

Iowa Tourism Office Marketing Grant Scoring Rubric

Project Description – Max Score = 20 Points				
20	15	10	5	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clearly conveys how the campaign or project aligns with IEDA’s mission and the ITO’s marketing campaign in its approach, target audiences and media channels</li> <li>- Overall application is clear, concise, and well-composed. It clearly identifies, articulates and justifies the proposed campaign details, use of specific tactics, progression of the campaign through major milestones and accurately identifies responsible parties</li> <li>- Summary includes information about how the applicant has prepared for calendar year 2026 implementation</li> <li>- Clearly describes how state funds will be used to implement specific campaign tactics</li> <li>- Is an out-of-state marketing campaign</li> <li>- Timeline is well-thought-out, appropriate, clear, breaks down the appropriate campaign milestones between 1/1/26 – 12/31/26 and aligns with the narrative, budget and tactics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Somewhat articulates how the project aligns with IEDA’s mission and ITO’s marketing campaign</li> <li>- Overall application is clear And includes information about the proposed project but lacks some important campaign details, tactics or milestones <i>or</i> the narrative is so repetitive it is difficult to read and find important information</li> <li>- Preparation for the project is not noted in the summary</li> <li>- States general use of state funds but does not connect the budget to specific campaign tactics</li> <li>- Markets <i>primarily</i> to out-of-state travelers</li> <li>- Timeline is between 1/1/26 and 12/31/26 but does not completely align with the narrative or budget or is missing an important milestones or key tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- States IEDA’s mission and/or ITO’s marketing but does not describe how the project aligns.</li> <li>- Summary of the project is brief and broad or the narrative is more about the organization than the project so that the applicant has not conveyed an understanding of the tactics or milestones</li> <li>- Project budget is confused with the applicant’s organizational budget <i>or</i> goes beyond the proposed campaign budget so use of state funds is unclear</li> <li>- Markets to in-state and out-of-state travelers equally</li> <li>- Timeline for the project is sparse, leaves out important milestones and key tasks or identifies inappropriate responsible parties for key tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does not mention IEDA’s mission or ITO’s marketing</li> <li>- Portions of the campaign or project description and answers are inconsistent, confusing or irrelevant</li> <li>- Use of state funds are not described in the summary</li> <li>- Primarily markets to in-state travelers but incorporates some out of state component</li> <li>- Timeline is missing major components and clearly does not align with the narrative or proposed funds expenditure, creating concerns about one or the other or both</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conflicts with IEDA’s mission or ITO’s marketing campaign</li> <li>- Project is not clear</li> <li>- Application is incomplete, poorly composed and inconsistent</li> <li>- Applicant is clearly not prepared to implement a successful tourism marketing campaign Clearly only markets to local and/or in-state audiences</li> <li>- Timeline is inadequate, starts before 1/1/26 without justification or extends beyond 12/31/26</li> </ul>

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Economic Impact & Ability to Promote Tourism Industry Growth – Max Score = 20 Points				
20	15	10	5	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Clearly describes</i> how the project aligns with the Iowa Tourism Office’s overall strategy to grow the state’s economy through travel expenditures and using travel as a catalyst for talent attraction</li> <li>- Strongly aligns with specific ITO’s marketing strategies: messaging approach, target audiences and media channels</li> <li>- Is clearly included in the applicants marketing plan as a strategy the applicant will implement to increase tourism’s economic impact</li> <li>- Describes how benefits will be measured quantitatively and details platforms, tracking or other industry measures that will be used and by whom</li> <li>- There is high confidence that the project will benefit the economy at a local level, magnify Iowa’s brand, increase Iowa’s marketing success, positively impact Iowa’s brand, and statewide economic impact is likely</li> <li>- The project has a high likelihood of becoming an example for other tourism partners and/or for the State</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>States</i> alignment between the proposed campaign and the Iowa Tourism Office’s overall strategy to grow the state’s economy through travel expenditures and using travel as a catalyst for talent attraction</li> <li>- Somewhat aligns with specific ITO’s marketing strategies related to messaging approach, target audiences and media channels</li> <li>-- Aligns with the applicant’s marketing plan and implements specific strategies in that plan</li> <li>- Primarily refers to qualitative methods of measurement</li> <li>- The project is likely to result in economic benefits for the local economy and a region of Iowa. Iowa’s brand will benefit from the project even if the statewide economic impact may be difficult to measure</li> <li>- The project may be an example for other tourism organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- States support for ITO’s overall strategy to grow the state’s economy through travel expenditures and using travel as a catalyst for talent attraction but not how the project aligns</li> <li>- Aligns with at least 2 specific ITO marketing strategies</li> <li>- Aligns with broad or vague statements in the applicant’s marketing plan</li> <li>- Measures of success are all qualitative and vague but mentioned</li> <li>- The project is likely to result in local and regional economy benefits</li> <li>- The project may be an example for a subset of the tourism industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does not mention the ITO’s overall strategy to grow the state’s economy through travel expenditures and using travel as a catalyst for talent attraction</li> <li>- Aligns with only 1 of ITO’s marketing strategies</li> <li>- Unclear as to whether the proposed campaign is part of or aligns with the applicant’s marketing plan.</li> <li>- Success will be difficult to measure or measures are not closely aligned to the proposed project</li> <li>- Economic impact is not clearly articulated and cannot be measured beyond the applicant organization or local level</li> <li>- The project is unlikely to be used as an example</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does not align with ITO’s efforts or any campaign strategies</li> <li>- May only benefit the applicant economically</li> <li>- Is not based on any industry trends</li> <li>- The applicant has no marketing strategy or doesn’t reference it</li> <li>- Measurements are not appropriate or not provided</li> </ul>

