

ARPA's Infrastructure Committee: Operations Survey

Summary Report



ARPA is a provincial charitable not-for-profit organization with a voluntary board of directors dedicated to the promotion of recreation and parks and their benefits to the quality of life of all Albertans.

Our Vision...

"A province, and communities within, that embrace and proactively use recreation and parks as essential means for enhancing individual well-being and community vitality, economic sustainability and natural resource protection and conservation."

Our mission...

ARPA strives to build healthy citizens, their communities and their environments throughout Alberta.

For more information on ARPA, our programs or services, or the benefits of recreation and parks, please visit our website at <http://www.arpaonline.ca>.

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ARPA's Infrastructure Committee: Operations Survey

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Introduction

ARPA's Infrastructure Committee, with the help of the consulting firm Randall Conrad and Associates, has completed an operational assessment of community recreation facilities across the Province of Alberta. The following summary of this assessment indicates how recreation facilities and operators generate revenues and expenses as well as how facilities are scheduled / utilized. A brief look of what the future holds for the operations of Alberta community recreation facilities is also included. This information is meant to compliment ongoing ARPA Infrastructure Committee initiatives including the Community Recreation Infrastructure Assessment Program.

Methodology

The methodology used was to administer a survey including a combination of telephone interviews and a self administered questionnaire survey delivered by mail, fax, or email.

The survey instrument was developed by the ARPA Infrastructure Committee and consisted of eight key questions (see survey instrument included in the appendix). The purpose of the survey included, but was not limited to, the identification of sources of revenues and expenses for facility operators, general levels of facility use, operator knowledge of funding sources (grant programs) and user/access fees charged.

Sample

Facility operators from fifteen Alberta communities were contacted and asked to complete a survey questionnaire. Operators from each community were asked to complete the survey for one sample arena, one aquatic facility, and one other recreational facility types that they might have in their respective community. Responses were received from ten communities representing a total of 19 facilities:

- 10 arenas
- 6 pools: 3 outdoor, 3 indoor
- 3 curling rinks

The following chart indicates the communities that were included in the survey:

Sample Communities			
Airdrie	Edmonton	Lethbridge	Beaumont
Entwistle	Lloydminster	Calgary	Grande Prairie
Marwayne	Camrose	Vauxhall	Hinton
Consort	High Prairie	Wood Buffalo	

Key Findings

The following findings include an overview of the operational conditions of arenas, curling rinks and aquatics facilities from a sampling across the Province. All but one of the facilities surveyed were municipally owned and operated. An agricultural society operated one of the facilities surveyed.

It is important to note that the data presented herein should be considered "representative only" for discussion purposes as it is only based on a limited sample of facilities in Alberta. Also, budgeting practices differ between municipalities and no two recreation facilities are exactly alike.

Operational Budgets

The recreation facilities which are analyzed in this report are located in different municipalities and have varied facility components. That being said, the following analysis attempts to provide average operational budget breakdowns for four facility categories, namely:

1. arenas
2. arenas with curling rinks (multiplexes)
3. indoor aquatics centres, and
4. outdoor aquatics centres.

Weeks of operation for arenas differed depending on rural or urban locale. For instance, arenas in larger and mid-sized centers provided ice between 39 and 41 weeks per year whereas arenas in smaller centres provided ice between 19 and 24 weeks per year. Hours of operation in arenas also differed between urban and rural centers as arenas in mid- and large-sized centers were found to operate between 16 and 17 hours per day while arenas in smaller centers operated between 9 and 12 hours per day.

Indoor pools were found to be in operation 50 weeks per year, 14 to 17.5 hours per day while outdoor pools were open 13 weeks per year, 12 hours per day.

