



National Recreation
and Park Association

Special Park District National Database Report



PRRORAGIS, short for Park and Recreation Operating Ratio and Geographic Information System, is NRPA’s cutting-edge, online management tool, designed for public park and recreation agencies—and FREE to all members of NRPA. PRORAGIS is a replacement for the NRPA standards that have guided land acquisition and development for the past 45 years. This data is much more accurate because you can compare standards with departments in your state or region and the data that is reported comprises actual numbers rather than a more generic national average. However PRORAGIS is multi-dimensional. It also provides assistance with the following typical park and recreation functions:

- Benchmark survey of peers;
- Master planning of parks;
- Comprehensive jurisdiction planning;
- Strategic planning;
- Business and revenue-generation planning;
- Marketing of facilities, programs and tourist attractions;
- Justification and defense of departmental budgets.

The PRORAGIS database gives us differing data pictures depending on the variables we choose. This means that in the future we expect to do some oversampling of PRORAGIS data to explore selected topics in more detail. These topics might include program operating data, fees and charges; and salary studies. However, as we are building the database the profiles from jurisdictional types are interesting to identify differences between each type.

The profiles in aggregate show the similarities and differences between the jurisdiction types. As the number of profiles increase it is likely that the overall character of the jurisdiction type will become more pronounced. The first group we studied was the County Departments, which we looked at in January. Some of you that are special agencies, but represent a county may find yourself in both categories.

This report focuses on profiles that have been submitted by Special Districts (35), Regional or Metro Authorities (4) and Independent Districts (7). There were actually more Profiles on the server than the 46 used for data. Many of them did not have key data points completed and thus could not be included in the aggregation.

As more agencies complete PRORAGIS profiles, the database for these groups will become more accurate and more useful to the members. It is probably not surprising that most of these agencies are located in Illinois. The following chart shows the distribution by state. If a state is not listed there were no profiles available from that state.

Jurisdiction State	Number
IL	23
CO	5
CA	3
GA	2
MI	2
OH	2
OR	2
KS	1
MD	1
MN	1
PA	1
TX	1
UT	1
WI	1

Your Jurisdiction

Regardless of how similar a department may seem to be for benchmarking or best practices analysis, you want to ensure that the target jurisdiction is a match to yours. Factors such as density, age ranges, population, finances, poverty, and growth rates, among others, are indicators of a similar jurisdiction’s suitability as a candidate for benchmarking studies. In addition to the medians and averages the display of upper and lower quartiles shows how distributed the data may be. For example, the operating budgets in the jurisdiction data table below vary by 1,000% and the population varies by about 500%.

Are the jurisdictions of similar size? What about the wealth of residents or the budgetary expenditures? All of these factors can be important in assessing a suitable benchmarking partner.

Jurisdiction Data Category	Median	Average	Lower Quartile	Upper Quartile
Square mileage that your incorporated jurisdiction serves	60	316	12	396
Jurisdiction Total Operating Budget	\$8,400,000	\$16,311,028	\$2,550,514	\$20,342,504
Jurisdiction Capital Budget	\$1,568,405	\$6,688,155	\$379,125	\$5,201,053
Jurisdiction per Capita Income	\$41,865	\$43,612	\$33,053	\$56,744
Jurisdiction Median Household Income	\$60,426	\$71,288	\$54,437	\$99,000
Jurisdiction Population	52,000	135,590	26,319	121,778

Other Jurisdiction Data Sets of Value

PRORAGIS has many values as a database designed for comparative analysis. There are a number of different data sets that may seem strange, but they are included because they enable users to judge what characteristics they are looking for in a benchmark or best practices study. For example, the demography table below is intended to give you a sense of the characteristics of a potential benchmark agency. The PRORAGIS reporting process allows you to view individual responses in side-by-side columns. This table shows the aggregated results of selected demographic groups. You will note that as an aggregate of agencies, the numbers eventually start to look like the national percentage for each group. For your benchmark study you may want to ensure that benchmark partners have a distribution of groups that are similar to those of your jurisdiction.

Jurisdiction Ethnic Distribution	Median	Average	Lower Quartile	Upper Quartile
White/Caucasian	77.10%	75.25%	66.70%	89.50%
Black/African American	4.15%	8.63%	1.08%	11.95%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.30%	0.37%	0.13%	0.40%
Asian	3.09%	4.56%	1.50%	5.25%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.07%	0.45%	0.00%	0.10%
Hispanic or Latino (any race) or Spanish Origin	6.90%	10.85%	4.14%	13.00%
Other	1.55%	1.87%	0.65%	2.98%

Note: These numbers may not add to 100% because they are compilations of all the agencies. These numbers are provided from the Census "Quick Facts" Tables from the U.S. Bureau of Census.

For example, Cleveland, Ohio and El Paso, Texas are both among the poorest cities in the nation. They are also reasonably similar in population. Yet Cleveland is 53% African American and 10% Hispanic, while El Paso is over 80% Hispanic and less than 4% African American.

