



SECTION 7 | Introduction and Process

The Recreation Program Assessment offers an in-depth perspective of the recreation program offerings and helps identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in programming. It also assists in identifying core programs, program gaps within the community, duplication of programs with other recreational service providers in the community, and determining future program offerings for residents.

The consulting team based these program findings and comments from program assessment forms, discussions, and interviews with the recreation staff. The consulting team completed a programming meeting with staff, reviewed the existing inventory of programs and also toured parts of the system.

The Department program staff selected the core programs to be evaluated and entered the data into the program assessment matrix provided by PROS. This report addresses the program offerings from a systems perspective for the core program areas. It identifies key issues and presents recommendations for these issues, while also offering recommendations to elevate the core programs to the next level.

SECTION 7.1 | Program Assessment and Overview

The Department offers a variety of programming options and is especially proficient in its Senior Programs and Special Events. Based on the community input process undertaken, a high number of residents were very appreciative of the nature and variety of recreation offerings. The key system-wide issues as ascertained from the program assessment sheets filled out by staff are as follows:

- The **program descriptions** could do a better job expanding the descriptions and promoting the benefits of participation. Some programs including youth athletics and basketball do not list any benefits at all.

- Also, staff stated that some existing individual programs are not listed in the program guide. Based on the community survey responses, the brochure is the most popular means of information for the community and lack of information in the brochure could limit program awareness. This is an area that must be immediately addressed to ensure maximum participation for special events.

- **Age segment distribution** (tracking what segments are served by the programs) is good, but can be improved. One area of improvement is the high school age program that is currently at 9 percent distribution. Best practice systems tend to have this in the 12 - 13 percent range.
- There is a **lack of balance in program lifecycle (program growth trends) distribution**. An above average number of programs lie in the mature to declining stage, while there are limited programs in the introduction through take-off stages.
- A desktop assessment of the information provided by the staff reveals the existence of high competitor pressure for many program areas. There are **several similar providers** with the majority of them being neighboring agencies including City of Tamarac, City of Plantation, City of Coral Springs, Town of Davie, Broward County, City of Lauderhill, City of Pembroke Pines, and YMCA of Broward among others. This provides the Department an opportunity to evaluate partnerships with other agencies as a way of reducing overlaps in offerings and creating competitive niches.
- **Limited program performance measures tracked.**
 - Several areas do track some program performance measures but these measures are not tracked on system-wide basis. Customer satisfaction rates are informally tracked, while customer retention rate is seldom tracked. Mini camp and Kids Days Off do track customer satisfaction and retention rates but most other program areas do not.
- There is good **volunteer support** for Swim Booster Club, Senior Center Membership, theater staffing, athletics coaches, Memorial Healthcare System for Earth Day and the Sunrise Police Explorers for Kids Holiday

Party. However, there seems to be an absence of a system-wide volunteer management approach for the Leisure Services Department.

- From a **partnership** standpoint, the Earth Day program had a number of partners listed. The partnership with AARP is a good example of a win-win agreement and more such partnership options should be explored.

- There is an absence of a focused and strategic system-wide approach to target potential partners / sponsors and this must be initiated.

- From a **marketing and promotions** standpoint, the staff undertakes a number of promotions with most programs using the Horizon (program guide), website, brochures, newsletters, and in-facility signage and promotions as a part of the marketing mix.

- Marketing efforts appear to be used with a focus on creating awareness but does not effectively seek to drive sales. Cross-promoting programs (promoting Senior Gardening Club during the Earth Day festival would be a good example) and creating packaged offerings with an aim to up-selling available options would be a recommended strategy to drive incremental revenue.

- Customized email blasts can be increased; use of Web 2.0 technologies including social networks, blogs / webinars / podcasts could be expanded to go with the Department's current use of Twitter for micro-blogging.

- Most commonly used **customer feedback methods** are in-house comment cards and user surveys.

- The use of pre-program surveys is virtually non-existent. Pre-program surveys are useful to gauge potential user interest before offering programs so as to limit cancellation rates and maximize resources.

- Lost customer surveys would also be a valuable addition. By building a database of all past and present users, the staff can track lost customers on an annual basis. These could then be surveyed to identify reasons for customer drop-outs.

- On-going online surveys through www.surveymonkey.com and using the Leisure Services website to a greater degree is recommended.

- **Pricing strategies** are varied across the board and use a variety of strategies from customers' ability to pay, resident discounts, group discounts, and age segment discounts particularly for the Aquatics classes. This is a good practice and must be expanded for other areas too as a way to drive attendance and maximize usage particularly at non-peak times. For contract classes, the instructor sets the prices but it would be recommended that the staff work with the instructors to set prices that are fair and represent the true value of the offerings.

- Additional strategies using prime-time / non-prime time rates could be employed to help address some of the capacity utilization issues.

- **Financial performance** measures are inconsistent. There is limited awareness of the cost per experience and the programs that have revenue to expense details provided do not factor in indirect costs such as staff time or fuel, maintenance etc. Cost recovery goals are not established for many program areas and lack of these business oriented practices limit the revenue generation potential for many program areas.

