

04 | PROGRAM ASSESSMENTS

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Program Assessment





The team performed a Recreation Program Assessment (January 2022) of the services offered by the Town of Apex Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources Department. The assessment offered an in-depth perspective of program and service offerings and helped identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities regarding programming. The assessment also assisted in identifying core programs, program gaps within the community, key system-wide issues, areas of improvement, and future programs and services for residents and visitors.

METHODOLOGY

The project team based these program findings and comments from a review of information provided by the Department including program descriptions, financial data, website content and discussions with staff. This report addresses the program offerings from a systems perspective for the entire portfolio of programs.

KEY FINDINGS

In order to help achieve the Department’s mission, Apex Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources provides a broad range of recreation and leisure programming for all ages and abilities. Currently, the Department offers numerous programs/activities to the Apex community. These program offerings are supported with dedicated spaces which include:

- › (6) Ball Diamonds
- › (1) Community Center
- › (1) Cultural Arts Center
- › (7) Multi-Purpose Fields
- › (12) Picnic Shelters
- › (5) Sand Volleyball Courts
- › (17) Tennis Courts
- › (1) Senior Center
- › (6) Pickleball Courts
- › (11) Parks





Note: Pleasant Park is a 92-acre park with several amenities including:

- › (6) Multi-Purpose Turf Fields
- › (4) Ball Diamonds
- › (4) Tennis Courts,
- › (6) Pickleball Courts
- › (2) Basketball Courts
- › (1) Sand Volleyball Court
- › (3) Picnic Shelters
- › (1) Cross Country Course



Figure 4.2 - Pleasant Park Master Plan

Program Assessment Overview

Below are some overall observations that stood out when analyzing the program assessment sheet:

- › Overall, the program descriptions effectively communicate the key benefits and goals of each Core Program Area.
- › Age segment distribution is aligned with the community's current population but needs to be monitored annually to ensure program distribution continues to match Apex's demographics.
- › Program lifecycles: Approximately 8 percent of the system's current programs are categorized in the Introduction Stage, while only 2 percent of programs fall into the Decline Stage. A complete description of Lifecycle Stages can be found on page 9.
- › The Town's volunteer program allows residents and organizations to get involved and give back to the community through various opportunities. There is a need for developing a volunteer program and a volunteer coordinator position, specifically for the PRCR Department.
- › From a marketing and promotions standpoint, the staff utilizes a variety of marketing methods when promoting their programs including: printed and online program guides, the Town's website, smartphone apps, flyers/brochures, direct mail, email blasts, marquee signs, in-facility signage, print newsletters, QR codes as well as various social media channels as a part of the marketing mix.
 - The Department would benefit from identifying Return on Investment (ROI) for all marketing initiatives.
 - There is an opportunity to increase the number of cross-promotions.
- › Currently, the Department utilizes a couple of customer feedback methods (pre-program surveys and post-program surveys). These are both useful tools that the Department is encouraged to use on a more consistent basis. The Department should begin implementing additional customer feedback tools ("lost customer" surveys, focus groups, statistically valid surveys, on-site surveys, and other customer relations programs). Collecting and incorporating user feedback is an essential step in order to measure and track key performance indicators over time.

- › Pricing strategies across each Core Program Area are rather sporadic. Currently, the most frequently used strategies are family or household status, resident/non-resident rates, cost recovery goals and customer's ability to pay. These are good practices and should be continued in addition to implementing some new pricing strategies which can be found on page 14. Furthermore, it is essential to develop a formal pricing policy in order to achieve a more consistent approach to pricing strategies and understanding current Cost-of-Service.
- › Financial performance measures such as cost recovery goals are currently being utilized on a Core Program Area level. Moving forward, it is recommended for staff to begin tracking cost recovery of individual programs, and the staff should factor in all direct and indirect costs pertaining to programming. A focus on developing consistent earned income opportunities would be beneficial to the Department's overall quest for greater fiscal sustainability.

Core Program Areas

To help achieve the mission, it is important to identify Core Program Areas based on current and future needs to create intent to focus around the specific program areas of greatest importance to the community. Public recreation is challenged by the premise of being all things to all people. The philosophy of the Core Program Area is to assist staff, policy makers, and the public to focus on what is most important to the community. Program areas are considered as Core if they meet a majority of the following criteria:

- › The program area has been provided for a long period of time (over 4-5 years) and/or is expected by the community.
- › The program area consumes a relatively large portion (5 percent or more) of the agency's overall budget.
- › The program area is offered 3-4 seasons per year.
- › The program area has wide demographic appeal.
- › There is a tiered level of skill development available within the program area's offerings.
- › There is full-time staff responsible for the program area.
- › There are facilities designed specifically to support the program area.
- › The agency controls a significant percentage (20 percent or more) of the local market.

Existing Program Areas

In discussions with the Department staff, six Core Program Areas were identified and are currently being offered.

