



# NRPA PARK AND RECREATION **MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

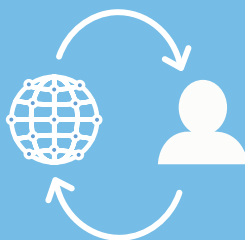
## MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

#### LOCAL SCHOOLS

are park and recreation agencies' most common partners to promote their amenities and programs.

Social media is a vital communications channel for virtually every park and recreation agency.



**76 PERCENT** of park and recreation agencies print a program catalog or guide promoting their offerings.



34% of park and recreation agencies market their offerings in **at least one additional language besides English.**



**3 in 4** park and recreation agencies actively market their offerings to people living outside of their jurisdiction.



Virtually every community across the United States is home to a local park and recreation agency. The services and facilities these agencies provide have a lasting impact on the lives of millions of people every day. With their focus on conservation, health and wellness and social equity, the more-than-10,000 local park and recreation agencies in the United States make our cities, towns and counties more vibrant, healthier and resilient. Whether it is a public park, trail, farmers market, summer camp or a healthy eating class at a recreation center, local park and recreation agencies offer programs and facilities that serve the needs and interests of every member of a community.

But getting the word out to the public about what park and recreation agencies do is a great challenge. The *2019 NRPA Engagement with Parks* report reveals that time constraints and a lack of awareness of agency programs, facilities and events are keeping people from taking full advantage of everything local park and recreation agencies have to offer. One solution to this challenge is for agencies to invest in marketing and communications strategies—although accomplishing this is no small feat.

Marketing and communications are at the heart of every successful program, campaign or event that park and recreation agencies host or administer. The more community members know about a local agency's amenities and programming, the more likely they are to take advantage of those offerings. Increasing numbers of participants in out-of-school time activities and programs, rising attendance at annual festivals and robust community support for parks and recreation are just a few of the potential outcomes of well-executed marketing strategies. Broad support for park and recreation offerings not only yields happier, healthier and stronger communities, but also builds a strong constituency among elected officials and other key stakeholders that can lead to more robust agency funding through larger budgets, increased donations and sponsorships.

Marketing and communicating what they offer to a community is a significant challenge for park and recreation agencies, especially in a competitive marketplace and often with limited resources. To learn more about how park and recreation leaders are facing this challenge, the NRPA Research team conducted a survey in September 2019. The 24-question *NRPA Park and Recreation Marketing and Communications Survey* sent to park and recreation agency leaders asked about marketing and communications goals, their partners and the resources they tap. The survey generated 418 responses, the data from which are the basis of this report.

# KEY FINDINGS

## Goals of Marketing and Communications Activities

The scope and responsibilities of park and recreation agencies' marketing and communications activities vary greatly by agency. But the most basic function—raising awareness of agency amenities and programming—is key for virtually every agency. The top three goals of park and recreation marketing and communications activities all focus on awareness building:

- Increase awareness of agency amenities and offerings (cited by 92 percent of respondents)
- Increase registration for paid (fee-based) programs, events, classes, leagues, etc. (91 percent)
- Increase attendance to nonpaid events (80 percent)

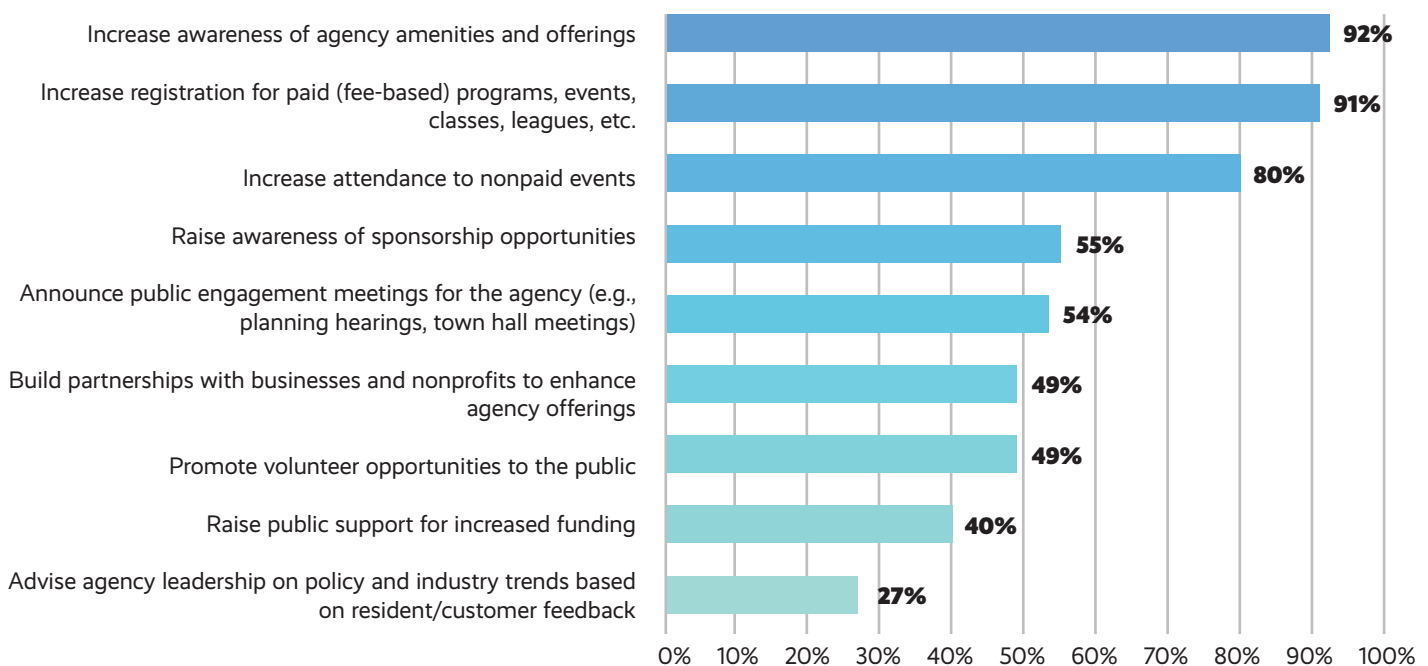
Beyond driving awareness of and attendance at agency facilities, programs and events, park and recreation marketing and communications efforts themselves can enhance these offerings by helping an agency achieve greater financial stability. For example, 55 percent of park and recreation agencies guide some of their marketing activities to raise awareness to companies and nonprofits of potential sponsorship opportunities and 49 percent of agencies use these activities to build external partnerships that enhance agency offerings.

Park and recreation agencies also rely on their marketing and communications activities to build public engagement with and support for their efforts. For example:

- Announce public engagement meetings for the agency (e.g., planning hearings, town hall meetings) (cited by 54 percent of respondents)
- Promote volunteer opportunities to the public (49 percent)
- Raise public support for increased funding (40 percent)

### Increasing Awareness of and Participation in Park and Recreation Amenities and Programs Are Primary Goals for Agencies' Marketing and Communications Activities

(Percent of Agencies)



## POPULATION SERVED

## ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET

	All	Less than 20,000 residents	20,000 – 49,999 residents	50,000 – 99,999 residents	100,000 residents and greater	Under \$1 million	\$1.0-4.9 million	\$5.0 - \$9.9 million	\$10 million and greater
Increase awareness of agency amenities and offerings	<b>92%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>96%</b>
Increase registration for paid (fee-based) programs, events, classes, leagues, etc.	<b>91</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>94</b>
Increase attendance to nonpaid events	<b>80</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>84</b>
Raise awareness of sponsorship opportunities	<b>55</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>62</b>
Announce public engagement meetings for the agency (e.g., planning hearings, town hall meetings)	<b>54</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>75</b>
Build partnerships with businesses and nonprofits to enhance agency offerings	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>58</b>
Promote volunteer opportunities to the public	<b>49</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>61</b>
Raise public support for increased funding	<b>40</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>46</b>
Advise agency leadership on policy and industry trends based on resident/customer feedback	<b>27</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>44</b>





