Findings and Recommendations of the Partnerships Committee

Transformation Team

TRANSFORMING
California State Parks

March 2016

Table of Contents

Section 1: Introduction

This report, developed by the Partnerships Committee (Committee) on behalf of the California Department of Parks and Recreation's Transformation Team, sets forth findings and recommendations for improving how the California Department of Parks and Recreation (Department) and its partners can work together to advance the mission of the Department through mutual commitment and mutual accountability.

In making these recommendations, the Committee emphasizes that the value of partnerships lies in the outcomes achieved: improving management of cultural and natural resources, serving visitors, and connecting the value of Parks to the citizens of California. The Department has a long history of working with a wide variety of partners, such as cooperating associations, concessionaires, non-profit organizations, and other public agencies. The findings and recommendations in this report build on the experience and lessons learned from what has worked and what has not worked.

This report creates a foundational framework for the Department to consider for implementation. Some elements may be appropriate for incorporating into the Department Operations Manual and others into a toolkit/handbook. The Committee also recognizes that key elements of the findings and recommendations must be integrated and aligned with the work of the Transformation Team's Operations Committee. The final section of this document outlines next steps for implementation.

These findings and recommendations draw on a substantial body of earlier work on partnerships created by the Parks Forward Commission. This work has been further refined through interviews with Department personnel and current partners, input from a series of Partnerships Advisory Committee convenings, and input from a broad array of current and potential partners and other stakeholders via webinars and a survey.

Partnerships, by their very nature, are mutual undertakings. Although this report focuses on how the Department can enhance its approach to partnerships, partner organizations can also look to this document for insights on how they, too, can improve how they engage with the Department.

Section 2: Vision for Partnerships

2.1 Grounded in the Mission

The Committee's vision for how the Department should work with and through partnerships is fundamentally anchored in the belief that fulfilling the Department's mission in the most impactful, effective, and efficient ways requires the Department to work more intentionally, effectively, and sincerely through partnerships. To do so successfully, both the Department and its partners must improve how they engage, communicate, and work together.

2.2 The Vision

The Department's mission is *"to provide for the health, inspiration, and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation"*.

With this as a starting point, the Committee proposes the following vision for how the Department and its partners should work together:

The Department will best achieve its mission through the intentional, proactive use of partnerships in which the Department and partners:

- Leverage each other's expertise
- Innovate, learn, and improve
- Build mutual trust and accountability

The Committee believes that fulfilling the Department's mission requires the skills and expertise of partners, which is gained through intentional and proactive relationships. There are many effective partners working with the Department today, and there are opportunities for increasing the number, quality, and effectiveness of such partnerships. This can be accomplished when the Department and partners:

- **Engage with each other to optimize each party's strengths and contributions.** The Committee believes that the skills, capabilities, capacity, and funding required to optimally fulfill the Department's mission will be found both inside and outside the Department. Partners can provide increased capacity and capabilities that advance the Department's mission, including the ability to attract new sources of funding.

- **Regard each other as valued partners, and build relationships of mutual transparency, trust, and accountability.** The Department and partners should strive to make their partnerships as effective as possible, characterized by:
    o A holistic orientation to building and maintaining partnerships, leveraging the full range of each party's strengths and potential contributions.
    o Continued trust and respect for the skills, expertise, and value brought by each partner.
    o Creativity and flexibility in creating and structuring partnerships and increased ongoing support for partnership efforts.
    o Continuous communication and transparency, designed to add value for all partnering entities.

- **Commit to innovation and continuous improvement.** The Department today has many innovative and successful partnerships from which the Department should learn in order to nurture high-performing partnerships across the state. To assess collective progress and fine-tune approaches to partnerships, the Department should intentionally track and analyze metrics, including such things as:
    o **Input metrics**. E.g., increases in: the number of creative programs and services across the Department; volunteer hours; the standardization of partnering skills
    o **Relationship metrics.** E.g., explicit declarations of shared value; number of partnerships with effective and timely communication protocols and schedules
    o **Outcome metrics.** E.g., increases in: quality and/or number of services for natural/cultural resource management; relevancy to California's changing visitor demographic; services that enable park resources to be devoted to other needs; revenues; public engagement; scope, breadth, and depth of services that are provided; quality of resource management; quality of the visitor experience; public appreciation and support of parks
    o **Impact metrics.** E.g., visitor services goals reached; improvements in resource protection; increases in attendance and diversity

Ultimately, this will require not just a shift in the policies, functions, and practices of the Department, but also a cultural shift—which is already taking place under the leadership of the Director—in how the Department views, values, and works with partners, and vice versa. As one interviewee observed, "Partnership is a way of behaving. It's not a policy phenomenon; it's a cultural one." In driving towards this vision, careful attention must be paid to ensuring a holistic view by not just simply implementing the structures and systems put forth in this document, but by maintaining a strong cultural orientation to the value of partnerships in both formal and informal ways.

Section 3: Understanding the Current Context

3.1 Types and Dimensions of Partnerships

Partners working with the Department today may be viewed through four related, but separate, lenses:

- **Department Function:** the Department or park-related function(s) that a partner fulfills

- **Type of Entity:** the type of partner entity

- **Partner Assets:** the assets and capabilities a partner contributes

- **Type of Agreement:** the type of legal or contractual agreement a partnership uses that defines their relationship with the Department

Additional descriptive detail on these dimensions of partnerships is provided in the accompanying table:

TYPES AND DIMENSIONS OF PARTNERSHIPS

DEPARTMENT FUNCTION *the **Departmental function(s)** that a partner fulfills*	In high-performing parks today, the Department focuses its resources on those park functions where its abilities are strongest or most critical, and looks to partners to perform those park functions for which the partners are well-suited. The exact mix of functions varies by unit depending on park priorities, park assets and capabilities, and partner assets and capabilities. The mix of park programs and functions include: **Operational Functions:** • HQ & District Administration • Facilities • Natural Resources • Cultural Resources • Public Safety – Enforcement and Aquatics • Park Operations • Defensive Planning and Compliance • Service Centers **Service-Driven Functions:** • Community Engagement • Concessions Management • Marketing / Public Relations • Partnerships • Recreational Services • Revenue Development • Interpretation and Education • Volunteer Management

TYPE OF ENTITY
 	
*the **type of entity** that a partner is*
	Current and potential partners include:
	• **Academic institutions**
	• **Community-based organizations (CBOs)** including:
	  – Local tourism agencies
	  – Nonprofits serving specific constituencies (e.g., underserved youth, diverse communities)
	  – Service organizations
	• **Foundations and other philanthropic organizations**
	• **For-profit businesses both big and small, including concessionaires and tour operators**
	• **Government agencies at the national, state, regional, and local levels** (e.g., NPS, DWP, county and city agencies) **and emergency responders**

