Citrus County
Tourist Development Council

DISCOVER CRYSTAL RIVER FLORIDA

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Special Event Marketing Grant (SEMG) & Application Guidelines

Citrus County Visitors & Convention Bureau
915 N Suncoast Blvd
Crystal River, FL 34429
www.discovercrystalriverfl.com

SUMMARY

The Citrus County Tourist Development Council (TDC) and the Visitors & Convention Bureau (VCB) offers a Special Event Marketing Grant (SEMG) to organizations designated to promote special events that attract overnight visitors to Citrus County, thereby impacting the lodging industry. A "Special Project/Event" is defined as "a new or existing organized exhibition, festival, fair, sports tournament, conference which is conducted according to a prearranged schedule and with a targeted interest to the general public which may be free or with a predetermined entry or registration fee(s)". For the purpose of this grant program, the public interest to prioritize those living outside Citrus County who would visit the destination and attract overnight visitors to observe or participate and may include Citrus County residents.

This SEMG is to provide funding to advertise and promote events to out-of-county markets in order to attract overnight visitors. The grant funds are intended to supplement the organization's budget and are restricted in their use for marketing, advertisement, and promotional materials.

This grant requires a dollar for dollar cash match of marketing funds, with the exception of option 1. All grant funds must be used to market the project/event outside the borders of Citrus County.

There are three funding options available. Option 1 has a maximum award of $2,000 and does not require verification of room nights nor matching funds. Option 2 has a maximum award of $5,000 and requires matching dollars but does not require verification of room nights. Option 3 has a maximum award of $10,000 and requires both matching dollars and verification of room nights. All grant funded marketing and messaging efforts (radio, TV, print, or digital) must be deployed outside Citrus County.

Applicants must conform to the TDC's policies and procedures as specified. Applicants failing to conform to the policies and procedures will not be considered for funding. All funding requests must be approved by the TDC. Organizations are required to submit a final evaluation report, including an itemized marketing expenditure spreadsheet, within 90 days after the event. Funds will be reimbursed after all post-evaluation forms have been submitted.

APPLICATION SCHEDULE

Applications must be submitted on the schedule set forth on the Tourist Development page of the Citrus County website at this address:

https://www.citrusbocc.com/news_detail_T12_R2430.php

The SEMG cycle will be open twice a year (January and July) for submittals. This will allow applicants more flexibility for event funding in a timely manner.

Application Deadline	TDC Approval	BOCC Approval
November (Date TBD)	January (Date TBD)	February (Date TBD)
May (Date TBD)	July (Date TBD)	August (Date TBD)

Deadlines are strictly enforced. The applicant must submit a completed hard copy application to the VCB either in person or via mail at:

915 N. Suncoast Blvd
Crystal River, FL 34429

A dated postmark will not be accepted as the date of receipt of an application. Applications that fail to meet the deadline must be resubmitted for consideration during the next funding cycle.

All materials submitted with an application will become a matter of public record, open to inspection by the public subject to Chapter 119, Florida State Statutes.

There are no guarantees that applicants will be awarded funding. Even though a project may qualify, limited funds may not allow all projects to receive assistance. Decisions regarding the award of funds are at the sole discretion of the Board of County Commissioners of Citrus County, FL (BOCC).

PRESENTATIONS

Presentations are mandatory and can only be given on the TDC meeting dates corresponding to the applicable funding cycle. Presentation time is limited to fifteen (15) minutes with Q&A from TDC. Following the presentation, the TDC will review the grant and vote on a budget allotment. The TDC will submit a recommendation to the BOCC for final approval. Funds cannot be obligated or expended prior to BOCC approval.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

The TDC accepts grant applications from organizations that will be promoting a project or events that will increase hotel stays in Citrus County. The venue for the event must be located within Citrus County in order to promote the tourism industry.

POLICIES

This grant requires a dollar-for-dollar cash match of marketing funds, with the exception of option 1. All grant funds must be used to market the project/event outside the borders of Citrus County.

