PARK AND RECREATION INCLUSION REPORT

NRPA National Recreation and Park Association

Because everyone deserves a great park

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INTRODUCTION

BECAUSE EVERYONE DESERVES A GREAT PARK

That is not just a slogan. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) works to ensure that every member of every community has access to the many great benefits that parks and recreation offer. The very philosophy of public parks and recreation is that all people—regardless of race, ethnicity, age, income level, physical ability, sexual orientation, gender or religion—are able to take advantage of quality programs, facilities, places and spaces that make their lives and communities great.

Reinforcing this belief, NRPA's Social Equity pillar focuses on ensuring all people have safe access to quality park and recreation facilities and programming. NRPA is leading this effort by investing in park improvement projects for in-need communities, providing resources and tools to park and recreation professionals on developing equitable communities, and supporting programs and policies that protect our most vulnerable communities from environmental and health hazards.

To deliver on this promise, NRPA has launched **Parks for Inclusion,** an initiative to improve access to health and wellness activities in parks for over one million people over the next three years. **NRPA defines inclusion as removing barriers, both physical and theoretical, so that all people have an equal opportunity to enjoy the benefits of parks and recreation.** The initiative emphasizes reaching the most vulnerable individuals and families—those who suffer from higher rates of health disparities and a diminished quality of life.

While park and recreation agencies strive for greater inclusion, they do face significant challenges in delivering on this promise. In some cases, agencies have limited financial and staffing resources that can make it difficult to serve those who may benefit the most from quality park and recreation services. In other cases, park and recreation agencies lack a clear understanding of the needs and desires of members of their city, town or county. As part of **Parks for Inclusion**, NRPA is supporting the creation of resources, professional development opportunities and technical assistance that will help park and recreation professionals serve every member of their communities.

To help achieve this goal, NRPA conducted a survey to gain greater insight into how agencies across the United States ensure that all members of their communities can enjoy parks and recreation. In September 2017, the NRPA research team sent park and recreation professionals a 26-question survey that asked how park and recreation agencies currently meet the needs of all individuals and groups in their city, town, or county, and what tools they need to better support their communities. The survey generated 497 responses: 32 percent were from park and recreation professionals in metropolitan/urban agencies, 53 percent from those in suburban/county agencies and 15 percent from rural agency professionals. Those responses inform the findings presented in this report.

PARKS FOR INCLUSION

NRPA's **Parks for Inclusion** initiative supports built-environment enhancements, model policy development and best practices for program implementation to increase access to health opportunities for the following populations:

- Racial and ethnic minorities and new Americans
- Individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities
- Members of the LGBTQ community

Our goal is that **Parks for Inclusion** will improve access to health opportunities in parks and recreation for one million people by September 30, 2020.

PARKS FOR INCLUSION

Removing barriers so that all people have an equal opportunity to enjoy the benefits of parks and recreation

Park and recreation agencies offer programming and activities for many community members, including:

2 in 5 PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES HAVE A **FORMAL INCLUSION POLICY** THAT ENSURE ALL MEMBERS OF A COMMUNITY CAN ACCESS AND ENJOY ALL THAT PARKS AND RECREATION HAS TO OFFER

THE GREATEST CHALLENGES KEEPING PARKS AND RECREATION FROM BEING INCLUSIVE TO ALL MEMBERS OF A COMMUNITY:

KEY FINDINGS

Park and recreation professionals often serve diverse populations with differing needs and desires. What they have in common is how they define "inclusion" for parks and recreation. Park and recreation leaders agree that park and recreation facilities, offerings and services should be accessible to people of all backgrounds, regardless of race; gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic position or physical/cognitive ability. **Inclusion means removing barriers that can deprive some people of the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of parks and recreation.** Survey respondents also see inclusiveness at park and recreation facilities as a method to bring people together and celebrate the diversity of communities in which they live.

As they seek to serve all members of a community, park and recreation agencies design and market facilities, programming and activities targeted to specific populations that otherwise may be underserved. A majority of agencies targets programming to individuals with a physical or cognitive disability. Seventy-four percent of park and recreation agencies develop programming and activities that serve individuals in their communities who live with a physical disability while 62 percent do so to serve individuals with a cognitive disability.

