



Destination Marketing Grant Guidelines

A. Introduction

The objective of the Henderson County Destination Marketing Grant program is to support Henderson County tourism partners with their marketing needs to promote visitation to the county. The Henderson County Tourism Development Authority (HCTDA) is empowered to make grants to its tourism partners under the authority granted by its enabling legislation, Session Law 2013-61, House Bill 545, Section 1, (e) Use of Tax Revenue: “The county shall, on a quarterly basis, remit the net proceeds of the room occupancy and tourism development tax levied under this act to the Henderson County Tourism Development Authority. The Authority shall use at least two thirds of the net proceeds of the room occupancy tax levied under this act to promote travel and tourism in Henderson County and shall use the remainder for tourism related expenditures.”

HCTDA and a grants committee comprised of representatives from the Henderson County tourism sector and appointed by the HCTDA Board will determine the eligibility of applicants and make recommendations to the HCTDA Board for funding. The HCTDA Board makes all final decisions regarding the awarding of any grants. This program is funded entirely by occupancy taxes paid by overnight visitors staying in lodging in Henderson County.

A. General Eligibility Requirements

To qualify for a HCTDA Destination Marketing Grant, the applicant must:

- a. Be a tourism-related business or other organization located in Henderson County that attracts visitors from outside the county
- b. Be organized under the laws of North Carolina or, if organized under the laws of another state, registered to do business in North Carolina
- c. Be registered as a federally-recognized non-profit, if applicable
- d. Have been in operation in Henderson County for at least one (1) year prior to the deadline for application submission
- e. Not be a property primarily used for lodging
- f. Demonstrate its intent to attract visitors to Henderson County
- g. Have a specific plan for how the requested funding will be invested to reach visitors or audiences outside of western North Carolina

B. Limitations

Limitations imposed by HCTDA upon the Destination Marketing Grant program include but are not limited to the following:

- a. Organizations may apply for funding for multiple marketing projects/ events held during a single twelve-month period but cannot apply for multiple years of funding. Applicants must complete a separate application for each event for which they are seeking funding.
- b. The amount requested in the application must be for a minimum of \$500 and no more than \$20,000.
- c. HCTDA reserves the right to cancel the Destination Marketing Grant program at any time and for any reason. HCTDA is not obligated to fund any request, nor is it obligated to expend the entire amount budgeted for the Destination Marketing Grant program in a given fiscal year. Recognizing that its resources are limited, HCTDA may, in its sole discretion, grant funding that is less than that requested by the applicant.
- d. HCTDA will not make payment directly to any vendor or individual. Payment will only be made to the applicant organization.
- e. Applicants that are approved for funding will be reimbursed for expenses based upon invoices submitted in accordance with the funding agreement. Pre-payment of expenses will not be considered.

- f. The grantee may be forced to return some or all funding plus interest if the grantee is found to have used the funding inappropriately or otherwise violated the funding agreement.
- g. Funding granted through this program must be utilized within twelve (12) months of the approval of the HCTDA board
- h. Applications received after the published deadline will not be considered.
- i. The applicant assumes the burden of all expenses associated with this application.

C. Permitted Uses

Examples of permitted uses of Destination Marketing Grant funding include but are not limited to:

- a. Production of brochures and other print collateral
- b. Out-of-market print, television, and radio advertising
- c. Billboards and other out-of-home media located outside western North Carolina
- d. Out-of-market trade and consumer show registration fees
- e. Targeted digital media, including search engine marketing targeting potential visitors to Henderson County, promoted posts on social media, and banner ads and similar types of pay-per-click advertising
- f. Out-of-market mobile marketing
- g. Expenses associated with out-of-market public relations efforts
- h. Design costs, including website design
- i. Professional photography and videography services

D. Ineligible Uses

Examples of ineligible uses of Destination Marketing Grant funding include but are not limited to:

- a. Marketing, advertising, or other expenses that is not intended to attract tourists or other business travelers to Henderson County
- b. Local print, television, radio, and advertising that is limited to western North Carolina
- c. Website hosting
- d. Operational expenses
- e. Capital expenditures
- f. Debt reduction
- g. Signage at a place of business
- h. Wayfinding signage
- i. Travel expenses
- j. Amateur photography and videography services
- k. Search engine optimization
- l. Fundraising expenses
- m. Event expenses (unless for marketing of an event)
- n. Influencer marketing
- o. Sweepstakes awards or similar kinds of prizes

E. Evaluation Criteria

Criteria to be used by the HCTDA grants committee to evaluate applications include the following:

1. Compliance with the stated requirements of the program
2. Detailed information providing for how the funding will be invested
3. Ability to help generate visitation to Henderson County
4. Eligibility of the applicant as a tourism-related business or organization
5. Alignment with the goals of HCTDA and the destination brand of Henderson County

Incomplete applications will not be considered. The grants committee will look especially favorably upon investments in marketing that help drive visitation during non-peak periods of visitation. Peak months for visitation to Henderson County are June, July, and October. Applicants which are not funded may reapply in future application cycles, but the applicant should seek feedback from HCTDA staff before doing so.

F. Schedule

1. The HCTDA will determine the amount of funding to be budgeted for the Destination Marketing Grant program during its annual planning prior to the start of the new fiscal year in July.
2. The HCTDA will notify tourism partners of the opening of the annual grant cycle at least 30 days prior to a pre-application conference.
3. The pre-application conference to discuss funding requirements and answer questions of potential applicants will be held approximately 30 days in advance of the application deadline. Attendance at this conference is not mandatory for applicants.
4. All applications must be submitted online. A grants committee of the HCTDA will evaluate all applications for funding and make final recommendations to the HCTDA Board. The HCTDA Board will then review and approve recommended applications for funding. All decisions of the Board will be final.
5. A signed funding agreement between the applicant and the HCTDA will be required of any applicant receiving prior to receiving funds through this program.

G. Reporting

Grantees who are awarded Destination Marketing Grant funds will be required to comply with the reporting requirements set forth in the funding agreement.

H. Notice of Public Record

Because HCTDA is a quasi-public entity, it is subject to Chapter 132 of North Carolina General Statutes. Consequently, this application and any materials submitted as part of this application and any documentation regarding any funding received are subject to disclosure to any party, public or private, upon request.