

# ***Parks & Prosperity: Drivers of Economic Vitality***



Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

# Agenda

1. Welcome & Session 1 Recap
2. Plenary Presentations
  - National Economic Data and Trends for Parks and Outdoor Recreation- *Jennifer Clinton, Senior Parks and Conservation Economist, TPL*
  - Workforce Development Opportunities and Resources for P&R Agencies- *Garrett Warfield, Chief Research and Impact Officer, NRPA*
3. Q&A
4. Breakout Rooms
5. Closing



# What We Heard

- Across the U.S, city park systems generated nearly **\$218 billion in economic activity**. U.S. cities with growing economies, regardless of size or location, are investing more in parks and open spaces on a per-acre and per-capita basis.
- Cities that invest in parks and open spaces attract a **diverse workforce** and, in turn, businesses, **employment opportunities**, and **real estate development** that contribute to improved quality-of-life in cities.
- **Staff capacity** is a major hindrance to leveraging the potential benefits of parks. Most agencies are just trying to stay afloat and are not seeing significant levels of investment from outside actors.





# Parks, Outdoor Recreation, & the Economics of Employment

Community of Practice: Economic Vitality

Jennifer Clinton  
Senior Parks and Conservation Economist

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# Key Takeaways

- Expanding the definition of economic benefits of parks and recreation
- How parks and recreation contribute to economic growth through workforce development
- Estimating the economic development benefits of outdoor recreation



# Measuring Economic Impact

## Direct

*Spending by producers/consumers in the economy because of a policy or activity change*

## Indirect

*Spending between businesses as a result of the direct spending*

## Induced

*Spending by people employed by those businesses*



# Measuring Economic Impact

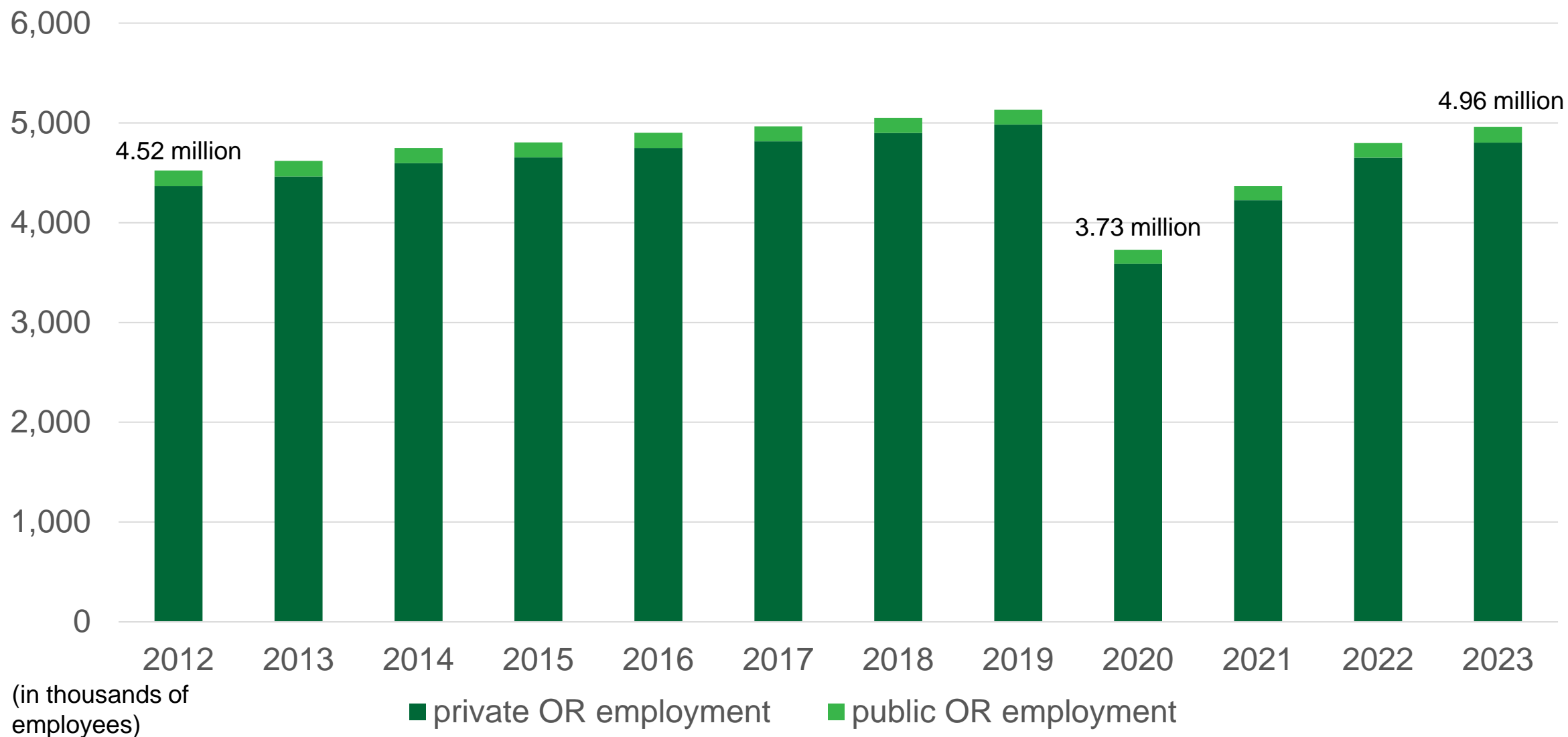
- Creating a new water park
  - *Direct: visitors pay for tickets, parking, and concessions when they go to the park*
  - *Indirect: park owner purchases sprayground equipment, surfacing, cleaning supplies, and more*
  - *Induced: park employees are paid in exchange for their work, which they in turn spend on rent, food, and other household needs*
- Increasing the price of ski lift tickets
  - *Direct: visitors pay the increased price of ski lift tickets*
  - *Indirect: the increased revenue is spent on chair lift upgrades and new rental equipment*
  - *Induced: employees at the ski mountain spend their wages on rent, food, and other household needs*

