

Leon County Division of Tourism



Visit
Tallahassee
A Division of Leon County

Signature Event
Grant Program
(Policies & Procedures)

Amended May 2, 2019

Table of Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Objectives
- III. Definition
- IV. Statement of Policies
- V. Procedures
- VI. Funding Eligibility
- VII. Funding Levels and Scoring
- VIII. Post Event Report
- IX. Conclusion

Leon County Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee Signature Event Grant Program

I. INTRODUCTION

The Leon County Tourist Development Council (TDC) was created pursuant to the State of Florida Local Option Tourist Development Act and Leon County Ordinance #88-01. The TDC administers funds collected from a local option tourist development tax (TDT) on transient lodging sales, i.e. hotels/motels, campgrounds and condominiums. The funds are designated to promote Tallahassee/Leon County as a preferred visitor destination for meetings and conventions, group leisure travel, special events, cultural activities and amateur sporting events.

The Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) approved the establishment of a Signature Event Grant Program in FY 2014 to compliment other grant programs operated by the TDC.

The definition of an “event” per section 125.0104, Florida Statutes; to be an authorized use of Tourist Development Tax revenue, an event “shall have as one of its main purposes the attraction of tourists as evidenced by the promotion of the activity or event to tourists.” By statute, a tourist is “a person who participates in trade or recreation activities outside of the county of his or her residence, or who rents transient accommodations including any living quarters or accommodations in any hotel, motel, resort motel, apartment, apartment hotel, rooming house, mobile home park, recreational vehicle park, condominium or timeshare resort for a term of 6 months or less.”

Currently, Leon County Division of Tourism annually allocates funds to three separate grant programs for local groups and organizations that coordinate events with a demonstrated history of or significant potential to draw visitors to the area. The Special Event Grants are reviewed by the Grant Review Committee and presented to the TDC for approval. There is a separate grant program for sporting events that is administered by the Tallahassee Sports Council and presented to the TDC for approval. Signature Event Grants are for festivals and events that can demonstrate the potential to bring a significant number of room nights to the community. Signature Event Grants are also reviewed by the Grant Review Committee and presented to the TDC for approval. The Grant Review Committee is made up of TDC members and may also include tourism and hospitality leaders and marketing professionals.

For clarification, Leon County Division of Tourism grant programs are funded by the Tourist Development Tax (TDT) which is generated from hotel room nights and designed to draw visitors to Tallahassee/Leon County. Grant programs administered by the Council on Culture & Arts (COCA) are also funded by TDT revenue and designed to support year-round arts and culture programming.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. Support large-scale event(s) that are/will be recognized as synonymous with the destination.
2. Increase the visibility of the destination in state, regional, national and even international media and elevate awareness of tourism's contribution to the local economy with the local media.
3. Generate a minimum of 1,500 hotel room nights for Tallahassee/Leon County commercial lodging properties during an event that does not occur during peak visitor periods. Peak visitor periods are generally defined as FSU home football game weekends in the fall semester, FAMU homecoming weekend, FSU or FAMU graduation weekends, and Monday through Thursday during the state legislative session.
4. Generate a significant economic impact for other hospitality related businesses such as restaurants and retail establishments.
5. Regenerate the investment of the Tourist Development Tax funds and also increase local sales tax collections.

III. DEFINITION

1. A Signature Event is:

- a. One that offers programming for the public over one or more days while demonstrating the potential to generate a minimum of 1,500 hotel room nights; Multiple day events, because of their broader economic impact to all aspects of the local economy, are preferred.
- b. An event that does not occur during peak visitor periods. Peak visitor periods are generally defined as FSU home football game weekends in the fall semester, FAMU homecoming weekend, FSU or FAMU graduation weekends, and Monday through Thursday during the state legislative session.
- c. An event that significantly distinguishes and elevates the appeal of Tallahassee/Leon County and has the potential to generate state, national and international media exposure.
- d. An event that has broad visitor and public appeal for motivating travel.
- e. An existing event that either expands, collaborates or merges, with other events taking place the same time, or an entirely new event.
- f. A cultural, historic, heritage, literary, music festival or sporting event.
- g. One that has an existing organizational structure to fully plan, market and produce the event, i.e. a turn-key event.
- h. An annual event.

