



**Town of Fulton
Hotel Occupancy Tax
Application**

Date Application received (To be completed by Town)		
Official Name of Organization/Entity:	Is the Organization/Entity a non-profit?	Date Organization/Entity Founded:
Rockport-Fulton Chamber of Commerce	Yes	
Organization/Entity Mailing Address:		
319 Broadway		
Organization/Entity website:		
www.rockport-fulton.org		
Name and Title of Person authorized to act on behalf of Organization/Entity for this application ("Applicant"):	Organization/Entity Phone:	Organization/Entity email:
Shelly Stuart President/CEO	361-729-6445 361-463-7641 (cell)	President@rockport.org

FUNDING REQUEST DESCRIPTION

Name of Project/Event:	Project/Event date(s):	
Visitor Center Operations & Marketing	All Year!	
Estimated number of room nights that will be occupied at local hotels, motels, and short-term rentals by attendees of your event(s) or project(s)?	Estimated number of annual attendance at your event(s) or project(s)?	Will you charge admission/if yes, how much?
Do your promotional materials/website note area lodging that can host attendees?	Have you negotiated a lodging rate at any local hotels, motels, and short-term rentals?	
Yes	N/A	
Project/Event location(s):	Total Amount of funds requested:	
319 Broadway Community	\$50,000	

In the space below, please describe each project/event for which funding is sought, and explain how each project/event will directly enhance and promote tourism and the hotel/motel/short-term rental (STR) industry in the Town of Fulton:

The Rockport-Fulton Visitor Center plays a critical role in promoting tourism and driving overnight stays — the core purpose of Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) funding as defined by the Texas Tax Code (§351.101).

What the Visitor Center Does:

Welcomes thousands of tourists annually – walk-ins, phone calls, mail-outs, and online inquiries

Directs visitors to hotels, motels, B&Bs, vacation rentals, and RV parks

Distributes brochures, maps, and guides that promote longer stays

Supports HOT-funded events like OysterFest

Operates 6 days a week, serving as the first stop for many out-of-town guests

Provides relocation, group travel, and seasonal visitor assistance

Direct Benefits to the Hotel Industry:

Refers guests daily to local lodging — often in real-time

Drives overnight stays by building multi-day itineraries for visitors

Promotes shoulder season and off-season events that boost occupancy

Gives local hotels and lodging free visibility through front-desk referrals and materials

Alignment with HOT Fund Purpose:

Under Texas law, HOT funds may be used for the operation of a Visitor Information Center that directly promotes tourism and the hotel industry.

The Rockport-Fulton Visitor Center:

Maintains visitor logs, referral data, and event metrics

Promotes tourism year-around

Converts inquiries into bookings — delivering a return on investment to local hotels

Supporting the Center = Supporting Tourism Growth

Every dollar invested in the Visitor Center helps:

Increase hotel occupancy

Attract longer stays

Create a better visitor experience

Strengthen the local economy

Investing HOT funds in the Rockport-Fulton Visitor Center is not just allowed — it's smart, measurable, and effective.

The remaining funding will be used strictly for marketing & promotion. We will aggressively promote Oysterfest and again attend the San Antonio Home & Garden Show to promote Oysterfest.

FUNDING CATEGORIES AUTHORIZED BY TEXAS LAW

(Please indicate which funding categories apply to your project/event – multiple categories may be selected)

	Check box below the appropriate category or categories	Amount requested for each category
The acquisition of sites for the construction, improvement, enlarging, equipping, repairing, operation, and maintenance of convention center facilities or <u>visitor</u> information centers, or both.		
The furnishing of facilities, personnel, and materials for the registration of convention delegates or registrants.		
Advertising and conducting solicitations and promotional programs to attract tourists and convention delegates or registrants to the municipality or its vicinity.		
The encouragement, promotion, improvement, and application of the arts, including instrumental and vocal music, dance, drama, folk art, creative writing, architecture, design and allied fields, painting, sculpture photography, graphic and craft arts, motion pictures, radio, television, tape and sound recording, and other arts related to the presentation, performance, execution, and exhibition of these major art forms.		
Historical restoration and preservation projects or activities or advertising and conducting solicitations and promotional programs to encourage tourists and convention delegates to visit preserved historic sites or museums; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at or in the immediate vicinity of convention centers; or • located elsewhere in the municipality or its vicinity that would be frequented by tourists and convention delegates 		
Signage directing the public to sights and attractions that are visited frequently by hotel guests in the municipality;		
The promotion of tourism by the enhancement and upgrading of existing sports facilities or fields if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the municipality owns the facilities or fields. 		

