



**Tourist Development Council
Advisory Committee Report
Special Events and Convention
Grant Guidelines
February 8, 2018**

TDC Advisory Committee Members

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The TDC advisory Committee was charged with providing the Tourist Development Council with guidelines for the Special Events and Convention Grant guidelines under 2016-599–E.

Special Event grants. This component shall authorize the Tourist Council to award special event grants to organizations or persons hosting an event in the City or surrounding areas. Any event funded under this component shall have as one of its primary purposes the attraction of tourists to the City as evidenced by the promotion of such event to tourists. This component shall be limited to the following grants:

(i) *Grant awards for attendance of 25,000 tourists or 10,000 room nights or greater.* The Tourist

Council may award grants for special events designed to attract a minimum of 25,000 tourists to the City, which grant award may not exceed \$250,000 for any such event unless currently obligated by contract until such obligation expires; and

(ii) *Grant awards for attendance of 5,000 tourists or greater for events held at publicly owned venues.* The Tourist Council may award grants for special events designed to attract a minimum of 5,000 tourists to the City using publicly owned tourist venues such as the arena, performing arts center, or stadium or at the zoo or eligible museums. Such grant awards may not exceed \$100,000 per event.

The TDC Advisory Committee respectfully submits our report and following recommendations.

Committee Members included

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Overview

The advisory committee used their expertise of having both reviewed and awarded grants and proposals and having experience submitting proposals for grants and contract procurement. Additionally, the committee reviewed what other communities around the state were doing regarding their special events in grants.

We found that most current processes and guidelines were effective. We did find areas where we were able to enhance the process, create a more objective assessment for the good of the city and our county, and streamline the evaluation process. Additionally, we were cognizant of changing social media and technology platforms, future development within Jacksonville and our ability to be nimble while being proactive as a community of choice for meetings, events, and conventions.

The application process will remain the same with some minor adjustments. These include educating the applicant on the evaluation criteria and points system.

The recommendations are for the evaluation, review and payment. Here are our recommendations and suggested guidelines.

This advisory report includes:

- 1) Recommendations
- 2) Evaluation criteria for the Special Events and Convention Grant guidelines.
- 3) Evaluation for payment to the grant winners.
- 4) Suggested topics for the TDC to review and discuss.

Further we defined the word “event” according to the Events Industry Council. The word event covers all meetings, trade shows, conventions, congresses, incentive events, exhibits, gatherings and other meetings.

Recommendation 1 – Change Ordinance - Expand Venue Description

The addition of the words “**other Duval private assets, when publicly owned venues are not appropriate or available.**”

(ii) **Grant awards for attendance of 5,000 tourists or greater for events held at publicly owned venues** and **other Duval private assets, when publicly owned venues are not appropriate or available.** The Tourist Council may award grants for special events designed to attract a minimum of 5,000 tourists to the City using publicly owned tourist venues such as the arena, performing arts center, or stadium or at the zoo or eligible museums. Such grant awards may not exceed \$100,000 per event.

The committee had detailed discussions about Duval county’s private assets that are used by event producers and who would consider bringing their event to Duval County if they were eligible for the grant awards program. We have assets owned by private citizens (such as a world class motor cross track) that could be utilized for events that would bring in international guests if the producers are eligible for the grant process.

Competition in the events industry is fierce in the state of Florida. We have limited assets for events, compared to other cities. Embracing unique privately-owned venues provides COJ with additional marketing pull.

Recommendation 2 – Change Ordinance - Add “any combination of”

Add the words “**and any combination thereof**”

(i) Grant awards for attendance of 25,000 tourists or 10,000 room nights or greater and any combination thereof. The Tourist Council may award grants for special events designed to attract a minimum of 25,000 tourists to the City, which grant award may not exceed \$250,000 for any such event unless currently obligated by contract until such obligation expires; and

Recommendation 3 – Use a Points System

Utilizing a points system to evaluate each submission using an objective quality standard. This allows for transparency, clarity and innovation. The goal is to have applicants have a score of at least 40 with a goal of 60 for excellence. Visit Jacksonville will continue to review the Marketing Portion of the application.

The TDC could have subcommittees who review only one aspect of each proposal. They could stay focused on one aspect, allowing a deeper evaluation of the particular area of focus. Using the points system, they can determine the quality, effectiveness, and innovation of their area of focus.

