Clark County Parks and Recreation

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Clark County Parks and Recreation
Masters of Public Administration
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
July 17, 2006
Daniel Davis
Josh Martinez
Steven Schyman
Clark County Parks and Recreation
7/17/06
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Executive Summary

As our primary assignment in PUA 791 (Topics in Administration), the following report has been prepared. It includes an examination of the current policies governing the programs offered by the Clark County Parks and Recreation Department as well as a comparison (benchmark) of two similar metropolitan areas. The following analysis was completed during the months of February thru July, 2006. It consisted of a series of interviews with Recreation Department managers from various agencies as well as information gathered from Management of Park and Recreation Text, 2005 and CAPRA (Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies).

This report contains a summary of our methodology, findings, and recommendations. It should be noted that the information included in the following analysis was collected from a limited number of managers/supervisors representing the following Agencies:

- Clark County Parks and Recreation Department
- City of Henderson parks and Recreation Department
- City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department

The Clark County Parks and Recreation Department has taken an informal approach in evaluating the success of its programs. Enrollment numbers and input from stakeholders have provided the most guidance in the decision making process. A survey of residents was completed in 1998 and 2002 and post-program surveys are used on an irregular basis. The overall feeling from the department is that surveys are not a reliable method for determining success of a program.

Our analysis revealed that both the City of Phoenix and City of Henderson Parks and Recreation Department utilize surveys on a regular basis during both the implementation phases and conclusion phases of each program. Moreover, the City of Henderson utilizes a spreadsheet that all survey information can be plugged into to determine success/failure of a program. With this information, an excel checklist was created using criteria from both agencies as well as information obtained from CAPRA and Management for Park and Recreation Agencies Text, 2005. Additionally, a cost factor was added into the equation from information obtained during a Clark County site visit of Desert Breeze Community Center.
**Purpose of the Report**

Clark County Parks and Recreation Department is the County agency that is responsible for delivering recreational and leisure programs to the citizens of Clark County. Citizens are the primary users of recreational programs and leisure activities and therefore the key ingredient in a successful Parks and Recreation Department. In turn it is vital that managers of Parks and Recreation Agencies monitor closely the needs of its citizens in regard to what programs they offer. Not only does the Park administration need to pay attention to the customers in regards to what type of programs they would like offered, but they also need to evaluate the current programs to determine if they are a success. Throughout the process of determining whether a program is successful management may also discover that a program simply needs changes made. They may also discover, however that the program should be eliminated altogether due to lost revenue, lack of participation, or inability to meet the overall goals of the department.

Over the years Parks and Recreation has taken an informal approach in evaluating the success of its programs. Enrollment numbers and surveying participants of programs have provided the most guidance in the decision making process in determining whether the county should keep the program or not. Parks and Recreation has adopted an informal approach to determining the success of programs in an attempt to avoid a formal policy. Per our interviews with the Parks and Recreation Department, Program Supervisor/HR Liaison Patrick Almeido, stated, “it was not always good to make a formal policy, because when formal policies are created, people want it followed to the letter of the policy, because when the policy is not followed the agency opens itself up for scrutiny or litigation.” (personal communication, 2006)

Since the department does not have a formal policy that they use for determining the success of programs, the Program Supervisor was asked. How is success determined? Are surveys used? He mentioned that surveys have been used in the past, but they are not a good judgment of success, because usually the participants that fill out the surveys are participants that are very unhappy with the program. (Patrick Almeido, personal communication, 2006) He then went on to mention that it is difficult to get good feedback since not all the participants are filling out the surveys. (Patrick Almeido, personal communication, 2006)

The issue that has been identified is that the Clark County Parks and Recreation Department does not have a formal policy and/or clear method to analyze programs offered to the public. Since there is no formal way to identify program success, the County has no way of determining if a recreational program should be retained, modified, or done away with. Therefore, the purpose of this report is to conduct a program analysis: of the current policies in place within the Clark County Parks and Recreation Department. Our research includes answers to the following questions:

1) How does the Clark County Parks and Recreation Department (CCPR) make their decisions to allocate which programs get funded and which ones stay open?
2) Which programs do they consider a priority and why?
3) How does the CCPR system of choosing these programs correlate with other agencies throughout the country that also deal with funding issues?
4) How do they determine where to offer the programs?
5) Is there any criteria used to determine the success/failure of each program?
6) Where does CCPR receive their surveys from and how are those surveys conducted?

The intent of this evaluation is twofold:

1) We will present a clear understanding of how decisions are made within the Clark County Recreation Department on behalf of the programs that it provides.
2) We will compare (benchmark) the standards used to analyze program success in Clark County to similar metropolitan areas.

