

**Parks Partners:
A Model Assessment Tool for Effective
Partnerships between Local Park Systems and Nonprofits**

by

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Applied Research Project

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Abstract

While local park systems provide multiple benefits to a community, many do not have adequate resources to meet service demands. Public-private partnerships, specifically those with nonprofits, have become a popular solution to this problem. Partnerships allow park agencies to better maintain green spaces, enhance programming and share in project coordination/management. As public stewards and servants, park agencies should ensure partnerships are as effective as possible.

Purpose: The purpose of this applied research project is three-fold. First, it develops a framework to assess the effectiveness of public-private partnerships between local public park systems and nonprofit entities. Second, it utilizes the framework to assess the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department's partnership with the nonprofit Austin Parks Foundation. Third, it provides recommendations for enhancing Austin's current and future public-private partnerships.

Methodology: A review of the literature identifies the ideal components of an ideal park/nonprofit partnership. The components are grouped into four separate categories and used to construct a model assessment tool. The tool is used to assess the partnership between the Austin Parks and Recreation Department and the Austin Parks Foundation nonprofit. The assessment takes the form of a case study, and utilizes document analysis, focused interviews and direct observation research methods.

Findings: The partnership between the Austin Parks and Recreation Department and the Austin Parks Foundation adequately aligns with the ideal type partnership for parks/nonprofits. The partnership is mostly effective in enhancing park and recreation services for the Austin community. Partners are very compatible, and significantly engage the community in activities. However, the partnership lacks a formal agreement and performance measurement activities. Partnership activities are trending toward traditionally underserved areas, and do not appear to further existing park system inequities.

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About the Author

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

A Resource Conundrum

In an episode of NBC's Emmy-award winning comedy series, *Parks and Recreation*, assistant Director for parks Leslie Knope suggests using grazing sheep to mow the grass in parks in order to save money. Her suggestion is in response to potential budget cuts for the parks department in the fictional municipality of Pawnee, Indiana. Faced with funding cuts, Knope is forced to find creative solutions to maintain basic park services. She later supplements her idea with another resourceful suggestion, "Tired sheep could become food... or sweaters!" While her solution is intended as humor, the scenario she finds herself in is an ongoing reality for many local park systems facing increased service demands and stagnant or lessening resources.

Ideally, all municipalities would have the funding necessary to maintain its park system, which includes providing quality programming and services. In reality, inadequate funding is perhaps the single most important factor threatening the delivery of public parks and recreation services at the local level (Gladwell, Anderson & Sellers, 2003, p. 105). This dynamic is not unique to communities of a specific size or geographic location. Rather, many municipalities simply do not have the capacity to manage, maintain, and develop public parks (Wilson, 2011, p. 9). As a result, local park systems are forced to come up with creative ways to maintain and enhance park and recreational services.

Partnering in the Park

One creative strategy for addressing this issue is the establishment of public-private partnerships (P3s) between public park systems and private, non-profit entities. Engaging in partnerships has become a common practice among local park systems and the nonprofit sector (Bruton et al., 2011, p. 57; Joassart-Marcelli et al., 2011, p. 682). These partnerships are reflective of the trend of public sector shifting from a centralized form of governance, to "network

governance” where public goods and services are provided by a network of actors, including nonprofits (Wilson, 2010, p. 11). Local park systems use partnerships in a variety of ways, including revitalizing existing parks and facilities, enhancing maintenance capabilities, and expanding programming opportunities (Madden, 2000, p. 17; Murray, 2009, p. 182). Partnerships also vary in scope and the type of nonprofit partners involved.

Overall, these partnerships have received substantial support from cities large and small, including the City of Austin, Texas. For instance, in a 2014 *Community Impact Newspaper* article, the current Austin Mayor Lee Leffingwell noted, “there are great demands on the city’s funds...and public-private partnerships could be one way the city could stretch its investment dollars while still supporting community benefits” (McCrady, 2014).

Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD)

The Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) owns and maintains the City of Austin’s park system. PARD preserves Austin’s many nature trails and provides recreational, cultural and outdoor services to the community. PARD maintains hundreds of parks, multiple pools and sports fields, golf courses, and cemeteries. PARD also provides year-round programming and hosts events at its many museums, recreation centers and cultural facilities.

Austin maintains a positive reputation as a “green city” in part due to the amount of land devoted to greenspace within its city limits.¹ While Austin’s park system contains a substantial amount of parkland per capita, it lacks the ability to provide adequate services and maintenance to that greenspace. Specifically, Austin is currently ranked 31st among the 75 largest U.S. cities in terms of overall park services, investment and access. A major contributing factor for Austin’s mid-tier ranking is the relatively small amount it spends per resident on its expansive park system (study score: 9/20).² While some may argue ranking 31st is commendable, the ranking allows Austin’s

¹ See <http://www.mnn.com/health/allergies/photos/top-10-green-us-cities/10-austin-texas#top-desktop>

² See <http://parkscore.tpl.org/city.php?city=Austin>

reputation as a top “green city” to be challenged. To help bridge the apparent gap between available fiscal resources and service demand, Austin’s park system has established various partnerships with private, non-profit entities. Among these, is its partnership with the nonprofit Austin Parks Foundation (APF).

Research Purpose

Effective partnerships allow a local park agency to maintain a healthy park system that meets the service demands of a community. A healthy park system provides a number of substantial benefits to a community. For instance, parks provide a venue for physical activity and exposure to nature. Such exposure is shown to have a positive impact on both physical and psychological health. Parks also help bring people together, acting as a nucleus of neighborhood activity and community building (Cohen, et al., 2014). Park programming has a positive effect on adolescent development, especially in large cities where there is a higher concentration of at-risk youth.³ According to a study conducted by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), local and regional parks across the nation generated nearly \$140 billion in economic activity and supported almost 1 million jobs from their operations and capital spending in 2013.

Current scholarly literature on public-private partnerships may not contain evaluation protocols or examples. In addition, cities like Austin do not appear to evaluate these partnerships in practice. Hence, there seems to be a scholarly and practical gap in knowledge about evaluation of partnerships specifically for parks and nonprofits. There is value in filling this gap and pursuing a standard that would provide local park systems (including Austin’s) with a “blueprint” for effective partnership management, thus enhancing service delivery.

³ See: http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Publications_and_Research/Research/Papers/Synopsis-of-Research-Papers.pdf

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this applied research project is three-fold. First, it develops a framework to assess the effectiveness of public-private partnerships between local public park systems and nonprofit entities. Second, it utilizes the framework to assess the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department's partnership with the nonprofit Austin Parks Foundation. Third, it provides recommendations for enhancing Austin's current and future public-private partnerships.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter II provides a review of the scholarly literature, outlining public-private partnerships in general and specifically between park systems and nonprofit entities. The chapter discusses the various components of park/nonprofit partnerships. It concludes with four practical ideal type categories identified from the literature. These practical ideal type categories outline and justify the model assessment tool. Chapter III provides basic information about both the Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) and the Austin Parks Foundation (APF). The chapter also briefly discusses the history of the PARD/APF partnership. Chapter IV outlines the methodology used to assess the PARD/APF partnership, connecting its activities with the model. This chapter also includes an operationalization table. Chapter V provides the results of the case study. Chapter VI provides PARD and APF with recommendations on how to improve the current partnership.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Chapter Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to review the scholarly literature on public-private partnerships (P3s). This review identifies “practical” ideal components of P3s between local park systems and nonprofit entities. The literature is used to develop a practical ideal model framework for evaluating the effectiveness of park/nonprofit partnerships. The chapter ends with a table linking the framework components to the literature.

Background: Parks, Nonprofits, and Partnerships

The three major pillars of the analysis used in this study include: local park systems, nonprofit entities and public-private partnerships (P3s). A local park system is a municipal entity that delivers leisure benefits to its public. A park system is the sum of its parts, which includes trails, open/green space, indoor recreation centers, aquatic facilities, playgrounds, sports fields and program offerings (Crosby & Rose, 2008, p. 63; Walker, 2004, p. 1). Nonprofit organizations “play a variety of social, economic, and political roles in the society. They provide services as well as educate, advocate, and engage people in civic and social life” (Salamon et al., 2013, p. 66). Nonprofits are categorized based on field of work (e.g. health care, arts and culture, and human services) (Brecher & Wise, 2008, p. 147). Many nonprofits help provide services for local park systems (Brecher and Wise, 2008, p. 149). Overall, nonprofits partner with governments in an effort to meet public needs and accomplish common goals (Gazley, 2008, p. 142).

The literature offers many definitions of public-private partnerships. For example, Hilvert and Swindell (2013, p. 245) note that, “[P3s] include collaborations involving a public agency and either a private firm or a nonprofit organization.” Additionally, Forrer (2010, p. 476) frames P3s as “ongoing agreements” where public and private organizations jointly make decisions and produce “a public good or service that has traditionally been provided by the public sector.” The term

‘partnership’ is sometimes used as a broad label to describe everything from cooperative ventures, interorganizational agreements, alliances, coalitions, collaborations, and workforces (Mowen & Kerstetter, 2006, p. 2).

Public-private partnerships are used for a multitude of purposes (Hilvert & Swindell, 2013, Savas, 2000). Neal (2010, p. 36) suggests that partnerships “are becoming an increasingly popular method of service delivery and management across many policy areas.” As such, a singular definition for all public-private partnerships is difficult to ascertain. Regardless, some scholars have attempted to outline the defining characteristics of a partnership. For instance, Brinkerhoff (2002, p. 21) suggests the following definition:

Partnership is a dynamic relationship among diverse actors, based on mutually agreed objectives, pursued through a shared understanding of the most rational division of labour based on the respective comparative advantages of each partner. Partnership encompasses mutual influence, with a careful balance between synergy and respective autonomy, which incorporates mutual respect, equal participation in decision making, mutual accountability and transparency.

In addition to the definition above, Brinkerhoff (2002, p. 22-23) suggests two distinguishing dimensions for defining a public-private partnership: mutuality and organizational identity. Mutuality refers to interdependence among partners, which requires process integration, regular interaction, communication, decision making and equal benefit and participation. Mutuality also refers to a horizontal rather than hierarchical dynamic. The components of mutuality distinguish a partnership from other collaborations, such as supplier/contractor relationships.⁴ The next dimension—organizational identity, takes into account that partnerships are defined by consistencies in the mission and values of partnering organizations. For instance nonprofits, like government, define the value they produce in terms of their mission rather than financial

⁴ As this analysis later notes, some public-private partnerships use “contracts” as performance review tools or in place of an agreement between partners. The use of contracts within a public-private partnership should not be confused with a traditional contractual relationship between a public entity and private vendor. While a P3 may feature contractual tools, the relationship between partners requires mutuality and ongoing collaboration. Conversely, a general contractual relationship is based on a simple and direct exchange of goods or services.

performance. The mission for both organizations is often serving the public through a service or advocacy. Overall, Brinkerhoff (2002, p. 22-24) shows that high degrees of mutuality and organizational identity distinguish partnerships from other forms of collaboration. These defining dimensions are shown in Table 2.1 below:

Figure 2.1 – Partnership Mutuality and Organizational Identity Matrix

		Mutuality	
		Low	High
Organizational Identity	High	2 Contracting	1 Partnership
	Low	3 Extension	4 Co-optation & Gradual Absorption

Figure 1. Partnership model.

Source: Brinkerhoff (2002, p. 22-24)

Advocates of public-private partnerships cite a multitude of benefits. Advocates frame benefits in both ideological and pragmatic terms (Forrer et al., 2010, p. 475). Ideologically, advocates argue the private sector is better equipped and provides services more effectively than the public sector. Savas (2000, p. 2) refers to P3s as a form of privatizing of public services, which he considers a "...tool to improve government performance and societal functioning." Pragmatically, P3s are seen as a way for governments to tap into the technical expertise, funding and knowledge of the private sector to provide quality services (Forrer et al., 2010, p. 475). Carson (2011, p. 21) suggests the nature of P3s allow for innovative outcomes, "One of the benefits of partnerships is that because they work across agency and program lines, they have the discretion to solve public problems creatively."

Partnership skeptics characterize the privatization of public services as a negative reduction in the role of government. This reduction eventually leads to disadvantaged citizens being left

without a support system (Savas, 2000, p. 2). Further critiques note that partnering with the private sector can result in corrupt contracting processes and lower quality services (Neal, 2010, p. 17). Private service providers may also retain a monopoly over a public service, resulting in price increases (Neal, 2010, p. 17). Overall, privatization is seen as a hindrance to public accountability as it makes blame less easy to assign (Neal, 2010, p. 17).

The following analysis focuses on P3s featuring local park systems (public) and nonprofits (private) partners. These park/nonprofit partnerships are collaborations in which nonprofits supplement public services in order to provide benefits to a citizenry (Brecher and Wise, 2008, p. 146). The origin of public-private collaborations is rooted in financial limitations faced by government entities.

Emergence of Park/Nonprofit Partnerships

The advent of public-private partnerships is largely attributed to economic hardships faced by government sectors. The first emergence of P3s occurred during the Carter Administration (1977-81), a time marked by economic stagnation and budgetary deficiencies. Public-private partnerships were seen by the government as a policy tool to help provide services without raising taxes or defaulting on financial responsibilities (Neal, 2010, p. 36-37). Without federal aid, many local governments were forced to make cuts to essential services.

In the decades since, municipal park systems have not been immune to such funding challenges. Funding for parks programming is increasingly threatened by the prioritization of other services, such as public safety, economic growth and urban development (Joassart-Marcelli et al., 2013, p. 683; Madden, 2000, p. 13). In most cities, when budgets are tight and incomes fall, park services are among the first areas to be cut (Joassart-Marcelli et al., 2013, p. 683). This reality is widespread, as “many cities and towns simply cannot allocate enough funds to their public spaces to maintain and manage them at a reasonable level” (Madden, 2000, p. 13). Funding issues within local parks are exacerbated by an overall lack of direct citizen support. As Neal (2010, p. 28) notes,

“Given that the costs of maintaining public parks are usually distributed broadly across the taxpaying public, the individual acting independently has every incentive to enjoy the parks but has no incentive to contribute to their maintenance, either by paying for upkeep or by enacting certain policies to ensure multiple and fair use.” This dynamic is reflected in the results of Crosby and Rose’s (2008) study of park support within a community. This study found that support for parks was strong and consistent with support for library, health and education services among a certain demographic. However, this same demographic “reacted negatively to notions of funding increased investment in parks through tax increases, bond referenda, or increased user fees for park facilities” (Crosby & Rose, 2008, p. 65). Conversely, residents may have the desire to support a park but are not organized enough to do so (Madden, 2000, p. 14). To curb these challenges, local park systems increasingly turn to the nonprofit sector for assistance (Joassart-Marcelli et al., 2013, p. 683).

According to Madden (2000, p. 23), a nonprofit’s activities are aligned to its role in the local park system. For instance, most nonprofits raise money for a park system, organize volunteers and perform outreach on behalf of the park. Other, larger organizations may assist with design, construction or even direct management of park activities. In addition, nonprofits provide varying levels of advocacy on behalf of a park or the entire park system. Madden (2000, p. 17-22) offers five distinct types of nonprofits that partner with local park systems, which are shown in **Table 2.1** below.

Table 2.1 – Categories of Nonprofit Parks Partners

Partner Type	Description and Role	Example
Assistance Providers	Small, volunteer-based. Assist with education, programming, volunteer coordination fundraising	Friends of Brentwood Park— <i>New Bedford, MA</i>
Catalysts	Initiate creation of new parks, park projects. Involved in advocacy, design, construction. Role with park agency changes upon project completion	National AIDS Memorial Grove— <i>San Francisco, CA</i>
Co-Managers	May share responsibility for planning, design, construction, management of parks, or combine funds and/or staff with park system	Central Park Conservancy— <i>New York, NY</i>
Sole Managers	Independently responsible for managing and maintaining park, developing park policies	Maymont Foundation— <i>Richmond, VA</i>

Citywide Partners	Not focused on single park/facility; advocate for entire park system, fundraise, works with small park-focused community groups/organizations	Partnerships for Parks— <i>New York, NY</i>
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Source: Madden, 2000, p. 17-22

Building off of the definitions above, Murray (2009, p. 182) asserts that nonprofits may take the form of “Friends of the Park” groups or “Business Improvement Districts” (BIDS). These ‘friends groups’ are essentially donation-based charitable organizations that help fund and perform maintenance improvements within parks. Friends groups organize volunteers to accomplish park improvements, including coordinated park “clean up days.” Nonprofit friends groups are also known to facilitate community and political awareness meetings and workshops (Madden, 2000, p. 18). Unlike friends groups, BIDs are financed through property taxes on property owners in a specific area, likely adjacent to or part of a park system (Murray, 2009, p. 182). Tax revenue supports the management of the defined district, funds capital projects, ongoing maintenance and other improvement functions (Murray, 2009, p. 186). BIDs often seek to revitalize a particular area of a city’s downtown. For instance, Wilson (2011, p. 11) notes, “BIDs... are inherently interested in ensuring ‘clean and safe’ areas for the safety and pleasure of tourists, shoppers, employees, and residents.”

Park/nonprofit partnership advocates cite various reasons for pursuing these collaborations. Most of these are consistent with aforementioned pragmatic reasons for pursuing P3s, including access to knowledge, expertise and resources not available to the public sector. In broad terms, P3s allow park systems to offer new services, enhance current services, and maintain services that are threatened by a loss of resources (Yoder, 2010, p. 96). As Neal (2010, p. 21) notes, “Proponents of the partial privatization of public parks argue that by creating partnerships between the public and private sectors to fund parks maintenance projects, more poor neighborhoods will have access to high-quality recreational opportunities.” Advocates also argue that park/nonprofit partnerships are seen as a way for park systems to be more efficient and flexible (Madden, 2000, p. 9). For instance, a nonprofit assigned with managing a park can quickly purchase new equipment and adjust funding

if needed. Nonprofit partners can also fundraise more effectively, as many citizens are wary of direct monetary donations to government agencies. Nonprofit partners also allow for additional advocacy for the park system as they do not have to remain politically neutral (Madden, 2000, p. 9). For example, a nonprofit partner may lobby elected officials for more park system funding on behalf of its partner. Park/nonprofit partnerships also allow for a focused approach on a certain park or facility that is in need (Madden, 2000, p. 9). Park systems' budgets usually must spread its resources across an entire system. P3s, however, provide an opportunity to invest in an area of need or importance.

Opponents of park/nonprofit partnerships refer to the negative impacts of privatizing public spaces. These impacts include decreased accountability and enhanced inequity of services. In terms of accountability, opponents argue there is limited oversight of private entities assigned with providing public park services (Neal, 2010, p. 17). Equity concerns include enhanced disparities in park services. For instance, a nonprofit entity may charge fees for services, limiting access to citizens who cannot afford to pay (Neal, 2010, p. 17). The existence of P3s within a community may indirectly enhance inequities as well. For instance, opponents note that a majority of P3s focus their efforts in wealthier areas of town, giving less attention to parks and facilities in economically disadvantaged areas (Brecher & Wise, 2008; Crosby & Rose, 2008). Other concerns include the level of service quality, which can be reduced when private partners become responsible for providing public services (Neal, 2010, p. 17). An additional critique is that park/nonprofit P3s may result in less availability for park spaces. Joassart-Marcelli et al., (2010, p. 687) provide a specific example, "... if a youth soccer club becomes the main provider of recreation activity in a given park, the facilities are less readily available for other pursuits and potential users may be excluded." While park/nonprofit P3 critics argue against privatization of public spaces, Joassart-Marcelli et al., (2010, p. 687) point out that these arrangements should not be characterized as traditional privatization, "...nonprofit participation can contribute to private fundraising and revitalization, but

rarely represents full privatization to the extent that ownership remains public and a large portion of revenues comes from city funds.” Instead, a more appropriate term may be “nonprofitization” of public spaces, which likely enjoys more public appeal and acceptance (Joassart-Marcelli et al., 2010, p. 687).

Public-private partnerships are an increasingly popular tool for public managers to improve service delivery, especially within local park systems. While there are substantial benefits in pursuing park/nonprofit partnership, these collaborations also bring associated risks (Brecher & Wise, 200, p. 159). Further, most organizations do not effectively manage or monitor partnerships once they are in place (Hilvert & Swindell, 2013, p. 248). Given these dynamics, it’s important to develop a tool for public managers to evaluate the effectiveness of park/nonprofit P3s. This should ensure public resources are maximized and citizens receive quality park and recreation services and programming. The following section introduces the conceptual framework (practical ideal type model) for evaluating park/nonprofit partnerships.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the need for effective park/nonprofit partnerships, this project uses the literature to develop a practical ideal type, which is then used to evaluate park/nonprofit P3s in the City of Austin, Texas. Note that the framework should be viewed as a model rather than a fixed standard—as Shields and Rangarajan (2013, p. 163) note, the “practical” ideal type is merely a benchmark that helps managers understand and improve reality.

This project evaluates the park/nonprofit partnership between the Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) and the Austin Parks Foundation (APF)⁵. The ideal categories of this model include *1) Compatibility, 2) Structure, 3) Communication and 4) Accountability*. The next section explains the model.

⁵ Chapter III provides background on the partnership between PARD and APF.

1. COMPATIBILITY

Ideally, a park/nonprofit P3 should include compatible partners (Yoder, 2010, p. 97). The first component of *compatibility* is the alignment of organizational mission, values and goals between partnering organizations. This alignment is necessary for partnership success.⁶ Partnership success depends on partners operating with similar philosophies (Yoder, 2010, p. 97).

The second component of *compatibility* includes complementary partnership capacity. While mission alignment is important, partners must also maintain the capacity to achieve the stated partnership goals (McPadden & Margerum, 2014, p. 1328). Capacity is complementary when each side brings a resource or capability that the other is lacking in order to provide park services (Mowen & Kersetter, 2005, p. 3; Bruton et al., 2011, p. 57).

Thirdly, *compatibility* is achieved if each partner is committed to upholding the public interest. As a public resource, local park systems address the needs and enhance the lives of all public citizens (Spangler & Caldwell, 2007, p. 64). A private nonprofit's control or influence over a public asset (e.g., parks) may conflict with the public interest (Brecher & Wise, 2008). Ideally, park/nonprofit P3 should include partners who demonstrate a commitment to public over private interests.

The final component of *compatibility* suggests that ideal P3s should avoid inequitable park-related outcomes. Inequity here refers to the availability of services across an entire park system (Brecher & Wise, 2008, p. 155). A frequent critique of park/nonprofit P3s is that they can enhance existing inequities of park services within a community.⁷ To achieve *compatibility*, an ideal P3 should not contribute to park inequity.

In summary, the *compatibility* category of an ideal park/nonprofit P3 can be described through four components, which include: *1) the alignment of parks and recreational mission, goals*

⁶ See Shaw, 2013, p. 110-111; Cousens et al., 2006, p. 37; Mowen & Kersetter, 2005, p. 3; Jacobson & Choi, 2008, p. 649.

⁷ See: Brecher & Wise, 2008, p. 156; Joassart-Marcelli et al., 2013, p. 686; Holifield & Williams, 2014, p. 70.

and values; 2) the complementary capacity to provide parks and recreational services; 3) the prioritization of public over private interest; and 4) the avoidance of non-equitable park system outcomes. The following sections discuss each of these components in detail.

1.1 Alignment of parks and recreational mission, goals and values

In order to be compatible P3 partners, each side should align mission, goals and values. Alignment in this sense refers to level of similarity between each partner's mission, values and goals (Murphy et al., 2014, p. 145). Values refer to an organization's identity, which directly influences its decision-making and actions (Bourne & Jenkins, 2013, p. 2). For example, if an organizational value is rooted in environmentalism, then its actions may consist of planting trees or maintaining waterfront habitats. Organizational mission and goals are often used interchangeably with the concept of vision, which refers to what the organization (partnership) seeks to achieve (Mowen & Kerstetter, 2006, p. 3). For example, in her development of an ideal type framework for P3s, Carson (2011, p. 14) argues that a shared vision and goals are critical components of partnership success. This alignment is important because it provides partners with specific direction on successful program implementation (Carson, 2011, p. 16).

Alignment between partners is an especially crucial component for park/nonprofit partnerships. (Mowen & Kerstetter, 2006, Cousens et al., 2006, p. 37). In a case study of park P3s, McPadden & Margerum (2014, p. 1327) noted the importance of having a clear mission and strategic goals amongst partners. The mission, goals and values of parks and nonprofit organizations can also be viewed as components of organizational culture, the understanding of which characterizes successful partnerships (Shaw, 2010, p. 114).

Given that alignment is ideal, it's important to define the mission, goals and values of local park systems. By doing so one can more easily identify its alignment with a nonprofit's mission, goals and values.

The overarching mission of parks is to provide services and support of recreational and cultural facilities which benefit residents and visitors (Kaczynski & Crompton, 2006, p. 89). Ideal nonprofit partners should share this mission to provide recreational services. This is evidenced in cities such as New York, which has established more than 50 successful park/nonprofit P3s. The majority of New York's partnering nonprofits are "park-related" in that their primary mission is to provide advocacy or specialized services for local parks (Brecher & Wise, 2008, p. 149-50).

Park systems also have specific values that make them essential public services. One major value of parks is their provision of physical health and wellness benefits to a community (Joassart-Marcelli et al., 2011, p. 682). This notion is supported by findings, which suggest the availability of parks and recreational amenities promotes community health and activity (Walker, 2004, p. 2). Another value of park systems are the ecological benefits they provide to urban environments through environmental stewardship and land preservation (Ryan, 2006, p. 61). Alignment of these values is important for P3 success. For example, in Pincetl's (2003, p. 981) discussion of park/nonprofit P3s in Los Angeles, she argues that environmentally-centric nonprofits play a significant role in effective land use for parks. The alignment described above helps ensure the partnership remains stable in the long-run and achieve its objectives (Shaw, 2003, p. 110-111).

There are instances where alignment does not exist within a park/nonprofit partnership, which can result in negative outcomes (Cousens et al., 2006, p. 49). Negative outcomes include partnership conflict, poor partnership performance, and overall partnership failure (Cousens et al., 2006, p. 37, 49; Crompton, 1998, p. 91). It should be noted that partners do not need to be identical; however, without an alignment of basic values partnership conflict can occur (Shaw, 2003, p. 110-111).

Some P3s can pit park system values against the benefits gained from nonprofit collaboration. Without alignment, a park system may prefer to avoid a P3 in order to uphold public sector values (Frisby et al., 2004, p. 123). Given the reality of reduced park funding, resource

scarcity may take precedent over upholding these values. An example of this would include a park system partnering with a nonprofit with values contrary to health or environmentalism. Cousens et al. (2006, p. 49) caution against this practice, noting, “This approach...one that neglects the importance of the values of those involved, has the potential to create problems resulting from the failure to appreciate the implications of interorganizational linkages for the organizations involved and the community.” Park systems should consider if alignment exists prior to entering or continuing a partnership with a nonprofit.

