

Milroy, Shannon

From: noreply@civicplus.com
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2023 10:50 AM
To: ATax Communications
Subject: Online Form Submittal: Accommodations Tax Grant Application

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Accommodations Tax Grant Application

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ACCOMMODATIONS TAX GRANT APPLICATION

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ACCOMMODATIONS TAX GRANT APPLICATION

Accommodations Tax Grant Application Instructions [Accommodations Tax Grant Application Instructions](#)

Accommodations Tax Grant Application Instructions I have read and acknowledged the Town of Bluffton, SC Accommodations Tax Grant Application Instructions.

(Section Break)

Application Date 9/29/2023

Full Legal Organization Name Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce

Project Name 2024 Official Bluffton Vacation Planner

Total Project Costs \$138,000

Total ATAX Funds Requested \$45,000

Percent of Total Budget 33%

Address 216 Bluffton Road

Street Address Line 2 *Field not completed.*

City Bluffton

| | |
|---|--|
| State | South Carolina |
| Zip Code | 29910 |
| Applicant must be designated as a non-profit entity to receive ATAX funds. Please include a copy of your organization's non-profit status, such as your IRS Designation Letter. | S1.B1. IRS Determination Letter of Not-for-Profit Status.pdf |
| Please upload a copy of your current Town of Bluffton Business License, which is required of all applicants. | Town of Bluffton Business License (2023).pdf |

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ACCOMMODATIONS TAX GRANT APPLICATION

Organization Primary Point of Contact

| | |
|----------------|--|
| First Name | Ariana |
| Last Name | Pernice |
| Title | Vice President, Visitor & Convention Bureau |
| Phone Number | 843-341-8366 |
| E-mail Address | apernice@hiltonheadisland.org |

(Section Break)

Organization Secondary Point of Contact

| | |
|----------------|--|
| First Name | Kayla |
| Last Name | Boyter |
| Title | Director of Marketing |
| Phone Number | 843-341-8384 |
| E-mail Address | kboyter@hiltonheadisland.org |

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ACCOMMODATIONS TAX GRANT APPLICATION

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Project Description: | The funds for this supplemental grant request would go directly towards supporting the costs of producing the 2024 Official Bluffton Vacation Planner, the comprehensive guide to what to see and do in Bluffton. This estimated cost includes the |
|----------------------|--|

production, publishing, printing and fulfillment costs. In addition to working with a digital and print publisher, our in-house marketing staff provides the oversight and management of the publication including the business directory, editorial content management, editorial review and proofreading of this asset.

The Vacation Planner is the primary print fulfillment piece for the destination that has been produced for the past three years. As we continue to evolve the Vacation Planner, we have seen increased interest from visitors and partners highlighted throughout the publication.

Bluffton's natural beauty is what sets the destination apart from other communities. By tapping into our portfolio of stunning photography and combining it with updated content, we have created a "lookbook" destination discovery publication for visitors to imagine themselves in the Heart of the Lowcountry™.

Readers gain an authentic understanding of the destination through every page in our guide that is designed to speak to our distinct audience categories and discover useful itineraries for their interests.

The Official Bluffton Vacation Planner strives to support the destination's pillars outlined in the Annual Destination Marketing Plan and aligned with the Town of Bluffton's initiatives.

- Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor
- History, Culture and Arts
- National Historic Register Designations
- Natural Beauty, Waterways and Parks
- Local Culinary and Local Market Experiences
- Festivals and Events

Thoughtful creative design breathes life into the printed page and takes the reader's journey into careful consideration. Brand messaging and stories from our community come to life in a myriad of ways including multi-page spreads dedicated to the key pillars of marketing for the destination.

A digital version complements the printed piece and also allows us to extend further reach of this publication for our brand and partners. This can be viewed on our website and is available to be downloaded.

The results? A guide that forms an emotional connection with

the reader and turns them into a visitor that continues to return year after year.

All advertising/marketing paid for with Town of Bluffton Accommodations Tax dollars must incorporate the branding shown here: **Town of Bluffton Brand Standards. The use of the Town's logo must meet the design standards outlined at the aforementioned link and be approved by the Town. Designs may be submitted electronically using this **link**. Please allow five (5) business days for approval.**

Impact on or Benefit to Tourism:

The Official Bluffton Vacation Planner is a tool that helps build brand awareness, enhance the visitor experience, and strengthen the connection to the destination. The Official Vacation Planner provides information regarding accommodations, highlights attractions, as well as what to see and do, allowing the traveler to plan their visit to the Town of Bluffton. This leads to a more memorable experience creating a connection with the visitor leaving them to want to return time and time again.

