



Chapter 10

Programming



Programming

Introduction

The recreation program assessment is prepared based upon the following information:

- Review of the organizational chart and reporting structure
- A review of program brochures
- Analysis of statistical program data provided by the Department
- A SWOT analysis to ascertain strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
- Staff programming questionnaire
- Conducting a work culture workshop
- Staff questionnaire about workplace culture
- One on one interviews with full time staff and the Executive Director
- Community Focus Groups
- Community survey
- Visits to key facilities
- Professional publications and associations
- Resources listed at the end of the report.

Purpose

The purpose of the recreation program assessment is to:

- a. Evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of program offerings;
- b. Ascertain the quantity of programs offered on an annual basis;
- c. Identify trends in program enrollment and popularity;
- d. Identify regional and national recreation and fitness trends; and
- e. Pinpoint programming strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities.
- f. Recommend strategies to increase recreation program participation, success rates and revenue.

Program and Evaluation

Programming drives demand. Individuals enrolled in programs tend to re-visit the program facilities and parks during non-program times. For example:

- A) Youth enrolled in a baseball league visits to the park not only on games days or organized practice sessions but also at their leisure to work on skills or enjoy a game of catch.
- B) Men and women taking golf lessons return to the golf course or driving range for “practice” rounds.
- C) Youth taking swim lessons return to the swimming pool/water park during open swim.
- D) Individuals enrolled in facility-based programs such as fitness classes become prime candidates for facility memberships.

This principle brings understanding that quality programming returns participants, often with companions, to parks and facilities beyond the formal instruction or program times. As a result, facility attendance, revenue, and concessions grow.

People purchase products and services to fill a need or desire. The more in sync with the needs, desires and trends of your market place, the more successful your programming will be. One method customers express their desires is by their purchasing decisions. They speak when they choose to enroll; they speak when they choose not to. Their behavior sheds light on activity preferences, days and times.

Beyond customary customer feedback methods as program evaluations, surveys, and suggestions, staff involvement in civic and community organizations is a useful method of gaining customer opinions. Similarly, active involvement in professional associations keeps

staff abreast of the hottest programming trends. Gathering customer input, however, is meaningful only if the information is deciphered, evaluated and acted upon. If you make the effort to gather information, do something with it.

Participation by minorities depends upon the Department being relevant to them. They must be able to relate to the programs and services offered. Does programming reflect their interests? Do they see themselves in the diversity of Department staff? Do they see themselves in the brochure photos?

Program evaluation has two subtexts, the macro evaluation and micro evaluation.

Macro level evaluation is the review of your comprehensive program menu often consisting of:

1. The overall program mix – (a review of the percentage of programs offered for each age or classification compared to your population demographics). Is the balance appropriate?
2. The collective bottom line (actual vs budget). Did the actual margin meet or exceed the budgeted margin for the program category?
3. The overall program success rate which indicates your level of efficiency and effectiveness.
4. Conducting a lifecycle analysis to identify and compare the percentage of programs in the stages of “introductory, new”, “core” and “decline”.

The micro level evaluation is an evaluation of each activity or class. A comprehensive activity/class evaluation consists of three perspectives:

1. The participants – Were the stated program objectives met? To what level was the participant satisfied? How can the program be improved?
2. The recreation programmer – Did the program meet its pre-stated determinants? Were the logistics smooth? Was the return on investment

worth the effort (Cost/Benefit)? Did the program meet the Department’s global objectives? What should you do differently? Is the class worthy of repeating? Examine the historical enrollment trend for the program.

3. Financial performance – Did the program meet or exceed budget objectives? Is it growing or declining in popularity and revenue? If it is run again, what financial adjustments should be made?

The recreation program assessment addresses macro level evaluation.

Program Mix

The program mix identifies each category of programming as a percent of total offering. According to data supplied by Department staff, the program mix over the last 2 years is as follows:

Program Category	Offerings	Percent
Active Adult / Continuing Ed	154	9%
Aquatics	86	5%
Golf	35	2%
Keen Ageds	43	3%
Special Event	70	4%
Summer Camp	186	11%
Summer Enrichment	132	8%
Tennis	86	5%
Trips / Travel	173	10%
Wellness / Fitness	219	13%
Youth Education	200	12%
Youth Sports	299	18%
Total	1683	100%

Documenting key performance indicators (KPI) along with maintaining a 5-year comparison delivers a macro level dashboard of overall performance and informed decision making. Recommended Key Performance Indicators are the household penetration rate, program enrollment/attendance, success rates and average class size. Waiting lists and the number of new and free offerings may also be included. Graphing each KPI over a 3 to 5-year period yields valuable internal trending information.



Figure 29: 2016-2017 Program Mix

2016-17 Participation

Program	Count	Percent
Active Adult / Continuing Ed	587	2%
Aquatics	791	3%
Golf	106	1%
Keen Agers	716	3%
Special Event	13,206	55%
Summer Camp	1,539	6%
Summer Enrichment	830	3%
Tennis	501	2%
Trips / Travel	2,211	9%
Wellness / Fitness	450	2%
Youth Education	644	3%
Youth Sports	2,587	11%
Total	24,168	100%

