



Pinellas County

Staff Report

File #: 25-0180A, **Version:** 1

Agenda Date: 2/25/2025

Subject:

Revisions to the Elite Event & Destination Enhancement Funding Program Guidelines from the Tourist Development Council.

Recommended Action:

Approval of the revisions to the Elite Event & Destination Enhancement Funding Program Guidelines.

- The Elite Event & Destination Enhancement Funding Program provides funding for eligible major events that generate attendees, visitors, room nights, and promotion for the County.
- Recommended revisions were unanimously approved by the Tourist Development Council on January 15, 2025.
- Substantive revisions include:
 - 1.) Increased program cap from \$2 million to \$3 million in accordance with the Tourist Development Plan.
 - 2.) Restored the funding cap for category one events to the 2017 level and increased the remaining caps accordingly; included a funding “range” to address the variance between events within each category.
 - 3.) Added public relations/media coverage as a funding criteria.
 - 4.) Added eco-friendly practices for funding consideration.
 - 5.) Eliminated the 2nd application cycle for Destination Enhancement events in lieu of accepting these applications year-round, provided funding is available.
 - 6.) Clarified “broadcast” to mean affiliated with a network cable company.

Strategic Plan:

Foster Continual Economic Growth and Vitality

4.6 Support a vibrant community with recreation, arts, and culture to attract residents and visitors

Deliver First-Class Services to the Public and Our Customers

5.2 Be responsible stewards of the public’s resources

Summary:

With Board approval, the revised Guidelines to administer the Elite Event Program will commence with the upcoming Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) application and funding cycle.

Background Information:

Section 125.0104(5)(a)3., Florida Statutes, authorizes the use of Tourist Development Tax (TDT) funds to promote and advertise tourism, and to support activities and events that have as one of their main purposes the attraction of tourists as evidence by their promotion to tourists. Pinellas County Code Section 118-32 (the Tourist Development Plan), reiterates that the marketing and sponsoring of special events and programs as authorized by the Statute is an allowable use of TDT revenues. Pursuant to these authorities, the Elite Event Program is one of the marketing programs administered

by CVB staff that provides funding to qualified, high-profile and destination enhancement events that meet the minimum criteria as set forth in the Guidelines. The original Guidelines were approved by the Board on February 7, 2012, and amended on January 29, 2013, April 15, 2014, December 12, 2017, December 11, 2018, March 10, 2020, March 8, 2022, and April 9, 2024.

Over the past years, this program has steadily become more popular including in FY24, when a total of 51 applications were received. CVB staff performed a review of the Guidelines prior to the FY26 funding cycle in an effort to increase efficiencies, increase the number of new events, encourage events to pursue public relations opportunities thereby increasing the CVB's brand awareness, and with an eye toward making overall improvements to the program.

On January 15, 2025, during the regular scheduled meeting, CVB staff presented the proposed Guideline revisions to the TDC which included the following substantive changes:

1. Increased program cap from \$2 million to \$3 million in accordance with the Tourist Development Plan.
2. Restored the funding cap for category 1 events to the 2017 level and increased the remaining caps accordingly; included a funding "range" to address the variance between events within each category.
3. Added public relations/media coverage as a funding criteria.
4. Added eco-friendly practices for funding consideration in alignment with The Tampa Bay Area Low-Waste Event Guide.
5. Eliminated the 2nd application cycle for Destination Enhancement events in lieu of accepting these applications year-round, provided funding is available.
6. Clarified "broadcast" to mean affiliated with a network cable company.

The TDC was very supportive of the changes and following discussion, unanimously approved the revised Guidelines. If approved by the Board, the revised Guidelines will become effective in the upcoming FY26 funding cycle.

Fiscal Impact:

This action by itself has no fiscal impact.

The CVB plans to submit a Decision Package to request an additional \$1 million for this funding program during the FY26 budget cycle.

Funding to support the Elite Event Program is included in the CVB's Operating Budget. The source of funding is the Tourist Development Tax Fund.

Staff Member Responsible:

Brian Lowack, Director, Convention and Visitors Bureau

Partners:

Tourist Development Council

Attachments:

Elite Event & Destination Enhancement Funding Program Guidelines (redline version)
Elite Event & Destination Enhancement Funding Program Guidelines (clean version)

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.



Pinellas County

Staff Report

File #: 24-0496A, **Version:** 1

Agenda Date: 4/9/2024

Subject:

Revisions to the Elite Event Funding Program Guidelines from the Tourist Development Council.

Recommended Action:

Approval of the revisions to the Elite Event Funding Program Guidelines.

- The Elite Event Funding Program provides funding for eligible major events that generate attendees or room nights in the County.
- Recommended revisions were unanimously approved by the Tourist Development Council on March 20, 2024.
- Substantive revisions include:
 - 1.) Renaming program to include Destination Enhancement Events which are category 3-5 events that typically do not meet any room night criteria.
 - 2.) Board of County Commissioners (Board) will approve a total maximum funding amount for Destination Enhancement Events.
 - 3.) Convention and Visitors Bureau staff is authorized to approve Destination Enhancement Events.
 - 4.) Destination Enhancement funding awards will be reported to the Board on the County Administrator's Receipt and File Report.
 - 5.) Destination Enhancement Tourism Promotion Agreements will be approved by the Director of Administrative Services and included in the Purchasing Department's Receipt and File Report.
 - 6.) Destination Enhancement funding cycle will run on a bi-annual basis, subject to funding availability.
 - 7.) Defined "Broadcast" and Broadcast Criteria for category 1 events to include receiving in excess of 100,000 views, in addition to established room night/attendance requirements.
 - 8.) Clarified "Marketing" as pre-event expenditures and "Sponsorship" as on-site brand exposure.

Strategic Plan:

Foster Continual Economic Growth and Vitality

4.6 Support a vibrant community with recreation, arts, and culture to attract residents and visitors

Summary:

With Board approval, the revised Guidelines to administer the Elite Event and Destination Enhancement Funding Program will commence with the upcoming Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) application and funding cycle.

Background Information:

The Elite Event Funding Program is one of the marketing programs administered by CVB staff, The

original Guidelines were approved by the Board on February 7, 2012, and amended on January 29, 2013, April 15, 2014, December 12, 2017, December 11, 2018, March 10, 2020, and March 8, 2022.

Over the past five years, applications received for category 3-5 events have increased by approximately 73.3%, or from 15 to 26. Funding for category 3-5 ranges from “up to” \$15,000.00 for a category 5 event to a maximum of \$25,000.00 for a category 3 event. Renaming these events as Destination Enhancement (DE) Events and moving them to a bi-annual funding cycle will allow the CVB to 1) be more selective in the review process to ensure only the best events receive funding, 2) delineate those events that are truly “Elite” Events, and 3) ensure the Elite Event Funding Program remains within the \$2.0 million cap authorized by the Tourist Development Plan.

On March 20, 2024, during the regular scheduled meeting, CVB staff presented the proposed Guideline revisions to the TDC which included the following:

- 1) Renaming program to include Destination Enhancement Events which are category 3-5 events that typically do not meet any room night criteria.
- 2) Board will approve a total maximum funding amount for DE Events.
- 3) CVB staff is authorized to approve Destination Enhancement Events.
- 4) DE funding awards will be reported to the Board on the County Administrator’s Receipt and File Report.
- 5) DE Tourism Promotion Agreements will be approved by the Director of Administrative Services and included in the Purchasing Department’s Receipt and File Report.
- 6) DE funding cycle will run on a bi-annual basis subject to funding availability.
- 7) Defined “Broadcast” and Broadcast Criteria for category 1 events to include receiving in excess of 100,000 views, in addition to established room night/attendance requirements.
- 8) Clarified “Marketing” as pre-event expenditures and “Sponsorship” as on-site brand exposure.

The TDC was very supportive of the changes and unanimously approved the revised Guidelines. If approved by the Board, the revised Guidelines will become effective in the upcoming FY25 funding cycle.

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Staff Member Responsible:

Brian Lowack, Director, Convention and Visitors Bureau

Partners:

Tourist Development Council

Attachments:

Elite Event Funding Guidelines (redline version)

Elite Event Funding Guidelines (clean version)

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 **\$2,000,000** annually for marketing special events and programs.

One of the marketing programs administrated by Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater (“VSPC”) 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 VSPC 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 VSPC, on behalf of the County, and an eligible applicant producing an Elite Event, wherein VSPC receives on-site event assets and opportunities to promote VSPC 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, Connected TV ("CTV"), Online Video ("OLV"), Over-the-Top ("OTT"), or other viewing platform.