There are three funding options available. Option 1 has a maximum award of $ 2,000 and does not require verification of room nights nor matching funds. Option 2 has a maximum award of $ 5,000 and requires matching dollars but does not require verification of room nights. Option 3 has a maximum award of $ 10,000 and requires both matching dollars and verification of room nights. All grant funded marketing and messaging efforts (radio, TV, print, or digital) must be deployed outside Citrus County.

Applicants must conform to the TDC's policies and procedures as specified. Applicants failing to conform to the policies and procedures will not be considered for funding. All funding requests must be approved by the TDC. Organizations are required to submit a final evaluation report, including an itemized marketing expenditure spreadsheet, within 60 days after the event. Funds will be reimbursed after all post-evaluation forms have been submitted.

There are three funding options available.

Option 1 has a maximum award of $2,000 and does not require verification of room nights nor matching funds.

Option 2 has a maximum award of $5,000 and requires matching dollars but does not

require verification of room nights.

Option 3 has a maximum award of $10,000 and requires both matching dollars and

verification of room nights.

PROCEDURES

The VCB will review the grant application to determine if all criteria are met prior to TDC review. After submission, the County Attorney's office will determine whether the project is appropriate for expenditure of Tourist Development Tax funds, pursuant to section 125.0104 of the Florida Statute.

At the applicable TDC meeting, the TDC will evaluate each SEMG application. The BOCC, at its discretion, may approve or reject any application, regardless of recommendations by the TDC.

There are no guarantees that applicants will be awarded funding. Even though a project may qualify, limited availability of funds may not allow all projects to receive assistance. Decisions regarding the award of funds are at the sole discretion of the BOCC.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Requests for funding will be evaluated on criteria to increase overnight lodging and economic impact for Citrus County. Applicants will be ranked according to the following criteria:

- Production of room nights
- Out-of-county advertising
- Detailed marketing plan
- Potential for economic impact
- Event timing and duration

The TDC and Citrus County, Florida (County) are not responsible for any debt incurred for the event. Grant funding limits are subject to final approval by the BOCC.

All events must take place after the BOCC meeting where the awards are voted upon. Marketing efforts that occur prior to that date are not eligible for reimbursement.

The VCB office will notify approved applicants by phone and email of the date and time of their presentation to the TDC. TDC meetings are generally held bi-monthly on the second Wednesday of the month.

Applications must conform to the policies and procedures specified by the TDC. Any application that is not in compliance will not be considered for funding.

QUESTIONS:

Please contact Auvis Cole at auvis@visitcitrus.com

AWARD PROCESS AND FUNDING AMOUNTS

The awarding of funds for Special Project/Event Marketing Grant is subject to the following additional limitations:

MAXIMUM AWARD

Option 1:
Organizations that are unable to present sufficient funds for a cash match are eligible to receive a maximum funding amount of $2,000 unmatched marketing dollars.

Option 2:
The maximum award for any such project or event is $5,000. This option requires matching dollars but does not require verified room nights.

Option 3:
This option requires matching dollars and verified room nights The maximum award an organization can seek is directly related to the projected verifiable room nights the event will generate, although the actual award amount will be evaluated on multiple criteria, subject to the following limits.

Established events are eligible for the following maximum award amounts (based on proven, prior year room night generation figures):

Number of Room Nights Generated	Maximum Annual Award Amount
500 and over	Up to $10,000
250 to 499	Up to $8,500
100 to 249	Up to $6,500

At time of reimbursement, if the verified number of room nights does not meet the proposed number in the application, the award will be reduced to the funding category equal to the number of room nights verified. If the actual number of room nights fall below the lowest threshold, the reimbursement amount will default to Option 1 or 2. Funding reimbursement will not be available until all reporting requirements are met.

ADVERTISING

The SEMG applicant's advertising and promotional funds must meet the requirements specified in this section. Failure to comply will result in rejection of the application. **All advertising materials are to be reviewed by the VCB prior to final production.**
Promotional materials must include one or more of the following:

- The Citrus County Visitors & Convention Bureau Logo

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- The VCB website URL: www.discovercrystalriverfl.com

All grant-funded advertising applicants must:

- Advertise in **out-of-market** (see policies) media to attract visitors from outside the county
- Work directly with lodging accommodations that provide a booking URL (required for Option 3)
- Generate economic impact in county
- Generate overnight lodging
- Submit itemized marketing expenditure spreadsheet a minimum of 90 days prior to the event or project.