The decisions which will be aided by our findings include those related to determination of the success/failure of programs provided by the Clark County Parks and Recreation Department.

Organization Background

Clark County Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for creating, implementing, and running recreation programs for the unincorporated areas of Clark County. Parks and Recreation is just 1 of 38 departments, Clark County operates.

The Department of Parks and Recreation was created by the County in 1963. It was created to, "acquire, develop and maintain parks and recreation areas, and to organize and direct leisure programs in the unincorporated areas of the County." (Parks & Recreation Master Plan, Pg. vii) Policy governing Park Policy was first created in the 1966 General Plan. It was expanded when the 1974 Local Park Code codified a spatial park standard of 4 acres per 1,000 population for neighborhood parks. (Parks & Recreation Master Plan, Pg. vii) The Local Park Code also created a set standard on funding sources for Parks and Recreation by establishing the Residential Construction Tax, or impact fee; these fees help to support park development. (Parks & Recreation Master Plan, Pg. vii)

Over the years Parks and Recreation has conducted several studies to determine the needs of the community that they serve. The first study was conducted in November of 1984. (Parks & Recreation Master Plan, Pg. vii) It was conducted in part with the County Comprehensive Plan Process. When the study was commissioned the County was interested in looking at some key areas, they were Park Program, Park and Open Space Plans. (Parks & Recreation Master Plan, Pg. vii) Parks and Recreation also examined alternative methods at accommodating park needs and delivery of services due to fiscal restraints on Parks and Recreation.

Clark County is one of the fastest growing communities in the United States. With the rapid growth the County faces, it is difficult for Parks & Recreation to keep up with the demands on programs. It is difficult to keep up with the program needs because when new neighborhoods go up parks and community centers are needed to provide programs to the residents of that area.
In order for Parks & Recreation to keep up with the increase growth in Clark County they are paying attention to growth trends. In the last 10 years the population in unincorporated Clark County has doubled in size to 474,500 residents. (Parks & Recreation Master Plan, Pg. vii) This increase in population is only expected to double in size to 865,000 residents in unincorporated Clark County by 2020. (Parks & Recreation Master Plan, Pg. vii)

Due to the large increase in population from year to year, Parks and Recreation had to go back and update their master plan in December of 1992. The reason they went back to update the master plan was to, "identify public needs and expectations related to park and facility delivery over a five-year planning horizon." (Parks & Recreation Master Plan, vii) Parks and Recreation using the five year planning horizon is a must in a community that is one of the fastest growing in the United States. By going back and updating the master plan in December of 1992, Parks and Recreation is able to get a better understanding, of community needs, such as a baseline of public attitudes and opinions regarding the County's Parks and Recreation Programs. (Parks & Recreation Master Plan, Pg. vii)

With the rapid growth that has occurred in Clark County over the last 10 years it is very important that the 20 year master plan is followed and updated for so many years. This is vital in order for Clark County to continue to meet the program needs of the community.

**Program Delivery System**

Recreational programs are provided by Clark County to citizens that reside in the County, but also to citizens that live outside of the County. There are no residency stipulations in order to use recreation programs offered by the County. In order to deliver programs to the citizens, Parks and Recreation must construct Parks and Community Centers. The infrastructure planning is very important in the delivery of programs because without open space and community centers there would be no place to host the recreation programs.

Currently, Clark County Parks and Recreation operates 12 community centers within unincorporated Clark County, 3 of which are designated Senior Centers. All centers offer a variety of classes, open recreation programs, field trips, community-wide and neighborhood special events. Seven centers also offer RecTrek, a year-round recreation program for children on break from school. Teen programs and senior activities are also conducted at several sites. Rooms are available to rent for meetings and public uses. The centers are also used to provide community services such as: well-baby clinics, health screenings, and senior forums. Community centers are located in various parts of town. When the 20 year master plan was created it broke the county up into 4 geographical areas, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and Northwest. By dividing the county up into 4 geographical areas it allows Parks and Recreation to strategically place community centers through out the county,
which in turn provides recreational programs throughout the county. (Parks & Recreation Master Plan, Map 2 Insert)

In addition to dividing the county up into 4 areas, Clark County Parks and Recreation partnered with other government agencies in order to gain more open space and building space for community centers. The agency that Parks and Recreation works with closely is the Clark County School District. By partnering with the School District it allows Parks and Recreation to use school property to host programs, such as recreational sporting events and primarily the Safekey program. This is beneficial for Parks and Recreation and the School District because they are able to share the cost. Also with much of the urban core built up in Clark County it is very difficult to locate new land to develop for new growth. (Parks & Recreation Master Plan, Pg. 2) Therefore by forming a partnership with CCSD it gives Parks and Recreation open space in the urban areas that they can build infrastructure on, that will allow them to provide recreational programs to citizens that reside in the urban area of the county.

