



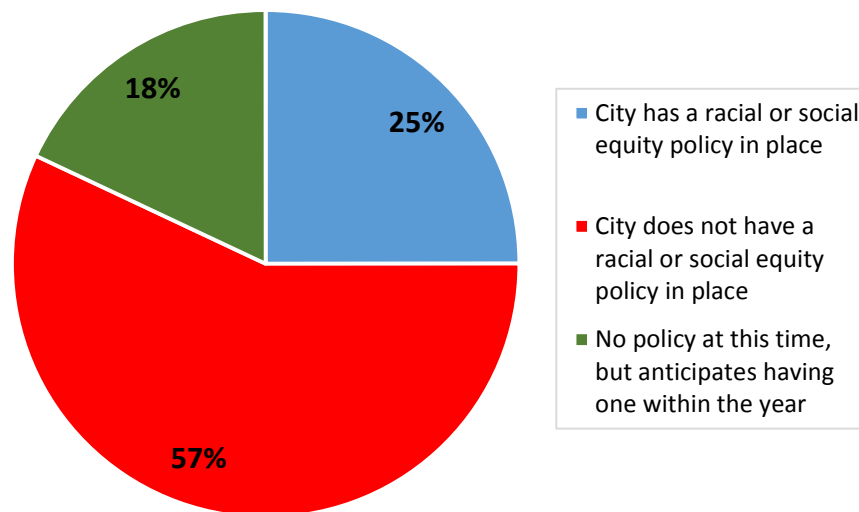
## Promoting Racial and Social Equity at Park and Recreation Agencies NRPA Research Survey Findings

Prior to the August 2016 NRPA Innovation Lab in Portland, the NRPA Research team surveyed park and recreation directors from urban and large suburban agencies about efforts to promote greater racial and social equity. The survey results find that even though most park and recreation professionals indicate that there is significant urgency within their cities to promote greater equity, just one in four agencies (and the cities in which they serve) currently have a racial and/or social equity policy in place. Park and recreation agencies utilize a number of tactics to advance equity, including partnerships with community groups, collecting/analyzing data that drive change, and developing tools and frameworks that evaluate policies through an equity lens. In addition, three in five agencies have conducted racial and/or social equity training for the management team and staff.

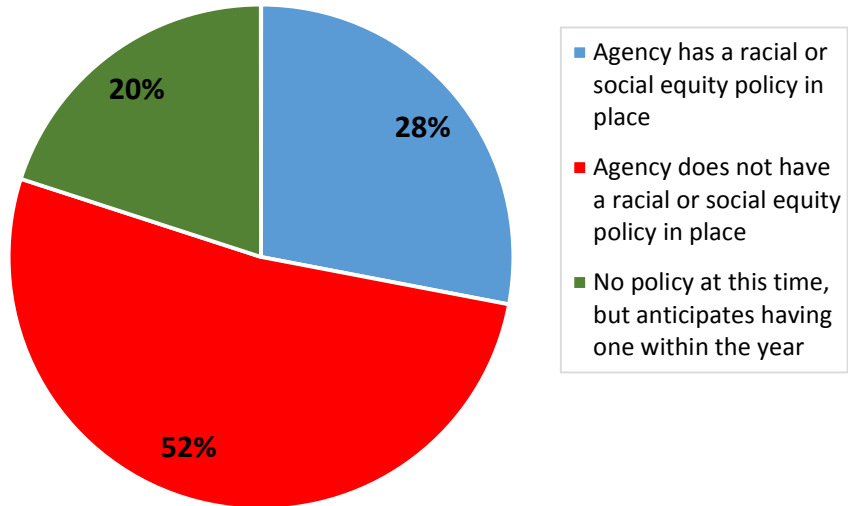
Most cities and most park & recreation agencies currently do not have racial or social equity policies that would assist in the evaluation of policies and services offerings. Most also do not anticipate putting a racial/equity policy in place in the coming year either. At this time:

- 25% of cities have a racial/social policy in place
- 28% of park and recreation agencies have a racial/social policy in place
- After combining the data from the two questions, only a third of survey respondents said that either their city or their agency had a racial/social equity policy in place.

