

2017 LODGING AND TOURISM FUND APPLICATION

Bainbridge In Bloom Garden Tour – Arts & Humanities Bainbridge

SECTION 1: APPLICANT INFORMATION

1. Describe the event or facility proposed including its purpose, history, and budget. Include past attendance history if applicable, and estimate the number of tourists drawn to the event or facility/year. Please estimate total attendance and number of tourists estimated to attend for 2017. How has the activity been promoted in the past (if applicable) and what promotion is planned for 2017?

The Bainbridge In Bloom Garden Tour is a regionally and nationally renowned showcase of island gardens, our natural heritage and the artistry of our local garden designers and owners. Now entering its 29th year, “the Bloom” is one of the island’s signature annual events and contributes to the island’s high profile as a tourist draw throughout the year.

Attendance has fluctuated through the years depending on the economy, the weather, the amount of promotion, and the range of offerings during the 2- or 3-day tour. This past year, the tour was scaled down somewhat (2 days, no gala dinner or auction, \$30,000 budget) while AHB undertook a top-to-bottom reorganization, and the tour was also moved up one month to June. Despite these changes, the tour still drew nearly 600 patrons over the two days. More than 100 volunteers contributed their time to the event, which received positive reviews.

For 2017, we plan to bring back popular features from earlier years including “Bike the Bloom,” with outreach to Seattle-area recreational bicyclists who are already familiar with the island by virtue of the annual Chilly Hilly event and enjoy touring the community.

We typically promote the event with news releases and feature articles in local and regional newspapers, the West Sound Home & Garden magazine, and sometime through advertising in regional glossies. This past year we tried a month-long video advertising campaign on West Sound ferry runs, the results of which were inconclusive. While this portion of the campaign contributed to “ambient” awareness of the upcoming tour, it did not seem to have a direct impact on ticket sales through most of the campaign. Conversely, use of social media was very successful in driving ticket sales. For 2017, we will continue our social media push, explore opportunities with Seattle-area concierge services and the various lifestyle magazines, and unveil a new www.bainbridgeinbloom.org website dedicated to this long-running and popular event.

2. If appropriate, please identify the project partner(s) and briefly describe the involvement of each. Please note that the maximum award of \$100,000 will apply to any single project, even if proposed by a team of partners.

Partnerships are developed each year with leading local businesses through event underwriting and sponsorships. Paramount among our partnering businesses are Bainbridge Gardens and Bay Hay & Feed, two garden centers of regional repute whose support of the Bloom through direct sponsorship and onsite ticket sales is unwavering from one year to the next. Port

Madison Enterprises (Suquamish Tribe) has also been a valued partner, providing subsidized bus transportation to gardens in neighborhoods with parking restrictions.

For the past four years, Filipino-American Hall has provided its venue free of charge – saving the tour an estimated \$2,000 per year in venue costs compared to previous years when the tour Hub was staged at a local school.

As live music at every garden venue has become a staple feature of the Bloom tour, we will partner with the Island Music Guild to help secure local performing musicians to fill out the festival bill. Finally, reinstating the Bike the Bloom promotion will reanimate our partnership opportunities with regional bicycle clubs, and the island’s two bike shops. We expect other opportunities to present themselves as well thanks to AHB’s vigorous new leadership.

3. If appropriate, please list each project and amount of funding awarded and utilized from the Lodging Tax (Civic Improvement) Fund within the last five years (2011-2016).

2016: Currents magazine, \$2,000
2015: Currents magazine, \$7,900
2014: Currents magazine, \$9,200
2013: Currents magazine, \$4,700
2012: Bainbridge In Bloom, \$10,000
2011: Bainbridge In Bloom, \$11,000

4. If any projects previously funded through the Lodging Tax (Civic Improvement) Fund were not completed and/or if reports were not submitted to the City as requested, please explain:

All projects funded through LTAC were completed and proper reports filed.

SECTION 2: PROJECT INFORMATION

1. Describe the proposed project.

a. Identify the Project’s main objectives and how each will be achieved.

Bainbridge In Bloom is the Northwest’s premier garden tour. Five private gardens are featured, each representing distinct flora, settings, design philosophies and views, to showcase the very best of island properties and the art and lifestyle of Northwest gardening. Patrons move from garden to garden during the self-guided tour, spending as much time as they like at each location as they explore and enjoy the setting and meet the garden owners. Live music at each location enhances the experience.

With nearly 30 years of experience and momentum behind it, the tour’s template is very well established and is well within AHB’s organizational capacity. The process for putting into place each component – garden selections, musicians, volunteer support teams, marketing, transportation, setup/takedown and other logistics – is by now finely honed. Tour features come and go from one year to the next, but the overall goal of showcasing the best island gardens while providing an exciting and enjoyable experience for patrons far and wide is unchanging and always achieved. Patron response to the tour is overwhelmingly positive.

b. Be as specific as possible about the proposed services, measurable impacts, distribution method and costs.

LTAC funding will be used to help fund general operations and marketing of the 2017 Bainbridge In Bloom event.

