

2027 LODGING TAX FUNDING APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Application Deadline: September 30, 2026



About

The Lodging Tax is a sales tax authorized by State law in [RCW 67.28](#). Olympia receives a 4% tax paid by consumers who stay overnight in a lodging establishment such as a hotel, motel, bed & breakfast facility, or campground. Lodging Tax is a restricted resource to be used for tourism-related activities as outlined in the What Lodging Tax Funds Can Support section of this document. Funds are awarded on a competitive basis to eligible applicants on a yearly basis.

Applications are reviewed by the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee using Application Review Criteria outlined in this document below.

This is a competitive funding application. Funding the requested amount is not guaranteed.

The Committee's recommendations are advisory. The City Council makes the final decision whether to approve recommendations from the Committee. The Council can choose not to approve a specific recommendation or to send recommendations back to the Committee for further consideration.

The 2027 funding cycle primarily supports programs and operations between January 1, 2027, and December 31, 2027. The Lodging Tax Advisory Committee may choose to recommend multiyear funding at their discretion.

Please read these Application Guidelines fully before applying. Applications are accepted online through Submittable at <https://cityofolympia.submittable.com/>

Please contact City of Olympia staff with questions regarding the funding application.

Amelia Layton, Senior Program Specialist

alayton@ci.olympia.wa.us

Phone: 360-570-3808

Application Timeline

- Application Open: August 31
- Application Deadline: September 30, 11 pm
- Notification of Funding Decision: November
- Contracting process with Funded Organizations: November- January
- Contract funding Period: January 1, 2027 – December 31, 2027

What Lodging Tax Funds Can Support

- **Tourism marketing.**
- **Marketing and operations of special events and festivals designed to attract tourists from 50+ miles away.**
- **Operations *and* capital expenditures of tourism-related facilities owned or operated by a municipality or a public facility district.**
- **Operations of tourism-related facilities owned or operated by nonprofit organizations (but *not* capital expenditures).**

Contracts for Services, Reporting and Payment

Funded applicants will enter into a Municipal Services Contract with the City of Olympia, this is a reimbursement-based contract. The City of Olympia will only reimburse those costs actually incurred by funded applicants and only after the service is rendered, paid for if provided by a third party, and a signed Request for Reimbursement invoice form (or other form acceptable to the City) has been submitted to the City, including copies of invoices and proof of payment.

Each funded applicant is required to submit a Final Report documenting economic impact and tourism attendance upon the completion of their funded program(s) or annually as applicable.

Requirements for Funded Organizations

Insurance

Organizations are **not required** to show proof of insurance as part of the contracting process if selected for funding. However, insurance may be needed for any other contracts, permits or facility use agreements between the applicant and the City.

City Permit-Required Insurance

When grant activities require City permits or facility use agreements, any applicable insurance requirements are administered through those permitting processes and apply only as part of the relevant permit or facility use approval, rather than as a condition of the grant agreement.

Examples include:

- Work in the City right-of-way requiring insurance under the right of way permit process
- Events in the City right of way requiring insurance under the special event permit process
- Events in City parks where insurance is included as part of the facility reservation process

Reimbursement of Insurance Costs

If grantees are required to purchase insurance to comply with City permitting requirements, those costs may be included in the grant budget and are eligible for reimbursement if approved.

Legal Compliance

Funded organizations must comply with the laws of the Federal Government, Washington State, and the City of Olympia, including ADA accessibility, non-discrimination, and Equal Employment opportunities.

Funding acknowledgement

Funded organizations may acknowledge City of Olympia in all appropriate public announcements, programs, advertising, and other forms of notice relating to the funded programming, as outlined in the funding contract.

Equity & Access

This work will look different for different organizations and projects, depending mission, leadership, and the audiences they intend to serve. The framing of equity and access below suggests a wide range of opportunities and approaches that organizations can develop and demonstrate in their work.

EQUITY

Equity refers to intentional actions taken to minimize historical, systemic, and institutional disparities and maximize opportunities for all people. Equity considers context: history, current realities, and future outcomes. Equity advances social justice by sharing social and economic resources and opportunities to create a more just society. The purpose of equity in Lodging Tax Funded programming is to foster greater inclusiveness and strengthen belonging, increase diversity, and broaden participation in the events, activities, and facilities in Olympia.

