

COMMISSION FOR ACCREDITATION OF
PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES

NATIONAL ACCREDITATION
STANDARDS



- Fourth Edition -
Revised April 2009

Sponsored by
National Recreation and Park Association

Created by the
Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies
Revised April 2009

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Introduction

The Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) Standards for National Accreditation provide an authoritative assessment tool for park and recreation agencies. Through compliance with these national standards of excellence, CAPRA accreditation assures policy makers, department staff, the general public and tax payers that an accredited park and recreation agency has been independently evaluated against established benchmarks as delivering a high level of quality.

Every park and recreation agency, whatever its focus or field of operation, is rightfully concerned with the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations. With the importance of park and recreation programs and services to the quality of life, each agency has an essential role in the lives of the people it serves. CAPRA accreditation is a quality assurance and quality improvement process demonstrating an agency's commitment to its employees, volunteers, patrons and community.

Accreditation Process

Accreditation is based on an agency's compliance with the 144 standards for national accreditation. To achieve accreditation, an agency must comply with all 36 Fundamental Standards, which are indicated by the ★ icon in this publication, and at least 85% of the remaining 108 standards (92).

CAPRA accreditation is a five-year cycle that includes three phases, development of the agency self-assessment report, the on site visitation, and the Commission's review and decision. The on site visitation follows the agency's development of its self-assessment report. If accreditation is granted by the Commission at its meeting following the on site visit, the agency will develop a new self assessment report and be revisited every five years. Within each of the four years between on site visits, the agency will submit an annual report that addresses its continued compliance with the accreditation standards. The complementary publication, *CAPRA Accreditation Handbook*, sets forth in detail the accreditation process and procedures.

Understanding Standards

A standard is a statement of desirable practice as set forth by experienced professionals. In evaluating an agency for accreditation, the standards are a measure of effectiveness using the cause and effect ("if...then") approach. If one acts in a certain way, then it is expected that there will be a certain outcome.

In practice, if an agency complies with a given standard, then it is expected that the agency's operations related to that standard will be positively affected. Viewed holistically, if an agency complies with the vast majority of the standards (i.e., all fundamental standards and at least 85% of the remaining), then it is understood that the agency is performing a quality operation. Standards enable evaluation by comparing what is found within an agency operation to what is accepted by professionals as desirable practices.

These standards are not a quantitative measure of the local availability of funds, lands, personnel, etc. and should be distinguished from other types of standards which address specific elements, such as open space standards, which are population-based, and playground equipment standards, which are product-based. These qualitative standards for accreditation are comprehensive, dealing with all aspects of agency operations.

The standards provide an effective and credible means of evaluating a park and recreation agency's overall system. The standards apply to all park and recreation systems, inasmuch as they are considered to be the elements for effective and efficient operations. Most agencies administer both park and recreation functions; however, some agencies only administer recreation programs and services, not park systems, and others only administer park systems, not recreation programs and services. Additionally, the

jurisdictional structure of agencies differs throughout the country, with many agencies operating under municipal authority, while others operate under county, park district, or other structures. Further, the standards apply to agencies of all sizes in terms of personnel, budget, and population served. It is recognized that each community is unique and may meet the standards in differing ways.

History of CAPRA Standards for National Accreditation

A forerunner of the CAPRA standards was a document titled, *Evaluation and Self-Study of Public Recreation and Park Agencies*, first issued in 1965. The standards in the document were initially determined by leading professionals in the Great Lakes District of the then National Recreation Association. Eight years later, in 1972, a statewide study in Pennsylvania encompassing thirty municipal park and recreation departments resulted in the document being updated and revised; and, after twenty years, it was replaced by the CAPRA standards.

The CAPRA standards were developed by a special committee initiated in 1989 by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). The standards and accreditation process were field tested at park and recreation agencies of varying characteristics. In 1993, the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies was established to implement and administer the accreditation program. Since then, the CAPRA standards have been reviewed and revised several times, notably in 1996, 2001, and 2009.

In 1998 work was begun to adapt the accreditation program to military recreation. An Army version of the standards, developed by the Army, was approved in 1999 and a representative of military services was added to the Commission board. In 2007, the Department of Defense proposed a revised set of military standards that applies to all military services; and was approved by the Commission in 2008 for use by all military services. The military accreditation standards are available as a separate document.

About the Commission

The Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies is a thirteen-member board composed of representatives from:

- American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (4 representatives)
- National Recreation and Park Association (4 representatives)
- International City/Council Management Association (1 representative)
- Council of State Executive Directors (1 representative)
- American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation (1 representative)
- National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials (1 representative)
- Armed Forces Recreation Society (1 representative)

The Commission is administratively sponsored by the National Recreation and Park Association, but acts with independence and under its own authority in determining accreditation standards and conferring accreditation of applicant agencies.

Using this Publication

This publication includes all of the CAPRA standards for national accreditation. Standards are ordered numerically by section. Each section covers a specific component of, or within, an agency's operations. The numerical ordering of standards is hierarchical and the relationship of the standards is identified by the numerical order (i.e., 3.4.1.1 is a sub-standard of 3.4.1, which is a sub-standard of 3.4).

Additionally, a Commentary section is included for each standard in order to provide further explanation

or direction to the agency regarding the standard. Commentary always relates to the standard under which it is located and is used to support, not replace, the standard.

Further, a Suggested Evidence of Compliance section is included for each standard in order to identify acceptable means of demonstrating compliance with a standard. It is important to understand that these are only suggestions and that other evidence may be more appropriate for a given agency and standard. The burden of proof regarding compliance rests with the agency. Where appropriate, an agency is encouraged to provide more than one proof of compliance for a standard.

Resources

More information about CAPRA national accreditation, including how to apply for accreditation and the list of currently accredited agencies, is available online at www.nrpa.org/capra or by contacting:

Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies
c/o National Recreation and Park Association
22377 Belmont Ridge Road
Ashburn, VA 20148
Tel (703) 858-2150
Fax (703) 858-0794
E-mail capra@nrpa.org

An additional resource is the publication, *Management of Park and Recreation Agencies*. This publication is based in part on the CAPRA standards and covers in detail best management practices for managing a park and recreation agency. This publication is available through the NRPA store at www.nrpa.org.

1.0 Agency Authority, Role and Responsibility

NOTE: Standards marked with a star (★) are fundamental standards, and are required of all agencies seeking accreditation.

1.1 Source of Authority★

Standard: The source of authority of, and powers for, the public recreation and park managing authority shall be clearly set forth by legal document.

Commentary: The source of authority or legal basis of operation and extent of the powers of the managing authority shall be identified in legal document such as the state statute, local charter, city ordinance, or park district code.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide legal citation and, if appropriate, date of resolution by local governing entity or legal authority (i.e., enabling act, support documentation, ordinance; if permissive state authority, provide charter).

1.1.1 Public Authority/Policy Body

Standard: The organizational authority structure should provide for one public authority responsible for policy-making functions.

Commentary: The policy-making entity is legally, ultimately responsible for the operation of the recreation and parks department; it has the "power to accomplish without recourse." It may be the city council or commission, an elected board of citizens specifically for parks and recreation, the school board, the county supervisors, or another legally established and elected body. This entity usually has taxing power and must approve the budget; it holds title to property. It also serves an important function in interpreting the programs, services, and facilities and in exerting influence throughout the community to improve and expand park and recreation programs, services, and facilities.

When the policy-making entity is not an elected independent board specifically for parks and recreation, the governing entity may appoint a parks and recreation board, which is delegated authority for operating policies and general administrative practices. This body would be considered a semi-independent board, since it would depend upon the city council or county commission for ultimate policy approval, in addition to approval and allocation of its funds. The board would be an integral part of city or county government or other local entity; and, the park and recreation executive may be directly responsible to the city or county manager, or to the park and recreation board itself. The park and recreation executive should not be responsible to both. When the operating policy-making body is a citizen board, it should hold regular meetings, duly publicized, with the actions of the board and reports of the administrator officially recorded and available. Board members should be representative of the total community and serve with staggered terms.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the organizational authority structure chart with a narrative description; show relationship to governing body, approving authority and the department. Distinguish this chart from a staff organization chart. Provide the public authority bylaws or charter.

1.1.2 Citizen Advisory Boards/Committees

Standard: There should be citizen advisory boards/committees.

Commentary: Advisory boards may serve an entire local governmental area, but also may serve a specific neighborhood, function, activity, center, or a particular site. The board(s) may be appointed by the mayor and the city council and/or the county commissioners, or may be elected. They may have delegated authority to manage their own affairs; however, have no final authority or responsibility for policy or administration. These types of boards are purely advisory to the governing body of the jurisdiction, which appoints them. Such boards may be composed of a relatively large body of representatives from all interested factions of the locality. In addition to those members appointed by officials of the city or county, interested civic groups may select representatives. The advisory board(s) engage the community and serve as advocates for the advancement of programs, facilities, and services.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide list of boards/committees with membership, authority, responsibilities and duties, terms of office, meeting minutes.

1.1.3 Responsibilities of Approving Authority, Chief Administrator, and Staff

Standard: There should be established guidelines defining the delineation of responsibilities for the policy-making functions of the approving authority and the administrative functions of the chief administrator and staff.

Commentary: The agency should have a clear understanding of how the overall approving authority, chief administrator, and staff relate to one another. Documentation of these roles is often defined through bylaws, memoranda of understandings (MOUs), charters, position descriptions, etc.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the established guidelines outlining the delineation of responsibilities for approving authority, chief administrator, and staff.

1.2 Jurisdiction

Standard: The specific geographical boundaries of the agency's jurisdiction should be set forth by geographical description and map.

Commentary: It is important that the Agency clearly sets forth the description of the geographical boundaries of its jurisdiction both within and outside the corporate limits. A detailed official map depicting the boundaries of the jurisdiction is essential.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a map with geographical boundaries of jurisdiction and service areas, including location of facilities identified.

1.3 Mission ★

Standard: There shall be an established mission statement, which defines the direction and purpose of the Agency.

Commentary: The agency mission is the purpose or reason for the existence of the agency and establishes the long-term direction for the agency services and activities. It shall reflect the outcomes or impacts that the agency seeks on its constituency. The mission statement shall be reviewed periodically by the public authority and is implemented through making and keeping of policies and achieving stated goals and objectives.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the established mission statement and evidence of periodic review.

1.3.1 Agency Goals and Objectives ★

Standard: There shall be established, measurable goals and objectives for the agency and for each organizational component within the agency. Such goals and objectives shall be directed toward accomplishing the agency mission, be reviewed annually, and distributed to all appropriate personnel.

Commentary: Establishing and routinely reviewing goals and objectives of the agency and each component helps to ensure direction and unity of purpose and serves as a basis for measuring progress. The goals and objectives shall state outcomes or impacts that the agency seeks to have on its constituency. There shall be an annual review stating the progress made toward the attainment of goals and objectives submitted to the agency's chief administrator and boards.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the goals and objectives for each organizational component, with evidence of annual review and distribution.

1.3.2 Personnel Involvement

Standard: There should be a process for acquiring and considering input from the various personnel levels within the agency in the development of agency goals and objectives.

Commentary: Obtaining the input of personnel has great value in improving the relevancy and coverage of goals and objectives statements; further, it encourages the feeling that employees have contributed to the management and operation of the agency.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide examples of the methods utilized to obtain input from personnel at various levels of the organization (e.g., surveys, focus groups, etc.) and how the organization's goals and objectives are communicated to all personnel.

