



Creating Community in the 21st Century



Executive Summary



VIP
action plan

An Action Plan For Parks & Recreation In California

Created by the California Park & Recreation Society

VIP ACTION PLAN: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

In 1999, the California Park & Recreation Society, released the VIP Action Plan (Vision, Insight and Planning), *Creating Community in the 21st Century*.



The VIP Action Plan created a statewide vision and mission for the parks and recreation profession. It identified core competencies which park and recreation professionals already possess and those competencies which they need. The plan developed strategies and performance measures to reposition the park and recreation profession as vital partners in building strong communities.

WHAT IS THE VIP PROJECT?

The purpose of the VIP Project: Vision... Insight... Planning (VIP) is to be proactive in determining the future of the park and recreation profession through developing and implementing a consistent vision and action plan for the profession that creates future success.

- *Vision* is the power of anticipating that which will or may come to be; the ability to foresee what is going to happen; a mental image created by the imagination, intelligent foresight.
- *Insight* is the capacity to discern the true nature of a situation.
- *Planning* is the technique for formulating a detailed scheme, program or method that leads to accomplishing a goal.

WHY AN ACTION PLAN?

The VIP Action Plan is intended to:

- Place the park and recreation profession at the table when critical issues are framed and decisions are made;
- Proactively address future trends;
- Meet the needs of a rapidly changing society;
- Give us a common vision leading to a preferred future.

CPRS charted new territory in developing the VIP Action Plan. It is more than a plan for a single organization - the plan encompasses the entire park and recreation profession. By developing an action plan that demonstrates the outcomes provided by the profession, parks and recreation will be recognized as an essential service. The park and recreation profession become more self-sufficient and enjoy broader support, and consequently will be more difficult to eliminate in difficult economic times.

The plan is being implemented through collaborative partnership - including contributions that are being made by individuals; specific public, private and nonprofit organizations; universities; and professional associations.

CORE VALUES

Core values are the qualities and beliefs that form the foundation of parks and recreation. The following were identified during the plan development process as the profession's core values:

- Inclusivity
- Accessibility
- Diversity of Experience
- Spirituality
- Service to Community
- Environmental Stewardship
- Personal Development
- Healthy lifestyles
- Professional Growth
- Lifelong Learning
- Fun and Celebration



The Vision

The vision statement describes the preferred future of parks and recreation. This vision is the cornerstone of the future strategic planning efforts:

“We Create Community Through People, Parks and Programs”

We, the parks and recreation profession, include commercial and for-profit organizations, such as health clubs and equipment vendors; non profit organizations, such as the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club; natural resource agencies, such as the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service and county/state parks; therapeutic recreation agencies, such as hospitals, rehabilitation centers and long-term care facilities; community colleges and universities which prepare our future professionals; adult education providers who offer lifelong learning opportunities; park professionals who preserve the natural environment, enhance safety and protect our valuable resource investment; special districts and local recreation and park agencies that provide parks and recreation opportunities to local residents; students who are the professionals of the future; citizen volunteers who provide many direct services; and others. All are part of the vision for the future.

To **create** is to bring into being or to cause. This word emphasizes the active role of parks and recreation in the task of creating community.

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Community is a sense of belonging, ownership and common purpose that develops among people who live or work together as a social unit. Within parks and recreation, a community may be a city, a hospital ward, a park and recreation district, a senior center, a national park, a neighborhood for a for-profit business or nonprofit agency.

It includes both your co-workers and the clients you serve.

Parks and recreation often delivers services through **people** - our staff and volunteers make connections with our clients and residents to improve lives. It is this person-to-person contact that relieves the loneliness of senior citizens, reduces the stress and isolation of working adults, and inspires and teaches youth to become productive community members.



Parks and recreation professionals mobilize people to solve community problems - from building trails to coaching sports leagues to tutoring youth-at-risk. We are the essential connection to people and their need in the communities and settings that we serve.

As a profession, we are known for our **parks** and open space. They create a green infrastructure that is essential to our state's economy - from the peaks of Mount Shasta to a neighborhood park in the midst of our largest city. We provide relief from urban development, preserve the environment and provide opportunities for recreation through our facilities. In addition to parks, we provide many types of facilities today to meet the needs of our customers - water parks, health clubs, wilderness areas, skate parks, community centers, etc. In the vision statement, the word "park" can be interpreted as any facility provided by parks and recreation to meet needs.

Programs are the recreation activities, services or organizational structures designed to produce specific outcomes or benefits to our clients. Historically, our programs have also been an important means of connecting with clients and creating community. As such, these programs are acknowledged in our vision statement.

MISSION

Personal expenditures on recreation and leisure in the United States exceed \$700 billion annually (NRPA, 1998). In addition, more than \$10 billion is spent annually by local, state and federal agencies on parks and recreation facilities, programs and services. Do you ever consider what difference is made in individuals, communities, the environment and the economy through parks and recreation? Our mission statement describes why parks and recreation services exist - the benefits provided by parks and recreation.

These benefits are necessary to develop healthy individuals and communities when the economy is strong - and are even more important when we face economic and social challenges. The mission of parks and recreation was crafted from feedback obtained throughout the planning process.

