

Fayette County Tourism Grant Program
Criteria and Guidelines
2016

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Fifty percent of the Fayette County Room Tax is appropriated for a grant program specifically established to support the county's non-profit 501(c)(3) and for-profit tourism assets. **The purpose of this grant program is to enhance the tourism experience, increase tourism, visitation and overnight stays within Fayette County.** Awards are granted annually on the basis of merit as determined by the Fayette County Tourism Grant Review Committee and administered by the Fayette County Commissioners and the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau.

CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES

1. 501(c)(3) Non-profit Organizations:

Grants may be awarded to any 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose primary place of business is in Fayette County and **whose mission is directly related to tourism and tourism development**, i.e. museums, historical sites, performing arts organizations, etc., that submit a request for such funds utilizing the official grant application furnished for this purpose. Grants may be awarded in the following four project categories:

A. Marketing Programs: Marketing and advertising programs must be targeted to media that primarily reach out to non-Fayette County residents. Cooperative programs which include tourism partners in the three-county Laurel Highlands region are eligible. The Grant Program will not fund advertisements in local event programs (i.e. high school sports programs, local dance troupe programs, etc.)

B. Capital Projects: Capital improvements that benefit tourism and augment the visitor's experience by developing new or enhancing existing Fayette County 501(c)(3) nonprofit tourist attractions or amenities will be considered. Funds may be used as matching grant funds for implementation of capital improvement projects.

C. Operational Expenses: Grants for rent, utilities, land phones (not mobile service), office equipment such as desks, chairs, computers, software, copy machines, etc. consumable supplies such as stationery, paper, etc. will be considered. However, grants will **not** be awarded for:

- Staff payroll expenses (such as salaries, wages, health/life insurance or other such employee benefits)
- Travel expenses (such as gas, mileage, air fare or other transportation, lodging, etc.)
- Sectarian religious purposes

D. Tourism Education Projects: Tourism education projects that will provide training and educational events with the intended purpose of building and enhancing the Fayette County tourism infrastructure will be considered. Educational projects can include (but are not limited to) topics such as: developing frontline staff communication skills; connecting visitors to Fayette County sites and venues; packaging & partnerships, becoming visitor-ready, etc. This grant category **is limited to** "intra-industry education", therefore Tourism Education Project grants will not be awarded to public or private schools, universities, or career/technical schools.

2. For-Profit Organizations:

Marketing grants only may be awarded to any for-profit tourism related business or organization located within Fayette County that submits a request for such funds utilizing the official grant application furnished for this purpose and whose mission and operation are directly related to tourism and tourism development. For-profit entities are required to provide a dollar for dollar (1:1) match for grant dollars awarded. The source of the match must be detailed in the grant budget worksheet. A For-profit can only apply for one grant.

- A. **Marketing Programs:** Marketing and advertising programs must be targeted to media that primarily reach out to non-Fayette County residents. Cooperative programs which include tourism partners in the three-county Laurel Highlands region are eligible. The Grant Program will not fund advertisements in local event programs (i.e. high school sports programs, local dance troupe programs, etc.) Sources for the match must be detailed in the budget worksheet required as part of the application.

Grants are awarded on an annual basis. The schedule for the 2016 Fayette County Tourism Grant Program is as follows:

- A Coffee Chat will be held: **Wednesday, January 20, 2016**
- Applications will be available: **Friday, January 22, 2016**
- Deadline for applications to be submitted: **Friday, March 4, 2016, 4:30 PM**
- Awards will be announced: **Mid-April 2016**

3. Award amounts must be appropriately utilized within 10 months (**before February 28, 2017**). Based on the dollar amount, grants will be distributed with a minimum of one-half of the grant awarded at the time of the announcement. In the event a partial distribution of the grant is made, the remaining one-half of the grant will be distributed when the project is 50% completed. Prior to distribution of the remainder of a grant, the grant recipient must submit a written request for the balance of the grant, copies of invoices verifying the expenditure of the first portion of the grant, a brief project update and a "certification letter" to:

**ATTN: Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau
Fayette Tourism Grant Program
120 East Main Street
Ligonier, PA 15658**

4. If the funds are not appropriately utilized within the 10 month period (**ending February 28, 2017**), applicants must inform the grant committee in writing and either request an extension or return, to the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, administrator of the Fayette Tourism Grant Program, the entire amount that has not been appropriately utilized along with any interest accrued accompanied by an explanation of why the funds were not used.

5. As a provision of accepting the grant, awardees must provide adequate proof that the funds received were used for their intended purpose. **A final project report** is required not later than **May 31, 2017** and must include:

- A. A Copy of approved Budget Expenditure form from grant application.
- B. Completed Grant Expenditure form with copies of invoices and proof of payment.