Age data, economics and jurisdiction growth rates all influence the way a department within a jurisdiction will operate. Excessively young or old jurisdictions face differing challenges. These differences buttress the argument that all departments are unique.

Category	Median	Average	Lower Quartile	Upper Quartile
Percentage of jurisdiction population that is younger than 18 years of age	24.70%	24.86%	23.00%	26.70%
Percentage of jurisdiction population that is older than 65 years of age	11.40%	13.01%	9.43%	15.00%
Percentage of jurisdiction population that is below the poverty line	7.95%	10.85%	3.95%	12.00%
Jurisdiction population growth rate 2000-2010	4.90%	11.29%	0.50%	15.80%

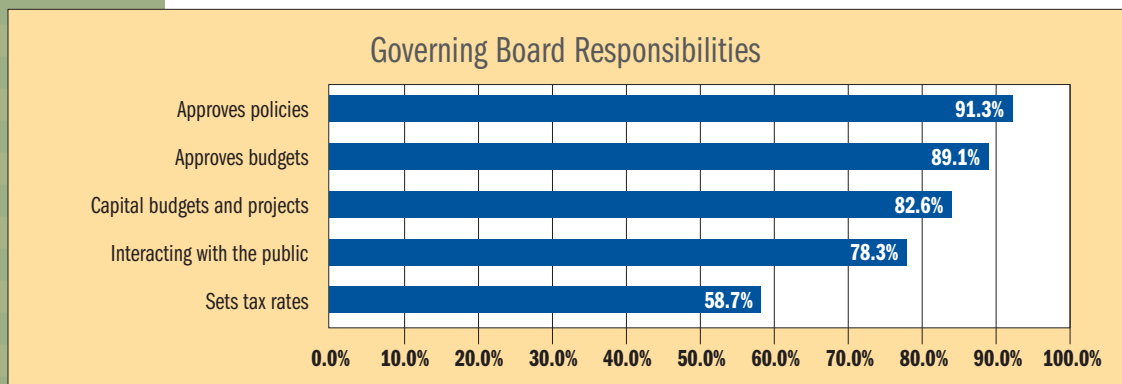


Your Department

Benchmark data does not select winners and losers. If you are looking at six jurisdictions that are similar in many aspects they will have differences in operating ratios. But, that does not mean that one is better than the other, just different. By ensuring that the jurisdictions are similar and that the department structure and functions are similar you can reduce the variation in the results. Your responsibility is to explain any differences. The following data points help to both find similar agencies and may provide an understanding for how they differ from you.

Boards and Commissions

Of the 44 respondents answering the question on boards and commissions, 12 indicated that their board was appointed by elected officials and 32 indicated that board members were elected. The respondents indicated that 39 of the boards were independent. The table below shows the functions typically performed by governing boards. This may be valuable for assessing the function of the board or commission for a department.

