

Where Do We Spend Our Recreation Dollar?

AMM Municipal Officials Tradeshow and Seminar

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In Terms of Parks and Recreation

A local government should use recreation as a vehicle for achieving certain socially worthwhile goals and objectives, where such achievement clearly results in some form of indirect benefit (public good) to all residents of the community.

Foundation Statement

The community will direct its efforts toward achieving the greatest "public good" possible in return for the investment of limited available public resources designated by council each year.

Mission Statement

The community will use leisure services as a vehicle in achieving socially worthwhile goals and objectives, where the achievement of such goals and objectives clearly results in some form of indirect benefit (ie. public good) to all citizens.

Two Socially Worthwhile Goals and Objectives:

1. **Use the delivery of public leisure services to further the growth and development of the community:** (i.e. through first establishing a broadly felt community identity and then developing a widely held community spirit and, finally, to the evolution of a community culture.)
2. **Use the delivery of public leisure services to further the growth and development of the individual:** (i.e. the social, emotional, moral, and physical development of each member of the community.)

21 Service Objectives

Goal #1 - Development of a Sense of Community:

1. SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events (e.g. carnivals, fairs, and the likes) can contribute to a feeling of community identity and spirit. Therefore, the municipality should be involved in sponsoring special events to the extent necessary to ensure promotion of this objective.

2. SUPPORT TO LOCAL GROUPS

Local clubs, groups and agencies are and will be organizing and sponsoring leisure opportunities. The "people doing things for themselves" aspect of such groups is socially worthwhile and desirable. The municipality should support such groups in their efforts. Support may occur in a number of ways, including subsidized access to facilities, assistance in leadership training, provision of specialized equipment or the provision of operating grants.

3. EXPOSURE TO SPORTING EVENTS

Community identity, spirit and culture can be fostered through the environment generated by spectators at athletic events. In such events, sport can be closely linked with community identity and pride. Because of this, opportunities should be provided for spectator experiences at athletic events.

4. EXPOSURE TO THE ARTS

Artistic endeavors (both performing and visual) represent one of the most significant aspects of developing a culture in any community. Through exposure to the arts, local residents should develop a better understanding and appreciation of the cultural aspects of a community.

5. SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

Because social functions are a valuable vehicle to use in developing community cohesion and identity, the public sector should ensure that such opportunities exist.

6. PROTECTING COMMUNITY NATURAL RESOURCES

The protection of natural aesthetic features, vistas, natural phenomenon and features of historic significance and the provision of public access to such features will contribute to a greater understanding of and pride in the community and, therefore, contribute to community growth.

7. BEAUTIFY THE COMMUNITY

The extent to which a community is seen by its residents as being visually pleasing is directly related to the potential for creating community identity, spirit and culture. Therefore, to make a community more beautiful is a worthwhile social objective worthy of tax support.

8. FAMILY ORIENTED LEISURE SERVICES

The family unit is an integral building block of community growth. Opportunities should be provided for families to pursue leisure as a family unit.

9. INTEGRATING GENERATIONS AND SUB GROUPS

Community growth can be fostered through increased contact between people of varying age groups within the community. The more contact and interchange between seniors and younger adults and children, the greater the potential for community growth. Therefore, in the provision of leisure services, attempts should be made to provide such contact and interchange between seniors and younger residents with a view toward transmitting cultural heritage across the generations.

Community growth can further be fostered through an integrative mixing of various ethnic groups so that each better understands and appreciates the differences and strengths of the other. Multicultural recreation services can be used as a vehicle in making the community more cohesive.

Community growth can also be fostered by integrating various groups of people with special needs into mainstream programming. Whether individuals have physical, emotional or mental special needs, recreation can be used as a leveling and integrative force.

Goal #2 - Development of the Individual:

10. FITNESS (WELL BEING)

Fitness, in this context, is used broadly as a synonym for wellness, and refers to mental and emotional, as well as physical fitness. The fitness level of every resident of the community should be increased at least to a pre-determined minimum level with opportunities available for progress beyond this point.

11. PRE-SCHOOL LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES

An opportunity should exist for every pre-school aged child to participate with other children in a variety of leisure experiences, in order to:

- ◆ Expose the child to social settings
- ◆ Foster gross motor development
- ◆ Provide a generally happy and satisfying atmosphere where growth can occur
- ◆ Teach basic safety skills and attitudes.

