



DeSoto County

Tourism Development Council

Meeting Agenda

Tuesday, August 11, 2026

1:30 PM

CALL TO ORDER

MINUTES APPROVAL

Minutes for June 9, 2026

[26-1926](#)

Attachments: [TDC June 9, 2026 meeting minutes](#)

REGULAR BUSINESS

Bed Tax Revenue Update

[26-1927](#)

Attachments: [TD Revenues-Master](#)

SEO & Organic Social Media Marketing Update

[26-1928](#)

Twin Creeks Adventure Ranch Presentation

[26-1929](#)

Visit Florida 2027 Vacation Guide Ad Renewal

[26-1932](#)

Attachments: [FL_MEDIA KIT_VACATION GUIDE](#)

Discussion of Marketing Matching Grant Revisions

[26-1930](#)

Attachments: [Revised 2025 TDC Marketing Matching Grant Resolution--approved](#)

Discussion to Change Future TDC Meeting Schedule

[26-1931](#)

PUBLIC COMMENTS

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

STAFF COMMENTS

ADJOURN

NOTE: For quasi-judicial matters, any party desiring a verbatim record of the proceeding of this hearing for the purpose of an appeal is advised to make private arrangements for the production of a record and anyone wishing to present documents or other written evidence to the Board must provide eight (8) copies of the written material. If special accommodations are required in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals should contact the County Administrator's Office by calling 863-993-4800 at least forty-eight hours prior to the hearing.



DeSoto County

8/11/2026

-
-
- ☐ Consent Agenda ☐ Quasi-Judicial Public Hearing
☒ Regular Business 1:30 pm
☐ Public Hearing Minutes

DEPARTMENT: Tourism Development
SUBMITTED BY: Sondra Guffey
PRESENTED BY: Trent Anthney

TITLE & DESCRIPTION:

Minutes for the June 9, 2026, TDC meeting

REQUESTED MOTION:

Approval

SUMMARY:

TDC members will review the minutes from June 9, 2026, meeting

BACKGROUND:

On June 9, 2026, the Tourism Development Department held its regular meeting. These are the minutes from that meeting.

FUNDS:

Budget Amount: Click or tap here to enter text.

Actual Agenda Item: Click or tap here to enter text.

Cost: Click or tap here to enter text.

Account Number: Click or tap here to enter text.

Explanation: Click or tap here to enter text.



DeSoto County

Tourism Development Council

Meeting Minutes - Draft

Tuesday, June 9, 2026

1:30 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Trent Anthney called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

Present: Trent Anthney, Judy Wertz-Strickland, Zac Varner and Megan Cutler

Absent: Pam Ames, Summer Lempenau, Sanjay Patel and Jerod Gross

MINUTES APPROVAL

Minutes for the April 21, 2026 TDC meeting

Tourism Development Council members reviewed the minutes from the April 21, 2026, meeting. Ms. Wertz-Strickland made a motion to approve. Vice Chari Varner seconded the motion. All approved.

REGULAR BUSINESS

Bed Tax Revenue Update

Ms. Guffey presented the March 2026 bed tax revenue. The March bed tax revenue showed a 2% increase compared to March of the previous year; however, significant declines of 21%, 32%, and 57% were seen earlier in the year.

Council members discussed possible reasons as to why numbers have been down compared to the previous year.

Members cited high fuel prices, general cost increases, and reduced travel frequency. Seasonal patterns were also noted with strong bookings around New Year's and Presidents' Day, but a "slower than expected" spring. Members noted that low river levels during the spring had been an effect on activities and bookings. Mr. Varner stated that his sales were down approximately 10% during that time.

Mr. Anthney stated that a significant portion of his business comes from Florida's east coast (Miami/Fort Lauderdale), with tourists seeking rural experiences and river activities like fossil hunting.

TDC members discussed a potential tourism marketing slogan: "Far enough away to be different and close enough to be doable."

Mr. Anthney also noted that tourists are coming to DeSoto County and other small, rural towns to get away from the city.

Based on Council's recommendation, staff agreed to explore cross promoting with Davie Rodeo and other rodeos.

Discussion of Marketing Matching Grant Revisions

The Council discussed amending the tourism marketing grant resolution to allow

funds to be used for market research that would benefit the entire county, not just individual businesses.

Ms. Guffey stated that there is approximately \$15,000 to \$20,000 in the Marketing Matching Grant budget that is currently unspent, adding that the amount does not carry over to the next fiscal year.

For the Marketing Matching Grant, a proposed language addition was discussed: "Market research that benefits and can be used by the entire county may also, at the TDC's discretion, be approved."

Ms. Cutler made a motion to approve adding the following language to the Marketing Matching Grant: "Market research that benefits and can be used by the entire county may also, at the TDC's discretion, be approved." Ms. Wertz-Strickland seconded. On the item, discussion continued.

Mr. Varner noted that the Council is on language at this point in the meeting, asking members if they would like to amend the motion to say, "as long as the language is approved by everybody?"

Mr. Varner continued stating that the motion had been amended to state that, "As long as the language is approved, we're going to push that marketing grant money can be used for the research."

