

Parks Equity Toolkit

Research and planning tools to engage youth with parks



Equity Tools

The tools are designed for park agencies and other entities to collaborate with youth and organizations for parks planning, data collection, and community engagement. The tools were developed as part of the [Metropolitan Council youth and parks research](#) completed in 2020.

Research Purpose

The research was designed to build more and stronger connections between youth and the outdoors, specifically within the Twin Cities Regional Park System. This toolkit walks through the research process to share documents for others to adapt and use.

Before the park visit

- [Solicitation for organizational participation](#). The research team partnered with five area youth serving organizations (YSOs) selected for their distribution across the region, commitment to getting youth outside, and connections with youth who were historically underserved by the Regional Park System. The YSOs were Asian Media Access, Organization of Liberians in Minnesota, Outdoor Latino MN, Troop 100, and Urban Roots. We developed an application to identify YSO collaborators. This application was designed to identify possible partners while making it easy to apply.
- [Selection criteria and scoring guidelines](#) used by the committee to select participating YSO were chosen by a committee.
- After a committee chose the preferred partner YSO's, all applicants were contacted and informed of the decision.
- [Memorandum of Understanding](#). Our research team met with selected partner YSOs to review the project and establish the guidelines for successful participation. Both parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining expectations. The MOU was developed by Council procurement with research team input to be collaborative and clear.

- [“Get to know you conversation.”](#) The team met with each YSO to review the project, learn more about each group’s values, culture, and interests and design a unique in-park experience for them. The in-park experiences were planned using responses to the questions in this document.

In-park visit

- [Schedules.](#) Each organization was given a sample schedule with guidelines for making a great in-park experience.
- [Consent form.](#) As part of their microconsultancy work, organizations distributed and obtained consent from individual youth participants and their guardians.
- [Field Research Challenge.](#) All in-park experiences included an activity where youth generated data by analyzing the park. This was called the Field Research Challenge. The field research challenge consists of questions answered in the park and a follow up discussion.
- **Parent focus groups.** The parents/guardians who attended the in-park activities were also interviewed using a designed group interview tool. In addition to [English](#), this tool was translated into [Spanish](#) and [Hmong](#). The Spanish-language focus group was administered entirely in Spanish. A bilingual Hmong-English focus group was completed with help of a YSO leader.

Discussing the data with youth after the park experience

After the team conducted all the in-park events we did a preliminary analysis of the data and formed our recommendations. The team then met with the youth again to review the recommendations in sessions we called *validity conversations* and *visual methodology sessions*.

Validity conversations are a program of fun activities and discussion to verify the accuracy of the Council research findings. They included a Kahoot quiz, a “share your findings” group presentation activity, and an “agree/disagree” activity.

See a sample validity conversation schedule with all activities on page 29.

1. One of the methods used to test validity was to use the online app, [Kahoot. We asked questions asking youth to remember](#) their park experience. This is an app that was familiar to many youth when we used it in 2019. Kahoot allows you to design your own quiz. Participants log in to the quiz using their own mobile devices. Questions are presented individually with multiple choice answers. Participants have a set amount of time to answer. More points are awarded for quicker responses.
2. Most important takeaways. (Detailed process in the sample schedule.) One element of the research design was to encourage youth to develop their abilities to analyze, advocate, and enjoy public policy conversations. In this exercise, youth did these things by preparing short poster presentations for youth to make recommendations based on what they remembered about the day in the park. These “sticky” memories indicated what was important to highlight in the research. Examples of the posters are [here](#) and [here](#).

3. Agree/disagree exercise. [Youth were presented with large papers with research findings statements written on them.](#) The team prepared these statements in advance. Youth were given small sticky notes and pens. [They chose two findings they found most important to agree with or disagree with.](#) They wrote on an “agree” colored note the reasons why they agreed or a “disagree” colored note if they disagreed. Youth then presented to their peers about research findings with the most opinions.
4. Visual methodology exercise. The research project generated lots of photos. These were treated as visual data that demonstrate what is happening in a park scene. They provide additional information that words can’t provide. [Youth researchers](#) reflect on their experiences in the parks, explain what they see in photos, and learn more about visual data analysis.

Inclusivity and Recognition

1. [Food.](#) How to create a culturally competent and inclusive experience with food while investing in minority-owned businesses. A list of things to consider.
2. [Certificate of completion.](#) Each youth and adult who participated in an in-park experience and/or validity conversation [was awarded a certificate](#) of completion, a \$20 gift card, and had their name in the acknowledgement section of the report (could opt out).

Resources

See resources, listed below, beginning next page.

- Solicitation of Youth-Serving Organizations
- Scoring Guidelines
- Memorandum of Understanding
- Scheduling the Collaboration with Youth-Serving Organizations - ‘Get to Know You’ Convocation
- In-Park Experience Example
- In-Park Experience Schedule
- Sample Consent Form
- Field Research Challenge Activity
- Parent Focus Group Guide (in English)
- Parent Focus Group Guide (in Spanish)
- Parent Focus Group Guide (Hmong)
- Culturally Competent Catering
- Validity Conversation Schedule
- Visual Methodology Activity
- Sample Certificate Blank

Invitation: Seeking youth-serving organizations to collaborate for Metropolitan Council “Youth & Parks” research project.

This research project invites up to five youth-serving organizations to work with a research team of Metropolitan Council Staff, high school students and university age students. The purpose of the research to generate data about how youth age 15-19 think about and enjoy nature in the Regional Parks System. Please read the entire document before completing the application of interest to make sure this project is a good fit with your organization.

Time commitments and timeline: Two meetings before October 1, one half-day in-park experience between late September and early November, two post-park meetings, attend final presentation. Exact dates to be agreed on. Project time scope September 2019 – May 2020.