AUTHORIZED USE OF FUNDS

The following are examples of how SEMG funds may be used to promote tourism in Citrus County:

- Advertising and promotional expenses with the intent to attract visitors to Citrus County and increase overnight visitation
- Print, Radio, Digital, Search Optimization, Social Media Campaigns & TV Advertisements
- Outdoor Signage/ Banners/ Billboards **(must be posted outside of the County)**
- Postage for Direct Mail of promotional materials

Other expenditures consistent with Florida Statutes and VCB/TDC objectives may be considered.

The following are examples of how tourist development funds ***may not*** be used for Special Events:

- Annual operating expenditures not directly related to the project or event. Legal, medical, engineering, accounting, auditing, planning, feasibility studies, or other consulting services.
- Salaries or supplements to salaries for existing or future staff, or employment of personnel not directly related to the project or event.
- Real property or capital improvements to privately owned facilities.
- Tangible personal property including, but not limited to, office furnishings or equipment, permanent collections.
- Interest or reduction of deficits and loans.
- Expenses incurred or obligated prior to or after the grant project period.
- Prize money, scholarships, awards, plaques, or certificates.
- Travel expenses.
- Officials' fees and handling
- Medical and athletic training fees and supplies
- Transportation costs for contract labor
- Security (police, sheriff deputies, ushers, marshals)
- Projects restricted to private or exclusive participation.
- Private entertainment, food and beverages.

If the grant application is approved by the BOCC, the organization will be awarded a budget for advertising the Special Event. The County shall maintain the right to refuse to pay for any advertisement or promotion that does not comply with the guidelines set forth in this application and set by the TDC and BOCC.

PROCEDURE FOR DISBURSEMENT OF GRANT FUNDS

The TDC requires grant recipients to submit the complete final evaluation report within 90 days of the Special Event before reimbursement and/or payment of any invoice will be issued. Invoices will be processed as follows:

- Copies of invoices for advertising, proof of performance of advertising and proof of payment are required for all items that are seeking to be reimbursed.
- Invoices received at the VCB will be reviewed, coded, and submitted to the Citrus County Finance Department for payment or reimbursement.
- Invoices received where the event's identity cannot be determined will be returned to applicants as incomplete with instructions to submit the bill for processing back to the VCB.
- Reimbursements are due 90 days after the event with invoices submitted for approval along with the final evaluation report to the VCB.

VCB will review requests for payment and submit approved invoices to the Citrus County Finance Department for reimbursement. Final decisions on disbursement of grant funds are at the sole discretion of Citrus County.

DISSOLUTION OF ORGANIZATION

If a Special Event loses its sustainability, the organization disbands or goes out of business or the event does not take place, funding will be terminated.

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

A Final Evaluation Report is due within 90 days following the dates of each scheduled Event. The criteria to be followed in completing the form are listed below and available on the website. The report requires specific details describing the following in relation to the Special Event:

- Estimated economic impact from local tourist related businesses
- Accommodation verifications from overnight stays for the event and number of rooms occupied (options 3 only)
- Analytics report from each lodging establishment of choice that provided a booking URL for overnight stays (options 3 only)
- Number of out of town visitors
- Copies of all advertising invoices - print, radio, materials – provide proofs, tear sheets, spot reports and proof of payment
- Copies of all promotion items with Citrus County VCB logo
- Itemized marketing expenditure spreadsheet
- Detailed budget reconciliation
- If applicable, proof of non-profit status

All grant recipients are required to maintain accurate financial records. All grants are subject to audit by the Citrus County Clerk of Circuit Court and Comptroller.

To assess the impact of the event on the Citrus County lodging industry, the VCB emphasizes the importance of tracking the number of overnight visitors attending the event. Room block reports from hotels are the preferred method of reporting room data. This information will be used to help track the number of visitors attending the event. Furthermore, this information helps determine the growth of a particular event.

