



Room Night Generating Events – Funding Program Guidelines

AUTHORIZATION HISTORY

The Ocala/Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau (OMCVCB), leads and supports the tourism industry in Marion County by providing the highest quality and most innovative marketing programs and promotions to ensure the continued growth of tourism. The OMCVCB's objective and purpose of these Room Night Generating Events - Funding Program Guidelines (these "Guidelines") is to position Marion County as a must-experience destination in Florida through quality events and initiatives supported by the OMCVCB funding program (the "Program"). The OMCVCB recognizes events are a major contributor to the overall tourism economy. In order to develop event related tourism, the OMCVCB has put in place these Guidelines for events seeking funding.

The Florida State Legislature enacted the Local Option Tourist Development Act (Section 125.0104, Florida Statutes) in response to the growing need of Florida counties to provide additional revenue sources for tourist development in an effort to stimulate the local economy. The Marion County Tourist Development Council (TDC) was created pursuant to Marion County Resolution 04-R-44, as a result of the 2004 passage of the 2% Tourist Development Tax (TDT) and subsequent passage of an additional 2% TDT in 2015, and operates in accordance with Florida State Statute 125.0104. The Tourist Development Tax Revenues are designated to promote Ocala/Marion County as a preferred visitor destination.

All requests for funds from organizers (Applicants) seeking to host an event (Event) must be reviewed and approved by OMCVCB Staff and the Tourist Development Council (TDC). Once a funding amount has been allocated, funds will not be disbursed until after the Event has been completed and a post-event economic impact report has been produced and timely submitted to the OMCVCB for review.

The number and extent of these funds will be dependent upon the Tourist Development annual budget allocation for these purposes. Ideally, the funds allocated by the TDC will eventually be returned through an increase in transient lodging sales and the tourist development tax generated from those sales.

ROOM NIGHT GENERATING EVENT FUNDING CRITERIA - STATEMENT OF POLICIES

Funding will be provided in direct correlation for room nights generated and subject to a specified maximum award. For each verified room night, a **\$14 rebate** will be eligible to the Event planner. Any Event that produces less than 100 verified room nights will not be eligible.

Additionally, reimbursement amounts will be capped at the figure requested on the application and approved by the Marion County Board of County Commissioners. No amounts will be increased retroactively.

The maximum funding for any Event by this Program is not intended to exceed \$25,000. However, should extraordinary circumstance exist, a request for a higher amount will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, but will follow the same requirements for consideration and recommendation to the Marion County Board of County Commissioners for final approval.

- A. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Not applicable or N/A should be marked if needed.
- B. Funding is not intended to support administrative costs or non-public Events. Funding is intended to support marketing and promotional efforts, production/operational expenses and venue/site rentals and costs associated with facilities (see eligible and ineligible use of funds list). The Ocala/Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau logo block must appear prominently in all advertising and publicity (written or electronic) for the Event.
- C. Accommodations secured for the Event must be located within Marion County.
- D. Funding shall be provided as reimbursement for approved actual expenditures upon completion of the Event. Proof of payment must be provided and may be submitted in the form of a vendor receipt and a front and back copy of cleared check or credit card receipt. Cash receipts can be accepted for reimbursements; however, Applicant is strongly encouraged to use a more trackable payment method. Written confirmation from a vendor that an expenditure has been paid in full is necessary if only a copy of the front of the cleared check is provided. Written confirmation from a vendor will be necessary if cash was accepted as payment.
- E. In order to assess the impact of each Event on the Ocala/Marion County transient lodging industry, the OMCVCB requires the tracking of the number of overnight visitors attending the Event. **Room block reports from hotels are the preferred method of reporting room data.** Following the Event, the OMCVCB reserves the right to conduct an audit of information presented for each funded Event. All lodging accommodations listed by an Applicant may be contacted to confirm the number of room nights generated for the Event. Failure to track rooms and/or visitors will void eligibility for any post-Event funding.
 - *For the purpose of calculating creditable overnight stays, only rooms subject to Tourist Development Tax shall be included, i.e., rooms exempt from payment of tax or provided on a complimentary (free of charge) basis shall be excluded from the calculation.*
- F. Any funds granted will be subject to audit by the Marion County Clerk of the Court – Internal Auditor or other representative the County may designate. Any expenditure deemed ineligible as a result of an audit shall be repaid by Applicant to the OMCVCB within 60 days of written demand.
- G. Applicant shall provide proof of insurance to County obtained with a company or companies authorized to do business in the State of Florida with an A.M. Best Company rating of at least A- (A minus). A \$1,000,000 Commercial General Liability Insurance Policy is required for the Event along with “Marion County, a political subdivision of the State of Florida, its officials, employees, and volunteers” being named as an Additional Insured on the policy. The term of coverage must include not only all days of the Event, but set up days and take down days as well. **Failure to provide this prior to the Event, will result in disqualification to receive funding.**
- H. Recognition of the OMCVCB must be included where appropriate on all printed material and Applicant’s website and referred to in public relations activities. A camera-ready logo will be provided upon request and is available on Ocalamarion.com. All printed materials with the logo block must be presented with the reimbursement request.
- I. Upon approval of funds, Applicant must provide, if applicable, 20 tickets for promotional use, as