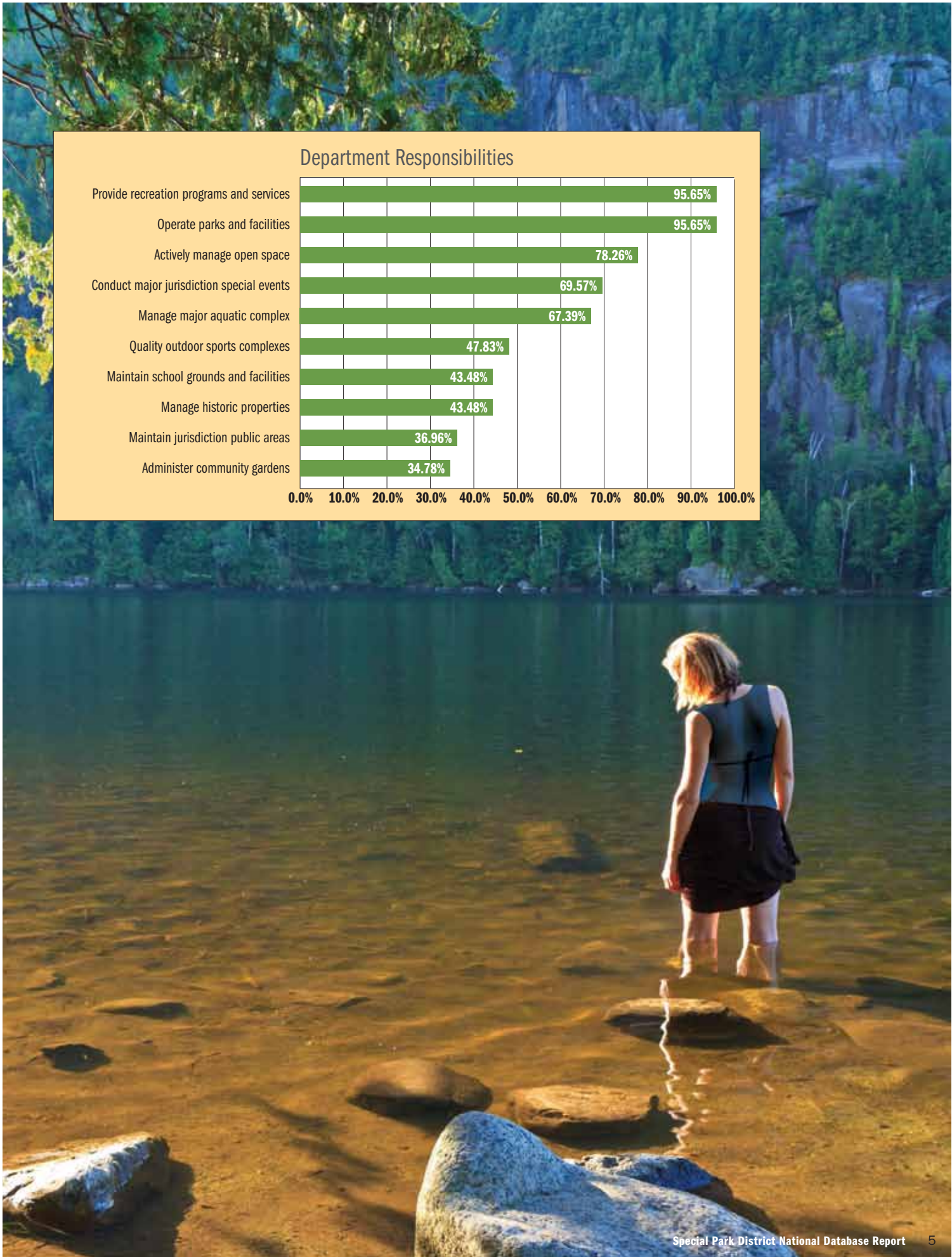
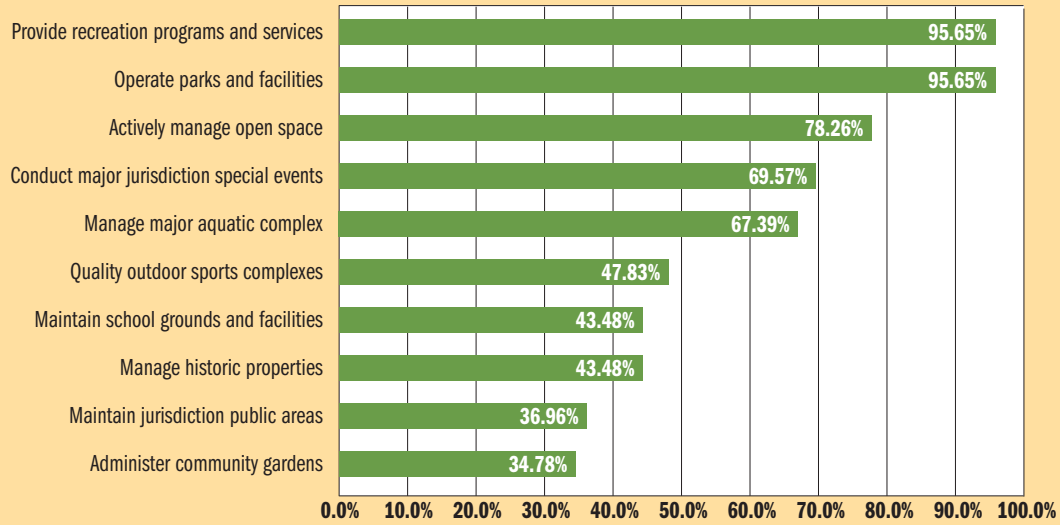


Department Responsibilities

Department responsibilities clearly show the different generic responsibilities of departments that may differ from your operation. For example, if you maintain school grounds you will most likely seek to compare yourself to other departments that do as well. However, if you are a southern department snow plowing may change the number of permanent staff for departments with staff who can be productive through the winter.

The table following addresses the primary functions that departments are responsible for carrying out. That is, 96.65% of agencies indicated they were responsible for operating and maintaining the parks and facilities. This implies that 3.35% of the respondents outsourced the work to another department or a private contractor. For responsibilities such as administering community gardens (34.78%), it can mean that either there is no community garden program or it is administered by another department.

Department Responsibilities





Specific Questions on Operations

Throughout the PRORAGIS profile there are a number of questions that reflect the level of resources that a department has available and the types of activities for which they are responsible. Besides questions of functions performed such as maintenance of street trees or snowplowing and similar there are questions like the one reflected in the following table, which indicates the aggregate number of departments that have access to Computer-aided Maintenance Management Systems (CMMS). CMMS are used to manage buildings, grounds, and equipment (vehicles, trailers, mowers etc.) maintenance, cost history, work schedules, asset and risk management, service levels and even maintenance activity travel routes. As you know, travel is the number one enemy of productivity.

