

WASHINGTON TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TOURISM SPECIAL EVENTS SPONSORSHIP PACKAGE

Fiscal Year 2026 – 2027

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The Washington Tourism Development Authority (WTDA) awards grants in accordance with its By-Laws, established under an ordinance passed by the Washington City Council in 1994. Funding is derived from occupancy taxes collected from tourists and visitors staying in Airbnbs, hotels, and motels within the Washington city limits.

The primary purpose of the WTDA Special Events Sponsorship Packages is to stimulate and support Washington–Beaufort County organizations and agencies in the promotion and marketing of tourism and culturally related special events. These sponsorships are intended to help establish new special events and support existing events within the city limits of Washington as well as Beaufort County.

“Special Events” are defined as unique, noteworthy experiences centered on a specific activity that are open to the public and generate broad public interest. Examples include festivals, concerts, exhibitions, celebrations, and sporting events. Special events should ultimately be self-sustaining without continued reliance on WTDA Special Events Sponsorship funding.

Funding for the WTDA Special Events Program is included in the WTDA annual budget. The WTDA Board of Directors determines the budget allocation prior to the start of each new fiscal year. Special event grant applications are accepted and considered twice per fiscal year (*see “Application Process – 1a & 1b”*).

APPLICATION ELIGIBILITY:

1. Capital Improvements, such as beautification, rehabilitation, and enhancements, will **NOT** be considered for the WTDA Special Events Sponsorships. Special events that generate public interest within Beaufort County and attract visitors outside the county will only be considered. Those events may include:
 - a. Festivals, concerts, exhibitions, and celebrations.
 - b. Recreation leagues that attract regional and statewide tournaments to Washington and/or Beaufort County sports complexes.

- c. Virtual events will **NOT** be eligible
- 2. Special events must be located within Beaufort County to qualify. Preference will be given to events within the City limits, however events within the County will be considered.
- 3. Applicants may submit only one application per submission window (see “Application Process – 1a & 1b”). A special event is not eligible to receive funding in consecutive submission periods.
- 4. Established events must be self-sustaining and able to succeed without WTDA support. New events must have a stated plan of efforts to become self-sustaining.
- 5. Allowable expenses may only include:
 - a. Advertising and marketing of the special event. This may include physical and digital ads, event flyers, paid social media ads;
 - b. Special event merchandise used for promotional and event use.
- 6. Routine operating expenses are **NOT** eligible. Those expenses include, but are not limited to:
 - a. permits, salaries, equipment, and other non-marketing related items.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

- 1. Event organizers will have two submission windows for grant applications.
 - a. **Window 1:** Applications may be submitted from July 15, 2026, through August 12, 2026. Applications will be reviewed at the WTDA Board of Directors meeting on August 20, 2026.
 - b. **Window 2:** Applications may be submitted from January 20, 2027, through February 10, 2027. Applications will be reviewed at the WTDA Board of Directors meeting on February 18, 2027.
- 2. Prior to submission, event organizers must discuss their application with the WTDA Executive Director to jointly review the proposal and confirm that it aligns with WTDA guidelines. If an application does not meet the initial criteria, the WTDA Executive Director reserves the right to reject the application.

3. At the time of submission, event organizers must provide a detailed event budget, including, but not limited to, marketing and advertising expenses, operational costs, and sources of income.
4. If an application is advanced for review by the WTDA Board of Directors, the event organizer must attend the Board of Directors meeting and present their application. The application will then be reviewed and voted on by the Board of Directors.
5. The WTDA Executive Director will contact the event organizer within five (5) business days following the Board of Directors meeting to communicate the results of the vote via email.

SPONSORSHIP AWARDS:

1. To be approved, an application must be reviewed by the WTDA Board of Directors and receive a minimum of four (4) approved votes.
2. If funding is approved, the event organizer must list and recognize WTDA as a sponsor in accordance with the event's designated recognition levels. Organizers will receive a high-resolution version of the WTDA logo for promotional use. The logo may not be modified in any way without prior written permission from the WTDA Executive Director.
3. Maximum award amounts will be determined based on the following tiers:
 - a. **Tier 1:** Up to \$2,500 – Events attracting more than 3,000 visitors. Benefits include:
 - i. Event promotion through WTDA media partners
 - ii. Paid social media advertising
 - iii. Proxi Maps for event
 - iv. WTDA presence at the event, including photography and outreach
 - b. **Tier 2:** Up to \$1,500 – Events attracting fewer than 3,000 visitors. Benefits include:
 - i. Paid social media advertising
 - ii. Proxi Maps for event
 - iii. WTDA presence at the event, including photography and outreach
 - c. **Tier 3:** Up to \$1,000 – Events attracting fewer than 1,500 visitors. Benefits include:
 - i. Proxi Maps for event

