

Inspire Olympia	Lodging Tax Funding
Authority and Use of Funds	
<p><b>RCW 36.160</b></p> <p>Funds distributed to cultural organizations may be used to support cultural and educational activities, programs, and initiatives; public benefits and communications; and basic operations. Funds may also be used for (a) Capital expenditures or acquisitions, and (b) technology, equipment, and supplies</p>	<p><b>RCW 67.28.1816</b></p> <p>Lodging tax revenues may be used for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism marketing</li> <li>• Marketing and operations of special events and festivals designed to attract tourists from 50+ miles away</li> <li>• Operations and capital expenditures of tourism-related facilities owned or operated by a municipality or a public facility district</li> <li>• Operations of tourism-related facilities owned or operated by nonprofit organizations (not capital expenditures)</li> </ul>
Funding Amount and Cycle	
<p>Estimated 2025 revenue for competitive grants: \$2.65m</p> <p>Awards amounts of \$3000 to \$75,000 per year July - June</p>	<p>Estimated 2025 revenue for competitive grants: \$675k</p> <p>Unrestricted award amount January - December</p>
Program Funding Goals	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support public programs in arts, culture, heritage, and science.</li> <li>• Reduce barriers and enhance participation, especially for historically underserved populations.</li> <li>• Support minority cultural programs by and for culturally or ethnically specific communities and or underrepresented groups.</li> <li>• Expand access to youth education programs in arts, culture, heritage, and science.</li> <li>• Enhance sustainability and collaboration within and among cultural sector organizations.</li> </ul>	<p>Priority will be given to tourism activities that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show potential to result in overnight stays by tourists in lodging establishments within the City.</li> <li>• Promote Olympia and/or events, activities, and places in the city to potential tourists outside Thurston County.</li> <li>• Show potential to result in economic benefit to Olympia.</li> <li>• Minimize duplication of services and encourage cooperative marketing and partnerships.</li> <li>• Provide, maintain, operate, or enhance City-owned tourism facilities or infrastructure.</li> </ul>
Eligibility	
<p>Eligible applicants must meet all four criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registered Non-Profit or fiscally sponsored org</li> <li>• Mission-focused in art, culture, heritage, science</li> <li>• Located in City of Olympia, or majority of programming is in the city, or primarily serves Olympia residents or Olympia Public Schools</li> <li>• Provides public programming</li> </ul>	<p>Applicants may be any of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonprofit organizations</li> <li>• Fiscally sponsored groups</li> <li>• Municipalities</li> <li>• Businesses</li> </ul>

Advisory Board per RCW	
Membership must include citizen representatives of constituencies and organizations with interests relevant to the work of the program including, but not limited to, leaders in the business, educational, and cultural communities. Advisory council members should be residents of the county creating the program.	At least five members, to include: (a) At least two representatives of businesses required to collect Lodging Tax; and (b) at least two members who are involved in activities funded by Lodging Tax revenue. One member shall be an elected official of the municipality who shall serve as chair of the committee.
Review Criteria	
<p>Applicants are evaluated based on the degree to which they address a range of standards listed from minimum to most successful, in the areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programming Merit and Value</li> <li>• Youth Education Programs, if offered</li> <li>• Community Engagement and Impact</li> <li>• Equity and Access</li> <li>• Capacity and Feasibility (Impact Applicants) OR</li> <li>• Management and Operations (Comprehensive Applicants)</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Project or event plan is clear, and the proposal reflects enough detail to effectively determine the potential to result in overnight stays by tourists in lodging establishments within the City. (20 pts.)</li> <li>2. Project demonstrates potential for overnight stays. (Room nights: Over 200 = 20 pts., 100-200 = 15 pts., 50-100=10 pts., less than 50 = 5 pts.)</li> <li>3. Proposal demonstrates the organization is working in partnership with fellow organizations and businesses. (15 pts.)</li> <li>4. Project has clear marketing goals and defined promotion plan for marketing outside Thurston County. (20 pts.)</li> <li>5. Project complements other events in the community and helps create a diversity of opportunities (arts, culture, recreation, education, or historic significance). (10 pts.)</li> <li>6. Event proposal defines additional revenue benefits beyond overnight stays (likely diners, shoppers, paid parking etc.). (10 pts.)</li> <li>7. Project occurs in non-demand periods or shoulder season. (5 pts.)</li> </ol> <p>Innovation Bonus: (5 pts. ea) Shows growth or adaptation over use of a previous award; or Presents an unusual approach or exciting new direction.</p>
Common Administrative Support Systems	
<p><b>A single City granting platform</b></p> <p>The City uses “Submittable” to support applicants and manage the evaluation processes for Inspire, LTAC and Neighborhood Grants. This is a common industry software platform for grant administration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar to the city’s Permit Portal (Smartgov), Submittable acts as a portal where users can submit and track their applications, view past applications, submit reports, and message staff.</li> <li>• City staff can view draft submissions - this is helpful for customer support.</li> <li>• Applicants can manage multiple applications for multiple funders if they also use the platform.</li> <li>• Reviewers evaluate, score, and offer comments in the program, eliminating wasteful printing.</li> <li>• Reviewers can see the application and the review form on the same screen.</li> <li>• Includes reporting and data management tools for administrators.</li> </ul> <p><b>Supporting Resources</b></p> <p>Published Guidelines clearly explain the rules for applicants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligibility</li> <li>• Funding Goals</li> <li>• Requirements for funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Managing a contract with the city</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

- Insurance
- Reporting requirements
- Application questions including supporting questions and information
- Scoring criteria and review process
- Reporting

Customer Support Strategies:

- Staff do not score applications or make funding recommendations, allowing them to provide unbiased support for applicants.
- Staff can review drafts and suggest ways to strengthen and align proposals to program funding goals.
- Applicants can request 1:1 time with staff until the day before applications close.
- Regular Online informational sessions are recorded and posted to city webpages.

Staffing overlaps provide for additional consistency:

- Economic Development Director
- Senior Program Specialist
- Administrative support staff in CPED and Accounting supporting contracting and payment.