

HIGHLANDS COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (TDC) ADVERTISING GRANT APPLICATION

This program is administered by the Highlands County Tourist Development Council, which is overseen by the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners.

Introduction

Program Funding Paid for by Overnight Visitors

Funding for the Highlands County Tourist Development Council (TDC) comes from the Highlands County Tourist Development Tax (TDT) – the proceeds of a county-wide 2% tax applied to the rental fees paid for short-term accommodations such as hotel/motel rooms, condominiums, vacation homes, campground sites and apartment rentals of six months or less. The TDT is not a tax paid by residents unless they are staying in local lodging but, rather, is paid by Highlands County’s visitors. The tax also applies to short-term rentals arranged through on-line services such as VRBO and Airbnb.

The nine-member Tourist Development Council (TDC) is an appointed advisory group tasked with making recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) on how the TDT funds should be spent to achieve the County’s tourist development goals. More information about the TDT can be found in the enabling legislation, Section 125.0104, Florida Statutes.

Why Tourism Development?

Tourism is an economic development tool that provides great benefits to the citizens of Highlands County including job creation, sales and gasoline taxes, plus millions of dollars in ad valorem tax revenue paid by local tourism businesses, all which help pay for the quality of life we enjoy. So, while overnight visitors pay the TDT, the approximate \$150 million in direct spending that visitors pay annually to local businesses does much more.

Uses of the Tourist Development Tax are restricted by Florida Statute and County Ordinance. Simply put, the TDC’s Grant Program is permitted only as a means of advertising and promoting tourism. **Therefore, events funded through this program must demonstrate the intent and effect of attracting visitors to Highlands County.**

Tourists, for the purpose of Highlands County’s Grant Program, fall into two categories:

- ❖ High-Value Visitors – those staying overnight in paid accommodations.
- ❖ Day Visitors – those coming from areas near Highlands County who do not spend the night.

About the TDC & The Grant Program

The 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 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 lodging rental. The funds are designated to promote Highlands County as a preferred visitor destination.

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 Tourist Development Advertising Grant Program is to provide funding assistance for events that attract visitors to Highlands County, thereby impacting the economy of Highlands County.

Eligible Applicants: For-Profit Organizations, Not-For-Profit Organizations, Government Agencies, Chambers of Commerce.

Festival/event organizers of these entities may apply for TDC funds for promotion outside of Highlands County. The festival/event must have, as one of its main purposes, the attraction of tourists to Highlands County, Florida as evidenced by the promotion of the festival/event to tourists.

Reimbursable Advertising Grants

- 1. **Option I:** Reimbursement of advertising costs up to \$1,000 with no room verifications required.
- 2. **Option II:** Reimbursement of advertising costs based upon room verification at the rate of \$10 per verified room night up to 500 room nights. Maximum amount: \$5,000.

Brochure Grants

Design and printing of promotional brochures are eligible for advertising grant funds. Up to 50% of the total costs for design and printing of promotional brochures distributed outside of Highlands County will qualify. The maximum grant amount is \$500.00 and verification that the brochures were distributed outside Highlands County is required.

Sports Event Grants

Organized sporting tournaments may receive grant funds for field rental fees up to a maximum of \$5,000. Factors used in the 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

ELIGIBILITY

The following summarizes eligible and ineligible use of TDC funding.

Eligible Use of Funds for festivals/events (existing or new): NOTE**** Reimbursement for advertising is limited to advertising placed outside of Highlands County. When advertising covers areas both inside and outside Highlands County, documentation acceptable to the Board of County Commissioners must be provided establishing the percentage allocable to advertising outside Highlands County.

1. Pre-Event Marketing (must provide paid receipts)
2. Digital advertising (online, websites, social media)
3. Print advertisements/brochures
4. Radio advertisements
5. Television advertisements
6. Outdoor signage/billboards/banners
7. Other expenditures consistent with Florida Statutes & TDC objectives

Eligible Use of Funds for Sporting Events (existing or new): NOTE**** Reimbursement for advertising is limited to advertising placed outside of Highlands County. When advertising covers areas both inside and outside Highlands County, documentation acceptable to the Board of County Commissioners must be provided establishing the percentage allocable to advertising outside Highlands County.

