mParks℠
Michigan Recreation & Park Association

Professional Development & Career Pathway

1. Early Career

Invest in yourself and build your professional foundation by developing communication, teamwork, and community engagement skills while earning certifications and connecting with peers through mParks programs and trainings.

GET STARTED

Invest in mParks Membership

Join a Focus Area

- Active Aging
- Adaptive (TR)
- Aquatics
- Archery
- Athletics
- Facilities
- Marketing
- New Professionals
- Park Maintenance
- Programming
- Students
- Trails
- Youth, Teens & Camps
- WIRED

Join a Regional Group

- Knuckles Knorth
- NERPA
- NWPRA
- SMRPA
- WAM
- WMRPA

Serve on a Committee

- Advocate
- Teach
  - Conference & Trade Show
  - Certification
- Inspire
- Unite

BUILD SKILLS

- Join a Leadership Development Program
- Attend a webinar
- Attend mParks Conference & Trade Show
- Participate in a Focus Area or Committee Meeting
- Explore and Earn Professional Certifications (CPRP, CPSI, AFO, CYSA, etc.)
- Obtain CPR/First Aid or Mental Health First Aid Certification
- Complete FEMA Certification

MAKE CONNECTIONS

- Attend mParks Joint Meetings
- Attend local council or board meetings
- Get involved with Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, PTO, Library Board, etc.
- Apply to be a mentee in the mParks Mentorship Program

EXPAND REACH

- Visit other agencies, organizations, and facilities
- Network with peers
- Apply or Nominate for New Professional or Program Awards

2. Middle Career

Expand your influence by taking on leadership roles and advancing supervision, budgeting, grant writing, and strategic planning skills. This phase emphasizes professional growth, collaboration, and mentoring emerging leaders to strengthen the profession.

DEEPEN ENGAGEMENT

- Increase involvement in mParks by joining Middle Managers or Directors Focus Areas
- Take a leadership role in a Focus Area, Regional Group, and/or Committee
- Join Michigan Association of County Park & Recreation Officials (MACPRO)

ADVANCE KNOWLEDGE

- Attend mParks Workshops and Conferences
- Complete NRPA and other national online trainings
- Maintain and earn new certifications
- Pursue a graduate degree
- Attend grant writing & management trainings
- Present at mParks educational events

STRENGTHEN NETWORKS

- Recruit new members to mParks
- Organize partnership programs or events
- Build and maintain relationships with other department heads in the community
- Expand understanding of other municipal jobs for cross-functional teams

BROADEN IMPACT

- Compare best practices with other agencies
- Mentor a new professional
- Write an article for publication
- Nominate or apply for awards

3. Established Career

Lead the profession through advocacy, mentorship, and advanced management, focusing on policy development, organizational leadership, and fiscal oversight. This stage centers on shaping the future of parks and recreation while modeling excellence and lifelong learning.

LEAD THE PROFESSION

- Advocate for and guide mParks Focus Areas, Regional Groups, and Committees
- Stay engaged with mParks events and governance

PURSUE LIFELONG LEARNING

- Run for mParks Board of Directors
- Attend professional workshops and conferences
- Complete specialized trainings
- Earn advanced certifications or degrees (CPRE, MPA, MBA, etc.)
- Train in grant writing and advanced management

INFLUENCE LOCALLY

- Cultivate relationships with local/state officials
- Develop local partnerships or community events
- Develop relationships with your State Representative and Senator
- Apply to be a mentor in the mParks Mentorship Program

RAISE THE BAR

- Serve as Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COAPRT) and Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) site visitor
- Advocate for parks with local/state governments
- Present at mParks, NRPA, or other conferences
- Consider park and recreation adjacent jobs such as City Management, Private-Sector (Vendor), Foundation service

CELEBRATE SUCCESS

- Nominate others or apply for Hall of Fame and program awards
- Volunteer on local parks and recreation advisory board

Plan, learn, and grow at mParks.org/pathway

CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN

A Pathway for Professional Development

Presented by mParks

The voice of Michigan's parks and recreation community.

We Advocate.

We Teach.

We Inspire.

We Unite.

mParks.org