



SPORT **HQ**

Facility planning guide



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
1. The idea	4
2. Facility planning documents	6
3. Project planning	8
4. Investment attraction	9
5. Project and funding management	10

The information presented in this guide:

- is general in nature and does not consider your organisation's specific situation;
- is correct at time of publishing; and
- should not be considered as legal advice.

Introduction

This guide has been developed to demonstrate the planning process and provides an overview of the steps your organisation can take to continue on the path to facility development. The guide is divided into the five key steps, from developing your idea through to managing project delivery and funding acquittal.



1. The idea

- Identified need
- Define objectives
- Assess current facilities
- Identify requirements
- Funding sources
- Stakeholder consultation
- Initial budget and resources



2. Facility planning documents

- Spatial analysis/facility layout plan
- Master plan/facility plan
- Feasibility study and/or business case
- Concept plan
- Detailed design
- Site assessments
- Other planning documents
- Sports lighting



3. Project planning

- Stakeholder engagement
- Timeline
- Transition
- Forecast demand and budget
- Resource planning
- Scope of works
- Cost estimation



4. Investment attraction

- Budget allocation
- Engagement with Council
- Grants/funding opportunities
- Borrowings



5. Project and funding management

- Project manager
- Approvals
- Tender
- Construction
- Cash flow
- Acquittal
- Maintenance planning and management

1. The Idea



Your organisation has identified a need to develop your facilities. One of the most important questions at this stage is – **“Will this facility development align with your goals?”**. You can use the *Facility project planning workbook* to further explore your idea. Consider the following steps when developing your idea into a plan:

Define objectives

Clearly define what you hope to achieve from the facility development. This might include increasing capacity, improving safety, enhancing your members' experience or supporting new activities. Always bring it back to your organisation's goals.

Your organisation's strategic plan can guide this process as it outlines the long-term goals and objectives of your organisation. Referencing your strategic plan ensures that the facility development aligns with your organisation's broader vision and direction. Adding your facility needs to your strategic plan keeps everyone on the same path.

At key moments, such as planning, budgeting or applying for a grant, broaden the conversation. Ask: “How can we use this opportunity to make our grounds, facilities and activities, safer and more accessible and welcoming for everyone?”

Assess current facilities

Conduct a thorough assessment of your current facilities, noting their condition, capacity, the type and level of activities it caters for and any limitations. There may be limitations on your site due to flooding, bushfire, environmental overlays, adjacent land uses, lease conditions (if any), zoning or contaminated land (e.g. decommissioned landfill). It's important to identify site constraints that may influence the project early. This then provides a baseline to work from and helps provide initial direction for required facility updates.

There could be potential to improve accessibility and equality through Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliance and cultural and gender sensitivities.

Identify requirements

Great design starts with knowing who you're building for and how they'll use the space. Before you plan anything, ask a wide range of people what they would like to see from your organisation and venue. It's important that this includes people with disability, people from different cultural and gender backgrounds, parents and older people.

By applying fit-for-purpose, multi-use, compatibility, public-safety, health-and-safety, accessibility, co-design and universal-design principles, you'll create facilities that adapt, welcome and protect every member of your community.

Write down what is needed to meet the defined objectives.

Use the *Sport HQ Best practice design principles guide* to understand each principle and why it matters for your organisation. You can also refer to the *Sport HQ Guide to diversity, equity and inclusion*.

Funding sources

Carefully consider available funding sources when plotting out your project, especially when evaluating the project's scale and timeline, which can range from months to years, depending on the scale of the project.

Can the project be completed with savings or will fundraising or grants be necessary? If external funding is necessary, consider what planning documentation may be required to help secure funding.

Stakeholder consultation

Consult with stakeholders, including members, staff, community partners, investors, state and national sporting organisations, Queensland Government's sport and recreation office and Council.

Be careful to manage expectations. Just talking about something might mean people think it will definitely go ahead. It's best to frame your consultation according to the current planning stage of your project.

While it's still early in the project, their input can provide valuable insights and may help to garner support for the project as it progresses. If you are on leased land, discuss your ideas with the land owner (e.g. your local Council). There may be limitations that restrict your project or certain approvals, which you will need to obtain before you proceed.

