



ALACHUA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING ADVANTAGE PROGRAM

CONFERENCE GRANT APPLICATION
APPLICATION APPROVED BY BOCC [12/13/2022-07/09/2024](#)

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

Purpose

In order to The Meeting Advantage Program supports and enhances 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.

Definition

For the purposes of this application, a conference is defined as a multi-day meeting, trade show, expo, or gathering of people with common interests regarding an organization, association, industry, profession, or club with a group of talks on a particular subject, or a meeting in which matters are formally discussed, with paid overnight lodging in Alachua County.

Use of Tourist Development Tax Revenue are set by the state under the Local Option Tourist Development Act, F.S. 125.0104. An eligible event is one that its main purpose for the attraction of tourists as evidenced by the promotion of the activity or event to tourists. A tourist is a person who participates in trade or recreation activities outside of the county of his or her residence, or who rents transient accommodations as provided in the Act.

Eligibility

Applicants must check the boxes below to signify fulfillment of the following eligibility requirements:

- Be a The applicant is a legally established entity. Individuals are not eligible.
- The hotel room block reservation is for at least 50 hotel room nights.
- The Conferences and paid conference lodging accommodations must be are within the boundaries of Alachua County.
- 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.
- The complete Meeting Advantage Program application packet must be submitted at least 2 months prior to the conference.

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Ineligible Events and Activities

- Political events
- Discriminatory acts or practices, including discrimination based on race; color; national origin; religion; sex; marital status; age; disability; sexual orientation; gender identify or expression.
- A program or event whose purpose is to promote the religion of the provider, be significantly sectarian in nature, involve religious indoctrination, require participation in religious ritual, or encourage the preference of a religion.

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Application Submission and Materials Due Date

Completed applications must be submitted with all requested information. It is the complete responsibility of the applicant to compile and package applications according to instructions. It is the sole and complete responsibility of the applicant to provide all required application documentation 2 months prior to the start date of the conference. Applications who fail to meet this requirement will not be funded.

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All Meeting Advantage applications must be reviewed by the Alachua County Tourism Development Council (TDC). The TDC considers applications and makes funding recommendations 6 times annually.

Credit Attribution Requirement

All grantees MUST include the Visit Gainesville, Alachua County, FL logo and "Funded in part by Visit Gainesville, Alachua County" on conference and promotional materials, including but not limited to printed brochures, flyers, programs, posters, postcards, website, and promotional emails.

Applicants that omit the logo and credit attribution on promotional materials will not be eligible to receive funding under this program.

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Financial Guidelines & Documentation

Conference Grants provide funds for 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 production of verified room nights, via a letter from lodging facilities. Copies of paid invoices, cancelled checks, 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.

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 conference and promotional materials, including but not limited to printed brochures, flyers, programs, posters, postcards, website, digital, radio, television, and billboards.

Funding Requests

The Conference Grant request amount is based on a 4:1 ratio of estimated tourist development tax dollars generated.

Example: To calculate the grant funding request amount. Complete the following:

$$\frac{340}{\text{Hotel room nights}} \times \frac{\$120}{\text{Average room rate}} = \frac{\$40,800}{\text{Lodging Revenue}} \times 5\% = \frac{\$2,040}{\text{Tourist Development Tax}} \times 4 = \frac{\$8,160}{\text{Grant Request Amount}}$$

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.

Grant request amounts may not exceed \$10,000.

Estimated Occupancy and Actual Occupancy

Final grant awards are based on verified room nights at the conclusion of the conference, at which time documentation from the hotel or lodging provider of verified room nights and rates must be provided. Verification is defined as an official document from the hotel or lodging property listing final rates and actual room nights. The final reimbursement request amount is calculated using the formula above and of verified room nights utilized for the 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.

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 production of verified room nights, via a letter from lodging facilities.

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Reimbursement documentation 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.

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

- Invoice to Visit Gainesville, Alachua County for final verified Meeting Advantage Program reimbursement amount.
- 1. Official documentation from the hotel or lodging property listing final rates and actual room nights letter(s) from lodging facilities verifying room nights and room rate.
- 2. Invoices for allowable expenditures with corresponding credit card receipts or cancelled checks.
- 3. Copies of Advertising, brochures, or other materials with appropriate Visit Gainesville, Alachua County logo and credit attribution credit.
- 4. 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.

EXAMPLES OF ALLOWABLE EXPENDITURES FOR GRANT AWARD REIMBURSEMENT

1. Rental fees for use of a facility for the conference.
2. Printing and / or postage.
3. Advertisements and promotion for the conference including television, radio, newspaper, magazines, billboards, digital.
4. Preparation of presentation materials, such as brochures, slides, etc.
5. Transportation within Alachua County while conference is being held, i.e., bus transportation to take participants to conference site, dining, local attractions, etc.
6. Catering, excluding alcohol.
7. Promotional items with the Visit Gainesville, Alachua County, FL logo.

NON-ALLOWABLE EXPENSES

This grant will not reimburse for the following non-allowable expenditures:

1. Payment of any bills of a personal nature, such as rent, mortgage, utilities, personal vehicles.
2. Real property, capital improvements, including but not limited to new construction, renovation, restoration, installation or replacement of fixtures, and tangible personal property.
3. Interest or reduction of deficits or loans, fines, penalties, or cost of litigation. 4. Member-only events, entertainment, food or beverages for private events;
5. Expenses incurred or obligated prior to or after funding period.
6. Making payments or reimbursements for goods or services purchased for previous or other events, invoices paid outside of contract period.
7. Advertising, printing, or other expenses that omit the Visit Gainesville, Alachua County, FL logo and recognition.
8. Benefits, projects, and fundraisers that benefit organizations other than the contracted applicant.
9. Benefits and projects planned primarily for fundraising purposes.
10. Prize money, scholarships, awards, plaques, certificates, or contributions.
11. Political events.
12. Alcohol
13. Sales and Tourist Development Tax
14. Hotel rooms for attendees
15. Payments of organizational staff.

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- ~~16. Discriminatory acts or practices, including discrimination based on race; color; national origin; religion; sex; marital status; age; disability; sexual orientation; gender identify or expression.~~
- ~~17. In accordance with applicable law, the funding provided by way of this program or agreement may not be used in aid of a program or event whose purpose is to promote the religion of the provider, be significantly sectarian in nature, involve religious indoctrination, require participation in religious ritual, or encourage the preference of a religion.~~
- ~~18. Any expenditure not authorized by Alachua County Code of Ordinances~~

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VISIT GAINESVILLE, ALACHUA COUNTY CONFERENCE GRANT APPLICATION

Organization Name: _____

Contact Name: _____

Board Chair or ~~President~~ Contact: _____

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Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email for Primary Contact: _____

Conference Name: _____

Conference Dates: _____

Conference Location: _____

Lodging Location: _____

Total Projected Number of Participants: _____ **Provide the previous year's conference information (if applicable):** _____

Local: _____ **Location:** _____

Out of Town: _____ **Total Room Nights:** _____

Complete the following to calculate the grant request amount:

If a room block has been secured, indicate: Number of blocked rooms: _____ Number of nights: _____

Average Room rate: _____ Calculate grant funding request amount. Complete the following:

$$\frac{\text{Hotel room nights} \times \text{Average room rate}}{\text{Lodging Revenue}} \times 5\% = \frac{\text{Tourist Development Tax}}{\text{Grant Request Amount}} \times 4 = \$$$

$$\text{Blocked Rooms} \times \text{Number of Nights} = \text{Total Room Nights} \times \$15.00 = \text{Grant Request Amount}$$

Completed applications will be reviewed by the Tourist Development Council who will decide as to the eligibility of the submittal and recommended funding award.

Final grant funding reimbursement amounts will be determined by actual rooms nights and rates at the conclusion of the conference and cannot exceed \$10,000.-

Applicants must attach the following documents to complete the Meeting Advantage Program application packet:

- A hotel room block reservation form of at least 50 hotel room nights.

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- Description of conference.
- Detailed event budget.
- Organization's W-9 tax form.
- A statement on letterhead that the applicant is a governmental entity or a copy of the Organization's Active Status from Sunbiz.org.

Please attach the following with completed application:

- ~~_____~~ Brief description of conference
- ~~_____~~ Detailed Budget
- ~~_____~~ Room Block Reservation Form (if available)

Please initial next to each item below, signifying that you have read and understand the conditions of the Meeting Advantage Program (Conference Grant).

~~_____~~ I attest that all information in the application is accurate and that the events and activities to be considered for funding are in compliance with the Alachua County Code of Ordinances and Meeting Advantage Program criteria.

~~_____~~ I attest that if awarded, the funding provided by way of this program or agreement will not be used in aid of a program or event whose purpose is to promote the religion of the provider, be significantly sectarian in nature, involve religious indoctrination, require participation in religious ritual, or encourage the preference of a religion.

~~_____~~ ~~I will include the Visit Gainesville, Alachua County logo and credit attribution understand that all on conference and promotional materials, including but not limited to printed brochures, flyers, programs, posters, postcards, website, digital, and promotional emails, printed and/or digital collateral and advertisements must include the Visit Gainesville, Alachua County, FL logo as one of the event sponsors and on any and all advertising/marketing materials, the event website (with link to VisitGainesville.com), programs, and any newsletters or email notifications promoting the event.~~

~~_____~~ I understand that the event will credit Visit Gainesville, Alachua County, FL at the level equal to the award amount. For example, if the award is \$10,000.00 and that is a gold level sponsor, Visit Gainesville Alachua County is to be listed as a gold sponsor.

~~_____~~ Tickets for the appropriate level sponsorship must be provided to Visit Gainesville, Alachua County, FL for promotional activities.

~~_____~~ I understand that all reporting requirements must be satisfied to receive reimbursement funding.

~~_____~~ I understand that the event must be ADA accessible.

~~_____~~ I understand that a statement on letterhead that the applicant is a governmental entity or a copy of the Organization's Active Status from Sunbiz.org must be attached to be eligible for funding.

~~_____~~ I certify that my conference event is within the boundaries of Alachua County.

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____ I acknowledge that this application and grant documents submitted to the Alachua County, become public records subject to the provisions of Chapter 199, F.S., Florida Public Records Law.

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____ I understand that I should complete and submit the Meeting Advantage Program application Sponsorship packet at least 2 months prior to the event date.

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Signature of Authorizing Official (~~Board Chair~~)
(Board Chair or President)

Signature of Primary Contact

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