

# Taos County Lodger's Tax Grant Program

## FINAL Grant Program Guidelines

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### About Lodger's Tax:

Lodger's Tax is collected from tourists who stay in lodging establishments in Taos County. Up to fifty (50%) percent of Lodger's Tax monies collected are mandated to be spent to promote tourism and/or tourist attractions in Taos County. Any organization may have a very worthy community project, however, if the project does not deal with promoting tourism or tourist attractions, the organization will not qualify for Lodger's Tax Funds.

**Mission Statement:** The Taos County Lodger's Tax Grant Program supports tourist-related facilities, attractions, and events within Taos County by investing in funding proposals that use advertising, publicizing and promotion to enhance the lives and journeys of locals and visitors alike; and that highlight the uniqueness of Taos County's culture, heritage, innovation, and diversity.

**Vision Statement:** We seek to increase the quality of life across Taos County as it can be experienced by visitors and lived by inhabitants.

**Reimbursement Only:** Lodger's Tax funds are disbursed on a reimbursement-basis only. This means that, should an entity be awarded a Lodger's Tax grant, funds are not disbursed until the grantee provides the necessary documentation and proof of payment for eligible expenses (reimbursement process explained below). Once an entity applies, their application goes through a multi-step review and approval process, ending with the County Board of Commissioners approval. Once the Commission has approved a grant, a purchase order (PO) will be created, essentially establishing the grantee as a contractor who is delivering promotional services on behalf of the County. Only purchases made after the date of the PO are eligible for reimbursement. All Lodger's Tax POs are only valid for the fiscal year in which they are opened.

**Non-Discrimination:** Taos County does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in the employment or the provision of services. Contractors shall comply with the A.D.A. requirements.

## Program Goals:

The goals of the Taos County Lodger's Tax Grant Program are rooted in the mission, vision, and values stated in these guidelines, and also adhere to NM Lodger's Tax Act (Lodgers' Tax Act [[3-38-13](#) to [3-38-25](#) NMSA 1978] ) that mandate the use of collected lodger's tax as recommended by the Advisory Board for the purposes of advertising, publicizing and promoting tourist-related attractions, facilities and events of the municipality or county and tourist-related facilities, attractions and events within the area. These program goals are also aligned with destination stewardship principles and values.

- Encourage Reciprocity: Make investments that encourage reciprocity between the tourist and the local resident in such that tourists enrich and enhance the livability for locals, while the vibrancy and vitality of local collective culture of Taos County welcomes and supports responsible tourism.
- Preservation: Preserve the culture and heritage of Taos County.
- Positive Experience: Create a positive experience for visitors coming to Taos County, and as a result create value and community pride by local residents.
- Innovation & Creativity: Encourage and support innovation and creativity in the promotion of activities that build upon past endeavors while also broadening, strengthening and deepening funded tourist-related attractions, facilities, and events.
- Balance of Promotions: Ensure that awarded organizations strike a balance of promotions both inside and outside of the County.

### General Program & Lodger's Tax Advisory Board Goals

- Ensure a positive and accountable experience for grant-seekers and grantees through an approach that is:
  - o Values-based
  - o Timely
  - o Communicative
  - o Accountable and transparent
- Ensure that funding opportunities are broadly publicized in order to attract and fund the most diverse pool of grantees across the County as possible.
- Ensure responsible use of public funds as recommended by the Lodger's Tax Advisory Board through commitment to the goals, mission, vision, and values stated in these guidelines.

## Acknowledgement Requirements:

Because this is a local government grant program that provides reimbursement for marketing and advertising, Taos County requires awardees to display either our logo or the phrase “Funded in Part by Taos County Lodger’s Tax” on all promotional materials connected to the approved funded activities. Taos County must be acknowledged in a manner consistent with all other sponsors.

## Eligibility:

Only tourist-related facilities, attractions, and tourist-related events occurring in Taos County are eligible for County Lodger Tax funds. Funds can only be used for advertising, publicizing, and promoting tourist-related attractions, facilities and events within the County.