Some Councils require approval before you build a shed or remove a tree - it's best to check! You can also ask if any past master plans have been undertaken for your facility.

A stakeholder project control group can be a good way to ensure each stakeholder is represented and has a say throughout the project. Refer to section 3 and the *Sport HQ Stakeholder project control group fact sheet* for more information.

For facilities with multiple user groups, expectations from other users and chatting with contractors directly can cause 'scope-creep'.

Managing the 'project want' can be a challenge. Focus on 'project need' and what is achievable with resources.

Initial budget and resources

Start to consider the budget and resources for the project, for example:

What professional input might you require?

This might include things like cost estimation, designs and plans.

What resources do you have available to complete your project?

Consider the expertise of your people for project management and delivery, as well as any financial or in-kind contributions. It's important to note that some projects, especially large projects and those funded by government entities, may require the involvement of an independent accredited construction project manager as a mandatory item.

If the organisation is considering paying members to deliver parts of the project, any potential conflicts of interest must be identified early and managed transparently, even where suitably qualified members are invited to bid for the work.

Establishing a project subcommittee can help drive the project planning process while ensuring ethical considerations and potential conflicts of interest are addressed proactively.

What is the estimated cost of completing your project?

Consider anticipated construction and professional costs, as well as any contingency (around 10%) and escalation allowances (around 5%). Also keep in mind that there may be costs associated with planning, design and approvals. A professional quantity surveyor may be required to help determine the likely costs if the project is more complex and quotes from contractors are not available.

Refer to *Sport HQ Cost estimation guide*.

Keep your budget updated. After the initial estimate, regularly review and amend the costs throughout the project.



2. Facility planning documents

Once you have established your idea, you can proceed with the required facility development plans, reports and approvals. Not every document or step is required for every project. The documents required can depend on the complexity and scale of each project. The below table demonstrates the planning documents from early planning stages with less detail to final planning documentation with detailed design. A small project such as building a shed may only require initial stakeholder engagement with Council (if required), receiving quotes from a number of builders to verify current market price and engaging a contractor to build the shed. Larger projects may require some or all of the steps below.

Planning initiation and formation

Spatial analysis/facility layout plan

Provides a quick visual reference to show your project goals. A facility layout plan might be known as a site plan.

A preliminary design, sketch or concept plan to provide a visual indication of the project, or a diagrammatic overlay on an aerial photo of the site to show the proposed location (including identifying streets/roads, if appropriate) and layout of main elements such as participation spaces, car parks, playgrounds and major buildings.

Master plan/facility plan

Visualises the proposed development. Can include initial investigations, and stakeholder and community consultation.

A master plan provides an overview of the proposed development including all retained, existing and proposed new buildings and structures, participation spaces, footpath networks, internal roadways and car parks. If required, additional detail such as approximate locations of lighting, drinking fountains, external furniture and entry signage can also be illustrated on the plan.

Various levels of investigations may be necessary at this stage including:

- Local government overlay analysis regarding issues such as zoning, flooding, bush fires, environmental and noise impacts
- Power supply, potable water supply, stormwater and effluent disposal investigations
- Site topography
- Stakeholder and community consultation may also be completed at this stage

Project assessment

Feasibility study and/or business case

Explores financial viability. An important step for large-scale projects that are seeking external funding.

This planning stage aims to determine the viability of a proposed facility development project.

Considerations and inclusions may include:

- Social and economic cost benefit analysis
- Demand assessment, gap and trend analysis
- Stakeholder and community engagement
- Capital and operational financial forecasting
- Governance and management
- Strategic context and policy alignment
- Benchmarking



Development approval stage

Concept plan

The preliminary consultant package for development approval. Developed by an appropriately qualified professional for the scope and scale of the project. A concept plan might be known as a sketch design.

This design provides more detail than the master plan, including building floor plan layouts, sections and elevations (drawn to scale). It also includes a higher level of detail in the external works such as notes about overland flow or drainage, locations of external furniture, finishes for footpaths and larger scale drawings of feature design nodes. 3D imagery can also be included at this stage. Other specialists such as town planners, environmental scientists and traffic engineers may include reports, if necessary.

Refer to the Sport HQ Facility plan and design examples for visual examples.

