

1. Recognizing each public park and recreation agency is unique in its purpose, mission, culture, financing, governance, enabling legislation, etc., what does your agency do well in managing its resources to meet its stated goals?

**BREC does really well at:**

**Serving the community by offering thousands of free and affordable healthy activities, serving more than 1-million people in 2021 through events and programs in a state consistently ranked highest in poverty and poor health.**

**Holding storm water. A recent evaluation found BREC's land held nearly 10-billion gallons of water during a historic flood, enough to fill Tiger Stadium 71 times.**

**Actively increasing green infrastructure to protect against future flooding, earning a \$4.7-million watershed initiative grant to enhance the largest construction project in BREC history.**

**Leveraging tax dollars through partnerships, housing the main library, children's museum, parish-wide soccer program, bike-repair work study program, an urban farm community, the first litter boom in a local watershed and many others in its parks.**

**Setting the standard. BREC was among the first park agencies in the nation to earn national accreditation, becoming re-accredited for the sixth time in 2019.**

**Being unique through a mix of parks and facilities which mirror the history and rich natural resources in south Louisiana including a swamp nature center, observatory, equestrian and RV park, performing arts theatre, arboretum, botanical garden, water park, five golf courses, 30-thousand square feet extreme sports park and much more.**

**Providing connectivity as BREC works with state and local partners to implement a bicycle-pedestrian master plan to add 450 miles of connectivity trails in the parish.**

**Serving during disaster such as historic flooding, major hurricanes, devastating ice storms as well as the pandemic. BREC offers emergency camps, virtual programming, mobile recreation units to shelters, distribution of meals and supplies in parks, expansion of free wi-fi across the parish and shelter and staging. BREC received FEMA funding to create strategically located state-of-the-art recreation centers which will house emergency responders/staging during disasters. These two buildings are currently in design.**

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2. Based upon your response to question 1, what is your agency assessing or measuring and how are you measuring what you say you are doing well? Cite 3 examples of assessments or measurements and provide data. Each example will be worth up to 3 points, for a total of 9 points

**BREC created a Partnerships and Development division and hired a consultant to help create a new Community Engagement policy to gain more on-going community feedback. A community survey asked what residents feel are the most important areas on which they should have input. Almost 1,000 respondents, with demographics mirroring those of the parish and 84% who visit parks at least once per month, indicated input is most important for park/facility designs, parish-wide plans, programs, and events.**

**BREC tracks attendance at programs, events, and staffed facilities with over 1 million guests served in 2021. BREC's IT department also deployed an in-house pilot solution to track passive usage, utilizing over 1,000 cameras and artificial intelligence. BREC will use the data for planning and funding purposes. To better leverage private funds, BREC is working with a national sponsorship consulting firm to identify its most valuable opportunities based on usage and visibility.**

**BREC's Natural Resources Management Division created rubrics for scoring parks on their ecological value and natural capital value. The rubrics assess a variety of conditions and services like carbon sequestration, urban heat index and stormwater benefit through reduced runoff. A stormwater runoff coefficient comparison of five BREC parks shows the difference development can make as a fully forested park has a runoff equivalent to 41 Olympic swimming pools, a partially forested community park: 81, one with grow zones: 89, another with partial tree canopy: 110 and a fully developed neighborhood park: 260.**

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3. Cite 3 examples of internally focused initiatives, actions, or programs your agency has undertaken in the last 3 years that demonstrate how it connect(s) with your decision-makers, commissions/boards, business community, partners, and/or coalitions. Describe how you measure the outcome(s) of these efforts. Each example will be worth up to 3 points, for a total of 9 points

**As residents of the parish continue to rely on BREC to meet rapidly increasing needs, obtaining additional funding to meet those needs has become increasingly important. With an intentional focus on high-quality grant writing, BREC recently secured almost \$35-million in grants to construct trails, more green infrastructure, state-of-the-art recreation centers to house first responders/staging areas during disasters and improve ballfield lighting.**

**BREC began a strategic initiative to streamline internal processes and data, to provide more reporting for better decision-making, and to improve customer experiences. The project included the implementation of new software systems for customers to reserve golf tee times and admission for the Zoo, as well as sales for both. The new systems offer streamlined check-in at golf courses, with 10.6% of customers pre-paying through the system. All customers receive customized post round surveys facilitating greater customer interaction and increased feedback. 12.15% of Zoo customers purchased online tickets in 2021 with gift card sales increasing 569%. Memberships are now digital as well, offering the ability to track member sales and promote better customer relationship management.**

**Other than pay, the top request from staff in employee engagement surveys is training. BREC's Training division, purchased a new Learning Management Software and created an extensive online training library in addition to in-person trainings, including customer service and supervisory training. The software allows both staff members and supervisors to keep track of trainings taken, assign courses and know when trainings are overdue.**

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4. Cite 3 examples of externally focused initiatives, actions, or programs your agency has undertaken in the last 3 years that demonstrate its relationship to the members of your community and customers. Describe how you measure the outcome(s) of these efforts. Each example will be worth up to 3 points, for a total of 9 points.

