



Tourism Grant



Application for 2024 Funds

**Completed application packages are due by 4:30 p.m.
Wednesday, November 15th, 2023.**

Cowlitz County

**1900 7th Avenue
Longview, WA 98632
360.577.3137**

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

CAN WE APPLY FOR FUNDING FOR MORE THAN ONE EVENT?

Yes. Applications may be submitted for more than one event. Applicants should not make multiple requests for the same event or project. Each application must be for a unique event or project.

ARE GRANTS ONLY FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS?

No, both Government Agencies and Non-Profit agencies may apply

WHAT CAN THE GRANT FUNDS BE USED FOR?

Grant funds will be allocated for new or existing events that bring people to Cowlitz County from outside a 50-mile radius and attract hotel stays. Allowed expenses include marketing and promotion of the event.

DO WE GIVE BONUS POINTS FOR ANYTHING?

Yes, we give extra points for:

- Innovative events that represent an unusual approach or moves the County's Tourism program in a useful new direction
- Events that occur outside of our peak season of May 15th to September 15th
- Family friendly events

HOW LONG ARE MY GRANT FUNDS AVAILABLE?

The event or project must take place within the calendar year of 2024.

WHAT IF I DON'T USE THE ENTIRE AMOUNT I AM AWARDED?

This is a reimbursement grant. You will be reimbursed for applicable expenses, with documentation, up to the awarded amount. Any unused funds will remain with the County and will roll over to the next year.

Cowlitz County
1900 7th Avenue
Longview, WA 98632
360.577.3137

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Cowlitz County Citizens, Jurisdictions,
Agencies and Organizations

FROM: Kim Bowcutt, Tourism Director

DATE: October 10, 2023

SUBJECT: Notice of Funding Availability

This Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) announces that Cowlitz County is accepting applications from public and non-profit agencies for events projects that assist tourism development and promotion in Cowlitz County. Funds may be used for marketing and promotions for existing or new events/projects that attract overnight stays in our County per RCW 67.28.1816

The program is funded through the taxes imposed on hotel and motel room rentals in Cowlitz County. **Funds will be available on or about January 20, 2024**, and will be awarded on a competitive basis to eligible applicants with the demonstrated ability to complete their event by December 18, 2024.

Historically, the average allocation has been about \$3,000 but has ranged from \$5,000 - \$10,000 depending on economic impact to the community and overnight stays in hotels. Details of eligibility and other program requirements are included in the application package.

To be eligible, completed applications must be received by 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, November 15, 2023, by the Cowlitz County Tourism Department at 1900 7th Avenue, Longview, WA. No applications received after that time and date will be considered for funding.

Applicants will be notified by December 15, 2023, as to whether or not they will be awarded funding.

If you have questions, require additional information, or are in need of technical assistance, please contact Dawn Smith, Tourism Coordinator, at 360.577.3137 or smithd@cowlitzwa.gov

APPLICATION PACKAGE

- Completed application.
- W-9
- References-2 with one from an entity paying lodging taxes
- Meeting minutes if a public agency

- The application must demonstrate that the organization will supply at least 25% of the total event cost. The matching requirement may be met by a cash contribution, in-kind services, or a combination of both.
- No event will be considered for funding unless it can demonstrate that it can be completed by December 18, 2024.
- Assistance program funds cannot be used to offset non-project operations and maintenance costs.
- If an organization submits applications for more than one event, each event must have its own complete application package and the applicant **must** rank the projects from most important to least important.
- The program is open to applicants from public and non-profit entities with the demonstrated capacity to accomplish the proposed event. This includes agencies such as port districts, cities and towns, museums and galleries, historical societies, arts groups, chambers of commerce, and 501(c) 3 and 501(c) 6 non-profits.

**Please provide the following information as attachment:
(These are requirements for an application to be considered for funding.)**

ALL APPLICANTS:

- One copy of the completed grant application. Please email or fax the completed copy to smithd@cowlitzwa.gov or fax to 360.577.6254
- Two references, one from a hotel or motel or other lodging tax paying entity (RV Park or Campground)
- Current 2022 W-9

PUBLIC AGENCIES (Cities & Towns):

- Copy of meeting minutes approving project and authorizing application for funds.

COWLITZ COUNTY TOURISM GRANT

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Cowlitz County Tourism Grant is to support events that encourage tourism activities in Cowlitz County. Eligibility of sponsors and events is defined broadly to encourage wide participation and innovative proposals.

The source of the funds is the County's share of lodging taxes collected on hotel and motel room rentals within Cowlitz County.

Cowlitz County Tourism administers this grant program and staff will provide technical assistance. Please call 360.577.3137 for help.

SELECTION PROCESS

When the solicitation period closes, staff will review applications for completeness and eligibility. Qualifying applications will then be evaluated by the County's Lodging Tax Advisory Committee (LTAC), which will make funding recommendations to the County. The Board of County Commissioners will make the final decision on approval and funding levels. Staff will then consult with applicants of approved events to develop contracts. When both the applicant and the County sign the contract, staff will notify sponsors to proceed.

It is very important that applicants are aware of the following.

- All contracts are reimbursement-based, i.e. the applicant must expend funds on approved items and then seek reimbursement under terms of the governing contract.
- No costs incurred prior to the county's signing of a contract for an approved event can be reimbursed.
- Only after a contract is issued is an event applicant authorized to begin incurring reimbursable costs.