Compensation for participating organizations from the Metropolitan Council: \$4,000

To pursue this opportunity:

1. Complete attached application of interest (page 2-3) and send to [staff email] . Deadline: *September 6, 2019*
2. If your organization is selected, schedule a one-on-one 90- minute meeting at a location convenient to you with Met Council employee [staff name] to determine fit between project and collaborator. Deadline: *September 20, 2019*
3. Organize youth and guardians/parents from your organization to participate in a regional park for a fun half day activity that will happen between September 20 and November 10, 2019.
4. Bring attendees from your organization to a youth-led presentation in winter or spring 2020. The presentation will be held a location convenient to you.

Invitation: Youth-serving organizations are invited to bring a group of up to twenty high school age youth and their guardians/parents for a fun half day activity in a regional park in which youth ideas and experiences will inform the future of the Regional Park System. The event will be held on time arranged between late September and early November at a Regional Park. To participate and receive compensation, the organization must have at least ten youth and five parent/guardians attend the half day event. Up to twenty youth and twenty guardians/parents could participate.

What the organization will get: A fun experience for high school youth; a chance to influence priorities and programming in the Regional Park System; \$4000 for the community organization; Gift cards for youth and parent/guardians who attend the event.

Application is on pages 2-3. Complete details of the project are on pages 4-7.

Solicitation for Youth-Serving Organization as Consultants

Criteria for choosing the five organizations in order of priority:

- Capacity to successfully recruit youth and guardian participants and complete the project requirements
- Commitment to the outcomes/values of the research project
- Contribution to geographic and social diversity of the project as a whole
- Staff and leadership have deep ties to the community served by the organization
- Previous experience with youth participant action research

Please complete the following application of interest and return to [staff email].

Name of organization: .

Address of organization:

Website of organization (if applicable): .

Contact person: .

Contact person phone:

Contact person email: .

What is your organization's mission?

How many youth does your organization serve from the following groups? (Note – one group is fine! Youth who fit more than one of these descriptors is fine!)

	African American youth
	American Indian, indigenous, and/or Native American youth
	Rural youth
	Youth active in groups related to #diversifyoutdoors
	Youth from families living in low income or poverty
	Youth from New American, Asian and/or African diasporic communities (for example, Hmong, Karen, Latinx/Hispanic, Somali)
	Youth from other communities of color not listed here who are underserved by the Regional Park System
	Youth with physical or cognitive disabilities
	Youth with extensive outdoor experience

If needed, please comment:

Solicitation for Youth-Serving Organization as Consultants

Can you complete the following requirements? Can someone in the organization discuss these answers in a one-on-one meeting in English or another language used in your organization's daily work? Please check yes if your organization has:

Yes	Topics:
	Ability to recruit between ten and 20 participants ages 14-19 to attend half day in-park experience (required)
	Ability to recruit at least five guardians/parents to participate in a focus group (required)
	Ability to have 20 people listen to a youth-led presentation of research findings (20 people, required)
	Willingness to provide input on the research project with the research team (required)
	A process to ensure youth safety and has completed or will complete background checks for adult collaborators besides guardians/parents (required)
	Commitment to building capacity for youth in civic engagement, research, and outdoor activities (required)
	An interest in the values of the research project and purpose (required)
	Willingness to spread the word about the research project (required)
	Previous experience with qualitative, arts-based, and/or participant action research (desired)
	Commitment to creating future opportunities for youth in your program to visit the regional parks (desired)

Submit completed application via email to [staff member], [staff job title] ([staff email]).

Questions? Contact [staff member]: via email or mobile phone (staff number).

Scoring Guidelines

Youth & Parks Research Partnership Scoring Guidelines for Youth Organization Partners

Preparing for Meeting: Scoring Applicants

Note to scoring committee:

First: THANK YOU for your time and support of this effort to improve youth access to the Regional Park and Trail System. (Details about meeting, location here).

Please come to the meeting with a recommended cohort of five community organizations. We need one organization for each participating regional park agency. The potential regional park agency pairing is noted in the spreadsheet. Alternate pairings are possible. The suggested pairing is based on community organization location.

To create the cohort:

1. Score each organization according to the following criteria. Use the application, website information, and knowledge of the organization to score:
 - A. Capacity to successfully recruit youth and guardian participants and complete the project requirements. (using application, website information, knowledge of organization)
 - B. Contribution to geographic diversity of the project (can pair with an agency)
 - C. Commitment to the outcomes/values of the research project
 - D. Staff and leadership have deep ties to the community served by the organization/constituent led organization.
 - E. Contribution to the social diversity of the project as a whole (we seek to strengthen equitable usage of regional parks and trails by all our region's residents across race, ethnicity, income, national origin and ability).
2. Select your cohort based on top scores and creating geographic and social diversity.
3. Select alternates for each geographic park agency region based on acceptable candidates.

Additional Information:

The application was written to make it easy and fast for organizations to apply. As a result, the information on the application is not extensive. I encourage you to review their website and draw on your community knowledge in scoring the applicants.

Once we have selected a cohort and they have accepted, each organization will then be paired with a park implementing agency. The implementing agencies volunteered to participate in the project based on an email request sent to research staff in all regional park agencies.

Memorandum of Understanding

Memorandum of Understanding

Between
Metropolitan Council (Council)
and
[Youth Serving Organization] (Contractor)

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sets for the terms and understanding between the Council and the Contractor to provide research of the regional park systems to develop data to assist the Council in better serving young people.

Background

While large numbers of Twin Cities residents visit the regional parks, young people and people of color are not visiting the parks in representative numbers. Why? What amenities and activities would appeal to a young audience? The intention of this project is to generate data about how youth, age 15-19, think about and enjoy nature in the Regional Parks System. [Named organization] has important expertise needed to be able to answer these questions.

Purpose

This MOU will help to develop key research data to assist Council staff in developing and planning of the regional park systems to better serve young people.

The above goals will be accomplished by undertaking the following activities.

