VII. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSION OF IMPLEMENTATION

Individual chapters throughout this evaluation contain recommendations based on findings and practices in other jurisdictions. This section summarizes these recommendations and provides an estimate of additional staff and technology resources that may be required for implementation beginning on page 169.

In this summary, recommendations are not listed sequentially as they are in the report, but in three categories of related topics:

Advancing as a Learning Organization

- Recommendation 3.   Leverage past data and enforce class performance standards to focus on desired programs.

- Recommendation 8.   Simplify and roll-up reporting measures that establish balance and triangulate on competing goals.

- Recommendation 9.   Test, document, evaluate, and share marketing techniques.

- Recommendation 11.   Standardize practices and expectations across the recreation system.

Focusing on SPR's Vision and Target Customers

- Recommendation 4.   Continue to expand on SPR's statements of its recreation-related vision, goals, and target customers.

- Recommendation 5.   Continue to reduce barriers and encourage the participation of traditionally underserved groups and those with less access to alternatives.

- Recommendation 6.   Continue to align resources and fees to prioritize participation by low-income communities while earning revenues as appropriate.

Strengthening the System

- Recommendation 1.   Review and update the SPR/ARC partnership.

- Recommendation 2.   Reform the role and functioning of Advisory Councils.

- Recommendation 7.   Strengthen customer service.

- Recommendation 10.   Acknowledge and buttress the role staff play in providing social supports and ensuring safety and security.
[tracking staff time and impact of providing devoted to social services and social supports and ensuring safety and security feeds into **Recommendation 8**]

- Recommendation 12.   Ensure buildings and other facilities are used as much as possible.

Advancing as a Learning Organization

The recommendations contained in this section relate to SPR's ability to consolidate and share insights and best practices obtained through data analysis, evaluation, and experimentation. Existing regular meetings of Assistant Coordinators at the Geo- and system-wide levels provide an appropriate venue for ensuring such learnings are distributed across the organization. In addition, as noted on page 169, a new Manager-level position could be useful to facilitate this learning process.

Recommendation 3. Leverage past data and enforce class performance standards to focus on desired programs.

SPR can improve the accuracy of program development by creating a clearer link between program development and past performance, including participation rates from ACTIVE Net and outcomes captured through the Results Framework.

- Report location: page 35

When developing and marketing new programs, staff should have a clear goal for the number of participants and a plan for attracting them, particularly in categories or at sites with a history of low attendance. Under-minimum or cancelled programs should only be repeated if there is a clear plan for increasing participation or reasons why lower participation is acceptable. Programs cancelled due to low registrations or held with fewer than the minimum number of participants can be a drag on system efficiency, pushing up the subsidy required per participant and/or showing that SPR programs are not reflecting community needs or are not sufficiently publicized. At the same time, there may be legitimate reasons for cancellations and running classes below the minimum number of participants, including marketing investments in new programs that start with lower participation.

The new ARC budgeting tool provides a mechanism for determining the minimum number of participants in a program, to cover direct costs such as the instructor and supplies, but it appears these standards have not been consistently enforced systemwide to this point. Clearer standards for participation and tracking of why participants cancel will help SPR better manage programming to serve the most people. As noted in **Recommendation 8**, it is also important to track the number and characteristics of new customers.

Implementation Specifics for Recommendation 3

Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: High

Anticipated Benefits	Potential Resource Implications	Status (including relevant previous efforts)
- Better programming choices will increase service efficiency, with less time spent on unpopular or ineffective programs, and provide better service to the community.	- Better programming choices will increase service efficiency, with less time spent on unpopular or ineffective programs, and provide better service to the community.	- Creating schedule of community focus groups which will inform programming; researching national trends and developing thorough marketing plan when programs have been identified - This is an area where ACTIVE Net could be helpful; SPR is currently working on what data points to collect and types of reporting.

Recommendation 8. Strengthen SPR's performance management system to provide simple reports and nuanced consideration of competing goals.

Recommendation 8.1. Create simple dashboards that communicate, at a glance, the volume of SPR's recreation activities.

The Recreation Division owns a large and complicated array of programs. In the face of this complexity, it is essential that SPR create a way to report to community members and decision makers in a simple and consistent fashion. There are many ways to measure usage of SPR's recreation resources:

- Registered courses, including Community Center- and pool-based classes, child care, and other, are tracked through the CLASS system.
- Every passage through a Community Center door is recorded by a "People Counter," whether that trip is a registered participant in a scheduled course (in which case they are also tracked in the CLASS database), a caregiver dropping off or picking up a child, a SPR staff person, or a delivery service.
- Attendance at beaches, wading pools, and sprayparks are measured by staff observations, while pool attendance is captured by staff cashiers.

SPR does not have a good way to succinctly display a topline summary of different kinds of usage. A good example to review is Denver Parks and Recreation's monthly dashboard report on metrics including usage shown in Figure 28. A copy of SPR's dashboard concept is shown on page 170.

Recommendation 8.2. Refine comprehensive performance reporting to reflect the tensions between the competing goals of our Evaluative Framework.

