

'How To' Create

# MOBILE ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND

A Practical Guide



*Insights from the Calgary Experience*



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# A Snapshot of 'How To' Create a Mobile Adventure Playground

This guide  
will help show  
you 'how to'!



## Did you know?

- Many Canadian children have few chances to play freely outdoors.
- Opportunities for unstructured outdoor play are declining in Canada and world-wide.
- The potential benefits of risky, adventurous play far outweigh the drawbacks.
- Play supports children's physical, emotional, and social development.
- According to the United Nations, play is a child's right.

## What can you do to support play?

Actions can be taken to promote child-led, unstructured, risky play for all children. Creating a Mobile Adventure Playground (MAP) is one possible approach.

## Why create a MAP?

A MAP has many benefits for children, including:

- Exposure to different types of materials and tools.
- Opportunities to explore different types of physical environments such as flat grassy fields, rolling terrain, trees, or muddy puddles.
- Experiences with diverse weather conditions and seasons.
- Support for life-long physical activity and well-being.
- Development of decision-making skills and promotion of physical, cognitive, and social growth.

## How can this guide help?

This guide draws on the experiences of The City of Calgary, who initiated a MAP pilot project in 2016. It is not a recipe for re-creating the Calgary MAP program. Instead, it's a learning tool that will help you to develop a MAP that fits your municipality, community, or organization. This guide explains 'how to':

- Get started on a MAP, including tips for funding, setting the scope, and determining goals.
- Create a MAP, highlighting site selection, scheduling, staffing, and loose parts management.
- Sustain and evaluate a MAP for continued success.

There are also resources, templates, and links to other organizations. This guide aims to inspire and invigorate efforts to promote child-led, unstructured, risky play in your community.

# Introducing Mobile Adventure Playgrounds & the 'How To' Guide

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how?

How will this guide help?

This guide will provide you with tips for *planning*, *carrying out*, *evaluating*, and *sustaining* a MAP that fits your context, big or small.

## Let's begin with some facts about play:

- Play is essential to healthy childhood development.<sup>1</sup>
- Free, outdoor, and risky play are associated with improved health outcomes and cognitive, decision-making skills.<sup>1,2</sup>
- Opportunities for child-led, outdoor, and risky play are declining.<sup>1,3</sup>
- The United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child states children have the right to "... rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities ..."<sup>4</sup> (article 31)
- Child-led play hones risk management and motor skills growth.<sup>1,3</sup>



The United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child states children have the right to "... rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities.

## Now, some facts about playgrounds:

- Conventional playgrounds have fixed structures like swings and slides.
- Conventional playgrounds generally promote one type of play, active play.
- Adventure playgrounds are vibrant, constantly changing, outdoor spaces where children take the lead.<sup>5</sup>
- Adventure playgrounds include loose parts and materials, like boxes, old tires, and rope for children to play with, use, build, and alter as they see fit.<sup>5</sup>
- Adventure playgrounds provide opportunities for free play – play that is adventurous, risky, imaginative, creative, self-directed, and unstructured.<sup>5</sup>
- Adventure playgrounds stimulate children to make decisions about what, how, and with whom to play.<sup>5</sup>
- A mobile adventure playground (MAP) is a mobile version of an adventure playground.



1 Brussoni et al. (2015). What is the relationship between risky outdoor play and health in children? A systematic review. *Int. J. Environ. Res Public Health*, 12(6), 5423-6454. Available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/12/6/6455>

2 Canadian Public Health Association. (2019). *Children's unstructured play: position statement*. Available at: <https://www.cpha.ca/childrens-unstructured-play3>

3 ParticipACTION. (2015). *The ParticipACTION Report card on physical activity for children and youth*. Available at: [https://participation.cdn.prismic.io/participation/61cf55e8-c1c0-42c7-ba6b-1480fd2c29b9\\_participation-2015-report-card-full.pdf](https://participation.cdn.prismic.io/participation/61cf55e8-c1c0-42c7-ba6b-1480fd2c29b9_participation-2015-report-card-full.pdf)

4 United Nations. (2010). United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, Article 31. Available at: [https://www.childrensrights.ie/sites/default/files/submissions\\_reports/files/UNCRCEnglish\\_0.pdf](https://www.childrensrights.ie/sites/default/files/submissions_reports/files/UNCRCEnglish_0.pdf)

5 Play England. (2015). *Adventure Playground*. Available at: <http://www.playengland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Adventure-Playgrounds.pdf>





A MAP is not permanently fixed. It moves around to different locations, which makes it accessible to a broader community. All communities, organizations, or municipalities can create their own MAP or adopt adventure play principles.

## Who is this guide for?

- municipal or regional government staff, leadership, and decision-makers
- school board staff or leadership
- community, voluntary, and not-for-profit organizations or leaders
- play leaders, and
- individuals or organizations interested in promoting child-led, adventurous, risky play.

## Where did this guide come from?

The information in this guide is based on the experiences of The City of Calgary who created, piloted, ran, appraised, revised, and expanded their MAP program. Calgary initiated their MAP pilot program in 2016 funded by a Lawson Foundation grant. Their goal was to support child-led, unstructured, risky play for all children in the city. The MAP program arose in connection with the Calgary Play Charter<sup>6</sup> and The City of Calgary's hosting of the 2017 International Play Association triennial conference.





# The Language of Play: A Glossary of Terms

Terms such as “play” and “risk” can have different meanings in different contexts. Before getting started, let’s review the language used to describe child-led, unstructured, risky play in this guide:

- **Play –**

Any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled, and structured by the child. It is non-compulsory, driven by intrinsic motivation, and undertaken for its own sake. Play involves the exercise of autonomy, physical, mental or emotional activity. It has the potential to take infinite forms, either in groups or alone. These forms will change and be adapted throughout one’s lifetime. The key characteristics of play are fun, uncertainty, challenge, and flexibility. Together, these factors contribute to the enjoyment it produces and the consequent incentive to continue to play. Play is a fundamental and vital dimension of life, as well as an essential component of developing and maintaining physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual attributes.<sup>7</sup>

- **Adventure Play –**

Play in an unstructured, outdoor environment that incorporates elements of risk and can be physical, constructive, active, competitive, imaginative, social, and/or dramatic.

- **Child-Led Unstructured Play –**

Where the decisions about why, what, how, and with whom to play are made primarily by the child. Adults can be involved, but are not directing the child.

- **(Mobile)AdventurePlayground –**

An outdoor play space that fosters unstructured, child-led play. It often includes moveable and/or flexible materials, which can be used in a variety of ways. A mobile version of an adventure playground is designed to move locations on a regular basis. This could be daily, weekly, monthly, or on a different schedule that suits the context.

- **LooseParts –**

Any materials or tools that can be interacted with and/or used by children in a variety of ways to promote unstructured free play, such as tires, bathtubs, fabrics, plastic pipes, shovels, and cardboard.

- **Risk –**

Includes behaviours or actions on the edge of a child’s self-identified comfort zone. It requires active decision-making and is different for each child. Risks can be physical, social, etc. A risk is not the same as a ‘hazard.’<sup>1</sup>

- **Hazard –**

A potential source of damage, harm, and/or injury<sup>8</sup> that has no clear benefit to the child<sup>1</sup> and is not within the scope of their decision-making. Hazards should be managed by adults.<sup>9</sup> An example of a hazard is a broken rung on a ladder, whereas how high a child climbs on a structurally-sound ladder is a risk.



