



NORTH CAROLINA MOUNTAIN TOWNS OF CASHIERS,
CHEROKEE, DILLSBORO AND SYLVA

June 3, 2016

Jackson County Commissioners' Chairman and Board of Commissioners,

The Jackson County Tourism Development Authority has been working to establish a policy that can be utilized to fund requests that fall outside the scope of its grants program, which was created in 2013 to assist with advertising events. Since that program's inception, the JCTDA has distributed over \$88,000 in grant funding to organizations aimed at driving tourism to Jackson County.

In the last year, the board has been presented with requests for assisting with other tourism-related projects that fall outside the scope of advertising. Such applications include: monetarily sponsoring the Tuckasegee River Cleanup through funding t-shirts, bus rentals, and other fees; printing of tourist brochures and maps for municipalities; signs and wayfinding signage.

Funding these types of events falls outside the scope of the Grant program guidelines. It would be best to have a separate policy in place for us to use to support these requests. Recognizing that some requests we receive may be perceived as capital expenditures, we wanted to seek a consensus from the Jackson County Commissioners before proceeding with finalizing and adopting the special projects guidelines as drafted.

Legislation R12-34 that established the JCTDA requires Commissioner approval on all capital related expenditures but does not specify a threshold amount. The county typically considers capital expenditures as being greater than \$250.

We respect the need to obtain approval from the Commissioners for true capital requests such as buildings and infrastructure but at the same time, we do not want to burden the Commissioners by presenting each request we receive through a Special Projects Policy. It is not the intent of the Special Projects Policy to tap into the funds that may be set aside for capital projects requiring Commissioner approval.

In our draft policy, we have capped requests from community groups, municipalities, and organizations at \$2,500. This allows entities to apply for an amount up to that limit, but the process would be competitive, and the JCTDA board would review each application without a guarantee that any application in any fiscal year would be funded unless the JCTDA board deems it a good use of tourism dollars.

We are requesting input from the Commissioners on whether you have a comfort level with this policy. If you do, our board would like to enact this policy and move forward with authorizing these expenditures up to an amount of \$2,500 (maximum).

The language from R12-34 appears below as well as a draft copy of our special projects policy.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Nick Breedlove, Executive Director, JCTDA

Robert Jumper, Chairman, JCTDA

R12-34

A Resolution Confirming the Levy of an Existing 3% Occupancy Tax, Increasing the Levy of Occupancy Tax by 1%, and Creating the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority

Excerpts related to capital expenditures

Section 12: Powers and Duties of the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority.

- G. All funds must be used strictly for the promotion of tourist overnight visits to our county. Funds may be used for **capital expenditures** with recommendation from TDA Board and with approval by County Commissioners;

Section 13: Fiscal Year/Expenditures

Beginning July 1, 2013, the Authority shall use at least two thirds of occupancy tax funds to promote travel and tourism in Jackson County. The Authority may expend one-third of the occupancy tax funds for **capital-related expenditures** with the approval of the Jackson County Commissioners.

For the purpose of allocating expenditures, the Authority shall apply the following definitions:

- A. Promote travel and tourism – To advertise or market an area or activity, publish and distribute pamphlets and other materials, conduct market research, or engage in similar promotional activities that attract tourist or business travelers to the area; the term includes administrative expenses incurred in engaging in the listed activities.
- B. Tourism-related expenditures – Expenditures that, in the judgment of the Authority, are designed to increase the use of lodging facilities, meeting facilities, and convention facilities in the County by attracting tourists or business travelers to the county. The term includes tourism-related **capital expenditures**



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JCTDA Special Projects Funding Policy & Guidelines (DRAFT)

JCTDA Special Project funding is available to increase brand awareness, promote tourism and increase overnight stays in Jackson County. It is available to Jackson County community organizations, government, groups, or businesses for projects designed to increase tourism and tourism-related activities in Jackson County.

The JCTDA looks for projects that offer special or unique opportunities that may not be programmed in the budget. The Special Project funding program is not intended nor designed to replace its grant program that assists with advertising or to provide capital funding for larger scale projects.

Special Project funding is available in two tiers – up to \$1,200 and \$1,201 to \$2,500.

Tier 1 Project applications may request up to \$1,200 in funding.