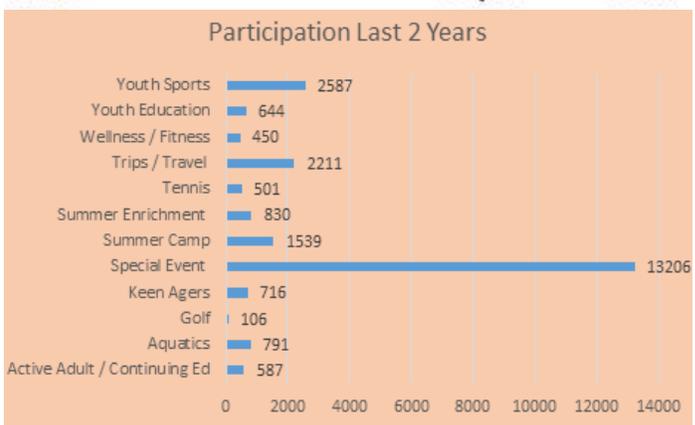


Figure 31: Participation Charts

Household Penetration Rate

The household penetration rate is a measure of the number of households that had at least one member of the household register for a program or activity within the year. A year to year increase or drop in household participation does not indicate a trend. At minimum three years, but ideally 5 years of tracking is necessary to identify the trend. If the 3 to 5-year trend line is increasing, programming is connecting with a growing number of households and the customer base is expanding. Conversely, if the trend line shows a decline, the customer base is shrinking. It represents a growing number of households disengaged from programming. For the non-participating households, the reputation of the Department hinges upon the visual appeal of the parks, word of mouth, social media, and news reports.

According to data provided by the Department, the household penetration rate for 2016 and for 2017 was between 8 and 10%. Translated, roughly 9 out of every 10 households are not engaged in the Departments programs. A desired penetration rate is 30% or higher.

Year	# of Housing Units	# of Households Registered	Penetration rate
2016	9,178	904	10%
2017	9,195	799	8%

Figure 30: Household Penetration Rate

Program Registration/Attendance

Program registrations and attendance gauge the popularity and relevance of your programs and services. These straightforward numbers indicate whether more or fewer people are participating in programs and services from year to year.

Program Success Rates

The overall program success rate is an indication of the effectiveness and efficiency. It is calculated by dividing the number of programs run by the number offered. The consultant team recommends a success rate for the overall program menu between 70% to 90%. With respect to measuring effectiveness - A success rate that is below 70% suggests time, effort and resources are allocated to programs that are not in sync with community interests. The loss (or waste) of time, effort, and resources on developing programs that do not go is a gauge of efficiency.

A success rate above 90% might indicate conservative programming lacking fresh, trending, cutting edge

offerings. New alternative opportunities when nurtured can grow into the maturity stage and become core programs.

2017 Success Rate

Active Adult / Continuing Ed	46%
Aquatics	53%
Golf	70%
Keen Agers	70%
Special Event	100%
Summer Camp	85%
Summer Enrichment	66%
Tennis	74%
Trips / Travel	38%
Wellness / Fitness	42%
Youth Education	57%
Youth Sports	57%

Figure 32: 2017 Program Success Rates

Like all products and services, selling recreation programs is a function of awareness, supply and demand, and pricing. When cancellation rates are greater than 30%:

- Eliminate offerings that have been adequately marketed yet repeatedly fail to generate sufficient enrollment.
- Consider reducing the number of similar or competing program choices and effectively market what is offered.
- With respect for busy schedules, consider shorter class schedules. Many agencies around the country are moving from 8-week programs to 4 or 6 week increments.

Average Class Size

The average class size impacts the program’s margin. It is calculated by dividing the total number of participants by the number of programs run. As the average class size increases, so does the margin because once direct



Figure 33: 2017 Program Success Rates, Bar

costs are covered, additional revenue goes to the bottom line. When looking to increase support through user fees be keenly aware of the average class sizes.

The Program Balance

The Learning Resources Network (LERN) is the world’s leading and largest association in continuing education and lifelong learning. According to LERN, 10% to 15% of the program menu should be new programming. These programs should be suitably marketed and given ample opportunity to grow. Sixty - 70% of the program menu should be in a growth or mature stage, yet routinely energized with a new or improved component. Ten to 15% of the program menu should be scrutinized for termination with the resources reinvested in new, trendy or cutting-edge programming. Staying current and relevant with your offerings is as much about your image and branding as it is about programming.

Each recreation program progresses through a lifecycle. The stages of the lifecycle are:

- Introductory stage
- Growth stage
- Maturity
- Decline

The content, delivery and description of core programs should be examined routinely. Content or

structural tweaks will keep a class fresh. Participant program evaluations should be highly valued in adjusting program content.

Aquatics

Aquatic operators generally agree it is better for the bottom-line to sell annual or summer passes than to depend on daily admission revenue. Pass sales are typically paid in full rather than installments which are most common in the fitness industry. Obtaining that revenue up front, weeks before the season begins provides cash flow and insulates the operation from daily weather conditions.

An outdoor aquatic facility is at financial risk when relying on daily admissions. Daily admissions are subject not only to weather conditions but to weather forecasts that not always materialize.

To improve the financial performance of the Munster Community Pool, a concentrated effort should be placed on increasing summer pass sales. Target market young families with children. Offer early registration incentives, online renewal of season passes, etc. The more income received prior to opening day means less dependency on a warm dry summer.

Community, Program Staff and Industry Perspectives

A. Community

Seven community group meetings were held on January 10, 2018 followed by an open to the public ‘Meet the Planners’ the same evening. Maximizing use of the band shell, deterioration of the Farmer’s Market, and programming the Kaske House were the most commonly mentioned programming concerns.

Residents overwhelmingly view the band shell as a first-class community asset, yet believe it is underutilized. Regarding the Farmer’s Market, they claim the number and quality of vendors has declined. Despite the

travel time, residents prefer going to markets in other communities.

The Kaske House, because of its tight quarters and narrow aisles, is not conducive to recreation programming and endangers the artifacts and conditions being preserved.

