



**Building Strong Partnerships Between
Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)
and Parks & Recreation Departments**

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**Sports
Salt Lake**

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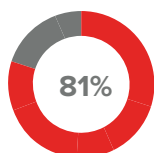
1 | Executive Summary

Creating successful partnerships between Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) and Parks and Recreation Departments is key to growing and enhancing sports tourism. We know from the 2023 Sports ETA State of the Industry Report that 81% of all sports tourism events take place at facilities managed by Parks and Recreation Departments, making their role crucial. However, their mission is often different from that of DMOs, which may lead to some challenges. This paper highlights common issues, offers solutions, and provides actionable steps to build a healthy and productive relationship between these entities. By focusing on better communication, sharing resources, and working together, DMOs and Parks and Recreation Departments can maximize the value they bring to both visitors and residents.

Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)



Parks and Recreation Departments



81% of all sports tourism events take place at facilities managed by Parks and Recreation Departments, making their role crucial.

2 | Introduction

Sports tourism is driving local economies more than ever. For cities to compete in this space, they need the right facilities, which are often run by Parks and Recreation Departments. However, while DMOs are focused on attracting outside visitors and hosting events, Parks and Recreation Departments are more concerned with meeting the needs of their citizens.

This difference in priorities can lead to friction, especially when facilities aren't equipped to handle the extra demand from tourism. However, despite these challenges, both DMOs and Parks and Recreation Departments share a common goal: supporting the long-term health and success of their communities. This paper will explore how they can work together more effectively.



DMOs and Parks and Recreation Departments share a common goal: supporting the long-term health and success of their communities



3 | The Challenge

1. Conflicting Goals and Priorities

Parks and Recreation Departments often design facilities with a lot of input from residents, aiming to meet the community's recreational needs. However, this can lead to issues when these facilities become popular for sports tourism events. The extra demand from these events can put a strain on staff, resources, and even access for citizens.

2. Budget Constraints and Resource Management

Many Parks and Recreation Departments have limited budgets, which can make it difficult to expand or improve facilities to meet the growing demand from tourism. When DMOs bring in more events without considering these limitations, it can lead to challenges in staffing and maintaining facilities.

3. Lack of Communication and Long-Term Planning

Too often, DMOs and Parks and Recreation Departments don't communicate enough. Without regular conversations, both groups miss out on opportunities to work together efficiently. For example, DMO's often feel pressure to agree to dates for hosting events without checking with the facility managers first, leading to disappointment and conflict. Long-term planning is key to making sure facilities are used well and serve both residents and visitors.



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Solutions and Best Practices

1. Establish Clear Communication Channels

Regular meetings between DMOs and Parks and Recreation Departments can help both sides stay on the same page. These conversations are crucial for planning upcoming events, addressing facility needs, and making sure community goals are aligned with tourism efforts.

2. Create Joint Strategies for Facility Use

Working together to create shared-use strategies can help ease the tension between local and tourist needs. This might include setting dedicated times for residents to use facilities or planning event schedules to avoid conflicts.

3. Explore Funding and Sponsorship Opportunities

DMOs can help Parks and Recreation Departments by securing sponsorships or providing financial support for facility upgrades. This benefits both parties by making the spaces more attractive for bigger, more prestigious events.

4. Collaborate on Marketing Efforts

DMOs are often better at marketing than Parks and Recreation Departments. By pooling their marketing efforts, DMOs can help increase visibility for both sports tourism events and local Parks and Recreation programs, benefiting the entire community.

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Where Do I Start?

For DMOs looking to connect with local Parks and Recreation Departments, here are some steps to get started:

1. Reach Out to Local Parks and Recreation Leaders

Start by reaching out to the leaders in your local Parks and Recreation Department. An initial meeting can help identify shared goals and begin building a partnership.

2. Engage with State Parks and Recreation Associations

Many states, such as Minnesota with the Minnesota Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA), have associations that can help connect DMOs with Parks and Recreation Departments. These groups can provide resources, education, and networking opportunities to help build strong partnerships.

3. Help Parks and Recreation Departments Tell Their Success Stories

Parks and Recreation Departments often struggle to showcase their successes. DMOs can assist by highlighting the value Parks and Recreation facilities bring to the community, whether through letters, attending city council meetings, or sharing stories in local media.

4. Conduct a Parks and Recreation Facilities Audit

DMOs should conduct an audit of their Parks and Recreation facilities to identify which venues are well-suited for sports tourism events. This audit will also highlight facilities that could become ideal event spaces with minimal improvements. The findings should be shared with Parks and Recreation leadership and incorporated into future park master planning efforts.

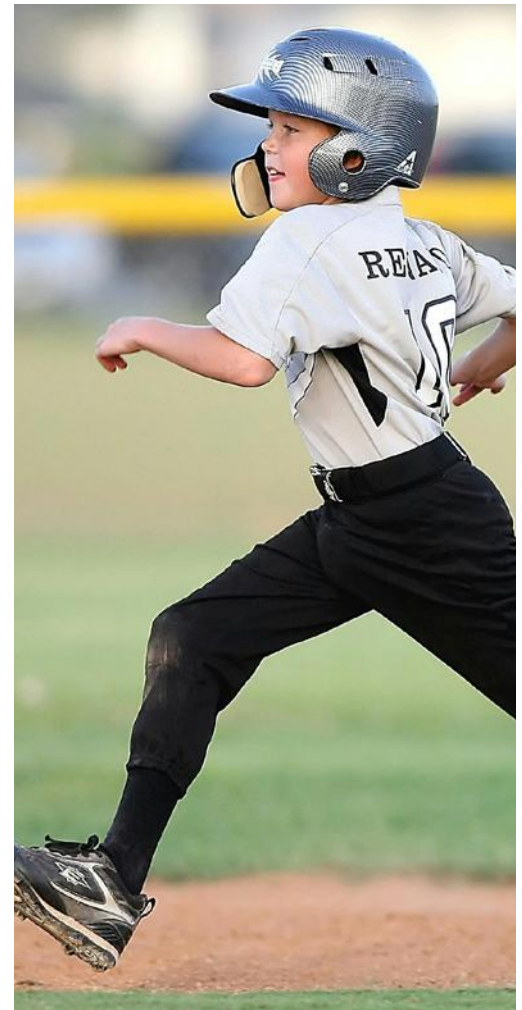
5. Provide Capital Investment and Sponsorship Opportunities

