



CITY OF ROME PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

APPENDIX C: RECREATIONAL PROGRAM ANALYSIS

ROME
the copper city



CHAPTER ONE RECREATION PROGRAMMING EXISTING CONDITIONS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The City of Rome's ("Rome") parks and recreation system plays a vital role in supporting community wellness, economic development, and quality of life. As the City continues to explore the future of its recreation offerings, this Existing Conditions Report provides a detailed assessment of how recreation programming is currently structured, funded, and delivered. It identifies the strengths of Rome's program offerings, as well as the challenges that hinder service delivery and strategic alignment with community priorities.

This report is the foundation for a strategic planning effort to enhance programming for the Rome community. It evaluates core business areas, staffing, partnerships, finances, policy issues, and community engagement practices. The intent is to build a clear understanding of current conditions and create a baseline for mapping out where Rome's recreation programming needs to go in the future to meet evolving community demand.

With this assessment, Rome can begin to:

- Define its recreation identity and core business areas,
- Clarify who is responsible for what programs and services,
- Align staffing and partnerships with community needs,
- Address operational inefficiencies and gaps in service,
- And adopt data-informed practices that support long-term program sustainability.

1.2 RECREATION PROGRAMMING SWOT SUMMARY

The table below outlines the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for Rome's recreation programming. The idea is to use the SWOT analysis to inform implications for the City as it develops a defined program strategy for future planning.

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Broad interest and participation in youth sports and adult sports - Summer seasonal staffing (94 positions budgeted in 2025) - Recent cost savings from hiring in-house and operational efficiencies - Development of a Fun Guide and new policies (insurance, field usage, rental) - Rome leadership supports capital investment in parks and recreation, programming, and partnerships - Active facilities like Kennedy Arena and Franklin Field - Efforts to repair YMCA and school partnerships underway	- Lack of clear core business areas and program identity - Departments working in silos, not aligned in field operations - No full-time director or transition plan - Outdated or unclear policies on hiring, event management, and cost tracking - No standardized data collection on program participation or cost of service - School facility access limited due to restrictions - Promotional efforts (e.g., PeachJar) are ineffective - Recreation services have become fragmented over the last several years - Key partnerships (Art Center, YMCA, Historical Society) lack integration with current programming.
Opportunities	Threats
- Define and prioritize core business areas (e.g., outdoor adventure, aquatics, active adults) - Indoor recreation (potential new community center) and trail-based programming - Improve data collection and use to guide decision-making (e.g., GIS analysis, understanding underserved areas of the community) - Enhance partnerships with nonprofits, schools, arts groups, YMCA - Develop a strategic phased staffing plan aligned to community needs and for increased programming - Maximize multi-use facilities and park investments - Create standard recreation programming policies across providers - Foster special events and bring back legacy programs (e.g., concerts, fishing derby)	- Increased competition from county and private sector sports complexes - Lack of consistent cost recovery model could limit sustainability - Fragmented provider network and inconsistent program standards - Aging facilities and infrastructure strain without additional staff - Insurance and liability concerns unaffiliated program providers - Risk of further disconnection with schools and community partners - Declining population trend - Low per capita and median household income levels

1.3 OPERATIONAL MODEL FOR RECREATION PROGRAMMING

The table below highlights current findings on how internal operations, staffing, finances, and community needs are currently aligned or misaligned with recreation program delivery standards.

Functional Area	Best Practice	Alignment/Misalignment with Best Practice
Core program areas	Core services that address the needs and priorities of residents.	- Fragmented program delivery: recreation programs are currently provided by multiple organizations with inconsistent coordination. - Core program areas are not clearly defined or aligned with staffing and community needs. - Lack of specific program plans for main programming facilities. - Seasonal programming (e.g., aquatics, day camps) is established but lacks year-round support. - The recent introduction of a Fun Guide and some new special events have enhanced community engagement.
Management	Defined structure, roles, and responsibilities focused on recreation services, decision making, and performance.	- Staff work in silos across departments with unclear lines of authority. Operational decision-making is fragmented. - Seasonal staff are heavily relied upon (94 staff for 2025), but no long-term staffing plan is in place. - Recreation leadership is in transition; no full-time Director is currently in place. - Limited accountability and consistency in program quality and service levels. - Cost recovery expectations are unclear and not tied to pricing strategy.
Facilities	Maximize and right-size indoor and outdoor spaces to accommodate quality recreation programs.	- Main locations for programming include Kennedy Arena, Franklyn's Field, Tosti Pool, Pinti Field and school facilities. - Some programs are delivered offsite by partners or private providers (e.g., Salvation Army, YMCA). - Some parks may face closure (Stephens Field), while others need revitalization.

Policies and Processes	The systems and workflows that support quality service delivery.	- Limited use of data and performance tracking (e.g., only Kennedy Arena seems to have monthly reporting). - No clear process for tracking cost of service or program effectiveness. - Event management, hiring, and partnership processes are ad hoc or informal. - Insurance and risk management standards are newly in development.
Data Collection/Information Systems	Insights and technology that is used to strategically plan, evaluate, and improve programs.	- Minimal data collected on participation, demand, or user satisfaction. - Lack of recreation management software for registration and scheduling. - Poor coordination with schools on marketing (PeachJar ineffective). - No centralized system for program inventory or performance monitoring.
Partnerships	Partners, vendors, and contractors that support recreation programming.	- Numerous community partners (YMCA, schools, private studios) operate independently. - Many providers lack formal agreements or accountability structures. - Public-private partnerships are underleveraged and uncoordinated.

1.4 CORE PROGRAMS

It is important to identify Core Program Areas based on current and future needs to create a sense of focus around specific program areas of greatest importance to the community. Public recreation is challenged by the premise of being all things to all people. The philosophy of the Core Program Areas is to assist staff, policy makers, and the public to focus on what is most important to the community to prioritize funding, staffing, and programming accordingly. Program areas are considered as Core if they meet most of the following criteria:

- The program area has been provided for an extended period (over 4-5 years) and/or is expected by the community.*
- The program area consumes a relatively sizable portion (5% or more) of Rome's overall budget.*
- The program area is offered 3-4 seasons per year.*
- The program area has wide demographic appeal.*
- There is a tiered level of skill development available within the program area's offerings.*
- There are full-time staff responsible for the program area.*
- There are facilities designed specifically to support the program area.*
- Rome controls a significant percentage (20% or more) of the local market.*



CURRENT CORE PROGRAMS

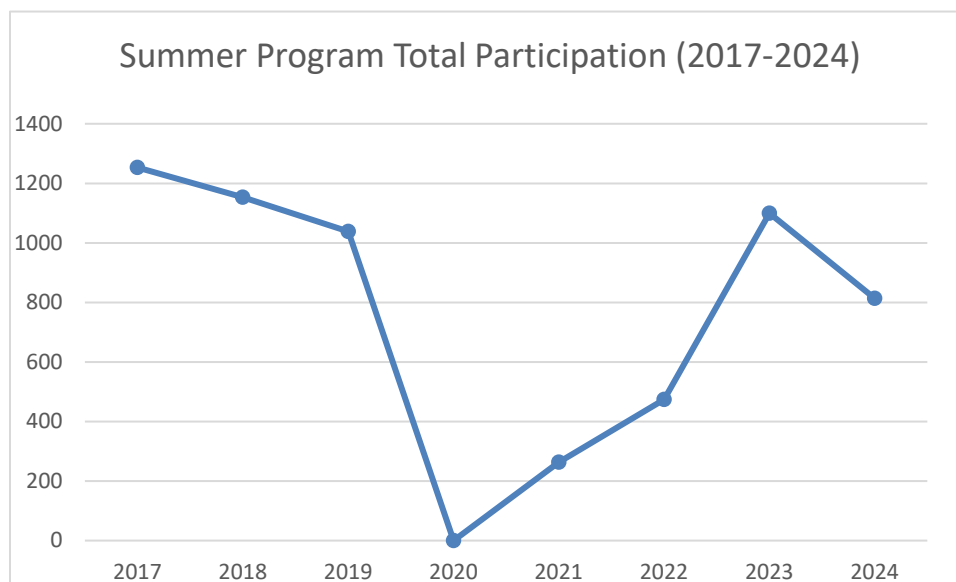
Rome primarily serves youth ages 6-12 in the summer with programs ranging from aquatics, to out of school activities and camps, and youth sports. Families are also targeted with community events throughout the year.

