

Expositions Commission

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- Attendance for the 12-day Ohio State Fair was 802,074 in 2005
- The Expositions Commission continues to implement a Facility Improvement and Modernization Plan to help attract nonfair events, a significant source of revenue to the Commission

OVERVIEW

The Ohio Expositions Commission was created and is governed by Revised Code Chapter 991. It is comprised of a 13-member commission specifically charged with the responsibility of conducting at least one fair annually and maintaining and managing property held by the state for the purpose of conducting fairs, expositions, and exhibits. The Commission currently oversees operations of the Ohio Expositions Center, a 360-acre facility located in Columbus, employs approximately 82 permanent staff and hires approximately 1,000 temporary employees throughout the year to work the State Fair and special events.

The Commission's goal is to become a self-sufficient agency. In order to do this, the Commission believes it must continue to make long-term improvements to the annual Ohio State Fair and provide an accommodating facility that will attract new nonfair events. The Commission is hopeful that these efforts will increase both participants and guests at the Fair and the nonfair events, resulting in greater revenues to fully support its operations.

Agency in Brief

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Number of Employees*	Total Appropriations-All Funds		GRF Appropriations		Appropriation Bill(s)
	2006	2007	2006	2007	
130*	\$14.56 million	\$14.56 million	\$400,000	\$400,000	Am. Sub. H.B. 66

*Employee count obtained from the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) payroll reports as of June 2005. The Expositions Commission stated that they had 68 full-time employees, 14 part-time employees and 48 seasonal employees at the end of June 2005. The seasonal employees were pre-fair. The Expo Commission employs up to 1,000 additional seasonal employees for the State Fair.

Commission Challenges

The Commission believes that the primary fiscal and programmatic challenge of the Ohio State Fair lies in achieving public expectation, such as providing support to the Junior Fair, while not negatively impacting the annual operating budget of the Ohio Expositions Commission.

Another challenge is the increase in local competition for nonfair events. Nonfair events are an important source of revenue to the Commission through rental fees for the facility and through parking fees. During the FY 2004-2005 biennium, the Commission continued to implement the Facility Improvement and Modernization Plan. The Commission is currently working on phase II of the plan by

improving the 17th Avenue entrance through an electrical upgrade project. In addition, the Commission is making a concerted effort to improve handicapped accessibility.

For the FY 2006-2007 biennium, the Commission plans to continue its ongoing efforts to promote efficient management, increase return business, and increase customer satisfaction with the physical facilities. The aim is to increase the number of participants and the guests that come to the Ohio Expositions Center, whether for the State Fair or for nonfair events. Success in improved management, well maintained facilities, and increased attendance would provide greater revenues to support operations on a daily basis. Challenges for the 2006-2007 budget are increased payroll costs, general inflation, and increased utility costs.

Appropriations Summary

The enacted budget appropriates flat funding for FY 2006 and FY 2007 at \$14,563,315 each year. This is a 0.3% decrease over estimated FY 2005 spending levels. The Commission is 97% funded through rotary funds in the State Special Revenue Fund Group. The remainder of the Commission's funding is derived from a GRF subsidy for the Junior Fair.

ANALYSIS OF THE ENACTED BUDGET

For budget purposes, as detailed below, the Expositions Commission is considered a single program series agency and its activities are not subdivided into separate programs.

Program Series 1

Ohio Expositions Commission

Purpose: To produce the annual Ohio State Fair and professionally manage and maintain the Ohio Expositions Center, a 360-acre facility located in Columbus, for year-round events.

The following table shows the line items that are used to fund the Ohio Expositions Commission, as well as the enacted budget's funding levels.

Fund	ALI	Title	FY 2006	FY 2007
General Revenue Fund				
GRF	723-403	Junior Fair Subsidy	\$400,000	\$400,000
General Revenue Fund Subtotal			\$400,000	\$400,000
State Special Revenue Fund				
4N2	723-602	Ohio State Fair Harness Racing	\$520,000	\$520,000
506	723-601	Operating Expenses	\$13,643,315	\$13,643,315
State Special Revenue Fund Subtotal			\$14,163,315	\$14,163,315
Total Funding: Expositions Commission			\$14,563,315	\$14,563,315

The Expositions Commission is responsible for the following two programs:

- **State Fair Management**
- **Nonfair Events**

State Fair Management

Program Description: The Ohio State Fair, authorized by R.C. Chapter 991., is an annual event that emphasizes youth education, and the promotion of Ohio's agricultural industry, Ohio products, Ohio tourism, and cultural activities. The Junior Fair, a part of the Ohio State Fair, allows over 10,000 youth from across the state participating in FFA or 4H to show their livestock. In addition, youth bands and choirs are invited to perform at the Fair. The commission provides lodging and food for these youth while they are participating in the Fair. These youth programs are supported through the GRF. The Commission also conducts harness racing during the Fair. Participants in the harness races pay an entry fee, which goes to pay for the use of the Scioto Downs Race Track located in Central Ohio.

In 2004, the Ohio State Fair went from 17 days to 12 days in order to reduce operational costs. However, this reduced number of days did not significantly hurt attendance. To illustrate, in 2003 the number of people that attended the Fair was 1,011,331; attendance in 2005 was 802,074.

Funding Sources: GRF and SSR derived from fees charged for facility rental, exhibit entries, parking, admissions, etc.

Implication of the Enacted Budget: The enacted budget provides full support for the State Fair Management program within the Ohio Expositions Commission. The Commission's two rotary accounts, which are used to support the Ohio State Fair Harness Racing and the Operating Expenses for the State Fair and nonfair events, are fully funded. However, the GRF funded line item received less than what was needed for the Junior Fair Subsidy. As a result, the Commission plans to use a portion of the State Fair operating expenses rotary fund (Fund 506) in an effort to maintain the Junior Fair at current levels.

Nonfair Events

Program Description: The Ohio Expositions Commission manages and operates the Ohio Exposition Center for year-round events. Nonfair events are an important source of revenue to the Commission, which charges rental fees for the facilities and for parking at these events. In 2004, the largest revenue-generating events included: Ohio Quarter Horse Association (over \$1.17 million); the Equine Affaire (over \$300,000); and the Goodguys event (over \$127,000).

As mentioned in the Overview, in order to remain competitive in the Columbus area, the Commission wants to improve the Fairground's image. During the FY 2006-2007 biennium, the Commission plans to continue implementation of the Facility Improvement and Modernization Plan. The Commission is currently working on phase II of the plan by improving the 17th Avenue entrance through an electrical upgrade project and handicapped accessibility.

Funding Source: SSR, consisting of fees for fair and nonfair events

Implication of the Enacted Budget: The Executive's recommendations provide full support for the Nonfair Events program within the Ohio Expositions Commission. However, the amount of revenue the Expo Commission receives determines the extent of funds that are allocated to expenditures. Yet, revenues can fluctuate because of reasons that are out of the Commission's control, like the weather.