Determining the Right Sports Field for Your Athletes

Your organization has decided to build a new sports field. This is an excellent decision that will benefit your athletes, the fans and the community. With sports participation and viewership on the rise, the focus on fitness, and the desire for environmentally friendly recreational venues, now is an ideal time to build a sports field.

As a sports turf manager, you are responsible for the quality of the new field. Most importantly, your goal is to manage it to a high level of playability and safety, thus reducing an athlete's likelihood of suffering a surface related injury. The first step is to ensure that your organization has decided to build the most suitable field based on use, budget, management expertise, and many other factors specific to your situation.

The Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) is developing a series of advisory bulletins. Often decisions that seem small and insignificant in the short-term can affect the quality of the field for years to come. The answers to these Assessment Questions should help to guide your organization to make the best choice for your athletes.

For more information, or assistance in evaluating your answers, contact STMA at ph. 800-323-3875 or STMAinfo@sportsturfmanager.org.

The content of this bulletin is intended for informational purposes and is not intended as a substitute for specific professional consultation.
Suggested Sports Field Assessment Questions

Overall Project Questions

1. Are there Certified Sports Field Managers (CSFM) or sports field managers available for this project?  ❏ Yes  ❏ No

2. Will the CSFM or sports field manager be involved with the field selection and construction process?  ❏ Yes  ❏ No

3. How many events are you planning to hold on the field? __________

   How often will the field be used? (games and events per week) __________

4. What sports will be played on this field? _____________________________________________________________________

   _____________________________________________________________________

5. How many non-sporting events will be held on this field? __________

6. Will the field use increase over time?  ❏ Yes  ❏ No

7. If you increase the numbers of events on the field are you able to allocate the necessary funding to provide the additional maintenance?  ❏ Yes  ❏ No

8. When (what time of year) will the bulk of your events be held? __________

   How does the event schedule overlay with weather limitations patterns? _____________________________________________________________________

9. How many other athletic fields at your institution do you manage? __________

   Are any synthetic?  ❏ Yes  ❏ No

10. Have you set an appropriate budget for the number of events you are planning?  ❏ Yes  ❏ No

11. What time-frame has been established for completion of this project? _____________________________________________________________________

12. What are the long-term expectations and goals? _____________________________________________________________________

13. What is your estimated project budget? _________________________

14. What is the projected Capital budget? (usually includes equipment with purchase costs of $1,000 +) __________

   Projected Operational budget? (includes all inputs, water and labor costs) _____________________________________________________________________

15. Have the safety concerns for the field type been identified and discussed?  ❏ Yes  ❏ No

16. Are you in the cool season, warm season or transitional zone?  ❏ Cool  ❏ Warm  ❏ Transitional zone
17. Have you selected an appropriate site for the installation of the field?  ❑ Yes  ❑ No
   Does it have a North, South, East or West orientation?  ❑ North  ❑ South  ❑ East  ❑ West

18. Do you have standards set for quality, field conditions, and safety?  ❑ Yes  ❑ No
   Have you set thresholds for which you are willing to accept liability?  ❑ Yes  ❑ No
   Have you identified the potential health issues associated with each field type?  ❑ Yes  ❑ No

19. Do you have an appropriate budget for the maintenance to provide the standards noted in question 18?  ❑ Yes  ❑ No

20. When was the last new athletic field installed at your institution? ______________
    (May indicate the projected life expectancy of the new field)

21. Have you read/are you familiar with the STMA “Guide to Synthetic and Natural Turfgrass for Sports Fields: Selection, Construction, and Maintenance Considerations”?  ❑ Yes  ❑ No

22. Have nearby institutions at your level of competition installed new fields recently?  ❑ Yes  ❑ No
   Were they synthetic?  ❑ Yes  ❑ No

23. What is the security plan for the area during construction? _____________________________________________________
    After construction? ______________________________________________________________________________________
    ___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Natural Fields

1. Do you allow appropriate time for renovations, re-work or repairs to your fields by not scheduling the field during these times?  ❑ Yes  ❑ No
   Does your budget allow for the items above?  ❑ Yes  ❑ No

2. Will you be able to rest the field during the prime growing season?  ❑ Yes  ❑ No

3. Do you have enough fields to allow for field rotation to provide the necessary rest periods for your field?  ❑ Yes  ❑ No

4. Are funds available for an irrigation system?  ❑ Yes  ❑ No
   If no, will watering costs be included in the operating budget?  ❑ Yes  ❑ No

5. Will there be footwear restrictions?  ❑ Yes  ❑ No

6. Do you have the appropriate equipment* to do the necessary maintenance on your field?  ❑ Yes  ❑ No

   * See Advisory Bulletin #2 – Suggested Equipment List
**Synthetic Fields**

1. If you are considering a synthetic field, will you charge user fees for the removal and environmental disposal of the synthetic turf when it becomes worn?  □ Yes □ No

   Are you budgeting for the costs associated with replacing the synthetic material?  □ Yes □ No

2. Do you or your staff have the expertise to monitor, groom or repair the synthetic field?  □ Yes □ No

3. Are funds available for an irrigation system?  □ Yes □ No

   If no, will the cost of water to cool the turf be included in the operating budget?  □ Yes □ No

4. What type of permanent field markings are desired or required? ____________________________________________

   What type of decorative or revenue generating logos are desired? ____________________________________________

   Do you intend to change field uses/markings and/or logos on the field?  □ Yes □ No

5. Do you have the appropriate equipment* to do the necessary maintenance on your field?  □ Yes □ No

   Will the budget allow for purchase of specialty tools to maintain and repair synthetic turf?  □ Yes □ No

   Will the budget allow for training the staff on how to use them correctly?  □ Yes □ No

   * See Advisory Bulletin #2 – Suggested Equipment List

6. Will there be footwear restrictions?  □ Yes □ No