

Chapter 23

Evaluation and Action Research

CAPRA Agency Accreditation Standards

0.4.1 Community Study

Standard: A comprehensive community study based on population shifts and changing social and economic conditions should be made at least every five years with interim up-dating.

Commentary: The study may be made by a planning group of the park and recreation Agency is a part. Social and service statistics should be utilized in the planning process.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a copy of latest community study and an indication of its use in park and recreation Agency planning.

0.4.2 Community Inventory

Standard: There should be a compiled, complete and current inventory of all areas, facilities, programs and services that are used and/or managed by the agency.

Commentary: The inventory should include programs, services, parcel locators, park names, facilities and specific components (ball fields, playgrounds, pools, centers, etc.) of the system-wide parks and recreation infrastructure and land holdings for all properties and facilities owned and/or managed by the agency. This inventory should also include alternative providers such as schools, other governmental agencies, for-profit and not for-profit providers, as it is critical for the park and recreation agency to understand where there are overlapping areas, facilities, programs and services or gaps in such. The inventory may be complimented by the use of GIS.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a copy of the inventory of programs and services and the physical resources of the community, demonstrating how the agency utilizes this information in the planning process.

0.4.3 Needs Index

Standard: A needs index for determining priorities for development of services within the community should be established within the comprehensive plan.

Commentary: A needs index often is considered a survey of citizen attitudes and opinions on what recreational activities they desire; however, it really is much more and involves consideration of the basic needs of the people of the community, where such are not being fulfilled, and how parks and recreation can contribute toward human development.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a copy of the needs index within the comprehensive plan.

0.9 Trends Analysis

Standard: There shall be a system in place to assess societal and local trends.

Commentary: It is essential that park and recreation agencies keep abreast of local, regional, state, national, and world societal trends to keep dynamic in serving their constituencies. This includes assessment of needs and issues.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a copy of the trends analysis documentation.

4.1.9 Performance Evaluation

Standard: There should be a fair and systematic procedure for annual appraisal of job performance.

Commentary: Such personnel evaluation should be utilized for the development and improved quality of the individual's performance on the job, as well as a basis for promotion, monetary increments, and dismissal. Evaluation should be a continuing process of which the annual review is a summary. Evaluation should involve a face-to-face analysis of performance, dealing objectively with facts and job-related personality factors. Evaluation instruments should be utilized in addition to evaluation interviews and general comments. Although evaluation is a day-by-day process, there should be periodic specific reviews with the employee, including at the end of the probationary period, at the end of a specific assignment, and annually. An employee's record should include a written annual evaluation.

Tasks of the position, as set forth in the job description, form the basis for the description of what work is to be performed and thus evaluated. Criteria used to define the quality of work should be descriptive, measurable, and allow a characterization regarding how the work is performed. The supervisor of employees is the person most familiar with their performance and able, therefore, to evaluate performance most accurately. This responsibility should not be delegated. In cases where an employee is supervised by more than one supervisor during a reporting period, the current supervisor should confer with the other supervisor(s).

A performance evaluation system should include the participation of the employee in the process. This should contribute to the fairness and objectivity of the system. As a full participant in the evaluation process, it is important that the employee be given a copy of the performance evaluation report, as well as, a copy be placed in the employee's personnel file.

Each evaluation report of an employee's performance should be read and understood by the employee. The signature should indicate only that the employee has read the report and should not imply agreement or disagreement with the content. If the employee refuses to sign, the supervisor should so note and record the reason or reasons, if given.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a copy of the procedures and a sample of completed performance evaluations without identifying personal information.

10.0 Evaluation and Research

* 10.1 Comprehensive Analysis

Standard: There shall be comprehensive analysis of the various evaluatory functions within the agency to assess the outcomes of recreation programs, services, areas and facilities.

Commentary: Evaluatory practices occur throughout a park and recreation agency's operations. The comprehensive analysis should be designed to link the multitude of evaluatory functions within the agency, to assess the outcomes of programs and services provided by the agency.

The comprehensive analysis should be based on the following, at a minimum:

- a. Annual evaluation of goals and objectives
- b. Trend analysis
- c. Data gathering for planning
- d. Community inventory and need index
- e. Service statistics
- f. Recreation services management – program needs and effectiveness
- g. Program evaluation
- h. Risk management determination of nature of, and extent of, risks
- i. Financial reports

Comprehensive analysis should identify desired outcomes, qualitative and quantitative evaluation tools, measurements, analysis of data and application of the findings. Data gathered through the comprehensive analysis should be utilized throughout the agency's planning process.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the most recent comprehensive evaluation of the agency's recreation programs, areas and facilities.

10.1.1 Position Responsibility for Evaluation

Standard: There should be specific personnel within the agency responsible for managing the evaluation analysis.

Commentary: Specific assignment of responsibility for evaluation and research is critical for agency accountability of programs and operations. The technical expertise for evaluation may be provided through private consultant contracts or service contracts with an educational institution having the technical expertise to direct the evaluation program of the agency. Actual implementation of evaluation may be a shared responsibility involving planning, operational and program personnel.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the job descriptions of the staff person(s) responsible for the comprehensive evaluation analysis and/or the consultant contracts or service agreements. The documentation should also include the resume(s) of experience and training of the incumbent staff or consultant(s) providing this service.

10.2 Experimental and Demonstration Projects

Standard: There should be at least one experimental or demonstration project or involvement in some aspect of research, as related to any part of park and recreation operations, each year.

Commentary: Departments are encouraged to undertake action research, exploratory investigations, operational studies and demonstration projects to develop better methods in conducting programs for all types of groups. These undertakings provide a means for the agency to test new or different approaches/techniques and systematically evaluate its effectiveness. Every agency, regardless of size, can undertake some type of study for the enhancement of its operations.

Since the community is the laboratory for recreation and park research and the public recreation and park agency is one prime channel thereto, when requested, collaborative efforts with individual researchers, private research organizations, graduate students, and educational institutions for appropriate research projects should be considered.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a report on an experimental or demonstration project for the last year and list projects for the last 5 years.

10.3 Personnel Training for the Evaluation of Programs, Services, Areas and Facilities

Standard: There should be ongoing training opportunities for all personnel of the agency involved in evaluation of programs, services, areas and/or facilities.

Commentary: Effective implementation of the agency's evaluation and research functions requires that all personnel involved in evaluation be properly trained. The training should be provided in the context of the comprehensive evaluation analysis, address qualitative and quantitative measurements, identification of applicable evaluation tools, data analysis and application of findings.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide examples of evaluation and research training opportunities completed by agency personnel, including syllabus or curriculum outline, training dates and participant list.