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ALACHUA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

NATURE AND CULTURE DESTINATION ENHANCEMENT GRANT APPLICATION

Applications must be received no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, August ~~22~~³, 202~~5~~⁴
Late applications will not be considered.

For programs and activities occurring between October 1, 202~~4~~⁵ - September 30, 202~~5~~⁶.

Completed applications should be mailed or delivered by the deadline to:

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

First time applicants: Please review the complete program application and eligibility requirements. Single weekend events and events with attendance under 500 people may utilize the Special Event Sponsorship application. Contact Visit Gainesville, Alachua County staff by emailing info@visitgainesville.com for a NCDE Grant Meeting Request for a meeting prior to completing the application.

Nature and Culture Destination Enhancement Grant Application

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Purpose

In order to support and enhance Alachua County as a culturally interesting and vibrant destination, the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners has allocated a portion of the Tourist Development Tax revenue to aid in the operations and promotions of arts, cultural, and nature events that have, as one of their main purposes, the attraction of tourists as evidenced by the promotion of the event to tourists.

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.

The total estimated award amount for the Fiscal Year 2026⁵ Grant is \$1,4600,000.

Application Submission

Applications should be submitted with all requested information. Missing or re-worded questions constitute an incomplete application. Each applicant is responsible for full and complete compliance with all laws, rules and regulations which may be applicable. Applications should be bound/stapled on the left side. **One (1) Original be submitted.**

Applications should be placed in a sealed envelope and labeled on the outside:
"Nature and Culture Destination Enhancement Grant Program"

It is the complete responsibility of the applicant to compile and package its proposals according to instructions.

All applications must be received no later than Friday, August 22³, 2025⁴ at 5:00 p.m. to:

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

Inquiries/Questions

Questions regarding any portion of the application or application process must be made in writing via email to the VCB at info@visitgainesville.com. All questions must be submitted **no later than 10 calendar days before the proposal due date**. All questions will be answered and posted to the VisitGainesville.com website. It is essential that applicants check the website for Addenda.

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<https://www.visitgainesville.com/additional-resources/partner-resources/>~~<http://www.visitgainesville.com/partner-resources>~~

Please print the question and answers, sign and include with your application.

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Prohibited Communications

The funding process is not over until the final award decisions are made by the County Commission. To ensure fair consideration for all applicants, the County prohibits communication regarding this funding process, including the funding recommendations to or with any department, employee, elected official, or any other person involved in evaluation of or consideration of the applications, until the County Commission has formalized its funding decision. Communication includes both oral and written. The County's representative may initiate communication with an applicant in order to obtain information.

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.

Program Guidelines/Funding Levels

Applicants are able to request funds based on operating revenues reported in the organization's last filed 990. The funding levels are as follows, with two exceptions as noted below:

Annual budget over \$1,000,000 Maximum Request 10% of budget
Annual budget up to \$ 999,999 Maximum Request 15% of budget
Annual budget up to \$ 499,999 Maximum Request 20% of budget
Annual budget up to \$ 199,999 Maximum Request 25% of budget
Annual budget up to \$ 100,000 Maximum Request 30% of budget

1. The maximum request amount for an Educational Agency is \$75,000.00 regardless of the number of program applications submitted. Educational Agencies that submit multiple applications are subject to the total award amount of \$75,000.00.
2. For applicants whose primary organizational purpose or mission is not to attract audience members, a separate event statement with direct expenses and revenues for the program is required. Funding request amounts will be based on that figure rather than the organizational budget.

A minimum of 25% of awarded funds must be spent on out-of-county marketing. Out-of-county marketing is defined as paid advertising, paid marketing, and paid promotions that reach, and are directly targeted to tourists, defined as persons and groups who reside outside the boundaries of Alachua County. To qualify for reimbursement, the paid advertising and paid marketing must reach at least 51% of the listeners/readers/viewers outside Alachua County. Applicants must be able to provide as evidenced by placement reports, audience demographics, distribution data, or other third-party verification provided by the media outlet or platform upon request.

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Eligibility

Applicants must fulfill the following at the time of application.

1. Be a legally established arts, nature or culture organization.
2. The operations, events and activities must be within the boundaries of Alachua County.
3. The proposed event has as one of its main purposes the attraction of tourists as evidenced by the promotion of the event to ~~tourists~~tourists, individuals who reside outside of Alachua County and can reasonably attend the event.
4. Have documented IRS non-profit, tax-exempt status. A copy of Active Status from Sunbiz.org must be attached to the application.
5. Institutions of higher education are eligible to apply for arts, nature or culture programs and events, within the request limit.
6. Applications will not be accepted from organizations who have applied for Tourist Development funding through the Gainesville Sports Commission, Sponsorships, Local Sports Destination Enhancement Grants and Conference Grants in the same year.
7. Applications will not be accepted for organizations to re-grant or provide funding to individuals or other organizations.
8. Government entities are not eligible to apply for Nature and Culture Destination Enhancement grants.

Credit Attribution Requirements

All grantees must include the current year-Visit Gainesville, Alachua County, FL logo and the following statement, "Funded in part by Visit Gainesville, Alachua County" on all organizational and promotional materials, including but not limited to print brochures, flyers, programs, posters, postcards, website, digital, radio, television, billboards, and promotional items.

Allowable Marketing and Promotion Expenditures

Out-of-county marketing must reach 51% outside Alachua County, including but not limited to: digital, social, print, radio, television, billboards, and printed materials distributed to over 51% out-of-county addresses.

Social Media Promotion Guideline

Guidelines for expenditures on social media. Please include screenshots of the promotions as backup with invoices. Facebook / Twitter / Instagram / YouTube / Other social media outlets: Tag post with "Funded in part by Visit Gainesville, Alachua County, FL" (Text and/or Logo) and use hashtags #WhyILoveGNV or #WhatsGoodAlachuaCounty

Non-Allowable Expenditures and Activities

This grant will not reimburse for the following disallowable expenditures:

1. Salaries, benefits, travel, or expenses of personnel not directly related to the creation of the programs, events or attractions that are open to the public;
2. Payment of any bills of a personal nature, such as rent, mortgage, utilities, personal vehicles;
3. Real property; capital improvements, including but not limited to new construction, renovation, restoration, installation or replacement of fixtures, and tangible personal property;
4. Interest or reduction of deficits or loans, fines, penalties, or cost of litigation;
5. Expenses incurred or obligated prior to or after funding period;

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6. Member-only events, entertainment, food or beverages for private events;
7. Events which are restricted to private or exclusive participation, including camps;
8. Making payments or reimbursements for goods or services purchased for previous or other events, invoices paid outside of contract period;
9. Advertising, printing or other expenses that omit the Visit Gainesville, Alachua County, FL logo and/or recognition.
10. Benefits, projects, and fundraisers that benefit organizations other than the contracted applicant;
- ~~11.~~ Benefits, galas, dinners, and projects planned primarily for fundraising purposes,
- ~~11-12.~~ Walks, runs, 5K races, or similar athletic events, that are primarily fundraising activities or that do not demonstrate a significant tourism impact as defined by the grant criteria.
- ~~12-13.~~ Prize money, scholarships, awards, plaques, trophies, certificates, or contributions;
- ~~13-14.~~ Political events or activities.
- ~~14-15.~~ Alcohol;
- ~~15-16.~~ Discriminatory acts or practices, including discrimination based on race; color; national origin; religion; sex; marital status; age; disability; sexual orientation; gender identify or expression.
- ~~16-17.~~ 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.
- ~~17-18.~~ Events and activities that have an attendance of fewer than 500 people.
- ~~18-19.~~ Any expenditure not authorized by Alachua County Code of Ordinances

Reimbursement

All funds are available on a reimbursement basis only. Proof of payment and proof of performance is required to process invoices. Proof of payment is copies of paid invoices, cancelled checks, credit card or bank statements. Proof of performance is advertising tear sheets, printed samples, video or audio recordings of broadcast and radio ads, screen shots of social media or digital ads that include dates and engagement information, or other backup information. Proof of payment and proof of performance must accompany all requests for funds.

Invoices for events should be submitted within 60 days of the conclusion of the event. Invoices for ongoing programs should be submitted quarterly.

Inclusion in application materials or budget does not constitute approval of an expense request or agreement to pay. Non-allowable activities and items will not be reimbursed even if they are referenced in an application or budget.

Evaluation Team Selection

Applications will be scored by the evaluation team who will present their funding recommendations to the County Commission.

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INSTRUCTIONS

All Applicants Complete and Provide the following:

- ☐ Grant Application Cover Page
- ☐ Addenda Question and Answers; initialed
- ☐ Up to 5 letters of support from sources outside your organization. Scorers may count each Letter of Support up to 1 Point.
- ☐ Supporting documents. Attach examples of past brochures, programs, reviews, advertising, social media posts, and social media metrics and engagement reports.

PRIVATE NON-PROFITS

Required Organizational Documents

- ☐ **Authorized Signatory** – Provide proof of persons authorized to sign contracts by submitting a Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations registration copy, board resolution or other evidentiary document.
- ☐ **Board of Directors** – Provide a list indicating officers and all directors' contact information including name, business affiliation, and contact information.
- ☐ Current **State of Florida Solicitation License** from the Florida Department of Agriculture

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Private Non-Profit Entities Applying for Program Support

Applicants whose primary organizational purpose or mission must be to attract audience members (ie: museums, theaters, zoos, galleries, and performance-based entities). For the purposes of this application, a cultural program is defined as: a museum, gallery, nature center, theater or performance space that has regular business hours and on-going operations; or performing arts organizations that produce annual seasons; or organizations with multiple events throughout the year.

- ☐ Most recently filed IRS Form 990 or IRS Form 990EZ
- OR
- ☐ If the organization's revenues are below \$50,000 and the organization only files the 990N, provide a statement of revenues and expenses for the most recently completed fiscal year. The maximum request amount is 30% of the annual revenue, and may not exceed \$15,000.

Private Non-Profit Entities Applying for Event Support

Applicants whose primary organizational purpose or mission is not to attract audience members and organizations producing one event per year. Single weekend events may consider applying for the Special Event Sponsorships in place of the Nature and Culture Destination Enhancement grant application.

- ☐ Most recently filed IRS Form 990 or IRS Form 990EZ
- OR
- ☐ If the organization's revenues are below \$50,000 and the organization only files the 990N, provide a statement of revenues and expenses for the most recently completed fiscal year.

AND

Detailed project / event budget for the special event or activity. Note: Funding request amounts will be based on that figure rather than the organizational budget. This amount cannot exceed the annual budget of the organization

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EDUCATIONAL ENTITIES

Required Documents

- ☐ Authorized Signatory – Provide proof of persons authorized to sign contracts by submitting a Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations registration copy, board resolution or other evidentiary document.
- ☐ Detailed project / event budget. Note: funding request amounts will be based on that figure rather than the organizational budget, not to exceed \$75,000 per entity.
- ☐ Executive Director/ Finance Director Signature on Budget Statement

Failure to provide a complete copy of most recently filed IRS Form 990, IRS Form 990EZ, IRS Form 990N (if required) and/or detailed event budget statements will disqualify the application.

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Attendance (40 Points)

- Attendance Ratio Score Calculation (see chart below). (34 points)
- Detailed explanation of how attendance estimates were determined. (2 points)
- Average attendance from the past two years of normal operations with evaluation report of how ~~is-~~ attendance attendance is tracked and verified based on ticket sales, research, surveys, etc. (4 points)

Attendance may only be included for in-person events produced and managed by the applicant entity.
Do not include attendance for:
- Activities that are a component of an outside organization’s event (including, but not limited to tabling, setting up a booth, providing informational materials, ~~or~~ performances or installations) at a festival, community fair, concert or similar.
- Online streaming views, website reach, social media followers or material distribution.
If non-allowable attendance is reported, it will be deducted from the attendance count and the ratio score will be re-calculated.

Attendance Ratio Score

Funding request divided by attendance = Ratio Score
4.0 and below = 34 points | 4.1 – 9.9 = 30 points | 10-14.9 = 25 points | 15 and higher = 20 points
Examples:

	<u>Funding Request</u>	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Ratio</u>	<u>Points</u>
Example 1:	\$10,000	20,000	.5	34 points
Example 2:	\$100,000	100,000	1	34 points
Example 3:	\$200,000	50,000	4	34 points
Example 4:	\$75,000	10,000	7.5	30 points
Example 5:	\$35,000	6,000	5.8	30 points
Example 6:	\$100,000	10,000	10	25 points
Example 7:	\$80,000	5,000	16	20 points
Example 8:	\$50,000	2,000	25	20 points

Calculate Your Ratio Score Here → _____

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Cultural Merit and Support (30 points)

1. History of the organization and its contribution to the cultural development of Alachua County. (10 points)
2. Artistic and/or cultural significance, creativity, and quality of the proposed project(s). Describe the proposed project(s) to be funded as the scope of services for the grant. (10 points)
3. Community support, grants, collaborations and/or in-kind contributions. (5 points)
4. Up to 5 letters of support. (5 points)

Excellent: 25-30 points: Organizational timeline and cultural contributions clearly demonstrate growth, sustainability, and expansion with specific examples. Projects are well-defined, achievable, unique, and reflect excellence. Clear evidence the organization follows best practices in multi-sourced funding strategies with examples of diversified and broad-based community support.

Good: 20-24 points: Organizational timeline and cultural contributions are defined. Projects are defined and achievable. Funding strategies provide examples of outside support.

Fair: 15-19 points: Little evidence of cultural contributions, sustainability or growth. Programs are not well-defined or achievable. Outside funding sources are lacking and there is little evidence of broader community support.

Marketing and Advertising Plan (30 points)

1. Describe the organization's marketing plan, including out-of-county marketing, and how the proposed event will be promoted to tourists. (15 points)
2. Provide a detailed description with budget breakdown of how 25% of requested grant funding will be spent to attract tourists. (10 points)
3. Additional supporting documents, attach examples of past brochures, programs, reviews, advertising, social media posts, and social media metrics and engagement reports. (5 points)

Excellent: 25-30 points: Well-defined marketing plan to grow attendance and attract tourists. Includes strategic use of multiple platforms (social, radio, web, etc.). Articulates understanding of target markets and the demographic profile of attendees. Includes plans for editorial press coverage. Clearly defines a return on investment for marketing and advertising expenditures.

Good: 20-24 points: Marketing plan to attract and grow attendance. Includes multiple platforms (social, radio, web, etc.).

Fair: 15-19 points: Undefined marketing plan to attract and grow attendance

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SCORING AND AWARD RATIOS

<u>Description</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Funding</u>
Strongly demonstrates public value of arts, nature, and culture. Merits investment of Alachua County funding.	90 – 100	Up to 100%
Satisfactorily demonstrates public value of arts, nature, and culture. Merits investment of Alachua County funding.	80 – 89.99	Up to 90%
Demonstrates public value of arts, nature, and culture. Merits investment of Alachua County funding.	70 – 79.99	Up to 80%
Makes an incomplete and/or inadequate case for the public value of arts, nature, and culture. Information is confusing, unclear, and lacks specific details. Does not merit investment of Alachua County funding.	69.99 or below	No Funding

At time of funding, Evaluation Team award recommendations will be submitted to the Board of County Commissioners. It may be necessary to apply a ratio to the amount each applicant qualifies for. The ratio will be determined by dividing the funds available by the total eligible amount of the applicants. For example: 30 vendors were awarded funding totaling \$1,200,000.00. You will take the available funding (ex. \$1,000,000.00) divided by the awarded funding \$1,200,000.00 giving you a ratio of 0.833. Take your awarded amount and multiply it by the new ratio to give you your actual funding amount.

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GRANT APPLICATION COVER PAGE

Requested Amount: \$ _____

Organization Name: _____

Authorized Contact Name and Phone Number: _____

Board President Name and Contact Number: _____

Project / Activity Name: _____

Project / Activity Dates: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip Code: _____

Email Address: _____

Additional Application Documents

- ☐ Up to 5 letters of support. Each Letter of Support may be counted as 1 Point.
- ☐ Supporting documents, attach examples of past brochures, programs, reviews, advertising, social media posts, and social media metrics and engagement reports.

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Attendance (40 points)

1. Attendance Ratio Score Calculation (see chart below). (34 points)
Funding request divided by attendance = Ratio Score
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	<u>Funding Request</u>	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Ratio</u>	<u>Points</u>
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Example 6:	\$100,000	10,000	10	25 points
Example 7:	\$80,000	5,000	16	20 points
Example 8:	\$50,000	2,000	25	20 points

Calculate Your Ratio Score Here → _____

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2. Provide a detailed explanation of how attendance estimates were determined. (2 points – 250 words)

3. Average attendance from the two most recent previous years of normal operations with evaluation report of how ~~is attendance~~attendance is tracked and verified based on ticket sales, research, surveys, etc. (4 points – 300 words)

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Nature and Culture Destination Enhancement Grant Application

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Cultural Merit and Support (30 points)

1. History of the organization and its contribution to the cultural development of Alachua County. (10 points – 400 words)
2. Artistic and/or cultural significance, creativity, and quality of the proposed project(s). Describe the proposed project(s) to be funded as the scope of services for the grant. Be specific. Include name(s) of events, location, dates and all relevant information. (10 points – 400 words)

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3. Community support, grants, collaborations and/or in-kind contributions. (5 points – 300 words)

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Cultural Merit and Support (30 points)

4. Up to 5 letters of support. (5 points – Attach.)

Excellent: 25-30 points: Organizational timeline and cultural contributions clearly demonstrate growth, sustainability, and expansion with specific examples. Projects are well-defined, achievable, unique, and reflect excellence. Clear evidence the organization follows best practices in multi-sourced funding strategies with examples of diversified and broad-based community support.

Good: 20-24 points: Organizational timeline and cultural contributions are defined. Projects are defined and achievable. Funding strategies provide examples of outside support.

Fair: 15-19 points: Little evidence of cultural contributions, sustainability or growth. Programs are not well-defined or achievable. Outside funding sources are lacking and there is little evidence of broader community support.

Marketing and Advertising Plan (30 points)

1. Describe the organization's marketing plan, including out-of-county marketing, and how the proposed event will be promoted to tourists. (15 points—500 words.)

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Marketing and Advertising Plan (30 points)

2. Provide a detailed description with budget breakdown of how 25% of requested grant funding will be spent to attract tourists. (10 points – 400 words)

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Marketing and Advertising Plan (30 points)

3. Additional supporting documents, attach examples of past brochures, programs, reviews, advertising, social media posts, and social media metrics and engagement reports. (5 points – Attach.)

Excellent: 25-30 points: Well-defined marketing plan to attract and grow attendance. Includes strategic use of multiple platforms (social, radio, web, etc.). Articulates understanding of target markets and the demographic profile of attendees. Includes plans for editorial press coverage. Clearly defines a return on investment for marketing and advertising expenditures.

Good: 20-24 points: Marketing plan to attract and grow attendance. Includes multiple platforms (social, radio, web, etc.).

Fair: 15-19 points: Undefined marketing plan to attract and grow attendance.

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Please initial next to each item below, signifying that you have read and understand the conditions of the Nature and Culture Destination Enhancement Grant program.

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- _____ 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 grant funding 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 attest that if awarded, the funding will not support or include discriminatory acts or practices, including discrimination based on race; color; national origin; religion; sex; marital status; age; disability; sexual orientation; gender identify or expression.
- _____ I understand that all printed and/or digital collateral and advertisements must include the Visit Gainesville, Alachua County, FL logo as one of the event sponsors and on 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 \$15,000.00 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 event is within the boundaries of Alachua County.
- _____ I acknowledge that this application and grant documents submitted to the County, become public records subject to the provisions of Chapter 119, F.S., Florida Public Records Law.

Signature of authorizing official (Board Chair)

Signature of Contact Person