Operational budgets were provided by participating facility operators. An overview of the averages of these operational budgets by facility type are as follows:

Table 1: Operational Budget Overview by Facility Type				
	Arenas (w/o Curling)	Arenas (w/ Curling)	Indoor Aquatics Centres	Outdoor Aquatics Centres
Sample Size	5	3	1	3
Revenues	\$289,345	\$178,385	\$512,767	\$36,466
Expenditures	(\$340,015)	(\$257,880)	(\$1,037,683)	(\$64,462)
Net Operations	(\$50,670)	(\$79,495)	(\$524,916)	(\$27,996)
Recovery on Operations	85%	69%	49%	57%

Note: these operating budget figures do not include capital cost recovery (i.e. debenture borrowing to construct the facility)

As can be seen, the average recovery on facility operations is between 57% and 85% depending on the type of facility. Aquatics centers require considerably more subsidy in operations as compared to arenas and curling rinks.

Extrapolating these results to the entire province (see Table 2), Albertans who use facilities invest over \$55.5M on an annual basis into recreation facilities through user fees for indoor and outdoor pools, arenas and combined arena / curling rinks. This does not account for the user fees collected in major multiplex facilities, community halls, or other community recreation facilities.

Table 2: Municipal Subsidy of Operational Deficits by Facility Type				
Facility Type	# in Province	Revenues	Expenditures	Net Operations
Indoor / Outdoor Pools	64	\$ 13,918,421	\$ 36,265,348	\$ (22,346,927)
Arenas	113	\$ 32,695,958	\$ 38,421,723	\$ (5,725,765)
Arenas With Curling	50	\$ 8,919,239	\$ 12,894,020	\$ (3,974,780)
Total	227	\$ 55,533,618	\$ 87,581,090	\$ (32,047,472)

Based on the results of the research presented in Table 2, municipalities subsidize the operation of indoor and outdoor pools, ice arenas and combination ice arenas/curling rinks by over \$32M on an annual basis.

As mentioned, budgeting practices for facilities differ considerably as does the allocation of costs in facility budgets. Therefore the best way to draw conclusive information from the budgets provided in this research is to understand proportional revenues and expense levels. The following charts provide average percentage of total revenue and expense breakdowns for the four facility categories.

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Revenue Breakdowns

Figure 1: Ice Arenas (Single or Twin)

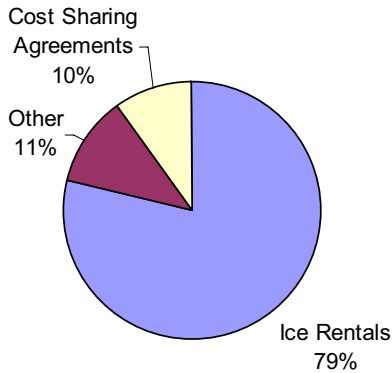


Figure 2: Ice Arenas with Curling Rinks (Multiplexes)