6 The City of Calgary. (2017). *Calgary’s Play Charter*. Available at: [www.calgary.ca/CSPS/Recreation/Documents/Research-and-development/PlayCharter\\_eng.pdf?noredirect=1](http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/Recreation/Documents/Research-and-development/PlayCharter_eng.pdf?noredirect=1)

7 Adapted from the definition of Play in General Comment 17 in United Nations. (2010). United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, Article 31. Available at: [https://www.childrensrights.ie/sites/default/files/submissions\\_reports/files/UNCRCEnglish\\_0.pdf](https://www.childrensrights.ie/sites/default/files/submissions_reports/files/UNCRCEnglish_0.pdf)

8 Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. (2017). *OHS Answers Fact Sheets: Hazard and Risk*. Available at: [https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/hazard\\_risk.html](https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/hazard_risk.html)

9 Canadian Public Health Association. (2019). *Risk, Hazard, and Play: What are Risks and Hazards?* Available at: <https://www.cpha.ca/risk-hazard-and-play-what-are-risks-and-hazards>

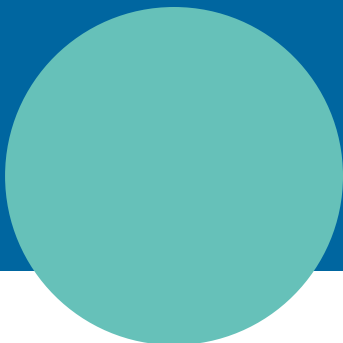


# 'How To' Get Started on a MAP

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The remainder of this 'how to' guide will walk you through steps for planning, creating, staffing, running, evaluating, and sustaining a MAP initiative. Here you will find specific tips and suggestions as well as insights on challenges you may face. To get started on a MAP:

- > Establish leadership.
- > Build a leadership team and partnerships.
- > Budget and secure funding.
- > Identify barriers to child-led, unstructured, risky play.







## Establish Leadership

Starting a MAP requires leadership. This can come from an individual or an organization. The best leadership for your MAP will depend on the scope and scale of your project and your aims. It could be a municipal staff member, a community play leader, or a school principal, to name a few. The City of Calgary led The City of Calgary MAP program. Municipalities are well situated to lead when the scope of the MAP includes the entire city or town. They often have the credibility to get buy-in from community members and partner organizations and have access to human and financial resources to successfully get a community-wide MAP up and running.

Consider the scale and scope of the MAP you are planning to initiate. Is it within a school board, across a community, or connected to a local children's organization? Choose your leadership accordingly. Key features of MAP leadership can include:

- Power to convene and bring together diverse local partners involved in child development and/or play to support the MAP and promote child-led, unstructured, risky play.
- Skills and resources related to project and program planning, funding, facilitation, implementation, communication and design, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Expertise, experience, and training related to children's free play and adventure play programming.





## Build a Leadership Team & Partnerships

Build a MAP leadership team and partnerships to support the success of your MAP program. The size and make up of your MAP team and partners will vary depending on the scope and scale of your MAP. Consider your specific goals, and the needs and opportunities available in your organization, community, and/or municipality when building your MAP team and partnerships. For example, potential team members or partners could come from parks and recreation sectors, law and risk management organizations, community groups, and non-governmental organizations.

### When creating your leadership team, consider including:

- People with varied skills, expertise, and interests related to children and/or play.
- Individuals and/or organizations with specific training or skills related to the promotion of adventure play and/or child-led free play.
- Individuals and organizations who represent the diversity of your community and/or organization based on age, socio-economic status, ethnicity, cultural background, disability, among others as appropriate.
- People and/or organizations who are passionate, resourceful, able to think outside the box, and will be dedicated to promoting child-led unstructured risky play.

A diverse MAP leadership team and partners will ensure your MAP reflects the differing needs and interests of your organization, community, and/or municipality. Your leadership team and partners could include school board trustees, municipal staff, early childhood educators, and members of community organizations. Consider including individuals and organizations from the private and public sectors as well as from non-governmental or volunteer organizations.

## Essential skills to have on your MAP leadership team

The process of creating, implementing, and sustaining a MAP program requires diverse skills and resources. The following skills are helpful to have within your leadership team and/or partnerships:

- **Advocacy and leadership –**  
To drive the project forward, obtain buy-in from organizational leadership, and provide oversight.
- **Fundraising –**  
To secure funding to support the creation and maintenance of the MAP program and its evaluation.
- **Child-led, unstructured, risky play expertise –**  
To provide guidance and training to incorporate the principles of child-led, unstructured, risky play into your MAP.
- **Legal and risk management –**  
To assess the risk, liability, and legal implications of the program and provide direction on consent, language use, and daily operations to ensure adherence to legal standards and best practices.
- **Staffing and staff training –**  
To hire, train, and oversee staffing of the MAP program.

- **Program/project management and administration –**  
To oversee all of the moving parts of the MAP including tasks, timelines, budget, staffing, and day-to-day operations.
- **Communication, marketing, and design –**  
To create targeted messaging and support buy-in efforts. To promote the MAP within your target community using marketing strategies.
- **Evaluation –**  
To facilitate discussions and guide decisions around measurement, outcomes, and evaluation of the MAP program. To oversee and support evaluation and monitoring.

## Budget & Secure Funding

A MAP requires funding. The City of Calgary MAP pilot program (2016-2018) was funded by a Lawson Foundation grant. The longer-term funding of the Calgary MAP has yet to be finalized. To promote access, equity, and inclusion for all citizens, The City of Calgary offered the MAP program free of charge. Consider the goals of your MAP when deciding on appropriate sources of funding, such as charging for entrance. Sources of funding can include: government and non-governmental grants; private donors/funders; public or not-for profit donors/funders; or fundraisers. Securing funding can be a time-consuming process so get started early. Draw on expertise within your MAP leadership team and among partners to identify different funding possibilities.

When creating a MAP budget, calculate upfront costs and those related to longer-term maintenance. The exact project costs will depend on the scope and goals of your MAP – the larger the scope the higher the costs. When creating a budget for your MAP, remember that project costs often exceed estimates. Build contingencies into your MAP budget to help mitigate cost overruns. For a breakdown of budget items and resources required for The City of Calgary MAP pilot project, see Appendix A.





**When creating your MAP budget, think about costs associated with:**

- **Staffing –**

A MAP requires a mix of higher-level permanent staff and seasonal workers such as MAP leaders, parent liaisons, and a program coordinator.

- **Materials –**

Acquiring, maintaining, and storing materials and loose parts can be costly, although they can also be donated, recycled, or repurposed from other projects.

- **Marketing, advertising, and ongoing communication –**

There can be significant costs associated with advertising and marketing your MAP depending on the scope and scale of your project, size of your community, overall aims, and target audience. Also consider the costs associated with the creation and maintenance of ongoing communication such as website and social media profiles.

- **Infrastructure –**

Structural supports beyond those available to a municipality, community, and/or organization may need to be factored into the project budget, such as site costs and vehicle use and maintenance.

**When pursuing funding opportunities for your MAP, consider:**

- Exploring a broad spectrum of organizations for funding and/or partnership opportunities, including local, provincial/territorial, federal, and international sources.
- Using tools, such as Grant Connect, to assist you in identifying funding opportunities. Be aware that portals such as this are primarily intended for non-profit organizations.
- Identifying how the proposed MAP project aligns with the goals and priorities of the funding or granting body.
- That granting cycles are time-limited and will not support the sustainability of your MAP.

# Identify Barriers to Child-Led, Unstructured, Risky Play

Closely examine your context before you start planning your MAP. Assess specific local barriers associated with child-led, unstructured, risky play. A barrier study can provide detailed information about obstacles and attitudes and can help you to target your efforts to address them. If possible, a barrier study should be conducted early in the MAP development process. Use surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups to assess barriers for different target groups such as parents/guardians, decision-makers, program/play leaders, and so on.

