

HIGHLANDS COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES, FORMS & INSTRUCTIONS

The Tourism Development Council (TDC) leads and supports the tourism industry in Highlands County by providing innovative marketing programs and promotions to ensure the continued growth of tourism and travel from visitors around the world. The TDC's objective is to position Highlands County as a must-experience destination in Florida through quality events and initiatives. The TDC recognizes events and meetings as a major contributor to the overall tourism economy. In order to develop this business, the TDC has put in place a Grant Program for events seeking funding. The TDC was created pursuant to Highlands County Ordinance 01-02-20 and operates in accordance with Florida State Statute 125.0104. The TDC administers funds collected from a tourist development tax on occupied transient lodging sales, i.e. hotels/motels, campgrounds and other short-term rental properties. The funds are designated to promote Highlands County as a preferred visitor destination.

All requests for funds must be reviewed and approved by Visit Highlands County Staff and the TDC. Once a funding amount has been allocated, funds will **not** be disbursed until after the event has been completed, receipts have been submitted and a post-event report has been produced. The number and extent of these grants will be dependent upon the availability of designated funds and specific allocations. Ideally, the funds allocated by the TDC will eventually be returned through an increase in transient lodging sales and the tourist development tax generated from those sales. The intent of the Special Event Tourist Development Grant Program is to provide funding assistance for events that attract overnight visitors to Highlands County, thereby impacting the lodging industry, campgrounds, condominiums as well as restaurants, retail establishments and other businesses.

Application Deadline and Guidelines

The TDC meets the last Thursday of each month. Completed grant applications must be submitted to the Visit Highlands County office no later than the 10th of each month in order to be placed on the TDC meeting agenda for funding consideration. If the 10th falls on a weekend/holiday, then the applications are **due the last business day prior to the posted deadline**. One application will be accepted per event. Applications must be complete; Not Applicable should be marked if needed.

Eligible Applicants: Not-For-Profit Organizations, Government Agencies, Chambers of Commerce. (Maximum of 4 Years Eligibility for No-Room Verification/\$1,000 Grants)

Submittal & Meeting Schedule

The TDC will review funding for Special Events Tourism Development Grants as outlined below. Applications will be added to the agenda in the order that they are received. TDC strongly recommends the funding request come before the TDC at least three months prior to the event in order for approval by the TDC, Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), and BOCC staff.

Reimbursement/Accountability

- Within 60 days after the completion of the event, the organization must submit:
 - Post Event Report, copy of collateral displaying approved logo block.
 - Invoice for grant funds (addressed to Highlands County Board of County Commissioners).
 - W-9 tax form.
 - All completed Visitor Questionnaires, if applicable.

- Reimbursement Request Form(s). All supporting reimbursement documentation. If the original award amount must be prorated due to shortage of room nights, an updated invoice will be requested with the new award amount.

The TDC will conduct audits to ensure accuracy of attendance and room nights reported. Natural disasters and incidents that may affect the event will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

*Not more than 60 days after the event, the planner **must** schedule a post-event, wrap-up meeting with the Visit Highlands County staff to deliver the final post-event report. Incomplete reports will not be considered. A request for an extension of this deadline will require specific additional action on the part of the Tourist Development Council.*

Existing Festivals: Multi-day festivals that bring out of county visitors. Funding may only be used to advertise outside of Highlands County. Festivals may only apply for four (4) total years.

Existing Group Events: Groups who choose Highlands County as a place to hold their multi-day group event, i.e., conventions, conferences. A group event must have a registration that identifies participants and city of origin. Funds will be awarded based on number of overnight stays. Grants requiring overnight stays will be evaluated on the following scale:

of Verified Overnight Rooms Grant Amount

Less than 100	\$1,000
200	\$2,000
350	\$3,500
500	\$5,000

Team Sporting Events: Organized sporting tournaments that come to Highlands County for a multi-day event. Sporting events may receive Grants each year they select Highlands County as their venue. Funds will be awarded based on field rental fees to a cap of \$5,000. Factors used in evaluation process will include but not be limited to the following:

- # of verified overnight stays
- # of out of county teams
- # of out of county players
- # of out of county coaches/officials
- Tournaments for ages 18 and under
- Economic impact to County

Existing Individual Sporting Events: Organized sporting tournaments that come to Highlands County for a multi-day event. Sporting events may receive Grants each year they select Highlands County as their venue. Each tournament will be evaluated and the Grant amount will be determined. Factors used in the evaluation process will include but not be limited to the following:

- # of verified overnight stays
- # of out of county players
- # of out of county coaches/officials
- Tournaments for ages 18 and under
- Economic impact to county

of Verified Overnight Rooms Grant Amount

Less than 100	\$1,000
200	\$2,000
350	\$3,500
500	\$5,000

New Group Event: Defined as an event that has not previously been held in Highlands County. New Events have three funding options as defined below:

- 1) No Room Verification: Funding without room night verification of \$1,000 maximum reimbursable advertising grant. Applicant will not need to verify room nights.
- 2) Verify Rooms Nights: Funding based on number of verified room nights. Same as Existing Group Event. All funds reimbursed after event has occurred.
- 3) Special Advanced Funds Grant: Only applicable to new events. The event host must estimate the number of room nights expected and present this information to the TDC Grants Review Panel. The Review Panel can recommend to TDC board two-phase funding with half of the room nights calculated and paid without room nights verified and the second half paid with room night verification. Example: If the event coordinator expects 500 room nights, the TDC will grant the event \$5,000 without room night verifications and \$5,000 with room night verifications. Both phases are based on reimbursements for approved advertising expenses.

