

## DRAFT – Policy for Tourism Commission Support

The City of Columbus, Wisconsin's Tourism Commission would like to offer support and assistance to local event organizers and other groups in the spirit of drawing overnight visitors to the city.

Areas of assistance include:

1. Room Tax Grant
2. Staff research of State Tourism grants and use of local tourism resources
3. Marketing partnerships and sponsorships

All applications for room tax funds, assistance, and/or marketing partnerships must be submitted at least 60 days prior to the date of the event or other deadline(s) for which funds, assistance, or partnership is requested. Applications are to be given to the Community and Economic Development Director, City Hall, 105 N. Dickason Blvd., Columbus, WI 53925.

Any financial assistance, sponsorship, financial contributions toward partnered marketing, or room tax grant funding shall be made from the Special Events line item in the Tourism Fund budget. This differentiates from the general marketing done by Tourism which is generally funded by the Marketing / Advertising line item.

The City of Columbus, WI Tourism Commission will operate without discrimination as to age, race, religion, gender, national origin, or sexual orientation in the consideration of funding and support requests and will recommend funding and support only to organizations which do not discriminate as to age, race, religion, gender, national origin, or sexual orientation.

## Room Tax Grant

Room Tax Grant is available to local event organizers hosting events within the City of Columbus, WI on a first-come, first-served basis and is available for related expenses. Guidelines for room tax funding are:

- The purpose of room tax proceeds is to foster tourism and development within the City of Columbus, WI. Priority will be given to events which will attract overnight visitors to the community.
- Funds are granted to non-profit organizations or organizations that can provide proof of insurance or have the ability to obtain insurance, if required.
- Applicants must leverage a minimum of \$2.00 of private funds for every \$1.00 of room tax funds requested.
- Within 60 days of completion of the event for which room tax funds are granted, applicants shall provide the Tourism Commission a final report detailing room tax eligible expenditures, including receipts for the expenditures for which they are seeking reimbursement. The report should also provide examples of the project/program and its effectiveness in promoting the City of Columbus. Failure to provide this report will result in the group not being eligible for the receipt of room tax funds for that grant year and for 18 months following the event.
- Within 60 days of completion of the event for which room tax funds are granted, applicants shall provide the Tourism Commission multiple photos of the event, including rights to the photos.
- Applicants are encouraged to have a mechanism in place to track effectiveness of their event, including statistics related to attendance and overnight stays generated.
- Applicants are required to be present when the Tourism Commission considers their request.
- The Tourism Commission will review applications and will make their decision based on:
  - How well the event meets these guidelines;
  - How well the organization makes use of its own resources along with the proposed use of funds.

## **Assistance with Local and State Tourism Resources**

There are various grants and opportunities that local event organizers may not be aware of to assist with funding events or the creation of information centers, event venues, or local attractions. Guidelines for assisting organizations with State and local tourism resources include:

- The purpose of staff assistance and use of tourism resources is to foster tourism and development within the City of Columbus, WI. Priority will be given to events and venues which will attract overnight visitors to the community.
- Assistance and/or resource use is granted to non-profit organizations or organizations that can provide evidence of active or planned tourism activity, if required.
- Applicants must leverage a minimum of \$2.00 of private funds for every \$1.00 of room tax funds requested.
- Applicants must leverage at least 1 member or staff who contributes a minimum of 2 hours for every 1 hour of City staff assistance.
- Applicants must apply at least 60 days in advance of any deadline in which a City staff researched grant or tourism funding may be needed.
- Within 60 days of completion of the request for which room tax funds, City staff assistance, or other tourism resources are granted, applicants shall provide the Tourism Commission a final report detailing room tax eligible expenditures, results of grant applications, tourism-related events, activities, and/or venue use. The report should also provide examples of the results and its effectiveness in promoting the City of Columbus. Failure to provide this report will result in the group not being eligible for the receipt of staff assistance for the remainder of the year and for 18 months following the request.
- Applicants are encouraged to have a mechanism in place to track effectiveness of their event(s) or venue, including statistics related to attendance and overnight stays generated.
- Applicants are required to be present when the Tourism Commission considers their request.
- The Tourism Commission will review applications and will make their decision based on:
  - How well the request meets these guidelines;
  - How many hours might be needed by City staff for research;
  - How well the organization makes use of its own resources along with the proposed use of funds, staff assistance, and other tourism resources.

## **Marketing Partnerships and Sponsorships**

The primary focus of the Tourism Commission is to promote events that draw visitors for overnight stays. Besides these kinds of events, there numerous other things that may draw out-of-town visitors in which an event organizer or other groups and organizations could partner with the Tourism Commission to help promote. Guidelines for Marketing Partnerships are as follows:

- The purpose of marketing partnerships and sponsorships is to foster tourism and development within the City of Columbus, WI. Priority will be given to events and venues which will attract overnight visitors to the community.
- Partnerships and sponsorships are granted to non-profit organizations or organizations that can provide proof of insurance or have the ability to obtain insurance, if required.
- Applicants must leverage a minimum of \$2.00 of private funds for every \$1.00 of tourism funds requested.
- Applicants must apply at least 60 days in advance of events.
- Within 60 days of completion of the event for which marketing partnerships are granted, applicants shall provide the Tourism Commission a final report detailing room tax eligible expenditures, including receipts for the expenditures for which they are seeking reimbursement. The report should also provide examples of the project/program and its effectiveness in promoting the City of Columbus. Failure to provide this report will result in the group not being eligible for the receipt of room tax funds for that grant year and for 18 months following the event.
- Within 60 days of completion of the event for which room tax funds are granted, applicants shall provide the Tourism Commission multiple photos of the event, including rights to the photos.
- Applicants are encouraged to have a mechanism in place to track effectiveness of their event, including statistics related to attendance and overnight stays generated.
- Applicants are required to be present when the Tourism Commission considers their request.
- The Tourism Commission will review applications and will make their decision based on:
  - How well the event meets these guidelines;
  - How well the organization makes use of its own resources along with the proposed use of funds.