



Chapter 3

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Starting a Local Sports and Recreation Program

3.1 Introduction

This section provides information and guidelines on basic steps to start a local sport and recreation program. Additional support materials available in the toolkit are referred to throughout this section of the manual.

Any local park and recreation department, agency or other community-based organization with an interest in providing sport, fitness and physical activity opportunities for individuals with physical disability can begin a program. The following is an outline of steps to consider when developing a new program.

- Define the need for a program or new activity
- Complete a resource assessment
- Form a Steering Committee
- Examine budgeting requirements
- Recruit participants, coaches and volunteers
- Establish a program evaluation component

BlazeSports Resource:

BlazeSports has produced a number of webinars that support the development of local sports and recreation programs. These webinars, including one devoted entirely to the topic of “How to Build Disability Sport & Physical Activity Programs in Your Community” can be found online at BlazeTV: <http://youtu.be/IxnjshuPfZQ>.

3.2 Define the Need

The first step in developing a program is to determine the need in the community. The following are examples of questions to ask.

- How many people with physical disabilities will be targeted? What is the interest level of the community?
- How will participants be recruited? Schools, rehabilitation facilities, other community based sport/recreation programs, newspaper advertisement features, word of mouth, website, social networking channels (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) are all places for recruitment.
- What is the age range of the population to be served?
- What is the skill level of the population to be served (beginner, novice, intermediate, elite)?
- What physical disabilities are most common in the community?
- What sports are people interested in?
- Are there other programs in existence that provide sport and recreation opportunities for people with disabilities?
- Will this program be redundant?
- What purpose will the program serve?
- What are the program's goals and objectives?



3.3 Conduct a Resource Assessment

After defining the need in the community and determining the purpose of the program, assess the resources available within the community that can be leveraged to support the program.

Funding – Identify potential sources of program funding; i.e. local civic groups, business groups, corporate foundations, private foundations, individuals, community grants, etc. See Section 7 - Fundraising and Resource Development for more detail.

Population: Know the population so your programs are appropriate for all participants. What disabilities are most common among the population you will be serving? Most programs offer activities for youth and adult participants with spinal injuries, amputations, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and visually impairments. Consider the target age groups? Is there transportation in the area? Are there obvious financial issues? Consider ethnicity and language of target audience?

When assessing the numbers and ages of possible participants, contact local rehabilitation hospitals, pediatric groups, durable medical equipment companies, prosthetic companies, school systems, Veterans Administration Centers and other organizations that provide services to people with physical disabilities.

Disability Statistics Resource

To find statistical information about disability in your city, state, or region visit the following resources:

US Census Bureau Reports: 54.4 Million Americans Report Some Level of Disability
<https://www.disability.gov/>

In a report issued in the December 2008 Current Population Reports the U.S. Census Bureau reported that of the 291.1 million people in the 2005 population of the United States, 54.4 million, or 18.7 percent, reported some level of disability, and 35 million (12.0 percent of all people) reported a severe disability.

American Community Survey

Description: The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities with information on how they are changing from year to year. Using the US Census survey, ACS collects information on age, race, income, disability status, commute time to work, home value, veteran status, and other important data from U.S. households. The ACS is administered every year to approximately three million households across every county in the US.

Link: <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>

The Programs: Choose the sport and recreation activities that will be offered to start the program. After reviewing the potential sport and recreation options, determine the interest level of your participants, the resources needed, and the feasibility of offering these opportunities. The US Census can also provide demographics by large city, and county at state levels.



Many local programs across the country currently offer instruction and competition in a variety of Paralympic sports (Examples: Boccia, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair rugby, wheelchair tennis, track and field, swimming, sledge hockey, goalball, sitting volleyball, fencing, and cycling). Additionally, there are other non-Paralympic sports that are very active within local programs. These sports are selected based on their adaptability, level of interest and development on the national and international level.

Consider whether to offer different programs for adults and/or youth; beginner, intermediate and/or advanced classes. Anticipating these questions when selecting the activities to offer will assist in better reaching potential participants. Consider other local and regional programs with which to establish a relationship. Programs often have difficulty retaining participants when there are only practices to attend. Regular seasonal competition at the proper level can make all the difference when it comes to athlete retention.

Program Options Resources:

A more detailed list and description of common sports and recreation activities can be found in Section 4 - Options in Sport and Recreation, of this manual.

