



**November 2025
Arts and Cultural Destination Enhancement
Funding Program Proposal**

**Prepared For
Ocala Marion County Visitors and Conventions Bureau (OMCVCB)
109 W. Silver Springs Boulevard, Ocala, FL 34475**

**Submitted By
Greg Thompson, Executive & Artistic Director, Ocala Civic Theatre
4337 E. Silver Springs Boulevard, Ocala, FL 34470
(352) 236-2274
gthompson@ocalacivictheatre.com**

SECTION I. Program/Event Summary, Organizational Information and Program Management

Program/Event Summary

Ocala Civic Theatre (The CiViC) requests \$7,500 in Arts and Cultural Destination Enhancement funding to support a targeted marketing initiative aimed at attracting cultural tourists from outside Marion County. This effort will position Ocala as a vibrant arts destination during non-peak tourism months by strengthening awareness of The CiViC's year-round programming, which includes mainstage productions, youth theatre, concerts, and special events.

Funding will support out-of-area marketing strategies such as website enhancements to promote local cultural, dining, and hospitality partners, social media and Google Ads, print and radio placements, billboards, and collaborative promotions with *Visit Florida* and regional Chambers of Commerce. The total marketing budget for this project is \$15,000, with The CiViC providing a \$7,500 cash/in-kind match.

Mission Statement

By offering quality theatrical experiences and performing arts education, Ocala Civic Theatre helps cultivate future artists and audiences, fostering a lifelong connection to the arts. We work to ensure the arts remain a place where our community can connect, participate and be inspired.

Organizational Information

Founded in 1950, The CiViC is one of Florida's oldest and largest community theatres. Each season, The CiViC produces three plays, three musicals, and three youth shows, totaling over 100 performances annually, and hosts more than 50 special events, reaching over 30,000 patrons.

Operating from a 362-seat facility at the Appleton Cultural Campus (adjacent to the Appleton Museum of Art), The CiViC employs 17 staff and nearly 300 volunteers, with a \$1.2 million annual operating budget. The Theatre's Academy serves 150 learners annually, and outreach programs reach 1,300+ additional participants in schools and public spaces.

Economic Impact

The CiViC is a consistent driver of cultural tourism in Marion County. According to the Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 Calculator, The CiViC generates \$3.3 million in economic activity annually, supporting 54 local jobs and contributing \$81,836 in local tax revenue, demonstrating a measurable return on public investment.

Across the 2024-2025 season, The CiViC welcomed 36,852 total attendees across 255 performances and events. Ticketing and ZIP-code analysis show that the Theatre consistently attracts audiences from outside Marion County, representing over 225 distinct ZIP codes. Between July 2024 and February 2025 alone, 4,877 tickets were purchased by patrons residing outside of Marion County, meaning at least 13% of all attendance originates from cultural tourism and regional visitors.

Financial Request

Total Project Cost: \$15,000

Amount Requested: \$7,500

The CiViC Matching Funds: \$7,500

Financial History

Fiscal Year	Total Income	Total Expenses	Surplus / (Deficit)
2024-2025	\$1,288,550.39	\$1,612,594.40	(\$324,044.01)
2023-2024	\$1,120,856.57	\$1,597,411.81	(\$476,555.24)
2022-2023	\$859,737.76	\$1,326,383.60	(\$466,645.84)

Board of Directors (2025-2026)*Executive Officers*

Jackie Eastman, CPA - President

Garry Adel - Vice President

Lori Cotton - Secretary

Amy Garcia Sampson - Treasurer

Directors

John Allsopp

Jaye Baillie

Kelsey Burnette

Kiah Manning

Laurie Reeder

Keith Sackin

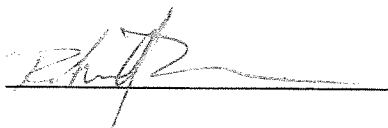
Board Members Emeritus

Laurie Zink

Jim Hilty

Authorized Official

Greg Thompson Executive & Artistic Director, Ocala Civic Theatre 4337 E. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala, FL 34470 (352) 236-2274 | gthompson@ocalacivictheatre.com

