

Project Proposal: *Sister Swim: Dive into Community and Wellness*

1. Executive Summary

The **Sister Swim** project aims to empower and engage culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women in Bendigo through a dedicated, culturally sensitive women-only swimming program. By providing a safe space for water aerobics and swimming lessons, this program seeks to enhance physical health, social connectedness, and confidence among migrant women, particularly those from Afghan, Karen, South Sudanese, Indian, Sri Lankan, Nepalese, Chinese, Japanese, and Thai communities. This initiative not only promotes well-being but also strengthens community bonds and fosters a more inclusive and vibrant local society.

2. Project Description

Australia's diverse multicultural landscape is reflected in the increasing number of women from various cultural backgrounds settling in regional areas like Bendigo. However, participation rates in physical activities among migrant and refugee women remain significantly lower than the national average due to cultural, social, and environmental barriers. This program addresses the urgent need for culturally sensitive and accessible health and wellness programs that cater specifically to these communities.

Research highlights that migrant women are 50% less likely to meet recommended physical activity guidelines than the general population, with cultural barriers, modesty requirements, and language challenges being significant deterrents. Specifically, only 24% of women from non-English speaking backgrounds in Australia participate in swimming activities, compared to 42% of the general female population. The Sister Swim program aims to close this gap by providing a supportive environment tailored to the unique needs of CALD women.

3. Program Objectives

The **Sister Swim** program is designed to:

1. **Enhance Physical Health:** Offer structured, culturally appropriate swimming and water aerobics sessions that promote overall physical well-being.
2. **Foster Social Connections:** Create opportunities for socialization and community building among women from diverse backgrounds.
3. **Build Confidence:** Develop swimming skills and water safety awareness, encouraging ongoing participation in physical activities.
4. **Provide Culturally Safe Spaces:** Ensure privacy and cultural sensitivity, particularly for women with modesty concerns.
5. **Promote Inclusivity:** Engage Afghan, Karen, South Sudanese, and other emerging communities to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion.

4. Program Plan

Program Structure

- Duration: 10-week program, conducted during the summer months.
- Location: Local swimming pool in Bendigo, reserved exclusively for women during program hours.
- Schedule: Weekly sessions.

Activities:

- Water Aerobics: Wednesdays, focusing on cardiovascular health, strength, and flexibility.
- Swimming Classes: Fridays, aimed at teaching basic swimming skills and water safety.

Support Services:

- Transportation: Support organising alternative transportation
- Bilingual Support Workers: Available at each session to assist with language needs and ensure cultural sensitivity, particularly for Afghan, Karen, South Sudanese, and other emerging communities.

Risk Management

- Low Participant Enrolment: Engage community leaders and cultural organizations for promotion, use multilingual marketing materials, and offer incentives like free trial sessions.
- Cultural Sensitivity Issues: Provide cultural competency training for staff, employ bilingual support workers, and implement anonymous feedback mechanisms to quickly address concerns.
- Safety and Health Concerns: Hire qualified instructors with first aid training, implement safety protocols, and ensure emergency preparedness.
- Funding and Budget Constraints: Monitor budget closely, apply for additional grants, and design a scalable program to adjust based on available resources.
- Weather and Facility Availability: Establish contingency plans for inclement weather or facility issues and have a communication plan for informing participants of changes.
- Language Barriers: Ensure multilingual staff and provide translated materials and visual aids to supplement instructions.

Evaluation Method

- Pre- and Post-Program Surveys: Assess changes in physical activity levels, social connectedness, and well-being, with surveys in multiple languages.
- Attendance Records: Track participation rates among targeted communities and identify trends.
- Participant Feedback: Conduct focus groups and interviews to gather qualitative data on experiences and suggestions for improvement.
- Confidence in growth: Track the participants confidence in the water and assessing their overall engagement

Deliverables

- 10 Weekly Sessions: Provide engaging and culturally sensitive swimming and water aerobics for 50 women from targeted communities.
- Transportation Services: Offer as needed safe and reliable transport for participants, especially those from the Afghan, Karen, South Sudanese, and other communities.
- Bilingual Support Services: Offer comprehensive language assistance and cultural support.
- Evaluation Report: Deliver a detailed report on program outcomes, participant feedback, and recommendations for future programming.

5. Budget

- Program Coordinator: \$3,000
- Community Bilingual and Support Workers: \$1,000
- Water Aerobics Classes: \$2,000
- Swimming Classes Instructor: \$3,000
- Materials, Catering, and Transport: \$1,000
- Organisational Admin & Overheads: \$2,000
- Organizational Executive Management: \$1,500

Total Budget: \$13,500

6. Conclusion

Sister Swim offers a unique opportunity to empower migrant women through culturally sensitive physical activities, building confidence, social connections, and overall well-being. By creating a supportive, inclusive environment, this program helps bridge the gap in physical activity participation among CALD women, fostering a healthier, more cohesive Bendigo community. Join us in making a lasting impact on the lives of these women and the community at large.

