

Seattle Legislative Department SPR Recreation Division Evaluation

**Civic Development, Public Assets
& Native Communities Committee**

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Study Team

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Study Purpose, Method, and Timeline

This evaluation of Seattle Parks & Recreation's recreation function was implemented to provide enhanced accountability for voters following the creation of the Seattle Park District in 2014.

- The study was intended to *describe* how SPR's Recreation Division operates, *evaluate* SPR's performance, and *recommend* opportunities for improvement.
- To conduct the study, BERK analyzed qualitative and quantitative data:
 - Qualitative information was gathered through document review and interviews with staff throughout SPR and representatives from partners.
 - Quantitative analysis included financial, programming, and demographic data.

Work was conducted by BERK staff over much of 2017, with regular check-ins with a Project Team that included Council, Budget Office, and SPR staff.

An Introduction to SPR's Recreation Division

SPR's Recreation Focus

SEATTLE PARKS AND RECREATION MISSION

Seattle Parks and Recreation provides welcoming and safe opportunities to play, learn, contemplate and build community, and promotes responsible stewardship of the land. We promote healthy people, a healthy environment, and strong communities.

SPR RECREATION VISION

“Creating Community through People and Programs”

To provide high quality, equitable recreation programming opportunities for everyone with an emphasis on underserved communities, and to be recognized as a leader in innovative, diverse programming.

With our department mission and division vision in mind, SPR's Recreation Division's broad strategic goals include:

- **Providing free or reduced-fee programming in “low-opportunity” areas of the city** to increase public access to and opportunities for recreation programs...
- **Serving more people, especially underserved communities and people living in the margins** through proactive outreach and marketing and the use of “community ambassadors...”
- **Developing community centers as central and primary neighborhood gathering spaces.** Beyond recreation, community centers can serve as hubs for community building; we intend to make changes to ensure the spaces are inviting, affordable and programmed in a way that reflects the demographics, interests and needs of the surrounding community...
- **Maintaining and adapting public facilities to meet the needs of our changing city** through strategic planning, partnerships and investment...

Service Delivery Model

- Recreation services are delivered citywide, in a variety of spaces: **pools, sprayparks, wading pools, Community Centers, Teen Life Centers**, and others.
- Some programming is organized by audience, including **teens, older adults, individuals with disabilities**, and others.
- In addition to traditional **recreation** and **Aquatics** programming, Community Centers are home to **child care** and **preschool programs** that constitute a significant share of activity.
- For the most part, SPR operates under a **fee-for-service** model in which participation fees are used to supplement resources provided through the City's General Fund and the Metropolitan Park District.
 - ❑ There are important exceptions to this rule, including **free drop-in programs** at Community Centers and a variety of free Aquatics resources
 - ❑ **Scholarships and discounted participation fees** are used to improve access for lower-income participants.

Recreation Division Capital Facilities

- 10 pools
- 20 wading pools
- 9 spray parks
- 9 beaches
- 27 Community Centers
- 3 Teen Life Centers
- 29 school-based facilities

