June 12, 2018

Ms. Sandi Fowler  
Assistant City Manager  
City of Cedar Rapids  
101 First Street SE  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401  

Dear Ms. Fowler:

Management Partners is pleased to transmit this report containing the results of the organizational review of the Parks and Recreation Department.

During the study, we took care to acknowledge several issues related to the service environment that are significant in shaping this report. First, it was made clear that there is little to no new financial resources available for parks and recreation activities. Second, a new department director has recently been recruited. Third, the parks superintendent resigned near the end of our review and his replacement will also need to be recruited or promoted. Given these issues, the objective of this report is to identify opportunities to optimize current department operations with the resources available.

Department culture was also identified as a concern by City leaders. Accordingly, with the assistance of staff, we developed, administered and summarized the results of a Parks and Recreation Department employee survey. That survey was administered and analyzed early in the review, so the outcomes could guide additional research.

A summary list of the recommendations is included as Attachment A. A draft Implementation Action Plan will be created and forwarded to you in support of this report.

Sincerely,

Gerald E. Newfarmer  
President & CEO
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Background

The City of Cedar Rapids has a practice of periodically conducting an external expert review of department operations to assure that best practices are in place. Management Partners was engaged to conduct an organizational review of the Parks and Recreation Department. The timing of this review was due to the recent resignation of the department director. Cedar Rapids’ senior managers determined that an organizational review would be useful for a new department director when s/he assumes leadership.

The City’s management team made it clear to Management Partners’ project team members that, due to the fiscal constraints facing the City government, the context of the organizational review must be to optimize current resources. While budget reductions and program cutbacks are not contemplated, there is little room for increases to the department’s budget in the next five years.

These financial rigors were incorporated into our analysis to provide a report that is useful to the City. City managers also asked that our analysis specifically include observations about the department’s strengths and high-performance areas. This would help establish an appropriate background for recognizing programs and practices that could be built on.
Methodology

Management Partners interviewed Cedar Rapids’ senior managers, including the city manager, assistant city manager, and assistant to the city manager, who was the acting parks and recreation director during the duration of the project. With the assistance of City senior managers, Parks and Recreation Department managers, supervisors, and program staff were also identified and interviewed. These interviews provided an overview of department operations, staffing, policies, and issues.

A confidential employee survey (the results of which are included in Attachment B) was made available to all department employees to gather information about the organizational culture and to solicit ideas for improvement. Employees were emailed an invitation to participate and the survey was administered online. The survey was open to responses between February 7 and 21, 2018; a total of 43 individuals responded.

The information gathered during the interviews and survey enabled Management Partners’ team members to identify observations about opportunities for improvement and issues that needed further research. The project team presented observations and preliminary recommendations to the assistant city manager and the acting department director, which helped to define follow-up activity.

Project team members then conducted additional site visits to verify our research, gather information, and conduct follow-up interviews. A project team member also made a site visit to each of the department’s maintenance facilities to assess conditions and provide additional information for our analysis.
Department Strengths

Management Partners’ project team members found many strengths and positive elements embedded in department operations, policies and practices. This section of the report details those that we found to be outstanding. It is important to note that just because some practice or operational element is not mentioned, it does not necessarily mean that we would consider it to be a weakness or in need of improvement. The opportunities for improvement are specifically identified in the next section of this report.

Operational Strengths

The project team identified the following as department strengths that can be built on while implementing changes. Each represents a facet of the department that is working well, exemplifies a best practice, or upholds the City’s organizational health program.

- Proactive and customer-focused front-line supervisors, as well as newer supervisors, have brought significant outside experience and energy.
- A strong commitment among recreation supervisors to provide programs that meet residents’ needs as well as generate revenue to offset a portion of the costs to provide services.
- Data gathering and recordkeeping support program development and operations in the Recreation Division and in Park Maintenance operations. These maintenance materials were detailed and helpful in allowing us to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the division.
- Frequent communication meetings among recreation supervisors can serve as a framework for good management practices.
- Many front-line supervisors are empowered to make decisions in their functional areas, particularly in parks operations and forestry.
- The Parks Maintenance Division’s written standard operating procedures had excellent detail and clarity, and the supervisors’ familiarity and adherence to them were impressive.
- The Parks Division has a good training program for full- and part-time employees. The written and DVD training materials were very thorough and applied across all the different sections of the division.
- Generally, the condition and appropriateness of the equipment used by the Parks and Forestry Divisions are good.
- There is excellent cooperation between the Fleet Division and the Parks and Forestry Divisions in the procurement and maintenance of vehicles and equipment.
- The department uses volunteers well in the Noelridge Greenhouse and park clean-up efforts.
- Resources are appropriately focused on priority areas identified in the 2010 Master Plan and later citizen surveys, i.e., signature parks, outdoor pools/aquatic centers/splashpads, NW Recreation Center, pavilions, trails, and playgrounds.

An overarching theme is the dedication of department employees to provide quality services, from senior managers through supervisors and front-line staff. Sustaining that dedication to the mission is not always easy in the face of financial constraints. However, it is clear that department staff have passion, commitment, and pride for their work.
This section of the report presents the outcomes of our analysis and recommendations for optimizing operations within the financial realities facing the City. The first sections deal with maintenance and operations, followed by recreation.

**Quadrant Organizational Plan for Parks Maintenance**

Most parks maintenance functions are carried out by a team that is assigned to a specific quadrant of the city. However, construction and maintenance of recreation facilities are assigned to a single team that has citywide responsibilities.

The quadrant system appears to be working well. Placing three of the four maintenance crews in the signature parks (Bever, Ellis, and Noelridge) placed “eyes” in the parks where they were needed most. The location of the City Service Center in the urban core maximizes these advantages while not being in a park. The quadrant locations minimized the travel distance and time to the other various parks in the service area and reduced the need for trucks and trailers to haul equipment to many of the park sites since many of the larger mowers could be driven to the other sites.

These geographic locations also placed the supervisors close to their employees, which results in better communication, standards of performance, and team cohesion. The daily phone calls and weekly face-to-face meetings between the superintendent and supervisors, the written standard operating procedures, and the seasonal employee training materials ensure that consistent standards of performance are communicated and achieved across the division despite multiple locations.

