



Dedicated Gymnastics Facility Development Guide

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1. Introduction

There are many reasons why Clubs may want to develop their own dedicated facilities; typically these are based around increasing membership numbers and raising performance levels. However for the long term sustainability of the Club increasing income streams through membership should be the initial focus of the Club following any project.

Having a dedicated facility also offers the possibility to provide a greater variety of gymnastics activities, improve customer service, professionalise the workforce and diversify the business model and income streams. A key consideration at an early stage needs to be what your Club goals are and how you intend to achieve them. Having your own facility can offer many opportunities but also introduces possible challenges to resolve, including:

- The Club's legal status and tax status.
- Understanding Employment Law.
- Improving business processes to manage increased finances and administration.
- Building management and maintenance.
- Workforce sustainability.
- An increase in expectations from your members.



2. Types of Dedicated Facility

Due to the variety of facilities where gymnastics takes place, facility projects are diverse. The main types of dedicated facility projects are:

- Refurbishment
- Upgrade
- Change of Use
- Asset Transfer
- New Build

New Build

A new build project is the full development of a gymnastics facility including all ancillary rooms such as changing, reception and viewing balconies. Costs are likely to be over £1200 per sq. Metre. This brings a suitably sized building of 1000 sq. Metre to well over the £1 million point and can be a substantial challenge to fund. Timescales can easily run into 2-3 years for completion of this type of project. Sport England provides a comprehensive design guide for a [standard affordable sports hall](#).

Refurbishment/Upgrade

These are 'fit-outs' of existing gymnastics facilities replacing older not fit for purpose equipment with newer, like-for-like equipment. An upgrade is the improvement of an existing project that will add extra value. This could be in the form of an extension to create more space, build new changing rooms or office space.

Conversion - Change of Use

Moving into an industrial unit, or other existing building and converting it into a gymnastics facility is known as change of use. This is due to the type of planning permission needed. Clubs wishing to move into an industrial unit must apply for 'Change of Use' planning permission to D2 as the project is changing the original purpose of the building and therefore what the initial planning permission was given for.

Conversion - Asset Transfer

An Asset Transfer involves the transfer of ownership of land or buildings from government organisations such as Local Authorities, to community groups like local sports clubs, often at a discounted price. Sport England has a [complete toolkit](#) for assisting with this process.



3. Specifications and Regulations

Specifications for overall space sizes and gymnastics equipment at various levels in different disciplines can be found on the BG Sports Equipment Data Sheets on the website.

Sport England produce a number of [useful documents and planning tools](#) that may be of use.

There is an [Affordable Sports Hall guide](#) that should be used as a best practice starting point for any project. When planning your facility don't forget to consider things like office space, reception area, waiting areas, changing rooms, etc. as well as the gym equipment layout.

Disability access should be considered from the start and incorporated into all projects. Doing this at the start of a project will be less disruptive and cheaper than trying to retrospectively resolve issues. There is an [online audit](#) to assist with this area.

Building regulations will need to be met on any works. You should apply for [Building Regulations approval](#) through your Local Authority.

Health and Safety requirements will need to be met. See the [H&S Executive website](#) for up to date information. Maintaining the BG GymMark award will help to ensure appropriate areas are covered. BG offer free H&S advice through [Agility UK](#).

[Fire Safety Risk guides](#) are available online. Most Gymnastics Clubs will probably come under the "small and medium places of assembly" section.

4. Project Stages

Although every project will be different there are several specific stages that most will pass through. While BG will be able to provide support around these, it is important to understand that the project must be driven by the Club.

Initial Feasibility Study

This is the first stage in deciding whether a project should go ahead. The Club Management Team should consider the needs and aspirations of the Club and whether the project is financially viable in principle. Look at the various options with regard to different types of projects and consult with Club members.

