

BUCKS COUNTY

TOURISM GRANT PROGRAM

Rules and Regulations

INTRODUCTION

Visit Bucks County, in partnership with the County of Bucks, facilitates the Bucks County Tourism Grant Program. Beginning in 2008 and funded through a percentage of the County's tax on lodging, the program aims to increase visitation from outside Bucks County resulting in economic impact and supporting jobs. A visitor is defined as an individual traveling 50 miles or more and/or staying overnight.

Visit Bucks County is the administrator of the program and oversees the documentation process in compliance with the program guidelines. Amendment recommendations are reviewed by the County of Bucks and approved by the VBC Board of Directors.

Awards are established on the basis of merit as determined by the Bucks County Tourism Grant Committee.

PURPOSE

In accordance with Act 18 of 2016, the Bucks County Tourism Grant Program provides grants for projects for tourism marketing, promotion, product development, enhancement of attractions, special events, exhibits and festivals that drive overnight travel to Bucks County, strengthen the vitality of the Bucks County tourism and hospitality community, result in increased economic activity, and do not compete with private sector tourism. Eligible organizations are defined as nonprofit or for-profit businesses within the tourism and hospitality industry.

RULES & REGULATIONS TABLE OF CONTENTS

All Bucks County Tourism Grant Program Terms & Conditions follow Pennsylvania State Regulations (Act 18 of 2016).

- I. Application Process and Timeline
 - II. Eligibility Requirements
 - a. Organizations
 - b. Projects
 - c. Expenses
 - III. Application Requirements
 - IV. Application Review Process
 - V. Grant Recipient Requirements
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I. Application Process and Timeline

- Applications for the Bucks County Tourism Grant Program will be accepted on an annual basis with one cycle per year.
- The application window will be announced on VisitBucksCounty.com/grantprogram. The application window will be open for 30 days.
- Applications may only be submitted via the online grant portal.

BUCKS COUNTY

TOURISM GRANT PROGRAM

- Upon entering the online grant portal, new users will need to create a new account and enter login credentials to complete the registration process.
- Applications are due by 5:00 p.m. on the deadline date.
- Visit Bucks County and the County of Bucks reserve the right to pause the Bucks County Tourism Grant Program at any time.

II. Eligibility Requirements

Organizations

- Eligible recipients are limited to tourism and/or hospitality organizations located in Bucks County. An organization may be located outside of Bucks County only if the planned project will be taking place within Bucks County and the organization can clearly demonstrate that the project will drive overnight stays and generate economic activity in Bucks County.
- The organization has to be in operation for at least one year at the time of each cycle's application window open date.
- Government groups and municipalities are not eligible for a grant.
- Public media organizations are not eligible for a grant. Public media organizations are defined as content creators, photographers/videographers, journalists, influencers, bloggers, podcasters, filmmakers, media production companies, freelance writers, public relations professionals and social media personalities. Other individuals or entities involved in the creation or distribution of content intended for public audiences may also be excluded.
- Sports tournament organizers whose project expenses meet specific criteria will be considered. See Eligible Expenses outlined below.
- Multiple organizations may collaborate on a singular project and submit one application per cycle.
- A company or organization is not eligible for a grant if in arrears with taxes or monies owed to the County of Bucks unless otherwise addressed with the County of Bucks.

Projects

- Grants shall be awarded based on project plans that demonstrate a potential to attract visitors to Bucks County.
- Each applicant may only submit one application containing one project. Projects that take place over a period of time will be considered. An additional application is only permitted if your organization is actively partnering with at least one other Bucks County organization on a joint project. If a for profit organization is involved, all for profit eligibility criteria will apply and override non-profit requirements.
- Activities or projects must take place within the Grant Activity Period defined in the grant application.
- Applications for activities or projects that take place outside the Grant Activity Period will be denied.
- Projects must be for a specific request in one of the following categories: Capital Improvements, Marketing, Product Development, Special Events and Exhibits. One project may fall into multiple categories.
- Capital Improvements:
 - Capital improvement projects that enhance the visitor experience and are visitor friendly upgrades that drive tourism will be considered.
 - For-profit organizations are not eligible for funding for capital improvement and infrastructure projects.
- Marketing:

BUCKS COUNTY

TOURISM GRANT PROGRAM

- Projects requesting funding for marketing expenditures that are designed to increase visitation to an attraction or event will be considered. Organizations will be asked to describe the target audience and the advertising radius outside of Bucks County. Out- of-County advertising or promotion will receive first consideration.
- For-profit organizations are only eligible to submit applications for the marketing and promotion of new initiatives that demonstrate regional economic impact.
- Product Development:
 - New tourism products and/or enhanced tourism experiences that serve as a destination driver and increase visitation will be considered. Projects must demonstrate the ability to be sustainable and financially and conceptually viable.
 - For-profit organizations are not eligible for funding for product development projects.
- Special Events and Exhibits:
 - Festivals, shows, performances, exhibits, programs and other events that are designed to drive visitation from outside of Bucks County will be considered.
 - Annual events will be considered; however, preference will be given to new activities associated with the event.
 - All special events and exhibits will be required to provide marketing and advertising plans. Preference will be given to plans that intend to reach overnight and multi-day visitors outside of Bucks County.
 - Sports tournaments whose expenses meet specific criteria will be considered. See eligible expenses.
 - For-profit organizations are not eligible for funding for special events and exhibits.
- Administrative technology projects will not be eligible for funding.
- Grant applications for activities or events that are, in the opinion of the Grant Committee, primarily related to fundraising for the sponsor, a start-up project or seed money, are strongly discouraged. The only deviation from this policy will be if the Grant Committee views the event as a realistic tourism generator bringing in significant visitation from outside the County.

Expenses

- All grants must be used for expenses directly related to the project. Expenses in connection with the grant request will be detailed and described within the Grant Application, on the Budget Worksheet and within the Grant Completion Report (for grant recipients.)
- Eligible Expenses (not limited to):
 - Capital Improvements:
 - Contractor, architect and/or construction costs. ☐ Materials.
 - Marketing:
 - Out-of-County travel advertising/marketing or promotion, including digital, social media, print, television, direct mail, radio, or other types of advertising/marketing.
 - Promotional activities that complement advertising.
 - Media production costs such as photography and videography.
 - Development of promotional materials and collateral (printed, digital, audio, visual or web based).
 - Special Events and Exhibits:
 - Freelance or third-party artist, speaker, entertainer fees.
 - Production costs related to arts or events.

BUCKS COUNTY

TOURISM GRANT PROGRAM

- Development of new events or major exhibits and activities.
- Sponsorships for sports tournaments must meet the below criteria:
 - Contracted at a Bucks County venue and room block at Bucks County lodging property.
 - Can specifically demonstrate local ROI in terms of overnight stays and impact to local tourism businesses.
 - Sponsorship packages should be equivalent to the dollar amount of grant funds awarded. Benefits may include, event tickets, website exposure, print advertising acknowledgement, press passes, etc.
- Ineligible Expenses (not limited to):
 - Expenses not directly related to the approved program. o Expenses that take place outside the Grant Activity Period defined in the grant application.
 - Retroactive expenses. o Studies, surveys or research. o General operating or administrative expenses. o Building repairs to sustain operations. o Staff costs (salaries, wages and fringes) and volunteer time. o Rent of offices, repairs, renovation and/or remodeling of office facilities. o Office supplies and promotional items (swag/giveaways.) o Administrative technology, computer hardware and software.
 - Professional development, including workshops or training, for staff. o Subscriptions or membership costs. o Scholarships or endowments. o Interest or the reduction of deficits or loans. o Projects restricted to private or exclusive participation. o Cash awards of any description.
 - Tournament bid fees and tournaments not booked.
 - Application and permit fees.
- In special occasions, a waiver from these terms may be requested from the Grant Committee. A waiver being approved does not imply the application will be approved.

III. Application Requirements

All applications must include the following:

- o Project or program description including:
 - o Project's purpose and how it supports the organization's mission.
 - o Ability to attract new visitors to Bucks County, especially from outside of the County.
 - o Anticipated visitation and audience profile.
 - o Benefit to the local Bucks County economy and demonstrated ROI.
 - o Marketing plans, reach and distance placed outside Bucks County.
 - o The amount of the funding requested and total cost of project.
 - o The extent of funds raised independent of the grant funding requested.
 - o The date the funds will be required.
 - o The name and contact information for the individual designated for the implementation of the project. That individual will be referred to as the Program Director.
 - Program Director is required to sign all grant paperwork.

BUCKS COUNTY

TOURISM GRANT PROGRAM

- In accordance with Pennsylvania law, Act 18, nonprofit organizations must provide at least a 25 percent match, cash or in-kind. For-profit organizations will be required to provide at least a 50 percent match, cash or in-kind.
 - A cash or in-kind match can be derived from:
 - Applicant dollars
 - Sponsorships
 - Donated dollars
 - Leveraging another grant
 - In-kind donations (physical items or professional services) o Volunteer hours and staff time are not accepted as an in-kind match.
- All in-kind matches need to be valued and documented by the donating organization(s).
- Applicants must demonstrate the ability to execute its project without depending on the continued financial assistance from grant funding.
- Required documentation:
 - Non-profit Organizations
 - Comprehensive project budget provided on the Budget Worksheet within the online grant portal.
 - List of officers.
 - Copy of 501-C3, 501-C6 (U.S. Department of Treasury IRS Tax-Exempt Status Determination Letter) (if applicable)
 - Articles of Incorporation/Articles of Organization
 - Subsistence Certificate (<https://www.corporations.pa.gov/search/corpsearch>)
 - W9
 - Marketing piece or photos if related to grant request
 - For Profit Organizations
 - Comprehensive project budget provided on the Budget Worksheet within the online grant portal.
 - List of owners.
 - Articles of Incorporation/Articles of Organization
 - Subsistence Certificate (<http://www.corporations.pa.gov/search/corpsearch>)
 - W9
 - Marketing piece or photos if related to grant request
- Application Checklist must be reviewed prior to submitting.
- Applications received after the deadline or incomplete will not be accepted.