Signature:  Date: 11/13/25

SECTION II. Narrative Statement of Program / Event

Ocala Civic Theatre is a year-round performing arts organization that produces a full season of live theatre, youth performance programs, and special events that attract both local residents and visitors from across the region. In the 2024-2025 season, The CiViC welcomed 36,852 attendees across 255 performances and events, representing visitors from more than 225 distinct ZIP codes. Between July 2024 and February 2025, 4,877 tickets (13%) were purchased by patrons residing outside Marion County, demonstrating a measurable and consistent cultural tourism draw. Located near the Silver Springs Community Redevelopment Area, The CiViC promotes tourism through arts-based travel, contributes to the local economy, and enhances Marion County's identity as an arts destination.

Non-peak season (Jan, Feb, Mar) programming includes:

Month	Program/Event	# of shows	Attendance	Out-of-Area Impact/Notes
April	Spring Youth Production -James and the Giant Peach (2025)	4	560	Tuition-free youth program; affordable family pricing; held at Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place; attracts local and regional families
May	Season Closing Mainstage Musical - <i>The SpongeBob Musical</i> (2025)	15	3379	Includes audience engagement programs; discounts for students, educators, first responders; draws regional patrons; held at the CiViC
June-July	Summer Youth Arts for All Intensive - <i>The Seussification of Romeo & Juliet & Godspell</i> (2024)	8	1401	Two youth ensembles; held at the CiViC ; encourages multigenerational travel; supports summer cultural visitation
September	Season Opening Musical - <i>Rodgers & Hammerstein's Cinderella</i> (2024)	15	4107	75% average capacity; Includes audience engagement programs; held at the CiViC; attracts both local and regional visitors
Oct-Nov	Fall Mainstage Production - <i>The Glass Menagerie</i> (2024)	15	2307	Held at the CiViC; includes audience engagement programs; attracts both local and regional visitors
December	Holiday Mainstage Production - <i>A Tuna Christmas</i> (2024)	12	2564	Held at the CiViC; targets winter visitors and multigenerational holiday audiences; key driver for early-season tourism and re-engagement of winter residents
Year-Round	Concerts, Comedy, & Special Events	50+	9130	Includes rental and touring events; held at the CiViC; introduces new audiences; expands cultural tourism reach

Spring Youth Production (April – Mary Sue Rich Community Center)

A tuition-free youth production offering accessible arts opportunities. School matinees are \$5; public performances \$12–\$18. The 2024 production of *James and the Giant Peach* welcomed 560 audience members across four performances.

Season Closing Mainstage Musical (May – The CiViC)

A three-week musical, typically 15 performances, drawing large regional attendance. *The SpongeBob Musical* had 3,379 attendees in 2024. Programming includes Student Night, Drinks with the Director, Play/Date family initiative, and Off Book discussions. Discounts are offered to students, educators, and first responders.

Summer Youth Arts for All Intensive (June-July – The CiViC)

Two youth ensembles present fully staged performances over two weekends. In 2024, *The Seussification of Romeo & Juliet* and *Godspell* drew 1,401 attendees, attracting multigenerational family travel.

Season Opening Musical (September – The CiViC)

A 15-performance musical kicking off the season. Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Cinderella* welcomed 4,107 audience members in 2024, averaging 75% capacity, driving early ticket sales and re-engaging winter residents. Also includes audience engagement opportunities.

Fall Mainstage Production (Oct-Nov – The CiViC)

A major three-week production such as *The Glass Menagerie* drew 2,307 attendees and included audience engagement opportunities.

Holiday Mainstage Production (December – The CiViC)

A special holiday production over two weeks (10 performances), welcoming winter visitors and multigenerational audiences. *A Tuna Christmas* attracted 2,564 attendees during early tourism season.

Concerts, Comedy, & Special Events (Year-Round – The CiViC)

50+ concerts, comedy, and cultural events drew 9,130 attendees, including rental and touring events that expand cultural tourism and attract new audiences.