ACCESS

Access can be expanded in a variety of ways, and some examples are listed in bold below.

As you develop proposals for Lodging Tax funding, please consider: Does your organization demonstrate these different types of access? Where do you have opportunities to expand? How can you make it easier for a variety of tourists and community members to participate in your programming?

We do not expect every organization to address all these points. We do encourage you to consider what makes sense for your programs and how to support participation beyond the participants you might typically serve. We encourage organizations to describe what greater access looks like for their work, specifically for visitors from 50 or more miles away.

Acceptance-based access is about how your organization nurtures a sense of **welcoming and belonging**, especially for those who are new to your organization's programs. Thinking through your organization's programming, you may consider:

- How you can demonstrate acceptance through interpersonal interactions, use of space, language, signage, etc., to make people feel comfortable
- The needs and perspectives of different potential participants in your programs, such as: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), people who identify as LGBTQIA+, people who speak different languages, people with different levels of education or experience, people with different levels of income, people of different ages, etc.

- How people from different backgrounds see themselves represented in the presenters, staff, or volunteers they encounter at your programs.

Communications Access is about **how your organization promotes its programs**. Consider how your organization is getting the word out about opportunities to engage, and whether the messages are shared in a way that the audience you intend to serve can receive them. You may want to think about:

- The formats, methods, and languages you use.
- The partnerships and networks you connect with to extend your reach to participants 50+ miles away. This might be working with similar organizations in Seattle or Portland to share your event within their network. Making use of Experience Olympia and Beyond the Visitor & Convention Bureau of Thurston County who can help you market your event to tourists.
- The ease with which participants can communicate with and get information from your organization.

Disability Access is about considering how you **can best serve people with disabilities**. There are a variety of ways in which your organization might be able to improve experiences for people with physical disabilities, developmental and unseen disabilities, and people who are neurodivergent. You may want to:

- Offer technology and services that can help people with disabilities – such as people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, or blind or vision-impaired – navigate your facility and/or programs.
- Check out the guidance provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Provide programs specifically for and market to people with physical or cognitive disabilities.
- Connect with people with disabilities to learn more about what you can do to support their inclusion and participation in your work.

Application Review Criteria

Your application should tell a clear story about the programming and marketing efforts you are proposing or the facilities you run and how it will impact tourism and drive heads in beds to Olympia. Each application will be reviewed by the [Lodging Tax Advisory Committee](#) individually and as a group. Committee members will use the review criteria below and will score each criterion with 100 possible points.

Based on their discussions and the combined scores, the review panel will make a collective recommendation about which applications to fund, and the relative amount of the funding request to support. Full funding at the requested amount is not guaranteed.

Priority will be given to tourism activities that:

- Show potential to result in overnight stays by tourists in lodging establishments within the City of Olympia.
- Promote Olympia and/or events, activities, and places in the city of Olympia to potential tourists from outside Thurston County.
- Show potential to result in Economic benefit to Olympia. (This may look like partnerships to encourage tourist spending on accommodations, activities, food, or souvenirs)

- Minimize duplication of services where appropriate and encourage cooperative marketing and partnerships.
- Provide, maintain, operate, or enhance City-owned tourism facilities or infrastructure.

Scoring Criteria

1. The 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.)**
2. This 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, no potential = 0 pts.)**
3. The proposal demonstrates that the organization is working in partnership with fellow organizations and businesses. **(15 pts.)**
4. The project has clear marketing goals and a defined promotion plan for marketing outside Thurston County. **(20 pts.)**
5. This project lends itself to the complement of other events in the community and helps create a diversity of opportunities (arts, culture, recreation, education, or historic significance). **(10 pts.)**
6. The event proposal defines additional revenue benefits beyond overnight stays (likely diners, shoppers, paid parking etc.). **(10 pts.)**
7. This project occurs in non-demand periods or shoulder season. **(5 pts.)**

Innovation (BONUS 5 pts. each)

If the applicant has applied in previous years, does the applicant demonstrate how Lodging Tax Funds will be used to adapt or grow the project?

