

Tourism Product Development Fund

2018 Program Guide

*Enhancing the Community
through Product Development*

BCTDA Mission:

To be a leader in the economic development of Buncombe County by attracting and serving visitors, generating income, jobs and tax revenues that make the community a better place to live and visit.



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 A Letter from the Chair

Dear TPDF Applicant:

The Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA) is pleased that you are interested in applying for funding from the Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF). As Chair of the TPDF Committee, the body charged with making funding recommendations to the BCTDA, we are excited to work with you, and to play a role in the development of projects that have potential to significantly impact the tourism industry as well as benefit the entire community.

The TPDF was created by the North Carolina General Assembly in 2001 to provide funding for capital tourism projects that increase the number of overnight stays in Buncombe County lodging properties, generating tax revenue, jobs, and spending at local businesses.

In 2013-14, the BCTDA embarked on a TPDF Application Improvement Study; the goals of which were to simplify the application process, lower the barrier to entry for applicants, and clarify guidelines and criteria. Strategies for improvement were identified and incorporated into the grant cycle. Additionally, in June 2015, the General Assembly passed HB347 which includes modifications to the Buncombe County Tourism Product Development Fund. Under these changes, for-profit entities are no longer eligible for TPDF funding.

The specific criteria by which TPDF funding decisions are made are outlined in this Program Guide. Please carefully review both the grant requirements and criteria for evaluation. The TPDF Committee may utilize a waiver to advance a project if the specifications fall outside the criteria yet represent a significant impact to hotel room nights and Buncombe County economic sustainability.

Please keep in mind, because the source of TPDF funding is public, all applications are subject to the requirements regarding “public records” found in Chapter 132 of the North Carolina General Statutes. Submitted applications will be disclosed upon request.

If you have specific questions about the application process, contact Pat Kappes, Director of Public Affairs, at 828.210.2724 or at pkappes@ExploreAsheville.com.

Thank you for your interest in the TPDF and in helping grow the economy of Buncombe County.

Sincerely,

Robert Foster
Chair, Tourism Product Development Fund Committee

1.2. History of the Tourism Product Development Fund

The Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) is a funding mechanism of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA). The creation of TPDF is the outgrowth of a business decision by the hospitality industry to drive more room nights to the area, and help create a sustainable impact on the overall economy by attracting a bigger base of customers for local businesses.

In 2001, the North Carolina General Assembly increased the occupancy tax from three to four percent. The additional one percent was dedicated to the fund, which offers grant, loan guarantee and debt service opportunities for capital development projects that serve to significantly increase patronage of lodging facilities in Buncombe County.

In 2015, HB347 was passed, increasing the occupancy tax two percent and bringing Buncombe County's occupancy rate in line with other municipalities in North Carolina. The bill preserved the 25 percent dedication of revenue for TPDF, and eliminated funding of for-profit projects to focus on local government and non-profit needs. Additionally, the BCTDA adopted significant changes to the TPDF program in 2015, including the Strategic Priority List and the Major Works Pathway. These new strategic tools enable the BCTDA to take a more proactive approach to filling strategic gaps in market, and encourages collaboration between staff and industry.

An investment in tourism can mean big dividends for the community – a stronger, diverse economy, an influx of substantial revenue, an increase in sales taxes, and an improved quality of life for the residents who share in the myriad of restaurants and retail operations, cultural and recreation attractions, and entertainment that results.

Since the fund's inception in 2001, a total of \$34.5 million has been awarded to 33 community projects including:

- John B. Lewis Soccer Complex at Azalea Park
- Grove Arcade
- The Bonsai Garden at the North Carolina Arboretum
- Asheville Visitor Center
- Western North Carolina Veterans' Memorial at Pack Square Park
- Buncombe County Civil War Trails
- Asheville Area Wayfinding
- Pack Square Park & Pavilion
- Asheville Art Museum
- The Orange Peel
- U.S. Cellular Center
- Smoky Mountain Adventure Center
- Montford Park Players
- Navitat Canopy Adventures
- Lighting for UNC Asheville Sports Fields
- Pack Square Park & Canopy
- Highland Brewing Company Property Development
- The Collider
- River Access at Pearson Bridge
- Enka Center Ballfields
- City of Asheville's Riverfront Destination Development
- Asheville Museum of Science
- WNC Nature Center
- Asheville Community Theatre
- WNC Farmers Market
- The Wortham Center

