

Sport

in the Neighbourhood



Developing grass-roots, community-based sport and physical activity



Ever wondered why kids don't

Remember when kids seemed to naturally get exercise in a local park? With little more than a ball, some form of sport would 'erupt' and kids were kept busy, active and safe for hours.

And by the way, where did all this 'anti-social' behaviour that's reported in the news come from? And why do we live in neighbourhoods but we don't know our neighbours?

Residents in the Bateau Bay area on the NSW Central Coast were asking themselves the same questions that many neighbourhoods across the country were asking.

New entertainment technology, safety concerns, time-poor parents and changes to society and in our

go outside and play anymore?

communities mean that informal sport doesn't seem to spontaneously 'erupt' anymore. And kids aren't just missing out on a healthy dose of exercise – they also miss out on feeling part of their neighbourhood and the lessons you learn from playing sport.

Parents in the Bateau Bay area wanted regular, free sporting activities for local kids to keep them active and safe. They wanted kids to be healthy and happy, and they also hoped that these activities would help adults to get to know their neighbours better and create a sense of community.

With members of the Killarney Vale, Bateau Bay, Tumbi Umbi (KBT) Community Building Network, the community worked together to create a program that would help their neighbourhood become an even better place to live.

Working together was the key to getting the project up and running and all the agencies in the KBT network contributed

to achieve tasks such as securing the playing fields, training the volunteers, getting access to toilets and funding the purchase of sporting equipment. Community members were also instrumental in spreading the word by conducting a letterbox drop to residents.

Sport in the Neighbourhood offers a wide range of activities such as skipping, hopscotch, bean bag toss, catch and throw and other novelty and gross motor skill activities for younger kids. For the bigger kids games like T-ball, volleyball, soccer, footy, touch, OzTag and cricket are also popular.

"There were a few hurdles to get over, but because everyone saw how good the program could be, we were able to work together to sort them out," said Rob, a community volunteer for Sport in the Neighbourhood.

"It's important to remember that we started out with nothing; no money, no equipment – nothing except an idea and a desire to do something positive for our kids and our community."

Introduction

This guide is designed to help implement a grass-roots sport and physical activity program in a local community.

The information presented in this guide is based on the experience gained through the implementation of the Sport in the Neighbourhood program at Bateau Bay on the NSW Central Coast.

This guide will share with you the process used to implement Sport in the Neighbourhood, as well as best-practice ideas used to implement similar programs following the Asset-Based Community Development model (ABCD).

Every community is unique and you may find that some steps in the process don't fit, may not seem to work or might be too difficult for your project or your community – that's OK! This guide will provide you with the foundations to put your ideas for your community sport project into action.

This booklet will give you an overview of the project and the CD at the back provides more detailed information and some templates that you might find useful.



Five-step process

So what is Sport in the Neighbourhood?

Sport in the Neighbourhood is a weekly community-run program at Bateau Bay on the NSW Central Coast where volunteer leaders coordinate and supervise sports and games at a local park.

The leaders set up a number of games where kids can walk straight in and get started. There's also a range of equipment kids are free to use to start their own games. Leaders encourage kids, as well as parents and other adults, to get involved in the program and have a say in what regular and new activities take place.

At the end of the session all participants help pack-up the equipment for the leaders to return to the local neighbourhood centre for storage.

Sport in the Neighbourhood is that simple!

Sport in the Neighbourhood followed a five-step process in implementing its community sport and physical activity program:

- 1** Research the community
- 2** Engage the community
- 3** Develop the program
- 4** Implement the program
- 5** Evaluate the program.

In the following sections you'll find an explanation of what's involved in each step, and how they will help you reach your desired outcomes.

More detail on each of the five steps is included on the resource CD at the back of this guide.



1 Research the community



Gathering information and statistics will give you a better understanding about your community, how it operates and what its needs are.

Define the community: What are the characteristics of the community you are working in? Consider investigating things like population, age distribution, socio-economic status and family composition.

Identify organisations and services that currently exist: Find out if anything similar is already in existence to avoid duplicating it. This research might also identify potential partners for your program or help you learn from past experiences of other organisations.

Lessons from Sport in the Neighbourhood

The KBT Network found that there was a wealth of knowledge amongst its member agencies. Wyong Shire Council and Housing NSW provided a lot of useful demographic and statistical information, while local community members that were closely connected to their community also reported back with valuable information.

Engage the community 2

An effective program will need community support and ownership to ensure it successfully meets its desired outcomes.

Take the idea to the community: To gauge the community's interest and support, you will need to provide them with information about the proposed program and seek their feedback and ideas. This is often called a community consultation. You want to find out:

- What does the community want to achieve?
- What do they want the outcomes of this program to be?
- How will it benefit the community?
- Do they have the willingness and resources to support it?

Establish a working group: This group of local and agency representatives will be responsible for overseeing the development, implementation and management of the program, so it's important to have the right people.

