



MAKE IT HAPPEN Create & Improve Funds

Goal of Create and Improve Program:

The goal of this program is to create and improve tourism-related facilities in Ruston and Lincoln Parish, as well as enhance the visitor experience and strengthen Ruston as a visitor destination. We want to improve our community through improving infrastructure, new construction, beautification, renovations, and repairs for tourism-related businesses and organizations.

There is a separate program to help fund the promotion of special events and festivals that attract visitors to Ruston and Lincoln Parish.

Events are not eligible to receive money through both programs and should only apply through the program which best fits the event parameters.

Who is eligible to apply for funding?

Any tourism-related business or organization that is attempting to create new or improve existing tourism infrastructure in Lincoln Parish. The creation or improvement must begin in 2018 with a well defined timeline for completion.

How to request funds?

Applications for funding should be sent in with completed funding form to
Experience Ruston CVB
Make it Happen Funds Request
P.O. Box 1383
Ruston, LA 71273

Selection Criteria:

Experience Ruston will consider applications according to the following criteria:

- Commitment to tourism in Ruston and Lincoln Parish– evidence that the project serves to attract out-of-town guests, generating restaurant and hotel traffic; marketed to the fullest extent possible in an effective and efficient manner; demonstrates a willingness to work with the tourism industry; commitment to develop other funding sources
- Regional need – address a need within our community that impacts our region; packaging of hotels, attractions and shopping will also be evaluated.
- Soundness of proposed project – clearly identified objectives, assigned responsibilities and accountability with a realistic timetable for implementation and additional funding sources.
- Stability and management capacity – a proven record or demonstrated capacity to develop resources, plan, organize and implement a planned project
- Quality and uniqueness of proposed project – extent to which the activity provides a program for tourists which is of significant merit and without such assistance would not take place in Ruston

What can funds be used for?

- Expenditures for survey and planning for development or revitalizing a tourism related attraction
- Capital improvements of a new or existing tourism related attraction.
- Special projects deemed to be of a community wide tourism interest.

Matching Funds Requirement

Organizations are encouraged to pledge a 30% match of dollars for the request for funding to be considered. The money funded by the CVB should not be more than 70% of the total project budget for the event.

Example: If the total budget for your project is \$25,000, you can request 70% of that budget or \$17,500 from the CVB with a match of \$7,500 from your organization to complete the budget.

Cap on Funding

The total amount of funding by the Experience Ruston CVB may be no more than \$35,000 per year per project.

Requirements of Matching Funds

1. If you are awarded a Make it Happen Funds by the Experience Ruston CVB to help promote your event, you will be required to meet with staff of the CVB for a grant work session. The work session should be held as soon after award of the grant as possible and will include information on the follow-up report, as well as assistance in the production project. It is your responsibility to schedule this work session. If the work session is not completed in advance of the event, the funding will be withheld.
2. The following information should be included in all promotional materials:
 - All funded projects must display signage that includes the Experience Ruston logo provided by Experience Ruston in an appropriate size as in relation to project sponsor guidelines.
 - All verbal and visual marketing materials for any project must include experienceruston.com and the Experience Ruston Logo. This includes all fliers, banners, invitations, websites, email, t-shirts, and media advertisements and announcements.
 - Experience Ruston CVB will receive a sponsorship packet appropriate to the amount of support.
3. Failure to comply with these requirements will disqualify the event organization from future funding assistance.

Distribution of Funds and Final Report

Up to 75% of approved funds will be distributed to organizations prior to their completion with proper documentation. The final 25% of funds will be distributed following completion with a 30-day requirement to file a final report after the event.

A final report should include:

- Final Budget – compare proposed to actual budget
- Summary of the project and its completed status
- Samples of all marketing materials to include ad tearsheets, website promotions, printed materials, video promotions or other collateral materials.
- Photos of the completed project

The final report should be submitted to:

Experience Ruston CVB
Attn: Travis Napper, President
P.O. Box, 1383
Ruston, LA 71273.

Failure to comply will disqualify event organization from future funding consideration.

If the organization does not request the remaining funds within one year of the award date, the organization forfeits the amount.

Additional Information

Funds may be withdrawn for projects which are substantially reduced, inaccurately portrayed in the application or which do not reasonably occur within the proposed dates.

Funding is awarded on a competitive basis and is not guaranteed. Applicants should be aware that they may not receive the full amount of funds requested.