On weeknights and weekends, one seasonal employee is on duty in each quadrant. On weekends, one of the supervisors is on duty. We learned that this model produced an efficient use of resources.
Out of necessity, some tasks that are citywide (garbage collection, trail maintenance, Tait Cummins Softball Complex), require specialized knowledge or are allocated to another quadrant (e.g., bathroom maintenance for the four facilities in the urban core to Bever Park crews are assigned to specific quadrants). While this appeared inconsistent with the quadrant model, these tweaks were necessary, distributed rather equally, and make operational sense.

**Recreation Maintenance**

Construction and maintenance of recreation facilities are assigned to a single crew with citywide responsibility. This crew is under the leadership of the parks superintendent. During interviews we heard information that indicated there may be advantages to assigning this crew to the recreation superintendent. Much of their work is for facilities overseen by Recreation Division staff. It appeared that responsiveness and efficiency could be enhanced if supervision of this section was transferred to the Recreation Division superintendent.

At five full-time equivalent employees (FTEs), the Recreation Maintenance Section has the most full-time employees of any Parks Division section and oversees most of the highest used, highest risk, and highest cost facilities such as outdoor pools and aquatic centers, the NW Recreation Center, Bender Pool, and the outdoor playgrounds. The full-time staff require the highest training and skill level in the department (e.g., certified pool operators, confined-space training, certified playground safety inspectors, etc.). To better meet the early morning scheduling needs of the outdoor aquatic centers, four of the full-time crew work four-day, 10-hour shifts, with two people working Monday through Thursday and two people working Tuesday through Friday during the outdoor pool season. One of the full-time employees is always on call.

This section also serves as the central store for many of the cleaning and maintenance supplies used by the recreation facilities and all the park quadrants, resulting in efficiencies of scale. The fifth full-time employee works a five-day week and devotes half of their day to managing the inventory of items necessary to keep both the Park Division and Recreation Divisions supplied.

This section delivers a high level of service, is focused on continuous improvement, and appears to be meeting or exceeding the needs of the Recreation Division.
Due to intense focus on asset management activities, which corresponds more closely with the mission of the Parks Division rather than the Recreation Division, and the lack of asset management background of the current recreation superintendent, we conclude that the Recreation Maintenance Section should remain under the supervision of the park superintendent.

**Parks Construction Crew**

The Construction Section consists of one supervisor, one full-time employee, and two seasonal employees. They are in their own shop buildings in part of Ellis Park immediately adjacent to Ellis Harbor. The maintenance facility is roughly a half-mile away from the Ellis Park maintenance facility, also in Ellis Park.

The team performs construction activities throughout the park system using heavy or specialized construction equipment. For larger jobs they often use park maintenance staff from the park quadrant in which they are working. The section supervisor, who has worked for the department for 35 years and is near retirement, suggested in his initial interview that the section should either have more full-time employees as it once did, or be disbanded. He suggested that his supervisory position be downgraded to a lead equipment operator, and the employees be relocated among Noelridge, Bever, and Ellis Park quadrants. If larger crews were needed to perform a job, they could be brought together from the various quadrant maintenance staff.

A Management Partners project team member visited the construction shops and spoke with the parks superintendent at length about the construction section supervisor’s concept. Many of the lighter construction projects are currently performed on their own by the quadrant park maintenance staff. If more than two construction staff members are needed to perform a job, other park maintenance staff from one or more of the quadrants are assigned to help.

The wood shop was relocated from the Ellis Park maintenance building to the second construction building; but all the park maintenance employees use it for special projects. The lines between the various park maintenance staff and the construction staff are blurred frequently and cooperation makes it work.

We concur with the construction supervisor’s recommendation. At an appropriate time, the construction supervisor position should be reclassified to a lead equipment operator, and the staff should be distributed among the three quadrant locations. This would result in each
of the three signature park locations having one person focused on construction. When major construction work is needed in a park facility a task team can be formed from the quadrant maintenance teams under the direction of the supervisor for the quadrant. Otherwise, each of the individuals would perform construction work in their own quadrant. The location of where large and one-of-a-kind equipment would be stored would have to be determined as part of the transition.

This change would also allow the Ellis Park maintenance crew (now temporarily relocated to the construction location due to the unsafe conditions at their current facility) to move to the construction location. This could eliminate the need to replace the current Ellis Park maintenance facility, saving millions of dollars in replacement costs. This change would require more analysis and deliberation in conjunction with the needs of recreation maintenance (which is in Ellis Park at a third location) to determine the best configuration and location of these two maintenance sections.

**Recommendation 1.** Reclassify the construction supervisor as a lead equipment operator.

**Recommendation 2.** Reassign parks construction crewmembers to each of the parks maintenance quadrants.

**Recommendation 3.** Move Ellis Park parks maintenance staff and equipment permanently into the construction facility.

**Ellis and Tait-Cummins Softball Fields Maintenance**

The daytime field maintenance staff (seasonal employees) who maintain and prepare the softball diamonds every day for Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department leagues and tournaments are supervised by the Ellis Park maintenance supervisor. The nighttime field and program staff (seasonal employees) are supervised by the recreation supervisor. This position also runs and oversees all the recreation programs and outside weekend tournaments that occur on those fields.

During interviews we were told of the difficulty in getting field maintenance help after 3:30 pm because the daytime maintenance staff had gone home. (The current labor agreement establishes 3:30 pm as the end of shift for parks maintenance workers.) It appeared that the maintenance of the facilities and user services could be improved by
unifying the supervision of all seasonal maintenance and program employees under the recreation supervisor.

Until 2014, all the seasonal employees were supervised by a recreation supervisor. At that time the fields were scheduled for major improvements. Since the former Ellis Park maintenance supervisor has an employment background and college training in athletic field and turf maintenance, a decision was made to place the crews responsible for field maintenance under that position. Consensus is that this arrangement has produced better maintenance outcomes.

The evening crew has more duties associated with program administration and lining and dragging fields. These duties do not demand special skillsets associated with field and turf maintenance.

A preferred organization plan would be to have all field and program responsibilities for softball fields under a single person for better accountability, transparency and customer service. The department should make arrangements to provide the necessary support and authority to the recreation supervisors so that position can direct field maintenance as needed.

**Recommendation 4.** Include a recreation supervisor in planning and directing field and turf maintenance responsibilities for Ellis and Tait-Cummins softball fields.

**City Arborist and Forestry Division**

The city arborist leads the Forestry Division and is responsible for maintaining trees on all public facilities and rights-of-way and also removing trees and stumps from private property that cause hazardous conditions to the public. Historically, the division has reported to the department director. The previous department director placed the division under the supervision of the parks superintendent.