Most park and recreation agencies also design and market programming and activities geared to community members of diverse backgrounds. Seven in ten agencies target programming and activities for members of their communities that are part of a multicultural, racial or ethnic group. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, approximately 36 percent of the U.S. population belongs to a racial or ethnic minority group. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reveal that chronic health conditions—including heart disease, cancer, diabetes and stroke—are more common and can be more severe among Americans who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group. Health and wellness opportunities provided by parks and recreation is one way to reduce these disparities.[1]

Less common are park and recreation agencies that program specifically for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) community. Currently, only 30 percent of agencies deliver programs specifically to serve this population, yet the need for quality park and recreation opportunities can be great for these individuals. Research suggests LGBTQ individuals face physical and mental health disparities linked to social stigma, discrimination and denial of their civil and human rights.[2]

Another segment of the population facing a growing need for park and recreation programming is the refugee and immigrant community. Park and recreation facilities and programs have an opportunity to foster community relationships, create employment opportunities, deliver English-language education and serve as venues for physical activity opportunities respectful of cultural norms (e.g., gender-specific programs and hours). Currently, only 27 percent of agencies have programs targeted to these new Americans.

[1] *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; "Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH)" Published 2016 https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/aag/reach.htm*

[2] *Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health" https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-health*

PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES SPECIFICALLY DESIGN AND MARKET PROGRAMMING AND ACTIVITIES TARGETED TO DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES

(Percent of Agencies)

Some park and recreation agencies are more likely than others to offer inclusive programming and activities targeted to specific segments of their communities. For example, suburban agencies and those that are part of a county government are more likely than other agencies to offer specific programming for individuals with a physical or cognitive disability. Park and recreation agencies in an urban locale are more likely than agencies in other areas to offer programing and activities geared to multicultural, racial or ethnic communities, members of the LGBTQ community or refugee and immigrant communities.

PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES SPECIFICALLY DESIGN AND MARKET PROGRAMMING AND ACTIVITIES TARGETED TO DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES

(Percent of Agencies by Jurisdiction Type)

INCLUSION POLICIES

Inclusion policies can specify a list of rights to ensure staff is clear about what inclusion within the agency means. Below is a sample inclusion policy from an agency in Connecticut.

The Rights of All Persons to Recreation Services

- Individuals have the right to choose recreation and leisure activities that are personally satisfying and of interest to them.
- Individuals have the right to choose activities that occur in settings that are non-discriminatory in practice, policy and attitude.
- Individuals have the right to participate in a diverse choice of recreation and leisure activities with their peers that allows for, promotes and encourages full inclusion of all participants.
- Individuals have the right to be treated with respect and supported in age-appropriate programs and services in a manner consistent with how people without disabilities are treated. Individuals with disabilities have the right to request and receive support and accommodations in programs and services to the degree that it does not fundamentally alter the intent and nature of the program design as defined by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Program providers have the right to request that all participants, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, meet the minimal eligibility requirements of their program service and that the safety and wellbeing of all participants are insured in the delivery of recreation services and programs.

Many park and recreation agencies have developed formal policies that outline their goals, guidelines and procedures that help ensure all members of a community can access all that those facilities have to offer. Such policies may include an outline of the accommodations that improve accessibility to parks, recreation centers and other facilities along with a description of the process that a resident would follow to request a specific accommodation. The policies typically are available on the agency's website.

Creating and implementing a formal inclusion policy allows park and recreation agencies to maintain consistent guidelines and match their actions to those guidelines. While many agencies are already achieving a standard of inclusion, they frequently lack a formal policy that ensures consistent implementation of this standard across an agency. With a formal policy, an inclusion standard will thrive despite any staff turnover, leadership changes, shifts in agency priorities or funding shortages. Agencies should customize their inclusion policy to reflect an organization's strengths and strategic goals.

Forty percent of park and recreation agencies currently have a formal inclusion policy, with another 15 percent intending to develop such a policy within the next year. More than half (53 percent) of urban park and recreation agencies currently have an inclusion policy while 41 percent of county agencies and 37 percent of suburban agencies have formal inclusion policies.

