

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

STAFF REPORT

Department of Finance & Administration



MEETING DATE: August 19, 2025
 SUBJECT: Society of Bluffton Artists: Getting the Word Out Phase 2
 PROJECT MANAGER: Shannon Milroy, Budget & Procurement Manager

Summarized below is the application from the Society of Bluffton Artists (SOBA) for Accommodations Tax grant dollars in support of advertising and promotion for the organization's Fiscal Year 2026 expenses from September 1, 2025 - August 31, 2026.

Total Budget, per application: \$40,000
Requested Amount: \$40,000
Percentage of Request^: 100%

^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		Budget Items Eligible for ATAX Funds
Advertising & Promotion of Tourism or Arts and Cultural Events	\$40,446		
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events	-		
Public Facilities	-		
Municipality and County Services	-	*	
Tourist Transportation	-	*	
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses	186,259		
Total	\$226,705		

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

Budgeted Expenses Summary:

Advertising & Promotion:

Total Budget: \$40,446

- Includes print and digital advertising as well as social media ads, eblasts, mailers, flyers and posters

Other/Ineligible Project Expenses:

Total Budget: \$206,195

- Includes rent, operating expenses, utilities, professional fees, supplies, insurance, and maintenance

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

Amount Requested	Advertising (15)	Tourism Draw % (5)	Benefit to Tourism (5)	Self-Sufficiency % (5)	Misc. (10)	Total of 40 possible	Comments
\$40,000	11	4	3	5	8	31	

Advertising: This request is 100% related to advertising and promotion. Most of the advertising will be done in local publications/media (Local Life, Bluffton/HH Sun, Explore Bluffton, Pink Magazine, Island Events, Bluffton Guide, LowCountry Weekly), digitally (visitbluffton.org, Facebook, Instagram, YELP, YouTube, TripAdvisor, Google My Business) and through the hanging of posters locally and distribution of flyers.

Tourism Draw %: Approximately 51% of gallery visitors are from out of the area for the most recently completed calendar year of 2024.

Benefit to Tourism: SOBA has been a Bluffton presence for 30 years, and in that time has sponsored or participated in local festivals, art walks and events that Old Town Bluffton Merchants Society schedules.

Self-Sufficiency % (Financial Need): The request is approximately 5.7% of SOBA's projected total FY2026 budget of \$226,705. Other sources of income include sponsorships, donations, membership fees, judged show entry fees, merchandise sales, the art school and rental income.

Previous Funding Amounts						
Fiscal Year	Requested Amount	% of Budget	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Expended	Comments
2025	\$27,000	11.5%	\$27,000	\$27,000	\$16,425.77	Expenses January - May 2025 to date; June submitted and under review
2024	\$20,000	8%	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$18,740.81	Final Report Submitted
2023	\$15,000	50%	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$14,402.49	
2022	\$16,063	50%	\$16,063	\$16,063	\$15,178.16	

Accommodations Tax Committee Recommendations and Comments:

The Committee recommends funding \$_____ for _____.

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ATAX GRANT APPLICATION SCORING SHEET

Attachment 7
AUGUST 19, 2025

Entity: **Society of Bluffton Artists**

Project: **Getting the Word Out Phase 2**

Project Type: **Advertising/Promotion**

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		