- ii. WTDA presence at the event, including photography and outreach
- d. **Tier 4:** Up to \$500 – Events attracting more than 500 visitors. Benefits include:
 - i. WTDA presence at the event, including photography and outreach

AWARD FUNDS:

1. Documentation **MUST** be submitted to the WTDA Executive Director before funds are distributed (*See “Application Eligibility - 4 & 5” for allowed expenses*). Required documentation includes:
 - a. Copies of invoices and/or credit card receipts
 - b. Samples of collateral materials and digital advertising used for the event
2. If an invoice **EXCEEDS** the awarded amount, distributed funds will be limited to the amount approved by the WTDA Board of Directors.
3. If an invoice is **LESS** than the awarded amount, distributed funds will reflect only the invoice total. Any remaining funds may be applied to another eligible invoice. If no additional invoice is submitted, the WTDA reserves the right to amend the approved funding amount.
4. Funds may be **DENIED** if the event organizer submits false documentation or uses distributed funds for purposes other than approved advertising and marketing expenses.

SUBMISSION:

1. Submit your form to eruyle@washingtonnc.gov
2. Eligible submissions will only be accepted during the two window periods (*see “Application Process – 1a & 1b”*).
3. Please include the following documentation in your submission:
 - a. Event Budget: including detailed marketing line
 - b. Marketing Material: brochures, flyers, ads (*digital and physical*)
 - c. WTDA Special Events Agreement (*page 5*)

Dear Grant Applicant,

Before submitting your grant request, please ensure that you have carefully reviewed the WTDA Sponsorship Grant Program Rules and Regulations. It is important that all eligibility requirements are met prior to submission. All event organizers are required to meet with the WTDA Executive Director to confirm that the applicant and event meet the established criteria.

If you agree to the rules and regulations of the WTDA Sponsorship Grant Program, please sign below. Submit this signed document with your application, along with the other required materials outlined in the guidelines (see "Submission - 3").

If you have any questions, please contact the WTDA office at (252) 975-9652.

Sincerely,

Erin Ruyle

Washington Torusim Develop Authority Executive Director

AGREEMENT:

My signature below attests that I have read and understand the rules and regulations of the WTDA Special Events Grant Program.

Event Organizer

Date

Name of Organization: _____

Mailing address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Preferred method of contact: ☐ Phone ☐ Email

Project Director: _____ Title: _____

Project Name: _____

Total Project Budget: _____ Amount Being Requested: _____

Source(s) of Project Funding: _____

Source of Organization/Agency Operating Funds: _____

Date Project to Begin: _____ Date Project to End: _____

Is your organization For Profit or Non-Profit? _____

Federal ID#: _____ Organization's fiscal year ends: _____

What is your organization's annual budget? _____

Anticipated Visitor Attendance: _____

Anticipated impact on Hotel/Motel Occupancy: _____

Narrative Description of Project (include need assessment/purpose of project, outline of project procedure, intended results of project) _____

Any additional comments that support the need for project and/or projects merit as an event or activity to enhance Washington as a travel destination. _____

How will the requested funds be utilized? Complete the section(s) specific to the request.

1. Special Events/Projects (be specific in expense breakdown)

2. Marketing/Promotion (if paid media specify name/type of media or publication and the date of airing/appearance; if audio visual specify slides, film, video, etc., for all other be specific in expense breakdown)

3. Collateral Material (specify type and number printed, include breakdown of design, layout and printing cost)

4. Travel and/or Travel Show (specify breakdown and show name)

5. Recreation Leagues (show specific use of requested funds)

6. Other (be specific)

Total Requested Funds: _____

Name & Address to appear on check: _____

Project Director Signature: _____

(DATE)

Signature of Organization Official : _____

(DATE)