



# Pinellas County

## Staff Report

**File #:** 25-0978A, **Version:** 1

**Agenda Date:** 7/22/2025

### **Subject:**

Fiscal Year 2026 Elite Event funding recommendations from the Tourist Development Council.

### **Recommended Action:**

Approval of the Tourist Development Council's (TDC) recommendation to fund 49 events through the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Elite Event and Destination Enhancement Funding Program (Elite Event Program).

- Convention and Visitors Bureau staff evaluated, scored, and recommended to the TDC 49 events totaling "up to" funding in the amount of \$2,685,000.00.
- Consistent with the Board of County Commissioners (Board) approval and Board delegated authority, the County Administrator or the Director of Administrative Services will execute Elite Event agreements, and they will appear as delegated items on the Board meeting agenda once final terms and marketing deliverables are agreed upon.
- Events applying outside of the application window may be considered if funds are available and may be recommended at VisitSPC's discretion.
- Unallocated funds may be used for marketing purposes at VisitSPC's discretion.
- Funding for Elite Events is included in the FY26 Proposed Budget in the Tourist Development Tax Fund. This item does not obligate the County before the adoption of the FY26 Budget.

### **Strategic Priorities:**

Prosperity and Opportunity

3.2 Provide and promote tourism opportunities

### **Summary:**

With Board approval, CVB staff will administer the FY26 Elite Event Program, which provides funding to qualified, high-profile and community events that meet the minimum criteria as set out in the Elite Event Program Guidelines (Guidelines). In addition to the funding, the CVB also provides events with value in-kind contributions that may include an on-site truss, concert stage, and more.

### **Background Information:**

Tourist Development Tax funds may be legally expended for an activity/event if that event has as one of its main purposes the attraction of tourists as evidenced by the promotion of the event to tourists, per Fla. Stat. 125.0104(5)(a)3. In enacting this authorization, Pinellas County's Tourist Development Plan, Section 118-32 of the Pinellas County Code, authorizes the use of up to \$3,000,000 annually for the marketing of special events and programs, which funding is governed by the Guidelines adopted by the Board on February 25, 2025. Those Guidelines include the following criteria:

Category 1, \$150,000 - \$250,000: Elite Event that meets or exceeds 50,000 unique attendees, 15,000 room nights and 500,000 broadcast views.

Category 2, \$75,000 - \$150,000: Elite Event that meets or exceeds two out of the following three criteria - 50,000 unique attendees, 15,000 room nights, 100,000 broadcast views or planned PR/media coverage valued in excess of \$50,000.

Category 3, \$50,000 - \$75,000: Elite Event that meets or exceeds one out of the following three criteria - 20,000 unique attendees, 7,500 room nights, 500,000 broadcast views or planned PR/media coverage valued in excess of \$100,000.

Category 4, \$25,000 - \$50,000: Elite Event that meets or exceeds one out of the following two criteria - 10,000 unique attendees or 3,000 room nights.

Category 5, up to \$25,000: Destination Enhancement Event that meets or exceeds 5,000 unique attendees.

In accordance with the Guidelines, off cycle events that are evaluated and recommended for Categories 1-4 will be brought before the TDC for review with final approval by the Board. Events recommended for Category 5, Destination Enhancement funding, will be administratively awarded by staff.

On June 25, 2025, during the regular TDC meeting, staff presented the CVB's recommendation to fund 49 FY26 events for a total of "up to" \$2,685,000 in funding. Additionally, Events applying outside of the application window may be considered if funds are available and may be recommended at VisitSPC's discretion. Unallocated funds may be used for marketing purposes at VisitSPC's discretion. Following discussion, the TDC unanimously approved staff's recommendations.

Total Category 1 Elite Events: \$500,000  
Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg - \$250,000  
Valspar Championship - \$250,000

Total Category 2 Elite Events: \$675,000  
The ANNIKA Driven by Gainbridge at Pelican - \$150,000  
St. Pete Pride - \$150,000  
The St. Pete Powerboat Grand Prix - \$125,000  
The Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival - \$125,000  
2026 Clearwater Offshore Nationals - \$125,000

Total Category 3 Elite Events: \$840,000  
Clearwater Jazz Festival - \$75,000  
Sanding Ovals, The Gallery of Sand - \$75,000  
World Champions Cup - \$75,000  
ReliaQuest Bowl Clearwater Beach Day - \$75,000  
Dunedin Highland Games & Festival - \$75,000  
St. Pete Bike Fest - \$75,000  
Reggae Rise Up 2026 - \$75,000  
Clearwater Sea-Blues Festival - \$65,000  
St. Pete Run Fest - \$65,000  
MLK Dream Parade - \$65,000

Festivals of Speed - \$65,000  
Tampa Bay Blues Festival - \$55,000

Total Category 4 Elite Events: \$300,000  
John's Pass Seafood Festival - \$50,000  
Savor St. Pete - \$50,000  
33rd Annual Spring King of the Beach - \$50,000  
NYE at the Pier - \$40,000  
Tampa Bay Barbeque Festival - \$40,000  
St. Pete Tacos & Tequila Festival - \$40,000  
Dunedin Mardi Gras - \$30,000

