

# ***Centre Programming Guide***



## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of a Little Athletics Centre is to provide an environment where families can come together, have fun and provide fitness opportunities. An essential part of “Family, Fun & Fitness” is the weekly athletic development of track and field athletes, culminating in Centre meets. Little Athletics offers something different to everyone and its wide range of activities and events caters for children of all abilities. LAQ recognizes seven equity areas, which include gender, disabilities, older adults, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, non-English speakers, employment status and isolated communities.

The Sports Commission defines physical literacy as “Physical literacy is the skills, knowledge and behaviors that give us the confidence and motivation to move throughout our lives”. In other words, kids play games to strengthen their mindset to engage them in meaningful skill acquisition; enabling them to develop skills and use those skills in an age-appropriate competitive environment.

When designing a program there is a need to recognise that some athletes are better able to participate than others. While competition is an inherent quality of life, it should not be the sole purpose of a Little Athletics program. The emphasis should be on self-improvement and developing skills. To become physically literate, children need to master fundamental movement skills through a series of developmental stages. In the earlier stages, play and physical activity should be fun and exciting while teaching agility, balance, co-ordination and speed (ABC’s). Later stages of physical literacy develop event specific skills, fitness and competition.

To assist in developing activities for the earlier stages, the use of games with athletic skill bias is encouraged. Children learn and master skills through experiential learning involving positive play and game-based activities that are fun and involve constant participation. Activities need to be focused on developing the skills of running, jumping and throwing with the view to putting those skills to use in competition. Fun, achievable and challenging.

The preparation of the weekly program is the most important function that a Centre administration must undertake. The development of skills and type of events and the method of arranging them will vary from Centre to Centre, since available facilities and number of children also varies.

Refer to the Competition Handbook for event specifications.

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## The Program Officer

The role and responsibility of the Centre Program Officer lies in the preparation and conduct of the Centre's program and competition activities during the season. In doing so, they:

- Develop and publish a list of events or activities for each age group for each Centre meet
- Act as “meeting (arena) manager” by keeping an eye on the progress of events during the meet and dynamically making adjustments as necessary. For example, if there is a long line of age groups queued up to complete the 100m, one of those age groups might be rescheduled to do one of their field events earlier and then come back to the 100m when it is less congested.

The weekly meet program should provide opportunities where athletes can acquire skills and further develop their athletic confidence.

## Know your Centre

Developing a program will be different for every Centre. The first thing to consider is what facilities are available. For example, how many long jump pits are available? How many discus and shot put circles? How many flop and scissor mats? Can javelin be done safely at the same time as other events? How many straights are available for conducting sprints? These constraints will dictate which events can be scheduled at the same time.

Next, you need to consider the number of athletes you have at your Centre. This may vary considerably from year to year and so may require you to rethink some of your programming traditions.

## Structure

Each Centre conducts its own Centre meets, either in the Summer or Winter season, and may only include LAQ standard events and appropriate development elements for age groups U6 to U17s. The Centre may also decide to conduct events for Tiny Tots within the guidelines.

The following reflects a relatively traditional way of structuring a Centre meet around a sequence of competition events. Centres are encouraged however, to be creative and feel free to experiment with alternatives that provide a more engaging experience for athletes. For example, in addition to competition events, it is certainly reasonable to mix in athletics based games (especially for younger age groups) and to incorporate coaching activities to develop skills and techniques. Please share with us any innovative practices that you have found successful.

## Development vs Competition

Little Athletics is an ideal platform for athletes of any age to develop and improve motor skills that are not only necessary and used in Little Athletics, but for many other sports. When creating a program LAQ recommends that there be an emphasis on skill development during the Centre meet program, particularly in the beginning of the season and for Tiny-Tots to U8's. There are a number of resources, available on the [LAQ website](#) that can provide guidance for play training and development, these include ASAP Manual, Games Manual, Tiny Tots Handbook and Active After-School Communities Manual.

A weekly Centre program may include any one or combination of the following:

- Sanctioned Events - events as per the LAQ Rules of Competition Handbook or the McDonald Achievement Award cards, conducted with the appropriate standard of competition equipment and application of competition rules.
- Modified Event - defined as a sanctioned /standard event that is conducted
  - using appropriate equipment of non-competition standard
  - run over a distance less than the minimum event standard
  - with modified rules
- Play Training - skill development based on using fun events and games
- Coaching session - a coaching session using correct coaching methods and appropriate equipment suitable for sanctioned events for that age group

## How Many Events?

Little Athletics generally has a very high attrition rate. Each season, about half of our families do not return. Surveys have shown that one of the biggest issues is programs that run too long and excessive waiting time between events. Reducing waiting time between events should be the Program Officers' highest priority. In deciding how many events to offer for each age group each week, please consider that "less may be more". The number of events may vary across age groups. For example U6, U7 & U8 might do only 3 events/activities per week and be finished in 1 - 1 ½ hours, while U9 to U17 might do 4 or 5 events/activities per week and be finished in 2 hours. The maximum number of sessions/event for a normal Centre meet is five (5). You may wish to include a skill development session for U9-U10 athletes as one of their scheduled activities.

