

# **BRADFORD COUNTY TOURISM PROMOTION AGENCY ROOM TAX GRANT OVERVIEW**

## **I. Introduction**

As the agency responsible for ensuring that Room Tax money collected in Bradford County is used for the purposes of tourism, promotion and development, the Bradford County Tourism Promotion Agency has developed the Room Tax Grant Program.

## **II. Statement of Purpose**

30% of the county's hotel room tax will be used to help underwrite the expense of three types of projects:

1. Special Events and Exhibits that will increase tourism to an area/attraction.
2. Marketing, Promotional Projects, Publicity Initiatives to aid in advertising endeavors to increase tourism.
3. Wayfinding Aides by the county or the county's cultural, historical, and recreational organizations for the purpose of increasing tourism and overnight stays.

Grants may be considered and awarded each grant cycle by the Bradford County Tourism Promotion Agency upon the recommendation of the County's Room Tax Grant Committee. All grants are administered by the Bradford County Tourism Promotion Agency.

## **III. General Conditions**

- A. Grants will **not** be provided for sectarian religious expenses.
- B. Grants will **not** be awarded for food or refreshments, travel, **entertainment** or operational expenses.
- C. Grant funds may be used to match federal and state funds, but are not considered private donations. Room tax grants can only be used to match grants that are being used for projects that will directly impact tourism within the region.
- D. Grants will be awarded to qualified applicants as defined in Section V.

- E. Bradford County Tourism Promotion Agency may choose to set minimum/maximum grant awards.
- F. All grants must have a 25% cash or in-kind match of the total amount requested, due to House Bill 794, now known as Act 18 of 2016. For example: “Proof of Match” is per event, NOT overall total budget. When closing out a grant, organizations must show the money received AND matching funds went toward what they applied for (proof by invoices submitted). NO grant money can be used outside of the original request. **Proof of 25% cash or in-kind match MUST be submitted separately from the Organization’s Annual Budget.**

#### IV. Grant Categories

##### Category 1: Special Events/Exhibits

**Special Event:** A special event/exhibit is defined as an event/display open to the public that promotes tourism in the county. A bona fide not-for-profit or a program of an officially recognized not-for-profit organization must sponsor the event/exhibit. The event/exhibit must be either an attraction in and of itself or one that will be used as a complement to an existing public event, display or attraction. The event/exhibit must also be advertised outside a fifty mile radius.

- Consideration will be given to all proposed events/exhibits, including those without history. Preference may be given to proposals from organizations that have produced similar events/exhibits with at least one year of event history and have completed financial summaries (reported using generally accepted accounting principles) and that have advertised or otherwise promoted these events/exhibits at least fifty miles outside of the County.
- All proposals must include a written marketing plan to promote the event.

**Category 2: Marketing/Promotional Projects/Publicity Initiatives:** The applicant must demonstrate that this project directly correlates to increasing tourism within the region. The project should target promotion beyond a fifty mile radius with emphasis on overnight stays.

- The applicant must be a bona fide, officially recognized not-for-profit organization (and provide proof through copy of your most recent 501c-3 or 501c-6 Certification/Designation Letter).

**Category 3: Wayfinding Aides:** Consideration will be given to groups proposing to develop maps, signage or other tools which would be of assistance to area visitors.

## V. Qualified Applicants

Grants may be awarded to all qualifying **cultural, historical and recreational entities** for qualifying **special events or exhibits, marketing and promotion, and wayfinding projects**, that submit a written application for such funds. **Local and County government** may also qualify and submit a written application for review.

To be a qualifying **CULTURAL, HISTORICAL OR RECREATIONAL ENTITY**, an organization must:

- be a bona fide, officially recognized not-for-profit organization (**with proof of designation letter or certificate**)
- have one year of audited financial reports from within the past 2 years OR 990 if the organization does not do annual audits
- have a proven positive record of advertising to bring patrons and audience members from beyond a fifty mile radius.
- show proof of a 25% cash or in-kind match of the total amount requested, due to House Bill 794, now known as Act 18 of 2016. For example: “Proof of Match” is per event, NOT overall total budget. When closing out a grant, organizations must show the money received AND matching funds went toward what they applied for (proof by invoices submitted). NO grant money can be used outside of the original request. **Proof of 25% cash or in-kind match MUST be submitted separately from the Organization’s Annual Budget.**
- be in good standing with no open grant closeout documents pending submission or approval.

## VI. General Conditions for Award

1. Through a press release issued by the Bradford County Tourism Promotion Agency, the agency will announce the availability of grant funds in local newspapers, radio, website, and social media. Eligible applicants will submit **5 (five)** copies of the Room Tax Grant application directly to the **Bradford County Tourism Promotion Agency at 1 Washington St., Suite B, Towanda PA 18848.**
2. The Bradford County Tourism Promotion Agency Room Tax Committee will be charged with making certain each application meets and/or exceeds the established criteria.
3. A County Room Tax Committee (consisting of 5 Tourism Board members) appointed by the County Commissioners will be charged with reviewing all applications and determining which grants will be awarded, keeping in line with the available grant funds. The Committee may also recommend projects to be initiated by the County. The County Room Tax Committee shall present each of their final recommendations for awards to the County Commissioners for

formal approval. (In the event that a member of the County Room Tax Committee serves on the Board of a grant applicant, it is mandatory that said member removes himself or herself from the decision-making process related to any application submitted by that organization or event committee.) The County Commissioners and the County Room Tax Chairperson then sign off on those projects and a list of formally approved projects is submitted to the Tourism Agency office.

4. Once approved, the office will notify all applicants of whether their project was approved and for what amount.
5. Grant funds will be dispersed through the BRADFORD COUNTY TOURISM PROMOTION AGENCY. Nothing shall prevent the BRADFORD COUNTY TOURISM PROMOTION AGENCY from withholding part or all of the total monies available for awards.
6. It shall in no way be understood or implied that there shall be an equal division of the total funds among categories or projects.
7. Awardees of BRADFORD COUNTY TOURISM PROMOTION AGENCY Room Tax Grants must sign a contract outlining grant disbursement procedures.
8. Awardees (non-profit and municipalities) will disperse the received grant funds for eligible expenses. In a final closeout report to the BRADFORD COUNTY TOURISM PROMOTION AGENCY, awardees must provide adequate proof that the funds received were used for their intended purpose through the submission of ad tear sheets, media billings or any other similar documentation, along with properly executed vouchers, invoices, cancelled checks and/or other records detailing the nature and propriety of the charges that were signed and approved by the organization's officer(s). Organizations must also show proof of 25% match as required by law, and utilize the FREE resources offered via the Tourism Agency.
9. All publicity and promotional campaigns undertaken with grant funds must include the following:

***“Funded in part by the Bradford County Tourism Promotion Agency.”***

**Questions regarding the application process should be directed to:**

**Bradford County Tourism Promotion Agency**

**1 Washington St., Suite B**

**Towanda PA 18848**

**570.265.TOUR (8687)**

**bctourism@bradfordcountypa.gov**