Other strongly held opinions and reoccurring themes expressed during the focus groups were:

1. Make greater use of the band shell
2. Kaske House not suitable for recreation programming
3. Participation and quality of the Farmer’s Market has diminished
4. More programs on evenings and weekends
5. Desire programs in shorter sessions
6. Lack indoor programming space / Need for recreation center
7. Partnering with Hammond, Highland and Dyer for programs and activities is desired
8. Retain nonresident participation
9. Desire to know programming trends
10. Need for competitive salary and wages to retain top talent
11. Making old programs new / refreshed
12. Resolve perceived conflict between historical society and Park/Rec Dept
13. Concerts in the Park are valued and enjoyed however there’s desire for concerts with “bigger names”
14. Pursue naming rights for the band shell
15. Enhancing the partnerships with Arts Council, Garden Club, Service Groups, Chamber of Commerce, school district, and youth sport groups

Additionally, a statistically valid community survey was conducted as part of the master planning process. Reoccurring programming desires were for more or improved tennis, farmers market, indoor swimming cooking classes, fitness & exercise, and yoga.

B. Programming Staff

Programming staff input was obtained through a SWOT Analysis, a written questionnaire and one-on-one interviews.

The SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis was conducted February 16, 2018 to obtain staff’s perception of the Department’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; and to create awareness of current societal, cultural and behavioral trends. Eleven staff participated.

After each group brainstormed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, each participant was asked to mark which they believed were most important. The most highly rated are summarized in frequency of response order within each category.

Strengths

- Staff 7
- Parks (Many & Clean) 3
- Partnerships / Sponsorships 1

Weaknesses

- Under staffed 8
- Lack appropriate indoor program space 6
- Overworked 4
- Reliance on part-time staff 4
- Low pay 2
- Budget 2
- Time constraints 1

Opportunities

- Build / Acquire a Recreation Center 6

Threats

- Part time employee pay 6
- Higher salaries in IL 6
- Budget 1

Lack of appropriate indoor facilities, budget constraints, and workload were confirmed by surveys and one-on-one interviews to be the top challenges and limiting factors to increased programming.

Munster Parks and Recreation staff are pleased with the quality of equipment and level of facility maintenance. They offer creative programming opportunities.

Their challenges are staffing, marketing, increasing participation and household penetration. These challenges are not unfamiliar to park and recreation agencies across the country.

Today, the landscape of recreation service providers is highly competitive. One must distinguish themselves from the competition. Whether it be through superb service, unique programs or features, or providing the best value.

Programs held in general purpose rooms or fitted into available spaces are perceived as lesser quality. Without appropriately designed and equipped spaces, programs are at a disadvantage when compared to the competition when the competition provides specialized or custom spaces for running programs

Price, therefore, is not necessarily the primary driver in a consumer’s purchasing decision. Consumers look at many things including reputation, quality of instruction, quality of facility, customer service, and price. Recreation and fitness providers with the highest market share often have facilities specifically designed for their activities. For example, people looking for a dance class are more apt to register at a facility that has a suspended wood floor, mirrors on the walls, excellent acoustics, and well qualified instructors. Those in search of aerobic fitness or karate programs desire the same qualities in the hosting facility. Arts and crafts programs will attract more participation when held in spaces designed and equipped specifically for arts and crafts with sinks, kilns, storage, display shelves, etc.

The primary indoor program locations for the Department are schools, the Social Center and the Kaske House. Facilities designed specifically for recreation programs and activities improve public perception of quality, and generally boost participation. A growing number of public recreation centers are being run on business principles so a majority of operating costs are covered through user fees.

Decreasing quality and declining participation in the farmer’s market resonated from both the staff and community focus groups. Many so-called farmer’s markets have transitioned into flea markets selling artesian items as produce, spices, edibles, flowers, teas, candles, soaps, and items of wear. An authentic farmer’s market features farm grown produce.

Considerations for a high-quality flea or farmer’s market are:

- Quality and variety of produce
- Affordability
- Location
- Transportation accessibility
- Physical layout (visibility and circulation)
- Quality, affordability and relevance of supporting facilities (i.e., shops and restaurants)
- Purposefulness (what do body oils and candles have to do with eating?)
- Attitude and helpfulness of vendors

Farmer’s markets succeed because people get something from going there beyond a simple bag of produce. Many see them as a town square, more than simply a retail experience, where people gather to have conversations with fellow citizens, neighbors, and friends.

A summary of the full SWOT analysis is found in the appendix Staff SWOT Analysis 2.16.18.

C. Industry

According to Recreation Management 2017 State of the Industry Survey, the primary challenges and concerns facing programming staff from across the country are:

- Equipment and facility maintenance
- Staffing
- Marketing and increasing participation
- Creating new and innovative programs

Cost Recovery / Revenue Enhancement

Cost recovery is the degree to which a program’s fee covers the direct and indirect expenses related to the provision of that program. The degree of cost recovery is based upon who benefits from the activity—the individual or the community – and how much benefit is apportioned to each. Simplistically, there are three general levels of cost recovery as follows:

- Level One – Full cost recovery. Programs and services that provide significant personal benefit and little to marginal community benefit. These programs and services – frequently competing with the private sector - should generate sufficient revenue to cover direct, indirect and administrative costs associated with program/service.
- Level Two – Self-sufficient programs. Programs in this category generate sufficient revenue to cover the direct costs of the program but not 100% of the indirect and administrative overhead. These programs and services benefit the individual participant and contribute to a well-rounded menu of activities consistent with the agency’s mission.
- Level Three – Subsidized programs. Programs in this category do not generate enough revenue to cover the programs direct costs, nor any portion of the indirect and administrative costs. Often these programs are of a large-scale nature such as a July Fourth celebration, summer concert series, community fest or car/art show. These program have significant community benefits. Many are offered free of charge, therefore fully subsidized. The annual audits for the Town of Munster does not provide detailed revenue or expenses, therefore we were not able to decipher the precise level of cost recovery for the Department.