1.4 Policies, Rules and Regulations, and Operational Procedures

Standard: A distinction should be made among policies, rules and regulations, and operational procedures and how each is developed and implemented within the agency.

Commentary: The differences between Policies, Rules and regulations, and Operational procedures are often confused. Policies are broad statements set forth by the policy-making approving authority. An established policy is a settled course of action required to be followed by the chief administrator and staff. Rules and regulations are administrative statements developed by the agency chief administrator and, when appropriate, approved by the board. They are based on the policies and set forth requirements guiding the activity of participants and staff functions. Operational procedures are guidelines, set forth by the administrator and staff to facilitate the implementation of policies, how something is to be done, when, and by whom.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide documentation establishing how policies, rules and regulations, and operational procedures are developed and implemented.

1.4.1 Policy Manual★

Standard: There shall be a manual setting forth the agency policies, which is kept up-to date, reviewed systematically, at least every five years, by the administration, and made available to pertinent administrative and supervisory personnel.

Commentary: The agency chief administrator shall prepare a review of policies for the approving authority. Policies may be reviewed in general or with specificity, but in either case, the chief administrator shall recommend to the approving authority the need to continue, change or terminate existing policies. Of course, policy changes can be recommended at any time and do not have to wait for the systematic review.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide access to the agency policy manual, demonstrate how it is made available, and provide evidence of its review by the approving authority and administrators.

1.5 Agency Relationships★

Standard: There shall be an understanding of the roles of counterpart and complementary organizations through liaison roles with nearby park and recreation agencies, public and social service organizations, and other local government agencies.

Commentary: Establishing and maintaining effective channels of communication between governmental and non-governmental agencies are essential in improving cooperation through partnerships. Good liaison can result in more productive efforts, including greater cost effectiveness and efficiency, in accomplishing the mission of the agency.

When possible, there shall be park and recreation agency representation on all development and subdivision control committees. This is especially important when the park and recreation service is not a department of local government, but has an independent board or commission. Also, it is particularly important to maintain liaison with regulatory agencies.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide evidence of cooperative efforts, including a list of staff with liaison responsibility. This information may be evidenced through Memoranda of Agreement, Memoranda of Understanding, Cooperative Agreements, etc.

1.5.1 Operational Coordination and Cooperation Agreements

Standard: There should be established policies on cooperative use and maintenance of facilities and program operation, facility design, land development, finances, etc., with other agencies or organizations or individuals.

Commentary: Long-term agreements with periodic review are preferable to annual agreements, inasmuch as they permit longer-range program planning. There should be agreements between the park and recreation agency and other city/county agencies, as well as the schools and other public and private agencies.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the policies and agreements.

2.0 Planning

NOTE: Standards marked with a star (★) are fundamental standards, and are required of all agencies seeking accreditation.

2.1 Overall Planning Function within Agency

Standard: The agency should have planning functions with established responsibilities, including at least one staff member or consultant with planning capability.

Commentary: Planning activities are essential to effective agency management. Frequently, they are the responsibility of a permanent component of the agency; however, they may be performed by staff from various units or contracted to an outside professional consultant. Complex demands for services and limited public resources require that the park and recreation agency carefully research operational alternatives and plan future programs.

Precise guidelines should establish the parameters of planning tasks and responsibilities. The planning functions that may be included in the guidelines are: multi-year planning, operations planning, budgeting, personnel allocation alternatives, systems analysis, contingency planning, etc. The functions should include a description of activities (budget development, forms control, grant management, strategic operational planning, traffic analysis, and information management) and how they should be organized or assigned.

The competence of the planning unit's leadership is a major ingredient in a productive and effective planning effort. This competence may be reflected both in academic training and in prior professional experience. The chief administrator should be closely involved in the planning process. A direct relationship between planning personnel and the chief administrator enhances the ability for the planning personnel to collect data and make recommendations, and the chief administrator's ability to make informed decisions.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the responsibilities and functions of the planning entity. Provide resume of training and experience for staff and/or consultants who have planning capabilities.

2.2 Involvement in Local Planning★

Standard: The park and recreation agency shall be regularly involved in local planning (community, comprehensive planning, strategic planning, capital improvement planning) that will impact parks and recreation services within their jurisdiction.

Commentary: Agency personnel shall be involved with the community planning process through participation on local planning committees.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Define the role, personnel and documentation of involvement (i.e., minutes, agenda, cooperative agreements, etc.).

2.3 Planning with Regional, State, Federal and Non-government Agencies

Standard: The public park and recreation Agency should have a working relationship with regional, state, and federal agencies as well as non-governmental service providers that impact the services within their jurisdiction.

Commentary: The agency should be engaged with regional, state, federal and non-government groups to ensure the coordination of planning efforts that affect the delivery of parks and recreation services within the jurisdiction. Involvement in these efforts should highlight the complimentary nature of the services and minimize duplication.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Define the role of agency personnel and documentation of involvement (minutes, agendas, cooperative agreements) in state federal and non-governmental agencies planning.

2.4 Comprehensive Plan★

Standard: There shall be a comprehensive park and recreation system plan, which is basically an inventory of existing conditions and recommendations for future programs and services, acquisition and development of areas and facilities, and administration. The plan shall be officially adopted by the appropriate governing body, updated regularly, be linked with a capital improvement budget and a phased development.

Commentary: The Agency shall have a multi year plan, which includes: goals and operational objectives, anticipated workload and population trends, anticipated personnel levels, and anticipated capital improvements and equipment needs. The planning process and its "end product" are essential to effective agency management. The agency shall have a clear written articulation of goals and objectives and a plan for achieving them. The plan shall cover successive years beyond the current budget year and shall contain provisions for updating regularly.

The plan shall reflect transportation patterns, population profiles, demand projections, private facilities, and socioeconomic factors, aligned and impacted agencies, organizations, and groups, and many other variables.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the current plan, with date of official approval; describe linkage to the agency's capital improvement budget and a phased development.

2.4.1 Trends Analysis

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

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. The analysis of trends over time may include impact of demographic changes, lifestyle and employment practices, complimentary recreation providers, medical advancements, etc., to inform the strategic thinking processes for the agencies' comprehensive plan.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the trends analysis documentation.

2.4.2 Community Assessment

Standard: A comprehensive community study based on population shifts and changing social and economic conditions shall be conducted regularly.

Commentary: A community assessment is a description of a community and its people. The purpose is to identify the needs of a community in order to provide services appropriate to those needs. Data collection should identify needs and priorities in support of planning decisions. It should take into account the cultural, economic and physical conditions that make up the community.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the latest community assessment and an indication of its use in park and recreation agency planning.

2.4.3 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 an inventory of programs and services and the physical resources of the community, demonstrating how the agency utilizes this information in the planning process.

2.4.4 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 the needs index within the comprehensive plan.

2.5 Feasibility Studies

Standard: Feasibility Studies shall be conducted to determine the feasibility of proposed facilities.

Commentary: Feasibility studies should also include market analysis, cost benefit analysis, site analysis, and external impact analysis.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide examples of recent feasibility studies.

2.6 Strategic Plan★

Standard: An agency shall have a strategic plan, approved by the approving authority, stating how the agency will achieve its mission, goals, and objectives. The strategic plan shall be reviewed annually.

Commentary: Strategic planning is vital to high performing organizations and involves large scale input (organizational and community) to identify and come to agreement on vision, mission, and values that support and guide the systems, structures, and strategies as a framework for organizational progress to achieve results. Strategic plans are devised using trends analysis, needs assessment, and organizational and community input. The goals and objects of the plan shall be measurable to demonstrate progress and results. The strategic plan shall support the priorities and initiatives of the whole organization.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the agency's strategic plan, date of approval by approving authority and indicate progress being made in implementing the plan.

2.7 Site Plans

Standard: There should be site plans to guide the use of existing and the development of future areas and facilities.

Commentary: The site plans should relate to a specific park site or special use area, delineating areas of activity, circulation patterns, building locations, parking areas and other components of overall development. The plan may include cost estimates for long-range operations. Site plans are not necessarily required for all areas or land holdings within the agency's jurisdiction, but those areas being actively maintained (or managed) by the agency or being planned for utilization.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a representative sampling of the agency's areas and facilities site plans.

2.8 Historical, Cultural and Natural Resource Management Plan

Standard: A historical, cultural and natural resource management plan(s) should address all resource-based areas.

Commentary: The historical, cultural and natural resource management plan(s) should be an integral part of the planning process. This should include an inventory of historical, cultural and natural resources and recommendations for how these will be managed. These resources may be addressed as part of the agency's comprehensive plan.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the historical, cultural and natural resource management plan(s).

2.9 Community Involvement

Standard: The agency should include community involvement in the planning process.

Commentary: Agencies should develop a systematic process to include the entire community in the planning process. It is critical that the diversity of individuals comprising the community (i.e., all cultures, ages, and abilities) are provided opportunities for input.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Describe how the interests (community organizations and individuals) representing the diversity of the community were involved.

3.0 Organization and Administration

NOTE: Standards marked with a star (★) are fundamental standards, and are required of all agencies seeking accreditation.

3.1 Organizational Structure★

Standard: The agency shall establish a staff organizational structure, specifying the interrelationships within the organization.

Commentary: An agency's structure shall reflect its purpose, its methods of operation in relation to its resources, and its relationship to the community. The organizational structure shall be established so that the alignment of responsibility and delegation of authority is clearly understood to enable an agency to carry out its goals.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the agency's organizational structure (i.e., organizational chart) showing interrelationships.

3.1.1 Statement of Purpose for Each Organizational Component

Standard: The agency should have an established purpose statement for each organizational component that is available to all employees.

Commentary: In support of the agency's mission, each organizational component should be guided by the purpose. The purpose statement should guide the work of agency staff with responsibility in the respective component.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the purpose statements and indicate how they are made available to personnel.

3.2 Administrative Policies and Procedures★

Standard: There shall be policies and procedures, encompassing administrative aspects of the organization.

Commentary: These policies may be included in the agency policy manual. Whether a component of the policy manual or managed separately, the material shall be organized in manner allowing personnel easy access. This may be accomplished through the development of an administrative manual, comprising the policies and procedures, covering various topical components such as personnel, maintenance and operations, risk management, human resources, and financial procedures. Each employee shall have access to the section(s) applicable to their position responsibility. The policies and procedures shall be reviewed on an annual basis and revised as needed.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the administrative policies and procedures and demonstrate how this information is made available to personnel.

3.2.1 Administrative Offices

Standard: There should be allocated administrative space and equipment to perform the agency's functions and responsibilities.

Commentary: The administrative offices should be accessible to the public. There should be functional meeting rooms for use by both professional staff and volunteers. There should be adequate office space for personnel with functional workspace, storage facilities, and filing cabinets. There should be an accessible resource library for staff use and research. In smaller agencies, particularly, these administrative office functions might be in conjunction with other departments of the governing body.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide documentation that describes the types of office space and administrative equipment used by the agency.

3.2.2 Support Services

Standard: Support staff and services should be provided to enable the professional staff to perform their appropriate functions.

