



# DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN PARKS AND RECREATION



NATIONAL RECREATION  
AND PARK ASSOCIATION



A person wears a butterfly costume at a park in Denton, Texas.

Photo courtesy of Denton Parks and Recreation





A young boy participates in an adaptive climbing program hosted by Glenwood Springs (Colorado) Parks and Recreation.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF JOE VAN WYK, CITY OF GLENWOOD SPRINGS PARKS AND RECREATION

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# INTRODUCTION

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF MESA PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES



Participants enthusiastically partake in a cheer performance

Quality parks and recreation is essential to individual and community health, well-being and resilience. At the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), it is our mission to help build vibrant and thriving communities by supporting park and recreation professionals in meeting their emerging and future challenges.

One challenge — and strength — within most communities is difference: in race, ethnicity, gender identity, religion, socio-economic status, age, language, or physical or mental abilities and skills. Differences “meet” on the playground; park and recreation professionals operate at the intersection of those differences.

Since 2013, Equity — previously referred to as “social equity” — has been one of NRPA’s Three Pillars: Health and Wellness, Equity and Conservation. These three areas of focus have moved the park and recreation field from communicating “what we do” to focusing on the impact we have. This includes NRPA centering equity in all of its work.

Conversations, learning opportunities and research have been integral parts of NRPA’s focus. The *2021 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Parks and Recreation Report* highlighted findings

from a national survey of park and recreation leaders that informed NRPA’s strategy in supporting professionals in the field as they work to enhance the quality of life for all people. The question is: What has been the impact of NRPA’s work so far?

In April 2023, the NRPA Research team surveyed park and recreation leaders to gain a better understanding of their agencies’ efforts surrounding diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) practices. The 20-question survey, a follow-up to the 2021 study, took inventory of park and recreation agency DEI activities, the professional development opportunities provided to agency staff and volunteers, and the challenges organizations face in their efforts to promote DEI practices. The survey’s 294 responses from park and recreation leaders across the United States are the basis for this report.

# INFOGRAPHIC: DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

Nearly 2 in 3 park and recreation agencies have established formal diversity, equity and inclusion activities or plan to establish them in the immediate future.



92 percent of park and recreation agencies offer diversity, equity and inclusion education and resources to their staff.



6 in 7 park and recreation leaders agree that park and recreation inequity is a problem nationally.



Agencies' diversity, equity and inclusion staff leaders include directors, senior leadership, dedicated staff, human resources employees and program staff.





# KEY FINDINGS

PHOTO COURTESY OF DREAMSTIME.COM/MATHAYWARD



A group of happy kids play outside.

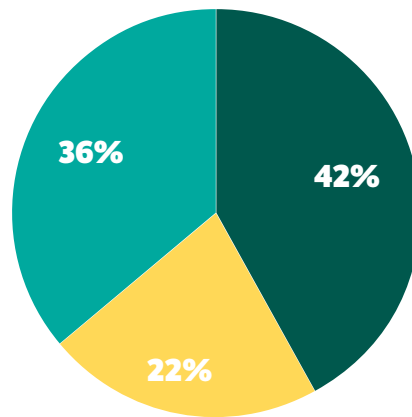
Forty-two percent of park and recreation agencies currently have formal diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs, an eight-percentage-point increase from 2021. Another 22 percent of park and recreation leaders anticipate that their agencies will establish formal DEI activities within the next year. The remaining 36 percent of survey respondents report that their agencies do not have plans to launch formal DEI initiatives in the immediate future.

Formal DEI programs are more common at park and recreation agencies that serve highly populated communities. Sixty-six percent of respondents from agencies serving communities of at least 100,000 residents report that their organizations have established formal DEI activities, with another 18 percent

of respondents indicating that their agencies will be launching formal DEI activities within the next year. One-third of agencies serving jurisdictions of fewer than 50,000 people currently have formal DEI programs, with another 23 percent expecting to establish such programs in the immediate future.

## Nearly 2 in 3 Park and Recreation Agencies Have, or Plan to Have in the Immediate Future, Established Formal Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Activities

(Percentage Distribution of Agencies)



- Currently has established formal DEI activities
- Does not currently have established formal DEI activities, but plans to do so within the next year
- Does not currently have established formal DEI activities and has no immediate plans to do so

Staff, rather than external third parties, lead most park and recreation agencies' DEI activities, with agency leaders typically guiding the work. Nearly half of all agencies rely on key members of their management teams. These staff leaders fall within four major categories:

- Senior leadership (assistant director, superintendent, deputy director)
- Human resources (HR)/Administration (HR administrator, HR director, director of business/finance services)
- Program staff (recreation and sports specialists/managers/supervisors/therapeutic recreation specialist)

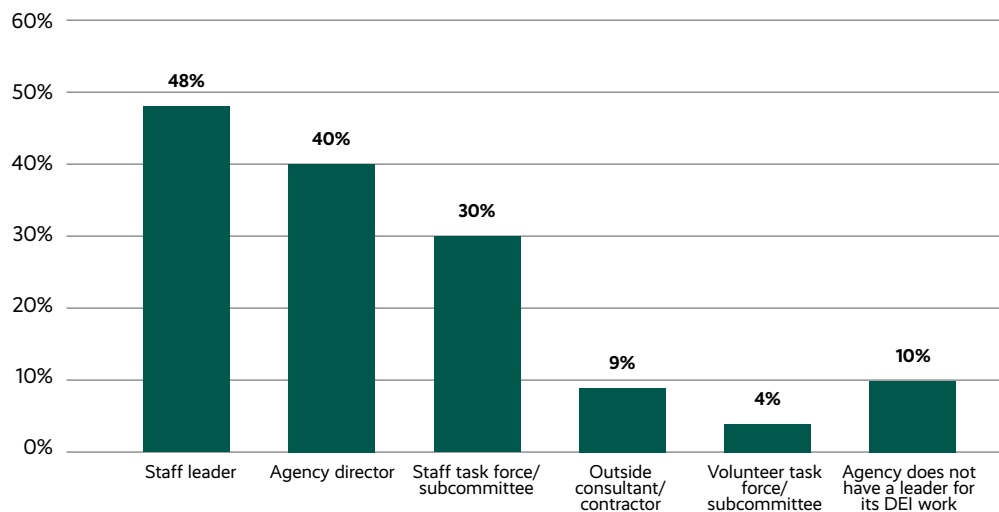
- Dedicated DEI/equity staff (Chief equity officer, DEI supervisor/manager/coordinator, director of equity and inclusion)

Four in 10 agency directors oversee their current (or will oversee any future) formal DEI activities. At 30 percent of agencies, a staff task force and/or subcommittee play an important role in DEI activities.