Only about one quarter (24 percent) of rural agencies currently have an inclusion policy. Rural agencies often face barriers of high poverty rates, lack of availability of fresh and healthy foods, and limited walkability to recreation opportunities and service providers. The combination of these challenges can lead to an increase in chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and obesity. Creating an inclusion policy can be a critical step for rural-based agencies to help residents make decisions regarding healthy eating and physical activity.

TWO IN FIVE PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES HAVE A FORMAL INCLUSION POLICY

(Percentage Distribution of Agencies)

Working with third parties to provide resources, technical assistance and outreach support is one way park and recreation agencies ensure that their programming and activities are relevant and accessible to all members of a community. The majority of park and recreation agencies—93 percent—partners with other government agencies and external organizations so that their programming and activities are inclusive to all members of their communities.

Park and recreation agencies are most likely to partner with local schools (83 percent), nonprofit organizations (77 percent) and area-wide agencies on aging and disabilities (65 percent).

Other common partners include:

- Local law enforcement agencies (55 percent)
- Hospitals and healthcare providers (46 percent)
- Faith-based organizations (44 percent)
- Transit agencies (26 percent)

Urban park and recreation agencies are more likely than other agencies to partner with nonprofit organizations, local law enforcement agencies and faith-based organizations on inclusion-related programming and offerings. Conversely, suburban park and recreation agencies are more likely to partner with the local school system.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

In Grand Rapids, Michigan, park and recreation agencies are creating and strengthening partnerships with community resources such as Disability Advocates of Kent County, the Fair Housing Center of Western Michigan, Kent County Essential Needs Task Force, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, HUD Continuum of Care, and the West Michigan Hispanic Center.

PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES WORK CLOSELY WITH THIRD-PARTY ORGANIZATIONS TO ENSURE PROGRAMMING AND ACTIVITIES ARE INCLUSIVE TO ALL MEMBERS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES

(Percent of Agencies Working with Government Agencies and External Organizations)

For all the progress park and recreation agencies have made ensuring that their facilities, programming and offerings serve all members of a community, there remain barriers that hamper agencies from fully succeeding in that mission. Nine in ten park and recreation agencies report they are confronting challenges that prevent their offerings from being more inclusive.

A number of these challenges result from a lack of resources: insufficient funding (57 percent), inadequate staffing (46 percent), a need for greater staff training (25 percent) or scarce supplies and equipment (9 percent). The lack of resources is due in part because few agencies are able to access federal funding to support their inclusion efforts. In fact, only 12 percent of park and recreation leaders indicate that their agencies are current recipients of federal government grants, program support or other resources (such as best practices, technical assistance or training) that support inclusive programming.

Other barriers impeding more robust inclusion activities focus on the challenges some park and recreation agencies have in fully understanding the needs of and reaching underserved members of a community. Twenty-three percent of agencies indicate they do not currently have outreach activities that sufficiently reach these populations while 20 percent acknowledge that they do not fully understand the needs of these communities. By engaging in efforts to involve minority members of a community in planning and programming activities, offerings can begin to meet specific needs, allowing everyone to benefit from not only equal but equitable access to parks and recreation.

Fortunately, a lack of desire to make sure parks and recreation serves all people is not a significant barrier to efforts that promote greater inclusiveness. In fact, few park and recreation professionals report any apathy from either the general public or local government leaders as

INSUFFICIENT FUNDING AND STAFFING ARE THE GREATEST CHALLENGES KEEPING PARKS AND RECREATION FROM BEING INCLUSIVE TO ALL MEMBERS OF A COMMUNITY

(Percent of Agencies)

a factor hampering their agencies' efforts to be more inclusive. Only 15 percent of survey respondents indicate that a lack of support from the general public is holding back inclusion efforts; a mere six percent indicate a lack of support from local government leaders.

Leaders from urban park and recreation agencies are slightly more likely than others to indicate that their agencies suffer from deficient outreach efforts. Respondents from rural agencies are more likely to report challenges associated with insufficient funding, staffing and facility space.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH A PHYSICAL OR COGNITIVE DISABILITY

Park and recreation agencies design and market a wide variety of program offerings targeted to members of their communities who live with either a physical or cognitive disability. These inclusion efforts can be especially meaningful, as adults with disabilities are three times more likely to have heart disease, stroke, diabetes or cancer than are adults without them. According to the CDC, nearly half of all adults with disabilities get no aerobic physical activity,[3] an important behavior to reduce the onset of chronic diseases. Further, physical activity provides emotional benefits, including social support and gaining confidence.

