



VISIT PENSACOLA

EVENT GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

1/22/24



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1401 E. Gregory St.
Pensacola, FL 30502



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Visit Pensacola Event Grant Program

A. INTRODUCTION

The Escambia County Tourist Development Council (TDC) was created pursuant to the State of Florida Local Option Tourist Development Act and Escambia County Ordinance Chapter 90, Article II. Section 90-31 – 90-64. The TDC guides the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners in the administering of funds collected from a local option tourist development tax (commonly known as the "bed tax" or TDT) on occupied transient lodging sales, i.e., hotels/motels, campgrounds, and condominiums. The funds are designated to promote Escambia County as a preferred visitor destination with an emphasis on the shoulder season of late August through May. Visit Pensacola allocates funds from its annual budget to a grant program for local groups and organizations that coordinate events with a demonstrated history of visitor impact or the significant potential to draw visitors to the area. These grant dollars are to be used on the marketing of events creating awareness, and bringing visitors from outside of Escambia County. **The dollars are to be used 75% on the marketing of events via Visit Pensacola's marketing agency of record to ensure awareness, and visitors from outside of Escambia County. 25% of the Event Grant dollars may be used by the event organizer for the operations of said event.**

Applications are evaluated against established criteria and historic precedent. The number and extent of these grants will be dependent upon the availability of designated funds and specific allocations. Ideally, the funds allocated by Visit Pensacola will eventually be returned through an increase in transient lodging sales and the tourist development tax generated from those sales and increased spending in the community that positively affects local sales tax revenues. **The maximum grant request is \$50K and will be awarded on a pass/fail score system. An event must receive a score of 70 or higher for award consideration.**

B. DEFINITIONS

An "Event" shall be defined as an organized concert, exhibition, festival, experience, fair, conference or celebration which is conducted according to a prearranged schedule and in which public interest and demand are manifested. For the purpose of this grant program, the public should extend beyond Escambia County to those living outside Escambia County who would consider visiting the destination and staying overnight to observe or participate.

C. STATEMENT OF POLICIES

- 1) TDT funds expended for the event/experience need to meet the allowable uses as defined by the governing state statute. *(Tourism grant funds that are expended for an activity, service, venue, or event, the activity, service, venue, or event shall have as one of its main purposes the attraction of tourists as evidenced by the marketing of the activity, service, venue, or event to tourists. For more information see Florida State Statutes 125.0104 section 5(A)2.)*



- 2) Grant funds are intended to supplement the sponsoring organization's budget and not be the sole source of funding. Higher consideration will be provided to applicants who have a lower percentage of TDT dollars as part of the total revenue.
- 3) Grant applications will be on an annual basis; however, the time between the award and the event/product start date cannot be under 90 days to maximize advertising to potential visitors to the county. Grant requests are not guaranteed from year to year.
- 4) Paid lodging secured or promoted for the event/experience must be located within Escambia County.
- 5) Funding shall be provided as reimbursement for approved actual expenditures upon completion of the event/experience. Proof of payment must be provided. Proof of payment may be submitted in the form of a "paid" vendor credit card receipt or a cleared check. If a check is used, a copy of both the front and back of cleared check must be provided. Written confirmation from a vendor that expenditure has been paid in full is necessary. A detailed listing of what is needed for reimbursement is attached to Exhibit A.
- 6) To be eligible for final payment, a completed Post-Program Report must be submitted within 45 days of the program end. The report must include tracking statistics regarding out-of-town visitors and their overall impact on the local economy, particularly on transient lodging facilities and occupancy. **Failure to submit a complete Post-Event Report will result in disqualification for support and could place future eligibility in question.** If the event occurs near the end of the fiscal year, the request for reimbursement must be received by September 30.
- 7) Any funds granted will be subject to audit including Escambia County budget office and the Clerk of the Court office.
- 8) To qualify for reimbursement, proof of liability insurance must be provided by the host organization in the amount of \$1 million with Visit Pensacola Inc. as a named insured.
- 9) **Visit Pensacola will lead 75% of the approved funds in the form of advertising, public relations, marketing or research programs through its respective agency of record on behalf of the applicant.**
- 10) Recognition of Visit Pensacola must be included where appropriate on all marketing material and the organization's Web site referred to in public relations activities. A camera-ready logo will be provided. All marketing materials with the Visit Pensacola logo must be presented with the Post Event Report. Failure to include the logo can be cause for disallowing reimbursement of that portion of the grant.
- 11) Funding is not intended to support administrative costs or non-public events. Unallowable expenses: *general and administrative expenses including salaries or supplements to salaries, building, renovating and/or remodeling expenses, prize money, scholarships, awards, permanent equipment purchases, debts incurred prior to grant requests, programs which solicit advertising or sponsorships, hospitality or social functions and advertising that only reaches within of Escambia County and its residents.*
- 12) Applicants should be aware that Visit Pensacola via its research company will survey lodging partners and event attendees to obtain visitation data.
- 13) Entities receiving TDT funds from other entities (ACE, Pensacola Sports, Escambia County) are not eligible to receive a grant through Visit Pensacola.