Age Segment Distribution:

In addition to the lifecycle analysis, staff also assessed age segment distribution of programs. The distribution follows:

• Preschool	9%.
• Elementary Aged (K-5th grade)	13%.
• Middle School (6-8th grade)	15%.
• High School (9-12th grade)	9%.
• Young Adults 18-24	13%.
• Adults 25-44	11%.
• Middle Age 45-64	15%.
• Seniors 65+	13%.
• Family Events	4%.

The balance of age segment distribution is good but it can be improved. An area that stands out is the nine (9) percent distribution of high school age programs, which is among the toughest age groups to program for. Best practice systems tend to have this in the 12 - 13 percent range.

The U.S. Census information demographics report depicts that the U-18 age group comprises 24 percent of the total population currently and it is projected to further decrease to 21 percent in the next 10 years. However, as seen in the list above, the program distribution by age segment has over 36 percent of the programming dedicated to those age segments.

On the other hand, the programs for 45+ age groups comprise 28 percent of the total program offerings, but that age group comprises 40 percent or more of the total population based on 2009 population estimates. Also, given that the median age of the residents in Sunrise is projected to increase significantly from 36.7 years in 2000 to 42 years by 2018, it is imperative that the Department plan to alter its programming mix to accommodate for these demographic shifts.

The Department should review the age segment distribution on an annual basis and ensure that age segments show good balance throughout. In reviewing age segment growth over the next five years, the greatest percentage growth areas will occur in all age segments over 55.

Also, PROS' operational experience reveals that rather than categorizing the 55+ market as one program area, the trend is moving toward having two to three segments of older adults. The Department must look into further splitting program offerings into 45–54, 55–65, 65–75 and older segments.

Lifecycle Analysis:

The program assessment included a lifecycle analysis by staff members, in which program growth trends were evaluated. The listing of programs is included in **Figure 6.2a** at the end of this section (a full-size version of this chart is available in the Appendix). This assessment was not based on quantitative data, but on staff's knowledge of their program areas. The

following list shows the percentage distribution of the various lifecycle categories of the Department's recreation programs.

- **Introduction** stage (New program; modest participation) – 26%.
- **Take off** stage (Rapid participation growth) – 11%.
- **Growth** stage (Moderate, but consistent participation growth) – 6%.
- **Mature** stage (Slow participation growth) – 40%.
- **Saturation** stage (Minimal to no participation growth; extreme competition) – 11%.
- **Decline** stage (Declining participation) – 6%.

These percentages were obtained by comparing the number of programs in each individual stage with the total number of programs listed in the program worksheets. The lifecycles indicate a lack of balance with 40 percent programs being in the Mature stage. The consulting team recommends that 60 percent of programs should be in the introduction, take off or growth stages. For the Department, this percentage is at 43 percent which indicates that there is room for improvement.

The overall strategy includes moving more Mature and Saturated programs to the Introductory, stage and continuing to add newer programs based on community needs and trends. Also, based on the program lifecycle there are a very limited number of programs in the introduction through take-off stage and this speaks to the limited extent of innovation in the program cycles while continuing too long with declining programs. Programs in the Decline stage must be closely reviewed to evaluate repositioning them or eliminating them in the future.

Staff should complete a lifecycle review on an annual basis and ensure that the percentage distribution closely aligns with desired performance. Furthermore, the Department could include a performance measure of percentage of total number of new programs offered annually as an incentive for more innovation.

An example of promoting innovation in the recreation program development culture could include developing a network of national best-in-class agencies and facilitating an on-line discussion about current programming trends.

Core Programs

The consulting team believes in the importance of identifying core programs based on current and future needs. This assists in creating a sense of focus around specific program areas of greatest importance to the community. Public recreation is challenged by the premise of being all things to all people. The core program philosophy assists staff in being able to focus on what is most important. Programs are categorized as core programs if they meet a majority of the following categories:

- The program has been provided for a long period of time (over 4-5 years).
- Offered 3-4 sessions per year.
- Wide demographic appeal.
- Includes 5% or more of recreation budget.
- Includes a tiered level of skill development.
- Requires full-time staff to manage the program area.
- Has strong social value.
- High level of customer interface exists.
- High partnering capability.
- Facilities are designed to support the program.

