



VisitHATTIESBURG TOURISM GRANT PROGRAM FISCAL YEAR 2021

Introduction

VisitHATTIESBURG's mission is to actively position Hattiesburg as a year-round premier leisure and business destination in the Gulf South. With the global pandemic's effects on the tourism industry, VisitHATTIESBURG continues to support and grow tourism's economic impact in the community while promoting safe and responsible travel.

VisitHATTIESBURG's Tourism Grant Program (TGP) is an annual allocation designed to enhance visitor and tourism promotion efforts in Hattiesburg. TGP provides funds for marketing and other qualified expenses for projects / events that fulfill VisitHATTIESBURG'S mission and, ultimately, increase overnight travel to Hattiesburg. All FY21 funded projects must comply with local, state, and national Covid-19 and safety guidelines.

Qualifying Programs and Events

Eligible applicants for funding include an organization/event/project whose objective is to promote Hattiesburg's tourism industry to out-of-town visitors by generating overnight travel and economic stimulus to the city. The target audience should be outside the immediate Hattiesburg area (over 50-mile radius or out-of-state).

Qualifying entities may be attractions, associations, organizations or governmental agencies which promote their event, products and/or services to visitors from outside the area. Qualified grant projects should be classified in one of the following categories:

1. Festival / Event
2. Attraction / Public Use Facility:
 - a. Museums, historical buildings, meeting space, sporting facilities, etc.
3. Other organizations / associations with a primary objective of promoting tourism in Hattiesburg

TGP funds may be used for a variety of expenses, including traditional and digital advertising, brochures and signage, event or exhibit production costs, and marketing and promotional activities. Disallowable expenses include facility utilities, general operating expenses, administrative expenses (including salaries, travel, meal and lodging), loan payments, personal benefits, cash awards or expenses not directly related to the approved project, and any illegal activities.

Eligibility Requirements

Applicants should fulfill the following requirements:

- The project for which grant funds are requested must be primarily located within Hattiesburg (includes Forrest and Lamar Counties).
- Virtual events are not eligible for TGP funding.
- Projects should promote Hattiesburg as a destination by highlighting local lodging, dining, shopping and attractions.
- All funded projects must comply with local, state, and national Covid-19 and safety guidelines.
- The proposed project must comply with all applicable laws, permits, licenses and regulations.
- Each project must maintain financial records to document the use of TGP funds. These records should be filed and made available for inspection by VisitHATTIESBURG for a period of not less than three (3) years.
- If funding is granted, the current VisitHATTIESBURG logo must be included on all collateral, advertisement, digital media, and signage in relation to the funded project. In addition, a hyperlinked VisitHATTIESBURG logo must be placed on the project website upon grant selection and must remain for a period of no less than 12 consecutive months.
- In cases where sponsorship packages are available, a sponsorship equivalent to the dollar amount of TGP funds awarded should be provided to VisitHATTIESBURG.
- Grants for individual organizations must not exceed \$5,000 in a Fiscal Year (October 1 – September 30).
- An organization receiving TGP funding is responsible for paying any applicable taxes.
- Additional guidelines may be required on an individual project basis and will be outlined in the TGP award letter and agreement.

Grant Application & Timeline

The selection process for the Tourism Grant Program is overseen by the Programs and Promotions department of VisitHATTIESBURG. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- Potential for economic impact
- Increased hotel occupancy
- Merit of the project's marketing and advertising plan
- Project's ability to attract visitors
- Fiscal stability of project / organization
- Ability to benefit Hattiesburg as a visitor destination
- Proven, historical success of the project or organization

The following steps are a requirement of TGP funding:

1. A completed application is submitted for the project.
2. Grant decision is determined by VisitHATTIESBURG.
3. If selected for the TGP program, a signed contract will be entered between the applicant and VisitHATTIESBURG.

4. A final report and supporting documentation is due within 30 days of a project's completion and no later than September 30, 2019.

2018-19 TGP Deadline Calendar

December 7, 2020	Application process begins for the FY 2021 TGP year
January 4, 2021	Application Priority Deadline*
January 15, 2021	Target date for notifying FY 2021 TGP applicants
September 30, 2021	Deadline for final reporting**

* If TGP funding has not been fully allocated by the priority deadline, additional applications will be accepted throughout the 2021 Fiscal Year or until all funds are depleted. Projects with applications submitted by the stated deadline will receive priority in funding decisions.

** A final report must be provided within 30 days of project completion or by September 30, 2021, whichever comes first.

Stipulations

Limited funds are available each Fiscal Year and are awarded on a competitive basis. All decisions regarding grants are at the sole discretion of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission, and the following stipulations are effective for any project receiving funding:

- Failure to use funds as specified in an application will result a full refund of TGP funds distributed.
- Failure to submit a final report and other required documentation may result in penalties including but not limited to a full refund of TGP funds distributed.
- TGP funds cannot be transferred from one project to another or to another organization other than that listed on the application.
- Applicants not in compliance with reporting deadlines and procedures will be disqualified from receiving any future TGP funding.
- If a project changes during developmental or planning stages, the applicant should submit a written request to VisitHATTIESBURG, which may choose to accept or decline the changes. If changes are declined, no further TGP funds will be awarded and any distributed funds must be refunded immediately. If changes are approved, an addendum to the original agreement will be provided by VisitHATTIESBURG and the project may move forward with pledged funding.
- **Selected projects must be completed within the Fiscal Year in which the grant is awarded. If a project is delayed, the grantee must inform VisitHATTIESBURG in writing, requesting an extension. VisitHATTIESBURG reserves the right to reject a request for extension which may result in penalties including but not limited to a full refund of TGP funds distributed.**

For questions related to VisitHATTIESBURG's Tourism Grant Program, please contact Kristen Brock at kbrock@visithburg.org or 601-296-7475.