

THE OKLAHOMA PROFESSIONAL UMPIRE WORKFORCE MODEL

*A Conceptual, Financial, and Operational Framework for Youth Sports
Reform*

Integrity of the Game vs Economic Impact (Politics); The Oklahoma Business Plan

Hidden Valley - Integrity of the Game Research

Prepared August 29, 2026

Dataset baseline: AIUSSSA - HVIOG(5).csv

Purpose of this framework

This report converts the earlier salaried-umpire concept into a structured workforce model using the current Hidden Valley dataset. It is a research and policy-design document, not a representation that any particular facility, sanctioning body, director, or umpire has violated tax, labor, or criminal law. Dataset monetary fields are analytical/model fields unless independently verified as actual payments.

Executive Summary

The central reform proposition is straightforward: officiating should be treated as an accountable labor function of the youth-sports delivery system rather than an opaque game-by-game cash variable. The model developed here retains the original concept of a salaried professional umpire workforce, but refines it into an operational framework that can be tested at the facility, regional, and statewide levels.

The current Hidden Valley dataset contains 20,316 division-level records spanning 2001-2026, 20,316 unique TournamentID values, 242 named director/operator labels, 429 facility labels, and 89 Oklahoma counties. Across the full dataset, it models 424,234 minimum games, 777,569 umpire assignment-equivalents, and \$31,095,360 in umpire-fee exposure.

For the 2026 season snapshot contained in the uploaded dataset, the model includes 7,572 teams, 21,983 minimum games, 41,992 umpire assignment-equivalents, and \$1,679,680 in modeled umpire fees. The file computes umpire fees as assignment-equivalents multiplied by UmpirePayPerGame; the dominant nonzero UmpirePayPerGame value is \$40. Therefore, these figures should be read as a workload-cost model, not as proof of actual cash disbursements.

Primary conclusion

Using the original 80-minute-game plus 10-minute-changeover concept, the 2026 workload represents approximately 62,988 scheduled officiating hours. At an illustrative 1,500 direct-officiating hours per full-time equivalent, that workload is approximately 42.0 FTEs. This supports a professional-workforce concept, but the weekend and seasonal concentration of youth sports makes a hybrid model - salaried core officials plus W-2 seasonal/part-time capacity - more operationally realistic than assuming every assignment can be absorbed by year-round salaried staff.

Key Research Findings

- Across 2001-2026, modeled umpire fees total \$31,095,360 against 777,569 assignment-equivalents, an implied weighted average of about \$39.99 per assignment-equivalent.
- The recent five-season average (2022-2026) is 22,568 minimum games, 42,650 assignment-equivalents, and \$1,705,984 in modeled umpire fees per season.
- In 2026, modeled umpire fees are 29.4% of modeled TotalEventIncome and equal approximately \$222 per team entered.
- The dataset records assignment volume, not unique individual umpires. TotalEventUmpires is best interpreted as umpire positions or assignment-equivalents, not a headcount of people.
- Two records do not follow the usual TotalMinimumGamesPlayed x UmpiresPerGame = TotalEventUmpires relationship because those rows contain zero umpire pay/assignments. This is immaterial to statewide totals but is documented as a data-quality note.

1. Conceptual Origin and Evolution

The framework is an extension of two earlier Integrity of the Game research papers. The September 5, 2024 paper, “Financial Transparency and Impact of Umpire Compensation Models in Oklahoma’s Youth Sports (USSSA),” explicitly contrasted cash-per-game officiating with a proposed salary-based system. It described fixed annual compensation, benefits, age-based crew requirements, an approximately 80-minute game window plus a 10-minute transition, user-group staffing concepts, and an all-in compensation ceiling of approximately \$60,000 per umpire. The later “Sunday Profit / Umpire Tariff” paper developed the problem statement around game guarantees, Sunday revenue incentives, informal per-game compensation, and municipal/user-group oversight.

