



Highlands County Tourist Development Council
Highlands County Government Center Boardroom
Regular Meeting – October 30, 2025 @ 8:15 a.m.

Agenda

1. **Call to Order / Pledge / Meeting Notice / Roll Call / Quorum** J. Stewart
2. **Acceptance of TDC Meeting Minutes of August 7, 2025** J. Stewart
3. **Financial and Office Reports** R. Fultz
4. **Updates – Marketing & Events**
 - A. Destination, Marketing, and Budget Update C. Hartt
 - B. Digital Marketing Update from Madden Media A. Noto
 - C. Sports Events Update from Airstream Ventures A. Verlander
 - D. Citrus Golf Trail Marketing Update K. Strickland
 - E. Tourism Collaboration Initiative Update S. Phelps
5. **Items for Voting**
 - A. Local Tax Collection Change E. Zwayer
 - B. Inspire Dance New Event Grant Request A. Verlander
 - C. Deep South Lax New Event Grant Request A. Verlander
 - D. TDC Grant Policies R. Fultz
 - E. Avon Park Baseball Museum Request R. Sevigny
 - F. Facility Study Additional Info Update & 3rd Penny Funds C. Hartt
 - G. 2026 TDC Meeting Dates R. Fultz
 - H. 2025-2026 TDC Chair R. Fultz
6. **Old Business/Discussion/Informational**
 - A. Land Donation Letter C. Hartt
 - B. Sports Complex – Grant Update & Third Party Management C. Hartt
7. **Public Input**
8. **Board Member Roundtable**
9. **Upcoming Meetings & TDC-Sponsored Events**
 - Oct. 30: Art & Culture Stakeholder Meeting at SFSC Center for Performing Arts
 - Nov. 10 – 11: Citrus Golf Trail Open at Sun 'N Lake Golf Club
 - Dec. 6: Last Paddler Standing at H.L. Bishop Park
 - Dec. 12: Spartan Group Tour – *RSVP with Reagan or Casey*
 - Dec. 13 – 14: Spartan Trifecta Weekend at Skipper Ranch
 - Dec. 27 – 30: Citrus Golf Trail Ladies Invitational at Sun 'N Lake Golf Club
 - **January 29: TDC Quarterly Meeting**
10. **Adjournment** J. Stewart

Item 2



**Highlands County Tourist Development Council
Highlands County Government Center Boardroom
Regular Meeting
August 7th, 2025 @ 8:15 a.m.**

Draft Regular Meeting

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:15 a.m. by Commissioner Campbell

Roll Call

Council Members Present:

Commissioner Campbell (Chair)
Lydia Capote
Maritza Christiansen
Christine Hatfield
Andy Kesling
Josh Stewart
Debra Worley

Absent:

Elizabeth Compton
Cindy Garren

Also, Present:

Casey Hartt, Lead Marketing Consultant
Reagan Fultz, Tourism Marketing & Project Manager
Sarah Maldonado, Tourism Development Coordinator
Leah Sauls, Development Services Director
Jen Carlisle, Madden Media
Alan Verlander, Airstream Ventures
Shellie Phelps-Whitfield, Biggest Fish Consulting
Kate Strickland, Wander Media
Alexa Chapa, Downtown Sebring Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)
Kim Piesek, Sebring Historical Society
Jennifer Bush, Lake Placid Chamber of Commerce

Ms. Fultz established that a quorum had been met.

2. Financial and Office Reports

Ms. Fultz presented the revenue and office reports. It was noted that Tourist Development Tax (TDT) collections remain above prior year levels, with year-to-date collections showing continued growth.

Ms. Fultz also shared that Sarah Maldonado, the Tourism Development Coordinator, would be leaving her position for another opportunity, and that this would be her final meeting with the TDC.

Council members received detailed printouts of the financial and office reports. There were no questions or comments.

3. Acceptance of TDC Meeting Minutes of May 1, 2025.

Commissioner Campbell asked if there were any comments or changes to the minutes of May 1, 2025. No comments or corrections were noted.

Mr. Stewart made a motion, seconded by Ms. Hatfield, to approve the meeting minutes.

All Council members voted aye, and the motion carried.

4. Marketing and Event Updates

A. Destination and Budget Update

Ms. Hartt presented a destination and budget update, noting that occupancy rates remain up compared to the prior year. Staff activities included presentations to city councils and organizations throughout the County; continued promotion of Visit Sebring's digital and print materials; and coordination with partners on tourism initiatives. She also shared takeaways from staff's participation in the 2025 Destinations Florida Marketing Summit in Cape Coral, Florida.

B. Digital Marketing Update from Madden Media

Ms. Carlisle provided the TDC with updates on digital marketing performance and the Visit Sebring website. Key indicators such as engagement, session length, and conversion metrics were noted as trending positively. Copies of the presentation were provided in the agenda packets.

Ms. Carlisle also presented marketing initiatives for the upcoming fiscal year, including building upon the HGTV spotlight, increasing dedicated SEO hours to keep up with evolving search behavior driven by generative AI, and related efforts.

C. Sports Events Updates from Airstream Ventures

Mr. Verlander presented current and upcoming sports events in Highlands County. He highlighted the County's central location and strong relationships with event organizers as drivers of recent bookings. He also noted progress in strengthening Sebring's positioning as a sports tourism hub.

D. Citrus Golf Trail Marketing Update

Ms. Strickland gave an update on marketing efforts for the Citrus Golf Trail. Campaigns promoting the trail continue to gain traction, and preparations for upcoming tournaments are underway.

E. Tourism Collaboration Initiative Update

Ms. Phelps-Whitfield reported on the Tourism Collaboration Initiative, outlining recent engagement with local partners and emphasizing the importance of strengthening industry relationships. She noted early positive outcomes from collaboration efforts.

F. HGTV Passport Update

Ms. Chapa shared details on the CRA's process for building out an 'HGTV Home Town Takeover Tour' passport on the Bandwango platform, which is funded by the TDC. She provided data on the passport's performance, including the number of downloads; the number of check-ins at locations within the tour; the number of prizes redeemed; and related engagement metrics.

5. Items for Voting

A. Lake June Lagoon Update

Ms. Smoyer presented an update on Lake June Lagoon's progress to the TDC. She shared that due to increases in tariffs, freight costs for the inflatables needed to build out the splash park have increased by 85%–215%, depending on the item. As a result, the purchase and delivery of the inflatables have been delayed, with only a few received to date. In order to avoid opening the park before it is fully equipped to the intended standard, she requested to postpone the opening and to postpone the reimbursable grant payments accordingly.

Mr. Stewart made a motion, seconded by Ms. Christiansen, to shift the grant timelines and deadlines from starting in the original period of FY24/25 to start in FY25/26 and run for three years.

All Council members voted aye, and the motion carried.

B. 2025 Citrus Golf Trail Ladies Invitational Grant Request

Mr. Beaty presented a grant request from the Citrus Golf Trail for the 2025 Citrus Golf Trail Ladies Invitational taking place at Sun 'N Lake Gold Club December 27-30, 2025.

Mr. Stewart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Kesling, to approve Sports Event Grant request for the 2025 Citrus Golf Trail Ladies Invitational with funding up to \$15,000, based on \$20 per verified room night. Reimbursable grant funds are to be used for facility rental, event officials, and digital marketing. Funds to come from cost center 5305.

All council members voted Aye, and the motion carried.

C. Facility Development Update

Ms. Hartt presented updates on facility development planning. The discussion included ongoing work with consultants, potential land opportunities, and future funding considerations. The full presentation can be found at the URL <https://youtu.be/T9PgX5oizSU> beginning at the **1:15:56** mark, and continues at the URL <https://youtu.be/EllZulwS6MY> with Council discussion and direction beginning at the **6:38** mark.

There was no formal motion or vote. The Council provided consensus for staff to bring back more information on the financials of the top three recommendations from the recent study, as well as on third-party management options.

D. FY2025-2026 Budget

Ms. Hartt presented the staff proposed FY2025-2026 budget to the TDC. The full presentation of the budget and related discussion between council members, staff, and vendors can be found at the URL <https://youtu.be/EllZulwS6MY> beginning at the **38:45** mark.

Mr. Stewart made a motion, seconded by Ms. Capote, to approve the proposed FY2025–2026 budget as presented.

Upon roll call, all Council members voted aye. The motion carried.

6. Old Business / Discussion / Informational

A. Caladium Festival Update

Ms. Bush provided a verbal update on the successes of the 2025 Caladium Festival and shared appreciation for everyone who made the event possible.

B. TDC Grant Recommendations

Ms. Fultz presented proposed updates to the TDC grant program.

The full presentation can be found at the URL <https://youtu.be/EllZulwS6MY> beginning at the 1:18:11 mark, and continued/completed at the URL <https://youtu.be/tbO9XfmVM3U>.

Ms. Fultz explained that the policies discussed were under review with the County's Legal Office and would come before the TDC at the next meeting.

C. TDT Payment Reminder Letter

Ms. Fultz shared that a TDT reminder letter would be sent to all relevant parties and would be updated as needed, depending on whether the TDC and the Tax Collector determine that TDT will be collected locally rather than through the Florida Department of Revenue.

D. True Omni Update

Ms. Fultz shared that the office continues to work on finalizing the True Omni project to install interactive digital kiosks in downtown Avon Park, Sebring, and Lake Placid. She noted that coordination among multiple internal departments, municipalities, and private property owners had caused some delays but that installations were now anticipated for October.

E. Tourism Insights & Awards Luncheon Update

Ms. Hartt reminded the TDC that the annual Tourism Insights and Awards Luncheon would be taking place on September 10, 2025, at Seven Sebring Raceway Hotel.

F. County Comp Plan Update

Ms. Sauls reported that there are no evaluation recommendations for tourism at this time, but she expects that tourism will expand from its current single sentence under Economic Development to a full paragraph.

7. Public Input

Ms. Piesik from the Sebring Historical Society shared that the county's museums had formed a collaborative group to meet quarterly to discuss shared challenges and opportunities. They plan to produce a rack card and may explore creating a Bandwango tour. She also noted partnerships with Small World Tours and Highlands Transportation to increase both day trip and local tours, and expressed interest in launching a YouTube channel or hosting social media influencers.

8. Board Member Roundtable

Ms. Worley shared that the developer responsible for the Journal Plaza renovations had purchased a new building in downtown Lake Placid to renovate into a restaurant and boutique hotel. She also mentioned discussions regarding the tower in Lake Placid.

Mr. Kesling suggested reducing the number of printed agenda packets, with several members expressing interest in using digital copies instead. Staff will work individually with members to determine their preferences for future meetings.

9. Upcoming Meetings & TDC-Sponsored Events

- Aug. 16–17: Pro Watercross Jet Ski Racing at Donaldson Park
- Sept. 10: Tourism Insights & Awards Luncheon
- Sept. 29 – Oct. 1: Visit Sebring Classic Golf Tournament at Sun 'N Lake Golf Club
- Oct. 26: GFNY Cycling at The Barn at Paso Fino
- Oct. 30: TDC Quarterly Meeting

10. Adjournment

Mr. Campbell adjourned the meeting at 11:28 a.m.

For all backup documents, please contact Highlands County Public Information Office
863-402-6500.

DRAFT

Item 3

**HIGHLANDS COUNTY
TOURIST DEVELOPMENT REVENUE BALANCES
FOR FY 2024 / 2025**

Period	Taxes	Interest	TOTAL
October	\$ 160,689.68	\$ 15,099.26	\$ 175,788.94
November	144,660.63	17,624.16	162,284.79
December	161,192.63	17,888.31	179,080.94
January	229,010.08	17,339.70	246,349.78
February	270,147.04	15,414.96	285,562.00
March	331,004.97	15,902.51	346,907.48
April	177,834.69	16,482.42	194,317.11
May	153,562.34	17,179.37	170,741.71
June			0.00
July			0.00
August			0.00
September			0.00
TOTALS	\$ 1,628,102.06	\$ 132,930.69	\$ 1,761,032.75

**HIGHLANDS COUNTY
TOURIST DEVELOPMENT BALANCES
FY 2024 / 2025**

Description	Operations 5301	Marketing & Events 5305	Lakes 5306	Asset Dev/Enhance 5309	TOTALS
Ending Balance 09/30/2024	0.00	2,195,281.71	6,124.13	2,444,286.47	4,645,692.31
Revenue Replace Allocation	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tax Revenue - FY 24/25 *	170,333.76	1,150,440.80	0.00	440,258.19	1,761,032.75
Gran / Misc. Revenue	0.00	8,897.53	0.00	0.00	8,897.53
Interest Adj. per Finance	0.00	(38,353.01)	165.84	38,187.16	(0.00)
Expense - FY 24/25 **	170,333.76	797,675.60	0.00	3,700.00	971,709.36
Less Encumbrances ***	44,658.47	212,438.39	0.00	82,478.00	339,574.86
Less Contingency		200,000.00			200,000.00
Available Balance	(44,658.47)	2,106,153.04	6,289.97	2,836,553.82	4,904,338.37

* - Revenues (taxes & interest) thru 5/31/25

** - Expenses thru 5/31/25

*** - Purchase orders "pulled" thru 5/31/25 but funds not expended yet; does not necessarily equate to Tourist Board's approved projects list.

TOURIST TAX REVENUES FY14/15 TO CURRENT

FISCAL YEARS PRIOR TO 4TH PENNY

FY14/15	
MONTH	REVENUE
October	\$ 23,120.78
November	\$ 21,048.70
December	\$ 27,647.65
January	\$ 52,243.11
February	\$ 58,400.96
March	\$ 84,295.71
April	\$ 26,865.85
May	\$ 23,873.46
June	\$ 21,559.04
July	\$ 20,538.04
August	\$ 18,555.70
September	\$ 22,429.78
Total Revenue for 14/15	\$400,578.78

FY15/16	
MONTH	REVENUE
October	\$ 26,896.02
November	\$ 28,461.81
December	\$ 35,355.22
January	\$ 53,684.60
February	\$ 61,101.62
March	\$ 85,800.87
April	\$ 32,177.72
May	\$ 24,566.91
June	\$ 23,274.72
July	\$ 22,087.48
August	\$ 17,170.71
September	\$ 19,335.12
Total Revenue for 15/16	\$429,912.80

FY16/17	
MONTH	REVENUE
October	\$ 25,337.16
November	\$ 26,691.21
December	\$ 31,779.06
January	\$ 56,308.75
February	\$ 59,294.91
March	\$ 83,327.89
April	\$ 29,909.40
May	\$ 23,424.23
June	\$ 21,712.29
July	\$ 21,234.44
August	\$ 15,873.35
September	\$ 35,809.45
Total Revenue for 16/17	\$430,702.14

FY17/18	
MONTH	REVENUE
October	\$ 37,784.53
November	\$ 37,812.25
December	\$ 38,466.37
January	\$ 54,552.75
February	\$ 66,084.02
March	\$ 73,431.19
April	\$ 32,076.85
May	\$ 26,838.59
June	\$ 27,228.52
July	\$ 27,044.32
August	\$ 42,138.16
September	\$ 46,656.88
Total Revenue for 17/18	\$510,114.43

TOURIST TAX REVENUES FY14/15 TO CURRENT, Cont'd.

FISCAL YEARS COLLECTING 4% TDT

FY18/19	
MONTH	REVENUE
October	\$ 54,327.10
November	\$ 71,994.27
December	\$ 64,625.96
January	\$ 121,869.88
February	\$ 125,752.81
March	\$ 206,212.71
April	\$ 69,821.55
May	\$ 68,042.60
June	\$ 59,724.95
July	\$ 59,569.14
August	\$ 54,149.47
September	\$ 59,389.48
Total Revenue for 18/19	\$1,015,479.92

FY19/20	
MONTH	REVENUE
October	\$ 60,771.86
November	\$ 69,843.75
December	\$ 93,115.90
January	\$ 128,896.18
February	\$ 156,987.00
March	\$ 62,523.28
April	\$ 36,965.33
May	\$ 43,334.89
June	\$ 56,117.30
July	\$ 63,094.60
August	\$ 48,655.60
September	\$ 56,923.47
Total Revenue for 19/20	\$877,229.16

FY 20/21	
MONTH	REVENUE
October	\$ 76,975.97
November	\$ 106,567.00
December	\$ 64,602.93
January	\$ 96,549.75
February	\$ 102,464.05
March	\$ 206,210.64
April	\$ 102,224.62
May	\$ 92,438.98
June	\$ 81,464.52
July	\$ 85,225.58
August	\$ 73,315.28
September	\$ 86,493.30
Total Revenue for 20/21	\$1,174,532.62

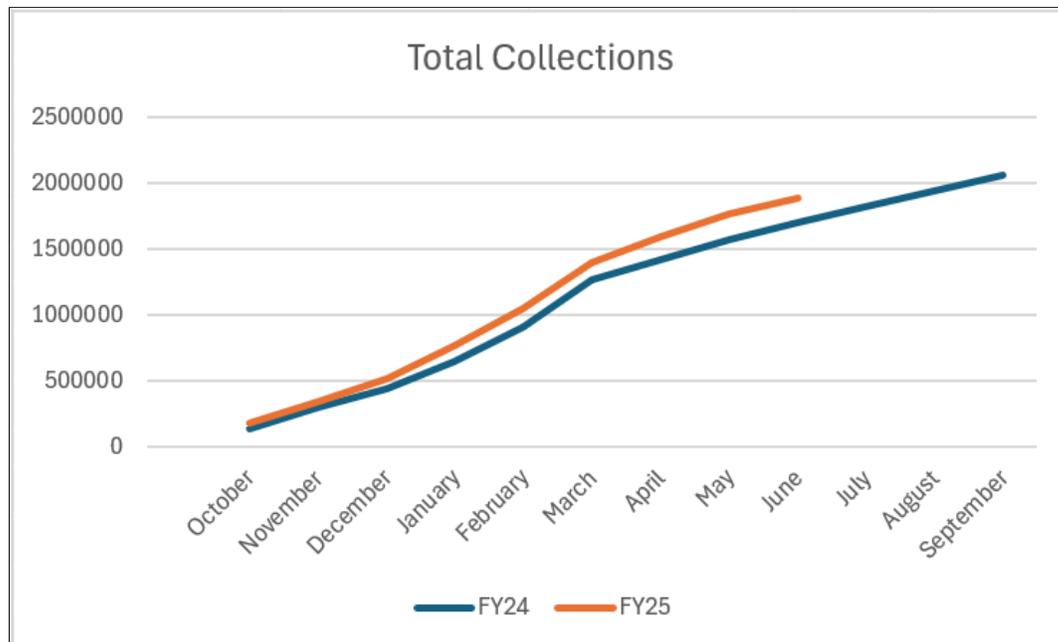
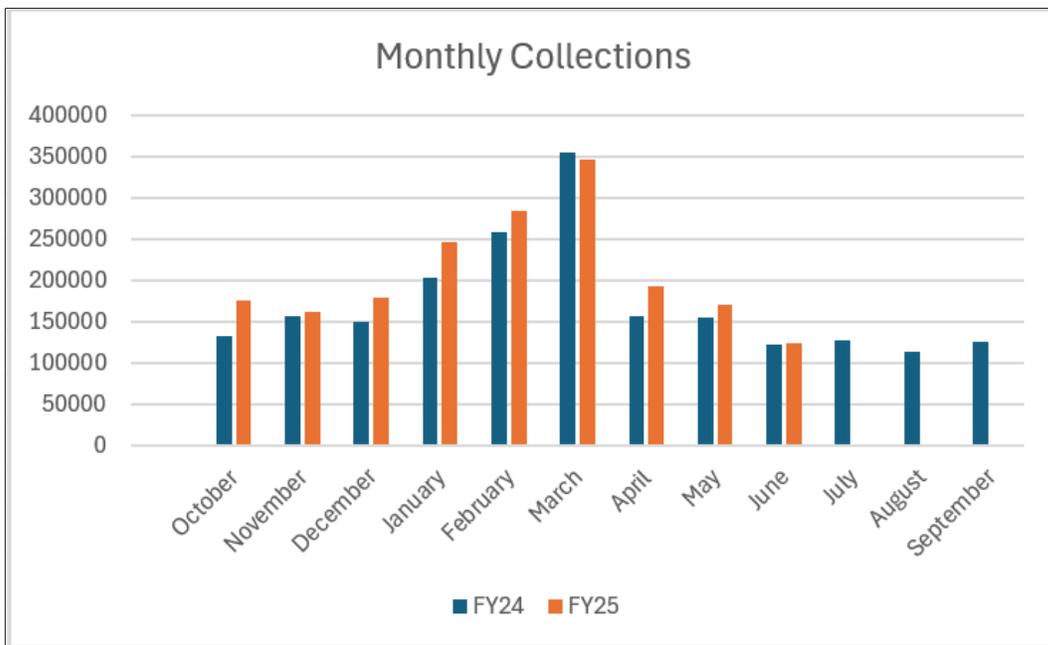
FY 21/22	
MONTH	REVENUE
October	\$ 118,841.95
November	\$ 105,876.25
December	\$ 120,563.05
January	\$ 136,601.62
February	\$ 181,959.16
March	\$ 288,865.36
April	\$ 131,598.20
May	\$ 100,392.63
June	\$ 91,591.19
July	\$ 106,870.71
August	\$ 77,825.61
September	\$ 116,063.44
Total Revenue for 21/22	\$1,577,049.17

FISCAL YEARS COLLECTING 5% TDT

FY 22/23	
MONTH	REVENUE
October	\$ 194,813.41
November	\$ 146,842.12
December	\$ 147,328.69
January	\$ 169,777.39
February	\$ 241,887.91
March	\$ 351,868.47
April	\$ 120,831.21
May	\$ 93,838.88
June	\$ 98,169.53
July	\$ 100,023.92
August - 5%	\$ 100,819.93
September - 5%	\$ 167,625.01
Total Revenue for 22/23	\$1,933,826.47

FY 23/24	
MONTH	REVENUE
October	\$ 132,758.45
November	\$ 157,706.47
December	\$ 150,311.58
January	\$ 203,565.26
February	\$ 258,286.64
March	\$ 356,562.71
April	\$ 157,799.95
May	\$ 155,657.68
June	\$ 121,827.72
July	\$ 127,730.68
August	\$ 113,699.57
September	\$ 125,673.44
Total Revenue for 23/24	\$2,061,580.15

FY 24/25	
MONTH	REVENUE
October	\$ 175,788.94
November	\$ 162,284.79
December	\$ 179,080.94
January	\$ 246,349.78
February	\$ 285,562.00
March	\$ 346,907.48
April	\$ 194,317.11
May	\$ 170,741.71
June	
July	
August	
September	
Total Revenue for 24/25	\$1,761,032.75