The CiViC's programming merits TDC funding because it attracts out-of-county visitors, drives economic activity, and strengthens Marion County's reputation as a cultural destination. Art & Economic Prosperity 6 (AEP 6) finds that arts patrons from outside Marion County generated an additional \$49.50 per person in spending, not including ticket sales, while in town for our events. In 2024-2025, 13% of ticket buyers were from outside the county. Year-round programming, including mainstage musicals, youth productions, and special events, draws audiences during non-peak months. TDC support leverages public investment to produce measurable economic impact, sustain local jobs, and enhance cultural tourism in Marion County.

SECTION III. Tourism Generation/ Marketing Plan

The CiViC is a year-round performing arts organization whose programming contributes to Marion County's cultural destination profile. The proposed marketing activities are aimed at increasing visitation from outside the county by promoting productions that occur outside of the January-March peak tourist season, including the Closing Musical in May, the Opening Musical in September, the Spring Youth Production in April, and the Summer Youth Productions in July. These programs are positioned to attract cultural travelers during shoulder periods, supporting off-peak economic activity.

Target Markets

Recent ticketing data demonstrates that approximately 13% of patrons reside outside Marion County, providing a baseline for tourism impact. This proposal strengthens out-of-county reach through a two-tiered market strategy:

1. Primary Market - Regional Domestic Drive Market

Visitors within a 30-90-minute radius, including Alachua, Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Levy, and Sumter counties, where travel patterns support day trips and overnight stays associated with cultural activities.

2. Secondary Market - Non-Domestic Travelers

Seasonal residents, visiting friends and relatives, and leisure travelers planning visits to Central and North Central Florida. Marketing to this audience focuses on destination awareness in alignment with *Visit Florida* domestic and non-domestic travel data, positioning The CiViC as part of a broader cultural itinerary rather than a single-event trip driver.

Distribution to Lodging Industry Partners

The CiViC will expand partnerships to provide lodging providers with opportunities to collaborate on co-promotional offers and ticket & lodging packages. Partners will be featured on the enhanced "Plan Your Trip" webpage, connecting audiences with local restaurants and attractions and encouraging multi-day cultural visits. These collaborations promote regional cultural tourism and provide opportunities for expanded economic impact. The effectiveness of these initiatives will be tracked through lodging partner surveys, website analytics, and unique QR codes. The CiViC has previously collaborated with lodging providers, such as Equus Inn, as Community Partners, with partners receiving theatre lobby signage, program recognition, and production sponsorship. (See attached RFP)

Measurement and Evaluation

To comply with Florida State Statute §125.0104, evidence of tourist origin will be collected and reported using:

- ZIP code data captured through the ticketing system
- Patron and lodging partner surveys administered digitally and onsite
- Website analytics identifying geographic source audiences
- Lodging and dining promotional code tracking

Key Performance Indicators

- Increase out-of-county attendance (from 13% to 20% annually) measured through ZIP-code tracking
- Increase destination awareness measured through digital analytics across media channels
- Support overnight economic activity (documented year-over-year increase) measured through promotion codes and survey response data

Out-of-County Marketing Initiatives- Projected ROI, Attendance, and Reach

The CiViC will implement an integrated marketing campaign emphasizing out-of-county promotion across digital, radio, print, and tourism partnership channels.

Strategy	Description	Cost / Funding	Out-of-County Attendees	Projected Impressions / Reach	Total Economic Impact ¹	ROI
Website Enhancement	"Plan Your Trip" webpage encouraging overnight visits	\$1,000 / Grant	100	5,000-7,500	\$4,950	4.95
Social Media Content Creation	Video/audio/written messaging for Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok	\$1,000 (\$500 Grant / \$500 Cash)	200	50,000-60,000	\$9,900	9.9
Google Ads (Search & Display)	Geo-targeted campaigns to drive-market ZIPs & non-domestic audiences	\$0 / Google Ad Grant	120	15,000-20,000	\$5,940	n/a
Radio & Digital Media	WUFT, WIND-FM & K-Country ads, DJ mentions, ticket contests	\$3,000 / In-Kind	90	6,000-8,000	\$4,455	n/a
Print Advertising	Regional lifestyle and tourism publications	\$2,500 / In-Kind	60	60,000-80,000	\$2,970	n/a
Outdoor Billboard	Out-of-area billboard promoting cultural visitation	\$4,000 / Grant	300	20,000-25,000	\$14,850	3.71
Tourism & Chamber Partnerships	Memberships supporting cross-promotion, listings, referrals	\$1,500 / Grant	50	N/A	\$2,475	1.65
Promotional Incentives	Discount codes/vouchers tied to overnight stays	\$500 / Grant	50	N/A	\$2,475	4.95