Report back to the community: Share the results of your consultation and the proposed project outcomes with the community. Regular communication to the broader community will ensure they remain supportive of the program.

Lessons from Sport in the Neighbourhood

We found that word-of-mouth was a valuable method of gauging community interest. Not everyone could make it to a community meeting but people all over the community were talking to each other. Our community members in the network could get in touch with many community members and regularly reported back to us.



3 Develop the program

Now that you know what the community wants to achieve, you have their support and involvement, the working group now has the task of mapping out how the program will be structured and how it will operate.

Putting the program together – the nuts and bolts!

There are many things to consider in mapping out your program, including:

- **Program format and structure** – What will a typical activity session involve? How long will the sessions run and on what day(s)?
- **Venue** – What's the most convenient, accessible, affordable and suitable venue?
- **Equipment** – What type and how much do you need? Where will it be stored?
- **Volunteers** – How many are needed? How will you train them, retain them and reward them for their efforts?
- **Toilets** – Can you get access to them? Will they need to be monitored?

Create a risk management plan: Addressing potential risks before they occur will create a safer environment for all participants. Once developed, the risk management plan also needs to be known and understood by all volunteers associated with the program.

Lessons from Sport in the Neighbourhood

The most successful way to recruit a volunteer is to ask them personally. Community members who were part of the KBT Network told almost everyone they talked to about the program and asked them if they wanted to get involved.







Implement the program 4

By now the program should have its shape and structure. The next step is to plan for the final things that need to be done to get the program started and keep it running.

Implementation plan: mapping out your final few steps and applying some timeframes for these tasks to be completed is a useful way of checking your progress and keeping all the members of the work group involved. Your implementation plan might include things like:

- **Promotion** – Several weeks of promotion may be necessary to create heightened interest in the community. You might consider using a number of different methods, like word of mouth, radio, newsletters, newspapers and letterbox drops
- **Volunteer orientation** – Brief your volunteers about the program and their roles and responsibilities, and ensure they have been trained to carry out their tasks
- **A trial run** – Test the program with a small group of participants before the start date to ease the volunteers into their roles and to iron out any logistical problems
- **Program launch** – Kick off the project with a bang! Create more awareness and media interest by staging a formal launch with an “official opening” and extra activities such as a BBQ, giveaways, music etc.
- **Program refinement** – Gathering early feedback from participants and volunteers in the first few weeks can allow changes, if necessary, to ensure that you are delivering what the participants and the community want
- **Volunteer recognition** – Recognising the contribution of volunteers helps to retain them and keep them happy.

Lessons from Sport in the Neighbourhood

To make sure all of our volunteers knew exactly what they had to do for the start of the program we held a trial run and then a meeting one week before the program started. At the meeting we developed a short, written task list for each of the volunteers to refer to and this was an easy and effective way of ensuring everyone knew what they had to do.

5 Evaluate the program

A good evaluation structure will give you valuable feedback on how the project is going and ultimately whether your project is working.

- Evaluation methods should be established prior to starting the program, measuring whether the program is delivering the outcomes established at the beginning.
- Evaluation of your program should be kept simple. Using the same measures throughout the life of the program will make it easier to assess progress.
- Evaluation is an on-going process - half yearly and yearly evaluations are commonly used, but you may have to evaluate at times that suit your funding requirements.
- Ensure that you report results of evaluation back to the community and program stakeholders. Keeping the community up-to-date and informed about the program will mean they are more likely to keep supporting it!

Lessons from Sport in the Neighbourhood

We based our evaluation on the number of kids and parents who attended each week. We developed a sign-in sheet that every participant needed to complete prior to participating, recording their name and age. That way we not only knew who attended but we also collected age demographics throughout the program.





a team effort

Sport in the Neighbourhood was a collaborative effort by the members of the Killarney Vale, Bateau Bay, Tumbi Umbi (KBT) Community Drug Action Team and Community Builders Network, which included:

- Banksia Family Centre
- Benevolent Society
- Cynthia Street Neighbourhood Centre
- Horizons Family Service
- Housing NSW
- NSW Department of Education and Training
- NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet
- NSW Health
- NSW Police – Tuggerah Lakes Area Command
- NSW Sport and Recreation
- PCYC Bateau Bay
- Samaritans Disability and Youth Services
- Wyong Shire Council
- The community of Bateau Bay, with special thanks to program volunteers and community members Rob, Tammy, Freda, Karen, Sharyn, Ron and Julie.

The structure of this resource is based on *Building stronger communities through physical activity: a practitioner's resource*, developed by the NSW Premier's Council for Active Living, and available from www.pcal.nsw.gov.au

sport in your neighbourhood

We hope that this guide will help you to develop a successful and sustainable grass-roots sport and physical activity program in your local community.

The enclosed resource CD contains fact sheets that cover each of the five steps in greater detail, with more tips, templates and information to assist with your planning. These resources can also be downloaded from www.dsr.nsw.gov.au

For more information about Sport in the Neighbourhood, contact:

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