Stage in Program Lifecycle					
Introduction	Take-Off	Growth	Mature	Saturated	Decline
Senior programs contractual- paper artistry	Aquatics-City free group sw im lessons	Aquatics- City group sw im lessons	Aquatics-Aquat Fitness	Aquatics-Free group sw im lessons	Aquatics-Scuba
Senior programs contractual-ESOL	Aquatics-Ellis Lifeguard Class	Aquatics-City Private sw im lessons	Senior Programs-In house-Line dancing	Aquatics-Ellis Lifeguard class	Senior Programs-Trips-Sports Venues
Senior Programs-In house-Book Club		Aquatics-Sw im team programs	Senior Programs-In house-New Years Party	Senior programs contractual-Green Thumbs	Contractual Youth Programs
Senior Programs-In house-Walk your way to health		Camps- Mini camps and Kids day off	Senior Programs-In house-Dinner Party	Senior programs contractual-Choral group	Youth-in house classes- Rec Baseball
Senior Programs-In house-Gardening Club		Camps-Summer Camps	Senior Programs-In house-Picnic	Senior programs contractual-Painting	Youth-in house classes- Rec Soccer
Senior Programs-In house-Scottish dancing		Theater Programs- Broadway series	Senior Programs-In house-Duplicate bridge	Senior Programs-In house-Woodcarving	Youth-in house classes- Rec flag-football and cheerleading
Special Events-Earth Day		Theater Programs- World Music series	Senior Programs-In house-single club	Senior Programs-In house-Movies	Youth-in house classes- Rec basketball
Special Events		Theater Programs- Children's showtime	Senior Programs-In house-Bingo	Senior Programs-In house-Tai Chi	Youth-in house classes- Rec Roller Hockey
		Theater Programs- Jazz-Blues	Senior Programs-Trips-General Trips	Senior Programs-In house-Aerobics	Youth-in house classes- Rec Softball
		Theater Programs- American Tribute	Special Events	Senior Programs-In house-Reg. Bridge	Youth-in house classes- Travel soccer
		Senior programs contractual-Computers	Special Events- Woodstock	Senior Programs-In house-Stretcherise	Youth-in house classes- babygarten
		Senior programs contractual-Beading	Youth In house classes- Tackle football	Senior Programs-In house-Bocce	Youth-in house classes- Kids in the kitchen
		Senior programs contractual-Spanish	Youth In house classes- Just you and me	Senior Programs-In house-Mah Jongg	Youth-in house classes- Adult Basketball league
		Senior Programs-In house-AARP safe driver	Youth In house classes- Crafty kids	Medical Transportation	
		Senior Programs-In house-Bowling	Youth In house classes- Tot adventures	Mini-bus transportation	
		Senior Programs-In house-Sewing		Contractual Youth Programs	
		Senior Programs-Trips-Casino Trips		Youth In house classes- Travel Baseball	
		Special Events		Youth In house classes- Tackle cheerleading	
		Youth In house classes- Travel softball			
		Youth In house classes- 2006-17			
		Youth In house classes- 2007-25			
		Youth In house classes- 2008-33			
		Youth In house classes- 2009-53			
New program; modest participation	Rapid participation growth	Moderate, but consistent participation growth	Slow participation growth	Minimal to no participation growth; extreme competition	Declining participation

During the programming meeting with the staff, the following core program areas were identified:

- Adult Programs
- Aquatics
- Camps
- Cultural Arts
- Senior Programs
- Special Events
- Transportation
- Youth Programs

Recommended Core Programs:

The following list includes recommendations to reposition current programs or add newer core programs to the existing ones:

New Program Areas

- Outdoor skills / Adventure programs (Adventure Trips, 5K races, Bi-athlons, Triathlons etc.).

Repositioned Program Areas

- Active Retired Adult Enrichment Programs (as opposed to Senior Programs).
- Fitness and Wellness programs (Adult and Youth combined)

While PROS understands that staffing resources and existing programs may hinder some of the growth efforts, it is essential that the staff commit to a concerted effort towards expanding / repositioning

these core program areas to proactively position the Department to accommodate shifts in user needs and trends.

Nationally, **Outdoor skills / adventure programming** is a growing trend. This can include rock climbing, canoeing, kayaking, paragliding, dirt biking, running, and triathlons.

From a running / triathlon standpoint, there is an opportunity to create a branded special event similar to the Earth Day or even in conjunction with it. The Earth Day 5K / 10 K / Half Marathon could be good events to extend the festivities and widen the potential visitor base. The largest growth segment by age for triathlons is the youth market. In particular, the women's market is the fastest growing segment in the sport of triathlon. According to USA Triathlon, USAT female membership has increased from 11percent in the early 90s, to 37 percent today. There could also be an opportunity to have an indoor-outdoor hybrid triathlon using the City's facilities, particularly the Civic Center complex.

Based on nationwide trends, **fitness and wellness** activities are among the most important program category. Currently, there are some fitness and wellness classes offered through private contractors but there is an opportunity to create a Fitness and Wellness core program area within that.. Given the community's high need and the aging population trend, Adult Fitness and Wellness programs will continue to grow exponentially. On the other hand, with the increasing focus on childhood obesity, more and more parents are concerned with ensuring a healthy occurrence of fitness and wellness activities in their kids' lives. Thus, an initial core program area focused on Fitness and Wellness with an eventual goal of splitting into Adult and Youth focused program areas, would be recommended.

