



## Newsletter

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**So you thought the CERM PI® project was about an annual survey and sports and leisure centres? In part you are correct; but there is much more, including:**

• New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation (NSWDSR) and CERM have had a strong relationship for over three years through a collaborative research project involving the 11 Sport and Recreation Centres throughout NSW. There are components to this collaboration, including:

- Six monthly collations of operational data for all centres
- Annual collation of Customer Service Quality (CSQ) reviews for each centre, and
- Annual collation of integrated reviews reporting on a range of performance indicators for operational and CSQ information.

This year the collaboration has been extended to develop CSQ processes for the collection of data from children seven to twelve years. In a separate but complementary study, Dr Bruce Hayler from the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) is conducting research into stakeholder benefits from children involved in camping experiences at the NSWDSR centres. Sue Mikilewicz is the leader on this project with support from Gary Crilley.

• From an initiation by SPARC (Sport, Arts and Recreation Council for People with a Disability), five sponsors combined to fund the development of a Research and Evaluation Agenda for South Australians with a disability and their involvement in sport, the arts and other recreation choices. The funding collaborators include:

- Arts SA
- Disability Services Office
- Health Promotion – SA Dept. Human Services
- Office of Recreation and Sport
- SPARC, and
- UniSA, Division of Information Technology, Engineering and the Environment (CERM)

The project is being led by Scott Edgecombe with support from Gary Crilley, and is due for completion in July 2001.

• The City of Playford (SA) has requested the CERM PI team (led by Duncan Murray) to conduct a survey of the ratepayers which extends traditional recreation planning efforts, including:

- Cluster sampling of the population to minimise taking an assumed bias of the population in terms of what they do, and want in terms of recreation opportunities in the city
- The population sampling used is to meet strict requirements necessary to satisfy strong confidence in the results being generalised to the entire Playford community
- Asking respondents what their experience has been of local facilities and what they anticipate doing in the near future – without dramatic changes in personal circumstances.

• The City of Onkaparinga has engaged Duncan Murray to prepare a discussion paper to stimulate considerations of the provision of indoor sports and recreation services in the future. Analysis of existing data bases developed by ABS and CERM PI will compare patterns of participation; popular activities; issues of importance to customers; and participation trends. Comparisons will be made between Onkaparinga and cities similar in character from across Australia.



- In preparation for a submission for the Commonwealth Regional Tourism Program 2000-2001, 'Developing a national benchmarking program of service quality and operational indicators for non-metropolitan caravan park operations', CERM brought together a team of collaborators including Barry Bell from Griffith University and Bruce Hayllar from UTS. Awaiting the final result of the second round of assessments, CERM have been asked by one of the industry partners that (regardless of the funding decision), to work with them on a program to test the potential benefits anticipated. The funding decisions should be known after the Federal Budget in May. This project has to date been led by Heather March and Gary Crilley, but will in the future be guided by Barry Bell of Griffith University in Brisbane.
- With approximately 2,000 full-time staff, the University of South Australia has a major commitment to provide quality research and consulting services to external clients across a variety of knowledge and service areas. The CERM PI® team led by Sue Mikilewicz was engaged this year to conduct a study of the 'Perceptions of service quality' held by the external customers of the university. One possible outcome of this project being explored is the benchmarking of a number of Australian universities, making this project a first of its type in Australia universities.

### **And two more (at least) "on the boil":**

The CERM PI® team is in the final stages of signing a Research Collaboration Agreement with one of Australia's most forward thinking land management agencies. The finalisation of this agreement will significantly grow the cooperative research and evaluation being conducted within the areas of customer satisfaction, visitor services and maintenance contract measures.

**More news of this in the next newsletter.**

Development of a course dealing with performance management for parks and leisure settings. This is not yet another course of the "old mould", but with some of the following features:

- Designed for practitioners and professionals in the field
- Designed with industry collaborators/sponsors' input and monitoring
- Delivered by a team teaching arrangement of practitioners and academics/researchers
- Optional multi-State, University Graduate Certificate status or stand-alone full-fee payment course, and
- Intensive week-long on-site format, with on-line (www) support and assessments prior to and post on-site attendance.

This development is gaining momentum for a possible commencement from 2002. If you have a particular interest in courses such as the National School for Park Management (Melbourne); Executive Certificates (UTS); or the Leisure Australia (Adelaide) course in facility management, and would like to be involved in the very best of each of these, Gary Crilley would be happy to keep you informed of developments <gary.crilley@unisa.edu.au>

## Frequently Asked Questions:

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In preparation for the release of the CERM PI Bulletin in June 2001, the CERM PI team has reviewed one of its key indicators Expense Recovery. The discussion begins with 'plain English' interpretations of the terms 'performance indicators' and 'CERM PI operational management performance indicators'. The key indicator 'expense recovery' is reviewed and possible strategies to maximise usage of CERM PI indicators is discussed.

