



**Lauderdale County Tourism
Special Event Marketing Grant Program Guidelines
Fiscal Year 2024-2025**

Lauderdale County Tourism allocates funds from its annual budget for a Special Event Marketing Grant Program for groups and organizations that coordinate events in Lauderdale County with a demonstrated history of/or significant potential for attracting visitors to Lauderdale County and encouraging usage of Lauderdale County hotel rooms.

Goal of program:

The goal of this program is to help fund the promotion of attractions, special events and festivals that attract visitors to Lauderdale County to overnight in our hotels.

Who is eligible to apply for funding?

Any organization with significant city ties that is established primarily to produce attractions, cultural programs, festivals, or special events, that utilizes private sector community financial support and volunteers in addition to any paid staff they may have to carry out the objectives of the organization. The event must be held between the dates of October 1, 2024, and September 30, 2025. While the program is not limited to non-profits, no money will be granted for the direct profit of the applicant organization.

How to request funds?

Applications for funding should be sent in the form of a letter to:

Lauderdale County Tourism
Grant Program
2000 Front St., Suite A
Meridian, MS 39301

The application must be postmarked by July 1, 2024, or delivered that day by 3 pm and should include:

- a. Name of organization producing event with contact name, address, phone, and email
- b. Name, dates, and location of the event
- c. Description of the event
- d. Budget for event
- e. Marketing plan showing strategy to address markets outside of 90-mile radius
- f. Methods of tracking success

Applicants will be notified by August 16, 2024, of having been awarded a grant. Grant recipients are encouraged to ensure they understand the guidelines of grant, specifically **the strict requirements for grant closeout**. Should the recipient have any questions, those questions should be asked before submitting invoice for grant funds.

Selection Criteria

The Lauderdale County Tourism Grant Committee will consider applications according to the following criteria:

- Commitment to Tourism in Lauderdale County – 25%
Evidence that the project serves to attract out-of-town guests, generating restaurant and hotel traffic; marketed to the fullest extent possible in an effective and efficient manner; demonstrates a willingness to work with the tourism industry; commitment to develop other funding sources;
- Regional Promotion – 25%
A well thought out, detailed marketing plan that is designed to increase awareness of the event in regional media; packaging of hotels, attractions and shopping will also be evaluated;
- Soundness of Proposed Project – 20%
Clearly identified objectives, assigned responsibilities and accountability with a realistic timetable for implementation and additional funding sources;
- Stability and Management Capacity – 15%
A proven record of demonstrated capacity to develop resources, plan, organize and implement a planned project;
- Quality and uniqueness of proposed project – 15%
Extent to which the activity provides a program for tourists which is of significant merit and without such assistance would not take place in Lauderdale County.

*****Please note that this is a COMPETITIVE grant program. It is IMPERATIVE that the above criteria be met to be considered for funding.**

What can funds be used for?

Funds may be used for marketing purposes only. The money may not be used for event production expenses such as fencing, staging, entertainment, etc.

Matching Funds Requirement

Organizations are required to pledge a 50% match of funds for funding to be considered. The money funded by Lauderdale County Tourism may not be more than 50% of the total budget for the event.

Requirements of Matching Grants

1. Grant recipients must accept grant award by submitting the following no later than August 30, 2024.
 - Letter Accepting Grant Award
 - Invoice for Grant Amount Awarded
 - W-9 for Organization
2. Lauderdale County Tourism will receive a sponsorship packet appropriate to the amount of support.
3. The following information should be included in all promotional materials.
 - a. All funded projects must display the Visit Meridian logo provided by Lauderdale County Tourism in an appropriate size in relation to event sponsor guidelines. The following logo is the correct logo to be utilized:



4. Failure to comply with these requirements will disqualify the event organization from future funding assistance for three years.

Distribution of Funds and Final Report

Approved funds will be distributed to organizations prior to their expenditures with a 90-day requirement to file a final report after the event.

A final report should include:

- A copy of the executed marketing plan clearly stating how the granted money was spent to include invoices, receipts, proof of payment (credit card receipt or canceled check) for grant expenses as well as matching funds - purchase orders or cash payments are not acceptable
- Attendance figures and hotel room nights tracked
- Samples of all marketing materials to include ad tear sheets, website promotions, printed materials, video promotions or other collateral materials

The final report should be mailed to:
Lauderdale County Tourism
Grant Program / Closeout
2000 Front Street, Suite A
Meridian, MS 39301

The close out report must be postmarked no more than 90 days after the event. Failure to comply will disqualify event organization from future funding consideration for three years.

Event Cancellation

In case of cancellation of event for any reason other than weather-related cancellations, funds will be returned to Lauderdale County Tourism.

Questions

Applicants are encouraged to ensure they understand the guidelines of grant, specifically the strict requirements for grant closeout. Should the recipient have any questions, they are encouraged to meet with the Director of Tourism no later than two weeks prior to submitting application.