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The primary mission or “business” of parks and recreation is to:

Strengthen community image and sense of place

Parks, recreation facilities, programs and community events are key factors in strengthening community image and creating sense of place.

Protect environmental resources

By acquiring, managing and restoring valuable resources as open space, such as rivers, streams, greenways, view sheds, forests and other habitat areas, natural resources are protected and habitat required for the survival of diverse species is preserved.



Foster human development

Parks and recreation services foster social, intellectual, physical and emotional development of children, youth and adults.

Strengthen safety and security

Park and recreation professionals provide safe environments for recreation and design programs and services specifically to reduce criminal activity.

Support economic development

Recreation programs and facilities attract and retain businesses and residents, as well as attract tourists. Parks and recreation provides jobs and generates income for the community and for local businesses. Park maintenance staff maintain parks and community facilities to protect public investments.

Provide recreational experiences

Through programmed and self-facilitated recreation, a variety of benefits to individuals and society are achieved. Recreational experiences also are important as an end in themselves for personal enjoyment.

Increase cultural unity

Parks and recreation increases cultural unity through experiences that promote cultural understanding and celebrate our growing diversity.

Promote health and wellness

Participation in recreation improves physical and emotional health.

Facilitate community problem-solving

Park and recreation professionals have skills in facilitation and leadership that can be applied to resolve community problems and Issues.

Core competencies

Core competencies are the special skills and abilities of parks and recreation professionals. In order to compete in an ever-changing market, we must have the skills needed to deliver services in the 21st century. As we go about our business, the world is rapidly changing around us. Adapting to these changes is paramount for the future success of our profession.

We need professionals who are willing to develop skills and savvy and who have the courage to lead our profession into the next millennium. Those who will survive will be those who respond to the issues in a proactive way by providing services that our communities and customers value. Those who survive can weave a complex web of stakeholders and coalitions into a force that achieves our vision and mission.



These are the professionals who will succeed in the next millennium: professionals who understand and can articulate our role in creating community; individuals who master the political process to achieve their goals; leaders in their own communities; individuals who have compassion for people; professionals who not only respond and react to changes and trends, but can be trendsetters; innovative professionals who have relevant, finely honed skills; multifaceted individuals who can broker resources and bring coalitions together; and leaders who are called to the table when important decisions are made. Those who prefer the status quo and do not recognize the forces that shape us will flounder.

Competencies are organized using a “meta” leadership competency model used by corporations.

Business Acumen

- Action (strategic) planning
- Human development
- Resource (management) development
- Strategic thinking
- Technology

Communications & Marketing

- Communications
- Facilitation
- Mediation

Planning & Evaluation

- Creator of experiences
- Outcome driven management
- Prevention models (knowledge of and use of)
- Research & evaluation

Community Relations

- Community knowledge
- Community building
- Partnering and coalition building
- People orientation
- Political dynamics/acumen

Leadership and Management

- Flexibility
- Leadership
- Multi-tasking
- Resourcefulness

Descriptions of these competencies can be found on the CPRS Web site, www.cprs.org/creating-trends.htm.

STRATEGIES



To accomplish the mission of parks and recreation, seven prime strategies were developed. These are methods, resources, processes and systems we will deploy to achieve success.

The strategy areas are outlined below:

Communicating The Vision

Communicating the vision and value of parks and recreation and the VIP project to the profession.

Forming Partnerships

Communicating the vision and value of parks and recreation to allied professionals, citizens, the media and policymakers to develop partners and allies.

Expanding Professional Competencies

Building capacity within the park and recreation profession by providing professional and continuing education that increases skills in the core competencies that will be needed for success in the future.

Demonstrating Results

Conducting research to document the value of parks and recreation and to influence public opinion and policy.

Documenting Best Practices

Identifying, developing and documenting new or current practices that clearly demonstrate the value of parks and recreation.

Strengthening The Parks and Recreation Ethic

Integrating the park and recreation ethic into all aspects of the K-12 educational experience

Impacting Public Policy

Impacting public policy at the local, state and federal level to promote the value of parks and recreation.

Expanding Resources

Identifying new resources and strategic partnerships to move parks and recreation towards professional and community goals.

Identifying Key Trends and Opportunities



During the VIP planning process, trends that will have a major impact on parks and recreation in the future and will best utilize distinctive professional competencies were identified. From these trends, specific market opportunities that have growth potential for the future have been targeted. Since the impact of trends will vary depending on geographical location and community character, professionals must evaluate the trends in light of local needs and priorities, and must identify the market opportunities with the greatest potential for their agency.