Agencies are less likely to use non-staff resources to lead their DEI activities. For example, less than 10 percent of agencies use an external consultant or contractor to lead their DEI activities, while a mere four percent have a volunteer task force or subcommittee.

### Park and Recreation Leaders Oversee Their Agencies' Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Activities

(Percent of Agencies That Currently Have Established DEI Activities or Will Be Establishing DEI Activities Within a Year)



Virtually every park and recreation agency across the nation has activities and policies that promote DEI outcomes. This includes just less than half (46 percent of survey respondents) of park and recreation agencies that have an expressed commitment to DEI in their foundational documents — including vision and mission statements and strategic plans.

More common are efforts that ensure a diverse and inclusive workforce at a particular agency. Seventy-four percent of survey respondents indicate that their agencies have instituted hiring practices and policies to promote a more diverse workforce.

Many park and recreation agencies also provide DEI-related education and professional development opportunities for their staff and volunteers. These offerings include:

- Staff education/skill development (at 56 percent of agencies)
- Volunteer education/skill development (49 percent)

Agencies also have established DEI practices that shape how they interact with their communities, including:

- Community engagement policies (cited by 43 percent of respondents)

- Intentional outreach to underserved communities for feedback and input (41 percent)
- Recreation programming policies (39 percent)
- Volunteer recruitment practices and policies (34 percent)
- Contracting/Procurement requirements (e.g., minority or women business enterprise programs) (33 percent)

Other DEI-focused practices found at many park and recreation agencies include:

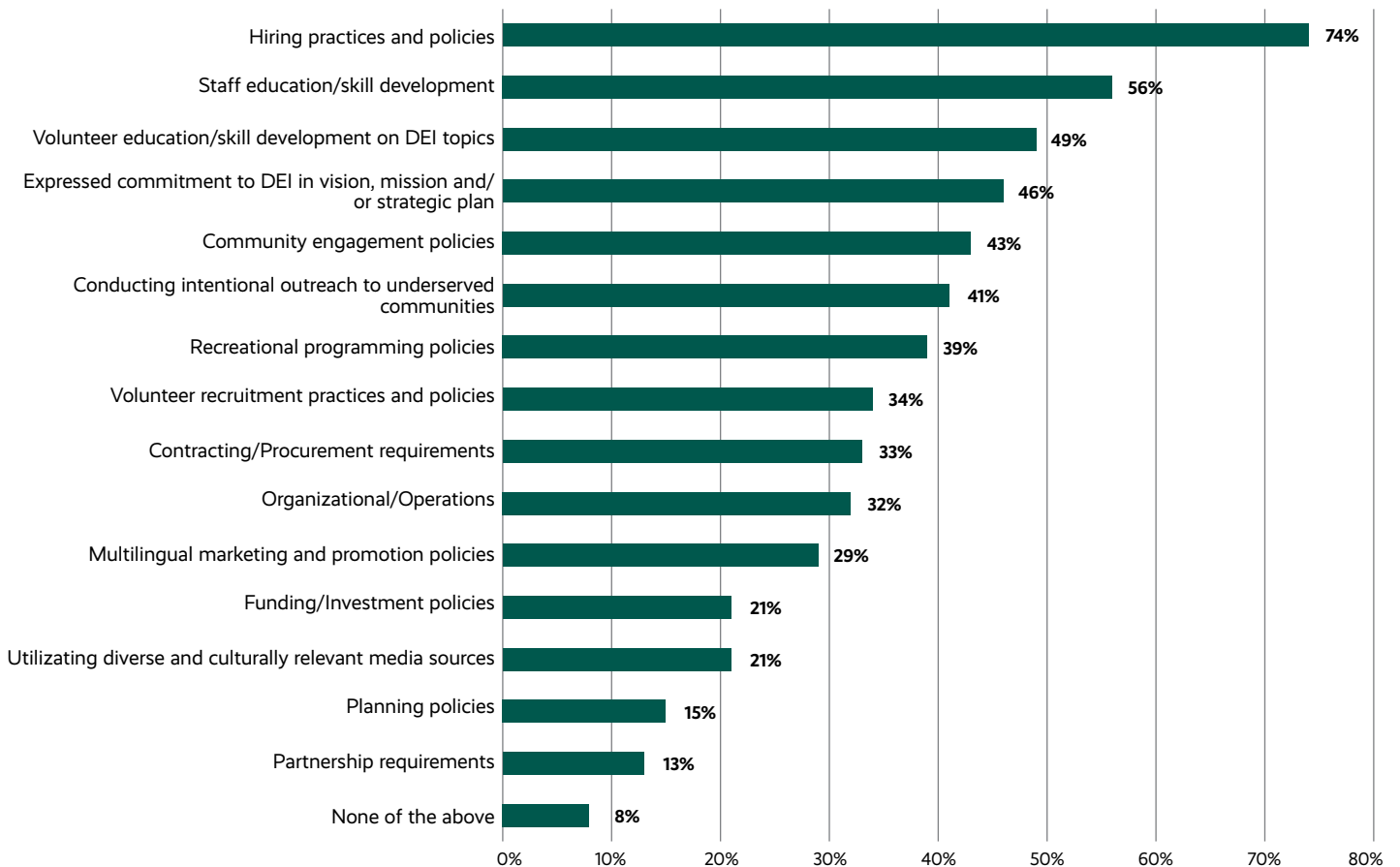
- Policies for providing marketing materials and promotions in multiple languages (cited by 29 percent of respondents)
- Funding/Investment policies (21 percent)
- Utilizing diverse and culturally relevant media sources for marketing (21 percent)
- Planning policies (e.g., land acquisition, zoning, transportation) (15 percent)
- Partnership requirements (e.g., commitment to DEI) (13 percent)

Agencies serving jurisdictions of 100,000 or more residents are much more likely than those serving smaller populations (less than 50,000 residents) to have policies and practices associated with:

- Hiring (79 percent in larger populations compared to 61 percent in smaller populations)
- Expressed commitment to DEI in foundational documents (63 percent compared to 32 percent)
- Offering staff education/skill development (62 percent compared to 38 percent)
- Providing education/skill development on DEI topics for professional staff and volunteers (62 percent compared to 43 percent)
- Community engagement (57 percent compared to 22 percent)
- Recreational programming (47 percent compared to 32 percent)

## 9 in 10 Park and Recreation Agencies Have Activities and Policies That Promote Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

(Percent of Agencies)





Park and recreation leaders continue to face significant challenges in promoting diversity and establishing inclusionary and equitable practices at their agencies. Nine in 10 leaders overall and 95 percent of leaders serving populations of at least 100,000 report that they face challenges in promoting their DEI practices and goals. Nearly three in five park and recreation leaders report difficulty in developing staff capacity and competency around DEI. Making sure that agency staffing reflects the community that the agency serves is another obstacle. Forty-one percent of agency leaders report difficulty in recruiting candidates for park and recreation jobs who reflect the communities they serve.

