



**American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
Tourism Grant Program
Process and Application Guidelines
Fiscal Year 2024**

Issue Date:	September 13, 2023, at 1:00 PM
Issuing Agency:	Loudoun County Government Department of Finance and Procurement 1 Harrison Street, SE Leesburg, VA 20175
Contact Information:	Barb Lawrence barbara.lawrence@loudoun.gov
Application Due Date:	October 4, 2023, at 4:00 PM
Period of Funding:	January 15, 2024 - June 30, 2024
Award Amounts:	Up to \$50,000

Information and application information can be found here: loudoun.gov/grantopportunities

Applicant Information Session/Training: Thursday, September 14, 2023, at 2:00 PM. [Click here to join the meeting](#). Meeting ID: 237 769 840 588; Passcode: ABJhWH. **Or call in (audio only)** +1 757-600-4923, Phone Conference ID: 861 539 217#

- **Note:** if you do not have a Microsoft Teams account, [follow these instructions](#) to join the meeting.

Summary

In November 2022, through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC), Loudoun County was awarded \$1.24 million to reinvigorate the area's tourism industry. The VTC received ARPA funding to assist in the revitalization of Virginia's tourism industry with financial resources to overcome the negative impact of COVID-19 and support attracting visitors to destinations and events statewide. 133 jurisdictions across the Commonwealth were allocated funds based on the relative share of the locality to total state tax revenue attributable to tourism in 2019.

\$240,000 of Loudoun's award is designated for grant opportunities to local organizations for aid in their tourism planning, marketing, and execution. Funding will support one round of a supplemental Tourism Grant Program using ARPA funds to support festivals, events, and other activities that draw visitors and overnight stays to Loudoun.

Eligibility Criteria

ARPA Tourism Grant Program funding is available to organizations who are responsible for organizing, and hosting festivals, events, and other activities that draw visitors and overnight stays to Loudoun. The VTC outlined eligible and ineligible expenses [here](#). Please review eligible and ineligible expenses closely before applying.

U.S. Department of Treasury recommends that aid should be limited to businesses, attractions, events, and businesses districts that were operating prior to the pandemic and affected by required closures and other efforts to contain the pandemic.

Application Considerations

To promote overnight stays, advertising funded by the ARPA Tourism Program Grant must be shown to be part of a well-thought-out marketing plan to attract visitors from outside of Loudoun County and reflected in a comprehensive budget to be reviewed by a panel of County staff.

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 allowable expenses under ARPA guidelines. A complete listing can be found [here](#):

- Advertising
- Paid social media
- Television (broadcast and streaming)
- Radio, podcast, and streaming audio platforms
- Brand partnerships/sponsored content
- Digital videos and banners
- Print Advertising
- Familiarization Tours and Events
- Influencer Marketing

- Consumer Events (Must be organized for the purpose of attracting visitors to the destination)
- Entertainment Costs to include booking fees, accommodations in local County properties
- Permanent or semi-permanent structures for entertainment
- Equipment such as generators

The following are specific examples of unallowable expenses but is not an exhaustive list. A complete listing can be found [here](#):

- Administrative costs, payroll costs
- Retroactive spending
- Maintenance fees
- Tourism master plan development or strategic planning
- General infrastructure costs such as water or sewer
- Rainy day funds or financial reserves
- Promotional products
- Prize money
- Purchase or production of items for resale
- Acquisition of land or buildings

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 at www.visitloudoun.org.

Review Process

Applications will be reviewed by County staff from the Finance and Procurement team, the Department of Economic Development, and Visit Loudoun. Applicants will be scrutinized for meeting eligibility requirements, a clearly defined marketing plan with specific budget line items for approved expenses, the ability to attract overnight visitors to events in the area, and defined methodology for collecting and reporting visitor data such as place of origin and spending patterns. Incomplete or ineligible applications will not be considered.

Requests for recurring funding commitments will not be considered as part of this application process; funding in one year does not guarantee funding in future years.

It is the Loudoun County 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 Tourism Program Grant funding. *Current Restricted Transient Occupancy Tax (RTOT) grantees are eligible to apply.*

FY 2024 Process and Timeline

Applicants for the FY 2024 ARPA Tourism Grant Program will be required to apply using the online form located at: loudoun.gov/grantopportunities. Applicants may only submit one application for FY 2024. Questions may be submitted via email at barbara.lawrence@loudoun.gov. **The deadline to submit questions is September 25, 2023.**

Once reviewers’ scores are available, applicants will be ranked, and the funding amount will be determined. Recommendations will then be made to the Finance/Government Operations and Economic Development Committee (FGOEDC) for consideration on **December 12, 2023**. Following approval by the Board of Supervisors at their **December 19, 2023**, Business Meeting, organizations will be informed of their application status.

ARPA Tourism Grant Timeline	
Grant Application Opens	September 13, 2023
Applicant Training	September 14, 2023, 2:00 PM
Deadline for Applicant Questions	September 25, 2023
Grant Application Closes	October 4, 2023, 4:00 PM
Application Review	October – November 2023
Award Recommendations presented at FGOEDC meeting	December 12, 2023
Recommendations presented to the Board of Supervisors	December 19, 2023
Fully Executed MOUs	January 15, 2024
Final Report	30 days post event

Application Instructions

For the FY 2024 ARPA Tourism Grant process, applicants can access the online application form at the following link: loudoun.gov/grantopportunities.

The following application will be completed in the AmpliFund Grants Management System.

- Part I – General Organization Information
- Part II – 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”. There is no character limit attached to the text boxes in the application.

Part I – General Organization 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 – 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 and provide the proposed budget for your proposal and a detailed marketing plan.

The maximum award for FY2024 is \$50,000. The amount of funding requested should be clearly presented and explained and should be consistently tied to the anticipated tourism increases throughout the application.

Application Scoring

Applications are scored by a multi-agency review team from Finance and Procurement, Economic Development, and Visit Loudoun. The application is built on a Likert scale, with four points as the maximum score for each question. The total 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 viable applicants with a reasonable alignment with the County’s mission and stated goals. Applicants scoring below an average of 2.5 are considered weak applicants. All efforts will be made to fund as many viable projects as possible, however funding is limited, and a strong application is no guarantee of funding in part or whole.

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.
- Loudoun County defines overnight visitors as anyone staying in the County from more than 40 miles from their home address. Consider the following ideas for measuring reach or visitors outside of your town or service area:
 - 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.

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

The Loudoun County Visitor Information Center

Market Station - Lower Deck
Corner of Loudoun St. and Harrison St.
112-G South Street, SE
Leesburg, VA 20175
800-752-6118
703-771-2170
VCHost@visitloudoun.org

Mason Enterprise Center – Leesburg

202 Church St. SE
Leesburg, VA 20175
703-466-0466
mec20175@gmu.edu

Requirements for Grant Recipients

Once awards have been announced, grant recipients will be required to sign an agreement with the County 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 **January 15, 2024**, and, unless sooner terminated, will expire on June 30, 2024.
- County funding will be remitted to the Organization within thirty (30) days after the execution of the agreement and an invoice is submitted.
- Each organization must account for all expenditures made from the awarded funding, and it must be provided to the County within thirty (30) days after the event is completed. The Organization will also need to complete and submit a programmatic report detailing activities and outcomes associated with grant funding. 100 percent documentation for expenditures will be required.
- 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.

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

Contact Information

Questions about the application form or process may be directed to Barb Lawrence, Grants Coordinator, Department of Finance and Procurement.

Email: barbara.lawrence@loudoun.gov

Phone: (571) 258-3996