Tier 2 Project applications may request amounts between \$1,201 to \$2,500 in funding.

The application requirements, reporting and evaluation are designed to be straightforward and achievable by most community groups and organizations.

Matching Requirements Special Project funding recipients are required to provide an equal match. Applicant must match the amount of the awarded grant. Up to 50% of the match may be in-kind, the other 50% should be a cash match.

(Example: An applicant that is awarded a \$1,200 grant must provide \$1,200 in matching funds. Of the \$1,200 in matching funds, up to \$600 may be in-kind services such as donated professional services or materials relevant to the grant project and the other \$600 should be a cash match).

Eligible projects include (but are not limited to) such things as:

- Community engagement activities (conferences, educational seminars, or meetings) to further the community's understanding and involvement with the tourism and hospitality sector
- Wayfinding/signage plans
- Tourism event creation
- Tourism service training or related projects
- Projects with similar intent or purpose

Ineligible projects for consideration include (but are not limited to):

- Fund raising requests
- Funding for feasibility studies
- Community festivals
- Reunions and centennial events
- Overhead expenses
- Existing deficits
- Awards and prizes
- Projects that seek funding for the organization's ongoing operating expenses.
- Applications that seek funding to host/advertise events (these requests will be handled through the JCTDA Grant Application).
- Projects that apply for funds after the project has been completed.
- No special project funding may be used to promote a specific candidate, political party, political platform, social issue, religion or individual doctrine.
- Special project funding should not be used for advertising as that is the purpose of the JCTDA grant program.
- Organizations that discriminate because of race, color, creed, gender or national origin.

Projects should:

- Serve unmet visitor needs that are clearly defined
- Encourage visitors to stay in Jackson County longer
- Enhance the visitor experience
- Improve the quality of life for Jackson County residents
- Demonstrate a need for funding
- Address a community need that supports the JCTDA mission
- Purchase goods in Jackson County whenever possible

Special Project Funding Requirements:

- Project must take place and reside within Jackson County.
- A minimum of three letters of support
- Project shall generate a detailed press release to JCTDA no later than 30 days prior to project start date. Press releases shall mention TDA involvement. Following successful project completion an additional press release shall be generated. The TDA Director or designee shall be invited to any project-related events, ribbon cuttings or the like.
- Projects shall request funding no later than 90 days in advance of project for consideration. The JCTDA may request that groups requesting funding present their request in person after reviewing their written submission.
- The recipient of special project funding is responsible for any liability issues resulting and holds the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority harmless from any liability as a result of granting special project funds.
- Board members shall recuse themselves from participating in the discussion and from voting on an application when they may have a real or perceived conflict of interest or will receive an economic benefit from the project being considered; they shall also make board members aware, as soon as they become aware, of any connection with a project placed before the board for consideration.
- Funds shall not be granted for normal and routine operating and administrative expenses normally paid by grantee. Routine expenses include, but are not limited to, costs such as utilities, telephone, shipping, salaries/wages, and fringe benefits, administrative or membership

- fees, salaries, operating costs, travel and mileage, architectural engineering studies.
- Once special project funds are approved, the funds will be disbursed following the accepted accounting practices of Jackson County TDA.
 - Should the special project exceed the estimated expense, no more than the granted amount will be paid out. Applicant is responsible and required to refund excess or unused funds.
 - Special projects funding may be awarded for less than the amount requested, depending on the number of applications received and other factors at the discretion of the JCTDA.
 - All projects must be completed within 12 months and the projects final report must be received no later than 30 days of project completion.

Partial Funding

The amount of requested grant funding through this program will far exceed the amount available. This Special Projects funding program is highly competitive. In some instances, and some fiscal years, no special projects may be funded or only partial funding may be recommended for a project. Applicants are asked to identify, in advance, how a project would be modified if the full amount is not recommended.

