

Community Use of School Property in Missouri



Paying for Community Use of School Property





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Community Use of School Property in Missouri is available at kchealthykids.org

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This guide was created through a partnership between KC Healthy Kids, Missouri Association of Councils of Government, Missouri Consultants for Education, Missouri School Boards' Association, Missouri State Alliance of YMCAs and Public Health Law Center.

The organizations were convened to promote and sustain community changes that enable healthy lifestyles. Their goal is to accelerate and advance policy and environmental changes in Missouri that encourage healthy eating and active living.

About KC Healthy Kids

KC Healthy Kids rallies the people in our communities to improve access to affordable fresh food and safe places to walk and play. When our neighborhoods support healthy habits, we are less likely to suffer from obesity, which is linked to Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and poor mental health. To make a lasting impact, we shape policies that improve our food system and physical surroundings, and, ultimately, the places where we live, work, learn and play.

About the Public Health Law Center

The Public Health Law Center helps create communities where everyone can be healthy. We empower our partners to transform their environments by eliminating commercial tobacco, promoting healthy food, and encouraging active lifestyles. We believe that our legal knowledge can help bring justice to public health as we support our partners in reducing health disparities. Founded in 2000, the Center is located at Mitchell Hamline School of Law in St. Paul, Minnesota.



Paying for Community Use of School Property in Missouri

Opening up school district property for public use provides community groups, individuals in Missouri a valuable opportunity to engage in physical or recreational activity in a safe, convenient, and affordable place.

However, the adoption and implementation of a successful community use program involves various costs associated with funding different components of the program, including daily operations, regular maintenance, program staffing and facility updates.

A recent survey taken by school administrators in Missouri showed that increased funding would help school districts overcome barriers related to cost and support increased use of school property by community groups.¹

Therefore, it is important for school districts to explore multiple funding streams to support their efforts to effectively address cost issues and ensure the continuity and sustainability of their community use programs.

This resource highlights several funding opportunities that could potentially be used to finance community use programs in schools.



Community use agreements

Formal/written agreements between a school district or school and a government entity (e.g. the city, county, parks and recreation department) or a non-governmental entity (e.g. the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club) allow school districts to ease the burden of having to defray all costs associated with operating a community use program (improving security, providing utilities), maintaining facilities and equipment (making repairs and renovations) and paying for staff services (custodial, security, technician and food services staff).

Community use agreements are a cost-effective strategy that can be used to facilitate cost-sharing responsibilities between participating entities.



Grants from federal, state, and county government agencies

School districts have the opportunity to increase funds for their community use programs by competing for grants offered by federal, state and county government agencies. Districts also can partner with other community organizations to apply for matching funds from government agencies.

Grants from county parks and recreation departments² and federal grant programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund³ can help schools pay for infrastructure and facilities construction, new equipment, etc.

In the past, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has provided grants to public schools (and public schools that have partnered with nonprofit organizations) to establish/enhance programs for children enrolled during non school hours, after their daily class sessions or during other non school hours (i.e., breaks, holidays, or weekends, etc.), through their School Age Community grant program.⁴

School districts can find the department of education grants at <https://dese.mo.gov/quality-schools/extended-learning/afterschool-programs/grants>

In April 2015, the Kirksville R-III School District received a \$75,000 grant from the Department of Natural Resources Land and Water Conservation Fund to help purchase playground equipment for an inclusive playground that is now part of the district.

The playground is open to the public and was designed to be accessible to anyone in the community. More information about this collaborative initiative can be found at the following link: <http://www.kirksvilledailyexpress.com/article/20150415/>

Grants from foundations, businesses and philanthropic organizations

Districts can also support their community use program by partnering with local nonprofit organizations or government agencies to access funding streams from community foundations, local businesses, and other philanthropic organizations.

For example, Action for Healthy Kids, a national nonprofit organization, offers grants to Missouri K-12 schools to support physical activity initiatives through their “Game On” grant program.⁵ Foundations such as the Missouri Foundation for Health and the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City also provide grant opportunities to support safe environments for physical activity and the health and well-being of communities through their “Opportunity Fund”⁶ and “Healthy Communities Grant,”⁷ respectively.

Grants such as these can be valuable resources for improving school districts’ indoor and outdoor recreational spaces and can be used in tandem with other funding sources to create a sustainable community use program.



