunteers and staff? How can you provide improved training opportunities for your staff and/or volunteers?

CHECKLIST FOR ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY GYM

Task	Completed
1. Demand/interest determined	
2. Committee/working party established	
3. Initial planning conducted	
4. Location decided	
5. Funding sourced	
6. Management structure agreed and implemented	
7. Staffing (qualified) and volunteers identified	
8. Documentation developed – policies, programs, prices, conditions, etc.	
9. Promotion/publicity actioned	
10. Equipment gathered/purchased/set up	
11. Programs advertised	
12. Gym launched	
13. Monitoring/reviews conducted	
14. Changes implemented as a result of evaluation	
15. Ongoing review	

REFERENCES

Documents

1. *Physical Activity Among South Australian Adults Summary Report – Sept 2007*, a joint initiative of SA Health, ORS and Attorney General's Department and the Physical Activity Council.
2. *Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sport Annual Report, 2008*, Australian Government, Australian Sports Commission, Department of Health and Ageing.
3. *Australian Standard 4685. Parts 1–6 2004: Standards Australia International Ltd.* Sydney NSW 2001.
4. *Use of departmental sites for other than departmental purposes (updated December 2008)*, Department of Education and Children's Services, Government of South Australia.
5. *Kids And Gyms - Guidelines For Working With Children In Gyms.*
6. *Crèche Guidelines for Sports, Recreation and Fitness Organisations*, Government of South Australia –Office for Recreation and Sport.
7. *Office for Recreation and Sport Strategic Planning Template.*

Websites

1. Codes of Practice

Recreation SA www.recreationsa.org
Safework SA www.safework.sa.gov.au

2. Risk Management

Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (Community Gyms Risk Factsheet) www.vmia.vic.gov.au

3. Equipment suppliers

www.gymlink.com.au
www.fitnesssuppliers.com.au
www.equipmentfirst.com

4. Sports Medicine and Safety

Sports Medicine Australia SA Branch www.smasa.asn.au

5. Legal

WorkCover www.workcover.com

6. Kids in gyms

Children's Hospital at Westmead www.chw.edu.au

7. Fair Trading (Health and Fitness Industry Code of Practice) Regulations 2007

www.legislation.sa.gov.au

8. Grants Information

Government of South Australia www.sa.gov.au
Office for Recreation and Sport www.recsport.sa.gov.au

Additional References

Operating Procedures for Gyms in Sports Club, Office for Recreation and Sport, November 2007–unpublished.



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