	FY23/24	FY24/25	% change
Oct	\$ 132,758.45	\$ 175,788.94	32%
Nov	\$ 157,706.47	\$ 162,284.79	3%
Dec	\$ 150,311.58	\$ 179,080.94	19%
Jan	\$ 203,565.26	\$ 246,349.78	21%
Feb	\$ 258,286.64	\$ 285,562.00	11%
Mar	\$ 356,562.71	\$ 346,907.48	-3%
Apr	\$ 157,799.95	\$ 194,317.11	23%
May	\$ 155,657.68	\$ 170,741.71	10%
June	\$ 121,827.72	\$ 124,536.54	2%
July	\$ 127,730.68		
Aug	\$ 113,699.57		
Sept	\$ 125,673.44		
TOTAL			
to current reported month	\$ 1,694,476.46	\$ 1,885,569.29	11%
<i>Year End Total</i>	<i>\$ 2,061,580.15</i>	<i>TBD</i>	

Leads

2024-2025 vs 2023-2024

2024-2025	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total YTD
Visit FI Magazine	101	52	88	72	132	123	180	99	127	260	182	109	1525
Phone Request	4	5	4	5	6	8	3	12	9	4	6	5	71
Undiscovered FL													
Contact Us*	17	20	19	13	22	30	34	19	16	18	19	17	244
Request Info*	14	7	12	35	42	124	169	52	47	77	68	41	688
Subscribe*	87	132	177	214	104	207	184	94	83	121	130	109	1642
Total	223	216	300	339	306	492	570	276	282	480	405	281	4170

Web Site Total*	118	159	208	262	168	361	387	165	146	216	217	167	2574
------------------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	-------------

2023-2024	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total YTD
Visit FI Magazine	141	92	62	85	172	142	126	110	170	144	82	124	1450
Phone Request	3	5	6	5	8	5	6	5	3	4	3	5	58
Undiscovered FL													
Contact Us*	5	9	3	8	4	6	23	20	20	25	11	16	150
Request Info*	7	23	11	28	10	14	19	13	13	9	8	4	159
Subscribe*	89	94	104	157	139	116	137	167	110	124	103	100	1440
Total	245	223	186	283	333	283	311	315	316	306	207	249	3257

Web Site Total*	101	126	118	193	153	136	179	200	143	158	122	120	1749
------------------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	-------------

Variance +/-

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total YTD
2022 vs 2023 Leads	-22	-7	114	56	-27	209	259	-39	-34	174	198	32	913
2022 vs 2023 Website Leads*	17	33	90	69	15	225	208	-35	3	58	95	47	825

* = Website Leads

FY25 TDC Grants

Event	Date	Grant Type	Year of Grant (if Multi-Year)	TDC grant UP TO:	FSF grant	Other funding	TDC Payable to	Notes	Reimbursable for	Verified Room Nights	Actual Reimbursed	Awarded Funding Unused
Hurricane Junior Golf Tour Visit Sebring Fall Junior Open (Event 1 of 2 on contract)	October 18 - 20, 2024	New Event Grant (3-year)	1	\$ 9,100.00			Hurricane Junior Golf Tour	\$9,100 per tournament = \$7,500 base + \$20/verified room night (80 rooms) \$18,200 total = \$15,000 base + \$20/verified room night (160 rooms)	venue fees, staff event fees, marketing & promotions	28	\$ 7,731.56	\$ 1,368.44
GFNY Cycling	October 20, 2024	High Impact Signature Event (3-year)	2	\$ 65,000.00			GFNY (Gran Fondo New York)	up to \$65,000, based on \$20/verified room night (up to 3,250 rooms)	MOT & Traffic Control & Light Towers; Promo Items/shirts for athletes; facility rental; marketing and graphic design; post-race meal for athletes; A/V	2,614	\$ 37,660.00	\$ 27,340.00
Citrus Golf Trail Open	November 5-8, 2024	Sport Event Grant (1-year)	N/A	\$ 6,000.00			Minor League Golf	\$20/ver. Rooms (up to 300 Rooms)	venue rental, officials, digital marketing, equip rentals, Pro-Am reception	76	\$ 1,520.00	\$ 4,480.00
Spartan Race	December 7-8, 2024	High Impact Signature Event Grant (3-year)	1	\$ 90,000.00	\$ 18,926.08		Spartan	\$20/ver. Room night (up to 4,500 rooms)	eligible costs associated with facility rental, production, and marketing for the SPARTAN Race.	10,384	\$ 90,000.00	\$ -
Citrus Golf Trail Ladies' Invitational	December 27-30, 2024	Sport Event Grant (1-year)	N/A	\$ 15,000.00			Citrus Golf Trail	\$20/verified room night up to \$15,000 total. (up to 750 Rooms)	Reimbursable grant funds are to be used for facility rental, promotional items, marketing (golf genius, social media, and Google ads).	300	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 9,000.00
SODA Dragboat Race	May 3-4, 2025	New Event Grant (3-year)	2	\$18,312.50			SDOA (Southern Outlaw Dragboat Association)	Year 1: \$7,500 + \$10,000 room nights = \$17,500 Year 2: \$3,562.50 + \$14750 room nights = \$18,312.50 Year 3: \$3,562.50 + \$14750 room nights = \$18,312.50	event officials, out of county marketing/broadcast, Event T-shirts with Visit Sebring Logo, trophies/plaques with Visit Sebring Logo, event insurance, and rescue personal & equipment	170	\$ 6,962.50	\$11,350.00

Item 4A



Destination & Budget Update October 30, 2025



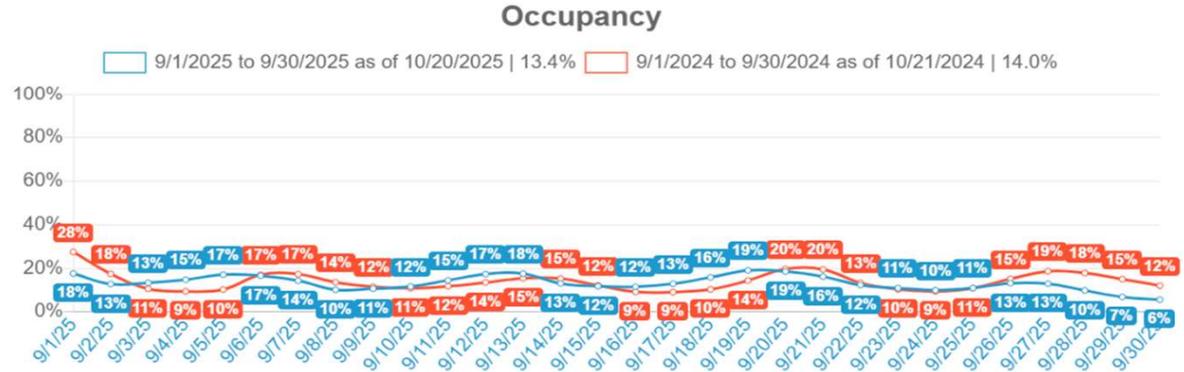
Increased Indicators YOY

- For Hotels YOY Sept. 2024 vs Sept. 2025:
 - Occupancy down 0.8%
 - Lowest of similar counties
 - Counties that had increase are heavily invested in sports tourism and facility development
 - Average Daily Rate (ADR) up \$3.90.
- Highlands County's average ADR continues to be the highest compared to similar counties at \$150.74
- Highlands County RevPAR is 2nd highest compared to similar counties at 86.68.



Data Source: Airbnb/Vrbo combined

KPI	Value	Compared	Difference
ADR	\$229	\$182	26%
Occupancy	13.4%	14.0%	-4%
RevPAR	\$31	\$26	21%
Revenue	\$757,251	\$670,957	13%



Q4: TDC Staff Activity & Stakeholder Outreach

- **2025 Tourism Insights & Awards Luncheon**
 - Tourism Award Winners
 - AI Presentation by Matt Clement
- Hosted **AI Workshop** – hands on AI learning
- **Stakeholder Meetings**
 - Hotels
 - Restaurants
 - Art & Culture
- TDC staff attended **Florida Governor's Conference**.
- **Tourism Coordinator Interviews**
- **Destination TV Channel** planning meeting
- Facility development calls with **Fair Board & Max Long Stakeholders**
 - Ongoing calls with Huddle Up Group, Synergy Sports & Airstream Ventures
- **HGTV Regional Team Meetings**
- Working with **True Omni** and cities/town through the kiosk installation process.
- Launched **Hospitality Training** with two full sessions. More in planning stages.
- Shellie Phelps meeting with all County Commissioners & County Administration





Tourism Award Winners

- Hotel Service Champion - Sergio Guareno from Inn on the Lakes
- Attraction Service Champion - Jon Scott from Airboat Wildlife Adventures
- Restaurant Service Champions - David Ailstock from 18 East Restaurant
- Sports Champion - Kim Largin with U.S. Fastpitch Association
- Rising Star Champion - Tina Barkey from The Bagel Bar
- Innovation Champion – The Sugar Express
- Volunteer Champion - Nancy Fisk from the Historical Society of Avon Park
- Humanitarian Champion – Don Jose Mexican Restaurant

Florida Governor's Conference on Tourism

Success in AI in Destination Marketing will require:

1. Creative thinking/ability to ask effective questions.
2. Effective decision-making skills
3. Empathy

New Expedia Group study shows sports tourism not just growing, but re-shaping global travel and delivering outsized economic impact.

1. Youth sports tourism – invest in fields, complexes, and year-round amateur events that will generate room nights.
2. Women's sports partnerships – attract fast-growing audiences by partnering with women's leagues, tournaments & athletes.
3. Niche & identity-driven sports – highlight sports that align with local culture & natural assets to attract highly engaged audiences.
4. Sports as content marketing – harness sports momentum through brand collaborators, fan storytelling and athlete partnerships to elevate destination visibility and authenticity.

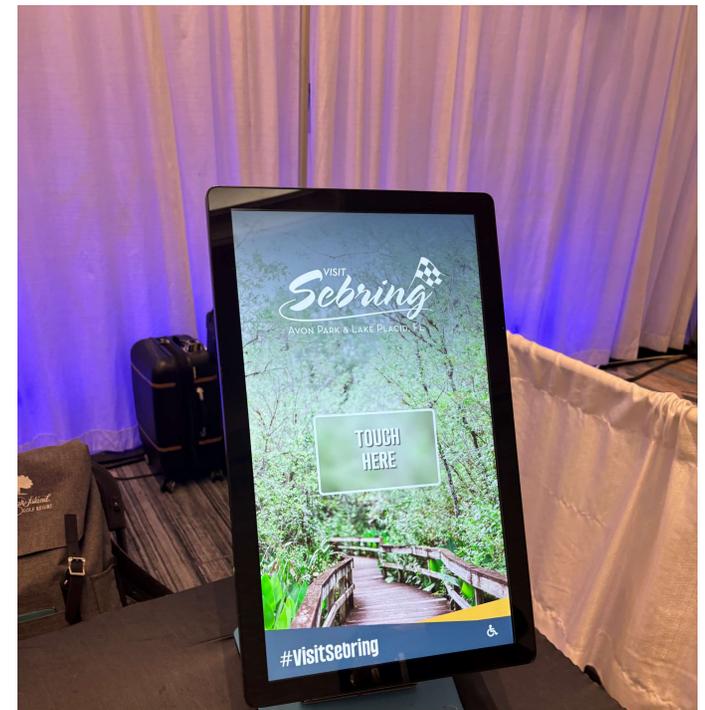
Framework for Strategic Storytelling

1. Strategy first, format second
2. Creators as partners
3. Trends as tools

VISIT FLORIDA Launched ad campaign in partnership with Margaritaville.

Live More Floridays

Aims to showcase experiences that extend beyond the state's theme parks and beaches.
Focal point is musical collaboration with the Buffet song "Floridays"



Q4: Public Relations Update/Much PR

- **SATW virtual media marketplace**
 - Met with more than two dozen media to promote Highlands County in June
 - Sent personalized follow-ups to everybody I met with more story ideas throughout July and August
- **Caladium Festival**
 - Finished story pitches and event calendar submissions, including booking an interview with a grower w/Better Lawns and Gardens
 - Supported Florida Rambler with their independent trip to Highlands County during Caladium Fest
- Participated in **Visit Florida media missions: Nashville & NYC**
 - This included preparing a pitch to participate, preparing collateral, traveling to Nashville and attending in NYC
 - Met with dozens of media and influencers, sharing the story of Highlands County
 - Included sodas from the Sebring Soda Shop at the NYC evening event
- Registered for **IMM**, the most important media marketplace in the US, taking place in **NYC in January 2026**

Published Articles/Earned Media

Much PR



Florida's Best-Kept Secret Offers Small-Town Charm Without The Tourist Crowds
southernliving.com



An Old Florida staple, Sebring, is on the rebound
floridarambler.com



Lake Placid Caladium Festival, July 2025
floridarambler.com



8 Best Things to Do in Lake Placid, FL (2025)
• Authentic Florida
authenticflorida.com



Looking Forward

- **True Omni** – kiosk installation in each downtown; expected October 2025.
- **Lake June Lagoon** – Delayed due to product availability. Three-year contract at \$50,000/year will start this fiscal year. Plans to install in Spring/Summer 2026
- TDC presenting to **Leadership Highlands** on November 10.
- Scheduling another day for **Hospitality Training** on November 17.
- **ING Fall Conference (golf media)** November 18-21.
- **German media** rep here November 20-22 courtesy of VISIT FLORIDA.
- County Facility recommendations & on-going conversations. **Three presentations on Nov. 4.**
- New **Tourism Coordinator** starts November 4.
- Next **TDC Quarterly Board Meeting**: Thursday, January 29, 2026. Meetings are open to the public.
 - Will have final TDT revenue for FY 2024-2025

2024-2025 Marketing (5305) Budget to Date *As of 9.30.25

	Approved Budget	Earmarked/Spent	Balance Remaining
Advertising/SEO/SEM/ Website	525,000	377,691	147,309 (did not launch Destination Channel)
Experience Enhancement (Water-based Grant)	50,000	(Earmarked but 3-year contract will not start until 25-26 FY)	50,000
Promotions/PR	65,000	46,895	18,105
Sports Marketing	82,000	81,000	1,000
Visitor Services	40,000	65,050 (kiosks)	-25,050
Industry Relations	20,000	35,236	-15,236
Event Grants	575,000	294,200	280,800
Special Projects	63,000	67,000 (Huddle Up, Facility Study, RMPK)	-4,000
FSF Income	(+20,000) Not included in total below	+1,595	
TOTAL	1,420,000	975,524.5	452,928



5309 – Asset Development & Enhancement

- Budgeted \$450,000 this FY
- Spent/earmarked: \$118,678
 - Facility Study: \$65,000
 - Adjacent land at Sports Complex Appraisal: \$3,700
 - Interior Netting at Sports Complex: \$49,978

“

Great things in business
are never done by one
person. They're done by
a team of people.

– Steve Jobs

”

Any Questions?
Casey@VisitSebring.com



Item 4B

Item 4C



AVON PARK & LAKE PLACID, FL

**SPORTS TOURISM
PRESENTATION**

QUARTERLY REPORT- OCTOBER 2025



Association Trips

Upcoming Sports Conference which will connect us to sports tourism even organizers which will help us bring more events to Avon Park, Lake Placid and Sebring.



Airstream Ventures
BUSINESS.SPORTS.TOURISM



04/25
Tulsa, OK



06/25
Treasure Coast



09/25
Columbia, SC



12/25
Lexington, KY



SPORTS ETA

44 TOTAL EVENT MEETINGS

For Highlands County:

APBA, USA Catchball, World Trail Races, Disc Golf Pro Tour, World Axe Throwing League, USA Field Hockey, USA Gymnastics, World Senior Games, USA Softball, UFFL, etc..

FLA SPORTS SUMMIT

27 TOTAL EVENT MEETINGS

For Highlands County:

AAU, The Spring Games, Triple Crown, NCAA, USAAA Sports, American Cornhole League, Sports ETA, Bocce Ball, AJGA

S.P.O.R.T.S.

23 TOTAL EVENT MEETINGS

For Highlands County:

AAU, USA Softball, USA Gymnastics, Triple Crown, American Cornhole League, NAIA, APBA, USA WaterSki, USA Table Tennis, USA Pickleball, US Powerlifting, Fishers of Men Fishing, AJGA, etc...

Highlighted/New Events



Pro Watercross-Avon Park

Pro Watercross came back to Highlands County again hosted this time by the City of Avon Park. Racers from all over the country competed for the crown. The event was also broadcast nationally on CBS Sports Network.



Brand Name Athletes

Over 500 girls played in the inaugurals BNA tournament at the HC Sports Complex on August 2-3, 2025.



Lake Placid Lacrosse

With a last second switch, Lacrosse was brought to Lake Placid at the sports complex. Reviews were outstanding.

Booked Events

Hurricane Junior Golf Tour (Oct 24)
 US Fast Pitch Softball (Oct 24)
 CGT Open/MLGT/ING Pro-Am (Nov 24)
 US Fast Pitch Softball (Dec 24)
 Spartan Race (Dec 24)
 CGT Ladies Invitational (Dec 24)
 US Fast Pitch Softball (8 Events 2025)
 Pro Watercross (Apr 2025)
 Florida Prep Lacrosse Event (May 2025)
 Southern Outlaw Drag Boat Racing (May 2025)
 Fla Blast Lax (June 2025)
 Brand Name Athletes Flag Football (Aug 25)
 Pro Watercross (Aug 25)
 Florida Crabs Lacrosse Combine (Sept 25)
 MotoSurf (Sept 25)
 CGT Open (Nov 25)
 Last Paddler Standing (Dec 25)
 Florida Prep Lacrosse Showcase (Nov 25)
 Spartan Race (Dec 25)
 CGT Ladies Invitational (Dec 25)
 UFFL (Aug 26)
 Inspire Dance (May 26) "Pending county approval"
 Premier Girls Fast Pitch (2026-7 events)

Advanced Conversations

- Gridiron Sunshine Football Classic (2025)
- Dock Dogs (2026)
- American Powerboat Assoc (2026)
- United Flag Football League (2026)
- Premier Lacrosse League Camp (2026)
- Surf Foil Tour (2026)
- US Senior Pickleball (2026)

Conversations

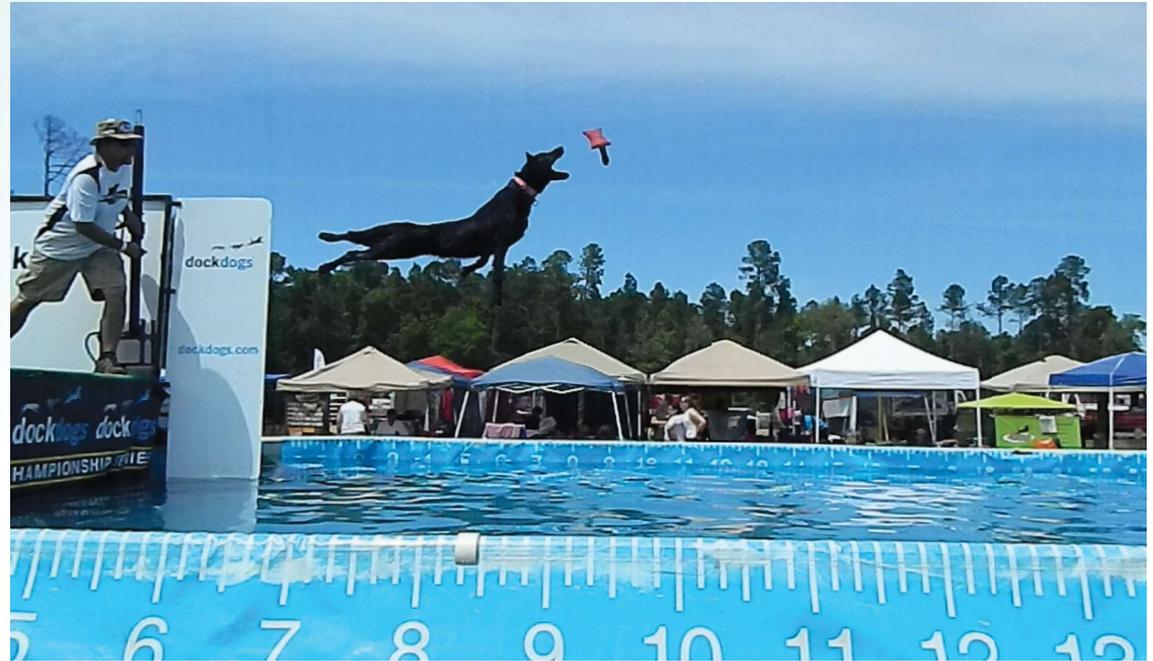
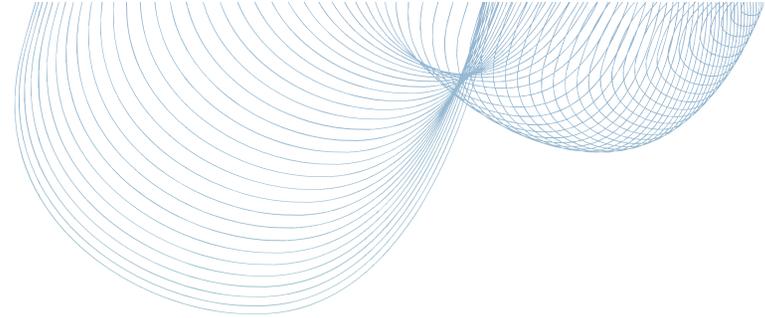
- 7v7 Football (2026)
- USA Cycling (2026)
- FICA-Cycling (2026)
- Unrivaled Sports (2026)
- US CCO (2026)
- Game On Events (2026)
- 5v5 Soccer (2026)
- Jr. College Softball (2025-26)
- FIRST Robotics Qualifier
- American Darters Assoc (2026)



SO THE IDEA WITH DOCK DOGS IS WE WOULD MARRY THIS EVENT TO ANOTHER EVENT IN ALL THREE CITIES.

WE ARE WORKING WITH THE DIFFERENT ENTITIES IN THE CITIES TO DETERMINE WHICH EVENTS COULD USE AN ADD-ON.

FOR SEBRING, WE ARE CURRENTLY FOCUSED ON THE SODA FESTIVAL.



Annual Contract

OCT 2024- SEPT 2025

\$82,000 per year

2024-2025 TOURISM IMPACT VS. CONTRACT

TOTAL VALUE

\$5.38 Million

(Room night values, impact values, marketing values)

Events

GOAL: 22

ACTUAL: 22

Room Nights

GOAL: 12,000

ACTUAL: 11,860

Tourism Impact

GOAL: \$4 MIL

ACTUAL: \$ 5.38 MIL

Item 4D

citrusgolftrail



scope of WORK



1

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT

Ongoing creation, scheduling, and engagement across Citrus Golf Trail's social media platforms to build brand awareness, grow audience reach, and drive traffic to the website and member courses.

