

CHAPTER 216  
SPORTS TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

Chapter rescission date pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.7: 4/22/31

**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.

*“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.

*“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 entity”* means a nonprofit entity.

*“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).

[ARC 0139D, IAB 3/18/26, effective 4/22/26]

**261—216.2(15F) Eligible applicants.** Eligible applicants are identified in Iowa Code section 15F.401(2) “a.”

[ARC 0139D, IAB 3/18/26, effective 4/22/26]

**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 entity 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.

[ARC 0139D, IAB 3/18/26, effective 4/22/26]

**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.

[ARC 0139D, IAB 3/18/26, effective 4/22/26]

**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.

[ARC 0139D, IAB 3/18/26, effective 4/22/26]

**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).

[ARC 0139D, IAB 3/18/26, effective 4/22/26]

**261—216.7(15F) Administration.**

**216.7(1) Administration of awards.**

a. The agreement entered into pursuant to 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 and 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.

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These rules are intended to implement 2022 Iowa Acts, House File 2579, and Iowa Code chapter 15F, subchapter IV.

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