This report does not discard those ideas. It makes three refinements. First, it separates observed dataset fields from policy assumptions. Second, it treats worker classification as a legal/factual determination rather than assuming that a 1099 or W-2 label alone controls. Third, it recognizes the scheduling reality that a professional system may require multiple employment categories: a salaried professional core, seasonal W-2 officials, and limited truly independent contractors only where the facts support that classification.

2. Research Basis and Dataset Architecture

Measure	2001-2026 dataset baseline
Division-level records	20,316
Season range	2001-2026
Unique TournamentID values	20,316
Named director/operator labels	242
Facility labels	429
Counties represented	89
Teams entered	165,212
Minimum games modeled	424,234
Umpire assignment-equivalents	777,569
Modeled umpire fees	\$31,095,360
Modeled team entry fees	\$36,339,630
Modeled event gate	\$68,189,690
Modeled event income	\$138,624,165

Important interpretation: the file is a research model. “TotalMinimumGamesPlayed” is derived from minimum game guarantees/team counts; “TotalEventUmpires” is generally minimum games multiplied by UmpiresPerGame; “TotalEventUmpireFees” is TotalEventUmpires multiplied by UmpirePayPerGame. In the current file, that fee formula is internally consistent across all rows. The resulting totals are therefore useful for staffing and policy modeling but should not be described as audited payroll or verified tax-reporting amounts without independent source documentation.

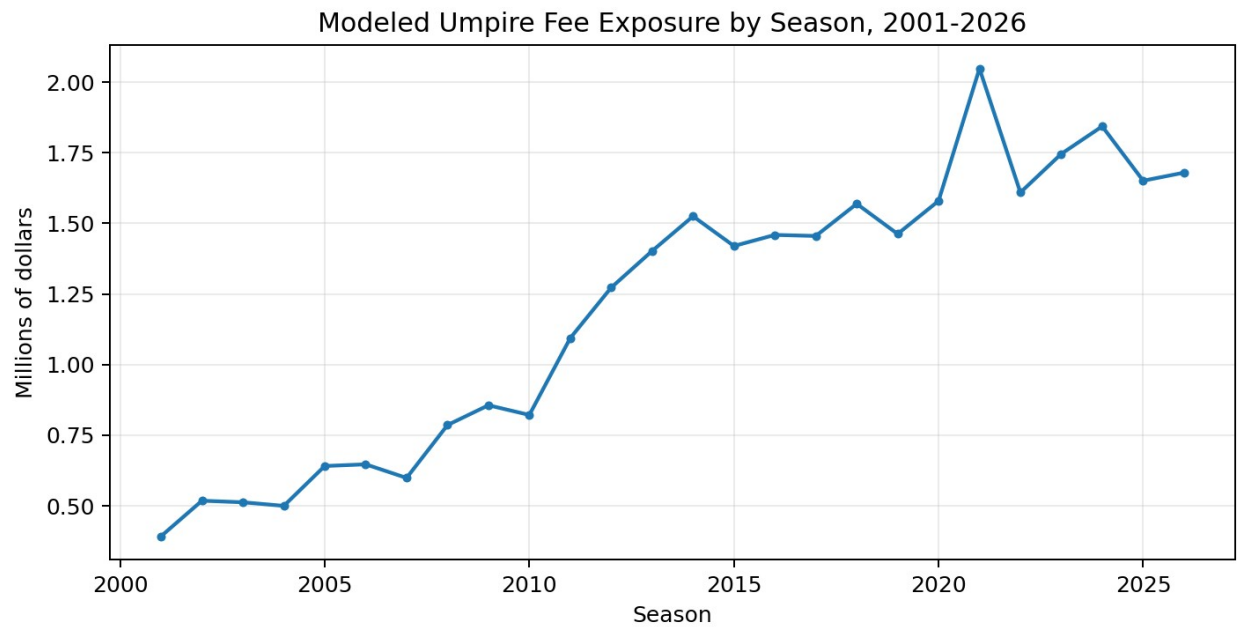


Figure 1. Annual modeled umpire-fee exposure. Source: AIUSSSA - HVI0G(5).csv.