Facilities: What facilities will be used for the program? Many programs will have “in-house” facilities to use. When considering facilities for the programs, be observant of accessibility issues (i.e. width of entrances, ramps, bathroom size, etc.), space, storage options, and availability of the facility during the different seasons and at reasonable times of day. Are storage facilities available for the equipment?

When you have access to an outside facility, maintain good communication with personnel and call on a regular basis prior to using the facility to confirm practice time and specifics of facility usage.

Facilities Access Resources:

Americans with Disabilities Act Guidelines Checklist:

<http://www.ada.gov/checkweb.htm>

ADA Recreational Facilities Guidelines:

http://www.ada.gov/regs2010/factsheets/2010_Standards_factsheet.html

BlazeSports Webinar: “An Introduction to Creating Accessible Sport, Fitness, and Physical Activity Environments”: <http://youtu.be/De-LHCEbFXU>

Staff Expertise: Determine if qualified staff is available to help coach different programs. Many programs have difficulty finding staff that is knowledgeable in the different sports or willing to volunteer to coach. Ensure that staff is in place before promoting or launching programs. University physical therapy and therapeutic recreation programs, local park and recreation departments, and rehabilitation hospitals are good sources for coaches and assistants in all sports. Additionally, a good method for locating quality coaches is to identify individuals who have a background in coaching the non-disabled version of the sport and are willing to learn the nuances of coaching athletes with disabilities.



Staff Training Resources:

BlazeSports Webinar Series: <http://www.youtube.com/blazesports>

Certified Disability Sports Specialist program:
<http://www.blazesports.org/resources/professional-development/>

BlazeSports Annual Conference: <http://www.blazesports.org/resources/annual-conference/>

Schedules: Regularly scheduled weekly sports training sessions are the foundation of good programs. Establish dates and times for practices. Be aware of the specific sports seasons so that the program may be eligible to receive support, linking programs with camps, clinics and competitions from surrounding programs, national governing bodies (NGBs) and disabled sports organizations (DSOs).

Scheduling Resources:

BlazeSports Webinar: "Wheelchair Basketball Part 1: Planning a Successful Season": <http://youtu.be/3bXGFicm-OA>

Equipment: Take an inventory of the different sports equipment available throughout the community. Check with wheelchair or medical equipment companies, rehabilitation hospitals, adult athletes within the community, and any other disability organizations within the community. Introductory programs for most sports can be started without having ample sports specific wheelchairs. Having as many as possible on hand will enhance a program, but continually building the supply will allow the equipment inventory to grow with the program.

3.4 Form a Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is a group of individuals within the community who have experience, background, community stature and a network of relationships to help in the establishment and continuation of a local program.

The Steering Committee should consist of community leaders and experts who represent various constituencies. These may include parks and recreation professionals, members of local government agencies, disability advocates, rehabilitation center staff, healthcare professionals, school system/special education staff, media, other non-profit agency officials, parents and advocates of a children with a physical disability, adult athletes with a physical disability, corporate representatives and others with an interest in developing a community-based disability sports program.

Roles and Responsibilities of a Steering Committee

Developing good working relationships within the community is a fundamental step in building a successful and sustainable program. By involving key groups, organizations, and individuals at the developmental stage, the community can develop ownership of the program from the beginning. A Steering Committee can include a minimum of five individuals who are ready to establish and grow the program.

The Committee should:



- Elect a chairperson who will run the scheduled meetings and appoint committee members. Committee members should serve a designated term.
- Schedule quarterly, bimonthly, or monthly meetings.
- Take ownership of the program.
- Provide administrative leadership to facilitate the development and support of the program.
- Ensure all programs are adequately staffed with trained personnel (CPR, First AID, CDSS)
- Oversee recruitment through schools, rehabilitation facilities, and person-to-person contact, etc.
- Oversee arrangements for venues, sports training, meetings, and competitions.
- Oversee organization of seasonal sports programs.
- Help plan or coordinate, as necessary, accessible transportation to and from training and competition programs.
- Assist in developing a budget and funding that includes expenses, general revenue, fees, donations, grants and in-kind services.
- Prepare grant applications.
- Ensure appropriate record keeping and database development of staff, volunteers, and participants.
- Continue to recruit new committee members.

Invitations

Each prospective steering committee member should receive an invitation to the initial meeting written on the administrative organization's letterhead and signed by the Director of the organization. The letter should include:

- Brief summary of the organization and proposed local program.
- Importance of community involvement.
- Date, time, and location of meeting.

Meeting Agenda

For the first meeting, create an agenda that covers the major points to be discussed, such as:

- Plans for a local program.
- Strategy for implementing a local program.
- Benefits of having a local program.
- Role of committee members.
- Action plans for next meeting.
- Next meeting date, time, and place.

