

4.2 RECREATION PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

4.2.1 INTRODUCTION

As part of the planning process, PROS performed an assessment of the programs and services offered by Richland County, South Carolina. The assessment offers an in-depth perspective of program and service offerings and helps identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities regarding programming for residents. The program assessment also assists in identifying what are considered core programs, program gaps within the community, key system-wide program issues, and areas for improvement and in determining future programs and services for residents.

PROS based these program findings and comments from a review of information provided by the County in the program assessment templates developed by PROS. Included are program descriptions, participation statistics, financial data, website content, focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and discussions with staff. It identifies key issues and presents recommendations for these issues, summarized at the end of this section.



4.2.2 EXISTING CORE PROGRAM AREAS

The core program areas for Richland County Recreation Commission (RCRC) are listed below. It is important to recognize that limits on the Commission's staffing, resources, and availability of space may hinder some of the staff efforts to maintain or expand core programs; therefore, it is essential that staff commit to a concerted effort towards managing and prioritizing core program areas even if resources fluctuate.

4.2.2.1 ADAPTIVE RECREATION PROGRAMS

The Richland County Recreation Commission provides programming and activities for children, adults and military veterans with intellectual and physical disabilities.

- Goal - To provide a safe environment for individuals with special needs to enhance social skills, daily living skills, and promote a healthy mind, body, and spirit.

4.2.2.2 ADULT ATHLETIC PROGRAMS

The Richland County Recreation Commission believes that just because you are an adult doesn't mean you can't have fun while being active and healthy. Kickball, Softball and Basketball leagues are available to adults who want to rewind the clock and stay fit.

- Goal - To create a positive impact on the physical, mental, and social health of individuals and their communities.

4.2.2.3 ADULT PROGRAMS

The Richland County Recreation Commission offers a variety of programs for adults 18-45 that impact their physical, mental, and social health.

- Goal - To offer affordable and quality recreational programs to our communities.

4.2.2.4 FACILITY RENTAL PROGRAMS

The Richland County Recreation Commission is committed to renting facilities at an affordable rate to community members and organizations.

- Goal - To offer clean and safe facilities to be rented for athletics and social events.

4.2.2.5 HEALTH & WELLNESS PROGRAMS

The Richland County Recreation Commission is committed to offering health and wellness programs and activities for the various communities we serve.

- Goal – To provide information to the public about health issues that may affect our communities.

4.2.2.6 OUT OF SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS

The Richland County Recreation Commission's afterschool and summer camp programs are a great service for parents of children in K5 through the 8th grade. Parents can be reassured that their children are in a safe and fun environment that helps to develop their child mentally and physically.

- Goal – To provide a safe environment for kids during the school year and summer.

4.2.2.7 SENIOR PROGRAMS

The Richland County Recreation Commission is committed to offering adults age 50 and above a variety of leisure and fitness experiences to choose from throughout the year.

- Goal – To create a positive impact on the physical, mental, and social health of individuals and their communities.

4.2.2.8 SPECIAL EVENTS

The Richland County Recreation Commission offers a variety of special events throughout the year. These events showcase cultural diversity and promote health and wellness. Each event provides fun and family entertainment.

- Goal – To create a fun memorable experience for the entire family by offering quality and affordable events that enrich lives and connect communities.

4.2.2.9 YOUTH ATHLETIC PROGRAMS

The Richland County Recreation Commission offers instructional and recreational youth athletic programs beginning at age 3.

- Goal – To create a positive impact on the physical, mental, and social health of individuals and their communities.

4.2.2.10 YOUTH PROGRAMS

The Richland County Recreation Commission is committed to offering youth quality programs and activities that promote teamwork, fitness, and a healthy lifestyle.

- Goal – To offer affordable and quality recreational programs to our communities.

4.2.3 REPOSITIONED PROGRAM AREA

With an increased focus on wellness as well as healthy living including diet and nutrition, it may be beneficial to expand the Health and Wellness programs. Also, given the unique differences in age segment needs along with the County's aging population demographics, there may be an opportunity to have separate Youth Health and Wellness programs and Adult Health and Wellness programs as well.