**After passionate debate with community leaders and the public over the location of the Baton Rouge Zoo, BREC is nearing completion on key elements of the first phase of the largest single project in its history, a reimagined Zoo and surrounding park, which received input from more than 4,000 residents through public meetings, surveys, social media, stakeholder meetings and a huge Party in the Park celebration. Despite construction and pandemic/weather related closures, Zoo visitation increased 38% in 2020 and 13% in 2021.**

**In 2021, a state Senator filed a bill to split BREC up into multiple park systems with new Commissions and staff without any input from the public. BREC quickly rallied supporters, partners, and other community constituents who wrote letters and emails to their legislators opposing the bill and also commissioned public input surveys to gather public input which demonstrated opposition. Ultimately, the bill was pulled by the author after almost 100 constituents appeared at the House Committee meeting to formally oppose the bill with only four people in support.**

**Baton Rouge ranks second in the nation for bicyclist deaths. BREC worked with state, City/Parish and planning leaders to create a parish wide Bicycle/Pedestrian master plan to create 450-miles of connectivity trails. The plan received approval in 2020. Seven trail sections have been completed, BREC received a nearly \$4-million grant for a section to connect an underserved area to Downtown and several more are in planning, design, and construction.**

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5. Park & recreation agencies are increasingly called upon to demonstrate the results of their services and practices to decision-makers and the public. Cite 3 outcomes, results, or impacts achieved in the last 3 years that your agency has measured; background about the outcome(s); and how the results were achieved. Each example will be worth up to 3 points, for a total of 9 points.

**BREC is undergoing an economic impact study by the Trust for Public Land to demonstrate its value to the community. Preliminary results show BREC parks increase market value of homes in the parish by nearly \$21-million. It also shows BREC will save taxpayers \$36,224,882 annually in avoided stormwater treatment when additional planned green infrastructure is constructed. BREC parks also currently remove more than 126 tons of pollution from the environment each year.**

**BREC's annual 24-hour Bioblitz event uses citizens to help catalogue species in BREC Parks. In 2019, BREC invited schools and incorporated Louisiana's new science curriculum into the data collection process, allowing students to learn from professional scientists. In 2020, the program went virtual, expanding to two-months, and in 2021, GIS was used to create a dashboard for participants to view. Since the program began, participants have recorded 3,337 species in BREC Parks using the iNaturalist app. The information creates a baseline of data for conservation management plans to meet conservation and resiliency goals. It also informs interpretative signage and nature programs to help visitors understand the biodiversity of BREC parks and south Louisiana.**

**BREC strives to increase equitable access to its parks and amenities. To ensure everyone can visit the Baton Rouge Zoo regardless of income, every Wednesday afternoon, admission is discounted to \$1.50 per person. The Zoo promotes the program on social media and its website. In 2020, the program saw a remarkable 128% increase over 2019 numbers and a 21% increase in 2021. The 2020 increase was due in part to a 50th anniversary celebration in the month of June where admission dropped to 50-cents, although attendance was up every Wednesday afternoon that the Zoo was open that year.**

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6. Park & recreation agencies focus on creativity and innovation. Cite 3 innovations implemented by your agency within the last 3 years that have had a significant impact on service delivery, customer satisfaction, partnerships, financial condition, fiscal sustainability, and/or internal operations. Each example will be worth up to 3 points, for a total of 9 points.