12. BASIC LEISURE SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

A wide variety of leisure pursuits in such areas as sport, performing arts, visual arts, outdoor nature oriented skills, and hobbies, should be identified, and basic skill level instruction in each should be provided for school aged children in order to:

- ◆ Provide exposure to skills which may form the basis for enjoying lifetime leisure activities
- ◆ Contribute to gross motor and fine motor physical development
- ◆ Provide social settings in which social, moral and emotional growth can be fostered
- ◆ Provide the basis for leisure education (i.e. the teachings of the benefits of and wise use of leisure time).

13. ADVANCED LEISURE SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

Opportunities should be provided for those children who wish to further develop their interest and skills in a wide variety of leisure pursuits beyond the basic level.

14. SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEENS

The maturing from youth to adult which occurs during teenage years is often a critical time in the life of an individual. It is also a time when individual difficulties may result in severe social problems. Hence, opportunities should be provided for teens to:

- ◆ Learn about themselves and how they will react to various social settings and pressures
- ◆ Develop positive social/emotional/moral skills, principles and convictions
- ◆ Develop positive leisure lifestyle patterns which will remain with them through adulthood.

15. BASIC LEISURE SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR ADULTS

Opportunities should be provided in a wide range of leisure endeavors and hobbies for adults who wish to be exposed to such endeavors and learn some basic skills in each.

16. ADVANCED LEISURE SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR ADULTS

Opportunities should be provided for those adults who wish to further develop their interests or abilities in a wide variety of leisure pursuits.

17. OPPORTUNITIES FOR SENIORS

Opportunities should be provided for senior citizens to participate in the leisure activities of their choice in order to:

- ◆ Maintain overall fitness levels
- ◆ Maintain social contacts and continue to be involved in social environments
- ◆ Provide a continuing sense of worth and meaning of life through continuing personal growth.

18. INTERPRETING THE ENVIRONMENT

Opportunities should be provided for every local resident to learn about, understand, relate to and experience all aspects of his/her environment.

19. REFLECTION/ESCAPE

Often growth can occur through escape, reflection, contact with nature and relaxation in a serene natural environment. Because of this, opportunities should be provided for residents to experience nature.

20. LEISURE EDUCATION

All residents should be generally educated as to the best use of leisure time and the benefits (e.g. growth and fulfillment) that accrue therefrom.

21. COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

A communication/information system should be established and maintained whereby all residents are made aware of the availability of access to all leisure opportunities in the community

Subsidizing Leisure Services

Justification for Subsidy

Services will be subsidized only if and to the extent that indirect benefit to the entire community can be demonstrated.

Need for Subsidy

Services will be subsidized only to the extent necessary to realize the indirect benefit above.

Publicly Sponsored Leisure Service must:

- Meet socially worthwhile goals and objectives and clearly demonstrate a benefit to all residents of the community;
- and
- As far as reasonably possible be accessible to all residents of the community.

Service Delivery Process

Although this process is meant to suggest long term direction within which to provide parks and recreation, it will be important each year to adjust and fine tune priorities and services. The following series of steps suggest how this short term planning should occur.

The Council should **first inventory each of the services it now provides and catalogue them under the 21 service objectives it is responsible for achieving.** Figure One, on page 6, provides a basis for that assessment.

Before budget preparation each year Council and staff would use a chart such as that illustrated to document the extent to which each of its services actually contributes to each objective. Instead of simply putting an "X" in the box to indicate whether or not a service meets an objective, a three point weighting scale could be used to show whether the service contributes in a modest, moderate or major way. Completion of this chart will show where the Council's resources are currently being focused.

One point is particularly worthy of note. A service which contributes to only one objective is not automatically less important or effective than a service which contributes to many objectives. Consideration must also be given to **the cost of the service, how many other services are directed at the same objective, the priority of the objective, and the extent to which the service meets the objective.** If, for example, a play school program were the only service directed at the pre-school objective, and it cost very little in relation to the extent to which it met that objective, and the objective was considered a very high priority, the fact that this service met only one objective would not make it less important than other services which contributed to many objectives, most of which were low priority, perhaps contributed only marginally and operated at high cost. Any service which does not contribute directly to the objectives, nor supports other activities which do, would be a candidate for termination.