- Funds must be oriented towards advertising, publicizing, and promoting Taos County as outlined in Section 3-28-21 NMSA 1978 (as amended) “Use of Tax Proceeds.”
- Funding is available to any type of entity (non-profit or for-profit). Any organization that promotes travel and tourism for the benefit of Taos County, has an established organization and leadership, can accomplish the proposed project, aligns with the Mission, Vision and Goals of the Taos County Lodger’s Tax Grant Program, and can comply with all applicable conditions is eligible to apply.
- An entity must have a Federal EIN and a NM BTIN Number. If an entity does not have a Federal EIN and/or NM BTIN Number, it must be fiscally sponsored by a fully incorporated entity.
- Commercial operations must be currently registered to conduct business in Taos County, the Town of Red River, the Town of Taos, the Village of Questa, or the Village of Taos Ski Valley, depending on in which jurisdiction their program will take place. A business (LLC or other for-profit entity) is eligible if the project being applied for benefits the public. [[Link to PLANNING DEPT](#)] [[Link to CLERK’s OFFICE](#)]
- If the facility, attraction or event is located within the unincorporated area of Taos County, and will take place on a property that does not have prior zoning clearance for the proposed activity, the entity will be required to apply for a Taos County Temporary Permit. Applicants can look up the jurisdiction of their proposed location using the [Taos County Interactive GIS Map](#).
- If your organization or entity uses a fiscal sponsor, your application must include fiscal sponsor contact information and a signed contract or memorandum of understanding (MOU) from your fiscal sponsor. Fiscal sponsors must:
  - o Be headquartered within Taos County.
  - o Be informed of the application to the TCLT grant program.
  - o Provide an EIN and W-9 form.
  - o Sign a grant agreement accepting responsibility for project oversight.
  - o Receive, distribute and manage the grant funds, if awarded.
- All grantees will be required to submit Vendor Information and W-9 Forms.
- Only 1 entity may apply per project/event/facility per fiscal year (July 1-June 30).

- Eligible entities may receive only 1 grant per fiscal year (July 1-June 30).

## Examples of Eligible Expenses:

- Posters, billboards, banners
- Brochures, flyers, pamphlets
- Radio
- TV commercials/infomercials
- Printing
- Magazine, newspaper, journal entries
- Direct Mail (targeted flyers, postcards, etc.)
- Production (swag items like t-shirts, mugs, etc.)
- Social Media (Facebook ads, Instagram posts, etc.)
- Specific Website Enhancements
  - o While Lodger's Tax funding does not support website redesign or general maintenance, eligible website enhancements include but are not limited to new project-specific functions or internal links for an applicant's specific project.
- Creative/Graphic Design Services

If you have any questions about eligibility, or are considering an expense not listed above, please contact the Taos County Lodger's Tax Coordinator before incurring the cost.

## Ineligible Costs/Applicants:

- Grants will not be awarded to a group without an EIN.
- Individuals and Sole Proprietors are ineligible to apply.
- Activities taking place outside Taos County are ineligible.
- Grantees who fail to submit their previous due final reports by the end of the previous fiscal year (ending June 30) will be ineligible to apply for 1 year.
- Funds, material property or services rendered directly or indirectly from the proceeds of Lodger's Tax, shall not be used for any political activity or to further the election or defeat or any candidate for office.
- Any loss arising from uncollectible accounts, other claims or related costs.
- Contribution to a contingency reserve, or similar provision for unforeseen events.
- Costs of attending meetings, which are not open for attendance on a non-discriminatory basis.
- Funds shall **not be used** for postage, supplies, (ink, envelopes, etc.), website development (this is considered an operational expense), tours, event speakers, entertainers, rental of buildings, food and beverage, gift cards or cash prizes, event production, annual dues for products or subscriptions, regular staff wages, or other operational expenses etc.
- Fundraisers, galas, or private events are ineligible.
- Programs that take place at schools or private organizations must be open to and broadly advertised to the public.
- Approved marketing and advertising materials that neither have the Taos County logo or words "funded in Part by Taos County Lodger's Tax."
- Inquiries about the eligibility of specific expenses are encouraged prior to applying. If you have a question about potential expenses, please don't hesitate to contact Taos County staff.

## How to Apply:

Lodger's Tax funds are available to spend only within the fiscal year they are granted (July 1-June 30). Applicants should consider how much lead time they need to prepare for and spend down their grant funds when choosing an application deadline. A Spring deadline is intended to give grantees a full fiscal year during which they can spend approved funds. A Fall deadline is available for those with Spring/Summer events, or those who were not aware of the earlier deadline. All reimbursement requests must be made no later than May 15 in any given fiscal year. Funds that are not spent on a PO by the May 15 deadline will be forfeited back to the County.

**For the Fiscal Year 2027 (July 1, 2026-June 30, 2027), there will be two submission deadlines as follows:**

- Deadline 1: Applications accepted between March 3 and March 31, 2026
- Deadline 2: Applications accepted between August 15 and due by September 15, 2026

### Steps to apply:

- We are hosting an in-person workshop on February 25<sup>th</sup> at 6PM in the Taos County Chambers for returning and prospective applicants to offer helpful information in preparation for the application opening in March. Information about the event will be posted through different media channels leading up to the event day. Please consider attending if you plan on applying in future grant cycles.
- If the proposal includes producing an event and a Temporary Permit is required (contact Taos County Planning Staff to inquire), an approved Temporary Permit must be completed prior to submitting an application for Lodger's Tax.
- If the applicant is a for-profit entity and located outside of Taos County, the proper Business Registration must be in place.
- Complete an online application through Submittable and submit necessary agreements if fiscally sponsored or if Temporary Permits and/or Business Registrations are needed.
- Be prepared to complete a Vendor Information form and W-9 if the entity is a new applicant or if contact information has changed.

