

  
COASTAL MISSISSIPPI  
**TOURISM EVENT IMPACT GRANT**  
FY27 GUIDELINES

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## 1. PURPOSE OF GRANT

The Tourism Event Impact Grant is administered by the Mississippi Gulf Coast Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau, doing business as **Coastal Mississippi**, to support events that generate **measurable visitor impact** in Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson counties.

**Coastal Mississippi does not sponsor events.** Funding awarded through this program is not a sponsorship, donation, or general event subsidy. Tourism Event Impact Grant funds are an investment in documented tourism outcomes, including room nights, out-of-market visitation, visitor spending, and overall economic impact for the Coast.

**At least 50% of awarded grant funds must be used for out-of-market advertising** designed to reach visitors outside the Coastal Mississippi region and encourage overnight stays.

**Coastal Mississippi's** sales and marketing programs are funded through lodging tax revenue, which is governed by Mississippi law and must be used to advance tourism-related objectives. Federal and state grant dollars awarded to **Coastal Mississippi** are strictly prohibited from sub-award and are not used to fund this program.

## 2. KEY DATES

| Milestone                    | Date                                                                            |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Application deadline         | August 15, 2026, by 5:00 PM CT                                                  |
| Eligible event window        | October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027                                     |
| First payment (75% of award) | 30 days prior to the event, but not before October 1, 2026                      |
| Final payment (25% of award) | Within 45 days of Coastal Mississippi's receipt of a complete Post-Event Report |

**Incomplete applications will not be considered. No exceptions.**

## 3. FUNDING TIERS

Grant awards are structured across three funding tiers. Award levels will be determined by verified attendance, documented room nights, and the event's overall economic impact. Multi-year funding may be awarded with a planned year-over-year reduction of 15% in Year 2 and 30% in Year 3, encouraging events to develop sustainable marketing budgets over time. All funded events will be reviewed annually to determine continued eligibility and appropriate funding levels.

| Tier                           | Event Type                 | Attendance | Room Night Min      | Min Event Days | Operating History |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Tier 1: Signature Event        | Destination Driver         | 10,000+    | 3,000               | 3 days         | 2 years           |
| Tier 2: Tourism Growth Event   | Established Regional Event | 5,000+     | 1,500               | 2 days         | 2 years           |
| Tier 3: Emerging Tourism Event | Developing Tourism Event   | 1,500+     | Room block required | 2 days         | 1 year            |

*For all tiers, an event day is defined as a minimum of 8 hours, and event days must be consecutive.*

## **Tier 1: Signature Event (Maximum Award \$30,000)**

Purpose: Proven destination-driving events with significant overnight visitation and regional impact.

### **Qualifications, documented with the application:**

- Minimum 10,000 annual attendees
- Minimum 3 consecutive event days (a day is defined as a minimum of 8 hours)
- Minimum 2 years operating history
- Demonstrated hotel room production through an established room block with a Coastal Mississippi lodging partner, with a minimum of 3,000 room nights
- Significant economic impact that drives visitor spend across the board
- Marketing plan with proposed media schedule

Funding: Year 1 up to \$30,000; Year 2 up to \$25,500; Year 3 up to \$21,000.

## **Tier 2: Tourism Growth Event (Maximum Award \$15,000)**

Purpose: Established events demonstrating tourism growth potential but not yet meeting Signature Event thresholds.

### **Qualifications, documented with the application:**

- Minimum 5,000 attendees
- Minimum 2 consecutive event days
- Minimum 2 years operating history
- Demonstrated hotel room production through an established room block with a Coastal Mississippi lodging partner, with a minimum of 1,500 room nights
- Significant economic impact that drives visitor spend across the board
- Marketing plan with proposed media schedule

Funding: Year 1 up to \$15,000; Year 2 up to \$12,750; Year 3 up to \$10,500.

## **Tier 3: Emerging Tourism Event (Maximum Award \$7,500)**

Purpose: Smaller events with strong tourism potential and a demonstrated commitment to growth.

### **Qualifications, documented with the application:**

- Minimum 1,500 attendees
- Minimum 2 consecutive event days
- Minimum 1 year operating history
- Demonstrated hotel room production through an established room block with a Coastal Mississippi lodging partner
- Significant economic impact that drives visitor spend across the board
- Marketing plan with proposed media schedule

Funding: Year 1 up to \$7,500; Year 2 up to \$6,375; Year 3 up to \$5,250.

## 4. GENERAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- The event must take place in Coastal Mississippi (Hancock, Harrison, or Jackson County) between October 1, 2026, and September 30, 2027.
- The event must generate overnight visitation and identify a Coastal Mississippi lodging partner.
- The applicant organization receiving grant funding must be the responsible party for all expenditures. No exceptions.
- Awarded funds are ineligible to be transferred from one organization to another.
- Prior attendance must be proven through ticket sales reports or attendance reports from a qualified source.

## 5. USE OF FUNDS

**A minimum of 50% of the grant award must be used for out-of-market advertising** placed outside the Coastal Mississippi Designated Market Area (DMA) to drive overnight visitation to Coastal Mississippi. Eligible DMAs include but are not limited to Mobile/Pensacola, New Orleans, the North Shore of Louisiana, Hattiesburg/Laurel, Jackson, and Baton Rouge.