In the first couple of weeks of each season, you will likely have many inexperienced athletes and parents helpers. You might therefore schedule fewer events for those weeks and perhaps save time by not measuring or timing events at first. You may also choose to conduct one week as skill development activities with no measuring or timing, followed by the next week as a more competitive structure where you measure and time. This weekly alternating between skills development and a structured competitive environment will allow the athletes to further develop and refine skills necessary.

## Balance

You do not necessarily need to schedule each event the exact same number of times each season. For example, you may offer 100m sprint more often per season than the 1500m walk. You should however, generally aim for some degree of balance in your program. This applies to the entire season as well as to each week's program. For example, you would probably aim to offer each of the throws events an approximately equal number of times per season, similarly for jumps events. If in a given week you had two field events, then it would be best to do one jump and one throw. For those older age groups doing four or more events per week, a reasonable starting point would be to do one jump, one throw, one sprint, and one middle distance event each week. Into this, you need to mix hurdles and walks. The relative proportion of each of these events will vary from Centre to Centre. Centres are encouraged, however to not leave out entire event groups such as walks or hurdles.

## Combining and Splitting Age groups

Some age groups may have a small number of athletes (less than 10), so you might consider merging them with other age groups for the purposes of programming. For example, you might combine the U15, U16, and U17 boys into a single group. It is also possible to merge age groups across genders, for example combining U14 boys with U14 girls. Merging age groups provides a larger pool of parents to act as helpers and reduces contention for limited facilities. In merging age groups, you should be mindful of the fact that different age groups compete with different weight implements and over different distances.

Other age groups might be excessively large (eg. U12 boys might have more than 30), so you might consider splitting this age group. Large groups are particularly problematic for events such as high jump that take a long time for a large diverse group to progress through a long progression of heights. Such groups could be split just for select events (such as high jump, where the groups use separate high jump facilities), or they could be split for the entire program.

## Tiny Tots

Tiny Tots should be doing play-based games rather than competitive competitions. These games and activities are used to develop athletic abilities that will be useful in future years. For example, instead of doing high jump competitions (best heights being measured), they could play a game that involves jumping over a low elastic crossbar onto a high jump mat. Another example involves motion like triple jump. Instead of doing the event (which they are not sanctioned to do), they could be learning coordination by hopping, bounding and jumping between coloured mats positioned close together. Above all, it should be fun and parents are particularly encouraged to be actively involved in these activities.

Refer to the Tiny Tots Handbook for more information.

## **Multi-Class**

Multi-Class (MC) athletes can participate in standard events, suitable to their abilities, with their relevant age group or be offered LAQ approved MC events incorporated into the Centre program as separate events.

Refer to the LAQ Multi-Class webpage for more information.

## **Event Sequencing**

Once you have decided which events each age group is going to do each week, you need to decide in which order to offer them. Firstly, you need to consider the athletes. Endurance events are probably better programmed towards the end of the program (or out of the heat of the day) as athletes can more quickly recover from sprint and field events. Secondly, you want to consider the logistics of switching between events. For example if you have a bunch of 70m and 100m sprints to conduct, then you might be best to run all of one event first, so as to avoid having to move starting stands back and forwards. Similarly, with hurdles you will not want to be going up and down in heights or adding/removing hurdles for different distances.

## **Periodic Programs**

Most Centres work on a periodic program, which means they have a schedule of events that might span a time period of say 3 to 6 weeks, after which the same sequence of programs is repeated (perhaps with some minor variation). Some events take much longer to complete than other events, so you generally want to balance the overall set of events that you schedule so that each week's program takes roughly the same amount of time.

For example, you may not want to schedule all age groups to do high jump on the same night as it takes a long time, and all age groups will be contending for a limited number of high jump mats. For other events such as hurdles or walks, you might for logistical purposes find it easier to do all of them together on the one night.

## Available Events

It is up to your Centre to decide if you wish to offer all of the events listed in the LAQ Competition Handbook. Some events may not be possible due to safety or availability.

A sound base line for Centre programming would start with all standard events, incorporating optional and skill development events when appropriate. Centres cannot exceed the distances, heights and weight specifications for any age group. Likewise, Centres can create 'Centre only events' provided they are age appropriate. For example, you must not offer Javelin to younger age groups, however, you could introduce a fun turbo jav game.

