

Title **Dickinson Parks and Recreation District** 03/01/2024  
id. 45753794

by **Benjamin Rae** in **2024 AAPRA National Gold Medal Program - Public Agency**

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**Original Submission** 03/01/2024

Score n/a

Official Organization Name (This will be used for publicity and award purposes) Dickinson Parks and Recreation District

Select the appropriate population category for the jurisdiction served by your agency. Class V

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Current Program Brochure Website Link	<a href="https://dickinsonparks.org/about-us/">https://dickinsonparks.org/about-us/</a>
Master Plan Website Link	<a href="https://dickinsonparks.org/about-us/">https://dickinsonparks.org/about-us/</a>
Strategic Plan Website Link	<a href="https://dickinsonparks.org/about-us/">https://dickinsonparks.org/about-us/</a>
Is your website controlled by the agency or your jurisdiction?	Agency controlled
Planning	Please upload a three page Executive Summary of your most recent Master Plan and a three page Executive Summary of your Strategic Plan for the agency. Within this overview, it is suggested the overview include major goals of the plan; current progress towards reaching those goals; and future plans to complete the plan.
Load Executive Summary of your Master Plan here. (Maximum 3 pages)	
<a href="#">Master_Plan_Executive_Summary-2024.pdf</a>	
Load Strategic Plan Executive Summary. (Maximum 3 pages)	
<a href="#">Strategic_Plan-ExecutiveSummary-2024.pdf</a>	

NPRA Park Metrics Profile Data (2023)

National Gold Medal applicants are required to upload data from the NPRA Park Metrics Form as a condition of application. It's a simple process to create an account for an agency that has not participated in the past. <https://www.nrpaparkmetrics.com/> Once an agency has submitted their Park Metrics questions they can go to: Reports Custom Reports Click "Switch to Side-by-Side Reporting" Click Search in Step 1 Select your agency and click "Build Report" in Step 2 Export the results in Step 3

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Load NPRA Park Metrics Profile Data (2023) Here

[2023-NRPA-Park-Metrics\\_1.pdf](#)

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Jurisdiction Information

Note: Much of the following information is helpful in determining which agencies would be most similar for benchmarking purposes. These figures provide agencies with important demographic characteristics of the jurisdictions served by the various agencies. Most of the information can be found on the Census Bureau's website at: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts>

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For years 2019 - 2023

[Jurisdiction Info 10.1.xlsx](#)

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Although not required for participation, does your agency currently hold or is currently going through Commission on Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) accreditation?

Essay Questions

Please use the following definitions when answering the essay questions: Undertaken implies action has begun, launched, started, attempted. Outcomes are specific, measurable statements that communicate the goal has been met; they describe specific changes in conditions, behaviors, attitudes, knowledge, or skills expected to occur because of your actions. Community is meant to be the agency's service area. Team members refers to staff, full and part time, and volunteers.

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1. Recognizing each public park and recreation agency is unique in its purpose, mission, culture, financing, enabling legislation, etc., describe what your agency does well in managing its resources to meet its stated goals. Maximum value 15 points.

Dickinson Parks and Recreation District, founded in 1947, is a national leader in enhancing the Quality of Life for residents in a rural community. Our management strategy sets us apart, driven by a mission-focused approach and guided by our master plan and strategic initiatives. We prioritize a symbiotic relationship with the City of Dickinson, user groups, and the community at large.

With limited rural resources, we have excelled in strategic resource management, leveraging every dollar to provide top-level amenities like the West River Community Center and programs that rival those found in urban environments. Our innovative approach and personal touch have allowed us to stretch our resources and deliver exceptional value to the community.

Public/private partnerships with youth sport user groups and local businesses have played a key role in amplifying our impact. By bringing together diverse stakeholders, we have not only expanded our reach but also diversified our resources. These collaborations demonstrate our adaptability and ability to maximize community benefit with limited funds.

Our commitment to efficiency and effectiveness goes beyond the scale of resources. We have transformed challenges into opportunities, finding creative solutions to meet the evolving needs of our residents. Success stories are embedded in the fabric of everyday life, showcasing our dedication to our core values of leadership, excellence, integrity, service, unity, respect, and ethics (L.E.I.S.U.R.E.)

In all our endeavors, whether it's park development or program implementation, we remain true to the essence of why the District was created. As stewards of well-being, we stand as a testament to the harmonious intersection of our mission, resource management, and community impact. This positions Dickinson Parks and Recreation District as a national leader in the field and highlights our commitment to enhancing the Quality of Life for residents in the Dickinson community.

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2. Based upon your response to Question 1, what measurements is your agency using to evaluate what you say you are doing well? Cite three examples of the agency's assessments or measurements and the types of data collected. Maximum value 10 points.

