

Attractions Marketing Program Guidelines

The Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB), in partnership with the Southwest Florida Community Foundation, accepts, reviews and processes funding requests from tourism-related, non-profit organizations on behalf of the Tourism Development Council (as qualified per Florida State Statute 125.0104).

Goal

The program provides financial assistance to not-for-profit arts and attractions organizations that enhance tourism opportunities in Lee County. These site-based attractions and organizations provide a different level of service to visitors than events, and by the nature of their existence, attract visitation to the region or offer reasons for visitors to extend their stay in the destination.

VCB partners funded through this program are expected to:

- Assume a leadership and advocacy role in the community to advance tourism.
- Enhance the visitor experience and encourage repeat visitations through promotions and dissemination of information regarding arts and cultural offerings available in Lee County.
- Participate in cooperative promotional efforts with the Lee County VCB, where applicable.

To be eligible for this program, an organization must meet the following minimum criteria:

- The organization must be legally organized as a nonprofit, holding a federal 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status OR be an arts or cultural department or division of a municipal government that is incorporated in Lee County.
- The organization must be a tourism attraction or organization, located in Lee County.
- The organization must have their financial statements audited or reviewed annually by a third party CPA, and the most recent year's report will be provided to VCB upon request.
- The organization's facilities, programs or services must be available to visitors throughout the year. While an organization's major program(s) or service(s) may occur primarily during a specific time of year, other services and programming should occur and benefit visitors throughout the remainder of the year.
- Signature events that occur in season and draw significant economic impact and national media attention may be considered for funding under this program.
- The organization must have a dedicated administrator responsible for managing the organization.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to show proof of eligibility. Applications should also show how the organization brings visitors to Lee County throughout the year. Organizations must be able to show results of grant dollars spent (e.g. Increased out-of town visitation, increased website traffic, etc.) with specific data.

Additional information:

- The grant will fund eligible marketing initiatives only.
- Partners funded through this program will be required to outline specifically how funds will be spent before the beginning of the Fiscal Year in which funds are awarded.
- Change requests regarding usage of grant funds require prior approval and should be made in writing to the VCB Program Manager.
- Partners will be required to submit a detailed final report, including specific information about marketing projects, results, additional dollars spent, copies of invoices and proof of payment.
- Applicants must share attendance of out-of-county vs. local visitation from the organization's most recently completed fiscal year.
- Partners will be required to provide specific information about how out-of-county visitation data is collected. Partners may use admission, ticket sales, etc. to track visitation, and will be expected to survey a representative sample of visitors at special events that are not ticketed. This can be done via brief on site interviews, via email or website questionnaires post event.
- Applicants will be required to provide actual revenues and expenses from the organization's most recently completed fiscal year including a breakdown of funds spent specifically for marketing.
- Funds may be used solely for marketing projects, or projects that are intended specifically to bring visitors from out-of-county (see fundable items listed below). Any use of grant money for items not listed or approved will result in requiring non-complying recipients to pay back the previously awarded money within one year of contract end date. Failure to comply with the required grant reporting will impact future funding decisions and allocations.
- Funding is for projects that occur within the designated fiscal year only.
- Funding must be used for the project designated in the application.
- All project printed materials, signage or advertising must contain the words and/or logo where applicable, "Sponsored in part by the Lee County Tourist Development Council."
- Applicants are encouraged to have marketing plans reviewed by VCB marketing staff prior to submitting.
- In order to be considered for funding through the TDC, applicants must attend an Attractions Marketing Workshop prior to submitting application. No applications will be considered without attendance.

Fundable and Non-Fundable items:

Grant funds MAY be used for...

- The production and placement of print, television, radio and billboard ads.
- Digital marketing efforts such as online advertising, social media campaigns, search optimization and e-marketing.
- The design and construction of a new website or enhancements to an existing website.
Note: Website hosting fees are considered an operational expense, and will not be covered by grant funds.

- Printing and mailing/distribution costs for travel guides, attraction maps, rack cards and any direct mail projects.
- Photography and video projects that support an approved marketing campaign.
- International marketing opportunities.

Grant funds MAY NOT be used for...

- Capital investments
- Asset development/ product enhancement
- Salary support, personnel, agency costs
- Strategic plan development
- Lobbying
- Public Relations/press releases
- Tradeshow registration fees, booth rentals/educational conferences, membership dues
- Travel costs (food, lodging, entertainment)
- Database development
- Market research to identify target markets
- Facility rental/insurance
- Purchase or rental of equipment or supplies
- Food or alcoholic beverages
- Items for resale
- Operating costs (including web hosting and domain registration)

General instructions:

Partners must submit the application and any additional supporting information electronically. Information and access to the request form can be found here: <https://www.leevcb.com/funding-programs/attractions-marketing>

Fiscal Year 2018/2019 Application Timeline:

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| April 30, 2018 | VCB Attractions Marketing Application Webinar |
| May 1, 2018 | FY2018/19 Application Cycle opens |
| May 30, 2018 | FY2017/18 grant reports due |
| June 22, 2018 | Deadline for Applications |
| June 29-July 27, 2018 | Committee Review of Requests |
| August 9, 2018 | TDC formalizes funding recommendations |
| September 2018 | SWFL community foundation & BoCC budget approval |
| October 8, 2018 | Notification of funding results |
| November 16, 2018 | Reception-Presentation of grant awards |
| May, 2019 | Post Grant Report due |