



Listed below are the most common questions asked when starting a sports commission. The NASC has provided some assistance with the answers that follow.

We're thinking about starting a sports commission, but we do not know what to do.

If this sounds familiar, welcome to the wonderful world of sports promotion! Many communities have pondered this same dilemma. Fortunately, over 20 years ago, a group of promotional pioneers engaged in sporting activities across the United States realized that they could accomplish their goals more effectively by working with communities with similar interests. This collaboration resulted in the formation of the National Association of Sports Commissions (NASC). NASC was legally established in the spring of 1992 and is the national leader in the sports industry. Strong bonds have been established, not just among member communities, but with other athletic organizations involved in producing sports activities.

Why do we need a sports commission?

Let's start with a bit of history that almost every community can relate to. For many years in hundreds of communities throughout the United States, all promotional efforts for the area were conducted through the local chamber of commerce. Over time, these promotional efforts became so specialized that separate chamber divisions, or totally independent corporations were formed to handle these unique markets, such as industrial development and tourism promotion.

Today, one of the grandchildren of these first promotional efforts is the sports commission. Throughout the United States, these organizations have originated in several manners. Many had their beginnings as chamber of commerce committees. A large number were (and still are) associated with the local convention and visitors bureau. Some have been formed as independent, non-profit entities. All across the nation, communities are realizing the massive economic and public relations impact sports can have on a city. Capitalizing on this impact requires special people with unique insights into this market.

A special, dedicated effort led by community volunteers and ably assisted by quality staff members can make sports a major force in economic development or revitalization. If you feel that your community has the combination of people and facilities, which will give you opportunities to serve the sports industry, serious consideration should be given to establishing a sports commission.

How should the commission be organized?

There is more than one answer to this question. Initially, one should look at the ultimate goal: hosting more sporting events in your community. How can you best accomplish this in your area?

Currently, the three major forms of sports commissions are:

- Independent, non-profit corporations
- Division of local convention and visitors bureau
- Government agency (city, county, state)

A normal growth pattern for many sports commissions entails beginning as part of some other entity, and eventually becoming independent. This is not necessarily the best for all communities; however, it is one natural process of evolution. Once again, the most important factor is the final outcome you wish to achieve. You know the alliances, which need to be formed to make this concept happen. Choose the form which best combines your goal with the ability to obtain that goal.

It is important to remember that organizational status is not etched in stone. At the correct time, a commission may alter its organizational structure in order to accomplish the goals of its mission. However, it is imperative to ensure that all of the "players" are involved in determining the appropriate time for change. In all cases, a set of bylaws should be developed that best fit your needs. Examples of the various types of bylaws are available through the NASC.



What kind of board should we have?

Currently, boards for local sports commissions vary in size from 5 to 150 members. There are a high number of commissions with board memberships between 15 and 30 people. The higher the number, the more important it is to have a smaller group, such as an executive committee, which can do the real work of the commission.

You may be thinking, "If someone else does the work, why have a larger number on the overall board?" In most cases, a large board of directors serves as a means to establish consensus in a community. People like feeling they are a part of the action, and the more individuals involved, the more people you are going to please.

Some commissions also place a large number of high profile members of the local business community and/or sports celebrities on the board. This is great for the image, but if you need your board to be a working group of people, make sure you have a core committee who can give you the "go" in addition to the others who give you the "show."

Where do we get our money?

It is critical for you to develop a regular, dependable source of funding. Some of the main sources of revenue currently being used by various sports commissions throughout the United States include the following:

- Membership sales
- Corporate donations (cash and/or in-kind services)
- Grants
- Bed tax
- Managing Events (i.e., operating tournaments to hosting an annual awards banquet)

As you prepare a case to receive funding from any source, remember that it is more important to have a product people want to buy than it is to have something you wish to sell. Your responsibility is to satisfy a need for your potential donor. Therefore, learning about that need is the true challenge of fundraising.

What do we have to sell to sports organizations?

A critical first step in the establishment of any sports promotional group is an inventory of sports facilities and sports organizations in your community. Secondly, it is important to know when the facilities are available. Finally, you need to determine whether or not a local volunteer base and supply of officials exist to support sporting events.

New authors are told to write about things they know. Likewise, it makes sense for a community just beginning its efforts to attract sports, to start with the sports strengths of the area. For example, if you have excellent softball facilities and appropriate access to people and materials, you should work to host as many softball tournaments as possible. Are there sports your area is known for? Initially, go after events based on them, and eventually other types will follow.

For more answers to questions about business development opportunities in the sports event industry, contact the NASC at 513.281.3888 or NASC@SportsCommissions.org.