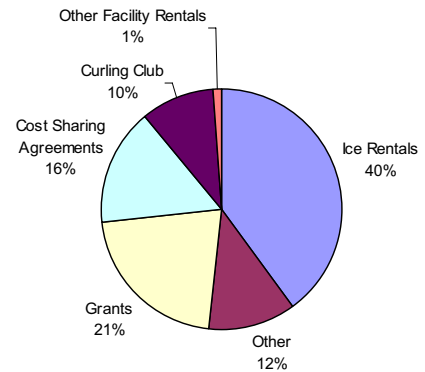


Figure 3: Outdoor Aquatic Centres

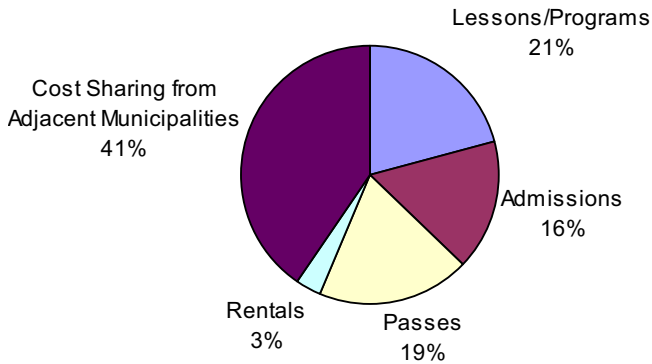
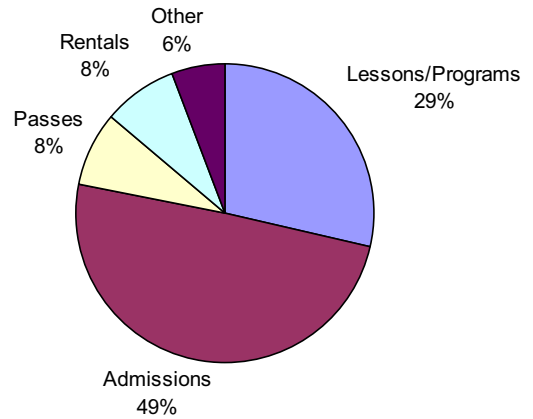


Figure 4: Indoor Aquatic Centres



Expense Breakdowns

Figure 5: Ice Arenas (Single or Twin)

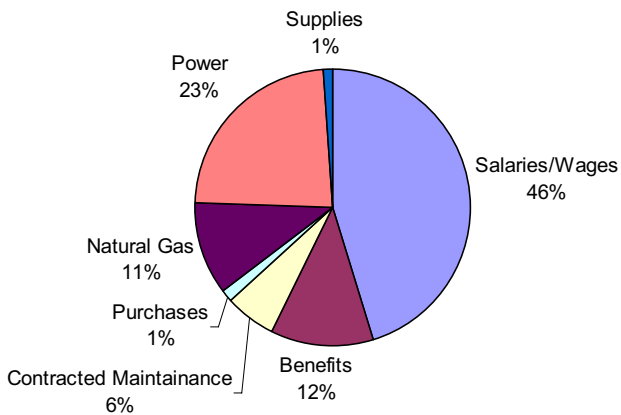
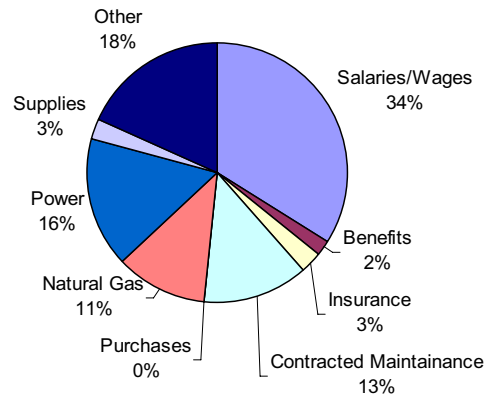


Figure 6: Ice Arenas with Curling Rinks (Multiplexes)



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Figure 7: Outdoor Aquatic Centres

