

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

STAFF REPORT

Department of Finance & Administration



MEETING DATE: May 16, 2023
 SUBJECT: Historic Bluffton Foundation: Welcome Center at the Heyward House
 PROJECT MANAGER: Shannon Milroy, Budget & Procurement Analyst

Summarized below is the application from the Historic Bluffton Foundation (HBF) for "Bluffton Welcome Center at the Heyward House" for Accommodations Tax grant dollars to operate and maintain the Heyward House as the Town's Welcome Center as well as marketing materials.

Requested Amount: \$150,000

Historic Bluffton Foundation	Total Budget	Recommended ATAX Grant (approx. 53% of total budget)
Advertising & Promotion	\$12,250	\$12,250
Arts & Cultural Events:	15,500	15,500
Operations:	255,400	122,250
Total	\$283,150	\$150,000

Eligible "Tourism-Related Expenditures" per South Carolina Code of Laws:

Advertising & Promotion of Tourism:

Total budget: \$12,250

- Regional Marketing via weekly ads in local newspapers, area map, Chamber Vacation Planner, online magazines and social media outlets, ads in LOCAL LIFE Magazine, rack placed at hotels and airports, posters, website fees, Google ads and Chamber dues: \$12,000

Arts & Cultural Events:

Total Budget: \$15,500

- Special events and programs

Operations:

Total Budget: \$255,400

- Salaries and benefits, administrative fees, utilities, dues and subscriptions, office supplies, equipment upgrades, professional development and contract services such as accounting, cleaning, consulting, landscaping, and pest control.

Tourism Draw %: Visitors to the Hayward House was 7,532 in 2020/2021 with 85% from out of town. Total visitors projected for FY 2021/2022 is estimated at 11,500 with visitor numbers rebounding since opening the doors to the public effective March 7, 2022.

Benefit to Tourism: Official Welcome (Visitors) Center for the Town of Bluffton.

Self-Sufficiency % (Financial Need): Requesting approximately 75% of Welcome Center budget, and 63% of the total organization's budget. Last year's annual award was \$169,000.

Table Rating (Scores 0-5 with 5 satisfying the qualifications best, exception Advertising 0-15)

Amount Recommended	Advertising (15)	Tourism Draw % (5)	Benefit to Tourism (5)	Self-Sufficiency % (5)	Misc. (10)	Total of 40 possible	Comments
\$150,000	6	4	5	3	9	27	

Previous Funding Amounts - Historic Bluffton Foundation

Fiscal Year	Amount Requested	% of Budget	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Expended	Comments
2022	\$175,000	82%	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$89,432	Expenses July 2022 - January 2023
2021	190,000	84%	190,000	18,200	117,517	PPP Loan
2020	169,000	82%	169,000	169,000	149,450	

Accommodations Tax Committee Recommendations and Comments:

The Committee recommends funding \$150,000 for operating visitor information center expenses.