FY26 Summary of Guideline Changes

Change the criteria for categorizing attendees

In previous years, the TDC/A program categorized attendees as Out-of-County Residents and In-County Residents. The categories have been updated to Local and Non-Local attendees. The criteria for Local attendees now includes Sarasota, Manatee and Charlotte Counties.

Eligibility

The ACA team will be adding an eligibility form that is completed by the applicants prior to applicants receiving access to the grant application. This ensures that there is a process to review the security, ticketing, and manned entrance plans for projects prior to them moving forward to completing an application.

Request Amount

In previous years, request amount was determined by organizational budget size. Then, depending on the amount requested, there were different financial requirements (i.e. a compilation report, financial report with notes, or a full audit).

Those requirements have now been simplified and consolidated. Now, in order to request grants of different sizes, the organization must be able to meet certain requirements surrounding attendance goals, budget size, and financial documentation. The attendance goal for each area is new.

Request Amount	Requirements
$0 - $30,000	IRS Form 990 for most recent tax year A review with notes by a CPA.
$30,001- $50,000	IRS Form 990 for most recent tax year An audit with notes by a CPA. Organizational expenses at or above $350,000 Projected attendance of over 6,000 with at least 25% non-local attendees
$50,001 - $75,000	IRS Form 990 for most recent tax year An audit with notes by a CPA Organizational expenses at or above $1,000,000

	Projected attendance of over 10,000 with at least 25% non-local attendees
$75,001 - $125,000	IRS Form 990 for most recent tax year An audit with notes by a CPA Organizational expenses at or above $2,000,000 Projected attendance of over 20,000 with at least 25% non-local attendees

No edits were made regarding the match requirement.

Grant Rubric

The scoring breakdown changed:

	FY25 points	FY26 points
Tourist Appeal	50	65
Artistic/Cultural Significance	30	20
Administrative Competence	20	15

To make these edits, we removed some questions from various sections and changed point values for others. The bonus point section was removed, and some automatic point deductions were included. Here's a chart showing the changes:

Tourist Appeal	~~**50**~~ **65 points possible**
This organization has a demonstrated history of attracting tourists to the Sarasota County area	10 points
Tourism target selected is appropriate to the budget and scope of the project	10 points
This project is able to report general attendance figures by local, in-state, out-of-state and international tourists, using a reliable method of counting appropriate to the budget and scope of the project	10 points
Documented Collaborations ○ Events – Lodging listed on webpage ○ Formal package agreements with other venues/events or accommodations. Examples include: historic sites and museums creating a joint ticketing/tour package or weekend event; Weekend packages that include lodging, dinner, and a theater show; Special events with packages to visit other locations in Sarasota County after the event.	5 points
Application clearly shows how this grant will allow the organization to expand its audience	~~5 points~~ 10 points
Application clearly shows how the project will be promoted out-of-county	~~2 points~~ 5 points
Application clearly shows how the project will be promoted out-of-area	~~2 points~~ 5 points
The project takes place fully or partially in non-peak season (May-October) - 2 pts for fully, 1 pt for partially	2 points
Use effective approaches to reach targeted tourist segment(s)	2 points