well as media passes for use by OMCVCB staff to attend and cover the Event for Marion County's marketing and public relations purposes.

- J. Applicant is to have only one designated contact (Designee) for the duration of the funding process. Designee is responsible for turning in all application documents, as well as follow up paperwork needed prior to the Event. Additionally, Designee will be responsible for executing the funding contract and providing a W-9 for Applicant. Funds will be released only to Designee upon completion of post-Event documentation and room night certification. Should Designee change at any point during the process, written notification to the OMCVCB office is required. Failure to provide notification will delay or eliminate the ability to receive reimbursement.
- K. Applicant must be registered to do business in the State of Florida with an active account on Sunbiz.org.
- L. If any details (date, time, name of event, etc.) change prior to the Event execution, a letter must be sent to the OMCVCB office advising of the changes. Date changes require a vote of approval by the TDC and must be submitted in writing on Applicant's letterhead. Same will be reviewed and approved by the TDC in order for funding to remain eligible.
- M. **Applicant must meet with a representative of the Ocala/Marion County Visitors & Convention Bureau (via phone or in person) prior to submitting an application.**
 - a. The application is available at www.ocalamarion.com.
 - b. Please contact (352) 438-2800 or email sales@marionfl.org for an application and/or to set an appointment.
- N. Applicant is required to grant Marion County and all of its agents, the right to use and reproduce any and all photographs, digital images, videotapes or recordings made at or made in relation to the Event, including those of Applicant's employees, volunteers, invitees, and those that contain Applicant's name, artwork, logo or trademark, for use by Marion County, and the right to copyright and/or use, reuse and/or publish, republish photographic pictures, digital images, videotapes or recordings. Applicant must affirm that it is the legal owner of any artwork, logo or trademark used by Applicant and acknowledge that Marion County is relying on this representation and to the extent there is any claim by any third party against Marion County, Applicant will indemnify and hold Marion County harmless as to any such claim or damages arising from such claim. Applicant is required to grant Marion County permission for the photographs, digital images, videotapes, or recordings to be used in their entirety and/or edited versions as deemed necessary by Marion County. Applicant must understand these items will become the property of Marion County and all rights to inspect or approve as well as any royalties or other such compensation are waived. Applicant further grants Marion County permission for the photographs, digital images, videotapes or recordings to be used by Marion County at any time in the future without notice being provided and that Marion County's use may include for trade, commercial and advertising purposes, to promote the product or service of Marion County, and to simply report happenings in Marion County, and may include the use of items on Marion County websites. Applicant must make its invitees aware of Marion County's intentions in this regard and make a release a requirement to participate in the Event.
- O. The Ocala/Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau may also require a "testimonial" for use on its website (ocalamarion.com) as a condition of reimbursement. Such testimonial should reflect an honest assessment by Applicant.