# Outdoor Recreation's Economic Impact

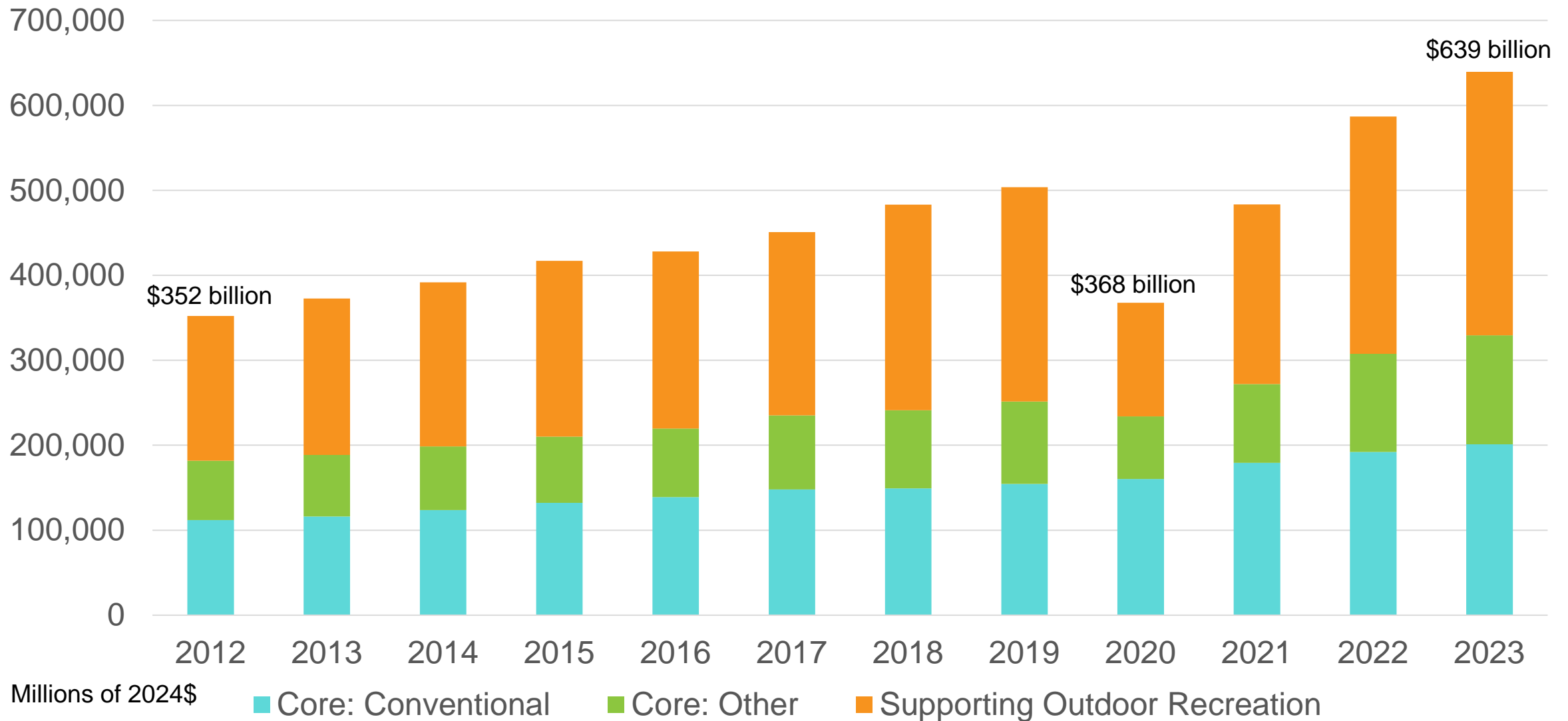
- U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis analyzes the economic impact of outdoor recreation at the national and state level: <https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>
- Four values:
  - Value add (contribution to GDP)
  - Gross outputs
  - Compensation
  - employment
- Three levels of analysis:
  - Core Outdoor Recreation Activities
    - *Biking, boating, fishing, climbing, equestrian, hunting, ATVing, RVing, recreational flying, motorcycling, and snow activities*
  - Other Outdoor Recreation Activities
    - *Amusement parks, festivals, sporting events, concerts, field sports, golf/tennis, guided tours, gardening*
  - Supporting Outdoor Recreation Activities
    - *Construction, local trips and travel, food/beverage lodging/shopping associated with recreation travel, transportation, government spending*