While most programming occurs in the parks, such as Franklyn's Field, Pinti Field, and Tosti Pool, during the summer because of a lack of indoor multi-use or flex space, the John F. Kennedy Arena does offer an opportunity for year round programming including ice sports in the fall and winter and youth sports such as basketball and summer camps in the spring and summer. Rome also partners with the Rome Free Academy and Rome Country Club using partner facilities for youth sports programming.

Current Core Programs
Aquatics
Camps and Out of School (Lunch Programs)
Community Events
Youth Sports

SUMMER PROGRAM PARTICIPATION TRENDS

Data provided by Rome shows a declining trend in summer program participation over the last eight years. Between the years of 2017-2019, summer program participation decreased by approximately 17% from 1,253 total participants in 2017 to 1,038 in 2019. There is no data available for 2020, which is likely due to a lack of programming offered due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Program participation rebounded between 2021-2023 to pre-pandemic levels, with peak participation occurring in 2023 (1,100 total participants). However, program participation decreased by 26% in 2024 (814 total participants).



Summer recreation program participation has experienced fluctuations over the last eight years but ultimately show a decline as of 2024.

RECREATION PROGRAM MARKET POTENTIAL

The demographic analysis of Rome's population reveals several trends that will impact recreation programming over the next decade. The stagnant to declining population growth will provide a more limited market for future programs and recreation facility growth. Rome will need to be strategic in the type and number of programs and activities that will be planned. Also, Rome has an aging population which means that programs and activities need to be planned to accommodate multiple generations, including older, active adults.

Additionally, data reveals a low potential for household disposable income that can be allocated to recreation programming. Rome will need to continue to be mindful of this when pricing programs. While programming that caters to individual interests or is specialized should be priced to recover all direct costs, Rome should offer low-cost opportunities and establish a financial aid or scholarship program to ensure accessibility to critical or essential activities.

Finally, an analysis of local recreation trends shows interest in several types of recreation including:

- Archery
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Electronic Gaming
- Fishing
- Swimming

PARTNERSHIP AND COMMUNITY PROVIDERS

Rome's recreation programming relies on a wide network of informal and formal partnerships to deliver services to the community. However, many of these relationships have weakened over time or operate without clear structure, creating inconsistencies in program delivery and limited strategic alignment.

Rome is in the process of reestablishing a formal partnership with the YMCA, historically a key partner in youth programming. While there is interest on both sides in re-establishing collaboration, no formal agreement or shared staffing model currently exists. Similarly, school partnerships, once a strong component of youth sports and facility access, provide opportunity for future enhancement. However, regulations have made it increasingly difficult to use school facilities.

The Rome Art Community Center and other arts and culture providers represent another underutilized partnership opportunity. Historically, the Rome financially supported arts groups, the public library, and local theater; however, that funding has been gradually withdrawn.

Several sports organizations, including Rome Chaos, War Dogs, and Copper City basketball programs, operate independently and sometimes in competition with each other. Without a centralized coordination system or shared use policy, the Rome's role in youth sports has diminished, and program standards vary significantly. The Kennedy Arena, capable of supporting multiple basketball courts, has been rented out without a long-term strategy or equity-focused allocation plan.

On the operational side, Rome has made progress by implementing field usage policies, a stage rental policy, and requiring certificates of insurance for program providers. These are foundational steps toward more structured partnerships, but the policies are still relatively new and inconsistently applied.

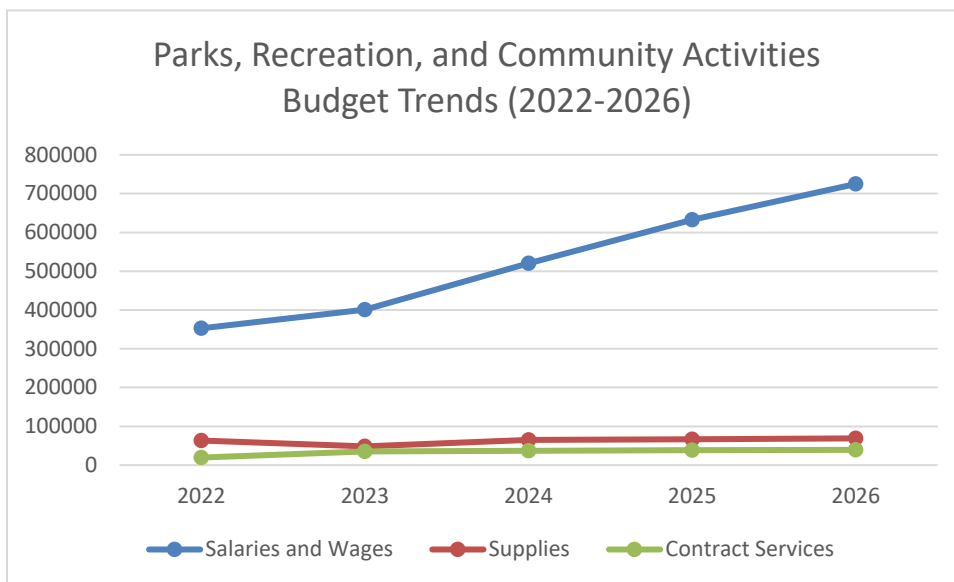
Despite the number of active and potential partners, there is no consistent partnership policy or protocol guiding how organizations collaborate with Rome. This has contributed to a fragmented provider landscape, gaps in programming, and a lack of shared accountability.



1.5 RECREATION PROGRAMMING FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Rome’s recreation programming is primarily funded through property taxes but also receives limited revenue from grants, sponsorships, partnerships, and user fees. Currently, there are minimal cost tracking standards and data-informed budgeting practices in place for recreation programming. Rome budget data for Parks, Recreation, and Community Activities shows increasing salaries and wages for the years 2022-2026 but a minimal increase in supplies and contracted services. At the time of this report, it was not clear what percentage of the overall budget is specifically allocated to recreation programming. According to National Recreation and Park Association (“NRPA”) Park Metrics benchmarks, parks and recreation departments that serve a population between 20,000 to 49,999 allocate 38% of their budget to recreation services.

Additionally, Rome’s total budget for parks, recreation, and community activities, municipal pools, and the Civic Arena and other supporting facilities totaled \$1,838,126 in 2025. NRPA Park Metrics show that the median average for annual operating expenses for populations between 20,000 to 49,999 total \$3,682,806 and the low average totals \$2,040,046.



Salaries and Wages in the Parks, Recreation, and Community Activities Budget have increased 105% over the last five years.

1.6 PROMOTION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Rome has made recent strides in marketing its recreation programs, but gaps remain in outreach effectiveness, brand identity, and community engagement. The launch of a seasonal Fun Guide is a positive development, offering residents a centralized listing of available programs and events. However, distribution channels and visibility remain limited, reducing reach and impact.

One of the primary challenges is the fragmented nature of promotion and communication across departments and partner organizations. Programs offered by the City, YMCA, local sports leagues, arts organizations, and other community groups are rarely coordinated under a single marketing strategy. As a result, residents may be unaware of the full range of opportunities available, particularly those not directly administered by Rome.



Efforts to collaborate with the school district on marketing have been hindered by systemic limitations. For example, Rome has attempted to use PeachJar, a digital flyer distribution system used by schools, but this method has proven ineffective in reaching target audiences. Better integration with school communication systems and youth-serving organizations will be critical for reaching families.

Despite these challenges, Rome has begun to incorporate more on-the-ground engagement strategies. Youth surveys conducted during summer programs, sign-up events like the one held at Kennedy Arena, and outreach initiatives (e.g., summer lunch program) are helping to generate feedback and build awareness. These efforts provide a foundation for more intentional community engagement.

