

# 6-Steps for Councils to Promote Outdoor Fitness Equipment in South Australia

Did you know across South Australia there are more than 200 outdoor fitness stations?

A state-wide project delivered by the University of South Australia has located and audited most of these fitness stations, talked to councils, and examined the research evidence to identify the following good practice opportunities to support community wellbeing.



1

## Make information about outdoor fitness equipment easy to locate



### Barrier

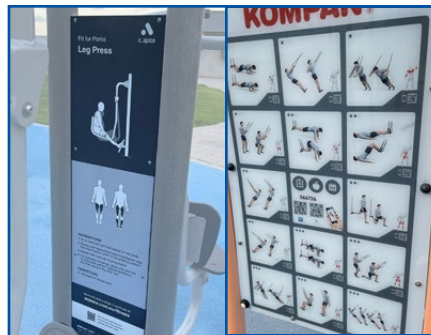
Users may not be aware of existing equipment location, types of equipment, or where to source this information.

### Opportunities

- Council Websites: Dedicated and consistently-presented outdoor fitness equipment sections, including maps, address, and/or interactive tool to clearly identify locations.
- Use icons to identify the presence of outdoor fitness equipment within parks and reserves.
- Identify outdoor fitness equipment sites within a council area on Google Maps (i.e. added via the 'missing place' feature).

2

## Ensure instructions are clearly presented and appropriate for users



### Barrier

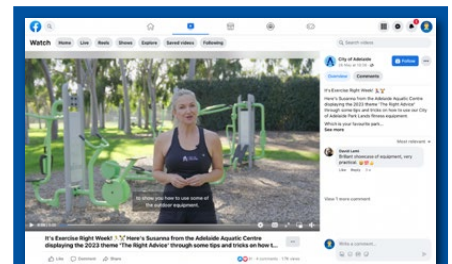
Lack of understanding about how to use outdoor fitness equipment.

### Opportunities

- For safety and user benefit, it's important to illustrate 'how', 'how often', and 'how hard' to do it.
- QR Codes on equipment could link to video resources, including culturally tailored ones as required.
- Use iconography or incorporate multilingual instructions.
- Regular equipment maintenance inspections could include checking legibility of instructional signage.

3

## Promote outdoor fitness equipment regularly through council communications



Councils can aim to increase usage and community fitness through free PT Sessions.

### Barrier

Limited promotion of outdoor fitness equipment.

### Opportunities

- Installation is just the first step. Increasing awareness is vital to promote usage.
- Councils could utilise various channels (E.g. social media, eDM, newsletters, local press) to regularly raise awareness.
- Encourage community to share success stories, testimonials or user experiences to inspire other residents to engage with outdoor fitness equipment, creating a stronger sense of community.
- Engage users with a diverse range of ages, abilities, and fitness levels.

4

Promote user safety by maintaining equipment that are visible and accessible



#### Barrier

People may feel unsafe using the outdoor fitness equipment.

#### Opportunities

- Optimal locations were high foot-traffic and highly visible areas that encourage spontaneous use (e.g. along popular walking paths) and enable community surveillance.
- Having equipment in good condition with soft-fall surfacing supports user perceptions of safety.

5

Consider obtaining usage data for outdoor fitness equipment



#### Barrier

It is unknown how often, when, and by whom the outdoor fitness equipment installations are being used in South Australia.

#### Opportunities

- Consider community-wide surveys or in-person observations to determine who is using the equipment, what for, and when.
- Use this data to guide to target messaging that enhances participation.
- Offer programs suitable for target audience (E.g. come 'n' try / supervised sessions) and monitor attendance.

6

Optimise adjacent amenities to support the use of outdoor fitness equipment



#### Barrier

Lack of supporting amenities can impact regular and spontaneous usage.

#### Opportunities

- Proximity of water fountains to outdoor fitness equipment may be beneficial.
- Shade, either by trees or shade sails could encourage use throughout the year.
- Consideration of the access needs of persons with low mobility, child caregivers, and people with disability (e.g. car parks, sealed paths, seating, toilets).



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of South Australia  
Wellbeing SA

Project Team: Alyson Crozier, Tom Wycherley, Brad Stenner, & Stuart Gollan  
UniSA Alliance for Research in Exercise, Nutrition and Activity  
For more information, contact [arena@unisa.edu.au](mailto:arena@unisa.edu.au)

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## Project findings that provide context for opportunities

### 1. Make information about outdoor fitness equipment easier to locate

- The level of community awareness about the location of equipment hugely impacts usage.
- Council websites varied greatly designs, details provided, terminology, and formatting of outdoor fitness equipment information.

### 4. Promote user safety by maintaining equipment that are visible and accessible

- 37% of outdoor fitness equipment sites were not clearly visible from a nearby road.
- 72% were located close to a children's playground, which creates a family-friendly, higher foot-traffic environment.
- 93% of equipment examined was in workable condition.
- 70% having soft-fall underlay.

### 2. Ensure instructional information is clearly presented and appropriate for users

- Most sites had equipment to facilitate a comprehensive training session.
- 67-82% of equipment sites included pictures and/or written instructions.
- 12% of sites had no instructions provided.
- Many instructional signs had weathered rendering them illegible.

### 5. Consider obtaining usage data for outdoor fitness equipment

- There is little usage data available within South Australia for outdoor fitness equipment.
- Research suggests that users are often older adults, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, and may have lower health literacy.

### 3. Promote outdoor fitness equipment regularly through council communications

- Councils use a range of strategies for promoting outdoor fitness equipment facilities and programs.
- The amount and types of promotion was varied with many offering "No active promotion".
- When present, the success of the promotion was unknown due to limited monitoring or evaluation.

### 6. Optimise adjacent amenities to support the use of outdoor fitness equipment

- 49% of audited sites had water fountains nearby
- Half across South Australia had no natural shade, shade sails, nor shelter.