

Service Squamish Initiative



Recreation Services



Core Service Review



Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTERVIEW SUMMARY:	6
RECOMMENDATIONS	11
ACTION PLAN	14

Executive Summary

In April 2010 the Service Squamish Initiative was introduced by the District of Squamish to envision a new approach to achieving excellence in local government for its residents, investors, Council and employees. This core service review of the Recreation Services function is the sixth in a series of reviews conducted between February 2010 and July 2011.

The District of Squamish's (District) Recreation Services (RS) department offers a reasonably well-attended array of traditional programming and services. In many cases, it has been the individual dedication and efforts of staff that have kept current programs and facilities running smoothly in spite of challenges.

Both the RS staff and public recognize that RS is good at providing repeat traditional programming and at the same time they have a sense that Squamish has, and is, changing significantly in its demographics and needs. The RS employees are recognized as having a high-level of ownership for their roles and a true passion for recreation and for working with the District of Squamish. The RS staff and the Squamish community (public) recognize that significant adjustments are required in terms of vision, strategy, programming, processes, facilities as well as with the organizational and communication cultures to ensure that RS programming and services reflect the current and future recreation needs.

Over the past year RS has recognized and started to look at some of the administrative and strategic changes that are needed to shift the RS programming and services to meet the needs of the community. The findings and recommendations in this report support those efforts and provide additional considerations surrounding four themes: Leadership and Strategy; Programming and Scheduling; Service Delivery; and Communication.

Leadership and Strategy:

The Recreation Service's vision and supporting strategy is overdue for renewal in order to truly represent today's District of Squamish needs. Without a clearly understood vision and strategy, decisions around the evolution of the facility, programming inside and outside the facility and required staffing levels cannot be made. A lack of strategy is leading to a great deal of time spent attempting make decision, resulting in high employee turnover and dissatisfaction from the public around programming offered.

The Leadership of Recreation Services needs to focus on the development of an effective Vision and Strategy. This new Vision and Strategy need not take months to develop but rather should be a working document that can be revisited and tweaked yearly and that acts as a touchstone against which crucial decisions about programs, schedules, and the facilities are made. Once a clear Vision and Strategy are in place Management needs to empower employees and give employees freedom to be innovative and creative, to make decisions that make sense to our customers and to drive new and exciting programs.

Programming:

The current recreation programming is a varied version of the same programming that has been in place for many years. The quality of the programming varies and there is a significant shared belief with all stakeholders that the RS programming is ready for a change. Current programming is not inclusive of all age groups nor are all programs well

attended. Many individuals commented that Brennan Park feels like a “ghost town” with nothing going on there. Current programming rarely extends outside the walls of Brennan Park.

Recreation Programming needs to take on a whole new look and feel. Conducting a strategic review of programming including understanding best practices in other municipalities and including input from all stakeholders is essential and necessary. Launching new programming across RS as early as spring 2012 with a full marketing campaign will breathe new life into a tired Recreation program. Reviewing programming yearly and ensuring stakeholders stay in touch by way of an advisory group will ensure programming at RS continues to evolve and develop every year as the demographics and desires of the community change. The next two years is about catching up on current trends in recreation and capitalizing on our amazing outdoor environment as part of the programming we offer.

Service Delivery and People:

The Services RS delivers to the public is seen from some people’s eyes as being excellent and others as being poor. Consistently the message received was one of mediocrity. This mediocrity does not stem from a lack of engagement and willingness on the part of the employees; a strong desire to create great programming and provide excellent service does exist.

Delivering Outstanding Service in RS requires changes be made to the existing Organization Structure. A new role that has individuals focused on developing programming that meets the needs of all groups is imperative. In addition, the individuals responsible for the delivery of programs need to ensure instructors receive feedback and coaching around the delivery of their programs. With the engaged employees that work for RS, excellence in service delivery will not be a problem once the “what” and “when” of programming is in line with what the community wants and the coaching and feedback for instructors exists.

Communication:

Over many years the culture and communication norms of RS has evolved to a point where groups and teams are somewhat isolated, not working from the same vision and are not sharing ideas or resources to the extent that they could. Sharing of information internally does not happen in a fluid or consistent way. Working in silos impacts the ability of teams to deliver services to the public effectively and stifles the development of innovative and creative programming.

