

2017 Criteria and Guidelines
Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Program

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Thirty-three percent of the Westmoreland County Lodging Tax is appropriated for a grant program specifically established to support the county's tourism assets. **The purpose of this grant program is to enhance the tourism experience, increase tourism visitation, and overnight stays within Westmoreland County.** Awards are granted annually on the basis of merit as determined by the Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Review Committee and administered by the Westmoreland County Commissioners and the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau. Thus grant funding should be primarily used for marketing and advertising expenses that target potential visitors who reside outside of the Laurel Highlands counties and whose visit is likely to result in an overnight stay.

CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES

1. All recipients are required to have a cash or in-kind match of at least 25%. Half of the match can be in-kind services and/or donated materials and documentation must be provided for any in-kind match. In-kind services documentation must include work performed, date/dates of the services and hourly rate and hours donated. In-kind volunteer work is only acceptable for events (such as festivals) and only for the time the volunteer works at the event. The volunteer's time is valued at \$10 per hour and must be documented, including dates, services they provided, and hours of service.
2. If you receive a grant, you can incur expenses eligible for assistance immediately after grant notification. Expenses cannot be incurred before notification date.
3. Grants may be awarded to any non-profit or for-profit tourism-related business or organization located within Westmoreland County that submits a request for such funds utilizing the official grant application furnished for this purpose and whose mission and operation are directly related to tourism and tourism development.
4. Grants are awarded on an annual basis.
5. Applicants should not assume that they will be awarded a grant on an annual basis, nor should they consider these tourism grants a permanent addition to their budget.
6. If, at the deadline for submission of the current year's application, any recipient of a prior grant who has not submitted the required supporting documentation within the prescribed deadline explaining and evidencing the use of the grant and an extension has not been requested and approved shall be ineligible to apply for a future grant until such supporting documentation required herein are submitted and accepted.
7. Applicants must use only the official forms and required documents for submission.
8. Grant applications must be typed. Handwritten applications will not be considered by the grant committee.
9. An applicant may not file for more than one grant request for each type of grant.
10. Each type of grant request must be submitted on a separate application.

11. Individual applications should be secured with a paperclip. DO NOT staple and DO NOT place applications in folders or binders.
12. Award amounts must be appropriately utilized **before December 2017.**
13. If the funds are not appropriately utilized within the designated period applicants must inform the grant committee in writing and either request an extension or return, to the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, administrator of the Westmoreland Tourism Grant Program, the unused portion of the grant that has not been appropriately utilized along with any interest accrued accompanied by an explanation of why the funds were not used.
14. Recipients approved for an extension shall be eligible to apply for a subsequent grant during the extension period.
15. The grant committee reserves the right to approve or reject an extension request and the decision of the committee or its designated representative(s) shall be final and binding upon all parties.
16. As a provision of accepting the grant, awardees must provide adequate proof that the funds received were used for their intended purpose.
17. **It shall be the sole responsibility of any recipient of a grant to adhere to the prescribed deadlines** relative to the appropriate utilization of any such grant. Neither the county commissioners, the grant committee nor the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau shall be responsible for monitoring such deadlines or informing any grant recipient of an impending or expired deadline.
18. A for-profit business that receives a grant may be required to treat the grant as income and is responsible for paying any necessary applicable taxes.
19. Awardees shall publicly acknowledge the Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Program through all reasonable means as a stipulation of accepting such awards. This includes recognition of funding on printed media, social media pages, websites and any other media that might be engaged utilizing grant funds.
20. Photographs may be included.
21. All non-profit applicants **must provide a copy of their IRS Determination 501(c)(3) Letter and a list of their Board of Directors. Failure to do so will render an application ineligible.**
22. A written request is needed for all budget changes. Send all requests to rseifert@laurelhighlands.org.
23. Based on the dollar amount, grants will be distributed with a minimum of one-half of the grant awarded at the time of the announcement. In the event a partial distribution of the grant is made, the remaining one-half of the grant will be distributed when the project is 50% complete.

Grants may be awarded in the following three (3) project categories:

Marketing Programs: Marketing and advertising programs must be targeted to media that primarily reach non-Westmoreland County residents. Cooperative programs, which include tourism partners in the three-county Laurel Highlands region, are eligible. The Grant Program will not fund advertisements in local event programs (i.e. high school sports programs, local dance troupe programs, etc.)