The Department is doing an excellent job with managing and promoting existing programs. Additionally, the overall quality of the recreation programs that people have participated in are of a very high level and the PROS team urges the staff to continue maintaining that level moving forward.

4.2.4 LIFECYCLE ANALYSIS

The program assessment included a lifecycle analysis completed by staff members. The listing of programs is included in the chart on the following page. This assessment was not based on quantitative data, but based on staff's knowledge of their program areas. These lifecycles can, and often do, change from year to year or over time depending on how the programs fare.

The figure below shows the percentage distribution of the various lifecycle categories of the Commission's 91 recreation programs as listed by the staff:

Lifecycle Stage	Description	Actual Program Distribution		Recommended Distribution
Introduction	New program; modest participation	25%	86% total	50-60% total
Take-Off	Rapid participation growth	15%		
Growth	Moderate, but consistent population growth	46%		
Mature	Slow participation growth	13%	13%	40%
Saturation	Minimal to no participation growth; extreme competition	0%	0% total	0-10% total
Decline	Declining participation	0%		

Table 4.1 Program Lifecycle Distribution

These percentages were obtained by comparing the number of programs listed in each individual stage with the total number of programs listed in the program worksheets. The PROS team recognizes that while there is no statistically sound method for obtaining the percentage breakout of all programs by lifecycle stages, the overall pattern and trends are apparent in the Program Lifecycle table.

The lifecycle trend provides areas of opportunity. Programs in the Mature stage are valuable to the programming mix because their steady nature allows for predictable resource allocation and efficient delivery; however, only 13% of programs fall into the Mature stage, which is well below the recommended 40%. There are currently 0% of all programs that are in the Decline and/or Saturation Stage, which is well within the recommended range.

4.2.4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

The PROS team recommends that the staff track program lifecycles on an annual basis to ensure that the number of programs in the Saturated to Decline stages remains minimal, while also ensuring an increased number of programs in the Introduction stage. It is recommended that programs from Saturated to Decline should comprise **no more than 10%** of the total program mix at any given time.

Additionally, the bottom 5% of all poorly performing programs must be eliminated or repositioned to ensure the cycle of program innovation continues. It would also be helpful to establish a performance metric to ensure a set percentage of programs only should be in the Decline stage and any programs staying in that stage for two years should be repositioned or eliminated in favor of new programs. These recommendations for lifecycles and retention rates are meant to be used as performance metrics for the Commission staff to track against and demonstrate success.

Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Stage in Program Lifecycle					
Introduction	Take-Off	Growth	Mature	Saturated	Decline
Winter Wonderland	Adult Softball	Camp Sunshine	Veteran's Program		
Fancy Feet Soccer	Adult Badminton	Challenger Football League	After-school Program		
Pickle Ball	Athletic Fields	Rising High Basketball League	Ballroom Dancing		
Neo Soul Night	Everybody Deserves a Massage	Adult Flag Football	Ceramics		
Urban Ballroom Dancing	National HIV Day	Adult Basetball	Creative Connections		
Stroke Awareness	Chair Exercise	Adult Kickball	Salsa		
Depression	Basket Weaving	Golf	Tae Kwon Do		
Prostate Awareness	Line Dance	Tennis	Senior Games		
American Health Month	Showtime Carousel	Free Public Internet and Computer Access	Fencing		
Cycle for Sickle Cell	T-Ball	Introduction to Computers 1 & 2	Home School Recreation		
National Condom Day	Badminton	Introduction to Excel	Martial Arts		
National Children's Day	Volley Ball Basics	Microsoft Office Access	Skate Nights		
Family Health and Fitness Month	Dance Classes	Microsoft Office PowerPoint			
National Night Out	Steps of Faith Praise Dancing	Microsoft Office Publisher			
National Kidney Month		Microsoft Office Word			
Diabetes Month		Soul Line Dancing			
Healthy Aging Month		Parks-class rooms			
Richland Community Crime Prevention Walk		Community Centers			
Card Player		Picnic Shelters			
Aerobics		Tennis Courts			
Game Night		Aquatics			
Yoga		Summer Camp			
Disco Dash		Adult Trips			
		Bingo			
		Bowling			
		Fitness Room			
		Strength & Conditioning			
		Stepping Classes			
		Zumba Gold			
		Arthritis Exercise			
		Cottontail Festival			
		Breakfast with Santa			
		Flag Football			
		Youth Track			
		Youth Soccer			
		Youth Basketball			
		Gymnastics			
		Free Play Basketball			
		Basketball Basics			
		Action Cheer and Tumble			
		Tap & Ballet			
		Hip Hop Dance			
25%	15%	46%	13%	0%	0%
New program; modest participation	Rapid participation growth	Moderate, but consistent participation growth	Slow participation growth	Minimal to no participation growth; extreme competition	Declining participation