Communication with the public happens in the same way it has done for the last 10 years with little integration of new technology. Before this review was undertaken the 3000+ data base of email addresses had never been used as a communication tool.

Effective communication in RS needs to involve the development of processes that will facilitate individuals at a supervisory level to sharing information more effectively. Ownership of positions needs to shift to the degree that when an individual is away service can still be provided to the public.

Summary:

The potential of the District's RS is its' largest asset today. All of the stakeholders are in complete agreement that the potential to transform the District's definition of, and vision for RS is overdue and exciting. As the District has changed in terms of demographics and its economy, so has its RS vision and needs. This report's findings, recommendations and action plan should assist the District leaders and stakeholders in their decision and execution processes for moving RS forward.

Interview Summary:

Approach

This review was conducted based on two primary approaches;

1. Confidential individual (interviews) to get the input of all, or a representation of all, key stakeholders. Julie Morris, District of Squamish Human Resource Advisor, conducted the external stakeholder interviews. Kehl Petersen, external consultant, conducted the internal District employee interviews in order to provide absolute confidentiality
2. Confidential individual citizen/stakeholder input via a web-based survey.
3. Independent reviews and comparison of the district's RS environment through documentation (plans, strategies, previous reviews/input, agenda/minutes, etc.).
4. Follow-up dialogue regarding findings and draft recommendations with key stakeholders.
5. Presentation and opportunity for questions of final report findings and recommendation

When stakeholders were interviewed their comments can be grouped into the following themes:

- Service Delivery
- People
- Programming
- Leadership and Policy

The findings listed below are a summary of all external and internal stakeholder interviews.

Leadership & Strategy - FINDINGS

This section looks at the Leadership element of the RS in terms of strategy, support, coaching, measuring, performance management, development, work design, process management, issue resolution and change management. The key findings relating to Leadership are:

- The lack of a current or known strategic plan for recreation makes decision making difficult. When new ideas are presented by external stakeholders or staff members it is near impossible to evaluate the decision as there is no criteria against which to do so.
- The Manager of RS is overwhelmed with process and administrative tasks and does not have the time required to address the larger strategic and process changes required.
- The leadership culture within RS seems to be overly hierarchical. This “up and down the management chain” for some processes and information is slowing down change and improvements and significantly reducing quick turnaround times on decisions, which in turn reduces the RS staff from bringing ideas forward.
- There was limited indication of a full performance management process for staff. There is some recent development plan work that some of the staff indicated that they were a part of. This was not consistent.
- RS leadership not very visible and accessible to the RS staff. There are many RS staff who have not seen or had a discussion with the RS leadership over long periods of time (multiple months to years). This includes the members of the leadership team who work onsite.
- There is a significant reluctance and process for RS staff to share ideas based on experience, they believe that nothing will get done with it or it will not be considered.
- There is an inability to develop business cases to support new initiatives and make decisions about facility or program changes.

Recreation Programming – FINDINGS

This section looks at the Recreation Programming element of the RS in terms of type, amount, availability, appropriateness (not a detailed program-to-user analysis). The key findings relating to Recreation Programming are:

- The recreation programming in general appears to be “hit and miss” in terms of the degree to which it is meeting and keeping up with the needs of the community. Generally the feedback regarding programming is mixed with some programs being well designed and delivered while others are not well designed or delivered. In addition there is often not enough availability of programming (ie – long wait lists) or variety of offerings for some demographics including Youth and Adults.
- RS does not have a way to assess program effectiveness and for the most part is relating previous years of programming with the addition and reduction of some select programs.
- The current RS programming has minimal ties with the District’s Economic Development plans and activities.
- The District’s Campground operation does not get very much management or functional attention from RS. Operations manages the day-to-day maintenance and RS collects the payments when people come to the office to pay (150+ feet away). Indications are that ~ 50% of the potential revenue is not collected.
- RS programming lags behind what comparable sized Recreation Departments offer.

Service Delivery FINDINGS

The service delivery within RS is generally good overall in terms of the service delivered with the programs offered. There is a periodic service quality gap with some of the programs. Examples include: program cancellations; instructor quality and evaluation of service.

