



ALACHUA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

CONFERENCE GRANT APPLICATION

Applications must be received no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, November 5, 2021
Late applications will not be considered.

For programs and activities occurring between October 1, 2021 - September 30, 2022.

Alachua County Visitors and Convention Bureau
33 North Main Street
Gainesville, Florida 32601
(352) 374-5260

Purpose

In order to support and enhance Alachua County as a destination for conferences, the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners has allocated a portion of Tourist Development Tax to aid in the operations and promotions of conferences that have as one of their main purposes the attraction of tourists as evidenced by the promotion of the conference to tourists.

Eligibility

Applicants must fulfill the following:

1. Be a legally established entity. Individuals are not eligible.
2. Conferences and paid conference lodging accommodations must be within the boundaries of Alachua County.
3. The proposed conference must have as one of its main purposes the attraction of tourists as evidenced by the promotion of the conference to tourists.

Application Submission

Completed applications must be submitted with all requested information by the deadline on the cover page of the application. It is the complete responsibility of the applicant to compile and package applications according to instructions. Late applications will not be accepted.

Financial Guidelines & Documentation

Conference Grants provide funds for up to 50% of the budget for the total costs of an approved conference, up to a maximum of \$10,000, subject to the funding availability and verification of room nights.

Reimbursement

All funds are available on a reimbursement basis only after the conclusion of the conference and upon receipt of all required reimbursement documentation. Reimbursement is contingent on the percentage of verified room nights, via letter from lodging facilities. Copies of paid invoices, cancelled checks, tear sheets, printed samples or other backup information which shows proof of payment must accompany all requests for funds. Invoices should be submitted within 60 days after the conclusion of the conference. Payments will be made only to the organization receiving the grant, and cannot be made directly to vendors or individuals. All funds shall be subject to audit by Alachua County.

Prohibited Communications

The funding process is not over until the final award decisions are made by the County Commission. To ensure fair consideration for all applicants, the County prohibits communication regarding this funding process, including the funding recommendations to or with any department, employee, elected official, or any other person involved in evaluation of or consideration of the applications, until the County Commission has formalized its funding decision. Communication includes both oral and written. The County's representative may initiate communication with an applicant in order to obtain information.

Acceptance/Rejection of Applications

Alachua County reserves the right to reject any application which may be considered irregular, show serious omission, or unauthorized alteration of form. Alachua County reserves the right to accept any application in whole or in part, to waive technicalities, or to accept applications which, in the County's judgment, best serve the interests of the County.

Public Records

Responses to this grant, upon receipt by the County, become public records subject to the provisions Chapter 119 F.S., Florida Public Records Law.

Credit Attribution Requirement

All grantees must include the Visit Gainesville, Alachua County, FL logo and “Funded in part by Visit Gainesville, Alachua County” on all promotional materials, including but not limited to printed brochures, flyers, programs, posters, postcards, website, digital, radio, television, billboards and promotional items.

The Conference Grant request amount is based on a 6:1 ratio of estimated tourist tax dollars generated. To determine the maximum grant amount, complete the following:

Number of Hotel Rooms _____ *multiplied by* **Number of Nights** _____ *multiplied by* **Room Rate** (or average room rate of \$100), _____ *multiplied by* 5% _____. This is the estimated Tourist Development Tax generated by the conference.
Multiply by 6 _____. This is the maximum grant request amount.

EXAMPLE: Number of Hotel Rooms 140 *multiplied by* **Number of Nights** 2 *multiplied by* **Room Rate** (or average room rate of \$100), \$100 *multiplied by* 5% \$1,400. This is the estimated Tourist Development Tax generated by the conference.
Multiply by 6 \$8,400 This is the maximum grant request amount.

If a room block has been secured, use the room rate provided by the host lodging facility. If the host lodging facility has not yet been identified, use the rate of \$100 per room per night.

Completion of Conference

All organizations must accomplish what is set forth in the grant application proposal. If for any reason the requirements of the grant have not been met, the County reserves the right to withhold payment.

Estimated Occupancy and Actual Occupancy

At the completion of the conference, documentation of verified room nights and rates from the lodging provider in the form of a letter accompanied by receipt must be provided. The final reimbursement amount is calculated as a percentage of verified room nights utilized for the conference.

| % of Verified Rooms | <u>Reimbursement Eligibility</u> | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| | First Time Conferences | Recurring Conferences |
| 80-100% | 100% | 100% |
| 70-79% | 83% | 87.5% |
| 60-69% | 66% | 75% |
| 50-59% | 50% | 62.5% |
| 0-49% | 0 | 0 |

EXAMPLES OF ALLOWABLE EXPENDITURES

- Rental fees for use of a facility for the conference
- Conference related printing and postage

- Advertisements and promotion for the conference including television, radio, newspaper, magazines, billboards, digital
- Preparation of presentation materials, such as brochures, slides, etc.
- Transportation within Alachua County while conference is being held, i.e. bus transportation to take participants to conference site, dining, local attractions, etc.
- Conference catering, excluding alcohol.
- Promotional items with the Visit Gainesville, Alachua County, FL logo

