

House Legislative Oversight Committee

Request for Information about Committee Recommendations, 2019

Agency Responding	Parks Recreation and Tourism, Department of
Submission Date	11/1/2019

Recommendation Number	Recommendations to Agency and Implementation Notes on File with Legislative Oversight Committee as of August 2019	Status of Implementation	Actual or Anticipated Date of 100% Completion	Estimated Net Financial Savings, Realized or Anticipated, in the 5 Years Following Implementation*	Agency Responses		Additional Comments (optional)
					Non-Financial Benefits Realized or Anticipated from Implementing Recommendation	Non-Financial Drawbacks Realized or Anticipated from Implementing Recommendation	
Report Rec #02	AGENCY: Track the effectiveness of its advertisement of grant and funding opportunities IMPLEMENTATION: None to date	In Progress	Ongoing	\$0	While this recommendation does not provide a cost savings, it does better ensure effective use of grant funding	None at this time	See attached Word Document
Report Rec #03	AGENCY: Perform a cost/benefit analysis of offering online, virtual tours of state parks IMPLEMENTATION: None to date	In Progress	January 31, 2020 - completion of Table Rock Virtual Tour	(~)\$25,000 per Virtual Tour Production	Virtual Tours will provide greater accessibility to select natural and cultural sites for residents and visitors with limited mobility	None at this time	See attached Word Document
Report Rec #04	AGENCY: Create, publish, and regularly update plans for anticipated building maintenance costs IMPLEMENTATION: None to date	Not Started - No plans to implement	n/a	\$0	No benefits identified - the agency already provides this information for the annual Comprehensive Permanent Improvement Plan, which is published on the Executive Budget Office website.	This action would create unnecessary reporting for information that is already provided by the Agency to the Executive Budget Office each year.	Information on SCPRT's Capital Improvement Projects, including project costs and subsequent maintenance costs, can be found at this website: https://www.admin.sc.gov/budget/cipp
Report Rec #05	AGENCY: Collaborate with the Department of Revenue (DOR) about how to utilize each agency's different expertise to ensure the auditing required for film incentives is accomplished as efficiently as possible IMPLEMENTATION: None to date	In Progress	1/1/2020	\$0	Greater collaboration between DOR and PRT in an auditing process; SCDOR has access to confidential information to ensure that all expenditures are audited and paid out properly	None at this time	MOA has been drafted and is under review by DOR; cross-over training to begin in January 1,2020
Report Rec #06	AGENCY: (a) Conduct exit interviews of employees separating from the agency and (b) Compile the data in the aggregate to help inform policy decisions IMPLEMENTATION: None to date	In Progress	4/1/2020	\$0	This action will allow the agency to determine employee motivations for leaving the agency.	None at this time	
Report Rec #07	AGENCY: (a) Allow opportunities for anonymous feedback from employees and (b) Compile the data in the aggregate to help inform policy decisions IMPLEMENTATION: None to date	Not Started - No plans to implement	n/a	\$0		Based on previous experience, SCPRT feels that soliciting anonymous feedback generates more problems than solutions. In addition, the agency currently offers multiple opportunities for open and confidential feedback. This is accomplished through staff meetings, statewide monthly State Parks staff conference calls, and the Human Resource and Directorate Offices.	SCPRT feels that existing resources, such as HRD, SHAC, OSHA and OIG provide all State Employees with ample opportunities to voice any serious workplace concerns.
Report Rec #08	AGENCY: (a) Perform employee satisfaction surveys on a regular basis and (b) Compile the data in the aggregate to help inform policy decisions IMPLEMENTATION: None to date	Not Yet Started - Agency plans to implement	12/31/2020	\$0	This action will provide consistent insight into employee satisfaction and sentiment in a standardized manner. This information can then be used to better inform agency planning and programming.	None at this time	
Report Rec #09	AGENCY: Post agency policies online IMPLEMENTATION: None to date	Complete	n/a	\$0		The Agency believes that publishing all Agency policies in one location, in essence a clearinghouse of policies, may result in confusion for agency customers and partners. All Agency policies are made available to their relevant audiences at the most appropriate online locations. See Additional Comments for further details.	Agency HR Policies are available to all SCPRT employees on the Agency Intranet site. Film policies are available on the Film Office website. Grant program policies available on specific grant webpages on the SCPRT.com website. Welcome Center literature guidelines are available on the SCPRT.com Tourism webpage. State Parks visitor policies are available on the State Parks website.
Report Rec #10	AGENCY: Collect and publish accommodation tax expenditures in a searchable, sortable format IMPLEMENTATION: None to date	Not Started - No plans to implement	n/a	(~)\$100,000 to (~)\$200,000 for website/database development	No benefits identified		SCPRT has discussed this topic with TERC staff. TERC staff has explored options to provide local governments with an online portal to submit accommodations tax expenditure information electronically. This would provide the easiest method to develop an online, searchable database of expenditures; however, it is cost prohibitive without additional appropriations.
Report Rec #11	AGENCY: Post online a list of research information available from the agency upon request IMPLEMENTATION: None to date	Not Started - No plans to implement	n/a	\$0	No benefits identified	SCPRT currently provides a wide range of tourism-related industry and economic data on the agency website: sopr.com . Unpublished data is generally not made publicly available due to contractual restrictions placed on the data purchase. Agency data that is produced on an ad-hoc basis is generally done at the request of news media or industry partners, who are directly provided the requested data.	
Report Rec #12	AGENCY: Work with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Conservation Bank to create and post online a comprehensive list of properties citizens can search by different fields IMPLEMENTATION: None to date	Not Started - No plans to implement	n/a	(~)\$100,000 to (~)\$200,000 for website/database development	No benefits identified	Both SCPRT and SCDNR provide online resources for consumers to browse or search for state-owned or managed properties for recreation purposes. Managing real-time information, such as availability, limitations of use, etc., about these properties collectively would create an administrative burden on one or both agencies. This would also likely result in outdated or incorrect information in the collective listing.	The SC Conservation Bank does not actively manage or own any properties, however, the Conservation Bank website does provide a list of grants awarded by the agency for conservation. Lastly, a list of properties owned or managed by SCPRT and SCDNR is available in the Appendices of South Carolina's 2019 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. https://www.sopr.com/recreation/statewide-comprehensive-outdoor-recreation-plan

