Restricted Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) Fund Tourism Grant Program
Process and Application Guidelines
Fiscal Year 2020

Loudoun County's FY 2020 budget includes funds that can be allocated to organizations for proposals that provide tourism services or activities consistent with the county's Restricted Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) Funding Policy and the Code of Virginia. This program is designed to support local tourism initiatives and events that drive tourism to Loudoun County.

The Board's Restricted TOT grant program was established to fund events or programs which further the Board's funding policy:
- To provide the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors with the opportunity to strategically and proactively impact tourism in Loudoun County through the sustained investment in the provision of core tourism services;
- To enable targeted investment in high priority tourism projects that advance Loudoun's strategic tourism objectives; and
- To maximize tax relief to the general fund by increasing Restricted Transient Occupancy Tax revenues.

All funding proposals must comply with eligibility requirements for Restricted TOT Funds outlined in Section 58.1-3819 of the Code of Virginia: *"Transient occupancy tax… shall be designated and spent solely for tourism and travel, marketing of tourism or initiatives that… attract travelers to the locality, increase occupancy at lodging properties, and generate tourism revenues in the locality."*

Eligibility Criteria
Loudoun County's competitive TOT grant funds can be designated and spent for any of the following tourism activities:
1. Marketing of events and programs to attract visitors;
2. Initiatives that attract visitors to the locality;
3. Initiatives that drive demand for and increase occupancy at lodging properties; or
4. Initiatives that drive spending and generate revenue in the locality through tourism.

Applications will be reviewed by county staff for completeness and eligibility under Section 58.1-3819 of the Code of Virginia and the Board of Supervisors' TOT Funding Policy upon receipt. Incomplete or ineligible applications will not be considered.

No requests for recurring funding commitments will be considered as part of this application process; funding in one year does not guarantee funding in future years.

It is the Board of Supervisors' policy that nonprofit entities receiving public funds for their proposed project through other means - such as Visit Loudoun Grants, Community Development Block Grants, Loudoun County Regional Organization Funding, Human Service Nonprofit Grants or other such programs - will not be eligible for Restricted TOT grants.

FY 2020 Process and Timeline

Applicants for the FY 2020 TOT Tourism Grant will be required to submit an application using the online form located at: www.loudoun.gov/management-budget. Applicants may only submit one application for FY 2020. A question and answer (Q&A) document, where answers to all applicant questions will be posted publicly, will be available on the website as well. Questions may be submitted via email to the Grants Program Coordinator, Shalom Black: shalom.black@loudoun.gov. All answers will be posted on the webpage by March 28.

At the conclusion of the application period, all applications will be reviewed by representatives from Visit Loudoun, the Department of Economic Development, County Administration, and the Department of Management and Budget.

Once the scores are available, applicants will be ranked and the funding amount will be determined. Recommendations will then be made to the Board of Supervisors at the May 23, 2019 Board meeting for funding decisions. Following approval by the Board of Supervisors, applicants will be informed of whether or not their organization has received a funding award.

TOT Tourism Grant Timeline	
Grant Application Release Date	March 1
Grant Application Due Date	March 29, 4pm
Award Recommendations presented at Board meeting	May 23
Send notice of award to applicants	May 24
MOUs due to Department of Management and Budget	June 15

Application Instructions

For the FY 2020 Nonprofit Grant process, applicants can access the online application form at the following link: www.loudoun.gov/management-budget. The application form includes the following sections:

- Part I - General Information
- Part II - Financial Information
- Part III – Proposal Information

Applicants are required to provide a response for questions with an asterisk "*". If the required questions do not apply to your organization, please enter "not applicable" or "N/A", or for questions requesting a monetary or numerical response, enter "0". There is no character limit attached to the text boxes in the application.

Part I - General Information

This section requests basic organizational information, including contact information, Federal Tax ID number, size, year of founding, organizational mission and milestones, and years that the organization has served Loudoun residents. Applicants must also indicate whether they are a first time applicant.

Part II – Financial Information

Please provide the financial statements for the entire organization, not just the program requesting funds. If you are a chapter of a larger regional or national organization, please provide the information for your chapter only.

