



Parks & Recreation Benchmarking Program

**Tennessee Department of
Environment & Conservation**

Recreation Educational Services Division



**DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENT &
CONSERVATION**

**PARKS & RECREATION
BENCHMARKING PROGRAM
TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENT & CONSERVATION
RECREATION EDUCATIONAL SERVICES
DIVISION**

**PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
BENCHMARKING PROGRAM**

Program Overview

Local governments are challenged by tax payers to improve the quality and effectiveness of services, especially when the budgetary pressures increase, and this very often affects funding for parks and recreation services the most. Benchmarking is a process used in management and particularly strategic management, in which organizations evaluate various aspects of their processes in relation to best practice with the goal of increasing efficiency and quality of products and services, while reducing costs. This allows organizations to develop plans on how to adopt such best practice, usually with the aim of increasing some aspect of performance. It promotes the organization to “think outside the box” and opens organizations to new methods, ideas and tools to improve their effectiveness. Instead of pursuing decision making based on “this is the way we have always done it”, an organization examines what is proven to produce the best results. Benchmarking helps break through resistance to change by providing successful examples of problem solving that are currently employed and that are shown to work.

The National Recreation and Parks Association began an accreditation process in the mid 1990’s, for much of the exact same reasons the business world did: to identify, recognize and publicize quality Parks and Recreation Departments nationwide. Recreation Education Services (RES) developed, based on the NRPA model, a Parks and Recreation Benchmarking program for Tennessee that is modified to provide realistic performance goals for the varying levels of recreation leisure services provided throughout the state. Each local government providing a recreation/leisure component can achieve benchmarking in a classified Tier system. The Parks and Recreation Technical Assistance Service (PARTAS) section of RES assisted in modeling the criteria for each Tier certification by drawing on practical experience in the field working with successful quality parks and recreation systems.

The basic premise is to provide feedback to cities/counties/department’s, which are either striving to begin a park system, continuing to develop their system or wanting to excel in the services and facilities they provide. Benchmarking is most effective when one can model peer comparisons with parks and recreation leaders statewide. Recreation

Educational Services has also integrated the Benchmarking into the Local Parks and Recreation Fund (LPRF) and Land Water and Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant application process.. Integrating this program will allow communities to streamline their grant applications in the upcoming grant cycles during their five year certification.

It is the desire of Recreation Educational Services through the Economic and Community Development Three Star Program to begin this process and establish benchmarking criteria that will positively affect communities for many years to come.

PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT BENCHMARKING PROGRAM Application Process

The Parks and Recreation Department Benchmarking Program is designed as a part of the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development's Three-Star Program. A parks and recreation system benchmarked through RES may use the certification as part of the Visionary component of the Three-Star program – the Recreation Assessment, and receive points for completion. The Parks and Recreation Department Benchmarking Program is designed as a road map to assist local communities in their effort to achieve excellence in community and economic development. As a participating community, you will be guided through a comprehensive plan of essential criteria developed by parks and recreation professionals and with the cooperation of various state agencies.

The Benchmarking Program is sub-divided into three levels, called Tier Status Levels. All governmental entities administering public parks and recreation systems are encouraged to participate in this **Tennessee Parks and Recreation Department Benchmarking** process. The local government agency will select the Tier Level that best reflects their current level of operation and RES staff will evaluate if this Tier Level is appropriate for the community as part of the Benchmarking Certification. *It is recommended that the local government agency contact their PARTAS consultant to determine the appropriate Tier Level before beginning the application process.*

How does a community begin the process? A community can access the application and certification packet through the RES web site at www.tdec.net/recreation and click on the PARTAS link, or may contact their PARTAS consultant to request an application and packet. It is recommended that the community contact PARTAS consultants with any questions they may have concerning the Benchmarking process.

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**PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
BENCHMARKING PROGRAM
Application Form**

PARTAS Staff members are available to clarify questions concerning the form and criteria. In addition, PARTAS consultants can schedule a site visit to meet with the Agency to discuss accreditation; its merits and the process. PARTAS Consultants **will not** complete the application for any governmental agency or assist in revising answers once the application has been submitted to RES.

Helpful tips in application preparation:

- Appoint a coordinator – One person should be designated as the coordinator or “lead” of the project. However, involving many agency staff, board members and or volunteers is always helpful in developing information for the report.
- Study the standards – know each standard and their scope in order to collect, organize and provide the most current and accurate data and materials.
- Assign responsibilities and set dates for accomplishment – for gathering materials, preparation of various reports and pulling the entire document together.
- Write the report – each portion of the document must utilize the same format, font and designate a person to review for editing both for content and grammar.
- Final Compilation – report must be put in a digital format and burned on a CD that contains a cover label title page (identifying agency, date, etc.), personal note/letter from agency official, table of contents, completed application, body of report with appropriate attachments, additional attachments that have been specifically cross-referenced in body of report.

The Self-Assessment Study/Benchmarking Report

The Agency shall conduct the self-assessment and generate the benchmarking report. The Benchmarking Program Tier Status Levels Report generated by the Agency is used by the RES Review Team to determine the actual score and Tier level of the Agency. Therefore, the importance of this report must not be minimized. Agency staff is responsible for presenting detailed evidence, making it clear how each standard in the checklist document is being met.

The self-assessment study and the report generated by the agency staff is a major undertaking and not merely a cursory review of the status quo by administrative personnel or staff.

Submitting The Application Form & The Self-Assessment Benchmarking Report

The Agency will complete the Application Form and Self-Assessment Benchmarking Report and submit to RES at the listed address. **RES will accept benchmarking applications from May 31 through November 30.** RES will respond and acknowledge the receipt of the agency's application and report through written verification.