- The program delivery is inconsistent – some instructors are skilled and engaged while others are not providing the level of service expected and learning opportunities.
- The schedule and availability of services offered is a barrier to participation for a number of the community. Some examples include:
 - There are not enough spaces in specific programs (mainly in aquatics).
 - Individuals often find themselves on wait lists for programs.
 - Timing for programming offered does not meet current demand particularly for parents that are working.
 - The booking process is difficult for some.
- RS is under-utilizing information technology to drive process and service improvements. In the case of their current Recreation system (CLASS), it has taken them a considerably long time to utilize and implement some of the basic features.
- The facility is under utilized. Estimated utilization rates for 2010 are: Gymnasium/Auditorium: 33%; Jr. Lounge: 12%; Sr. Lounge: 18%; Ice: 60%; Dry slab: 15%; Pool Rental & Programs: 75% with admission rates at 128 average people per day combining all programs; Fields: vary with sport and season - utilization data is unclear.
- Externally managed major events are well supported by RS.
- The RS facilities are well maintained and supported for RS programming and delivery staff.
- RS is currently mostly focused on Brennan Park and seems limited in seeing other facilities as part of a broader recreation environment. Most of RS activities and programming occur within the walls of Brennan Park.
- The public physical spaces within Brennan Park (excluding the pool area) need to be updated and a focus on creating a warm and inviting atmosphere.
- Some of the current office configurations and standards for some of the staff are substandard in comparison to other District facilities in terms of air temperature, lighting, disruptions due to circulation paths cutting through desk areas, etc.
- There was a persistently raised need for a “proper” and separate workout facility (gym, weight room) throughout the internal and external interviews and survey data indicating this has been discussed for some time with little resolution.
- There are indications that the some use of volunteers for additional programming might be worth exploring.

People - FINDINGS

This section looks at the People element of the RS in terms of culture(s), structure, roles & responsibilities, group & individual development, KSA (skill, knowledge and ability) and relationships. The key findings relating to People are:

- Individual RS employees display a high degree of ownership to their jobs. Sometimes this degree of ownership contributes to minimal knowledge sharing so that when they are away delivering customer service is a real challenge. In addition employees tend to work in silos with limited communication or planning directed at other departments.
- Employees are great at replicating what has been done in the past and struggle to look a different ways to do new programs or services when requests come in from the public.
- The rules, policies and process for scheduling of casual staff are unclear and are not always followed. The process is overly complex and it makes it very difficult for many of the casual staff as well as the supervisor.
- The use of casuals, vs. regular or part time employees vs. contractor employees seems to be haphazard with no clear understanding of which resource fits where.
- Programmers, Instructors and Contractors tend to work in insolation leading to each group reinventing program elements each time.
- The pool and the remaining areas within RS are considered quite separate and rarely make the opportunity to interact or share ideas.
- Some of the programmer and coordinator level staff appear to be overwhelmed and unable to manage the current program load nor expand the program offered.

Policy, Procedures & Governance - FINDINGS

This section looks at the Policy, Procedures & Governance element of the RS in terms of existence, effectiveness, relevance, complexity and access. The key findings relating to Policy, Procedures & Governance are:

- **Facility Booking:** The booking process for facilities is restricted to standard office hours, is centralized with one role, is cumbersome is not user friendly in terms of processes and forms. Generally this booking process is not meeting the community's needs and is also frustrating for other RS and District staff.
- **Program Booking:** The booking process for programs is considered to be not user friendly in terms of the processes, forms and online experience. Generally this booking process is not fully meeting the community's needs.
- **Community Input:** Generally the current process for getting community input into the strategy, program design and ongoing facility development is through Council reports and motions. This limits the community input and makes it difficult for the RS leadership to plan effectively for recreation programs and facilities.
- It appears that the RS facilities have run into replacement reserve deficiencies for major capital work over the years. These deficiencies have resulted in delays to the capital schedule for major items, which is creating a concern of long-term viability and costs.
- There seems to be a lack of regular and effective business case development within RS.

