



Engaging Diverse Youth in Park Programs

Examples from Golden Gate National Recreation Area
and Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

2015

INSTITUTE
AT THE GOLDEN GATE

OVERVIEW

THE DIVERSITY CHALLENGE

With the population of the United States rapidly diversifying, the National Park Service (NPS) faces a major challenge. Neither NPS staff nor park visitors fully reflect the demographics of our changing country. In a 2008-2009 survey, people who identify as Latino made up 13% of the general population survey sample, but only 9% of the group that had visited a national park in the last two years. Similarly, those who identify as African American made up 12% of the general population, but only 7% of park visitors.¹

A CALL TO ACTION

The NPS is aware of this challenge and Director Jon Jarvis' recent *Call to Action* asks parks to “welcome and engage diverse communities through culturally relevant park stories and experiences that are accessible to all.”² This effort is not limited to ethnic diversity; it includes more effectively engaging economically disadvantaged communities, those of differing physical abilities, potential visitors of all ages, and populations that generally lack access to our national parks. Additionally, many park partners and other organizations are working passionately to improve park access for all.³

This challenge presents an opportunity for parks in urban areas to lead change. Unlike remote parks that require significant expenditures of time and money to visit, these parks are often already located near a diverse range of communities and can address questions of relevance and inclusion more directly.

IDENTIFYING BEST PRACTICE

This report highlights programs that have successfully engaged new audiences at two specific parks, both in urban areas. In Golden Gate National Recreation Area (straddling three counties in the San Francisco Bay Area), Crissy Field Center—a partnership of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, NPS, and the Presidio Trust—is an effective model for reaching more diverse audiences. A youth environmental education and leadership development center, it focuses on “engaging people who traditionally have had little—if any—access to national parks.”⁴ The Crissy Field Center has had great success in attracting new park users since opening in 2001.

The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area near Los Angeles has also been implementing innovative programming to reach new audiences, including a downtown LA outreach office and a suite of youth programs aimed at ethnically diverse students.

A ROADMAP FOR PARKS

Based on methods and approaches used in these two locations, the Institute at the Golden Gate has identified best practices, devised a roadmap, and created a “how-to” guide for engaging with diverse users and communities. We hope other parks will find these tools useful in their own diversity efforts.

1 *National Park Service Comprehensive Survey of the American Public, 2008-2009: Racial and Ethnic Diversity of National Park System Visitors and Non-Visitors* (http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/docs/CompSurvey2008_2009RaceEthnicity.pdf, July 2011).

2 *A Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement* (http://www.nps.gov/calltoaction/PDF/C2A_2014.pdf, August 2014).

3 For examples, see an extensive list compiled by Dr. Nina Roberts of San Francisco State University in collaboration with Bill Gwaltney of the National Park Service: “Community Engagement & Empowerment for Diverse Audiences” (http://online.sfsu.edu/nroberts/documents/OutreachProgrammingOrgsResearch_DiversityResources.pdf, August 2012).

4 *Crissy Field Center* (<http://www.parksconservancy.org/programs/crissy-field-center/>).