# Outdoor Recreation Employment (US BEA)



# Outdoor Recreation Value Add (US BEA)



| Core Outdoor Recreation  |  | Supporting Outdoor Recreation  |
|--|--|--|
| Conventional   | Other  |  |
| Bicycling  | Amusement parks and water parks                        | Construction   |
| Boating and Fishing: Canoeing, Kayaking, Fishing, Sailing, Other Boating | Festivals, sporting events, and concerts               | Local trips and travel   |
| Climbing, hiking, and tent camping                                       | Field sports   | Trips and travel: food/beverage, lodging, shopping/souvenirs, transportation |
| Equestrian   | Game areas (including golf and tennis)                 | Government expenditures (federal, state/local)                               |
| Hunting, Shooting, and Trapping  | Guided tours and outfitted travel (air/land and water) |  |
| Motorcycling and ATVing  | Productive activities (including gardening)            |  |
| Recreational Flying  | Other outdoor recreation activities                    |  |
| Fving  | Multi-use apparel and accessories (other)              |  |
| Snow Activities: Skiing, Snowboarding, Other                             |  |  |
| Other conventional activities  |  |  |
| Multi-use apparel and accessories for conventional activities            |  |  |

# Example: Youth Sports' Economic Impact

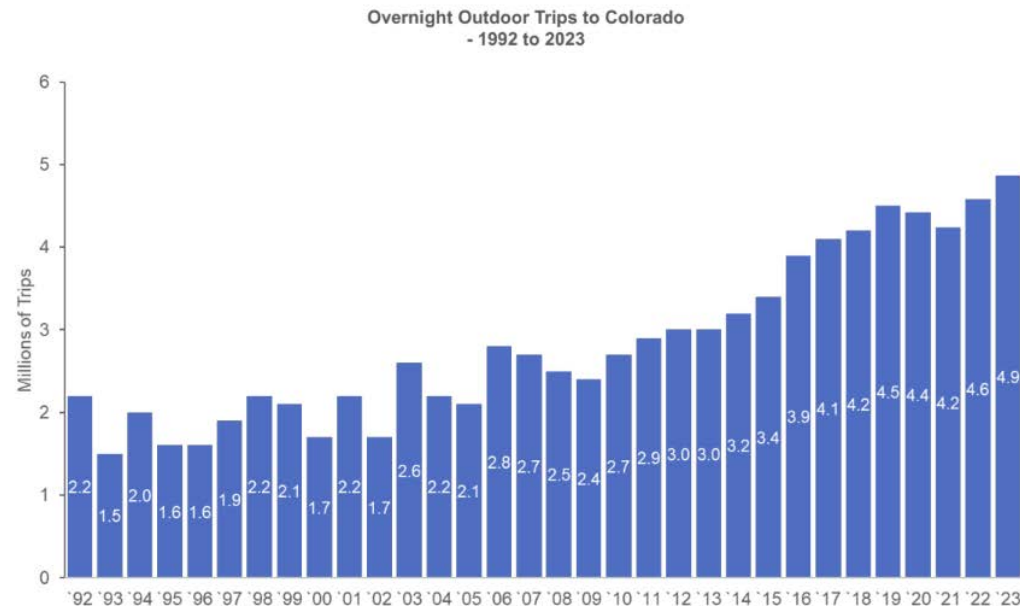
- Sports ETA (trade association for the sports events and tourism industry) publishes data on the economic impact of adult and youth amateur events and collegiate tournaments (not professional sports, college regular season)
- **Sports travelers spent \$52.5 billion in 2023, including:**
  - **\$13.5 billion on transportation**
  - **\$10.9 billion on lodging**
  - **\$9.7 billion on food and beverages**
- Top ten states by economic impact:
  - Florida, Texas, California, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, New York, Tennessee, Georgia, Virginia
- Report available at <https://research.sportseta.org/industry-reports/>

