



Best Practices Guide



An Introduction to The Art of Playground Project Building

Welcome to the ten-step guide to fulfilling your playground dreams. Have a vision but not sure where to begin? Hoping to get the ball rolling on your community venture? Searching for the secrets to a successful project? If you're starting out on an exciting playground adventure and need a little guidance, you're in the right place! In this comprehensive guide, we will take a closer look at all you need to succeed!

Follow these ten steps to unleash magical moments and watch the young buds of your playground dreams flower into life.

The Golden Ten-Step Process To Realizing Your Playground Goals

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Run off your feet and don't have time to read the whole guide?

Check out the most important takeaways to start building the foundations of tailor-made play

A group of people, including a woman with glasses and a man with glasses, are shown from a high angle with their hands stacked in a circle. The image is overlaid with a dark blue semi-transparent filter. The text is centered over the hands.

Step One: **Forming Your Committee**

You're only as powerful as your team! If you want your project to succeed, you need to arm yourself with dedicated and passionate individuals who truly believe in your cause. Think about the different aspects of your project and the characteristics your committee will need to possess. Whether they are paid employees, volunteers, or a mixture of the two, you must treat the hiring and role allocation process seriously. Each member should be screened and assigned to the right role based on their strengths and capabilities.

Step One: Forming Your Committee

According to *Frontiers in Psychology*, a real team has six dimensions:

- 1. Tightly Coupled interdependence** – Make sure you spread the responsibility across the entire team.
- 2. Agreed Upon Objectives** – Set clear goals from the very beginning. Motivate every member so they believe in your mission and make sure they have the drive to see the project through to the end.
- 3. A Systematic Review of Performance** – Constantly check in with your team and provide regular feedback. If you see a problem arising or notice team members would be more suited to another task, be transparent. Walk them through the reasons behind your decisions for change to ensure motivation remains high.
- 4. Clear Boundaries** – Don't be afraid to delegate tasks, but always make it clear that your decisions are final. Ask for all progress to be reported back to you frequently so you can keep track of all milestones.
- 5. High Autonomy** – Empower your team members to reach their full potential by giving them the space to be creative. Stay open to new ideas, listen to your team, and play to the strengths of every individual.
- 6. Specified Roles** – Assess the qualities of each individual and create sub-committees. Allocate team members to each of these sub-committees based on their experience. Place the more persuasive members in the fundraising committee, for example. Put the more creative members in the design committee. Place the more practical members in the general construction committee. Every individual will have something valuable to offer. Just make sure you allocate roles that will bring out their best and lead your project towards your playground goals.

It's your job to ensure your core committee is set up for success. This is one of the most important steps. Select your members well, and you'll have all the support you need to reach your youngsters' dreams, and transform your outdoor space.



Step Two:

Creating Your Strategy and Setting Your Goals

Big goals get big results! Take all your ideas to the drawing board and be prepared to discuss, dissect, and strategize as a team. Starting out, you may have a clear idea of what you want to achieve in this project. But if you don't communicate and agree upon your main objectives clearly from the start, your project will be chaotic and stress-ridden!

Step Two: Creating Your Strategy and Setting Your Goals

Forbes™ found that 92% of CEOs believe communication is critical to the success of their strategic initiatives. So take their advice by sharing your vision with your team from the get-go. Then work together towards your shared goals and build up from there. Some of the top causes of project failure include a change in project objectives, poor communication, and inadequate vision. But with clarity, clear communication, and common goals, your core committee is bound to back you all the way.

From forming a winning strategy and designing an innovative play space to gathering funds and installing your shiny new equipment – your team will be there to support you. Why? Because they'll believe in your cause and have a clear-set method to follow. So before you get stuck in, use and abuse your core committee to bring clarity to the what, why, and how's of your playground project.

Here are a few things to consider when formulating your plan:

- Who is this playground aimed for?
- What factors do you need to consider? (ages, abilities, number of children, etc.)
- Where would you like to build this play area?
- What skills are you hoping to develop through play?
- When would you like to open your new playground?
- Is there a specific theme or style you would like your play area to embody?
- What is your budget and how will you raise the funds?

There are many aspects to consider if you're serious about bringing your youngsters' playground dreams to life. But create and agree on your goals, methods, and processes from the beginning and you're already halfway there!



