

TOURISM GRANT POLICY

Mission: The Tourism Grant program awards funds to projects that strengthen Montana's economy through the development and enhancement of the state's tourism and recreation industry.

Intent: The Tourism Grant program will fund projects that develop and enhance tourism and recreation products that are of interest to nonresident visitor profiles as outlined in "Montana Destination Brand Research."

Strategy: Funds will be awarded to tourism and recreation projects that fall within the following general categories:

- Arts / Culture / Heritage preservation
- Visitor facility upgrades / construction
- Niche product development

Section I Application Deadline

- Applications are accepted online beginning July 1st of each fiscal year. The State's fiscal year runs July 1 through June 30.
- The application cycle will close at 5:00 pm MST, September 30th.
- Applicants will be notified of their project's status on or before December 15th.
- If additional funding becomes available, a second round of applications will be accepted beginning March 1st and closing on April 15th.
- Projects chosen for funding must be completed within one (1) year from the date the contract is signed.

Section II Funding

The Tourism Grant program is funded by the 4% Lodging Facility Use Tax. The grant funding pool is approximately \$1 million.

- The grant program is not intended to be a sustainable funding source. The amount and frequency of grant awards an applicant organization has received will be taken into consideration.
- No "pass through" entities may be utilized to apply for grant funding. Applicant organization must own and be legally responsible for the project seeking grant funds.
- No state or federal agencies may apply.

Section III Application Review

- Applicant organizations may not apply more than once per fiscal year.
- Applications will be evaluated on a pass/fail rating system.
- Priority will be given to projects that:
 - Clearly define how the project will be marketed once complete.
 - Have been identified as key tourism projects in a professionally-conducted community master planning process.

- Are supported by one or more of the following tourism partners: an official Montana Tourism Region, Convention and Visitors Bureau, or Tourism Advisory Council.

Section IV Eligible Organizations

- Montana nonprofit organization
- Montana tribal government
- Montana city or county government

Section V Matching Funds

The applicant match must be "hard" dollars, an actual money investment in the project. The cash match is \$1 grantee: \$2 state. In-kind services are not considered a qualified match. The match must be applied to the project as outlined in the grant application:

- Prior work done on a project cannot be used as a cash match. Example – Cash match from Phase 1 of a multi-phase construction project is not eligible if applicant is asking for grant funds for Phase 3 of the project.
- Work done outside the definition of the project, as identified in the grant application, cannot be used as a cash match. Example – Applicant staff time to attend meetings regarding the development of the grant project.

Section VI Eligible Projects

- A. Projects that preserve, protect and improve access to Montana's arts, culture and heritage treasures. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - Historical restoration of a visitor facility or artifact
 - Tribal, cultural or historical interpretation and exhibits
- B. Projects that enhance the nonresident visitor experience and increase expenditures. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - Facility construction and upgrades that increase nonresident visitor capacity
 - One-time grant fund investment in out-of-state paid media advertising for a destination event created to demonstrate measurable ROI (including lodging)
 - Website enhancements that facilitate nonresident visitor expenditures and are accompanied by a marketing strategy
- C. Niche product development of interest to nonresident visitors, as identified in "Montana Destination Brand Research."

Section VII Ineligible Projects and Activities

Projects and activities will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Examples of ineligible projects and activities include, but are not limited to:

- Workshops and training
- Market research and feasibility studies
- Applicant's personnel costs including wages, travel, per diem
- Administrative overhead/indirect costs

- Office supplies, including but not limited to, postage, photocopies, telephone or internet charges
- Costs of promotional items (pens, pencils, t-shirts, hats, general merchandise, etc.)
- Annual subscriptions/membership costs
- Projects that do not contribute to increased nonresident visitor capacity and expenditures
- Projects where the investment could be considered a regular cost of doing business
- Domain registration and Website hosting
- Social media posts, Google AdWords and press releases
- Routine upkeep and maintenance expenses