
**CIVIC
RESEARCH
SERVICES,
INC.**

Annual Evaluation Report
Access to Recreation Initiative
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INTRODUCTION

Brief History of the Initiative

The Access to Recreation Initiative (Initiative) began in 2006 with plans to utilize four key strategies to heighten awareness of universal accessibility in recreational settings and to promote better practice. The strategies include:

- ◆ Grants to Michigan community foundations (CFs) to convene their communities in support of accessibility in recreation, construct model recreational facilities, and fund an endowment to maintain the construction project and support future accessibility endeavors.
- ◆ Grant to CFs in Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois for these same purposes.
- ◆ A grant to the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association Foundation (MRPAF) to train its members in universal access practices and options, issue grants to construct state-of-the-art recreational facilities, and issue grants for the purchase of needed accessibility equipment. A foundational effort to develop criteria identifying universally accessible recreational facilities was also embedded in the MRPAF strategy, although of service to the broader Initiative.
- ◆ A grant to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (Michigan DNR) to upgrade selected park facilities and to amend the application for its primary grant program for local parks programs, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF), to recognize and reward applicants that propose universally accessible projects.

A fifth strategy focused on public policy and sustainable change was later added, and involves grants to grantmaker associations in Indiana, Ohio, and Indiana, and comparable staff-supported work in Michigan. The grantmaker associations and Initiative staff are tasked with 1) creating policy advisory committees in each state, 2) working with these committees to establish public policy and communications strategies, 3) hosting in-state events in 2008, and 4) participating in a four-state regional conference in 2009.

The initial proposal to the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) outlined a set of evaluation questions to be answered via self-evaluation over the course of the Initiative. However, in the Initiative's first year, a series of management and capacity challenges emerged that ultimately resulted in the selection of a new Initiative manager. The new Initiative manager chose to contract evaluation to Civic Research Services, Inc. (CRS). CRS has also assisted with day-to-day administration of portions of the grant during the past year.

Evaluation Questions

The original evaluation questions for the Initiative, devised at the time the proposal was submitted to WKKF, included some embedded expectations about the Initiative that have not held up over time. Specifically, one question was dedicated to a recognition and marketing strategy that is not currently being pursued, and one question concerned Universal Access Criteria that have not been developed. In order to better reflect the Initiative's active strategies and goals, a revised set of questions was developed to guide the evaluation, as follow:

- ◆ To what extent are training, communications, and other forms of outreach under the Initiative successful at raising awareness of universal design and building capacity to pursue it?

- ◆ What technical or logistical challenges are grantees experiencing in the course of their construction projects? What types of support are most needed?
- ◆ What strategies do community foundations (CFs) use to convene their communities around issues of inclusion in recreation? What strategies appear to be most effective?
- ◆ What are CFs learning about effective leadership on the issue of access to recreation? What roles do they envision themselves playing after the grant-funded work is complete?
- ◆ What motivates recreational agencies at the state and local levels to pursue a policy of accessibility beyond ADA standards? How can a greater number of parks and recreation departments be encouraged and supported to pursue accessibility?
- ◆ To what extent did the grants to CFs, grantmaker associations, MRPA members, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) result in long-term changes in policy or practice that will have sustained impact? What types of policy or practice changes are most needed to improve access to recreation? What are the most prominent barriers and opportunities that grantees experienced in addressing policy and practice?
- ◆ How can grantees and other interested parties collaborate in pursuit of broad change in policy and practice?

Data Sources and Evaluation Activities

Data sources for the evaluation to date are limited, and include the following:

- ◆ Reports:
 - Midterm reports provided by MDNR pursuant to grant requirements
 - Semiannual reports provided by CF grantees pursuant to grant requirements
- ◆ Meetings: Onsite participation in policy advisory group meetings in each state, in which grantee updates were provided and joint strategies discussed
- ◆ Site visits: Visits have been conducted with 15 of 22 CF grantees (to date), involving interviews with grantee project managers, parks and recreation partners, advisory group members, foundation board members (where appropriate), and other persons with insight into the grant (as was appropriate to each grantee's circumstances and approach)
- ◆ Surveys:
 - An online survey of participants in the MDNR "Hands-On" Accessibility Event of June 2008
 - Onsite evaluation of the MRPA Inclusion Seminar of February 2009

Additional data collection is planned for the future, including but not limited to:

- ◆ Additional direct feedback in the form of surveys, onsite feedback forms, or other methods on training offered through the MRPA grant
- ◆ Annual and final reports submitted by MRPA grantees, pursuant to grant requirements

FINDINGS

Evaluation Question #1: To what extent are training, communications, and other forms of outreach under the Initiative successful at raising awareness of universal design and building capacity to pursue it?

To date, the A2R Initiative has offered a range of formal and informal opportunities for training and technical assistance and has also engaged in some outreach. **Formal training opportunities** have included the MDNR's "Hands-On Accessibility Day" in June 2008 at Island Lake State Recreation Area in Brighton (Livingston County), the MRPA Inclusion Seminar in February 2009 in Dearborn, and National Center on Accessibility (NCA) training in Bloomington, Indiana (sponsored by A2R for A2R grantees). **Technical assistance** has been extended by Cynthia Burkhour (for Michigan community foundation grantees and Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund applicants), NCA (for community foundation grantees in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio), and consultant Mark Trieglaff (for MRPA "Accessible by Design" grantees). **Informal education and assistance** has been a feature of some elements of the work of state grantmaker associations participating in A2R policy efforts.

FORMAL TRAINING

Participant evaluations were conducted for the MDNR's "Hands-On Accessibility Day" and the MRPA Inclusion Seminar. A brief summary of results is provided below and stand-alone reports are attached.

Hands-On Accessibility Day. In June 2008, the Accessibility Advisory Council (AAC) for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) hosted an event at Island Lake State Recreation Area for a predominantly MDNR audience. The event was designed to allow attendees "hands-on" use of adaptive equipment for hunting and featured adaptive crossbows, rifles, and mobility equipment. Vendors were available to help attendees try the equipment and to answer their questions. Seventy-four individuals attended the event and 30 responded to the survey. Sixteen respondents self-identified as MDNR staff; 8 as MDNR leadership or policymakers; 7 as a member of the AAC, 5 as a person with a disability, and 3 as an "other" recreational professional.¹

Overall, all respondents said the event was at least "somewhat valuable" and 78% found it "very valuable." When asked to describe the most important thing they learned or experienced, attendees' most common response focused on the range of adaptive equipment available to people with disabilities. Eight survey participants expressed surprise that there were so many options, often commenting that they had not been aware of this market. The next most common theme (6 respondents) was focused specifically on the adaptive equipment. Four respondents' comments revealed new appreciation for the significance of accessibility issues in recreation.

Several respondents felt the event could be improved by involving more people (specifically, members of the public and/or the media) and by improving the physical arrangements at the event to provide easier access for those wishing to use the equipment.

All respondents had at least "some" interest in future, similar events and 70% were "very interested." The most common recommendations for other types of adaptive equipment to try "hands-on" were fishing

¹ Responses exceed the count of completed surveys because more than one category applied to some individuals.

equipment (7), personal mobility devices and other off-road mobility options (5), camping equipment (3), boating equipment (3), and additional hunting equipment (2).

The survey explored respondents' thoughts about policy changes that MDNR should pursue related to accessibility as well as general educational needs around accessibility. However, these questions did not elicit significant content with clear guidance for the AAC. The most commonly mentioned policy issue mentioned by survey participants was the collection of issues related to use of personal mobility devices and adaptive motorized equipment in MDNR facilities.

The full survey results for the hands-on event can be viewed in Appendix A.

MRPA Inclusion Seminar. On February 3, 2009, MRPA hosted an Inclusion Seminar in conjunction with its annual conference. The pre-conference, half-day seminar attracted more than 100 attendees and featured presentations on people-first language and the differences between universal design and designing for ADA² compliance; funding available through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF); the Active Communities program of the Michigan Fitness Foundation; a brief presentation by a staff member of the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living (CIL) on the roles people with disabilities can play in recreational planning; and a panel presentation featuring A2R grantees.

A total of 44 event evaluations were completed and returned at the end of the seminar. Of these, 49% were MRPA members and 46% were connected to an A2R grant (grantee, staff, advisory board, etc.). Attendees rated their overall satisfaction, on average, at a 4.2 on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high). Eighty-three percent agreed that they would recommend the event to others while 12% were neutral and 5% disagreed. Only 26% agreed that "most of the information presented today was new to me," while 45% were neutral and 29% disagreed. "Most valued" elements of the event included the NCA presentation on universal design and its distinctions from ADA compliance; the panel discussion featuring A2R grantees and "on-the-ground" projects, and "examples" provided through both of these sessions.

An analysis of attendees' motivations for attending showed that expectations and desires were diverse, with some attendees interested in "how-to" information such as design standards, some interested in "universal design 101," some interested in funding options, and many expressing idiosyncratic interests related to work they are pursuing in their home communities. Sixty-six percent of attendees felt they experienced the benefit they were seeking, 25% experienced it "somewhat," 7% "a little," and 2% "not at all." Recommendations related to this event included doing more to tap the emerging expertise of leading-edge practitioners in Michigan through interactive sessions that strive to develop collective knowledge.

The full report on feedback collected for the Inclusion Seminar can be viewed in Appendix B.

NCA On-Site Universal Design Training. Several grantees or their partners have attended the National Center on Accessibility's week-long training in Bloomington, Indiana, and many positive comments about the worth of the training have been received via e-mail or through grantees' semiannual reports. No formal evaluation of the training has been pursued under A2R.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The most common form of support and outreach under A2R to date has been one-on-one technical consultation for grantees and applicants. Most of those receiving such technical assistance and providing

² Americans with Disabilities Act.

any feedback on it have been very pleased with the quality of support provided by Cindy Burkhour, Mark Trieglaff, and the National Center on Accessibility. Several grantees have credited the technical consultants with important assistance in working with their architects and designers, who frequently claimed knowledge of universal design, but whose plans revealed an ADA-based understanding of accessibility.

WORKSHOPS

The Indiana Grantmakers Alliance, the Donors Forum (Illinois), and the Ohio Grantmakers Forum have each held workshops with their advisory committees, grantees, and in some cases, other interested parties focused on universal design and opportunities to advance it in the recreational context. Only limited data of an evaluative nature has been reported; however, A2R evaluation support participated in sessions in Ohio and Illinois.

- ◆ The Indiana Grantmakers Alliance sent two presenters to the Self Advocates Becoming Empowered 2008 National Conference in Indianapolis in September 2008. Over 1,000 self-advocates were in attendance.
- ◆ The Indiana Grantmakers Alliance also sent a panel to the Indiana Parks and Recreation Association annual conference in Bloomington during January 2009. The panel featured an A2R community foundation, parks and recreation partner, and an NCA representative, and feedback forms collected on site featured ratings of between 4.07 and 4.53 on five-point scales measuring various dimensions of worth and satisfaction.
- ◆ The Ohio Grantmakers Forum hosted a pre-conference session in coordination with the organization's annual event in Cleveland in October 2008. While several conference attendees registered for the session, only a handful of individuals not connected to A2R attended.
- ◆ The Donor's Forum in Illinois hosted a November 2008 event in Kankakee in conjunction with a regular meeting of the Illinois Association of Community Foundations. While not formally evaluated, the event was well attended by both A2R grantees and other interested Illinois CFs, and appeared to be very well received.

Evaluation Question #2: What technical or logistical challenges are grantees experiencing in the course of their construction projects? What types of support are most needed?

As of May 2008, the time of the last annual evaluation report, several grantees were reporting a variety of technical and logistical challenges as they finalized plans and began implementation of their construction projects. Those challenges included:

- ◆ Unanticipated regulatory barriers or site limitations causing time or money complications.
- ◆ Scope expansions and cost overruns.
- ◆ Slow public processes and public-sector staff turnover.
- ◆ Difficulty identifying and procuring appropriate equipment or materials.
- ◆ Delays associated with large-scale, interdependent projects.
- ◆ Public resistance or inadequate base of community education.