D. FUNDING ELIGIBILITY

The intent of the Grant Program is to provide funding assistance for events/experiences that attract overnight visitors to Escambia County impacting the commercial lodging industry, hotels/motels, campgrounds, condominiums as well as restaurants, retail establishments, and other businesses. To be considered for funding, the following criteria have been established:

1. Events/Experiences must take place in Escambia County
2. The event/experience must have the potential to bring or have a documented history of bringing out-of-town visitors.
3. Tourism must be the primary focus of all funded events/performance/programs/experiences
4. All events/performance/programs/experiences must be open and accessible to the general public.
5. Each application must include a signed Certification and Compliance page and a current W9.
6. Applicant must provide a detailed marketing plan and detailed budget. Templates provided at the mandatory Event Grant Workshop.
7. Applicant must demonstrate enough available funds for planning and implementing the event/performance/program/experience.
 - This is a reimbursement grant. Therefore, funds for awarded grants are only paid following the submission of paid invoices documenting eligible expenses and submission of the interim or final report.
 - Applicant must provide a detailed program budget using the template provided. 75% or more of funds must be used for marketing led by Visit Pensacola's agency of record and 25% may be used for operations by the event organizer. **Failure to comply will not be eligible.**
 - Visit Pensacola Grant Funds cannot exceed 50% of the total Grant Applicants event expense budget. **Failure to comply will not be eligible.**
8. Applicant must show proof of application or necessary permits required at the time of application.
9. The program must use commercial lodging establishments within Escambia County.
10. Applicant must be an established organization qualified to do business in Florida. Organizations that are not Florida corporations/organizations/entities must qualify with the Florida Department of State to do business in Florida.
11. Must provide liability insurance coverage with Visit Pensacola as a named insured.

E. VISITOR TRACKING

To assess each event's impact on the Pensacola-Escambia County transient lodging industry, Visit Pensacola wants to emphasize the importance of tracking the number of overnight visitors attending the event/experience. We will work directly with our research company to intercept visitors at each event to ascertain various data, including party size, length of stay, the reason for visit, awareness of the event, spending and other data. Please provide the best contact for scheduling of intercepts.



In addition, it is suggested that you implement the following to help track visitors to your event:

- **Room Block & Pick-Up Reports from Lodging Properties:** Utilize Visit Pensacola's website to get recommendations on lodging properties (hotel/motel, condo, and campground) in Escambia County. Determine the appropriate properties to partner with to set up rate codes for your event. By promoting those properties in your marketing, you will help drive overnight business to the destination, thus generating more spending in the community.
- **Visitor Tracking Information:** Specific data can be tracked to be used for future marketing (zip code, email address, street address, social media address). You can gather this at the program, during a purchase process or through other technology applications.

F. SELF-EVALUATION OF APPLICATION

- Does the event meet all of the above-listed Qualifying Criteria and Allowable Use of Funding (failure to meet these criteria may result in disqualification of the application)
- Expected total attendance and percent of total attendance attributed to out of county visitors
- Does the applicant have a methodology to track and compile visitor participation
- Projected number of overnight stays and period of lodging occupancy
- Experience and qualifications of management and partners coordinating the event
- Is the event unique to the area
- Is this event during a non-peak tourism period or for events with period-appropriate dates
- Will the event generate an enhanced tourism experience and does it provide a significant draw for tourists
- Does the applicant have a completed marketing plan and detailed budget
- Did the applicant attend a mandatory Visit Pensacola workshop

Applications will be scored with a maximum score of one hundred (100) points per applicant. A score of 70 must be received for consideration.

Total Point Scale

100 – 70 points: receive 100% of requested funds.

Visit Pensacola will lead 75% of the approved funds in the form of advertising, public relations, marketing or research programs through its respective agency of record on behalf of the applicant. 25% will go directly to the event organizer for operations on a reimbursement basis.

If you receive less than 70 points, you are not eligible for any requested funds.