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<b>Innovation – Max Score = 15 Points</b>			
<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is a brand-new campaign</li> <li>- Clearly articulates how the entire campaign is innovative for the Iowa tourism industry</li> <li>- Clearly and succinctly describes specific innovative qualities of the campaign and how the campaign is expanding or evolving the applicant organization and/or partner's tourism marketing capacity</li> <li>- Explains what new information and/or research informed the campaign</li> <li>- Details how the campaign's tactics will attract the attention of or connect with the selected IEDA target audience(s) in a new way</li> <li>- The innovative, enhanced and/or distinctive nature of the project for the Iowa tourism industry, applicant and partners is obvious</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Elevates and builds on an existing campaign, taking the campaign to a new level with innovative tactics; is not repetitive of the previous campaign but instead uses a different tactic, for example taking a successful Facebook campaign and expanding it to Pinterest rather than directing the same Facebook campaign to a new audience</li> <li>- Clearly and succinctly describes specific innovative qualities of the campaign and how the campaign is expanding or evolving the applicant organization and/or partner's tourism marketing capacity</li> <li>- Explains what information and/or research informed the campaign</li> <li>- Describes how tactics will connect with IEDA target audiences</li> <li>- The innovative, enhanced or distinctive nature of the proposed project for the local organization and partners is obvious and significant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expands on or replicates a previous campaign in limited ways, for example a new target audience or market is the primary change in the campaign</li> <li>- Details why the innovative portions of their campaign are necessary to move their organization forward, to evolve their tourism marketing capacity or to accomplish more innovative marketing in the future</li> <li>- Describes the project/media tactics and why they believe they will connect with the selected IEDA target audience(s)</li> <li>- Only local information or localized research has informed the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The applicant has implemented the same campaign in the past</li> <li>- The campaign or project is not innovative</li> <li>- The applicant does not articulate how the project/media tactics connect with the selected IEDA target audience(s)</li> <li>- No research or information was used to inform the project</li> </ul>

<b>Need – Max Score = 5 Points</b>	
<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clearly articulates why state funds will enhance the project</li> <li>- Details other sources of funding sought out to support the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does not express a need for state funds</li> <li>- The applicant has not pursued other sources of funding for the project</li> </ul>

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<b>Sustainability – Max Score = 15 Points</b>			
<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Articulates how implementation of the campaign will enable the applicant and/or partners to advance tourism marketing beyond FY 2026</li> <li>- Clearly details how and why specific funding entities and partners were active in campaign development to advance support and funding for future tourism campaigns</li> <li>- Clearly describes how the applicant will obtain and distribute results of the campaign to stakeholders to leverage future funding and/or support for their organization, partners and/or for future marketing campaigns</li> <li>- When applicable, includes details about how the applicant and/or partners will use, and pay for utilization of, any tangible components of the campaign beyond FY 2026 (i.e. website, photographs, drone footage, influencer testimonies)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- States the applicant will sustain the proposed project beyond FY 2026 because the project covers a one-time-cost</li> <li>- Involvement of specific funding entities and partners in project development or implementation is provided but not how or why they influenced the campaign</li> <li>- States that results will be measured or project summarized and to whom information will be distributed but it does not provide clear explanation of how those results might impact future marketing or funding</li> <li>- When applicable, states that the applicant and/or partners will pay for utilization of any tangible components of the campaign beyond FY 2026 and how they will pay for them but there is not a clear plan for their use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- States the applicant will sustain the proposed project but does not explain how</li> <li>- Involvement of funding entities and partners is generally stated but who, how or why are not detailed</li> <li>- Measurement of success will be difficult and may not motivate partners to contribute in the future</li> <li>- When applicable, states that tangible components of the campaign will be used but not how, by whom or how use will be paid for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The applicant does not take responsibility beyond the grant fiscal year</li> <li>- There is no indication that funding entities or partners were involved in development of the campaign</li> <li>- There is no plan for partner engagement beyond FY 2026</li> <li>- The campaign will have a limited impact during its implementation and no tangible components or impact after it is completed</li> </ul>