3. The Problem the Workforce Model Is Designed to Solve

The proposed reform is not simply a wage increase. It addresses a structural weakness: when officiating is financed and administered only as a per-game variable expense, the system can become disconnected from workforce development, documented payroll, training, background screening, scheduling standards, retention, performance management, and public-facility accountability. A professional workforce model makes those functions explicit.

Current variable model - research concern	Professional workforce model - proposed control
Game-by-game labor purchased as needed	Annual workforce plan tied to verified schedule capacity
Cash or decentralized payment may be difficult to audit	Central payroll ledger and documented compensation
Limited continuity in recruitment and development	Career ladder, mentoring, evaluation, and retention
Peak weekends create competition for officials	Regional scheduling pool and reserve capacity
Training/background processes may vary by operator	Uniform certification and screening policy
Facility owner may see only lease/user-group relationship	Facility receives workforce, payroll, and compliance reporting
Labor cost is embedded within event economics	Labor cost is separately reported as a program expense

4. Workforce Architecture

4.1 Three-tier staffing design

A statewide professional model should not equate “professional” with “every official must be a 40-hour salaried employee.” The recommended architecture is a three-tier labor system designed around verified workload and worker-classification facts:

Tier 1 - Salaried Professional Core: Year-round W-2 officials responsible for priority assignments, training, mentoring, rules education, evaluation, facility coordination, recruitment, and quality assurance.

The original concept's approximately \$60,000 all-in annual ceiling can be tested here as a policy benchmark rather than assumed as a statutory wage rule.

Tier 2 - Seasonal / Part-time W-2 Pool: Officials used to absorb spring/summer peaks, large tournament weekends, vacations, illness, and simultaneous facility demand. Hourly or per-assignment pay can still exist within formal payroll; professionalization does not require converting every hour into an annual salary.

Tier 3 - Limited Independent Contractors: Reserved for relationships that genuinely meet applicable classification standards. A 1099 label by itself should not be used as a substitute for analyzing behavioral control, financial control, economic dependence, and the actual relationship.

4.2 Position families

Position	Core responsibilities
Professional Umpire I	Assigned games; rules proficiency; safety; documented evaluations; annual continuing education.
Professional Umpire II / Crew Chief	Higher-level games; crew leadership; incident reporting; mentor responsibilities.
Regional Umpire Supervisor	Assignments, quality control, evaluations, conflict resolution, workforce utilization.
Training & Compliance Coordinator	Certification curriculum, background-screening workflow, payroll/training records, audit support.
Seasonal Umpire	Peak-period game coverage under documented W-2 payroll and common standards.

4.3 Scheduling standards

The original concept used an 80-minute game and a 10-minute transition period. For planning purposes, this report treats one umpire assignment-equivalent as a 90-minute scheduled block. The operational model should also impose maximum consecutive-game limits, meal/rest periods, travel buffers between facilities, heat/weather rules, and recovery standards. Those limits should be defined prospectively and not altered to increase event throughput after schedules are published.