On the island, our primary advertising outreach is through AHB's quarterly Currents magazine, which always features a two-page spread on the upcoming Bloom. This is very effective outreach, as Currents is direct-mailed to all 12,000 island households and we get very good response; it is also very costly, as each edition of the magazine costs \$10,000-\$12,000 to produce and distribute (only about two-thirds of this cost is offset by advertising and sponsorship revenue from businesses and organizations).

Off-island, we rely on regular coverage from West Sound Home & Garden magazine, and features in the Bainbridge Island Review and Kitsap Sun, all of which have been very reliable venues.

Funding from LTAC would allow us to consider additional paid-advertising venues like AAA's Washington Journey magazine. This publication has a readership demographic in line with the Bloom's target audience, but like all print venues is very costly – more than \$3,000 for a single, 1/6 page ad. We would also explore advertising spots on regional public radio stations like KNKX (formerly KPLU).

Operationally, transportation costs are expected to go up in 2017, as we already know two of the featured gardens have very limited vehicle access. Shuttles will whisk patrons from park-and-ride lots to those locations, to mitigate neighborhood impacts – one of the event's logistical challenges of which the public may not always be aware.

c. If appropriate, provide details about the facility operating costs to be funded.

There are no facility operating costs as this is not a facility-based program. All expenses are tied to organizing, promoting and executing the event at the five gardens selected for that year's tour.

Provide a brief narrative statement to address each of the stated selection criteria. Describe outcomes anticipated from each criterion, as well as the overall project.

a. Expected impact on increased tourism in 2017. Please provide specific estimates of how the project will impact the number of people traveling to Bainbridge Island from fifty miles or more one way from their place of residence, or travelling from another country or state outside of Washington State. If appropriate, compare/contrast this impact to actual or estimated number of tourists at your event/facility in 2015 and estimates for 2016.

As an event with a regional and even national profile, Bainbridge In Bloom is one of the island's signature draws for visitors each year. Its longevity and stature contribute to Bainbridge Island's profile as a premier destination for tourists drawn to the uniqueness of the island lifestyle.

During the 2016 event, we drew visitors from around the Puget Sound region, the Pacific Northwest, and the nation. Visitors came from many states including Massachusetts, Georgia,

Colorado, Florida, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Indiana, New Hampshire, New York, Idaho, Oregon and California, as well as several Canadian provinces. These results are in line with previous years for this annual event, despite the fact that we scaled down the event somewhat while AHB undertook a yearlong reorganization.

For 2017, we plan to reinstitute features from past year, including the “Bike the Bloom” promotion to bring low-impact, non-motorized tour patrons from Seattle and other locations; a pre-tour gala evening fundraiser for the AHB organization; additional arts “pop-up” galleries at each garden on the tour. Our goal is to grow the event back to patronage levels seen in previous years, when we could reliably count on 1,000 or more visitors on the tour.

b. Expected impact on or increase in overnight stays on the island. Please include actual or estimated numbers of tourists who will stay overnight in paid accommodations in Bainbridge lodging establishments in 2017 as a result of proposed activities. Please include the basis for any estimates.

Based on historical data, we estimate that 50 percent of Bloom patrons come from off-island, a significant percentage of those coming from out of state.

c. Projected economic impact on Bainbridge Island businesses, facilities, events and amenities, including sales of overnight lodging, meals, tours, gifts, and souvenirs (helpful data may be found on the Washington State Department of Commerce website).

Regional tourism is a growth industry, and Bainbridge Island clearly benefits from proximity to downtown Seattle and the exotic appeal of a ferry ride for visitors. The tourism group “Visit Seattle” reported recently (April 2016) that Seattle saw record tourism for the third straight year, with some 38.1 million visiting in 2015, a 2.6 increase year over year. Overnight stays were up 2.3 percent during this period; total economic impact was estimated at \$9.7 billion. Attracting even a minute fraction of that traffic will have an obvious benefit for Bainbridge lodging and service providers and shops, and the island economy overall. Anecdotally, we know that many Bloom patrons are sampling a variety of regional attractions while visiting Seattle, and become intrigued by the Bainbridge Island and the garden tour through our promotional outreach.

d. The project’s potential to draw visitors to the Island and increase overnight stays during the off-season, i.e. October 1 until Memorial Day.

The Bainbridge In Bloom event now falls very early in the tourism “high season” – late spring, right after Memorial Day and before tourism season begins in earnest. The tour was previously held in July, but in 2016 we moved up the tour one month to June. We did so in response to recent dry summers, to ensure that gardens would still be verdant and green during the tour. It was a calculated risk, given that the tour has a very loyal following who were accustomed to a July event. But the move had the desired effect, and gardens were in rich and full flower, and visitors reacted positively to the change.

While it is not an “off-season” event, the Bloom is one component of a network of garden-related activities and venues (including Bloedel Reserve and the regional garden centers) that position Bainbridge Island as a destination community for garden enthusiasts, and a must-see

for visitors year-round. A strong and well-marketed Bainbridge In Bloom is a residual draw and economic driver in all seasons.

e. The applicants' demonstrated history of organizational and project success.