Does the project represent an unusual approach or move the Lodging Tax Funding program in an exciting new direction?

Application Components

The sections below explain the questions that will be in [the online application form](#). We suggest that you refer to this section as you develop your application.

The application questions give you the opportunity to tell your organization's story and to demonstrate how your work aligns with the Primary Funding Goals and Application Review Criteria. You should assume that the panelists who will review your application are not familiar with your work, so be as clear and specific as possible. Note that there are word limits for each section.

The proposal and all documents filed with the City are public record. The City may choose to post on its website copies of all or parts of the proposals and attached documents.

**NOTE: The Visitor & Convention Bureau of Thurston County
dba Experience Olympia & Beyond is your resource.**

www.experienceolympia.com

**Call them for help with completing your application and documenting the success of your event.
For more information, please reach them at info@experienceolympia.com**

Check which one of the following applies to your agency:

- ☐ Non-Profit
- ☐ Public Agency "Public agency" means any agency, political subdivision, or unit of local government of this state including, but not limited to, municipal corporations, quasi municipal corporations, special purpose districts, and local service districts; any agency of the state government; any agency of the United States; any Indian tribe recognized as such by the federal government; and any political subdivision of another state.
- ☐ For-Profit business applying for tourism promotion/marketing funding

I am applying for (check all that apply):

- ☐ Tourism Promotion/Marketing
- ☐ Operation of a Special Event/ Festival designed to attract tourists
- ☐ Operation of a Tourism Promotion Agency
- ☐ Operation of a Tourism-Related Facility owned or operated by a non-profit organization
- ☐ Operation and/or Capital Costs of a Tourism-Related Facility owned by a municipality

Organization Information

Organization/Agency/Business Legal Name:

Organization Mailing Address:

Federal Tax ID Number:

City of Olympia Business License:

Contact Name, Title, email, and phone:

Organization's mission statement: (100 words)

About your organization: (200 words max)

Provide an overview of what your organization does and why. What are your organization's key strategic goals? Who are your primary participants and/or audiences?

About your event/activity/facility

Requested Funding Amount:

List the Date(s) of your event or activity:

Describe your tourism-related event/activity/facility: (400 – 500 words)

- Describe why tourists will travel to Olympia to attend your event/activity/facility.
- If an event, list the event name, date(s), and projected overall attendance.
- Please share the prior success of your event/activity/facility has had in attracting tourists. This might be examples of successful marketing or partnerships, or past regional or national attention your event has received.
- If you are an established event or facility, what are you planning on doing new this year to grow attendance, reach new audiences, or build capacity to grow?

List any partnerships or collaborations that help ensure the success of the event/activity/facility: (100 words max)

Describe how you will promote your event/activity/facility to attract tourists: (400 - 500 words)

- Include your target tourist audience (location, demographics, etc.).
- List any printed marketing materials, published advertising (when & where), targeted social media plans that will be part of your promotional plan.
- How do you ensure that you reach visitors from 50 miles away to attend your facility or event?
- What percentage of attendees to your event or facility are from 50 miles away and how are you making that estimation? This could be tracking zip codes provided through registration or ticket sales, survey data, or geofencing reporting.
- How are you engaging and inviting audiences from diverse backgrounds and identities?

How do you ensure that you reach visitors from 50 miles away while promoting your facility or event? (200 words)

Event/activity/facility Accessibility: (300 – 500 words)

- How does your event/activity/facility welcome and invite attendees with physical accessibility needs, sensory needs/ASD, lo/no vision, deaf or hard of hearing, limited English, and/or families with young children?
- What are the available accommodations and how does your audience learn about and request them?
- Are any written materials offered in other languages?
- Please share any relevant accessibility statements or a link to where they can be found on your event/organization's website.

Is there a host hotel for your event?

- ☐ YES *Name of Hotel:
☐ No

Describe how your event will encourage attendees to stay overnight, promote lodging establishments, restaurants, and businesses located in the City of Olympia: (200 words)

2027 Tourism Impact Estimates and 2026 Actuals: If you have not previously been funded or you have not completed your 2026 programming, please leave the 2026 column blank.