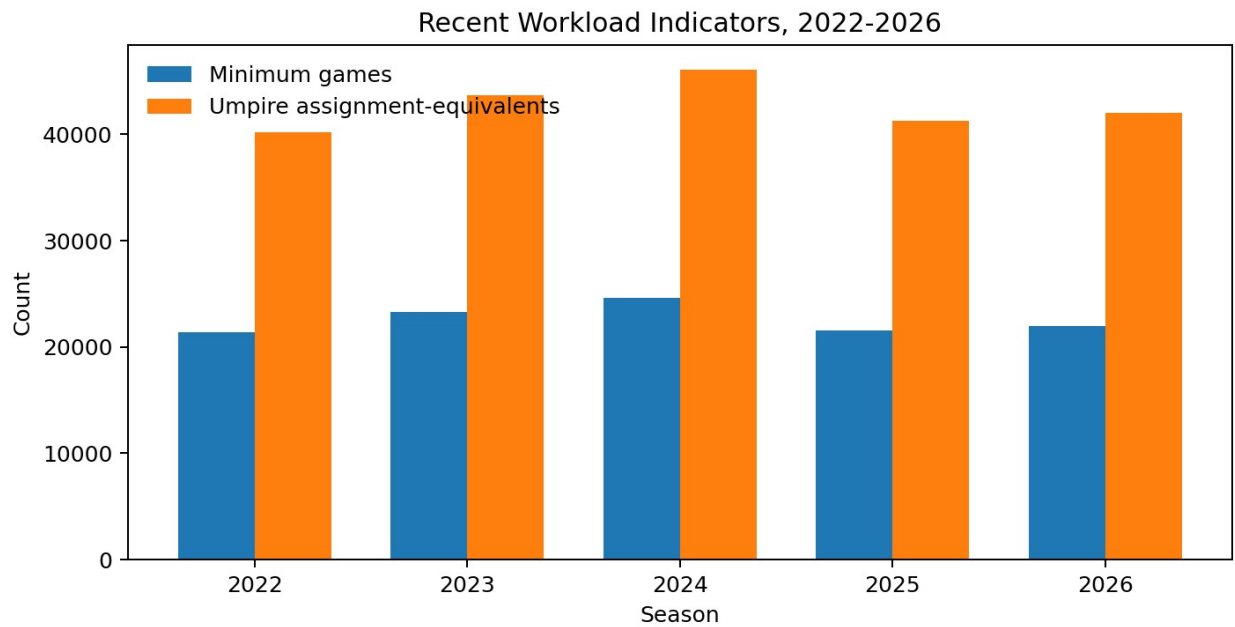


Figure 2. Recent minimum-game and umpire-assignment-equivalent volume. Source: AIUSSSA - HVI0G(5).csv.

5. 2026 Workload Conversion

2026 measure	Dataset value / derived result
Teams entered	7,572
Minimum games	21,983
Umpire assignment-equivalents	41,992
Modeled umpire fees	\$1,679,680
Modeled event income	\$5,719,011
Assignment-equivalents per minimum game	1.91
Modeled umpire cost per minimum game	\$76
Modeled umpire cost per team	\$222
Scheduled hours at 90 minutes/assignment	62,988
Illustrative FTE at 1,500 direct hours/year	42.0 FTE

The FTE conversion is an operational scenario, not a dataset field. The 1,500 direct-officiating-hour denominator is intentionally lower than a standard full-time paid-hour year because professional officials would also need paid time for training, travel between assignments, meetings, evaluations, administrative work, leave, and nonproductive schedule gaps. A pilot should measure actual utilization before a permanent staffing ratio is adopted.

6. Financial Model and Funding Scenarios

The current dataset provides a modeled officiating cost pool. The reform question is whether that pool can support a professional payroll after accounting for compensation, employer-side payroll costs, insurance, workers' compensation, training, uniforms, technology, travel, supervision, and reserve coverage. The scenarios below deliberately separate source-derived values from policy assumptions.

Scenario	Basis	Annual cost	Difference / note
Current 2026 modeled fee pool	Dataset	\$1,679,680	Modeled assignment fees only; not a full employer-cost budget.
42 FTE at \$40,000 all-in	Illustrative policy scenario	\$1,680,000	\$320 vs. current pool
42 FTE at \$50,000 all-in	Illustrative policy scenario	\$2,100,000	\$420,320 vs. current pool
42 FTE at \$60,000 all-in	Original ceiling benchmark	\$2,520,000	\$840,320 vs. current pool
Hybrid: 30 core at \$60k + residual assignments at \$40	Illustrative transition scenario	\$2,279,680	\$600,000 vs. current pool

Funding sensitivity

If the full \$840,320 incremental cost of the 42-FTE / \$60,000 all-in scenario were borne only by the 2026 participant base, it would equal about \$111 per team or \$38 per minimum game. That is a sensitivity test, not a recommendation. A mature funding plan could distribute cost across team fees, facility/user-group payments, gate allocations, municipal appropriations, sponsorships, grants, league fees, and sanctioning-body contributions.

