

Forest County Tourism Grant Program Criteria and Guidelines

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

A portion of the Forest County Hotel 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 Forest County. Awards are granted on the basis of merit as determined by Northwest Pennsylvania Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau, the Tourism Grant Committee and the Forest County Board of Commissioners. Grants are administered by Northwest Pennsylvania Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau, Inc.

CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES:

1. Grants may be awarded for any non-profit tourism-oriented initiative sponsored by an organization or event located within Forest County that submits a request for such funds. Applications must show how tourism visitation and overnight stays will be increased through the funding.

A. Marketing and Advertising Programs: Advertising programs must be targeted to media outside a 75 mile radius of the event that will reach non-County residents. The Grant Program will not fund advertisements in local publications; local high school sports programs, local dance or theater programs, etc. Examples of tourism marketing promotion and advertising include but are not limited to: brochures, website development and enhancement, out-of-county billboards, television and radio commercials, Facebook paid ads, and/or print advertisements.

B. Tourism Development: Tourism development programs and projects as deemed appropriate by the Committee. Examples include interpretive panels, public art projects, community festivals, etc.

Grants will not be awarded for standard or event operational expenses.

2. The grant schedule:

Ongoing – grants will be awarded to eligible non-profit organizations for eligible projects within 30 days of receipt of application at Northwest Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau office.

Award amounts must be utilized within one year. If a project is not finalized within one year of receiving the grant, the applicant must submit a status report and updated timeline for completion of the project.

3. As a provision of accepting these monies, awardees must provide adequate proof that the funds received were used for their intended purpose. A final project report (close-out) is

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required within sixty (60) days of the completion of the project. If the summary is not received the applicant will not be eligible for future funding.

4. An organization may only submit one grant request per project.

6. All grant applications must include at least 25% matching funds or in kind donations.

7. Nothing shall prevent the Forest County Tourism Grant Committee from withholding part or all of the total monies available for annual awards should that entity feel that insufficient requests have been made justifying exhaustion of those funds.

8. It should not be presumed that any applicant will be awarded a grant on an annual basis, nor should the availability of these grant awards be considered an annual part of any applicant's budget.

9. The Tourism Grant Committee is comprised of members of the Forest County Hotel Tax Committee: Appointees are at the determination of the Forest County Commissioners. In the event that a member of the Tourism Grant Committee serves on the Board of the applicant organization or event, or is affiliated in another manner, it is mandatory that said member remove his or herself from that review and/or decision making process.

10. Those receiving awards are asked to publicly acknowledge and within the context of their brochures and other promotional materials, that support for the event/project has been provided by the Forest County Room Tax Committee, the Forest County Commissioners, and the PA Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau.

11. Grant awards will be presented to each recipient by Northwest Pennsylvania Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau and Forest County Commissioners.

12. The Room Tax Committee will review the criteria and guidelines annually at the end of the fiscal year to enhance, amend, or dissolve said guidelines.