	• **Not-for-profits, including:**
	  − Friends Groups/Cooperating Associations
	  − Natural resource preservation organizations at the national, state, regional, and local levels
	  − Cultural resource preservation organizations at the national, state, regional, and local levels
	  − Conservation advocacy organizations at the state, regional, and local levels
	• **Tribal entities**
	• **Volunteers and volunteer organizations**
	• **Youth Corps**

PARTNER ASSETS *the **assets and capabilities** a partner contributes*	At a high level, the kinds of assets and capabilities that are valuable in partnerships include the following: • **Financial resources and fundraising capabilities** • **Relationship assets** (e.g., relationships with local community-based organizations or local businesses) • **Specialized skills and knowledge** (e.g., scientific, technical, interpretive, historical perspective) • **Additional capacity** (i.e., staffing) • **Reputational assets** (i.e., credibility with certain stakeholder groups) • **Creativity** (i.e., non-traditional approaches to providing services, revenues, fees, products)
TYPE OF AGREEMENT *the type of legal or contractual **agreement** a partnership uses*	**Most commonly-used agreement types:** • Concession Contracts • Contract for Services • Cooperating Associations Agreements • Fundraising / Donor Agreements • MOUs • Operating Agreements • Special Event Permits **Other agreement types:** • Joint Powers Authority (JPA) Agreements • Partner Agreements • Sponsorship Agreements • Task Agreements (NPS) • Volunteer in Parks Program (VIPP) Agreements • EZ Form (new proposed agreement type)

3.2 Priority Areas for Improvement

Although the Department enjoys many partnerships today, including a number of high-performing partnerships, the Committee identified four priority areas to drive growth in the number and quality of partnerships:

- **Leadership and partnering skills:** High-performing partnerships require the practice of fundamental proven principles and protocols and clear agreement on goals and responsibilities by all involved parties. These skills should be more robustly developed and embedded across Department personnel and partners alike.

- **Policies and practices:** The Department must manage obligations under externally-imposed statutory requirements (e.g., those related to working with the Department of General Services) as well as internal Departmental policies and procedures. These internal policies and procedures are not always well understood nor are they consistently interpreted across the Department. And, in

some cases, these policies can be overly burdensome and not partner-friendly. The Department should explore opportunities to update relevant policies in ways that will facilitate more streamlined processes and improve the Department's ability to foster strong partnerships, ultimately driving better outcomes.

- **Capacity and capabilities**

    - **Within the Department:** Significant resource constraints as well as a lack of capacity and expertise across the Department has made it difficult in the past for staff to devote sufficient attention to supporting partnerships. Responsibility for managing partnerships has seldom been identified as a primary responsibility of any staff position. Formal partnerships roles have been largely constituted by the part-time staff role of cooperating association liaisons (CALs), but this only pertains to one type of partner. Although partnerships can add significant capacity and skills to the Department, effective partnerships require significant time and attention of Unit, Sector, District, and Headquarters personnel to nurture and maintain them. Through the new Partnerships Office, the Department should intentionally prioritize the use of staff time for building and consistently overseeing critical partnerships.

    - **For Partners:** Partners should also explore opportunities to invest in their own skillsets, professionalism, and capabilities to partner effectively as they often lack sufficient capacity and training in collaboration and may lack the expertise of working with a public entity. In addition, non-profit partners depend on donated resources but many lack sufficient capacity and/or expertise in fundraising.

- **Support and incentives:** With the launch of the new Partnerships Office, the Department has the opportunity to provide more guidance, support, training, and incentives to personnel to develop, manage, and support high-quality partnerships. Some Department personnel are more naturally skilled at developing, creating, maintaining, and overseeing partnerships, but others would benefit from intentional Departmental investment in providing specific skills-building support (e.g., training focused on building specific partnerships competencies) and general guidance (e.g., clear signals that pursuing productive partnerships is not only allowed, but enabled and encouraged).

Section 4: The Future of Partnerships

The balance of this document is designed to provide recommendations on advancing the partnership vision described above. The Committee sets forth a proposed set of **principles** and **best practices** to guide and enhance partnerships. It also sets forth recommendations for **policy modifications** aimed at improving the ability of the Department and its partners to work together more efficiently and effectively. Finally, the Committee makes recommendations with respect to the Department's new **Partnerships Office,** including organizational changes to enable the Department to

successfully execute the new vision for partnerships.

4.1 Guiding Principles

The following six principles summarize the philosophy that underlies how the Department and their partners should approach partnerships:

1. **Partnerships further the Department's mission.** Partnerships with a broad spectrum of entities enable the fulfillment of the Department's and individual parks' missions.

2. **The Department should partner with organizations that fully support both the Department's and individual parks' vision and mission.** The Department partners with those organizations that can and do support the vision and mission of the Department and its individual parks. While the universe of potential partners is broad, partnerships should be mission-driven.

3. **Partnerships should be created, managed, and supported to optimize competencies, capabilities, and resources of the partnering entities. Roles and responsibilities should be clearly understood.** The Department and partners bring a broad mix of skills, expertise, capabilities, and resources that, collectively, can yield results greater than the sum of the parts and maximize overall value, but only if the Department and its partners carefully articulate their respective roles and responsibilities.

4. **Successful partnerships are led from the field with support from Sacramento.** Strong partnerships should be led by field personnel who are empowered and supported by Department leadership and the Partnership Office, with clarity on decision rights and processes.

5. **Partnerships are two-way; high performing partnerships adhere to best practices, including ongoing communication.** Partnerships should be designed to assure mutual commitment and mutual accountability. Partners should have a sense of shared and complementary values and outcomes. The highest-performing partnerships are particularly strong at timely communication and learning – and adapting – from experience.

6. **The Department will build out from existing strengths in partnerships.** Existing successful partnerships provide opportunities to learn best practices from real-time, in-progress efforts and explore the ways that the Department and its partners elsewhere can modify their roles, responsibilities, and authorities to maximize shared park outcomes.

Some of the Department's highest-performing partnerships help to illustrate these guiding principles when applied in real-world settings:

- **Example of how a partner can advance all aspects of the Department's mission:** *Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods'* efforts have enabled the

Department to keep parks open that otherwise would have been closed and build deeper relationships with local communities. When Austin Creek State Recreation Area was threatened with closure, the Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods signed an operating agreement with the Department to ensure the park would remain open to the public. In addition to performing general operating duties, Stewards also provides visitor services and programming, such as operating campgrounds and providing educational programs for children, for the parks in the Russian River District. Stewards also works with local government agencies and local business owners to build relationships, garner financial support, and encourage the feeling of community with the State Parks

- **Examples of how partners' core competencies can complement the Department in advancing its mission:** *Point Blue Conservation Science* extends the Department's ability to conduct scientific research on conservation issues by providing staffing and expertise. Point Blue is able to help the Department with reporting and tracking of species, such as the snowy plover, an endangered bird species that nests on state park land. Point Blue enables the Department to better meet its mission by providing a deeper scientific understanding of the species' needs, helping the Department tailor their activities to achieve preservation goals while still allowing for civilian recreation in the areas with the snowy plover. Similarly, *Crystal Cove Alliance* allows the Department to focus resources on necessary public safety functions (e.g., lifeguarding), while maintaining strong levels of education and interpretive programs coordinated and delivered by Crystal Cove Alliance. In addition to illustrating how partners' core competencies can complement the Department in advancing its mission, these examples also show how partnerships among dissimilar entities can oftentimes create and realize the greatest value.