Commentary: Sufficient and appropriately skilled clerical and administrative staff should be provided. Adequate support services, equipment, and materials, such as computers and copiers, resource literature, and AV equipment, should be provided. Current technology, where appropriate and feasible, should be utilized to effectively perform functions.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a listing of support staff and services.

3.3 Communication System★

Standard: A communication system shall be established to insure the accurate and timely transfer of information, both internal and external.

Commentary: An internal communications component within the agency includes “upward” and “downward” communication. This would include unit newsletters and other briefs and how they are disseminated.

An external communications component includes formal communications to higher levels of government, counterpart agencies, news media, and members of the public. Timely communications with external departments of government and outside agencies are crucial to success in cooperative efforts in meeting the needs of the community. Good communications with the appropriate news media are essential.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a communication matrix illustrating how internal and external communications are managed by the agency.

3.4 Process for Public Information, Community Relations, Marketing★

Standard: There shall be an established process regarding the integrated role of public information, community relations, and marketing functions of the agency including periodic reporting and evaluation.

Commentary: Public information, community relations, and marketing are complementary functions, which must exist within the agency. The functions overlap because they all deal with an organization's relationships and employ similar communication tools. While they have the same ultimate purpose of helping assure an organization's success, the purpose of each differs and each approaches the task from a different perspective.

The person or persons responsible for the public information, community relations and marketing functions shall periodically submit a report to the agency's chief administrator. The report shall include, at a minimum, the following elements: a description of current opportunities/problems/needs voiced by the community that have a bearing on park and recreation activities within the community; and a statement of recommended actions. The process shall be evaluated annually, at a minimum, for effectiveness.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the established process and examples of implementation.

3.4.1 Public Information Statement

Standard: A written statement states that the Agency is committed to informing the community and the news media of events within the public domain that are handled by or involve the agency and sets forth policies that govern what information should be released, when it should be released, and by whom it should be released.

Commentary: To operate effectively, a park and recreation agency must have the support of its community. An agency can obtain such support by informing the public and news media of events that affect the lives of citizens in the community. By providing the news media and the community with information on agency administration and operations, a relationship of mutual trust, cooperation, and respect can be maintained.

The agency's written statement should address how the agency will handle potential situations in, which the news media is interested in Agency operations, as well as situations where the Agency wishes to generate media interest.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the written statement.

3.4.1.1 Public Information and Community Relations Responsibility

Standard: A specific position in the agency should be designated to direct the public information and community relations functions.

Commentary: The agency should have a point of control for information dissemination to the community and the media. In large jurisdictions where media contacts are frequent a full-time public information officer may be needed to coordinate activities; however, where the community served is small and media contacts infrequent, the assignment of the function to an individual as a part-time responsibility may suffice. While it is recognized that each employee has the responsibility for promoting community relations, the intent of the standard is to establish the authority and responsibility for developing and coordinating the agency's community relations function in an identifiable position. The person in the position should either be or have direct access to the chief administrator.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the position description that reflects responsibilities for such functions.

3.4.2 Community Relations Plan

Standard: The agency should establish a community relations plan.

Commentary: The community relations plan focuses on identifying and addressing community needs of all segments of its service population. An agency should make use of the many community organizations that exist in its jurisdiction and establish relationships with them. The park and recreation agency should play an active role in organizing community groups where they do not exist. By establishing such links with the community, the park and recreation agency learns of issues, needs, and opportunities and responds to them before they become problems.

A well-organized community relations effort can act as an effective means of eliciting public support and can serve to identify problems in the making.

The community relations plan usually provides for the following: establishing contact with formal community organizations and other community groups; developing community relations policies for the agency; identifying training needs through interviews with community representatives; and establishing community groups.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the community relations plan.

3.4.3 Marketing Plan

Standard: The agency should have an established marketing plan, based on market research that includes an annual evaluation.

Commentary: Effective market research, planning, product development, strategies and objectives for delivering demand-driven, high quality programs and services contribute to successful park and recreation operations. Marketing is a process for accomplishing agency mission and objectives by developing, pricing, making accessible, and providing accurate and timely information about recreational opportunities that satisfy the wants/desires of target markets. Larger park and recreation agencies should designate a person or staff unit with the primary responsibility for development, implementation and evaluation of marketing strategies and tactics. In addition, the complexities of marketing and related research functions require that all agency staff be appropriately educated about marketing and its application across functions.

All park and recreation agencies perform certain marketing functions; the scope of their work however, depends on their size and mandate. Among the functions are user inquiry, development of an agency marketing philosophy and marketing plan, and development of operational procedures and policy guidelines to implement that philosophy.

The marketing plan should be based on marketing research. An agency should perform market research (i.e., needs assessment, trends analysis, etc.) to determine community program needs/demands, develop user-profiles and identify potential target markets for the agency. Analytical reports should be provided to appropriate organizational units.

An annual evaluation of the marketing functions should include the following items: type of activity, location, time, date, objectives achieved, and actual costs. The position accountable for the marketing of the agency should perform evaluations comparing the plans and the results of activities and meet regularly with operating units of the agency, neighborhood associations and other business/community groups to assess program needs and evaluate current programs. Marketing strategies should be evaluated against marketing objectives.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the plan and latest evaluation.

3.4.3.1 Marketing Position Responsibility

Standard: A specific position should be designated to direct the marketing function.

Commentary: If possible, marketing functions should be the responsibility of a permanent position of the agency. This person works closely with all agency units in developing, coordinating, and implementing the agency marketing plan. In smaller agencies, this may be one of several responsibilities of a single position.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the position description that includes responsibility for marketing.

3.5 Management Information Systems★

Standard: The Agency shall have a management information system, including statistical and data summaries of agency activities, such as daily, monthly, and annual reports.

Commentary: The management information system shall provide reliable information to be used in management decision-making. This is important in predicting workload, determining manpower and other resource needs, and in preparing budgets. Examples of data sources are program attendance, equipment and material inventories, work orders, budget administration records.

The administrative reporting system shall provide management information on the activities of the agency. Properly designed administrative reports will reflect comparative data and trends on activities. An administrative reporting system is effective in ensuring communications throughout the chain of command. An appropriate information system shall include at least financial, personnel, and program records; property inventories; legal documents; and accident report.

A monthly report shall provide heads of organizational components an opportunity to account for the activities in their units. Administrative matters may be discussed in the report, and comparative data on activities of the previous month, same month in the previous year, and year-to-date are valuable sources of management information. The monthly report may also permit the heads of organizational units to identify the objectives of their units for the next month.

The annual report may be a summary of the monthly reports. The report, which may be in a digital format, shall provide comparative data and statistics and account for the activities of the agency.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Describe and provide examples of use of the management information system, such as recent statistical and data summaries.

3.5.1 Application of Technology

Standard: The application and use of technology should enable the agency to operate efficiently.

Commentary: With increasing availability of technology systems providing a myriad of functions an agency should be researching and applying such resources as it deems appropriate. Examples could include but are not limited to office systems, records management and sharing systems, lighting and irrigation systems, work orders and work assignment applications, financial systems, course programming software, etc.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a list of systems currently in use by the agency and any evidence of research regarding future systems uses.

3.6 Records Management Policy and Procedure

Standard: The agency should have established policy and procedures for control, maintenance, and retention of records.

Commentary: The records management function is important to the effective delivery of park and recreation services and may be available in a centralized location. Those records that are basic to meeting the management, operational, and information needs of the agency should be included. Records management should be consistent with legal requirements.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the records management policy and procedures.

3.6.1 Records Disaster Mitigation and Recovery

Standard: There should be an established Records Disaster Mitigation and Recovery plan and procedures.

Commentary: Agencies may potentially incur disasters such as office floods, fires, and major weather disasters. In addition many records are filed electronically, which open them up to electrical and erasure disasters. An agency should have a plan and procedures for protecting its records, storing them and recovering critical information after a disaster, no matter the level.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the Records Disaster Mitigation and Recovery plan and procedures.

4.0 Human Resources

NOTE: Standards marked with a star (★) are fundamental standards, and are required of all agencies seeking accreditation.

4.1 Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual★

Standard: There shall be established policies, which govern the administration of personnel procedures for both professional and nonprofessional employees that are reviewed annually.

Commentary: The personnel practices shall include procedures for selection, hiring, and dismissal; retirement, hospitalization, leaves, vacation, other benefits, and increment policy; salary schedule; incentive system; and staff development program. The personnel policies and procedures manual shall be available to each employee, as appropriate to the position held.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the personnel policies and procedures manual and the date of latest review.

4.1.1 Code of Ethics★

Standard: There must be an established statement of ethical principals for agency personnel.

Commentary: Professional integrity is the cornerstone of credibility. Personnel shall have a clear understanding of ethical responsibility involving issues as related to the park and recreation system, business dealings with other entities, interrelationships with other organizations and agencies, and interactions with participants.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the Code of Ethics.

4.1.2 Recruitment Process

Standard: There should be a comprehensive recruitment process to attract qualified personnel.

Commentary: A written statement should initiate the formal recruitment process. Administration of the process should be the responsibility of one identifiable position. The recruitment process should be based upon an established recruitment plan with specific goals and measurable objectives that are evaluated annually.

Recruitment activities will be enhanced by cooperative arrangement with a personnel agency, if any and with community organizations and key leaders. Recruiters should be sent on-site to educational institutions and community service organizations. An extension of recruitment is establishing a park and recreation student intern recruitment process.

It is understood that in certain cases an agency is required to handle its personnel through a state or local civil service merit system, and is, therefore, linked to that system in the recruitment of its park and recreation personnel. Agencies are obligated to comply with all applicable statutes and policy statements.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the recruitment procedures.

4.1.3 Equal Employment Opportunity and Workforce Diversity★

Standard: There shall be an established policy regarding diversity for all employment practices and evidence that it is being implemented.

Commentary: The policy shall assure equal opportunities for employment, promotion, and equity in employment working conditions. The agency shall have an established diversity program that creates and sustains a respectful and culturally responsive workforce. The agency must comply with the American Disabilities Act.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the equal opportunity and workforce diversity policy and show evidence of implementation of the policy.

4.1.4 Selection Process

Standard: There should be comprehensive procedures for the process of hiring personnel.

Commentary: Comprehensive procedures are essential for the proper administration, use, and defensibility of the selection process. The procedures describe the order of events in the selection process. The procedures may deal solely with the selection process or may be incorporated in a larger personnel management or general policy and procedure manual. The procedures should include, at the least, information about the purpose, development, validity, utility, fairness, adverse impact, administration, scoring, and interpretation of all elements used in the selection process. The park and recreation agency may rely upon a state or local civil service commission, employment agency, or other public or private external organization to administer or provide one or more elements of the selection process.

Where a centralized personnel agency exists, the responsibilities retained by the park and recreation agency shall be specified. The park and recreation agency should retain specific prerogatives concerning the selection process that will allow the agency to obtain qualified candidates for its positions. Identification of the specific needs of the Agency, determination of skills and the personal attributes required for positions and the selection of personnel on these bases are examples of responsibilities that should be retained by the park and recreation chief administrator. The agency also should have a role in the development of the measurement instruments that are used in determining the skills and attributes of applicants for positions.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide selection process procedures and evidence that procedures are being followed.

4.1.5 Background Investigation

Standard: Personnel hiring should include procedures for background investigation prior to appointment, including verification of a candidate's qualifying credentials, review of a candidate's civil and criminal record, particular attention to drug and child/adult-abuse records, and driving record for employees assigned to operate motor vehicles.