Note:

* If implementation of a recommendation will result in a net cost to the agency, please include that as a negative number in column E.

Supplemental Information for House Legislative Oversight Committee's Request for Information about Committee Recommendations, 2019 from SCPRT.

Report Recommendation #2 (Track the effectiveness of its advertisement of grant and funding opportunities) – Additional Comments

As standard practice, the agency advertises all grant opportunities through two primary means: media press releases and the monthly SCPRT e-newsletter. In addition, the agency notifies potential grantees through various relevant organizations, including the South Carolina Recreation & Parks Association, South Carolina Travel and Tourism Coalition, South Carolina Sports Alliance, South Carolina Association of Tourism Regions, South Carolina Municipal Association, and the South Carolina Association of Counties.

SCPRT regularly evaluates the effectiveness of its outreach for the agency's grant programs through analysis of grant supply and demand. In this analysis, the agency not only looks at the volume of grant applications in comparison to available funding, but also the geographical distribution of grant applicants and, ultimately, grant projects. The demand/supply analysis initially evaluates the amount of grant funding available in comparison with the amount of grant funding available for each grant cycle. Because the parameters of each grant program vary, each grant program is reviewed individually and comprehensively and in consideration of all aspects, including awareness, funding source and match requirements, and applicant eligibility requirements.

Long-established recreation grant programs, such as the Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), consistently experience grant demand that is comparable to or greater than the amount of funding available. For example, in FY 20 the agency received 47 Letters of Intent for RTP Grants, of which the agency can potentially award 10 – 12 grants based on the level of Federal funding available for this program. In the last cycle of the LWCF, the agency received sufficient applications to award all available Federal funds for this program.

