

**Illinois Rural Recreation Development Project**  
**SUMMARY OF PHONE INTERVIEW RESEARCH**

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- Based on the phone interviews the following communities are still working with IRRDP:
  - Newman through the Village of Newman
  - Tuscola through the Village of Tuscola
  - Farmer City through the Village of Farmer City
  - Virginia through the Village of Virginia
  - Bushnell
  - Colchester through local non-profit (ICCS)
  - Lomax through local non-profit (ICCS)
  - Hamilton
  
- Based on the phone interviews the following communities have achieved some level of sustainability since the IRRDP guidance ended:
  - Forest through local Boys and Girls Club and an original affiliation with the Lion's Club
  - Marshall through Marshall in Motion (a local non-profit)
  - Paris through the local YMCA
  - Tolono through the Tolono Park District
  - Watseka through Watseka Park District
  - Villa Grove through the Village of Villa Grove
  - Minooka
  
- Based on the phone interviews, the following communities have no hint of sustainable recreation and leisure programs, since the IRRDP guidance ended:
  - Chatsworth
  - Edingburg
  - Gibson City
  - Le Roy
  - Ogden
  - Momence
  
- Based on the feedback from the phone interviews, the essence to developing sustainable local recreation and park services can be boiled down to three areas:
  - Funding
  - Structure

- Committed Committee and Chair
- The bottom line to sustainability is funding. Training committee members how to seek private and public sector funding through grants and sponsorships. Furthermore, we need to provide information and teach marketing, so that the committee can justify nominal user fees and municipal tax appropriations for the program. This could be even using a “modified benefits mentality.” I believe a community could gain support from the citizens to fund the majority of the program through tax appropriations instead of soliciting small donation from the few businesses in each town.
- The second major factor for long-term sustainability is developing a structure in which to house the programming. Many of the communities, after IRRDP guidance, housed their programs under a non-profit ( a new NGO, YMCA, or Boys and Girls Club). I cannot express how important helping a committee find a structure that fits into the local polity is. Whether through the municipality, a citizen committee, and citizen organized non-profit, or a special district. This is a key issue that needs to be built into the Model for Sustainability. I feel building a statewide relationship with the Illinois Coalition for Community Services is appropriate and essential in giving communities the structure they need, especially in the area of the non-profit citizen groups. I feel non-profits are the best format for almost all towns to achieve sustainability, because it removes politics from the process (as does the park district model). The beauty of the non-profit is the city can grant tax funds to the agency and a trustee or mayor can be a on the board of directors, but the organization is separate. This process is proving successful in Colchester and Lomax.
- The greatest challenges for committees and communities were in the area of: funding (overwhelmingly), then citizen involvement in the committee process. Attendance and participation from year to year tends to drop in each town. Also, several towns mentioned communication and support between the committee and IRRDP was problematic. Lastly, finding and keeping good youth leaders and directors was an issue.
- Essentially, the actual summer day camp program is taking the same or similar form in all communities, current IRRDP communities and sustainable communities. Overwhelmingly, committee members across the state stated that “just getting the program up and running,” “continuing the program,” and “giving the kids something to do in the summer” were the greatest successes achieved by their community.
- In the area of Summer Daze director positions, we need to increase the number of local directors or add a structure for qualified directors to the “Model for Sustainability.” For example, we could place a University student the first year in a new IRRDP town with a local person shadowing the director. The University student would solidify immediate program success with the day camp. Incubating

a qualified local director will assist in the process of achieving sustainability. Furthermore, the issue of director housing, cost and placement, has been a key reason for communities not to continue participation in IRRDP. Addressing the issue of director housing is a topic that needs to be given immediate attention this fall.