Our District utilizes a robust set of measurements to evaluate performance and ensure excellence in areas that matter most to the community. Here are three key aspects of our assessment strategy:

1. Participation Numbers: We closely track registration figures to gauge the success of programs and services. This quantitative data provides valuable insights into the popularity and effectiveness of our offerings, guiding future planning and resource allocation.

2. Survey Results: We conducted a comprehensive community survey in June 2023, gathering feedback from over 2,000 respondents (11% of the adult population in our District). This extensive sample size ensures a representative snapshot of community segments. Analyzing the qualitative data allows us to identify areas of success, address concerns, and fine-tune initiatives to align better with community needs.

3. Social Analytics: In the digital era, we leverage social analytics to measure our online presence and engagement. Monitoring likes, shares, comments, and reach provides real-time assessment of our outreach efforts. This data helps us evaluate the effectiveness of communication strategies, identify popular content, and adapt our online presence to align with community preferences.

These measurement approaches represent a holistic evaluation method, combining quantitative and qualitative data. We also conduct annual reviews of our program plan, strategic plan, and policies to ensure alignment with community expectations and evolving needs. Through these assessments, we maintain a dynamic and responsive approach, continuously improving services and sustaining a positive impact on the community.

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3. Well managed agencies know the source(s) of its funds, regardless of the amount, and plans how it will utilize those funds. Describe the agency's fiscal management strategies and cite two examples of how the agency allocates its funds to respond to its stated mission and goals. Maximum value 10 points.

Dickinson Parks and Recreation District prioritizes strategic fiscal management to align financial resources with our mission and goals. We focus on making informed investments for long-term community benefits. Two key strategies illustrate our approach:

**Investments in Facilities:** A significant portion of funds are strategically allocated to enhance and maintain our facilities and infrastructure. The community survey in 2023 revealed the importance of facility maintenance over new construction. As a result, 80% of the 2024 capital funds are dedicated to maintenance projects. This investment aligns with our mission of providing top-tier recreational spaces for the community. Regular maintenance, facility upgrades, and technology investments ensure safe, modern, and accessible spaces that meet evolving needs.

**Budget Strategies:** Our budgeting process reflects community priorities. We establish long-term budget strategies to align with the demand from our fiscally conservative District. Only 35% of the District's budget comes from taxing sources, with the remaining funds obtained from user fees, sponsorships, donations, and grants. Our budget strategies prioritize funding for programs and services that directly contribute to community well-being. We also review our current debt, fee structure, employee compensation, and investments to ensure adequate funding for high-quality offerings. Budget allocations, such as expanding youth programs or enhancing green spaces, demonstrate a commitment to fulfilling our District's mission.

By allocating funds to facility improvements and aligning budget strategies with community priorities, the District ensures that each dollar serves the overarching goal of enhancing quality of life for residents.

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4. Well managed agencies consistently communicate internally to ensure their team members are informed and engaged; they are included in the decision-making processes; and they are motivated to succeed. Describe three examples undertaken in the last three years of agency initiatives or actions that demonstrate how it communicates, engages, and connects with its team members. Explain the intended outcomes and how they are being measured. Maximum value 10 points.

The District uses task management software "Monday.com" to enhance communication and collaboration with team members. The software allows for assigning tasks and provides real-time tracking, which has improved efficiency along with improved communication over the past two years. The implementation of Microsoft 365 was introduced in 2022, which helped in document management, communication, and collaboration. Documents are stored on a platform that is accessible regardless of time, place, and device. The District is also creating a document management policy to provide guidelines for creating, editing, sharing, and storing documents. The policy will ensure better information security and asset management.

To improve employee morale, the District has revamped its elected employee committee to include strategic planning, wages and benefits, employee wellness and professionalism, hiring and training, grievance, and all other related employee engagement/decision making. This committee communicates with full-time staff and uses their feedback to facilitate improved morale by making recommendations to senior leadership on needed policy changes.

The budget committee is responsible for identifying strategies during the fiscal year to shape the District's financial direction. The committee reviews the strategies regularly to ensure accountability across each department. All full-time employees are informed and engaged during this process, as they are involved in the initial stages of the preliminary budget. The supervisors/specialists make recommendations reviewed by the department directors and budget committee. This process provides an opportunity for every employee to make informed decisions.

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5. Enlisting and engaging with external entities, i.e., community members, customers, businesses, partners, or coalitions, can expand an agency's resources and influence. Describe three examples undertaken in the last three years that demonstrate the agency's efforts to increase its resources or influence by involving community members, customers, businesses, coalitions, or partners. Explain the intended outcomes and how they are being measured. Maximum value 10 points.