Usage and Access

- Create a summary dashboard view of the use of recreation resources. Keep it simple, like Denver's example and clearly show magnitude and trends in usage. Include class registrations and estimated volumes for drop-in resources.
- Ensure that all programs are tracking and contributing usage data, including as new programs get added, such as Get Moving and Recreation for All. Participation data (as well as the demographic data described below) are important to report for these individual programs, and for summing in Division-wide reports of the number of individuals served.
- Compare changes in usage to changes in population.
- Track new customers and their characteristics.
- Report on operating expenditures, including scholarships, and usage at Geo level, ZIP code, block group, or individual level to understand how effectively SPR is investing in access for lower income populations.
- Report on scholarship usage, including the demographics of recipients.
- While maintaining open and inviting facilities and programs, seek to collect information on the demographics of users to understand who is being served and how that population differs from the overall population of the neighboring community. Integrate GIS, demographic, and user information to connect programming decisions with facility locations and geographic distribution of need.

Quality and Impact

- Track repeat customers and their characteristics.
- Report on customer satisfaction over time. This should be done more consistently across the system. Aquatics, for example, should find ways to integrate customer satisfaction questions with the registration process or in follow-up to a class.
- Integrate Results Framework measures of customer outcomes in systemwide evaluation and reporting.

- Capture and share stories related to the impact Recreation staff can have on the lives of individuals and families in need.

Resource Efficiency

- Create a dashboard for facility rentals, describing the volume of rentals (number and hours), revenues, discounts, and impact on other programming.
- Track class cancellations and classes that run with fewer than the minimum registrants.
- Track downtime and unplanned closures of facilities.
- Consider more specific cost recovery goals and tracking based on facility capacity and the full costs of both direct and indirect (maintenance and capital) factors. This will inform **Recommendation 12** regarding facility rentals.

To track some of the recommended measures listed above, SPR will have to make investments in facilitating technology, including ACTIVE Net, possibly replacement of People Counters, and staff capacity to collect, analyze, and report out on division-wide data. These resource requirements are summarized in the section beginning on page 169.

It is important to appreciate the tensions and tradeoffs associated with tracking and reporting on this data, including investments in staff time and technology and the impacts to customers, including potentially making facilities or services less welcoming. In some cases, in the face of such practical tradeoffs, it may be wise to sacrifice "perfect" data for observational data that is likely to be accurate to an appropriate level of magnitude. For example, the physical design of some centers may make it prohibitive to install automated counters to capture the number of people who enter the building or the number of participants in a particular class. Headcounts by staff may be an entirely appropriate solution, as long as the data is integrated with other automatically calculated data. Similarly, staff could estimate demographic information in broad categories based on observations, understanding some individuals will be miscategorized, rather than asking all participants to provide demographic data.

Recommendation 8.3. Strengthen the ability to understand who is using SPR's recreation resources.

With the move to ACTIVE Net, SPR will have greater ability to track and report on the demographic characteristics of recreation users and scholarship recipients. This data will be essential for supporting Access-related goals and **Recommendation 5** and **Recommendation 6**. Collection of this data must be calibrated with the need to keep facilities and programming open and welcoming to participants. The collection of demographic data be calibrated based on changes in practices by other organizations and the level of comfort that different Seattle communities have with sharing this information, including refugees and immigrants who may have a general distrust of government based on past experiences.

Recommendation 8.4. Continue to build out the Results Framework system.

The Results Framework model is both 1) a process that instigates productive conversations among SPR and ARC staff responsible for program development and delivery; 2) a product that measures the effectiveness or outcomes associated with effective recreational programming. A clear timeline should be established to expand SPR's pilot work to other relevant programming. As noted above, Results Framework data should be integrated with other performance data as a way of triangulating in on multiple desired outcomes. Results Framework data should also be leveraged for program developed as noted in **Recommendation 3**.

Implementation Specifics for Recommendation 8

Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: High

Anticipated Benefits	Potential Resource Implications	Status (including relevant previous efforts)
▪ Accessible roll-ups of performance measures will generate additional support for SPR's services among public and decision makers. They should also help to highlight emerging challenges or waste, leading to more efficient use of resources. ▪ Effective use of Results Framework feedback and instructor incentives will lead to more effective programming and greater customer satisfaction.	▪ Additional staff capacity will be needed to collect, analyze, and report on data. See summary at the end of this section for staff and technology needs related to this Recommendation.	▪ SPR's goal for 2018 is to create quarterly performance reporting for key Rec priorities and data sources, including: (i) People Counter, (ii) Program Registration and Drop-In, (iii) Scholarships and other access efforts. (See draft dashboard at end of this section.) ▪ SPR intends to continue the Results Framework effort, and roll it out to Teen and Aquatics programs in 2018. This is a labor-intensive effort that requires ongoing coordination and facilitation, both with SPR staff and ARC staff and instructors. This could be made more efficient with technology for automation of data collection, analysis, and reporting, but this will also require investment.

Recommendation 9. Test, document, evaluate, and share marketing techniques.

While many site staff are using creative techniques to understand community needs and market programs (such as surveys at special events or text blasting), it's unclear that techniques are being evaluated, documented, and shared. In addition, brochure development and production has been identified as an activity taking significant staff time and resources, and opportunities for efficiencies should be investigated.