- Programming-Based on phone interviews and end-of-the-year director reports, more programming ideas and hands on activities need to be included in training. To address this, I recommend returning directors should play a more active role in planning and presenting at both trainings. Also, more links to resources for programming should be added to the web site. Lastly, a director's bulletin board or some how require list serve participation and program plan swapping needs to be implemented.
- Another trend seems to be less kids attending Summer Daze in any given town each year. This can be attributed to committees narrowing the age range of the program from 5-14 to 6-10, on average. In this case, some kind of early teen program or a Teen Reach curriculum, especially in Bureau County, could be wrapped into rural recreation.
- At the Citizen Action Committee Training we need to stress:
  - Organizational Structure
  - Fluid, organic summer day camp program—make it fit your community in terms of times, days, length
  - Continue to train committee members to “asset map and build.”
  - Continue to move from a “paternalistic” program to “capacity-building participatory process.”
  - Encourage communities to “wrap-around” and organize current community assets.
  - Focus on recruiting and retaining committee members.
  - Meetings should take place once a month during the year and once a week during the summer daze program.
  - Transferability needs to be built into the Model for Sustainability. For example, by the end of a community's third year, their committee should plan some type of non-summer, non-youth program. This should move the committee past just providing summer daze service delivery.
  - Teach the philosophy of using recreation as a tool for community and youth development. The committee should be able to somewhat articulate that summer daze is more than city-sponsored babysitting or supervised summer recess.

- The following suggestions were offered for how we can modify our project:
  - Directors need tact when evaluating playground equipment and facilities and encourage local directors
  - Use CD Theory and start working with communities earlier
  - Suggest how to set fees
  - Director Housing is an issue for cost and available facilities
  - Diversify Services
  - Local control-financially and over the program
  - Staff Training was an especially hot area
    - Add hands-on crafts, activities
    - Add program planning and more daily structure
    - Add CPR and First Aid
    - How to advertise and market the program
  
- Locally, the committees would like to change:
  - Diversify services to address year round needs
  - More Citizen Involvement
  - Hire a local director to eliminate housing location and cost
  - Have more committee/staff meetings and increase communication
  - Have a committee member attend director's training
  - Find funding
  - Help directors become knowledgeable about the community
  
- Advice to new participating towns:
  - Organize your committee give it structure
    - Grass-roots
    - A dedicated chair is essential
    - Member selection-a cross-section of the community
    - Give each member a specific responsibility
    - Welcome parental input
    - Advance planning
    - Input in programming
  - Staff
    - Youth Leaders-higher older staff and do oral interviews
    - Director
      - Find a good one
      - Finding housing is a problem
      - Communicate with director
  - Find funding-get donations, payroll is the biggest expense
  - Plan publicity
  - Collaborate with other community organizations

- Factors that contributed to sustainability:
  - Structure-ICCS help, Park district. YMCA, B&G Club, Lion's Club
  - Continued Funding/Increased Fees
  - Gave Kid's something to do/Community Need and Interest?/Positive Feedback verbally and through increased Attendance
  - Values and Character Building
  - Good Staff and Directors
  - Local Political Support
  
- Factors that contributed to a lack of Sustainability:
  - Funding
  - Attendance
  - Lack of local political support
  - Director's Inexperience
  - Committee Leadership
  - Director Housing
  - Foreign Idea
  
- IRRDP can incubate Sustainability by:
  - Funding-share cost up front
  - Committee
    - Member Recruitment
    - Training-Funding, Budgeting, Boardmanship
    - Organization/Structure
    - Stress Community Development
    - Help determine kid's interest for programming
    - Maintain communication between town and IRRDP
    - Let committee do more planning
  - Maintain Communication with past Summer Daze Town
    - Invite to training
  - Give Mktg and Sponsorship Information
  - Diversify services
    - Special Events
    - Pre-K Summer Daze
    - \$ for Playground Eq/Links to Companies
    - Day Trips
    - Facilities help
  - Provide a timeline

- Directors
  - Screen Better
  - Hire local directors
  - Have consistency from year to year
  