While the aggregated data on its own is of little value, if you are seeking to purchase a CMMS system, from the myriad of possible systems, you can do a side-by-side search and determine who has one, and survey them for recommendations. From the aggregate below we know that there are more without CMMS than with it.

IT Capability	Percent
Does your department have an Activity Registration/Recreation Program and Membership Management System?	86.96%
Does your department have a Computer-aided Maintenance Management System (CMMS)?	28.16%
Does your department have Automated Administrative Systems?	67.39%

Department Programs

Programs are an obvious area of comparison and are often responsible for more than 40% of your earned revenue. Ensuring that any benchmark partner has the desired emphasis on programming is important. These aggregated totals imply a widely diverse method for counting attendance if nothing else.

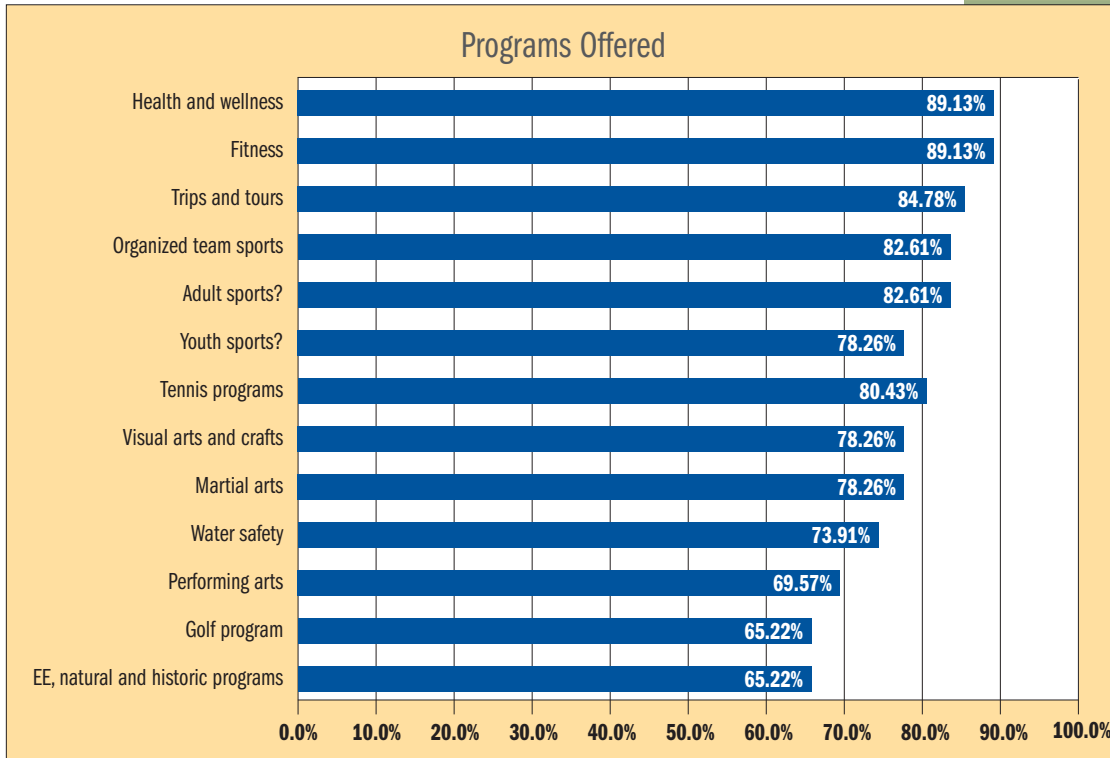
Category	Median	Average	Lower Quartile	Upper Quartile
What is your total annual number of participants attending programs, classes and small events?	28,716	581,967	5,411	387,646

Determining Magnitude and Calculating Operating Ratios

Scattered throughout the profile are questions that serve two functions. First, they provide magnitude information such as the table above on attendance. This data, like other data points, can be used in side-by-side analysis to determine suitable benchmark partners. You can see the rather large range of responses by noting the huge variation from the median to the average. You would want to be sure that your potential partner's attendance is the same general magnitude as yours, or at least uses the same process for compiling attendance numbers..

The second use for this data is as a factor in calculating varied ratios. This might include visitors per FTE, operating cost per visitor, revenue per visitor, and similar.

The following chart indicates the kinds of programming that are offered by respondents. This is obviously a selected representation of the types of programs.



Other factors that influence the selection of similar departments include such items as resident/non-resident fees. Of the 35 respondents represented here, 76.09% of them have non-resident fees.

