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Certified Public Manager Project

Program Evaluation

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STATE DOCUMENTS

CPM Project Project Goal

Develop a process and associated tools to measure the effectiveness and quality of programming and levels of customer satisfaction. Complete process development by March 2002

Problem Statement

History /Current Circumstances

Opening in 1998, Saluda Shoals Park is a relatively new park. Phase Two development is scheduled to be completed in December 2001. Included in Phase Two are new infrastructure, expanded day use area, meeting center and an environmental center. Environmental education and outdoor recreation programming occur on a somewhat limited basis with scheduled programming limited to several programs per month. With the completion of Phase Two development comes a desire for increased quality and quantity of programming that will meet visitor and staff needs.

Current Situation

Saluda Shoals Park is currently in Phase Two development. This phase will bring major facilities including a 10,000 square foot environmental center, a 500 person capacity meeting facility, three picnic shelters and restrooms.

Impact

With the completion of Phase Two development, a host of new programming and services will be available to the public. It will become

increasingly important to ensure that programming is meeting the needs and expectations of park visitors and staff.

Currently, there is no formal method to measure the effectiveness and quality of the programming. The completion of this project will ensure that a system is in place that will measure the programming and levels of customer satisfaction. The process will help ensure that customers are receiving quality services and that park staff is working with seamless processes.

Data

Quantitative and qualitative data is not being recorded with the exception of canoe rentals and overall park attendance.

Alignment with Agency

It is the goal of the agency to dramatically increase the quantity and quality of programming corresponding with completion of Phase Two development. The scope of this project will assist the agency in obtaining evaluative data that will help ensure alignment of customer and staff expectations with programming.

Developing and implementing a method for evaluating programming at Saluda Shoals Park is critical to the mission of the Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission. Since quality is a thing to strive for in both the agency and the park mission statements, it is important to have a method to measure quality of customer programming. Processes and tools developed will be sensitive to customer and staff needs.

In an effort to evaluate customer satisfaction, the agency has initiated a customer suggestion box. A customer survey and a process for evaluating the youth athletics program are also under development.

Desired State

This process is necessary to determine whether or not programming is meeting customer expectation, agency goals and staff needs. Programming will be evaluated in a statistically valid manner. The evaluation process will work with other agency processes. The desired goal is 95% satisfaction.

Mission Statements

Agency Mission

The mission of the Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission is to enhance the quality of life for all citizens of the district through the development of recreation programs that promote a lifestyle of wellness, physical activities and cultural experience for all ages.

Saluda Shoals Mission Statement

The mission of Saluda Shoals Park is to provide a premier, environmentally sensitive riverfront park that will attract visitors to experience the treasures of the Saluda River by offering exceptional environmental and cultural educational programming, and outdoor recreational opportunities. Saluda Shoals Park will continue a precedent of quality and innovation in riverfront development throughout the Midlands.

Educational Vision

Educational programming at Saluda Shoals Park will play a key role in developing a citizenry with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to make informed decisions while incorporating thoughtful insight into the human experience with reflective emotional sensitivities to the needs of others, our environment, our past and our future.

Three universal languages, the beauty of nature, the mystery of science, and the experience of art, will be used to tell the story of human interaction with our environment.

Cause Analysis

No data is available at this time. My project is to develop processes and tools for program evaluation. There is no evaluation process in place due to the newness of the park and the limited programming.

Data Collection

Data Collection Goals

Note: The very nature of this project is to acquire data because existing data is extremely limited. In this section I will focus on process for acquiring new evaluative data.

- 1) To collect data that will be useful in the development and implementation of all park programming
- 2) To ensure that customer needs are being met
- 3) To ensure that quality of programming meets or exceeds customer expectations
- 4) To help develop types of programming that will meet customer expectations and preferences
- 5) To ensure that data collection processes are valid and staff friendly.

Ability to implement and maintain processes is a high priority.

Operational Definitions and Procedures

Programs at Saluda Shoals Park will take on many forms. We have categorized them into

- 1) Environmental Educational programming will highlight
 - a) Environmental systems
 - i) As we view the natural world, we begin to realize that it is a very complex place. By breaking this world down into separate systems, it

becomes easier to comprehend how everything works. The earth itself is a physical system.

b) Interdependency

i) All systems, and individual organisms, which are systems in themselves, relate to each other. If one system is changed, others are affected. If global warming changes the physical system of the earth, consequences to species, individual organisms, and other systems are inevitable.

c) Interpreting the site while expressing regional and global relationships

i) Interpretation, to be valuable, must involve the visitor. The visitor must first develop some sort of emotion or knowledge with a place that he or she is, before a broader connectedness can be developed.

