COLUMBIA, MO
WHAT YOU UNEXPECT

City of Columbia, Missouri
Convention and Visitors Bureau

August 4, 2017

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

REF: Annual Convention & Visitor's Bureau Tourism Development Program Update

Dear Mayor & City Council,

On behalf of the Convention & Visitors Bureau Advisory Board, this letter serves as the annual update on the CVB's Tourism Development Program. A portion of the Columbia Lodging Tax is set aside for tourism development. Applications can be made by not-for-profit and for-profit organizations for assistance with funds to develop new, or expand existing festivals and events that generate overnight visitation in Columbia hotels, provide an economic impact and have potential for future growth.

The Tourism Development Program currently has five different categories: Signature Series, Festivals & Events, Sports Events, Attraction Development and Community Sponsorships. In FY2017, $159,108 was awarded to 25 tourism development applications.

The Signature Series events are Columbia's largest and oldest festivals that have been funded through the tourism development fund for over 10 years. In FY17, $75,000 was given to our seven (7) "Signature Series" events: True/False Film Festival, Roots N Blues N BBQ Festival, Show-Me STATE GAMES, Art in the Park, MU Concert Series, Citizen Jane Film Festival, and the Heritage Festival. These events are considered "iconic" to Columbia and add to our overall tourism product. A majority of them generate national press coverage for the community. Funding levels are based on a scoring system with the following criteria: overnight stays, marketing plan, sponsorship plan, event timing and cultural image. There are three levels of funding based on the overall application score: Gold tier - $12,500; Silver tier - $10,000 and Bronze tier - $7,500.

The CVB Board received one Festival & Events application and awarded $7,500 for the We Always Swing Jazz Series. Now in its 23rd year, the We Always Swing Jazz series features over 14 different musical & educational jazz events starting in September very year and go through the month of April. Other special events are held during the month of April which is National Jazz Month. This year they will also be collaborating with the Citizen Jane Film Festival, the Unbound Book Festival and the MU School of Music Centennial Celebration. The tourism funds will assist with entertainment and promotion expenses.

There were two Sports Development Fund applications submitted in FY2017. The Columbia Swim Club received $10,000 to host the SPEEDO Sectional Championships in March 2017. This met brought in over 700 swimmers and 110 coaches from Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas, Nebraska and Illinois. The three day event generated over 1,800 hotel room nights for Columbia and is on track to become an annual event during the month of March. The Missouri Basketball Coaches Association was awarded $10,000 to host the Norm Stewart Classic. This event is also held during a low occupancy time for hotels, in December, and brings in 24 boys & girls varsity high school teams from across the state of Missouri to play basketball for 48 straight hours. All of the games are 'live-streamed' and carried on ESPN3.

Community Sponsorships became part of the Tourism Development Program in 2013. These are events or promotions targeted at residents and/or the community that don't generate a great deal of room nights, if any, but do provide a means to increase awareness of the city of Columbia as a tourism destination. During FY2017, the CVB Board reviewed 16 event applications for a total of $41,700. Some of the events awarded were: Fire in the Sky, 9th Street Summerfest, Unbound Book Festival, MO Symphony's Hot Summer Nights, 2017 Bike MO, Boone Dawdle and the Missouri River Relief 2017 Wild & Scenic Film Festival. Funds are used to support event promotions and entertainment costs. The Board also voted to move the Heritage Festival from the Signature Series category to the Community Sponsorship level starting in FY2018.

During FY2017, the CVB contracted with the University Of Missouri Office Of Research for $14,908 to conduct an economic impact study of the Missouri State High School Activities Association State Basketball Championships, as well as a visitor profile study of the MU Concert Series. As many festivals and events are partially financed by public tax support, these third-party studies are important in identifying their positive impact on the local community. When the final results of these two studies are completed, we will report the findings to the Council. We will continue to use these surveys as a tool to assess and evaluate festivals & events every two to three years.

In closing, we have requested $425,500 be appropriated in the CVB's FY2018 budget as we anticipate requests for tourism dollars to continue throughout the next fiscal year.

On behalf of the CVB Advisory Board, thank you for your time and thank you for your service & commitment to the city of Columbia.

Sincerely,

Scott Cristal, CTA
Chair, CVB Advisory Board

cc: CVB Advisory Board Members
CVB Director - Amy Schneider, CTA
City Manager - Mike Matthes, CTA
City Clerk - Sheela Amin, CTA