**Scotland County**

**Tourism Development Authority**

**Purpose**

The Scotland County Tourism Development Authority (TDA) was established through state session law. 100% of our funding is generated by a 6% hospitality tax applied to hotel stays in our community. These dollars are then appropriated at the discretion of the TDA Board to help **attract and engage travelers so they visit Laurinburg and Scotland County, stay in our hotels, and contribute to our collective economic growth and well-being.**

**OBJECTIVE/MISSION**

The objective of the Scotland County Tourism Development Authority (TDA) is to partner with organizations to develop tourism in Laurinburg and Scotland County with specific emphasis on supporting the TDA’s efforts to increase visitation, travel-related expenditures, and, of most importance, overnight hotel stays in Laurinburg and Scotland County.

**OVERVIEW**

The TDA is comprised of a seven-person volunteer board appointed by the Scotland County Board of Commissioners. Of the seven member board, two members must be owners or operators of hotels, motels, or other taxable accommodations in the county. Ideally, board members will not currently, or historically be allied with a specific event so as to avoid a conflict of interest (real or perceived). Each appointment is for a period of three years. The appointments are staggard with only a partial segment of the board being appointed each year. TDA board members may be reappointed for multiple terms.

Preferred activities to be funded by the board include aggressive outreach marketing programs designed to attract ***new visitors*** from outside the local region and enhance the long-term growth of the travel industry in Laurinburg and Scotland County. The TDA director has discretion in the application of these funds up to a level of $500. New opportunities above this amount must have board approval.

A primary partnership effort of the TDA is to review and reward “Tourism Grants” for events and programs that promote travel to Scotland County.” The exact amount of the “tourism” award will depend upon TDA budgetary considerations and the project’s ability to meet established guidelines, with emphasis and value placed upon the project’s ability to ***generate hotel/motel room nights***.

Priority will be given to organizations bringing ***new*** events to Laurinburg or Scotland County and/or **enhancing or expanding existing events**. The intent of the TDA is not to provide “year-over-year” funding of an event or organization, but to provide starter money that helps provide stability and growth of the tourism opportunity.

In addition to the core tourism grant opportunities, the TDA appreciates there are events that, while valuable in bringing visitors from outside the county, do not necessarily generate a significant level of overnight hotel stays. For those events that may expect to bring in hundreds of visitors from outside the county, and show promise, and take effort to turn visitors into overnight hotel stays, the TDA will consider providing “seed money” for marketing support.

If awarded, these seed grants will range from $500 to $1,500. The exact amount granted will be determined by the TDA board, based on several factors, including the expected number of outside visitors, the potential for event growth, and the broader impact on tourism. These grants are intended to support events that have the capacity to grow and ultimately generate hotel room bookings. Ongoing support for events that fail to demonstrate growth or a positive impact on the hotel industry may be reconsidered by the board if future funding requests are made. Organizations are encouraged to prioritize their events, as the TDA prefers to support a diverse range of organizations rather than funding multiple events from a single organization. Please note: Seed funds are designated for marketing purposes only and cannot be used to directly fund the event itself or support the organization.

All grants provided should be viewed as “one-time” grants and are not automatically renewed. New grant requests must take place each year.

For all approved grants, funding ***must be used for marketing*** and programs that are specifically designed to build visitation. All materials must include the use of the TDA logo and Web site and, as able, text that further “sells” Scotland County and our hotels. Variations of the TDA logo and materials are not permitted without the prior written consent of the TDA.

The TDA reserves the right to provide marketing counsel and has final approval for all materials and marketing programs funded by TDA grants. Additionally, the TDA reserves the right **to have its executive director oversee and manage the planning, billing, and payment** of all media, printing and marketing expenses incurred using TDA grant dollars.

A second, lesser consideration of the TDA is to provide capital funds that would be used to enhance a specific tourist site or event within Scotland County. Funds dedicated to capital improvements must be used to ***make a site or event more “tourist-friendly.”***

Marketing and/or Capital Funds shall not be granted, **nor *may they be used for normal and routine operating and administrative expenses*** normally paid by grantee. Routine expenses include, but are not limited to, costs such as utilities, rent, vehicles, telephone, shipping, salaries/wages, and fringe benefits. It is also not the intent of the TDA for grants to be used to make-up any budget shortfalls being experienced by potential partners.

An additional focus of the TDA is to promote tourism in Scotland County on the LED Boards. the TDA has purchased and installed an LED board on Highway 74 in Laurel Hill, a second board on Highway 74 east of town on property leased from Service Thread, and are in the process of purchasing and installing a third board on Aberdeen Road north of Laurinburg. These boards are 100% owned and operated by the TDA.

***GUIDELINES FOR GRANTS:***

Any organization or agency which promotes travel and tourism-related events and activities that will take place in Laurinburg or Scotland County, is eligible to make applications for grant funding according to the following specifications.

1. Projects should be designed to ***increase*** visitation for the organization or event, and, in turn, occupancy of Laurinburg or Scotland County hotels, motels, and facilities.

2. Approval of the grant includes the use of the TDA logo and Web site, which must be included on promotional and/or supplemental materials.