Total / Combined: Out-of-County Attendees: 970 | Total Projected Economic Impact: \$47,015

¹ Economic impact estimates use a conservative out-of-county spending figure of \$49.50 per attendee, based on Marion County-specific AEP6 data (Americans for the Arts, 2024). ROI is calculated for grant or cash-funded initiatives only; in-kind and Google Ad Grant initiatives are included in economic impact but do not have ROI. Attendance and impression figures are conservative projections based on historic attendance, media reach, and engagement trends. Tracking methods include ticketing zip codes, promo codes, surveys, and lodging partner collaboration, ensuring compliance with Florida Statutes Section 125.0104.

SECTION IV. Sustainability and Growth Potential

The CiViC's programming is supported by a broad network of community stakeholders, including local patrons, volunteers, donors, civic partners, and regional cultural organizations. The organization engages approximately 300 volunteers annually and operates with extensive community participation, reflecting sustained local support for its mission to provide accessible, high-quality arts experiences for residents and visitors. School partnerships, youth ensembles, and public engagement initiatives further strengthen community investment in The CiViC's ongoing work.

The City of Ocala and Ocala Parks & Recreation have been key partners in establishing Academy West, a performing arts education initiative at the **Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place**. This collaboration has enabled The CiViC to extend arts education and performance opportunities into a traditionally underserved area of the community, aligning with shared goals of equitable access and community inclusion.

Partnerships with **Marion County Public Schools** provide additional evidence of community support. Each year, hundreds of students attend the Spring Youth Production during designated school-day performances, offering exposure to live theatre and supporting arts education objectives. These programs also encourage broader family and community engagement in local cultural programming.

The CiViC is located on the **Appleton Cultural Campus of the College of Central Florida**, adjacent to the **Appleton Museum of Art**. The organization continues to explore expanded collaboration with both institutions through joint educational activities, cross-promotional opportunities, and campus-based cultural programming. These relationships reflect ongoing cooperation among key arts and educational entities in Marion County.

The Marion Cultural Alliance (MCA) also provides significant community support to The CiViC through event collaborations, promotional partnerships, and grant funding. MCA and The CiViC have co-hosted community arts events at the **Brick City Center for the Arts**, maintaining a downtown presence for The CiViC, working jointly to promote local performances, advancing shared goals of strengthening Marion County's cultural landscape and expanding access to the arts.

In addition, The CiViC's proximity to **Silver Springs State Park and the Ocala National Forest** presents opportunities for co-marketing efforts that link arts and cultural activities with the area's natural assets. Such collaborations can strengthen destination awareness and support balanced regional tourism growth.

Future Growth Plan

The CiViC's established base of community partnerships provides a strong foundation for long-term growth. Attendance data indicate consistent regional and out-of-county participation across multiple seasons, particularly during non-peak periods such as the Spring Youth Production, Season Closing Musical in May, Summer Youth Productions, and the Season Opening Musical in September. These programs contribute to extended visitor stays and year-round economic activity.

Planned strategies for growth include:

- Expanding outreach to regional drive-market audiences while maintaining engagement with national and international cultural visitors.
- Strengthening cooperative marketing with *Visit Florida* and regional Chambers of Commerce to align with broader tourism priorities.
- Developing lodging and hospitality partnerships that promote overnight stays and multi-day cultural itineraries.
- Enhancing digital marketing and analytics, including social media, Google Ads, and email campaigns, to better target and evaluate audience engagement.
- Introducing new programming and engagement initiatives designed to diversify offerings and encourage repeat visitation.