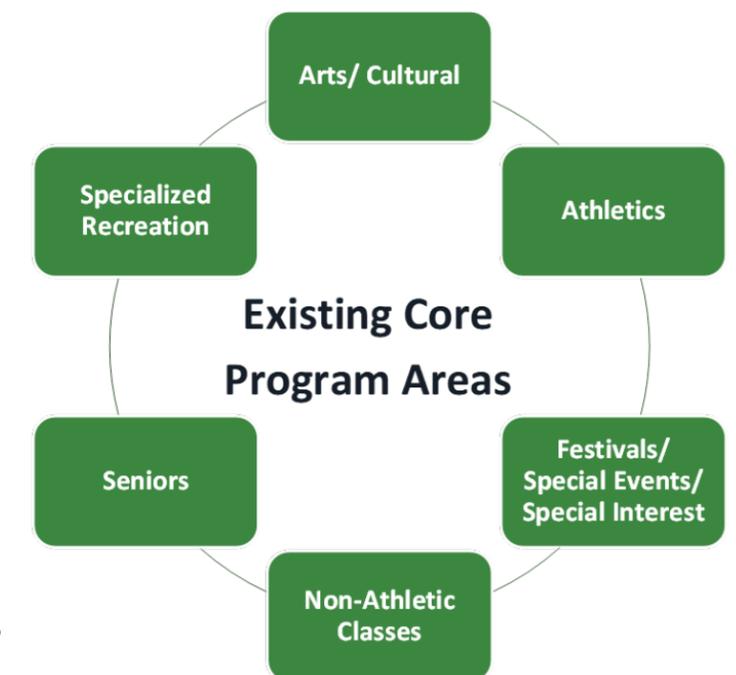


Figure 4.3 - Apex Core Program Areas



ARTS/CULTURE		<p>Description: Programming offered for all ages in all areas of the arts. This includes (but is not limited to) dance, visual arts, theater arts (drama), culinary arts, crafts, and music.</p> <p>Goals: Provide quality arts programs for members of the community to explore creative outlets.</p>	<p>Sample of Offerings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Art Exhibits › Ballet Performances › Classical Concert › Snapology Classes › Theater Plays
ATHLETICS		<p>Description: Sports leagues and programs offered for youth and adults.</p> <p>Goals: Provide the opportunity for sports skill development, sportsmanship, team play and fun in a participation-based atmosphere.</p>	<p>Sample of Offerings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Adult Basketball Leagues › Adult Softball Leagues › USTA Tennis Leagues › Youth Lacrosse Clinic › Youth Soccer Leagues
FESTIVALS/SPECIAL EVENTS/ SPECIAL INTERESTS		<p>Description: Special events occurring at Town Parks, Facilities, Town Campus, and Historic Downtown.</p> <p>Goals: Provide a diverse range of entertainment and education opportunities in a larger setting than traditional recreational activities</p>	<p>Sample of Offerings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Fireworks and 4th of July › Christmas Tree & Wreath Auction › Indigenous Peoples Day › Juneteenth › Outdoor Concerts & Movies
NON-ATHLETIC CLASSES		<p>Description: Variety of non-athletic programming offered to spark the interest of every age.</p> <p>Goals: Provide new programming areas for people to explore a range of interest. Most of these programs are offered at a low cost for users.</p>	<p>Sample of Offerings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Basic Yoga › Fun Days Summer Camp › Pilates › Youth Nature Workshops › Zumba
SENIORS		<p>Description: Programming offered to those ages 55+</p> <p>Goals: Provide quality opportunities for education, physical exercise, social interaction, and mental stimulation to the population of 55+ residents or participants.</p>	<p>Sample of Offerings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Art Programs › Day Trips › Fitness Programs › Pickleball › Social Programs

ARTS/CULTURE		<p>Description: Programming offered for all ages in all areas of the arts. This includes (but is not limited to) dance, visual arts, theater arts (drama), culinary arts, crafts, and music.</p> <p>Goals: Provide quality arts programs for members of the community to explore creative outlets.</p>	<p>Sample of Offerings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Art Exhibits › Ballet Performances › Classical Concert › Snapology Classes › Theater Plays
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Core Program Area Recommendations

Based upon the observations of the planning team and demographic and recreation trends information, the existing Core Program Areas provide a generally well-rounded and diverse array of programs that could serve the community at present. Department staff should evaluate Core Program Areas and individual programs, ideally on an annual basis, to ensure offerings are relevant to evolving demographics and trends in the local community.

Based on community input from the statistically valid survey, residents have a “need” for more community-oriented special events and festivals, specifically outdoor movies and concerts. Additionally, residents would like to see supplemental fitness/wellness and art programs added to what is currently being offered. All three of these program areas were ranked as “high priority” for residents who participated in the statistically valid survey.



