

# NORTH DAKOTA



## PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Strategic Plan  
**2018 - 2022**



STEWARDSHIP • SERVICE • EXPERIENCES • LEADERSHIP • PARTNERSHIPS

## About the Department of Parks and Recreation

The North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department is the state agency charged with administering selected parks and recreation areas that are deemed to have state-wide or regional significance. The department is also responsible for the off-highway vehicle and snowmobile programs, outdoor recreation grants, statewide recreation planning and the Nature Preserves Act.

## Purpose for Strategic Planning

The purpose of the strategic plan is to align the department around an unified direction and strategy that will capitalize on leadership and organizations strengths, be intentional in using resources and focus on organizational sustainability.

The approach included gathering information from internal sources, collaborating agency partners, stakeholders and users across North Dakota. The analysis of both external and internal environments is used to develop a strategic framework, goals and performance metrics that will lead the agency for the next five years.

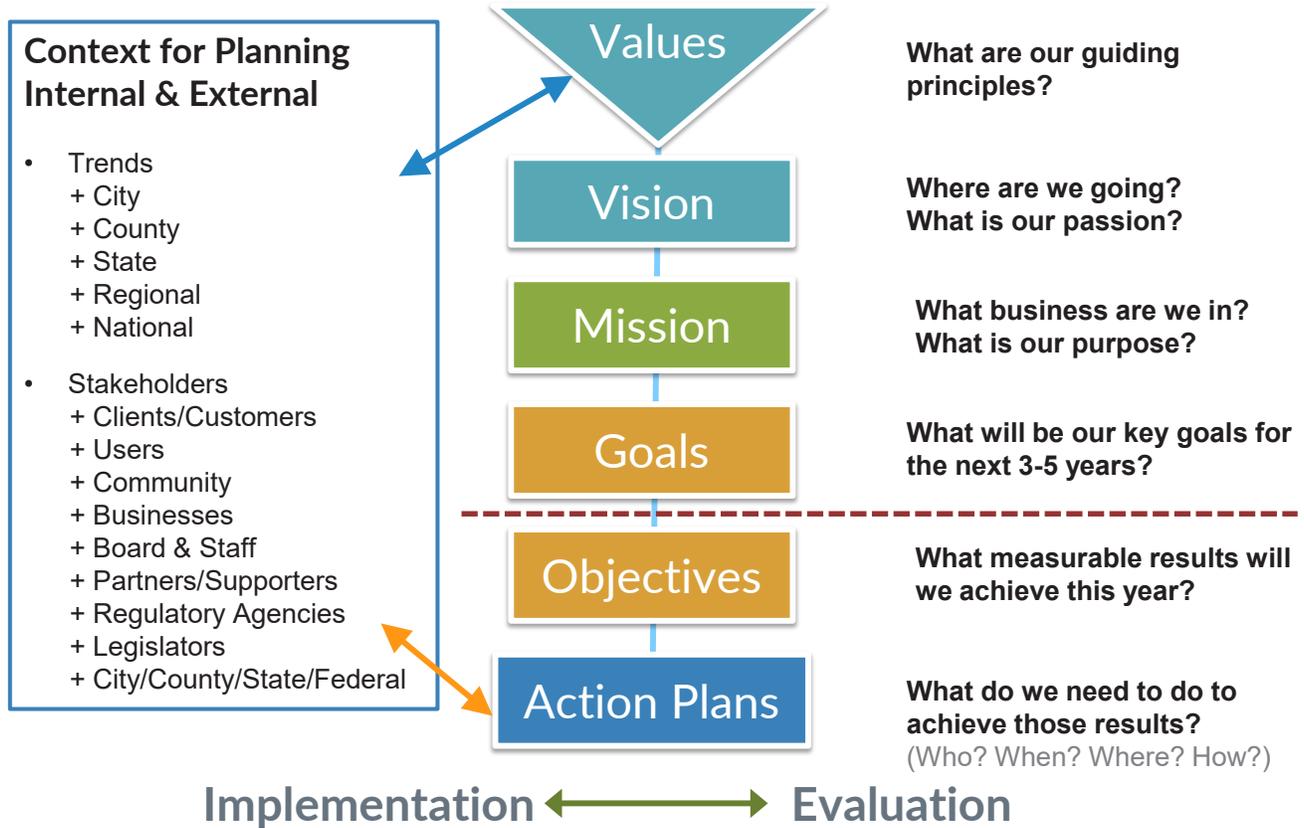
## Strategic Planning Model

The external and internal environment scan provided the basis for finding areas of agreement that were viewed as key drivers in the variety of work that the department embraces. The feedback was paired with local, state, regional and national trends related to parks and recreation to provide a systems analysis of opportunities.

The department's values were compared with what staff perceived as the current value set against what the value set aspires to be in five years. The values became the guiding principles for defining the department's vision and mission. The vision reflects the aspirational context and the mission defines the business in which the department operates.