Communication - FINDINGS

This section looks at the Communication element of the RS in terms of information access, style, frequency & input opportunities. The key findings relating to Communication are:

- Inter-departmental and inter-team communication within RS is limited and not fully meeting its potential. In some cases it could be considered to be unintentionally anti-collaborative.
- **RS-wide meetings/events:** There appears to be very little opportunity for the teams and groups within RS to get together for a meeting or learning event. Schedules and coverage play a role in this, although there is a desire and arguably a need for a periodic RS-wide session for all (most) staff to hear a single important message relating to strategy, vision, change or opportunity.
- **Guide:** The program guide is the document most individuals use to determine what programming is being offered. Many of the stakeholders and frontline staff noted that community members miss receiving the guide in the mail.
- **Conflict:** The communication culture and skills for many of the staff in RS is not encouraging to address conflict in the workplace with each other. There are some unresolved and disruptive relationships that exist with RS and also with other support department staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Leadership & Strategy - RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop an effective vision and strategy ensuring a variety of stakeholder representatives including staff, citizens, recreation and facility partners, recreation associations and groups, and of course council have input. Ensure the Vision includes all Recreation Services not just Brennan Park. For the "Recreation Capital of Canada" it seems that the current view of "recreation facilities" could be broadened significantly.
2. Begin using the Vision as a touchstone so RS leaders and employees are able to make responsive and reasonable decisions without time consuming and cumbersome request and approval processes.
3. Focus on conducting business case analysis' to make decisions about facility and program development. The first business case to be fully developed is a Fitness Center in Brennan Park.
4. Implement leadership coaching that includes training on delegation, relationship management and delivering effective feedback.

Recreation Programming - RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Redevelop and relaunch a new set of programming that meets the needs of all of our community groups, is innovative, will generate excitement and will drive increased attendance. This will involve conducting a full audit / assessment of recreation programming offered, attendance of and desired programming.
2. Create a programming process, templates and standards that all programmers are required to utilize in the development, delivery and sustainment of RS programs.
3. Establish an RS events process that is separate from programming. This process should create an event mandate in which proposed events can be measured against. Create an event coordination role in conjunction with or directly with the District event coordination process and team. (Could be part time but needs to be defined as part of some one's job description)
4. Create a process that ensures that the creation and changing of programming is done with a reasonable level of user, employee and community input. This input needs to include those who are not users or customers in order to ensure that programs are both fully serving the community and optimizing District resources (people, facilities, programs).

Service Delivery - RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create and maintain a recreation program instructor and program evaluation process and system
2. Review RS's current utilization of CLASS and a plan for evolving the use/features where possible.
3. Offer more programming in Aquatics to decrease waitlists and drive increased satisfaction with the "learn to swim" programming.
4. Create a process that provides regular resource utilization rate reporting data that can be combined into a performance measurement program.
5. RS and Facilities to conduct an assessment of both the public spaces and employee offices to determine if there is any appropriate upgrades/changes required.

People - RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Restructure the Program Supervisor Position – Change the Program Supervisor positions to Program Leader positions to support cross training, facilitate more strategic program development and allows for the diversification of programming to support outdoor programming and youth programming.
2. Accommodate the recommendation from the Building, Planning, Environment and Trails Core Service Review to split up the Trails Coordinator duties and move ~50% of the role and position to Recreation Services to be combined to create an additional Recreation Programmer with a focus on the outdoors.
3. Ensure adequate program support with the addition of another Program Coordinator and more clearly defined roles between Coordinators and Program Leaders.
4. Determine the level of supervisory needed in aquatics and address the Instructor Guard 1/2 ongoing recruiting challenge.
5. Reduce the use and dependence on casual employees by creating, where appropriate, part time positions that are appealing to members of the community that do not want full time work but want a consistent amount of work they can count on.

See Organizational Charts on pages 17 and 18

Policy, Procedures & Governance - RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Booking Processes: Creating a standard booking experience that is easy, accessible, and online for most of it, and that provides the financial integration needed for both the District and the customers.
2. Look at moving to a system where by booking for the next set of programming occurs on the last day of the current program to ensure better access for all participants.
3. Consider utilizing CLASS as the District wide booking application and assign an administrator who can configure access to a number of key staff across the District who can in turn provide booking services.
4. Recreation Advisory Group: Establish a Recreation Advisory Group that provides input and guidance to the RS leadership. This will provide the needed context for creating and managing a RS vision, strategy and ongoing input on programming from a diverse sample of the community.
5. RS to initiate and conduct a joint assessment with Facility and Finance departments to establish the appropriate replacement reserve schedule and address any deficits with the CAO and CFO.
6. Work with the Union to create a letter of understanding that supports managing casual availability over a program set vs. month to month.