**To demonstrate BREC's commitment to diversity, inclusion and equity, BREC participated in a Disparity Study which reviewed contracts and purchases in partnership with the City/Parish. Following the review, a Statement of Equity was written and adopted by the BREC Commission in January of 2021. A Small Business Opportunity policy was also adopted requiring that disadvantaged businesses (DBE) are given the opportunity to compete for BREC contracts and purchases. BREC currently utilizes 21% of disadvantaged businesses in the parish. The Disparity Study recommended increasing that to 33%.**

**To strengthen conservation efforts, BREC created the Green Force, a trained volunteer group dedicated to creating more native natural areas in EBR Parish. The program works with the Louisiana Master Naturalists providing volunteer opportunities to graduates. Despite the pandemic, Green Force volunteers provided 1,637 volunteer hours in 2020 and another 1,700 in 2021. New volunteers complete an 8-hour training course with existing members taking a recertification course. They were especially valuable in 2020 acting as trail ambassadors when trail use drastically increased during the pandemic, and in 2021 when Hurricane Ida caused damage to every nature trail in the BREC system. Other park systems in the state are now replicating this program.**

**BREC repurposed the significantly underutilized Howell Golf Course, located in an underserved area with high poverty and crime rates. The 114-acre park now offers an adventure playground, state-of-the-art outdoor fitness equipment, heavily utilized trails and fishing pond, sports areas and First Tee area, preserving part of the golf course. A 4-acre urban farm provides fresh fruits and vegetables to the surrounding food desert, and a new recreation center, swimming pool and pool house are in construction. BREC is also combining two golf courses in another underserved area as part of a \$4.7-million watershed project to protect nearby homes and businesses from flooding.**

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7. What initiatives or actions has your agency undertaken in the last 3 years to ensure all members of the community have fair and just access to quality parks and recreation?

**Updated maintenance standards to ensure equability across parks**  
**Passage of Commission Statement on Equity leading to policies, procedures and robust small business procurement program for all BREC purchases**  
**Creation of staff Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee that is holding "Talk Tuesdays," sharing information in staff newsletter and monthly planning meetings**  
**Completed ADA Transition Plan for accessibility across system**  
**Two mobile playground units provide summer, holiday and after school programs in play deserts**  
**Baton Rouge Zoo is the first facility in the parish and third in the state to become certified as a sensory inclusive facility.**  
**Recreation events include a sensory tent for autistic children**  
**\$100,000+ given annually in summer camp scholarships**  
**Serve an additional 5,500 seniors through partnership with local Council on Aging**  
**Host monthly socials for adults with disabilities (virtual through height of pandemic)**  
**Expanded free wi-fi to help children with virtual school and adults with remote work**

8. What initiatives or actions has your agency undertaken in the last 3 years that advance health equity, improve individual and community-level health outcomes and quality of life? Cite efforts undertaken for personnel and /or members of the community that activate and inspire health and wellness.

**Placed brochures in medical offices to highlight health benefits of parks, gave patients brochures with parks and amenities near them**  
**Partnered with Pennington Biomedical Center on "Burn with BREC" calculator on website to calculate calories burned in parks**  
**Partnered with hospitals for COVID-19 testing and vaccinations at BREC locations, provided vaccination clinics for staff**  
**"Play it Safe" campaign encouraged outdoor activity while promoting CDC guidelines to visitors**  
**Created parish-wide bicycle/pedestrian master plan and more than doubled miles of trails in the BREC system**  
**House Bike Share program in seven parks with parish wide usage skyrocketing during the pandemic to 1,500 new users per month, more than 80,000 per year**  
**Placed outdoor fitness stations in 22 parks**  
**Partnered with health providers on special summer camps for kids with asthma and sickle cell anemia**  
**Host Woods Walks for mental health**  
**Expanding urban farm in a park located in a food desert**

9. What initiatives or actions has your agency undertaken in the last 3 years to address the impact of climate change through environmental stewardship, sustainability practices, and environmental programming? Cite efforts undertaken.

**Manage 2,000 acres of conservation land throughout the parish, including two nature education centers, three satellite conservation areas and seven nature reserves**

**Operate Swamp Nature Center preserving the past in an urbanized area**

**Expanded and reorganized conservation staff into separate land management and programming divisions**

**Completed master plan for new community park to be a model for resilience and flood protection design**

**Awarded \$4.7-million watershed initiative grant to improve flood protection in the largest community park in BREC's system**

**Constructed nature center as part of master plan in 500-acre conservation area where two main rivers converge**

**Provide coverage through tree inventory for 22.2% of the parish, removing 444 tons of pollution annually**

**Created Green Force volunteer group which helped rebuild all nature trails after Hurricane Ida**

**Committed \$5-million for \$50+ million project with state, LSU and City-Parish to dredge lakes and implement ambitious master plan in most utilized recreation area**

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10. What challenge(s) has your agency experienced in the last 3 years and what action(s) has your agency undertaken to address the challenge(s)? Cite the agency's role in identifying and addressing the challenge(s), the steps/actions undertaken, and the measured effectiveness of the effort(s).