Prior to starting their MAP program, The City of Calgary did a thorough review of the related research and practice-based literature. They then conducted interviews with parents (see Appendix B for the interview guide). After, they did study of parental/guardian and asked about barriers to child-led, unstructured, risky play (see Appendix C for the parental barriers survey). Over 1600 parents completed the survey. This led to the identification of the following barriers:

## Parental barriers

- Lack of information or understanding of the meaning and value or benefits of a MAP and child-led, unstructured, risky play.
- Fear of children getting hurt and misunderstanding the difference between risk and hazard.
- Lack of skills or capacity to facilitate child-led, unstructured, risky play.
- Time and energy constraints.
- Fear of being judged by other parents for allowing their children to engage in play that could be perceived as 'unsafe.'
- A prevailing atmosphere of 'helicopter parenting,' i.e., that is overly involved and watchful.

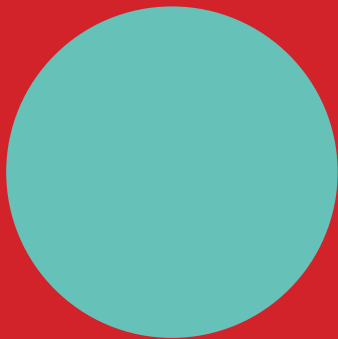
## Children's barriers

- Unfamiliar with self-led, adventurous, risky play.
- Used to play in structured environments with guidance and involvement from adults.
- Preference for sedentary play activities, especially those involving technology.
- Enrolled in many structured extracurricular programs, so no time for free play.
- Unaccustomed to outdoor play, especially in colder months.

## Structural barriers

- Lack of safe and appropriate places for children to play freely outdoors in the local environment and/or costs associated with access to such opportunities.
- Poor fit with sub-segments of the local population; for example, underserved populations and/or communities who do not 'see themselves' in the existing play programming.
- Finite resources and competing demands on local funds.
- A lack of collective ownership and responsibility for providing opportunities for child-led, unstructured, risky play.





# 'How To' Create a MAP

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**You are ready to get started on the creation of your MAP!  
To initiate and achieve a successful MAP program:**

- > Set the scope, goals, and timelines for your MAP program.**
- > Determine the core characteristics of your MAP.**
- > Choose MAP locations.**
- > Plan for seasonal variation.**
- > Develop marketing and communications strategies.**
- > Manage risk and addressing potential liability.**



## Set the Scope, Goals, & Timelines for Your MAP

To determine the scope of your MAP, consider funding, access to resources, and existing skills and strengths in your organization. Think about the skills, resources, and strengths among your leadership team and local partners. Take stock of existing programming, policies, and political will to build on. Modifying existing programming to incorporate a MAP and/or the related adventure play principles is one way to achieve your goals and take advantage of structures and opportunities already in place.

Be realistic when setting MAP goals and timelines. Do you have access to the resources, skills, and funding to achieve those goals? If not, think about what is feasible for you to achieve in the short-term. Also, consider what you can sustain in the longer-term. When goal-setting, along with your leadership team, project partners, and community members, ask:

- What do you want to achieve with the MAP initiative?
  - Identify specific short-, medium-, and long-term goals.
- What resources, skills, and expertise will be required to achieve the stated goals?
- Who will benefit from the achievement of these goals?
- What are the possible unintended consequences of achieving the MAP goals? How can these be mitigated?

Setting specific goals for your MAP initiative will enable you to evaluate your success. The City of Calgary MAP program had the following goals:

### Short-term

- Provide parents/guardians with information about the benefits of child-led, unstructured, risky play and get their buy-in and support for the MAP program.

- Encourage children to come to a MAP on their own.
- Build capacity among children and parents/guardians to engage in child-led, unstructured, risky play.
- Create public awareness around the lack of opportunities for child-led, unstructured, risky play and its benefits.

### Medium-term

- Support child-led, unstructured, risky play among this generation of children in Calgary. Lay the foundation for the next generation of children in Calgary.
- Guide policy and decision-makers to support diverse opportunities for child-led, unstructured, risky play in Calgary.
- Promote positive mental, physical, and cognitive development among children in Calgary.
- Develop a sustainable, equitable, and accessible unstructured play program for all Calgarians.
- Develop a marketing and communications strategy that addresses the aforementioned goals and reduces identified barriers to child-led, unstructured, risky play for children and parents/guardians in Calgary.
- Undertake actions and commitments in support of the Calgary Play Charter.

### Long-term

- Inspire and build capacity in other community groups, organizations, and municipalities so they can create and deliver their own MAP or unstructured play programming and support child-led, unstructured, risky play in their communities.
- Be a global leader in supporting diverse forms of children's play within a municipal context.

## Determine the Core Characteristics of Your MAP

MAP core characteristics will reflect your specific values, goals, context, and local constraints and/or regulations. For example, if your goal is to promote equity then your MAP should be free of charge. It should be in locations that are easily accessed by foot, bike, car, and public transportation, particularly by children and among underserved populations. The core characteristics of your MAP will guide your decision-making process. They will help to set the project scope, site selection, programming, scheduling, and staffing, to name a few.

The core characteristics of The City of Calgary MAP program are outlined below. These aligned with Calgary's vision to promote child-led, unstructured, risky play for all children in the city.

- No formal sign-in, sign-up, consent, or fee required.
- MAP leaders facilitate child-led activities and build capacity among children and/or parents/guardians for child-led, unstructured, risky play.
- Play areas should be well-defined but not fenced-in or closed off.
- No fixed structures and all elements must be moveable and mobile.
- Encourage risky play and risk-taking behaviours through the inclusion of elements, such as heights and tools.
- Include loose-parts, materials, tools, larger objects, and natural elements to promote diverse forms of play.
- Integrate MAP with nature to encourage active play and connection to nature.

## Choose MAP Sites

Carefully choose the sites for your MAP. Sites need to align with your goals, scope, and scale. Through site selection you can address identified barriers, such as access to unstructured play spaces in specific underserved neighbourhood. The MAP site refers to the place(s) where a MAP is hosted within the community, organization, or municipality, such as a park or school grounds. It also specifies the exact location within the park or green space, for example, on the hill or in a forested area. Site selection will impact the accessibility of your MAP to particular sub-populations and/or geographic locations and influence attendance. Choosing natural environments, such as terrain with hills and trees, creates a more engaging surrounding in which children can be creative.

MAP site selection is also a practical decision that will depend on the locations available to your organization, community, or municipality. Other aspects to consider when selecting the sites for your MAP include:

- Costs associated with the site use.
- Access to facilities such as toilets, shade, drinking water, parking.
- Site specific bylaws or regulations, like no climbing trees.
- Other events or uses of that space and/or park.
- Visibility to passers-by to promote walk-in traffic and to parents/guardians who will be watching their children.
- Presence of natural elements such as hills, trees, bushes, grass, dirt, etc.
- Ease of set up/take down of MAP. Remember, the loose parts/materials are mobile and need to be transported to the site!

- Site access via walkways, bike paths, parking lots, etc.
- Safety concerns or site hazards such as proximity to a busy road.

The City of Calgary hosted their MAPs at six regional municipal parks. They choose these sites because they were under municipal jurisdiction and offered large, open, and diverse natural elements. The sites also had essential facilities like bathrooms and water. They were accessible to strollers and mobility-device users. The Calgary MAP sites were in different geographical locations across the city to promote access for all.