Mr. Varner asked staff to present the final language at a future meeting. Depending on the language, Council members can then approve the revisions.

Ms. Wertz-Strickland made a motion to approve the amendment to the original motion. Ms. Cutler seconded. All approved.

Ms. Guffey noted that a draft of the amended language will be circulated for legal review before a final vote by the TDC.

As part of this agenda item, there was a discussion to increase the maximum grant award from \$3,000 to \$5,000.

A separate motion was made by Mr. Varner, and seconded by Ms. Wertz-Strickland, to increase the maximum grant award amount from \$3,000 to \$5,000. All approved.

Discussion of Marketing Opportunities

To the Council, Ms. Guffey presented tourism marketing opportunities at Punta Gorda Airport (PGD). The goal is to capture airport traffic using destination dining guides with QR codes for tracking.

Mr. Anthney made a motion for staff to spend up to \$200 per month on literature distribution at all three brochure kiosk locations at PGD for 12 months. Ms. Cutler seconded. All approved.

Beautification Project update

Due to time restraints, this item was tabled for a future meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

n/a

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Ms. Wertz-Strickland noted that the Arcadia Bed and Breakfast is reportedly for sale, with limited breakfast service due to sprinkler system requirements.

STAFF COMMENTS

Ms. Guffey noted that Sleep Inn & Suites in Port Charlotte reached out to staff to discuss a partnership for overflow lodging during major events. Staff will pursue the conversation.

Mr. Sutphin noted that historic house John Lee Haus Inn, owned by Pia and Thomas Crone, is now operating as a wedding venue within the city limits. The owners are still renovating the second story where the inn portion of the business will take place.

Ms. Guffey stated that the TDC currently has eight of its required nine members. The state statute requires two elected officials from the City of Arcadia. Staff has contacted the city to request an appointee.

ADJOURN

Mr. Varner made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:55 p.m. Ms. Cutler seconded. All approved.

NOTE: For quasi-judicial matters, any party desiring a verbatim record of the proceeding of this hearing for the purpose of an appeal is advised to make private arrangements for the production of a

record and anyone wishing to present documents or other written evidence to the Board must provide

eight (8) copies of the written material. If special accommodations are required in accordance with

the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals should contact the County Administrator's Office by

calling 863-993-4800 at least forty-eight hours prior to the hearing.



DeSoto County

8/11/2026

-
- ☐ Consent Agenda ☐ Quasi-Judicial Public Hearing
☒ Regular Business 1:30 pm
☐ Public Hearing Other

DEPARTMENT: Tourism Development
SUBMITTED BY: Sondra Guffey
PRESENTED BY: Sondra Guffey

TITLE & DESCRIPTION:
Bed Tax Revenue Update

REQUESTED MOTION:
n/a

SUMMARY:
Tourist Development revenues collected in May 2026, that were received in July, were listed as \$9,793.01 versus one year ago of \$9,153.14.

BACKGROUND:
Tourist Bed Tax revenues for May 2026 in DeSoto County increased compared to May 2025. Received in July, revenues collected for May 2026 were up 7%, listing as \$9,793.01 versus one year ago at \$9,153.14.

FUNDS:
Budget Amount: Click or tap here to enter text.
Actual Agenda Item: Click or tap here to enter text.
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Explanation: Click or tap here to enter text.

Tourist Development	FY 2025/26	FY 2024/25	Variance	Percent Change
October	11,156.76	14,067.23	-2,910	-21%
November	9,470.90	13,936.87	-4,466	-32%
December	7,919.41	18,628.09	-10,709	-57%
January	12,746.56	32,939.72	-20,193	-61%
February	16,697.95	24,552.69	-7,855	-32%
March	16,595.48	16,309.63	286	2%
April	12,819.47	12,759.86	60	0%
May	9793.01	9153.14	640	7%
June		8,688.14		
July		9,054.79		
August		9295.38		
September		9355.48		
Total Revenues		178,741.02		
FY 24/25		\$178,741.02		
FY 22/23		\$164,531.85		
FY 21/22		\$121,020.86		
FY 20/21		\$84,008.75		
FY 19/20		\$69,444.29		
FY 18/19		\$73,370.06		



DeSoto County

8/11/2026

-
- ☐ Consent Agenda ☐ Quasi-Judicial Public Hearing
☒ Regular Business 1:30 pm
☐ Public Hearing Other

DEPARTMENT: Tourism Development
SUBMITTED BY: Sondra Guffey
PRESENTED BY: Sondra Guffey

TITLE & DESCRIPTION:
SEO & Organic Social Media Marketing Update

REQUESTED MOTION:
n/a

SUMMARY:
Staff will provide an update on its SEO & Organic Social Media Marketing company search.

BACKGROUND:
With direction from TDC members, staff submitted Request For Quotes to multiple SEO and Social Media Marketing companies. After considering the companies that responded, staff has selected NetWeave Social Networking. This is an update on that effort.