## Marketing Partners

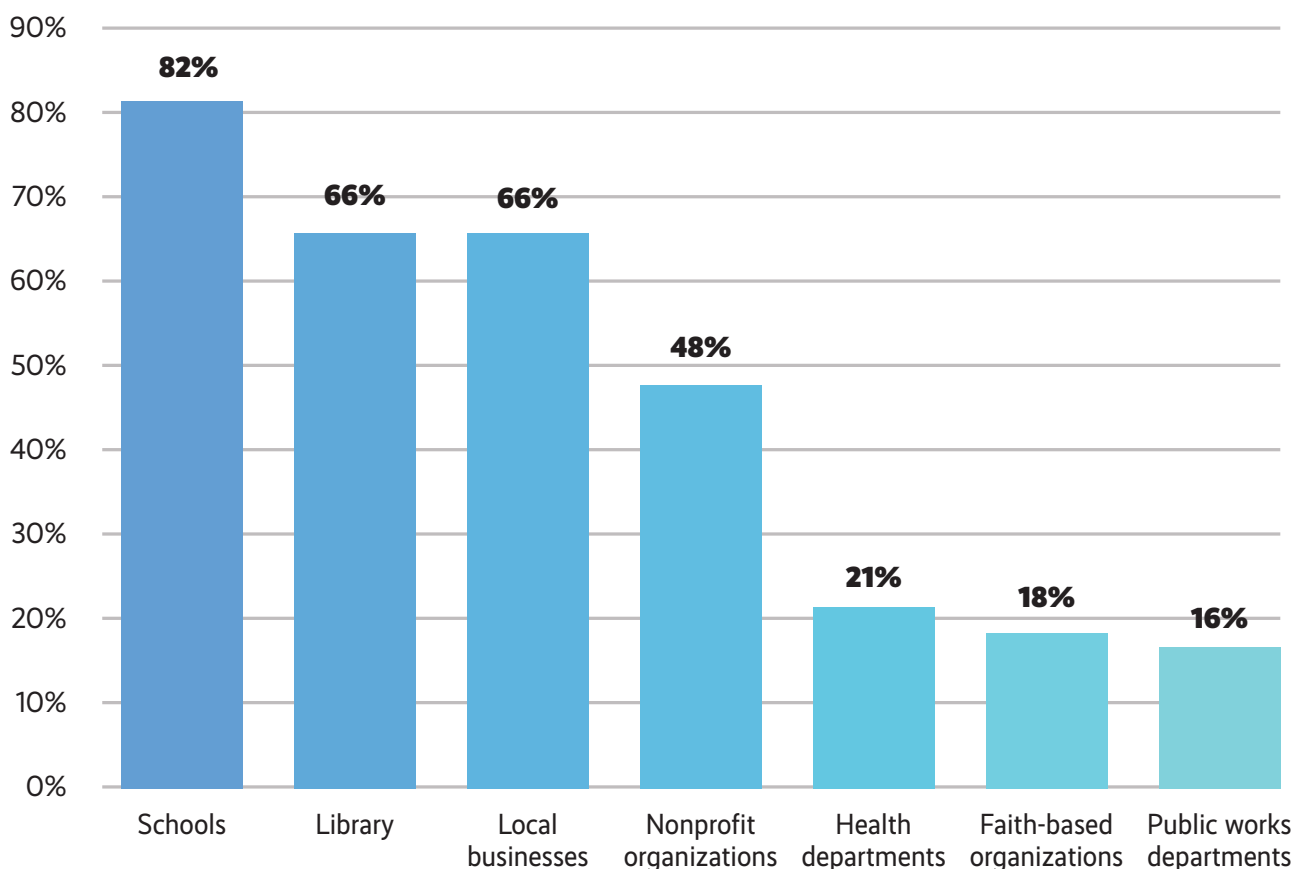
As the survey results show, getting the word out to the public about all that parks and recreation has to offer is the primary goal of marketing and communications activities. Working with partners makes achieving this goal far more likely. Eighty percent of park and recreation agencies partner with at least one outside entity to produce and distribute marketing materials that highlight key amenities and programming opportunities for a community.

The most common partners on which park and recreation agencies rely to promote their amenities, programs and offerings are local schools. Eighty-two percent of park and recreation agencies work with local public and private schools to promote their offerings. In addition, two-thirds of park and recreation agencies work with libraries and two-thirds work with local businesses to distribute their marketing messages. In the latter case, this may take the form of posters on bulletin boards and having agency brochures and catalogs available at grocery stores, coffee shops and local gyms. Other frequently cited marketing and communications partners include:

- Nonprofit organizations (e.g., the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs of America) (cited by 48 percent of respondents)
- Local health departments (21 percent)
- Faith-based organizations (18 percent)
- Public works departments (16 percent)

Agencies serving relatively small populations—less than 20,000 residents—rely particularly heavily on schools and local businesses to distribute parks and recreation marketing and communications materials (86 percent and 80 percent, respectively). Larger agencies are slightly less likely than smaller ones to work with local schools, but more likely to rely on libraries and public health departments.

**Park and Recreation Agencies Partner with Schools, Libraries and Local Businesses to Produce and Distribute Marketing Materials**  
(Percent of Agencies that Use Third-Party Resources)



	POPULATION SERVED					ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET			
	All	Less than 20,000 residents	20,000 – 49,999 residents	50,000 – 99,999 residents	100,000 residents and greater	Under \$1 million	\$1.0-4.9 million	\$5.0 - \$9.9 million	\$10 million and greater
Schools	92%	92%	93%	93%	91%	83%	94%	93%	96%
Local businesses	91	92	95	92	89	87	93	93	94
Library	80	82	84	82	77	75	78	89	84
Nonprofit organizations	55	55	64	55	49	54	54	53	62
Health departments	54	43	64	55	59	41	48	61	75
Faith-based organizations	49	49	53	58	43	46	48	56	58
Public works departments	49	45	45	54	59	48	44	53	61

## Marketing Methods

Parks and recreation marketing and communications efforts encompass many methods, including a mix of traditional and new-era communications channels. Social media, agency websites and email messages are the top three channels—methods that did not even exist a quarter of a century ago. Virtually all park and recreation agencies use social media—including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat—as a vital communications channel. A nearly equal percentage of agencies (97 percent) rely on their websites or those of their jurisdiction (city, town, county) to spread the word about their amenities, programs and offerings. Further, 89 percent of agencies alert the public of their offerings through email messages and newsletters.

But not all communications are digital. Traditional printed communications remain a feature at most park and recreation agencies. They include:

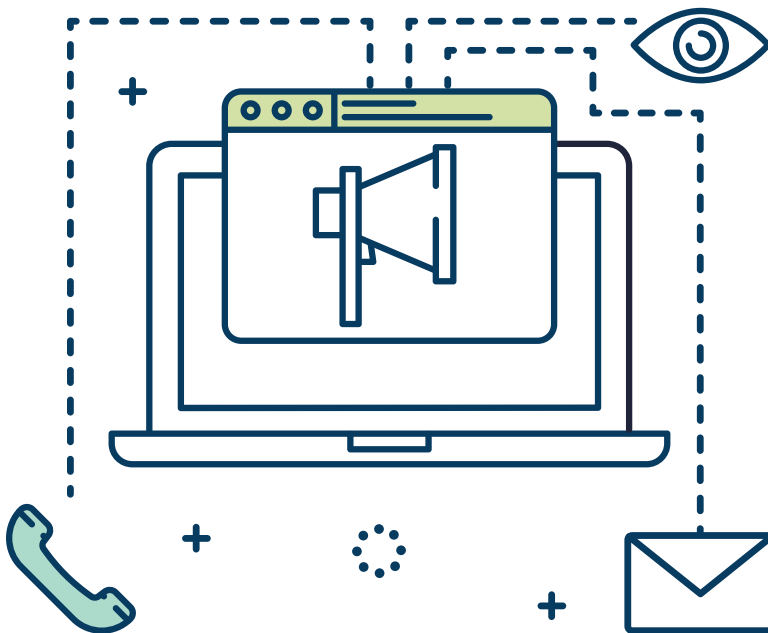
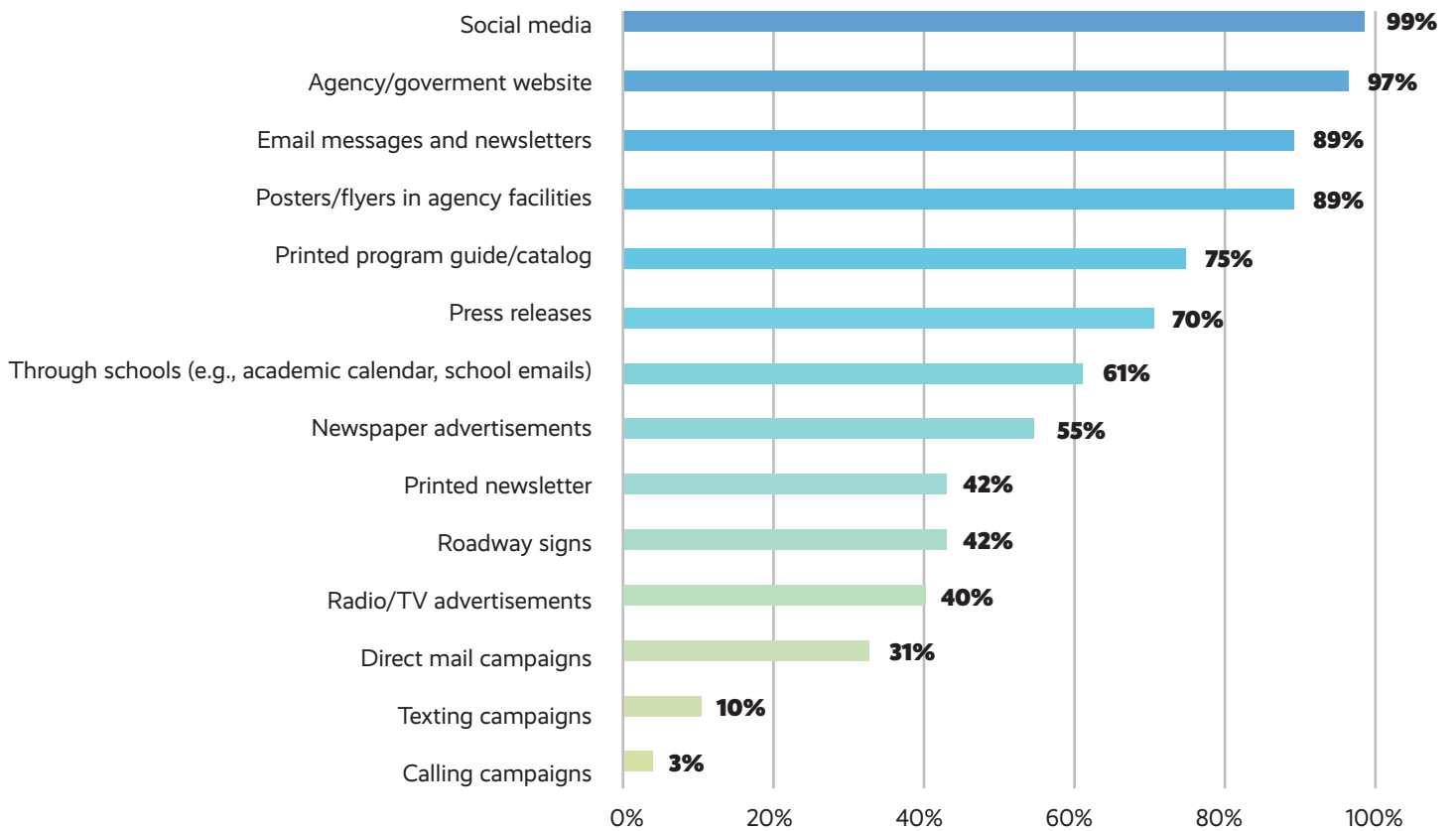
- Posters/flyers in agency facilities (cited by 89 percent of respondents)
- Printed program guide/catalog (75 percent)
- Printed newsletter (42 percent)
- Direct mail campaigns (31 percent)

A smaller percentage of park and recreation agencies also advertise their offerings through newspaper advertisements (55 percent), roadway signs (42 percent) and radio/TV advertisements (40 percent). Beyond paid advertisements, 70 percent of park and recreation agencies get the word out to local media through press releases.