The Forestry Division has 13 full-time employees. Although there is some coordination between the Forestry Division and Parks Division on weekly work programs, there is not a significant operational reason that would require the Forestry Division to report to the park superintendent.

Having forestry go back to be a separate division with the city arborist reporting to the new director would be the best option, both because of the relatively separate nature of the work and to take some of the
responsibility off the park superintendent. It will allow a smaller span of control of the parks superintendent who can focus more on park maintenance issues.

**Recommendation 5.** Assign the city arborist (head of the Forestry Division) as a direct report to the department director.

**Landscape Architect**

The landscape architect is primarily responsible for implementing the department’s CIP program and working with other departments such as planning or public works on joint projects. Ideally the person would be a self-starting individual who is very good at managing their own projects and work activities and meeting deadlines without a great deal of direct supervision. In the past, this position has reported to the department director but has been reporting to the parks superintendent since the previous director’s departure.

The position should more appropriately report to the department director since its duties extend beyond parks operations to other department functions and citywide issues. We understand that the position will be reassigned to directly report to the department director, and support that change.

**Mowing, Turf Grass and Native Plantings**

Mowing and trimming of grass in the parks and greenway system likely consumes more work hours than any other single maintenance activity. Most of this activity is performed by seasonal employees when they are available. Since the department is having trouble in hiring a full complement of seasonal employees and it appears unlikely that more funding will be made available for park maintenance needs, our team examined the turf maintenance policies and procedures with the goal of reducing the maintenance hours devoted to the mowing and trimming of grass.

**Deployment**

As discussed previously, multiple geographic locations for maintenance crews places the maintenance staff and equipment closest to the location of most of the mowing, saving time and the need to haul equipment. The 16-foot-wide mowers are driven directly to the park sites and some of the 11-foot-wide mowers are as well, eliminating the need for a truck and a
trailer. In some of larger parks, such as Jones, the mower is stored on site for the four days it takes to complete the mowing. The current deployment of mowing equipment is very efficient and should be continued.

**Equipment Mix**

There may be economies in using a different mix of equipment and crew sizes to gain efficiencies by obtaining different types of mowers. The mowing crews’ supervisors should examine the mix of mowing equipment, particularly in the larger maintenance shops such as Ellis and Noelridge. This analysis will take someone very knowledgeable about mowing equipment, so it may be necessary to engage outside assistance in this endeavor.

**Recommendation 6.** Analyze the types of mowing equipment assigned to each quadrant to identify opportunities for efficiencies.

**Mowing Schedules**

Upon initial examination it appeared that changing the shift schedule from the current eight-hour shift to a four-day, ten-hour shift would gain some efficiencies by eliminating one shift of stand-up and stand-down time estimated at one hour per crew per week. This would represent a significant gain in actual mowing hours available.

The primary obstacle to the ten-hour shift schedule is that mowing supervisors, under the current labor agreement, must work the eight-hour, five-day shift schedule. Changing the shift schedule is not feasible now due to the current labor agreement. Department managers should examine in detail the advantages of various shift schedules for maintenance crews and negotiate for scheduling flexibility to maximize efficiency.

**Recommendation 7.** Negotiate a different work schedule for mowing and maintenance crews that optimizes efficient deployment.

**Mowing Frequency**

The Parks Division has a very specific and detailed standard operating procedure for mowing with levels of service defined by park, use, and area. Our team specifically focused on the areas scheduled for mowing twice a week, as that is a very high level of maintenance. Many of the
areas designated for twice weekly mowing make sense, such as sports fields, downtown and urban core parks, and areas that receive a high amount of use. However, a more detailed analysis should be performed by supervisory staff on areas of the park and open space system that are desired to have a manicured look, areas of the park system that receive high amounts of fertilizer and pesticides to achieve a desired look, and signature parks.

It is possible these areas could be mowed slightly less frequently to lower the time demands without significant public impact. It will take communication and involvement with the public, however, to explain the changes and begin to lower expectations they may have for certain areas.

**Recommendation 8.** Reexamine standard operating procedures for areas that are mowed twice weekly to determine the opportunities for less intense mowing operations.

**Grass Trimming Efficiencies**

Trimming grass in areas that cannot be reached by mowers is a labor-intensive activity. To the degree that grass trimming can be reduced and minimized in the future, efficiencies can be realized. The Parks Division has done a good job of mulching around trees, creating larger mulched beds for shrubs and small trees, and using mulch along other edges, reducing the needed trimming time. However, in using design to minimize maintenance, there are good opportunities to build in small improvements such as concrete mow strips along fences and other improvements to eliminate the need for trimming. This would require closer coordination with and greater accountability of the landscape architect to place these design details into construction plans.

The Parks Division could then examine opportunities to apply these design details as a retrofit to current park areas and use quadrant maintenance crews to install such improvements.

**Recommendation 9.** Include state-of-the-art parks design specifications that will reduce the need for grass trimming.

**Recommendation 10.** Develop a work program for installing design improvements that reduces the need for grass trimming.
No-Mow Areas

The park maintenance staff has begun allowing the areas in forests or under stands of trees previously mowed to be primarily no-mow areas except for once or twice a year. Our project team’s site visit to some of the larger parks indicates this practice could likely be expanded.

Recommendation 11. Analyze mowing standard operating procedures to identify opportunities to increase “no-mow” areas.

Native Plants

The City is engaged with a larger Cedar Rapids area effort to create 1,000 acres of prairie for pollinators throughout the metropolitan area on a variety of properties owned by both public and private entities. A portion of this initiative involves converting mowed turf to prairie. Based on information provided by the superintendent, the Cedar Rapids park system has or will convert 44 acres of mowed turf to prairie by 2021. This leaves a remaining 622 acres of mowed turf.

Our project team members believe additional acres (at least 10% to 20% of the remaining total) could be converted to either prairie or stands of native grasses. This rough estimate is based on visits to Van Vechten, Shawnee, Jones, and Cherry Hill parks and comparing the plans for conversion to what our team observed. Due to the potential for public opposition, a strong public education program may be required to facilitate this approach to turf management.

Recommendation 12. Reexamine the plan for converting turf to native grasses to identify opportunities to increase the acreage to be converted.

