

**Washington State P&R Professionals
COVID-19 Coordination
The State of Local Parks and Recreation**

Thursday, August 6, 2020

12 noon to 1:00 pm



- 1. Introductions**
- 2. COVID-19 Impacts**
- 3. Predictions for P&R Agencies Following COVID-19**
- 4. Lessons Learned from P&R Leaders**
- 5. Options for Community Center Operations**
- 6. Alternative Service Execution**
- 7. Ensuring Equity**
- 8. Looking Ahead**
- 9. Q&A**

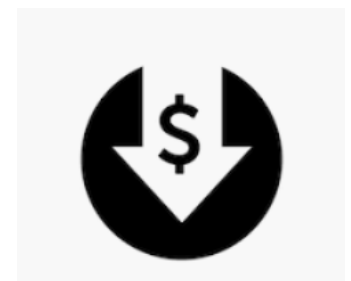
Results of a late June 2020 survey conducted by NRPA found a **majority of P&R leaders had been asked to reduce spending:**

- **60%** of park and recreation agencies are **reducing current spending by 10-19%**.
- Nearly **one in five** agencies are **reducing spending by 30%**.
- **57%** of P&R agencies are **reducing capital spending by 50 to 59%**.



- One in five agencies report that their **capital budgets have been zeroed out.**
- 46% of park and recreation agencies made **reductions to the next FY spending** with a median target range of 10-19% reduction.
- 97% of park and recreation leaders predict their agency's **earned revenues will miss budget targets by a median range of 30-39%** this FY and 20-29% in the next FY

571,000 state and local government jobs were eliminated in May. Moody's predicts that 3 million more could be at risk in the near future.



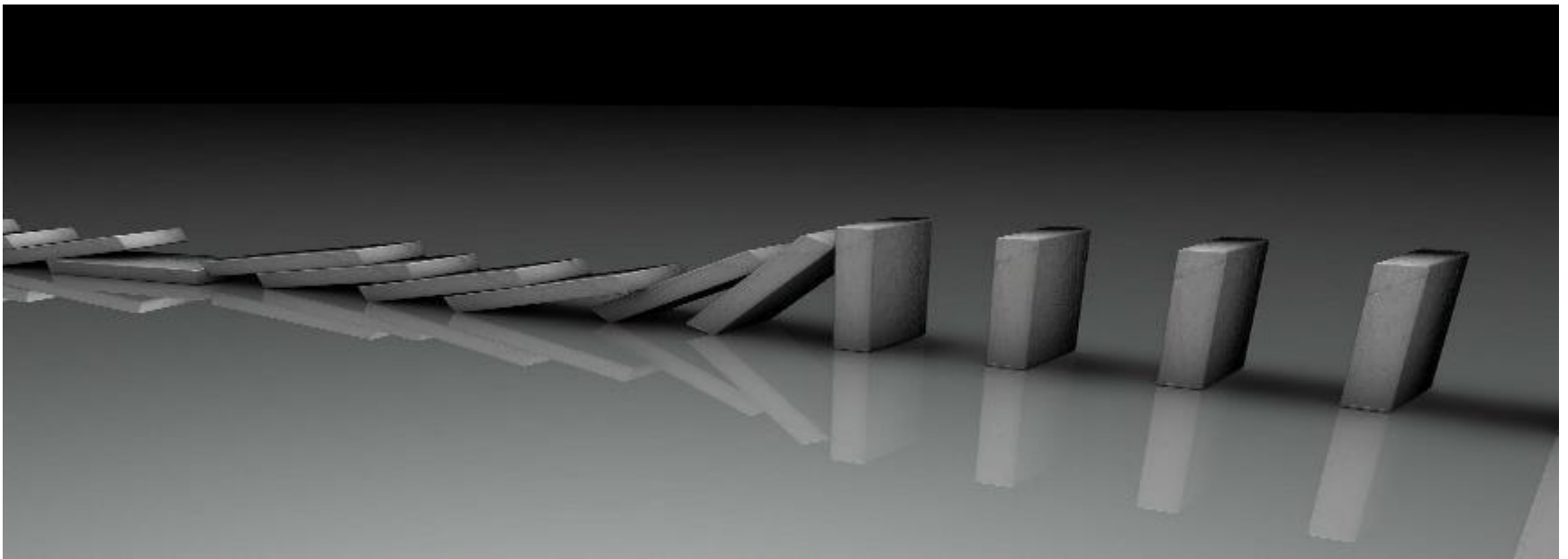
- According to the NY Times, the **value of the childcare sector in the US was \$47.2 billion** prior to the COVID-19 outbreak.
- The US had a childcare crisis before COVID-19 and the pandemic will make it much worse.
- Childcare providers receive no meaningful public investment and essentially operate as small businesses.
- Most childcare providers operate on thin margins with little cash reserves. The complete loss of revenue has forced many of these small businesses to close.