2) Cultural History

a) Cultural/historical education programming will focus on how different populations of people, through different time periods, have impacted, and have been impacted by, the environment in which they lived. Visitors will gain an understanding of how our current lifestyles decisions impact our environment, now and in the future.

b) How the environment impacted society

i) Benefits

ii) Hardships

c) How society impacted the environment

i) Technology

- ii) Land use
 - d) How attitudes and societal norms effected the interaction between humans and their environment
 - e) How #'s 1-3 are related. How do the available natural resources impact society? In turn, how does society's use of the natural resources, impact the environment. How does this cycle impact society?
- 3) Outdoor Recreation
- a) Outdoor recreational programming will promote appreciation and awareness of the resources while instilling an essence of respect and sensitivity for the environment through active participation and interaction with the environment.
- 4) Group Programming
- a) Group programming will focus on team building and group dynamics. It will often include elements of environmental/cultural education and outdoor recreation.

Key Elements

The key elements are

- 1) There is no data on program evaluation
- 2) There are no processes in place for program evaluation
- 3) There are no tool developed for program evaluation

Key Categories

Key categories that we will look at for quantitative data are demonstrated in the PARS Excel spreadsheet that is attached.

Data Collection

- 1) We have begun compiling program attendance/revenue and parking fee revenue on Jan 1, 2001. This will be accomplished using the Excel spreadsheet that is attached.
- 2) I have located several evaluation tools to use as models for developing our own tools.
- 3) I have developed a partnership with Clemson University that will enlist the input and support of experts in the field of outdoor recreation.

Future Data Collection

The following steps are in process to assist future data collection.

- 1) The Park Attendance Recording System (PARS) (attached) is an Excel spreadsheet that will record attendance. This will provide quantitative data.
- 2) An agency wide survey (attached) is being prepared that will provide some needs assessment information for programming. I had had key input into the initial drafts of this survey however it was not my project.
- 3) A Youth Sports Program Evaluation is in place within the agency. After reviewing this evaluation tool, I determined that it is not relevant to this project.
- 4) Additional tools that are being developed include:
 - a. Environmental education programming evaluation
 - b. Outdoor recreation programming evaluation

- c. Cultural Education programming evaluation
- d. Group programming evaluation

Tools will be developed using existing models. The models will be tailored to specific park needs and reviewed by professors from Clemson University's Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management program. This review is necessary to ensure that collected data will be valid and useful.

Through a literature review, I have located a thesis (Melton, 1998) that provides a model for evaluating knowledge, attitudes and behavior in an in-state environmental education program. I am considering using this as a format for developing a similar tool for Saluda Shoals Park.

Formative Evaluation

In developing formative evaluations for schools programming I will ask a group of teachers the following questions:

- 1) What components of the State Department of Education's standards do you feel least prepared to teach that would fit into our content areas?
- 2) What components of the standards are you least interesting in teaching?
- 3) What components of the standards do you feel would work better if taught in an outdoor park setting?

By asking these questions, I will be able to find out what components of the standards teachers would rather teach off site with external staff.

Tailoring our programming to these needs will help ensure that topic taught at Saluda Shoals Park are desirable and helpful to the teachers. Meeting these needs should increase interest and attendance.

Implementation Plan

Forward

"Even though there is a need to evaluate, relatively little of the literature has provided empirical evidence of the outcomes of environmental education" (Leeming, 1993). O'Hearn (1982) states, "with this broad working definition it is imperative that a few measurable objectives be identified as 'indicators' of the program's impact." Evaluative techniques are important not only to measure effectiveness of programming but also to document success to potential supporters.

Although I have not found documentation in literature, I feel that it is safe to transpose the evaluative needs of environmental education to that of other types of programming.

Much initial resource information was gathered while attending national conference workshops. In particular, a two-day workshop focused on evaluating environmental education materials. "Excellence in Environmental Education Guidelines for Learning (K-12)" 1999.

The University of Southern Illinois is conducting cutting edge research on program evaluation and has quite a bit of information relevant to this project. While valuable, as research documentation, their processes are too staff intensive and are too heavily based in in-depth statistical analysis to be realistically useful at this time. One of my goals is to develop a staff friendly process that aligns with staff processes; one that can actually be initiated and maintained.

Clemson University is also supplying a great deal of useful information and assistance. In 1998, Graduate Student Christine Melton presented a thesis on "Differences in Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behavior Before and After the Teaching KATE (Kids About the Environment) Program." I will be using her pre and post-test as a model in developing evaluative materials. After several needs assessment meetings with elementary school teachers, I have determined that their priorities include vocabulary and process skills. Post evaluations will highlight these two areas.