The department's leadership team synthesized the data and developed key priorities and goals. The leadership team is responsible for working with the department's staff to define the objectives to achieve those goals and the criteria for evaluating success.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING MODEL



## Methodology

Appreciative planning is a methodology that capitalizes on the most successful attributes of an organization and builds upon the strengths of the team. It involves partnering with key stakeholders in positive inquiry around data collection, design of “real time” planning sessions and facilitation of groups from vision to specific implementation plans.

The open, inclusive process is based on the strengths and success of the current situation that can be carried into the future. It creates new positive, life-enhancing stories and perceptions of the situation that helps to build positive scenarios in a self-reinforcing cycle of thinking.

This highly successful model of appreciative strategic planning involves partnering with key stakeholders that ensures that they are:

**Informed**, because they are impacted by changes and their cooperation is needed;

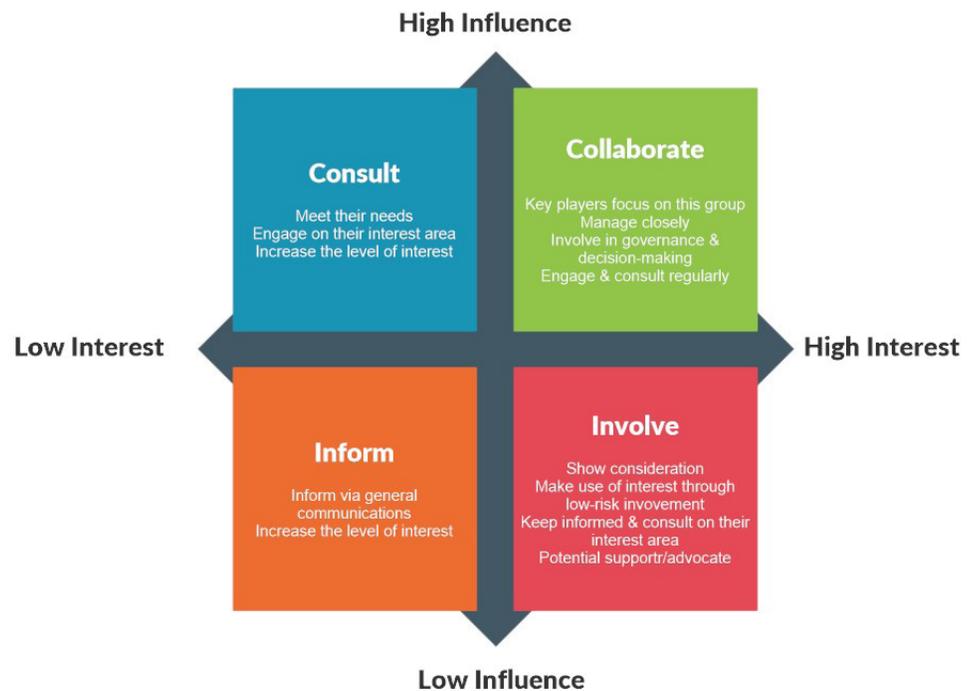
**Consulted**, because they will need to take action to make the changes so their support, cooperation and expertise is needed;

**Involved**, because they can have significant influence over the success of the change; they therefore need to be able to invest time, make decisions and influence others; and

**Collaborated** with so their input, money, time and public support will result in success.

The Department identified several stakeholders whose feedback was instrumental to the compilation of this plan. The process centered around a systematic methodology of data gathering that involved both qualitative and quantitative inquiry and analysis.

Stakeholder evaluations indicated that the processes used to gather their feedback were relevant and productive. Many expressed interest in their continued support for the North Dakota’s Parks and Recreation Department.



The public participation spectrum

# Strategic Plan Process

## Department Leadership Team Meeting

The strategic planning process commenced by soliciting input from the Parks and Recreation Department's Leadership Team (DLT) around the depth and scope of the process. The meeting identified the leadership team's expectations for the process and the role of all internal staff. Several key informants had been identified, both internal and external, as stakeholders who needed to be informed, involved, consulted or part of the collaboration. A data collection strategy and communication plan for data dissemination was identified. An inclusive staff approach included allocating time at the department's all-staff meeting towards this effort.

## All Staff Meeting and Online Staff Survey

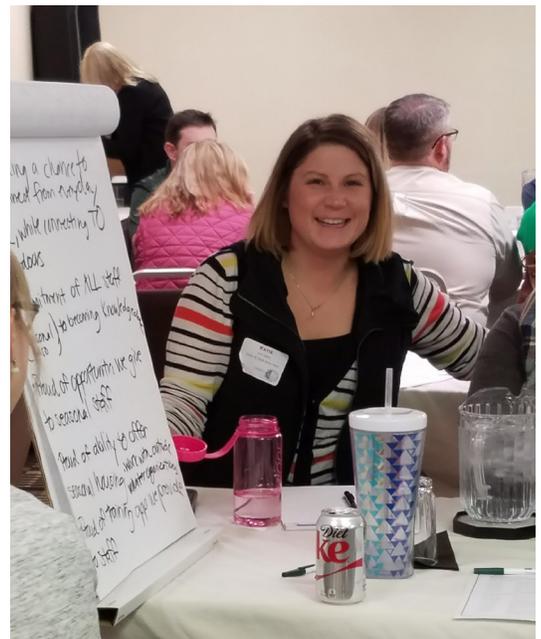
The Department's all staff meeting provided a venue to introduce the strategic planning process, communicate the different levels of involvement, both internally and externally, and have staff participate by answering a series of key visioning questions.

Participants broke into small groups and were encouraged to record all individual responses to the questions. The responses were compiled into a series of key themes that were part of the overall analysis from all stakeholders.

An online survey completed by staff members presented the opportunity to further explore topics relevant to the culture of the organization. The survey results revealed that the alignment between the department's current mission and staffs' opinion of achieving that mission resulted in a high level of agreement, with room for growth. Current and aspiring department values were identified by respondents. The survey provided an opportunity for the staff to contribute questions for the external stakeholder interviews.



The department leadership team learned about the basis of strategic planning, its impacts on an organization and how to best maximize their collective strengths.



Staff members gathered in small groups to brainstorm ideas and generate comrade in order to gain their valuable insights to the strategic plan.

## Regional Listening Sessions

Regional listening sessions were conducted in the communities of Grand Forks, Valley City, Bismarck and Williston. The listening sessions were an opportunity for the general public to provide input to the strategic planning process. Each meeting was publicly noticed and additional department communications included social media and targeted outreach.

Each meeting was conducted in the same manner with an opening presentation by members of the leadership team and then the consultants set the context of the planning endeavor. Next, similar to the staff meeting, participants gathered in small groups to answer a series of six questions.

A key themes report summarizes the responses from all four listening sessions. Many of the responses were duplicated, regardless of geographic proximity, resulting in a high level of agreement among priorities.

Members of the public responded to many of the same questions as other partners. Meeting evaluations indicated positive feedback regarding their role in the process and their willingness to contribute to the plan.



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# Strategic Plan Process

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## Focus Groups

Three focus groups were conducted that consisted of external stakeholders that consisted of people from key partnerships, local, state and federal agencies and non-profit organizations. The focus group participants are people who interact with the department's leadership and field staff to extend resources for education, resource management, programming or grant programs.

The focus groups were facilitated in a formal group discussion format. The format allowed for more robust group interaction and discussion since the participants collaborated with each other and the department on multiple issues. Twelve questions framed the agenda.

Stakeholders viewed the department's employees as leaders and ambassadors in the field of parks and recreation and for the State of North Dakota. Many of the focus group participants indicated that they felt energized by the meetings and desired more opportunities for collaborative interaction.

## Content Specialist Interviews

People who are identified as content specialists are important to strategic planning because they have an internal and external perspective. Six individual interviews were conducted with people who are current or former directors of state parks and recreation agencies. The outcomes from the interview were to identify any forthcoming trends for state agencies and best practices that may be able to be applied to North Dakota's strategy.

Eight questions framed the interview with the responses aggregated into key themes. The specialists brought forth local and regional perspectives. They also provided insight to internal aspects of departmental operations which were key topic areas that other stakeholders did not address.



Focus group participants often indicated their appreciation for NDPRD's leadership and how the department positively impacts their organizational goals.

Some focus groups were so energized by the discussions that many suggested to hold them on a more regular basis.

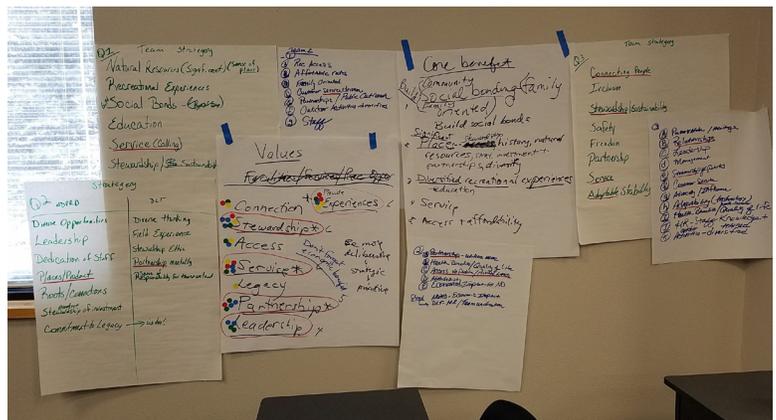
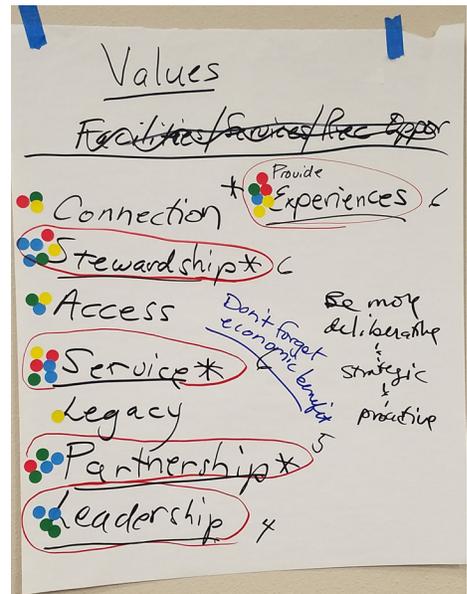
## Department Leadership Team Workshop

In order to align around a unified direction and strategy for North Dakota Parks & Recreation, the department's leadership team participated in a two-day workshop. The outcomes from the workshop included strategizing to capitalize on leadership and organizational strengths as identified from the data gathering effort, with a focus on the intentional use of resources and organizational sustainability.

The leadership team for the Parks and Recreation Department is tasked with owning the outcomes from the strategic plan. In order to align expectations, the team identified their personal strengths and how those strengths contribute to the team's success.

All of the interview and survey data from employees, stakeholders, partners, visitors and users was reviewed and incorporated into the vision, mission and guiding values for the department. The development of the department's strategic priorities and goals were formulated and refined through a multi-step process.