▪ Report location: page 77

Recommendation 9.1. Plan and track the results of Community Center-specific marketing efforts.

Community Center Business Plans or other mechanisms should be used to plan and coordinate outreach efforts with ARC, and to tap into promising practices in use elsewhere in the system. The results of this outreach should be reported on and adaptations made to be as effective and efficient as possible in these efforts.

Recommendation 9.2. Learn from techniques that work and consolidate efforts around proven practices.

Site staff should continue developing and testing specific marketing techniques for reaching their communities, and should document these techniques, track what works and why, share with colleagues, and learn from each other. This ongoing learning could be facilitated via meetings of Assistant Coordinators as mentioned on page 152 and by a Manager-level position described on page 169. Implementation will require coordination with ARC.

Recommendation 9.3. Adapt a more efficient approach to promoting classes.

SPR should continue to transition away from traditional printed brochures, which are both labor intensive to develop and require a long production period, meaning content can be outdated by the time the brochure is printed. The second phase of ACTIVE Net implementation will allow SPR develop a "Quick List" for the public, with a web page serving as the main source of program information. This approach is similar to practices already employed in Denver and other cities.

Implementation Specifics for Recommendation 9

Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: Medium

Anticipated Benefits	Potential Resource Implications	Status (including relevant previous strategies)
▪ This effort must be implemented in partnership with ARC, which holds responsibility for some marketing efforts. ▪ This effort should lead to the use of marketing techniques that are proven to be more efficient and effective, leading to an increase usage of recreation services, particularly among target customers identified in **Recommendation 4**.	▪ Some advances can be made here without additional resources by creating a shared network drive to capture marketing efforts implemented at different centers. These could be reviewed twice a year, along with Results Framework input, with suggestions and best practices shared system wide. This relates to additional capacity under **Recommendation 11** for organizational learning.	▪ ACTIVE Net may allow access and capacity to send email updates; SPR is still exploring and determining privacy policies. ▪ Part of the MSA negotiation.

Recommendation 11. Standardize practices and expectations across the recreation system.

Recommendation 11.1. Create additional capacity for cross-system learning and consolidation around proven practices.

Individual Community Centers seem to operate independently in many ways, setting their own fees and operational practices. While a "one-size-fits-all" approach is not appropriate given the true variety across Seattle neighborhoods and would diminish the ability of staff to make decisions based on their insights as recreation professionals; guidelines, parameters, and preferred options should be established for operations, trainings, and staff roles. This has implications related to customer service; program design, pricing, and marketing; and day-to-day operations. This ongoing learning could be facilitated via meetings of Assistant Coordinators as mentioned on page 152 and by a Manager-level position described on page 169.

Recommendation 11.2. Employ Lean Management Tools to focus Division resources on generating value for the customer.

Lean Management is an organizational development structure focusing on reducing waste in workflows and prioritizing customer service. By training staff on Lean Performance Improvement principles and tools (perhaps as a pilot in some programs or a few Community Centers), processes may be streamlined and focused on generating value for the customer. This philosophy would strengthen organizational values

around customer satisfaction and resource efficiency. Resources are available to train staff in Lean techniques, including free options provided by the State Auditor's Office.

Implementation Specifics for Recommendation 11

Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: High

Anticipated Benefits	Potential Resource Implications	Status (including relevant previous efforts)
▪ Leadership capacity will be needed to review data and to assemble and share proven practices. ▪ Results should enhance both effectiveness and efficiency of SPR's work.	▪ Additional staff capacity will be review data and practices and to share the results across the system. See summary at the end of this section.	▪ Current practices (i.e. – rental, fee waivers) under review by Recreation Managers. ▪ Any changes or new practices will be communicated through trainings, in-person meetings and electronically (i.e. – storing on SharePoint).

Focusing on SPR's Vision and Target Customers

Recommendation 4. Continue to expand on SPR's statements of its recreation-related Vision, Goals, and target customers.

Excellent service delivery generally requires a sense of urgency (answering the question, "Why does this really matter?") and clarity of intentions. SPR and the Recreation Division are equipped with a Vision, Mission, and Goal statements, some of which genuinely resonate with staff, namely the shortening of "Healthy People, Healthy Environment, Strong Communities" to "Healthy, Healthy, Strong."

▪ Report location: page 40

More can be done to establish an explicit shared understanding of why recreation matters and the particular role played by SPR. The Recreation Division's new Vision, Mission, and strategic goals (page 5) do an excellent job of articulating the tension between serving the full community and emphasizing services for those populations that might not otherwise have access to recreation opportunities. Continued development – and discussion – of these ideas is important to create a shared understanding of these issues among Recreation Division and ARC staff. We suggest:

▪ Acknowledging the tensions implicit in BERK's Evaluative Framework (usage + access, quality + impact, and resource efficiency) and link to a performance management system that triangulates in on these factors (see **Recommendation 8**).

▪ Continuing to define who the Recreation Division serves, acknowledging the tension among goals to serve all City residents and taxpayers; to prioritize those with relatively less access to alternative opportunities for recreation; and competing for the participation (and fees) of those who can afford alternatives offered by the private sector.