User fees

A commonly used strategy for funding community use of school property is user fees. The Missouri School Board Association has revised the school board policy on community use of school district facilities to allow districts to charge a rental fee for the use of school property.

Fees can be set up as a per time or per-hour use payment, or districts can require a one-time payment through an agreement with the user group for recurring use over a set period of time.

User fees are usually charged to offset utility and maintenance costs for certain facilities, such as a district's pool, athletic field/track/stadium, kitchen, etc., and costs incurred by the district for providing overtime pay for custodial staff, food services personnel, technicians and security personnel.

Schools typically use a multi-tiered or sliding fee schedule so that different types of user groups (e.g. school groups, nonprofits, community organizations serving the district, for-profits, and community groups outside the district, etc.) can be charged different amounts.⁸ However, since school districts strive to make their facilities and equipment accessible to most community users, districts typically require only a nominal fee from their users. Therefore this revenue may not be adequate to fund the entire community use program.

The "School Facilities Cost Calculator," developed by The Center for Cities and Schools at the University of California, Berkeley, in partnership with the 21st Century School Fund, can be a useful tool for school districts needing guidance in crafting an effective fee schedule.

This cost calculator is designed to help school districts understand the operational costs of facilities and build a multi-tiered fee structure for different types of community users based on actual costs of facilities on a per square-foot and hourly basis.

More information about this tool can be found at <http://www.bestfacilities.org/best-home/Project3.asp?ProjID=50>

Other Funding Options

School districts can find other creative and cost-effective funding streams to finance their efforts to increase community use of school district facilities and equipment.

A good practice is for the school district to form and maintain a working group or advisory council to take the initiative on identifying program needs and thinking creatively about nontraditional ways of addressing those funding needs.

For example, fundraisers such as fun runs or walk-a-thons can be organized to raise money for small-scale improvements such as installing a hallway gate or purchasing additional tennis racquets.

The working group can use fundraising events to solicit in-kind and monetary donations from individuals and community organizations to maximize resources and offset some of the costs the school district will have to bear.

The “SuperFit School Challenge” program provides an opportunity for schools to raise funds in support of important programs while teaching the school community the importance of healthy physical activity and nutrition. Information about this healthy fundraising partnership program with Action for Healthy Kids is available at <http://superfitschoolchallenge.org/>



Conclusion

It is important for community use programs to be designed carefully so as not to create a burden for a school district's budget and operations or make it cost-prohibitive for community users.

Since one funding stream is typically inadequate to fully fund the implementation of a community use program, it is important that school districts have multiple funding mechanisms and combine these funding sources to support different aspects of the community use program to ensure its continuity and sustainability.

Having sufficient program funding can help remove barriers related to cost so that school administrators can increase community use of school property and support efforts to create healthier communities in Missouri.



¹ PUBLIC HEALTH LAW CENTER, Missouri Community Use of School Property 4 (2015), <http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/Missouri-use-of-school-property.WEB .1.pdf>

² Outreach Grants, PLATTE COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION, <http://www.platteparks.com/outreach-grants/>

³ Land and Water Conservation Fund Grants, MISSOURI STATE PARKS, <https://mostateparks.com/page/61215/land-and-water-conservation-fund-lwcf-grants>

⁴ Grants, MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION, <https://dese.mo.gov/quality-schools/extended-learning/afterschool-programs/grants>

⁵ School Grants for Healthy Kids, ACTION FOR HEALTHY KIDS, <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/tools-for-schools/apply-for-grants>

⁶ Opportunity Fund, MISSOURI FOUNDATION FOR HEALTH, <https://mffh.org/our-focus/community-needs/opportunity-fund/>

⁷ Healthy Communities, HEALTH CARE FOUNDATION OF GREATER KANSAS CITY, <https://hcfgkc.org/grantees-and-applicants/what-we-fund/foundation-defined-grants/healthy-communities/>

⁸ SCHOOL DUDE, Recovering Costs for the Community Use of Our Schools: Examining the Successful Implementation of Cost Recovery Programs in Our Schools 19 (2015), <https://www.schooldude.com/Portals/0/Public%20Content/White%20Papers/Cost%20Recovery%20Whitepaperfinal.pdf?ver=2015-06-29-124705-960>