**Cities with Racial/Social Equity Policies**  
(Percentage Distribution)

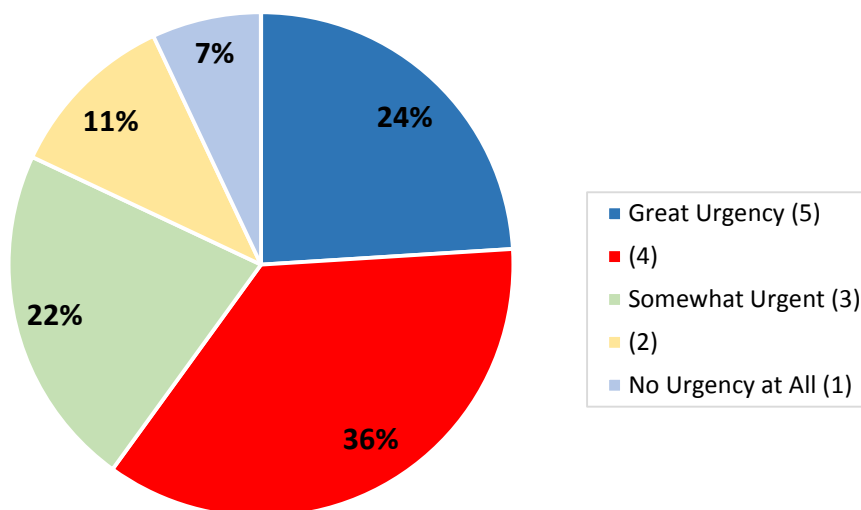


**Park & Recreation Agencies  
with Racial/Social Equity Policies**  
(Percentage Distribution)

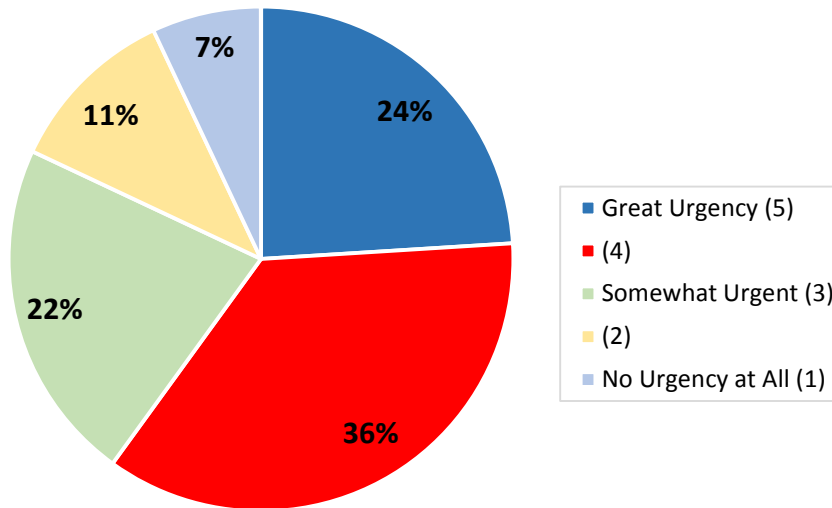


There is a relative dearth of racial and social equity policies despite a general urgency among cities and agencies to stimulate greater equity. Three in five park and recreation agency directors report that there is significant urgency within their city to take actions and make changes that promote greater equity. Slightly fewer respondents (56 percent) indicate there being the same urgency at their agencies. On the flip side, 18 percent of park and recreation agency directors indicate that there is little-to-no urgency at either their city or at their agency.

**Urgency Within City to Take Actions/Make Changes  
that Promote Greater Equity**  
(Percentage Distribution)



## Urgency Within Park & Recreation Agencies to Take Actions/Make Changes that Promote Greater Equity (Percentage Distribution)