2. An “Emerging Signature Event” is:

When an existing event meets the definition of a Signature Event, yet only estimates generating between 1,250 – 1,499 hotel room nights, and historically generates near that amount, the event may apply to be considered for designation as an “Emerging Signature Event” - that may be eligible for increased funding and marketing support from the Leon County Division of Tourism/ Visit Tallahassee.

An Emerging Signature Event is an existing event with a record of growing attendance and room nights whose coordinating organization is interested, willing and able to grow their event to generate at least 1,500 room nights.

Organizations must work with Leon County Division of Tourism /Visit Tallahassee staff to identify event enhancements and marketing opportunities to transition to signature event grant status and funding levels.

Organizations must be able to identify and document what new features or aspects will be added to expand the event, i.e. add another day of activities or add a concert with headlining act(s), etc., in their grant application.

Organizations must also agree and allow Leon County Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee’s research firm of record to conduct an economic impact study of the event to substantiate/verify the event generated at or around 1,250 hotel room nights. If the initial study indicates the room nights generated did not reach the 1,250 target for hotel room nights, the organization will move back into the Special Event grant program for one year before they may reapply for the “Emerging Signature Event” status again.

IV. STATEMENT OF POLICIES

1. No applicant may be considered for or receive more than one Legacy, Signature, or Emerging Signature Event Grant per fiscal year, with the exception of a once-a-year event that may coincidentally occur within the same fiscal year due to scheduling. An example would be an early October event that is scheduled for late September the following fall, both occurring the same fiscal year.
2. Grant funds are intended to supplement the organization's budget.
3. An event occurring during peak visitor periods will not be considered for funding. Peak visitor periods are generally defined as FSU home football game weekends in the fall semester, FAMU homecoming weekend, FSU or FAMU graduation weekends, and Monday through Thursday during the state legislative session.
4. Applicant must provide a statement of need for grant funding.
5. Signature events must meet community standards and align with the County’s tourism marketing objectives and positioning.
6. Legacy, Signature, and Emerging Signature events should not receive support from County general revenue through the BOCC or the Council on Culture & Arts (COCA) with the exception of in-kind support. No other funds from the BOCC can be used for the match requirement.

7. Each application will be evaluated against established criteria, *past performance* and historic precedent.
8. Applicant must provide a statement of stability and growth for the event (i.e. How do you define success for the event and what is your long-term plan to sustain and grow the event over the next five years?).
9. For new events that demonstrate the potential to generate the minimum 1,500 hotel room nights, the TDC has the option to fund the event through a Signature Event grant in its initial three (3) years.
10. Funding does not support administrative costs or private events. Funding supports marketing and promotional efforts, venue/site rentals and costs associated with visiting artists and/or exhibits.
11. Hotels secured for the event must be located within Leon County.
12. Applicant's budget must reflect at least a 25% dollar-for-dollar match (donated in-kind services will not be allowed) to the requested grant amount. Applicants will be required to identify the amount of matching funds in the event budget submitted and the amount must be verified and sourced in the Post-Event Report. The grant award amount may be reduced for the next cycle proportionately to the shortfall of funds raised if the 25% matching funds are not received.
13. Funding shall be provided as reimbursement for approved actual expenditures upon completion of the event. Proof of payment must be provided. Proof of payment may be submitted in the form of a vendor receipt and a front and back copy of cleared check, or a credit card receipt. Cash receipts can be accepted for reimbursements; however using a check or credit card is preferred. Written confirmation from vendor that expenditure has been paid in full is necessary if only a copy of the front of the cleared check is provided.
14. Leon County Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee staff will direct the County's marketing research firm of record to conduct an economic impact study of an event receiving Legacy, Signature, or Emerging Signature Event Grant funding. Event organizers must allow for face-to-face interviews with spectators and participants in order to be eligible.
15. It is the intent of the TDC to discourage the support of two competing signature events. This includes events that take place during the same week/weekend or similarly themed concerts and festivals.
16. To be eligible for payment, a completed Post-Event Report must be submitted. The report must include a recap of the event and how the event promoters measured the success/failure of the event. Failure to submit a complete Post-Event Report will result in disqualification for support. Requests for reimbursement must be received by September 30.
17. Any funds granted will be subject to audit by the Leon County Auditor.
18. Indemnification: By submitting this Grant application, the applicant agrees that upon final approval of the Grant the applicant shall indemnify Leon County, Florida, a charter county and political subdivision of the State of Florida (the "County"), to the extent provided as follows:

(a) Except as otherwise provided herein below, the applicant shall indemnify, save and hold the County, its officials, officers and employees harmless from any and all actions, obligations, claims, damages, expenses, costs of any kind, debts, negligence, and liabilities arising from, or in any way related to, acts or omissions of the applicant, its employees, volunteers, subcontractors, employees of subcontractors, or clientele, in the performance of, or failure to perform under, this event for which the Grant was approved. Should the County, as a result of the performance or lack thereof by or on behalf of the applicant, be required to reimburse any sums to any organization, or reimburse funds to any Federal, state or local governmental entity, contribute funds to the performance of this event for which the Grant was approved, or expend County funds to complete or correct such performance, the applicant, upon demand by the County, shall refund and reimburse the County for all sums so reimbursed or expended by the County.

(b) If the applicant is a governmental entity or other such organization to which the protection of sovereign immunity is applicable, the indemnification requirements set forth in subparagraph (1) above shall apply to such applicant only to the extent as allowed in Section 768.28, Florida Statutes, and nothing herein shall be deemed to be a waiver of such applicant's sovereign immunity beyond those statutory limits as provided therein.

(c) If the event for which the Grant was approved is to take place on property owned by the County and/or is sponsored by the County, the applicant shall, in addition to these indemnification requirements, be required to provide to the County a certificate of insurance showing that that the applicant has procured insurance against claims for injuries to persons or damages to property which may arise from, or in connection with, the performance by the applicant, its employees, volunteers, subcontractors, employees of subcontractors, or clientele, of this event for which the Grant was approved, in the minimum coverage and amounts as follows, and that the County has been named as an additional insured: (i) commercial general liability insurance coverage with combined single limits for bodily injury, personal injury, and property damage of no less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence and a \$2,000,000 annual aggregate; and (ii) if applicable, workers' compensation insurance covering all employees meeting statutory limits in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws.

19. The combined Leon County/Visit Tallahassee logo must be included on all printed and online advertisements and promotional materials for the event. Promotional materials include: banners, signs, t-shirts, programs, brochures, event website, etc. Online material developed for the event must include a link to the VisitTallahassee.com website. Before these materials are produced, they **MUST BE SUBMITTED AND APPROVED** by the Leon County Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee **PRIOR to distribution** to ensure that the combined Leon County/Visit Tallahassee logo appears properly.

Leon County Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee is dedicated to supporting worthwhile local events through our grant programs and other promotional opportunities but reserves the right to reduce or eliminate grant funding for

organizations that do not receive prior approval for correct logo use.