To summarize, an ideal park/nonprofit P3 should have an alignment of park and recreational mission, values and goals. This includes a demonstrated commitment to providing health and activity-oriented services, as well as environmental stewardship.

1.2 Complementary capacity to provide parks and recreational services

The second component of *compatibility* suggests that park/nonprofit partnerships should have complementary capacity to provide parks and recreational services.⁸ When organizations are complementary each side can contribute activities the other side is unable to produce (Crompton, 1998, p. 73).

To determine if complementary capacity exists within a P3, one must define the specific services and resources associated with park systems. Parks and recreational services include an array of activities and programs designed to support healthy lifestyle and environmental resources.⁹ The physical resources of local park systems include trails, green space, indoor recreation centers, aquatic facilities, playgrounds, and sports fields (Crosby & Rose, 2008, p. 63). These activities, programs and resources collectively define parks and recreational services. Ideally, each side of the P3 would complement the other’s capacity to provide these park-centric resources and services (McPadden & Margerum, 2014, p. 1323).

⁸ See: Bruton et al., 2011, p. 57; MCPadden & Margerum, 2014, p. 1323; Neal, 2011, p. 54; Walker, 1999, p. 17

⁹ See: Shulaker et al., 2006, p. 14, 19; Holifield & Williams, 2014, p. 70; Ryan, 2006, p. 61.

Partnering organizations in an ideal park/nonprofit partnership should also have the capacity to support these services. For example, in a study of park/nonprofit P3s, Neal (2010, p. 54) concluded that, "...a key purported strength of [P3s] is that the public and private sectors each bring complementary contributions to the table that make good sense and that offer benefits to all parties." The nature of these contributions can vary from financial gifts via grants, to providing access to facilities to the ability to provide volunteers (Cousens et al., 2006, p. 47-48).

The complementary capacity ideal can be further expanded when we consider the assets and liabilities of park systems and nonprofits. According to Walker (1999, p. 17), these assets and liabilities should offset each other in order to create a successful park/nonprofit P3:

In good partnerships, the assets of one party offset the liabilities of the other. For example, the nonprofit partner may bring flexible funding to the partnership, allowing new program initiatives and offsetting a public agency's chronic underfunding, which impedes innovation. The public sector, in turn, may bring a solid organizational infrastructure, allowing the partnership to implement new initiatives and offsetting nonprofit's lack of staff and predictable funding.

Wollenburg's (2013, p. 137) study of park/nonprofit P3 agreements reiterates the importance of complementary capacity, noting that successful partnerships build on strengths and assets and address the areas which need improvement. **Table 2.2** below draws on Walker's (1999) insights and can be used to assess the degree of complementary capacity:

Table 2.2 Public and Private Assets and Liabilities

	POTENTIAL ASSETS	POTENTIAL LIABILITIES
Public Sector	Stable Funding Organizational Infrastructure Public Legitimacy Natural Constituencies	Chronic Underfunding Bureaucratic Inertia Popular Indifference Narrow Constituencies
Nonprofit Partner	Flexible Funding Organizational Flexibility Community Credibility Broad Constituencies	Unpredictable Funding Lack of Follow-Through Unrealistic Expectations Shallow Support

Source: Walker (1999, p. 17)

A tangible example of complementary capacity can be found in the park/nonprofit P3 between the City of Louisville park system and the “Louisville Olmstead Parks Conservancy.” The Louisville Olmstead Conservancy’s capacity to raise private contributions for the park system complemented the stable but underfunded City of Louisville park budget. Another tangible example can be found in Cleveland’s “Youth Outdoors,” a park/nonprofit P3 between the City of Cleveland, Ohio State 4-H Cooperative Extension, and Cleveland Metroparks. This P3 involves a partnering organization providing mentors to work with inner-city youth to experience outdoor recreation. The mentors relate to the backgrounds of these youth—beyond the expertise of park staff. Additionally, youth are provided skills and training using equipment and settings not normally available to these children—an asset the mentors are unable to provide directly (Mowen & Kerstetter, 2006, p. 3). Each side of this collaborative effort uses its own unique capacity to complement the inadequacies of its partner.

In summary, each organization within an ideal park/nonprofit P3 should exhibit a complementary capacity to provide relevant parks and recreation services. Services include supporting health and environmentally-oriented activities/programs, as well as the maintenance and functionality of physical park resources such as pools, green spaces, recreation centers and sports fields. Further, ideal partners should offset the inherent assets and liabilities of the other partnering organization, thus maximizing strengths and creating a successful P3.

1.3 Prioritization of public over private interests

To achieve *compatibility* partners should prioritize the public interest over any competing, private interests.¹⁰ Park systems are public goods, which Dumas et al., (2007, p. 30) define as “... a good that produces positive benefits for multiple individuals.” Public interest here refers to the provision of parks benefits to all individuals of a community. Private interests include those that serve the nonprofit partnering organization and do not benefit the broader public.

¹⁰ See: Shaw, 2003, p. 114; Wilson, 2011, p. 79; Frisby et al., 2004, p. 113.

The prioritization of public over private interest is demonstrated when the outputs of the partnership serve the entire community. These outputs include services, programming and the availability of facilities and park resources. A park/nonprofit P3 should prioritize the provision of these outputs over any other competing interests.

The prioritization of public interest often depends on the intention of the nonprofit partner within a P3. Traditionally, partnerships involving nonprofits and public entities have focused on the social good for all citizens (Frisby et al., 2004, p. 113). However, some nonprofits focus their attention on the well-being of a certain subset of the population rather than an entire community (Brecher & Wise, 2008, p. 157). This dynamic can lead to the exclusion of other portions of the community, which is not ideal for P3s (Joassart-Marcelli et al., 2011, p. 684). Rather, public assets such as parks require an approach focused on the broader public interest. Without this focus, a partnership conflict can occur (Brecher & Wise, 2008, p. 157).

Public interest prioritization is especially important in P3s featuring a nonprofit managing a park asset. In these cases, private nonprofits take control of the daily operations of a park asset, which can provide significant benefits to a park system (Murray, 2009, p. 242; Wilson, 2011, p. 79). However, nonprofit park managers are sometimes criticized over concerns about the infusion of private interests into public park systems. Examples of private interests can include donors to the nonprofit exerting too much control over park management; overt commercialization of the park; and a focus on revenue-enterprises rather than park programming (Murray, 2009, p. 192-193). These private interests are similar to the components of a P3 between the public and commercial sector, which focuses on financial gain rather than public good. The tension between competing public and private interests has the ability to deter partnership success (Frisby et al., 2004, p. 113).

The infusion of private over public interests may be the result of pressure from nonprofit leadership. As Brecher and Wise (2008, p. 158) note, “Nonprofit board members may have goals that match the needs of selected, narrow constituents, but their ideas and projects may not be

consistent with broader public service goals.” Nonprofits often self-select members of these boards based on commitment to the organization or their ability to fundraise (Brecher & Wise, 2008, p. 158-159). In order to ensure a prioritization of public interest park systems should require more public representation on these boards. This may include a public official or their designee, which helps ensure more public accountability (Brecher & Wise, 2008, p. 158-159). An ideal partnering nonprofit would include public representation within its governing structure.

In summary, public interest should be prioritized in the activities of an ideal park/nonprofit P3. Nonprofit partners may have inherent private interests; however, ideal nonprofit partners should prioritize providing park benefits to all citizens when engaged in a park P3. The notion of park benefit dispersion provides an introduction into the fourth and final component of the *compatibility* ideal: the avoidance of non-equitable park system outcomes.

1.4 Avoidance of non-equitable park system outcomes

The final component of *compatibility* suggests that ideal park/nonprofit P3s avoid non-equitable park system outcomes (Holifield & Williams, 2014, p. 70). Park system equity is achieved when rich and poor neighborhoods receive park services of equal quality. Inequity occurs when there are significant levels of disparate services between areas of a community (Brecher & Wise, 2008, p. 155; Murray, 2009, p. 193).

Inequity within park systems is considered an unfortunate reality of today’s parks and recreation landscape (Brecher & Wise, 2008, p. 155). These inequities are often the result of deeply rooted socio-economic disparities within communities (Joassart-Marcelli et al., 2008, p. 686). Specifically, low-income communities composed of racial and ethnic minorities usually have less access to park and recreational services than other communities (Tardona et al., 2014, p. 75; Crosby & Rose, 2008, p. 64-65).

The growth of park/nonprofit partnerships is seen as a contributing factor to park system inequities (Brecher & Wise, 2008, p. 156; Joassart-Marcelli et al., 2008, p. 704). Areas where

nonprofit/park activity is the highest are usually the areas least in need. The origin of this pattern is explained by Neal (2010, p. 40), who suggests that parks near wealthy areas typically receive support of both public and private efforts, while parks in less advantaged areas depend only on what public efforts can provide. Additionally, Neal's assertion is supported by studies from Holifield and Williams (2014, p. 71-72) and Joassart-Marcelli et al., (2008, p. 706), which found significant park/nonprofit activity in white, wealthy areas. Conversely, nonprofit activity was lacking in poor, minority communities, furthering park service inequities. As Joassart-Marcelli et al., (2008, p. 706) note, "Our results show that poverty severely limits the ability of nonprofits to contribute to the maintenance of adequate recreational programming opportunities." Nonprofit collaboration with parks is found more likely to occur in larger parks common to white suburbs as opposed to smaller parks in inner-city minority neighborhoods (Holifield & Williams, 2014, p. 71). The significance of this dynamic is magnified when one considers that low-income, minority individuals are more likely to use and value park amenities than other demographics (Crosby & Rose, 2008, p. 65).

Park systems should take steps to ensure that its partnership does not exacerbate existing service inequities. P3s centered on a specific park should evaluate the relative need of that area of the park system. If adequate service levels exist, a partnership may enhance system-wide park service inequity. Inequity can be addressed by limiting the amount or intended uses of current nonprofit support (Brecher & Wise 2008, p. 159). Restrictions may include caps on private funding earmarked for a facility or area that already receives adequate support. Brecher and Wise (2008, p. 159) note the benefit of such restrictions, "Such limits would both curb excessive disparities and provide some incentive for supporter of a specific park to keep pressure on public officials to raise the baseline amount for all facilities." It should be noted that nonprofit collaboration alone cannot maintain complex park systems and address all park inequity issues. An ideal park/nonprofit P3, however, should take steps to ensure these inequities are not heightened (Holifield & Williams, 2014, p. 75-76).

The preceding section provided insights into how park/nonprofit partnerships can achieve *compatibility*. This includes aligning goals, mission and values as well as a complementary capacity amongst partners. Additionally, ideal P3s should prioritize the public's interest and avoid furthering existing inequities. The next section introduces the second ideal category for park/nonprofit P3s: partnership structure.

2. STRUCTURE

The P3 literature discusses several types of public-partnership structures, but does not offer a singular ideal type.¹¹ According to Bryson et al., (2006, p. 48) organizational structure can be conceptualized in terms of task specialization, division of labor, rules, standard operating procedures, and designated authority relationships. These, along with other partnership components from the literature, make up the ideal *structure* for a park/nonprofit P3. These ideal components are outlined below and include: *1) well-defined park funding and management roles; 2) collaboration with local parks constituency groups; 3) the existence of formal written agreement; and 4) balance of power among partners*. The following sections discuss each of these ideal components.

2.1 Well-defined park funding and management roles

An ideal park/nonprofit partnership has clearly defined roles for the management of park assets and funding sources (Jacobson & Choi, 2008, p. 641; Neal, 2010, p. 66). This is accomplished when each partner demonstrates a full understanding of its financial and managerial responsibilities. Without clearly defining these roles, the cost of a P3 may increase and the relationship between partners could be damaged (Frisby et al., 2004, p. 113, 117).

Funding roles between the park system and the nonprofit partner may vary. For example, some nonprofits receive financial support directly from a park system. In the P3 between the City of New York and the nonprofit, Asphalt Green, the park system pays Asphalt Green \$750,000 per year to provide services. Asphalt Green occupies a space owned by the park system, keeps fees earned

¹¹ See Cousens et al., 2006, p. 40; , 1999, p. 11; Savas, 2000, p. 7; Neal, 2010, p. 165.

by its program offerings, and makes a portion of its programs free to the public. In other cases, a nonprofit may be required to raise private donations to support its role in providing park services (Brecher and Wise, 2008, p. 153). For example, the City of New York provides no funding support to Bryant Park Corporation (BCP) nonprofit as part of their established P3. All projects and programs are supported with private funds to the BCP, which is responsible for day-to-day operations of Bryant Park.

The coordination of these funding responsibilities is an important part of defining the parameters of a successful P3 (Hilvert & Swindell, 2013, p. 247). Alternatively, a lack of clarity on fiscal responsibility among partners can create a barrier to P3 success (LaCour, 1982, p. 265-66). Clarity is apparent when partners have a defined budget for the partnership activities. Partnerships that require members to make a specific budget that identifies different streams of funding for the partnership activities are more successful than partnerships that do not (Carson, 2011, p. 64).

Park/nonprofit P3s also vary in terms of the level of park management control given to the nonprofit partner. Management control refers to the responsibilities for daily operations and maintenance of a park or facility. For example, the Bryant Park Corporation's (BPC's) P3 with the City of New York dictates that the BPC is responsible for all maintenance and operations in that park. Most P3s, however, do not delegate this level of operational responsibilities to a nonprofit partner (Brecher and Wise, 2008, p. 152). Regardless of the level on management, an ideal partnership should have clear expectations for each partner (Harnik, 2003, p. 53). Clarity in management roles can be achieved by developing a management plan that clearly outlines roles, expectations, reporting mechanisms and policies (Wollenburg, 2013, p. 138).

Overall, partners should take steps to clearly define funding and management roles. These roles are the foundation for partnership activity. Partners should establish both a partnership budget and a management plan to define funding and management roles.

2.2 Collaboration with local parks constituency groups

The second component of *structure* is that an ideal park/nonprofit partnership should collaborate with local parks constituency groups. Public-private partnerships do not operate in a vacuum. Further, sustaining a successful local park system requires a dedicated park constituency of users, neighbors and stewards (Ryan, 2006, p. 61; Harnik, 2003, p. 53). Constituency groups include neighborhood associations, youth organizations, environmental clubs, community development agencies, and other organizations with an interest in the park system (Walker, 1999, p. 2, 14-15). Collaboration with these groups is vital to the success of a park/nonprofit partnership.

While constituency groups may work closely with the park system and the nonprofit, they should not be considered formal partners. Walker (1999, p. 14) suggests that an ideal park/nonprofit P3 should include two types of partners: general and limited. General partners include the local park system and the partnering nonprofit. These entities have the most invested into the P3, assume the most risk, and take a lead role in creating new parks or improving of existing facilities. Limited partners include the various constituency groups that supplement the efforts of the general partners. These groups are usually bound by common, park-related interests including environmentalism, community-building, and historic preservation. Collaboration with constituency groups is vital to the success of a park/nonprofit P3s (Walker, 1999, p. 15).

Constituency groups bring value to a park/nonprofit partnership in a number of ways. These groups often include individuals with relevant skills and expertise that can benefit the P3 (Neal, 2010, p. 180). Additionally, collaboration with these groups provides the P3 with access to valuable information and connections to people and organizations willing to assist with the goals of the P3. Constituency groups also use their connections to enhance the credibility of a P3. Involvement of groups enables community support and participation in meetings and volunteer efforts (Neal, 2010, p. 180). Maintaining a connection with these groups is especially valuable when conflict occurs. For instance, in the 1980s staff from the Central Park Conservancy (CPC)

accidentally removed trees that were sensitive bird habitats. Since that incident, CPC officials continually meet with a group of local birdwatchers to ensure support and rapport is maintained (Murray, 2009, p. 218). An ideal park/nonprofit P3 should take steps to collaborate with local constituency groups to help achieve the goals of the partnership.

A prime example of successful constituency group collaboration can be found in Partnerships for Parks, which is a P3 between the City of New York park system (NYC) and the nonprofit, City Parks Foundation (CPF). This collaboration works to cultivate grassroots support for park maintenance and link together existing park-centric groups to build a strong, citywide constituency. As part of this P3, outreach coordinators provide direct links between these groups and the local park system. The groups are provided tools and resources to sustain the parks, and the park system benefits by the various support efforts of these groups (Madden, 2000, p. 22). While this P3 is technically between NYC and CPF, the involvement of the constituency groups provides a larger, positive impact for the entire park system. This example provides clear evidence of the value gained when park/nonprofit P3s collaborate with local constituency groups.

2.3 Existence of formal written agreement

An ideal park/nonprofit P3 should include a formal, written agreement outlining the parameters of the partnership. Partnership agreements describe the operating relationship between two or more agencies or organizations (LaCour, 1982, p. 265). An agreement between park systems and nonprofits can take a variety of forms, including a memoranda-of-understanding (MOU), grant agreements, contracts, or master operating agreements (Madden, 2000, p. 36). The development of these agreements is a necessary practice for any successful partnership (Jacobson & Choi, 2008, p. 644; McPadden & Margerum, 2014, p. 1323). This standard also applies to park/nonprofit P3s, which should have its parameters written down explicitly and expectations clearly identified (Harnik, 2003, p. 53).

There are a number of specific benefits of developing formal agreements. LaCour (1982, p. 266) asserts that the overarching benefit of agreements is that they formalize the partnership. Agreements also help bring transparency to the relationship. As DiMartino (2014, p. 276) notes, “Transparency over issues of ownership, personnel, budgeting, outcomes, and termination are essential for successful relationships.”

Ideal partnership agreements should outline a number of basic components. These include the name of the agreement; contributions of the partners; purpose of the partnership agreement; duration of partnership; allocation of profits, losses, and draws; partner authority and role; agreeable terms and termination of partnership (Wollenburg, et al., 2013, p. 139). Additionally, outlining written specific objectives and goals of the partnership is an ideal practice (Carson, 2011, p. 52; DiMartino, 2014, p. 276).

Along with basic components, ideal agreements should also be written with certain characteristics. LaCour (1982, p. 266) contends agreements should include simple, clear language and a focus on the desired outcome of the P3. Additionally, ideal agreements are written systematically—which includes sections describing the reason for the partnership, responsibilities of each agency, performance standards, communication protocols and methods for modifying the agreement. Finally, agreements should clarify funding roles and clearly state the mutual benefit that will be achieved by the partnership.

Specific to park/nonprofit P3s, Brecher and Wise (2008, p. 151-153) identify five dimensions of variability among P3s. An ideal P3 should include a formal, written agreement that discusses each of these dimensions. The first dimension—support from the city, identifies what level of financial or staff-related support will be provided as part of the P3. The second—access to concession revenue, suggests dynamics of any concession revenue or activity within the partnership. The third dimension—responsibilities in capital projects, identifies the roles of each partner for raising funds and designing, building, and managing capital infrastructure projects. The

fourth dimension—maintenance responsibility, should describe what level of operational responsibility each partner has for a particular park or facility. The final dimension—governance structure, discusses the leadership and oversight dynamics of the partnership and partnering organization. This includes how each side should interact as per the P3.

To summarize, an ideal park/nonprofit P3s should be formalized via a written agreement. These agreements should clearly address a number of key areas, including roles and expectations for each partner, funding components, partnership duration, and methods for altering or discontinuing the P3. Now that the importance of formal written agreements has been discussed, this analysis moves to the final component of the *structure* category: *balance of power among partners*.

2.4 Balance of power among partners

An ideal nonprofit/park P3 should maintain a balance of power among partners (Mowen & Kerstetter, 2006, p. 3). Power balance is achieved when partnering agencies interact in a nonhierarchical manner (Shaw, 2003, p. 110). This interaction includes the joint setting of priorities, allocation of resources, and performance evaluation (Alexander et al, 2001, p. 168). P3s with a balance of power should also have partners who can influence the direction of the partnership individually. Additionally, partners should be able to be honest when discussing issues and have an equal opportunity for involvement in discussions and decision-making (Laing, et al., 2008, p. 11-12, 14). By sharing power, partnership leaders “foster a sense of joint ownership and collective responsibility.” (Alexander et al., 2001, p. 168).

Power imbalances are usually the result of incompatibility and/or organizational differences among partners. For instance, public organizations may be unwilling to concede control. Similarly, nonprofit organizations, known for flexible dynamics, may resist the loss of autonomy that comes with collaboration (Walker, 1999, p. 2; Shaw, 2003, p. 109). Additionally, if partners disagree on the purpose or vision the partnership, power imbalances may result (Carson, 2011, p. 15). Overall,

balancing power among partners allows for a more effective partnership than one that includes elements of coercion or control (Shaw, 2003, p. 111).

A key component of achieving a balance of power is maintaining flexibility within a P3 (Jacobson and Choi, 2008, p. 651). Flexibility is maintained when partners learn to compromise on certain decisions and direction (Jacobson & Choi, 2008, p. 651). Effective partners are willing to compromise and avoid singlemindedness (McPadden and Margerum, 2014, p. 1327).

The importance of balancing power within a P3 extends to all groups and organizations involved in the P3. This includes the various constituent groups that park systems and nonprofits collaborate with. Power balance is important given that these groups may carry histories of poor relations with each other. For instance, in a study of the Boston Harbor Islands park/nonprofit P3, Neal (2010, p. 203-204) found there were perceived power differentials between partner groups. Organizations indirectly involved in that P3 disrespected and mistrusted each other in some cases, partially due to the varying levels of perceived influence within the P3. This led to conflict and prevented overall partnership synergy.

The preceding section discusses components for achieving the ideal *structure* of a park/nonprofit P3s. This includes having clearly defined funding and management roles amongst partners, as well as collaboration with local parks constituency groups. Additionally, *structure* is achieved when the partnership has a formal written agreement outlining relevant roles, as well as a balance of power among partners. The next section introduces the third ideal category for park/nonprofit P3s: partnership communication.

3. COMMUNICATION

The third ideal category is partnership *communication*. The literature continually discusses the importance of effective communication for successful P3s.¹² Communication refers to both

¹² See: Carson, 2011, p. 42; Hilvert & Swindell, 2013, p. 245; Jacobson & Choi, 2008, p. 645-47; Yoder, 2010, p. 106.

written and verbal communication amongst partners, as well as internal interactions within partner organizations. Ideal communication should be both quick and easy between partners (Page, 2004, p. 594). Effective communication includes clear, two-way channels, which help strengthen partnership cooperation (Forrer, 2010, p. 479). The lack of effective communication is the most common quality of non-productive partnerships (Yoder, 2010, p. 98).

The findings of this section are similar to portions of the ideal partnership model developed by Carson (2011, p. 14). Carson's model describes communication as a necessity for partnership success (2011, p. 29). This project further mirrors Carson's with regard to the importance of information sharing and meeting practices of P3 participants. However, the following analysis focuses specifically on park/nonprofit interaction, which requires open communication for partnership success (Laing, et al., 2008, p. 17).

For the purposes of this project, the *communication* ideal for park/nonprofit partnerships is described within three components: 1) *Demonstrated leadership support*; 2) *Information sharing*; and 3) *Routine meetings*.

3.1 Demonstrated leadership support

An ideal park/nonprofit P3 has the full support of leadership (Laing, et al, 2008, p. 11). Leadership primarily refers to the leaders of partnering organizations, however, support from influential politicians and community leaders is also important.¹³ Overall, direct support and commitment from leadership is major component to a successful partnership process (Carson, 2011, p. 15).

Support from leadership can be demonstrated in multiple ways. This includes overt written or verbal expressions of support, or formal actions such as an elected body voting to support formation of a P3. For example, a political body may be required to approve expenditures and other items necessary for a partnership, making their support critical for success (Jacobson & Choi, 2008,

¹³ See: Jacobson and Choi, 2008, p. 652; Laing, et al., 2008, p. 6; Neal, 2010, p. 166; Mowen & Kerstetter, 2006, p. 3-4.

p. 652). Leadership support can also be reflected in overall organizational support, which includes the devotion of personnel time or financial contributions (Mowen & Kerstetter, 2006, p. 3).

Leadership support is directly beneficial to park/nonprofit partnerships (Madden, 2000, p. 8). For instance, support from leadership lends immediately credibility to the P3 (Neal, 2010, p. 167). The perception of a P3 internally and externally is enhanced by this support, which leads to increased support from other stakeholders. Further, support from leadership often evolves into leadership involvement in partnership activities. This involvement is vital to P3 and produces multiple benefits in its own right (Neal, 2010, p. 167).

To summarize, an ideal park/nonprofit partnership has the full support of leadership. It's important that this leadership be demonstrated clearly. Leadership support is not limited to the leaders of partnering organizations, but also includes politicians and community leaders. These individuals have a direct impact on the partnership's success, making their support invaluable. The next section discusses the second component of *communication*—information sharing among partners.

3.2 Information sharing

An ideal park/nonprofit P3 should feature partners that distribute relevant and timely information associated with the partnership (Carson, 2011, p. 31-32; Shaw, 2003, p. 110). Information may include varying types of concepts, knowledge, and tools that are key to the daily activities of the partnership (Carson, 2011, p. 32).

The means which information and knowledge is shared within a P3 often vary. There is value in using modern communication tools to share information among partners. This includes the sharing of information on social media platforms. “Social media represent an important technology currently being used to support informal and semi-formal knowledge sharing among partners” (Rathi et al., 2014, p. 882). However, communication and information sharing between partners

should mainly rely on traditional platforms, including face-to-face, via phone, or written communication, including email.

The sharing of relevant information within a partnership provides multiple benefits. For instance, information sharing builds trust among partners, which is essential to partnership success (Laing et al., 2008, p. 14; Jacobson & Choi, 2008, p. 64). The sharing of information also allows partners to be on the same page and maintain equal footing within the P3 (Carson, 2011, p. 33). Further, Rathi et al. (2014, p. 868) point out that sharing information has benefits for the organizations as well, "...organizations create as well as share new knowledge by partnering with each other; this process helps organizations to remain competitive and renew themselves" (Rathi et al., 2014, p. 868).

In summary, ideal park/nonprofit partnerships ensure that relevant and timely information is shared amongst partners. The sharing of information builds trust and further the success of the partnership. The third and final component of the *communication* ideal builds off of information sharing, noting that partners should meet and interact on a routine basis.

3.3 Routine meetings

Ideal partners should routinely meet to discuss the partnership and progress on shared efforts (Carson, 2011, p. 29). Routine meetings and interactions are necessary to establishing effective communication amongst partners (Hilvert & Swindell, 2013, p. 245). Overall, partnership success depends on the level of interactions between partners (Yoder, 2010, p. 96).

When partners meet on a routine basis there are a number of significant benefits. Much like the benefits of sharing information, routine meetings help establish and reinforce trust among partners (Bryson et al., 2006, p. 47-48). Trust among partners can comprise "interpersonal behavior, confidence in organizational competence and expected performance, and a common bond and sense of goodwill" (Bryson et al., 2006, p. 48). Continual interaction through routine meetings also provides a venue for decision-making (Carson, 2011, p. 30; Bryson et al., 2006, p. 49).