## Social Media and Websites Are the Leading Communications Channels to Promote Amenities, Programs and Events

(Percent of Agencies)

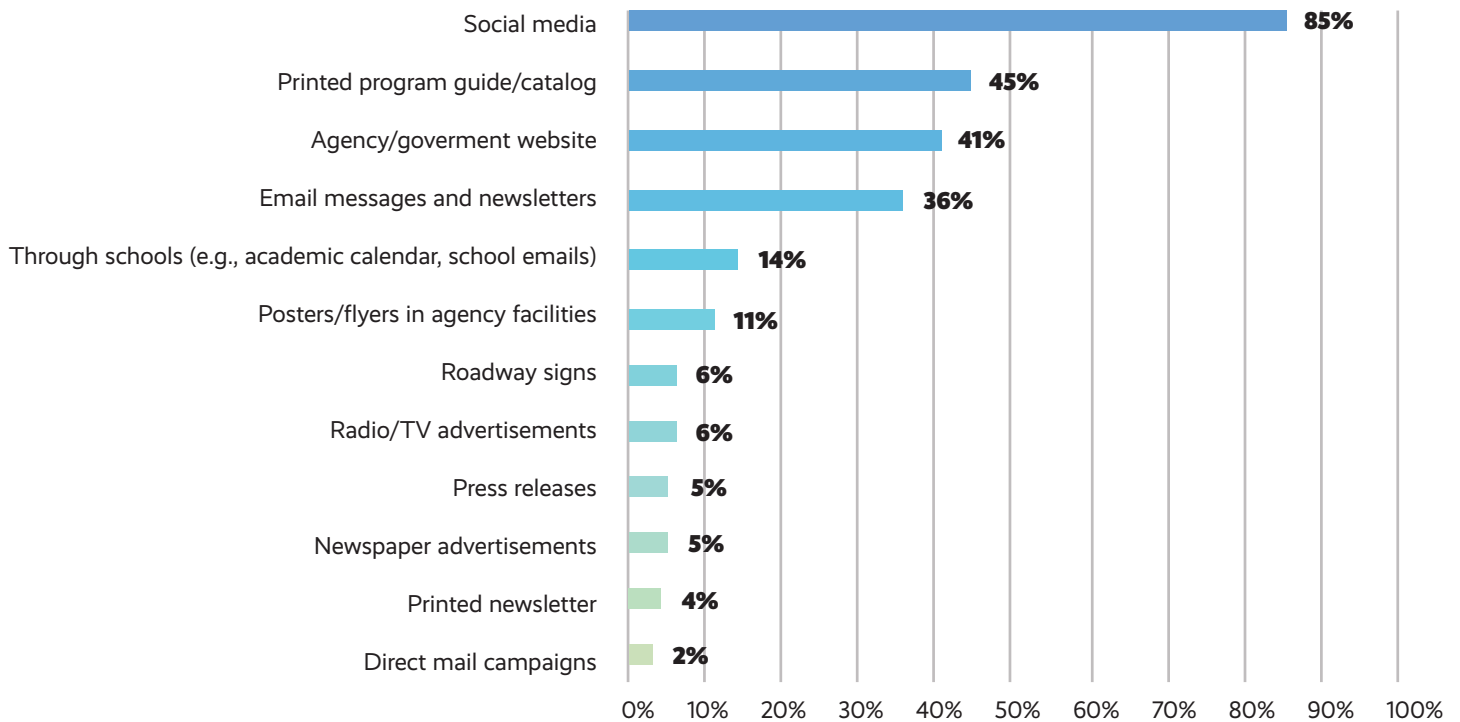


While park and recreation agencies deliver marketing and communications messaging via many channels, some channels are more effective than others. Park and recreation professionals consider four channels as the most effective ones for marketing park and recreation amenities, programs and events:

- Social media (cited by 85 percent of respondents)
- Printed program guide/catalog (45 percent)
- Agency/government website (41 percent)
- Email messages and newsletters (36 percent)

## Park and Recreation Professionals See Social Media, Printed Program Guides, Websites and Email Campaigns as Their Most Effective Communications Channels

(Percent of Agencies Indicating the Channel Is One of Three Most Effective Channels)



### Social Media

Social media plays a vital role in a park and recreation agency's marketing and communications efforts. Not only does virtually every agency include social media as a part of its marketing and communications strategy, most park and recreation professionals view social media as a very effective avenue. Also, well-executed social media tactics provide agencies with other highly valued benefits: cost and time. Social media can connect with the public just moments after an agency crafts a message and can do so at little to no cost.

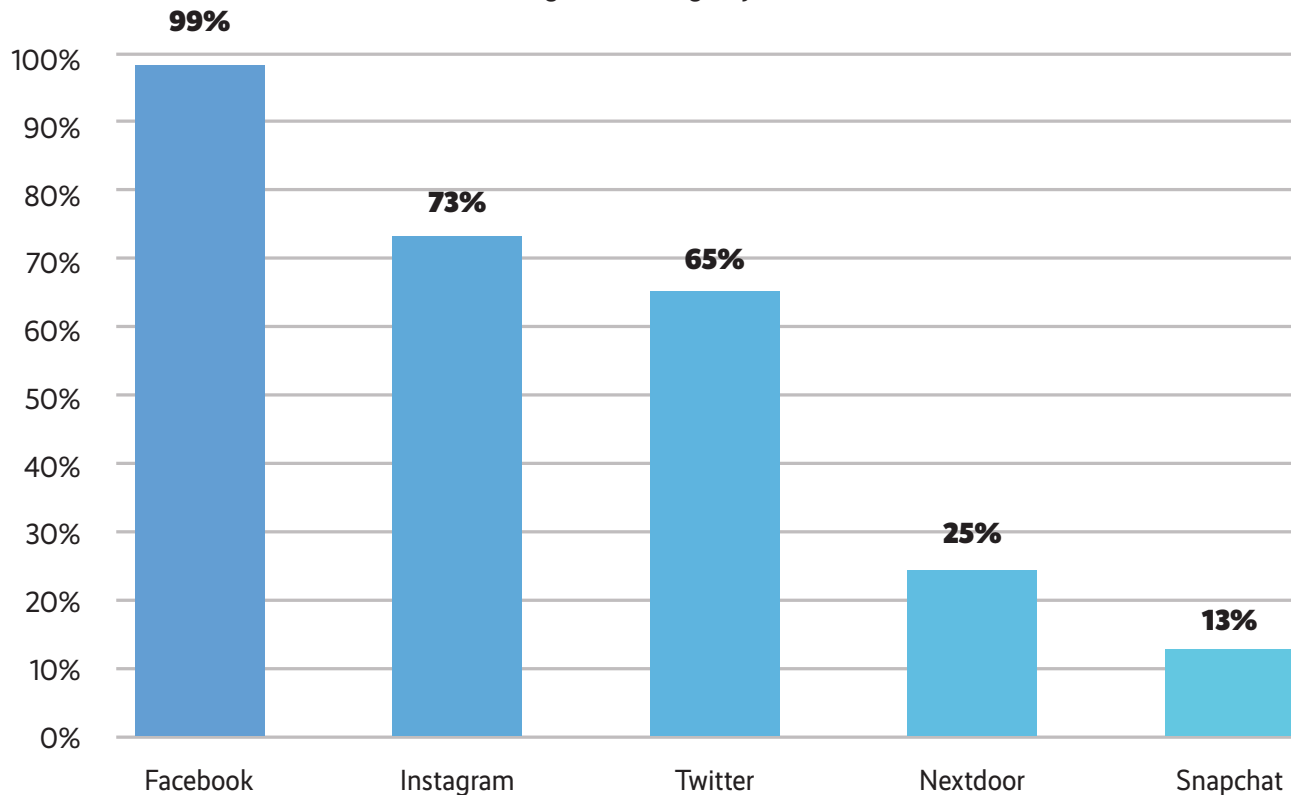
Facebook plays a role in nearly every park and recreation social media strategy. Ninety-nine percent of park and recreation agencies that use social media have a Facebook account for marketing and communications purposes. Three in four agencies broadcast their messages through Instagram and nearly two in three agencies publicize events through a Twitter account. Less commonly used social media platforms include Snapchat and Nextdoor.