FUNDS:
Budget Amount: Click or tap here to enter text.
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DeSoto County

8/11/2026

-
- ☐ Consent Agenda ☐ Quasi-Judicial Public Hearing
☒ Regular Business 1:30 pm
☐ Public Hearing Presentation

DEPARTMENT: Tourism Development
SUBMITTED BY: Sondra Guffey
PRESENTED BY: Tara Bashell and John Arnold

TITLE & DESCRIPTION:

Twin Creeks Adventure Ranch Presentation

REQUESTED MOTION:

n/a

SUMMARY:

Owners Tara Bashell and John Arnold will present details about their new destination Twin Creeks Adventure Ranch.

BACKGROUND:

Owners Tara Bashell and John Arnold are opening Twin Creeks Adventure Ranch at 3720 SW Hwy 17, Arcadia, FL 34266. The pair asked to present information and answer questions about the new tourist attraction.

FUNDS:

Budget Amount: Click or tap here to enter text.

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Cost: Click or tap here to enter text.

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Explanation: Click or tap here to enter text.



DeSoto County

8/11/2026

Item #:

- ☐ Consent Agenda ☐ Quasi-Judicial Public Hearing
☒ Regular Business 1:30 pm
☐ Public Hearing Other

DEPARTMENT: Tourism Development
SUBMITTED BY: Sondra Guffey
PRESENTED BY: Sondra Guffey

TITLE & DESCRIPTION:

Visit Florida 2027 Vacation Guide Ad Renewal

REQUESTED MOTION:

Approval of purchasing two Featured Photo Listings for \$1,496.25 each.

SUMMARY:

Consider purchasing two Featured Photo Listings for \$1,496.25 each in the Visit Florida 2027 Vacation Guide.

BACKGROUND:

This is the annual guide published by Visit Florida. We participated in 2026. The price is the same as last year.

FUNDS:

Budget Amount: \$2,992.50

Actual Agenda Item: \$2,992.50

Cost: \$2,992.50

Account Number: 150-20105524700000

Explanation: Click or tap here to enter text.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
VISIT FLORIDA®

2027 OFFICIAL FLORIDA VACATION GUIDE

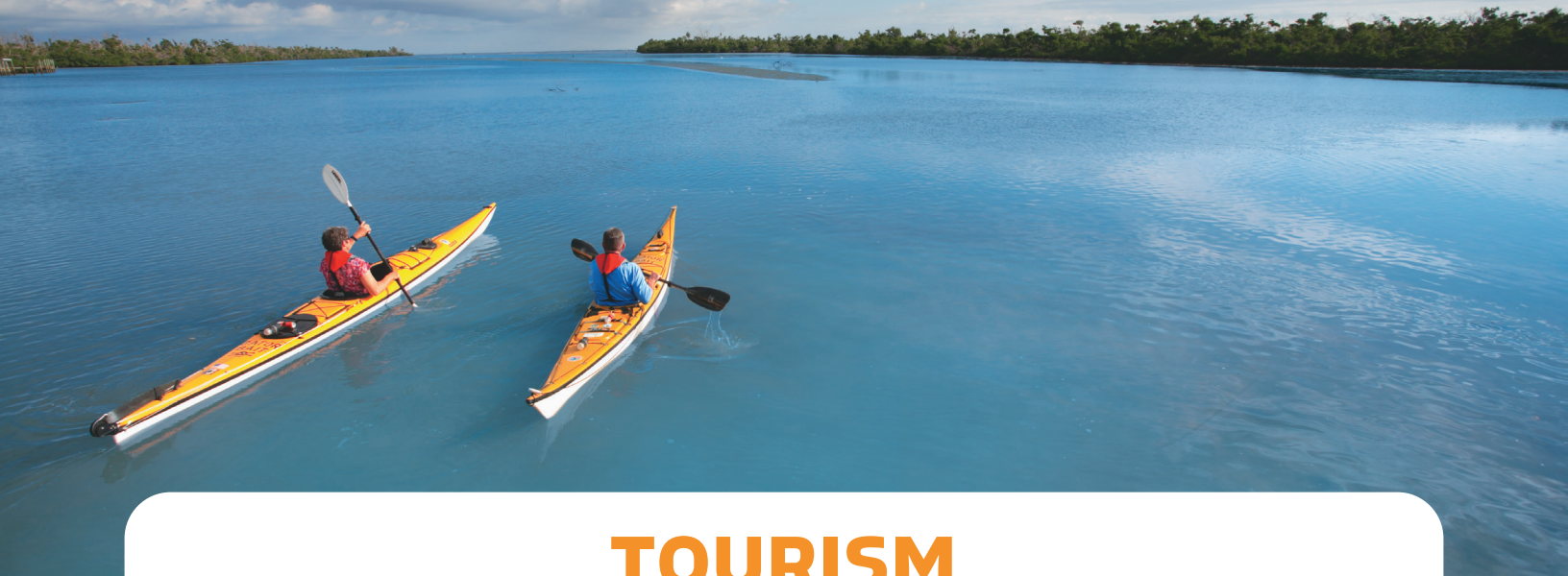
MEDIA KIT



AD SALES CLOSE
SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

PUBLICATION DATE
LATE DECEMBER 2026

*MATERIALS DUE DATE BASED ON
SALES AGREEMENT DATE



TOURISM

FLORIDA'S #1 INDUSTRY

VISIT FLORIDA executes a paid, earned and owned media strategy in key markets across the country and the world. Focusing on our incredible Florida brand, we work to drive a highly qualified and active travel-planning audience to come visit, engage with our partners and create a positive statewide economic impact.