6.1 What “all-in compensation” should include

- Base wages or salary
- Employer payroll taxes and unemployment obligations
- Workers’ compensation and applicable insurance
- Health/retirement benefit contributions where offered
- Paid training and certification
- Uniforms/protective equipment allowance
- Travel/mileage policy
- Scheduling and payroll technology
- Supervision, evaluation, and compliance administration
- Contingency/relief staffing

The earlier \$60,000 ceiling should therefore be defined precisely. If \$60,000 means salary alone, employer cost will exceed \$60,000. If it means total compensation and employer burden, the cash salary must be lower. The pilot budget should publish both gross wage and total employer cost so stakeholders are not comparing unlike figures.

7. Payroll, Classification, and Compliance Design

For federal tax purposes, the IRS directs businesses to evaluate the entire relationship, including behavioral control, financial control, and the type of relationship. The U.S. Department of Labor separately applies an economic-realities analysis under the Fair Labor Standards Act. Accordingly, this model should not assert that all umpires are automatically employees or automatically contractors. The reform is to make the relationship deliberate, documented, and reviewed rather than informal.

Control area	Proposed requirement
Worker classification	Written classification analysis before onboarding; periodic review when duties/control change.
Payroll	W-2 payroll for employees; documented time/assignment records; lawful withholding and reporting.
Overtime/minimum wage	Payroll configuration reviewed for FLSA and applicable state-law requirements; salary alone does not automatically

Control area	Proposed requirement
	eliminate overtime obligations.
Independent contractors	Use only where facts support contractor status; maintain agreements and required information reporting.
Background screening	Uniform policy, documented completion, renewal schedule, and restricted access to sensitive results.
Training/certification	Annual rules, safety, conduct, harassment prevention, incident reporting, and facility-specific orientation.
Records retention	Central schedule, time, payroll, certification, incident, and evaluation records with an auditable retention policy.

External legal note: IRS guidance states that worker status turns on the facts of control and independence, while Department of Labor guidance under the FLSA focuses on the economic realities of the relationship. This report is not legal advice; a pilot should be reviewed by qualified employment and tax counsel before implementation.

8. Governance and Public-Facility Accountability

Where public, tribal, nonprofit, or privately owned facilities host substantial youth-sports activity, the workforce model can function as a transparency layer without requiring the facility owner to operate the tournament itself. The critical policy change is to require auditable information about who employs/pays officials and what standards apply.

Governance artifact	Minimum disclosure
Annual workforce plan	Expected games, crew assumptions, peak dates, core/seasonal headcount, reserve percentage.
Payroll control report	Total gross wages, employer burden, contractor payments if any, and reconciliation to assignments.
Facility utilization report	Games and officiating hours by facility/user group; cancellations and unfilled assignments.
Compliance dashboard	Certification rate, background-screen completion, training completion, incident counts, unresolved exceptions.
Financial reconciliation	Event/league revenue dedicated to officiating compared with actual payroll/workforce cost.
Public summary	Aggregated, privacy-protective annual report suitable for municipalities, boards, parents, and policymakers.

9. Facility-Level Pilot Design

The most defensible path to statewide reform is a controlled pilot at one or more high-volume facilities. The pilot should run long enough to capture preseason, regular league play, spring tournament peaks, summer championship periods, weather disruptions, and post-season demand.

1. Establish a baseline year using actual schedules, actual games completed, actual umpire assignments, cancellations, and actual payments.
2. Calculate the peak simultaneous-crew requirement by 30-minute interval and by facility.
3. Hire a small salaried professional core and a larger seasonal W-2 reserve pool.
4. Use centralized scheduling and timekeeping with unique worker identifiers so assignment-equivalents can be converted into actual person-hours.

5. Track cost per completed game, cost per team, unfilled assignments, cancellations, travel, overtime, turnover, and training hours.
6. Survey coaches, facility managers, umpires, and parents on consistency, professionalism, safety, and perceived fairness.
7. Publish a pilot closeout report comparing cost, service quality, compliance, and workforce retention against the baseline model.