III. FUNDING ELIGIBILITY

The following summarizes eligible and ineligible use of TDC funding.

Eligible Use of Funds for Non-Sporting Events (Existing & New Events):

1. Pre-Event Marketing (paid only, no reimbursement for value in kind). All advertising must be placed outside of Highlands County:
 1. Digital Advertisements (online, websites, social media)
 2. Print Advertisements
 3. Radio Advertisements
 4. Television Advertisements
 5. Outdoor Signage/Banners
2. Other expenditures consistent with Florida Statutes & TDC objectives may be considered.

Eligible Use of Funds for Sporting Events:

1. Pre-Event Marketing (paid only, no reimbursement for value in kind). All advertising must be placed outside of Highlands County:
 1. Digital Advertisements (online, websites, social media)
 2. Print Advertisements
 3. Radio Advertisements
 4. Television Advertisements
 5. Outdoor Signage/Banners
2. Expenses directly associated with sporting event, including sport field/facility rental
3. Other expenditures consistent with Florida Statutes & TDC objectives may be considered.

Ineligible Use of Funds:

Grant funds **MAY NOT** be used for:

1. Posters/flyers/banners
2. Awards to participants
3. Food/refreshments
4. Annual operating expenditures, to include property taxes
5. Professional legal, medical, engineering, accounting, auditing, consultant or tax service

6. Real property
7. Interest or reduction of deficits or loans
8. Prize money and/or scholarships
9. Receptions or social functions other than those specifically designed for pre-event media promotional purposes
10. Facility Rental (except sports facility)
11. Security (Police, Sheriff Deputies, Ushers, Marshalls)
12. Fees to Sanctioning Bodies
13. Maintenance, Janitorial and Other Clean-Up
14. Officials' Fees and Housing
15. Sales tax
16. Website design of any kind
17. Ongoing or annual facility maintenance
18. Docents and/or employee wages
19. Timing and Scoring Equipment, Supplies and Fees
20. Rental Items: Tents, Toilets, Barricades, etc.
21. Sports Specific Equipment (Purchase or Rental)
22. Volunteer and Officials' Incentives
23. Medical and Athletic Training Fees and Supplies
24. Transportation Costs Fees for Contract Labor
25. Programs that solicit advertising.
26. Other expenditures not consistent with Florida Statutes or TDC objectives.

Application Process:

Applications for Group Events & Sports Tournaments must be filed with the Highlands County Tourist Development Council (TDC) no later than 60 days prior to the event. Applications for Festivals must be filed no later than 180 days prior to the event. Once staff has evaluated and approved an application, it will be placed on the earliest TDC agenda for funding consideration. An event representative must be present at the TDC meeting.

Contract Process

The following requirements must be satisfied and the contract presented to the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to receive final approval of the TDC Grant.

1. The TDC office will have the contract approved and signed by the following:

a. Board Attorney	e. Assistant County Administrator/Community Services Division Director
b. Department of OMB	f. Risk Management
c. County Administrator	g. Leisure Services Director
d. Administrative Services Director	

2. The applicant will be responsible for obtaining the signatures of the President and Secretary of the organization requesting the grant funds. Please return the signed contracts to the Tourist Development office in a timely manner.

3. The Visit Highlands County office will submit ten copies of the signed contract to the County Administrative office two Fridays prior to the Board of County Commissioners agenda date. The BOCC Regular meetings are the first and third Tuesday of the month.

4. After the Board of County Commissioners approves the grant request, funds may be expended. Any funds spent prior to the BOCC approval will not be reimbursable.
5. A copy of the final contract may be obtained at the Tourist Development office one week after the BOCC approval.
6. The applicant should contact the Tourist Development office to obtain an electronic copy of the TDC logo for advertisements. A deduction of 10% of grant funds paid will be made to the grant funding if the TDC logo does not appear on all reimbursable advertisements.
7. The applicant will be responsible for submitting the proper documentation for reimbursement within 60 days of the event. Reimbursements submitted after 60 days will be null and void.