Step Three:

Gathering Community Input

With your plans and objectives in hand, now you're ready to solidify your ideas. Turn to your community members for their opinions. Involve the children and parents that will be benefiting most from this new area. Pick their brains to find out what they would like to see from their new playground. But always keep your main goals in mind. Their feedback should help you align these goals with their expectations and give you a clearer view of their opinions and concerns.

Step Three: Gathering Community Input

It will also give your community a sense of belonging and responsibility, so they're more likely to take care of the equipment once it's been installed. However, it's important to be selective when organizing all their thoughts into a list of the main takeaways. You don't want to steer away from your primary objectives after all.

You should also try to include your volunteers in the decision-making process. If they feel like their voice is being heard, they are 4.6 times more likely to feel empowered and perform to the best of their ability throughout the project. Present your plans and encourage each member of your team to add their two cents. If any concerns or specific requests are made, think about how these new insights affect your plans and discuss the best approach with your core committee.



Step Four: **Selecting Your Ideal Site**

Are you knocking down an old and tattered playground to replace it with safe and shiny new play systems? Then this step is as easy as pie! When considering the perfect site for grand adventures to unfold in, you need to be asking all these questions, and more. The last thing you want is to invest your community's time, energy, and resources on a dream that turns into a nightmare. And all because you picked the wrong location or forgot to consider the little things!

Step Four: Selecting Your Ideal Site

You can jump straight to Step 5 because you're all set on your location. However, if you're creating a new playground, there are several important factors to consider. Ask yourself the following questions before deciding upon your chosen outdoor area:

Spacing

- How many children are you hoping to cater for?
- Do you have any youngsters with special needs? If so, do you have enough space to make your play zone wheelchair-friendly?
- Where are your visitors going to park?
- What kind of equipment are you going to include? How much space will these structures take up?
- Is there enough space for parents and supervisors to monitor activities easily?

Safety

- Are there any main roads nearby? If so, how can you protect your children and prevent them from running out into traffic? Will you put up fencing? If so, what type of fencing will you use?
- Is there enough space for emergency vehicles to enter if need be?
- Will maintenance teams be able to access the play area with ease?
- Is there access to a power source?
- How will you light up your play area at night?

Convenience

- Are there bathroom facilities nearby? If not, will you have the space, budget, and resources to install them?
- Is there enough room for picnic tables, benches, and other areas that will bring community members together?
- What's the environment like? Does it complement or clash with your playground theme and objectives?

A photograph of two men in a meeting. One man is standing on the left, wearing a light blue button-down shirt over a dark t-shirt and jeans. The other man is sitting at a table on the right, wearing a denim shirt and glasses, looking towards the standing man. The background shows a room with a whiteboard and a door. The entire image has a blue tint.

Step Five: **Consulting a Playground Guru**

Before designing your community's ideal playground, get picking the brains of a reliable playground guru! By turning to a knowledgeable consultant for help, you won't miss a trick when building upon your dreams.

Step Five: Consulting a Playground Guru

Play is not just a contagious explosion of fun. There are numerous other benefits too. From enhanced cognitive development to stronger physical growth and improved decision-making skills; you name it, with the right playground equipment you can empower your youngsters through play. Ready to form the building blocks of your little rascals' future success and happiness? Then choose your play partner with care. Then work together to introduce activities that help develop a wide range of skills for your whole community.

There's lots at stake, so remember to interview several companies before coming to a decision. Compare advice and discuss safety guidelines, government standards, best practices, pricing, and designs. You want to piece together an eye-catching, engaging play area that's beneficial for all. To do so, clearly outline your goals and expectations, and present your ideas. Your chosen partner will then help you design and select the structures that not only meet your requirements, but also challenge your kids appropriately based on their specific needs, ages, and abilities.



Step Six:

Contemplating the Costs

Once you've discussed your ideas with a specialist, ask for a ballpark figure so you can visualize and plan accordingly. Depending on your vision and objectives, an innovative, ADA compliant playground will range anywhere between \$10,000 and \$50,000+.

Step Six: Contemplating the Costs

Although this might seem ambitious at first, there are certain tricks and tips you can follow to reach your goals:

- 1. Get Your Creative Heads On!** – From running competitions and local events to advertising, crowdfunding, and networking, there are many effective fundraising strategies you can follow to chip away at your goal.
- 2. Connect The Dots** – Think about how local businesses could benefit from your playground and approach them to invest in your project. Apply for grants or search for a loan with low interest rates. With the right attitude and approach, you may be surprised at how many doors you can open.
- 3. Make the Most of Community Spirit** – You can cut the costs dramatically if you manage to summon up the forces that lie within your community! First, spread the word about your project, and search for volunteers who can help you with the build. When you've selected your team, ask if anyone has experience installing playground equipment. If not, turn to your playground partner for supervisory services and let the building begin!
- 4. Break It Down** – Who says you have to do it all at once? Don't be intimidated by the size of your dreams. If you think your goals are too ambitious, split your project into phases. Raise the funds for phase one first to get the heart of your playground beating. Then build on up from there. If you choose this option though, just make sure each phase of your project meets government safety and compliance standards.