Contractor Responsibilities.

Give input and research participation:

- Meet with research team members twice before the in-park experience and once after the experience. Youth or parents from the Greater Twin Cities Region must be present at least one of the activities.
- Maintain confidentiality of youth and guardian/parent voices within the process as appropriate
- Organize an audience for a presentation on the research findings before April 30, 2020.

Provide organizational and logistical expertise:

- Recruit between 10 and 15 youth to participate who are available for the half-day experience to be held at [location] from [time] on [date].
- Recruit at least five guardians or parents to participate in the workshop (may include more parents, up to twenty parents/guardians of youth participants).
- Collect signatures for waivers by all participants before the workshop date
- Transport participants to [location] by [time].
- Recruit audience members to hear youth-led presentation of results. This audience can include original research participants.

Council Responsibilities

- At the completion of these tasks, the organization will be paid \$4000. Each youth and parent participant will receive a \$20 gift card within one month after the event. Additionally, the Council will attend to details of:

Analysis

- Organize meetings with each community organization before the project.
- Facilitate research experience in park along with implementing agencies.
- Value youth input and mentor youth for participation in presentations if the organization so chooses. Details of this participation will be sent to groups within one week after in-park experience.

Memorandum of Understanding

- Make findings available to stakeholders in ways that are useful and accessible to the community organizations.

Logistics

- Produce a Certificate of Completion for each youth and guardian/parent who completes the workshop.
- Council staff and research team will meet with community organizations before and after the in-park experience.
- Arrange for food during the event.
- Provide compensation for organization and youth/guardian effort while being good stewards of taxpayer money.
- Demonstrate a process to ensure the safety of youth through background checks of all research team members and appropriate human subjects protections.
- Reimburse reasonable expenses for time, expertise, transportation, and food.
- Arrange presentations on the research findings between January and May 2020.

Reporting

Principal Parks researcher will evaluate effectiveness and adherence to the agreement. Evaluation will happen on or before May 30, 2020.

Funding

At the completion of these tasks, the Contractor will be paid \$4,000 within 30 days of receipt of invoice.

Duration

This MOU is at-will and may be modified by mutual consent of authorized officials from _____ . This MOU shall become effective upon signature by the authorized officials from the _____ and will remain in effect until modified or terminated by any one of the partners by mutual consent. In the absence of mutual agreement by the authorized officials from _____ this MOU shall end on September 30, 2020.

Contact Information

Council: [Staff name and title]
Address: [Address of staff office]
Telephone:
Fax:
E-mail:

Contractor Name: [Youth Serving Organization]
Partner Representative: [Name]
Position: [Position]
Address:
Telephone:
Fax:
E-mail:

(Partner signature) Date:
(Partner name, organization, position)

(Partner signature) Date:
(Partner name, organization, position)

Youth & Parks: Scheduling the YSO Collaboration

We look forward to working with you! This is an exciting project with great potential and a tight timeline. Please help us schedule by providing the following dates:

- Possible dates for in-park experience
- 2-3 proposed dates and suggested locations for a “get to know you” conversation.

Possible dates for in-park experience. Please respond with possible dates as soon as you can.:

October 27th

November 1st or 2nd

Monday, October 28th

An after-school time is also possible

Who is invited to the get-to-know-you conversation?

Designated project contact at [Organization] (required)

Youth and other interested staff at [Organization] (highly desired)

Other stakeholders identified by [Organization] (you decide)

Met Council Staff research team (Up to three people)

Sample email before the meeting:

Dear [Colleagues at YSO],

This meeting will be a get to know you conversation to learn more about what [your organization's] youth and staff prioritize in the relationship between youth and the outdoors. Our conversation can include:

- What activities do youth like to do?
- What would a fun half day look like?
- What is the best way to create a conversation about youth and parks that could be recorded and shared as data for the study?
- What are the goals of the project for all participant organizations and entities?
- What would you like to know about us?
- Planning next steps

**Thank you,
[Staff contact]**

In-Park Experience Example

Youth & Parks Activity

Youth Serving Organization:

Park Agency:

Location:



10:00 am: Arrival at park. Gather, review schedule for the day

10:15 am: Environmental Science badge work with Naturalist

12:00 noon: Lunch at pavilion

1:00 pm: Sports time

2:00 pm: Group 1 – Field research challenge/park audit

Group 2 – Snack, small group focus group

3:00 pm: Group 1 – Snack, small group focus group

Group 2 – Field research challenge/park audit

4:00 pm: End of activities, depart for home

Youth & Parks Research Partnership Schedule for Afternoon Field Research and Park Fun

Sample Schedule (half day experience)

YOUTH & PARKS ACTIVITY

Date:

Youth Serving Organization:

Park Agency:

Location:

- 1:00 pm* Arrive at Park, Icebreaker activity
- 1:30 pm* Camera basics: How to take photos of nature and people in nature
- 2:00 pm* Photo contest around the park/Parent conversation indoors
- 3:00 pm* Food: Pizza, wings, fruit. Photo contest prizes and small group activity to talk about photos, park experience
- 4:00 pm* Bonfire and story circle
- 5:00 pm* Activity ends

Please make sure to dress for the weather. Some activities will be held outside.

Informed Consent for Youth & Parks Research Project [Date, time, and location of experience]

Youth & Parks Half Day Research Activity CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN PARK ACTIVITY

Name of youth or adult participant:

You are invited to take part in a youth & parks experience involving research and learning about the Regional Park System. This event involves fun, research, conversation, and learning around a topic. This form tells you the purpose of the event, what will happen during the day, and possible risks and benefits to you. If you have questions, please ask. Then you can decide if you want to join this event or not. If you are under 18, your parent also needs to sign and give permission.

A1. INTRODUCTION – WHY ARE WE INVITING YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited to participate in this activity because you are a young person age 14-19 or a parent/guardian of a youth. We would like to see more youth like you visit the Regional Parks.