- Montreat College
- Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center
- Woodfin Greenway & Blueway

In an effort to ensure the application process works most effectively and provides the best use of the funds, the Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau, on behalf of the BCTDA, conducted a TPDF Application Improvement Study in 2013-14. The goals of the study were to simplify the application process, lower the barrier to entry for applicants, and clarify guidelines and criteria. Strategies for improvement were identified and incorporated into the grant cycle.

1.3 Enabling Legislation

As per legislation, there are two essential requirements to be considered for funding:

- The funding must be for capital expenses (“bricks and mortar”), and
- A project must demonstrate that it will create substantial new and incremental room nights in Buncombe County.
- Other core criteria are detailed in sections 3.2 and 3.3.

Other provisions as stated in the legislation:

- Projects must provide a feasibility study demonstrating the project's economic value to the area and the number of estimated new room nights it will generate. Projects must be expected to significantly increase patronage of lodging facilities in Buncombe County.
- BCTDA is not required to exhaust all of the funds generated each year and may accumulate money in order to create a revolving fund.
- BCTDA may not commit for purposes of debt service in excess of thirty-three percent (33%) of net funds received in any one year for a period of time in excess of 10 years. The Authority may not commit for purposes of debt service in excess of ten percent (10%) of net funds received in any one year for any single project.
- For-profit entities are not eligible for TPDF funding.

Review the legislation here:

HB105: <http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/Sessions/2001/Bills/House/HTML/H105v3.html>

HB347: <http://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2015/Bills/House/HTML/H347v4.html>

1.4 Funding Pathways

There are a number of ways that the BCTDA can work with applicants interested in TPDF funding.

Grant, Loan Guarantee, or Debt Service: TPDF applicants may submit funding requests during the standard grant cycle for a grant, loan guarantee or debt service. The TPDF Committee must review and evaluate project applications during the cycle, and make recommendations to the BCTDA for funding.

Strategic Priority List: During the standard grant cycle, the TPDF Committee may wish to recommend funding for a project but not have the funds available. As per legislation, the BCTDA cannot make a binding commitment to fund projects using future year revenues. In this case, the TPDF Committee may recommend the BCTDA place a project on the Strategic Priority List, to be considered when funding is available. Selected projects would receive priority for funding in future years. While the applicant will be required to provide an update to the BCTDA ensuring there have been no substantive changes to the project as presented, the applicant will not be required to resubmit an application in the grant cycle again.

Major Works Pathway: This approach enables a funding pathway outside the annual TPDF funding cycle for significant projects representing a minimum \$5 million capital investment, and requiring multi-year funding. Outside of the grant cycle, applicants may present a project proposal to the BCTDA for funding consideration. All potential major projects must conform to TPDF requirements and are subject to evaluation by the TPDF Committee. Applicants interested in pursuing the Major Works Pathway are encouraged to consult with CVB staff in early stages of project planning.

1.5 Asheville Destination Brand Promise

Our brand promise is grounded in Asheville's history – all that has contributed to what the destination is today. The community has a long history of hospitality and acceptance, welcoming visitors to the area dating back to the late 18th- and early 19th- centuries when it became known as a health and wellness destination. As it became more well-known, it attracted and inspired people from all walks of life, including wealthy socialites and even the famous.

As a unique element of sophistication formed in this part of the Blue Ridge Mountains, greater opportunities became available to enrich the experience. And as George Vanderbilt's home, Biltmore, transformed itself into one of the early tourist attractions in the country, the Grove Park Inn began attracting celebrities, and the area's rich heritage was discovered, the arms reached even wider to welcome an increasing number of visitors.

The net result of this genuine, organic evolution is an area unsurpassed by the variety and quality of arts and crafts, restaurants, music, attractions and outdoor opportunities available to experience. It remains today, an area that welcomes and inspires visitors, artists, adventure seekers and entrepreneurs – all who seek to enrich their lives in a real and personal way.