10. Performance Measures

Dimension	Recommended metric
Coverage	% of scheduled games with required crew size; unfilled assignment rate.
Quality	Evaluation scores; rules-test pass rates; verified complaint rate.
Workforce	Retention, absenteeism, training completion, advancement, average weekly hours.
Financial	Cost/completed game; payroll as % of event income; overtime; travel; employer burden.
Integrity	Assignment-conflict disclosures; incident resolution time; audit exceptions.
Access	Change in team fees/gate burden; participation by community and age group.
Facility	On-time starts, schedule compression, weather recovery, field utilization.

11. Statewide Scaling Model

A statewide system should be regional rather than centrally dispatching every game from one office. Oklahoma can be divided into workforce regions based on facility density and driving time. Each region would maintain a professional core, seasonal pool, and reciprocal coverage agreements. The statewide level would define payroll controls, minimum certification, screening, conduct, training, data standards, and reporting.

The Hidden Valley dataset can support this next phase because it already includes municipality, county, facility, sport, dates, game guarantees, crew assumptions, and modeled officiating cost. The necessary improvement is to add actual completed-game and unique-umpire/timekeeping data. Once those fields exist, the research can move from assignment-equivalent modeling to validated workforce engineering.

12. Data Improvements Required Before Implementation

- Unique Umpire ID (de-identified for public reporting)
- Actual game start/end time and completed/canceled status
- Actual umpire assignment by game
- Actual payment method and gross payment
- W-2 / 1099 / volunteer classification field as documented by payer
- Payer entity and employer of record
- Travel time/mileage where reimbursed
- Training/certification and background-screening dates
- Overtime/weekly hours for W-2 employees

- Reason for assignment cancellation/replacement

13. Risks and Guardrails

Risk	Guardrail
Overstating modeled data as actual payment evidence	Label all derived fee/workload values as modeled unless independently verified.
Unsustainable salary commitment during off-season	Use core/seasonal staffing and annual capacity review.
Weekend overtime concentration	Design rotations, relief pools, and timekeeping before schedules are accepted.
Classification errors	Use counsel-reviewed classification process based on facts, not labels.
Cost shifted entirely to families	Use diversified funding and publish fee-impact analysis before adoption.
Loss of experienced current officials	Create transition credit, grandfathered training pathways, and competitive compensation.
Centralization without accountability	Independent audit rights, board/facility reporting, and public aggregate metrics.

14. Implementation Roadmap

Phase	Approximate scope	Key deliverable
0 - Validation	60-90 days	Validate formulas, actual game/payment samples, classification review, select pilot facilities.
1 - Design	90 days	Job descriptions, pay bands, policies, payroll vendor, training curriculum, scheduling technology.
2 - Pilot	One full playing cycle	Operate core + seasonal workforce; collect actual time/cost/quality data.
3 - Evaluation	30-60 days after pilot	Independent cost and service comparison; public pilot report.
4 - Regional scale	Following season	Expand to additional facilities using measured staffing ratios.
5 - Statewide framework	After validated regional results	Common standards, reporting, reciprocal coverage, and funding policy.

15. Conclusion

The Oklahoma Professional Umpire Workforce Model is best understood as an infrastructure reform. The objective is not merely to replace cash with checks, nor to turn every current umpire into a \$60,000 employee. The objective is to make officiating a measurable, professionally managed labor system with transparent compensation, enforceable standards, a career pathway, verified scheduling capacity, and a financial structure that can be explained to families, facility owners, policymakers, and tax authorities.

The current Hidden Valley dataset demonstrates sufficient modeled scale to justify testing the idea: 777,569 umpire assignment-equivalents and \$31,095,360 in modeled umpire-fee exposure across 2001-2026, with approximately 41,992 assignment-equivalents in the 2026 snapshot alone. The next evidentiary step is not another estimate; it is a pilot that captures actual workers, actual hours, actual games, actual payroll, and actual service outcomes.

