

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

STAFF REPORT

Department of Finance & Administration



MEETING DATE: November 18, 2025
 SUBJECT: The New Bluffton Worship: 2025 Christmas Eve Under the Stars
 PROJECT MANAGER: Shannon Milroy, Budget & Procurement Manager

Summarized below is the application from The New Bluffton Worship for Accommodations Tax grant dollars in support of their 2025 Christmas Eve Under the Stars event.

Total Budget, per application: \$18,000

Requested Amount: \$11,500

Percentage of Request^: 63%

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

Eligible Tourism-Related Expense Categories (per SC Code of Laws)	Budget per Category (based on Budget Form)		Budget per Category (based on Budget Form), corrected as needed
Advertising & Promotion of Tourism or Arts and Cultural Events	\$9,100		\$9,100
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events	3,000		3,000
Public Facilities		*	
Municipality and County Services	1,000	*	1,000
Tourist Transportation		*	
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses	3,000		3,000
Total	\$16,100		\$16,100

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

Budgeted Expenses Summary, based on submitted Line-Item Budget Form:

Advertising & Promotion:

Total Budget: \$9,100

- Local newspaper and magazine ads including digital, social media, email blasts, postcards/mailers, and posters/signage

Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events:

Total Budget: \$3,000

- Rentals of tables, chairs, stages, tents

Municipal and County Services:

Total Budget: \$1,000

- Security Provided by Bluffton Police Department

Other/Ineligible Project Expenses:

Total Budget: \$67,431

- Personnel, costumes, props, concessions, cast party/food, other production costs

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
\$11,500	8	5	5	2	3	2	25	

Advertising: Approximately 80% of the requested funds will be spent on advertising the event; most of the ads will be run locally and digitally in (The Jasper Sun, The Bluffton Sun, The Hilton Head Sun, and CB2) as well as via postcards, google ads, Facebook and on WHHI and WSAV.

Festival/Event: To be held on the evening of December 24, 2025.

Bluffton Event: The event will be held at Oyster Factory Park.

Tourism Draw %: The 2024 event had an estimated 38% tourist attendance.

Benefit to Tourism: Tourists visiting Bluffton during the holidays attend the event. While here, they spend money lodging as well as in local restaurants and retail shops.

Self-Sufficiency % (Financial Need): Amount requested is approximately 63% of the total budget, which is mostly for marketing the event. Church funds will cover additional expenses.

			Previous Funding Amounts				
Fiscal Year	Requested Amount	% of Budget	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Expended	Lapsed	Comments
2025	\$28,810	61.8%	\$25,100	\$25,100	\$11,359	\$13,741	Final Report Submitted
2024	\$23,110	77.5%	\$15,280	\$15,280	\$9,070	\$6,210	Final Report Submitted

Accommodations Tax Committee Recommendations and Comments:

The Committee recommends funding \$11,500 for the 2025 Christmas Eve Under the Stars event.

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ATAX GRANT APPLICATION SCORING SHEET			
Entity: The New Bluffton Worship	Project: 2025 Christmas Eve Under the Stars	Project Type: Event/Festival	
Scoring Category	Points Possible	Points Awarded	
ADVERTISING	15		
Part 1: Five (5) points possible. Based on how much of the requested funds go toward advertising.			
0% of funds go toward advertising	0 points		
1% - 20% of funds go toward advertising	1 point		
21% - 40% of funds go toward advertising	2 points		
41% - 60% of funds go toward advertising	3 points		
61% - 80% of funds go toward advertising	4 points		
81% - 100% of funds go toward advertising	5 points		
Part 2: Ten (10) points possible. Based on <u>where</u> the advertising is placed.			
None of the funds go toward advertising	0 points		
Local newspapers/periodicals and electronic advertising (ex. Island Packet, The Bluffton Sun)	2 points		
Local guides/periodicals specifically geared toward tourists with a shelf life of more than 30 days	4 points		
Larger regional publications and electronic marketing within 100 miles (ex. Charleston or Savannah news outlets)	6 points		
Newspapers/periodicals/electronic marketing to large, metropolitan areas outside of 100 miles away (ex. Atlanta, Charlotte, Washington, D.C., Chicago)	8 points		
Nationally distributed newspapers/periodicals/electronic marketing (ex. USA Today, NY Times, Southern Living Magazine)	10 points		
TOURIST FACILITIES	15		
Higher point value given based on anticipated ratio of tourists to locals			
FESTIVAL/EVENT	5		
Higher point value given to requests for festivals or events			
Length of event/festival should be considered. Is it an all-day event versus a two-hour event? Multi-day event?			
BLUFFTON EVENT	5		
Higher point value given to events held within the town limits of Bluffton and/or spanning multiple locations			
TOURISM DRAW	5		
0% of attendees are tourists based on historical or projected information	0 points		
1% - 20% of attendees are tourists based on historical or projected info	1 point		
21% - 40% of attendees are tourists based on historical or projected info	2 points		
41% - 60% of attendees are tourists based on historical or projected info	3 points		
61% - 80% of attendees are tourists based on historical or projected info	4 points		
81% - 100% of attendees are tourists based on historical or projected info	5 points		
BENEFIT TO TOURISM (LOCAL ECONOMY)	5		
Higher point value given to events that encourage overnight stays and/or have local business participation			
SELF SUFFIECIENCY	5		
100% of budget from ATAX request	0 points		
80% - 99% of budget from ATAX request	1 point		
60% - 79% of budget from ATAX request	2 points		
40% - 59% of budget from ATAX request	3 points		
20% - 39% of budget from ATAX request	4 points		
1% - 19% of budget from ATAX request	5 points		
MISCELLANEOUS	10		
Only use if applicant does not qualify as a festival/event			
Group Average Point Total (out of a possible 40 points)		0	
Group Average Percentage			