The Sister Swim program represents a valuable investment in the Bendigo community, addressing a critical gap in services for CALD women and promoting social cohesion and health. By supporting this initiative, businesses and stakeholders can demonstrate their commitment to diversity, inclusion, and social responsibility, positioning themselves as leaders in fostering a more inclusive and vibrant local society.

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Co-Design Plan for the "Sister Swim" Program

To ensure the "Sister Swim" program effectively meets the needs of the diverse communities it aims to serve, we will adopt a comprehensive co-design approach. This strategy involves active collaboration with community members throughout all stages of program development, from initial planning through to implementation and evaluation. By engaging Afghan, Karen, South Sudanese, Indian, Sri Lankan, Nepalese, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, and other emerging communities in the design process, we ensure the program is culturally relevant, accessible, and tailored to the unique needs and preferences of the participants.

Co-Design Plan Overview

1. Preparation and Engagement

- Objective: Establish strong relationships and build trust with community members and stakeholders.

Actions:

- Identify Key Community Leaders: Engage with respected leaders, cultural organizations, and community groups representing Afghan, Karen, South Sudanese, and other target communities to act as co-design partners.
- Initial Meetings: Conduct introductory meetings to present the “Sister Swim” program concept and goals, emphasizing the importance of community input and collaboration.
- Cultural Competency Training: Ensure all staff involved in the co-design process receive cultural competency training to understand and respect the diverse cultural backgrounds and needs of the participants.

2. Community Workshops

- Objective: Develop the program collaboratively with direct input from the community.

Actions:

- Organize Workshops: Arrange a series of workshops at accessible community venues, scheduling sessions at convenient times for participants. Provide necessary support such as childcare, transportation, and refreshments to encourage active participation.
- Facilitated Discussions: Utilize facilitators who are fluent in relevant languages and culturally competent to lead discussions on the program’s objectives, activities, and logistics.
- Co-Creation Activities: Involve participants in interactive activities like brainstorming, role-playing, and scenario planning to gather their input on preferred activities, timing, locations, and support services.
- Feedback Collection: Use a variety of methods such as surveys, suggestion boxes, and small group discussions to collect feedback, particularly from those who may be less comfortable speaking in large groups.

3. Program Design and Iteration

- Objective: Develop a preliminary program design based on community feedback and refine it continuously.

Actions:

- Draft Program Outline: Create an initial draft of the program outline, incorporating feedback from workshops regarding session content, structure, and logistics.
- Community Review: Share the draft program with community members for their review and additional input. Organize follow-up sessions to discuss feedback and make any necessary adjustments.

- **Pilot Testing:** Conduct a small-scale pilot of the program with participants from each community. Collect data on their experiences and gather qualitative feedback through interviews and focus groups.

4. Continuous Engagement and Feedback

- **Objective:** Maintain open and ongoing communication with community members throughout the duration of the program.

Actions:

- **Feedback Loops:** Set up regular check-ins with community representatives and participants to gather feedback and make real-time adjustments to the program.
- **Community Advisory Group:** Establish a community advisory group made up of representatives from each targeted community to provide ongoing guidance and support for the program.
- **Communication Channels:** Utilize diverse communication channels (such as social media, community bulletin boards, email, and in-person meetings) to keep participants informed and engaged.

5. Evaluation and Reflection

- **Objective:** Evaluate the program's effectiveness and identify areas for improvement based on community feedback.

Actions:

- **Collect Data:** Use surveys, focus groups, and interviews to gather both quantitative and qualitative data on program outcomes, participant satisfaction, and areas needing improvement.
- **Community Feedback Sessions:** Host evaluation sessions with community members to discuss the program's successes and challenges and collect suggestions for future iterations.
- **Report Findings:** Share evaluation findings with the community, funders, and stakeholders, emphasizing the program's impact and the critical role of community input in its success.
- **Iterative Improvement:** Use feedback and evaluation data to refine and enhance the program for future offerings, ensuring it continues to meet the diverse needs of the communities it serves.

Conclusion

The co-design plan for the “Sister Swim” program places the voices of Afghan, Karen, South Sudanese, Indian, Sri Lankan, Nepalese, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, and other emerging communities at the heart of program development. By engaging these communities throughout every phase of process, we ensure the program is culturally appropriate, accessible, and fosters a strong sense of ownership and empowerment in participants. This collaborative approach not only improves the program’s effectiveness but also strengthens the community bonds and promotes social inclusion in Bendigo