Determining the best location for your MAP can include site visits and liaising with staff from that location (e.g., parks, operations, or facilities staff). Once you have selected your MAP sites, engage the staff working there early and continuously. Keep them informed. Let them know what you are doing and, more importantly, why. Be specific about how the MAP will impact them and their site. Outline what children may choose to do (e.g., climb trees, build forts). Discuss how you will handle any conflicts with other events or site regulations. Create open communication and listen to their concerns and suggestions. The City of Calgary conducted a survey with site operation staff. They gathered staff thoughts and feedback on the MAP (see Appendix D for the parks operations staff survey). Having the support and buy-in from site operation staff is key to your success – they can be some of your biggest MAP allies!

## Plan for Seasonal Variations

There are great benefits to outdoor play for children during all seasons.<sup>10</sup> If you live somewhere with seasonal variations in weather, think about how to adapt your MAP in response. All-season MAP programming can help shift attitudes toward outdoor play and can positively impact children's long-term physical activity.<sup>1,10</sup> Here are some tips for a winter MAP:

- Adjust the loose parts and materials to account for more active forms of play. Have fewer smaller tools, which are difficult to use with mitts and may get lost in the snow.
- Have warming stations, fire pits, and indoor washrooms available.
- Include messaging to parents/guardians and children to dress appropriately for winter.
- Take advantage of winter activities that relate to the landscape, like sledding hills.
- Target your marketing and communication to highlight the unique aspects of a winter MAP.

10 Storli & Hagen. (2010). Affordances in outdoor environments and children's physically active play in pre-school. *Eur Early Child Ed Res J*, 18, 445- 456. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2010.525923>

## Develop Marketing & Communication Strategies

Consider engaging marketing and communication specialists to get exposure, buy-in, and target particular members of your organization, community, and/or municipality. Marketing specialists may be an existing part of your organization, community, or municipality. However, that does not need to be the case. This may present a good partnership opportunity. Communication and marketing specialists can:

- Develop and manage the MAP communications plan.
- Consult with staff on effective communication strategies about the MAP and child-led unstructured risky play. For example, create key messages or talking points.
- Develop MAP marketing and promotional material.
- Create targeted MAP messaging to get the attention of specific audiences and communities.
- Develop and maintain MAP-related digital content.
- Communicate with the public and/or potential MAP users about daily operations, such as locations and closures.
- Incorporate evaluation findings into MAP marketing strategy and materials.

The City of Calgary used a variety of communication strategies for their MAP program. They took advantage of existing infrastructure, such as The City of Calgary website. They also added new avenues, like social media sites and on-site signage (see on-site signage examples in Appendix E).

Consider your intended audience and key messages. Target your marketing and communication strategies accordingly. Remember, the mobile nature of the MAP means potential users will need to know your location and schedule and be kept informed of any changes.

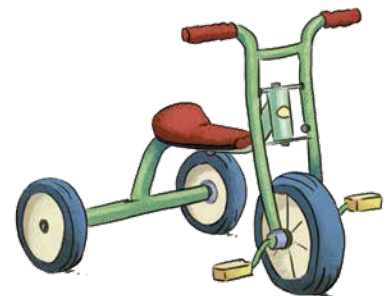
Here are some additional tips for MAP marketing and communication:

- Word of mouth, social media, and point of site signage are all highly effective means of informing parents/guardians about your MAP.
- Photos and videos are useful for sharing the MAP experience and garnering interest among potential users. Hire a professional photographer to gather MAP photos and videos of participants. Include people/children representing a range of ages, ethnicities, genders, and abilities. Ensure you get appropriate consent for the use of photos and videos.
- Consider using marketing and communication to strategically direct attendance to the MAP at particular locations and times. For example, encourage a daycare centre to join a MAP during typically slow times so the site does not get overwhelmed.
- Key messaging around the benefits of child-led, unstructured, risky play and understanding what resonates with your community is crucial to obtaining local buy-in.
- Targeted communication and messaging, like using imagery, is essential to connect with harder to reach groups, such as individuals who have low literacy.

## Manage Risk & Address Potential Liability

Consider how to manage risk and potential liability when you are planning your MAP. Specific regulations and responsibilities will depend on your organization, community, and/or municipality. They will also depend on the specific aspects of the MAP program. Engage with law, risk, and liability specialists, including your insurance provider, early to address any possible issues. Law and risk specialists can provide guidance and direction for:

- Understanding risk, liability, and legal implications and possibilities of the MAP.
- Handling potential legal and liability issues.
- Meeting informed consent requirements for MAP participants.
- Aligning day-to-day operations with legal obligations and responsibilities.
- Using terminology and language all communication and on-site signage.







# 'How To' Staff a MAP

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**You are ready to get started on planning for the daily operations of your MAP! In this section you will find details on staffing and staff training, including 'how to':**

- > Set staff roles and responsibilities.**
- > Hire MAP on-site staff.**
- > Train staff.**
- > Manage MAP on-site staff.**



## Set Staff Roles & Responsibilities

MAP success depends on a team of motivated, well-trained staff who understand and can communicate the values, goals, and benefits of the program. On-site staff facilitate the day-to-day MAP operations. They are also ambassadors for your MAP and child-led, unstructured, risky play in your community. MAP staffing requirements will depend on the scale and scope of your MAP. They will also depend on the availability and expertise of existing staff in your organization, community, and/or municipality. If your staff include volunteers, plan to address regulatory requirements, such as background checks.

Core MAP staff roles and their related responsibilities can include:

## MAP Program Coordinator / Specialist

- Oversees day-to-day MAP operations, such as site logistics, loose parts and materials, staff.
- Assists in the development of MAP programming.
- Hires, trains, and supervises MAP leaders and other site staff.
- Communicates with the public on-site and through other communication strategies, and addresses questions and concerns.
- Acts as the point of contact between the organizational leadership, for example a municipal body, and the MAP project team.
- Gathers feedback, information, and insights into equipment use.
- Supports MAP evaluation.

Success depends on a team of motivated, well-trained staff who understand and can communicate the values, goals, and benefits of the program.



## MAP Leaders

- Manages day-to-day, on-site operations of the MAP, including site set up and take down.
- Records attendance, weather conditions, and any issues/concerns that arise.
- Inspires and facilitates, but does not lead, child-led, unstructured, risky play.
- Builds capacity among children and parents/guardians for child-led, unstructured, risky play.
- Communicates with the public about the benefits of child-led, unstructured, risky play and the MAP program, and addresses any concerns.
- Conducts a comprehensive site check and monitors safety of loose parts and materials.

## MAP Parent Liaison

This can be a role within the MAP leaders or can be a separate on-site staff role. As such, they are responsible for the same tasks as MAP leaders and additionally:

- Engages with parents to communicate the values, goals, and benefits of the MAP and child-led unstructured risky play.
- Responds to parent questions and concerns.
- Facilitates parent-free engagement in the MAP for the children.
- Hands out and gathers user (parents/guardians) feedback surveys (see Appendix F for an intercept survey).

## Hire MAP On-Site Staff

MAP leaders and parent liaisons are the on-site, frontline staff interacting with parents/guardians and children at your sites. They are instrumental to the success of your program and provide and facilitate unstructured play opportunities for children. There are many characteristics that make a good MAP leader and a good parent liaison. Consider tailoring the roles and duties for each MAP leader and/or parent liaison to match their unique skill set and strengths. When hiring, keep in mind that people with experience delivering structured recreation programs for children can require 'unlearning' of many of those skills. You are assembling a team who should ideally work well together and complement one another's strengths and weaknesses.

When hiring MAP leaders and/or parent liaisons, look for individuals who are:

- Energetic, enthusiastic, and engaged.
- Flexible and can adapt to the constantly shifting nature of the MAP.
- Graduates of post-secondary programs in education, kinesiology, environmental education, or early childhood development.
- Representative of diverse ages, backgrounds, and skills sets.
- Strong communicators and have related skills and experience, especially for the parent liaison role.
- Able to encourage, facilitate, and inspire child-led play rather than lead it themselves.
- Comfortable with child-led unstructured risky play.
- Willing and able to set up, move, and take down the MAP and associated loose parts and materials.