Table 4.2 Stage in Program Life Cycle

4.2.5 AGE SEGMENT DISTRIBUTION

In addition to the lifecycle analysis, staff also assessed age segment distribution of programs.

Despite the fact that the adult and senior populations represent over 48% of the local population (median age 33.7 years), the balance of age segment distribution for programs is skewed towards youth. Based on the program list provided by the staff, 60% of all programming is geared towards ages 24 and below. It is typical nation-wide for agencies to focus heavily on youth and families. The absence of multi-generational spaces and thus program offerings also impact the participation for the young families (ages 20-40) where the parents are more likely to spend their time and resources in programs for the youth.

Less than 8% of programs cater to the 65+ population even though the 55+ population is expected to grow to over 28% of total population by 2030. It would be appropriate for the staff to view the age segment distributions on an annual basis to ensure continued rebalancing among skewed categories.

Also, if possible, given the differences in how the active adults (55+) participate in recreation programs, the trend is moving toward having at least two different segments of older adults. The Commission could evaluate further splitting program offerings into 55-74 and 75 plus program segments.



4.2.6 SPONSORS / PARTNERS AND VOLUNTEERS

4.2.6.1 SPONSORS / PARTNERS

Currently, the Recreation Commission has multiple partners such as the South Carolina United Recreational Soccer Club, Patrons, AARP, Richland Fashion Mall, etc. Most of the partners have formal written agreements with RCRC that help run program registrations, cover program cost, provide their services and/or spaces for programs and events, etc.

In order to truly sell the potential benefits of partnering with the system, there is a need to develop a focused sponsorship campaign and a proposal for tiered sponsorship levels. Under the “Foundation” tab of the Richland County Recreation Commission website, you can find contact information in addition to a brief write-up explaining why organizations should partner with RCRC. This information should be highlighted front and center on the website describing the steps required to become a sponsor/partner.

Additionally, to garner sponsorship dollars it would be helpful for the Recreation Commission to provide a detailed listing of each event, the participation numbers and user demographics, which would help potential sponsors to identify how well the park system participants align with the sponsor’s target market and choose the right fit for them.

These metrics will also help the Commission evaluate its return on investment (ROI) for sponsorships / partnerships for various events. Some other recommendations would be to publish these metrics on the website and promote them aggressively.

Other recommendations for Sponsorship include:

Sponsor Recognition - Recognizing all existing or past sponsors for their support would strengthen working relationships with sponsors. The brochure’s imagery could provide illustrations of promotions that may have been done or could be done to demonstrate sponsorship positioning. The Commission should consider adding a page in the brochure thanking all of their current partners.



Tiered Sponsorship Levels - It is essential to create tiered levels of sponsorship in order to allow all potential sponsors the ability to choose the level of support they wish to exhibit.

Package Offerings - It has been seen that the greater the opportunities to package the offerings, the more the likelihood of selling sponsorship. Packaging sponsorship opportunities for Events as well as Signature Parks and Facilities including the Polo Road Park, Kelly Mill Sports Complex and Pond, LinRick Golf Course, Richland County Tennis Center, the Recreation Centers, etc. could be a viable option to provide additional sponsor value as well.

Providing sample packaging options that tie-in some signature special events with some of the smaller events would ensure that the staff up-sells events that may not be sold otherwise, while the partners receive more bang for their buck.