III. Funding Categories & Eligibility

- A. Funding Categories are as follows:
- i. **Category I** – Considered an Elite Event that generates at least 50,000 "unique" paid, credentialed and/or otherwise documented attendees or over 15,000 room nights in Pinellas County with maximum funding eligibility up to \$150,000. The entirety of the main Category 1 events must be hosted in Pinellas County with Broadcast expected or guaranteed to surpass 100,000 views.
 - ii. **Category II** – Considered an Elite Event that generates at least 15,000 "unique" paid, credentialed and/or otherwise documented attendees or over 4,500 room nights in Pinellas County with maximum funding eligibility up to \$75,000.
 - iii. **Category III** – Considered an Elite Event or Destination Enhancement Event that generates at least 10,000 "unique" paid, credentialed and/or otherwise documented attendees or over 3,000 room nights in Pinellas County with maximum funding eligibility up to \$25,000.
 - iv. **Category IV** – Considered a Destination Enhancement Event that generates at least 7,500 "unique" paid, credentialed and/or otherwise documented attendees with maximum funding eligibility up to \$20,000.
 - v. **Category V** – Considered a Destination Enhancement Event that is a new event to Pinellas County with no local prior hotel room and/or attendance history which is required to meet Category I-IV consideration, with maximum funding eligibility up to \$15,000.00.
- 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, and III events, generate the required room nights or unique attendees in Pinellas County as set forth herein,
 - iii. for Category IV events, generate the required attendees;
 - iv. For Category V submit completed application, including projected potential room nights/ expected "unique" attendees;
 - v. demonstrate it will attract Tourists to Pinellas County;
 - vi. 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 VSPC and/or its advertising agency of record;
 - vii. provide VSPC exclusivity as the only CVB and Destination Marketing Organization ("DMO") recognized supporter of the Elite Event, and
 - viii. not utilize funding towards other VSPC programs (e.g. co-op programs, etc.).

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 VSPC. 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 VSPC 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 VSPC.
- C. Applicant's Marketing and/or Sponsorship proposal must have a direct correlation with VSPC'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 VSPC'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 VSPC.

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 VSPC 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 VSPC staff along with VSPC'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. VSPC 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 VSPC staff and the TDC.
 - b. Funding recommendations and negotiations of funding agreement terms will not begin until BCC review and approval of those recommendations.
- C. Rating Criteria.
 - i. Unique Attendees & Room Nights – Ability of the Event to generate unique attendees (Category I, II, III, and IV) OR room nights in excess of the threshold established to be eligible for funding (Category I, II, and III).
 - 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, and applicable III).
 - 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, and applicable III).
 - 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, and IV).
 - 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, and IV).

D. Program Timeline

- i. For Elite Events (Category I, II, applicable III), VSPC 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 VSPC staff negotiates terms of the funding agreements
- ii. For Destination Enhancement Events (applicable Category III, IV, V), VSPC staff, with TDC approval, will annually establish a schedule for consideration and award of funding, which will generally comply with the following timeline:
 - Cycle 1**
 - March Commence application process for Events occurring between October 1 to March 31
 - April Deadline for receipt of applications
 - May Staff and advertising agency of record, if applicable, evaluate applications and determine awards
 - May/June Staff notifies TDC of funding determinations, and files a report of awards granted with the BCC
 - June - September VSPC staff negotiates terms of the funding agreements for events occurring between October 1 and March 31
 - Cycle 2**
 - September Commence application process for Events occurring between April 1 to September 30
 - October Deadline for receipt of applications
 - November Staff and advertising agency of record, if applicable, evaluate applications and determine awards
 - November/December Staff notifies TDC of funding determinations, and files a report of awards granted with the BCC
 - January - March VSPC staff negotiates terms of the funding agreements for events occurring between April 1 and September 30
- 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.

VI. Key Documents

In addition to the Funding Guidelines, the Elite Event & Destination Enhancement Funding Program is supported by other key documents, including:

- A. Program Overview
- B. Application Requirements & Instructions
- C. Funding Application
- D. Program Process Flow Chart & Timeline
- E. Post-Event Report Form
- F. Tourism Promotion Agreement



Pinellas County

Staff Report

File #: 22-0231A, **Version:** 1

Agenda Date: 3/8/2022

Subject:

Revisions to the Elite Event Funding Program Guidelines from the Tourist Development Council.

Recommended Action:

Approval of the Tourist Development Council's (TDC's) recommended revisions to the Elite Event Funding Program Guidelines.

- The Elite Event Funding Program provides funding for eligible major events that generate attendees or room nights in the County.
- Substantive revisions include:
 - 1.) Cultural Heritage category was renamed to category four.
 - 2.) Addition of category five for new, first time events to the County.
 - 3.) Revised room night and attendance thresholds and on categories one through three, revised requirement to meet one "or" the other criteria.
 - 4.) Increased the maximum funding for category one from \$125K to ~~\$200K~~. BCC approved \$150K
 - 5.) Eliminated the TDC Elite Committee and replaced with staff performing the tasks.
- Recommended revisions were unanimously approved by the TDC.

Strategic Plan:

Foster Continual Economic Growth and Vitality

4.6 Support a vibrant community with recreation, arts, and culture to attract residents and visitors

Summary:

With Board of County Commissioners (Board) approval, the revised Guidelines to administer the Elite Event Funding Program will commence with the upcoming FY23 application and funding cycle.

Background Information:

The Elite Event Funding Program is one of the marketing programs administered by Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) staff. The original Guidelines were approved by the Board on February 7, 2012, and amended on January 29, 2013, April 15, 2014, December 12, 2017, December 11, 2018, and March 10, 2020.

Prior to the initiation of the FY23 funding cycle, the TDC had a workshop on November 17, 2021, to discuss the Elite Event Funding Program Guidelines. Following the discussion, the TDC requested staff to develop program revisions for presentation at the next TDC meeting.

On December 15, 2021, staff presented proposed revisions which included the following substantive changes to the Guidelines:

- 1.) Cultural Heritage category was renamed to category four.
- 2.) Addition of category five for new, first time events to the County.

- 3.) Revised criteria for meeting room nights “and” attendance thresholds, to meeting one “or” the other criteria for categories one and two.
- 4.) Increased the maximum funding for category one from \$125K to \$200K.
- 5.) Eliminated the TDC Elite Committee and replaced with County staff performing the tasks.

The TDC was supportive of the revisions and requested staff further review the criteria for room nights and attendance, and if necessary, adjust the thresholds to bring them into alignment with what could realistically be attained.

At the TDC meeting on January 20, 2022, CVB Director, Steve Hayes, presented revised room night and attendance requirements and the underlying methodology for his determination. The TDC discussed the threshold revisions and further approved changing the category three requirement for meeting room night “and” attendance thresholds, to meeting room night “or” attendance, for consistency with categories one and two. The TDC requested final revisions be brought to the next TDC meeting for approval.

On February 16, 2022, staff presented the revised Guidelines to the TDC and they were unanimously approved. If approved by the Board, the revised Guidelines will become effective in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2023 funding cycle.

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Staff Member Responsible:

Steve Hayes, Director, Convention and Visitors Bureau

Partners:

Tourist Development Council

Attachments:

Summary of Changes

Elite Event Funding Guidelines (redline version)

Elite Event Funding Guidelines (clean version)



Summary Notes/Major Changes to Elite Event Guidelines

Funding Categories & Eligibility

- Under Category 1 expanded national broadcast to include streaming and other platforms
- Renamed Cultural/Heritage to Category 4
- Created Category 5 which would be for new first-time events to Pinellas County
- Changes in Attendance, Room Nights, and Funding Level and changed measurement to attendance OR room nights.
 - Category 1: Attendance more than 50,000 or generates over 15,000 room nights. *Currently 50,000 people or 25,000 room nights.* Maximum funding eligibility up to ~~\$200,000~~ BCC approved \$150,000 on 3-8-22.
 - Category 2: Attendance over 15,000 or generates over 4,500 room nights. *Currently 20,000 people and 10,000 room nights.* No change in maximum funding level, up to \$75,000
 - Category 3: Attendance over 10,000 or generates over 3,000 room nights. *Currently 10,000 people and 5,000 room nights.* No change in maximum funding level, up to \$25,000
 - Category 4: Attendance over 7,500. Lowered maximum funding level, from \$25,000 to \$20,000 to better reflect the difference between Category 3 and Category 4.
 - Category 5: Maximum funding level, up to \$15,000

Notes

- *Attendance numbers are provided by the event and is either based on an estimate or actual ticket sales*
- *Room nights determined by using data from Destination Analysts reports. Current data is from overall visitation results. Future changes can be based on actual category results (limited data set currently). The data used to estimate room nights is estimated event attendance, party size (2.5), length of stay (2.2 nights) and % stayed overnight (36%)*

Application Process & Review

- VSPC staff and our agency of record (BVK) will review each application for accuracy and detail, back-up material and the appropriate tourism/marketing value
- After review VSPC staff will make funding recommendations to the TDC based on the information in the application
- VSPC staff will present recommendations to the TDC members for discussion and approval. Upon approval the TDC will provide their recommendations to the BCC.
- The BCC will review the TDC and VSPC recommendations and approve before negotiations begin with the events.

Rating Criteria

- Added economic impact to the list of criteria for evaluation



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 \$2,000,000 annually for: (i) marketing special events and programs; (ii) providing promotional or operating support for exhibits or programs provided by museums owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public; (iii) providing promotional support for zoological parks that are owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public; and (iv) event and program sponsorships.