NON-ALLOWABLE EXPENSES

This grant will not reimburse for the following disallowable expenditures:

- Payment of any bills of a personal nature, such as rent, mortgage, utilities, personal vehicles;
- Real property; capital improvements, including but not limited to new construction, renovation, restoration, installation or replacement of fixtures, and tangible personal property;
- Interest or reduction of deficits or loans, fines, penalties, or cost of litigation;
- Expenses incurred or obligated prior to or after funding period;
- Making payments or reimbursements for goods or services purchased for previous or other events, invoices paid outside of contract period;
- Advertising, printing or other expenses that omit the Visit Gainesville, Alachua County, FL logo and/or recognition.
- Benefits, projects, and fundraisers that benefit organizations other than the contracted applicant.
- Benefits and projects planned primarily for fundraising purposes;
- Prize money, scholarships, awards, plaques, certificates, or contributions;
- Political or religious events;
- Alcohol;
- Sales Tax;
- Hotel rooms for attendees;
- Staff payments for services;
- Any expenditure not authorized by Alachua County Code of Ordinances.

CONFERENCE GRANT APPLICATION

Organization Name: _____

Contact Name: _____

Board President / CEO Contact: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email for Primary Contact: _____

Conference Name: _____

Conference Dates: _____

Conference Location: _____

Lodging Location: _____

Room Block Secured (circle one) YES / NO

If yes, indicate number of blocked rooms _____ If yes, indicate room rate _____

Requested Grant Amount: \$ _____

(Calculate by completing the following:

NUMBER OF HOTEL ROOMS _____ multiplied by NUMBER OF NIGHTS _____
multiplied by ROOM RATE (or average room rate of \$100), _____ multiplied by 5%
_____.

This is the estimated Tourist Development Tax generated by the conference.

Multiply by 6 _____ to calculate the maximum grant request amount.

1. **Conference Plan:** The Conference Plan should describe the objectives, program, and logistical arrangements for the meeting. Provide a narrative of the conference and its contribution to the growth of tourism in Alachua County. (400 words | 30 points)

Excellent: 25-30 points: Conference plans and objectives are well-defined, achievable, and reflect excellence. Clear evidence the organization follows best practices in conference and event management.

Good: 20-24 points: The conference plans and objectives are defined and achievable.

Fair: 15-19 points: Conference plan is not well-defined or achievable.

2. **Marketing Plan:** Describe the conference marketing plan, including out-of-county marketing, and how the proposed event will be promoted to tourists. (400 words | 30 points)

Excellent: 25-30 points: Well-defined marketing plan to grow attendance and attract tourists. Includes strategic use of multiple platforms (social, radio, web, etc.). Articulates understanding of target markets and the demographic profile of attendees. Includes plans for editorial press coverage. Clearly defines a return on investment for marketing and advertising expenditures.

Good: 20-24 points: Marketing plan to attract and grow attendance. Includes multiple platforms (social, radio, web, etc.).

Fair: 15-19 points: Undefined marketing plan to attract and grow attendance.

3. Does the conference occur during low occupancy months of December, January, or July?

Yes = 2 points No = 0 points

4. Estimated Tourist Development Tax generated (Calculate by completing the following:

NUMBER OF HOTEL ROOMS _____ multiplied by NUMBER OF NIGHTS _____
multiplied by ROOM RATE (or average room rate of \$100), _____ multiplied by 5% _____.

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| \$600 and under = 0 points | \$2,001 - \$2,300 = 20 points |
| \$601 - \$800 = 5 points | \$2,301 - \$2,600 = 23 points |
| \$801 - \$1000 = 8 points | \$2,601 - \$2,900 = 26 points |
| \$1,001 - \$1,300 = 10 points | \$2,901 - \$3,200 = 29 points |
| \$1,301 - \$1,700 = 14 points | \$3,201 - \$3,500 = 32 points |
| \$1,701 - \$2,000 = 17 points | \$3,501 - \$3,800 = 35 points |
| | \$3,801 and above = 38 points |

| Total | Points | % of Request Amount |
|-------|--------------|---------------------|
| | 90+ | 100% |
| | 80-89 | 75% |
| | 70-79 | 50% |
| | 69 and below | 0% |

Please attach the following with completed application:

- ___ Detailed Budget
- ___ Room Block Reservation Form

At the completion of the conference, reimbursement requests must be accompanied by the following:

- Letter(s) from lodging facilities verifying room nights and room rate.
- Conference related invoices with corresponding credit card receipts or cancelled checks.
- Financial statement listing revenues and expenses related to the conference.
- Advertising, handouts, brochures, or other conference materials with appropriate attribution credit.
- Digital photos of the event, meeting and/or venue with photo release for Visit Gainesville, Alachua County to use the photo for promotion of the County.