The Vacation Planner also supports local economic development by connecting visitors with local businesses that leads to increased growth for those community partners.

Over the past three years of the Vacation Planner production, we have seen growth and demand for this product. 2022 was our first year for this piece, our distribution was 8,000 and then, in 2023, based on demand we grew that number to 25,000 units. The Official Vacation Planner has done so well we've reorder an additional 5,000 units for 2023. For 2024 we are anticipating an order of 30,000 units.

***“Tourist”* means a person who does not reside within the corporate limits of the Town or within a Town zip code that takes a trip into the corporate limits of the Town for any purpose, except daily commuting to and from work.**

***“Travel”* and *“Tourism”* mean the action and activities of people taking trips outside their home communities for any purpose, except daily commuting to and from work.**

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Project/Event Start & End 7/1/2023 - 12/31/2024
Date:

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Multi-Year Project/Event? | Yes |
| Permits Required, if any: | N/A |
| Additional Comments: | The project timeline extends over two fiscal years to account for the planning, development and production as well as the full calendar year of distribution. |

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ACCOMMODATIONS TAX GRANT APPLICATION

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

| | |
|--|--|
| Project/Event Line Item Budget | 2024 Official Bluffton Vacation Planner Budget.pdf |
| Most Recent Fiscal Year Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Accounting Statement | FY2023 HHI-B COC Audit-Balance Sheet.pdf |
| Financial Guarantee | Town of Bluffton Supplemental Grant Board Approval.pdf |

Applicant must provide a copy of official minutes wherein the sponsoring organization approves the project and commits the organization to financial responsibility for carrying it out to the stage of completion.

(Section Break)

Please list all contributions made to the project/event by the sponsoring organization. This shall include both monetary and in-kind goods and/or services, as applicable.

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Contribution | N/A |
| Amount/Value | N/A |
| Contribution | N/A |
| Amount/Value | N/A |

(Section Break)

| | |
|---|-----|
| Have you requested, received or been awarded funding from other sources or organizations (including | Yes |
|---|-----|

additional ATAX funds from other local entities) for this project/event?

If yes, please list all sources and amounts:

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| Funding Source | Southern Beaufort County |
|----------------|--------------------------|

| | |
|--------|----------|
| Amount | \$50,000 |
|--------|----------|

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Funding Source | <i>Field not completed.</i> |
|----------------|-----------------------------|

| | |
|--------|-----------------------------|
| Amount | <i>Field not completed.</i> |
|--------|-----------------------------|

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Funding Source | <i>Field not completed.</i> |
|----------------|-----------------------------|

| | |
|--------|-----------------------------|
| Amount | <i>Field not completed.</i> |
|--------|-----------------------------|

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Funding Source | <i>Field not completed.</i> |
|----------------|-----------------------------|

| | |
|--------|-----------------------------|
| Amount | <i>Field not completed.</i> |
|--------|-----------------------------|

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ACCOMMODATIONS TAX GRANT APPLICATION

PRIOR RECIPIENT'S REPORT

If your organization has received ATAX funding from the Town of Bluffton in previous years, you must complete the below information. Only the information for the most recent round of funding is required.

If you have not received ATAX funding from the Town of Bluffton, please answer "No" and skip this section, and sign and submit your application.

| | |
|---|-----|
| Has your organization previously received ATAX funds from the Town of Bluffton? | Yes |
|---|-----|

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Project/Event Name | Town of Bluffton Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) Annual Plan |
|--------------------|---|

| | |
|------|------|
| Year | 2023 |
|------|------|

| | |
|----------------|---------|
| Amount Awarded | 466,089 |
|----------------|---------|

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| Was project completed? | Yes |
|------------------------|-----|

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| How were the funds used? | The FY2023 funds were used for execution of the Town of Bluffton DMO Tourism Marketing Annual Plan which included project management and maintenance of VisitBluffton.org , all |
|--------------------------|---|

ExploreBlufftonSC social channels and paid Google display advertising. In addition, there was also the production of the 2023 Official Bluffton Vacation Planner, a media buy partnership with Garden & Gun, photography and research included in this plan.

What impact did this project/event have on the community or benefit tourism? Describe how the tourism data was measured.

