

COUNT US IN

DEVELOPING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN



This guideline will assist providers with:

BEGINNING
DEVELOPING A PROGRAM

CONTINUING
RETAINING YOUR PARTICIPANTS

ASSESSING
EVALUATING THE PROGRAM



**VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY**

**A NEW
SCHOOL OF
THOUGHT**

Supported by
the Victorian
Government



INTRODUCTION



This guideline has been developed on findings from a three year research project titled 'Count Us In: Developing Physical Activity Programs for Women'. The guidelines are targeted for program providers in private, community and leisure organisations, located in metropolitan and regional areas throughout Victoria.

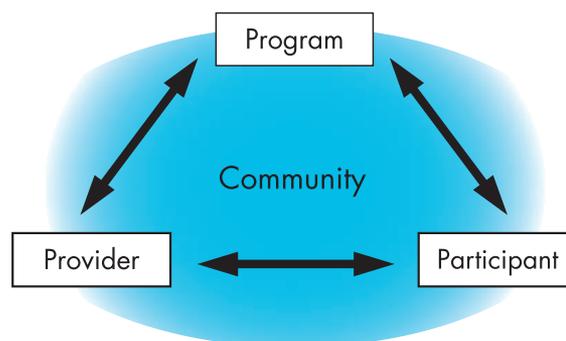
The Victorian study involved:

- Surveying government and private stakeholders.
- Conducting focus groups with women aged 18 – 80
The life phases of participants represented: full-time and part-time workers, at home mothers, and senior citizens. These women participated in a variety of programs e.g. walking, yoga, aerobics, rowing, softball, pram walking.
- Interviewing program managers and instructors from a range of organisations e.g. private, community and leisure providers in metropolitan and regional communities throughout Victoria.
- Metropolitan and regional communities throughout Victoria.

PROVIDERS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMS



Successful physical activity program providers consult their female participants, work in conjunction with other community organisations and respond to community needs.



The strategies and examples detailed in this brochure were determined by examining different types of physical activity program. The organisations and communities are defined below.

- Private is any organisation that delivers a program for profit and is not supported financially by another organisation e.g. fitness gymnasium or sporting centre.
- Community is a health or community organisation which delivers a wide range of community programs e.g. neighbourhood house or community centre.
- Leisure is a leisure or recreation provider whose major purpose is physical activity provision and who may be supported financially by another organisation such as local government e.g. swimming pool or recreation centre.
- Metropolitan provider resides in the Melbourne region.
- Regional provider resides in either rural or regional Victoria.

GUIDELINE USE



To use the guideline, program providers:

- 1** Determine what stage a program is at:
BEGINNING - Developing a Program Page 4
CONTINUING - Retaining your Participants Page 7
ASSESSING - Evaluating the Program Page 10

- 2** Refer to the stage in the guideline.

- 3** Tick the strategies to incorporate in the stage.

- 4** Note the examples to possibly include in the program.



BEGINNING: DEVELOPING A PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAM

ASSESSING NEEDS OF WOMEN IN YOUR COMMUNITY

(Strategies and Examples)

Please tick

Examine current programs provided by your organisation/ community and identify any gaps

Survey members and determine if women of all ages are attending
Assess programs currently in the community and determine if all physical activity levels are addressed

Determine the needs of the different groups of women in your community

Women of different ages require different physical outcomes from their programs
Working women are constrained by time and require routine and additional services
Women with children need social connection and child minding support to exercise
Women from CALD communities have needs specific to their culture

Understand the reasons why women participate, the benefits they receive from participation and match these to specific groups of women

Women participate for a variety of reasons. It can be to improve:

- physical health e.g. cardiovascular endurance
- general health e.g. relaxation
- social connectedness e.g. opportunity to meet people
- personal gain e.g. time for themselves
- education e.g. knowledge on health issues

Identify the different needs of women in different communities

Regional women need programs that foster social connectedness and include supportive strategies, such as the instructor and other program members providing transport or assisting with childcare
Metropolitan women are more concerned with health issues and the physical environment they are exercising in

MARKETING THE PROGRAM

(Strategies and Examples)

Word of Mouth: most popular method of participant recruitment

Women discuss the program with their friends
Participants bring along a friend

Advertising

In local media including radio, television and newspaper
Letter box drop of program flyers, delivered by walking program participants

Promotions

Come and try two sessions free
Bring a friend
Reduced membership prices for a specific time
New program launch