### What are performance indicators?

With the increased importance of public accountability and ongoing evaluations fast becoming a feature of good management practice, the regular use of performance indicators has been a revolutionary decision-making tool for leisure managers. Moreover, as customers of leisure services have come to expect higher standards of service quality, this has prompted many organisations to look more closely at adopting strategies which can provide them with a competitive advantage.

What exactly are performance indicators you ask? Performance indicators are a useful method of measuring aspects of services that are often difficult to quantify otherwise. The key role of performance indicators is to assist managers in their decision-making process, accurately pin-pointing areas where further evaluation may be necessary, so corrective action can be taken. Effectively, performance indicators act as a catalyst for managers to assess, monitor and improve the overall performance of their leisure services, facilities and programs, across a range of management and service delivery functions. Whilst they are only 'indicators' they can provide valuable information in areas of evaluation and accountability, service management, leadership and motivation, as well as strategic planning. Importantly, performance indicators enable leisure services to internally identify and measure continuous improvement of their services. They achieve this by examining customer service and operational management performance indicator trends over time (ie. how well a service is doing compared to previous years), and via externally benchmarking these indicators against similar types of leisure services. This concept of benchmarking enables leisure managers to objectively compare and measure the efficiency, effectiveness and increasingly, the appropriateness of their leisure services, with similar services. Using the same set of performance indicators, participating leisure services results are combined into categories according to their type of leisure centre or facility, to create national, annually updated benchmarks, which provide ongoing targeted monitoring and evaluation.

### Q. What does the CERM PI Key Indicator Expense Recovery measure and how can I use this information?

A. Expense Recovery is calculated by taking the annual income received by a facility and expressing it as a percentage of the annual operating expenses for running that facility. CERM PI indicators are grouped by centre category (eg dry or wet centre) and by size. Expense recovery is useful measure of how efficiently a centre is managing its resources.

The CERM PI median is therefore a useful measure to determine where a centre may be placed in relation to other similar centres in the sample. Centre managers may like to consider their own expense recovery results against their previous year's results (internal benchmarking) as well as with the median for similar centres (external benchmarking). If, for example, expense recovery is well below the median value, it would be useful for the manager to determine why, and to possibly identify future strategies to improve this aspect of the centre's operations.

### Q. What are CERM PI operational management (efficiency) indicators?

A. CERM PIs operational management indicators relate to the use of resources. Some include the relationship between inputs (costs) to outputs. CERM PI has also developed additional non-cost related indicators according to the demands of the leisure industry. Examples are visits per square metre and major incidents to total visits.

### Q. If I have a comparatively poor Expense Recovery result, what other CERM PI indicators can assist me in focusing a strategy for future improvement?

A. Firstly, it should be mentioned that a poor Expense Recovery result may be the consequence of circumstances or limitations which are understood and accepted by management of a centre. For example, the centre may have been closed for renovations and revenue consequently affected during that period or it may be that management plans prioritise equity of access over expense recovery. In terms of providing a focus for improvement it may be useful for managers to review cost share indicators which express resource outputs in various areas of operational management as a percentage of gross expenditure. For example, energy cost share for the centre may be well above the median for similar centres. This would obviously be impacting upon overall expense recovery and a review of the focus of expenditure in this area may be beneficial. Visits per square metre, is another key indicator that should be perused. It is possible that a poor expense recovery figure is the reflection of lower visitation rates to the centre; increasing the 'numbers through the door' would obviously impact upon revenue and hence overall expense recovery. Similarly, finance indicators such as surplus/subsidy per visit, fees per visit and gross receipts per square metre can provide additional insight. One point to note, remember that the strategies developed to improve expense recovery should consider the impact upon customers' perceptions of the centre. Increasing fees, for example, may be negatively received by customers and may ultimately have an impact upon the number of visits to the centre.

## For Your Information:

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### **AUS Online!!**

Over the past 12 months CERM PI and Australian University Sport (AUS) have been collaborating on the development of a range of performance indicators specifically for university sport facilities. The first national operational management survey for these facilities is currently underway (on-line) with results expected in June/July 2001. This program of performance indicators and benchmarking is innovative in the university sport sector and will provide consistent, objective information to assist in the management of these types of facilities. A summary report on this program will feature in upcoming CERMPI newsletters.

*A section of 'FAQ's' contains an 'excerpt' from an article published by Scott Edgecombe, Research Associate, CERM PI®, University of SA. For the full article please refer to the 'Parks and Leisure' Journal, Volume 4, No. 1, March 2001.*

***You can now see that the CERM PI® team are certainly not cave dwellers; if you know someone who could be enlightened, please be our guest and tell them about us, or send them our way via < <http://cermpi.unisa.edu.au>>***



**Graduation Ceremony 24/4/01,  
School of Environmental & Recreation Management,  
University of South Australia**

*Right to Left: Duncan Murray (PhD graduate), Scott Edgecombe (Honours graduate), Wade Matheson (Honours graduate and Sponsorship Manager Hi-Sports), Gary Crilley (Honours supervisor for Scott, Wade and Sue), Sue Mikilewicz (Honours graduate).*