In addition to the new core programs, it would be useful to **reposition Senior programs to Active Retired Adult Enrichment programs**. The word senior has often times been linked to a negative connotation among the current audiences, especially the active baby boomer population. This would allow for greater participation in the program areas and maximize outreach to all 55+ age segments. Going ahead, a recommendation is to further segment within these age segments to introduce 55-64 and 65+ programs. As observed, 55 year old participants have substantially different recreation needs than 70 year old participants

and this would ensure a more focused approach towards serving the community's needs.

Additional, individual program areas serving as Special Events or Arts and Cultural events that could be introduced include:

- Outdoor movie night.
- Cultural programs – Art in the Park exhibits and competitions.
- Expand programming opportunities in the Civic Center Theater by introducing shows for children, movie night, theater based programs, black and white films etc.

Program Participation and Barriers:

One of the survey questions asked respondents about their **participation in recreation programs** offered by the Department. Based on their responses, 22 percent participated in existing programs over the last 12 months. These numbers are lower than the national benchmark numbers which are around 30 - 32 percent.

Since previous survey results are unknown it is difficult to establish how the current 22 percent participation rate ranks in comparison to past data. However, going forward it is recommended that the Department continues to track this number over time to establish trends in participation.

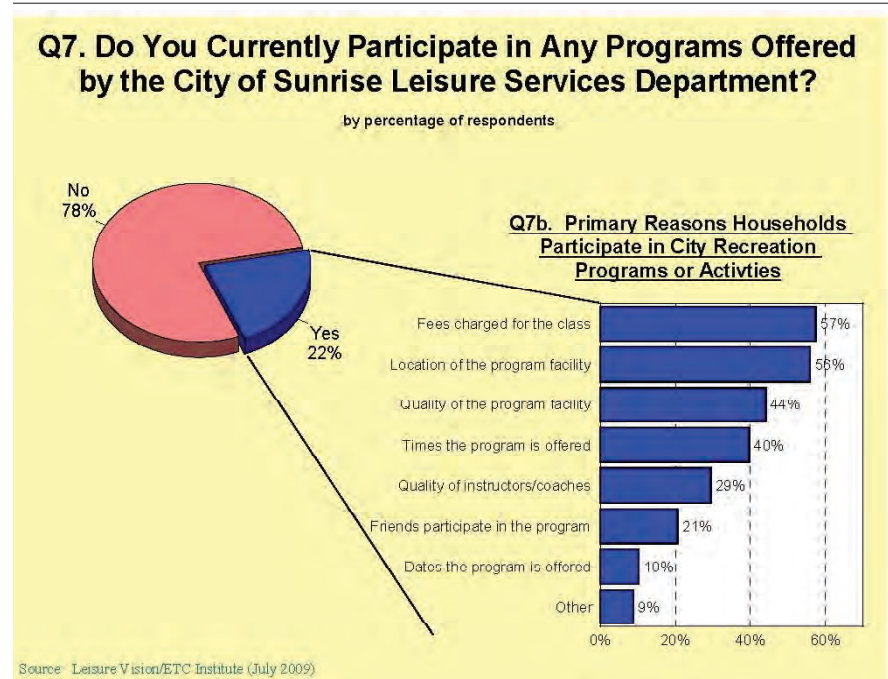
The primary reasons that respondents stated for participation in the City recreation programs or activities were:

- Fees charged for the classes (57%)
- Location of the programs facility (56%)
- Quality of the program facility (44%)

The results, particularly the one pertaining to fees, serve to underscore the existing perception that the Department's offerings are a tremendous

value for money. There is a sentiment among some of the staff, and the consulting team concurs, that the prices are almost too low and need to be reviewed on an in-going basis to ensure they represent the true value they offer.

It is interesting to note that 21 percent of participants stated that they participated because their friends did. This further underscores the importance of word of mouth marketing and the importance of offering a good quality program and excellent customer service so as to increase the chances for referred business.



Along with tracking participant interest and participation in various programs, the flip side was to investigate reasons **why people do not participate** in the Department's programs. The survey asked, "What prevents households from participating in programs?" The four most significant reasons were:

- Too busy – 26%.
- Too far from our residence – 19%
- Do not know what is being offered – 17%.
- Program times are not convenient – 15%.

In order to move from its current position to the national averages of 30 percent or higher, the Department must undertake a root cause analysis to delve deeper into the stated causes of non-participation. This determination could be difficult, as non-participants generally may not feel motivated to attend a focus group or complete a survey about why they do not participate. One method for this includes participant interviews at the special events. Also, lost customer surveys by tracking past participants to identify reasons for discontinuation would help shed light on areas of improvement.