However, Rome lacks a consistent brand identity for its recreation services and has not established a formal marketing or communications plan. Most

outreach is reactive rather than proactive, and there is no data-driven approach to measuring the effectiveness of marketing strategies or targeting underserved populations.

Looking forward, Rome has an opportunity to develop a comprehensive marketing and engagement strategy that strengthens connections with residents, increases program participation, and builds community support.

1.7 NEXT STEPS AND TRANSITION TO RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings outlined in this Existing Conditions Report provide a foundational understanding of how recreation programming is currently delivered and supported in Rome. Through this analysis, several key themes have emerged: a need for increased program ownership and coordination, more strategic and formalized partnerships, consistent program standards, better data collection, and stronger community engagement.

As the master plan project moves into the next phase of planning, the focus will shift from assessment to **strategy development**. Recreation program recommendations will be grounded in the realities identified in this report and designed to help Rome build a more cohesive, responsive, and sustainable recreation program framework.

The next phase will include:

- **Vision:** A forward-looking vision for recreation programming that reflects community values, promotes equitable access, and leverages the City's strengths, facilities, and partnerships.
- **Strategic Priorities:** Clear focus areas to guide decision-making, such as defining core program areas, rebuilding partnerships, improving operations, and aligning staff and resources to community needs.
- **Actions and Implementation Steps:** Specific, phased recommendations for improving program delivery, staffing, facilities, policies, and funding. These will include both short-term improvements and long-term system changes.
- **Performance Tracking:** Metrics and tools to evaluate program effectiveness, community impact, and operational efficiency. This includes guidance on how to use participation data, cost recovery analysis, and resident feedback to inform continuous improvement.

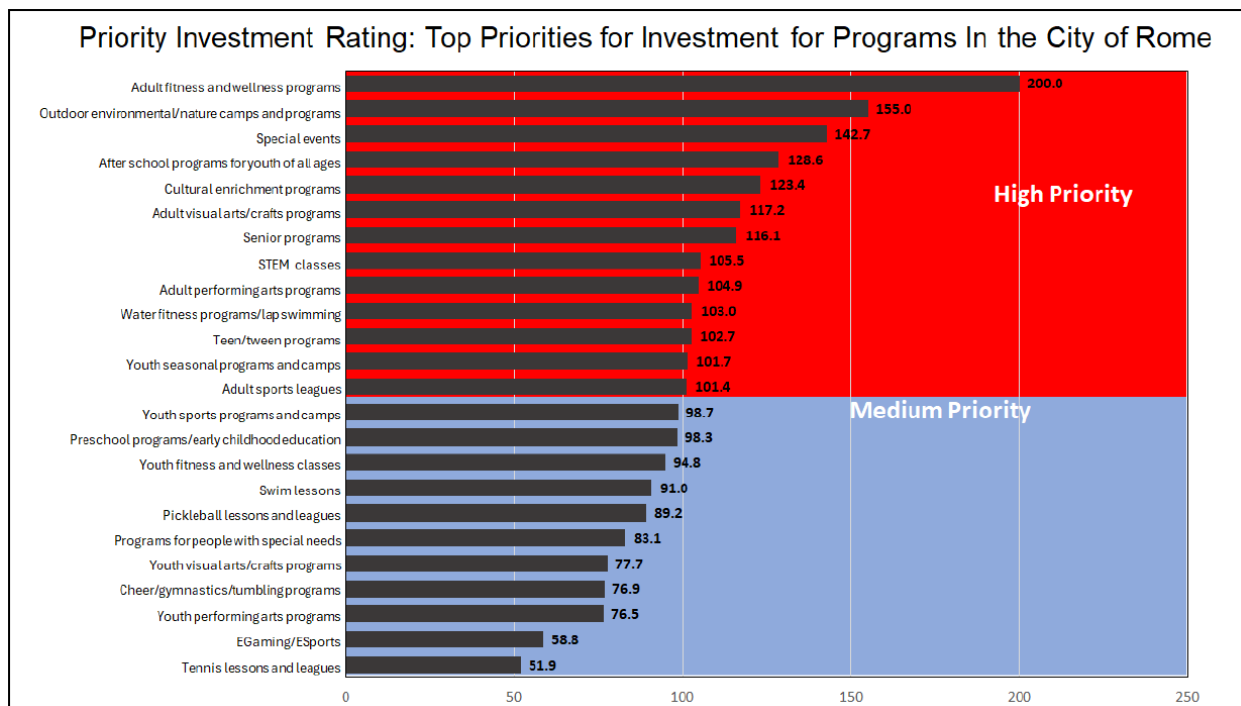
Together, these elements will form a **strategic programming plan** that aligns with master plan goals, responds to resident needs, and strengthens Rome's recreation services, ensuring they remain relevant, high-quality, and sustainable for years to come.



CHAPTER TWO RECREATION PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 COMMUNITY SURVEY

A statistically valid community survey was administered by the ETC Institute in the summer of 2025. The survey analysis reveals top priorities for investment for programs and activities through a Priority Investment Rating (PIR). The top priorities for investment, based on the number of households that have a need for specific programming and how well their needs are currently being met, are adult fitness and wellness programs, outdoor environmental/nature camps and programs, special events, afterschool program for youth, and cultural enrichment programs. The survey priorities should be used with other demographic, recreation trend, and market data to inform future planning of core program areas for Rome.



2025 Community Survey – Priority Investment Rating for Recreation Programming

2.2 CORE PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on community feedback and trends, new and adapted core program areas of focus have been outlined below for Rome with some key, measurable outcomes for consideration.

Core Program Area Title	Description	Key, Measurable Outcomes
Arts and Culture	Provide diverse and accessible art and culture programs that celebrate creativity, heritage, and community engagement across all ages and backgrounds.	- Number of programs offered annually - Attendance by age group - Participant satisfaction ratings

Active Adults	Enhance the quality of life for adults aged 55 and older by providing diverse and engaging recreational opportunities that promote physical health, mental well-being, social connections, and lifelong learning.	- Participation rates among adults 55+ - Retention and repeat participation - Reported health and wellness impact
Fitness and Wellness	Promote a healthy and active community by offering diverse and accessible fitness and wellness programs that support physical, mental, and emotional well-being for all ages and fitness levels.	- Program attendance and frequency - Percent of programs at capacity - Fitness assessment or self-reported health
Community Special Events	Create vibrant, inclusive, and memorable special events that strengthen community bonds, celebrate local culture, and provide diverse entertainment and recreational opportunities.	- Event attendance - Economic impact (e.g., vendor revenue) - Community satisfaction and participation surveys
Nature Education and Outdoor Adventure	Inspire a deep connection to nature and foster personal growth through diverse outdoor education and adventure programs that promote environmental stewardship, physical activity, and lifelong learning.	- Number of environmental/outdoor programs - Youth participation in nature-based activities - Pre/post program surveys
Youth and Family Out-of-School Enrichment	Structured, engaging opportunities for children, youth, and families during out-of-school hours, including afterschool, evening, weekend, holiday break, and summer programs.	- Program enrollment by age and season - Access for low-income families - Academic or social-emotional outcomes
Youth Sports	Provide comprehensive and inclusive youth sports programs that foster physical development, teamwork, and a lifelong love of sports while promoting positive values such as sportsmanship, discipline, and respect.	- Player registration and retention rates - Number of volunteer coaches - Participant skill or knowledge growth

2.2.1 SHIFT TO QUALITY PROGRAMMING OVER QUANTITY OF PROGRAMMING

While Rome has offered a wide range of parks, facilities, and programs in the past, many facilities are aging, underutilized, or stretched thin for services. Rather than expanding the number of offerings, Rome should prioritize reinvesting in existing spaces to modernize infrastructure, enhance accessibility, and improve the overall participant experience. This approach includes consolidating underperforming sites, upgrading high-impact facilities, and tailoring programs to align more closely with community needs and expectations. By emphasizing quality over quantity, Rome can create a more sustainable system that delivers meaningful, well-maintained, and impactful recreation opportunities, building resident pride and ensuring long-term relevance.