For consideration by the Highlands County Tourist Development Council, please make sure your application is filled out completely and accompanied by the following information:

- IRS Form W-9
- TDC Final Report (for previous TDC grantees only);
- Complete project event budget (Sections 4 & 5);

Please submit your application along with all items on the checklist to:

INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS WILL BE RETURNED

**APPLICATIONS FOR EVENTS WITHIN 45 DAYS OF TDC MEETING WILL NOT BE
PLACED ON THE AGENDA**

Dana Knight
Tourist Development Council
501 S. Commerce Avenue, Sebring, FL 33870
(863) 402-6909-Phone
dknight@hcbcc.org
www.VisitHighlandsCounty.com

<p>Category (please check one)</p> <p>New Event</p> <p>Recurring Event</p> <p>Sporting Event</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Convention</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Professional Sporting Event</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Conference</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Amateur Sporting Event</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Special Event</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Auto Racing Event</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Festival</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Other</td> </tr> </table> <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> YES # of Years Rec'd TDC Funds: ____ <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> YES # of Years Rec'd TDC Funds: ____ <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> Convention	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Sporting Event	<input type="checkbox"/> Conference	<input type="checkbox"/> Amateur Sporting Event	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Event	<input type="checkbox"/> Auto Racing Event	<input type="checkbox"/> Festival	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Convention	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Sporting Event								
<input type="checkbox"/> Conference	<input type="checkbox"/> Amateur Sporting Event								
<input type="checkbox"/> Special Event	<input type="checkbox"/> Auto Racing Event								
<input type="checkbox"/> Festival	<input type="checkbox"/> Other								
<p>Event History Provide past 3 years # of room nights from this event including (if applicable): a) <u>City event held</u> b) Date/month/year of event c) total # of room nights</p>									
<p>If you have already reserved Highlands County hotel rooms, please list hotel(s), number of rooms reserved, total room nights and dates.</p>									
<p>How many rooms' nights do you project this event will bring to Highlands County?</p>									
<p>How many rooms' nights do you guarantee to bring to Highlands County?</p>									
<p>How do you intend to provide a valid count of attendance and room nights at this year's event?</p>									
<p>Total amount of grant funding being requested from the Tourist Development Council for this event</p>	<p>\$</p>								
<p>Intended Use of Funds <i>Note: TDC funds can only be used to reimburse advertising expenditures (except with sporting events). Please attach itemized expenditures to be funded by this grant/detail and the media and/or publication(s) which will be used.</i></p>									

<p>List <u>ALL</u> other <u>actual</u> or <u>potential</u> city/county/state/federal funding sources for this event:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit Florida • Florida Division of Cultural Affairs • Florida Sports Foundation • City Council(s) • CRA(s) • Heartland Cultural Alliance • Highlands County Gov't <p>>>Do not include grant money from Highlands County TDC. <u>Failure to disclose other funding sources will result in denial of future TDC funding of events.</u></p>	
<p>List all other contributors, sponsors, and sources of funding for this event other than the grant money from the Highlands County area.</p>	
<p>What additional sources of funding have you sought or do you intend to seek?</p>	
<p>List past TDC funding for this event (include each year with amount requested, amount granted, amount spent, and purpose).</p>	
<p>List media coverage of previous year(s)' event(s)</p>	

Section 3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION	
<p>Who are your target audience(s) for attendance?</p>	
<p>What is your projected attendance (include local participants, out-of-town participants and guests)?</p>	

Section 4	
INCOME: PROJECT BUDGET RECAP	
Tourist Development Fund Request	\$
Total Contributor/Sponsor Funds	\$
Other income sources (i.e. registration fees, ticket sales, concessions, vendor sales)	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
TOTAL INCOME	\$

Section5	
EXPENSES: PROJECT BUDGET RECAP	
Please list ALL event expenses and indicate which items will utilize TDC funds	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$

**Section 6
CERTIFICATIONS**

I have reviewed the GRANT APPLICATION from the Highlands County Tourism Development Council (TDC). I am in full agreement with the information contained in this application, and I certify its attachments are accurate and complete. I further acknowledge my understanding that the TDC in making a grant for special promotions or other purposes does not assume any liability or responsibility for the ultimate financial profitability of the event for which the grant is awarded. The TDC, unless otherwise specifically stated, is only a financial contributor to the event and not a promoter or co-sponsor, and will not guarantee or be responsible or liable for any debts incurred for such event. All third parties are hereby put on notice that the TDC will not be responsible for payment of any costs or debts for the event that are not paid by the grant application.

Reimbursement, after the date of the event, will only be made for itemized, authorized expenses approved by the TDC and outlined in the award/offer letter. All invoices to be reimbursed/direct vendor paid must be submitted no later than 60 days after the close of the event.

I understand the above guidelines and agree to comply with them. I understand full receipt of grant funding is based upon the organization's compliance with ALL regulations.

Authorized Agent: _____

Title: _____ Date: _____

Authorized Agent Signature: _____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Application Received: _____

Date of the Event: _____

Is this application complete? *Yes* *No*

Funding Source for Grant: *General* *Arts & Culture*