The McDonald's Achievement cards list the groups of events that each age group needs to complete in order to receive an event group achievement certificate. For example, U13 girls need to complete both 80m Hurdles and 200m Hurdles in order to receive a Hurdles group certificate and U12 boys need to complete both a 700m and 1500m Walk in order to receive a Walks group certificate. You should therefore ideally aim to offer each of these events at least once during each season.

The following table shows the standard list of events recommended for each age group.

EVENTS	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12	U13	U 14	U 15	U16	U17
70 metre	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
100 metre	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
200 metre	option	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
300 metre	option	option	option	option	option	option	option	option	option	option	option	option
400 metre		option	option	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
500 metre		option	option	option	option	option	option	option	option	option	option	option
700 metre			option	option	option	option	option	option	option	option	option	option
800 metre				yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
1500 metre					yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Sprint Hurdle	option	option	60m	60m	60m	80m	80m	80m	80m G 90m B	90m G 100m B	90m G 100m B	100m G 110m B
Distance Hurdle								200m	200m	300m	300m	300m
Race Walking (short)		300m	300m	300m	700m	700m	700m	700m	700m	700m	700m	700m
Race Walking (long)				700m	1100	1100m	1500m	1500m	1500m/ 3000m	1500m/ 3000m	1500m/ 3000m	1500m/ 3000m
Long Jump	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Triple Jump						yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
High Jump			option	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Shot Put	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Discus	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Javelin						yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

## Event Requirements

Below is a list of the minimum equipment followed by the number of event areas recommended for Centres with up to 100 athletes. Additional useful equipment can be purchased if wanted eg. shot board, starting blocks, and flags.

Numbers in this table represent one event area. Modified equipment for all events where possible.

Digital Stopwatches or Timing Device	6-8
Starting Equipment and appropriate accompanying items e.g. hammer starters gun requires caps and set of ear muffs (29db)	1
350g Discus (rubber)	2
500g Discus (rubber)	2
750g Discus (rubber)	2
1kg Discus (rubber)	2
1.5kg Discus (rubber)	2
1kg Shot Put	2
1.5kg Shot Put	2
2kg Shot Put	2
3kg Shot Put	2
4kg Shot Put	2
5 kg Shot Put	2
400g Javelin	2
500g Javelin	2
600g Javelin	2
700g Javelin	1
Measuring Tapes	2 x 15m & 30m; 1 x 50m & 100m
set of 4 anchoring pegs	2
Long Jump Take-off Strip (1 x ½m)	1
Standing measuring spikes	5
Scissor mats	1 set
Flop mats	1 set
High Jump uprights with bases	2 sets
High Jump Crossbars	2
Measuring stick	2
Flexible bar	1
Mini Hurdles - U6s or skill development	24
Standard collapsible hurdles	100 (8 lanes)
Modified equipment for all events where possible	As required

The ideal number of field events areas for most Centres with up to 250 athletes is:

- two-shot put circles
- two discus circles
- one javelin sector on an adjacent oval
- two high jump areas
- two long jump pits

The following table provides an overview of the ideal venue, required equipment, and base number of people required for each Little Athletics event. Some of the equipment is essential (high jump mats), others are not (judges' stands).

EVENT	VENUE	EQUIPMENT	PEOPLE
Straight Track for sprints: 70m 100m	Flat, long area 100m long. Must be wide enough for 4+ lanes Start & Finish Lines Marked lanes	1 Starter's gun & caps OR Electronic Starting gun with flash. 1 Set Ear muffs 6-8 Stop watches 1 Starter's stand (opt) 1 Set Finish Line posts 1 Time Keepers' stand (opt) 1 Place Judges' stand (opt) Stationery	1 Starter 1 Start Marshall 3 Timekeepers 3 Place Judges 1 Recorder
Circular Track: 200m 400m 800m 1500m	Circular track 300m or 400m Staggered start Start & Finish lines Marked lanes	As Above & 1 Bell 1 Lap Counter (opt)	Same as for sprints
Hurdles 60m 80m 90m 100m 110m 200m 300m	As for sprints Hurdle positions marked Circular track with hurdle positions marked	As above & Adjustable hurdles (LAQ approved) Refer to the Competition Handbook for specific quantities for each distance /age group	Same as for sprints
Walks	Circular track Start & finish lines	As above for circular track events	Same as for sprints 3 Walk Judges
Relays	Circular track Marked changeover areas	As above 8 Batons	Same as for sprints 1 Judge for each changeover area



