



CHAPTER 11 – PARTNERSHIP REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

This chapter speaks to the importance of partnerships, BREC’s history of working with others to provide services, the three types of partnerships, the elements of successful partnerships, the most common failures of partnerships, the elements of a successful partnership agreement, and, the partnerships which surfaced during the strategic planning process which should be of the highest priority for the department.

First, partnerships are important because BREC cannot be everything to everyone within the Parish. As a result, partners are needed to stretch limited resources.

Second, BREC has worked successfully since 1946 with partners to expand its services for citizens. Partnerships have not generally been formalized, however, that is a process which is now being implemented.

Third, there are three types of agency partnerships and five functional partnerships. First, the agency partnerships include: a) public/public; b) public/not-for-profit; and, c) public/private. Examples of each are provided in this chapter. Functional partnerships include: a) cooperative programming efforts; b) joint facility use; c) staffing; d) financial; and, e) community councils.

Fourth, successful partnerships are possible when each party shares a common goal, is open and honest with one another, communicates well and often, and holds itself accountable for its commitment.

Fifth, partnerships do fail from time to time when one party, or both, have hidden agendas; when the relationship is not managed well by regular communication; and, when the original partnership agreement lacked clarity.

Sixth, the highest rated partnerships which surfaced during the planning process included: a) youth sports associations; b) hobbyists; c) united way agencies; d) conservation groups

INTRODUCTION

For several decades, BREC has understood that its resources must be leveraged to provide citizens with as many leisure opportunities as possible. Since 1946, partners from the public sector, private sector and not-for-profit sector have worked with BREC to produce special events, construct special use facilities, acquire open space and conservation areas and provide a variety of recreation programs. The 2003 BREC Annual Report lists five pages (approximately 185) organizations with whom the department has worked during the past year to pursue programs, activities and facilities with others who share a common goal of serving citizen needs in the Parish.



Definition

A partnership is a cooperative venture between two or more parties with a common goal, who combine complementary resources to establish a mutual direction or complete a mutually beneficial project.

Types of Partnerships – By Group

Public/private – Examples of public/private partnerships include the following:

- A private group interested in environmental conservation receives a grant from a foundation to build an educational kiosk, providing all materials and labor, and needs a spot to place it.
- A private restaurant operator sees the need for a concession stand in the park and funds its construction, operates it and provides a percentage of the revenue back to the park and recreation department.
- A large corporation wants to provide a skatepark but doesn't want to operate it. The corporation writes a large check to the park and recreation department in exchange for publicizing their underwriting of the park's cost.

Public/not-for-profit – Examples of public/not-for-profit partnerships include the following:

- A non-profit athletic association needs fields for community programs and wants to get grants for the construction of fields. The association would get priority use of the fields which would be open for other users during off-peak times.
- A museum provides funding and constructs a new building on park and recreation department land. The museum dedicates some space and time for community meetings and also pays a portion of revenue to the park and recreation department for its lease of the park land.

Public/public – Examples of public/public partnerships include the following:

- A school district has need for a new swimming pool for their athletes. The district funds the new pool and subsidizes its operating costs while the park and recreation department manages it and provides public swimming opportunities in off-hours.
- A park and recreation department funds and constructs a new recreation center and partners with a YMCA to manage it.



Types of Partnerships – By Function

There are four primary function-related partnerships:

Cooperative programming – Cooperative programming efforts are often used by BREC and include innovative joint programming for special events and a variety of re-occurring programs and activities.

Joint facility use – Again, BREC utilizes this opportunity to partner on a regular basis. Examples include the use of athletic fields by sports associations.

Staffing – BREC has a need for ongoing staff training and may want to consider this opportunity. Possibilities include the use of local experts “loaned executives” in areas which are needed by the department; in turn, BREC can offer expertise to them for a need they have – say fundraising or health and wellness program for their employees.

Financial – Several financial examples were provided in the section preceding this one in this chapter.

Community councils – This type of partnership typically consists of members that represent the diversity of the community and are ideally suited to develop the practical solutions necessary to solve local issues. BREC is involved in community councils in its Community Resources Department and Recreation Department.

Determining Partnership Potential

While partnerships offer a number of benefits, they may not be appropriate to every situation. There are six steps that BREC should follow to ensure that it has fully investigated the potential for any partnerships which it is considering:

Step 1 - BREC must educate its commissioners and staff to “invite involvement”. By educating everyone to the potential of partnerships, it will raise the awareness of the possibilities within the Parish that could benefit the department and, ultimately, the citizens who are requesting services.

Step 2 – BREC has valuable information from the Needs Assessment Survey which was completed during the Strategic Planning Process. The department needs to follow the recommendations included in the Implementation Chapter of this report to prioritize its needs and the areas in which it is in most need of partners.

Step 3 – BREC must continue its ongoing efforts to identify prospective partners and investigate their needs and resources. It is extremely important that potential partners be evaluated to determine if their mission, goals and objectives, as well as their image, are compatible with the department.