In early May, the Aspen Institute partnered with North Carolina State University to survey parents with children involved in youth sports. Some high level results include:

- 50% of parents fear that their children may get sick if they resume youth sports when restrictions are lifted.
- 46% of parents fear they will become infected with COVID-19 watching their children play youth sports.
- 52% of parents indicated that they are extremely or slightly comfortable with their child participating in travel, elite or club events when activities resume.
- 67% of parents expressed comfort in returning to community sports.





Debbie Trueblood, the Illinois Park and Recreation Association Director, compiled the following predictions for the future of P&R that can shed some light on what might be on the horizon.

- **High unemployment** rates will prevail for the near future
- The long-term impact of the drastic increase in unemployment and wage cuts, will **create a market favorable to employers.**
- Even after the “stay at home” orders are lifted, **more employees will work remotely.**
- Some community members will become agoraphobic about leaving their homes, preferring to receive services at home.



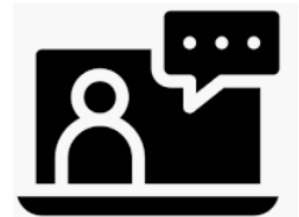
- State and federal budgets will be challenged by their respective expenses in healthcare, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and economic/social programs.
- Professional development budgets and employer support to maintain continuing education will be reduced.
- Municipal departments will be hit hard as their communities may choose to refocus those budget dollars elsewhere.



- Some park and recreation agencies will not survive the next five years or will be reduced to a shell of their former model.
- Agencies who survive will focus on:
 - Essential services
 - Trimming down expenses and programming
 - Incorporating virtual programming
 - Identifying new revenue sources
 - Creating new partnerships with neighboring agencies and those previously identified as competitors
- Agencies who rely on volunteers may see a shift in volunteerism.



- P&R association **educational programs** will shift from more generalized, skill-based courses to more deeply niche topics, **focused on strategies that help agencies generate new revenue and rebuild.**
- There will be a **technology boom** in the P&R field as vendors create innovations that reduce staff time and bring services to the community virtually.
- P&R agencies may find themselves involved with **e-learning for kids** as school closures start and stop and P&R may have to find a way to provide socially distant childcare in large facilities, supporting school work, as parents return to work.



- Similar to the 2008 – 2010 recession, people will not be traveling for leisure, “stay-cations” will become more popular, and this creates room for innovative R&R agencies to profit from in-state tourism.



Michael Kirschman, Dir. of Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation Dept.

While in Mecklenburg County, Kirschman responded to a 16% budget reduction in 2010 and a 46% reduction in 2011.

To reduce expenses:

- 7 divisions were merged into 5
- 9 park regions were reduced to 3
- Two capital divisions were merged
- Park operations and specialized trades were merged
- Special events were eliminated
- Based on usage and participation, 4 of 22 recreation centers were closed
- Nature center hours were reduced

It took 2 to 3 years to recover from the budget cuts

Aisha Pana, Dir. of Parks and Recreation Services at Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District

Experiencing an \$11 million shortfall in current FY from loss of program and facility revenue.

\$9 million in cuts were made by:

- Letting go of 792 part-time employees
- Furloughing 38 full-time staff (primarily from aquatics)
- Laid off 23 full-time staff
- Restructuring is under consideration

When cutting programs and services, Tualatin Hills uses a variety of metrics to determine how to proceed including:

- Size of facility
- What the facility offers
- Geographic location

Paul Gilbert, Executive Director of Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority

Nova Parks experienced a \$7.3 million shortfall – they cut \$5.5 million in expenses by:

- restructuring debt
- Furloughing some staff
- Early retirement was offered to those eligible in the next few years
- Some positions permanently eliminated
- All five pools were not opened for the summer
- Rental venues on hold

Nova Parks will consider any type of arrangement on their land as long as the situation has a “good” or “neutral” impact on the land and those who use it including:

- Selling the use of land – wetland banks and stream banks/long term revenue
- Laying fiber optic tubes under trails – Nova Parks has a trail that goes through a technology center that generates \$1 million annually
- Negotiating a new cell tower lease – possibly being paid up front for 20 years

Community Center Options

- Convert to rental venues
- Outsource operations
- Partner with non-profits – for office space or programming
- Contact local and state governments to assess their need for additional space
- Partner with mental health services
- Change the focus from recreation to opportunity by creating an Opportunity Center



- Create a corporate training center and rent out or provide training for other organizations
- Rent fitness spaces to a for-profit fitness center
- Work with local library to add satellite facilities
- Create work spaces for professionals who work from home
- Contract with a medical facility
- Provide space for organizations that provide opportunities for young adults with disabilities
- Lease space for PT, massage or spa services
- Rent space to small, local churches



- Create opportunities for families that homeschool their children
- Consider partnerships with state and national parks
- Evaluate assets and create opportunities for naming rights
- Partner with a sports marketing firm to sell and handle all signage
- Look to add marijuana use to existing programs like P&R have done with beer and wine



Nonprofits - Many opportunities exist for P&R agencies to create partnerships with nonprofits.

