

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

STAFF REPORT

Department of Finance & Administration



MEETING DATE: August 19, 2025
 SUBJECT: Historic Bluffton Foundation: Fall Tour of Homes
 PROJECT MANAGER: Shannon Milroy, Budget & Procurement Manager

Summarized below is the application from the Historic Bluffton Foundation for Accommodations Tax grant dollars to support marketing and facilities costs for the Fall Tour of Homes event.

Total Budget: \$16,250

Requested Amount: \$6,500

Percentage of Request^: 37%

^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		Budget Items Eligible for ATAF Funds
Advertising & Promotion of Tourism or Arts and Cultural Events	\$4,500		
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events	3,500		
Public Facilities	400	*	
Municipality and County Services	-	*	
Tourist Transportation	-	*	
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses	7,650		
Total	\$16,050		

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

Budgeted Expenses Summary:

Advertising & Promotion:

Total budget \$4,500

- Includes digital and print ads, flyers and social media

Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events:

Total budget \$3,500

- Rentals of tables, chairs, etc.

Public Facilities:

Total budget \$400

- Dumpsters/Trash Hauling

Other/Ineligible Project Expenses:

Total budget \$7,650

- Home preparation, insurance, administrative costs, catering, volunteer expenses

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
\$6,500	8	4	4	3	4	4	27	

Advertising: Of the requested funds, about 70% is anticipated to be spent on marketing the event. Advertising will include a digital marketing campaign via website, Facebook and Instagram as well as with the Chamber of Commerce. Digital ads will target the Savannah, Beaufort, HHI, greater South Carolina and Georgia markets. Flyers and print ads in local outlets The Island Packet, Sun City News, and Bluffton Today will be utilized.

Festival/Event: The one-day event will take place on Saturday, October 4, 2025.

Bluffton Event: The tour will be conducted at various homes located within Old Town Bluffton with a centralized starting point at The Heyward House.

Tourism Draw %: This is an inaugural event and therefore, no tourism statistics exist. However, approximately 300 attendees are expected.

Benefit to Tourism: The local economy will be stimulated by increasing foot traffic to shops, restaurants, galleries and lodging.

Self-Sufficiency % (Financial Need): The request is approximately 40% of the Historic Bluffton Foundation's projected event budget. Other revenue sources include sponsorships and registration fees.

Previous Funding Amounts						
Fiscal Year	Requested Amount	% of Budget	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Expended	Comments
n/a						

Accommodations Tax Committee Recommendations and Comments:

The Committee recommends funding \$_____ for _____.

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ATAX GRANT APPLICATION SCORING SHEET

Attachment 15

AUGUST 19, 2025

Entity: **Historic Bluffton Foundation**

Project: **Fall Tour of Homes**

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 SUFFICIENCY	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)		
Group Average Percentage		