Provide supporting documents such as examples of past print advertising, social media posts and analytics, radio or television spots, etc. to illustrate the quality of marketing efforts	~~2 points~~ 1 points
Artistic/Cultural Significance	**~~30~~ 20 points possible**
The project brings heritage, cultural, and/or artistic significance to the county.	5 points
The project adds value to and is appropriate to the organization's mission, artistic/cultural/historical field, artists, audience, community, and/or constituency.	5 points
~~Artistic/Cultural target selected is appropriate to the budget and scope of the project~~	~~5 points~~
Applicant is specific about how this grant is funding new or significantly improved exhibitions, programming, performances or events.	5 points
The application clearly demonstrates the significance of the culture/heritage or quality of the artists/performers and other key individuals, works of art, museum collections, artistic partners, and/or services involved in the project and their relevance to the audience or communities of Sarasota County.	~~4 points~~ 5 points
~~Evidence of direct compensation to artists or program providers that bring visitors to Sarasota County. This can include an analysis of paid versus nonpaid performers.~~	~~3 points~~
~~Application shows clear community support by providing information about grants, volunteer support, collaboration with other organizations, and in-kind contributions.~~	~~3 points~~
Administrative Competence	**20 points possible**
The applications presents an accurate and feasible budget for the project	5 points
The organization's financial documents demonstrate financial stability Possible indicators of financial stability include having a positive, unrestricted net asset balance or a plan to eliminate any such deficit. Also explain any rapid year-to-year swing in either revenue or expenses or changes to endowment (current status, plans for acquiring or expanding), etc.	5 points
The applicant provides evidence that the event is sustainable by showing that other funding sources have been identified and the required match is available.	5 points
~~The organization has a successful history of service in Sarasota County~~	~~3 points~~
~~The organization has made an attempt to use Visit Sarasota County and/or Florida's Cultural Coast brand in their marketing~~	~~1 point~~
~~The organization demonstrates the ability to administer other public funding~~	~~1 point~~
~~**Bonus Points**~~	~~**Up to 10 points**~~
~~For **previous applicants**, up to 5 bonus points may be awarded for showing the following:~~ ~~○ Reported total attendance from previous FY fell within 80% of projected number~~ ~~○ Reported tourist percentages in previous year significantly exceeded the projected number~~ ~~○ Report showed the ability to hit the selected artistic/cultural and tourism targets~~	~~5 points~~
~~For **first time applicants**, up to 5 bonus points may be awarded for showing the following:~~ ~~○ Attendance at grant information sessions/preparation meetings~~ ~~○ Exceptionally clear and complete application~~	~~5 points~~
~~For **new events**, up to 5 bonus points may be awarded for showing the following:~~ ~~○ Events in existences for 3 or less years can be awarded additional points to foster expansion of the tourism experience offered to visitors~~	~~5 points~~
Automated Point Deductions	
For **previous applicants**, if reported tourist percentages from the most recently completed FY did not reach 25% and no sufficient explanation of circumstances beyond the organization's control is provided.	- 4 points
For **previous applicants, if r**eported total attendance from the most recently completed FY did not fall within at least 80% of projected number	-1 points
Total Points ~~Including Bonus Points (cannot exceed 100)~~	

Reconsideration process.

A minor change was made so reconsideration requests would come to ACA staff instead of being hand-delivered the Parks & Rec team.

Marketing Expenses were detailed

Marketing Expenses: While 50% of grant funds must be allocated to marketing expenses, the following are ineligible:

- Staff salaries, wages, or benefits for employees of the applicant organization.
- Marketing expenses not directly tied to the funded project.
- General branding efforts unrelated to the specific project.
- Development or maintenance of organizational websites, unless directly tied to project promotion.
- Marketing subscriptions or services that do not specifically promote the funded project (e.g., general social media management tools or analytics platforms).

Reimbursement and Reporting Requirements

This section is new and was added to detail what would happen if organizations do not hit their attendance goals or survey/zip code collection requirements.

The largest edit to this section is the inclusion of a tourist target that must be met in order to receive the full amount of the second reimbursement. Details are below:

- **Reimbursement levels:**
  - **0 – 9.99% Non-Local attendance:** 0% of the 50%
  - **10 - 14.99% Non-Local attendance:** 50% of the 50%
  - **15 - 24.99% Non-Local attendance:** 75% of the 50%
  - **25% or more Non-Local attendance:** 100% of the 50%
    - Note: If final attendance numbers fall short of 25% of non-local attendees, the organization can provide a detailed explanation for circumstances beyond its control to avoid potential withholding of grant funding. Acceptable explanations may include unforeseen events such as natural disasters, pandemics, severe weather conditions, declared states of emergency, acts of God, or other extraordinary circumstances that could not have been reasonably anticipated or mitigated by the organization. Without such justification, a portion of the grant funding will be withheld.

Metrics around Artistic/Cultural Purpose and Tourism Appeal were removed

In previous years, the following metrics were included as requirements for grantees. These have been removed. Required information has been updated to zip code collection, survey collection, and final tourist numbers.

Metrics from previous years:

1. Applicant must demonstrate that the project has an artistic/cultural purpose, by selecting and reporting on one of the following metrics:
   a. At least 80% of survey respondents will rate the artistic/cultural quality of the program as good or excellent. An analysis of survey responses must be provided with the final report.

b. At least 25% of our performances will have nationally or internationally acclaimed performers of the highest professional quality. Biographies for these performers must be provided with the final report.
c. Our TDC/A project will garner at least two reviews or feature stories in regional or national media outlets. Reviews or feature stories must be provided with the final report.

2. Applicant must demonstrate that the project has tourism appeal, by selecting and reporting on one of the following metrics:
    a. Our organization will collaborate with at least two hotels to draw visitors to the area. Final report must document the results of our collaboration.
    b. At least 30% of tourists responding to a survey will indicate that our marketing attracted them to the TDC/A project. Final Report must include types of marketing strategies that brought tourists to their offerings.

Frequently Asked Questions

Details that were originally spread throughout the guidelines were moved into this section to keep the core guidelines more streamlined.