Working with other organisations

Pamphlets, handouts, flyers distributed to organisations that women in target groups will visit
Staff of affiliated organisation recommend the program



IDENTIFYING AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS

(Strategies and Examples)

Please tick

Identify barriers specific to the group and instigate strategies to overcome these

Women with children need child minding integrated into the program. This may include access to a crèche, an activity that involves the children e.g. pram walking or participants taking turns to mind the children

Work with other organisations to overcome resource problems

Use the local school's facilities or equipment
Develop programs that use the natural environment e.g. parks, rivers or open space

Provide incentives to encourage instructors to train

Gain funding to educate coaches or instructors, or provide in-house training workshops
Pay for instructors to undergo additional training
Arrange for trained staff to mentor untrained, to encourage knowledge sharing

Appropriate scheduling of classes

For women with school age children, schedule the program after school drop off time
For working women time is often a barrier. Keep the program within one hour and schedule before 8.00am, at lunchtime or after 6.00pm
To make women comfortable, avoid scheduling any other program at that time in the exercise space
If the program is outdoors, respond to seasonal changes e.g. one session in the winter and two in the summer

Appropriate cost for participants

Make program part of an overall membership package to decrease cost
Keep costs small by subsidising from other programs delivered by facility
Use trained volunteers as instructors/coordinators
Use public open space venues e.g. parks, to keep costs low
Apply for grants
Have flexibility in membership packages to allow for members to take part in promotional deals e.g. 40 days for \$40.00

WORKING WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

(Strategies and Examples)

Use other organisations to provide resources or facilities if your organisation does not have them

Have the community nurse provide a lecture or pamphlets on related health issues
Use walking paths or parks in scenic locations maintained by local council

Deliver programs for other organisations, if they do not have the facilities or skills

A multicultural group wants to increase the physical activity of its members. Provider works in conjunction with the group to appoint the instructor and facilities
The local hospital does not have the facilities to run its post cardiac care program. In conjunction with their staff you devise a program and deliver it for them
Partner with local sporting associations to obtain grants and deliver programs



CONTINUING: RETAINING YOUR PARTICIPANTS

PROVIDING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

(Strategies and Examples)

Please tick

Crèche or child minding is provided

- Facility provides child minding services e.g. crèche or day care
- Participants organise a child minding roster
- Carers are allowed to bring children to the exercise environment, if child care is not available and it is safe to do so

Variety of payment schedules

- Casual payment is allowed
- Membership packages with discounts are available
- Discount prices for ten sessions
- Payment can be staggered over membership period
- Specific groups have discounts e.g. Seniors

Clear communication between the provider and participants

- Provider contacts the participants when any changes occur to the program through newsletter, phone or verbally by the instructor
- Provider responds to any written or verbal concerns identified by the participants
- Provider distributes detailed membership booklet

The class atmosphere is supportive and encouraging

- Participants feel safe due to group environment e.g. walking or provision of equipment, such as blinds
- Activities are tailored to the needs of the group and alternatives are available if they cannot do something, therefore, everyone achieves
- Participants encourage one another to keep attending
- Confidentiality of conversations is encouraged by instructor

ENCOURAGING A SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

(Strategies and Examples)

Participants foster social atmosphere by talking and laughing during exercise process

- Participants have time to greet each other at the beginning of class
- Participants are able to choose groups in which they want to exercise
- Participants organise a social function at end of every session

Facility provides an area for social gathering after the activity

- An area is set aside for women after class to have a coffee and chat
- Organisation subsidises coffee, biscuits or lollies

Social events occur out of class time

- Either the group or instructor organises functions out of class time e.g. bus trips

Instructor organises special events during class time

- Celebrate special days e.g. Melbourne Cup, Christmas
- After-class lunches or special morning teas e.g. Mothers Day



MAINTAINING A SUITABLE EXERCISE ENVIRONMENT

(Strategies and Examples)

Please
tick

The indoor environment is well maintained and suitable to the activity

Clean

Air-conditioned

There is enough equipment for all members

Variety of equipment is provided and is well maintained

Participants feel comfortable in exercise area. This may include providing blinds and not having mirrors

The exercise space is big enough for all participants to exercise safely

The outdoor environment is suitable

Scenic eg parkland

Wide walking paths in metropolitan community

Shade provided during hot weather

Wet weather alternative areas e.g. school gym

Lighting at night time or early morning e.g. street lighting

Access available

Ramps for wheelchairs, prams and those hindered by stairs

Car parking provided

Public transport is available or pick up is organised by provider

RECOGNISING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INSTRUCTOR

(Strategies and Examples)