The marketing efforts implemented in the annual plan, played a crucial role in influencing travel to the destination. The plan increased brand awareness for Bluffton through advertising, social media campaigns and other marketing efforts, reaching a targeted audience and generating interest amongst our core demographic. There was direct engagement with the brand along with increased visitor numbers via promotion of the experiences and events.

Efforts also created economic benefits with promotion of community partners and local businesses. This led to increased spending by visitors on accommodations, food, transportation, excursions and activities. Ultimately, generating revenue and supporting the Town of Bluffton businesses.

In summary, destination marketing is a powerful tool that shapes the tourism industry for Bluffton attracting visitors, boosting the local economy, creating jobs, and promoting sustainable and responsible tourism practices. It's an essential component of a destination's overall tourism strategy.

2022 Economic Impact Study:

****Note, we will not have the 2023 Economic Impact Study until February 2024.**

- Number of Visitors: 431,561
- Economic Impact of Tourism on Beaufort County: \$206.81 million
- Tourism Jobs: 2,526 (2.2% of all Beaufort County jobs)
- Tax Revenues: \$8.80 million (up 15.5% from 2021)
- Beaufort County: \$2.30 million
- Town of Bluffton: \$6.51 million
- Estimated Return on Tax Investment: \$25.34 per \$1 spent

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Please provide the project/event budgets for the previous two (2) years.

[FY2023 and FY2022 Town of Bluffton Budgets.pdf](#)

Additional Comments

Field not completed.

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ACCOMMODATIONS TAX GRANT APPLICATION

All applicants will be required to come before the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee (ATAC) and answer any and all questions when scheduled to do so.

Any organization awarded funds for advertising/marketing must incorporate the Bluffton Heart of the Lowcountry brand logo in all promotional materials and advertising.

The South Carolina Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) defines a “public body” as any organization or corporation supported in whole or in part by public funds or expending public funds. If awarded, your organization's acceptance of public funds from the Town of Bluffton may cause your organization to come within the meaning of “public body” as defined by the Freedom of Information Act. S.C. Code Ann. §30-4-10, et seq. (Supp. 2002). Accordingly, this is to advise that by accepting public funds, your organization may be subject to the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

By submitting this application, the organization certifies that it has read and understands the paragraphs above. The organization additionally certifies that it does not discriminate in any manner on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, religion, or language and that all funds that may be received by the applicant organization from the Town of Bluffton, South Carolina will be solely used for the purposes set forth in this application and will comply with all laws and statutes, including the South Carolina Code of Laws regarding Allocations of Accommodations Tax Revenues.

By typing your name below, you are signing this application electronically. You agree that your electronic signature is the legal equivalent of your manual signature on this application.

| | |
|-----------|-------------------|
| Signature | Ariana D. Pernice |
|-----------|-------------------|

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Signatory's Title or Position | Vice President, Visitor & Convention Bureau |
|-------------------------------|---|

Email not displaying correctly? [View it in your browser.](#)

Internal Revenue Service

COPY

Date: May 26, 2006

HILTON HEAD ISLAND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
PO BOX 5647
HILTON HEAD SC 29938-5647 476

Department of the Treasury
P. O. Box 2508
Cincinnati, OH 45201

Person to Contact:
Ronnie Clemons ID# 31-04020
Customer Service Representative
Toll Free Telephone Number:
877-829-5500
Federal Identification Number:
57-0375569

Dear Sir or Madam:

This is in response to your request of May 26, 2006, regarding your organization's tax-exempt status.

In April 1958 we issued a determination letter that recognized your organization as exempt from federal income tax. Our records indicate that your organization is currently exempt under section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Because your organization is not an organization described in section 170(c) of the Code, donors may not deduct contributions made to your organization. You should advise your contributors to that effect.

If you have any questions, please call us at the telephone number shown in the heading of this letter.

