OFFICIAL NOTICE & AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING

MEETING: Room Tax Commission
DATE/TIME: Monday, July 27, 2026, at 4:00 PM
LOCATION: Wausau City Hall — Council Chambers
407 Grant Street, Wausau WI, 54403

MEMBERS:
Michael Marens
Tom Neal
Carol Lukens
Tim VanDeYacht
Lindsey Lewitske

1 Elect Chairperson and Vice Chairperson for the Room Tax Commission.

3 Consideration of the minutes of the preceding meeting(s).

April 27, 2026 Regular Room Tax Commission Minutes

June 26, 2026 Special Room Tax Commission Minutes

4 Discussion and possible action.

- **a.** Tourism Grant request from the Performing Arts Foundation/The Grand Theater for the The Grand Theater 2026-2027 Show Season.
- **b.** Tourism Grant request from Wausau Festival of Arts Inc for the 2026 Wausau Festival of Arts.
- **c.** Tourism Grant request from the Great Northern Blues Society for the 27th Annual Blues Café.

5 Adjournment.

Michael Martens, Chair

NOTICE POSTED AT CITY HALL (407 GRANT STREET) AND TRANSMITTED TO THE OFFICIALLY DESIGNATED NEWSPAPER

DATE: 07/22/2026
TIME: 3:30 PM
POSTED BY: Kody Hart

This meeting may be viewed on YouTube and Channel 981 on Cable TV

In accordance with the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the City of Wausau will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability in its services, programs or activities. If you need assistance or reasonable accommodations in participating in this meeting or event due to a disability as defined under the ADA, please call the ADA Coordinator at (715) 261-6622 or ADAServices@wausauwi.gov to discuss your accessibility needs. We ask your request be provided a minimum of 72 hours before the scheduled event or meeting. If a request is made less than 72 hours before the event the City of Wausau will make a good faith effort to accommodate your request.

City of Wausau
(715) 261-6500 | clerk@wausauwi.gov
wausauwi.gov

OFFICIAL MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING

MEETING:	Room Tax Commission	**MEMBERS:**	
DATE/TIME:	Monday, April 27, 2026, at 4:00 PM	Michael Marens (C) Tim VanDeYacht (VC) Tom Neal	Carol Lukens Lindsey Lewitske
LOCATION:	Wausau City Hall — Council Chambers 407 Grant Street, Wausau WI, 54403		

Members Present: Michael Martens, Tim VanDeYacht, Lindsey Lewitzke, Tom Neal
Members Not Present:
Members Excused: Carol Lukens
Present 4, Not Present 0, Excused 1

Noting the presence of a quorum, the Chairperson called the meeting to order at 04:01 PM.

1 Update from the Wausau/Central Wisconsin Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Without objection, this item was postponed to a future meeting.

2 Consideration of the minutes of the preceding meeting(s).

Motion by Lewitzke, seconded by VanDeYacht, to approve all items outlined below. Motion Passed, 4-0.

Feburary 9, 2026 Regular Room Tax Commission Minutes

3 Discussion and possible action.

a. Tourism Grant request from Taste N' Glow Balloon Fest for Taste N Glow Fest.

Lewitzke stated support for granting the full requested amount, as it typically takes three years to get an annual event out of the start-up phase and this event was in its third year of occurrence in its current iteration.

VanDeYacht questioned previous year's funding and if the applicants had sent post-event evaluations that measured the value of the marketing campaign. VanDeYacht questioned if the event had differentiated itself from other similar events. The applicant stated various aspects that differentiated the event from other similar events.

Motion by VanDeYacht, seconded by Neal, to approve the grant amount of $20,000. Motion Passed 4-0.

b. Tourism Grant request from Hmong American Center for Hmong Wausau Festival.

Motion by Neal, seconded by Lewitzke, to approve the grant amount of $20,000. Motion Passed 4-0.

c. Tourism Grant request from EAA Chapter 640 for AirVenture Cup Race.

Lewitzke stated support as this event is different than a typical airport event as it causes the pilots to stay overnight in Wausau.

Martens stated this event specifically contributes to room tax as it causes the participants to stay in hotel rooms in the city.

Motion by Neal, seconded by VanDeYacht, to approve the grant amount of $10,000. Motion Passed 4-0.

d. Tourism Grant request from Wausau Events for Big Bull Falls Blues Fest.

Martens stated that with a number of regional blues festivals shuttering, this was an opportunity to capture some of that lost regional market share.

Motion by Neal, seconded by VanDeYacht, to approve the grant amount of $20,000. Motion Passed 4-0.

e. Tourism Grant request from Central Wisconsin Offroad Cycling Coalition (CWOCC) for Sylvan Hill Bike Trail Maintenance.

Lewitzke questioned how many events occur at the Sylvan Hill Bike Trail. It was stated there is an annual event and a number of individual group ride events. It was further stated that there are about 10,000 annual visitors to the area because of the bike trails.

VanDeYacht questioned the marketing plan for the Central Wisconsin Offroad Cycling Coalition. It was stated that there is a social media outreach campaign that networks among different mountain bike enthusiasts within the region and that Wausau is uniquely positioned to bring people in as the closest downhill trail to larger populations in the southern part of the state.

Motion by VanDeYacht, seconded by Lewitzke, to approve the amount of $25,000. Motion Passed 4-0.

f. Tourism Grant request from the City of Wausau for event portable security bollards.

Lewitzke stated that there should be a longer-term solution for security bollards that would not be as labor-intensive and permanent. It was further stated concerns that this could increase the cost to operate with the Department of Public Works.

Martens stated other barrier options would have been significantly more expensive.

VanDeYacht questioned if this was the proper place for the funding source.

Neal stated that this was a relatively small investment and that there were applications beyond the downtown area for which these could be utilized.

Lewitzke suggested utilizing half of the proposed bollards this year to see if this is a feasible option for deployment.

VanDeYacht stated support for utilizing half of the proposed bollards to test the applicability.

Motion by Alderperson Neal, seconded by None, to approve the amount at 50% of the monetary ask. Motion Passed 4-0.

4 Adjournment.

Motion by Neal, seconded by VanDeYacht, to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 04:43 PM.

The recording of this meeting may be viewed on YouTube @CityofWausauMeetings

OFFICIAL MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING

MEETING: Room Tax Commission
DATE/TIME: Tuesday, June 23, 2026, at 4:00 PM
LOCATION: Wausau City Hall — Council Chambers
407 Grant Street, Wausau WI, 54403

MEMBERS:
Michael Marens (C)
Tom Neal
Carol Lukens
Tim VanDeYacht
Lindsey Lewitske

Members Present: Michael Martens, Lindsey Lewitzke, Carol Lukens, Tom Neal
Members Not Present: Tim VanDeYacht
Members Excused:
Present 4, Not Present 1, Excused 0

Noting the presence of a quorum, the Chairperson called the meeting to order at 04:02 PM.

1 Discussion and possible action.

a. Consider Room Tax funding request for Domtar Dam Modernization for $25,000.

Neal stated support in principle but questioned if this item was within the charter of the room tax allocation.

Lewitzke stated that this item would fall under room tax allocation for municipal development that is reasonably likely to generate hotel stays within that municipality.

Motion by Neal, seconded by Lewitzke, to approve the allocation of $25,000. Motion Passed 4-0.

2 Adjournment.

Motion by Lukens, seconded by Neal, to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 04:06 PM.

The recording of this meeting may be viewed on YouTube @CityofWausauMeetings

City of Wausau
(715) 261-6500 | clerk@wausauwi.gov
wausauwi.gov

COMMISSION ROOM TAX TOURISM GRANT APPLICATION

Getting Started

Beginning January 1, 2017 the State Law mandates the City forward to a tourism commission any room tax revenue exceeding the amount the municipality may retain. The Commission must spend room tax revenue on tourism promotion and tourism development.

Tourism Promotion and Tourism Development is defined in the Wisconsin Statutes to mean any of the following that are significantly used by transient tourists and reasonably likely to generate paid overnight stays at more than one establishment in the municipality on which room tax is imposed:

- Marketing projects, including advertising buys, creation and distribution of printed or electronic promotional tourist materials, or efforts to recruit conventions, sporting events or motor coach groups.
- Transient tourist informational services.
- Tangible municipal development, including a convention center.

Transient tourist means any person residing for a continuous period of less than one month in a hotel, motel or other furnished accommodations.

The Commission is obligated to submit on an annual basis a detail report of its room tax expenditures to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue.

The Room Tax Tourism Grant program is designed to promote tourism related activity within the City of Wausau with specific emphasis on tourism that is reasonably likely to generate overnight stays in hotel facilities.

APPLICATION DEADLINES:
Applications are considered on a rolling cycle.

The room tax commission meets at 4 PM on the 4th Monday of these months:

- October
- January
- April
- July

Applications must be submitted by the ***2nd Monday*** of these months to be considered.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND USE OF FUNDS:

- Design, production and placement costs for marketing that targets visitors from outside the City of Wausau and its surrounding communities. This includes but is not limited to: brochures, fliers, posters, direct mail, registration materials, print ads, radio ads, television ads. Website enhancements that are reasonably likely to increase tourism and overnight hotel stay. Web and social media marketing that increase traffic of visitors from outside the City of Wausau and its surrounding communities.
- Purchase of marketing lists, search engine marketing ad words, google ad words.
- Offsite signage such as billboards targeting visitors that live outside the City and its surrounding communities.
- Fees must be payable to a third party vendor. In-kind fees are not eligible.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

- Not for Profit Organizations with an IRS determination.
- Not for Profit Organization is in good standing with the City.
- Event is located in or near the City of Wausau and offers verifiable economic benefits to the City of Wausau through increased room nights.
- The event or promotional opportunity should demonstrate economic impact as it relates to tourism and is reasonably likely to generate multiple hotel stays.
- Repeat grant applicants have filed timely post event reports.

GRANT RECOGNITION:
All awarded marketing projects must include the City of Wausau logo and where space allows, the following grant recognition: "Sponsored in part by the City of Wausau Room Tax."

