

SEASPAR 2013-15 Strategic Plan

The South East Association for Special Parks And Recreation



Creating the SEASPAR of the Future



Heller and Heller Consulting, Inc.

Prepared by Heller and Heller Consulting, Inc. - December 2012





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT PAGE

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Introduction

The South East Association for Special Parks And Recreation (SEASPAR) and Heller and Heller Consulting, Inc. (HHC) worked collaboratively to develop the SEASPAR Strategic Plan 2012 to 2015. The Strategic Plan's intent is to:

- Establish a three year future direction
- Incorporate user needs into future planning through a survey and focus groups
- Ensure future programs and services are aligned with the needs of customers
- Work toward continuously improving existing excellent performance

The South East Association for Special Parks And Recreation was formed in 1976 and now consists of eleven member agencies. SEASPAR was the first of a second wave of special recreation associations forming in the suburbs of Chicago. The eleven member agencies that make up SEASPAR include: Village of Brookfield, Downers Grove Park District, Community Park District of LaGrange Park, Village of Indian Head Park, Darien Park District, Clarendon Hills Park District, Park District of LaGrange, Lisle Park District, Village of Western Springs, Westmont Park District, and Woodridge Park District.

As a result of its growing and unique programming and its cooperative efforts with many community organizations, SEASPAR was nominated and received the National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Special Recreation programming. In their 36 year history, 13,000 programs, 7,000 day campers, 1,790 people in balloon, 106 seasonal brochures, 146,000 participants, and 2.1 million service hours. Additionally, all of their full-time staff are certified as Certified Park and Recreation Professionals and/or Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists.

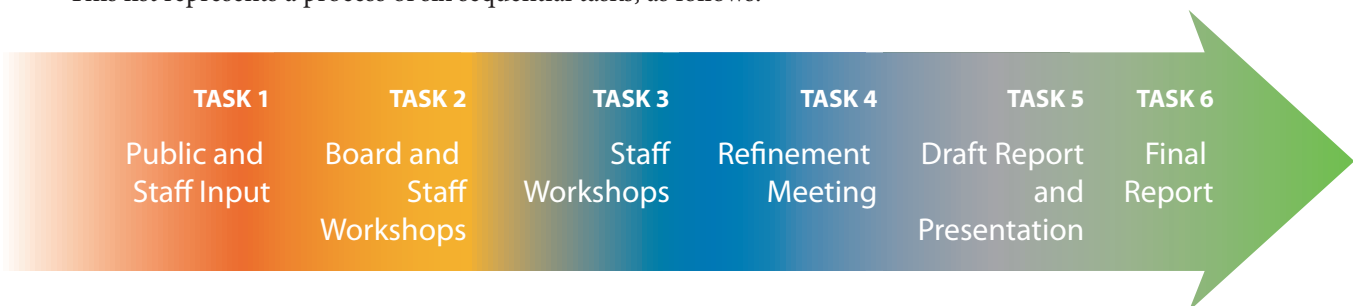
SEASPAR has had a longtime commitment to a strategic planning process in place and is dedicated to continuing these efforts. The Plan will create direction for connecting with customers, financial stability, internal support and communication, program development, and the capacity for growth. All of these areas relate to one another. Good strategic direction takes this into account. A specific example is financial stability relating to staffing levels and internal support. If additional staffing is needed, this impacts financial stability and internal support provided. These cause and effect relationships are included in the strategic initiatives.

Previous to this process, the Association did have mission and vision statements. This strategic planning process included a review of the mission and vision statements, and the development of agency values.

The elements of the Plan include the major areas as follows:

- Revised mission and vision
- Development of values
- Participant, Board, and staff input
- Public input from teachers, social service providers, park district staff
- Notes from Board and staff workshops
- Information about the Balanced Scorecard framework for strategy
- Major Focus Areas
- Strategic Themes
- Objective Statements
- Strategy Maps
- Strategic Initiatives
- Guidelines for Implementation
- Strategic Plan Definitions

This list represents a process of six sequential tasks, as follows:



Mission, Vision and Values

A good starting point for strategy is a review and development of mission, vision, and values. Mission statements define the business or purpose of the organization. Vision statements are more aspirational; what do we hope to become? Values set a level of expectation describing how people within the organization behave. The essence of strategic planning asks these three basic questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to go?
- How will we get there?

After a series of Board and staff review, SEASPAR has a new mission and vision, more contemporary statements for today’s times and developed organizational values, or the way employees and Board members work within the organization.

MISSION STATEMENT

SEASPAR provides dynamic recreation programs and quality services for its residents with disabilities

VISION STATEMENT

Discover abilities, achieve potential, realize dreams

VALUES

Fun: Finding enjoyment and having a sense of humor in what we do and bringing smiles to those we serve

Excellence: Setting our work standards very high, resulting in superior programs and services

Service: Providing reliable and responsible interactions with our customers

Respect: Proper acceptance and sense of worth in our encounters with others

Accountability: Creating organizational and personal responsibility for financial management and all actions affecting the agency

Participant, Board and Staff Input

As part of the Strategic Planning process, two days of focus groups were held at the SEASPAR offices. The consulting firm of Heller and Heller, Inc. conducted eight focus group meetings on December 14 and 15, 2011 with SEASPAR's Board, full-time and part-time staff, volunteers, partner and member agencies, and parents. Approximately 75 individuals participated in the process. Similar questions were asked of all groups, with a few questions specific to the audience, such as staff members. The following information represents a consensus of information generated during the meetings.