Recreation Educational Services Division Team Review and Evaluation

The RES Review Team will review and evaluate applications as they come in after May 31..

The RES Review Team will consider all pertinent documentation that has been submitted. The RES Team may then recommend the following:

1. Full approval of the Tier Status that the agency is requesting;
2. Deferral of Tier Status based on the following: A request for additional information or verification from the applicant is needed and/or on occasion it may be necessary for a member or members of the RES Team to conduct a site visit to the community to visually ensure accuracy of information and gather additional data. The appropriate PARTAS consultant will contact the applicant to assist in the process. The applicant will have 30days to submit additional information after notification. If no additional work or information is provided after 30 days, RES will send notification that the Tier Status is declined.
3. Decline Tier Status with reasoning provided;
4. Grant continuing Tier Status; or
5. Withdraw current Tier Status

If full certification of Tier Status is granted, the certification for that particular Tier Status level is good for five years. Upon the end of the five years the agency must resubmit an application for either recertification of the same Tier Status level, or request certification approval in a higher Tier Level. Each applicant will be sent an official acknowledgment letter and a certificate of Tier Status.

- If the applicant requests renewal of their same Tier Status, the RES Team may approve but with either suggested recommendations for changes or improvements; or with required conditions to maintain Tier Status or to assist in moving an agency on to the next Tier level after the five year continuation.
- If additional information is required, applicant will be notified in writing and will have no less than 30 days to provide the additional information. If applicant does not provide the requested information within 1 month following the applicant's receipt of recommendation letter, then the application will be pulled and the process will need to be reinitiated.
- Declining Tier Status would only be issued to initial applicants when weaknesses are sufficient to deny such status. **The RES Team is committed to working with each and every applicant to ensure that declining and agency only occurs in rare cases**
- After initial application, or during reapplication for a change in Tier Status, an agency has the right to withdraw the application before the RES

Team has considered it. The RES Team will officially withdraw the application until a later date.

Published List of Tier Status Agencies

- A list of all Tier Status agencies shall be featured on the Recreation Educational Services Division website and other publications.
- Information regarding the Tier Status of a specific agency shall be available, upon written request, through the Director of Recreation Educational Services. When the request is made, the agency shall be notified of the request.

**TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION
RECREATION EDUCATIONAL SERVICES DIVISION
PARKS AND RECREATION BENCHMARKING PROGRAM
TIER STATUS LEVELS REPORT**

Tier I: A city, town, or county can be classified as Tier I provided the following thirteen items have been established and achieved. Please include at least a half page overview/narrative for each standard, along with attachments.

1. Legal Authority, Role and Responsibility.

- a. The source of authority of and powers for the public recreation and park managing authority shall be clearly set forth by legal document.
- b. Through written guidelines and legal document such as an Ordinance, City or County Charter or otherwise (see TCA 11-21-102 & 11-24-104).

Explanation: Legal documentation of the source of authority for the parks and recreation program. (i.e. TCA 11-21-102 & 11-24-104).

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Local governing body resolution or ordinance establishing the parks and recreation structure, enabling laws, and charter. Provide charter or ordinance; city/county organizational charts documenting the function of parks and recreation within the government entity.

2. The organizational structure must include the development of a Parks and Recreation Board (an advisory or policy board primarily made up of citizen representatives is recommended, but elected official(s) may serve as a liaison from the City Council or County Commission to the advisory board and as a voting member of the policy board).

- a. Develops Board Operating Procedures (By-laws). To include membership, length of terms, composition, voting rights, meeting times, etc.)
- b. Develops sound Policies and Procedures for park areas, facilities, and programs.
- c. Develop Departmental mission statement.
- d. Develops or assists in developing and/or maintaining park facilities, program/event development to include a variety of activities for a variety of citizens.

Explanation: An Advisory Board that serves the community, usually appointed by the Mayor and/or city council with representation from all sectors of the community; the advisory board participates in many aspects of the recreation delivery system; policy boards may exist in joint recreation systems, or when a government transfers authority for the provision of parks and recreation programs to a board. These boards manage their own budget, policies, etc.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a list of boards/membership; community diversity; duties and responsibilities; copies of policies and procedures adopted by the board; copy of department's or governing body's mission statement.

3. Recognize an individual, either as a volunteer or paid part-time/full-time, as the Director of Parks and Recreation, to assist the board in the above duties.

- a. This "Director" is most likely the only staff person and in many cases out sources much of the programming to other organizations or associations. The Director in many ways acts as a facilitator for much of these functions or endeavors.

Explanation: How are programs being delivered in your community – who is the professional or coordinator serving in that lead role?

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Organizational chart of the department or functions of the Director within the city; provide job description or job plan for the Director position; describe whether full-time or part-time or volunteer.

4. Established partnerships:

- a. Recognizing and understanding the roles of counterpart and complementary agencies in the community.

Explanation: Effective relationships and partnerships are the first steps to improving cooperation. Keeping lines of communication open helps your agency establish new programs and meets its goals.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Document who you are partnering with in your community. Provide examples of cooperative efforts or agreements and illustrate the impact of good working relationships

5. Planning must include written goals and objectives for the department.

- a. These should be directed toward accomplishing the department's mission and be updated annually.
- b. Goals and objectives must also address future organization and development and focus on plans for growth.

Explanation: A sound mission statement declares the agency's purpose or reason for existence, is adopted by the governing body and understood by all staff, boards, and the public. The mission of the agency guides the development of annual goals and objectives or plans.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a copy of a written mission statement, written goals and objectives for the department/agency.