20. Grantee is required to coordinate public announcements of the event including the entertainment and/or performing acts, news releases, social media posts, or broadcasts associated as part of the event with Leon County Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee.
21. Allowable expenses shall include:
 - Promotion, marketing and paid advertising/media placed outside of Tallahassee/Leon County which attracts attendees that will stay overnight and use Tallahassee/Leon County hotels or short-term lodging.
 - Event production and technical expenses, site fees/costs (contract help, rentals, insurance) rights fees, sanction fees, non-monetary awards and travel expenses including lodging.
 - Note: On page 7 of the Application the applicants are required to describe how the grant funds will be used. Any changes to the items submitted in the application **MUST** be submitted in writing to the Leon County Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee office and will not be allowed without written approval from staff **PRIOR** to the event.
22. Unallowable expenses include:
 - General and administrative expenses.
 - Building, renovating and/or remodeling expenses.
 - Permanent equipment purchases.
 - Debts incurred prior to grant period.
 - Programs which solicit advertising or sponsorships.
 - Hospitality or social functions.
 - Advertising that primarily reaches Tallahassee/Leon County and its residents.
 - Sleeping room expenses for attendees.

V. PROCEDURES

1. Funding for the Tourism Legacy, Signature, and Emerging Signature Event Grant Program will be included as part of the Division of Tourism operating budget.
2. Funds will be primarily used to market the signature event but may be used for other purposes as authorized by section 125.0104, Florida Statutes, such as programming and production expenses as long as the main focus is the promotion of the event to visitors.
3. Funds will be provided to the recipient on a reimbursement basis upon receipt of a post event report demonstrating proof that the funds were spent as agreed upon.
4. Each grant application will be reviewed by Leon County Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee staff to ensure all required materials have been supplied. Failure to supply the required materials may result in disqualification. Following staff review, the applications will be provided to the TDC's Grant Review Committee for scoring. The Committee will score each application on a 100 point scale based on the established scoring criteria in Section VII.
5. Once approved by the TDC, and the Leon County Board of County Commissioners as appropriate, staff will issue an award letter to the grant recipient outlining the amount with a contract agreement authorizing the uses of the funds. The contract agreement will include a scope of work, deliverables, and required documentation. Signed contracts must be received by Leon County Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee within 30 days of receipt of award letter.
6. Upon receipt of a standardized post event report, staff will process the grant invoice for payment.

SIGNATURE EVENT ANNUAL GRANT TIMELINE

Mid-May - Grant application 60-day cycle opens

Mid-July – Grant cycle closes

August – Public Meeting of Grants Review Committee

September – TDC review/approval of grant funding recommendations

Late-September – Award letters and contracts sent to grantees

It is strongly encouraged for applicants to be in attendance or send a representative to the Grant Review Committee meeting.

VI. FUNDING ELIGIBILITY

The intent of the Signature Event Grant Program is to provide funding assistance for events that attract overnight visitors to Tallahassee/Leon County and create business for 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. Each application must include a signed Certification and Compliance page.
2. Event must take place between October 1 and September 30 of the upcoming fiscal year.
3. The event must have the potential to bring out-of-town visitors that use commercial lodging establishments in Tallahassee/Leon County.
4. Applicant must provide a marketing/promotions plan.
5. Applicant must provide a detailed event budget indicating matching funds.

VII. FUNDING LEVELS AND SCORING

The TDC recommended funding levels table takes into account that other segments of the local economy such as restaurants and retail will benefit from an increase in visitation along with hotels, motels, and other tourism related businesses. In addition, the State and Tallahassee/Leon County will benefit from the increased direct spending thereby enhancing sales and gas tax collections. Therefore, the recommended funding guidelines do not require a 1:1 return on investment with regard to the TDT. Instead, the proposed funding model is based on an approximate 1:3 return of TDT given the anticipated direct economic impact of signature events. The current TDC Special Events grant program also uses an approximate 1:3 formula based on a much smaller scale.

The Division of Tourism will direct the County’s marketing research firm of record to conduct an economic impact study of each event funded under the Signature Event Grant Program. This would show the number of room nights generated and the economic impact of any event receiving funding under this category. This study would be used as a benchmark for consideration of future funding requests.