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT SEASPAR, WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ISSUES FACING THE ORGANIZATION IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

The demand for services continues to grow. As a result, getting out in front of demand while staying innovative with less money, maintaining efficiency and staying affordable will be a continued challenge. An additional challenge is serving the growing autism population, while still offering a wider range of other special needs as best we can. All the while, keeping a qualified, engaged, and satisfied staff will remain important. Lastly, getting the word out about SEASPAR will be a continued challenge. Other thoughts include:

- The need for a third adult EAGLES program
- We tend to hunker down...we need to teach parents to ask for help
- Facility space
- Training staff in all the areas of special needs
- We need aquatics inclusion staff
- Transportation issues

WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHS THAT WE NEED TO MAKE SURE WE BUILD ON FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STRATEGIC PLAN?

Great relationships with families, board support, excellent staff, YMCA and co-ops result in a great reputation. There is a marketing need to get some corporate involvement for raising funds. Many mentioned the successful EAGLES program. In addition:

- The variety of programs
- There is more awareness of SEASPAR in the west (Downers area) than out east. Geography could hinder people from knowing about SEASPAR if you don't live in Downers Grove
- Participants do not have a sense of entitlement
- The "premier" SRA
- Our entire public relations outreach
- Giant Steps partnership is good
- Good working environment
- Supportive Board
- Transparency with the Board
- Good volunteer program
- Good partners
- A lot of people who are involved stay involved
- The Board members are leaders in their communities, which helps SEASPAR

WHAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE THERE FOR IMPROVEMENT TO SEASPAR?

Staff can always be developed and trained more. Volunteers will always continue to be needed. Technology is always an area for improvement as well as bigger, and accessible facility and office space. Also, a fearless attitude to change, and establishing a youth area for intervening early. Additional comments include:

- Lisa and Anne work together more frequently to strengthen the volunteer program
- Eliminate anything that slows us down
- Cancelled programs
- Overcoming stigma parents have that their child doesn't "need it"
- Paper, process documentation is needed but could be streamlined

- Parents need a time for respite, there should be a parent's night out when there are activities available for the kids or other respite opportunities
- Track our brochures to determine marketing effectiveness
- Online registration, which is scheduled for June 1
- Start a buddy program that would transition kids into junior high and high school
- A half day summer school camp during the summer
- Accept the waiver program we get from the state. Though, this would require the need to be a Medicaid provider
- Involving the staff and Board in the community
- Can people out of district be allowed to register for SEASPAR programs?
- Space requests should be done via email and not a hard copy, and more importantly, we need to schedule out further. In Darien, I need 12 months lead time.
- Need to make sure SEASPAR creates sustainable services
- It is hard to for us to find inclusion support, and we need help finding good aides
- We now have participants that sign up all year and need inclusion help, and we need aides that know the child and families
- The need for all member agencies to collaborate and cooperate toward SEASPAR's mission. Some agencies are better than others

ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC PROGRAMS OR SERVICES YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE OFFERED THAT ARE NOT CURRENTLY OFFERED? ALL RESPONSES ARE LISTED BELOW:

- Programs for 2,3,4 year olds - newborn and young -
- After school programs
- More TR than field trips
- Healthy programs
- Documenting and improving processes
- Research the possibility of offering programs for older adults
- Parent meetings and activities
- Programs for physically challenged adults
- Program for deaf and hard of hearing
- Veterans
- Buddy Program
- Disability specific programming and separate programs for higher functioning populations
- Parent advocacy group/Parent support group/networking
- Having participants in the community fundraise for programs/events, and hopefully could raise awareness

- Satisfaction about the AKTION Group and feel that is a strong group for 40 year olds
- Need programs for 20, 30 year olds
- Open Gyms, Drop-in Times (mentioned by multiple participants)
- Competitive and non-competitive track
- Expanding the Eagle Program (mentioned by several participants)
- Eleven park districts are a part of SEASPAR and if they all partner, each can offer daily exercise programs in each area, every day
- Parent-to-Parent networking or support groups or advocacy (mentioned by a couple of participants)
- Soccer programs
- Variety in Music Classes
- Keep up changing the locations
- Have programs back to back to save travelling time
- Summer camps (mentioned by a couple of participants)
- The programs that are not offered we can take via the park district programs
- When we have mentioned something about a needed change, the staff is so accepting
- Swim lessons offered during dinner time
- It would be nice to have a place with a family changing room
- Have a heated pool
- Karate with special needs or sensory issues. Body awareness activity benefit. There is supposed to be a guy in the Orland Park area that does karate for special needs kids
- Programs for keeping kids fit (mentioned by several participants)
- Joint park district staff training on various disabilities
- Expanding the Eagle program. In Brookfield there are a lot of people who want to be in the program. Where does the program grow next?
- Let's make sure we are very deliberate with our ideas for new programs
- It is tough to reach the really young people, and parents may be hesitant to get their child involved because they do not want to believe their child has a disability. Though there are other programs that these kids can take advantage of. Partnerships with these groups when their children get a little older

ARE THERE AGE SEGMENTS OR VARIOUS POPULATION GROUPS THAT YOU FEEL ARE UNDERSERVED, AND WHY?

Responses are listed below:

- Early childhood
- Not sure, but maybe there should be programs for older adults
- Deaf and hard of hearing
- Get our brochures out to doctor's office
- Higher functioning school age kids (falling through the cracks)
- What is the barrier for young parents
- Visually impaired
- Mentally ill
- School aged kids in general
- Specific programming for older population
- TBI traumatic brain injury
- Physical impairment that are not yet in assisted living
- More focus on Day Camps
- Have children carry over to other parts of the year
- The "transition" aged student (16-20 years) are under represented
- 6-14 years are under served
- One participant stated that she believed more than 25% of the kids' programs get cancelled due to low enrollment
- The changing face of disabilities changes their programming. Again, programming for Autism is very different than programming for someone with Down Syndrome
- I can only speak to my age group. The least pages of the brochure seems to be related to 8-10 year olds
- The older population was not served, but with the EAGLES program it is
- Are there needs out there that SEASPAR doesn't know about it?