CRISSY FIELD CENTER

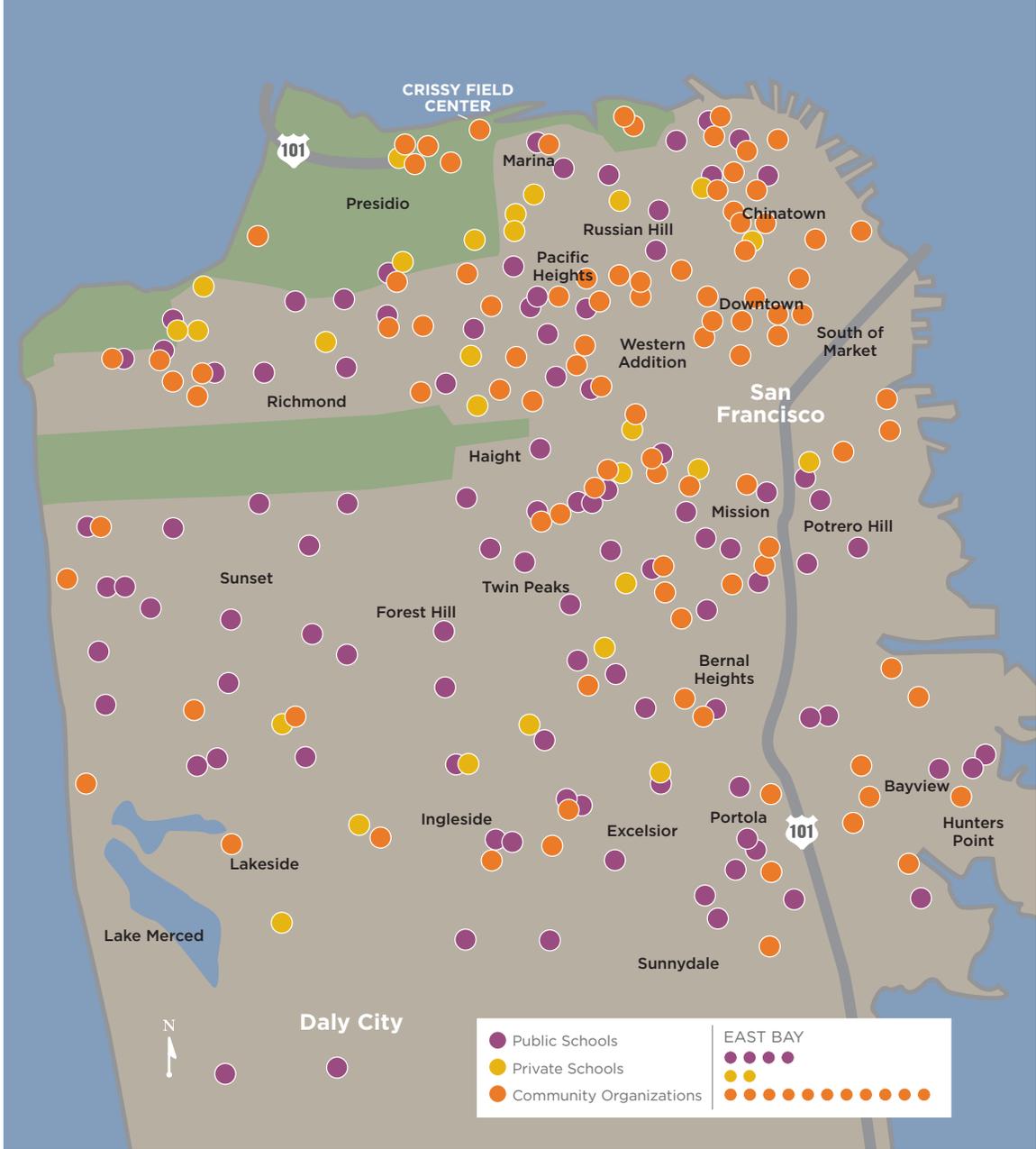
The Crissy Field Center is a project of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (the nonprofit support partner of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, also popularly known as the Golden Gate National Parks), the NPS, and the Presidio Trust. Through youth leadership programs, community programs, and school programs, the Crissy Field Center offers multicultural environmental education to children and teenagers throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Based on Crissy Field in San Francisco and looking out onto the iconic Golden Gate Bridge, the Center has been operating since 2001. According to the Center’s 10-year report, “Our programs meet new audiences where they live, provide culturally relevant experiences, and address language and transportation barriers.”

The following map from the same report shows that Crissy Field Center is successfully reaching the many ethnically distinct neighborhoods of San Francisco: from 2001 to 2011, the Center “served students from every public middle and high school in San Francisco,” “delivered environmental education to students in 67 out of the 72 San Francisco public elementary schools,” and “worked with 400 schools and community groups to expand reach of Center programs.”⁵ The Center is truly engaging a diverse youth audience.