GRANT LIMITS:
- Grants will be limited based upon funding.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
- All grants will be evaluated on established criteria and ranked competitively by the Commission.
- The grant application will serve as a grant agreement and must be signed by an authorized official within the organization.
- The grant expires one year after awarded by the Room Tax Commission.
- Grantees should request funds via email request to finance@ci.wausau.wi.us
- The Room Tax Summary Compliance reporting should be submitted timely to finance@ci.wausau.wi.us

EVALUATION CRITERIA:
- Completeness and quality of the application. 10 points
- A well-developed marketing strategy that can reasonably be expected to generate multiple hotel stays. 30 points
- The event and application substantiate local economic impact from:
  - local visitors. 5 points
  - day trip visitors. 15 points
  - overnight visitors. 30 points
- The methodology proposed to survey attendees is well developed and will likely generate good quality information regarding event attendees and whether they are local or non-local. 10 points
- The event is unique, unduplicated and creative . 20 points
- Expected/historical event attendance:
  - 0-1,000 attendees annually. 5 points
  - 1,000-5,000 attendees annually. 10 points
  - 5,000+ attendees annually. 15 points
- Event located within the City of Wausau. 5 points

REVIEW AND AWARD PROCESS:
- Timely grant requests will be reviewed by staff for completeness.
- The Commission will review, score and rank proposals based upon the Evaluation Criteria.
- Staff will compile ranking for Commission consideration.
- Commission will review and make a final grant determination.
- Grant applicants will be informed of the grant determination.

Organization Info

Name of Organization *

Performing Arts Foundation/The Grand Theater

Authorized Official First Name *

Tessa

Authorized Official Last Name *

Oestreich

Authorized Official Title *

Director of Development

Email Address *

toestreich@grandtheater.org

Organization Website URL *

www.grandtheater.org

Street Address *

401 N 4th Street

City *

Wausau

State *

WI

Zip *

54403

Daytime Telephone *

(715) 842-0988

Grant Information

Grant Request Amount *

$35,000.00

Total Project/Event Budget *

$4,687,924.00

Event Title *

The Grand's 2026-2027 Show Season

Event Date(s) or Date Range *

August 2026 - June 2027

Projected Number of Attendees *

75,000 (historic annual attendance)

Event Location *

The Grand Theater – Wausau, WI

Have you applied or been awarded room tax or other public funding for this event? *

- ○ Yes
- ☒ No

Estimated Number of Hotel Stays from the Project/Event *

800

*

- ☒ New Event/Project
- ○ Existing Event/Project

Project/Event Description *

The Grand Theater is North Central Wisconsin's most complete event complex, providing a variety of gathering spaces for touring shows, rental events, meetings, exhibits and social activities. As we kick off our 2026-2027 Season, we are asking for $35,000 to help support our marketing efforts for the season.

With almost 84,000 tickets sold this past season, over 31,000 were sold to residents living outside of Marathon County. There are many patrons who travel from outside of Marathon County, including about 6,200 who travel outside driving distance (90+ miles). We saw a fantastic response to the announce of our season in June, and are pleased to see that our fall shows are selling well.

We are bringing more shows to Wausau than ever before. We announced 38 mainstage season shows in June, including Jay Leno and Wayne Newton, and have already added three additional headliners to the schedule for before the end of the year. Nationally-touring artists with major name recognition often add dates to their tours in the second half of the season as well, so we anticipate announcing additional shows in the coming months. We do see patrons making ticket purchasing decisions later, so we do anticipate continuing to spend more in marketing per show than in years past.

With the historic reopening of The Grand after our Second Century Campaign renovation, we are bringing more shows and bigger shows to Wausau than ever before. Six of our seven Broadway shows will be playing for two nights, bringing twice as many tourists to Wausau and doubling the number of nights Broadway casts will be staying in Wausau area hotels. With more shows and IATSE touring standards requiring single rooms, more Broadway artists and crew will be staying in Wausau hotels than before.

Due to the sheer number of shows, the caliber and name-recognition of the artists, and buying patterns of our patrons, we would greatly appreciate the continued support of the Room Tax Commission in our enhanced marketing efforts.

Optional: Upload Project/Event Details

Marketing Plan

Provide a detailed marketing plan or strategy. Complete the marketing budget below that lists each marketing piece, the location of the piece, approximate dates of views, cost, planned distribution of materials etc. Outline specifically how this plan is reasonably likely to generate overnight hotel stays. Additionally, highlight those marketing materials that are outside the City of Wausau and those that are over 90 miles away.

Marketing Plan Description *

With a total marketing budget of $241,500, we plan to extend our marketing reach to at least 100 miles beyond Wausau, while still serving our DMA. The marketing mix targeting those patrons includes video, digital, radio, print, outdoor, and targeted social media messages. The strategy outlined below will run for The Grand's season, encouraging tourism and overnight stays in Wausau through June 2027.

TV Flights: As ticket purchasing trends continue to shift closer to performance dates, television advertising in the weeks leading up to each show has become increasingly important. We consistently see a strong return on investment from purchasing primetime placements across both network and cable programming, including those that extend beyond the greater Wausau area. These campaigns help us engage both returning patrons and new audiences while expanding our regional reach. Additionally, many Broadway touring contracts now require minimum television advertising commitments, making expanded TV advertising an essential component of our marketing strategy. Room Tax funding would allow us to increase primetime television placements, particularly with WJFW-12, whose coverage extends throughout northern Wisconsin and into Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Radio Advertising: Radio continues to be an effective tool for reaching audiences beyond our traditional DMA. We have expanded our radio advertising with stations such as WXPR/WXPW, allowing us to connect with potential patrons throughout Wisconsin's Northwoods and encourage travel to Wausau for performances.

Billboards: We strategically place billboards along major travel corridors outside our primary market, including Highway 51 near Minocqua and Marshfield, Highway 10 near Plover, and Highway 29 west toward Eau Claire. These locations help attract visitors traveling from surrounding regions and encourage attendance from audiences outside the Wausau area. Due to limited billboard inventory during the previous election cycle, opportunities were restricted. With increased availability this year, we have expanded our billboard budget to maximize regional visibility.

Social Media Advertising: Social media, particularly Facebook, Instagram, and Bandsintown, remains an effective way to promote performances to audiences throughout the region. Through Meta's advertising platform, Facebook and Instagram allow us to target performing arts enthusiasts across the Upper Midwest who are most likely to travel for unique live entertainment experiences. Additional promotion through Bandsintown extends our reach to concertgoers actively searching for live events, helping us connect with potential visitors beyond a 100-mile radius of Wausau and increasing the potential for overnight stays. With a strong Broadway season and exclusive Upper Midwest performances by nationally recognized artists, we are well positioned to attract visitors from across the region.

Direct Mail: Direct mail continues to generate strong ticket sales and remains an important part of our marketing strategy. Our seasonal newsletters are mailed three times each season to more than 35,000 households across Wisconsin and neighboring states, promoting upcoming performances and encouraging cultural tourism to Wausau. This past season, direct mail proved to be one of the most effective ways at maintaining consistent tickets sales to new and returning patrons alike.

Digital Marketing: We utilize targeted digital advertising across multiple online platforms to reach prospective patrons who are most likely to travel for live performances. Our campaigns focus on performing arts audiences located more than 90 miles from Wausau, helping expand our geographic reach, attract new visitors, and increase the potential for overnight stays. Last season, we partnered with a specialized arts marketing firm to support these efforts. After evaluating campaign performance, we refined our marketing strategy and chose to partner with two firms this year, one local and one national, to leverage their complementary expertise and expand our reach. This approach allows us to optimize advertising campaigns, respond more quickly to performance trends, more effectively target high-value audiences, and maximize our marketing investment.

Marketing Media Description *
TV Flights

Locations covered by the media/publications *
Wausau/Rhinelander/ Stevens Point/UP

Approximate dates *
August 2026 – June 2027

Expected Cost *
$58,500.00

Grant Request *
$11,000.00

Marketing Media Description *
Radio Ads

Locations covered by the media/publications *
Wausau/Stevens Point/Rhinelander/UP

Approximate dates *
August 2026 – June 2027

Expected Cost *
$25,000.00

Grant Request *
$3,000.00

Marketing Media Description *
Billboards

Locations covered by the media/publications *
Marshfield/Minocqua/Eau Claire/Plover

Approximate dates *
August 2026 – June 2027

Expected Cost *
$27,000.00

Grant Request *
$4,000.00

Marketing Media Description *
Social Media Marketing

Locations covered by the media/publications *
90-mile radius/Midwest

Approximate dates *
August 2026 – June 2027

Expected Cost *
$20,000.00

Grant Request *
$2,000.00

Marketing Media Description *
Direct Mail

Locations covered by the media/publications *
Midwest

Approximate dates *
August 2026 – June 2027

Expected Cost *
$58,500.00

Grant Request *
$8,000.00

Marketing Media Description *
Digital Marketing

Locations covered by the media/publications *
Midwest

Approximate dates *
August 2026 – June 2027

Expected Cost *
$52,500.00

Grant Request *
$7,000.00

Total Plan Requested Amount
$35,000.00

Difference between grant requested and planned
$0.00

Additional information may be attached

Hotel Stays

Detail how your organization/project/event will be reasonably likely to create overnight stays in the City of Wausau lodging facilities. Please explain your methodology for identifying multiple hotel stays generated by the event and surveying event goers. *

Our proposed plan includes marketing to a geographic area 90+ miles outside of Wausau and throughout the Midwest. We regularly see patrons coming to The Grand from Upper Michigan, the greater Chicagoland area, the Twin Cities, and all over the state of Wisconsin. We have seen a positive response to our performances from audiences outside the Wausau area and we would like to capitalize on that and expand our marketing to encourage travelers to visit Wausau.

Through our ticketing software, we are able to track where patrons are traveling from and reasonably estimate the number of overnight stays generated by performances at The Grand. In nearly every season, more than 36% of ticket buyers reside outside of Marathon County. During the 2025-2026 season, an estimated 6,200 attendees traveled from more than 90 miles away.

The Grand will directly provide a minimum of 450 hotel room nights for artists during the 2026-2027 Season. Our Broadway productions are expected to generate an additional 240 room nights, an increase over last season due to the greater number of Broadway performances scheduled this year. In addition, other visiting artists arrange their own accommodations, and many patrons travel from 90 or more miles away to attend performances. Based on these factors, we conservatively estimate that The Grand will generate at least 800 hotel room nights throughout the 2026-2027 Season.

Repeat events are required to provide evidence of historic room nights. *

During the 2025-26 Season, The Grand Theater directly booked 455 rooms for artists. In addition, Broadway tours alone booked another 220 nights. These do not include other accommodations made directly by artists or patrons that chose to stay at other Wausau area hotels.