Commentary: The background investigation is a very useful and relevant component of the selection process. Investigators must use all data available on the candidate to assess his or her suitability for employment. It is more reliable to conduct the inquiry in person, though telephone and mail inquiries are appropriate in cases of criminal history and driving records. Background investigations are generally listed among the final stages in the selection process only to suggest that this is when they should be completed; they are likely to have commenced much earlier. There is a need for special sensitivity to any possible child-abuse record. Background investigation procedures should be in the personnel manual.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the background investigation procedures and examples of background checks completed.

4.1.6 Employee Benefits

Standard: There should be an established employee benefits plan.

Commentary: Each of the benefits provided to employees should be described in terms of what is provided, under what conditions, and the extent of the benefit. Types of benefits often include administrative leave, holiday leave, sick leave, vacation leave, retirement program, health insurance program, disability and death benefits program, liability protection program, provision of clothing and equipment used by employees in performing park and recreation functions, employee education benefits, if any, and personnel support services to employees.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the employee benefits plan.

4.1.7 Supervision

Standard: There should be constructive and effective supervision of all personnel to help them grow professionally and improve programs and services.

Commentary: Supervision should be an on-going and systematic process and not just available when a problem occurs. Effort should be made toward establishing the supervisory process as one of helpfulness for the well-being of the individual and agency, and not just overseeing. Supervision can be one of the most important self-development programs available to the employees.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a narrative of the systematic process for supervising personnel.

4.1.8 Compensation

Standard: There should be an established compensation plan that is reviewed annually that establishes equity of compensation among units within the agency.

Commentary: The compensation plan should include entry-level compensation for the agency; compensation differential within position; compensation differential between positions; compensation levels for those with special skills, if any; salary augmentation; compensatory time policy; and overtime policy. The compensation plan for an agency should take into account agency employment standards, agency skill needs, and compensation levels offered by other local employers. The compensation plan should be based on the agency's position classifications and provide for differentiation between positions, uniform percentage increases between classes and positions, and room within the ranges for recognition of superior performance.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the compensation plan and evidence of its annual review.

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 the procedures and a sample of completed performance evaluations without identifying personal information.

4.1.10 Promotion

Standard: There should be an established statement available to all employees defining the promotion process and the agency's role.

Commentary: The park and recreation agency may rely upon a state or local civil service commission, or other public or private external organization to administer one or more elements of the process in accordance with legal, professional, and administrative requirements. Where a centralized personnel agency exists, the statement should govern the responsibilities retained by the park and recreation agency's chief administrator for the promotion of personnel. The agency should have a role in the development of the measurement instruments that are used in determining the skills, knowledge, and abilities of employees for positions.

The statement should describe all elements used in the promotional process and may be incorporated within a comprehensive personnel management or general policy and procedures manual.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the statement, and indicate how it has been communicated to employees.

4.1.11 Disciplinary System

Standard: There should be a disciplinary system based on the code of conduct and performance.

Commentary: The system should specify the conduct expected of employees, and particularly identify prohibited employee behavior. This system should include, but not be limited to: (1) compliance with agency statements; (2) unbecoming conduct; (3) appropriate appearance; (4) use of alcohol and drugs; (5) acceptance of gratuities, bribes, or rewards; (6) abuse of authority; and (7) proper care and maintenance of equipment. Prohibitions should be specific, whereas approved behavior may be stated in general terms (e.g., courtesy, punctuality). In addition to providing a copy of the code of conduct and performance to each employee, this should be a topic included in all levels of training and repeated at intervals to emphasize its importance.

The components of the disciplinary system should identify the methods to be applied to individual conduct in the interest of discipline. The system should be based on fairness to the employee, the agency and the community for, which it serves. Disciplinary action steps may be defined in collective bargaining agreements, if applicable.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the code of conduct and performance and the policies and procedures that guide the disciplinary system, and how this information is communicated and made accessible to employees. Copies of the disciplinary action steps should be included in collective bargaining agreements, if applicable.

4.1.12 Grievance Procedures

Standard: A grievance procedure, available to all employees, should be established.

Commentary: The procedures shall identify matters that are grievable; establish time limitations for filing or presenting the grievance; establish procedural steps and time limitations at each step in the grievance procedure; and establish criteria for employee representation. Formal grievance procedures should be written in clear, concise terms. If grievance procedures are part of a collective bargaining agreement, such agreement must be used.

A grievance usually contains the following information: a written statement of the grievance and the facts upon which it is based; a written allegation of the specific wrongful act and harm done; and a written statement of the remedy or adjustment sought. These three principal elements of a grievance may be included in one written statement. A form may be designed for this purpose to include spaces for noting significant times, dates, and actions taken relative to the grievance. Grievance procedures are outlined in most collective bargaining agreements.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the grievance procedures and indicate how the procedures have been communicated to the employees. Grievance procedures should be included in collective bargaining agreements, if applicable.

4.1.13 Termination and End of Employment

Standard: There should be established policies and procedures for termination and end of employment.

Commentary: Agencies should be prepared for instances of termination and end of employment with policies and procedures outlining the process.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the dated and approved termination and end of employment policies and procedures, and indicate how they have been communicated to employees.

4.2 Staff Qualifications★

Standard: The agency shall employ professional staff qualified to develop and operate programs and services.

Commentary: Competent professional staff shall be employed to carry out the program in accord with the goals and objectives. Type of staff needed to carry out specific program elements and services shall be concisely identified in the budgeting process. Each individual employed shall be delegated authority commensurate with the assigned tasks. Staff shall be qualified for the positions as provided in the job descriptions. Professional park and recreation personnel shall have certification and/or educational training appropriate to the position. Staff in certain positions should carry the appropriate certifications.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: List professional staff with the responsibilities and qualifications to carry out such duties.

4.3 Job Analysis and Job Descriptions★

Standard: Established job descriptions for all positions shall be based on the job analysis and include, at a minimum: duties, responsibilities, and tasks of each position; and minimum level of proficiency necessary in the job-related skills, knowledge, abilities, and behaviors.

Commentary: A variety of valid and useful methods are available for conducting a job analysis and establishing job descriptions. A job description should include both the position description (title, line of authority, scope and range of authority; duties, functions, responsibilities; and amount and kind of supervision exercised and received) and job qualifications (education, certification or registration, experience, competencies, special skills, etc.). Some agencies within civil service systems are obligated to use the job analysis and job descriptions established by that system.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a job description for a full-time, part-time, temporary and internship position, if applicable, and an example of a job analysis.

4.4 Chief Administrator★

Standard: There shall be a professionally-qualified administrator who is responsible to the approving authority for the management, direction, and control of the operations and administration of the agency, and who shall have authority to perform such responsibilities.

Commentary: The administrative or executive function is accomplished by the chief administrator employed by the approving authority to be responsible for the operation of the agency. The chief administrator shall be employed full-time, year-round, and be qualified by experience and education in park, recreation, or related disciplines.

Evidence of "professionally qualified" include holding the Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) certification, having a degree in parks and recreation or related field, or five years professional experience in parks and recreation commensurate with the position qualifications and involvement in professional park and recreation organizations. All criteria are highly desirable.

The chief administrator shall help the approving authority to become familiar not only with the individual responsibilities of the approving authority members, but also with general operation of the agency. The chief administrator shall keep the approving authority, staff, and community informed of public policy issues that affects the community.

A system shall be established to ensure that leadership is available when the agency's chief administrator is incapacitated, off duty, out of town, or otherwise unable to act.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the chief administrator position description and the name and professional qualifications of the current agency chief administrator.

4.5 Physical Examination

Standard: There should be a established policy governing the provision of physical examinations for employees.

Commentary: Certain positions may, because of the physical job requirements, involve a pre-employment physical as a condition of appointment. Some agencies within civil service systems are obligated to follow the physical examination policy established by that system.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the physical examination policy and evidence of compliance.

4.5.1 Workforce Health and Wellness

Standard: There should be an employee health and wellness program(s) within the agency.

Commentary: Park and recreation agencies are often the model for healthy and active lifestyles. As such, park and recreation agencies should provide opportunities that improve the health and wellness of its employees. Such opportunities do not necessarily have to be conducted by the agency, but may utilize community resources.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide evidence of the agency's health and wellness program and employee participation.

4.6 Orientation Program

Standard: There should be an orientation program for all personnel employed by the Agency.

Commentary: An orientation program of the agency should include (1) philosophy, goals, and objectives; (2) the history and development of the agency; and (3) pertinent sociological and environmental factors of the community and specific neighborhood in which the individual is to serve. Full-time staff may be provided a more in-depth orientation than part-time staff.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide outline of orientation program.

4.6.1 In-Service Training Function

Standard: There shall be an in-service training function within the agency that is evaluated, updated, and reviewed annually.

Commentary: The nature of the training function will be based on the size of the agency, with larger agencies having a specific training component and smaller agencies relying on training provided by other agencies as required.

The training component should facilitate the development of agency training programs; notifying personnel of available and/or required training; maintaining training records; assuring that required training programs are attended; implementing and coordinating training programs; selecting instructors; and evaluating training programs.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide evidence of the in-service training function and an outline of the training programs offered.

4.6.2 Employee Development

Standard: There should be a program of employee development, available for employees throughout the agency, based on needs of individual employees and future organizational needs.

Commentary: Employee development is a structured process that is utilized by an agency to provide opportunities for individual growth and development at all levels. The employee development program should foster the improvement of personal skills, knowledge, and abilities of personnel in order to successfully meet agency tasks and employee advancement requirements. The program ensures all employees equal access to training and development opportunities. The aim of employee development is to highlight specific opportunities for individual growth at all levels and to improve overall job satisfaction and performance. The agency may utilize the career development program to further the professional growth and capabilities of the employee's present and/or future job role within the agency. Leadership development programs should support current leaders and provide an avenue for growth of new leaders to address future organizational needs. The employee development program should include availability of periodicals, books, and other resource materials; attendance at conferences and workshops; staff seminars and study groups; in-service education program of a specific sequence and content; encouragement of correspondence courses and academic work; visitation to other programs; relevant certifications; and/or utilize a mentorship program.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide examples of how the agency supports employee development.

4.6.3 Succession Planning

Standard: Agencies should formulate a succession plan to ensure the continued effective performance of the organization by making provisions for the development and replacement of key people over time.

Commentary: Every organization has a unique population of employees that often reflects the age and life cycle of the organization. Over time, employees reach retirement age and vacate positions. Often, the retiring employees are in leadership positions or possess institutional knowledge critical to organizational sustainability. Organizations should be aware of the age demographics of their employee workforce and plan for their inevitable departure. Planning should involve employee development, leadership training, knowledge transfer and possible reorganization to ensure continuity of services.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the agency's succession plan.

4.6.4 Professional Organization Membership

Standard: Professional personnel should be active members of their professional organization(s).

Commentary: "Active" means more than holding membership. It includes attendance at meetings, presentations, committee work, elected and appointed positions, participation in educational opportunities, etc.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a list of professional personnel and the professional organization(s) in, which they are a member; indicate nature of participation.

4.7 Volunteer Management

Standard: There should be a volunteer management function within the agency, including a comprehensive Volunteer Management Manual.

Commentary: Park and recreation agencies rely heavily on the contribution of volunteers. As such, the agency should have a comprehensive Volunteer Management Manual that includes policies and procedures related to the management of volunteers.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the Volunteer Management Manual.

