

HANCOCK PARK DISTRICT JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE: Program Specialist
CLASSIFICATION: Grade 8 – Permanent/Part-time
SUPERVISOR: Naturalist/Program Manager

RESPONSIBILITIES

The primary responsibility of the Program Specialist is to help develop and implement a comprehensive public program that is diverse from a topic, target market, and park location standpoint (i.e., serve all ages in a variety of ways, with a variety of programs, and at a variety of park locations). The Program Specialist is expected to schedule and conduct programs when people are available to participate (weekdays, weeknights, and weekends) and develop programs from four broad program categories, including Environmental Education, Outdoor Education, and Nature Study; History and Living History; Outdoor Recreation, Nature-Based Outdoor Recreation, Outdoor Adventure, and Outdoor Recreation Skills Instructional Courses (Leisure Education Initiative); and General Recreation Programs and Activities.

The Program Specialist is responsible for implementing a six-step program delivery process, including program idea, program development, program description, program planning, program leadership, and program evaluation on a seasonal and year around basis. In addition to public programs, the Program Specialist is expected to lead requested programs (e.g., school programs).

ESSENTIAL DUTIES

1. Meet expectations, including responsibilities and essential duties outlined in the job description, performance evaluation criteria (initiative, dependability, quality, and cooperation), and operational procedures in the Personnel Manual.
2. Incorporate relevant information from the Strategic and Comprehensive Plan (if applicable) into the operation of the Program Department.
3. Develop a comprehensive public program offering on a seasonal and year around basis using at least four broad program categories:
 - A. Environmental Education, Outdoor Education, and Nature Study
 - B. History and Living History
 - C. Outdoor Recreation, Nature-Based Outdoor Recreation, Outdoor Adventure, and Outdoor Recreation Skills Instructional Courses (Leisure Education Initiative),
 - D. General Recreation Programs and Activities

4. Diversify program opportunities and experiences (i.e., serve everyone in a variety of ways). Broaden the range of programs from a topic, target market (age), and location standpoint. Evaluate success. Initiate changes to keep programs fresh, dynamic, and inviting. Schedule programs when people are available to participate, including weekdays, weeknights, and weekends.
5. Manage time efficiently and responsibly, multi-task effectively, and develop and implement a relatively high volume of public programs on a seasonal and annual basis. Ensure a steady workload. During each season of the year, handle a variety of program-related duties, such as public programs, requested programs (e.g., school programs), special events, and meetings while preparing programs for the next season and beyond.
6. Contribute to the overall delivery of public programs by being directly involved in the six-step public program delivery process (program idea, program development, program description, program planning, program leadership, and program evaluation):
 - A) Program Idea. Generate program ideas by visiting parks, trails, and facilities, reading various publications, visiting websites belonging to other leisure service organizations, attending conferences (e.g., National Association for Interpretation and Ohio Parks and Recreation Association), and by using creativity and imagination, interest and passion, experience and knowledge, and work ethic and resourcefulness to get the job done.
 - B) Program Development. Develop and prepare programs to be publicized by completing program worksheets that identify program title, program location, program date, program time, program age group or target market, program goals and objectives, program expenses (activity budget), program description, and the results of program evaluation.
 - C) Program Description. Write program descriptions that explain who, what, when, where, how, and why in a concise and well-written style that informs and educates, helps the reader visualize participation, explains the benefits, generates interest, and entices people to register. Proofread carefully to ensure correct spelling, proper sentence structure and punctuation, and ample content to effectively describe and promote public programs.
 - D) Program Planning. Plan programs by monitoring registrations, confirming minimum registrations (if applicable), and purchasing (if necessary) or gathering equipment, material, and supplies, and set up or prepare for the program in an efficient way (i.e., maximize available time by not spending more time on planning than is really necessary). Following the program, put equipment, materials, and supplies away in an organized fashion for later use, clean and secure the program facility or park location, and repeat the process for the next program.

- E) Program Leadership. Conduct programs in a manner that reflect sound planning, quality, and an understanding of and appreciation for customer service. Lead a variety of programs and activities for participants of all ages.
- F) Program Evaluation. Evaluate programs to determine if program goals and objectives were met and what (if any) changes should be made before the program or a variation of the program is offered again, or not. Document and communicate the results.

