Regulatory Analysis

Notice of Intended Action to be published: 261—Chapter 216
"Sports Tourism Infrastructure Program"

Iowa Code section(s) or chapter(s) authorizing rulemaking: 15F, subchapter IV
State or federal law(s) implemented by the rulemaking: Iowa Code chapter 15F, subchapter IV

Public Hearing

A public hearing at which persons may present their views orally or in writing will be held as follows:

October 21, 2025	1963 Bell Avenue
10:15 to 10:30 a.m.	Des Moines, Iowa

Public Comment

Any interested person may submit written comments concerning this Regulatory Analysis, which must be received by the Economic Development Authority (Authority) no later than 4:30 p.m. on the date of the public hearing. Comments should be directed to:

Lisa Connell
Iowa Economic Development Authority
1963 Bell Avenue, Suite 200
Des Moines, Iowa 50315
Email: lisa.connell@iowaeda.com

Purpose and Summary

Pursuant to Executive Order 10, the Authority proposes to rescind Chapter 216 and adopt a new chapter in lieu thereof. The chapter describes the policies and procedures applicable to the sports tourism program infrastructure fund administered by the Authority pursuant to Iowa Code chapter 15F, subchapter IV as amended by 2025 Iowa Acts, House File 975 and Senate File 660. The program provides eligible applicants with grants for infrastructure projects that actively and directly support sporting events.

The updated chapter will be more concise throughout. Unnecessary definitions, language that duplicates statute, and language that is duplicated within the chapter will be eliminated. Changes to the program in 2025 Iowa Acts, House File 975 and Senate File 660, are incorporated.

Analysis of Impact

1. **Persons affected by the proposed rulemaking:**

- **Classes of persons that will bear the costs of the proposed rulemaking:**

Entities interested in applying for or receiving assistance through the program will bear the costs of the rulemaking.

- **Classes of persons that will benefit from the proposed rulemaking:**

Entities interested in applying for or receiving assistance through the program will benefit from the rulemaking.

2. **Impact of the proposed rulemaking, economic or otherwise, including the nature and amount of all the different kinds of costs that would be incurred:**

- **Quantitative description of impact:**

Entities interested in applying for the program may require staff time to complete an application to receive financial assistance. Recipients of financial assistance may similarly incur costs to administer the award, including requests for disbursement. Some applicants/recipients may choose to rely on an external service provider to complete these tasks, such as a grant writer. The amount of the costs will vary depending on the compensation of staff or service providers involved.

- **Qualitative description of impact:**

The program supports infrastructure projects that actively and directly support sporting events.

3. **Costs to the State:**

- **Implementation and enforcement costs borne by the agency or any other agency:**

Authority staff time is required to review and approve applications, draft and execute program contracts, disburse funds, and communicate with program applicants and recipients.

- **Anticipated effect on State revenues:**

The rules have no anticipated impact on State revenues. 2022 Iowa Acts, House File 2579, appropriated $12 million for the purposes of the fund.

4. **Comparison of the costs and benefits of the proposed rulemaking to the costs and benefits of inaction:**

Only the entities that will potentially benefit from financial assistance bear the costs of the rulemaking. The costs to the State to administer the program are proportional to the activities supported by financial assistance.

5. **Determination whether less costly methods or less intrusive methods exist for achieving the purpose of the proposed rulemaking:**

The Authority has not identified any less costly or less intrusive methods for administering the program.

6. **Alternative methods considered by the agency:**

- **Description of any alternative methods that were seriously considered by the agency:**

The Authority did not consider any other methods.

- **Reasons why alternative methods were rejected in favor of the proposed rulemaking:**

The Authority did not consider any other methods.

Small Business Impact

If the rulemaking will have a substantial impact on small business, include a discussion of whether it would be feasible and practicable to do any of the following to reduce the impact of the rulemaking on small business:

- Establish less stringent compliance or reporting requirements in the rulemaking for small business.
- Establish less stringent schedules or deadlines in the rulemaking for compliance or reporting requirements for small business.
- Consolidate or simplify the rulemaking's compliance or reporting requirements for small business.
- Establish performance standards to replace design or operational standards in the rulemaking for small business.
- Exempt small business from any or all requirements of the rulemaking.

If legal and feasible, how does the rulemaking use a method discussed above to reduce the substantial impact on small business?

