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2025-26 Tourism Grant program opens Jan. 15

Timeline, eligibility changes in place for upcoming grant cycle

STATE COLLEGE, PA, Jan. 6, 2025 – **The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau (HVAB)**, along with Centre County Commissioners, announced that applications will be accepted for the 2025-26 Tourism Grant program beginning Wednesday, Jan. 15, 2025.

HVAB President and CEO Fritz Smith said the application window is opening one month earlier than prior years to allow more time for reviewing and processing the applications as they have increased greatly in numbers over the last five years.

“The HVAB staff, Board and Centre County Commissioners are delighted that growing awareness has stimulated so much new and innovative activity, such as the Happy Valley Improv Festival, Centre Film Festival, and so many others,” Smith said. “Strong hotel performance and the collection of the lodging tax from short-term rental properties starting in 2019 greatly increased the pool of funding available to support the program, which may reach the one-million-dollar threshold this year.”

The online grant application portal will be open until **COB Friday, Feb. 21, 2025. Late applications will not be accepted.** The grant award announcement is expected to follow the same early June timeframe.

Smith stressed that only nonprofit entities will be eligible to apply for projects that boost tourism, particularly overnight visitation.

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“The grant program was established to help nonprofit event organizers, museums and other attractions with their marketing and tourism development efforts,” Smith said, noting that a few exceptions had been made in recent years regarding for-profit entities.

“However, due to an influx in for-profit applications for projects that are potentially not eligible under Act 18, the state law that governs the hotel occupancy tax, the decision was made to again limit applications to qualifying nonprofit entities,” he said.

Smith also reminded potential applicants that the purpose of the Tourism Grant program is to drive visitation to the county, with emphasis on overnight stays, meaning not all Centre County nonprofit organizations or municipalities have projects that meet program guidelines.

“We encourage those considering applying to examine for their ask with a visitation impact lens,” he said. “Day trippers are of course valuable to our strong tourism economy. They spend money in our restaurants and shops. But encouraging people to extend their time in Happy Valley is the goal of the grant program.”

Smith stressed that hotel revenue growth directly correlates to the continued growth of the Tourism Grant pool.

Created in 2002, the annual Tourism Grant program has awarded more than \$6.6 million to local events, attractions and initiatives designed to boost visitation.

Centre County Commissioners echoed many of Smith’s sentiments in a joint statement:

“We are excited to announce the 2025-26 Tourism Grant program with The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau. With the Tourism Grant pool anticipated to exceed \$1 million, we strongly urge eligible nonprofits to apply. This program has developed tourism assets over the last 23 years, which benefits not only visitors but also those who call Happy Valley home. Due in part to the Tourism Grant program, the hospitality sector now has over 8,000 employees, which is a record-breaking for Centre County.”

The 2025-26 Tourism Grant application portal can be accessed at www.happyvalley.com/grant-program.

Questions about the 2025-26 Tourism Grant program should be directed to Judy Maurer at JudyM@happyvalley.com.

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