3. Funding will be provided only for projects that promote out-of-county visitors, and have more than a local impact.

4. Projects must be open to, and directed towards the general public.

5. Projects and applicants must be non-political and secular in nature.

6. Projects submitted by organizations bringing events to Laurinburg or Scotland County will be given priority. Projects that bring events to the larger region, but provide hotel/motel opportunities to Laurinburg and/or Scotland County will also be considered. All projects must be designed to stimulate economic activity for Laurinburg or Scotland County and attract revenue. Furthermore, grant funding will be contingent/based on the project's ability to generate hotel motel room nights - as that is the basis for the TDA’s fund source.

7. Priority will be given to organizations bringing ***new*** events to Laurinburg or Scotland County or **enhancing or expanding existing events**.

8. Funds shall not be granted for normal and routine operating and administrative expenses normally paid by grantee. Routine expenses include, but are not limited to, costs such as utilities, telephone, shipping, salaries/wages, and fringe benefits.

9. In making decisions on grant applications the TDA will consider such factors as the type and scope of the applying organization/agency, the effect and impact of proposed project on travel and tourism, the timetable in which the project will be completed, the dollar amount requested, the number of applications received, the project’s ability and intent to attract visitors to Laurinburg or Scotland County on a continuing basis, and the overall merit of the project.

10**.** The TDA shall review all applications and recommend awards. The TDA reserves the right to authorize a grants committee to review applications and recommend awards, for action by the full TDA board.

11. The TDA board shall vote and have sole authority in granting and disbursing funds.

12. Once the awards are approved, the funds will be disbursed following the accepted accounting practices of the Scotland County Finance Department.

13. Should the project exceed the estimated expense, no more than the granted amount will be paid out. Grant applicant is responsible for refunding excess unused funds.

14. A grant may be awarded for less than the amount requested, depending on the number of applications received and other factors in the discretion of the TDA.

15. Applications are for the current fiscal year and project only and reapplication must be made for future projects.

16. Funding will only be awarded for a specific project or event once. Future applications must be submitted for a different project or event.

***APPLICATION SCHEDULE***

1. **Application deadline for “Tourism Grants” is 90 days prior to project implementation.** Applications received after this deadline **will not** be considered, except upon a specific approval of the TDA.
2. Those groups submitting a “Tourism Grant” are requested to present their request at a monthly TDA meeting. The TDA generally meets on the third Wednesday of the month.
3. **Applications for “Seed Grants” are reviewed quarterly: July, October, January, April.** Applications received outside of these sessions **will not** be considered, except upon a specific approval of the TDA. Those groups submitting a “Seed Grant” are requested to present their request at these quarterly meeting (again, the third Wednesday of these months).

3. After an application is received and processed, the TDA Grants Committee may meet and their recommendations will be presented at the next regularly scheduled TDA board meeting. Applicants will be notified soon after the meeting of the approval or denial of their requests.

4. Recipients of grant funding must submit to the TDA an Interim Report no later than 30 days prior to the subject event, said Interim Report to include, without limitation, copies of all invoices paid with grant funds, and a complete accounting of all grant funds received and disbursed as of the Report date.

5. Recipients of grant funding must submit a record of Project Accountability within 60 days from project completion for the purpose of review of compliance with grant terms. If at any time projects are not being performed within the scope of the approved applications and terms of this program the subject grant will be cancelled and NO future funds will be issued by the TDA. Grant funds that are not properly applied are subject to repayment.

6. Upon project completion, a review should be held with the TDA director to review the project. Further documentation may be requested including: 1) Project Accountability Report (see attached), 2) copies of paid invoices and 3) hotel room night documentation.

7. The TDA also suggests a post-event marketing meeting be held to discuss ways of improving the event and expanding the tourism opportunity.

8. A recipient who has failed to complete a previous grant satisfactorily will not be eligible for a subsequent grant until the previous grant has concluded satisfactorily.

**APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

1. Complete and send in the enclosed tourism marketing grant application. All information must be complete.

2. Type or print application clearly. Additional pages may be attached, but are not necessary.

3. Mail applications to:

Scotland County Tourism Development Authority

507 W. Covington Street

Laurinburg, NC  25353

If possible, please also submit a copy of the application electronically to: chughes@hmgresults.com

4. Final proofs and/or changes to grant projects must be approved by the TDA prior to project implementation as part of the process. Proofs and/or changes not approved may become ineligible for grant payment.

5. Hotel documentation confirming number of room nights brought to Laurinburg or Scotland County specifically from the project funded under this program may be requested. This should be in a memo or letter directly from the hotels to the grantee.

6. Projects must be complete and the TDA must receive invoices by 60 days from project completion.

7. Grant applicant is responsible for refunding excess funds. Should the project exceed the estimated and/or requested expense, no more than the granted amount will be paid out.

***ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES***

In addition to the responsibilities stated above, it is the complete responsibility of the grant recipient to:

1. Submit a final proof to the TDA for approval before going to print with any printed material.

2. Provide the TDA with an original copy of the invoices for the project and all related paperwork, including accountability form and hotel room nights documentation.

This policy is effective January 1, 2025