Operational works approval/building approval/tender

Detailed design

Comprehensive package for approvals, tender and construction. Usually a combination of reports and detailed construction plans and specifications.

Includes detailed and dimensioned plans, schedules and specification documentation, for example the identification and location of services (water, sewerage and electricity). Plans and documentation are produced by architects, landscape architects and engineers (structural, civil, traffic, lighting engineers or otherwise). Other specialists such as town planners, environmental scientists and traffic engineers may include reports, if necessary. A bill of quantities may also be produced for tendering purposes.

Site assessments

Consultants, engineers and town planners may be required to conduct site testing. These are best completed early in the project so there are no surprises. Potential testing and plans include:

- Geotechnical assessment and soil contamination testing
- Noise assessment
- Fire management plan
- Flora and fauna surveys (including seasonal surveys)
- Environmental impact/management plan
- Flood management plan
- Native Title and Cultural Heritage assessments
- Traffic management plan
- Service utility plan (i.e. plumbing, drainage, sewerage and electricity)

Other planning documents

Depending on your project you may also require additional planning documents, for example:

- A project management plan
- A procurement management plan
- An asset management plan
- A risk assessment
- A management and operations plan
- A land management plan
- Emergency evacuation plans
- Event management plans including parking management

Sports lighting

Sports lighting technology has evolved quickly, offering more efficient and flexible ways to illuminate your organisation's playing arenas. In Australia, key standards, AS 2560.2:2021 for sports lighting and AS 4282:2023 for outdoor light spill ensure safety, performance and community amenity. If your organisation is considering a lighting project, take these initial steps:

- Research products and layouts that satisfy your sport's participation or competition requirements
- Work with accredited lighting design professionals for advice on Australian standards and site-specific conditions
- Gain advice from people and organisations who have successfully completed compliant installations

For an overview refer to the *Sport HQ Sports lighting fact sheet* or for a detailed, step-by-step checklist and deeper guidance, see the *Sport HQ Sports lighting best practice guide*.

3. Project planning

When a organisation decides to complete a new project, careful planning is crucial to ensure success. Your planning should outline key steps to manage the project effectively. These steps include creating a timeline, planning for transition, forecasting demand and budget, procuring necessary resources and undertaking a tendering process if needed. Each of these elements plays a vital role in managing the project's flow, ensuring all aspects are accounted for and that the project is completed on time and within budget. Here's a closer look at these steps:

Stakeholder engagement

Keep your stakeholders informed throughout both planning and construction. Share progress on social media, in newsletters and on your website so members stay engaged. Don't forget to send regular email updates or hold meetings with your Council, state sporting body and funding partners to keep everyone aligned.

For larger projects, consider forming a dedicated stakeholder Project Control Group (PCG). This small leadership team brings together key voices, ensures balanced decision making, keeps the project on scope and budget and helps you manage risks early. For detailed guidance on setting up and running your stakeholder PCG, see the *Sport HQ Stakeholder project control group fact sheet*.

Timeline

Begin by mapping out a realistic timeline for your project. Consider all stages of the project from planning, procurement, construction, to completion. Factor in potential delays such as weather or the required approvals processes.

As the project progresses, review your project program, adjusting the timeline as you gain approvals, appoint contractors and experience delays. This program will help you keep your project stakeholders and members informed.

Transition

Plan for the transition phase during which the new facilities or changes will be put into use. This might involve training volunteers and staff, informing members and updating any relevant operational procedures. In some cases, project construction may render your site, or part of your site unusable. Operational plans and financial contingencies should be put in place and temporary facilities may even be required.

Forecast demand and budget

Estimate the expected usage of the new facility and budget accordingly. This should take into account initial construction costs, ongoing maintenance and potential income from its use.

Be realistic and detailed with your budgeting. Often, unexpected costs can arise during facility development, so it's essential to plan for contingencies. A comprehensive budget that includes room for unplanned expenses will help ensure your project stays on track financially.

Resource planning

Determine the resources, materials and services you'll need to procure for the project. This could involve hiring a project manager, paying for storage, purchasing construction materials, securing a contractor or paying for insurance.

A project manager brings expert oversight to your organisation's facility project. They manage construction, approvals, timelines and risks while keeping your project on budget and meeting quality standards.