- These are my initial thoughts on how to organize the contents for Citizen Action Committee Member Manual. Obviously, this needs to be cleaned up and tightened up. This is Stephanie Koenig's main project.
  - General Information about IRRDP
    - Mission
    - Model for Sustainability
    - List of Sustainable Towns/Bar Graph
    - List of all Towns by Year
    - Contact Information
    - Information about Land Grant Institutions and Extension
    - Organizational Chart
    - Service levels from summer daze to advice
    - Long-term plans
  - Summer Daze
    - Packet of town paperwork (Tracey)
    - Cost
    - What is a Day Camp?/Length of Program
    - Effectiveness
    - Outcomes
    - Timeline for Committee
    - To do list
    - Administrative Procedures
      - Check-in/out
      - Registration
      - Information Synopsis for Parents
        - Cost
        - Outcomes
        - Outcome Based Theory, not Babysitting
      - Criminal Background Check Procedures
      - How to formulate a price for a program
      - Transportation Policy
      - ACA Accreditation
    - Training
      - What is covered at Director and YL Training
      - What needs to be covered in towns
        - First Aid and CPR
    - Program Planning
      - Daily Program plans from other towns (2002 Binders)  
LEIST-316-Day to Day Operations

- Outcome-Based Theory, not Babby Sitting
  - Web Links-ACA, S&S
  - Ideas, themes, games
    - Marissa's guide
    - UCHA book
    - Local and Regionsl Resources
    - Guest Speakers-police, fire, IDNR, USFS, Ext.
    - Field Trip Sites
    - Danville Wings
  - Where to buy equipment and Supplies
  - Liability/Legalities
  - Contact Information for other rown who have participated in IRRDP
- IRRDP Towns
  - List of Sustainable Towns/Bar Graph
  - Examples of committee structure (pd, city, non-profit)
    - Colchester/Lomax-ICCS examples
    - Marshall
    - County Co-Op
    - Director Sharing
  - Organizational Chart of Committees
    - St. Joseph
  - Good and Bad stories from other towns
- Citizen Action Committee
  - Role of the Committee and Committee Members
  - How to recruit committee members
  - Major challenges for committees (see pi)
  - Major successes of committees (see pi)
  - Recognition program for committee members
  - Meetings-suggestion once a month and once a week with director during summer daze
- HR
  - Job Descriptions/Role Delegation for Committee, Directors, and Youth Leaders
  - Work Permit Guidelines
  - Housing Guidelines for Directo
  - Interviewing Guidelines for Youth leaders and Directors, Sample Questions
- Funding
  - Grants
    - List of Foundations
    - Grant Seeking and Writing Tips
    - IDNR info. from Steve Gonzalez
  - Sponsorship
  - Donations
  - Sample and Real Examples of Town Budgets

- A tool to demonstrate the Benefits to Business
  - Funding Breakdowns between town and IRRDP
- Links from Web Site
  - Professional Organizations
    - IPRA
    - IAPD
  - Community Development Resources
- Forms-Make a CD?
- Research
  - Needs Assessments
  - Evaluations
  - Measure Sustainability
- Advertising, Marketing, and Publicity
  - How to connect/build relationships with the media
  - Press Releases
  - Political Involvement
  - Video
- As administrators, we need to continue to collaborate and network with community development organizations (ICCS, UI-Ext., IIRA) and political arenas (GRAC). Interagency meetings are paramount to serve as a clearinghouse. Furthermore, we need to encourage more support from IPRA and IAPD to assist or at least fund our work in establishing new park and recreation agencies. Many of the rural park districts that participated in IRRDP expresses discontent with support from IAPD. However, agency incubation may not be IAPD's role.
- Overall, I feel we have made a dramatic move towards aligning IRRDP with current trends in the area of community and youth development. Our Mission of sustainable rural development is on the right track. Our program seems to be as effective as any program or curriculum highlighted or presented at the Community Development Society. So far, since 1995, former and current committee members have been highly satisfied with our assistance, however, the vast majority want more training in the area of "local capacity-building."
- Next Steps:
  - Update Model for Sustainability based on PI Feedback
    - Major discussion point---when do we start enforcing the three-year subsidy....need to finalize policy before 9/26 when we roll out 2003 town recruitment
  - Finalize Advisory Manual Contents and Put together
  - Overhaul the website from a Summer Daze Electronic Brochure to an IRRDP web site. Have a button on the left for services available...then the next page a list of services with links being Summer Daze. Basically, our current content would fall under this sub-area.
    - Fix initial mistakes and changes

- Add upcoming events button on left
  - Training
- Add Announcements on the left
- Add Summer Daze Button
- Add over 50 button and put information from Grant
- Links for Playground Equipment