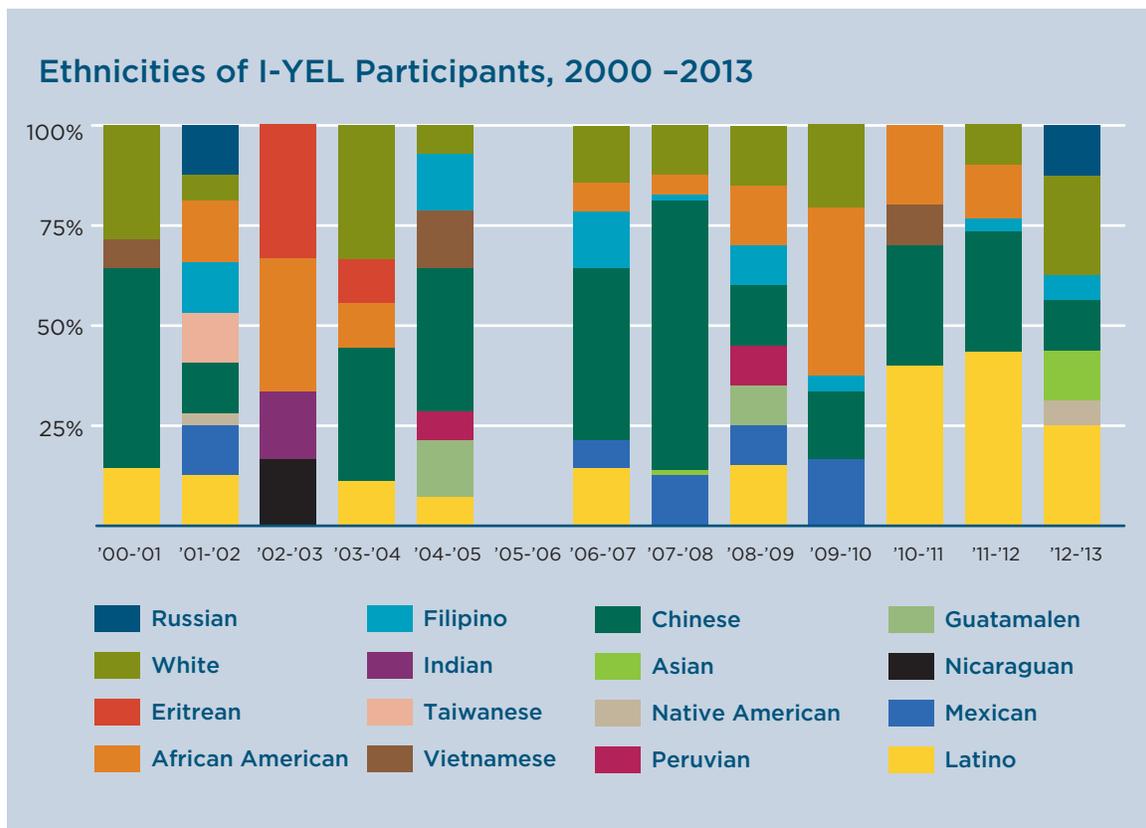
CRISSY FIELD CENTER PROGRAM REACH

Schools and organizations that have been served by Center programs, 2001–2011



Graphic provided by the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy.

Participants in the Center’s high school program, Inspiring Young Emerging Leaders (I-YEL), reported their own ethnicities in 16 different ways from 2000 to 2013.⁶ Combining some of these groups for comparison shows high representation of non-Caucasian youth: about 42% of I-YEL participants are Asian, while 33% of San Francisco city residents are Asian; 25% of I-YEL participants are Latino compared to 15% of San Francisco residents; and 16% of I-YEL participants are African American, compared to only 6% of San Francisco residents.⁷ These results indicate that I-YEL is achieving the Center’s goal of reaching a diverse audience of non-traditional park users.



It is worth noting that I-YEL does not have open enrollment, but rather is a carefully selected group designed to bring together a variety of youth. I-YEL participants are strategically selected to be the most diverse possible subset of a wider hiring pool that may actually be skewed to one ethnicity or another. However, the diversity of applicants available to choose from is a testament to the Center’s success in reaching out to broad audiences.

6 Crissy Field Center asked participants to identify themselves with a free response, rather than asking them to choose from a list of racial/ethnic identity options. This aligns with many Center practices intended to privilege and authorize youth voice. Data for 2005-2006 were not available.

7 U.S. Census Bureau, *2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates for San Francisco City, California* (http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/12_5YR/DP05/1600000US0667000).

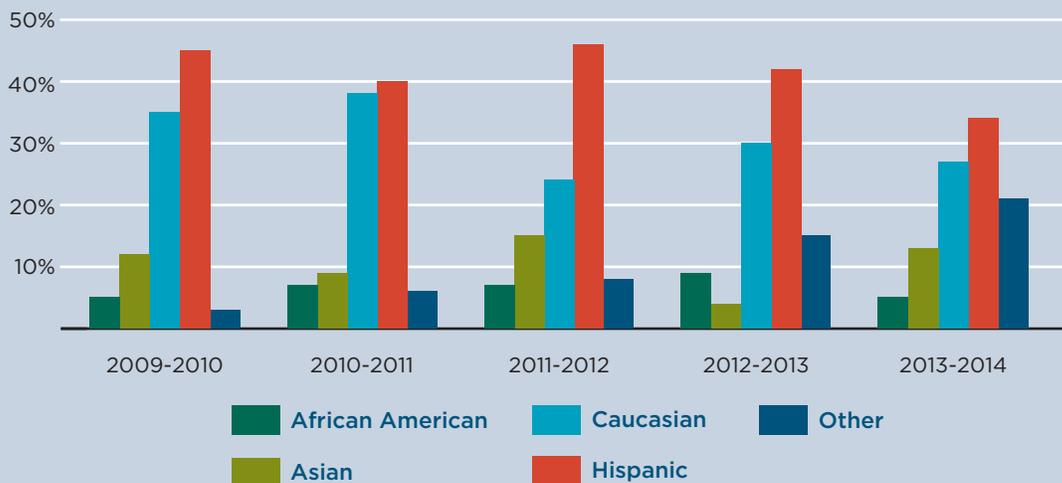
SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is spread between Los Angeles County and Ventura County. To the south and east, it borders one of the United States' biggest cities. To the north, it borders smaller towns and farmland. Much of the surrounding population is Latino, a group historically underrepresented among park visitors. In an urban area where transportation is dominated by freeways and private vehicles, there is almost no way to access the park on public transit or on foot.