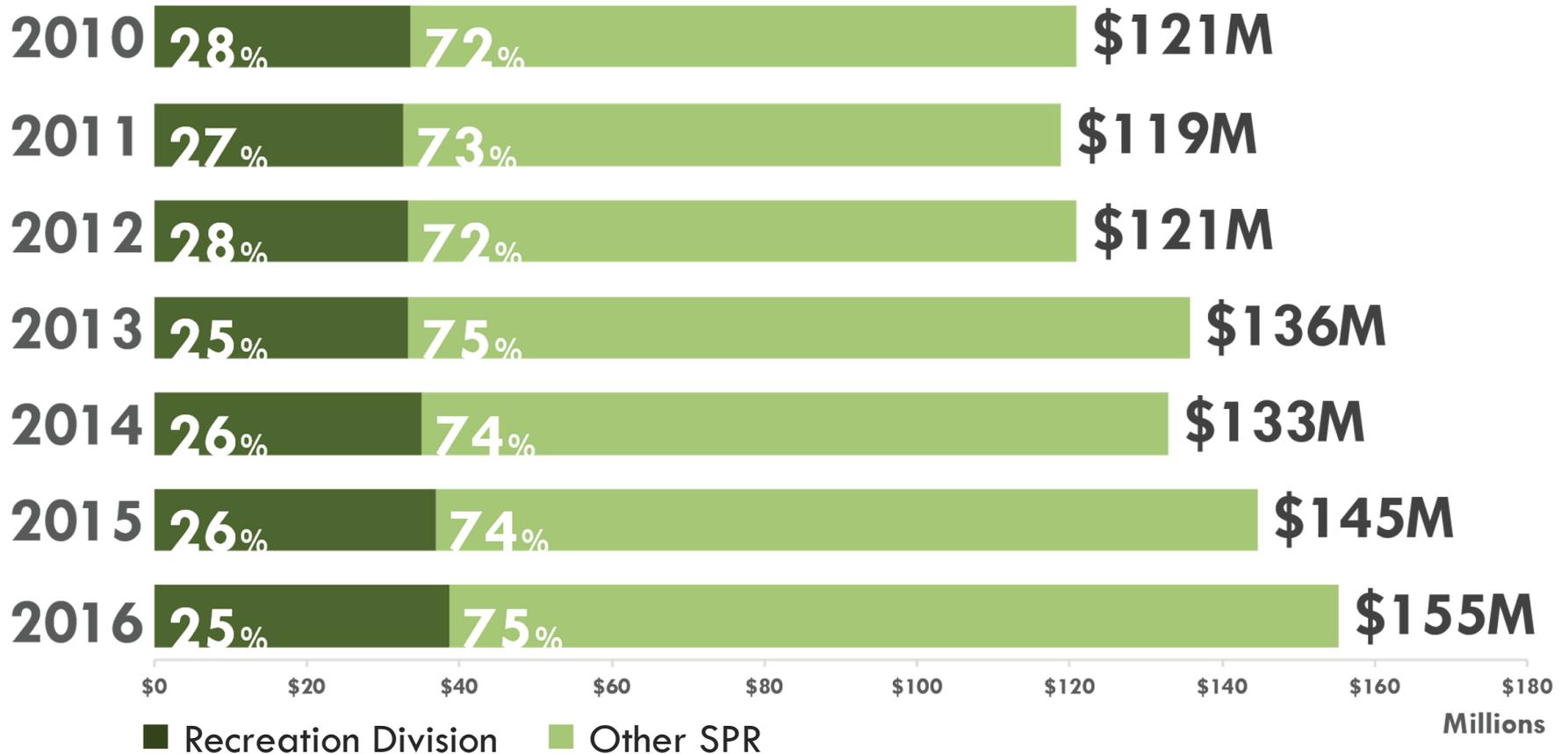
Service Delivery Model, continued

- SPR partners with **ARC**, a non-profit organization, that helps support and implement recreation programs.
 - In addition to substantial supplemental support, ARC plays a central role in recreation program delivery by hiring and supervising many of the instructors that deliver programming in facilities provided and managed by SPR, as well as at Seattle Public School facilities.
 - In addition to programming that occurs during “public hours,” some facilities operate additional hours financed by ARC and the user fees it collects for these programs.
- **Advisory Councils** are responsible for supporting individual facilities and some citywide programs through ARC budget oversight, fundraising, serving as a connection to the local community, and advocating on behalf of the program.