7. Consider the following program development concepts:

- A) The “building blocks” concept contemplates progressive program topics (i.e., a variety of programs serving all ages). Programs build on each other in terms of topic, scope, and content as the participant ages to ensure that programs are available every step of the way from the earliest age throughout adulthood. With a building blocks approach, program development becomes strategic and age appropriate. An entire program development campaign can be structured based on this concept. The key to a successful building blocks approach is preschool programs. In essence, preschoolers serve as the foundation upon which to develop future programs for preschoolers as they age and for participants of all ages.
- B) The “not everything in nature” concept emphasizes the fact that not all preschool programs (and programs in general) have to focus on nature or lead with an educational objective. The General Recreation Programs and Activities category is meant to encourage the development of programs other than Environmental Education, Outdoor Education, and Nature Study; History and Living History; and Outdoor Recreation, Nature-Based Outdoor Recreation, Outdoor Adventure, and Outdoor Recreation Skills Instructional Courses (Leisure Education Initiative) in favor of play, recreation, and fun and broadening program topics (i.e., to help create a diverse overall program offering).
- C) The “lead with fun” concept reasons that learning will occur naturally (i.e., learning through play while having fun). Consider the impact of preschool programs (and youth programs in general) with a game or games (fun activities) as the primary program objective or purpose, or as a regular feature within all or most preschool programs.
- D) While it is beneficial for young children to participate in a variety of programs and to do so early and often in an effort to further their development and well-being, it is equally beneficial for older children (e.g., ages 7-12) to participate in programs on a regular basis. Achieve an appropriate balance within youth programs as part of an overall program delivery and customer service strategy.

- E) The program topic and its goals and objectives should help determine who the program is for. The program might be open to all ages or it might be for a particular age and up (e.g., 11 and up or 18 and up) or it might be for a specific age range (e.g., 6 to 12). It is beneficial for youth in particular to participate in programs that are structured and to interact with participants of similar age (e.g., youth ages 8-10). A program with several class sessions over the course of days or weeks and multiple programs with differing topics for the same age group during each season and throughout the year promote interaction, socialization, and enjoyment. Camaraderie among peers and engaging program topics can enhance program quality. This concept also applies to other target markets, such as teenagers (e.g., 13-15), adults, active older adults/50+, and family units.
 - F) The Hancock Park District's Leisure Education Initiative involves a series of outdoor recreation skills instructional courses that introduce outdoor recreation activities, teach fundamental skills, and encourage participation in outdoor recreation over the course of a lifetime. Given the interest in outdoor recreation and outdoor adventure generally as a national trend, and the natural features, parks, trails, and facilities found throughout the Hancock Park System, the development of a nature-based outdoor recreation program, including activities (e.g., destination hiking or backpacking and camping) and outdoor skills (e.g., backpacking instruction) is justified.
8. Perform administration work:
- A) Record program participation and report program statistics on a timely basis and according to the schedule.
 - B) Write program descriptions and submit information on a seasonal basis and according to the schedule.
 - C) Planning, inventory, and purchasing program materials, supplies, and equipment.
 - D) Develop and submit an annual Program Department budget request as directed.
 - E) Participate in public speaking and attend meetings. Attend and participate in monthly Program Department staff meetings.
9. Secure facilities, take care of vehicles and equipment, and safeguard program participants.
10. Enforce land and water use regulations on a situational basis by being aware of what is happening in the parks and on the trails, informing, educating, and encouraging voluntary compliance with park regulations, and seeking assistance from sworn law enforcement officers when public safety is in question and when certain laws are being broken.
11. Work with and supervise volunteers as needed and record volunteer hours.

12. Meet with the Naturalist/Program Manager on a regular basis, as needed, and upon request (either in the office or in the field) to provide updates and seek guidance, discuss ideas and issues, and ensure open and ongoing communication about any and all aspects of program management.

*Essential duties are not to be construed as all-inclusive.
Other duties may be required and assigned.*

QUALIFICATIONS

A bachelor's degree in Parks and Recreation Administration, Natural Resources, Biology, Ecology, Zoology or a related field and at least two years of experience in program planning, program development, and program leadership is preferred. However, any combination of education and experience that demonstrates the ability to perform the essential duties of the position will be considered.

The Program Specialist should be proficient with Microsoft Office software applications and have the ability to communicate in a clear and professional manner both orally and in writing, demonstrate high professional standards and a progressive program management mindset, and be willing to accept new challenges, technologies, and opportunities. The Naturalist/Program Manager should have excellent presentation, customer service, and organizational skills along with the ability to teach and lead participants of all ages and develop and maintain effective working relationships.

The Program Specialist should possess creativity and imagination, have interest and passion for the work, exhibit enthusiasm for the job, demonstrate a strong work ethic and a positive attitude, and be resourceful. Moreover, the Program Specialist should be comfortable working in an environment and culture that values empowerment, ownership, professionalism, responsibility, enjoyment, results, and the freedom to put oneself into the work while adhering to overarching program management criteria and operational procedures.

WORK ENVIRONMENT & PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

Work regularly occurs in a quiet office environment, in a variety of indoor and outdoor program settings, and in the field where noise level is moderate, weather conditions vary from normal to extreme, and environmental conditions vary from developed to primitive. Work requires the ability to exert light to moderate physical effort involving some combination of climbing, balancing, stooping, kneeling, crouching, and crawling; lift carry, push, and pull objects and materials weighing 25 pounds generally and approximately 80 pounds when working with the portable planetarium; coordinate eyes, hands, feet, and limbs in performing skilled movements; and recognize and identify degrees of similarities or differences between characteristics of colors, shapes, sounds, and textures associated with job related objects, materials, and tasks.

EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have read the Program Specialist Job Description and understand the responsibilities and essential duties of my position.

Signature

Date