If hotel room block reports for overnight verification are not utilized, then the applicant will be required to ensure the completion of Visitor Surveys by a minimum of 20% of the total attendees as submitted in the application. To clarify, if the applicant projects 4,000 attendees and opts to not utilize hotel room block reports, then a minimum of 800 Visitor Surveys are required. All applicants are required to track overall total attendance to establish the overall community impact of the event.

Each application will be evaluated and scored in four (4) categories with a maximum score of one hundred (100) points based on the following criteria:

1. Commitment to the overall economic impact of Tourism Development in Citrus County- Maximum of 40 Points - Evidence of the overall tourism economic impact by out-of-county visitors.

   (30 points) High Impact Visitors: More than 250 estimated room nights

   (20 points) Medium Impact Visitors: More than 150 estimated room nights

   (10 points) Low Impact Visitors: More than 50 room nights

   (5 points) Event occurs during non-peak seasons. Non-Peak season is considered to be the months of (September/October) and (May/June).

   (5 points) Multi-day event. Yes/No?

2. Event Marketing Plan- Maximum of 20 Points – Identification of strategies and opportunities for attracting visitors from out-of-county. Marketing plan shall be thorough, well-defined and realistic.

   (20 points) Specifically defined

   (10 points) Identified but not specifically defined

   (0 points) Not defined

3. Soundness of Special Event- Maximum of 20 Points Event clearly defines event objectives, funding sources and overall budget.

   Event Objectives

   - (5 points) Clearly defined
   - (0 points) Not defined well or at all

   Funding Sources/Budget

   - (5 points) Specific income and expenses sources are defined on application
   - (0 points) Not defined well or at all

Has this event received TDC funding in the past?

- (10 points) 0-3 years
- (5 points) 3-6 years
- (0 points) 6+ years

4. Stability and Management Capacity- Maximum of 20 Points - Proven record or demonstrated capacities to effectively plan, organize and implement a unique and high quality Special Event.

   How long has the event existed?

   - (10 points) Over 5 years
   - (5 points) Under 5 years
   - (0 points) First year

   Is the Special Event unique and of a high quality to the area/county?

   - (10 points) Very unique
   - (5 points) Somewhat unique
   - (0 points) Not unique

Special Event Marketing Grant FY 2027

APPLICATION REQUEST

Organization Information

Organization _____

Primary Contact _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Registered as a non-profit corporation? ☐ Yes ☐ No (Attach proof)

Event Description

Event Name _____

Event Dates _____

Requested Amount _____

Total Budget _____

**** Event budget must be submitted together with this application ****

Has this project previously received TDC funding?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered yes, please give a short description of the project and date funding was awarded:

One hundred percent (100%) of the funds awarded to SEMG recipients shall be used for advertising and promotion to target audiences outside of Citrus County.

Please explain the intended use of "out of county" direct advertising funds.

Please provide detailed information on your event.

How will Citrus County benefit from your event?

How many verifiable hotel stays do you project this event will bring to Citrus County?

Have any room blocks been reserved at the lodging facility of choice? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, list locations with the number of rooms blocked at each location:

How many years has this event taken place?

How does the event serve to attract out of county visitors generating hotel, motel, and RV/campground rentals?

I,_____, the Applicant or Authorized Agent of Applicant have reviewed this Application for the SEMG and concur with the information submitted herein. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the information contained in this Application and its attachments is accurate and complete. If funds are awarded, I agree to follow all guidelines as provided in the grant guidelines. I, the Applicant or Authorized Agent of Applicant, acknowledge that I have reviewed and understand the advertising requirements for the SEMG. Additionally, I understand that failure to comply with these advertising requirements will result in denial of the SEMG funding.

I also understand that grant funds will only be disbursed after completion of a final evaluation report, verification of room nights when applicable, and approval of invoices by the VCB and Citrus County.
Should the verifiable room nights be in a range less than the grant awarded, the grant will be reduced to the appropriate grant range.