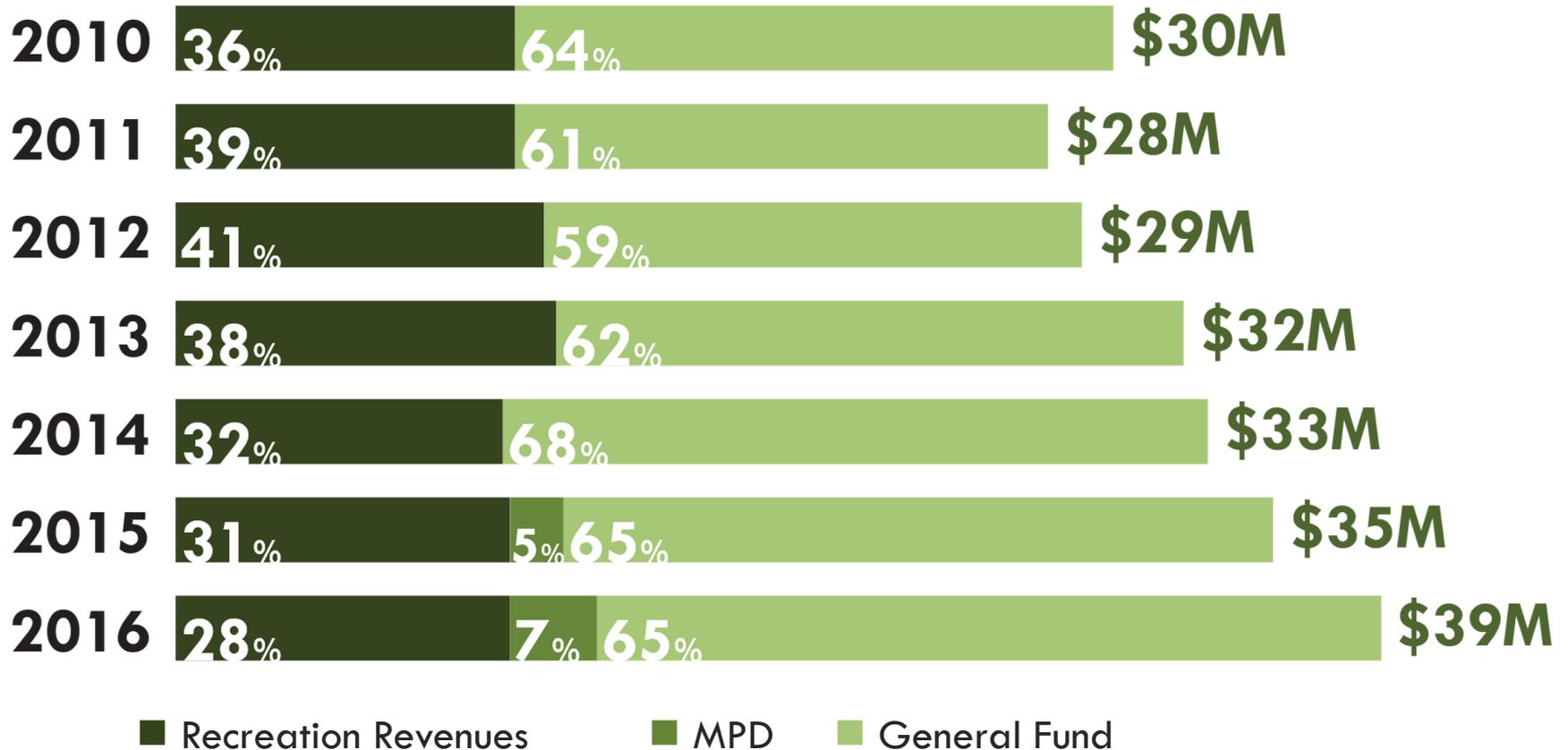
Recreation Division & SPR Expenditures

Operating Expenditures Only



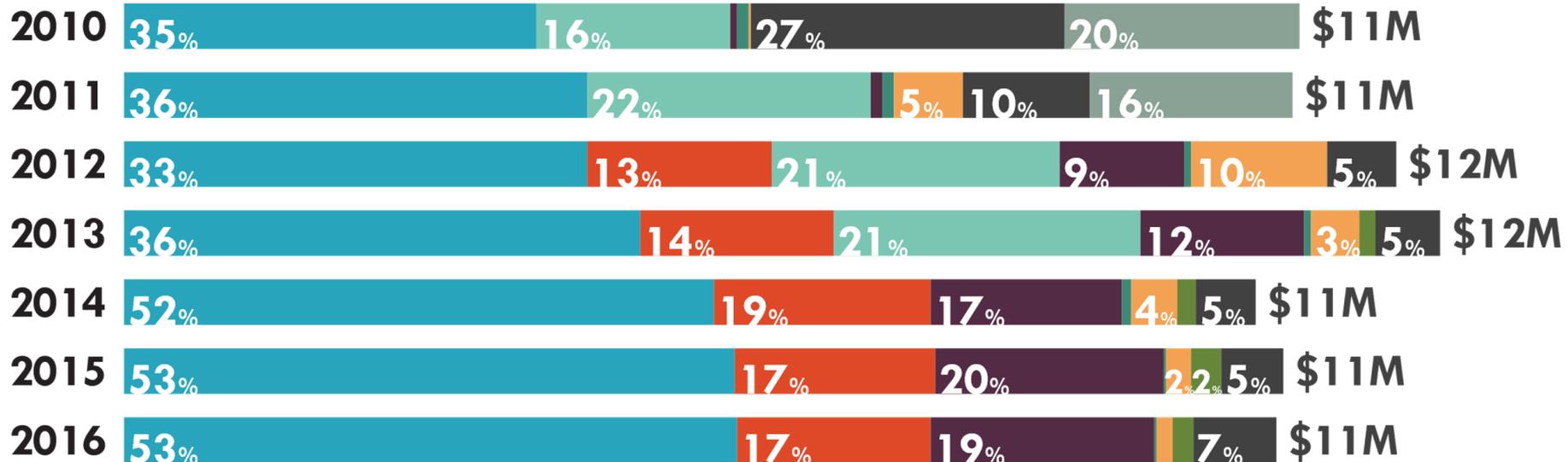
Recreation Division Revenues by Source