## Train MAP On-Site Staff

Training of MAP on-site staff is key to the success of the program. Training should be practical, hands on, and a mix of experiential and educational learning. It should highlight the values, goals, and principles of your MAP. MAP staff will be the on-site ambassadors for the program. They need to understand the benefits of a MAP and be able to answer any questions or concerns parents/guardians may have. If possible, have experts in the area of child-led, unstructured, risky play lead your staff training. Involve people who have previous experience with a MAP or other adventure playgrounds in your staff training. Include playful activities. Participate in a MAP together and practice facilitating and 'playing' freely. Training and mentorship of on-site staff should be ongoing. It can address specific challenges and/or areas requiring improvement as they arise. Consider incorporating into your MAP staff training:

- How to facilitate, encourage, and inspire child-led, unstructured, risky play rather than lead or direct that play.
- Example scenarios and possible solutions, such as a parent drops a child off and leaves.
- The goals, values, and benefits of the MAP program and the child-led, unstructured, risky play it promotes.
- How to be inclusive and encourage participation among children and families from diverse backgrounds, social situations, and with differing disabilities.
- The safe and appropriate use of the MAP tools, loose parts, and materials and how to build capacity among children for their use.
- Set up, tear down, transportation, and storage of MAP loose parts and materials.
- Expectations for conduct and discussion of code of ethics and liability reflective of the organization, community, and/or municipality responsible for the MAP.
- First aid.





## Manage MAP On-Site Staff

The dynamic, unstructured nature of a MAP can make it difficult to determine ahead of time the appropriate number of on-site staff. A MAP does not usually have registration. This can lead to an unpredictable number of attendees. Weather can also impact your MAP staffing needs. Rain or cold can mean fewer children than expected attend the MAP. Warm sunny days can mean that you exceed your anticipated numbers.

Having on-call staff available if and/or when they are needed is one solution to match staffing to attendance. This can present challenges for your staff that may prefer to have set hours. Other possible solutions are having staff who are not needed on-site work on other aspects of the MAP program, such as managing the loose parts inventory. When scheduling on-site staff, account for all of the tasks that are required. These include set up, take down, play facilitation, communication and liaising with parents, and survey distribution and collection, among others.

Engage with parents to communicate the values, goals, and benefits of the MAP and child-led unstructured risky play.



# 'How To' Gather & Manage Loose Parts

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**Materials and loose parts are a core feature of a MAP.  
In this section you will find details on 'how to':**

- > **Gather and maintain loose parts.**
- > **Transport and store loose parts.**

## Gather & Maintain Loose Parts

When selecting loose parts and materials, consider how they can support different types of play. Some items are best used for constructing, while others suit storytelling and imaginative play. Think about how the objects can be moved, used, held, and manipulated by children. Boxes, fabric, craft supplies, old tires, natural materials, foam, wood, pots and pans, wheels, tape, rope, and paint are some materials that can be used in a MAP.

The most popular items at Calgary MAP were tools, a bathtub, large slide pieces, old tires, and plastic pipes. Consider which materials will work well in cold and snowy weather, in summer heat, and in the rain and/or other weather conditions. Almost anything can be used in a MAP – children are astonishingly creative in what they can reimagine!

Keep an up-to-date loose parts and materials inventory and 'wish list.' The majority of the materials used in a MAP can be received for free. Partnering with local business and suppliers can be effective for obtaining loose parts and materials donations. Organizations that may have materials for donation include construction companies, fabric and craft stores, thrift stores, the municipal waste and recycling services, car mechanics, hardware stores, furniture companies, and community groups. Even individuals within your own community or organization may have materials to donate. Donation letters can initiate a conversation with local organizations, businesses, community members, and organizations and can outline specific loose parts and/or materials you are looking for. Don't forget to describe the purpose of a MAP and its benefits. Having your inventory and 'wish list' in place before asking for donations can ensure you gather only items of use to your MAP.

The City of Calgary fostered and maintained relationships with MAP loose parts donor organizations through regular communication. They informed potential donors about the MAP program, how it was valuable to the community, and how the specific donation would benefit the program. They also kept their loose parts donors informed about how their supplies were being used by the children at the MAPs and provided them with stories and photographs. This helped to maintain relationships and fostered donors' continued support. See Appendix G for copies of the loose parts and materials donation request letters for The City of Calgary MAP.

Other approaches to gathering donations for loose parts can include requests through social media, newsletters, and websites. A drop box can also receive donations from the public. You are likely to receive unwanted materials using this approach so use it sparingly and strategically. Be selective about the loose parts and materials you request and accept. Avoid having too many donations or items that you cannot use and then need to dispose of or store!

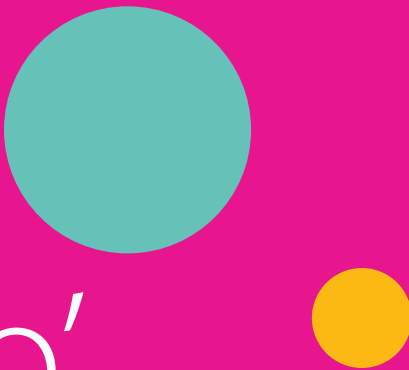
## Transport & Store Loose Parts

When planning for a MAP, account for the transportation of loose parts and site materials from site to site. Transport vehicles must be large enough to accommodate all of the loose parts and materials. If parts need to be 'jig-sawed' into place or transported in several trips it will take additional resources, skills, and time. Having a larger vehicle makes transporting materials easier. It also makes it easier to pack and unpack the materials and loose parts at the beginning and end of the day. Staff will need to obtain the appropriate training and licensing to operate the vehicle.

All of the MAP loose parts and equipment need a place to be stored when not in use. If your MAP program expands, storage will become increasingly important. When planning for loose parts and materials storage, consider your current and future needs in terms of space and weather conditions. Think about the costs of different storage options, whether they are on or offsite, transport that would be required to and from the storage space, and upkeep required. Possible loose parts storage options can include:

- play boxes
- movable sheds, and
- permanent storage units.

Maintenance and upkeep of loose parts storage can be a shared responsibility. It could involve partnership with local communities or organizations. They could oversee the upkeep of play boxes. Collaborating with the community requires effective communication and continued engagement.



# 'How To' Day-To-Day MAP Operations

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**You have completed your planning, hired and trained your staff, and are ready for the daily operation of your MAP to begin. In this section you'll find details on 'how to':**

- > Schedule a MAP.**
- > Plan for inclement weather.**
- > Manage day-to-day site operations.**





## Schedule a MAP

Consider the needs of your community when creating your MAP schedule. Account for the anticipated age and life stage of the children, socio-demographic characteristics of the parents/guardians, the season, and school calendar. These and other factors will impact the availability of children to attend your MAP. Vary your MAP schedule to target different demographics (e.g., during school hours and off school hours). Keep track of attendance at your MAP. This will inform a schedule that works best for your community, organization, and/or municipality. Be flexible with your MAP scheduling and alter it in response to demand.

In terms of MAP, The City of Calgary found:

- MAP programs were better attended on weekdays compared to weekends or holidays.
- The busiest hours for the MAP program were between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.
- Young children (aged 5-12) and their parents/guardians made up the majority of MAP participants.
- Compared to winter, MAP programs had higher attendance during the spring and summer months, especially when school was out.