- **Example of how high performing partnerships adhere to shared values, have mutual commitment, and practice ongoing communication:** *Tamalpais Lands Collaborative* has a five-way partnership for stewardship of Mt. Tamalpais, which is anchored in a shared vision of "One Tam." At the start of this multi-entity partnership, all the involved parties established and agreed to their shared vision and goals for the collaboration. In order to address the challenges facing Mt. Tamalpais, One Tam capitalizes on the strengths and skillsets of all five organizations to create a holistic approach to problem solving. Their partnership practices also include following a consistent communication schedule and understanding each other's roles and responsibilities. Moreover, they do not adhere to strict jurisdictional boundaries that could limit their success.

4.2 Best Practices

The following six best practices summarize key actions the Department and its partners should take when creating and maintaining any partnerships:

1. Articulate priorities and goals for the next 3-5 years at the District or Unit level

and seek qualified partners to help advance them. A strong partnership is rooted in a clear understanding of what the Department aspires to achieve in a given District or Unit. This allows the Department to proactively seek partnerships that can further these aims and avoid those that distract from these aims.

2. **Be clear and consistent on the Department's policies and practices and work with partners to facilitate policy guidance, compliance, and improvement.** Ultimately, a culture of partnerships requires consistent understanding across the Department and among partners on applicable legal constraints and internal policies and a commitment to make policy application more efficient. In the short term, identifying inconsistencies among internal policies can help pinpoint policy improvement opportunities.

3. **Set clear expectations about the Department and Partners' roles and responsibilities and oversight mechanisms.** A strong partnership agreement should:

   - State up front the roles and activities for which each party is responsible
   - Specify what each party gives (assets and capabilities) and gets (benefits)
   - Define the shared outcomes sought by the partner(s) and the Department, milestones along the way, and how the partnership will be evaluated over time
   - Designate key contacts and liaisons for each party with responsibility for managing the partnership

4. **Achieve mutual agreement on realistic expectations and constraints.** Partnerships require education of partners in the legal and policy constraints to which parks are subject, and, the constraints (e.g., Board demands, annual strategic planning processes) partners face. Parks and partnership organizations that experience continued success understand each other's limitations in order to work within the bounds of what is possible.

5. **Align internal incentives to support partnerships.** Internal Departmental policies, procedures, and incentive systems should be aligned to support and recognize partnerships as an important Departmental value.

6. **Intentionally invest in ongoing communication and engagement among partners through regular meetings.** Partnerships are relationships that require regular communication and engagement beyond formal annual reviews. These can include: regular face-to-face meetings or calls, timely problem-solving, attendance of Department personnel at major partner events, co-training events, responsiveness to phone calls and outreach, and/or learning from issues/successes as they are identified and discussed.

As part of the roll out of the Partnerships Office (details beginning on page 14), the Best Practices for partnerships will be both added to and further developed.

Process for translating these into practice

These six best practices effectively represent a process for developing and maintaining strong partnerships, which can be applied at the Unit, Sector, District, or State level with any potential partner, as illustrated in this flow:

PROCESS FOR BUILDING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS USING BEST PRACTICES
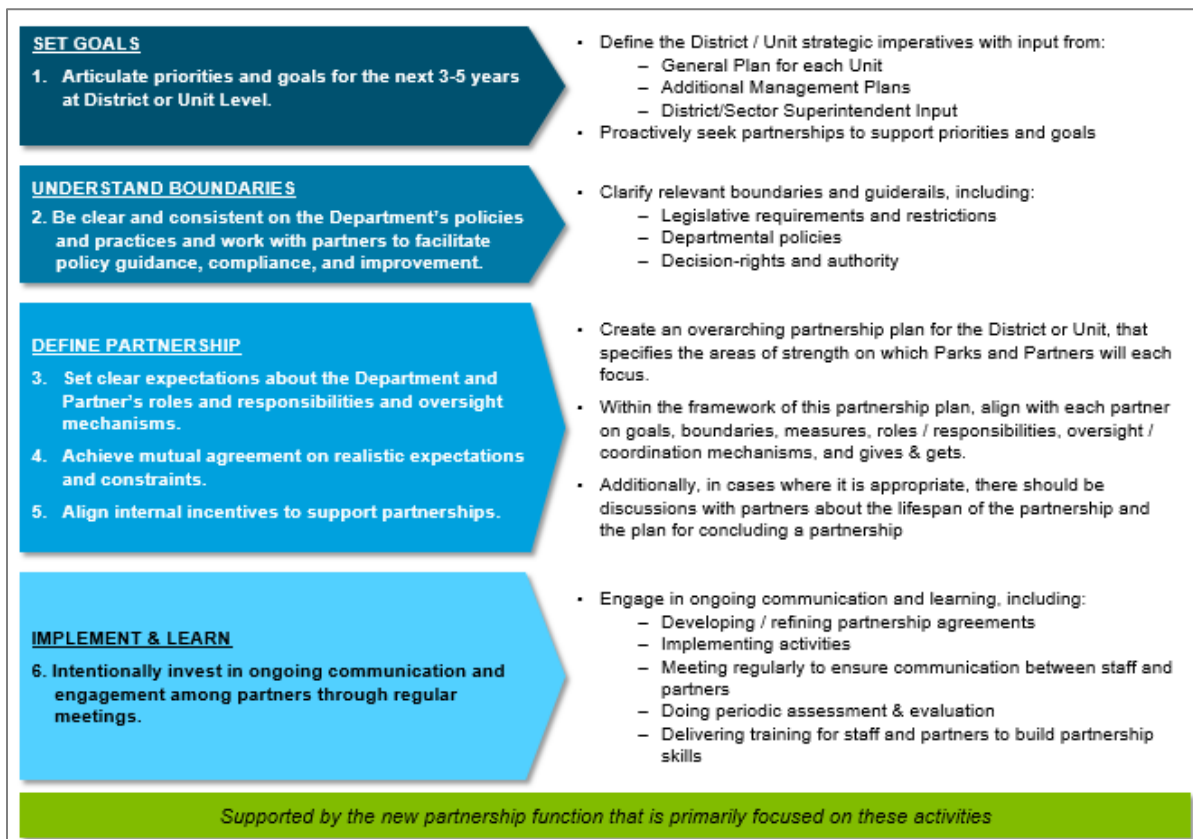
4.3 Recommended Policy Modifications

Certain Departmental policies and practices constrain the Department's ability to effectively build and maintain strong partnerships. "Red tape" results not from a few policies that have outsized impact, but instead from the accumulation of decades of individual smaller policy decisions combined with inconsistent interpretation across the Department.

