

Organizational Structure Opportunities

July 2016



About California State Parks

The California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) protects and preserves California's most significant natural and cultural resources while delivering public spaces to bring families and friends together and providing a wide array of recreational opportunities for the benefit and enjoyment of all people. Off-highway motor vehicle recreation, boating activities, horseback riding, on and off-road cycling, hiking, camping, and rock climbing are some of the recreational activities enjoyed in 280 state parks organized into 22 field districts throughout the state.

In 2015, the Administration established a Transformation Team to help strengthen state parks through a series of initiatives supporting strategic goals, such as improving visitors' experiences and making the system more relevant to a broader and more diverse population. One initiative is to update the department's organizational structure to better serve the public.

The Transformation Team has been reviewing the department's organizational structure and has identified opportunities to eliminate duplicative services, realign divisions and programs to better support field operations, consolidate some field districts, flatten field management structures, and establish career paths to leadership for a broad range of professional backgrounds. The department will now work with staff and stakeholders as it develops a new organizational model for the department, which will also include how field districts are organized.

Need for Organizational Structure Assessment

State Parks has not performed a department-wide organizational structure assessment since the early 1990's. Since that time, the services provided by the department have changed and in some cases even increased. Some examples:

- A myriad of **grant programs** are administered from different areas of the department. An assessment is needed to improve the delivery of these important funding opportunities. Grants enhance recreational opportunities in local communities, promote safe outdoor activities, and protect natural and cultural resources.
- **Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students Program (PORTS)** and a **department-wide marketing program**. These and other programs and services were assimilated into the existing organizational structure without a full understanding of impacts to service delivery.

- The **Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Program** was established as a division in 1982. More recently, in 2012, the **Department of Boating and Waterways** was merged with the department. The current organizational structure separates these important recreation services from the rest of the services provided by the department. Visitors would be better served by fully integrating these services into the rest of the department.
- An additional layer of **field management** was established in the early 2000's. This was an internal policy decision and was resourced through the reallocation of positions and salary savings.

A new organizational structure will address these incremental organizational changes and better support all mission-based programs and services with a new streamlined organizational structure.

New Organization Builds on Recent Fiscal Improvements

Over the last several years, the department has implemented several initiatives that strengthen its fiscal tracking systems. These new systems have allowed for better-informed communication and decision-making with regard to the allocation of resources. These initiatives include:

- **Additional Fiscal Information Provided the Public (Park Unit Costing Report)** – This year, the department released its third annual park unit costing report. This report provides the estimated expenditures at each state park location. The additional fiscal information allows the department to engage in resource discussions with various partners, the legislature and other stakeholders in a more meaningful way.
- **Parks Field Leaders Are Getting Budgets Sooner** – Traditionally, districts would not receive their annual budgets until months after the start of the fiscal year, which is July 1. Consequently, district leaders were making service delivery and resource decisions throughout the busy summer season without a budget plan. This is no longer the case. For the last two years, all districts received their budget allocations by July 1. In fact, the districts engage in discussions about their budget plans with headquarters months prior to the beginning of the fiscal year to allow for better planning.
- **Eliminated Lag in Revenue Data Tracking** – Historically, there has been a lag in revenue collected in the field being recorded at departmental headquarters accounting systems. Under that system, it could take three months for a dollar collected in the field to register in the state's fiscal system used by the department's management to make fiscal decisions. By automating this process across the districts, the several months lag has been reduced to 48 hours.

- **Entire Department Now Using Same Budget Projection Tool** – Until recently, divisions and field districts developed budget planning documents that did not reflect the most up-to-date fiscal information from headquarters. Likewise, the headquarters budget planning documents did not reflect the latest information from the field and divisions. This made the reconciliation of the department’s budget challenging and often resulted in miscommunication about resource availability. However, in early 2016, the department launched a new budget planning system, which facilitates a monthly reconciliation of headquarters and field budget information. Consequently, the department is able to better manage its resources as better fiscal information is available to managers. This new system will also facilitate year-end closing activities.

Through the current transformation effort, the department is also developing a new service-based budgeting tool. This tool will allow State Parks to demonstrate how it is using its resources and the services provided at individual parks. This information will inform the development of an updated organizational structure and will help to articulate the services that can be provided at various funding levels and how the department will best deliver those services.