The park is seeking to address these challenges with targeted education and youth employment programs, as well as an outreach office in downtown Los Angeles, over 30 miles away from the park itself. Park education and outreach rangers have been tracking demographic data on school field trip participants for 30 years in the form of teacher surveys at the beginning of each visit (see table below), and comparing it against the demographics of the school districts as a whole.

Ethnicities of Santa Monica Mountains Education Program Participants, as Reported by Classroom Teachers*



* Data provided by staff of Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

Park staff use this information to decide how to meet the extremely high demand for field trip slots every year; though the system mostly operates on a first-come, first-served basis, park staff will give special priority to requests from schools that primarily serve communities that the park has not engaged recently.

They also have created a youth employment program, called SAMO Youth (using the NPS abbreviated nickname for Santa Monica), which physically brings young people from historically disadvantaged communities into the park by picking them up in Los Angeles and driving them to the site.

The downtown Los Angeles office represents a successful partnership between NPS and California State Parks, since employees from both agencies work there and have already begun informally sharing outreach opportunities in their first year. A truly urban outpost at El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic Park, the office enables NPS rangers to open the front door, set up a table, and have access to the neighborhood's 4 million annual visitors. They can also more easily attend conferences and run interpretive programs for community organizations in the community's spaces. Other agencies are eager to participate in these successes; currently there are plans for a new visitor center next door to the El Pueblo office, to be run jointly by the Western National Parks Association (WNPA), NPS, the U.S. Forest Service, California State Parks, and others.



LESSONS FOR PARK ENGAGEMENT: A ROADMAP AND “HOW-TO” GUIDE

SIX KEY FACTORS

Based on the examples identified above, as well as through interviews with many park staff, former program participants, educators, program managers, and others, the Institute has identified six elements that have been key to outreach success and are likely to be relevant to other parks. They are:

- (1) Hire staff who are representative of the local population and speak the languages of the target communities
- (2) Build relationships with schools and community programs
- (3) Actively engage community representatives to co-design programs that address community needs, instead of park needs
- (4) Create a supportive, welcoming culture
- (5) Bridge the geographical gap
- (6) Actively recruit program participants

None of the key elements that arose from our research are likely to surprise park professionals. Yet some of these factors that can help make parks accessible and relevant to broader audiences have proven difficult to implement. Part of the challenge is breaking down each element into granular, actionable tactics.

Below, we offer a few specific tactics that staff members can use to implement each element, along with short, explanatory narratives. In drawing out these tactics we recognize that different parks have different priorities and different levels of funding for these initiatives. While a few of the recommendations here require budget lines, many do not. Rather, they are tasks and techniques to be tested in the context of any existing youth program.

Of course, the range of possible tactics goes far beyond those suggested here, and some may apply better to your park than others. Please consider this document a roadmap rather than a conclusive set of rules.

Hire staff who are representative of the local population and speak the languages of the target communities

The audience you seek to reach should be able to see themselves in park staff. Your program needs to be run by people who understand the culture, the neighborhood, and even the school system of your program participants. If your program aspires to teach diversity, equality, and inclusion, it will have to model those principles. Even beyond that, your staff members need to be able to relate to participants and to empathize with their life experience. Otherwise, participants may feel that the program is not really for them and will be less likely to stay or to come back in the future.

How do you implement this?

- Reconsider the actual qualifications to be listed on position descriptions; distinguish between true prerequisites and skills that can be trained on the job
 - Recognize that, for the work to be done, cultural fluency makes a candidate more highly qualified than replicable training such as a bachelor's degree
- Pose questions on the job applications about candidates' experience with specific cultural backgrounds and in working with less-resourced communities
- Include language about social justice in the job description, and underscore and articulate your organization's commitment to diversity
- If scoring staff applications with a rubric, give additional points to alumni of the program
- Advertise job openings in places that do not require a relatively high level of privilege to access—for example, post on Craigslist and reach out through contacts and partner organizations in your target communities

Examples

Crissy Field Center has chosen a nuanced, innovative perspective for evaluating how well-qualified its job candidates might be. Traditional hiring processes mainly consider quantifiable, technical knowledge and experience—an approach that filters through candidates to find the person who will need the least additional training and education in order to do the job effectively. While the Center does ask questions about relevant work experience, they have crafted their internal hiring discussions to include the questions, “What local knowledge and additional skills does the candidate bring to the position?” and “What existing community relationships does the person have that move our work forward?” In this view, cultural familiarity and fluency is a true prerequisite for qualification, whereas skills that can be developed through training are less immediately crucial.