The Committee is working to identify the underlying policies and statutes that significantly contribute to these constraints. To date, the Committee has reviewed a large number of Departmental policies, identified a preliminary list of policies that could be improved to facilitate partnerships, and begun developing recommendations for policy modifications. The Committee has also engaged with partners in reviewing policies and shaping recommendations. Each identified policy is being reviewed using the Committee's proposed Partnerships Vision and Guiding Principles as a lens for determining what modifications are needed to better support partnerships.

Below is the initial set of policies that have been identified, including those under review and those that the Committee proposes reviewing:

- **Revenue Generation and Incentive Programs:** The current approach to revenue generation within California State Parks does not account for funding contributed by partners in any form and does not incentivize partnering for District and Sector leadership.

- **Public Works on State Park Property:** Partners are not currently allowed to do any kind of public works or construction projects in the State Parks as the State Contracting Manual states that competitive bidding requirements apply unless the nonprofit entity is "exempt by statute or the contract is for subvention or local assistance."

- **Special Events Policy:** There is inconsistent interpretation of the Special Events Policy when applied to partners, specifically nonprofits, and their ability to hold special events on park property.

Policies for Future Review

- **Donor and Sponsorship Guidelines:** The Department's 2007 document on Donor and Sponsorship Guidelines is inconsistently interpreted statewide and sometimes does not align with opportunities that arise from partners, funders, donors, and sponsors.

In addition to the potential modification of identified policies, two changes in late 2015 to Departmental statutes and policies should accelerate the Department's ability to partner effectively:

- **The passage and signing of SB204 and AB549**: These programs may help open more opportunities for the Department to partner as they are interpreted and developed.

- **The creation of the EZ Form:** The EZ Form allows for a streamlined and simplified means for Districts and programs to create and preserve local partnerships. It is intended to break down—or at least minimize—the barriers that prevent or inhibit partnerships by affording the Department flexibility to promote existing relationships as well the engagement of new types of partners that fall outside the "normal" realm of cooperating associations and volunteers, such as community groups and service organizations. This mechanism is intended to create a locally executable option for partnerships of up to 5 years in duration and allows the Department to grant limited access to, and use of, facilities, which can be a key factor in facilitating a two-way partnership.

4.4 Partnerships Office and Organizational Design

The Department recently launched a new Partnerships Office, which is the first step towards improving the Department's ability to drive strong partnerships. In order for the Department and its partners to successfully execute the vision, guiding principles, best practices, and policy modifications outlined above, the Committee recommends the following organizational adjustments:

ORGANIZATIONAL ADJUSTMENTS FOR PARTNERIN

1 Design the **PARTNERSHIPS OFFICE** to serve as a resource center and center of excellence

2 Clearly articulate required **PARTNERSHIPS COMPETENCIES**

3 **BUILD COMPETENCIES** through training, mentorship, and communication

4 Update **HIRING, EVALUATION & PROMOTION CRITERIA** to emphasize partnership competencies

5 Coordinate with **SUPPORTING NETWORKS**

4.4.1 New Partnerships Office

4.4.1.1 Partnerships Office Purpose

The Committee recommends that the explicit purpose of the recently created Partnerships Office should be to support the partnerships work done in the field at the Unit, Sector, and District levels in two ways:

(1) Act as a **resource center** that supports field-level partnerships decisions**:**

- **Accelerate and facilitate partnerships activities:** Streamline partnership processes, orchestrate approvals, and cut through bureaucratic barriers; provide consultative support to Districts in developing and implementing partnerships plans; serve as an information hub about partnerships and partnership best practices throughout the Department

- **Develop and engage state-level partnerships:** Collaborate with existing statewide partners; identify and develop new partnerships opportunities at the state-level (e.g., with other state and national agencies, philanthropic and corporate partnerships, concessions); vet and recognize donors; work with relevant partners on statewide fundraising campaigns

- **Aid in problem solving and conflict resolution**: Help navigate issues and disagreements in the field; identify and develop recommendations to resolve recurring or systemic conflicts in the field

- **Provide support for successes:** Assist field staff with tools that celebrate successes and ensure that successful partnerships are consistently supported

(2) Act as a **center of excellence** that improves the Department's overall partnerships abilities:

- **Advocate for partnerships** across the Department

- **Set Department-wide partnerships policies and processes**

- **Document, distill, and share best practices** and lessons learned from all partnerships to be shared Department-wide

- **Provide guidance to specific pilot activities** to help ensure successful outcomes and appropriate learnings about partnerships best practices are emerging from pilots

- **Document strategic plans and metrics for each District** and identify Department-wide themes for needs, goals, and performance

- **Support the creation and delivery of training** to field personnel on partnerships best practices to build partnerships competencies

- **Host an Agency Partnerships Roundtable** with other resource management agencies from the regional, state, and/or federal level who use partnerships to share and develop best practices

4.4.1.2 Partnerships Office Design

The structure of the Partnerships Office should be designed so that:

- Decision-making authority rests where services are delivered (i.e., at the District, Sector, or Unit level) and includes accountability for the outcomes of those decisions and more Department-wide clarity on boundaries and standards.

- Every District has an individual clearly designated with the responsibility for partnerships.

- Activities pertaining to partnerships receive robust levels of support with requirements aligned with risk.