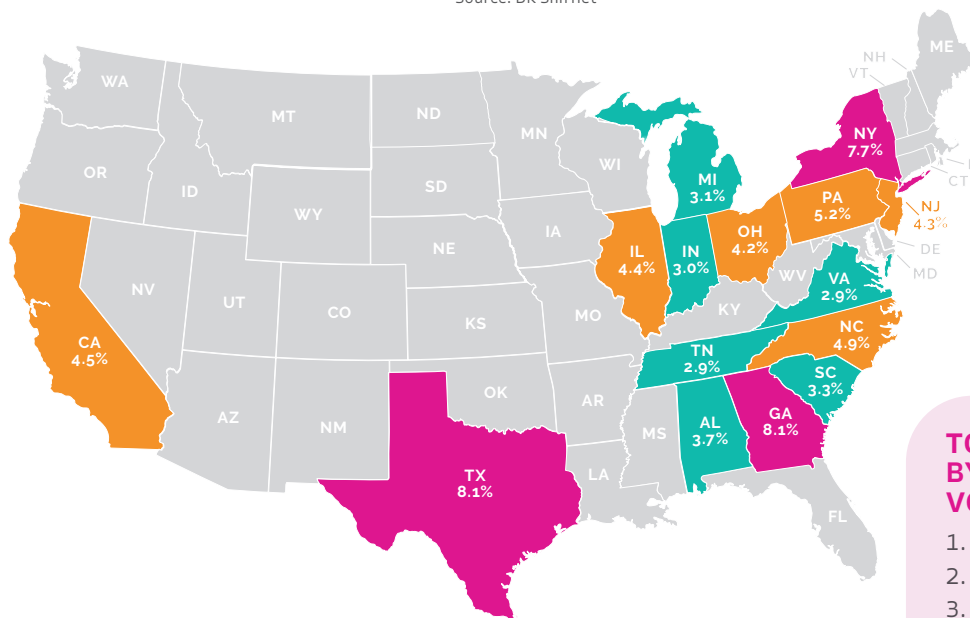
TOP STATES

FLORIDA'S TOP 15 ORIGIN STATES

This chart shows the percentage of visitors originating in each state.



Source: DK Shiftlet





300K
PRINT
DISTRIBUTION

500K
DIGITAL EGUIDE
PAGE VIEWS

WHY IS AN AD IN THE OFFICIAL FLORIDA VACATION GUIDE IMPORTANT?

THE GUIDE provides **VISIT FLORIDA** tourism partners with unmatched access to a highly qualified audience that uses the Guide to plan where to stay, what to do and where to eat before they arrive and while they're here.

VISITORS LOVE THE GUIDE

- The Guide allows readers to discover something new and pushes them online to learn more
- Unique trip-planning content stimulates inspiration, emotion and desire
- Beautiful images and compelling articles deliver deeper reader engagement
- Immersive content creates higher comprehension and recall
- Marketing Sherpa reports that 82% of internet users trust print ads when making a purchasing decision, more than any other medium

PRINT DISTRIBUTION

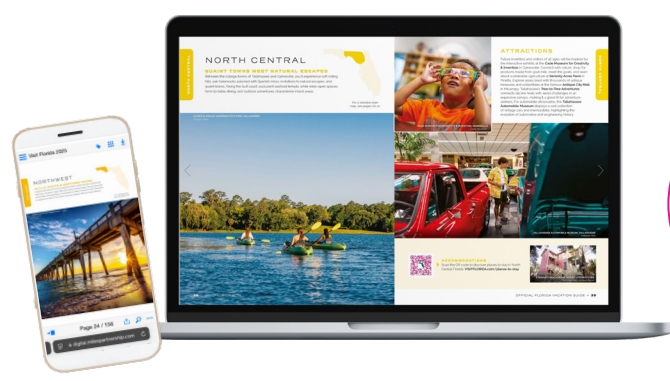
BY DIRECT REQUEST The Guide is sent to travelers to fulfill requests by website, email and phone

ACROSS THE STATE It's available at all Florida Welcome Centers, Turnpike Service Plazas, VISIT FLORIDA Partners, Chambers and local Visitor Centers

NATIONWIDE The Guide is also available at select AAA offices around the country and consumer travel shows

DIGITAL GUIDE

- Extend your reach exponentially with the eGuide
- eGuide is prominently promoted on VISITFLORIDA.com
- Your ad links directly to your website



60%
of those planning travel used **VISIT FLORIDA's** official resources to plan their trips.

DIGITAL AND SOCIAL FOLLOWERS*

VISIT FLORIDA™
28.5M
Website Sessions
(23.5M Users; 34.5M Pageviews)


1.4M
GLOBALLY
Facebook


205.6K
X (previously
Twitter)


529K
Instagram(domestic)
18.8k (spanish)
49.3k (Brasil)


27.6K
Pinterest


59.2K
YouTube

*as of April 2025

PRINT AD OPPORTUNITIES

Attract a highly qualified audience and build brand awareness with photo-rich advertising across multiple platforms.