Tourism-related marketing expenses eligible for funding, including but not limited to:

- Internet website development or enhancement.
- Image marketing (creating photo or film libraries, logo development, new artwork, etc.).
- Tourism awareness programs and customer service programs.
- Brochure design and printing
- Advertising (TV stations, radio stations, newspapers, magazines, billboards, etc. – local media may be included if the majority of their audience is out of the county).

Capital Projects: Capital improvements that benefit tourism and augment the visitor's experience by developing new or enhancing existing Westmoreland County tourist attractions or amenities will be considered.

Visitor Center: Operation of a visitor center in an Allegheny Trail Alliance recognized "Great Allegheny Passage Trail Town" in Westmoreland County, including expenses related to staffing the center (payroll, payroll taxes, and payroll fees).

Expenses not eligible for grant funding:

- Food, lodging, mileage and transportation costs.
- Purchase or rental computers, software, projectors and other equipment.
- Telephone expenses.
- Postage and handling expenses
- Purchase of brochure racks.
- Envelopes, letterhead, business cards, and miscellaneous office supplies.
- Membership dues, sponsorships and talent/dignitary honorariums.
- Office space rental.
- Physical construction of billboards
- Gift cards, t-shirts and items for resale.
- Standard operational expenses such as rent, utilities, insurance, payroll, postage, etc., with the exception of the approved expenses directly related to the operation of a seasonal visitor center
- Sectarian religious purposes

REPORTING GUIDELINES

Request for balance of a grant the grant recipient must submit the following:

Applicants must provide:

- A. LHVB Tourism Grant Second Half Reporting Form
- B. Completed Grant Expenditure Form
- C. Copy of approved Budget Expenditure Form
- D. Copies of all invoices and proof of payment
- E. Marketing grants must provide copies of all printed advertisements, press releases, or samples of media placements/media
- F. Capital grant projects must provide before and after photos of the project.
- G. Grant recipients shall abide by all local, state, and federal laws and regulations and agree to furnish all the documentation listed above. In addition, grant recipients understand that the expenditure of grant funds received might be subject to audit and or further verification and agree to cooperate with any such audit or verification process.

To close out a grant, the LHVB Tourism Grant Final Report Form and the required documentation must be submitted no later than **March 31, 2018**.

Applicants must provide:

- A. LHVB Tourism Grant Final Reporting Form
- B. Completed Grant Expenditure Form
- C. Copy of approved Budget Expenditure Form from grant application
- D. Copies of all invoices and proof of payment
- E. Marketing grants must provide copies of all printed advertisements, press releases, or samples of media placements/media
- F. Capital grant projects must provide before and after photos of the project.
- G. Grant recipients shall abide by all local, state, and federal laws and regulations and agree to furnish all the documentation listed above. In addition, grant recipients understand that the expenditure of grant funds received might be subject to audit and or further verification and agree to cooperate with any such audit or verification process.

YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO SUBMIT FIVE (5) COPIES OF GRANT APPLICATIONS ALONG WITH TWO (2) COPIES OF THE BUDGET EXPENDITURE FORM FOR EACH APPLICATION AND EACH MUST BE SUBMITTED WITHIN THE PRESCRIBED DEADLINE IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED.

MAILING ADDRESS FOR ALL GRANT CORRESPONDENCES

Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau
ATTN: Grant Administrator
120 East Main Street
Ligonier, PA 15658

WESTMORELAND COUNTY TOURISM GRANT REVIEW COMMITTEE

- A. The Tourism Grant Review Committee shall be comprised of five (5) members:
- One (1) Westmoreland County Commissioner or the Commissioners' Designee
 - The President and CEO of the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau (LHVB) or the President and CEO's designee
 - One (1) member of the LHVB Board of Directors who represents the Westmoreland County lodging community
 - Two (2) representatives of Westmoreland County appointed by the Westmoreland County Commissioners to serve annual terms
- B. In the event that a member of the Tourism Grant Review Committee serves on the board of the applicant organization or event, or is affiliated in another manner, it is mandatory that said member recuse himself/herself from the review and/or decision making process of that specific application.
- C. The committee will review all grant applications and announce the awards in January or February 2017.
- D. Grant awards shall be presented to each recipient jointly by representatives of the Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Committee and the Westmoreland County Commissioners.
- E. Nothing shall prevent the Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Review Committee from withholding part or all of the grant funds available for annual awards should the committee believe that insufficient requests have been made justifying the full distribution of those funds. Should funds be remaining at the end of any fiscal year, those funds may be rolled forward to be utilized in the subsequent year's grant program.
- F. The Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Review Committee will review these Criteria and Guidelines on an annual basis to enhance, amend, or modify said guidelines.