Questions Relating to Possible Grants and Sponsorships

Within PRORAGIS, there are also a number of questions that relate to potential grants and sponsorships to which NRPA may have access. Over the last two years NRPA has held a grant from Wal-Mart and distributed \$50,000 each year to 15 agencies to increase the number of meals provided for summer programs and before and/or after-school care. By knowing that you offer these types of services, your department can be considered for participation in similar grants when available. Healthy foods and activities related to obesity and chronic health issues have funding available, which NRPA can access because they represent a national grass-roots membership. Numerous other questions are geared in a similar way to take advantage of funding and partnership opportunities. The following table shows participation in some of the more “fundable” services provided by departments.





Programs Offered as Percent of Respondents	
Summer Camp	84.78%
Weeks of Camp	9.88
Campers per week	285.91
Provide meals or snacks at camp	30.43%
Before and After School	65.22%
Before School Program	8.70%
After School Program	17.39%
Preschool	58.70%
Full Daycare	13.04%
Specific Teen programs	84.78%
Senior Programs	80.43%
If yes, does your department provide meals for seniors?	13.04%
Programs for people with disabilities	69.57%
If yes, does your department make accommodation for inclusion in activities?	67.39%
If yes, do you conduct Individual Assessments of clients with significant disabilities?	39.13%
Do you provide program opportunities for people with significant disabilities?	63.04%
Community gardens	36.96%
If yes, does your department rent or permit spaces for gardens?	28.26%
Major Special Events	39.13%

Financial and Budget Data

Financial data like program data can be used for magnitude and ratio development. The total operating expenditures figure contains all of the expenditures assigned to you for the fiscal year. Note that some jurisdictions may retain certain benefits as jurisdiction-wide and not assign them to your department. Make sure you are comparing all expense categories.

Department data	Median	Average	Lower Quartile	Upper Quartile
What are your department's TOTAL operating expenditures for your fiscal year?	\$ 8,396,309	\$18,815,777	\$ 2,056,245	\$ 20,006,878

Sub-level Analysis

The PRORAGIS profile also allows you to look at some of the data from a different perspective. The following table shows a different way to analyze operating expenses. In this chart the capital expenditures are for products or services paid for from the operating fund rather than the capital funded projects. By studying the distribution of the expenses for personnel, operations and capital you can get a sense of whether or not your operations are balanced.

What percentage of your total operating expenditures is in the following categories?
(Percentages must add to 100%)

Category	Median	Average	Lower Quartile	Upper Quartile
Personnel Services (expenditures for all salaries, wages and benefits)	62%	59%	49%	70%
Operations (expenditures for all functions of the Department)	34%	36%	26%	44%
Capital (expenditures for capital equipment, capital projects and debt services paid from the operating funds)	2%	5%	0%	5%
Other, please describe:	0%	3%	0%	0%

Although it is not clearly shown in this table, most departments have a higher percentage of operating expenses for personnel than for the other categories. Generally, the more resource-intensive a department is, the higher the percentage of dollars for operations. For example, if you look at a golf course operation the personnel cost may typically be around 45%, the operating costs another 45% and the capital 10%. Program-focused departments tend to have higher personnel expenses. This may be changing as agencies contract for program services and move the dollars from personnel to operations.

Department Revenue

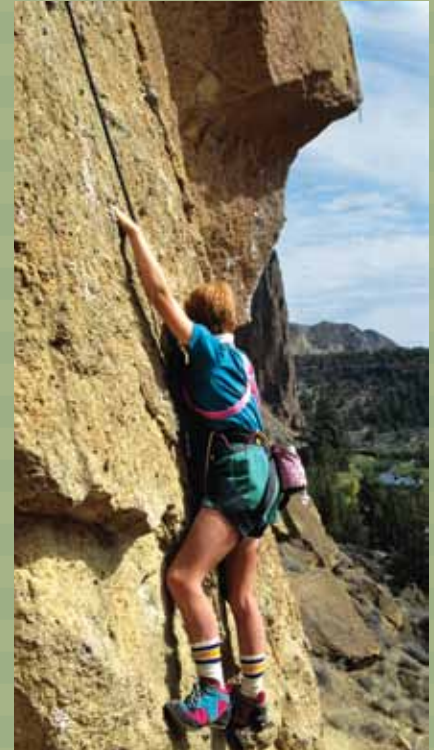
The total operating expenses generally includes either prior year actual revenue or estimated revenue for the coming fiscal year. The following table indicates the general percentages of those earned revenues as a portion of the total. These numbers are commonly referred to as cost recovery rates.

Of The Total Operating Expenditures,
What Percentage Comes from Agency Fees and Charges
(Earned Income)

Category	Median	Average	Lower Quartile	Upper Quartile
Agency fees and charges	36.00%	36.07%	22.00%	50.13%

In the current economy, revenue can be a major benefit as it reduces the cost of services to the residents at-large in favor of payment by users of the services. While this has limitations for serving residents equitably, revenue is not going away any time soon. The numbers below for revenue do not include any tax sources such as levies. It focuses on earned income as shown in the next table.