Incorporating the Preschool and Child Care programs that constitute a significant portion of the Recreation Division's efforts, but are somewhat obscured by a focus on traditional "recreation" functions and programs.

Implementation Specifics for Recommendation 4

Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: Ongoing

Anticipated Benefits	Potential Resource Implications	Status (including relevant previous strategies)
■ Clarity in service priorities will ensure that limited resources are used as effectively and efficiently as possible, guiding tradeoffs and resource allocations. ■ This work is necessary to serve those with greatest need, fulfilling SPR's focus and the City's racial and social justice goals.	■ Programming budget impact will depend on whether City moves to eliminate program fees for low income youth and seniors; biggest implication of this would be to ARC budget and PAR fee received by SPR. ■ Associated costs would include interpretation services, staff training, and marketing. ■ Additional study and community engagement will be necessary to track changing barriers and evaluate potential responses. ■ As with **Recommendation 4**: programming impact will depend on whether City moves to eliminate program fees for youth, older adults; biggest implication will be to ARC budget and PAR fee received by SPR.	■ See new Recreation Division Vision, Mission, and strategic goals on page 7. ■ Eliminated drop-in fees for weight rooms, basketball, tot play. ■ Implemented Women Only Swims, LGBTQ Swims requested by public. ■ Scholarship application is available in 6 languages and has been combined with registration form, going from 4-pages to 1-page, front and back. ■ Now piloting third party income verification at Magnuson CC with Brettler Place residents; Mercy Housing will verify, eliminating the need to collect income verification paperwork (federal, state mandate to receive DSHS payments). ■ Staff can apply to ARC Equity Fund for additional program resources or to add RSJ-focused programs. ■ Piloting summer "HUB" program at Garfield CC that offers enhanced or specialty camps for youth ages 7-14.

Recommendation 5. Continue to reduce barriers and encourage the participation of traditionally underserved groups and those with less access to alternatives.

To supplement the resource- and affordability-focused approaches described above, SPR is doing more to encourage participation among target groups programmatically. This entails understanding and addressing current barriers, devising appropriate programming, and effectively marketing the availability of recreation resources.

■ Report location: page 48

To supplement the resource- and affordability-focused approaches described above, SPR is doing more to encourage participation among target groups programmatically. This entails understanding and addressing current barriers, devising appropriate programming, and effectively marketing the availability of recreation resources.

■ **Continue to seek to understand the barriers to participation and desired programming,** building on previous engagements, revising Advisory Councils to be more effective in this role, and leveraging insights from trusted public and non-profit partners. Centralize this information so it is commonly understood by staff

across the system and use it to inform ongoing learning and continuous improvement conversations among staff who recruit for classes and other services. This ongoing learning could be facilitated via meetings of Assistant Coordinators as mentioned on page 152 and by a Manager-level position described on page 169.

- **Be truly welcoming**. While customer service is important to serving all customers well, it has particular import for reaching and retaining customers for whom a public facility is not necessarily a welcoming place, namely refugees, immigrants, and non-native speakers of English. Special skills, translation, and deliberate marketing in Community Centers and in communities are all important to this.

- **Continue to learn** from others, including staff of other City programs that serve the same population, as well as recreation agencies across the country striving to improve outreach to, programming for, and affordability for underserved groups.

These efforts may be strengthened by **Recommendation 2**, which seeks to improve the role and functioning of Advisory Councils. Councils have had a traditional role of providing a voice to community needs, but not all perform this function well.

Implementation Specifics for Recommendation 5

Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: Ongoing

Anticipated Benefits	Potential Resource Implications	Status (including relevant previous strategies)
■ This work is necessary to serve those with greatest need, fulfilling SPR's focus and the City's racial and social justice goals.	■ Associated costs would include interpretation services, staff training, and marketing. ■ Additional study and community engagement will be necessary to track changing barriers and evaluate potential responses. ■ As with Recommendation 4: programming impact will depend on whether City moves to eliminate program fees for youth, older adults; biggest implication will be to ARC budget and PAR fee received by SPR.	■ Eliminated drop-in fees for weight rooms, basketball, tot play. ■ Implemented Women Only Swims, LGBTQ Swims requested by public. ■ Scholarship application is available in 6 languages and has been combined with registration form, going from 4-pages to 1-page, front and back. ■ Now piloting third party income verification at Magnuson CC with Brettler Place residents; Mercy Housing will verify, eliminating the need to collect income verification paperwork (federal, state mandate to receive DSHS payments). ■ Staff can apply to ARC Equity Fund for additional program resources or to add RSJ-focused programs. ■ Piloting summer "HUB" program at Garfield CC that offers enhanced or specialty camps for youth ages 7-14.

Recommendation 6. Continue to align resources and fees to prioritize participation by low-income communities while earning revenues as appropriate.

SPR has made positive strides in addressing historic elements of the system that favor the participation of some. Scholarships and discounts are being used to increase access to child care, recreation programs, and aquatics resources among those with limited resources. Community Center financial resources are being concentrated in the Southwest and Southeast of the City which have greater numbers of lower income community members (see discussion around Figure 35). Our recommendations build on these efforts, focusing on resource allocation, maintaining affordable access for those with limited means, and maximizing opportunities to generate system revenues through participation fees.