Low Maintenance Design Details

Our review indicated there is no list or library of standard design details for low-maintenance landscapes. The department’s landscape architect has been asked to incorporate low-maintenance details into many improvement projects but this approach has not been consistent. Coordination between the park maintenance staff and the designers of the improvements can lead to high-quality, low-maintenance landscapes. The creation of a set of standard details that is incorporated into each project, where applicable, would be a systematic way to ensure it happens.
Recommendation 13. Create standard details for construction of low-maintenance landscape and set up a system and accountability to ensure they are part of every project.

Recommendation 14. Implement a policy that the maintenance supervisory staff will be asked to review all construction and landscape plans for input on low-maintenance solutions.

Training Forestry Division Crews

Information from interviews indicates a concern about the degree of training available to the forestry crew. The belief is that crew members are capable but have not received training needed to be optimally productive. Time availability for in-house training and money availability to engage external trainers were identified as obstacles to an appropriate training program. Currently, about 20 to 24 hours per person per year is available for training. Funding in Fiscal Year 2018-19 for contract trainers is $1,400. With appropriate training, parks staff state that productivity of the forestry crew could be increased significantly.

We concur that the current level of commitment to forestry crew training needs to be more robust. Safety training needs to be enhanced. It was not apparent to our project team that training receives strong support from senior managers, possibly due to budget constraints and staffing limitations.

Marginal training budgets are a false economy that should be addressed and rectified. Parks staff estimate that a training budget of $4,000 would be sufficient for contract trainers and an additional 16 to 24 hours of training per person per year would train staff to the skill level needed to optimize productivity.

Recommendation 15. Support and fund the city arborist’s and forestry supervisor’s design for an appropriate training protocol for the forestry crew.

Seasonal Employees

Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department, like many other such departments in the country, relies heavily on seasonal employees to provide service during the peak season. In interviews we learned that the Recreation Division staff are satisfied with the ability to hire seasonal employees but is not always satisfied with the quality. Parks Division
managers are distressed with the inability to find and recruit seasonal employees and only slightly more satisfied with the quality than the Recreation Division. The Recreation Division has adjusted for quality issues with close supervision protocols. The Parks Division, however, is experiencing a more difficult problem since they are not able to onboard the seasonal employees authorized by the budget.

In 2017, parks maintenance operations had 100% of their 52 budgeted seasonal positions filled for only one pay period out of 17; at least 75% of their positions filled for four pay periods; at least 50% of their positions filled for seven pay periods; less than 50% filled for five pay periods, two at the very beginning and two at the very end of the season. The parks superintendent has opined sufficient seasonal hours are budgeted but the issue turns on the ability to fill the positions budgeted. Our analysis determined the constraints discussed below.

Barriers include low pay relative to the private landscape sector and Cedar Rapids Public Works Department, quality of the applicants, drug and physical test failure, applicant withdrawal from the process, lack of applicants due to low unemployment, and perceived effort level needed (some people don’t want to work that hard). Also, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) limits seasonal employees who work 40 hours per week to a maximum six-month term. The only other seasonal employee alternative is limited to working less than 30 hours per week all year to stay within ACA guidelines.

The Public Works Department pays their entry-level laborers $17.76 per hour. According to parks staff, the private grounds maintenance/landscape sector pays seasonal employees approximately $13.00 to $15.00 per hour. Most parks seasonal employees are paid $9.75 to $10.25 per hour. This rate is equivalent to what the fast food industry is paying in the Cedar Rapids area.

Our review of the recruitment efforts for parks seasonal employees indicates the Parks Division had a very aggressive recruitment program for seasonal employees, including flyers and brochures to all local high schools and colleges, Facebook and Twitter postings, advertising on four college job websites, visiting school and community college job fairs, and the city’s human resources website page. Thus, it is not likely that focusing on the recruitment effort will bear more fruit.

We examined privatization as a possible solution to the difficulty of employing seasonal workers. The division prepared mowing rate models for large and small parks. The employee costs were provided by the
Finance Department and the hours needed per acre were provided by parks staff by measuring actual times in the field. The resulting computed costs were $11.52 per acre for large parks and $28.50 per acre for small parks. Based on staff’s informal knowledge of the local market, these costs were 33% to 50% of what a private contractor would charge for similar work. This would indicate that privatization is not a likely path toward lower cost.

Using volunteers was explored as an option to seasonal employees. Volunteers are primarily used for annual park cleanup activities and in the propagation of greenhouse plants. Volunteers cannot be used for most of the tasks seasonal employees perform, primarily mowing, trimming, bathroom cleaning, and garbage pick-up.

Having analyzed the issues and potential solutions to the difficulty of hiring seasonal park employees and finding no feasible pathways to improvement, higher importance must be attached to the efforts to reduce turf maintenance demands as specified in this report’s Recommendations 7 through 15.

**Assistance for Recreation Maintenance**

In addition to the recreation facility maintenance crew, the Recreation Division also requests maintenance assistance from other parks maintenance crews. The requests were routed through the park superintendent and according to Recreation Division staff, the answer was almost always “no.” We were told the reason was that parks maintenance employees were too busy with their own maintenance program. We can appreciate the stress when staff have a maintenance issue and the crews that are understaffed and need to attend to their assigned responsibilities.

The need for intradepartmental teamwork is a situation that the new director will have to address. Our project team took note of comments regarding friction between parks and recreation staff. We also heard many examples cited about outstanding cooperation among staff of the two divisions. Nearly all organizations would benefit from better teamwork and the Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department is no exception. The new department director should make teambuilding a high priority upon embarking on their duties, using both training and cross-functional team assignments to strengthen relationships.

**Recommendation 16. Develop and implement team-building training and events for department staff.**
Recommendation 17. Use cross-functional task teams to provide opportunities for people to work together on department-wide issues.

It is critical to have park maintenance operations support the needs of the recreation staff who are bringing people into the park system for an organized activity. The department should establish protocols for situations when parks crews should be diverted from their normal duties to assist with recreation facility maintenance issues.

Recommendation 18. Implement written protocols for parks maintenance crews to provide situational assistance on recreation facilities.

Recreation Cost Recovery and Fees Policies

Cedar Rapids collects revenue for many of its recreation programs. One of the elements of this analysis is to rationalize the policies for which programs should collect revenue, how much cost should be recovered, how fees are established, and the procedures for collecting fee revenue.

