Constructing Urban Youth Outreach Strategies in Urban-Proximate Parks

Cassidy Jones & Matt Brownlee
(cassidy.jones@utah.edu) (matthew.brownlee@hsc.utah.edu)
Parks, Recreation, & Tourism
University of Utah
Overview

- Purpose
- Background
- Research Approach—5 phases
- Future Research
- Questions
How can the NPS interface with urban-dwelling youth in a sustained, strategic manner?

- Timpanogos Cave National Monument
- Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program
SWOT Analysis

Analysis tool that allows a group to identify and assess positive and negative factors that influence a dynamic objective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbr.</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>Internal factors that positively influence likelihood of success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
<td>Internal factors that negatively influence likelihood of success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>External factors that positively influence likelihood of success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Threats</td>
<td>External factors that negatively influence likelihood of success.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The NPS Centennial

Connecting People to Parks

• “Develop and nurture lifelong connections between the public and parks—especially for young people—through a continuum of engaging recreational, educational, volunteer, and work experiences.”

• “Connect urban communities to parks, trails, waterways, and community green spaces that give people access to fun outdoor experiences close to home.” (NPS 2011)
Salt Lake City &
The Wasatch Front

• Approx. 2 million residents
• 2/3 population of the state
• One of the fastest growing urban areas in the US
(Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, University of Utah 2015; Metropolitan Policy Program, Brookings Institution 2008; Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel Utah Legislature 2014; Wasatch Front Regional Council 2016)

• One park, one NPS program
Census: Utah is nation's fastest-growing state

Utah is Still the Youngest State in the U.S.

Utah is home to one of America's most youthful states, which contributes to the state's vibrant workforce and active lifestyle.

How Do We Compare With the U.S.?

Utah continued to report the highest birth rate in the U.S. with 16.95 live births per 1,000 total population in 2015. The preliminary U.S. birth rate in 2015 of 12.9 per 1,000 population was considerably lower. The U.S. rate increased from the 2014 rate of 12.5.
Research Approach

1. Gathering context information
2. Conducting and processing a SWOT analysis
3. Identifying strategic themes
4. Composing strategies
5. Making recommendations

**Purpose:** How can the NPS on the Wasatch Front interface with youth in the Salt Lake City Jordan River District in a sustained, strategic manner?
Phase 1: Gathering Context Information

School Focus Groups

Community Organization Interviews
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hands-on material for classroom use are appealing in a very text and photo-oriented education setting</td>
<td>e.g. “teaching toolkits,” specimens, tactile props, lesson plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to learn from experts is appealing to both teachers and students</td>
<td>Not all teachers have strong science backgrounds and would appreciate hosting an NPS professional or utilizing an NPS lesson plan to teach curriculum. Students appreciate seeing NPS outreach presence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and time for out-of-the-classroom experiences present challenges to teachers</td>
<td>Transportation is cost-prohibitive. Walkable access to nearby nature or other learning sites is inhibited by Westside geography. Technology (e.g., Google Tours) is a good alternative to on-site visits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New teachers face numerous accessibility barriers</td>
<td>High teacher turn-over means lack of knowledge about systems for taking advantage of opportunities (e.g., field trip availability and teaching toolkits are reserved by more experienced teachers, namely on the Eastside). Communication from district science coordinators could help mitigate these gaps in knowledge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social studies content/time is lacking in classrooms</td>
<td>Integrating geography, history, and social studies with science or math in outreach programming is appealing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mentoring can be successful in urban communities</td>
<td>e.g., Utah Museum of Natural History “Youth Teaching Youth” program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time considerations are prohibitive of outdoor recreation participation</td>
<td>Time for out-of-the-classroom outdoor recreation experiences is lacking in many areas of youth’s lives (e.g., in class, after school, during family leisure time which is usually late at night or on the weekend). Outreach can be a reasonable alternative to out-of-the-classroom outdoor recreation.</td>
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</table>
Phase 2: Conducting and Processing a SWOT Analysis

National Park Service focus group—Timpanogos Cave National Monument and Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance Program staff
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
|          | • Desire of staff and management to provide product/service **
|          | • Innovative thinking
|          | • Good reputation of NPS
|          | • Geographic location of TICA and RTCA
|          | • Strong existing TICA youth programs *
|          | • Strong existing partnerships
|          | • Limited and changeable funding for staff **
|          | • Distance between TICA and urban center
|          | • Seasonality of TICA operations *
|          | • Limited connectivity in the park
|          | • Limited physical space
|          | • Lack of reliable partners
|          | • Managing expectations of NPS
|          | • Transportation mode and time
|          | • Staff language capacity
|          | • Climate of uncertainty