Category	Median	Average	Lower Quartile	Upper Quartile
What is your department's TOTAL non-tax Revenues for your fiscal year?	\$ 3,022,671	\$ 13,769,011	\$ 740,248	\$ 7,202,476



The following table indicates the source of the earned revenue for the respondents. As mentioned previously, the largest sum usually comes from programs and classes fees and charges. This data can be very helpful for seeking best practices or ways and means of increasing your revenues.

What percentage of your annual non-tax revenues came from the following sources? (Percentages must add to 100%)				
Category	Median	Average	Lower Quartile	Upper Quartile
Facility entry fees/ memberships	17.00%	19.00%	6.90%	32.64%
Programs and class fees and charges	27.00%	28.50%	16.80%	56.50%
Facility Rentals	3.15%	3.30%	2.00%	5.25%
Facility, property or ROW leases	0.05%	0.10%	0.00%	1.40%
Concessions, resale items	2.41%	2.81%	1.00%	4.85%
Sale of real property	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.09%

Trend Data

Another focus of some of the PRORAGIS questions is to start building trend data. While the table below gives information about Capital Fund Budgets it is also intended to serve as a baseline for future trend data. At the earliest, a trend pattern requires three years' data to have some validity.

Another element is what we would call "Big Picture Credibility". The second question in the table below, "What is your department's amount of renovation need?" addresses the total maintenance deficit for parks and recreation at the state and local levels. A study in Canada, estimated the total maintenance deficit for parks and cultural facilities in Canada's municipalities to be \$42.0 billion dollars. That would imply a US maintenance deficit in excess of \$300 billion. With only 28 respondents to this question and a total of \$195 million, that is an average of \$7.0 million. If all of the 46 departments were averaging the \$7.0 million in maintenance deficit this group would account for over \$330 million in maintenance deficit.

Consider also the same 28 departments indicated that new lands and facilities are needed or that existing structures have reached the point where they are no longer salvageable and must be replaced. That shows an average of almost \$4.0 million in new capital funding needs.

