

# ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## STAFF REPORT

### Department of Finance & Administration



MEETING DATE: May 20, 2025  
 SUBJECT: BlacQuity SC: 2025 Roots and Rivers Festival  
 PROJECT MANAGER: Shannon Milroy, Budget, Grants & Procurement Administrator

Summarized below is the application from BlacQuity SC for Accommodations Tax grant dollars in support of advertising, facilities, security and transportation for their 2025 Roots and Rivers Festival.

**Total Budget, per application:** \$62,000  
**Requested Amount:** \$27,000  
**Percentage of Request^:** 43.5%

^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, <u>per</u> budget form		ATAC Recommends ATAX Funds
Advertising & Promotion of Tourism or Arts and Cultural Events	\$19,650		\$19,650
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events	2,800		2,800
Public Facilities	2,500	*	1,670
Municipality and County Services	3,000	*	1,800
Tourist Transportation	1,800	*	1,080
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses	5,100		
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$34,850</b>		<b>\$27,000</b>

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

#### Budgeted Expenses Summary:

##### Advertising & Promotion:

Total budget \$19,650

- Local and regional newspaper, magazine, radio and television ads, billboards, social media, email/text blasts, postcards, posters, event website and graphic design

##### Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events:

Total budget \$2,800

- Rentals of venue, stage, tents

##### Public Facilities:

Total budget \$2,500

- Port-o-Lets rental, handwashing station

##### Municipal and County Services:

Total budget \$3,000

- Dumpsters, Bluffton Police Department security and other security

##### Tourist Transportation:

Total budget \$1,800

- Shuttle services for attendees

Other/Ineligible Project Expenses:

Total budget \$5,150

- Gifts/giveaways, staff coordination/planning, insurance, videographer, office supplies & administration expenses

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

Amount Recommended	Advertising (15)	Festival / Event (5)	Bluffton Event (5)	Tourism Draw % (5)	Benefit to Tourism (5)	Self-Sufficiency % (5)	Total of 40 possible	Comments
\$27,000	10	4	4	3	3	3	27	

Advertising: Of the requested funds, \$20,000 (or 74%) is requested to market/advertise the event. Intended media vehicles for advertising include WHHI-TV, WSAV-TV, WJCL, WTOG, Gullah Geechee Radio (98.5 FM), Bob FM (104.9)/G100 Savannah, 98.7 FM/101.1 FM, WHCJ (Savannah State Radio), iHeart Radio, Spotify Radio, Lowcountry Weekly, The Bluffton Sun, The Island Packet, Post & Courier, The Southern Edge Magazine, Local Life, Savannah Magazine, CB2 Magazine, Urban Magazine (Atlanta), HHI-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce Newsletters, Facebook, and online on VisitBluffton.org and SouthCarolinaLowcountry.com

Festival/Event: The event is scheduled to take place from 2-8 p.m. on September 6 and will feature food and entertainment.

Bluffton Event: The location of the 2025 event was not identified in the application; in 2023, the event was held at Oyster Factory Park.

Tourism Draw %: The reported tourism attendance at the 2024 event was 54%, which includes visitors from Savannah, Charleston, Atlanta, Jacksonville, Ohio and New York.

Benefit to Tourism: Event marketing materials will provide a list of recommended hotels and accommodations; visitors will also be encouraged to explore Bluffton's Historic District and shops, dine locally and extend their stay.

Self-Sufficiency % (Financial Need): The request is approximately 44% of BlacQuity's total projected events budget of \$62,000 for 2025. Additional revenue sources include sponsorships, donations, vendor and registration fees, ticket and raffles sales, and in-kind contributions.

Previous Funding Amounts						
Fiscal Year	Requested Amount	% of Budget	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Expended	Comments
2025	\$38,186	57%	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$22,733.03	Final report submitted
2024	\$38,186	57%	\$21,836	\$21,836	\$14,006.87	Amounts consist of both grant awards combined. Final report submitted

Accommodations Tax Committee Recommendations and Comments:

The Committee recommends funding \$27,000 for 2025 Roots & Rivers Festival.