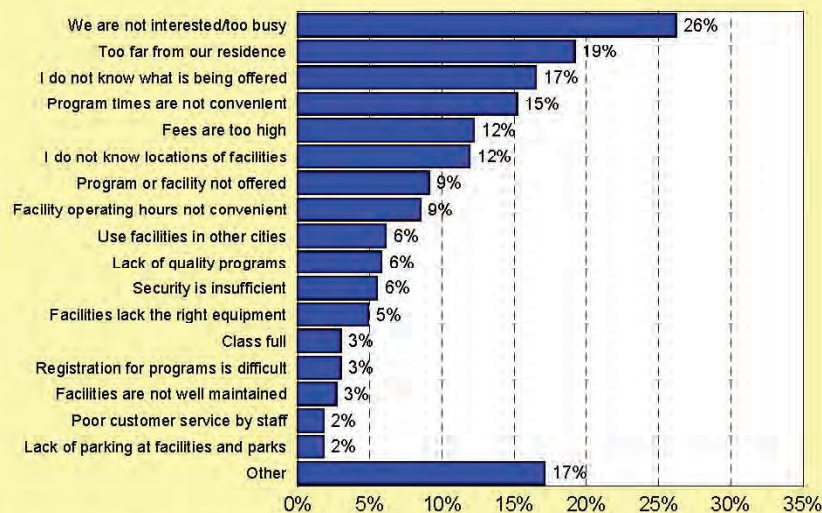
In terms of **distance from residences**, using information from the LOS analysis, it would be easier to evaluate the true levels of services and equity of access of offerings in the community. This would help the Department determine program areas that might not be within a typical drive-time distance for parts of the community and address those issues. Another recommendation would be to take the offerings to the users by conducting certain programs / classes at the HOA.

Lack of awareness about the Department offerings could be partly attributed to insufficient or improper marketing and outreach to the community. For **program times**, conducting informal surveys (offline and on the website) and focus groups could help identify convenient program times that may help increase participation.

Overall, the Department does have below average participation rates but by addressing issues that can be internally controlled, (increasing awareness, offering programs in convenient locations and timings) there is no reason why participation rates, and consequently revenue generated, cannot be increased to national averages and higher.

Q8. Reasons Preventing Households From Using City Parks, Recreation Facilities or Programs More Often

by percentage of respondents (multiple choices could be made)



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (December 2009)

SECTION 7.2 | Partners, Sponsors, and Volunteers

Currently, there is partnership support for some of the special events but no adequate system-wide sponsor / partner support. There is an opportunity to identify and actively pursue earned income options to help alleviate the financial constraints faced by the Department.

From a system-wide standpoint, the consulting team recommends developing an enhanced sponsorship brochure that can be used to promote and sell the benefits of partnering with the Department. One of the key ways in which the sponsorship brochure can help a potential partner / sponsor evaluate the viability of entering into an agreement with the Department is by providing tangible metrics (participants) for various events. Additionally, these recommendations should be published on the website and aggressively promoted. Additionally, recognizing all existing or past sponsors for their support would certainly help build goodwill. The brochure's images could provide some samples

pictures of the types of promotions that may have been done or could be done. The images should also focus on reflecting the diversity of the participant base in a multi-cultural place like Sunrise.

PROS' experience has been that the greater the opportunities to package the offerings, the more the likelihood of selling sponsorship. Providing sample packaging options that tie-in some signature special events such as the Earth Day or the Woodstock Arts and Crafts Festival with some of the smaller events would ensure that the staff up-sells events that may not get sold otherwise, while the partner gets more bang for their buck.

From a partnership standpoint, the Department must develop and implement a partnership plan for the next five years to maximize existing resources and serve the community's needs. Identifying potential partners, reasons for involvements and desired strategic outcomes from the given partnerships are important steps to bear in mind as the Department embarks on expanding the partner / sponsor base particularly targeting the corporates in the area. Additionally, teaching and training staff to negotiate and manage partnerships will assist in empowering them and helping ensure the successful implementation of partnership / sponsorship agreements.

For other partnership options, local healthcare providers or agencies such as Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital or Pinnacle Health Wellness could be solicited to 'present' (serve as a naming rights options) a fitness and wellness class or fitness program areas (youth or adult classes) where they can get significant exposure to their relevant target through these programs in exchange for their support. For example, Walk Your Way to Health with Pinnacle Health Wellness.

The ability to offer a potential partner / sponsor the chance to maximize the experiential marketing opportunities they offer is a huge plus. As an example, using Dell or Apple signage and images would not hold the same value as Dell or Apple products being displayed at the event where the users have the ability to touch and feel the product i.e. experience the product they may want to purchase. The same would be applicable for arts supplies from a local business during the Woodstock Arts and Crafts festival. Additionally, promotions via coupons / discounts etc. that are shown to directly impact sales are powerful tools and could be used for local businesses.

As mentioned earlier, the Department has moderate volunteer support for individual program areas. There is support for some aquatics programs and special events, but it is not tracked and leveraged to its maximum potential. It would be beneficial for the Leisure Services Department to establish a department-wide volunteer management program and establish a volunteer coordinator or allocate a set portion of a staff member's time towards volunteer management. The focus of this position is to create a broad based approach to targeting and utilizing volunteer support. Additionally, they must seek to enhance the desirability of volunteering for the Department's programs and events by developing a good reward and recognition system, similar to Frequent Flier airline programs. Volunteers can use their volunteer hours to obtain early registration at programs, or discounted pricing at certain programs, rentals or events. The Department currently offers information on the website to potential volunteers about How To Get Involved, which is a good practice. However, it would benefit greatly from creating a branded volunteer program that has a system in place for volunteer recruitment, retention, and recognition. Staff should also quantify the labor dollars which volunteers provide to the Department and this should be communicated to all partners, stakeholders and community members to educate them on the operational cost savings as a result of volunteer support.