2

EMAIL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

Strategic development and distribution of branded e-newsletters that highlight news, promotions, and events to nurture relationships with past visitors and inspire future travel.

3

WEBSITE REDESIGN

A complete refresh of the Citrus Golf Trail website focused on modern design, streamlined navigation, and improved user experience to better showcase member courses and increase conversions.

social MEDIA

TOTAL AUDIENCE

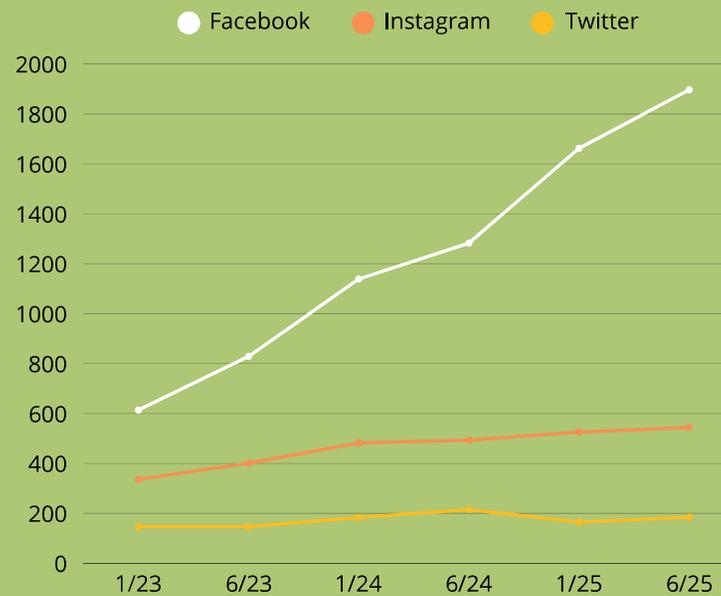
↑ 161%

AVERAGE IMPRESSIONS

3,456

AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT RATE

↑ 7%



email MARKETING

Date	Open Rate	Click-Through Rate
January '23	33%	1%
January '24	32%	1%
January '25	31%	1%
Current	32%	1%

website REDESIGN



DESTINATION OVERVIEW

An engaging introduction that highlights Highlands County's charm, the Citrus Golf Trail experience, and what makes the area a must-visit golf destination.



WEEKLY BLOG POSTS

Fresh, search-optimized content published regularly to showcase member courses, travel tips, and stories that keep the website dynamic and improve visibility.



SPECIAL EVENTS

A dedicated section promoting tournaments, seasonal offers, and community happenings to keep visitors informed and encourage repeat visits.



CUSTOM BOOKING ENGINE

An integrated tool that allows users to seamlessly book accommodations and tee times directly through the site, simplifying trip planning and driving conversions.



citrusgolftrail

Item 4E



Biggest Fish Consulting Update for Highlands County TDC

"Everyone Matters" **Hospitality Training**

Two FULL sessions hosted on October 27th

Next sessions available on November 17th

Art & Culture Stakeholder Meeting

The Role of the Arts in Revitalization

October 30th

Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts at SFSC,
Avon Park

October Regional Team Meeting

Wet Dogs Brewing in Lake Placid
with
Presentations by
Wander Media,
Airstream Ventures,
Madden Media



American Bus Association Marketplace

Highlands County will be represented in
Reno, January 2026

This event includes fantastic networking opportunities
and full-day interviews with travel operators

Regional Team Trailblazing Retreat

February 18th, 2026

Thank You



Item 5A



Staff recommendation/suggested motion:

Item to be presented by Eric Zwyer, Highlands County Tax Collector, for the Tourist Development Council's review and action at their discretion.

Item 5B



Event: Inspire National Dance Competition (NDC) Sebring Regional Competition (May 1-3, 2026)

Amount Requested:

2026: \$20,600 (\$20,000 (grant) + \$600 (30 verified room nights))

2027: \$10,600 (\$10,000 (grant) + \$600 (30 verified room nights))

2028: \$10,600 (\$10,000 (grant) + \$600 (30 verified room nights))

Criteria for Evaluation of Applications: New Event Grant Program

- I. Commitment to the Expansion of Tourism in Highlands County: **5**
 - II. Soundness of Proposed Event
 - a. Objective Worksheet: **5**
 - b. Additional Funding Sources/Budget: **10**
 - c. Out of County Advertising/Marketing Plan: **10**
 - III. Stability & Management Capacity
 - a. Digital Presence: **10**
 - b. Event History: **10**
 - c. Visitor Survey: **5**
 - IV. Quality of Proposed Event: **25**
- Bonus Points: **10**

TOTAL SCORE: 90 (eligible for max requested funding)

To be eligible for maximum funding, scores must be at least 85. Scores of 50 or less will not be eligible for funding. Scores from 55-80 will be eligible for 75% of requested funds.

Staff recommendation/suggested motion:

Move to approve the request from Inspire National Dance Competition for the Inspire NDC Sebring Regional Competition grant application request for funding as a 3-year, New Event Grant with funding up to \$20,600 for year #1 (2026) and up to \$10,600/year for years #2 (2027) and #3 (2028).

For year one, applicant will receive \$20,000 for reimbursable expenses after the event + up to additional \$600 based on verified room nights (up to 30 verified room nights at \$20/room night). For years two and three, applicant will receive \$10,000 for reimbursable expenses after the event + up to additional \$600 based on verified room nights (up to 30 verified room nights at \$20/room night), per year.

Reimbursable grant funds are to be used for venue rental, stage rental, pipe and drape rental, and awards featuring the Visit Sebring logo. Funds to come from Cost Center 5305 for Marketing & Events.

APPLICATION

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

The application **must be completely filled out**. Not Applicable or N/A should be marked as appropriate. Refer to

Copies of the following items must be attached to your application:

- List of Applicant's current Officers and/or Board members (if applicable)
- Applicant's W-9 tax form for post-Event payment
- Overall & detailed Marketing Plan for the Event. This plan must outline product (event); market position/competitive analysis; target audience; target markets; marketing goals, objectives and tactics; market strategy; budget and evaluation metrics.
- Business plan outlining how the re-occurring event will increase out-of-county attendees each year
- Example of proposed Visitor/Attendee Survey

Please note: All final paperwork as outlined in the application must be submitted to the TDC **within 60 days of the conclusion of the Event**. The request for reimbursement will be considered incomplete until all of the required forms are submitted to the TDC.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY TDC NEW EVENT FUNDING REQUEST APPLICATION

Amount Requested from TDC:

Year 1: \$ <u>20,600</u>	(\$ <u>20,000</u> Base + \$ <u>600</u> from <u>30</u> room nights at \$20/night)
Year 2: \$ <u>10,600</u>	(\$ <u>10,000</u> Base + \$ <u>600</u> from <u>30</u> room nights at \$20/night)
Year 3: \$ <u>10,600</u>	(\$ <u>10,000</u> Base + \$ <u>600</u> from <u>30</u> room nights at \$20/night)

I. General Information

1. Name of Applicant: INSPIRE NATIONAL DANCE COMPETITION
2. Name of Event: INSPIRE NATIONAL DANCE COMPETITION SPRING REGIONAL COMPETITION
3. Contact person: DEBBIE JONES
4. Contact person e-mail: DJONES@SCLDADL.COM
5. Complete address of Applicant: 3002 HAWKS RIDGE DRIVE, STATESBORO, GA 30461
6. Cell phone: 912-507-6853
7. Applicant's Chief Official/Event Coordinator: NANCY MESSINGER
Title: BUSINESS MANAGER
Address if different from above: N/A
Cell phone:
Email: busmgr@INSPIRENDC.COM
8. Has Event ever received funding from the TDC? Yes No
- a. If yes – list years and amounts: N/A
9. Amount Applicant is requesting for the Event/Project
a. Year 1: \$ 20,600 ; Year 2: \$ 10,600 ; Year 3: \$ 10,600
10. Intended use of funds: (Refer to page 3 & 4 – Eligible and Ineligible Uses of Funds)
HELP DEFRAY VENUE COST + STAGE + FLOOR/DRAPE

II. Details about Applicant: (describe your business or organization)

III. Schedule of Event: (can provide in separate attachment/document if needed)

IV. Event Specific Information

1. Event name: *INSPIRE NATIONAL DANCE COMPETITION SEBRING REGIONAL COMPETITION*
2. Type of event: *DANCE COMPETITION*
3. Is this event an elimination tournament? *NO*
4. Dates of Event: *MAY 1-3, 2026*
5. Location of Event: *ALAN JOY ARENA*
6. Event Website: *WWW.INSPIRENDC.COM*
7. Event Social Media Handles/Pages: *FACEBOOK/INSPIRE NATIONAL DANCE COMPETITION*
8. Event Admission Price (if applicable): *N/A*
9. Event/Project promoter (if other than Applicant): *N/A*
 1. Name of promoter:
 2. Company name:
 3. Contact name:
 4. Address: *N/A*
 5. Phone:
 6. Email:
 7. Website:

V. Economic Impact

1. Please complete the table below.

Category	Type	# of Adult	# of Youth
Total # Expected Participants (competitors, coaches, trainers, officials, etc.)	Out-of-State	0	0
	In-State & Staying Overnight	100	350
	Day Trip	0	0
Total # Expected Fans (family, friends, etc.)	Out-of-State	20	0
	In-State & Staying Overnight	50	0
	Day Trip	600	0
Total # Expected Media	Out-of-State	0	
	In-State & Staying Overnight	0	
	Day Trip	0	

2. What is the GUARANTEED MINIMUM NUMBER OF PAID ROOM NIGHTS the Event will bring to Sebring/Highlands County? (This is the minimum number of rooms that must be captured by the Event and documented by submitting the Room Night Certification Form within 60 days of the conclusion of the Event. The TDC reserves the right to reduce the reimbursement amount should the Event fail to meet this minimum room night guarantee.)

Number of Room Nights: 18 nights (STAFF)

3. What is the GUARANTEED MINIMUM NUMBER OF EVENT ATTENDEES? (Please answer each question below or your application will be deemed incomplete).
1. Number of attendees: 1,150 (1st event - ESTIMATE)
 2. How many/what percentage will be traveling to the event from outside the county? 70%
 3. How will you document the attendees and the out-of-county percentage? BASED ON REGISTRATION
 4. Will you be providing the TDC with attendee contact information? NO
4. If event has been held in another destination previously, please provide the previous year's event information (if applicable):

Previous Event or Project: INSPIRE NATIONAL DANCE COMPETITION - Port Charlotte competition
 Date: MAY 3RD, 2025
 Location: Port Charlotte
 Total Room Nights: 20
 Contact Name/Phone: NANCY MESSINGER / 912-506-3967
 Economic Impact (if available):
 Funding amount awarded and funding entity (if any): \$1,000

EVENT BUDGET SUMMARY

EVENT INCOME

Visit Sebring cannot be the sole source of income. Please list all Event income sources, types and amounts, including grants, sponsorships, registration fees, and in-kind services provided from public agencies, such as Police Department, Fire Rescue, etc. Please designate hard dollars versus in-kind.

Income Source & Type (i.e. Publix Sponsorship or Attendee Registration Fees)	Income Amount (or In-Kind Amount)
<u>REGISTRATION</u>	<u>\$ 52,500</u>
<u>MERCHANDISE SALES</u>	<u>3,000</u>
Visit Sebring/TDC Funding Request	\$ 20,600
TOTAL INCOME ALL SOURCES	\$ 76,100

Grant Application Checklist

Please initial next to each item and fill in the blanks below. This list must accompany your grant application.

Initials

NM This application is being submitted at least four months (120 days) prior to the event start.

Date of Event: May 13, 2026
Date of Application: 9/30/25

NM I understand that the reimbursement request must be completed and submitted to the Tourism Office with all back up and supporting material no later than 60 days after the event ends, which will be on July 1, 2026 (date 60 days after event ends).

NM I will obtain the signatures of the organization's President & Secretary on the proposed grant contract by October 7, 2025. (date one week after the application is submitted to and accepted by the Tourism Office)

NM I understand that the "Visit Sebring" logo must appear in any print advertisements that are funded by the TDC. For digital ads, the "Visit Sebring" logo must either be featured on the advertisement or on website/landing page linked to the ad or the ad must link to the TDC's website, VisitSebring.com. I will also use the #VisitSebring hashtag on at least one event social media post.

NM I have included an IRS W-9 Form and a copy of the Florida Division of Corporations form with the application.

NM I understand that someone representing this grant application must be available at the TDC meeting when it considers the application for funding or the application will not be considered. Airstream Ventures

NM I understand that no expenses incurred before the TDC recommends approval of the grant application will be reimbursed under any circumstances. I also understand that no funding has been approved until the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) approves execution of the Grant Contract and that no expenditures will be reimbursed if the BOCC does not approve execution of the Grant Contract.

NM I understand that reimbursements following the event will only be made for itemized, authorized expenses approved by the BOCC in the fully executed Grant Contract.

NM I understand each reimbursement request must include copies of paid invoices, screenshots of digital ads, copies of the ad/tear sheets, invoice for reimbursement amount to the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners, copy of front and back of cleared checks paying for advertising, and outreach figures identifying the

number of people your ad reached outside Highlands County and inside Highlands County.

NM I understand Reimbursement will only be provided at a rate of \$20/verified room night. And all funds will only be reimbursed after the event is complete.

NM I agree that the funds I receive will ONLY be used in accordance with the eligible and ineligible uses of funds. (pages 3-4)

NM I understand that I am required to submit a **Room Night Certification Form** from each participating hotel in order to track the number of hotel room nights the Event produces in order to receive funding. (page 8)

NM I have reviewed the **Highlands County Special Event Permit Flow Chart** and will proceed with any required county permits. (Contact: Rachel Barry; (863) 402-6638)

NM I have included a list of my business/organization's current Officers and/or Board members (if applicable) with the application.

NM I will provide the Visit Sebring office with a Certificate of Insurance (COI) naming "Highlands County Tourism Office" as additionally insured no later than 15 days before the event begins. If required, I will also provide the Visit Sebring office with a Certificate of Insurance (COI) naming "Florida Sports Foundation" as additionally insured no later than 15 days before the event begins.

NM I have included a detailed **Business Plan** for the Event that outlines how the event will increase out-of-county visitors each year.

NM I have included a detailed **Marketing Plan** for the Event.

NM I have included a sample **Visitor/Attendee Survey** for the Event, and will submit survey results to the Visit Sebring office no later than 60 days after the event takes place.

NM As an authorized representative of Applicant, I (the person submitting this application) acknowledge that I am also the person required to execute the contract and prepare the **Post-Event Report** (page 9-10) for the Event within 60 days after completion of event to receive payment. This report should include: total number of participants, total number of coaches, spectators, staff, media, etc., information regarding where attendee came from, feedback about destination (what did they like/not like).

NM I also acknowledge that I am required to submit documentation that confirms my authority to act on behalf of the Applying Organization, such as a corporate resolution or a copy of a record from the State of Florida Division of Corporations that lists me (the person submitting the Application) as an officer who has statutory authority to represent and bind the Applying Organization.

MM

I acknowledge that any material made or received by Highlands County in connection with my request for Program funding is a public record and subject to public inspection unless there is a legislatively created exemption that makes it confidential and not subject to disclosure. I acknowledge that I cannot dictate to Highlands County what material is open to public inspection or the circumstances under which material is deemed confidential.

MM

I understand that as a requirement to receiving funding, I will execute a release to permit Highlands County to photo and/or record the Event and I must make Event invitees aware of this and make the signing of a release a requirement to participate in the Event.

MM

I understand that all funds received are subject to audit by the Highlands County Clerk of the Court – Internal Auditor or other representative as Highlands County may designate.

MA

I understand that this event may require a Highlands County Special Event Permit, and it is up to me to complete that permit request and pay the required permit fee.

Authorized Agent: Nancy MESSINGER

Title: Business Manager Date: 9/30/25

Authorized Agent Signature: Nancy MESSINGER

SMART Objective Worksheet

Draft Goal: _____

Definition	Your Objective
Specific <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do I want to accomplish with this event? Why? • What is the desired result? 	Our Company wants to accomplish having a family oriented competition in Sebring. Our desired result is to introduce this area as a safe and family oriented place to come and enjoy competition.
Measurable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you quantify (numerically or descriptively) success? • How will you measure progress? 	We will quantify success if we have @ least 125 routines or more participating the 1st year. That will lead to more studios and routines for next year.
Achievable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What skills are needed? • What resources are necessary? • What factors impact goal achievement? • Does the goal require the right amount of effort? 	The skills needed to accomplish this is our advertising, visiting studios, social media posts and emails. Having our whole team working on introducing this new venue and studio visits impact this goal achievement. We always put effort into reaching our goals because it benefits the dancers, the community and us.
Relevant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the goal aligned with the overall mission or strategy to increase economic activity in Highlands County? 	Yes the goal is aligned with the overall mission.
Time-bound <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much time will be available to complete this SMART Objective? • Is the deadline realistic? 	It will take whatever time is necessary to complete the SMART objective. We create a plan to reach everyone possible and promote it. will emails, postcards, text and mailings

Final Goal:

Our final goal is to create a new competition in Sebring for studios and dancers to come enjoy what they do as well as see new sights and cities. We hope to make this competition a yearly event.

CERTIFICATION OF APPLICANT

Applicant has reviewed this Application for Funds from the Highlands County Tourist Development Council. Applicant is in full agreement with the information contained herein. To the best of Applicant's knowledge, the information contained in this Application and its attachments is accurate and complete.

Applicant Name: Inspire National Dance Competition

Date: 9/30/25

By: Mary Mungo
(Signature)

Its: Business Manager
(Title)

STATE OF FLORIDA
COUNTY OF _____

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me by means of physical presence or online notarization this 30 day of September, 2025 by Deborah D. Jones (name) as Business Manager (title) for Inspire NDC (applicant, name of party on behalf of whom instrument was executed).



Deborah D. Jones
(Signature of Notary Public-State of Florida)

Deborah D. Jones
(Name of Notary Typed, Printed, or Stamped)

Personally Known OR Produced Identification _____

Type of Identification Produced



Inspire National Dance Board Members:

Matthew Jones, Co-owner

Ann Marie Jones, Co-owner

Visitor Information - Sebring, FL



Event Overview

Sebring FL Regional

(Date)

Inspire Numbers

Anne-Marie Jones – 912-399-0408 - Nancy Messinger – (609) 369-3719

Venue

Alan J. Arena

781 Magolia Avenue

Sebring, FL

Brief Outline of Weekend

Friday, (Date)

4:15 AM	Doors Open for Competition – <i>Judges in Place</i>
5:00 PM	Session 1 – Junior-Comp Elite & Teen Comp/Comp Elite – S/D/T
7:30 PM	<i>Awards Session</i>
8:15 PM	Session 2 – Senior-Comp-S/D/T
9:45 PM	<i>Awards Session – Judges Free to Leave</i>
10:30 PM	Staff to Hotel

Saturday, (Date)

7:00 AM	Staff Arrives at Venue
7:15 AM	<i>Doors Open for Competition</i>
7:30 AM	<i>Judges in Place</i>
8:00 AM	Session 3 – All Mini/Petite-S/D/T & Junior Rec/Comp-S/D/T
1:00 PM	<i>Awards Session</i>
1:45 PM	Session 4 – Mini/Petite/Junior – Groups/Superlines/Productions
5:15 PM	<i>Awards Session</i>
6:00 PM	Session 5 – Teen/Senior – Rec – S/D/T
9:15 PM	<i>Awards Session – Judges Free to Leave</i>

Sunday, (Date)

7:15 AM	<i>Doors Open for Competition</i>
7:30 AM	<i>Judges in Place</i>
8:00 AM	Session 6 – Teen/Senior – Groups/Superlines/Productions
12:30 PM	<i>Awards Session</i>
1:30 PM	Session 7 – Senior-Comp Elite – S/D/T
3:45 PM	<i>Awards Session – Judges Free to Leave</i>
4:30 PM	Tear Down Begins
6:15 PM	Tear Down Complete



Photography Release Form

I, _____, grant Inspire National Dance Competition, LLC, the right and permission to use my and my dancer's images as part of advertisements and social media posts. This includes video and still images.

I hereby release and discharge Inspire National Dance Competition, LLC from any and all claims and demands arising out of or in connection with the use of the images and my name, likeness, and identity, including without limitation any and all claims for libel, privacy, or publicity.

Dancer's Name: _____

Parent or Guardian's Name _____

Signature: _____

Date Signed: _____

Inspire National Dance Competition — Sebring 2026

Event Dates: May 1-3, 2026

1. Event Overview

- **Event Name:** Inspire National Dance Competition
- **Location:** Sebring, FL
- **Dates:** May 1-3, 2026
- **Purpose:** To showcase top dance talent across the nation, provide a platform for dancers to gain recognition, and promote community engagement through dance.
- **Features:** Multiple dance categories, workshops, awards, celebrity judges, and audience engagement activities.

2. Market Position & Competitive Analysis

Market Position

- Inspire aims to position itself as a premier, nationally recognized dance competition focusing on excellence, inclusivity, and community engagement.
- Differentiators include high-profile judges, quality production, comprehensive workshops, and a focus on both competitive and developmental aspects of dance.

Competitive Analysis

Competitors	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Local/National Dance Competitions	Established reputation, existing network	Less innovative, limited outreach	Unique branding, celebrity judges	Market saturation, economic downturns
Online Dance Platforms	Accessibility, broad reach	Less personal interaction	Hybrid models, live experiences	Digital fatigue, lack of in-person engagement

Key Differentiators

- National scope with a focus on community.
- High-caliber judging panel.
- Concurrent workshops and masterclasses.
- Local partnerships to boost community involvement.

3. Target Audience & Markets

Primary Target Audience

- Dance Studios & Schools: Directors, teachers, students aged 5-18.
- Parents & Families: Supporting young dancers.
- Dance Enthusiasts & Fans: Local and regional dance lovers.

Secondary Target Audience

- Local Community: Sebring residents interested in arts and culture.
- Sponsors & Vendors: Brands aligned with youth, arts, and entertainment.
- Media & Press: Regional and national dance/media outlets.

Geographic Markets

- Primary: Southeast U.S. (Florida, Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina)
- Secondary: National (across the U.S. through digital outreach)

4. Marketing Goals & Objectives

Goals

- Establish Inspire Sebring, FL, as a premier dance competition destination.
- Achieve 400+ participating dance groups or solo acts.
- Generate 900+ attendees over three days.
- Secure sponsorships with at least 5 brands.
- Drive awareness and engagement through digital campaigns.

SMART Objectives

- Increase social media followers by 50% six months before the event.
- Secure 5 media features and mentions.
- Achieve at least 50% early-bird registration rate within the first three months.
- Collect attendee feedback with a satisfaction rate of 90% post-event.