If you are awarded TPDF funding, your organization will be required to work with the CVB to ensure your employees and/or volunteers deliver the Asheville Area Destination Brand Promise to visitors, including the following marketing activities:

- Promoting the Grantor's digital marketing assets including ExploreAsheville.com, and distributing the Grantor-supplied Official Asheville Visitor Guides at your location.
- Display a reciprocal web link to ExploreAsheville.com on your website.
- Ensure your staff knows and understands the Asheville Area Destination Brand Promise.

- Source in-bound groups requiring 10 rooms or more per night for meetings, conventions, and events through the Explore Asheville CVB Group Sales Department.

Asheville Destination Brand Promise

We guarantee you a life enriching experience each and every time you visit Asheville. It's personal, personal to you. And it is also personal to us. We live that same genuine experience and want to share it with you. We empower you to discover a collection of experiences that is as unique and varied as each individual who visits us, and allows you to do so in a warm, embracing and creative environment.

Asheville Destination Brand Core Values

Welcoming: Warm and engaging; friendly and accessible; we are excited that you came to visit; we want to share our Asheville with you.

Natural: Genuine, original and real, not staged; we respect your individualism and originality; our natural lifestyle is only enhanced by the natural beauty that surrounds us; come and be amazed and rejuvenated.

Vibrant: Colorful, bright, engaging and delightful; be delighted by the opportunities around you; we are creative, diverse and alive; come and be energized by our colorful and exciting lifestyle.

2.0 People behind the Process

Established by legislation in 1983, the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA) is a quasi-governmental entity charged with marketing Buncombe County as a tourism destination and administering its tourism product development fund.

The legislation gives the BCTDA ultimate authority over the awarding of the tourism product development funds, following recommendations from a TPDF Committee. The TPDF Committee is charged with ensuring TPDF dollars are used to enhance the community through product development leading to significant new and repeat room nights in Buncombe County and providing recommendations to the BCTDA Board.

2.1 BCTDA Board Members

The Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA) is a board of eleven volunteers appointed to oversee the use of occupancy tax revenues as directed by North Carolina law. Four members are appointed by Asheville City Council, four by the Buncombe County Commission, and one by the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce. Six members represent accommodations who collect the tax and three are from non-lodging, tourism-related

businesses. A Buncombe County Commissioner and an Asheville City Council Member serve as non-voting, ex-officio board members.

Jim Muth, Chair

Beaufort House Inn
City Appointment – Lodging (100 Rooms or Less)

Gary Froeba

The Omni Grove Park Inn
County Appointment – Lodging (101+ Rooms)

Leah Ashburn

Highland Brewing Company
County Appointment – Tourism Related

Andrew Celwyn

Herbiary
City Appointment – Tourism Related

Chip Craig

Greybeard Rentals
County Appointment – Lodging (101+ Rooms)

Asheville City Council Ex-Officio Member – **Councilwoman Julie Mayfield**

Buncombe County Commission Ex-Officio Member – **Commissioner Joe Belcher**

2.2 TPDF Committee

As per the legislation, the TPDF Committee is appointed by the BCTDA, and need not be comprised solely of members of the Authority. A majority of positions must be held by lodging representatives. Committee members can serve one partial and two full terms.

Robert Foster, Chair

Doubletree by Hilton Biltmore/Asheville
Lodging Appointment

John Lockett, Vice Chair

Grand Bohemian Hotel Asheville
Lodging Appointment

Himanshu Karvir

Holiday Inn Biltmore
City Appointment – Lodging (101+ Rooms)

John Lockett

Grand Bohemian Hotel Asheville
City Appointment – Lodging (101+ Rooms)

John McKibbon

McKibbon Hotel Management
County Appointment – Lodging (100 Rooms or Less)

Paula Wilber, Past Chair

Biltmore Company
Chamber Appointment – Tourism Related

Jay Curwen

Nantahala Outdoor Center
Tourism Appointment

Mark Hemphill

Biltmore Company
Lodging Appointment

Fielding Lowe
Carolina Alliance Bank
Finance Appointment

Ken Stamps
Navitat Canopy Adventures
Tourism Appointment

David McCartney
Aloft Asheville Downtown
Lodging Appointment

Ruth Summers
Grove Arcade
Tourism Appointment

** At the time the 2018 TPDF Program Guide was developed, there was one vacant position on the nine-member TPDF Committee.*

2.3 TPDF Staff

The Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) implements sales and marketing strategies and tactics on behalf of the BCTDA.

