

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

STAFF REPORT

Department of Finance & Administration



MEETING DATE: August 19, 2025
 SUBJECT: Historic Bluffton Arts & Seafood Festival: 2025 Arts & Seafood Festival
 PROJECT MANAGER: Shannon Milroy, Budget & Procurement Manager

Summarized below is the application from the Historic Bluffton Arts & Seafood Festival for Accommodations Tax grant dollars to support the 2025 Historic Arts & Seafood Festival.

Total Budget, per application: \$229,700
Requested Amount: \$80,000
Percentage of Request^: 35%

^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	\$79,000		
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events	10,000		
Public Facilities	10,500	*	
Municipality and County Services	11,000	*	
Tourist Transportation	7,000	*	
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses	77,500		
Total	\$195,000		

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

Budgeted Expenses Summary:

Advertising & Promotion:

Total budget \$79,000

- Print and digital advertising, radio, television, social media, e-blasts, signage and banners, HHI-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce Vacation Planner, online festival listings

Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events:

Total Budget: \$10,000

- Rentals

Public Facilities*:

Total Budget: \$10,500

- Temporary/Portable restrooms, parking and dumpster rental/trash hauling

Municipality and County Services*:

Total Budget \$11,000

- Security; provided by Bluffton PD (\$6,000) and not provided by Bluffton PD (\$5,000)

Tourist Transportation*:

Total Budget \$5,000

- Event Shuttles

Other/Ineligible Project Expenses:

Total budget \$77,500

- Photography, entertainment, 5K Walk/Run, insurance, kids events, merchandise, soiree dinner, Waddell dinner expenses, other supplies

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
\$80,000	13	5	5	3	5	4	35	

Advertising: Of the requested funds, almost 100% is anticipated to be spent on marketing the event. Southern Living Magazine, The HHI-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce Vacation Planner and newsletter e-blasts, digital advertising targeting the Atlanta, Ashville, Augusta, Charleston, Charlotte, Columbia and Jacksonville markets and various other magazines and local media are intended for the marketing campaign.

Festival/Event: Nine (9) day event held October 11 - 19, 2024

Bluffton Event: Events held throughout Old Town Bluffton.

Tourism Draw %: 2024 event reported 40% of attendees were tourists.

Benefit to Tourism: The 9-day festival is designed to increase tourism to Bluffton and has been recognized by the Southeast Tourism Society as one of the top 20 events in the southeast.

Self-Sufficiency % (Financial Need): Requesting approximately 35% of the total budget. A projected total of \$153,775 is to be collected this year from sponsorships, vendor & registration fees, and merchandise sales. Additionally, an estimated \$20,000 from the Historic Bluffton Arts & Seafood Festival Reserve Balance will be used to cover the 2025 anticipated expenses.

Previous Funding Amounts						
Fiscal Year	Requested Amount	% of Budget	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Expended	Comments
2025	\$80,000	36%	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	Final Report Submitted
2024	\$80,000	39%	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	Final Report Submitted
2023	\$80,000	48%	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	

Accommodations Tax Committee Recommendations and Comments:

The Committee recommends funding \$_____ for _____.

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ATAX GRANT APPLICATION SCORING SHEET

Attachment 9
AUGUST 19, 2025

Entity: **Historic Arts & Seafood Festival** Project: **2025 Arts & Seafood Festival**

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		