The most prevalent program offering for individuals with a physical or cognitive disability focuses on physical activities and fitness training. Eighty percent of those park and recreation agencies that program specifically for individuals with a physical or cognitive disability deliver walking programs, yoga classes, personal training and sport leagues. Sixty-two percent of agencies deliver out-of-school time programs (e.g., summer camps, before/after-school programs) geared to children with physical or cognitive disabilities.

Other commonly offered programs designed for and marketed to individuals with a physical or cognitive disability include:

- Volunteer or employment activities, including opportunities to volunteer or work at park and recreation centers (57 percent)
- Health and wellness programs, including chronic disease prevention (e.g., arthritis, diabetes),treatment programs and cooking/nutrition classes (50 percent)
- Field trips, tours and vacations (44 percent)
- Special Olympics and/or Paralympics (44 percent)
- Therapy and mentoring services, including swimming/water therapy, art/music therapy and peer coaching (37 percent)
- Technology training, including computer skills and training (14 percent)

[3] *"Inactivity Related to Chronic Disease in Adults with Disabilities" https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/division-information/media-tools/dpk/vs-disability-activity/index.html*

PROGRAM EXAMPLES

Examples of programming for individuals with a physical or cognitive disability:

- Physical activity programs, exercise classes and/or fitness training (e.g., walking programs, yoga classes, personal training, sports leagues)
- Volunteer or employment activities (e.g., opportunities to volunteer or work in parks and recreation centers)
- Health and wellness programs (e.g., chronic disease prevention [arthritis, diabetes] and treatment programs, cooking/nutrition classes)

Park and recreation agencies deliver specialized programming and offerings to individuals of all ages that live with a physical or cognitive disability, especially children. More than four in five agencies focus specifically on children aged between five and 12 years old with this type of specialized programming, while nearly three-quarters of agencies do the same for teenagers.

INCLUSION MICROGRANT CHALLENGE

In the fall of 2017, NRPA—with help from the Lakeshore Foundation—hosted an innovative inclusion microgrant challenge. Four local park and recreation agencies each received $1,000 awards to implement changes to their facilities to foster inclusion for those individuals with a physical or cognitive disability.

"Learn to Ride Adaptive" bike program in Austin, Texas, provides community members with an adaptive bike to participate in cycling programs alongside their peers.

"Prichard Pride: Growing a Garden Together" in Prichard, Alabama, added ramps and signage to an intergenerational garden, allowing all to garden together.

"Grow Up Green Club" in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, enables children on the autism spectrum and typically developing children to explore sun, water, wind, dirt and backyard nature.

"Sense Tents" in Minneapolis, Minnesota, brings mobile tent units to events to provide the appropriate tools for people with disabilities to regulate their senses and calm their minds and bodies.

PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES DEVELOP ACTIVITIES TARGETED TO INDIVIDUALS LIVING WITH PHYSICAL AND/OR COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

(Percent of Agencies that Program Specifically for Individuals Living with Physical and/or Cognitive Disabilities)

PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES DESIGN PROGRAMMING AND ACTIVITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH PHYSICAL AND/OR COGNITIVE DISABILITIES OF ALL AGES

(Percent of Agencies that Program Specifically for Individuals Living with Physical and/or Cognitive Disabilities Based on Age)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MULTICULTURAL/RACIAL/ ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

Seven in ten local park and recreation agencies deliver programs and activities targeted to members of a multicultural, racial or ethnic community. Some of these programs are celebratory in form, bringing together people to rejoice in the diversity of their cities or towns. Other offerings are intended to mitigate any higher prevalence of chronic health issues or work to counter the detrimental impact of higher rates of crime, violence and gang activity that impede safe access to parks, recreation and educational opportunities.

Park and recreation agencies serve as beacons of support for disadvantaged individuals by creating opportunities for inclusion through volunteer positions, program involvement and social engagement. Inclusive practices can break down segregated social groups, encouraging all in the neighborhood to take advantage of the facility. Designing programming to meet the needs of multicultural, racial or ethnic communities can aid in reducing crime rates and supports the well-being of historically marginalized and vulnerable groups.