ASSURANCES

The Applicant hereby certifies to the Town of Fulton that, to the best of the Applicant's knowledge and belief, the:

1. Project(s)/event(s) for which financial assistance is sought will be administered in accordance with Federal, State, and local law;
2. HOT funds received as a result of this application will be used solely for the project(s)/event(s) described herein;
3. Applicant has read, understand, and will conform to the Town of Fulton HOT guidelines and policy;
4. Figures, facts, and representations made in the application, including any attachments hereto, are true and correct.

Shelley Stuart
Applicant's Signature

Date: 6-23-25

Shelley Stuart
Printed Name

President/CEO
Title

A Visitor Center, also known as a Visitor Information Center or Tourist Information Center, is a facility designed to provide information and assistance to tourists and visitors. These centers are often located in areas that attract a large number of tourists, such as national parks, cities, historical sites, and other popular destinations. The main functions of a Visitor Center include:

1. **Information Provision:** Offering maps, brochures, guides, and other informational materials about the local area, attractions, activities, accommodations, dining options, and events.
2. **Assistance and Guidance:** Providing personalized assistance and recommendations to visitors, answering questions, and helping with travel planning.
3. **Educational Displays:** Featuring exhibits, displays, and multimedia presentations about the local history, culture, wildlife, and natural features.
4. **Facilities and Amenities:** Providing restrooms, seating areas, and sometimes refreshments or gift shops.
5. **Ticket Sales:** Selling tickets for local attractions, tours, and events.
6. **Promotion of Local Businesses:** Highlighting and promoting local businesses, services, and attractions to support the local economy.

The cost to run a Visitor Information Center (VIC) can vary widely depending on several factors such as location, size, services offered, staffing, and operational hours. Here are some of the key cost components:

1. **Facility Costs:**
 - **Rent or Mortgage:** The cost of leasing or owning the building.
 - **Utilities:** Electricity, water, heating/cooling, and internet services.
 - **Maintenance and Repairs:** Regular upkeep of the building and grounds.
2. **Staffing:**
 - **Salaries and Wages:** Pay for full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees.
 - **Training:** Costs associated with training staff.
 - **Benefits:** Health insurance, retirement plans, and other employee benefits.
3. **Operational Costs:**
 - **Office Supplies:** Paper, printing, computers, and other office essentials.
 - **Marketing and Advertising:** Costs for promoting the center and local attractions.
 - **Insurance:** Liability insurance and property insurance.
4. **Technology:**
 - **Software:** Customer relationship management (CRM) systems, point-of-sale (POS) systems, and other necessary software.
 - **Website Maintenance:** Costs for maintaining an online presence.
5. **Programs and Services:**
 - **Educational Programs:** Costs of running workshops, tours, and other educational activities.
 - **Exhibits:** Creating and maintaining informational displays and exhibits.
6. **Miscellaneous:**
 - **Refreshments and Supplies:** Stocking refreshments for visitors.
 - **Gift Shop Inventory:** If the center includes a retail component.

Given these variables, the annual cost to run a Visitor Information Center can range from tens of thousands to several million dollars. For example:

- **Small, rural VICs** might operate on a budget of \$50,000 to \$150,000 per year.
- **Medium-sized VICs** in moderately populated areas might have annual costs ranging from \$150,000 to \$500,000.
- **Large VICs** in major tourist destinations could see annual expenses in the range of \$500,000 to several million dollars.

To determine specific costs, a detailed budget considering the factors above is necessary, tailored to the specific context and location of the Visitor Information Center.



The Visitor Center Council (VCC) is responsible for overseeing the strategic direction, financial health, and overall operations of the Rockport-Fulton Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center, including setting policies, approving budgets, promoting tourism initiatives, and ensuring the center provides accurate and welcoming information to visitors to the area; essentially acting as the governing body to guide the center's mission and goals.

