

TO: Mr. Adam Cole & Ms. Wendy Brown – RCO

CC: Mr. Jon Snyder – Governor’s Office/Ms. Myra Baldini – OFM

FROM: Roxanne Miles, Chair (Pierce County Parks) and Doug Levy, State Lobbyist --
On behalf of WRPA Legislative Committee

RE: Input/Suggestions for Excess Revenues for Stadium & Exhibition Center Account (YAF Account)

RESPONSE NEEDED: We hope these can be evaluated and integrated into the approach determined by RCO/RCFB and reviewed by the Governor’s Office and OFM

First, *thank* you for the outreach to WRPA and for providing our agencies – comprising the vast majority of Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF) grant recipients – to provide comments and suggestions on the one-time infusion of revenues from the Stadium and Exhibition Center Account. We organized comments in the same sequence used in Adam’s “Gateway Questions” document, in which he also included a “Stadium YAF and Board YAF Program Crosswalk.”

Overall Comments/Suggestions

- We agree with **an innovative and flexible approach** to the use of funds. Develop a program that **deploys funds statewide to both urban and rural areas** -- not just to affluent areas but to all.
- We agree with the approach of **phasing the use of this funding vs. trying to deploy it all at once**. We think it is very important that the Legislature view this as enhanced one-time funding and NOT substitute this funding for Accounts such as YAF. A phased deployment also allows funds to be used more strategically and supports the best projects and community needs.
- We believe that in utilizing this funding, RCO should be **prepared to integrate information, data, and metric from parallel processes and studies underway**, such as the “Physical Activity Task Force” study by RCO and various equity reviews. These may give the Agency a better way of standardizing and outlining what constitutes “equity,” or help determine gaps in service.
- We believe there are **some areas where the statute outlining the Stadium & Exhibition Center Account (43.99N.060) is explicit and should be honored** so as not to undermine it and open the door to “repurposing.” As examples, we would note the 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 distribution (*new/improvements/maintenance*) formula that is proportional to population.
- However, where there are multiple ways to read the statute or terms (“*outdoor community athletic facilities*”) are not precisely defined, **we appreciate the idea of viewing these flexibly**.
- We believe there should be a portion of funds, or criteria surrounding funds, that promotes **increased equity of access and equity for users**.
- We also see funding **helping to address severe backlogs in maintenance of existing facilities**. RCO could point to its recommendations in the legislatively-directed “Regional Assets of Statewide Significance” (RASS) study, where addressing M&O gaps was a key recommendation.
- We see this funding as a way to **incentivize more joint use of facilities** (*such as those common to schools and local parks agencies, or adjacent to one or the other*), which would create new partnerships for sustainable use.

- We like the idea of viewing **at least some of this funding as a way to address non-traditional sports and uses** which have not received much attention in prior YAF funding cycles.

Comments on Specific Questions Outlined in Adam Cole's Memo

1. RCW requirements

- Since the proportional allocations based on population and by project type are absolutes, we suggest the allocation could be done by County for the larger counties, and by combined counties when those counties plan together under a regional authority.
- We noted that the “Eligible Applicants” under the Stadium & Exhibition Center Account includes cities, counties, and non-profit organizations but *not* Park Districts/MPDs. YAF *does* include a broader list to include Park Districts/MPDs as well as Tribes. We would recommend use of the broader ‘Eligible Applicants’ list.

2. Youth or Community Outdoor Athletic Facilities, or both?

- It might be helpful to have three (3) separate categories and specify what goes into them by definition, but have all equally compete (no need to separate out funding per category). Sport fields, pools, and then special use youth recreation facilities (*skate parks, BMX, etc*). Perhaps indicate youth use must be at least 50 percent of known users of a facility. SCORP data can help inform this.
- We received significant input about the lack of funding sources available for pools and aquatic facilities, and just as importantly, the equipment to operate pools (boiler facilities, as one example). Using some of this one-time funding for pools, pool equipment, and aquatic facilities makes great sense to us – *especially* when one considers how important swimming skills and water safety are vis-à-vis Washington’s plethora of waterways, coastal waters, and water activities. We also heard from folks that there may be similar needs for things such as ice rinks.
- We like the idea of having some funding available for non-traditional sports/activities. The demand metrics should be different for the different categories of facilities.

3. Flexibilities – Timing and allocation

- Support idea of phased approach.
- RCO may wish to start out with strictly funding proportionally per statute – honoring the statute so that others do not undermine it. Use data and common definitions and ways to evaluate equity to inform the priority use for the funding on a region by region basis. Priority can be on how to fill gaps not served, how to expand uses of the sites, and how to renovate to meet new trends.

4. Purpose –

How/why to make this a novel program: [Phasing, additional focus on equity, addressing M&O, devoting some funding to facilities for non-traditional sports.](#)

- *Focused on equity?* We agree. 2022 could be used to do equity and research work as per budget provisos. Use a consultant to pull together data from equity work, physical activity task force, etc. This work could help inform 2023/2025 projects. The research could also help generate a common framework for what to integrate in the competitive process criteria (gaps, youth population, trend change, SCORP scores). This should be broad enough to help evaluators consider development (gaps), renovation and maintenance needs separately and prioritize each.
- *“Large Cap” or Small Projects:* We would like to suggest both – we heard from larger agencies about extremely large/complicated projects that are very difficult to fund under the current construct for YAF and other grant programs. We also heard from a small agency about the importance of having a tiered portion of funding so that smaller agencies compete with like-sized smaller agencies – perhaps by region/county area, population, or agency budgets. We also suggest development have a different maximum dollar amount from renovation and maintenance. Since there must be 1/3 of funds set aside in each funding bucket, there could be many more maintenance projects than capital development projects.
- *Match to other grants:* Yes, to stimulate more grant applications and maximize available funds.
- *Match requirements:* We do believe that ‘skin in the game’ is important. One thought would be to use 10 percent to promote a lower barrier for development and renovation. Could also use in-kind match for maintenance.
- *Match to other grants:* Yes, to stimulate more grant applications and maximize available funds.
- *No demonstration of comprehensive parks plan?* Perhaps in lieu of a full plan, require inclusion in other plans to show support and readiness. Recommend that equity work produce a common framework for data and need so that agencies don’t have to create it themselves. They can use the physical activity, equity plan, RASS, etc. to show need without local adoption of an updated Comprehensive or PROS Plan.
- *Grant Evaluation Criteria?* Look at equity and need first. Development – look at how it fills gaps to access/use for unserved or under-served youth. Renovation – Look at how it restores facilities to safely function or to expand to meet new recreation trends or needs. Maintenance – Evaluate how it can leverage other funds or provide one year of stop-gap funding.
- *To what extent should funds support facilities such as playgrounds, trails and picnic areas (this supports equity):* We generally believe the funds should support a YAF facility (sport, pool, specialty). We did also receive input suggesting the facilities referenced in your question could provide important access that does not currently exist. We would also suggest restrooms, concessions, standards, bleachers, etc., that sustain operations of a youth athletic facility should be considered.