Cost Recovery

We heard conflicting reports regarding a cost recovery policy. Individuals interviewed in the City Manager’s Office stated there is no adopted policy. The recreation director and front-line supervisory staff stated the policy is “to make a profit.” The budget analyst in the Finance Department who has been most responsible for helping to build and manage the department’s budget over the years said he couldn’t tell us what the policy was. The fact is recreation fees are being set and revenue is being collected. The objective should be to develop and adopt a cost recovery policy that can be applied transparently and consistently.

It is clear the department does not make a net profit from recreation activities, and we are aware of no department in the nation that does. Beyond this fact, there are two elements to be considered.

First, to what extent should the department recover the cost of its operations? Communities across the nation have applied different answers, depending on the choices of elected officials, advisory boards and ultimately, residents. The foundation of a financial resources allocation philosophy and policy is based on the theory that those who benefit most from certain recreation services should pay for those services.
Broadly speaking, recreation services can be categorized as providing “mostly community benefit,” “considerable individual benefit,” or “balanced community and individual benefit.” Typically, programs that are “mostly community benefit” expect little to no cost recovery. Recreation programs that are “considerable individual benefit” usually have an expectation of some level of cost recovery. “Balanced community and individual benefit” programs usually are structured to offset costs through fees in proportion to the individual benefit.

Second, based on an analysis of the categories in which each of its services falls and a full understanding of the organization’s costs to provide each service (including all direct and indirect costs), a policy on cost recovery and subsidy allocation (essentially the level of tax support or other generally available resources to be provided to maintain operations) can be established.

No one in the Cedar Rapids organization could show us a written cost recovery policy that had been either drafted or adopted. Recreation supervisors told us they were typically given revenue and expense numbers each year that they were expected to achieve in the coming fiscal year. If they were able to generate more income through higher fees or higher activity or reduce discretionary expenses through better cost control or lower activity, they had met their target. Most important, no recreation supervisor or the recreation superintendent could tell us how the revenue and expense targets were established.

Cedar Rapids should develop and adopt a cost recovery policy for transparency and accountability reasons. Consideration should be given to whether direct costs and overhead costs are both included in cost recovery. If overhead costs are to be included, a calculation of such cost must be formulated. A decision must be made regarding affordability and whether to provide discounts or apply an affordability test. A decision is also required about which recreation program types should be included in a cost recovery policy.

There are many examples of cost recovery policy available from industry organizations such as the National Parks and Recreation Association, and various state organizations. The department director should lead a project to research cost recovery models and develop options for consideration by Cedar Rapids’ senior managers and elected officials. The director should be given assistance by the finance staff and solicit the participation of the various resident advisory groups to the department.

**Recommendation 19. Develop and adopt a cost recovery policy for Cedar Rapids’ recreation programs.**
Current Fees Practice

As noted, the department currently establishes and collects fees for certain recreation programs. We compared current practices to best practices to determine any need for improvement.

The department’s fee structure is based on an ongoing analysis of what department staff believe represents the market in which they operate and, in some instances, what it costs to provide the staff to provide the service. For those classes for which an instructor is specifically employed (e.g., pottery, yoga, and crafts), the fee is based on an estimate of the number of participants who will be enrolled divided by the cost to pay the instructor’s payroll expenses. For classes or services that serve the broader market, fees are based on what department staff believe to be competitive in the immediate market (e.g., private clubs, YMCA, YWCA, school districts, and other public jurisdictions) as well as their experience generating participants to their programs.

Absent an adopted policy on cost recovery, the situational approach currently being used to establish a fee structure for recreation programs to which a fee is attached is certainly rational. However, this is not a best practice. A best practice for fee structuring can only be realized within the context of an adopted policy of cost recovery as detailed above.

Collection Process and Security

Most fees are collected electronically when an individual or group registers for a class or season pass or reserves a facility. Whether this is done on the internet or physically in the office, the payment is made electronically by credit card or other payment system. Cash is handled for daily admissions at the pools and for concession purchases at the pools and athletic facilities when teams are playing.

We were told that cash received at the pools is handled by a designated seasonal employee who has been trained how to handle money at the point of sale system. The cash is picked up daily by the aquatics supervisor, or her designee, and delivered to the City’s Finance Department.

Cash received for concession sales at the athletic facilities is collected by a designated seasonal employee who has been trained how to handle money at the point of sale. The cash is then held overnight by that employee or his/her supervisor, if available, and delivered to the City’s Finance Department “in the next few days.”
In neither set of facilities are special steps taken to secure the properties from direct cash theft or other inappropriate activity beyond the police patrols that cruise the community. Finally, we were told the department was exploring new point-of-sale technology that might be installed as early as Fiscal Year 2019-20 and might bring additional technology to address this issue.

Although we were told there have been no cash thefts from department facilities in recent memory, it is not safe to assume they will not happen. There have been situations where police have been called to break up activity of a physical or threatening nature to participants on the grounds.

Recommendation 20. Analyze the collection process and determine if and how the proposed point-of-sale technology will make the process more secure.

Recommendation 21. Request that the Police Department review the safety procedures and recommend safety improvements for those handling cash and the cash itself.

Recommendation 22. Request that the Finance Department review the internal controls and cash handling procedures to ensure they are sufficient and appropriate.

**Concession Management**

The department generates income through concession sales at the pools and on the ball and soccer fields during league and tournament play. As the second largest source of income to the department, concession management is an important element in department operations. Decisions on what to sell on recreation property are made by the recreation supervisors who manage the facilities and are based on historical experience and feedback from program participants.

Supervisors tell department administrative staff what products to purchase and in what quantities during each season. Administrative staff prepare purchase orders on which bids are executed by the Finance Department. Supervisors request delivery of products on an as-needed basis through either the administrative office or directly from the supplier, who delivers the product to the facility or playfield at the time requested.
Product inventories and sales activity are maintained by the supervisors and provided to department administrative staff on a regular basis as part the system for paying for and requesting additional product.

We were told by some supervisors that several analyses have been made during the past ten years to determine if switching to one private concession operator would be more cost effective. In each instance the current system was determined to be more cost effective and better able to meet the department’s flexibility requirements. Our review indicates that the current process works well and is meeting the department’s needs.

**Partnerships**

The Parks and Recreation Department operates within a region where a broad range of public and private organizations provide grounds, facilities and activities which complement or, in fact, compete with the City. There are many recreation providers in the region, including private instructors, exercise clubs, country clubs, YMCA, YWCA, neighborhood associations, school districts, colleges and universities and other cities and counties.

