

Work as a Primary Occupation: Exploring the Impact of Leadership on the Vocational Experience of Working at Club Rec

Sophie Handloff, OT/s; Ryan Whitney, OT, OTD, OTR; Joseph Connelly, M.Ed.; Natasha Waden, MPA

INTRODUCTION

Arlington Recreation Department's summer program, Club Rec, aims to provide a meaningful, inclusive, fun, and social summer day camp experience for children in the town of Arlington, MA.

Vocation: A type of work that one feels particularly called to do.

Since 2021, Tufts University Department of Occupational Therapy has worked with Club Rec to support its programming, operations, and inclusion practices.

2021: Review of Club Rec's inclusion practices

2022: Club Rec Inclusion Director; Inclusion training for staff

2023: Inclusion training focused on self-regulation for campers and staff

PROJECT AIMS

The 2024 project was developed based on recommendations for **additional leadership team training** and an **increased focus on staff engagement**.

1. To provide a workshop to the leadership team to enhance their **leadership skills**.
2. To examine counselors' feelings of **perceived support from leadership** and overall demonstration of **meaningful occupational engagement** in their roles.

BACKGROUND

Higher **motivation**, levels of **success** & overall work **satisfaction** if leaders^{1,2}:

Demonstrate Commitment to followers^{1,2,3,4,5}

- Clear expectations and communication
- Invest in counselors' growth

Prioritize Work Culture^{1,2}

- Staff appreciation efforts
- Strengths based approach to feedback

Establish Mutual Trust⁶

- Invest time in relationships with staff
- Delegate tasks

METHODS

PRE-CAMP

Informal needs assessment

Staff appreciation plan

Leadership workshop

CAMP

Focus group 1

Staff appreciation initiatives

Skilled observation

Post-surveys

Focus group 2

POST-CAMP

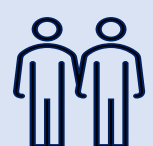
Mixed methods data analysis

Recommendation report

PARTICIPANTS

Leadership Team
n = 9
18-29 years old
1 new, 8 returning

2 Directors



2 Assistant Directors



3 Activity Specialists



2 Group Leaders



Counselors
n = 24
16-19 years old
8 new, 16 returning

24 Counselors



RESULTS

Counselors' Perceptions of Leadership Support

COMMITMENT

"I feel overall, communication has been pretty good."

"They [leadership team] tell you what you could have done next time, and it kind of just helps you grow as a counselor."

WORK CULTURE

"Our bosses do a pretty good job of positive reinforcement"

"If you did something good, they [leadership team] are really good at being positive about that and telling you that you did it well."

TRUST

"The support from the directors was really nice."

"Even though they [leadership team] are in charge of the activities, they will say to us 'can you do this part?' So they are good at communicating what they want us to do."

Focus group *n* = 5/24 counselors

Leadership Team Post-Survey

100% of leadership workshop attendees reported the workshop was **very helpful** or **helpful**.

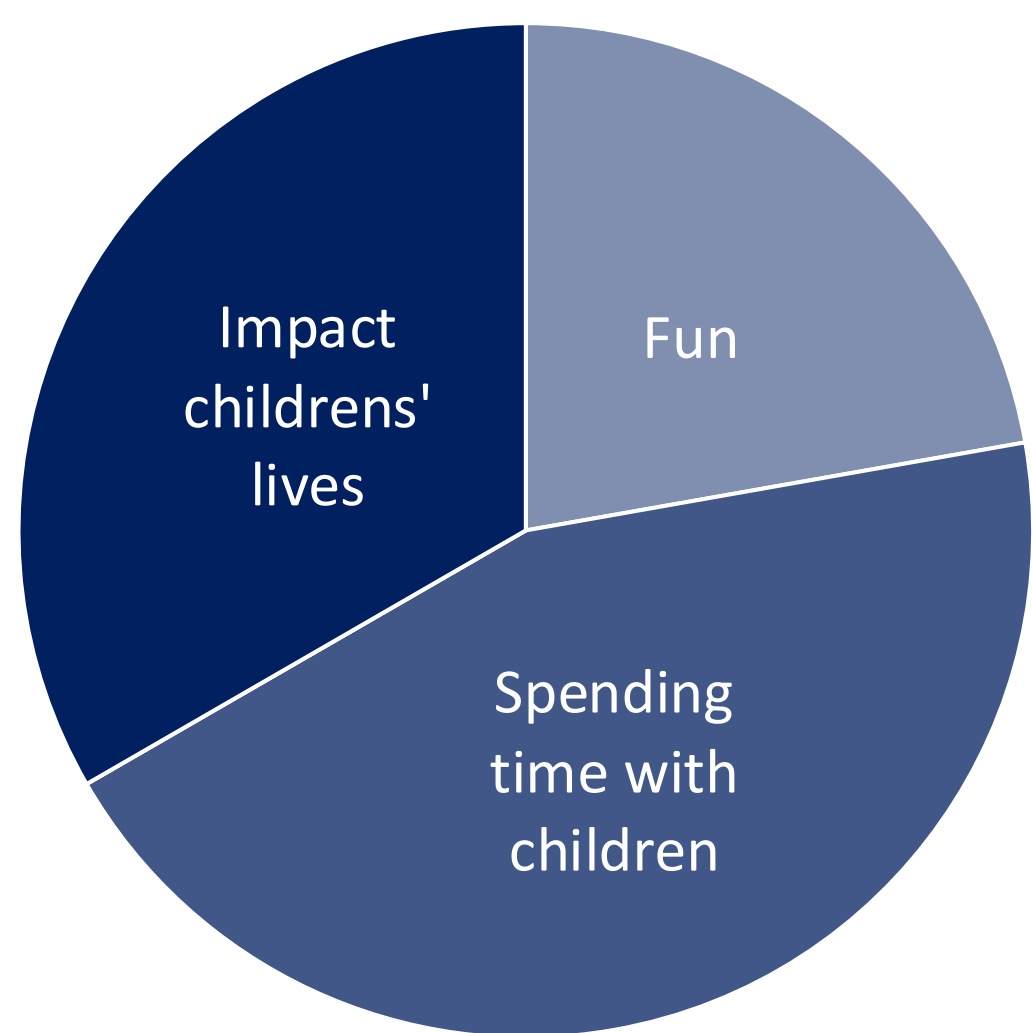
88% of the leadership team reported they were **confident** or **very confident** in being a leader this summer.