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST SIGNIFICANT FACTORS THAT RESULTS IN SOME SPECIAL NEEDS FAMILIES NOT PARTICIPATING IN OUR SERVICES AND PROGRAMS?

Essentially the majority of responses fall under the three categories: time, awareness, and cost, so are we getting the right programs to the right people and is it worth the time and money? Money, transportation and busy family/scheduling issues were also frequently mentioned. There needs to be a better understanding between parent and services/organization, utilizing a better parent orientation. It is also worth noting, the fees are deemed to be reasonable; families just are not able to participate as much as they used to as a result of changing economic conditions.

- Some participants do not want to mix with others
- We have an identity crisis
- Participants are creatures of habit

- More awareness of scholarships needs to be created
- There are some people that just don't want to have their kids in these programs as they lose control
- Non-resident rate should be offered. It's only for people who live in the SEASPAR boundaries
- EAGLES program is maxed out and we have no more room, so we can't allow non-residents away
- There is some resistance from families who do not want to admit their child has special needs

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE FEES FOR PROGRAMS?

The consensus is fees are reasonable and comparable to the competition; however, some suspect the reason for cancellation of programs may be the cost. If some think fees are still too high, scholarship money is available. Another note, it may be necessary to address the issue of transportation costs. Other points on fees:

- In one of the focus groups, the participants were not aware of how program fees are generated
- It's tough for the extended care
- We have cut back a little on programs because our family can't afford more
- We feel there needs to be a commitment by the parent by paying a fee

ANY IDEAS FOR HOW SEASPAR CAN STRENGTHEN OR BUILD NEW PARTNERSHIPS?

A few participants mentioned there are many organizations SEASPAR can partner with, and a suggestion is to have a full-time liaison for SEASPAR as well as part-time staff that can go to different organizations explaining their experiences, working with LITTLE FRIENDS and HELPING HANDS and feedback from board members. Also, reaching to schools via school social worker, as well as:

- Member entity staff and orientation of new recreation agency staff
- Ensuring a collaborative approach toward corporate support between SEASPAR's efforts and member entity efforts
- Center for Independence (CFI)
- Fostering relationships with private sector/private schools for good prices
- We have a lot to offer in expertise that could help out another partner. We may help to provide staff training
- The Leisure Ed program is a school program that uses SEASPAR buses, but those families don't receive SEASPAR information. It isn't our program we just have the transportation and driver but we can't reach them.
 - How can SEASPAR market to them? Coupons? Try a free program?
 - Get brochures and information to the school inclusion facilitator
- Instead of cancelling classes can the participants go to another park district/park and recreation department and get the program?
- Develop more SRA-to-SRA partnerships. They've been successful doing that with basketball

- They really struggle with keeping kids in the system once they've experienced a cancellation. It's such a disappointment that they will just go elsewhere and not come back
- Build awareness of SEASPAR in the community and with families
- Start parent support groups like the one for autism at College of DuPage
- Maybe SEASPAR can distribute information to new parents at the hospitals when they give out information. I know it's early in the child's life, but maybe they would remember SEASPAR when they are ready for the services
- Best buddies could be coordinated among agencies
- Corporate sponsors...cooperative effort with all agencies involved could be extended...could use a title sponsor for scholarships
- Laura is terrific at getting good deals
- Marketing company to help gain support from bigger companies
- They have done a really good job. Service clubs in all of the communities are involved
- We have appreciation for volunteers
- Organizations just send us money without our asking
- Staff do a good job with relationships
- SEASPAR does a great job relating with us, the Board. The larger districts have been great at sharing facilities
- We feel the number of 11 agencies is about right

HOW WOULD YOU ASSESS THE SEASPAR'S EFFORTS IN COMMUNICATING WITH ITS CUSTOMERS? ANY IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT?

There are a great breadth of ideas and those are listed below but the majority of improvements could be found in the Website by adding a calendar link, e-newsletter and creating a twitter. These technology improvements are essential to create an avenue for releasing updates and important information quickly.

- I think there should be a marketing position
- Better promotional items
- It is so important to use fund raising programs online
- Having a foundation or parent group in support of Lisa
- I think it's good with our current customers
- Staff can cross promote while they are at a program. If I had flyers or information about a fund raising event that needed to be distributed, I would pass that out to parents when I saw them drop off/pick up their kids
- For new parents, we could add features inside the brochure that would announce New Parent Orientation or Open House
- SEASPAR staff need to share their files and notes with each other so the needs of participants are known in advance. Do they even read our files/applications? This information needs to be

better communicated, and I know there are a lot of people involved in making this happen, but do they meet as a team to review and discuss a class list?

- Are the schools an untapped resource for getting the word out?
- What is SEASPAR....hard to communicate what it is!
- We want a telephone contact number on weekends when they are involved in trips. Should have a contact cell phone number
- The best thing they have are the vans, and they are wonderful advertisements
- It would be good to streamline the scholarship process. It was too intrusive
- Free spot on cable/Public Service Announcement
- Try to have a presence at big park district/recreation and parks department events will help with name recognition
- Fund raising: I have a question about analyzing how much fundraising do we need. Does it need to be hard sell? There is a point that fund raising may override the mission of the organization. We have been fortunate with donations so far, though that may change

CAN YOU THINK OF ANY QUESTIONS I HAVE NOT COVERED OR ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?