Stephanie Pace Brown
President & CEO, Explore Asheville CVB

Marla Tambellini
Deputy Director/VP of Marketing, Explore Asheville CVB

Pat Kappes – primary TPDF Program contact
Director of Public Affairs, Explore Asheville CVB

3.0 Application Process

The enabling legislation mandates that a TPDF Committee review all applications and make funding recommendations to the BCTDA. Projects must pass a Phase I and Phase II approval by the TPDF Committee prior to consideration by the BCTDA.

Potential applicants should review both Phase I and Phase II applications at the commencement of the process to ensure that they can provide all of the information requested in both phases. It is also recommended that applicants review the standard contract to ensure they can comply with the terms should their project be awarded funding.

Phase I consists of a short application form which requests important preliminary information and is designed to assess the viability of the application and its conformity to the goals of the fund without requiring significant effort from the applicant. Successful Phase I applicants will be invited to participate in Phase II. **The deadline for submission of the Phase I application is June 6, 2018 at 5:00 PM EST, and applicants will be notified on June 27, 2018.**

Phase II consists of a more comprehensive application requesting additional information from applicants such as financials, business plans and feasibility studies among other requirements. Applicants invited to participate in Phase II will have the opportunity to present projects in

person to the TPDF Committee on September 27 or 28, 2018 as part of the review process. Phase II may also include site visits, as per the TPDF Committee's request. **The deadline for submission of the Phase II application is August 29, 2018 at 5:00 PM EST, and applicants will be notified of funding decisions on or before October 31, 2018.**

3.1 Applicant Agreement

Applicants will be asked to acknowledge and certify the following statements as part of the application process:

DISCLOSURE FOR PUBLIC RECORD

As a quasi-governmental agency, the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority is subject to Chapter 132 of the North Carolina General Assembly Statutes. Therefore, any and all aspects of this application must be made available by the BCTDA to any party, public or private, upon request without exception. If you are concerned that the distribution of any of your application materials may do irreparable damage to you, your organization, or associated parties, the BCTDA highly recommends that you seek alternative funding in lieu of TPDF funds.

PROJECT MONITORING

I hereby acknowledge that if I am awarded TPDF funding, I will be required to submit an annual report by January 15 of each year during the term of the agreement, with the term commencing on the effective date and continuing for four years after the completion date. Reports include marketing plans and methodologies for capturing annual and out-of-market visitation, up-to-date room night projections, and copies of survey instruments used for data among other requirements.

BCTDA MARKETING

I hereby acknowledge that certain information from my application, such as the project description, time line, and leadership, may be used by the BCTDA at its sole discretion for the promotion and marketing of the TPDF program and the region as a tourism destination.

TERMS OF AGREEMENT

I hereby acknowledge that I have reviewed and understand the terms of the contract agreement.

COMPLETED APPLICATION

I hereby acknowledge that I have completed this application in good faith, confidence, and counsel, and have done so in full compliance with the law. I have made no attempt to falsify or misconstrue facts or data anywhere in this application.

3.2 Application Timeline

Information Session	Wednesday, April 11, 2018, 3 p.m. – 5 p.m.
Phase 1 Applications Due	Wednesday, June 6, 2018, 5 p.m. EST
Phase I Applicants Notified	Wednesday, June 27, 2018
Phase 2 Applications Due	Wednesday, August 29, 2018, 5 p.m. EST
Project Presentations	September 27 & 28, 2018*
Site Visits	October 8 & 9, 2018*
Grantees Announced	On or before Wednesday, October 31, 2018

**Applicant must be available on one of these dates.*

3.3 TPDF Grant Requirements

Applications are assessed based on the following grant requirements. The TPDF Committee may utilize a waiver to advance a project if the specifications fall outside the requirements yet represent a significant impact to hotel room nights and Buncombe County economic sustainability.