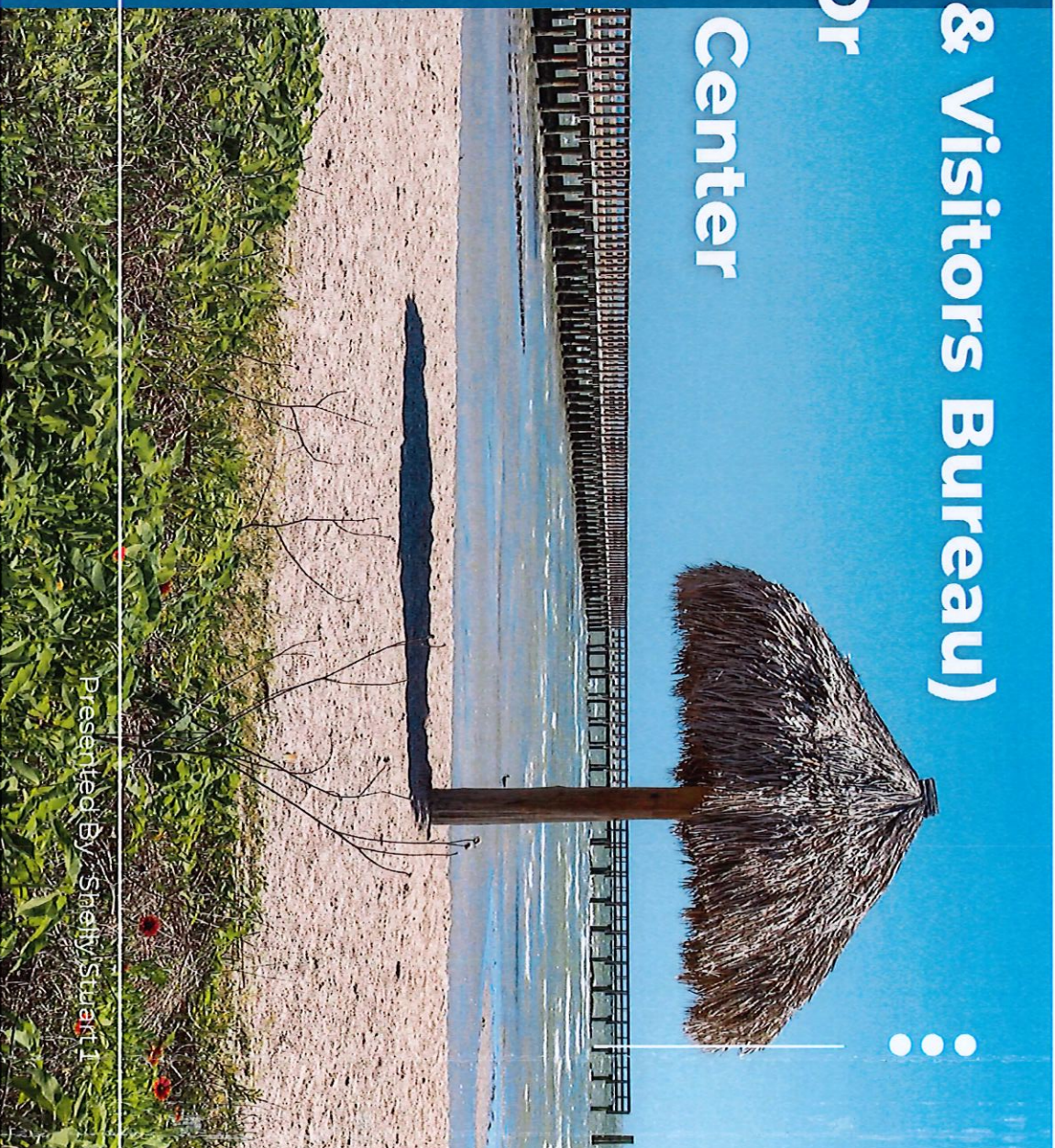
Key Responsibilities:

- **Strategic Planning:**
 - Develop and implement a long-term vision for the visitor center, aligning with local tourism goals.
 - Set annual objectives and priorities for the center's operations.
 - Oversee the development of marketing and promotional strategies to attract visitors.
- **Financial Oversight:**
 - Review and approve annual budgets and financial reports.
 - Monitor revenue streams including visitor fees, retail sales, and potential partnerships.
 - Ensure financial stability and responsible resource allocation.
- **Operational Management:**
 - Appoint and supervise the Visitor Center manager and staff.
 - Establish policies and procedures for visitor services, including information dissemination and customer service standards.
 - Oversee the maintenance and upkeep of the visitor center facility.
- **Community Engagement:**
 - Collaborate with local businesses, tourism organizations, and community leaders to promote the area.
 - Build relationships with stakeholders and advocate for tourism development initiatives.
 - Gather feedback from visitors to improve the visitor center experience.
- **Council Governance:**
 - Conduct regular board meetings to discuss operational matters and strategic decisions.
 - Ensure compliance with relevant regulations and legal requirements.
 - Recruit and retain qualified board members with diverse expertise.