ADVERTORIALS

- Advertorials don't look like ads. Their design, which aligns with the look of the guide's editorial content, gives their content more credibility and legitimacy.
- A spread or page that incorporates both a display ad and an advertorial registers with readers as two mentions, increasing brand awareness.
- Readers respond to advertorials and display ads in different ways. By building a spread or page that incorporates both, you'll reach readers who are drawn to display ads as well as those who prefer objective editorial content.

1/2 Display ad, 1/2 Advertorial
Full Page Combo Ad



The advertorial spread incorporates a display ad on the left and an advertorial on the right, which can also be used as a full-page advertorial standalone.



MORE PRINT AD OPPORTUNITIES

AD PARTNERS ENJOY

- Reader Response leads weekly
- A highlighted listing in the listing section
- 5% VISIT FLORIDA Partner discount (10% discount for multi-ad buys)



2025 READER RESPONSE LEADS NUMBERS

131,863

QUICK CHECK
(GENERAL)

42,190

TARGETED
(SPECIFIC)

174,053

TOTAL READER
RESPONSE LEADS

IN THE PRINT GUIDE, eGUIDE & ONLINE

Partners receive a username and password to log into the data engine, where they can view, manage and contact their leads. Partners also receive weekly emails with their leads.

DISPLAY ADS

Consumer-friendly messaging and visuals with impactful calls-to-action,
Flexible ad sizes to accommodate creative assets and budgets.



$\frac{1}{6}$
Page Ad
 $2\frac{1}{16}''$
 $\times 4\frac{7}{16}''$

$\frac{1}{3}$
Page Ad
 $4\frac{5}{16}'' \times 4\frac{7}{16}''$

$\frac{1}{2}$ Page Ad
 $6\frac{9}{16}'' \times 4\frac{7}{16}''$

SPECIAL AD SECTIONS

LIMITED CO-OP OPPORTUNITIES

THINGS TO DO & PLACES TO STAY (\$2,545)

- Geo-pin shows your location on state map
- Reader Response number drives new customer leads
- Highlighted Listing in Listings Section
- eGuide ad links to your website



1 PENSACOLA LIGHTHOUSE & MARITIME MUSEUM

Visitors can climb 177 steps to the top of the lighthouse for one of the most beautiful views on the Gulf Coast, and tour a number of educational exhibits. Visit our website for admission pricing, hours of operation, and other visitation guidelines.

2081 Radford Boulevard, Pensacola, FL 32508, 850-393-1561

PensacolaLighthouse.org

Things To Do ad
Formatted 1/6 page



FUN THINGS TO DO

Your adventures are waiting for you.



5 SPALLILLIANA HOTEL EFFIE

A place to pause, breathe deeply, and let go. With hot, cold, and comfy treatments, located only at Spa Effie, and the area's only on-call relaxation room, our spa is as unique as you are. Leave feeling grounded and refreshed.

1 Grand Sandestin Blvd, Miramar Beach, FL 32550, 844-688-1889

HotelEffie.com/spa-effie



6 TALLAHASSEE MUSEUM

Walk amongst Florida's wildlife, history and natural beauty at the Tallahassee Museum. From wildlife adventures and endangered red wolves to snakes and owls, there's something for the entire family to enjoy. Plan your visit at TallahasseeMuseum.org

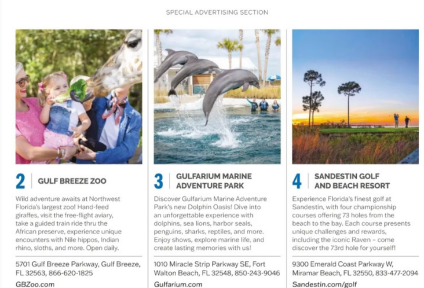


7 ST. AUGUSTINE ART ASSOCIATION

One of the oldest art organizations in the country, the St. Augustine Art Association showcases work by over 300 local and regional artists. With new, themed exhibitions monthly, the gallery is open free to the public. Tue-Sun, 12-5pm.

22 Marine Street, St. Augustine, FL 32084 904-824-2310

STAA.org



2 GULF BREEZE ZOO

Wild adventure awaits at Northwest Florida's largest zoo! Hand-feeding giraffes, and the free flight aviary, tour a number of educational exhibits. Visit our website for admission pricing, hours of operation, and other visitation guidelines.

5301 Gulf Breeze Parkway, Gulf Breeze, FL 32563, 850-462-1825

GBZoo.com



3 GULFARIUM MARINE ADVENTURE PARK

Discover Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park's new Dolphin Diner! Dive into an unforgettable experience with dolphins, sea lions, harbor seals, penguins, sharks, rays, and more. Enjoy shows, explore marine life, and create lasting memories with our 3D photo booth.

