

A photograph of two swimmers at a pool deck. In the foreground, a swimmer in a black and orange swimsuit and black swim cap is leaning forward on a blue starting block. In the background, another swimmer in a dark swimsuit and black swim cap is standing on a similar block, adjusting their cap. The scene is set in a bright, modern pool facility with large windows and a white wall. The overall tone is light blue and professional.

Leading Practices for Facility Allocation



BCRPA

British Columbia
Recreation & Parks
Association

viaSPORT
British Columbia

Background

In November 2024, a working group was formed with leaders from BCRPA, viaSport BC, Provincial Sport Organizations in BC and municipal facility managers in BC. The group's purpose was to develop principles and practices to improve facility access and equity and encourage collaboration between recreation providers and user groups. The group reviewed 24 municipal facility allocation policies across BC with representation from rural/urban, and smaller/larger communities. Recognizing that each city, town, and region have unique circumstances, the group sought to find commonalities that could inform leading practices and serve as a reference tool for facility allocation decisions.

Fun Facts from the Review

1. The 24 allocation policies that were reviewed affect more than 2,810,000 residents in the province.
2. A wide range of allocation policies were collected, from the village of Cumberland to the city of Vancouver and northern locations of Prince George and Kitimat.
3. 14 were urban communities, 10 were rural communities.

5 Leading Practices for Facility Allocation

1. Prioritize Community Benefit

Consider the following:

- Provide booking priority to non-profit, youth, and resident/district groups over commercial or non-resident users.
- Allow commercial groups to book only after community demand is met—and consider if premium rates are appropriate.
- Allocate space to new sports, underrepresented groups and equity deserving groups including disabilities and adaptive sport organizations, to create a more equitable use of space.
- Review how space is historically allocated and establish parameters on how long groups are given priority booking.
- Understand alignment of a community sport organization to a governing body such as a provincial or national sport organization (PSO, NSO) that oversees standards related to safety, governance, and programming. Reflect on how the Provincial Sport Organization is working with, and supporting, local sport development and sport hosting opportunities.

2. Transparent Allocation Policy

- Develop a clear priority ranking. Consider where semi-pro and private schools fit in.
- (e.g. municipal programs → minor sports → schools → community organizations → commercial)
- Make booking rules and practices transparent. For example, where municipalities distinguish between local and out-of-area users and offer preferred time slots or pricing for locals ensure this is well-communicated in order to manage expectations.
- Engage with community members in a meaningful way to ensure that equitable representation is thoroughly considered.
- Ensure bookings reflect a mix of demographics to promote inclusion.
- Take into account prime and non-prime time and in-season or out of season programming when reviewing allocation requests. When there is limited availability, prioritize sports that are in active competition season.
- Consider proactively connecting with PSOs to understand how allocation can support recommended Long-Term Athlete Development (Sport for Life LTD) and training ratios that are appropriate to ages and states of development.

3. Annual or Biennial Booking Review

- Conduct a yearly, or biennial review of allocation to ensure fair access and adjust based on use.
- Request user groups to provide annual reporting for tracking statistics.
- Consider opportunities to accommodate hosting of larger sport events that fall outside of the current allocation window (e.g. – an event that is more than 1 year out).

4. Event vs. Seasonal Play/Rec Balance

- Set caps, or scheduling limits, to avoid events or tournaments dominating peak times.
- Review peak times and consider opportunities to shift timing of programming in order to balance recreation and sport or event access.
- Allow buffer time in facility scheduling for adaptive sport programs due to specialized equipment (e.g. sport chairs, sledge hockey gear) or support personnel.

5. Governance Process

- Formal Definitions: Clearly define “community group”, “resident”, “commercial”, etc. in your policy to avoid grey areas.
- Policy review: Municipalities to have a regular review schedule.
- Consistency: Establish consistency across Allocation Policies for different spaces in the community, i.e. arena, pool, fields, etc.
- Conflict resolution: Have a conflict resolution process in place to address complaints.
- Tracking: Keep a record of the development and changes made to policies.

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