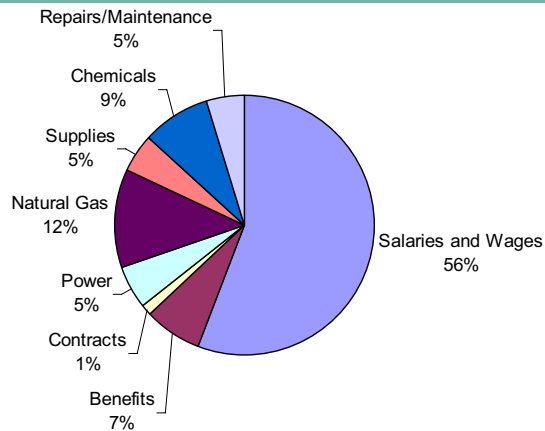


Figure 8: Indoor Aquatic Centres

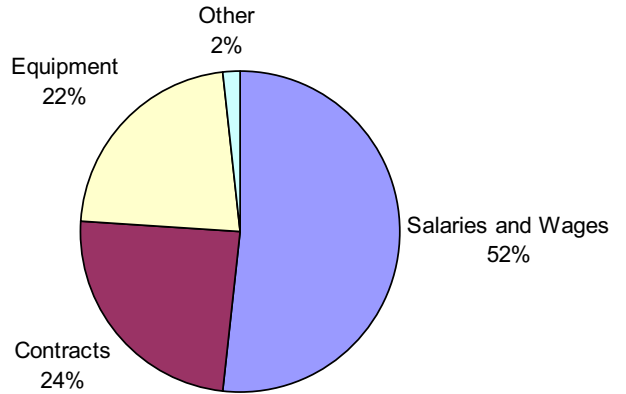


Table 3: Revenue and Expense Percentage Breakdown - Arenas

Budget Item	Percent of Total for Ice Arenas without Curling Rinks	Percent of Total for Ice Arenas with Curling Rinks
Revenues		
Ice Rentals	89.7%	48.8%
Other	12.9%	14.6%
Grants	0.0%	26.3%
Cost Sharing Agreements	11.3%	19.0%
Curling Club	0.0%	12.2%
Other Facility Rentals	0.0%	1.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Expenses		
Salaries/Wages	51.3%	34.5%
Benefits	13.5%	1.9%
Insurance	0.0%	3.0%
Contracted Maintenance	7.1%	13.2%
Purchases	1.6%	0.1%
Natural Gas	12.4%	11.5%
Power	26.3%	16.3%
Supplies	1.3%	2.7%
Misc.	0.0%	0.0%
Debtenture	0.0%	10.2%
Other	0.0%	18.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

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Table 4: Revenue and Expense Percentage Breakdown – Swimming Pools

Budget Item	Indoor Pools	Outdoor Pools
Revenues		
Lessons/Programs	28.7%	25.6%
Admissions	49.2%	19.9%
Passes	8.1%	23.7%
Rentals	8.1%	3.6%
Other	5.9%	0.0%
Cost Sharing from Adjacent Municipalities	0.0%	49.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Expenses		
Salaries and Wages	51.8%	58.9%
Benefits	0.0%	7.5%
Contracts	24.3%	1.6%
Equipment	22.2%	0.0%
Power	0.0%	5.5%
Natural Gas	0.0%	12.8%
Supplies	0.0%	5.2%
Chemicals	0.0%	9.0%
Repairs/Maintenance	0.0%	4.9%
Other	1.8%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Life Cycle Budgeting

Facility operators were asked whether or not they operated with a facility life cycle plan and also to indicate how much is spent on an annual basis on facility life cycle budgeting. In total, 43% of respondents stated that they did in fact have a life cycle capital plan for their respective facility. In terms of the dollar amount contributed on an annual basis operators used a variety of methods including a fixed amount (with non formal basis), a percentage of facility capital value and a percentage of operational expenditures. Half of the facility operators surveyed stated that there were plans for major renovations / upgrades to their respective facilities in the near future.

Staffing

For arenas, an average of three full time (3 full-time equivalent) permanent staff and two and a half part time (1.25 full-time equivalent) seasonal staff were allocated to operations, maintenance and scheduling per ice sheet (although there were economies of scale realized by multi-sheet facilities).

Indoor pools averaged 5 full time (5 full-time equivalent) permanent staff, 5.5 full time seasonal staff, and 30 part time permanent staff (15 full-time equivalent). Outdoor pools had no full time permanent staff and averaged 6.5 full time seasonal staff and 2.5 part time seasonal staff.

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Average salary / wage rate levels for responding facility operators were as follows:

Category	Low Range	High Range	Typical
Junior Lifeguard	\$8.00 - \$13.43	\$8.30 - \$14.35	\$10.00
Senior Lifeguard	\$10.75 - \$17.04	\$11.75 - \$20.27	\$12.00 - \$13.00
Arena Operator	\$16.22 - \$19.94	\$16.79 - \$21.86	\$17.00 - \$18.00
Arena Maintenance	\$8.50 - \$14.86	\$15.34 - \$18.00	\$16.00 - \$17.00

Facility Usage

The level of facility usage also depends on the size of community which the facility is located in. Facilities in small-sized communities experience between 15,000 – 26,000 users per year whereas mid-sized communities see, on average 70,000 users and large-sized communities see an average 150,000 users per year. Note that these numbers have been collected by facility operators and are based on user visits only (I.E. not including spectators).