Desired Skills and Qualifications for VCC Council:

- **Tourism Industry Knowledge:** Deep understanding of tourism trends, marketing strategies, and visitor needs.
- **Leadership and Management Skills:** Ability to guide a team, set clear direction, and make informed decisions.
- **Financial Acumen:** Understanding of financial statements, budgeting, and resource management.
- **Communication Skills:** Effective communication with staff, stakeholders, and the broader community.
- **Community Involvement:** Commitment to local tourism development and community engagement.

CVB (Convention & Visitors Bureau) OR Visitor Center



www.rockport-fulton.org

Presented By: Shelly Stuart 1

What is the Difference?

A CVB (Convention and Visitors Bureau) is a larger organization that actively promotes tourism for an entire region, often focusing on attracting large events and conferences, while a Visitor Center is a physical location where tourists can get information about local attractions, lodging, and maps, typically operated on a smaller scale within a specific area; essentially, a CVB is more focused on marketing a destination while a Visitor Center provides direct information to visitors once they arrive.



Key Points:

A Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) and a Visitor Center both aim to promote tourism, but they serve different functions and scopes:

Function:

A CVB works to attract visitors to a whole region by marketing its attractions and facilities to event planners and tour operators, while a Visitor Center primarily provides basic information to tourists already in the area.

Scope:

A CVB has a broader scope, often collaborating with local businesses and tourism stakeholders to promote the entire destination, while a Visitor Center generally focuses on providing immediate information about nearby attractions.

Location:

A CVB is typically not a physical location that visitors can walk into, while a Visitor Center is a physical space where tourists can access information and often purchase souvenirs

In Short:

A CVB works on destination marketing and event attraction, often at a strategic level, while a Visitor Center provides on-the-ground assistance and information for tourists who are already in the area.

Convention & Visitor Bureau (CVB)

Marketing and Promotion:

- CVBs develop campaigns to market the destination to a wide audience, including leisure tourists, business travelers, and event planners.

Attracting Conventions and Events:

- CVBs play a key role in securing large conferences, conventions, and events by partnering with hotels, conference centers, and other venues.

Research and Analysis:

- CVBs gather data on visitor demographics, economic impact, and tourism trends.





Visitor Center

Information Hub:

- Visitor Centers provide visitors with maps, brochures, and detailed information on local attractions, dining options, accommodations, events, and activities.

Enhancing the Visitor Experience:

- Visitor Centers serve as cultural introductions, showcasing local art, history, or even hosting small exhibits that reflect the destination's unique character.

Wayfinding and Accessibility Support:

- They assist travelers in navigating the area, including providing information on accessibility features, public transit routes, parking, and any services for travelers with disabilities.



Supporting Tourism



CVBs are essential for creating awareness and demand for a destination, while Visitor Centers serve as crucial support hubs to ensure that visitors have everything they need to enjoy their stay. If they enjoy their stay they will return as well as recommend the area to all their family and friends.



Does a Community Need Both?

Having both a Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) and a Visitor Center in a community is highly beneficial, as each plays a distinct yet complementary role in driving and supporting tourism. Here's why both are essential:

Strategic Destination Promotion & Immediate Visitor Support

- A CVB promotes the destination to the broader market by strategically positioning the area as an attractive destination for tourists, conventions, and events. They focus on long-term growth and establishing a compelling destination brand.
- A Visitor Center, on the other hand, supports the visitors who are already there, providing them with tailored, on-the-ground assistance that ensures a positive experience.
- Together, they address both ends of the tourism experience: attracting visitors and ensuring they have a seamless, enjoyable stay once they arrive.

Does a Community Need Both? (Con't)

Economic Impact & Revenue Generation

- CVBs drive economic impact by bringing large groups (like conferences and conventions) to the area, which leads to increased spending at local hotels, restaurants, shops, and attractions.
- Visitor Centers enhance that economic impact by keeping visitors informed and engaged. When visitors are well-informed, they are more likely to explore additional attractions, stay longer, and spend more money locally.
- By encouraging return visits and word-of-mouth recommendations, both entities help sustain and grow the local economy over time.