List of Members

At the first meeting, send around a sheet of paper asking for everyone's contact information. Even if they cannot serve on the committee, they still may be interested in knowing what is going on with the program and can become a source for volunteers and funding.



Make another list of the members who will serve on the committee and designate committee tasks (see below for more information). Start a database with their contact information and update it frequently.

Committee Tasks

The most successful committees have members who are active and who take ownership of the program. The following is a list of possible jobs that the committee members can sign up for:

- Elect a chairperson who will run the scheduled meetings.
- Provide administrative leadership to facilitate the development and support of the program.
- Assure all programs are adequately staffed.
- Oversee recruitment programs through schools, rehabilitation facilities, and person-to-person contact, etc.
- Oversee arrangements for venues for sports training, meetings, and competitions.
- Oversee organization of seasonal sports programs.
- Help plan or coordinate, as necessary, accessible transportation to and from training and competition programs.
- Assist in developing a budget and funding that includes expenses, general revenue, fees, donations, grants and in-kind services.
- Develop grant applications for funding.
- Ensure appropriate record keeping and database development of staff, volunteers, and participants.
- Continue to recruit new committee members.

3.5 Create a Budget

Fundamental to a successful program is the development of a budget that is realistic in the identification of potential revenues. An accurate and cost-effective approach in detailing expenditures will also ensure fiscal accuracy. The program budget must be reviewed and periodically adjusted. Actual revenues and revised revenue projections are balanced against actual expenditures and projected future expenses. There are many types of budget formats available and local programs should use formats that best meet their needs.

3.6 Recruiting Participants

A critical element to a successful program is the development and implementation of a long-term participant recruitment program. There are no short cuts or foolproof recruitment strategies. Commitment, determination and effort will yield results. Potential recruitment strategies include:

- Mailings and flyers distributed through schools, rehabilitation facilities, durable medical equipment companies, prosthetic companies, non-profit agencies, various disability support groups and other organizations that offer services to persons with a disability.
- Meetings with school officials, department of labor representatives, and rehabilitation facilities staff to create an on-going network to distribute information.



- Meetings with Veteran Administration (VA) hospitals and other healthcare/medical/wellness providers to facilitate communication to prospective participants.
- Strategies for locating children mainstreamed in school systems and who are often not directly identified as having physical disabilities, e.g. through a BlazeDay in the school.
- Conduct disability awareness for students and staff of local university and secondary school systems.
- Person to person contact. This method has been proven to be an extremely successful way to add participants to your programs. Following up leads with personal contact will produce results.
- Organization's website.
- Social Networking channels such as Facebook and Twitter.

Recruitment Resource:

BlazeSports Webinars: "Recruiting Participants: Making a Connection with Your Local School District, Community Program, and/or Military Installation" is available at:

<http://youtu.be/yZnY7gL74Ug>

"Working with Adapted PE Teachers: Partnerships, Recruitment, and Mandates":

http://youtu.be/J_Ef9YoyNOg

3.7 Recruiting and Training Coaches and Volunteers

Coaches

Another key to a successful program is a qualified and competent coaching staff. When selecting staff, make sure they have a background in disability sport or sport in general, who can be educated/trained on an adapted version of the sport to be offered and disability specific considerations. Coaches who are able to create an atmosphere of fun amidst a sports/athletic training environment will continue to create a supportive and recognized program throughout the community. Having good "people" skills will also assist in the programs growth.

An important consideration in developing and maintaining a quality coaching staff is to compensate the coaches fairly, either with a stipend or other form of payment. When creating budgets, plan for payment of staff. Program content and a committed coaching staff contribute significantly to a successful program.

Also ensure that staff is properly trained in key areas of disability and risk management so the participants receive quality coaching in a safe environment that is appropriate to the individual's skill level as well as disability. Requiring a credential such as the Certified Disability Sport Specialist (CDSS) offered through BlazeSports is one way to ensure that your coaches and volunteers are prepared to deliver a program to the standards of best practice.



Coaches Training Resources:

BlazeSports Webinar Series: <http://www.youtube.com/blazesports>

Certified Disability Sports Specialist program:
<http://www.blazesports.org/resources/professional-development/>

BlazeSports Annual Conference: <http://www.blazesports.org/resources/annual-conference/>

Volunteers

Volunteers are often referred to as the heart of a program or organization. Volunteers can be found throughout the community. Many school clubs, colleges, service clubs, church congregations, businesses and other organizations encourage members and/or staff to participate in volunteer opportunities. Volunteer agencies are an additional recruiting resource; they can assist with running newspaper ads and basic word of mouth networking.