6. Recreation Programs, Services and Events provided shall be based on:

- a. Department philosophy and goals.
- b. Community opportunities.
- c. Constituency needs.
- d. Program development should involve the citizens/participants.
- e. Services are most likely delivered through other organizations/associations or cooperative means.

Explanation: The Recreation Program is also defined as the total services of your parks and recreation department including essential program elements such as community centers and playgrounds, programs for seniors, programs for special populations, cultural arts, and other special areas. Program services can be administrative, financing, areas and facilities, activity selection, literature, etc.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Department's program philosophy, needs assessment done in the community, current year recreation program plans. Provide citizen input results from other methods such as community meetings; other organizations that provide recreation programs in your community.

7. Marketing, Public Relations and Customer Service

- a. The Department should have some type of marketing component to ensure that the targeted public is receiving information concerning the Department's activities, mission and objectives.

Explanation: It is imperative that a park and recreation agency has the support of its community. The effectiveness and success of programs depend on their involvement.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a marketing plan or public information plan to show how you distribute information to the media and describe the relationship with media in your community. Provide a written statement.

8. Resource Management and Land Use Planning

- a. A master site plan for areas and facilities must be included in overall comprehensive planning.
- b. Citizen involvement in the planning process must be attained to best meet their needs and gain their support.

Explanation: The agency must demonstrate knowledge of the interrelationship between leisure behavior and the natural environment, and the understanding of the principles and practices basic to the effective management of recreation users in natural resources settings.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a copy of procedures for land management and protection issues; copy of the master site plan(s); land use plan.

9. Facility Use Management

a. A written land development policy and procedures for development of park and recreation lands and facilities within the financial framework of the department/city must be completed.

b. There must be dedicated city personnel/and or volunteer organizations to assist in maintaining park facilities at an established standard.

Explanation: A community should have a plan indicating where future recreation development is desired within current land holdings. Also maintenance schedule and plan to show the allocation of labor and resources to upkeep of facilities and recreation land.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Written maintenance/management plans; checklists for parks and facilities; preventive maintenance program outline; personnel involved in the maintenance and operations section of facility management; recent inspection reports.

10. Fiscal Policy

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

b. There must be an established policy on the type of services for which fees and charges may be instituted and the basis for establishing the amount of such fees and charges.

Explanation: Fiscal policies that govern the acceptance of fees and the disbursement of funds are a necessary component to meet legal requirements.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Written policies for the accounting of revenue from fees charged and the disbursement of funds. These would include those established by the local government for adherence and the procedures a citizen board follows. Include written rental agreements and fee schedule for all activities and rentals.

11. Budgeting

a. There shall be an annual operating and capital improvement budgets, including both revenue and expenditures. What is the annual budgeting process?

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Written copies of the last 3 years budgets for the department or organization. Must include identifying sources of revenue and line items for expenses.

12. Risk Management

- a. There must be a policy for risk management, which is approved by the Department's policy entity.
- b. There must be an employee or designee with risk management responsibility and authority to carry out the policies established for risk management.

Explanation: Each department or organization has the responsibility to provide safe facilities and programs for the use by the public. Liability should always get examination to protect the local government and the organization.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: A written risk management plan that includes insurance liability coverage, name of provider, and policy for inspections and maintenance records. Indication of who has the responsibility for evaluation and implementation of a risk management program.

13. Safety and Security

- a. Partnerships with local law enforcement agencies (city/County) must be established for general patrol to include basic safety and security for park and recreation sites and facilities.
- b. A general security plan shall be developed and enacted for both general use of outdoor area and facilities, and for specific group program/activity functions.

Suggested Evidence for Compliance: A written emergency management plan that indicates routes of evacuation, procedures for notification of emergencies requiring law enforcement, fire, or emergency medical, appropriate signage with emergency phone numbers, what patrol procedures are used, staff responsibilities and training, and inventory of equipment.

Tier II: A City, town or county can be classified as Tier II provided all of the objectives in Tier I and the following sixteen objectives in Tier II have been established and achieved. Please include a half page overview/narrative for each standard, along with attachments.

1. Legal Authority, Role and Responsibility

- a. The Parks and Recreation Board has developed sound policies to guide management/staff in the performance of duties, particularly related to planning, facility development and fiscal matters.
- b. The parks and Recreation Board has developed manuals pertaining to Administration (policies and operational procedures, personnel, employment), Maintenance, Aquatics, Playgrounds, Risk management, etc.
- c. Specific distinction has been made among policies, rules and regulations, and operational procedures.

Explanation: Provide legal documentation for the source of authority for the parks and recreation program. (i.e., TCA 11-21-102 & 11-24-104).

Policies are broad statements set forth by the policy making board. Rules and regulations are administrative statements developed by the chief administrator and usually approved by the board. They are based on policies and create certain requirements for staff activities. Operational procedures are guidelines produced by the administrator and staff, to facilitate the implementation of programs through assigning specific responsibilities, producing a schedule, and outlining a plan of action.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide evidence of these distinctions and how each type is developed and administered. Include copies of manuals – or table of contents – describing content and distribution method to staff. How is this process reviewed among staff, and/or board?

2. Establishment of a formal organizational structure to include:

- a. City/County employ's full-time Parks and Recreation Director.
- b. Some professional and support staff is provided to administer/oversee certain functions of the park system. Positions may include Maintenance Foreman and Maintenance Utility Worker, Secretary/Marketing, Programmer (recreation and athletic).
- c. Creation of an organizational chart with personnel job descriptions.
- d. Establishment of adequate administrative space and equipment (office).
- e. A communication system has been established to insure the accurate and timely transfer of information, both internal and external.

- f. Specific geographical descriptions and maps should set and establish physical boundaries of the Department/Agencies' jurisdiction.
- g. Mission statement is defined and strategically placed in correspondence letterheads, flyers, pamphlets, posters, etc.