5. Marketing Tactics & Strategies

Branding & Positioning

- Develop a compelling event logo, tagline (“#InspireSebring”), and consistent branding.
- Update the official website with registration, schedules, and sponsorship info.

Digital Marketing

- Website & Landing Pages: User-friendly, SEO-optimized.
- Social Media Campaigns: Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok for teaser videos, behind-the-scenes, and participant highlights.
- Email Marketing: Monthly emails to registered participants, partners, and prospects.
- Paid Ads: Facebook Ads, Instagram sponsored posts, Facebook Ads targeting dance communities.

Public Relations & Media

- Ambassadors showcasing the upcoming event
- Partnerships with dance influencers and bloggers.
- Social media interviews with judges and performers.

Community & Partner Outreach

- Collaborate with local schools, community centers, and dance studios for promotions.
- Sponsor partnerships for merchandise, and social media tags.
- Engage Sebring tourism boards for city promotion.

On-Site Promotions

- Branded banners, stage backdrops, and attendee engagement zones.
- Interactive activity to increase onsite engagement.
- Free video and pictures to participants for broader reach.

6. Market Strategy

- Pre-Event (6-12 months out): Build awareness, early registration incentives, and secure sponsors.
- Mid-Phase (3-6 months): Intensify social media campaigns, local outreach, media engagement.
- Final Phase (1-3 months): Promotions, last-minute registrations, onsite branding.
- Post-Event: Content sharing, surveys, media coverage recap, sponsorship reporting.

7. Budget Breakdown (Estimated)

Item	Estimated Cost
Branding & Website	\$1,000
Digital Advertising	\$1,500
Print Materials	\$2,000
On-site Promotions & Materials	\$1,500
Event Promotion	\$2,250
Staff, Judges & Event Management (pay)	\$8,175
Staff & Judge (Hotel)	\$4,046
Venue cost	\$4,000
Stage cost	\$10,000
Pipe and Drape	\$5,000
Awards	\$2,500
Transportation, Ins., Travel, Awards	\$3,500
Contingency	\$2,000
Total	\$47,471

8. Evaluation Metrics

Metric	Goal	Measurement Method
Registration Numbers	400+ groups/solos	Event registration data
Attendance	900+ attendees	onsite headcount
Social Media Engagement	50% follower growth	Platform analytics
Sponsorship Revenue	\$20,000+	Sponsorship agreements
Participant & Audience Satisfaction	90% positive feedback	Post-event surveys
Website Traffic	30% increase	Google Analytics

9. Conclusion

This marketing plan aims to position Inspire Sebring 2026 as a nationally recognized, community-centric dance competition through targeted outreach, strategic partnerships, compelling branding, and robust digital campaigns. Regular monitoring and flexibility will ensure the achievement of goals and a successful event.

Emergency Action Plan (EAP) for Inspire NDC –

Alan J. Arena

781 Magnolia Avenue

Sebring, Florida

Emergency Personnel Contact Information

Company Contact(s):

Name: info@inspirendc.com
Job Title: Director of Inspire
Phone Number: 912-506-3967
Email: info@inspirendc.com

Name: production@thecenter.org
Job Title: Production and Event Manager
Phone Number: 904-276-6803
Email: production@thecenter.org

Alerts

In the event of an emergency, employees are alerted by:

- An alarm bell/buzzer
- A public address system
- Verbal communication by designated leader(s)

The emergency signal for each emergency will be as follows:

- Fire, sounding of the Alarm
- Severe Weather, using Public Address System
- Active Shooter, call police discussion with management

Routes, Assembly, and Accounting. In the event of an emergency, employees shall evacuate: To the nearest available marked exit. After an emergency evacuation, employees will gather: Outside in the main parking lot. The procedure for accounting for all employees after an emergency evacuation will be: Take a head count. Have all studios check names. Family members will also check on each other. Identify the names and the last known locations of anyone not accounted for and pass then to the official in charge..

Medical Emergency

Call medical emergency personnel:

- (a) Paramedics
- (b) Ambulance
- (c) Fire Department
- (d) Other

Provide the following information:

- (a) Nature of medical emergency,
- (b) Location of the emergency (address, building, room number), and
- (c) Your name and phone number from which you are calling.

If personnel trained in First Aid are not available, as a minimum, attempt to provide the following assistance:

- Stop the bleeding with firm pressure on the wounds
- Note: Avoid contact with blood or other bodily fluids

Fire Emergency

When the fire is discovered:

If a fire is reported, pull the fire alarm, (if available and not already activated) to warn occupants to evacuate. Then Dial 911 to alert the fire department. Provide the following information:

- (a) Business name and street address
- (b) Nature of fire
- (c) Fire location (building and floor)
- (d) Type of fire alarm (detector, pull station, sprinkler water flow)
- (e) Location of fire alarm (building and floor)
- (f) Name of person reporting fire
- (g) Telephone number for return call

Fight the fire ONLY if:

- The fire is small and is not spreading to other areas.

Fire Extinguisher Policy. Portable fire extinguishers are provided in the workplace for employee use. In the event of a fire, any employee may use extinguishers to attempt to extinguish the fire before evacuating.

Upon being notified about the fire emergency, occupants must:

- (a) Leave the building using the designated escape routes.
- (b) Assemble in the designated area: Outside in the main parking lot.
- (c) Remain outside until the competent authority announces that it is safe to re-enter.

Evacuation Procedures

- (a) Evacuate buildings along evacuation routes to primary assembly areas outside.
- (b) Redirect building occupants to stairs and exits away from the fire.
- (c) Prohibit the use of elevators.
- (d) Evacuation team to account for all employees and visitors at the Assembly Area.

Severe Weather and Natural Disasters

Tornado:

- (a) When a warning is issued by sirens or other means, seek shelter inside. Consider the following:

- (i) Small interior rooms on the lowest floor and without windows,
 - (ii) Hallways on the lowest floor away from doors and windows, and
 - (iii) Rooms constructed with reinforced concrete, brick, or block with no windows.
- (b) Stay away from outside walls and windows.
 - (c) Use arms to protect the head and neck.
 - (d) Remain sheltered until the tornado threat is announced to be over.

Earthquake:

- (a) Stay calm and await instructions from the emergency coordinator or the designated official.
- (b) Keep away from overhead fixtures, windows, filing cabinets, and electrical power.
- (c) Help individuals with disabilities find a safe place.
- (d) Evacuate as instructed by the emergency coordinator and/or the designated official.

Flood:

- (a) If indoors:
 - (i) Be ready to evacuate as directed by the emergency coordinator and/or the designated official.
 - (ii) Follow the recommended primary or secondary evacuation routes.
- (b) If outdoors:
 - (i) Climb to high ground and stay there.
 - (ii) Avoid walking or driving through flood water.
 - (iii) Abandon your car immediately if it stalls and climb to a higher ground.

Hurricane:

The nature of a hurricane provides for more warning than other natural and weather disasters. A hurricane watch will be issued when a hurricane becomes a threat to a coastal area. Typically, a hurricane watch will be issued when hurricane winds of 74 mph or higher, or a combination of dangerously high water and rough seas, are expected in the area within 24 hours.

Once a hurricane watch has been issued:

- (a) Stay calm and await instructions from the emergency coordinator or the designated official.
- (b) Continue to monitor local TV and radio stations for instructions.
- (c) Secure the building by moving all loose items indoors and boarding up windows and openings.

During a hurricane:

Remain indoors and consider the following:

- (a) Small interior rooms on the lowest floor and without windows,
- (b) Hallways on the lowest floor away from doors and windows, and
- (c) Rooms constructed with reinforced concrete, brick, or block with no windows.

Extended Power Loss

In the event of extended power loss to a facility, certain precautionary measures should be taken depending on the geographical location and environment of the facility:

- (a) Unnecessary electrical equipment and appliances should be turned off if power restoration would surge causing damage to electronics and sensitive equipment.
- (b) Facilities with freezing temperatures should turn off and drain the following lines in the event of a long-term power loss.
 - (i) Fire sprinkler system
 - (ii) Standpipes
 - (iii) Potable water lines
 - (iv) Toilets
- (c) Add propylene-glycol to drains to prevent traps from freezing.
- (d) Equipment that contains fluids that may freeze due to long-term exposure to freezing temperatures should be moved to heated areas, drained of liquids, or provided with auxiliary heat sources.

Upon Restoration of heat and power:

- (a) Electronic equipment should be brought up to ambient temperatures before energizing to prevent condensation from forming on circuitry.
- (b) Fire and potable water piping should be checked for leaks from freeze damage after the heat has been restored to the facility and the water is turned back on.

Active Shooter and Workplace Violence

Profile of an Active Shooter: An Active Shooter is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area, typically using firearms.

How to respond when an Active Shooter is in your vicinity:

- (a) Evacuate
 - (i) Have an escape route and plan in mind
 - (ii) Leave your belongings behind
- (b) Hideout
 - (i) Act with physical aggression and throw items at the active shooter
 - (ii) Block entry to your hiding place and lock doors
- (c) Take action
 - (i) As a last resort and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to incapacitate the active shooter
 - (ii) Block entry to your hiding place and lock doors

CALL 911 WHEN IT IS SAFE TO DO SO

How you should react when law enforcement arrives:

- (a) Remain calm and follow officers' instructions
- (b) Immediately raise hands and spread fingers
- (c) Avoid making quick movements toward officers such as attempting to hold on to them for safety
- (d) Avoid pointing, screaming, and/or yelling
- (e) Do not stop to ask officers for help or directions when evacuating. Just proceed in the direction from which the officers entered the premises.

Information you should provide to law enforcement:

- (a) Location of active shooter
- (b) Number of shooters, if more than one
- (c) Physical description of shooter(s)
- (d) Number and type of weapon(s)
- (e) Number of potential victims at the location

Bomb Threats

Phone Bomb Threat

- (a) Stay calm - do not alarm others.
- (b) Notify your supervisor who will report the threat to law enforcement by CALLING 911. Make the call if the supervisor is not present.
- (c) Decisions to evacuate the building will be made by law enforcement personnel.

Written Bomb Threat

- (a) Remain calm and leave the message where it is found.
- (b) Do not handle the document any more than necessary to preserve fingerprints and other evidence.
- (c) Do not alarm others.
- (d) Notify your supervisor who will report the threat to law enforcement by CALLING 911. Make the call if the supervisor is not present.
- (e) Do not give information to anyone except a supervisor and law enforcement personnel.

Persons With Disabilities

Employee and Supervisor Responsibilities

(a) If you are an employee with a disability, there are critical steps you should take to help ensure that you will be safe during an emergency. First, inform your supervisor if you require assistance in the event of an evacuation. Second, work with your supervisor to develop a plan to ensure your safe evacuation in the event of an emergency. If you do not wish to share your needs with your supervisor, you should review the procedures to be followed in an emergency situation affecting your assigned facility and familiarize yourself with your evacuation route and assembly area.

(b) If you are a supervisor, you are responsible for reviewing your facility's EAP with all employees under your supervision, including those with disabilities, to ensure that each employee clearly understands the procedures that must be followed during an emergency event. Be proactive in developing emergency plans to meet the needs of employees with a disability. You should also include your employees with disabilities in the decision-making process when selecting special equipment and developing evacuation procedures in collaboration with your building managers.

Procedures

Options for disability evacuation include:

(a) Shelter in Place

(b) Evacuation Chair or Other Assistive Device

(c) An evacuation chair or escape chair is a lightweight wheelchair used to evacuate a physically disabled person from an area of danger, such as a burning building. The chair is designed to allow an attendant to transfer the person downstairs more safely than could be done with a normal wheelchair. Such chairs may be folded to a small size and stowed in much the same manner as other firefighting equipment such as fire hoses and fire extinguishers.

(d) Two-person Carry

(i) This is a way to carry a person to safety with the assistance of a partner. The two assistants link arms to form a backrest and grip wrists to form a seat.

Please remember, when making decisions regarding the best way to evacuate individuals with disabilities from your building, you should work closely with your local emergency response personnel and their safety specialists.

Item 5C



Event: Deep South Lax Recruits Showcase (November 22-23, 2025)

Amount Requested:

2025: \$30,000 (\$20,000 (grant) + \$10,000 (500 verified room nights))

2026: \$25,000 (\$10,000 (grant) + \$15,000 (750 verified room nights))

2027: \$30,000 (\$10,000 (grant) + \$20,000 (1,000 verified room nights))

Criteria for Evaluation of Applications: New Event Grant Program

- I. Commitment to the Expansion of Tourism in Highlands County: **15**
 - II. Soundness of Proposed Event
 - a. Objective Worksheet: **5**
 - b. Additional Funding Sources/Budget: **10**
 - c. Out of County Advertising/Marketing Plan: **10**
 - III. Stability & Management Capacity
 - a. Digital Presence: **10**
 - b. Event History: **5**
 - c. Visitor Survey: **0**
 - IV. Quality of Proposed Event: **5**
- Bonus Points: **0**

TOTAL SCORE: 60 (eligible for 75% of requested base funding)

To be eligible for maximum funding, scores must be at least 85. Scores of 50 or less will not be eligible for funding. Scores from 55-80 will be eligible for 75% of requested funds.

Staff recommendation/suggested motion:

Move to approve the grant funding request from Florida Prep Lacrosse for the Deep South Lax Recruits Showcase as a three-year New Event Grant, with funding amounts as follows:

- Year 1 (2025): Up to \$22,500 total— including up to \$15,000 based on the scoring of the application, and up to an additional \$7,500 based on verified room nights (up to 375 verified room nights at \$20 per room night).
- Year 2 (2026): Up to \$22,500 total— including up to \$7,500 based on the scoring of the application, and up to an additional \$15,000 based on verified room nights (up to 750 verified room nights at \$20 per room night).
- Year 3 (2027): Up to \$27,500 total— including up to \$7,500 based on the scoring of the application, and up to an additional \$20,000 based on verified room nights (up to 1,000 verified room nights at \$20 per room night).

All grant funds are reimbursable, and may be used for the following expenses: facility rental, event staff, event insurance, event equipment, promotional materials both digital and marketing featuring the Visit Sebring logo, and Jerseys and Trophies/Medals featuring the Visit Sebring logo.

Funding to come from Cost Center 5305 – Marketing & Events.

APPLICATION

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

The application **must be completely filled out**. Not Applicable or N/A should be marked as appropriate. Refer to

Copies of the following items must be attached to your application:

- List of Applicant’s current Officers and/or Board members (if applicable)
- Applicant’s W-9 tax form for post-Event payment
- Overall & detailed Marketing Plan for the Event. This plan must outline product (event); market position/competitive analysis; target audience; target markets; marketing goals, objectives and tactics; market strategy; budget and evaluation metrics.
- Business plan outlining how the re-occurring event will increase out-of-county attendees each year
- Example of proposed Visitor/Attendee Survey

Please note: All final paperwork as outlined in the application must be submitted to the TDC **within 60 days of the conclusion of the Event**. The request for reimbursement will be considered incomplete until all of the required forms are submitted to the TDC.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY TDC NEW EVENT FUNDING REQUEST APPLICATION

Amount Requested from TDC:

Year 1: \$ <u>30,000</u>	(\$ <u>20,000</u> Base + \$ <u>10,000</u> from <u>500</u> room nights at \$20/night)
Year 2: \$ <u>25,000</u>	(\$ <u>10,000</u> Base + \$ <u>15,000</u> from <u>750</u> room nights at \$20/night)
Year 3: \$ <u>30,000</u>	(\$ <u>10,000</u> Base + \$ <u>20,000</u> from <u>1,000</u> room nights at \$20/night)

I. General Information

1. Name of Applicant: Florida Prep Lacrosse
2. Name of Event: Deep South Lax Recruits Showcase
3. Contact person: Tom West
4. Contact person e-mail: tom@floridapreplax.com
5. Complete address of Applicant: 304 Marsh Cove Dr, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
6. Cell phone: 386-931-8503
7. Applicant’s Chief Official/Event Coordinator: Tom West
Title: Director
Address if different from above:
Cell phone:
Email:
8. Has Event ever received funding from the TDC? Yes No
a. If yes – list years and amounts:
9. Amount Applicant is requesting for the Event/Project
a. Year 1: \$ 30,000 ; Year 2: \$ 25,000 ; Year 3: \$ 30,000
10. Intended use of funds: (Refer to page 3 & 4 – Eligible and Ineligible Uses of Funds)

II. Details about Applicant: (describe your business or organization)

We are a youth lacrosse organization that is looking to bring tourism to Highlands County by teaching young men the game of life through the game of lacrosse.

III. Schedule of Event: (can provide in separate attachment/document if needed)

November 22: 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM
 November 23: 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM

IV. Event Specific Information

1. Event name: Deep South Lax Recruits Showcase
2. Type of event: Showcase
3. Is this event an elimination tournament? No
4. Dates of Event: Nov 22-23, 2025
5. Location of Event: Lake June Park
6. Event Website: www.floridapreplax.com
7. Event Social Media Handles/Pages: @floridapreplax
8. Event Admission Price (if applicable): NA
9. Event/Project promoter (if other than Applicant):
 1. Name of promoter:
 2. Company name:
 3. Contact name:
 4. Address:
 5. Phone:
 6. Email:
 7. Website:

V. Economic Impact

1. Please complete the table below.

Category	Type	# of Adult	# of Youth
Total # Expected Participants (competitors, coaches, trainers, officials, etc.)	Out-of-State		
	In-State & Staying Overnight		800
	Day Trip		
Total # Expected Fans (family, friends, etc.)	Out-of-State		
	In-State & Staying Overnight	800	
	Day Trip		
Total # Expected Media	Out-of-State		
	In-State & Staying Overnight	15	
	Day Trip		

2. What is the GUARANTEED MINIMUM NUMBER OF PAID ROOM NIGHTS the Event will bring to Sebring/Highlands County? (This is the minimum number of rooms that must be captured by the Event and documented by submitting the Room Night Certification Form within 60 days of the conclusion of the Event. The TDC reserves the right to reduce the reimbursement amount should the Event fail to meet this minimum room night guarantee.)

Number of Room Nights: 500

3. What is the GUARANTEED MINIMUM NUMBER OF EVENT ATTENDEES? (Please answer each question below or your application will be deemed incomplete).
1. Number of attendees: 800
 2. How many/what percentage will be traveling to the event from outside the county? 95%+
 3. How will you document the attendees and the out-of-county percentage? Through registrations
 4. Will you be providing the TDC with attendee contact information? We can
4. If event has been held in another destination previously, please provide the previous year's event information (if applicable):

Previous Event or Project:
 Date:
 Location:
 Total Room Nights:
 Contact Name/Phone:
 Economic Impact (if available):
 Funding amount awarded and funding entity (if any):

EVENT BUDGET SUMMARY

EVENT INCOME

Visit Sebring cannot be the sole source of income. Please list all Event income sources, types and amounts, including grants, sponsorships, registration fees, and in-kind services provided from public agencies, such as Police Department, Fire Rescue, etc. Please designate hard dollars versus in-kind.

Income Source & Type (i.e. Publix Sponsorship or Attendee Registration Fees)	Income Amount (or In-Kind Amount)
Registration Fees	\$20,000
Visit Sebring/TDC Funding Request	\$ 30,000
TOTAL INCOME ALL SOURCES	\$ 50,000

EVENT EXPENSES

Provide an itemized summary of all expenses, then indicate those which are intended use of TDC funds at the bottom of this page. Please be as detailed as possible, including intended media outlets, promotional materials, etc. and the dollar amount that will be expended (tentatively) for each category. This chart will reflect the total amount of the grant you have requested. Use additional sheets if necessary.

Expense Type (Facility Rental, Event Speakers, Signage, Insurance, etc.)	Expense Amount
Equipment Transportation	\$1,000
Tryout jerseys (with Visit Sebring logo)	\$4,000
Staffing	\$5,000
Insurance	\$1,000
Promotional Material both digital and print	\$5,000
Signage (with Visit Sebring)	\$1,000
Facility Rental	\$1,000
Awards	\$1,000
Officials	\$2,000
Lodging	\$6,000
Balls	\$1,500
TOTAL EVENT EXPENSES	\$ 28,500
Intended Use of Tourist Development Tax Funds (provide details)	Amount
Line items above minus lodging	\$22,500
TOTAL TDC EXPENSES	\$ 22,500

Grant Application Checklist

Please initial next to each item and fill in the blanks below. This list must accompany your grant application.

Initials

 TW This application is being submitted at least four months (120 days) prior to the event start.

Date of Event: NOV 22-23
Date of Application: OCT 1

 TW I understand that the reimbursement request must be completed and submitted to the Tourism Office with all back up and supporting material no later than 60 days after the event ends, which will be on _____ (date 60 days after event ends).

 TW I will obtain the signatures of the organization's President & Secretary on the proposed grant contract by _____. (date one week after the application is submitted to and accepted by the Tourism Office)

 TW I understand that the "Visit Sebring" logo must appear in any print advertisements that are funded by the TDC. For digital ads, the "Visit Sebring" logo must either be featured on the advertisement or on website/landing page linked to the ad or the ad must link to the TDC's website, VisitSebring.com. I will also use the #VisitSebring hashtag on at least one event social media post.

 TW I have included an IRS **W-9 Form** and a copy of the Florida Division of Corporations form with the application.

 TW I understand that someone representing this grant application must be available at the TDC meeting when it considers the application for funding or the application will not be considered.

 TW I understand that no expenses incurred before the TDC recommends approval of the grant application will be reimbursed under any circumstances. I also understand that no funding has been approved until the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) approves execution of the Grant Contract and that no expenditures will be reimbursed if the BOCC does not approve execution of the Grant Contract.

 TW I understand that reimbursements following the event will only be made for itemized, authorized expenses approved by the BOCC in the fully executed Grant Contract.

 TW I understand each reimbursement request must include copies of paid invoices, screenshots of digital ads, copies of the ad/tear sheets, invoice for reimbursement amount to the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners, copy of front and back of cleared checks paying for advertising, and outreach figures identifying the

number of people your ad reached outside Highlands County and inside Highlands County.

TW I understand Reimbursement will only be provided at a rate of \$20/verified room night. And all funds will only be reimbursed after the event is complete.

TW I agree that the funds I receive will ONLY be used in accordance with the eligible and ineligible uses of funds. (pages 3-4)

TW I understand that I am required to submit a **Room Night Certification Form** from each participating hotel in order to track the number of hotel room nights the Event produces in order to receive funding. (page 8)

TW I have reviewed the **Highlands County Special Event Permit Flow Chart** and will proceed with any required county permits. (Contact: Rachel Barry; (863) 402-6638)

TW I have included a list of my business/organization's current Officers and/or Board members (if applicable) with the application.