Fostering greater community engagement remains an area for improvement for many park and recreation agencies. Forty-three percent of survey respondents indicate that they are seeking ways to build trust with the communities their agencies serve. Further, efforts that ensure all members of their communities have access to and enjoy their parks, facilities and programming is a challenge at 39 percent of agencies.

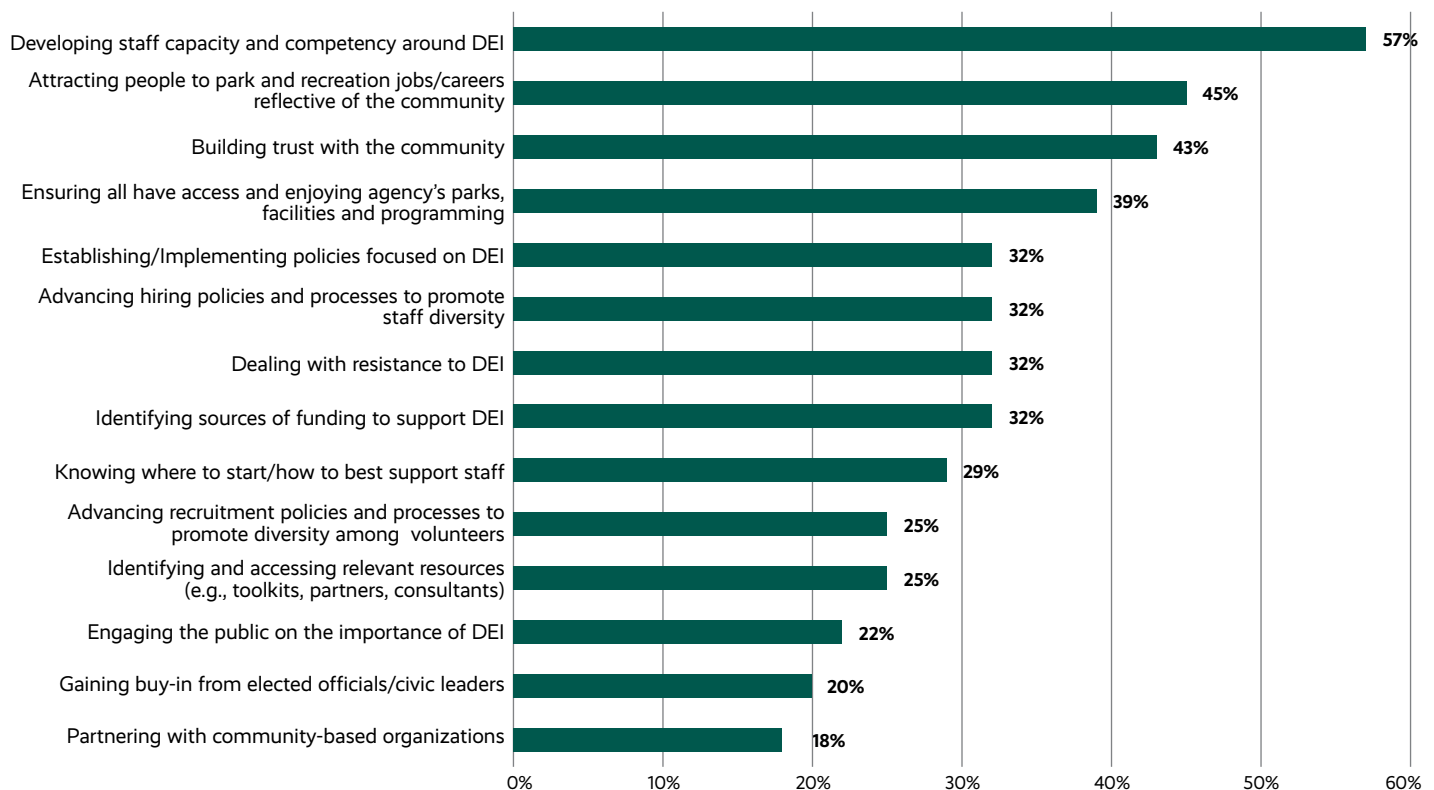
Park and recreation agency leaders cite additional challenges

their agencies face in efforts to promote diversity and establish inclusionary and equitable practices, including:

- Identifying sources of funding to support DEI (cited by 32 percent of respondents)
- Establishing/Implementing policies focused on DEI (32 percent)
- Dealing with resistance to DEI (32 percent)
- Advancing hiring policies and processes to promote staff diversity (32 percent)
- Knowing where to start/how to best support staff (29 percent)
- Advancing recruitment policies and processes to promote diversity among agency volunteers (25 percent)
- Identifying and accessing relevant resources (25 percent)
- Engaging the public on the importance of DEI (22 percent)
- Gaining buy-in from elected officials/civic leaders (20 percent)
- Partnering with community-based organizations (18 percent)

## 9 in 10 Park and Recreation Leaders Face Challenges in Their Efforts to Promote Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Practices

(Percent of Agencies That Currently Have DEI Activities or Will Be Establishing DEI Activities Within a Year)



A formal equity assessment (or audit) is a systematic process that reviews an organization’s policies and practices, and can identify, target and redress disparate outcomes that are based on various demographic characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, gender or income. The resulting recommendations usually are documented as measurable goals or outcomes that guide departmental and organizational changes. An informal assessment usually involves a review process of policies and practices but does not focus on the entire organization. It most likely looks at a smaller subsection or function of the organization, such as hiring policies or youth sports practices.