1. Pre-Event Marketing (must provide paid receipts)
2. Digital advertisements (online, websites, social media)
3. Print advertisements/brochures
4. Radio advertisements
5. Television advertisements
6. Outdoor signage/billboards/banners
7. Expenses directly associated with sporting event, including sport field/facility rental
8. Other expenditures consistent with Florida Statutes & TDC objectives

Ineligible Use of Funds:

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

1. Billboards/banners/signage placed inside Highlands County
2. Awards to participants
3. Food/refreshments
4. Annual operating expenditures, including property taxes
5. Legal, medical, engineering, accounting, auditing, consultant, tax, or other professional services
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's deputies, ushers, marshals)
12. Fees to Sanctioning Bodies
13. In-Kind services
14. Maintenance, janitorial and other clean-up
15. Officials' fees and housing
16. Sales tax
17. Event website design
18. Posters or flyers to be used at the event
19. Ongoing or annual facility maintenance
20. Docents and/or employee wages
21. Timing and scoring equipment, supplies, and fees
22. Rental items including, but not limited to, tents, toilets, and barricades
23. Sports specific equipment (purchase or rental)
24. Volunteer and official's incentives
25. Medical and athletic training fees and supplies
26. Transportation costs
27. Contract labor costs
28. Programs that solicit advertising
29. Other expenditures not consistent with Florida Statutes or TDC objectives

Application Process

All requests for funds must be reviewed by Highlands County Tourism Staff; recommended by the TDC; and approved by the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners (HCBCC). Funds will be reimbursed after the event has been completed and receipts have been submitted.

Completed grant applications must be submitted to the Highlands County Tourism Office no later than two weeks prior to the TDC meeting and no less than 120 days prior to the event.

After submitting the Grant Application, the Applicant has one week to obtain the President and Secretary's signatures on the Highlands County Tourism Grant Contract. The contract must be turned in to the Tourism Office no later than one week prior to the scheduled TDC meeting. Electronic or faxed signatures will not be accepted. One application will be accepted per event. A completed W-9 form and a copy of the Florida Division of Corporations form must be submitted with the application. Once staff has evaluated an application, it will be placed on the earliest TDC agenda for funding consideration. An event representative must be available to answer questions at the TDC meeting.

For events serving alcoholic beverages: Not less than seven days prior to any event at which alcoholic beverages are sold or otherwise dispensed in any manner for consumption at the event, the Grantee shall deliver to the Highlands County Tourism Office a certificate of insurance naming "Highlands County, a political subdivision of the State of Florida, the Highlands County Tourist Development Council, and their respective elected and appointed officials, officers, employees, agents, and volunteers" as additional insureds. The certificate of insurance shall include Commercial General Liability, Products Liability, and Liquor Liability Insurance with minimum limits of \$1,000,000 per

occurrence, combined single limit for bodily injury liability and property damage liability, including premises and operations. Fire damage liability insurance coverage shall also be included with a minimum limit of \$100,000. The Certificate of Insurance must be signed by a person authorized by the insurer to bind coverage on its behalf.

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Criteria for Advertisement

1. All printed material for which reimbursement is requested must display the “Visit Sebring” logo (2016 version) on the advertisement.

2. All digital material for which reimbursement is requested must comply with at least one of the following: a) display the Visit Sebring logo on the advertisement, b) the advertisement must link to the Visit Sebring website (www.VisitSebring.com), and/or c) the website that is linked to the advertisement must display the Visit Sebring logo on the main page of that linked website.

3. All advertising for which reimbursement is requested must comply with the American Broadcasting Society’s standard “Advertising to be of a ‘G’ rating” and must have as one of its main purposes the attraction of tourists to Highlands County, Florida as evidenced by the promotion of the festival/event to tourists.