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Based on the statement of receipts and disbursements contained in the audits for the fiscal years ending December 31, 2015 and December 31, 2016, revenues derived from the Departments programs and services may or may not be sufficient to cover direct and indirect costs associated with its operation and contribute to overall administrative costs.

	<u>FY 2015</u>	<u>FY 2016</u>
Revenue	\$3,088,181	\$2,826,648
Expense	\$3,104,500	\$2,474,710
Net	(\$ 16,319)	\$ 351,938

Figure 34: Revenue and Expense, 2015 and 2016

For instructional and classroom type programs the Learning Resource Network (LERN) recommends ideal percentages to obtain financially successful programming. When budgeting, begin with revenue first, then limit direct costs to 60% of income. The ideal budget formula is:

Income	\$ _____ (100%)
Promotion (marketing)	\$ _____ (10-15%)
Production (wages, supplies, etc.)	\$ _____ (45-50%)
Total Direct Costs	\$ _____ (60%)
Margin	\$ _____ (40%)

Figure 35: Ideal Budget Formula, LERN

While individual programs may vary from the 40% target margin, the collective program category (preschool, youth, teen, adult, seniors) should aim toward a 40% goal. The philosophy of your elected officials, community demographics or economics may not allow for a 40% margin. In such cases management should work to achieve as close to 40% as possible.

Improving net revenue often requires shifting from a government mindset to a business mindset. Once a budget is approved, government employees zero in on ‘the budget’. However, the focus is more realistically on only half ‘the budget’; the expense side. In reality,

program expenses are approved only in relationship to the revenue the program will derive. If revenue is short of projections, expenses must be managed to maintain the margin.

The key to long term financial success is revenue growth. To improve the bottom line a business must either increase income or reduce expenses. The first step to increasing margins should be to analyze and reduce expenses.

Instructor costs must be rational and justified in the market place, not inflated because of longevity.

The Munster Parks and Recreation Department does not use a standard independent contractor form. Utilizing one is recommended not only to establish written responsibilities and compensation but contain safeguards from liability. An Independent Contractor Agreement common in the industry is presented in the appendix.

Independent contractor compensation may vary by the level of expertise. Ideally compensation should be based on a 60%/40% or 65%/35% split of revenue. According to staff the Department is generally at 70%/30%.

Other critical compensation factors to consider when using independent contractors:

1. When seeking to increase revenue from contracted instructor courses, don’t simply increase fees. Increasing the fee makes the contractor wealthier, not the District. If a contracted instructor gets 70% of revenue, raising a fee from \$35 to \$45 generates an additional \$7 for the contractor but only \$3 for the Department. To improve the bottom line, negotiate a better percentage for the Department.

2. Another method of contracting with independent providers is to give them a flat fee per participant. Negotiate a per person charge with the contracted provider. What the Department charges a participant should be of no business to the contractor; it is between the Department and the participant.

Example: The Department agrees to pay a contractor \$20 per person to teach karate. If the class fee is \$40, the Department nets \$20/participant. Under a 70%/30% contract, the Department's net would be merely \$12.

3. Contracted instructors should never get a share of the premium charged to nonresidents. It doesn't cost the contractor any more to service a nonresident. The nonresident premium is assessed by the Department as a "fair share" fee since residents support the Department through tax dollars.

All that said, there are unique situations that call for a customized agreement suitable to both parties. The more complex the relationship, for example partnering with a hospital, the more detailed the contract. The town attorney should review all contracts that waiver from the standard form.

Negotiate the best price for all equipment and supplies. Competitively price or negotiate purchases and services every year. Lock in low prices with multi-year contracts. A final step would be to eliminate nonessential expenses.

On the income side, there are two ways to increase program revenue, either increase fees or increase

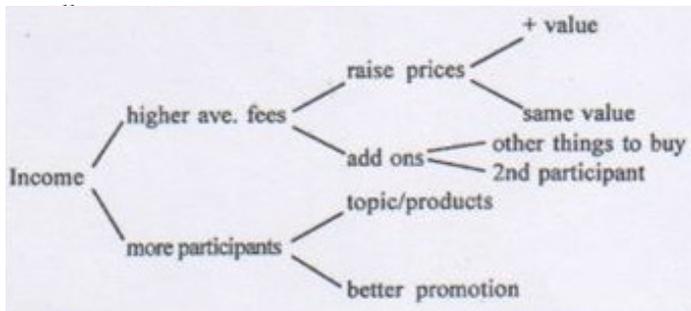


Figure 36: Program Revenue Sources Chart

Increasing Fees

When increasing fees, overall income goes up while enrollment stays relatively the same. Three techniques for increasing fees are:

- a. Simply increase the fee.
- b. Increase the fee while adding to the real or

perceived value, such as including a t-shirt or item relative to the class. Example: Little Sport Basketball program – give each participant a basketball as part of the program. If the basketball costs \$3.99 increase the program fee by \$10. Or enhance the perceived value of a class with a nicer presentation, special guest / speaker, better environment, etc. Using this technique, the participant will get more for their money.

- c. Provide ancillary retail opportunity; the ability for participants to purchase items related to the class. It's a concept public speakers use when they sell copies of their books or CDs in the back of the room.

Increasing Enrollment

The second way to increase income is to increase enrollment. There are several strategies to consider.

- a. Refresh or restructure the program. Change the title, give it a new format or new instructor using a different style. Perhaps hold the class in a new location or outside. The objective is to grow enrollment by improving the product.
- b. Better promotion. Better promotion can mean many things.
 1. Reach - Reach more people.
 2. Repetition - Reach the same people again and again.
 3. Diversify Marketing - Market the same message in multiple formats, multiple times.
 4. Target Market - Identify the target market and focus on them.