# Example: State-level Tourism Data

- Many states' tourism agencies work with consultants to estimate the economic impact of domestic and international visitation
- Survey data may include questions about outdoor recreation or visiting nature
- Example: Colorado Tourism Office publishes Visitor Profiles:

Size and Structure of Colorado's Travel Market

Base: Overnight Outdoor Person-Trips





# PARKS & REC WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING AND SKILLS-BASED TALENT PRACTICES

Garrett Warfield, PhD  
Chief Research & Impact Officer



NATIONAL  
RECREATION AND PARK  
ASSOCIATION

# ABOUT NRPA



The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is the leading not-for-profit organization dedicated to building strong, vibrant and resilient communities through the power of parks and recreation. With more than 60,000 members, NRPA advances this mission by investing in and championing the work of park and recreation professionals and advocates — the catalysts for positive change in service of equity, climate-readiness, and overall health and well-being. For more information, visit [www.nrpa.org](http://www.nrpa.org). For digital access to NRPA's flagship publication, *Parks & Recreation*, visit [parksandrecreation.org](http://parksandrecreation.org).





# Celebrating Our Successes in 2024



We hosted the largest  
NRPA Annual Conference to date,  
with **521 exhibiting companies**  
and **more than 8,300 attendees**.



NRPA reached  
**68,000**  
members.

NRPA's new Equity in Practice  
Certificate Program  
welcomed more than **165 participants** —  
**88% completed Equity Action Plans**.



NRPA invested  
**\$3.9 million** in  
**136 communities**.



With support from the CDC,  
NRPA trained more than  
**165 instructors**  
to implement arthritis  
programming, improving the  
health and well-being of more than  
**8,500 individuals**.



More than  
**2 million people**  
were reached through  
NRPA grant and  
partnership programs.



NRPA launched the first  
Sustainability in Practice  
cohort with **10 park agencies**  
and **community partners** to  
advance resilience through parks.