- Report location: page 49

Recommendation 6.1. Concentrate operating resources to facilitate access for lower income community members.

Our analysis shows that SPR is concentrating public (General Fund and MPD) resources in lower income neighborhoods to buttress access to Community Center amenities and programming (see discussion around Figure 35). This focus should be maintained and refined as a deliberate strategy, with ongoing performance measurement used to adjust the system over time to achieve desired goals.

In addition to public resources, SPR and ARC are changing the way ARC fund balances function, moving toward a more equitable, systemwide approach. Previously, individual centers retained funds they raised from year to year; beginning in 2018, the ARC Equity Fund pools surplus resources and makes them available to other Centers twice a year by request.

In 2016, individual ARC community councils raised funds ranging from $100 to a high of $41,000 at Garfield. ARC is looking to consolidate revenues across the system. This should continue, with monitoring for adverse effects that may come from introducing possible disincentives for individual Community Centers to raise funds through program fees, Advisory Council fundraising, and other means.

Recommendation 6.2. Study and set fee levels to capture appropriate revenues from those who can afford to pay.

Recreation programs are a classic example of a public services that can be partially supported through user fees. SPR has the ability to generate additional revenue through participant fees from those who can afford to pay more to support its recreation mission and subsidizing access for the underserved.

Participant fees are currently geographically uniform across the system for Aquatics and more variable for Community Center programs – see Figure 35. It is not well understood whether current fees are appropriately set relative to other alternatives and the price sensitivity of customers. Opportunities to increase this source of earned revenue must be balanced with other goals, particularly creating affordable access for residents at all income ranges.

Discounted participation fees should be intended to improve affordability based on ability to pay. SPR should explore the pros and cons of reducing fee discounts not related to income, such as for those over age 50 or with disabilities. While these programs are currently offered for free, it would be more consistent to charge for these courses and offer scholarships for those with limited resources.

SPR should conduct a review of its recreation fee and scholarship structure:

1) Conduct a fee study to see if fees are properly set relative to market rates for comparable services (adjusted downwards to reflect taxpayer investment in the system) and willingness to pay. As part of this review, compare SPR rate setting practices and rates to those of comparable communities.

2) Model the likely financial and participation outcomes associated with fee adjustments and commensurate modification of scholarship budget and criteria.

3) Evaluate fee setting, scholarship, and model options together.

Recommendation 6.3. Explore opportunities to charge higher rates for non-Seattle residents.

Detailed figures on nonresident use of SPR recreation programs was not available for this analysis, but an estimate based on user ZIP codes showed different levels of nonresident usage in 2016:

- Community Center programs 6%
- Aquatics programs 5%
- Boating programs 18% (moorage fees will likely change with pending new contract)
- Facility Rentals *not determined*

As these individuals do not contribute General Fund and MPD tax revenues to support the system, it is reasonable to charge an additional increment for use of Seattle Public Schools resources. Peer cities Minneapolis, Portland, and Chicago all charge higher fees to nonresidents, ranging from 40% to 100% higher than resident fees. SPR charges nonresident fees for programs at the Amy Yee Tennis Center (not addressed by this report) that are approximately 10% higher. Some neighboring cities, including Mountlake Terrace and Renton charge higher pool fees for non-residents.

Recommendation 6.4. Study the need to increase funds available for scholarships and strengthen their administration to support access for low income communities.

As a fee-based system, there is a balance between generating revenue and enabling access. SPR's use of scholarships and discounts helps increase opportunities for people with limited ability to pay while establishing a higher base rate for those who can afford to pay.

Particularly if the fee study recommended in **Recommendation 3.2** results in base fee increase, SPR and the City of Seattle overall should further study the need to expand and promote scholarships and discounts, targeting low-income community members (see information on demand for scholarships in the section beginning on page 47).

Implementation Specifics for Recommendation 6

Timeframe: Medium-term | Priority: Medium

Anticipated Benefits	Potential Resource Implications	Status (including relevant previous strategies)
▪ Implementation of this Recommendation is essential to achieving the Recreation Division's focus on serving non-traditional populations while generating income sufficient to maintain desired level of service targets across the system.	▪ Resources will need to be invested in a fee study. This effort could focus on select programming (and perhaps facility rentals) rather than taking on all of Recreation Division's programs. ▪ By balancing fee increases for some and scholarships for other, the net impact may be cost neutral while strengthening the ability of the system to focus limited public resources on providing services for those with limited access to alternatives. ▪ Charging differential fees for non-Seattle residents should lead to a modest revenue increase, though some non-residents may decrease their use of the system if fees go up.	▪ SPR and ARC are reviewing their fee setting model through the current cost sharing analysis. ▪ Charging differential fees for non-Seattle residents is being tested at the Amy Yee Tennis Center. ACTIVE Net will help identify Seattle and non-Seattle residents.

Strengthening the System

Recommendation 1. Review and update the SPR and ARC partnership.

The relationship between SPR and ARC has evolved incrementally over time. The partners are currently engaged in a review and update of this relationship to align goals and roles and to establish clear accountability for desired outcomes. The goal is to then use these agreed-upon updated roles in the next Master Services Agreement (MSA), a ten-year agreement governing the partnership.