APPLICATION DEADLINE AND GUIDELINES

One application will be accepted per Event. The application **must be completely filled out**. Not Applicable or N/A should be marked if needed. Completed applications will be date stamped and added to the TDC agenda in the order that they are received. If approved by the TDC, the application will then be presented to the Marion County Board of County Commissioners for final approval.

ALL FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS REQUIRE FINAL APPROVAL BY THE MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

You may mail or hand deliver the **ORIGINAL** application to:

Ocala/Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau
Attn: Corry Locke
109 West Silver Springs Boulevard
Ocala, FL 34475

The Designee, Event director, fiscal administrator or other contact person may be called upon by OMCVCB staff at any time during the review process. TDC meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of each month (unless otherwise noticed). Applicants are strongly encouraged, if possible, to attend the meeting for which its application is scheduled for review. This will be the only opportunity to speak directly to the TDC in regards to the Event application. Attending the meeting is NOT requirement to receive funding.

REIMBURSEMENT/ACCOUNTABILITY

- Within 60 days after the completion of the Event, Applicant must submit:
 - Eligible reimbursable expenses (with proof of payment and copy of event collateral displaying approved logo block).
 - Invoice for TDC/BCC approved funds (addressed to Ocala Marion/County Visitors and Convention Bureau) and all supporting reimbursement documentation.
- The OMCVCB will, at its discretion, conduct audits to review accuracy of attendance and room nights reported in reimbursement requests.

Incomplete reimbursement requests will not be considered. A request for an extension of the 60 day deadline must be provided in writing to OMCVCB staff and may require specific additional action on the part of the TDC.

ELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS

The following is a list of how Tourist Development Funds are to be used to promote tourism for Marion County.

1. Promotional Expense

- A. Promotional expenses in conjunction with the Event to increase participation and bring visitors that will stay in overnight accommodations and generate Tourist Development Tax within Ocala/Marion County as a result of the Event.
- B. Advertising and publicity outside of the Marion County area to increase participation, attendance and awareness of the Event and generate hotel room nights:
 - Print
 - Radio
 - Online Media
 - Television Advertisements
 - Outdoor Signage/Banners
 - Poster/Flyers/Brochures
 - Media Events
 - Direct Mail
 - Event Banners
 - Printing Collateral
 - Live-Streaming production expenses of the Event.
- Artwork/Graphic Design
- C. The OMCVCB logo block and name inclusive on all digital and printed material associated with the Event and listed as a sponsor of the Event including t-shirts, Event merchandise, and or give away items.

2. Operational Expense

Operational expenses are attributed purely to the development/production of the Event that specifically targets and promotes out-of-town visitors to come to Marion County.

- A. Bid Fee (Must be considered an authorized use as determined by the Florida State Statute 125.0104);
- B. Rental fees for Event venue/facility so long as Event venue/facility is owned by a third party unrelated to and not associated with Applicant.
- C. Event specific rental items.
- D. Event related judges, officials, or umpires.
- E. Additional necessary operational expenses, as approved per Florida State Statute 125.0104, and indicated in the final motion to approve funding.

