

# The Montana Tourism Grant Program

## Frequently Asked Questions

1) How is the **Tourism Grant Program** funded?

The Tourism Grant Program is funded by the 4% Lodging Facility Use Tax; commonly known as the “Bed Tax”, which is collected from guests of hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, guest ranches, resorts, and campgrounds. Of the 64.4% collected bed tax distributed to the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development, approximately \$750,000 is awarded annually through the Tourism Grant Program.

2) Who is eligible to apply for **Tourism Grants** and how often?

Any registered non-profit organization [501(c)(3) or 501(c)(6)], Tribal government, or City or County government in Montana is eligible to apply for a Tourism Grant. Eligible entities cannot use funds as a pass-through for ineligible entities, which include for-profit businesses, individuals, and State or Federal agencies. Eligible entities may only apply once per fiscal year.

3) What kind of tourism-related project does the **Tourism Grant Program** consider a good fit for the funds?

Funds are awarded to proposed tourism and recreation projects that preserve, protect, and improve access to Montana’s arts, cultures, and/or heritage treasures; proposed projects that will enhance the non-resident visitor experience and increase expenditures in the community; and proposed projects of interest to non-resident visitors as identified in Montana Destination Brand Research.

4) How does one submit an application to the **Tourism Grant Program**?

Applications are accepted via an online platform [Submittable.com] beginning July 1<sup>st</sup> of each fiscal year. The link to the submittable.com application is made available on July 1 on the <http://marketmt.com/TourismGrants> webpage. The application window closes at 5 pm MST on September 30<sup>th</sup> of each fiscal year.

5) How are applications reviewed for **Tourism Grant** funds and what is the criteria considered?

Applications are evaluated by a review team comprised of three staff in the Industry Services & Outreach Bureau, a staff member with the Office of Indian Country Economic Development, a staff member with the Community Development Division, and a board member of the Tourism Advisory Council.

Applications are reviewed by how well the applicant would market the proposed project upon completion to measure the impact to non-resident visitors; proposed projects that were identified as key tourism development in a community master plan; and proposed projects that are supported by tourism and community partners.

6) What qualifies as a cash match for a **Tourism Grant** and how is that demonstrated?

Applicants must demonstrate a cash match of actual and committed money invested in the proposed project. The cash match is \$1 applicant to \$2 award. For example: an applicant requesting \$6,000 grant award must demonstrate they have \$3,000 committed to the completion of the project as match. In-kind services, in-kind labor, and/or volunteer hours cannot count as match. The cash match is demonstrated in the proposed project budget and budget narrative and documented in the Request for Funds form by those applicants that are awarded a grant.

7) What project costs can **Tourism Grant** funds be used for?

Tourism Grant funds can be requested for actual project and activity related costs only. Examples of ineligible project costs include but are not limited to: workshops and training; market research or feasibility studies; staff costs including wages, travel, per diem; administrative, overhead, or indirect costs; office supplies; promotional items; subscriptions or membership costs; domain registration and website hosting; social media posts or press releases; routine operation and maintenance costs.

8) When can construction or activities start on a tourism-related project that has submitted an application to the **Tourism Grant Program**?

Due to the quality of the review team process, announcements of Tourism Grant Program awards typically occur mid-to-late December. After announcement, the Department will enter into a contract with each Awardee. An executed contract must be in place for Tourism Grant funds to be applied to any activity or project costs. Any activity or project costs incurred prior to an executed contract are the sole responsibility of the applicant.

9) If awarded, are there any reports or forms required by the **Tourism Grant Program**?

A Request for Funds Form is required when a Grantee is requesting funds for their project. A Request for Funds can be submitted once per month, quarterly, or at project completion depending on the financial needs of the project. The 1:2 cash match must be met with each Request for Funds submitted and supporting invoices of activities on the project must be attached.

A Final Project Report measures the goals, outcomes, and achievements of the project after completion. The Final Project Report is due within 1-year of successful completion of the project **or** no later than September 1 of the next fiscal year [for example FY19 projects should be completed by 2020 so even if the project was completed 1/5/2020, the Final Report is due by 9/30/2020].

Templates of the Request for Funds and the Final Project Report are available on the Tourism Grant Program: Tools & Resources & FAQ's webpage at <http://marketmt.com/TourismGrants#Tools-Resources-FAQ-s-2592>.

10) Is there a deadline to complete a tourism-related project if funded by the **Tourism Grant Program**?

From the date of award, funded applicants have 1 year to complete the project therefore Tourism Grant Program funds are typically not appropriate for front-end construction projects, projects that are still in the fundraising or planning phase, and/or non-shovel-ready projects.

For more information on the **Tourism Grant Program** please visit our website at <http://marketmt.com/TourismGrants> or contact Michele Cushman, the Tourism Grant Program Director, at 406.841.2796 or by email [TourismGrants@mt.gov](mailto:TourismGrants@mt.gov).