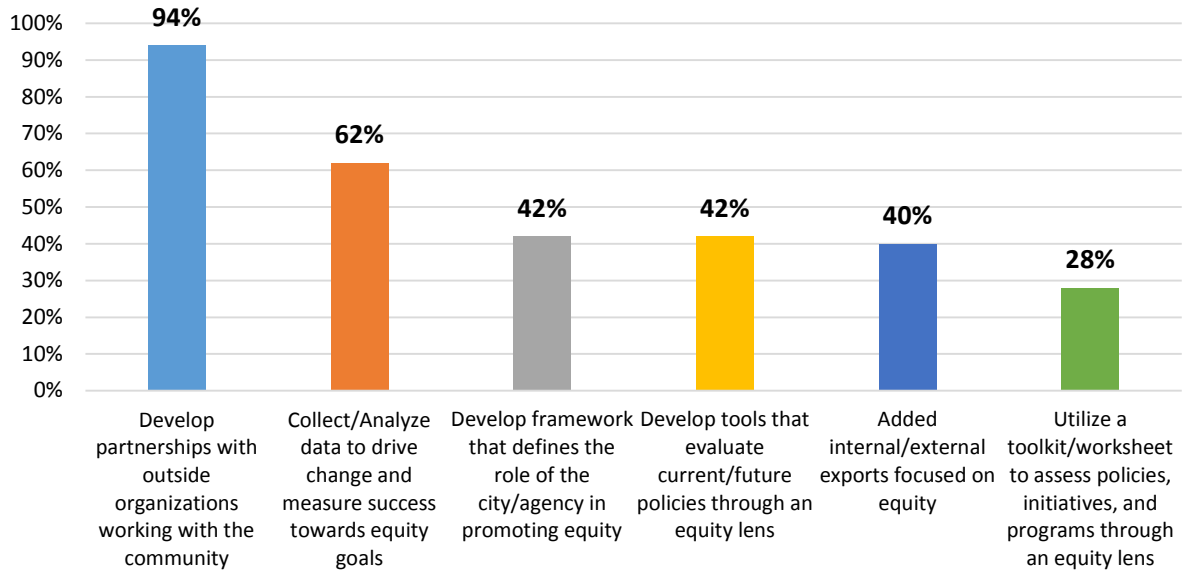


Cities and their park & recreation agencies embrace a number of tactics to advance racial/social equity in their communities. These include:

- Developing partnerships with outside organizations working within the community (94 percent)
- Collecting/analyzing data to drive change and to measure success towards equity goals (62 percent)
- Develop a framework that defines the role of the city/agency in promoting equity (42 percent)
- Developing tools that evaluate current/future policies through an equity lens (42 percent)
- Adding internal/external experts (including staff and consultants) that are focused on equity issues (40 percent)
- Utilizing a toolkit/worksheet to assess policies, initiatives, and programs through an equity lens (28 percent).

## Tactics Used by Cities and Park & Recreation Agencies to Advance Racial and/or Social Equity

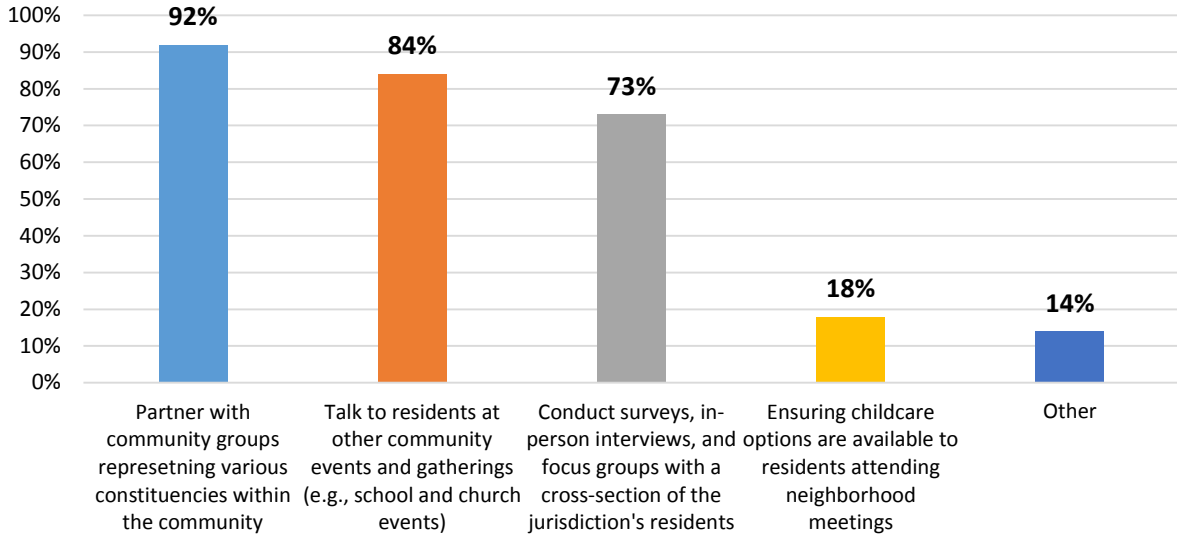
(Percent of Agencies)



Park and recreation agencies employ a number of strategies to ensure all members of their communities participate in the engagement process. Most agencies work with community groups to reach these different constituencies (92 percent) and/or attend other community events and gatherings (such as, school and church events) to talk to members of their community (85 percent). Another effective method to generate greater community engagement used by many agencies is collecting direct feedback from the residents of their community (73 percent). This can be through surveys, in-person interviews, and focus groups.