Reimbursement Procedures

The following documents are required in order to receive TDC funds following the festival/event. All documentation must be submitted to the Highlands County Tourism Office no later than 60 days following the event.

1. Invoices addressed to: Highlands County Board of County Commissioners
Attn: C/O Tourism Office
501 S. Commerce Avenue, Suite 3
Sebring, FL 33870
863-402-6909

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.

2. Copies of expenditure documents, including a copy of each cancelled check (front and back).

3. A copy of all product(s) developed or produced, such as brochures and advertising.

4. A copy of advertising “proof of publication tear sheet/screen shot”.

5. Documentation of outreach must be provided separately identifying the number of people your ad reached outside Highlands County and inside Highlands County. For brochures identify each distribution location and the quantities distributed at each location.

ATTACHMENT A
HIGHLANDS COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT GRANT
APPLICATION

SECTION 1
PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: _____
Title: _____
E-mail Address: _____
Work Phone: _____
Home Phone/Cell Phone: _____

COMPANY/ORGANIZATION APPLYING FOR THE GRANT

Business name as listed with the Florida Division of Corporations: _____

FEIN: _____

Address as listed with the Florida Division of Corporations: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Event Website: _____

EVENT INFORMATION

Event
Name/
Project
Name:

Event Location (Name of Park/Building/
Area):

Event
Address:

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Date the Event Opens: _____ Time the event opens: _____ : _____
MM/DD/YYYY HH MM/AM or PM

Date the Event Ends: _____ Time the event ends: _____ : _____
MM/DD/YYYY HH MM/AM or PM

REOCCURRING EVENT INFORMATION

How have you measured the success of your event in the past?

Ex: Ticket Sales/Participants/Vendors/Profit or Loss etc.... _____

Last Year Vs Previous Year's data

Year _____ Previous _____

Year _____ Last _____

Total _____ Gain or Loss _____

What is your total projected gain for this year's event? _____

What action do you plan to take this year to increase the success of the event? _____

SECTION 2

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

List all actual and potential funding sources for this event.

Funding Source	Actual	Potential	Amount
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ _____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ _____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ _____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ _____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ _____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ _____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ _____
	TOTAL		\$ _____

Check which grant you are applying for:

- Option I** **Option II** **Brochure Grant** **Sports Event up to**
\$1,000 **\$1000-\$5,000** **50% match up to \$500** **\$5,000**

Is this a new event to Highlands County?

- Yes or No

List all advertising you will be placing to promote the event and the amount you will be requesting the TDC to reimburse:

Vendor Name	Type of Advertising Digital, Print, Radio or Other	Full Amount of Buy	TDC Reimbursement Request Amount
_____	_____	\$ _____	\$ _____
_____	_____	\$ _____	\$ _____
_____	_____	\$ _____	\$ _____
_____	_____	\$ _____	\$ _____
_____	_____	\$ _____	\$ _____
_____	_____	\$ _____	\$ _____
_____	_____	\$ _____	\$ _____

TOTAL

\$

\$

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Move to recommend up to

\$

to

for advertising outside of Highlands County
the

Funds to be dispersed
from

room verifications required.

Grant Application Checklist

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

Initials

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

Date of Event: _____

Date of Application: _____

_____ 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).

_____ 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)

_____ 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.

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

_____ 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.

_____ 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 approves execution of the Grant Contract and that no expenditures will be reimbursed if the Board of County Commissioners does not approve execution of the Grant Contract.

_____ I understand that reimbursements following the festival/event will only be made for itemized, authorized expenses approved by the Board of County Commissioners in the fully executed Grant Contract.

_____ Each reimbursement request must include copies of paid invoices, 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. For brochures identify each distribution location and the quantities distributed at each location.

Authorized Agent: _____

Title: _____ Date: _____

Authorized Agent Signature: _____

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