<table>
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<tr>
<th>External</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
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<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
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</table>
|          | • TICA’s distance learning program
|          | • Adopting a scaffolding model
|          | • Forming a cohesive strategy with other agencies and partners **
|          | • Establishing and presenting a defined product/service *
|          | • Pursuing partnerships with existing MOUs
|          | • School district community liaisons
|          | • Getting involved with proposed environmental education centers
|          | • Identifying specific NPS product/service **
|          | • Understanding what the community wants and offering a relevant product/service
|          | • Difficulty of coordinating outreach efforts
|          | • Curriculum standards and testing pressures
|          | • Willingness of schools and teachers to partner *
|          | • Lack of a strategy for outreach
|          | • Changes in administration
|          | • Reaching “significant others” |
Phase 3: Identifying Strategic Themes

Combining associated SWOT factors and considering context

**Strengths**
3: Good reputation of the National Park Service as a desirable partner and a positive uniformed presence

**Weaknesses**
3: Seasonality of TICA operations makes it difficult to retain staff for continued training and makes it challenging to develop and sustain partnerships
7: Managing misaligned and/or conflated expectations of NPS

**Opportunities**
3: Forming a cohesive strategy with other agencies and partners (important partners include: Jordan River Commission, Backman Elementary, Sorenson Unity Center, Boys & Girls Clubs, Bureau of Land Management, ISEE**)
5: Pursuing partnerships with groups that already have Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the National Park Service (e.g. Boys & Girls Clubs of America, YMCA)

**Threats**
5: Willingness of schools and specific teachers to partner
3: Difficulty of coordinating outreach efforts with other agencies and organizations
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Concept-Level Strategic Themes</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Whole Community Engagement</strong>—Due to a lack of cultural and familial context for outdoor recreation activities, an absence of employees who demographically represent the youth population, and the lack of autonomy of youth to visit places independently, there is a need to engage families and communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum</strong>—Due to limited teacher time, testing pressures, a dearth of middle-level resources, and the nature of student interest, there is a need to integrate social studies content and social justice themes into education about protected areas.</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Partnerships</strong>—Due to the potential for partnerships to enhance impact and prevent replication of services, there is a need to establish and maintain partnerships with flexible and sustainable objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scaffolding</strong>—Due to the fact that maintaining communication with educators is challenging (especially considering Title 1 turnover) and continuation and repetition of experiences (learning and recreation) is vital, a structured plan for sustained outreach (e.g. scaffolding) is needed.</td>
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</tbody>
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**Schools & Community Youth Organization Context**

**CONCEPT THEME 3**

**PARTNERSHIPS**

- Important to determine a good way to utilize partnerships and not replicate services
- Important to maintain flexible and sustainable objectives

**Due to the potential for partnerships to enhance impact and prevent replication of services, there is a need to establish and maintain partnerships with flexible and sustainable objectives.**
## Phase 4: Composing Strategies

**Associated SWOT factors analyzed in various directions**

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<td>Strengths-Opportunities</td>
<td>Maximizing strengths to take advantage of opportunities.</td>
<td>How can strengths be utilized to take advantage of associated opportunities?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>S-T</strong></td>
<td>Strengths-Threats</td>
<td>Maximizing strengths to overcome threats</td>
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<td><strong>W-O</strong></td>
<td>Weaknesses-Opportunities</td>
<td>Overcoming weaknesses to take advantage of opportunities</td>
<td>What is needed to overcome weaknesses in order to take advantage of associated opportunities?</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>W-T</strong></td>
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<td>How can weaknesses be minimized to overcome associated threats?</td>
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**CT3: Partnerships**

**Strengths**
- S3: Good reputation of NPS
- S6: Strong existing partnerships

**Opportunities**
- O3: Forming a cohesive strategy with other agencies and partners
- O5: Pursuing partnerships with existing MOUs

**Strategy:** Pursue partnerships with local branches of national organizations with existing MOUs as part of a broad cohesive strategy with other agencies and partners, some of which have existing strong relationships with the NPS while others may be drawn into a strategic group by the good reputation of the NPS.

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**CT4: Scaffolding**

**Strengths**
- S4: Geographic location of TICA & RTCA
- S5: Strong existing TICA youth programs
- S6: Strong existing partnerships

**Opportunities**
- O2: Adopting a scaffolding model
- O3: Forming a cohesive strategy with other agencies and partners

**Strategy:** Adopt a scaffolding model that maximizes strong existing partnerships and youth programs and connects NPS efforts with other agencies’ and organizations’ resources in a manner that strategically takes advantage of TICA’s and RTCA’s location near many potential partners and proximate to a large urban youth population.
Phase 5: Making Recommendations