4.2.6.2 CROWD FUNDING

This area can be operated in conjunction with the Foundation's projects in looking for specific opportunities. Crowdfunding websites such as Kickstarter.com, Razoo.com, [Indiegogo](https://www.indiegogo.com/), etc. have extremely successful examples of public agencies that have successfully partnered and raised revenue to build or enhance parks and facilities, offer programs and even design marketing materials. The Town of Blacksburg recently raised over \$7,600 for a Mountain Biking Skills Park matching grant with the South Carolina Commission of Conservation and Recreation.

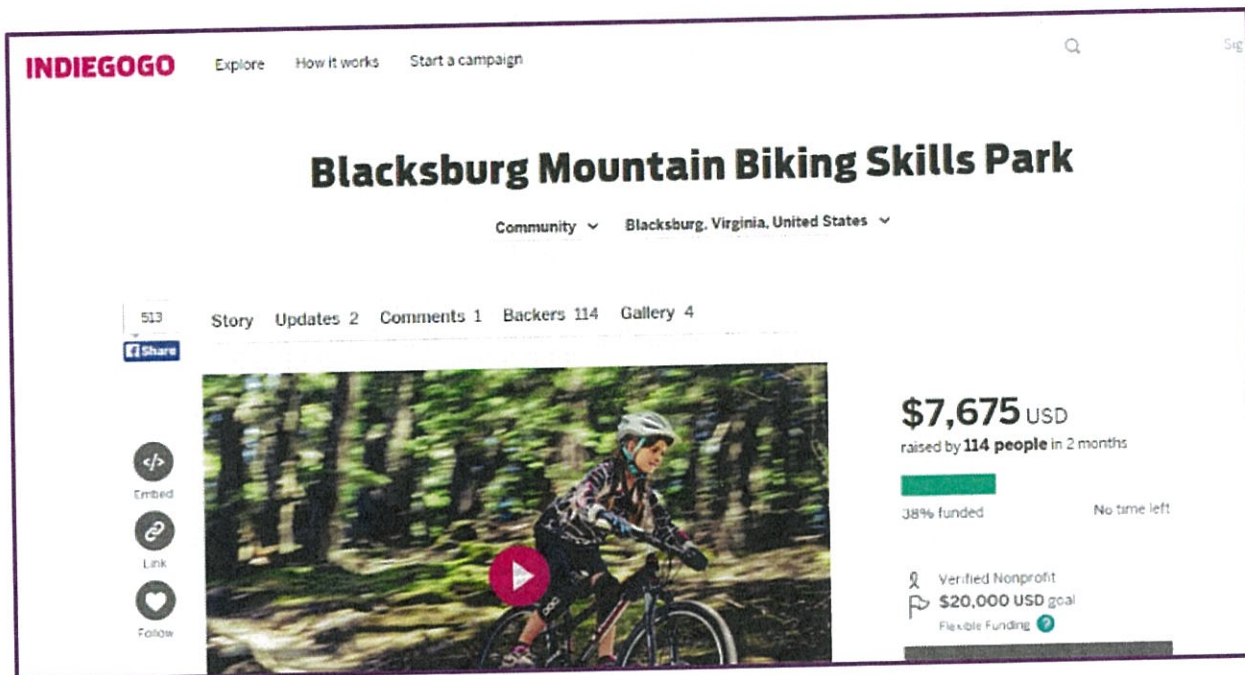


Figure 4.1 Indiegogo Website Screenshot

4.2.6.3 PROGRAM VOLUNTEERS

The Recreation Commission has a wide variety of volunteers to help with their core programs. Although, the Commission utilizes a wide variety of volunteers there is no place on the RCRC website (www.richlandcountyrecreation.com) homepage for individuals or organizations to sign up or learn about volunteer opportunities with RCRC. PROS also encourages the Commission to foster a system-wide approach to volunteer recruitment and management. Ensuring streamlined procedures and standardized guidelines for volunteer management are critical to making volunteers an effective complement to paid personnel and a valuable asset in reducing operational costs. When managed with respect and used strategically, volunteers can also serve as the primary advocates for the Commission and its offerings.

A key part of maintaining the desirability of volunteerism in the Commission is developing a good reward and recognition system. The consultant team recommends using tactics similar to those found in frequent flier programs, wherein volunteers can use their volunteer hours to obtain early registration at programs, or discounted pricing at certain programs, rentals or events, or any other Commission function.