If you're still worried about the funds, constantly remind yourself and your team that your playground will have a positive impact on your community. Picture the end goal and always remember why you're doing what you're doing. It's okay to be a little daunted. You're certainly not alone. A lack of project funding is one of the top three project management challenges. But just like in the world of play, a healthy challenge only makes you stronger! If you run your fundraising campaigns with energy, determination, and drive, even the most daunting figures can be raised.



Step Seven: **Selecting Your Equipment**

With the designs at the ready and the funds well underway, it's time to select and order your equipment. Your playground partner should provide you with a 3D rendering and equipment list, so you can visualize the structures you'll need, and work with them to pick the best options.

Step Seven: Selecting Your Equipment

You'll want to find a balance between sturdy, safe playground structures, and creative, transformative designs. You'll also need to consider playground amenities such as benches, shade structures, litter receptacles, and picnic tables.

Ask your playground consultant to provide you with several options from different manufacturers, so you can compare quality and pricing. Try to be as practical and realistic as possible. Remember that if you want your play area to stand the test of time and last for generations, you'll need to select pieces of play that can be easily maintained. Work with your playground consultant to draw up a maintenance plan. And don't forget to save the contact information of your suppliers and manufacturers too, in case you need to replace or repair any parts in a few years.

With all that done, give yourself a pat on the back! When the time has come to place your order, it means you're almost at the finish line!



Step Eight: Installing Your Playground

With the sweet taste of success just around the corner, you'll soon be ready to celebrate in style! But first, you have a very important job to do.

Step Eight: Installing Your Playground

The installation of your playground project is one of the most important steps. You need to make sure that you follow all guidelines, and piece together the parts of play in a safe, structured way. If you're working with a professional installation team, you can sit back and relax while they work their magic to bring your playground to life.

If you've chosen the DIY route to save costs, make sure your volunteers are ready for action. You'll also need to invite an installation expert who can supervise the build and make sure all pieces are put together correctly. Think ahead and prepare for the installation before it takes place. Is there easy access to power, and water? Have you ordered a dumpster to dispose of waste? If you're organizing the build yourself, how many volunteers will you need? Should you provide any drinks and snacks for helpers? Have you delegated roles and organized who will be working on what?

Make sure you prepare as much as possible in the run-up to the build, so when the day comes around, you'll be able to enjoy the experience!



Grand Opening

Step Nine: **The Grand Opening**

You made it! After weeks of planning and countless effort and energy, you've finally reached your goal.

Step Nine: The Grand Opening

So celebrate in style! Throw a party, invite the local media, and make sure all members of your community attend. Post the event on social media, and spread the word that the dream has been brought to life! At the opening, make a speech that brings your team to tears of joy! Say a big thank you to your donors and volunteers, and ask for key players to say a few inspirational words about the journey. But most importantly of all...bring the kids! Encourage every youngster in your community to come to the opening, so they can jump aboard the rollercoaster of fun that awaits!

FUNDRAISING GUIDE

PUB #325

SAFETY C

STARTED GUIDE

Step Ten:
Useful Resources

Looking for a little more guidance and support?

PLANNING BEST PRACTICE

ADA STANDARD

OUR C

Step Ten: Useful Resources

Here are some handy documents you can feast your eyes on to help you realize your playground goals:

Safety First!

- The KidsTale Safety Guide
- The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
- The ASTM Consumer Safety Performance Specification
- The Certified Safety Playground Inspector

Finding the Funds

- The KidsTale Fundraising Planning Guide
- Government Grants and Loans
- The Best Crowdfunding Sites

Convenience

- The KidsTale Blog
- Successful Playground Project Stories

Fancy a quick chat to run through your project goals? Send us a message and we'll be happy to schedule an appointment. Whether you'd like to brainstorm a few ideas, ask for some advice, or just want some pointers to head you in the right direction, our playground experts are here to help!

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6419-K Toledo Street

Houston, TX 77008

1+(844) KidsTale