Operating Revenues Only



Recreation Division Revenues: Earned

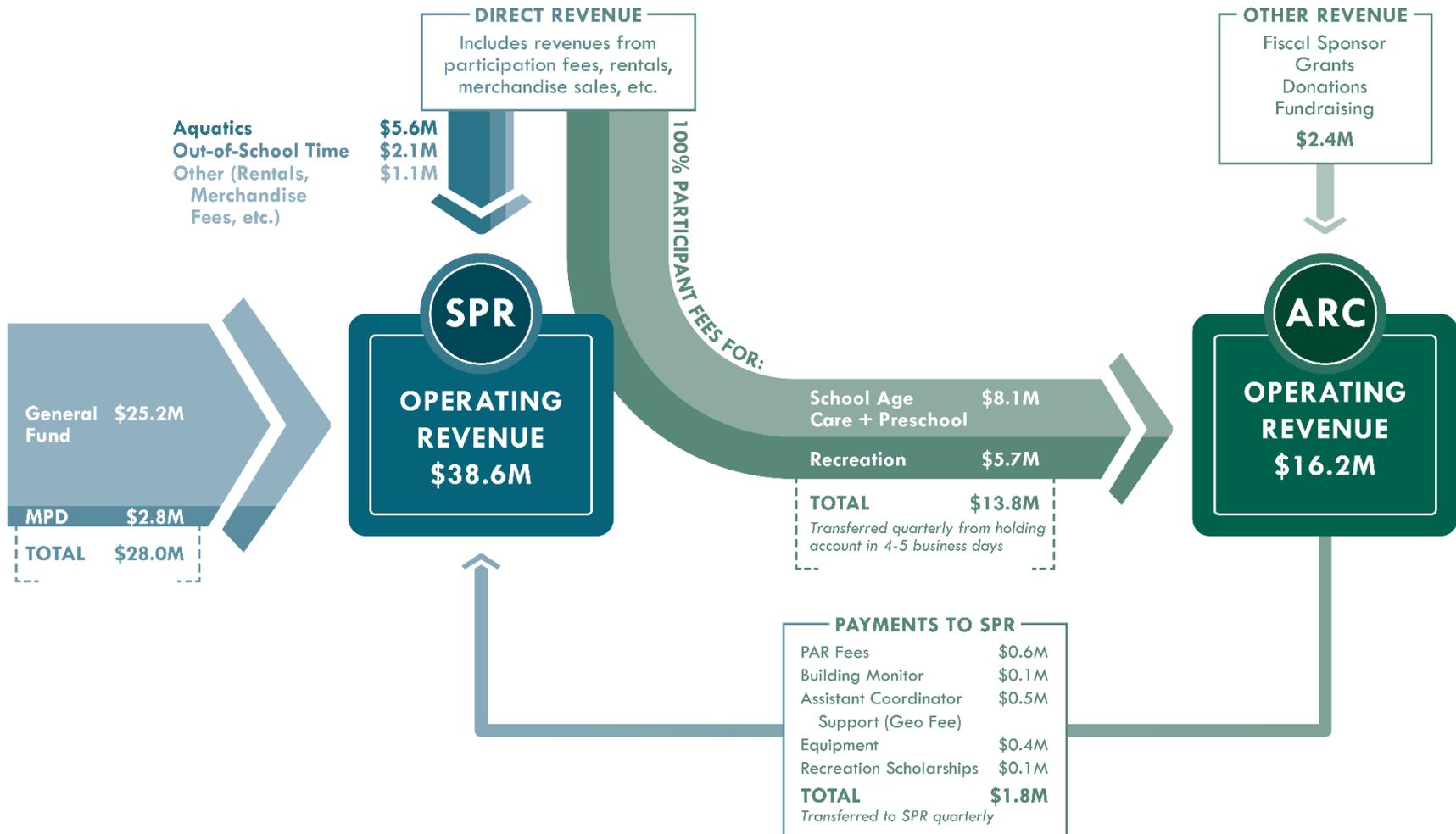
Operating Revenues Only



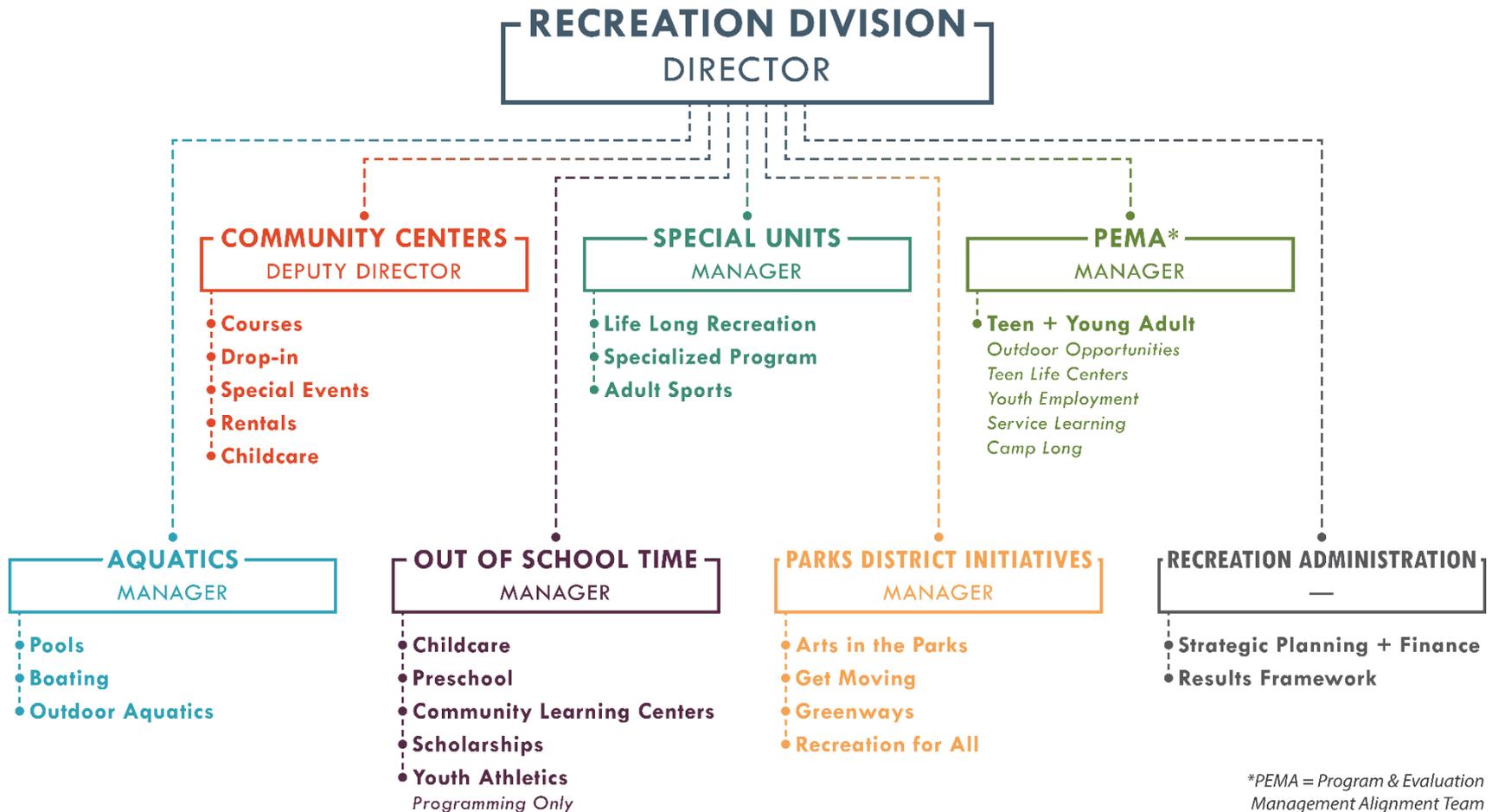
- Aquatics
- Citywide Athletics
- Youth & Young Adult Services
- Lifelong Recreation/Special Programs
- Community Centers
- Out-of-School Time Programs
- Environmental Programs
- Admin
- Other (includes units that were later moved out of Recreation)