2.3 PROGRAM STRATEGIES, STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Program standards should be established as a part of the program development process to ensure consistency of services. A focused approach should be applied to quality assurance for all services and how they are planned, implemented, and evaluated.

Quality standards should include expectations for staff training, staff performance evaluations, the condition of the program space, condition of supplies and equipment used for activities, and adhering to risk management policies and practices.

Also, defined and consistent customer service standards ensure that staff are maintaining a safe, quality, and positive experience for participants. Important standards are applied to the customer's journey from the point of deciding to register for a program or activity, through the registration process, participation, and, finally, evaluation of the



customer's experience after the program or activity has been completed. Staff should always be mindful of consistent communication with the customer through the completion of the program or activity as well as ways that the customer experience can be enhanced.

2.3.1 PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCE GUIDE

Rome should create a Program Development and Resource Guide that outlines a consistent program development process that can assist programming staff with service delivery standards for both in-house and contracted programs. This includes a worksheet that staff would fill out when proposing a new program or update to a current program. The worksheet outlines critical program details including projected expenses that are used to establish the program fee. The worksheet also asks for information related to program outcomes, marketing tactics, and whether a similar program is offered elsewhere within the community.

Also, as a part of the program development process, Rome should consider comparing planned programs and prioritizing resources using additional data points, such as potential partnership or sponsorship opportunities, market competition, and the program's priority investment ranking from the community needs assessment survey. This additional analysis will help staff make an informed, objective case to the public when a program is in decline, but beloved by a few, is retired. A strong case is made for resources to be allocated to the program/service if it has a high priority ranking, appropriate cost recovery, good age segment appeal, good partnership potential, and strong market conditions.

2.3.2 DATA COLLECTION FOR RECREATION PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Rome can streamline recreation program management data collection through recreation management software by using a more automated workflow that minimizes staff time and produces key data for informed decision making.

- Rome should first determine the key data points that they would like to regularly analyze. Some best practices for metrics include program participation, financial performance such as the cost recovery percentage of each program, customer feedback, operational metrics such as instructor or staff hours per program, and key marketing insights including social media or email campaign effectiveness.
- Recreation management software has features that can assist with the automated data collection for many of these key data points.
- Custom reports can be automatically generated for program participation trends, waitlist to enrollment conversion, facility utilization, and revenue vs. cost recovery per program.
- Recreation management software can also send post program surveys via email after program completion. Software such as SurveyMonkey or Google Forms linked through the software can help capture satisfaction scores and feedback for reporting purposes.
- Finally, there are online dashboards, some that are free to use such as Google's Looker Studio, which can be created using the data collected through recreation management software that can provide real-time updates on program performance for monthly or quarterly reports.

2.3.3 ALTERNATIVE PROVIDER ANALYSIS

Performing an alternative service provider and market definition analysis for recreational programming can offer several benefits to Rome to help the organization operate more efficiently, offer higher-quality programs, and best serve the needs of the community.

- Understanding the alternative service providers in the market allows Rome to identify gaps in existing services and potentially offer new or improved programs to meet the needs of the community more effectively.

- Identifying gaps in the market can also present opportunities for Rome to develop new revenue streams through innovative programs or partnering with private providers for mutually beneficial outcomes.
- By analyzing the market, Rome can identify potential cost-saving opportunities by either collaborating with existing providers or outsourcing certain services, thus optimizing resource allocation.
- Analyzing alternative providers helps the department benchmark its own programs against those offered by competitors, leading to the enhancement of program quality and diversity.
- Through consistent market analysis, Rome can prioritize its resources based on identified needs and demands, ensuring that investments are directed towards areas where they are most needed and likely to have the greatest impact.
- By offering programs that align with community interests and preferences, Rome can create greater engagement and satisfaction among residents, leading to increased utilization of recreational facilities and services.
- Insights gained from the analysis can inform the department's strategic planning process, helping to set clear objectives and priorities for future programming initiatives.

2.3.4 AGE SEGMENT ANALYSIS

An age segment analysis examines the distribution of recreation programs across different age groups to determine which populations are being served and where gaps may exist. This analysis is an essential tool for program planning, as it helps align recreation offerings with community demographics, interests, and evolving needs. For Rome, this analysis supports informed decision-making about resource allocation, program development, and strategic outreach.

2.3.5 PROGRAM CLASSIFICATION

Conducting a classification of services analysis informs how each program serves the overall organization mission, the goals and objectives of each core program area, and how the program should be funded with tax dollars and/or user fees and charges. Where a program or service is classified depends upon alignment with the organizational mission, how the public perceives a program, legal mandates, financial sustainability, personal benefit, competition in the marketplace, and access by participants. Program classifications can also help to determine the most appropriate management, funding, and marketing strategies.

2.3.6 PROGRAM LIFECYCLE

A program lifecycle analysis involves reviewing each program offered by Rome to determine the stage of growth or decline for each. This provides a way of informing strategic decisions about the overall mix of programs managed by Rome to ensure that an appropriate number of programs are “fresh” and that few programs, if any, need to be discontinued. This analysis is not based on strict quantitative data, but rather, it is based on staff members’ knowledge of their programs.

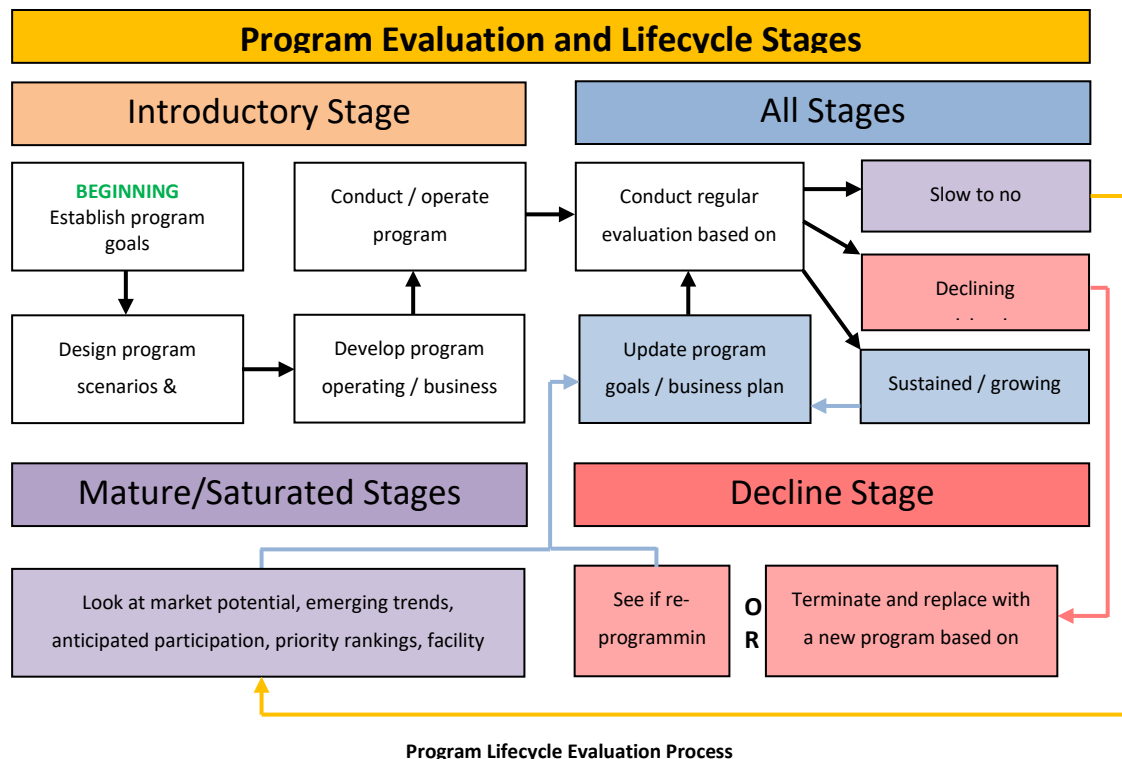
It is recommended to have fifty to sixty percent of all programs within the beginning stages because it provides Rome with an avenue to energize its programmatic offerings. These stages ensure the pipeline for new programs is there prior to programs transitioning into the Mature stage.

