

City of Travelers Rest Accommodations Tax Grant Guidelines

The City of Travelers Rest receives Accommodations Tax Revenues from the State of South Carolina. In accordance with the South Carolina code of laws, the City has established an accommodations tax fund to be used for tourism-related expenditures or used to provide additional municipal services that would enhance the city's tourism-related infrastructure and facilities. For this reason, it is the intent of the City of Travelers Rest to provide funding to organizations that seek to promote tourism. These guidelines serve to provide guidance on how to award funding for tourism-related project proposals.

Eligibility

Organizations and/or events that meet the following criteria are eligible to apply for accommodations tax grants:

1. The organization must be in good standing with City and without outstanding debt obligations to the City.
2. All projects and/or events must occur within the Travelers Rest city limits.
3. If funding is provided for a facility, the facility must be open to the public.
4. If funding is provided for an event, the event must be marketed and open to the public.
5. Grantee organizations may not re-grant Accommodations Tax funds to other organizations (all funds must be spent on the project or event specified in the grant application by the organization that is awarded the funds).
6. The event or promotional opportunity must demonstrate a significant economic/cultural impact as it relates to tourism.
7. The expenditure must meet the following requirements:
 - a. The expenditure must be used to attract or provide for tourists. Only those organizations whose project proposals are considered "tourism-related expenditures" are eligible to apply. State Accommodations Tax Law SC Code Section 6-4-5 (4) states that "travel" and "tourism" mean the action and activities of people taking trips outside their home communities for any purpose, except daily commuting to and from work. A tourist is generally one that comes from 50 miles outside of the jurisdiction. SC Code Section 6- 4-10 (4)(b) defines tourism-related expenditures are defined in the legislation as follows:
 - i. Advertising and promotion of tourism so as to develop and increase tourist attendance through the generation of publicity.
 - ii. Promotion of the arts and cultural events.
 - iii. Construction, maintenance, and operation of facilities for civic and cultural activities including construction and maintenance of access and other nearby roads and utilities for the facilities.
 - iv. The criminal justice system, law enforcement, fire protection, solid waste collection, and health facilities when required to serve tourists and tourist facilities. This is based on the estimated percentage of costs directly attributed to tourists.

- v. Public facilities such as restrooms, dressing rooms, parks, and parking lots.
- vi. Tourist shuttle transportation.
- vii. Control and repair of waterfront erosion.
- viii. Operating visitor information centers.

Projects

Projects meeting the eligibility requirement for grant funding must be capable of fully implementing the project scope within one year. The City Council may waive this requirement for projects requiring multiple year funding for full implementation or for projects requiring funding for initial phase necessary for start-up efforts.

Organizations requesting grant funding must commit to obtaining all necessary permits, approvals, and/or permissions as may be required for execution of the proposed project.

Notice of Grant Funding

The City shall provide public notice of the availability of grant funding on an annual basis. The public notice is intended to encourage broad representation of organizations and, for this purpose, the City will advertise information regarding availability of grant funding in a variety of print and electronic platforms including, but not limited to, newspapers serving the City of Travelers Rest, City websites, and public postings. The notice shall include the amount of funding available for eligible projects, the timeframe for receipt of applications, and the location of application forms.

Application Procedure

Application forms are available online and in-person at City Hall. A complete application must be submitted to be eligible for funding. Completed applications shall include the following information:

1. Name, location, and primary contact information of the requesting organization.
2. Project name (precisely describing the project scope of work)
3. Project description including a detailed explanation of the project, the intended outcome of the project, the public benefit derived from the proposed project, and the eligibility criteria the project most closely reflects.
4. Justification for project funding including how the project will encourage tourism and attract new visitors to Travelers Rest, the program tourism objectives, and how the achievements of the program will be measured.
5. Project budget detailing the anticipated total cost of the project including an estimate of both revenues (detailed by major funding sources) and expenditures (detailed by major expense categories)
6. Supplemental information that provides a detailed account of the organization's intended use of grant funding.

Application Review

State legislation governing the administration of Accommodations Tax requires that an appointed Accommodation Tax Advisory Committee (ATAC) review requests and make written recommendations to City Council regarding the use of accommodation tax proceeds. The ATAC serves in an advisory role to City Council and their recommendations are not to be considered commitments of funding.

All applications requesting accommodation tax grant program funds are to be submitted to the City Administrator or his/her designee for review. The City Administrator will review applications for completeness of information and consistency with eligibility requirements.