The proposed rules do not have a substantial impact on small business. The rules do not establish compliance or reporting requirements for businesses. The rules do not establish design or operational standards.

Text of Proposed Rulemaking

ITEM 1. Rescind 261—Chapter 216 and adopt the following **new** chapter in lieu thereof:

CHAPTER 216
SPORTS TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

261—216.1(15F) Definitions. When used in this chapter unless the context otherwise requires:

"Accredited colleges and universities" means any college, university, or institution of higher learning that is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission or by an accrediting agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

"Authority" means the economic development authority created in Iowa Code section 15.105.

"Bid fees" means fees paid as part of proposing a location for an event.

"Board" means the same as defined in Iowa Code section 15.102.

"Convention and visitors bureau" or *"CVB"* means an organization engaged primarily in the marketing and promotion of a local community or communities to businesses and to leisure travelers interested in the area's facilities. Such organizations are typically engaged in a wide range of activities, including but not limited to assisting businesses and leisure travelers in identifying meeting locations and convention sites; providing maps and other travel information; providing information on local attractions, lodging, and restaurants; and organizing tours of local historical, recreational, and cultural attractions.

"District" means the same as defined in Iowa Code section 15F.401.

"Financial assistance" means the same as defined in Iowa Code section 15F.401.

"Infrastructure" means land acquisition and construction; major renovations of buildings; and all appurtenant structures, utilities, and site development that are related to the operation of a sporting event.

"Infrastructure fund" means the fund established pursuant to Iowa Code section 15F.404 for purposes of financing sports tourism infrastructure projects.

"Marketing" means planning for or implementing efforts to publicize a sporting event using a range of strategies, tools, and tactics.

"Organization" means the same as defined in Iowa Code section 15F.401.

"Professional sporting events" means the same as defined in Iowa Code section 15F.401.

"Program" means the sports tourism infrastructure program administered pursuant to this chapter and funded by the infrastructure fund.

"Public organization" means a nonprofit organization.

"Sporting event" means an athletic activity requiring skill or physical prowess, usually competitive in nature and governed by a set of rules provided by a nationally recognized sanctioning body. A sporting event typically includes the placing of competitors into a fixed order of finish depending upon their respective athletic performance within the rules provided for that activity.

"Sports tourism program review committee" or *"review committee"* means the committee established by Iowa Code section 15F.402(2) as amended by 2025 Iowa Acts, House File 975.

261—216.2(15F) Eligible applicants. Eligible applicants are identified in Iowa Code section 15F.401(2)*"a"* as amended by 2025 Iowa Acts, Senate File 660.

261—216.3(15F) Eligible infrastructure projects. Only projects that support sporting events occurring in Iowa are eligible for assistance.

216.3(1) When considering whether to award financial assistance for two fiscal years, the board shall evaluate metrics including the amount of revenue generated by ticket sales, the estimated economic impact, and the number of overnight stays at hotels in the city or county where the sporting event is being held. For example, economic impact may be calculated as total estimated attendance

multiplied by daily attendee spending multiplied by average length of stay. If an eligible applicant wishes to supply an alternative formula for calculating economic impact, the applicant must supply a credible source for using an alternative formula. The authority may include such metrics and estimates in a program agreement executed pursuant to Iowa Code section 15F.401.

216.3(2) A city, county, or public organization shall not use financial assistance for costs incurred prior to approval of financial assistance.

216.3(3) Financial assistance shall be provided for sports tourism infrastructure projects that draw a national and international audience and attract a significant number of visitors from outside the state. Factors the authority will consider in determining whether a project is qualified under this subrule include but are not limited to whether the likelihood of a national or international audience is validated by any available data about the anticipated audiences for the event, whether the event is nationally or internationally televised, and projected visitor information or visitor information for similar events held in the state.

261—216.4(15F) Eligible and ineligible infrastructure expenses.

216.4(1) *Eligible expenses.* Examples of eligible expenses include but are not limited to:

a. Land acquisition;
b. Construction;
c. Major renovation of buildings;
d. Site development;
e. Permanent or temporary structures; and
f. Purchase or long-term lease of equipment.

216.4(2) *Ineligible expenses.* Expenses that are not directly related to sporting events or are not considered infrastructure will be ineligible for reimbursement under the program. Examples of ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

a. Bid fees, rights fees, solicitation efforts, or lobbying fees;
b. Travel costs or compensation of applicant staff;
c. Expenses associated with marketing or promotion;
d. Ongoing operational costs not specifically related to sporting events; and
e. Other costs that the board determines to be ineligible.