Total Category 5 Destination Enhancement Events: \$345,000  
32nd Annual Fall King of the Beach - \$25,000  
Holiday Lights in the Gardens - \$25,000  
American Stage "Into the Woods" the Musical in the Park 2026 - \$25,000  
OCC Invitational Bike Show - \$25,000  
SHINE St. Petersburg Mural Festival (contingent on receiving mural rights) - \$25,000  
St. Petersburg Distance Classic - \$25,000  
Winter Pride Saint Pete - \$25,000  
Multiple Events (Tampa Bay Brewers Alliance) - \$20,000  
SALSA at the District - \$20,000  
Dunedin Celtic Music Festival - \$20,000  
LOCALTOPIA, "A Community Celebration of All Things Local" - \$20,000  
Merry Beach Market & Holiday Festival - \$15,000  
Dunedin Pride Week - \$15,000  
Tampa Bay Empanada Festival - \$15,000  
Tide Fest - \$15,000  
Palm Harbor Festival - \$15,000  
Clearwater AquaX Grand Prix - \$15,000

1 Event Bundle for 6 events at the St. Pete Pier: \$25,000  
St. Pete Pier Fall Festival and Pumpkin Patch  
Piertoberfest  
Tampa Bay Ice Cream Festival  
St. Pete Spring Festival & Easter Egg Hunt  
Paws on Parade  
Putt The Pier Holiday Edition

**Fiscal Impact:**

\$2,685,000 (49) FY26 Elite and Destination Enhancement Events  
\$ 315,000 May be allocated toward future FY26 off-cycle events or other marketing purposes  
\$3,000,000 Total FY26 available Elite Event Program funding

Funding to support the Elite Event and Destination Enhancement Funding Program is provided through the CVB's Annual Operating Budget. The source of funding is the Tourist Development Tax Fund.

## **I. Background & Overview**

---

Pinellas County collects a six-percent Tourist Development Tax ("Bed Tax") on all overnight tourism accommodations in the County. This tax is levied on customers of hotels, motels, condominiums, campgrounds, apartments and private homes that rent accommodations for less than six months in duration. The Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners ("BCC"), with input from the Tourist Development Council ("TDC"), has developed a Tourist Development Plan ("Plan") to guide how these proceeds are spent. Bed Taxes are spent, in large part, on marketing Pinellas County as a destination for leisure, business, conference, sports, film production, and other tourist travel. In support of these tourism marketing efforts, the Plan authorizes the expenditure of up to **\$3,000,000** annually for marketing special events and programs.

One of the marketing programs administrated by Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater ("VisitSPC") is the **Elite Event & Destination Enhancement Funding Program** for events meeting the criteria to receive funding from TDT funds to be used specifically for marketing and promoting an event to potential tourists outside of Pinellas County. The goal of this program is to ensure that grant funding is awarded in a way that maximizes 1) **consistency**; 2) **return on investment and sustainability of the individual events and the overall program**; and 3) **transparency**.

**The County's fiscal year begins on October 1 and ends on September 30 of the following year. Therefore, applications for Event funding are for annual events that are held within the next fiscal year after the application submittal date between October 1 and the following September 30. However, events that are annually held during either the last week of September or the first week of October are eligible to apply for funding for two annual events in those instances when both annual events fall within the same fiscal year.**

## **II. Definitions**

---

In the context of this tourism marketing/promotion program, the following definitions apply:

- A. "Elite Event" shall mean an organized sporting event, concert, exhibition, festival, fair, special event or celebration which is conducted according to a prearranged schedule that is generally less than seven (7) days in duration, and that: (i) is marketed to tourists that would consider visiting the destination and staying overnight to observe or participate in the Elite Event; and (ii) is conducted at a venue in Pinellas County, generating at least the minimum number of required room nights in Pinellas County and/or unique event attendees for funding eligibility as set out herein.
- B. "Destination Enhancement Event" shall mean a special event conducted at a venue in Pinellas County that attracts visitation through promotion of the event, generates VisitSPC and Pinellas County's awareness to non-residents, and enhances the visitor experience.
- C. "Marketing" shall mean pre-event advertising (print, electronic, digital, etc.), direct sales, public relations, promotions, or research, exclusive of professional fees and services, designed to increase tourist-related business activity from outside Pinellas County.
- D. "Sponsorship" shall mean a mutually beneficial business arrangement between VisitSPC, on behalf of the County, and an eligible applicant producing an Elite Event or Destination Enhancement Event, wherein VisitSPC receives assets and opportunities, including but not limited to broadcast and on-site benefits, to promote VisitSPC brand and the Pinellas County destination not included in the Marketing Plan.
- E. "Tourist" shall mean a person who participates in trade or recreational activities outside the county of his/her residence and/or who rents or leases transient accommodations in Pinellas County as described in Section 125.0104(3)(a), Florida Statutes.
- F. "Unique Attendees" shall mean a single individual attending the event whether for a single day or multiple days. Examples of Unique Attendees:
  - a worker issued a 2-day credential is considered one (1) Unique Attendee
  - an individual purchasing a 3-day package is considered one (1) Unique Attendee