In terms of user types for facilities, pools are more likely to be used by seniors than are arenas. Arena users are more likely to be youth (70% – 93% of users) while pool users are more evenly split between youth and adult, with youth comprising 41% - 53% of users, while adults constitute 39% - 46%.

School use of facilities was provided through formal joint use agreements in 77% of the facilities assessed with compensation for use varying between agreements.

Facility operators were also asked to list and explain successful programs that they have recently implemented. In response to this question, two swimming pool operators noted the success of junior lifeguard programs and themed swims (i.e. Late Night, School-Based, etc...). New programs for arena operators included women's hockey and parent-tot skate programs.

Grant Awareness

Facility operators were questioned about their awareness and associated access of common provincial and federal grant programs. These programs, listed in the table below, are distributed by provincial and federal government bodies for the upgrade and renovation of existing facilities as well as the design and construction of new facilities.

Grant Program	% of Facility Operators Aware of Program	% of Facility Operators Accessing the Program in the Past 5 Years	Dollar Amount of Grants Accessed (if applicable)
General Facility Grant Programs			
Community Facilities Enhancement Program (CFEP) – <i>Alberta Gaming</i>	100%	81%	\$9,000-\$250,000
Agricultural Initiatives – <i>Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development</i>	44%	6% (only one facility was operated by an Agricultural Board)	n/a
Centennial Grant – <i>Alberta Community Development</i>	81%	19%	\$3,000-\$1,000,000
Community Initiatives – <i>Alberta Gaming</i>	100%	56%	\$3,419-\$2,000,000
Infrastructure Canada-Alberta Program (ICAP) – <i>Alberta Infrastructure</i>	56%	19%	\$15,870 (only one responded with a value)
<i>*Others grants mentioned included the Summer Career Placement Grant</i>			
Green Initiative Grants			
MeFirst – <i>Alberta Municipal Affairs</i>	56%	0%	n/a
Energy Innovators	25%	0%	n/a
<i>*Other green initiative grant programs mentioned included the Rubber Recycling Association of Alberta (flooring subsidy) and the Development Initiatives Program (Quality of Life Grant)</i>			

Planned Development

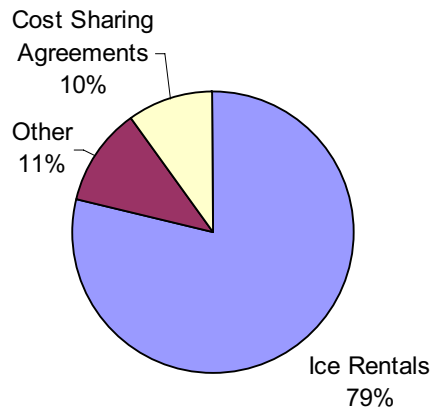
When asked if there were any major plans for new recreation facility development 38% (6 communities) stated that there were no plans for development while 25% (4 communities) indicated that there were plans for twin ice arena development in each respective community. Other new or renovation planning for facilities included aquatics centre renovations, a skate park, and an outdoor water park.

Future Trends

A predominant trend in community recreation facility development and programming in Alberta today is the leisure mall or multiplex concept. This concept entails building clusters of facilities together under one roof and/or on one site. Although there are numerous savings in terms of operating costs of clustered facilities (i.e. utilities, staffing, mechanical systems, etc...) another more financially significant attribute to the leisure mall concept is the ability for the operator to charge spontaneous use access fees that provide value to users through choice and convenience of activity. Spontaneous use is defined as activity participation opportunity(s) that can be accessed at any time during the day and do not require scheduling commitment.

As this trend becomes more widespread, it will cause a shift in the operational budgeting of recreation facilities. Take, for example, the average operational budget breakdown for an arena / curling rink facility as calculated in previous sections of this study.