Cowlitz County
Tourism Grant Program

Event Information

Event Title: _____

Event Sponsor /
Contract Authority: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Contact Person: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Date Range and Location of Event/Project _____

Sponsor is: Non-Profit Public agency

How many times have you received the Lodging Tax Grant, for this activity, in the past five years? _____

2024 Budget:

Request: \$ _____ Match: \$ _____ Total Project Budget: \$ _____

If you do not receive full funding, how would this affect your project?

Estimated visitors drawn: _____ Estimated overnight stays generated: _____

EVENT SUMMARY

In the space below, provide a concise, one paragraph summary of your proposed event and what tourism expansion objectives it will accomplish. If your request is part of a larger project or event, you may briefly describe the over-all project. However, please focus the majority of your answer on the specific element for which you are requesting funding.

SCOPE OF EVENT

Fully describe the event. Expand your summary paragraph from page one to address such issues as: what it is you wish to do; who will benefit and why and how; beginning and ending dates of your event; and what measures you will apply to evaluate its success. If you are requesting funds for a specific portion of a larger event, please so state but focus your response on the element for which you are requesting funding assistance. This section requires you to establish, in a clear and quantifiable way, that your event will sustain or enhance one or more aspects (to be identified by you) of tourism in Cowlitz County. Proposals from events that can prove they will generate overnight stays are preferred.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Because Cowlitz County operates the Hotel-Motel fund as an economic development tool, one of the key evaluation criteria for selecting a project for funding is its potential economic benefit. In addition, the County is required to report to the State on the numbers of visitors and the numbers of overnight stays generated by each project. Please indicate the anticipated economic impact of your event and, especially, its potential for generating visitors and overnight stays. Quantify your projections and indicate how you propose to verify your results. Remember, food and fuel purchases assist the local economy but do not contribute to the Hotel-Motel fund; the fund derives entirely from taxes on overnight lodging in the County. If your event will not result directly in overnight stays, try to demonstrate how its success may contribute to generating future overnight stays. An example might be a one-day festival you sponsor which, when combined with – and jointly marketed with – an event the following day which appealed to the same audience, would encourage visitors to spend the night and attend both events. In this example, it would be important to discuss the timeframe and strategy for future implementation of an appropriate cooperative marketing campaign to link your one- day festival with the second one. Again, quantify your projections

EVENT BUDGET

Please detail the budget for your event or project. Remember that though the County can pay no personnel costs (wages, benefits, etc.), such costs are eligible as a portion of your matching portion. The County can pay a share of such costs as design and layout of printed materials, printing, and communications. Please specify whether your various match items will be either cash (C) or in-kind (I/K).

BUDGET NARRATIVE

In the space below please offer any information which you feel may provide useful background on your proposed budget such as source and rate at which matching labor costs are calculated, numbers of promotional pieces to be produced, numbers of media ads to be placed, media outlets to be used, etc.

	Event Name:				
Item	Requested From County	*Requested From City (if applicable)	Cash Match	In-Kind Match	Total
1.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
2.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
3.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
4.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
5.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
6.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
7.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
8.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
9.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
10.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Totals:	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

COOPERATIVE COMMITMENTS FORM

Please provide details of your efforts to apply for City LTAC funds, in the area where your event will be taking place.

As part of the grant application packet please complete this form with all information related to other funds/source contributions.

City LTAC: _____
Name of City

Date Applied: _____

Amount Requested \$ _____

Status of Application: _____

Contact Person at City: _____

Have you applied for City LTAC funds in prior years? If so, please list dates, amounts and results:

Other Funding Partners: _____

List of Cooperative Partners: _____

Amount (by partner) \$ _____

GRANT APPLICATIONS WILL BE JUDGED BY THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA

1. Previous Events (10 Points)

If the applicant has applied for grant funds from Cowlitz County Tourism in the past, did they meet contract requirements? Were reports submitted on time? Is this a repeat funding application or a new event/promotion? Previous infractions mean reduced points on current application. Submitted spread sheet report of overnight stays at area lodging, and lodging tax project report.

2. Relationship to Tourism and Degree of Long Term Impact (50 points)

- Ability of event to attract visitors to Cowlitz County and enhance tourism product **(15 points)**
- Ability of event to increase transient room tax revenues (measured by increasing overall revenues from room tax by generating overnight visitor stays) **(15 points)**
- Ability of event to encourage repeat or future visits, or encouraging visitors to extend their stay **(10 points)**
- Event includes measurable and credible indicators and objectives **(10 points)**

3. Applicant's Ability to Undertake the Event (20 points)

- Is the plan and budget realistic?
- Has the applicant identified metrics to indicate success?
- Does the event propose an efficient, economical use of the County's funds?
- Does the event meet the minimum match of 25% or more?
- Does the applicant have the support of cooperative partners?
- Are there any previously demonstrated management and administrative successes?

4. Demonstrated Community Support and Public Involvement (20 points)

- Is there evidence of in-kind support?
- Is there evidence of endorsement by community groups and at least one hotel/motel? (Two letters of support/endorsement are required.)
- Were there any guest focus groups, guest surveys, public workshops, meetings, or other methods to gauge guest interest or the potential for citizen involvement in the event?

Bonus Points (up to 15 points)

- Does the event represent an unusual approach or does it move the County's Tourism program in a useful new direction? **(5 points)**
- Event has the potential to increase room tax revenues during the tourism shoulder and/or off-season, specifically before May 15th and after September 15th **(5 points)**
- Event is family friendly **(5 points)**

Total Points: 100

Total Bonus Points: 15