## Virtually All Park and Recreation Agencies Include Facebook as Part of Their Social Media Strategy

(Percent of Agencies Using Any Social Media)



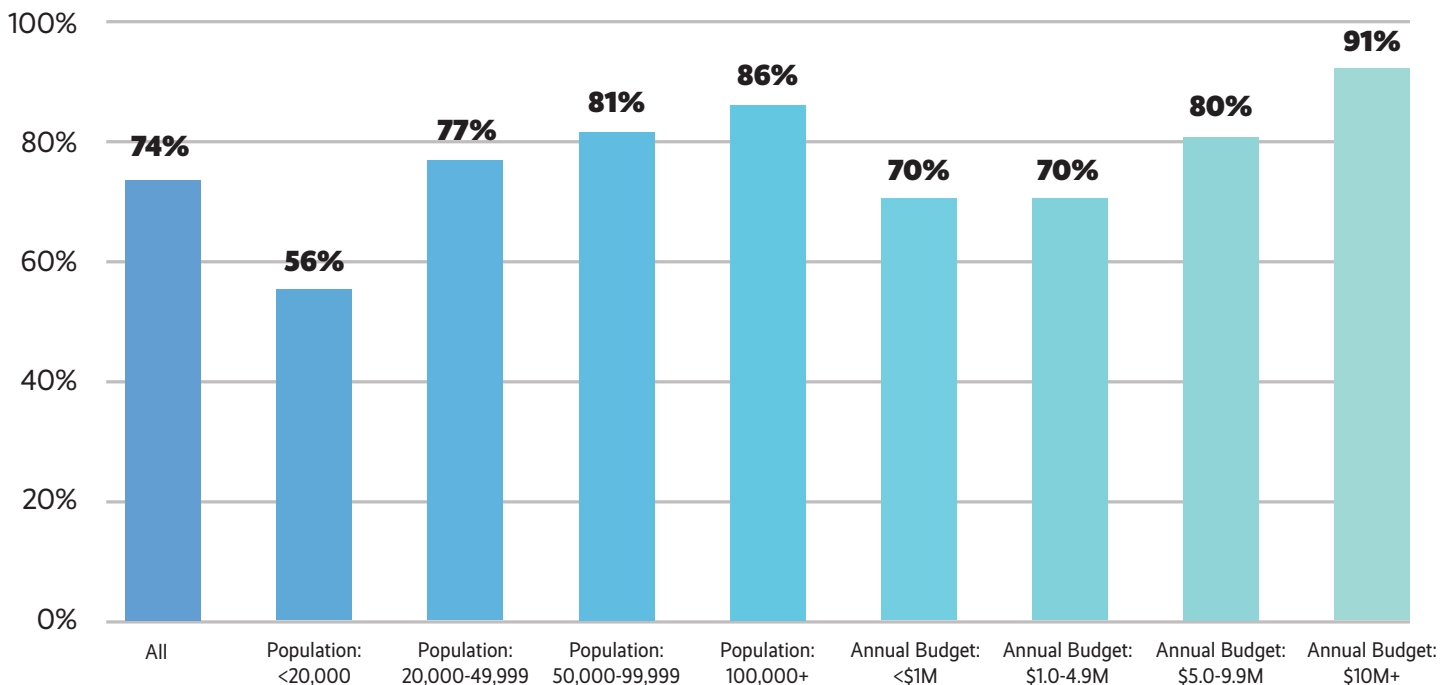
	POPULATION SERVED					ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET			
	All	Less than 20,000 residents	20,000 – 49,999 residents	50,000 – 99,999 residents	100,000 residents and greater	Under \$1 million	\$1.0-4.9 million	\$5.0 - \$9.9 million	\$10 million and greater
Facebook	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%
Instagram	73	55	70	85	84	60	61	82	92
Twitter	65	46	58	73	84	46	53	74	89
Nextdoor	25	20	19	28	35	10	23	30	38
Snapchat	13	10	10	20	13	3	9	18	20

It takes more than just posting photos and messages for park and recreation agencies to realize the full benefits of social media, particularly if those messages are reaching a smaller-than-desired audience. One way to overcome this limitation is by purchasing advertisements on social media platforms to promote the accounts or a specific posting.

Seventy-four percent of park and recreation agencies purchase social media ads—primarily on Facebook—to increase exposure of the agency’s postings. Larger agencies, including those with annual operating budgets greater than \$10 million (91 percent) and those serving at least 100,000 residents (86 percent), are the most likely to purchase social media ads.



**Three in Four Park and Recreation Agencies Purchase Ads on Social Media Channels**  
 (Percent of Agencies Using Any Social Media)



## Printed Catalogs

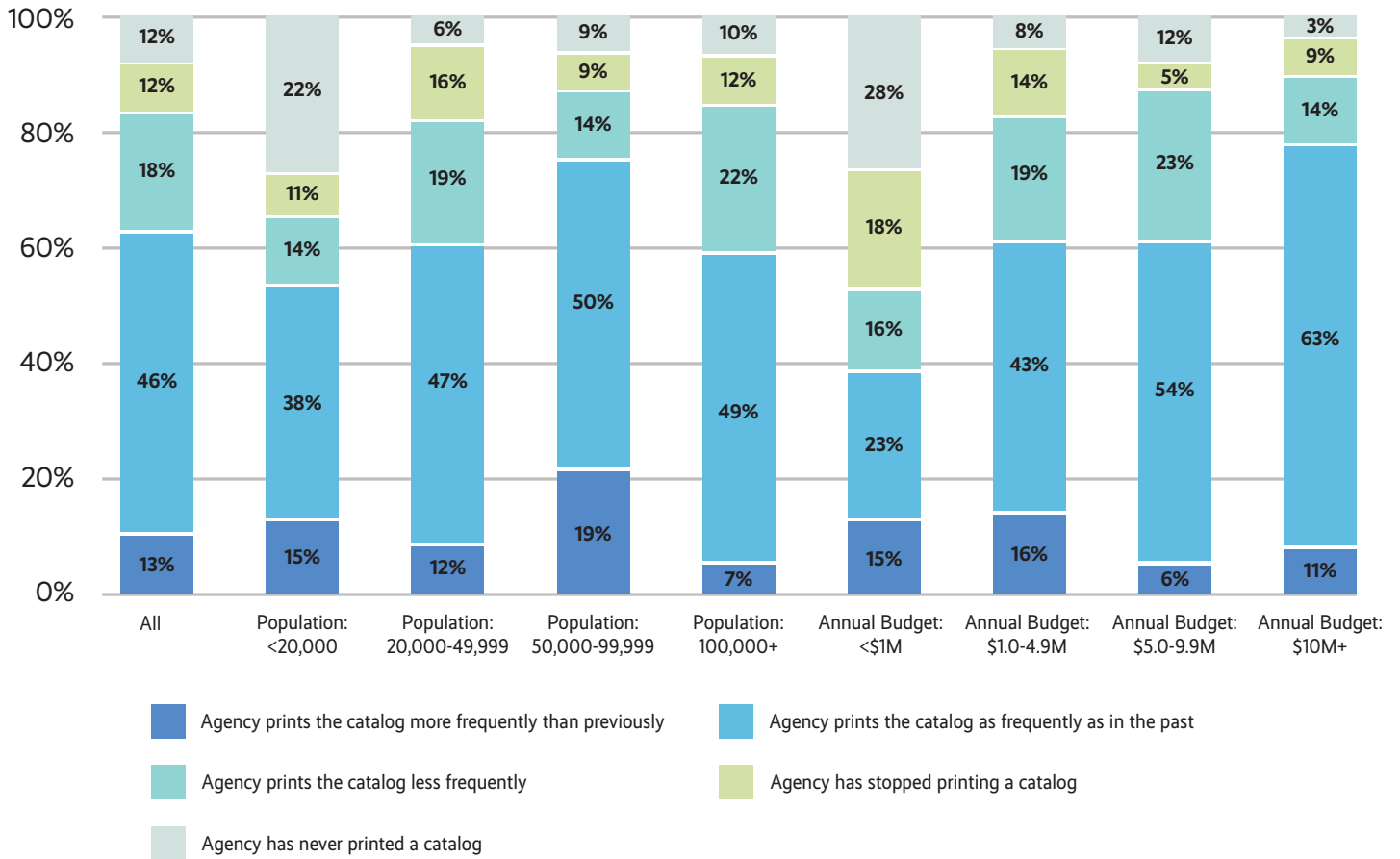
Even in this digital age, park and recreation agencies continue to rely on traditional analog communications channels. These include publication and distribution of a printed program catalog or guide featuring an agency's events, classes and programs. The advantage of a printed guide is that it is a tangible, high-profile way to highlight the breadth of an agency's offerings. On the other hand, these guides can be costly to print and distribute (often by mail) and do not allow for last-minute changes (such as information regarding newly added or canceled events). Nonetheless, annual, semi-annual or quarterly publications have been—and in many cases have remained—flagship components of park and recreation agencies' marketing and communications strategies.

Seventy-six percent of park and recreation agencies currently print a program catalog or guide, and these publications are features of agencies both large and small. Smaller agencies are, however, slightly less likely to print a program catalog; two-thirds of agencies serving populations smaller than 20,000 residents print a catalog as do 54 percent of agencies with annual operating budgets of less than \$1 million.

In recent years, 12 percent of agencies have stopped printing program catalogs while 18 percent of agencies have reduced the frequency of catalog publication. On the flipside, 13 percent of park and recreation agencies have increased the frequency of catalog publication.