The Mature stage anchors a program portfolio, and it is recommended to have forty percent of programs within the Mature category to achieve a stable foundation.

It is a natural progression for programs to eventually evolve into saturation and decline stages. However, if programs reach these stages rapidly, it could be an indication that the quality of the programs does not meet expectations, or there is not as much of a demand for the programs. As programs enter the Decline Stage, they must be closely reviewed and evaluated for repositioning or elimination. When this occurs, Rome should modify these programs to begin a new lifecycle within the Introductory Stage or replace the existing programs with innovative programs based upon community needs and trends.

Program Lifecycle Recommendations

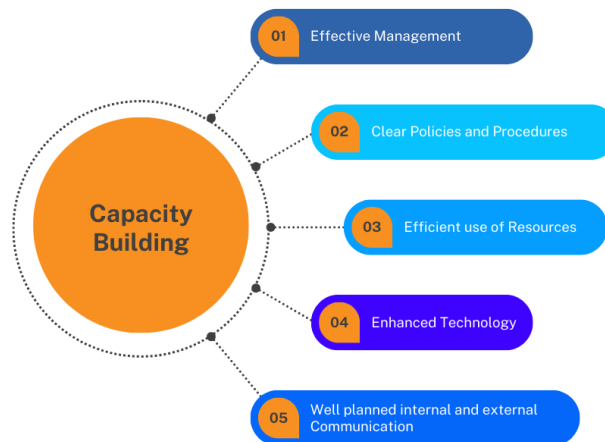
- Conduct an annual review of all programs to determine their stages of growth or decline and adjust the portfolio as needed to maintain balance and innovation.
- Aim for 50-60% of programs in the beginning stages to energize offerings and ensure a pipeline for future mature programs.
- Implement annual performance metrics for each core program area to track participation growth, customer retention, and the introduction of new programs, fostering innovation and alignment with community needs and trends.



2.3.7 CREATING MORE CAPACITY FOR PROGRAMMING

Rome and its programming will benefit from a sustained effort toward building capacity to address the limitations of space and staffing. There are five key operational areas crucial to a park and recreation department's success.

- **Policy/Procedure:** This involves establishing clear guidelines and protocols to achieve desired outcomes for park and recreation services, ensuring adherence to approved plans, policies, and standards.
- **Management:** This focuses on effectively organizing, coordinating, and supervising all departmental activities to fulfill defined goals. It encompasses staff roles, responsibilities, and overall workflow.
- **Resources:** This entails managing the department's resources, including finances, equipment, inventory, staff expertise, and information, to ensure their efficient utilization for optimal functioning.
- **Technology:** This emphasizes leveraging technology like software, tools, and equipment to enhance efficiency in park operations. This can involve utilizing digital platforms for communication, work order tracking, or resource management.
- **Communications:** This covers both internal and external communication strategies. It involves effectively disseminating information regarding park operations, promoting services and programs, and keeping the community informed about capital projects.



Rome can adopt several strategic approaches that help strengthen the preceding key operational areas.

- ***Ensure a staffing plan is established before planning additional programs. Falling short on staff will have a direct effect on program capacity and may leave some activities unsupervised or cancelled altogether.***
- Consider partnering with additional community organizations to host programs. Leveraging partnerships with local schools, community and private organizations can provide access to additional volunteers and spaces for programming, which can extend the range and reach of recreational activities. Utilizing these external venues during off-peak hours or through collaborative agreements can help mitigate space constraints without significant capital investment. Also, volunteers with specific skills and interests can help fill a need for program instructors.
- The use of enhanced technology can help with staff efficiency through automated tasks and allow staff to be used in different, potentially more effective ways.
 - Streamline operations such as recruitment, training, and employee management through cloud software that brings together all necessary human resources functions.
 - Systems that tie together program registration and facility usage data with financial performance data, can make analysis more efficient for budgeting, and reporting with accuracy.
 - Automate marketing campaigns, content creation, and audience engagement. Software that brings all marketing functions under one umbrella and that also provides real time engagement metrics can save staff a lot of time on this important recreational programming function.

- Design and manage recreational programs and events. For example, new technology can help with research and data analysis to determine participation trends to recognize adjustments or enhancements that need to be made to offerings.
- Lastly, new technology can help in counting visitors, monitoring building systems, surveilling facilities, providing security, planning building improvements, and saving energy. This can save valuable time while providing more data for informed operational decisions.

CREATE A FRONT-LINE-FOCUSED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Build an efficient, front-line-focused organizational structure by streamlining internal processes, prioritizing resources for staff who directly serve residents, and aligning leadership support to strengthen day-to-day service delivery. This approach ensures that the department operates with greater clarity, responsiveness, and accountability, while putting community experience at the center of its operations.

In practice, this suggests:

- **Efficiency:** Reducing layers of bureaucracy, clarifying roles, and streamlining processes so staff spend less time on internal hurdles and more time serving the community.
- **Front-line-focused:** Prioritizing positions and support for the staff who interact directly with residents (program instructors, maintenance crews, customer service, event coordinators), ensuring they have the tools, training, and authority to deliver high-quality service.
- **Organizational structure:** Rebalancing or restructuring departments, divisions, or reporting lines so that leadership supports operations rather than pulling resources away from them, with clearer accountability and stronger communication channels.

In short, it is about creating a lean, service-oriented organization that puts community-facing staff and resident experience at the center, while aligning management and support systems to back them up effectively.

2.3.8 VOLUNTEERS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Another way to expand capacity for additional recreation programming is through effective volunteer management and partnership strategies. Below are best practices for each.

BEST PRACTICES IN VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

In developing a volunteer policy, some best practices that the Rome should be aware of include:

- Involve volunteers in cross-training to expose them to various organizational functions and increase their skill. This can also increase their utility, allowing for more flexibility in making work assignments, and can increase their appreciation and understanding of the Rome.
- Ensure a Volunteer Coordinator (a designated program staff member with volunteer management responsibility) and associated staff stay fully informed about the strategic direction of the agency overall, including strategic initiatives for all divisions. Periodically identify, evaluate, or revise specific tactics the volunteer services program should undertake to support the larger organizational mission.
- A key part of maintaining the desirability of volunteerism in the agency is developing a good reward and recognition system. The consultant team recommends using tactics like those found in frequent flier programs, wherein volunteers can use their volunteer hours to obtain early registration at programs, or discounted pricing at certain programs, rentals or events, or any other department function. Identify and summarize volunteer recognition policies in a Volunteer Policy document.
- Regularly update volunteer position descriptions. Include an overview of the volunteer position lifecycle in the Volunteer Manual, including the procedure for creating a new position.

- Add end-of-lifecycle process steps to the Volunteer Manual to ensure that there is formal documentation of resignation or termination of volunteers. Also include ways to monitor and track reasons for resignation/termination and perform exit interviews with outgoing volunteers when able.
- In addition to the number of volunteers and volunteer hours, categorization and tracking volunteerism by type and extent of work, is important:
- Regular volunteers: Those volunteers whose work is continuous, provided their work performance is satisfactory and there is a continuing need for their services.
- Special event volunteers: Volunteers who help with a particular event with no expectation that they will return after the event is complete.
- Episodic volunteers: Volunteers who help with a particular project type on a recurring or irregular basis with no expectation that they will return for other duties.
- Volunteer interns: Volunteers who have committed to work for the agency to fulfill a specific higher-level educational learning requirement.
- Community service volunteers: Volunteers who are volunteering over a specified period to fulfill a community service requirement.