Communication - RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Facilitate better interdepartmental communication by making meetings more action oriented and sharing minutes with action items in a timely manner. Look for opportunities to bring RSA staff from different areas together periodically for information sharing and team building.
2. Leadership needs to coach and encourage employees to work through conflicts that exist with long serving employees.
3. Enhance the marketing of programs by assesses the effectiveness of RS public communications (all channels) and determine how to strengthen the program. Utilize the Recreation Advisory Group as well to test any changes or solutions.
4. Leadership needs to work with the District's economic development resources and processes to establish the how to work with the broader business community to bring continuity to the "The Outdoor Recreation Capital of Canada" brand.

ACTION PLAN

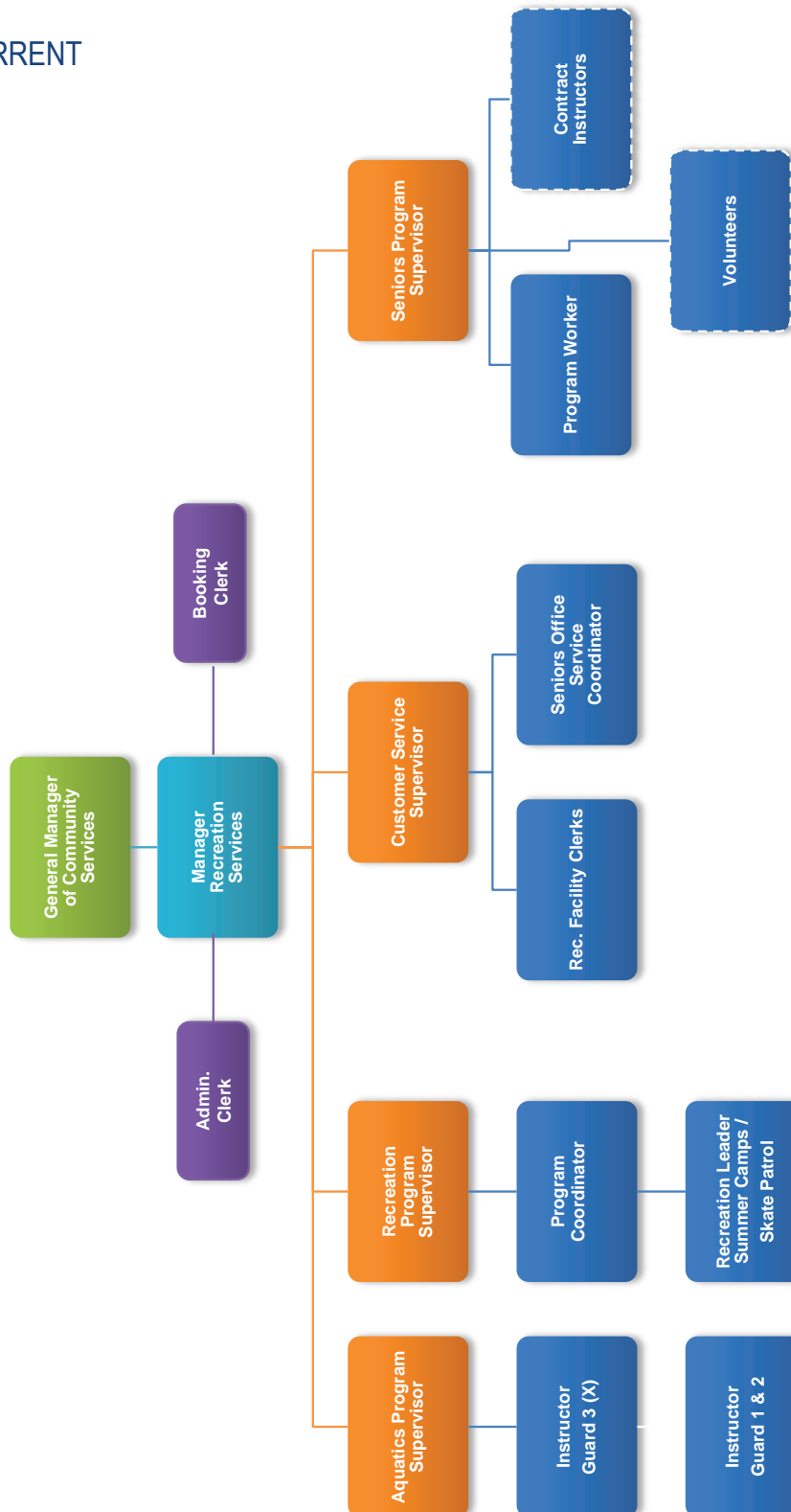
Below is a list of actions derived from the Findings and Recommendations section. Please refer to the Findings and Recommendations section for more details. All Budget implications are high-level estimates and would most likely change once more in-depth assessments within each recommendation are conducted.