4.7.1 Utilization of Volunteers

Standard: Volunteers should be utilized by the agency in a variety of positions.

Commentary: Agency volunteers should be used for functions such as program leadership, fundraising and fiscal management, public relations and promotion, clerical services, advisory councils, program/service support, etc. Volunteer positions carrying higher levels of responsibility should be supported by the agency volunteer position descriptions.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide list of functions in which agency volunteers are utilized, the extent of such utilization, and examples of volunteer position descriptions.

4.7.2 Recruitment, Selection, Orientation, Training, and Retention

Standard: There should be an on-going function within the agency for the recruitment, selection, orientation, training and retention of volunteers, including procedures on background screening.

Commentary: As part of the selection process, background investigations are highly desired for all volunteers who work routinely with vulnerable populations, especially youth, senior adults, and persons with disabilities.

In certain circumstances, training specific to the volunteer's area of responsibility is strongly recommended, especially for volunteers who work routinely with vulnerable populations, such as youth, senior adults, and persons with disabilities (i.e., youth coaches, senior center volunteers, and rehabilitation center volunteers).

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the agency's recruitment, selection, orientation, training, and retention procedures. Provide the agency's background investigation procedures for volunteers and evidence of implementation.

4.7.3 Supervision and Evaluation

Standard: Agency volunteers should be monitored, should receive supervisory visits and conferences, and be evaluated regarding performance.

Commentary: Supervision and evaluation of volunteers is important to ensure adequate training is provided and to verify satisfactory conduct and performance. The degree to which the agency supervises and evaluates volunteers may vary depending on the role of the volunteers (i.e., one-time volunteer assisting with a park cleanup vs. a repeat volunteer assisting with a rehabilitation program).

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide written description of the monitoring system including current practices for supervisory visits, and examples of completed evaluations.

4.7.4 Recognition

Standard: There should be a function within the agency for the recognition for volunteers.

Commentary: Volunteers provide their time and energy to assist an agency without expectation of monetary benefit. Thus, officially recognizing the agency's appreciation for volunteers is meaningful and appreciated by volunteers. Recognition may take many forms, depending on the nature of the volunteer roles, from a simple thank-you letter posted on the agency website to an individual certificate of appreciation, to personal recognition at a banquet, etc.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide description of the nature of recognitions given, including any awards and public recognition.

4.7.5 Liability Coverage

Standard: Agency volunteers should be covered for negligence liability by the agency.

Commentary: Individuals representing the agency in any official capacity, such as volunteers, should be provided appropriate negligence liability insurance.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide documentation indicating coverage.

4.8 Consultants and Contract Employees

Standard: The agency should have policies and procedures regarding the use of consultants and contract employees.

Commentary: Consultants and contract employees may be utilized by the agency for specialized functions. These may be officially contracted for a fee or their services may not involve a fee. This may include consultants on human development, management, finance, landscape design, facility construction, etc.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the agency's policies and procedures regarding the use of consultants and contract employees.

5.0 Financial Management

NOTE: Standards marked with a star (★) are fundamental standards, and are required of all agencies seeking accreditation.

5.1 Fiscal Policy★

Standard: Fiscal policies setting guidelines for management and control of revenues, expenditures, and investment of funds shall be set forth clearly in writing, and the legal authority must be clearly established.

Commentary: Policy of an agency must comply with the higher authority of the parent organization and be based on appropriate enabling legislation. General and enterprise/self-sustaining fund revenues include revenues from property taxes, sales taxes, income taxes, licenses and permits, fees and charges. Policy decisions regarding revenues from other than general funds may include millage, grants, gifts and bequests, special taxes and assessments. Policies may include pay-as-you-go or pay-as-you-use. This shall include policies that low-income portions of the population will be accommodated.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide policies for fiscal and legal authority.

5.1.1 Fees and Charges★

Standard: There shall be an established policy on the type of services for what fees and charges may be instituted and the basis for establishing the amount of such fees and charges.

Commentary: Recognition shall be given to the function of income-producing and subsidized activities as well as "break-even" activities. Often a local agency will establish a policy to subsidize children's activities, but not adults, or establish differential fees for residents and non-residents. Such policies shall be regularly evaluated.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the policy on fees and charges and the current fee schedules.

5.1.2 Acceptance of Gifts and Donations

Standard: The agency should have an established policy for the acceptance of gifts and donations.

Commentary: "Reverter Clauses" are sometimes used to assure that the properties given for recreational use continue for that purpose or revert to the owners or heirs. Where a gift is real property, funds to build a facility, or funds to purchase acreage, there must be a provision for adequately maintaining the property after acquisition.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the policy on acceptance of gifts and donations.

5.1.3 Governmental Grants

Standard: Where feasible and appropriate, regional, state and federal grants should be used to supplement agency funding through an established procedure to research, coordinate and implement grants.

Commentary: Governmental grants can provide significant funding for programs, services, land acquisition and development. Grants from other governmental agencies leverage agency resources to enhance services, expand programs, acquire land and develop facilities. Typically, grants are awarded on a competitive basis through regional, state and federal programs. Grants may require local matching funds or in-kind services and generally include special conditions or restrictions to ensure that the grant funds are utilized in accordance with the program intent.

Prior to grant procurement, agencies should evaluate how the grant application process, approval, implementation and management will be coordinated.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the procedure along with a summary of governmental grants received by the agency for the past five years, including identification of the following: project descriptions, grantor, date awarded, grant amount, agency-match requirements.

5.1.4 Private, Corporate, and Non-Profit Support

Standard: Where feasible and appropriate, private, corporate, and non-profit support should be used to supplement agency funding through a established procedure to research, coordinate and implement alternative funding

Commentary: Such support can provide significant contribution for capital improvements, and enhanced agency programs and services. Financial and in-kind support from individuals, corporations and foundations can provide opportunities to address mutual goals of the agency and the grantor. This financial support may involve recognition of sponsorship ranging from public acknowledgement to facility-naming rights.

Prior to acceptance of support, agencies should evaluate the terms of acceptance and how the implementation and management process will be coordinated.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a procedure along with a summary of private, corporate and non-profit support received by the agency for the past five years including identification of the following: project descriptions, grantor/sponsor, date awarded, value of the contribution and applicable recognition.

5.2 Fiscal Management Procedures★

Standard: There shall be established procedures for the fiscal management of the agency.

Commentary: Procedures for the fiscal management function within the agency include, at a minimum, annual budget development, supervision of internal expenditures and revenues and related controls, and maintenance of liaison with the government's fiscal officers.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the procedures for the fiscal management of the agency.

5.2.1 Authority and Responsibility for Financial Management

Standard: The agency's chief administrator should be designated as having the authority and responsibility for the fiscal management of the agency.

Commentary: Although an agency's chief administrator is ultimately responsible for all fiscal matters of the agency, the size and complexity of the agency may dictate the need to delegate responsibility for fiscal management functions to an identifiable person or component within the agency.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide documentation demonstrating clear delegation of fiscal authority for the agency.

5.2.2 Purchasing Procedures

Standard: Agencies should have established procedures for the requisition and purchase of agency equipment, supplies and services.

Commentary: There shall be formal procedures for controlling the requisition and purchase of agency supplies, equipment and services such as; specifications for items requiring standardized purchases, bidding procedures, criteria for the selection of vendors and bidders, and petty cash and procurement cards.

Purchasing procedures may be controlled by the governing entity.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the procedures for the requisition and purchase of agency equipment, supplies, and services.

5.2.2.1 Emergency Purchase Procedures

Standard: There should be established procedures for emergency purchases within the agency.

Commentary: Established procedures are necessary to the agency in making emergency purchases to secure equipment or services in a swift and efficient manner.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the procedures for emergency purchases.

5.3 Accounting System★

Standard: The agency shall have a comprehensive accounting system.

Commentary: The accounting system shall be compatible with, or may be a part of, the central accounting system of the governing jurisdiction with the availability of regular status reports. It is essential that an agency establish such a system to ensure an orderly, accurate, and complete documentation of the flow of funds. The accounting system shall facilitate rapid retrieval of information on the status of appropriations, expenditures and revenue any time the information is required.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a description of the accounting system.

5.3.1 Financial Status Reports

Standard: The agency should utilize monthly financial status reports.

Commentary: Monthly financial status reports should include, at a minimum:

- Initial appropriation for each account (or program);
- Balances at the commencement of the regularly defined period;
- Expenditures and encumbrances made during the period;
- Unencumbered balances; and
- Revenue status.

Each appropriation and expenditure should be classified, at a minimum, according to function, organizational component, activity, object, and program.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the previous three months' financial status reports.

5.3.2 Position Authorization

Standard: There should be established procedures for maintaining control over approved positions in relation to budget authorizations.

Commentary: The intent of the standard is to establish controls on the number and type of agency positions filled and vacant at any time to ensure that persons on the payroll are legally employed and that positions are in accordance with budget authorizations.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the position authorization procedures and budgeted positions.

5.3.3 Fiscal Control and Monitoring

Standard: There should be established procedures used for collecting, safeguarding, and disbursing funds.

Commentary: The fiscal control and monitoring procedures should include, at a minimum:

- Maintenance of an allotment system, if any, or records of appropriations among organizational components;
- Preparation of financial statements;
- Conduct of internal audits; and
- Persons or positions authorized to accept or disburse funds.

Formal fiscal control and monitoring procedures enable an agency to establish accountability, to comply with funding authorizations and restrictions, to ensure that disbursements are for designated and approved recipients and, to alert agency management to possible problems. The procedures should enhance security and accountability of all monies received by the agency, and should include designation of persons permitted to receive money, receipt procedures, accountability, security, and audits. Employees handling money should be bonded.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the fiscal control and monitoring procedures.

5.3.4 Independent Audit ★

Standard: There shall be an independent audit of the agency's fiscal activities conducted annually.

Commentary: As a basis for determining the financial integrity of an agency's fiscal control procedures, an independent audit shall be conducted at least annually or at a time stipulated by applicable statute or regulation. The audit may be performed by the government's internal audit staff (external to the agency being audited) or by an outside certified public accounting firm.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the most recent independent audit and management letter, if provided. Provide the response to the audit recommendations.

5.4 Annual Budget ★

Standard: There shall be an annual operating and capital improvements budget(s), including both revenues and expenditures.

Commentary: Operating budgets include both capital and operating expenses and cover a one-year period and capital improvements may extend five or six years with annual review. The nature of an agency's budgetary system may be determined by the kind of system in use by its governmental authority.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the current and approved annual operating and capital improvements budgets.

5.4.1 Budget Development Participation

Standard: The heads of major agency components within the agency should participate in the development of the agency's budget.

Commentary: An agency's budget should be developed in cooperation with all major organizational components within the agency. To increase the value of the input and to enhance coordination in the budget process, guidelines should be established to inform the heads of components of the essential tasks and procedures relating to the budget preparation process. The guidelines should include instructions for preparing budget request documents and for providing adequate justification for major continuing expenditures or changes in continuing expenditures of budget items. Information should be included regarding operating impact.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide evidence of such participation by major organizational components in the budget preparation process.

5.4.2 Budget Recommendations

Standard: Agency components should provide recommendations, based on operational and activity analysis, for use in the development of the agency's budget.