Flow of Revenues: SPR & ARC

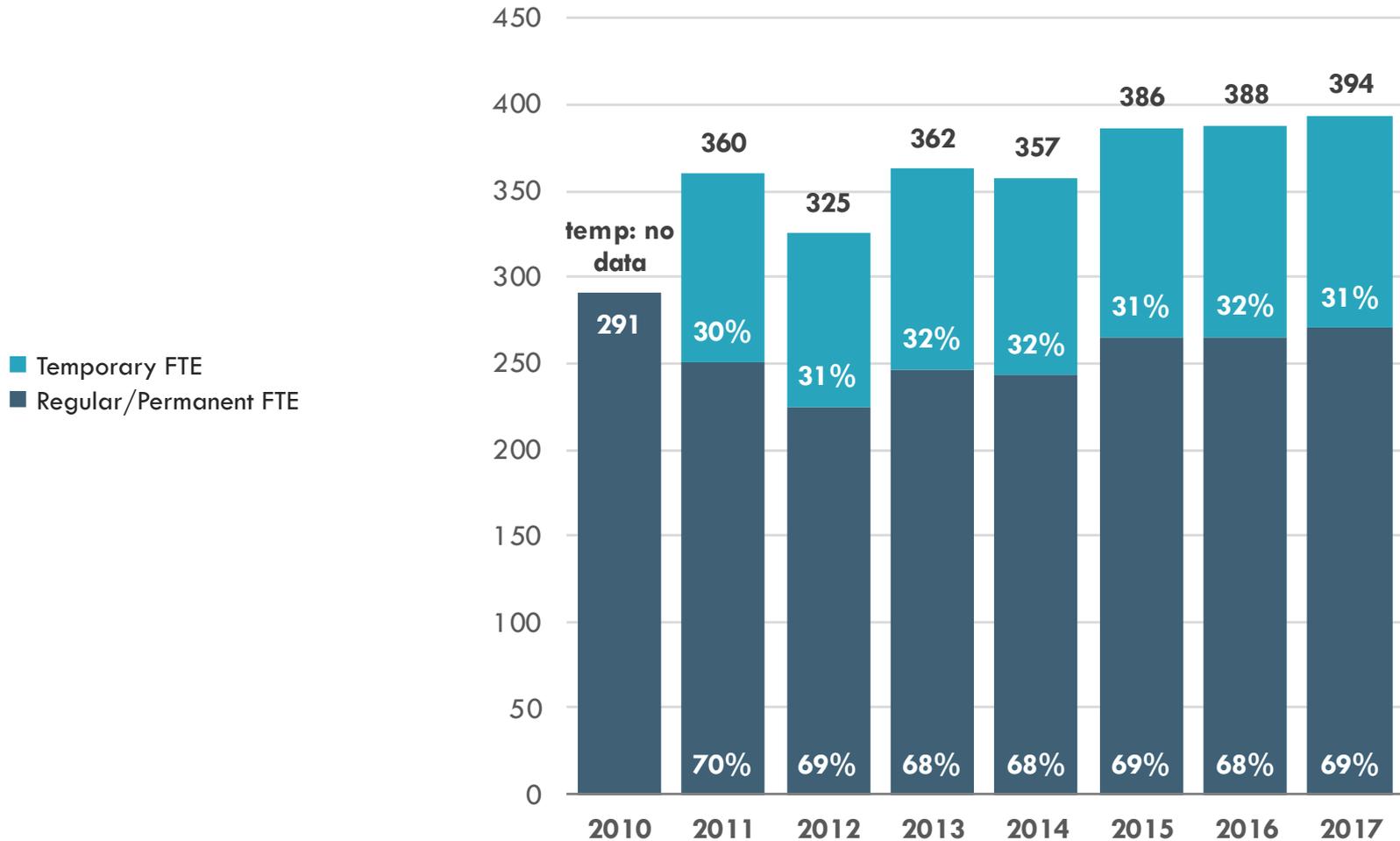
SPR + ARC REVENUE SHARING FLOW, 2016 ACTUALS