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<b>Budget – Max Score = 10 Points</b>		
<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Budget section is justified, well developed and consistent throughout and is mathematically accurate</li> <li>- High confidence that all grant and matching funds will be expended between 1/1/26 and 12/31/26</li> <li>- Expenses are directly related to the campaign detailed in the application, aligning with timeline, description of how funds will be used and the cash match letter</li> <li>- The letter of cash match is mathematically accurate, verifies that the applicant organization will provide at least 20% of the total project cost in cash match, is signed by an authorized representative from the applicant organization</li> <li>- The cost of all proposed expenses has been justified by the applicant through reference to specific vendor quotes, discussion with vendors, or bills incurred within the past year) and those vendors and the type of communication from the vendor has been clearly stated in the budget table For example, the applicant does provide a bid but refers to the bid they have and who provided it</li> <li>- The budget does not include any ineligible expenses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Budget aligns with the proposed campaign but has minor mathematical errors or requires some adjustment/additional information</li> <li>- The letter of cash match has minor mathematical errors, requires some additional information/verification but can still be used if the project is awarded</li> <li>- Appropriate justification for cost, specifically how the vendor price was derived and a reference to specific communication with the vendor, are not included in the budget table (inappropriate references to why the project itself is justified such as ‘this is really important because’ are provided; rather than justification for the cost of the work)</li> <li>- May include ineligible expenses, but the exclusion of those expenses does not impact the overall implementation of the proposed project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Budget is not consistent with other parts of the application</li> <li>- Expenses that are not directly related to the proposed project are included</li> <li>- The budget includes expenditures that would occur beyond December 31, 2026</li> <li>- Appropriate justification regarding vendor price and communication are not included in the budget table</li> <li>- The letter of cash match would need to be replaced for the project to be awarded because it is not a valid match commitment if it has any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not provide enough cash match</li> <li>• Does not verify that the applicant organization will provide at least 20% of the total project cost in cash match, or</li> <li>• Identifies ineligible in-kind match rather than cash match</li> <li>• Is not signed by an authorized representative</li> <li>• Is not from the applicant</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Includes ineligible expenses that when deducted will jeopardize implementation of the proposed campaign</li> </ul>

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<b>Collaboration – Max Score = 15 Points</b>			
<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Applicant is from a membership, multi-partner organization or collaboration and the campaign goes beyond normal partnership efforts</li> <li>- Campaign engages 3 or more entities, including private businesses in development and implementation</li> <li>- Applicant clearly defines and describes the land area they are including in their “tourismshed”</li> <li>- Campaign markets multiple visitor opportunities within the defined “tourismshed”, encouraging travelers to visit multiple attractions, patronize businesses and engage in multiple activities</li> <li>- Campaign is likely to result in increased length of stay, overnight trips, increased money spent per trip and return visits</li> <li>- More than one private business is very likely to realize increased traffic or sales</li> <li>- Collaborative nature of the campaign will demonstrate the benefit of marketing to both private and public entities within the tourism industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Campaign engages at least two entities in a public-private partnership to implement a tourism campaign</li> <li>- At least one membership or multi-partner organization or collaboration is involved in the planning, implementation and/or evaluation of the campaign</li> <li>- Applicant notes a general “tourismshed” area</li> <li>- Campaign markets at least 3 visitor opportunities within that “tourismshed” encouraging visitors to travel to multiple sites</li> <li>- Campaign is likely to result in increased length of stay, money spent per trip, and/or encourage return visits</li> <li>- At least one private entity may realize increased traffic and/or sales</li> <li>- Clearly demonstrates the benefit of the proposed project to a partnering entity other than the applicant organizational board and members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Campaign engages at least two entities in a public-private partnership to implement a tourism campaign but neither of them is a private business and no membership or multi-partner organizations partner organizations are involved</li> <li>- A “tourimshed” is not defined beyond a community boundary</li> <li>- Although the campaign encourages travelers to visit at least 2 destinations it does not encourage visitors to explore beyond those destinations</li> <li>- Campaign may result in increased traffic or sales for two partnering entities but is unlikely to result in measurable increased length of stay or money spent per trip for any other entities.</li> <li>- Campaign may encourage return visit for at least one of the partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Applicant is a single entity who is seeking to benefit themselves</li> <li>- No other entities are involved in project planning, implementation or evaluation</li> <li>- A tourismshed is irrelevant because there is only one entity involved or marketed by the campaign</li> <li>- Campaign is unlikely to benefit anyone other than the applicant</li> </ul>

\*Reviewers may assign a score between the scoring divisions for any category. (i.e., if the applicant does not meet all the criteria to score a 20 but meets some of them, and more than the criteria to score a 15, then the reviewer may select a score value between 15 and 20)