Writing Business Plan

This is about turning the idea/concept into a deliverable project. A Business Plan sets out all aspects of the Project and is vital to ensure all stakeholders understand what the project is and minimise any misunderstandings. There is no standard format for a Business Plan as each project will be different; however some of the headings that might want to be considered are



1. Mission Statement
2. Executive Summary
3. Background and Current Position
4. Need for Dedicated Facility
5. Facility Proposal
6. Usage and Activity Delivery
7. Management/Governance
8. Build/Setting up Costs
9. Running Costs
10. Project Monitoring

This is likely to be a live document that has more detail regularly added as the project develops.

[BG Business Planning Templates.](#)

Locating the Project Venue

Finding a suitable site/land/building can take some time. Search online and contact commercial property agents as well as using local knowledge and contacts. Finding a partner that may offer land for a new build may be relatively easy, but carefully consider the total costs of these types of projects. If you are planning a new build project you will probably need to use an [Architect with experience in sports facilities.](#)

Financing the Project

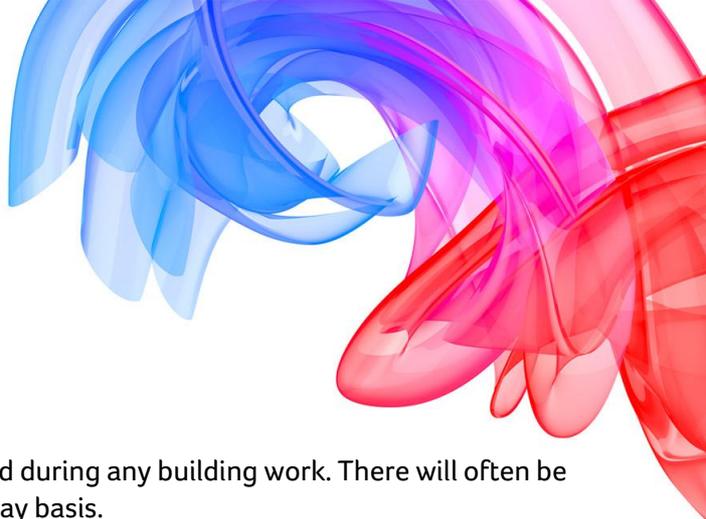
Look at the total amount needed and how you could reach it. [Funding streams](#) change regularly so keep up to date with what's available. If there are large gaps in your funding plans it may be that the project is not viable

Planning Permission

Depending on the project you may need to apply for Change of Use planning permission. This will cost a fee, can take at least 6-8 weeks and may be turned down if your project doesn't meet local requirements. The key to gaining Change of Use planning permission is often in doing the background work prior to making an application. Build relationships with local Planning Officers and Councillors to gain their support in advance. Many Local Authorities offer free pre-planning applications to offer advice on whether a full application would be successful. Normal planning objections are based around loss of employment opportunities, extra traffic flow and car parking, but these can be argued against by providing appropriate evidence. Clubs may choose to employ a specialist Planning Consultant company to address any possible problems and increase their chances of success.

Agreeing Lease Details

Leases can often be negotiated to include months free at the beginning or reductions in rent. Ensure you understand what you are signing, liable for and any clauses for rent increases. If you are intending to apply for funding, there will normally be minimum lease length requirements as the Security of Tenure. Some landlords may ask for a deposit, or a guarantor for the length of the agreement. Make sure any Planning Change of Use is completed before signing a lease.



Build Process and Monitoring

Don't underestimate the need for someone to be around during any building work. There will often be questions and decisions that need making on a day to day basis.

Opening

The official opening will be your biggest opportunity to promote your new venue. Do lots of local promotion and invite as much local press, television and radio as possible.

Activity Delivery and Management

Once open this is where the Club can now do all the things that were the reason for the project in the first place. It is inevitable that some might not work quite as expected, so regularly review progress and make adjustments as required. Managing the Club and building will take a considerable amount of time so consider how this will be done.