## Community Engagement Strategies Used by Park & Recreation Agencies to Ensure All Residents Participate

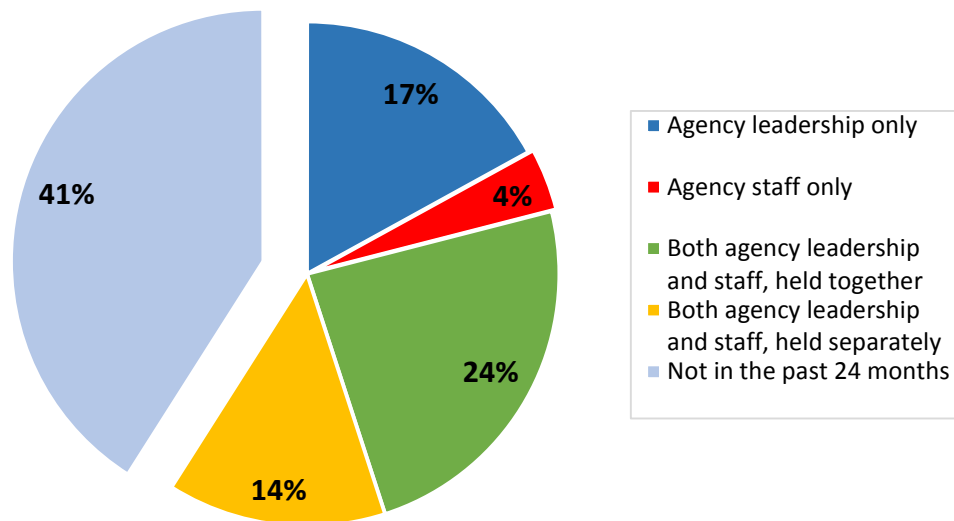
(Percent of Agencies)



Beyond external efforts noted above, park and recreation agencies work with their internal teams to raise greater awareness of the role they play in the promotion of equity. A majority of survey respondents report that their park and recreation agency have conducted some form of racial/social equity training for their leadership team, their staff or both within the past two years. Most of these agencies have held equity training for both their leadership and staff, although in some cases the two groups participated in separate training sessions.

## Agencies that Have Held Racial/Social Equity Training for Leadership and Staff within the Past 24 Months

(Percentage Distribution)



Park and recreation agency directors offered a number of examples of projects, policies or program where their agency made a difference in terms of promoting greater racial and/or social equity.

2nd Grade Swim. Teaching all 2nd Graders throughout the city how to swim
Adoption of an ordinance that uses a criteria based system with a focus on racial and economic equity, for capital investments in neighborhood parks
Playground project, which created both a new playground that is of high value location to the Hmong community, as well as a new fully accessible playground as well. Required a policy change.
Clean and Safe Spaces (CLASS) Parks Program. Budgeted program that adds both maintenance and recreational services to more than 30 of our Recreation Centers in underserved communities.
Fee assistance policy ensuring all programs are affordable.
Improving facilities to meet and exceed ADA requirements in addition to partnering with faith based groups to include programs that benefit all.
Internally focused policy reviews are conducted regularly.
It is one of our Departments "Guiding Principles" for programs, services and planning.
Latino Institute program has been in existence in our department for the past 16 years. It is a way for our department to bring city, county and state resources to all citizens within our city to educate on all the services available to them in a fun environment.
Minority and Woman Owned Business inclusion in contract services and supplies.
Neighbors helping Neighbors Program that involves the policing and oversight of neighborhoods by neighborhood residents where they are also responsible in assisting the less fortunate.
Our mission statement and placing social equity as a primary driver in all that we do.
Our new Parks District Initiative "Get Moving" as we used members from the community (Hispanic, East African, Laotian) to get our information out and engaged them in RFP process early on, set up focus group meetings with each group to assist with application
Our work with young people and families who reside in public housing developments.
Outdoor Adventures Program seeks to provide outdoor recreation opportunities to youth, in communities that might not otherwise have an opportunity. Boating, fishing, hikes, nature play, etc.
Park Partners- internal grants program to stimulate innovative equity-oriented partnerships.
Parks Department Master Plan
Recreation Program Plan and centralized Hiring processes have insured fair distribution of programs and facilities and that we are hiring diverse and qualified staff
Safe Summer Initiative Grant (SSIG) Since 2008, the Mayor and City Council have annually approved funding for the Safe Summer Initiative Grant (SSIG) program. The intent of the SSIG program is to provide or enhance recreational and/or educational opportunities not normally available to high-risk and gang-impacted youth during the summer months, therefore