When demand exceeds supply, prices rise and/or businesses are motivated to expand. This would mean raising fees and/or adding additional sessions of programs with waiting lists. However, when supply exceeds demand, businesses scale back. This means reducing the number of programs or sessions offered

so the ones that are offered have a greater chance of succeeding. Many park and recreation agencies offer so many choices in dance, gymnastics, etc. that few of these classes reach maximum and many are cancelled. Generally, it is better to be over demanded and under supplied than over supplied and under demanded.

A final consideration for increasing net margin is to examine market pricing. After determining your program fee using your budget formula, compare it to the local competition. When comparing like-to-like programs if your fee is low by comparison, raise it. Seek to provide the best value, not the cheapest price. (Value is defined as what one gets in return for what one pays.)

Neighbor Rate

A Neighbor Rate is a program or admission fee between the resident and non-resident rate offered to bordering municipalities (Highland, Homewood, Dyer). Often it is offered in exchange for having the programs for which the neighbor rate applies listed/promoted in the neighbor's web site and in their program catalog. Though nonresidents gain lower cost access to Munster recreation programs recreation opportunities, Munster experiences fewer class cancellations, higher average class sizes and ultimately higher net revenue.

Marketing

Marketing is inclusive of advertising, public relations, promotions and sales. It is a process by which a product or service is introduced and promoted to potential customers. Its two primary purposes are:

1. Build brand awareness and reputation
2. Sell your programs and services

Branding is the process of creating distinctive and long-lasting perceptions in the minds of consumers. Its main benefit is that customers are much more likely to remember your business.

It benefits businesses by building ...

- A consistent universal image.
- Loyalty. When people have a positive experience with a memorable brand, they're more likely to buy again from that company rather than a competing brand.
- Familiarity. Branding makes an impact on your non-customers. People who haven't done business with the Department but have encountered your identity/brand/logo numerous times may become willing to recommend you even when they have little or no personal knowledge of your programs or services.
- A reputation for quality and service. With a well-established brand, you can introduce new programs or services and more easily win acceptance because your reputation precedes it.
- Greater equity. A reputable brand can leverage its good name when seeking public support, fundraising or volunteers.
- Your ability to attract and retain the best employees
- Your ability to establish partnerships within the community
- Greater employee satisfaction including an increased sense of pride and loyalty

Seasonal Brochure and Website

The Learning Resource Network (LERN) is the leading international organization for class programming and consulting. LERN research concludes printed seasonal brochures remain the number one source for marketing an agency's programs and services. Websites are second.



“Information That Works!”

The LERN recommends the design of program brochures follow the AIDA principle.

Attention (The front cover needs to attract the reader's attention).

Interest (The first two pages must create an interest in what you are offering).

Desire (The inside pages must generate the desire to sign up for a class).

Action (The registration page needs to encourage action and registration).

According to LERN you have three seconds to capture the reader's attention in a printed piece, so the message needs to be exceptionally clear.

Program descriptions should be written to describe and to sell. Begin with a dynamic opening statement or emotional appeal then describe what to expect from the class. The write up should end with a call to action; a reason to enroll.

Many, but not all your program descriptions, abide by this approach. It's recommended program write ups be reviewed and refreshed on a regular basis.

The Department's online, print and social media presence should represent its community demographics. Diverse constituencies must be able to see themselves in marketing materials or they'll assume they aren't a part of your target market.

The Department does a good job using images that portray the blend of Munster residents.

Dynamic web sites with interactive features such as overhead video views of the parks or short video clips of certain classes or facilities have proven to connect with viewers. With virtual reality and experiential marketing on the rise, consider adding video clips to your website.

Target market the farmer's market directly to area farmers, fresh food grocers, and health food stores. Distribute fliers or pick up business cards from desired vendors at other area farmer's markets.

The Town of Munster has a restrictive sign ordinance which prohibits outdoor signs in high traffic area. Community groups and staff believe the ordinance inhibits marketing major community-wide activities.

Trends

Identifying industry and societal trends is key to the success of any business. Societal, cultural and behavioral trends have a significant impact on the success (or lack) of recreation programs and services and public support. Staff must be cognizant of these trends and their influence on the park and recreation industry. Programming with these societal and cultural trends in mind should increase interest and participation in your offerings.

The Planning Resources Team facilitated a brainstorming session to identify societal, cultural and behavioral trends as well as trends in the park and recreation industry. Trends are patterns of gradual change or tendency moving in a certain direction over time. Tracking and responding to trends is imperative to remain relevant. Societal, cultural and behavioral trends can impact the success (or lack) of recreation programs and services and public support. Recreation programs must adapt as society and behaviors change.

Comprehensive inventory of trends is found in the appendix.

One of the big challenges the modern American family faces is mental health. Not only are adults facing anxiety and depression, but children are over committed and stressed beyond their capacity. Prescriptive medications are common to calm nerves and assist in the ability to focus.

More people are turning to natural ways to improve their physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. Wellness activities including mild exercise, healthy eating/cooking, natural remedies, meditation, yoga, and nature walks are rising. Market these kinds of programs with an emphasis on relaxation, anxiety relief and peace of mind.

Today, people are not only crunched for time, but they are less focused and more readily change course. Recreation programmers must recognize this shift. Programmers throughout the nation are offering classes in shorter increments (i.e. 2, 4 or 6 weeks instead of the traditional 6 to 8 weeks) to be more accommodating to individual and family schedules.

Recreation programmers must be aware that sedentary technological options have won the attention of youth – iPads, iPhones, and gaming.

