

FY23 Iowa Tourism Grant Guidelines

The Iowa Tourism Grant (ITG) Program promotes tourism in Iowa by funding tourism-related marketing initiatives, events and meetings that benefit both local economies and the state's economy. Applications are available annually, and preference will be given to those that support the overall marketing plan of the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) in terms of its target audiences and messaging.

IEDA/Iowa Tourism Office Marketing Plan

When people from other states see Iowa on TV or online, they want to visit. When they visit, they are more likely to stay. This is why IEDA's visitor and talent attraction strategies fit hand in glove through its This is Iowa initiative.

IEDA's marketing is helping Iowa address one of its major challenges: population. Slow population growth has not kept pace with a wave of retiring Baby Boomers. The state must attract more people – visitors and residents – from other states.

This is Iowa was built on a significant research study, with two key findings:

1. Most people simply don't know enough about the state to form an accurate opinion.
2. Tourism is critical: two-thirds of U.S. adults say they have seriously considered moving somewhere after visiting.

Following a pandemic-fueled pause in out-of-state marketing, IEDA leveraged a one-time infusion of federal COVID-19 recovery funds in FY2022 to take its marketing to places it had never been, including:

- Introducing Iowa to the nation for the first time through a national television ad that gave viewers a glimpse of Iowa's beauty and lifestyle.
- A tourism campaign that showcases the state from an entirely fresh perspective – that of a drone camera – and sets Iowa's tourism efforts apart from others.
- Investing in more everyday marketing tools that Iowa needs to stay competitive, including a refreshed digital presence and an inventory of photography and video that brings Iowa to life for prospective visitors.

Preliminary results show the investment is paying off: About one-quarter of U.S. travelers and one-third of U.S. job seekers saw Iowa advertising in the first half of 2022, according to a survey. Of those, 80% of travelers and 83% of job seekers said the advertising made them more likely to consider Iowa.

IEDA/Iowa Tourism Office Target Audiences

- Young adults (Gen Z and Millennials ages 22-29) looking to start and/or grow a career and gain new experiences
- Young families (Millennials and Gen X ages 30-39) wanting to make family memories and discover a work/life balance
- Middle-aged adults (Gen X and Boomers ages 40-55) with disposable income that may recommend Iowa to younger generations

IEDA/Iowa Tourism Office Messaging

- Affordability of travel and cost of living/doing business
- Economic viability of communities and careers
- Natural beauty for visiting and quality of life
- Culture and lifestyle from art to festivals, breweries and restaurants

Read an overview of IEDA's marketing [plan here](#)

Eligibility

Applicants must be a tourism-related entity based in Iowa. This includes nonprofits, for-profits, cities, counties and regional government and planning entities.

Applicants may submit one application per funding cycle. The same project cannot receive funding from the ITG program two years in a row.

Funding

Minimum grant request: \$2,500

Maximum grant request: \$10,000

- All funds requested must be whole numbers between \$2,500 to \$10,000 and be in increments of \$100. (i.e., \$2,500; \$2,600; \$2,700; etc.)

Application Requirements

Each application must contain the following:

- Applicant name, address, email, phone number, contact person and federal identification number
- Description of how the application supports [IEDA's marketing plan](#)
- Selection of the **primary** focus of the project
 - Advertising (i.e., purchasing spots for radio, TV, billboard, newspaper, social media, etc.)
 - Print production (i.e., signage, postcards, print advertisements, etc.)
 - Multimedia production (i.e., video, podcasts, animation graphics, etc.)
 - Event or meeting
- Selection of the IEDA Target Audience(s) the project aligns with
- Selection of the IEDA message(s) the project aligns with
- Documentation that the grant request is consistent with the cost of implementing the project, which includes vendor quotes, bids, advertising rate sheets and invoices (must total at least the grant amount request plus the cash match)
- Written documentation establishing the amount and source of the required 25 percent cash match
- Completed Minority Impact Statement Form and W9 (both found on the [ITG website](#))
- Description of the plan to recognize IEDA/Iowa Tourism Office for its investment in the project
 - Travel Iowa credit language and logos are at traveliowa.com/logos
- Applicants that are an event, attraction, restaurant or lodging facility must have an updated listing on traveliowa.com. If you are a new listing or event, you will need to wait until the launch of the new traveliowa.com in September.

Eligible Expenses

All project expenses (grant request plus cash match) must directly relate to the implementation of a tourism-related marketing initiative, event or meeting **and be incurred within the calendar year (January 2023 – December 2023)**. Examples of eligible expenses include:

- Costs associated with executing marketing tactics and strategies, including planning, design and production of advertising, print materials, digital tools and exhibits for consumer-focused tradeshows.
- Payments to speakers or entertainers, venue rental and equipment rental for tourism-related educational events or meetings.

- If expenses are due before January 1 for events held in early in the year, those expenses are allowed in the budget and in quotes provided. It is preferred that payments to vendors be made after January 1, but this may not be possible. Grant reviewers will be made aware of this when scoring.

Any expense that doesn't directly relate to the project is ineligible for funding. Examples include:

- Staff salaries and wages
- Vertical infrastructure
- Equipment and software
- Postage
- Marketing programs already subsidized by the Iowa Tourism Office
- All travel, meal and lodging costs of staff and contractors
- Alcoholic beverages
- Solicitation efforts
- Lobbying fees
- Projects that receive funding from the Regional Sports Authority District or Meet in Iowa programs
- Prizes given to participants or attendees

Scoring Criteria

ITG applications receive a score between zero and 100 points. A group of volunteer reviewers affiliated with Iowa's tourism industry determines scores and grant awards. Preference will be given to applications that reach IEDA's target audience(s) and align with IEDA messaging.

Project Information – 20 Points

Explain the project, the timeline for implementation and how state funds will be used. Remember to include how the project aligns with IEDA's marketing campaign.

Economic Impact and Ability to Promote Tourism Industry Growth – 20 Points

Describe how the project supports the mission of the Iowa Tourism Office and how the project is part of the applicant's broader marketing strategy to increase tourism's economic impact. The mission of the Iowa Tourism Office is to grow the state's economy through travel expenditures. Use numbers—economic impact, ROI, attendance, number of households/people reached, etc.—where applicable.

Innovation – 20 Points

Describe the innovative qualities of the project. If the application is not for a new marketing initiative or event, explain how the proposed project will enhance the current marketing initiative or event. Special consideration will be given to projects that utilize new media tactics (i.e., video, podcasts, etc.) to connect with IEDA's target audiences as detailed in [IEDA's marketing plan](#).

Need – 15 Points

Explain the need for funds to implement the proposed project. Provide information on other funding sources, including both successful and unsuccessful requests. State whether the project will continue without an award.

Sustainability – 10 Points

Describe plans to continue and sustain the project upon completion of the grant. Include how the project's success will be measured and how the project's benefits will be utilized for future marketing endeavors.

Budget – 10 Points

Budget must be relevant to the project. Provide clear documentation of planned project expenses.

Collaboration – 5 Points

An application that represents a collaboration of multiple entities will receive five points. A collaborative application has multiple partners investing in the project.

Required Records

Grantees must submit invoices for eligible project expenses and proof of payments that total to at least the grant award amount plus the 25 percent minimum cash match. Grantees must also provide examples of how the Iowa Tourism Office's investment was acknowledged. Projects that come in under budget or cannot produce eligible invoices will not be reimbursed fully for the awarded grant. All project contracts run January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023. Final reports are due by the deadline provided in your contract administered by IEDA.