G. "Broadcast" shall mean a national broadcast service such as network cable, streaming service affiliated with a network cable company, Connected TV ("CTV"), Online Video ("OLV"), Over-the-Top ("OTT"), or other viewing platform deemed eligible by VisitSPC

H. "Planned P.R. / Media Coverage" shall mean earned national media exposure before or during the Event.

### III. Funding Categories & Eligibility

---

A. Funding Categories are as follows:

- i. **Category I, \$150k to \$250k** – Elite Event that meets or exceeds all three (3) eligibility requirements.
  - i. 50,000 Unique Attendees,
  - ii. 15,000 Room Nights in Pinellas County,
  - iii. 500,000 Broadcast Views
- ii. **Category II, \$75k to \$150k** – Elite Event that meets or exceeds two (2) out of three (3) eligibility requirements.
  - i. 50,000 Unique Attendees,
  - ii. 15,000 Room Nights in Pinellas County,
  - iii. 100,000 Broadcast Views or Planned P.R. / Media Coverage valued in excess of \$50,000
- iii. **Category III, \$50k to \$75k** – Elite Event that meets or exceeds one (1) out of three (3) eligibility requirements.
  - i. 20,000 Unique Attendees,
  - ii. 7,500 Room Nights in Pinellas County
  - iii. 500,000 Broadcast Views or Planned P.R. / Media Coverage valued in excess of \$100,000
- iv. **Category IV, \$25k to \$50k** – Elite Event that meets or exceeds one (1) out of two (2) eligibility requirements.
  - i. 10,000 Unique Attendees,
  - ii. 3,000 Room Nights in Pinellas County
- v. **Category V, up to \$25k** – Destination Enhancement Event that meets or exceeds 5,000 Unique Attendees.

B. To be considered eligible for funding, each applicant must:

- i. Conduct, produce, manage, and/or operate an Elite Event and/or Destination Enhancement Event at a location in Pinellas County.
- ii. For Category I, II, III, and IV events, generate the required room nights or unique attendees in Pinellas County as set forth herein.
- iii. For Category V submit completed application, including projected potential room nights/ expected "unique" attendees.
- iv. Demonstrate it will attract Tourists to Pinellas County.
- v. Provide Marketing and/or Sponsorship benefits that satisfies the Marketing rating criteria in Section V. C. and that has a media value equal to or greater than the funding awarded, as determined by VisitSPC and/or its advertising agency of record.
- vi. Not utilize funding towards other VisitSPC programs (e.g. co-op programs, etc.).
- vii. Disclose any other county funding sources in the application process.

\* Any unallocated funds may be used for marketing purposes at VisitSPC's discretion.

\* VisitSPC may spend additional marketing dollars with qualifying events at its discretion and in compliance with Florida Statutes and the Tourist Development Plan.

### IV. Conditions of Funding

---

A. Funds may only be used in accordance with Chapter 125, Florida Statutes and Chapter 118 of the Pinellas County Code for the Marketing and/or Sponsorship benefits agreed upon with VisitSPC. Funds are to be used to market and promote an event to potential tourists outside of Pinellas County and may not be used for event operating expenses (except for any funds received by applicant expressly allocated by VisitSPC for sponsorship benefits).

B. Applicants receiving Event funding will be required to enter into and sign a Tourism Promotions Agreement prepared by the Pinellas County Attorney's Office. This Agreement will include Marketing and/or Sponsorship benefits to be negotiated and received by VisitSPC.

C. Applicant's Marketing and/or Sponsorship proposal must have a direct correlation with VisitSPC's targeted markets and should specifically indicate how that correlation exists.

D. For Events held between October 1 and December 31, expenditures incurred prior to the beginning of the fiscal year may be reimbursed in the fiscal year the Event is held if expressly allowed in the Funding Agreement.

E. By accepting Event funding, the applicant agrees to allow the VisitSPC's staff and/or research firm of record access to the venue to conduct on site intercepts with attendees to determine the value of the event, festival, program, or project to tourism and its potential for future growth.

F. Funding will be paid in a lump sum on a post-event basis or as otherwise provided in the Tourism Promotions Agreement, subject to submittal of a fully completed and signed **Post-Event Report Form and any other documentation** acceptable to VisitSPC.

G. Events utilizing Pinellas County property during their event must adhere to and abide by the County's Special Use and Event Guide available at <http://www.pinellas.gov/special-use-and-event-guide>.