Is your event/project reserving a block of rooms for this event in a City of Wausau hotel *

☒ Yes ◯ No

Please provide number of rooms, number of nights and name of the hotel. *

We partner with many City of Wausau hotels, including Jefferson Street Inn where most artist accommodations are made, as it is closest to The Grand.

Required Documents

ORGANIZATION WIDE BUDGET *

2026-27 Budget APROVED.pdf 74.96KB

PROJECT OR EVENT BUDGET *

2026-27 Show Budget.pdf 501.59KB

RECENT YEAREND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS *

Performing Arts Foundation Inc - FY25 990 PostedCleanCopy.pdf 10.64MB

IRS DETERMINATION *

IRS Letter of Determination.pdf 129.54KB

BOARD OF DIRECTORS *

2025.2026 PAF Board Listing FULL.pdf 141.09KB

Submit

I understand the restrictions placed on the expenditure of room tax funds governed by the Room Tax Commission and certify that the requested funds will be used for the purposes described in this application or approved by the Commission. I understand that the use of funds is subject to review and a post event reporting is required. Grant recipients will be considered ineligible for future grants until post event reporting is filed. This application will serve as a grant agreement and award as noted below.

Applicant Full Name *

Tessa Oestreich

Applicant Title *

Director of Development

Date Time

07/08/2026

REVENUE	2025-2026 APPROVED	2025-2026 YE PROJ	VARIANCE	2026-27 APPROVED	CHANGE FROM 2025-26	CHANGE FROM YE
TICKET SALES	$2,501,768	$2,835,092	$333,324	$2,684,239	$182,471	-$150,853
OTHER PERF REVENUE	$7,300	$12,588	$5,288	$7,650	$350	-$4,938
EVENT GRANTS/SPONSORSHIP	$216,000	$246,208	$30,208	$302,000	$86,000	$55,792
CONCESSIONS REVENUE	$419,130	$443,550	$24,420	$420,028	$898	-$23,522
BOX OFFICE REVENUE	$610,100	$621,400	$11,300	$623,500	$13,400	$2,100
RENTAL FEES	$137,000	$121,790	-$15,210	$128,100	-$8,900	$6,310
OTHER RENTAL INCOME	$137,200	$136,352	-$848	$129,500	-$7,700	-$6,852
PERF ARTS FUND DRIVE	$310,000	$328,000	$18,000	$330,000	$20,000	$2,000
OTHER GRANTS & DON	$44,407	$44,407	$0	$44,407	$0	$0
MISC INCOME	$1,900	$44,800	$42,900	$18,500	$16,600	-$26,300
TOTAL REVENUES	**$4,384,805**	**$4,834,187**	**$449,382**	**$4,687,924**	**$303,119**	**-$146,263**

EXPENSES	2025-2026 APPROVED	2025-2026 YE PROJ	VARIANCE	2026-27 APPROVED	CHANGE FROM 2025-26	CHANGE FROM YE
ARTIST FEES	$1,499,725	$1,776,742	-$277,017	$1,733,320	-$233,595	-$43,422
PROD EXPENSE - PAF	$423,776	$399,300	$24,476	$438,256	-$14,480	$38,956
MRKTG EXPENSE - PAF	$169,714	$202,568	-$32,854	$175,044	-$5,330	-$27,524
PROD EXPENSE - RENTAL	$60,200	$61,800	-$1,600	$50,850	$9,350	-$10,950
BOX OFFICE EXPENSE	$144,500	$151,300	-$6,800	$153,450	-$8,950	$2,150
CONCESSIONS EXPENSE	$157,000	$186,000	-$29,000	$165,000	-$8,000	-$21,000
FUNDRAISING EXPENSE	$21,400	$25,100	-$3,700	$21,400	$0	-$3,700
GENERAL MARKETING EXPENSE	$96,000	$114,176	-$18,176	$109,500	-$13,500	-$4,676
PERSONNEL EXPENSE	$1,357,080	$1,427,304	-$70,224	$1,430,352	-$73,272	$3,048
ADMINISTRATION	$136,700	$160,800	-$24,100	$142,500	-$5,800	-$18,300
UTILITIES	$113,500	$111,000	$2,500	$98,000	$15,500	-$13,000
OCCUPANCY	$157,501	$188,001	-$30,500	$155,001	$2,500	-$33,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	**$4,337,096**	**$4,804,091**	**-$466,995**	**$4,672,673**	**-$335,577**	**-$131,418**
CHANGE IN OPERATIONAL ASSETS	**$47,709**	**$30,096**	**-$17,613**	**$15,251**	**-$32,458**	**-$14,845**
NON-OPERATIONAL INC/EXPENSE	**-$135,000**	**$2,822,784**	**$2,957,784**	**-$135,000**	**$0**	**$700,000**
CHANGE IN ASSETS	**-$87,291**	**$2,852,880**	**$2,940,171**	**-$119,749**	**-$32,458**	**-$2,972,629**

Grand Evening and Matinee Series		SERIES TOTALS
Golden Circle (318 Seats)	$	**3,608.00**
Prime (198 Seats)	$	**3,151.00**
Section A (285 Seats)	$	**3,026.00**
Section B (245 Seats)	$	**2,265.00**
Section C (48 Seats)		
NOMINAL CAPACITY (1208 or 1180)		64,812
Section A comps		(1,610)
Section B comps		(1,635)
MAXIMUM SALES CAPACITY		61,567
POTENTIAL NAGBOR	$	***3,712,906***
PROJECTED % OF GROSS		***72%***
REVENUE		
GbNITE tickets sold		**41373**
GbNITE REVENUE [net 5% discount]	$	**2,609,482**
GbDAY tickets sold		**10680**
GbDAY REVENUE [# x $5.00 x 95%]	$	**74,758**
total tickets sold		**52053**
TOTAL TICKET REVENUE	$	***2,684,239***
MISCELLANEOUS INCOME		
Merchandise Percentage	$	7,650
Event Grants	$	35,000
WI Arts Board Grant	$	9,000
Program Advertising	$	45,000
Sponsorship Fee	$	203,000
TOTAL MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	$	**299,650**
TOTAL REVENUE	$	***2,983,889***
DIRECT EXPENSE		
ARTIST FEES	$	**1,475,700**
OVERAGE/SHARING CONTRACT	$	**128,867**
OTHER FEES (Support/BWay Royalties)	$	**128,753**
Technical Labor	$	255,700
House Staff	$	23,200
Security	$	45,250
TOTAL EVENT LABOR	$	**324,150**
Season Brochure [prorated]	$	31,470
Season Brochure Postage [prorated]	$	5,594
Newspaper	$	880
Radio	$	18,300
TV	$	51,500
Event Programs	$	20,500
Other Marketing	$	46,800
TOTAL MARKETING	$	**175,044**
ASCAP/BMI/SESAC	$	24,453
Production Supplies	$	-
Equipment/Personnel	$	49,050
Artist Hospitality	$	33,175
Travel & Lodging	$	250
TOTAL PRODUCTION COSTS	$	**106,583**
MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSE	$	-
TOTAL EXPENSES	$	***2,339,097***
CONTRIBUTION TO OVERHEAD	$	***631,649***

PERFORMING ARTS FOUNDATION, INC.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
2025-2026

Officers

President
Kay Gruling, Retired Physician

Vice President
Shanna Fink, Ruder Ware

Treasurer
Jennifer Porath, Wipfli

Corporate Secretary
Ridhwi Mukerji, Physician, Aspirus

Past President/Second Century Campaign Chair
Todd Nicklaus, Incredible Bank

Assistant Corporate Secretary*
Sean Wright, ex officio

Members at large

Jordan Baker, Greenheck Group

Rick Beese, Wausau Med Mal

Kandace Elmergreen, Elmergreen Associates

Peter Gaffaney, Baird

Tracy Hougum, Community Volunteer

Michael Loy, Geared Equity

Executive Staff

Sean Wright, Executive Director

Olivia Hill, Associate Director/GM

Merry Little, Director of Finance

Tessa Taylor, Director of Development

Tammy Stezenski, Director of Marketing

- *The executive director serves as Assistant Corporate Secretary, ex officio, but is not a board member.*
- *Officers serve as the Executive Committee*

COMMISSION ROOM TAX TOURISM GRANT APPLICATION

Getting Started

Beginning January 1, 2017 the State Law mandates the City forward to a tourism commission any room tax revenue exceeding the amount the municipality may retain. The Commission must spend room tax revenue on tourism promotion and tourism development.

Tourism Promotion and Tourism Development is defined in the Wisconsin Statutes to mean any of the following that are significantly used by transient tourists and reasonably likely to generate paid overnight stays at more than one establishment in the municipality on which room tax is imposed:

- Marketing projects, including advertising buys, creation and distribution of printed or electronic promotional tourist materials, or efforts to recruit conventions, sporting events or motor coach groups.
- Transient tourist informational services.
- Tangible municipal development, including a convention center.

Transient tourist means any person residing for a continuous period of less than one month in a hotel, motel or other furnished accommodations.

The Commission is obligated to submit on an annual basis a detail report of its room tax expenditures to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue.

The Room Tax Tourism Grant program is designed to promote tourism related activity within the City of Wausau with specific emphasis on tourism that is reasonably likely to generate overnight stays in hotel facilities.

APPLICATION DEADLINES:
Applications are considered on a rolling cycle.

The room tax commission meets at 4 PM on the 4th Monday of these months:

- October
- January
- April
- July

Applications must be submitted by the ***2nd Monday*** of these months to be considered.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND USE OF FUNDS:

- Design, production and placement costs for marketing that targets visitors from outside the City of Wausau and its surrounding communities. This includes but is not limited to: brochures, fliers, posters, direct mail, registration materials, print ads, radio ads, television ads. Website enhancements that are reasonably likely to increase tourism and overnight hotel stay. Web and social media marketing that increase traffic of visitors from outside the City of Wausau and its surrounding communities.
- Purchase of marketing lists, search engine marketing ad words, google ad words.
- Offsite signage such as billboards targeting visitors that live outside the City and its surrounding communities.
- Fees must be payable to a third party vendor. In-kind fees are not eligible.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

- Not for Profit Organizations with an IRS determination.
- Not for Profit Organization is in good standing with the City.
- Event is located in or near the City of Wausau and offers verifiable economic benefits to the City of Wausau through increased room nights.
- The event or promotional opportunity should demonstrate economic impact as it relates to tourism and is reasonably likely to generate multiple hotel stays.
- Repeat grant applicants have filed timely post event reports.

