

**City of Sarasota, Florida  
Office of Economic Development**



**Cultural Special Event Grant Program**

Established by the City Commission May 6, 2019

**Program Overview**

Cultural Special Events are a means of enhancing, marketing, and promoting the City of Sarasota's community to stimulate local business, community, and commerce activities.

Many of Sarasota's commercial nodes are considerably activated, enjoying not only continuous public interest, but benefiting from the excitement and interest of frequent special events held both in and out of 'season'. However, there remain other commercial areas of the City that would benefit from the operation of one or more special events throughout the year, helping to stimulate the local economy by drawing new and diverse attention to commercial corridors that are in the process of renewal.

Cultural special events differ from unspecified special events due to their unique and inimitable nature. Cultural Special Events amplify the community's existing culture – that is, the shared language, cuisine, social habits, music, arts, literature, crafts, history, and customs of our citizens. A successful Cultural Special Event demonstrates and celebrates what is uniquely Sarasota, and in doing so, attracts a wide and enthusiastic audience from the local community and regional area.

In keeping with the City of Sarasota's adopted Vision and Strategic Goals, which emphasize the preservation and enhancement of culture and diversity, the City Commission will consider allocating Economic Development Funds towards the creation and operation of Cultural Special Events in less-activated commercial areas of the City. The Commission will award matching grants of between \$10,001 and \$25,000 to applicants on a case-by-case basis as funding allows. Smaller grants of \$10,000 or less may be awarded administratively as funding allows. All applicants must submit a completed application package before being considered for funding. Applicants granted a funding award must enter into contract with the City of Sarasota, and funding is distributed in the form of reimbursement following the successful completion and submission of accounting documentation.

**Apply ONLINE:** [SarasotaFL.gov/EconomicDevelopmentOffice](https://SarasotaFL.gov/EconomicDevelopmentOffice)

## Application Criteria

To be eligible for funding under this program applicants are required to meet all the criteria listed below:

1. Your event must meet the definition of a Cultural Special Event, which is defined as: A new or existing event that has the potential to generate and attract a local and regional audience (including attendees from other states) and generate economic activity within under-activated commercial corridors within the City of Sarasota. Events can include; organized concerts, exhibitions, festivals, carnivals, athletic events, craft shows, competitions, parades, celebrations, markets, or other events similar in nature, which are open to the public. Special events do not include social parties, conferences, open houses, grand openings, ribbon cutting ceremonies, or events that are not open to the public. For the purposes of the City's Cultural Special Event Grant Program, events that are primarily religious or political in nature will not be eligible for funding.
2. Applicant must be a not-for-profit organization registered with the Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations, and as a charity with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs. Completed applications must be signed by two registered officers of the not-for-profit organization. Not-for-profit public institutions (e.g., federal, state or local governments; universities; etc.), political organizations and/or religious organizations are not eligible to apply for Cultural Special Event grant funds.
3. The event(s) should take place in under-activated commercial corridors of the City, including adjacent public gathering areas. Commercial areas currently holding multiple, high-traffic special events will be considered less likely to receive a funding award.
4. To be considered for an award, applicants must demonstrate a funding match that is equal to the amount of the grant being requested from the City. Requests may be made up to \$10,000 (administratively), and \$10,001 to \$25,000 (by City Commission approval). For example, a request for \$25,000 from the City of Sarasota would be eligible for consideration only if the cost of the event will be \$50,000 or more; if awarded the City would provide \$25,000, and the event organizer would provide a *minimum* of \$25,000 towards operating the event. The City will consider up to 50% of the required match as in-kind goods and services (Salaries are limited to a percentage of the match; please see application documents).
5. Special event must be open to the public and general entry shall be free whenever possible.
6. Applicant(s), Organization(s), and Event Space operator(s) (if any) may not be in default of any City of Sarasota programs or regulations, or have any outstanding liens, fines, or forfeitures.
7. Not-for-profit organizations who have a for-profit business and are hosting an event which is similar in nature to the for-profit business activity or operations, are not eligible for funding under this program.
8. Following the event, a post-event report must be submitted to the City of Sarasota that assesses the accuracy of projected estimates, indicates final event costs and contributions, and provides an estimate of future sustainability. The quality of the submission will be a critical component in the consideration of future funding awards. All events should be operated with the goal of financial independence and sustainability; however, the City will consider up to three years of continuous funding awards, based on an event demonstrated success and ability for regional growth.

## Allowable Uses for Grant Awards

- Rentals such as equipment, tents, chairs, tables, facilities, port-a-lets, etc.;
- Marketing and advertising;
- Entertainment and performers;
- Event production costs
- Accommodations to ensure compliance with ADA/Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Permits and licensing fees;
- Security and general liability insurance;
- Administrative expenses up to 10% (General Overhead).

## Grant Use Restrictions

Events that promote intolerance, hate, discrimination, religious dogma, political campaigns, or that celebrate or commemorate history or events that are not consistent with the current morals and ethics of the City of Sarasota and its citizens will not be eligible for grant funding. Additional restrictions include:

- Events that occur more than once on an annual basis.
- Events sponsored by the State of Florida, local governments or universities;
- Events that are not open to the public; (Event organizer *may* charge an attendance fee when appropriate).
- Administrative costs that are greater than 10% of the total Event cost;
- Prize money, awards, plaques or certificates;
- Purchase of tangible personal property;
- Interest payments or reduction of existing organizational deficits or loans;
- Travel expenses;
- Alcoholic beverages;
- Taxes, such as Florida State Sales Tax; or
- Costs for lobbying or attempting to influence federal, state or local legislation.