TW I will provide the Visit Sebring office with a Certificate of Insurance (COI) naming "Highlands County Tourism Office" as additionally insured no later than 15 days before the event begins. If required, I will also provide the Visit Sebring office with a Certificate of Insurance (COI) naming "Florida Sports Foundation" as additionally insured no later than 15 days before the event begins.

TW I have included a detailed **Business Plan** for the Event that outlines how the event will increase out-of-county visitors each year.

TW I have included a detailed **Marketing Plan** for the Event.

TW I have included a sample **Visitor/Attendee Survey** for the Event, and will submit survey results to the Visit Sebring office no later than 60 days after the event takes place.

TW As an authorized representative of Applicant, I (the person submitting this application) acknowledge that I am also the person required to execute the contract and prepare the **Post-Event Report** (page 9-10) for the Event within 60 days after completion of event to receive payment. This report should include: total number of participants, total number of coaches, spectators, staff, media, etc., information regarding where attendee came from, feedback about destination (what did they like/not like).

TW I also acknowledge that I am required to submit documentation that confirms my authority to act on behalf of the Applying Organization, such as a corporate resolution or a copy of a record from the State of Florida Division of Corporations that lists me (the person submitting the Application) as an officer who has statutory authority to represent and bind the Applying Organization.

TW I acknowledge that any material made or received by Highlands County in connection with my request for Program funding is a public record and subject to public inspection unless there is a legislatively created exemption that makes it confidential and not subject to disclosure. I acknowledge that I cannot dictate to Highlands County what material is open to public inspection or the circumstances under which material is deemed confidential.

 TW I understand that as a requirement to receiving funding, I will execute a release to permit Highlands County to photo and/or record the Event and I must make Event invitees aware of this and make the signing of a release a requirement to participate in the Event.

 TW I understand that all funds received are subject to audit by the Highlands County Clerk of the Court – Internal Auditor or other representative as Highlands County may designate.

 TW I understand that this event may require a Highlands County Special Event Permit, and it is up to me to complete that permit request and pay the required permit fee.

Authorized Agent: Tom West

Title: Owner *Date:* 10/10/25

Authorized Agent Signature: Tom West

SMART Objective Worksheet

Draft Goal: Deep South Lacrosse Showcase

Definition	Your Objective
Specific <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do I want to accomplish with this event? Why? • What is the desired result? 	Bring tourism to Highlands County and help introduce people to the area, as well as create a bigger lacrosse following in the county.
Measurable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you quantify (numerically or descriptively) success? • How will you measure progress? 	Success will be through registration numbers which we can measure through our own platform.
Achievable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What skills are needed? • What resources are necessary? • What factors impact goal achievement? • Does the goal require the right amount of effort? 	Understanding of lacrosse, with lacrosse equipment, relationships, and desire to be a part of the Florida Crabs are vital to make this achievable.
Relevant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the goal aligned with the overall mission or strategy to increase economic activity in Highlands County? 	Yes. We will be bringing tourism through sports.
Time-bound <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much time will be available to complete this SMART Objective? • Is the deadline realistic? 	We are already up and running for registrations so the deadline is realistic.

Final Goal:
Create the largest lacrosse showcase in Florida.

CERTIFICATION OF APPLICANT

Applicant has reviewed this Application for Funds from the Highlands County Tourist Development Council. Applicant is in full agreement with the information contained herein. To the best of Applicant's knowledge, the information contained in this Application and its attachments is accurate and complete.

Applicant Name: Tom West

Date: 10/10/2025

By: Tom West
(Signature)

Its: Owner
(Title)

STATE OF FLORIDA
COUNTY OF _____

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me by means of physical presence or online notarization this ____ day of _____, 20__ by _____ (name) as _____ (title) for _____ (applicant, name of party on behalf of whom instrument was executed).

(NOTARY SEAL)

(Signature of Notary Public-State of Florida)

(Name of Notary Typed, Printed, or Stamped)

Personally Known _____ OR Produced Identification _____

Type of Identification Produced

Marketing Plan

Objectives

- Sell out X player spots (e.g., 300) by 8 weeks prior.
- Fill hotel room blocks to 70–90% for event weekend.
- Attract 50+ collegiate coaches/scouts.
- Achieve 25% first-time visitors to Highlands County (surveyed).

KPIs

- Registrations per week
- Hotel room nights booked via event codes
- Website traffic & conversion rate
- Coach confirmations
- Sponsorship commitments
- Social media engagement & ad CTR

Target audiences & messaging

1. **Primary:** High school players (14–18) and their parents in Southeast U.S. — message: “High-level recruiting exposure, college coaches in attendance, highlight film opportunity.”
2. **Secondary:** College coaches & scouts — message: “Concentrated talent pool; efficient scouting weekend.”
3. **Tertiary / Local tourism audience:** Families looking for a weekend combining sports + outdoor recreation + murals — message: “Bring the family: fishing, mural tours, great local food.”

Tone: Performance-focused for players/coaches; family-friendly lifestyle for companions.

Channel strategy & tactics

1. Owned channels

- Event website landing page with coach list, travel guide, hotel blocks, and family activities package (mural tour, fishing voucher).
- Email automation: segmented flows for players, parents, coaches, and local partners.

2. Paid digital

- Facebook/Instagram geo-targeted campaigns (Florida, GA, AL, SC, NC) promoting early-bird registration and coach attendance.
- Google Search ads targeting: “lacrosse showcase Florida,” “high school lacrosse showcase,” “college lacrosse recruiting showcase.”
- Retargeting ads to website visitors with urgency 8–2 weeks before.

3. Organic & community

- Partnerships with regional lacrosse clubs to share event; offer coach referrals a discount.
- LinkedIn outreach and personalized email to college coaches and recruiting coordinators (build a prioritized coach list and make direct asks with value proposition—aggregated stats, player list, video options).

4. PR & earned media

- Press release to Visit Sebring, Highlands County media, local newspapers, and statewide sports outlets.
- Pitch lifestyle angle (family travel + murals + sports tourism) to travel writers and regional lifestyle outlets.

5. Local activation

- Create a “Bring the Family” package: discounted mural tour vouchers, priority fishing trip bookings, and local restaurant coupon book included in registration confirmation.

- Host a free mural walking tour on Saturday evening or a “family picnic & live music” to engage locals and families.

6. Sponsorship & cross-promotion

- Offer tiered sponsor packages (title, presenting, field sponsor, hospitality sponsor). Include hotel partnership where a sponsor subsidizes a hospitality tent.
- Cross-promote with hotels: featured in confirmation emails & hotel front-desk flyers.

7. College recruiting product

- Offer a paid optional player highlight reel + recruit packet for college coaches.
- Provide a coach portal with downloadable rosters, stats, and video links (value to coaches drives attendance).

Marketing budget (example allocation — \$20k)

- Creative & website micro-site: \$2,500
- Paid social ads (FB/IG): \$6,000
- Google search & retargeting: \$4,000
- Email & CRM tools: \$1,500
- PR & local media partnerships: \$2,000
- Collateral (signage, brochures, mural tour vouchers): \$1,500
- Contingency & promos (early-bird discounts / coach incentives): \$2,500

6-month marketing timeline (high-level)

- **T-24 to T-12 weeks:** Secure venue, hotels, TDC/Visit Sebring partnership. Build website and registration. Announce date + early-bird pricing. Start coach outreach.

- **T-12 to T-8 weeks:** Paid ads live; email blast to lacrosse lists and club partners. Lock sponsors.
- **T-8 to T-4 weeks:** Retargeting ramp, press pitch, finalize mural/family partner packages. Confirm coach list publicly.
- **T-4 to T-1 weeks:** Urgency push (sold-out warnings), local influencer invites, travel & logistics emails to registrants.
- **Event week & weekend:** Onsite hospitality, collect coach feedback, run family activations, collect data (hotel pickups, surveys).
- **Post-event (T+1–8 weeks):** Economic impact report to TDC & sponsors; photo/video highlight reel; early dates for next year.

Measurement & reporting

- **Pre-event:** Track registrations, hotel block pick-up, coach RSVPs, ad CTR & CPA.
- **Onsite:** Distribute short email or SMS survey to families about stay length, spending, and satisfaction. Log hotel night count via promo codes.
- **Post-event:** Create a short “event impact report” (rooms booked, estimated spend, photos, coach quotes) to share with TDC, chamber, and sponsors to secure next-year funding.

Quick promotional package idea (example)

- “Showcase + Stay” package: 2-night hotel, mural tour voucher, \$10 restaurant credit — sold as add-on at registration.
- Coach pass: free for first 50 college coaches that register (collect name + school), guaranteed rosters.

Final recommendations & next steps

1. **Meet Visit Sebring / TDC** now to explore co-op ad funding and hotel introductions. (They have events and tourism infrastructure to support and may fund marketing that proves room nights.) [Visit Sebring+1](#)

2. **Lock hotels** with competitive room blocks and unique family packages.
3. **Build coach outreach list** (target 100+ college programs) and create a short 1-page coach packet.
4. **Allocate a marketing test budget** (\$5k) to validate ad channels (FB vs Google) then scale to the planned budget.
5. **Prepare a simple post-event economic impact report** template to show the county/TDC immediate ROI.

Business Plan

Opportunity: Use the Deep South Lacrosse Recruiting Showcase as an anchor event to attract out-of-market players, families, and college coaches to Highlands County (Lake Placid / Sebring), generating lodging nights, restaurant and retail spend, and raising awareness of the area's outdoor, arts, and fishing tourism assets. Highlands County visitors spent hundreds of millions in recent years, showing a strong tourism base to build from.

Primary goals (year 1):

- Drive **1,200–2,000 incremental visitor nights** tied to the event (players + families + coaches).
- Increase offseason lodging occupancy in Sebring/Lake Placid for the event weekend by **30–50%**.
- Generate **\$200k–\$500k** in direct local economic impact (lodging, dining, retail) in year 1.

Timeframe: planning begun 9–12 months before event; primary marketing 6 months prior with heavy push 8–4 weeks out.

Market analysis & strategic advantages

1. **Geographic access:** Lake Placid is within ~2 hours' drive of Orlando International and ~1.5–2+ hours from other regional airports; that makes it driveable for many Florida/SE teams while still underserved for lacrosse-specific showcases. (Use commercial airports + local drive markets).
2. **Existing tourism assets:** Lake Placid markets itself as “Town of Murals,” and Highlands County is known for large lakes (e.g., Lake Istokpoga) and outdoor recreation — assets attractive to families that can extend stay beyond the game. Leverage mural tours and lakeside recreation to package with the event.
3. **Local tourism infrastructure:** There are multiple hotels (Holiday Inn Express, Wyndham/Ramada, local inns), and Sebring's Visit Sebring has an events/tourism apparatus and a Tourist Development Council that manages TDT for promotion—use these partners for discounts, promotions, and cooperative advertising.
4. **Sports tourism trend:** Sports events reliably bring midweek and shoulder-season visitation and create “heads in beds” that fund local TDT marketing—an ideal match for

Business Plan

Highlands County's TDC priorities.

Business model & revenue streams

Primary event revenue:

- **Player registration fees** (e.g., \$100–\$150/player)
- **Coach & scout passes** (flat fee or complimentary for target list)
- **Sponsorships** (title, apparel, food/beverage, local partners)
- **Vendor fees & concessions** (local restaurants, gear vendors)
- **Merchandise & add-ons** (tournaments photos, highlight reels)

Secondary tourism revenue (captured by local partners):

- **Lodging** (hotel nights)
- **F&B, retail, gas, attractions**

Fields & Facilities

- Secure 2–4 playable fields with restrooms, parking, and sideline seating (municipal park or school district fields). Consider back-to-back scheduling to maximize game density.
- Rent or partner for portable goals, nets, scoreboards, and tents.

Staffing & Services

- Referees / evaluators / coach directors (paid stipends).
- Athletic trainer / EMS on site.
- Check-in staff and results/roster admin.

Business Plan

- Volunteer corps (local high school helpers) for logistics.

Housing & Transportation

- Block hotel rooms at Holiday Inn Express, Ramada/Wyndham, local inns, and Sebring properties. Negotiate attrition clauses and complimentary rooms for tournament staff.
- Shuttle service options from hotels to fields if needed.

Permitting & Insurance

- Event liability insurance and field permits (county, school district).
- Coordinate with the Tourist Development Council for possible grant or marketing support.

Fan & Family Experience

- Family-friendly activations: mural tour voucher, fishing charters discounts, lake boat rental coupons, local food truck row, youth clinic.

Risk analysis & mitigation

- **Low registration:** early-bird pricing, targeted outreach to top feeder markets (Orlando, Tampa, Charlotte, Jacksonville), and bringing coaches in for free/discount to ensure recruiting value.
- **Weather:** backup fields, clear refund/transfer policies, indoor gym backup if available.
- **Accommodation shortfall:** expand room blocks to Sebring and nearby towns; arrange RV/camp options.
- **Insufficient hotel pick up (TDT metrics):** report projected economic impact to TDC and request marketing support or small grant.

Item 5D



Staff recommendation/suggested motion:

Move to approve the TDC Grant Policies as proposed.



Tourism Marketing Assistance Grant Funding Program Policy

This program is administered by the Highlands County Tourist Development Council (“TDC”), which is an advisory council to the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners).

Approved by TDC on October 30, 2025

Approved by the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners on November 4, 2025, through Resolution No.: 25-26-029

POLICY:

OVERVIEW

The Tourism Marketing Assistance Program (“TMAP”) is designed to enable tourism-related businesses in Highlands County to enhance their out-of-county marketing opportunities to potential tourists, leveraged with the *Visit Sebring* destination brand. The goals of the TMAP are to increase awareness of tourism attractions and offerings in Highlands County, enrich visitor experience, encourage repeat visitations through local business promotions, inspire brand adoption, and support tangible marketing materials highlighting tourism activities for Highlands County tourism partners.

The TMAP is meant to assist site-based businesses such as attractions, outfitters, or those relating to art, heritage/history and culture, that provide service to visitors beyond events. By the nature of their existence, applicants for this grant should attract visitation to the County or offer reasons for visitors to extend their stay in Highlands County during the months of April through December.

This is a reimbursable expense grant, for which the awarded funds will be distributed in accordance with the Criteria, Funding Request Level, and Eligible Use of Funds Sections below.

Grantees receiving funds through this Program are expected to:

- Assume a leadership and advocacy role in the community to advance tourism development by:
 - attending TDC stakeholder meetings;
 - sharing knowledge and feedback with the Highlands County Tourism office; and
 - collaborating with the TDC and local tourism partners in destination-wide efforts that strengthen Highlands County’s tourism industry.
- Enhance the visitor experience and encourage repeat visitations through promotions and dissemination of information about tourism offerings available in Highlands County.
- Participate in cooperative promotional efforts with the TDC, where applicable.
- Provide data showing the Grantee’s tourism development efforts during non-peak tourism months (April through December).

Tourism Marketing Assistance Grant Criteria

The following requirements apply to a grant for Tourism Marketing Assistance:

1. Upon awarding of the grant, the Grantee must enter into a Highlands County Grant Agreement, which will incorporate the requirements stated herein.
2. The Grant Applicant must be a business or organization located in Highlands County that provides services to visitors which either attract visitation to Highlands County or offer reasons for visitors to extend their stay in Highlands County during the months of April through December. The Grant Applicant must be providing these services currently or during the months of April through December.
3. The Grant Applicant must be authorized to transact business in the State of Florida in accordance with Florida law.
4. The Grant Applicant must provide a current IRS form W-9.
5. The Grant Applicant's tourism-based facility(ies), programs or services must be available to visitors during the months of April through December.
6. The Grant Applicant must have a dedicated administrator responsible for managing the business or organization.
7. It is the responsibility of the Grant Applicant to show proof of eligibility. Grant Applications should also show how the business or organization brings visitors to Highlands County throughout the year. Businesses or organizations receiving TMAP grant funding must be able to show positive results of grant dollars spent (e.g. Increased out-of-town visitation, increased website traffic, etc.) with specific data. Data should represent true visitors/tourists to the destination and shall not include seasonal or permanent residents.
8. Businesses or Organizations receiving TMAP grant funding shall provide financial and management oversight to assure compliance with TMAP guidelines, effectiveness of marketing outcomes, and accuracy of reimbursement requests.
9. Funding shall be provided as reimbursement for approved actual expenditures. To be eligible for payment, the Grantee must submit a detailed Final Report, including specific information about marketing placements (inclusive of the *Visit Sebring* logo) and results, additional dollars spent, copies of invoices, and proof of payment. Proof of payment may be submitted in the form of a vendor receipt and a front and back copy of cleared check or credit card receipt. Cash receipts will not be accepted for reimbursements. The Final Report, including all required documentation must be submitted to the Highlands County Tourism department within thirty (30) days after the completion of the TDC-approved marketing campaign that is the subject of the Grant.
 - a. The Final Report requirements will be provided by the Highlands County Tourism department and may include but not be limited to: a Goals Outcome Report, Full Report of Marketing Campaign Results, Attendance Metrics, copies/samples of advertising or promotional materials, and other supporting documents as requested by Highlands County.
10. The Grantee will only be reimbursed for expenditures that are pre-approved by Highlands County Tourism staff upon submission of the receipt showing payment in full.
11. After the awarding of the grant, any changes regarding the use of grant funds must be approved in writing by Highlands County Tourism staff **before any funds are expended**. All requests must be submitted in writing in advance of the proposed change.
12. Prior to reimbursement, the Grantee will be required to provide specific information about how out-of-county visitation data is collected. Acceptable methods may include proof of

admissions ticket sales, zip code data, etc. to track visitation. The Grantee will be expected to allow a representative from the Highlands County Tourism team to have access to survey a sample of visitors as mutually agreed upon by the TDC and the Grantee. This can be accomplished via brief on-site interviews, email, or website questionnaires.

13. Grant funds must be used solely for marketing projects intended specifically to bring visitors from out-of-county (see the Eligible Use of Funds section below). Any use of grant funds for items that are not listed herein or not approved by the TDC will result in a denial of reimbursement for those items. Failure to comply with the required grant reporting will impact future funding decisions and allocations.
14. Grant funding is to be expended only within the timeframe outlined in the Grant Application and/or Grant Agreement.
15. In order to qualify for reimbursement with grant funds:
 - a. All marketing materials, including digital advertisements, must include the current *Visit Sebring* logo. Additionally, the current *Visit Sebring* logo must appear on the Grantee's website for the entirety of the funding period.. Logos can be requested by sending an email to: info@visitsebring.com
 - b. Social and digital posts MUST tag "@VisitSebring"
 - c. Audio spots (radio/podcast) of thirty (30) seconds or more must include the following credits:
 - i. OUT-OF-AREA: "In partnership with VisitSebring.com"
 - ii. LOCAL: "In partnership with the Highlands County Tourist Development Council, an advisory board to the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners"
16. Grantees must agree to provide access to Highlands County Tourism staff to conduct on-site and/or email surveys/data collection.
17. Grantees must include the *Visit Sebring* logo in all promotional materials and activities supported by this grant. All printed and digital materials, signage or advertising for which reimbursement is sought must contain the current approved *Visit Sebring* logo, as well as the words: "Funding provided by the Highlands County Tourist Development Council."
18. To be considered for this grant, applicants must attend the TMAP Application Workshop prior to submitting an application. If the applicant cannot attend one of the TMAP Application Workshop sessions, Highlands County Tourism staff will make efforts to accommodate a virtual attendance option, if feasible.
19. Grantees must have a current listing on the Highlands County Tourism website (VisitSebring.com). If the Grant Applicant is not on the website at the time of submission of the Grant Application, the Grant Applicant must, in its Grant Application, advise of the same to ensure this requirement is met prior to funding approval.
20. Grantees will be required to provide to Highlands County a General Liability Insurance Certificate, naming "Highlands County" as an additional insured. This required Certificate of Insurance must be submitted to the Highlands County Tourism office within fourteen (14) calendar days after the Highlands County Grant Agreement is fully executed by both parties. Insurance is an absolute requirement. No other insurance policies will be considered as a substitute for the General Liability policy.

TMAP FUNDING REQUEST LEVELS

There is a maximum funding level of \$5,000.00 per applicant per County Fiscal Year¹. The final funding recommendation will be determined at the sole and absolute discretion of the TDC. The TDC has the right to place the application at a lower funding level without providing justification for its decision. All grant funding requests will be submitted as a recommendation by the TDC to the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners (“BCC”) or its authorized designee, which makes the final decision. The Highlands County Administrator is authorized by the BCC to approve or disapprove grant funding requests that do not exceed \$50,000.00. Periodically, the Highlands County Administrator shall notify the BCC, by way of an informational agenda item, of any grant funding requests so approved. Failure of the County Administrator to notify the BCC of an approved grant funding request shall not in any way invalidate such approval.

Exceptions for Extraordinary Circumstances

The TDC may recommend increasing funding in extraordinary circumstances. These extraordinary circumstances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for consideration and recommendation to the BCC or its authorized designee, which makes the final decision.

ELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS

Note: For the purposes of this grant, "out-of-county marketing" is defined as marketing efforts that target an audience of which fifty-one percent (51%) or more reside outside of Highlands County.

TMAP grant funds MAY ONLY be used for...

- Out-of-county marketing consisting of digital marketing and e-marketing efforts such as online advertising, social media campaigns, search engine optimization, and e-mail marketing.
 - Digital marketing efforts are defined as: electronic billboards, streaming tv and radio commercials, search engine ads (SEO), pay-per-click campaigns (PPC), and in-app ads.
 - E-marketing efforts are defined as: website pop-ups, paid social media ads (e.g. boosting posts, targeted ads, sponsored content), influencer marketing, and creative design for email campaigns and blogs.
- The design, production and placement of out-of-county digital ads, television, radio, and billboard ads.
- Design and development of a new website designed to attract tourism to Highlands County, or enhancements to an existing website aimed at improving the visitor experience in Highlands County. If the grant funds are used for this purpose, the website must include all pertinent information necessary for an out-of-county visitor. *Note: See below regarding ineligible Website hosting fees.*
- Photography and video projects that support an out-of-county marketing campaign approved by Highlands County Tourism. Any content must be shared with Highlands County with Highlands County receiving full rights of usage.
- Other – Eligible items not listed in the categories above, yet specifically approved by the TDC at the time of the approval of the Grant Application.

¹ If an Applicant has multiple sub-businesses which share a FEIN, the Applicant can apply for funding of up to \$5,000.00 for its primary eligible business. Any application for grant funding by a singular, eligible secondary business or organization will only be eligible for funding up to \$2,500.00.