One of the marketing programs administrated by Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater ("VSPC") is the **Elite Event Funding Program** for events meeting the criteria to receive funding from TDT funds. The genesis of the Elite Event program was called "New Product" funding, which then became "Special Events" funding and is now operated under the current name. Prior to the New Products program, events were funded on an ad hoc basis. The New Product (now Elite Event) program was created with the intent to provide a more systematic means for funding applications, review and recommendations for funding. The goal moving forward is to continue the program to allow maximum 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 Elite 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. "Marketing" shall mean 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.
- C. "Sponsorship" shall mean a mutually beneficial business arrangement between VSPC, on behalf of the County, and an eligible applicant producing an Elite Event, wherein VSPC receives event assets and opportunities to promote VSPC brand and the Pinellas County destination not included in the Marketing Plan.
- D. "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.
- E. "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

III. Funding Categories & Eligibility

- A. Funding Categories are as follows:
- i. **Category I** – generates at least 50,000 “unique” paid, credentialed and/or otherwise documented attendees or over 15,000 room nights in Pinellas County with maximum funding eligibility up to \$150,000. Category 1 events must be broadcast on national television or other broadcast services such as cable, streaming services or other viewing platforms.
 - ii. **Category II** – generates at least 15,000 “unique” paid, credentialed and/or otherwise documented attendees or over 4,500 room nights in Pinellas County with maximum funding eligibility up to \$75,000.
 - iii. **Category III** - generates at least 10,000 “unique” paid, credentialed and/or otherwise documented attendees or over 3,000 room nights in Pinellas County with maximum funding eligibility up to \$25,000.
 - iv. **Category IV** - generates at least 7,500 “unique” paid, credentialed and/or otherwise documented attendees with maximum funding eligibility up to \$20,000.
 - v. **Category V**- a new event to Pinellas County with no local prior hotel room and/or attendance history which is required to meet Category I-IV consideration, with maximum funding eligibility up to \$15,000.00.
- B. To be considered eligible for funding, each applicant must:
- i. conduct, produce, manage, and/or operate an Elite Event at a location in Pinellas County;
 - ii. for Category I, II, and III events, generate the required room nights or unique attendees in Pinellas County as set forth herein,
 - iii. for Category IV events, generate the required attendees;
 - iv. For Category V submit completed application, including projected potential room nights/ expected “unique” attendees;
 - v. demonstrate it will attract Tourists to Pinellas County;
 - vi. 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 VSPC and/or its advertising agency of record; and
 - vii. provide VSPC exclusivity as the only CVB and Destination Marketing Organization (“DMO”) recognized supporter of the Elite Event.

IV. Conditions of Funding

- A. Funds may only be used in accordance with Chapter 125, Florida Statutes for the Marketing and/or Sponsorship benefits as agreed upon with VSPC. Funds may not be used for event operating expenses, except and only to the extent any funds received by applicant are allocated by VSPC for sponsorship benefits.
- B. Applicants receiving Elite 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 VSPC.
- C. Applicant’s Marketing and/or Sponsorship proposal must have a direct correlation with VSPC’s targeted markets and should specifically indicate how that correlation exists.
- D. For Elite 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 Elite Event is held if expressly allowed in the Funding Agreement.
- E. By accepting Elite Event funding, the applicant agrees to allow the VSPC'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 VSPC.
- G. Elite Events utilizing Pinellas County property during their event must adhere to and abide by the County’s Special Events & Facilities Use Guide available at <http://www.pinellascounty.org/Events/pdf/Special-Events-Users-Guide.pdf>.

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 VSPC 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 VSPC staff along with VSPC'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. VSPC 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 VSPC staff and the TDC.
 - b. Funding recommendations and negotiations of funding agreement terms will not begin until BCC review and approval of those recommendations.
- C. Rating Criteria.
- i. Unique Attendees & Room Nights – Ability of the Elite Event to generate unique attendees (Category I, II, III, and IV) OR room nights in excess of the threshold established to be eligible for funding (Category I, II, and III).
 - 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.
 - 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).
 - iv. Economic impact - The financial effect an event will have on the local economy resulting from tourists.
 - v. Timing of Event: Peak vs. Offseason & Non-Conflicting – Timing of the Elite Event to coincide with non-peak or shoulder seasons in Pinellas County tourism. Preference will be given to Elite 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 Elite Event should not conflict with other Elite Events or other special events taking place in Pinellas County.
 - vi. Event History & Community Support – Demonstration of widespread community support and charitable contributions by the Elite Event applicant that benefit the Pinellas County community. Ability of the Elite Event to fulfill any previous contractual obligations with Pinellas County. Ability of the Elite Event to attract high caliber and high profile artists, athletes and/or participants to perform and/or attend in Pinellas County. Ability of the Elite Event to enhance the overall image of Pinellas County.
- D. Program Timeline
- i. VSPC 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 considers proposed funding recommendations
June/July	BCC reviews and considers recommendations
July	VSPC staff negotiates terms of the funding agreements
 - ii. Each year’s timeline will be published and available online at <https://partners.visitstpeteclearwater.com/resource/funding-opportunities/elite-event-funding-program>.

VI. Key Documents

In addition to the Funding Guidelines, the Elite Event Funding Program is supported by other key documents, including:

- A. Program Overview
- B. Application Requirements & Instructions
- C. Funding Application
- D. Program Process Flow Chart & Timeline
- E. Post-Event Report Form
- F. Elite Event Funding Agreement



Staff Report

File #: 20-315A, **Version:** 1

Agenda Date: 3/10/2020

Subject:

Revisions to the Elite Event Funding Guidelines from the Tourist Development Council.

Recommended Action:

Approval of the Tourist Development Council's (TDC) recommended revisions to the Elite Event Guidelines (Guidelines).

- The Elite Event Funding Program provides funding for eligible major events that generate a large number of attendees and room nights in the County.
- The revisions update the rating criteria and allowable use of designated sponsorship funds for event operating expenses.
- Recommended revisions were unanimously approved by the TDC.
- If approved, Guidelines will become effective in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2021 funding cycle.

Strategic Plan:

Foster Continual Economic Growth and Vitality

4.6 Support a vibrant community with recreation, arts, and culture to attract residents and visitors

Summary:

With Board of County Commissioners (Board) approval, the revised Guidelines to administer the TDC's Elite Event Program will commence with the upcoming FY21 application and funding cycle.

Background Information:

The Elite Event Funding Program is one of the marketing programs administered by staff on behalf of the TDC. The original Guidelines were approved by the Board on February 7, 2012, and amended on January 29, 2013, April 15, 2014, December 12, 2017, and December 11, 2018.

Prior to the initiation of the Fiscal Year 2021 funding cycle, staff reviewed the Guidelines and determined minor revisions were necessary to further clarify how funding could be utilized in section IV. A. and to bring the rating criteria in section V.C. in congruence with the Elite Event Funding Program Application.

On February 19, 2020, staff presented the Guideline revisions to the TDC and they were unanimously approved.

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Staff Member Responsible:

Steve Hayes, Director, Convention and Visitors Bureau

Partners:

Tourist Development Council
Office of Management and Budget, Strategic Performance Management

Attachments:

Elite Event Funding Guidelines (redline version)
Elite Event Funding Guidelines (clean version)



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") 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 \$2,000,000 annually for: (i) marketing special events and programs; (ii) providing promotional or operating support for exhibits or programs provided by museums owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public; (iii) providing promotional support for zoological parks that are owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public; and (iv) event and program sponsorships. The Pinellas County Tourist Development Council ("TDC") was established to make recommendations on how best to spend Bed Tax proceeds, including proposing an annual budget and funding for marketing and promotion activities related to special events.

One of the marketing programs administrated by Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater ("VSPC") on behalf of the TDC is the **Elite Event Funding Program** for major events meeting the criteria to receive funding from TDT funds. The genesis of the Elite Event program was called "New Product" funding, which then became "Special Events" funding and is now operated under the current name. Prior to the New Products program, events were funded on an ad hoc basis. The New Product (now Elite Event) program was created with the intent to provide a more systematic means for funding applications, review and recommendations for funding. The goal moving forward is to continue the program to allow maximum 1) **consistency**; 2) **return on investment and sustainability of the individual events and the overall program**; and 3) **transparency**.

Examples of events that have received funding in the past include the Clearwater Jazz Holiday, Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg, Outback Bowl, St. Petersburg Bowl, Tampa Bay Rays, Valspar PGA Golf Tournament, Clearwater Super Boat National Championship, and the Rock 'n' Roll Half Marathon of St. Petersburg. Many of these events either generated or are projected to generate significant attendance and/or room nights, although not necessarily at the level of traditional Elite Events.