GRANT RECOGNITION:

All awarded marketing projects must include the City of Wausau logo and where space allows, the following grant recognition: "Sponsored in part by the City of Wausau Room Tax."

GRANT LIMITS:

- Grants will be limited based upon funding.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- All grants will be evaluated on established criteria and ranked competitively by the Commission.
- The grant application will serve as a grant agreement and must be signed by an authorized official within the organization.
- The grant expires one year after awarded by the Room Tax Commission.
- Grantees should request funds via email request to finance@ci.wausau.wi.us
- The Room Tax Summary Compliance reporting should be submitted timely to finance@ci.wausau.wi.us

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

- Completeness and quality of the application. 10 points
- A well-developed marketing strategy that can reasonably be expected to generate multiple hotel stays. 30 points
- The event and application substantiate local economic impact from:
    - local visitors. 5 points
    - day trip visitors. 15 points
    - overnight visitors. 30 points
- The methodology proposed to survey attendees is well developed and will likely generate good quality information regarding event attendees and whether they are local or non-local. 10 points
- The event is unique, unduplicated and creative . 20 points
- Expected/historical event attendance:
    - 0-1,000 attendees annually. 5 points
    - 1,000-5,000 attendees annually. 10 points
    - 5,000+ attendees annually. 15 points
- Event located within the City of Wausau. 5 points

REVIEW AND AWARD PROCESS:

- Timely grant requests will be reviewed by staff for completeness.
- The Commission will review, score and rank proposals based upon the Evaluation Criteria.
- Staff will compile ranking for Commission consideration.
- Commission will review and make a final grant determination.
- Grant applicants will be informed of the grant determination.

Organization Info

Name of Organization *

Wausau Festival of Arts Inc

Authorized Official First Name *

Chris

Authorized Official Last Name *

Schliepp

Authorized Official Title *

Fundraising Chair

Email Address *

cschliepp@rwbaird.com

Organization Website URL *

www.wausaufoa.org

Street Address *

PO BOX 1763

City *
Wausau

State *
WI

Zip *
54402

Daytime Telephone *
(715) 845-1676

Grant Information

Grant Request Amount *
$9,408.00

Total Project/Event Budget *
$69,150.00

Event Title *
2026 Wausau Festival of Arts weekend Festival

Event Date(s) or Date Range *
09/12/2026-09/13/2026

Projected Number of Attendees *
25000

Event Location *
Downtown Wausau 3rd St and 400 Block

Have you applied or been awarded room tax or other public funding for this event? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☒ No

Estimated Number of Hotel Stays from the Project/Event *
150

*

- ☒ New Event/Project
- ☐ Existing Event/Project

Project/Event Description *

The Wausau Festival of Arts is a signature annual celebration of creativity, culture, and community that has been a tradition in downtown Wausau for more than 60 years. Held each year in the heart of the city, the festival brings together artists, residents, and visitors for a vibrant weekend experience that showcases the power of the arts to inspire, connect, and enrich lives.

Featuring more than 120 juried artists from across the region and beyond, the festival offers attendees the opportunity to explore and purchase a diverse collection of original artwork spanning a wide range of mediums. Beyond the art exhibits, the event creates an atmosphere where visitors can enjoy live entertainment, support nonprofit food vendors, and experience the energy of downtown Wausau.

The festival also provides hands on artistic opportunities for families through the Family Art Tent, where children can unleash their creativity and create their own works of art. Throughout the weekend, live music and entertainment on the 400 Block stage add to the festive atmosphere, creating an engaging experience for attendees of all ages.

More than an art show, the Wausau Festival of Arts serves as a community gathering that celebrates artistic expression, supports local businesses and nonprofits, and contributes to the cultural and economic vitality of the Wausau area.

Optional: Upload Project/Event Details

Artist Survey Graphs.pdf	215.49KB
Festival Weekend Data.pdf	534.63KB

Marketing Plan

Provide a detailed marketing plan or strategy. Complete the marketing budget below that lists each marketing piece, the location of the piece, approximate dates of views, cost, planned distribution of materials etc. Outline specifically how this plan is reasonably likely to generate overnight hotel stays. Additionally, highlight those marketing materials that are outside the City of Wausau and those that are over 90 miles away.

Marketing Plan Description *

The Festival of Arts. conducts annual post festival reviews to evaluate attendance, marketing effectiveness, and visitor engagement, using these insights to refine future strategies. Building on this data driven approach, the Wausau Festival of Arts has expanded its marketing efforts through a coordinated mix of digital and traditional advertising designed to attract visitors from both the local area and beyond.

This year is a dedicated team of volunteer marketing professionals expanding our digital advertising and communications, ensuring consistent messaging across all platforms. The festival utilizes targeted digital advertising, social media campaigns, geofencing technology, and enhanced website content to reach art enthusiasts and travelers throughout WI and the Midwest region. These efforts are complemented by radio advertising, print materials, posters, and community outreach to maximize visibility.

The festival's website serves as a year-round marketing tool, promoting artists, festival activities, and local attractions, during, and after the event. By aligning messaging across digital, radio, print, and website channels, the festival strengthens its ability to attract visitors from outside the immediate area, encourage weekend stays in Wausau, and support the economic impact of the event on the community.

Marketing Media Description *
Milwaukee Record

Locations covered by the media/publications *
Milwaukee and Chicago area

Approximate dates *
7/20/2026-09/13/2026

Expected Cost *
$1,500.00

Grant Request *
$1,500.00

Marketing Media Description *
Zapp

Locations covered by the media/publications *
Nationwide

Approximate dates *
01/01/2026-09/13/2026

Expected Cost *
$1,250.00

Grant Request *
$1,250.00

Marketing Media Description *
Facebook/Instagram ad boosts

Locations covered by the media/publications *
targeted locations across WI/Chicago/Minneapolis

Approximate dates *
08/1/2026-0913/2026

Expected Cost *
$1,500.00

Grant Request *
$1,500.00

Marketing Media Description *
CVB Online

Locations covered by the media/publications *
Online State of WI

Approximate dates *
01/01/2026-09/13/2026

Expected Cost *
$1,200.00

Grant Request *
$1,200.00

Marketing Media Description *
WPR Radio

Locations covered by the media/publications *
State wide WI

Approximate dates *
08/1/2026-09/13/2026

Expected Cost *
$1,275.00

Grant Request *
$1,275.00

Marketing Media Description *
Midwest Art Fairs online ad

Locations covered by the media/publications *
Midwest

Approximate dates *

Expected Cost *

Grant Request *

01/01/2026-09/13/2026	$25.00	$25.00

Marketing Media Description *
Drip Media Geo Fencing

Locations covered by the media/publications *
targeted locations across WI/Chicago/Minneapolis

Approximate dates *	Expected Cost *	Grant Request *
08/01/2026-09/13/2026	$1,500.00	$1,500.00

Marketing Media Description *
Sunrise Radio

Locations covered by the media/publications *
Radio social media and web

Approximate dates *	Expected Cost *	Grant Request *
08/01/2026-09/13/2026	$1,158.00	$1,158.00

Total Plan Requested Amount
$9,408.00

Difference between grant requested and planned
$0.00

Additional information may be attached

WFOA 2026 Advertising Projection.pdf 400.82KB

Hotel Stays

Detail how your organization/project/event will be reasonably likely to create overnight stays in the City of Wausau lodging facilities. Please explain your methodology for identifying multiple hotel stays generated by the event and surveying event goers. *

The Wausau Festival of Arts generates overnight hotel stays by attracting artists, patrons, and visitors from throughout Wisconsin and neighboring states. Each year, more than 120 juried artists participate in the festival, and annual artist surveys consistently show that typically over 50% stay in local hotels during the event weekend. Based on these survey results, the festival estimates that participating artists alone generate approximately 120 hotel room nights each year.
Beyond artist participation, the festival attracts more than 25,000 attendees over the course of the weekend, including many visitors traveling from more than 90 miles away. These guests often choose to stay overnight to fully enjoy the festival's extensive offerings, including artist exhibits, live entertainment, family art activities, downtown dining, and other area attractions. Our attendance data included in the project event details demonstrates the festival's ability to draw visitors from distant Wisconsin communities and surrounding states.
By providing a full weekend of activities and promoting Wausau as a destination for arts, culture, dining, and recreation, the Wausau Festival of Arts encourages multi-day visits that support local hotels and contribute to the economic vitality of the region.

Repeat events are required to provide evidence of historic room nights. *

Attached in the Project Event Details are the results of our annual artist survey, which we use to estimate the number of hotel room nights generated by participating artists. These survey results provide a reliable baseline for measuring overnight lodging demand associated with the festival and help demonstrate the economic impact of artist participation before accounting for the additional hotel stays generated by patrons attending the festival throughout the weekend.

Is your event/project reserving a block of rooms for this event in a City of Wausau hotel *

○ Yes ☒ No

Required Documents

ORGANIZATION WIDE BUDGET *

2026 FOA Budget.pdf 215.91KB

PROJECT OR EVENT BUDGET *

2026 FOA Budget.pdf 215.91KB

RECENT YEAREND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS *

2025 FOA P&L.pdf 216.74KB

IRS DETERMINATION *

FOA Tax Letter.pdf 1,005.79KB

BOARD OF DIRECTORS *

2026 Board and Committee Chair List.pdf 733.88KB

Submit

I understand the restrictions placed on the expenditure of room tax funds governed by the Room Tax Commission and certify that the requested funds will be used for the purposes described in this application or approved by the Commission. I understand that the use of funds is subject to review and a post event reporting is required. Grant recipients will be considered ineligible for future grants until post event reporting is filed. This application will serve as a grant agreement and award as noted below.