Building the Destination Brand & Reputation

- A CVB's marketing and branding efforts help put the community on the map as a destination, establishing a reputation that can attract travelers year after year.
- A Visitor Center reinforces that brand by delivering an experience that aligns with visitors' expectations. Positive interactions with helpful, knowledgeable staff create a memorable experience, solidifying a positive impression of the destination.
- With both working together, visitors not only hear about the destination but leave with experiences that match what was marketed, increasing credibility and trust in the destination brand.

Does a Community Need Both? (Con't)

Insights and Data-Driven Improvement

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Encouraging Longer Stays and Repeat Visits

- A CVB's promotional efforts create initial interest, attracting visitors to the area. However, Visitor Centers can inspire them to explore beyond the main attractions, discover hidden gems, and participate in local activities they might not have known about otherwise.
- By ensuring that visitors feel welcomed, informed, and supported, Visitor Centers play a key role in encouraging longer stays and higher satisfaction levels, which lead to repeat visits.
- When travelers have great experiences, they are more likely to return, recommend the destination to others, and continue the cycle of positive economic impact.

Summary

Aspect	Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)	Visitor Center
Purpose	Promote the destination broadly and attract events	Provide in-person support and resources for visitors
Audience	Tourists, event planners, business travelers, local partners	Individual tourists and travelers in the area
Main Focus	Strategic destination marketing, event attraction	On-the-ground visitor support, information distribution
Typical Services	Marketing, partnerships, event support, research	Maps, brochures, local guidance, emergency assistance
Funding	Often funded by local government, tourism taxes	Often funded by CVBs, government agencies, or nonprofits
Location		Physical location easily accessible to tourists
Interaction Level	Primarily B2B and strategic-level community engagement	Direct, one-on-one assistance with travelers



By working together, a CVB and a Visitor Center cover the entire visitor journey—from initial attraction to final farewell. The CVB builds demand and brings visitors in, while the Visitor Center provides them with the support they need to make the most of their stay. Both contribute to a sustainable tourism economy, a positive visitor experience, and a strong community reputation, making their presence invaluable to any tourism-focused area.





FIND YOURSELF IN
**ROCKPORT
FULTON**

PROPOSED BUDGET REQUEST

Rockport-Fulton Chamber of
Commerce & Visitor Center



Contact Us:



**If you have any questions,
please do not hesitate to
Contact Us:**

Contact us to get more info



president@lrockport.org



319 Broadway - Rockport, TX 78382



361-729-6445



www.rockport-fulton.org

Visitor Center Operations Manual



Rockport-Fulton
Chamber of
Commerce &
Visitor Center

Updated:
April 2025

Purpose & Mission

The Rockport-Fulton Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center exists to serve as a welcoming hub for visitors, newcomers, and community members by offering hospitality, information, and resources that promote the Rockport-Fulton area as a premier coastal destination. We aim to enhance the visitor experience while supporting local businesses and economic growth.

Hours of Operation

Standard Hours:

- Monday – Friday: 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM
- Saturday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM
- Closed Sundays and recognized holidays

Special Event Hours:

- Extended hours may be scheduled during key tourism events such as Seafair or HummerBird Celebration.

Closures:

- In cases of inclement weather, closures will follow Aransas County emergency protocols or be at the discretion of the Chamber President/CEO.

Staffing Structure

Visitor Center Coordinator/Manager

- Supervises day-to-day operations
- Schedules and trains volunteers
- Oversees brochure inventory and distribution
- Maintains monthly visitor stats and prepares reports

Volunteers - Charmers

- Serve as ambassadors of Rockport-Fulton
- Greet and assist walk-in guests
- Provide directions and recommendations
- Keep the lobby and materials organized

Chamber Staff Support

- Assist with overflow during high-traffic periods
- Handle business referrals and relocation packet requests
- Coordinate with VCC for media, marketing, and reporting needs

Training Requirements

- All staff and volunteers must attend an orientation
- Quarterly refresher meetings will be held to update on new businesses, events, and materials

Visitor Engagement Standards

Greeting Protocol

- Smile, stand if seated, and offer a friendly “Welcome to Rockport-Fulton!”
- Ask if guests need help planning their stay or finding specific attractions
- Offer maps, visitor guides, and themed brochures (e.g., birding, fishing, art galleries)

Customer Service Expectations

- Use positive language; if unsure about a topic, offer to find out or refer to staff
- Remain neutral in conversations—do not engage in political or controversial discussions
- Never refer any business over another

