



## Best Practices

The Florida Recreation and Park Association adopted a comprehensive Strategic Plan in 2015. That Plan is based on four foundational pillars – Health, Community Building, Environmental Sustainability and Resiliency, and Economic Impact/Development.

The Association is in search of Best Practices in each of these four areas, which can serve as a resource for parks and recreation professionals. We realize that “Best Practice” can be broadly applied and the meaning varies depending on the environment and industry one works within.

For the purposes of the FRPA Strategic Plan, the Association’s Board of Directors has adopted and will apply the following definition:

FRPA Strategic Best Practices – Methods, professional guidance, benchmarks and technical expertise centered around a FRPA strategic pillar (Health, Environment, Community Building, Economic Impact) that are evidence-based or proven through experience to support positive results and may be replicated or utilized by other parks and recreation agencies toward achieving a similar desired outcome.

“Evidence-based or proven through experience” indicates that the best practice has had some research, or long term monitoring conducted to show that the practice is having a positive outcome when applied. For example: When applying the best practice of mowing and over-seeding in this manner, for a period of one year, we have been able to extend the life of our turf by 6 months thus reducing expenses \$X; OR When integrating physical activity and nutrition education in our after school programming, we partnered with the University of XYZ to measure increased health of participants, and have shown a 24% reduction in BMI of participants.

We realize that there may be a plethora of “success stories” that are not evidence based, but have produced positive results for an agency, and may also have value as a shared resource.

Submissions will be evaluated by the Best Practice Workgroup to determine if the submission meets the criteria of “Best Practice” as we have defined, or if it should be catalogued as a “success story”.



## **Best Practice Submission**

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### **Area of Best Practice:**

HEALTH PILLAR: Supporting a well-connected community that allows for active transportation.  
ex: Assessment of connectivity between neighborhoods and parks, Involvement in community planning/development, permitting, etc.

**Summary of Best Practice:** (include description of the practice, reason for adopting/implementing best practice, measurement of effectiveness of the practice, what is your evidence that the practice is working, etc.)

### **Hialeah Healthy Families Initiative:**

- The City of Hialeah is a full-service city serving over 240,000 residents making it the fifth largest city in the State of Florida. Over 95% of the City's residents are Hispanic making Hialeah a diverse yet unified place to live. The City has many assets including over 15 community parks with recreation facilities and 7 pools. Similar to most communities around the country the rates of obesity in Hialeah are rising, with recent statistics showing 46% of school-age children in Hialeah are overweight, with 27% of those being obese. High rates of overweight have also been documented among 2-5 year-old children enrolled in the WIC program within Hialeah, with 36% being overweight, including 20% in the obese category. With support of the City Mayor, community stakeholders have determined these rates are unacceptable and have pledged to take action against childhood obesity in the City of Hialeah.

- Environmental changes encompass various dimensions of daily life. The built environment, or the man-made structures that we live in and that surround us, has been found to directly affect the rates of obesity. We recognize the importance of healthy food options being available to residents of Hialeah, the value of walkability in the city, and the messages and culture being promoted throughout city buildings and facilities. Many examples of potential areas of improvement related to the environment were discussed by the Working Groups. The following were the Environment Strategies identified for this Call to Action:

- Enhance and expand current active living or sports programming being offered. This may include incorporation of health fairs, healthy lifestyle groups for families, conditioning and individualized sports

- Increase fitness and active living programming for underserved or unreached populations throughout the city, such as for young children six and under, for girls, for children with disabilities, or for family groups or mixed-aged groups
- Increase access to healthy foods in vending machines and concessions through the parks, schools, and other community areas
- Provide public transportation to the flea market and other locations to expand access to healthy food
- Explore the potential for an active farmers market in the city
- Plan and develop community gardens
- Partner with grocery stores, farmers markets, *bodegas* (neighborhood markets) and *vianderos* (street vendors) to increase access to healthy food
- Increase health awareness through the display of information regarding healthy eating and activity in common areas such as physicians' offices, child care centers, schools, grocery stores, malls and libraries
- Increase education programming and materials available throughout the community on healthy eating, active living and on the long-term health implications of being overweight or obese, especially for children.

**Frequency Best Practice is Applied:** (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, bi-annually, annually)

- Daily

**Who Performs the Best Practice Function within your Agency:** (contracted, in-house parks staff, in-house recreation staff, citizens, etc.)

- It's a joint effort between our contracted vendors, in-house parks staff and in-house recreation staff.

**Positive Outcome of the Best Practice** (please summarize the evidence based benefit that has been derived by the agency from the best practice):

- Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) is a program funded across schools in Hialeah to promote walking and bicycling to school by making pedestrian routes safer and more appealing. The goal of the program is to encourage a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age. The Florida Department of Transportation has hired regional coordinators to work on health issues, including Walking School Buses, a group of children walking to school with one or more adults. Parents can volunteer to lead the groups. Through this initiative, parents will learn traffic safety skills, how to map safe routes and how to organize the walking school bus. The number of students walking to school has dropped considerably. The U.S. Department of Transportation reports that in 1969, about half of all schoolchildren walked or bicycled to or from school, and 87 percent of those living within one mile of school walked or bicycled. Today, fewer than 15 percent of children use active modes of transportation. We are hopeful that the number of children walking to school will increase over the coming years through the efforts of programs like the SRTS.

- In the summer of 2009, "Short Chef" Ray Newlands joined the City of Hialeah as a nutrition instructor for children in Kindergarten through 8th grade who are participating in the City's Creative Learning & Play (CL&P) summer camp. He visited each summer camp to provide an introduction to healthy foods and introduce new tastes to participating children. Over 300 children had the opportunity to learn from this fun and engaging "Short Chef" that summer. From the food pyramid and learning how to make healthy eating choices to delicious, nutritious recipes, these children experienced it all. As part of the course, the children took a field trip to Whole Foods Market where they toured the store, learned about organic foods, participated in food tasting and made a fresh tropical salad for their lunch. Whole Foods donated free gift bags for the children loaded with healthy snacks and coupons. It was, by far, the favorite summer activity of the children and staff. "Short Chef" has made a significant contribution to the children in both the afterschool and summer programs. The Education and Community Services Department is delighted to have hosted "Short Chef" in its out of school programs and plans to have "Short Chef" back to teach kids more about healthy eating choices during summer time. In addition, Short Chef is now part of EPI Health Eating Club, whereby he provides cooking lessons and caters our banquets. We are also exploring expanding his role for the summer of 2017 within our park programs.

**Awards/Recognitions/Designations Received as a Result of the Best Practice** (please share any awards or designations received, or publications that have featured this best practice):

- N/A

**Grants or Funding Received (if any):**

- We have received several grants from the Blue Foundation, which allowed us to implement our Hialeah Healthy Families Initiative.

**What other Best Practices would you suggest we collect?**

- N/A

**Submit this Form electronically to [charla@frpa.org](mailto:charla@frpa.org)**

Type directly onto this document, copy and paste form for as many practices as you would like to submit, and submit as a Word Document. Please DO NOT pdf the form.