VIP Trends Analysis Summary

The trends analysis for parks and recreation, *2000 and Beyond*, was conducted by Tapan Monroe, a well-respected futurist and former chief economist for PG&E. His report examines emerging and future trends in five main areas:

- The Changing California Economy
- Community Economic Vitality and Other Economic Impacts
- Demographic, Social and Cultural Trends
- Political and Legislative Trends
- The Fundamental Issue - America's Time-Use Pattern

The full trends analysis can be found on the CPRS Web site, www.cprs.org/creating-action.htm

Market Opportunities

Nineteen market opportunities have been identified that respond to key trends that will have a major impact on California residents. These opportunities may be classified into four types:

- Target Market Segments
 - *Dependent Care (for children under 12 years, people with disabilities and frail elders)*
 - *Youth Development (children and youth to 18 years)*

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- *Partners in K-12 Education*
- *Senior Services*
- *Diverse Population Groups*
- *Universal Access and Design*
- *Family Development*
- Opportunities to Address Social Trends
 - *Health & Wellness*
 - *Lifelong Learning*
 - *Technology-based Recreation*



- Community Planning and Development Opportunities
 - *Park and Recreation Facilities*
 - *Cultural Arts*
 - *Economic Development and Tourism*
 - *Model Neighborhoods*
 - *Libraries*
 - *Community Involvement and Facilitation*
- Environmental Stewardship and Awareness Opportunities
 - *Outdoor Recreation*
 - *Eco-tourism*
 - *Environmental Stewardship and Open Space*

Who will implement the VIP action plan strategies?

To develop a plan that encompasses the entire park and recreation profession, we need to involve and engage people at several levels. **These include:**

- Individuals
- Agencies and organizations
- CPRS (including districts, sections; and the statewide organization)
- Allied professionals
- Educators (academic institutions)

The plan identifies implementation responsibilities for each action plan item to help you determine potential roles for you, your agency and your professional affiliations during the implementation phase of this plan.

Conducting an Action Plan Process in Your Community

The questions below will assist you and your agency develop your action plan.

PART ONE: Your Organization

- What are the core values of your organization? Hold a staff workshop, brainstorm core values; compare the values identified by your staff with the core values presented in the VIP Action Planning Framework.
- What is the vision of your organization? Discuss the VIP vision at a staff meeting and adapt it to your needs. Adopt the vision within your organization.
- What is the mission of your organization? Hold a staff meeting to brainstorm your organization's mission. You may start with the mission statements identified in the VIP Action Planning Framework. Adopt these statements within your organization.
- Do your proposed values, vision and mission meet the needs of your community? Hold a community workshop to get feedback from your customers and partners.



PART TWO: Your Community

- How will the demographic make-up of your community or agency change in the next 5, 10 or 20 years? Check the planning department or U.S. Census Bureau for information.
- Will there be significant population growth? Check the planning department or U.S. Census Bureau for information.
- Who are your community's leaders? Identify community and business leaders and key stakeholders who are beneficial to your short- and long-range action planning efforts.
- What social issues are affecting your community or agency? Check with your planning department, refer to past community surveys, talk to your staff, conduct a survey, focus group and/or workshop. Interview community leaders. Talk to staff at partner agencies.
- What are community or agency needs as perceived by residents/customers? Conduct a survey, focus group and/or workshop. Interview community leaders.
- What administrative or policy changes will affect your clients? For example, are schools instituting a year-round schedule; is your budget being reduced or increased? What other issues are being addressed or will be addressed?

PART THREE: Your Competencies

- What are the specific competencies and strengths of your organization, including recognized skills, model programs and services, facilities, location, staff, partnerships, funding sources, etc.? Hold a staff workshop, look at letters of appreciation from customers, review past awards and ask customers and community leaders about what they value about your agency.

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PART FOUR: Your Strategic Market Opportunities

- Who are your current and potential partners? What services do they provide? What resources are they willing to share? Inventory your current partnerships, survey other providers and hold a focus group of potential partners. Identify overlapping resources/services and potential collaborations.
- Who are your competitors? Survey other providers about the services they offer.
- What gaps (or shortcomings) are notable in park and recreation services or facilities? Review collected data and consider type of service and outcome provided, location and age group served.
- Which of the market opportunities identified in this plan, Creating Community in the 21st Century, matches well with your local trends, your unique strengths and your current and future partnerships? Review data with staff.
- Are there market opportunities not presented in the VIP Project action plan that fit well with your situation? Identify with staff.
- Which opportunities are the highest priority based on community need and agency strengths? Of these, which are areas of your greatest strength? Review data with staff and customers.



PART FIVE: Your Strategies

- For each priority market opportunity identified above, design your service or facility to achieve specific goals.
- Identify lead responsibilities and supporting responsibilities.
- Identify agency needs for implementing the plan. Consider internal communications, external communications, professional development needs and resource needs.
- Develop a strategy for meeting agency needs to allow implementation of the plan.

PART SIX: Your Performance Measures

- Develop means of measuring the achievement of goals as the plan is implemented (formative evaluation). Do an observational study or customer survey.
- Implement the plan.
- Monitor success. Debrief progress toward goals with staff and clients. Identify possible areas for improvement.
- Evaluate your success at achieving established goals. Use an established instrument to measure goal achievement or work with educators or consultants to develop a customized instrument.
- Establish a communication program to publicize your success. Consider all media sources – newspaper articles, PSAs, web page information, announcements in a program guide, annual reports, etc.

**To Download the Complete VIP Action Plan
please visit the CPRS Web site at www.cprs.org/creating-action.htm**