- Make our office more environmentally friendly
- Be more efficient office wise
- Look at outsourcing our brochure - Full time marketing person could help with that
- More staff perks such as a bonus, raises, incentives
- We work so hard that some reward would be nice
- Promoting growth within the agency. We need to get a more range of repertoire of skills through cross training
- Financial system doesn't match up with pre and post budget
- Set of goals and objectives
- We used to have a process for end of year financial results
- Is there a computer or filing system that would allow all of us to easily make notes, review notes and be updated on participants and what is going on with them? We could better communicate about the kids, but it's really hard to all get together. Most of us are volunteers or part-time and we don't always get to talk with the full time people. Can more parents volunteer to help in some programs/events? (as a way to keep expenses to a minimum)
- Why aren't the adult kids volunteering who have been in these programs for so long?
- Our agencies need to do a better job explaining and educating staff about what SEASPAR is
- Training on more severe cases, they don't know what to do with physical needs. Someone hitting or biting...how lenient or strict should we be
- Making sure the aides are aware of all the potential problems with the participants with what they are pre-disposed what they are doing

- Brian does a good job coming out to visit. It may be good to have a designated staff person who comes to see us during training
- It's really important to maintain quality staff. They are so dedicated and we need to try to continue and focus on that attribute
- We do have long tenured staff, and we are able to recruit good staff

Summary of the Needs Assessment Survey Results

As part of the Strategic Planning process, a Needs Assessment Survey was completed in March, 2012. The purpose of the survey was to help establish priorities for the future direction of SEASPAR based on participant family feedback. The survey was administered both by mail and phone, with participant family information provided by SEASPAR staff. The survey questions were developed subsequent to the focus group input sessions.

A total of 300 surveys were completed. The results of the sample of 300 households have a 95% level of confidence with a margin of error of +/-5.7%. The following information highlights major survey findings.

AGES OF RESPONDENTS WHO PARTICIPATE OR WOULD BE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES OF SEASPAR

From a list of 9 age groups, respondents who participate in SEASPAR activities are well represented in all categories. The highest age group of users was in ages 5-9 (18%) with the least in ages 55-64 (2%).

ALL SEASPAR PROGRAMS THAT RESPONDENT HOUSEHOLDS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN DURING THE PAST YEAR

Out of 31 programs listed in the survey, only 9 programs were used by 20% or more of the households. The top 3 programs with 30% or greater participation were Special events (38%), social clubs (34%), and bowling (32%).

LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE OF POTENTIAL BENEFITS THAT USERS OF SEASPAR MAY RECEIVE FROM PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Respondents were asked to rate 15 benefits to the programs offered throughout the year. These results ranged from having fun to community involvement. Of these benefits, having fun and improving social skills were rated over 80% as the greatest benefits. All 15 benefits were rated 59% or higher.

FOUR BENEFITS THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO PARTICIPANTS WHO TAKE PART OR COULD TAKE PART IN SEASPAR PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES

Based on the sum of their top five choices, the benefits that are most important to respondent households are: having fun (56%), improve social skills (37%), being a participant rather than an observer (36%), gaining a sense of belonging (32%), and making long-term friends (32%).

WAYS THAT HOUSEHOLDS LEARN ABOUT SEASPAR PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

The SEASPAR Brochure (87%) is by far the most frequently mentioned way households have learned about the programs and activities. Other frequently mentioned ways households learn about SEASPAR programs and activities include: SEASPAR website (30%), from teachers (28%), and park district (28%).

THREE METHODS HOUSEHOLDS MOST PREFERRED FOR RECEIVING SEASPAR INFORMATION

The top three methods were in line with how participants are currently receiving their information. These are through the SEASPAR brochure, website, and teachers. Only 1% of the households preferred social media/Facebook.

HOW WELL SEASPAR PROGRAMS MEET THE NEEDS OF HOUSEHOLDS

From the list of 27 programs, households that have a need for SEASPAR programming were asked to indicate how well these types of SEASPAR programs meet their needs. For all 27 programs, less than 60% of households with a need for a program feel that their needs are being completely met. Of these programs, parent/tot classes and programs for wheelchair users met 100% of the needs for less than 5% of the households.

THREE DAYS/TIMES RESPONDENTS MOST PREFER TO USE SEASPAR PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

From a list of 11 potential times throughout the week when respondents would most prefer to use programs, four time frames received over 30% of the responses. Weekdays 6pm-9pm was the highest at 40%.

HOW RESPONDENTS RATE THE QUALITY OF INCLUSION SERVICES RECEIVED BY HOUSEHOLDS MEMBERS

91% of households rate the inclusion programs either good or excellent.

TWO MOST IMPORTANT STEPS SEASPAR CAN MAKE TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE INCLUSION SERVICES

Even with a 91% positive response towards the perceived quality of inclusion services, respondents indicated two important steps to improve. Both the need to increase awareness in parents and guardians (44%) and the member entity staff trainings (28%) received 72% of the responses.

SATISFACTION WITH CERTAIN ASPECTS OF INDOOR AND OUTDOOR FACILITIES THAT ARE USED BY SEASPAR

The facilities that the highest percentage of respondents are very or somewhat satisfied with are: safety of facilities (76%) accessibility of facilities (70%), quality of program space (71%).

TWO ASPECTS OF INDOOR AND OUTDOOR FACILITIES THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO RESPONDENT HOUSEHOLDS

Respondents were asked to choose two aspects from a list of 5 aspects. These included location, safety, accessibility, quality, none. Of these choices location (48%) and safety (36%) were the most important.

REASONS WHY HOUSEHOLDS DO NOT USE SEASPAR PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES MORE OFTEN

Respondents were provided with 16 choices for reasons they do not use SEASPAR programs. The top 3 reasons, all above 20%, were program times, too far from residence, and fees being too high. 0% of the respondents answered customer service.

PRIMARY DIAGNOSES FOR MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD WHO PARTICIPATE OR WOULD BE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES OF SEASPAR

Of the primary diagnoses 5 represented 16% or greater. These 5 diagnoses were autism (26%), mild developmental disability (24%), speech and language delay (20%), learning disability (16%), and down syndrome (16%).

SPECIAL RECREATION ASSOCIATIONS USED BY RESPONDENT HOUSEHOLDS

27% of the respondents have used agencies other than SEASPAR for their programming needs. Of these other agencies, WDSRA had the greatest percentage of users at 9%.