Our recommendations include:

- Adopt and implement the draft Guiding Principles and Joint Planning Framework described above.

- Establish a shared understanding of when the partners will collaborate on decision making and when they will coordinate. Clarify when partners will be Consulted (that is, when they have a say in the decision and when they can raise questions or make suggestions) and when they will be Informed (that is, when they don't have a say, but will be notified of a pending change before it is implemented).

- When policy changes will affect both organizations, communications should be jointly issued by SPR and ARC (signed by leadership of both organizations) or in a coordinated fashion. SPR and ARC leadership should plan these communications, with clear responsibilities and timelines.

- Prioritize strengthening communications between Community Center staff and Field Supervisors and continue joint field meetings.

- Jointly establish a model for ARC and SPR field staffing that determines how many are needed and what their capacity and role is.

- Set up a working group composed of human resources and field staff from both organizations. Jointly review current MSA standards as well as common practices on hiring and overseeing instructors. Determine if current MSA standards are sufficient and whether they are being followed.
- Elevate expectations for ARC's fundraising in the next MSA Update. As a separate non-profit organization, ARC is better positioned to fundraise than SPR, and may be able more meaningfully supplement core public funding, particularly in areas that may be compelling to donors, such as recreation scholarships for underrepresented populations.

Implementation Specifics for Recommendation 1

Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: High

Anticipated Benefits	Potential Resource Implications	Status (including relevant previous strategies)
- Alignment of these key partners should lead to greater efficiency and stronger service for customers, with shared accountability for providing high quality recreation programming.	- Leadership of both organizations will need to devote time for coordinated planning and communication. - Budget impacts will be clearer when partnership cost sharing study is complete (Spring 2018).	- Alignment of these key partners should lead to greater efficiency and stronger service for customers, with shared accountability for providing high quality recreation programming. - SPR and ARC are collaborating on a work product that will recap the history, benefits, and challenges of the partnership; a plan for ongoing joint planning; and recommendations for strengthening the partnership. The document will be completed in 2018and shared with staff of both organizations. - This work will inform a new 10-year MSA.

Recommendation 2. Reform the role and functioning of Advisory Councils.

Advisory Councils have played an important role in the history of SPR, providing dedicated volunteers, fundraising services, and a connection to the community. But today many Advisory Councils are not representative of the local population, and thus are not providing a voice to bring community needs to SPR staff. Further, recruitment, training, and retention of Advisory Council members is uneven at best, and roles and responsibilities often overlap between SPR and ARC staff.

- Report location: page 28

Recommendation 2.1. Strengthen Advisory Councils immediately.

Implement recommendations to strengthen Advisory Councils included from a 2015 study by a UW class in Community Oriented Public Health Practice, including: provide training to members; increase visibility; lower barriers to participation (by simplifying the application process, translating materials, and other means); and increase collaboration with other organizations. Providing training for current Advisory Council members and coordination between the SPR and ARC staff that work with Advisory Council members should be a primary focus.

Recommendation 2.2. Fundamentally reshape the role, structure, and diverse composition of Advisory Councils.

SPR and ARC should go beyond the ideas raised in the 2015 study to reconsider the role of the Advisory Councils on a deeper level, setting appropriate, non-fiduciary roles for voluntary groups and considering the best structure, which may reduce the number of Advisory Councils by creating regional or systemwide groups. Common expectations for the role of Advisory Councils should be set and adhered to. Responsibility for recruiting, training, and supporting Advisory Council members should be clearly assigned to SPR or ARC as appropriate. Reshaping of the Advisory Council system should involve significant engagement with SPR field staff, ARC staff, and existing Advisory Council members.

Implementation Specifics for Recommendation 2

Timeframe: Short-term for 2.1 and Medium-term for 2.2 | Priority: Medium

Anticipated Benefits	Potential Resource Implications	Status (including relevant previous strategies)
▪ The short-term strengthening of the Advisory Council system should create moderate performance improvements. Greater benefits will be seen with more wholesale reform called for in **Recommendation 2.2**.	▪ Time and energy will be required by ARC staff to train and support existing Advisory Councils.	▪ ARC is currently implementing a new training system for Advisory Council members which should improve the functioning of the current system while other options are explored through **Recommendation 2.2**.

Recommendation 7. Strengthen customer service.

Depending upon one's point of view or the piece of literature being consulted, customer service can be seen as essential or a distraction from a more fundamental focus on helping customers achieve their desired outcomes. While the Results Framework admirably focuses on the latter, we suggest that recreation is a service business and that a strong focus on welcoming facilities and customer service is critical to attracting and retaining satisfied customers. This is true both for customers with the ability to pay for for-profit alternatives, and for the populations that have been traditionally underserved or have fewer alternatives.

▪ Report location: page 56

Recommendation 7.1. Focus the Division and individual staff on the importance of customer service through culture- and expectation-setting.

Although customer service is an avowed management focus for SPR, little has been done in a standardized way systemwide to train staff, hold staff accountable, and understand changes over time. Recommended steps to improve focus on customer service include:

▪ Emphasize the importance of a customer orientation through guiding statements (Vision, Mission, or Values) and communications by leadership to establish a Division-wide culture of customer service. This has been done to some degree but can be expanded upon.