### Eligible Expenses

- Media placement and production (print, online, outdoor, broadcast, and radio)
- Public relations and media communications
- Strategic planning and research
- Signage or wayfinding
- Equipment purchases or rentals (stages, trailer stages, flat beds, portable bathrooms, lighting, venues, etc.); must be itemized on the Equipment Expense Breakout Form
- Musician fees

### Non-Eligible Expenses

Non-eligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- Agency commissions, consulting, and other fees
- Office supplies
- Items for resale
- Lobbying
- Educational conferences, advocacy programs, expos, and membership dues
- Travel expenses, including accommodations and non-public-relations or non-marketing-related transportation (travel to and from meetings will not be reimbursed)
- Operational costs such as employee salaries, rent, utilities, postage, logo design fees, event cleanup and trash removal, employee t-shirts, or other administrative costs
- Infrastructure
- Construction of facilities or modification and cosmetic enhancements
- Expenses incurred before the date of the award letter
- Pre- and post-parties, breakfast, brunch, lunch, snacks, and dinner
- Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages
- Food of any type

- Gifts for judges or contestants (trophies, plaques, gift cards, cash prizes, medals, engraving, ribbons, or any type of award)
- Exhibitor tents, booth space, or stalls
- Miscellaneous purchases (swag items, decorations, etc.)

### **Non-Eligible Event Types**

- Youth sporting events
- Theatre productions (plays and/or musicals)
- Community events, galas, and fundraisers
- Start-up events that do not meet the minimum operating history for their tier

## **6. PAYMENT SCHEDULE**

- 75% of the grant award will be paid 30 days prior to the event, but not before October 1, 2026, consistent with Coastal Mississippi's fiscal year of October 1 through September 30.
- The remaining 25% balance will be paid within 45 days of Coastal Mississippi's receipt of a complete Post-Event Report.

## **7. BRANDING REQUIREMENTS**

- All funded projects are REQUIRED to properly display the Coastal Mississippi logo as part of event marketing. The Play Coastal Mississippi logo must appear in digital, print, and TV advertising.
- Radio advertisements must include the phrase: "This project is partially funded by a grant through Coastal Mississippi."
- All use of the Coastal Mississippi logo and brand must be approved by Coastal Mississippi prior to publishing.

## **8. PROJECT CHANGES**

If a project changes during the development stages, a letter must be submitted to Coastal Mississippi for approval before the modification is made. The letter must state what has been approved for funding, the requested change, and the reasons for the change. Coastal Mississippi will notify the grant awardee in writing if changes are accepted.

## **9. GRANT TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

- The grantee must maintain accurate financial records on the receipt and use of grant funds. This information must be included in the Post-Event Report.
- Grant funds cannot be reallocated to a different event if the original event submitted for funding does not occur.
- If an organization has closed a grant with a remaining balance, the organization will NOT be allowed to submit a subsequent request for reimbursement.
- All grant awards are final.
- Any unused grant funds cannot be reallocated for other events.
- If the event does not take place, any expenses incurred are not eligible for reimbursement, including force majeure. No exceptions.
- Incomplete applications will not be considered.

## 10. POST-EVENT REPORT

A complete Post-Event Report is required following the event and is a condition of the final 25% payment. The report must include:

- Accurate financial records on the receipt and use of grant funds, with supporting invoices and proof of payment
- Room night report from partner hotels
- Ticket, registration, or attendance report from a qualified source (Ticketmaster, Eventbrite, or comparable verifiable reporting platform)
- Marketing campaign metrics (impressions, reach, engagement)
- Measurable overnight visitation
- Economic impact study or an event survey
- Media and/or equipment invoices, including media placements outside the Coastal Mississippi DMA totaling at least 50% of the grant award
- Samples of creative showing proper Coastal Mississippi logo usage and required radio scripting
- Following each funded event, Coastal Mississippi will conduct a post-event audit using available visitation and analytics platforms, including Placer.ai and Zartico. This review will be used to verify attendance, assess the origin and travel patterns of visitors, and evaluate the event's estimated economic impact.

All grants are subject to annual review. Multi-year awards under a Memorandum of Understanding are contingent on satisfactory annual performance.

## 11. HOW TO APPLY

**Applications are submitted online and are due August 15, 2026 by 5:00 PM CT.**

1. Visit <https://www.coastalmississippi.com/grants/>
2. Begin your application by filling out the form fields with the appropriate information.
3. Application Packet:
  - a. Name this single PDF: FY27TourismEventImpactGrant\_eventname
  - b. Upload the complete grant packet, which includes the Grant Submission Checklist, Application, and the Expense Breakout Forms, in the appropriate form field.
4. Supporting Documentation (Required): There are 3 upload fields for supporting documentation: 1. Marketing Support Documentation, 2. Event Verification, 3. W-9.
  - a. Marketing Plan and Media Schedule: Upload as a single PDF the Marketing Plan and Media Schedule targeting out-of-market DMAs in the appropriate field.
  - b. Event Verification: Upload as a single PDF proof of prior attendance, room night documentation, documentation of operating history, and letter of support from lodging partner(s) in the appropriate form field.
  - c. W-9: Upload the W-9 for the applicant organization.

**Instructions on how to combine PDF files:** <https://www.adobe.com/acrobat/how-to/merge-combine-pdf-files-online.html>

**Emailed applications will not be accepted. If you have issues uploading documents, contact [marketing@coastalmississippi.com](mailto:marketing@coastalmississippi.com) for assistance.**

**Incomplete applications will not be accepted. All fields are required.**