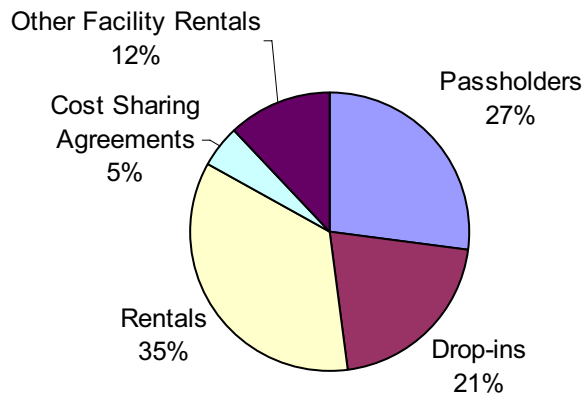
Figure 9: Revenue Breakdown in Ice Arenas (Single and Twin)



The major portions of revenue include rental fees, or an exchange for structured use of the facility. If the arena / curling rink facility were programmed to accommodate more spontaneous use, not necessary excluding structured users (renters), but sharing available the facility with drop in patrons, the breakdown of revenues changes dramatically.

The following revenue breakdown is estimated based upon information provided by larger multi-plex recreation centre facility operators throughout the Province:

Figure 10: Revenue Breakdown Typical Multiplex Facility



It is important to realize that this shift in provision to include more spontaneous use activities (and therefore services which compliment the charging of monthly pass fees) had not necessarily been at the expense of structured users. This shift in recreation service provision is due to the inclusion of ancillary facilities added to dedicated use / rental facilities that are available for spontaneous use at all times such as leisure ice, fitness / wellness areas, and walking tracks to name a few.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Although the information contained in this report is informative, it is important to realize that statistical significance of survey results on a province-wide basis is limited. Conclusions made from facility types/categories cannot be made for all similar facilities in the province, and it does not include all types of recreation facilities (i.e. major multi-component recreation facilities, community halls, stand alone curling rinks, agricultural facilities, etc...). Despite this fact, the report template and the data therein will act as a springboard for further research to be conducted with the ARPA community recreation facility inventory initiative to begin in 2006. As more information is collected, stronger correlation can be made between the averages presented in this report and what should be expected for similar independent facilities.

Appendix: Survey Instrument

To: Alberta Recreation Facility Operators

Dear Sir or Madam,

The Alberta Parks and Recreation Infrastructure Committee has retained the services of Randall Conrad and Associates to complete a recreation facility research project dealing with facility operational issues.

The following questionnaire has been developed by Randall Conrad and Associates in conjunction with the ARPA Infrastructure Committee and will be used to collect data from recreation facility operators from across the Province.

Our goal in this project is to determine key operating information for different types of recreation facilities across Alberta. This includes all aspects of operation, use, budgeting, marketing, and programming. When complete the information will provide insight into how facilities are operated in the Province.

The formal deliverables for this project have been identified as follows:

Compile a database outlining and comparing operational practices and budgets for select indoor recreation facilities throughout the Province of Alberta.

Prepare a working document study that will categorize findings for different types of facilities and different types of communities and identify average, or common, industry practice and develop industry benchmarks as a resource for the ARPA and municipal facility operators across the Province.

The deliverables will be made available to operators from across the Province so as to provide a broader perspective in facility operations and provide operational benchmarks for operators.

Please take the time to fill out this questionnaire as your input is greatly appreciated. As you will notice, some of the questions may or may not pertain to your operation depending on the type and size of the facility. If you cannot answer some questions, please leave them blank. If you have any other question about the survey or project, please feel free to contact Mike Roma, of Randall Conrad and Associates, at 780-416-9301 during normal business hours.