Excluding reading, though today much of it takes place on a tablet screen, four of the five most popular leisure activities for both Millennials and Gen X take place on a screen:

- Watching TV
- Computer/internet
- Playing video games and computer/internet games
- Watching/going to the movies

Nationwide, the most commonly offered programs are:

- Holiday and other special events (64.7%)
- Fitness programs (53.9%)
- Educational programs (58.6%)
- Day camps and summer camps (57.7%)
- Youth sport teams (53.9%)
- Mind-body balance programs such as yoga or martial arts (49.6%)
- Arts and crafts (46.9%)
- Adult team sports (45.1%)

Outdoor recreation continues to grow steadily across the country as reported in the 2017 Outdoor Participation Report funded by the Outdoor Foundation. The biggest motivator for outdoor participation was getting exercise. Running, walking and bicycling are the most frequently engaged outdoor activities making bike paths and trail ways a high priority.

Nature-base or environmental-oriented programs have been on the rise since 2003. As early as 2015

doctors have been prescribing time outdoors to treat maladies such as obesity, anxiety, depression and disruptive behavior. Being in a natural setting has therapeutic effects on mental health.

As leaders in, and representatives of the community, MPRD is best positioned to determine whether these parks, recreation and fitness trends are applicable to the Department:

Recreation and Fitness Trends (www.activenet.com, www.pewresearch.org, www.trendsactive.com, www.nowandnext.com, activenet.org, www.nrpa.org)

For elementary age children:

- o Health/wellness (education about smoking and alcohol intake)
- o Robotics / technology
- o Tutoring help
- o Science programs
- o Transition to high school programs
- o Volunteerism
- o Dance (hip hop, ballet)
- o Performing Arts (Theater)
- o Roller Sports
- o Art/ Crafts
- o Cooking/Nutrition classes
- o Rock wall
- o Gymnastics
- o Summer camp

For youth and teen:

- o Skiing / Snow boarding
- o Back to Nature / Green Environmental
- o Theater / Acting class, Musical Theater
- o Dance
- o Pokémon Go
- o Hikes / Eco Excursions
- o Babysitting / CPR/ Pediatric Training
- o Aquatic Safety Classes
- o Piano / vocal lessons
- o Art / Paint, draw, pottery
- o Trips / Mall day, sporting events

- o Transition Programs
- o Leadership Programs
- o Job Skill Workshops
- o Community Service, Volunteering
- o Internships
- o Skill building
- o Exploration
- o Outdoor adventures
- o Tours
- o ACT preparation
- o Hanging out with friends
- o Participation in organized youth sports is decreasing.

According to a study by the Sports & Fitness Industry Association, more kids than ever are not playing sports. Nearly 3 million fewer children have played basketball, soccer, track and field, baseball, football, and softball. Given the attention to sports concussions, parents are facing a difficult decision on their children's participation in traditional sports.

Over time, an emphasis on competitive sports and traveling teams has smothered recreational leagues in many communities. Too many parents feel compelled to put their kids on competitive teams with perceived expert coaching and skill development. Travelling youth's sports has become a lucrative industry. Costs for travel, practice time and other needs often force a child to specialize and select one sport over the others.

For adults:

- o Outdoor walking trails
- o Kayaking
- o Windsurfing
- o Stand up paddling
- o Lacrosse
- o Rugby
- o Cricket
- o Pickleball
- o Environmental education and nature programs
- o Programming in the parks (yoga, fitness, and dance) connects people with the parks.

- o Programs with alcohol accompaniment
- o Arts and entertainment
- o Travel programs
- o Programs for families with children of all ages. Gen X (1966-1976) and Gen Y (1977-1994) place high value on family.
- o Programs for women during their pregnancy
- o Life Sports (biking, swimming, jogging/walking)
- o High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)
- o Body Weight Training (no equipment necessary)
- o Strength Training (Building muscle mass)
- o Group Training exercise
- o Yoga (All types to include Aerial, and rope wall)
- o Functional Fitness
- o Underwater cycling (Vix)
- o Outdoor Adventure Activities
- o Indoor Adventure Activities

For seniors:

- o Tai Chi
- o Pickleball
- o Fitness Walking Clubs
- o Day Trips
- o Painting & Drawing Classes
- o Indoor Card games- Bridge / Dominoes
- o Yoga
- o Swimming
- o Golf
- o Tennis
- o Weight Training
- o Book Clubs
- o Light Aerobics
- o Fitness and Nutrition Classes
- o Volunteering
- o Computer Learning (and Teaching)
- o Lectures about History (especially war time)

In parks and facilities:

- o Trails and Bike Paths

- o Pocket Parks (small plots of open space in otherwise overbuilt areas)
- o Pop Up Parks (temporary park elements brought into neighborhoods)
- o Dog Parks
- o Nature Parks
- o Inner City Gardens
- o Aerial Parks (An aerial park is a climbing adventure set in the forest canopy. The park consists of platforms secured to trees with elements that connect each platform.)

minimum keeps recreation staff challenged and up to date with trends. It also keeps the overall program from becoming stale and outdated.

2. Consider financial mechanisms to fund construction of a recreation center.
3. Develop program evaluations that include the participants input, the programmer's perspective and the financial results.

General

High Priority

1. Continue tracking and graphing key performance indicators to gauge programming performance, effectiveness and trending. Recommended KPI's:
 - a. Household penetration rate
 - b. Number of programs/classes offered
 - c. Program enrollment
 - d. Program Success Rates
 - e. Average class size
4. Achieve program success rates of 70% - 95%
5. Implement a standard contract for all independent contracted instructors. The agreement should include duties and responsibilities, compensation, insurance requirements, a waiver and hold harmless clause. A sample contract is attached in the appendix.

Medium Priority

1. Ten to 15% of programming should be first time offerings or those still in the introductory phase. An agency's programming must be relevant and contemporary. Routinely offering new, innovative and trending programs gives residents and customers reason to look forward to the next brochure. The 10%-15%

Recreation Programming

High Priority

1. Classes must be held at convenient times the public is available to attend. Schedule more programs in the evenings and on weekends.
2. Offer classes in shorter terms. Try running classes in 4 or 6 week increments in lieu of the traditional 8 or 10 weeks. Offer a discount as incentive for people who sign up for two 4-week sessions at the same time.
3. Maximize use of the Band Shell. Programs to consider:
 - Kids Theatre
 - Chorus
 - Dance (Performances and lessons)
 - Comedy Nights
 - Magic Shows
 - Theatre Productions
 - High School Battle of the Bands
 - Host a Jazz Fest
4. Establishing a mission statement (purpose) for the Kaske House. Use the facility solely for activities consistent with the mission.
5. Build the farmer's market into something

more than a retail event. Make it a social, community gathering place in a busy location with supporting and complimentary facilities. Add music (guitar player, folk music, high school musician, etc.) Screen potential vendors; accept only high-quality vendors.

6. Popular programs consistently reaching maximum enrollment should be expanded adding additional sessions even at the expense reducing less popular classes.
7. When programming space is limited, offer programs that have proven successful and bring the highest financial return. Consider the owner of a retail store with limited space, stacks shelves with the most popular, highest mark-up products to obtain maximum sales and return on investment.
8. Provide opportunities for continued learning and/or development. When offering an introductory level class, be sure to offer an intermediary class and an advanced class.

Medium Priority

1. Less is more. Concentrate on core programs. Offer more sessions of programs with waiting list. Eliminate programs struggling or in decline.
2. Create spin offs of popular classes. When considering the development of new or introductory programs, base them on the current or future needs interests of the Department, what's trending in the industry, or addressing a societal issue.
3. Develop programs to combat or address negative societal, cultural and behavioral trends. Consider courses in safety, healthy eating, anti-violence solutions, cultural diversity and other topics from the trends list.
4. Due to the population living longer and having more interest in health and wellness,

differentiate between younger and older adult populations. Offer programs for the 65+ as well as the new "Middle Age" being 45-64 years of age.

5. Baby boomers (born 1946-1964) desire to be fit and healthy. Design programs for them to maintain cardiovascular health, strength and flexibility. Consider programs and classes that use a chair or standing support rails.
 - Offer classes that promote balance and range of motion
 - Offer classes that provide breathing exercises, relaxation and mental clarity.
 - Offer classes that increase muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance, and resistance training
 - Provide an atmosphere that is warm, friendly and safe.
6. Each town has an opportunity to develop unique programs derived from utilizing their community assets. A great suggestion was a program series titled 'How Do They Do That?' featuring a weekly or monthly trip to a local business to find out how the product is made, or service delivered.

How do they do that?

- Week 1 – Tour the local newspaper production plant
- Week 2 – Learn how Pepsi makes and bottles soft drinks
- Week 3 – Discover how Gayety's makes chocolate
- Week 4 – Get a behind the scenes tour of a fine dining restaurant, chat with the chef, leave with a treat or a discount on a reservation.
- Week 5 – Meet with a realtor. Discover best methods to buy and sell property
- Week 6 – Visit a car dealership. Learn how to buy and sell a car

Market the tours to curious adults and high schoolers who may be exploring career choices.

7. Host cooking and mixology programs at The View exposing it to potential new customers.

Some ideas...

- The Making of Gourmet meals
 - Sushi
 - Poke Bowls
 - Classic Cocktails
 - Holiday Cocktails
8. Consider trending and popular program ideas suggested in the Appendix.

Partnerships

High Priority

1. Establish formal written agreements with each youth sport group detailing the roles, responsibilities, and financial obligations of each party.
2. Schedule quarterly meetings between leaders of each local government (City, Library, school district) to maintain open dialog, coordinate schedules of major activities, do the same with the program partners (Arts Council, Garden Club, Service Groups, Chamber of Commerce)

Medium Priority

1. Establish a Munster Athletic Council that consists of one representative from each youth sport group and the Park and Recreation Department. Meet monthly to discuss and coordinate field and facility needs, registration, promotion, etc.
2. Improve marketing and cooperative programming with partners and community organizations such as the Arts Council, Garden Club, Kiwanis Club and youth sport organizations. Each had expressed a desire for a closer more cooperative relationship.

Revenue Enhancement - Improving Net Margin

High Priority

1. Implement a Neighbor Rate for residents of Highland, Hammond, and Dyer to increase revenue and program success rates.
2. Manage the payroll. Managers must be sure employee's time out promptly when sent home due to inclement weather or lack of attendance. In many work places staff are paid to the nearest quarter hour. Therefore 8 minutes equates to 15 minutes. Considering the number of employees, number of shifts, and number of days in summer season or annually at a fitness center, managing staff and shift changes accounts for substantial money. One seasonal water park saved \$5,000 by making sure staff promptly logged out.
3. Begin program budgeting by estimating revenue first, based on the minimum number of participants. For classroom type programs, limit expenses to 60% to 70% of revenue, leaving 30% to 40% for overhead/administration and surplus.
4. Once a program fee has been established, compare it to local competition. All things being equal, if the fee is low, raise it marginally keeping it just below the competition. If your price is higher than the competition, make sure you're offering greater value or service.
5. Use zero based program budgets to identify specific costs and quantities. Only then can one make educated decisions on reducing expenses.
6. Strive to offer the best value not the cheapest price. (Value is defined as what one gets for what they pay).

7. Retail stores price at \$2.98, \$4.99, etc. A person's brain tends to register those as \$2 and \$4 not what they really are - a penny away from \$3 and \$5. When pondering price increases, price up to just below the nearest 5 or 0. If you're considering a price increase from \$24 to \$26, raise it to \$29. Avoid prices ending in 0 or 5 as in \$20 or \$25.
 8. Add greater value to a program that justifies a price increase. Using the example of a Little Shots basketball program for ages 4 to 6 – Give each participant a basketball to keep. If the ball costs \$3 each, raise the price \$5 which adds \$2 to the bottom line. The basketball becomes a keepsake.
 9. Consider independent contractor agreements based on a flat rate per participant rather than a percentage. On percentage-based instructor contracts move splits toward 65/35.
 10. When possible, employ the “one more” strategy. Certain program capacities are established based on room size or instructor preference. If you have classes reaching capacity consider extending capacity by one, perhaps two participants if quality and safety aren't compromised. Since overhead costs are already covered, most revenue from one or two additional enrollments goes to the bottom-line.
2. Increase prices on popular classes that routinely fill up.
 3. Sell naming rights to the Band Shell
 4. Hire a promoter to contract performance at the Band Shell.
 5. As in major stadiums, during peak times for ballgames bring basic concessions (soft drinks, water, candy, chips) to the people rather than require them to come to the concession stand.

Low Priority

1. Routinely shop for competitive prices on supplies and services. Don't hesitate to negotiate. Consider your volume of business and ask for a better deal. Can they afford, or do they want to lose your business, or would they rather compromise on the price? Lock in low prices with multi-year contracts.
2. The District follows LERN's recommendation for pricing without zeros right of the decimal point (\$35 instead of \$35.00). Continue this practice on all marketing materials, social media and menu boards. Using zeros right of the decimal point subconsciously makes the price seem higher.

Marketing

Medium Priority

1. Offer a 100% Satisfaction Guarantee. With nothing to lose, individuals/parents have no risk in signing up for a program. The satisfaction guarantee is a bold statement of the confidence you have in delivering quality programs by competent instructors. A few renegades might exploit the policy but agencies that have had it in place for years report rare cases of abuse.

High Priority

1. Use the web sites, publications and connections of your community programming partners to promote your activities.
2. Develop and market the Munster Parks and Recreation brand tying all facilities and operations to a single recognizable presence. Maintain high quality branding by examining the brand image on an annual basis.

3. In exchange for a Neighbor Rate negotiated having Munster Parks and Recreation programs in which the neighbor rate applies listed/promoted in the Dyer, Hammond and Highland brochures and on their web sites.
4. While printed brochures remain the prime source of information, technology and social media are necessary to systematically reach today’s audiences. Employ multiple means of social media to connect with the community.
5. Enrich your web site with interactive features such as short videos of popular classes, an overhead visual tour of major parks and a welcome address by the Executive Director.
6. Use testimonials from participants or local authorities/celebrities to give credibility to programs/facilities.

Medium Priority

1. Once residents are aware of the Community Pool, purchasing a season pass is largely a function of weather, often weather from the previous summer. Therefore, provide an incentive to purchase a season pass. Send post cards or letters to season pass holders from the previous 2 to 3 years with an incentive to purchase prior to April 15th. (Purchase your pool pass prior to April 15th and receive last year’s pricing!). Limit other marketing to your seasonal brochure, web site and social media. Additional marketing dollars do not provide a significant return on investment.
2. Place registration kiosks in Town Hall and Centennial Golf Course / The View.
3. Edit program descriptions. Whether in print or online opening lines should be dynamic or

emotional to capture reader attention. Consider opening with a thought provoking question. Avoid starting out with “This camp will...”, “This program...”, “Participants will...”, “This is a”. Program descriptions should use persuasive language focusing on the benefits of participation.

4. To showcase and inform constituents about your good work, include a half to full page Annual Report to the winter-spring brochure. In bullet point form state the major accomplishments, awards, financial data, and what’s to come in the next 12 months.
5. Sprinkle the seasonal brochure and web site with statements about the benefits of parks and recreation. These can be found on the NRPA web site (nrpa.org) Examples:
 - a. Did you know:
 - Children are at their highest level of development when they are at play?
 - Kids that play outside have better vision than those who play inside?
 - Community play spaces boost positive attitudes toward cultural diversity and feelings of isolation?
 - 50% of all vigorous exercise happens in parks?
 - Organized activities in parks in low income neighborhoods increase peak use by as much as 25%
 - 73% of American adults believe parks, trails and open space are an essential part of the healthcare system?
 - More and more doctors are prescribing spending time in parks and on trails as a remedy for mental, physical and emotional health?

Trends

1. Evaluate the applicability of popular programs trending from around the country presented on the attachment at the end of this report.
2. Review the societal, cultural and behavioral trends on the trends attachment.
 - Evaluate the impact these trends have on your programs and services.
 - Develop programs that address or reverse negative trends. In other, words, create an antidote.
3. Offer one-time free classes outdoors in Centennial Park, Community Park and at other highly visible park locations. (aerobics, yoga, martial arts, meditation) Market through running clubs, sports stores, shoe stores, health stores and vitamin shops.

Sources And References

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- Sports & Fitness Industry Association
- American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM)
- Outdoor Industry Foundation
- Recreation Management
- The Outdoor Foundation
- Center for Disease Control
- Various park and recreation agency web sites
- Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA)
- National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA)
- Illinois Park and Recreation Association’s Open Forum
- National Recreation and Park Association’s NRPA Connect
- The American Academy of Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA)
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