A total of 10-20 people are expected to participate in this experience.

A2. DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS PARK ACTIVITY?

You decide whether to take part in this activity. You are free to say yes or no. Even if you join this experience, you do not have to stay in it. You may stop participating anytime.

A3. WHY ARE YOU ORGANIZING THIS RESEARCH ACTIVITY?

The purpose of this research activity is to bring youth and guardians/parents together to find out how the Regional Park System can improve youth access to parks. We will guide you through a field research experience, fun activities, and a conversation with food to talk about the parks and youth.

B1. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I TAKE PART IN THE RESEARCH ACTIVITY?

You will visit Battle Creek Park Reserve. You will be invited to participate in a parks scavenger hunt, a photo contest, a storytelling session, a casual dinner, and other activities that will be facilitated by professional staff. There will be some time to give advice to the research team. Parents will talk to a facilitator in a focus group to discuss how they would like their youth to enjoy the outdoors. If you choose not to answer a particular question, then say “pass” and the activity will move to the next person. We also request that you give permission to use the pictures you take and the pictures our staff takes in the research.

B2. HOW LONG WILL THIS TAKE?

About 5 hours from start to finish, including transportation.

B3. CAN I STOP BEING IN THE PARK ACTIVITY?

You may stop participating at any time. However, you will need to wait until the entire group is done to ride home with your group.

Sample Consent Form to Participate

C1. WHAT RISKS OR PROBLEMS CAN I EXPECT FROM THE IN-PARK ACTIVITY?

Activities:

- You may feel that some of the activities are irrelevant. If you do not wish to participate, you may skip it and say “pass.”
- You may come into contact with outdoor conditions (cold, wind) that are uncomfortable or have risk, such as a bonfire. You understand that The Metropolitan Council and Ramsey County are not responsible for risks associated with being in the outdoors.
- We will record some group conversations, not names of the participants. Recordings help us by ensuring that our notes taken during the activities are indeed accurate. We will destroy the recordings shortly after transcribing them.
- You can choose whether or not you want your name used in the research. We will only use your name if you want it used. If you wish, we can maintain confidentiality of your name. However, other members of your group may talk about what is said. We cannot guarantee confidentiality. However, we do guarantee that we will credit you in all reports if you consent to your name being used.

C2. ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO TAKING PART IN THE ACTIVITY?

This activity will allow you to give direct input to the Regional Park System. We hope the information from this activity will help the Regional Park System better serve all youth.

D1. ARE THERE ANY COSTS TO BEING IN THE ACTIVITY?

There are no costs to you for any of the activities or food that will be made available to you.

D2. WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THE ACTIVITY?

The Council will provide each participant with a \$20 gift card to be delivered to the organization no later than November 10, 2019. Participant must complete all activities to receive the gift card.

D3. WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY?

If you have more questions about this activity at any time, you can call [organization contact] at [contact phone] or [Council staff] at [staff phone number]. If you sign this form, we plan to keep your information (sign in sheet) for two years.

PLEASE CHOOSE:

- I do want my name credited in the research report.
- I do not want my name credited in the research report. I prefer to have my participation be confidential.

Sample Consent Form to Participate

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH ACTIVITY

By signing my name below, I confirm the following:

- I have read (or had read to me) this entire consent document. All of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
- The research activity's purpose, procedures, risks and possible benefits have been explained to me.
- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research activity.
- I have been told that I can stop at any time.

IMPORTANT: You will receive a signed and dated copy of this consent form. Please keep it where you can find it easily. It will help you remember what we discussed today.

Participant's Name(please print)	Participant's Signature	Date
Name of Parent/Guardian (if applicable) please print	Signature of Parent/Guardian	Date
* Name of person discussing/ obtaining consent please print	Signature of person discussing/obtaining consent	Date
* Facilitator		

Sample Consent Form for Use of Photos and Video

CONSENT TO USE OF PHOTOS AND VIDEO

By signing my name below, I confirm the following:

- I voluntarily agree to participate in the photo competition for field research, and that the photos I take will become part of the research project to help understand how youth see the parks.
- I understand that my photo or video of me might be taken at the activity. I voluntarily agree that these may be used for publicity purposes on the Metropolitan Council website, in brochures and flyers and news releases, and in presentations about the research in the future. I understand that I will receive no compensation for such uses.
- I understand that I retain the right to have any photographs discontinued from use in any or all of the above venues upon request, and if, at any time, I wish my photograph(s) to be discontinued from any of the above, it is my responsibility to contact Parks Research Darcie Vandegrift to make this request.

IMPORTANT: You will receive a signed and dated copy of this consent form. Please keep it where you can find it easily. It will help you remember what we discussed today.

Participant's Name(please print)	Participant's Signature	Date
Name of Parent/Guardian (if applicable) please print	Signature of Parent/Guardian	Date
* Name of person discussing/ obtaining consent please print	Signature of person discussing/obtaining consent	Date
* Facilitator		

Field Research Challenge

Total Time Needed: 90 Minutes

Equipment Needed: For each group – park map, clipboard, printed question handout, pens, phone or other photo-taking device.

Total Staff Needed: One staff member per group, plus one home base facilitator.

For the youth & parks research, youth were divided into four or five groups depending on size.

Part 1: Field research challenge, 20 minutes

Divide youth into 4 groups.

Each group will need to have a person in each of the following roles:

- ✓ Recorder: Write down the field observations using handout, pens, and clipboard
- ✓ Photographer: Take and post the pictures to the designated place online
- ✓ Timekeeper: Make sure the group completes the work in the 20-minute timeframe
- ✓ Discussion leader: Leads group discussion for the second portion of the event

Assign each group a specific area/habitat.

Each group has a total of 7 questions/tasks to do at the area/habitat

Answers collected through written answers, photos & drawings.

A staff member takes notes during the challenge.