Part III – Proposal Information

This section asks applicants to provide information on the specific initiative, program or event which the requested funds would support. Please describe that program, in the context of your larger organization, in the questions below.

There is no restriction on the amount an organization can request. However, the requested amount must be reasonable in the context of the funding levels included in the FY 2020 Proposed Budget for the RTOT Tourism Grant program. The amount of funding requested should be clearly presented and explained and should be consistently tied to the anticipated impact described throughout the application. **Requests above $10,000 require 1:1 matching funds.**

Please contact the Grants Coordinator if you need guidance in determining an appropriate funding level to request.

In order to promote overnight stays, advertising funded by TOT grants must be shown to be part of a well thought out marketing plan to attract visitors from outside of Loudoun County.

In order to aid in data collection to assess the efficacy of these grants, a portion of grant funds may be used by grantees to fund data collection. For example, funds could be used for a software program, or for staff time to conduct surveys.

The following are specific examples of unallowable expenses but is not an exhaustive list:
- Corporate debts
- Contingencies
- Contributions and donations
- Entertainment costs (except as otherwise provided)
- Fines and penalties
- Interest and other financial costs
- Legislative expenses
- Bricks and mortar

If your event or program includes overnight accommodations, organizers must work with Visit Loudoun to secure accommodations rather than book directly. This is to ensure that Visit Loudoun can assist in providing economic impact data. Visit Loudoun will also help connect applicants with tourism and hospitality-related resources for packaged offerings (e.g. transportation, restaurants, agritourism sites, etc.) if needed. Applicants are encouraged to take advantage of these resources, as well as linking to additional tourism information on www.visitloudoun.com.

Uploading Documents
In addition to the completed application, supplemental information is also required. Documents up to 250MB must be uploaded to the application in PDF, Microsoft Word, or Microsoft Excel formats.

You must upload a document for all fields marked as required. If you are unable to provide one of the documents, please create and upload a document explaining why you cannot.
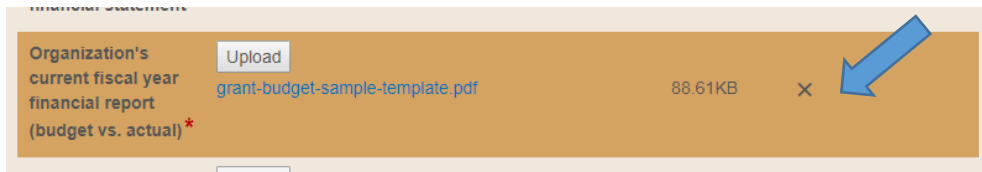
To upload these forms, click on the buttons titled "Upload".
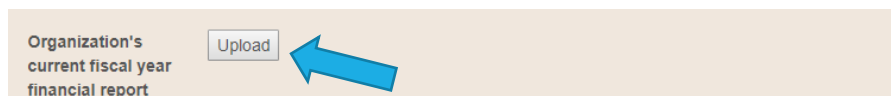
Once clicked, this button will open a window that will allow you to find the file or document that you want to add.
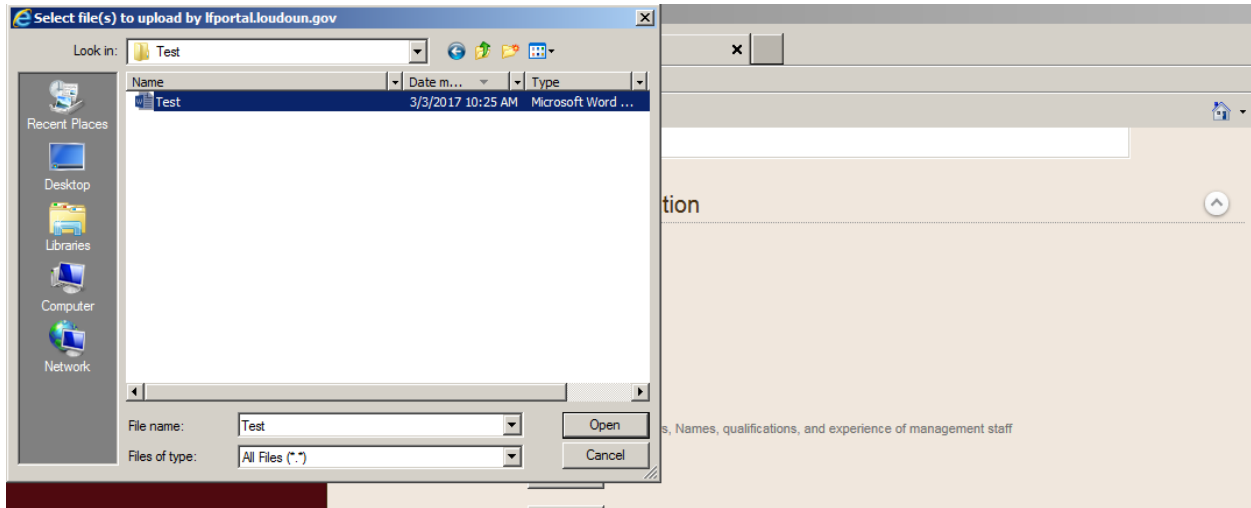
If the wrong file was chosen you can click the X. This will remove the file. To replace the file or add another file simply click the Upload button and repeat the process that is detailed above.