INELIGIBLE USES OF FUNDS

TMAP grant funds MAY NOT be used for any of the following:

- Any marketing efforts that are only in-county or those using 50% or more of grant funds to target Highlands County residents
- Day-to-day social media/content management or operations support (e.g. hiring a third-party agency to post regularly and not for the specific purpose of the approved marketing campaign that is the subject of the Grant.)
- Print products, including travel guides, attraction maps, rack cards, brochures, printed newsletters, etc.
- Capital investments, asset development, or product enhancement
- Salary support or other expenses regarding personnel
- Strategic plan development
- Lobbying
- Public Relations/press releases
- Tradeshow registration fees, booth rentals/educational conferences, membership dues
- Travel costs (food, lodging, entertainment)
- Costs associated with any membership or volunteer program, including fundraising events
- Database development / ticket platforms / point of sale systems
- Market research to identify target markets (Highlands County Tourism can provide this upon request)
- Facility rental/insurance
- Purchase or rental of equipment or supplies
- Food or alcoholic beverages
- Items for resale, promotional items, or any costs associated with retail operations
- Operating costs (including web hosting and domain registration)
- Advertisements without recognition of the *Visit Sebring* logo
- Advertisements for programs, venues, attractions, etc. outside of Highlands County
- Any use not authorized by Florida Statute 125.0104



Facility Rental Fee Grant Funding Program Policy

*This program is administered by the Highlands County Tourist Development Council ("TDC"),
which is an advisory council to the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners*

Approved by TDC on October 30, 2025

*Approved by the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners on
November 4, 2025, through Resolution No.: 25-26-029*

POLICY:

OVERVIEW

Grant funding is available to organizations for Facility Rental Fees for Tourism-driving Events staged at Highlands County managed facilities that are designed to attract large numbers of visitors from outside Highlands County.

Consideration for grant funding is determined by the application's appeal to the TDC and can be awarded on a per-event basis, or on a multi-event basis, with the understanding that post-event performance measures from one event must be provided to the Highlands County Tourism office staff and deemed acceptable before funding will be provided for the next event.

Facility Rental Fee Grant Criteria

The following requirements apply to a grant for Facility Rental Fees for Tourism-driving Events staged on Highlands County managed properties any time between **April and December** that will increase out-of-county attendees each year:

1. Upon awarding of the grant, the Grantee must enter into a Highlands County Grant Agreement specific to the Event(s), which will incorporate the requirements stated herein.
2. Each Event must be at least a two-day event with at least one overnight (either night or early morning) component
3. The Event must have a minimum of one hundred (100) *actual* participants (the calculation of the required number of participants does not including travelling companions/spectators)
4. At least fifty one percent (51%) of Event participants must originate from outside of Highlands County. The Grantee must submit a list of all Event participants evidencing the fifty one percent (51%) requirement at least fifteen (15) days prior to the Event. Failure to provide this evidence will deem the Grantee in violation of this Grant Policy and will void any grant agreement between Highlands County and the Grantee.
5. This grant is not applicable to exclusive events such as weddings, family reunions, class reunions, birthday parties, etc.

6. Rental fees covered by this grant must originate from the Highlands County Parks and Facilities Department. Therefore, the Event venue must be a Highlands County owned or managed facility.
7. The *Visit Sebring* logo block must appear prominently in all advertising and publicity (written or electronic) for the Event.
8. Room nights reported for the Event must be from accommodations located within Highlands County.
9. Grant funding will be provided as an internal transfer of funds between the Highlands County Tourism department and the Highlands County Parks & Facilities department for the approved rental fee as provided in the Grant Application. The Event organizer will not directly receive any grant funding from Highlands County.
10. Additional rental fees and associated expenses incurred during or after the Event will be the responsibility of the Event organizer and will not be paid for with Highland County Tourism funds.
11. Any expenses incurred due to late cancellation or rescheduling of the Event (as provided for in the Highlands County Parks & Facility Department's Facility Use Agreement) are the responsibility of the Event organizer and will not be paid by Highlands County.
12. To be eligible for future event funding, the Grantee must submit completed post-Event reporting documentation as required by Highlands County Tourism staff not more than thirty (30) days after the Event concludes.
13. The required post-Event reporting documentation includes, but may not be limited to a written report and signed/verified Room Block Report(s)/Room Night Certification Form(s), reflecting the actual room nights generated in comparison to the initial room night guarantee indicated in the Grant Application submitted by the Grantee. It is the responsibility of the Grantee to provide proof of room nights generated by the Event; this is not the responsibility of Highlands County Tourism staff. Highlands County Tourism staff may confirm accuracy of the Room Night Verification Form at staff discretion. Any funds granted to Grantee will be subject to audit by the Highlands County Clerk of the Court – Internal Auditor or other representative the County may designate.
14. Failure to timely submit completed Room Block Report (s)/Room Night Certification Form(s) will result in disqualification for future financial support from Highlands County Tourism.
15. Prior to the Event, Grantee must provide to Highlands County Certificates of Insurance naming "Highlands County" as an additional insured for each policy listed below. The term of coverage must include not only all days of the Event, but set up days and take down days, as well. Required insurance coverages and amounts include but may not be limited to:
 - a. \$1,000,000 General Liability each occurrence
 - b. \$1,000,000 Automobile Liability (Combined Single Limit)
 - c. Workers Compensation with statutorily required limits. The policy must include Employer Liability coverage with limits not less than \$1,000,000 each occurrence, \$1,000,000 each employee, and \$500,000 policy limit for disease.

A request to be exempt from the requirements of the insurance requirements listed above must be submitted with the grant application. The request for exemption must include a detailed explanation justifying the request, and will be reviewed by Highlands County on a case by case basis.

16. Highlands County reserves the right to lend assistance or administer approved grant funds in the form of advertising, public relations, promotions or marketing programs directly or through an outside vendor on behalf of the Grantee.
17. Recognition of the *Visit Sebring* brand must be included where appropriate on all marketing materials for the Event, on the Grantee's website, and referred to in public relations activities.
18. Upon award of the grant, the Grantee must provide Highlands County with at least four (4) media passes for use by Highlands County Tourism staff to attend and cover the Event for the Highlands County Tourism's marketing and public relations purposes.
19. The Grantee is to have only one designated contact ("Designee") for the duration of the grant process. Designee is responsible for submitting all required documents, including the Facility Use Agreement provided by the Highlands County Parks & Facilities department and any follow up paperwork needed prior to the Event. Additionally, Designee will be responsible for executing the Highlands County Grant Agreement and providing a W-9 for the Grantee. Should the Designee change at any point during the grant process, written notification to the Highlands County Tourism office is required. Failure to provide notification will adversely affect funding.
20. Grant funds will be released only to the Highlands County Parks & Facilities department up to an amount approved by the TDC. Any additional expenses incurred before, during or after the event beyond what the TDC approves is the responsibility of the Grantee. If the fee to rent the facility increases after the Grant Application is approved, but before the Event, Highlands County will only pay the amount previously approved by the TDC; any overage is the responsibility of the Grantee and not that of Highlands County. If the fee to rent the facility decreases after the Grant Application is approved, but before the Event, Highlands County will only pay the required amount and any additional funding that was previously approved for the grant will be forfeited by Grantee.
21. After the awarding of the grant, any changes to the details of the Event (date, time, name of event, etc.) must be approved in writing by Highlands County Tourism. A request to change the date of the Event must be submitted to the Highlands County Tourism office ninety (90) days prior to the current approved date or the proposed new date (whichever is first). Highlands County Tourism staff is authorized to decide whether or not to approve one (1) date change for the Event. Any additional date change will require a vote by the TDC. All date changes will require an Amendment to the Grant Agreement to reflect the new date.
22. By submission of the Grant Application, the Grantee grants Highlands County and all of its employees, officers, contractors, subcontractors, volunteers, and agents (collectively referred to in this paragraph as "Highlands County representatives"), the right to use and reproduce any and all photographs, digital images, videos or recordings made at or made in relation to the Event, including those of Grantee's employees, volunteers, invitees, and those that contain Grantee's name, artwork,

logo or trademark. This include the right of Highlands County to copyright and/or use, reuse, publish, and republish photographic pictures, digital images, videos or recordings. Grantee affirms that it is the legal owner of any artwork, logo or trademark used by Grantee for the Event and acknowledges that Highlands County is relying on this representation and to the extent there is any claim by any third party against Highlands County or its representatives, Grantee will indemnify and hold Highlands County and its representatives harmless as to any such claim or damages arising from such claim. Grantee is required to grant Highlands County permission for the photographs, digital images, video, or recordings to be used in their entirety and/or edited versions as deemed necessary by Highlands County. Grantee accepts and understands those items will become the property of Highlands County and all rights to inspect or approve those items, as well as any royalties or other such compensation are waived by Grantee. Grantee further grants Highlands County permission to use the photographs, digital images, videotapes or recordings at any time in the future without provision of notice. Highlands County's use may include use for trade, commercial and advertising purposes, to promote the product or service of Highlands County, and to simply report happenings in Highlands County, and may include the use of items on Highlands County websites. Grantee shall inform its invitees of Highlands County's intentions and rights as described in this paragraph and Grantee shall obtain executed Release and Waiver forms regarding the same from all event participants.

FACILITY RENTAL FEE FUNDING REQUEST LEVELS

There is a maximum funding level of up to \$5,000 per event. The guaranteed number of room nights, attendees, or participants stated in the Grant Application will not guarantee the level of funding at which the grant for the Event may be approved. The final funding recommendation will be determined at the sole and absolute discretion of the TDC. The TDC has the right to place the application at a lower funding level without providing justification for its decision. All grant funding requests will be submitted as a recommendation by the TDC to the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners ("BCC") or its authorized designee, which makes the final decision. The Highlands County Administrator is authorized by the BCC to approve or disapprove grant funding requests that do not exceed \$50,000.00. Periodically, the Highlands County Administrator shall notify the BCC, by way of an informational agenda item, of any grant funding requests so approved. Failure of the County Administrator to notify the BCC of an approved grant funding request shall not in any way invalidate such approval.

Exceptions for Extraordinary Circumstances

The TDC may recommend increasing funding in extraordinary circumstances. These extraordinary circumstances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for consideration and recommendation to the BCC or its authorized designee, which makes the final decision.

ELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS

The grant funds are used to promote tourism within Highlands County by covering facility rental fees for tourism-driving events that take place at Highlands County managed facilities and are designed to attract large numbers of visitors from outside Highlands County.

INELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS

Any expenses other than approved facility rental fees for tourism-driving events that take place at Highlands County managed facilities.



High Impact Signature Event Grant Funding Program Policy

This program is administered by the Highlands County Tourist Development Council (“TDC”), which is an advisory council to the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners.

Approved by TDC on October 30, 2025

Approved by the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners on November 4, 2025, through Resolution No.: 25-26-029

POLICY:

OVERVIEW

Grant funding is available to organizations for High Impact Signature Events staged in Highlands County that are designed to attract large numbers of visitors from outside Highlands County and provide a significant brand promotion and awareness for *Visit Sebring*. Such an Event must generate a **minimum of 1,000 TOTAL verified room nights or at least 10,000 verified attendees with at least 30% of the verified attendees coming from outside Highlands County** to be considered for funding.

Consideration for grant funding is determined by the number of room nights, number of verified attendees, the overall economic impact the Event will bring to Highlands County, and the overall impact the marketing plan will bring to the *Visit Sebring* brand. This is a reimbursable expense grant, for which the awarded funds will be distributed based on one of the methodologies contained in the High Impact Signature Event Funding Request Levels section below.

High Impact Signature Event Grant Criteria

The following requirements apply to a grant for a High Impact Signature Event staged in Highlands County any time between **April and December** that attracts overnight visitors in Highlands County:

1. Upon awarding of the grant, the Grantee must enter into a Highlands County Grant Agreement specific to the Event, which will incorporate the requirements stated herein.
2. The Event must be at least a two-day event with at least one overnight (either night or early morning) component.
3. The Grant applicant must submit with the grant application a robust out-of-Highlands-county marketing plan incorporating the *Visit Sebring* brand.
4. Funding is not intended to support administrative costs. Funding is intended to support marketing and promotional efforts, venue/site rentals and costs directly related to hosting the Event, etc.
5. The *Visit Sebring* logo block must appear prominently in all advertising and publicity (written or electronic) for the Event.

6. Hotels/accommodations secured for the Event must be located within Highlands County.
7. Funding shall be provided as reimbursement for approved actual expenditures upon completion of the Event. The Grantee must provide proof of payment of approved expenditures. Proof of payment may be submitted in the form of a vendor receipt and a front and back copy of cleared check or credit card receipt. Cash receipts will not be accepted for reimbursements.
8. The Grantee will only be reimbursed for facility fees that are pre-approved and upon submission of the receipt showing payment in full.
9. To be eligible for payment, the Grantee must submit completed post-Event reporting documentation as required by Highlands County Tourism staff not more than 60 days after the Event concludes. Failure to submit the required documentation will result in disqualification for payment.
10. The required post-event reporting documentation includes, but may not be limited to a written report and Room Night Verification Form, reflecting the actual room nights generated by the Event in comparison to the initial room night guarantee indicated in the grant application submitted by the Grantee. It is the responsibility of the Grantee to provide proof of room nights generated by the Event; this is not the responsibility of Highlands County Tourism staff. Highlands County Tourism staff may confirm accuracy of the Room Night Verification Form at staff discretion. Any funds granted to Grantee will be subject to audit by the Highlands County Clerk of the Court – Internal Auditor or other representative the County may designate.
11. Prior to the Event, Grantee must provide to Highlands County Certificates of Insurance naming “Highlands County” as an additional insured for each policy listed below. The term of coverage must include not only all days of the Event, but set up days and take down days, as well. Required insurance coverages and amounts include but may not be limited to:
 - a. \$1,000,000 General Liability each occurrence
 - b. \$1,000,000 Automobile Liability (Combined Single Limit)
 - c. Workers Compensation with statutorily required limits. The policy must include Employer Liability coverage with limits not less than \$1,000,000 each occurrence, \$1,000,000 each employee, and \$500,000 policy limit for disease.

A request to be exempt from the requirements of the insurance requirements listed above must be submitted with the grant application. The request for exemption must include a detailed explanation justifying the request, and will be reviewed by Highlands County on a case by case basis.
12. Highlands County reserves the right to lend assistance or administer approved grant funds in the form of advertising, public relations, promotions or marketing programs through an outside vendor on behalf of the Grantee.
13. Recognition of the *Visit Sebring* brand must be included where appropriate on all marketing materials for the Event, on the Grantee’s website, and referred to in public relations activities. All printed materials with the *Visit Sebring* logo must be presented with the Grantee’s reimbursement request.

14. Upon award of the grant, the Grantee must provide Highlands County with at least four (4) media passes for use by Highlands County Tourism staff to attend and cover the Event for Highlands County Tourism's marketing and public relations purposes.
15. The Grantee is to have only one designated contact ("Designee") for the duration of the grant process. Designee is responsible for submitting all required documents, including any follow up paperwork needed prior to the Event. Additionally, Designee will be responsible for executing the Highlands County Grant Agreement and providing a W-9 for the Grantee. Grant funds will be released only to Designee upon submission of all completed required post-Event documentation, including the Room Night Verification Form. Should the Designee change at any point during the grant process, written notification to the Highlands County Tourism office is required. Failure to provide notification will adversely affect funding.
16. After the awarding of the grant, any changes to the details of the Event (date, time, name of event, etc.) must be approved in writing by Highlands County Tourism. A request to change the date of the Event must be submitted to the Highlands County Tourism office ninety (90) days prior to the current approved date or the proposed new date (whichever is first). Highlands County Tourism staff is authorized to decide whether or not to approve one (1) date change for the Event. Any additional date change will require a vote by the TDC. All date changes will require an Amendment to the Grant Agreement to reflect the new date.
17. By submission of the Grant Application, the Grantee grants Highlands County and all of its employees, officers, contractors, subcontractors, volunteers, and agents (collectively referred to in this paragraph as "Highlands County representatives"), the right to use and reproduce any and all photographs, digital images, videos or recordings made at or made in relation to the Event, including those of Grantee's employees, volunteers, invitees, and those that contain Grantee's name, artwork, logo or trademark. This includes the right of Highlands County to copyright and/or use, reuse, publish, and republish photographic pictures, digital images, videos or recordings. Grantee affirms that it is the legal owner of any artwork, logo or trademark used by Grantee for the Event and acknowledges that Highlands County is relying on this representation and to the extent there is any claim by any third party against Highlands County or its representatives, Grantee will indemnify and hold Highlands County and its representatives harmless as to any such claim or damages arising from such claim. Grantee is required to grant Highlands County permission for the photographs, digital images, video, or recordings to be used in their entirety and/or edited versions as deemed necessary by Highlands County. Grantee accepts and understands those items will become the property of Highlands County and all rights to inspect or approve those items, as well as any royalties or other such compensation are waived by Grantee. Grantee further grants Highlands County permission to use the photographs, digital images, videos or recordings at any time in the future without provision of notice. Highlands County's use may include use for trade,

commercial, and advertising purposes, to promote the product or service of Highlands County, and to simply report happenings in Highlands County, and may include the use of items on Highlands County websites. Grantee shall inform its invitees of the County's intentions and rights as described in this paragraph and Grantee shall obtain executed Release & Waiver forms regarding the same from all Event participants.

HIGH IMPACT SIGNATURE EVENT FUNDING REQUEST LEVELS

Grant applicants may request up to sixty percent (60%) of their total funding request to be dedicated exclusively to marketing efforts outside of Highlands County. This portion of the grant will be reimbursed based on the scoring of the submitted marketing plan, as outlined in the grant scoring rubric.

The remaining percentage of the funding request must be tied to other eligible expenses as outlined below (Eligible Use of Funds), which will be reimbursed based on actual Event performance (calculated by the number of verified room nights or verified attendees). Payment for verified room nights will be issued at a rate of \$20.00 per verified room night. Payment for verified attendees will be issued at a rate of \$0.50 per verified attendee.

For grant funding based on room night verifications, Highlands County will only disburse grant funds for the actual, verified number of room nights. For example:

If a grant is approved for \$40,000 total, with \$20,000 allocated to marketing and \$20,000 tied to room night verifications (based on a projection of 1,000 room nights in the Grant Application), the Grantee will need to verify all 1,000 room nights in order to receive the full \$40,000 (assuming Grantee has complied with all other Grant requirements). However, if the Grantee is only able to verify 700 room nights after the Event, the payment to the Grantee from Highlands County will be calculated based off of those 700 room nights. If the Grantee's marketing plan scored high enough to qualify for the full \$20,000 in marketing reimbursement, the total grant payment for the Event will be \$34,000 (consisting of \$20,000 for marketing and \$14,000 for room nights), regardless of the originally approved \$40,000.

The final funding recommendation will be determined at the sole and absolute discretion of the TDC. Neither the scoring of the marketing plan nor the guaranteed number of room nights or attendees stated in the Grant Application will guarantee the level of funding at which the grant for the Event may be approved. As an example, if the TDC believes an Applicant has overstated the room nights or attendees or impact of the applicant's marketing plan, the TDC has the right to place the application at a lower funding level without providing justification for its decision. All grant funding requests will be submitted as a recommendation by the TDC to the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners ("BCC") or its authorized designee, which makes the final decision. The Highlands County Administrator is authorized by the BCC to approve or disapprove grant funding requests that do not exceed \$50,000.00. Periodically, the Highlands County Administrator shall notify the BCC, by way of an informational agenda item, of any grant funding requests so approved. Failure of the County Administrator to notify the BCC of an approved grant funding request shall not in any way invalidate such approval..

Exceptions for Extraordinary Circumstances

The TDC may recommend increasing funding in extraordinary circumstances. These extraordinary circumstances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for consideration and recommendation to the BCC or its authorized designee, which makes the final decision.

ELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS

The following is a list of permissible expenses that are reimbursable by the grant:

1. Out-of-County Advertising Expenses

Advertising and publicity outside of Highlands County to increase participation, attendance and awareness of the Event and generate hotel room nights. The *Visit Sebring* logo must appear with or in the advertisement, which must be pre-approved by Highlands County Tourism staff. Advertising examples include:

- Digital Online Advertising: geofencing, social media, retargeting, SEO/SEM, display ads, targeted email campaigns, digital content creation via online storytelling, etc.
- Print: advertising, direct mail, flyers/posters, etc.
- Radio & TV Advertisements placed outside Highlands County
- Public Relations/Media Events
- Targeted Audience Outreach, such as trade show booth rental
- Photography or Videography to be used for promotion of future events and that will be provided to Highlands County with full usage rights

2. Promotional Items

Promotional items for the Event must include *Visit Sebring's* logo and must be pre-approved by Highlands County Tourism staff before they qualify for reimbursement. Please consult Highlands County Tourism staff regarding ideas for promotional items.

3. Event Fees

Event fees may include:

- A/V equipment rental
- Entertainment (for events open to the public)
- In-county group transportation/tours
- Maintenance of Traffic fees
- Facility/venue rental fees - for Events that take place at venues or facilities within Highlands County (this requires pre-approval from Highlands County Tourism staff)
- Necessary event-related operational expenses, as permissible under Florida Statute 125.0104 and indicated in the final motion by the TDC to approve funding.

4. Trophies, Plaques, and Non-Monetary Awards

These type of items must include *Visit Sebring's* logo in the design and be pre-approved by Highlands County Tourism staff before they qualify for reimbursement.

5. Field/Facility/Venue Related Expenses

These expenses must be outlined in the Grant Application and will be approved at the discretion of the TDC.

INELIGIBLE USES OF FUNDS

1. Prize money, scholarships, monetary awards
2. Shirts or other apparel that are not pre-approved by Highlands County Tourism staff and/or do not include the *Visit Sebring* logo
3. Any travel expense (includes, but is not limited to, mileage reimbursement, car rental fees, airline tickets, hotel/accommodations, food, luggage fees, etc.)
4. Private entertainment, food, beverages, or any type of concession
5. Annual operating expenditures not directly related to the Event
6. Legal, medical, security, engineering, accounting, auditing, planning, feasibility studies or other consulting services
7. Employee salaries
8. Real property or capital improvements to facilities
9. Tangible personal property including but not limited to office furnishings or equipment
10. Interest or reduction of deficits and loans
11. Expenses incurred or obligated prior to or after the grant Event period
12. Advertising/promotional materials distributed in Highlands County, during or after the Event
13. Receptions, social functions, and the like, other than those specifically designed for pre-Event promotional purposes
14. Sales tax
15. Website design
16. Ongoing or annual facility maintenance
17. Any use not authorized by Florida Statute 125.0104



New Event Grant Funding Program Policy

This program is administered by the Highlands County Tourist Development Council (“TDC”), which is an advisory council to the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners.

Approved by TDC on October 30, 2025

Approved by the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners on November 4, 2025, through Resolution No.: 25-26-029

POLICY:

OVERVIEW

Grant funding is available to organizations for New Events staged in Highlands County that are designed to attract large numbers of visitors from outside Highlands County.

