

FY25 Iowa Tourism Grant Guidelines

The Iowa Tourism Grant (ITG) Program promotes tourism in Iowa by funding tourism-related marketing campaigns 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.

The This is Iowa Initiative 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.

IEDA has leveraged federal COVID-19 recovery funds 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.
- Soul of Iowa - 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.

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 as a place to visit, live and work.

IEDA/Iowa Tourism Office Target Audiences

- **Primary Target:** Young professionals and young families in Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wisconsin.
- **Secondary Target:** Young professionals and young families in other states with ties to Iowa.

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.)
- This grant has an 80:20 “grant to match ratio”. Therefore, the required match is 20% of the total project cost. For example: \$10,000 grant request + \$2,500 cash match = \$12,500 total project. A total project of \$5,000 would require \$1,000 match to receive \$4,000 in grant funds. Please note, cash match can not include in-kind donations.

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** marketing tactics of the campaign
 - Selection of the Target Audience(s) the project aligns with
 - Selection of the tourism 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 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

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 2025 – December 2025)**. 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.
- Expenses for work between January 2025 and December 2025 that are due before January 1, 2025. This may happen for events held early in the 2025 calendar 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 if this is not possible be very clear about why so that grant reviewers can 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 (includes installation of signage)

- 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 Description – 20 Points

Clearly articulate your tourism-related marketing initiative. Include your timeline for implementation and describe how state funds will be used. It is very important to detail how the project aligns with IEDA's marketing campaign, which can be found at [IEDA's marketing plan](#)

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

Describe how the project supports IEDA's mission and marketing campaign (to grow the state's economy through travel expenditures) and how the project is part of the applicant's broader marketing strategy to increase tourism's economic impact. Explain how the project will benefit the economy at a local and statewide level. Use numbers—economic impact, ROI, attendance, number of households/people reached, etc.—where applicable.

Innovation – 20 Points

State whether the project is a new event, marketing initiative or media tactic. 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. Explain how the project media tactics (i.e., video, podcasts, etc.) connect with IEDA's target audiences as detailed in [IEDA's marketing plan](#).

Need – 15 Points

Explain the need for state funds to implement the proposed project. Provide information on other funding sources, including both successful and unsuccessful requests.

Sustainability – 10 Points

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

Budget – 10 Points

Detail the budget as it directly relates to the project. Provide updated estimates and clear documentation of planned project expenses. Clearly detail the minimum required match of 20% of the total project.

Collaboration – 5 Points

Name and describe the role of any tourism industry partners or collaborators associated with the project. A collaborative application has multiple partners investing in the project. Explain how the project benefits multiple entities within the tourism industry.

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 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, 2025 - December 31, 2025. Final reports are due by the deadline provided in your contract administered by IEDA.