

**El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
Response to the
2025-26 El Dorado County Grand Jury Report
(Case 26-02: El Dorado County Owned Airports – Navigating Change)**

Case 26-02: El Dorado County Owned Airports – Navigating Change

The Grand Jury has requested responses from the Board of Supervisors to all Findings and all Recommendations.

Consistent with previous practice and pursuant to Board Policy A-11, the Chief Administrative Office is responsible for coordinating the County's response to the Grand Jury. Responses to the Grand Jury Report are directed by Board Policy A-11 and Penal Code 933.05. Accordingly, the Chief Administrative Office has reviewed and compiled the responses from all non-elected department heads into this Initial Draft Response for the Board's consideration.

FINDINGS

- F1. The County does not follow the guidelines outlined in its Airport Policy Document, Policy F-10, which was updated on July 29, 2025, as evidenced by Board approved changes to the ground lease standards resulting in discrepancies between adopted policy and current lease practices.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding.

The airport lease templates revision process prompted substantial tenant feedback, leading to a collaborative revision process throughout 2025. This process involved airport tenants, County staff, County Counsel, and the Board's Airport Ad-Hoc Committee, including multiple public meetings and detailed review sessions. The Board has since approved the revised Ground Lease and County Hangar Lease templates, which incorporate tenant-requested changes and staff clarifications. These approved templates now reflect current Board direction and lease practices. Staff brought forward corresponding updates to Policy F-10 to ensure full alignment with the newly approved templates on June 23, 2026 (Legistar file 26-0740).

- F2. The County's Airport Policy Document, Policy F-10, does not define the duties and responsibilities of the Airports Director. The newly approved Airports Operations Officer role has both specific and general duties, which overlap with the Airports Director's responsibilities and creates confusion.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees wholly with the finding.

The purpose of Policy F-10 is not to define the duties of the Airports Director; rather, it authorizes specific actions the Airports Director may take, including establishing different investment requirements for leaseholds or types of operators, reserving vacant County-owned hangars or ground space for specific uses, extending compliance timelines for new hangar construction, reviewing new construction for conformance with the Airport Layout Plan, and authorizing signage or advertisements at the airports. The Airport Operations Officer is responsible for daily airport operations and may provide recommendations to the Airports Director but does not have authority to take the actions specifically assigned to the Director. There is no overlap of duties.

- F3. The County's Airport Policy Document, Policy F-10, includes statements that lack specificity and fails to offer clear guidance for staff responsible for its implementation, such as clear criteria for lease extension or termination and new application requirements for existing versus prospective new users. The Policy's subjective language poses challenges for both staff and stakeholders in planning subsequent actions.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding.

Policy F-10 appropriately provides guidance for staff, and in places where additional specificity is needed, those details are contained within the individual airport leases. In regard to language on lease extension criteria, Section B.9 of Policy F-10 states "For current Lessee in good standing at the end of their lease term, the County Airport Director will provide that Lessee the right of first refusal in a new lease, unless the Airports Director determines that it would be in the best interests of the Airport to use that space for another purpose consistent with B.2." Individual leases contain additional specific language regarding lease terminations and options to extend. Application requirements for new versus existing users are the same.

- F4. El Dorado County failed to sufficiently inform the public about major Airport Ground Lease changes. The Grand Jury found that subsequent outreach prompted by complaints led to ground lease revisions that could have been avoided with earlier engagement.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding.

- F5. El Dorado County failed to meaningfully engage with the airport community in the same way it provides engagement for other special interest groups such as the Parks and Recreation Commission, Economic Development Advisory Commission, and Agriculture Commission.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding.

While the airport community has an interest in and can be affected by the County's actions, they do not hold any formal decision-making authority within it. In contrast, a Board-appointed committee such as the Parks Commission or Agriculture Commission is a designated group selected by the organization's governing board to carry out specific responsibilities, provide expert guidance, or make recommendations on behalf of the organization. While the general public can offer input or feedback, a Board-appointed committee operates with defined roles, delegated authority, and accountability to the board. Therefore, engagement with the airport community was conducted in a way that differs from engagement with other Board-appointed committees.

