

IOWA



PARKS AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION



Strategic Plan

Original—February 2017; Update—August 2019

How to use this Plan

A strategic plan identifies where an organization is and where it wants to be in the future. The strategic plan begins by setting the vision and mission for the Iowa Parks and Recreation Association. A vision statement reflects the broad, future identity of the IPRA. The mission statement focuses on what the IPRA will do to achieve its vision.

Vision and mission statements mean little without a strategy to implement them. The strategic directions in the IPRA Strategic Plan fall under five categories to better focus efforts and provide clear directions for the association in the next 3–5 years. The Strategic Plan provides priority action items to get started under each category. However, it will be the IPRA leadership who develops a full list of actions to push the strategic directions forward. While the strategic categories are separate in the Plan, many overlap and depend on the others to be pursued to their fullest.

The IPRA Strategic Plan should be viewed as a dynamic, changing document. It is not meant to be rigid or static, but should adapt in response to changing conditions, resources and opportunities—likely every 3–5 years. Updates to the Plan should be made as a collaboration with the IPRA membership, much like how the original Plan was developed. All members and the public should have easy access to the Plan at all times.

At minimum, staff and the board of directors (BOD) should undertake an annual evaluation of the Strategic Plan. The first BOD update of this plan took place in August 2019. The BOD determined which milestones in each category had been accomplished. During a half-day facilitated workshop, members and committee chairs looked at each section of the plan in-turn and made recommendations for updating the strategic approaches and providing a new actions checklist (replacing the original “Let’s Get Started” tasks that appear in the February 2017 version of the plan).



Preamble

The Strategic Plan for the Iowa Parks and Recreation Association is based on the input of more than 70 members through a series of focus groups, 127 members participating in an online survey, and 20 members participating in an intense half-day workshop to critique an early-draft strategic framework. This strategy was refined through additional review by the Steering Committee, BOD and IPRA staff. The Plan's intent is to provide a direction for the future of IPRA over the next 3–5 years while outlining tools to measure success and steps that will kick off implementation. This version of the plan reflects action checklists developed in a BOD update of August 2019.

Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles

VISION

A professional organization of engaged members dedicated to achieving the highest levels of parks and recreation services for the communities of Iowa

MISSION

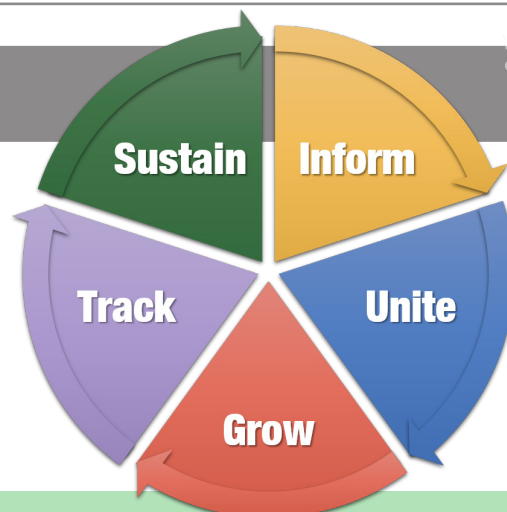
To help members develop their careers and support lasting parks and recreation systems

GUIDING PRINCIPLES: *Member–Driven. Service–Focused.*

1. **Member–driven and accessible.** IPRA must first and foremost be guided by the voices of its many members and provide members access to all tiers of the organization while delivering high-quality services.
2. **Sustainable and innovative.** IPRA must stand the test of time through thoughtful management of its resources, outreach for member growth, transparency in its operations and staying on top of advancements in the parks and recreation field.
3. **Enhanced through collective strength.** IPRA's strength stems not just from services it delivers, but from the education and collective voice it can provide on behalf of parks and recreation systems and professionals. Advocacy efforts should include elected officials at all levels of government, particularly statewide.
4. **Leadership and networking nurtured.** IPRA's value lies in large part through its ability to foster the personal and professional growth of its members, offering enrichment, networking, education and opportunities to lead.
5. **Diverse needs balanced.** IPRA strives to deliver an appropriate mix of services reflecting the wide-ranging needs of members at different points in their careers, and communities of various shapes and sizes.

Strategic Directions

The following categories provide direction that stems from general themes identified by member input and trends in the profession: **Sustain, Inform, Unite, Grow, and Track.** Each does not stand alone and they often overlap with each other to implement the Strategic Plan, aligning with the overall vision, mission and guiding principles. A “Let’s Keep Moving” checklist appears in each category, reflecting next-steps the BOD identified for continuing the strategic work of the plan. IPRA accomplished almost all of the “Let’s Get Started” action steps that appeared in the original plan.



1. SUSTAIN



IPRA is a quality organization, but any strategy must look at what it takes for the organization to stand the test of time. This typically prompts strategies related to revenue streams and membership growth. At the same time, programs and services feed into the IPRA's long-term value to its members.