If a grant appears to be under-utilized, the agency considers all aspects of the grant program to determine the reason for its low utilization. The first determination is whether potential grant applicants are aware of the program. If there is evidence of awareness, then the agency must consider other reasons that the grant program is underutilized. When necessary and allowed, the agency may adjust grant program parameters to encourage greater participation. For example, with the Sports Tourism Advertising & Recruitment (STAR), the agency engaged in discussions with both the South Carolina Recreation & Parks Association and South Carolina Sports Alliance in FY 19 to determine the cause for the underutilization of this grant. Based on these discussions, the agency determined that its requirement that STAR grants may only be awarded to units of local government proved to be both restrictive and problematic. Simply put, based on these discussions, the agency determined that sports event recruitment was primarily performed by designated tourism marketing organizations, such as Convention & Visitors Bureaus. Moreover, units of local government not actively involved in sports event recruitment were often reluctant to partner with tourism marketing organizations for the purpose of securing STAR grants. Therefore, the agency removed this restriction, allowing both units of local government and tourism marketing organizations to apply directly for STAR Grant funds – a solution amenable to all potential grantees. In addition, the agency broadened the scope of eligible events and types of allowable expenses to ensure that the program could be used by both developed and rural destinations.

The agency conducted a similar analysis of the Undiscovered SC Grant program in the current fiscal year. Based on this analysis, the agency determined that many local governments were unaware of the program and that increased outreach was needed to encourage more local governments to apply. The agency then engaged relevant statewide associations, such as the Municipal Association and Association of Counties, to share the grant opportunity with their respective members. The result was a substantial increase in the number of Letters of Intent in FY 20 compared to previous years. In past years, the agency would typically receive 2 – 3 Letters of Intent. In the current fiscal year, the agency received eight Letters of Intent for the program.

In the Request for Information about Committee Recommendations report, the agency has indicated this recommendation as ongoing and without an anticipated completion date because this analysis of grant advertising (and overall program) effectiveness is a routine activity for the agency that must be and is conducted on a routine basis. Ultimately, the agency views this analysis activity as an integral part of the grants administration process – one that must be conducted on a continual basis in order to ensure that these programs provide their intended benefits to visitors and residents of South Carolina.

Report Recommendation #3 (Perform a cost/benefit analysis of offering online, virtual tours of state parks) – Additional Comments

Subsequent to the agency's House Legislative Oversight Committee review, SCPRT began to explore opportunities to develop virtual reality experiences. While the agency did not conduct a formal cost/benefit analysis, it did work with its advertising agency of record to determine the costs of developing virtual reality tours.

Initially, the agency explored costs associated with contract services for virtual reality development, but ultimately found that this would be cost-prohibitive, as each virtual reality tour would cost \$100,000 or more, depending on the length of the tour. The agency then explored opportunities to purchase equipment, such as 360° video cameras, and conduct recording for virtual reality tours in-house. This presented the agency with a much more affordable option, approximately \$25,000 to develop the first virtual tour (not including post-production/editing costs), with a reduction in cost for subsequent virtual tour development.

The agency has already begun creating a virtual reality tour for hiking to the top of Table Rock Mountain. This virtual tour is expected to be completed by the end of FY 20 and has been funded through donations to the State Parks Service. Following that, the agency plans to create similar virtual tours of the Hunting Island Lighthouse and kayaking on the Catawba River at Landsford Canal State Park. Once this initial set of virtual tours is completed, the agency will then plan for future virtual tour development.

In addition to providing these virtual tours on-site at each respective park for park visitors with limited mobility, the agency is currently working to determine how best to make these tours available to the broader public. The agency does not intend to conduct a formal cost/benefit analysis, but does agree that providing these experiences is beneficial, especially for residents or visitors who have an interest in State Parks, but have limitations that prevent them from enjoying these experiences personally.