Tourism Promotion Tips

- Highlight local gems (Fulton Mansion, Rockport Beach, Heritage District, The Big Tree)
- Refer visitors to member businesses whenever possible
- Suggest experiences based on visitor interests (e.g., nature, food, history, art)
- Listen Actively – Let customers talk, and don’t interrupt. Use phrases like “I understand” or “That makes sense.”
- Speak Clearly & Simply – Avoid jargon unless you’re sure the customer understands it.
- Empathize, Don’t Just Apologize – “I’m sorry you’re frustrated” is OK. “I’d be frustrated too – let’s fix this” is better.
- Mirror the Customer’s Tone – If they’re casual, be casual. If they’re formal, be professional.
- Don’t Say “I Don’t Know” Without a Follow-Up – Say “Great question – let me find that out for you.”

Brochures, Displays & Marketing Materials

Display Guidelines

- Brochures must be tourism, community, or Chamber-related
- Priority is given to Chamber member businesses and sponsors
- Non-members may display materials only if space allows and with written approval

Inventory Management

- Weekly checks for restocking and removing outdated materials
- Seasonal materials (e.g., Christmas Boat Parade, Oysterfest) should be rotated as needed
- Maintain a list of current brochures on hand for reordering

Facilities & Cleanliness

- Keep the lobby neat, well-lit, and welcoming
- Tidy the front desk area before leaving shift
- Ensure coffee station (if offered) is stocked and clean
- Check and tidy restrooms daily; notify maintenance if supplies are low

Safety & Emergency Procedures

- Emergency exits and routes must be kept clear
- Know the location of first aid kits and AED device
- In case of emergency:
 - Medical: Call 911, notify Chamber staff immediately
 - Fire: Evacuate the building, use fire extinguishers if safe
 - Weather: Follow Chamber emergency preparedness protocols

Visitor Log & Data Collection

- Record daily visitor count in the Visitor Log (paper or digital)
- Collect zip codes and/or countries of origin for tourism reporting
- Track:
 - Number of guides/maps distributed
 - Business referrals made
 - Event inquiries
 - Submit monthly summary to Chamber leadership

Special Request & Tour Groups

- All group tours (school groups, clubs, RV caravans) must be pre-scheduled
- Prepare welcome bags or guided information sessions as needed
- Maintain a tour calendar to avoid scheduling conflicts
- All FAM Tours must be scheduled with the President/CEO of the Rockport-Fulton Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center

Lost & Found Policy

- Items found should be logged and tagged with date/location
- Securely store items for 30 days
- After 30 days, items will be discarded or donated, if appropriate

Technology & Phones

- Answer phones promptly using professional greeting:
 - "Thank you for calling the Rockport-Fulton Chamber and Visitor Center. How may I help you?"
 - Log detailed messages and forward to appropriate team member
 - Public Wi-Fi is available to visitors; monitor usage and report issues

Media, Social Media & Public Information

- All media inquiries must be directed to the Chamber CEO or Marketing Director
- Do not post photos or content on social media without approval
- Maintain confidentiality and professionalism at all times

Dress Code

- Business casual or branded Chamber/Visitor Center apparel preferred
- Name tags must be worn while on duty
- No offensive graphics, political messages, or casual beachwear

Code of Conduct

- Represent the Chamber and community positively
- Be respectful to all individuals, regardless of background or beliefs
- Report harassment or concerning behavior to Chamber leadership

Complaint Handling Procedure

The Rockport-Fulton Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center strives to offer excellent customer service. However, if a visitor, member, or community member has a complaint, it is important to respond in a way that is respectful, solution-focused, and aligned with Chamber values.

Guiding Principles

- Remain calm, professional, and courteous at all times.
- Listen actively and without interruption.
- Do not take complaints personally or respond defensively.
- Aim to resolve concerns promptly or escalate when appropriate.
- If the complaint is within your control (e.g., restocking brochures, providing clearer directions), resolve it on the spot.
- If it requires staff involvement or decision-making authority, say:
- "Let me share this with our staff, and we'll follow up with you as soon as possible."

Contact Us

Please feel free to contact our offices with any questions or concerns.

- **Phone**



361-729-6445

- **Message**



marketingmanager@rockportorg

- **Website**



www.rockport-fulton.org

- **Address**



319 Broadway
Rockport, TX 78382