A strong application will include information on similar events in similar markets as a basis for comparison.

Room Nights	Recommended Tourism Signature Event Funding Levels
1,500 – 1,999	\$15,000 - 25,999
2,000 – 2,999	\$26,000 - 37,999
3,000 – 3,999	\$38,000 - 49,999
4,000 – 5,000	\$50,000 - 59,999

Organizations are eligible for funding above \$60,000, however once recommended by the TDC it would need to be approved by the Leon County Board of County Commissioners.

SCORING CRITERIA

Tourism Development	Proposal coincides with shoulder seasons or periods of low-occupancy, and has potential of generating visitation to Tallahassee/Leon County that includes overnight stays in Tallahassee/Leon County commercial lodging (30 points)	30
	Proposal distinguishes the destination and elevates the appeal of Tallahassee/Leon County. (15 points)	15
Marketing	Proposal includes strategies for attracting visitors from in-state metro markets and the Southeast at minimum. Marketing plan is well-defined, thorough and realistic (20 points)	20
Event Evaluation	A statement of need for funding is included, and the budget is appropriate for the event. (10 points)	10
	Proposal includes goals for event, a statement of stability and growth, and a method for measuring and evaluating outcome of event. (10 points)	10
	Proposal includes detailed plan for documenting overnight hotel stays (10 points)	10
Technical	Quality of the grant application and all required documents are submitted. (5 points)	5
		Total Possible Points: 100

**Performance of prior event grants may impact your recommended funding level. This includes room nights generated, private funds raised, and proper logo use.*

The following formula will be used to determine the final grant amounts:

1. The average score of the panel will be determined for each application based on the maximum of 100 points as outlined above.
2. Applications scoring above the minimum threshold of 70% will be considered for funding based on the formula outlined below.
3. The average score for each application will first be converted into a percentage of the 100 maximum points possible. As an example, if Application #1 scored 90 out of 100, the percentage for Application #1 would be funded at a 90% level.
4. The grant amount allowable under the projected room nights listed in the Recommended Funding Level Table will then be multiplied by the percentage attained to determine the initial award based on the categories above. As an example, if Application #1 scored 90% and was eligible for \$50,000, the award would be for \$45,000.
5. The same process will be followed for each application and the total initial awards will be added.

6. If this recommended total amount exceeds the total budgeted for all grants, then adjustments may be made to the initial scores of all recipients on a pro-rata basis. All initial grants will be adjusted by the same pro-rata basis to determine the final grant score and award.
7. The final funding recommendation will be based on the Review Committee's discretion and the funding available. The Review Committee has the authority to adjust recommended and final award amounts.

VIII. POST EVENT REPORT

Leon County Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee will instruct its marketing research firm of record to conduct a statistically reliable number of spectator and participant surveys at the event to develop an economic impact study that shows the number of attendees, out of town guests, room nights generated and total economic impact from the event.

It is the responsibility of the event organizer to provide post event information (Appendix B) including:

1. The names of contracted hotels used for participants and spectators.
2. Room pick-ups (number of rooms secured, number of days, and the number of guests staying in each room) from each contracted hotel.
3. A written report on how the event measured its success or failure; what were the event goals and what was accomplished.
4. Leon County reserves the right to conduct a post-audit of information presented on the accommodations listed. All properties listed will be contacted to confirm the number of room nights generated for the event. **ANY MISLEADING OR FALSE INFORMATION PRESENTED CAN AND WILL ADVERSELY AFFECT FUTURE GRANT AWARDS.**
5. A post event budget showing revenues and expenses.
6. Upon receipt of the post event report, Leon County Division of Tourism/Visit Tallahassee will process the check request for the awarded grant amount.

IX. CONCLUSION

Applicants are asked not to contact members of the TDC Grant Review Committee. The event director, fiscal administrator or other contact person may be called upon by any one of these groups or their staff at any time during the review process.

For questions or additional information, please contact our office:

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