DMOs can invest in Parks and Recreation facilities by helping fund upgrades or expansions that make them better suited for sports tourism events. Sponsorships can also support local sports programs and events, creating a win-win situation for both sides.

6. Offer Educational Sessions

DMOs can offer workshops or informational sessions to educate Parks and Recreation staff about the benefits of sports tourism. This can help build bridges and create mutual understanding about how the two groups can work together.

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7

Benefits of a Strong DMO and Parks and Recreation Partnership



FOR DMOs:

- **Increased Event Opportunities:** Access to local facilities makes it easier to host a wide range of sports events, driving tourism.
- **Stronger Community Ties:** Supporting local Parks and Recreation Departments helps DMOs build better relationships with residents and local government.
- **Boosted Economy:** More events mean more visitors, which benefits local businesses and increases revenue.

FOR PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENTS:

- **New Funding Sources:** DMOs can provide much-needed funding for facility improvements, benefiting both locals and tourists.
- **Increased Visibility:** Marketing support from DMOs can raise awareness of Parks and Recreation programs and facilities, both locally and beyond.
- **Enhanced Local Programs:** Sponsorships and investments help fund community events and sports programs, ensuring their continued success.

FOR THE COMMUNITY:

- **Better Facilities:** Investments lead to improved spaces for both residents and visitors to enjoy.
- **Economic Growth:** Sports tourism brings more people into town, which means more spending at local businesses.
- **Community Spirit:** Large events bring the community together and foster local pride.

Stronger Community Ties: Supporting local Parks and Recreation Departments helps DMOs build better relationships with residents and local government.

7 | Conclusion: A Win-Win for Communities and Tourism

Strong partnerships between DMOs and Parks and Recreation Departments are key to building successful sports tourism programs. By working together and aligning their goals, both groups can create lasting benefits for the community. DMOs gain access to local facilities and expertise, while Parks and Recreation Departments receive much-needed resources and support. The result? Better facilities, more successful events, and a thriving local economy. The first step is reaching out—start the conversation, build trust, and work together to create a future that benefits both residents and visitors.

The result?
Better facilities, more successful events,
and a thriving local economy.



About Us



Sports ETA

As the only non-profit 501(c)3 trade association for the sports events and tourism industry in the United States, Sports ETA is the most essential resource for sports commissions, sports destinations, sports event owners, and industry partners. We believe sports tourism and the events that our members own and host have the power to transform society for the better. Our passion is to help sports events and tourism professionals achieve previously unimaginable levels of performance. We do this by nurturing a community of smart, creative, and interesting people: our members. Visit sportseta.org.



Our Sponsor

Sports Salt Lake is wide open for your next sports event. As host of the 2002 Olympic Winter Games and America's choice to bid on a future Winter Olympics, we have a proud history of hosting year-round sporting events of all levels. Sports Salt Lake holds ongoing world-class events at Olympic venues. What's more, new state-of-the-art venues like the [Salt Lake Regional Athletic Complex](#) and Easton Salt Lake Archery Center, as well as the [Salt Palace](#), [Mountain America Expo Center](#), [Utah Olympic Oval](#) and others, welcome the likes of Premier SuperCopa tournaments, USA Archery, USA Volleyball and more.

To complement these world-class facilities, Sports Salt Lake is a full-service sports authority. Its [experienced staff](#) partners with event planners and rights' holders to ensure event success. Developing dynamic bid packages. Partnering with local clubs. Executing powerful presentations. Whatever it takes to win your business. Once selected, our team works tirelessly to make each event a success for all involved, providing a full range of support services, assistance securing event volunteers, presenting community awareness campaigns and more.

Our Experts



Jennifer Fink

Director, Parks and Recreation
City of New Brighton, Minnesota

Jennifer Fink has over two decades of experience in Parks and Recreation and is currently serving as the Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of New Brighton. Over the past three years, she has overseen \$16 million in improvements to the park system, driving capital projects, community building and engagement initiatives.

In addition to her role in New Brighton, Jennifer is the President of the Minnesota Recreation and Park Foundation, serves as the Chair of the Board for Northeast Youth and Family Services, is on the Board of Directors for Twin Cities Gateway Convention and Visitors Bureau, and is active in the Sports ETA Parks and Recreation Community. Her dedication to the profession has been recognized with multiple awards, including the Dorothea Nelson and Horizon Awards from the Minnesota Recreation and Parks Association.



Jason T. West

Director, Parks and Recreation
City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota

Jason T. West is the Parks and Recreation Director for the City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota. He oversees the city's outdoor aquatic facility, the Recreation Outdoor Center, the Rec Center, all municipal facilities, and the net-zero energy Westwood Hills Nature Center. Jason leads the parks, recreation, natural resources, fleet, and municipal facilities divisions, managing 52 parks and supervising a team of 50 full-time and hundreds of seasonal employees.

With over 25 years of service and over \$20 million in facilities built, Jason has received the Jack Niles Award and multiple Presidential Awards from the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association. His leadership ensures high-quality recreational services and facilities for the community.