Additionally, routine meetings allow partners to clarify processes and gain a sense of participation (Laing et al., 2008, p. 11). Finally, Carson (2011, p. 30) found that, “frequent exchanges between members develop network values and norms, which help social mechanisms coordinate and monitor behavior.”

Routine meetings require certain dynamics to be successful. Meetings between partners should be planned well in advance to accommodate partner schedules (Yoder, 2010, p. 97). Establishing a meeting environment that promotes honesty and trust is also imperative (Yoder, 2010, p. 97). To be productive, meetings should also include an agenda to help guide discussion of important topics. Topics should ideally center on the status of intended partnership outcomes (Yoder, 2010, p. 97). The lack of these meetings can hinder project success, as Yoder (2010, p. 98) notes, “Without frequently scheduled communication focused on attaining goals and objectives, the possibility of losing control of the partnership increases.”

In summary, ideal partnerships feature effective communication methods. Effective communication requires demonstrated support from leadership and the exchange of information amongst partners. Additionally, effective communication is demonstrated when partners meet on a regular basis to discuss partnership outcomes and make decisions. Overall, the major benefit of effective communication is the continued establishment of trust among partners, which is vital to partnership success. The following section discusses the fourth and final ideal category—*accountability*.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY

Ideal park/nonprofit partnerships include elements of accountability. Public accountability traditionally refers to elected officials ensuring public managers are adequately serving the needs of the public. However, the dynamics of accountability shift when private partners are involved in providing public services (Forrer et al, 2010, p. 477). For instance, private partners may not be

accustomed to the accountability standards that are commonplace among public agencies. Additionally, the creative “outside the box” nature of P3s may result in actions that violate regulations designed to ensure accountability (Page, 2004, p. 591). For example, P3 partners may share critical information and resources, or make discretionary decisions without going through the proper legal or procedural channels (Page, 2004, p. 591). In some ways, the flexibility required of P3s makes ensuring public accountability more difficult to achieve. Regardless, maintaining accountability within P3s is necessary given the involvement of public resources (Minow, 2003, p. 1242; Forrer et al, 2010, p. 477).

Accountability refers to ensuring that public interests are met. This requires partnerships to remain accountable by responding to the desires of the public (Carson, 2011, p. 10). Additionally, accountability is achieved when there are systems in place to evaluate partnership performance (Neal, 2010, p. 18). Accountability may also take the form of agreements with mutual obligations, such as performance contracts that outline specific expected results but ensure flexibility in methods (Minow, 2003, p. 1259). The *accountability* ideal combines these notions into two components: 1) *Opportunities for public involvement* and 2) *Performance review*. These subcategories are described in the following sections.

4.1 Opportunities for public involvement

Park/nonprofit partnerships which involve the public in its activities are more effective and successful. Public involvement is not only a major success factor of a park system, it's also the basis for an effective parks partnership (Harnik, 2003, p. 52). Public involvement in this analysis includes providing opportunities for the community to comment on the components of a P3 (Yoder, 2010, p. 97). Public involvement is also achieved when the community is included in the activities of the partnership (Madden, 2000, p. 47). For example, a partnership may include the recruitment of community volunteers for routine park beautification efforts.

Given that parks are publicly-owned assets, the community should be given the chance to comment on the direction of the partnership. This also includes a voice in deciding priority issues which the partnership should address. Partnerships usually involve a new direction for providing park and recreation services, often to the financial benefit of the park system (Yoder, 2010, p. 97). Despite this benefit, it's imperative that community support for changes associated with a park/nonprofit partnership (Yoder, 2010, p. 97). It is important for partners to develop an effective, participatory process to involve the public (Madden, 200, p. 47). An example of a partnership incorporating the opinions of the community can be found in Brooklyn's Prospect Park Alliance (PPA). As part of its partnership with the City of New York, PPA established a Community Committee to serve as the public's voice and a tool for understanding the interests of neighborhoods near Prospect Park (Madden, 2000, p. 98). This committee serves as the advocacy arm of the organization and the P3 in general, resulting in significant public involvement opportunities. An ideal park/nonprofit P3 should have similar tools for understanding community sentiments.

Public involvement provides a number of benefits for a park/nonprofit partnership. For example, involving the community can increase the awareness of park initiatives and foster additional stewardship of park facilities (Shulaker et al., 2006, p. 98-99). Another direct benefit is the additional human resources dedicated to park activities. For example, the City of Portland's park system maintains numerous partnerships that provide opportunities for individual volunteers to support park services and programs. These volunteers represent the hourly equivalent of nearly 200 full-time staffers for the park system (Walker, 2004, p. 4). Ryan (2006, p. 70) reiterates the importance of public involvement, "...getting the public involved in hands-on management and improvements create stewards, which are essential for park survival." Involving the public also helps citizen's ability to find solutions to issues and problems facing a park system. As Jacobson and Choi (2008, p. 652) note, "The better the community's citizens comprehend issues and

participate...the better their ability to generate and support solutions to revitalize their community.” Finally, public involvement builds political support for a partnership and allows for more responsive design and programming (Madden, 2000, p. 47).

A partnership that does not feature public involvement opportunities deters overall partnership success (DiMartino, 2014, p. 263-264). Without these opportunities, public confidence in the partnership and the park system is hindered (Yoder, 2010, p. 97-98). To avoid this, Wilson (2011, p. 77) suggests park systems develop a policy to outline citizen involvement in the partnership. Participation policies related to P3s should “outline the roles and responsibilities of the [park] managers and citizens, participation principles, the specific circumstances that require public input, possible stakeholders, and methods of engagement.”

Overall, involvement of the public is important to ensuring partnership accountability. The next section discusses the second and final component of *accountability*—performance review.

4.2 Performance review

Park/nonprofit partnerships should establish methods for reviewing the performance of the P3. Performance review includes establishing a balanced set of measures that “captures the implementation and intended outcomes of the partnership” (Forrer, 2010, p. 481-482). Performance measures help ensure partnership performance and overall success (Forrer, 2010; Carson, 2011). However, as Hilvert and Swindell (2013, p. 248) point out, many partnerships do not monitor performance, “Communities engaged in collaborative efforts or other forms of alternative delivery generally do not do an adequate job in terms of monitoring and managing these arrangements once they are in place.” Without clarity in what a partnership can achieve, poor service quality from the P3 can occur (Neal, 2010, p. 17). Given this dynamic, it’s important for partners to plan and allocate resources to measure results produced by the partnership (Carson, 2011, p. 23).

Establishing performance metrics and reviewing them continually reinforces overall partnership success (Forrer, 2010; Carson, 2011). For instance, performance review helps establish

trust between partners, allows each partner to engage and assess organizational results, and contributes to overall accountability within a partnership (Forrer, 2010, p. 481-482). Without clearly established performance expectations and processes, partnerships may have trouble detecting and rectifying a failure in a timely way.

One of the most challenging aspects of ensuring accountability is determining how to measure success within a public-private partnership (DiMartino, 2014, p. 263-264). For performance review process to have value, partners must carefully consider the focus, process and use of performance measures (Forrer, 2010, p. 482). Focus includes what specific elements the partnership should measure. Given the noted importance of goal establishment,¹⁴ an evaluation mechanism should include partnership goals. Evaluation metrics do not have to be broad as partnerships should include small ‘wins’ and attainable goals to achieve as the P3 progresses (McPadden & Margerum, 2014, p. 1323). In terms of process, Carson (2011, p. 22) points to the importance of evaluation plans in public-private partnerships, “A partnership evaluation plan enhances accountability to the public and effective oversight of the partnership.” Ideally, these plans will document results and changes over the course of the partnership (Carson, 2011, p. 22). Elements of an evaluation plan can also be infused into the overall partnership agreement, which includes specific practices to acknowledge high performance (Forrer, 2010, p. 482). Contracts also provide a mechanism for performance review (Gazley, 2008, p. 141; Carson, 2011, p. 22). In determining the use of performance measures, Carson (2011) suggests showing specific data that connects the goals and outcomes of the partnership for internal and stakeholder consumption. The ultimate use of the performance measurement process is to use the information to improve future operations (Carson, 2011, p. 23).

Ensuring accountability through performance review also presents a number of challenges. Page (2004, p. 591) offers a number of specific barriers to the practice of establishing performance

¹⁴ See: Carson, 2011, p. 27, Hilvert & Swindell, 2013, p. 246.

metrics to achieve accountability. First, partners may not agree on the specific results that should be measured. This reinforces the need for determining goals and outcomes at the onset of a partnership. An additional challenge includes hesitancy from partners to be held accountable. As Page (2004, p. 591) suggests, "...some collaborators may resist being held accountable for results, fearing they will not perform well—either because they doubt their own capacity, or because circumstances beyond their control may influence the results they are asked to achieve."

Performance metrics may also focus too narrowly on results. This focus prevents broader partnership goals, which are not easily measured, to be displaced. Finally, performance review requires determining who is accountable to whom, and for what. While this is a challenge, the public partner should take a lead role to ensure accountability in a partnership (Forrer, 2010, p. 479). This assertion is based on the assumption that the public partner is better equipped to ensure public interests are being met (Forrer, 2010, p. 479). As Neal (2010, p. 21) notes, "The public sector is [traditionally] held to a higher standard of accountability than the private sector."

Overall, accountability is achieved within a park/nonprofit partnership when there is public involvement and mechanisms for performance review. Public involvement should feature citizen participation in the activities of the partnership. Performance review efforts should outline what is measured, how and what purpose the information will serve.

Summary of the Conceptual Framework

The elements of the conceptual framework are summarized in **Table 2.3** below and include ideal components of a park/nonprofit partnership. These components were described within four ideal categories: compatibility, structure, communication, and accountability.

The first category—*compatibility*, incorporates the necessity of having consistent mission, goals and values. The values and mission should ideally revolve around the tenants of a park system, including the provision of health/recreational activities and environmental stewardship. Ideal partners were also described as having the complementary capacity to provide park and

recreational services. Partners' respective strengths should ideally complement each other's inherent organizational weaknesses. Compatible partners should also prioritize the public interest, which includes avoiding any competing private interest. Finally, compatible partnerships avoid exacerbating any inequities within the local park system.

The second category—partnership *structure* includes the importance of defining management and funding roles. These dynamics should be well understood by each side of the P3. An ideal partnership should also collaborate with local park constituency groups and develop a formal written agreement. Finally, an ideal partnership should have a balance of power among partners with regard to decision-making and direction of the P3.

The third category—partnership *communication*, incorporates the importance of demonstrated support from leadership, including elected officials, nonprofit management and community groups. An ideal partnership should have information flow freely between each side, helping inform the dynamics of the partnership goals and intentions. Finally, partners should meet routinely to help build trust and discuss the direction of the partnership.

The final ideal category—partnership *accountability*, takes into account the importance of public involvement. An ideal partnership should provide public involvement opportunities to ensure the P3 is serving the public appropriately. Finally, partners should ensure that performance review processes are established, which help inform and improve the P3.

Table 2.3 – Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework	
<p>Title: Parks Partners: A Model Assessment Tool for Effective Partnerships between Local Park Systems and Non-Profits</p> <p>Purpose: The purpose of this applied research project is three-fold. First, it develops a framework to assess the effectiveness of public-private partnerships between local public park systems and nonprofit entities. Second, it utilizes the framework to assess the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department's partnership with the nonprofit Austin Parks Foundation. Third, it provides recommendations for enhancing Austin's current and future public-private partnerships.</p>	
Practical Ideal Type Categories	Literature
1. Compatibility	
1.1 Alignment of parks and recreational mission, goals and values	1.1 Bourne and Jenkins (2013); Carson (2011); Cousens, et al (2006); Crompton (1998); Frisby et al (2004); Hilvert and Swindell (2013); Holifield and Williams (2014); Kaczynski and Crompton (2006); McPadden and Margerum (2014); Mowen & Kersetter (2006); Murphy et al (2014); Murray (2009); Neal (2010); Pincetl (2003); Ryan (2006); Shaw (2003); Salamon (2001); Yoder (2010);
1.2 Complementary capacity to provide parks and recreational services	1.2 Bruton et al (2011); Cousens, et al (2006); Crompton (1998); Crosby & Rose (2008); Holifield and Williams (2014); McPadden and Margerum (2014); Mowen & Kersetter (2006); Neal (2010); Ryan (2006); Shulaker et al (2006); Walker (1999); Wollenburg (2013);
1.3 Prioritization of public over private interest	1.3 Brecher and Wise (2008); Dumas et al (2007); Frisby et al (2004); Joassart-Marcelli, et al (2011); Murray (2009); Shaw (2003); Spangler and Caldwell (2007); Wilson (2011);
1.4 Avoidance of non-equitable park system outcomes	1.4 Brecher and Wise (2008); Crosby & Rose (2008); Holifield & Williams (2014); Joassart-Marcelli, et al (2011); Murray (2009); Neal (2010); Tardona et al (2014);
2. Structure	
2.1 Well-defined park funding and management roles	2.1 Brecher & Wise (2008); Carson (2011); Cousens, et al (2006); Frisby et al (2004); Harnik (2003); Hilvert and Swindell (2013); Jacobson & Choi (2008); La Cour (1982); Murray (2009); Neal (2010); Savas (2000); Walker (1999); Wollenburg (2013);
2.2 Collaboration with local parks constituency groups	2.2 Harnik (2003); Madden (2001); Murray (2009); Neal (2010); Ryan (2006); Walker (1999);
2.3 Existence of formal written agreement	2.3 Brecher & Wise (2008); DiMartino (2014); Frisby (2004); Harkin (2003); Jacobson & Choi (2008); LaCour (1982); McPadden and Margerum (2014); Neal (2010); Wollenburg (2013);
2.4 Balance of power among partners	2.4 Alexander et al (2001); Caron (2011); DiMartino (2014); Jacobson and Choi (2008); Laing, et al. (2008); McPadden and Margerum (2014); Mowen & Kersetter (2006); Neal (2010); Shaw (2003); Walker (1999);
3. Communication	
3.1 Demonstrated support from leadership	3.1 Brecher and Wise (2008); Carson (2011); Laing, et al. (2008); Jacobson and Choi (2008); Madden (2000); Mowen & Kersetter (2006); Neal (2010); Shaw (2003);
3.2 Information sharing	3.2 Carson (2011); Jacobson and Choi (2008); Laing, et al.(2008); Neal (2010); Rathi et al (2014); Shaw (2003);
3.3 Routine informal meetings	3.3 Bryson et al (2006); Carson (2011); Hilvert and Swindell (2013); Laing, et al (2008); Yoder (2010);
4. Accountability	
4.1 Opportunities for public involvement	4.1 DiMartino (2014); Harnik (2003); Jacobson and Choi (2008)Laing, et al. (2008); Madden (2000); Neal (2010); Ryan (2006); Shulaker et al (2006); Walker (2004); Wilson (2011); Yoder (2010);
4.2 Performance review	4.2 Carson (2011); DiMartino (2014); Forrer (2010); Gazley (2008); Hilvert and Swindell (2013); McPadden and Margerum (2014); Murray (2009); Neal (2010); Page (2004);

Conclusion

This chapter provided basic background information regarding local park systems, nonprofits, and public-private partnerships. The emergence of park/nonprofit P3s was also discussed, including varying partnership types. The perspectives of P3 proponents and opponents were also described. Finally, elements of the conceptual framework were discussed and presented in **Table 2.3**. The next chapter uses the practical ideal model to assess the partnership between the Austin Parks and Recreation Department and the Austin Parks Foundation nonprofit.

CHAPTER III

The Austin Parks and Recreation Department and Austin Parks Foundation

Chapter Purpose

This chapter provides an overview of the City of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) and the Austin Parks Foundation (APF) nonprofit organization. Basic background information is provided for each organization. Additionally, the PARD/APF partnership is discussed in detail.

Overview of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD)

The Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) provides park and recreational services to the City of Austin, Texas. The capital city of Texas, Austin is also the 11th largest city in the United States, with nearly 890,000 residents in 2015. Continually cited as one of the fastest growing cities in the nation, Austin added more than 110,000 residents between 2010 and 2015 (City of Austin Planning and Zoning, 2016). One contributing factor for this migration is Austin's reputation as a city with temperate weather and ample outdoor activities. The Colorado River runs directly through

the heart of the city, and substantial open space provides a range of recreational opportunities. The city is also home to the annual Austin City Limits musical festival, which draws thousands of visitors to PARD's crown jewel, Zilker Park, for two consecutive weekends each fall.



Figure 3.1 - PARD Logo

Since 1928, PARD has been the steward of Austin’s municipal parkland, providing various park and recreational services to the community. PARD is responsible for managing nearly 300 individual parks, including 20,000 acres of greenspace. PARD’s parkland also includes over 200 miles of



Figure 3.2 - PARD Amenities

Source: Austin Parks and Recreation Department, 2016

nature trails, as well as multiple golf courses and cemeteries. PARD also manages many of Austin’s recreational and cultural facilities. These include multiple pools, recreation and senior centers, as well as sport fields and complexes. Additionally, PARD manages museums, cultural centers, and performance stages and amphitheaters. A number of buildings with historical significance are also maintained by PARD. **Figure 3.2** provides a visual look at scale of PARD-owned land and facilities.

PARD Organizational Structure

More than 700 employees help PARD provide a multitude of park, recreational and educational programming services to the community. Employees are spread throughout various divisions in PARD, the oversight of which is divided amongst three assistant Directors. These assistant Directors oversee multiple service divisions and report directly to the Director of PARD. **Table 3.1** shows the various divisions within PARD, including how oversight is divided amongst PARD’s executive staff.¹⁵

¹⁵ A more detailed version of PARD’s organizational chart, including charts for specific divisions within PARD, can be found at https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Parks/Homepage/orgchart09_2014.pdf

Table 3.1 - PARD Divisions and Executive Assignments

PARD Executive	Divisions Managed	Additional Information
Director	-Golf Services -All Operations	The Director oversees all activities of the department. Golf Services is the only division that reports directly to the Director.
Assistant Director	-Grounds Maintenance -Facility Services -Capital Projects -Aquatics and Athletics	Includes management of new construction projects, maintaining all parkland and facilities, and oversight of pool and athletic services.
Assistant Director	-Marketing/Communications -Community Programs -Centralized Programs -Nature-Based Programs -Management Services	Oversees engagement and outreach, programming at all recreation centers, youth and senior programs, park rangers, environmental and forestry services and centers. Also oversees internal human resources, development and safety.
Assistant Director	-History, Art and Nature -Financial Services -Special Events -Planning and Development	Includes management of art and cultural centers, including museums. Oversees financial divisions, and special event functions, including reservation of facilities and permitting. Also manages development, including planning, design and partnerships.

Source: Austin Parks and Recreation Department, 2016

PARD Assets and Activities

As seen in **Table 3.1** above, PARD manages multiple assets and is involved in a vast array of activities. Among the most well-known PARD assets is Zilker Park. Zilker, often described as “Austin’s most-loved park,” is a 351 acre tract near downtown Austin (Austin PARD, 2016). The park is heavily used and houses significant green space, a disc golf course, botanical gardens, and a nature and science center. Zilker Park also houses its own outdoor theater, which hosts various concerts and plays throughout the year. Multiple festivals and events are held at Zilker, the largest being the annual Austin City Limits music festival (ACL). Each fall, ACL attracts tens of thousands of visitors to Zilker Park over two consecutive weekends. The most prominent feature of Zilker is Barton Springs Pool—a natural spring-fed pool with consistent year-round temperatures.

Along with Barton Springs, PARD also maintains multiple swimming pools and aquatic facilities. In 2014, more than 1.25 million people visited PARD’s public pools (Austin PARD, 2016). The PARD aquatics division hires more than 750 lifeguards every year to help operate its

multiple pools and facilities. Many of PARD's aquatic facilities are more than 50 years old and in need of repair and maintenance (Austin PARD, 2016). In 2016, PARD is continuing to develop an aquatics master plan to guide its future efforts in providing these services.

In terms of athletics, PARD organizes sports leagues throughout its parks system. In 2014, an estimated 22,000 people participated in PARD's public sports leagues (Austin PARD, 2016). To help maintain these offerings, PARD's athletics division partners with a youth sports organization non-profit. PARD's six golf courses provide residents with a more affordable option to private courses. The golf division provides PARD with a consistent revenue stream via course fees and other related charges.

PARD manages multiple museums and cultural centers, which provide the community with gathering places and enrichment opportunities. For instance, the Asian-American Resource Center, the Mexican-American Cultural Center and the George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center offer educational classes, summer camps for youth, and feature various art exhibits. PARD employees staff each of these facilities and coordinate programming events throughout the year.

In terms of maintenance, PARD staff is responsible for the 20,000 acres within the parks system (Austin PARD, 2016). Additionally, the grounds maintenance division within PARD maintains more than 200 square miles of its trail system. Activities include restricting invasive vegetation, trimming trees, inspecting and repairing drainage systems, and reconstruction and reconditioning of current trails.

PARD Budget and Funding

The amount and level of services PARD can provide is limited by its annual budget, which is received from the City of Austin's general fund. While PARD does have the ability to create revenue through some of its activities, it mainly depends on its allotment from the general fund.

Figure 3.3 illustrates the funding sources for PARD's roughly \$83 million budget in 2015-16

(Austin Finance Online, 2016). PARD activities make up approximately 8 percent of the City of Austin’s \$911 million general fund budget.

Revenues from PARD’s golf fund includes golf green fees, golf cart rental fees, range sales, athletic sales, food and other concession dollars garnered. Expense refunds are dollars PARD received from other departments for performing work or providing service. As shown, while PARD actively pursues grants to support its activities, grants represent a small portion of its funding sources.

As shown in **Figure 3.4**, the vast majority of PARD’s funding is used for providing services

to the community. The term community services in this sense refers to the various operations of PARD, including athletics, aquatics, programming and recreation, museums and cultural programs, forestry, and golf operations (Austin Finance Online, 2016). The next largest use “parks, planning, operations,” refers to cemetery operations, routine maintenance at facilities/grounds, and planning, construction and acquisition of parkland and amenities (Austin Finance Online, 2016).

PARD Partnerships

PARD maintains a number of partnerships with local organizations and nonprofits. In 2015, PARD’s nonprofit and conservancy partners donated nearly \$9 million in park improvements (Austin PARD, 2016). The goals of these partnerships are varied, and many are concentrated on improving a specific park asset. For instance, PARD partnered with nonprofit Barton Springs

Figure 3.3 - PARD Funding Sources

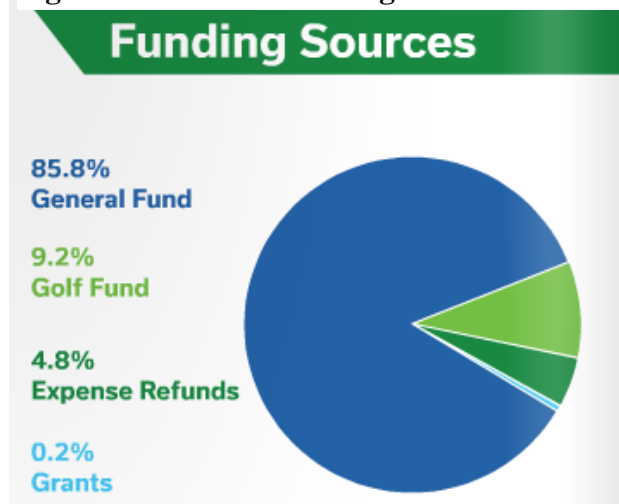
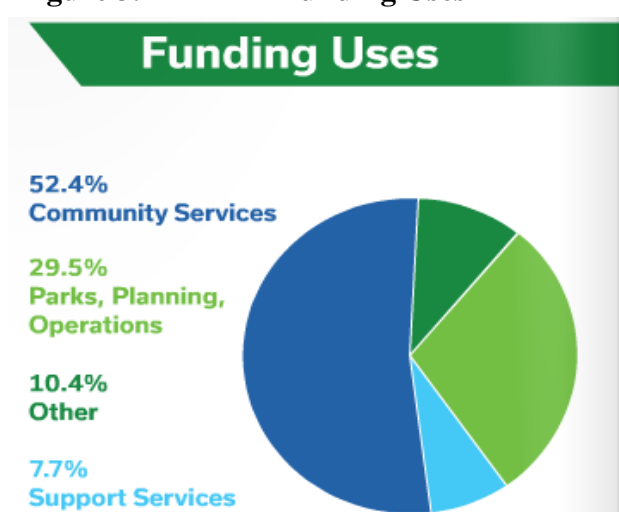


Figure 3.4 - PARD Funding Uses



Source: Austin Parks and Recreation Department, 2016

Conservancy to improve the Barton Springs pool and renovate its on-site bathhouse. PARD has also partnered with the Austin Area Garden Council, which supports gardening at the Zilker Botanical Gardens. PARD's partnership with the West Austin Youth Association helps provide youth sports activities on local parkland (Austin PARD, 2016). The nonprofit Austin Parks Foundation (APF) also partners with PARD to provide improvements and programming throughout the park system.

Overview of Austin Parks Foundation (APF)

The Austin Parks Foundation (APF) is a nonprofit organization that focuses on developing and maintaining the city's parks, trails and green spaces. APF was formed in 1992 and since that time worked alongside PARD to

promote park development and programming. APF's major role is to help bridge the gap between what is needed in the park system and what PARD is able to do with its limited resources. To accomplish this, APF focuses on connecting individuals to resources and other partnerships to help improve the park system (APF, 2016).

APF Organization and Funding

APF has a relatively small staff of 10 employees, all of which are involved in a multitude of activities (APF, 2016). An executive Director oversees operations, with a number of other staff members tasked with specific roles. For instance, APF employs a programs Director, responsible for developing the various programming, including the coordination of grants between local citizen groups and PARD. Additionally, APF employs a volunteer manager to coordinate its many volunteer-based activities. APF staff also focus on community engagement, organizing, and reaching out to the community about how they can help APF improve the park system. APF is governed by a board of Directors, which provides oversight on the operations of the organization.



Figure 3.5 - APF Logo

**AUSTIN
PARKS
FOUNDATION**

The board consists of community members from varying backgrounds, including community volunteers, private developers, and a legal professor (APF, 2016).

As a nonprofit organization, APF is largely dependent on private donations as a funding source. In 2014, 40 percent of its revenues were from corporate sponsorships and donations. Also in 2014, 95 percent of its expenses went directly toward programming activities (APF, 2016).