100% of the leadership team reported they were **confident** or **very confident** in delegating tasks to counselors this summer.

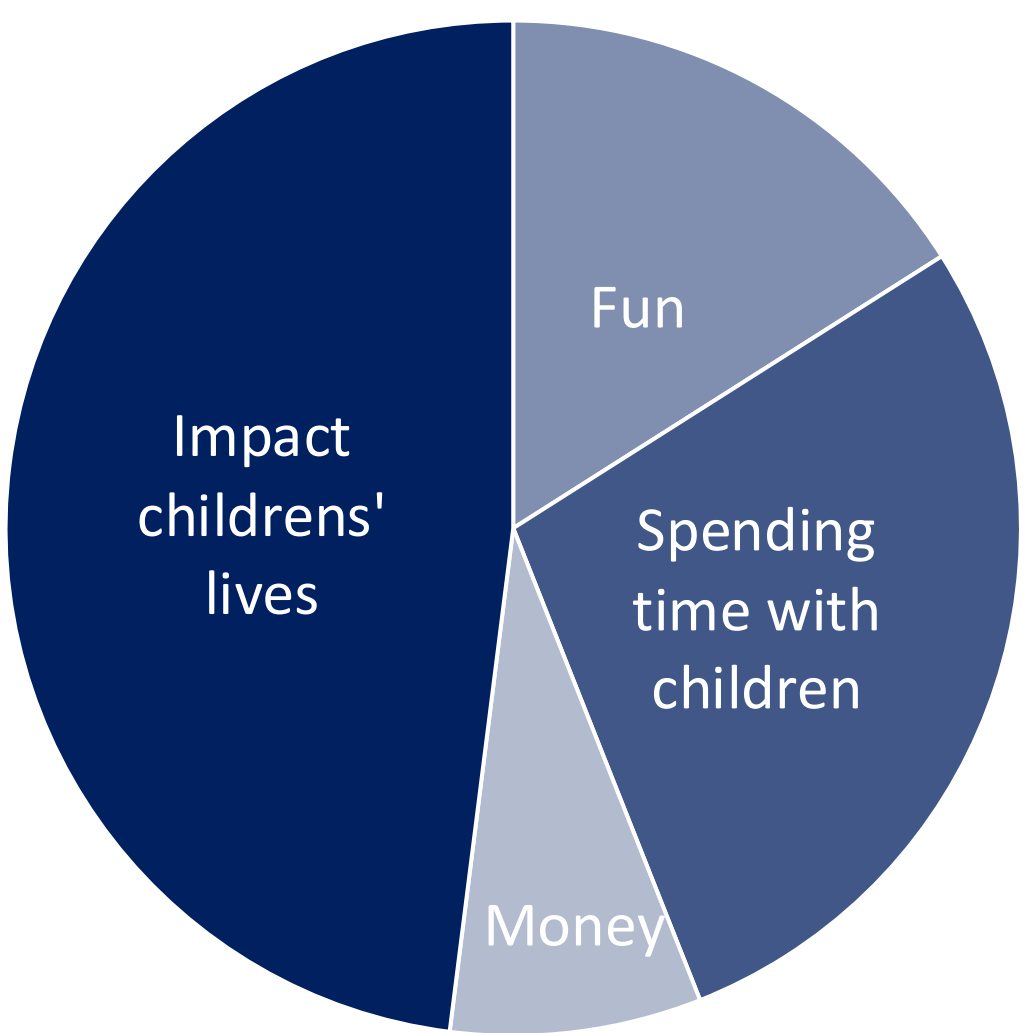
88% of the leadership team reported counselors were **engaged** or **very engaged** in their role this summer.

The following themes emerged from the data as to why **100%** of staff reported that working at Club Rec is **meaningful, fulfilling, or both**:

Leadership Team:



Counselors:



Counselor Post-Survey

Do you feel appreciated?

1

2

Probably yes

8

Definitely yes

13

Do you feel there is positive work culture?

Probably yes

10

Definitely yes

14

Do you feel the leadership team trusts you?

1

Probably yes

8

Definitely yes

15

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

AIM 1

The data demonstrates the leadership team applied key components from the workshop throughout the summer. Their confidence in their skills, combined with insights from the workshop empowered them to succeed as leaders.

AIM 2

The data demonstrates the leadership team's support allowed counselors to learn and grow in their vocational roles. This support also fostered high levels of counselor engagement, strong staff relationships, and a fun and positive work environment.

Trained and prepared leadership team

Counselors supported in vocational role

Campers have fun camp experience

Vocational role is meaningful & fulfilling for staff

Future Considerations:

- Continue leadership workshop to support leaders in preparedness for camp
- Assign leadership team member to oversee staff appreciation efforts
- Increase opportunities for formal feedback between leadership team and counselors
- Increase workshops/training available for staff in the following areas
 - Behavior management
 - Modeling

CONTACT:

Sophie Handloff, OT/s
sophie.handloff@tufts.edu
Ryan Whitney, OT, OTD, OTR
ryan.whitney@tufts.edu

REFERENCES:

