



**2025-2026**

**PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITY FUNDING  
GUIDELINES AND GRANT APPLICATION**

Hardee County Tourist Development Council

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# **TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX OVERVIEW**

## **OBJECTIVE**

The Hardee County Tourist Development Council endeavors to support organizations in their effort to develop and promote a local event by making available special grant funding, provided that the organization has met the requirements of the application and successfully completes the reimbursement process.

## **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

The Florida State Legislature enacted the Local Option Tourist Development Act Section 125.0104, Florida Statutes in response to the growing need of Florida counties to provide additional revenue sources for tourist development in an *effort* to stimulate the local economy. In response to this need, the voters of Hardee County approved in 2016, a two (2%) percent tourist development tax ("TDT") on rental accommodations of six (6) months or less. A Tourist Development Council ("TDC") was also created as an advisory Council to the Hardee County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) in planning ways to use the revenue received through the tourist development tax, based on statutory guidelines. The TDC is 100% funded by the TDT which paid by the tourists to Hardee County visitors, it is not collected from local residents unless they are staying in local lodging.

## **REVENUES**

Tourist Development Tax revenues are generated by overnight guests staying in Hardee County RV parks/campgrounds, hotels, motels and condominiums. As a rule, any short-term lodging of six months or less is subject to the two percent tax in addition to Hardee County's sales tax. Collections are received through the Florida Department of Revenue and returned to the County on a monthly basis for the County's use. Hardee County places this revenue in a special fund. Florida law outlines the proper use of these tax funds.

## **AUTHORIZED USES OF REVENUE**

All tax revenues received by the TDC pursuant to Florida Statute 125.0104(5)(a) shall be used for the following purposes only:

1. To acquire, construct, extend, enlarge, remodel, repair, improve, maintain, operate, or promote one or more:
  - a. Publicly owned and operated convention centers, sports stadiums, sports arenas, coliseums, or auditoriums within the boundaries of the county or subcounty special taxing district in which the tax is levied;
  - b. Auditoriums that are publicly owned but are operated by organizations that are exempt from federal taxation pursuant to 26 U.S.C. s. 501(c)(3) and open to the public, within the boundaries of the county or subcounty special taxing district in which the tax is levied; or
  - c. Aquariums or museums that are publicly owned and operated or owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public, within the boundaries of the county or subcounty special taxing district in which the tax is levied;
2. To promote zoological parks that are publicly owned and operated or owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public;
3. To promote and advertise tourism in this state and nationally and internationally; however, if tax revenues are expended for an activity, service, venue, or event, the activity, service, venue, or event must have as one of its main purposes the attraction of tourists as evidenced by the promotion of the activity, service, venue, or event to tourists;

4. To fund convention bureaus, tourist bureaus, tourist information centers, and news bureaus as county agencies or by contract with the chambers of commerce or similar associations in the county, which may include any indirect administrative costs for services performed by the county on behalf of the promotion agency;
5. To finance beach park facilities, or beach, channel, estuary, or lagoon improvement, maintenance, renourishment, restoration, and erosion control, including construction of beach groins and shoreline protection, enhancement, cleanup, or restoration of inland lakes and rivers to which there is public access as those uses relate to the physical preservation of the beach, shoreline, channel, estuary, lagoon, or inland lake or river. However, any funds identified by a county as the local matching source for beach renourishment, restoration, or erosion control projects included in the long-range budget plan of the state's Beach Management Plan, pursuant to s. 161.091, or funds contractually obligated by a county in the financial plan for a federally authorized shore protection project may not be used or loaned for any other purpose. In counties of fewer than 100,000 population, up to 10 percent of the revenues from the tourist development tax may be used for beach park facilities;
6. To acquire, construct, extend, enlarge, remodel, repair, improve, maintain, operate, or finance public facilities within the boundaries of the county or subcounty special taxing district in which the tax is levied, if the public facilities are needed to increase tourist-related business activities in the county or subcounty special district and are recommended by the county tourist development council created pursuant to paragraph (4)(e). Tax revenues may be used for any related land acquisition, land improvement, design and engineering costs, and all other professional and related costs required to bring the public facilities into service. As used in this subparagraph, the term "public facilities" means major capital improvements that have a life expectancy of 5 or more years, including, but not limited to, transportation, sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water, and pedestrian facilities. Tax revenues may be used for these purposes only if the following conditions are satisfied:
  - a. In the county fiscal year immediately preceding the fiscal year in which the tax revenues were initially used for such purposes, at least \$10 million in tourist development tax revenue was received or the county is a fiscally constrained county, as described in s. 218.67(1), located adjacent to the Gulf of America or the Atlantic Ocean;
  - b. The county governing board approves the use for the proposed public facilities by a vote of at least two-thirds of its membership;
  - c. No more than 70 percent of the cost of the proposed public facilities will be paid for with tourist development tax revenues, and sources of funding for the remaining cost are identified and confirmed by the county governing board;
  - d. At least 40 percent of all tourist development tax revenues collected in the county are spent to promote and advertise tourism as provided by this subsection; and
  - e. An independent professional analysis, performed at the expense of the county tourist development council, demonstrates the positive impact of the infrastructure project on tourist-related businesses in the county; or
7. To employ, train, equip, insure, or otherwise fund the provision of lifeguards certified by the American Red Cross, the

Y.M.C.A., or an equivalent nationally recognized aquatic training program, for beaches on the Gulf of America or the Atlantic Ocean.

Subparagraphs 1. and 2. may be implemented through service contracts and leases with lessees that have sufficient expertise or financial capability to operate such facilities.

Florida Statute 125.0104(5)(b) Also provides that tax revenues received by a county of less than 950,000 population imposing a tourist development tax may only be used by that county for the following purposes in addition to those purposes allowed pursuant to paragraph (a): to acquire, construct, extend, enlarge, remodel, repair, improve, maintain, operate, or

promote one or more zoological parks, fishing piers or nature centers which are publicly owned and operated or owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public. All population figures relating to this subsection shall be based on the most recent population estimates prepared pursuant to the provisions of s. 186.901. These population estimates shall be those in effect on July 1 of each year.

## **COMMON TERMS**

ACCOMMODATIONS - Hotel, Motel, Bed and Breakfast, Campground, Resort, Vacation Rental, etc.

ADVERTISING: The action of calling something to the attention of the public, especially by paid announcements.

BOCC – Hardee County Board of County Commissioners.

EVENT: A special event for which grant funds are being requested. This term may be used interchangeably with "project" in this document.

FISCAL CYCLE: The funding cycle is October 1 through September 30.

TDC: Hardee County Tourist Development Council

PROJECT: Tourism project for which grant funds are being requested. This term may be used interchangeably with "event" in this document.

PROMOTION: The furtherance of an event / project through advertising and publicity.

PUBLICITY: The dissemination of information or promotional material; paid advertising.

TOURIST: A person who participates in trade or recreation activities outside the county of his or her permanent residence or who rents or leases transient accommodations as described in Florida Statute 125.0104.

## **GRANT FUNDING GUIDELINES**

The TDC welcomes your organization and looks forward to events that promote our rural community! Promotional funding reimbursement through the TDC is specifically intended for events that increase tourism and visitors to Hardee County. Events that apply for this grant should have a majority of participants and/or spectators from out of Hardee County. Per State Statute TDC funds may be used to "promote and advertise tourism in the State of Florida and nationally and internationally; however, if tax revenues are expended for an activity, service, venue, or event, the activity, service, venue, or event shall have as one of its main purposes the attraction of tourists as evidenced by the promotion of the activity, service, venue, or event to tourists".

Funding eligibility expectations include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Events that have a history of and/or the potential to generate local accommodation reservations;
2. Multiple-day events which can include pre-events that guarantee overnight stays and/or a series of events located in Hardee County requiring accommodations.
3. Special consideration given to events that will generate regional, state, national, or international media attention and exposure for Hardee County.

Applications for grant funding are reviewed by the TDC Advisory Board for the economic benefits to the community and to ensure that the TDC is following state statute guidelines. Funding requests are reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis for the potential economic impact to Hardee County. Sliding-scale hosting fees may apply as determined by the TDC Board and/or Tourism Coordinator and Event Director.

### **ADVERTISING GUIDELINES**

Pre-press approval is required to assure the TDC logo is used in accordance with the current TDC brand requirements. (i.e. flyers, print ads, in-town signs, signs at the event, promotional items, etc.) Brand Guidelines are included in this packet and if you use any form of digital, radio or television advertising, please announce Hardee County as a host by referring to the Hardee Tourist Development Council. Additionally, your organization's event website must provide a link to the Hardee County website at: [www.hardeecountyfl.gov](http://www.hardeecountyfl.gov). Event sites not containing link to County's website will be deemed as not meeting all requirements and will not be eligible for reimbursement. You will need to provide web links, copies of print or digital advertisement, proof of radio or television advertising and any other information reflecting ways that your organization promoted the event in Hardee County. Pictures of promotional items are sufficient.

### **FINANCIAL GUIDELINES**

Grant funds must be expended only on items allowed under Florida Statute Section 125.0104. Any payment made that is later determined not to be an authorized expenditure shall be due and returned to the TDC. Reimbursable advertising must include advertising or promotional information that is distributed/broadcasted out of Hardee County for at least one overnight stay. Maximum allowable reimbursement is up to \$2,000.00 per event which is the maximum allowable allocation per event under this grant. The final amount approved will be determined by the TDC. It is important to note that all funding is based on availability of funds as determined by the approved budget for the TDC by the Board of County Commissioners. The TDC is funded on a fiscal cycle beginning October 1 and ending on September 30. Reimbursement of advertising funding must be applied for by the event organization. Grant funds will be dispersed only after the application has been fully executed. Failure to do so will serve as a withdrawal from the funding process. Award notifications will be made to the organization via the email address provided in the application. Any exceptions to the TDC language must be submitted with the application. The TDC is under no obligation to honor request for exceptions and may reject a grant application and not provide funding if the exception is not, in the sole opinion of the County, in its best interests.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS AND EVALUATION**

The TDC will review each application for funding once each year for inclusion in the Council's fiscal year budget.

\*Please note that most budget allocations are determined during the Summer with final approval before October 1<sup>st</sup>, the beginning of the Fiscal Year. An application must be submitted for each event every year, regardless of whether they have worked with TDC in the past. Applications must be complete or will not be considered for funding.

Applications may be emailed to Hardee County TDC at [bcc@hardeecounty.net](mailto:bcc@hardeecounty.net) or submitted via hand delivery or U.S. Mail to [412 W Orange St Suite 103, Wauchula, FL 33873](mailto:412 W Orange St Suite 103, Wauchula, FL 33873).

Please include as much information as possible regarding your event for consideration by the TDC Advisory Board as presentations by applicants will not be scheduled. The TDC typically meets quarterly. Meeting dates are advertised in advance at [www.hardeecountyfl.gov](http://www.hardeecountyfl.gov).

Any applications and new events submitted after the fiscal year will be considered only on a case by case basis and dependent upon budgetary allocations and scheduling availability. Any out-of-cycle funding application must be submitted at least 60 days prior to an event to allow for proper advertising and promotion. For all information on funding availability please contact the TDC Tourism Coordinator.

Factors used in the evaluation process include but not limited to:

1. Number of estimated overnight stays.
2. Number of out-of-county participants.
3. Number of events held throughout the year in Hardee County.
4. Events that generate Regional, State, National or International media exposure for Hardee County.
5. Events that show a commitment to the expansion of tourism in Hardee County.
6. Events that emphasize a substantial tourism, artistic, cultural, or other significance, giving prominence to creativity and excellence.
7. Events that without such assistance would not otherwise be possible.
8. Positive economic Impact to the community.

## **USE OF GRANT FUNDS**

### **ELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS**

Only out of county advertisement and promotions will be eligible for reimbursement. Eligible out of county advertisement or promotions include:

1. Pre-Event Marketing
2. Digital Advertisements (online, websites, social media)
3. Print advertisements/brochures
4. Radio or Television Advertisements
5. Outdoor signage/billboards/banners
6. Promotional expenses related to the event such as pens, pencils, cups, t-shirts, flags, etc. that are giveaways (not merchandise for sale).
7. Plaques, trophies, medals, and similar celebratory items.
8. Costs related to an event, performance, or activity designed to entertain others and attract out of county visitors to the event.

### **INELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS**

1. Advertising or promotion within Hardee County.
2. Expenses incurred or obligated prior to approval of TDC funding or after funding period.

3. Annual operating expenditures of the organization.
4. Legal, medical, engineering, accounting, auditing, or other professional consultant services.
5. Salaries of event staff or supplements for salaries of existing staff.
6. Capital improvements, including but not limited to construction, renovation, restoration and installation or replacement of fixtures.
7. Tangible personal property, including but not limited to office furnishings, equipment, permanent collections or individual pieces of art.
8. Interest or reduction of deficits or loans.
9. Events which are restricted to private or exclusive participation.
10. Private entertainment, food or beverages.
11. Payments or reimbursement for goods or services purchased for previous or other events.
12. Prize money and/or scholarships.
13. Any expenditures inconsistent with Florida Statutes and/or TDC objectives/guidelines.

## **AWARD NOTIFICATION PROCESS**

After the TDC Advisory Board review, a form will be sent to all applicants providing notification of any funding award received, award with adjustment or notification of non-reward with comments. Events receiving funding shall designate a representative of the event/organization that will be handling the reimbursement process ("Funding Manager"). The Funding Manager shall be responsible for maintaining a file with the original reimbursement application, all reimbursement correspondence, the funding request for reimbursement, all advertising invoices and samples of promotional and advertising materials used. The Funding Manager will be responsible for ensuring that all of the elements of the funding application are followed, requests for funds are accurate and appropriate proof is included. It is the Funding Manager's responsibility to see that any applicable Federal, State or County laws and policies are followed.

If awarded funding the Funding Manager will be required to sign an "Acceptance of Funding" form which must be returned to the TDC. This form assures that the authorized representative understands the terms and guidelines included in this packet as well as requirements of the TDC. The completed form must be received by the TDC prior to the first day of the event.

There are no guarantees that all applicants will be awarded funding. Even though an event may qualify, limited funds may not allow all projects to receive assistance. All decisions regarding the award of grant funds are at the sole discretion of the Hardee County Board of County Commissioners, following recommendations of the Hardee County TDC.



## **PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITY GRANT APPLICATION**

Name Of Applicant/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Street/P.O. Box: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Representative: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_

(Must Provide A Daytime Contact Number.)

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Event: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of Event: \_\_\_\_\_

Description Of Event: (Attach Additional Page(s) If needed) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL REIMBURSEMENT REQUESTED: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## **Process:**

The payment process for each event/tournament will only be considered following the successful completion of the event or tournament in Hardee County. You must provide a W-9 to be registered with Hardee County as a vendor to receive payment. \* Payment address must be the same as address on W-9. Invoices should not be submitted for payment until the event is complete. Invoice(s) must be submitted to the TDC office no later than 60 days following the event. Reminder notices will **not** be sent by the TDC office. The following documentation must accompany any invoice submitted for payment consideration and must include the TDC logo or mention Hardee County Tourism or Hardee County TDC:

1. Copies of all products(s) developed or produced, such as brochures or flyers and promotional items  
Copy of advertising (out of county) such as tear sheet or screen shot.
2. Pictures of sponsor mentions such as banners or logo placement on website and/or social media.
3. Post Economic Impact form (supplied by TDC office) or independent surveys (must include# of out of county participants and visitors as well as overnight stays in county) \*Please note that majority of participants must be from out of county.

Vendors awarded funding should take into consideration that payments from Hardee County TDC will be made in accordance with Florida Statute § 218.74 which stipulates that payment may take up to 45 days for processing upon receipt. Please refer to the official TDC funding guidelines for all application information.

## **Records:**

Public Record: All materials submitted with applications will be a matter of public record open to inspection by any citizen of the State of Florida. Subject to Chapter 119 Florida Statutes.

Audits and Records: The Organization awarded funds shall maintain such records and accounts, including property, personnel, and financial records, as are deemed necessary by the County to ensure a proper accounting of all TDC funds. The aforesaid records will be made available for audit or inspection purposes at any time during normal business.

## **ECONOMIC IMPACT INFORMATION**

(COMPLETE THE BOX BELOW WHICH IS APPLICABLE TO YOUR EVENT)

**NEW EVENT TO HARDEE COUNTY:**

Estimated Number of Participants (Vendors): \_\_\_\_\_ Estimated Number of Attendees (Spectators): \_\_\_\_\_

Is the event taking place at least 60 days from the submission of this application? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

Has this event previously taken place in another community? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

If yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_

Room Nights Projected: # of Nights \_\_\_\_ x # of Rooms \_\_\_\_ = Total Room Night: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you secured a fixed Hotel Rate for participants & visitors this event? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

If yes, what is that rate? \_\_\_\_\_

List all hotels that you feel participants & spectators will utilize for this event:

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**REPEAT EVENT:**

Estimated Number of Participants (Vendors): \_\_\_\_\_ Estimated Number of Attendees (Spectators): \_\_\_\_\_

Is the event taking place at least 60 days from the submission of this application? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

Has this event previously taken place in another community? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

If yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_

Room Nights Projected: # of Nights \_\_\_\_ x # of Rooms \_\_\_\_ = Total Room Night: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you secured a fixed Hotel Rate for participants & visitors this event? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

If yes, what is that rate? \_\_\_\_\_

List all hotels that you feel participants & spectators will utilize for this event:

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**PAST EVENT:**

Number of Participants (Vendors): \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Attendees (Spectators): \_\_\_\_\_

Room Nights: # of Nights \_\_\_\_ x # of Rooms \_\_\_\_ = Total Room Nights \_\_\_\_\_

Was there a secured fixed Hotel Rate for participants & visitors this event? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

If yes, what is that rate? \_\_\_\_\_

List all hotels that you feel participants & spectators will utilize for this event:

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**NEW TOURNAMENT TO HARDEE COUNTY (Athletic/ Fishing)**

Estimated Number of Participants: \_\_\_\_\_ Estimated Number of Attendees (Spectators): \_\_\_\_\_

Is the event at least 60 days from the submission of this application? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

Has this event previously taken place in another community? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No If yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_

Room Nights Projected: # of Nights \_\_\_ x # of Rooms \_\_\_ = Total Room Nights \_\_\_

Have you secured a fixed Hotel Rate for participants & visitors this event? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

If yes, what is that rate? \_\_\_\_\_

List all hotels that you feel participants & spectators will utilize for this event: (attached separate sheet if necessary)

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**REPEAT TOURNAMENT (Athletic/ Fishing)**

Estimated Number of Participants: \_\_\_\_\_ Estimated Number of Attendees (Spectators): \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Room Nights: # of Nights \_\_\_ x # of Rooms \_\_\_ = Total Room Nights \_\_\_

Have you secured a fixed Hotel Rate for participants & visitors this event? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

If yes, what is that rate? \_\_\_\_\_

List all hotels that you feel participants & spectators will utilize for this event: (attached separate sheet if necessary)

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**PAST TOURNAMENT EVENT**

PAST EVENT Number of Participants: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Attendees (Spectators): \_\_\_\_\_

Room Nights: # of Nights \_\_\_ x # of Rooms \_\_\_ = Total Room Nights \_\_\_

Was there a secured fixed Hotel Rate for participants & visitors this event? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

If yes, what was that rate? \_\_\_\_\_

List all hotels that you feel participants & spectators utilized for this event: (attached separate sheet if necessary)

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## **MARKETING SUMMARY\***

- 1) Describe how the event was evaluated for positive impact to Hardee County.  
(Attach additional pages if needed.)
  
- 2) What plans have been/were made for the marketing and promotion of the event?  
(Attach additional pages if needed.)
  
- 3) Provide details of brochure distribution, other print advertising (i.e., newspaper, magazine) and audio/video advertising. Note: Attach clippings or copies of newspaper, magazine, or professional periodicals showing coverage of event(s), which may be beneficial to the TDC's evaluation.  
(Attach additional pages if needed.)

*\*Reminder: Recognition of Hardee County Tourist Development Council must be included on all print, audio and video advertising which will be reimbursed by the Hardee County Tourist Development Council. See Hardee County TDC Brand Guidelines.*

## **CERTIFICATION**

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I AM THE RESPONSIBLE AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE FOR THIS EVENT/TOURNAMENT FOR THE ABOVE APPLICANT. I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE HARDEE COUNTY TDC SPECIAL EVENT POLICIES, ADVERTISING REQUIREMENTS, TDC BRAND REQUIREMENTS AND AGREE TO COMPLY WITH THESE POLICIES. THE FACTS STATED IN THIS APPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

### **For TDC Office Use Only**

Grant Amount Approved \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Date Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Acceptance sent: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated amount of TDT generated by this event: Total from rooms above \$ \_\_\_\_\_ X .02 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**\*ATTACH APPLICANT'S W9**