APF Activities and Programs

APF acts as a facilitator for neighborhood associations, community groups, and individuals to become involved in Austin's parks. This is often coordinated directly with PARD's "Adopt-A-Park" program, which allows local organizations to commit to the ongoing maintenance and improvement efforts of a specific park. APF helps guide prospective park adopter groups through the application process, sharing its expertise and project management assistance. APF works with park adopter groups to raise funds and recruit volunteers within the community. APF will coordinate volunteer work days with these groups, and help provide the necessary tools and resources to complete these projects.

Volunteerism is a major component of APF's activities, and these efforts are on full display during three annual events: It's My Park Day, National Trails Day, and National Public Lands Day. It's My Park Day (IMPD) is APF's signature event, occurring the first Saturday in March every year. IMPD features thousands of volunteers spread throughout over 100 PARD park locations. APF coordinates the recruitment of volunteers and project leaders for months prior to the event. APF and PARD coordinate resources and determine the needs at each park location. Both National Trails Day and National Public Lands Day provide similar, city-wide volunteer opportunities. (APF, 2016).

APF also contributes resources, both physical and financial, to the park system. Since 2006, APF's ACL Music Festival Grants Program has contributed more than \$2 million to park adopter groups for park improvement projects. This grant program allows park adopter groups to apply for

funding for specific project. APF asks groups to match their potential grant amount through volunteer labor, cash and in-kind contributions. In many cases, volunteer labor serves as the match. APF works with these groups to enact these projects, using tools and physical resources owned by PARD.

In terms of programming, APF offers a variety of health and recreational entertainment activities. For instance, APF offers free yoga classes throughout city parks, drawing in an estimated 1,000 attendees in 2014. APF's 'Movies in the Park' program provides a broad movie viewing opportunity for the public at various parks throughout the year. APF also provides an adaptable playscape for children, called 'Imagination Playground.' The playscape is featured weekly alongside a farmer's market in downtown Austin (APF, 2016).

APF is also involved in environmental conservation and sustainability activities within the local park system. For instance, APF initiates projects designed to expand the urban tree canopy and advocates for water conservation. More specifically, APF has taken a lead role in mulching trees and engaging in invasive plant species mitigation. APF works with PARD and local food trucks to establish concessions at park locations. These concession efforts provide a revenue stream for both APF and PARD, which can be redirected into funding park improvements (APF, 2016).

PARD/APF Partnership

In 1992, long-time parks advocate and former Austin City Council Member Beverly Griffith founded the Austin Parks Foundation. Since that time, APF and PARD have worked collaboratively as stewards of Austin's park system. Along with Austin itself, both PARD and APF have each evolved considerably since the early 1990s. Together these organizations provide a multitude of services to the park system and residents.

While many partnership activities have evolved over time, a number of support efforts have remained consistent. For instance, a major component throughout the partnership has been the use

of grant funds for park improvements. Since the 1990's, APF has been provided grant funds to PARD for projects at various park locations (City of Austin Council-Approved Records, 2016). This effort continues today, most notably through APF's ACL Grants Program. PARD/APF also work collaboratively on PARD's 'Adopt-a-Park' program, which allows community groups to become informal stewards of a specific park (APF, 2016). These usually take the form of 'friends-of' groups, and include neighborhood residents of a nearby park. The Adopt-a-Park program is the basis of much of the grant activity between PARD/APF, as only the adopter groups are eligible to apply for and receive grants. These groups are also key features of APF's routine volunteer workdays. Volunteer groups can utilize APF's tool warehouse and physical resources needed for park improvements, such as shovels and wheelbarrows (APF, 2016).

Partnership efforts also include a number of largescale redevelopment projects. For instance, APF and PARD joined with the Downtown Austin Alliance to redevelop Austin's oldest park, Republic Square, in downtown Austin. PARD and APF also joined together in renovating Auditorium Shores, a long swath of parkland along Lady Bird Lake. These projects are usually formalized with an agreement that spell-out roles and responsibilities of each organization. For instance, APF was tasked with finding a consultant to develop a new design for Republic Square Park.

Overall, APF supports the role of PARD by providing it with additional resources. These resources can be financial, with dollars raised being reinvested directly back into a park or project. Other resources are labor-specific, including volunteers to assist with clean-up and coordination. APF acts as an extension of PARD in many ways, and is able to function with separate dynamics and limitations given its nonprofit status.

Chapter Overview

This chapter provided background information about PARD, APF and their partnership. The next chapter discusses the research methods used for the case study of the PARD/APF partnership.

CHAPTER IV

Methodology

Chapter Purpose

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to assess the public-private partnership between the Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) and the Austin Parks Foundation (APF). The intent of this chapter is to move from the conceptualization stage¹⁶ to next phase in the research process—operationalization of the practical ideal type model. This phase includes determining what evidence is needed to assess the partnership against the ideal model (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013, p. 112). The collection of evidence is informed by the components of the practical ideal type model in Chapter II. This phase will also determine how the evidence is interpreted (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013, p. 112).

This chapter begins by describing the research setting and case study. Next, the conceptual framework is operationalized by connecting its contents with the data collection method (See **Table 4.1**). This table outlines the specific evidence collected for analysis. Methods used to collect the evidence are described, including strengths, weaknesses and an example of each. Finally, a scale of alignment is defined for the evaluation of evidence in the next chapter.

Research Setting and Case Study

The unit of analysis for this study is the public-private partnership between PARC and APF. This partnership is an excellent research subject given each organization's reputation as established park advocates in the community. The broad nature of this partnership requires multiple research methods to fully gauge its dynamics. These methods include focused interviews, document analysis, and direct observation. Each of these methods is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

A case study approach is used to analyze the PARC/APF partnership. Case study methods are used to understand a particular phenomenon in its real world context (Yin, 2014). Case studies

¹⁶ Conceptualization stage is discussed in Chapter II and reflected in Table 2.3 "Conceptual Framework Table"

typically focus on one or more people, organizations, communities, programs or processes (Johnson, 2014 p. 90). Strong case studies also use multiple sources of evidence (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013, p. 115).

The use of multiple sources of evidence is a strength of case study research. Multiple sources allow the researcher to develop converging lines of inquiry, or “triangulate” evidentiary sources (Yin, 2014, p. 119-121). The concept of triangulation borrows from principles of navigation, referring to the intersection of varying reference points to calculate a precise location. Similarly, triangulation in the context of a case study suggests that research findings based on multiple sources are stronger and more accurate (Yin, 2014, p. 119-121).

One downside of the case study approach is that the results may be overgeneralized to a larger population despite the narrowness of the study’s scope (Johnson, 2014, p. 92). Some critics suggest that case studies also lack external validity (Johnson, 2014, p. 92). However, in most cases external validity has little applicability to a practical ideal type study such as this (Shields and Rangarajan, 2013, p. 166). The findings of this study are only applicable to the PARD/APF partnership being assessed and should not be generalized further. On the other hand, the model has value because it could be used as a tool for assessing P3s between parks and non-profits in other cities.

Operationalization of the Practical Ideal Type Partnership

The Operationalization Table (**Table 4.1** below) describes the sources of evidence used for each of the categories within the Practical Ideal Type. Each category includes multiple components, which are listed in the first column of the table. For instance, the second component listed under the *Structure* category is, “2.2 Connectivity to local parks constituency groups.” The second column provides an acronym for the research method(s) used, including document analysis (DA), focused interviews (FI) and direct observation (DO). The third column specifies the questions used in focused interviews, documents analyzed and direct observation opportunities.

For instance, the second component of *Compatibility*, “1.2 Complementary capacity to provide parks and recreational services,” was assessed through document analysis and focused interviews. Documents analyzed varied from management operation agreements for specific parks, to copies of email communication between partners. Interview participants include staff from both PARD and APF. Interviewees were asked to “describe the void in service that this partnership addresses,” and “describe resources you contribute as part of this partnership.” Questions listed in the framework below served as a starting point, as some responses necessitated additional or clarifying questions. The intent was to gauge whether the contributions of each organization were complementary. To meet the criteria of this component, responses should provide specific examples of how each organization provides a service that the other would not otherwise be able to provide on its own (without the partnership). This table eventually provides a template for how to organize the results of the study (Shields and Rangarajan, 2013, p.173).

Table 4.1 – Operationalization Table

Title: Parks Partners: A Model Assessment Tool for Effective Partnerships between Local Park Systems and Non-Profits Purpose: The purpose of this applied research project is three-fold. First, it develops a framework to assess the effectiveness of public-private partnerships between local public park systems and nonprofit entities. Second, it utilizes the framework to assess the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department’s partnership with the nonprofit Austin Parks Foundation. Third, it provides recommendations for enhancing Austin’s current and future public-private partnerships.		
Ideal type Category	Research Methods	Interview Questions, Documents, and Observations
KEY: “FI”= Focused Interview / “DA”= Document Analysis / “DO”= Direct Observation		
1. Compatibility		
1.1 Alignment of parks and recreational mission, goals and values	FI	FI: 1) Discuss the overall mission of your organization and describe your goal(s) for this partnership. 2) How does this partnership contribute to health and wellness of residents and/or the environmental conservation of Austin parks? 3) Other questions as merited.
	DA	
		DA: PARD Long-Range Master Plan; APF Strategic Plan;
1.2 Complementary capacity to provide parks and recreational services	FI	FI: 1) Describe the void in service that this partnership addresses. 2) Describe resources you contribute as part of this partnership. 3) Other questions as merited
	DA	
	DO	
		DA: Management Operation Agreement for Republic Square Park; Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Downtown Parks; Council Meeting Transcript (5/15/14)
		DO: “It’s My Park Day” Event; Dove Springs Tree Planting Event;
1.3 Prioritization of public over private interests	FI	FI: 1) Discuss how residents benefit from this partnership. 2) What value is gained for your organization as a result of this partnership? 3) Other questions as merited.
	DA	
		DA: PARD Policy and Procedures for P3; APF Strategic Plan; Statesman Media Story re: Auditorium Shores; Parkland Improvement Agreement for Auditorium Shores; Management Operation Agreement for Republic Square Park; Memorandum of Understanding for Downtown Parks
1.4 Avoidance of non-equitable park system outcomes	FI	FI: 1) Describe the area of town that this partnership will focus its efforts (specific neighborhood/community). 2) What parks service gaps exist within this specific area and how do these compare to other gaps in service within the park system? 3) Discuss any overlap between this partnership’s focus area and other, similar partnerships in nearby neighborhoods/communities? 4) Other questions as merited.
	DA	
	DO	
		DA: APF Blog Post: Colony Park Grant; APF Blog Post: Fall 2015 ACL Grant Recipients; APF Blog Post: Onion Creek Grant; 2014 KXAN Story re: Dove Springs Playground; Onion Creek Master Plan Report; Council Meeting Transcript (2/17/15); UT-Austin Dove Springs Study; City of Austin District Socioeconomic Data;
		DO: “It’s My Park Day” Event; Dove Springs Tree Planting Event;
2. Structure		
2.1 Well-defined park funding & management roles	FI	FI: 1) Describe your organization’s role as part of this partnership with regard to funding and management of park facilities. 2) Other questions as merited
	DA	
		DA: Management Operation Agreement for Republic Square Park; Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Downtown Parks; Wooldridge Square Concession Agreement;
2.2 Connectivity to local parks constituency groups	FI	FI: 1) Discuss the level of involvement other parks-oriented constituency groups have as part of this partnership. 2) Discuss your interaction with these groups relative to the goals of the partnership. 3) Other questions as merited.
	DA	
	DO	
		DA: Handouts from Grant Information Session;
		DO: “It’s My Park Day” Event; Grant Information Session
2.3 Existence of formal written agreement	FI	FI: 1) What is the nature of the formal written agreements? 2) Are there any known issues or challenges with current agreements, and if so, please describe these. 3) Other questions as merited.
	DA	
		DA: Management Operation Agreement for Republic Square Park; Memorandum of Understanding for Downtown Parks; Wooldridge Square Concession Agreement; Old Bakery Emporium Concession Agreement;

2.4 Balance of power among partners	FI	FI: 1) Discuss how decisions are made with regard to this partnership. 2) What authority does your organization have, and what authority does your partnering organization have? 3) Other questions as merited.
	DA	
	DO	DA: Management Operation Agreement for Republic Square Park; Memorandum of Understanding for Downtown Parks; DO: Regular Meeting between PARD/APF Staff
3. Communication		
3.1 Demonstrated support from leadership	FI	FI: 1) Discuss the level of support from leadership within your organization and your partnering organization. 2) How exactly is this support conveyed? If not, describe the reasons for the lack of support. 3) Other questions as merited.
	DA	
	DO	DA: Parks Board Republic Square Recommendation; City Council Republic Square Recommendation; 2/17/2015 City Council Meeting Transcript; 12/11/2015 City Council Meeting Transcript DO: Barton Hills Park Press Conference for New Mural Project;
3.2 Information sharing	FI	FI: 1) How does information flow between you and the partnering organization? 2) How does the sharing of such information contribute to the effectiveness of this partnership? 3) Other questions as merited.
	DA	
	DO	DA: Emails between PARD/APF staff; DO: Regular Meeting between PARD/APF Staff
3.3 Routine Informal meetings	FI	FI: 1) How often do representatives from the partnering organization and PARD meet and in what setting (in-person, via phone)? 2) How do these meetings contribute to the success of the partnership? 3) Other questions as merited.
	DA	
	DO	DO: Regular Meeting between PARD/APF Staff
4. Accountability		
4.1 Opportunities for public involvement	FI	FI: 1) Describe the nature of public involvement in this partnership? 2) What level of access does the public have in terms of information or opportunities to comment on the partnership? 3) Other questions as merited
	DA	
	DO	DA: Onion Creek Master Plan Report; Onion Creek Master Plan Engagement Flyer; APF Volunteer Website; DO: "It's My Park Day" Event; Grants Information Session;
4.2 Performance review	FI	FI: 1) Discuss what type of performance measures are in place for this partnership 2) What are the specific outcome measurements for evaluations and how are they used? 3) Other questions as merited.
	DA	
	DO	DA: Wooldridge Square Concession Agreement; Management Operation Agreement for Republic Square Park; PARD Policy and Procedures for P3s

Document Analysis

Document analysis is a research method that uses quantifiable data to support the findings of a study. Using documents allows the researcher to repeatedly analyze the information. Additionally, document analysis features specific, unambiguous information used as evidence for a study (Yin, 2014, p. 106). However, it is not always clear whether documents collected are comprehensive or include only selective portions of available data. Further, documents may be difficult to find or include the bias of the document's author (Yin, 200, p. 106).

This case study features the analysis of existing documents related to the partnership between PARD and APF. Partnership documents are analyzed in relation to the criteria in the Practical Ideal Type model. Support for the criteria was determined by the contents of the documents analyzed. Documents were analyzed for each of the four Practical Ideal Type categories; *Compatibility*, *Structure*, *Communication* and *Accountability*. For instance, written emails were used to measure the level of information sharing between partners (3.2). Each of the documents analyzed in this case study are listed in **Table 4.2** below. Where possible, live links to the documents are provided.

Table 4.2 – Documents Analyzed

PARD Long-Range Master Plan
APF Strategic Plan (Draft)
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Downtown Parks
PARD Policy and Procedures for Public-Private Partnerships
Parkland Improvement, Management, and Operation Agreement for Republic Square Park
Austin-American Statesman Article re: Auditorium Shores (Dec. 8, 2013)
Parkland Improvement Agreement for Auditorium Shores
Parks Board Recommendation for Republic Square Park Agreement
APF Blog Post: Dove Springs Playscape (Aug. 25, 2014)
KXAN-TV Article: Dove Springs Playscape (June 18, 2014)
University of Texas at Austin Study: Dove Springs Neighborhood
APF Blog Post: Fall 2015 ACL Grant Recipients (Dec. 4, 2015)
City of Austin Council District Socioeconomic Data
APF Blog Post: \$700,000 Grant for New Colony Park (Jan. 20, 2016)
Rendering of New Colony Park Master Plan
Onion Creek Master Plan 2015 Report
Austin City Council Meeting Transcript (Feb. 17, 2015)
Fiscal Note for Republic Square Park Council Action
Wooldridge Square Concession Agreement
Old Bakery Emporium Concession Agreement
Austin Parks Board Meeting Documents re: Republic Square Park (Dec. 9, 2014)
Austin City Council Meeting Transcript (Dec. 11, 2014)
Austin City Council Meeting Minutes (Dec. 11, 2014)
Onion Creek Master Plan Project Website
Onion Creek Community Engagement Meeting Flyer (March 2015)
“Volunteer” Section of APF Website
“It’s My Park Day” Event Page on APF Website
“Volunteer Workdays” Section of APF Website

Sample: Document Analysis

Documents were collected from the partnering organizations following inquiries to and discussions with PARD and APF staff. Most of the information was readily available on the City of Austin's website. Documents were reviewed multiple times between January and April 2016. For instance, the Management Operations Agreement for Republic Square Park was reviewed to assess the definition of funding and management roles between partners (2.1). These documents needed to show that roles and responsibilities for funding, managing and maintaining Republic Square park were clearly defined in order to meeting the criteria of (2.1).

Focused Interviews

This study also utilized focused interviews as a research method. Focused interviews allow a researcher to obtain the perceptions of individuals about a topic (Johnson, 2014, p. 113). Interviews are especially useful when the topic or process being researched is complex in nature (Johnson, 2014, p. 113). Interviews are beneficial in that they allow a researcher to clarify responses and easily analyze the information provided (Johnson, 2014, p. 113). One challenge of using interviews is that respondents may tell the interviewer what he or she wants to hear, resulting in biased responses. Additionally, responses may be inaccurate due to poorly articulated questions or a lack of recollection from interviewees (Yin, 2014, p.106-113).

Focused interviews were conducted with staff from PARD and APF. Individuals from each organization were interviewed to measure each of the four Practical Ideal Type categories; *Compatibility, Structure, Communication* and *Accountability*. Questions were open-ended and at times included follow-up question or clarifying responses. This dynamic allowed for more detailed information about the partnership. Responses provided were used as evidence to gauge support of the Practical Ideal Type categories and components.

For example, Colin Wallis, Director of the APF, was asked to discuss the partnership's connectivity to local parks constituency groups (2.2). PARD Director Sara Hensley was similarly

asked to discuss the involvement of these groups. Evidence to judge whether the criteria of (2.2) was met includes each interviewee naming specific groups and how they contribute to the goals of the partnership. Additionally, responses from staff of APF and PARD provided evidence supporting criteria for information sharing (3.2) and meeting dynamics (3.3).

Sample: Focused Interviews

Between January 22 and February 12, 2016, four staff members from the partnering agencies were interviewed as part of this project. These include Colin Wallis, Executive Director of APF; Sara Hensley, Director of PARD; Ladye Ann Wofford, Programs Director at APF; and Brian Block, Development Administrator at PARD. Each person agreed to be interviewed and authorized for their name and professional title to be used in this study. All interviews occurred via one-hour phone conversations and responses to questions were transcribed for reference. Interview subjects were chosen based on their position within the partnering organizations and their involvement with the partnership. Their participation resulted in well-informed responses and a balanced insight into the dynamics of the partnership.

Direct Observation

Along with document analysis and focused interviews, this project also uses direct observation as a research method. Direct observation allows a researcher to be physically immersed within the context of the topic being studied (Yin, 2014, p. 106). Observation is a useful method when situations are complex in nature (Johnson, 2014, p. 110). The partnership studied involves multiple initiatives and various forms of interaction among partners as well as with the community. As such, observation is a valuable approach for assessing the behavior and dynamics of the partnership in action. Much like interviews however, observation methods can result in participants altering behavior based on their participation in the study (Yin, 2014, p. 106).

Sample: Direct Observation

The PARD/APF partnership provided multiple opportunities for direct observation research. This included the APF’s signature annual event, *It’s My Park Day*, which occurred March 5, 2016. This event occurred at various parks around Austin and showcased the collaborative efforts between APF, PARD, partner agencies and the community. Participants observed were informed of the researcher’s presence and explained the intent of the research project. Additionally, a number of routine meetings were observed between APF and PARD staff. This provided an opportunity to witness the inner workings of the partnership, including how staff from each organization work to accomplish mutual goals. Meeting participants were briefed on the researcher’s presence and provided opportunities to object. The full list of settings observed as part of this study can be found below in **Table 4.3**.

Table 4.3 – Direct Observations

Observation Setting	Location	Date
Barton Hills Park Press Conference	Barton Hills Community Park	December 12, 2015
Grants Information Class	Terrazzas Branch Library	February 17, 2016
Dove Springs Tree Planting Event	Dove Springs District Park	February 27, 2016
“It’s My Park Day” Event	Multiple Parks	March 5, 2016
Staff Meetings between PARD/APF	PARD Annex Facility	March 14, 2016

Criteria for Support

To ensure that evidence is assessed and presented in an objective manner, a four-level scale of alignment is utilized. The scale uses the evidence collected to determine the level of support or alignment between the partnership and components of the practical ideal type. For instance, significant, supportive evidence for a component would result in a more complete alignment between the component and the partnership. Similarly, weaker evidence results in a more limited alignment. The assessment scale includes four levels of alignment—**No, Limited, Adequate** and **Complete**.

No Alignment exists when there is no evidence to support the ideal component, or the evidence found does not align with the component. **Limited Alignment** is demonstrated when documents, interview responses and observations suggest minimal-to-no evidence supporting the ideal component. Additionally, Limited Alignment occurs if evidence is in conflict with the component's characteristics. **Adequate Alignment** occurs when evidence mostly supports the inclusion of the practical ideal component within the partnership. **Complete Alignment** is achieved when evidence includes multiple examples of the ideal component as part of the partnership. **Table 4.4** below describes the relationship between each level of alignment and evidence gauged by each research method.

Table 4.4 – Levels of Alignment

Level of Alignment	Document Analysis	Focused Interviews	Direct Observation
No Alignment	<i>-No documents found, or documents provide no proof of support for ideal component</i>	<i>-Responses mention no evidence or examples supporting ideal component</i> <i>-Inconsistent responses among partners</i>	<i>-Observation provided no proof of support for ideal component</i>
Limited Alignment	<i>-Documents contain minimal written evidence supporting ideal component</i>	<i>-Responses rarely mention evidence or examples supporting ideal component</i> <i>-Few conflicting responses among partners</i>	<i>-Witnessed minimal evidence or examples of ideal component</i>
Adequate Alignment	<i>-Documents contain some written evidence supporting ideal component</i>	<i>-Responses include some evidence and examples supporting the ideal component</i> <i>-Responses mostly consistent among partners</i>	<i>-Witnessed mostly consistent evidence of support for ideal component</i>
Complete Alignment	<i>-Documents contain multiple written examples of support for ideal component within partnership</i>	<i>-Responses provide support for, include multiple examples of ideal component</i> <i>-Responses always consistent among partners</i>	<i>-Witnessed multiple examples of support for ideal component characteristics</i>

Direct Observation Scoresheet

For the eight components that were assessed using direct observation, the scoresheet shown in **Table 4.5** below was utilized. Each component is listed in the first column, with the corresponding direct observation setting(s) listed in the middle column. During the observation, witnessed events were assessed in terms of each ideal component on a scale of **1 – 4**. This numerical scale draws from the outlined criteria in the alignment scale listed in Table 3.4 above. For instance, an observation score of **‘1’** suggests **‘No Alignment’** based on the witnessed evidence. A component receiving a **‘2’** shows **‘Limited Alignment’**, a **‘3’** shows **‘Complete Alignment’**. An observation score of **‘4’** suggests **‘Complete Alignment’** with the practical ideal type component based on the witnessed evidence. The score sheet is an effective tool for tracking observation results in various settings.

Table 4.5 – Direct Observation (DO) Score Sheet

Ideal Type Category	Direct Observation Setting	Alignment Level* (1-4)
1. Compatibility		
1.2 Complementary capacity to provide parks and recreational services	<i>“It’s My Park Day” Event (3/5/16)</i>	
	<i>Dove Springs Tree Planting Event (2/17/16)</i>	
1.3 Prioritization of public over private interest	<i>Grants Information Session (2/17/16)</i>	
	<i>Park Education Workshop (TBD)</i>	
1.4 Avoidance of non-equitable park system outcomes	<i>“It’s My Park Day” Event (3/5/16)</i>	
2. Structure		
2.2 Connectivity to parks constituency groups	<i>“It’s My Park Day” Event (3/5/16)</i>	
2.4 Balance of power among partners	<i>Regular Meetings between PARD/APF (TBD)</i>	
3. Communication		
3.1 Demonstrated support from leadership	<i>Barton Hills Press Conference for New Mural Project (12/12/15)</i>	
3.3 Routine informal meetings	<i>Regular Meetings between PARD/APF (multiple)</i>	
4. Accountability		
4.1 Opportunities for public involvement	<i>“It’s My Park Day” Event (3/5/2016)</i>	
	<i>Park Education Workshop (TBD)</i>	
	<i>Grants Information Session (2/17/16)</i>	
*Alignment Levels: ‘1’ = No Alignment / ‘2’ = Limited Alignment / ‘3’ = Adequate Alignment / ‘4’ = Complete Alignment		

Human Subjects Protection

The research methods used in this project received an exemption from full review by the Texas State University's Institutional Research Board (IRB). The IRB issued exemption number EXP2015N618009J on November 12, 2015 following a request from the project's author. The exemption is listed as "Appendix A" at the end of this project.

Interviews conducted as part of this study focused on the organizational dynamics of the partnership, avoided any discussion of personal feelings or sensitive information. The researcher ensured that individuals providing interviews or being observed were fully aware of the researcher's intent of obtaining information for this study. Those wishing not to participate were not part of the research process or findings contained in this study. Any individuals named in this study provided full consent to the researcher. This study did not feature the participation of any vulnerable populations.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the methods used to assess the public-private partnership between the Austin Parks and Recreation Department and the Austin Parks Foundation. A case study approach was utilized, which included document analysis, focused interviews, and direct observation methods. Documents associated with the partnership were analyzed in relation to the components of the Practical Ideal Type model. Additionally, interviews with staff from both PARD and APF were conducted to complement document assessment. Finally, a number of direct observation opportunities provided additional analysis of this partnership's activities. The next chapter details the results of the case study.

CHAPTER V

Results and Analysis

Chapter Purpose

This chapter outlines the results of the case study for the partnership between PARD and APF. This assessment is done using the categories and components of the practical ideal type model developed from the literature. Results are determined by using the methodologies described in Chapter IV, including document analysis, focused interviews, and direct observation. Each method assessed the alignment between the evidence found and the components of the practical ideal type model. This chapter concludes with a summary of the results of the case study.

There are four categories of the model assessment tool—*Compatibility, Structure, Communication, and Accountability*. Each of these categories includes components for analysis, which are analyzed individually. Results of the study begin by describing the practical ideal category, and then the results for each corresponding component. The first category assessed is *Compatibility*.