Over the past three years, our agency has actively engaged external entities to expand resources and influence, fostering collaborative relationships with measurable outcomes.

City Partnership and Funding Collaboration: We strengthened our relationship with the City of Dickinson, actively participating in planning sessions and securing additional funds from an existing sales tax. This collaboration resulted in a 60% increase in funding for recreation projects, \$250,000 in ARPA funding over 3 years, and an additional \$2.5 million for community center rehabilitation.

User Group Meetings: We initiated regular user group meetings to better understand their needs and challenges. This led to mutually beneficial partnerships, such as a \$1.25 million locker room renovation fully funded by the Dickinson Hockey Club and \$160,000 in total donations from 3 different entities for baseball field turf replacement.

Program Surveys for Community Input: To ensure our programs align with community preferences, we implemented program surveys, seeking input from participants and parents. By understanding the community's experiences, we aimed to enhance program offerings and increase participation. The outcomes are measured through survey responses, attendance numbers, and subsequent adjustments made to programs based on the feedback received.

In summary, our efforts in community engagement, user group collaboration, and program surveys demonstrate the commitment to expanding resources and influence. Measurable outcomes include financial contributions, facility improvements, program participation rates, and overall community satisfaction. We are dedicated to responsive and community-driven initiatives.

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6. Park and recreation agencies are called upon to demonstrate the results of their services and practices to decision-makers and the public. Cite three outcomes, results, or impacts achieved in the last three years that your agency has measured; background about the outcome(s); and the results achieved. Maximum value 10 points.

1. Strategic Plan: Dickinson Parks and Recreation District worked with stakeholders, community partners, and other key individuals within the community to establish the current Strategic Plan. This plan was included in the employee committee process and identified specific priorities and goals that aligned with community needs. The Strategic Plan empathized three priorities: The need for being a model organization in training, recruitment, retention, and employee well-being; maintain and develop athletic venues, destination parks, and Patterson Lake in an effort to be a premier tourist destination in western North Dakota; and improve the reach of leisure services to all segments of the community including age, gender, disability, program interest, and income level.

2. Annual Report: The District completed its first annual report that will be shared amongst key stakeholders to demonstrate the results and benefits of the services, facilities, and programs we continue to provide. This report encompasses all programming, facilities, and community engagement between user groups, partners, and other agencies that are also valued within our community. It conveys the importance of the District's work and how it continues to grow and impact throughout each year.

3. Program Plan: In 2023, the District implemented a Program Plan that identifies outcomes, results, and impacts achieved through recreational programming. User group meetings, focus groups, and transparency have aided in the adoption of this plan and will be used to assess future outcomes. The Program Plan focuses on program planning and framework, determinants, statistics, community inventory, national and local recreational trends, outreach, program services matrix, and evaluations/surveys. This information is evaluated regularly and will help guide future program plans, but also assists in the continued elevated level of service.

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7. Park and recreation agencies focus on creativity and innovation. Cite three innovations implemented by your agency within the last three years that have had a significant impact on service delivery, customer satisfaction, partnerships, financial condition, fiscal sustainability and/or internal operations. Maximum value 10 points.

Over the past three years, the District has introduced three impactful initiatives that have redefined services, customer satisfaction, and partnerships.

1. Patterson Lake Land Transfer: We pioneered the transfer of land surrounding Patterson Lake from the Bureau of Reclamation to the Dickinson Parks and Recreation District. This innovative approach involved collaborating with local, state, and national authorities. The impact has been significant, fostering increased community engagement, elevated park utilization, and a more diversified range of future recreational opportunities.

2. Sports Complex Partnership: The District forged a groundbreaking partnership with Dickinson State University for the Sanford Sports Complex which opened in 2023. This collaboration allowed us to expand our offerings without extensive infrastructure development. The complex serves as an extension of our facilities, enabling us to host larger tournaments and offer a broader array of sports programs. The partnership has elevated the quality of sports offerings and positioned us as a regional hub for athletic events.

3. Police Partnership for Community Safety: In 2023, we initiated a unique partnership with the Dickinson Police Department. This program provides free community center memberships to all City of Dickinson sworn peace officers and their families for the next five years. The program is funded 100% by a public safety grant and aims to improve wellness, recruitment, and retention of local police officers. By integrating police officers into recreational activities, we aim to build trust and community cohesion.

In summary, the District's commitment to creativity and innovation is evident in the Patterson Lake Land Transfer, Sports Complex Partnership, and the Police Partnership. These initiatives have positively impacted customer satisfaction, forged strategic partnerships, and contributed to our fiscal sustainability. By staying agile and forward-thinking, we continue to adapt to the evolving needs of the community, ensuring park and recreation offerings remain at the forefront of innovation.