Applicant Full Name *

Chris Schliepp

Applicant Title *

Fundraising Chair

Date Time

07/10/2026

	2026 Budget
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
Cash Over/Short	
Direct Public Support	
City Room Ta	10,800.00
Corporate Co	6,000.00
Foundation S	7,000.00
Individual Su	5,500.00
Total Direct Public Suppo	29,300.00
Interest	10.00
Other Types of Income	
Miscellaneous Revenue	
Total Other Types of Incor	0.00
Program Income	
Concession	450.00
Family Art	700.00
Refunds	0.00
Registration	32,000.00
Silent Auctio	4,800.00
Still Young a	550.00
Young Colle	900.00
Total Program Income	39,400.00
Reception Money	150.00
Total Income	68,860.00
Expense	
Advertising	13,000.00
Awards	6,800.00
Banquet	5,500.00
Buildings & Grounds	11,800.00
Business Expenses	1,200.00
Business Registration Fees	
Coordinator	8,000.00
Emerging Artists	100.00
Family Art Expense	500.00
Fundraising	
General Admin	
Insurance	3,900.00
Letterhead & Cards	50.00
Lodging - Em Artists & Ju	300.00
Matching Grants	1,000.00
Miscellaneous Expense	
Operations	
Printing and	800.00
Supplies	950.00
Telephone, T	0.00

			Total Operations	1,750.00
			Performers & Stage	4,600.00
			Postage, Mailing Service	50.00
			Refunds	0.00
			Scholarship	3,000.00
			Shirts	2,000.00
			Silent Auction Expenses	0.00
			Square Fees	200.00
			Still Young Art Expense	900.00
			Tax Penalty	0.00
			Zapp & Judging	3,000.00
			Tax preparation fee	1,500.00
		Total Expense		69,150.00
	Net Ordinary Income			-290.00
Net Income				**-290.00**

				Jan - Dec 25
Ordinary Income/Expense				
	Income			
		Direct Public Support		
			City Room Ta	10,808.00
			Corporate Co	5,783.46
			Foundation S	7,000.00
			Individual Su	5,323.50
		Total Direct Public Suppo		28,914.96
		Interest		10.66
		Other Types of Income		
			Miscellaneou	1.64
		Total Other Types of Incor		1.64
		Program Income		
			Concession	450.00
			Family Art	685.64
			Refunds	-1,130.00
			Registration	31,969.81
			Silent Auctio	4,787.67
			Still Young a	547.22
			Young Colle	874.00
		Total Program Income		38,184.34
		Reception Money		50.00
	Total Income			67,161.60
	Expense			
		Advertising		12,968.95
		Awards		6,800.00
		Banquet		5,361.74
		Buildings & Grounds		7,852.15
		Business Expenses		1,206.62
		Coordinator		9,750.02
		Emerging Artists		100.00
		Family Art Expense		492.89
		Insurance		3,838.11
		Lodging - Em Artists & Ju		283.76
		Matching Grants		2,000.00
		Miscellaneous Expense		0.64
		Operations		
			Printing and	663.01
			Supplies	965.53
		Total Operations		1,628.54
		Performers & Stage		4,600.00
		Postage, Mailing Service		24.96
		Refunds		25.00
		Scholarship		3,000.00
		Shirts		1,945.95

Silent Auction Expenses	70.82
Square Fees	203.27
Still Young Art Expense	915.21
Zapp & Judging	3,250.00
Total Expense	66,318.63
Net Ordinary Income	842.97
Net Income	**842.97**

2025 FESTIVAL OF ARTS COMMITTEE CHAIRS						
and BOARD MEMBERS						
As of May 2026	`					
COMMITTEE	**NAME**	**ADDRESS**	**PHONE/EMAIL**	**Board Member**	**Term/ Expires**	**Board Member Count**
Festival Coordinator	**Zoe Morning**	PO Box 1763 Wausau, WI 54402-1763	(715) 842-1676 (FOA), (info@wausaufoa.org			
Banquet	**Sarah Rudolph Chair**		715-803-3165 sarahrdlph@gmail.com			
	Rose DeHut Co-Chair		(715) 574-8236			
Block Captain/ Information Booth	**Judy Kafka Co-Chair**		(715)571-8060 clntplyr@gmail.com	**Yes**	1st: Oct. 2019 - Oct. 2022 2nd: Oct. 2022 - Oct. 2025	**X**
	Sue Summers Co-Chair		(715)571-0409 fivesummers@msn.com			
Building & Grounds	**Meghan Schneck Chair**		(608) meghanschneck@yahoo.com			
	Co-Chair					
Concessions	**Nancy Dolenshek**		715-5508765 (cell) nancy.dolenshek@gmail.com	**Yes**	1st: Oct. 2019 - Oct. 2022 2nd: Oct. 2022 - Oct. 2025	**X**
	Co-Chair					

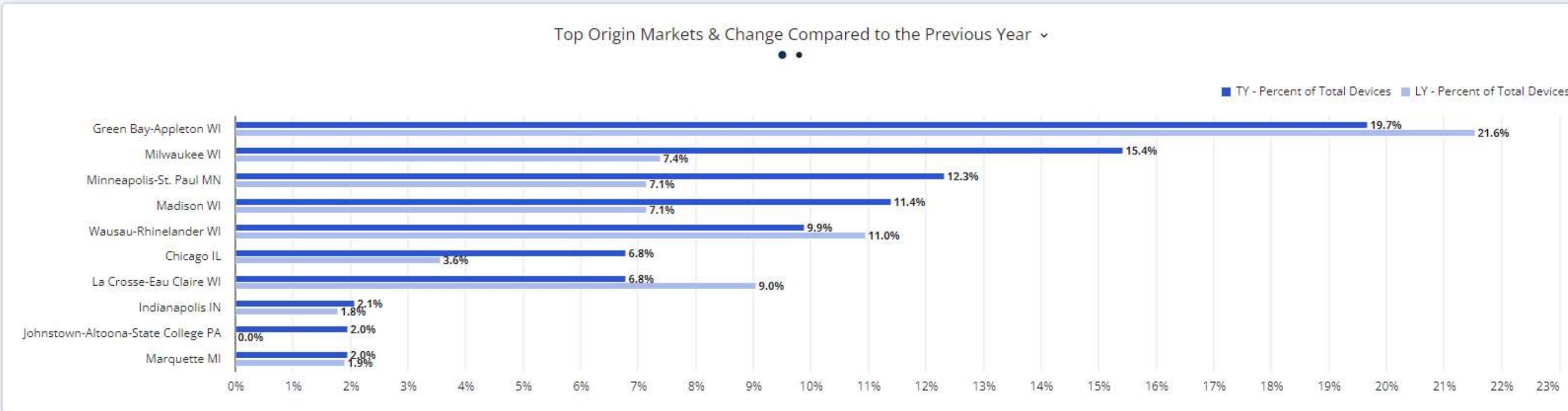
Emerging Artists	**Reid Rayome Chair**	2113 Lillie Street Wausau, WI 54403	(715)432-0867 (cell) rhrayome@yahoo.com		1st: Oct. 2024 - Oct. 2027 2nd: Oct 2027 - Oct. 2030	**X**
Family Art	**Monica Borreson Chair**					
Fundraising	**Chris Schliepp**		920-284-0446 cell CSchliepp@rwbaird.com		1st: Oct. 2018 - Oct. 2021 2nd: Oct. 2021 - Oct. 2024	**x**
	Teah Koval		teahnkoval@gmail.com		1st Oct 2025	**x**
Legal Advisor	**Reid Rayome**		(715)432-0867 (cell) rhrayome@yahoo.com			**x**
Graphics	**Gary Carle Chair**		(715)241-9797 carlestudios@gmail.com		1st: Oct. 2017 - 2020 2nd: Oct. 2020 - 2023	
Historian	**Diane Walker**		715-573-3811 dkwisu@gmail.com			
Matching Grants & Scholarships	**Kathy Drury Chair**		rickeydooey@gmail.com 715-212-6699		1st: Oct. 2018 - Oct. 2021 2nd: Oct. 2021 - Oct 2024	**x**
Performing Arts						
	Brad Schmicker Co-Chair					

President	**Wendy Hanneman Chair**		(715) 848-1916(h)	**Yes**	1st: Oct. 2020 - Oct. 2023 2nd: Oct. 2023 - Oct. 2026	**X**
President Elect						
Publicity and Social Media	**Ryan Wistein Co-Chair**		715 302 5175 rwistein@yahoo.com			X
	Ann Lemmer Chair		(920)207-3105 Ann.lemmer@gmail.com		1st: Oct 2016 - Oct. 2019 2nd: Oct 2019 - Oct. 2022	
Registration	**Zoe Morning Chair**					
	Co-Chair					
Silent Auction	**Yumiko Okabe**		(715)571-5670 (cell) yum@charter.net	**Yes**	1st: Oct. 2019 - Oct. 2022 2nd: Oct. 2022 - Oct. 2025	**X**
Technology Advisor	**Brad Schmicker**		(715)212-5161 bradschmick@gmail.com		1st: Oct. 2023-Oct. 2025 2nd: Oct. 2025-Oct. 2027	
	Bryson Bernarde		Bryson@unitedsmm.com			
Treasurer						
	Danielle Minnema		Danielle.Norwick@wipfli.com. 715-820-2409	**Yes**	Since Oct 2021	**X**
advertising	**Cory Mattson**		715-571-8157 rckrmattson@gmail.com			**x**

Young Collectors	**Wendy Hanneman Chair**		(715) 848-1916(h) wendy.hanneman@aspirus.org	**YES**	1st: Oct. 2020 - Oct. 2023 2nd: Oct. 2023 - Oct. 2026	
	Co-Chair					
Others	**David Keeffe Chair**		715 297-1440 dbkeeffe@gmail.com		1st: Oct. 2018 - Oct. 2021 2nd: Oct. 2021 - Oct 2024	

Where are your visitors coming from?

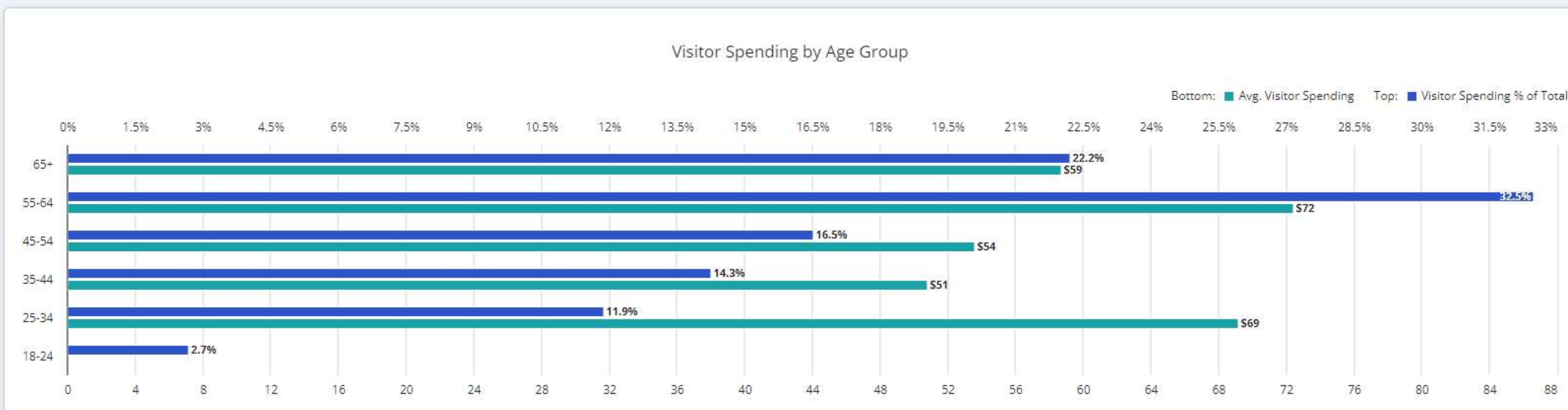
Source: Near. Note: This insight is not tied to the Visitor Market Area filter. If you select "Residents" this insight will appear blank. Tip: Click into an origin market bar to break down that Market Area by city, or by county. TY = This Year, LY = Last Year. The Non-US Visitor Market Area and Unknown Visitor City are excluded from this insight. Toggle to the next insight to see a full list of Market Areas. Click a table column header to re-sort the table.



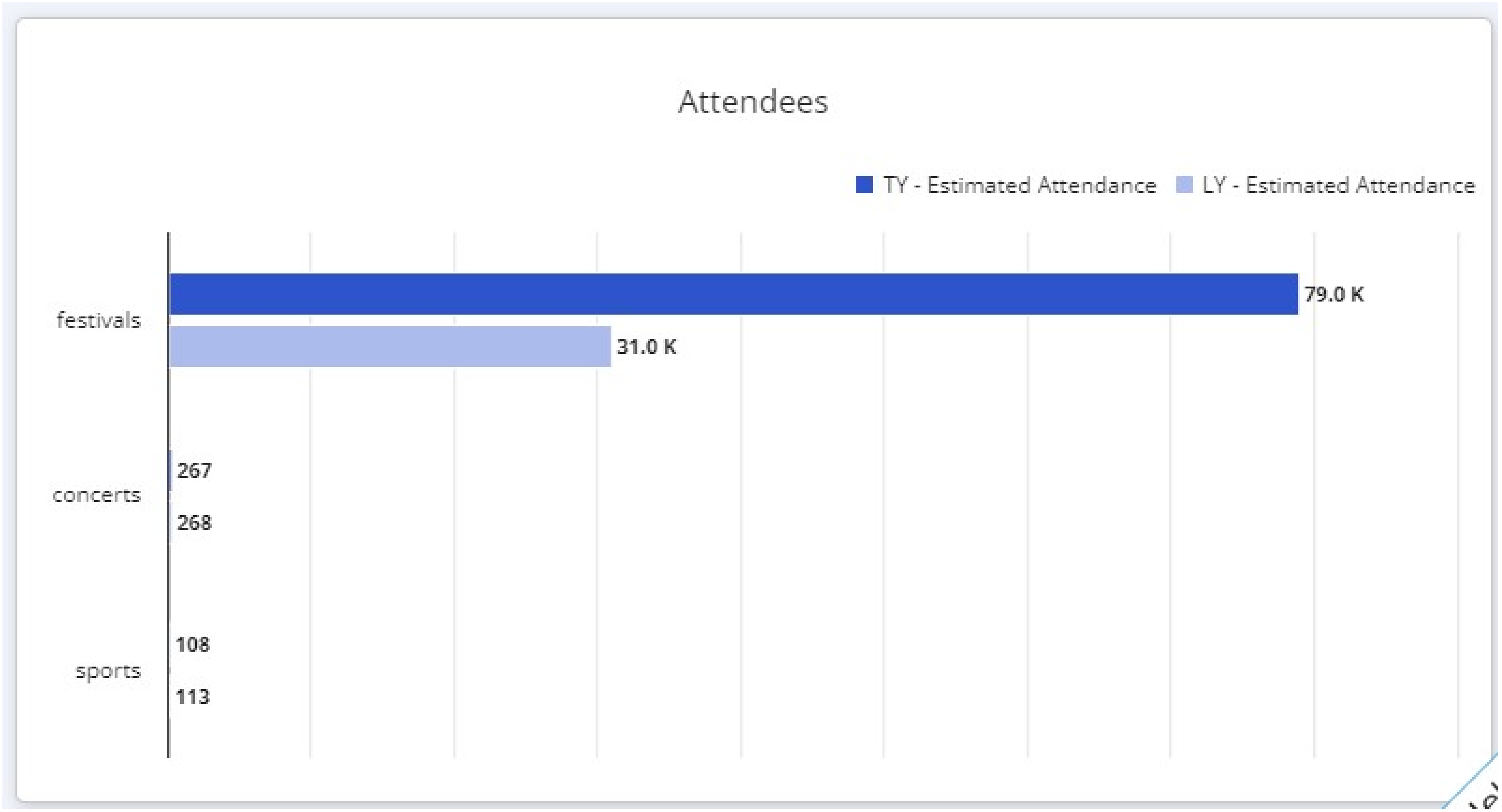
Where Visitors are coming from. Dark blue is this year, light blue is last year.

Which age groups are spending the most in destination?

Source: Affinity. Avg. Visitor Spending will not appear for an age group where there are 10 or less cardholders based on the filters selected. Tip: Click into an Age Group to see which Visitor Market Area those spenders are coming from.



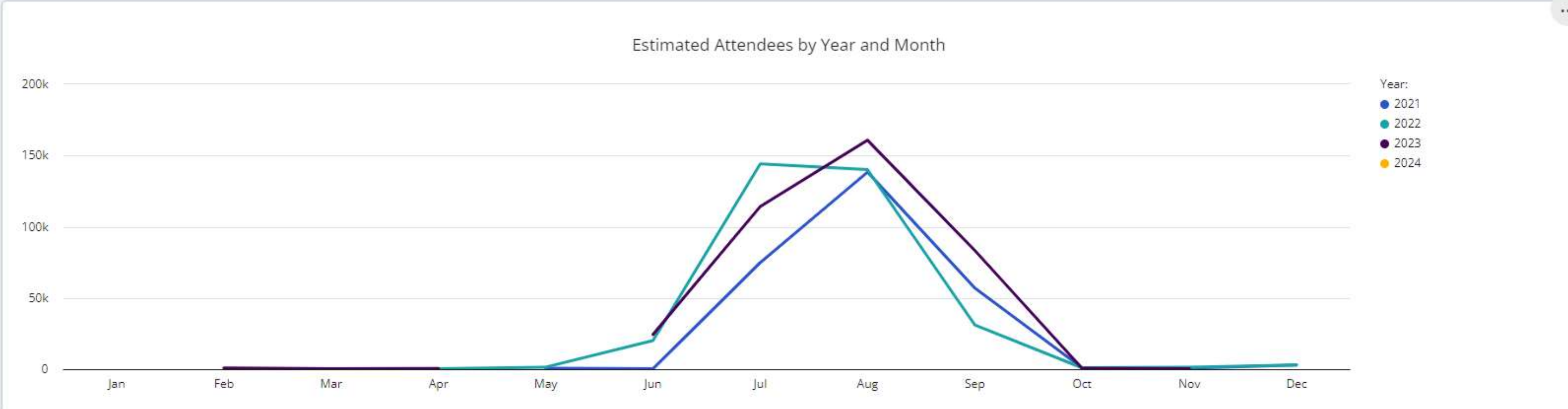
Age group spending – this would show your target audience.



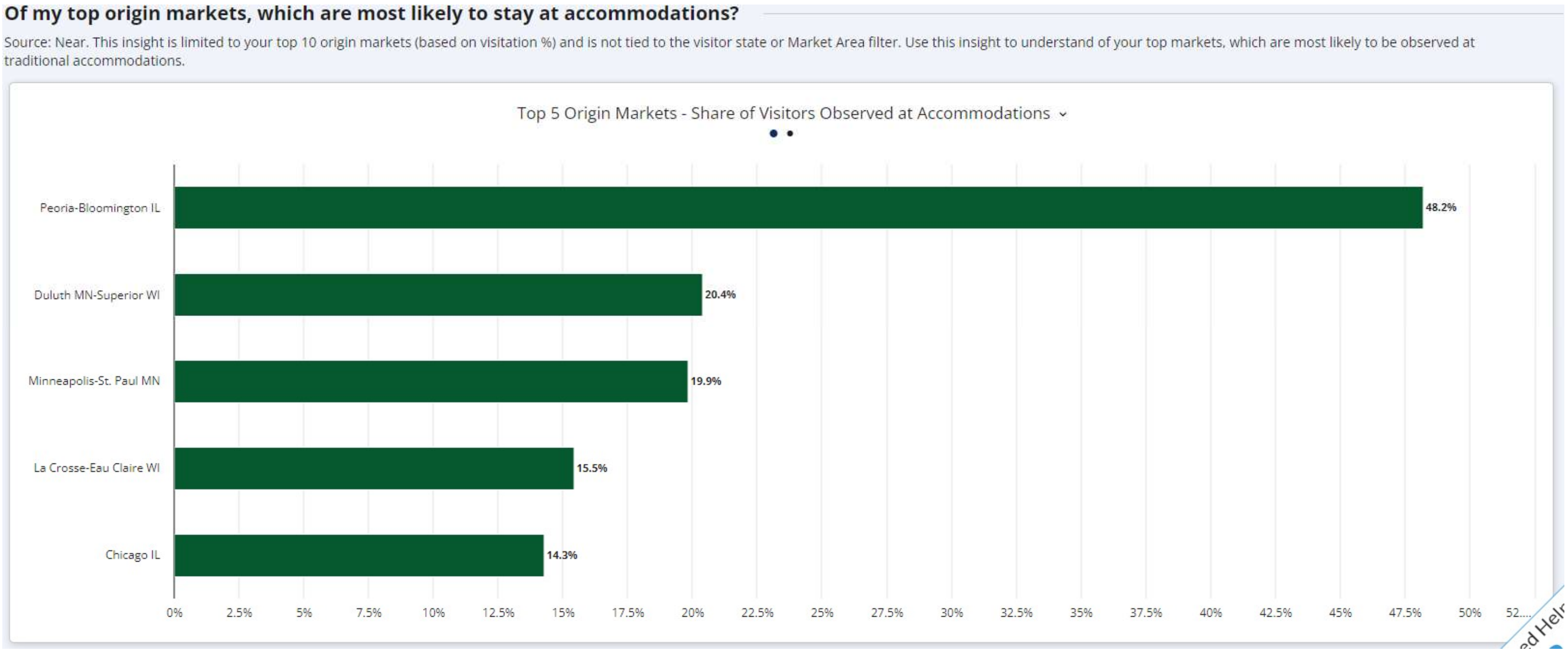
Estimated Attendance

How many attendees do our events typically draw each month and how is this year shaping?