Organizational Structure Assessment Approach

Over the past 12 months, a committee comprised of Transformation Team members and other key department leaders, met regularly to review the organizational structure and identify the functions needed to develop a service-driven headquarters and field organization and help to identify barriers to better delivering services. They also sought feedback from these leaders on what the future state headquarters organization should look like. To foster transparency and engagement in the assessment process, the committee also provided updates to the top leaders of the department through cyclical leadership meetings and workshops.

Through these discussions, this group:

- Defined the strategic goals and scope of the assessment in order to clarify the priorities and the level of change to be considered.
- Established organizational design principles and management practices defining the conditions necessary for the department to meet its mission-based goals and professional standards.
- Analyzed the current state of the organization, including district boundaries, to identify existing business challenges, improvement opportunities and desired benefits.
- Completed an analysis of duplicative functions at the headquarters level.

- Reviewed the organizational structures of local, state, and national park entities to identify leading practices and viable alternatives currently in use.

The committee leveraged the leadership input and the findings from their analyses to determine whether the current organizational structure supports the department's delivery of services in the most efficient manner. The review revealed many opportunities for improvement through an updated structure, which include the following:

- Several divisions and/or programs are duplicative and could benefit from streamlining. For example, several programs in headquarters (grants programs, facilities management, and planning activities) are services provided through multiple divisions throughout the department.
- Over the years, new programs were established, but never fully implemented. Consequently, programs struggle to fully deliver services. For instance, the marketing division was initiated, but an organizational structure was never established.
- There is a lack of emphasis on some key priority areas such as cultivation of partnerships, community engagement, fiscal management and revenue generation. A new structure should align resources to address priority programs.

Additional improvement opportunities identified by the committee are provided in the following section.

Organizational Structure Opportunities

The following opportunities form an organizational structure framework that incorporates Transformation Team goals (new ways of doing business) and provides a pathway for California State Parks to strategically realign the use of current resources to support its new priorities. These improvement opportunities would create an organizational structure that maximizes the use of current resources to better execute the department's mission. The new structure may result in shifts in how personnel will be organized. However no staff will be laid off through this process.

Opportunities from the organizational structure will include:

- **Align organization structure** to best reflect the mission and service of the department.
- **Develop a customer service ethic** that prioritizes collaboration within the department and solidifies serving the public as our primary purpose.

- **Operate as one unified state park system** to provide an array of recreational services across the system and support all 280 parks including nine state vehicle recreational areas while preserving allocation of all special funds.
- **Establish** a headquarters organization **model that best supports the delivery of programs and services.**
- **Realign divisions, programs, and district boundaries** to better support field operations and enhance services to community stakeholders.
- **Minimize duplicative services** and **empower decision making** at the appropriate levels for effective service delivery.
- **Develop stronger connections with existing and new partners** that is aligned with the department's mission to serve the public and their resources.
- **Bolster resource stewardship** that is responsive to climate change, sensitive to species management and protective of our dynamic history.
- **Place increased emphasis on revenue generation and grant distribution** implementation consistent with State Park's expanded focus on relevancy.
- **Foster continual innovation** after the transformation process is complete.
- **Centralize function-specific expertise** to facilitate knowledge sharing and use of best practices to better serve the public (e.g. facilities management, grants, planning).
- **Dedicate advocacy support for recreation constituency groups** representing on- and off-road cyclists, boaters, off-highway vehicles, equestrians and others, including emerging recreation activities.
- **Focus on strengthening engagement of under-represented groups;** developing recreation programming that builds lasting relationships with the community, partners and volunteers; and building a recruitment program focused on workforce diversification.
- **Identify career paths and enable pathways to leadership** for staff with relevant backgrounds and experiences both from within and outside the department.
- **Open positions to candidates from broader and more diverse backgrounds** so that the most qualified candidates are able to compete and the workforce at the department more closely represents the diverse demographics of the state.

Next Steps

In the upcoming months, the department will engage staff and stakeholders to discuss the new organizational structure and gather important input. This process is also expected to yield additional ideas on how a new organizational structure would improve the delivery of services. The feedback during this process will inform the development of a new organizational structure. The resulting organizational structure will be detailed in an operational transition plan report, which is a standard report developed by state departments to outline how it will move from the current organization structure to a new model. The new organizational structure will be in compliance with all laws, rules, policies and established best practices. The department will work closely with other state agencies, including CalHR, as it develops the organizational structure and a plan to transition to a new structure. The new structure may result in shifts in how personnel will be organized, however no staff will be laid off through this process. Communication and the management of the changes as the department transitions to a new model will be of key focus.