



MEMORANDUM

TO: Whatcom County Council

FROM: Tawni Helms, Office Administrator

RE: Whatcom County Lodging Tax Funding

DATE: December 2, 2024

On November 19, the Whatcom County Council approved the 2025 Whatcom County Lodging Committee funding recommendations. The contracts that require council approval are now on the December 3, council agenda. for 2025 funding. The recommendations are consistent with the history of this fund source. The 2025 application process included an emphasis on the Lodging Tax Committee's funding priorities as outlined below:

1. Visitor Center and Tourism Operations
2. Agencies and Event sponsors providing visitor services to Whatcom County
3. Events/Festivals hosted in Whatcom County.

2025 funding commitments continue to be on par with previous years. Five of the twenty-one awarded 2025 funding applicants are new and will be hosting events in unincorporated Whatcom County. Consistent with the funding priorities, the Chamber visitor centers received increased funding due to the increasing costs of operations. Additionally, this is the first time we are entering into 2-year agreements to further emphasize the funding commitment for the Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism (the City of Bellingham is also entering into two-year agreement with BWCT). Birch Bay Chamber Visitor Center and Mount Baker Foothills Chamber Visitor Center are also entering into two-year agreements as both Chambers serve Tourism in the largest areas in unincorporated Whatcom County. This is consistent with our biennial budget and the historical and continued commitment of the Lodging Tax Committee to prioritize funding these entities as defined in [RCW 67.28.1816](#). Any necessary adjustments for 2026 will be addressed during the biennial budget process.

In addition to emphasizing funding priorities, The Lodging Tax Committee is also developing a strategic plan for the consideration of allowable capital projects.