



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Orange County
Program Title: Booster Park Revitalization
Program Category: Parks & Recreation

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Stephanie Straub
Title: Assistant County Administrator
Signature: Stephanie Straub

2025 VACo Achievement Award Nomination; Category: Parks & Recreation
Nominee: Booster Park Revitalization**Brief Description:**

Since inheriting Booster Park in 2015, Orange County Parks & Recreation has been proud to make continuous improvements to its safety, usability, appearance, and amenities. While the facility wears many hats through hosting special events, food pantry distributions, field trips, and activities, providing a location for youth sports has always been its primary purpose. In fact, Booster Park is the premier youth sports complex in Orange County, Virginia. It fills a critical community role as it provides necessary, centrally-located baseball, softball, and soccer field facilities.

Accustomed to making the most with limited funds, our staff leaped at the opportunity to apply for (and receive) federal grant funding through the Community Project Funding program. Utilizing the funds to make previously out-of-reach improvements, we were able to revitalize every baseball/softball field with new, beautifully capped fencing, reinstall and expand batting cage opportunities, and make the concession stand safe for use.

Booster Park's revitalization was a continuation of the Department's commitment to youth sports, and a signal to the community that Booster would continue to serve as the premier athletics facility for young athletes in Orange County for years to come. Despite increases due to inflation that occurred between the proposal and grant award, staff were still able to make significant, cost-effective, and necessary improvements to this vital park – without raising, or even using (beyond staff time), local tax dollars.

Full Description:

Parks are often the cornerstone of community pride and involvement. They are meeting places and great equalizers which transcend economic, social, racial, and other boundaries. While it wears many hats and goes beyond its role through hosting special events and activities, providing a location for youth sports has always been the primary purpose of Booster Park. In fact, it is the premier youth sports complex in Orange County, Virginia. As such, it fills a critical community role by providing necessary, centrally located baseball, softball, and soccer field facilities. The park was originally developed by volunteer organizations seeking to provide the community with high quality recreational sports opportunities. Despite the sincere efforts of many determined volunteers, the park fell into disrepair and maintenance became too burdensome around the middle of the last decade. As a result, the County of Orange received notice at the end of 2015 that the Orange Youth Sports Foundation desired to transfer responsibility of Booster Park to the Orange County Parks & Recreation Department.

Inheriting the park was not planned; however, staff immediately began renovations and were able to open the fields without any play interruption. Going forward, staff diligently maintained the park to provide a quality play environment for our youth. However, lingering concerns remained from the park's former state of disrepair that were too costly for the Department to readily address from its budget. Among these issues were broken sections of fencing, a batting cage which was returning to nature, and a concession stand that was unusable due to a lack of fire suppression systems.

These needs being ever-present in the minds of Parks & Recreation staff, we were excited to be made aware of federal funding opportunities available through "Community Project Funding" requests in the spring of 2021. Such requests were a refined form of the

funding process often referred to as “earmarking,” so known because the process allowed federal elected officials to include funding requests directly related to their district. With the assistance of Orange County Administration, Parks & Recreation staff prepared the necessary narrative, presentation, and all required documentation to submit a proposal to then-Representative Abigail Spanberger’s office requesting \$122,590. We were even more excited to be notified that we had been selected in the early spring of 2022. A press conference was held at Booster Park on March 22, 2022, in celebration!

Despite the award, work could not begin for some time due to federal financial processes. For example, their fiscal year was delayed compared to ours, and there were several metaphorical hoops to jump through before the actual money was available to begin making improvements. Once all necessary steps were resolved, renovations to identified areas began in January 2024, and were completed by September.

Fencing was the first element to be addressed, since it would have the greatest positive impact on participant safety. Rather than making spot-repairs, all of the prior fencing was removed from each of the four baseball/softball fields. This complete overhaul ensured that any upturned or broken sections were removed - along with any doubt regarding the life expectancy of even seemingly acceptable sections. New fencing was installed in the early months of 2024. Going beyond replacement alone, staff also added orange safety caps along the tops of the outfield fences. While visually striking, these caps also protect outfielders from becoming snagged on the comparably loose top portions associated with chain-link fences.

While not directly related to play, our local youth sports organizations had long desired utilize Booster Park’s concession stand. Concession sales are a common source of revenue for such groups, which can offset a variety of expenses such as uniforms,

tournament fees, and team travel. Unfortunately, the stand was inherited in an unusable condition. There was no fire suppression system, and several appliances were in disrepair. Utilizing the HUD grant, Parks & Recreation was able to install the necessary fire suppression elements and purchase a new griddle and hotdog roller, along with making cosmetic repairs. Work was completed in the fall of 2024, and the stand promises to have trickle down effects on all aspects of Booster's operations.

The batting cage was the final park amenity to be addressed with the HUD funding. This improvement was more akin to a new addition than a renovation, because the only pieces left of the old cage when the park was inherited were a few ragged metal posts propped up by boards and some stringy netting sitting on a gravel pad. Knowing that demand would be high, the Department chose to make an expansion, by adding two full batting cages where only one had been before. Free access to batting cages has been a fantastic addition to the athletic resources of the park, for both families and teams.

Booster Park's revitalization was a continuation of the Department's commitment to youth sports, and a signal to the community that Booster would continue to serve as the premier athletics facility for young athletes in Orange County for years to come. Despite increases due to inflation that occurred between the proposal and grant award, staff were still able to make significant, cost-effective, and necessary improvements to this vital park – without raising, or even using, local tax dollars for equipment.

Before Pictures:



Broken fencing was frequently curling up at ground level, presenting a hazard to play.



The concession stand hood lacked any fire suppression system, and was not safe to use.



When the park was inherited (left) the only remaining pieces of the batting cage were a few metal posts propped up by boards. Staff removed those items for safety, but the space was used only to store soccer goals and benches for years.

Grant Award & Install Pictures:



A press conference was held with Rep. Spanberger to officially accept the grant award.



Fence repairs involved the complete removal and replacement of prior fencing.



Installation for the new batting cages went smoothly, and was highly-anticipated by the community.

After Pictures:



A new fire suppression system increases safety and allows concession stand use.



Booster's new high-quality batting cages are an oft-used amenity.



Desperately-needed fence repairs increase the safety and visual appeal of the park.