

2025 Grant Cycle - Phase I Application

Name of Project	John B Lewis Soccer Complex (JBL) Restoration
Organization Name	Asheville Buncombe Youth Soccer Association
Contact Name	Michael Rottjakob
Email	miker@abysa.org

Eligibility

Please complete the questions in this section to confirm your project is eligible for the Tourism Product Development Fund before beginning the application.

Is the applicant a federally recognized non-profit organization or government entity?	Yes
Is the project a festival, cultural event, or other event?	No
Is the grant application for operational expenses only?	No
Is the project located in Buncombe County?	Yes
At the time of application, does the applicant organization have legal control of the property through recorded deed or long-term lease agreement?	Yes
Will the project solely benefit a single lodging owner, lodging property, or be situated on a lodging property?	No

Is the project a major tourism capital project?

Yes

Will the project increase patronage of lodging facilities in Buncombe County by attracting tourists, business travelers, or both, AND further economic development in Buncombe County?

Yes

Will requested grant funds be used for one of the following: (1) Construction of a new location or relocation, or (2) Expansion of an existing location?

Yes

Applicant Organization Information

Organization Type

Non-Profit Organization

Organization Phone

(828) 778-9524

Organization Physical Address

593 Azalea Road East
Asheville, NC, 28805

Organization Mailing Address

PO Box 895
Asheville, North Carolina, 28802

Primary Contact Information

Please provide the contact information for the primary point of contact for this application.

Name

Michael Rottjakob

Title

Executive Director

Email

miker@abysa.org

Phone Number

(828) 778-9524

Project Details

Physical Address of Project

439 Azalea Road East
Asheville, North Carolina, 28805

Is your project an expansion of or improvement to an existing facility?

Yes

At the time of application, does the applicant organization have legal control of the property through a recorded deed or long-term lease agreement? If property is owned by a municipal partner, such as the City or County, a non-profit organization may provide a letter of support or other agreement with the municipal partner.

Yes, the applicant organization has legal control of the property through a long-term lease (Applicant leases the property)

Please describe your project.

The proposed project is replacement of the artificial turf and repair of the field lighting system at the John B. Lewis Soccer Complex (JBL). The turf replacement and lighting system repairs are needed to return the facility to service following the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene. The requested grant funding from this TPDF grant cycle is \$2,155,000.

JBL represents a remarkably successful public-private partnership between ABYSA, the City of Asheville, and the BCTDA. For twenty years, with JBL and Buncombe County Sports Park (BCSP) as flagship tournament facilities, ABYSA has produced dependable growth in hotel room night utilization and an impressive return on investment for the park’s partners. For our most recently completed fiscal year that ended June 30, 2024, hotel room nights supported by ABYSA events, and other field sports tournaments hosted at the above facilities, totaled over 27,000.

To return to this level of sports tourism impact and continue to add incremental room night growth, bringing JBL back to service is critical. Every high-impact tournament event hosted over the last five years has required all of the field capacity at both JBL and BCSP. At the time of Hurricane Helene, JBL represented just over 57% (four of seven) of our artificial turf with field lighting capacity. Restoration of this asset is instrumental in keeping Buncombe County on the list of top soccer and field sports destinations in our region. Absent timely turf replacement and field lighting repair, ABYSA and Explore Asheville will lose momentum in a very competitive event hosting marketplace and delay important economic healing for our tourism industry.

In addition to its impressive economic impact, JBL is also a significant quality of life asset for thousands of Buncombe County residents. In FY 2024, JBL provided tens of thousands of hours of essential practice and game space to 6,647 unique youth soccer registrants and 2,007 unique adult soccer registrants. Practice and game space at JBL was also utilized by youth and adult lacrosse and ultimate frisbee programs. The facility has been instrumental to growing the organizational capacity of ABYSA, allowing us to produce and host dependable and successful sports tourism events.

Provide a detailed description of the project scope of work. For each task / deliverable, include description, cost, and timeline of completion.

The project scope of work is straight forward and has been confirmed by Astroturf Corporation, the turf replacement contractor, and Musco Sports Lighting, the field lighting contractor. Both contractors and their engineers have made multiple site visits to JBL, both before and after debris removal was completed at the park, to produce scope of work and cost estimates. They confirm the project is very “shovel ready”.

The timelines reported in this application are based on funding notification on October 29, 2025. If there is a process by which expedited funding consideration can be facilitated and awarded, ABYSA, Astroturf, and Musco are all prepared to accelerate the project timeline. We have confirmed the contractor's availability to begin work as early as mid-September, 2025.

