



2026 Tourism Gives Support Program

Hamilton County Tourism (HCT) seeks to use the tourism economy as a catalyst to give back to the community it serves. HCT strives to reduce the social, economic, and environmental impacts of traditional tourism through activities that regenerate and provide a net benefit to our communities and residents, while supporting a meaningful experience for our visitors.

HCT supports the community by investing in projects that advance the following four guiding principles:

- **Planet:** Partner with organizations that support environmental stewardship.
- **Prosperity:** Support opportunities for equitable economic inclusion for all.
- **People:** Amplify all voices and cultures equally.
- **Place:** Make wise investments that make Hamilton County both a great place to live and visit.

Each nonprofit organization's funding request should be centered around one of the four Ps below:

PLANET: Environmental sustainability is vital to Hamilton County Tourism. Grants will be considered for environmental practices at events that draw visitors, implement action items that support education and action, or provide outdoor programs that raise awareness around a topic and new ideas that innovate and inspire.

PROSPERITY: HCT wants all partners to be economically viable. Data Intelligence, marketing and communications strategies, new ideas, growing workforce, and partner education are all examples of prosperity grant projects. Also considered in PROSPERITY is seasonality. Hamilton County sees a decline in visitation in colder months, late fall and early spring and encourages innovative ideas on how to attract visitors during these periods both indoors and out to provide year-around support to our local businesses while also balancing the pressures of visitation throughout the calendar.

PEOPLE: Hamilton County Tourism welcomes peoples of all races, ethnicities, abilities, gender identities, cultures and sexual orientation. HCT encourages organizations that produce public programs to explore how they might better represent diversity, equity, access, inclusion and belonging in those programs.

PLACE: Placemaking is an important component of community and attracting visitors. Many Hamilton County partners gather people and showcase culture through public art, festivals and other events. We encourage programs that highlight what is unique about our community's past, present and future.

Hamilton County Tourism, Inc.

37 East Main Street
Carmel, IN 46032

317.848.3181

VisitHamiltonCounty.com

Eligible organization types + funding levels

Request Amount, please note the following:

- Each organization must apply as the organization type with which they qualify (listed below).
- An organization grant request cannot exceed the corresponding level listed below.
- Organizations may apply for more than one category, but an award is not guaranteed.
- Festival attendance is measured by gate tickets, a system that attempts to accurately count visitors (e.g. people counters, geolocation data if available, zone counting)

Arts Districts, up to \$3,500

State designated arts districts that provide regular public programming on a community-wide scale.

Cities/Towns, up to \$5,000

Parks, downtown activations, city funded special events.

Festivals (10,000+ in attendance), up to \$5,000

Festivals are short-term in nature and must appeal to a wide variety of audiences, including out-of-area visitors. School festivals do not qualify. Faith related organizations can apply if the program is public, of general interest and not faith focused. Festivals with attendance under 10,000 in attendance should apply as a small, medium, or large tourism-related nonprofit organization (depending on budget).

Nonprofit Tourism-Related Small Organizations, up to \$5,000

Contributing nonprofits that have consistent operating hours, tell a story of a community to visitors, and have regular special programs. Small organizations have a budget of less than \$1,000,000.

Nonprofit Tourism-Related Medium Organizations, up to \$7,500

Contributing nonprofits that have consistent operating hours, tell a story of a community to visitors, and have regular special programs. Medium organizations have a budget of \$1,000,001 - \$5,000,000.

Nonprofit Tourism-Related Large Organizations, up to \$10,000

Iconic nonprofits with a permanent, physical location that have regular operating hours, can prove they attract regional audiences and are tourism-friendly or support a culture that is tourism focused. At least 10% of the organization's audience must come from beyond 50 miles (as proven by geolocation data or ticket sales). Large organizations have a budget of \$5,000,001+.

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Requirements to receive financial support from Hamilton County Tourism:

- Must be a nonprofit that has some interest in attracting out-of-area visitors.
- Complete the [grant interest form](#), details below.
- Add visitor-focused events to the [online Hamilton County Tourism calendar](#).
- Add a link to VisitHamiltonCounty.com on your website if the awarded grant level qualifies for sponsor recognition.
- Add the Hamilton County Tourism logo to marketing materials if the awarded grant level qualifies for sponsor logo placement.
- Conduct periodic check-ins with Sarah Buckner, Director of Community Engagement (e.g. email updates, in person meetings, PR Power Hour)
- Engage socially with @VisitHamiltonCo if your organization has a digital presence. HCT's links:
 - [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#)
- **No support can be given without returning a signed version of this letter of agreement form AND the organizational W9 form by the identified deadline.**

Proposal submission

To submit your project proposal, copy this [one page](#) template to a word document. Complete the template and email to Sarah Buckner at the date listed below.

Scoring Rubric

- Historical compliance with requirements listed above – 10%
 - *New applications will be given 10%*
- Shows use of one of the four P's – 45%
- Unique Idea– 45%

2026 Grant Timeline

January 5, 2026 – Nonprofit organizations may begin to submit the project [one sheet](#) to Sarah Buckner via [email](#). This document is required to receive grant funds.

February 13, 2026 – Project one sheet documents are due.

March 6, 2026 – HCT Board review of grant requests.

March 13, 2026 – Funding announced.

April 30, 2026 – Signed letter of agreement + W9 must be submitted to Hamilton County Tourism.

If funds remain, Hamilton County Tourism will consider a fall grant cycle. Contact [Sarah Buckner](#), Director of Community Engagement, with any questions.

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