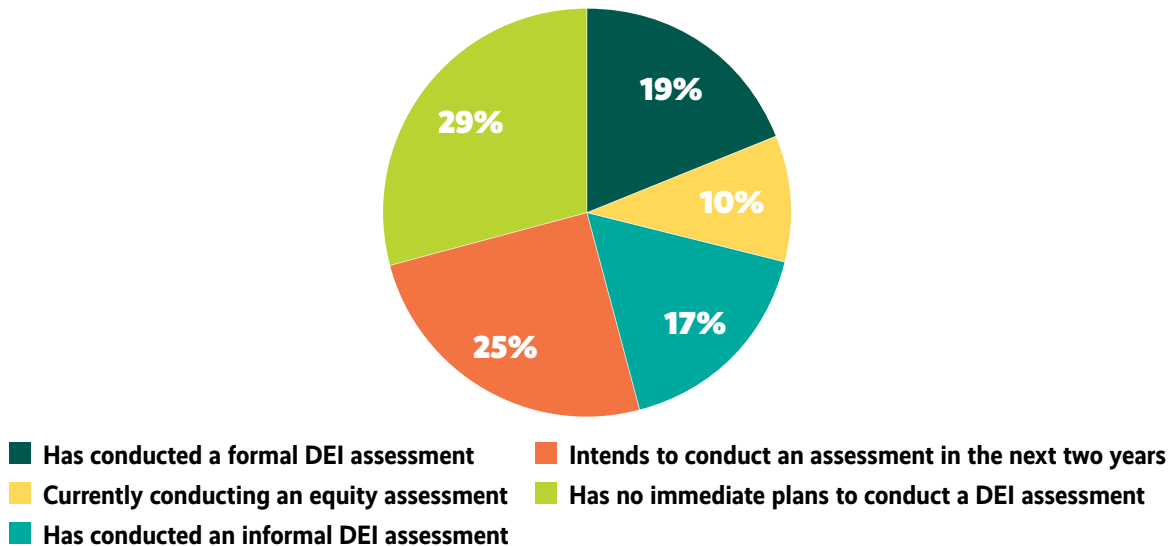
While a majority of park and recreation agencies have not conducted any formal equity assessment, a significant share has done so. Nineteen percent of park and recreation leaders indicate that their agencies have conducted a formal equity assessment within the past five years, with another 10 percent reporting that their organizations currently are conducting such an assessment. Seventeen percent of agencies have undertaken an informal DEI assessment within the past five

years. Looking to the future, 25 percent of park and recreation leaders plan to conduct an equity assessment within the next two years. Twenty-nine percent of agencies have neither conducted an equity assessment nor plan to do so in the near future.

Agencies that serve more populous jurisdictions are more likely than other agencies to have conducted some sort of DEI assessment. Twenty-eight percent of agencies that serve a population of at least 100,000 people have conducted a formal DEI assessment within the past five years, while another 22 percent have conducted an informal DEI assessment. In comparison, only 12 percent of agencies serving jurisdictions of less than 50,000 people have conducted a formal DEI assessment, while 14 percent have done an informal assessment. Twenty-two percent of agencies that serve at least 100,000 or more residents and 42 percent of agencies that serve less than 50,000 residents are currently conducting or anticipate conducting a DEI assessment in the next two years.

### 7 in 10 Park and Recreation Agencies Have Conducted or Plan to Conduct an Equity Assessment Within the Next Two Years

(Percent of Agencies That Currently Have DEI Activities or Will Be Establishing DEI Activities Within a Year)



More than nine in 10 park and recreation agencies offer their staff education, training and resources that promote DEI. In 2021, the percentage of agencies doing the same was 79 percent. Topics covered in agencies’ DEI education offerings include:

- Implicit bias
- Adaptive and inclusive programming
- Gender identity
- Hiring practices
- Cultural awareness
- Marketing and outreach to all

The most common delivery methods for staff DEI education are webinars and in-person training, each of which is offered by 70 percent of agencies. Slightly more than a third of agencies provide staff with financial support (e.g., tuition, travel reimbursement) to participate in external professional development activities. Agencies serving large jurisdictions (100,000 or more people) are more likely than those serving smaller populations (less than 50,000 people) to make the following available to their staff:

- Webinars (72 percent compared to 58 percent)
- In-person training (75 percent compared to 63 percent)
- Financial support for external professional development opportunities (40 percent compared to 33 percent)

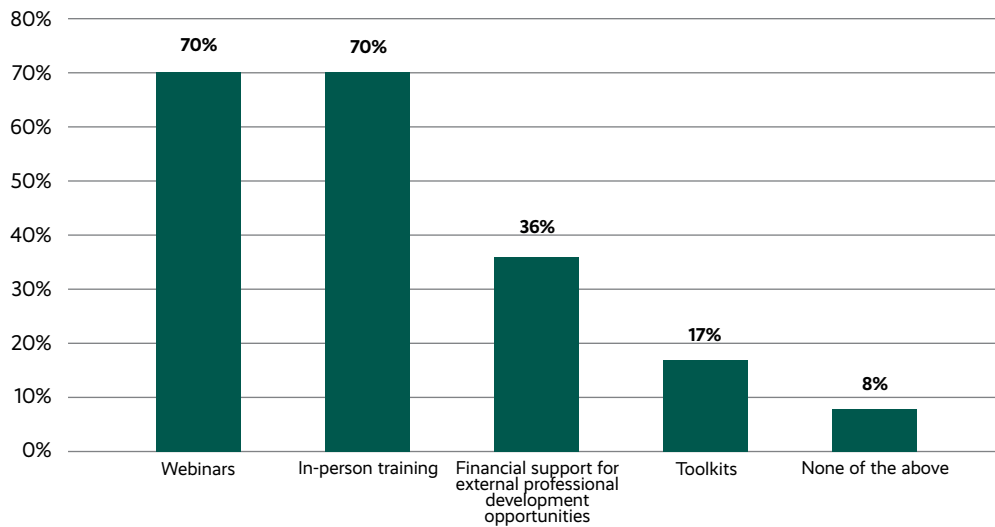


PHOTO COURTESY OF SUMMIT METRO PARKS

People participate in Summit Metro Parks' Cycling Without Age Adaptive Bike Rides program in Akron, Ohio.

## Ninety-Two Percent of Park and Recreation Agencies Offer Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Education and Resources to Staff

(Percent of Agencies That Currently Have DEI Activities or Will Be Establishing DEI Activities Within a Year)



A majority of park and recreation professionals indicate that their local political leaders view DEI in parks and recreation as important. Fifty-seven percent of survey respondents report that DEI in parks and recreation is important to their local jurisdictions' political leaders (e.g., mayors, city managers, county executives, council members), while 19 percent indicate that such efforts are unimportant to local leaders. Sixty-one percent of leaders from agencies serving populations of 100,000 or more report that their local jurisdictions' leaders place a high level of importance on DEI in parks and recreation compared to 48 percent of respondents from those agencies serving smaller jurisdictions (less than 50,000). Conversely, more than a third of agencies serving jurisdictions of less than 50,000 residents note that diversity, equity and inclusion in parks and recreation is of low importance to their local jurisdictions' leaders. Eleven percent of