Other best practices that the Commission should be aware of in managing volunteers include:

- Identify volunteer opportunities system-wide, develop job descriptions and acceptance conditions for volunteers (such as background checks).
- Utilize online sources such as www.volunteermatch.org to recruit volunteers.
- Develop a tracking system to quantify the number of volunteer hours according to program area and specific function and document cost savings in more detailed ways.
- Develop documented volunteer recruitment, retention, and recognition systems.
- Involve volunteers in cross-training to expose them to various recreational functions and increase their skill. This can also increase their utility, allowing for more flexibility in making work assignments, and can increase their appreciation and understanding of the Commission.
- Add steps to formally document resignation or termination of volunteers. Also, include ways to monitor and track reasons for resignation/termination.

4.2.7 MARKETING AND WEBSITE

4.2.7.1 MARKETING

This section reviews the Commission's marketing and promotions as gleaned from the program worksheets. Overall, RCRC does a fairly good job in maximizing the various marketing and outreach mechanisms. The number and types of mediums used are certainly varied but the survey responses indicated lack of awareness as one of the barriers to participation. Developing a true branding plan to create and propagate a message that resonates will be important to maximize the effectiveness of the marketing mediums listed below.

As stated in the program assessment worksheets provided by staff, most programs are promoted via the Print and Online Program Guide, the Website, Flyers and Brochures, Email Blasts, PSAs, and paid advertisements. There are also some instances of social media usage, and even some radio and TV. Areas of opportunity mentioned most frequently included creating an



on-hold preprogrammed phone message, using SMS Marketing, and using QR codes. Adding an RCRC based app would be a 'next practice' that a high performing agency like RCRC should certainly consider.

Given the limited marketing dollars available, it would be helpful for the Commission to undertake a marketing return on investment (ROI) assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of the marketing mediums undertaken and tailor future marketing spending to focus on the most effective mediums. This could be done by ensuring every registrant and as many on-site users as possible are asked 'How did you hear about us?' Tying the participant responses to marketing mediums would allow for a

better understanding of marketing spending and enable greater effectiveness of existing ones while eliminating non-effective mediums.

Cross promoting at Special Events would be highly recommended. It is imperative that the Commission take advantage of the presence of high numbers of relative captive audience in the special event environment to promote its other offerings, programs, facilities and rentals. Similarly, cross-promoting programs targeted towards the same age group audiences too should be highly encouraged. An example would be cross-promoting Breakfast with Santa at the Christmas Night at the Park and vice versa.

4.2.7.2 WEBSITE

The current website is very user-friendly and drop-down menus make it very easy to access any information desired by a user. The mobile friendly website (also known as a “responsive” website) is a good addition and a key tool in today’s times of increased smartphone utilization. The scrolling banner highlighting upcoming events is an excellent practice which directly drives user attention to future important dates.

