

IOWA TOURISM GRANTS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Iowa Tourism Grant program?

The purpose of the Iowa Tourism Grant (ITG) program is to promote 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.

When are applications available?

Applications are available once per year, usually in the late summer. The funding timeline is announced online at traveliowa.com/grants and in the Iowa Tourism Office's *E-Traveler*, usually in late summer. Contact tourism@iowaeda.com to receive the *E-Traveler*.

Only online applications will be accepted. When the application is released, a link will be available on the [ITG web page](#).

How much funding is available?

For FY2024, \$400,000 is available. The first \$100,000 in funding will be earmarked for Iowa Partner Welcome Center sites who have a current signed contract with the Iowa Tourism Office as of January 1st, 2024. If these additional funds are not allocated to partner welcome sites, they will be made available to other applicants.

How will the Welcome Center funding work?

Each Iowa Partner Welcome Center site who has a signed contract with the Iowa Tourism Office by January 1st, 2024 may submit one Iowa Tourism Grant application to the Iowa Tourism Office. The application must comply with the same rules and guidelines, and will be scored with the same scoring criteria, as all other Iowa Tourism Grant applications. Up to \$100,000 will be prioritized for projects submitted by these applicants and awarded to these applicants for qualifying projects that meet a minimum scoring criteria, which will be determined by the Iowa Tourism Office. If the \$100,000 in funding is awarded and additional qualifying projects meet the minimum scoring criteria, they will be scored by category with all other applications. However, if the entirety of the \$100,000 is not distributed through this process, the remaining funds will be added to the \$300,000 funding pool and be available to all applicants through the regular scoring process.

What is the maximum ITG award?

The maximum award amount is \$10,000. The minimum award amount is \$2,500.

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

Is there a match requirement?

Yes. Applicants must document a cash match equal to 20% of the total project, which is 25% of the grant request. For example: \$10,000 grant request+\$2,500 cash match= \$12,500 Total Project. A letter establishing the source and amount of match must be included with the application.

Who is eligible to apply?

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.

What is an eligible project?

The ITG program assists tourism-related marketing initiatives, events and meetings. "Tourism" means a site or event attracting people from beyond a 50-mile radius or people spending a night away from home to visit a site or event.

What are examples of eligible expenses?

The 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
- Equipment rental for a tourism-related event or educational meeting

What are ineligible expenses?

Expenses that do not directly relate to the proposed project must be excluded from the application, including:

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

When do expenses need to be incurred?

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 2024 – December 2024)**.

What if my project falls in January and expenses fall before January 1?

If expenses are due prior to January 1 for events held early in the year (before the end of February), 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 for all projects that fall early in the year when scoring.

What is the application review process?

Applications are first reviewed by IEDA staff for basic eligibility requirements. Applications clearing staff review are reviewed and scored by a group affiliated with the tourism industry. After scores are submitted to staff, the review committee meets to discuss as a large group and allocate funds.

What criteria are used in scoring?

Eligible applications receive a score between zero and 100 points:

- Project Information, 20 points
- Economic Impact and Ability to Promote Tourism Industry Growth, 20 points
- Innovation, 20 points
- Collaboration, 5 points
- Sustainability, 10 points
- Budget, 10 points
- Need, 15 points

What documents must be included with the application?

All applications must include:

- A letter certifying the cash match
- Minority Impact Statement must be downloaded from the [ITG web page](#), filled out and uploaded to your application
- Documentation of **each** proposed expense (vendor bids, quotes, advertising rate sheets, invoices, etc.)
- W9

Are there any other requirements?

Applicants that are attractions, restaurants, lodging facilities or hosting an event MUST have submitted or updated their listing at traveliowa.com before the application deadline.

Successful applicants must acknowledge the Iowa Tourism Office for its investment in the project and use the Travel Iowa logo where appropriate. Find more information on logo usage at traveliowa.com/logos.

Any tips for a great application?

1. Be clear. Don't assume reviewers are aware of your organization and/or your project.
2. Showcase how the project supports [IEDA's marketing plan](#).
3. Use statistics and/or actual numbers when discussing the project's economic impact.
4. Double check the application attachments and confirm you have appropriate, current documentation for **each** proposed project expense.
5. Login to traveliowa.com to check and update your listing.
6. Include only eligible project expenses in the application.
7. Contact the program manager regarding application questions or to discuss whether a proposed project is eligible for funding.

If I receive a grant, when will I get the check?

Checks will be disbursed after grant agreements are fully executed.

What are the grant closeout procedures?

To close out an ITG grant, the Tourism Office needs a completed Evaluation Report and proof that the project was implemented and completed, copies of eligible invoices, proof of payment that total at least the grant award plus the 25% cash match, proof that the vendor received payment, and proof that the Tourism Office was acknowledged for its support. Projects that come in under budget or that cannot produce eligible invoices must return grant funds. Closeout documentation is due 60 days after the project completion date listed in the grant agreement.