- **Co-production of services**
- **Every Hour Counts** – national coalition that helps children gain skills, knowledge and experiences needed for success. ECH has long-standing partnerships with more than 1,400 schools and community based organizations that provide after school and summer programming.
- **School's Out Washington** – an intermediary that provides assistance to organizations to ensure that young people have safe places to learn and grow when not in school. Annually they support 650 programs in 90,000 young people.



Private/Public Partnerships - Less common, some P&R agencies are partnering with for-profit vendors including:

- The US Forest Service has partnered with a for-profit vendor to manage just over half of their camp grounds (150 locations in 11 states).
- It is not uncommon for P&R agencies to work with their local YMCA to offer programs and services.
- In San Diego, CA, Balboa Park, one of the region's most iconic, is run by both the city and a combination of many private companies.
- Project for Public Spaces as a resource; placemaking



Foundations

- ✓ The Austin Parks Foundation
- ✓ The Austin Trail Foundation

It's important that the P&R agency have a seat on the board (for a staff member or elected official) and that the make-up of the board reflect the overall demographics of the community.

Conservancies

- ✓ Fort Vancouver National Trust
- ✓ The Pittsburgh Park Conservancy

While a conservancy is much more nimble than a governmental agency, the current climate for fundraising is challenging.

According to a new report from the Trust for Public Lands:

“Across the US parks serving primarily nonwhite populations are half the size of parks that serve the majority white populations and 5X more crowded.”

According to the 2019 Urban Institute Report, “Investing in Equitable Urban Park Systems” there are three important strategies for identifying issues related to equity:

- Leveraging Funding
- Encouraging Resident Support
- Health Systems Partners



- The chart below illustrates approaches to bridging park equity and cities that have been successful:

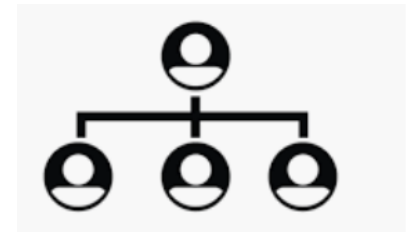
Approaches to Bridging Park Equity	Potential Champions	Placemaking Considerations	Examples
Adopting equity frameworks to guide park investment and priorities	City government and agencies	Equity frameworks used as instruments to measure park equity and indicate where there can be improvements	Miami-Dade County: park access and equity strategy
Using participatory tools to encourage park equity	Park departments, park advocates, and community stakeholders	Drafting strategies collaboratively engages the community voice and targets community needs	Minneapolis: community advisory committee process

Approaches to Bridging Park Equity	Potential Champions	Placemaking Considerations	Examples
Using economic impact assessments to value the benefits of parks	Park departments, advocates, foundations, and third-party assessment partners	Identifying the economic benefits of parks can encourage community development and investment in traditionally disinvested communities	Dallas: impact assessment of the value of the park system
Integrating park development priorities into master planning efforts	City government, park and planning departments, community stakeholders	Coordinated city planning efforts can identify overlapping priorities and offer the opportunity to consider needs of community residents	Los Angeles: Master Plan for Sustainable Parks and Recreation

Approaches to Bridging Park Equity	Potential Champions	Placemaking Considerations	Examples
Launching park campaigns for political and community buy-in	Mayors, city government, park advocates, and community stakeholders	Creates thoughtful partnerships to improve equitable access to parks across cities. Can leverage community voice for local action	Denver: 10-Minute Walk campaign

Future P&R Staffing Structures:

- Combining departments with others (public works, community or human services, libraries)
- Fewer levels of hierarchy
- Combining divisions or departments
- Additional contractual employees, free lancers and gig workers
- Additional data analytics positions
- Additional community connection, outreach and partnership staff



Relationships with community partners: In recent years, partnerships have become more prevalent. Even more so in today's times.

- Strengthen the relationship with existing partners
- Formalize and evaluate relationships
- Strategically identify new partners



Traits of the successful P&R provider in next 3 to 5 years:

- Stay nimble & flexible
- Keep up with current trends
- Strengthen business sophistication; technology, data
- Become experts in marketing & outreach; online engagement platforms, continue telling your story
- Strengthen organizational competencies: leadership, strategy, innovation
- Pay attention to equity
- Work on community trust building and outreach



Other considerations:

- Develop organizational culture to support creativity & innovation
- The use of robotics and artificial intelligence will likely change the way we operate
- Improve compensation and benefits for part-time employees
- Increase sophistication with establishment of fees, cost allocation, cost of services and earned revenue generation
- Technology competence and using data for decision making will become more important
- Capture increased park and trail usage





Questions and Discussion



Thank You!

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