**NPS key staff evaluated strategies and identified top 2 strategies per analysis direction**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>S-O strategies</strong></th>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>CM 1</td>
<td>Take advantage of staff innovative thinking to identify a product/service that fulfills NPS objectives, is suitable and adaptable to curriculum standards, and addresses other needs expressed in context interviews (i.e. the need for and interest in social studies content and social justice themes).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD 2</td>
<td>Pursue partnerships with local branches of national organizations with existing MOUs as part of a broad cohesive strategy with other agencies and partners, some of which have existing strong relationships with the NPS while others may be drawn into strategic group by the good reputation of the NPS.</td>
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<td>MD 1 CM 2</td>
<td>Adopt a scaffolding model that maximizes strong existing partnerships and youth programs and connects NPS efforts with other agencies’ and organizations’ resources in a manner that strategically takes advantage of TICA’s and RTCA’s location near many potential partners and proximate to a large urban youth population.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MD 2</td>
<td>(a) Maximize strong existing partnerships to ease the burden of coordinating outreach efforts. (b) Lean on the good reputation of the NPS to encourage educators to partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD 1 CM 1</td>
<td>To form a coordinated outreach plan using a scaffolding structure, take advantage of strong existing TICA youth programs and partnerships as well as the geographic proximity of TICA and RTCA to other potential partners and a large youth population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CM 2</td>
<td>(a) Take advantage of staff desire and innovative thinking to identify NPS product/service that is suitable and adaptable to curriculum standards and can be delivered in-person. (b) In order to encourage educators to partner, take advantage of the ability of TICA and RTCA staff to travel to geographically advantageous locations and capitalize on/reinforce the good reputation of the National Park Service by offering in-person experience.</td>
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CURRICULUM STRATEGY: IDENTIFY A PRODUCT OR SERVICE THAT FLEXIBLY MEETS CURRICULUM STANDARDS AND OTHER EDUCATOR NEEDS.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF STAFF INNOVATIVE THINKING TO IDENTIFY A PRODUCT/SERVICE THAT FULFILLS NPS OBJECTIVES, IS SUITABLE AND ADAPTABLE TO CURRICULUM STANDARDS, AND ADDRESSES OTHER NEEDS EXPRESSED IN CONTEXT INTERVIEWS (E.G. THE NEED FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CONTENT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE THEMES).

GOAL: Identify NPS outreach objectives and themes that are broadly adaptable to curriculum standards.

OBJECTIVES:
- Create an NPS working group of TICA and RTCA staff.
- Working group identifies key NPS outreach objectives.
- Working group identifies key NPS interpretive themes for programming.
- TICA & RTCA administration confirm outreach objectives and program interpretive themes.

GOAL: Assess needs of educators to in order to offer an NPS product/service that encourages them to partner.

OBJECTIVES:
- Form two focus groups (one elementary level, one middle and high school levels) of focus area educators.
- NPS working group facilitates focus groups to understand needs of educators.
  - **Recommendation:** Revisit themes identified in context focus groups (i.e. the need for social studies content and social justice themes, etc.).
- NPS working group shares findings with steering committee for scaffolding program to guide creation of programs to be offered by the NPS and partners. (See Scaffolding Strategy 1.)

GOAL: Take advantage of staff innovative thinking to create a product/service that fulfills NPS objectives, is suitable and adaptable to curriculum standards, and addresses other educator needs.

OBJECTIVES:
- NPS working group creates outlines for NPS learning experiences that are flexible according to grade-level and educator needs.
- Working group sustainably documents outreach program instructions and processes.
- Purchase and store relevant supplies.
Conclusion

CHECKLIST for URBAN YOUTH OUTREACH

CONCEPT STRATEGIES

SCAFFOLDING

1. Adopt a scaffolding model of strategic partnerships in order to efficiently offer outreach programming to nearby urban youth.
   - Establish a partnership of organizations/ agencies for delivering natural and cultural resource education and outdoor learning experiences.
   - Create a scaffolding structure of outreach programs established according to grade level.
   - Construct and maintain a communication system with educators about scheduling and supporting outreach programs.

2. Take advantage of existing and potential partnerships in order to reach nearby urban youth with scaffolded outreach programming.
   - Take advantage of existing NPS youth programs and partnerships.
   - Take advantage of geographic proximity to potential partners.
   - Take advantage of geographic proximity to urban youth population.

3. Stabilize NPS outreach capacity in order to participate in a scaffolded outreach program partnership.
   - Secure long term staffing for systems management of outreach programs and partnership development.
   - Secure staff to facilitate NPS outreach programs.
   - Construct a funding plan for staff and program operation.

WHOLE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Build relationships with community partners with the ability to effectively reach families.

- Build relationships with reliable partners with knowledge of the community.
- Reach out to groups with mechanisms in place for understanding community needs.
- Build relationships with partners with established ways of reaching parents and families.
Acknowledgements

Timpanogos Cave National Monument
- Cami McKinney
- Jim Ireland
- Annie Brantley
- BJ Cluff
- Sheila Hunt

NPS Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance Program
- Marcy DeMillion
- Betsy Byrne
- Brandon Stockton

Jordan River Commission
- Laura Hanson

Northwest Middle School
Backman Elementary School
Tracy Aviary
Splore
YouthWorks
Future Research

• NPS urban engagement
• Urban-proximate parks
• Park self-assessment scorecard

Cassidy Jones
cassidy.jones@utah.edu
(435) 671-6617
Parks, Recreation, & Tourism
University of Utah

Matt Brownlee
matthew.brownlee@hsc.utah.edu
(801) 585-7239
Parks, Recreation, & Tourism
University of Utah