1010 Miracle Strip Parkway SE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548, 850-243-9046

Gulfarium.com



4 SANDESTIN GOLF AND BEACH RESORT

Experience Florida's finest golf at Sandestin, with four championship courses offering 27 holes from the beach to the bay. Each course presents unique challenges and rewards, including the iconic Raven - come discover the 3rd hole for yourself!

9300 Emerald Coast Parkway W, Miramar Beach, FL 32550, 833-477-2094

Sandestin.com/golf



8 LIGHTNER MUSEUM

A remarkable collection. An iconic building. Explore and explore historic art, architecture, and design in one of St. Augustine's grandest buildings. Lightner Museum is housed in the former Accor Hotel, a grand Gilded Age hotel built by Henry Flagler in 1888.

75 King St N, St. Augustine, FL 32084 904-824-2874

LightnerMuseum.org



9 TAMPA BAY RESCUES INC.

Meet bears, snakes, furry friends, and other exotic animals while discussing the field of wildlife conservation. Join the fun, experience nature up close, and help create a brighter future for our captivating creatures!

4703 Park St N, St. Petersburg, FL 33706 727-329-8783

TampaBayRescues.com



10 ZUBRICK MAGIC THEATRE

The Zubrick Magic Theatre gives audiences an intimate and unforgettable evening of magical entertainment. Chris and Ryan Zubrick combine up-close-of-hand, family-friendly comedy, and grand-scale illusions. Get your tickets today before they all...disappear!

1211 1st Ave N, Suite 101, St. Petersburg, FL 33705, 866-982-7425

ZubrickMagic.com

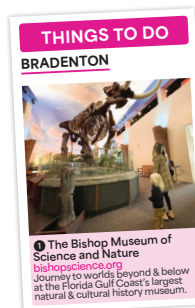
OFFICIAL FLORIDA VACATION GUIDE • 131

FEATURED PHOTO LISTINGS

- Make your business stand out and get noticed in this highly utilized planning section
- Low-cost investment to enhance your listing with a photo and expanded copy

Non-Partner Rate: \$1,575

Partner Rate: \$1,496.25



Featured Photo Listing



RATES

VISIT FLORIDA AD SIZES	NON-PARTNER RATES	PARTNER RATES (SAVE 5%)
Spread	\$ 31,210.00	\$ 29,649.50
Full	\$ 17,825.00	\$ 16,933.75
Half	\$ 11,140.00	\$ 10,583.00
Third	\$ 7,425.00	\$ 7,053.75
Sixth	\$ 3,815.00	\$ 3,624.25
Things to Do co-op*	\$ 2,545.00	\$ 2,545.00
Places to Stay co-op*	\$ 2,545.00	\$ 2,545.00
Featured photo listing	\$ 1,575.00	\$ 1,496.25

PREMIUM POSITIONS

Back Cover	\$ 26,515.00	\$ 25,189.25
Inside Covers, Page 1, Opposite TOC	\$ 21,215.00	\$ 20,154.25

ADVERTORIAL

Spread (Full Page Display Ad + Full Page Advertorial)	\$ 31,745.00	\$ 30,157.75
Full Page (Advertorial only, no display ad)	\$ 18,620.00	\$ 17,689.00
Full Page (1/2 Page Display Ad + 1/2 Page Advertorial)	\$ 18,000.00	\$ 17,100.00

*Not eligible for discounting

WANT EVEN MORE SAVINGS?

Purchase multiple ads and get a **10% discount** off non-Partner rates (excluding co-op ads).



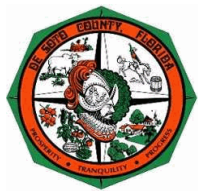
AD SALES CLOSE
SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 2026 PROGRAM CONTACT IRISH CARROLL



IRISH CARROLL

Office: 941-342-2390
Cell: 941-320-6447
Irish.Carroll@MilesPartnership.com
Regional Director - Global Marketing



DeSoto County

8/11/2026

-
- ☐ Consent Agenda ☐ Quasi-Judicial Public Hearing
☒ Regular Business 1:30 pm
☐ Public Hearing Other

DEPARTMENT: Tourism Development
SUBMITTED BY: Sondra Guffey
PRESENTED BY: Sondra Guffey

TITLE & DESCRIPTION:

Discussion of Marketing Matching Grant Revisions

REQUESTED MOTION:

Further discussion of revising the Marketing Matching Grant to include additional applicable submission options.

SUMMARY:

Staff has been in the process of revising the Marketing Matching Grant. At the June 9, 2026, TDC meeting, council members approved increasing the grant amount from \$3,000 to \$5,000. This discussion will involve additional submission options to the grant, such as creation of public art.

BACKGROUND:

Click or tap here to enter text.

FUNDS:

Budget Amount: Click or tap here to enter text.

Actual Agenda Item: Click or tap here to enter text.

Cost: Click or tap here to enter text.

Account Number: Click or tap here to enter text.

Explanation: Click or tap here to enter text.