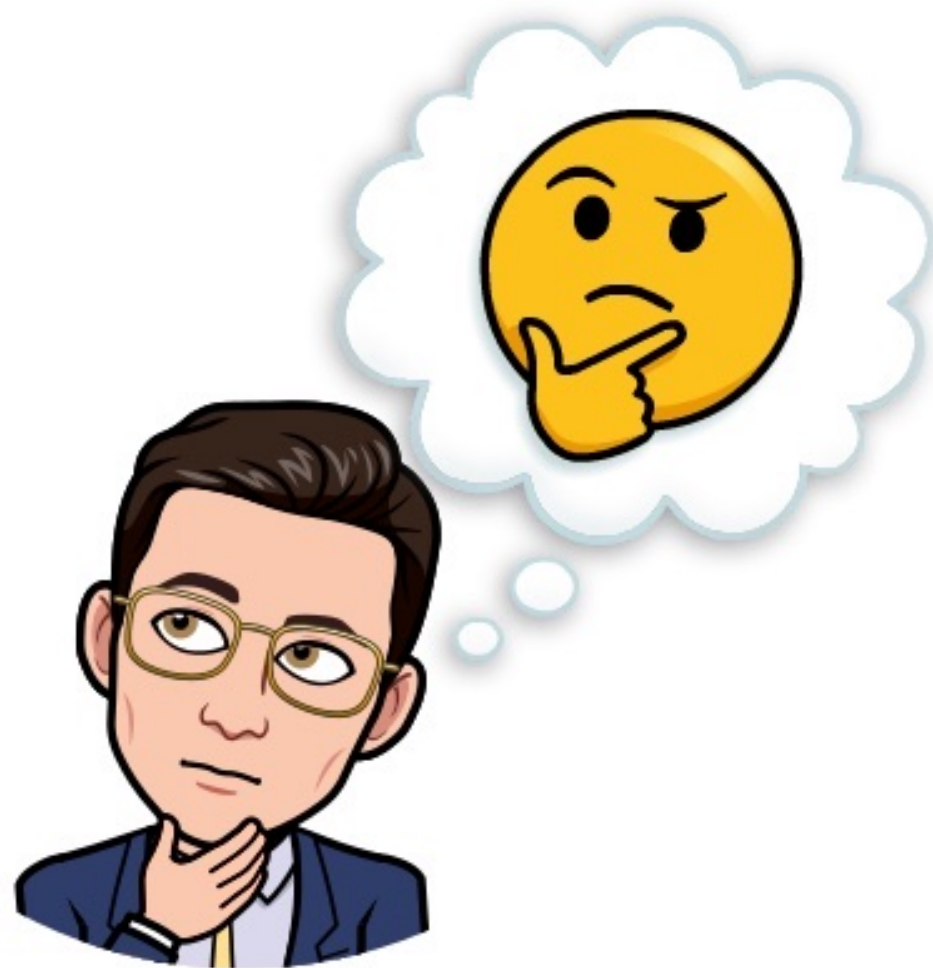
# IN 10-ish MINUTES, WE WILL HAVE

1. A stronger case for the importance of Parks & Rec workforce development for our agencies, communities, and the nation as a whole
2. Explored two areas of workforce development at the agency level: a) workforce direct service programming, and b) talent practices and professional development opportunities for Parks & Rec professionals
3. Access to free resources to guide your own ongoing research and investments in workforce development
4. Some easy ways to opt into more info or support from NRPA for workforce development investments and efforts









# DEMONSTRATED IMPACT: PACE EVALUATION



Research shows **Year Up's earnings impacts are the largest reported to date** for workforce programs tested by gold-standard RCTs.

## SUSTAINED EARNINGS GAINS

**30%** Wage gain at six years after graduation.

## PROTECTIVE EFFECTS AGAINST ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

Earnings gains persisted for Year Up group during economic downturn. Greater access to **quality jobs in IT, Business, and Finance** was key to maintaining or increasing pre-pandemic earnings.

## UNPRECEDENTED SOCIETAL BENEFITS

**\$2.46** Net benefits to society for every \$1 invested in Year Up. \$100M investment could generate a return of \$246M.

## LARGE CUMULATIVE EARNINGS IMPACTS FOR ALL SUBGROUPS

**Cumulative earnings impacts** were large and significant for all subgroups (e.g., age, gender, race/ethnicity, geography, etc.)



A person with dreadlocks and safety glasses is using a power sander on a wooden chair frame. The image is overlaid with a teal tint. The text "Why Parks & Recreation Workforce Development Matters" is centered over the image.

# Why Parks & Recreation Workforce Development Matters

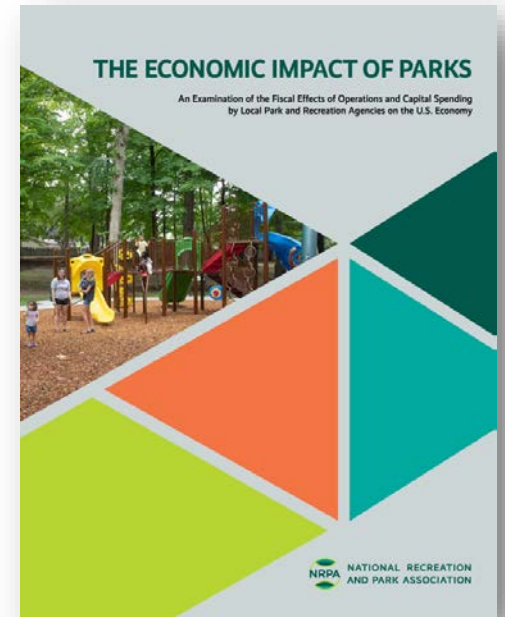


# 1. Local Activity with Massive Economic Scale

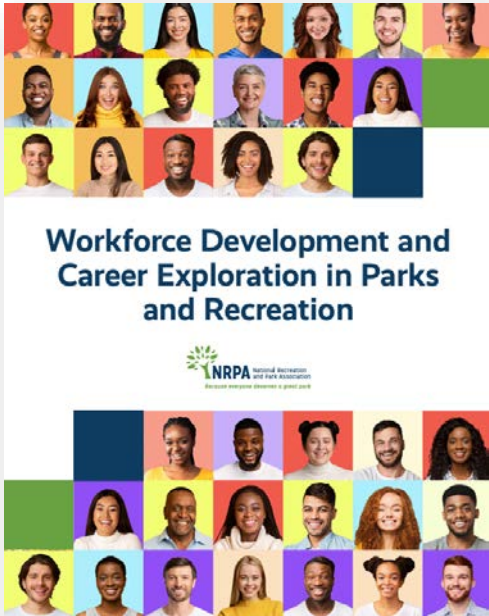
Even if we look specifically at local P&R agencies, including inside community and rec centers but excluding purchases of apparel, equipment, etc. related to outdoor festivals and broader commercial activities, P&R workforce has massive scale and broad economic impact.