EVENT	VENUE	EQUIPMENT	PEOPLE
Long Jump / Triple Jump	Flat landing pit filled with sand (min size 2.75m x 8m x 30cm)	Take off board(s) & mats 1 Rake, broom, & spike 2 Measuring tapes 1 Small marker Recording stationery	1 Chief Measurer 1 Recorder 1 Raker
High Jump	Flat level surface with adequate run up area and landing area (min 5m x 3m)	Calibrated uprights (2) Cross bar Measuring stick Landing mat(s) 1 Flexible bar for younger athletes (opt)	1 Chief Measurer 1 Recorder 1 Bar Attendant
Discus	Concrete or portable ring/ circle marked on grass Adequate area for safe landing of discus (should be 50m or more) Marked sector lines Cage or protective enclosure	1 Measuring tape (50m) 2 of each rubber/synthetic Discus: 350gm, 500gm, 750gm, 1kg & 1.5kg 1 Spike 1 Broom to sweep ring Recording stationery	1 Chief Measurer 1 Recorder 1 Retriever
Shot Put	Suitable ring including stop board Landing area & marked sector lines	Measuring tape (20m) 2 of each Shot Put: 1kg, 1.5kg, 2kg, 3kg, 4kg, 5kg 1 Broom 1 Spike Recording stationery	1 Chief Measurer 1 Recorder 1 Retriever
Javelin	Flat landing area and marked sector lines	Measuring tape (50m) 1 of each Javelin: 400g, 500g, 600g, 700g 1 Spike Recording stationery	1 Chief Measurer 1 Recorder 1 Retriever



### Sample Centre Meet Programs

The following are examples of what one weekly Centre meet program could look like.

#### Sample 1. Development program (small to medium Centre)

All athletic skills are derived from the fundamental motor skills. Athletes require competency in these to perform the more complex skills applied during competition. Centres should consider providing programs that incorporate age appropriate skill development at the beginning of the season or for the full season.

Note this program is based on:

- Field events with a maximum of 3 trials only
- High Jump 2 consecutive fails only; plus U11-U17 total of 4 fails across whole competition
- \*No measure/time
- \*\*No measure/time weeks 1-8 only

Age Group	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3	Activity 4	Optional
*Tiny Tots	LAQ Tiny Tots Program			-	-
*U6 G&B	LAQ 'FAST' Program			-	-
*U7 G&B	Long Jump skills	100m	Shot Put skills	Optional 70m	-
**U8 G&B	100m	Long Jump skills	70m	Optional Shot Put	-
U9 G&B	Shot Put	100m	Long Jump	70m	800m
U10 G&B	100m	Shot Put	70m	Long Jump	
U11 G&B	High Jump	100m	Discus	70m	
U12 G&B	100m	High Jump	70m	Discus	
U13/14 G&B	Discus	100m	High Jump	70m	
U15/16/17 G&B	100m	Discus	70m	High Jump	

The above table could be adjusted to use for a portion of, or for a full season, using the following as a guideline

- Tiny Tots LAQ Tiny Tots Program whole season - NO measure/time
- U6 LAQ 'FAST' Program plus other resources on LAQ website whole season. (NO measure/time)
- U7 3 activities plus 1 optional activity.
  - Weeks 1-8 Skill development using modified equipment at event areas. (NO measure/time)
  - Weeks 9-20 Skill development using standard equipment at event areas. (NO measure/time)
- U8 3 activities plus 1 optional activity
  - Weeks 1-8 Skill development using standard equipment at event areas. (NO measure/time)
  - Weeks 9-20 Skill development using standard equipment at event areas. (Measured/timed)
- U9 3 competition activities, 1 skill development activity, plus 1 optional activity.
- U10 3 competition activities, 1 skill development activity, plus 1 optional activity.
- U11 - U17 4 competition activities, plus 1 optional activity.

## Sample 2. Competition program (small to medium Centre)

Age Group	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3	Activity 4	Bonus
Tiny Tots	Tiny Tots program				x
U6 G&B	100 m [no times]		Event skills program		x
U7 G	Shot put	100m	Long Jump	70 m	x
U7 B	Shot put	100m	Long Jump	70 m	x
U8 G&B	Long Jump	Vortex	70m	Shot Put	x
U9 G	Long Jump	100m	Vortex	Shot Put	<i>optional 800m</i>
U9 B	100 m	Long Jump	70m	Discus	
U10 G	100 m	Discus	70m	High Jump	
U10 B	100 m	High Jump	Discus	70m	
U11 G	100 m	Shot Put	Triple Jump	70m	
U11 B	100 m	Shot Put	High Jump	70m	
U12 G	100 m	Triple Jump	Javelin	70m	
U12 B	100 m	Triple Jump	70m	Javelin	
U13 G	Long jump	100 m	Shot Put	70m	
U13 B	Long jump	100 m	Shot Put	70m	
U14/15 G&B	Javelin	100 m	Triple Jump	70m	
U16/17 G&B	High jump	100 m	Discus	70m	

### Additional Centre Competition

Centres may consider offering an additional and alternate style of competition, which fit within the standard set of events but offered outside the normal weekly Centre meet eg. Combined Event, Nitro style, Team Challenge or Inter-Centre meets.

Refer to the LAQ Centre Carnival webpage for more details.