These criteria have shaped the design of the recommended organizational structure for the new Partnerships Office, which would be **a small, dedicated function** composed of

personnel **both in Sacramento plus designated "Partnerships Liaisons" (PaLs) in the field**. It presumes that the Department is undertaking parallel actions across the organization (e.g., in HR) to support pushing as many decisions to the field level as possible**.** The **roles and responsibilities** of the Partnerships Office at the field- and headquarters-level would include:
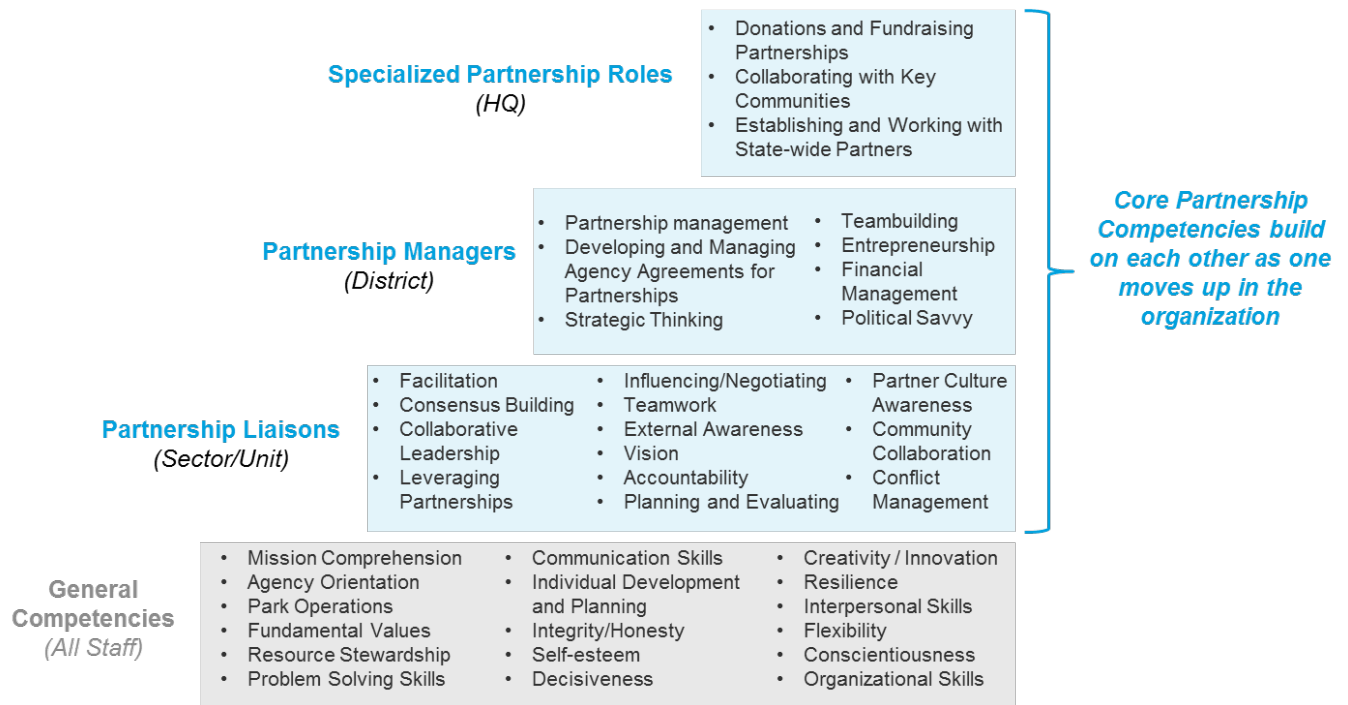
PARTNERSHIPS OFFICE ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

FIELD	**At the field level, the Partnerships Office is comprised of a District Superintendent and the Partnerships Liaisons (PaLs) they appoint.** PaLs will be designated at the District, Sector, or Unit level. In addition, PaLs should be trained in their responsibilities and appointed on a long-term basis (e.g., at least two years). **PaLs act as key points of contact for partnerships** with day-to-day responsibility for managing partnerships, including: helping develop, implement, and measure a sector-level partnerships plan that supports sector-level priorities. **PaLs are entrusted to exercise full authority to make partnerships decisions** – within the bounds of Department standards & boundaries – and are held accountable for outcomes. **Each PaL should be responsible for no more than 4 major partnerships** in addition to their other, non-PaL responsibilities. **District Superintendents have primary responsibility** for park partnerships as signatories to formal agreements and spokespersons for the Department, and are additionally responsible for monitoring effectiveness, compliance, and cohesiveness of partnerships across the District; advising parks, partners, and HQ; vetting agreements and sponsorships; identifying improvements to partnerships infrastructure; and sharing best practices.
HQ	**At the HQ level, the Partnerships Office is composed of dedicated staff,** whose responsibilities are to: - Act as a **resource center** that supports field-level partnerships decisions: **Accelerate partnerships activities**: streamline partnerships processes through expertise in contracts, policy, etc., orchestrating approvals, and cutting through bureaucratic barriers; provide consultative support to Districts in developing & implementing partnerships plans; serves as an information hub about partnerships and partnerships lessons across the Department. **Develop state-level partnerships**: collaborate with existing statewide partners, identify and develop new partnerships opportunities at the state level (e.g., with other state and national agencies, philanthropic and corporate partnerships, concessions); vet and recognize donors; work with relevant partners to manage state-wide fundraising campaigns **Aid in problem-solving conflict resolution**: Help navigate issues and disagreements in the field; identify and develop recommendations to resolve recurring or systemic conflicts in the field **Provide support for successes:** Assist field staff with tools that celebrate successes and ensure that successful partnerships are consistently supported - Act as a **center of excellence** that improves the Department's overall partnerships abilities: **Set Department-wide partnerships policies** and processes **Document, distill, and share best practices** and lessons learned from all CSP partnerships to be shared Department-wide **Provide guidance** to specific pilot activities to help ensure successful outcomes and appropriate learnings about partnerships best practices are emerging from pilots **Document strategic plans and metrics** for each sector and identify department-wide themes for needs, goals, and performance **Facilitate, create & deliver training** to field personnel on partnerships best practices to build partnerships competencies

> o **Host an Agency Partnerships Roundtable** with other resource management agencies from the regional, state, or federal level who use partnerships to share and develop best practices
- Maintain strong links to Community Engagement and Concessions roles

4.4.2 Partnerships Competencies

Building strong and successful partnerships requires a certain skill set that is not always reinforced by standard leadership development programs today. The Department has adapted the National Park Service model, which establishes a broad set of partnership competencies that should be present in specific levels of the organization, with competencies building on each other and becoming increasingly complex as one rises through the organization:

KEY PARTNERSHIPS COMPETENCIES ACROSS DEPARTMENT LEVELS

Specialized Partnership Roles
(HQ)
- Donations and Fundraising Partnerships
- Collaborating with Key Communities
- Establishing and Working with State-wide Partners

Partnership Managers
(District)
- Partnership management
- Developing and Managing Agency Agreements for Partnerships
- Strategic Thinking
- Teambuilding
- Entrepreneurship
- Financial Management
- Political Savvy

Partnership Liaisons
(Sector/Unit)
- Facilitation
- Consensus Building
- Collaborative Leadership
- Leveraging Partnerships
- Influencing/Negotiating
- Teamwork
- External Awareness
- Vision
- Accountability
- Planning and Evaluating
- Partner Culture Awareness
- Community Collaboration
- Conflict Management

General Competencies
(All Staff)
- Mission Comprehension
- Agency Orientation
- Park Operations
- Fundamental Values
- Resource Stewardship
- Problem Solving Skills
- Communication Skills
- Individual Development and Planning
- Integrity/Honesty
- Self-esteem
- Decisiveness
- Creativity / Innovation
- Resilience
- Interpersonal Skills
- Flexibility
- Conscientiousness
- Organizational Skills

Core Partnership Competencies build on each other as one moves up in the organization

4.4.3 Approach to Competency Building

The Committee recommends a multi-pronged approach to building these competencies, led by the Partnerships Office, based on the following principles:

- **Use multiple channels for building partnerships competencies.** Use different mechanisms such as frequent communications, coaching and mentorship, and providing tools and training.