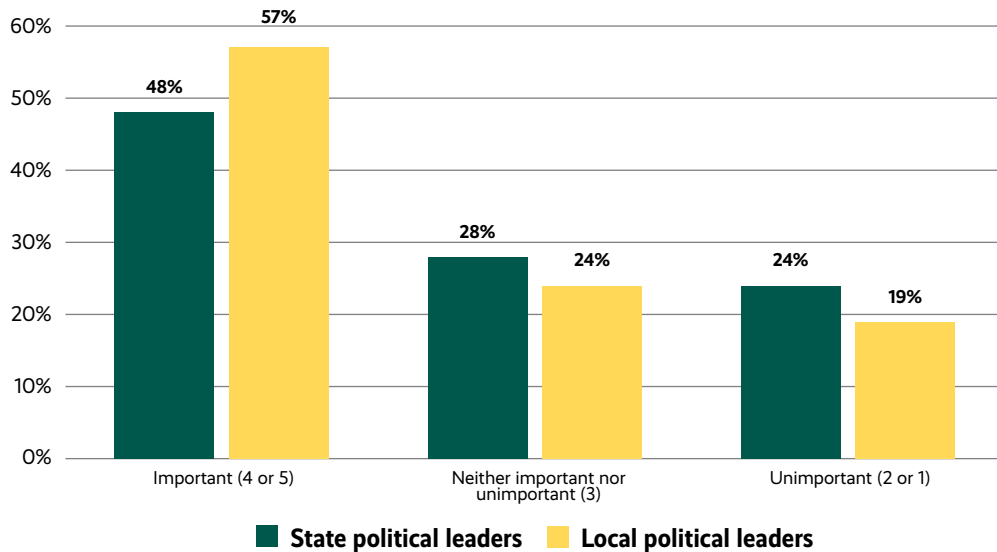
agencies serving populations of at least 100,000 report that DEI in parks and recreation is of low importance to their local jurisdictions' leaders.

A smaller share of agency leaders agree that their state-level political leaders (e.g., governors, state legislators) place a high degree of importance on DEI in parks and recreation compared to their local leaders. Forty-eight percent of survey respondents report that DEI in parks and recreation is important to their states' political leaders, while 24 percent indicate that such efforts are unimportant to state leaders. Sixty-two percent of leaders from agencies serving smaller jurisdictions (less than 50,000 people) indicate that their states' leaders place a high level of importance on DEI in parks and recreation compared to 52 percent of respondents from larger agencies (population of at least 100,000).



## Park and Recreation Leaders Report Support for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Activities by Local and State Political Leaders

(Percentage Distribution of Five-Point Scale Rating)

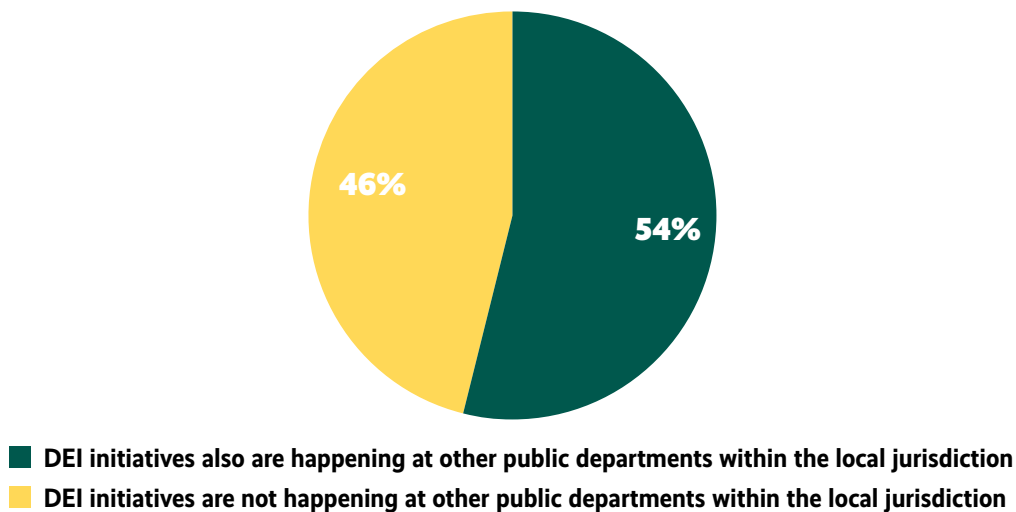


Slightly more than half of park and recreation leaders (54 percent) note that DEI efforts take place not only in their agencies but also throughout their local government. Seven in 10 respondents from agencies serving populations of at least 100,000 report that other local government departments have

established DEI activities compared to 30 percent of respondents from agencies serving jurisdictions of less than 50,000 people. In most of the cases, DEI efforts span across all jurisdiction agencies and departments with leadership coming from a mayor's, county executive's or city manager's office.

## In Many Communities, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives Span Across All Government Departments Beyond Parks and Recreation

(Percentage Distribution of Respondents)



Park and recreation leaders hold their agencies accountable for their DEI initiatives and use metrics that measure and track progress toward their goals. Approximately half of agencies take the following actions regarding race, ethnicity, gender, disability and income level:

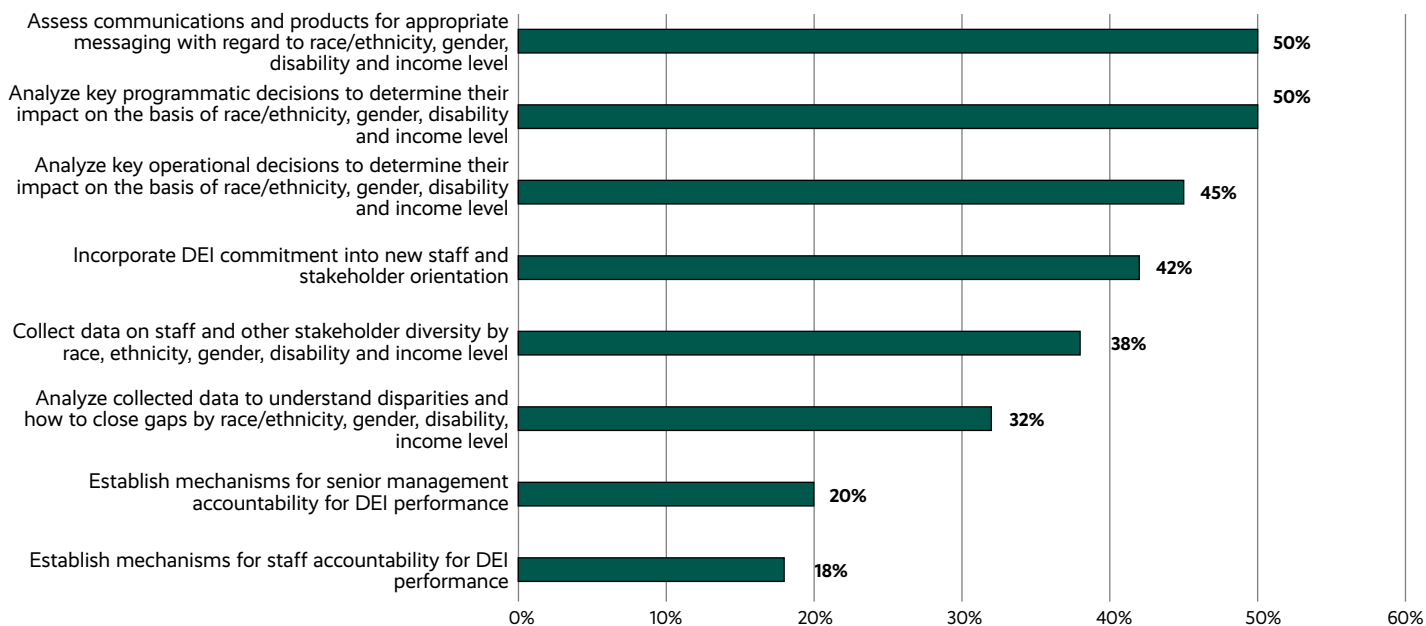
- Assess communications and products for appropriate messaging (cited by 50 percent of respondents)
- Analyze key programmatic decisions to determine their impact (50 percent)
- Analyze key operational decisions to determine their impact (45 percent)