Rome should encourage employees to volunteer in the community. Exposure of staff to the community in different roles (including those not related to parks and recreation) will raise awareness of the agency and its volunteer program. It also helps staff understand the role and expectations of a volunteer if they can experience it for themselves.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

The recommended policies and practices for public/private partnerships that may include businesses, private groups, private associations, or individuals who desire to make a profit from use of the Rome's facilities or programs are detailed below. These can also apply to partnerships where a private party wishes to develop a facility on park property, to provide a service on publicly owned property, or who has a contract with the agency to provide a task or service on the agency's behalf at public facilities. These unique partnership principles are as follows:

- Upon entering into an agreement with a private business, group, association or individual, the Rome staff and political leadership must recognize that they must allow the private entity to meet their financial objectives within reasonable parameters that protect the mission, goals and integrity of Rome.
- As an outcome of the partnership, Rome must receive a designated fee that may include a percentage of gross revenue dollars less sales tax on a regular basis, as outlined in the contract agreement.
- The working agreement of the partnership must establish a set of measurable outcomes to be achieved, as well as the tracking method of how those outcomes will be monitored by the agency. The outcomes will include standards of quality, financial reports, customer satisfaction, payments to the agency, and overall coordination with Rome for the services rendered.
- Depending on the level of investment made by the private contractor, the partnership agreement can be limited to months, a year or multiple years.
- If applicable, the private contractor will provide a working management plan annually that they will follow to ensure the outcomes desired by Rome. The management plan can and will be negotiated, if necessary. Monitoring the management plan will be the responsibility of both partners. The agency must allow the contractor to operate freely in their best interest, if the outcomes are achieved, and the terms of the partnership agreement are adhered to.
- The private contractor cannot lobby agency advisory or governing boards for renewal of a contract. Any such action will be cause for termination. All negotiations must be with the Rome Director or their designee.



- The agency has the right to advertise for private contracted partnership services or negotiate on an individual basis with a bid process based on the professional level of the service to be provided.
- If conflicts arise between both partners, the highest-ranking officers from both sides will try to resolve the issue before going to each partner's legal counsels. If none can be achieved, the partnership shall be dissolved.

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Rome has the potential to have a strong network of recreation program partners. Therefore, the following recommendations are both an overview of existing partnership opportunities available to Rome, as well as a suggested approach to organizing partnership pursuits. This is not an exhaustive list of all potential partnerships that can be developed, but this list can be used as a reference tool for the agency to develop its own priorities in partnership development. The following five areas of focus are recommended:

1. **Operational Partners:** Other entities and organizations that can support the efforts of Rome to maintain facilities and assets, promote amenities and park usage, support site needs, provide programs and events, and/or maintain the integrity of natural/cultural resources through in-kind labor, equipment, or materials.
2. **Vendor Partners:** Service providers and/or contractors that can gain brand association and notoriety as a preferred vendor or supporter of the ROME in exchange for reduced rates, services, or some other agreed upon benefit.
3. **Service Partners:** Nonprofit organizations and/or friends' groups that support the efforts of the agency to provide programs and events, and/or serve specific constituents in the community collaboratively.
4. **Co-Branding Partners:** Private, for-profit organizations that can gain brand association and notoriety as a supporter of Rome in exchange for sponsorship or co-branded programs, events, marketing and promotional campaigns, and/or advertising opportunities.
5. **Resource Development Partners:** A private, nonprofit organization with the primary purpose to leverage private sector resources, grants, other public funding opportunities, and resources from individuals and groups within the community to support the goals and objectives of the agency on mutually agreed strategic initiatives.

BEST PRACTICE FOR ALL PARTNERSHIPS

All partnerships developed and maintained by Rome should adhere to common policy requirements. These include:

- Each partner will meet with or report to Rome staff on a regular basis to plan and share activity-based costs and equity invested.
- Partners will establish measurable outcomes and work through key issues to focus on for the coming year to meet the desired outcomes.
- Each partner will focus on meeting a balance of equity agreed to and track investment costs accordingly.
- Measurable outcomes will be reviewed quarterly and shared with each partner, with adjustments made as needed.
- A working partnership agreement will be developed and monitored together on a quarterly or as-needed basis.
- Each partner will assign a liaison to serve each partnership agency for communication and planning purposes.

2.3.9 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance measures are vital gauges for parks and recreation programs. They cut through guesswork, revealing what truly resonates with the community. For example, participation numbers paint a clear picture of program popularity, while satisfaction surveys illuminate areas for improvement with service delivery. By tracking outcomes linked to core programming, Rome can pinpoint their programs' impact and justify their value to stakeholders. Ultimately, performance measures guide data-driven decisions, ensuring resources are directed towards programs that bring the most benefit to the community.

For recreation staff and Rome leadership, key performance indicators (“KPIs”) foster accountability and transparency, facilitating a clear understanding of individual and team contributions towards Rome goals. Regular monitoring and reporting on KPIs create a culture of continuous improvement and performance excellence. Staff can align their efforts with strategic priorities, focusing on initiatives that yield the highest community benefits. Additionally, KPIs enable leadership to recognize and reward outstanding performance, promote professional development, and cultivate a motivated workforce dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of the community through exceptional recreation programming.

HUMAN RESOURCE STANDARDS

Human resource standards are crucial for park and recreation programs because they ensure qualified, trained staff. This means recreation programs are led by competent instructors who can deliver safe and effective activities. Standards also promote fair treatment of staff, fostering a positive work environment that attracts and retains skilled employees. Ultimately, strong HR practices underpin successful recreation programs, benefiting both staff and the community they serve.

Specific standards that were analyzed, such as training and performance reviews, contribute to this goal. For example, a variety of training courses ensures staff have the wide range of skills and knowledge necessary to lead programs effectively, while performance reviews help identify areas for improvement and promote accountability toward continuous improvement and Rome goals.

For instance, by understanding staff strengths and areas for improvement, Rome can tailor training and professional development to address specific needs within recreation programming. Continued learning is one of the main drivers for staff motivation and a positive work culture. Also, encouraging open communication between staff and management will help ensure constructive feedback on employee performance is directly applied to program planning, execution, and customer services.

Additionally, performing regular quality assurance observations of contracted programs ensures that these instructors align with Rome expectations and standards for community recreation.

Performance evaluations and quality assurance observations are in and of themselves time and resource intensive requirements. Further, they must be completed by senior staff or director level leadership. This requirement should be planned and accounted for accordingly in workload assessments and staffing. As the current Rome leadership staff is at capacity, additional staffing should be explored to free up leadership to fulfill expert level tasks such as this.



2.4 ENHANCE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND RESIDENT EXPERIENCE

Enhance customer service and resident experience by building a culture of hospitality and accountability across all staff levels.

Strategies:

- **Training & Standards:** Implement ongoing customer service training focused on hospitality, inclusivity, and conflict resolution; establish clear service standards that staff are expected to meet.
- **Empowerment:** Provide front-line staff with the tools, information, and authority needed to resolve issues quickly and positively without unnecessary escalation.
- **Feedback Loops:** Create easy ways for residents to share feedback, both online and in person, and ensure that input is reviewed regularly to improve services and recognize staff successes.
- **Visibility & Presence:** Increase positive staff visibility in parks and facilities through ambassador programs, greeters, or on-site staff presence to create welcoming environments.

This shift not only strengthens trust and satisfaction among residents but also builds community pride and reinforces the value of Rome Parks and Recreation as a vital public service.

2.5 PROGRAM FINANCIALS

2.5.1 PRICING STRATEGIES

Pricing strategies are one mechanism that Rome can use to influence cost recovery and can help balance revenue generation with accessible pricing, allowing recreation services to offset the added costs of expanding programming by adding staffing or third-party contractors without overwhelming existing staff resources.

Best Practice Pricing Strategies	
Pricing Strategy	Description
Age Segment	Different prices offered for different ages
Bundle Pricing	Programs/ services are grouped together at a single, often discounted, price
By Competition (Market Rate)	Competitors' prices influence your price
By Cost Recovery Goals	Dept. cost recovery goals influence your price
By Customer's Ability to Pay	Scholarships, subsidies, discounted rates offered for low-income
By Location	Different prices at different locations
Family / Household Status	Different prices offered for family / household groups
Group Discounts	Different prices for groups
Introductory Pricing	Program/ service is offered at a lower price for a limited time when it's first launched
Prime / Non-Prime Time	Different prices for different times of the day
Residency	Different prices for resident vs non-resident
Subscription/ Member Pricing	Pay a recurring fee at regular intervals (i.e., memberships, member/ non-member)
Weekday / Weekend	Different prices for different days of the week

Moving forward, Rome should consider researching any untapped pricing strategies and the impact they could have on cost recovery goals. For instance, Rome could build their marketing budget by adding a marketing fee that is built into the overall fee for those programs that require more extensive promotions. This fee can eventually help to offset the costs for supplies, services, and personnel required for marketing and promotions.

