



Revised January 2025

OVERVIEW

The Gilmer Chamber Tourism Marketing Grant Program was established under O.C.G.A § 48-13-51(b). This program is administered by the Gilmer Chamber and its designated advisory group, the Tourism Marketing Grant Committee. The Committee includes Chamber staff, representatives from Ellijay, East Ellijay, and County Commissioners.

The Chamber oversees the funds collected from transient lodging taxes (TLT) assessed to hotels, motels, and other lodging establishments in the City of Ellijay, the City of East Ellijay, and Gilmer County. These funds are awarded via the Tourism Marketing Grant Program (TMGP), which is intended to support marketing expenses for local nonprofits that produce events and programs designed to attract overnight visitors to Gilmer County.

By following these guidelines, applicants can ensure that their application for the Tourism Marketing Grant is complete and meets all necessary requirements. For additional questions, please contact Gilmer Chamber Communications Manager Nohemi Reynoso at nohemir@gilmerchamber.com or 706-635-7400.

GUIDELINES

I. Eligibility

- a. Applicants must be registered nonprofits
- b. Projects or events must take place within Gilmer County
- c. Projects should promote Gilmer County as a preferred visitor destination and boost overnight stays
- d. All projects must be completed by June 30, 2025

II. Application

- a. Applications will only be accepted via the official application form available on the Gilmer Chamber website during designated open cycles
- b. Applications will only be reviewed if all required documentation is included
- c. Applications will only be reviewed if received by the specified deadline, late applications will not be considered

III. Peak Visitor Periods

- a. Applications will not be considered for funding if the event occurs during the following:
 - i. Memorial Day Weekend
 - ii. Independence Day Weekend
 - iii. Labor Day Weekend
 - iv. Thanksgiving Weekend
 - v. Christmas Week

IV. Required Documentation

- a. Applicant details must include the following:
 - i. Organization Name
 - ii. Registered nonprofit information
 - iii. Contact person and contact information
 - iv. Completed W-9
- b. Project/Event details must include:
 - i. Location, date, and time
 - ii. Project purpose and target audience
 - iii. Statement of sustainability
 - 1. How will the success of the event be defined?
 - 2. What is your long-term plan to sustain and grow the event over the next five years?
 - iv. Clear and measurable event goals to attract overnight visitors and the anticipated impact on tourism
 - v. Event public health/safety plan
- c. Marketing plan details must include:
 - i. An outline of the marketing strategies that will be used to promote the event or project
- d. Budget details must include:
 - i. A marketing budget outlining how the grant funds will support marketing and promotional costs in accordance with guidelines (See Eligible Expenses)
 - ii. An event budget outlining additional event/project expenses

V. Eligible Expenses

- a. Projects/events funded by this grant must:
 - i. Target an audience located more than 50 miles outside of Gilmer County and be designed to attract overnight visitors
 - ii. Use all awarded funds for marketing efforts, including but not limited to:
 - 1. Paid social media or other digital advertising
 - 2. Flyers, billboards, and other out-of-home placements
 - 3. Television, podcast, radio, and streaming ads
 - iii. Recognize Gilmer Chamber's tourism entity, Pick Ellijay, as an event sponsor at a level equal to the amount of funds awarded. For example, if a project is awarded \$2,000 and that amount is equivalent to a gold-level sponsor, the project should list Pick Ellijay as a gold-level sponsor.
 - iv. Feature the Pick Ellijay logo on all promotional materials, including banners, signs, t-shirts, programs, brochures, event websites, social media posts, etc. Online material developed for the event must include a link to the PickEllijay.com website. Before these materials are produced, a draft or design proof must be submitted and approved by the Gilmer Chamber Tourism Grant Committee.

VI. Ineligible Expenses

- a. Examples of ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:
 - i. Administrative and operational costs
 - ii. Private or members-only events
 - iii. Advertising that primarily reaches Gilmer County and its residents
 - iv. Additional non-marketing expenses
 - v. Fees paid to third-party vendors, consultants, or professional services
 - vi. Mileage or gas expenses due to the distribution of materials
 - vii. Items for resale and gift cards
 - viii. Food or alcoholic beverages

VII. Cancellation

- a. If an event is canceled, event organizers are required to make that determination at least 60 days prior to the event's originally scheduled date. The Tourism Marketing Grant Program will only reimburse for eligible expenses incurred 60 days prior to the original event date.

VIII. Funding

- a. Applicants can request up to \$2,500 per event application. Higher amounts may be considered.
- b. Funds are intended to supplement the organization's marketing budget for the event referenced in the application. (See Eligible Expenses)
- c. Funds will be disbursed as reimbursement for the approved expenses upon completion of the event. To be eligible for reimbursement, a completed post-event report must be submitted and approved within 60 days of event completion. (See Post Event Reporting)
- d. Applications may not receive grant funding for the same event from other organizations.
- e. Any funds granted will be subject to audit.

IX. Evaluation

- a. Applications will be evaluated by the Chamber's Tourism Marketing Grant Committee, which includes Chamber staff, representatives from both cities, and the County Commissioners.
- b. Applications will be assessed to confirm eligibility for funding and receipt of all required documentation. Subsequently, each application will be evaluated using the Grant Review Score Sheet 50-point scale according to the criteria below:
 - i. Generation of overnight stays and visitor appeal
 - ii. Description, sustainability, and public health/safety plan
 - iii. Event funding requirements and budget
 - iv. Branding
 - v. Marketing Plan

X. Visitor Tracking

- a. To evaluate the event's impact on the transient lodging industry in Gilmer County, the Tourism Marketing Grant Program requires post-event reporting that includes tracking the number of overnight visitors. Grant recipients can collect information using one of the following methods:
 - i. Room block reports from hotels/cabin rental companies
 - ii. Visitor Tracking Form (supplied). If your event uses an advanced registration process, please use the supplied Visitor Tracking Form to collect the required details.
 - iii. Visitor Tracking Survey (supplied). A third alternative requires 50 completed 5-question surveys from event attendees. Please use the supplied Visitor Tracking Survey to collect the required details.

XI. Post-Event Reporting

- a. Applicants must submit a post-event report within 60 days of the event's completion. Failure to do so may result in disqualification from future support. The post-event report should include the following documents:
 - ii. Marketing budget & invoices for eligible expenses covered by awarded grant amount
 - iii. Copy of proof of payments such as cleared checks or detailed credit card receipts. Proof of payment must match the invoices submitted.
 - iv. Visitor tracking documentation as listed in the section above (Visitor Tracking)
 - v. Copies of marketing or advertising materials and social media showing approved logo usage.