

Major Events Fund

Overview and Purpose

The Cleveland Major Events Fund is a proposed grant program that aims to support the acquisition and execution of national-scale sporting, fine arts, historic, natural/recreational, culinary, lifestyle, or creative industry events in Cleveland.

This fund will allow the City to regularly and strategically invest in high-profile events that bring economic activity and positive national attention to Cleveland. This model of creating a fund to support large-scale events is utilized at the state level in Ohio and in Counties/municipalities across the US (Ventura, CA; Tallahassee, FL, Sarasota, FL).

Cleveland has a pipeline of high-profile events coming to the city in the next few years, including Forbes 30 Under 30 Summit (October 2023), the Women's Final Four Tournament (April 2024), the 2024 Solar Eclipse (April 2024), the 2024 Pan-American Masters Game (July 2024), and the National Association of Black Journalists Convention (August 2025).

Eligibility

To be eligible to submit a grant proposal to the Cleveland Major Events Fund, an event must meet the following criteria:

- The main event and most satellite events must be located within the City of Cleveland
- 80% or more of official lodging booked on behalf of the event must be located in the City of Cleveland, as capacity allows
- Events must be inclusive (no limits on who can purchase tickets or attend)
- The entity organizing the event must provide an amount equal to or larger than the amount of grant funding being sought from the Major Events Fund
- The event must expect at least 1,000 out-of-town attendees (attendees traveling from 100 miles or more)
- The Fund will not support the same event more than once in a five-year period

Fund Management and City Contribution

The appropriation for this grant program should be **\$2 million** with unused funds rolling over to future fiscal years. The program will also seek funding from the State of Ohio and Cuyahoga County. Grants will not exceed \$500,000 per event.

The fund will be administered in partnership with Destination Cleveland. Grants will be allocated to Destination Cleveland to disburse to organizations which have been selected.

Application Review

The Fund does not have deadlines as applications will be reviewed as they are received. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. Applicants can expect a response within 60 days of submission. Destination Cleveland will receive and evaluate applications and make recommendations to the City of Cleveland.

Evaluation Criteria

Destination Cleveland will evaluate grant applications against the following criteria: Ability to Execute; Projected Attendance and Risk; Tourism and Talent Attraction; Financial Leverage; Equity, Inclusion, Local Economy, and Sustainability; Competitiveness and Prestige; Public Health and Safety.

Evaluation Criteria

Destination Cleveland will evaluate grant applications using the following criteria:

- I. **Ability to Execute**
 - a. Is the organization executing the event well-established, with a demonstrated ability to execute events of the proposed scale?
- II. **Projected Attendance and Risk**

- a. Does this event have a projected attendance that is supported by data, past attendee counts, and/or other reliable predictors? Is the event well-established and well-funded? Is there risk that the event may not happen or may be smaller than projected? Are there any other substantial risks to involvement with this event?
- III. **Tourism and Talent Attraction**
 - a. Will this event bring visitors to Cleveland who otherwise would not visit our city? Will visitors stay overnight in Cleveland? Do these visitors have high potential for being recruited to Cleveland for employment?
- IV. **Financial Leverage**
 - a. Have other private, public or non-profit entities committed funds to this event or committed to matching funds and/or in-kind contributions for this event?
- V. **Equity, Inclusion, Local Economy, and Sustainability**
 - a. Have the organizers of this event demonstrated a commitment to equity and inclusion throughout the planning and execution of their event?
 - b. Has the organization executing the event demonstrated a commitment to sustainability throughout the planning and execution of the event?
 - c. Have event organizers committed to using Cleveland businesses to support their event (ex: catering and food, cleaning and hospitality, music and the arts, etc.), and how significant is this commitment?
- VI. **Competitiveness and Prestige**
 - a. Does the event position Cleveland as a city in which to live, work or build a business? Will the event generate substantial national media coverage about Cleveland? Is the event nationally or globally well-recognized, highly regarded, and sought after?
- VII. **Public Health and Safety**
 - a. Are there any risks to general public health and safety associated with this event? Have the potential grantees addressed security, crowd control, traffic concerns and/or other public health/safety concerns?

Scoring Process

Destination Cleveland will score proposals on a rolling basis. Destination Cleveland will score proposals against the Evaluation Criteria above, assigning a score of 0-4 to each of the criteria. Proposals that score 15 or above will advance for City consideration, while proposals that score 14 or below will be rejected.

Because proposals will vary in scope, cost, and prestige, the proposals that advance for discussion will be evaluated solely against the qualitative criteria above.