In addition, I obtained a grant from the South Carolina Forestry Commission and hired a graduate intern, Jason Gindler from Clemson University to assist with needs assessments and other evaluation tools. This assistance will help ensure that survey information is valid.

Bennett (1989) is concerned that evaluation is often avoided because of the "complex perception of evaluation and the complicated mathematics associated with it." Bennet outlines a four-step process to simplify the process.

- 1) Set expectations
 - Goal and objectives
- 2) Plan the evaluation
 - Plan evaluation design (an example would be pre and post tests)
- 3) Determine the results
 - Collect and summarize data
- 4) Use the results
 - A critical, often overlooked

Timeline

Evaluating programming will be an ongoing process. As new programs and curricula are being developed, evaluation will be a part of the process. Once the evaluation process and tools are developed, costs will be minimal (approximately \$200.00 per new program) and will be budgeted in with program development.

Data entry and program reports will be the responsibility of the Administrative Support Specialist. \$800.00 has been budgeted over two years for computer training.

School Programming

School programming will be a large segment of programming at Saluda Shoals Park. Both teachers and district administrators are very supportive of our programming. I am currently setting up a needs assessment meeting with third and seventh grade teachers. The assessment will focus on three questions based on needs for meeting state curriculum standards:

- 1) What material that could be addressed on a park field trip, do you feel least qualified to teach?
- 2) What materials that could be addressed on a park field trip, are you least interested in teaching?
- 3) What materials that you teach, would be best taught in the outdoors?

By answering these three questions and obtaining additional comments on teacher priorities, we will be able to determine what programs to focus on for curriculum development.

Nature Centers

We are requesting information on program evaluation from nature's centers across the country. Contact information was obtained from professional associations. Information request letters will be mailed. The North American Association for Environmental Education has a chapter for Nature Center Directors. We will follow up with an e-mail to these member organizations. A draft of the letter that is being sent out is included in the appendix.

Summative Evaluation

Post site visit evaluation instruments will be a written test. With teacher recommendations, we determined that it would be better to test the students on site. With recommendations from Clemson University we will also follow up a sample by testing again after several weeks and testing before the program. Teachers in public schools are agreeable to this. The public school students think one test is enough although the sample size was small and methods unscientific. Sample questions are located in the appendix.

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data is being collected using the SSPARS form that is attached as a separate Excel document. While working with my team, we tried to develop categories that will be useful. As always, our goal is to develop tools that will staff friendly and will be used. One team member has been enrolled in an Access computer class. This will help us get the best information from our data.

While entering data into the spreadsheet, “General Information,” “Facilities,” and “Specific Information” will be recorded. “Group Types” and “Program Types” will be marked with an “X” if they pertain to the program.

When extracting data, we will be able to obtain information such as:

1. Total attendance by day, week, month, year or any combination.
2. How many students from Chapin Middle School attended our programming?
3. How many third graders attended nature programs?
4. How many seniors attended programming and what day of the week was the average highest attendance?
5. What is the ratio between in-district and out-of-district school/students?

Exhibits

Exhibits are viewed as an integral part of park programming so they will be discussed briefly. Professional exhibit designers will develop the park exhibits. As a part of the design process, they will conduct needs assessment and develop methods for evaluating the exhibits. This will be a one-time process but include both formative and summative evaluation. Exhibits that do not meet our expectations will be modified. My main role in exhibit evaluation is to include evaluation as part of the design process. I will also participate as the process evolves.

Special Events

Special events will be evaluated primarily by attendance numbers and revenue. Due to the staff intensive nature of large special events, the only qualitative evaluation will occur through visitor comments. Park staff will seek out a designated number of visitors and ask for input.

Evaluation Method

Partnering with Clemson University will ensure that evaluative data is statistically valid. Dr. Rob Bixler and Graduate Student Jason Ginder will develop and/or review evaluation tools. This formative process will ensure that survey questions are worded properly and scales are appropriate. They will also help us determine necessary sample size.

An overall program evaluation will occur once each year and data will be printed in an annual report. After the first full year, the entire evaluation process will be reassessed to make sure that we are obtaining the information we need and that the information is correct and valid. Dr. Bixler's assistance will be for this review.

Pending the first year evaluation (of the evaluation process and tools), we will make modifications if necessary. An example would be, if an adequate number of surveys were not being returned, we would adjust our process accordingly. In addition, we will seek publication in a professional publication (preferably a juried journal), which will open our process for peer review.