## 76 Percent of Park and Recreation Agencies Print a Catalog or Guide of Events, Classes and Programs

(Percentage Distribution)



## Language

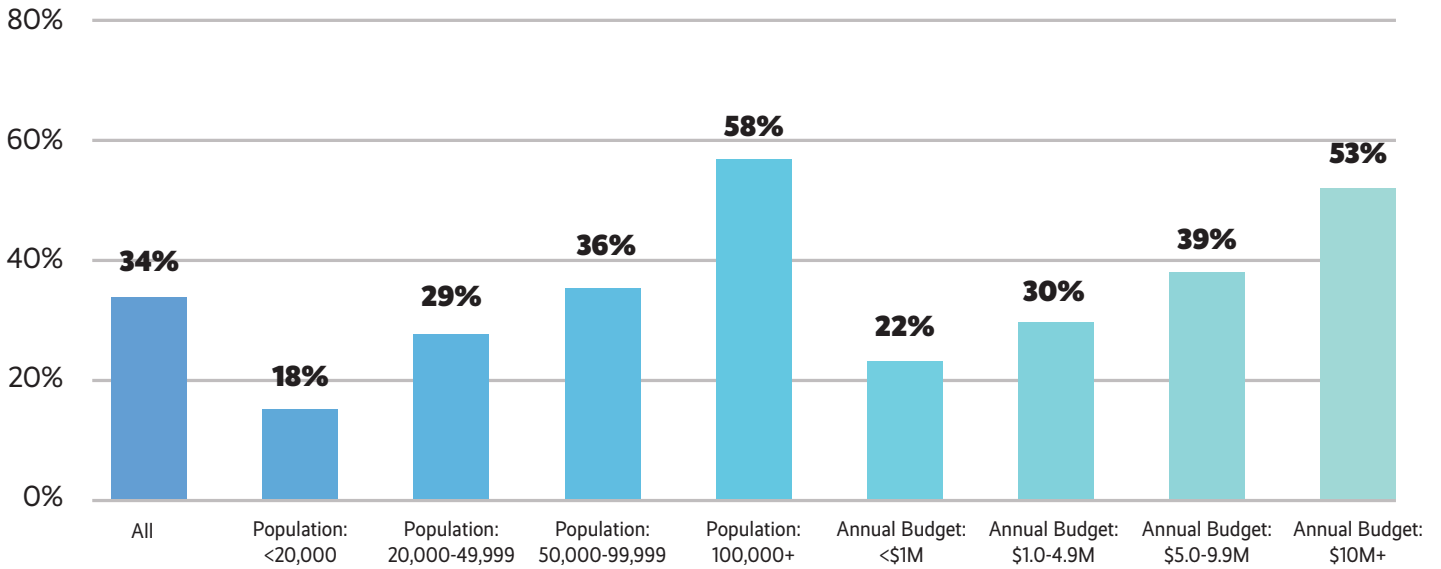
Parks and recreation is for everyone. The most successful agencies are those that ensure all members of a community enjoy the amenities and offerings that these agencies provide. But to ensure that all community members can take advantage of such programs, park and recreation agencies must embrace marketing and communications techniques that reach community members that they previously missed. This includes marketing agency amenities and programming in languages other than English.

Thirty-four percent of park and recreation agencies create and distribute marketing and communications collateral in at least one additional language besides English. This material may include printed and electronic messages, language-specific social media accounts and agency websites that have translation functionality. Spanish is the most-common second language park and recreation agencies use in their marketing and communications materials, followed by Korean, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese and French.



## A Third of Park and Recreation Agencies Markets to the Public in a Language Besides English

(Percent of Agencies)



## Marketing to People Outside of the Local Jurisdiction

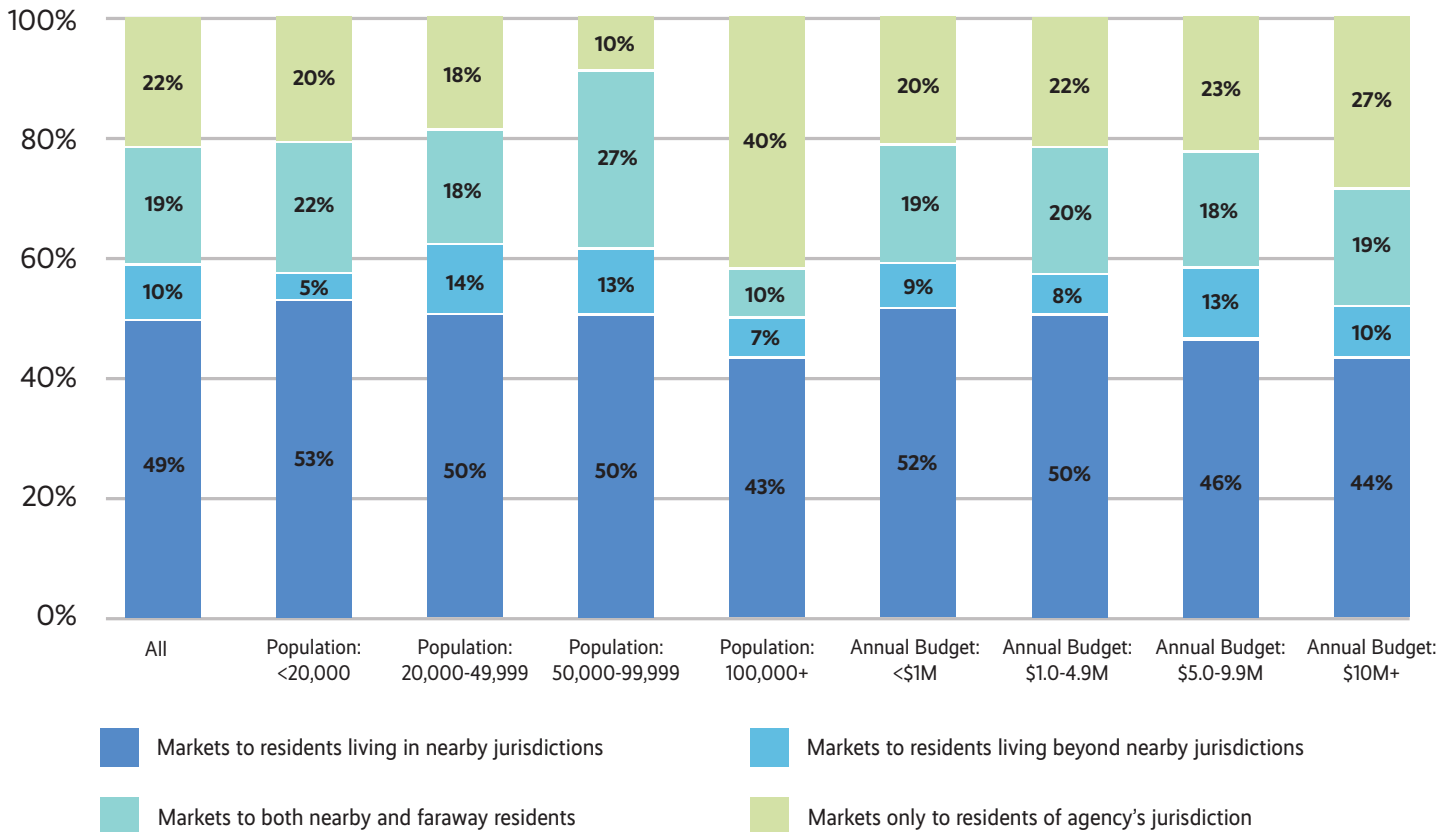
Parks and recreation amenities and programming are not only for people who live within the city, town or county that is home to the agency. Agency-sponsored events—cultural festivals, holiday celebrations, farmers markets, etc.—often draw people from surrounding towns or even from across a county. Further, residents who live outside an agency’s area can register for a class, out-of-school time program or sports league that may be unavailable in their town or that better fits their needs. The impact of out-of-jurisdiction registrants can be significant, not only boosting registration revenues for an agency but also sparking additional economic activity in the community (e.g., additional business for local restaurants and hotels). Hence, many park and recreation agencies market to people living outside of their jurisdiction.

Three in four park and recreation agencies actively market their events, programs and amenities to individuals who reside outside the agencies’ jurisdictions. Nearly half of agencies markets to residents in nearby jurisdictions, one in ten agencies does so to residents in faraway jurisdictions and 19 percent market to people who live in both nearby and faraway cities and towns. Agencies serving larger jurisdictions are less likely than others to market their offerings to out-of-town residents.



## Three in Four Park and Recreation Agencies Market Amenities, Programs and Events to People Living Outside Their Jurisdictions

(Percentage Distribution)



## Marketing and Communications Budgets and Resources

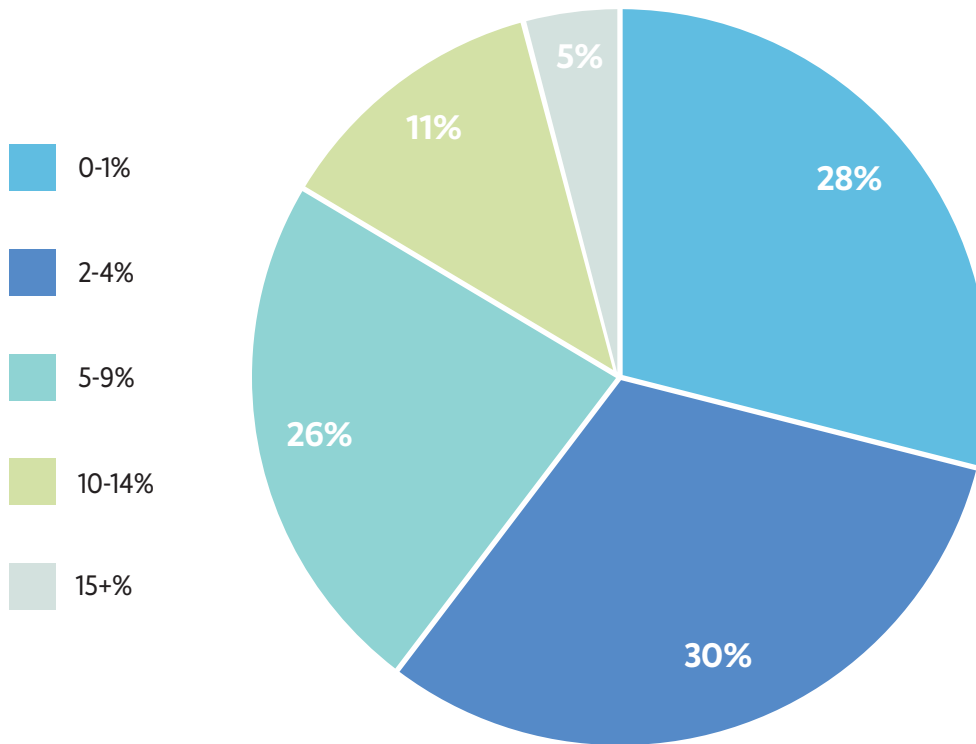
Park and recreation agencies dedicate a relatively small percentage of their annual operating budget to marketing their amenities and programming to the public. The typical park and recreation agency allocates three percent of its annual operating budget to marketing and communications activities, including all aspects of these activities from printing and design costs to paying for salaries and benefits of any associated employees.