After completing their field research groups will return to the designated area and turn in their observations to receive their prize/reward for completion. Return to designated area.

- ✓ Turn in field observations.
- ✓ Receive reward for completion.
- ✓ Transition to group discussion area.

Part 2: Group discussion

This portion takes about 35 minutes. Youth can eat dinner during this time. For the discussions, each habitat discussion leader will have a set of prepared questions to ask their fellow participants. Groups can be made by regrouping the youth so they sit and talk with youth who visited another park area to encourage sharing about the different experiences each environment provided. Each of the four discussion groups will have a research team observer for note taking and to help facilitate the conversation, if necessary.

Field Research Challenge Activity

6. Best selfie spot? Everyone take a selfie. Why did you choose the spot you did?

7. Best group pic spot? Take a group picture. Why did you choose the spot you did?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What parks have you been to in the past?

2. How do you usually get to the parks?

3. Why do you go to the parks & what do you do there?

4. What is your favorite activity to do in the parks?

Field Research Challenge Activity

5. What would you like to be able to do in the parks that you can't right now?
6. How do you learn about the parks? (New parks or current features/amenities, etc.)
7. What kind of programming would you like to see in the parks?
8. What makes a good park?
9. What makes a bad or not fun park?

Parent Focus Group Guide

Total Time Needed: 1.5 Hours (1 hour for event & 30 minutes for prep/takedown)

Equipment Needed: Chairs/seating, questions

Total Staff Needed: At least 1 facilitator (recommend 2)

Introduction

We are going to talk about your family and the regional parks today.

[Talk about the regional park where we are at, as well as some located closer to the organization's neighborhood.]

I want to know what we can do to make the parks a place that youth like to go. We will use the comments and suggestions you give us to improve our regional parks system for youth and their families. If you have any questions or don't understand something I say, you can raise your hand and stop me at any time to ask.

Feel free to stop me at any point to ask any questions. I will be recording our conversation so I can remember everything you say. We will write a report, but your names won't be used.

Do you have any questions now?

Opening questions

[Purpose is for participants to get acquainted and feel connected.]

- a) Tell us your first name, what your zip code is, and your favorite outdoor activity
- b) Tell us the ages of your children
- c) Why is it important for teens to spend time in the outdoors?
- d) What do you notice are the benefits when your teen spends time in the outdoors?

Outdoor Activity questions:

[See maps; provide overview of system.]

- a) What do you and your teen do now?
- b) Have you visited any Regional Parks or Trails?
- c) Does your teen spend time outside in nature?
- d) Who organizes for this time to happen (teen, family, organization, school)?
- e) How often does your teen get outdoors into nature?
- f) Does your family ever spend time in the outdoors together?
- g) What do you like to do?

[Follow up with: When? How often? Where do you like to go? How do you figure out where to go for time in the outdoors?]

How do you find out about things to do out of the house for fun? How do you find out about good opportunities for your teen?

[Probe: Family, school, organization, media (who?), social media (which)?]

Barrier Questions:

- Are there any worries you have about your teen getting out in the outdoors?
- What do you worry about?
- Has your family or teen had any negative experiences in the parks or the outdoors?
- What could park agencies and cities do to help your family spend more time enjoying the outdoors?

[Probe: what are the barriers and how can we get rid of them?]

What would you like your teen to try?

- What are some things that you would like your teen to be able learn to do in the outdoors in the summer?
- How about in the winter?
- What are the best times in your teen's family to schedule classes, activities or social events?

Closing Questions:

- What suggestions do you have to promote regional parks to families from your community?
- You have been very helpful. If you wish, we could follow up with you by sending a brief summary of our conversation today. Would you like to receive a written summary or have our team come back to talk about what we learned from all the youth and parents we talked to?

Parent Focus Group Guide - English

There are so many activities to do in the Regional Park System. We'd like to learn what you have done and what you'd like to do.

First: Which of these have you done before?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Animal, wildlife or bird watching | <input type="checkbox"/> Hiking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archery | <input type="checkbox"/> Horseback riding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bird or animal counting/research | <input type="checkbox"/> Kayaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camping | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning about animals and nature with a teacher or naturalist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canoeing | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning about history |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Celebrate with family in the park (birthday, reunion, wedding) | <input type="checkbox"/> Mountain biking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crafts or art in the outdoors | <input type="checkbox"/> Orienteering/map reading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concert outdoors | <input type="checkbox"/> Picnicking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking outside/grilling out | <input type="checkbox"/> Road biking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cross Country Skiing | <input type="checkbox"/> Roller blading/skateboarding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dog walking | <input type="checkbox"/> Running/jogging |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educational farming | <input type="checkbox"/> Scootering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Sledding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Geocaching | <input type="checkbox"/> Snowboarding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Going to the beach | <input type="checkbox"/> Snowmobiling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hammocking | <input type="checkbox"/> Snowshoeing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hang out with friends/just relax | <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming in a lake |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help take care of the parks (clean up, remove invasive plants) | <input type="checkbox"/> Tubing on the snow |

Parent Focus Group Guide - English

Here's that list again.

Please choose the top three that you haven't done but would like to try OR would do more often if you could:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Animal, wildlife or bird watching | <input type="checkbox"/> Hiking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archery | <input type="checkbox"/> Horseback riding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bird or animal counting/research | <input type="checkbox"/> Kayaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camping | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning about animals and nature with a teacher or naturalist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canoeing | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning about history |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Celebrate with family in the park (birthday, reunion, wedding) | <input type="checkbox"/> Mountain biking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crafts or art in the outdoors | <input type="checkbox"/> Orienteering/map reading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concert outdoors | <input type="checkbox"/> Picnicking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking outside/grilling out | <input type="checkbox"/> Road biking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cross Country Skiing | <input type="checkbox"/> Roller blading/skateboarding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dog walking | <input type="checkbox"/> Running/jogging |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educational farming | <input type="checkbox"/> Scootering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Sledding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Geocaching | <input type="checkbox"/> Snowboarding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Going to the beach | <input type="checkbox"/> Snowmobiling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hammocking | <input type="checkbox"/> Snowshoeing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hang out with friends/just relax | <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming in a lake |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help take care of the parks (clean up, remove invasive plants) | <input type="checkbox"/> Tubing on the snow |

PROYECTO - GUÍA DEL GRUPO DE ENFOQUE PARA PADRES

Introducción

Hoy hablaremos de sus familias y de los parques regionales.