Remarkably, the field infrastructure below the turf was not damaged by Helene and the turf replacement project can begin within 60-90 days after project funding is secured. The timeline for completion is estimated to be 30-45 days after mobilization. The engineering documents used for turf replacement

completed in July, 2017 are unchanged for this turf replacement.

The scope of work includes removal, hauling, and disposal of the existing turf, removal and replacement of the in-field perimeter drainage, flushing of silt and repair of several underground sections of the park storm water system, minimal grading and compaction of the existing stone field bases, manufacturing and reapplication of new artificial turf, and planting of natural grass around the outside perimeters of the fields. The cost estimate for these turf replacement project items is \$3,647,000, including all materials and labor. The project can be completed within 90 to 135 days following contract approval and notice to proceed.

While none of the light-pole structures or lamp fixtures were damaged by the flooding, electrical components that were under water need to be replaced. These include the control and monitoring cabinets for the entire system located above Azalea Road, the lighting contactor cabinets on each of the 16 light poles, the 32 (two per light pole) pole-length wire harnesses, and the conduit and underground wiring that were exposed to water. The cost estimate for the Musco Lighting repair items is \$663,000, including all materials and labor. The lighting repair project can be completed in 90 to 120 days following contract approval and notice to proceed.

The turf replacement and lighting repair components can occur at the same time and require minimal coordination between contractors. Astroturf and Musco have many years of experience working next to each other on field construction projects.

The City of Asheville has confirmed their commitment to preparing parking areas, and ensuring the park is safe for visitors, on a timeline that is consistent with the progress of this project. The condition of public access areas to the park is largely undamaged, have been cleaned by the debris removal contractor, and will require minimum work to prepare for parking and portable bathroom placement.

Project Milestones

What is the projected break ground date? Monday, January 5, 2026

What is the projected completion date? Monday, April 6, 2026

What is the projected opening date? Friday, April 10, 2026

Please provide other project milestones, if applicable. Please include the date and the milestone description.

There are no additional project milestones.

Project Financial Information

What type of funding are you requesting? Grant

What is the total budget for your project? \$4,310,000

What is your requested funding amount? \$2,155,000

List the current mix of non-TPDF funding for your project. Include the source, amount, status, and if the funding is contingent on TPDF funds.

	Source	Amount	Status
Source 1	ABYSA Cash Reserve	\$1,924,000	In-Hand
Source 2	City of Asheville/ABYSA Turf Replacement Fund	\$231,000	Committed
Source 3			
Source 4			
Source 5			
Source 6			
Source 7			
Source 8			
Source 9			
Source 10			

Total Amount of non-TPDF funding \$2,155,000

If the total amount of non-TPDF funding sources listed above is less than the requested TPDF funding amount. Please describe your plan to raise the remaining amount to meet the 1-to-1 funding match requirement.

N/A

If any of the above funding sources are contingent on receiving funding through the Tourism Product Development Fund, please explain below.

ABYSA have been preparing financially, for years, for the eventual replacement of the artificial turf at JBL. The anticipated turf replacement project timeline, if not accelerated by Hurricane Helene, was expected to occur in 2027-2028. The lease agreement between the City of Asheville and ABYSA also requires both parties to contribute to a joint turf replacement fund, which as of June 30, 2025, contains \$231,000.

ABYSA cash reserves, and the joint turf replacement fund, are contingent upon Tourism Product Development Fund grant funding in that the amounts available falls well short of the money needed to execute this project. In the absence of TPDF grant funding, restoration of the JBL asset will require significant fundraising and delay return to service by an estimated 24-36 months.

Have you received TPDF funding in the past for this specific project? Yes

If yes, Please describe what the previous BCTDA investment(s) specifically funded for your project and why you are applying for funding for this project again.

The John B Lewis Soccer Complex (JBL) was the recipient of grant funding in the very first BCTPDF award following the creation of the enabling legislation in 2001. Additional grants were awarded to ABYSA for the purchase and installation of the field lighting system in 2009 and the turf replacement project that was completed in 2017. We believe that previous grant funding for JBL has produced an excellent return on investment for the BCTDA.

More recent BCTPDF investments in sports field resources at Buncombe County Sports Park (BCSP) have further added to field inventory and provided a rapidly growing sports tourism impact for our community.