For larger projects or funding programs that require it, hiring an independent, qualified and licensed project manager is best practice. To learn more about engaging a project manager and their key benefits, see section 5 and the *Sport HQ Project manager fact sheet*.

Scope of works

A scope of works defines every aspect of your project including tasks, timelines and stages of work. It communicates the project requirements to funding providers, stakeholders and contractors, and informs the cost estimate. The scope of works sets clear expectations and enables the organisation to compare similar quotes. Later in the project it will help prevent scope creep and provides measurable criteria to track progress.

No matter the size of your project, your scope of works should be detailed enough to guide contractors and keep your team aligned. For a deeper dive into preparing a clear, accurate and measurable scope of works, see the *Sport HQ Scope of works fact sheet*.

Cost estimation

Once you've determined the scope of works, you will usually obtain cost estimates rather than moving directly to a formal tendering process. This involves seeking quotes from multiple suppliers or contractors, evaluating their proposals and then selecting the most suitable provider based on cost, experience and quality of service. For most grant applications, you will typically need at least three quotes to secure funding, especially for larger projects.

While the least expensive bid might be appealing, the cheapest provider may not always offer the best value or quality.

For larger or more complex projects, you might consider obtaining a cost estimate from a qualified quantity surveyor. This can provide a more comprehensive and accurate picture of the overall costs, including allowances for contingencies and escalation, helping you secure funding with greater confidence.

If estimating and tendering will incur fees, include an allowance for them in your overall budget.

Be prepared for flexibility at each step of your project. As it progresses, new information or changes in circumstances may require adjustments to your initial plans.

Effective value and cost management ensures that your organisation's projects deliver the greatest benefit to members and the community while staying within budget. By applying these strategies throughout planning and delivery, you can keep your project aligned with its goals, reduce risks and build confidence with stakeholders.

Refer to the *Sport HQ Cost estimation guide* and the *Sport HQ Value and cost management guide* for further details.

4. Investment attraction



When it comes to attracting investment for facility developments, organisations must proactively engage various stakeholders. A well-thought-out budget, clear communication, an understanding of grants and funding opportunities, and careful consideration of borrowing options can all contribute to the successful funding of a project. Here are some steps to guide organisations in attracting investment:

Budget allocation

As infrastructure grants often require a financial co-contribution, you will need to determine how much of your organisation's money can be allocated towards the project. This will form the basis of your funding, which will help investors and funding bodies understand your commitment to the project.

Engagement with Council

Engage with your local Council early. They may provide advice, resources or even funding for community projects. Maintain open and regular communication to foster a positive relationship and to ensure your project aligns with local plans, regulations and strategies.

If your project is to be constructed on Council-owned or controlled land, you will also need Council's written permission to conduct the project.

Grants/funding opportunities

Investigate and apply for relevant grants and funding opportunities, which could come from government grant programs, sporting bodies, businesses or community initiatives. Keep in mind that grants can be highly competitive. Always be aware of application deadlines, as project timelines can span a number of years, and ensure your project aligns with each grant program's specific criteria.

Start your grant application early and gather all the documents and evidence you'll need. Well-supported submissions will score higher. Statements of support from key stakeholders and your community are especially powerful. Ask your supporters to provide a letter or form that answers questions like:

- What specific role or commitment will you have in this project?
- How will your organisation or community benefit once it's complete?
- What risks or issues arise if the project does not go ahead?

If your project scope changes, don't assume existing support still applies. Always seek fresh consent so your evidence remains valid.

Please refer to the Sport HQ resources on being grant ready and grant writing.

Always confirm whether your grant funding is GST-inclusive or exclusive, and include GST in your project budget and quotes so you avoid unexpected costs or shortfalls.

Borrowings

While most organisations won't own the land they intend to develop (i.e. they will usually lease it from their local Council), it can be possible to secure commercial loans from banks or other financial institutions against a lease.

If you intend to seek commercial borrowings to help finance a facility development, make sure you understand the terms and conditions, including interest rates and repayment schedules, and that such a loan would be appropriate for the level of financial risk your organisation is willing to take.

Some organisations have also borrowed money from members to help fund facility developments. Before taking loans from members, it is important to consider the longer-term implications. If you intend to borrow money from members to fund facility developments, exercise caution and maintain open communication.