The County's fiscal year begins on October 1 and ends on September 30 of the following year. Therefore, applications for Elite 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. "Cultural Heritage Event" shall mean an Elite Event that recognizes and/or celebrates community history and identity, bonds to the past, present, and future, and/or values and traditions that attracts Tourists from VSPC's targeted markets.
- B. "Elite Event" shall mean a new or existing 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.
- C. "Marketing" shall mean 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 VSPC, on behalf of the County, and an eligible applicant producing an Elite Event, wherein VSPC receives event assets and opportunities to promote VSPC 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 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

III. Funding Categories & Eligibility

A. Funding Categories are as follows:

- Category I** – generates at least 50,000 "unique" paid, credentialed and/or otherwise documented attendees AND at least 25,000 room nights in Pinellas County with maximum funding eligibility up to \$125,000. Category 1 events must be broadcast on national television.
- Category II** – generates at least 20,000 "unique" paid, credentialed and/or otherwise documented attendees AND at least 10,000 room nights in Pinellas County with maximum funding eligibility up to \$75,000.
- Category III** - generates at least 10,000 "unique" paid, credentialed and/or otherwise documented attendees AND at least 5,000 room nights in Pinellas County with maximum funding eligibility up to \$25,000.
- Category IV** - a Cultural Heritage Event that generates at least 20,000 "unique" paid, credentialed and/or otherwise documented attendees with maximum funding eligibility up to \$25,000.

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

- conduct, produce, manage, and/or operate an Elite Event at a venue in Pinellas County;
- for Category I, II, and III events, generate the required room nights in Pinellas County as set forth herein, regardless of attendance at the Elite Event;
- for Category IV events, generate the required attendees, and attract Tourists from VSPC's targeted markets.
- demonstrate it will attract Tourist to Pinellas County;
- 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 Sponsorship payment or Marketing plan funding, as determined by VSPC and/or its advertising agency of record; and
- provide VSPC exclusivity as the only CVB and Destination Marketing Organization ("DMO") recognized supporter of the Elite Event.

IV. Conditions of Funding

A. Funds may only be used in accordance with Chapter 125, Florida Statutes for the Marketing and/or Sponsorship benefits as agreed upon with VSPC. Funds may not be used for event operating expenses, except and only to the extent any funds received by applicant are allocated by VSPC for sponsorship benefits.

B. Applicants receiving Elite 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 VSPC.

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

D. For Elite 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 Elite Event is held if expressly allowed in the Funding Agreement.

E. By accepting Elite Event funding, the applicant agrees to allow the VSPC'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** acceptable to VSPC.

G. Elite Events utilizing Pinellas County property during their event must adhere to and abide by the County's Special Events & Facilities Use Guide available at <http://www.pinellascounty.org/Events/pdf/Special-Events-Users-Guide.pdf>.

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 will disqualify the applicant.

B. Review & Evaluation Process.

- i. County Attorney.
 - a. Each application will be reviewed by the County Attorney's office to ensure compliance with state statutes, county ordinances and these Guidelines regarding proper usage of Bed Tax funds.
- ii. TDC Committee Review.
 - a. The TDC Chair shall appoint, in addition to the TDC Chair, no more than six (6) TDC members, of which four (4) must be tourism industry appointees, to serve on the Elite Event Committee ("Committee").
 - b. Each application deemed eligible by the County Attorney will be reviewed and scored at a meeting of the Committee, at which:
 1. The Committee will determine funding recommendations for each application within the TDC's recommended budget and in accordance with these Guidelines and Rating Criteria below.
 2. Applicants may be invited to attend, make presentations and answer questions of the Committee members.
 3. At conclusion of applicant presentations, Committee members will complete scoring.
 4. Category 1 applications will be scored first by the Committee, followed by Category 2, Category 3, and Category IV.
 5. The average score of each remaining Committee score will be announced by VSPC staff as the applicant's score.
 6. Once all applications have been reviewed and scored, VSPC staff will provide a ranking of highest to lowest scoring applicants.
 7. Beginning with the highest scoring applications, the Committee will determine recommended funding amounts for each application on an "up to" not-to-exceed basis.

However, absent objection by VSPC staff or any TDC member based on a past or current non-compliance with funding guidelines, misrepresentation, material change in the scope or economic benefits from the event, or failure to deliver marketing and or sponsorship benefits as agreed to, events that have received funding for the prior 5 years and which have consistently complied with all funding guideline requirements and submitted a complete Elite Event funding application herein shall bypass the evaluation review and scoring process and will be eligible for funding consideration in and up to amounts as requested, subject to staff negotiations, concurrence by the TDC, and subsequent approval by the BCC.

- c. The Committee will present its funding recommendations to the TDC for approval. Funding recommendations will be a maximum "up to" not-to-exceed amount and subject to negotiation by VSPC staff.
- iii. TDC Review & Recommendations.
 - a. The TDC will review and consider approval of the funding recommendations presented by the Committee.
 - b. The TDC will vote on funding recommendations for review and consideration of approval by the BCC.
- iv. BCC Review.
 - a. The BCC will review the funding recommendations provided by the TDC.
 - b. Funding recommendations will be considered for approval by the BCC.

C. Rating Criteria.

- i. Unique Attendees & Room Nights (200 points) – Ability of the Elite Event to generate unique attendees (Category I, II, III, and IV) AND room nights in excess of the threshold established to be eligible for funding (Category I, II, and III).
- ii. Marketing Plan (400 points) – 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.
- iii. Sponsorship Benefits (200 points) – 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).
- iv. Timing of Event: Peak vs. Offseason & Non-Conflicting (100 points) – Timing of the Elite Event to coincide with non-peak or shoulder seasons in Pinellas County tourism. Preference will be given to Elite 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 Elite Event should not conflict with other Elite Events or other special events taking place in Pinellas County.
- v. Event History & Community Support (100 points) – Demonstration of widespread community support and charitable contributions by the Elite Event applicant that benefit the Pinellas County community. Ability of the Elite Event to fulfill any previous contractual obligations with Pinellas County. Ability of the Elite Event to attract high caliber and high profile artists, athletes and/or participants to perform and/or attend in Pinellas County. Ability of the Elite Event to enhance the overall image of Pinellas County.

D. Application Scoring.

- i. Committee members will base their scores on the substance of the applications relative to the goals and objectives of the Elite Event Funding Program for each of the categories above in the following rating scale:

0% - 9%	unresponsive to the requirements of that item being rated
10% - 39%	does not meet current requirements of the item being rated
40% - 69%	partially meets requirements of that item being rated
70% - 89%	fully responsive to the requirements of the item being rated
90% - 100%	exceeds all requirements of the item being rated
- ii. All applications receiving an average score of 700 points or above out of the maximum 1000 points will be considered eligible for funding consideration. A score of 700 points or higher does not guarantee funding.

E. Program Timeline

- i. VSPC 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	Legal, Staff and Committee review of applications
May/June	Initial Elite Event Committee meeting
May/June	2 nd Committee Meeting to Determine Funding (if necessary)
June/July	TDC reviews and considers the Committee report
July	BCC final funding approval
TBD	Elite Event Funding Agreement executed
- ii. Each year’s timeline will be published in the **Program Process Flow Chart & Timeline**.

VI. Key Documents

In addition to the Funding Guidelines, the Elite Event Funding Program is supported by other key documents, including:

- A. Program Overview
- B. Application Requirements & Instructions
- C. Funding Application
- D. Program Process Flow Chart & Timeline
- E. Post-Event Report Form
- F. Elite Event Funding Agreement



Staff Report

File #: 18-1796A, **Version:** 1

Agenda Date: 12/11/2018

Subject:

Revision to the Elite Event Funding Guidelines from the Tourist Development Council.

Recommended Action:

Approval of the Tourist Development Council's (TDC) recommended revisions to the Elite Event Guidelines.

- The Elite Event program provides funding for eligible major events that generate a large number of attendees and room nights in the County.
- Recommended revisions were unanimously approved by the TDC.
- If approved, program revisions will become effective in the FY20 funding cycle.
- Substantive revisions include:
 1. Addition of fourth category cultural heritage events.
 2. Elimination of event sunset provision.
 3. Provides fast-track option for events to bypass evaluation and scoring, if the event received funding for the previous five (5) years.
 4. Addition of 'unique attendees' definition.
 5. Rating scale revised to mirror the scale used by the Capital Project Funding program.

Strategic Plan:

Foster Continual Economic Growth and Vitality

4.6 Support a vibrant community with recreation, arts, and culture to attract residents and visitors

Summary:

With Board of County Commissioners (Board) approval, the revised Guidelines to administer the TDC's Elite Event Funding Program will commence with the FY20 application and funding cycle.

Background Information:

The Elite Event Funding Program is one of the marketing programs administered by staff on behalf of the TDC. The original Elite Event Guidelines (Guidelines) were approved by the Board on February 7, 2012, and amended on January 29, 2013, April 15, 2014, and December 12, 2017.

On June 20, 2018, the TDC met to discuss their vision for the Program and directed staff to revise the Guidelines.

On October 17, 2018, staff presented the revised Guidelines to the TDC and they were unanimously approved.

The substantive revisions to the Guidelines include:

1. Fourth category added for Cultural Heritage Events.

2. Eliminated event sunseting.
3. Provided fast track option for events to bypass evaluation and scoring if they received funding for the previous five (5) years.
4. Added a definition for unique attendees.
5. Revised the rating scale to mirror the scale used by the Capital Project Funding Program.