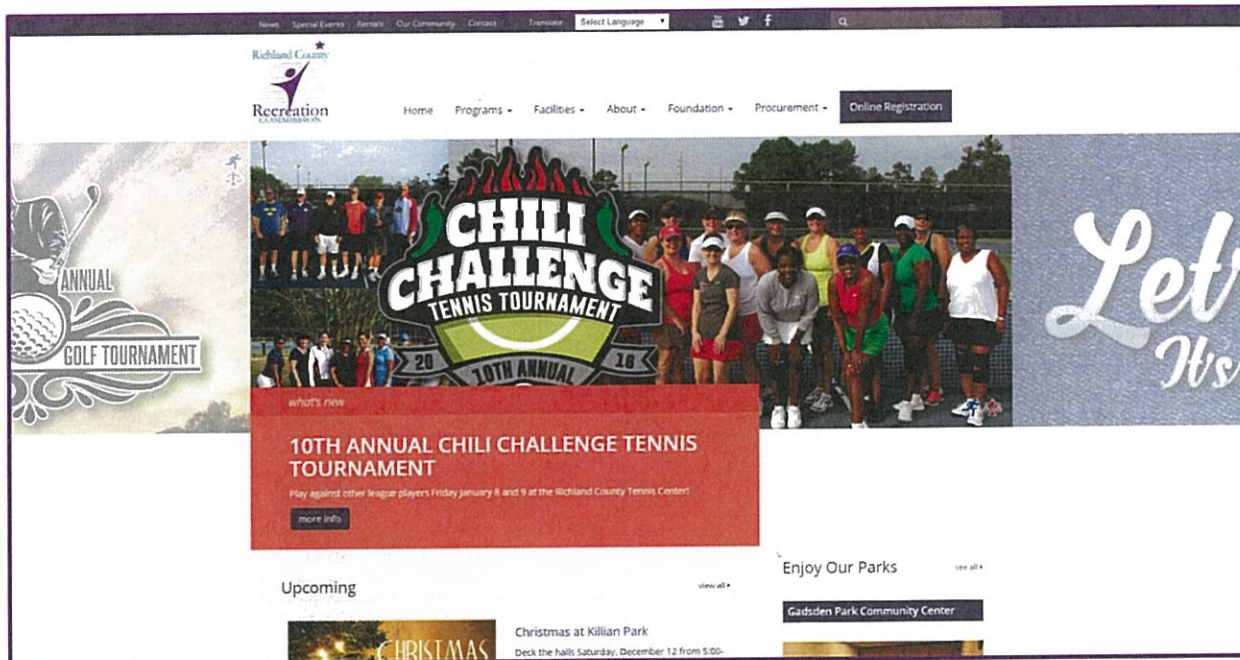


Figure 4.2 Example of a Responsive Website with Scrolling Banner

The use of Web 2.0 technology must be increased beyond what is currently used: Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to other mediums such as Instagram and Pinterest as well. The key to successful implementation of a social network is to move the participants from awareness to action and creating greater user engagement. This could be done by:

- Allowing controlled ‘user generated content’ by encouraging users to send in their pictures from the Commission’s special events or programs
- Introducing Facebook-only promotions to drive greater visitation to Facebook

- Leverage the website to obtain customer feedback for programs, parks and facilities and customer service
- Expand opportunities for Crowd-sourcing information on an ongoing basis
 - Some existing resources include www.mindmixer.com and www.peakdemocracy.com which can be evaluated if the agency has the resources and can utilize it on an on-going basis
- Provide opportunities for Donations or Crowd-funding through the website
 - www.kickstarter.org / www.indiegogo.com / www.razoo.com for Crowd funding options including printing program guides or developing marketing material
- Maximize the website’s revenue generating capabilities
- Conduct annual website strategy workshop with the staff to identify ways and means that the website can support the Commission



4.2.7.3 SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS

From the February 2014 Nielsen, The Digital Consumer report, the following chart shows unique audience of social media websites and apps by platform. The chart illustrates that individuals are reaching for their smartphone versus a traditional computer to access social media platforms.