Since the last annual evaluation report in May 2008, the vast majority of CFs' specific construction-related issues have been resolved. New, newly surfaced, or ongoing issues with the potential to affect construction timelines and products include the following:

- ◆ **Public-sector staffing and leadership issues:** The City of Algonac, associated with the St. Clair CF in Michigan, has been through two city managers since the A2R grant was received. The Superintendent of Parks in Kettering, OH (associated with the Dayton Foundation’s effort) is a National Guard reservist who has been called up to serve a year in Afghanistan. The work of the Mt. Pleasant Area CF suffered a severe setback with the unexpected death last fall of the city’s parks department director.
- ◆ **Coordination delays:** A few projects or project components are still dependent on broader design and construction efforts that are delayed.
- ◆ **Conflict with public-sector partners:** In Monroe County, Michigan, DuPage County, Illinois, and Oak Park, Illinois, grantees encountered situations where projects-in-process had been proposed to A2R and local stakeholders strongly resisted any change to their existing designs. These issues were ultimately worked through in DuPage County and Oak Park, although not without considerable stress and controversy. The Monroe County project was dropped.

CFs have been asked in each semiannual report to identify the types of technical assistance they need or would value from A2R. While past responses have emphasized construction-related items such as advice on equipment or materials, a “check-up” or visit once projects begin construction, training, and assistance with problems at challenging sites, these types of responses are growing increasingly infrequent. Instead, grantees are now reporting either no technical assistance needs or focusing on non-construction elements such as fundraising or peer-to-peer networking with their fellow grantees.

Evaluation Question #3: What strategies do community foundations use to convene their communities around issues of inclusion in recreation? What strategies appear to be most effective?

CFs in the four states are using a variety of strategies to convene their communities. Ongoing analysis of semiannual reports has found the following strategies to be most prevalent:

- ◆ **Empowering advisory committees:** Fourteen CFs have reported use of this strategy, which generally entails seating an advisory committee with representation from parks, the CF, and disability service organizations and empowering this committee to serve as the lead source of guidance and feedback for the architect designing the grant-funded recreational project(s). In several instances where CFs are working on numerous construction projects, a separate advisory group or subcommittee of a larger panel has been created for each project. Some advisory boards have a broader scope than includes planning and implementation related to convening, education, policy, and fundraising.
- ◆ **Presentations:**
 - *Presentations to municipal commissions and boards:* Ten CFs have reported use of this strategy. In most instances, CFs appear to be requesting the opportunity to present in the course of regularly scheduled municipal meetings, such as county commission or township board meetings. In a few cases, CFs and their partners are communicating with the public through public-notice hearings at municipal board meetings.
 - *Presentations to service clubs and organizations:* Ten CFs have reported use of this strategy, generally involving PowerPoint or other types of presentations to local Lions, Kiwanis,

chamber of commerce, AMVETS, and women's organizations, as well as other service clubs and groups.

- ◆ **Publicized meetings for community input:** Seven CFs previously reported use of this strategy, although very few continue to pursue it. In most cases, it appears that CFs using this strategy scheduled meetings for the purpose of collecting public input on proposed projects and identifying community members with interest in the issues.
- ◆ **Surveys and other forms of targeted data collection:** Six CFs have reported use of this strategy, in which the CF, its partners, and/or members of the advisory committee locate prospective park users and ask directly about their needs and desires for the recreational facility being developed (and/or for local recreational options more generally).
- ◆ **Trainings:** Six CFs have reported use of this strategy, in which the CF hosts formal training on universal design, typically for parks professionals within its service area and sometimes additionally for members of the community, elected and appointed officials, and area design professionals.
- ◆ **Special events:**
 - *Groundbreakings and grand openings.* Several CFs have reported groundbreaking events and most have held, or are in the process of planning, significant “grand opening” events.
 - *Annual donor events.* Four CFs have engaged in outreach at an annual CF dinner or other event for donors.
 - *Participation in local cultural events.* Two CFs have sponsored or participated in events of local significance.
 - *Simulation events.* Three CFs have hosted events that simulate visual and/or mobility impairments, engaging attendees in recreational activities such as wheelchair sports.
- ◆ **Student and youth events and contests:** Two CFs have developed student essay contests, one hosted a kids’ “dream and design” effort in which children with and without disabilities planned a playscape together, and another is developing a children’s book.

Other strategies reported by individual grantees include working with public relations students at the local university, creating a short film, recommending and sponsoring nationally recognized speakers for local events, direct corporate outreach, working with a citizen’s committee composed of residents adjacent to the grant-funded project site, a photo exhibit of people with disabilities engaged in recreational activities, and development of a Facebook page for an A2R-funded facility.

Those CFs that have already attempted to host their own community-input meetings have not reported much success, noting limited turnout and difficulty reaching persons with disabilities. In contrast, those working intensively with empowered advisory committees have often described these processes as quite vibrant and constructive, allowing parks representatives and persons with disabilities, or their service organizations, to learn about each others’ needs and imperatives and to learn about universal design options together.

Some of the unique and creative convening efforts fielded by individual CF grantees include the following:

- ◆ The Community Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County is collaborating with the local arts community to design a donor recognition wall for its playscape, and hopes to involve artists with disabilities in that process.

- ◆ The Community Foundation of St. Clair County developed a professional photo exhibit featuring people with disabilities engaged in their favorite recreational activities. Interviews with the subjects of the photography were used to develop written material to accompany the photographs which focused on the individuals as persons with disabilities, their goals and life pursuits, and their perspectives on the experiences captured on film. The photos were assembled into collages and displayed for two months at an area art gallery, Studio 1219. An opening-night party attended by the subjects of the photos as well as other participants in the A2R project was widely marketed to the community and was highly successful, with CF representatives noting many attendees beyond their “usual suspects.”
- ◆ The Harrison County CF is planning a multi-day “grand opening” event in June 2009 that will be aggressively marketed throughout the county. Students from nearby Spaulding University are leading an effort to develop intercept surveys for persons with disabilities and their caregivers to solicit feedback on the numerous accessibility improvements in area parks and to generate ideas for additional improvements that would be valued.

While many thoughtful events and efforts have been developed through Initiative grantees to date, some grantees are reporting very limited convening activity, and considerable resources remain in grantees’ convening budgets.

Evaluation Question #4: What are community foundations learning about effective leadership on the issue of access to recreation? What roles do they envision themselves playing after the grant-funded work is complete?

Community foundation representatives were asked several questions that touch on the issues of leadership, partnership, and future plans in the course of site visits in fall 2008. In two instances, CFs have served as the visible, recognized leaders of their A2R efforts, largely because local parks programs lacked any staff. In a few additional instances, CFs appear to have consciously avoided a leadership posture, typically in deference to parks or community leaders with whom the A2R-funded project or concept originated. However, in most cases CFs have developed viable partnerships with their parks and recreation partners, with CFs often leading efforts related to convening, fundraising, and marketing while parks and recreation partners led design and construction efforts.

Several CFs, particularly in Indiana and Illinois, credited past or current capacity-building grants with preparing them to assume the leadership roles anticipated in their A2R grants. In Indiana, grantees spoke of past investments by the Lilly Endowment through its Giving Indiana Funds for Tomorrow (GIFT) program, a long-term effort to build capacity and sustainability in Indiana community foundations. In Illinois, all grantees are participating in the Grand Victoria Foundation’s ongoing Communityworks effort, focused on building leadership capacity in the areas of early childhood education, workforce development, and land use.

Most CFs perceived outreach and education to be a first need in their communities. Several have expressed considerable pride in their A2R efforts and a sense of strong fit between the work and their missions. Often, CFs describe their roles as early promoters of accessibility, beginning with the particular projects funded by their A2R grants, but with future opportunities to expand into new projects and relationships with other municipalities in their service areas. They often recognized that they offer their parks and recreation partners credibility, connections, access to financial resources, and public relations and marketing skills. In a few instances, advisory boards or steering committees convened by CFs appear

well poised to provide future leadership on accessible recreation because they have developed into thoughtful groups that are sharing resources and experiences and collaborating to advance accessible recreation across municipal lines and sectors.

When asked about their intentions after the close of their A2R grants, most CFs emphasized the opportunities their endowment funds will provide for a continuing presence in accessibility issues in their communities. Several CFs also mentioned a broader awareness of accessibility developed through the A2R grant that will influence their grantmaking in other arenas. Three CFs noted a particular interest within their Youth Advisory Councils (YACs) that may help to shape the CF's future role.

“There won't ever be a playground that comes to us where we don't ask about accessibility.”
-Community Foundation Executive Director

Evaluation Question #5: What motivates recreational agencies at the state and local levels to pursue a policy of accessibility beyond ADA standards? How can a greater number of parks and recreation departments be encouraged and supported to pursue accessibility?

In the course of conducting a scan of Michigan's policy environment around accessibility in recreation, Jaclyn Miel-Uken, then a fellow at the Council of Michigan Foundations, found that the Michigan DNR began developing an interest in accessibility around 2002. New staff argued that the Department needed to conduct itself like a business: appropriations from Michigan's general fund to DNR had fallen to near zero, leaving the department wholly dependent on customer revenues to support its programs and services. Staff identified two potential customer groups that DNR could pursue in order to build its customer base: persons with disabilities and at-risk youth. The DNR created an accessibility team with membership from each of the organization's departments, and in 2004 this group completed a strategic plan focused on accessibility. In 2007, the DNR director established an Accessibility Advisory Council (AAC) composed of state agency representatives and community-based organizations to help the meet the objectives of the strategic plan and counsel the department on new strategies.

Similar scans for Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio did not identify comparable activities or interests in these other states' natural resource agencies; while each has made some provision for accessibility, Michigan's proactive approach and interest appears unique among the four states, perhaps because of the agency's unusual dependence on customer-generated revenues. However, Michigan's experience may suggest opportunities to persuade other state's natural resource agencies that an emphasis on accessibility is in their own self interests.

Leadership at the local level is spurred by a variety of factors:

- ◆ **A champion:** Local champions are often persons with a disability or family members of a person with a disability. Grantees in several sites noted such leadership from individuals serving on their governing boards or as local elected officials and sometimes traced the idea for the A2R-funded facility to a supportive board member or official.
- ◆ **View of parks as an economic development asset:** Some communities view their parks programs as economic development opportunities or assets. Within these communities, there is great readiness to

pursue accessibility as well as recognition that making community parks available to a broader segment of the population will enhance their value to the community and status as an asset.

- ◆ **Desire for professional development and stature:** In the course of site visits, it became clear that being involved in a cutting-edge accessibility effort was often a source of considerable professional pride for parks staff and leadership. Some parks and recreation partners have hosted meetings of their regional peers during which they toured the new feature or facility. The association between universal design and professionalism can be nurtured by statewide parks and recreation associations that feature the issue in their conference offerings. Employees of the Indiana State Park system routinely participate in NCA training to similar effect: accessibility is considered an important element of professional training and an important value for state park facilities.

Governance of local parks varies quite significantly from state to state. In Indiana, municipal parks are governed by appointed, volunteer parks boards and were often described in grantee sites as somewhat disengaged and focused on fiscal more so than programmatic issues. Parks compete with general local services for funding. In Ohio, there are both municipal park systems and Metro Park systems, with Metro Parks organized as separate political subdivisions and governed by appointed, volunteer boards and municipal parks systems generally responsive to local elected officials. In Michigan, municipal parks programs may be governed by an appointed or volunteer parks and recreation commission with all formal authority held by municipal government; parks programs may be supported by dedicated millages where adopted by voters. Finally, in Illinois, local parks are generally governed and staffed through parks districts, a separate layer of government with elected leadership and dedicated tax revenues. Most urban areas also have a special recreation association (SRA), an additional layer of governance typically formed of two or more parks districts with dedicated tax revenues to support inclusive programming. The differences in the form of local parks governance result in some differences in the dynamics of support and leadership for universally designed facilities. Professional recognition and stature appeared to be an important motivation for leadership on universal design in Indiana and Illinois, whereas in Michigan and Ohio, economic development motivations and orientations were relatively more common.