- F6. The County's Airports website does not offer a subscription option to request updates for new postings or changes.

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding.

- F7. Without support from leaseholders, private pilots, and aviation businesses, County Airports would require additional general fund subsidies. These Airports benefit law enforcement, emergency services, and the broader local economy. Airport users should be respected as valuable contributors and need representation.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding.

The Board agrees that leaseholders, private pilots, and aviation-related businesses are essential to the sustainability and success of County Airports. Without the participation and support of these users, additional general fund subsidies would likely be required. The Board also agrees that the Airports provide important benefits to law enforcement and emergency services. The Board believes that airport users are respected as valuable contributors to the airport system and that they have been properly represented through recent engagement efforts, including public meetings, outreach, and ongoing collaboration. The Board remains committed to maintaining this level of engagement moving forward.

- F8. The County is concerned that turning airports over to private management might lead to expensive FAA penalties. Airports play a vital role in the community, but rising subsidies from the County General Fund may not be sustainable long term and need to be examined.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding.

The County has not provided any recommendations or concerns regarding private management.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors update Airport Policy Document, Policy F-10 in accordance with Board approved revisions to lease requirements by December 31, 2026.

This recommendation has been implemented with a revised Airport Policy F-10 approved by the Board on June 23, 2026.

- R2. The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors update Airport Policy Document, Policy F-10 defining the duties, responsibilities, and authority over the County Airport program (aka Airports Director and/or Airports Operations Officer) and ensure language is clear and based on specific criteria by December 31, 2026.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

Job specific duties are not defined in Board Policy. The Airport Operations Officer duties are defined in the job specification. The County Airports Director has department head responsibility and authority over the County Airports and the Airport Operations Officer reports to the County Airports Director.

- R3. The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors direct staff to add a subscription function to the County's Airports web page by September 1, 2026, that will notify subscribers when a change or update is posted.

The recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future.

Airports staff will work with County Information Technologies to implement a GovDelivery notification subscription for Airports webpage changes by September 1, 2026.

- R4. The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors establish an aviation advisory group to meet at least biannually with Airport administrators and provide feedback to the Board, when necessary, by December 31, 2026.

The recommendation requires further analysis.

Airport staff have begun to engage with the Gold Country Airports Association to receive specific feedback regarding the Airports. County staff have also committed to bi-annual meetings open to the public with Airport staff and the Board's Airport Ad-Hoc Committee. Staff would like to continue to work with these stakeholders over the next several months to develop effective ways to receive and give feedback between the airport community and airport administration and will report back to the Board of Supervisors by November 3, 2026, with an update on the effectiveness of these efforts.

- R5. The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors direct staff by December 31, 2026, to develop a plan to increase Airport revenue, ensuring public access to events, business expansion, or other recommendations from airport advisors that could reduce the County General Fund contribution to Airport operations.

The recommendation has been implemented.

The Board of Supervisors and the Board Ad-Hoc Committee have directed staff on multiple occasions to look at ways to increase Airport revenue. Staff are actively working with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on grant opportunities to develop additional hangars at the Placerville Airport. Staff are also working on plans for special events at the Airports that will be open to the public. The rate sheet adopted by the Board on June 23, 2026, included revised rates for Commercial ground leases and the elimination of the commercial landing fees in an effort to encourage business expansion.

- R6. The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors direct staff to work with the FAA and its Airport Investment Partnership Program to evaluate airport privatization.

The recommendation requires further analysis.

Staff will analyze the feasibility, requirements, and appropriate path for evaluating potential airport privatization in coordination with the FAA and its Airport Investment Partnership Program. Staff will complete this analysis and report back to the Board by November 3, 2026.