Recreation supervisors are knowledgeable and aware of this broad range of potential competitors or partners that may impact their programs. Several suggested the City should take greater steps to partner with these individuals or groups to maximize the resources it spends on parks and recreation operations. While they recognize the appeal in having control over each facility or activity the department provides, they also suggest the City’s resources might be better utilized in partnering with several regional efforts on ballfields and other facilities where City staff have expertise that would bring value to operations. The department director should initiate discussions with potential partners to determine opportunities for service sharing that would benefit residents of Cedar Rapids.

**Recommendation 23.** Initiate discussions with potential partners to determine opportunities for service sharing.

**Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

Our review of the adopted parks and recreation master plan indicates it is seriously out of alignment with the Cedar Rapids financial realities as described to Management Partners’ project team members. There are few capital investment resources available for parks and recreation in the current capital improvement program. Our analysis indicates that the
capital available falls well short of what is needed for industry standard maintenance of current facilities, let alone resources for expanding current or building new facilities. In view of such rigorous financial constraints, it would be prudent to revisit the master plan and conform it to the financial realities facing Cedar Rapids.

New and replacement facilities, additional programs and initiatives, and program elements not focused on maintaining current park and recreation facilities should be described and scheduled as future initiatives. Reconfiguring the master plan to conform to financial reality is important to set realistic community expectations. As currently configured, the master plan is misleading at best to Cedar Rapids residents and is likely to have a negative effect on their opinions of department and city government performance, transparency and accountability.

Recommendation 24. Conform the parks master plan to the financial constraints facing the City.

Parks and Recreation Foundation

The City has created a private foundation to support parks and recreation developments. This is a wise move that needs to be nurtured and grown with a high priority focus from the department director as well as senior management and elected officials. We have seen such foundations in other jurisdictions raising tens of millions of dollars for parks and recreation facilities and operations. During the search for a new department director, a strong element of experience sought should be the track record of raising community financial support for parks and recreation activities. City senior management and elected officials should develop a strategy for how they may be effective participants in growing the existing foundation.

Recommendation 25. Develop a strategy for nurturing and growing the parks and recreation private foundation.
Conclusion

The City of Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department is at a critical juncture. Leadership changes and financial constraints offer a challenge to providing high-quality service. The City seeks to optimize current operations of the department to put it on a trajectory toward being an industry model in meeting the needs and expectations of Cedar Rapids residents.

This report identifies steps that would bring greater efficiency in the use of current resources without requiring extensive new operating funds. The department has many strengths to build on in implementing the recommendations in this report. These should give confidence to City leaders that the recommendations in the report are implementable and will make the department even stronger.
Attachment A – List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Reclassify the construction supervisor as a lead equipment operator.

Recommendation 2. Reassign parks construction crewmembers to each of the parks maintenance quadrants.

Recommendation 3. Move Ellis Park parks maintenance staff and equipment permanently into the construction facility.

Recommendation 4. Include a recreation supervisor in planning and directing field and turf maintenance responsibilities for Ellis and Tait-Cummins softball fields.

Recommendation 5. Assign the city arborist (head of the Forestry Division) as a direct report to the department director.

Recommendation 6. Analyze the types of mowing equipment assigned to each quadrant to identify opportunities for efficiencies.

Recommendation 7. Negotiate a different work schedule for mowing and maintenance crews that optimizes efficient deployment.

Recommendation 8. Reexamine standard operating procedures for areas that are mowed twice weekly to determine the opportunities for less intense mowing operations.

Recommendation 9. Include state-of-the-art parks design specifications that will reduce the need for grass trimming.

Recommendation 10. Develop a work program for installing design improvements that reduces the need for grass trimming.

Recommendation 11. Analyze mowing standard operating procedures to identify opportunities to increase “no-mow” areas.

Recommendation 12. Reexamine the plan for converting turf to native grasses to identify opportunities to increase the acreage to be converted.

Recommendation 13. Create standard details for construction of low-maintenance landscape and set up a system and accountability to ensure they are part of every project.

Recommendation 14. Implement a policy that the maintenance supervisory staff will be asked to review all construction and landscape plans for input on low-maintenance solutions.

Recommendation 15. Support and fund the city arborist’s and forestry supervisor’s design for an appropriate training protocol for the forestry crew.

Recommendation 16. Develop and implement team-building training and events for department staff.

Recommendation 17. Use cross-functional task teams to provide opportunities for people to work together on department-wide issues.

Recommendation 18. Implement written protocols for parks maintenance crews to provide situational assistance on recreation facilities.
Recommendation 19. Develop and adopt a cost recovery policy for Cedar Rapids’ recreation programs.

Recommendation 20. Analyze the collection process and determine if and how the proposed point-of-sale technology will make the process more secure.

Recommendation 21. Request that the Police Department review the safety procedures and recommend safety improvements for those handling cash and the cash itself.

Recommendation 22. Request that the Finance Department review the internal controls and cash handling procedures to ensure they are sufficient and appropriate.

Recommendation 23. Initiate discussions with potential partners to determine opportunities for service sharing.

Recommendation 24. Conform the parks master plan to the financial constraints facing the City.

Recommendation 25. Develop a strategy for nurturing and growing the parks and recreation private foundation.
**Attachment B – Employee Survey Results**

**Background**

Management Partners developed an employee survey to solicit input from staff as part of the City of Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department review. All employees in the Parks and Recreation Department were emailed an invitation to participate. The survey was open to responses between February 7 and 21; a total of 43 individuals responded.

**Demographics**

The following three tables detail the demographics of the employees responding to the survey. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents in terms of their length of service with the Parks and Recreation Department.

**Table 1. How long have you worked for the Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 5 years</td>
<td>15 (35%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 years</td>
<td>9 (21%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 years</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 15 years</td>
<td>14 (33%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly half of respondents have worked for the department for five years or less (43%) and one-third of respondents have worked for the department for over 15 years.

Table 2 shows the role of each respondent within the department.

**Table 2. Which of the following best describes your position?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>5 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory</td>
<td>13 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Supervisory</td>
<td>25 (58%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over half of the respondents hold a non-supervisory position (58%) with the remaining respondents either in a supervisory or management role.

Table 3 shows the breakdown of respondents based on which operation they work for in the Parks and Recreation Department.
Table 3. Which of the following operations do you work in for the Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parks</td>
<td>23 (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>16 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than half of the respondents work in Parks (53%) while 37% work in Recreation, with 9% in Administration.