- C. A summary report of the completed project including any traceable results and pictures of capital improvements (if applicable).
- D. Final Grant Expenditure Certification form executed by a principal of the entity that received the grant attesting to the fact that the grant funds were used for the purpose(s) awarded.
- E. If a grant was for a capital project, photos (before & after) of the project **must** be included in the final report.
- F. If the grant was for a marketing project, copies of any advertisements, press releases, or samples of media placements/media logs are to be included in the final report.
- G. Grant recipients shall abide by all local, state, and federal laws and regulations and agree to furnish all receipts and a certification letter to verify the expenditure of any grant funds received. In addition, grant recipients understand that the expenditure of grant funds received might be subject to audit and or further verification and agree to cooperate with any such audit or verification process.

6. Additional requirements:

A. If a grant was for operational expenses, the report should include an itemized/categorized list of all such expenses paid.

B. If the grant was for a tourism education project, the report should include full details of the education programs developed or conducted with full facts and figures regarding presenter(s), attendees and locations.

7. Grant applications must be typewritten. Handwritten applications will not be considered by the grant committee.

8. A non-profit organization may request a grant for each of the four project categories cited above and each must be submitted on a separate application. However, any non-profit organization may not file more than one grant request for any of the four project categories.

9. If, at the deadline for submission of the current year's applications, any recipient of a prior grant that has not submitted the required receipts and supporting documentation within the prescribed deadline explaining and evidencing the use of the grant shall be "ineligible" to apply for a future grant until such receipts and supporting documentation required herein are submitted and accepted.

Based on extenuating circumstances that might have precluded a grant from being utilized, a deadline extension may be requested by a grant recipient and, if approved, said recipient shall be eligible to apply for a subsequent grant during the extension period.

The grant committee reserves the right to approve or reject an extension request and the decision of the committee or its designated representative(s) shall be final and binding upon all parties.

10. It shall be the sole responsibility of any recipient of a grant to be observant and adhere to the prescribed deadlines relative to the appropriate utilization of any such grant. Neither the county commissioners, the grant committee nor the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau shall be responsible for monitoring such deadlines or informing any grant recipient of an impending or expired deadline. Failure

of a grant recipient to comply with the deadline relative to a grant will subject said recipient to the covenants and provisions contained in these Criteria and Guidelines.

11. Applicants should not assume that they will be awarded a grant on an annual basis, nor should they consider these tourism grants a permanent addition to their budget.

12. All non-profit applicants **must provide a copy of their IRS Determination 501(c)(3) Letter and a list of their Board of Directors. Failure to do so will render an application ineligible.**

13. A for-profit business that receives a grant may be required to treat the grant *as income and is responsible for paying any necessary applicable taxes.*

14. Awardees shall publicly acknowledge the Fayette County Tourism Grant Program through all reasonable means as a stipulation of accepting such awards. This includes recognition of funding on printed media, social media pages, websites and any other media that might be engaged utilizing grant funds.

15. Applicants should use only the official application for submission of grant requests. Photographs may also be included. Individual applications should be secured with a paperclip. **DO NOT** staple set together and **DO NOT** place applications in folders or binders.

PLEASE NOTE THAT FIVE COPIES OF EACH APPLICATION MUST BE SUBMITTED WITHIN THE PRESCRIBED DEADLINE IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED AND HANDWRITTEN APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AS STIPULATED IN § 7 ABOVE.

FAYETTE COUNTY TOURISM GRANT REVIEW COMMITTEE

1. The Tourism Grant Review Committee shall be comprised of five (5) members:
 - Three (3) representatives appointed by the Fayette County Commissioners, annually to serve one (1) year terms
 - The President & CEO of the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau (LHVB) or the President & CEO's designee
 - A Fayette County lodging community member of the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau having the highest volume of hotel tax collected for the prior year.

In the event that a member of the Tourism Grant Review Committee serves on the board of the applicant organization or event, or is affiliated in another manner, it is mandatory that said member recuse himself/herself from review and/or decision making process of that specific application.

2. The committee will review all grant applications and announce awards mid to late April 2016.

3. Grant awards shall be presented to each recipient jointly by representatives of the Fayette County Tourism Grant Committee and the Fayette County Commissioners.

4. Nothing shall prevent the Fayette County Tourism Grant Review Committee from withholding part or all of the grant funds available for annual awards should the committee believe that insufficient requests have been made justifying the full distribution of those funds. Should funds be remaining at the end of any fiscal year, those funds may be rolled forward to be utilized in the subsequent year's grant program.

5. The Fayette County Tourism Grant Review Committee will review these Criteria and Guidelines on an annual basis to enhance, amend, or annul them.