INELIGIBLE USES OF FUNDS

FUNDS MAY NOT BE USED FOR:

1. Prize money, scholarships, awards, plaques, trophies, certificates;
2. T-shirts that do not include the Ocala/Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau logo block;
3. Any and all travel expenses. (Includes, but is not limited to, car rental fees, airline tickets, hotels, food, luggage fees, etc.);
4. Private entertainment, food, beverages, or any type of concession;
5. Annual operating expenditures;
6. Legal, engineering, accounting, auditing, planning, feasibility studies or other consulting services;
7. Employee salaries;
8. Real property or capital improvements to facilities;
9. Tangible personal property including but not limited to items reusable outside of the Event operations such as clipboards, radios, office furnishings, or equipment;
10. Interest or reduction of deficits and loans;
11. Expenses incurred or obligated prior to or after the grant Event period;
12. Advertising and promotional materials distributed at the Event site or after the Event;
13. Receptions or social functions other than those specifically designed for pre-event media promotional purposes;
14. Sales tax;
15. Website design not specific to the Event; and
16. Ongoing or annual facility maintenance;
17. Items required or services offered by the rented facility that are not expended or consumed by the Event.

RFP DISTRIBUTION AND ROOM NIGHT TRACKING

Applicant will be required to provide tracking data for all paid room nights associated with the Event. At least 75% of all room nights must be verified by a lodging partner (hotel, motel, RV park, campground, vacation rental, etc.) or provided from the iDSS CRM database used by the OMCVCB. Applicant is strongly encouraged to conduct its own room night surveys as an additional step to verifying room nights. Obtaining zip codes is recommended to show the geographic location and estimated distance traveled by all participants. This will be crucial to help determine the total number of rooms nights generated. A minimum of 100 room nights will need to be verified in order to be eligible to receive any funding.

For all Events that are funded by the OMCVCB, the following procedure must take place to secure hotel accommodations:

1. Applicant must include the OMCVCB logo block and link www.ocalamarion.com on the Event website (if applicable).
2. If a host or overflow hotel has been identified, it must be disclosed in this application. If a no host or overflow hotel has been identified, a hotel Request for Proposal (RFP) shall be sent out via the OMCVCB office in order to secure hotel rooms for the Event. This process provides Applicant an opportunity to secure the best possible rate for the host hotel and/or overflow hotels.
3. When Applicant has selected the participating hotel or hotels, Applicant must notify the OMCVCB so all of the hotels that originally submitted a lead will be informed of Applicant's decision. **It is up to Applicant to set up a tracking code or system so that the hotel front desk and sales staff can track and document all Event related room nights.**
4. Applicant may list as many, or as few, "participating hotels" on the Event website, and may post as much information, including pictures, amenities, etc. for these hotels as they choose as long as the listed hotels on the tournament website are hotels located in Marion County.
5. Applicant may utilize a third party housing provider for accommodations as long as the selected accommodators are within Marion County. Applicant may not list hotels outside of Marion County unless it receives special permission from the OMCVCB. (Example – Marion County hotels may not meet the demand of the Event so overflow hotels outside of the County could be considered necessary to accommodate participants).
6. After the Event, Applicant will submit the Room Night Certification Form from all of the hotels that generated room nights from the Event. This form is what the OMCVCB uses to verify actual number of room nights generated from the Event. This form, which can be found herein, needs to be filled out and signed by an authorized representative of the lodging partner. Rooms may also be verified by the accommodators using our iDSS CRM database. Emails from accommodators certifying room nights will also be accepted; however, this is not the preferred method for room tracking.

Copies of the following items should be attached to your application:

- List of Applicant's current Officers and/or Board members (if available)
- Applicant's W-9 tax form for post-Event payment
- Overall marketing plan for the Event (if applicable)

**OCALA/MARION COUNTY VISITORS AND CONVENTION BUREAU
ROOM NIGHT GENERATING EVENTS FUNDING REQUEST APPLICATION**

I. General Information

1. Name of Organization:
2. Official Name of Organization as listed on W-9:
3. Organization's Principal Address:
4. Organization's Chief Officer:
 - a. Email:
 - b. Phone number:
5. Name of Event:
6. Event's Website (if applicable):
7. Event's Social Media Handles (if applicable):
 - a. Facebook:
 - b. Twitter:
 - c. Instagram:
 - d. YouTube:
 - e. Other:
8. Organization's Event Director (if different from above):
 - a. Title:
 - b. Email:
 - c. Phone number:
9. Requested amount of funding for the Event:
10. Intended use of funds (please refer to pages 5-6 for eligible/ineligible uses):