Source: PredictHQ. Note: Events below include Conferences, Expos, Festivals, Concerts, Sports and Performing-Arts only. Other event types in the Category filter at the top are not tied to these insights. Tip: For details on what events took place in a particular month or year, click on any month for more information.



Graph shows the growth with 2023 event being the highest in attendance.



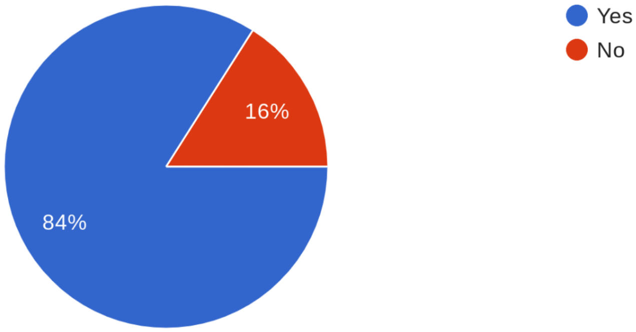
Top 5 Markets that are staying overnight in the Greater Wausau Area

WFOA Advertising Budget Projection - 2026

Company Name	Product	Amount (this year's budget)	Notes
City Pages	Winter Events Book	$795	
City Pages	Summer fun book	$900	
City Pages	Best of City Pages	$525	
WPR	WPR (Statewide)	$1,275	x
ZAPP	ZAPP (Nationwide)	$1,250	x
FB/Instagram	FB/Instagram	$1,500	x
Sun Printing	Sun Printing vinyl banners	$422	
CVB	CVB (statewide/web)	$1,200	x
VistaPrints	Rack Cards (local)	$350	
Sunshine	1/4 page ad plus 1 FREE Group Call to Artists eBlast	$600	
Midwest Art Fairs	online ad (nation wide)	$25	x
Milwaukee Record		$1,500	x
drip--geofencing	statewide and beyond	$1,500	x
Sunrise	Radio/web/social media nationwide	$1,158	x
	Total	**$13,000**	

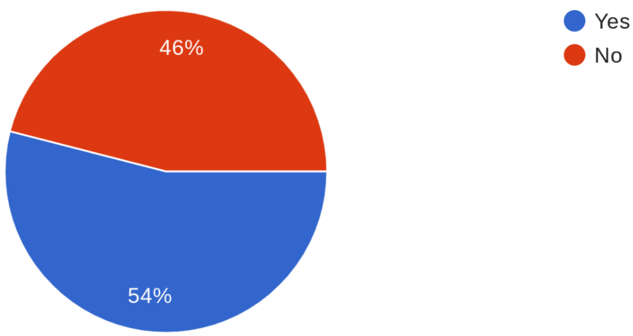
Did you patronize any of the downtown businesses?

50 responses



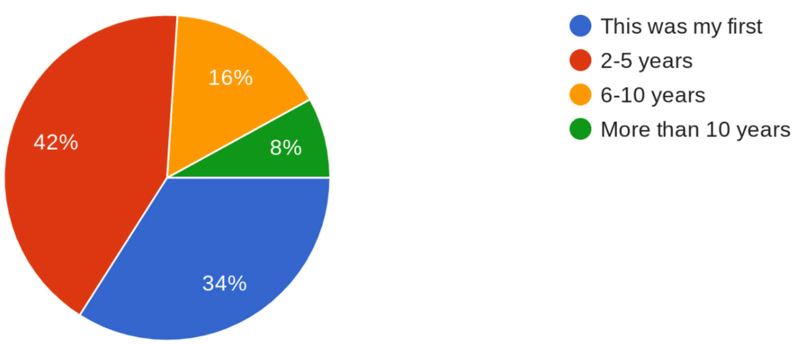
Did you stay in a Wausau area hotel?

50 responses



How many years have you exhibited at our festival?

50 responses



COMMISSION ROOM TAX TOURISM GRANT APPLICATION

Getting Started

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Applications must be submitted by the ***2nd Monday*** of these months to be considered.

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- Not for Profit Organization is in good standing with the City.
- Event is located in or near the City of Wausau and offers verifiable economic benefits to the City of Wausau through increased room nights.
- The event or promotional opportunity should demonstrate economic impact as it relates to tourism and is reasonably likely to generate multiple hotel stays.
- Repeat grant applicants have filed timely post event reports.

GRANT RECOGNITION:
All awarded marketing projects must include the City of Wausau logo and where space allows, the following grant recognition: "Sponsored in part by the City of Wausau Room Tax."

GRANT LIMITS:

- Grants will be limited based upon funding.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- All grants will be evaluated on established criteria and ranked competitively by the Commission.
- The grant application will serve as a grant agreement and must be signed by an authorized official within the organization.
- The grant expires one year after awarded by the Room Tax Commission.
- Grantees should request funds via email request to finance@ci.wausau.wi.us
- The Room Tax Summary Compliance reporting should be submitted timely to finance@ci.wausau.wi.us

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

- Completeness and quality of the application. 10 points
- A well-developed marketing strategy that can reasonably be expected to generate multiple hotel stays. 30 points
- The event and application substantiate local economic impact from:
    - local visitors. 5 points
    - day trip visitors. 15 points
    - overnight visitors. 30 points
- The methodology proposed to survey attendees is well developed and will likely generate good quality information regarding event attendees and whether they are local or non-local. 10 points
- The event is unique, unduplicated and creative . 20 points
- Expected/historical event attendance:
    - 0-1,000 attendees annually. 5 points
    - 1,000-5,000 attendees annually. 10 points
    - 5,000+ attendees annually. 15 points
- Event located within the City of Wausau. 5 points

REVIEW AND AWARD PROCESS:

- Timely grant requests will be reviewed by staff for completeness.
- The Commission will review, score and rank proposals based upon the Evaluation Criteria.
- Staff will compile ranking for Commission consideration.
- Commission will review and make a final grant determination.
- Grant applicants will be informed of the grant determination.

Organization Info

Name of Organization *
Great Northern Blues Society

Authorized Official First Name *
Rylan

Authorized Official Last Name *
Hoerter

Authorized Official Title *
President

Email Address *
President@gnbs.org

Organization Website URL *
gnbs.org

Street Address *
P.O. Box 2276

City *
Wausau

State *
WI

Zip *
54402

Daytime Telephone *
(715) 432-4355

Grant Information

Grant Request Amount *
$7,500.00

Total Project/Event Budget *
$30,000.00

Event Title *
27th Annual Blues Café

Event Date(s) or Date Range *
3/12/2027 - 3/13/2027

Projected Number of Attendees *
1000

Event Location *
Rothschild Pavilion

Have you applied or been awarded room tax or other public funding for this event? *

- [x] Yes
- [ ] No

Please Describe *
Village of Rothschild Tourism Support grant (Applied, not approved)

Estimated Number of Hotel Stays from the Project/Event *
150

*

- [ ] New Event/Project
- [x] Existing Event/Project

Project/Event Description *
The Blues Cafe is an annual 2-day blues festival that features 6 different local and national blues bands. The event is the primary fundraiser for the Great Northern Blues Society and the proceeds go towards helping the society carry out its mission, of conserving and promoting blues music and musicians. Proceeds also go towards the GNBS annual scholarship program, which is helping graduating high school seniors pursue their careers in music education. Proceeds also fund Blues in the Schools events.

The GNBS also sponsors a shuttle service that makes regular stops between Rothschild hotels to encourage out of town guests, and hotel stays.

The Blues Café was initially put together by Tom Schlief, one of the original and long-time organizers of the Big Bull Falls Blues Festival. The very first Blues Café' shows were hosted at the original Rothschild Pavilion in the mid-90's. The event ran for a couple of years and then disappeared. When the Great Northern Blues Society was formed in 1998, reviving the Blues Café was discussed as a way to raise money. It took a couple of years of planning to put on an event of its size, with the first “reincarnated” Café being held at Marathon Park’s Youth Building in 2000. (Now known as East Gate Hall.) The event took place there until 2008, when it was moved to the Stoney Creek Inn. The Blues Café came full circle in 2010 and moved back where it started in 1993 – the historical Rothschild Pavilion.

The Great Northern Blues Society is a 501.c3 Non-Profit organization. Tax ID 39-1985165

Optional: Upload Project/Event Details

Marketing Plan

Provide a detailed marketing plan or strategy. Complete the marketing budget below that lists each marketing piece, the location of the piece, approximate dates of views, cost, planned distribution of materials etc. Outline specifically how this plan is reasonably likely to generate overnight hotel stays. Additionally, highlight those marketing materials that are outside the City of Wausau and those that are over 90 miles away.

Marketing Plan Description *

Interviews with local radio and TV stations. Wausau Pilot & Review partnership. Heavy Facebook and email marketing to our established databases of members and festivalgoers.
Also seeking other online publications such as the Wausonian.

In the past, we have also partnered with News Channel 7 to run a 30-second TV advertisement on four of their channels as well as digital 3rd party marketing. We'd like to do this again but our current budget does not allow for it. In 2025 we paid $3,000 to Channel 7 and they matched our contribution for a total spend of $6,000.

Marketing Media Description *

Channel 7 News

Locations covered by the media/publications *

Channel 7 has detailed demographics that they can target with their digital advertising to target people with 3-rd party advertising who specifically show a music interest with their internet browsing.

