
Capital Budget Committee

HB 2356

Brief Description: Concerning state capital funding of health and safety improvements at agricultural fairs.

Sponsors: Representatives Warnick, Dunshee, Haigh, Buys, Van De Wege and Tharinger.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the Department of Agriculture to provide capital funding on a competitive basis to local governments and nonprofit organizations for health and safety improvements to agricultural fair grounds and fair facilities.
- Sets out contract, monitoring, and non-compliance requirements related to the capital funding.

Hearing Date: 1/19/12

Staff: Meg Van Schoorl (786-7105).

Background:

Current law divides agricultural fairs into four categories. "Area fairs" are organized to serve an area larger than one county. "County and district fairs" are organized to serve single counties and are under the direct control of county commissioners. "Community fairs" are organized primarily to serve a smaller area than an area or county fair. "Youth shows and fairs" serve three or more counties, educate and train rural youth, and are approved by Washington State University or the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. According to the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), there are 33 county fairs, 4 area fairs, 17 community fairs, and 12 youth fairs.

Counties that own or lease government property and provide it for area, county and district agricultural fairs may apply to the WSDA for "special assistance" in carrying out capital improvements on these properties. Entities other than counties are not eligible to apply for this

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capital funding, and making capital improvements to properties for community or youth fairs is not an eligible purpose.

From 2003-2011, \$2.2 million was appropriated through biennial capital budgets to the WSDA for fair improvement grants. The WSDA awarded grants to counties for projects such as replacing electrical wiring to comply with current codes, renovating restrooms to meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements, demolishing and replacing an exhibit barn because of dry rot, installing parking lot lighting, and replacing wooden bleachers with aluminum bleachers.

The 2011-13 Capital Budget (ESHB 2020, Section 3113) appropriates \$1 million from state bonds to the WSDA for grants to support health and safety projects at county fairs.

Summary of Bill:

"Agricultural fair" is defined as a fair or exhibition to promote agriculture that includes a balanced variety of livestock and agricultural product exhibits, related arts and manufactures, farm home products, and educational components.

Subject to specific appropriations, the WSDA may provide capital funding to local governments and nonprofit organizations for capital projects that make health or safety improvements to agricultural fair grounds or fair facilities in order to benefit participants and the fair-going public.

The WSDA is to provide the capital funding on a competitive basis, develop and manage contracts with the selected applicants, monitor grantee expenditures and performance, report information, and exercise due diligence.

Contract provisions must require that capital improvements be held by the grantee for a specified time period and be used for the purpose of the grant. Non-compliance with these provisions will require the grantee to repay the State General Fund the principal amount of the grant plus interest.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.