

Project Spotlight: Philadelphia Parks & Rec Older Adult Services



Project Type: Strategic Planning
Timeline: January 2024 - May 2024

About the Client

Philadelphia Parks and Recreation (PPR) is the City of Philadelphia's hub for managing city-owned parks, pools, playgrounds, green spaces and recreation centers. PPR also provides direct recreation and social services to Philadelphians of all ages throughout the Parks and Recreation system.

One of PPR's primary program areas is Older Adult Services. PPR provides dedicated services to older adults aged 55 and older at six Older Adult Centers (OACs) throughout the city. Each OAC offers healthy meals, recreational, cultural and educational programs, health promotion, social services, volunteer opportunities and transportation services for older adult members. Members at each site are charged an affordable annual membership fee, which includes full access to services and activities on a year-round basis.



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Project Scope

The project's primary goal was to develop an Older Adult Services Implementation Plan, which would guide the department's efforts to strengthen its services as a key component of its most recent strategic plan: Our Path to 2020 and Beyond. The project also involved creating an intuitive and easy-to-use implementation tracking tool to help PPR leadership monitor progress toward each objective within the Implementation Plan.

Methodology & Project Activities

To achieve these goals, Anavi Strategies employed a structured and collaborative approach:

Data Analysis & Visualization

Conducted exploratory data analysis using U.S. Census Bureau statistics to better understand current data on the older adult population, and how that might help inform programs, policies, and decision-making. The analysis focused on geographic distribution and poverty rates among Philadelphia's older adult population, as well as healthcare coverage and access to public transportation.

Stakeholder Interviews

Conducted 11 individual interviews with PPR leadership, central office staff, and Older Adult Center directors to better understand the primary staffing, programmatic, and facilities challenges within PPR's Older Adult Services, as well as begin to identify a clear vision and action steps over the next 3-5 years.

External City Scan

Conducted research and held interviews with Parks and Recreation Department leaders in Austin, Columbus, Phoenix, and San Jose to identify best practices around Older Adult Services. Each comparable case study was selected using criteria developed jointly with PPR leadership, including departmental budget size, city demographics, and internal program structure.

Focus Groups

Designed and facilitated a large focus group with approximately 30 PPR staff from across the city to identify a vision and action steps to strengthen Older Adult Services programs, as well as three smaller focus groups with approximately 15 older adult members at different OAC sites to obtain their feedback on tentative recommendations for PPR.

Results & Deliverables

Our team developed an Older Adults Services Implementation Plan for PPR that contained clear and specific action steps in each of the following areas of work:

- Program Goals & Outcomes
- Staff Support
- Hiring & Retention
- Programmatic and Staff Integration
- Community Engagement & Partnerships
- Facilities

Additionally, we created an implementation tracker which subcategorized each action step within the Implementation Plan by cost level, implementation timeframe, and staff members responsible for leading each step.



Through this collaborative effort, PPR has developed internal buy-in among staff responsible for delivering Older Adult Services at all levels of the organization, and is now positioned to take clear action to strengthen their impact in the lives of older adults across Philadelphia.