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Staff Member Responsible:

David Downing, Director, Convention and Visitors Bureau

Partners:

Tourist Development Council

Attachments:

Elite Event Funding Guidelines (redline version)

Elite Event Funding Guidelines (clean version)



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”) 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 \$2,000,000 annually for: (i) marketing special events and programs; (ii) providing promotional or operating support for exhibits or programs provided by museums owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public; (iii) providing promotional support for zoological parks that are owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public; and (iv) event and program sponsorships. The Pinellas County Tourist Development Council (“TDC”) was established to make recommendations on how best to spend Bed Tax proceeds, including proposing an annual budget and funding for marketing and promotion activities related to special events.

One of the marketing programs administrated by Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater (“VSPC”) on behalf of the TDC is the **Elite Event Funding Program** for major events meeting the criteria to receive funding from TDT funds. The genesis of the Elite Event program was called “New Product” funding, which then became “Special Events” funding and is now operated under the current name. Prior to the New Products program, events were funded on an ad hoc basis. The New Product (now Elite Event) program was created with the intent to provide a more systematic means for funding applications, review and recommendations for funding. The goal moving forward is to continue the program to allow maximum 1) **consistency**; 2) **return on investment and sustainability of the individual events and the overall program**; and 3) **transparency**.

Examples of events that have received funding in the past include the Clearwater Jazz Holiday, Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg, Outback Bowl, St. Petersburg Bowl, Tampa Bay Rays, Valspar PGA Golf Tournament, Clearwater Super Boat National Championship, and the Rock ‘n’ Roll Half Marathon of St. Petersburg. Many of these events either generated or are projected to generate significant attendance and/or room nights, although not necessarily at the level of traditional Elite Events.

The County’s fiscal year begins on October 1 and ends on September 30 of the following year. Therefore, applications for Elite 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. “Cultural Heritage Event” shall mean an Elite Event that recognizes and/or celebrates community history and identity, bonds to the past, present, and future, and/or values and traditions that attracts Tourists from VSPC’s targeted markets.
- B. “Elite Event” shall mean a new or existing 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.
- C. “Marketing” shall mean 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 VSPC, on behalf of the County, and an eligible applicant producing an Elite Event, wherein VSPC receives event assets and opportunities to promote VSPC 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 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

III. Funding Categories & Eligibility

A. Funding Categories are as follows:

- Category I** – generates at least 50,000 "unique" paid, credentialed and/or otherwise documented attendees AND at least 25,000 room nights in Pinellas County with maximum funding eligibility up to \$125,000. Category 1 events must be broadcast on national television.
- Category II** – generates at least 20,000 "unique" paid, credentialed and/or otherwise documented attendees AND at least 10,000 room nights in Pinellas County with maximum funding eligibility up to \$75,000.
- Category III** - generates at least 10,000 "unique" paid, credentialed and/or otherwise documented attendees AND at least 5,000 room nights in Pinellas County with maximum funding eligibility up to \$25,000.
- Category IV** - a Cultural Heritage Event that generates at least 20,000 "unique" paid, credentialed and/or otherwise documented attendees with maximum funding eligibility up to \$25,000.

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

- conduct, produce, manage, and/or operate an Elite Event at a venue in Pinellas County;
- for Category I, II, and III events, generate the required room nights in Pinellas County as set forth herein, regardless of attendance at the Elite Event;
- for Category IV events, generate the required attendees, and attract Tourists from VSPC's targeted markets.
- demonstrate it will attract Tourist to Pinellas County;
- 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 Sponsorship payment or Marketing plan funding, as determined by VSPC and/or its advertising agency of record; and
- provide VSPC exclusivity as the only CVB and Destination Marketing Organization ("DMO") recognized supporter of the Elite Event.

IV. Conditions of Funding

A. Funds may only be used in accordance with Chapter 125, Florida Statutes for the Marketing and/or Sponsorship benefits as agreed upon with VSPC. Funds may not be utilized towards operating expenses.

B. Applicants receiving Elite 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 VSPC.

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

D. For Elite 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 Elite Event is held if expressly allowed in the Funding Agreement.

E. By accepting Elite Event funding, the applicant agrees to allow the VSPC'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** acceptable to VSPC.

G. Elite Events utilizing Pinellas County property during their event must adhere to and abide by the County's Special Events & Facilities Use Guide available at <http://www.pinellascounty.org/Events/pdf/Special-Events-Users-Guide.pdf>.

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 will disqualify the applicant.
- B. Review & Evaluation Process.
- i. County Attorney.
 - a. Each application will be reviewed by the County Attorney's office to ensure compliance with state statutes, county ordinances and these Guidelines regarding proper usage of Bed Tax funds.
 - ii. TDC Committee Review.
 - a. The TDC Chair shall appoint, in addition to the TDC Chair, no more than six (6) TDC members, of which four (4) must be tourism industry appointees, to serve on the Elite Event Committee ("Committee").
 - b. Each application deemed eligible by the County Attorney will be reviewed and scored at a meeting of the Committee, at which:
 1. The Committee will determine funding recommendations for each application within the TDC's recommended budget and in accordance with these Guidelines and Rating Criteria below.
 2. Applicants may be invited to attend, make presentations and answer questions of the Committee members.
 3. At conclusion of applicant presentations, Committee members will complete scoring.
 4. Category 1 applications will be scored first by the Committee, followed by Category 2, Category 3, and Category IV.
 5. The average score of each remaining Committee score will be announced by VSPC staff as the applicant's score.
 6. Once all applications have been reviewed and scored, VSPC staff will provide a ranking of highest to lowest scoring applicants.
 7. Beginning with the highest scoring applications, the Committee will determine recommended funding amounts for each application on an "up to" not-to-exceed basis.
- However, absent objection by VSPC staff or any TDC member based on a past or current non-compliance with funding guidelines, misrepresentation, material change in the scope or economic benefits from the event, or failure to deliver marketing and or sponsorship benefits as agreed to, events that have received funding for the prior 5 years and which have consistently complied with all funding guideline requirements and submitted a complete Elite Event funding application herein shall bypass the evaluation review and scoring process and will be eligible for funding consideration in and up to amounts as requested, subject to staff negotiations, concurrence by the TDC, and subsequent approval by the BCC.
- c. The Committee will present its funding recommendations to the TDC for approval. Funding recommendations will be a maximum "up to" not-to-exceed amount and subject to negotiation by VSPC staff.
 - iii. TDC Review & Recommendations.
 - a. The TDC will review and consider approval of the funding recommendations presented by the Committee.
 - b. The TDC will vote on funding recommendations for review and consideration of approval by the BCC.
 - iv. BCC Review.
 - a. The BCC will review the funding recommendations provided by the TDC.
 - b. Funding recommendations will be considered for approval by the BCC.
- C. Rating Criteria.
- i. Unique Attendees / Room Nights (200 points) – Ability of the Elite Event to generate unique attendees (Category I, II, III, and IV) AND room nights in excess of the threshold established to be eligible for funding (Category I, II, and III).

- ii. Marketing & Advertising Plan (200 points) – The value of the applicant’s proposed Marketing & Advertising Plan in promoting Pinellas County as a tourist destination and the extent the value of the plan exceeds the funding request.
- iii. Media & Digital Plan (200 points) – The value of the applicant’s proposed Media & Digital Plan in promoting Pinellas County as a tourist destination and the extent the value of the plan exceeds the funding request.
- iv. Event Onsite Benefits (200 points) – The value of the applicant’s proposed Event Onsite Benefits in promoting Pinellas County as a tourist destination and the extent the value of the benefits exceeds the funding request.
- v. Timing of Event: Peak vs. Offseason & Non-Conflicting (100 points) – Timing of the Elite Event to coincide with non-peak or shoulder seasons in Pinellas County tourism. Preference will be given to Elite 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 Elite Event should not conflict with other Elite Events or other special events taking place in Pinellas County.
- vi. Event History & Community Support (100 points) – Demonstration of widespread community support and charitable contributions by the Elite Event applicant that benefit the Pinellas County community. Ability of the Elite Event to fulfill any previous contractual obligations with Pinellas County. Ability of the Elite Event to attract high caliber and high profile artists, athletes and/or participants to perform and/or attend in Pinellas County. Ability of the Elite Event to enhance the overall image of Pinellas County.

D. Application Scoring.

- i. Committee members will base their scores on the substance of the applications relative to the goals and objectives of the Elite Event Funding Program for each of the categories above in the following rating scale:

0% - 9%	unresponsive to the requirements of that item being rated
10% - 39%	does not meet current requirements of the item being rated
40% - 69%	partially meets requirements of that item being rated
70% - 89%	fully responsive to the requirements of the item being rated
90% - 100%	exceeds all requirements of the item being rated

- ii. All applications receiving an average score of 700 points or above out of the maximum 1000 points will be considered eligible for funding consideration. A score of 700 points or higher does not guarantee funding.