Explanation: The agency should have a formal structure with a full-time Parks and Recreation Director and some professional staff – such as Programmers, Supervisors, Crew Leaders, etc. Specify in detail the structure and how the system functions and develop an organizational chart. Are you fulfilling your mission statement? There should be adequate administrative space and equipment to perform the department's functions and responsibilities.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide copies of organizational charts for both the agency/department and the local governmental structure, a copy of mission statement. Provide job descriptions for all full time professional staff. Supply a copy of the administrative manual; a checklist of the types of administrative space utilized and to what level these offices/spaces are accessible to the public. Describe your communication system.

3. Has established partnerships:

- a. Through the use of written, established policies/agreements on cooperative use and maintenance of facilities and program operation, facility design, land development, finances, etc. with other organizations, agencies or individuals.

Explanation: Long-range program planning utilizing cooperative agreements and established partners can create very successful programs and efficient operations.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a copy of policies and any agreements for shared use of facilities, MOA's (Memoranda of Agreements) and MOU's (Memoranda of Understanding), cooperative program or sponsorship efforts.

4. Strategic Planning must include:

- a. Obtaining input from various personnel within the department to develop and update annual departmental goals and objectives.
- b. Long Range Plan that incorporates steps that identify: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? How do we get there? Who is responsible?
- c. An annual written evaluation stating the progress made toward the attainment of goals and objectives must be submitted to the department chief elected official (normally the City or County Mayor). This evaluation should also be submitted and reviewed by the advisory or policy board.

Explanation: In order to measure progress, the department should identify goals and objectives over the long term utilizing a defined strategy to provide direction and communicate these to the community. The department implements a system to measure the outcomes of programs, facilities, and activities and their impact on the community. Obtaining and encouraging input from personnel also greatly improves the importance and coverage of goals and objectives statements.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a copy of goals and objectives for each organizational component for a minimum of five years. Document public planning meetings and needs assessment surveys. How is input received from the public and personnel?

5. Recreation Programs, Services and Events provided shall be based on:

- a. Services shall be delivered in a variety of ways, such as: structured or semi-structured programs, outreach, user services, and rentals.
- b. The program should provide for recreation opportunities under primarily general supervision with some direct face-to-face leadership
- c. Services should be provided to train individuals and small groups in conducting various programs and services so they can work assist the department in delivery and take leadership in providing a variety of activities.
- d. Some services should be offered for a fee to augment basic recreation opportunities.
- e. Specific objectives must be established for each program or services offered and evaluation system devised to measure success.
- f. Programs and services shall be available to all cultures and population residents of and visitors to the community.

Explanation: An inventory of programs and services and resources in the community is necessary to determine program-planning direction. A needs assessment or survey determines the needs, attitudes and interests of citizens for recreation activities. Staff should follow the principles of program planning to ensure opportunities for all.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a schedule of fees and charges, and policy of implementation; program objectives (some samples); program planning principles utilized by your staff; copies of quarterly program brochures or newspapers showing programs/events offered for all needs and abilities; copy of a recent citizens' survey. Training and requirements for contractual staff and non profit organizations in providing programs using park facilities.

6. Marketing, Public Relations and Customer Service

- a. A specific person within City/County administrations should serve in the capacity of marketing and public relations for parks and recreation facilities and programming.

Explanation: The department should show its commitment to establishing community ties. This standard is addressed to show a specific intent of assigning a staff person within the agency the responsibility to develop those relationships and create new and meaningful partnerships.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a community relations plan or show the organizational chart and/or job description.

7. Facility Use Management

- a. There must be a written maintenance and operations plan for management of the Department's park and recreation area, facilities, and equipment. This includes but is not limited to: established facility plan and inspection checklists, playground inspection checklists, vandalism procedures, visitor safety, athletic field plan and inspection checklists, employee orientation forms, etc.
- b. There must be an established regular review of legal requirements related to facilities, such as licenses, sanitary regulations, fire laws, and safety measures, and inspections of adherence to. Special attention is needed for swimming pools, restrooms, kitchens, or animal (zoo) facilities. Do larger departments do this in an official meeting?
- c. There must be a preventive maintenance program, including regularly scheduled systematic inspections and careful safety checks, for each facility.
- d. There must be competent personnel assigned for routine maintenance, repairs and minor improvements, general cleanliness and overall attractiveness of areas, facilities, and equipment with clearly defined duties.

Explanation: There are many types of park areas and facilities in the larger departments, and these agencies should each have a unique set of maintenance standards and/or management plans for each area/park. Special attention to preventive maintenance practices for high use facilities such as playground equipment, swimming pools, and trails.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Written maintenance/management plans; checklists for parks and facilities; preventive maintenance program outline; personnel involved in the maintenance and operations section of facility management; recent inspection reports.

8. Management of Information Systems/records Management

- a. The Department must have a central records system, including records control, maintenance and retention.
- b. There must be written procedures for handling of funds by personnel.

- c. There must be written procedures for accident and incident information collection and use of the accident or incident report.

Explanation: The management information system should provide management information on the activities of the department and should provide reliable information for use in decision-making. Different types of data sources, software, and hardware used for the management of the department.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Describe and provide examples of written procedures, statistical information, data summaries, records system, etc.

9. Resource Management and Land Use Planning

- a. Most plans and studies should be conducted and prepared by a park planner, landscape architect, or other design professional, depending upon the nature of the project. New, what about old?
- b. The overall physical plan should have phased development (prioritization), with a capital improvement budget for each phase. The plan should provide for flexibility due to changing conditions.
- c. There should be procedures for protecting park and recreation lands and facilities from encroachment.