Thank you for your input in this matter,

Sincerely,



M. Roma

ARPA Infrastructure Committee
Operations Market Research Questionnaire

Facility information

- Facility Name: _____
- Address: _____
- Phone Number: _____
- Contact: _____
- Ownership of Facility and Site (i.e. municipal, non-profit, private):
 - Facility: _____
 - Site: _____
- Operational Responsibility of Facility (i.e. municipal, non-profit, private): _____

Facility Inventory	Description	Facility Specifics	Annual Weeks of Operation	Hours of Operation (peak season)
Arena	Single Sheet Twin Other (explain): _____	Sized of Ice: <input type="checkbox"/> NHL <input type="checkbox"/> Olympic Type of Ice: <input type="checkbox"/> Natural <input type="checkbox"/> Artificial Dimensions (explain): _____		
Curling Rink	# of Sheets			
Aquatics Center (indoor)	Leisure Based Competition Based Combination	<input type="checkbox"/> Hot Tub <input type="checkbox"/> Sauna <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Room <input type="checkbox"/> Family Change Volume of Water: _____		
Aquatics Center (outdoor)	Leisure Based Competition Based Combination	<input type="checkbox"/> Hot Tub <input type="checkbox"/> Sauna <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Room <input type="checkbox"/> Family Change Volume of Water: _____		
Indoor field house / Indoor soccer	Single pitch Twin Other (explain): _____	Amenities: Walking track Flooring: _____		
Fitness Center	Cardio / Strength Aerobics Combination			
Child Care Facilities	Day Care Drop-in Care Combination			
Lease Spaces	Retail Food and Beverage Other: _____	Amount of Space (square feet): _____ Lease Rate: _____		
Meeting Rooms	Community use Internal use Combination	# of Rooms: _____ Size of rooms: _____		
Multipurpose Rooms	Community use Internal use Combination	# of Rooms: _____ Size of rooms: _____		

Facility budget information...

Please list below the Operational Revenues and Expenses that apply to your facility (if a category does not apply to you, please put n/a, if the figures are unknown, please put unknown)

Operational Revenues

Revenue Component	Amount
Arena	
Aquatics	
Curling Rink	
Field House / Indoor Soccer	
Fitness Center	
Child Care Services	
Fitness & Wellness Programs	
Leased Spaces	
Multi-purpose/Meeting Rooms, etc	
Food and Beverage Sales	
Gaming – Bingos, Casinos, etc...	
Municipal Support (local)	
Municipal Support (surrounding municipalities)	
Other operational grants	
Sponsorship / Advertising Revenues	
Other	

Overall Facility Operational Expenses

Expense Component	Amount
Utilities: Electricity	
Utilities: Gas	
Utilities: Water and Sewer	
Advertising	
Telephone / Internet	
Insurance	
Contracted Services (List: _____)	
Salaries and Wages	
Supplies	
Repairs and Maintenance	
Equipment	
Cost of Good Sold	
Other	
Total	

Does your facility have a multi-year capital replacement plan (i.e. lifecycle plan)? (Y/N) _____

If so, how much is budgeted on an annual basis for life cycle costs? (Please briefly explain rationale)

Are you planning major facility replacement or upgrade in the next 5 years (Y?N) Please explain.

Staffing...

Number of Full Time Permanent staff: _____

Number of Full Time Seasonal staff: _____

Number of Part Time Permanent staff: _____

Number of Part Time Seasonal staff: _____

Wage Grid

Staff Category	Wage Range (Wage/Hour)	
	Low	High
Lifeguards - Junior		
Lifeguards - Senior		
Arena Operator		
Arena Maintenance		
Other...		

Staff Certification

Staff Category	# of Certified Staff	AARFP Certification Achieved
Lifeguards Part Time		Level I, II, or III
Lifeguards Full Time		Level I, II, or III
Head Lifeguards		Level I, II, or III
Arena Operator		Level I or II
Arena Maintenance		Level I or II
Other...		

Facility Usage (if available)...

Total number of annual facility users: _____

Users by facility component

Facility Component	Estimated Annual Users
Arena	
Aquatics	
Curling Rink	
Field House	
Fitness Center	
Child Care Services	
Fitness & Wellness Programs	
Multi-purpose/Meeting Rooms, etc	
Other	

User Demographics (if available)...