### Application, Review & Purchase Order Timelines:

- Applications received by March 31, 2026 or September 15, 2026
- Applications screened, and subsequently reviewed by the Lodger's Tax Advisory Board during a public panel in June or October
- Funding recommendations presented to the County Board of Commissioners at the soonest available meeting following the Advisory Board's review in May/June or October/November
- Approved applications must submit any required Vendor Information and W-9 forms within 1 week of notification of Commission approval.
- Purchase Orders will be completed within 3 weeks of receipt of all required Vendor Information and W-9 forms. Spring application purchase orders will not be available prior to the start of the new fiscal year (July 1) in any given year. Due to the complexity and staffing needs required to close and reopen the County's budget cycle each fiscal year in June and July, purchase orders for the spring applicants will be available in the month of July, but are not guaranteed to be available on July 1.

## Review Process:

### Lodger's Tax Advisory Board Responsibilities:

- Proposals for funding are accepted, and initial screening and/or evaluation is conducted by Taos County staff. All submissions will be screened by the County Manager prior to moving forward for consideration.
- The Advisory Board will review and score applications during a public panel session. The review criteria are listed below.
- Advisory Board members with conflicts of interest will declare any said conflict and will not be permitted to offer an opinion or score on the application in question.
- Based on ranked scores and the amount of available funding, the Lodger's Tax Advisory Board will make a set of funding recommendations to be presented to the Taos County Board of Commissioners for approval.
- Taos County Staff will present recommendations to the Taos County Board of Commissioners on the proposed Lodger's Tax disbursements including the amount, if any, to be granted to each organization.
- Taos County staff will notify those organizations of the award decisions by the County Commission and the proper accounting and reporting requirements for those funds.
- The County Commission may deny the disbursement of funds, or portion thereof, if funds were not used accordingly.
- Note that the Advisory Board will consider the diversity in applicants (cultural, geographic, discipline) and organization size in the final award process.

## Review Criteria:

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Eligibility:** the proposal meets eligibility criteria
- **Scoring:** Within the context of the TCLT goals, scores will be based on the following areas. Applicants should respond to how their program, facility, or event(s) meet the goals and can be evaluated against these considerations. Applications need not incorporate every consideration. The Lodger's Tax Advisory Board will look for an overall balance to the final slate of funding recommendations to ensure the broadest scope of activities are funded. Each application will be scored out of 100 total possible points.
  - o **What type of program/facility/event(s) is it and what type of audience is it for? (20 Points)**
    - Indicators/considerations used for scoring:
      - Annual/seasonal
      - New or Repeat
      - Uniqueness of the offering
      - Audience: New/Local tourists
      - Age/Demographic

- Overnight vs Day tourists
- **TCLT Goals:** The project advances one or more TCLT goals as stated in the guidelines [LINK]. **(25 Points)**
  - Indicators/considerations used for scoring:
    - Encourage Reciprocity
    - Preservation
    - Positive Experiences
    - Innovation & Creativity
    - Balance of Promotions
- **Does the program/facility/event(s) create a positive experience for visitors and add value to Taos County? (25 Points)**
  - Indicators/considerations used for scoring:
    - Accessible to youth, families and kids
    - Attracts new or out of County visitors
    - Attracts repeat tourists
    - Is it localized i.e. opportunity for visitors to gain cultural awareness of Taos County
    - Increases lodging stays
    - Encourages accessibility (of all types – free, invites marginalized communities, ADA etc)
- **Are the promotions innovative? (20 Points)**
  - Indicators/considerations used for scoring:
    - In- vs. out-of-County promotions
    - # of publications
    - Types of advertising/diversity of channels
    - Use of technology
    - Lead time; broad and/or equitable approach to audiences
    - Presence of additional sponsorships/partnerships.
- **Budget:** The budget reflects the proposed activities and requested amount. **(10 Points)**

## Reimbursement Process:

Eligible applicants approved by Taos County Board of Commissioners to receive Lodger’s Tax promotional funds shall be required to comply with the following procedures in order to receive reimbursement for promotional activities. For Taos County to decide payment eligibility pursuant to Section 3-38-21 NMSA 1978 (as amended):

- Grantees are required to submit an invoice, receipt that matches the invoice amount, and proof of payment for they would like to be reimbursed. Acceptable proof of payment can be in the form of a photocopy of the front AND back of a cleared check, a credit card receipt, or OFFICIAL bank statement showing the debit. Screenshot lists of transactions will not be accepted. Account numbers and unrelated statement activity may be redacted from bank statements. (EXAMPLE)
- Multiple expenses may be submitted at one time, and the batch of eligible expenses and related documentation is considered a “reimbursement request.”