All loans should be based on clear, legally-binding agreements outlining the terms and repayment plan. You should seek expert advice before taking on any borrowings so that you can make informed decisions that align with your organisation's financial goals and risk tolerance.

Remember, attracting investment requires patience, perseverance and, most importantly, a well-developed plan. It's a collaborative effort that involves communicating the organisation's vision and the positive impact of the project on the community.

5. Project and funding management

Once a organisation has completed the planning stages for a new project and secured funding, it's time to transition into the execution phase. This is where all the preparation begins to materialise into tangible results. The execution phase typically involves the tendering process, overseeing construction and finally, the acquittal process, where the organisation provides a report to funding bodies and it's members about how funds were used. Here are the steps involved:

Project manager

An organisation may choose to hire a project manager to oversee the approvals, tendering and construction. A project manager, along with managing the project, represents your organisation's interests and provides clear progress updates so you always know what's happening. A licensed project manager can prepare tender documents, arrange inspections and handle any tasks that need certification. This is particularly necessary for larger scale projects that require development approvals, a tender process and major construction. Refer to the *Sport HQ Project manager fact sheet* for more information on engaging a project manager.

Approvals

Before proceeding to the project's construction phase, you will need to complete your final designs and obtain all necessary approvals, including a development approval (DA) and a Building Approval (BA). A DA gives you formal permission for any assessable works and may include conditions you must meet. A BA confirms that your design and construction comply with building laws. Because Council requirements, fees and timelines vary, check early with your local planning or building department, or engage a qualified professional, to confirm exactly what you need.

For further guidance on these approvals, see the *Sport HQ Development and building approval fact sheet*. These steps will help you avoid potential legal or procedural roadblocks down the line. Confirm that the final designs align with the organisation's vision and meet all regulatory and stakeholder specifications. Additionally, any permissions or clearances required from local, state or federal bodies should be secured.

Tender

This is a process where the organisation invites bids from various contractors to undertake the project. This may be through an open advertisement or in other cases a select tender invitation list may be appropriate. When evaluating these bids, consider both price and non-price criteria, noting this is a confidential process. While the cost is undoubtedly significant, other factors like the proposed timeline, the contractor's experience, past projects and the quality of their work should be weighed into the decision-making.

Once you select a bid, you'll sign a contract with the chosen contractor. If you have received grant funding you may be required to secure the funding body's approval before you sign the contract.

Refer to the *Sport HQ Procurement and tendering fact sheet* for more information on the different types of tendering.

Construction

During this phase, the organisation needs to closely monitor the project's progress to ensure it's on track and meets the agreed standards. Regular site visits, meetings with the contractor and status updates should be part of the process.

Open and clear communication is important and if changes are required, ensure the conditions are documented so both parties know the details. The project manager can help by managing this communication.

Refer to the *Sport HQ Value and cost management guide* for information on managing escalating costs.

Review and adjust your project timeline plan regularly to understand the impacts of delays.

Cash flow

It is important to understand and plan your cash flow during construction. Key project completion stages may require you to pay your contractor. However, unless your grant funds are paid upfront, or the project stages align with your grant payment milestones, short term cash flow deficits may occur which will need to be accommodated.

Acquittal

This is a crucial final step where the organisation demonstrates to funding bodies and it's members the success of the project and how the money was used. Financial reporting that evidences where the funds were spent according to the agreed terms is essential. The acquittal process might require you to present invoices, receipts, proof of expenditure (e.g. bank statements) and a summary of project outcomes. Also note if the acquittal process is GST exclusive or inclusive.

The success of the project depends heavily on careful management during these phases. You should therefore maintain transparency, good communication and stay organised to ensure the project is completed successfully and to the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

Maintenance planning and management

Once your new facility or infrastructure is up and running, you need a clear plan to keep it in top condition. Start by creating an asset management plan that lists every element, the maintenance tasks required, their frequency and estimated costs. If you lease land from Council, confirm who is responsible for which maintenance tasks.

To cover future upkeep and replacements, establish a sinking fund and make regular deposits that account for your new infrastructure. You can use the *Sport HQ Asset management spreadsheet* to record your assets and to calculate your sinking-fund contributions.

Prioritise preventive maintenance. It's more cost-effective and safer for your members than waiting for something to fail.