SECTION 7.3 | Marketing and Promotions

This section reviews the Department's marketing approaches as well as key promotions and tactics.

According to the community needs assessment survey, a very high percentage of residents acquire information about the Leisure Services offerings through the Leisure Services Brochure – Horizons (49 percent). Nationally, 48 percent of residents rely on their park and recreation program guide thus the numbers in Sunrise seem to be on par with national averages. The other most frequently mentioned ways that respondents learn about programs and activities include: from friends and neighbors (30 percent), and City of Sunrise website (21 percent) as well as newspaper articles (21 percent).

Mediums like TV and radio seem to have very limited success since less than 10 percent and 2 percent of the respondents respectively have stated these mediums are the primary source of information. The Department would be well-served with conducting an assessment of the Marketing Return in Investment for various mediums. This would help identify such sources that may not offering a great return on the investment, and choose to reallocate marketing spending in areas that might have more impact.

As per the information provided in the program assessment worksheets, virtually every program is promoted via the program guide, the website and through flyers and brochures / direct mail. Only 6 percent of the respondents stated that they obtained information through the Department email. **Emails blasts** are being currently used for Camps and Cultural events but could be expanded to other areas such as Aquatics - swim lessons and Senior Programs. Email blasts are a very useful promotions tool since they are cost-effective and offer the ability to customize the message to individual groups. The Department would be well served with capturing user information during program registration and over special events. The information can be used to populate the user database and utilized for customized email blasts that can be used to provide program information and web-based promotions.

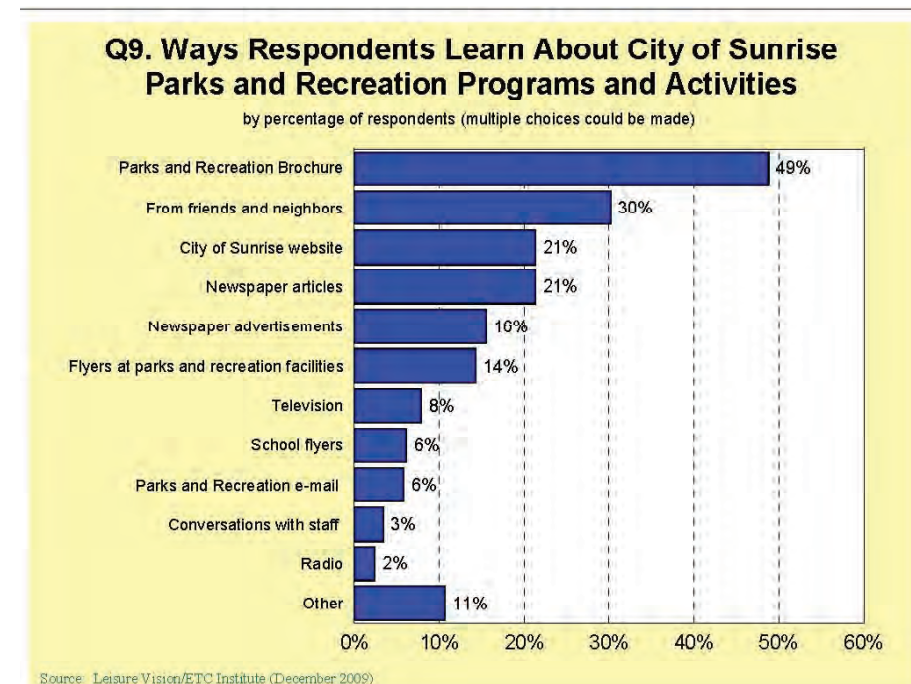
An effective and affordable means of promotion is '**On-hold pre-programmed messages**' that highlight upcoming classes, events or key registration dates for everyone who calls in to the Department.

Additionally, the consulting team recommends maximizing the use of **technology and social networks**. Developing a Facebook profile to compliment the current Twitter account would be the first step towards the strategic goal of maximizing outreach and building a brand in a cost effective manner. Additionally, other opportunities would include **SMS texting, Blogging, Podcasting and Webinars**.

Facebook – Teens are the main target of this movement, but more and more the participant base is expanding to include young mom's and middle-aged adults. The Department could utilize Facebook to:

- Provide a plethora of free and constantly updated information, including weekly calendar updates with events and programs.