## Application Process

Only complete application packages (including all support documentation) will be considered for evaluation. An *Application Package Checklist* is provided as part of the attached documents and should be completed and submitted as part of your application package.

**Hard Copy Submission:** Please submit **1 original and 4 copies of the application to Office of Economic Development** by mail, or between the hours of 8am and 5pm Monday through Friday (not including Federal holidays) at **1782 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Sarasota, FL. 34234**.

**Digital Submission:** Applications may be printed from the City of Sarasota's website. Complete submissions (application and supporting documentation) **may be emailed as a PDF to the Office of Economic Development at: Rowena.Elliott@SarasotaFL.gov**

## Funding Decisions

City of Sarasota Office of Economic Development staff will score the application packages on a scale of 0 to 100 (described further herein) and rank the applications accordingly. Applicants must score a minimum of 70 points to be considered eligible for funding. Decisions on funding awards in the amount of \$10,000 or less may be made by City Staff; Grant requests between \$10,001 and \$25,000 must be presented to the City Commission for consideration during a regularly scheduled public meeting. The process of receiving, reviewing, ranking, and potentially presenting the request before the City Commission may take up to 60 days.

The Office of Economic Development reserves the right to reject all applications that are not substantially complete or do not meet the Application Criteria. Should the initial scoring process result in a determination of ineligibility, a denial letter will be sent from the Office of Economic Development within 14 business days of the decision date (however, applicants are allowed to appeal Staff's decision to the City Commission). Grant requests more than \$10,001 will be brought in front of the Commission for consideration, however, should Staff determine that the proposed event will not promote the goals and objectives of the Grant Program, a recommendation of "no funding" may be made to the City Commission. Applicants will be notified of a Commission decision within 14 business days of the Commission's decision. Notification will be made initially via email, to be by written notification.

Funding awards will take place on a first-come first-served basis until all available grant funds are depleted. When and if organizations are competing for remaining funding opportunities, grants will be awarded by score/ranking. Although most grant awards will be based on the highest-ranking applications, the City reserves the right to make an award for less than the amount requested by an applicant.

## **Grant Agreement and Insurance Requirement**

All applicants selected to receive grant funds under this program will be required to enter into a written agreement with the Office of Economic Development outlining the grant requirements. For events occurring on City property, grant recipients will need to meet all City of Sarasota Special Event application and permitting requirements as outlined in the attached *Special Event Permit Guide* and codified in Chapter 29.6 of the City of Sarasota's Code of Ordinances. Recipients are required to obtain and maintain commercial general liability insurance, naming the City of Sarasota as additional insured, with a liability limit of no less than one million dollars (\$1,000,000) per occurrence and two million dollars (\$2,000,000) aggregate. Insurance shall be placed with Florida admitted insurers rated B+ or better by A.M. Best's rating service.

## **Funding Disbursements**

Unless agreed in writing and further outlined in the grant agreement, grant funds shall be delivered to the successful applicant(s) after the event has occurred and City staff have reviewed and approved the Post-Event Report, and receipts for all expenses are provided. A maximum of 50% of the grant funds may be provided prior to the event if approved in writing by the City of Sarasota Office of Economic Development. Proper documentation and proof of all payments will be required before the balance of the funds are released. Proof of payment should be submitted in the form of a vendor receipt and a front & back copy of cleared check or credit card receipt. Receipts for cash payments may be accepted in limited circumstances. Written confirmation from vendor that expenditure has been paid in full is necessary if only a copy of the front of the cleared check is provided. A completed Post-Event Report is required to be submitted and approved 60 days after the event.

The City of Sarasota will provide reimbursement within 30 days, provided all required documentation has been properly completed in accordance with the requirements of the City of Sarasota.

## **Post-Event Reporting**

All grant recipients will be required to submit a post-event report documenting the detailed expenditures of City and other funds and providing a self-assessment regarding the success of the event, including a comparison of the original grant application criteria with the final outcomes of the event. This post-event report will be due to the Office of Economic Development within 60 days of the event's conclusion.

## Criteria for Evaluating and Ranking of Applications

The applications will be scored using the general criteria described below. (Please note: ONLY events meeting the Application Criteria (Page 2) will be considered eligible for scoring).

1. **Event Description (Maximum 50 points):** A detailed description of the proposed event will allow the Office of Economic Development to consider the event's potential for short and long-term economic benefits to the City of Sarasota. To be considered for funding, the location of the proposed event should occur within under-activated commercial corridors within the City of Sarasota, provide a unique and exceptional experience for attendees, demonstrate a skillful use of marketing and merchandising, and be well-organized, with a clear vision.
2. **Attendance/Regional Interest (Maximum 30 points):** Reasonable estimates of attendance shall be provided, including methodology for estimation (prior to, and during event). Preference will be given to events that attract attendees from surrounding cities, counties, nearby states, and generate overnight hotel stays.
3. **Financial Collaboration (Maximum 10 points):** Applicants that demonstrate their Organization's financial commitment to the event's success and long-term sustainability, as well as the support of the community (in the form of donations, and/or in-kind services) will be more likely to receive a grant award.
4. **Post-Event Reporting (Maximum 10 points):** Applicants seeking a second or third year of grant funding will be considered with respect to the quality of the post-event report previously submitted to the City of Sarasota.

Please see the Cultural Special Event Grant Application for more instruction and detailed information on how to successfully meet the criteria described above.