**DESOTO COUNTY, FLORIDA
RESOLUTION NO. 2025-**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF DESOTO COUNTY, FLORIDA, MODIFYING THE
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT MARKETING GRANT
PROGRAM; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

WHEREAS, the DeSoto County (“County”) Board of County Commissioners (“Board”) adopted Ordinance No. 2010-02 establishing the DeSoto County Tourist Development Council; and

WHEREAS, the Board adopted Ordinance No. 2010-15 implementing a 2% Tourist Development Tax and adopting a three-year Tourism Plan; and

WHEREAS, the voters of the County passed the Tourist Development Tax in the 2010 General election; and

WHEREAS, the Tourism Plan specifically allows for use of funds for the purpose of providing financial assistance to promote tourism events and attractions in the County; and

WHEREAS, in February 2013, the Board adopted Resolution 2013-10 creating the DeSoto County Tourism Development Marketing Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Board adopted Resolutions 2016-26 and 2022-25 to revise the Tourism Development Marketing Grant Program; and

WHEREAS, the DeSoto County Tourist Development Council has reviewed the performance of the program and recommends several changes to increase access to and participation in the program; and

WHEREAS, the Board finds adoption of this Resolution is in the best interest of the residents of Desoto County, Florida

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF DESOTO COUNTY, FLORIDA, AS
FOLLOWS:**

Section 1 – That the foregoing “WHEREAS” clauses are ratified and confirmed as being true and correct and are hereby incorporated by reference as part of this Resolution.

Section 2 - That the DeSoto County Tourism Development Marketing Grant Program is hereby modified and reformed as reflected in Attachment I.

Section 3 - That this Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 25th day of February 2025.

ATTEST:

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Mandy Hines
County Administrator

J.C. Deriso
Chairman

Approved as to form and legal sufficiency:

Valerie Vicente
County Attorney

ATTACHMENT I

PURPOSE:

This document sets forth the guidelines and eligibility criteria for grant awards from Tourist Development Tax funds. Applications will be accepted annually from eligible organizations (also described herein as “applicants”) that will sponsor and promote tourism activities within DeSoto County, bring substantial numbers of tourists/visitors to the County and promote overnight bed stays within the County. The overall purpose of the program is to promote DeSoto County as a Tourist destination by assisting tourism events with effective marketing campaigns.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

1. The Organization must be an organization qualified to do business in Florida.
2. All events, performances, or programs must be open to the public.
3. Events may be a series of recurring similar events (such as a monthly market, a concert series, etc.)
4. Events cannot be unreasonably restrictive through admittance fees, public access or crowd capacity, which limits participation by visitors.
5. Events, performances or programs must take place in DeSoto County. If these events, performances, or programs are to be used for fund raising purposes, profits must go exclusively to programs that benefit DeSoto County residents and/or charities.
6. Tourism Development Marketing Grant funds require a 25% match from the Organization/grantee for marketing-related expenses. The County provides 75%

ELIGIBLE USES OF FUNDS:

Tourist development funds may be used for promotional or advertising expenses in conjunction with an event, activity or material to increase awareness of DeSoto County outside this area. The purpose is to increase the attendance at the event, with the goal of promoting overnight stays that generate bed taxes. There should be an emphasis on reaching people outside DeSoto County. This includes, but not limited to, internet, social media, print, television, radio and billboard advertising. This could also include printing or other promotional activity that could encourage visitors to return.

MAXIMUM AWARD:

Awards shall not exceed a maximum of \$3,000.00 per award. The applicant will be required to share in cost at a ratio of 25% of the award. Applicants shall indicate the amount of funding requested in their application based on ability and commitment to provide a 25% match, up to the maximum award. Applicants may request, or be offered an award of less than the maximum award.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

Applications will be solicited on an annual basis through advertisement in a newspaper of general circulation at an appropriate time as determined by tourism development staff. The advertisement shall include, at a minimum, the following:

1. Amount of funding made available
2. Purpose of availability of funds
3. Location where applications may be obtained
4. Address to which applications must be submitted
5. Office Contact phone number

APPLICATION SCORING PROCESS:

All applications received by the deadline outlined in the public advertising shall be date/time stamped upon receipt and shall be provided to the Tourist Development Office. The Tourist Development Office will establish a Selection Committee from members of the Tourist Development Council and/or County Staff. The Selection Committee members shall be provided the applications and scoring sheets for independent review. The selection committee may request oral presentations from applicants in the application scoring process. The Selection Committee shall meet and make formal funding recommendations to be submitted to the Board of County Commissioners for consideration. Upon award, recipients (or “grantees”) will be notified by staff and presented with an award document (i.e., a grant agreement) for acceptance and signature and be available for media promotions or press releases as appropriate. Applications will be scored based on the following criteria:

Evaluation Factors	Possible Points	Score
Commitment to the expansion of tourism in DeSoto County	25	
Soundness of Project	20	
Quality and Uniqueness of Project	20	
Positive Economic Impact to DeSoto County	15	
Stability of Management and capacity	10	
Use of DeSoto County Vendors & Business Owners	10	
Total	100	

ADVERTISING GUIDELINES¹:

Promotional and advertising materials should be reviewed by DeSoto County Tourism staff prior to publishing and advertisement, to assure eligibility.