No.	Category	Action Item	Priority	Budget Implications
1	LEADERSHIP & STRATEGY	Develop an effective vision and strategy ensuring a variety of stakeholder representatives including staff, citizens, recreation and facility partners, recreation associations and groups, and of course council have input.	HIGH	\$5,000 – Support from an external consultant.
2	LEADERSHIP & STRATEGY	Begin using the Vision as a touch stone so RS leaders and employees are able to make responsive and reasonable decision without time consuming and cumbersome request and approval processes.	HIGH	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.
3	LEADERSHIP & STRATEGY	Conducting business case analysis' to make decisions about facility and program development. The first business case to be fully developed is a Fitness Center in Brennan Park.	MEDIUM	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.
4	PROGRAMMING	Re develop and re launch a new set of programming that meets the needs of all our community groups, is innovative, will generate excitement and will drive increased attendance. This will involve conducting a full audit / assessment of recreation programming offered, attendance of and desired programming.	MEDIUM	Assessment None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope. Alterations – depending on the assessment and decisions.
5	PROGRAMMING	Create a programming process, templates and standards that all programmers are required to utilize in the development, delivery and sustainment of RS programs.	LOW	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.
6	PROGRAMMING	Establish an RS events process that is separate from programming. This process should - create an event mandate in which proposed events can be measured against. Create an event coordination role in conjunction with or directly with the District event coordination process and team. (Could be part time but needs to be defined part of some one's job description)	MEDIUM	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.

7	PROGRAMMING	Create a process that ensures that the creation and changing of programming is done regularly with a reasonable level of user, employee and community input.	LOW	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.
8	PEOPLE	Restructure the Program Supervisor Position – to Program Leader -	HIGH	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.
9	PEOPLE	Create on Outdoor Program Leader Position that included 50% Trails of the Trails Coordinator duties.	HIGH	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.
10	PEOPLE	Add another Program Coordinator and more clearly defined the roles between Coordinators and Program Leaders.	HIGH	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.
11	PEOPLE	Determine the level of supervisory needed in aquatics and address the Instructor Guard 1/2 ongoing recruiting challenge.	MEDIUM	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope and within revenue/cost.
12	PEOPLE	Reduce the use and dependence on casual employees by creating, where appropriate, part time positions.	MEDIUM	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.
13	COMMUNICATION	Facilitate better interdepartmental communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making meetings more action oriented • sharing minutes with action items in a timely manner • bring RSA staff from different areas together periodically for information sharing and team building. 	MEDIUM	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.
14	COMMUNICATION	Leadership to coach employees to work through conflicts that exist with long serving employees.	MEDIUM	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.
15	COMMUNICATION	Enhance the marketing of programs by assess the effectiveness of RS public communications (all channels) and determine how to strengthen the program.	MEDIUM	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.
16	COMMUNICATION	Work with the District's economic development resources and processes to establish the how to work with the broader business community to bring continuity to the "The Outdoor Recreation Capital of Canada" brand.	MEDIUM	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope

17	POLICY	Creating a standard booking experience that is easy, accessible, and online for most of it, and that provides the financial integration needed for both the District and the customers.	MEDIUM	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.
18	POLICY	Move to a system where by booking for the next set of programming occurs on the last day of the current program to ensure better access for all participants.	MEDIUM	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.
19	POLICY	Consider utilizing CLASS as the District wide booking application and assign an administrator who can configure access to a number of key staff across the	LOW	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.
20	POLICY	Establish a Recreation Advisory Group that provides input and guidance to the RS leadership. This will provide the needed context for creating and managing a RS vision, strategy and ongoing input on programming from a diverse sample of the community.	LOW	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.
21	POLICY	RS to initiate and conduct a joint assessment with Facility and Finance departments to establish the appropriate replacement reserve schedule and address any deficits with the CAO and CFO.	MEDIUM	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.
22	POLICY	Work with the Union to create a letter of understanding that supports managing casual availability over a program set vs. month to month	HIGH	None – to be conducted by the District within current resource scope.

CURRENT



PROPOSED

