

Sports Grant Program

Effective October 2023

Visit Sarasota County (VSC) recognizes sports events as a major contributor to the overall tourism economy. In order to develop this business, VSC has put in place a grant program for events seeking financial support. VSC allocates sports event support dollars into two categories:

1. Large/Bid/Multi-Year Events
2. Destination/Regional Events

Large Bid or Multi-Year Events Procedures and Guidelines

These events are normally large and come up at various times during the year for competitive bid. They are confidential in nature and normally very time sensitive in regards to turn around of an official proposal.

All financial commitments made through bid events must:

1. Be approved by the VSC Board at its monthly meeting.
2. Be within the Sports approved budget unless otherwise approved by President and VSC Board of Directors.
3. If the event is cancelled for any reason, there shall be no grant payment to the Grantee regardless of any expenditures the Grantee has made. Force Majeure may apply.

Upon award of a bid, an agreement contract will be sent out to the event organizer explaining all details of the funding guarantee including all reporting requirements post-event. Prior to the event start, an organizer must submit its proof of event insurance with Visit Sarasota County listed under additionally insured.

Large bid or multi-year events are not subject to performance evaluation guidelines, however these events are required to provide the following post-event materials:

1. Post-event economic impact form submission
2. Proof of paid lodging room nights in Sarasota County via hotel pick-up reports or surveys
3. W-9 form (dated within one year from the event's start date)
4. Invoice
5. Proof of any additional benefits provided to VSC as outlined in contract, such as logo placement, etc.

Annual or Locally Owned Event Grant Guidelines

This funding is allocated to events that are locally owned and/or held on an annual or reoccurring basis that produce overnight visitation to Sarasota County.

Application Process

VSC has a comprehensive grant application that must be completed for all destination/regionally organized event grants. This application link can be found on the VisitSarasotaSports.com page or completed via the direct link <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/db415383371e41888e915160bcc16ab8>. The Visit Sarasota Sports staff receives email notifications to review new applications in real-time.

Grants are awarded on a first come, first serve basis; and applicants are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. If the budgeted grant program amount has been distributed, then no other grants will be contracted in that fiscal year. Applications will be scored by VSC staff using a scorecard of additional grant program priorities that is approved annually by the VSC Board of Directors. The scorecard funding matrix is as follows:

Final Score	Funding Level In-Season (January - April)	Funding Level Off-Season (May - December)
1-2 points (low funding)	\$2 per room night in SC	\$4 per room night in SC
3-5 points (half funding)	\$2.50 per room night in SC	\$4.50 per room night in SC
6-8 points (full funding)	\$3 per room night in SC	\$5 per room night in SC

- In-season months are defined as January, February, March, and April.
- Off-season months are defined as May, June, July, August, September, October, November and December.
- The maximum grant awarded per application is \$10,000.*
- Total amount awarded to a single applicant cannot exceed \$40,000 within one fiscal year.*The event must produce a minimum of 100 total room nights in Sarasota County to be eligible for the award.*

*For Standard Grant Program only, does not include Large Bid or Multi-Year Event funding.

VSC holds the right to not award grants during blackout dates where the county is already saturated by a large event taking place. Grants are not awarded during the months of February and March.

For annual events, hotel room night estimates shall not exceed 50 percent inflation from the actual Sarasota County hotel room nights reported in the event’s previous year. Variances to this guideline may be considered by VSC staff on a case-by-case basis pending explanation and supporting documentation from applicant.

Once grant funding level has been determined based on the event’s date, score, and estimated room nights, staff develops event contracts for all approved grants to be signed by applicant prior to the event start date. The agreement is sent to applicants electronically via DocuSign.

Prior to the event start, an organizer must attach its proof of event insurance, with Visit Sarasota County listed under additionally insured, to the DocuSign grant contract.

Reimbursement/Accountability Guidelines

- Within 30 days after the completion of the event, the organization must submit:
 - Post-event economic impact form
 - Documentation of actualized room nights in the form of hotel pick-up reports, individual participant surveys or a visitor survey conducted by a paid research firm. All vacation rental, condo and AirBnB room nights must include the address of the rental unit.
 - W-9 tax form (dated within one year from the event’s start date)
- The final amount awarded is based off actualized room nights in Sarasota County as outlined above, but not to exceed the contracted amount.
- Visit Sarasota Sports team will conduct random audits to promote accuracy of attendance and room nights reported in the post-event submission hub on Smartsheet.

- Natural disasters and other incidents that may affect the impact generated by the event will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- If the event is cancelled for any reason, there shall be no grant payment to the Grantee regardless of any expenditures the Grantee has made. Force Majeure may apply.

Post Event Process

For applicant

Immediately after the event, an automated email will be sent to the event organizer/applicant congratulating them on a great event, providing them with a link to the Smartsheet Post-Event report as well as reminding them of the full post-event requirements:

1. Post-event economic impact form submission
2. Actualized room night documentation in the form of hotel pick up reports or surveys. All vacation rental, condo and AirBnB room nights must include the address of the rental unit.
3. W-9 form (dated within one year from the event's start date)

For Visit Sarasota County

- Once the materials listed above have been submitted, the economic impact numbers are automatically calculated and stored on the shared VSC/Sarasota County Smartsheet prefilled with Downs & St. Germain Research's formulas, which are provided to VSC prior to the start of each fiscal year.
- A check request with the following attached documents is submitted to the accounting department for payment to the event organizer/applicant.
 1. Check request
 2. Signed grant contract
 3. W-9 form (dated within one year from the event's start date)
 4. Post-event report displaying economic impact numbers
 5. Hotel back-up/survey documentation

Reporting Procedures

Each quarter, VSC will prepare a report of all distributed funds for the Tourist Development Council and VSC Board of Directors. This report will include attendance, room night and economic impact information for all events supported in the previous quarter, as well as the actual funding amounts distributed.

VSC will also provide the full year's sports event report to the Board of County Commissioners during the annual presentation.