[Hablar sobre el parque regional donde estamos, como también de los que están ubicados en las comunidades aledañas y vecindarios más cercanos de la organización].

Me gustaría saber qué podemos hacer para lograr que los parques sean lugares a donde los jóvenes les guste ir. Para mejorar nuestro sistema de parques regionales para los jóvenes y sus familias, nos valdremos de los comentarios, sugerencias y recomendaciones que ustedes nos brinden. Si en algún momento tienen alguna pregunta por hacer o no entienden algo de lo que digo, no duden en interrumpirme en cualquier momento y levantar la mano para preguntar.

Estaré grabando nuestra conversación para poder recordar y retomar todo lo que digan. Redactaremos un informe por escrito en el que no aparecerán sus nombres.

¿Ahora tienen alguna pregunta?

Preguntas Iniciales

[Los Participantes se familiarizan y se sienten conectados.]

- a) Díganos su nombre, cuál es su código postal, y su actividad favorita al aire libre.
- b) Indíquenos cuáles son las edades de sus hijos.
- c) ¿Por qué es importante para los adolescentes pasar tiempo al aire libre?
- d) ¿Qué beneficios percibe cuando sus hijos pasan tiempo al aire libre?

Actividades en el aire libre

¿Qué suelen hacer usted y su hijo ahora?

¿Han visitado algún Parque o Sendero Regional? (Ver mapas; ofrecen una descripción general del sistema de parques regionales)

¿Su hijo pasa tiempo afuera en contacto con la naturaleza?

- a) ¿Quién organiza las cosas para que este momento se presente (el adolescente, la familia, una organización, la escuela)?
- b) ¿Con qué frecuencia su hijo disfruta de estar al aire libre con la naturaleza?
- c) ¿Alguna vez los miembros de su familia pasan tiempo juntos al aire libre? ¿Qué es lo que más les gusta hacer? (investigar – ¿cuándo? ¿Con qué frecuencia? ¿A dónde le gusta ir? ¿Cómo averiguan y se enteran a dónde ir a pasar un tiempo al aire libre?)
- d) ¿Cómo se dan cuenta de las cosas que hay para hacer fuera de la casa para divertirse?
¿Cómo se entera de las buenas oportunidades que hay para su hijo? (por sondeos, la familia, la escuela, la organización, los medios de comunicación (en este caso, ¿quién?), las redes sociales (¿Cuál?))

Barreras y obstáculos

- ¿Tiene alguna preocupación de que su hijo vaya a estar al aire libre? ¿Qué es lo que le preocupa?
- ¿Alguna vez su familia o el adolescente han tenido o vivido alguna experiencia negativa en los parques o en una salida al aire libre?
- ¿Qué podrían hacer las agencias de parques o los centros urbanos para ayudar a que su familia pase más tiempo disfrutando al aire libre?

[sondeo: ¿Cuáles son las barreras que lo impiden y cómo podemos eliminarlas?]

- ¿Qué le gustaría que su hijo adolescente tratara de experimentar?
- ¿Cuáles son algunas de las cosas que le gustaría que su hijo pudiera aprender a hacer al aire libre en el verano?
- ¿Qué tal si fuera en el invierno?
- ¿En la familia de su hijo, cuáles son los mejores momentos para programar clases, actividades o eventos sociales?

Preguntas finales

- ¿Qué sugerencias tiene para incentivar el uso de los parques regionales en las familias de su comunidad?
- Sus aportes han sido de gran utilidad. Si lo desea, podríamos hacer un seguimiento y continuar comunicándonos con usted enviándole un breve resumen de nuestra conversación de hoy. ¿Le gustaría recibir un resumen escrito o hacer que nuestro equipo vuelva a hablar y retomar lo que aprendimos de todos aquellos jóvenes y padres con los que hablamos?

Hnub no peb yuav tham txog koj tsev neeg thiab tej tshav ua si (regional parks).

[Tham txog tshav ua si uas nyob ntawm peb nrog rau cov tshav ua si uas nyob ze lub koom haum].

Kuv xav paub seb yuav ua li cas cov hluas thiaj li nyiam mus tom tej tshav ua si no. Tej lus comments thiab tswv yim taw qhia los ntawm nej yuav muab coj mus siv los mus txhim kho peb tej tshav ua si rau cov hluas thiab lawv tsev neeg. Yog tias koj muaj lus nug lossis tsis to taub ib yam twg, koj tsa koj txhais tes thiab nug kuv thaum twg los tau.

Yog muaj lus nug, hais kom kuv nres thaum twg los tau. Wb txoj kev sib tham no yuav muab kaw tseg es kuv thiaj li nco txhua yam koj hais. Peb yuav muab siv coj mus sau ib tsab ntawv xov xwm tiamsis yuav tsis tso koj npe tawm.

Koj puas mus lus nug?

I. Cov lus nug qhib:

Cov koom tes los sib paub sib zeem: a. Qhia peb koj lub npe, zauv cheeb tsam koj nyob (zipcode), thiab koj nyiaj ua dabtsi tawm rooj b. Qhia peb koj cov menyuam muaj hnub nyoog li cas c. Vim li cas tseem ceeb rau cov hluas siv sijhawm nyob sab nraud zoov? Thaum koj menyuam tawm rooj ua si sab nraud, koj puas pom tias lawv muaj kev kaj siab li cas?

