

April 10, 2018

Rural Recreation Survey Results

In early March 2018, RMA distributed a request for one member of each municipality to complete a survey on rural recreation. RMA would like to thank each of you for your participation! Without your contributions, we would not be able to gather and share these results.

All municipalities in Alberta own, operate, and maintain some variety of recreation facilities. These establishments include, but are not limited to arenas, halls, rodeo grounds, campsites, and parks. Understanding the composition of rural recreation facilities and associated support will help RMA advocate on behalf of our members. It is through these results that RMA can now understand municipal commitments to recreation, key areas of focus, and potential opportunities to build upon that will help RMA advocate on behalf of our members. The member survey results are as follows:

- 58% of respondents do not have a department specifically for parks and recreation matters. There appears to be varying organizational structures, with some combinations including culture, agriculture, community services, or economic development.
- 33% of respondents have a manager or director responsible for parks and recreation. The remaining distribution is six percent who are unsure and 61 percent who do not. That being said, the compliment of other staff levels and positions are diverse.
- The numerical data illustrates that resources that RMA members dedicate to recreation vary significantly from volunteers to 80 full time equivalent staff.
- Despite municipalities not sharing staff with other municipalities to meet the needs of their communities, there seems to be an openness and willingness to work together as 79% of municipalities are involved in regional partnerships with adjacent municipalities to support the provision of recreation.
- Through the development of Intermunicipal Collaboration Frameworks (ICFs), municipalities will have another avenue to work together in-service delivery, cost sharing, or facility ownership models.
- It is evident that overall budgets and funding mechanisms are barriers to the success of recreation in municipalities. Whether it be the need for grant dollars, not-for-profit contributions, or volunteer fatigue, there are challenges being presented because of too little funding.

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- On average, less than 10% of a municipality's annual operating budget is spent on parks and recreation.
- In many municipalities, not-for-profit and volunteer organizations are providing alternative programming to fill the recreational gap.
- Many residents travel near and far to use recreation facilities. Some municipalities provide funding, while others have usage agreements. Ultimately, access is there but at what cost (time, dollars, etc.) is unknown. These arrangements are likely to be burdensome on the populations engaging in activity as 89 percent of people travel up to 50 kilometers for facility access.

It is clear that municipalities support a vast number of facilities, while also providing support to community organizations for the facilitation of recreation, arts, and culture programs. General recognition is that there are varying needs in municipalities and that the current set up, whatever it may be, poses challenges and as a result there is opportunity to continue growth and communication.

This information will be used in future discussions and advocacy related to rural recreation and the RMA values input provided by our members through this survey.

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