II. Description of Event:

III. Event Specific Information

1. Event Name:
2. Type of Event: (circle one)
 - a. Sports
 - b. Convention
 - c. Tradeshow
 - d. Business Meeting
 - e. Festival
3. Dates of Event:
4. Location of Event:
5. Total Projected Number of Participants:
 - a. Local:
 - b. Out-of-town:
6. Total Projected Number of Spectators Per Day:
 - a. Local:
 - b. Out-of-town:
7. Total Projected Number of Media, Staff, Officials, Volunteers, etc.:
 - a. Local:
 - b. Out-of-Town:
8. Event Promoter (if other than Applicant):
 - a. Company Name:
 - b. Address:
 - c. Contact Information:
9. Admission Price (if applicable):

10. What is the anticipated number of room nights you expect to generate with this Event?
11. Provide the previous year's Event information (if applicable):
 - a. Dates:
 - b. Location:
 - c. Total achieved Room Nights:
 - d. Did the event receive funding from the TDC?
 - i. If so, how much?

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EVENT EXPENSES

Provide an itemized summary indicating the intended use of TDC funds at the bottom of this page. Please be as detailed as possible, including intended publications, promotional materials, etc. and the dollar amount that will be expended (tentatively) for each category. This is the total amount of the grant you have requested. Use additional sheets if necessary.

TOTAL EXPENSES - Please list all projected expenses, not including TDC Funds.	Expense Amount
Expense Type	
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$

Intended Use of Tourist Development Tax Funds	Amount
TOTAL EVENT EXPENSES	\$

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR FUNDING
INITIAL BESIDE EACH TO CONFIRM APPLICANT’S AGREEMENT

_____ Applicant will utilize the funding awarded strictly in compliance with the eligible and ineligible uses of funds list. (Guidelines, pages 5 and 6.)

_____ It is Applicant’s responsibility to track all rooms associated with the Event in order to receive funding. (page 2, paragraph E.)

_____ Applicant has included a list of its current Officers and/or Board members (if applicable) with the application.

_____ Applicant’s W-9 tax form is included with the application.

_____ Applicant acknowledges that Marion County must be listed as an additional insured on the Event’s insurance policy. (page 2, paragraph G)

_____ Applicant has included a marketing plan for the Event (if applicable).

_____ As an authorized representative of Applicant, the person submitting this documentation acknowledges that he/she is also the person required to execute the contract and prepare the post-Event documents within 60 days of the Event end date as well as receive the final payment.

_____ Applicant understands that all funding will be paid following the Event as a reimbursement for expenses incurred unless specific exceptions have been made otherwise.

_____ Applicant acknowledges that any material made or received by Marion County in connection with Applicant’s request for Event funding is a public record and subject to public inspection unless there is a legislatively created exemption that makes it confidential and not subject to disclosure. Applicant acknowledges that subject to Florida laws, it cannot dictate to Marion County what material is open to public inspection or the circumstances under which material is deemed confidential.

_____ Applicant understands that as a requirement to receiving funding, Applicant will execute a release to permit Marion County to photo and/or record the Event and Applicant must make Event invitees aware of this and make the signing of a release a requirement to participate in the Event.

_____ Applicant understands that all funds it receives are subject to audit by the Marion County Clerk of the Court – Internal Auditor or other representative as Marion County may designate. Any expenditure deemed illegible as a result of an audit shall be repaid by Applicant to the OMCVCB within 60 day of written demand.

CERTIFICATION OF APPLICANT

Applicant has reviewed this Application for Funding from the Tourist Development Council. Applicant is in full agreement with the information contained herein. To the best of Applicant's knowledge, the information contained in this Application and its attachments is accurate and complete.

Applicant

Date

By: _____
(Signature)

Its: _____
(Title)