As one senior staff member at Crissy Field Center says, “Anyone can learn environmental education lesson plans. Not everyone can build connections with community groups and youth.” The Center has occasionally found funding to create extra positions for job applicants who lack necessary technical skills but possess highly valuable abilities to connect to target communities. For the Center, these newly created jobs represent a worthy investment, even when the candidates are not yet trained for the position for which they applied.

The Crissy Field Center also tailors the language of job listings to communicate its social justice mission. After experimenting with various approaches and language, they now begin every posting with the words, “Are you interested in environmental and social change?” They indicate that candidates should have experience working with low-income communities in the United States, and should understand the needs of youth and low-income, urban communities. Such position descriptions are more inclusive of candidates who come from

“If you’re asking young people to become leaders in what they’re doing, they need to see role models.”

CHARITY MAYBURY, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, CRISSY FIELD CENTER

low-income backgrounds and more welcoming to those who may have high cultural qualifications but less educational privilege. What's more, creating metrics to evaluate candidates on these factors makes hiring a diverse staff concrete and measurable. To fulfill that worthwhile but hard-to-measure desire to recruit a diverse range of people, the Center has a clearly defined way to assign value to cultural fluency.

Finding job candidates from diverse backgrounds can be challenging. In response to that problem, Santa Monica Mountains and Golden Gate have both created a tradition of hiring their own program alumni. However, a Center staff member warns that, "One challenge with hiring alumni is their lack of experience. Chances are they will be competing with other applicants with tons of internships (unpaid experience) and work experience. Giving extra points to alumni of the program only matters if work experience isn't the most important quality in the hiring decision."

Another way to target your employee recruitment is to release job postings in a limited, intentional way. Crissy Field Center's default hiring blueprint calls for position openings to be posted internally and "sent to selected external partners," and only posted elsewhere "if a larger pool of candidates is desired." The selected external partners usually include collaboratives, community convener meetings, and schools with which the Center already has relationships. In these contexts, the community leaders trust the park enough to share recommendations for the best and brightest candidates.

Build relationships with schools and community programs

If you are committed to serving more diverse communities, the good news is you're not alone. Others are working on similar projects and there are different ways to engage with other like-minded organizations. Programmatic relationships will support your outreach and hiring efforts, give you a clearer sense of the niche that you fill and the needs you can meet, and establish your park as a reliable, supportive part of the socio-cultural landscape.

How do you implement this?

- Invite colleagues from schools and related programs to visit your space, give them tours, and discuss program successes and failures with them
- Invite youth from related programs to attend programs put on by your youth
- Regularly attend community meetings in the neighborhoods where your target audiences live, meet community leaders, and practice active, open-minded listening
- Introduce park staff to individual teachers and counselors at schools where you're doing recruiting, then continue to reach out to those individuals with ensuing programs to develop a consistent set of contacts

Examples

The Crissy Field Center's Community Programs department is a unique team of both federal and nonprofit park employees charged with serving people of all ages outside school hours to strengthen park ties to target communities. It originally had only a small staff focused on running programs, but as its scope grew, the Center's leaders decided to prioritize

relationship-building with potential organizational partners. Even though the pay-off is not always immediate, regularly committing staff time to such efforts will ultimately build a strong, lasting tie between your program and the communities you seek to serve.

Currently, Center staff members are assigned to attend community convener meetings that are held outside the park in their target communities. The wide range of meeting participants includes community members and representatives from churches, schools, recreation centers, parks, libraries, and local nonprofit organizations. Parks are usually not a central topic of discussion, but the Center considers these meetings important for gaining a fuller understanding of the communities they serve, and for providing the opportunity for the park to show support, interest, and involvement. Relationships that are based in initial contact at these meetings have been central to the Center's community programs.

When tabling at an information fair, the Crissy Field Center prefers to send two staff members—one to sit at the table and give out brochures, and another to walk around to every other table and meet every other organizer. As one of the Center's community program managers says, "We really look to embed ourselves in the community." Through consistently showing up and being part of the discussion, Center staff develop a rapport with community leaders and establish a positive reputation—and thus people from the target community come to them with requests for park programs. As organizational relationships become more solid over time, awareness of the park improves across the city and the need to advertise programs diminishes.

A key word in this set of recommendations is "consistent." Since so much of the hiring and promotion that happens in NPS leads staff to move from park to park over the years, it can be especially difficult to maintain a long-term connection between park staff and community members. Staff members at Santa Monica Mountains suggest attending conferences, talks, and workshops; exchanging business cards with the people you meet there; and then following up more than once to establish ongoing contact. It can be productive to build relationships at any staff level. For example, school principals who have been supportive of park partnerships sometimes transfer to a new school and bring the connection with them. Similarly, enthusiastic teachers may be able to spread interest in park programs among their colleagues before even approaching school administrators about it.

"You have to invite people but you also have to go out to them. You have to meet them at their offices. Be honest with them, find out what they want. You have to stick around for a long time; it can't be a one- or two-time shot. If you're not willing to invest, then don't even bother, because it kills [parks'] credibility."