Criteria	Qualifier	Considerations / Factors	Maximum Points	Total Points
Total Tourism Impact	Does the event or project drive tourism development, benefit economic prosperity and opportunity for Jacksonville?	Overall projected direct economic impact, room nights generated, hotel motel tax collections, calendar maximization, and potential for attendees outside of 150 mile radius.	25	
Brand Opportunity	Will be special event project successfully articulate competitively position and positively promote Jacksonville's brand?	Leadership position for the Jacksonville brand. National television broadcast. International exposure. Visibility of destination marketing logos imagery and media coverage.	15	
Marketing Plan	Does the special event project meet and demonstrate the necessary marketing plan requirements?	Traditional advertising electronic and social media, PR and earned media, collaborative, partnership and influence marketing. After review by Visit Jacksonville were their findings of innovation, uniqueness?	10	
Stewardship	Does the event/project have leverage opportunities for Jacksonville?	Use of city-owned public venues parks, attractions, museums, area assets and potential business opportunities. Use of local talent. Use of local suppliers.	5	
Quality of Life Impact	Does the event enhance the quality of life for the community?	Community engagement, civic, social and legacy impact.	5	
Total Points Achieved			60	

Recommendation 4 – Focused Category

We recommend to the TDC that in evaluating grant applications, small groups of TDC members will look at one category for all applicants (ex. all marketing portions of all applications) rather than all TDC members looking at all applications in their entirety. This method is used by State and Federal levels of government and provides for enhanced effectiveness.

Recommendation 5 – Values and Brand Statement

A strong brand opportunity exists with the alignment with special events and projects. The advisory committee suggests that the TDC have a clear brand and value statement of Jacksonville and communicate that to applicants. What are the values of Jacksonville? What is the brand we want to promote nationally and internationally?

Recommendation 6 – Evaluation for Payment to the Grant Winners

To receive final payment applicants must follow current guidelines and:

- Submit specific social media advertisement purchases with the targeted geographic group (150 miles outside of Duval County or 2 hours drive).
- Submit links to influencers and personalities who are talking about the event in Duval County.
- Possible need to change the ordinance.

Recommendation 7 – Guidelines for an Application Fee

The task force discussed the purpose of an application fee, and the pros and cons of having an application fee attached to the process. The task force analyzed the possible costs including the process, who is involved (various COJ employees, the staff of Visit Jacksonville, and volunteers of the TDC) and the time dedicated to the process.

After review, the task force agreed that there should be **no application fee** to submit a grant proposal.

The Evaluation Process

The goal is to have applicants have a score of at least 40 with a goal of 60 for excellence.

The small TDC sub review committees will review only one aspect of each proposal.

The following pages have the specific questions and criteria for each area.

Criteria	Qualifier	Considerations / Factors	Maximum Points	Total Points
Total Tourism Impact	Does the event or project drive tourism development, benefit economic prosperity and opportunity for Jacksonville?	Overall projected direct economic impact, room nights generated, hotel motel tax collections, calendar maximization, and potential for attendees outside of 150 mile radius.	25	
Brand Opportunity	Will be special event project successfully articulate competitively position and positively promote Jacksonville's brand?	Leadership position for the Jacksonville brand. National television broadcast. International exposure. Visibility of destination marketing logos imagery and media coverage.	15	
Marketing Plan After Review from Visit Jacksonville	Does the special event project meet and demonstrate the necessary marketing plan requirements?	Traditional advertising electronic and social media, PR and earned media, collaborative, partnership and influence marketing. After review by Visit Jacksonville were their findings of innovation, uniqueness?	10	
Stewardship	Does the event/project have leverage opportunities for Jacksonville?	Use of city-owned public venues parks, attractions, museums, area assets and potential business opportunities. Use of local talent. Use of local suppliers.	5	
Quality of Life Impact	Does the event enhance the quality of life for the community?	Community engagement, civic, social and legacy impact.	5	
Total Points Achieved			60	

Evaluation Category: Total Tourism Impact

Criteria Category: Total Tourism Impact

Maximum Points: 25

Summary for Evaluator: Does this event drive tourism development benefit economic prosperity and opportunity for Jacksonville? Overall projected direct economic impact, room nights generated, hotel motel tax collections, calendar maximization, and potential for attendees outside of 150 mile radius.

Questions to Consider in Evaluation:

- Does the applicant show how many room nights and venues they will be using?
- How will they provide documentation that they have met room nights?
- How will they survey and show the results to count room nights?
- The onus is on the applicant to show the TDC how they will prove that they met the goals they set. The application states “How do you intend to provide a valid count of attendance of tourist and room nights at this year’s event?”
 - Are the evaluation tools specific and focused?
 - How will data be collected and by whom?
 - What is their back up assessment plan?

Evaluation Category: Brand Opportunity

Criteria Category: Brand Opportunity

Maximum Points: 15

Summary for Evaluator: Visibility of destination, marketing logos imagery and media coverage.

Will the special event successfully articulates, competitively position and positively promote the Jacksonville brand? Does the event yield a leadership position for the Jacksonville brand? Will Duval County or the City of Jacksonville have national television broadcast or international exposure?