THREE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES THAT SHOULD RECEIVE THE MOST ATTENTION

The five top areas include: number of programs, quality of programs, staff knowledge, fees, and program locations. Each of these received over 20% of votes when asked what their top three choices.

SATISFACTION WITH CERTAIN ASPECTS OF FACILITIES USED BY SEASPAR

The greatest percentage of respondents listed program quality, staff availability, ease of registration, staff knowledge, and information availability as the most significant areas of satisfaction.

SATISFACTION WITH OVERALL VALUE FROM SEASPAR

90% of respondents feel either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with overall value provided by SEASPAR services.

The Balanced Scorecard

The SEASPAR Strategic Plan is based on the Balanced Scorecard, a strategy framework that emphasizes the cause and effect relationships among distinct yet interrelated perspectives: customer needs, financial performance, internal support processes, and learning and growth. For the purposes of SEASPAR, an additional perspective was developed for program development.

The Scorecard also includes a measurement system that monitors organizational performance. The Scorecard focuses on the key drivers of success that leads to the achievement of mission and vision.

Robert Kaplan and David Norton developed the Scorecard in the early 1990s. At the time, they believed that knowledge based assets were becoming increasingly important. Yet, most organizations at the time measured financial results while not measuring employee capabilities, information systems, quality and innovation. The authors believed employees pay attention to what the organization measured. As a result, organizations had a tendency of overly focusing on financial performance.

Since that time, both private and public sector organizations have implemented the Balanced Scorecard. The premise of the scorecard is to develop a strategy-based measurement system that becomes the foundation for the development of strategy.

The SEASPAR Balanced Scorecard framework includes five perspectives:

- Program Development: To achieve excellence in services, how do we develop programs?
- Customer: To achieve our mission and vision, how should we appear to our customers?
- Financial: To succeed financially, how should we appear to our taxpayers?
- Internal business: To satisfy our customers, which business processes must we do extremely well?
- Learning and growth: To achieve our mission and vision, how will we sustain our ability to change and improve, and develop leaders among the staff and Board?

The strategic recommendations included in this Plan outline future efforts and resource allocation relating to these five perspectives. This approach ensures that learning and growth of the organization relates to its strategic initiatives. Furthermore, it focuses on the customer and the ability of the agency to be financially sustainable.

Strategic Plan Hierarchy

In using the scorecard, SEASPAR has developed Strategic Themes that are broad-brushed organizational descriptions that provide direction. These Themes follow the perspectives outlined above. They include:

- Programs: Programs are our Business
- Customer: Anticipating and Creating Customer Need
- Financial: Financial Sustainability
- Internal Business: Process Efficiency
- Learning and Growth: Leadership Development and Empowerment

The Themes provide the over-arching framework for the Plan's implementation.

The Plan includes a hierarchy of elements that starts with the most macro level of strategy and moves to a more micro level (moving from strategic to tactical). The starting point for any strategic planning process is the review of the vision, mission, and values. The mission and vision statements were changed from previous wording. Values were discussed among staff and board members, which resulted in new values.

Subsequent to the development of Strategic Themes, Objectives were developed. Objectives describe what SEASPAR needs to do well in support of the Themes. For example, one of the Objectives for the Theme: Programs are our Business is: "Support the Continuous Improvement of Recreation Programs." Therefore, the agency must identify ways to continuously improve programs. Strategic Initiatives are more micro-level in support of the Strategic Objectives. As evidenced from the sequence listed above, the Initiatives are more specific than the Objectives, and the Objectives are more specific than the Themes.

A measurement system of key performance indicators follows the Themes and Objectives. The measurement system reflects progress in completing the Strategic Initiatives. The tactics are detailed action steps that outline how each initiative will be accomplished.

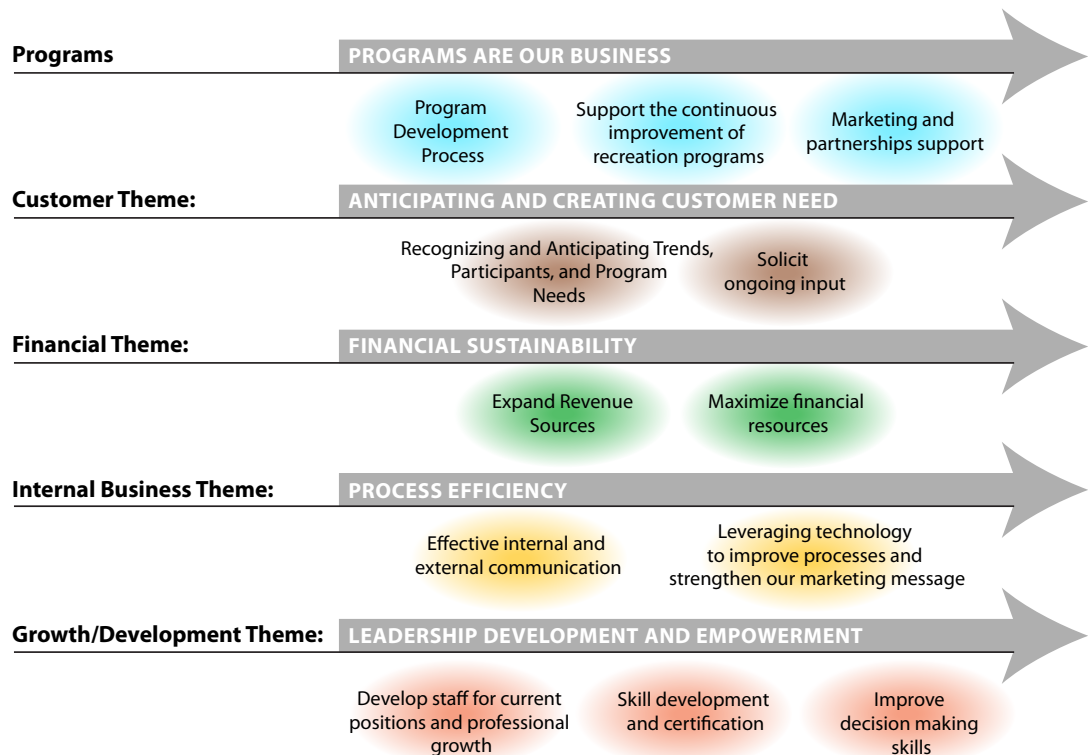
The Balanced Scorecard hierarchy is presented by the pyramid shown below.