- If submitting multiple expenses, all documents must be submitted in ONE email with all attachments included.
- Invoices and expenses dated prior to the date of the Purchase Order will not be eligible for reimbursement.
- Invoices/receipts must be itemized and clearly legible.
- Grantees are allowed to reallocate budget expenditures, as long as costs fit within the guidelines and in the spirit of the grant proposal. Grantees will be requested to show budgeted vs actual expenses in their final report.

**Reimbursement Request and Payment Timelines:**

- Reimbursement requests will be accepted on a quarterly basis during the fiscal year according to the following request periods:
  - o July 1 - September 15
  - o September 16 - November 15
  - o November 16 - February 15
  - o February 16 - May 15
- Grantees may submit requests by each of these deadlines, though requests received during each period will not be reviewed and submitted for disbursement until after each deadline.
  - o For example, a grantee submits a packet of expense documents as a reimbursement request on September 27. That request will not be processed and paid until after the November 15 “period”.
- All reimbursement requests must be made through the Taos County Economic Development Department’s Submittable grant portal no later than May 15 of each fiscal year. Requests made after May 15 will not be processed or paid, and no extensions will be provided.
- Unspent funds on a PO will be forfeited back to the County.

**Additional Reporting**

**In addition to the above requirements for reimbursement, Taos County asks grantees to provide the following information about the program/facility/event(s) for which they received Lodger’s Tax funds by May 15 of the fiscal year in which they received a grant (or at the time of the last reimbursement request) in the form of a final report found in your Submittable account:**

- Attendance figures, number of overnight stays (if possible), 2-4 samples of promotional brochures, copies of media ad placement, or links to audiovisual programs.
- A complete financial statement in the form of a Budget vs Actual statement based on the original budget projection submitted with the grant application. The entity shall also submit a complete itemized list by vendor of all expenditures related to promotion and advertising. The statement shall note all eligible costs.
- A brief descriptive report describing the use of Lodger’s Tax funding, project outcomes, challenges faced, and considerations for future improvements or aspects to maintain. Please also include figures or data collected about attendance, overnight stays, promotional return on investment, or any other information related to the impact of your County-funded promotions.

## Agreements:

- Eligible organizations approved by the Commission to receive Lodger’s Tax funds, shall be required to comply with the following accounting requirements as condition of funding:
- The entity shall keep accounts, render statements and prepare an annual financial statement for the program that was funded in accordance with accepted methods of accounting.
- The organization shall certify that the funds were duly expended for the explicit purpose of which authorized, that receipts for all expenditures are attached, and that all expenditures were authorized by the governing body of said organization.
- The organization acknowledges and fully understands that failure to comply with these requirements, and requests for accountability of funds for the Lodger’s Tax Fund, will result in loss of funds.
- The organization understands that failing to follow the acknowledgement and logo requirements may result in the loss of reimbursement eligibility.
- The Lodger’s Tax Advisory Board will review all supporting documentation pertaining to the award of Lodger’s Tax Funds, which must be used only for advertising purposes.
- All organizations may be subject to audit by an agency appointed by the Taos County Board of Commissioners.

### **Applicants will be required to provide an e-signature for the following agreements:**

I/We certify that I/we am/are authorized to act on behalf of the organization making this application and that the statements herein are complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. If funded, we will keep a clear and accurate account of how the funds were used. We will evaluate the use of funds as required and approved by Taos County, and will deliver an evaluation report to the County no more than May 15 of the fiscal year in which this application has been submitted. The deadline shall be the Friday at 5:00pm before May 15 if May 15 falls on a weekend.

The undersigned certifies that they have read and understand the above general conditions and that they accept these conditions and submit the attached proposal in full compliance with these conditions and the applicable proposal specifications. In submitting this proposal, the offeror represents that the offeror has familiarized themselves with the nature and extent of the request for proposals dealing with Federal, State, and Local requirements which are a part of the request for proposals. The offeror will comply with all applicable federal and state laws, local ordinances, and the rules and regulations of all authorities having jurisdiction over the services being proposed. Evaluations and financial statements are a requirement of the proposal and must be submitted in a timely manner, but no later than May 15 of the fiscal year in which the application was submitted. The deadline shall be the Friday at 5:00pm before May 15 if May 15 falls on a weekend. Failure to submit appropriate reimbursement materials and accurate evaluation statements may jeopardize future awards.