Print Form

City of West Columbia
Bridging Past, Present and Future

FY 2014-2015

CITY OF WEST COLUMBIA ACCOMMODATIONS TAX

GRANT OVERVIEW & GUIDELINES

Authorized under Chapter 4 of Title 6 of the South Carolina Code of Laws ("Code"), Accommodation Taxes are collected by lodging facilities (i.e., hotels, motels, etc.) from individuals who spend one or more nights in their facilities (also known as the "heads on beds" tax). These tourism-related funds must then be used to promote tourism and enlarge the economic benefits of the area through advertising, promotion, and providing those facilities and services that enhance the ability of the county or municipality to attract and provide for tourists. Collected funds are distributed to the respective counties and municipalities to determine the best use of these funds that meets the intent of the law. In the City of West Columbia, applications for funds from the Tourism-related Fund are submitted to the *West Columbia Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee* (**Committee**) for review. Eligible applicants include public and private not-for profit organizations. The Committee will then make allocation recommendations to West Columbia City Council for final determination and approval.

What is the definition of a tourist?

Under Section 6-5-5 (a)(4), ***"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***. Because there is no clear definition of "home community" within the Code, the Tourism Expenditure Review Committee (TERC), the state oversight committee for these funds, has adopted a guideline set by other travel industry entities that states that a **tourist is <u>generally</u> one who travels in excess of 50 miles from home.** However, TERC will review every event on a case by case basis to consider how the project or event increases visitors to the region and boosts the economy.

What type of project or event qualifies as a tourism-related expenditure?

The Committee looks to distinguish between events or activities designated for and attended primarily by those in the local community (not qualifying) from events that are designated for and attended primarily by non-residents who come from outside the local community, which generally means from outside a 50-mile radius (qualifying). To make a determination regarding the purpose or intent of an activity or event, the Committee looks to substantiate the promotional activities undertaken to bring non-residents into the area to attend the funded activity. **The promotional effort is a key indicator of the extent to which the purpose of the funded activity is to attract non-residents.**

Categories of Qualifying Expenditures (as applied to West Columbia):

Under the Code, in ***order to qualify for a tourism-related expenditure***, the expenditure must **(1) be used to attract or provide for tourists, and (2) can not be used for an item that would normally need to be provided for by the municipality.** There are five (5) categories of tourism-related expenditures applicable for the City of West Columbia:

- Advertising & Promotion of Tourism – Under Code Section 6-4-10 (4)(b)(1), monies in the Tourism-related Fund can be used for advertising and the promotion of tourism to increase tourism in the municipality. Qualifying expenditures would include monies spent on magazine, newspaper, web, radio or television advertising in an attempt to promote the municipality to tourists. Qualifying expenditures also include monies spent to promote the municipality to entities that specialize in tourism, such as bus tour companies and travel agencies.

- Arts & Cultural Events – Under Code Section 6-4-10 (4)(b)(2), monies in the Tourism-related Fund can be used for the promotion of the arts and cultural events. Expenditures that can qualify include monies used for advertising or the promotion of a particular festival or arts/cultural event held in or near the municipality in an effort to attract tourists who will stay in hotels/motels, etc. within the city.

- Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events – Under Code Section 6-4-10 (4)(b)(3), monies in the Tourism-related Fund can be used for the construction, maintenance and operation of facilities for cultural and civic activities, including construction and maintenance of access and other nearby roads and utilities for the facilities. Eligible expenditures can include the costs incurred in building a civic center, a museum or a coliseum. Funds may also be used for the continued operation of such facility including repairs, and management fees or salaries of those who work at the facility. **Please note that the facility must enhance the ability of the municipality to attract and provide for tourists and can not provide primarily local functions or benefits.**

- Tourist Transportation – Under Code Section 6-4-10 (4)(b)(6), monies in the Tourism-related Fund may be used for tourist shuttle transportation. Qualifying expenditures include any monies spent to provide public transportation to tourist, such as shuttle buses or trolleys. For example, shuttles to transport persons from the airport to hotels, or from the hotels to tourist attractions, or from conventions or tourist attractions to other tourist facilities would qualify.