1. COMPATIBILITY

As discussed in Chapter II, an ideal park/nonprofit partnership should feature compatible partners. Compatibility refers to how effective partners will likely be should they meet certain criteria. The criteria in this case are determined by examining each organization individually as well as through specific partnership activities. To achieve compatibility a partnership should feature four ideal components, listed in **Table 5.1** below:

Table 5.1 –Compatibility Practical Ideal Type Categories

Compatibility Practical Ideal Type Components
<i>1.1 Alignment of parks and recreational mission, goals and values</i>
<i>1.2 Complementary capacity to provide parks and recreational services</i>
<i>1.3 Prioritization of public over private interest</i>
<i>1.4 Avoidance of non-equitable park system outcomes</i>

Alignment of parks and recreational mission, goals and values (1.1)

Focused Interviews

During each of the interviews, respondents noted similar themes in terms of the intent of their organizations. For instance, when asked about their organization's mission, goals and values, each of the four respondents mentioned providing park-related services to the community. PARD's Director pointed out that PARD strives to serve the community in the area of parks recreation, culture, and arts. APF's Director noted that the overarching intent of APF is to "build partnerships to develop and maintain parks trails, and open spaces." Similarly, each staff member from PARD and APF mentioned maintaining parks, trails and open spaces in their response. PARD respondents discussed providing a "good quality of life for residents," and a goal of "meeting the needs of the community."

When asked how their respective goals related to the goals of the partnership, additional evidence of alignment was seen. Specifically, APF respondents noted how their organization's role is mainly to support the activities of PARD. A PARD staffer pointed out the goal of the partnership helps PARD be effective in meeting the needs of the community through park services. All sides agreed that a funding gap exists within PARD, which prevents the provision of adequate services. To address this, the leveraging of funds and resources is a key component of the partnership's goal. For example, when speaking about the noted funding gap, APF's Director pointed out that, "...our goal, at the heart of it, is to leverage the annual budget to close that gap."

When asked about how the partnership contributes to the health and wellness of residents, respondents provided multiple examples of resources and programming. For instance, the APF staff member noted that a recent focus for APF is curbing childhood obesity and creating a safe environment in parks. Similarly, the PARD staffer noted how the partnership helped develop new playground equipment. The APF staffer also outlined how APF is able to provide fitness

programming, including fitness boot camps, yoga and Zumba classes, and the installation of fitness equipment at PARD facilities. All of these examples provide substantial evidence of alignment.

Interview subjects were also asked how this partnership contributes to the environment. All respondents mentioned volunteer work days and the continual efforts to involve the community in maintaining the parks. This included the provision of “nature-based programming, mulching trees, invasive species mitigation, and environmental education.” The APF staffer specifically mentioned working with PARD on a pilot program for “habituurf”—which was described as “a combination of four native types of grasses.” The turf requires minimal watering, which is helpful in the context of a drought.

Based on the responses from each side, evidence suggests this partnership has **complete alignment** with this ideal type component. Multiple examples were provided, which were consistent between organizations. To better understand the level of alignment between each side’s mission, goals and vision, multiple partnership documents were analyzed for evidence.

Document Analysis

Documents reviewed provided multiple source of evidence of alignment between the partnership and the practical ideal. Documents reviewed include PARD’s [Long-Range Master Plan](#), and APF’s draft Strategic Plan.¹⁷ The documents provide an individual look at each organization’s dynamics.

According to the *Master Plan*, PARD’s mission is to “provide, protect and preserve a Park System that promotes recreational, cultural and outdoor experiences for the Austin Community.” APF’s draft Strategic Plan does not lay out its mission as clearly, however it does note that its stated goal is to “serve as the backbone to our mission of connecting people to resources and partnership to develop and improve parks.” PARD’s stated mission emphasizes its role as the main service

¹⁷ APF’s Strategic Plan was in draft form at the time this analysis was performed (February-March 2016). The contents of this document may have received minor changes since that time. APF provide permission to review the contents of the draft plan for this assessment.

provider of park-related services for “the Austin Community.” APF’s mission acknowledges that it acts as a support system for PARD’s provision of services. APF’s mission seems to aim at bridging the gap between “the Austin Community” and quality park services. Overall, the mission of each organization appears consistent given the joint focus on enhancing the park system for the benefit of the community.

Chapter 4 of PARD’s *Master Plan* provides insights to its stated goals. PARD lists six overall “goals” for the department. The document defines the term “goal” as “general” and “global in nature.” Similarly, APF lists four “primary goals” within its draft strategic plan. A comparison of each organization’s stated goals are listed below in **Table 5.2**.

Table 5.2 – Comparison of Stated Goals for PARD and APF

PARD Goals	APF Goals
1. Provide a diversity and sufficiency of recreational opportunities	1. Optimize the diversity and reach of APF’s program mix to increase our impact.
2. Provide safe and accessible parks and facilities to all citizens	2. Be a leading voice for the transformative power of parks.
3. Foster collaboration, coordination, and partnerships throughout the community	3. Develop and strengthen our strategic partnerships to promote our community’s parks and green spaces
4. Design and maintain parks and facilities to achieve environmental sustainability	4. Cultivate the flexibility and capacity to respond to the needs of our community’s parks and green spaces.
5. Employ an ongoing system of organizational evaluation	
6. Improve maintenance and operational efficiency throughout the park system	

Specific consistencies exist amongst most of the stated goals. For instance, the first goal listed for PARD and APF speaks to the desire for diverse services and sufficient community reach. Goal #3 notes the importance of partnerships in providing park services to the community. Much like the stated missions of each organization, these goals all intend to improve the park system for the ultimate benefit of the community.

The value of each organization was not plainly stated in any of the documents reviewed; however, value was determined through inference of components of evidence. Organizational values, according to the literature review, refer to an organization's identity and directly inform its actions. With this in mind, inferences from the available documents suggested that both PARD and APF have consistent organizational values. For instance, APF's draft strategic plan listed three "guiding themes and priorities." They are

- 1) Recognizing and promoting our leadership role in the community
- 2) Diversifying our impact, resources, and reach
- 3) Expanding the sustainability of our parks

According to the plan, the themes listed above are "woven throughout (APF's) goals and accompanying activities. For each theme, a description provides additional context. For example, the description under #3 above notes that APF "believes our parks should be safe, well-maintained, and thoughtfully planned..."

Alternatively, PARD's Long-Range Master Plan notes four tenants as part of its overall management philosophy. According to the plan, PARD strives to ensure:

- Inclusiveness of all segments of the population
- Contribution to the diversity of cultural, natural and recreational resources
- Higher standards of design and maintenance
- Preservation of our community open space

Drawing from these seven stated themes/tenants, the value of each organization is seen. There are also consistencies among the partners. For instance, each prioritized the diversity of resources within the park system. Additionally, each notes the importance of environmental stewardships—APF mentions "expanding sustainability of our parks" and PARD notes the "preservation" of parks/open space. Based on this consistency, and other evidence found in partnership documents, the partnership appears in **complete alignment** with the ideal type.

Summary Results (1.1 Alignment of parks and recreational mission, goals and values)

Overall evidence suggests **complete alignment** between the PARD/APF partnership and the practical ideal type component. Both PARD and APF appear to have consistent intentions, which

are reflected in their activities of the partnership. Consistencies were noted in both interview responses and documented evidence. The next practical ideal component is analyzed in terms of partnership activities and what each side contributes.

Complementary capacity to provide parks and recreational services (1.2)

Focused Interviews

When interviewees were asked to discuss voids in service and what their organization brings to the partnership, responses were consistent overall. Multiple examples suggest that each side understands what the other brings to the table. Most directly, each side discussed the “limited funds” available to PARD and how APF helps fund areas left unaddressed. APF noted parks maintenance specifically, suggesting it is difficult for PARD to manage all of its assets on its own. PARD similarly noted that it cannot be reliant on its budget alone, and depends on nonprofit assistance for fundraising and grants. PARD also noted that it is conscious of what it should and should not be involved in, saying, “It does not do us any good to go out and say we are going to teach these exercise classes ourselves when there are other providers already doing that.”

In terms of outreach and advocacy, each side agreed that APF helps fill a void in fundraising efforts and supplements PARD’s advocacy activities. For instance, the APF Director noted its ability as a nonprofit to effectively fundraise the private sector. Similarly, PARD said that APF is better suited to perform outreach and obtain donations given that they are not a governmental entity. Each side agreed that APF assisted PARD in advocating for the parks, as APF tends to have a more direct link to the community. PARD’s Director noted, “...they [APF] hear things we don’t hear...something we might need to be focusing on.” This helps PARD improve its service outputs.

Other responses suggest that partners’ capacity complement each other. For instance, while APF helps provide funding for projects otherwise not available, PARD manages projects, providing professional expertise and labor. When discussing how APF helps engage community volunteers

for projects, PARD staff noted, “We are the operational side...they [APF] bring people into the network, and it’s our operations, our guys in the field, that work well with these groups.” PARD also noted that while APF provides financial and volunteer resources, PARD staff will still scope a project to make sure it is feasible, and make sure it gets designed appropriately.

During the interview, PARD discussed a tool that is being developed to ensure they are not duplicating efforts with other service providers. While it appears that there is strong complementary capacity between partners, the efforts described by PARD suggest there could be room for improvement.

Evidence obtained from responses to these questions suggests **adequate – complete alignment** with the practical ideal component. The partnership also presented multiple documents for review to test against the ideal type.

Document Analysis

Overall, the documented evidence suggests **adequate alignment** between the partnership and the ideal. A number of project specific documents were analyzed to understand the nature of each partner’s contribution and reach this conclusion. Each of these documents is discussed in detail in this section.

A 2011 memorandum of understanding (MOU) between PARD, APF and the Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA) was analyzed for its alignment with this component. The MOU outlines roles for each partner for activities in downtown parks. APF’s stated roles include providing fundraising activities for park improvements. Specifically, the MOU notes APF will “solicit funds for park improvements, maintenance, and event programming.” The MOU suggests APF’s role of soliciting funds complements PARD’s inherent inability as a public entity to solicit private donations. This dynamic is further emphasized within the MOU, which notes that PARD will determine what can and cannot be funded, and engage in discussions with APF about funding

strategies. This section highlights PARD's ability to estimate the needed costs, and APF's ability to obtain funds outside the normal municipal budget process in order to realize park improvements.

The MOU also mentions that APF will "engage interested stakeholders...for park improvements and programming" (Page 2). While PARD is capable of such engagement, the designation of this responsibility suggests APF's enhanced ability to reach a broader audience. This is difficult to discern from this document alone, however responses from APF staff regarding its connection to park advocacy groups validates APF's enhanced engagement ability.

PARD's role in other areas of this MOU includes the provision of the actual space (parkland) for programming to occur, as well as the oversight of permits and approvals. For instance, APF is designated with providing events such as movies, concerts and exercise classes, while PARD will approve these programs in advance and ensure the necessary permits are obtained. PARD ensures safety and compliance, and mitigates liabilities that come with allowing a non-City entity to provide programming in a public park. Meanwhile, APF is tasked with providing the actual programming that PARD otherwise would not have the capacity to provide. Based on the language of the MOU, each side is designated a specific role in providing downtown park services. Overall, APF is able to safely and effectively provide this programming given the oversight and physical space provided by PARD.

A [transcript](#) of an Austin City Council meeting provided additional evidence of alignment. Transcripts of a discussion regarding master planning efforts in Republic Square Park suggest APF helps fill a void in PARD services. For instance, while answering a question from the Mayor Pro Tem a PARD assistant Director notes that APF has agreed to use contributions to build an endowment fund and underwrite the annual maintenance and operations costs of the park, estimated at \$300,000. PARD staff compares this amount to the much lower estimate of tens-of thousands of dollars the department is able to contribute to the park on its own. Later in the discussion, the

transcript shows the PARD Director discussing the programming benefits that APF will provide to Republic Square Park:

One of the huge benefits of this partnership is their (APF's) ability for programming purposes...they are going to focus on programming that not only will house events but will house family-friendly programs...they are looking to put in vendors focused on bringing events to this park...this sets the tone for us for future partnerships, not only in the downtown area but across the city.

A review of the Parkland Improvement, Management and Operations Agreement for Republic Square Park contains significant detail of APF and PARD responsibilities for this park. For instance, APF is assigned with the “design, permitting, bidding and construction” of parkland improvements at Republic Square. To help ease this



Figure 5.1 - Republic Square Park

process, PARD is obligated to “request waivers of fees for City permits, licenses and inspections in connection with the construction of Parkland Improvements by APF.” An image of Republic Square Park in downtown Austin is shown in **Figure 5.1**.

It should be noted that these documents provided only a sample of the collaborations between PARD and APF, and are in no way comprehensive of all partnership activities. To supplement the documented evidence, two PARD/APF events were observed in action.

Direct Observation

Observation of a tree planting event at Dove Springs District Park suggested **complete alignment** with the ideal component. The event featured multiple staff from PARD's Urban Forestry Division and one project coordinator from APF. The goal of the event appeared to be to have community volunteers assist PARD staff with planting multiple trees around the park.

The dynamic between the APF project coordinator and the PARD manager showed

Figure 5.2 - Unplanted Trees at Dove Springs



evidence of complementary capacity between partners. For instance, multiple PARD vehicles were present, and shovels, mulch, wheelbarrows and to-be planted trees were all provided by PARD. Materials can be seen in **Figure 5.2**.

The event also featured at least 50 volunteers, many of whom are show in **Figure**

5.3. When welcoming the gathered volunteers, the PARD manager acknowledged the event was made possible by the partnership with APF. PARD thanked the APF project coordinator for recruiting the volunteers. Before tree planting began, PARD staff provided detailed instructions on how to perform root pruning on the trees. APF assisted in this effort, but ultimately deferring to the expertise of the PARD manager, who noted he had a background in horticulture. **Figure 5.4** shows the PARD manager and APF representative addressing the volunteers.



Figure 5.4 - Dove Springs Demonstration



Figure 5.3 - Dove Springs Volunteers

The second event observed APF’s signature annual event—It’s My Park Day (IMPD)—provided significant evidence of complementary capacity between partners. IMPD occurred city-wide and featured thousands of volunteers at multiple parks throughout Austin. Evidence collected during this observation suggests **complete alignment** with the ideal component. Volunteer activities were observed at four separate parks throughout Austin, including Gus Garcia, Bartholomew, Pease and the McElheny Oak Grove. A range of activities were observed at each location, including trash pick-up, mulching of trees, habitat restoration and mitigation, and graffiti removal. The overall intent was to improve and beautify the park spaces.

Approximately 100 volunteers worked in Bartholomew Park to clean-up the creek, its disc golf course, and mulch trees. PARD provided supplies, including trucks and mulch, while APF provided 100 volunteers to work in this park. Volunteers worked to transport the mulch from large piles to various trees within the park. **Figure 5.5** shows a pile of mulch and a PARD vehicle in the background. **Figure 5.6** shows volunteers mulching trees.

Figure 5.5 – Mulch, PARD Truck at IMPD



Figure 5.6 - Mulch Volunteers at IMPD

Volunteers were observed in the creek collecting debris. Significant debris was observed along the creek, which runs throughout Bartholomew Park. Volunteers used gloves to collect debris and place in bags for disposal. **Figure 5.7** shows volunteers in the creek bed, surrounded by debris. **Figure 5.8** shows debris removed from the creek.



Figure 5.7 - Creek Debris Volunteers at IMPD



Figure 5.8 - Creek Debris from IMPD

An observation of IMPD volunteer activities at Pease Park included beautification efforts and multiple environmental efforts. Volunteers removed graffiti from bridges and other areas. Others concentrated on the removal of invasive species, habitat restoration, tree watering, root repair, mulching and planting of flowers and shrubbery. The majority of the volunteers appeared to be associated with the Pease Park Conservancy. **Figure 5.9** shows an entrance of Pease Park, with another sign indicating it as a site for APF's IMPD event.



Figure 5.9 - Pease Park Sign at IMPD

Figure 5.10 shows a volunteer removing graffiti, and **Figure 5.11** shows a water truck used by volunteers to water the trees at Pease Park. Activities at Pease appeared exceptionally sophisticated and services provided from volunteers appeared to be work PARD would have otherwise had to perform on its own.

Figure 5.11 - Water Truck at IMPD



Figure 5.10 - Graffiti Removal at IMPD



Significant environmental improvements were observed at another IMPD location in southeast Austin. A team of nearly twenty volunteers worked to clear invasive shrubbery and “hand mulch” the McElhenney Oak Grove in the Montopolis Greenbelt. While the greenbelt is managed by PARD, the oak grove is overseen by the City of Austin’s Watershed Protection Department, which manages the city’s floodplains. **Figure 5.12** shows a sign for the oak grove, taken within the grove itself. According to the project leader, the oak grove is in a key floodplain management area. Volunteers attempted to trim down some of the shrubbery so that sunlight could penetrate the grove and allow the native plant species to thrive. The project leader mentioned that this was their seventh time participating in the event at this location. **Figure 5.13** below shows the project leader trimming down plants. **Figure 5.14** shows an example tools used during the hand mulching process.

Figure 5.12 – Oak Grove Entry Sign at IMPD



Figure 5.13 - Crew Leader Trimming Brush at IMPD



Figure 5.14 – Tool Used at IMPD

The results of the direct observation for both events are noted in **Table 5.3** below, the Direct Observation Score Sheet.

Table 5.3 – DO Score Sheet for (1.2)

Ideal Type Component	Direct Observation Setting	Alignment Level (1-4)*
1.2 Complementary capacity to provide parks and recreational services	<i>Dove Springs Tree Planting Event (2/27/16)</i>	4
	<i>"It's My Park Day" Event (3/5/16)</i>	4
<i>*Alignment Levels: '1' = No Alignment '2' = Limited Alignment '3' = Adequate Alignment '4' = Complete Alignment</i>		

Summary Results (1.2 Complementary capacity to provide parks and recreational services)

Partnership evidence suggests **complete alignment** with the ideal component. PARD and APF each provide recreational and park-related services. For the most part, contributions and relevant services are complementary in nature. The third component of this ideal category focuses on whether the partnership prioritizes public interest in its activities.

Prioritization of public over private interests (1.3)

Focused Interviews

Respondents discussed how residents benefited from the partnership, each side noting relatively similar examples and themes. For instance, APF noted that their work touches “each corner of the city,” and also highlighted their grant program. A separate APF staffer noted that last year APF provided \$1.5 million in grants that benefited PARD property. Similarly, PARD’s Director noted that there has been increased awareness and participation with the grant programs offered by APF. The PARD staff member spoke highly of APF’s commitment to parks and the public interest, noting, “Everything they [APF] do is dedicated to supporting the park system.”

Responses were consistent when participants were asked how the partnership benefits their organization or the respondent specifically (versus benefiting the public). Both APF staffers noted their role in supplementing funding for PARD, and deferred any benefit gained to the enhancement of the parks system. PARD’s Director specifically noted that the partnership helps PARD gain value in terms of perceived importance from elected officials. She noted, “It’s one thing for me to

stand up in front of the City Council and talk about our parks...it's another when a group of citizens talk about the value of parks, the role they play and their positive economic impact.” No mention of personal benefit was discussed from any APF or PARD respondent.

Responses for this component suggest **complete alignment** with the practical ideal type component. Responses all focused on public benefit, with no mention of private interests. Responses were consistent among the participants. To support this finding, a number of documents were reviewed for evidence of alignment.

Document Analysis

Document analysis indicated that the partnership is in **adequate alignment** with the practical ideal component. The vast majority of documents showed a commitment to the public interest in partnership activities. However, documented evidence for one project involving APF was alleged to prioritize private interest. Documents analyzed include APF's Strategic Plan, the Parkland Improvement, Management and Operations Agreement for Republic Square Park, the memo, a [media story](#) regarding renovations to Auditorium Shores,¹⁸ and the Parkland Improvement Agreement for Auditorium Shores between APF, PARD a C3 Presents, a private event company.

Documented evidence for each individual organization features evidence of prioritization of the public interest. For example, APF's draft strategic plan notes that it is committed to ensuring its program services are “meeting our community's needs.” Separately, PARD's written policy for public-private partnerships outlines six requirements for entering into partnerships. One key requirement is that a partnership will “likely result in a significant and measurable public benefit.”

Additionally, documents for specific partnership activities provide evidence of public interest prioritization. For instance, subsection “B” of the Republic Square Park agreement notes, “The City, APF ... have agreed that the public benefits of the Park will be substantially enhanced

¹⁸ Auditorium Shores was formally renamed to “Vic Mathias Shores” in 2014. Documents analyzed for this project were created prior to the renaming taking effect, and still refer to this location as “Auditorium Shores.”

through the re-improvement of the Park.” The memorandum of understanding for downtown parks notes that APF, with PARD approval, may develop programming that is open to the public.

According to other documents, allegations of private interests intruding on parkland arose in 2013 when PARD and APF joined local event promotions company C3 Presents to renovate Auditorium Shores. Along with renovations, the agreement between the parties also required the drafting of an “Event Impact Analysis” courtesy of TUR Partners, a private firm. According to the agreement, APF was tasked with assisting PARD in managing the design and construction process for the renovation. C3’s involvement included a \$5 million donation for the project—\$3.5 million to the City/PARD for design and construction efforts, and \$1.5 million to APF to compensate TUR Partners and future improvements to Auditorium Shores. The distribution of C3’s funds are found in Exhibit F of the agreement, shown in **Figure 5.15**.

Figure 5.15 – Auditorium Shores Payment Schedule

Auditorium Shores - Improvements

Donation Payment Schedule

Updated: 11/06/2013

C3 payments	APF		City	
Fiscal Year	\$	notes	\$	notes
FY 13-14	750,000	for TUR and PM	250,000	design
FY 14-15	500,000	for TUR and PM	500,000	design/construction
FY 15-16	250,000	for future impvmnts	750,000	construction
FY 16-17			1,000,000	construction
FY 17-18			1,000,000	construction
	1,500,000		3,500,000	
				5,000,000

“TUR”= TUR Partners
“PM” = Project Manager

Annual payments by C3 Presents to be made no later than December 1st of each fiscal year

Source: Parkland Improvement Agreement with the Austin Parks Foundation and C3 Presents, L.L.C

Controversy over the redesign centered on the adjustment of a portion of Auditorium Shores that was jointly used as an off-leash area for dogs and a space for special events, some organized by C3 Presents. The referenced area was to be moved, and dogs would be disallowed off-leash in this new area. According to a [media article](#) from the *Austin American-Statesman* (Coppola, 2013), some

community members questioned whether the parkland was effectively being established as an event space, courtesy of C3's donation. The below excerpt from the article quoting a community member summarizes this point.

"The bottom line is that the donation is a conflict of interest, because C3 uses Auditorium Shores as an event space," Collen said. "If they wanted to make a philanthropic donation, they wouldn't have a contract about how the money has to be used."

Source: Austin American-Statesman, Coppola, 2013

While APF was a party to this agreement, no documented evidence was found to substantiate the notion that private interests were put above the public interest in this case. In the *Austin American-Statesman* article the reporter notes that "it is not clear how much influence, if any, (C3 and APF) had on the final design (of Auditorium Shores)" (Coppola, 2013). The concept of a public benefit in this case is relative and open to interpretation. For instance, the loss of a portion of an off-leash dog area may be interpreted as a prioritization of private interest in favor of C3. However, a case for public benefit can equally be made by noting that Auditorium Shores received a significant renovation at no cost to PARD or APF.

Taking all documented evidence into consideration for this ideal component, APF and PARD activities provide overt prioritization of public, rather than private benefits. The case of Auditorium Shores and C3 raised questions, however it does not present enough tangible evidence to deter the partnership's apparent commitment to the public via its multiple activities.

Direct Observation

A grant information session provided evidence of **complete alignment** between the partnership and the practical ideal component. The information session was hosted by APF staff and intended to instruct individuals on how to apply for a grant with APF via its ACL Music Festival Grants Program. The event was held at a public library, featured five attendees, and

functioned as an instructional workshop in a classroom setting. Attendees were diverse and appeared to be relatively familiar with the grant applications process.

The APF staffer discussed the types of projects suitable for this program, and how to submit a strong application for consideration. She also noted that the grant program has expanded this year, and that APF is offering three different funding levels in order to accommodate smaller projects. Questions from attendees were received throughout and APF took time to answer each question, reiterating the positive impact these funds can provide. Following the one-hour session, an attendee who had asked the majority of questions asked to discuss the process further with APF staff. The citizen and the APF staff member spent the next 30 minutes discussing specific issues related to the process to ensure the citizen had a thorough understanding.

While this session occurred from Noon to 1 p.m. on a Wednesday afternoon, another session was scheduled for the same evening. This was to be sure to accommodate the schedules of all members of the community who may have wanted to attend. Significant evidence is seen in the multiple accounts of accommodation and proactive outreach to the public. The results of the direct observation are listed in the score sheet below (**Table 5.4**).

Table 5.4 – DO Score Sheet for (1.3)

Ideal Type Component	Direct Observation Setting	Alignment Level (1-4)*
1.3 Prioritization of public over private interests	<i>Grant Information Session (2/17/16)</i>	4
*Alignment Levels: '1' = No Alignment / '2' = Limited Alignment / '3' = Adequate Alignment / '4' = Complete Alignment		

Summary Results (1.3 Prioritization of public over private interests)

Overall, partnership evidence collected suggests **complete alignment** with the practical ideal component. Residents receive significant and tangible benefits from the efforts of the partnership. These benefits are primarily the provision of park and recreational opportunities/services. Based on the evidence, partners appear committed to ensuring the public

interests are considered above any competing private interests. The final component for this category examines if partnership activities are furthering any existing park service inequities.

Avoidance of non-equitable park system outcomes (1.4)

Focused Interviews

Participants were asked to discuss partnership activity Austin, specifically if they felt there was any overlap between partnership activity and well-served areas. APF's Director acknowledged that there is significant attention paid to certain parks—including Zilker Park in the heart of the city. He noted that many parks, especially those east of I-35, have not received the same amount of attention and resources others, including Zilker, have. He noted that overlap does exist in the urban core, especially with regard to other park-centric nonprofit activity. Both PARD and APF noted that they are aware of this dynamic, and are constantly working to be conscious of the needs in other parks in low-income areas. Each side made the point that their organization, and their partnership, is focused on the whole system and not one area. PARD's Director also noted that the department needs to be more "strategically focused" and mentioned the current development of a tool that will allow PARD/APF to maximize efforts. She noted that this tool would track activities and determine if current service levels need to be adjusted to prevent redundancy.

Both APF respondents mentioned that there is a concerted effort in the partnership to address park equity. When speaking about engaging communities east of I-35, the APF Director said, "Our model has been to partner up with them to help bring resources and expertise to help them better their park. They have plenty of passion, just not a lot of resources. We marry our resources with their passion." Similarly, PARD noted that the partnership has helped them reach out directly to parts of the city that are typically less engaged.