Trained volunteers with defined roles and responsibilities are important. Under-utilized and/or unappreciated volunteers tend not to continue working with a program. Refer to Section 5 - Volunteer Management for more detailed information related to volunteer recruitment, training and retention.

3.8 Program Evaluation

What is program evaluation?

Program evaluation essentially means comparing actual program outcomes to the intended outcomes. The Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) defines evaluation as the “the systematic gathering, analysis and reporting of data about a program to assist in decision making.” Program evaluation produces the information needed to improve the effectiveness of programs.

Evaluation is a process that can be done internally or with the support of an external evaluator, usually an independent contractor or a local university. Having someone on your Board with evaluation expertise is recommended. The American Evaluation Association (www.eval.org) is a great resource for finding evaluators in your state.

Why Evaluate?

- to collect information about the effectiveness/impact of a program
- to be accountable to funders, stakeholders, clients, staff, participants, etc
- to improve a program
 - to identify what works, what doesn't and why
 - to improve usefulness of program materials
 - to assess the needs of your target population
- to assess the efficiency (cost-benefit) of a program



Types of Evaluation

Programs can measure results in a number of ways including fitness testing, surveys, questionnaires and observations. Depending on the program's intended outcomes, a program can decide which results should be measured. Evaluation can also be divided into three main types based on when the evaluation is conducted in the life of a program and the types of information collected.

1. Formative Evaluation

- Focuses on programs that are under development and used during the planning stages of a program to ensure that it is developed based on the needs of community/participants
- Evaluation activities include needs assessments, developing program logic models, and pre-testing program materials (e.g. educational materials)

2. Process Evaluation

- Focuses on programs that are already underway and looks at the activities involved in implementing the program and how well they can be improved.
- Process evaluations are very important because programs are seldom implemented as designed or planned and they help answer why a program was or was not effective.
- Answers questions such as "what services are actually being delivered and to whom?", "are they being implemented as intended?"
- Evaluation activities include tracking number of people and description of people reached (e.g. gender, age, type of disability); tracking quantity and types of programs provided, description of how programs are provided, and quality of programs.

3. Summative Evaluation

- Focuses on programs that are already underway or completed.
- Examines the effects of the program (intended and unintended). Sometimes referred to as impact or outcome evaluation
- Answers the questions "Did the program meet its stated goals and objectives?" (outcome) and "Did the program make a difference?" (impact evaluation)
- Can assess both short-term and long-term outcomes.
 - Short-term outcomes: changes in participants such as participation rates, awareness, knowledge, or behavior.
 - Long-term outcomes: larger impacts of a program on a community such as policy or environmental change
- Evaluation activities include measuring changes in attitude, knowledge, and behavior, fitness tests measure changes in health status (EG secondary medical conditions)

Guiding Principles

- People may use different words to describe the same thing; try not to get caught up in the terminology. Describe evaluation in ways that the organization/partners will understand.
- Spend enough time up front in the planning phase of the program
- Evaluation is an important part of all phases of a program - planning and implementation, not just at the end of a program. Integrate evaluation into ongoing program activities.
- Be clear about the purpose of the evaluation.



- Consider using multiple evaluation methods (qualitative and quantitative) to understand the multi-component nature of most programs. For example, conducting a focus group with parents (qualitative) or collecting changes in sport performance or fitness (quantitative).
- Don't try and evaluate everything. Select key criteria that will help you develop your program(s).

Ten Basic Steps in Program Evaluation

(Adapted from The Health Communication Unit, at the Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto)

1. Clarify Your Program

- Define program goals, population of interest, short and long-term objectives
- Define programs activities and outputs (results of activities such as number of trainings) that meet these objectives
- Establish measurable program indicators for each objective. Indicators are what the program is trying to change, e.g. fitness level
- Ensure prerequisites for evaluation are in place such as funding, staff, etc
- Creating a logic model during this step can be very useful. A logic model is simply a graphical representation of your program activities and intended outcomes (short- and long-term).
- BlazeSports America's logic model is included at the end of this section as an example

2. Engage Stakeholders

- Some organizations choose to engage stakeholders first and then clarify the program objectives together
- Define stakeholders (who are they? – participants, funders, parents, etc)
- Understand stakeholders' interests and expectations (EG what they want to know about the program and expectations regarding type of evaluation)
- Engage stakeholder participation
- Develop evaluation questions (based on program goals and objectives and
- Prioritize stakeholder evaluation questions and expectations. It is not possible to answer all evaluation questions, so it is important to prioritize

3. Assess Resources for the Evaluation

- Determine availability of staff and volunteer time and evaluation skills
- Determine amount of money allocated for evaluation, allocating 5-10% of budget is standard
- Determine timeline of evaluation

4. Design the Evaluation

- Select best type of evaluation to be conducted for the program – formative, process, or summative
- Design evaluation plan/framework
- Consider ethical issues and confidentiality (EG storage of personal information, parental consent, etc.)



