

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

STAFF REPORT

Department of Finance & Administration



MEETING DATE: May 20, 2025
 SUBJECT: HBF: FY2026 Heyward House Museum Operations
 PROJECT MANAGER: Shannon Milroy, Budget, Grants & Procurement Administrator

Summarized below is the application from the Historic Bluffton Foundation for Accommodations Tax grant dollars to operate and maintain the Heyward House Museum for Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026).

Total Budget, per application: \$989,720
Requested Amount: \$50,000
Percentage of Request^: 5.05%

^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, per budget form		ATAC Recommends ATAX Funds
Advertising & Promotion of Tourism or Arts and Cultural Events	\$81,180		\$50,000
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events	628,800		
Public Facilities			
Municipality and County Services	3,940	*	
Tourist Transportation		*	
Operating Expenses	56,400		
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses	244,400		
Total	\$1,014,720		\$50,000

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

Budgeted Expenses Summary:

Advertising & Promotion:

Total budget: \$81,180

- Newspaper, magazine, social media, email blasts, postcards/mailers, posters/signage, graphic design, and brochures

Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events:

Total budget: \$628,800

- Repairs and maintenance, hardscape/landscape engineering fees & survey and installation

Municipality and County Services:

Total budget: \$3,940

- Dumpster Rental/Trash Hauling and BPD Security for events held on grounds

Operating Expenses:

Total budget: \$56,400

- Utilities, website hosting, office supplies, postage, accounting/professional fees

Other/Ineligible Project Expenses:

Total budget: \$244,400

- Personnel expenses, insurance, bank fees, dues and professional development, gift shop inventory and golf cart maintenance

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
\$50,000	8	4	4	4	10	30	

Advertising: Of the total projected annual budget of \$1,014,720, approximately 8% is anticipated to be spent on advertising; this encompasses all local publications, social media, online wedding websites, Google, local newspapers, the Chamber of Commerce, email blasts, Statewide Welcome Centers, the Bluffton Vacation Planner, the HHI Vacation Planner, HHI Today and WTOC.

Tourism Draw %: Within a year's time, the Heyward House Museum welcomed approximately 29,000 visitors with nearly 87% of those being non-locals.

Benefit to Tourism: Visitors to The Heyward House Museum contribute to the local economy by spending on dining, shopping and other attractions; the facility serves as a key cultural destination that encourages longer stays and repeat visits.

Self-Sufficiency % (Financial Need): The request is approximately 5% of the Historic Bluffton Foundation's FY2026 projected budget for the Heyward House. Other revenue sources include donations, grants, merchandise sales, tours, event rentals/special events, memberships and in-kind contributions.

Previous Funding Amounts						
Fiscal Year	Requested Amount	% of Budget	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Expended	Comments
2025	\$40,000	47%	\$40,000	\$20,000	\$0	January - March 2025 expenses; final report not yet due
2025	\$40,000	47%	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	October - December 2024 expenses; final report submitted
2025	\$40,000	47%	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	July - September 2024 expenses; final report submitted
2024	\$150,000	53%	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	Expenses through June 2024; Final Report submitted

Accommodations Tax Committee Recommendations and Comments:

The Committee recommends funding \$50,000 for operational expenses associated with the Heyward House Museum.