Both APF respondents provided specific examples of how the partnership was addressing traditionally underserved communities. For instance, the APF staff member mentioned that there is a renewed effort in "grassroots organizing and engagement," pointing specifically to the Dove

Springs community in southeast Austin. As a result of their grassroots efforts, she noted that residents who have never participated in any civic group are now advocating to elected leaders on behalf of their community. The APF Director also mentioned Colony Park, in northeast Austin, noting a recent \$700,000 grant to create a park in that community.

The interviews provided specific examples and evidence that the partnership is aware of the need to ensure their efforts are not resulting in park inequities. All sides admitted work still needed to be done, however specific examples and a holistic view of responses are evidence of **adequate alignment** with the ideal type component. Examples provided a starting point for examining documents for further evidence.

Document Analysis

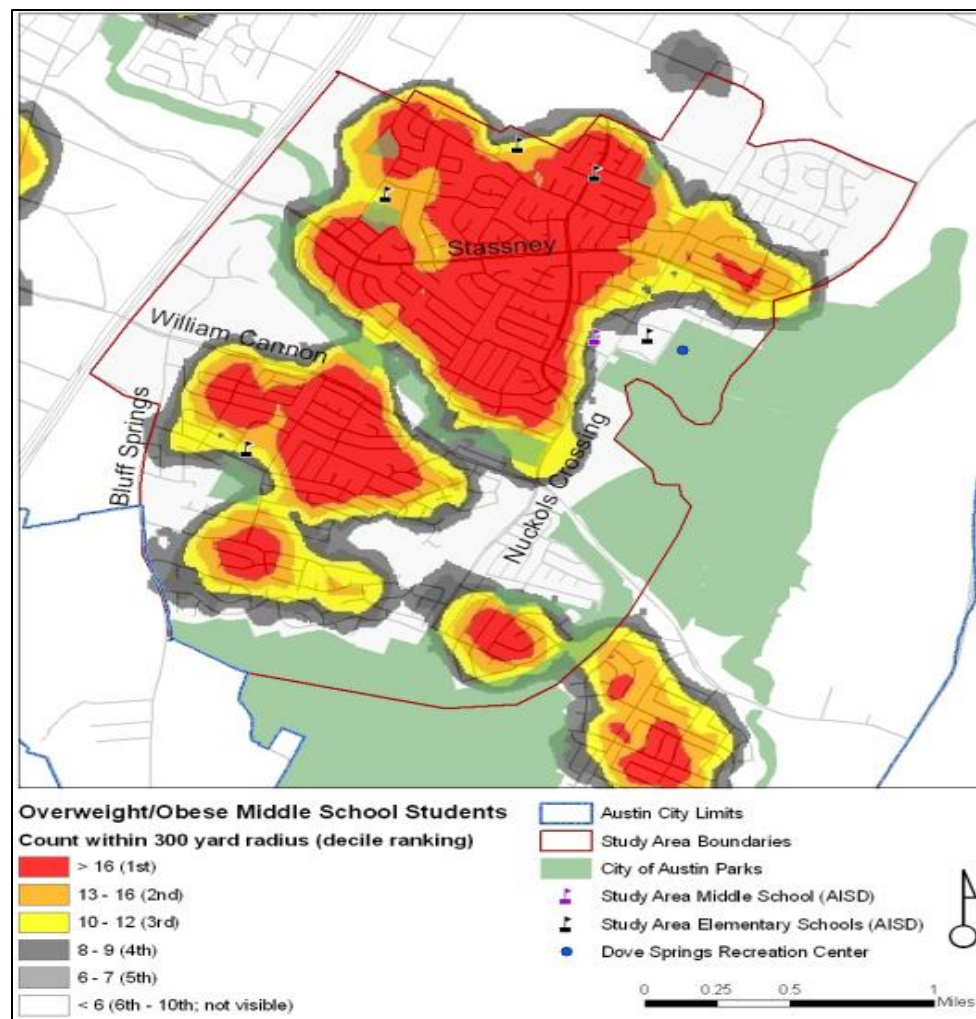
Overall, the documented evidence for this partnership suggests **adequate alignment** with the ideal component. Documents analyzed include APF blog posts, media articles, the Onion Creek Park Master Plan Report and a Council meeting transcript. To understand how the partnership efforts related to equitable services in Austin, an understanding of socioeconomic issues was needed to complete the analysis. Socioeconomic data was used to provide context to the areas of Austin which activities were documented.

A 2014 [blog post](#) posted on APF website notes that APF and PARD designed and installed “a playscape and nature paths for Dove Springs District Park.” The post notes that this initiative “is part of a larger collaboration to spearhead physical fitness and healthy lifestyles in the community.” A June 18, 2014 [media story](#) from KXAN, Austin’s local NBC affiliate, also focuses on this new playscape. The written version of the story notes that trails surrounding this park had become “obsolete.” The story reinforces the APF blog post, noting that the renovation is part of a larger effort to promote physical fitness and healthy lifestyles in the Dove Springs community. The relevance to park system inequities is apparent when we consider this project in the context of a University of Texas at Austin [study about health and wellness in Dove Springs](#). This study found

that the Dove Springs neighborhood had the “highest counts of obesity in nearly all of the Austin neighborhood residential areas” (McCray, et al, 2010). APF’s blog post takes this finding a step further, noting that the neighborhood has the highest rate of childhood obesity in Central Texas.

Figure 5.16 from the UT-Austin study shows the dispersion of childhood obesity in the Dove Springs area.

Figure 5.16 – Obesity Concentration for Middle School Children in Dove Springs



Source: UT-Austin Report 'Dove Springs Neighborhood Analysis: A Planning Oriented Study of Public Health & the Built Environment'

Another [blog post](#) from APF details its Fall 2015 Austin City Limits (ACL) Music Festival Grant recipients, totaling \$237,000. The grant funds are divided among various advocacy groups around the city who have “adopted” a specific park within their community. The funds are used for improvements to parks, which are led by the applying advocacy group. The nine parks chosen are

listed in **Table 5.5** below, which also show the location of the park in terms of the ten geographic City Council districts of Austin.

Table 5.5 – Fall 2015 ACL Grant Recipients by Geographic District

Park Receiving Grant	District	Grant Amount
Alderbrook Park	7	\$50,000
Covert Park at Mount Bonnell	10	\$13,000
Balcones District Park	7	\$43,000
Barton Hills Community Park	5	\$50,000
Goat Cave Karst Preserve	8	\$8,860
Northstar Greenbelt	7	\$7,107
Mayfield Park	10	\$22,434
Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park	7	\$7,500
Walnut Creek Park Pool	7	\$29,355

Sources: APF, 2016 and City of Austin, 2016

As shown above, each of these parks are geographically located in four of Austin’s ten City Council districts—District 5 (one park), District 7 (five parks), District 10 (two parks) and District 8 (one park). District 5 includes south-central and south Austin, while district 8 covers southwest Austin. Districts 7 and 10 include north, west or northwest Austin. No grants were provided to parks in districts in east, northeast, or southeast Austin. While no documents were found outlining park service levels by district, [socioeconomic data from the City of Austin website](#) suggests grant funds were dispersed disproportionately to wealthier areas of town. For instance, all of the districts in which a park was selected for a grant have among the lowest poverty rate percentages of all districts. Additionally, each of these four districts rank in the top six in terms of median family income. Socioeconomic comparisons are shown below in **Table 5.6**.

Table 5.6 – Socioeconomic District Comparison of Fall 2015 ACL Park Grant Recipients

Socioeconomic Metric	Districts Receiving Grant	Districts Not Receiving Grant	All Districts
Poverty Rate (average)	17.5%	26.4%	19.6%
Median Annual Family Income (average)	\$99,687	\$54,611	\$72,642

Source: City of Austin Planning and Zoning, 2016

The socioeconomic data relative to the grant recipients requires additional context. While this data does not directly relate to available park services, it is relevant given the relationship between poverty and poor park services.¹⁹ Further, the lack of geographic representation could be due to a lack of park advocacy groups in poorer districts, resulting in fewer applications from these areas. The blog post announcing the Fall 2015 grant recipients also notes that APF has awarded “nearly \$1,500,000 in grants to park improvement projects,” and since 2006 has “funded over 120 park projects in the greater Austin area.” More analysis of the dispersion of previously administered grant funds is likely needed as the fall 2015 ACL recipients are only a glimpse of the most recent activity.

Another [blog post](#) on APF’s website provides additional evidence into this partnership’s efforts regarding park equity. The post notes that APF received a \$700,000 grant from the St. David’s Foundation to begin the first phase of the new Colony District Park, located in northeast Austin’s Colony Park neighborhood. The first phase will include “the development of two sports fields, a pavilion, additional trails, benches, drinking fountains and a playscape.” The post notes the grant is rooted in improving the health and well-being of the Colony Park community. According to a [rendering of the future Colony District Park](#), phase one will include the development of all trails for this park.

APF/PARD’s efforts in Colony Park seem to counter the equity outcomes of the latest fall 2015 ACL grant process, suggesting alignment with the ideal component. The project will be located within Austin’s District 1, which has the third lowest median family income and

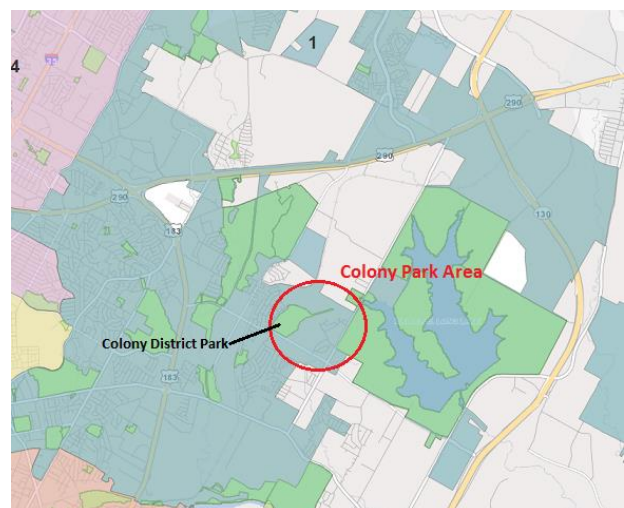


Figure 5.17 - Colony Park

¹⁹ See Chapter II, pages 28-30, which references scholarly literature on the relationship between nonprofit activity, wealth, poverty and the level of park services. Specifically, see information cited from Tardona et al, Crosby & Rose, Joassart-Marcelli, and Holifield & Williams.

third highest poverty rate compared to other Austin districts. **Figure 5.17** shows the location of Colony Park within District 1, as well as the 93 acres PARD-owned parkland that will be revitalized, beginning with phase one.

A July 17, 2015 [report](#) of the recently-completed Onion Creek Park Master Plan was analyzed to provide any evidence of alignment with the ideal component. APF, in collaboration with PARD, led the planning process for Master Plan. The Plan outlines the development of 555-acres of parkland in southeast Austin along the Onion Green greenbelt. The park is often referred to as the Onion Creek Metropolitan Park (OCMP). According to the report, interventions for the park include ideas for:

- Improvement to open spaces and the Onion Creek riparian corridor
- Accessible trails for walking and running
- Existing dog park
- Existing equestrian activities
- Play fields
- Areas for gatherings
- Recreation or multi-entertainment facilities
- Exercise areas
- Educational opportunities

To understand how PARD/APF's efforts with the OCMP relate to avoiding park system inequity, it's helpful to examine the dynamics of the surrounding community. The community surrounding the Onion Creek area lies in District 2. According to the aforementioned socioeconomic data, District 2 has the fifth-highest poverty rate among Austin's ten districts.

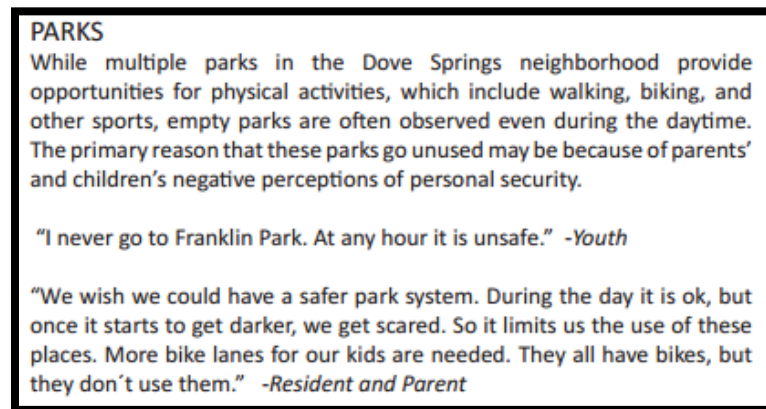
Additionally, annual family income ranks seventh among the ten districts.²⁰ The aforementioned

[UT-Austin study of the nearby Dove Springs neighborhood](#) provides additional context (McCray, et

²⁰While District 2 ranks seventh overall in terms of media family income (MFI), it should be noted that the range between District 2 MFI and the district with the lowest MFI is only \$6,465. The bottom four ranking districts include District 3 (\$36,185), District 4 (\$39,200), District 1 (\$42,150), and District 2 (\$42,650). After District 2, the next lowest district MFI is District 7 (\$74,250), making the difference in MFI between districts 4 and 7 \$31,600. This dynamic suggests a significant wealth gap between the bottom four districts and top six districts in Austin. The relationship between wealth, poverty and park equity discussed in Chapter 2 thus becomes relevant in the context of Austin. Any park-related efforts occurring within any of the bottom four districts can be considered a positive contribution toward achieving equity in park services.

al, 2010). The study notes that while parkland is available, it often goes unused given safety concerns. **Figure 5.18** below shows an excerpt from the study.

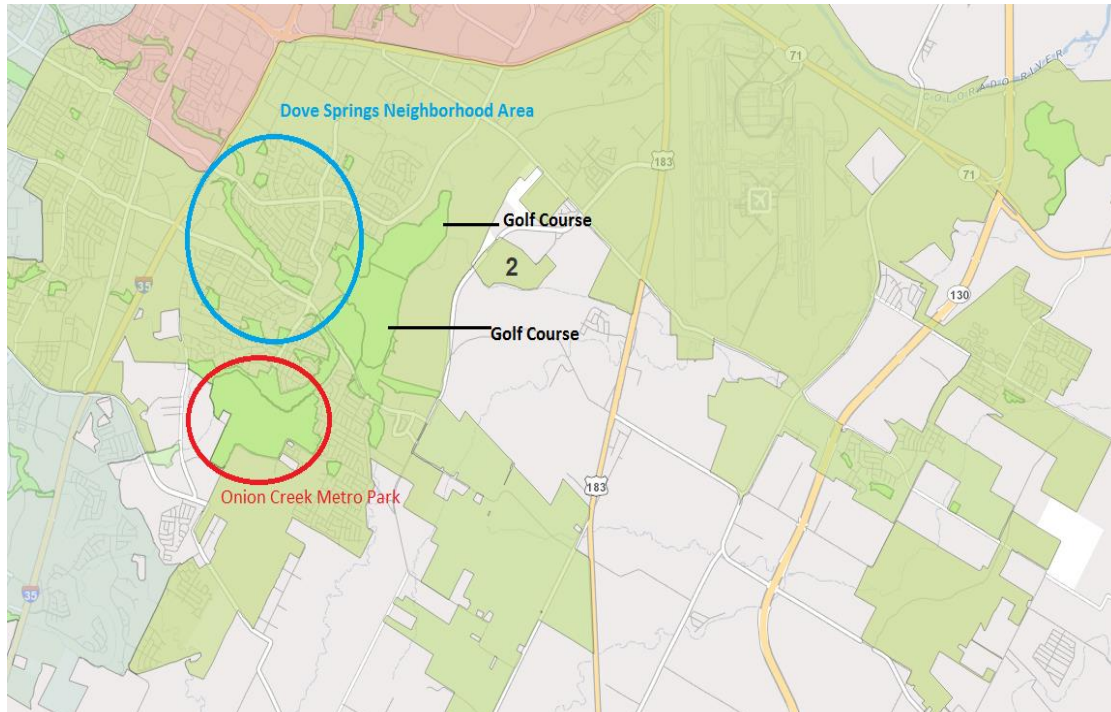
Figure 5.18 – Excerpts from Dove Springs Neighborhood Assessment on Park Safety



The study also mentions the PARD-managed Dove Springs Recreation Center, noting it is “underutilized due to limited staffing and operating hours, cost-prohibitive program fees and neighborhood safety issues.” The documented evidence related to the OCMP does not address safety within parks specifically, so it is difficult to discern how PARD/APF’s efforts with the OCMP help achieve park equity in this sense. The OCMP report does note that the vision of the park is one of “inclusivity for all ages, abilities, social economic statuses and variety of interests.”

In terms of park service quality and availability in the referenced area, no documented evidence was found comparing District 2 service levels relative to other districts. **Figure 5.19** below is a map of District 2, with identified PARD-owned parkland. The map highlights the location of the OCMP in relation to the Dove Springs neighborhood. The other two large patches of PARD-owned parkland are labeled as golf courses. While this is a park amenity, associated fees and other barriers make this park service historically less accessible to the general public.

Figure 5.19 – District 2 | Dove Springs/ Onion Creek Metro Park



The Director of the APF addressed the City Council in early 2015 about APF’s efforts and specifically spoke to park equity. A copy of the [transcript](#) from was analyzed as documented evidence for the ideal component. During the meeting, the APF Director noted that APF partners with the Austin City Limits (ACL) music festival, which occurs each year in Zilker Park. As part of that partnership, ACL organizers donate funds for APF to administer throughout the city. “We take funds that come from that event and spread them into all of your (Council’s) districts, into your parks, as your community asks.” The Director goes on to mention that this process is done via a grant program which gives “from \$500 to \$50,000 for neighbors that want to build a swing-set, plant trees.”

Examples of partnership activities avoiding inequitable outcomes were present in the documents analyzed. However, socioeconomic data suggest that some activities are concentrated away from areas with poor service levels. To determine how the partnership further aligns with the ideal component, a number of activities were observed.

Direct Observation

Observation of the tree planting event in the Dove Springs District Park suggested **complete alignment** with the ideal component. The park itself is in relatively good condition considering the noted socioeconomic challenges of the surrounding community. The tree planting event was well-attended and featured significant resources from PARD. These resources include shovels, large piles of mulch, approximately 30-40 new trees, and multiple professional staff members. A diverse mix of roughly 50 volunteers participated in helping plant new trees along the trail of the park.

Observation of the It's My Park Day (IMPD) event suggested **adequate alignment** with the ideal component. IMPD provided multiple opportunities to the geographic dispersion of partnership activities. Observation of work performed was concentrated at four parks spread throughout the city. Gus Garcia Park in northeast Austin was the observed location furthest from Austin's urban core, existing in District 4 but very close to the border of District 1. The area surrounding this park appeared to be lower-income and working-class, relative to central or west Austin. The surrounding community featured many pawn shops, payday lending businesses and a lack of public amenities. The park is located on Rundberg Lane, which is considered a more socioeconomically depressed area.²¹ The park itself was an exception, featuring a newer-looking facility and quality amenities.

Multiple instances of park betterment activities were observed. Approximately 15-20 volunteers roamed the park picking up trash and other items from the sports fields and trails. Volunteers collected the trash in bags and buckets and dispensed them in on-site dumpsters. A project leader informally noted that there was a diverse mix of volunteers in terms of age and background. The project leader and another volunteer mentioned they live in the area and have been participating in this event for the last seven years, specifically at this park. Unprompted, the project leader noted frustration with the significant amount of attention parks in the urban core receive

²¹ There is an ongoing revitalization effort occurring along Rundberg Lane corridor, aimed at curbing the area's historically higher crime and poverty rates. See: <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/our-community-0>

relative to Gus Garcia and other outlying parks. Participation level at this park appeared impactful, but had one-fourth the amount of volunteers when compared to IMPD activities observed at Pease Park—which is located in downtown Austin. The difference in participation between the two parks is likely due the involvement of the Pease Park Conservancy—a well-organized nonprofit dedicated to that specific park. Gus Garcia Park does not have its own conservancy.

Direct observation results for all events are shown in **Table 5.7** below.

Table 5.7 – DO Score Sheet for (1.4)

Ideal Type Component	Direct Observation Setting	Alignment Level (1-4)*
1.4 Avoidance of non-equitable park system outcomes	<i>Dove Springs Tree Planting Event (2/27/16)</i>	4
	<i>"It's My Park Day" Event (3/5/16)</i>	3
<i>*Alignment Levels: '1' = No Alignment / '2' = Limited Alignment / '3' = Adequate Alignment / '4' = Complete Alignment</i>		

Summary Results (1.4 Avoidance of non-equitable park system outcomes)

Overall, partnership evidence suggests **adequate alignment** with the practical ideal component. Partnership participants are aware of current park system inequities and in most cases avoid furthering inequities. Partnership activities appear to be trending toward an enhanced focus on achieving park system equity city-wide. Based on the known dynamics and the evidence presented, the PARD/APF partnership appears well-positioned to make a significant impact in terms of equity.

OVERALL RESULTS FOR COMPATIBILITY (1)

The evidence discussed in this section shows that the PARD/APF partnership are compatible partners. PARD and APF have a consistent mission, goals and objectives. Their respective resources and attributes complement each other, allowing for the effective provision of park-related services. Additionally, each side appears to prioritize the public interest. Finally, the partnership remains conscious of its effect on park system equity and in most cases makes a concerted effort to not further inequity. In fact, many current activities are performed with a

deliberate focus on enhancing equity in the park system. The results for the four ideal components of this category are shown in **Table 5.8** below. Overall, the PARD/APF partnership can be considered in **complete alignment** with the practical ideal type category.

Table 5.8 – Overall Results for Compatibility (1)

Ideal Component		Alignment
1.1	<i>Alignment of parks and recreational mission, goals and values</i>	Complete
1.2	<i>Complementary capacity to provide parks and recreational services</i>	Complete
1.3	<i>Prioritization of public over private interest</i>	Complete
1.4	<i>Avoidance of non-equitable park system outcomes</i>	Adequate
Overall Alignment with Compatibility Ideal		Complete Alignment

2. STRUCTURE

As discussed in Chapter II, ideal partnerships feature certain structural components. These components include well-defined roles among partners and collaboration with local constituency groups. Ideal partnerships should also have a formal written agreement and maintain a balance of power in terms of decision making and direction. **Table 5.9** below lists the four practical ideal components.

Table 5.9 – Structure Practical Ideal Type Components

Structure Practical Ideal Type Components
<i>2.1 Well-defined park funding and management roles</i>
<i>2.2 Collaboration with local parks constituency groups</i>
<i>2.3 Existence of formal written agreement</i>
<i>2.4 Balance of power among partners</i>

Well-defined park funding and management roles (2.1)

Focused Interviews

Participants were asked to discuss their organization's role in the management and funding parks and facilities. Responses were consistent among the interviewees. Each individual acknowledged that PARD was responsible for the day-to-day management of park facilities and assets, while APF provided a supplementary role in managing specific projects. APF's Director

noted that management was a “new wrinkle for us [APF] to think about.” He provided the example of Republic Square Park in downtown, noting that APF is taking a lead role in renovating the park. PARD and APF are joined in that partnership by another non-profit, the Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA), which will ultimately manage the park. PARD’s Director acknowledged the Republic Square example as well, noting PARD has turned over aspects of project management to APF. Mutual understanding of each side’s role extended to funding components within the partnership. Both sides recognized that funding is mainly provided from PARD, however APF plays a large role in in terms of fundraising and leveraging support in that manner.

Responses were consistent and each side appeared to know their organization’s respective role with regard to funding and management. This was demonstrated broadly, as well as with a specific project. Evidence from these interviews suggests **complete alignment** with the ideal type component. Given the discussion of specific projects between APF and PARD, documented evidence from projects was examined with regard to the ideal component.

Document Analysis

Multiple documents relating to specific projects were reviewed to determine how clearly funding and management roles are defined. The level of detail in the documents varied, and in most cases the roles were clear. In some cases, the specifics appeared somewhat complex or convoluted.

The Parkland Improvement, Management and Operations Agreement for Republic Square Park is a 27-page, legally binding document that outlines the roles and responsibilities of PARD, APF and the DAA which is also a partner in this project. The project itself is focused on making significant capital improvements to the park, as well as infusing new amenities and programming. The agreement includes a section entitled “Design, Permitting and Construction Responsibilities.” The section notes that APF will provide construction costs at various times of the construction phase. The term “cost” is further elaborated to include “engineering costs, other consultant fees, legal fees, insurance costs, labor costs, materials costs, equipment costs, other construction costs,

site restoration, re-vegetation costs and landscaping costs, permit and inspection fees (unless waived), and any other costs actually incurred by APF in the design, permitting and construction of the Parkland Improvements.” However, the agreement notes, APF will have no responsibility for costs attributable to remediation or mitigation of areas outside the boundaries of the park. Should funds be needed for those activities, the City (PARD) will identify the source of such funding.

Another section of this agreement, titled “Responsibilities and Agreements of the City” provides further insight into PARD’s role. This section described how PARD will assume responsibility for “baseline services and operation of the park.” These include mowing grass, trash removal and disposal, and weeding. The section also notes the PARD will provide APF with specific funding sources for its role in the design, permitting, bidding and other activities. These include \$700,000 from 2012 voter-approved bonds, \$447,850 of development revenue from projects near Republic Square Park, and all utilities used in connection with the parkland improvements to be administered by APF. Additionally, as part of the Council action to approve this agreement, a [fiscal note](#) was included for consideration. The fiscal note corresponds directly with the PARD’s noted financial contributions. A rendering of a potential redesign of Republic Square Park is show in **Figure 5.20** below.



Figure 5.20 – Rendering of Republic Square Park Redesign

Another document, a Concession Agreement between APF and PARD for Woolridge Square, was analyzed in terms of funding and management responsibilities. The agreement outlines APF’s role in managing concessions at a PARD site. Goals of the agreement, spelled out in the document, include preparing and selling various foods at Woolridge Square, and using revenue generated from concession sales to fund improvements at the site.

The agreement provided insight into APF’s funding role for this concession activity. Section 4 of the concession agreement is entitled “APF OBLIGATIONS.” This section includes 25 separate responsibilities. For instance, Section C notes APF will “operate and manage and on-site food and beverage concession vending breakfast and lunch items to the public.” Under this obligation, it is noted that vendors must remit 10% of gross monthly revenue (less sales tax) from all concessions generated at the site. Other responsibilities range from ensuring the vendors have the correct permits and licenses, to ensuring the proper disposal of trash and recyclables at the site. Section “U” notes that APF will retain a minimum of 10% of the gross revenue generated for future improvements to Woolridge Square, and must collaborate with PARD on such improvements.

