

City of Columbus, WI Tourism Room Tax Funding Guidelines

Objective:

This grant is intended to foster tourism promotion and tourism development in Columbus, WI. Tourism promotion and tourism development is defined as marketing projects, transient tourist information services, and tangible municipal development that is significantly used by transient tourists and reasonably likely to generate paid overnight stays at more than one lodging establishment in Columbus, WI.

Application Categories:

The applicant shall apply for one or more of the following categories per event in which the Tourism Commission may have room tax funding available and cannot be used for an applicant's general marketing expenditures or organizational operating expenses. The categories are:

- **Development Funding** - funding for the creation, enhancement, or recruitment of a tourism facility, service, or attraction, etc. including their direct non-operational costs.
- **Event Funding** - funding for the creation, production, or recruitment of an event, convention, etc. including their direct costs.
- **Promotional Funding** - funding for the marketing and promotion of an event, production, convention, etc. excluding costs to create, produce, or recruit the event, attraction, etc.

Timeline and Process:

The timeline for applications is:

- Initial application will be due March 31*
- Application meeting will take place in April
- Application will be reviewed at the May and June Tourism Commission meetings
- Pre-awarding meeting will take place in September
- Final report will be emailed or hand-delivered to City Hall by December 23
- Final review and reimbursement awarding at January Tourism Commission meeting

** Applications submitted after March 31 will be placed on a wait list with possible consideration based on available funding*

The process details for applicants applying for room tax funding is as follows:

1. **Initial Application and Application Meeting** - Applicants may fill out an online form as part of an initial application that will go to City staff. Applicants will be contacted by City staff to go over the initial application, scoring criteria, final reporting, and address any questions. Staff may advise on improvements to the application or possibly explain why the application does not meet the objective. Once completed, the application will be forwarded to the Tourism Commission for review.
2. **Commission Review** - The Tourism Commission will review, score, and award, modify, or reject the application. If the application is rejected, the applicant will be notified and may be scheduled to appear at a Tourism Commission meeting to appeal the decision. If

an application is awarded funds, those funds will be disbursed as reimbursement pending the commission's review of the applicant's final report.

3. **Final Reporting by Applicant** - The applicant will be contacted by City staff for a post-review meeting to go over what will be needed for final reporting and address any other questions. Once completed, the applicant will send staff their final report for review and forwarding to the Tourism Commission.
4. **Awarding and Reimbursement** - Pending Tourism Commission approval of the applicant's final report, City Staff will reach out to the applicant to let them know if they've been awarded or not. Or if the award has been modified from the application. If awarded, staff will request an invoice that includes a breakdown of expenses as per the Tourism Commission awarding. Once the invoice is received, staff will forward it to the City's Finance Department for processing and disbursement. The Tourism Commission may publicize award winners with a press release.

Scoring Criteria:

The grant will score on a scale from 1 (least) to 5 (most) on the following criteria to ensure fair and consistent scoring of each application. Funding will be prioritized for applications scoring highest.

- Meeting the objective of this grant
- Likelihood to generate paid overnight stays at multiple in-city lodging establishments
- Method to measure paid overnight stays generation
- Likelihood of economic impact to in-city businesses (excluding lodging)
- Method to measure economic impact
- Likelihood to attract out-of-town visitors to the city
- Method to measure visitor attraction
- Promoting Columbus, WI
- Ability to match funding reimbursement request with one or more application category funds 2:1

Final Report Materials:

Awarded applicants will need to submit a final report along with the appropriate materials that support the scoring criteria and directly relevant to the category applied for:

- Receipts directly related to the application
- Relevant analytics to support scoring criteria such as demographics, economic impact, where visitors have come from, etc.
- High-quality, marketable event photos granting permission to the City of Columbus, WI allowing for tourism marketing
- Draft and final marketing materials with Visit Columbus naming or branding
- Mail / email lists granting permission to the City of Columbus, WI allowing for tourism marketing