In 2021, **10,000+** local P&R agencies...

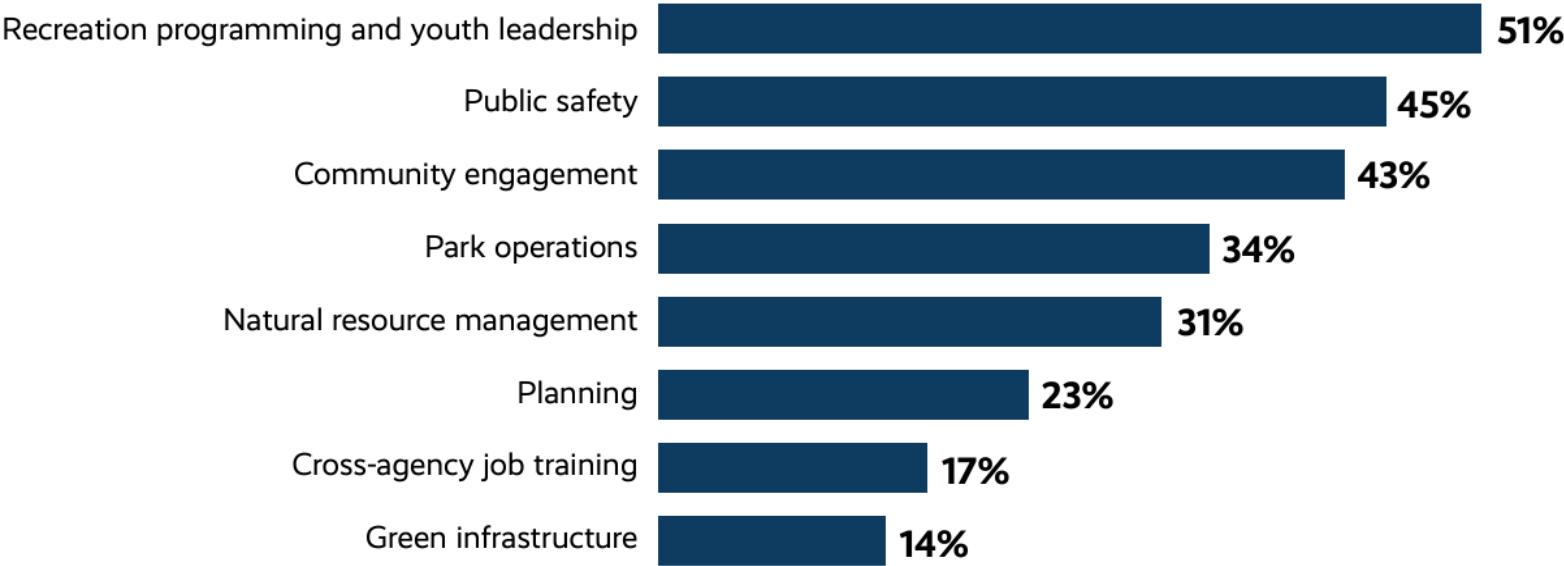
- Employed **326,000** full- and part-time employees,
- Translating to **\$41 billion** in operations
- Contributing to over **\$200 billion** in economic activity



# 2. Nurture Pipeline of Future Leaders in P&R and Beyond



**Park and Recreation Agencies Expose Youth and Young Adults to a Wide Range of Jobs**  
(Percent of Agencies That Currently Offer a Workforce Development/Career Exploration Program)























































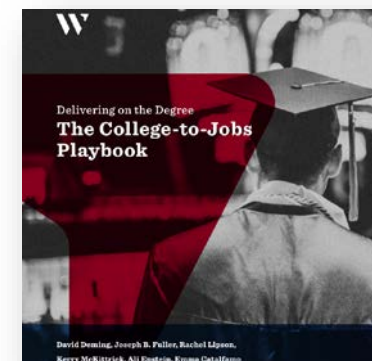


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# Workforce Practices and Resources: Direct Service Programs & Employer Talent Practices