Communication

Respondents were shown a list of statements in several different categories, including communication, service delivery and customer service, tools and equipment, training, and organizational culture, and were asked whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement. The responses to statements about communication are shown in Table 4 with the detailed percentages for strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree as well as an aggregate of percentages for strongly agree/agree and strongly disagree/disagree.

Table 4. Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) The mission of our department is clear to me.</td>
<td>10 (24%)</td>
<td>24 (57%)</td>
<td>8 (19%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34 (81%)</td>
<td>8 (19%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Communication within my department is useful.</td>
<td>10 (24%)</td>
<td>19 (45%)</td>
<td>10 (24%)</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29 (69%)</td>
<td>13 (31%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) I am more likely to learn about developments through the grapevine than through formal communication channels.</td>
<td>9 (21%)</td>
<td>11 (26%)</td>
<td>14 (33%)</td>
<td>8 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 (48%)</td>
<td>22 (52%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) My supervisor keeps me informed.</td>
<td>11 (26%)</td>
<td>23 (53%)</td>
<td>7 (16%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34 (79%)</td>
<td>9 (21%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) If I have a question or problem, I can speak openly to my supervisor about it.</td>
<td>18 (43%)</td>
<td>17 (40%)</td>
<td>5 (12%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35 (83%)</td>
<td>7 (17%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) My supervisor does a good job of involving me in decisions that affect me and my work.</td>
<td>16 (39%)</td>
<td>17 (41%)</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33 (80%)</td>
<td>8 (20%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) My supervisor facilitates and encourages open and honest communication among team members.</td>
<td>16 (39%)</td>
<td>16 (39%)</td>
<td>5 (12%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32 (78%)</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) My supervisor is open to feedback from me.</td>
<td>14 (33%)</td>
<td>23 (53%)</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37 (86%)</td>
<td>6 (14%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Over three-fourths of respondents either strongly agree or agree that information on the department website meets customer needs (75%), that their supervisor encourages open and honest communication (78%), their supervisor keeps them informed (79%) and involves them in decisions that affect their work (80%), that the department’s mission is clear (81%), and that they can openly speak to their supervisor about questions or problems (83%). Just 69% of respondents strongly agree or agree that communication within the department is useful while less than half, 48%, strongly agree or agree that they are more likely to learn about developments through the grapevine rather than through formal communication channels.

**Service Delivery and Customer Service**

Table 5 shows the responses to statements about service delivery and customer service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. Service Delivery and Customer Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i) Information provided on our website meets customer needs.</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
<td>24 (67%)</td>
<td>8 (22%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27 (75%)</td>
<td>9 (25%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| a) The Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department provides services that meet the needs of the community. | 6 (14%) | 29 (69%) | 7 (17%) | 0 (0%) |
|                                                                 | 35 (83%) | 7 (17%) |
| b) The Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department is continually looking at ways to improve our services to the community. | 13 (32%) | 18 (44%) | 10 (24%) | 0 (0%) |
|                                                                 | 31 (76%) | 10 (24%) |
| c) The Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department provides prompt customer service. | 12 (29%) | 27 (66%) | 2 (5%) | 0 (0%) |
|                                                                 | 39 (95%) | 2 (5%) |
| d) The Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department serves customers enthusiastically. | 8 (19%) | 30 (71%) | 4 (10%) | 0 (0%) |
|                                                                 | 38 (90%) | 4 (10%) |
| e) Employees find creative solutions to meet customer needs. | 11 (27%) | 26 (63%) | 3 (7%) | 1 (2%) |
|                                                                 | 37 (90%) | 4 (10%) |
| f) I am allowed to make decisions to solve problems for customers. | 15 (38%) | 21 (53%) | 3 (8%) | 1 (3%) |
|                                                                 | 36 (90%) | 4 (10%) |
| g) I trust department leaders to provide direction that meets our customer needs. | 11 (30%) | 15 (41%) | 9 (24%) | 2 (5%) |
|                                                                 | 26 (70%) | 11 (30%) |
| h) I know how to solve most customer problems without referring customers to someone else. | 10 (25%) | 27 (68%) | 3 (8%) | 0 (0%) |
|                                                                 | 37 (93%) | 3 (8%) |
| i) My unit has an established process to receive feedback from our customers. | 5 (13%) | 26 (67%) | 7 (18%) | 1 (3%) |
|                                                                 | 31 (79%) | 8 (21%) |
j) My department has a reputation in the community for positive customer service. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My department has a reputation in the community for positive customer service.</td>
<td>10 (30%)</td>
<td>19 (58%)</td>
<td>4 (12%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29 (88%)</td>
<td>4 (12%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

k) I am proud to work at the Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am proud to work at the Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department.</td>
<td>15 (38%)</td>
<td>23 (59%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38 (97%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly every respondent strongly agreed or agreed that they are proud to work at the Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department (97%). More than three-fourths of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with each statement about service delivery and customer service except just 70% strongly agreed or agreed that they trust department leaders to provide direction that meets customer needs.

Respondents were asked to share ideas on how to improve customer service in an open-ended response. A total of 16 respondents took the opportunity to provide their thoughts about ways to improve customer service. Two ideas were mentioned by more than one respondent. Five respondents expressed the desire to obtain more customer feedback either through surveying customers more often or by soliciting feedback through social media. Four respondents think the department should increase customer service training and implement more cross training so employees can be more helpful.

**Tools and Equipment**

Responses to statements about tools and equipment are shown in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) The necessary resources (e.g. materials/equipment) are available for me to do my job efficiently.</td>
<td>6 (14%)</td>
<td>21 (50%)</td>
<td>12 (29%)</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27 (64%)</td>
<td>15 (36%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) The Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department has the technology we need to do our jobs efficiently and effectively.</td>
<td>7 (17%)</td>
<td>18 (44%)</td>
<td>16 (39%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25 (61%)</td>
<td>16 (39%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) The Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department staff use technology effectively.</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
<td>19 (48%)</td>
<td>12 (30%)</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25 (63%)</td>
<td>15 (38%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than half of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the three statements regarding tools and equipment with 61% in agreement that the department has the necessary technology to do their jobs efficiently and effectively, 63% agree that the department staff uses that technology effectively, and 64% agreed that the necessary resources are available to perform their job effectively.
Training

Table 7 shows the responses to statements about training.