5. Business Development

The development of a gymnastics facility cannot solely end at investment in the structure of the building; and must include wider Club provision to ensure growth and sustainability whilst offering quality provision. A Club business plan is essential to provide assurances and evidence that the Club is viable and has a long-term future. If British Gymnastics and/or other partner funders are to invest into a facility development they will require evidence that the Club can provide a long-term return on investment linked to their outcomes. The business plan must show changes to income and expenditure related to facility development and how this affects profit and loss over a sustained period. This must also provide information about 'Replacement and Repair' funds to continually ensure quality provision within the facility. Other aspects of the club that will need to be included in facility developments are the impact on participation within the club, the development of performance and sustaining members. The development of the Club governance, workforce and partnerships must also be included.

Many Clubs will be able to show a waiting list of many hundreds of potential customers. Typically these will go back over many months or even years. Experience shows that you are unlikely to be able to convert all these into actual members, after just a few months waiting most will move on to do something different. This is an important point to bear in mind when planning potential increases in membership numbers.

Effective timetabling and diversification will be key to maximising income streams. Gymnastics for All (GfA) activities such as FreeG and GymFit can provide alternatives to traditional gymnastics classes and excellent customer service will assist with retention of members.

If hiring out the space to other Clubs or bodies separate Hire Agreement's should be put in place to safeguard your organisation.

[Club Matters](#) is a Sport England initiative delivered by PwC to provide free support in business & financial planning, marketing, facilities management and governance. Many gymnastics clubs are already registered and have received support around specific areas.



6. Legal Status

It is vitally important that the Club reviews its current legal status and makes any required changes before progressing too far along the project. This can have major implications on the amount of personal risk taken on by the Management Team for things like lease agreements and employment. It also has a large influence over what types of funding the Club may be eligible to access, along with potential tax benefits that may change the project. There are many [different types of structure](#) available and careful consideration should be given to the potential pros/cons of each.

7. Setup Costs

There can add up to between £5,000-£10,000 invested through legal fees, planning permission, etc. in getting a large project to a point where it is ready to proceed. Clubs should be aware that this investment may not always pay off and money may be lost if the project can't go ahead for any reason.

On top of these, the costs of preparing a building to be suitable for gymnastics activity can vary hugely depending on the state of the building to be used. Money can often be saved by asking local business to support your organisation and some projects have been very successful with gaining donations of office equipment, kitchen equipment, paint, carpets, etc.

8. Running Costs

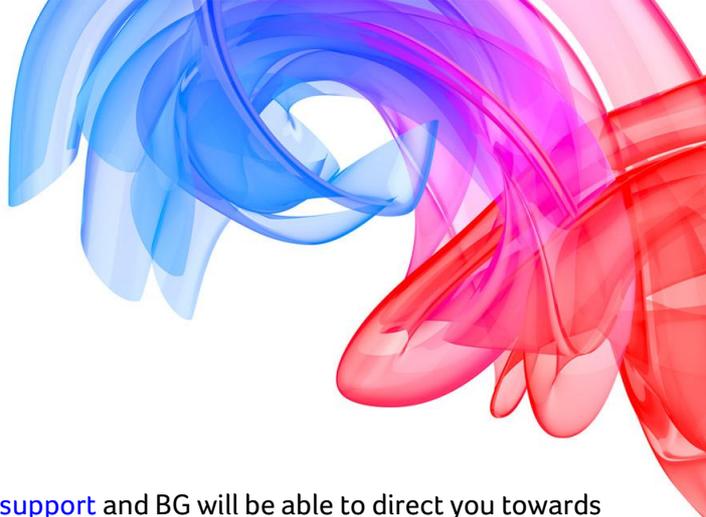
You should be prepared for managing a business with a potential turnover of up to £1 million. Careful consideration should be given to the monthly cash flow predictions. While it's relatively straightforward to predict an end of year operating profit, it's equally easy to run out of cash at some point and not be able to pay your rent or employees.