# The Baker's Dozen: Evidence-based Program Elements

| Intervention Category            | Research Prevalence   | Research Strength   | Implementation Prevalence   | Implementation Feasibility  | Intervention Category                | Research Prevalence   | Research Strength   | Implementation Prevalence   | Implementation Feasibility  |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Career coaching                  |    |    |    |    | Last-mile bootcamps                  |    |    |    |    |
| Cohort programming               |    |    |    |    | Internships                          |    |    |    |    |
| Career pathways initiatives      |    |    |    |    | Job shadowing                        |    |    |    |    |
| Career mentorship Programs       |    |    |    |    | Co-ops                               |    |    |    |    |
| Career readiness curriculum      |   |   |   |   | Apprenticeships                      |   |   |   |   |
| Experiential learning coursework |  |  |  |  | Subsidized youth employment programs |  |  |  |  |
| Industry-recognized credentials  |  |  |  |  |                                      |   |   |   |   |



# EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS

## WHAT DO THEY HAVE IN COMMON?

### Incorporate Community Voice

Agencies **co-create programs** to reflect the needs of their communities and regularly seek input, especially from youth and young adults.



*Louisville, KY*

### Emphasize Real Work-based Learning Experiences (Internships, On-the-job Training)

Among all program elements, **arguably the most impactful are real-world, hands-on training experiences**. These include (ideally) paid internships with agencies or other employer partners with relevant training and talent needs. Well-structured internship opportunities have the potential to convert into full-time jobs after the program.



**CA-RE**  
Career Awareness  
Related Experience  
*Columbia, MO*

### Implement High Program Standards



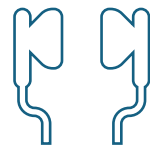
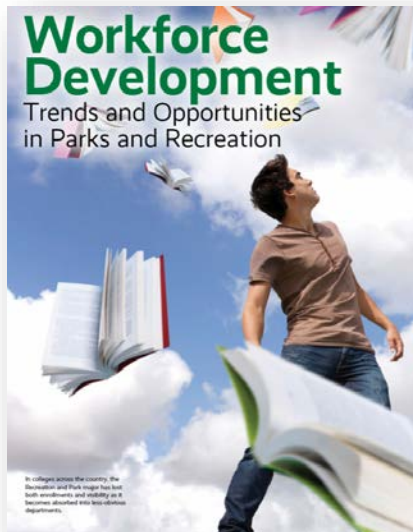


# Undeniable Workforce Challenges and Opportunities

- **Trends:** competitive labor market, shortage of willing workers for public sector jobs, low visibility of some P&R degree programs
- **Opportunities:** recruit talent from reputable independent or homegrown sectoral training, community-based, and certificate programs

**70 Million** U.S. workers are skilled through alternative routes outside college, including:

- **50%** of all workers in the U.S.
- **66%** of rural workers
- **61%** of Veteran workers
- **>50%** of Black and Hispanic workers



# Skills-first Strategies and Measures

## Skills and experience > sector-specific degree requirements to attract:

- talent from non-traditional backgrounds outside of conventional higher ed
- experienced professionals from other sectors outside of P&R

**Important:** These strategies complement and do not replace college pathways (“both/and”)

| Key questions about skills-based strategies  | Suggested metric to analyze biannually   |
|--|--|
| Practice adoption  |  |
| 1. Are we <b>expanding access to opportunity at our company</b> for job seekers?                                   | #, % and % change of total job postings that do not require a 4-year degree or bachelor's equivalent   |
| 2. Are we <b>actually hiring more people based on skills</b> ?   | % of new hires without a 4-year degree or bachelor's equivalent out of total job postings that do not require a 4-year degree or bachelor's equivalent |
| 3. Are we <b>diversifying our sourcing partners</b> and creating pathways into our company for non degree-holders? | % of entry-level hires coming from internship, apprenticeship or other work-based experience programs that do not require a 4-year degree              |
| 4. Are we <b>investing in scaling our skills-based strategy</b> ?  | \$, % and % change of total HR budget allocation for non-traditional talent pipeline development/sourcing  |



A person with dreadlocks and safety glasses is using a power sander on a wooden chair frame. The image is overlaid with a teal tint. The text "Take Action" is centered in white.

Take Action



# Get Involved with NRPA



## Tell Your Story, Learn from Others

Learn from other P&R leaders or consider sharing your workforce development story with us through **OPENS**pace, the official blog and podcast of NRPA.



## Up to \$20k Agency Stipend for Rural WFD Community of Practice Members

**Rural agencies with populations <50k** are invited to apply to our 12-month community of practice with technical support for agency WFD. **Applications open February 10<sup>th</sup>!**



## Professional Development for your teams

Want more skills-based WFD opportunities? Check out NRPA's industry-leading **CPRP**, **CPRE** and education programs serving early-career, managers, & executives.