**Table 7. Training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strongly Agree/Agree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) I have the training I need to do my job effectively.</td>
<td>13 (32%)</td>
<td>21 (51%)</td>
<td>5 (12%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) I am provided with additional training when I need it.</td>
<td>12 (31%)</td>
<td>18 (46%)</td>
<td>7 (18%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Training provided by the department for new employees is effective.</td>
<td>6 (18%)</td>
<td>18 (53%)</td>
<td>5 (15%)</td>
<td>5 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Training provided by the City for new employees is effective.</td>
<td>6 (17%)</td>
<td>25 (69%)</td>
<td>5 (14%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) I have the necessary training to effectively use available technology.</td>
<td>7 (17%)</td>
<td>22 (54%)</td>
<td>12 (29%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) My supervisor supports my professional development.</td>
<td>15 (38%)</td>
<td>19 (49%)</td>
<td>5 (13%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) The Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department is prepared for future employee turnover such as departures and retirements.</td>
<td>3 (9%)</td>
<td>7 (21%)</td>
<td>13 (39%)</td>
<td>10 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) Performance evaluations are conducted in a consistent manner across the Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department.</td>
<td>9 (27%)</td>
<td>19 (58%)</td>
<td>4 (12%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Performance evaluations are a helpful tool in my professional development.</td>
<td>7 (18%)</td>
<td>18 (47%)</td>
<td>10 (26%)</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents strongly agree or agree that they have the training they need (83%), they can receive training when needed (77%), training for new employees is effective (86%) and that they are trained to effectively use technology (71%). Nearly nine in ten respondents (87%) strongly agree or agree that their supervisor supports their professional development. While 85% strongly agree or agree that performance evaluations are conducted in a consistent manner, just 66% strongly agree or agree that performance evaluations are helpful in their professional development. Only 30% of respondents strongly agree or agree that the department is prepared for future employee turnover, which is indicative of an area that needs some attention.

Organizational Culture

Responses to statements about the Parks and Recreation Department’s organizational culture are shown in Table 8.
### Table 8. Organizational Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) I have a clear understanding of my job responsibilities and expectations.</td>
<td>13 (33%)</td>
<td>25 (63%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Employees in the Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department work well as a team.</td>
<td>8 (20%)</td>
<td>17 (43%)</td>
<td>11 (28%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) I am treated as a valued team member by other employees.</td>
<td>9 (23%)</td>
<td>24 (62%)</td>
<td>5 (13%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) I am treated as a valued team member by my supervisor.</td>
<td>16 (40%)</td>
<td>20 (50%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department employees work as a team within my unit (i.e. parks, rec, golf, etc.).</td>
<td>12 (31%)</td>
<td>15 (38%)</td>
<td>9 (23%)</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department employees work collaboratively between units (i.e. parks, rec, golf, etc.).</td>
<td>7 (18%)</td>
<td>22 (56%)</td>
<td>7 (18%)</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department employees support one another in their work.</td>
<td>7 (18%)</td>
<td>24 (60%)</td>
<td>9 (23%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) Department leaders treat employees fairly.</td>
<td>5 (14%)</td>
<td>21 (60%)</td>
<td>5 (14%)</td>
<td>4 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) My immediate supervisor treats me with respect.</td>
<td>20 (51%)</td>
<td>17 (44%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j) Employees are held accountable for the results of their work.</td>
<td>6 (16%)</td>
<td>12 (32%)</td>
<td>12 (32%)</td>
<td>7 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k) Employees are held accountable for being an effective teammate.</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
<td>16 (44%)</td>
<td>11 (31%)</td>
<td>6 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l) Questioning the ways things are done can have adverse personal consequences.</td>
<td>6 (17%)</td>
<td>9 (26%)</td>
<td>17 (49%)</td>
<td>3 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m) Quality performance is recognized and rewarded.</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>19 (50%)</td>
<td>15 (39%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n) My work is valued by my supervisor.</td>
<td>15 (38%)</td>
<td>22 (55%)</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o) Employee morale in the Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department is good.</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
<td>16 (42%)</td>
<td>11 (29%)</td>
<td>8 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p) I would recommend the Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department as a good place to work.</td>
<td>11 (30%)</td>
<td>20 (54%)</td>
<td>6 (16%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nearly every respondent strongly agrees or agrees that they have a clear understanding of their job responsibilities and expectations (95%), 84% strongly agree or agree that they would recommend the department as a good place to work, and 93% strongly agree or agree that their work is valued by their supervisor.

Most respondents strongly agree or agree that they are treated as a valued team member by other employees (85%) and their supervisor (90%), however just 63% strongly agree or agree that department employees work well as a team and 69% strongly agree or agree that employees in their unit work well as a team. Nearly three-quarters of respondents strongly agree or agree that department employees work collaboratively between units (74%), slightly more, 78%, strongly agree or agree that employees support each other in their work. However just 53% strongly agree or agree that employees are held accountable for being an effective teammate.

While 74% of respondents strongly agree or agree that department leaders treat employees fairly and 95% strongly agree or agree that their immediate supervisor treats them with respect, less than half of the respondents strongly agree or agree that employees are held accountable for their work (49%) and slightly more than half, 55%, strongly agree or agree that quality performance is recognized or rewarded.

Slightly more than four of ten respondents strongly agree or agree that adverse personal consequences can result from questioning the way things are done (43%). Just half of the respondents strongly agree or agree that morale is good in the department.

**Additional Issues**

Respondents were able to note any additional issues they believe should be addressed during the review of the Parks and Recreation Department. A total of 31 responses were received and three ideas were mentioned by more than one respondent. Six respondents indicated the need to increase staffing but they differ on which areas need more staff; administration, parks, or recreation. Four respondents think the department needs to focus on improving communication, especially between management and staff. Three respondents believe the department could benefit from teambuilding to encourage trust and communication between the different operations.

**Conclusion**

A total of 43 employees responded to the survey to provide thoughts about communication, service delivery and customer service, tools and equipment, training, and organizational culture in the Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department. While responses to the survey were generally positive, it is concerning that only half of respondents think morale within the department is good.

Respondents indicated that while most communication is sufficient there is room for improvement, especially since respondents believe they often learned of information through
the grapevine rather than through official channels. Customer service delivery is performed well in the minds of respondents and most enjoy working for the department. Slightly less than two-thirds of respondents think that the tools, equipment and technology used in the department allows staff to be efficient and effective. While respondents think training is appropriate, there appears to be room for improvement regarding performance evaluations. They overwhelmingly think the department is not prepared for future employee turnover. Respondents feel valued but think that teamwork could be better and that the department could do a better job recognizing quality performance.