BARBARA APPLEBAUM, ACTING CHIEF OF INTERPRETATION AND OUTREACH, SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

Recently, Santa Monica Mountains has even piloted a summer program for teachers to work as seasonal rangers, developing curriculum for permanent park rangers and for classroom teachers like themselves. The teacher-rangers are employed for six weeks, paid with stipends that

are currently covered by a nonprofit partner, and they live at home. Though the long-term effects of this program are not yet clear, it seems likely that such deep investment in community relationships will spread awareness of and interest in the parks to the teachers' students, if not beyond.

Actively engage community representatives to co-design programs that address community needs, instead of park needs

This key shift feels risky because it asks you and your park staff to value serving people as highly as protecting natural and cultural park resources. However, positioning your park as a dynamic solution to social challenges transforms it from a fragily preserved museum piece to a beloved resource—likely to be used more, with all the attendant risks, but also much more likely to be cherished and safeguarded by the growing number of people who use it. This approach allows so much good to be done that it's worth the potential risk.

How do you implement this?

- Attend and actively listen at community convener meetings, as a starting point for thinking and talking about participant needs
- If your program selects participants instead of offering open enrollment, consider how much each candidate seems to need the program; weigh this more heavily than candidate's previous accomplishments
- Create youth and community advisory councils to design programs
- Offer pay or a stipend to participants
- Ask staff members regularly (at least once a year or when program participants turn over) what they want to be the foci of their program
 - Encourage them to change their offerings according to the needs they see in their participants and what they are hearing from the community
 - Provide paid time to develop new curriculum
- If your program includes evaluation, evaluate performance in ways that will not discriminate against those with limited English and/or writing skills (for example, talk with each participant regularly instead of administering a test)

Examples

Santa Monica Mountains has found that paying a stipend to its youth program participants is a powerful tool in meeting community needs. SAMO Youth participants' stipend is a way for them to demonstrate to their families that the work they are doing holds the promise of a career and indicates to target communities that environmental work is worthwhile and marketable. One ranger explains that "society values things for their monetary value," so offering pay is useful in "making [the experience] real for the students." A stipend has the added benefit of creating a climate that teaches job readiness skills like professionalism, timeliness, attendance, and focus. Finally, a stipend can help students from low-income backgrounds provide some amount of financial support to their families.

When the Crissy Field Center's founding director was establishing the Center she attended community convener meetings in two of San Francisco's most poorly resourced neighborhoods, learning what skills and worries the residents had, and finding out what they felt their needs were. Then she came up with suggestions of how the park could serve those needs, and shared them with some community members. They pushed back—hard. This was a turning point: the Center learned that the park would be more successful by working with community members in a co-design capacity than by trying to help them. The director then formed two advisory groups from the target communities, one of adults and one of youth, and asked them for suggestions instead.

As it turned out, the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) became instrumental in guiding programming for the Center. Several of the original members came from an existing youth conservation program in the city, and lived in under-resourced neighborhoods that the Center was interested in engaging. The members, who each received a stipend, met weekly to plan. Together, this group of high school students created a proposal for a program that centered on youth leadership and voice. One of those initial participants describes that they had support from one staff member to “get the idea down and move forward,” but the youth themselves remained in charge of making decisions. Eventually, they requested a funder's forum, pitched their proposal to the park non-profit's executive board, and walked away with \$150,000 to launch the three-year pilot program, Inspiring Young Emerging Leaders (I-YEL). Turning all of the creative power over to potential participants allowed the Center to ensure that their programs were rooted in the lives of the youth they served and really would meet community needs.

“We regard our community leaders and advisors as thought partners. Engaging them in the co-design process is key; if they have had a hand in co-designing an experience for their community, they are much more likely to promote it to their community and take an active role in ensuring the program's success.”

CHRISTY ROCCA, DIRECTOR OF THE CRISSY FIELD CENTER, GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVANCY

Create a supportive, welcoming culture

Many of the participants you are seeking come from backgrounds lacking safe, green spaces, social support, and other resources that your program provides. If your program is a safe, supportive place and represents a welcoming, warm community to participants, they are more likely to stay and succeed in the program, to participate in future years, and to recruit friends and family members to participate. If you are trying to engage an audience that is historically under-resourced and that has traditionally felt less welcome in parks, you will need to carefully create an inviting and encouraging culture in your program.

How do you implement this?