Questions to Consider in Evaluation:

- How is the Jacksonville brand integrated into all the marketing and communication pieces?
- How does this event position Jacksonville's brand in a lead position?
 - Logo placement
 - The message platform
 - Significant brand alignment
- Is the special event in alignment with the updated Jacksonville values and vision of Jacksonville?
- Are there other complementary brands that will strengthen this position through collaboration or partnership?
- Does the event use influential personalities to promote the event and Jacksonville?

Evaluation Category: Marketing Plan

Criteria Category: Marketing Plan

Maximum Points 10 points

Summary for Evaluator: Does the special event project meet and demonstrate the necessary marketing plan requirements? Does the event incorporate traditional advertising, electronic and social media, PR and earned media, collaborative, partnership and influence marketing? Do they have a website with links back to Visit Jacksonville? After review by Visit Jacksonville what were their findings of innovation, uniqueness?

Questions to Consider in Evaluation: After the marketing review and approval from Visit Jacksonville.

- Did the applicant produce innovative and unique marketing plan?
- Is new technology being used? Video promotion?
- Does the applicant have enough time to execute their marketing plan?
- What are the specific ad purchases for promotion outside 150-mile radius.
- How will the objectives be measured?
- Does the marketing plan and the letter of acceptance of the proposal provide enough time for the event to follow through on all marketing commitments?

Evaluation Category: Stewardship

Criteria Category: Stewardship

Maximum Points: 5

Summary for Evaluator: The event shall be graded on the basis of the event increasing utilization and promotion of City of Jacksonville and Duval County public access sports and entertainment venues including parks, attractions, museums and other Duval County assets. Given that such utilization stimulates the vibrancy and relevance of Duval County's public access venues and unique private venues, the point value is given will reflect the impact of funded events that will increase the profile of the hosting venue. Does the event offer as an enhancement to the tourist experience in additional opportunities to tour Duval County gems on the date of the event? A strong score will weigh both utilization and promotion of the hosting venue.

Questions to Consider in Evaluation:

- Is the event to be held in a city, county or publicly-funded supported venue or destination?
- Is the venue for the event one in which tourists or visitors to our city might be inclined to visit at a time other than the funded event?
- Does a venue benefit from the event being hosted there?
- How important is the funding to the venue securing the event?
- Is there competition for the event such that it may be hosted at another private venue or similar public venue outside of Duval County?
- Are Duval County local talent and subcontractors utilized for the event?
- Will Jacksonville and/or Duval County lose the event if it is not hosted at a private unique venue within Duval County?
- Does the event integrate the utilization of or promotion of other county destinations outside of the actual event venue, during the event period (ie: promote to its guests to visit the zoo during their stay)?

Evaluation Category: Quality of Life Impact

Criteria Category: Quality of Life Impact

Maximum Points: 5

Summary for Evaluator: Does the event project enhance the quality of life for the community? Community engagement, civic, social and legacy impact. The inclusion of social effect awareness (the leave behind) as assessment criteria may diversify the applicant pool to include those who are concerned with such impact.

Questions to Consider in Evaluation:

- Is the applicant using underused venues (hidden gems)?
- Is the applicant using local service providers for their events?
- Does the applicant have a social impact plan of action that gives back to the community?
 - Free music, theatre, artistic or community outreach clinics for the community
 - Recycling initiative or youth initiative. Such as donations of goods or services- T Shirts recycled to a not for profit in town. Swag and/or bags donated to local charities.
 - Is the applicant utilizing programs for underserved youth, mothers and children, programs for job creation from not for profits?
 - Is the applicant providing services to enhance, or improve a community center, a park or building a playground?

Topics for The TDC To Review And Discuss

During our meetings there were topics for discussion that were outside our scope of focus. We felt it was important for TDC members to be aware and to have further discussions and provide guidelines.

1. We highly suggest that the TDC consider removing the stipulation of a non-profit entity being the only type of organization that can apply for TDC support. This limits the opportunities Jacksonville could have to drive further tourism development. Having flexibility with either non-profit or for-profit entities being afforded the opportunity to submit applications puts Jacksonville and Northeast Florida in a competitive advantage against our peer cities.
2. Equestrian Center grant management.
3. Flexibility for Visit Jacksonville on the \$5/room night requirement for convention groups.
4. The use of private facilities for TDC funded events due to space availability or suitability for the specific event.
5. Policies for multi-year grants (special event and convention grants).
6. The need and process for a TDC budget category for requesting convention bid funds to host major meeting and even conventions in Jacksonville.
7. There are potential events that bring significant national and international television exposure to Duval County and the region that may not meet the tourist threshold. Some are made for television events but may not drive the hotel/motel tax. We recommend that the TDC develop a mechanism to have flexibility for considerations of certain events. The object is to provide the TDC with the authority and flexibility to make an investment decision if an event could deliver significant value for branding and exposure for Jacksonville.
8. Access to the waters ways. There may be a conflict between 7 new marine time enforcements rules and events. It is advised that the TDC review for possible issues for Duval County citizens.