A. Refine member connections to maximize benefits for members

- i. Support working committees or other programming avenues to expand outreach/services to member sub-groups, (e.g., small-community parks/rec leaders, rec center managers, natural resources managers, etc.), through new or current committee structures. (Note: Aquatics committee is a successful model for IPRA and likely worthy of modeling for other committees)
- ii. Assist members to self-connect for personalized career development and professional counsel
 - a. Establish an enhanced member database, allowing members to identify career stages and specific experiences of members for direct one-to-one outreach
- iii. Survey to determine the potential value of, and interest in, any ongoing mentoring program
- iv. Develop additional education opportunities for extended staff

B. Boost member knowledge and understanding of the committee structure, identifying responsibilities of each committee in achieving all strategic directions

- i. Create a mini action statement for each committee, stating its main purpose
- ii. Review committees for gaps and where additional committees may be needed (e.g., Technology committee/task force)

C. Identify new revenue streams and cost reductions

- i. Explore expansion of training, institutes and similar programs with net revenues
- ii. Annually review services provided for value and efficiency; cut/tweak as required and where savings can be quantified
- iii. Convene a New Resources Task Force

D. Budget for technology

- i. Maintain a budget line item for technology enhancement

E. Accommodate changing needs of commercial members to enhance support and benefits to the IPRA

- i. Reassess approach to conference exhibit hall

Note: Recognize vendor members' sustaining contributions to the IPRA and consider this item for priority action

F. Partner with affiliate organizations to prepare case studies for information and ideas supporting IPRA's continuous improvement (see also "Unite")

G. Communicate regularly with members on what their fees support and the value of the IPRA to continue retention of existing members

Keep Going: Pursue new revenues

Let's keep moving!

Convene "New Resources Task Force" to identify—and begin to pursue—alternative funding sources for IPRA activities; explore the resources of other state associations

Survey commercial members for satisfaction with IPRA to develop understanding of their needs

Educate members on how to use IPRA's communications tools, particularly website and members-only pages

Responsibility: New Resources Task Force and Inform Committee

Success Looks Like...

- Increased member volunteers on IPRA committees and in leadership positions
- Enhanced technology in use by the organization

2. INFORM



Nearly every organization benefits from working to improve information access, transparency, and ongoing communications. In the case of IPRA, expanding its use of technology surfaces as an element to maintain a high level of information exchange, but some basic ongoing communication upgrades will also benefit organizational efforts.

A. Upgrade the organization's access to and use of technology

- i. Continue to focus on ongoing website improvements to increase its value to members and the public
 - a. Grow awareness and use of member log-in
 - b. Continue assessing the website and adapt to achieve improved appeal and efficiencies
- ii. Leverage technologies to continue and increase ongoing education and connection events (e.g., webinars, Skype meetings, online forums, surveys/data input, etc.)
- iii. Use technologies to overcome geographic distances
- iv. Develop a strategic approach to use of social media, building from technology advancements and expanded communications



B. Improve members' ability to access information

- i. Routinely and promptly post and distribute BOD meeting minutes/updates, committee meeting notes, survey results, etc.
- ii. Adapt e-blasts and monthly magazines as members' needs change over time



Keep Going: Implement social media strategies and increase value of members-only website section

Update technology to Zoom or equivalent; improve functionality of online forums

Routinely post BOD/committee info on members-only pages; prompt use through email postings

Recruit and support social media expertise to the Inform Committee

Develop Strategic Social Media Plan but begin with Facebook events and improved interactivity

Use expanded measures with BOD for assessing social media strategy

Responsibility: Staff, Inform Committee, and BOD

Let's keep moving!

Success Looks Like...

- Increased website visits/traffic
- Utilize social media measures

3. UNITE



Along with professional and membership enrichment, the core of IPRA should be to promote the foundation upon which it was formed: quality and lasting parks and recreation systems in Iowa. While the organization cannot undertake this monumental task alone, it can be the voice through meaningful partnerships and tactful communication with leaders at all levels, and members of the public. Innovation in communication and evidence-based advocacy are necessary to better compete for a wide range of resources needed to move the strategy forward. Expansion of this committee is required. Development of legislative agendas and advocacy strategies appropriate to a legal structure like the IPRA are fodder for future conference topics and expanded partnerships.

A. Provide new opportunities for members to become involved with advocacy efforts

- i. Create additional leadership opportunities, particularly in the Legislative Committee
- ii. Establish a chair and vice-chair system to ensure continuity as committee membership changes

B. Coordinate a united platform on IPRA advocacy priorities

- i. Streamline a legislative agenda annually and track priority policies
- ii. Establish standard fall session to educate and train parks and recreation leaders to advocate for themselves
- iii. Activate citizens to rally on behalf of their local systems and build support within their communities



C. Improve information access for decision-makers at the state and local level

- i. Communicate the many benefits of parks and recreation systems that lead to resource prioritization by local and state leaders to the field (use strategies under “**Inform**” and “**Track**”)

D. Develop appropriate partnerships to strengthen the voice of IPRA and its mission

- i. Seek partnerships with similar organizations and experts in the profession for expanded understanding of parks and recreation benefits and associated outreach—both for advocacy efforts and education of the public

Keep Going: Focus on learning local advocacy

Establish Fall Workshop sessions on advocacy at state and local levels

Recruit and train/educate YPN members for advocacy roles

Add legislative tab to website for all members to stay current on issues; distribute legislative agenda quarterly

Pursue partnerships for advocacy and education (Iowa League of Cities, County Conservation Boards, local leadership initiatives, etc.)