IV. Application Review Process and Timeline

Tourism Grant Committee

- The Bucks County Tourism Grant Committee is comprised of six members: County of Bucks Appointment (Commissioner or designee), Visit Bucks County Board of Director/Lodging Community Representative, Nonprofit Community Representative, For-profit Community Representative, Visit Bucks County President/CEO or designee, Bucks County Economic Development Agency Representative.

BUCKS COUNTY

TOURISM GRANT PROGRAM

- Awards are granted on the basis of merit and determined at the sole discretion of the Bucks County Tourism Grant Committee.
- The Grant Committee will review all applications and formal notification will be given to all applicants following their review.
- The Grant Committee reserves the right to consider special grant requests.

Awards

- Grant amounts will vary for each application. The award minimum and maximum will be defined annually on grant application.
- Successful applicants will receive award by mail.
- There is no guarantee that applicants will be awarded a grant.
- Grant awards should not be considered an annual part of any applicant's budget.
- Beginning in 2020, one grant recipient each cycle will be recognized as the Charles H. Martin Grant Recipient, in recognition of Commissioner Martin's commitment in starting and supporting the Bucks County Tourism Grant Program.

V. Grant Recipient Requirements

- Successful applicants will be required to sign the Agreement to Terms & Conditions in order to receive award.
- Funds must be used as specified in the Agreement Terms & Conditions. The uses of grant funds must be used for the specified initiatives outlined in the grant award notification letter, approved grant application and approved budget. A Program Director must be designated for the implementation of the award in accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the grant program.
- Grant funds must be expended within twelve (12) months of receiving the award.
- Grant recipients are required to credit the Bucks County Tourism Grant Program for funding this project in whole or in part on relevant project marketing materials and capital projects.
 - A Grant Completion Report must be submitted no later than January 31st of the year following the Grant Activity Period. Organizations that fail to submit the report by the deadline may result in forfeiture of awarded grant funds and may become ineligible for future grant cycles.
- Grant Completion Reports are submitted within the online grant portal and must include:
 - Description of project. o How the project supported your organization's mission.
 - How the project enhanced Bucks County tourism.
 - Actual attendance or visitation numbers and tracking method (if applicable.)
 - Visitation of patrons beyond Bucks County (50+ miles) (if applicable.)
 - Metrics and creative from advertising media (if applicable.)
 - Narrative on the impact to the local economy (if applicable.)
 - Project's impact on area accommodations and number of room nights (if applicable.)
 - Comparison to previous years (if applicable.)
 - Marketing piece or photos related to grant request.
- Grant Completion Reports must be accompanied by copies of receipts and/or invoices for goods and services rendered in connection with the execution of the grant. Copies of cancelled checks, bank statements showing electronic payments, credit card statements, receipts and/or invoices will be required to document your total expenditures.

BUCKS COUNTY

TOURISM GRANT PROGRAM

- If a recipient is unable to complete a project funded by the Tourism Grant Program, Visit Bucks County must be notified immediately.
- Grant recipients may request a change to the scope of work or allocation of budgeted expenses due to extenuating circumstances for a previously awarded grant or request an extension if the organization is unable to complete the project within one year following a grant award. All organizations requesting a change or an extension must submit a detailed, written request to be approved by the Grant Committee on the Request for Change or Extension Form. Extension requests may only be granted for a maximum of one year beyond the established Grant Activity Period.
- If a recipient is unable to complete a project because the grant request was not fully funded, grant award must be returned to Visit Bucks County or a request to change the scope or work must be submitted.
- If terms and deadlines are not met, Visit Bucks County will seek reimbursement of its funding from the recipient unless an extension is approved by the Grant Committee.
- Grant recipients are not automatically eligible for marketing support from Visit Bucks County. Any promotional consideration will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- Failure to comply with any requirements may necessitate a return or repayment of funds to the Bucks County Tourism Grant Program and may jeopardize future grant requests.
 - Funds that are returned to the Bucks County Tourism Grant Program due to a delay in expenditures beyond the twelve (12) month grant period or due to noncompliance with these terms and conditions must be repaid with accrued interest at a rate equal to prime.
- Organization shall hold harmless Visit Bucks County and the County of Bucks, their staffs, marketing partners, and board of directors from any losses incurred as a result of any legal action brought in connection with the use of the tourism grant funds or in connection with any matter related to the tourism grant process.
- All award recipients are required to have insurance coverage. Proof of insurance shall be provided only upon request by Visit Bucks County. Visit Bucks County has the sole discretion to require organizations to add Visit Bucks County as an additional insured on the relevant policy if deemed necessary. Organizations shall comply with such a request.

All Bucks County Tourism Grant Program inquiries should be directed to:

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