- Choose employees whose personal abilities suggest they can help create a culture of flexibility and compassion
 - When hiring, ask candidates' references about their ability to communicate thoughtfully, maintain a positive attitude, and work sensitively with others
- Seek to support youth beyond the planned program scope when urgent needs arise (hunger, emotional crisis, lack of shelter)
 - Incorporate relaxed, one-on-one conversations about participants' involvement and general well-being into the program delivery
 - Address immediate needs where possible: be able to connect youth to external resources such as emergency shelters
 - Consider hiring staff with social work experience or creating a staff position for a social worker
- Be flexible with timing and space usage to avoid causing feelings of exclusion, and empower all staff members to accommodate community time and space requests where possible
- Provide opportunities for staff who do not work directly in the youth program and youth to interact
 - Make sure staff know the names of youth, and vice versa
 - Give all staff experience building rapport with youth
- Encourage your administrative or support staff who do not work directly with youth to actively engage with and welcome program participants, including providing space for youth to visit the offices outside of program hours
- Actively listen and incorporate the youth's ideas



Examples

A Santa Monica ranger who focuses on education says that creating this culture all comes down to people and communication. When hiring program staff, she does reference checks to ask if the candidates work well with others, if they're flexible, and if they value working with people of diverse backgrounds. She seeks out "people who have good human contact skills," on the grounds that you cannot really train an employee to be "open and approachable to the public."



Program culture can be truly powerful. One reason the Crissy Field Center has been able to maintain such a diverse audience is that many of its program participants return year after year, sometimes bringing friends, and sometimes becoming staff. Many agree that one of the biggest reasons to keep coming back to the Center is the sense of community. One former youth participant, now a staff member, says "I grew up here." Another describes discussions with trusted adult leaders about "who you are, where you're from, what you want to be," and reminisces about how they would stay late just to talk—the Center became "the new hang-out spot," even after program hours. Yet another says that staff members were "always there to support," and that the Center was a place where youth "never felt shunned, like we didn't belong there." One of the original staff members remembers accepting his first job offer to work there and thinking, "This is gonna be my new home."

The Crissy Field Center staff's willingness to address youth needs beyond the scope of its programming is valuable in helping participants recognize the Center as a safe space. However, there is no specific administrative structure for it. Staff respond to immediate needs; for example, when a participant showed up with nothing to eat for lunch, staff found extra food in the office kitchen to share. Staff confront more daunting challenges, such as lack of housing for a participant, as they arise, with the resources they can find, but Center leaders recognize that this can take an immense toll and that more highly trained support services would be ideal. They hope to create a staff position for a social worker in the future.

Bridge the geographical gap

Many national parks require money and time to access. Even if you are close to an urban area, there is probably physical distance between the park where you run programs and the people you want to participate in those programs. Though it's certainly not the only barrier your prospective audience faces, it may be a significant one and they may not have the resources to overcome it.

How do you implement this?

- On materials about your program, include a map with public transit information
- For meetings, set program times to accommodate when participants can realistically arrive on public transit
- Arrange to pick up and drop off program participants at locations closer to their homes
- Establish an office outside of the park, in an area near your target audience, and have some staff report there regularly/directly
- Enter cooperative management agreements with other agencies in order to run programs on land closer to your audience

Examples

Santa Monica Mountains begins with the assumption that none of the youth in its programs will be able to access the park on their own. SAMO Youth chooses a place in Los Angeles where a van driven by a ranger can pick up participants and drive them to the park, then designs its recruiting so that advertisements only target youth who can get to the pick-up point on foot or public transit. Santa Monica Mountains also has signed cooperative management agreements with other agencies, such as California State Parks, in order to station interpretive rangers at an off-site office in downtown Los Angeles and have them run programs on non-federal parkland that is more easily accessible by people without cars or without the means to drive long distances.

Actively recruit program participants

No matter how excellent a program you create, you cannot be sure of engaging your target audience if you do not get out the word. You will need to find the people you are hoping will participate, and pitch the program directly to them. Passive marketing will be inherently insufficient; your audience is defined, at least in part, by the fact that they do not already come to parks.



Golden Gate National Parks' Roving Ranger used to be a bread truck. Now it's a "mobile trailhead" staffed by uniformed NPS rangers and stocked full of maps and brochures about the parks. Employees at the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy created the Roving Ranger after being inspired by the ranger-staffed Wilderness Desk at University of California at Merced; both projects take the park to the community, instead of vice versa. This brightly colored truck brings park rangers and information directly to potential audiences at university campuses, fairs, and festivals. It builds awareness of the local national parks among people who have never visited, explains bus routes and driving routes to those who do not know how to get there, and teaches about trails and events to those who do not know what to do when they arrive.

How do you implement this?