Appendix

Date
<Name>
<Institution>
<Address>
<City> <State> <Zip>

Dear <Name>:

We have a simple request of you with a real payoff for environmental education and interpretation. We have been asked by an environmental education center to collect examples of school field trip evaluation forms used by nature centers and environmental education centers across the country. They have asked us to share the best question formats we find with them and the rest of the profession.

If your agency currently uses any written evaluation forms, designed to be filled out by teachers, students or parents, we would appreciate receiving a copy. Please enclose the form(s) in the enclosed business-reply envelope. We will compile the best examples of question formats for each type of question and make it available at <http://www.clemson.hehd.evalforms.edu> within one year. If for some reason your agency is not currently using a form, we also need to know this. Please jot us a note on this letter stating so and return it to us. This will save us the time and expense of calling the agencies that do not respond.

Thank you in advance for your assistance. All responses are confidential. The web report will not mention what agency the questions came from. Remember to save the web address for future reference.

Sincerely,

Robert Bixler, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

Jason Ginder
Research Associate

Please See Separate Attachments

- 1) Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission survey
- 2) Attendance spreadsheet

Sample Questions

A Masters thesis from Clemson University will be used as a model for format and question structure for test development (Melton 1998). The following questions are quoted from her thesis as examples.

Part I - Knowledge Component

A tree in the forest dies and falls to the floor. As a result of this, the trees nutrients are:

- a. Destroyed
- b. Evaporated
- c. Recycled
- d. Unavailable

Part II - Attitudinal Component

(Strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree, strongly disagree)

I do not worry about nocturnal animals because they only come out at night and are hard to see.

Sample Third Grade Test

(Note: teachers will approve all tests.)

Part I - Knowledge Component

- 1) Camouflage is an adaptation that animals use to
 - a. Attract mates
 - b. Recognize animals
 - c. Blend in with the environment
 - d. Display warning colors

- 2) Beaks of carnivorous birds
 - a. Are long and narrow
 - b. Are short and wide
 - c. Are hooked at the ends
 - d. Are black

- 3) What organisms are at the bottom of the food chain?
 - a. Plants
 - b. Animals
 - c. Consumers
 - d. Decomposers

Part II - Attitudinal Component

(A. Strongly agree, B. agree, C. no opinion, D. disagree, E. strongly disagree)

4) Basic needs of animals do not concern my life.

A B C D E

5) I do not fit into the same food chain with animals

A B C D E

6) A quality natural environment has little impact on me.

A B C D E

References

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- North American Association for Environmental Education. (1998). Environmental Education Materials: Guidelines for Excellence. Troy, Ohio.
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- O'Hearn, G. (1982) What is the purpose of evaluation? The Journal of Environmental Education 13(4)
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Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission Saluda Shoals Park

Program Attendance Reporting System (SSPARS)

General Information

Park	Event Date(s)	Day(s) of the Week	Promotion Type	Event Title or School Name (If Applicable)	School District	Program Title	Environmental Center
SSP	07/16/98	Fr, Sa, Su	N, R.				Canoeing

Facilities - Daily Attendance		Parking	
Program Attendance		Daily # Vehicles	
	Shelter One		
	Shelter Two		
	Shelter Three		
	<u>Cars</u>		
	<u>Buses</u>		
	Number of Programs or Tours		
	Attendance	1	
	Length of Program	18	
	Volunteer Hours	2	
	Drop-in	3	
	Part of a Series		

										Specific Information
										Budget
										Facility Number
										Adult Resident Fee
									\$20.00	Adult Non-Resident Fee
										Child Resident Fee
										Child Non-Resident Fee
										Other Fee
										Total Revenue
									\$360.00	Expenditures
									\$245.00	Preschool

										Schools (K-5)	Group Types	
										Schools (6-8)		Program Types
										Schools (9-12)		
										Home Schoolers		
										Contract Groups		
										Seniors over 55		
										Junior Rangers		
										History Program		
										History Tour		
										Archaeology Program		
										Archaeology Tour		
										Nature Program		
										Nature Tour		
								X		Canoeing		
								X		Mountain Biking		
										Hiking		
										Recreation		
										Off Site		
										Other or Comments (Explain)		

Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission Survey

The Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission Survey is in process. Surveys have been mailed and are being returned. Follow up post cards have been mailed out to encourage the return of surveys. Telephone banks are also calling people who did not respond in an extra effort to receive as many completed surveys as possible.

My role in this district wide survey was to review and support the survey. Several of my suggestions were implemented. Much of the information gathered will be extremely useful as formative program evaluation data.

Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission Survey

Please only one response per family.