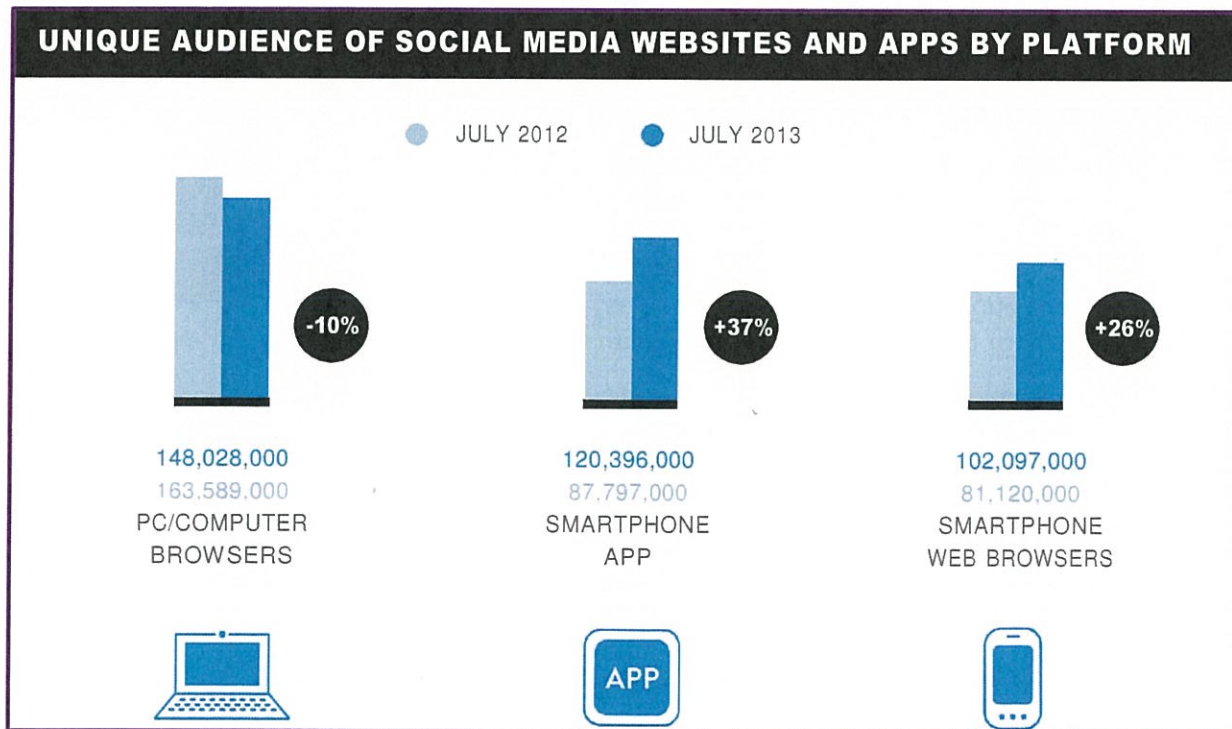


Figure 4.3 Digital Consumer Report

The report also indicated that while Facebook remains the largest social network in both web and mobile, consumers are taking on other social media platforms such as Pinterest and Instagram. Pinterest has tripled unique users on smartphone apps and Instagram has nearly doubled the number of unique users in 2013.

Pinterest



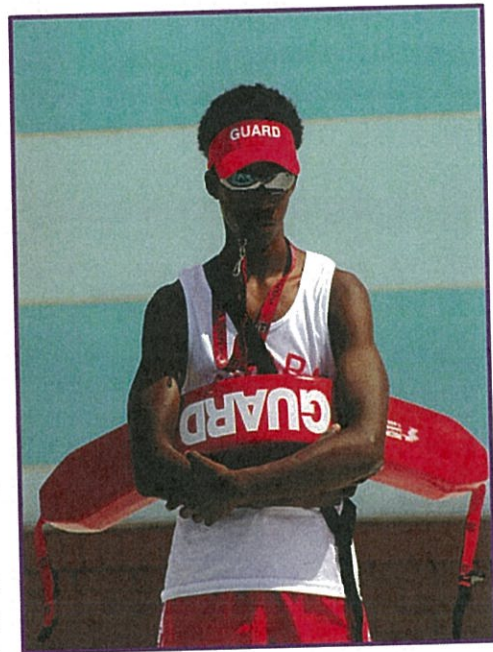
4.2.8 CUSTOMER SERVICE AND FEEDBACK

Customer service is the root of success in any organization. A true community-service organization prides itself on identifying its customers' preferences and acting in accordance to help fulfill their needs. In order to do this, an ongoing and system-wide feedback mechanism is of vital importance and the Commission's willingness to undertake an extensive customer service training initiative for its staff is a big step in the right direction.

Currently, there are a variety of training and recognition practices in place including employee recognition, customer service training etc. However, an area that RCRC can improve on is in capturing and using data and metrics to enhance decision-making and the overall customer experience.

Best practice systems such as Carmel-Clay Parks and Recreation, Indiana are starting to utilize real-time customer feedback reporting apps to gather location-based feedback at all programs, parks or facilities throughout the County.

Check out www.keepphappifeet.com for more details on the app.



4.2.9 PROMISE OF EXCELLENCE

RCRC does have a **Customer Service Policy** updated as of December 2013 and also a **Promise of Excellence Customer Service Program** which encourages all employees to go above and beyond in their daily duties. See below for details on the program.