We are applying for grant funding, again, due to the devastating impact that the loss of JBL, during Hurricane Helene, is having on our lodging and tourism industry and our local sports community. Partnership with ABYSA on JBL restoration and leveraging our mutual commitment and proven track record in sports tourism and community benefit, will accelerate our recovery.

Project Impact

Will the project be able to track the number of visitors to the project through ticket sales, registration, surveys, or other similar methods?

Yes

If applicable, how many visitors does your current operation serve annually?

More than 550,000

What is the estimated number of visitors at your project for YEAR 1 of operation?

22,897 room nights

What is the estimated number of visitors at your project for YEAR 2 of operation?

26,938 room nights

What is the estimated number of visitors at your project for YEAR 3 of operation?

29,632 room nights

What are your visitation estimates based on? (Example: existing customer data, ticket sales, research, etc.)

The number of visitors (one person going one time) to JBL is over 700,000 per year based on analysis of scheduled use of the facility. This includes daily use of the park by sports programs, residents use of the facility, and those visiting for sports tourism related events.

In June 2023, Explore Asheville, ABYSA, and ABRSC produced an analysis of the economic impact of tournament events hosted at the John B Lewis Soccer Complex (JBL) and Buncombe County Sports Park (BCSP), utilizing Explore Asheville’s subscription to the Event Impact Calculator. This analysis evaluated highly reliable tournament registration data from eleven large scale tournaments. The data included the number of participants on each attending team, where the team traveled from, and the number of days the team was in Buncombe County for the event. All of the events, due to their size, utilized both the JBL and BCSP fields. The Event Impact Calculator estimated the number of room nights to be 26,938 for the FY Ending June 30, 2023.

This report is the basis for the estimated visitation, expressed in room nights above, for year one, two, and three following the restoration of JBL. All of the 2023 events returned in 2024, and the number of teams attending grew, in year over year comparison, making this an excellent baseline for visitors utilizing paid lodging for tournaments.

For year one following the restoration of JBL, we anticipate overnight visitation to return to 85% of the 2023-2024 level, or 22,897 room nights. In year two we anticipate returning to 100% of the 2023-2024 level, and in year three, exceeding that level with 10% growth.

How many days would a typical visitor patronize your project during one visit to Buncombe County? 70% of tournament guests stay 2 days, 30% stay one day

What is your estimated percentage of visitors to this project who will stay overnight in Buncombe County in paid lodging? 100% of out of market tournament guests as reported above.

Please describe your current or expected audience.

Our primary audience is competitive-travel youth and adult soccer and lacrosse teams who come to JBL for invitational tournaments, state or national association events, and regional travel league play. In addition, we host other field sports (lacrosse, ultimate frisbee, flag football) for tournament play and in collaboration with local sports associations, private event owners, Explore Asheville, Explore Asheville’s partner Airstream Ventures, and the Asheville Buncombe Regional Sports Commission.

ABYSA has a proven record of hosting large scale events based on the capacity and quality of our facilities, our outstanding hospitality, and the ability to leverage ABYSA’s participation in other association tournaments with reciprocal agreements to attend our events.

Terms of Agreement

Please read each of the following statements and acknowledge that you understand and agree to them by checking the boxes. Applications cannot be submitted unless this field is completed.

Disclsoure for the Public Record

As a public authority, the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority is subject to Chapter 132 of the North Carolina General Statutes. Therefore, any and all aspects of this application must be made available by the BCTDA to any party, public or private, upon request without exception. If you are concerned that the distribution of any of your application materials may do irreparable damage to you, your organization, or associated parties, the BCTDA highly recommends that you seek alternative funding in lieu of TPDF funds.

Project Monitoring

I hereby acknowledge that if I am awarded TPDF funding, I will be required to submit an annual report by January 15 of each year during the term of the agreement, with the term commencing on the effective date and continuing for four years after the completion date. Reports include marketing plans and methodologies for capturing annual and out-of-market visitation, up-to-date room night projections, and copies of survey instruments used for data among other requirements.

BCTDA Marketing

I hereby acknowledge that certain information from my application, such as the project description, timeline, and leadership, may be used by the BCTDA at its sole discretion for the promotion and marketing of the TPDF program and the region as a tourism destination.

Completed Application

I hereby acknowledge that I have completed this application in good faith and have done so in full

compliance with the law. I have made no attempt to falsify or misconstrue facts or data anywhere in this application. The information contained in this application is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Terms and Conditions

Accepted