E. Program Timeline

- i. VSPC 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	Legal, Staff and Committee review of applications
May/June	Initial Elite Event Committee meeting
May/June	2 nd Committee Meeting to Determine Funding (if necessary)
June/July	TDC reviews and considers the Committee report
July	BCC final funding approval
TBD	Elite Event Funding Agreement executed

- ii. Each year’s timeline will be published in the **Program Process Flow Chart & Timeline**.

VI. Key Documents

In addition to the Funding Guidelines, the Elite Event Funding Program is supported by other key documents, including:

- A. Program Overview
- B. Application Requirements & Instructions
- C. Funding Application
- D. Program Process Flow Chart & Timeline
- E. Post-Event Report Form
- F. Elite Event Funding Agreement



Staff Report

File #: 17-1987A, **Version:** 1

Agenda Date: 12/12/2017

Subject:

Revisions to the Elite Event Guidelines from the Tourist Development Council.

Recommended Action:

Approve the Tourist Development Council's (TDC) recommended revisions to the Elite Event Guidelines (Guidelines).

The Elite Event Program provides funding for eligible major events that generate a large number of attendees and room nights in the County.

Strategic Plan:

Foster Continual Economic Growth and Vitality

4.6 Support a vibrant community with recreation, arts, and culture to attract residents and visitors

Summary:

With Board of County Commissioners (Board) approval, the revised Guidelines to administer the TDC's Elite Event Funding Program will commence with the Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) application and funding cycle.

Background Information:

The Elite Event Funding Program is one of the marketing programs administered by staff on behalf of the TDC. The original Guidelines were approved by the Board on February 7, 2012, and amended on January 29, 2013, and April 15, 2014.

On February 15, 2017, the TDC met and discussed its vision for the program and directed staff to revise the Guidelines for improved consistency, return on investment, and transparency.

On September 20, 2017, staff presented a draft of the revised Guidelines to the TDC for review and discussion. On October 18, 2017, the TDC unanimously approved the revised Guidelines.

At a Board work session on October 24, 2017, staff presented the Guidelines. The Guidelines reflect Board input; no substantive changes were required to the TDC recommendations.

The substantive revisions to the Guidelines include:

1. Categories for funding were increased from two to three.
2. Attendance and room night criteria was revised.
3. Contract terms and final funding amounts will be negotiated by staff for increased tourism promotional benefits.
4. Repeat events will receive reduced funding in years two and three after which the event would not be eligible to apply.
5. Reduced the total points that an application could receive during the scoring process

for reported room nights and attendance.
6. Codification of the composition of the Elite Event Committee.

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Staff Member Responsible:

David Downing, Director, Convention and Visitors Bureau

Partners:

Tourist Development Council

Attachments:

Elite Event Funding Guidelines (Existing)
Elite Event Funding Program Guidelines Summary of Changes
New Elite Event Funding Guidelines (adopted by the TDC on 10-18-17)

ELITE EVENT FUNDING GUIDELINES

I. Background

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 has developed a Tourist Development Plan (“Plan”) to guide how these proceeds are spent. In addition to reserve funds, contributions to debt service on Tropicana Field and spring training facilities in Clearwater and Dunedin, and beach nourishment, Bed Taxes are spent on marketing Pinellas County as a destination for leisure, business, conference, sports and film production travel. In support of these tourism marketing efforts, the Plan authorizes the expenditure of up to \$2,000,000 annually for: (i) marketing special events and programs; (ii) providing promotional or operating support for exhibits or programs provided by museums owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public; (iii) providing promotional support for zoological parks that are owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public; and (iv) event and program sponsorships.

The Pinellas County Tourist Development Council (“TDC”) was established to make recommendations on how best to spend Bed Tax proceeds, including proposing an annual budget and funding for marketing and promotion activities related to special events.

One of the marketing programs operated by Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater (“VSPC”) is the Elite Event funding program for major events meeting the criteria to receive funding from VSPC. These events generally have had at least 25,000 attendees generating substantial room nights in Pinellas County, and are marketed to tourists outside of Pinellas County, thereby generating a significant positive economic impact for Pinellas County. The sum of \$600,000 was allocated for Elite Events in FY 11/12. Examples of events that have received Elite Event funding in the past include the Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg, Outback Bowl, St. Petersburg Bowl, Tampa Bay Rays, and the Transitions PGA Golf Tournament.

In addition to these Elite Events, the VSPC previously provided marketing funding for Special Events (formerly known as New Product). This program was in place for many years, but has not been funded since FY 08/09 because of budgetary constraints. The VSPC has also provided marketing funding on an ad hoc basis for events, including the Clearwater Super Boat National Championship and the Rock ‘n’ Roll Half Marathon of St. Petersburg (through the Sports Commission), and the Outback Bowl Beach Days. Many of these events either generated or are projected to generate significant attendance and/or room nights, although not necessarily at the level of traditional Elite Events.

Expanding the Elite Event funding program to create two (2) categories of Elite Events as provided in these Guidelines will maximize the economic benefits of the tourism marketing

associated with these events within the available Bed Tax funding as budgeted annually, and will provide fair and equitable funding opportunities for all events.

Beginning with FY 12/13, events that are eligible for funding will be evaluated and ranked as provided in these Guidelines. Available funding will be determined annually as approved in the VSPC budget by the Board of County Commissioners. Events that were not eligible for funding or did not apply for Elite Event funding will not be funded on an ad hoc basis during the budget year, unless otherwise authorized in the Plan and approved budget. Elite Events operated by not-for-profit entities will be eligible to receive either sponsorship funding in exchange for marketing benefits, or marketing plan funding. Elite Events operated by for-profit entities will be eligible to receive funding for an approved marketing plan only.

Prior to the application process each year, VSPC will hold a public information session to inform eligible candidates of the program and provide detailed information, guidelines, the application forms and respond to any questions. The informational meeting and the program will also be promoted through press releases, VSPC's electronic newsletter, and other communication tools available through resources at Pinellas County.

II. Definitions

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

A. "Marketing" shall mean advertising, direct sales, public relations, promotions, or research, exclusive of professional fees and services, designed to increase tourist-related business activity from outside Pinellas County.

B. "Elite Event" shall mean a new or existing organized sporting event, concert, exhibition, festival, fair 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, or if not conducted at a Pinellas County venue, generates at least the minimum number of required room nights in Pinellas County for funding eligibility as set out herein. Elite Events conducted by either for-profit or not-for-profit entities, or a municipality are eligible for funding. Category 1 Elite Events project or have a history of at least 25,000 paid or documented attendees or project or have a history of at least 10,000 room nights, and are nationally televised. Category 2 Elite Events project or have a history of at least 15,000 paid or documented attendees or project or have a history of at least 5,000 room nights. Events, concerts, exhibitions, festivals, fairs or celebrations that extend over a season of more than thirty (30) days are not eligible for Elite Event funding.

C. "Sponsorship" shall mean a mutually beneficial business arrangement between the County, on behalf of VSPC, and an eligible applicant producing an Elite Event, wherein the County pays a fee or provides in-kind services in return for Marketing benefits associated with the Elite Event.

D. "Tourist" shall mean a person who participates in trade or recreational activities outside the county of his/her residence or who rents or leases transient accommodations in Pinellas County as described in Section 125.0104(3)(a), Florida Statutes.

III. Eligibility

A. The applicant must conduct, produce, manage, and or operate an Elite Event at a venue in Pinellas County, or if not conducted at a Pinellas County venue, the Elite Event must generate the required room nights in Pinellas County as set forth herein, regardless of attendance at the Elite Event.

B. The applicant must be a legally established not-for-profit organization or a municipality to be eligible for Sponsorship funding. Not-for-profits, municipalities and any entity producing an Elite Event that is not eligible for Sponsorship funding shall be eligible to receive funding for an approved Marketing plan.

C. The applicant for Elite Event funding shall:

1. Demonstrate that it will attract Tourists to Pinellas County;
2. Have the ability to generate positive international, national and regional coverage for the destination.
3.
 - a. Have at least 25,000 paid or documented attendees and/or generate at least 10,000 room nights for Category 1 Elite Events.
 - b. Have at least 15,000 paid or documented attendees and/or generate at least 5,000 room nights for Category 2 Elite Events.
 - c. Specify whether applicant is applying for Category I or Category 2 funding.
4. Provide Marketing benefits or a Marketing plan that satisfies the Marketing rating criteria in Section VII. B. and that has a media value equal to or greater than the Sponsorship payment or Marketing plan funding, as determined by the VSPC advertising agency of record.

IV. Funding Standards

A. Based upon eligibility, funding requests for Elite Events may be provided in the form of either Sponsorships or for funding a Marketing plan. Marketing plan funding may not be expended on wages, travel expenses, operating or capital costs, permits, rental fees, webpage development or maintenance costs, and other similar costs or expenses not related to Marketing.

B. Preference will be given to Elite Events which occur during "off season" periods, including January 1 through February 15, May 1 through June 30, and September 1 through December 31. Events must have a direct correlation with VSPC's targeted markets and should specifically indicate how that correlation exists.