CONCLUSION

Applicants are asked not to contact members of the Visit Pensacola Grant Committee/Board of Directors. Staff may be called upon by any one of these groups or staff at any time during the review process. Please submit the attached application form to Nicole Stacey, Vice President, Destination Development. nstacey@visitpensacola.com



Visit Pensacola Event Grant Program – Marketing Implementation

To further Visit Pensacola's mission of developing tourism in Escambia County, the new Event Grant Program has been designed to better support the attraction of overnight and out-of-town visitors to selected events and experiences. Out-of-town visitors impact the commercial lodging industry, hotels/motels, campgrounds, condominiums, as well as restaurants, retail establishments, and other businesses in Escambia County.

Since out-of-town visitors are not a critical factor of success for most local events, these grants should be considered an additional resource to expand an event's audience — not a core sustaining resource.

25% Operations

25% of the amount awarded is available for operational expenses.

While we recognize the effort to attract more out-of-town visitors may add to the operational burden, this amount is not required to be spent specifically for that purpose.

75% Out-of-Market Marketing

75% of the amount awarded will be administered by Visit Pensacola and used to promote the event outside Escambia County.

Visit Pensacola will work closely with each event team to develop a custom marketing plan that extends the event's local promotions effort. Creative messaging and audience targeting will be custom to the needs of each event. This allows events to leverage Visit Pensacola's resources for efficient asset development and media buys, as well as the tools to measure and document success.

Media Options

Visit Pensacola prefers digital and social marketing platforms for event marketing. These platforms/tactics provide precise audience targeting and tracking capabilities that help measure campaign ROI.

Platforms/tactics that will be considered:

- Digital Display Advertising
- Digital Video Advertising
- Digital Native Advertising
- Social Media Advertising - Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok, Snapchat
- Digital Audio Advertising - Spotify, Pandora, iHeart, etc.
- Connected TV
- YouTube
- Email marketing

Audiences relevant to each event will be developed. In addition, the retargeting audience of people who have visited the Visit Pensacola website is available.



CERTIFICATION AND COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

APPLICANT:

I hereby certify that the information contained in this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and that I have read and understand the Policies and Procedures of the Visit Pensacola Event Grants Program and will abide by all legal, financial, and reporting requirements as a condition of receiving grant funds from Visit Pensacola. Signatures must be **original** in **blue ink**.

Name: _____

Organization: _____

(Signature): _____ (Date) _____

Please return the original application via email to Nicole Stacey at Nstacey@visitpensacola.com or to our physical location at:

Visit Pensacola
Attention: Event Grant Program
1401 E. Gregory St.
Pensacola, FL 32502

- **(1) Visit Pensacola Grant Event Workshop Attendance is Required**
 - **Visit Pensacola public scoring meeting is REQUIRED**
- Failure to attend either will automatically disqualify application***

****Please provide a fully completed application. Failure to submit all items will result in an incomplete submission, and your application will be rejected. Please email Nicole Stacey (nstacey@visitpensacola.com) with questions regarding the Visit Pensacola Event Grant Application and submission requirements.**

VISIT PENSACOLA POST-PROGRAM REPORT



(Must be turned in to receive final payment)

<u>Event / Product Grant Information</u>		
Name of Event:		
Contact/Title:		
Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Telephone #: ()	Awarded Grant Amount: \$	
Email:		
Make Check Payable To (Please Note – Organization must be the same as an organization that was awarded grant.) Tax I.D. or Social Security #: (This information is required)		

To be reimbursed, please submit the following:

- 1) An invoice from your organization to Visit Pensacola for payment of awarded grant amount.
- 2) Valid invoice(s) for allowable expenses.
- 3) Copy of proof of payments such as cleared check record showing front and back of checks, or detailed credit card receipts.
- 4) Number of visitors calculated with backup documentation
- 5) Number of room nights tracked with backup documentation
- 6) Copies of marketing, advertising materials, and websites showing Visit Pensacola logo.

EXPENSES TO BE REIMBURSED

Itemized expenses to be reimbursed by the Visit Pensacola Grant funds must be allowable and match submitted invoices. Use additional pages if necessary. 75% of VP Grants funding must be used for marketing lead by Visit Pensacola's agency of recor. 25% may be used for operational. Visit Pensacola Grant funding cannot exceed 50% of the total event expense budget.

Expense Item	Amount



NUMBER OF VISITORS

Provide back up (letter/communication) from the lodging properties participating with your event. Unknown or untracked is not acceptable and request for reimbursement will not be processed.

MEDIA / MARKETING

Provide a summary of all media exposure received (local, regional and national) as well as examples of marketing materials which included Visit Pensacola branding. Please add additional sheets if needed.