5. Determine Appropriate Methods of Measurement and Procedures

- Qualitative versus quantitative methods or both (referred to as a mixed method). Methods include a literature review, surveys, interviews, focus groups, record keeping, pre/post health/fitness measures
- Consider stakeholder expectations, resources and type of evaluation
- Select sampling design (including sample size and recruitment method)

6. Develop Work Plan, Budget and Timeline for Evaluation

- Identify specific tasks, roles, resource allocation, and deadlines for evaluation activities

7. Collect the Data Using Agreed-upon Methods and Procedures

- Pilot test tools and collection procedures first
- Data collection techniques

8. Process and Analyze the Data/Results

- Prepare the data for analysis
- Analyze the data

9. Interpret and Disseminate the Results

- Interpret results
- Present/share results with all stakeholders in a format that they understand

10. Take Action based on results and recommendations

- Make improvements to the program based on evaluation results
- Create a plan that puts those improvements into action

Examples of Evaluation Measures

Examples of Evaluation Measures	How to Measure
How often are participants attending practice and receiving physical activity?	Attendance
Are all participants offered the opportunity to be physically active?	Teaching Observation
Are activities offered as planned?	
Is the staff comfortable with leading, coaching, and encouraging physical activity or a particular sport	Staff Feedback Survey
Do participants enjoy being physically active or participating in a particular sport?	Participant Surveys
Has the fitness level of participants increased?	Brockport Physical Fitness Test (for youth with disabilities) President's Fitness Challenge FITNESSGRAM



Brockport Physical Fitness Test

The Brockport Physical Fitness Test (BPFT) is a criterion-referenced, health-related test of physical fitness appropriate for use with youngsters with disabilities, aged 10-17 years. The Brockport Physical Fitness Test is designed for and is suitable for use with students with and without a disability. Disabilities such as spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy, blindness, congenital anomalies, amputations and cognitive impairment. The physical fitness test battery (27 items in total) can be customized for nearly any student. However, most test batteries for individuals will involve only four to six items depending on the individual being tested. For more information, visit www.topendsports.com/testing/brockport.htm

The President's Challenge

The President's Challenge provides activities, activity logs, and health and fitness tests that can be used in programs offered in schools or communities. The President's Challenge website contains on-line fitness assessments and fitness files to track fitness outcomes of participants. These assessments can be adapted for individuals with physical disability. For more information, visit <http://www.presidentschallenge.org/index.shtml>

FITNESSGRAM

FITNESSGRAM is a computerized fitness assessment tool developed by the Cooper Institute. It measures three components of health-related physical fitness that have been identified as important to overall health and function: aerobic capacity, body composition, and muscular strength, endurance, and flexibility. These assessments should be adapted for individuals with physical disability. For more information, visit www.fitnessgram.net/home.

Evaluation Resources

There are numerous evaluation resources and books available. The following resources represent some of the most comprehensive in the field, all with similar concepts and information.

W.K Kellogg Foundation

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation/links/WK-Kellogg-Foundation.pdf>

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide

<http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/PED/Resources/documents/LogicModelGuide.pdf>

The Health Communication Unit

Evaluating Health Promotion Programs Workbook

http://www.thcu.ca/resource_db/pubs/107465116.pdf

Logic Models Workbook (pdf available on Evaluation CD)

See http://www.thcu.ca/resource_db/pubs/107465116.pdf

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Evaluation Workgroup

<http://www.cdc.gov/eval/index.htm>

The Community Tool Box

Numerous templates and guides on evaluation.

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/Default.htm>



American Evaluation Association

Find resources and tools, and find qualified evaluators in your state.

<http://www.eval.org/>

Toolkit for Sports Development

Sport-in-Development, A Monitoring and Evaluation Manual

www.uk sport.gov.uk/docLib/MISC/FredCoalterseminarMandEManual.pdf

BlazeSports – Logic Model