Figure 4.4 - Special Events and Festivals

Potential New Core Program Area Recommendations

The Department should explore adding additional Core Program Areas to assist in fulfilling any existing unmet needs of the community. Based on input gathered through ETC Institute’s statistically valid survey, Apex residents have a strong “need” for some additional programs outside of what is currently being offered. Some new program areas the Department should consider moving forward with include:

- › Aquatics (E.g., Learn to Swim, Water Aerobics and other Water Activities)
- › Water Sports (E.g., Paddle board yoga, Fishing, Kayaking and other Outdoor Water Activities)

Both of these program areas scored within the top 5 highest priorities of or by Apex Residents and should be considered by Department staff when contemplating new programs to introduce. It should be noted that this would require new facilities/amenities to be built and/or exploring partnerships with local organizations.

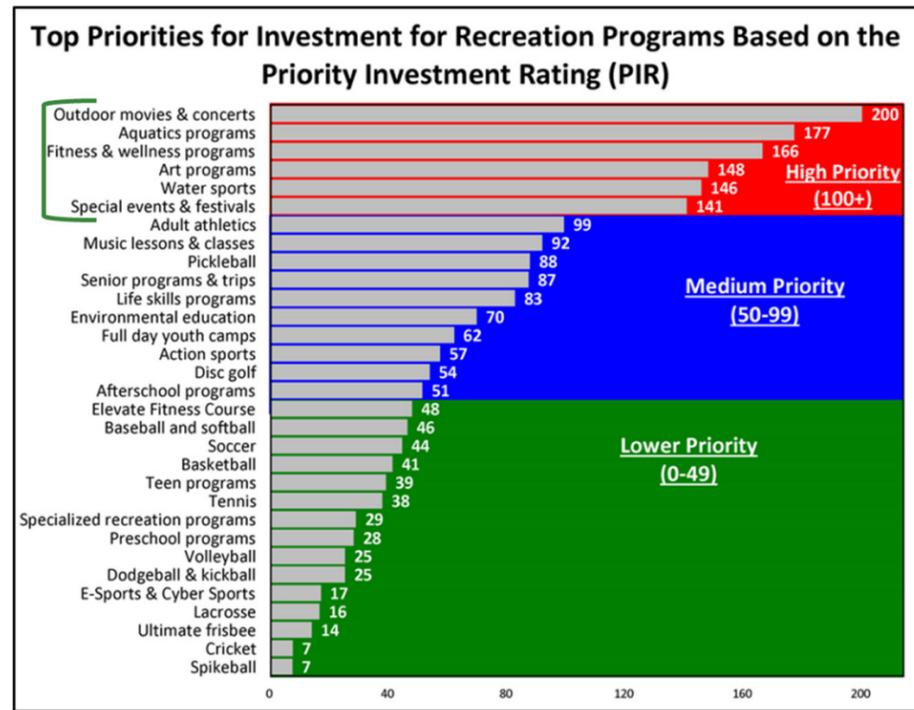


Figure 4.5 - Apex Current Recreation Program PIR

PROGRAM STRATEGY ANALYSIS

Age Segment Analysis

The table below depicts each Core Program Area and the most prominent age segments they serve. Many Core Program Areas serve multiple age segments, Primary (noted with a 'P') and Secondary (noted with an 'S') markets are identified:

Core Program Area	AGE SEGMENT ANALYSIS					
	Preschool (5 & Under)	Elementary (6-12)	Teens (13-17)	Adult (18-54)	Senior (55+)	All Age Segment Programs
Arts & Culture	P	P	P	P	P	P
Athletics	P	P	P	P		
Festivals/Special Events/Special Interest	S	S	S	S	S	P
Non-Athletic Classes	P	P	S	S		
Seniors					P	
Specialized Recreation and Inclusion Services	S	P/S	P	P		S

Figure 4.6 - Apex Program Priority by Age Segment

For this report, an Age Segment Analysis was completed by Core Program Area, providing an over-arching view of the age segments served by different program areas, and displaying any gaps in segments served. It is also beneficial for Departments to perform Age Segment Analysis by individual programs, in order to gain a more nuanced view of the data. Based on the age demographics of the Town, current programs seem to be well-aligned with the community's age profile. With the Town's median age being 37 years old, it is quite fitting that the adult age segment (18-54) is being fulfilled with appropriate recreational and cultural programming.

Apex's 35-54-year-old segment is the largest age group in the population, so ensuring the Town provides ample programming dedicated to middle-aged adults will be instrumental for the success of the Department. Potential program areas the Department could add/expand upon include adult focused special events/festivals, adult fitness/wellness classes, and non-athletic and art programs, which all scored as "High Priority" in the community survey and are popular amongst the 35-54 year-old age segment.

Staff should continue to monitor demographic shifts and program offerings to ensure that the needs of each age group are being met. Establishing a plan including which age segment to target, what message to convey, and which marketing method(s) to use, along with creating the social media campaign and determining what to measure for success before allocating resources towards a particular effort, would achieve best practices in programming. In addition to catering to all age segments, it is also crucial to ensure various populations feel included. Currently, the Department does an excellent job of filling the needs of a diverse range of user groups (Disabled, Latino, Persons of Color, LGBTQ+ Community, Women, and other minority and often underserved populations).



