



**GILMER  
CHAMBER**  
TOURISM EVENT SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM



**Revised January 2025**

[gilmerchamber.com/sponsorships](http://gilmerchamber.com/sponsorships)

## OVERVIEW

The Gilmer Chamber has created a Tourism Event Sponsorship Program for the purpose of awarding monetary and non-monetary incentives to entities who produce tourism focused events and programs. This program is administered by the Gilmer Chamber, its designated advisory group, and the Tourism Event Sponsorship Committee. The Committee includes representatives from the cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay, and County Commissioners.

Established under O.C.G.A § 48-13-51(b), the Gilmer Chamber oversees the funds collected from transient lodging taxes (TLT) assessed to hotels, motels, and other lodging establishments in the City of Ellijay, the City of East Ellijay, and Gilmer County. A portion of these funds is awarded via the Tourism Event Sponsorship Program (TESP), is intended to support marketing expenses for local organizations that produce events and programs designed to attract overnight visitors to Gilmer County.

By following these guidelines, applicants can ensure that their application for the Tourism Event Sponsorship is complete and meets all necessary requirements. For additional questions, please contact Gilmer Chamber Communications Manager Nohemi Reynoso at [nohemir@gilmerchamber.com](mailto:nohemir@gilmerchamber.com) or 706-635-7400.

## GUIDELINES

### I. Eligibility

- a. Projects or events must take place within Gilmer County. Exceptions can be made if the event takes place at a location anticipated to result in a positive economic impact in Gilmer County.
- b. Projects should promote Gilmer County as a preferred visitor destination and boost overnight stays
- c. Projects must be completed by June 30, 2025

### II. Application

- a. Applications will only be accepted via the official application form available on the Gilmer Chamber website during designated open cycles
- b. Applications will only be reviewed if all required documentation is included
- c. Applications will only be reviewed if received by the specified deadline, late applications will not be considered
- d. Applications do not guarantee funds will be awarded. Applicants will receive a Pre-Approval Notification Form if application is approved.

### III. Peak Visitor Periods

- a. Applications will not be considered for funding if the event occurs during the following:
  - i. Memorial Day Weekend
  - ii. Independence Day Weekend
  - iii. Labor Day Weekend
  - iv. Thanksgiving Weekend
  - v. Christmas Week

#### **IV. Required Documentation**

- a. Applicant details must include the following:
  - i. Organization Name
  - ii. Contact person and contact information
  - iii. Completed W-9
- b. Project/Event details must include:
  - i. Location, date, and time
  - ii. Project purpose and target audience
  - iii. Statement of sustainability
    - 1. How will the success of the event be defined?
    - 2. What is your long-term plan to sustain and grow the event over the next five years?
  - iv. Clear and measurable event goals to attract overnight visitors and the anticipated impact on tourism
  - v. Event public health/safety plan
- c. Marketing plan details must include:
  - i. An outline of the marketing strategies that will be used to promote the event or project
- d. Budget details must include:
  - i. A marketing budget outlining how the sponsorship funds will support marketing and promotional costs in accordance with guidelines (See Eligible Expenses)
  - ii. An event budget outlining additional event/project expenses

#### **V. Eligible Expenses**

- a. Projects/events funded by this sponsorship must:
  - i. Target an audience located more than 50 miles outside of Gilmer County and be designed to attract overnight visitors
  - ii. Use all awarded funds for marketing efforts, including but not limited to:
    - 1. Paid social media or other digital advertising
    - 2. Flyers, billboards, and other out-of-home placements
    - 3. Television, podcast, radio, and streaming ads
  - iii. Recognize Gilmer Chamber's tourism entity, Pick Ellijay, as an event sponsor at a level equal to the amount of funds awarded. For example, if a project is awarded \$2,000 and that amount is equivalent to a gold-level sponsor, the project should list Pick Ellijay as a gold-level sponsor.
  - iv. Feature the Pick Ellijay logo on all promotional materials, including banners, signs, t-shirts, programs, brochures, event websites, social media posts, etc. Online material developed for the event must include a link to the PickEllijay.com website. Before these materials are produced, a draft or design proof must be submitted and approved by the Gilmer Chamber Board of Directors.

#### **VI. Ineligible Expenses**

- a. Examples of ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:
  - i. Administrative and operational costs
  - ii. Private or members-only events
  - iii. Advertising that primarily reaches Gilmer County and its residents
  - iv. Food or alcoholic beverages
  - v. Fees paid to third-party vendors, consultants, or professional services
  - vi. Mileage or gas expenses due to the distribution of materials
  - vii. Items for resale and gift cards
  - viii. Additional non-marketing expenses

## **VII. Cancellation**

- a. If an event is canceled, event organizers are required to make that determination at least 60 days prior to the event's originally scheduled date. The Tourism Event Sponsorship Program will only reimburse for eligible expenses incurred 60 days prior to the original event date.

## **VIII. Funding**

- a. Applicants can request up to \$2,500 per application. Application may include a single event or a series of events.
- b. Higher amounts may be considered for events with potential significant visitor impact. Requests for more than \$10,000 will be reviewed by the Gilmer Chamber Board of Directors.
- c. Funds are intended to supplement the organization's marketing budget for the event referenced in the application. (See Eligible Expenses)
- d. Funds will be disbursed as reimbursement for the approved expenses upon completion of the event. To be eligible for reimbursement, a completed post-event report must be submitted and approved within 60 days of event completion. (See Post Event Reporting)
- e. Any funds awarded by this sponsorship program will be subject to audit.

## **IX. Evaluation**

- a. Applications will be evaluated by the Sponsorship Committee and/or Gilmer Chamber's Board of Directors, including community leaders, representatives from both cities, and the County Commissioners.
- b. Applications will be assessed to confirm eligibility for funding and receipt of all required documentation. Subsequently, each application will be evaluated using the Sponsorship Review Score Sheet 50-point scale according to the criteria below:
  - i. Generation of overnight stays and visitor appeal
  - ii. Description, sustainability, and public health/safety plan
  - iii. Event funding requirements and budget
  - iv. Branding
  - v. Marketing Plan

## **X. Visitor Tracking**

- a. To evaluate the event's impact on the transient lodging industry in Gilmer County, the Tourism Event Sponsorship Program requires post-event reporting that includes tracking the number of overnight visitors. Sponsorship recipients may collect information using one of the following:
  - i. Room block reports from hotels/cabin rental companies
  - ii. Ticket/Registration Data. If your event uses an advanced ticket or registration process, use the supplied Visitor Tracking Instructions to collect the required details.
  - iii. Visitor Tracking Survey (supplied). A third alternative requires 50 completed 5-question surveys from event attendees. Please use the supplied Visitor Tracking Survey to collect the required details.

## **XI. Post-Event Reporting**

- a. Applicants must submit a post-event report within 60 days of the event's completion. Failure to do so may result in disqualification from future support. The post-event report should include the following documents:
  - ii. Marketing budget & invoices for eligible expenses covered by awarded sponsorship
  - iii. Copy of proof of payments such as cleared checks or detailed credit card receipts. Proof of payment must match the invoices submitted.
  - iv. Visitor tracking documentation as listed in the section above (Visitor Tracking)
  - v. Copies of marketing or advertising materials and social media showing approved logo usage.