



STARKVILLE VISITORS AND CONVENTION COUNCIL SPONSORSHIP GRANT PROGRAM

Introduction

The Starkville Visitors and Convention Council (VCC) is the official destination marketing organization for the City of Starkville. It focuses on promoting Starkville to potential leisure, convention and group travelers.

The VCC's Sponsorship Grant Program is an annual allocation designed to enhance tourism promotion efforts in Starkville. The program provides funds for marketing and other qualified expenses for projects and events that positively impact the City of Starkville and ultimately, increase overnight travel to the city.

Qualifying Programs and Events

Eligible applicants for funding include an organization/event/project whose objective is to promote Starkville's tourism industry to out-of-town visitors by generating overnight travel and economic stimulus to the city. The target audience should be outside the immediate Starkville area (over 50-mile radius or out-of-state). **Events must occur from October 1, 2023, to September 30, 2024, to be eligible for funding.**

Qualifying entities may be attractions, associations, organizations, or governmental agencies which promote their event, products and/or services to visitors from outside the area. Qualified grant projects should be classified in one of the following categories:

1. Festival / Event
2. Attraction / Public Use Facility:
 - a. Museums, historical buildings, meeting space, sporting facilities, etc.
3. Other organizations / associations with a primary objective of promoting tourism in Starkville

Sponsorship Grant funds may be used for a variety of expenses, including traditional and digital advertising, brochures and signage, event or exhibit production costs, and marketing and promotional activities. Disallowable expenses include utilities, general operating expenses, administrative expenses (including salaries, travel, meals and lodging), loan payments, personal benefits, cash awards, expenses not directly related to the approved project, and any illegal activities.

Eligibility Requirements

Applicants should fulfill the following requirements:

- The project for which grant funds are requested must be primarily located within Starkville.
- Projects should promote Starkville as a destination by highlighting local lodging, dining, shopping, and attractions.
- The proposed project must comply with all applicable laws, permits, licenses and regulations.
- Each project must maintain financial records to document the use of Sponsorship Grant funds. These records should be filed and made available for inspection by the VCC for a period of not less than three (3) years.
- **If funding is granted, the current Starkville: Mississippi's College Town logo must be included on all collateral, advertisement, digital media, and signage in relation to the funded project. In addition, a hyperlinked Starkville: Mississippi's College Town logo must be placed on the project website upon grant selection and must remain for a period of no less than 12 consecutive months.**
- **In cases where sponsorship packages are available, a sponsorship equivalent to the dollar amount of Sponsorship Grant funds awarded should be provided to the VCC. This information should be included in application submissions.**
- Grants for individual organizations must not exceed \$5,000 in a Fiscal Year (October 1 – September 30).
- An organization receiving Sponsorship Grant funding is responsible for paying any applicable taxes.
- Additional guidelines may be required on an individual project basis and will be outlined in the Sponsorship Grant award letter and agreement.

Grant Application & Timeline

The selection process for the Sponsorship Grant Program is overseen by the VCC. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- Potential for economic impact
- Increased hotel occupancy
- Merit of the project's marketing and advertising plan
- Project's ability to attract visitors
- Fiscal stability of project / organization
- Ability to benefit Starkville as a visitor destination
- Proven, historical success of the project or organization

The following steps are a requirement for funding:

1. A completed application is submitted for the project.
2. Grant decision is determined by the VCC Board of Directors.
3. If selected for the Sponsorship Grant program, a signed contract will be entered between the applicant and the VCC.
4. A final report and supporting documentation is due within 30 days of a project's completion and no later than September 30, 2024.

FY24 Sponsorship Grant Deadline Calendar

July 1, 2023	Application process begins for the FY 2023 Sponsorship Grant
August 1, 2023	Application Priority Deadline*
September 15, 2023	Target date for notifying FY 2024 Sponsorship Grant applicants
September 30, 2024	Deadline for final reporting**

* If SPONSORSHIP GRANT funding has not been fully allocated by the priority deadline, additional applications will be accepted throughout the 2023 Fiscal Year or until all funds are depleted. Projects with applications submitted by the stated deadline will receive priority in funding decisions.

** A final report must be provided within 30 days of project completion or by September 30, 2024, whichever comes first.

Stipulations

Limited funds are available each Fiscal Year and are awarded on a competitive basis. All decisions regarding grants are at the sole discretion of the Starkville VCC Board of Directors, and the following stipulations are effective for any project receiving funding:

- Failure to use funds as specified in an application will result a full refund of Sponsorship Grant funds distributed.
- Failure to submit a final report and other required documentation may result in penalties including but not limited to a full refund of Sponsorship Grant funds distributed.
- Sponsorship Grant funds cannot be transferred from one project to another or to another organization other than the organization listed on the application.
- Applicants not in compliance with reporting deadlines and procedures will be disqualified from receiving any future Sponsorship Grant funding.
- If a project changes during developmental stages, the applicant should submit a written request to the VCC which may choose to accept or decline the changes. If changes are declined, no further Sponsorship Grant funds will be awarded, and any distributed funds must be refunded immediately. If changes are approved, an addendum to the original agreement will be provided by the VCC and the project may move forward with pledged funding.
- Selected projects must be completed within the Fiscal Year in which the grant is awarded. If a project is delayed, the grantee must inform the VCC in writing, requesting an extension. The VCC reserves the right to reject a request for extension which may result in penalties including but not limited to a full refund of Sponsorship Grant funds distributed.

For questions related to the Sponsorship Grant Program, please contact Paige Hunt at phunt@starkville.org or 662.323.3322.