Strategy Maps

All of the strategic themes, objectives, and initiatives are aligned with the Balanced Scorecard themes: program, customer, financial, internal business support, and learning and growth. These are represented in the following strategy maps. The first map provides the perspectives and their supporting objectives. The second map includes a listing of measures.

The role of Themes and Objectives in movement toward Strategy



Measuring progress toward Strategy



Objective Statements

The following is a list of Objectives and a specific definition that describes each of them to ensure understanding of their intended meaning. The Objectives support each of the five strategic themes and are generally two to four in number in support of the themes. The objectives represent what the organization needs to do well in support of the major themes.

THEME: PROGRAMS ARE OUR BUSINESS

Objective 1. Program Development Process: Recreation program effectiveness is determined not only by the number of registrants, but also by registrants who participate on a continuing basis. A process will be developed to monitor the development and management of recreation programs. This process will include criteria for determining whether the program is administered in-house or contractual, lifecycle analysis, and parameters for when or when not to eliminate due to lack of interest.

Objective 2. Support the Continuous Improvement of Recreation Programs: This includes creating a culture in which staff and public input is encouraged. This will be accomplished through user research and various survey methods including needs assessments, satisfaction surveys, and program space identification.

Objective 3. Marketing and Partnership Support: An extremely important customer requirement is the effectiveness of access to services. This includes the Website, program guide, registration process, and telephone interaction. As a result, these access mechanisms will be monitored and evaluated for improvement. Also, recognizing the importance of partnerships in the service delivery process, a partner review process will be created to evaluate both current and future partner opportunities.

THEME: ANTICIPATING AND CREATING CUSTOMER NEED

Objective 1. Recognize and Anticipate Trends, Participants, and Program Needs: Providing appropriate future programming requires an agency to know the customer. Staying current with demographic information, special disability needs, as well as future changes within the population will allow programmers the ability to offer new programs that will be successful.

Objective 2. Solicit Ongoing Input: In order to continually improve programs and processes, customer input is crucial. Inviting consistent feedback through regularly scheduled surveys, the creation of community input groups, and other outside means of evaluation will best provide the information needed to develop practical and sought after programs for the SEASPAR communities.

THEME: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Objective 1. Expand Revenue Sources: This includes a financial plan which encompasses a means to expand non tax revenue support through sponsorships and partnerships. This plan will also identify both future implementations of programs and services as well as the actual costs for future programming.

Objective 2. Maximize Financial Resources: Agencies that can comprehensively evaluate their budgetary goals as well as develop consistent annual review processes will be able to better communicate any changes needed along with streamline the budget process. This also involves efficiency of operations.

THEME: PROCESS EFFICIENCY

Objective 1. Effective Internal and External Communication: Good communication is one of the most influential keys to providing quality services. Quality communication practices should be implemented and reviewed at all levels including communication among staff, the Board members, and the community and participants.

Objective 2. Leverage Technology to Improve Processes and Strengthen our Marketing Message: Agencies must have a clear vision of how they want to utilize technology in marketing and understand what the current technical capabilities are. This will allow SEASPAR to evaluate and identify the best practices for creating awareness of the message. Knowing the technology capabilities will also provide avenues to collect program, marketing, and budget performance measures.

THEME: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

Objective 1. *Develop Staff for Current Positions and Professional Growth:* Providing staff and Board members with appropriate learning opportunities is critical to SEASPAR's future. An annual training calendar will be developed to ensure adequate training of staff. Encouraging staff to also look for external means of education and training will continue to be encouraged.

Objective 2. *Skill Development and Certification:* Agencies need to develop clear job descriptions and position competencies for the development of skills. In addition, some SEASPAR positions require certification.

Objective 3. *Improved Decision Making Skills:* Decision making skills are significantly important for staff success. SEASPAR will develop processes and tools to enhance decision making skills. In addition, SEASPAR will allow staff a certain level of independence in decision making within their job responsibilities. These levels will be identified for staff.

Strategic Themes, Objectives and Initiatives

The following are the themes, objectives, initiatives, and tactics for the next three years. Time period priorities are attached to each Initiative as follows:

- Short Term Initiatives to be accomplished during year one
- Mid Term Initiatives to be accomplished during year two
- Long Term Initiatives to be accomplished during year three
- Continuous goals are repeated on an ongoing basis

THEME: PROGRAMS ARE OUR BUSINESS

Objective 1: Program Development Process

- Develop a systematic process for recreation program development and management short term
 - Use survey results to see what parents requested
 - Identify program trends through RecTrac to determine future programs
 - Establish program lifecycles to determine when to cancel programs
 - Use programming priority criteria and update as needed
 - Determine viability of programs that are not successful/continuously cancel
 - Research other SRA's, public, and private service providers for successful and emerging programs
 - Co-op with member entities for our participants to attend their programs
- Develop an education process to inform parents about new programs mid term
 - Schedule an open house for parents and care givers to learn about new programs
 - Emphasize benefits of programs in blurbs
 - Equip teachers to be our advocates
 - Offer special promotion of new programs on the Web and other promotional venues
 - Follow up with parents after week one or two of programs