1. Funding must be for capital investments only (“bricks and mortar” projects--design not included). Operational expenses will not be considered for funding.
2. A project must demonstrate that it will create substantial new and incremental hotel room nights in Buncombe County.
3. The TPDF will only fund projects that have a minimum of a 1-to-1 funding match to the TPDF funding requested (excluding in-kind goods and services). Design fees already expended will be considered as counting towards the 1-to-1 funding match.
4. Projects which either directly increase hotel room nights by themselves or support a larger initiative that will increase room nights will be evaluated equally.
5. Projects may not solely benefit a single hotel owner, hotel property, or be situated on a hotel property.
6. TPDF funds cannot be the first funds committed to a project.
7. For-profit entities are not eligible for TPDF funding.

3.4 Criteria by Which Projects Will Be Evaluated

Applications will be evaluated according to these criteria:

Project Information

- **Strength of Sales and Marketing Plan**
Sales and marketing plans for projects will be evaluated upon the level of investment budgeted for these activities and the likelihood they will succeed in drawing visitation to the destination.
- **Timeliness of the Project**

Projects which are “shovel ready” may rate more highly than those which are still two or more years from beginning construction.

- **Uniqueness and Innovation of Project**

Attractions and activities which are new to the region or not available to visitors living in key feeder markets for the destination may be valued more highly than those which duplicate offerings already available to visitors.

Financial Strength

- **Financial Stability of the Requesting Organization**

Each applicant organization will be evaluated for financial sustainability, and their perceived ability to raise additional funds as needed to bring the project to completion.

- **Strength of Business Planning**

The proposed business plan for the project will be evaluated on its accuracy, completeness, and likelihood to support a successful and sustainable operation once the project has opened.

- **1-to-1 Funding Match Exceeded**

While it is a requirement for applying organizations to have secured a funding match equal to the amount for which they are applying from the TPDF, projects that exceed the 1-to-1 requirement may receive particular consideration.

Project Impact

- **Ratio of Room Nights Generated to Funding Requested**

The amount of TPDF funding requested will be analyzed versus the potential return of new hotel room nights in Buncombe County to be generated by the project.

- **Generator of New and Incremental Room Nights**

The room night impact of a proposed project will be assessed on whether the project is drawing new visitors to the area, or simply pulling from existing visitors in Buncombe County while not increasing the number of new room nights.

- **Association with an Identified Need Period**

Projects that draw visitors to the destination specifically during identified periods of need for hotel room nights may receive more consideration than those that draw visitors exclusively during peak and established visitation periods.

- **Size of Market to be Served**

Projects that target large audiences capable of filling many area hotel rooms are valued, but projects that draw new and untapped niche markets to Asheville may also be worthy of consideration.

- **Scope of Impact Upon Lodging Market**

The impact of a project upon Buncombe County hoteliers will be considered not only in terms of number of hotel room nights generated, but also in terms of the geographic impact and types of hotels filled by visitors.

- **Ability to Serve as a Contributing Asset**

Projects which support an important generator of destination room nights or which could stimulate additional activity but which may not generate significant room nights by

themselves will be considered. Applicants should demonstrate the potential for additional tourism product development if their project is built.

Destination Branding

- **Strength of Brand Alignment**

Projects will be evaluated on whether they are consistent with the Asheville destination brand and provide additional support for the brand promise.

4.0 Application Materials for the 2018 Grant Cycle

The applications are available for download on the AshevilleCVB.com website as editable PDF forms. It is recommended to save the PDF form to your computer before beginning your work. Enter your information in the form fields, and be sure to save often.

4.1 Phase I Application

Download here: <http://www.AshevilleCVB.com/TPDF2018>

Phase I applications are due Wednesday, June 6, 2018, 5:00 p.m. EST. When finished with the application, email the PDF file as an attachment to Pat Kappes, Director of Public Affairs, at pkappes@ExploreAsheville.com.