Commentary: In particular, recommendations concerning personnel resources are logical and necessary outcomes of analytic and programmatic activities. In addition to an assessment of future personnel needs, the analysis should include an assessment of presently assigned positions to ensure that positions allocated to agency functions are appropriate.

Unit costs per program element should be computed and line items established for the operational procedures determined to insure adequate support funding for all personnel authorized. Adequate financial records and service statistics should be maintained to assist in this process.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide examples of agency component recommendations and evidence of their consideration in the budgeting process.

5.5 Budget Control

Standard: There should be procedures for budget control within the agency, including an allotment system, accounting system, frequent reporting of revenues and expenditures, and continuous management review.

Commentary: Agencies should utilize appropriate accounting methodologies and systems to ensure proper budget control.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the procedures for budget control within the agency.

5.5.1 Supplemental/Emergency Appropriations

Standard: There should be established procedures for requesting supplemental or emergency appropriations and fund transfers.

Commentary: Provisions should be available within the agency's budget system to meet circumstances that cannot be anticipated by prior fiscal planning efforts (e.g., additional funds to compensate for overtime expended during a civil disturbance or funds needed to purchase needed material not authorized in the operating budget). Mechanisms of adjustment may include transferring funds from one account to another and/or requesting that additional funds be granted for agency needs.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the supplemental/emergency appropriations procedures.

5.5.2 Inventory and Fixed Assets Control

Standard: There should be established procedures for inventory control of agency property, equipment, and other assets.

Commentary: Inventory controls are intended to prevent losses and unauthorized use, and to avoid both inventory excesses and shortages. There should be a complete and current listing of agency assets.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide procedures for inventory and fixed asset control.

6.0 Programs and Services Management

NOTE: Standards marked with a star (★) are fundamental standards, and are required of all agencies seeking accreditation.

6.1 Recreation Programming Plan★

Standard: The agency shall utilize a recreation programming plan that includes both a long-range plan covering 3-5 years or more that is periodically reviewed and a current-year implementation plan.

Commentary: The recreation programming plan includes all elements and services of the public park and recreation agency's programming functions, including activity selection, type and scope of programs, outreach initiatives, etc. Program elements are aspects such as community centers and playgrounds; programs for senior adults, persons with disabilities and other groups; and specialized program fields such as cultural arts and athletics. Program services are aspects such as program consultation, provision of equipment and facilities, and literature. While related to a master or comprehensive plan, the recreation programming plan shall be an outgrowth of other strategic and program forecasting tools. Program service determinants and participant involvement shall be included in this plan. Agencies with limited recreation program services need to have a plan that defines the scope of services provided by the agency within its service area.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a Recreation Programming Plan including both long-range and current-year plans.

6.1.1 Program and Service Determinants

Standard: The programs and services provided by the agency shall be based on the conceptual foundations of play, recreation, and leisure; constituent interests and needs; community opportunities; agency philosophy and goals; and experiences desirable for clientele.

Commentary: A systematic and studied approach should be taken in determining what programs and services should be provided by the agency. Other opportunities in the community, needs of the targeted constituencies, and the agency's own goals must be specifically a part of the consideration for programs and services selected.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide documentation and examples demonstrating that the five determinants are used in determining programs and services.

6.1.2 Participant Involvement

Standard: The agency's development of programs and services should involve participants.

Commentary: Participants should have involvement in (a) planning, through such means as club officers, senior adult and teen councils, and ad hoc committees; (b) conducting activities, such as serving as volunteer leaders on playgrounds, recreation aides for special group services, judges for contests; (c) sponsors, such as playground advisory councils, program and/or team sponsors, special project patrons; and, (d) policy recommendation through citizen advisory committees and study groups at both the neighborhood and community-wide levels.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Describe the process and provide examples of how the agency obtains and utilizes participants' input.

6.1.3 Self-Directed Programs and Services

Standard: The agency should offer self-directed recreation opportunities.

Commentary: Self-directed programs and services provide for recreation opportunities where there is only general supervision, including picnic facilities, tennis courts, roadways in scenic areas, bridle trails, self-guiding nature trails, and open playgrounds. These self-directed areas, facilities, and equipment should be provided to give an opportunity for individuals and groups to participate without leadership, under only general supervision.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide examples of how the agency provides self-directed recreation opportunities, including a list of such opportunities.

6.1.4 Leader-Directed Programs and Services

Standard: The agency should offer leader-directed recreation opportunities.

Commentary: Leader-directed programs and services provide recreation opportunities where participant involvement is directed by a leader, including skills instruction classes, such as tennis, crafts, dance; synchronized swimming performance; creative dramatics for children.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide examples of how the agency provides leader-directed recreation opportunities, including a list of such opportunities.

6.1.5 Facilitated Programs and Services

Standard: The agency should offer facilitated recreation opportunities.

Commentary: Facilitated programs and services provided recreation opportunities where individuals and groups of individuals are encouraged and assisted to operate independently of the agency. An example of facilitated programs and services would be an individual or group that wishes to start a community theater organization; the city may help initially by providing a meeting place, some administrative help in publicity, and "seed money" if needed; eventually the organization may become self-sustaining. Demonstration projects may be utilized for this purpose.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide examples of how the agency provides facilitated recreation opportunities, including a list of such opportunities.

6.1.6 Fee-Based Programs and Services

Standard: The agency should offer programs and services for a fee.

Commentary: Not all programs and services can be offered without charge. To offer some programs and services for a fee can greatly augment the recreational opportunities. Services for a fee may include the rental of picnic pavilions, ice skates and skis, boats, videos, safety equipment. Programs for a fee may include instruction, trips, and theater productions.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a listing of the fee-based programs and services within the agency.

6.1.7 Cooperative Programming

Standard: There should be cooperative programming among the public, commercial, and nonprofit entities.

Commentary: The public park and recreation program should be coordinated with related programs of other organizations in the community, such as the schools, voluntary agencies, and churches, to provide maximum coverage with a minimum of duplication, as well as to reduce inter-agency competition for the time of an individual. Programs under joint auspices with other community organizations should be established wherever feasible. In program development, marketing and community action groups should be involved. It is important to insure groups are well-balanced to truly represent the majority, as well as the minority, of community desires.

The desirability of total community programming is in order to avoid unnecessary waste of effort and finances. Frequently several agencies are found to be programming the same type of activity for the same people at the same time -- while some activities and people are neglected altogether.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide description of cooperative programming, with examples of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), Memoranda of Agreement (MOA), partnering, or outsourcing.

6.2 Objectives★

Standard: There shall be specific objectives established for programs or services.

Commentary: Objectives shall be written in terms of what the program or service is supposed to do for the participants. Frequently such objectives are written as general values to the individual, such as "develop desirable personality traits" or "improve the mental and/or physical health." While there is a place for this type of generalization, for objectives to be meaningful, they should be more specific as to the actual outcome or impact desired by the program or service. Only in so stating can objectives be used for evaluation purposes. The agency shall define the program areas by the objectives. These can be defined by the program areas; such as; nature, dance, music, sports, fitness, special events etc. These can also be defined further into levels such as beginner, intermediate and advanced.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide objectives for programs or services.

6.3 Program Evaluation

Standard: Programs shall be evaluated regularly and systematically based on stated program objectives.

Commentary: Program evaluations should be an integral part of the program planning process and should clearly document the extent to which objectives are met. The agency should consider an analysis of data collected from program evaluations in planning for programs.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide examples of completed program evaluations with analyses.

6.4 Outreach to Underserved Populations★

Standard: The agency shall proactively extend programs and services to residents who may be underserved in the community.

Commentary: Parks and recreation programs and services shall be available to all residents regardless of income, cultural background, geographic location, age or ability level. To encourage participation in parks and recreation programs and services, agencies shall identify and address barriers that may limit access by special populations in the community. For instance, financial barriers may be addressed through reduced fees and scholarships. Geographic barriers may be addressed through provision of transportation services or replication of programs at more convenient locations throughout the community. Language and cultural barriers may be addressed by use of interpreters or employment of staff that reflect the cultural diversity of the community. Agencies may offer inclusion support services to ensure access to programs and services for people of all abilities.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Identify underserved populations (provide methodology and data used for this analysis), describe specific barriers within the community that limit participation and provide examples of outreach programs and services offered by the agency to meet the needs of this population.

6.5 Scope of Program Opportunities

Standard: The agency's programs shall provide opportunities in all program fields for various proficiency levels, ability, socio-economic levels, racial and ethnic backgrounds, ages, and gender in accordance with the agency's statement of mission.

Commentary: The agency should take into consideration the total community offerings. Some opportunities may be offered by other community agencies, both private and public. Also, opportunities do not have to be available all at the same time, as there may be a multiyear rotational plan and seasonal considerations. Opportunities for levels of proficiency may be made by offering skills instruction, clubs, leagues, tournaments, theater groups, etc., for different levels of ability. In offering opportunities from each of the program fields, there should be special consideration given to those, which emphasize appreciation, understanding, and development of skills.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a matrix or listing of programs by fields, demonstrating clearly how the agency provides for opportunities for various proficiency levels, socio-economic levels, racial and ethnic backgrounds, ages, and genders.

6.6 Selection of Program Content

Standard: The selection of program content, specific activities, and opportunities shall be based upon an understanding of individual differences and the culture of the community.

Commentary: There should be a system of progression for activities based upon the abilities of the participants. Program content should provide for individual differences of interests, abilities (mental, social, physical), background experiences, etc. Activities selected should be suited to and contribute toward fulfillment of the basic physical, emotional, social, and intellectual requirements of individuals. Unique characteristics of different populations within the community should be identified and related to the selection of activities. In selecting activities, local resources and cultural characteristics should be capitalized upon. Program content should be related directly to stated objectives of the specific program.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a list of program activities and describe how individual and cultural interests were considered.

6.7 Community Education for Leisure

Standard: The agency should have a function to educate the community on the benefits, values, and impacts of leisure services.

Commentary: Education of leisure should be continuous and operational in nature. It should directly educate the residents about the benefits, value, and impacts of the leisure services provided by the agency, and the positive impacts that parks and recreation can have on society.

As practitioners, a program should be developed that educates the public about the sometimes subtle and intrinsic benefits that leisure time, and participation the recreation activities provide. Examples may include:

- Working with local schools to develop a class, or create a class within the agency's program regarding the benefits.
- Developing community presentations regarding the benefits and present at community functions.
- Creating a "benefits" video to air on the agency's cable TV channel.
- Organizing and categorizing agency publications according to the benefits associated with the programs.
- Including benefit statements in the program description so that the consumer would see how he or she would gain from participating in the program.
- Including the question of "How have you benefited from this program" in participant evaluations, causing the participant to reflect up on the benefits of the program.
- Including the benefits of the departments' programs and services in press releases and public service announcements that are broadcast to the public through various media channels.
- Conducting benefits-based program studies or demonstration projects.

Education of leisure services should occur in the practice of parks and recreation services.

Measurement of the efficacy of education efforts may be difficult, but a program should be in place to supply this educational information to the public.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide examples of the methods utilized by the agency to educate the community on the value, benefits, and impact of leisure services.

6.8 Program and Service Statistics

Standard: The agency should collect statistics on its programs and services for evaluation and future program and service development.