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8. What initiatives or actions has your agency undertaken in the last three years to ensure all members of the community have fair and just access to quality parks and recreation? Maximum 5 point

Over the past three years, our agency has implemented initiatives to foster fair and just access to quality parks and recreation. One notable endeavor is the development of Friendship Park into a hub for inclusive recreational activities. This initiative includes accessible playground equipment, restrooms, and sensory play features. Friendship Park was funded by private donations, a grant, and contributions from the City, County, and Park District.

We are committed to providing equal access for all participants. All programs are open to individuals with disabilities, as accommodations can be made. In 2023, we reviewed our financial aid scholarship program to make memberships and program registration fees affordable regardless of economic circumstances.

These initiatives address barriers to equitable access, creating an environment where everyone can enjoy parks and recreation programs. We are committed to fostering a sense of belonging and ensuring that our community spaces are accessible and welcoming to all.

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9. What initiatives or actions has your agency undertaken in the last three years to advance health equity, improve individual and community-level health outcomes, and quality of life? Cite efforts undertaken for team members and/or community members that encourage and inspire health and wellness. Maximum 5 points.

Dickinson Parks and Recreation District has prioritized creating partnerships with organizations promoting health equity in the community. Internally, the West River Community Center offers wellness programming for all ages, including 40 weekly group fitness classes ranging from mommy-and-me to cycling and senior fitness, while a focus on enhancing the personal training program created exclusive spaces for clients. District employees are also required to be involved in wellness initiatives throughout the community. Currently, the Executive Director serves on a childcare and youth workgroup addressing the needs of the underserved and vulnerable youth in Dickinson. Full-time staff members volunteer their time to deliver meals for Elder Care in Dickinson as well as participate in the Best Friends Mentoring Program. Dickinson Parks and Recreation serves as a wellness leader through its community resources page on [dickinsonparks.org/partners](http://dickinsonparks.org/partners), which offers information on resources and organizations promoting health and wellness to the Dickinson community.

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10. What initiatives or actions has your agency undertaken in the last three years to address the impact of climate change through environmental stewardship, sustainability practices, and environmental programming? Cite efforts undertaken. Maximum 5 points.

Dickinson Parks and Recreation District recognizes the importance of trees not only to improve quality of life but to filter air pollutants and carbon dioxide while reducing air temperature. The past three years we have planted over 150 large balled and burlap trees with another 89 on order for spring planting. The American Elms have seen devastating losses due to Dutch Elm disease and we are dedicated to replacing every tree removed with a new tree to maintain the city's tree canopy. We are also in the planning stages of turning several undeveloped parks into tree farms for the tree replacement program. We are committed to planting a wide variety of tree species in the tree farms to help reduce future losses that may occur from insects or disease. The District also maintains a seat on the Dickinson Urban Forestry Program and the North Dakota Forest Service Grant Review Committee.

11. What challenge(s) has your agency experienced in the last three years and what action(s) has your agency undertaken to address these challenge(s)? Cite the agency's role in identifying and addressing the challenge(s), the steps/actions undertaken, and the measured effectiveness of the effort(s). Maximum 10 points.

Over the past three years, Dickinson Parks and Recreation District has faced challenges such as staff turnover, inflation, and a dynamic demographic shift in our community. The landscape underwent significant changes, transitioning to a stabilization period in the early 2020s after a surge in population growth in the early 2010s, resulting in a younger, larger population and increased demand for youth recreation programs.

To address these challenges, we engaged with the community through surveys and small group interviews to ensure our initiatives aligned with their preferences. This proactive approach has led to higher program participation rates and increased community satisfaction, reflecting the commitment to serving diverse and evolving demographics.

Staff turnover has been a significant issue due to the strong oil market and retirement of experienced employees. Since the beginning of 2022, we have replaced 60% of full-time staff. To counter this, we have increased professional development opportunities, implemented District-wide plans, enhanced employee recognition and wellness initiatives, and made adjustments to employee compensation. Although turnover has slowed since mid-2023, ongoing adjustments may be necessary to maintain consistent and quality employee performance.

Inflation has also posed a challenge to budgetary planning. To address rising costs, we conducted a thorough financial review and identified areas for cost efficiencies without compromising service quality. Strategic budget adjustments have been made, prioritizing regular maintenance over new facility development. Regular financial audits and budget adherence tracking have allowed us to assess our overall financial health and ensure continued service delivery.

In summary, the District has actively responded to challenges such as staff turnover, inflation, and demographic shifts. Through community engagement, strategic personnel and budgetary adjustments, and a focus on service quality, we have remained committed to meeting the evolving needs of the Dickinson community.

THANK YOU!

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