Approximate dates *

February 1st --> March 12th 2027

Expected Cost *

$3,000.00

Grant Request *

$3,000.00

Marketing Media Description *

Radio Advertising

Locations covered by the media/publications *

Central Wisconsin

Approximate dates *

February 1st --> March 12th 2027

Expected Cost *

$2,000.00

Grant Request *

$2,000.00

Marketing Media Description *

Facebook / Instagram

Locations covered by the media/publications *

Key Cities with Blues influence that we target are - Chicago, Milwaukee, Madison, & Minneapolis.

Approximate dates *

January - March 12th

Expected Cost *

$1,000.00

Grant Request *

$1,000.00

Marketing Media Description *

Shuttle Service

Locations covered by the media/publications *

Central Wsconsin

Approximate dates *

March 12-13

Expected Cost *

$1,500.00

Grant Request *

$1,500.00

Total Plan Requested Amount

$7,500.00

Difference between grant requested and planned

$0.00

Additional information may be attached

Hotel Stays

Detail how your organization/project/event will be reasonably likely to create overnight stays in the City of Wausau lodging facilities. Please explain your methodology for identifying multiple hotel stays generated by the event and surveying event goers. *

In the past, we offered a hotel shuttle to run a route through Rothschild hotels, but we have heard from guests wanting to stay closer to downtown Wausau who can then be closer to the downtown bars and after parties. We would like to offer a secondary shuttle that would run a route through Wausau Hotels in addition to the Rothschild route.

Repeat events are required to provide evidence of historic room nights. *

We have worked with Rothschild in the past on hotel room blocks and post-event reporting. Event reporting has been VERY inaccurate for several factors. (guest not booking in the room block, room blocks close 30 days before our event, guest book in other hotels we haven't partnered with, hotel employees not accurately reporting stays..etc) If we receive a grant from Wausau, I would like to discuss options for partnering with Wausau hotels on room blocks, reporting and shuttle routes.

Is your event/project reserving a block of rooms for this event in a City of Wausau hotel *

○ Yes ☒ No

Required Documents

ORGANIZATION WIDE BUDGET *

2027 GNBS_Blues Cafe Budget.pdf 247.6KB

PROJECT OR EVENT BUDGET *

2027 GNBS_Blues Cafe Budget.pdf 247.6KB

RECENT YEAREND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS *

GNBS Financials 2022 - 2026.pdf 411.59KB

IRS DETERMINATION *

GNBS Articles of Incorporation.pdf 2.07MB

BOARD OF DIRECTORS *

Great Northern Blues Society - Board of Directors.pdf 113.38KB

Submit

I understand the restrictions placed on the expenditure of room tax funds governed by the Room Tax Commission and certify that the requested funds will be used for the purposes described in this application or approved by the Commission. I understand that the use of funds is subject to review and a post event reporting is required. Grant recipients will be considered ineligible for future grants until post event reporting is filed. This application will serve as a grant agreement and award as noted below.

Applicant Full Name *

Rylan Hoerter

Applicant Title *

GNBS President

Date Time

07/20/2026

Great Northern Blues Society Blues Café

Year		2026	2025	2024	2023	2022
Income						
Membership Fees		$ 720.00	$ 810.00	$ 900.00	$ 640.00	$ 765.00
Ticket Sales		$ 11,655.00	$ 15,575.00	$ 17,555.00	$ 12,738.50	$ 14,338.00
Food & Beverage		$ 5,178.00	$ 10,546.00	$ 10,055.00	$ 11,247.00	$ 11,786.00
Event Sponsorship		$ 6,000.00	$ 7,000.00	$ 6,500.00	$ 3,750.00	$ 4,775.00
Contributions		$ 269.00	$ 354.00	$ 137.00	$ 225.41	$ 359.00
Merchandise Sales		$ 1,199.00	$ 1,626.00	$ 2,067.00	$ 1,973.00	$ 2,222.00
Village Grant		$ 6,000.00	$ 7,500.00	$ 6,000.00	$ 2,000.00	$ 2,000.00
Auction		$ 625.00	$ 1,000.00	$ 310.00	$ 260.00	$ 280.00
	Total	**$ 31,646.00**	**$ 44,411.00**	**$ 43,524.00**	**$ 32,833.91**	**$ 36,525.00**
Expensives						
Large TV Screen				$ 1,726.50		
Bands		$ 14,450.00	$ 15,600.00	$ 15,500.00	$ 15,800.00	$ 11,334.00
Band Hotal Rooms		$ 1,980.00	$ 2,530.00	$ 2,309.79	$ 2,132.00	$ 1,616.32
Food & Beverage Costs		$ 2,595.70	$ 4,571.87	$ 3,826.18	$ 4,115.18	$ 4,696.10
Merchandise		$ 1,193.00	$ 1,163.00	$ 1,576.00	$ 1,131.00	$ 1,634.00
Cleaning		$ 643.89	$ 643.89	$ 643.89	$ 621.40	$ 509.72
Rent & Security		$ 2,697.50	$ 2,515.00	$ 2,342.50	$ 2,175.00	$ 1,287.50
Event Insurance		$ 907.00	$ 883.00	$ 826.00	$ 619.00	$ 473.00
Sound		$ 3,000.00	$ 2,750.00	$ 2,750.00	$ 2,750.00	$ 2,500.00
Video		$ 500.00	$ 450.00	$ 400.00	$ 350.00	$ 350.00
Printing (Tickets, wristbands)		$ 1,078.87	$ 629.35	$ 1,001.11	$ 540.00	$ 301.76
Advertising		$ 671.45	$ 3,446.00	$ 510.17	$ 1,122.00	$ 534.00
Postage & email& internet		$ 649.51	$ 345.42	$ 60.00	$ 69.25	$ 116.00
Miscellaneous		$ 131.41	$ 222.08	$ 550.68	$ 115.50	$ 325.62
Shuttle		$ 1,600.00	$ 1,600.00	$ 1,850.00	$ 750.00	$ 700.00
PayPal Fees		$ 237.08	$ 266.14	$ 183.29	$ 225.77	$ 255.27
Sales Tax WDOR		$ 1,006.55	$ 1,446.00	$ 1,585.15	$ 1,395.15	$ 2,572.97
	Total	**$ 33,341.96**	**$ 39,061.75**	**$ 37,641.26**	**$ 33,911.25**	**$ 29,206.26**
	Net Tota	**$ (1,695.96)**	**$ 5,349.25**	**$ 5,882.74**	**$ (1,077.34)**	**$ 7,318.74**

Great Northern Blues Society — Blues Café

2027 Operating Budget

INCOME

Category	2027 Budget
Membership Fees	$1,600.00
Ticket Sales	$10,000.00
Food & Beverage Sales	$5,000.00
Corporate Sponsors	$7,000.00
Grants	$6,000.00
Contributions / Donations	$500.00
Merchandise Sales	$1,200.00
Auction	$500.00
Total Income	**$31,800.00**

EXPENSES

Category	2027 Budget
Bands/Entertainment	$10,000.00
Band/Production Hotel Rooms	$2,000.00
Food & Beverage Costs	$2,500.00
Merchandise (Cost of Goods)	$1,000.00
Cleaning	$700.00
Rent & Security	$2,800.00
Event Insurance	$1,000.00
Sound/Produciton	$3,000.00
Video	$500.00
Printing (Tickets, Wristbands)	$1,000.00
Advertising	$3,000.00
Postage, Email & Internet	$650.00
Miscellaneous	$250.00
Shuttle	$1,800.00
PayPal Fees	$0.00
Sales Tax (WDOR)	$1,600.00
Total Expenses	**$31,800.00**

NET TOTAL (Income − Expenses)	**$0.00**

Notes

• Does not include funding for Blues in the Schools or Scholoships. These amounts are pending a profitable fundraiser. (Usually ~$5,000)

Great Northern Blues Society

MISSION STATEMENT:

Conserve, promote and present Blues music in all of its forms for audiences of all ages through community outreach. Serve as a support network for Blues musicians; encourage their artistic growth and help them thrive by providing opportunities to perform.

The Board

OFFICERS:
President – Rylan Hoerter
Vice President – Jason Busha
Treasurer – Jean White
Secretary – Debra Blegen

BOARD MEMBERS:
Jeff Busha
Carol Dorava
Mike Tatro
Jeff Oelke
Ron Graewin

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS:
Debra Blegen – Volunteer Committee Chair
Carol Dorava – Merchandise Committee Chair
Jeff Busha – Marketing Committee Chair, Web Dude & Videographer
Rylan Hoerter – Entertainment Committee Chair

Jason Busha – Sponsorship Committee Chair & Stage Manager
Rylan Hoerter – Membership Committee Chair
Mike Tatro – Official Photographer

** If you have interest in coordinating a committee, please contact gnbs@gnbs.org. We could use help with authoring content for our website, emails and social pages. We need help organizing membership events and we can always use help obtaining/retaining corporate sponsors.

The Great Northern Blues Society meets every second Thursday of the month at 6:15 pm (in the back room) at Loppnow's Sports Bar, 1502 N. Third Street in Wausau.
All members are invited and encouraged to attend.
Email us for more information or with any questions.

2026 ROOM TAX

	ROOM TAX COMMISSION
Carryover from Prior Year	**701,900**
Room Tax Revenue 2026 PROJECTION	**606,000**
Room Tax Retained by Hotels	**10,501**
Available	**1,297,398**
ROOM TAX COMMISSION AWARDS:	
CVB	**420,053**
IRONBULL events	**20,000**
Grand Theater	**30,000**
4th of July	**10,000**
Wings over Wausau	**20,000**
Sports Authority - World Corn Hole Tournament	**14,500**
Chalkfest	**2,500**
Alice Partnership in Agriculture	**5,000**
Trail Development	**398,678**
Riverlife Piers	**6,900**
Taste and Glow	**20,000**
Bull Fall Bluesfest	**20,000**
Venture Cup	**10,000**
Hmong Festival	**20,000**
Water-Filled Bollards	**7,644**
Domtar Dam Improvements	**25,000**
Slyvan Hill Trail Development	**25,000**
Total Allocated	**1,055,275**
NEW REQUESTS UNDER CONSIDERATION	
Grand Theater August 2026 to June 2027	**35,000**
Wausau Festival of Arts 2026	**9,408**
Blues Café March 2027	**7,500**
BALANCE AVAILABLE FOR ALLOCATION	**190,215**