- **Meet people where they are.** Design communications and trainings to make information accessible to people where they are, geographically and in their knowledge base, rather than requiring people to travel or assuming expertise.

- **Include both Department staff and partners.** As a general rule, partners should be included in all communications and invited to all trainings, and sessions that focus primarily on Department staff should be limited to those that exclusively focus on internal Departmental issues.

Our recommendations for building partnerships competencies in line with these principles fall into three broad categories:

- **Communication:** Keep personnel and partners informed of best practices, trends, and key changes.

- **Coaching, Mentorship, & Tools:** Support and guide PaLs and partners in their partnerships work to improve skills.

- **Training:** Build on existing trainings, both internal and external.

Additional detail on each category follows.

4.4.3.1 Communication

To keep personnel and partners up to date on partnerships-related changes, the new Partnerships Office should work closely with the Department's communication function to prioritize the following communication actions, focused on both Department staff and partners:

- Hosting a **"(Re)orientation to Partnerships" Webinar** for all Department staff in Spring 2016

    - Purpose: to clearly signal to all staff that the Department is improving its way of partnering *and* clearly communicate changes that will enable this

    - Key content: partnerships vision, principles, and practices; policy changes (or clearer interpretations of existing policies); roles and responsibilities of the partnerships office; Q&A

- Establishing a **Partnerships communications hub** (e.g., website) that serves the broad community of those involved in partnerships

    - Purpose: to act as a dynamic, up-to-date reference guide that captures and communicates all relevant partnerships knowledge

    - Key content: Findings and Recommendations of the Partnerships Committee; best practices; examples of "bright spots"; list of relevant internal and external trainings and learning resources on partnerships; online trainings and communications; guidance and updates on Departmental policies and procedures related to partnerships; a community of practice where people can ask questions and receive suggested solutions; a community listserv; feedback mechanisms through

which staff can request assistance or coaching or provide other comments to the Partnerships Office

- o Importantly, partners should have access to these online resources, and this communications hub should identify trainings to which partners may be invited.

- Distributing **regular communications** (likely done every 3-6 months as webinars or conference calls) to all Parks staff by Partnerships Office

  - o <u>Purpose:</u> to establish an effective communications and engagement channel focused on partnerships

  - o <u>Key content:</u> "Bright spots" shining a light on a sampling of best practices being done both in the Department and externally; announcements and descriptions of new policy changes; Q&A

4.4.3.2 Coaching, Mentorship, and Tools

The new Partnerships Office should support and guide individuals in the field by adopting a coaching and mentorship framework that helps PaLs to build relevant partnerships skills as they do their work. Specifically, the new Office should:

- **Identify internal Department personnel or external partners with strong partnering skills to act as mentors to field personnel** who have more limited or less successful partnering experiences. Through a mentorship program designed and run by the Partnerships Office, mentors can help answer questions, coach other personnel through the creation of a partnership, and ensure proper skills are being supported in the field.

- **Guide PaLs to relevant information**, such as online trainings, recorded webinars, and documentation related to best practices when they are faced with a specific issue.

- **Adopt a "train the trainer" model**, in which those in the new Partnerships Office are required to attend partnership-specific trainings and then conduct training for their partners.

- **Create a set of tools and methodologies** that will guide each phase of the partnership process and provide practical templates, forms and checklists for PaLs and partners and others engaging in partnerships.

4.4.3.3 Training

The Department should build new training resources, continue to use some existing training resources, and set appropriate expectations and funding levels to reinforce training. As a first step, the Committee recommends a thorough assessment and redesign of trainings with respect to partnerships so that the Department is at the forefront of current standards and best practices. The Committee recommends that the new Partnerships Office take the lead on this assessment and redevelopment of trainings, which would then be owned and coordinated by the Training Office.

- **Invest upfront in building base-level partnerships competencies and knowledge.** Invest in the orientation of new staff to partnerships by creating and integrating an explicit training into new hire orientation on the importance of partnerships and best practices for partnerships. Additionally, invest in orientation of new partners to the Department by creating and requiring an online training that builds some of these competencies and imparts knowledge of how the Department operates.

- **Design future trainings to meet people where they are.** Use online trainings, "mini-trainings," and regional workshop formats in lieu of in-person trainings that require personnel to travel (which result in reduced attendance and increased costs). Content can be used from existing workshops put on by the Cooperating Associations Program manager or the Volunteers in Parks Program manager or can be tailored based on identified weaknesses/strengths in regions.

- **Create training for staff in the Partnerships Office (HQ and Field).** Synthesize the best partnerships aspects from existing trainings into a single comprehensive training course and consider developing other trainings that help staff and partners build:
  - Management and technical skills, such as strategic planning with partners, project management, and financial skills
  - Facilitation skills, such as counseling, listening, negotiation, the use of regular communications, and conflict resolution
  - Cross-sector knowledge of how the Department operates and how nonprofits operate

Recommendations for the use of existing internal and external trainings

- **Continue offering existing trainings that build partnerships competencies in the interim while the Department builds partnerships-specific trainings.** Once the Partnerships Office is able to develop partnerships-specific trainings, the below trainings should be updated or used as secondary trainings when needed:
  - CALSB: Cooperative Association Liaison Skill Building (currently required for all CALs)
  - BIGI: Basic Interpretation for Guides and Interpreters (currently required for Guides & Interpreters)
  - PSB: Partnership Skills Building (currently optional for the Department and partners)
  - Meeting Design & Facilitation: Meeting Design & Facilitation is designed to assist anyone who plans meetings or helps groups reach critical decisions.

- o Project Management: for individuals assigned lead responsibility in the development, implementation and coordination of District construction and related projects.
  - o Volunteer Management: for field volunteer program coordinators
  - o Facilitator Skills: this training assists participants in developing basic techniques to facilitate a wide variety of group interactions ranging from employee meetings to public hearings.
- **Publicize and encourage PaLs to attend relevant external trainings,** including exploring state-wide partnerships with skill-building nonprofits, for example those offered by Association for Partners for Public Lands (APPL), California State Parks Foundation's (CSPF) Technical Assistance Center, or Training for Change (which provides training workshops that help elevate the skills of those who train others and offers workshops focused on organizing and strategically leading a group)
- **Publicize existing resources that can support partner organizations** (e.g., California State Parks Foundation as a resource for nonprofits)

Recommendations for setting expectations and funding

- **Set clear expectations** for training by **recommending or requiring certain courses for PaLs and for partners**, at regular intervals. Where possible, create incentives for PaLs to take these trainings.
- **Support trainings through necessary budget allocations.** Make learning and skill-building a priority for partnerships.

