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SAMPSON COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU ANNOUNCES CAPITAL GRANT PROGRAM

Capital Grant Program developed to grow tourism assets in Sampson County

(Sampson County, NC) -- The Sampson County Convention & Visitors Bureau (SCCVB) has revealed the newest tool in its arsenal aimed to assist in the development and growth of tourism throughout Sampson County. On November 28, 2017, the Sampson County CVB Board of Directors approved the implementation and funding of the Sampson County Convention & Visitors Bureau Capital Grants Program.

The SCCVB Capital Grant Program (CGP) was developed to stimulate economic growth by supporting non-profit visitor attractions in Sampson County, NC. The program allows the SCCVB to award capital grant funding to organizations whose projects are designed or developed to attract visitors to Sampson County. The program allows eligible organizations to receive funding for the development of new visitor attractions or to organizations that are working to enhance or restore existing structures and other projects whose primary mission is to serve visitors to Sampson County.

Capital Grant Funds may be granted for projects such as new brick and mortar construction, maintenance and preservation of historic attractions, cultural and historical acquisitions, conservation of artifacts, or other infrastructure that improves the CVB's ability to promote tourism and that assists in attracting visitors to Sampson County. "Primary consideration will be given to those projects that have the greatest potential for positive economic impact for tourism within the County. Highest priority will be given to those projects which are more likely to promote and generate travel from outside Sampson County and that lead to overnight stays among our local lodging establishments" stated Sheila Barefoot, Director of the Sampson County CVB.

CVB Board Member and Chair, Julie Stadig stated, "Projects performed under the CGP must be for travel and tourism development only and may not contain or include elements not related to destination development. Projects not adhering to this provision will not be considered. All projects approved for funding must prove that they attract and serve visitors to Sampson County as their primary purpose."

Organizations that may apply for CGP funding include any legally chartered 501-(c)3 non-profit Sampson County organization or chartered municipality representing a visitor attraction, which includes tourism promotion among its major activities. Documentation of legal status, tax exemption, federal identification number, budget, and organizational purpose are required with all applications. The organization applying for funds must show that they own the property, and it is not leased by the organization. However, if an organization making a request does not own the land or the structure to be preserved or built on a particular site, the organization may provide properly executed documents that state the organization has a permanent easement for the site, including ingress and egress.

The Sampson County Convention & Visitors Bureau CGP will use a matching grant formula whereby organizations may be awarded one grant dollar for each dollar spent by the organization, up to \$50,000 per project. Due to the potential number of grant applications that may be received annually, the full amount of an organization's grant request may not be awarded. It is anticipated that typical grant awards may average between \$5,000 and \$10,000. The SCCVB Capital Grant Program has a cap of \$50,000 per organization. Once this amount has been distributed to an organization, the organization must sit out of the grant application process for a period of three (3) years from date of final funding from the CVB. In addition, multiple non-profits may not apply to receive funding for the same project.

SCCVB Director, Sheila Barefoot stated, "the Sampson County CVB Capital Grant Committee will process Capital Grant Applications twice per fiscal year (August & January) or until such time that the annual allocation is exhausted. Applications for the first cycle may be submitted from July 1st until July 30th, and must be postmarked no later than July 30th for consideration during the August cycle. Applications for the second cycle may be submitted from November 30th to December 31st, and must be postmarked no later than December 31st for consideration during the January cycle. Capital Grant applicants must contain the written approval or a formal resolution of the organizations governing board, and include relevant municipal government endorsement, and a list providing other individuals or organizations that have made contributions to the proposed project."

Funding for the SCCVB Capital Grant Program is provided through room occupancy taxes (ROT) that are collected by Sampson County's lodging establishments which are generated as a result of overnight lodging by visitors to Sampson County. The SCCVB will allocate 33% of all room occupancy taxes collected to the Capital Grant Program on an annual basis.

"It is the mission of the Sampson County Convention & Visitors Bureau to market and promote Sampson County, its assets, and its industry partners to attract both business and leisure travelers to Sampson County," stated Julie Stadig, CVB Board Chair. "During the past year, the SCCVB contracted with Magellan Strategy Group to assist in developing a strategic plan created to identify Sampson County's strengths and weaknesses as related to tourism and tourism development and to create a roadmap that will allow the CVB to meet

the objectives identified. Since the strategic plan was adopted, two of the primary goals identified in the strategic plan have now been achieved stated Stadig, including the recent adoption and approval allowing the ROT rate to be raised from 3% to 6% and now with the implementation of the CVB's Capital Grant Program."

The Sampson County CVB was approved and enacted to be a public authority established through legislation by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina and adopted, approved, and enacted by the Sampson County Board of Commissioners with the purpose of promoting the development of travel and tourism related activities in Sampson County, through state, regional and national advertising, marketing and promotional activities and campaigns.

For more information or details about the SCCVB Capital Grant Program or to receive grant guidelines and applications, contact Sheila Barefoot, Director at 910-592-2557 or via email at sbarefoot@visitsampsonnc.com. The Sampson County CVB's offices are inside the Sampson County Exposition Center located at 414 Warsaw Road, Clinton, NC.

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