The Woolridge Square concession agreement shows PARD’s management role for this activity. Section 5 of the agreement is labeled “CITY OBLIGATIONS” and suggests that PARD

has a more limited role than APF. The four obligations include PARD's general responsibility in allowing APF to operate and manage an approved concession in this location. Additionally, PARD will review compliance reports and provide APF with a calendar of events, "including holidays observed by the City that may or may not be held at Woolridge Square." It does not discuss PARD's financial roles or responsibilities.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) related to the management of downtown parks provided additional evidence. This document is more general in nature and does not correspond to a single park or facility. It notes that PARD is responsible for maintenance and operations of all designated parkland, and will identify needs for each downtown park. Should sufficient funding not be available, PARD will discuss maintenance priorities with APF, and engage in funding strategies. APF is able to engage in planning and design in order to implement improvement projects, but only with the approval of PARD and under an "APF/PARD Parkland Improvement Agreement or separate agreement."

Documented evidence varied for this component, suggesting that partnership activities also vary in terms of overall funding and management roles. Documents observed provided most of the necessary information to understand individual funding and management roles; however some were more detailed than others. These roles should be clearly identifiable for all documents guiding partnership activities. No documents were found which broadly outline funding and management roles. This reinforces the notion that roles change based on the circumstances of a project or activity. Overall, documented evidence for this ideal component was significant and suggested an **adequate alignment** with the ideal component.

Summary Results (2.1 Well-defined park funding and management roles)

Partnership evidence showed that PARD/APF are involved in a multitude of activities. These activities range in complexity, and as such the roles of each side appear to fluctuate. In most cases, each side understands its respective role for managing and financing resources and activities.

Documents suggest some variability in this regard; however the interviews conducted show that partnership participants have a firm grasp of their respective roles. As such, the partnership has **adequate – complete alignment** with this idea type. The next section examines the involvement of other constituency groups in partnership activities.

Collaboration with local parks constituency groups (2.2)

Focused Interviews

Participants were asked to discuss the involvement of park-centric community groups in the activities of this partnership. Responses show this is a very strong area of alignment, with evidence suggesting **complete alignment** with the ideal component.

Multiple examples of constituency group involvement was provided during interviews. In its responses, APF reiterated the important of these groups and how they are vital to the daily functions of the partnership. APF's Director mentioned the various "friends-of" groups that are committed to maintaining specific parks. He noted that these groups, totaling 70+, are able to see a need, and then work with APF directly to help address that need. This is done via APF's grant opportunities, which rely on the park adopter/friends-of groups. More specifically, the friends-of and park adopter groups routinely participate in major "volunteer work days" at specific parks throughout the year. He noted that APF also works with these groups by serving as a "community foundation for their fundraising efforts." In describing how this works, he noted that APF establishes an account for each group, allowing the group to take advantage of APF's nonprofit status when spending those funds on specific projects. This makes the process of fundraising and making improvements easier for the parks constituency groups.

The PARD staff respondent pointed out that the department is a "close partner" of neighborhood park groups, and that engaging these groups is a "joint goal" between PARD and APF. He noted much of the partnership resources are aimed at supporting these groups through outreach, training and the provision of tools and materials. PARD's Director said that the more

connections that are made between PARD, APF and these groups, the more support the park system can receive.

Document Analysis

Documents used to measure this component showed **complete alignment** with the practical ideal. For instance, a document given to attendees of an APF grant workshop provides an outline of the various funding levels for grant projects. Under the “who may apply” section of this document it describes the eligible participants. These include “Adopt-A-Park groups, neighborhood associations, and park stakeholder groups.” The document is strong evidence that the grant program directly involves park constituency groups.

A similar document provided at the grant workshop goes into detail about the grant program. This document is effectively an “FAQ” resource for the grant program. A section entitled “Who should apply” answers by noting “Any Adopt-A-Park group or group working closely with the park adopter may apply.” It goes on to note that APF strongly encourages groups that have not applied before and groups in underserved areas to apply.

Direct Observation

The referenced grant information session was attended to gather in-person evidence of the partnership working with local constituency groups. The APF representative providing the information was speaking to individuals who were all affiliated with a respective neighborhood or Adopt-A-Park group. The session involved explanation of how groups should submit applications and what information should be included. APF noted that they work closely with PARD to determine if the project proposed by the applicant group is feasible. Throughout the session, APF reiterated the coordination between APF and PARD for grant applications from constituency groups. Given the overt focus on these groups, this observation suggested **complete alignment** with the practical ideal type component.

The *It's My Park Day* (IMPD) event provided multiple examples of how connected the partnership is with local park constituency groups. Most notably, the activities of the Pease Park Conservancy during IMPD showed how the partnership helps connect to other park-oriented groups. Most, if not all, of the individuals participating in IMPD at Pease Park were affiliated with the Pease Park Conservancy. **Figure 5.21** shows the sign at Pease Park during IMPD.



Figure 5.21 - Pease Park Sign

While some volunteers may not have been members, the presence of this organization provides strong evidence and points to **complete alignment** with the ideal type component. The results of observing both IMPD and the grant information session are show in **Table 5.10** below.

Table 5.10 – DO Score Sheet for (2.2)

Ideal Type Component	Direct Observation Setting	Alignment Level (1-4)*
2.2 Connectivity to parks constituency groups	<i>Grant Information Session (2/17/16)</i>	4
	<i>"It's My Park Day" Event (3/5/16)</i>	4
*Alignment Levels: '1' = No Alignment '2' = Limited Alignment '3' = Adequate Alignment '4' = Complete Alignment		

Summary Results (2.2 Connectivity to parks constituency groups)

Based on the evidence collected, a substantial amount of partnership activity involves park constituency groups. Partners reiterated this during interviews, and tangible documents and observations supported these claims. The partnership is shown to have **complete alignment** with this ideal type component. The next section explores whether the partnership has established a formal agreement.

Existence of formal written agreement (2.3)

Focused Interviews

Respondents did not provide significant evidence during interviews regarding the existence of a formal written agreement. PARD's Director recalled that an agreement existed "at one point," however it is now likely outdated. APF's Director agreed with PARD, noting that he was not aware of a written agreement, but thought there was a memorandum of understanding (MOU). He believes the MOU basically says that PARD and APF "can make parks better together."

Despite the lack of an agreement, each side pointed out the positive relationship and long history between PARD and APF. APF's Director noted that an agreement could be useful, however "city leaders are pretty clear about the value we bring to the table." PARD's Director agreed, noting that APF and PARD meet regularly, have a good relationship and an agreement would likely have little value.

The ideal type is based on the existence of an overarching, written agreement between each partner. Based on these responses, the partnership has **no alignment** with this ideal type. Project specific agreements have been mentioned through the research process, and the document analysis portion sought to better understand the role of those agreements relative to the idea type.

Document Analysis

Documented evidence for this ideal component was significant and suggested **limited alignment** with the ideal component. No overarching agreement was found for the PARD/APF partnership. Documented evidenced found included only project-specific agreements and memorandums of understanding (MOUs). For instance, the Management and Operations Agreement for Republic Square Park is specific to that particular park asset/project. Similarly, the Concession Agreements for the Old Bakery Emporium and Woolridge Square only outline concessionary roles for each partner at those locations. The referenced MOU is limited to select

parkland in the downtown areas, and connects in many ways to the Republic Square, Emporium and Woolridge Square agreements.

Summary Results (2.3 Existence of formal written agreement)

Evidence suggests **no-limited alignment** with the ideal component. While no overarching agreement was found, limited alignment was observed given the existence of project-specific agreements. Project specific agreements align with the characteristics of the ideal type component—including outlining roles, responsibilities and expectations of partners. However, they are limited in their overall scope.

Balance of power among partners (2.4)

Focused Interviews

Participants were each asked about how decisions are made with regard to partnership activities and direction. Responses were varied, with some consistency among partners. APF deferred much of the decision making power to PARD and downplayed their role as supporters of PARD. “Our [APF’s] authority is only as strong as PARD wants it to be...they hold all of the cards,” noted the APF Director. APF staff also mentioned its board of Directors and its strategic plan, both of which guide direction and decision making internally. PARD took a more indirect stance in its responses, reiterating the collaborative nature of the partnership. PARD staff said there is no push from either side and that APF is very responsive to the needs and goals of the park system.

APF qualified its responses by noting that the positive relationship between each side makes this a true collaboration. Specifically, APF said decisions affecting the partnership are not made outside of the partnership itself. The APF Director also mentioned that decision making power can vary based on circumstances.

Responses did not provide significant evidence with regard to this ideal. Responses indicated that APF perceives PARD as a more powerful partner, however it does not appear to

affect the relationship or trust among partners. Given the noted dynamics, evidence suggests **limited-adequate alignment** with the ideal type component. Documents outlining partnership activities should provide more tangible evidence.

Document Analysis

Documented evidence suggests a **limited alignment** with this ideal component. Some of the documents observed include language that delegates responsibility to APF from PARD. However, much of this responsibility often includes approval processes and mechanisms for APF to follow.

The Parkland Improvement, Management and Operations Agreement for Republic Square Park between PARD, APF and the Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA) is evidence of this slight power imbalance. In a section titled “VII. TERMINATION, DEFAULT AND REMEDIES,” each organization’s obligations are referenced. Part of this section outlines the proper steps if duties are not fulfilled by an organization. While PARD has duties listed throughout the agreement, and is mentioned at the beginning as one of the “Parties,” it is rarely mentioned in this section. For instance, written scenarios of breaching the requirements of the agreement are mainly included for APF, and the DAA, another partnering agency. Section ‘F’ notes, “the City (PARD) at its sole discretion may at any time terminate this Agreement, by giving the Parties (APF, DAA) 30 days’ notice of termination.”

Another document analyzed to determine the balance of power among partners was the memorandum of understanding (MOU) for downtown park operations between PARD, APF and the Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA). A section titled “IV MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CITY, APF AND DAA” discusses the role of each organization. Under subsections detailing park improvement and programming responsibilities, the first sentence of each begins with clarifying that PARD has ultimate approval of activities. For instance, subsection “C” begins “With PARD approval and supervision APF and/or DAA may work with planning and design experts...” Similarly, subsection “D” begins “With PARD approval APF and DAA may develop

programming...” and continues “All programming is subject to approval by PARD....” However, the document also mentions multiple times the nonbinding nature of the MOU. Section V notes that while each of these parties agreed to pursue the objective of the MOU, it is ultimately “non-binding and unenforceable.”

Direct Observation

A routine meeting on March 14, 2016 was observed to understand the power dynamics between partners. During the meeting, each side discussed specific projects. The list used to guide the meeting was developed by APF and APF led the direction of the discussion. PARD provided responses and background information on project specifics throughout the meeting.

Most of the projects and issues discussed involved projects that APF was waiting for information from PARD to proceed, or looking for specific direction. PARD provided updates where possible, and committed to providing more information at a later time. PARD did not appear to need as much from APF as APF needed from PARD. While APF took a more active role in the meeting, PARD appeared to hold most of the control in the outcome of projects being discussed. For example, when asked about the status of funds that were set aside for a specific park, PARD informed APF that it would need to see “where things stood” with other PARD staff members. APF insisted that the funds will need to be used for a specific purpose, and PARD asked if APF had a specific deadline for when the funds needed to be expensed. Based on the interactions and tone of the meeting, the partnership showed **adequate alignment** with the ideal type.

Table 5.11 – DO Score Sheet for (2.4)

Ideal Type Component	Direct Observation Setting	Alignment Level (1-4)*
2.4 Balance of power among partners	<i>Regular Meeting between PARD/APF (3/14/16)</i>	3
<i>*Alignment Levels: ‘1’ = No Alignment ‘2’ = Limited Alignment ‘3’ = Adequate Alignment ‘4’ = Complete Alignment</i>		

Summary Results (2.4 Balance of power among partners)

Evidence collected suggests that, in most cases, PARD holds most of the power in this partnership. This dynamic was specifically apparent in the documented agreements reviewed, which has considerably more terms and conditions for APF than PARD. Further, interviewees from APF downplayed their overall influence in terms of partnership activities. However, a direct observation of a meeting between partners showed more of a balance in terms of influence and decision-making. Overall, decisions and activities are executed together in most cases, but PARD seems to hold a higher standing in terms of final direction. Evidence suggests the partnership has **limited – adequate alignment** with the ideal type component.

OVERALL RESULTS FOR STRUCTURE (2.1 – 2.4)

The structure of this partnership shows **adequate alignment** with the ideal type model. Each side fully understands its respective role in terms of funding and management. These roles are usually clearly outlined in partnership documents and consistently conveyed from partners. The strongest evidence for this category was seen in the partnerships collaboration with constituency groups. The involvement of outside groups appears to be a major component of all partnership activities. The lack of a formal agreement deterred overall alignment with the ideal. Finally, the balance of power between partners was less prevalent and tended to show PARD as the more powerful partner. **Table 5.12** below outlines the overall results for the structure category.

Figure 5.12 – Overall Results for Structure

Ideal Component		Alignment
2.1	<i>Well-defined park funding and management roles</i>	Adequate – Complete
2.2	<i>Collaboration with local parks constituency groups</i>	Complete
2.3	<i>Existence of formal written agreement</i>	No – Limited
2.4	<i>Balance of power among partners</i>	Limited – Adequate
Overall Alignment with Structure Ideal		Adequate Alignment

3. COMMUNICATION

Ideal partnerships should feature effective communication, which includes three specific components. Partnerships should have expressed support from leadership. Partners should also share information, and hold regular meetings to ensure effective communication. These three components are listed in **Table 5.13** below. The components are analyzed in terms of evidence from PARD/APF's partnership, and the results are described through the following section.

Table 5.13 – Communication Practical Ideal Components

Communication Practical Ideal Type Components
<i>3.1 Demonstrated support from leadership</i>
<i>3.2 Information sharing</i>
<i>3.3 Routine informal meetings</i>

Demonstrated leadership support (3.1)

Focused Interviews

Respondents all noted that the partnership receives considerable support from leadership. Both the APF Director and PARD staff member reiterated PARD leadership's support for the partnership. PARD's Director affirmed these assertions in her response, and also mentioned the support from governmental bodies. Specifically, both PARD and APF mentioned the Austin Parks Board, which is a citizen advisory board that is appointed by the City Council. The Mayor and City Council were also mentioned specifically. APF's Director said, "Our City leadership, particularly the Mayor and City Council Members, know that PARD cannot get it done alone...they [PARD/City] rely on partnerships to do more."

Overall, partners responded positively when asked about leadership within their own organization as well as the partnering organization. This evidence suggests **complete alignment** with the ideal component, however, documented evidence is needed to support this claim.

Document Analysis

Documents reviewed for evidence include voting data and referrals from meetings of the City Council and the Parks Board. Meeting transcripts were also reviewed to determine support from leadership.

A [transcript](#) from a February 17, 2015 City Council meeting provided significant evidence of support from leadership for this partnership. During this meeting, a member of the Parks Board provided Council with a presentation about partnerships and conservancies in Austin parks. The Board member used the Onion Creek Metro Park project as an “excellent example of a P3 (public-private partnership).” She noted APF’s role in creating the master plan for this park, and made a point that she wanted to “highlight” this example for the Council. The Board Member’s reiteration of this project and APF’s involvement is evidence of direct, demonstrative support from leadership.

A review of documents from meetings of the Parks Board and City Council also provided evidence of support for partnership activities. For instance, a document from the December 9, 2014 Parks Board meeting revealed unanimous approval of PARD negotiating an agreement between APF, the Downtown Austin Alliance and PARD. The document reads, “The Parks and Recreation Board recommends to the City Council the approval to negotiation and execution of an agreement with the Austin parks Foundations...for final design, construction, operation and management of Republic Square.” A review of the [transcript](#) for the December 11, 2014 meeting reveals the PARD Director referring to APF as a “great” partner in the Republic Square project. The [meeting minutes](#) noted that the Council voted unanimously to authorize PARD to negotiate an agreement with APF regarding Republic Square.

Direct Observation

A December 2016 press conference event provided additional evidence of demonstrated leadership support. This press conference focused on the unveiling of an art mosaic at the Barton Hills Neighborhood Park. Along with APF and PARD, this project was the result of collaboration

with local community groups and the City of Austin Public Works Department via its Neighborhood Partnering Program (NPP). APF's role was to act as a financial intermediary between the neighborhood group and the NPP.

Austin's Mayor, a City Council member and the PARD Director all spoke positively of the project and the partnership/collaboration that made it possible. Each one took a moment to thank the community for working with the partnering agencies, and reiterated the positive benefits that can result when "we all work together." **Figure 5.22** shows Austin Mayor Steve Adler speaking during the press conference, and the art mural in the background. **Figure 5.23** shows the cutting of the ceremonial ribbon by the Mayor, Council Members, and City of Austin executives, and other community leaders.

Figure 5.23 – Community Leaders Cut Ceremonial Ribbon



Figure 5.22 – Austin Mayor at Press Conference



Table 5.14 shows how this event scored in terms of the practical ideal component.

Table 5.14 – DO Score Sheet for (3.1)

Ideal Type Component	Direct Observation Setting	Alignment Level (1-4)*
3.1 Demonstrated support from leadership	<i>Barton Hills Press Conference for New Mural Project (12/12/15)</i>	4
<i>*Alignment Levels: '1' = No Alignment / '2' = Limited Alignment / '3' = Adequate Alignment / '4' = Complete Alignment</i>		

Summary Results (3.1)

Evidence collected shows strong support from leadership for the partnership and its activities. Multiple documented examples reiterated support, and responses from partners supported these claims. Observation of such support provided additional evidence of alignment. Overall, the PARD/APF partnership has **complete alignment** with the practical ideal component.

Information sharing (3.2)

Focused Interviews

Respondents were asked how information flows between partnership participants. The Director of PARD and APF each mentioned that they are continually sharing new ideas and information with each other. Each mentioned that email and text messaging are routine forms of communication. PARD staff also mentioned information flows both informally and formally, noting ongoing daily contact. He noted, “At the day to day level, we’re coordinating logistics, making adjustments where needed...getting things done.” The APF staffer specifically mentioned phone and email communication was common between her and PARD staff.

Respondents were also asked what effect the sharing of information has on partnership activities. The APF Director referred to the exchange of information as “really important.” PARD’s Director said it helps each side maximize time. All participants noted that the sharing of information is a key function of the partnership’s activities. For instance, the APF said when it coordinates its volunteer work days it depends on information from PARD for it to be a success.

APF will ask PARD in advance for information about “where in the park system is there a need?”

Once volunteers are brought on board, APF is armed with the information received from PARD and can begin work immediately. If there is a specific project, APF will work with PARD to ensure project feasibility and make sure the proper tools and supplies are acquired. If not, PARD and APF will work together to fill those gaps.

Responses to these questions were consistent among each side of the partnership. There appears to be strong information flow between partners, and each side was able to describe the tangible benefits of information sharing. Evidence collected from this portion of the interviews suggests **complete alignment** with ideal type component. Documents showing the sharing of information between partners can provide further support for this alignment.

Document Analysis

Email correspondence between PARD and APF officials provided evidence of how information is shared between partners. For instance, sample emails showed the APF Director sharing ideas for park improvement initiatives with PARD’s Director. Written in these emails were suggestions that projects from other cities could be feasible for Austin. PARD’s Director responded positively to suggestions from the PARD Director.

Information shared in emails involved both partnership activities and issues that partners felt each other needed to be aware of. For instance, a number of emails were related to APF’s annual It’s My Park Day event. The emails show that partners coordinated where staff would be during the date of the event. This shows strong evidence of joint involvement between partners. Alternatively, PARD’s Director forwarded an email to APF’s Director detailing a request to close a portion of a very popular trail. The email chain showed disagreement between two private parties about whether the trail should be closed, a decision ultimately PARD would need to make. PARD felt there was value in sharing such information with APF, regardless of whether this was related to partnership

activities directly. PARD's sharing of this information as an "FYI" to APF suggests strong collaboration between partners.

Another email shows APF taking the initiative to share information with PARD. A recent email from an APF staffer to the APF Director asked if the Director is comfortable committing resources to PARD's efforts in hiring lifeguards. The Director responds by providing a specific dollar amount that APF is willing to commit to. The second part of his response notes that he is copying the PARD Director and assistant Director "so they are in the loop as well." This email shows APF's willingness to share partnership related information immediately, understanding the importance of all parties being on the same page.

Emails did not contain many relevant project updates. Most of the emails were informal in nature and did not include significant details. The fact that information is being shared presents strong evidence, however more email examples are needed to understand the scope of information passed between partners. Based on the emails reviewed, the partnership is in **adequate – complete alignment** with the ideal type component.

Direct Observation

A meeting was observed between partners. During the meeting, APF inquired about the status of various projects. There were a number of instances where PARD staff did not have any information to provide for certain projects. For instance, an inquiry from APF regarding funding allocated to a museum was met with relative silence from PARD. Staff from PARD was not able to recall any specifics, and it was clear that APF was not kept in the loop on the status of this specific project.

Much of the meeting featured information being shared about the internal nature of projects and topics involving APF and PARD. For instance, PARD shared insights about the politics behind discussions within the city organization. No negative comments were observed, and PARD only

shared their thoughts on why projects may stall in some instances. Each side seemed to provide informative perspectives to each other.

Overall, evidence observed during this meeting suggests **limited – adequate alignment** with the practical ideal type. The evidence was weakened by certain instances where neither PARD nor APF was fully aware of the status of certain projects and funding components. This dynamic suggested a lack of information sharing prior to the meeting itself. **Table 5.15** shows the results of the observation.

Table 5.15 – DO Score Sheet for (3.2)

Ideal Type Component	Direct Observation Setting	Alignment Level (1-4)*
3.2 Information sharing	<i>Regular Meeting between PARD/APF (3/14/16)</i>	2 -3
<i>*Alignment Levels: '1' = No Alignment / '2' = Limited Alignment / '3' = Adequate Alignment / '4' = Complete Alignment</i>		

Summary Results (3.2 Information sharing)

Evidence shows **adequate alignment** between the partnership and the practical ideal type component. Focused interview responses were consistent about how information is shared, with all parties providing specific examples. Emails provided evidence supporting the notion that information is continuously shared between partners.

Routine meetings (3.3)

Focused Interviews

Partnership participants were asked to discuss how frequently meetings are held. The APF staffer said that she meets regularly with the assistant Director of PARD, and meets frequently depending on the project. PARD staff noted that formal meetings are set once per month, depending on the topic of discussion or current activities. The PARD Director said she meets with APF's Director "every other week or so." APF's Director mentioned that he was meeting with the PARD Director following the interview conducted for this project. He also mentioned his staff routinely meets with PARD staff.

Responses were consistent among partners in terms of how frequently each side meets. While much of the meetings seem informal, there is a joint understanding from each side that these meetings occur at least once or twice per month. The routine nature of the meetings suggests **complete alignment** with the ideal type component.

Direct Observation

A meeting was observed between APF and PARD staff, which featured discussion of multiple projects. The meeting itself supported the notion that partners meet on a regular basis, and there was mention of the previous meeting as well as a discussion of the next meeting. Meetings are said to occur on a monthly basis. Partners used an agenda provided by APF to discuss various projects, most of which involved maintenance or the installation of new equipment.

The meeting was very open-ended and informal. Participants were able to speak freely and no one sat at the head of the table or appeared to be the leader of the discussion. Partners interrupted each other with clarifying questions as needed, and each side took notes on specific items to follow-up on. There was a positive rapport between partners, with each side making lighthearted jokes or comments throughout.

Given the observed meeting's discussion referenced prior meetings and also featured mention of an upcoming meeting, there is considerable evidence that partners meet on a routine basis. The result of the observation is noted in **Table 5.16** below.

Table 5.16 – DO Score Sheet for (3.3)

Ideal Type Component	Direct Observation Setting	Alignment Level (1-4)*
3.3 Routine informal meetings	<i>Regular Meeting between PARD/APF (3/14/16)</i>	4
<i>*Alignment Levels: '1' = No Alignment / '2' = Limited Alignment / '3' = Adequate Alignment / '4' = Complete Alignment</i>		

Summary Results (3.3 Routine informal meetings)

Overall, there was strong evidence to support partners meeting informally and on a routine basis. The meetings were said to occur monthly, and as-needed. Interview responses were

consistent in terms of partners' meeting habits. The observed meeting provided indication that this was a routine practice for partners. No documents were available, however evidence reviewed provided consistent examples of partnership meeting habits. As such, the partnership is in **complete alignment** with the ideal type component.

OVERALL RESULTS FOR STRUCTURE (3.1 – 3.3)

Examples of partnership communication dynamics were less abundant than the previous two ideal type categories. Evidence for the communication ideal relied more heavily on the focused interview sessions with partners. Interview responses were consistent throughout, suggesting strong evidence of alignment with the ideal type.

Partners faltered slightly in terms of the sharing of information and a lack of documented evidence. This became evident during the observation of a meeting between partners and emails analyzed. These aspects were the only observed and analyzed examples of misalignment with the ideal type. It should be noted that most direct observations provided substantial evidence of alignment. Regardless, evidence for this category would have been strengthened should more documented evidence be available for analysis.

Based on all of the evidence collected for this category, the partnership is in **adequate – complete alignment** with the communication category. The results for the category are reflected in **Table 5.17** below.

Table 5.17 – Overall Results for Communication

Ideal Component		Alignment
<i>3.1</i>	<i>Demonstrated support from leadership</i>	Complete
<i>3.2</i>	<i>Information sharing</i>	Adequate
<i>3.3</i>	<i>Routine informal meetings</i>	Complete
Overall Alignment with Communication Ideal		Adequate – Complete Alignment

4. ACCOUNTABILITY

An ideal park/nonprofit partnership should include elements of accountability. These elements include ensuring that activities are in accordance with the public interest. To achieve this, the partnership should involve the public in its activities and provide citizens opportunities to voice opinions about those activities. Additionally, accountability refers to establishing performance measures, and reviewing how well the partnership performs in terms meeting certain standards. For this research, accountability is summarized as two practical ideal components, listed in **Table 5.18** below:

Table 5.18 – Accountability Practical Ideal Type Components

Accountability Practical Ideal Type Components
<i>4.1 Opportunities for public involvement</i>
<i>4.2 Performance review</i>

Opportunities for public involvement (4.1)

Focused Interviews

Partners were asked to describe the level of public involvement in the partnership’s activities, including opportunities for public comment. Each side discussed joint efforts, including regular public meetings aimed at receiving public input. APF’s Director noted, “We have to be mindful that any work we do is on public land—we do not make decisions in a silo.” PARD’s Director mentioned the somewhat controversial renovation of Auditorium Shores, noting that APF was “right there with us” throughout the public engagement process. PARD staff mentioned that there is always public involvement, especially with formal projects.

APF and PARD staff also mentioned the noted success of more “grassroots” approaches to engaging the public. These efforts were described as performing more “outreach” rather than inviting the public to come to a specific location. Outreach in this case includes going into

neighborhoods and engaging the community directly. APF staff said it has seen “impressive results” from these efforts, referring to the process as “community organizing.”

Responses provided indication of public engagement and public involvement. Specific examples were rarely provided however, and responses were fairly general. While examples and details likely exist, evidence from interviewees suggests only **adequate alignment** with the ideal type component. Documents will need to provide specific examples and details to indicate complete alignment.

