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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**York County Tourism Grant Program awards funding to Sojourn Noir**  
*Sojourn Noir – a locally founded Black tourism initiative*

**YORK, PA** – The Tourism Grant Program of York County, PA, awarded \$75,000 in funding to Sojourn Noir, a locally founded Black tourism initiative. This grant request was submitted in early 2023 and was ratified last month at the Explore York Board of Directors meeting.

[Sojourn Noir](#) was designed with the Black traveler in mind. They promote, and seek to bring, Black tourists to York, PA, an area with vibrant culture, rich history, and a diverse community of makers. York County, PA, is near major cities such as Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington DC.

According to a piece from MMGY Global, *“The Black Traveler: Insights, Opportunities & Priorities,”* Black U.S. leisure travelers accounted for more than 500 million overnight stays, contributing more than 100 billion tourism dollars, or 13.1% of the U.S. leisure travel market in 2022.

Unfortunately, according to that same research, 42% of respondents stated they felt unwelcome in a destination they visited. In response to this contradiction, Joanne Wilmore, Founder & CEO of Sojourn Noir, said, “We aim to create a welcoming haven and a culturally representative environment in York County. It is beyond time to change...”

Sojourn Noir looks to combat negative historical trends and narratives and create new and positive opportunities for Black travelers in York County by:

- Encouraging Black travelers to explore experiences, activities, and adventures to which they have been historically denied access or safe passage.
- Reintroducing Black travelers to the restorative power of rest and recreation.
- Increasing the cultural competency of businesses and tourism bureaus to provide an optimal travel and leisure experience in their establishments and throughout the County.

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*have it made here*<sup>SM</sup>

Laura Wagner, Explore York President, is also passionate about the opportunity to invest in a locally operated, Black led, woman owned professional tourism initiative. Their mission is to inspire Black people to engage in the inalienable right to leisure travel. “We support their mission & vision and look forward to a long-standing partnership with Sojourn Noir as we work together to increase tourism equity and inclusion and create funding opportunities within our community.”

Sojourn Noir is partnering with local retailers, restaurants, and others in the hospitality industry to help create inviting spaces and experiences throughout York County where Black travelers feel respected, welcomed, and a sense of belonging.

**Specific outcomes of the Sojourn Noir project will include:**

- Development and implementation of a training program.
- Targeted, digital marketing campaign.
- Business outreach strategy and dedicated collateral.
- Representation of York County at Black leisure travel conferences.

**More information about the Explore York Tourism Grant Program:**

This program seeks quality applications for tourism projects that drive economic impact, support tourism initiatives, and bring overnight visitors into York County. Projects that promote geographic diversity across the county, advance racial equity in tourism, and highlight the creative makers spirit of York County are also desired. The next round of grant funding opens early January 2024.

**Ideal applications include projects:**

- Focused on tourism; attracting visitors outside of York County, a 50-mile radius is preferred.
- Designed to create a positive fiscal impact to York County through overnight hotel stays.
- That enhance the visitor experience.
- That support geographic diversity across all 911 square miles of York County.
- From a diverse pool of applicants that support diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Explore York Tourism Grant Program provides all applicants equal opportunity for funding consideration and does not discriminate based on race, gender, religion, caste, or creed.

Explore York’s mission is to maximize tourism expenditures and their economic impact in York County, PA, through comprehensive tourism sales and marketing programs. Explore York’s vision is for a York County where tourism is recognized for the value of its economic impact and its role in raising the profile of York County as a sought-after destination. For more information on Explore York County, PA, and the destination, call 1-888-858-9675 or visit [YorkPA.org](http://YorkPA.org).

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