



Project Feasibility – Aquatic programming studies

A very common request of TAP is for us to provide the facts and figures that prove a community can build and sustain a specific size of facility. For a smaller community this could be a 6 or 8 lane 25-yard pool with other auxiliary pools for programming. For larger communities this is usually some form of a 50-meter pool with recreation and leisure pools for community use.

The key word here is “prove” and TAP does not have the staff or resources for a full Feasibility Study. What is usually needed is “get you started” information. Even though our staff has expertise in all areas, each study, if correctly done, must be area specific. The demographics of Miami Florida vary greatly from those of Seattle Washington but on paper, the raw numbers look similar. The needs of each community will be based on what exist there now and what national trends they are not currently fulfilling. The delivery system of the actual programs plays as important of a part as the size and scope of facility.

Those who call us think we should just send out numbers from existing sites that prove the case they want to present. They also ask us to provide multiple examples of municipalities that are successful in operating large aquatic facilities without losing money.

It would not be appropriate to the proper planning of a project to compare facilities that are in existence today and then try to prove that scenario can be duplicated anywhere else. There is much more to it than that, and most city officials will consider a person or group who tries to oversimplify this process as totally non-credible. Once so tagged, your opportunity for bringing the correct information is gone.

Every city/municipality, school, university, etc. that is truly considering embarking on a project will require a detailed feasibility study be done. These studies are multi-phased and formal documents that cost money. They are done by professionals with allot of their time and resources invested. A typical aquatic programming feasibility study can take well over 200-man hours of research and development. What we can do is refer you to professional providers of USA Swimming and TAP “for these studies. We suggest you consider our preferred providers who have committed to offer preferred service and discount pricing to our club projects. (* note - there are many consultants who [in our opinion] have outdated information and will not support total aquatic programming and the proper design for multiple pools)

TAP does not have access to grants to help with studies or building facilities. All grant opportunities will probably come from your local level if any are available. The resources to continue the model for NEW RECREATIONAL FACILITIES we have had in this country for over 60 years are rapidly disappearing. Most of us enjoyed access to some form of COMMUNITY facility while growing up. Whether it was a school, YMCA/YWCA, or City Parks & Rec., it was always there for us. We never thought much about how it got there or how it afforded to stay open. Times have changed.

- Citizens are taxed close to the limit
- Utilities cost have skyrocketed over the past 15 years – especially since 2002

- Insurance cost have drastically increased because of inadequate risk-management
- Staffing and operational cost are escalating
- Building materials are going up more often than yearly – sometimes monthly
- Finding real estate that is affordable is a monumental task

If we compare what it cost to build a facility now to what it was just 20 years ago, the results are eye-opening. An indoor facility that was 12,000 square feet could be built with a pre-engineered steel building and concrete pools for around \$2 million. Price today – at least quadruple that.

What is more attention-getting is that the overall operational cost of that facility has gone from around \$100,000 a year to \$460,000 a year. Chlorine products incur 5% to 8% price increase annually and a similar price increase for natural gas and electricity is predictable.

So even if there are school dollars, or community dollars available, boards and committees shy away from the high cost of operating large pools. It has to be shown that the entire community has a need and a use for a specific pool(s) or they probably will not get built.

This is where feasibility studies are worth their weight in gold. Some things to expect from a feasibility expert who understands Total Aquatic Programming:

- Interviews to present and discuss the project goals, objectives, scope, and schedule.
- Discussion of base assumptions which will be expanded to provide the framework for continued analysis and strategy development.
- Confirmation on lines of communication, points of contact, level of involvement by the club leaders and staff.
- Provider will collect, log, and review any data and information to facilitate a thorough understanding of the project background.
- Provider will be in close and constant contact with the designated project manager and/or USA Swimming Facilities Development Department throughout the project.
- A market analysis will be performed to document the needs and identify the target market and core service offerings of the proposed facility.
- Market definition will occur through an iterative process to identify key issues, needs, and vision for the project.
- Analysis of the major direct and indirect competitors will be compared against the activities and programs identified in the Market Definition.
- Interviews with key stakeholders to document their needs and other issues.
- Examine the demographics of the area. Trends will be documented based on growth, stable, or decline status and frequency of participation by each demographic characteristic. These figures will drive the revenue projections
- Identify the recommended core program markets based on the input and analysis performed during this task. The outcome of this task will be used to establish a concept development plan including financial performance and partnership/management alternatives.

Following the decision on advancing the project, Provider should prepare a concept development plan that translates the market and program needs into facility, land, operations and partnering plans.

- Provider will lead the effort to translate the core program market and facility needs into a space allocation program including sizing requirements and component relationships and interaction including site analysis.
- Provider will prepare a development plan including concept and location development and will prepare budgetary construction cost estimates and final space/land needs to establish the Final Development and Operational Plan.
- The financial analysis will be performed in conjunction with the concept development task. This translates concepts into hard numbers that establish the baseline for decision-making.
- Provider will establish operational standards and costs for the proposed facility based on full operations. This will include hours of operation, maintenance standards, staffing levels

needed, technology requirements and customer service requirements based on established and agreed upon outcomes.

- Provider will evaluate partnership and management alternatives opportunities and develop a strategy to support formal agreements.
- Based on the operational plan for the facility and debt service, Provider will develop a pricing strategy for each of the appropriate services with the desired outcome of a self-sufficient facility. Pricing strategies will also include program fees, lease fees, rental space, concessions or rental pricing, for both prime time and non-prime time use. This will be converted into a 12-month financial projection which can be used as the base for pro forma and operating budget development. These options will include a combination of options partnerships/sponsorships, revenue generation and other available resources.
- Following the agreement on the development plan and recommendations, Provider will prepare the final report documenting all findings, analysis and recommendations to support implementation. This will include the vision, mission, goals and objectives for the facility along with the strategies, actions, pricing strategies, target market, programming plan, management/staffing plan, partnering/management plan, funding recommendations, priorities/timelines and performance measurements. This plan should be one that generates excitement and encourages reading and promotion. Electronic files of the report and associated support material will be delivered for final reproduction and distribution.