

# ACCOMMODATIONS TAX APPLICATION WORKBOOK



Richland County Office of Budget and Grants Management

# IS THE A-TAX GRANT RIGHT FOR YOU?

## ORGANIZATION ELIGIBILITY

- ☐ Organization in existence at least one year before requesting funds.
- ☐ Proof of non-profit status from SC Secretary of State.
- ☐ Proof of non-profit status from IRS
- ☐ Board of Directors.
- ☐ County may not sponsor nor provide financial support to a religious organization in a manner that would actively involve it in a religious activity.
- ☐ Funds must be solely used for secular purposes and the principal/primary goal of the sponsored activity cannot promote the advancement of religion.
- ☐ Richland County will not award A-Tax funds to individuals, fraternal organizations, or groups that endorse/support political campaigns.

## ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES

A-Tax County funds are to be used for tourism related expenses only Per Title Six (6-4-5) of SC State Law.

- Advertising and promotion of tourism so as to develop and increase tourist attendance through the generation of publicity;
- Promotion of the arts and cultural events
- Construction, maintenance, and operation of facilities for civic and cultural activities including construction and maintenance of access and other nearby roads and utilities for the facilities
- The criminal justice system, law enforcement, fire protection, solid waste collection, and health facilities when required to serve tourists and tourist facilities. This is based on the estimated percentage of costs directly attributed to tourists
- Public facilities such as restrooms, dressing rooms, parks, and parking lots
- Tourist shuttle transportation
- Control and repair of waterfront erosion
- Operating visitor information centers

# CHOOSING YOUR PROJECT

## FUNDING PRIORITIES

The A-Tax Committee gives priority to projects that:

- Generate overnight stay in unincorporated Richland County's lodging facilities; and Promote and highlight unincorporated Richland County's historic and cultural venues, recreational facilities and events, and the uniqueness and flavor of the local community.
- Promote dining at restaurants, cafeterias, and other eating and drinking establishments where Richland County collects Accommodations Tax in unincorporated Richland County
- Projects that request funding for ineligible expenditures will not be awarded.

## DESCRIBE THE PROJECT AND ITS TOURISM MISSION

Projects with clear tourism goals and evidence of impact are prioritized by the A-tax Committee. Emphasis is placed on projects that generate more hotel stays in unincorporated areas.

Consider:

1. How does this project promote and highlight unincorporated Richland County's historic and cultural venues, recreational facilities and events?
2. What unique aspects of Richland County culture and environment can attract tourists?
3. What has worked in other locations that may work here?
4. How does your project or event promote tourism, the consumption of meals, and overnight stays in unincorporated Richland County?

## TAKE SOME NOTES HERE

# PROVING PROJECT BENEFITS

## DESCRIBE THE BENEFIT TO TOURISM

The A-Tax committee evaluates projects based on their estimated tourism impact. Your project should aim to have a measurable tourism impact that can be supported by evidence. This tourism impact should be measured in the form of visitors to Richland County, meals sold, and additional hotel stays generated. Estimates for these metrics are a required part of the A-tax grant application. These estimates can be achieved through comparison to similar tourism projects.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

**Objectives** - provide an **organized pathway** to meet your primary vision. They are operational and measurable. They **describe specific** things you will accomplish. This includes the qualitative or quantitative (amount of change or level of achievement).

**Goals** statements are usually a global statement of need or program/project to be solved by your project?

An **Objective** is what your project or program will accomplish.

### ***Sample Goal:***

*"Generic Location Tourism Alliance" seeks to promote local culture and bring tourists to the Lower Richland area.*

### ***And Related Objectives:***

We are developing planning to establish an annual *Generic Location Culture Fest*. The *Generic Tourism Alliance* has partnered with 5 local restaurants and a dance troupe to attract at least 100 tourists from surrounding counties.

### **Process and Outcome Objectives**

***Process Objectives***- typically begin with words like "To Develop" and "To Establish" and describe a process rather than an outcome.

***Outcome Objectives***- Outcome objects typically begin with words like "To increase" or "To reduce" and describes a measureable, expected outcome.

## KNOW YOUR OUTCOMES

Please consider the methods you will use to measure your tourism outcomes. The reporting process for the A-tax grant program includes providing the real numbers of tourists visiting Richland County as part of the event, the amount of meals the event caused to be sold, and the amount of hotel stays generated.

Also consider the impact your event will have on the community. How does the event highlight the uniqueness of Richland County? What groups benefit from this increased awareness? These outcomes can also be measured.

No matter what goals have been set, it is important to track success. Some suggestions for tracking these metrics are:

- **Sign in sheets:** These documents are easy and inexpensive to implement at most events. They also allow visitors to list their point of origin and other useful data.
- **Partnerships with local restaurants:** Local restaurants are better than anyone at tracking the meals sold to tourists visiting your event. A partnership helps you keep track of the impact of your event, assists a local business, and can even help the visitors through potential discounts.
- **Partnerships with hotels:** Hotels are happy to receive business from referrals and can assist in keeping track of tourists.

TAKE SOME NOTES HERE

# PLANNING YOUR PROJECT

## MAKING THE EVENT HAPPEN

Once tourism goals and an event are chosen and the focus then moves to the obstacles between your organization and making the event happen. Some details to consider are listed below:

- Where is the event happening?
- Does the project require permits?
- Who is the target audience?
- What organizations are available to partner with?
- What funding from other grant programs might be needed?

TAKE SOME NOTES HERE

## THE MARKETING PLAN

All tourism projects need a good marketing plan. This plan should take into account the following:

- **The Target Audience:** Different marketing options such as billboards, radio stations, TV ads, and online marketing options appeal to different demographics. Know who is most interested in your event and reach out to them.
- **Geographic Location:** The primary goal should be attracting tourists from outside of Richland County. The marketing plan should clearly demonstrate how these people are to be reached.
- **Reach Out:** Community involvement is an inexpensive way to increase attendance at an event.

TAKE SOME NOTES HERE

## THE BUDGET

An essential part of the application, the project budget shows how you intend to meet the goals outlined earlier. How does the organization plan to spend A-tax funding if awarded?

- **Consider Other Funding Sources:** The A-Tax grant committee is dedicated to assisting tourism projects in unincorporated Richland County. Unfortunately, the funding that can be distributed is limited. Other funding sources can allow your project's goals to be met even if the full amount requested is not awarded.
- **Consider Eligible Expenditures:** Budgets that request A-tax funding to pay for ineligible expenditures will not be approved by the A-tax committee.
- **Include All Funding Sources:** Other funding sources outside of the A-tax grant should be listed in the appropriate areas of your application.
- **Sort Expenditures by Category:** You are not required to have decided upon vendors at the time of the application. Instead provide dollar amounts of expected expenditure for each valid expense category.

### BUDGET WORKSHEET

Expenditure Category	A-Tax Request	Other Sources
Advertising/Marketing/Promotions		
Advertising/Marketing Related Salary		
Municipal Services/Security		
<b>Total</b>		

# STARTING THE APPLICATION

## REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Before we can start with our A-tax application, there are some required documents that will need to be gathered. These documents are required before the submission of your application.

- ☐ IRS Determination Letter Indicating 501 c(3) nonprofit charitable status
- ☐ Proof of **current** registration as a charity with the SC Secretary of State
- ☐ List of Organization's **current** Board of Directors
- ☐ Recent 990 tax form or 990 post card + financial statement
- ☐ Richland County **current** business license or business license assessment survey form
- ☐ Organization W-9

## GOING TO ZOOMGRANTS

With your document collection and planning complete you are now ready to complete the application!

The Richland County FY2025 Accommodations Tax Grant Program Opens on **December 4, 2023** and closes on **February 4, 2024**.

All Richland County grant programs can be found at <https://zoomgrants.com/gprop.asp?donorid=2236>

## CONTACTS

If there is anything we can do to help, please let us know! Please contact grants staff with any questions you may have.

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