Also, differential pricing such as weekday/weekend and prime time/non-prime time pricing could incentivize usage during off-peak times with lower prices and maximize revenue generation during periods of high demand.

These other pricing strategies can help balance revenue generation with accessible pricing, allowing Rome to expand programming without overwhelming existing staff resources.

- Offering different prices based on age (e.g., youth, adults, seniors) can encourage participation across demographics. Seniors may receive lower fees, which can boost overall participation, while certain youth and adult programs that are in higher demand typically have higher rates and can generate more revenue to subsidize other services.
- Providing discounts for group registrations (e.g., sports teams, classes) can encourage larger participation with minimal marketing or outreach, reducing per-user administrative efforts while increasing total revenue.
- Setting fees in line with local competition ensures that Rome remains competitive. This can maximize participation while aligning fees with what people are willing to pay, ensuring you are not undervaluing services, thus increasing revenue to reinvest in staff and other resources.

2.6 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR RECREATION PROGRAMMING

Rome seeks to ensure that all members of the community can participate in recreation programs and activities, regardless of their financial circumstances.

Fundamental to increasing program access is providing and supporting programs and amenities that serve all ages, abilities, and interests in the community. Following the previously outlined program strategy objectives will help to better ensure programs are evenly distributed.

Establishing a scholarship fund for discounted recreational programming and facility access can significantly enhance access to recreation offerings for the Independence community. Further, Rome should consider including the following measures in a scholarship policy:

- Identify specific populations in the city through demographic data to understand their needs and financial barriers. Where appropriate, tailor scholarship programming to specific populations such as youth, seniors, as well as low-income families.
- Provide income-based discounted rates for residents facing financial limitations. U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines can be used to determine the appropriate percentage of fee discounts.
- Provide discounts for services for low-income residents.
- Offer alternative payment options and alternative payment methods to accommodate different financial circumstances.
- Implement community outreach and education with residents to raise awareness of available programs and services and help with accessing services.
- Ensure that measures are implemented to guarantee the confidentiality of all applicant information.
- Ensure that partnerships with private or non-profit organizations that use facilities and do not have customers that qualify for need based assistance – such as private, non-profit sports associations- cover the full costs of park use accordingly.

Also, leveraging the resources of a non-profit or establishing a Park Foundation can create a conducive form of community support and philanthropic endeavors. Rome can tap into resources beyond its operational budget. A foundation can spearhead fundraising efforts, seeking donations from local businesses, individuals, and organizations committed to promoting wellness and community inclusivity. These contributions can be restricted

funds specifically for a scholarship fund, ensuring that financial barriers do not hinder access to Rome offerings. Additionally, the foundation can manage the allocation and distribution of scholarships, ensuring transparency and fairness in the selection process.

2.7 COST RECOVERY

Rome's current implementation of cost recovery is inconsistent across all services. Cost recovery targets should be identified for each core program area at a minimum, and for specific programs or events when realistic. The previously identified core program areas would serve as an effective breakdown for tracking cost recovery metrics including administrative costs. Theoretically, staff should review how programs are grouped for similar cost recovery and subsidy goals to determine if current practices still meet management outcomes.

Determining cost recovery performance and using it to make informed pricing decisions involves a three-step process:

1. Classify all programs and services based on the public or private benefit they provide (as completed in the previous section).
2. Conduct a Cost-of-Service Analysis to calculate the full cost of each program.
3. Establish a cost recovery percentage, through Rome policy, for each program or program type based on the outcomes of the previous two steps and adjust program prices accordingly.

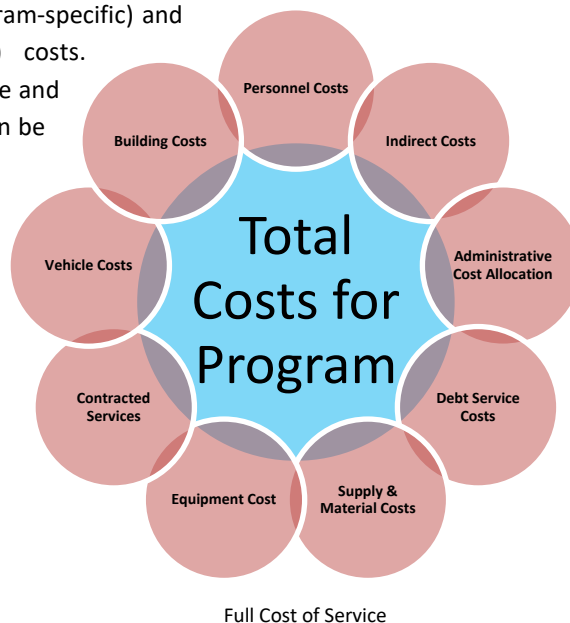
The following section provides more details on steps 2 & 3.

UNDERSTANDING THE FULL COST OF SERVICE

To develop specific cost recovery targets, full cost of accounting needs to be created for each class or program that accurately calculates direct and indirect costs. Cost recovery goals are established once these numbers are in place, and ROME's program staff should be trained on this process. A Cost-of-Service Analysis should be conducted on each program, or program type, that accurately calculates direct (i.e., program-specific) and indirect (i.e., comprehensive, including administrative overhead) costs. Completing a Cost-of-Service Analysis not only helps determine the true and full cost of offering a program, but it also provides information that can be used to price programs based upon accurate delivery costs.

The methodology for determining the total Cost-of-Service involves calculating the total cost for the activity, program, or service, then calculating the total revenue earned for that activity. Costs (and revenue) can also be derived on a per unit basis. Program or activity units may include:

- Number of participants
- Number of tasks performed
- Number of consumable units
- Number of service calls
- Number of events
- Required time for offering program/service



Agencies use Cost-of-Service Analysis to determine what financial resources are required to provide specific programs at specific levels of service. Results are used to determine and track cost recovery as well as to benchmark different programs provided by the agency between one another. Cost recovery goals are established once Cost-of-Service totals have been calculated. Program staff should be trained in the process of conducting a Cost-of-Service Analysis and the process should be undertaken on a regular basis.

Overall, the department should rebalance cost recovery expectations by program area, ensuring that high-performing areas help sustain mission-driven but lower-return services. A transparent cost recovery policy will also build community understanding of where subsidies are intentional and where revenues are maximized.

Below are some strategic recommendations for ways in which Rome can improve their cost recovery performance, by core program area.

ESTABLISHING COST RECOVERY TARGETS

Cost recovery targets should reflect the degree to which a program provides a public versus individual good. Programs providing public benefits (i.e., Essential Services) should be subsidized more by Rome; programs providing individual benefits (i.e., Important or Value-Added Services) should seek to recover costs and/or generate revenue for other services.

The graphic below outlines potential cost recovery targets for Rome services based on how they are classified.



Recommended cost recovery targets based on service classifications



2.8 PROGRAM MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Effective marketing and communication are essential to the success of recreation programs. They not only drive participation but also help build community awareness, foster trust, and promote the value of services offered. Analyzing these practices helps ensure that messaging strategies are efficient, inclusive, and aligned with both community needs and Rome's mission. Strategic communication can amplify the impact of programming, strengthen partnerships, and increase customer satisfaction and engagement.

Rome should modernize and expand its digital strategies to better reach today's residents. Streamlining program information into a centralized, easy-to-navigate online hub, increasing the frequency and quality of social media content, and restoring broader school-based outreach would significantly improve visibility. A unified marketing strategy, consistent across sites, integrated across channels, and supported by both print and digital, will help the department build stronger community connections, expand participation, and reinforce its identity as a resident-first service provider.

