THE SPORTS INTERN
INDUSTRY INSIDER

NICHOLAS GONZALEZ

DIRECTOR OF PARKS AND RECREATION
CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

Nicholas didn't initially set out to work in sports. He first majored in psychology with minors in biology and music, later earning his MBA with concentrations in marketing and management & leadership. During college, he also held part-time customer service jobs that sharpened his problem-solving and people skills – experience that would prove invaluable in public service.

His professional journey began with the City of Ontario, where he started as a Community Life & Culture Officer before moving into the role of Recreation & Community Services Director. There, he championed youth sports by expanding programs, partnering with local AYSOs and Little Leagues, and building out new recreational offerings. His work also connected him directly with professional teams, including the **Ontario Fury** (indoor soccer), the **Agua Caliente Clippers** (NBA G League), and the **Ontario Reign** (AHL). In addition, he helped plan and brand the **Ontario Sports Empire**, which is set to become the largest multi-use outdoor sports complex west of the Rockies.

Now serving as the **Director of Parks & Recreation in Palm Springs**, Nicholas oversees a wide range of facilities, programs, and community initiatives that shape the city's quality of life.

INSIDE THE ROLE

CURRENT JOB: Director of Parks & Recreation, City of Palm Springs

DAY-TO-DAY: A mix of leadership meetings, staff development, community engagement, and oversight of programs and facilities

FAVORITE PART: Seeing the direct impact on the community, from families enjoying parks to kids learning to swim

BIGGEST CHALLENGE: Balancing limited resources with high community expectations while delivering quality programs

NICK'S TIPS

1. **Say yes to opportunities.** Even small or unexpected roles can open doors.
2. **Be adaptable.** Sports and recreation evolve quickly; flexibility makes you stand out.
3. **Build relationships.** Networking is about learning and sharing, not just landing jobs.