Some agencies spend even less of their budgets on these efforts. Twenty-eight percent of survey respondents indicate their agencies designate less than two percent of their annual operating budgets to marketing and communications. Conversely, 17 percent of park and recreation agencies spend at least 10 percent of their annual budgets on marketing and communications strategies.

Smaller park and recreation agencies tend to dedicate a greater percentage of their annual budgets to marketing activities than do larger ones (although this is, of course, relative as these agencies' overall budgets are comparatively small). The typical park and recreation agency serving fewer than 20,000 residents and the typical agency with an annual budget under \$1 million each spends five percent of their annual budgets on marketing and communications activities. In comparison, the median is three percent for agencies serving every other population cohort. Further, park and recreation agencies with annual budgets of at least \$10 million dedicate two percent of their annual budgets on marketing.

## Nearly 3 in 5 Park and Recreation Agencies Designate Less Than 5% of Their Annual Operating Budgets to Marketing and Communications Activities

(Percentage Distribution)



## Typical Percentage of Park and Recreation Agency Operating Budgets Dedicated to Marketing and Communications Activities

(Median Percentage)

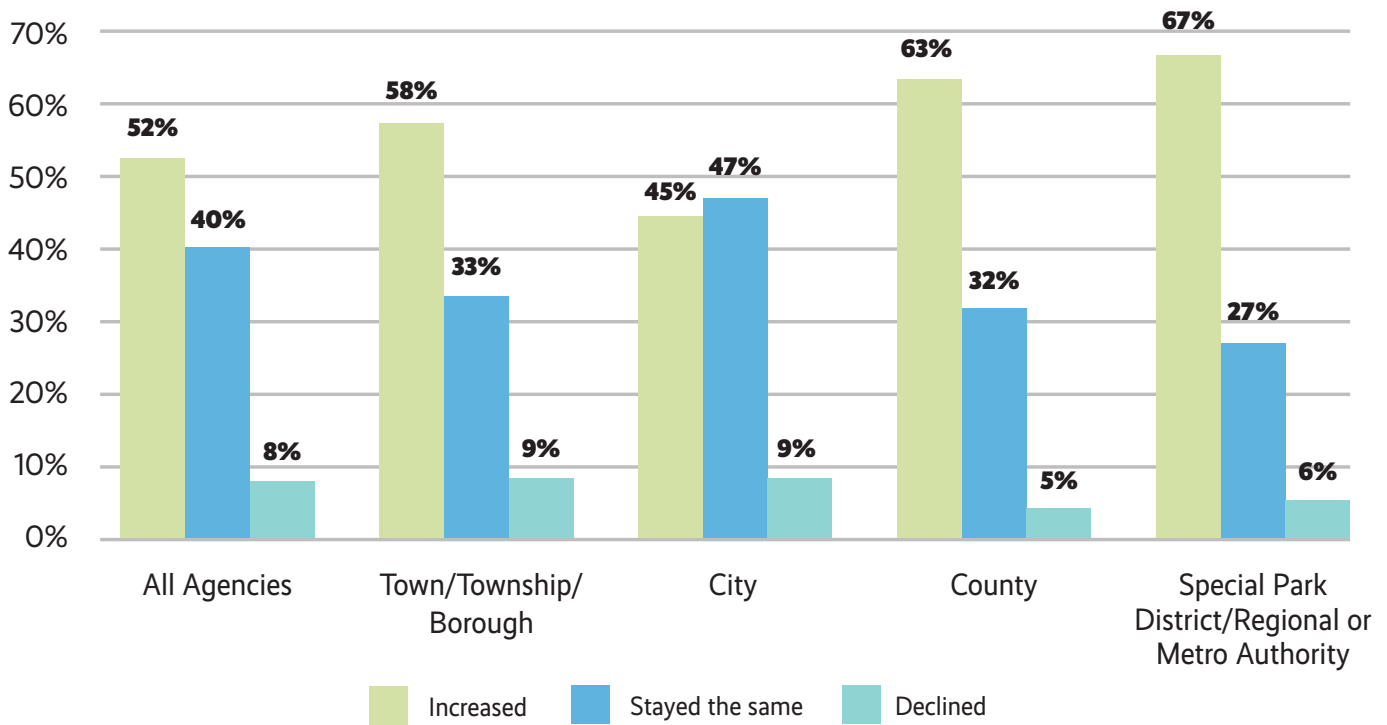
POPULATION SERVED					ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET			
All	Less than 20,000 residents	20,000 – 49,999 residents	50,000 – 99,999 residents	100,000 residents and greater	Under \$1 million	\$1.0-4.9 million	\$5.0 - \$9.9 million	\$10 million and greater
3%	5%	3%	3%	2%	5%	3%	4%	2%

A relatively strong economy and increased interest in promoting park and recreation benefits have led to larger marketing budgets in recent years. Fifty-two percent of park and recreation agencies have seen their marketing and communications budgets expand over the past five years. This includes one in six park and recreation agencies that has had its marketing and communications budget swell by more than 10 percent. Special park districts and county park and recreation agencies, along with those serving larger populations, are even more likely to have experienced an increase in their marketing and communications budgets. Conversely, marketing and communications budgets have contracted at eight percent of park and recreation agencies.



## Marketing and Communications Budgets Have Increased Over the Past Five Years at Most Park and Recreation Agencies

(Percentage Distribution)



## Special Park Districts, County Agencies and Systems Serving Larger Populations Are Most Likely to Have Increased Marketing and Communications Budgets of the Past Five Years

(Percentage Distribution)

	POPULATION SERVED					ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET			
	All	Less than 20,000 residents	20,000 – 49,999 residents	50,000 – 99,999 residents	100,000 residents and greater	Under \$1 million	\$1.0-4.9 million	\$5.0 - \$9.9 million	\$10 million and greater
Increased by more than 10%	16%	11%	20%	16%	19%	12%	13%	20%	22%
Increased by less than 10%	36	38	33	40	35	35	31	47	37
Stayed the same	40	43	42	37	35	46	48	29	30
Decreased by less than 10%	5	3	4	4	6	6	5	2	5
Decreased by more than 10%	3	5	1	3	5	1	3	2	6



Park and recreation agencies differ in how they execute marketing and communications strategies. Some have staff that delivers marketing and communications strategies and tactics for the entire organization. At other agencies, there is no “marketing department” per se; rather, these agencies assign marketing and communications responsibilities to program managers.

A small majority of park and recreation agencies has internal staff dedicated to marketing and communicating information about park and recreation amenities, programming and offerings to the public. Fifty-six percent of park and recreation agencies have designated internal marketing and communications staff managing most or all marketing and communications activities.

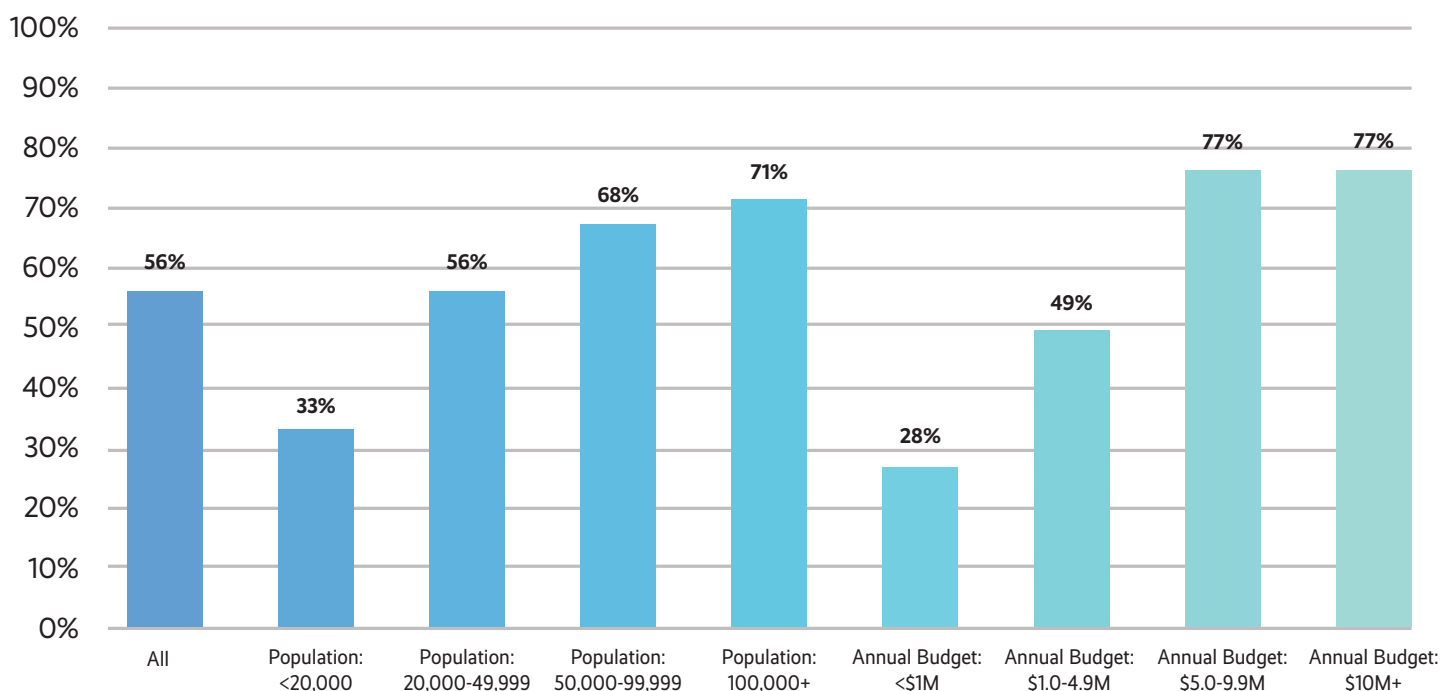
Agency-wide dedicated marketing and communications staff is more common at medium-size and larger agencies than at smaller ones. Seventy-one percent of park and recreation agencies serving a population of at least 100,000 residents or more have designated internal marketing and communications staff managing most or all marketing and communications activities. This compares to just a third of agencies that serves fewer than 20,000 residents. Similarly, agencies with annual budgets of less than \$1 million are far less likely to have staff dedicated to marketing (28 percent) compared to agencies with annual operating budgets of \$10 million or greater.

Agencies that do not have dedicated staff to handle marketing and communications efforts typically assign those responsibilities to the program managers overseeing specific events, programs, classes, etc. For example, the head of an agency’s aquatic center may be directly responsible for promoting swim classes. Twenty-six percent of agencies place the main responsibility for marketing and communications on program managers; however, this is more common at smaller agencies.

Forty-eight percent of park and recreation agencies serving a population of fewer than 20,000 residents rely on program managers to handle most or all marketing efforts for agency events, programs and classes. Similarly, program managers at 57 percent of agencies with annual operating budgets under \$1 million have chief responsibility for marketing and communications.

### While a Majority of Park and Recreation Agencies Has an Internal Staff and/or a Department That Manages Marketing and Communications Activities, This is Less Common at Small Agencies

(Percent of Agencies)



**Special Park Districts and County Park and Recreation Agencies Are More Likely to Have Internal Staff and/or a Department That Manages Marketing and Communications Activities**  
(Percent of Agencies)

	All Agencies	Town/ Township/ Borough	City	County	Special Park District/ Regional or Metro Authority
Agency has internal staff (and/or department) that manages most/all marketing and communications activities.	<b>56%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>79%</b>
Agency does not have staff dedicated to marketing/communications activities. Rather, program managers handle most/all marketing efforts for their events/programs/classes.	<b>26</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>
A combination of internal staff and a third-party company manages most/all of the agency's marketing and communications needs.	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>
Local jurisdiction (i.e., city, town, county) manages most/all of the agency's marketing and communications needs.	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>n/a</b>
Other	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>

If a park and recreation agency *does* have a team dedicated to delivering marketing and communications strategies and tactics, the function area tends to be a small shop. The typical park and recreation agency with earmarked marketing and communications staff has 1.5 full-time equivalent employees (FTEs) dedicated to these activities. Special park districts and county park and recreation agencies typically employ two FTEs dedicated to marketing and communications activities while town and city agencies employ a median of one FTE to serve this function.

**The Typical Park and Recreation Agency Has 1.5 Full-time Equivalent Employees Dedicated to Marketing and Communications Activities**  
(Median Number of Full-time Employees)

	POPULATION SERVED					ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET			
	All	Less than 20,000 residents	20,000 – 49,999 residents	50,000 – 99,999 residents	100,000 residents and greater	Under \$1 million	\$1-4.9 million	\$5.0 - \$9.9 million	\$10 million and greater
Median	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>3.0</b>

## Responsibilities of Marketing and Communications Staff and Outside Contractors

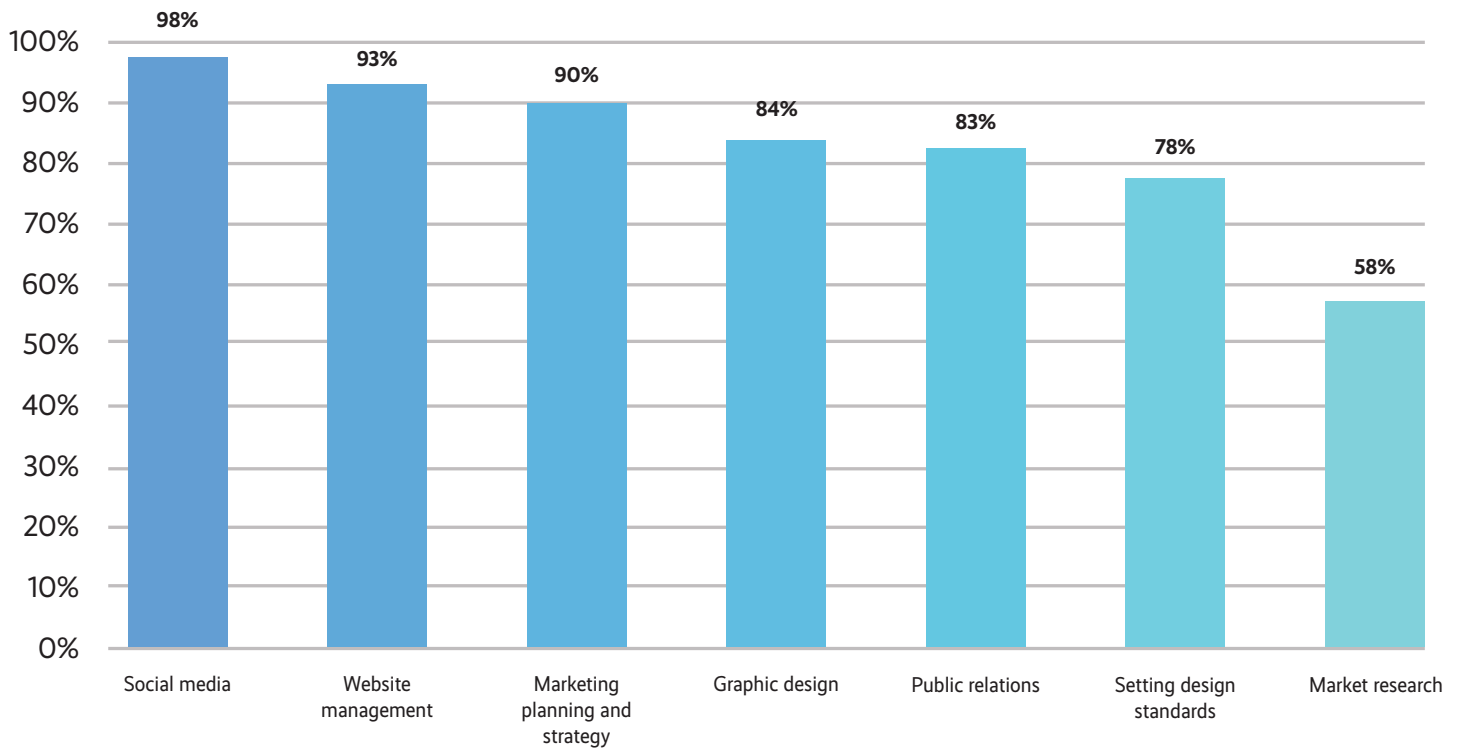
The marketing and communications team shares many of the same responsibilities at park and recreation agencies across the nation. At least nine in ten agencies have their marketing and communications teams take the lead on:

- Social media (cited by 98 percent of respondents)
- Website management (93 percent)
- Marketing planning and strategy (90 percent)

Other top activities park and recreation marketing team responsibilities include graphic design (84 percent), public relations (83 percent) and setting design standards (78 percent).

### Marketing and Communications Staff Lead Many Integral Activities

(Percent of Agencies)

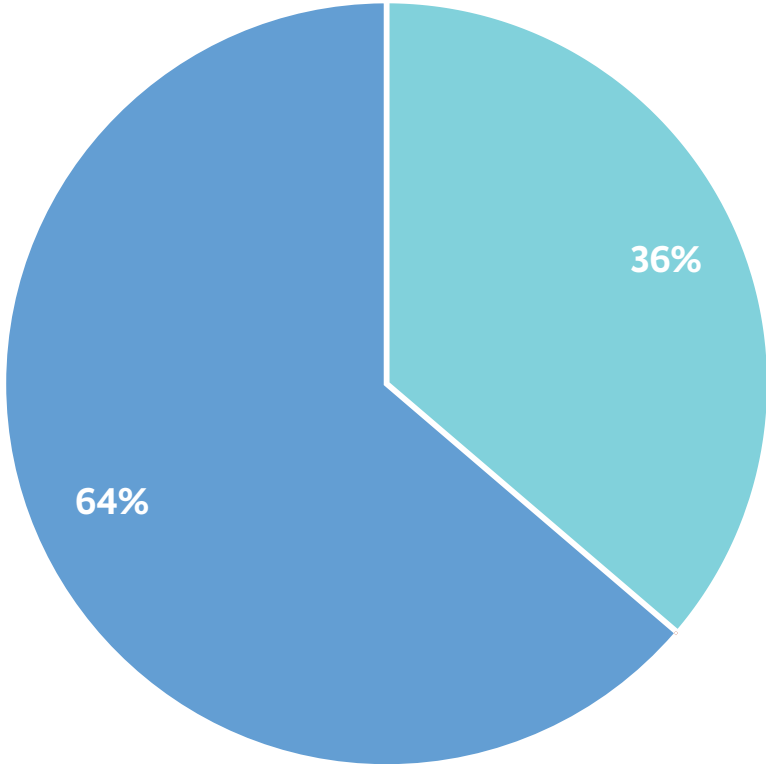


While park and recreation agency staff performs many critical marketing and communications tasks, third-party contractors are a valuable resource for many agencies. Thirty-six percent of park and recreation agencies use third-party contractors to help them achieve their marketing and communications goals. Special park districts are most likely (51 percent) to use third-party contractors for marketing and communications purposes. Similarly, larger park and recreation agencies also are more likely to embrace outside resources than are smaller ones; 43 percent of agencies serving jurisdictions with at least 100,000 residents and 49 percent of agencies with annual operating budgets of \$10 million or more use third-party resources to support their marketing and communications activities. Less likely to use third-party resources are agencies serving fewer than 20,000 residents (17 percent).



