

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, short-term vacation rentals, resorts, and campgrounds. Of the collected bed tax distributed to the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development, approximately \$750,000 is awarded annually to projects through the Tourism Grant Program.

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

Any primary registered non-profit 501(c) tax-exempt organization, Tribal government, or City or County government **based 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, subsidiaries of a non-profit, and other State or Federal agencies. Eligible entities are limited to one application for one proposed project per funding cycle.

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 the [Montana Destination Brand Research Study](#).

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

Applications are accepted via an online platform [Submittable.com] of each fiscal year. The link to the submittable.com application is made available when the application cycle opens on the <https://marketmt.com/Programs/Industry-Services-and-Outreach/Tourism-Grant-Program> website.

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 at least one 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 match for a **Tourism Grant** and how is that demonstrated?

Applicants must demonstrate a match of actual and committed money and in-kind investment if applicable in the proposed project. The match is \$1 applicant to \$2 award. For example: if the project costs \$9,000 to complete, an applicant requesting \$6,000 grant award must demonstrate they have \$3,000 committed to the completion of the project as match. Reasonable in-kind services, in-kind labor, and/or volunteer hours can count up to 25% of applicant match yet the remaining 75% of applicant match must be hard cash. Staff salary is not considered committed cash as that is earned and

committed to an individual. However, staff salary can count up to 25% of in-kind match. The match must be demonstrated in the proposed project budget and budget narrative of the application.

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) What level of technical assistance does the **Tourism Grant Program** provide?

Prior to the launch of an application cycle, the Tourism Grant Program will host a webinar training and workshop to provide an over-view of the Program guidelines and timeline, updates, and an overview of the actual application. A recording of the webinar workshop will be made available on the Tourism Grant Program website at <https://MarketMT.com/Programs/Industry-Services-and-Outreach/Tourism-Grant-Program> while the application cycle is open.

9) What is the difference between the annual application cycle and a special application cycle for event-based activities offered by the **Tourism Grant Program**?

The annual application cycle is open for eligible entities for proposed **projects** that develop and enhance tourism and recreation products in Montana that have the potential to increase non-resident visitation and expenditures. Occasionally, in years of higher projected revenues of facility use tax, a special application cycle will be launched for **event-based** activities only. Per Statute, event-based costs that can be supported with Tourism Grant funds are limited to specific advertising or marketing costs, event infrastructure costs, 25% of venue/facility costs, and signage directing attendees to the event. Due to these statutory limitations, event-based activities are not qualified for consideration in the annual application cycle. Subsequently, projects are not qualified for consideration in a special application cycle for event-based activities.

10) 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 process, announcements of Tourism Grant Program awards typically occur within 45 days after the close of the application cycle. After announcement of awards, 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 announcement of award date are the sole responsibility of the applicant.

11) 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 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** 30-days of successful completion of the project. The Department reserves the right to withhold 10% of the total Tourism Grant award from the final Request for Funds to ensure each Grantee submits the required Final Project Report.

Templates of the Request for Funds and the Final Project Report are available within the Tools for Grantees section on the Tourism Grant Program website at <https://MarketMT.com/Programs/Industry-Services-and-Outreach/Tourism-Grant-Program>.

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

From the date of award, funded applicants have till June 1 of the following fiscal 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 <https://MarketMT.com/Programs/Industry-Services-and-Outreach/Tourism-Grant-Program> or contact Michele Cushman, the Tourism Grant Program Manager, at 406.841.2796 or by email TourismGrants@mt.gov.