## Plan for Inclement Weather

Plan ahead for possible inclement weather. Develop clear guidelines and practices for your on-site staff in the case poor weather arises. Decide how you will communicate weather-related changes to your MAP schedule to the public. Here are some weather-related MAP planning and operation tips:

- Identify nearby emergency shelters for sudden inclement or severe weather, such as poor air quality index, lightning storms, or blizzards.
- Ensure on-site staff are aware of and have received training in relation to emergency weather procedures, such as seeking shelter or encouraging water consumption and sunscreen application.
- Incorporate weather preparedness information into your marketing and communication. Remind participants and parents/guardians to bring gloves and a toque, drink plenty of water, and/or apply sunscreen.
- Have appropriate supplies available on-site, such as sunscreen, water, or warming huts.
- Communicate weather-related MAP closures in a timely and easily accessible manner. On-site signs, updated website announcements, and social media posts can be effective in this regard.

## Manage Day-To-Day Site Operations

Plan ahead. This will help you successfully manage the daily operation of your MAP. Clearly outline what staff should do if there is poor weather, different attendance than expected, an injury or conflict between children, or parental concerns. Have the designated parent liaison focus on addressing parental questions and providing information about the MAP and child-led, unstructured, risky play. Anticipate parental questions and concerns and train staff to answer them accordingly.

Information about the MAP can also be posted to on-site signs, such as sandwich boards. These can also be used to demarcate the boundaries of your MAP without creating actual barriers. Calgary used the on-site signage to fulfil informed consent requirements as well.

The mobile nature of the MAP means it takes time to set up and take down. This includes loose parts and materials, but also possible set up of shade structures, water stations, warming stations, information boards, and signage. Staff accordingly and provide sufficient time and training.

Designate one person to oversee site set up and tear down. Involve children and their families in setting up or taking down the MAP. Plan for how to manage any play-in-progress. Communicate to children what will happen to structures in mid-creation at the end of the day.

For the successful day-to-day running of your MAP:

- Try not to be strict with 'children only' rules. The MAP can provide wonderful opportunities for parents/guardians to interact and play with their children. On-site MAP staff can help to promote child-led rather than adult-led play.
- Use challenge cards (e.g., "build a spaceship and travel the stars") to help prompt child-led, unstructured, risky play among children who are shy, unsure, or MAP first-timers. See Appendix H for examples of play challenge ideas.



Ensure on-site staff are aware of and have received training in relation to emergency weather procedures, such as seeking shelter or encouraging water consumption and sunscreen application.







# 'How To' Evaluate the Success of a MAP



Evaluation is key to long-term sustainability and documenting the success of your MAP. Information gathered through evaluation is useful to achieve and maintain buy-in for child-led, unstructured, risky play in your community. It can make a case for future or continued funding of your MAP. Evaluation can also support the growth of a MAP program. Use your evaluation to identify gaps in your MAP programming and plan to address these in the future. For the evaluation of your MAP:

- > Create an evaluation plan.
- > Develop assessment tools.
- > Conduct an evaluation.
- > Share the evaluation findings.



## Create an Evaluation Plan

Think about how you will assess and evaluate your MAP during its development. Ongoing evaluation will enable you to assess the success of your program, change directions or revise goals and outcomes as appropriate, and determine next steps. Funding agencies often require end-of- grant reports and related outcome measures. Involve an evaluation specialist in the process and throughout your project. This person will:

- Provide direction on project goals and outcomes.
- Lead the development and implementation of evaluation guidelines and tools, such as surveys or observation rubrics.

- Train on-site MAP staff for evaluation and feedback related duties, such as handing out surveys or recording observations.
- Analyze data and make recommendations to other project teams, such as communications, marketing, and staff training.
- Ensure continuity of the MAP and respond to changes and growth of the program.

Align the evaluation of your MAP with your specific scope and goals. Think about:

- What are the primary goals of our MAP? What do we hope to achieve?
- How will we know when or if we've achieved our goals?

- Who do we want to reach with the MAP programming?
- How might the lessons learned from MAP implementation be applied to other programs?
- How will we determine the success of the MAP program?
- What type of feedback do we need or want from MAP participants, staff, and others to improve the program and ensure alignment with our goals?



A comprehensive evaluation includes MAP outcomes and outputs of the MAP. This focuses on what was achieved. It also assesses the MAP implementation processes, i.e., how the program worked or did not. Be flexible and ready to adapt your evaluation techniques and programs in response to what you are learning. Evaluation can change throughout the process!

When creating your MAP evaluation plan, consider:

- **What outcomes you will measure –**  
These are the products and results of the MAP. They should relate to goals and values of your MAP, such as improving opportunities for children to engage in child-led, unstructured, risky play.
- **What processes you will measure –**  
These are the MAP program activities, such as communication strategies, site set-up, on-site staff roles and responsibilities. A process evaluation focuses on whether these have been

implemented as intended. It can also highlight barriers and facilitators to implementation.

- **How data will be collected –**  
Information can be gathered through interviews, surveys, or observations. Relevant data can be available through other sources, such as organizational or administrative records.
- **Who will be targeted –**  
Your evaluation may target parents/guardians, children, MAP staff, key decision-makers, organizational leadership, or the general public. Engage with diverse communities and individuals for your data collection. Consider the alignment between your MAP goals and who you are targeting in your evaluation.
- **When will you collect data –**  
Having baseline data, that is information collected prior to introducing the MAP program, will provide a point of comparison to measure its outcomes. It

will help you identify what has changed after introducing the MAP program. You will need to make a schedule for other data collection. This may be ongoing through the MAP season, at the end of a MAP season, or a multiple time points during the year. Time data collection to align with your goals.

- **Who will collect and analyze the data –**  
Account for time commitments, costs, and skills needed or training required to ensure the feasibility of your data collection and analysis.
- **How will you report on and use the data –**  
When making your evaluation plan, decide how the evaluation data will be used and who your audience will be. Consider how your evaluation findings can support your goals.



## Develop Assessment Tools

You will need to find or create specific MAP assessment tools. These could be surveys, interview guides, or observation rubrics. You can also use existing data in your assessment such as census, organizational, or administrative records. If so, ensure that you have the appropriate permission to use the data for MAP evaluation purposes.

Use multiple methods of data collection to capture the full benefits of your MAP. Match your measures to your outcomes. For example, if you want to promote imaginative play you will need to measure that specifically. Collecting feedback from parents/guardians and children who attend the MAP can provide valuable insights into what aspects of the program are working and what should be improved or altered. This can also inform you of parental/guardian attitudes and beliefs related to child-led, unstructured, risky play and identify and address possible parental barriers. Personal MAP stories and testimonials can also provide relevant assessment information.

Use data collection methods appropriate to your target audience. Gathering feedback from the children, for example, can be challenging. Use different methods than you would with adults. Children's perspectives can be collected indirectly, by asking parents to mediate. This has limitations in terms of capturing children's voices. With children, try using images rather than words in your surveys, ask them about their experiences, or conduct a group interview. Consider how to gather information from target audiences for whom English is not the primary language or who have low literacy. These factors will need to be accounted for in the development of your tools and data collection methods.

The evaluation specialist working with The City of Calgary developed an observation tool for the MAP evaluation. It was called the SOMAP (System for Observing Mobile Adventure Playgrounds; see Appendix I). The SOMAP was a revised version of a validated play evaluation tool called the SOPARC (System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities).<sup>11</sup> Calgary identified four dimensions of play to target with their MAP program, which the SOMAP measured:

- 1) physical activity
- 2) risk (e.g., evidence of heights, rough and tumble play, or high speeds)
- 3) social play (e.g., children playing alone versus playing in children-only groups versus playing with adults), and
- 4) engagement (e.g., evidence of creative, construction, and free play, or non-play related activities).