Explanation: Good planning requires special attention to the community's needs for open space, natural areas, encroachment and development pressures, and other special areas such as wetlands protection. Sound environmental practices are an important aspect of the department's overall land use plan.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide copy of standards and procedures; master site plans and/or studies; inventories of protected land, program listing or brochure of programs and facilities that illustrate your policies and/or philosophy.

10. Recruitment and Selection of Personnel

- a. There must be a written policy regarding hiring and selection of employees that complies with all applicable federal laws and regulations concerning equal employment opportunity and due process..
- b. There should be a written compensation program, which is reviewed annually. There should be equity of compensation among units (departments) within the local governmental structure.
- c. There must be a written fringe benefits program.
- d. Every effort to secure qualified personnel, especially in upper management, must be employed by the department.

Explanation: There should be a comprehensive aggressive recruitment and selection program to secure qualified personnel. One person should have administrative control to implement policies of cultural diversity, employee compensation and fringe benefits, etc. The human resource or finance departments of the local governing body may supply this service.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a copy of recruitment and selection procedures; selection process manual; cultural diversity policy of the department, or local governing body.

11. Human Resources

- a. A written analysis for all positions must be maintained on file and shall include, at a minimum: duties, responsibilities, and tasks of each position; and minimum level of proficiency in the job related skills, knowledge, abilities and behaviors.
- b. There shall be written policies, which govern the administration of personnel procedures for both professional and nonprofessional employees and are reviewed annually.
- c. Professional park and recreation personnel must be active members of their professional organizations.
- d. There should be constructive and effective supervision of all personnel to help them grow professionally and interpret program to the community.
- e. There should be an orientation program for all personnel employed by the Department.
- f. Volunteers should be utilized in the Department for functions such as program leadership, financial drives and fiscal management, public relations and promotions, clerical services, and advisory councils.
- g. There should be a program of recognition for volunteers.

Explanation: Department should understand and apply personnel management techniques, including performance evaluations, recruitment, selection, training, motivation, career development and evaluation/recognition of staff and volunteers.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Listing of professional staff with qualifications/responsibilities, job descriptions which include the physical requirements of the position, education and training requirements and environmental and safety requirements. Indicate professional certifications necessary for positions. Include performance evaluation process and forms, a current copy of orientation program; training plans and programs for all staff; comprehensive volunteer manual.

12. Fiscal Policy

- a. There must be a written policy for the acceptance of gifts and bequests.

- b. Where feasible and appropriate, matching funding by state and federal governments, voluntary agencies, private groups, and individual's maybe used.
- c. There shall be written procedures for fiscal management of the Department.
- d. The Departments Director or chief administrator must be designated as having the authority and responsibility for the fiscal management of the Department.
- e. Outside agencies, organizations, and corporations should be utilized for funding programs and facilities of many different types.
- f. The Department must have an accounting system that includes, at a minimum, provisions for monthly status reports.

Explanation: The department or governing body should have a policy for the acceptance of gifts and bequests. Written procedures for fiscal management for the department are essential when dealing with outside agencies, grants, etc.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide the procedures and guidelines for fiscal policies; records/reports and recent examples of government cost sharing (matching funds); copies of monthly financial reports. Include fees and charges policy and fee schedule.

13. Budgeting

- a. Department personnel have prepared written recommendations, based on operational and activity analysis, for use in the development of the department's budget.
- b. There are written procedures for inventory control of the Department's property, equipment and other assets.

Explanation: The budget preparation is in conjunction with all major operational/organizational components within the department. Guidelines available to encourage input and enhance coordination in the budget process by key personnel.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide procedures or written recommendations illustrating staff involvement; a copy of procedures and practices for budget control. Last three years budgets and detail the approval process of the budget.

14. Risk Management

- a. There must be a risk management analysis systematically performed annually and with approaches to control of risks clearly identified.

Explanation: Use methods and tools appropriate for your type of department/agency – it is important that the department has a systematic procedure established to assure total assessment reduce

liability, manage risk, and provide safe use of facilities and participation in programs

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Risk management evaluation procedures for special events and programs, and which includes forms for regular inspections and reporting of liability and safety issues. Indicate liability coverage for facilities and provider. Hold Harmless agreements and waivers should be included and requirements of insurance for contractual labor.

15. Safety and Security

- a. The authority of all park and recreation personnel as related to law enforcement, traffic control, and general security functions shall be clearly set forth by policy statement and communicated to appropriate persons. A person (staff member) shall be designated as liaison to the jurisdictional police.
- b. There must be a plan for traffic control, worked out in conjunction with the jurisdictional police for:
 - Each activity/facility site, including parking and foot travel.
 - Each major event where there are large numbers of people and vehicles.
 - Crowd control
 - Traffic patterns
 - Emergencies, natural disasters, etc.
- c. There must be clearly identified procedures for recording and documenting accidents and disturbances within the parks and facilities.

Explanation: This standard illustrates the understanding of the law enforcement in management of leisure services, including land management, personnel, human rights, financing, and risk management. The development of an emergency action plan and training of staff is vital at this level to provide swift and appropriate care. Methods of compliance should be demonstrated and discussed.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a copy of the policy and method of distribution, and name of liaison; copies or outlines of traffic control plans; record keeping procedures and copies of documents utilized in reporting. A copy of emergency action plan.

16. Evaluations and Research

- a. There shall be a systematic evaluation plan to assess outcomes and the operational deficiency and effectiveness of the Department.

Explanation: This standard is concerned with a systematic evaluation program for the total departmental operation. Evaluations should include both the complete operation of the agency, and specific elements and services, such

as service statistics, policy review, annual review of goals and objectives, program evaluation, etc.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a copy of an evaluation plan including survey technique, system of measurements, and the most recent evaluation.