Handwritten applications will not be accepted. Additional files and attachments will not be accepted in Phase I.

4.2 Phase II Application

Download a copy for reference here: <http://www.AshevilleCVB.com/TPDF2018>

Potential applicants should review the Phase II application to ensure that they are capable of providing all of the information requested should they be invited to participate in Phase II.

Phase II applications are due Wednesday, August 29, 2018, 5:00 p.m. EST. Submit the completed application in PDF format via email to Pat Kappes, Director of Public Affairs, at pkappes@ExploreAsheville.com.

Handwritten applications will not be accepted. There are several additional files required in Phase II as outlined in the application. Please attach the files in .doc, .xls, or .pdf formats in the email with your completed application. **Name the files as instructed in the application.**

5.0 Awardee Information

Phase II applicants will be notified on or before Wednesday, October 31, 2018. Grant agreement contracts will be developed for each awarded project in the weeks following the

awardee announcement. A standard contract agreement is available for reference at <http://www.AshevilleCVB.com/TPDF2018>, and should be reviewed prior to submission of the application.

5.1 Funding Timeline

The Grant will be disbursed in three payments. Subject to contractual conditions, the first disbursement will be made when the construction of Project is one-third completed; the second disbursement will be made when the Project is two-thirds completed; and the third disbursement shall be made upon the date of completion. Each disbursement shall be in the amount of one-third of the Grant. Disbursement requests require supporting documentation as outlined in the Grant Agreement.

There is also an option to receive one disbursement based on specific project needs; however, single disbursements will only be processed after construction is 100% complete.

5.2 Reporting Requirements

An annual report must be made by the Grantee to the Grantor by January 15 of each year during the term of the Agreement, with the term commencing on the effective date and continuing for four years after the completion date. Reports include marketing plans and methodologies for capturing annual and out-of-market visitation, up-to-date room night projections, and copies of survey instruments used for data among other requirements.

6.0 Support

6.1 Contact Information

For assistance, please contact:
Pat Kappes, Director of Public Affairs
Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau
(828) 210-2724
pkappes@ExploreAsheville.com

6.2 Information Session Workshop

An Information Session will be held to explain the process and provide assistance for interested applicants.

Date: Wednesday, April 11, 2018
Time: 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Location: Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau
Boardroom, First Floor
27 College Place
Asheville, NC 28801

6.3 Glossary

Definition of terms used in the application materials:

Average daily room rate (ADR) – The average hotel or motel room rate paid by guests over a given period of time in a given market. This rate does not include taxes and fees paid by the guest. The Explore Asheville CVB receives ADR data for hotels and motels in Buncombe County via a subscription from Smith Travel Research, an international provider of lodging market data.

Demographics – A description of a particular audience based upon certain segmentation characteristics, including age, household income, educational level attained, gender, and the presence of children at home.

Occupancy tax – A tax paid by guests staying in paid accommodations such as hotels, motels, vacation rentals, and bed and breakfasts. The tax is not applied to religious organizations, educational organizations, and summer camps. Guests in lodging properties in Buncombe County pay a total of 4% occupancy tax (in addition to applicable state sales tax). 1% of the 4% generates the Tourism Product Development Fund.

Out-of-market – A term used to describe guests who reside outside of the Asheville market. This term is used to indicate different geographic areas, including guests living outside of Buncombe County; outside of the Asheville metropolitan area (Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, and Madison counties); or outside of the local Greenville/Spartanburg/Asheville television market area. (The Explore Asheville CVB uses the term “out-of-market” to refer to visitors living outside of the local television market area.)

Room nights – One room night is defined as a single night spent in one room in a lodging property. Even if there are two or more guests staying in the room for one night, it is considered to be one room night.

New or Incremental Room Nights—“New” room nights are defined as those which are truly new to the market—that is, attracting new visitors to Buncombe County who would not have otherwise visited and who stay overnight in paid accommodations. “Incremental” room nights are room nights generated by visitors extending their stay by at least one night directly as a result of a new project.