Sincerely,



Janna K. Skufca, Director, TE/GE
Customer Account Services

TOWN OF BLUFFTON

April 19, 2023

DATE ISSUED

April 30, 2024

EXPIRES

LIC-04-23-049051

LICENSE NUMBER

9429

BUSINESS ID

Hilton Head Island - Bluffton Chamber of Commerce

COMPANY NAME

Hilton Head Island - Bluffton Chamber of Commerce

DBA NAME

Non Profit - Business Associations

BUSINESS TYPE

NON PROFIT

DESCRIPTION/CONDITIONS

 216 BLUFFTON RD
 BLUFFTON SC 29910

BUSINESS LOCATION

 PO Box 5647
 Hilton Head Island SC 29938-
 MAILING LOCATION

ALL BUSINESSES LOCATED IN THE TOWN OF BLUFFTON MUST POST THE BUSINESS LICENSE IN A VISIBLE LOCATION WITHIN THE BUSINESS LOCATION AS REFERENCED ABOVE AND IS VALID FOR THIS LOCATION ONLY. ALL BUSINESSES LOCATED OUTSIDE THE TOWN OF BLUFFTON MUST KEEP A CURRENT COPY WHILE CONDUCTING BUSINESS INSIDE THE TOWN OF BLUFFTON. CHANGE IN LOCATION OR OWNERSHIP REQUIRES A NEW LICENSE. IF THE BUSINESS IS CLOSED, CONTACT OUR OFFICE AT 843-706-4501 TO UPDATE ACCOUNT.

Section 6-21 Purpose and Duration of Business License

The business license levied by this ordinance is for the purpose of providing such regulation as may be required for the business subject thereto and for the purpose of raising revenue for the general fund through a privilege tax. Each license shall be issued for one (1) calendar year ending December 31. The provisions of this ordinance and the rates herein shall remain in effect from year to year as amended by Town Council.

Renewal Process

Renewal notices are mailed in January of each year to all active businesses.

Section 6-22-A License Tax.

The required license tax shall be paid for each business subject hereto according to the applicable rate classification on or before the thirtieth (30th) day of April in each year.

Hilton Head Island - Bluffton Chamber of Commerce
 PO Box 5647
 Hilton Head Island SC 29938-

Construction within the Town of Bluffton
 shall only occur during the hours of
 7:00am - 7:00pm Monday thru Saturday
 and 12:00pm - 7:00pm on Sunday.

| 2024 Official Bluffton Vacation Planner Budget | | |
|--|------------------|--|
| | Amount | Description |
| Publishing | \$66,000 | Account management, sales consultation/assistance, planning, interviewing, writing, editing, designing and sourcing and publishing |
| Printing | \$62,000 | Print production of 30,000 planners |
| Fulfillment | \$10,000 | Mail fulfillment for shipping planners |
| TOTAL | \$138,000 | |

HILTON HEAD ISLAND - BLUFFTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCESTATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION

| | <u>2023</u> | <u>June 30,</u> <u>2022</u> |
|--|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| ASSETS | | |
| Current assets | | |
| Cash | \$ 2,883,832 | \$ 3,080,888 |
| Accounts receivable (less allowance for doubtful accounts of \$1,500 and \$250, respectively) | 174,584 | 81,412 |
| Prepaid expenses | 143,112 | 62,234 |
| Other assets | 9,793 | 9,293 |
| Total current assets | 3,211,321 | 3,233,827 |
| Property and equipment, net | 871,921 | 931,322 |
| Total assets | <u>\$ 4,083,242</u> | <u>\$ 4,165,149</u> |
| LIABILITIES | | |
| Current liabilities | | |
| Accounts payable | \$ 835,910 | \$ 638,289 |
| Deferred revenue | 2,214,075 | 2,472,870 |
| Other liabilities | 262,893 | 285,911 |
| Total current liabilities | 3,312,878 | 3,397,070 |
| NET ASSETS | | |
| Without donor restrictions | 770,364 | 768,079 |
| Total liabilities and net assets | <u>\$ 4,083,242</u> | <u>\$ 4,165,149</u> |

(The accompanying notes are an integral part of the financial statements.)

HILTON HEAD ISLAND - BLUFFTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCESTATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES

| | <u>Total for the year ended</u> | |
|--|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| | <u>June 30,</u> | |
| | <u>2023</u> | <u>2022</u> |
| REVENUES AND OTHER SUPPORT | | |
| Visitor and Convention Bureau projects | \$ 10,827,413 | \$ 9,486,004 |
| Membership dues | 782,280 | 761,709 |
| Membership projects | 941,137 | 672,701 |
| Brochure advertising | 326,472 | 294,083 |
| Building rent and common share | 86,006 | 78,881 |
| Interest | 17,961 | 2,482 |
| Total revenues and other support | <u>12,981,269</u> | <u>11,295,860</u> |
| EXPENSES | | |
| Visitor and Convention Bureau | 9,503,884 | 8,230,085 |
| Salaries and related benefits | 2,563,563 | 2,275,852 |
| General and administrative | 330,914 | 318,406 |
| Membership projects | 341,702 | 184,800 |
| Building | 121,400 | 123,711 |
| Depreciation | 98,441 | 92,303 |
| Bluffton office | 19,080 | 22,052 |
| Total expenses | <u>12,978,984</u> | <u>11,247,209</u> |
| Change in net assets | 2,285 | 48,651 |
| Net assets - beginning | <u>768,079</u> | <u>719,428</u> |
| Net assets - ending | <u>\$ 770,364</u> | <u>\$ 768,079</u> |

(The accompanying notes are an integral part of the financial statements.)