**Figure One
Department Activity/Service Objective Matrix**

Service Objective		Eg. Arena	Pool	Programs	Parks	Sport sfields
1	Special Events					
2	Support to Local Groups					
3	Exposure to Sporting Events					
4	Exposure to the Arts					
5	Social Functions					
6	Protecting Community Natural Resources					
7	Beautify the Community					
8	Opportunities for Family Units					
9	Mixing Generations and Sub-groups					
10	Fitness and Wellbeing					
11	Pre-School Recreation Opportunities					
12	Basic Skill Development for Children					
13	Advanced Skill Development for Children					
14	Social Opportunities for Teens					
15	Basic Skill Development for Adults					
16	Advanced Skill Development for Adults					
17	Recreation Opportunities for Seniors					
18	Interpreting the Environment					
19	Reflection/Escape					
20	Leisure Education					
21	Communication					
<p align="center">Service Contributions: 3 – In a major way 2 – In a moderate way 1 – in a modest way 0 – not at all</p>						

After reviewing the inventory chart, the Council may decide that a number of the objectives are not as well served as others, and set the attainment of these objectives as higher priorities for the coming year. This, of course, would have an impact on budget considerations. In subsequent years, these priorities may be relatively well served in relation to other objectives and new priorities may emerge.

The second step would be to prioritize the service objectives to determine where more should be done. Figure Two, page 7 is provided as a template for that process.

Each participant would be given a specific number of priority votes. The column on the left represents the collective total of all these votes. The other column shows the top ranked priorities where the one with the highest number of votes is the highest priority.

**Figure Two
Prioritization of Service Objectives**

Foster Sense of Community	Score	Rank
Special Events		
Support to Local Groups		
Exposure to Sporting Events		
Exposure to the Arts		
Social Functions		
Protecting Community Natural Resources		
Beautify the Community		
Opportunities for Family Units		
Mixing Generations and Sub-groups		
Foster Growth of the Individual	Score	Rank
Fitness and Wellbeing		
Pre-School Recreation Opportunities		
Basic Skill Development for Children		
Advanced Skill Development for Children		
Social Opportunities for Teens		
Basic Skill Development for Adults		
Advanced Skill Development for Adults		
Recreation Opportunities for Seniors		
Interpreting the Environment		
Reflection/Escape		
Leisure Education		
Communication		

The final step would be to attempt, over the coming year, to render the Communities activities more effective at meeting the 21 objectives and more specifically the highest priority service objectives. To achieve this, the Council would review the inventory chart (Figure One) from each of the two axis independently.

To start, the separate rows of the chart, each representing a service objective, should be analyzed with a view toward more effective strategies for achieving each.

For example, the Council might brainstorm new ideas for achieving a specific objective. Then it might estimate costs and benefits of each item on the list, prioritize them and implement only those that are most cost effective.

At the end of the year an evaluation process would reveal success or lack thereof in achieving a specific objective. The cost of the strategies could then be weighed against the benefits, and adjusted during the following year to delete those that are least effective. Where appropriate, new strategies could be implemented.

This process/responsibility may be given to the Recreation Commission, who's role would be to evaluate the communities delivery of leisure services and recommend to Council priorities for the future. This process could also assist non-profit groups who receive municipal funding, a process for planning and justifying receipt of annual funding.

There are many ways in which communities evaluate and support their programs, facilities and services. This model is only one way in which to set goals, objectives, priorities, allocate funding, set fees and charges and plan for the future. This process can be adapted to fit within most delivery systems currently offering recreation and leisure services.

In adopting the above, the community realizes a number of advantages:

- ❖ The spending of public tax funds on leisure services can be easily justified to the public (on the basis not only of the direct benefit to the users but also indirect benefit to all)
- ❖ The rationale for activity is sufficiently clear that the effectiveness of the community's recreation delivery system can be measured. The weakness of most evaluation models is in the setting of rather motherhood, unmeasurable goals and objectives which can be inconsistent with each other.
- ❖ The rationale for fees and charges policies (the degree and type of subsidization) becomes clearer.
- ❖ Planning for the future allocation/protection of resources becomes possible because a proactive rather than reactive stance is assumed.