Figure 4.7 - Apex's Current Recreation Offerings



Program Lifecycle

A Program Lifecycle Analysis involves reviewing each program offered by the Department to determine the stage of growth or decline for each. This provides a way of informing strategic decisions about the overall mix of programs managed by the agency to ensure that an appropriate number of programs are “fresh” and that relatively few programs, if any, need to be discontinued. This analysis is not based on strict quantitative data, but rather it is based on staff members’ knowledge of their program areas. The following table shows the percentage distribution of the various lifecycle categories of the Town’s programs. These percentages were obtained by comparing the number of programs in each individual stage with the total number of programs listed by staff members.

LIFECYCLE	DESCRIPTION	ACTUAL PROGRAM DISTRIBUTIONS		RECOMMENDED DISTRIBUTION
Introduction	New Programs;modest participation	8%	81%	50%-60% Total
Take-Off	Rapid participation growth	19%		
Growth	Moderate, but consistent participation growth	54%		
Mature	Slow participation growth	13%	13%	40%
Saturation	Minimal to no participation growth; extreme competition	4%	6%	1%-10% Total
Decline	Declining participation	2%		

Figure 4.8 - Apex Program Lifecycle Distribution

The Lifecycle Analysis depicts a slightly skewed program distribution. Approximately 81 percent of all programs fall within the beginning stages (Introduction, Take-Off, and Growth). It is recommended to have 50-60 percent of all programs within these beginning stages because it provides the Department with an avenue to energize its programmatic offerings. Eventually these programs will begin to move into the mature stage and they will ensure the pipeline for new programs is there. It is key to continue adding new programs in the Introduction stage as those programs are meant to progress through the lifecycle stages.

According to staff, 13 percent of all program offerings fell into the Mature Stage. This stage anchors a program portfolio and it is recommended to have roughly 40 percent of programs within the Mature category in order to achieve a stable foundation. However, it is important to note that 54 percent of all programs are currently within the Growth Stage and will be moving into the Mature Stage in the near future. For that reason, the Department should not be overly concerned with the current distribution percentage.

An estimated 6 percent of programs are Saturated or Declining, and this is a great testament to how well the Department does at repositioning existing program offerings. This is a natural progression for programs to eventually evolve into saturation and decline. However, if programs reach these stages rapidly it could be an indication that the quality of the programs does not meet expectations, or there is not as much of a demand for the programs. As programs enter into the Decline stage, they must be closely reviewed and evaluated for repositioning or elimination. When this occurs, the Department should modify these programs to begin a new lifecycle within the Introductory stage or replace the existing programs with new programs based upon community needs and trends.

Staff should complete a Program Lifecycle Analysis on an annual basis and ensure that the percentage distribution closely aligns with desired performance. The Department could include annual performance measures for each Core Program Area to track participation growth, customer retention and percentage of new programs as an incentive for innovation and alignment with community trends.

Program Classification

Conducting a classification of services analysis informs how each program serves the overall organization mission, the goals and objectives of each Core Program Area and how the program should be funded regarding tax dollars and/or user fees and charges. Program Classification can help to determine the most appropriate management, funding and marketing strategies.

Program classifications are based on the degree to which the program provides a public benefit versus a private benefit. Public benefit can be described as everyone receiving the same level of benefit with equal access, whereas private benefit can be described as the user receiving exclusive benefit above what a general taxpayer receives for their personal benefit.

For this exercise, the Department used a classification method based on three categories: Essential Services, Important Services and Value-Added Services. Where a program or service is classified depends upon alignment with the organizational mission, how the public perceives a program, legal mandates, financial sustainability, personal benefit, competition in the marketplace, and access by participants. The following bullets and graphic describe each of the three program classifications.

- › Essential Programs category are critical to achieving the organizational mission and providing community-wide benefits and therefore, generally receive priority for tax-dollar subsidization.
- › Important or Value-Added program classifications generally represent programs that receive lower priority for subsidization.
 - *Important programs contribute to the organizational mission but are not essential to it and cost recovery for these programs should be high (at least 80 percent overall).*
 - *Value-Added programs are not critical to the mission and should be prevented from drawing upon limited public funding, so overall cost recovery for these programs should be near or in excess of 100 percent.*



Figure 4.9 - Fishing Camp



Figure 4.10 - Program Classification

With assistance from staff, a classification of programs and services was conducted for all of the recreation programs offered by the Department. The results presented in the following table represent the current classification distribution of recreation program services. Programs should be assigned cost recovery goal ranges within those overall categories. A full program list organized by Core Program Areas can be found in the appendices.

APEX PROGRAM CLASSIFICATION DISTRIBUTION		
Essential	Important	Value-Added
37%	41%	22%

Figure 4.11 - Apex Program Classification Distribution

As the Department continues to evolve to better meet the community's needs, there could be an added benefit to managing the services if they all were classified according to the Cost Recovery Model for Sustainable Services depicted below in Figure 4.12.