WEBSITE

As Rome looks to make future enhancements to the website and overall user experience, staff should consider implementing accessibility guidelines and new technology to improve usability. Overall user experience looks at several factors including accessibility, customer experience, and usability. Rome should also regularly analyze website metrics that track user behavior and can identify areas for overall improvement.

In addition, as a part of overall updates to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA"), the Department of Justice released updated regulations for all state and local government web and mobile content to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines ("WCAG") Version 2.1, Levels A and AA. Rome should work with City communications and legal representatives to understand full digital compliance requirements for content, design, programming, and procedural updates that are necessary.

Rome should continue to utilize website analytics to track user behavior and regularly identify other areas for improvement.

Additionally, to enhance the customer experience and streamline recreation program administration, ROME should invest in improved software with automation features for repetitive tasks like program setup, pricing updates, and roster and waitlist management. Automation could also simplify communication with participants through customizable online forms, reminders, and confirmation emails. Using a single, integrated software platform is essential to avoid customer confusion and encourage program registration.

However, while automation reduces administrative time, staff oversight remains necessary. Designating one staff member to manage and optimize Rome's software will help maximize the technology's potential, though additional staffing may be required to support these improvements.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media strategies play a critical role in telling the story of a recreation agency. The right content can increase program participation and overall community awareness of Rome services.

While this will be a challenge due to current staffing levels, Rome should work with city staff and partners to continue a focus on high-quality photos and videos that highlight parks, facilities, programs, and their users. Rome should consider online events and challenges, live video, and partnerships with local influencers to drive more traffic to its social media channels. Additionally, maintaining a consistent posting schedule can ensure that fresh content is

always being pushed out to the community. A periodic social media audit is recommended to provide Rome with a sound understanding on how social media impacts its programming. The audit can also show insights on how Rome is engaging with their audiences and how effective the platforms are at raising awareness of recreation services.

There are several components and benefits to a social media audit that are highlighted below.

- Take inventory of the platforms that are in use and whether you need them by developing Key Performance Indicators.
- Define goals for each platform to ensure multiple platforms are not pushing out the same type of content.
- Ensure branding and messaging are consistent across all platforms.
- Understand how to use social media analytics to determine where your social media traffic is coming from. Google analytics is another tool to inform Rome about website and social media users.
- Understand the demographics and preferences on content type of Rome social media followers and tailor the messaging to the right audience.
- Identify the top performing social media posts and build on this success with future social media campaigns.

Marketing and Communications Recommendations

- Create a marketing plan aligned with Rome goals and annually update marketing strategies to reflect community needs. Focus on high-quality word-of-mouth, social media, and website enhancements, using inclusive and accessible communication methods.
- Enhance the online user experience by streamlining navigation and automate tasks to enhance customer satisfaction and operational efficiency.
- Ensure consistent branding and messaging across all platforms, regularly assess unmet community needs, and educate staff on marketing principles to boost program participation and community engagement.

MARKETING PLAN

The best practice is to have a specific recreation marketing plan that is in line with Rome goals and objectives in communications. A marketing plan must be built upon and integrated with supporting plans and directly coordinate with organization vision and priorities. The plan should also provide specific guidance as to how ROME's identity and brand is to be consistently portrayed across the multiple methods and deliverables used for communication. Below are the essential pieces to an effective marketing plan:

- Know the audience: Understand the community demographics and who Rome is trying to reach along with their needs and interests and how they will best receive messaging. Rome should also regularly assess the unmet needs or gaps in recreation services throughout the community.
- Define the goals that will drive specific marketing strategies: Some goals can include increasing program participation, boost Rome brand awareness, or improving community engagement for more informed decision making.
- Create the right message: Focus on the benefits and positive outcomes of the program. Emphasize the factors that make the program or service stand out from others in the community.
- Use the right tools and channels: Depending on the demographic and area, some channels may not resonate with community members. For instance, traditional media can reach a wider audience, but it may not be the main source for Rome's target market. Additionally, partnerships with other community organizations can help Rome get messaging to the right audience by sharing resources. By ensuring the



right method is used, Rome will maximize resources for marketing and communications and see positive results with engagement.

- Monitor goals and strategies regularly: Rome should build in methods to measure the impact of the marketing plan and specific strategies to ensure necessary adjustments can be made with communications.

Enhancing marketing efforts will be a challenge with minimal staff time to allocate to the responsibilities. There are some approaches that will help maximize staff time.

- Identify the programs that bring the most value or have the highest participation and prioritize marketing efforts for these.
- Automate social media posts with low-cost content management platforms, such as Hootsuite.
- Use email marketing tools to automate regular program update emails to Rome's customer database.
- Collaborate with local civic organizations to share marketing resources such as print materials or distribution lists.
- Use online design tools that can create professional-looking marketing materials with minimal design experience and in a fraction of the time it would take a printing or design vendor.
- Use larger programs and events or popular public spaces as an opportunity to cross-promote programs and events.

MARKETING TRAINING

Educating program staff on marketing principles can lead to increased awareness of services and overall participation, a stronger connection with the community, and enhanced program partnerships. Simply put, marketing training empowers program staff to take more ownership over their programs. This is a time and resource intensive activity and should be planned accordingly in staffing projections.

CHAPTER THREE SUMMARY AND ACTION PLAN

Rome Parks and Recreation plays an important role in improving quality of life, bringing people together, and promoting health and wellness in the community. The department offers a variety of programs, events, and activities, but there are opportunities to make the system stronger, more consistent, and more aligned with what residents want and need.

As community interests change, it is important for Rome to focus its time and resources on the programs that make the biggest impact. Defining a clear set of core program areas will help staff prioritize offerings that reflect community values and use city facilities efficiently. Developing policies for program pricing, cost recovery, and performance tracking will also make it easier to measure success and ensure programs remain accessible and financially sustainable.

Partnerships and volunteer support are another key opportunity. By collaborating more closely with schools, local organizations, and community groups, Rome can expand its role as a facilitator of recreation opportunities without increasing costs. Using recreation management software and a more consistent approach to marketing will also make it easier for residents to find and register for programs.

The following Recreation Programming Action Plan outlines the next steps for improving recreation services in Rome. It includes specific goals, actions, and timelines to guide short- and mid-term progress. Together, these strategies will help Rome Parks and Recreation grow, improve, and deliver high-quality experiences that meet the needs of all residents.

Recommendation	Goal	Action	Timeline
Define and prioritize core program areas	Clarify Rome's recreation identity and focus staffing and funding	Establish criteria for core program areas; develop a program portfolio by season and age segment	Short-Term (0-2 years)
Create a Program Development and Resource Guide	Standardize program creation and improve cost recovery	Develop a guide including program planning guidelines, pricing and partnership strategies	Short-Term (0-2 years)
Implement program lifecycle management	Ensure innovation and sustainability in program mix	Review programs annually to assess lifecycle stage; retire or modify low-performing programs	Mid-Term (2-5 years)
Improve volunteer and partnership strategies	Expand program capacity and improve service delivery	Develop partnership and volunteer management policies	Short-Term (0-2 years)
Develop and apply program classification and cost recovery policy	Ensure appropriate subsidy levels and financial sustainability	Classify programs as Essential, Important, or Value-Added; assign cost recovery targets	Short-Term (0-2 years)
Expand programs for older adults and underserved demographics	Address gaps in age segment coverage and promote equity	Develop new offerings for 55+ adults and low-income youth and families	Mid-Term (2-5 years)
Adopt a recreation management software system	Streamline registration, scheduling, and performance tracking	Select and implement software with data management, registration, and reporting features	Short-Term (0-2 years)
Develop a consistent, citywide marketing and branding strategy	Increase visibility, awareness, and participation	Create and implement a marketing plan with digital tools, social media strategy, and staff training	Short-Term (0-2 years)
Evaluate space utilization and develop indoor/outdoor programming strategy	Maximize use of existing assets and plan for future indoor recreation needs	Map programming across park and facility locations; plan for future facility investments	Mid-Term (2-5 years)
Establish key performance indicators for programs	Measure success and improve decision making	Track participation, satisfaction, cost recovery, and operational efficiency by program area	Short-Term (0-2 years)