I certify that the above information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

(Name) _____ (Date) _____

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"Exhibit A"

Grant Reimbursement Guidelines

For a complete list of guidelines, please see Florida State Statutes 125.0104 and 129.09

- **Have ALL COMPLETED submission (in order) to Visit Pensacola by the 10th of the month.**
- **The first submission will need a copy of the completed, signed grant.**
- Visit Pensacola Staff, and immediate family are not allowed for reimbursement under the grant guidelines.
- Submissions are once a month. Have your completed submission at that time. Do not 'piecemeal' it together over the course of the month.
- Have your submission in order, invoice to VPI cleared check to a vendor, vendor invoice, backup to invoice, contracts, pics of ads, receipts from vendors, etc. Everything must be legible and in alphabetical order, no front and back copies, single side only and in color if applicable. Any books, magazines created used for back up will need single side only color copies. Do not submit the original.
- Provide a narrative or explanation of the event and each expense.
- Must have detailed receipts of all requests asking for reimbursement.
- Must have invoices, not just orders, but invoice, and run sheets if applicable.
- If purchasing media/advertisement must have a copy of an ad showing Visit Pensacola seal as a sponsor.
- Must have a copy of checks cleared from the bank.
- If paid by a credit card, need credit card statement and a copy of cleared check paid to the credit card company.
- Provide copies of completed and signed contracts, agreements and or applications you are asking for reimbursement for.
- Cashier checks, wires, checks, credit cards check, vendor payments, etc. must all be accompanied with a receipt from the vendor and a vendor's invoice.
- Event Insurance Declaration page showing Visit Pensacola, Inc. 1401 E. Gregory St. Pensacola, FL 32502 listed as additional insured. This can be obtained thru your homeowner's or renter's insurance policy and or EventHelper, WedSafe, WedSure, and other online event insurance companies. This must be provided to VPI prior to reimbursement.
- Only highlight what you are asking reimbursement for (total without tips, alcohol). Make sure tax is not included for reimbursement for non-reimbursable.
- Must follow current GSA (Government Standards Act) guidelines for meals (\$61.00 per day) within Escambia County. Please see <http://www.gsa.gov> this rate changes yearly. Must have detailed receipts, with who the meal was for, and affiliations.
- For lodging, must have detailed invoice (folio sheet) showing ALL fees per night including all taxes. Must have a list of names and affiliates for each room. Only rooms in Escambia County are allowed.
- If room service charge, need to not only back out item ordered but also back out sales tax charged on the item (same for other disallowed like alcohol, or tips).



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- MUST have the DETAILED receipt if asking for reimbursement on a room service charge.
- CASH receipts are not reimbursable. MUST have a copy of the cleared check(s). If the expense is paid with CASH, then the company pays the person who paid the expense, with proper documentation. Then that canceled check with all the appropriate documentation is submitted. This is no matter the amount.
- Previous disallowed requests must be resubmitted with correct backup.
- Checks cannot be copied on top of an invoice. Each copy of the check and invoice must be separate. Everything must be **legible**.
- REDACT (Blackout) ALL account numbers, signatures on checks, social security numbers, etc. In a public record request, the County will not do this.
- Any costs related to agreements that are refundable are not reimbursable until after the event with proof of not being refunded.
- Visit Pensacola reserves the right to request additional information.

Funding Restrictions: Awarded grant funds may not be provided or utilized for any of the following:

- Cash receipts
- Capital Improvements, including expenditures for the acquisition, construction or alteration of a facility, unless allowed by Florida Statutes, Chapter 125.0104, Paragraph 5 Authorized Uses of Revenue
- Mortgage Payments
- Payment of past deficits
- Tips, gratuities, alcohol
- Deposits that will be refunded
- Prepays
- Staff Salaries and Admin costs
- Mileage
- Purchases for resale
- Donations/sponsorships, scholarships, plaques or awards
- Purchase of equipment which has a useful life of one year or more and a unit cost of \$100.00 or more
- Activities and events which do not promote tourism in Escambia County
- In-kind services are defined as goods or services provided for the festival, event or program for which you would normally have to pay. The value of the services should be based on what you would normally pay for the goods or services. Documentation of the value will be required from the contributing entity. Applicants are encouraged to list in-kind donations as a demonstration of additional community support. Volunteer time or hours not eligible as in-kind.
- All expenses that are covered by other revenue
- Activities and events intended only for the applicants' membership or local community
- Food, lodging and personal transportation for traveling out-of-county
- Rent paid to a sponsoring organization for hosting a special event



Please note that Visit Pensacola, Inc. is subject to Public Record Law. Thereby your submission, reimbursement and back up to/from Visit Pensacola would be subject to Public Records Requests.