_____ _____
Authorized Agent Signature Date

_____ _____
Print Name Title

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

(Checklist for presentation to TDC)

Please Provide the Following. Some of the below can be covered in the application questions:

- Event description (detailed)
- Event name / event dates
- Amount requested
- Detailed Event Budget: all sources of income, all expenses
- Intended use of "out of county" direct advertising funds
- How will Citrus County benefit from the project?
- How many verifiable hotel stays do you project this event will bring to the county?
- Have blocks of rooms been reserved at a lodging facility?
- List past TDC funding, if applicable (year, event, requested amount, awarded amount, spent amount).
- How does the event serve to attract out of county visitors generating room nights?
- How will the event be marketed to the fullest extent possible in an effective and efficient manner?
- How will you demonstrate a willingness to work with the tourism industry?
- How do you intend to accomplish your slated objectives?
- The completed SEMG Application must include documentation of the extent to which the event provides a program for Citrus County visitors and its residents which is of significant merit and that, without such assistance, would not take place in the County.
- Itemized marketing spreadsheet

ECONOMIC IMPACT SURVEY AND REPORTING INSTRUCTIONS

Economic Impact Survey Visitor Questionnaire (option 3 only) – Applicants will be required to distribute and collect Economic Impact Visitor Questionnaires as provided by the Tourist Development Council. These surveys will aid in the tracking of participants' accommodations and spending patterns in Citrus County of persons attending the event. As part of the Grant process, these surveys are required to be submitted with the final evaluation report.

Economic Impact Survey Summary Report (option 3 only) – After collecting the completed Economic Impact Questionnaires, divide them by zip code and combine the information compiled using Economic Impact Survey Summary Reports. These summary reports are to be used as a tool to help create the final evaluation report.

EXAMPLE: ECONOMIC IMPACT SURVEY VISITOR QUESTIONNAIRE (Option 3 only)

EVENT NAME:_____EVENT DATE:_____

1. What is your primary zip code?

2. How many nights do you plan to stay in Citrus County?
   # Nights: Day Trip Only:

3. Where are you staying while in Citrus County?

   a - Hotel/Motel b - Vacation Rental/Condo c - Friends/Relatives
   d - Bed and Breakfast e - Campground f - Other

EXAMPLE: ECONOMIC IMPACT SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT (Option 3 only)

Instructions: Enter the zip code for this summary report in line 1, and the total number of responses for the zip code in the appropriate locations below. Use this information to complete a Final Survey Report.

EVENT NAME:_____EVENT DATE:_____

1. Summary report for Zip Code:_____
2. Total nights/day trips in Citrus County: Nights: _ Day trips: _
3. Total Accommodations in Citrus County:

   Hotel/Motel:____ Vacation Rental / Condo:_ Friends/Relatives:_
   Bed and Breakfast:___ Campground:_____ Other:_____

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

Organization _____

Primary Contact _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Please answer the following questions related to the event.

1. Is this a first time event? If not, how many times has this event taken place?

2. What was the total attendance for the event?

3. What attractions or activities did guests participate in other than your event?

4. What problems occurred, if any, during the event?

5. List all advertising, marketing and/or public relations associated with the event.

6. How can the event be improved or expanded?

7. What is the total expense of the event?

8. List all the vendors that have been paid. If not, what invoices are still outstanding & why?

9. How many people were surveyed?

10. Please provide copies of all advertising.

ROOM NIGHT CERTIFICATION

An email or letter direct from the lodging partners is required with the information below included.

	TRACKED ROOM NIGHTS
GROUP NAME	
EVENT NAME	
DATE	
PAID ROOM NIGHTS	
COMP ROOM NIGHTS	

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REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST FORM

Organization _____

Primary Contact _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Each expense must include: 1) Paid invoice or cancelled check. 2) Tear sheet, printed sample, or the backup information to substantiate payment. Failure to submit request correctly will delay payment. Reimbursement must be submitted within 90 days following event.

Expense Description	Vendor	Invoice Amount	Reimbursement Amount
Total to be reimbursed to organization			$

I agree that the above information is accurate based upon our records. The funds requested are for reimbursement from the grant awarded by Citrus County and are actual expenses related to the event.

Authorized Agent Signature:_____ Date:_____