When the form is completely filled out and all files have been attached using the Upload button, you will electronically "sign" the application and agree to the conditions listed by entering the email address of your organization's designated authorizing official. You can then click on the Submit button to send the application for review and consideration.
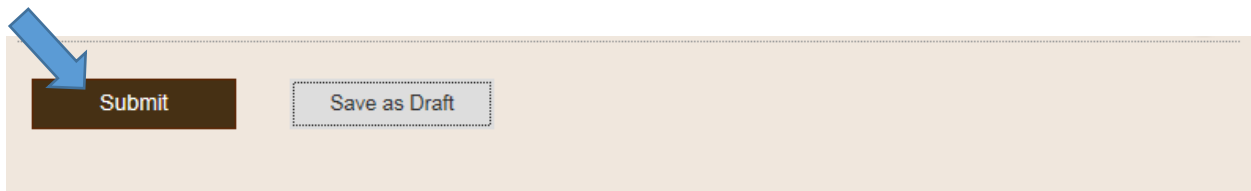
Applicants may also save their application form and return to the form to make changes or add more information at a later time. To save, click on "Save as Draft."

After clicking the button, Save as Draft, a window will appear. Applicants should input an email address and create a password. Be sure to write down the password you create! Once this has been completed click the Save button in the bottom right hand corner of the window. After clicking the Save button a link or internet address will be emailed to you.
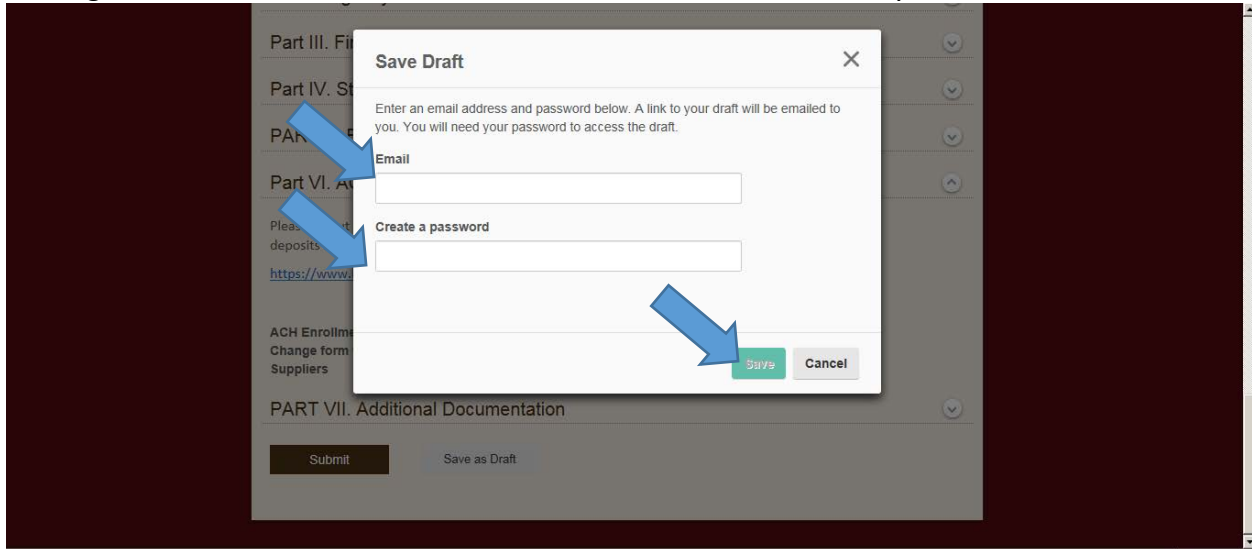
Application Scoring