PARTICIPATION

1. Has any member of your household used any of the following facilities of the Irmo Chapin Recreation District during the last year? Please rate each facility using the following scale: 1=unsatisfactory, 2=needs improvements, 3= satisfactory, 4=good, 5=outstanding.

Facility	Used within last year?		How would you rate the facility?				
	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5
Seven Oaks Park	Yes ___	No ___	1	2	3	4	5
Crooked Creek Park	Yes ___	No ___	1	2	3	4	5
Saluda Shoals Park	Yes ___	No ___	1	2	3	4	5
Mini Parks	Yes ___	No ___	1	2	3	4	5
Athletic Fields	Yes ___	No ___	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS:

2. Has any member of your household participated in any of the following programs managed by the Irmo Chapin Recreation District? Please rate your experience with these programs using the following scale: 1=unsatisfactory, 2=needs improvement, 3=satisfactory, 4=good, 5=outstanding

Programs Areas	Participated last year?		How would you rate the program?				
	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5
Youth Sports	Yes ___	No ___	1	2	3	4	5
Youth Cultural Programs	Yes ___	No ___	1	2	3	4	5
Senior Programs	Yes ___	No ___	1	2	3	4	5
Adult Sports Programs	Yes ___	No ___	1	2	3	4	5
Adult Cultural Programs	Yes ___	No ___	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS:

3. How do you get your information on Irmo Chapin Recreation District programs? Please check all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Public Service Announcements (radio/tv)	<input type="checkbox"/> Schools
<input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth	<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper inserts
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Centers	<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper listings

4. Are there recreational facilities that you feel would significantly enhance the quality of life of the residents of the District that are not presently being provided by the Irmo Chapin Recreation District?

Yes ___ No ___

If you answered yes, please check your top three priorities for new facilities:

<input type="checkbox"/> Baseball/softball fields	<input type="checkbox"/> Portable roller hockey rinks	<input type="checkbox"/> Natural/water based recreation areas
<input type="checkbox"/> Soccer/football fields	<input type="checkbox"/> Racquetball courts	<input type="checkbox"/> Bicycle trails
<input type="checkbox"/> Swimming pool(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Tennis courts	<input type="checkbox"/> River Greenway
<input type="checkbox"/> Running/walking tracks or trails	<input type="checkbox"/> Botanical gardens	<input type="checkbox"/> Water park
<input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor volleyball courts	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater/auditorium	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Playground equipment	<input type="checkbox"/> Horseshoes	
<input type="checkbox"/> Skateboard facilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Croquet courts	

5. Currently the owner of a home valued at \$100,000 pays approximately \$60.00 annually for recreation facilities and services. Would you be willing to pay additional taxes in order to construct and operate additional facilities?

PROGRAMMING

7. Is the selection of programs in the Chapin Community meeting the needs of the Chapin area?

Yes _____ No _____

If no, what programs would you like to see added? _____

Are there programs that should be eliminated? If so, which ones? _____

8. Is the selection of programs in the Irmo Community meeting the needs of the Irmo area?

Yes _____ No _____

If no, what programs would you like to see added? _____

Are there programs that should be eliminated? If so, which ones? _____

9. Are we meeting the needs of our user groups?

Youth Yes _____ No _____ If not, what change would you make? _____

Adults Yes _____ No _____ If not, what change would you make? _____

Senior Citizens Yes _____ No _____ If not, what change would you make? _____

Special Needs Populations Yes _____ No _____ If not, what change would you make? _____

10. We would like to know your general feelings about recreation services in the Irmo Chapin Park District. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5
Recreation programs are beneficial to the members of my household and me.	1	2	3	4	5
Sufficient recreation opportunities are available in our community	1	2	3	4	5
Recreation programs bring a community closer together.	1	2	3	4	5
Recreation improves the quality of life in our community.	1	2	3	4	5
We should spend more money on recreation in our community.	1	2	3	4	5
Fees for residents of the Irmo Chapin Recreation District should be discounted.	1	2	3	4	5

Please tell us a little about you.

11. Do you live within the Lexington County portion of Lexington/Richland School District Five? _____ Yes _____ No

Please check the appropriate boxes that apply to you.

Gender:

_____ male _____ female

Age:

_____ 18 and under _____ 19-29
 _____ 30-39 _____ 40-49
 _____ 50-59 _____ 60-69
 _____ 70+

Race:

_____ African American/Black _____ Caucasian/White
 _____ American Indian/Native American _____ Hispanic
 _____ Asian _____ Other _____

12. How many people including yourself, within the following age groups, live in your household?