Another area of SIRC’s focus is the economic impact of events such as Philadelphia’s Hispanic Fiesta, the Blue Cross Broad Street Run and marathons and half-marathons in Miami, Georgia, Chicago and beyond.

For the Philadelphia Marathon and 2011 Wawa Welcome America series, SIRC partnered with Philadelphia’s Office of the City Representative for Ceremonial and Special Events to determine who came to the events, how many tourism dollars were generated and how the events can be optimized.

With the Welcome America study in particular, City Representative Melanie Johnson said she was surprised to see the number of attendees who came from outside the Philadelphia region—about 60 to 70 percent of the more than 500,000 spectators.

In addition to attracting non-local visitors, the event encouraged Philadelphia residents to remain in the city rather than travel elsewhere. These attendees (approximately 133,305 people) contributed to an estimated “retained expenditure” of more than $2 million.

This supports Johnson’s assertions that these events increase quality of life for Philadelphia residents, who may not spend money on hotels but still enjoy the events and infuse money into the local economy.

After the 2011 Philadelphia Marathon, SIRC reported that the event drew an estimated 33,846 non-local residents to Philadelphia, and the average per-person spending totaled $441.87. In all, the race events pumped $20.52 million into Philadelphia’s economy.

Overall event satisfaction was 90 percent. Nearly 88 percent of respondents said they would recommend the event, and 57 percent said they would suggest Philadelphia as a vacation destination.

Both studies broke down the age, gender and race demographics, and with these and other numbers, the city has been able to maximize its marketing approach, attract sponsors and determine how to improve future events.

“I think it’s important because we are a city need to promote ourselves,” Johnson said. “Having an economic impact study allows us to get the information out to the public that this event is important.”

When it comes to reporting hard-hitting numbers, Jordan said that because SIRC is viewed as an independent third party, the data can be seen as more credible.

“We’re not profit driven,” he said. “We don’t have to make X amount of dollars per year so we do the work and present the results and it is what it is.”

In some cases, SIRC is able to secure joint funding with partners, and both Jordan and Kent said SIRC hopes to increase the number of studies by both building off of past partnerships and developing new ones.

Kent said SIRC is exactly where it wants to be—providing high-quality research at a fraction of the cost—and hopes to grow the center into the region’s main resource for sport and recreation research.

“There aren’t any other research centers in the region that can offer the breadth of services that we do,” he said.

McDanel and Students Run Philly Style also partnered with Temple’s Department of Nursing to develop some of their early research evaluations.

McDanel said she values these university partnerships and will continue to collaborate with SIRC. Students Run Philly Style recently secured funding for a yearlong study of academic performance, antiviolence measures, self-esteem and self-efficacy.

“Partnerships between the university and community organizations are a big part of the fabric of Philadelphia, where it takes all of us to make this place a better place to live and work and create a better future for our young people,” McDanel said.

“We’re going toward a common goal, and that’s really how it feels,” she said. “That’s not just words we say or put on paper. That’s how it feels.”

“Third-party potential...”

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