The team concluded with the formulation of an implementation plan that included a strategy for further employee engagement. The leadership team committed to the further refinement of the goals and objectives along with guidelines for accountability and measurement. The outcomes reflect a strategic plan for a five-year period: 2018 - 2022.



The leadership team was tasked with synthesizing all of the data into key goals and objectives based upon all of the feedback.

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# Values, Mission & Vision

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## Values

### CORE VALUES:

Stewardship

Service

Experiences

Leadership

Partnerships

Core values are important because they support the vision, shape the culture and reflect collective values and beliefs of an organization. Values are the core essence of an organization's identity that help frame the context when executing decision-making processes. The North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department has adopted the five following core values:

**Stewardship.** We care for and sustainably manage natural, cultural, physical and fiscal resources.

**Service.** We serve citizens, visitors, communities, partners and future generations.

**Experiences.** We recognize the need for a diversity of recreation experiences across the landscape that allow all people to discover, connect, escape the pressures of daily life and be physically active.

**Leadership.** We lead by example in all that we do and through collaboration and consultation with stakeholders and partners.

**Partnerships.** We work collaboratively with those who share our mission and those we serve.

## Mission Statement

An organization's mission statement is a written declaration of the organization's core purpose and focus that generally remains consistent over time. The mission clearly articulates what the purpose of the organization and is present-focused.

**The North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department offers a diversity of recreation opportunities and sustainably manage resources.**

## Vision

A vision statement is future-focused and describes an aspirational vision of how the organization wants to be and how it is viewed by others. The vision often reflects an inspirational or motivational statement that is received by employees and stakeholders alike.

**Enriching generations through experiences that connect people and places.**

# Goals & Objectives

Goals and objectives are important statements because they turn the mission and vision into specific measurable targets. Goals are outcome statements that guide the implementation of the strategy. Goals may be general or broad. Goals are often realistic and obvious in order to clarify the team's direction and gain support from stakeholders. Objectives are more detailed than goals and explain how the goals will be accomplished through a series of activities that must be completed to achieve the goal.

## Goal #1: Optimize Planning

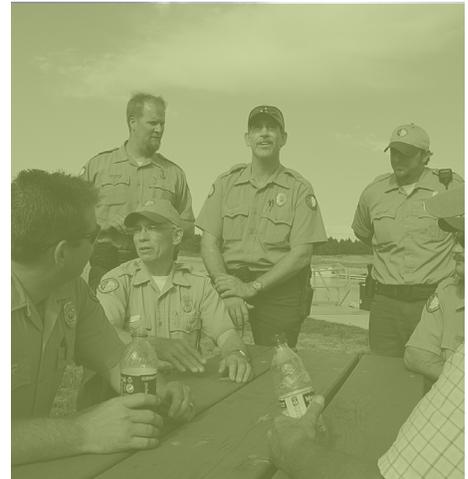
Objectives:

- 1.1 Create a consistent planning structure.
- 1.2 Develop a cyclical planning strategy.
- 1.3 Develop a tracking system for the implementation of plans.

## Goal #2: Create a Culture of Continuous Improvement

Objectives:

- 2.1 Develop and implement a department-wide training program.
- 2.2 Implement a program to improve agency processes.
- 2.3 Recognize employee contributions to the improvement of the agency's effectiveness and efficiency.



# Goals & Objectives



## Goal #3: Cultivate Partnerships Across the Landscape

### Objectives:

- 3.1 Identify strategic partnerships and build relationships.
- 3.2 Create state-wide opportunities for collaboration across all providers of public recreation and relevant partners.
- 3.3 Elevate the role of park staff and regional managers in their communities and regions.
- 3.4 Formalize partnerships where they exist.

## Goal #4: Strengthen Communications

### Objectives:

- 4.1 Develop and implement a department marketing strategy.
- 4.2 Execute a plan for non-marketing external communications.
- 4.3 Improve internal communication methods.