Commentary: Statistical data should be collected that is useful to the agency, such as proportion of constituents receiving services, number of participants registered and attending, number of groups and sessions; demographics of the participants such as the age, sex, cultural background, marital status, parental status, educational level, occupation, and length of time in community.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide examples of statistics collected and how the agency utilizes the data.

7.0 Facility and Land Use Management

NOTE: Standards marked with a star (★) are fundamental standards, and are required of all agencies seeking accreditation.

7.1 Acquisition of Park and Recreation Lands

Standard: The agency should have established policies and procedures for the acquisition of lands for park, recreation, conservation, and historical-cultural purposes.

Commentary: This authority usually originates in state enabling acts, is delegated to local governments and is implemented through local charters and ordinances. Lands may be acquired for park purposes through purchase, acceptance of gifts and bequests, and on occasion, through right of eminent domain. The utilization of lands may include joint use and cooperative agreements and lease agreements with other entities. Because land costs rise rapidly as areas are developed, planned acquisition is crucial. Acquisition of lands shall be for both current and projected needs of the community and based on policy and planning.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide policy and procedures for land acquisition and the citation of legal authority to acquire lands.

7.2 Development of Areas and Facilities

Standard: The agency should have established policies and procedures for the development of park and recreation land and facilities.

Commentary: The need and use of land and facilities in relation to the current program goals of the agency should be reviewed annually. The review should reflect a concern for optimum usage and coordination with the total area and facility resources of the community. Applicable open space and design standards should be considered.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide land development policies and procedures, with evidence of annual review.

7.3 Defense Against Encroachment

Standard: The agency should have procedures for protecting park and recreation lands and facilities from encroachment.

Commentary: Proper planning often requires the acquisition of lands for park and recreation purposes well in advance of the community's need for full development of programs and facilities. During this interim period, particularly, there may be encroachment pressures for both public and private purposes. Vigilance and determination are needed to preserve and protect the long-term public interest in these areas. If areas held in reserve are used and publicized for "use as trails, primitive camping, wetlands, etc.," the community will recognize them as recreation (i.e. natural resource areas, property boundaries) and help resist encroachment. The procedures should include progressive steps to address escalated encroachment issues.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the procedures regarding defense against encroachment.

7.4 Disposal of Lands

Standard: The agency should have established procedures regarding the disposal of park and recreation lands.

Commentary: From time to time demographic shifts may change the need for recreation services in certain geographic districts. Need for greater public interests, such as interstate highways, may make it necessary to dispose of park lands in specific areas. In such cases negotiations should insure that the public recreational benefits are not diminished. In many communities the park and recreation departments receive cash and land to provide similar facilities in another location within the community service area. Such disposal should be in accord with the comprehensive plan. In many jurisdictions, law requires a referendum before the local government may sell park, cemetery, riverfront, or waterfront property. Such legislative requirements safeguard the community interests from short-term political decisions base on expediency while allowing negotiation of long-term benefits.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the disposal of park and recreation land procedures.

7.5 Maintenance and Operations Management Plan★

Standard: There shall be an established maintenance and operations plan for management of the agency's park and recreation areas, facilities, and equipment.

Commentary: Parks and portions of large parks shall be identified according to the intended use of the area, ranging from heavily used and highly developed areas to the large meadows and wooded vistas that act as buffer zones and provide some sense of solitude. Each of these areas shall be assigned an appropriate set of maintenance standards including both recommended frequency and acceptable quality.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the current maintenance and operations management plan.

7.5.1 Facility Legal Requirements

Standard: There should be a regular review of legal requirements related to facilities, such as licenses, sanitary regulations, fire laws, and safety measures, and inspections of adherence thereto.

Commentary: Special attention should be given aquatic facilities, child care facilities, concessions, kitchens, and zoos.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a list of facilities, including date of last review and inspection.

7.5.2 Preventive Maintenance Plan

Standard: There should be a comprehensive preventive maintenance plan, which incorporates a preventative program for each facility that includes regularly scheduled systematic inspections and detailed safety checks.

Commentary: Special attention should be given to playground equipment, aquatic facilities, pedestrian ways, etc.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the preventative maintenance plan and examples of facility preventative maintenance programs with completed inspections and safety checks.

7.5.3 Recycling

Standard: There should be a recycling program for park and recreation facilities as well as the agency's administrative offices.

Commentary: The recycling program should include all major products suitable for recycling in the given region with an emphasis on making the recycling process easy and convenient for park and recreation users. The program should also include an educational component for both users and employees.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide description of the recycling program for facilities and administrative offices.

7.6 Fleet Management Plan

Standard: The agency should have an established fleet management plan comprised of an inventory and maintenance schedule of all vehicles and other major equipment, annual inspections, and a replacement schedule.

Commentary: The plan should include a current inventory of vehicles and other major equipment, regularly scheduled preventative maintenance, documented safety inspections of equipment, records of repair and maintenance of vehicles and equipment, and a replacement schedule of vehicles and other major equipment for the agency.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide fleet management plan.

7.7 Agency-Owned Equipment and Property

Standard: There should be policies and procedures for the management of and accountability for agency-owned equipment and property.

Commentary: Equipment and property policies and procedures should include the purchase and distribution to authorized persons, proper training of appropriate personnel in use of equipment, safe and secure storage of equipment, and maintenance of all equipment in operational readiness and working order. Such property includes supplies, materials, tools, expendable items, vehicles, installed and mobile equipment, and personal wear items used by agency personnel, etc.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide policy and procedures regarding agency-owned equipment and property.

7.8 Natural Resource Management and Environmental Stewardship★

Standard: There shall be environmentally sound policies and procedures that are integral to all operations.

Commentary: Policy and procedures are needed to address environmentally unique areas, wetlands, riverbanks, and woodlands valuable for erosion control, nature study, wildlife habitat, water supply reservoirs and water recharge areas. Critical elements include species selection for trees and shrubs, integrated pest management, knowledge of plant succession communities, and woodland ecology.

Even if the agency does not own/control the natural resource, there shall be procedures to ensure environmental stewardship the environment and work with other agencies to meet and promote environmentally sound standards.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the established policies and procedures.

7.9 Environmental Sustainability

Standard: The agency should have an established environmental sustainability policy that addresses energy conservation, environmentally preferable purchasing, water conservation/quality protection and sustainable design/construction of buildings and facilities.

Commentary: Parks and open spaces are essential green infrastructure providing carbon reducing landscapes that help clean our air and water, recharge aquifers and reduce storm water runoff. As stewards of these public spaces, parks and recreation agencies should set the example for environmental stewardship by employing best practices in environmental sustainability related to energy use, water management and consumption, product selection and facility design.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the agency's environmental sustainability policy and examples that demonstrate its implementation.

7.10 Maintenance Personnel Assignment

Standard: The agency should have procedures for the assignment of competent personnel with clearly defined duties for routine maintenance, repairs and minor improvements, general cleanliness and overall attractiveness of areas, facilities, and equipment.

Commentary: Effective maintenance of grounds and facilities requires the selection, training, and supervision of workers in a wide variety of tasks ranging from seasonal laborers to skilled trades. Supervisory staff must be able to focus on maintenance management, such as workload control, as well as supervise the technical details of maintenance work.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide examples of methods used by the agency to assign staff.

7.11 Capital Asset Depreciation and Replacement

Standard: The agency should have an established depreciation and replacement schedule for all park and recreation capital assets.

Commentary: Capital assets including buildings, facilities, and equipment have predictable life cycles that should be recognized in schedules that identify the useful life of each element and the associated costs of replacement. Replacement costs may be reflected in annual depreciation or a lump sum at the end of the element's useful life. Replacement schedules for buildings, site improvements and fixed equipment typically include a number of components, each having their own predictable life. Whereas, replacement schedules for mobile equipment (beyond routine preventive maintenance) and computer hardware generally anticipate replacement of the entire unit. Capital asset depreciation and replacement schedules, including projected costs of replacement, should be reflected in the agency's financial plan.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the capital asset depreciation and replacement schedule.

8.0 Public Safety, Law Enforcement and Security

NOTE: Standards marked with a star (★) are fundamental standards, and are required of all agencies seeking accreditation.

8.1 Laws and Ordinances★

Standard: Public safety and law enforcement within parks and recreation areas and facilities shall be governed by laws and ordinances, some of which may be enacted specifically for the control and management of parks and recreation areas and facilities.

Commentary: These laws and ordinances provide the foundation for controlling activities and behavior within the jurisdiction of the agency. General municipal codes, laws and ordinances and state and federal laws are applicable to parks and recreation areas and facilities. However, these laws generally have broad application and lack specificity as they relate to the control and management of parks and recreation areas and facilities. Special laws and ordinances may be enacted to specifically address and guide public use and behavior and may delegate authority to issues and enforce permits, licenses, rules and regulations applicable to parks and recreation areas and facilities. Specific municipal codes, laws and ordinances shall be posted or readily available to park patrons.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide documentation of the prevailing laws, ordinances and codes that pertain specifically to areas and facilities under the jurisdiction of the agency including documentation of approval.

8.2 Authority to Enforce Laws by Law Enforcement Officers★

Standard: The authority of Law Enforcement Officers to enforce laws and ordinances pertaining specifically to activity within parks and recreation areas and facilities shall be clearly established to ensure that enforcement actions are upheld.

Commentary: Enforcement of laws and ordinances within parks and recreation areas and facilities is vested with law enforcement officers. These law enforcement officers may be employed by the agency (such as park rangers or park police) or be provided by a local law enforcement agency. The authority to enforce laws and ordinances within parks and recreation areas and facilities must be established through assignment within the agency, by contract(s) with another agency or by policy of the general government policy board.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide documentation that establishes the authority of law enforcement officers to enforce laws and ordinances within the agency's jurisdiction.

8.3 Law Enforcement Officer Training

Standard: Law enforcement officers with the authority to enforce laws within areas and facilities under the jurisdiction of the agency must have proper training in order to carry out their roles and responsibilities.

Commentary: Law enforcement officers may or may not be employed by the agency, but someone needs to have the authority to enforce laws in parks, recreation areas and facilities. These law enforcement officers must participate in structured training programs to assure proper execution of their duties. Applicable training updates and refreshers are critical in maintaining quality law enforcement services.

In many instances, the park and recreation agency relies on the services of law enforcement officers from other jurisdictions or departments within the governmental subdivision. These law enforcement officers, should through the requirements of their respective law enforcement agency receive proper training.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide examples that the current training program for law enforcement officers having jurisdiction within the parks and recreation agency includes the full scope of responsibility and provides for ongoing training updates.

8.4 Public Safety and Law Enforcement Role of Agency Staff★

Standard: Agency staff has a role in educating and informing patrons of laws, ordinances, rules and regulations that apply to parks and recreation areas and facilities. This role and level of authority shall be established through policy directive.

Commentary: Regardless of whether the agency employs law enforcement officers or contracts for law enforcement services, agency staff has a responsibility to educate patrons on the proper use of parks, recreation areas and facilities. Agency staff is the first line to redirect behavior in an effort to gain compliance with ordinances, rules and regulations. Agency staff must understand that when patrons fail to comply with laws and ordinances, enforcement of these laws and ordinances thereby becomes the responsibility of the sworn law enforcement officers.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide documentation that defines the role of agency staff in public safety and enforcement of laws, ordinances, rules and regulations.