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

D. The County's fiscal year begins on October 1 and ends on September 30 of the following year. Therefore, applications for Elite 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.

E. The maximum funding available for any Category 1 Elite Event is \$250,000 or 20% of the total VSPC Elite Event budget, whichever is less. The maximum funding available for any Category 2 Elite Event is \$100,000 or 10% of the total VSPC Elite Event budget, whichever is less.

F. Applicants will only be considered for, and compete within, the funding category applicant applied for, and will not be eligible for funding in another category.

G. By accepting Elite Event funding, the applicant agrees to allow the VSPC's 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.

H. Applicants receiving Elite Event funding will be required to sign an Agreement that has been prepared by the Pinellas County Attorney's Office. This Agreement must include either a Marketing plan or specify the Marketing benefits to be received by the VSPC.

V. Required Documentation

FAILURE TO PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WITH THE APPLICATION WILL DISQUALIFY THE APPLICANT:

A. For not-for-profit corporate applicants, proof acceptable to the VSPC of the legally established not-for-profit status.

B. A completed application that addresses each Rating Criteria.

C. A Marketing plan, or if the application is for a Sponsorship, a proposal outlining the Marketing benefits to be received for the Sponsorship, that specifies the proposed advertising, direct sales, public relations, or promotions, that will reach VSPC-targeted audiences and satisfies the rating criteria.

VI. Evaluation Process

A. Each application will be reviewed by the County Attorney's office to ensure compliance with state statutes, county ordinances and these Guidelines regarding proper usage of Bed Tax funds.

B. Prior to the meeting referred to in subsection D. herein, each application will be reviewed and scored by members of the Elite Event Committee (“Committee”) and the VSPC Director or designee, based on the rating scale shown later in these Guidelines.

C. The Committee and staff will hold a meeting to rank all applications that score at least 700 points, and determine funding recommendations for each Elite Event within the TDC’s recommended budget and in accordance with these Guidelines.

D. Applicants may be invited to make a presentation to the Committee if requested.

E. Staff will then announce the total points and the average score for each application and then provide a ranking of highest to lowest scoring applicants.

F. After review of all applications, public comment will be requested.

G. Committee members will then complete a final review of all qualifying applications and have an opportunity adjust scores based on any new information.

H. Any score changes will be recorded and a new average score announced if scores were revised.

I. Members of the Committee will begin with the highest scoring applications and determine recommended funding amounts for each application.

J. If necessary, a second meeting may be called to make the funding determinations for each application.

VII. Rating Criteria

A. The ability of the Elite Event to generate attendance or room nights in excess of the threshold established to be eligible for funding. 400 points

B. The value of applicant’s Marketing plan or Marketing benefits (in the case of Sponsorships) in promoting Pinellas County as a Tourist destination, as measured by: (i) how the Elite Event Marketing specifically complements the VSPC’s Marketing programs and key markets of origin; (ii) the ability of the Elite Event Marketing to enhance the overall image of the County as a preferred destination for leisure, business, conference, sports or film production travel; and (iii) the ability of the Elite Event Marketing to generate positive international, national or regional publicity. 300 points

C. The extent to which the media value of the Marketing exceeds the Sponsorship or Marketing plan funding request. 100 points

D. Timing of the Elite Event to coincide with non-peak or shoulder seasons in Pinellas County tourism as defined in Section IV.B. of these Guidelines. 100 points

E. Demonstration of wide spread community support and contributions to not-for-profits by the Elite Event applicant that benefit the community. Community support can be demonstrated by showing public (governmental) or private monetary support, either through cash or in-kind contributions, volunteer base, or in other ways. 100 points

All those rating the applications will base their scores for each of the six items in the rating scale as follows:

0%	unresponsive to the requirements of that item being rated
10% - 30%	does not meet current requirements of the item being rated
40% - 60%	partially meets requirements of that item being rated
70% - 90%	fully responsive to the requirements of the item being rated
100%	exceeds all requirements of the item being rated

Note: All applications receiving an average score of 700 points or above out of the maximum 1000 points will be considered eligible for funding consideration. A score of 700 points or higher does not guarantee funding.

VIII. Timeline for Grants

The TDC will annually establish a schedule for consideration and award of grants, which will generally comply with the following timeframes:

January/February/March	Notification and public Information Sessions/applications available
April	Deadline for receipt of applications
May	Legal, Staff and Committee review of applications
May/June	Initial Elite Event Committee meeting
May/June	2 nd Committee Meeting to Determine Funding (if necessary)
June/July	TDC reviews and considers the Committee report
July	Board of County Commissioners' final approval of funding awards
TBD	Elite Event Funding Agreement executed

IX. Payment Procedures

Marketing Plan Funding recipients will be reimbursed for payments authorized by the Funding Agreement and its Marketing plan. Recipients should submit original invoices to VSPC and provide proper backup to show that the approved advertisement or service was provided. Payments will only be made as reimbursements, not directly to supplier companies. Elite Event funds approved and allocated for specific purposes shall not be expended or disbursed in lump-

sum form. Disbursements will be made upon invoices presented to the VSPC and Pinellas County for approval for services rendered. Funds cannot be disbursed in advance for services not yet rendered. However, deposits required for delivery of goods and services can be reimbursed.

Sponsorship payments may be paid in a lump sum, or in installments, as determined by the VSPC and as set out in the approved Funding Agreement. Payment of Sponsorships shall be made no earlier than 45 days before the date of the Elite Event.

X. Miscellaneous

Any and all Elite Events utilizing County Property during their event will adhere to and abide by the County's Special Events & Facilities Use Guide available at <http://www.pinellascounty.org/Events/pdf/Special-Events-Users-Guide.pdf>.

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Visit St. Pete/Clearwater
Elite Event Funding Program
New Guidelines Comparison
As of 10/20/17

CURRENT GUIDELINES	PROPOSED REVISED GUIDELINES
<p>I. Background</p>	<p>I. Background & Overview</p> <p>Changes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include Goals of Program: consistency, ROI/sustainability and transparency. 2. Updated so events listed are more current.
<p>II. Definitions</p>	<p>II. Definitions</p> <p>No substantive changes.</p>
<p>III. Eligibility</p> <p>Current Language:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Category 1 Thresholds: 10k Room Nights, 25k Attendees 2. Category 2 Thresholds: 5k Room Nights, 15k Attendees 3. No Category 3 4. Applicants must surpass <u>EITHER</u> threshold to qualify 5. No Sunsetting 	<p>III. Funding Categories & Eligibility</p> <p>Changes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Category 1 Thresholds: 25k Room Nights, 50k Attendees 2. Category 2 Thresholds: 10k Room Nights, 20k Attendees 3. Introduce Category 3: 5k Room Nights, 10k Attendees 4. Applicants must surpass <u>BOTH</u> thresholds to qualify 5. Introduce Sunsetting (Section III-C)
<p>IV. Funding Standards</p> <p>Current Language:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Subsection A includes examples of non-allowable use of funds 2. Subsection B language "Preference...December 31." 3. Subsection B language "Events...exists." 	<p>IV. Conditions of Funding</p> <p>Changes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Subsection A revised as "Funds may only be used in accordance with Chapter 125, Florida Statutes" 2. Relocated to Section V-C-v 3. Relocated to Section IV-C

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Subsection C 5. Subsection D 6. Subsection E 7. Subsection F 8. Subsection G 9. Subsection H 10. Payment can be in installments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Relocated to Section IV-D 5. Relocated to Section I, last paragraph in bold 6. Relocated to Section III-A 7. Deleted 8. Relocated to Section IV-E 9. Relocated to Section IV-B 10. Subsection F: Payment will be one lump sum, post-event
<p>V. Required Documentation VI. Evaluation Process VII. Rating Criteria VIII. Timeline for Grants</p> <p>Current Language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Section V 2. Section VI 3. Section VII 4. Scoring: Attendance <u>OR</u> Room Nights (400 pts) Marketing Plan/Benefits (300 pts) Media (100 pts) Timing (100 pts) Community Support (100 pts) <p>5. Section VIII</p>	<p>Sections merged into V. Application Process & Review</p> <p>Changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Updated & Relocated to: Section V-A 2. Updated & Relocated to: Section V-B 3. Updated & Relocated to: Section V-C and V-D 4. Scoring: Attendance <u>AND</u> Room Nights (200 pts) Marketing Plan (200 pts) Media Plan (200 pts) Onsite Benefits (200 pts) Timing (100 pts) History & Community Support (100 pts) 5. Updated & Relocated to: Section V-E
<p>IX. Payment Procedures</p>	<p>Removed; See Section IV-F</p>
<p>X. Miscellaneous</p>	<p>Relocated to Section IV-G</p>
<p>*NEW* IV. Key Documents</p>	



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”) 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 \$2,000,000 annually for: (i) marketing special events and programs; (ii) providing promotional or operating support for exhibits or programs provided by museums owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public; (iii) providing promotional support for zoological parks that are owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public; and (iv) event and program sponsorships. The Pinellas County Tourist Development Council (“TDC”) was established to make recommendations on how best to spend Bed Tax proceeds, including proposing an annual budget and funding for marketing and promotion activities related to special events.