Consideration for New Event grant funding is determined by scoring of the submitted application, the number of room nights, and the overall economic impact the Event will bring to Highlands County. This is a reimbursable expense grant, for which the awarded funds will be distributed as explained in the New Event Funding Request Levels section below.

New Event Grant Criteria

The following requirements apply to a grant for a New Event in Highlands County that attracts out-of-county attendees any time between **April and December**:

1. Upon awarding of the grant, the Grantee must enter into a Highlands County Grant Agreement specific to the Event, which will incorporate the requirements stated herein.
2. The Event must be planned to re-occur in Highlands County for three (3) years.
3. The Event must not have previously been held in Highlands County.
The Event must be at least a two-day event with at least one overnight (either night or early morning) component.
4. Funding is not intended to support administrative costs. Funding is intended to support marketing and promotional efforts, venue/site rentals, and costs directly related to hosting the event, etc.
5. The *Visit Sebring* logo block must appear prominently in all advertising and publicity (written or electronic) for the Event.
6. Hotels/accommodations secured for the Event must be located within Highlands County.
7. Funding shall be provided as reimbursement for approved actual expenditures upon completion of the Event. The Grantee must provide proof of payment of approved expenditures. Proof of payment may be submitted in the form of a vendor receipt and a front and back copy of cleared check or credit card receipt. Cash receipts will not be accepted for reimbursements.

8. The Grantee will only be reimbursed for facility fees that are pre-approved and upon submission of the receipt showing payment in full.
9. To be eligible for payment, the Grantee must submit completed post-event reporting documentation as outlined by Highlands County Tourism staff not more than 60 days after the Event concludes. Failure to submit the required documentation will result in disqualification for payment.
10. The required post-event reporting documentation includes, but may not be limited to a written report and signed Room Block Report(s)/Room Night Certification Form(s)/Room Night Verification Form, reflecting the actual room nights generated by the Event in comparison to the initial room night guarantee indicated in the grant application submitted by the Grantee. It is the responsibility of the Grantee to provide proof of room nights generated by the Event; this is not the responsibility of Highlands County Tourism staff. Highlands County Tourism staff may confirm accuracy of the Room Night Verification Form at staff discretion. Any funds granted to Grantee will be subject to audit by the Highlands County Clerk of the Court – Internal Auditor or other representative the County may designate.
11. Prior to the Event, Grantee must provide to Highlands County Certificates of Insurance naming “Highlands County” as an additional insured for each policy listed below. The term of coverage must include not only all days of the Event, but set up days and take down days, as well. Required insurance coverages and amounts include but may not be limited to:
 - a. \$1,000,000 General Liability each occurrence
 - b. \$1,000,000 Automobile Liability (Combined Single Limit)
 - c. Workers Compensation with statutorily required limits. The policy must include Employer Liability coverage with limits not less than \$1,000,000 each occurrence, \$1,000,000 each employee, and \$500,000 policy limit for disease.

A request to be exempt from the requirements of the insurance requirements listed above must be submitted with the grant application. The request for exemption must include a detailed explanation justifying the request, and will be reviewed by Highlands County on a case by case basis.
12. Highlands County reserves the right to lend assistance or administer approved grants funds in the form of advertising, public relations, promotions or marketing programs through an outside vendor on behalf of the Grantee.
13. Recognition of the *Visit Sebring* brand must be included where appropriate on all marketing materials for the Event, on the Grantee’s website, and referred to in public relations activities. All printed materials with the *Visit Sebring* logo must be presented with the Grantee’s reimbursement request.
14. Upon award of the grant, the Grantee must provide Highlands County with at least four (4) media passes for use by Highlands County Tourism staff to attend and cover the Event for the Highlands County Tourism’s marketing and public relations purposes.
15. The Grantee is to have only one designated contact (Designee) for the duration of the grant process. Designee is responsible for submitting all required documents, including any follow up paperwork needed prior to the Event. Additionally, Designee will be responsible for executing the Highlands County Grant Agreement

and providing a W-9 for the Grantee. Grant funds will be released only to Designee upon submission of completed required post-Event documentation, including Room Block Report(s)/Room Night Certification Form(s)/Room Night Verification Form. Should the Designee change at any point during the grant process, written notification to the Highlands County Tourism office is required. Failure to provide notification will adversely affect funding.

16. After the awarding of the grant, any changes to the details of the Event (date, time, name of event, etc.) must be approved in writing by Highlands County Tourism. A request to change the date of the Event must be submitted to the Highlands County Tourism office ninety (90) days prior to the current approved date or the proposed new date (whichever is first). Highlands County Tourism staff is authorized to decide whether or not to approve one (1) date change for the Event. Any additional date change will require a vote by the TDC. All date changes will require an Amendment to the Grant Agreement to reflect the new date.
17. change prior to the Event execution, a letter must be sent to the TDC office regarding the changes. Date changes require approval by the TDC staff for first occurrence and Amendment to Grant Agreement and must be submitted 90 days prior to the originally approved date or new date (whichever is first). Any additional date change will require a vote by the TDC and Amendment to Grant Agreement and must be submitted 90 days prior to the current approved date or new date (whichever is first).
18. By submission of the grant application, the Grantee grants Highlands County and all of its employees, officers, contractors, subcontractors, volunteers, and agents (collectively referred to in this paragraph as "Highlands County representatives"), the right to use and reproduce any and all photographs, digital images, videotapes or recordings made at or made in relation to the Event, including those of Grantee's employees, volunteers, invitees, and those that contain Grantee's name, artwork, logo or trademark. This includes the right of Highlands County to copyright and/or use, reuse, publish, and republish photographic pictures, digital images, videos or recordings. Grantee affirms that it is the legal owner of any artwork, logo or trademark used by Grantee for the Event and acknowledges that Highlands County is relying on this representation and to the extent there is any claim by any third party against Highlands County or its representatives, Grantee will indemnify and hold Highlands County and its representatives harmless as to any such claim or damages arising from such claim. Grantee is required to grant Highlands County permission for the photographs, digital images, video, or recordings to be used in their entirety and/or edited versions as deemed necessary by Highlands County. Grantee accepts and understands those items will become the property of Highlands County and all rights to inspect or approve those items, as well as any royalties or other such compensation are waived by Grantee. Grantee further grants Highlands County permission to use the photographs, digital images, videotapes or recordings at any time in the future without provision of notice. Highlands County's use may include use for trade, commercial, and advertising purposes, to promote the product or service of Highlands County, and to simply report happenings in Highlands County, and may include the use of items on Highlands County websites. Grantee shall inform its invitees of the County's

intentions and rights as described in this paragraph and Grantee shall obtain executed Release and Waiver forms regarding the same from all Event participants.

NEW EVENT FUNDING REQUEST LEVELS

There is a maximum funding level of \$20,000 for year #1, \$10,000 for year #2, and \$10,000 for year #3, based on scoring of the submitted grant application. There is also an opportunity for additional grant funding for \$20.00 per verified room night, based on the verified actual room nights generated by the Event. Grant funds will only be distributed for reimbursement of approved expenses as outlined below (Eligible Use of Funds).

For grant funding based on room night verifications, Highlands County will only disburse grant funds for the actual, verified number of room nights. For example:

If a grant is approved for \$22,000 total, consisting of a \$20,000 base, plus \$2,000 tied to room night verifications (based on a projection of 100 room nights in the Grant Application), the Grantee will need to verify all 100 room nights in order to receive the full \$22,000 (assuming Grantee has complied with all other Grant requirements). However, if the Grantee is only able to verify 30 room nights after the Event, the payment to the Grantee from Highlands County will be calculated based off of those 30 room nights. If the Grantee's grant application scored high enough to qualify for the full \$20,000 base grant amount, the total grant payment for the Event will be \$20,600 (consisting of the \$20,000 base amount and \$600 for room nights), regardless of the originally approved \$22,000.

The final funding recommendation will be determined at the sole and absolute discretion of the TDC. Neither the scoring of the grant application nor the guaranteed number of room nights stated in the Grant Application will guarantee the level of funding at which the grant for the Event may be approved. As an example, if the TDC believes an Applicant has overstated the room nights, the TDC has the right to place the application at a lower funding level without providing justification for its decision. All grant funding requests will be submitted as a recommendation by the TDC to the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners ("BCC") or its authorized designee, which makes the final decision. The Highlands County Administrator is authorized by the BCC to approve or disapprove grant funding requests that do not exceed \$50,000.00. Periodically, the Highlands County Administrator shall notify the BCC, by way of an informational agenda item, of any grant funding requests so approved. Failure of the County Administrator to notify the BCC of an approved grant funding request shall not in any way invalidate such approval.

Exceptions for Extraordinary Circumstances

The TDC may recommend increasing funding in extraordinary circumstances. These extraordinary circumstances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for consideration and recommendation to the BCC or its authorized designee, which makes the final decision.

ELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS

The following is a list of permissible expenses that are reimbursable by the grant:

1. Out-of-County Advertising Expenses

Advertising and publicity outside of Highlands County to increase participation, attendance and awareness of the Event and generate hotel room nights. The *Visit Sebring* logo must appear with or in the advertisement, which must be pre-approved by Highlands County Tourism staff. Advertising examples include:

- Digital Online Advertising: geofencing, social media, retargeting, SEO/SEM, display ads, targeted email campaigns, digital content creation via online storytelling, etc.
- Print: advertising, direct mail, flyers/posters, etc.
- Radio & TV Advertisements placed outside Highlands County
- Public Relations/Media Events
- Targeted Audience Outreach, such as trade show booth rental
- Photography or Videography to be used for promotion of future events and that will be provided to Highlands County with full usage rights.

2. Promotional Items

Promotional items for the Event must include *Visit Sebring's* logo and must be pre-approved by Highlands County Tourism staff before they qualify for reimbursement. Please consult Highlands County Tourism staff regarding ideas for promotional items.

3. Event Fees

Event fees may include:

- A/V equipment rental
- Entertainment (for events open to the public)
- In-county group transportation/tours
- Maintenance of Traffic fees
- Facility/venue rental fees - for Events that take place at venues or facilities within Highlands County (this requires pre-approval from Highlands County Tourism staff).
- Necessary event-related operational expenses, as permissible under Florida Statute 125.0104 and indicated in the final motion by TDC to approve funding.

4. Trophies, Plaques, and Non-Monetary Awards

These types of items must include *Visit Sebring's* logo in the design and be pre-approved by Highlands County Tourism staff before they qualify for reimbursement.

5. Field/Facility/Venue Related Expenses

These expenses must be outlined in the Grant Application and will be approved at the discretion of the TDC.

INELIGIBLE USES OF FUNDS:

1. Prize money, scholarships, monetary awards

2. Shirts or other apparel that are not pre-approved by Highlands County Tourism staff and/or do not include the *Visit Sebring* logo
3. Any travel expense (includes, but is not limited to, mileage reimbursement, car rental fees, airline tickets, hotel/accommodations, food, luggage fees, etc.)
4. Private entertainment, food, beverages, or any type of concession
5. Annual operating expenditures not directly related to the Event
6. Legal, medical, security, engineering, accounting, auditing, planning, feasibility studies or other consulting services
7. Employee salaries
8. Real property or capital improvements to facilities
9. Tangible personal property including but not limited to office furnishings or equipment
10. Interest or reduction of deficits and loans
11. Expenses incurred or obligated prior to or after the grant Event period
12. Advertising/promotional materials distributed in Highlands County, during or after the Event
13. Receptions, social functions, and the like, other than those specifically designed for pre-Event promotional purposes
14. Sales tax
15. Website design
16. Ongoing or annual facility maintenance
17. Any use not authorized by the Florida Statute 125.0104



Sport or Special Event Grant Funding Program Policy

This program is administered by the Highlands County Tourist Development Council (“TDC”), which is an advisory council to the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners.

Approved by TDC on October 30, 2025

Approved by the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners on November 4, 2025, through Resolution No.: 25-26-029

POLICY:

OVERVIEW

Grant funding is available to organizations for major Sport or Special Events staged in Highlands County that are designed to attract large numbers of visitors from outside Highlands County. Such an Event must generate a **minimum of 100 TOTAL verified room nights** to be considered for funding. An example would be a state, regional, national, or international sporting event, conference, corporate meeting, or other.

Consideration for grant funding is determined by the number of room nights and the overall economic impact the Event will bring to Highlands County. This is a reimbursable expense grant, for which the awarded funds will be distributed as explained in the Sport & Special Event Funding Request Levels section below.

Sport & Special Event Grant Criteria

The following requirements apply to a grant for a Sport or Special Event staged in Highlands County any time between **April and December** that attracts overnight visitors in Highlands County:

1. Upon awarding of the grant, the Grantee must enter into a Highlands County Grant Agreement specific to the Event, which will incorporate the requirements stated herein.
2. The Event must generate at least 100 verified room nights.
3. This grant is not applicable to exclusive events such as weddings, family reunions, class reunions, birthday parties, etc.
4. Funding is not intended to support administrative costs. Funding is intended to support marketing and promotional efforts outside of Highlands County, venue/site rentals and costs, bid fees, etc. that are directly related to hosting the Event.
5. The *Visit Sebring* logo block must appear prominently in all advertising and publicity (written or electronic) for the Event.
6. Hotels/accommodations secured for the Event must be located within Highlands County.
7. Funding shall be provided as reimbursement for approved actual expenditures upon completion of the Event. The Grantee must provide proof of payment of approved expenditures. Proof of payment may be submitted in the form of a vendor

receipt and a front and back copy of cleared check or credit card receipt. Cash receipts will not be accepted for reimbursements.

8. The Grantee will only be reimbursed for facility fees that are pre-approved and upon submission of the receipt showing payment in full.
9. To be eligible for payment, the Grantee must submit completed post-Event reporting documentation as required by Highlands County Tourism staff not more than 60 days after the Event concludes. Failure to submit the required documentation will result in disqualification for payment.
10. The required post-event reporting documentation includes, but may not be limited to a written report and signed Room Block Report(s)/Room Night Certification Form(s)/Room Night Verification Form, reflecting the actual room nights generated by the Event in comparison to the initial room night guarantee indicated in the grant application submitted by the Grantee. It is the responsibility of the Grantee to provide proof of room nights generated by the Event; this is not the responsibility of Highlands County Tourism staff. Highlands County Tourism staff may confirm accuracy of the Room Night Verification Form at staff discretion. Any funds granted to Grantee will be subject to audit by the Highlands County Clerk of the Court – Internal Auditor or other representative the County may designate.
11. Prior to the Event, Grantee must provide to Highlands County Certificates of Insurance naming “Highlands County” as an additional insured for each policy listed below. The term of coverage must include not only all days of the Event, but set up days and take down days, as well. Required insurance coverages and amounts include but may not be limited to:
 - a. \$1,000,000 General Liability each occurrence
 - b. \$1,000,000 Automobile Liability (Combined Single Limit)
 - c. Workers Compensation with statutorily required limits. The policy must include Employer Liability coverage with limits not less than \$1,000,000 each occurrence, \$1,000,000 each employee, and \$500,000 policy limit for disease.

A request to be exempt from the requirements of the insurance requirements listed above must be submitted with the grant application. The request for exemption must include a detailed explanation justifying the request, and will be reviewed by Highlands County on a case by case basis.

12. Highlands County reserves the right to lend assistance or administer approved grant funds in the form of advertising, public relations, promotions, or marketing programs directly or through an outside vendor on behalf of the Grantee.
13. Recognition of the *Visit Sebring* brand must be included where appropriate on all marketing materials for the Event, on the Grantee’s website, and referred to in public relations activities. All printed materials with the *Visit Sebring* logo must be presented with the Grantee’s reimbursement request.
14. Upon award of the grant, the Grantee must provide Highlands County with at least four (4) media passes for use by Highlands County Tourism staff to attend and cover the Event for the Highlands County Tourism’s marketing and public relations purposes.
15. The Grantee is to have only one designated contact (“Designee”) for the duration of the grant process. Designee is responsible for submitting all required documents,

including any follow up paperwork needed prior to the Event. Additionally, Designee will be responsible for executing the Highlands County Grant Agreement and providing a W-9 for the Grantee. Grant funds will be released only to Designee upon submission of all completed required post-Event documentation, including Room Block Report(s)/Room Night Certification Form(s)/Room Night Verification Form. Should the Designee change at any point during the grant process, written notification to the Highlands County Tourism office is required. Failure to provide notification will adversely affect funding.

16. After the awarding of the grant, any changes to the details of the Event (date, time, name of event, etc.) must be approved in writing by Highlands County Tourism. A request to change the date of the Event must be submitted to the Highlands County Tourism office ninety (90) days prior to the current approved date or the proposed new date (whichever is first). Highlands County Tourism staff is authorized to decide whether or not to approve one (1) date change for the Event. Any additional date change will require a vote by the TDC. All date changes will require an Amendment to the Grant Agreement to reflect the new date.
17. By submission of the Grant Application, the Grantee grants Highlands County and all of its employees, officers, contractors, subcontractors, volunteers, and agents (collectively referred to in this paragraph as "Highlands County representatives"), the right to use and reproduce any and all photographs, digital images, videos or recordings made at or made in relation to the Event, including those of Grantee's employees, volunteers, invitees, and those that contain Grantee's name, artwork, logo or trademark. This includes the right of Highlands County to copyright and/or use, reuse, publish, and republish photographic pictures, digital images, videos or recordings. Grantee affirms that it is the legal owner of any artwork, logo or trademark used by Grantee for the Event and acknowledges that Highlands County is relying on this representation and to the extent there is any claim by any third party against Highlands County or its representatives, Grantee will indemnify and hold Highlands County and its representatives harmless as to any such claim or damages arising from such claim. Grantee is required to grant Highlands County permission for the photographs, digital images, video, or recordings to be used in their entirety and/or edited versions as deemed necessary by Highlands County. Grantee accepts and understands those items will become the property of Highlands County and all rights to inspect or approve those items, as well as any royalties or other such compensation are waived by Grantee. Grantee further grants Highlands County permission to use the photographs, digital images, videos, or recordings at any time in the future without provision of notice. Highlands County's use may include use for trade, commercial, and advertising purposes, to promote the product or service of Highlands County, and to simply report happenings in Highlands County, and may include the use of items on Highlands County websites. Grantee shall inform its invitees of Highlands County's intentions and rights as described in this paragraph and Grantee shall obtain executed Release and Waiver forms regarding the same from all Event participants.

SPORT & SPECIAL EVENT FUNDING REQUEST LEVELS

There is a maximum funding level of \$20,000. The guaranteed number of room nights stated in the Grant Application will not guarantee the level of funding at which the grant for the Event may be approved. The final funding recommendation will be determined at the sole and absolute discretion of the TDC. The TDC has the right to place any application at a lower funding level without providing justification for its decision. All grant funding requests will be submitted as a recommendation by the TDC to the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners (“BCC”) or its authorized designee, which makes the final decision. The Highlands County Administrator is authorized by the BCC to approve or disapprove grant funding requests that do not exceed \$50,000.00. Periodically, the Highlands County Administrator shall notify the BCC, by way of an informational agenda item, of any grant funding requests so approved. Failure of the County Administrator to notify the BCC of an approved grant funding request shall not in any way invalidate such approval.

Grant funds will only be disbursed for the actual, verified number of room nights. For example: If a grant is approved for \$20,000, based on a Grant Application projecting 1,000 room nights, but the Grantee is only able to verify 700 room nights after the Event, the payment to the Grantee from Highlands County will be calculated based off of those 700 room nights. Accordingly, the total grant payment for the Event will be \$14,000 (assuming Grantee has complied with all other Grant requirements), regardless of the originally approved \$20,000.

Exceptions for extraordinary circumstances

The TDC may recommend increasing funding in extraordinary circumstances. These extraordinary circumstances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for consideration and recommendation to the BCC or its authorized designee, which makes the final decision.

ELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS

The following is a list of permissible expenses that are reimbursable by the grant:

1. Out-of-County Advertising Expenses

Advertising and publicity outside Highlands County to increase participation, attendance and awareness of the Event and generate hotel room nights. The *Visit Sebring* logo must appear in or with the advertisement, which must be pre-approved by Highlands County Tourism staff. Advertising examples include:

- Digital Online Advertising: geofencing, social media, retargeting, SEO/SEM, display ads, targeted email campaigns, digital content creation via online storytelling, etc.
- Print: advertising, direct mail, flyers/posters, etc.
- Radio & TV Advertisements placed outside Highlands County
- Public Relations/Media Events
- Targeted Audience Outreach, such as trade show booth rental
- Photography or Videography to be used for promotion of future events and that will be provided to Highlands County with full usage rights

2. Promotional Items/Shirts

Promotional items for the Event must be tied to a direct “experience” with the Event (i.e. themed reception, activity, etc.). Additionally, the *Visit Sebring* logo must be included on the shirt or promotional item, and the item with logo must be pre-approved by Highlands County Tourism staff before they qualify for reimbursement. Please consult Highlands County Tourism staff regarding any direct experience ideas and ideas for promotional items.

3. Hosting, Bid, Facility or Event Fees

- Bid or Hosting Fee (Must be considered an authorized use as determined by Florida Statute 125.0104).
- Facility/venue rental fees - for Events that take place at venues or facilities within Highlands County (this requires pre-approval from Highlands County Tourism staff)
- Maintenance of Traffic fees.
- Necessary event-related operational expenses, as permissible under Florida Statute 125.0104 and indicated in the final motion by the TDC to approve funding.

4. Trophies, Plaques, and Non-Monetary Awards

These types of items must include *Visit Sebring's* logo in the design and be pre-approved by Highlands County Tourism staff before they qualify for reimbursement.

5. Field/Facility Related Expenses

These expenses must be outlined in the Grant Application and will be approved at the discretion of the TDC.

INELIGIBLE USES OF FUNDS:

1. Prize money, scholarships, monetary awards
2. Shirts or other apparel that are not pre-approved by Highlands County Tourism staff and/or do not include the *Visit Sebring* logo
3. Any travel expense (includes, but is not limited to, mileage reimbursement, car rental fees, airline tickets, hotel/accommodations, food, luggage fees, etc.)
4. Private entertainment, food, beverages, or any type of concession
5. Annual operating expenditures not directly related to the Event/Project
6. Legal, medical, security, engineering, accounting, auditing, planning, feasibility studies or other consulting services
7. Employee salaries
8. Real property or capital improvements to facilities
9. Tangible personal property including but not limited to office furnishings or equipment
10. Interest or reduction of deficits and loans
11. Expenses incurred or obligated prior to or after the grant Event period
12. Advertising/promotional materials distributed in Highlands County, during or after the Event

13. Receptions, social functions, and the like, other than those specifically designed for pre-Event media promotional purposes
14. Sales tax
15. Website design
16. Ongoing or annual facility maintenance
17. Any use not authorized by Florida Statute 125.0104

Item 5E



Staff recommendation/suggested motion:

Item to be presented by Ronald Sevigny, Baseball Museum Committee Chairman, for the Tourist Development Council's review and action at their discretion.