II. Koj ua dabtsi nrog koj cov menyuam uas nyob rau them tho hluas?

a. Koj puas tau mus xyuas Tej Tshav Ua Si lossis Kev Taug Ua Si (Saib cov map duab; pom tag nrho tej chaw ua si)

b. Koj tus menyuam tho hluas puas siv sijhawm mus nyob nraud zoov nrog tej uas ntuj tsim teb raug? Leejtwg yog tus npaj rau tej sijhawm no (tus hluas, tsev neeg, koom haum, tsev kawm ntawv)? Koj tus menyuam tho hluas mus ua si nraud zoov nrog tej ntuj tsim teb raug ntau npaum cas?

c. Koj tsev neeg puas mus ua si nraud zoov ua ke yam li ib tse neeg? Nej nyiam ua dabtsi? (nug txog – thaum twg? Pes tsawg zaus? Nyiam mus rau thaj chaw twg? Koj txiav txim mus qhov twg li cas?)

d. Koj txiav txim yuav ua dabtsi lom zem thaum tawm rooj li cas? Koj nrhiav txog tej hwv tsam zoo rau koj tus menyuam tho hluas li cas?

(tshuaj ntsuam, tsev neeg, tsev kawm ntawv, koom haum, xov xwm (leejtwg?), hauv online social media (lub twg))

III. Tej qhov daig

- a. Puas muaj tej yam uas koj txhawj txog koj tus menyuam thaum nws mus tawm rooj? Koj txhawj txog dabtsi? b. Koj tsev neeg lossis koj tus menyuam puas tau mus raug tej yam phem thaum tawm rooj li? c. Tej koom haum saib xyuas tshav ua si thiab cov nroog nyob yuav pab koj tsev neeg li cas kom nej thiaj li nyiam mus ua si tawm rooj?

(tshuaj ntsuam: dabtsi yog cov daig thiab yuav ua li cas peb thiaj li rhuav tshem tau?)

Tips for Culturally Competent Catering

Food is an important part of building community. Sharing a meal is a fun, simple, and useful way for people to come together – and a great way to spend a day in the park! We found that catering food for the Youth Serving Organizations was a great way to discuss and debrief our in-park experiences. This document shares specifics from the Met Council Youth and Parks research in hopes of offering you ideas for working within your organization.

During our meetings with the Youth Serving Organizations (YSOs), we sought to understand what foods were appetizing and/or culturally competent for the youth and their organization. Providing foods that youth of different cultures enjoyed and from locally owned vendors was an important part of our process. When we invite new or underserved groups of people into the parks, the foods offered in hospitality need to be inclusive to peoples' cultural diets and tastes.

Expanding options from the foods we serve is a great way to be more culturally inclusive and competent, and to make the parks feel more welcoming to underserved park users. Park agencies and other public sites offering food can ensure that approved site caterers and onsite vendors offer an inclusive set of food options.

As often as possible, we used the [Metropolitan Council's Underutilized Business \(MCUB\)](#) vendors list to select a vendor that would satisfy the needs and tastes of the YSOs. MCUB vendors are minority-owned businesses throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan region. If there were no vendors specifically from our MCUB list near our meeting sites, we applied MCUB principles to select vendors.

When selecting a vendor to work with youth consider or discuss the following:

- ✓ What are the tastes, preferences, and restrictions of the population I am serving?
- ✓ Will this food be enjoyable and accessible to the population I am serving?
- ✓ Are there any allergies to account for?
- ✓ Are there any dietary restrictions that must be accommodated for? (I.e. no pork or beef products, no meat, no shellfish, etc.)
- ✓ How can we uplift minority-owned and underutilized businesses?
- ✓ Is the vendor a minority-owned or locally owned business?
- ✓ Can this vendor provide utensils to accommodate for disabilities?
- ✓ If a vendor is from a chain, consider if there are minority-owned or locally owned businesses that provide the same cuisine
- ✓ Is there room to help build a relationship between the population you are serving and the vendor?

While we remained respectful of cultural dietary restrictions, the foods we catered were not always from the respective cultures of the youth from the YSOs. For example, we ensured that there would be options with no pork-products for a youth group to accommodate Muslim youth in the organization. We provided banh mi from [Mi-Sant Banh Mi Company](#) for one of our meetings with them. Mi-Sant is a local restaurant owned by second-generation Vietnamese American immigrants in Brooklyn Park. Youth were very excited to try banh mi, and one of the YSO leaders asked for *Mi-Sant's* information!

Validity Conversation Activities

Sample Validity Conversation Schedule

6:00 pm: Kickoff, serve dinner and introduction.

Explain research and goals for evening – YSO Adult Leader and Council Research Leader

6:15 pm: 15 minutes Kahoot Quiz – Research team member

6:30: Activity, “Most Important Takeaways” - Research team member

A. Divide youth into groups of four. Give each group a big sticky paper and pens.
“This is an activity for you to share what the most important findings are for the youth & parks study” (Chance to introduce the vocabulary findings in research)

B. Choose a topic:

Big thoughts – What do you want to say about the research activities and how would you answer the research questions: What new things did you think about because of your park day? Why is the park important to you? How do you feel in nature? What do you like to do there?

Big recommendations – Imagine that you have been nominated to give advice to the park system on behalf of youth in the Twin Cities. Write down your top 3-5 recommendations to deliver to the advisory committee?

Invitation – Think about the park you visited. What would an invitation to that park look like? What would your tagline, motto or brand be? Get creative!

C. Each group presents ideas

D. Ask youth for closing comments. What do they notice? How would they summarize the findings of the activity?

7:00 Evaluating the research team’s findings. Agree/disagree activity.

