



FY2027 DETAILS

WHAT IS THE TOURISM GRANT PROGRAM?

VisitHATTIESBURG's mission is to actively position Hattiesburg as a year-round premier leisure and business destination in the Gulf South.

Four focus areas have been identified to aid in this goal:

1. Grow tourism's economic impact
2. Communicate and amplify Hattiesburg's story
3. Strengthen its partner network and collaboration
4. Prioritize placemaking to enhance the HBURG experience

VisitHATTIESBURG's Tourism Grant Program (TGP) is a competitive annual allocation designed to enhance visitor and tourism promotion efforts in Hattiesburg. TGP provides funds for marketing and other qualified expenses for projects or events that fulfill VisitHATTIESBURG's mission and, ultimately, increase overnight travel to Hattiesburg.

Since its launch in 2018, the Tourism Grant Program has supported more than 190 tourism-friendly local events and initiatives, including concerts, sports tournaments, expos, and cultural festivals. To date, VisitHATTIESBURG has reinvested more than \$320,000 into the community through this program.

WHAT QUALIFIES FOR THE TOURISM GRANT PROGRAM?

Qualifying entities may be attractions, associations, organizations, or agencies.

While the target audience for the project or event should be outside the immediate Hattiesburg area (over 50-mile radius or out-of-state), qualified grant projects must be held in Hattiesburg and should be classified in one of the following categories:

- Festival or Event
- Attraction or Public Use Facility (museums, historical buildings, meeting space, sporting facilities, etc.)
- Other organizations or associations with a primary objective of promoting tourism in Hattiesburg

Applicants should also fulfill the following requirements:

- The project or event must be primarily located within Hattiesburg (includes Forrest and Lamar Counties).
- The project or event must occur during VisitHATTIESBURG's fiscal year (Oct. 1, 2026, to Sept. 30, 2027).
- The project or event should promote Hattiesburg as a destination by highlighting local lodging, dining, shopping, and attractions.
- The project or event must comply with all applicable laws, permits, licenses, and regulations.
- The project or event must maintain financial records detailing the use of TGP funds. These records should be filed and made available for inspection by VisitHATTIESBURG for no less than three (3) years.

HOW CAN FUNDS BE USED?

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 or other legitimate promotional activities.

Disallowable expenses include utilities, general operating or administrative costs (including salaries, travel, meals, and lodging), loan payments, personal benefits, cash awards, expenses not directly related to the approved project, and any illegal activities.

Of note, grants for individual organizations cannot exceed \$5,000 in a fiscal year (Oct. 1 – Sept. 30). Applicants are encouraged to prioritize events and projects for consideration.

An organization receiving TGP funding is responsible for paying all applicable taxes.

HOW ARE APPLICATIONS REVIEWED?

The Tourism Grant Program is overseen by VisitHATTIESBURG's Programs and Development department. A selection committee of local stakeholders evaluates all applications through a competitive review process.

It is the responsibility of the applying entity to make their case for funding by providing clear objectives, data from past events or projects, and other relevant

information. A qualified applicant will show how they will promote Hattiesburg to out-of-town visitors, generating overnight travel and economic stimulus to the city and the tourism industry. Assume the review committee is unfamiliar with your project, event, or organization.

For events or projects where sponsorship packages are available, applicants should include such details in TGP application submission.

Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

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

IF FUNDED, WHAT'S NEXT?

- A signed contract will be entered into between the applying entity and VisitHATTIESBURG.
- The current VisitHATTIESBURG logo* and/or TGP badge must be included on:
 - all collateral, advertisement, digital media, and signage related to the funded project.
 - project website upon grant selection and remain for no less than 12 consecutive months and linked to the VisitHBURG.org homepage.
- In cases where sponsorship packages are available, a sponsorship equivalent to the dollar amount of TGP funds awarded must be provided to VisitHATTIESBURG.
- Submit your event for inclusion on the VisitHBURG website at <https://www.visithburg.org/events/submit-an-event/>. Additional suggestions for where to submit events will be provided, too.
- Additional guidelines may be required on an individual project basis and will be outlined in the TGP award letter and agreement.
- A final report and supporting documentation must be submitted, or funding must be returned to VisitHATTIESBURG. The final report outline will be provided on the Tourism Grant Program page on VisitHBURG.org.

FY27 TGP IMPORTANT DATES:

Aug. 6, 2026	Applications open.
Sept. 1, 2026	Priority deadline for applications. Applications submitted by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2026 will be reviewed and considered first for funding. If TGP funding is not fully awarded during the initial review process, applications will continue to be accepted throughout FY2027, or until allocated TGP funds are depleted.
Sept. 15, 2026	Target date for notifying FY27 TGP applicants of status.
Oct. 1, 2026	VisitHATTIESBURG's FY26 fiscal year begins.
Oct. 1, 2026 - Sept. 30, 2027	All qualifying projects and events must occur within this window.
Sept. 30, 2027	Deadline for final reporting for FY27 awards. A final report must be provided within 30 days of project completion or by Sept. 30, 2027, whichever comes first, or grant funds must be returned.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW BEFORE APPLYING?

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 in a full refund of TGP funds distributed.
- Failure to submit a final report with receipts and other required documentation may result in penalties, including, but not limited to, a full refund of TGP funds distributed and disqualification for future TGP funding.
- Applicants not in compliance with reporting deadlines and procedures will be disqualified from receiving any future TGP funding.
- TGP funds cannot be transferred from one project to another or to another organization other than that listed on the application.

- If a project changes during developmental 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 by the recipient. 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.

For questions related to VisitHATTIESBURG's Tourism Grant Program, contact Lydia Pierce, lpierce@visithburg.org or 601-296-7475.

**VisitHATTIESBURG's logo can be found [here](#). Please note the logo and colors were updated in 2024, so awarded entities may need to update their files.*