## V. Application Process & Review

---

### A. Application Submittal.

- i. Each applicant must submit a fully completed **Funding Application** ("Application") per the **Application Requirements & Instructions**.
- ii. All Applications must be submitted by the deadline established in the **Program Process Flow Chart & Timeline**.
- iii. Incomplete or late Applications may disqualify the applicant.

### B. Review & Evaluation Process.

- i. Staff review and evaluation.
  - a. Each application will be reviewed by VisitSPC staff and the County Attorney's office, as may be needed, to ensure compliance with state statutes, county ordinances and these Guidelines regarding proper usage of Bed Tax funds.
  - b. Select VisitSPC staff along with VisitSPC's advertising agency of record will evaluate each application using the criteria in these guidelines and determine the tourism and marketing value of the event.
- ii. VisitSPC staff will then make its funding recommendations to the entire TDC who will then review and finalize their funding recommendations for BCC review and approval.
- iii. BCC Review.
  - a. The BCC will review the funding recommendations of both VisitSPC staff and the TDC.
  - b. Funding recommendations and negotiations of funding agreement terms will not begin until BCC review and approval of those recommendations.
- iv. Destination Enhancement Events will be evaluated and awarded administratively by VisitSPC staff.

### C. Rating Criteria.

- i. Unique Attendees & Room Nights – Ability of the Event to generate unique attendees, room nights, broadcast views, and/or planned P.R. / media coverage in excess of the thresholds established to be eligible for funding (Category I, II, III, IV, and V).
- ii. Marketing Plan – The value of the applicant's proposed Marketing Plan in promoting Pinellas County as a tourist destination and the extent the value of the plan exceeds the funding request (Category I, II, III, IV, and V).
- iii. Sponsorship Benefits – The value of the applicant's proposed Sponsorship Benefits in promoting Pinellas County as a tourist destination and the extent the value of the benefits exceeds the funding request (includes onsite benefits) (Category I, II, III, IV, and V).
- iv. Economic impact - The financial effect an event will have on the local economy resulting from tourists (Category I, II, III, and IV).
- v. Timing of Event: Peak vs. Offseason & Non-Conflicting – Timing of the Event to coincide with non-peak or shoulder seasons in Pinellas County tourism. Preference will be given to Events which occur during "off season" periods, including January 1 through February 15, May 1 through June 30, and September 1 through December 31. In addition, timing of the Event should not conflict with other funded Events in the local community taking place in Pinellas County (Category I, II, III, IV, and V).
- vi. Event History & Community Support – Demonstration of widespread community support and charitable contributions by the Event applicant that benefit the Pinellas County community. Ability of the Event to fulfill any previous contractual obligations with Pinellas County. Ability of the Event to attract high caliber

and high profile artists, athletes and/or participants to perform and/or attend in Pinellas County. Ability of the Event to enhance the overall image of Pinellas County (Category I, II, III, IV, and V).

- vii. Events using eco-friendly practices will be considered and may impact funding levels. Applicants must outline specific measures they will implement to align with eco-friendly objectives.

D. Program Timeline

- i. For Elite Events and Destination Enhancement Events, VisitSPC staff, with TDC approval, will annually establish a schedule for consideration and award of funding, which will generally comply with the following timeline:

March	Commence application process
April	Deadline for receipt of applications
May	Staff and advertising agency of record evaluation of applications
May/June	TDC reviews and votes on funding recommendations
June/July	BCC reviews and votes on funding recommendations
July	VisitSPC staff negotiates terms of the funding agreements
- ii. Events applying outside the application window can be considered if funds are available and may be recommended at VisitSPC's discretion.
- iii. Each year's timeline will be published and available online at <https://partners.visitstpeteclearwater.com/resource/funding-opportunities/elite-event-funding-program>.
- iv. Funding for any event is based on availability and is limited by the provisions of Florida Law and the Pinellas County Code.