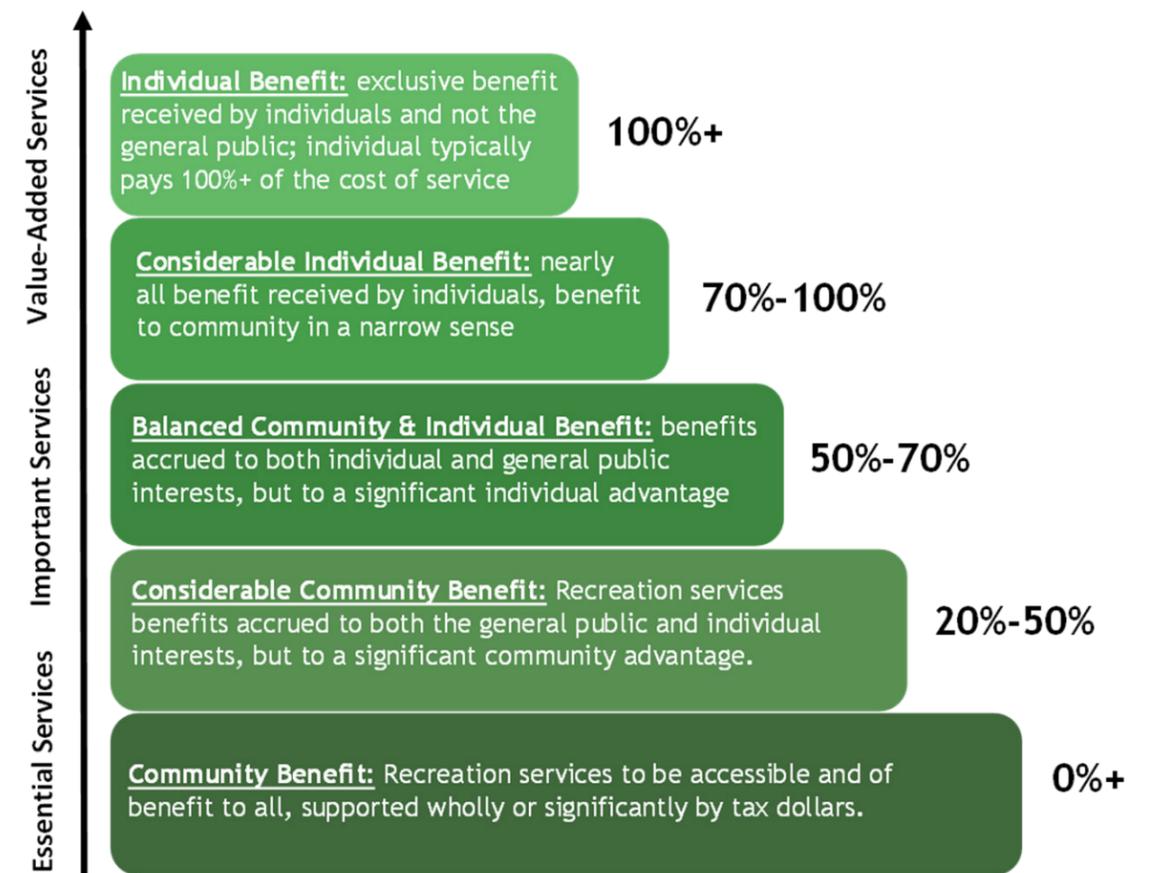


Figure 4.12 - Cost Recovery Model

Given the broad range of cost recovery goals (from 0 to 40 percent for Essential Services or 40 percent to 80 percent for Important Services), it would be helpful to further distribute programs internally within sub-ranges of cost recovery as depicted in the previous Figure. This will allow for programs to fall within an overall service classification tier while still demonstrating a difference in expected / desired cost recovery goals based on a greater understanding of the program's goals (Pure Community services versus Mostly Community Services or Community and Individual Mix versus Mostly Individual Mix).



Cost of Service & Cost Recovery

Cost recovery targets should at least be identified for each Core Program Area and for specific programs or events when realistic. The previously identified Core Program Areas would serve as an effective breakdown for tracking cost recovery metrics including administrative costs. Theoretically, the staff should review how programs are grouped for similar cost recovery and subsidy goals to determine if current practices still meet management expected outcomes.

Determining cost recovery performance and using it to make informed pricing decisions involves a three-step process:

- › Classify all programs and services based on the public or private benefit they provide (as completed in the previous section).
- › Conduct a Cost-of-Service Analysis to calculate the full cost of each program.
- › Establish a cost recovery percentage through Department policy for each program or program type based on the outcomes of the previous two steps and adjust program prices accordingly.

Understanding the Full Cost-of-Service

To develop specific cost recovery targets, full cost of accounting needs to be created for each class or program that accurately calculates direct and indirect costs. Cost recovery goals are established once these numbers are in place and the Department's program staff should be trained on this process. A Cost-of-Service Analysis should be conducted on each program, or program type, that accurately calculates direct (program-specific) and indirect (comprehensive, including administrative overhead) costs. Completing a Cost-of-Service Analysis not only helps determine the true and full cost of offering a program, but it also provides information that can be used to price programs based upon accurate delivery costs. Figure 8 illustrates the common types of costs that must be accounted for in a Cost-of-Service Analysis.