**More Than One in Three Park and Recreation Agencies Use Outside Contractors to Support Marketing and Communications Efforts**

(Percentage Distribution)



■ Use outside contractors
 ■ Do not use outside contractors

	POPULATION SERVED					ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET			
	All	Less than 20,000 residents	20,000 – 49,999 residents	50,000 – 99,999 residents	100,000 residents and greater	Under \$1 million	\$1.0-4.9 million	\$5.0 - \$9.9 million	\$10 million and greater
Agencies Use Outside Contractors	<b>36%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>49%</b>

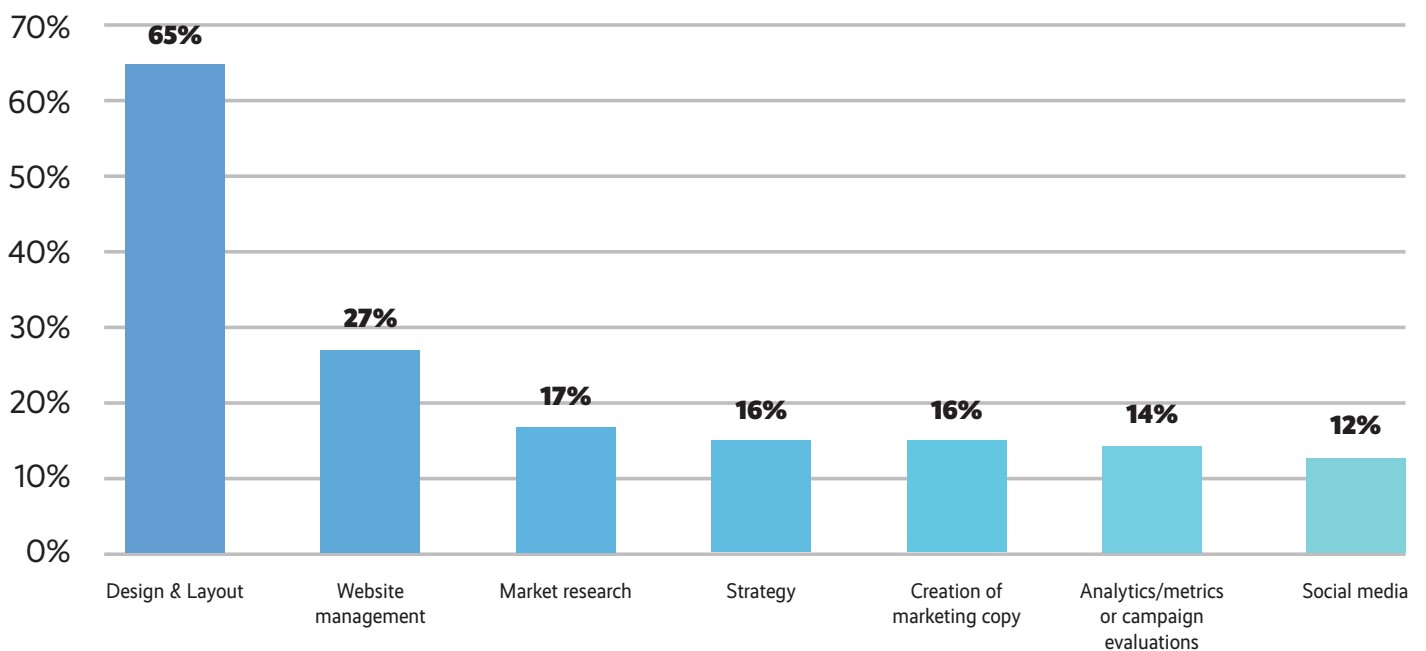




Among park and recreation agencies that *do* use third-party resources to support their marketing and communications activities, most utilize those resources for at least some of their graphic design work including the layout of advertising, catalogs and other printed and online marketing collateral. Two-thirds of agencies that use third-party marketing resources outsource at least some of their graphic design work. Less common outsourced marketing and communications activities include:

- Website management (cited by 27 percent of respondents)
- Market research (17 percent)
- Strategy (16 percent)
- Marketing copy creation (16 percent)
- Analytics/metrics/evaluation of campaigns (14 percent)
- Social media (12 percent)

**Park and Recreation Agencies Most Frequently Engage a Third-Party Resource for Design and Layout of Marketing and Communications Materials**  
 (Percent of Agencies that Use Third-Party Resources)



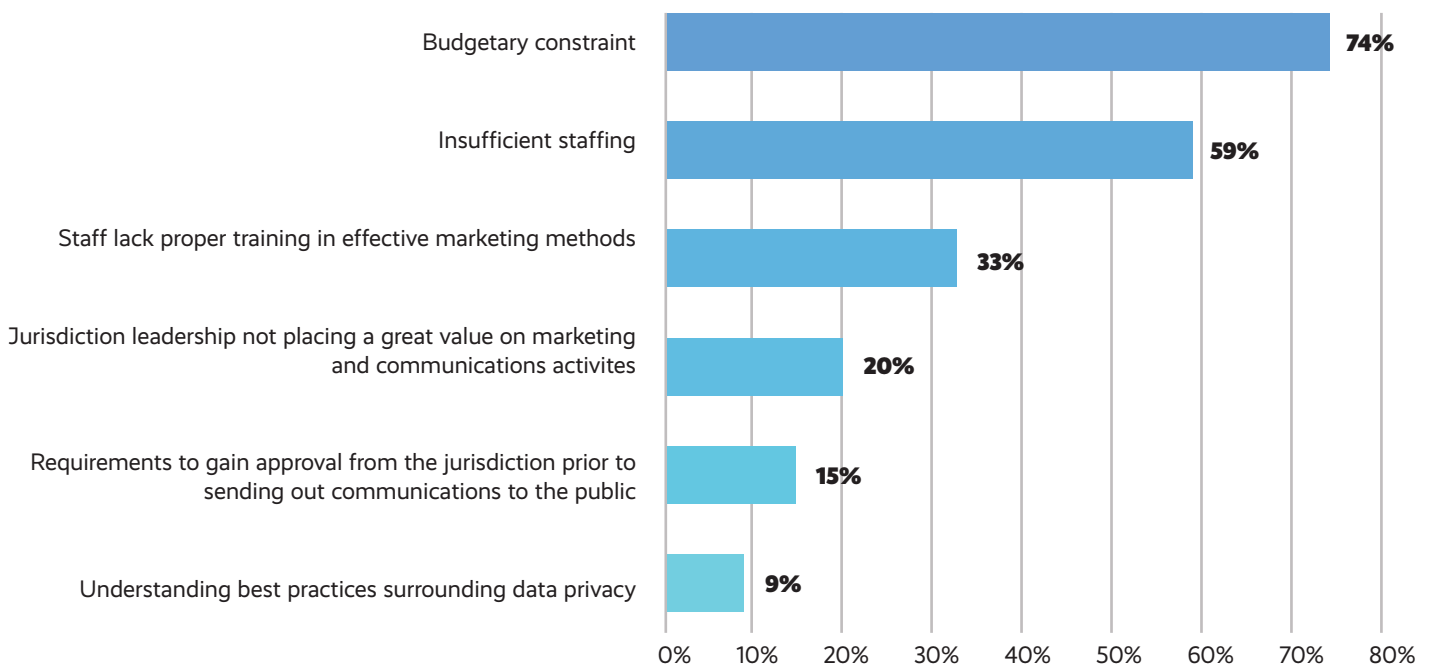


## Marketing and Communications Challenges

Most park and recreation professionals face challenges that keep their agencies from reaping the full benefits of a well-designed and executed marketing and communications strategy. One of the biggest challenges centers on a lack of resources and training. Three-quarters of park and recreation professionals indicate their agency faces budgetary constraints that keep their marketing strategies from being more successful. Similarly, 59 percent of survey respondents report their agency has insufficient staff dedicated to marketing and communications efforts. The lack of resources may reflect, among other things, their jurisdiction’s leadership—mayor, council members, county executives—who may not place great importance on the agency’s marketing needs (reported by 20 percent of agencies).

Park and recreation leaders also are seeking more training for their staff (and perhaps themselves) in the area of marketing and communications. A third of survey respondents indicates their staff lack proper training in effective marketing efforts and nine percent are seeking greater understanding of the issues surrounding data privacy.

**Park and Recreation Agencies’ Marketing Activities Strain from Insufficient Budgets and Staffing**  
(Percent of Agencies Reporting Challenge)



## Conclusions

Park and recreation agencies bring a wealth of opportunities to their cities, towns and counties that promote improved physical health, a lasting relationship with nature and a vibrant connection to every member of a community. But these same agencies face challenges in reaching a public that is time-starved and has more choices than ever for recreation and physical activity. In today’s competitive marketplace, park and recreation leaders must increase the public’s awareness of their agencies’ offerings, not only to build upon fee revenues but also to build public support for sustainable agency funding.

The *NRPA Park and Recreation Marketing and Communications Report* reveals that most agencies execute marketing and communications strategies with very limited resources. A median of two percent of annual operating budgets and perhaps one or two employees are focused on marketing. At the same time, social media and email have lowered significantly the costs and turnaround time to execute successful marketing efforts and can be particularly effective in reaching every member of the community an agency serves. Taking further advantage of these tools and working more closely with outside partners to distribute marketing and communications messages can help park and recreation agencies work through the clutter of the marketplace and deliver on their promise to enhance the quality of life for all people.

