

Measuring the Impact of Special Events

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As summer draws to a close and thoughts of fall activities and events take hold, many communities throughout the country are reflecting on their slate of special events that took place this past summer. They are also evaluating which events are meeting the community's collective goals and objectives.

Frequently, communities use events to build the visitor base and generate tax revenue, as well as provide exposure and brand awareness for their community or destination. Events also serve the purpose of enhancing the local community fabric, culture, and quality of life for residents. A wide variety of events have evolved in recent years, all with differing purposes.



Hazel Miller performs at the Lakewood Heritage Center as part of the 2007 Summer Concert Series.

When the primary driver is generating business and awareness for the community, it is helpful to accurately measure the economic impact and return on investment (ROI) that any particular special event is generating. In this way, all special events that a community holds can be evaluated by the same accurate, credible, defensible yard stick as to their ROI contribution to the local community.

Events that primarily serve cultural or quality of life purposes may require slightly different measures, but they too can and should be measured. The tools for evaluating events continue to evolve and will grow in importance as communities are asked to contribute to events or are using events to meet economic objectives.

Parks and Recreation Departments are more and more frequently being asked to provide staff, services, and facilities to accommodate community special events, but what is the real cost and impact, both fiscal and social? RRC has developed extensive modeling and research techniques for evaluating special events in a variety of settings for all types and sizes of gatherings. More and more communities are recognizing the need to accurately measure their events with an integrated and standardized set of metrics across all events so that educated and informed decisions can be made as to which events should be invested for the future given limited funding dollars.

RRC continues to look for ways to efficiently collect event related data and to develop analytical tools to support community efforts to measure and understand performance in the fast changing arena of special events.