- Visitors Centers – Under Code Section 6-4-10 (4)(b)(8), monies in the Tourism-related Fund may be used for operating visitor centers. Expenditures that will qualify are any monies spent to operate and maintain centers whose primary purpose is to provide information, brochures, and other services to tourists.

Who is eligible to apply?

Eligible applicants include public and private non-profit organizations. No grant can be made to a private **for-profit** organization to be expended by the organization for its own event. Also, grants will not be made to non-profit organizations for projects which will primarily benefit one or a very few persons, or an exclusive group of for-profit organizations.

Can Tourism-related Funds be used to support local art or music programs such as Jazz in the Schools, which improve the cultural climate of the municipality?

NO. While such art programs are educational and promote culture, they do not enhance the ability of the municipality to attract and provide for tourists. These types of programs primarily benefit the local population by exposing them to new experiences; however, tourists rarely participate or experience the benefits of these programs.

Can Tourism-related Funds be used for local transportation for senior citizens' programs, or programs related to drug abuse, AIDS awareness or similar programs that would benefit residents?

NO. While such programs do benefit the local community, they do not fit into any of the categories of tourism-related expenditures and they do not attract or promote tourism within the municipality. However, to the extent that a particular program is primarily designed to serve tourists, the program could be eligible as a tourism-related expenditure. For example, senior citizens transportation for elderly tourists may qualify as a tourism-related expenditure.

Can Tourism-related Funds be used to fund billboards or advertising relating to anniversaries or other non-tourist related promotions for schools, colleges, universities or municipalities?

As a general rule, NO. However, if the billboard was designed to advertise the area and attract tourists to the municipality, then the expenditure may qualify. For example, a billboard that reads "Come see West Columbia and celebrate our 130th Anniversary," and lists events to be held celebrating the anniversary, would qualify. A billboard recognizing the anniversary of a private high school would not.

Can Tourism-related Funds be used for travel and lodging expenses of local high school bands in such events as the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade?

NO. These events do not serve to attract tourists to the band's municipality; rather they only serve to attract tourists to the locality where such event is being held.

Can Tourism-related Funds be used to fund scholarships offered by a sporting or other type of similar event, which otherwise qualifies for Tourism-related Funds for promoting its events?

NO. The scholarships do not qualify as a tourism-related expenditure under the Code.

May a municipality use Tourism-related Funds for beautification projects?

It depends on two factors: (1) is the project designed to attract or provide for tourists? and (2) is the beautification a service that would normally be provided by the municipality? For example, a beautification project around municipal buildings is a service that is normally provided by the municipality and would not qualify. However, the creation of a public garden, such as Edisto Gardens in Orangeburg or Brookgreen Gardens in Horry County, is the creation of a destination tourist facility and would qualify for tourism-related funds, provided that such location was designed to attract tourists or enhance the ability of the municipality to attract tourists.

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Accommodations Tax Application Guidelines FY 2014-2015

Thank you for your interest in West Columbia's Accommodations Tax Program. The following policies and procedures for making an application to the Tourism-related Fund are provided below for your assistance. Grant Overview & Guidelines are also attached for your information and should be reviewed prior to making an application.

Funding provided by Accommodations Tax used for promotion and advertising specifically designed to bring tourists to the City of West Columbia, is made under the provision that the City of West Columbia will be listed as a co-sponsor on all advertising, including, but not limited to, all print media, radio, television and web ads. Funds can only be awarded to those projects that will attract people to stay overnight in the City of West Columbia and to frequent City of West Columbia restaurants.

Grants funds from the Accommodations Tax Program should be considered supplementary to the budget of any applicant, and unless otherwise approved, must be used within the fiscal year for which the funds were approved (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015).

DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTNG APPLICATION: No later than **5 PM on APRIL 22, 2014**

NUMBER OF COPIES: Applicant should submit one (1) original and ten (10) unbound applications (binder-clips acceptable). All applications must be typed. Please use the on-line fillable form. No e-mailed copies will be accepted.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS: The applicant must be a public or private **non-profit** organization.

DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS: Generally, funding is of the reimbursement method with appropriate documentation (i.e., signed contract(s), detailed invoice(s), canceled check(s), etc.).

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS: If your organization received funding last year, a copy of the final financial statement must accompany this application.

OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS TAX FUNDING: Organizations must indicate any other accommodations tax funds they have requested or received from other municipalities or counties for this funding year.

FUNDING APROVAL: Funding in one calendar year does not automatically ensure funding in subsequent years. Organizations seeking accommodation tax funding must submit an application each year.

The West Columbia Accommodations Tax Committee will hold a public meeting on Tuesday, April 29, 2014 at 5:30 PM in the New Brookland Room at City Hall (200 N. 12th Street) to review applications, and if deemed appropriate, to hear presentations from selected applicants.

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ACCOMMODATION TAX APPLICATION

1. **The Applicant** must be a public or private non-profit organization. **Private non-profit organizations (non-governmental) must attach a copy of the applicant's 501 (C) certification letter and a copy of a current Secretary of State charity registration letter.** PLEASE FILL IN ALL BLANKS. Incomplete applications may be deemed unresponsive and be returned to the applicant. Use "N/A" if not applicable.

Name of Project/Event _____

Event Website: _____

Applicant/Organization _____

Federal ID No. _____ Non-Profit Status: _____

Type of Organization: ___County ___ Municipal ___ Non-Profit ___ Community Service/Church, etc.

Project Manager _____ Title _____

Primary Telephone #_____ Secondary Telephone # _____

Address _____

Email _____

Applicants must submit a budget of planned expenditures with application, and an accounting of how funds were spent at the end of the funding year.

*(**Definition:** Tourism/tourist generally means the action and activities of people taking trips **50 miles** outside their home communities for any purpose, except daily commuting to and from work.)* **Distribution of funds may be based on the percentage of visitors who travel 50 or more miles from outside the West Columbia community to attend or visit your event.**

2. Project Category (check one)

____ **Advertising and Promotion of Tourism**
The promotion of tourism to West Columbia through advertising in print media, radio, television, web ads, and/or other

____ **Arts & Cultural Events**
The promotion of the arts or cultural events to tourists through advertising or promoting a particular festival or arts/cultural event.

____ **Facilities for Civic & Cultural Events**
The construction, maintenance and operations of a facility used for cultural and civic activities that will attract tourists to West Columbia. Eligible expenditures can also include construction and maintenance costs for access and other nearby roads and utilities for the facility. Facilities for primarily local use are not eligible.

_____ **Tourist Transportation**
To provide for public transportation, such as shuttle buses or trolleys, to transport tourists to and from hotels and tourist facilities, attractions and/or events.

_____ **Visitors Centers**
For the operation/maintenance of visitors centers whose primary purpose is to provide information, brochures and other services to tourists.

3. Project/Event general description with specific reference to what will be accomplished with city funds. Describe how your project/event will attract and promote tourism or help provide services and facilities that are needed to attract and provide for tourists, civic and cultural activities. (Attach additional sheet, if necessary)

4. Project Period: Begin _____ End _____
(must be within the funding year July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015)

5. One important factor in allocating these funds is that there should be more hotel/motel activity in West Columbia due to the funding provided.