Appendix A - Annual Hidden Valley Umpire Workload Summary

Season	Records	Teams	Min. games	Umpire assignments	Modeled umpire fees	Modeled event income
2001	322	2,311	5,353	9,819	\$392,760	\$1,320,285
2002	465	3,336	7,281	12,961	\$518,440	\$2,168,553
2003	457	3,241	7,271	12,821	\$512,840	\$2,242,518
2004	442	3,193	7,171	12,504	\$500,160	\$2,204,519
2005	626	4,178	9,259	16,030	\$641,200	\$3,076,099
2006	646	4,104	9,290	16,180	\$647,200	\$3,515,726
2007	614	3,854	8,413	14,977	\$599,080	\$2,699,136
2008	739	4,906	11,087	19,656	\$786,240	\$5,177,455
2009	716	5,263	12,226	21,407	\$856,280	\$6,851,557
2010	662	5,063	11,689	20,551	\$822,040	\$7,313,481
2011	878	6,653	15,255	27,353	\$1,094,120	\$6,216,265
2012	1,042	7,876	17,666	31,819	\$1,272,760	\$8,161,745
2013	1,042	8,392	19,046	35,060	\$1,402,400	\$7,741,511
2014	1,055	8,665	20,936	38,131	\$1,525,240	\$8,393,342
2015	951	7,709	19,525	35,502	\$1,420,080	\$6,672,485
2016	1,011	8,217	20,154	36,482	\$1,459,280	\$7,062,958
2017	911	7,440	19,950	36,388	\$1,455,520	\$5,007,889
2018	957	7,849	21,131	39,235	\$1,569,400	\$5,137,197
2019	869	7,103	19,538	36,754	\$1,462,760	\$5,033,462
2020	846	7,323	21,553	39,490	\$1,579,600	\$5,539,640
2021	967	9,267	27,598	51,201	\$2,048,040	\$7,297,907
2022	758	7,349	21,400	40,234	\$1,609,360	\$5,490,774
2023	841	8,144	23,312	43,654	\$1,746,160	\$6,437,630
2024	901	8,728	24,591	46,090	\$1,843,600	\$6,385,695
2025	775	7,476	21,556	41,278	\$1,651,120	\$5,757,325
2026	823	7,572	21,983	41,992	\$1,679,680	\$5,719,011

Appendix B - Source and Method Notes

- Primary dataset: AIUSSSA - HVI0G(5).csv, uploaded August 29, 2026. This report treats it as the current authoritative Hidden Valley baseline supplied by the researcher.
- Concept source: Financial Transparency and Impact of Umpire Compensation Models in Oklahoma's Youth Sports (USSSA), Professor K, September 5, 2024.
- Problem/reform source: The Sunday Profit - Umpire Tariff and Game Guarantee vs. Integrity of the Game vs. Religion, Integrity of the Game vs Economic Impact (Politics); The Oklahoma Business Plan.
- External legal references consulted for classification framing: IRS, "Independent contractor (self-employed) or employee?" and Publication 15-A (2026); U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division, Fact Sheet 13 (FLSA employee/independent-contractor classification).
- Dataset formula check: TotalEventUmpireFees equals TotalEventUmpires x UmpirePayPerGame for all 20,316 rows. TotalEventUmpires generally equals TotalMinimumGamesPlayed x UmpiresPerGame, with two zero-pay/zero-assignment anomalies documented in the source file.

- The 90-minute assignment block (80-minute game + 10-minute transition), 1,500 direct-officiating hours/FTE, and compensation scenarios are policy assumptions used for sensitivity analysis. They are not claims about historical actual working hours or wages.

Appendix C - Research Disclaimer

This document is a research, workforce-planning, and public-policy framework. It is not an audit, legal opinion, tax opinion, employment-law determination, accusation of wrongdoing, or finding of liability. Monetary and workload fields derived from the Hidden Valley dataset are described as modeled unless independently verified. Worker classification depends on the facts and circumstances of the actual relationship and should be evaluated by qualified professionals before a pilot or permanent program is implemented.