One of the marketing programs administrated by Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater (“VSPC”) on behalf of the TDC is the **Elite Event Funding Program** for major events meeting the criteria to receive funding from TDT funds. The genesis of the Elite Event program was called “New Product” funding, which then became “Special Events” funding and is now operated under the current name. Prior to the New Products program, events were funded on an ad hoc basis. The New Product (now Elite Event) program was created with the intent to provide a more systematic means for funding applications, review and recommendations for funding. The goal moving forward is to continue the program to allow maximum 1) **consistency**; 2) **return on investment and sustainability of the individual events and the overall program**; and 3) **transparency**.

Examples of events that have received funding in the past include the Clearwater Jazz Holiday, Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg, Outback Bowl, St. Petersburg Bowl, Tampa Bay Rays, Valspar PGA Golf Tournament, Clearwater Super Boat National Championship, and the Rock ‘n’ Roll Half Marathon of St. Petersburg. Many of these events either generated or are projected to generate significant attendance and/or room nights, although not necessarily at the level of traditional Elite Events.

The County’s fiscal year begins on October 1 and ends on September 30 of the following year. Therefore, applications for Elite 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 a new or existing 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 unique event attendees for funding eligibility as set out herein.

B. “Marketing” shall mean 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.

C. “Sponsorship” shall mean a mutually beneficial business arrangement between VSPC, on behalf of the County, and an eligible applicant producing an Elite Event, wherein VSPC receives event assets and opportunities to promote VSPC brand and the Pinellas County destination not included in the Marketing Plan.

D. "Tourist" shall mean a person who participates in trade or recreational activities outside the county of his/her residence and who rents or leases transient accommodations in Pinellas County as described in Section 125.0104(3)(a), Florida Statutes.

III. Funding Categories & Eligibility

A. Funding Categories are as follows:

- i. **Category I** – generate at least 50,000 "unique" paid, credential and/or otherwise documented attendees AND at least 25,000 room nights in Pinellas County with maximum funding eligibility up to \$125,000. Category 1 events must be broadcast on national television.
- ii. **Category II** – generate at least 20,000 "unique" paid, credential and/or otherwise documented attendees AND at least 10,000 room nights in Pinellas County with maximum funding eligibility up to \$75,000.
- iii. **Category III** - generate at least 10,000 "unique" paid, credential and/or otherwise documented attendees AND at least 5,000 room nights in Pinellas County with maximum funding eligibility up to \$25,000.

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

- i. conduct, produce, manage, and/or operate an Elite Event at a venue in Pinellas County, generating the required room nights in Pinellas County as set forth herein, regardless of attendance at the Elite Event;
- ii. demonstrate it will attract Tourist to Pinellas County;
- iii. 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 Sponsorship payment or Marketing plan funding, as determined by VSPC and/or its advertising agency of record; and
- iv. provide VSPC exclusivity as the only CVB and Destination Marketing Organization ("DMO") recognized supporter of the Elite Event.

C. Funding Availability:

- i. Year 1 – Applicants are eligible to receive up to 100% of the funding request.
- ii. Year 2 – Applicants who are receiving funding for the 2nd year are eligible to receive up to 75% of the funding maximum in the category applied for.
- iii. Year 3 - Applicants who are receiving funding for the 3rd year are eligible to receive up to 50% of the funding maximum in the category applied for.
- iv. Applicants are not eligible for funding after the event's 3rd year, but will be considered for marketing/advertising funding under VSPC's annual operations budget, as negotiated by VSPC staff.

IV. Conditions of Funding

A. Funds may only be used in accordance with Chapter 125, Florida Statutes for the Marketing and/or Sponsorship benefits as agreed upon with VSPC. Funds may not be utilized towards operating expenses.

B. Applicants receiving Elite 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 VSPC.

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

D. For Elite 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 Elite Event is held if expressly allowed in the Funding Agreement.

E. By accepting Elite Event funding, the applicant agrees to allow the VSPC'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 subject to submittal of a fully completed and signed **Post-Event Report Form** acceptable to VSPC.

G. Elite Events utilizing Pinellas County property during their event must adhere to and abide by the County's Special Events & Facilities Use Guide available at <http://www.pinellascounty.org/Events/pdf/Special-Events-Users-Guide.pdf>.

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 will disqualify the applicant.

- B. Review & Evaluation Process.
 - i. County Attorney.
 - a. Each application will be reviewed by the County Attorney's office to ensure compliance with state statutes, county ordinances and these Guidelines regarding proper usage of Bed Tax funds.
 - ii. TDC Committee Review.
 - a. The TDC Chair shall appoint, in addition to the TDC Chair, no more than six (6) TDC members, of which four (4) must be tourism industry appointees, to serve on the Elite Event Committee (“Committee”).
 - b. Each application deemed eligible by the County Attorney will be reviewed and scored at a meeting of the Committee, at which:
 - 1. The Committee will determine funding recommendations for each application within the TDC’s recommended budget and in accordance with these Guidelines and Rating Criteria below.
 - 2. Applicants may be invited to attend, make presentations and answer questions of the Committee members.
 - 3. At conclusion of applicant presentations, Committee members will complete scoring.
 - 4. Category 1 applications will be scored first by the Committee, followed by Category 2, and then Category 3.
 - 5. The average score of each remaining Committee score will be announced by VSPC staff as the applicant’s score.
 - 6. Once all applications have been reviewed and scored, VSPC staff will provide a ranking of highest to lowest scoring applicants.
 - 7. Beginning with the highest scoring applications, the Committee will determine recommended funding amounts for each application on an “up to” not-to-exceed basis.
 - c. The Committee will present its funding recommendations to the TDC for approval. Funding recommendations will be a maximum “up to” not-to-exceed amount and subject to negotiation by VSPC staff.
 - iii. TDC Review & Recommendations.
 - a. The TDC will review and consider approval of the funding recommendations presented by the Committee.
 - b. The TDC will vote on funding recommendations for review and consideration of approval by the BCC.
 - iv. BCC Review.
 - a. The BCC will review the funding recommendations provided by the TDC.
 - b. Funding recommendations will be considered for approval by the BCC.

- C. Rating Criteria.
 - i. Unique Attendees / Room Nights (200 points) – Ability of the Elite Event to generate unique attendees AND room nights in excess of the threshold established to be eligible for funding.
 - ii. Marketing & Advertising Plan (200 points) – The value of the applicant’s proposed Marketing & Advertising Plan in promoting Pinellas County as a tourist destination and the extent the value of the plan exceeds the funding request.
 - iii. Media & Digital Plan (200 points) – The value of the applicant’s proposed Media & Digital Plan in promoting Pinellas County as a tourist destination and the extent the value of the plan exceeds the funding request.
 - iv. Event Onsite Benefits (200 points) – The value of the applicant’s proposed Event Onsite Benefits in promoting Pinellas County as a tourist destination and the extent the value of the benefits exceeds the funding request.

- v. Timing of Event: Peak vs. Offseason & Non-Conflicting (100 points) – Timing of the Elite Event to coincide with non-peak or shoulder seasons in Pinellas County tourism. Preference will be given to Elite 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 Elite Event should not conflict with other Elite Events or other special events taking place in Pinellas County.
- vi. Event History & Community Support (100 points) – Demonstration of widespread community support and charitable contributions by the Elite Event applicant that benefit the Pinellas County community. Ability of the Elite Event to fulfill any previous contractual obligations with Pinellas County. Ability of the Elite Event to attract high caliber and high profile artists, athletes and/or participants to perform and/or attend in Pinellas County. Ability of the Elite Event to enhance the overall image of Pinellas County.

D. Application Scoring.

- i. Committee members will base their scores on the substance of the applications relative to the goals and objectives of the Elite Event Funding Program for each of the categories above in the following rating scale:

0%	unresponsive to the requirements of that item being rated
10% - 30%	does not meet current requirements of the item being rated
40% - 60%	partially meets requirements of that item being rated
70% - 90%	fully responsive to the requirements of the item being rated
100%	exceeds all requirements of the item being rated

- ii. All applications receiving an average score of 700 points or above out of the maximum 1000 points will be considered eligible for funding consideration. A score of 700 points or higher does not guarantee funding.

E. Program Timeline

- i. VSPC 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	Legal, Staff and Committee review of applications
May/June	Initial Elite Event Committee meeting
May/June	2 nd Committee Meeting to Determine Funding (if necessary)
June/July	TDC reviews and considers the Committee report
July	BCC final funding approval
TBD	Elite Event Funding Agreement executed

- ii. Each year’s timeline will be published in the **Program Process Flow Chart & Timeline**.

VI. Key Documents

In addition to the Funding Guidelines, the Elite Event Funding Program is supported by other key documents, including:

- A. Program Overview
- B. Application Requirements & Instructions
- C. Funding Application
- D. Program Process Flow Chart & Timeline
- E. Post-Event Report Form
- F. Elite Event Funding Agreement