Research team member leads the activity

A. Put up sticky pages with the five biggest “findings” written, one on each one. Distribute sticky notes.

B. Chose the two most important topics. Do you agree or disagree with the finding? Use green for agree and aqua for disagree. Write one sentence about why you agree/disagree and put it on the sticky pad

C. Which themes were youth most interested in? What should we summarize as the “finding”?

7:30 Presentation of certificates – Research Team and YSO Leaders

Visual Methodology Activity

Visual Methodology Activity

Total Time Needed: 3 Hours (1 hour first day & 2 hours second day)

Equipment Needed: Photos, tables for group work, map with all park sites, big sticky papers, tape

Total Staff Needed: At least 5 (1 for each group observation & 1 overall coordinator)

Youth enjoy working with photos. The stories told in photos are related but different from the analysis completed through text or speech. This activity asks youth to collaborate to analyze a collection of photos for theme and aesthetics. It is a method that relies on analysis of the visual. The youth can select photos in a sequence that can tell a story.

Desired outcomes include:

- Analysis of photos to be used in a research project
- Analysis of the validity of research findings through testing whether the research findings correspond with what was observed and photographed at the field site
- Introduction of research terms to youth such as methodology, visual analysis, data, and findings
- Learning to imaging audience and tell a clear story to them
- Reminders and reinforcement about the fun of getting outdoors through working with photos of the outdoors.

Preparation (gathering photos)

Activity leader needs to print the collection of photos for each day. We recommend about 15 photos for a group of ten youth for the first activity on day one and about 50 photos for the second day activity. Photos from the youth and parks research project [are available for use](#). Photos from your organization's field research challenge could also be used.

This activity happened over a two-day period using a collection of photos created during in-park experiences. Research or planning staff will need the collection of photos from an in-park activity. We used fifteen on the first day and fifty on the second day, printed in color on office printer paper.

Some of the photos involved the youth who participated in the visual methodology activity. Other photos were from activities they had not attended. The photos represented a range of activities, scenery, and young people age 14-18. The activity leader will also need a list of themes or concepts that they would like youth to apply ("code") to the photos. In the original activity, youth coded the photos to the themes of the research. Coding could also be done around park and trail planning (amenities, habitats, activities, missing elements).

Visual Methodology Activity

Tuesday 11/19 (First day of 2-day engagement activity)

1. Spread out 15 photos
2. Each person gets to pick a photo
3. Between now and Thursday, think a bit about the photo and what it says about the park. What can someone learn from seeing it?

Thursday 11/21 (Second day of 2-day engagement activity) 4:00-6:00 (2-hour duration)

4:00-4:10:

Recent photo discussion activity.

Define: coding as categorizing data (visual data, in this case) into specific categories. Systematically analyzing how data fits into patterns. Look at photos as data and apply themes to each.

- What did you learn/discuss in looking at the photos?

4:10-4:15:

Explain to youth the collection of photos they are working with. For our activity, we explained that they were looking at photos from across five different parks. Display a map of the park system. Explain and point out relevant park sites.

Get out the photos for youth to work with.

4:15-4:25:

Review of photos taken in park and what makes a quality photo.

Ask if there are any photographers in the group.

Discussion Questions

- ✓ What was our activity with photos in the park (Field research challenge)?
- ✓ What are student photos telling us about the experience of people like you in the park?
- ✓ Lay photos out that correspond to each category/activity.
- ✓ What does this photo tell us about the park visit activity?

4:25-4:35:

Talk about data from photos

Explain visual methodologies – analyzing what we can see in photos that can't always be described in surveys, interviews or other talk.

- ✓ How can we learn from photos/what can we learn from photos?
- ✓ How can this add to our research in a different way than our interviews, for example?

Put one photo up and talk as a group about composition. Describe the rule of thirds.

Visual Methodology Activity

4:35-4:45:

Break into four small groups of youth to discuss the selected photo from prior meeting:

- ✓ What does your photo tell you?
- ✓ Why did you choose this photo when we met at our last meeting?

4:45-5:15:

Code the photos, sorting by theme

Summary of activity: Spread lots of photos (taken by research team or use the youth & parks photos) out. Sort by theme based on 5 main research finding themes. Work as a group to put into categories. This could be adapted to the needs of your project. We worked as an entire group with all pictures (50 photos), but a group could be divided into two groups. Youth were told that it was important that different people agreed with the way photos were thematized, called inter-coder reliability (different people agree what the theme is in the photo).

Youth put thematized groups of photos together by using big sticky notes and tape.

Let group pick themes but offer suggested themes that meet goals of the activity. Youth & parks themes were:

- Staff connecting youth to parks
- History/nature education
- Peer interaction/free time
- Recreation/activity
- Photography/understanding the park visually or through social media or art
- Safety in parks
- Visiting parks with an organization
- Sharing stories in parks
- Using the park to connect to community
- Parks as a time for mindfulness and health
- Parks as a place to be myself

5:15- 5:30:

Pick your favorite and least favorite photos as a group.

- ✓ Share why
- ✓ If you had to add something to a photo what would it be?
- ✓ How does this photo make you feel?

5:30-5:50:

Make a story with ten pictures. Now that you organized the photos, select 10 photos and make a book that is telling a story with them.

Visual Methodology Activity

- What images bring out a clear message?
- Which photos would you curate together to tell a story?
- Which photos would make a good coloring page?
- Create a book with your team
- Write descriptions for photos based on your experience in the parks
- Curate photos together (like an art exhibit or an Instagram feed)

What do photos tell you about parks more broadly?

Where would you like to see photos of parks?

Talk with youth about possible places to post stories:

- On social media?
- On the Youth & Parks Instagram?
- Imagine 5 weeks of posts

Certificate of Completion



THE METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

recognizes



For their leadership and participation in the "Youth and Parks Study"
And their impact on future planning in regional parks, On the 3rd of November 2019.



Darcie Vandegrift, Research Associate, RA

Presented Dec 13, 2019