Figure 4.13 - Cost -of-Service Analysis

The methodology for determining the total Cost-of-Service involves calculating the total cost for the activity, program or service, then calculating the total revenue earned for that activity. Costs (and revenue) can also be derived on a per unit basis. Program or activity units may include:

- › Number of participants
- › Number of tasks performed
- › Number of consumable units
- › Number of service calls
- › Number of events
- › Required time for offering programs service

Agencies use Cost-of-Service Analysis to determine what financial resources are required to provide specific programs at specific levels of service. Results are used to determine and track cost recovery as well as to benchmark different programs provided by the Department between one another. Cost recovery goals are established once Cost-of-Service totals have been calculated. Program staff should be trained in the process of conducting a Cost-of-Service Analysis and the process should be undertaken at least every 2-years.

Current Cost Recovery

With regard to cost recovery, the Department currently establishes goals and tracks actual cost recovery on a Core Program Area level. This is deemed a best practice and should be continued on an annual basis. Additionally, some individual programs also track cost recovery (E.g., Athletic Programs). Over time the Department should evolve into implementing cost recovery goals at the individual program level for all programs. The table to the right shows current cost recovery goals and actual cost recovery for each Core Program Area.

The Department's current Core Program Area with the greatest actual cost recovery is Arts & Culture with 60 percent-100 percent cost recovery. Followed by Athletics and Non-Athletic Classes, each with 50 percent-100 percent cost recovery.

As shown in the table above, cost recovery targets can vary based on the Core Program Area and even at the program level within a Core Program Area. Several variables can influence the cost recovery target, including lifecycle stage, demographic served and perhaps most important, program classification. These are best practices for Core Program Areas. Programs within each Core Program Area will vary in price and subsidy level. The program mix within each Core Program Area will determine the cost recovery capabilities.

With approved cost recovery goals, annual tracking, and quality assurance, overall cost recovery will improve. Use the key performance indicators and update annually to include cost recovery goals and actual cost recovery achieved. Each Core Program Area can and should be benchmarked against itself on an annual basis.

COST RECOVERY GOAL BY CORE PROGRAM AREA		
Core Program Area	Cost Recovery Goal	Actual Cost Recovery
Arts & Culture	60%-100%	60%-100%
Athletics	50%-100%	50%-100%
Festivals/Special Events/Special Interests	0%	0%
Non-Athletic Classes	50-100%	50-100%
Seniors	35%	35%
Specialized Recreation	35%	35%

Figure 4.14 - Cost Recovery by Core Program Area



Cost Recovery Best Practices

Cost recovery targets should reflect the degree to which a program provides a public versus individual good. Programs providing public benefits (Essential programs) should be subsidized more by the Department. Programs providing individual benefits (Value-Added programs) should seek to recover costs and generate revenue for other services.

Pricing

Pricing strategies are one mechanism agencies can use to influence cost recovery. Overall, the degree to which the Department uses various pricing strategies is rather consistent. Pricing tactics are concentrated in four main pricing strategies including family/household status, residency rates, cost recovery goals and customer's ability to pay.

Considering weekday/weekend rates, prime/non-prime time rates, group discounts, by-location pricing and market rates are also valuable strategies when setting prices. These untapped pricing strategies are useful to help stabilize usage patterns and help with cost recovery for higher quality amenities and services. The consulting team recommends that all Core Program Areas continue utilizing cost recovery as a major factor in determining pricing and look at underutilized pricing strategies to bolster participation and revenue.

Staff should continue to monitor the effectiveness of the various pricing strategies they employ and adjust as necessary. It is also important to continue monitoring for yearly competitor and other service providers (similar providers) as found in appendices. The table below details pricing methods currently in place by each Core Program Area and additional areas for strategies to implement over time.

PRICING STRATEGIES										
Core Program Areas	Age Segment	Family/ Household Status	Residency	Weekday/ Weekend	Prime/Non Prime Time	Group Discounts	By Location	By Competition (Market Rate)	By Cost Recover Goals	By Customer's Ability to Pay
Arts & Culture		X	X						X	X
Athletics		X	X						X	X
Festivals/Special Events/ Special Interests	X								X	X
Non-Athletic Classes		X	X						X	X
Seniors			X					X	X	X
Specialized Recreations		X	X					X	X	X

Figure 4.15 - Pricing Strategies

Program Strategy Recommendations

In general, the Department program staff should continue the cycle of evaluating programs on both individual merit as well as the program mix as a whole. This can be completed at one time, on an annual basis, or in batches at key seasonal points of the year, as long as each program is checked once per year.

The following tools and strategies can help facilitate this evaluation process:

Mini Business Plans

The consulting team recommends that Mini Business Plans (2-3 pages) for each Core Program Area be updated on a yearly basis. These plans should evaluate the Core Program Area based on meeting the outcomes desired for participants, cost recovery, percentage of the market and business controls, Cost-of-Service, pricing strategy for the next year and marketing strategies that are to be implemented. If developed regularly and consistently, they can be effective tools for budget construction and justification processes in addition to marketing and communication tools.