FY26  
TDC ELITE EVENT FUNDING  
RECOMMENDATIONS

EVENT NAME		ATTENDEES (SELF-REPORTED)	ROOM NIGHTS (D.I. CALCULATOR)	ECONOMIC IMPACT (D.I. CALCULATOR)	CATEGORY REQUEST	FUNDING REQUEST	VSPC EVALUATION	TDC FY26 RECOMMENDATION	MARKETING / SPONSORSHIP SPLIT
1	<a href="#">Firestone Grand Prix of St Petersburg</a>	95,000	15,645	\$ 14,638,781.00	1	\$250,000	High	\$250,000	NEGOTIABLE
2	<a href="#">Valspar Championship</a>	107,784	19,578	\$ 18,216,426.00	1	\$250,000	High	\$250,000	NEGOTIABLE
3	<a href="#">St Pete Pride</a>	200,000	20,348	\$ 12,482,697.00	2	\$150,000	High	\$150,000	NEGOTIABLE
4	<a href="#">The ANNIKA Driven by Gainbridge at Pelican</a>	55,000	5,975	\$ 5,371,213.00	1	\$250,000	High	\$150,000	NEGOTIABLE
5	<a href="#">The St. Pete Powerboat Grand Prix</a>	60,000	12,037	\$ 9,467,913.00	1	\$250,000	Mid	\$125,000	NEGOTIABLE
6	<a href="#">The Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival</a>	60,000	5,573	\$ 4,031,540.00	2	\$150,000	Mid	\$125,000	NEGOTIABLE
7	<a href="#">2026 Clearwater Offshore Nationals</a>	150,000	7,635	\$ 6,005,765.00	2	\$150,000	Mid	\$125,000	NEGOTIABLE
8	<a href="#">Clearwater Jazz Holiday</a>	24,000	7,533	\$ 5,650,792.00	3	\$75,000	High	\$75,000	NEGOTIABLE
9	<a href="#">Sanding Ovations, The Gallery of Sand</a>	50,000	11,248	\$ 9,456,146.00	3	\$75,000	High	\$75,000	NEGOTIABLE
10	<a href="#">World Champions Cup</a>	15,000	3,374	\$ 2,567,393.00	3	\$75,000	High	\$75,000	NEGOTIABLE
11	<a href="#">ReliaQuest Bowl Clearwater Beach Day</a>	5,000	776	\$ 833,796.00	3	\$75,000	High	\$75,000	NEGOTIABLE
12	<a href="#">Dunedin Highland Games &amp; Festival</a>	27,000	2,338	\$ 2,533,037.00	3	\$75,000	High	\$75,000	NEGOTIABLE
13	<a href="#">St Pete BikeFest</a>	35,000	6,833	\$ 5,351,510.00	3	\$75,000	High	\$75,000	NEGOTIABLE
14	<a href="#">Reggae Rise Up 2026</a>	25,000	3,828	\$ 3,997,477.00	2	\$150,000	High	\$75,000	NEGOTIABLE
15	<a href="#">Clearwater Sea-Blues Festival</a>	20,000	3,593	\$ 3,320,930.00	3	\$75,000	Mid	\$65,000	NEGOTIABLE
16	<a href="#">St Pete Run Fest</a>	23,050	1,404	\$ 1,197,864.00	3	\$75,000	Mid	\$65,000	NEGOTIABLE
17	<a href="#">MLK Dream Big</a>	65,000	9,455	\$ 7,610,640.00	3	\$75,000	Mid	\$65,000	NEGOTIABLE
18	<a href="#">Festivals of Speed</a>	20,500	1,910	\$ 2,253,057.00	3	\$75,000	Mid	\$65,000	NEGOTIABLE
19	<a href="#">Tampa Bay Blues Festival</a>	25,000	5,076	\$ 4,960,328.00	2	\$150,000	Low	\$55,000	NEGOTIABLE
20	<a href="#">John's Pass Seafood Festival</a>	65,000	4,476	\$ 3,586,734.00	4	\$50,000	High	\$50,000	70 % M / 30% S
21	<a href="#">Savor St. Pete</a>	9,500	578	\$ 553,362.00	4	\$50,000	High	\$50,000	70 % M / 30% S
22	<a href="#">33rd Annual Spring King of the Beach</a>	20,000	2,276	\$ 2,157,164.00	4	\$50,000	High	\$50,000	70 % M / 30% S
23	<a href="#">NYE at the Pier</a>	30,000	1,708	\$ 1,834,349.00	4	\$50,000	Mid	\$40,000	70 % M / 30% S
24	<a href="#">Tampa Bay Barbecue Festival</a>	10,000	1,521	\$ 1,510,724.00	4	\$50,000	Mid	\$40,000	70 % M / 30% S
25	<a href="#">St Pete Tacos &amp; Tequila Festival</a>	11,000	1,793	\$ 1,534,676.00	4	\$50,000	Mid	\$40,000	70 % M / 30% S
26	<a href="#">Dunedin Mardi Gras</a>	12,500	861	\$ 947,962.00	4	\$30,000	Low	\$30,000	70 % M / 30% S
27	<a href="#">32nd Annual Fall King of the Beach</a>	15,500	2,046	\$ 1,745,413.00	5	\$25,000	High	\$25,000	70 % M / 30% S
28	<a href="#">Holiday Lights in the Gardens</a>	60,000	3,579	\$ 2,084,627.00	5	\$25,000	High	\$25,000	70 % M / 30% S
29	<a href="#">American Stage "Into The Woods" the Musical in the Park 2026</a>	15,200	86	\$ 57,332.00	5	\$25,000	High	\$25,000	70 % M / 30% S
30	<a href="#">OCC Invitational Bike Show</a>	20,000	1,015	\$ 910,570.00	5	\$25,000	High	\$25,000	70 % M / 30% S
31	<a href="#">St. Petersburg Distance Classic</a>	6,000	590	\$ 623,381.00	4	\$50,000	High	\$25,000	70 % M / 30% S
32	<a href="#">Winter Pride Saint Pete</a>	100,000	3,408	\$ 2,932,944.00	3	\$75,000	High	\$25,000	70 % M / 30% S
33	<a href="#">Merry Beach Market &amp; Holiday festival</a>	12,000	702	\$ 679,334.00	5	\$15,000	High	\$15,000	70 % M / 30% S
34	<a href="#">SHINE St. Petersburg Mural Festival</a>	12,000	1,226	\$ 804,805.00	5	\$25,000	Mid	\$25,000	70 % M / 30% S
35	<a href="#">Multiple Events (Tampa Bay Brewers Alliance)</a>	7,500	0	\$ -	5	\$25,000	Mid	\$20,000	70 % M / 30% S
36	<a href="#">SALSA at the District</a>	5,000	776	\$ 825,821.00	5	\$25,000	Mid	\$20,000	70 % M / 30% S
37	<a href="#">Dunedin Celtic Music Festival</a>	5,000	173	\$ 183,519.00	5	\$25,000	Mid	\$20,000	70 % M / 30% S
38	<a href="#">LOCALTOPIA, "A Community Celebration of All Things Local"</a>	60,000	1,242	\$ 1,465,401.00	5	\$25,000	Mid	\$20,000	70 % M / 30% S
39	<a href="#">Dunedin Pride Week</a>	10,000	2,045	\$ 1,600,224.00	5	\$25,000	Low	\$15,000	70 % M / 30% S
40	<a href="#">Tampa Bay Empanada Festival</a>	7,500	607	\$ 675,977.00	5	\$25,000	Low	\$15,000	70 % M / 30% S
41	<a href="#">Tide Fest</a>	5,000	344	\$ 344,767.00	5	\$25,000	Low	\$15,000	70 % M / 30% S



