

Department Efficiency and Collaboration: Saint Paul Parks and Recreation and Saint Paul Public Library

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Appreciation

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Goals & Research Questions

- **Goal:** To identify **efficiencies and opportunities for collaboration, cost sharing, and process improvement** within **SPPL and Parks and Recreation**
 - **Focus Areas:** Human resources and staffing, financial management and procurement, technology management and equipment, facilities and maintenance
- **Questions:** Where are the current effective practices and opportunities for improvement in each of the four functions across SPPL and Parks and Recreation? What are the actionable ways to reduce redundancy and create efficiencies in each of the four functions between SPPL and Parks and Recreation?

Methods

- **Document review:** Collection and review of relevant documents provided by SPPL and Parks and Recreation across the four functional areas (summary in Appendix A)
- **Literature summary:** Broad literature review to examine shared services and interdepartmental collaboration in governmental entities (summary in Appendix B, links to articles included)
- **Key informant interviews:** 15 interviews including 2 deputy directors, 1 operations manager, 12 mid-level managers and supervisors with expertise in one or more of the four functional areas (interview guide in Appendix C)

Key Findings: Opportunities

- There is a **shared vision to find efficiencies** across the two departments among high-level managers.
- **Staff at all levels shared ideas and suggestions** for creating efficiencies and cost sharing, indicating a breadth of experience and knowledge.
- **Collaboration and trust currently exist.** Enhancing and building on the relationships as the work continues will be important.
- **Security and safety** are areas ripe for collaboration.
- **Co-located sites present unique opportunities** to establish collaboration and pilot efficiency measures.
- Defining **clear roles and responsibilities** is critical as greater collaboration occurs across departments.

Key Findings: Challenges

- Staff who work in a functional area in one department are **not aware of the work processes used by their counterparts in the other department**. For example, staff who work with vendors are not aware of which vendors are being used by their counterparts. This inhibits the process of creating efficiencies between SPPL and Parks and Recreation.
- **Aging buildings** in both departments, but especially in SPPL, present substantial budget challenges.
- Both departments experience **staffing challenges** due, in part, to fixed budgets established through the City budgeting process.
- **Labor contract language** can prevent accomplishing tasks in the most efficient manner.

Key Findings: Human Resources and Staffing

- The centralized human resource approach **may not fully accommodate the specific needs** of different departments.
- **Hiring needed staff, especially seasonal staff, can be cumbersome**, slowing down the hiring process. There is a need for an efficient hiring and on-boarding process to enable departments to fill positions quickly, particularly during the summer season.
- **Cross training staff** can reduce costs and create a pipeline for staff movement and promotion

Key Findings: Financial Management and Procurement

- **More coordination** is needed between departments to avoid redundancy and inefficiencies in resource management to better navigate procurement processes, for example, utilizing common vendors and master contracts.

Key Findings: Technology Management and Equipment

- **Managing budget constraints while keeping up with technological advances** is a constant struggle especially given the rapid pace of change in the technology landscape.
- Greater **collaboration on technology investments** could prevent duplication of efforts and ensure that both departments benefit from technology advancements.

Key Findings: Facilities and Maintenance

- Staff express **uncertainty on how best to optimize** the use of physical spaces to reduce costs.
- There are current **strategies in place to manage physical assets between departments** designed to produce efficiencies and cost sharing, however, those strategies might not be used across all working sections in both departments.

High Priority Recommendations

- Build **awareness among staff** of the work being done in the other department. The **culture of collaboration** among departments, in this case SPPL and Parks and Recreation, **needs to be constantly reinforced and modeled through all staff levels—from directors to front line staff**. The overarching message needs to highlight the “one city approach” in all function areas.
- *Note that additional ‘low hanging fruit’ actions are included in Appendix E*

High Priority Recommendations

- Organize **workgroups within each function area consisting of staff members who do similar jobs from both departments**. Require each workgroup to set regular ongoing meetings using a virtual platform such as Microsoft Teams. The purpose of the workgroups is to:
 - Share information about processes in each department.
 - Build relationships and trust between staff and their counterparts across departments.
 - Explore services within each department that can be shared or centralized.
 - Establish priorities for shared service implementation.
- Additional guidance about these proposed workgroups is included in Appendix D.

Secondary Priority Recommendations: Human Resources

- Continue having **human resources liaisons** assigned to each department and expect these liaisons to **collaborate** on developing materials for staff across the two departments.
- Consider greater **centralization of departments for more efficient hiring, cross training, on-boarding, and career development processes** and to **negotiate with unions on expanding job roles**, for example, engineering and maintenance roles.

Secondary Priority Recommendations: Financial Management and Procurement

- Consider more **centralized, integrated services**, for example, developing a mechanism **to share vendor and contract lists**.
- Develop **policy guidance** for sharing vendors.

Secondary Priority Recommendations: Technology Management and Equipment

- Prioritize **safety and security processes** as a starting point for collaboration.
- Examine opportunities for **purchasing technology equipment**, for example, computers, **in greater quantities to access better pricing**.
- Prioritize exploring **efficiencies and cost-savings at co-located sites**, for example, sharing physical spaces such as conference space and classrooms and enabling cross-departmental access for maintenance support.
- Continue progress on establishing **one video management system** for all departments.

Secondary Priority Recommendations: Facilities and Maintenance

- Examine possibilities for a more **standardized maintenance process** to create efficiencies among maintenance staff and prevent the frequency of repairs.

Future Consideration Recommendations

- Financial management and procurement
 - Examine the benefits of **eProcurement systems** that exist in other municipalities.
 - Examine asset management and set **standards, life cycles, and requirements for equipment**, including furniture.
- Facilities and maintenance
 - Develop **policies for equipment sharing** that address the care and maintenance of the equipment.



Thank you!