Objective 2: Support the Continuous Improvement of Recreation Programs

- Identify registration patterns and make appropriate changes to program offerings based on the information short term
 - Review registration trends
 - Utilize cross tab information to assist with analysis
 - Change program offerings as needed
- Analyze parent attitude of ability and its influence in purchasing behavior mid term
 - Distribute mailing to parents regarding a specific program(s) to determine if they think their child can be successful in those programs
 - Compare parent/caregiver versus staff opinions

- Conduct intervention with parents to re-direct misconceptions of program requirements for participants' ability
- Re-word blurbs for competitive vs. non-competitive options
- Evaluate placing new participant/program stories in the brochure
- Consider a discount on registration for signing up for new programs
- Identify additional space options short term
 - Pursue dedicated space at new facilities constructed by member entities
 - Request facilities with as much advanced notice as possible with each member entity
 - Create a calendar of permanent programs
 - Discuss and develop an agreement with member entities for space, and seek board action or permanent space when possible
- Research why people are not registering early/on time and develop methods to influence customers to register in a timely manner long term
 - Research how other park and recreation agencies influence timely registrations
 - Identify target population and send survey as to why they are registering late
 - Consider and propose financial incentives for timely registrations

Objective 3: Marketing and Partnership Support

- Complete an access review with customers that includes feedback from customers about the Website, program guide and other marketing methods, staff interaction, program registration, etc. mid term
 - Create separate promotional strategies based upon identified groupings
 - Review and evaluate survey results
 - Assess for current participants by grouping
- Develop a partner review process to determine when to partner, with whom to partner, and to evaluate partner relationships long term
 - Identify purpose of partnerships
 - Develop input form to use when meeting with a potential partner
 - List responsibilities of each partner
 - Create agreement or statement of understanding and have parties sign

THEME: ANTICIPATING AND CREATING CUSTOMER NEED

Objective 1: Recognize and Anticipate Trends, Participants, and Program Needs

- Research and identify customer needs and requirements for future programs continuous, begin mid term
 - Use crosstabs to identify needs
 - Identify resources for research (new places, new ideas)
 - Identify new trends on an annual basis
 - Evaluate and assess current trends using registration data and survey feedback
- Create an ongoing process to identify disability trends long term
 - Research other SRAs, social service agencies, news/media, medical journals, *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, networking with similar agencies
 - Report findings to recreation staff annually
 - Act on findings
- Study nationwide best practices of special recreation services long term
 - Develop a plan of action to contact service providers and gain information
 - Evaluate and identify best practices based on research
 - Identify areas SEASPAR needs to improve
 - Research what agencies excel in those areas
 - Implement changes as appropriate

Objective 2: Solicit Ongoing Input

- Create an ongoing process for customer feedback continuous, begin short term
 - Identify specific program targets to survey
 - Create surveys for targeted areas, e.g. age, program type
 - Establish a time cycle for surveys, so as to not have multiple surveys being sent simultaneously
 - Evaluate additional methods of feedback such as mystery shopping, consumer advisory panels, and small group discussions with Director and/or staff

THEME: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Objective 1: Expand Revenue Sources

- Continue to build non tax revenue support continuous, begin short term
 - Prospect the business community and notable individuals for corporate support
 - Evaluate the costs and benefits of a foundation vs. an organized group of volunteers to raise funds
 - Research development programs to leverage grants
 - Analyze the costs of developing a dashboard for giving and determine feasibility of implementation
 - Research the development of a significant community event as a fundraiser

Objective 2: Maximize Financial Resources

- Evaluate cost recovery goals by program area, change as needed and communicate long term
 - Articulate current cost recovery goals for major program areas
 - Compare cost recovery vs. member entities and comparable SRAs
 - Evaluate potential changes and their effect on the SEASPAR budget and participation
 - Recommend changes and implement changes deemed necessary
 - Reassess bi-annually

THEME: PROCESS EFFICIENCY**Objective 1: Effective Internal and External Communication**

- Assess overall quality of internal communication short term
 - Define quality internal communication
 - Evaluate current conditions and establish baseline performance
 - Identify methods of internal communication and continue education
 - Identify proper methods of internal communication for specific purposes
 - Effective/efficient
 - Who needs to know
 - Identify areas for improvement
 - Refine process
- Review member entity communication process and make changes as needed short term
 - Reinstate informal gatherings with member entities
 - Coordinate informal inclusion gatherings with member entity staff to train new staff about inclusion procedures and answer questions/concerns for returning staff
 - Compile and maintain staff list and responsibilities of member entity staff
 - Develop a welcome Packet for new member entity staff
 - Request members place SEASPAR on their new employee training schedules
 - Update and advance the Summer Inclusion Orientation
 - Conduct meetings with member entity staff working in specific areas such as facilities, inclusion, etc.
- Develop a process to communicate ongoing strategic plan process mid term
 - Develop reports for the Board
 - Present reports at Board meetings and Recreation staff/full-time staff meetings
 - Dedicate space in newsletter
 - Inform public of relevant action

- Develop an annual review process to evaluate and streamline existing key processes. Establish an action plan for annual selection of processes to improve continuous, begin mid term
 - Identify key processes in most need of improvement on an annual basis
 - Identify steps in the process
 - Identify long and short term improvements
 - Initiate new process improvements
 - Evaluate as needed

Objective 2: Leverage Technology to Improve Processes and Strengthen our Marketing Message