1. Grantee Website and/or Social Media Sites and Digital Advertisements - Your organization's website (if you have one), social media,) must provide a link to the DeSoto County TDC website at: www.VisitDeSoto.Com.
2. Print/Digital - All grantees must show on printed materials (including advertising, flyers & posters): The Visit DeSoto logo and the Tourism Website: www.VisitDeSoto.com.
Audio - All audio advertising must include verbal "For more information on DeSoto County, FL, go to www.VisitDeSoto.com"
3. Video - All video advertising must display video credit with the Visit DeSoto logo plus, "For more information on DeSoto County, FL, go to www.VisitDeSoto.com."

*

¹ Promotional advertising materials that do not meet the criteria set forth herein shall not be eligible for reimbursement.

EVENT MONITORING:

Any member of the Tourist Development council, designated staff of the Board of County Commissioners or assigned volunteers may attend and/or monitor any and all events to ensure compliance with grant and reporting requirements. All grant recipients are required to maintain complete and accurate accounting and project records for the event. All funds granted shall be subject to audit by the Board of County Commissioners Administrative Services Department. All documentation submitted to the County shall become public record and governed as such by Chapter 119, Florida statutes.

All organizations must accomplish what is presented and set forth in the grant agreement. If for any reason the requirements of the grant agreement have not been met, the County has the right to withhold any payment and/or terminate the grant agreement.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

1. Final Status Report: Within ninety (90) days of the completion of the activity/activities or event/series of events that promote tourism within DeSoto County, the grantee must summarize its efforts by providing the following information:
 - A brief narration of the event(s) or material (such as a brochure or website). Include any media coverage received.
 - An evaluation of the estimated economic impact the event(s)/material had on DeSoto County.
 - Includes local attractions that were visited as part of the event, and local restaurants or businesses utilized as part of the event or material
 - Photographs, if any, of the event. Can provide a link to photos on Social Media and or web.
 - Final estimated number of event participants, if applicable
 - Room Night Certification Form - the organization must make every effort to obtain the number of overnight stays from local hotels within the County that housed those attending the event. This means that the grantee should make available a list of County hotels and RV/campgrounds (and other transient rental facilities) and encourage overnight stays. After the event, the grantee may be required to request proof of overnight stays.
 - Event or location surveys - The organization should allow the Tourist Development Office to make surveys of attendees. The organization is encouraged to make all attempts to collect basic demographic data about the attendees and make that available to the Tourist Development office.

2. A financial statement listing all the major revenues received and expenses paid in the course of the event or creation of material.

NOTE: IF THE EVENT RESULTS IN NO OVERNIGHT STAYS, OR FEW OVERNIGHT STAYS, THE GRANTEE MUST DOCUMENT ITS EFFORTS TO PROMOTE OVERNIGHT STAYS AND GENERAL TOURISM WITHIN DESOTO COUNTY.

REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS:

A Request for Funds Form must be completed on a reimbursement basis only and made after proof of paid invoices are presented and submitted to the Economic and Tourist Development Department for interim draws and for final payment. Reimbursement of funds must stay within the confines of the Project Expenses outlined in your award document. Payment is on a reimbursement basis and proof of paid invoices, tear sheets of ads, copies of programs, schedule of the airing of audio and video advertisements), must be provided prior to payment of grant funds to the organization. Grantee is required to submit verification in writing that all subcontractors and vendors have been paid for work and materials previously performed or received prior to receipt of any further payments.

Organization representative must complete final report and submit reimbursement requests to the Economic Development and Tourism office within ninety (90) days of the close of the event or series of events or release of material. Requests received after that may not be reimbursed. This is your responsibility, and no reminder notices will be sent from the Economic and Tourist Development Office or the Tourist Development Council.

No advanced payment of expenses by the County is authorized.

*Reimbursement process subject to change to maintain compliance with County policy and/or auditor advice or requirements.

If Tourist Development Tax funds become inadequate to fund all or part of a Tourist Development grant, the County reserves the right to reduce funding to a grantee accordingly.

There are no guarantees that all applicants will be awarded funding even though a project may qualify. Limited funds may not allow all projects to receive assistance. All decisions regarding the award of grant funds are at the sole discretion of the Board of County Commissioners following recommendations of the Tourist Development Council.



DeSoto County

8/11/2026

Item #:

- ☐ Consent Agenda ☐ Quasi-Judicial Public Hearing
☒ Regular Business 1:30 pm
☐ Public Hearing Other

DEPARTMENT: Tourism Development
SUBMITTED BY: Sondra Guffey
PRESENTED BY: Sondra Guffey

TITLE & DESCRIPTION:

Discussion of Changing Future TDC Meeting Schedule

REQUESTED MOTION:

n/a

SUMMARY:

Discussion on changing the day and time of future Tourism Development Council meetings.

BACKGROUND:

In 2026, multiple TDC meetings had to be moved to a different day and/or location due to conflicting county meetings or workshops that were previously not scheduled. This is a discussion about changing the time and day of the week for 2027 TDC meetings.

FUNDS:

Budget Amount: Click or tap here to enter text.

Actual Agenda Item: Click or tap here to enter text.

Cost: Click or tap here to enter text.

Account Number: Click or tap here to enter text.

Explanation: Click or tap here to enter text.