Evaluation Question #6: To what extent did the grants to community foundations, grantmaker associations, MRPA members, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources result in long-term changes in policy or practice that will have sustained impact? What types of policy or practice changes are most needed to improve access to recreation? What are the most prominent barriers and opportunities that grantees experienced in addressing policy and practice?

POLICY CHANGES

Several grantees have reported modest changes in policy or practice as a consequence of their grant-funded efforts. The most common policy changes, and most frequent targets of A2R grantees, have been efforts to embed a commitment to universal design in local five-year recreation plans.

- ◆ In Wyoming, Michigan, where a MRPAF “Accessible by Design” grant allowed for construction of a splash pad, the grantee reports that the community updated its recreation master plan to explicitly acknowledge the desirability of universal design. The community is also exploring the possibility of

creating a citizen's accessibility council. The Oak Park/River Forest CF reports that a representative from the Village of Oak Park's Universal Access Commission will be involved in all future Park District planning projects.

- ◆ The City of Midland is updating its five-year recreation plan and is emphasizing an assessment of all facilities for accessibility as well as an effort to identify opportunities to pursue universal access in city-owned facilities. In a letter to the Midland County Community Foundation, the Parks and Recreation director noted, "the Foundation's Access to Recreation endeavor goes hand in hand with the direction we are taking with our new Master Plan." The Midland County Parks and Recreation Department has similarly improved language on accessibility in its five-year plan.
- ◆ In Monroe County, representatives from City of Monroe Parks, Monroe County Parks, and the Monroe Township Parks and Recreation Committee all serve on that grantee's Access to Recreation Advisory Committee (ATRAC); the County recently approved a new five-year plan that includes a commitment to increase accessibility, which will be carried through to the organization's goals and annual work plans. Representatives of the City and Township voiced a commitment to embedding accessibility issues in their planning documents.
- ◆ Parks staff from Shelbyville, Indiana stated that universal design will be incorporated into the 2012 update of that community's five-year recreation plan.

Several grantees have also reported new commitments to the purchase or use of accessible equipment:

- ◆ The CF of St. Joseph County reports that its parks department has committed to purchasing only accessible picnic tables in the future and will replace its existing stock of tables over time.
- ◆ In Greenville, Michigan, the parks department is installing only accessible porta-johns at its facilities.
- ◆ Van Buren Township has made a commitment to buying only accessible picnic tables, grills, and fire pits in the future.
- ◆ The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is developing a new design for toilet/shower facilities at State Parks. The new design will be unisex, employing universal design principles. The revised design makes sense for park operations as well as for accessibility reasons, as it will require only one stall to be closed at a time as opposed to entire men's or women's facilities. Several State Park managers have additionally committed to purchasing only accessible picnic tables, grills, and fire pits in the future.

In Illinois, the Springfield Parks District, in partnership with the Sangamon County CF, is pursuing the establishment of a Special Recreation Association (SRA) for the area. By Illinois statute, SRAs must involve more than one Park District, so considerable negotiation is involved in the effort. In Circleville, Ohio, volunteer committees are working to pass a levy to provide permanent funding for Circleville Parks, which currently has no staff and no budget.

Two CFs have reported internal impacts on their grantmaking processes:

- ◆ The Harrison County CF reports that its grants committee has inquired about the accessibility of some recently submitted grant requests and that the A2R grant has "changed the mindset" within the Foundation
- ◆ In St. Clair County, the CF has revised its grant application to inquire of all grantees whether proposed programs and projects are barrier-free and accessible to persons of all abilities.

The most significant changes in policy and practice to date have occurred within the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The following achievements are noted:

- ◆ The Department has created an Accessibility Advisory Council (AAC) with representation from across the organization's divisions and with membership from other state agencies. The AAC has helped the Department develop a single strategy for accessibility guidelines, whereas in the past, several divisions were working separately to define accessibility standards. The AAC is also exploring changes in policy to promote better access for hunters with disabilities.
- ◆ When choosing sites for accessibility upgrades to be paid from the A2R grant, the Department used a thoughtful process of internal competition to encourage staff throughout its parks division to learn about accessibility and universal design. The Department additionally updated its Web site and improved resources available internally for learning about universal design.
- ◆ DNR selected seven state parks and/or recreation areas for upgrades with A2R funding, and at each site, more improvements were identified and designed than the budget can support. The improvements that cannot currently be funded have been built into the parks' capital improvement plans for the future, and it is expected that all improvements will be completed within five years.
- ◆ The Department used its limited federal grants for facility improvements to provide matching dollars to A2R project sites.
- ◆ In keeping with its A2R grant, the Department designed and implemented changes to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant application process to create incentives for local communities to submit proposals with accessible designs.

MOST NEEDED CHANGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Grantees' and policy advisory groups' comments and discussion suggest that the most significant barriers to progress are knowledge and information gaps. In keeping with their observations, one of the most needed and obvious changes to pursue is to encourage more parks and recreation departments to engage in ongoing, systematic consultation with people with disabilities in the course of facility design and in general recreational planning. This is a best practice that can offer some degree of compensation for lack of formal training in universal design if it opens communications channels between parks designers and people with disabilities, seniors, and others with accessibility concerns in the community. Better, more user-friendly, and more conveniently accessed resources and documents to support communities in implementing universal design are also needed. Depending on the character of local parks governance, board education may be a critical aspect of the education process.

Some parks staff interviewed in the course of site visits noted that, in communities with threshold levels of staff, planning, and organization, the five-year recreational master plan may not be the most significant avenue for the pursuit of policy change. Annual work or strategic plans—developed with reference to the five-year plan—are a more meaningful source of guidance, and it is in the course of developing annual work plans that specific actions in pursuit of improved accessibility would be articulated. Additional ideas recommended by parks personnel included:

- ◆ Addressing training in universal design in hiring, personnel, and promotion policies and in employees' professional development plans
- ◆ Addressing equipment preferences in procurement policies
- ◆ Updating boilerplate language used in RFPs and RFQs for professional consultants such as architects, designers, and engineers to clarify communication around expectations for knowledge and use of universal design practices

BARRIERS

One of the most common barriers to policy change as observed in the course of site visits is that smaller parks and recreation departments may lack formal policy, or, more commonly, may have formal policy that is limited in scope and not an important factor in the conduct of day-to-day business. In several locations receiving A2R support, the parks department consisted of fewer than five full-time staff, with several of these positions administrative or custodial in nature. While in some respects, these organizations are easier to influence and can change direction more quickly, embedding new commitments in policy that can outlast the employment of a critical staff member is not characteristic of the operations.

Barriers acknowledged by individual grantees or discussed within statewide policy advisory group meetings include the following:

- ◆ Lack of familiarity with universal design among parks and recreation professionals and elected officials
- ◆ Lack of convenient, understandable, easily accessed information about universal design
- ◆ A fragmented policymaking system in which local governments are the primary policymakers
- ◆ Perceptions that universal design is substantially more expensive
- ◆ Residual resentment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which is perceived as an unfunded mandate, and fear that universal design or “doing more” than required by the ADA will involve the parks and recreation agency in significant governmental “red tape” and complexity
- ◆ Lack of preparedness for universal design among design professionals, equipment manufacturers, and other suppliers of goods and services in recreation; advertising of equipment, designs, and materials as ADA-compliant or “universal design” when they are not
- ◆ Lack of engagement or priority placed on accessibility in recreation by disability service providers and advocates for persons with disabilities
- ◆ Lack of disability awareness training among parks and recreation professionals and elected officials that results in reluctance to open a discussion with persons with disabilities
- ◆ Many municipalities are not in compliance with the ADA and fearful of revealing it through open discussion of accessibility issues in their parks
- ◆ Many perceive the issue of accessibility in recreation as a “luxury” issue of very low priority when compared to jobs and the economy, education, health care, and other such issues

As also reported last year, another barrier reported by one grantee is public resistance rooted in fear and bias about people with disabilities. The grantee is updating a park in a neighborhood setting where local users were resistant to the proposed changes out of fear that park usage would substantially increase, predominantly by people with physical and cognitive disabilities. The grantee has successfully worked with a committee of residents of property adjacent to the park to educate them about the CF’s intent and calm their concerns. In June 2007, a first public hearing by the municipal partner was attended by about 30 residents expressing concern and skepticism about the upgrades, but by March 2008, a second hearing turned out approximately 40 residents who voiced their support for the project.

Evaluation Question #7: How can grantees and other interested parties collaborate in pursuit of broad change in policy and practice?

The policy advisory committees assembled in each of the four Initiative states were initially tasked with identifying opportunities and strategies for fostering change beyond the scope of the Initiative grants within their borders. Each of the groups has brainstormed possibilities and developed its own list of preferred strategies. All groups spoke at length about public outreach and opportunities to change the tone of discourse around the issue by emphasizing its applicability to groups far beyond those with disabilities, including seniors, caretakers, and family members of persons with disabilities. Figure 1 shows the results of this discussion for Illinois A2R grantees and other Illinois participants.

Figure 1

SUMMARY OF PRACTICAL IDEAS TO SUPPORT AND ADVANCE

UNIVERSALLY DESIGNED RECREATION IN ILLINOIS

As developed by participants at the November 13 Access to Recreation meeting

1. Create more Special Recreation Associations throughout the state, allowing communities to access more technical and financial resources.
2. Include universal design objectives in master plans and budgets, rather than as an afterthought
3. Encourage manufacturers of play equipment to embrace universal design, thereby limiting the need for customization
4. Build base of support for continued and full funding for the Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) Program, a state-financed grant program that provides funding assistance to local government agencies for acquisition and/or development of land for public parks and open space, which has been used to build universally designed parks in Illinois.
5. Encourage the use of tourism dollars to support universally designed recreational projects.
6. Community foundations can use endowed funds to support the development of policies to support universal access to recreation.
7. The Illinois Alliance of Community Foundations' Joint Legislative Committee can be a state-level agent to advocate for policies that support universal access.
8. Encourage advocates of universal design principles to join park district boards where they can work to integrate universal design as a best practice into individual park district policy.
9. Illinois Attorney General's Office could provide training and encouragement to manufacturers, landscape architects and park district staff to adopt universal design principles.
10. Create a recognition program or certification (similar to LEED certification) for recreational facilities that meet universal design criteria – Recognize the trailblazers.
11. Community Development Block Grant dollars should also be sought to support universal access projects, as they contribute to the quality of life in a community that attracts companies and workers.
12. Need to make sure that universally accessible transportation is available to universally designed recreational opportunities.

Other ideas developed through the statewide meetings convened by grantmaker associations include the following:

1. Commissioning research to document and evaluate the quality of state policies with respect to accessibility in recreation
2. Developing best-practice manuals and other informational products to help other CFs replicate the work of Initiative grantees
3. Outreach to municipal associations, design and construction professionals, equipment manufacturers, hospitals and health-care providers, and other groups and organizations with a natural interest in the issue to build common cause
4. Broad public awareness campaigns that reframe the issue of accessibility in recreation from a disabilities issue to an issue affecting most of the population (such as seniors, returning veterans, mothers with strollers, caretakers, and family members of persons meeting any of these descriptions)
5. Building a repository of lessons learned and a database of innovations to help improve practice and information exchange
6. Emulating the Safe Routes to School process³
7. Outreach to grantmakers to encourage support of accessibility in recreation and more generally; amending grantmaker associations' governing documents to include a commitment to accessibility
8. Creation of a "good housekeeping" seal or functional equivalent to label equipment and facilities

Differences across the states in the structure of local decision-making around parks investment and programming suggest that, to a considerable degree, outreach and education efforts should be tailored to the individual states' policymaking contexts. Four-state collaboration may be particularly useful in identifying federal grant programs that could support universal access projects and programs and developing interactive resources to share best practices and lessons learned. Experience in all four states also suggests that statewide parks and recreation associations have a potentially important role to play in promoting policy and practice changes related to accessibility: professional standing is an important motivator for parks directors, and many directors in small communities have limited to no professional community close to home.