8.4.1 Staff Liaison to Law Enforcement Officers

Standard: There should be formalized liaison assignments for agency staff to the official law enforcement officers providing public safety and law enforcement service to the agency.

Commentary: Agencies having law enforcement officers on staff such as park police or park rangers generally have established roles based on the agency's organizational structure and relationships defined through job descriptions and position assignments. For agencies relying on the services of law enforcement officers from other jurisdictions or departments within the governmental subdivision, it is essential that formalized liaison relationships be established between agency staff and the official law enforcement organization. Multiple staff within the agency may have assignments based on organizational roles and responsibilities. In any event, the liaison assignments should be clearly documented.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide current documentation formalizing the liaison assignment(s) to agency staff with the law enforcement authority responsible for enforcement of laws and ordinances within the parks and recreation areas and facilities.

8.4.2 Public Safety and Law Enforcement In-Service Training for Staff

Standard: Agency staff should understand their role in public safety and law enforcement and relationships with law enforcement officers having jurisdiction within parks and recreation areas and facilities.

Commentary: In-service training for agency staff on their role, responsibility and relationship to law enforcement officers is critical to assure appropriate response to public safety needs. In-service training should be extended to front line staff such as lifeguards and park attendants to assure that they are fully prepared to respond to law-enforcement incidents.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide current documentation of in-service training for agency staff, defining their role in public safety and law enforcement.

8.4.3 Handling of Disruptive Behavior

Standard: There should be established procedures prescribed for agency staff for response to disruptive behavior at agency areas and facilities.

Commentary: The agency should define the role of staff in response to disruptive behavior. Procedures should identify staff's role in education of patrons, intervention when an incident occurs, documentation of behavior and delineation of law enforcement roles in handling behavioral issues.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide current procedures regarding handling of disruptive behavior.

8.4.4 Traffic Control, Parking Plans, and Crowd Control

Standard: Large-scale events hosted or facilitated by the agency require planning and coordination of traffic, parking and crowd control should be coordinated with the official law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the affected areas.

Commentary: Large-scale events hosted by the agency or authorized by permit to a third party should address traffic control, parking and crowd control. Plans should specifically define the role of the event sponsor, agency staff, the law enforcement agency and traffic layouts of the venue, traffic routes and personnel assignments.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide evidence that illustrates the coordination of traffic control, parking plans and crowd control for activities and events hosted or facilitated by the agency.

8.4.5 Handling of Evidentiary Items

Standard: Procedures should be established that guide agency staff in the preservation and handling of evidentiary items from discovery until transferred to the appropriate law enforcement authority.

Commentary: Agency staff, in carrying out their duties and responsibilities, may discover contraband or other evidentiary items that may be critical in law enforcement investigation and legal prosecution. Procedures should be established in coordination with the appropriate law enforcement agencies to define staff roles in ensuring that evidentiary items are preserved until the proper law enforcement agency assumes command of the scene.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the procedures defining the role and responsibility of agency staff in the discovery, preservation and handling of evidentiary items.

8.5 General Security Plan★

Standard: The agency shall have a comprehensive general security plan addressing all major areas, buildings and facilities under its jurisdiction.

Commentary: The general security plan may be a compilation of security plans from each major area, building or facility. Plans for each major area, building or facility should be available at each site. At a minimum, these plans should include locking key systems and associated assignments; alarm system and assignment of security codes; opening and closing procedures; fire alarm and fire suppression systems; emergency evacuation procedures; and critical incident response procedures. Hazardous or flammable materials storage areas are to be clearly identified in plans and at each specific site. Signage at each site should be installed in accordance with the unified signage system. To be effective, the security plan needs to be updated annually or when a new area, building or facility is added or security systems are modified or due to legislative changes.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the agency's general security plan with documentation illustrating that it is reviewed annually and updated to reflect current conditions.

8.6 Emergency Management Plan

***Standard:* Park and recreation agencies, having roles in emergency management systems within their local jurisdiction, should be aware of the applicable operations plan.**

Commentary: Roles may vary depending on the scope of services provided by the agency and the location of its areas and facilities. For agencies near large metropolitan areas or identified by other means, being aware of the applicable operations plan may not be sufficient. In these cases, the agency's specialized staff, buildings and equipment may be integral to the plan and may be deployed in the event of a large-scale emergency. The U. S. Office of Homeland Security provides guidance and support for the preparation and maintenance of emergency management plans.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the applicable emergency management plan with the most recent date of approval. If, due to security concerns, the emergency management plan is not available for public review, acceptable evidence is the emergency management plan's table of contents.

8.6.1 In-Service Training for Agency Staff

***Standard:* Through the use of in-service training, agency personnel should understand their role in ongoing security and emergency management.**

Commentary: All staff have a role in security and emergency management. In-service training informs staff of their role and defines specific procedures for routine operations as well as response to critical incidents and emergencies.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide documentation of in-service training programs on general security and emergency management, including a dated outline of the presentation topics and a roster of participants.

9.0 Risk Management

NOTE: Standards marked with a star (★) are fundamental standards, and are required of all agencies seeking accreditation.

9.1 Risk Management Plan★

Standard: There shall be a risk management plan reviewed on a regular basis which encompasses analysis of risk exposure, control approaches and financial impact for the agency.

Commentary: A comprehensive risk management plan is essential to minimize legal liabilities and personal injuries. A risk management plan analyzes the programs/services offered and facilities/areas managed for personal injury and financial loss potential and identifies approaches to handle such losses. It sets forth basic policies and procedures to manage the identified risks.

The agency shall implement approaches for identification and control of risks based on the specific needs of the agency. There is no prescriptive method for identification of all risks suitable for all entities; the method and tools used will vary. Risk management is an on-going process and its effectiveness must be systematically evaluated and adjustments made as appropriate. Responsibilities must be assigned and structure set in place to implement an effective plan.

The analysis shall include the direct costs (staffing, insurance, prevention) and indirect costs (time lost from work by injured employees, damage to equipment and facilities, failure to provide services and loss of income) of the agency's risk management.

In some cases, the risk management plan and function may occur outside the park and recreation agency by a higher government authority.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the current risk management plan with the most recent review date and approval by the proper authority.

9.1.1 Statement of Policy

Standard: The agency should have a policy for risk management that is approved by the proper authority.

Commentary: The policy entity for the agency must set the direction and give appropriate authority for implementing operational practices and procedures for the parks and recreation agency.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the risk management policy including indication of approval by the proper authority.

9.1.2 Risk Management Operations Manual

Standard: There should be a manual(s) of operating procedures for carrying out the risk management plan, accessible to all agency personnel.

Commentary: Specific implementation procedures are important element in a risk management plan. Guidelines for implementation of the procedures should be put together into a risk management manual to provide an authoritative guide and immediately available reference for all levels of employees. Not all employees need a full copy of the manual, but it should be available, and pertinent aspects should be given to the employees in accord with their responsibilities.

Particular attention should be given to national, state and local emergency plans and procedures directed toward large-scale natural disasters, such as earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, forest fires, and floods, and include evacuation procedures, inventory and location of equipment and materials, displacement plans for facility residents and activities, and psychological aid for staff affected by emergency, etc. Plans also should be prepared for civil disturbances, as well as emergency care both for special events with a large number of attendees and for on-going activity in the parks and recreational facilities. Special cooperative arrangements should be made with other public departments and agencies, private contractors, and community organizations.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the risk management operations manual and demonstrate how employees of all levels are made aware of the aspects pertinent to their responsibilities.

9.1.2.1 Accident and Incident Reports

Standard: There should be established procedures for accident and incident reporting and analysis of accident and incident reports.

Commentary: There should be an accident/incident report form, in addition to police, vehicle accident, or insurance reports, which includes identification information (who), specific location of accident (where), description of accident in terms of action of injured and sequence of activity (what), possible preventative measures the injured could have taken, procedures followed in rendering aid, and disposition. Data should be obtained in an appropriate manner to support planned and coordinated accident prevention programs within the agency.

Accident/report forms should be available to all employees at all times. Incident reports also must be made for such instances as disturbances, lost children, stolen items, vehicles break-ins, traffic accidents, etc.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the accident/incident form(s) and the procedures for documenting and analyzing accidents and incidents.

9.1.3 Personnel Involvement and Training

Standard: The risk management function within the agency should involve active interaction among personnel at all levels.

Commentary: Interaction is essential at all levels of the organization. The direct service employees have insights to risks that are critical to implementation of risk management procedures. The employees must be assured of their importance to ensure successful risk management. Employees at all levels of the organization must be trained to understand the risk management operational procedure.

Suggested Evidences of Compliance: Demonstrate how personnel at all levels are included in the risk management function of the agency.

9.2 Risk Manager

Standard: There should be an individual with risk management responsibility and authority to carry out the policies established for risk management of the park and recreation agency.

Commentary: Agencies should be engaged in aggressive loss control management and monitoring. It is essential to assign responsibility for this vital role and ensure it receives the credibility and acceptance it warrants so as to not be perceived only as insurance purchase. Operationally, for most effective implementation, a risk manager will be designated. The risk manager must be given authority to carry out the policies established regarding risk management, both with the employees and the administration. The risk manager will work closely with the finance office of the agency in facilitating the financial approaches determined to be most appropriate and with the administrator/supervisors of the programs and services in obtaining essential employee performance as related to reduction of programmatic risks.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Demonstrate the assignment of risk management responsibility to an individual authorized to carry out the policies established for risk management.

10.0 Evaluation and Research

NOTE: Standards marked with a star (★) are fundamental standards, and are required of all agencies seeking accreditation.

10.1 Evaluation Analysis★

Standard: There shall be a process for evaluation to assess the outcomes of park and recreation programs, services areas and facilities, completed annually at a minimum and linked to the agency's planning process.

Commentary: Evaluatory practices occur throughout a park and recreation agency's operations. The agency shall perform an analysis of the multitude of evaluatory functions within the agency, to assess the outcomes of programs and services provided by the agency.

The analysis includes identification of the qualitative and quantitative tools listed below, an analysis of the evaluation results and linked to the agency's planning process.

The analysis may include data gathered from the following qualitative and quantitative tools:

- 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

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Demonstrate that the comprehensive analysis has been considered by the agency in its annual planning process. Describe the process for evaluation and cite examples for how this data has been used by the agency.

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 Staff Training for Evaluation of Programs, Services, Areas, 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.

10.4 Quality Assurance

Standard: The agency should monitor and evaluate the quality of its programs, services, areas and facilities from the user's perspective.

Commentary: Today's park and recreation users are increasingly discerning in terms of facility, program, and service quality. Failure to provide this quality will damage relationships with customers and stake-holders, reduce potential revenues and increase long-term operating costs.

Park and recreation agencies must be sensitive to the issue of quality assurance and customer relations. Customer relations and hospitality training are important elements of quality assurance, but are not enough, by themselves, to guarantee quality recreation experiences. There must be total quality management. It takes consistency of effort and time to realize and continually improve quality. Quality assurance requires focused organizational decision-making, processes, and employee efforts toward meeting, and where possible exceeding, customer expectations.

The quality assurance function within the agency should include methods and standards for improving the quality of programs, services, areas and facilities. A quality assurance function within the agency should be the responsibility of the administrator or designated personnel.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide examples for monitoring and evaluating quality assurance within the agency (examples: customer comment cards, secret/mystery shopper surveys, verbal surveys of users, program evaluations, focus groups).

