



Seattle Sports Commission, King County Play Equity Coalition Launch Basketball Equity Program

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SEATTLE, WA: The Seattle Sports Commission (SSC) and King County Play Equity Coalition, alongside a dozen area partners, have launched a youth basketball initiative designed to bring one of the region's most popular sports to underserved communities. The new Basketball Equity Program, operating with \$500,000 of funding from the State of Washington, focuses on increasing visibility, access, and inclusion in basketball for local youth, while highlighting opportunities for careers in the sports industry.

"There is an urgent need and desire for resources that help kids connect to the benefits of team sports, like basketball. And, in a city that will forever love and honor its robust history of basketball excellence, from championships to top draft picks to hall-of-famers, there is no shortage of incredible role models," said Beth Knox, SSC President & CEO. "We are grateful to the State of Washington for this opportunity to better serve youth sports and we are proud to partner with the King County Play Equity Coalition to put these dollars to work."

The activities and investments are being steered by a community-led coalition, the Basketball Equity Action Team (BEAT). BEAT is composed of more than a dozen organizations collectively that serve over 62,000 youth across the state. Together, they have identified spaces, people, and programs with historically marginalized access to basketball and are working to create more opportunities using a 2-phase approach.

In Phase 1, existing summer camps and clinics will receive support for transportation, scholarships, food, and equipment. One of these programs is the Give Back Foundation, a local non-profit founded by Gonzaga University sophomore basketball player Nolan Hickman.

"The Hickman Legacy Foundation and its Give Back Camp are excited to partner with this initiative to provide equitable access to youth and children in Seattle and surrounding communities," said Hickman. "Basketball is a game that all should be able to enjoy no matter their background, skill, or ability."

Phase 1 also creates new collaborations with organizations like Seattle Adaptive Sports to train basketball coaches to meet the needs of the region's diverse basketball community.

"Seattle Adaptive Sports is beyond grateful for the support offered at our youth summer wheelchair basketball clinic! At a high level, promoting awareness of adaptive sports in our

community helps connect us all,” said Seattle Adaptive Sports Board President Jennifer Waggoner. “On an individual level, creating opportunities for physically disabled participants who would not otherwise have access to thrive in basketball is incredibly meaningful for youth and their families. Neither could be achieved without this support.”

Other recipients of Phase 1 funding include Compukidz Worldwide, Native Youth Rise Above, Schut Basketball Institute, and the Seattle Storm.

Phase 2 will focus on the development of community-oriented 3x3 basketball festivals, a fast-growing version of the sport that was recently added to the Tokyo Summer Olympics.

“3x3 basketball offers an exciting opportunity to address some of the challenges that can prevent communities and families from engaging in developmentally appropriate basketball,” said Julie McCleery, of the UW’s Center for Leadership in Athletics and the King County Play Equity Coalition.

“3x3 can be played on a half court indoor and outdoor, allows all members of a team substantial playing time, provides more space for athlete creativity, leadership, and skill development, and is less of a time and financial commitment than 5 on 5. Using this model allows for the introduction of a more inclusive and youth-focused approach to basketball and we’re excited to bring a festival format to at least two neighborhoods as part of this effort.”

Initial plans for the festival include free instructional clinics for youth, various skill challenges, 3x3 competitive and introductory games, food trucks, music, and appearances from local basketball greats.

3x3 Festival Dates & Locations:

- Saturday, Sept. 17 – Tukwila Community Center
- Saturday, Sept. 24 – Kent YMCA

More details will be available by end of August via the Tukwila Community Center & Kent YMCA websites.

BEAT meets weekly to determine recommendations and budget allocation for each phase of the grant program. This group includes community leaders from the following organizations:

- Boys & Girls Club of King County
- Compukidz Worldwide
- Fenix Basketball
- Give Back Foundation
- King County Play Equity Coalition
- Native Youth Rise Above
- Schut Basketball
- Seattle Adaptive Sports
- Seattle Storm
- Shoreline Sports Foundation
- Special Olympics WA
- Tukwila Parks & Rec
- UW’s Center for Leadership in Athletics
- YMCA of Greater Seattle

About The Seattle Sports Commission:

The Seattle Sports Commission (SSC) is committed to making the Greater Seattle Region a world-class sports market. By fostering a strong sports culture that hosts youth, amateur and professional events, the SSC seeks to create positive social and economic impact within our community. Go to seattlesports.org or contact info@seattlesports.org to learn more.

About the King County Play Equity Coalition

The King County Play Equity Coalition is a collective action network of over 100 organizations dedicated to changing systems so that all youth – and particularly youth from historically underserved groups – experience the transformative benefits of play, sports, outdoor recreation and physical activity. Go to www.kcplayequity.org or contact playkc@uw.edu to learn more.