



Guidelines for Tourism Grants

The Highlands Chamber of Commerce is offering Tourism Grants to assist in promoting tourism and economic growth. Approved Tourism Grants are funded through a 3% Occupancy Tax paid by visitors in Highlands' accommodations. Requests are received to fund various initiatives and activities subject to the provisions of Senate Bill 948 passed on August 1, 1986.

Funds provided by Occupancy Tax must be used for the purpose of promoting travel and tourism as stipulated in Senate Bill 948. To be considered for approval all grant requests must fully comply with these guidelines.

Senate Bill 948 reads in part:

“Section 1(e) Use of Tax Revenue. A taxing county shall place revenue collected from the tax levied under this act in a special Travel and Tourism Fund. Revenue in this Fund may be used only to promote travel and tourism in the county.”

Purpose:

Our goal for this grant program is to provide financial support to eligible organizations seeking funds to promote travel and tourism which will stimulate economic growth in the Highlands area and Macon County. The activity or initiative must be designed specifically to attract visitors, generating overnight and extended stays and/or serving visitors once they have arrived.

This grant program will look to fund eligible initiatives and activities related to tourism promotion, advertising, marketing, enhancement of attractions and the staging of special events to attract visitors. For this reason, all advertising and marketing must reach outside a 50-mile radius of Highlands, NC.

Eligibility:

Recipients

Applicants for Tourism Grants must:

- Be a Highlands or Macon County based 501c3 organization.
- Have an accounting of expenditures for the scope of work available for public inspection if requested.

Activities and Initiatives

All activities or initiatives must aid visitors in a better understanding, appreciation, or interpretation of their experience as a visitor to Highlands, NC. Activities and initiatives might include:

- Events

- Marketing and Advertising
- Enhancement of Attractions
- Programs

Exclusions:

- Funding will not be provided for events or programs conducted outside Highlands, NC.
- Funding will not be provided for advertising and marketing conducted only within 50 miles of Highlands, NC.
- Funds will not be provided for administrative or operating costs.

Application Requirements

All requests for Tourism Grant funds must include the following:

- Application for Tourism Grant Form found at Highlandschamber.org or by requesting a copy from grants@highlandschamber.org
- Details outlining the scope of work and how it is expected to attract visitors
- Extent of funds for the scope of work that are independent of the grant funding requested
- Date funds are required
- Anticipated visitation, audience profile, marketing plans and benefit to the community
- Applicant's financial statement for the preceding year
- IRS Letter of Organization
- Line item budget for the scope of work

Grant requests will not be presented to the Grant Committee for consideration until all required information is provided.

Grant Amounts

Grant funding will vary for each application.

Timetable:

Grants are accepted on a rolling basis and will be reviewed by the grant committee at the end of each quarter in the fiscal year. Recommended applicants will be presented to the Highlands Chamber Board of Directors for approval at the following Board meeting.

Notification:

Applicants will be notified and funded within 15 business days post Board approval.

Grant Committee Review

The Grant Committee will base the application review on:

- Eligibility
- Reflection of best interest for the organization and community of Highlands
- Adherence to goals and guidelines
- Qualifying activities and outcomes

Completed applications will be considered by the Grants Committee comprised of a member of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and Highlands Business Leaders. Recommendations from the Grant Committee will be provided to the Highlands Chamber Board of Directors for approval.

Funding Guidelines:

Approval and funding for Tourism Grants is at the discretion of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. Funding levels will be determined by the applicable fiscal year budget, available funds, and sound fiscal practices.

Scope of Work Modifications:

If there are changes during an applicant's scope of work, funded by the Tourism Grant, the grantee must notify the Executive Director in writing within 5 business days and request permission for use of / or continued use of the grant funding. The Executive Director will consult the Grants Committee and advise the grantee of their decision. The Highlands Chamber Board of Directors reserve the right to deny funds for modified scope of work.

Recognition:

All advertising must recognize that *funding is due in part to a Tourism Grant with Visit Highlands, NC*

Post Grant Reports

All funded grants must submit a post grant report prior to or on the deadline stated in the application along with proof of expenditures in the line item budget submitted with the grant.