THE DEPOT MUSEUM

& HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AVON PARK
"Your Ticket to the Past"

Leah Sauls

Director

501 S Commerce Ave

Sebring, FL 33870

Leah;

Per your communication on Sept 8, I am attaching a cover letter summarizing our funding request.

If you need any additional information, please let me know.

We will be at the TDC meeting on October 30.

Regards

Ronald Sevigny,

Committee Chairman

863-414-3850 ronald7e@gmail.com

BASEBALL MUSEUM

RE: Historical Society of Avon Park request for \$100,000 towards completion of Baseball Museum

A little over two years ago, a group of Highlands County citizens met to brainstorm "What could we do to put Avon Park on the map".

Lake Placid is the Caladium Capital of the World and the Mural City; and Sebring has the International Race. What could we do to highlight Avon Park?

After much deliberation, it was decided that the one unique and special feature of Avon Park is its legendary baseball history.

Of the 411 towns and cities in Florida, Avon Park is #1 when we look at the past 100 years. An unmatched history that started with Major League baseball from 1925 to 1952; and then the unmatched success of the Avon Park High School Baseball team . ESPN 2012 calling us "Baseball City".

It was decided to expand the present Depot Museum to add a Baseball Museum. Architects cost estimate was \$580,000.

The community responded with great enthusiasm and a little over \$300,000 has been raised from individuals and businesses. The City of Avon Park unanimously approved a grant of \$100,000 towards the project.

In addition to preserving our legendary baseball history, our Committee focus is to create a Museum that will bring baseball fans from all over to our City and our Downtown.

To that end , we are emphasizing the Major League aspect that will resonate with sports fans. We will highlight Babe Ruth Lou Gehrig, Dizzy Dean, Enos Slaughter, and the more than 15 Hall of Famers that played games in Avon Park. There will also be a special emphasis on Thomas "Flash" Gordon and Hal McRae, our hometown heroes.

This will be only the second baseball museum in the State of Florida. The other museum is in Ybor City. We have been collaborating with the leadership of that museum where they will bring travelling exhibits to our location; and will collaborate on putting on special events with retired MLB players.

This project will be a big plus in attracting visitors to our County.

Our request for \$100,000 from Highlands County will allow us to successfully complete this project.

Your consideration is greatly appreciated.

Regards, Ronald Sevigny/Committee Chairman



Item 5F



Staff recommendation/suggested motion:

Move to approve allocating \$1.9 Million from Cost Center 5309 to a Project created to help fund facility enhancement and development at the Highlands County Sports Complex; and the balance of Cost Center 5309 to a Project created to help fund the development of a TDC-approved Multi-Purpose Indoor Sports Tourism Facility within Highlands County.



Facility Development Update

Highlands County Tourist Development Council (TDC)

October 30, 2025

For Discussion Today...

Facility Location Updates

November 4 Presentations

Facility Comparative Financial Analysis

Next Steps & Project Funding Breakdown



Highlands County Sports Complex Status

- Increasing use by locals & tourists.
- TDC received state grant to purchase additional 43 +/- acres next to complex for field expansion.
 - Total cost to TDC for property purchase & due diligence - \$800,000
 - Grant will reimburse for \$400,000
 - Working on due diligence from county side (title work)
 - Owner wants to close in 2026
- Waiting to receive grant agreement from the state.
- RFQ draft in process for 3rd party management



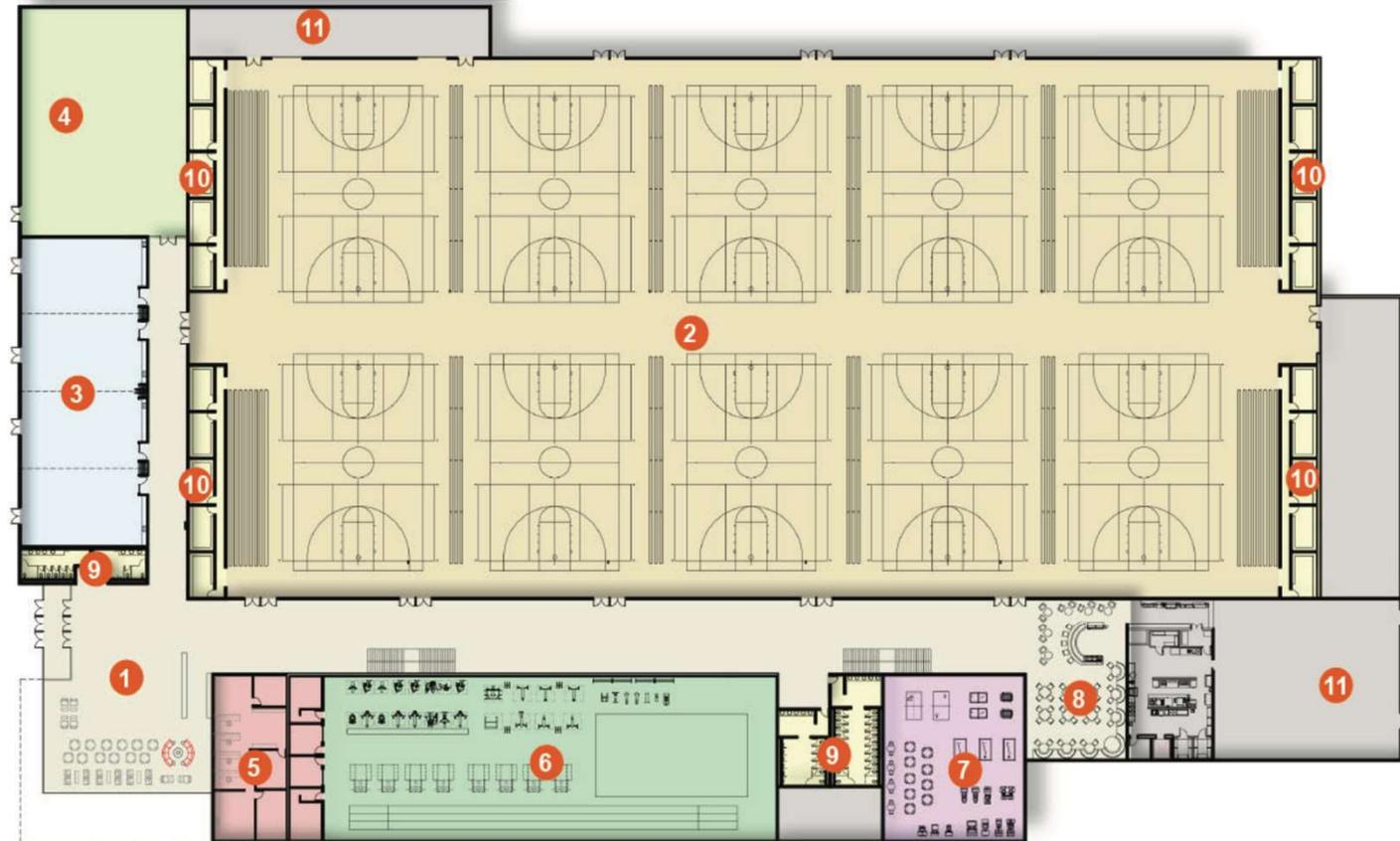
Indoor Facility

- TDC received letter for land donation
 - 15.5 +/- acres; former Kenilworth golf course
 - Across railroad from Fred Wild Elementary
- Working with county departments through land donation process
 - Survey, title work, legal, etc.
- Would be adjacent to proposed apartment complex.

Indoor Facility- Conceptual Floorplan

Main Level 150,000 square feet

1. Main Entry Lobby & Lounge	5,000
2. 10 Court Gymnasium / Event Center	84,000
3. Meeting / Team Rooms	6,000
4. Orthopedic Tenant Partner	5,000
5. Staff Offices	3,000
6. Performance Training Center	10,000
7. Family Entertainment Center	3,500
8. Cafe & Seating	2,000
9. Restrooms	1,000
10. Team Change Rooms	3,000
11. Mechanical & Maintenance Areas	9,500
Non-assigned area:	18,000



Fairgrounds Project Status

Firemen/Fair Board have applied for a state grant through Dept. of Agriculture for \$400,000 to assist with some of the study recommendations. Should know outcome by March 2026.



TDC connected them with grant company to help submit their application. They used data from TDC's facility study as supporting information.

Max Long Project Status



Have had ongoing meetings with Max Long stakeholders (YMCA, City of Sebring, Sebring Youth Baseball).



Consensus of the group is to ask Synergy Sports & Airstream to present study findings and recommendations to Sebring City Council. Scheduled for Nov. 4.



Max Long/Muni Expansion Status

No action.

City of Sebring planning to issue RFP.

Lake June Project Status



TDC/ASV successfully relocated a Lacrosse Camp from Tampa to Lake June Park in September.



Lacrosse organizer & attendees would like to do more events there.



Upgrades will be needed.



Town of Lake Placid organizing a recreation workshop on Nov. 4 with Synergy Sports & Airstream Ventures as presenters regarding Lake June Park recommendations.

Donaldson Park & HL Bishop Parks

Donaldson Park

- City of Avon Park has city-driven development plans
- Working to schedule a call with City of Avon Park & sports consultants for initial discussion.

HL Bishop Park

- Focused on leisure tourism with Lake June Lagoon project.

Upcoming Facility Development Presentations: November 4

Synergy Sports (Jason Boudrie) & Alan Verlander (Airstream Ventures)

>Will discuss P3 funding mechanism.

- **Highlands County Commission Special Workshop**
 - Immediately following BOCC regular meeting that starts at 9am
 - Highlight May 1 TDC Facility Study & Location Updates to BOCC
 - County Commission Chambers
- **Town of Lake Placid Special Workshop**
 - 2:00 PM at Lake Placid Town Hall
 - Discuss options for improvements to Lake June Park/Ballfields
- **City of Sebring Meeting**
 - 5:30 PM at Sebring City Hall
 - Discuss options for improvements to Max Long Complex



Facility Development Comparative Analysis

	Fairgrounds/ Alan Jay	Max Long	Max Long/ Muni	Highlands County Sports Complex	H.L. Bishop	Lake June Sports Complex	Donaldson Park/ Lake Verona
Estimated Renovation Cost	\$1M- \$2M	\$8M- \$10M	\$15M- \$20M	\$10M- \$15M	\$250k- \$500k	\$3M- \$5M	\$1M- \$2M
Avg. 5-Year Economic Impact	\$8.5M	\$36M	\$60M	\$51M	\$15M	\$17M	\$5.1M
Cumulative 5- Year TDC Revenue	\$650,000	\$2,500,000	\$4,600,000	\$3,900,000	\$230,000	\$1,300,000	\$395,000
Avg. Annual Visitors	20,000	90,000	140,000	85,000	7,000	20,000	12,000
Projected Annual Costs		\$150,000- mgmt. \$720,000- lease	\$500,000- mgmt. \$1,400,000- lease	\$200,000- mgmt. \$1,000,000- lease \$800,000 - purchase		\$125,000- mgmt. \$360,000- lease	



Potential next steps....

If TDC would like to move to the next steps with either Sports Complex, Indoor Facility or both....

Move 3rd penny funds to designated “projects” for either (or both) of the county-owned/proposed sport facility development concepts so funds are earmarked.

Current 3rd Penny Amount: \$2.8 million

- Sports Complex Expansion: \$1.9 million
- Indoor Facility: \$4.25 million

Project Funding Breakdown

County-Owned Proposed Projects

Current Sports Complex

- \$800,000 – one time land purchase & due diligence
- \$1 million – Annual lease payment
- \$100,000 – Annual management fee
- TOTAL: \$1.9 million
- *Predevelopment: 10% of estimated project cost.*

Indoor Sports Facility

- Land donated
- \$4 million – Annual lease payment
- \$250,000 – Annual management fee
- TOTAL: \$4.25 million
- *Predevelopment: 10% of estimated project cost*

TOTAL From TDC 3rd Penny

- \$6.15 million (\$1.9 M + \$4.25 M)
- - \$400,000 (land purchase grant reimbursement)
- TOTAL: \$5.75 million

Any
Questions?



Item 5G



Staff recommendation/suggested motion:

Move to set the schedule as follows for the 2026 TDC meeting dates:

Thursday, January 29, 2026

Thursday, April 30, 2026

Thursday, August 13, 2026

Thursday, October 29, 2026

Item 5H



Staff recommendation/suggested motion:

Move to appoint _____ as Chairperson and _____ as Vice Chairperson of the Tourist Development Council for 2026.

Item 6A

September 17, 2025

Highlands County Tourist Development Council (TDC) &
Highlands County Board of County Commissioners
600 South Commerce Avenue
Sebring, FL 33870

To Whom It May Concern:

Please let this letter serve as confirmation of Lake Jackson Holdings LLC's interest in donating 15.41 +/- acres to Highlands County/Highlands County Tourist Development Council (TDC) for the development of an indoor multi-use facility. This targeted property is currently part of a larger tract listed as parcel #[S-32-34-29-090-0030-0010](#).

As the master developer, we are willing to commit the land, as legally described below, as well as some development services to the facility development project. The Legal Description of the land is as follows:

A PORTION OF SECTION 32, TOWNSHIP 34 SOUTH, RANGE 29 EAST, HIGHLANDS COUNTY, FLORIDA, BEING MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

COMMENCE AT THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF SECTION 32; THENCE NORTH 01°00'10" WEST, ALONG THE EAST LINE OF SAID SECTION, A DISTANCE OF 865.18 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 87°49'20" WEST. A DISTANCE OF 40.00 FEET TO A POINT LYING ON THE WEST RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF HIGHLANDS AVENUE; THENCE NORTH 01°00'10" WEST ALONG SAID LINE, A DISTANCE OF 774.95 FEET TO A POINT LYING ON THE WESTERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF S.C.L. RAILROAD AND TO A POINT ON A NON TANGENT CURVE TO THE RIGHT, HAVING A RADIUS OF 1,689.24 FEET, A CENTRAL ANGLE OF 13°15'16", AND A CHORD BEARING OF NORTH 07°37'48" WEST, 389.91 FEET; THENCE NORTH ALONG THE ARC A DISTANCE OF 390.78 FEET; THENCE NORTH 01°00'10" WEST, ALONG SAID RAILROAD RIGHT OF WAY LINE, A DISTANCE OF 1,079.66 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 88°57'00" WEST, A DISTANCE OF 777.61 FEET TO

A.F.

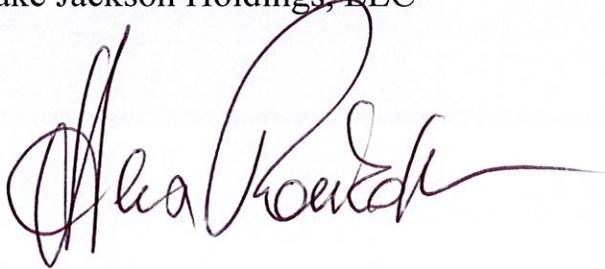
A POINT ON THE WESTERLY RIGHT OF WAY OF PERSIMMON AVENUE; THENCE SOUTH 00°58'40" EAST AND ALONG SAID WESTERLY RIGHT OF WAY OF PERSIMMON AVENUE, A DISTANCE OF 47.25 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 88°57'00" WEST, A DISTANCE OF 416.67 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 01°03'00" EAST, A DISTANCE OF 340.95 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING; THENCE CONTINUE SOUTH 01°03'00" EAST, A DISTANCE OF 1,119.11 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 88°57'00" WEST, A DISTANCE OF 600.00 FEET; THENCE NORTH 01°03'00" WEST, A DISTANCE OF 1,119.11 FEET; THENCE NORTH 88°57'00" EAST, A DISTANCE OF 600.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING.

We plan to apply for a CDBG Grant with the City of Sebring and would appreciate any assistance the County could provide confirming the land donation, the intended use of the property and the number of jobs that the facility would provide. This grant would be used to construct public infrastructure that directly serves employment creating business.

Should you have any questions or concerns, or require any additional information, please feel free to contact me at alexforkosh1@gmail.com. We look forward to continuing the conversation with the County and other key stakeholders.

Sincerely,

Alexander Forkosh
CEO & Managing Member
Lake Jackson Holdings, LLC



Item 6B



**HIGHLANDS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
ADMINISTRATION**

600 S. Commerce Ave., Sebring, Florida 33870
Office (863) 402-6500 Fax (863) 402-6835 www.highlandsfl.gov

September 3, 2025

Ms. Lucia Cortez, FCCM
Florida Communities Trust
Division of State Lands
Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Re: Florida Communities Trust Grant Award Notification, Sports Complex Expansion, FCT
Application #24-008-FF25

Dear Ms. Cortez,

Thank you for your email and formal letter notifying our tourism office that the above-referenced grant application submitted by Visit Sebring & Highlands County has been awarded funding under the Florida Communities Trust 2024–25 cycle.

Please accept this correspondence as confirmation of our willingness to accept the grant award. We are eager to review the forthcoming draft agreement and to move forward with project acquisition activities in partnership with your team.

On behalf of Visit Sebring and Highlands County, we appreciate the Florida Communities Trust's investment in our community and look forward to advancing the expansion of the County's multi-sport complex.

Sincerely,

Laurie Hurner
County Administrator
Highlands County



HIGHLANDS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
600 S. Commerce Ave., Sebring, Florida 33870



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF Environmental Protection

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Jay Collins
Lt. Governor

Alexis A. Lambert
Secretary

August 25, 2025

Mrs. Reagan Fultz
Tourism Marketing & Project Manager
Highlands County Board of County Commissioners – Visit Sebring

Re.: Florida Communities Trust Grant Award, Sports Complex Expansion, FCT
Application # 24-008-FF25

Dear Mrs. Fultz:

Congratulations. This is to inform you that the above referenced grant application from Visit Sebring & Highlands County has been awarded a grant from the Florida Communities Trust 2024-25 funding cycle. The grant is approved for the original amount in the application, \$372,000.00 or 50% of the total project cost, whichever is lower. Visit Sebring & Highlands County has committed to provide \$372,000.00 or 50% of the project cost, whichever is lower. Please let us know if Visit Sebring & Highlands County are still willing to accept the grant. Upon receipt of your affirmative reply, we will draft a grant award agreement and commence with the project acquisition activities. Again, congratulations on receiving this grant award. Please let me know if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lucia Cortez".

Lucia Cortez, FCCM
Florida Communities Trust
Division of State Lands



**Florida Communities Trust Parks and Open Space Program
Final Priority Funding List for FY 2025
Approved by the Governing Board August 13, 2025**

#NAME?	Project Name <i>Page 1, #1 of Application Form</i>	Applicant Name <i>Page 1, #2 of Application Form</i>	County <i>Page 1, #5</i>	Acres <i>Page 1, #6, Show to the 2nd decimal</i>	Acquisition Type <i>Page 2, #7</i>	Preliminary Score	Objections	Project Excellence	Final Score	FCT Grant Award Amount* <i>Page 2, #9a</i>	Match Amount <i>Page 2, #9b</i>	Total <i>(formula)</i>	% of Award <i>(formula)</i>	% of Match <i>(formula)</i>	Balance Available <i>(formula)</i>
24-001-FF25	Edmondson Farm Curry Creek Preserve Acquisition and Enhancement Project	Sarasota County	Sarasota	32.00	Pre-Acquired	182	0	10	192	\$1,182,265.00	\$1,773,397.50	\$2,955,662.50	40%	60%	\$14,580,701.55
24-002-FF25	Indian River Land Trust/ Toni Robinson Extension Property	Indian River Land Trust	Indian River	48.00	Pre-Acquired	163	0	10	173	\$2,500,000.00	\$1,817,900.00	\$4,317,900.00	58%	42%	\$12,080,701.55
24-003-FF25	Triple Creek Greenway Phase Three	Hillsborough County, a Political Subdivision of the State of Florida	Hillsborough	109.41	Pre-Acquired	162	0	0	162	\$482,820.00	\$482,820.00	\$965,640.00	50%	50%	\$11,597,881.55
24-009-FF25	Doris Leeper Spruce Creek Preserve Doan Tract	County of Volusia	Volusia	4.12	Pre-Acquired	139	0	10	149	\$246,939.00	\$164,626.00	\$411,565.00	60%	40%	\$11,350,942.55
24-008-FF25	Sports Complex Expansion	VISIT SEBRING - Highlands County	Highlands	43.87	Reimbursement	126	5	0	131	\$372,000.00	\$372,000.00	\$744,000.00	50%	50%	\$10,978,942.55
24-007-FF25	Carroll/Thacker Park Property	City of Kissimmee	Osceola	8.27	Pre-Acquired	123	0	0	123	\$1,793,822.00	\$2,690,734.00	\$4,484,556.00	40%	60%	\$9,185,120.55
24-005-FF25	Bal Harbour	City of Fort Lauderdale	Broward	0.443	Pre-Acquired	98	0	0	98	\$626,414.00	\$626,415.00	\$1,252,829.00	50%	50%	\$8,558,706.55
24-012-FF25	Ravenswood Park Addition Land Acquisition	City of St. Augustine	St. Johns	2.47	Pre-Acquired	97	0	0	97	\$460,000.00	\$460,000.00	\$920,000.00	50%	50%	\$8,098,706.55
24-006-FF25	Sebastian Waterfront Park Expansion	City of Sebastian	Indian River	1.38	Reimbursement	83	3	0	86	\$1,041,000.00	\$694,000.00	\$1,735,000.00	60%	40%	\$7,057,706.55
24-004-FF25	Homestead S.W. 8th Avenue Land Acquisition	Homestead Community Redevelopment Agency	Miami-Dade	0.10	Reimbursement	73	0	0	73	\$212,500.00	\$70,833.00	\$283,333.00	75%	25%	\$6,845,206.55
Total Acres:				250.063						\$8,917,760.00	\$9,152,725.50	\$18,070,485.50			\$ 6,845,206.55

FCT Funds Available
 FY 2020-2021 \$ 2,717.70
 FY 2023-2024 \$ 3,060,248.85
 FY 2024-2025 \$ 12,700,000.00
Total Available \$ 15,762,966.55

Defer vote - applicant encouraged to reapply for next cycle

24-011-FF25	Old Highway 50 Park & Trailhead	City of Clermont	Lake	26.00	Reimbursement	30			30	\$1,282,500.00	\$427,500.00	\$1,710,000.00	75%	25%	
-------------	---------------------------------	------------------	------	-------	---------------	----	--	--	----	----------------	--------------	----------------	-----	-----	--

Approved in an open, legally noticed public meeting by FCT Governing Board pursuant to Rule 62-818, Florida Administrative Code

Signed: **Bryan Bradner** Digitally signed by Bryan Bradner
 Date: 2025.08.20 15:04:29 -04'00'
 Bryan Bradner, Chair, FCT Governing Board