**On April 2, 2021 (Good Friday), a bill was filed with no prior public input to break the BREC park system into four smaller systems. BREC leadership quickly sprang into action to inform the community about Senate Bill 205 through the creation of a SB 205 webpage, news release, fact sheet, letter to the editor, Fact Check social media page and a text app to communicate updates to followers of the legislation.**

**BREC commissioned a survey to measure community support, gathering more than 1,200 responses in two weeks. Most respondents weren't aware of the bill and the majority of those that were, did not support it. BREC created information packets for legislators, including letters from NRPA and Trust for Public Land explaining the benefits of a large system: dedicated funding stream, ability to leverage staff and purchasing, and offer robust programming and expertise. BREC's Superintendent spoke at City Council meetings, professional organizations, and a Town Hall meeting to answer questions about the bill and made presentations to both Senate and House committees.**

**Result: 90 speakers spoke against the bill with four in support, 19 emails opposed the bill, the Fact Check page received 4,755 visits and on May 27, the bill was pulled from consideration by the sponsor.**

**In agreement with the Senator and to harness community support, BREC embarked on the creation of community advisory committees. Staff met with park systems across the country to learn best practices, empaneled community leaders from across the parish to work with a national and local consultant, commissioned a community engagement survey to learn how and on what topics citizens are most interested in giving input on, and is in the process of creating a community engagement policy that will be followed by the creation of advisory committees strategically located across the parish.**

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Jurisdiction Information

**Note: Much of the following information is helpful in determining which agencies would be most similar for benchmarking purposes. These figures provide agencies with important demographic characteristics of the jurisdictions served by the various agencies. Most of the information can be found on the Census Bureau's website at: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts>**

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Jurisdiction Information

[Jurisdiction Info 10.1.xlsx](#)

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Is your website controlled by the agency or your jurisdiction?

**Agency controlled**

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Select the appropriate population category for the jurisdiction served by your agency.

**Class I (400,001 and over)**

Although not required for participation, does your agency currently hold or is currently going through Commission on Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) accreditation? **Yes**

Jurisdiction Statistics *n/a*

Jurisdiction population growth rate from 2011-2020 (from Census data or estimates) **-0.46%**

Jurisdiction Ethnic Distribution (will not necessarily total to 100%)

[Jurisdiction Ethnic Distribution 11.1.xlsx](#)

Budget and Funding Summary *n/a*

What were your agency/department's TOTAL operating expenditures for FY2017 and FY2021?

[Operating Expenditures 12.1.xlsx](#)

What percentage of your total operating expenditures in FY2017 came from the following sources (total must add to 100%)

[Operating Expenditures 12.2.xlsx](#)

Comments *n/a*

What percentage of your total operating expenditures in FY2021 came from the following sources (total must add to 100%)

[Operating Expenditures 12.3.xlsx](#)

Comments **Self-generated revenues fell in 2020 and 2021 due to pandemic related closures of facilities and lower capacity limits once they re-opened. Golf and the Zoo set records for attendance and revenue, lessening the impact on the operating budget.**

Budget and Funding n/a  
Summary

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What were your agency/department's TOTAL non-tax revenues (Earned Revenue) for FY2017 and FY2021?

[Budget and Funding 13.1.xlsx](#)

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What were your agency/department's total capital budget in FY2017 and FY2021?

[Budget and Funding 13.2.xlsx](#)

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What percentage of your FY2017 capital construction and acquisition budget came from the following sources? (total must add to 100%)

[Budget and Funding 13.3.xlsx](#)

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What percentage of your FY2021 capital construction and acquisition budget came from the following sources? (total must add to 100%)

[Budget and Funding 13.4.xlsx](#)

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Statistical Indicator Summary

[Statistical Indicator Summary 14.1.xlsx](#)

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Facilities n/a

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Please indicate the number of areas and facilities currently owned, leased or in cooperative agreements by your agency/department.

[Facilities 15.1.xlsx](#)

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Facilities n/a

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Please indicate the number of areas and facilities currently owned, managed, leased or in cooperative agreements by your agency/department.

[Facilities 16.1.xlsx](#)

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Facilities n/a

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Please indicate the number of areas and facilities currently owned, managed, leased or in cooperative agreements by your agency/department.

[Facilities 17.1.xlsx](#)

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Facilities n/a

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Please indicate the number of areas and facilities currently owned, managed, leased or in cooperative agreements by your agency/department.

[Facilities 18.1.xlsx](#)

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THANK YOU! n/a

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