- Control the message and identify how the target market responds to it.
- Display pictures and clips from special events such as the Earth Day / Cultural Festival or Woodstock Arts and Crafts festival.
- Allow controlled 'user generated content' by encouraging users to send in their pictures from the Department's special events or programs they participated in.
- Introduce Facebook-only promotions to drive greater visitation to Facebook. An example could be – first 5 fans on the Facebook account who respond to the program could get a 10% discount or get a chance for early registration to a popular program



Twitter (already in use by City) can be updated daily/hourly with promo codes and special events also.

SMS Texting – Current research shows that approximately 1,742 texts

are sent and received per month by teenagers. Given that more than one out of four individuals in the Sunrise service area is under the age of 19, there is an opportunity to target them through text messaging. By utilizing text messaging, the Department can also better track Return on Investment (ROI). Some specific advantages of utilizing SMS include:

- Using different short codes, one can track exactly where the customer saw the promotion – if it were via the newspaper, billboard, or television/ radio commercial. In using the short codes, the organization can determine which avenue of advertisement reaches the most customers.
- SMS prompts people to respond; thus, offering a promotion with a relatively short shelf life for events like the Earth Day Celebration / Woodstock Arts and Crafts Festival or for new classes that are introduced would be a good use of this medium.

Bloggng – This could be written by alternating staff members or could be ‘from the Director’s desk’ where upcoming events, past successes or plain community outreach could be undertaken. This is a very personalized form of communication and helps build an affinity for the staff and Department as a whole. However, blogs do offer an opportunity for almost instant feedback which may need to be controlled or monitored on a regular basis.

There is also an opportunity to add a retail link to the website that could have branded merchandise currently sold at special events such as the Woodstock Arts and Crafts Festival, Cultural Festival or other special events.

Webinars / Podcasting – These allow for a focused topic-based discussion where staff and senior groups, other special interest groups and community members at large can participate in the creation of a webinar or podcast that may be of interest. These could reside on the Sunrise website and users can be solicited on a monthly basis to provide feedback to identify the topics of most interest to them

Other recommendations include advertising in the community section in the Sunset – Friday / Sundays and targeting condo owners. Sending ‘Remember the Date’ information and using bulletin boards and signage would be additional means of ensuring top-of-the-mind recall and

maximizing participation in the community.

Long term, it would be important to ensure that the marketing efforts follow a Department-wide marketing plan, supplemented by business plans for core programs and facility operations.

SECTION 7.4 | Customer Feedback and HR Standards

Customer service is at the root of the success of any organization. A true community-service organization prides itself on identifying its customers’ preferences and acting in accordance to help fulfill their needs. In order to do this, an ongoing and system-wide feedback mechanism is of vital importance.

Currently, the Department does not have a system-wide approach but rather a program-wise approach towards garnering customer feedback. Most of the feedback is limited to in-house comment cards and user surveys. There are occasional instances of programs such as Medical and Minibus transportation that seem to use the website to obtain customer feedback. Adding user surveys and focus groups to the mix for Special events would be useful.

The Consulting team recommends the use of ‘Pre-program survey’ and ‘Lost customer surveys’ on a regular basis. The use of pre-program surveys is virtually non-existent. Pre-program surveys are useful to gauge potential user interest before offering programs so as to limit cancellation rates and maximize resources. By utilizing information available from the RecTrac software about past users, the staff can track lost customers on an annual basis. These could then be surveyed to identify reasons for customer drop-outs.

At the beginning of a year or a season, the Department could also conduct ‘Senior Open Houses’ or ‘Facebook Focus Groups’ to provide users or potential users an opportunity to preview the upcoming program offerings and provide feedback on the types of offerings they would be most interested in. This provides a constant input mechanism for programming ideas and ensures that offerings are need-based not personality based. Additionally, users are more likely to participate in

programs that they have had a chance to provide input on.

From an HR standpoint, aquatics core program area has adequate standards and it is encouraging to see dollars allocated towards continuing education and cost of service training even in this tough economic climate. The HR standards for this program area are worthy of emulating, as applicable, system-wide. Currently, Ellis and Associates Standards are responsible for helping update policies and procedures on an on-going basis.

In addition to staff review, the Consulting team recommends instituting a volunteer review process so as to ensure consistency in volunteer standards and manner of representation of the Department in the community. There is a lack of customer service training or marketing training for the staff, which should be added. In an increasingly multicultural community like the City of Sunrise, diversity training too should be an important component of the training mix.

As for instructors, the consulting team recommends evaluating instructor performance through an on-going objective process. Having an on-going instructor quality check as well as establishing lesson plans at the beginning of each class would certainly help elevate the level of the offerings which would in turn enable the Department to price the programs to their true value.

SECTION 7.5 | Service System Review

The relationship between the service delivery process and program revenues is of critical importance. With an understanding of this important dynamic, the following section provides an analysis of the service system and includes building on the service foundation that already exists in the City. As observed from the community input obtained, the Department currently experiences a fairly high level of customer satisfaction though there is an expectation of wanting to further improve and enhance the offerings. This section is intended to do just that.