▪ Continue and strengthen ongoing customer service training for all customer-facing positions such as Recreation Attendants. This has been done to some degree but can be expanded upon.

▪ Set clear expectations for staff, tying customer service to job descriptions and performance evaluations. Include expectations that staff will "greet every customer who walks in the door and proactively offer information about programs and services" in job descriptions and personnel evaluations.

▪ Consider requiring customer service experience for positions with significant front-line public and customer interactions. (Minimum qualifications for the Recreation Services Representative position with Denver Parks and Recreation includes two years of customer service work in recreation, retail,

hospital, or a related industry.)

- Encourage customer-serving staff to share their insights and observations of what matters to customers based on their day-to-day interactions. Staff often have good ideas about improving the customer experience, but not the authority or responsibility for implementing them. This ongoing learning could be facilitated via meetings of Assistant Coordinators as mentioned on page 152 and by a Manager-level position described on page 169.
- Give staff the encouragement and tools to put themselves "in the customer's shoes," using customer personas or other methods to explore the customer experience of a wealthy resident, a teen, or a non-English speaking refugee new to the United States.
- Train staff, including temporary staff, in learning from customers through daily interactions and observations or by holding conversations with individuals or groups (avoid the off-putting term "focus groups.") and see this as a core function of recreation specialists.

Recommendation 7.2. Add new tools to gather customer satisfaction information from program participants.

In addition to current tools, SPR should implement new systems to understand and track customer satisfaction. Peer cities may serve as an inspiration and practical example as summarized in the Appendix beginning on page 175. Chicago, Denver, and Portland have all implemented efforts such as a secret shopper program or systemwide randomized surveys of customers. The full implementation of ACTIVE Net will strengthen SPR's ability to survey program participants and this opportunity needs to be fully explored and taken advantage of.

The results of this customer input should integrate into SPR's performance management system as noted in **Recommendation 8**.

Implementation Specifics for Recommendation 7

Timeframe: Ongoing | Priority: Ongoing

Anticipated Benefits	Potential Resource Implications	Status (including relevant previous strategies)
While there will be up-front costs associated with training and tool development, these should result in better service and greater customer satisfaction. This can increase repeat customers, including those with access to alternative forms of recreation.	- Ideal would be $300 per year per staff for training for a total of about $60,000. Park District funding could be used to supplement the Department training budget. - Resources will be needed to design and implement new customer satisfaction tracking mechanisms per **Recommendation 7.2**. These efforts may be a refocusing of existing staff and funding, or may require new resources.	- Current trainings staff will receive by end of 2018: - Gender Identity training; how it changes program descriptions - Working with homeless population (request made to DES; SPR safety team identifying other trainers, resources) - Recreation Division Customer Service Retreat. - This is an area where ACTIVE Net might help with data collection, tracking, and reporting.

Recommendation 10. Acknowledge and buttress the role staff play in providing social supports and ensuring safety and security.

Staff of some Community Centers spend a significant portion of their time providing social supports to customers and/or ensuring safety and security. This can include everything from providing referrals to social service agencies, to helping a child whose parent is addicted to drugs, to dealing with disruptive or mentally ill customers. These functions are performed admirably by many staff, but more could be done to acknowledge and support these demands at the system level:

- Report location: page 84

Recommendation 10.1. Understand, report on, and acknowledge the demands these roles have on staff and the positive impacts they have on customers.

- Recognize these roles more explicitly in SPR's Mission, Values, and guiding documents such as strategic plans.
- Incorporate this role in job descriptions and interview processes so potential new employees understand this may be part of their day-to-day role and to better understand the interest and skillset of applicants as it relates to this topic.
- Create mechanisms for staff to record the impact of these demands on their time so it can be understood and managed.
- Acknowledge the immense positive impact individual staff members can have on the children, youth, and adults they serve. Celebrate day-to-day heroism and the positive impact it has on families. Tell these stories to supplement quantitative measures in SPR's performance reporting (see **Recommendation 8**).

Recommendation 10.2. Support Recreation staff who provide social supports to customers.

- Create trainings and offer guidance and access to resources to support staff who provide significant levels of social supports based on their Community Center assignment.
- Explore opportunities to increase access to social services provided through the City and by community-based organizations. Consider formal partnerships to leverage dedicated capacity and expertise. Denver brings in outside partners to provide additional services to customers, such as a visiting nurse. Going one step further, Minneapolis leases space in a recreation center to a social service organization which provides direct service to clients at that location.

Recommendation 10.3. Strengthen staff ability to deal with safety issues.

- Ensure safety standards are being met, prioritizing the safety of SPR and ARC staff.
- Share lessons learned and successful strategies across Community Centers, such as at the interagency meetings.
- Review training on safety and look for areas to improve. Some peer cities provide staff trainings on crisis intervention, active shooter, verbal judo, and more.