Many agencies hold the staff and key stakeholders accountable for DEI efforts through:

- Incorporating DEI commitment into new staff and stakeholder orientation (cited by 42 percent of respondents)
- Collecting data on staff and other stakeholder (e.g., partners, vendors, community) diversity by race, ethnicity, gender, disability and income level (38 percent)
- Analyzing collected data to understand disparities and how to close gaps by race/ethnicity, gender, disability, income level (32 percent)
- Establishing mechanisms for senior management accountability for DEI performance (20 percent)
- Establishing mechanisms for staff accountability for DEI performance (18 percent)

## Park and Recreation Agencies Hold Themselves Accountable for Their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives

(Percent of Agencies With Established DEI Activities)



The United States has developed a robust infrastructure of local, state and national parks and recreation spaces, including the establishment of the National Park Service and programs focused on urban parks (e.g., the “City Beautiful” movement). Parks are essential infrastructure, adding beauty, clean water and clean air, as well as places for exploration, recreation, socialization and peace. However, historical and contemporary land-use policies have shaped access to these spaces in an inequitable fashion — in ways that continue to make it easier

for some, and much harder for others, to experience and benefit from parks, recreation and open spaces. NRPA survey data finds that more than 100 million people — 29 percent of the U.S. population — lack walkable access to the benefits parks and recreation provides.

Park and recreation leaders agree that inequitable provision of park and recreation infrastructure, amenities and programming by race is a problem in the United States. Six in seven

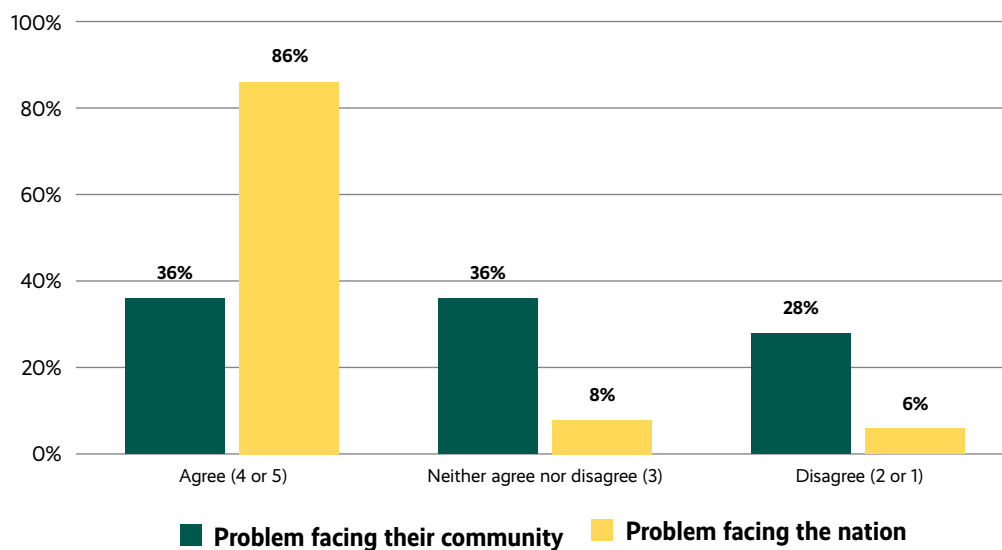
survey respondents note that park and recreation inequity is a nationwide problem. Fifty-seven percent strongly agree that inequity is a national problem, with another 28 percent rating this issue a “4” on the five-point scale. This sentiment is consistent regardless of agency size or location.

The same park and recreation leaders, however, are less likely to characterize access to park and recreation services and amenities as inequitable in their local communities. Just more than one-third of park and recreation leaders agree that park and recreation inequity is a problem in their communities, rating this as a “4” or “5” on a five-point scale. Twenty-eight percent of survey respondents disagree with the assertion that the delivery of park and recreation services and amenities is inequitable, while 36 percent neither agree nor disagree with the sentiment.

**Park access is defined as just and fair quantity, proximity and connections to quality parks, green spaces and recreation facilities, as well as programming that is safe, inclusive, culturally relevant and welcoming to everyone.**

### Park and Recreation Leaders Agree That Inequitable Provision of Park and Recreation Infrastructure, Amenities and Programming By Race Is a Problem; They Are More Optimistic About Their Own Communities

(Percentage Distribution of Five-Point Scale Rating)



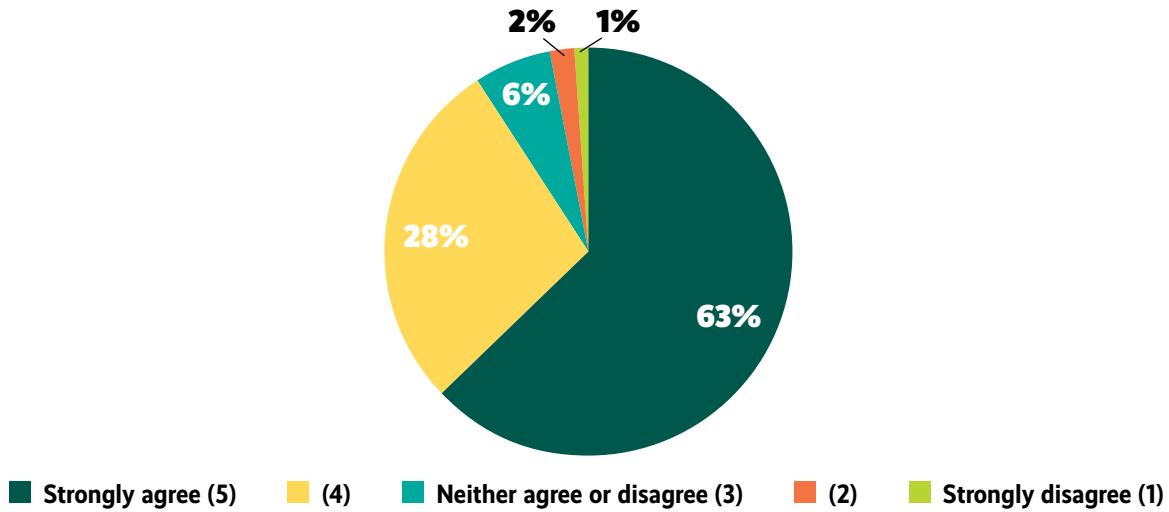
Regardless of whether or not they see inequity in their localities, an overwhelming majority of park and recreation leaders want the profession to address the inequitable delivery of park and recreation infrastructure, amenities and programming. More than nine in 10 survey respondents agree that address-