The instructor is qualified and knowledgeable

Maintains qualifications

Attends additional training or workshops

Gives clear demonstrations and verbal feedback

Ensures the program has a variety of activity

Organises social events and attends them

The instructor promotes a social atmosphere

Welcomes participants as they arrive

Encourages participants to attend social event at end of session

Organises social events and attends them

The instructor is friendly and motivated

Enjoys delivering the program

Is enthusiastic and has well developed interpersonal skills

Interacts well with, and has rapport with, participants

Talks individually with participants on issues affecting them during activity



RECOGNISING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INSTRUCTOR

(Strategies and Examples)

Please tick

The instructor ensures the program environment is supportive

- Provides additional information for participants, such as handouts on health issues
- Provides individual instruction if required
- Ensures each participant achieves at each stage before they progress
- Assists participants in getting equipment and organising groups
- Listens to participants talk about personal issues

Instructor tailors the program to suit the needs of the participants

- Modifies activity to suit the needs of the individual
- Assists with setting personal exercise goals
- Provides alternative exercises if required
- Provides exercise and equipment suitable to the needs of the group e.g. strength and conditioning for over 50's
- Organises music suitable to the age of participants and activity

The instructor allows participants to provide input

- Will include suggestions on activities or exercise
- Plays music provided by participants

The instructor communicates with other instructors who deliver the program

- Email facilities to communicate with casual staff members/instructors
- Regular monthly meetings with staff
- Organises replacement instructor with skills suitable to program

LINKING WITH OTHER PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMS

(Strategies and Examples)

Participants have the flexibility to move between programs

- If women become pregnant, they can move from a land-based aerobics class to water aerobics and return when appropriate
- If participants in recreational sports want to play competitively, they can move into a competition. Likewise competitive players can move into a social competition

The organisation provides a variety of programs to suit the needs of various groups

- Low impact classes, strength and conditioning classes, free weights, high impact classes

Instructor monitors participant progress

- Every 12 weeks each participant undergoes a fitness assessment. Depending on the results another program may be recommended



ASSESSING: EVALUATING THE PROGRAM

CONTINUING ASSESSMENT

(Strategies and Examples)

Please tick

Evaluation occurs before the program begins

- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis of provider organisation
- Analysis of community needs and current provision of services
- Survey of potential participants' needs and requirements

Evaluate during program development

- Assess facilities ability to resource the program
- Reflect on links or relationship with assisting organisations
- Pilot the program
- Hold a focus group with members to analyse development

Regular assessment while the program is operating

- Staff is assessed through performance reviews and observation of instruction during a class
- Participants complete a Customer Satisfaction Survey on both the program and the facility
- Number of participants attending the program is monitored

Change program delivery if the evaluation identifies issues

- An Instructor is reallocated because they do not suit the specific group of participants
- A venue is changed because the women did not feel comfortable in the environment

INCLUDING PROGRAM STAKEHOLDERS IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS (Strategies and Examples)

Allow participants opportunity to provide feedback and act on the information provided

- Survey participants
- Listen to anecdotal information given during social situations

Encourage instructors to provide information on program effectiveness

- Determine if participants achieved exercise goals
- Facility and equipment maintenance requirements
- Appropriateness of activities

Allow input from other organisations who assist in program delivery

- Provide information for funding sources
- Survey key stakeholders on working relationship



Contact details

Dr Clare Hanlon
School of Human Movement, Recreation and Performance
Victoria University
PO Box 14428
Melbourne VIC 8001
Tel: +61 3 9919 3268
Clare.Hanlon@vu.edu.au

An electronic copy can be downloaded from www.sport.vic.gov.au

Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to the women throughout Victoria who shared their experiences and provided valuable input towards identifying strategies and examples for encouraging women in physical activity. We would like to express our gratitude to the managers in sport and active recreation organisations who shared their expertise and assisted in validating this guideline.

The 'Count Us In: Developing Physical Activity Programs for Women' project was collaboratively supported by the Department for Victorian Communities, Sport and Recreation Victoria, through the Women in Sport Program and Victoria University.

The Victoria University research team comprised:
Dr Clare Hanlon, Professor Tony Morris, Ms Susan Nabbs,
Associate Professor Precilla Choi
CARES (Centre for Ageing, Rehabilitation, Exercise and Sport)