- Identify current technology system capabilities short term
 - Review systems used by other agencies
 - Investigate current technology and identify improvements in our use of the current technology
 - Identify ways to best use technology for fundraising
 - Investigate current manual processes and determine if they can be automated
 - Utilize expert analysis for technology improvements like RecTrac
- Identify technology solutions to assist with creating greater customer awareness short term
 - Review electronic communications and social media processes
 - Increase or initiate use of Constant Contact, Facebook and/or other electronic media, such as blogging, QR codes, doodle.com and Website opportunities
 - Get feedback via online tool sent through email, include text alerts
- Develop key performance indicators including program performance, customer and financial results, learning and growth efforts, and internal support satisfaction long term
 - Identify categories of information for SEASPAR to use to exhibit transparency to the public, potential financial sources, partners, etc.
 - Research cost of true dashboard software vs. other methods of exhibiting this info
- Evaluate methods of creating awareness, identify key marketing message, and implement changes/improvements continuous, begin mid term
 - Use the survey results to evaluate the methods of creating awareness and their use or continued use
 - Research new methods of communicating awareness and identify our ability to use them
 - Evaluate potential messages using established mission, vision, values

THEME: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT**Objective 1: Develop Staff for Current Positions and Professional Growth**

- Develop staff's proficiencies by identifying essential core competencies, identifying gaps, and providing necessary training short term
 - Identify key competencies by position
 - Assess staff skills according to the competencies
 - Identify gaps
 - Create learning, training, and feedback opportunities for development
 - Evaluate progress
- Provide appropriate learning opportunities for staff through the development of an annual training calendar mid term
 - Establish training needs based on position
 - Identify funds required for training; request necessary funding
 - Schedule training during Recreation staff and All staff meetings and/or PIE days

Objective 2: Skill Development and Certification

- Review competencies for each position mid term
 - Review and update job descriptions
 - Investigate competency/certification for Recreation and Administrative staff
- Identify certification requirements according to position responsibilities mid term
 - Update requirements annually or when needed to comply with laws, risk management recommendations, and agency's professional standards and policies
 - Keep up to date with requirements and update annually as needed
 - Develop specific plans and steps to achieve and maintain certifications

Objective 3: Improved Decision Making Skills

- Develop decision making competency to allow for independence and latitude for employees long term
 - Research and share decision making techniques or formats
 - Develop basic decision-making trees for major decisions in specific situations or staff positions

Implementation Guidelines

The following is a listing of suggestions for successful implementation of the Strategic Plan. Developing an ongoing commitment to strategy requires commitment and discipline to regularly report on strategy, monitor progress, and measure results.

- The Plan becomes SEASPAR's framework for decision making. When decisions or responses to the community are needed, the Plan becomes the reference point for decision making and whether or not new issues or responses to the community are of higher importance than what has been established in the Plan.
- Include Strategic Plan information as part of the new Board member and employee orientation program.
- Post a summary or shortened version of the Plan on the Website and track results on the site as well. It may also be helpful to print a short summary of the Plan's progress to distribute to interested partners and community members.
- A staff person or team should have responsibility of being the project manager of the Plan's deployment to ensure successful implementation.
- Regular reporting of the Plan's progress should occur. Break the Plan into separate fiscal years and report one year at a time, as an ongoing annual work plan. It is the project leader's responsibility to report on his/her goal, included in a monthly or quarterly report.
- At the end of the year, perform an annual review and documentation of the initiatives.
- Update major stakeholders on the Plan's implementation and results on an annual basis.
- Conduct staff meetings on a quarterly or semi-annual basis to review the Plan's progress and results and report the Plan's progress to the Board on a quarterly basis.
- The performance appraisal process should reflect the completion of the Strategic Plan Initiatives as an evaluation criterion. Also, performance criteria should be aligned with values.
- Track the measurement system on a quarterly basis. Some of the measures will be calculated annually. Provide an annual narrative about the results. Review the inventory of measures on an annual basis and make adjustments as necessary to ensure the measures continuously add value to decision making. Include a combination of lagging and leading indicators.
- After completion of the first year of the Plan and baseline results are quantified, targets should be initiated for the measurement system.
- There should be an annual just-in-time review of the next year's Initiatives to determine if priorities have changed. This can be included at an annual retreat in which successive years' Initiatives are discussed as part of the annual budget process. Initiatives should tie into the budget process.
- Post a chart of each year's initiatives on office walls in administrative areas with a check-off column designating completion as part of a visual management program. Staff meetings should regularly include discussion of strategy. This is a part of the visualization process to emphasize the Plan's importance and the agency's commitment to execution.
- After each year of the Plan, the staff should review the Plan's process and revise any parts of the process that need improvement.
- If there are ideas for new strategies that arise throughout the year, include them on a written "parking lot" and review them as part of the annual just-in-time review to determine if they supplant any existing initiatives.

Definitions

The following list of key words describes the definition of the terminology used for the Strategic Plan.

Balanced Scorecard Perspectives—the four perspectives include Customer, Financial, Internal Business Process, and Learning and Growth. They demonstrate cause and effect relationships in the completion of strategy. In addition, the SEASPAR perspectives also include Programs.

Measures—a standard used to evaluate and communicate performance against expected results. Measures are normally quantitative indicators and capture numbers, dollars, percentages, etc. Measures assist the staff with the ability to determine organizational performance.

Mission—describes the business of the organization. The mission also defines the core purpose of the organization and why it exists.

Strategic Themes— broad brushed, macro-oriented organizational sense of direction that relates to the four Balanced Scorecard perspectives of customer, financial, internal business, and growth and development.

Strategic Objectives—concise statements describing the specific elements an organization must do well in order to execute its strategy.

Strategic Initiatives—the specific programs, activities, projects, or actions an organization will undertake in an effort to meet performance targets. The strategic initiatives are specifically detailed with specific tactics, which are not included within the body of the Strategic Plan, but will exist in separate documentation.

Tactics—Tactics are included for short term initiatives. Tactics are subordinate to the initiatives and detail the steps necessary to complete an initiative.

Values—describe the way the agency operates. Values are meaningful expressions of describing what is important in the way we treat our employees and our guests and relates to the internal culture of the organization.

Vision—desired future of the organization. The vision should be a “stretch” for the organization, but possible to achieve in approximately five years. It should state a measurable achievement.