Step 4 – BREC must compare and contrast the needs and resources of potential partners. It is best to consider a policy of equal reciprocity, or win/win, as there will be problems if one partner believes they are receiving less benefits than the resources they are contributing.



Step 5 – BREC must develop a partnership proposal designed to achieve success. The proposal must describe the objectives, intentions and outcomes while emphasizing the mutual benefits and shared resources.

Step 6 – BREC must propose a formal partnership agreement. Current agreements tend to be informal but it is recommended that they be formalized to provide clarity and to provide a tool which can be discussed annually as the agreement is reviewed. To develop external and internal agreements, BREC should consider the following:

For external partners, questions each agency/partner should answer:

- a.) Name or organization/agency
- b.) Contact persons names and numbers
- c.) Location of the project/program
- d.) Public/age group/sex served
- e.) Start/end date of agreement
- f.) Identify goals/outcomes of each partner (both the city, recreation department and partner)
- g.) How will goals be measured, by whom and when
- h.) What are dollar contributions of each partner (personal services, supplies, equipment, facilities, cash commitment, other)
- i.) Expected revenue of the city, recreation department and community partner
- j.) How will ongoing communication be addressed?
- k.) Insurance requirements

For internal partners within a governmental agency, with the understanding that BREC is autonomous in its operation and differs from the norm in that regard:

- a.) What is your opinion of the existing partnership? If you could change it, what would you change?
- b.) Do you think your working agreement with each other is equitable?
- c.) Do each of you have similar visions?
- d.) Do you value each other?
- e.) What is your vision as a partner with each other in the future?
- f.) What changes in facilities, programs and management practices would you like to see incorporated which would facilitate a stronger partnership?
- g.) What performance measures would you like to see incorporated into our relationship?
- h.) Identify the weaknesses of the current partnership.

Components of Successful Partnerships

- Common goals and missions
- Each partner has a history of sound management and success
- Neither party has a personal agenda
- Each party has similar interests



- Each party has a different expertise which complements the other party
- Each party has an interest in improving its service to people

Why Partnerships Fail

- Lack of commitment from one or multiple partners
- Using partnership for personal gain
- The initial objectives lacked clarity
- One party had expectations of the other that were unrealistic
- The initial agreement was not equitable – not a win/win situation for both partners
- May have been hidden agendas by one, or both, partners
- Communication process between partners was inadequate

Observations of Existing BREC Partnerships

1. Currently, a formal partnership agreement has not been developed.
2. The consultant is not aware of any formal recognition of partners which highlights their value to the department and to the community, thus developing an ongoing culture of the value of partnering.
3. Long term arrangements between BREC and others have relied on gentlemen’s agreements which can result in typical issues such as:
 - Turnover in staff at BREC, or the partnering agency, can lead to misunderstandings about what the original agreement really meant (lack of clarity)
 - Communication between each partner does not likely occur on a regular basis, thus leading to the potential for “heated exchanges” between the two when problems arise
 - It is likely that the partners are not sharing equitably in the risks that are involved with the venture

Recommended partnerships for BREC to implement the Strategic Master Plan

Other chapters within this report have identified: a) the core businesses that BREC should focus its resources on; b) the interests citizens have in programs, parks, open space and facilities; c) citizen preferences for quality rather than quantity; d) environmental stewardship; and, e) the need for the department to assist other providers in their special needs which will enhance their programs. As a result, four groups have surfaced which should be considered for formal partnerships with the department. Those groups are:

Youth sports associations – One of the core businesses that has been identified for the department is youth sports. Youth sports is provided in the Parish by volunteer groups, thus this would be a public/not-for-profit partnership. Typical issues which must be considered for youth sports associations include:



- turnover by the association leadership is typically pretty frequent as leaders move on when their children graduate from the program.
- Several youth sports providers are focused on the competitive aspect of their sport, thus the recreational component can be overlooked.
- Training for coaches is an important element of this group. It is not easy, from a political perspective, to require coach’s training, however, it is important, nonetheless.
- Financial documentation from the Association to be provided to the department is also important. There are some associations who use public facilities and generate a tremendous amount of revenue to be used for purposes that the department should be made aware of.

United Way Agencies – Another core business for BREC is youth and teen programs. Although BREC provides a wide variety of programs and activities for youth and teens, other providers such as the United Way Agencies also provide needed services. A partnership between BREC and the United Way Agencies would also be a public/not-for-profit agreement. In this case, BREC has excess capacity in its recreation centers and the United Way Agencies have a need for that space. This could be a great opportunity for both partners and, especially, for those who benefit from the services provided.

Conservation Groups – Protection of the environment is obviously an extremely important objective for BREC. There is no option which allows for anything other than the best effort to accomplish this objective. In that regard, several interested organized and unorganized citizens expressed interest during the planning process for working with the department to protect the cultural, historical and natural resources within the Parish.

Hobbyists – Popular activities in the Parish include model cars and trains, quilting, photography and scrapbooks. As previously stated, BREC has excess capacity at its recreation centers and hobbyists have a need for space. This is another good opportunity for a partnership which meets a legitimate community need.