4.4.3.4 Ongoing Partnerships Office Support

The Committee recommends the Partnership Office take on the following ongoing responsibilities related to partnerships competency building:

- Finalize and continually update the Partnership Toolkit, based on learnings and best practices, and distribute regularly to PaLs and partners
- Develop curriculum and set an annual calendar for partnerships related training
- Coordinate instruction or deliver training as appropriate in collaboration with the Training office
- Provide ongoing coaching and mentoring to PaLs, partners, and others engaged in partnerships

4.4.4 Evaluation and Promotion Criteria

The Committee recommends the Department consider the following adjustments to better support partnerships and **incentivize** their use:

- Include partnerships orientation and skills as key hiring and promotion requirements.

- Integrate sensible partnerships success metrics into the personnel evaluation process.

- Create Partnerships Awards, e.g., Departmental Awards, the Director's Partnerships Awards, District Partnerships Awards, and Park- and Program-specific awards to recognize key partners and park staff.

- Institute more robust strategic planning processes for each park, as a necessary backdrop to defining appropriate partnerships to advance the mission and strategic aims of each park.

The adjustments to evaluation and promotion criteria will be further developed by the Partnerships Office.

4.4.5 Use of Supporting Networks

The Committee recommends the Partnerships Office leverage the following external **existing support networks** to support the work of partnerships:

- **California State Parks Foundation's Technical Assistance Center (TAC):** TAC provides no-cost, expert assistance to state park partners—i.e., nonprofit park operators, cooperating associations, and other nonprofits—that seek to build organizational capacity and effectiveness in managing and supporting park programs and resources. TAC offers fundraising, communications, organizational development, and business planning consulting assistance to participating partners. In addition to direct consulting, TAC also provides trainings and information to all TAC-eligible partners through webinars, convenings, and newsletters.

- **California League of Park Associations (CALPA):** CALPA provides mutual support and networking among the Cooperating Associations linked to the California State Parks System by arranging workshops, conferences, and providing various informational resources for members.

- **California Parks Hospitality Association (CPHA)**: CPHA represents companies and individuals who provide hospitality services under contract with the Department. It participates in discussions that may lead to the development of new policies and new laws that can impact contract service providers; provides business-related training for members, for Department staff, and for others involved with the State Park System; and connects contract service providers with one another for their mutual benefit.

- **Association of Partners on Public Lands (APPL)**: APPL is a professional organization for Cooperating Associations and Park Friends Groups. It provides an annual convention, offers fee consultations, and conducts trainings.

- **National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA) Center for Park Management**: The Center for Park Management conducts research and

provides instruction on park partnerships.

Additionally, the Committee recommends the Partnerships Office consider developing **new supporting networks**, similar to ones that National Park Service uses:

- **Friends Alliance**: Alliance of Park Unit Friends Groups meet twice a year, share best practices, sometimes have training sessions on subjects at their meetings, address common concerns, and advocate. They elect officers but are not incorporated, serving primarily as a brain trust for Friends Groups.

- **Partnerships Coordinators Network**: This network collaborates on issues and solutions and shares best practices.

- **Regional Partnerships Networks of Park and Partner Contacts**: These networks similarly share information and convene trainings and meetings.

Section 5: Implementation

5.1 Pilots and New Partnerships

There will be a number of pilot programs and innovative partnerships launched during the Transformation effort. The Committee recommends that the Partnerships Office play an active role in tracking and evaluating a portfolio of pilots and new programs that involve innovative partnerships in order to evaluate the success of new types and models of partnerships, share learnings, and actively manage opportunities for scale. Nevertheless, it is not expected that the Partnerships Office would duplicate the "on the ground" oversight of these pilots or programs.

The Partnerships Office should identify pilots and new partnerships to include in the portfolio based on a set of criteria:

SELECTION CRITERIA

1. <u>Meets overall pilot program objectives of:</u>	2. <u>Explicitly articulates the concept being tested, e.g.:</u>	3. <u>Has clear ways to assess success, learning, and scaling:</u>

• SUPPORTING THE MISSION of the Department
• TESTING alternate approaches to partnerships
• LEARNING which approaches to partnerships are most successful
• EXPANDING SUCCESS by:
  – Scaling and growing successful approaches
  – Replicating successful approaches more broadly across the state.
	• Learning how to best partner with community based organizations
	• Testing specific aspects of working with diverse sets of partners
	• Developing methods and approaches for creating a comprehensive partnerships plan
	• Improving the effectiveness of current non-profit operators
		• SUCCESS METRICS: How will the Department know if the pilot is succeeding?
		• LEARNING: What are learnings from the pilot that can be applied more broadly?
		• SCALING: Where and how can we scale this approach?

4. <u>Meets other minimum criteria for success</u>

- Geographic location that maximizes other Transformation aims (e.g., located close to an urban population center to increase access)
- Park personnel and partners have sufficient leadership and partnering skills and capacity or can be supplemented
- External support or constituencies exist that can marshal resources, connections, influence, or advocacy
- Has funding, with sustainable revenue stream and appropriate allocation of revenues with partners to ensure both alignment of incentives towards growing revenue, and, sufficient resources to support project. This may include outside "investor" funding from philanthropies with the intent of using the pilot as a means of building capacity and capabilities

The Committee recommends that the Partnerships Office complete the following steps to ensure the evaluation, learning, and scale of appropriate future partnerships.