FY26  
TDC ELITE EVENT FUNDING  
RECOMMENDATIONS

EVENT NAME		ATTENDEES (SELF-REPORTED)	ROOM NIGHTS (D.I. CALCULATOR)	ECONOMIC IMPACT (D.I. CALCULATOR)	CATEGORY REQUEST	FUNDING REQUEST	VSPC EVALUATION	TDC FY26 RECOMMENDATION	MARKETING / SPONSORSHIP SPLIT
42	<a href="#">Palm Harbor Festival</a>	20,000	3,749	\$ 3,572,935.00	3	\$75,000	Low	\$15,000	70 % M / 30% S
43	<a href="#">Clearwater AquaX Grand Prix</a>	1,200	796	\$ 526,241.00	3	\$75,000	Low	\$15,000	NEGOTIABLE

Up to \$25k w/ rights to market & promote muruals; Up to \$20k w/o rights

ST. PETE PIER BUNDLE

44	<a href="#">St Pete Pier Fall Festival and Pumpkin Patch</a>	30,000	700	\$ 483,053.00	4	\$50,000		\$25,000	100% Sponsorship
45	<a href="#">Piertoberfest</a>	10,000	431	\$ 414,756.00	5	\$25,000			
46	<a href="#">Tampa Bay Ice Cream Festival Presented by Visit St Pete Clearwater</a>	12,000	194	\$ 249,962.00	5	\$25,000			
47	<a href="#">St Pete Spring Festival &amp; Easter Egg Hunt</a>	8,000	69	\$ 76,679.00	5	\$20,000			
48	<a href="#">Paws on Parade</a>	5,000	86	\$ 89,815.00	5	\$15,000			
49	<a href="#">Putt The Pier Holiday Edition</a>	8,000	400	\$ 246,792.00	5	\$10,000			

1,655,234181,636\$152,666,624\$2,685,000

WITHDRAWN

50	<a href="#">Bucs Beach Bash</a>				5	\$25,000
----	---------------------------------	--	--	--	---	----------