## Goal #5: Connect Generations through Experiences

### Objectives:

- 5.1 Understand customers and identify their needs.
- 5.2 Inventory experience opportunities.
- 5.3 Prioritize and improve experience opportunities.

## Goal #6: Embrace Opportunities and Sustain Resources

### Objectives:

- 6.1 Maintain and improve resources.
- 6.2 Investigate alternatives for asset management systems.
- 6.3 Explore development opportunities.



## **Parks and Recreation is Essential to North Dakota**

Strategic planning requires active participation in a process that results in setting a vision for the future that is grounded in current realities. In North Dakota, the outdoor recreation economy generates 30,000 direct jobs that results in \$3.1 billion in consumer spending and generates \$179 million in state and local tax revenues according to the Outdoor Recreation Foundation. There is no doubt that parks and recreation provide a vital role in North Dakota's future that supports economic vitality, workforce recruitment and retention and improves community health.

## **Ownership and Commitment**

The process utilized as a part of this strategic planning effort was an inclusive effort to intentionally build the social capital, trust, motivation and ability to collaborate with partners, stakeholders and the public. The implementation of the goals and objectives will occur at various organizational levels, so that all people feel a sense of ownership and responsibility towards North Dakota's areas of regional and state-wide significance.

## **The Foundation for the Future**

The goals and objectives reflect the values as seen through the eyes of the public and the department's employees. As changes occur in the context of budgets, staffing and organizational structure, these values will guide management decisions. North Dakota Parks and Recreation is already perceived as the leaders in the profession. The ability for the department to build upon their collective strengths and core mission is the foundation for which the department will continue to achieve success.



## MISSION

We offer a diversity of recreation opportunities and sustainably manage resources.

## VISION

Enriching generations through experiences that connect people and places.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

2018 - 2022

<p><b>CULTIVATE PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE</b></p> <p>IDENTIFY STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND BUILD RELATIONSHIPS</p> <p>CREATE STATE-WIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION ACROSS ALL PROVIDERS OF PUBLIC RECREATION AND RELEVANT PARTNERS</p> <p>ELEVATE THE ROLE OF PARK STAFF AND REGIONAL MANAGERS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES AND REGIONS</p> <p>FORMALIZE PARTNERSHIPS WHERE THEY EXIST</p>	<p><b>OPTIMIZE PLANNING</b></p> <p>CREATE CONSISTENT PLANNING FRAMEWORK</p> <p>DEVELOP A CYCLICAL PLANNING STRATEGY</p> <p>DEVELOP TRACKING SYSTEM FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PLANS</p>	<p><b>CREATE A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT</b></p> <p>DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A DEPARTMENT WIDE TRAINING PROGRAM</p> <p>IMPLEMENT A PROGRAM TO IMPROVE AGENCY PROCESSES</p> <p>RECOGNIZE EMPLOYEE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF AGENCY EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY</p>	<p><b>STRENGTHEN COMMUNICATIONS</b></p> <p>DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A DEPARTMENT MARKETING STRATEGY</p> <p>EXECUTE A PLAN FOR NON-MARKETING EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS</p> <p>IMPROVE INTERNAL COMMUNICATION METHODS</p>	<p><b>CONNECT GENERATIONS THROUGH EXPERIENCES</b></p> <p>UNDERSTAND CUSTOMERS AND IDENTIFY THEIR NEEDS</p> <p>INVENTORY EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>PRIORITIZE AND IMPROVE EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES</p>	<p><b>EMBRACE OPPORTUNITIES &amp; SUSTAIN RESOURCES</b></p> <p>MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE RESOURCES</p> <p>INVESTIGATE ALTERNATIVES FOR ASSET MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS</p> <p>EXPLORE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES</p>
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## VALUES

Stewardship · Service · Experiences · Leadership · Partnerships

CURRENT AS OF: MAY 22, 2018

Prepared for:



Stewardship • Service • Experiences • Leadership • Partnerships

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Prepared by:



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Business & Executive Coaching - Organizational Development