Tier III: A city, town or county can be classified as Tier III provided all of the objectives in Tier I, & Tier II have been met and the following sixteen objectives have been established and achieved. Please include a one-page overview/narrative for each standard, along with attachments.

1. Legal Authority, Role and Responsibility.

- a. Board accepts certain responsibilities to include:
 - i. Actively supports the Director and his or her policies, both within the organization and to outside parties, as long as performance is judged to be satisfactory.
 - ii. Assists City or County officials or takes lead in replacing the Director promptly.
 - iii. Participates actively in the decisions to elect and re-elect board members.
 - iv. Assists or takes lead in determining compensation of senior professional management.
 - v. Discusses and advises proposed major changes in the organizations strategy and direction, major financing proposals, and other crucial issues, usually proposed by the Director.
 - vi. Requires Director to explain rationale behind operating budgets, major capital expenditures, acquisitions, investments, personnel matters and planning.
 - vii. Formulates major policies regarding ethical or public responsibilities matters, conveying to the organization that the board expects adherence to these policies and violations are not tolerated.
 - viii. Analyzes reports on organization's performance, addressing questions to highlight areas of concern, and suggesting possible actions to improve performance.

Explanation: The department must understand and apply organizational and political practices to foster meaningful relationships with boards, commissioners, staff; governmental, non-profit and private organizations; and the public to enhance leisure service opportunities. The Director should prepare a review of policies for the board and also provide recommendations on the status and evaluation of such policies. Guidelines for internal relationships are often incorporated into job position descriptions.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Copy of agency/department policy manual with cover letter indicating its distribution and the review by the board and administrators; written guidelines for organizational changes/strategies; budget narratives; performance reviews.

2. Has established a Formal Organizational Structure, which should include increased size and complexity of service, facilities and programming.

- a. Hierarchical structure uses departmentalization and generates an organization chart that shows chain of command with a top-down structure. Steps include:
 - i. Departmentalized by functions.
 - ii. Assigns tasks to specific positions and units to take advantage of the specialized skills of certain employees.
 - iii. Divide and distribute the overall work load of the organization (division of labor or delineation of responsibility).
 - iv. Establish the number of people who will report to each supervisor (span of control)
 - v. Ensures that there is unity of command.
 - vi. Determine the degree of power and control of each position (delegation of authority).
- b. A nonhierarchical structure is an alternate form that is used in some systems. They are classified by:
 - i. Work teams – The key is coordinating efforts to meet a common objective. There is no power structure. Each member of the team is on the same level as every other member. Each member comes to the team with different level of expertise, which is needed for the project.
 - ii. Outsourcing – contracting services to be done by outside businesses or agencies.
- c. Administrative offices are generally accessible to the public, provide a wide array of information, have an attractive and adequate reception area, which reflects the professional atmosphere of the organization.
 - i. Adequate and attractive work environments for employees, volunteers and visitors.
 - ii. Comfortable and attractive meeting rooms for planning, education and other needs.
 - iii. Sufficient storage or warehousing facilities, a library for research and adequate administrative space and equipment.
- d. Adequate support staff and services are provided to allow professional staff to perform their appropriate functions.
- e. A Communication system is in place to insure accurate and timely transfer of information especially to higher levels of government, counterpart agencies, news media and the public.

Explanation: A department must have a structure in place as described in a-e above.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide copy of department's structure, whether hierarchical in nature or other system based on work teams, i.e. – and show examples of staffing, programs, action plans, resources utilized, interagency partnerships, etc. Maps/brochures showing

administrative space and describing types of space available for use internally, and by the public. Listing of adequate support staff and services and a communication plan.

3. Has established Partnerships:

- a. To not only include written agreements with others as stated in Tier II but must include written agreements with school districts and other parks and recreation departments or recreation providers in adjoining jurisdictions or jurisdictions having concurrent authority in the Departments service area.
 - i. This standard ensures that park and recreation personnel are aware of the diverse resources at their disposal.
 - ii. Recreation departments or providers should include where applicable such agencies such as U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE); Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA); National Park Service (NPS); other local or county parks and recreation departments; Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA); Big Brothers/Big Sisters and a variety of other providers.
 - iii. (This section in Tier III will assist in the overall goal of establishing Recreation Corridors and lead to a Seamless Recreation System for Tennessee).
 - iv. There must be a liaison from the department to other local government agencies and legislative authorities such as city or county commissions, school boards, zoning commissions, public works, state and federal legislators, etc.

Explanation: Long-term agreements with periodic review are preferable to annual agreements, since they permit longer-range program planning. Written agreements should exist between the parks and recreation department and other city/county agencies, as well as the schools and other public and private agencies. It is important to have representation from the park and recreation department on all appropriate inter-governmental committees, especially with the regulatory agencies.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide examples of written agreements and situations that use a liaison system. Provide letters of agreement, directories or lists of available services/resources from other departments or recreation-related agencies.

4. Planning in Tier III will be comprised of several types of planning concepts: Comprehensive or Master Planning; Community Planning and Internal Systems Planning.