	2027 Estimate	2026 Actuals
Overall attendance		
Number of people who travel more than 50 miles for your event/activity		
Of the number of people who travel more than 50 miles, the number of people who travel from out of state or from another country		
Number of people who will stay in Paid accommodations in Olympia or Olympia area		
Number of people who will stay overnight without paying for accommodation in Olympia or Olympia area		
Number of paid lodging room nights resulting from your event/activity/facility (Example: 25 paid rooms on Friday and 50 paid rooms on Saturday +75 paid lodging rooms per nights)		

How will you collect Tourism data for your event/activity/facility in 2027?

- ☐ Direct Count (Preferred)
☐ Indirect count
☐ Representative Survey
☐ Informal Survey (Preferred)
☐ Structured Estimate (Please Explain)
☐ Other (please Explain)

Explanation or details:

Are you applying for Lodging Tax funds from another community?

- ☐ No
☐ Yes * If yes, List other jurisdiction(s) and amounts requested.

Complete the Budget Worksheet for your event/activity/facility. Budget worksheets can be found on the website.

Contract Deliverables or Scope of Work: How do you intend to use the funds requested from the City of Olympia?

If funded your deliverables are the summary of the key aspects of your event/activity/facility that will be supported by the Lodging Tax support. The deliverables you list will be considered a draft; after funding decisions are made, staff will work with organizations to adjust and finalize deliverables for the contract.

For contracting purposes, deliverables need to be written in a detailed way that shows the specifics of the services that an organization is providing to the City of Olympia with Lodging Tax Funding. Include anticipated dates of expenses if known. Examples of deliverables include but are not limited to:

- Professional services for your event such as event planners, performers, stage assembly contractors, and audio/visual professionals.
- Printing expenses for posters, flyers, brochures, etc.
- Marketing expenses – be as specific as possible.
- Event support- insurance, security, facility rental, equipment rental, etc.
- Facilities operation- utilities, technology, subscriptions & dues, etc.

What will you cut from or do differently if full funding for your request is not available? (150 words max)

Please be thorough with your answer. In balancing the number of requests with limited funds available, the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee relies on this information for decision making.

End of Application

Required Attachments:

- ☐ Completed Budget Worksheet
- ☐ 1-3 Work Samples: Share brief examples of past work that show the value of your programming and/or the success of your tourism marketing efforts.
 - Work Samples may include photos, event programs, a newspaper article, survey results or anything else that you think will help the review panel better understand the past success of your event/activity/facility.
 - If your event/activity is new this year, work samples can include relevant planning documents, letters of commitment or partnership, etc.

Please limit your materials to a combined total of no more than 4 pages of written materials, or 8 images per work sample.

Please contact City of Olympia staff with questions regarding the funding application.

Amelia Layton, Senior Programs Specialist

alayton@ci.olympia.wa.us Phone: 360570-3808

DEFINITIONS

- **Tourist:** A visitor from at least 50 miles away.

Count Methods

- **Direct Count:** Actual count of visitors using methods such as paid admissions or registrations, clicker counts at entry points, vehicle counts or number of chairs filled. A direct count may also include information collected directly from businesses, such as hotels, restaurants or tour guides, likely to be affected by an event.
- **Indirect Count:** Estimate based on information related to the number of visitors such as raffle tickets sold, redeemed discount certificates, brochures handed out, police requirements for crowd control or visual estimates.
- **Representative Survey:** Information collected directly from individual visitors/participants. A representative survey is a highly structured data collection tool, based on a defined random sample of participants, and the results can be reliably projected to the entire population attending an event and includes margin of error and confidence level.
- **Informal Survey:** Information collected directly from individual visitors or participants in a nonrandom manner that is not representative of all visitors or participants. Informal survey results cannot be projected to the entire visitor population and provide a limited indicator of attendance because not all participants had an equal chance of being included in the survey.
- **Structured Estimate:** Estimate produced by computing known information related to the event or location. For example, one jurisdiction estimated attendance by dividing the square footage of the event area by the international building code allowance for persons (3 square feet).