HILTON HEAD ISLAND-BLUFFTON
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

A. Town of Bluffton Supplemental Grant

Miles reported it was time to go before the Town of Bluffton to apply for a quarterly supplemental grant request. The requested amount of \$45,000 is for a portion of the production and fulfillment of the *2024 Official Bluffton Vacation Planner* with the remainder being picked up by Southern Beaufort County ATAX funds. Dr. Panu made a motion to support the grant. The motion was seconded by Beck and unanimously approved.

HILTON HEAD ISLAND - BLUFFTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATION OF THE TOWN OF BLUFFTON
HILTON HEAD ISLAND VISITOR AND CONVENTION BUREAU
SCHEDULE OF DETAILED REVENUES AND EXPENSES
YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2023

| | BLUFFTON ACCOMMODATIONS TAX |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Revenues | |
| Town of Bluffton DMO | \$ 466,089 |
| Total revenue | <u>466,089</u> |
| Expenses | |
| Direct marketing | |
| Leisure marketing (Garden & Gun) | 90,000 |
| Digital promotions - Google/Facebook | 84,290 |
| Vacation planner (Bluffton Only Guide) | 61,505 |
| Digital promotions - Website/SEO | 46,128 |
| Digital promotions - social media | 17,340 |
| Vacation planner (regional) | 17,226 |
| Fulfillment (regional vacation planner) | 6,284 |
| Fulfillment (Bluffton Only Guide) | 5,394 |
| Leisure marketing - other | 3,959 |
| Photography | 3,000 |
| Bluffton visitor research | <u>2,819</u> |
| Total direct marketing | <u>337,945</u> |
| Sales, marketing and administrative | |
| Salaries | 86,622 |
| Operations - other | 15,152 |
| Employee benefits - insurance | 7,926 |
| Operations - building expense | 7,530 |
| Payroll taxes | 6,150 |
| Employee benefits - 401k | <u>4,764</u> |
| Total sales, marketing and administrative | <u>128,144</u> |
| Total expenses | <u>466,089</u> |
| Excess of revenues over expenses | <u>\$ -</u> |

HILTON HEAD ISLAND - BLUFFTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATION OF THE TOWN OF BLUFFTON
HILTON HEAD ISLAND VISITOR AND CONVENTION BUREAU
SCHEDULE OF DETAILED REVENUES AND EXPENSES
YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2022

| | BLUFFTON ACCOMMODATIONS TAX |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Revenues | |
| Town of Bluffton DMO | \$ 482,459 |
| Total revenue | <u>482,459</u> |
| Expenses | |
| Direct marketing | |
| Bluffton carryover | 73,820 |
| Digital promotions - Website/SEO | 58,368 |
| Digital promotions - Google/Facebook | 56,699 |
| Leisure marketing (Garden & Gun) | 45,000 |
| Vacation planner (Bluffton Only Guide) | 31,928 |
| Leisure marketing (Local Palate) | 22,500 |
| Vacation planner (regional) | 17,752 |
| Digital promotions - social media | 15,000 |
| Fulfillment (Bluffton Only Guide) | 11,507 |
| Fulfillment (regional vacation planner) | 8,844 |
| Bluffton visitor research | 3,886 |
| Leisure marketing - other | 2,066 |
| Total direct marketing | <u>347,370</u> |
| Sales, marketing and administrative | |
| Salaries | 89,734 |
| Operations - other | 16,880 |
| Employee benefits - insurance | 8,898 |
| Operations - building expense | 8,809 |
| Payroll taxes | 6,281 |
| Employee benefits - 401k | 4,487 |
| Total sales, marketing and administrative | <u>135,089</u> |
| Total expenses | <u>482,459</u> |
| Excess of revenues over expenses | <u>\$ -</u> |