

Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Program
Criteria and Guidelines
2016

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Thirty-three percent of the Westmoreland County Room 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 Westmoreland County.** Awards are granted annually on the basis of merit as determined by the Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Review Committee and administered by the Westmoreland County Commissioners and the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau.

CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES

1. Grants may be awarded to any tourism-related business or organization (non-profit or for-profit) located within Westmoreland County that submits a request for such funds utilizing the official grant application furnished for this purpose and whose mission and operation are directly related to tourism and tourism development. Grants may be awarded in the following project categories:

- A. **Marketing Programs:** Marketing and advertising programs must be targeted to media that primarily reach out to non-Westmoreland County residents. Cooperative programs, which include tourism partners in the three-county Laurel Highlands region, are eligible. The Grant Program will not fund advertisements in local event programs (i.e. high school sports programs, local dance troupe programs, etc.)
- B. **Capital Projects:** Capital improvements that benefit tourism and augment the visitor's experience by developing new or enhancing existing Westmoreland County tourist attractions or amenities will be considered.
- C. **Visitor Center:** Operation of a visitor center in an Allegheny Trail Alliance officially recognized "Great Allegheny Passage Trail Town" in Westmoreland County, including expenses related to staffing the center (payroll, payroll taxes, payroll fees).
- D. **Grants will not be awarded for:**
 - Standard operational expenses (such as rent, utilities, insurance, payroll, etc., with the exception of the approved expenses directly related to the operation of a seasonal visitor center)
 - Travel expenses (such as gas, mileage, air fare or other transportation, lodging, etc.)
 - Sectarian religious purposes

2. Grants are awarded on an annual basis. The schedule for the 2016 Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Program is as follows:

- A Grant Coffee Chat will be held: **Wednesday, November 18, 2015**
- Applications will be available: **Monday, November 23, 2015**
- Deadline for applications to be submitted: **Friday, January 29, 2016, 4:30 PM**
- Awards will be announced: **Mid-March 2016**

3. Award amounts must be appropriately utilized within 10 months (**before January 31, 2017**). Based on the dollar amount, grants will be distributed with a minimum of one-half of the grant awarded at the time of the announcement. In the event a partial distribution of the grant is made, the remaining one-half of the grant will be distributed when the project is 50% complete. Prior to distribution of the remainder of a grant, the grant recipient must submit a written request for the balance of the grant, copies of invoices and proof of payment verifying the expenditure of the first portion of the grant, a brief project update and a completed Request for Second Half of Grant form to:

**Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau
ATTN: Westmoreland Tourism Grant
120 East Main Street
Ligonier, PA 15658**

4. If the funds are not appropriately utilized within the 10 month period (**ending January 31, 2017**), applicants must inform the grant committee in writing and either request an extension or return, to the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, administrator of the Westmoreland Tourism Grant Program, the entire amount that has not been appropriately utilized along with any interest accrued accompanied by an explanation of why the funds were not used.

5. As a provision of accepting the grant, awardees must provide adequate proof that the funds received were used for their intended purpose. **A final project report** is required not later than **April 30, 2017** and **must** include:

- A. Copy of approved Budget Expenditure form from grant application.
- B. Completed Grant Expenditure form with copies of invoices and proof of payment.
- C. A summary report of the completed project including any traceable results and pictures of capital improvements (if applicable).
- D. Final Grant Expenditure Certification form executed by a principal of the entity that received the grant attesting to the fact that the grant funds were used for the purpose(s) awarded.
- E. If a grant was for a capital project, photos (before & after) of the project **must** be included in the final report.
- F. If the grant was for a marketing project, copies of any advertisements, press releases, or samples of media placements/media logs are to be included in the final report.
- G. Grant recipients shall abide by all local, state, and federal laws and regulations and agree to furnish all receipts, proofs of payment and a certification form to verify the expenditure of any grant funds received. In addition, grant recipients understand that the expenditure of grant funds received might be subject to audit and or further verification and agree to cooperate with any such audit or verification process.

6. Grant applications must be typewritten. Handwritten applications will not be considered by the grant committee.

7. An applicant may request both a marketing and a capital grant. However, an applicant may not file more than one grant request for a marketing project or a capital project. Each type of grant request must be submitted on a separate application.

8. If, at the deadline for submission of the current year's application, any recipient of a prior grant who has not submitted the required receipts and supporting documentation within the prescribed deadline explaining and evidencing the use of the grant shall be "ineligible" to apply for a future grant until such receipts and supporting documentation required herein are submitted and accepted.

Based on extenuating circumstances that might have precluded a grant from being appropriately utilized, a deadline extension may be requested by a grant recipient and, if approved, said recipient shall be eligible to apply for a subsequent grant during the extension period.

The grant committee reserves the right to approve or reject an extension request and the decision of the committee or its designated representative(s) shall be final and binding upon all parties.

9. It shall be the sole responsibility of any recipient of a grant to adhere to the prescribed deadlines relative to the appropriate utilization of any such grant. Neither the county commissioners, the grant committee nor the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau shall be responsible for monitoring such deadlines or informing any grant recipient of an impending or expired deadline. Failure of a grant recipient to comply with the deadline relative to a grant will subject said recipient to the covenants and provisions contained in these Criteria and Guidelines.

10. Applicants should not assume that they will be awarded a grant on an annual basis, nor should they consider these tourism grants a permanent addition to their budget.

11. A for-profit business that receives a grant may be required to treat the grant as *income and is responsible for paying any necessary applicable taxes.*

12. Awardees shall publicly acknowledge the Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Program through all reasonable means as a stipulation of accepting such awards. This includes recognition of funding on printed media, social media pages, websites and any other media that might be engaged utilizing grant funds.

13. Applicants should use only the official forms and required documents for submission. Photographs may also be included. Individual applications should be secured with a paperclip. DO NOT staple set together and DO NOT place applications in folders or binders.

PLEASE NOTE THAT SIX COPIES OF EACH APPLICATION MUST BE SUBMITTED WITHIN THE PRESCRIBED DEADLINE IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED AND AS NOTED IN # 7 ABOVE. **HANDWRITTEN APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

WESTMORELAND COUNTY TOURISM GRANT REVIEW COMMITTEE

- A. The Tourism Grant Review Committee shall be comprised of five (5) members:
- One Westmoreland County Commissioner or the Commissioners' Designee
 - The President & CEO of the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau (LHVB) or the President & CEO's designee
 - One member of the LHVB Board of Directors who represents the
 - Westmoreland County lodging community
 - Two (2) representatives of Westmoreland County appointed by the Westmoreland County Commissioners to serve annual terms.
- B. In the event that a member of the Tourism Grant Review Committee serves on the board of the applicant organization or event, or is affiliated in another manner, it is mandatory that said member recuse himself/herself from the review and/or decision making process of that specific application.
- C. The committee will review all grant applications and announce the awards mid to late March 2016.
- D. Grant awards shall be presented to each recipient jointly by representatives of the Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Committee and the Westmoreland County Commissioners.
- E. Nothing shall prevent the Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Review Committee from withholding part or all of the grant funds available for annual awards should the committee believe that insufficient requests have been made justifying the full distribution of those funds. Should funds be remaining at the end of any fiscal year, those funds may be rolled forward to be utilized in the subsequent year's grant program.
- F. The Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Review Committee will review these Criteria and Guidelines on an annual basis to enhance, amend, or modify said guidelines.

*Re: Section 1, Paragraph C – The Allegheny Trail Alliance determination of the designation "Trail Town" shall be used as the official designation for this section.