Definition of Tourism

The JCTDA utilizes the state's definition of tourism, which is aligned with the JCTDA's definition: "Tourism" means economic activity resulting from tourists. "Tourist" is a person who, for business, pleasure, recreation or participation in events related to the arts, heritage or culture, travels from the community in which that person is a resident to a different community that is separate, distinct from and unrelated to the person's community of residence, and that trip:

- a. Requires the person travel more than 50 miles from the community of residence; or
- b. Includes an overnight stay in a paid accommodation in Jackson County, North Carolina

Disclaimer The Jackson County Tourism Development Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications, to waive any informalities in the application process, and award special project funding to the applicant(s) to whom in their consideration submitted the best applications(s) and/or projects. The JCTDA reserves the right to inspect, at any time, the grantee's financial records and reserve the right to call for a full repayment from any grantee organization not complying with all regulations. Only one application per project will be considered; projects with multiple phases will be considered one project for this purpose.

In making decisions on grant applications the JCTDA will consider such factors as the type and scope of the applying organization/agency, the effect and impact of proposed project on travel and tourism, the timetable in which the project will be completed, the dollar amount requested, the number of applications received, the project's ability and intent to attract visitors to Jackson County on a continuing basis, and the overall merit of the project.

Evaluation

Grant applications will be reviewed by a JCTDA committee established to review special project applications. The JCTDA committee will recommend the top ranking applications, both Tier 1 and Tier 2, to the JCTDA full board who will then make the final decision for awarding grants. grant applications will be judged by the following criteria: previous tourism projects, degree of long term impact, applicant's ability to undertake the project, demonstrated community support and public, application, and TDA board evaluation.



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JCTDA Special Project Application

Organization Applying: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip _____

Contact Person: _____

Phone Number: _____

Tax ID # or SSN: _____

Email Address: _____

Web Site Address: _____

Title of Project: _____

Brief Description of Project: _____

Financial Data

Tourism Special Project Grant Funds Requested: _____

Cash Match Proposed: _____

In-Kind Match Proposed: _____

Total Value of Project: _____

Funding Period of Time: From _____ To _____

Has organization received JCTDA funding in any form in the past? If so please list years, amounts and through what program: Yes _____ No _____ Details:

The undersigned, as proposer, declares that he/she has carefully examined the requirements of the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority Special Projects Application packet and agrees, if the application is funded, that proposer will contract with the JCTDA to furnish the services as specified, in accordance with the grant application attached.

Signature of Applicant Date

BUDGET

Include all revenue and expenditures associated with this project proposal.

Revenue

a) Tourism Special Project Grant: _____
(Up to \$1,200 for Tier 1 or between \$1,201 and \$2500 for Tier 2)

b) Cash Match: _____
(Your organization must supply an equal match for the grant amount listed under item 'a' above. Of that equal match, at least 50% must be a cash match and up to 50% may be an in-kind match.)

c) Other Cash Funds:

Source: _____

Source: _____

Source: _____

Total: _____
(a+b+c)

Detail in-kind match

Source: _____

Source: _____

Source: _____

Expenditures

Item or service:	Cost – Grant:	Cost – Applicant:	Cost – Other:
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_____	_____	_____	_____
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Total:	_____	_____	_____
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Plan:

1. What is the main focus of this proposal?

2. What are the project activities?

3. When will this activity occur? How long will it last?

4. Who is the target market? What is your strategy for reaching the target market?

Project Goals:

5. What results do you expect?

6. What short-term and long-term economic impacts do you expect?

QUALIFICATIONS OF APPLICANT

7. Describe your organization and its relationship to tourism in Jackson County.

8. Describe your organization, it's history and community involvement below.

9. Describe your experience in operating past or similar projects. Have these projects been successful in bringing tourists to Jackson County? How are you uniquely qualified to carry out this project?

10. What is your plan for how this project will become self-sufficient?

RELATIONSHIP TO MARKETING PLANS

11. Explain how your project will increase "visitors" to Jackson County. If your project is an "attendance event" (i.e. festival or fair) or an attraction, describe specifically how you will market the event to "visitors". If your project is a print promotion, how will it reach "visitors"?

12. What is your criterion for success? How will you know if you have been successful?

13. If your project is already underway (event is booked and will occur in 2016 and brochure is already printed), explain how this grant will increase the results.

14. Your project may be recommended only for partial funding. Assuming that you receive only half the amount you are requesting, how will you modify your project?

15. Describe any in-kind assistance you expect to receive from individuals, businesses or other community groups in support of this project. Letters of support may be attached.

Three letters of support for this project from organizations, businesses, or individuals must be attached. Letters should specifically address your proposal and why the writer believes the project will benefit the community.