Responsibility: Staff/Legislative Committee

Let's keep moving!

Success Looks Like...

- Set benchmark, then measure growth in membership that feels informed on IPRA support activities
- Citizens rally on behalf of their local systems and build support within their communities
- Elevate engagement around legislative issues; development of a legislative agenda

4. GROW



Career development of members and recruitment to the ranks of IPRA are core to the IPRA mission. “Grow” references the personal growth of individual members as they gain experience and knowledge through IPRA, and it refers to the organization. When IPRA successfully brings new members into the parks and recreation fold and/or adds someone to its membership roster, growth of both the profession and the organization occurs.

A. Create demand for pursuit of the parks and recreation profession

- i. Enhance appeal of the profession to high school and college students and emerging professionals
 - a. Assess potential value of K-12 awareness/recruitment efforts and/or internships
- ii. Recognize the “second career” appeal of parks and recreation pursuits, particularly for new professionals in smaller communities
- iii. Expand current college outreach efforts to institutions beyond U of I and UNI
- iv. Connect with students in parks/recreation, conservation and sports management career fields

B. Expand IPRA recruitment to professionals at all stages of their careers

- i. Engage vendors and other related professions
- ii. Provide members with resource tools to aid in high school and college student recruitment
- iii. Develop second-career/retiree recruitment strategies

C. Connect YPN, mid-career and senior professionals through leadership and mentorship

- i. Establish mentorship program involving all career levels of the organization
- ii. Use the organization’s structure to offer leadership opportunities
- iii. Explore Parks & Recreation Professional Certifications, enhanced training
- iv. Craft lifelong learning opportunities for retirees to remain involved and/or mentor other members
- v. Advance “regional rendezvous” to provide ongoing, localized support for members and prospective members in different regions



Keep Going: Grow membership, promote diversity, enhance mentorship and connect across experience levels

Establish effective mentorship program connecting YPN, mid-career and senior professionals

Expand college recruitment beyond Iowa and UNI

Evaluate regional rendezvous for refinement

Celebrate certifications

Benchmark organization’s diversity (age, gender identity, persons with disabilities, ethnicity/culture, economics and experience)

Responsibility: Executive Team/YPN, Staff, and Grow Committee

Let’s keep moving!

Success Looks Like...

- Increased percentage of involvement from members/non-members outside of central Iowa
- Established mentorship program connects YPN, mid-career and senior professionals
- Increase new delegates at Conference and Fall Workshop

5. TRACK



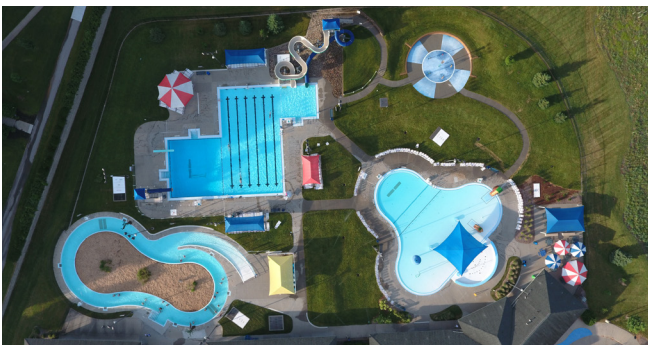
IPRA members ask that IPRA up its data game, increasing its capacity to serve as a data-driven organization. Data collection in many categories is essential to provide a full complement of member services. Monitoring trends is one valuable piece, but also understanding the members and their changing needs can make all the difference in IPRA's capacity to serve the parks and recreation profession and sustain itself. At the same time, it is this section of the strategy that is crafted to measure the success and/or needs of implementing this strategy in the short, medium and long term across all strategic categories.

A. Identify key data for the association to collect or support, potentially addressing:

- i. Best practices and certifications/accreditation
- ii. Career development
- iii. IPRA progress as an organization

B. Enhance the membership directory through online tools for improved networking and exchange of ideas

C. Track success of Strategic Plan through specified metrics, reviewed annually for relevance



Keep Going: Establish data collection relevant to member needs and strategic assessment

Track Committee identifies priority data points in partnership with BOD

Include metrics in BOD agenda and share data in members-only section

Complete and maintain currency of IPRA directory

Publish annual association report

Responsibility: Track Committee, BOD and Staff

Let's keep moving!

Success Looks Like...

- Publish annual association report including priority data identified

Summary of Success—Year One



SUSTAIN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alternative revenue sources identified
 INFORM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social media strategy developed and launched
UNITE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Advocacy Training at Fall Workshop
 GROW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mentorship program off and running
TRACK    	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual association report published