It is important for the Department to manage service as an overall system

in which all program areas consistently apply similar service standards. This is first and foremost in working on continuously improving overall service excellence. One method to achieve this is to follow established standards for customer satisfaction. This can be accomplished through a cross functional 'voice-of-the-customer' team.

ISO 9000:2001 (International Standards Organization) develops standards for various industries worldwide. These are best-practice components that are employed across multiple industries as a mechanism of developing an overall excellent customer satisfaction system. The Department might consider adopting portions of these standards to improve customer satisfaction. These four components include:

- Top management commitment.
- On-going needs assessment of customers.
- Overall customer satisfaction system.
- Overall customer dissatisfaction system.

Top management commitment is demonstrated by allocating resources to continuously improve services, such as technology, registration system improvements, staffing to support excellent service, development of overall service training, and recognizing staff for excellent service. Part-time staffing recruitment, retention, salary and benefits were all mentioned as concerns for delivering excellent service. This is an important area of improvement for the Department.

Top management should regularly review data relating to customer satisfaction. This can be achieved by including customer feedback as a regular discussion item in staff meetings.

The **Needs Assessment** through a subjective community input process is a good starting point in determining customer needs. This formalized approach should be completed approximately every five years. In interim years, it is helpful to do less formal approaches in determining customer needs by core program areas through program evaluations, consumer advisory panels, secret shoppers, and focus groups. Good service systems identify future customer needs as well as current needs.

Customer satisfaction rates should be included as part of a performance measurement system. Results should be shared with the Parks Board, staff, and the public. It is important to ensure that the evaluation criteria match the key customer requirements which should be established for each program area.

Customer satisfaction processes should occur not only with recreation programs, but also with general park maintenance and athletic field quality, new park design, and community events.

Another best-practice suggestion for enhancing the customer satisfaction process is to use the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) score criteria, developed at the University of Michigan. Their customer satisfaction index includes three overall satisfaction scores:

- How satisfied are customers with the Department overall?
- How likely will the customer repurchase the program or service?
- How likely will the customer refer the service to a friend?

The averages of all three percentages are then included as one overall score. These questions should be included on all surveys and program evaluations.

Survey questions need to correlate with the most important customer requirements. No standardized process exists for determining customer requirements. The most effective method to determine important customer requirements is through interviews/focus groups with customers. Staff input into the process is valuable as well; particularly staff who interface with customers on a regular basis.

Good satisfaction measurement systems include performing additional methods beyond surveying and program evaluations. Many times, high satisfaction rates from surveys provide insignificant actionable data to determine improvements.

Surveys are a good tool to measure current conditions. However, in order to keep ahead of customer demand and needs, the Department should have some knowledge of future needs and expectations of customers.

Another component of excellent standards for customer satisfaction is

the development of a system wide approach to handling **customer dissatisfaction**. Standards should exist for handling complaints and inquiries. Furthermore, a database should exist that tracks all of the inquiries or comments about needed improvements. This information should be reviewed on a quarterly basis by the senior management team. Consistent suggestions for improvements or dissatisfaction areas should become a focus for the following year's strategic objectives.

As mentioned previously, a voice-of-the-customer team can be responsible for overseeing the service system. This is a cross-functional team comprised of several staff interested in service quality and they assume responsibility for overseeing the organization's service system.

This process ensures consistency in the customer experience throughout the entire organization. This team should have the responsibility of developing an overall customer satisfaction measurement system, the development of standards, and the development of customer requirements for core program areas. The team should also monitor customer service training.

The team should identify specifications for excellent service and develop an audit system to verify that specifications are being met by staff. The audit system could be performed by secret shoppers or staff members who do not have direct responsibility for an audited area. Audits can be as simple as a listing on a check list of important service requirements.

The voice-of-the-customer team can develop a system-wide approach to service, supplemented by site-specific individual training and orientation.

SECTION 7 | SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In evaluating all the information obtained from the community input, survey, and needs assessments, it would be reasonable to say that the Department has been doing a fair job with the existing facilities and resources. Most of the key facilities are in good condition and appealing to potential participants, but the less-than-optimum capacity utilization does hinder the ability to generate maximum revenue. The Special

Events are well run, with good community support and the staff has been doing a good job with introducing newer events such as the Cultural Festival etc.

The community feedback has been positive and staff interactions, program variety and value for money have been some of the biggest strengths. In terms of areas of improvement, increasing the number of system-wide performance measures used and tracking user data and customer feedback are the biggest ones to address. Targeting partnerships with an objective to ensure maximum advantage for both sides and generate earned income support for the Department is recommended. Some examples seen in similar systems include health and wellness partners as well as individual corporations for presenting program areas or jointly developing / programming a facility. In Sunrise, the Pinnacle Health Wellness and the Joe DiMaggio's Children's Hospital are two such examples that can be leveraged from a partnership standpoint. Also, focusing on marketing outreach, packaging and up-selling sponsorship opportunities and establishing a volunteer management program are areas that the Department must target in order to embellish its current offerings, operate efficiently and sustainably and continue to serve the needs of its changing audience.