Recreation Division Organization

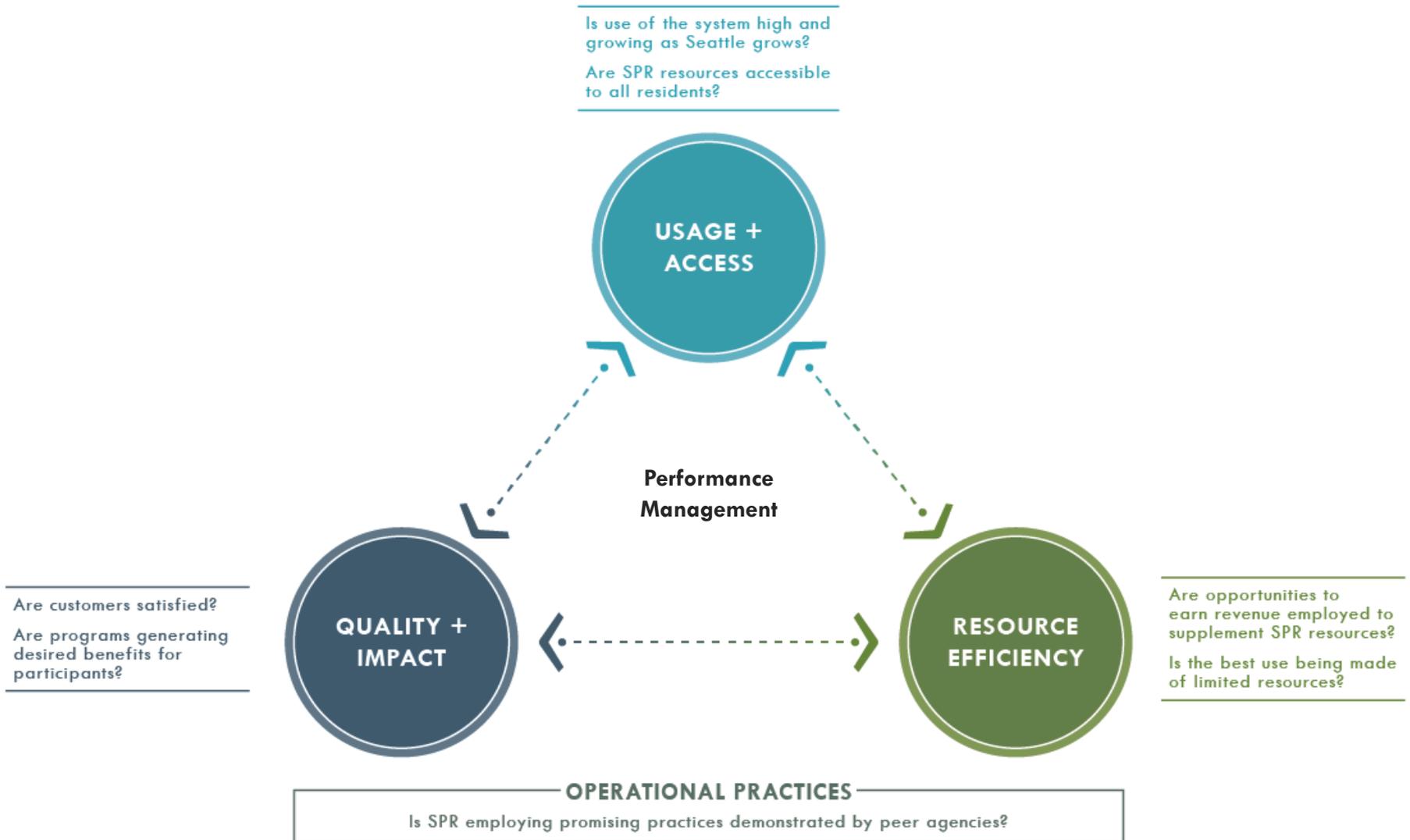


Recreation Division Staffing



Evaluative Framework, Key Findings, & Recommendations

Evaluative Framework



Key Findings

- The effectiveness of the Recreation Division must be considered in tandem with consideration of **ARC** and the **Advisory Councils**.
- **Increased data collection**, strengthened performance measures, and additional work on fee setting are needed to measure success and target programs and services to priority populations.
- There is an opportunity to improve **customer service**.
- **Standardized operating and marketing practices**, as well as the development of a culture and capacity for learning will enable SPR to be more effective.
- Continued **staff training** will be essential to improvement.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations are presented in the report with Implementation Specifics:

- Timeframe
- Priority
- Anticipated Benefits
- Potential Resource Implications
- Status (including relevant previous efforts)

Recommendations are organized in three thematic areas and discussed in more detail on the following slides.

All Recommendations in Order of Presentation in Report

1. Review and update the SPR/ARC partnership.
2. Reform the role and functioning of Advisory Councils.
3. Leverage past data and enforce class performance standards to focus on desired programs.
4. Continue to expand on SPR's statements of its recreation-related vision, goals, and target customers.
5. Continue to reduce barriers and encourage the participation of traditionally underserved groups and those with less access to alternatives.
6. Continue to align resources and fees to prioritize participation by low-income communities while earning revenues as appropriate.
7. Strengthen customer service.
8. Simplify and roll-up reporting measures that establish balance and triangulate on competing goals.
9. Test, document, evaluate, and share marketing techniques.
10. Acknowledge and buttress the role staff play in providing social supports and ensuring safety and security.
11. Standardize practices and expectations across the recreation system.
12. Ensure buildings and other facilities are used as much as possible.

Advancing as a Learning Organization

- **Recommendation 3.** Leverage past data and enforce class performance standards to focus on desired programs.
Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: High
- **Recommendation 8.** Simplify and roll-up reporting measures that establish balance and triangulate on competing goals.
Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: High
- **Recommendation 9.** Test, document, evaluate, and share marketing techniques.
Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: Medium
- **Recommendation 11.** Standardize practices and expectations across the recreation system.
Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: High

Focusing on SPR's Vision and Target Customers

- **Recommendation 4.** Continue to expand on SPR's statements of its recreation-related vision, goals, and target customers.
Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: Ongoing
- **Recommendation 5.** Continue to reduce barriers and encourage the participation of traditionally underserved groups and those with less access to alternatives.
Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: Ongoing
- **Recommendation 6.** Continue to align resources and fees to prioritize participation by low-income communities while earning revenues as appropriate.
Timeframe: Medium-term | Priority: Medium

Strengthening the System

- **Recommendation 1.** Review and update the SPR/ARC partnership.
Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: High
- **Recommendation 2.** Reform the role and functioning of Advisory Councils.
Timeframe: Short-term for 2.1 and Medium-term for 2.2 | Priority: Medium
- **Recommendation 7.** Strengthen customer service.
Timeframe: Ongoing | Priority: Ongoing
- **Recommendation 10.** Acknowledge and buttress the role staff play in providing social supports and ensuring safety and security.
Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: Medium
- **Recommendation 12.** Ensure buildings and other facilities are used as much as possible.
Timeframe: Short-term | Priority: High

Staff and Technology Resources Needed

Additional Training (Recommendations 7 and 10)

Performance Management and Organizational Learning (Recommendations 3, 8, 9, and 11)

- **Staff Capacity – add resources or re-prioritize existing staff or resources to:**
 - ❑ Collect, analyze and report out on division-wide data.
 - ❑ Consolidate and act on learnings from data analysis and review of promising practices from across the system.
 - ❑ Provide leadership in implementation and consistent application of the new or changing practices.
- **One-time Technology Investments**
 - ❑ Technology for automation of data collection and analysis.
 - ❑ People Counter replacement.
- **Ongoing Technology Costs**
 - ❑ Annual licenses for Tableau or other reporting technology.
 - ❑ Possible increased costs associated with ACTIVE Net.

Thank you!

Questions?