Elite Event Funding Program  
Funding History

Event	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	9 YEAR TOTALS	FY 2026 REQUEST	FY 2026 TDC & VSPC Recommendation	Category TDC Recommendation
American Stage Production (e.g. "Hair")									\$20,000	\$20,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	Cat 5 - High
St. Petersburg Distance Classic											\$50,000	\$25,000	Cat 5 - High
Winter Pride St. Pete											\$75,000	\$25,000	Cat 5 - High
LOCALTOPIA				\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$20,000	\$25,000	\$20,000	\$140,000	\$25,000	\$20,000	Cat 5 - Mid
Dunedin Celtic Music Festival											\$25,000	\$20,000	Cat 5 - Mid
SALSA at the District											\$25,000	\$20,000	Cat 5 - Mid
Tampa Bay Brewers Alliance									\$15,000	\$15,000	\$25,000	\$20,000	Cat 5 - Mid
Tampa Bay Empanada Festival											\$25,000	\$15,000	Cat 5 - Low
Palm Harbor Festival											\$75,000	\$15,000	Cat 5 - Low
Clearwater AquaX Grand Prix											\$75,000	\$15,000	Cat 5 - Low
Merry Beach Market & Holiday Festival											\$15,000	\$15,000	Cat 5 - High
Tide Fest											\$25,000	\$15,000	Cat 5 - Low
Dunedin Pride Week											\$25,000	\$15,000	Cat 5 - Low
Bucs Beach Bash											\$25,000		Withdrawn
St. Pete Pier LIVE (Rise Up Concert Series)								\$15,000	\$10,000	\$25,000			
Rays Music Festival									Cancelled	\$0			
St. Pete Pier Bundle (All July Events)									\$15,000	\$15,000			
Shopapalooza Festival								\$20,000		\$20,000			
St. Pete Pier Fall Festival & Pumpking Patch							\$20,000	\$25,000		\$45,000			
The Fourth on the St. Pete Pier							\$20,000	\$25,000		\$45,000			
First Night St. Petersburg								\$20,000		\$20,000			
Piertoberfest								\$20,000		\$20,000			
Tampa Bay Ice Cream Festival								\$20,000		\$20,000			
Gasparilla Bowl (f/k/a St. Pete Bowl)	\$135,000	\$40,000			Cancelled	\$25,000	Cancelled			\$200,000			
Enchant Christmas						\$75,000		\$75,000		\$150,000			
East-West Shrine Game	\$85,000	\$35,000								\$120,000			
RibFest	\$100,000									\$100,000			
Publix Rock 'n' Roll Running Series Clearwater							\$9,838	\$75,000		\$84,838			
Old Salt Baddest BBQ	\$55,000									\$55,000			
DTSP Songwriters Festival				\$25,000		Cancelled				\$25,000			
Tall Ships St. Petersburg							\$15,000			\$15,000			

Elite Event Funding Program  
Funding History

Event	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	9 YEAR TOTALS	FY 2026 REQUEST	FY 2026 TDC & VSPC Recommendation	Category TDC Recommendation
St. Pete Tacos and Tequila Festival (Fall)							\$15,000			\$15,000			
Sunshine City Smokeout							\$15,000			\$15,000			
Pier Fest				\$10,080	Cancelled					\$10,080			
Banyan Music Festival							Cancelled			\$0			
Shamrock Fest							Cancelled			\$0			

Totals	\$1,525,000	\$1,030,000	\$602,900	\$490,303	\$499,730	\$1,025,000	\$1,339,838	\$1,728,355	\$1,885,995	\$10,127,121	\$3,590,000	\$2,685,000	
# of Events in Program	13	12	10	16	15	18	31	34	35		45	44	

Red Text - Deal Terms Pending  
Modified Event due to COVID-19, hurricane, etc.  
In the Program but Event Cancelled or Rescheduled  
Up to \$25k w/ rights to market & promote muruals; Up to \$20k w/o rights


Elite Event Funding Program  
Funding History

Event	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	9 YEAR TOTALS	FY 2026 REQUEST	FY 2026 TDC & VSPC Recommendation	Category TDC Recommendation
St. Pete Tacos and Tequila Festival (Fall)							\$15,000			\$15,000			
Sunshine City Smokeout							\$15,000			\$15,000			
Pier Fest				\$10,080	Cancelled					\$10,080			
Banyan Music Festival							Cancelled			\$0			
Shamrock Fest							Cancelled			\$0			


Totals	\$1,525,000	\$1,030,000	\$602,900	\$490,303	\$499,730	\$1,025,000	\$1,339,838	\$1,728,355	\$1,885,995	\$10,127,121	\$3,590,000	\$2,685,000	
# of Events in Program	13	12	10	16	15	18	31	34	35		45	44	

Red Text - Deal Terms Pending  
Modified Event due to COVID-19, hurricane, etc.  
In the Program but Event Cancelled or Rescheduled  
Up to \$25k w/ rights to market & promote muruals; Up to \$20k w/o rights

# PROGRAM CHANGES

1. Budget increase from \$2M to \$3M
  2. Increase in funding maximums
  3. Redefined category criteria
  4. Clarified broadcast requirements
  5. Introduced Planned P.R. / Media Coverage as funding criteria
  6. Introduced Eco-Friendly Practices as consideration
  7. Ability to accept applications year-round, if funds available
  8. Utilized D.I. Calculator tool to standardize economic impact and room nights
- 

# REMINDERS

1. Funding not guaranteed year-to-year.
  2. Priorities as described during Public Information Webinar
    - Award events with proven ability to generate visitation, impacts, and exposure.
    - Out-of-market spending in VisitSPC strategic markets.
    - Projections substantiated via previous studies or hard data.
      - Zip code report (Ticketed Events) vs Jacobs Method (Non-Ticketed)
  3. Recommendations based on **Value** to VisitSPC.
    - Room Nights & Attendance
    - Broadcast Value
    - Marketing & P.R. Value
    - Sponsorship Value
- 