The SOMAP provided a “snapshot” of what was going on within the MAP at a single point in time. It was unable to account for play activities and engagement levels that developed over a longer duration. The SOMAP was not designed to capture the non-physical aspects of play, such as problem solving, fine motor skills, emotional and social risk-taking, and the formation of social bonds through play. Adapting your evaluation tools to meet your goals and using multiple different forms of evaluation can help to address these gaps.

The City of Calgary also created parent/guardian intercept surveys (see Appendix F). These gathered information from parents, caregivers, and children (indirectly) attending the MAP. The intercept survey provided information on who was attending the MAP, why, and what they thought about it. The surveys included:

- Age of the children attending the MAP.
- How they found out about MAP.
- How many times they visited the MAP and in what locations
- What new MAP locations would they like to see.
- Overall satisfaction with the MAP.
- Perceived benefits of the MAP for their family.
- Children's experiences of the MAP.

11 McKenzie & Cohen. (2006). SOPARC: Description and procedures manual. Available at: [https://www.activelivingresearch.org/sites/activelivingresearch.org/files/SOPARC\\_Protocols.pdf](https://www.activelivingresearch.org/sites/activelivingresearch.org/files/SOPARC_Protocols.pdf)

## Conduct an Evaluation

Assessing your MAP can be time consuming and requires specific skills. Schedule accordingly. Make sure staff are appropriately trained in the use of the evaluation tools. If validated tools, such as the SOMAP, are administered incorrectly you risk gathering low quality data. Consider assigning the role of evaluation support and training specific MAP staff to conduct evaluation. By conducting MAP observations and parent/guardian surveys throughout the MAP program, The City of Calgary was able to gauge trends in their outcome measures and see change over time and across seasons.

It can be challenging to get people to complete your surveys and provide you with the feedback that you need to assess your MAP. Based on the Calgary experience, parents/guardians preferred activities they could complete at the MAP site, such as face-to-face interviews and paper surveys.

Evaluation activities conducted at pick-up had greater success than those conducted during the drop-off of children at the MAP. Parents/guardians were distracted if other activities were going on at the site. This was not a good time to conduct evaluations.

There were two primary outcomes for The City of Calgary MAP program:

- 1) Promote child-led, unstructured, risky play.
- 2) Communicate the importance of this form of play to parents/guardians.

The first outcome was assessed using site observations and the SOMAP tool. It focused on four dimensions of children's play: 1) physical activity level; 2) risky behaviour; 3) social play; and, 4) child engagement. SOMAP observations were conducted throughout the MAP season by trained observers. The evaluation specialist conducted the analysis of the data.

To address their second outcome, The City of Calgary conducted intercept surveys with parents/guardians. These were surveys gathered feedback from parents/guardians and their children on their experiences with the MAP (see Appendix F). In the survey, parents/guardians were asked about their beliefs, perceptions, experiences, and feedback on the MAP. MAP leaders handed out the surveys to parents/guardians attending the MAP. This occurred throughout the duration of program and was mostly the task of the parent liaison. The survey data were analyzed by the evaluation specialist.

“Evaluation activities conducted at pick-up had greater success than those conducted during the drop-off of children at the MAP.”



## Share the Evaluation Findings

Sharing knowledge and insights about your MAP can shape perspectives and encourage discussions around play in the broader community. You can inspire other communities, organizations, or municipalities to do the same. This will contribute to a growing movement to promote child-led, unstructured, risky play. Explore local opportunities to communicate the success of your MAP. Consider your target audience and how your evaluation findings align with your MAP goals, scope, and scale. A marketing, media, or communications specialist will help make the most of your opportunities to share your MAP evaluation findings. Other possible avenues to share your MAP successes include:

- **Networks and Forums**

- Children & Nature Network
- your provincial and national Recreation and Parks Associations
- school board and parent council meetings, and
- town hall meetings and public engagement events.

- **Conferences**

- Provincial and national Parks and Recreation annual conferences provide opportunities for connecting with play practitioners and advocates and accessing resources.
- The International Play Association triennial conference is an excellent forum for networking, seeking feedback, sharing knowledge, and becoming familiar with work being done to support play at local, provincial, and international levels.


Your MAP evaluation results will highlight what is working at your MAP. It will also reveal aspects that could use rethinking. Consider about how you will incorporate your evaluation findings into your future programming. Evaluation will strengthen your MAP and allow you to celebrate and share your successes!

Based on their MAP evaluation, The City of Calgary found:

- The majority of children attending the MAP were preschool age, rather than the expected elementary age – it was extremely rare to have children 12 years of age and older attend.
- Unstructured, loose parts play was appropriate for all ages.
- There were many instances of cross-age play, such as 10-year olds helping 18-month olds.
- The MAP did not increase physical activity compared to a conventional playground. Instead it promoted children's engagement in diverse types of play, such as construction, creative, and social play.
- There were more active forms of play at the MAP sites with interesting terrain, such as hills, heights, and climbable trees.
- There were greater levels of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity at the winter MAP compared to summer MAP – the children moved more to stay warm!
- Spring and summer MAP had higher numbers participating than winter MAP. The latter were still able to generate good attendance.
- Children who attended a MAP were typically accompanied by one parent or a nanny.
- MAP attendance was lower on weekends.
- Only a small portion of the families who attended belonged to visible minority groups.







# 'How To' Sustain a MAP

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**Ideally, a MAP can provide opportunities for child-led, unstructured, risky play on an ongoing basis. In this section you will find details on 'how to':**