Of the total facility users, please indicate the percentages that are:

- Seniors _____
- Youth _____
- Adults _____

Of the total facility users, please indicate the percentages that are:

- Male _____
- Female _____

Do you have a joint use agreement with schools? (Y/N)_____

- If yes, is this agreement formal / informal? (Y/N)_____
- Does the facility get compensated for such use? (Y/N) Please explain.

- If yes, how many annual hours is each facility component used?

Facility Component	Estimated Annual Hours of Use
Arena	
Aquatics	
Curling Rink	
Field House	
Fitness Center	
Fitness & Wellness Programs	
Multi-purpose/Meeting Rooms, etc	

Market information...

Market Definition	Population	Increasing / Decreasing
Local Municipality		
Facility Market Draw (Estimated travel time: 30 minutes)		

Program Information...

What types of programs / events take place in your facility? (Please check all that apply.)

Program / Event	Youth Ages 0-18	Adult Ages 19-49	Senior Ages 50+
Organized sports leagues			
hockey			
curling			
lacrosse			
ball hockey			
other			
other			
other			
other			
Organized programs			
figure skating			
walking			
fitness / wellness / aerobics programs			
nutritional counseling			
personal training			
drop-in sports programs			
other			
Spontaneous use activities			
Public skating			
Shinny hockey			
Fitness / wellness training			
Public gymnasium time			
Other			
Special events			
community wide events (i.e. fairs, exhibitions, etc...)			
Provincial level sporting events			
other			
other			

Have you offered any new programs that you would consider to be particularly successful in the past five years?
(Y/N) Please explain.

Awareness of grant opportunities...

Please fill in the following chart related to facility enhancement grant programs...

Grant Title	Are you aware of this program?	Have you accessed this program in the past 5 years?	How much assistance did you receive from this program in the past five years?
Community Facility Enhancement Program (CFEP)			
Agriculture Initiatives Grant			
Centennial Grant Program			
Community Initiatives Program			
Infrastructure Canada-Alberta Program (ICAP)			
Other:			
Other:			

Please fill in the following chart related to Energy Practices grant programs...

Grant Title	Are you aware of this program?	Have you accessed this program?	How much assistance did you receive from this program?
Me First Interest Free Loan			
Energy Innovators Initiative (Federal)			
Other:			
Other:			

Are you aware of any other grants that may be applicable to your facility and/or programs offered? (Y/N)
Please explain. _____

Are there any plans for the development of major new or upgraded recreation facilities in your municipality?
(Y/N) Explain _____

User Rates...

Please indicate your fees and charges (if applicable) for activities that apply in your facility:

General Facility Fees:

- Youth monthly pass access rate _____
- Adult monthly pass access rate _____
- Senior monthly pass access rate _____
- Family monthly pass access rate _____

Arena Fees:

- Youth Prime Time _____
- Youth Non-prime Time _____
- Adult Prime Time _____
- Adult Non-prime Time _____
- Pad Rental Rate (Daily, ice out) _____

Curling Fees:

- Youth Prime Time Per Sheet _____
- Adult Prime Time Per Sheet _____
- Youth Non-prime Time Per Sheet _____
- Adult Non-prime Time Per Sheet _____
- And / or _____
- Youth Club Membership Fees: _____
- Adult Club Membership Fees: _____
- Senior Club Membership Fees: _____

Field house Fees:

- Youth Prime Time Per Pitch _____
- Adult Prime Time Per Pitch _____
- Youth Non-prime Time Per Pitch _____
- Adult Non-prime Time Per Pitch _____

Aquatics Fees:

- Youth Drop-in _____
- Adult Drop-in _____
- Seniors Drop-in _____
- Family Drop-in _____
- Tank rental _____

Thank you very much for your time and assistance in providing your facility information. If you have any questions, comments or feedback regarding the this survey or its content please contact Mike Roma, of Randall Conrad and Associates Ltd. at (780) 416-9301.