ing inequity in parks and recreation is an important mission for those in their field. Sixty-two percent of leaders strongly agree with this mission, rating it a “5” on a five-point scale. Only three percent of survey respondents disagree that the park and recreation profession should address inequities.



## Park and Recreation Leaders Agree It Is Important to Address Park and Recreation Inequities

(Percentage Distribution of Respondents)

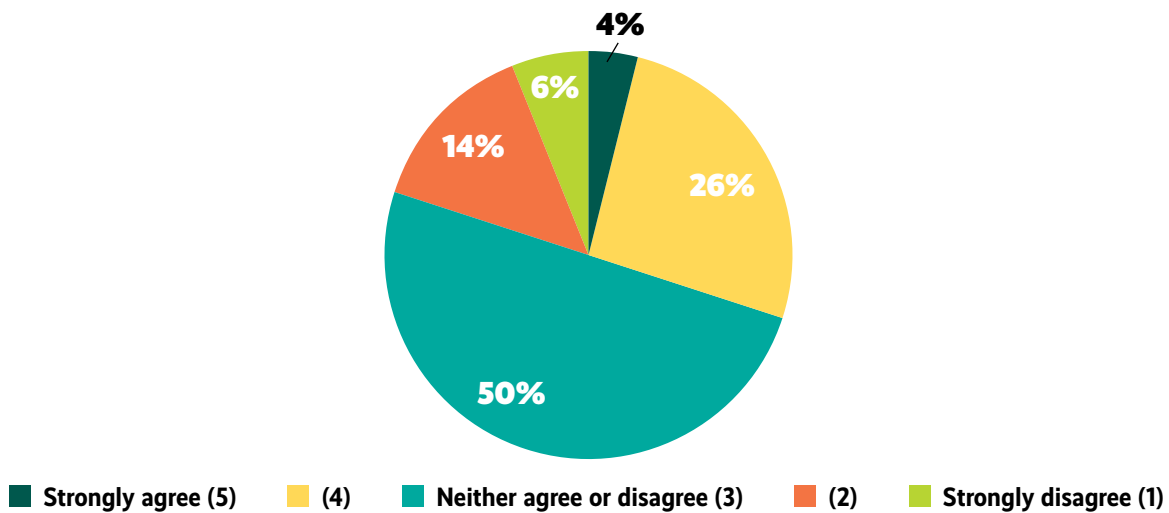


Most park and recreation leaders believe that their profession is not adequately addressing park and recreation inequities. Thirty percent of survey respondents agree that the pace at which parks and recreation is addressing inequity is appropriate, with only four percent strongly agreeing with the statement. Twenty percent of park and recreation leaders do not agree that the field is sufficiently addressing inequities, while half of survey

respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Respondents from park and recreation agencies serving less than 50,000 residents are more likely to agree that the pace at which the field of parks and recreation is addressing inequity is appropriate than are their peers at agencies serving populations of at least 100,000 people (48 percent versus 25 percent, respectively).

## Most Park and Recreation Leaders Say the Park and Recreation Field Should Do More to Address Inequities

(Percentage Distribution of Respondents Based on Their Agreement on Whether the Pace at Which the Field Addresses Inequity Is Appropriate)



# CONCLUSION



A group of people gather with Vernon Township Recreation and Community Affairs in a park in Vernon Township, New Jersey.

PHOTO COURTESY OF VERNON TOWNSHIP RECREATION AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

This study's key findings mirror those of our 2021 report. Still, there are two notable new findings. First, a third of park and recreation leaders call out “dealing with resistance to DEI [diversity, equity and inclusion]” as a challenge that they and their agencies face in their efforts to promote diversity and establish inclusionary and equitable practices. Second, an overwhelming majority of survey respondents agree that inequitable provision of park and recreation infrastructure, amenities and programming by race is a national problem (facing their community and facing the nation), but “only” one-third sees it as a problem facing their own communities.

Both findings suggest there are education and communication opportunities for the profession, the public and NRPA to better understand and address equity gaps at the local, state and national levels. NRPA survey data of the U.S. public find that there is strong support for equitable access to parks and recreation, and that support spans demographic and political groupings. The question is: What are the next steps to take to achieve this crucial goal? The answer starts with park and recreation leaders focusing on their ability to affect their local communities.

This report builds on the 2021 study to provide a better understanding of the current state of DEI work across the field, the professionals who lead the work, and highlights the

opportunities for NRPA to continue to support its members. The conclusions from the 2021 report illustrated four themes: targeted support for smaller agencies, building member capacity and competency in DEI, best practices and peer networks, and trusted resources. Using these same themes, here are some key takeaways from the 2023 survey results.

## Targeted Support for Smaller Agencies

Smaller agencies continue to face challenges in initiating and implementing DEI practices. In 2021, three in five agencies serving populations of at least 100,000 had established formal DEI activities, with only a quarter of agencies serving less than 50,000 people having done the same. In 2023, smaller

agencies are less likely to have conducted a formal or informal assessment, and to have established policies and practices that address or advance diversity, equity and inclusion — the difference increasing slightly since 2021.

## Building Member Capacity and Competency in DEI

As in the 2021 survey, agency leaders report that the most common DEI activities and/or policies in 2023 center around hiring practices and policies and education/skill development for staff and volunteers. At the same time, nearly three in five park and recreation leaders report significant challenges in providing staff and volunteers with consistent opportunities to learn. Specific challenges noted are:

- The lack of funding for multilingual tools and resources
- Difficulty creating partnerships with underrepresented communities/community engagement
- Knowing where to start (especially for small agencies)
- Hiring staff who reflect the community/Knowing what to do when staff does not reflect community
- Dealing with resistance to DEI

## Best Practices and Peer Networks

Two of our most-valued member benefits — networking and sharing of best practices — are reflected in the survey results, with leaders asking about what others are doing across the field.