- a. Comprehensive or Master Planning must be completed to include:
 - i. Integration of programs/services and physical resources
 - ii. Community study and demographics

- iii. Inventory of community programs/services and physical resources
 - iv. Continuous environmental scans (information gathering to determine the current conditions, internal and external of the organization. Most likely completed through citizen surveys, public meetings, and evaluation of specific environmental factors).
 - v. Resources needed to implement.
 - vi. Priorities, action plans and timelines.
 - vii. Interagency partnerships.
 - viii. This plan should be officially adopted by the appropriate governing body, updated regularly and be linked with capital improvement budgets and phased development.
- b. Community Planning must be completed and will include:
- i. The department must regularly be involved in and a part of community planning to coordinate with others such as: transportation, public safety, public works, planning and zoning, school systems, etc.
 - ii. Professional park and recreation personnel should be a part of the team for total community planning.
 - iii. A Community planning study based on population shifts and changing social and economic conditions should be created at least every five years.
 - iv. The department should have a strong working relationship with professional recreation state organizations, state legislative communities and state recreation associations to assist in disseminating information for local and state planning.
- c. Internal Systems Planning which is essential for effective operational management must be completed and will include:
- i. Information technology, public relations and marketing, human resources, financial management and budgeting (which often includes a five year capital plan), risk management, law enforcement and security, maintenance and evaluation.
- d. The department must have planning and research functions with established responsibilities and should employ at least one staff member or consultant who has planning and research capability.

Explanation: This standard covers the importance of planning on many levels: community, strategic, and comprehensive planning. It also recognizes that research plays an integral role in planning and assessing societal and local trends. Cover all sections as listed above in a-d.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Identify instances and personnel who served as part of a community planning team or who worked with state/federal agencies on community planning issues. Provide a copy of the agency's strategic plan and date of approval by board, and indicate

progress made in implementing the plan. Attach copy of current comprehensive planning efforts, including internal systems planning. Provide copy of responsibilities of the planning and research function of your department and job description of person with this function and/or consultant agreement.

5. Recreation Programs, Services and Events provided shall be based on:

- a. Programs and services should provide recreation opportunities under direct face-to-face leadership, including skills instructions.
- b. The department's programs shall provide opportunities in all program fields for various levels of proficiency, socio-economic levels, racial and ethnic backgrounds, ages, and gender in accordance with the department's statement of mission.
 - i. Opportunities for levels of proficiency may be made by offering skills instruction, clubs, leagues, tournaments, etc., for different levels of ability.
 - ii. This standard of skill proficiency is for the cultural arts as well as the physical skills.
 - iii. In offering opportunities from each of the program fields, there should be special consideration given to those, which emphasize appreciation and understanding, as well as skill development.
 - iv. Adequate opportunities must be available to persons of all races, creeds, and colors, as well as ages and gender, and regardless of physical or mental disability or economic level.
- c. The selection of program content, specific activities and opportunities shall be based upon an understanding of individual differences and the culture of the community.
- d. The program shall provide structurally for a wide range of types of participation.
- e. There shall be a plan of education for leisure and recreation experiences.

Explanation: The department should determine what programs and services are provided through a professional, systematic, and studied approach. Program planning principles/determinants are: conceptual foundations of play, recreation, and leisure; constituent needs; community opportunities; agency philosophy and goals; and experiences desirable for the given location/community.

The public entity is not independent, but should consider the following when selecting programs and services: other opportunities offered in the community, the particular needs of the targeted constituencies, and the department's goals and objectives. Participants, volunteers, and staff should have input into program selection and evaluation.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide written statement and examples that the main program planning philosophies were used in planning for programs and services. Describe the process for obtaining and utilizing different types of input. Provide a list of ways in which services/programs are delivered. Provide copy of your Program Plan that includes objectives, leadership opportunities, fee-based programs, outreach services, scope of program content and program evaluation.

6. Facility Use Management

- a. A security plan must be developed for each building and facility. Annual reviews and inspections should reflect changes. Security plan should include alarm systems, key and lock systems and professional security personnel to patrol sites.
- b. There must be a fleet management plan, including inventory and maintenance schedule, for all vehicles and other equipment.
- c. There must be policy and procedures for the management of and accountability for department-owned property, including purchase and distribution to authorized persons, proper training of appropriate personnel in use of equipment, safe, secure storage of equipment, and maintenance of all equipment in operational readiness and working order.
- d. There must be a written environmentally sound standards and procedures for development and maintenance of the Department's natural resources, with particular attention to protection and preservation of especially-sensitive land and water issues.
- e. There must be competent personnel/crews with clearly defined duties, job descriptions identifying specialty areas for routine to major maintenance (including electrical and plumbing), general development and construction, a high dedication to attractiveness of areas, facilities and equipment, and overall cleanliness of facilities.
- f. There must be an established replacement schedule for all park and recreation properties and facilities and equipment.

Explanation: The department must demonstrate their understanding of and ability to implement principles and procedures related to operation and care of resources, areas, and facilities. Effective maintenance of grounds and facilities requires the selection, training, and supervision of workers in a wide variety of tasks. Supervisory staff must focus on maintenance management, such as workload control and supervision of the technical details of maintenance work.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide plans, policies and written examples as listed in a – f above.

7. Marketing, Public Relations and Customer Service

- a. The Department must have a marketing component with specific functions and a written plan, which includes annual evaluations of the entire marketing/public relation's components.
- b. There must be a marketing research component in the marketing plan.
- c. A specific person within the department and with an appropriate job description must be designated to direct the marketing component of the department.
- d. The parks and recreation Department must monitor and evaluate the quality of its facilities, natural resources (areas), programs and services from a user's perspective.
- e. The personnel responsible for the marketing, public relations and information must submit a report to the Departments Director, identifying how the marketing functions are being evaluated and the collected data is being used to better enhance the Department's goals. This report should be done quarterly, but at least annually.

Explanation: 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 the department's mission and goals/objectives. Marketing is recognized as a crucial function.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide a Marketing Plan including the research component; position description of coordinator and their functions; copies of user surveys; quarterly/annual reports on how the marketing function within the department is evaluated and focuses on specific accomplishments.

