

July 17, 2025

Mayor and City Council
City of Columbia
710 E. Broadway
Columbia, MO 65201

REF: Convention & Visitors Bureau Tourism Development Program Annual Update

Dear Mayor and Council,

On behalf of the Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) Advisory Board, I am pleased to provide this annual update on the CVB's Tourism Development Program, funded through a portion of Columbia's Lodging Tax. The program provides financial support to both for-profit and nonprofit organizations to develop and enhance festivals, events, and attractions that drive overnight visitation to Columbia, boosting hotel stays and generating positive economic impact for our community.

The Tourism Development Program features six funding categories: Signature Series, Festivals & Events, Sports Development, Attraction Development, Community Sponsorships and Large Meetings & Conventions. For FY2025, \$425,000 was appropriated for funding requests. To date, we have received 39 applications totaling \$304,090 in requests.

In FY2025, five Signature Series events received a total of \$70,000. These established events have long-standing reputations, generate national media coverage, and deliver significant economic impact to Columbia. This year's Signature Series events included: True/False Film Fest, "We Always Swing" Jazz Series, MU Concert Series, Show-Me STATE GAMES, and Art in the Park.

There was a total of \$172,840 awarded to 11 sporting events, including the National Middle School Basketball Championships and the Homeschool Basketball State Championships. Funds also supported competitive bids to secure or retain events in Columbia. Columbia hosted multiple Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) State Championships in 2025 including Football, Cross Country, Basketball, Wrestling, and Music; along with the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Cross Country National Championships. These events consistently generate significant overnight stays and economic benefit. The Columbia Sports Commission reviews all Sports Development applications and competitive bids, making recommendations to the CVB Advisory Board.

Community Sponsorships support events primarily geared toward local residents while promoting Columbia as a welcoming, family-friendly destination. Funding is determined by the CVB Director based on each event's tourism impact. So far this year, 21 applications have been awarded a total of \$54,250. Some of these events include: Unbound Book Festival, Fire in the Sky, Harvest Hootenanny, Missouri Jazz Festival, USA Senior Softball and the Zipper Fest.

300 South Providence Road Columbia, MO 65203

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New in FY2025, the CVB introduced funding to retain large meetings and conventions as well as to solicit new business to the Columbia market. Two applications totaling \$7,000 has been awarded.

Since its inception in 2000, the Tourism Development Program has remained a vital tool in promoting Columbia's cultural and heritage tourism, year-round sports marketing, and the growth of festivals and attractions. We appreciate your ongoing support of Columbia's tourism industry and hospitality community.

Thank you for your continued partnership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Richard Walls', written over a horizontal line.

Richard Walls, Chair
Columbia Convention & Visitors Bureau

cc: DeCarlon Seewood, City Manager
Amy Schneider, CVB Director
CVB Advisory Board members