Implementation Specifics for Recommendation 10

Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: Medium

Anticipated Benefits	Potential Resource Implications	Status (including relevant previous strategies)
▪ Investments in staff training and supportive partnerships will both provide better services for community members with specific needs and better support staff, strengthening morale and retention. ▪ Better telling this story will do more to communicate the full value that SPR provides to the community, which goes beyond the benefits associated with traditional recreation opportunities.	▪ **Recommendation 10.1** relates to SPR's ability to track and report on performance data (**Recommendation 8**). The data in this case includes i) how staff spend their time (specifically the investment of time in providing social support services to customers and addressing safety and security); ii) the impact of these efforts, which may be personal stories of individual customers; and iii) the number of safety/security events that occur. ▪ **Recommendations 10.2** and 10.3 relate directly to staff training which is also in **Recommendation 7**.	▪ SPR currently provides some safety and emergency response training. ▪ Additional consideration is needed to determine the best way to track time by staff providing social support services to customers and addressing safety and security

Recommendation 12. Ensure buildings and other facilities are used as much as possible.

While public recreation hours are a top priority, non-public (ARC-funded) programming and facility rentals also provide service to residents and generate revenue to support the system. All three uses must be balanced in a way that best serves the public and makes maximum use of capital facilities.

▪ Report location: page 106

Recommendation 12.1. Restructure facility rentals to better serve the public and generate revenues.

Responsibility for facility rentals should be centralized within SPR to leverage shared expertise and a dedicated focus on this service, recognizing that it is fundamentally different than recreation programming and creating clear incentives for appropriately maximizing rental revenues. Facility rentals should, however, be managed to achieve targets that balance the tensions within our Evaluative Framework, providing access to an affordable shared community resource while generating income to supplement public resources. A more complete understanding of the full incremental costs associated with facility rentals and the fees set by competing facilities in the market should inform rental fee setting, with use of discounts to enable access for those individuals, families, or groups with fewer resources. People Counter data can be used to identify more suitable times for rentals that don't interfere with programming hours.

Recommendation 12.2. Round out public-funded programing with other productive uses.

While we understand that SPR has a preference for prioritizing public hours over non-public programming, this may not always be the best use of overall public resources. We note that Minneapolis made a decision

to focus public hours and funding for staff positions during times with the highest usage. Other programs such as preschool, rentals, and senior programs occur during non-public hours, but are not staffed by front-desk staff. SPR should collaborate with ARC and other partners to identify the most cost-effective ways to activate facilities and generate public benefit on as many days and for as many hours as possible. Creative solutions may be necessary to address potential challenges related to needed supporting services, including facility oversight from a risk management point of view or janitorial services.

Implementation Specifics for Recommendation 12

Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: High

Anticipated Benefits	Potential Resource Implications	Status (including relevant previous strategies)
▪ Alignment of these key partners should lead to greater efficiency and stronger service for customers, with shared accountability for providing high quality recreation programming.	▪ Leadership of both organizations will need to devote time for coordinated planning and communication. ▪ Budget impacts will be clearer when partnership cost sharing study is complete (Spring 2018).	▪ Current MSA ended 2017; working now under a one-year agreement. ▪ SPR and ARC are collaborating on a work product that will recap the history, benefits, and challenges of the partnership; a plan for ongoing joint planning; and recommendations for strengthening the partnership. The document will be completed in 2018 and shared with staff of both organizations. ▪ This work will inform a new 10-year MSA.

Summary of Additional Staff and Technology Resources Required

While some of the recommendations above can be advanced with existing resources, others will require additional staff time and/or expertise, as well as supporting technologies.

Staff Training

- Recommendation 7.   Strengthen customer service.

- Recommendation 10.   Acknowledge and buttress the role staff play in providing social supports and ensuring safety and security.

These Recommendations call for additional training for SPR staff in areas that are not related to mandatory training. This reflects the demands of serving a changing community and the role that Community Centers play, serving as gathering places for populations with high needs.

Performance Management and Organizational Learning

- Recommendation 3.   Leverage past data and enforce class performance standards to focus on desired programs

- Recommendation 8.   Simplify and roll-up reporting measures that establish balance and triangulate on competing goals.

- Recommendation 9.   Test, document, evaluate, and share marketing techniques

- Recommendation 11.   Standardize practices and expectations across the recreation system.

Taken together, this suite of recommendations constitutes an important effort to strengthen SPR as a learning organization, improving its use of data and strengthening its capacity to identify and spread the use of proven practices. To do so effectively will require additional investment in staff capacity and technology.

Staff Capacity
- Additional staff will be needed whose sole responsibility is to collect, analyze and report out on division-wide data. This could be included in the next round of Park District funding.
  - 1 FTE Admin Staff Analyst (ASA). 0.5 FTE Research & Eval. Aide (REA).
  - 2018 #'s ASA $109,561; REA $43,937.

- A Manager-level position may be needed to consolidate and act on learnings from data analysis and review of promising practices from across the system. A key position is needed to provide leadership in implementation and consistent application of the new or changing practices.
  - 1 FTE Manager 1 - $109,561.

One-time Technology Investments
- Technology for automation of data collection and analysis: $3,000-5,000.
- People Counter replacement (SPR is submitting a Budget Issue Paper for 2019 for funding to replace old system).

Ongoing Technology Costs
- Annual licenses for Tableau or other reporting technology: $3,000.
- Possible increased costs associated with ACTIVE Net.