

# Board of County Commissioners

## Leon County, Florida

### Policy No. 21-6

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| Title:             | County Tourism Event Grant Programs  |
| Date Adopted:      | July 13, 2021  |
| Effective Date:    | July 13, 2021  |
| Reference:         | Section 125.0104, Florida Statutes, Tourist Development Tax; Development procedures for levying; authorized uses; referendum; enforcement. |
| Policy Superseded: | N/A  |

It shall be the policy of Leon County, Florida, that a new policy entitled “County Tourism Event Grant Programs” is hereby adopted, to wit:

### Tourism Grant Programs

#### A. Purpose

The Leon County Division of Tourism event grant programs are funded by the Tourist Development Tax (TDT) which is generated from overnight lodging. 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. Event grant funds are awarded to groups and organizations that coordinate events open to the public with a demonstrated history of or show significant potential to generate overnight stays from visitors outside of Leon County. .

#### B. Definitions

1. **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, service, venue or event to tourists.”
2. **Tourist** - Per section 125.0104, Florida Statutes, a tourist is “a person who participates in trade or recreation activities outside of the county of his or her permanent residence, or who rents or leases transient accommodations including any living quarters or accommodations in any hotel, motel, apartment 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.”
3. **Private Event** – A private event is an event hosted by an organization or league with access or participation restricted to members only. Private events are not eligible to receive Tourism grant funding. Events with paid admission are not considered a private event.

**C. Grant Program Descriptions**

1. **Legacy Event** – A Legacy Event is an event, festival or tournament that has been taking place in the community for a minimum of five years and annually generates a high number of room nights and the largest economic impact for the community. These events are large, multi-day events that are well known and draw visitors from across the country and internationally. The Legacy Event program was implemented to ensure that these events would have the assurance of funding at the levels necessary to consistently produce and market the event without having to compete for funding with small or new events.
2. **Signature/Emerging Signature Events** – Signature and Emerging Signature events are annual events that take place over one or more days and can demonstrate the ability to produce significant room nights. These events are generally well-established, multi-day larger events that have a broad visitor appeal for motivating travel. An Emerging Signature event is one that meets the criteria for a Signature event but is not yet able to generate the same economic impact as the Signature event. In order to be elevated to Signature Event status, these events must have been taking place in the community for a minimum of three years and be able to show an increase in visitation over that period.
3. **Special Events** – Special Events are a new or small events and festivals that are open to the public and attract overnight visitors to Leon County/Tallahassee. These events have a history of or show potential to generate overnight stays from visitors outside of Leon County/Tallahassee.
4. **Sports Events** – Sports Event grants are similar to Special Events grants regarding overnight stays and visitation requirements and are specially for events categorized as amateur sporting events.

**D. Board Intent**

1. The intent of the County Tourism Grant Program is to provide funding assistance for events that open to the public and attract overnight visitors to Tallahassee/Leon County and create business for the commercial lodging industry, (hotels/motels, campgrounds, condominiums, short-term vacation rentals) as well as restaurants, retail establishments and other businesses.
2. Annually as part of the budget process, the Board may establish an allocation for the County Tourism Grant Programs. The Tourist Development Council (TDC), through the County Administrator or his designee, may recommend specific funding levels for each grant program. The Director of Tourism has the flexibility to adjust budget allocations among the grant programs based on the need and market conditions as demonstrated in the grant applications.
3. Grant funds are intended to supplement the organization's marketing and event budget for Grant funding cannot be used for private events or administrative costs.
4. The number and extent of the grants offered will depend upon the availability of designated funds and specific allocations.

5. The Division of Tourism shall be responsible for facilitating the grant application process and contract management for events awarded County tourism funds. The TDC shall approve any revisions to the annual Grant Guidelines as deemed necessary for the grant cycle.
6. The TDC shall approve all grant award funding with the exception of Legacy Event grants which also require review and approval by the Board.

**E. Eligibility**

1. Any organization or agency with a defined marketing plan for an event that demonstrates the potential to attract overnight visitors who use commercial lodging establishments to Tallahassee/Leon County is eligible to apply for Tourism grant funding.
2. Events must meet criteria in section 125.0104, Florida Statutes, which outlines permissible uses of TDT funds.
3. Individual Tourism Event Grant Programs may include specific eligibility requirements such as the type of event (sports, leisure, business, civic, historic, , etc.), the number of anticipated visitors, the estimated number of room nights generated by event , the scale of regional, national, or international media exposure highlighting the destination, or other criteria deemed appropriate by the County in attracting tourists to Leon County in accordance with section 125.0104, Florida Statutes.

**F. Procedures**

The following procedures shall govern all funding requests made during the fiscal year:

1. The Tourism Grant Programs are competitive grant programs and subject to the restrictions and fulfillment of requirements set forth in section 125.0104, Florida Statutes. Funding will be awarded to organizations that meet the eligibility requirements and are based on a competitive evaluation that considers the description of the event seeking funds and the ability of the organization to fulfill the intended results.
2. Commercial lodging secured for the event must be located within Leon County.
3. Tourism Grant Program guidelines are prepared annually by Tourism staff which include definitions, policies, procedures, scoring criteria, appeals process, and reporting.
4. Grant funding is provided on a reimbursement basis and after all required documentation has been received by the Division of Tourism,
5. Grant funding will not be considered for event that occurs 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.

6. No event may receive grant funding from both the Tourism Grant Program and the Council on Culture & the Arts (COCA).
7. The Division of Tourism, with guidance from the TDC, shall establish an application period and submittal deadline for Tourism Grant Program funding requests. The Grant Application Cycle should be open for 4-6 weeks in the summer prior to the next fiscal year.
8. The Division of Tourism staff shall review grant applications for eligibility and present eligible applications to the Grant Review Committee(s) appointed by the TDC. The Grant Review Committee reviews and scores applications then recommendations are presented to the TDC no later than the September TDC meeting.
9. The TDC shall annually review and approve the Tourism Event Grant Guidelines and appoint a Grant Review Committee(s) from its membership to evaluate and score grant applications. The Tallahassee Sports Council will evaluate and score sports grant applications and forward funding recommendations to the TDC for approval.
10. Legacy Event grants are multi-year grants with measurable deliverables presented to the TDC for review and approval then presented to the Board for final review and approval.
11. The Board authorizes the TDC to consider and award event grants consistent with this policy and its procedures outside of the established grant application cycle provided Tourism Event Grant funds are available.