Document Analysis

An analysis of various partnership documents suggests **complete alignment** with the ideal component. Documents analyzed provided ample evidence that partnership activities feature significant involvement of the community. Public involvement includes engagement efforts and working directly with the community on park-related activities.

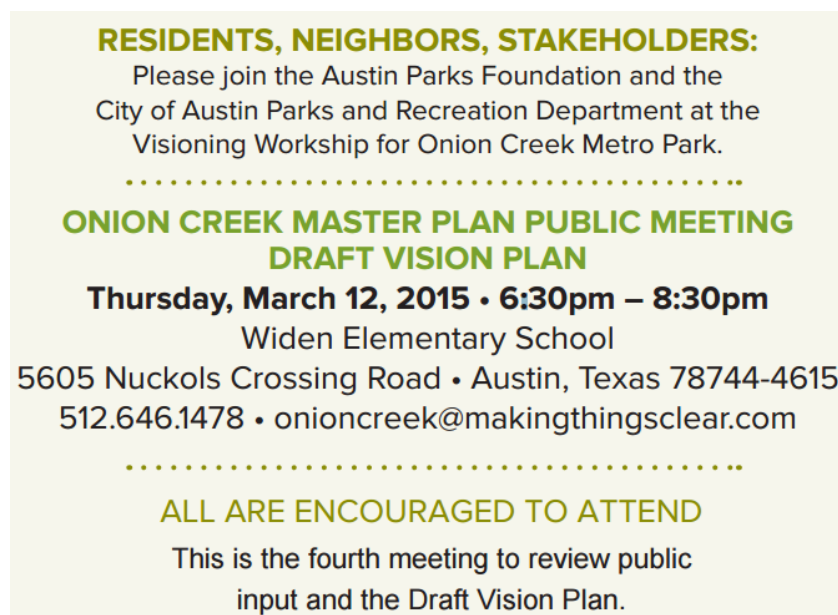
Documents related to the previously described Onion Creek Master Plan and Onion Creek Metro Park (OCMP) detailed a significant level of public involvement. The OCMP project’s [website](#) notes, “The entire Austin community is asked to help identify a vision for the types of activities and improvements for the Onion Creek Metro Park and Greenbelt Corridor to be included in the Master Plan for the park.” The site housed copies of presentations and materials given at three separate community workshops and a final wrap-up meeting intended to engage the community. The workshop and final meeting details are listed below in **Table 5.19**.

Meeting Location	Date and Time	Materials
Mendez Middle School	Monday, March 17, 2014 6-8 p.m.	Presentation Informational Display Boards
Blazier Elementary School	Thursday, Sept. 11, 2014, 6-8 p.m.	Framework Document Informational Display Boards Vision for Onion Creek
Blazier Elementary School	Thursday, December 4, 2014, 6-8 p.m.	Framework Document Presentation Informational Display Boards Survey (now closed)
Widen Elementary School	Thursday, March 12, 2015, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Presentation Meeting Summary

Table 5.19 – Community Engagement Meetings for Onion Creek Master Plan / Park

As seen in the table above, the engagement process occurred over a one-year period, featured varying locations, and diverse days of the week and evening hours to accommodate wide array of schedules. The fourth and final meeting from March 2015 was publicized with a [flyer](#) with the meeting's details. A bilingual flyer was not located. **Figure 5.24** shows a portion of the flyer's verbiage/design.

Figure 5.24 – Onion Creek Engagement Flyer



A July 2015 [Master Plan Report](#) featured a section detailing the public engagement efforts and results. The section describes the intent of each of the four public meetings noted in **Table 5.19**, including the meeting's purpose and images of the meeting taking place. For instance, the third public meeting in December 2014 focused on design scenarios for the OCMP. An excerpt from the report notes in part, "The project team discussed the results of the previous meeting and surveys, engaged participants in group discussions with the principal design team." The meeting also featured an interactive framework plan for the basis of discussion. Community outreach assistants facilitated the conversations and recorded all comments." **Figure 5.25** below show excerpts of commentary. **Figure 5.26** shows the meeting in progress.

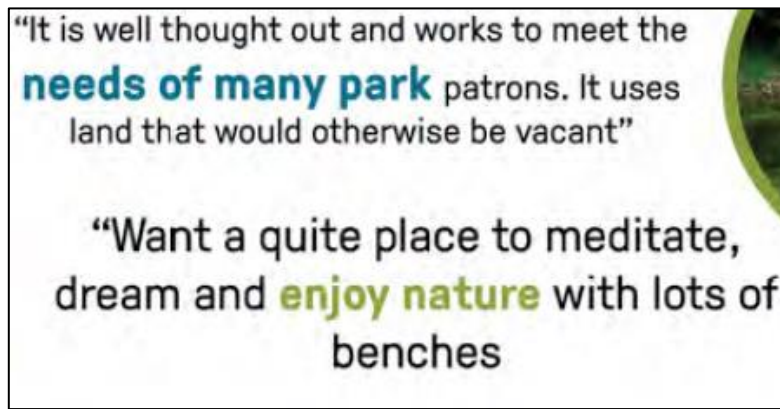


Figure 5.25 - Excerpt of Onion Creek Community Feedback

A review of the "Volunteer" portion of APF's [website](#) provides significant evidence of public involvement in the partnership's activities. APF works with the community by engaging volunteers to contribute their time and resources at various PARD locations. **Figure 5.27** below features an excerpt from the APF website.



Figure 5.26 - Onion Creek Engagement Meeting Participants

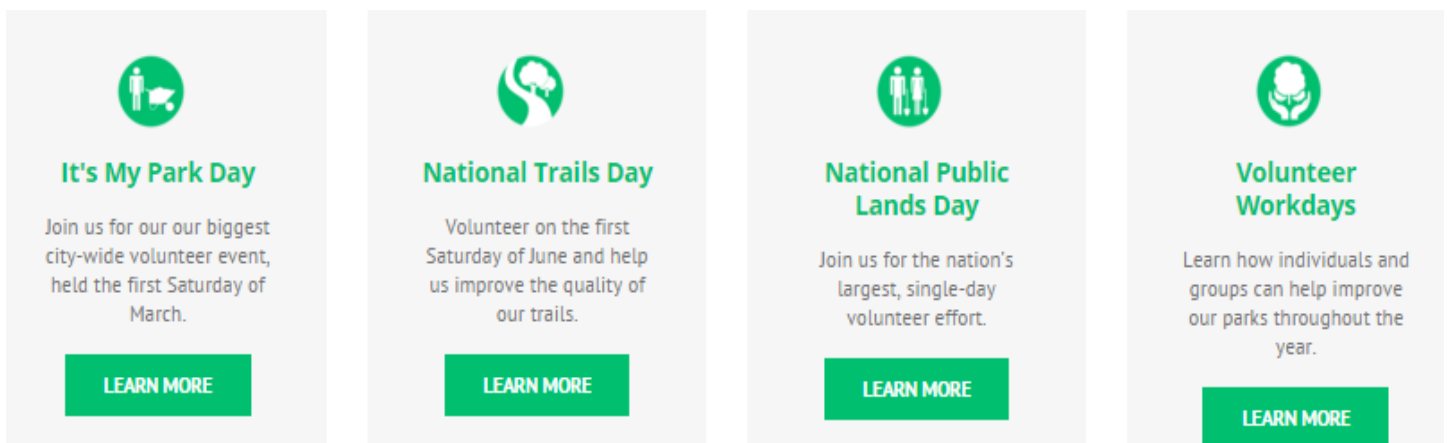


Figure 5.27 - Screen Shot of APF Website

The signature event, It's My Park Day (IMPD), is the largest volunteer effort for the PARD/APF partnership. According to the event [website](#), the 2015 event featured “nearly 100 projects city-wide, 3,000 volunteers, and 10,000 hours of volunteer labor.” The Volunteer Workdays [website](#) notes that events occur year-round and provide volunteer opportunities for businesses, organizations and service groups. Volunteer workdays are also offered for individuals.

Direct Observation

Significant public involvement was observed during the It's My Park Day (IMPD) event. While approximately 100 volunteers were observed, APF and PARD assert that the event draws roughly three-thousand people into Austin's parks. Participants appeared diverse in terms of age and ethnicity, with many mentioning they had participated in IMPD multiple times in prior years. The project leader at Gus Garcia Park event said most of the volunteers lived in the surrounding community, while some were local college students looking for community service activities. It was clear throughout the observation that IMPD depends on the involvement of the public. As such, evidence observed suggests **complete alignment** with the practical ideal component.

Similarly, the grant information session observed focused on how the public can get involved in obtaining grant funds for specific neighborhood park projects. APF reiterated throughout the session that it wanted to know what projects were important to the community. The grant program was described as the means for the community to voice their opinions to PARD about what projects and improvements are most needed. During the session, APF mentioned that members of the community applying for the grant would be heavily involved in the project. This includes providing justification, specification on what will be done, all of which involves working directly with PARD to determine feasibility. In terms of what APF was looking for in an application, the APF representative told the attendees that demonstrated community involvement was an important consideration. Evidence collected during this observation shows that the partnership's activities heavily involve the public. Further, the concept of an open-ended process

which allows the community to suggest any project keeps both PARD and APF accountable. The alternative to this grant program could be PARD and APF working together, without community input or involvement, to spend funding on projects they deem necessary. Based on this observation, evidence shows **complete alignment** with the practical ideal type component. **Table 5.20** below shows scores recorded for each of the observations for this component.

Table 5.20 – DO Score Sheet for (4.1)

Ideal Type Component	Direct Observation Setting	Alignment Level (1-4)*
4.1 Opportunities for public involvement	<i>"It's My Park Day" Event (3/5/2016)</i>	4
	<i>Grants Information Session (2/17/16)</i>	4
*Alignment Levels: '1' = No Alignment / '2' = Limited Alignment / '3' = Adequate Alignment / '4' = Complete Alignment		

Summary Results (4.1 Opportunities for public involvement)

Results for this component suggest there are multiple opportunities for public involvement in this partnership. Public engagement efforts, community outreach, and grassroots organizing were all noted functions of the partnership. Further, multiple tangible examples were seen of the public directly involved in the activities, working side-by-side with PARD and APF staff. Based on these results, the partnership is shown to have **complete alignment** with the ideal component. The next section examines performance review activities within the partnership.

Performance review (4.2)

Focused Interviews

Participants were asked to discuss current performance measures for the partnership. Responses were consistent overall, although it was clear that performance measurement is not prioritized in the partnership. For instance, both PARD respondents said that performance measurement efforts are more general and less “formal.” APF respondents agreed with the informal nature of performance measurements, suggesting that performance is measured in the “work that gets done—if a pool stays open, if a tree gets mulched.”

While there did not appear to be any formal review or measures for partnership activities, each side does appear to review its own performance. APF noted its internal performance measures are related to growing funding, volunteer projects, education programs, number of events, and generally having the ability to do more. PARD mentioned its annual report, which highlights its accomplishments for the year. APF contributions are said to be mentioned in PARD's annual report, however, responses did not indicate that partnership activities were reviewed specifically.

Responses indicated that performance review is not currently a feature of this partnership. Based on this evidence, it appears there is **no alignment** with the ideal type component. In order to find evidence of performance review, documents need to feature elements of performance measures or requirements regarding partnership activities.

Document Analysis

Partnership documents did not provide significant evidence of performance review activities between PARD and APF. The documents analyzed include agreements for specific projects, as well as PARD's written policy for public-private partnerships.

The agreement regarding the management of Republic Square Park includes a section regarding financial reporting and performance. While APF is a part to the agreement, the financial reporting requirements are specifically tied to another party of the agreement—the Downtown Austin Alliance.

Alternatively, the concession agreement between PARD and APF for Woolridge Square does indicate performance review activities. Section 5 of the agreement, entitled "CITY OBLIGATIONS" notes that PARD will "oversee and monitor APF's performance under this agreement through periodic site visits and reporting requirements." Similarly, the next section of the agreement discusses APF's requirement to submit detailed concession reports to PARD. A copy of the report template is found in an attachment at the end of the agreement. This document suggests there are performance review efforts in partnership activities.

PARD does appear to indicate the importance of measuring the benefit of its partnerships. PARD’s policy for public-private partnerships outlines six requirements for entering into partnerships. One requirement is that the partnership will “likely result in a significant and measurable public benefit.”

Given the findings of the document analysis, the partnership has **limited alignment** with the practical ideal component. Evidence showed cases of performance review for specific projects only. The PARD procedures indicated a commitment to measuring benefit, suggesting the importance of performance and awareness. However, in terms of the APF partnership, there does not appear to be documented evidence of a consistent or overarching effort to review performance of partnership activities.

Summary Results (4.2 Performance review)

Interview responses and documents did not provide strong evidence of partnership alignment with this component. Partners indicated that performance review of the partnership and its activities does not occur formally. Documents suggested reporting requirements and the intent to measure benefit, but similarly failed to show performance review activities on any significant scale. As such, the partnership has **no – limited alignment** with the ideal type component. **Table 5.21** below combines the results for the practical ideal category.

Table 5.21 – Overall Results for Accountability

Ideal Component		Alignment
4.1	Opportunities for public involvement	Complete
4.2	Performance review	No – Limited
Overall Alignment with Accountability Ideal		Limited – Adequate

OVERALL RESULTS:

The summarized results of this study are shown in **Table 5.22** below. The PARD/APF partnership is adequately aligned with the ideal partnership model.

Table 5.22 – Overall Results

Ideal Component	Alignment
1. COMPATIBILITY	Complete
2. STRUCTURE	Adequate
3. COMMUNICATION	Complete
4. ACCOUNTABILITY	Limited- Adequate
Overall Alignment with Practical Ideal Model	Adequate Alignment

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the results of each of the four practical ideal type categories for park/nonprofit partnerships. Chapter VI concludes this project by summarizing where the partnership excels in terms of the ideal type, and areas for improvement moving forward. Areas for improvement are discussed in terms of the PARD/APF partnership, as well as PARD's current and future partnerships with other nonprofits.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion and Recommendations

Chapter Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it is to provide the Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) and the Austin Parks Foundation (APF) with recommendations on how to improve their current partnership. Based on the analysis from chapter five, recommendations for each of the four practical ideal type categories are provided. The second is to provide PARC with recommendations to improve its current and future partnerships with nonprofits.

The purpose of this applied research project was threefold. First, it described the ideal type components of an effective public-private partnership between local public park systems and nonprofit entities. Second, it used the ideal type components to assess the Austin Parks and Recreation Department's partnership with the Austin Parks Foundation. Third, based on the assessment, it provides recommendations for enhancing the APF/PARC partnership as well as current and future PARC/nonprofit partnerships.

Recommendations

The model assessment tool for effective park/nonprofit partnerships included three practical ideal type categories developed from the literature. Each of these categories included ideal components. A case study of the PARC/APF partnership was conducted using these components.

Table 6.1 summarizes the results of the study and outlines recommendations.

Table 6.1 – Summary Results and Recommendations

Practical Ideal Type Component	Alignment	Recommendation(s)
1. COMPATIBILITY		
<i>1.1 Alignment of parks and recreational mission, goals and values</i>	Complete	<p>There is strong consistency in the mission, goals and values of PARD and APF. The intent of each organization is to provide park and recreational services to the Austin community. Each side should sustain their organizational dynamics, which are strongly aligned.</p> <p>PARD should use APF's organizational dynamics as a model when assessing other potential nonprofit partners.</p>
<i>1.2 Complementary capacity to provide parks and recreational services</i>	Complete	<p>PARD and APF utilize their relative strengths to complement each other's shortcomings, making them strong complementary partners. Each side should continue to maximize its abilities in this regard.</p> <p>Moving forward, PARD should involve APF in its ongoing development of a matrix that shows what it is doing and whether a service could be more efficiently provided by another organization. Involving APF will help illustrate the complementary nature of the partnership.</p> <p>The matrix should also be used in relation to all current partnerships, to ensure complementary capacity is being achieved.</p> <p>Once developed, this matrix should be a standard tool when evaluating whether potential partnerships should be entered into—if services between PARD and the potential partner are redundant, the partnership may not be practical or effective.</p>
<i>1.3 Prioritization of public over private interests</i>	Complete	<p>The activities of the partnership are in the interest of the public, based on the evidence reviewed. Only one scenario challenged this notion (Auditorium Shores renovation).</p> <p>To help counteract perceptions of private interest prioritization, PARD and APF should develop joint, external communication strategies when engaged in a project with a private company on parkland. Strategies should focus on transparency and outline the public benefit of each project.</p>
<i>1.4 Avoidance of non-equitable park system outcomes</i>	Adequate	<p>While partnership activity is high in centralized areas, efforts do not appear to have furthered any park inequities. Rather, a recent concerted effort suggests activities are being focused in communities that do not receive high levels of park services.</p> <p>PARD/APF should continue to prioritize traditionally underserved communities. Most notably, partners should invest resources into proactive outreach/recruitment for the Adopt-A-Park program in areas without high involvement in the program.</p>

		PARD should also prioritize future partnerships with conservancies or nonprofits located in traditionally underserved Council districts. This prioritization can be included as part of its “Review Criteria” in its current written procedures for establishing partnerships.
2. STRUCTURE		
2.1 Well-defined park funding and management roles	Complete	<p>Funding and management roles are clearly outlined and well-understood by each partner. Partners should maintain their current practice of outlining roles and responsibilities via agreements and memorandums of understanding for specific areas/projects.</p> <p>PARD would be well-served to ensure all current and future partnership documents clearly outline these roles.</p>
2.2 Connectivity to local parks constituency groups	Complete	Involvement of community park groups is the strongest aspect of the partnership. Partners should continue to build on this aspect, and maintain the positive working relationships with the community.
2.3 Existence of formal written agreement	No – Limited	<p>No overarching agreement exists for this partnership. While the partnership is well-established, this does pose a potential issue for the partnership’s consistency over time.</p> <p>PARD should work with APF to develop a formal written agreement based on current practices. While the partnership is well-established, an agreement would solidify the partnership’s longevity as leadership changes occur and organizations evolve over time. Development of an agreement provides an opportunity for partners to jointly reflect on how to enhance the partnership moving forward. Further, an agreement would bring PARD in alignment with its own partnership procedures, which notes all PARD partnerships must have formal written agreements.</p>
2.4 Balance of power among partners	Limited – Adequate	<p>Much of the power appears to be concentrated with PARD.</p> <p>Given that trust is apparent among partners, PARD should allow APF to take a more active role in determining activities and direction. PARD approval should remain necessary in agreed-upon circumstances, such as large projects, but should not be automatically assume in all cases. As a capable partner for 24 years, APF should be provided opportunities manage or co-manage more PARD assets, where feasible. This allows PARD more flexibility in other service areas.</p>
3. COMMUNICATION		
3.1 Demonstrated support from leadership	Complete	Leadership support is strong on both sides of the partnership. Partners should continue to demonstrate the value of the collaboration, especially when leadership changes occur.
3.2 Information sharing	Adequate	Partners appear to stay in close contact and share relevant information in most cases.

		To help curb instances where neither side knows the current status of a project/funding, partners should jointly develop meeting agendas in advance of actually meeting. This will allow each side to prepare the relevant information in advance. Agendas may be informed by weekly lists of items of interest for each partner.
3.3 Routine Informal meetings	Complete	<p>Meetings occur frequently and consistently among partners. This practice should be maintained, taking into consideration the recommendation above regarding joint agenda development.</p> <p>Where feasible, PARD should ensure it has opportunities to discuss activities with each of its current and future nonprofit partners.</p>
4. ACCOUNTABILITY		
4.1 Opportunities for public involvement	Complete	Partnership activities show significant public involvement. Partners should maintain their commitment to engagement and outreach, especially under Austin's relatively new district-based governing system.
4.2 Performance review	No – Limited	<p>While partners evaluate individual organizational success metrics, there is no review process for the effectiveness or value of partnership activities.</p> <p>Partners should work to develop metrics based on current practices. These metrics should be designed to show how well activities contribute to overall park services.</p> <p>The value of this process is threefold: 1) partners can continue to learn from the metrics and adjust practices to maximize effectiveness, 2) metrics provide demonstrated value, which will help APF with fundraising efforts, 3) the review process can serve as a model for performance review processes for other PARD partnerships</p> <p>Finally, PARD should engage the newly created City of Austin Office of Performance Management. This office can assist with developing an assessment of current activities and help establish performance metrics for PARD/nonprofit partnerships.</p>

Considerations for Future Research

Research for this case study was conducted over a three-month period. This is a relatively short amount of time to fully grasp the dynamics of a multi-decade partnership. However, in order to make recommendations that could be implemented, analysis of the most recent partnership activities was necessary.

The scope of this project suggests there are opportunities for additional research regarding park/nonprofit partnerships. For instance, public services are trending towards a model of new governance that merges the division between public and private sectors. This dynamic is already in place in many park systems, where nonprofit conservancies are effectively managing public park assets. As this practice becomes more commonplace, research into the value of privatization of public assets is warranted. Results of such a study would allow public administrators to potentially shift the provision of certain services to the private/nonprofit sector. This shift may free-up valuable public resources for other chronically underfunded services, including healthcare and education.

While this project utilized mainly qualitative research methods, there is value in looking at park/nonprofit partnerships from an overt qualitative perspective. Statistical methods could be used to measure the actual dollar value that these partnerships provide a local park system. Comparing this value gives public administrators further justification to pursue partnerships and maximize public resources. Further statistical inquiry should be made into the impact of park-related nonprofit concentration in a specific area of a community. As noted in Chapter II, a high concentration of nonprofit activity can actually create park inequities system-wide. Further, an influx of nonprofits and conservancies in a community may dilute private fundraising sources as all of the organizations will be asking for donations from the same network. This competitive funding dynamic was mentioned during the interview portion of this analysis and is worth examining from statistical perspective. Results from such a study may deter nonprofit activity in a concentrated area, ultimately benefiting more segments of a community.

Improvements to the Model

The model framework would benefit from a number of modifications and improvements. While the model serves as a partnership evaluation tool for public park administrators, narrowing its contents would allow it to fit specific park/nonprofit partnership types. For instance, ideal components related to the *Structure* category, especially the definition of funding and management

roles (2.1) could be expanded for partnerships focused on long-term capital improvement projects. This expansion could list specific sub-components for this ideal component, including the types of management roles needed for phases of the project. Further, funding specifics could be added as subcomponents, including details for how partners will pay down capital debt over time and other complex expenditures. These subcomponents would be informed by the literature and examples of park/nonprofit collaboration for capital improvement projects. The value of this type of modification is that these partnerships are likely much more complex than those between park agencies and “friends-of” groups focused on occasional park clean-up efforts.

For the simpler or even smaller-scaled partnerships, the importance of formal written agreements (2.3) and routine meetings (3.3) may not be as necessary. Rather, additional components could be explored to maximize the informal nature of these types of collaborations. For example, the model could be altered to include informal application processes for potential partners.

In terms of performance review (4.2), the model could be expanded to include subcomponents specific to metrics associated with improving park systems or realizing joint projects. These subcomponents would vary in terms of the partnership type and scope. Subcomponents for performance review for a smaller, informal partnership may include stated metrics for volunteer hours, projects per month, project impact or other metrics informed by the literature.

This model could also be altered for use as a tool for public-private partnerships outside of the park/nonprofit realm. The broad nature of its components allow for applicability to other partnership types. For example, the importance of organizational compatibility and effective communication is surely not limited to park/nonprofit partnerships. Slight modification to park-specific components would allow this model to evolve into an assessment tool or “checklist” when evaluating public-private partnerships. For instance, the ideal component regarding avoiding park inequities (1.4) could be altered to assurances of mutual benefit for partnering organizations, or

avoidance of risk and negative outcomes. Further review of the literature is needed to fine-tune the model for broad applicability, but the potential exists nonetheless.

Conclusion

It is clear that there is value in establishing partnerships to help provide public park services. While the types of partnerships may vary, the ultimate goal of each should be to have a positive impact on a local park system. The efforts of this project show that the partnership between the Austin Parks and Recreation Department and the Austin Parks Foundation provides significant benefits to the community. Based on the document analysis, focused interviews, and direct observation of activities, the PARD/APF's collaboration is an example of an effective park/nonprofit partnership. Given the partnership's long history, its activities and programming are well-established and efficiently executed. Despite leadership changes over the multiple decades of the partnership, partners appear to have maintained a strong rapport and complement each other well.

Equity, diversity and engagement are top priorities for Austin leaders, especially the city's recent shift to geographic (district-based) representation. The broad nature of the PARD/APF partnership provides partners with an opportunity to set the standard for enhancing equitable services across the community. Both PARD and APF have increased their efforts in community outreach and engagement, a trend that should no doubt continue. Partners should couple these efforts with ensuring they are tracking the value the partnership provides and the goals that they want to achieve. More specifically, partners need to establish performance metrics and goals together, rather than as separate organizations. This collaboration will reinforce a joint vision for partnership activities and help demonstrate the value of the partnership.

All communities deserve a quality park system, which is made easier with the help of partnerships. Despite how well a city may be fairing economically, it is unrealistic to think that there will be enough resources to meet all service demands. Ultimately, partnerships provide a way

for a community to overcome its resource shortfall—despite how large the gap. Public park systems, much like many public agencies, will continually be asked to do more with less. This dynamic does not appear to be shifting any time soon, so park officials must ensure their resources are being used in the most effective way possible. This project provides an additional tool for officials to use to ensure their partnerships are maximizing those resources.

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Appendix A

----- Forwarded message -----

From: AVPR IRB <ospirb@txstate.edu>
Date: Thu, Nov 12, 2015 at 1:57 PM
Subject: Exemption Request EXP2015N618009J - Approval
To: rkc32@txstate.edu

DO NOT REPLY TO THIS MESSAGE. This email message is generated by the IRB online application program.

Based on the information in IRB Exemption Request EXP2015N618009J which you submitted on 11/11/15 14:39:40, your project is exempt from full or expedited review by the Texas State Institutional Review Board.

If you have questions, please submit an IRB Inquiry form:

http://www.txstate.edu/research/irb/irb_inquiry.html

Comments:
Based on the information presented in your exemption request #EXP2015N618009J, your project qualifies as exempt from review by the Texas State Institutional Review Board. Please note the following:

The only portion of the research that actually involves human subjects are the interviews, and the category that covers that research is Category 2 (possibly 3, if subject is a public official). You don't need to resubmit the request however.

The other portion described in your application is not considered research with human subjects and doesn't require any review or designation as exempt.

While you are using pre-existing records, the data in those records are not uniformly derived from human individuals in the same way, for example, that a data set of vaccination records from the state health department would be.

If you need additional information, please contact me at 245-2314.

Thanks and good luck with your research.

Becky Northcut
Research Integrity & Compliance

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Institutional Review Board
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