- Translate program materials (website, brochures, flyers, etc.) into the languages predominantly spoken in your target communities
- Visit schools with high enrollment from your target audience (for example, schools with high percentages of students receiving free or reduced lunch)
 - Table to provide information and hand out paper copies of the program application (if applicable)
 - Offer question-and-answer sessions in classrooms, particularly in classes relevant to the program
 - Give program materials to guidance counselors who advise students on jobs and extracurricular experiences
- Ask or require returning program alumni to do peer recruiting
 - Provide scripts for class announcements
 - Provide talking points and sign-up sheets for information sessions to be organized and led by alumni
 - Require alumni seeking to return to organize a minimum number of peer information sessions
- Offer pay or a stipend to individuals who participate in programs
- Before recruiting begins, conduct a staff workshop on how to recognize need for the program in a candidate
- Identify neighborhoods or other communities from which you would like to recruit, then build relationships with organizations that already work there
 - Set up a time to send park staff to their offices to meet their leaders
 - Ask what their mission and goals are, and listen to the answers
- Call or send emails to all organizations you have partnered with previously every time you have a new opportunity (special events, new programs, etc.)
- Engage with community organizations and individuals through your social media, and develop a voice that matches theirs

Examples

As explored above, a stipend can be a powerful recruiting tool. Youth whose families have limited resources may see the program as an opportunity to help out at home. When Crissy Field Center staff members ask youth how they will use the money, some mention school supplies and groceries. Urban Trailblazer youth, who range in age from roughly 12 to 14, receive \$250 for seven weeks—a significant amount to the average middle school student, but a particularly persuasive factor for those with higher financial needs at home.

Crissy Field Center invites returning program alumni into the recruiting process. They each get a “share packet” with a sign-up sheet for a minimum audience of 10, applications, and a script for in-class announcements. The idea is that each of them does a presentation at their school or for a club, passes out paper copies of the program application, and brings back proof of the presentation to the Center in the form of the filled-out attendance sheet. Anecdotally, personal endorsements of Center programs have been a strong recruiting force.

Crissy Field Center has recently become more aware of its social media audience. Through its Facebook page, the Center mostly engages educators between 28 and 40 years old. While staff see the value of establishing the Center as a thought leader through inspiring and informing this adult audience, they also want to use social media tools to reach, empower, and invite youth. This effort is just beginning, but it entails, in part, developing a light, conversational voice and following a consistent, thematic posting schedule to build a more committed readership.

Staff of the SAMO Youth program have developed a long-term relationship with the environmental science academy at Woodrow Wilson High School in East Los Angeles. One particular science teacher there has been an ally for the program, recruiting students to apply and helping set up the interviews. This in-school champion has helped keep a steady flow of student applications to SAMO Youth, and has acted as a familiar, trusted voice in recommending the program to potential participants. In the early days of the program, a park ranger visited the school often to give in-class and student club presentations and to (in his words) “get them all psyched” about the program, but interest has become so strong that he no longer needs to visit.

The Santa Monica Mountains ranger who started SAMO Youth was its only staff member for a long time. He began working for NPS as an intern, and found that there were not many other Latino rangers. “This program was created out of a clear need to bring more people of color to the science field,” he says. The ranger found that some of his most effective outreach was just spending a lot of time in schools where student bodies were largely Latino. Among other things, visibility of staff members who look like your target audience will drive that audience’s participation.

CONCLUSION

Not all of the specific tactics and steps described here and used in the Golden Gate National Parks and Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area will work in your park. However, we believe many of the strategies and tactics identified in this report may be of assistance to other parks in their efforts to serve more diverse park users. To this end, we have sought to provide as much detail on the “how” of implementation as possible.

In addition to the actions of park staff in individual parks, we believe commitment from park system leaders and decision makers will be crucial to making parks relevant and of service to more diverse audiences in the future. To be successful, we will need champions at all levels. We look ahead to the second century of national parks with the hope and expectation that they will fully represent the diversity of our communities.

APPENDIX A

List of Contributors

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APPENDIX B

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Page 16: Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

ABOUT US

The Institute at the Golden Gate

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The Institute at the Golden Gate is a program of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy in partnership with the National Park Service. Our mission is to make parks and public lands part of the solution to major societal challenges like our healthcare crisis, climate change and urban development. The Institute pilot tests new ideas locally, measures the impact, identifies and shares best practices, and influences policy regionally, nationally and globally.

Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

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The Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy is the nonprofit membership organization created to preserve the Golden Gate National Parks, enhance the experiences of park visitors, and build a community dedicated to conserving the parks for the future. The Conservancy is an authorized “cooperating association” of the National Park Service and is one of more than 70 such nonprofit organizations working with national parks around the country.

National Park Service

www.nps.gov

National Park Service is a federal agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior charged with managing the preservation and public use of America’s most significant natural, scenic, historic, and cultural treasures. The NPS manages the Golden Gate National Parks, as well as 405 other parks across the United States.

About the Author

Ruth Pimentel is an Emerging Leaders Fellow at the Institute at the Golden Gate, focused on policy relating to urban parks. She has worked in the national parks as an intern volunteer manager and field ecologist, and for AmeriCorps as an urban gardener and health educator. She holds a B.A. from Harvard University and resides in the San Francisco Bay Area.



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