8. Recruitment and Selection of Personnel

- a. There must be a comprehensive and aggressive recruitment program to secure qualified personnel. There should be a manual that describes all components of the selection process.
- b. Personnel hiring should include procedures for background investigations prior to appointment.
- c. There should be a disciplinary system related to the code of conduct and performance evaluation.
- d. A grievance procedure process must be established.

Explanation: The department must understand and demonstrate a professional organization – utilizing ethical principles and professionalism as applied to all professional practices, attitudes, and behaviors in leisure services delivery.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: A comprehensive employee manual of the park and recreation department will encompass many of these standards in this section and provide the requested evidence of compliance.

9. Fiscal Policy

- a. There must be written procedures for emergency purchasing or rental agreements for equipment.
- b. The Department will have an accounting system, including an independent audit as required by City/County direction.
- c. There must be written procedures for maintaining control over personnel in relation to budget authorizations.
- d. There must be procedures used for collecting, safeguarding, and disbursing cash to include, at a minimum: maintenance of an allotment system, if any, records of appropriations among organizational components; prescription of financial statements; conduct of internal audits; and persons or positions authorized to accept or disburse funds.
- e. There must be written procedures for internal monitoring of the Department's non-cash fiscal activities.

Explanation: Financial management is the process of planning for, acquiring, and using funds to achieve predetermined organization goals and objectives. Three major functions of financial management are common to park and recreation organizations: 1) determine the scope and content of fiscal policies; 2) obtain the best possible mix of financing alternatives; and 3) establish fiscal guidelines and controls to ensure that funds are allocated and spent wisely and responsibly to achieve the highest quality products and services possible.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide plans, policies and written examples as listed in a – e above.

10. Resource Management and Land Use Planning

- a. Where deemed advisable or required by law, there must be special or feasibility studies completed prior to construction to determine the appropriateness of certain facilities (golf courses, swimming pools, zoological parks, etc.).
- b. There should be written policies and procedures for the department to acquire lands for parks, recreation, conservation, and historical-cultural purposes.
- c. All plans and studies must be conducted and prepared by a park planner, landscape architect, or other design professional, depending upon the nature of the project.
- d. There should be written procedures providing safeguards for public interest when it becomes necessary to dispose of parks and recreation lands.

Explanation: There are written environmentally sound standards and procedures for development and maintenance of the department's natural resources, with particular attention to protection and preservation of especially sensitive land and water areas.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Provide copy of Land Use Plan; policies and procedures; open space studies or plans; land disposal policy.

11. Human Resources

- a. There must be an on the job training program which is evaluated, updated, and revised annually.
- b. There must be a program of career development (and self-improvement) based on needs of individual employees, including the responsibilities of employee and employer.
- c. There must be an on-going recruitment, selection, and orientation program for volunteers.
- d. Volunteers should be covered for negligence liability by the agency.
- e. Consultants and contract employees are being utilized for special functions on a continual basis.

Explanation: Competent professional leadership employed to carry out the program in accord with goals and objectives. Qualified staff for the positions as provided in the job analyses. There is an orientation program for all personnel employed by the department.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Job training and/or career development plans for staff and volunteers; provide contracts that are utilized for provision of special functions; volunteer manual.

12. Management of Information Systems/records Management

- a. The Department must have a management information system, including statistical and data summaries of Department's activities, such as daily, monthly and annual reports.
- b. Appropriate service statistics must be maintained to plan, interpret, and evaluate the recreation and park program.

Explanation: Increased productivity through use of information technology (IT) in management decisions is the ultimate goal of information technology management. IT solves business problems and increases personal productivity. Appropriate records on individual participants and groups should be maintained in a form that lends itself to summarization of useful information, such as proportion of constituents receiving services, number of participants registered, number of groups and sessions, and the attendance, etc.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Describe and provide examples of management information system use, such as copies of recent statistical

and data summaries; describe the central records system; provide copies of reports. Provide the types of service statistics maintained and provide copies of reports issued and use of the data.

13. Budgeting

- a. The heads of major organizational components within the Department must be participating in the preparation of the agency's budget.
- b. There must be procedures for firm budget control within the Department, including allotment systems, accounting systems, frequent reporting of revenues and expenditures and continuous management review through staff reports and meetings.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: (Optional) – Please contact RES for additional information/assistance in completing this category.

14. Risk Management

- a. The risk management plan should involve active interaction between employees at all levels and administration/superiors.
- b. There must be a manual of operating procedures for carrying out the risk management plan. All administrative and supervisory personnel shall have a copy of the manual and other employees' procedures pertinent to their responsibilities.
- c. The risk management plan should be monitored in terms of dollar costs.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: (Optional) - Please contact RES for additional information/assistance in completing this category

15. Safety and Security

- a. There shall be special in-service training for the safety of personnel handling traffic control at events and in parking areas. In addition, training shall be extended to law enforcement personnel conducted by the Department or in conjunction with the jurisdictional police or other agency. In-service training must also address the use of volunteers and volunteers must also be trained in appropriate security measures.
- b. This shall be as a part of the overall plan and policies to include use of road blocks and street closures, those regarding the handling of drugs, weapons and other evidentiary materials and also those regarding assault and batteries, crowd disturbances and other types of instances.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: (Optional) - Please contact RES for additional information/assistance in completing this category.

16. Evaluations and Research

- a. There must be at least one experimental or demonstration project or involvement in some aspect of research, as related to any part of parks and recreation operations, each year.
- b. There shall be a staff member or a consultant with expertise to direct the technical evaluations/research process.

Suggested Evidence of Compliance: (Optional) - Please contact RES for additional information/assistance in completing this category.

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