CONCLUSIONS

Formal training and technical assistance under the Initiative has been generally well received. As additional efforts are fielded in coming months, including webinars and seminars, additional feedback will be gathered to help shape future educational offerings.

³ Safe Routes to School is a federally supported program that was authorized as part of the surface transportation bill signed into law in August 2005. The legislation provides every state with funding to help with infrastructure improvements such as sidewalks and traffic-calming efforts, and also supports community activities to encourage and enable students to walk and bicycle to school. The Safe Routes to Schools movement is international, and first emerged in the United States in the late 1990s. It features a community-wide planning process to identify needs and opportunities, build support, and document progress.

Grantees are reporting far fewer technical and logistical challenges associated with construction and are beginning to request support on other elements of their work. While a few technical challenges remain and some grants related to sizeable community efforts are susceptible to additional delays, most grantees are reporting no particular unresolved technical issues related to their projects. Several are interested in support for their fundraising efforts and in opportunities for communication with other grantees.

Many grantees are reporting comprehensive and creative community convening efforts. Advisory groups remain an important strategy for CF grantees and are proving useful vehicles for developing common cause among foundation, parks, and disability communities. Many A2R grantees are also presenting their efforts to diverse community groups including municipal boards and commissions and nonprofit organizations. Some CFs are reporting very little convening activity and may benefit from grantee-to-grantee or Initiative assistance to identify strategies they can employ.

Parks and recreation departments are often motivated to exceed ADA requirements by champions, by desires for professional recognition and achievement, and by concepts of park value that emphasize their potential economic significance. In communities adopting a “new economy” or “place-making” concept of economic development, it is relatively common for parks and municipal leadership to consider parks an important asset for attracting new residents and businesses. Where this mindset is found, there is a general openness to accessibility as a strategy and relatively little objection on the basis of cost. A2R grantees also frequently credit local champions as the driving force behind local efforts to improve accessibility. Finally, parks professionals take pride in developing progressive facilities that are recognized within their profession. This last factor may be the best opportunity for A2R to motivate other communities, and suggests an important role for the statewide parks and recreation associations in promoting accessibility.

Several grantees are reporting modest policy changes, but additional work may be necessary to identify and promote practical ideas. In several grantee contexts, the idea of policy change to sustain commitment was received with some confusion, generally because parks departments are small and policy and practice decisions are frequently informal. In larger communities, several instances have been reported in which language focused on accessibility has been adopted into five-year recreational plans. Translating this intent into day-to-day operating policies related to personnel, purchasing, and contracting may offer more impact, and examples might support communities interested in making such changes.

Significant policy change has been achieved within the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. A2R may wish to foster cross-state discussion on the processes used in MDNR to cultivate awareness throughout the organization and institutionalize a commitment to accessibility.

Individual state advisory groups have identified numerous, common ideas for advancing accessibility in recreation. All state advisory groups focused on critical needs in building awareness and educating decision makers, staff, vendors, and the community at large. Differences in state policymaking structures suggest that state-level outreach and communication strategies are likely warranted. Identification of federal funding sources with the potential to support universal access could be pursued by the four states collectively, as could the development of best-practices resources.

**CIVIC
RESEARCH
SERVICES,
INC.**

APPENDIX A:
SURVEY REPORT
HANDS-ON ACCESSIBILITY EVENT AT ISLAND
LAKE STATE RECREATION AREA

SUBMITTED AUGUST 2008

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INTRODUCTION

In June 2008, the Accessibility Advisory Council (AAC) for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) hosted an event at Island Lake State Recreation Area. The event was designed to allow attendees “hands-on” use of adaptive equipment for hunting and featured adaptive crossbows, rifles, and mobility equipment. Vendors were available to help attendees try the equipment and to answer their questions.

MDNR is the recipient of a grant from the Access to Recreation Initiative (A2R), an effort funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation via Midwest Community Foundation Ventures. Soon after the event, in consultation with A2R, the AAC decided to conduct a brief online survey of attendees to gather feedback on the event. The survey was conducted using SurveyMonkey, a subscription-based service, by Civic Research Services, Inc. (CRS), the A2R evaluation subcontractor.

The AAC forwarded a list of 77 event attendees. Of these, 30 responded to the survey and three indicated they had not in fact attended. The survey response rate is calculated as 40%, or 30 of 74 eligible respondents. With this rate of response, readers should exercise caution in generalizing the findings to nonrespondents.

FINDINGS

The survey included 16 questions focused on the following issues:

- ◆ Respondent characteristics
- ◆ The perceived usefulness and educational value of the event
- ◆ The perceived value of the event’s “hands-on” format
- ◆ The types of equipment that respondents used during the event
- ◆ Interest in and recommendations regarding future events
- ◆ MDNR policy related to accessibility

Seven questions were open-ended, soliciting feedback in the respondents’ own words.

Respondent Characteristics

A limited number of questions gathered information about respondents’ characteristics. Respondents were asked to self-identify as MDNR staff members, MDNR leadership/policymakers, members of the AAC, other recreation professionals, and persons with a disability, selecting as many as applied. The results are shown in Figure A-1.

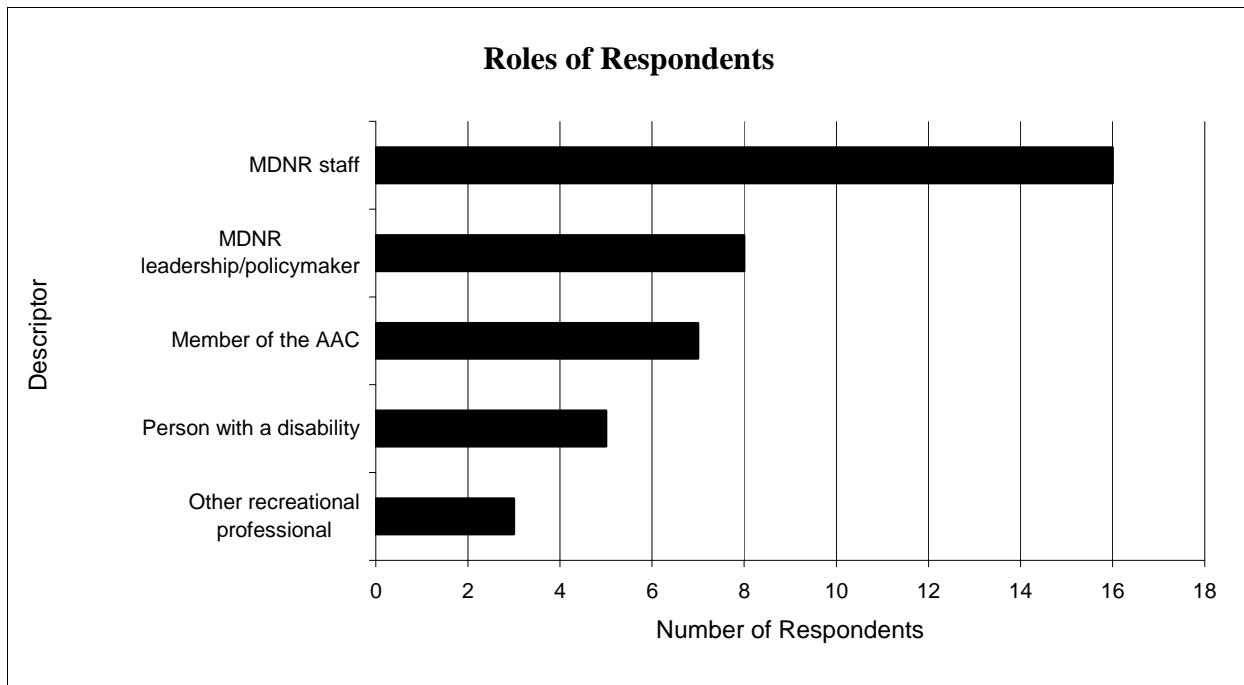


Figure A-1 *Note: Several respondents self-identified as both MDNR staff and MDNR leadership/policymakers. In these instances, respondents were classified as MDNR leadership and not staff.

Respondents were also asked to rate their level of knowledge of accessibility issues in recreation on a scale of 1 (“I know very little about the issue”) to 10 (“I am an expert on the issue”). The mean response was 6.04, with responses ranging from “2” to “9.” Seventy-six percent of respondents rated themselves between a “5” and a “7,” with 12% rating themselves at an “8” or “9” and 12% rating themselves at a “4” or lower.

Respondents were finally asked to describe the number of one-way miles they drove to attend the event. The mean response was 60 miles. Two respondents drove 10 or fewer one-way miles. Seventy percent (20 respondents) traveled between 40 and 70 one-way miles. Of the remaining six respondents, two drove more than 60 but less than 100 miles, three drove 100-150 miles, and one drove nearly 170 miles. Because the event was largely targeted to MDNR employees, it is reasonable to assume that many respondents were traveling from the Lansing area.

Usefulness and Educational Value

Survey participants were asked to rate how useful the event was on four dimensions, using a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high). The responses are described in Table A-1.

Table A-1: Self-Reported Usefulness of the Event			
Question	Response		
	Not useful (1-3)	Somewhat useful (4-6)	Useful (7-10)
<i>To what extent was the Hands-On Accessibility Event useful to you in...</i>			
...learning more about adaptive equipment?	3.4%	6.9%	89.6%

Table A-1: Self-Reported Usefulness of the Event			
Question	Response		
<i>To what extent was the Hands-On Accessibility Event useful to you in...</i>	Not useful (1-3)	Somewhat useful (4-6)	Useful (7-10)
...meeting people who can help you answer questions about adaptive equipment?	0.0%	11.1%	88.8%
...improving your general understanding of accessibility issues in recreation?	3.7%	7.4%	88.8%
...providing information relevant to your job or policymaking role?	11.1%	11.1%	77.7%

The vast majority of respondents gave the event strong positive ratings on all of the dimensions tested.

Survey participants also rated the overall educational value of the event. As shown in Figure A-2, all respondents said the event was at least “somewhat valuable” and 78% found it “very valuable.”

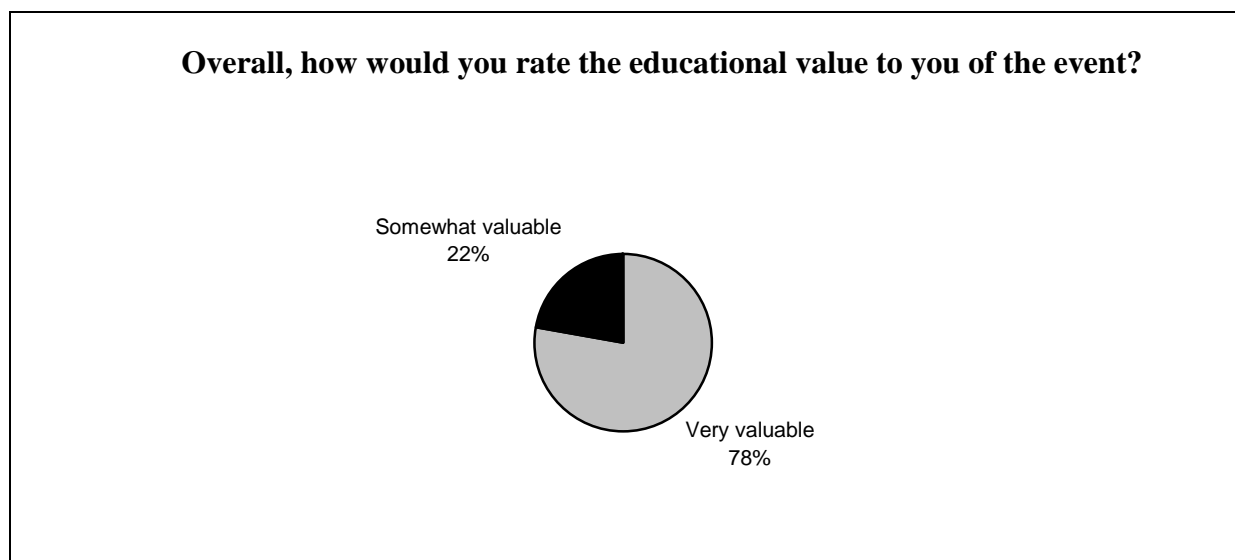


Figure A-2

An open-ended question asked respondents to identify the “most important thing they learned or experienced” through the event. Twenty-three survey participants responded to the question, and their responses were classified into like categories and are shown in Table A-2.

The most common response, offered by eight individuals, focused on the range of adaptive equipment available. Several survey participants expressed surprise at the variety of options available to people with disabilities, often commenting that they had not been aware of the level of development in the market for adaptive hunting equipment. The next most common response (offered by six survey respondents) was focused specifically on the adaptive equipment: some simply mentioned use of the equipment when asked about the most important thing they learned or experienced, while others described something specific they had learned about the equipment. Four respondents’ comments revealed new appreciation for the significance of accessibility issues in recreation.

Table A-2: Open-Ended Comments*—		
“What was the most important thing you learned or experienced through the event?”		
Comment Type	Comment Examples	Number of Comments
There are many options available to persons with disabilities interested in hunting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ That just about anyone can participate. ◆ Seeing what's available for people with disabilities. Having the hands on opportunity for those that wanted to try the equipment and people willing to show you how the equipment works. ◆ The level of specialty and individual accommodations available for folks with disabilities. The ingenuity and creativity were impressive. ◆ There are creative people out there offering solutions. ◆ That there are a lot of different adaptive devices being made/developed to assist in the enjoyment of hunting and fishing. ◆ The devices for the crossbows were my favorite. I did not realize how many advances are available to overcome physical challenges. ◆ The varied types of equipment that have been adapted for folks who need it. ◆ ... [W]hat's new and being marketed, and how this equipment can be used to make life easier for all types of abilities. 	8
Responses focused on the equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Hands-on use of the adaptive equipment. ◆ Shooting a crossbow and a modified bow. ◆ The use of crossbows. ◆ Understanding the differences between adaptive equipment and standard equipment. ◆ Crossbows are not the answer for everyone with a disability. ◆ That there are a number of ways to modify a regular bow for use if you have an injury or disability. 	6
I have a new awareness of accessibility issues in recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ This event raised my awareness of accessibility issues in outdoor recreation. I was impressed by the variety of adaptive equipment available. ◆ I learned the importance of adaptive equipment and their value to the accessibility of recreational activities, for challenged individuals. ◆ The most important thing I learned was that accessibility is even that big of an issue when it comes to outdoor recreation. I was unaware not only of the actual adaptive devices themselves, but of the accessibility movement in general with regards to outdoor recreation ◆ Accessibility is not something to take for granted ... It is something to be planned for. 	4
Access to vendors of adaptive equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Being able to see the vehicles and talk to the manufacturers. ◆ Meeting folks who have roles in adaptive equipment and modifications for different types of mobility. 	2
Other/ unclassifiable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How much is needed to help the disability community enjoy outdoor recreation. ◆ Some of the issues facing individuals in wheel chairs. ◆ Seeing the high level of interest in learning about the topic ◆ That there are vendors, equipment and other resources available for teaching purposes. ◆ That the use of a crossbow is not necessarily a benefit in the woods, regardless of your abilities. ◆ Watching fellow attendees have fun experiencing new things and accomplishing first-time shooting, riding, and wheeling. ◆ Seeing our beautiful accessible park. 	6
Totals		26**

Notes: *Comments here and throughout this document have been lightly edited for grammar and spelling. **Totals exceed number of participants responding to the question because some respondents listed more than one distinct concept in their responses.

Value of the "Hands-On" Format

Figure A-3 shows the responses to a question about the importance and value of the "hands-on" feature of the event. As shown in the figure, all respondents considered the feature at least somewhat important, while 81% considered it very important.

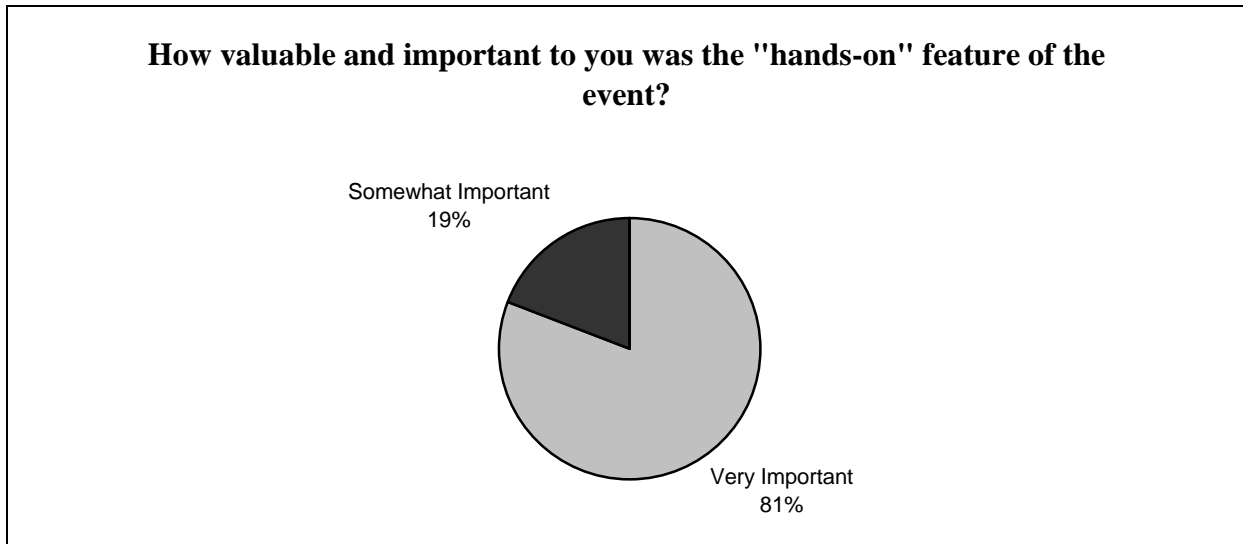


Figure A-3

Most respondents did take advantage of the opportunity to try the equipment made available at the event. As shown in Figure A-4, 73% of attendees used adaptive bows, 53% tried the Segway, 30% tried adaptive rifles, and 37% tried "other" adaptive equipment, including golf carts, quads, the motor home lift, and the Amkar (the accessible electric car).

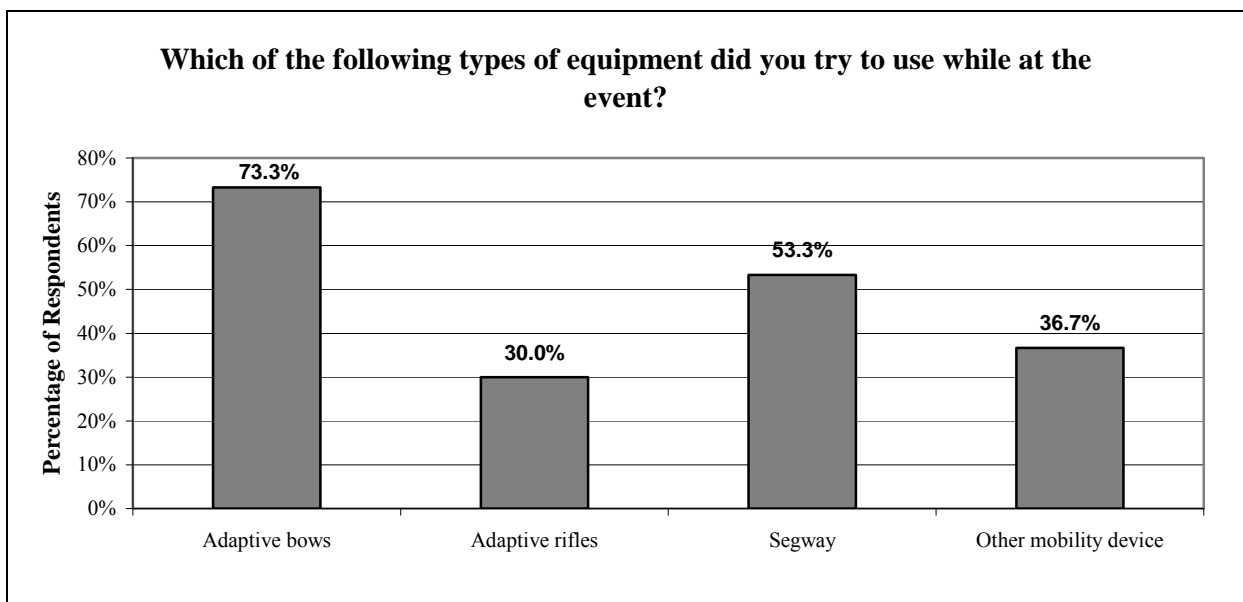


Figure A-4

As shown in Figure A-5, respondents were quite varied in the extent to which they sampled the varying forms of adaptive equipment available at the event. Twenty percent of respondents did not personally try any of the available forms of equipment, while 10% tried everything there was.

The average respondent tried 1.93 forms of equipment. Those self-identifying as MDNR leadership/policymakers (8 respondents) tried, on average, 3 types of equipment, while those self-identifying as MDNR staff (but not leadership/policymakers, 16 respondents) tried, on average, 1.75 types of equipment. Those not affiliated with MDNR (6 respondents) tried, on average, 1 type of equipment.

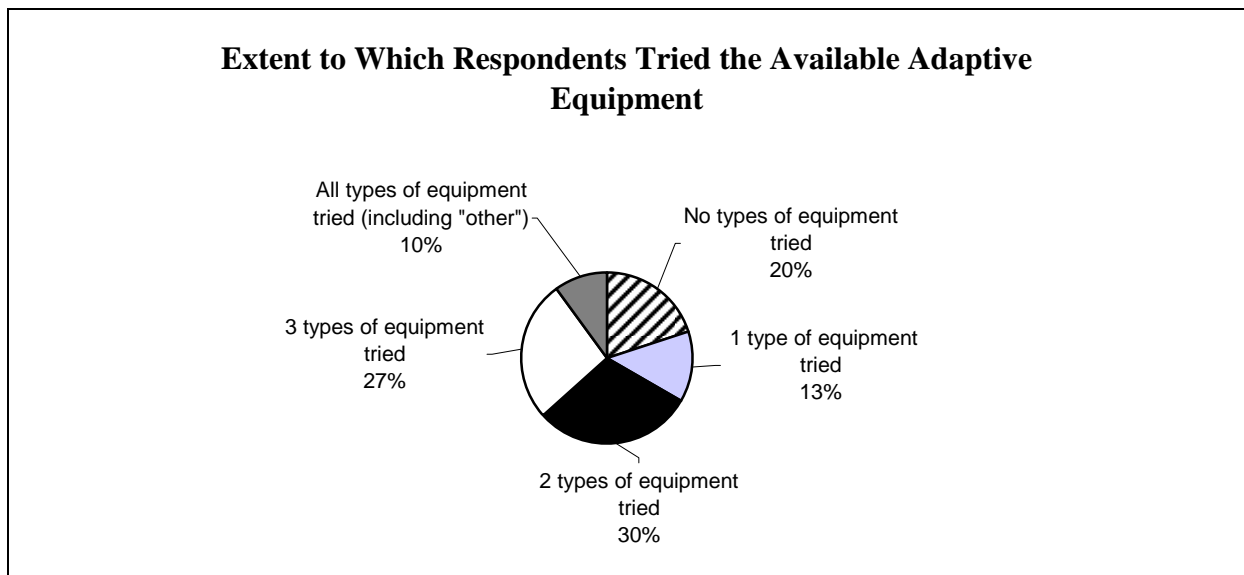


Figure A-5

Questions Not Addressed by the Event

Survey participants were asked to identify, in their own words, what questions they had about adaptive equipment for hunting that were not answered at or by the event. Several respondents left this question blank or wrote in “none” or “N/A.” Many of the questions that respondents raised had to do with MDNR policy (or state policy more generally) and the degree to which it permits or inhibits use of the adaptive equipment showcased at the event:

- ◆ “What limitations currently exist on state lands to use any or all of the equipment that was being showcased.”
- ◆ “Most of the questions that I have concerning adaptive equipment for hunting, pertain to the qualification limitations that are placed on individuals. Allowing individuals to decide their own type or style of adaptive equipment, would allow for more equal accessibility of all.”
- ◆ “I just have more general questions about the processes behind obtaining permits for modified equipment.”
- ◆ “There should have been some mention of standard ORVs, how they are allowed to be used on state land, and if there are differences in the regs for people with disabilities and if/how they can be modified too.”

Some of the questions and comments conveyed interest in, or need for, more exposure to adaptive equipment of varying forms:

- ◆ “A broader range of personal mobility devices to allow us to see what should and what should not be approved for use on state land.”
- ◆ “We need to see more in action demonstrations.”
- ◆ “Need to see more adaptive shooting equipment.”

Other questions raised focused on MDNR’s intentions for accessibility policy, access to contact information for manufacturers, and one specific question about equipment:

- ◆ “Is the department going to continue to expand on this concept? If so, how and when?”
- ◆ “I’m not sure if there was a wheel lock-down for shooting to stabilize a wheelchair from kick-back.”
- ◆ “Is there a list of manufactures and vendors contact information available?”

How Could the Event Have Been Improved?

Table A-3 shows responses to the question, “How could this event have been improved?” The most common themes were to involve more people and to improve the physical arrangements at the event to provide easier access for those wishing to use the equipment.

Table A-3: Open-Ended Comments— “How could this event have been improved?”		
Comment Type	Comment Examples	Number of Comments
More people/ public involvement/ media involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ More advertising. ◆ I would recommend media involvement to help get the word out. ◆ I think for the first event, it was well done. If there is another, the public and more news media should be invited. ◆ It would be great if we could include the public. This would allow them to gain further knowledge of the adaptive equipment available to further their accessibility to the outdoors. ◆ It was a very good event—DNR needs to start using this in conjunction with other events. ◆ Perhaps another, larger event could be planned and promoted, to pass this valuable information on to even more people. 	6
Make it easier to access and use the equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ More hands on demonstrations. ◆ Bow ranges could’ve been set up in a safer manner. ◆ Maybe the archery area could have been spread out a little. It was crowded and hard to see and hear the “helper” at times. ◆ More stations to display and use equipment. ◆ More modified bows. ◆ I think there could have been a little bit more organizational structure with regards to the physical setup of the event. Maybe more signage by each booth/table saying what modified device could be tried there. 	6
Include other forms of adaptive equipment/ more manufacturers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Expanded beyond the hunting realm to include other outdoor recreation adaptive equipment. ◆ Show more adaptive hunting fishing camping trails and nature accessible exhibits like we do at the state fair with bonnie. <i>[sic]</i> ◆ We could solicit more equipment representatives, and have fishing adaptive equipment. I would like to try the Segway with the seat attachment. ◆ Additional information on adaptive fishing equipment or other water-based outdoor recreation equipment. Need more manufacturers. 	4

Table A-3: Open-Ended Comments— “How could this event have been improved?”		
Comment Type	Comment Examples	Number of Comments
All other responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A debriefing session should have occurred at the end or on a different day to discuss the issues involved with the equipment, etc. That is what regulations would have to change to make the adaptive equipment legal? What land use rules would have to occur to make the vehicles legal? Does the Dept. really want to make the changes to allow all of these devices, vehicles, etc. ◆ Need to get participation from state legislators and staff. ◆ Providing more literature or contact information for vendors or specialists. ◆ No rain. 	4
Totals		20*

Interest in Future Events

Survey participants were asked about their level of interest in future “hands-on” events, the types of adaptive equipment that should be featured at future events, and the relative value of opportunities to co-schedule an event with other, existing MDNR services. As shown in Figure A-6, respondents were interested in future events: all respondents had at least “some” interest and 70% were “very interested.”

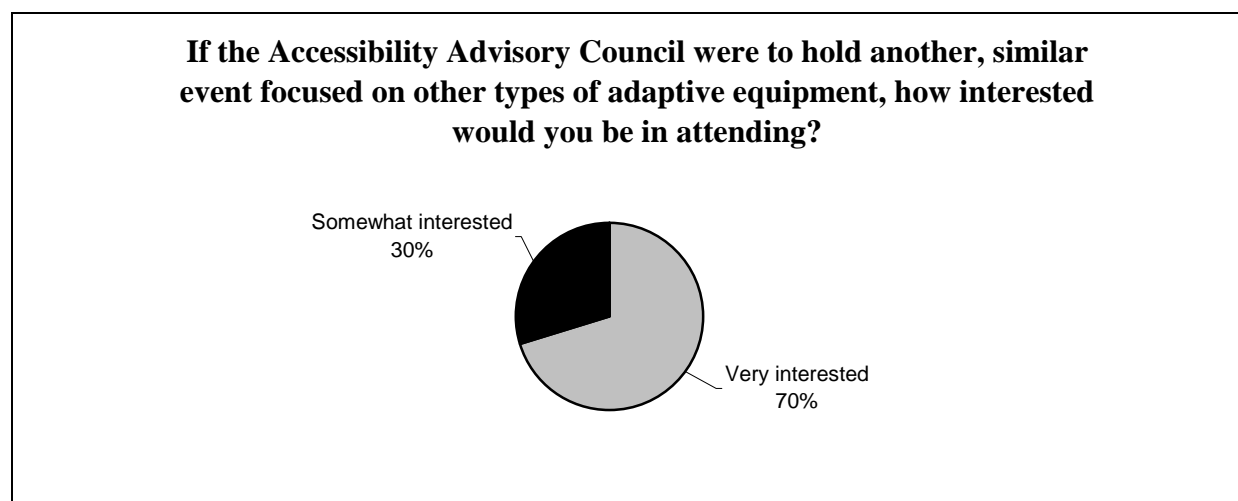


Figure A-6

When asked what other types of adaptive equipment they would be interested in exploring through another hands-on event, many respondents (17) did not answer. The priorities of those who did are reflected in Table A-4.

Table A-4: Other Types of Adaptive Equipment of Interest to Respondents	
Type of Equipment	Number of Mentions
Fishing	7
Personal mobility devices/other off-road mobility options	5
Camping	3
Boating	3
Additional hunting	2
Other	5

Table A-4: Other Types of Adaptive Equipment of Interest to Respondents

Type of Equipment	Number of Mentions
Totals	25*

*Note: Totals exceed the number of individual respondents because many named more than one type of interest.

While some of the responses to the question had little or no elaboration (e.g., fishing equipment), others included extensive commentary that may be helpful in interpreting respondents’ specific information needs. Comments are provided below, by applicable category:

- ◆ *Personal mobility devices/other off-road mobility options:* One respondent noted, “We will need to make decisions in the future about what/if we will allow wheeled vehicles for access. How do you determine the difference between a traditional ATV and a personal mobility device? We need help in determining where to draw the line. Perhaps seeing more of these devices and seeing the ‘footprint’ they make on the ground when being used would help.” A second respondent wanted to see numerous or different types of off-road motorized equipment with accessibility adaptations, while a third asked specifically about the seat attachment for Segways.
- ◆ *Boating equipment:* Respondents focused specifically on “canoe/kayak” and “boat ramp and lift equipment for boat/canoe access” in addition to more general requests for boating equipment.
- ◆ *Additional hunting:* Respondents focused on hunting equipment specifically mentioned “crossbows, recurves, and long bows,” “modified bows,” and hunting blinds.
- ◆ *Other interests:* These included “trail uses,” “beach access,” and “other water-based outdoor recreation equipment” (“other” in context meant other than fishing).

Respondents were presented with a list of opportunities for the AAC to conduct accessibility-related education and outreach in coordination with other existing MDNR public events, including trails openings/dedications, parks “Get Outdoors” events, MDNR public meetings, and natural areas dedications. They were then asked to rank each as a low priority, medium priority, or high priority. The results are shown in Table A-5 and show highest priority placed by respondents on parks “Get Outdoors” events. Other opportunities were not without priority, with significant percentages of the respondents rating them as a high or medium priority.

Table A-5: Priority Placed on Existing Opportunities for Accessibility-Related Education and Outreach by the AAC

	Low priority	Medium priority	High priority	Mean*
Trails openings/dedications	15%	42%	42%	2.27
Parks “Get Outdoors” events	4%	15%	81%	2.78
MDNR public meetings	15%	42%	42%	2.27
Natural areas dedications	24%	40%	36%	2.12

*Note: Means were calculated by coding “low priority” as 1, “medium priority” as 2, and “high priority” as 3.

Respondents also provided several other ideas for the AAC to pursue accessibility-related outreach and education. These were:

- ◆ “Special hunters education classes for people with disabilities.”
- ◆ “Outdoor shows (fishing, hunting, general outdoors).”
- ◆ “It should be a part of the department’s standard operations.”
- ◆ “Hunting and fishing exhibitions.”
- ◆ “All DNR outdoor shows would have a place.”

- ◆ “AAC Day on the Capitol lawn. Show legislators and more DNR officials what accessible equipment is available.”

Policy Changes to Improve Accessibility

Respondents were asked to identify policy changes (beyond policies related to hunting accessibility) that should be considered by MDNR. Only six respondents did so, and their verbatim comments are provided below.

One respondent advocated for a comprehensive review of all policies against an accessibility criterion:

- ◆ “Overall - Review all of the policies to make certain that the policies and practices are inclusive and accessible for all citizens and visitors.”

The largest number of respondents focused on general accessibility for persons with disabilities within MDNR properties, with some emphasizing motorized access and others emphasizing nonmotorized access:

- ◆ “ORV regs for physically impaired hunters and anglers.”
- ◆ “Land use outside of the hunting seasons. ‘Where can users go and what can they do?’”
- ◆ “Land access with personal assistive devices.”
- ◆ “Grants given out should make paved access a must.”

A final respondent echoed the interest in basic mobility and access issues, but also registered a caution:

- ◆ “Policies for walking access not just hunting.....In addition I think that the entire hunting and access program needs to be looked at.....I think that there are too many that just want to see opportunities expanded without regard to what regulations changes are needed or what the long term impacts of those changes might be.”

Broader Educational Needs Related to Accessibility

Near the end of the survey, respondents were asked, “What types of educational opportunities (hands-on or not) related to accessibility would be most helpful to you?” The answers, in respondents’ own words, were highly varied and difficult to classify. In some cases, respondents seemed to be identifying the education and training they personally need, while in other circumstances, respondents appeared to be focusing on what they believed would be appropriate for others needful of better information and exposure to accessibility issues.

Comments are reproduced verbatim in this section, in loose categories. Four respondents emphasized additional hands-on opportunities focused on equipment:

- ◆ “Hunting items and mobility items.”
- ◆ “Mobile units/blinds.”
- ◆ “Expo type of event to provide demo opportunities and information on adaptive equipment in general, expanded beyond hunting.”
- ◆ “The hands-on events are critical in even getting a grasp on the accessibility issue. Feeling and using the equipment is what really connects people from the public to the people with the actual accessibility problems. I feel like presentations or things of that nature just would not be as helpful.”

Two focused on opportunities to interact with people with disabilities:

- ◆ “The opportunity to meet more outdoors people with challenging disabilities. This would help to better understand the issues from their point of view.”
- ◆ “Actually spend some time with someone who needs these devices to better understand how they work and why they are necessary.”

The remaining comments were too general to be classified or were expressed by only a single individual.

- ◆ “Interactions with experts and lay people was great.”
- ◆ “Showing people with disabilities in all aspects of using the parks.”
- ◆ “Seminars or sessions that are linked to other DNR activities.”
- ◆ “Policy discussions.”
- ◆ “More training opportunities.”
- ◆ “Just about everything. I’m trying to incorporate any opportunity into the shows and expos DNR does.”
- ◆ “Information on what other states are doing and how Michigan ranks with them.”
- ◆ “‘People-first’ language presentation to board members and other civic/non-profit groups.”

CONCLUSIONS

1. *Respondents found solid educational value in the event.* Large majorities (on the order of close to 90%) found the event valuable for learning about adaptive equipment, meeting people who can answer questions about adaptive equipment, and improving their general understanding of accessibility issues in recreation). More than three-quarters of respondents also felt the event had provided information relevant to their jobs or policymaking roles.

Respondents’ comments about the “most important thing” learned or experienced showed that, before the event, respondents were often unaware of the range of adaptive equipment available, unfamiliar with the workings of that equipment, and (less commonly) relatively unaware of accessibility issues in recreation more generally.

2. *The hands-on feature was very well received.* All respondents felt the “hands-on” feature was at least “somewhat” important, and more than 80% found it “very” important and valuable. Respondents also made significant use of the opportunity to try varying forms of accessible equipment, with crossbows and the Segway getting the greatest use and MDNR leaders/policymakers particularly likely to try multiple forms of available equipment.
3. *Respondents seek broader exposure and better organization for future events.* When asked how the event might have been improved, the most common themes were 1) expand the event to include public or media involvement, and 2) improve physical flow, access, and availability of the equipment to provide easier, safer, and more educational use.
4. *Respondents are interested in future “hands-on” events.* All respondents were at least “somewhat interested” in future events, while 70% were “very interested.” Most respondents were unable to name a type of equipment that should be featured at future events, but among those who did, fishing, personal mobility devices, and adaptive motorized vehicles were most commonly mentioned.

5. *Respondents see greatest opportunity for accessibility-related education and outreach at parks “Get Outdoors” events.* Eighty-one percent of respondents rated this option as a “high priority, whereas trails openings/dedications and MDNR public meetings were rated as a “high priority” by 42% of survey respondents.
6. *Respondents are uncertain about the policy implications of accessibility concerns.* While the most commonly mentioned policy-related issues throughout the survey had to do with adaptive motorized equipment, personal mobility devices, and their legality for varying purposes under current law and regulatory standards, most of those participating in the survey did not comment about policy issues.
7. *There is no consensus among respondents regarding ideal forms of additional accessibility-related education.* Respondents’ comments about desirable, additional education ranged from the highly specific (“mobile units/blinds”) to the highly general (“more training opportunities”). Some focused on their own needs, while some focused on the needs of others. Some are interested in policy discussions and comparative rankings of Michigan’s approach, while others want to spend time with, and learn from individuals with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Continue hands-on events.* The event format was extremely well received, and respondents’ comments about what they learned or experienced appear to be largely consistent with the AAC’s hopes in hosting the event.
2. *Continue to pay close attention to event logistics to ensure ready access to equipment and vendors under good learning conditions for attendees.* Twenty percent of respondents suggested room for improvement in this category. While 20% is not an overwhelming proportion of participants, it is sizeable enough to be indicative of legitimate room for improvement.
3. *Consider featuring adaptive equipment for fishing and/or mobility devices (motorized and nonmotorized) for the next event.* Although few survey participants were able to comment on the types of equipment they would like to learn more about, these were the most commonly mentioned issues.
4. *Consider building education and outreach about accessibility into parks “Get Outdoors” events as a first step.* More than 80% of survey respondents thought this should be a high priority opportunity for the AAC.
5. *In the policy arena, continue to explore issues related to adaptive motorized vehicles and personal mobility devices and their consistency with existing regulations.* To the extent that any common policy refrain can be heard in the survey data, this issue appears to be on the minds of event attendees.
6. *Consider ways to use hands-on events to deliver additional educational content or drive traffic to educational materials on the AAC Web site.* Although there was no consensus available in the survey data about educational needs and wants, there may be opportunity to intersperse more general education about accessibility into hands-on events. For example, literature on people-first language could be made available for attendees to take home,

experts of varying stripes could be invited and attendees encouraged to approach them with questions specific to their expertise, follow-up or debriefing discussions could be conducted, and announcements about content available on the AAC Web site could be made. This approach could capitalize on the energy and enthusiasm around the hands-on events while making additional information available.

7. *Explore opportunities to involve a broader audience in future events.* The AAC will undoubtedly need to consider numerous logistical and other challenges associated with involvement of members of the public and/or the media, all of which concerns lie outside the capacity of this survey to address. However, this was one of the most common recommendations of survey participants.

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Appendix B:
Event Evaluation
Michigan Recreation and Parks Association
February 2009 Inclusion Seminar

Submitted March 2009

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INTRODUCTION

On February 3, 2009, the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA) hosted an Inclusion Seminar in conjunction with its annual conference. The pre-conference event was a component of the Access to Recreation Initiative (A2R), which provided the MRPA Foundation with more than \$2 million in funding for educational programming and for regrants to Michigan recreation providers for cutting-edge, universally designed facilities and related equipment. The half-day seminar attracted more than 100 attendees and featured the following content:

- ◆ Presentations by Sherril York of the National Center on Accessibility (NCA) on people-first language and the differences between universal design and designing for ADA⁴ compliance
- ◆ A presentation by Linda Hegstrom of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) on funding available through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF)
- ◆ A presentation by Sarah Panken, coordinator of the Active Communities program of the Michigan Fitness Foundation
- ◆ A brief presentation by Carolyn Grawi of the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living (CIL) on the roles people with disabilities can play in recreational planning
- ◆ A panel presentation featuring A2R grantees facilitated by Tom Woiwode of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan

A total of 44 event evaluations were completed and returned at the end of the seminar. This report presents the feedback gathered through those evaluations.

FINDINGS

Overall Satisfaction

Attendees were asked to rate their overall satisfaction, the accommodations and food, the speakers, and the relevance and usefulness of the information provided on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Table B-1 shows the ratings distribution and mean ratings. The mean ratings ranged between 4.0 and 4.3 and did not appear to vary depending on respondents' connections to MRPA or Access to Recreation.

Table B-1: Satisfaction with Elements of the Event						
	Responses on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)	Overall satisfaction	Quality/comfort of accommodations	Food	Quality of speakers	Relevance and usefulness of the information
Percentages	1 (Very negative)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	2	0.0%	2.4%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%
	3	19.5%	14.3%	25.6%	16.7%	9.1%
	4	41.5%	45.2%	41.9%	50.0%	50.0%
	5 (Very positive)	39.0%	38.1%	30.2%	33.3%	40.9%

⁴ Americans with Disabilities Act.

Table B-1: Satisfaction with Elements of the Event						
	Responses on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)	Overall satisfaction	Quality/ comfort of accommodations	Food	Quality of speakers	Relevance and usefulness of the information
Means	<i>All respondents</i>	4.2	4.2	4.0	4.2	4.3
	<i>MRPA Members</i>	4.1	4.7	4.1	4.1	4.3
	<i>A2R Grantees/Staff</i>	4.1	4.1	3.8	4.1	4.3

Table B-2 shows responses to two additional scaled questions. Attendees generally indicated that they would be willing to recommend the event to others. However, most attendees did not feel that the information presented was new to them: the largest group (45%) gave a rating of “3,” or neutral, in response to this question, while 26% agreed “strongly” or “somewhat” that most of the information was new to them and 28% disagreed “strongly” or “somewhat.”

Table B-2: Indicators of the Value of the Event			
	Responses on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)	I would recommend this event to others.	Most of the information presented today was new to me.
Percentages	1 (Strongly disagree)	0.0%	7.1%
	2	4.8%	21.4%
	3	11.9%	45.3%
	4	38.1%	23.8%
	5 (Strongly agree)	45.2%	2.4%
Means	<i>All respondents</i>	4.2	2.9
	<i>MRPA Members</i>	4.1	2.9
	<i>A2R Grantees/Staff</i>	4.1	2.9

Most and Least Valued Elements of the Event

Attendees were asked to describe, in their own words, what they liked or valued *most* and *least* about the event. Table B-3 reviews the “most valued” aspects with example quotes.

Table B-3: Most Valued Aspects of the Event		
Comment Category	Example Comments	Number of Mentions
Sherril York's presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "Explanation of difference between universal access and universal design." ◆ "People first language and universal design." ◆ "Sherril's basic 101 information and the comparisons of ADA vs. accessibility." ◆ "Universal design info." ◆ "Sherril York was fantastic." ◆ "ADA accessibility info and universal design, respectful language." 	12
Closing panel discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "The conversation panel was good." ◆ "Hearing about on the ground UA projects—successes and challenges." ◆ "Found the panel very interesting and informative." 	8
"Examples"*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "Great pictures of accessible and universal design examples." ◆ "Examples of the universal access." ◆ "Hearing about other projects around the state." ◆ "Visual and narrative overview of projects – both national and in the state of Michigan." 	7
Sarah Panken's presentation on Active Michigan Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "Susan Pankin used her pp to direct the presentation. Glad she didn't read her presentation." ◆ "Active communities." 	5
Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "This was a great opportunity to network." ◆ "The opportunity to talk to other people." 	3
All others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "Facility design issues." ◆ "Great speakers and handouts." ◆ "Adding to my knowledge bank." ◆ "The fact that there is a concerted effort to educate recreation planners and staff about universal design and issues of concern to people with disabilities." ◆ "The grant part." ◆ "Information about potential funding sources." 	12

*Note: Some of the references in this category appeared to focus on examples of universal design provided by Sherril York. Others mentioning "examples" appeared to be referring to example projects discussed by A2R grantees. Finally, in some instances, it was not possible to determine which category of "example" was intended by the respondent.

Table B-4 reviews the "least valued" aspects of the event.

Table B-4: Least Valued Aspects of the Event

Comment Category	Example Comments	Number of Mentions
Linda Hegstrom’s presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “The section on grant funding was dull.” ◆ “The resources part and their applicability to projects.” ◆ “Grants.” ◆ “Linda Hegstrom—lack of confidence in her area of expertise—boring presenter.” ◆ “Linda needs to present more positively. Don’t be dismissive but state positively that the committee/staff for grants needed to update their learning curve.” 	9
Sarah Panken’s presentation on Active Michigan Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “Active living communities discussion.” ◆ “Sarah—no handouts (except booklet)—would have been helpful! Talked too fast, ‘all over the place.’” ◆ “Active communities presentation needed handouts to follow to maximizing benefits.” 	4
Carolyn Grawi’s presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “CIL presentation may have been more oriented to recreation not just a very small portion of presentation.” ◆ “Carolyn-did not see the purpose of her topic?!” ◆ “Carolyn Grawi was too negative.” ◆ “I think the CIL could have done a better job of explaining why they should be involved and what they could offer for recreation.” 	4
Too basic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “The first session was old info for me—nothing new.” ◆ “Some of the information presented was at a very basic level but review is good, I guess.” ◆ “Some of the info from morning—while well presented—info was basic and could have been just a handout.” 	4
All others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “Too much discussion of terminology not enough illustration of barriers to access & ways communities to overcome them, specific to recreational programs. Not enough info on what % of current recreations programs are accessible.” ◆ “The time spent on language is good but a shorter time.” ◆ “Too much time spent on Dr. York in the morning.” ◆ “Some of the presentations seemed to miss the target audience for the day.” ◆ “Afternoon portion.” ◆ “Too much scheduled for one day. Speakers at the end were too hurried by the initial speakers who used too much time.” ◆ “One-sided copies! Going green.” ◆ “Would have liked to have written information on Land and Water Conservation Fund.” ◆ “Unclear where to sign in for seminar.” ◆ “Not knowing who was here from ‘my community.’” ◆ “Need more activity—movement—even though we are listening—we need to be involved.” 	15

Meeting Expectations of Attendees

The degree to which the event met attendees' expectations was measured through two questions. Respondents were asked to respond to the following question in their own words: "What were you hoping to gain or experience from attending this event? What motivated you to attend?" A follow-up, scaled question asked if they experienced the benefit they sought, with response options including "yes," "somewhat," "a little," or "not at all."

Table B-5 shows the most common themes in respondents' descriptions of what motivated them to attend the seminar. Thirty-two of the 44 respondents provided a description of their expectations, and some responses listed multiple types of expectations.

Table B-5: Types of Motivations for Attending the Event		
Type of Motivation	Number of Mentions	Percent with Expectations Fully Met
How-to information (e.g., design information)	10	50%
Funding options	7	29%
Basics of universal design	7	86%
What other communities are doing with universal design	3	67%
All others	12	67%
Totals	39	66%

"Other" or unclassifiable motivations included:

- ◆ "Information on developing/funding accessible recreation programs for hi unemployment area—how to employ local youth, unemployed in the conversation and operation of programs."
- ◆ "Information on new things—getting info on parks accessibility."
- ◆ "New ideas and information about what can be done with universal design."
- ◆ "Good opportunity to gain knowledge/network."
- ◆ "Better understanding of ADA issues."
- ◆ "Currently working on 'access to rec grant' for local community... need ideas/thoughts."
- ◆ "Working on access to recreation."
- ◆ "Looking for speakers and resources for a similar future event."
- ◆ "Very interested in accessibility—and non-motorized and healthy communities."
- ◆ "Topic was interesting/valuable too!"
- ◆ "More information on helping people [be] included... in existing activities (ball, art, theater, etc.)"
- ◆ "Information to keep access to recreation viable now that grant in our community is over."

Figure B-1 shows the distribution of responses to the question, "Did you experience the benefit you were hoping for?"

**Did you experience the benefit you were hoping for?
MRPA Inclusion Seminar, February 2009**

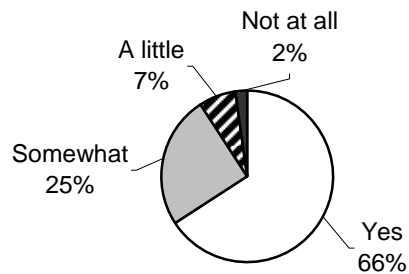


Figure B-1

Responses to this series were not affected by whether or not the respondent was an MRPA member or had a connection to Access to Recreation, both in terms of the types of expectations respondents had for the event and the degree to which their expectations were satisfied.

Respondent Characteristics

Forty-nine percent of attendees were MRPA members and 46% self-identified as an Access to Recreation grantee, broadly defined as staff, advisory board, or other type of connection. Eight respondents indicated both types of connections.

Figure B-2 shows the types of work attendees do. As shown in the graphic, more than half the respondents worked in parks and recreation. Approximately 18% of respondents worked in or were otherwise involved in the disabilities field and 16% were affiliated with a foundation. Approximately 10% indicated an organizational affiliation associated with other types of nonprofits, local government, private-for-profit organizations, or planning and economic development. "Other" associations included one representative each of a neighborhood association, a community association, a philanthropic project, a consultancy, and state government.

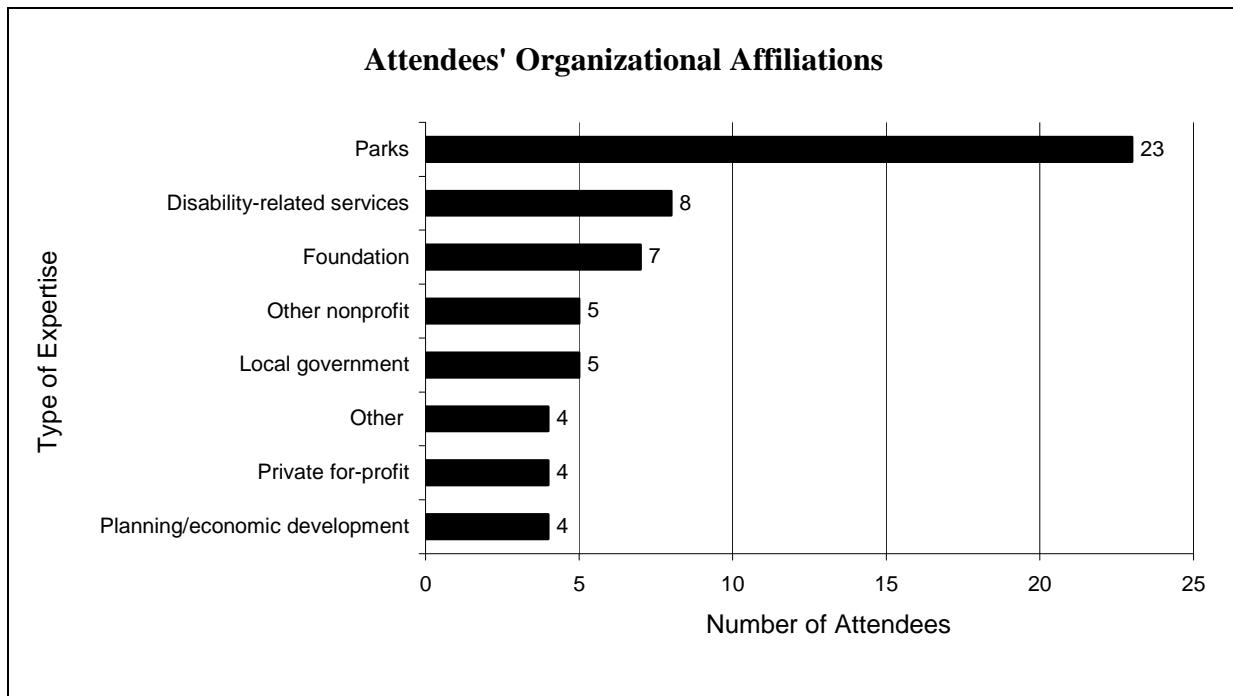


Figure B-2

End-of-Survey Comments

The end of the form offered respondents an opportunity to provide any additional comments. Four respondents took this opportunity to praise the event and offer thanks.

- ◆ “Excellent!”
- ◆ “Great job!”
- ◆ “Overall—very nice event. Informative. Thank you for the opportunity to attend.”
- ◆ “Very inspirational.”

Two respondents offered a comment or question on connections between disability organizations and parks and recreational professionals.

- ◆ “Maybe a formal partnership w/MRPA at state level w/Disability Network/Michigan—then a partnership those members of MRPA and local DN/members at local areas.”
- ◆ “I would like to know what parks and rec. are doing to help broaden the philosophical access to existing programs. For example, the facility/program may be accessible but does the t-ball coach have the confidence and support to help kids have a meaningful experience.”

One respondent raised some issues regarding the setting and format of the event, and a second noted some accessibility issues for the event.

- ◆ “Ask all speakers at podium to repeat questions from the audience. Not audible in this large room. Thanks! Maybe put in a 3 min. physical activity in the afternoon session—stretch, some fun thing to keep the oxygen flowing.”

- ◆ “Too bad first speaker didn’t use people first language no wheel chair accessible seating provided in room up here or in the lunch area hard to read colors on power pt. red on black is very hard to see... Panel was great.”

Four respondents had more comments on specific elements of the event, most commonly praise for the closing panel. One additionally noted that the event should have been associated with more continuing education credits.

- ◆ “Panel discussion was really interesting. Would have been better if they had pictures for us to see their specific projects/planned projects. (Juan was really good, as was Mark—both noted the change in MINDSET, access is so much more than just getting there.)”
- ◆ “The conversation panel was good.”
- ◆ “This session should’ve ended so people could attend another session prior to opening keynote. Panel was great-good facilitation. Great response. The facilitator is/should be a game show host!! This was longer than a .4 ceu. It should be at least .5, possibly .6 ceu[s].”
- ◆ “Morning half presentation was most informational and useful. Afternoon felt rushed with each presentation.”

The final three respondents offered suggestions for additional content they would have valued.

- ◆ “More on resources to design—create solutions.”
- ◆ “I would like more real life examples of the projects that have been completed.”
- ◆ “Break out sessions w/topic named to learn more specifics about community projects (w/ a facilitator).”

CONCLUSIONS

Respondents were generally satisfied overall, with the accommodations, and with the speakers and relevance of the information. Ratings did not vary significantly depending on the attendee’s status as an MRPA member, A2R grantee, or other type of attendee. Eighty-three percent of respondents indicated that they would recommend the event to others.

Respondents indicated that much of the information was not new to them. Only 26% of those returning an evaluation agreed (rating of “4” or “5” on the 5-point scale) that “most of the information presented today was new to me.” Forty-five percent offered a neutral rating of “3” and the remaining 29% offered a “disagree” rating of “1” or “2.”

Sherril York’s presentation was most commonly named as the “most valued” element of the event, with the closing panel almost as frequently discussed. While these two elements of the event accounted for 20 “most-valued element” comments, there were another 27 comments focused on a variety of other portions of the event, suggesting that participants found varying things to appreciate.

Descriptions of “least-valued” elements of the event tended to focus on poor presentation quality or lack of perceived relevance. Presentations on MNRTF grant availability, the Active Michigan Communities program, and the Center for Independent Living were the most commonly named “least-valued” elements and many of the comments described these presentations as “dull,” negative, or rambling.

Attendees’ expectations and hopes for the event were very diverse. The most common hopes or expectations for the event focused on “how-to” information, the “basics” of universal design, and gaining more information about funding options. Two-thirds of respondents indicated their expectations were fully met and 25% felt their expectations were met “somewhat.” Those interested in basic information about universal design were most likely to feel their expectations were met, while those seeking “how-to” and funding information were less satisfied.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Consider a breakout portion when conducting future events.** While respondents were generally positive about the event, their comments and responses suggest a considerable diversity of interests and needs that will be difficult to satisfy in an event with only plenary sessions. Additionally, given the strong indications that most of the material was not new to attendees, more advanced material relevant to attendees’ interests could be pursued in breakout sessions that attendees choose. The most common motivations and interests for the 2009 attendees were “how-to” or design information, funding, and the “basics” of universal design; these categories could be considered as possibilities for breakout sessions in a future event.
2. **Consider an emphasis on A2R participants and grantees as leaders of collaborative learning in future events.** Given that use of universal design in recreation is at a very early stage in Michigan and “experts” few and far between, an Inclusion Seminar might provide good opportunity for comparison/contrast of successful strategies used by those who have completed a significant, accessible project. For example, many attendees were interested in funding but satisfaction with the MNRTF presentation was limited. Future events could feature panels or breakouts in which funding for several accessible projects is explored in some depth, with questions such as: from where were donations and support sought and received, to what extent were community contributions (such as labor in the form of community-build projects) pursued and with what results, to what extent were fundraisers successfully employed, and the like. Issues of collaborating with persons with disabilities and/or service organizations could be similarly pursued. While potentially difficult to manage, such an approach might improve information quality and interest, offer recognition to vanguard communities and professionals, and build the base of knowledge in Michigan.