

A Fine Balance

Paul Spray believes the biggest challenge in the development of any sports and leisure facility is the need to balance broadly defined deliverables with precisely defined constraints.

The strategic rationale behind any new sports and leisure development depends upon factors such as the client, the site location, venue classification, program variety, specialist function, user demographic, catchment area and whether the facility is publicly or privately operated.

Client variables differ from project to project and can range from a single client to a multi-client structure as with a number of AFL sports and recreation developments currently underway in the state of Victoria where the client comprises the federal government; the state government, local government and the football club each with their own broadly defined deliverables.

Variable factors under the programs on offer at facilities depend on the project type, for example, a national, state or regional leisure facility may typically comprise a broad mix of wet and dry facilities and each of these components will aim to offer bespoke programs.

The impact of developing tailored components for single programs will limit the total programs that can be delivered under any development and there is a need to maximise the development opportunity by taking a mixed-use approach in brief development.

Projects managed by Davis Langdon where this mixed use approach has been successful include the proposed Kyneton Sports and Aquatic Centre in Victoria which involved discreetly combining a the warm water exercise pool and learn to swim pool into one body of water to ensure programs were not compromised but allowed economy in capital expenditure.

Another example is the 50 metre pool in the National Aquatic Centre in Ireland, which, can be divided into three pools (one a 25 metre² pool, two other measuring 11.5 x 25 metres pools and a 16.5 x 25 metre diving pool) with the use of movable booms and floors. The basis again being that one body of water serviced by one set of plant and equipment is able to provide for multiple programs.

In our experience of managing sports and leisure development projects in Australia and Internationally all of these broadly undefined variables have one common consistent factor. Any viable sports and leisure development from a local community sports centre to a national stadium must be delivered within precisely defined constraints whether related to time, cost or quality.

Typically, project deliverables are broadly defined initially through feasibility analysis comprising stakeholder consultation, financial modelling, market analysis, conceptual design development and other components forming a business plan. This provides the vehicle for agreement and understanding of business needs by all stakeholders.

Therefore, it is imperative the business plan is robust, provides an early identification of the project risks and values, and gives a basis against which to assess the viability of the various options that will be generated during project development.

Before undertaking the project management of any sports and leisure project Davis Langdon ensure that the client and stakeholders have a clear understanding of what success means to them in terms of purpose, vision, definition, viability and how key areas of development will be managed during the project lifecycle.

Having undertaken this we are able to lead a project team in seeking to identify the fine balance between opportunity and demand whilst being highly aware of revenue streams, capital expenditure limitations and often divergent requirements of multiple stakeholders.

The success of any given project will be governed on many fronts and not limited specifically to time, cost and quality, therefore, it is important to understand all critical success factors with appropriate weighting to ensure project viability is maximised.



Queensland Academy of Sport. Courtesy of Davis Langdon.



State Volley Ball Centre, Dandenong, Victoria. Courtesy of Davis Langdon.

Functional Technical Brief

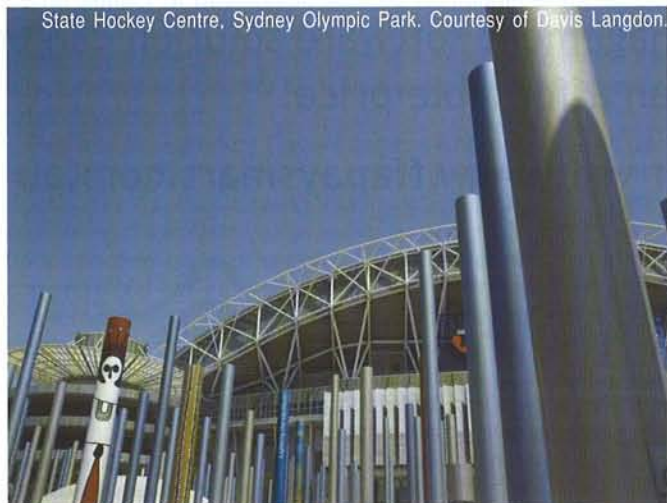
Typically once we have determined the conditions for success we translate the business plan into a Functional Technical Brief to interpret the business requirements into a document, which forms the road map from which a project design team can be procured to produce designs and forms the backbone for development of the project.

During the early development of the Functional Technical Brief, the conditions for success, needs to be defined and understood by all project stakeholders including the appointed design team giving close consideration to risks, clients' specific needs and the existing business plan.

Our experience has identified it is essential these issues be given adequate consideration along with other client functional objectives and constraints. The brief should also include a project mission statement, details of the projects philosophy and context, priorities, project structure and governance requirements, descriptive functional requirements budgetary constraints and a milestone master control program for delivery.

An effective Functional Technical Brief must be clearly linked back to the business plan and developed in sufficient detail. A comprehensive Functional Technical Brief which has been subjected to rigorous interrogation provides a clear direction for the project design team to the balance of outcomes required by the stakeholders.

Davis Langdon's experience in the delivery of sports and leisure projects has proven that if a Functional Technical Brief is ambiguous or incomplete, confusion and delay ensues as clients and project teams are forced to work through issues not previously anticipated. Confusion arises when team members cannot see the fine balance between the broadly defined deliverables and precisely defined constraints.



State Hockey Centre, Sydney Olympic Park. Courtesy of Davis Langdon.

Risk and Value Management

Throughout the project development life cycle, stakeholders are faced with difficult decisions, resulting from precisely defined constraints such as budgetary limitations or technical restrictions. As a result of our direct involvement in sports and leisure projects we have developed numerous flexible and well thought out decision-making mechanisms, through combined risk and value management to ensure outcomes maximise the benefit and viability of the project, without compromising the broadly defined deliverables.

Intrinsically linked value and risk management is one approach we adopt to facilitate a decision making process with the client at agreed project milestones. It focuses on maximising value rather than simply minimising cost considering whole life costs, not just construction capital costs.

It is relatively easy to understand what drives capital cost of sports facilities, however, capital cost drivers need to be evaluated against factors that also consider value drivers such as revenue income streams, productivity, statutory requirements, function, interfaces, flexibility and future-proofing amongst others.

We have used this technique successfully in numerous projects to deliver benefits which have exceeded expectations of clients without compromising the intent and originally agreed conditions for success.

The approach requires the client, all key stakeholders and the design team to consider any number of options, which, provide a solution to a particular problem, whether financial, time or quality based and assess the options under a range of value drivers.

Once this has been undertaken the client can then make an informed decision based on equal facts instead of becoming pressured, overwhelmed and ultimately frustrated with options that are not easily compared.

The focus of all our value and risk management studies vary dependant on what stage of the project they are being undertaken.

However, regardless if it is the feasibility, concept design, schematic design, detail design, tender or construction stage our emphasis is the same, being to focus on what things to do to contribute to the project objectives, not what they are, as that is what provides the value.

Using this technique, we have developed an approach which allows clients to make informed decisions when developing sports and leisure facilities with a full understanding of the consequences. It also creates an environment which allows the fine balance to be reached between broadly defined deliverables and precisely defined constraints.

Paul Spray is an Associate Director with Davis Langdon Project Management. He leads Davis Langdon's National Arts and Leisure Sector Group and also sits on the Davis Langdon Seah International Sports Group.