Each community center varies in size. Therefore it varies in the amount of programs that it can offer. Hollywood Recreation center is made up of 40,000 sq ft, the facility has 5 full time employees and over 40 part time employees, similar size centers have the same number of employees. Smaller facilities have 3-4 full time employees and 15-30 part time employees.

These community centers offer approximately 250 programs. The programs offered cover a wide range from family, youth and senior recreation programs, after-school activities, day camps, summer special events and sports programs. The programs range in price from free to $250.00 dollars.

Revenue from sponsors and fees is imperative to operate the various recreation programs. In addition, the county allocates a budget to the Parks and Recreation Department. The fees collected are used to pay part-time employees to teach the various programs. Sponsors are often solicited for donations at large events coordinated in conjunction with P&R resources. The revenue that is provided through the county budgeting process is used for the day to day operating costs, materials and full-time employees pay. Currently, success is contingent on how much review a program generates.

**Overall Evaluation Goals**

Program Evaluations are an integral part of the process of programming. Such program evaluation should determine the extent to which stated program goals, and objectives have been achieved. This often includes a measure of participant satisfaction, as well as a review of the processes and procedures used in the planning and implementation phases. Program evaluations should be conducted in a systematic fashion and on a regular basis. The evaluation should occur during various points as it documents the extent to which goals and objectives have been met. (Management of Park and Recreation Agencies, 2005)
In addition the Management of Parks and Recreation text suggests 2 types of evaluations which may be used to evaluate program success. They are as follows:

**Formative Evaluation:** Ongoing process that takes place throughout the planning and implementation stages. The purpose of this type of evaluation is to make modifications and corrections to services as they unfold.

**Summative Evaluation:** Evaluation occurs at the end of a program and attempts to comprehensively analyze the program and its effect. (Management of Park and Recreation Agencies, 2005)

The City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department currently uses a Summative type survey to evaluate its junior lifeguard and youth swim programs. This comment form allows the participants to suggest program improvement, as well as identify whether or not their needs were met and the staff was responsive.

Evaluation of programs should include both an implementation evaluation, which involves the design of the program, and a benefits evaluation, which is conducted after a program is implemented. Specific programs should be evaluated, as well as the entire program delivery system, in terms of the organization’s long-term objectives and needs assessment data. Staff should demonstrate that they are providing programs that support long-term objectives, the assumption being that organizations can shape demand, not just respond to it (Management of Park and Recreation Agencies, 2005).

Historically, the Clark County Parks and Recreation has taken an informal approach in evaluating the success of its programs. Enrollment numbers and input from stakeholders have provided the most guidance in the decision making process. This informal style is aimed at resolving the creation of any formal policy. The primary issue identified is that the Clark County Parks and Recreation Department does not have a policy and/or clear method to evaluate programs offered to the public.

The entire community is indirectly affected by how municipalities choose to use their funds. Recreation programs that fail to provide a worthwhile and utilized service can be considered a waste of employees’ time and tax payer dollars. In addition, the County is expected to be efficient with tax payer’s money.

The goal of this Analysis is to compare (benchmark) the standards used to analyze program success in Clark County to similar metropolitan areas. The following areas were chosen based on the demographic resemblance to Clark County:

City of Henderson: Population 249,298 (City of Henderson.com)
City of Phoenix: Population 1,300,000 (Phoenix-Arizona.com)

With the information collected, it is our intent to develop a check sheet and/or computer program in excel that will help the county run known information they have about each program through this testing measure. A checklist provides a tool from which to
determine the success of each program based on the effort and resources committed to it. The goal of this proposal is to add the following benefits:

- Provide alternative method to evaluate programs beyond user surveys
- Strengthen Recreation Departments ability to grade customer satisfaction, utilization and cost
- Add a tool for gauging incorporation of it’s mission, vision and goals into each recreation center program

Methodology

The initial research of Clark County Parks and Recreation was very broad, but as the program analysis took shape the research was narrowed down to evaluating recreational program success. The following methods were utilized for our analysis:

- Benchmarking other agencies’ Parks and Recreation Departments
- Contacted CAPRA (Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies)
- Gathered information from Management of Park and Recreation Agencies Book, Second Edition
- Completed Clark County site visits to Cambridge Community Center and Desert Breeze Community Center
- Completed City of Henderson site visit of Paseo Verde Multigenerational Center
- Gathered information via email from Clark County Parks and Recreation, Program Supervisor/HR Liaison, Patrick Almeido
- Informational meeting with City of Henderson Parks and Recreation, Assistant Director, Dirk Richwine
- Informational meeting with City of Henderson Parks and Recreation, Recreation Coordinator, Felicia Riviera-Baker
- Informational meeting with Michael Schumaker, Recreation Program Supervisor (Desert Breeze Community Center)
- Telephone Interview with City of Phoenix, Adimistrator, Steven Turner
- Telephone Interview with Maricopa County, Administrator, Tina Allen
- Telephone Interview with City of Henderson, Director of Parks and Recreation, Jim Norman

Through conducting informational meetings and e-mailing Tara L. Fitzpatrick-Navarro (CAPRA), the group discovered there is established information out there in regards to judging program success.

When judging program success Jim Norman, Director of Parks and Recreation, City of Henderson, mentioned that there is simple criteria that is used:
-Participation
-Revenue
-Customer Satisfaction

Information from surveys/criteria gathered from City of Henderson, City of Phoenix and Management of Park and Recreation Agencies Text provided us with the criteria necessary to create the survey format that follows.

Recommendations

When analyzing the Parks and Recreation Department it is difficult to determine a pure cost benefit equation/analysis/graph. The primary goal of the Parks and Recreation Dept. is to provide programs that are beneficial to the community. Therefore, making a profit is not the overall deciding factor. As a result, an economic analysis may be open for interpretation. The objective of our analysis is to decipher between successful and unsuccessful programs by means of a survey. The ultimate outcomes should reflect the programs that should remain versus those that should be reevaluated. By using the method of a statistical analysis, we will provide a more community based approach. We are under the assumption that funds are available for the Parks and Recreation to provide programs that are necessary and have community demand.

Should a standard cost benefit analysis be provided, a variety of alternatives will be reviewed. A cost benefit analysis will compare total cost, total benefit, marginal cost and marginal benefit. It is expected that since most program funds come from tax dollars, the process may be expensive and time intensive.

As a result, we recommend that surveys are provided in the form of a paper handout and included on the Parks & Recreation web page. Community center program participants will be encouraged to complete a survey at the end of each finished program. The survey will include all of the following.

- Good Value for customers money
- Quality of Instruction/Supervision
- Quality of Program
- Quality of Staff
- Ease of Registration
- Program Hours for convenience
- Program Cleanliness
- Safety
- Customer Service
- Publicity of Event
- Overall Satisfaction
Each question will have a liker scale that runs from 1 – 5. After all the data is collected from a particular program, the scores will be calculated in a spreadsheet to get an average score from each question.

There is a management survey that will be completed which also has a liker score from 1 -5. The survey includes the following questions.

- Ability to Staff
- Location Availability
- Materials cost
- Number of Participants

When both the customer survey and the management survey are completed an average score add up to a number from 1 – 5. It had been the assumption of this group that a score of 1.49 or below will require an interdepartmental investigation of the program.

The following excel workbook (see survey appendix) provides an easy, user-friendly tool for Parks and Recreation Managers to figure out if a program is successful. In addition, we have also included an economic analysis component which adds value to the workbook.
List of References


City of Henderson Parks and Recreation Department. (2005). Program Evaluation Overview


**Clark County Parks and Recreation Customer Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<td>Quality of Instruction/Supervision</td>
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<td>Quality of Program</td>
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<td>Overall Satisfaction</td>
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**Total Average Score**: 3.181818

Scores are between 1 and 5.

- Excellent - 5
- Above Average - 4
- Average - 3
- Below Average - 2
- Poor - 1
Clark County Parks and Recreation Customer Survey

Program Name: 
Instructor: 
Location: 
Date: 
Time: 

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<th></th>
<th>Poor</th>
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<th>Average</th>
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Reset | Submit
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# Program Evaluation Check List

## Part I

### Customer Survey Results

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*Total Average Score on Customer Surveys: 2.99*

## Part II

### Management Factors

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<td>Location Availability</td>
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<td>Class Minimums *</td>
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*Total Average Score for Management Factors: 3.6667*

### Average Score for both Customer Surveys and Management Factors

3.32833

- Keep Program if Score is between 1.5 and >
- Reevaluate Program if Score is < 1.49

*Must meet class minimum as set by the Clark County Parks and Recreation Class Fee Scholarship Calculations*