The Bainbridge In Bloom Garden Tour has been successfully produced by Arts & Humanities Bainbridge for the past 28 years. We always have many garden owners eager to offer up their properties for the tour, despite the hard work and long preparation that precedes the event. Local businesses are also very supportive and glad to participate and have their names associated with the event.

f. Describe any partnerships with other organizations and businesses in the proposed project – including efforts to minimize duplication of services where appropriate and encourage cooperative marketing.

As a standalone event held in rotating locations around the island, Bainbridge In Bloom has not had an obvious overlap with other specific tourism events during the garden tour weekend. We have maintained an informal partnership with Bloedel Reserve, which has publicized the Bloom tour to its membership for the past few years, outstanding and very valuable support.

AHB has recently begun discussions with the island's other cultural organizations about better coordination and cross-promotion in 2017 to draw more regional attention. AHB is also a member of the Bainbridge Island Chamber of Commerce, and benefits from that organization's promotional outreach.

g. Describe the degree to which the project goals and/or results can be objectively assessed.

Quantitative assessment is possible through ticket sales and money raised, and Bainbridge In Bloom is on the upswing as we add features back into the two-day event. The event's longevity – nearly 30 years of continuous production -- also speaks well of its sustainability, value to the community, and popularity with patrons who visit the island and spend money while they are here.

h. Describe the degree to which the project will leverage award funds with additional matching funds or donated in-kind goods or services.

Arts & Humanities Bainbridge is requesting \$5,000 in LTAC funding in 2017, to be leveraged in a variety of ways.

Not often heralded, but integral to the success of the Bloom, are the scores of volunteers who plan the Bloom in the preceding months, then give up much (or all) of their weekend to make the two-day tour event a success. In the days leading up to the event, volunteers help set up supporting infrastructure at each garden – tents for check-in outside, and for performing musicians inside, among other arrangements. Once the Bloom weekend arrives, a large team of volunteers staff the Bloom "Hub" at the Filipino-American Hall – outside, managing parking as tour patrons arrive, and inside, distributing tour maps and providing information on restaurants, shopping and other services to optimize the visitor experience (and spending). Outside each garden, more volunteers check wristbands and provide directions and information. Docents staff each garden throughout the weekend, providing information on the types of plants on display and other garden features. The monetary value of these volunteers'

time is almost incalculable given the thousands of hours contributed to the event at every level over so many months.

Local businesses also make significant contributions to the success of the Bloom each year. This past year we enjoyed sponsorships by leading local businesses and organizations including Port Madison Enterprises (Suquamish Tribe), Bainbridge Homes, Puget Sound Energy, RBC Wealth Management, and TILZ, among others. Both Bainbridge Gardens and Bay Hay & Feed, garden centers of regional repute, are longtime sponsoring partners. All of this adds up to a successful event in which the investment of city LTAC dollars is matched and leveraged many times over.

Supporting Documentation

Provide a project timeline that identifies major milestones.

October 2016: Bloom coordinator and team leaders selected

November 2016: Call to artists – Bainbridge In Bloom poster art contest announced

December 2016: Five island gardens selected for the tour

January 2017: Begin graphic design for marketing collateral and advertising campaign

February-April 2017: Firm up participating vendors, musicians and artists. File]

May 2017: Marketing effort stepped up including social media outreach, story placement in regional gardening magazines and general-interest publications, advertising aboard ferries. Online ticket sales begin. Volunteers assigned for support at tour hub and each garden.

June 2017: Bainbridge In Bloom Garden Tour

July 2017: Post-event debrief

Include a detailed budget for the proposed project itemizing expenses and income. Include the amount requested from the Lodging Tax Fund and identify other sources of funding anticipated or obtained, including matching funds, as well as any in-kind contributions necessary to complete the project.

LTAC Funding Request

Grant revenue: \$5,000

Publicity/marketing

Advertising/marketing: \$6,000

Website development: \$1,000

Graphic design: \$2,000

Banners & Signage: \$ 1,000

Posters/printing: \$2,500

Postage: \$200

Event

Gala evening and catering: \$10,000
Buses: \$5,000 (shuttles to gardens)
Entertainment/musicians: \$3,500
Honey Buckets: \$500
Venue/Hub rental: \$500
Licenses: COBI \$25
Supplies: \$1,700
Garden Gifts: \$600
Merchant fees: \$400
Day-of-event catering expenses: \$250

If applicable, please describe the project's scalability. How would the project scope and budget be adjusted should the full amount of the LTAC funding request not be awarded? Please provide specifics. If this information is not provided, the award committee will not consider alternative levels of funding.

Bainbridge In Bloom has enjoyed a nearly three-decade run, some years with city funding but most years without. Full funding under the city's LTAC program will allow AHB to step up marketing efforts with regional publications and other venues, drawing more visitors to the event from off island. The event will continue with our without full funding under LTAC.

Provide copies of your organization's 2015 income/expense summary and 2016 budget.

Attached.

Provide an estimate of 2016 revenue and expenses.

Attached.

Letters of Partnership – Include letters from any partnering organizations committing to joint sponsorship of the application and specifying their intended activities.

N/A. The application is submitted solely by Arts & Humanities Bainbridge.