Applications are scored by a multi-agency review team from County Administration, Management and Budget, Economic Development, and Visit Loudoun. The application is built on a point scale, with four points as the maximum score for each question. The summed score achieved by an applicant across all panel reviewers is then averaged by the number of questions and the number of reviewers. Applicants with an average score of 3.0 or higher are considered strong applicants; those with an average score of 2.5 to 2.9 are considered to be viable applicants with a reasonable alignment with the County's mission and stated goals. Applicants scoring below an average of 2.5 are considered to be weak applicants.

Preference is given to applications including:
- Initiatives likely to attract visitors from outside of Loudoun County who are inclined to stay overnight.
- Partnerships between multiple organizations or tourism and hospitality-related businesses.
- Solid data collection efforts.

Tips for Application Development

- Assume that the reviewers are not familiar with your organization; scores are based on application content only

- Identify attributes of the attraction or event that would motivate residents of areas outside of Loudoun County to visit/ attend

- Emphasize result achieved by the program, including metrics used to measure results

- Ensure that costs in requested budget are reasonable, well- explained, and within industry standards (if applicable)

- Be sure that responses to questions:
    - Directly answer the question
    - Are concise, specific, and thorough
    - Are specific to Loudoun County

- Be sure that all required documents have been uploaded, or explain why you cannot provide them

- Consider the following ideas for measuring out-of-town reach or visitors:
    - Use website analytics to track engagement by geographic region. You can also use analytics to track reach of digital and social media campaigns
    - If you have online ticket sales, use digital analytics to report zip codes of attendees
    - Ask for zip codes of attendees as they enter attraction/event, or count out-of-state license plates at event
    - Partner with merchants or other hospitality-related businesses to provide special discounts to help measure the economic impact of the event
    - Have a raffle where participants must fill out a survey capturing demographics to enter

- At the end of the grant, you should be able to measure successes tied to the funding and information about visitors. For example:
    - Compared to last year, sales during the event increased XX%
    - XX% of attendees were from outside of County
    - XX% of survey respondents spent over $50 at the event

- Detail how you will promote increased visitation to Loudoun County. Examples include: print media, website, social media, online ads as well as partnering with other events with same event timeframe, cross-promotion using materials available from Visit Loudoun, etc.

- Additional resources are available through Visit Loudoun and the Small Business Development Center, both located in downtown Leesburg.

Requirements for Grant Recipients

Once awards have been announced, grant recipients will be required to sign an agreement with the County in order to receive the grant funds. This agreement will outline the requirements for receiving the grant award and will include important terms relative to the grant award as follows:

- The term of the funding will begin on July 1, 2019 and, unless sooner terminated, will expire on June 30, 2020.

- The County funding will be remitted to the Organization within thirty (30) days after the execution of the agreement. The Organization must account for all expenditures made from the awarded funding. The accounting will be on the Expenditure portion of the Mid-Year Report for Nonprofit Organizations, a form supplied by the County, and it must be provided to the County within thirty (30) days after the event is completed.

- If the event is cancelled, or if the Organization otherwise desires to use any portion of the County Funding for a purpose other than stated in their application, the Organization must seek approval from the Board through the Department of Management and Budget.

- As a condition of receiving the County Funding, the Organization shall agree to repay County funds if the event is cancelled for any reason. To that end, it is recommended that the Organization obtain Event Cancellation Insurance in an amount sufficient to maintain yearly operations in the event that the event is cancelled.

Contact Information

Questions about the application form or process may be directed to Shalom Black, Grants Program Coordinator within the Department of Management and Budget.

Email: Shalom.Black@loudoun.gov
Phone: (703) 737- 8186