Program Development & Decision-Making Matrix

When developing program plans and strategies, it is useful to consider all of the Core Program Areas and individual program analysis discussed in this Program Assessment. Lifecycle, Age Segment, Classification, and Cost Recovery Goals should all be tracked. This information, along with the latest demographic trends and community input should be factors that lead to program decision-making. Community input can help staff focus in on specific program areas to develop new opportunities in what group of citizens to target including the best marketing methods to use.

A simple and easy-to-use tool similar to Figure 4.16 below will help compare programs and prioritize resources using multiple data points, rather than relying solely on cost recovery. This analysis will help the staff make an informed, objective case to the public when a program is in decline and retired, yet it was enjoyed by a few users. If the program/service is determined to have strong priority, appropriate cost recovery, good age segment appeal, good partnership potential and strong market conditions the next step is to determine the marketing methods by completing a similar exercise as the one seen below.

Marketing & Promotion Methods				Internal Factors			
Program Idea (Name or Concept): _____				Priority Ranking: High Medium Low			
Marketing Methods				Program Area: Core Non-core			
Activity Guide	Content Developed	Contact Information	Start Date	Classification: Essential Important Discretionary			
Website				Cost Recovery Range: 0-40% 60-80% 80+%			
Newspaper Article				Age Segment: Primary Secondary			
Radio				Sponsorship/Partnership			
Social Media				Potential Partnerships: Monetary Volunteers Partner Skill Location/Space			
Flyers - Public Places				Potential Sponsors: Monetary Volunteers Sponsor Skill Location/Space			
Newspaper Ad				Market Competition			
Email Notification				Number of Competitors			
Event Website				Competitiveness: High Medium Low			
School Flyer/Newsletter				Growth Potential: High Low			
Television							
Digital Sign							
Friends & Neighbors Groups							
Staff Promotion @ Events							

Figure 4.16 - Mini Business Plan Examples



Program Evaluation Cycle (with Lifecycle Stages)

Using the Age Segment, Lifecycle Analysis, and other established criteria, the program staff should evaluate programs on an annual basis to determine program mix. This can be incorporated into the Program Operating/Business Plan process. A diagram of the program evaluation cycle and program lifecycle is found in Figure 12. During the Introductory Stages the program staff should establish program goals, design program scenarios and components and develop the program operating/business plan. Regular program evaluations will help determine the future of a program.

If participation levels are still growing, continue to provide the program. When participation growth is slowing (or non-existent) or competition increases, the staff should look at modifying the program to re-energize the customers to participate. When program participation is consistently declining, the staff should terminate the program and replace it with a new program based on the public’s priority ranking and/or in activity areas that are trending nationally/regionally/locally, while taking into consideration the anticipated local participation percentage.

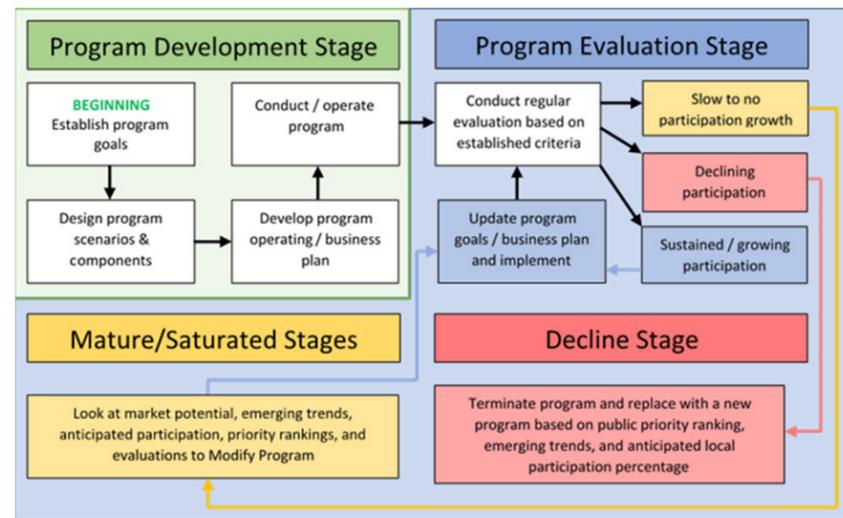


Figure 4.17 - Evaluating Cycle with Program Lifecycle Logic Matrix

Market, Volunteers and Partnerships

Current Recreation Marketing and Communications

The Department’s current marketing plan utilizes several communication methods to connect with residents including:

- › Printed program guides
- › Online program guides
- › The Town’s website
- › Smartphone apps
- › Flyers/brochures
- › Direct mail
- › Email blasts
- › Marquee signs
- › In-facility signage
- › Print newsletters
- › QR codes
- › CAC radio and printed advertising
- › Various social media channels

Effective communication strategies require striking an appropriate balance between the content with the volume of messaging while utilizing the “right” methods of delivery. The Department has a broad distribution of delivery methods for promoting programs. It is imperative to continue updating the marketing plan on an annual basis, at minimum, in order to provide information for community needs, demographics, and recreation trends.