Through continued collaboration with civic, educational, and cultural partners, and the implementation of a structured marketing and outreach plan, The CiViC seeks to sustainably increase visitor participation, support year-round cultural activity, and strengthen Marion County's overall arts and tourism ecosystem.

SECTION V. Proposal Budget

Strategy	Description	Estimated Cost	Source of Funds
Website Enhancement	"Plan Your Trip" webpage featuring lodging, dining, attractions, and suggested itineraries that encourage overnight visits.	\$1,000	Grant
Social Media Content Creation	Production of video, audio, and written messaging for Meta and YouTube campaigns targeting out-of-county audiences.	\$1,000	\$500 Grant / \$500 Cash match
Google Ads (Search and Display)	Geo-targeted campaigns to both (1) drive-market ZIP codes and (2) non-domestic audiences engaged in trip-planning behavior.	\$1,500	Google Ad Grant, In-Kind
Radio & Digital Media Partnership	WUFT, WIND-FM and K-Country ads, streaming, DJ mentions, ticket contests, and interview segments.	\$3,000	In-Kind Media Value
Print Advertising	Regional lifestyle and tourism publications (<i>Lake & Sumter Style</i> , <i>Elite Equestrian</i> , <i>The Scout Guide</i>).	\$2,500	In-Kind Media Value
Outdoor Advertising	Out-of-area billboard to promote trip planning and cultural visitation.	\$4,000	Grant
Tourism & Chamber Partnerships	Memberships to <i>Visit Florida</i> , <i>Citrus County Chamber of Commerce</i> , <i>Greater Hernando Chamber</i> , and <i>Greater Gainesville Chamber</i> supporting cross-promotion, listings, and visitor referral networks.	\$1,500	Grant
Promotional Incentives	Discount codes or vouchers tied to overnight stays (estimated cost of \$5-10 per redemption, projected 50 redemptions)	\$500	Grant

Total Out-of-County Marketing Value: \$15,000**Grant Request: \$7,500****Match + In-Kind: \$7,500****Budget Notes:**

- Matching funds are provided through a combination of cash contribution, in-kind media value, and the Google Ads grant, demonstrating robust community and partner support.
- All line items are specific to out-of-county marketing and cultural tourism promotion to maximize measurable impact in alignment with Florida Statutes Section 125.0104.
- The budget reflects careful alignment of expenses with projected visitor outcomes, ensuring efficient use of public funding to sustain and grow cultural tourism.

Lodging Partnership Request for Proposals

Ocala Civic Theatre (The CiViC), located on the Appleton Cultural Campus alongside the Appleton Museum of Art and just minutes from Silver Springs State Park and the Ocala National Forest, welcomes over 30,000 arts and culture-minded patrons annually, including a significant number from outside Marion County.

The CiViC seeks lodging partners to create ticket-and-lodging packages, co-promotional offers, and enhanced visitor experiences that encourage multi-day cultural tourism and generate measurable economic impact for our region.

Event Name: Ocala Civic Theatre 2026 Cultural Tourism Engagement Initiative

Organization: Ocala Civic Theatre

Guest Lodging Periods & Estimated Room Needs:

Production / Event	Dates	Estimated Total Attendance	Estimated Out-of-Area Guests (13%)	Estimated Rooms per Night	Total Room Nights
Season Closing Musical	Apr 30-May 3, 7-10, 14-17	3,379	439	6-7	90-100
Summer Youth Production 1	Jul 10-12	547	71	5-6	12-18
Summer Youth Production 2	Jul 17-19	546	71	5-6	12-18
Season Opening Musical	Sep 10-13, 17-20, 24-27	4,107	534	7-9	105-125

Totals:

- **Estimated Total Attendance: 8,579**
- **Total Out-of-Area Guests: ~1,115**
- **Total Room Nights Needed: ~219-261**

Note: Historical attendance data from similar past productions were used to project out-of-county guests needing lodging. Estimates are conservative. Not all out-of-county visitors will book hotels; many may drive in from nearby counties or stay with friends/family. Average room occupancy is assumed at 1.75 guests per room.

Special Requests / Considerations: Standard amenities and services expected for group or visitor bookings.

Proposals will be submitted through the Ocala/Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau.