



Agenda Item Summary

File #: 26-00180

Agenda Date: 4/14/2026

Agenda Item Name:

Request Approval of the Visit Gainesville, Alachua County Special Event Sponsorship Application

Presenter:

Jordan Shepherd, Tourism Grants Coordinator

Description:

Approve the Visit Gainesville, Alachua County Special Event Sponsorship Application as presented

Recommended Action:

Approve the updated Special Event Sponsorship application as presented, and make the legislative factual determination that activities funded with Tourist Development Tax revenue through the Special Event Sponsorship program serve a public purpose and are primarily used for the promotion of tourism in Alachua County. The Grant Program will remain open on a rolling basis. Following a thorough review by staff, all recommended funding allocations will be submitted for approval through the Public Purpose approval process.

Prior Board Motions:

The prior application was approved on December 13, 2022.

Fiscal Note:

\$300,000 is allocated annually, with the amount subject to review and evaluation as part of the annual budget process.

Tourist Development Grants Event Sponsorship Fund: 005.45.4530.552.83.05

Strategic Guide:

All Other Mandatory and Discretionary Services

Background:

The primary goals of the Special Event Sponsorship Application updates are to provide clearer guidance for applicants, refine eligibility, and offer new incentives for events that drive local hotel stays.

Key Updates & Changes:

Tiered Funding Model: The new application has six defined event categories, ranging from "Signature Large-Scale Events" to "Developing Tourism Events." Each tier has specific attendance and historical requirements to determine maximum base funding.

Hotel Room Block Incentive: A new incentive allows events with confirmed blocks of 50+ hotel room nights to request an additional \$15 per verified room night, increasing the maximum potential award from \$20,000 to \$25,000.

Improved Accountability and Data Collection: The new application outlines a formal post-event submittal process, including a mandatory Post-Event Report. These updates will support the County's Performance Management Program by improving data collection and enabling more accurate measurement of program outcomes and return on investment.

Marketing-Only Support: A new category has been added specifically for small-scale events that demonstrate tourism potential but are only eligible for out-of-county marketing support rather than general operating expenses.

During the 2026 Florida Legislative Session, the Florida Legislature approved SB 1134. SB 1134 has not yet been signed into law by the Governor, but he is expected to do so. If signed into law, it will become effective on January 1, 2027. Among other things, the new law would require that, starting January 1, 2027, the County must obtain the following certification from all applicants before they receive a grant from the County:

Certification Required by §287.139, Florida Statutes. Pursuant to §287.139, Florida Statutes, the Grant Applicant hereby certifies to the County that it does not and will not use County funds in requiring its employees, contractors, volunteers, vendors, or agents to ascribed to, study, or be instructed using materials relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion as defined in §125.595(1), Florida Statutes.

Accordingly, County staff will require this certification from grant applicants starting on January 1, 2027, if SB 1134 becomes law.

In accordance with §125.0104, Florida Statutes, the County has allocated a portion of Tourist Development Tax to create and fund the Special Event Sponsorship program, the purpose of which is to promote, advertise and support activities and events that have as one of their main purposes the attraction of tourists to Alachua County. All funding awards provided by Visit Gainesville, Alachua County are reimbursement only for allowable expenses, including out-of-county advertising.