An effective marketing plan must build upon and integrate with supporting plans and directly coordinate with organization priorities. The plan should also provide specific guidance as to how the Department’s identity and brand is to be consistently portrayed across the multiple methods and deliverables used for communication.



Figure 4.18 - Program Guide



Figure 4.19 - Town of Apex Website

Website

The Department's website (<https://www.apexnc.org/223/Parks-Recreation-Cultural-Resources>) has several features that make it easy to navigate and user friendly. There are sixteen icons located in the middle of the homepage which allow users to quickly access frequently sought-after information (Online Registration, Program Guides, Maps & Plans, Parks, Facilities and Rentals) Similarly, just below those icons is a "Helpful Documents and Links" section which directs residents to all rental forms, registration forms, and permits/licenses they may be seeking. At the bottom of the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources homepage, users will find a "Connect with Us" section which has links to all of the Town's social media pages including; Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and NextDoor. This makes it easy for residents to follow/subscribe to the Town's various platforms in order to better stay connected on what is happening in the community.

Additionally, it should be noted that the Department's Cultural Arts Center (the Halle) also has its own website where users can find all necessary information on upcoming events and festivals. (<http://www.thehalle.org/>)

Marketing and Communication Findings

- Ensure the marketing plan includes the components and strategies identified in this section. A Marketing Department should be involved in the administration of the system to monitor activities and events that should be presented to the community. Marketing will ultimately answer to the director for approval of information / methods used to market the system to residents.
- Establish priority age segments to target in terms of new program or service development and communication tactics.
- Establish and review performance measures for marketing on a regular basis; performance measures can be tracked through customer surveys as well as some web-based metrics.
- Leverage relationships with partners to enhance marketing efforts through cross-promotion that include defined measurable outcomes.

Volunteer and Partnership Management

Today's realities require most public recreation and parks departments to seek productive and meaningful partnerships with both community organizations and individuals to deliver quality and seamless services to their residents. These relationships should be mutually beneficial to each party to better meet overall community needs and expand the positive impact of the agency's mission. Effective partnerships and meaningful volunteerism are key strategy areas for the Town to meet the needs of the community in the years to come.

Current Volunteer Management

When managed with respect and used strategically, volunteers can serve as the primary advocates for the Town and its offerings. Currently, Apex uses a town-wide approach to volunteerism. All of the Town's volunteer opportunities are posted under the "Our Community" tab on the Town's website homepage. Additionally, some volunteer opportunities are also marketed on the Town's social media pages.

Management of volunteers is currently tracked on a limited basis. Moving forward, it is recommended that the Department begin tracking additional key performance indicators such as volunteer hours and type of volunteers (community service, special event, intern and other volunteer opportunities). Tracking volunteer hours can be used in budget discussions showing how well the Department is able to leverage limited resources. A complete list of volunteer recommendations and best practices can be found in the appendices.



Figure 4.20 - Example of Special Event Marketing



Volunteering

Adopt-a-Park / Trail

Adopting a section of a Town trail or park, and improve it through litter pick-up, maintaining flower beds, painting, spreading playground mulch and other safety surfacing and other manual labor. [Learn more...](#)

Apex Farmers Market

The weekly market provides opportunities to volunteer on-site and from home. [Learn more...](#)

Citizen Advisory Boards

Advisory boards offer Apex citizens the opportunity to provide input to Council on important topics including land use planning, zoning, and parks & recreation. Members are Council-appointed, with terms lasting from 1 to 3 years. Most boards meet monthly. If you'd like to serve, submit an [interest form](#).

Citizens Assisting Police in Apex (CAPA)

CAPA members help provide assistance at public events and assist the Police Department in support roles at events such as Child/Medical ID Program, Peakfest, Apex Night Out, Christmas with a Cop, Town Parades, Traffic Control and more. Before becoming CAPA member, a volunteer must successfully complete Apex's Citizens Police Academy. Email for [more info](#).

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

Participants are educated about disaster preparedness and trained in basic disaster response skills to enable them to assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event. To volunteer, please fill out the [online form](#).

Landscaping / Outdoor

Assist with outdoor projects like mulching at the town's parks and trails. To volunteer, please fill out the [online form](#).

Meals on Wheels

Meals on Wheels of Wake County serves noon time meals every weekday to the elderly, homebound and persons with disabilities of Wake County. To volunteer, or for more information, please visit the [Meals on Wheels website](#).

Special Events

Volunteers needed for events like: Olde Fashioned 4th of July, events at the Halle Cultural Arts Center, Peak Fest (1st Saturday in May), Turkey Trot 5K (Saturday prior to Thanksgiving), and other events! To volunteer, please fill out the [online form](#).

Figure 4.21 - Current Volunteering Opportunities on Town's Website