providing a safe environment for participants while keeping them active and engaged.
Second year of a community outreach program featuring "Parks on the GO" van where we bring park programming into communities.
Swimming Pools, spray grounds and outdoor recreation Seasonal staffing is reflective of our communities
We recently adopted its first Internal Diversity Development Plan. We also adopted the Community Outreach Roadmap earlier this year.
We have a number of programs that allow us to offer low or no cost recreation programs in our underserved communities. Our CLASS Parks Teen Program and our Girls Play LA Sports Program assist with being able to offer recreational activities in communities where cost is a major factor.
We provide opportunity to all as part of our core vision, mission and values.
Wonderful Assistant Director that is leading the charge
Workplace Culture Pricing programs to promote access for all social strata and groups to recreate together.
Youth 360 Learn to Swim
Budgeting, programming, maintenance equity in the less fortunate areas of town.
Our philosophy is to serve the WHOLE community. Equity is inherent in everything we do
Park dedication policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decreased rates for pools in low income areas (Wells and BMI pools) to encourage use of the pools by lower income users</li> <li>• The city has a goal of a park within a half mile of every resident. People with easy access to recreation facilities and parks are more physically active and less likely to be overweight or obese than those without access to such facilities.</li> <li>• The Healthy Henderson program which is the City's innovative fitness, health and wellness program that encourages people to get fit and stay healthy.</li> <li>• The city offers financial assistance for select recreation programs to those who qualify.</li> <li>• Senior Dimensions Benefits is a fitness benefit available to Senior Dimensions members.</li> </ul>

While many park and recreation agencies have been successful in designing and implementing policies and programs that advance equity in their communities, most also face challenges that have prevented greater success. As noted below, a lack of funding and resources are among these many challenges.

Additional funding and resources
Developing a nurturing environment in which the covers action can take place.
Dollars & Education
Finances
Funding
Funding and not understanding the issues behind the barriers of equity.
Funding is always a challenge Staff Training...drilling down to front line staff to be sure they understand and are respectful while enforcing rules and regulations
I believe the greatest challenge lies with change management. The internal diversity

development plan will change the way our agency operates from within. Getting employees on board with the changes will be difficult.
In most cases it is funding and staffing to subsidize the activities.
Lack of adult engagement in most underserved communities.
Lack of education and understanding.
Lack of funds
Lack of inclusion and advertising opportunities for advancing an equity agenda.
Lack of knowledge and awareness on the part of leadership.
Lack of knowledge on this subject. Needs to be tied to a larger strategic goal of inclusiveness.
Lack of staffing/facilities to meet the growing challenges.
More funding is needed to offer scholarships to subsidize recreational programs. Programs need to be very inexpensive or free to obtain greater participation.
Mostly in response to economic downturns, we've done a great job of becoming very revenue- and fee-focused. As a result, we've created significant equity and access challenges as the overwhelming majority of our programs are fee-based.
Not enough staff who primary focus is equity; clear direction is needed, especially changes to hiring practices citywide
Not having one.
Political agendas can play a role.
Political direction on most important priorities.
Reduced Board support for funding these initiatives.
Resource constraints on maintaining low prices. Resource constraints on ensuring that facilities are located in an easily accessible spot for all groups. Equitable access for therapeutic recreation is challenge as well.
The demographics of our city is more affluent than most surrounding cities. The needs of the less affluent are often overlooked. We have been working hard to create programs to help this population.
The huge size of the county and daunting number of areas with equity disproportionality
The need to redefine what responsiveness looks like in communities that are historically over represented in the decision making process.
Waiting on overall city efforts. New Equity Officer should be on board in a month or so.
Not seen as local problem
Politics
We cover multiple jurisdictions, we are a region that is racially polarized - educating my board and staff on what the grass root issues are is a challenge. People are too quick to judge

**About the survey:**

The NRPA research team conducted a brief eight question survey on racial and social equity activities at park and recreation agencies during July 19-29, 2016. The survey was sent to 430 directors at urban and large suburban agencies and generated 60 responses, equal to a 14 percent response rate.