SUGGESTED OVERSIGHT MECHANISMS TO MAXIMIZE LEARNING

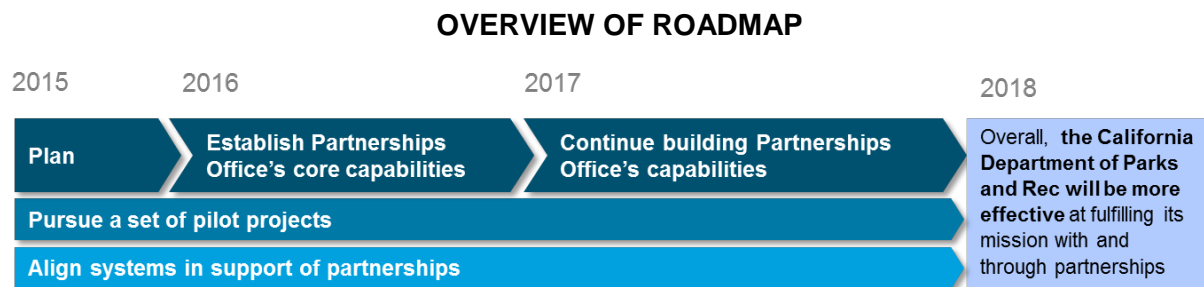| STRUCTURE & RESOURCES	PROCESS STEPS		
	DESIGN	**MANAGE**	**EVALUATE**
On the ground: Parks personnel 1-2 parks personnel at the District and / or Sector level explicitly tasked with responsibility for the pilot Ideally includes the District Superintendent Required to meet with partners at least every 2-4 weeks to discuss pilot Specific pilot responsibilities TBD with partners **On the ground: Partners** 1-2 individuals at each partner designated as responsible point of contact for the pilot Required to meet with Parks personnel at least every 2-4 weeks to discuss pilot Specific pilot responsibilities TBD with Parks personnel	Each party describes desired "wins" and educates on constraints (e.g., Department budget, Board requirements) Team articulates pilot goals, lists and assigns roles and responsibilities Team establishes communication and meeting cadence Team sets workplan for project, with clear checkpoints for adjusting plan and interim / overall metrics for success	Team implements the roles and responsibilities as discussed Team maintains agreed-upon communication and meeting cadence Team requests implementation support from HQ as needed (to cut through red tape, to help facilitate key meetings, for specific training, etc.)	Team assesses success and learning as needed but at minimum provides quarterly update to HQ and deeper review of pilot annually Team requests evaluation support from HQ as needed
In HQ: Partnerships Office personnel aware of project objectives and positioned to respond to provide support upon request Attends, designs, and facilitates early meeting Receives quarterly updates on progress	HQ provides guidance on pilot goals and agreement HQ provides staff support in designing the conversations described above	HQ receives quarterly updates on pilot progress HQ consolidates learning across all pilots and shares as relevant to others in the Department (e.g., other pilots, personnel, or partners) HQ does annual cross-pilot assessment at annual points	

5.2 High-Level Roadmap for Implementation

5.2.1 Goal for 2018

By 2018, the Committee's aim is that **the Department will be more effective** at fulfilling its mission across all units, with and through partnerships. Some indicators of this would be:

- **Greater number of effective partnerships** providing greater service to public, higher revenues, and stronger relationships with partners

- **Greater consistency in how partnerships are valued and supported** across the Department

- **Several successful new or expanded partnerships** where pilot opportunities have become flourishing parks supported by strong partnerships

- **Deeper ability to build and maintain effective partnerships** across the Department

5.2.2 High-Level Roadmap to 2018

OVERVIEW OF ROADMAP

2015	2016	2017	2018
Plan	**Establish Partnerships Office's core capabilities**	**Continue building Partnerships Office's capabilities**	Overall, **the California Department of Parks and Rec will be more effective** at fulfilling its mission with and through partnerships
Pursue a set of pilot projects			
Align systems in support of partnerships			

To achieve this by 2018, the Department will build on the recommendations developed in early 2016, using the remainder of 2016 to operationalize the Partnerships Office with core capabilities to provide structure, clarity on existing policies and procedures, and build partnerships competencies through communication, mentorship, coaching, toolkits, and training within the Department. These adjustments will be expanded throughout the Department to enable widespread change. As a result, all Units, Sectors, and Districts will be better enabled to pursue partnerships. In 2017, the Department will further build out capabilities in the Partnerships Office to include its full set of responsibilities. As a result, all Units, Sectors, and Districts will receive more support in building and maintaining partnerships.

In parallel, through 2016 and 2017 the Department will pursue a set of pilot projects (as described above). These pilots represent opportunities to test new models and

practices, which will then allow us to take our learnings to replicate and scale successes.

The Department's efforts in 2016-2017 to modernize and align its systems, technology, and processes through the transformation effort also can support partnerships. This includes:

- **HR policies**: hiring and promotion criteria, incentives, and training

- **Budgeting**: sufficient resources devoted to building and maintaining partnerships

- **Personnel**: filling key field positions, including District Superintendent positions, with staff who understand and value partnerships

5.3 Next Steps for Implementation

These findings and recommendations of the Partnerships Committee represent the first step in helping the Department and its partners work together more efficiently and effectively.

The findings and recommendations can be put into practice through the following steps:

Structural Changes. The Department has already begun making changes consistent the recommendations in Section 4.4.1, by establishing a dedicated Partnerships office in Headquarters. Further structural and operational changes will be made thereafter.

Incorporation in the Department Operations Manual (DOM). Some elements of this document will be memorialized in the DOM, which sets guiding policy for field operations. The Partnerships Committee will submit recommendations to the Park Operations and Policy Group, which will bring a final recommendation to the Director.

Creation of a "Toolkit". The Partnerships Committee will prepare a preliminary Toolkit to serve as a detailed guide for the creation and practice of partnerships. The toolkit will be delivered to the new Partnerships Office, which will maintain and update the document. Example elements the toolkit _may_ include are:

- **Principles for effective partnerships** (e.g., examples of principles in practice in a partnership)

- **Guidance on setting roles and responsibilities** (e.g., guidance on how to set role and responsibility expectations)

- **Sample agreements and MOUs** (e.g., completed examples of an EZ Form)

- **Conflict resolution guidance** (e.g., mediation techniques)

- **Evaluation tools** (e.g., examples of metrics or tracking methods)

- **Intellectual Property** (e.g., clarity on, and protocols for, use of Department intellectual property)

- **Model case studies** (e.g., examples of successes, frustrations, and lessons learned)

- **Guidance on communication processes** (e.g., suggested communication schedules)

- **Other information sources** (e.g., recommendations of other available toolkits on partnerships from outside organizations)

APPENDIX
TRANSFORMATION TEAM
PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Danita Rodriguez (co-chair) *Superintendent,* Bay Area District, California Department of Parks and Recreation

Steve McCormick (co-chair) *Former President/CEO,* The Nature Conservancy; *former President/CEO,* the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation

Matt Bischoff, *State Historian III,* Monterey District, California Department of Parks and Recreation

Ellen Clark, *Coordinator, Statewide Volunteers in Parks Program,* California Department of Parks and Recreation

Harry Helling, *Former President,* Crystal Cove Alliance

Dana Jones, *Northern Division Chief,* California Department of Parks and Recreation

Todd Lewis, *Superintendent,* Central Sector, Orange Co. District*,* California Department of Parks and Recreation

Ray Murray, *Chief,* Partnerships Program*,* Pacific West Region, National Parks Service

Sean Woods, *Superintendent,* Los Angeles Sector*,* Angeles District, California Department of Parks and Recreation

Traci Verardo-Torres, *Founder,* TVT Consulting; *former Legislative and Policy Director,* California State Parks Foundation