261—216.5(15F) Threshold application requirements. To be considered for funding under the program, an application must meet the following threshold application requirements:

216.5(1) There must be demonstrated local support for the proposed activity.

216.5(2) The application must contain a detailed description of the project outlining the sporting event(s) and the infrastructure expenses necessary to support it.

216.5(3) The proposed project budget must be spent on infrastructure that actively and directly supports the sporting event(s).

216.5(4) The application must contain detailed information and projections sufficient to enable the authority to accurately assess the economic impact of the sporting event(s) described in the application. Such information shall include the estimated number of spectators and estimated quality and quantity of advertising and media coverage the sporting event(s) will generate. If the applicant has previously held substantially similar events, the information shall include actual attendance figures from past events and a summary of the advertising and media coverage generated.

261—216.6(15F) Application process.

216.6(1) Applications for assistance under the program shall be submitted to the authority. For those applications that meet the threshold application requirements and the eligibility criteria, the authority shall forward the applications to the board and provide a staff review analysis and evaluation to the sports tourism program review committee and to the board.

216.6(2) When reviewing the applications, the review committee and the authority shall consider the criteria identified in Iowa Code section 15F.402(3) and the following:

a. The extent to which the project would generate additional recreational and cultural attractions or tourism opportunities.

b. The extent to which the sporting event to be supported by the infrastructure project is unique, innovative, or diverse.

216.6(3) Upon review of the recommendations of the review committee, the board shall make final funding decisions in accordance with Iowa Code section 15F.401(5).

261—216.7(15F) Administration.

216.7(1) *Administration of awards.*

a. The agreement entered into pursuant Iowa Code section 15F.401(8) will include the terms and conditions under which financial assistance must be repaid or penalties incurred in the event the applicant does not fulfill all obligations under the agreement.

b. The applicant must execute and return the agreement within 90 days of the transmittal of the final agreement. Failure to do so may be cause for the board to terminate the award.

c. Financial assistance shall not be provided until all financing for the sports tourism infrastructure project is secured and documented to the satisfaction of the authority.

d. Awards may be conditioned upon authority receipt and board approval of an implementation plan for the funded project.

216.7(2) *Reports.* The report required pursuant to Iowa Code section 15F.401(7) shall be submitted in the manner and on forms prescribed by the authority. The authority may perform any reviews or site visits necessary to ensure performance by the applicant.

216.7(3) *Requests for funds.* Recipients shall submit requests for funds in the manner and on forms prescribed by the authority. Individual requests for funds shall be made in an amount equal to or greater than $1,000 per request, except for the final draw of funds.

216.7(4) *Recordkeeping and retention.* The recipient shall retain all financial records, supporting documents, and other records pertinent to the sports tourism award for three years after contract closeout. Representatives of the authority shall have access to all recipient records that pertain to sports tourism funds.

216.7(5) *Amendments to contracts.* Any substantive change to a contract shall be considered an amendment. Substantive changes include time extensions, budget revisions, and significant alterations of the funded project that change the scope, location, objectives, or scale of the approved project. Amendments must be approved by the board. The authority may execute nonsubstantive or ministerial changes to the contract without board approval.

216.7(6) *Project closeout.* Upon expiration of the agreement, the authority shall initiate project closeout procedures.

216.7(7) *Compliance with state and local laws and regulations.* Recipients shall comply with all applicable federal, state or local laws, rules or regulations, including but not limited to these rules, any provisions of the Iowa Code governing the program or the recipient's project or operations.

216.7(8) *Remedies for noncompliance.* At any time before project closeout, the authority may, for cause, find that a recipient is not in compliance with the requirements of this program. Remedies for noncompliance may include penalties up to and including the return of program funds. Reasons for a finding of noncompliance include but are not limited to the applicant's use of funds for activities not described in the contract; the applicant's failure to complete funded projects in a timely manner; the applicant's failure to comply with applicable federal, state or local laws, rules or regulations; or the lack of a continuing capacity of the applicant to carry out the approved project in a timely manner.

These rules are intended to implement 2022 Iowa Acts, House File 2579, and Iowa Code chapter 15F, subchapter IV as amended by 2025 Iowa Acts, Senate File 660 and House File 975.