



## 2024 Walton County Event Grant Program Guidelines

### Program Overview:

The Walton County Tourism Department's Event Marketing Support Program is intended to support, grow, and promote local special events that have the ability to generate overnight stays, strengthen the South Walton/Beyond the Beach brands and enhance the Walton County visitor experience. Applicants whose events are accepted into the program will receive a combination of marketing support and reimbursable funds that are intended to achieve the listed objectives above.

It is the intention of WCTD to support event partners whose events and marketing plans align with the South Walton/Beyond the Beach brand and target demographic (affluent travelers, \$175K+ household income).

### Eligibility:

In order for a special event to be considered for approval, it must meet the following minimum requirements:

- Event must take place in Walton County between October 1, 2023, and September 30, 2024.
- The event must be made accessible to the public and disabled persons.
- A complete application and all supporting documentation must be submitted prior to the application deadline.
- Applicant must show proof that all required county and/or local permits are secured prior to the event date.
- A post event report must be completed and delivered to WCTD no more than 45 days following the event.
- Multiple events by the same applicant require separate applications.
- Eligible events must be willing to comply with the South Walton/Beyond the Beach brand inclusion standards.

### Process and Timeline:

#### January 10 -

- Update form on Simpleview
- Update language on website with new dates and contact info

**February 1** - Announce applications are live and available for partners

**February 1** - March 29 - Applications are available for 9 weeks

**March 29** - Application closes, Remove links from website



**March 30 – April 3** - Applications and supporting documents are reviewed by staff for completeness for eligibility requirements by staff.

**April 4-10** - Applications are independently scored by a Tourism Department committee.

**April 11-28** - Staff will review and compile the score sheets completed by the Tourism Department committee to determine which events have been accepted into the program and at what level of support.

**May 1** - Include in budget

**June 6** - The Walton County Tourist Development Council will meet at the regularly scheduled meeting. The council will review the scores to approve.

#### **Event Classifications:**

##### **Signature Event - \$20,000**

- Large-scale, multi-day events with significant ticket sales;
- Ability to generate a significant amount of paid, overnight lodging in Walton County;
- Demonstrates a historical track record of event attendance and rooms nights generated in Walton County;
- Marketing plan demonstrates significant efforts to promote event in core markets such as Atlanta, Birmingham, Nashville, New Orleans, Houston, Dallas, Mobile;
- Provides strong opportunity for regional, national or international exposure for Walton County;
- Enhances the visitor's Walton County vacation experience.

##### **Experience Event - \$10,000**

- Mid-sized events generally having one or more days of significant event activity;
- Ability to generate paid, overnight lodging in Walton County;
- Demonstrates a track record of event attendance and room nights generated in Walton County;
- Marketing plan demonstrates a significant effort to promote the event on a regional level, outside of Bay and Okaloosa County;
- Provides an opportunity for regional exposure for Walton County;
- Enhances the visitor's Walton County vacation experience.

##### **Community Event - \$5,000**

- Small events generally having one day of significant event activity;



- Demonstrates a track record of event attendance;
- Marketing plan demonstrates a significant effort to promote the event on a regional level, outside of Walton County;
- Provides an opportunity for regional exposure for Walton County;
- Enhances the visitor's Walton County vacation experience.

#### **Special Circumstances:**

- Certain event partners whose primary business is event production that have a yearly calendar of consistent but changing event programming may qualify for a yearly support program at the Signature Event level to be used to promote multiple events throughout the year.
- These circumstances will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

#### **Program Benefits:**

#### **Event Responsibilities**

##### Marketing

- Provide a detailed Marketing Plan with an invoice for payment
- Event must provide Public Safety Plan
- South Walton/Beyond the Beach Logo on the following
  - Ads
  - Website
  - T-shirts
  - Programs
- Tiered Ticket Approach
  - Signature
    - 20 tickets
    - 4 VIP
  - Experience
    - 16 tickets
    - 2 VIP

##### Communications

- WCTD named in all press releases;
- NW/SW is named as the location of the event;
- Media tickets should be made available to the WCTD on request in addition to marketing tickets;
- Allow WCTD the opportunity to host a meal with any event-hosted media.

#### **Walton County Tourism Department Responsibilities**

##### Marketing

- Will provide proper logos for event use;



- Create a signature/experience event on WCTD website with photos and content provided by event;
- Create an online campaign based on timing request of event;
- Provide reports to event based on online campaign.

#### Communications

- Pitch event as part of communications process

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#### Scoring Criteria:

All events will be scored by a TDC committee with a maximum score of 100 based on a combination of responses to the Application Questionnaire, the event's Marketing Plan and the Event Description Narrative. Members of the committee will vote to determine if an event qualifies as a Signature or Experience event. Events receiving an aggregate score below **75/100** will not be accepted into the program.

#### Other Marketing Tips for the Marketing Plan

##### Targeting

- Demographics - Ages 35-64 with HHI of \$175,000+
  - Affluent Families: age 35-54 with HHI \$175K+ and have kids under 18 in the household
  - Empty Nesters: age 55-64 with HHI \$175K+, married and no kids under 18 in the household
- Geography - Atlanta, Birmingham, Nashville, Houston, Dallas, New Orleans, Mobile

##### Digital Advertising vs Print Advertising

- Within digital advertising, targeting capabilities ensure you reach your target audience based on age, HHI, location and interests.

- Because digital advertising allows tracking of engagement with ads and clicks on those ads, a clearer ROI can be established. You know what is working and what is not working.
- Digital advertising allows for quick changes to be made, rather than the “set it and forget it” approach of traditional media.

## Digital Advertising

- Google Search Engine Marketing
  - Geo-targeting: Birmingham, Nashville, Atlanta, Dallas, Houston, New Orleans,
  - Audience Targeting: Adults 35-64, HHI \$150K+, Luxury Travelers, Affluent Moms, Affluent Baby Boomers, Empty Nesters
  - Campaign Flight Dates: January - April
  - Creative: Ad Copy
  - Estimated Impressions: 50,000
  - Net Cost: \$2,500
- Facebook Promoted Posts
  - Geo-targeting: Birmingham, Nashville, Atlanta, Dallas, Houston, New Orleans
  - Audience Targeting: Affluent Adults 35-64
  - Campaign Flight Dates: January - April
  - Creative: :15 Video, Social Post Copy
  - Estimated Video Completions: 3,100
  - Net Cost: \$2,500

## Print:

- Garden & Gun: Published monthly, the publication is distributed to affluent households nationally with 56% of the audience being within the Southeast.
  - Circulation: 400,000
  - Demographics: 90% of the G&G audience is 35+ and average HHI level is \$370,800
  - Distribution: Monthly
  - Placement: Full page in April/May Visit Florida issue
  - Net Cost: \$70,000
- Nashville Lifestyles – the publication reaches middle Tennessee’s educated and affluent residents monthly. Editorial features in every issue include fashion, celebrities, music, events, entertaining, health, travel, homes, and dining.
  - Circulation: 32,000
  - Demographics: Median age of their readers is 45 and 54% have household income of \$100,000+
  - Distribution: Monthly
  - Placement: Full page in March Spring Travel Issue
  - Net Cost: \$2,555