

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

STAFF REPORT

Department of Finance & Administration



MEETING DATE: November 15, 2023
 SUBJECT: Farmers Market of Bluffton: 2024 Expenses
 PROJECT MANAGER: Shannon Milroy, Budget & Procurement Analyst

Summarized below is the application from the Farmers Market of Bluffton, Inc. for Accommodations Tax grant dollars in support of advertising and facility support for the weekly Bluffton Farmer's Market.

Total Budget: \$138,850

Requested Amount: \$55,300

Percentage of Request^: 39.8%

^Includes up to 100% for Advertising & Promotion plus up to 50% of remaining expenses

Eligible Tourism-Related Expense Categories (per SC Code of Laws)	Total Budget for Category		Requested ATAX Funds
Advertising & Promotion of Tourism or Arts and Cultural Events	\$42,800		\$42,800
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events	12,500		12,500
Public Facilities	-		-
Municipality and County Services	-	*	-
Tourist Transportation	-	*	-
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses	81,550		-
Total	\$138,850		\$55,300

*Reimbursement will be based on the estimated percentage of tourists provided for

Budgeted Eligible Expenses:

Advertising & Promotion:

Total Budget: \$42,800

- Rack cards and posters placed in hotels, welcome centers, stores, and businesses.
- Advertising in visitor publications, magazines, newspapers, radio, social media, etc.

Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events:

Total Budget: \$12,500

- Heyward House rental for market overflow and stage usage is \$7,500 annually.
- The remaining \$5,000 is for support with tents, tables, chairs, cones, sawhorses, safety signage, extension cords, safety mats, etc.
- This allows visitors to safely enjoy the market and have a welcome and clean venue.

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

Amount Requested	Advertising (15)	Festival/Event (5)	Bluffton Event (5)	Tourism Draw % (5)	Benefit to Tourism (5)	Self-Sufficiency % (5)	Total of 40 possible	Comments
\$55,300	11	5	5	4	5	4	34	

Advertising: 77% of requested funds will be spent on advertising, which has historically included advertising in Local Life magazine, CH2/CB2 magazine, the Bluffton/HHI Sun, social media, newsletters and text alerts.

Festival/Event: Weekly event held every Thursday to attract and provide for tourists; in 2024, will be held from January 11th to December 19th.

Bluffton Event: Held in Old Town Bluffton at Martin Family Park with overflow space provided at the Hayward House Common Grounds.

Tourism Draw %: 75%. Data is collected informally by taking sample verbal zip code surveys at different times and different seasons when volunteers are available.

Benefit to Tourism: Many visitors are from Beaufort, Savannah, Port Royal, and Hilton Head Island, as well as vacationers visiting from other states and countries.

Self-Sufficiency % (Financial Need): Requesting approximately 41% of the total budget. Additional revenue streams include in-kind services and donations, contracted and daily sponsorships, vendor fees, table/tent rentals and merchandise sales.

Previous Funding Amounts						
Fiscal Year	Requested Amount	% of Budget	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Expended	Comments
2023	\$50,500	40%	\$50,500	\$50,500	\$21,415.73	Through July 2023
2022	\$37,900	38%	\$37,900	\$37,900	\$34,923.65	
2021	\$33,800	35%	\$33,800	\$33,800	\$30,050.04	

Accommodations Tax Committee Recommendations and Comments:

The Committee recommends funding \$55,300 for advertising and promotion of tourism and facility support expenses.