Many of these offerings are celebrations of the respective communities themselves, whether a holiday commemoration (65 percent) or a heritage festival (61 percent). These programs not only bring together members of a specific community, but they also serve as opportunities to unite people of diverse backgrounds in a positive, constructive manner.

Other programs and activities geared to members of multicultural, racial or ethnic communities include:

- Community gardens (54 percent)
- Health and wellness programs targeted to specific members of the community (e.g., "GirlTrek," "Summer Night Lights") (41 percent)
- Culturally sensitive program hours, including, women-only hours at swimming pools and gyms, female program leaders (26 percent)
- Budget and personal finance training (nine percent)

PROGRAM EXAMPLES

Examples of programming for multicultural, racial or ethnic community members:

- Heritage and holiday celebrations
- Culturally sensitive program hours (e.g., women-only pool time, female program leaders for female students, etc.)
- Health and Wellness programs targeted to specific cultures, races and ethnicities (e.g., "GirlTrek")

SUMMER NIGHT LIGHTS

In 2011, the **"Summer Night Lights"** program—an antigang initiative in Los Angeles that involves keeping parks open at night with extensive programming and free food—was credited with a 57 percent reduction in gangrelated homicides in areas surrounding participating parks. Furthermore, gun fire decreased 55 percent, and the number of shooting victims declined 45 percent.

PARK AND RECREATION ACTIVITIES TARGETED TO MEMBERS OF MULTICULTURAL, RACIAL OR ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

(Percent of Agencies that Program Specifically for Members of Multicultural, Racial or Ethnic Communities)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

Park and recreation agencies meet the needs of the local LGBTQ population through a variety of programs and offerings. Research shows that lack of physical and social activity opportunities may contribute to health disparities of LGBTQ members, including physical and mental health, as well as social issues. Discrimination against LGBTQ persons has also been associated with high rates of psychiatric disorders, substance abuse, and even suicide,[4] bolstering the need for programming through park and recreation agencies.

Just over half of the park and recreation agencies (52 percent) that design and market programs that specifically serve LGBTQ individuals offer community events and awareness campaigns, including Pride Months, parades and festivals. Similarly, 51 percent of agencies host social activities targeted to the LGBTQ community, such as adult sports leagues.

Other park and recreation programs and offerings targeted to the LGBTQ community include:

- Family programs, including, before/afterschool out-of-school time programs, summer camps and early childhood programs (40 percent)
- LGBTQ youth groups and mentoring services (18 percent)
- Gay-straight alliances (11 percent)

Beyond programming, many park and recreation agencies have added features to their facilities (e.g., recreation centers, gyms) that aid in the comfort and increased perception of safety for the LGBTQ community. These features include gender neutral and/or unisex restrooms, private/family-style locker and changing rooms, and identifying safe spaces for LGBTQ youth.

Park and recreation agencies deliver specialized programming and offerings to all members of their local LGBTQ community, with a particular focus on younger adults. Eight-five percent of agencies specifically focus their LGBTQ programs and offerings on adults between 19 and 35 years old, while 77 percent of agencies focus on programming for teenagers between 13 and 18 years old.

PROGRAM EXAMPLES

Examples of programming for LGBTQ community members include:

- Community events/awareness campaigns (e.g., Pride Month)
- Social activities/programs (e.g., adult sports leagues)
- LGBTQ youth groups and/or mentor services and gay-straight alliances

PRIDE OUTSIDE

"Pride Outside" is a Washington, D.C. based group whose goal is getting members of the LGBTQ community outdoors and involved in recreation activities. This includes a partnership with a major outdoor goods retailer to offer backpacking and camping classes targeted to LGBTQ individuals who are new to those activities, as well as provide more advanced skills such as navigation. These programs help the LGBTQ community feel welcome in the recreation space, and confident and supported as they explore new opportunities.

[4] *"Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health" https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-health*

PARK AND RECREATION EVENTS AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES TARGETED TO MEMBERS OF THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

(Percent of Agencies that Program Specifically for the LGBTQ Community)

PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES DESIGN PROGRAMMING AND ACTIVITIES FOR MEMBERS OF THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY OF ALL AGES

(Percent of Agencies that Program Specifically for the LGBTQ Community by Age)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Just over a quarter of park and recreation agencies indicate they design programs and activities specifically for refugees and immigrants who reside in their communities. The offerings are as diverse as the populations the agencies serve. Delivering programming specific to new Americans aids in creating a sense of place in adopted communities, and also supports civic engagement.

The most common park and recreation offerings geared to refugees and immigrants are multicultural community programs and events. Eighty-five percent of park and recreation agencies that offer programming specifically for refugees and immigrants sponsor festivals and other celebrations that highlight these members of a community. Seventy-three percent of agencies also have special out-of-school time programs—summer camps, before/afterschool programs, youth sports programs and youth engagement programs—all of which are inclusive of the community's refugees and immigrants.

Two-thirds of agencies work to strengthen the relationship of their communities' newest residents and the outdoors with specific outdoor recreation programs targeted to this population. Nearly three in five agencies aim to improve the health and wellness of the refugee and immigrant population by offering a variety of wellness programs, including chronic disease prevention and treatment programs, cooking and nutrition programs.

Other programs and activities designed and marketed by park and recreation agencies to serve refugees and immigrants living in their communities include:

- Community gardens (55 percent)
- English as a Second Language (ESL) classes (32 percent)
- Job skills training, including computer skills (24 percent)

PROGRAM EXAMPLES

Examples of programming for new Americans

- Multicultural community programs/events (e.g., festivals, celebrations)
- English as a Second Language (ESL) program/classes
- Job skills training (e.g., computer skills training)

PARKS FOR NEW PORTLANDERS

"Parks for New Portlanders" (PNP) is a program initiated by Portland (Oregon) Parks & Recreation with goal of providing recreation opportunities for immigrant and refugee communities. PNP works with community partners and city leaders to design culturally relevant programs and makes sure services and spaces are welcoming and accessible to communities of color, new immigrants and refugees.

With one in five Portlanders foreign-born, addressing the needs of this new and diverse population is crucial as they transition to Portland's community. The PNP program hosts sporting events such as Portland World Cup Soccer in the summer and Intercultural Basketball Tournament in the fall, to assist new Portlanders in accessing Portland Parks & Recreation services to promote greater integration into Portland's community and create a sense of belonging.

"Parks for New Portlanders" brings together seven foreign-born Community Youth Ambassadors who are local leaders, community experts, and who speak 12 different languages to assist with the transition to Portland.

PARK AND RECREATION ACTIVITIES TARGETED TO REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY

(Percent of Agencies that Program Specifically for Refugees and Immigrants)

Park and recreation agencies deliver specialized programming and offerings to refugee and immigrant populations of all ages in their communities. Agencies, are, however, more apt to deliver programs targeted specifically to children within these communities. Eighty-six percent of agencies focus on children aged between five and 12 years with this type of specialized programming, with 83 percent of agencies doing the same for teenagers between the ages of 13 and 18 years old.

Even though recreation programs for refugee and immigrant communities are often children-focused, still a vast majority of agencies also crafts offerings for adult aged members of these populations. Three-quarters of agencies with targeted programming for their refugee and immigrant population design such activities for adults aged 19 to 35 years and 71 percent target programming to adults aged 36 years or older.

PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES DESIGN PROGRAMMING AND ACTIVITIES FOR REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS OF ALL AGES

(Percent of Agencies that Program Specifically for Refugees and Immigrants Based on Age)

ENGAGEMENT THAT PROMOTES INCLUSION

Park and recreation professionals want their agencies to deliver the services, programming and offerings that their communities want and need. This goal can be difficult to achieve as agencies face tight budgetary constraints that require them to prioritize what facilities, services and offerings they should (and should not) offer.

One way park and recreation leaders make optimal decisions is by gaining a firm understanding of the residents who live near park and recreation facilities. Demographic information and market research data on local residents are available from a number of government and market research resources. One resource available to park and recreation professionals is the NRPA Facility Market Report, which highlights key data and insights about the market served by an individual agency's facilities.

Beyond the "who" lives near such facilities, park and recreation agencies also need to understand "what" these residents need in terms of park and recreation offerings. Most agencies have a variety of methods to engage the public when they are planning and designing their inclusive program offerings.

Nine in ten agencies that design and market specific programming for either multicultural audiences or refugee and immigrant populations engage these populations when planning for new park and recreation programs, facilities and space. Similarly, 84 percent of agencies that target programs to individuals living with either a physical or cognitive disability conduct similar engagement strategies, while 68 percent of agencies with specific LGBTQ programming do the same.

The most common form of engagement is via surveys of members of a specific community. This is especially true for agencies targeting programs to individuals living with a physical or cognitive disability, members of a multicultural, racial or ethnic community and the LGBTQ community. Agencies seeking to serve the refugee and/or immigrant community are most likely to use direct outreach at local community events for one-on-one conversations.

Other widely cited forms of parks and recreation engagement include:

- Focus groups
- Having members of the relevant community serve as planning committee representatives
- Conducting audits on parks, trails, transportation and/or accessibility

METHODS FOR ENGAGING MEMBERS OF THE DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES WHEN PLANNING FOR NEW PARK AND RECREATION PROGRAMS, FACILITIES AND SPACES

(Percent of Agencies with Type of Targeted Outreach)

In addition to enhancing their engagement with a community, park and recreation leaders seek more resources and training to help in their agencies' efforts to make their offerings more inclusive to all members of their communities. Eighty-seven percent of park and recreation professionals are seeking best practice guides and success stories that highlight those peer agencies across the United States that have effectively broadened the impact of parks and recreation for these audiences. Other resources requested by park and recreation professionals include:

- Professional development opportunities, including webinars, education sessions and staff training and development resources (85 percent)
- Guidance on developing formal policies that promote parks and recreation inclusiveness (81 percent)
- Tools that help identify community partners and resources that could help secure funding for inclusive programs and facilities (81 percent)
- Guidance on various inclusive language, community strategies and effective engagement processes (79 percent)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES SOUGHT BY PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES LOOKING TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

(Percent of Respondents Indicating Resource Would be "Valuable")

CONCLUSION

Parks and recreation truly build communities—communities for all. They are the places and spaces where people from all walks of life come together to learn, to experience, to interact and to grow. A park should not only reflect the culture and spirit of its community; it should also serve all members of a community, especially individuals or groups who have endured historical injustices and communities that suffered from inadequate investment. While park and recreation agencies are leaders in creating these spaces and confronting these disparities head on, there remain significant opportunities for expanding such efforts further and ensuring that the needs of all are met.

With the **Parks for Inclusion** initiative, and with the support of local park and recreation agencies throughout the United States, NRPA is committed to ensuring that everyone—regardless of race, ethnicity, physical ability, gender, religion or sexual orientation—has equal access to the benefits of parks and recreation. NRPA is committed to accomplishing this goal through a number of activities:

- Supporting built-environment enhancements and park improvement projects in various underserved communities
- Hosting professional development opportunities such as webinars and conference sessions
- Aiding in model policy development to create sustainable, long-term changes
- Collecting and sharing the success stories of inclusive activities across the field
- Connecting agencies with community partners to support and enhance each other's work
- Creating best practices for program implementation to increase access to health opportunities

Learn more at www.nrpa.org/ParksForInclusion

ABOUT NRPA

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing park, recreation and conservation efforts that enhance quality of life for all people. Through its network of 60,000 recreation and park professionals and advocates, NRPA encourages the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles, conservation initiatives and equitable access to parks and public space.

NRPA brings strength to our message by partnering with like-minded organizations including those in the federal government, nonprofits and commercial enterprises. Funded through dues, grants, registrations and charitable contributions, NRPA produces research, education and policy initiatives for our members that ultimately enrich the communities they serve.

NRPA places immense importance on research and data to raise the status of parks and recreation and conducts research with two goals. First, NRPA creates data to help park and recreation agencies make optimal decisions on operations, programming and spending. Second, NRPA generates data and insights that support park and recreation professionals making the case for greater and more stable funding to policymakers, key stakeholders, the media and the general public. The NRPA research team works closely with internal subject matter experts, respected industry consultants and the academic community to develop its reports and data resources. Learn more at www.nrpa.org/Research

NRPA National Recreation and Park Association

Because everyone deserves a great park

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