For events projects:

a. which hotels in the City of West Columbia have you contacted to arrange rooms for your overnight visitors? ____ American Inn (1617 Chas. Hwy) ____ Americas Inn & Suites (McSwain Dr) ____ Holiday Inn & Suites (McSwain Dr) ____ Quality Inn (2516 Augusta Rd) ____ West Columbia Extended Stay (McSwain Dr) Total rooms booked _____

b. Total number of visitors expected to attend your event _____.

c. What percentage of visitors outside the West Columbia community (50 miles or more) will be attending your event? _____

6. List the method(s) to be used to track tourist:

____ Web page inquiries – estimated inquiries per month _____
____ Brochure mailings – estimated brochures mailed per month _____
____ Event ticket sales – estimated tickets sold per event _____
____ Event registration – estimated registrants per event _____
____ Hotel room sales – estimated # of rooms per event/per month
____ Phone call inquiries – estimated phone calls per month _____
____ Surveys – estimated percent of "tourist" responses per survey _____
____ License plates – estimated count per event _____

7. Do/will you advertise outside a 50-mile radius? _____Yes _____No

a. **If yes**, please check all that apply to advertising sources outside a 50-mile radius:

___Rack cards - # distributed _____
___Brochures - # distributed _____
___Posters - # distributed _____
___Magazine Ads - # ads _____ (list ads & distribution range on separate sheet)
___Newspaper Ads - # ads _____ (list newspapers & distribution on separate sheet)
___Televisions Ads - # ads _____ (list stations & viewing range on separate sheet)
___Radio Ads - # ads _____ (list stations & listening range on separate sheet)
___Billboards - # ads _____ (list number & locations on separate sheet)
___Websites - # web pages other than primary website: _____ (list on separate sheet the target audience)
___Other (list on separate sheet along with target audience

b. If no, is there any other group/agency who will be responsible for advertising? If so, who? _____

8. Estimated Cost of Project $_____

9. Total Accommodations Tax Funds Requested from West Columbia for FY2014-2015: $_____, which represents _____% of the total project/event budget. Please include this amount when listing proposed sources of income on budget page. (Unless otherwise approved, funds must be spent within the funding year: July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015.)

10. Has your project/event or organization previously received Accommodations Tax Funds in the last 3 years? ___Yes ___No

a. If yes,

FY 2013-2014: $_____; source: _____; purpose: _____

FY 2012-2013: $_____; source: _____; purpose: _____

FY 2011-2012: $_____; source: _____; purpose: _____

b. For each award year, did you expend 100% of the Accommodations Tax Funds you received?
___Yes ___No

c. If no, please explain: _____

Organization /Event _____

Provide the best description possible for the type and source of revenue(s) (example: A-Tax grant /Lexington County – Committed - $10,000). Identify all contributing sponsors by name, agency, etc.
Please include the amount being requested from West Columbia A-Tax in your budget.

Type of Revenue /Source	**Received / Committed**	Amount for **FY 2014-2015**
TOTAL *		

***NOTE: This amount should equal the amount of expenses on following page.**

Organization/Event: _____

List all expenses associated with this event.

Type of Expenditure	FY-2014-2015
TOTAL*	

***NOTE: This amount should equal the amount of revenues on previous page.**

I certify that the above information, along with any attachments, represents a true and accurate description of the project/event for which we are applying for funds through the West Columbia Accommodations Tax Program.

I also certify that I have read and understand the West Columbia Accommodations Tax Overview and Guidelines.

_____ _____

Signature of Project Manager/Director Date

PLEASE FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS BELOW:

Order of Application Package:

1. Cover letter to include brief history of organization.
2. Copy of IRS 501 (C) certification letter (for private non-profit organizations)
3. Copy of a current South Carolina Secretary of State Charity registration letter (for private non-Profit organizations)
4. Completed West Columbia Accommodations Tax Application (including revenues/expenses)
5. Additional Information to questions (placed in order of questions)

Submit one (1) original, completed application package and ten (10) copies (unbound - binder-clips acceptable) to:

City of West Columbia
ATTN: Donna M. Smith
City Hall
200 N. 12th Street
West Columbia, SC 29169

DEADLINE IS 5 p.m. on APRIL 22, 2014

****All applications must be typed****

*****No e-mail copies will be accepted*****

NOTE: Please call Donna Smith at 939-8614 if you have any questions regarding the application, project eligibility or the grant process *prior* to submission of your application.