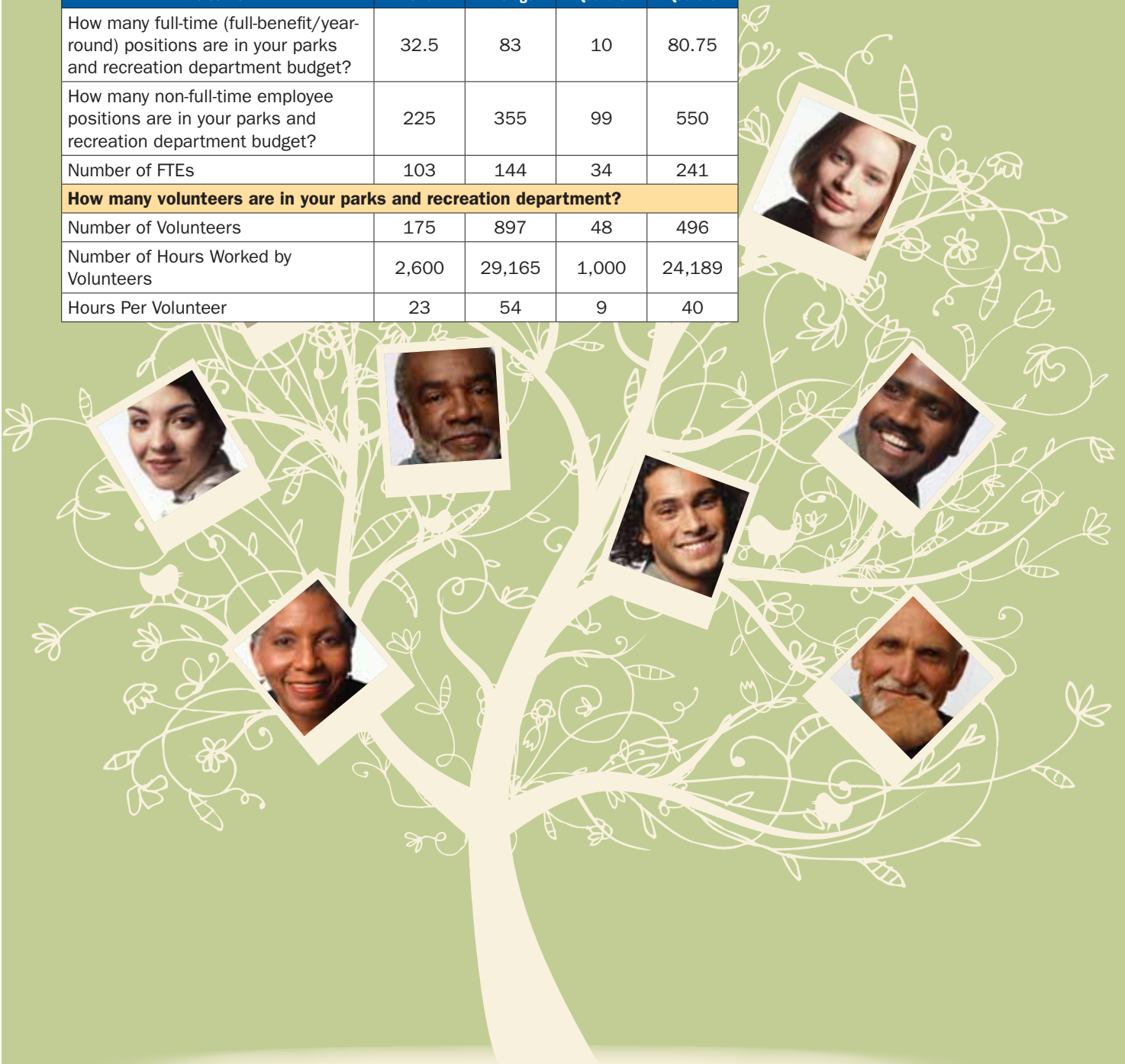


Capital Budget	Median	Average	25% Quartile	75% Quartile	Total All Respondents
What is your department's total capital budget?	\$975,900	\$6,763,261	\$308,000	\$3,253,917	\$236,714,141
What is your department's amount of renovation need?	\$1,084,803	\$6,957,587	\$306,764	\$5,000,000	\$194,812,438
What is your department's amount of new capital need?	\$40,500	\$3,804,786	\$125,000	\$4,420,519	\$95,119,643

Department Personnel

The following table shows the aggregated full-time and non-full-time positions from the responding agencies. By measuring in Full Time Equivalents (FTEs), it is possible to get a better sense of the actual workforce. Volunteers are included to indicate the departments' use of non-payroll staff.

Personnel	Median	Average	25% Quartile	75% Quartile
How many full-time (full-benefit/year-round) positions are in your parks and recreation department budget?	32.5	83	10	80.75
How many non-full-time employee positions are in your parks and recreation department budget?	225	355	99	550
Number of FTEs	103	144	34	241
How many volunteers are in your parks and recreation department?				
Number of Volunteers	175	897	48	496
Number of Hours Worked by Volunteers	2,600	29,165	1,000	24,189
Hours Per Volunteer	23	54	9	40





Parks, Trails and Facilities

The following two tables provide an overview of the aggregated park lands and trail information for the participating counties. Facilities data has been left out of this summary due to the difficulty of compiling the data in aggregate and its relative value in that format.

The trails table below shows the multi-purpose trail with no equestrian access as the most popular type of trail. Cells showing no value indicate that there were not enough departments indicating a positive number to calculate the function.

Park Lands	Median	Average	25% Quartile	75% Quartile
Park Attendance	200,000	1,145,219	65,000	1,425,000
How many individual parks or sites does your department/agency maintain and/or have management responsibility over?				
Number of Parks or Sites	40.00	60.00	11.50	59.50
Total Number of Acres	679.00	2,413.02	106.00	1,715.50
Acres per Park Site	14.90	47.10	9.10	31.65
Percent of your acreage developed?	74.00%	63.66%	43.00%	89.00%
Percent of your acreage undeveloped?	26.00%	36.87%	15.00%	56.00%

What is the total mileage of greenways and trails managed by your agency?				
Type	Median	Average	25% Quartile	75% Quartile
Multi-purpose—No Equestrian	4.88	15.26		14.79
Multi-purpose—Equestrian permitted		12.29		7.88
Hiking/walking only	0.50	10.18		9.50
Bicycling only		0.78		
Equestrian only		0.98		
Other, please describe:	1.75	21.40		36.40
Total	12.00	39.20	4.13	33.07

Miscellaneous Ratios

Whether looking for budget justification, best practices, or performance measures to monitor work progress, the operating ratios are of the greatest value. The operating ratios created in PRORAGIS reporting may not provide the detail that you need to manage your department. It does, however, provide a framework for identifying the ratios that will be the most helpful. For example, you can drill down into the cost recovery revenue to see where most of your revenue is coming from. You can see if increasing the revenue winners is an option. One department increased their program revenues by \$1.2 million dollars when they moved to an online automated registration system that cut program cancellations by 21% over a year. The ratios will inform you where you are positioned in the group of your peers.

As has been mentioned throughout this report, the development of operating ratios is of value because it allows a department to measure certain aspects of performance across differences that may exist. Further, each department can determine what level of service they wish to provide to their citizens.