# CONNECT



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[www.nrpa.org](http://www.nrpa.org)

General questions about NRPA products,  
services, and membership benefits

[customerservice@nrpa.org](mailto:customerservice@nrpa.org)

Questions specifically for Garrett or about  
NRPA's Research & Evaluation insights

[gwarfield@nrpa.org](mailto:gwarfield@nrpa.org)



# Q&A





# Breakout Rooms

*20 minutes*

- **Icebreaker-** What partnerships are you leveraging for talent acquisition and recruitment? What have been some successes and challenges in examining these partnerships?
- **Reflecting on the plenary presentations-** Have you done any economic analysis of workforce development and parks? If so, what data and tools are you currently using?
- **Closing -** What challenges are missing from today's conversation that you currently grapple with to improve the connection between economic vitality and your work, both directly and indirectly?





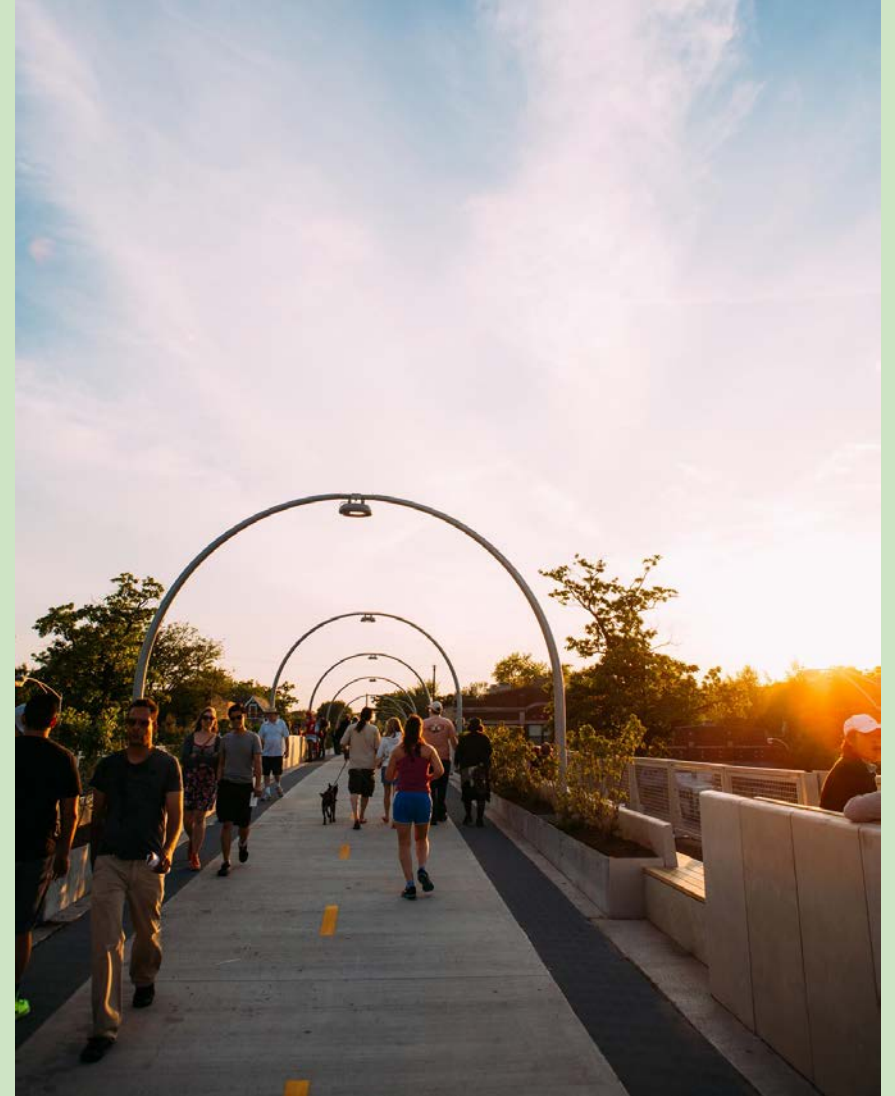
# Welcome Back!

Please share your feedback in the exit ticket.



# Series Dates & Topics

- **November 6-** Parks & Prosperity: Drivers of Economic Vitality
- **January 15-** Mobilizing Parks as Employment Magnets
- ➔ • **March 5-** Making Spaces into Places ←
- **May 7-** Stimulating Tourism & Local Economies
- **July 9-** Parks Beyond Boundaries: Strategies for Inclusive Growth







Since 1972, TPL has protected 4 million acres of public land; created 5,364 parks, trails, schoolyards, and iconic outdoor places; raised \$93 billion in public funding for parks and public lands; and connected nearly 9.4 million people to the outdoors.

To learn more, visit [tpl.org](https://tpl.org).

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

# Thank you!

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