Eligible applications will be forwarded to the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee (ATAC) for review and recommendation.

Projects will be evaluated and prioritized for funding based on the following criteria:

1. Impact on tourism, including but not limited to, documented economic/cultural impact on the City of Travelers Rest through hotel room nights booked and/or the number of tourists traveling into Travelers Rest from outside their home communities. Other means of documenting the impact on tourism will also be considered.
2. Alignment with and the capacity to promote City Council goals and objectives specifically related to tourism.
3. The event or project is promoted to and appeals to a diverse audience.
4. Demonstrated successful results from previous funded projects/events
5. Quality of the application and presentation before the ATAC.
6. Availability of funding and requested amount.

ATAC Recommendations

The ATAC's role is to review each application based on the set criteria to determine the best use of the available funding. The Committee forwards its recommendations to the City Administrator, who reviews the recommendations for consistency with funding parameters, consistency with Council goals and objectives, diversity of efforts, and cohesiveness of overall program. The City Administrator will present the ATAC recommendations as well as his/her recommendations to City Council.

City Council Review

The allocation of all grant funding is subject to the discretion of the City Council. Upon receipt of recommendations from the ATAC and the City Administrator, the Council may elect to support, modify, or decline an organization's project funding request.

Procedures for Awarded Projects

Organizations awarded grant funding will be notified prior to funding each year. Recipients of grant awards are required to:

1. Provide all necessary documentation including but not limited to evidence of evidence of City business license (if required). To remain in good standing, recipients must provide a final accounting for the project, copies of all invoices, receipts and canceled checks showing payment, and a completed final report within thirty (30) days of the project completion date, but not later than July 31st. Failure to provide a complete final report, to include the supplemental information listed below, will result in a loss of funding for the following grant cycle regardless of whether an approval has already been granted for that cycle by Council.
2. The Final Report shall include:
 - a. (1) Total attendance to the event, (2) how many people attended that live outside of the city of Travelers Rest, and (3) information on how this number was determined (such as sign-in log, counting vehicle tags, etc.).
 - b. Provide additional relevant information demonstrating economic impact such as number of hotel room nights booked or other information as appropriate
 - c. The project's outcome including, attainment of goals and objectives and percentage of tourist participation.

Provide an accounting of all revenues and expenditures associated with the project, including Accommodations Tax revenues from other sources (such as Greenville County). Expenses not previously identified in the Tourism Funds Grant Application will not be reimbursed.

A W-9 form must be submitted to the City of Travelers Rest prior to receiving funding.

Funding Priorities

As required by the South Carolina Accommodation Tax Law, projects must attract visitors to the City of Travelers Rest. Priority also will be given to unique projects that:

1. Generate additional tourism-related tax dollars within the City of Travelers Rest
2. Promote dining at restaurants in the City of Travelers Rest
3. Generate overnight stays in City of Travelers Rest lodging facilities
4. Construct new or enhance existing recreation facilities to include amenities and trails
5. Promote and highlight the City of Travelers Rest's historic and cultural venues, recreational facilities, trails and events, and the uniqueness of the local community
6. Advertise and promote tourism so as to develop and increase tourist attendance through the generation of publicity
7. Promote arts and cultural events
8. Demonstrate additional government or private sector funding is available to the project in an amount at least matching the grant amount (1 to 1 match).

9. Facilitate the acquisition, final-stage design, construction, repair, renovation, rehabilitation, or other capital improvements of historic and cultural venues, recreational facilities, and trails.

Accommodation Tax grant funds may not be used for:

1. Programming and marketing expenses associated with capital campaigns or non-facilities capital campaigns (e.g., endowment campaigns)
2. Regular operating activities of an organization
3. Fundraising expenses
4. Mortgage or loan payments
5. Accommodations tax tourism funds may not be spent on purely local functions
6. Beauty pageants should not be funded out of accommodations tax funds.
7. Fireworks expenditures may only be funded to the extent that they attract and provide for tourism. This would include expenditures to advertise an event to tourists or an event that has ties to civic or cultural activities (such as a July 4th, New Year's Eve) fireworks display.
8. Welcome signs are not acceptable accommodations tax expenditures and should not be funded from accommodations taxes. However, welcome signs when part of an overall tourism promotion and displayed in an effort to attract tourists may be funded. Example of appropriate expenditures would be billboards displayed in an "out of market" advertising area that states "come stay in xyz..." which would state the tourist destination.