Miscellaneous Benchmarking Ratios	Median	Average	Low Quartile	Hi Quartile
Operating Expenditures per Capita	\$205	\$216	\$67	\$340
Operating Expenditures per FTE	\$121,525	\$374,951	\$95,080	\$227,400
Operating Expenditures per Acre of Land Managed or Maintained	\$16,225	\$32,871	\$7,350	\$33,369
Acreage of Parkland per 1,000 Population	12	19	6	20
Acres of Parkland Maintained per FTE	7	13	4	22
Jurisdiction Population Per Square Mile Served	1,866	2,299	298	3,203
Jurisdiction Population per FTE	908	12,654	460	3,003
Revenue per Capita	\$60	\$82	\$19	\$134
What is your department's TOTAL Earned Revenues for your fiscal year?	\$2,307,684	\$5,451,212	\$525,249	\$9,180,742
Revenue as a percent of Total Operating Expense (Cost Recovery Rate)	36.00%	36.07%	22.00%	50.13%
Revenue per Visitor	\$9	\$31	\$2	\$22
Total Operating Expenditures per Visitor	\$46	\$113	\$12	\$150
Total Capital plus Total Operating Expenditures per Capita	\$264	\$266	\$88	\$404
Total Capital Costs per Capita	\$28	\$54	\$9	\$62
Tax Cost per Capita	\$119	\$1,453	\$33	\$188

Note that these ratios do not denote winners and losers. No specific conclusion can be drawn without further analysis. The fact that one department does something for less money or with fewer people does not necessarily mean that they are doing the function better, just differently.

National Standards

The following data, though sparse, provides departments with a sense of the population standards that actually exist for facilities. We all knew that the former NRPA standards were not viable for most department operations, but there has never been a replacement for them until now. As more profiles are completed this table of population per facility will become an increasingly credible guide for use in master planning and funding. For example, if you are master planning for recreation centers you can choose to build to the median, the average, or at a logical point along the quartile line. If you review the data on the centers, you will note that larger centers have a higher population ratio.

For facilities like fitness centers, the population ratio is of little value. A fitness facility, often located in a larger recreation center usually has a minimum design size of 3,500 sq. ft. with maximum size dependent on the feasible clientele. Many fitness spaces are in excess of 10,000 sq. ft. to accommodate the mix of equipment desired for the fitness program.

Other standards are dependent on the profiles from specific areas of the country. For example, indoor ice rinks may have a fairly consistent standard nationwide. Outdoor ice rinks standards will only be of value when there are sufficient profiles from states in northern climates. Eagan, MN a city of 80,000 in Dakota County has two indoor ice sheets and 24 outdoor rinks. The old NRPA Standards indicated a need for 1 ice sheet per 50,000 residents.



Jurisdiction Population Per Facility	Median	Average	25% Quartile	75% Quartile
Recreation/Community Center	22,966	34,680	13,500	34,125
Fitness Center	36,000	58,301	11,986	46,883
Playground	2,688	6,257	1,581	4,716
Tot Lots	17,333	42,926	3,794	58,500
Tennis court (indoor)	58,000	96,955	41,496	118,000
Tennis court (outdoor)	3,149	7,930	2,337	6,157
Basketball court (outdoor)	4,850	24,082	3,333	6,568
Swimming pool (indoor) - Competition pools	100,278	160,964	49,481	216,503
Swimming pool (indoor) - Non-Competition pools	36,000	114,023	25,000	45,974
Swimming pool (outdoor) - Competition pools	43,403	114,586	31,250	95,144
Swimming pool (outdoor) - Non-Competition pools	36,000	49,918	23,494	67,809
Senior center	63,085	86,038	32,542	134,927
Ice skating rink (indoor)	45,974	84,699	27,342	66,646
Ice skating rink (outdoor)	18,000	38,120	11,375	29,500
Rectangular fields - Football	12,916	20,326	4,409	29,250
Rectangular fields - Soccer, Lacrosse, Field Hockey (Regulation Size)	7,769	17,063	3,566	12,432
Rectangular fields - Soccer, Lacrosse, Field Hockey (Small-Sided Fields)	9,552	25,613	3,919	19,500
Diamond Fields - Baseball with 90 ft. base paths	24,459	41,928	11,425	41,779
Diamond Fields - Baseball with 50-65 ft. base paths and mound	7,074	11,404	3,300	12,325
Diamond Fields - Softball (youth)	8,025	10,539	3,806	11,530
Diamond Fields - Softball (adult)	11,800	22,407	7,188	20,187



Conclusion

As departments increasingly understand the value of completing the PRORAGIS profile, the data will become more credible for all agencies. Special Districts may find data most valuable at the state and regional levels. This will require a concerted effort to engage more special agencies in completing the profiles.

NRPA is moving forward with a number of initiatives focusing on health and wellness, conservation of parklands and open space, efforts to identify jobs and economic value of park and recreation agencies and ensuring social equity in Park and Recreation Services. We are also emphasizing the ways and means of sustainable funding resources. In 2012 we will likely be in contact regarding funding opportunities within your state as we try to catalog the options.

All of these initiatives are being incorporated into PRORAGIS to make it the “go-to” management tool for your department. Please let us know of any issues you incur providing data or getting reports from PRORAGIS.

If you have any questions, would like more information, or need some clarification or help with completing the PRORAGIS Profile please contact:

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NRPA members can join the PRORAGIS Connect group and interact with peers that have already completed the profile.



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