Service Excellence is RCRC’s pledge to “provide exceptional customer service to our patrons, our employees, and our valued community partners”. All RCRC employees receive training in orientation devoted to delivering world class service.

RCRC’s Promise of Excellence pledge encourages all employees to go “above and beyond” their daily duties. It applies to all employees, from receptionists, to grounds workers, to park staff, to administration, to interns. At the Richland County Recreation Commission, we see every individual patron, every family member, every community partner, and all of our co-workers as customers. As an organization, we promote a culture that acknowledges strong performances in customer service. Each day, we recognize exceptional customer service in our peers, subordinates, and supervisors. An example of an employee recognition program is also provided here.



Figure 4.4 Sample of Employee Recognition Program, NYC Parks

4.2.9.1 COMPONENTS OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

- Staff:
 - All incoming staff receives customer service training during the orientation process and must sign the customer service policy;
 - The RCRC Facility Operations Staff Development and Evaluation Program was created and Implemented in 2013, which strongly emphasized customer service;
 - All staff who has been with the agency had to sign the customer service policy when it was updated in 2013 as part of the “Promise of Excellence” program;
 - In 2014, the “Excellence Employee Recognition Program” was implemented in an effort to recognize staff for the excellent work they do for patrons and coworkers. The completed forms are placed in the employees’ personnel file.

THE GAME PLAN

7473 Parklane Road, Columbia, SC 29223
Phone: 803-741-RCRC (7272) | Fax: 803-741-2028
info@rcrc.state.sc.us
www.richlandcountyrecreation.com

Adaptive Recreation	3
Adult Activity Center	4
Athletics	5
Ballettine Community Center	5
Bluff Road Park	7
Blythehood Park	8
Caughman Road Park	10
Crane Creek Gymnasium	10
Cross Roads Park Community Center	11
Denny Terrace Gymnasium	11
Eastover Park	12
Forest Lake Park	13
Friendage Park	14
Gadsden Park Community Center	15
Garners Ferry Adult Activity Center	16
Garners Ferry Technology Center	17
Hopkins Adult Activity Center	17
Hopkins Park	18
James E. Chyburn Technology Center	18
Killian Park	19
Meadowlark Park	19
North Springs Park Community Center	20
North Springs Park	20
Pine Grove Community Center	21
Polo Road Park	21
Richland County Tennis Center	22
St. Andrews Park	22
Trenholm Park	23
Upper Richland Community Center	23

MISSION:
Dedicated to enriching lives and connecting communities through diverse recreational opportunities.

VISION:
To be recognized as a leader in park management and the delivery of quality recreation programs in order to better promote health and improve the quality of life in Richland County.

PROMISE OF EXCELLENCE:
RCRC's Promise of Excellence pledge encourages all employees to go above and beyond their daily duties. It applies to all employees, from receptionists, to grounds workers, to park staff, to administrators, to interns. At the Richland County Recreation Commission, we see every individual patron, every family member, every community partner, and all of our co-workers as customers. As an organization, we promote a culture that acknowledges strong performance in customer service. Each day we recognize exceptional customer service in our peers, subordinates, and supervisors.

WE PROMOTE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES:
The Richland County Recreation Commission is dedicated to the concept of equal opportunity. The Commission will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, national origin, or marital status. In its employment practices or in its facility use/parts/quotas policies.

NOTICE:
The Game Plan is a program guide for upcoming classes and events and is subject to change without notice. Please contact your local park facility for more information.

3 PILLARS LEGEND:
Health and Wellness
Conservation
Social Equity

- Patrons
 - Promise of Excellence statement is on the inside cover of all Game Plans;
 - It was the theme of the 2013-14 Annual Report;
 - “Promise of Excellence” Table Top Banners were created and placed in all RCRC facilities;
 - The website features an “Excellence” tab where visitors and patrons can provide their “Excellent” experience;
 - During events staff utilizes an iPad that features a Survey Monkey so that the agency can capture real time feedback;
 - Evaluations are distributed during events to capture feedback;
 - Excellence forms are available for patrons to fill out about employees who they would like to recognize;
 - The RCRC Facebook page has also been utilized by patrons when they want to provide feedback on a particular program or service.