- > Sustain a MAP.**
- > Plan for the future of a MAP.**



## Sustain a MAP Program

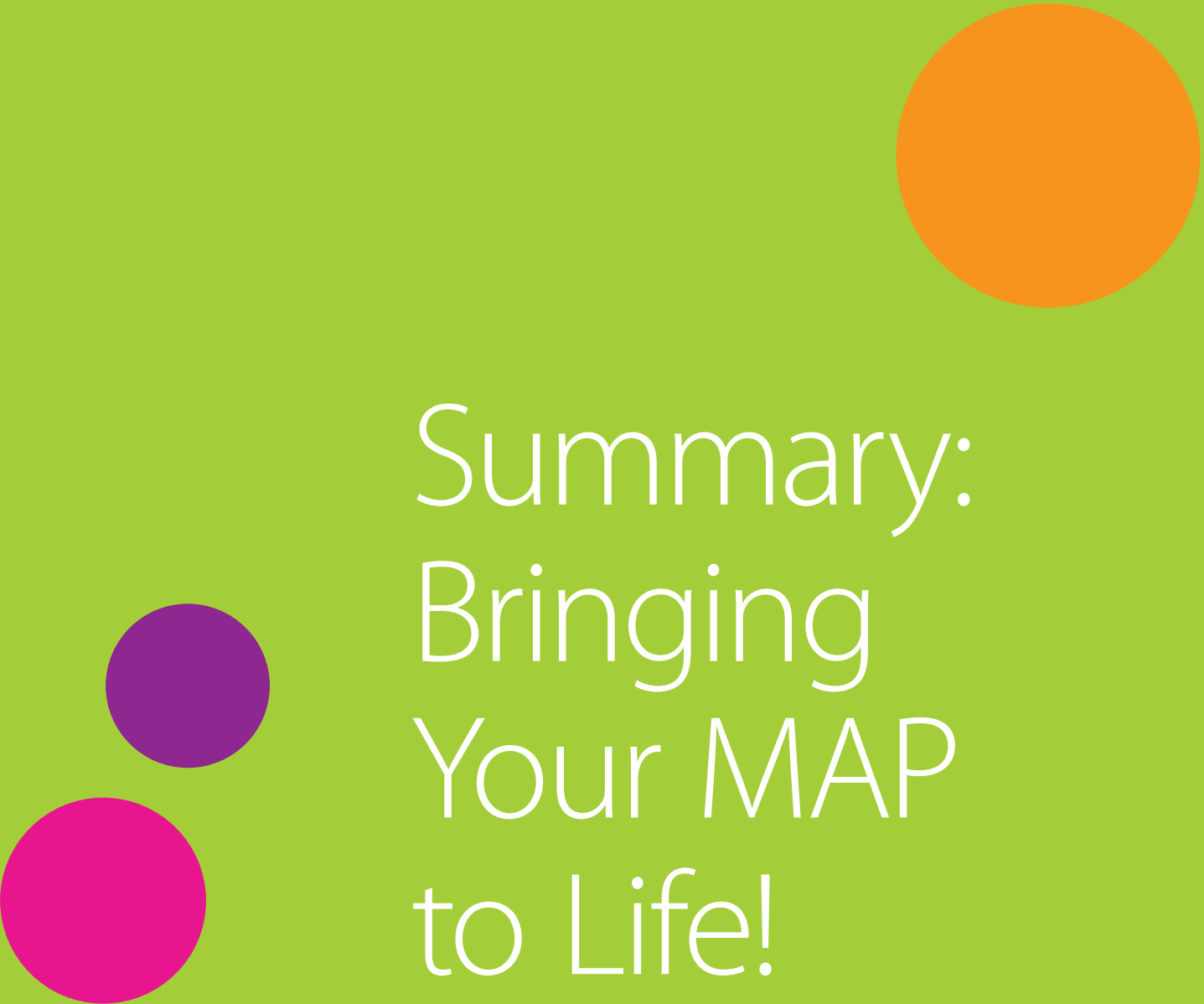
The long-term sustainability of your MAP depends on staffing, partnerships, funding, and communication. As project staff changes there is potential for knowledge loss. Keep detailed documentation and plan for transitions to ensure key knowledge about your MAP is maintained. Training is also key to sustainability. Have experienced MAP staff train new staff. Celebrate the strengths of your individual MAP staff, provide opportunities for learning and growth, and maintain your connection with seasonal staff to keep them returning to work at your MAP.

Long-term funding is essential to the ongoing success of your MAP. Plan ahead for when start-up funds and seed grants have run out. Leverage buy-in from key decision-makers, for example members of city council, to attract longer-term structural funding. Use your evaluation results to highlight the success and impact of your MAP and make the case for long-term funding. Don't forget that stories from parents and children who have benefited from the MAP. These are key for sustained interest and buy-in from partners and community members. Consider integrating cost-saving measures into your MAP to make your funding last. Ask for material and loose parts donations, incorporate adventure play into existing programming, or share resources with other organizations undertaking similar projects.

## Plan for the Future of a MAP

Think about your plans for the future of your MAP. This may involve growth, change, or long-term sustainability. Be open and flexible in your planning to take advantage of opportunities and needs that arise in your community, organization, or municipality along the way. The City of Calgary identified several areas to target as their MAP program grows. These include:

- Creating Adventure Playgrounds to provide opportunities for children to undertake longer-term projects, such as building a fort.
- Developing small kits and “do-it-yourself” guides to bring a mini-MAP into homes and other smaller spaces, like birthday parties, backyards, and even indoors.
- Improving the reach of the MAP program to include more children and families from diverse socio-demographic and economic backgrounds.



# Summary: Bringing Your MAP to Life!

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**Congratulations! You have the tools and information needed to bring a MAP to life in your community.**





## Keep in mind:

- Unstructured adventure play can start small! If creating a full-scale MAP program from scratch is not feasible, look for ways to incorporate elements of child-led, unstructured, risky play and loose parts into existing play programming.
- Buy-in and support from parents/guardians, decision-makers, and the community in general is essential to the ongoing success of the MAP program.
- Long-term planning for sustainability is key, particularly related to funding, partnerships, and loose parts and materials.
- Take advantage of the unique natural landscape in your community. Host a MAP in areas with dynamic and interesting natural features, such as mud, hills, dirt, water, and trees.
- A wide variety of loose parts will support different types of play at your MAP.
- MAP schedules, sites, on-site staff, messaging, and communications will impact the accessibility and inclusivity of your MAP for different sub-populations.
- Wherever possible, incorporate fun and play into all aspects of the project!

“Remember to have fun as you develop a MAP in your community. It is worth the effort! A MAP can be a powerful investment in children’s development and well-being in your community.”



# Additional MAP Resources

**Additional resources are available at [arpaonline.ca/playcharter/](http://arpaonline.ca/playcharter/). These resources can help you create, evaluate, and sustain your MAP. MAP resources created by The City of Calgary are appended, including:**

- Appendix A. Calgary MAP Pilot: Budget Items & Resources Required
- Appendix B. Parental Barrier Interview Guide
- Appendix C. Parental Barrier Survey
- Appendix D. Parks Operations Staff Survey
- Appendix E. Examples of MAP On-Site Signage
- Appendix F. Parental Intercept Survey
- Appendix G. Loose Parts & Materials Donation Request Letters
- Appendix H. Examples of Play Challenge Ideas
- Appendix I. SOMAP Observation Tool & Guide

## Background Information & Support for Children's Play

- United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child:  
[https://www.childrensrights.ie/sites/default/files/submissions\\_reports/files/UNCRCEnglsh\\_0.pdf](https://www.childrensrights.ie/sites/default/files/submissions_reports/files/UNCRCEnglsh_0.pdf)
- 2015 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth:  
[https://participaction.cdn.prismic.io/participaction/61cf55e8-c1c0-42c7-ba6b-1480fd2c29b9\\_participaction-2015-report-card-full.pdf](https://participaction.cdn.prismic.io/participaction/61cf55e8-c1c0-42c7-ba6b-1480fd2c29b9_participaction-2015-report-card-full.pdf)
- 2018 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth:  
[https://participaction.cdn.prismic.io/participaction%2F5e923384-b01a-4680-a353-60b45c271811\\_2018\\_participaction\\_report\\_card\\_-\\_highlight\\_report\\_0.pdf](https://participaction.cdn.prismic.io/participaction%2F5e923384-b01a-4680-a353-60b45c271811_2018_participaction_report_card_-_highlight_report_0.pdf)
- Why safe playgrounds aren't great for kids:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=lztEnBFN5zU&feature=youtu.be>
- International Play Association: <http://ipaworld.org/>

## Play & The City of Calgary

- Play in the City of Calgary: <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/Parks/Pages/Locations/Adventure-Playgrounds.aspx>
- Calgary Play Charter general information: <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/Recreation/Pages/Research-and-development/Calgary-Play-Charter.aspx>
- YYC Plays: <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/Recreation/Pages/Research-and-development/YYC-Plays.aspx>


## (Mobile) Adventure Playgrounds & Related Tools

- SOPARC: Description and Procedures Manual: [https://www.activelivingresearch.org/sites/activelivingresearch.org/files/SOPARC\\_Protocols.pdf](https://www.activelivingresearch.org/sites/activelivingresearch.org/files/SOPARC_Protocols.pdf)
- Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide: <http://www.playengland.org.uk/media/172644/managing-risk-in-play-provision.pdf>
- Pop-Up Adventure Play Website: <https://popupadventureplaygrounds.wordpress.com/>
- Adventure Playgrounds: The essential elements: <http://www.playengland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Adventure-Playgrounds.pdf>
- Loose Parts Play: A toolkit: <https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Loose-Parts-Play-web.pdf>





## Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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