Ensure your plan predicts an end of year surplus as money will be needed for longer term development, equipment replacement, etc. Be wary of any plans that predict an excessively large profit for a year though.

9. Workforce Development

This is a critical part of any facility project and a workforce audit and projected needs analysis should be undertaken as part of the planning. Decisions need to be made about whether the Club intends to operate with [paid employees](#), [volunteers](#) or a [combination of both](#). All positions necessary for running the Club need to be considered. Don't underestimate the work involved in non-coaching roles essential to running the Club.

Talk to your [Work Force Development Coordinator](#) to discuss any training requirements that you identify for the future.



10. Funding Options

Many facility projects will require some type of [funding support](#) and BG will be able to direct you towards the most suitable types for your project. Funding types are normally split into Capital or Revenue. [Capital funding](#) is generally for building work and fixed equipment with Revenue funding used to help with core running costs, salaries or specific project costs. Any funding bid should be able to demonstrate sustainability for the future through the business plan, without a continued need for further funding.

Much of the equipment used for gymnastics (foam pits, etc) can be considered as fixed i.e. it is permanently set up and can be included into a facility project as a capital expense. Clubs should look at their current equipment provision and try to save costs on a facility development, by using existing equipment in new venues where possible. Non-permanent gymnastics equipment can be funded and purchased by revenue funding streams that will support capital projects.

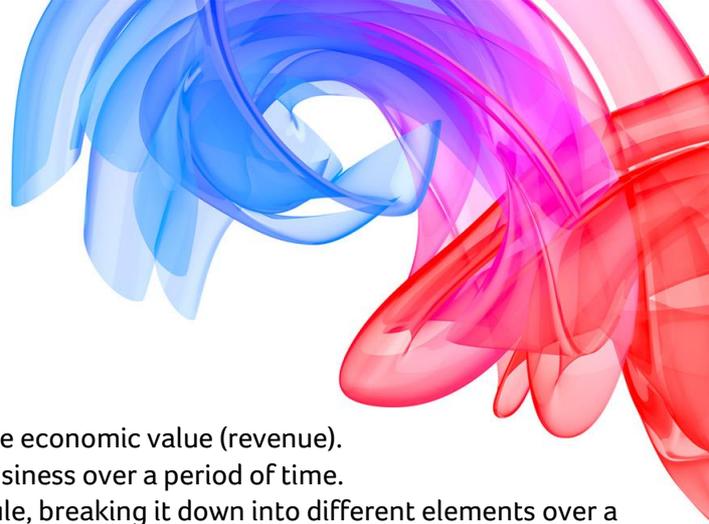
Self-funding through saving money over a period of time is always a good place to start. Alternatively a bank business loan backed up with a good business plan is a perfectly acceptable way of funding part or even all of a project.

11. Project Management

While developing a dedicated facility is a team effort, it's important that there is one single person nominated as the Project Manager who is empowered to make decisions and drive the project forwards. This should be someone with relevant skills (not necessarily gymnastics based) who has the time and experience to organise and direct the tasks. It may be useful to have a Project Gantt chart, or just a spreadsheet, listing the tasks that need doing, timescales and allocating responsibility to specific people.

12. British Gymnastics Support

For a facility development project to be successful it will need to be driven by the Club, the [BG Facility Team](#) is able to support and offer advice but will not be able to do the work for you.



13. Glossary of Terms

Business Model – An organisation’s strategy to generate economic value (revenue).

Cash Flow – The movement of money in and out of a business over a period of time.

Gantt Chart – A diagram that shows the project schedule, breaking it down into different elements over a timescale.

Income Stream – Money generated on a regular basis by a specific activity.

Lease – Legal contract to pay the building owner a set amount, for a period of time.

Security of Tenure – The right to occupy a building.

Workforce Audit – A review of all current and potential roles (coaching and otherwise) that are needed to allow the organisation to function.