



Board Summary Report

File #: 25-196

Agenda Date: 3/31/2025

Agenda #:

To: Board of County Commissioners

Through: Gini Pingnot, Director, Open Spaces Glen Poole, Open Spaces Operations Manager

Prepared By:

Matt Bixenman, Fairgrounds Site Manager, Open Spaces

Presenter: Matt Bixenman, Fairgrounds Site Manager, Open Spaces; Lexy Kingsbaker, Event and Business Development Supervisor, Open Spaces

Subject:

11:00 AM *2025 Arapahoe County Fairgrounds and Park Event Center Programming

Purpose and Request:

Staff will provide an informational update regarding the 2024 annual event programming hosted at the Event Center: Arapahoe County Fairgrounds and Park.

Background and Discussion: The Event Center at Arapahoe County's Fairgrounds and Park's mission is to provide educational, agricultural and recreational experiences that celebrate our western heritage and preserve our prairie environment, economic and managerial sustainability.

To accomplish this mission, staff strives to ensure event holders receive exceptional customer service while providing visitors opportunities to attend a wide array of regional and community-based events at a County facility the public can be proud of.

Our work is guided, in part, by a market study that was conducted by an independent consultant in 2015 to evaluate regional and local event facility needs in the south metro Denver/Aurora area. This study provided insights to the County on the type of events the facilities would need to support over the next 3-5 years of its operations. The study identified lack of large exhibition hall space in our region. This finding ultimately led the County to collaborate on the construction of an Exhibition Hall addition to the existing building. The market

study also informed potential event demographics interested in renting the space for resident-driven events. Those included: Consumer shows, such as home shows, garden shows, tech events, car shows, pet expo, clothing consignment sales, craft shows, travel shows, seasonal and specialty shows.

- Festivals focused on family and social activities, including childrens expo, food and wine festivals and locally held movie nights.
- Banquets, receptions, parties and quinceaneras.

Marketing dollars were spent early on to promote the new Exhibition Hall. Since then, staff have created a strong portfolio of diverse events. Revenue funds generated from these events are now used for more grass roots marketing vs. target specific marketing. Since COVID, a number of surrounding facilities have closed their operations. This has driven new clients to Arapahoe County's Event Center. Our reoccurring events word of mouth, and grass roots marketing has kept the calendar booked solid even though we no longer do specific target marketing

Event revenue is depicted in the accompanying power point presentation and shows the facility's different event types and the revenue generated by those specific event types. Event demographics have shifted over recent years with different event types being more popular depending on the industry market. As such, we have shifted in recent years to multiday events from single day banquet events. Multiday events provide larger revenue contracts, the predictability of reoccurring revenue year to year, an significant economic impact on the surrounding community and requires less staff time for the revenue generated than one day events.

Some of our other event categories include sporting events, equestrian events, and interdepartmental events. Our sporting events typically occupy our space for small portions of a day and utilize an hourly rate within their contracts. Equestrian events are by nature more operationally oriented. They require heavy equipment use, watering, stalling, etc. Equestrian events are typically a lower revenue contract and are subsidized to some degree. Interdepartmental events are a large part of the bookings at the Fairgrounds facility. Interdepartmental events have increased over the years as County departments started to realize the value the Fairgrounds facility can provide for their training, presentation, and celebration events.

The Event Center and Fairgrounds budgets are located in Fund 28 within two cost centers. The first cost center is the Heritage Operational Fund (303) which supports day to day operations of the facility with staffing, utilities, maintenance, etc. Heritage funds cannot fund new building construction. They can only support maintenance and operations of the facility. The second is the Revenue Fund (302) which is generated through collecting revenue from event contracts and associated equipment rentals. The 302 cost center currently funds two employees and financially supports the Fairground's annual signature events. This account has historically funded CIP projects, as the funds are nonrestrictive. The Revenue Fund consists of revenue from event rentals which is crucial for our future growth and expansion.

Fiscal Impact: Since this presentation is solely for informational purposes, there is no fiscal impact.

Alternatives: N/A

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

- Be fiscally sustainable
- Provide essential and mandated service
- Be community focused

Staff Recommendation: N/A