# FUNDING CATEGORIES & ELIGIBILITY

		Funding Range
Category 1	Must meet/exceed all (3) criteria: 50k attendees, 15k room nights, 500k broadcast views	\$150k to \$250k
Category 2	Must meet/exceed (2) of (3) criteria: 50k attendees, 15k room nights, 100k broadcast views or \$50k of PR/Media Coverage	\$75k to \$150k
Category 3	Must meet/exceed (1) of (3) criteria: 20k attendees, 7,500 room nights 500k broadcast views or \$100k of PR/Media Coverage	\$50k to \$75k
Category 4	Must meet/exceed 10k attendees or 3k room nights	\$25k to \$50k
Category 5	Must meet/exceed 5k attendees	Up to \$25k



# APPLICATION REVIEW

## 1. Materials

- Funding Recommendations Spreadsheet
- Program Guidelines

## 2. History / Progression

	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26
Budget	\$2M	\$2M	\$2M	\$2M	\$3M
# of Applications	20	35	47	51	50
Total Funding Requested	\$1,035,000	\$1,940,000	\$2,593,800	\$2,960,000	\$3,590,000
# Applications Recommended	18	31	33	33	44
Total Funding Recommended	\$1,000,000	\$1,460,000	\$1,820,000	\$1,865,000	\$2,685,000

# APPLICATION REVIEW

## 3. VisitSPC Committee

- Executive Staff: Brian Lowack, Steve Grimes, Kylie Diaz, Kathryn Reagan
- Senior Staff: Katie Bridges, Craig Campbell, Eddie Kirsch, Jason Latimer, Jessica Morrow
- Agency Support/Resources

## 4. Process

- Administrative & Legal Review
  - Eligibility Assessment & Category Placement
  - Evaluation: High, Middle, Low Range
  - Funding Recommendation
- 

# **RATING CRITERIA**


## **Data / History**

- Attendees (as provided by organizer)
- Room Nights (D.I. calculator)
- Economic Impact (D.I. calculator)

## **Marketing / Sponsorship**

- Value of Paid Media & Public Relations Plans
- Value of Sponsorship Proposal, Broadcast & Brand Exposure

## **Other Considerations**

- Timing of Event: Peak vs Non-Peak, Conflicting
  - Sustainability Initiatives
- 

# RECOMMENDATION FORMULA

Category	Range	Low	Middle	High	M v S Split
1	\$150k to \$250k	\$150k	\$200k	\$250k	Negotiable
2	\$75k to \$150k	\$100k	\$125k	\$150k	Negotiable
3	\$50k to \$75k	\$55k	\$65k	\$75k	Negotiable
4	\$25k to \$50k	\$30k	\$40k	\$50k	70% M / 30% S
5	Up to \$25k	\$15k	\$20k	\$25k	70% M / 30% S (except where noted)

# SUMMARY

**50 Total Applications**

**43 Applications + 1 Bundle Recommended for Funding**

**FY26 Recommended Funding: \$2,685,000**

**Remaining for Open Applications & Business Development Opportunities: \$315,000**

**New Data & Measurement Tools Forthcoming**



THANK YOU



ST.PETE  
CLEARWATER,FL

## OMB Granicus Review

<b>Granicus Title</b>	Fiscal Year 2026 Elite Event funding recommendations from the Tourist Development Council.				
<b>Granicus ID#</b>	25-0978A	<b>Reference #</b>		<b>Date</b>	30-Jun-2025

**Mark all Applicable Boxes:**

Type of Review									
<b>CIP</b>		<b>Grant</b>		<b>Other</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Revenue</b>		<b>Project</b>	

**Fiscal Information:**

<b>New Contract (Y/N)</b>	N	<b>Original Amount</b>	\$0
<b>Fund(s)</b>	1040	<b>Amount of Change (+/-)</b>	\$2,680,000
<b>Cost Center(s)</b>	381280	<b>Total Amount</b>	\$2,680,000
<b>Program(s)</b>	1998	<b>Amount Available</b>	<b>Total: \$3,000,000</b>
<b>Account(s)</b>	5480200	<b>Included in Applicable Budget? (Y/N)</b>	Yes
<b>Fiscal Year(s)</b>	FY26		

Description & Comments
(What is it, any issues found, is there a financial impact to current/next FY, does this contract vary from previous FY, etc.)

This item is the recommendation for Elite Events funding from the Tourist Development Council (TDC), not the County. The TDC is recommending funding 49 events in the FY26 Elite Events programs for a total of \$2,685,000. The FY26 Proposed Budget to the BCC includes \$3.0M of funding for Elite Events, which is the maximum amount allowed under the current Pinellas County Tourist Development Plan.

The CVB reviewed and scored all eligible applications and found 49 met the minimum score and recommended funding those events for a total of \$2,680,000.

The Staff report stated the 'remaining budgeted funds in the amount of \$315,000 will be allocated toward FY26 off-cycle applicants and/or new business opportunities that will result in a high return on investment (ROI),' OMB does not agree with this statement and thinks the remaining funds would need to be approved by the Board in a future action. I have updated the Staff Report to re-state this section.

**Analyst:**      **Jim Abernathy**

**Ok to Sign:** ☐