- “As a practitioner, I would like to see materials on best practices for creating equity in access and opportunity.”
- “NRPA provides a lot of tools and resources currently... [that may] outpace the progress of the average park and recreation agency. I think a sliding scale of resources for those in the beginning stages versus those that are more advanced would be appropriate. Not that the work isn’t needed, but agencies may be dismayed or turned off if they feel they have to take drastic steps to ‘catch up’ and thus may make no change at all. Baby steps are better than no steps at all.”

Leaders don’t just want to hear about best practices; they also want to engage with peers and get assistance on how to implement those practices.

## Trusted Resources

Similar to 2021, this year’s survey results highlight the various policies and programs already in place; agency leadership offer or support in-person and online training on topics, such as implicit bias, adaptive and inclusive programming, gender identity and cultural awareness. When asked what type of

support or assistance from NRPA would be valuable, the most common requests were:

- Toolkits, webinars, training (including conference sessions)
- Sample policies
- Information on how to start the conversation, (e.g., simple actions and where to start; especially when your community is not diverse)

The themes that emerged in 2021 (and remain salient in 2023) provided a foundation for the strategy of how NRPA supports diversity, equity and inclusion in the field. The approach that resulted, Equity in Practice (EiP), redefined how park and recreation professionals can advance equity. Through EiP, NRPA offers several different opportunities for members to engage in equity work that is specific to the needs of the industry, guided by the themes.



A young girl plays with crafts in Elk Grove, California.

PHOTO COURTESY OF COSUMINES CSD PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT, ELK GROVE, CALIFORNIA



**EiP Talks and Clinics** (smaller agency support; building member capacity and competency in DEI): A one-stop-shop of live and on-demand sessions presented by subject matter experts in the field, sharing their experience and what is working around DEI in their agencies and communities.

**DEI Leaders and State Affiliate DEI Network** (best practices and peer networking): Bimonthly calls and NRPA Connect groups facilitate peer learning, connection and support; DEI Leaders and State Affiliate DEI Network (NRPA login needed).

**EiP Certificate** (building member capacity and competency in DEI): A “train the trainer,” 12-week learning opportunity, designed specifically for park and recreation professionals, focused on skill-building and practice (think: What does this look like in my work?), culminating with a completed equity action plan. With the completion of the three certificates, agencies will have the option of taking the curriculum home to use for all staff (full- and part-time) and community partners.

**EiP Resource Library** (trusted resources): These curated resources support individual and group learning. These include toolkits, podcasts, articles and books.

The results from this survey give more guidance to refine NRPA’s support for DEI efforts and to inform this next phase — developing resources that meet agencies where they are. As is evident in various responses to the current survey, agency leaders recognize that they are in different places on the DEI spectrum — some having established DEI programs and policies, some departments having just started this work, and some looking for where to start. Park and recreation professionals should have resources that re-

fect those different places. To answer that need, NRPA will provide additional EiP resources that support those who are at the beginning and middle stages of their DEI work. Specifically:

- Creating “How Tos,” brief toolkits that focus on implementation and inclusion in common programs (think inclusive event naming, starting a DEI committee, inclusive swim attire and policies, etc.)
- Expanding the resource library and creating better filters/search capabilities so members can search based on where they are
- Pairing down of the EiP certificate curriculum for easier access and use
- Creating a bank of stories from the field highlighting what’s working and best practices, where members share examples of the work they are doing, focusing on simple ideas and changes that created improved outcomes

“We work so others can play” is the essence of what park and recreation professionals do. The majority of work to advance DEI within the field is led by agency staff — recreation specialists, program managers, HR departments — either as individuals or as members of a DEI committee. At NRPA, part of centering equity is progress over perfection, which is a good reminder that:

- All staff, regardless of title, have some power for creating change when they focus on their “sphere of influence.” What is yours?
- Informal assessments are just as useful as formal equity assessments. What’s an easy win? What do you have decision-making power over? Who can you work with to support change?
- Starting small and being consistent is better than doing nothing at all.



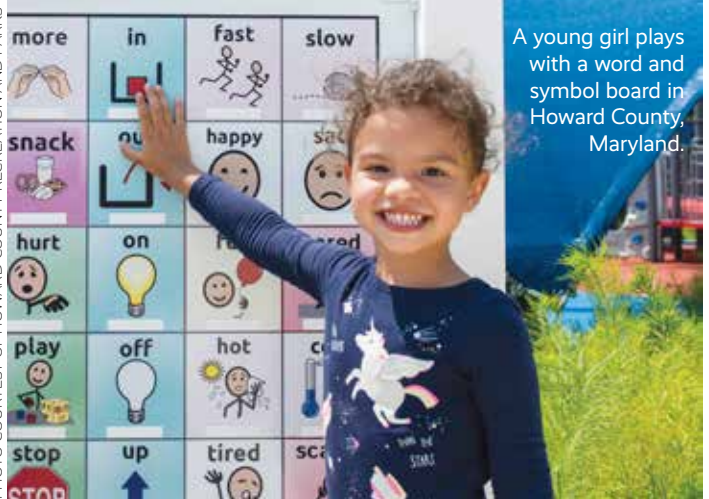
Community members attend a ribbon cutting event in Denver, Colorado.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CITY & COUNTY OF DENVER DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION

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PHOTO COURTESY OF HOWARD COUNTY RECREATION AND PARKS



A young girl plays with a word and symbol board in Howard County, Maryland.

# ABOUT NRPA

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is the leading not-for-profit organization dedicated to building strong, vibrant and resilient communities through the power of parks and recreation. With more than 60,000 members, NRPA advances this vision by investing in and championing the work of park and recreation professionals and advocates — the catalysts for positive change in service of equity, climate-readiness, and overall health and well-being.

NRPA brings strength to our message by partnering with like-minded organizations, including those in the federal government, nonprofits and commercial enterprises. Funded through dues, grants, registrations and charitable contributions, NRPA produces research, education and policy initiatives for our members that ultimately enrich the communities they serve.

NRPA places immense importance on research and data to raise the status of parks and recreation. We conduct research with two goals: First, NRPA creates and analyzes data to help park and recreation agencies make optimal decisions on operations, programming and spending. Second, NRPA develops data and insights that support park and recreation professionals making the case for greater and more stable funding to policymakers, key stakeholders, the media and the general public.

The NRPA Research team works closely with internal subject matter experts, respected industry consultants and the academic community to develop its reports and data resources. Learn more about NRPA research reports and resources at [nrpa.org/Research](https://nrpa.org/Research).



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