- **(1) Visit Pensacola Grant Event Workshop Attendance is Required**
 - **Visit Pensacola public scoring meeting is REQUIRED***Failure to attend either will automatically disqualify application*



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"Exhibit B"

75% Out-of-Market Marketing

75% of the amount awarded will be administered by Visit Pensacola and used to promote the event outside Escambia County.

Visit Pensacola will work closely with each event team to develop a custom marketing plan that extends the event's local promotions effort. Creative messaging and audience targeting will be custom to the needs of each event. This allows events to leverage Visit Pensacola's resources for efficient asset development and media buys, as well as the tools to measure and document success.

Top advertising markets for grantees:

- 1) New Orleans, LA
- 2) Birmingham, AL
- 3) Biloxi, MS
- 4) Nashville, TN
- 5) Tallahassee, FL

Other markets to consider:

Atlanta, GA
Baton Rouge, LA
Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX
Gulfport, MS
Houston, TX
Jackson, MS
Lafayette, LA
Little Rock, AR
Memphis, TN
Montgomery, AL
Orlando, FL
Tampa, FL



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"Exhibit C"

Contract Reporting Requirements

Once the committee awards have been reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors of Visit Pensacola, all contracts will be issued by and returned to the Visit Pensacola office. Interim and Final Reports and all reimbursement requests are to be submitted to the Visit Pensacola office.

- A final report must be submitted with reimbursement requests within 45 days after the event or before the end of the fiscal year (September 30th), whichever occurs first.
- Final Report must include a documented assessment of results measured against the applications projections for attendance, overnight stays and out of County visitors in attendance, and proof of marketing.
- Any funded event of activity that fails to file reports required in the application will not be eligible for funding during the next funding period. **Under no circumstances, will payment be made for an event with reports outstanding.**
- Recipients must notify Visit Pensacola in writing of any substantial changes (i.e., date, venue, event content, etc.) to their event/program/experience.
- All information provided to Visit Pensacola will become a matter of public record.



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Definitions

Brochures/Collateral: Brochures, websites, mass mailings or emails.

Budget Detail: Itemized breakdown of proposed program expenditures and income.

Contracted Services Revenue: Revenue derived from fees earned through the sale of services. Include sale of workshops, etc., to other community organizations, government contracts for specific services, performance or residency fees, etc.

Direct Talent Cost: The fee paid to hire talent.

Earned Media: Public Relations/Publicity costs associated with efforts to general editorial content/mentions other than paid placements in media outlets, i.e., news releases, event or program-specific newsletters, photography or videography for marketing purposes.

Eligible Non-Profit: Organizations recognized as having a non-profit status by the Florida Department of State Division of Corporations.

In-Kind Contributions: Donated goods and services for which a fair market value shall be calculated. Does not include volunteer/administrative personnel.

In-Kind Media: Media provided at no cost for television, radio, magazine, newspaper, billboard or digital platforms.

In-Kind Marketing: Marketing provided at no cost, including market research and advertising.

Multi-Day Event: Any event that lasts longer than one day and less than 32 days.

Operations: Costs that are not directly attributable to the talent, such as overhead expense that is used for the entire event or all talent. Including but not limited to labor, equipment, etc.

Out-Of-Market: Outside of Escambia County.

Paid Lodging: Any accommodations that are paid for including hotels, condominiums, etc.

Paid Media: Paid advertising placements in traditional publications such as newspapers, magazines or outdoor media; web-based placements on commercial sites; paid broadcast spots on television or radio; and/or event-specific direct mail (electronic or traditional). This may include the production and distribution of event-specific brochures or fliers.

Peak Periods: Memorial Day to Labor Day



Personnel: Payments for administrative, marketing, curatorial, technical employees including salaries, wages, fees and benefits to organization staff, identified explicitly with the funded program.

Printing: The production of banners, posters, books, newspapers or other printed material.

Public Relations: Production of positive reputation with the public through various unpaid or earned communications including, traditional media, newsletters, blogs, social media, and in-person engagements.

Sponsorship: Backing, support, patronage, funding or financing for the event/experience/program.

Ticket Sales: Revenue from the sale of admissions, ticket subscriptions and memberships for the program.

Total Operating Budget: Gross itemized summary of organizations probable or actual expenditures and income for a proposed current or completed fiscal year.

Travel: Costs directly related to travel of an individual or individuals identified explicitly with the program. Costs must be in accordance with Florida Statute 112.061.

Venue: The scene or setting such as a physical location where the event or activity takes place.

Visitor: Any guests traveling to and spending dollars in Escambia County.



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