American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration

Survey of Management Challenges

Below is a listing of the 139 management challenges identified by the Academy Fellows who are affiliated with non-university settings. These items have been grouped into ten themes. Each Fellow could identify up to three challenges. The numbers before each item refer to whether this was the 1st, 2nd or 3rd response given by a Fellow related to the following question: Consider the array of daily challenges you face in managing and delivering services in your community. You NOW have the money and the resources to tackle them-which one(s) would you invest in solving?

1. **Recruit, Train, and Retain Quality Staff**
    1-Talent acquisition for part-time and seasonal positions (including the ability to increase pay, offer health insurance, etc. to be an employer of choice)
    1-Recruiting and retaining excellent staff at all levels of the organization, including part-timers
    1-Training and staff development
    1-Leadership of staff
    1-Professional development
    1-Future leader development
    1-Developing future parks and recreation professionals
    1-Lack of quality individuals coming into the profession-there's also a move away from strong aquatic focused individuals leaving huge gaps in talent to fill these roles
    2-Networking with young professionals
    2-Clear and concise professional development approaches for park and recreation professionals
    2-Invest more in professional development
    2-Developing staff
    2-Salary and Benefit increase for staff
    2-Invest in staff development
    2-Recruiting and retaining quality part-time staff (providing health benefits and retirement) and competitive pay
    3-Meaningful training
    3-Finding career-minded, well-prepared employees
    3-Hiring more staff to deliver services
    3-Additional staff
    3-Professional development for all levels of staff to create the next leaders
    3-Professional development
    3-Leadership development

2. **Enhance Programs and Services that meet unique and pressing needs of the community**
    1-Health and wellness facilities and programs
    1-Aquatics
    1-Eliminate most park fees
    1-Providing the services and model for serving seniors with disabilities
    1-Developing youth people in challenging communities

1-Developing programs to reduce the divisions in our communities
2-Transportation to programming
2-Provide low cost/free recreation program for youth
2-Programs
2-Providing top notch programming at no charge
2-Connecting people with nature
2-Youth engagement
2-Developing programs and services for all segments of the population
2-Homelessness, and strategies for that
2-Mental health challenges in the community-stigma, prevention, etc.
2-Providing services that are relevant to our demographics
2-Health and wellness issues
3-After school programs
3-Wellness initiatives for community
3-Invest in a student employment department academy
3-Sustaining healthy people and nature

3. **Increase efficacy of advocacy and elevate public understanding of the value, benefits and importance of park and recreation services**
1-Adocating the importance of parks and recreation with your governing board
1-Lack of sophisticated understanding of the design of park and recreation related to public policy in order to transfer this knowledge to policy and advisory board leaders
1-Educating opinion leaders of the value of public parks and recreation
1-Awareness of our programs and services for their benefits
1-Shifting health priority to prevention (rather than acute care) through parks and recreation services
1-Educating the public about, and appreciation of the resource base
2-Educate community on value of open space
2-Increasing awareness of the relevance of parks and recreation
2-Development of a fully engaged community for support
2-Politics/Favoritism and the Good Ole Boy Network
2-Build community support for funding/valuing P & R
2-Getting other public agencies to treat park district as equal
2-Enhancing public awareness of importance of Park, Recreation and Conservation
3-Building community advocacy
3-Marketing and image making
3-Helping all better value the park and recreation benefits
3-Develop community advocates
3-Connecting and engaging the community to park and recreation through marketing, branding and enhanced communication
3-Communicating the value of parks

4. **Resolve problems of aging infrastructure, deferred maintenance, and infrastructure maintenance**
1-Backlog of aging infrastructure-capital projects
1-Taking care of what we have-deferred maintenance, equipment/infrastructure improvements
1-Funding to take care of parks we have
1-Counter intuitive question structure-that is always the first challenge, having resources
1-Deferred maintenance
1-Maintain and improve aging infrastructure
1-Deferred maintenance

1-Improving existing infrastructure
1-Preventive maintenance budgeting
1-Infrastructure
1-Infrastructure refresh
2-Repair and update facilities that are degrading
2-Improving existing recreation and parks infrastructure
2-Maintenance backlog
2-Maintenance backlogs, including upgrades
2-Deferred maintenance-fix what we have
2-Deferrred Maintenance
2-Specific funding for infrastructure funding for parks, trails and facilities

5. **Acquire Land and Develop Facilities and Services**
   1-Purchase additional park land
   1-Purchasing and setting aside property for future park development and open space preservation
   1-Land acquisition and preservation
   1-Development and maintenance of youth sports facilities
   2-Land acquisition
   2-Implementation of our long-term master plan that includes significant capital investments
   2-Land acquisition
   2-Developing new services to address community wants/needs. Trails, open space
   2-Building/renovation of needed facilities
   3-Greater infrastructure planning for bike and pedestrian paths, trails, and gathering areas
   3-Create new facilities that blend our age groups and ethnicity together
   3-Build more assets to support fitness, health and athletics
   3-Renovate and develop areas and facilities in a way that is adaptable to changing environmental factors

6. **Enhance Internal Operations; Engage in Continuous Quality Improvement**
   1-Becoming a more effective, efficient and productive agency
   1-Success Planning
   1-Sustainable operational budget
   1-Ensure dedicated funding sources for operations and capital
   2-Identifying and promoting industry best practices
   2-Technology
   2-Protecting and yet enjoying our natural and cultural resources
   2-Technology-keeping up with the tools that communicate, create more efficiencies and capturing metrics
   2-Marketing of programs and services
   3-Addressing challenges in delivery of leisure services
   3-Dramatically increase pay for staff and offer more training opportunities
   3-Avoidng all the noise of special interests and causes to focus on park and recreation services
   3-Technology

7. **Address Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in All Operations**
   1-Equalize the quality of facilities and experiences
   1-Reaching all the population you serve
   1-Accessibility (do note I have a vested interest in this)
   1-Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
   1-Equity in our Park Systems through acquisition of Parks and renovation of existing facilities
   1-Equity

1-Diversity, equity and inclusion
2-Equitable investment across the park system
3-Equitable access to parks and recreation services
3-Improving equitable access to recreation and park resources
3-Ensuring equity in the delivery of services (inclusion and equity combined)

8. **Increase capacity for Data-Driven Decision-Making**
1-Determing community "need" (not interests, demand, etc.)
2-Tools to collect and analyze user data to make better-informed decisions
2-Determing the impacts we should be having
2-Best practices research
2-Research on best practices
3-Determining whether or not we are having an impact
3-Continue to identify and promote best practices
3-Evaluating parks and recreation data
3-Engaging early on in trends analysis and developing a recommended best practice or policy response for the field

9. **Address Environmental and Physical Resource Issues**
1-For our community, flood control including lands for water retention or detention, flood control relief
1-Educating the community re: climate change
1-Restoring natural habitats to health
2-Restore all natural and cultural resources and protect other vital resources
3-Management of invasive species
3-Climate resilience
3-Raising environmental consciousness
3-Integration of green infrastructure needs

10. **Increase Collaboration among Community, Governmental and Non-governmental Partners**
1-Collaboration between governmental agencies
2-Developing partnerships with other government stakeholders to mutually support what we do-water and sewer departments, planning, police and public safety-finding the ways and commonalities so that we all are advocating for the same end result and therefore supporting each other's common mission
3-Collaboration-we are a divisive world, we need to model partnerships and collaboration
3-Creating a healthier more active community infrastructure through partnerships
3-Working with community partners to connect transportation networks to our parks