



FY 2025-2026 Tourism Marketing Grant FAQs

Q: Is this grant the same as the Developmental Co-op?

A: Yes, the grant has been renamed and changed slightly to avoid confusion with other co-op programs.

Q: What is the budget and how many grants will be awarded?

A: Last year, 95 were awarded. The amount varies based on number of applicants and the amounts requested. The budget is \$1,500,000.

Q: What is the match requirement for this grant?

A: Organizations within counties that are designated as distressed per the current or previous two FYs Appalachian Regional Commission guidelines are eligible for an 80/20 reimbursable grant. Organizations within counties that are designated as at-risk per the current or previous two FYs Appalachian Regional Commission guidelines are eligible for an 70/30 reimbursable grant. All other qualified organizations will be eligible for the regular 50/50 reimbursable grant as offered in years past.

Q: Is there a cap?

A: While there is no cap this year, there are a few things to consider when applying:

- Total requests typically far exceed the allocated budget. All proposed projects may not be funded.
- Is this project going to move the needle in your marketing efforts?
 - Are there new projects that would increase exposure for your destination?
- Will your marketing budget accommodate your ask? Can your organization pay for the entire project and get reimbursed for 80%, 70% or 50%, depending on county economic status?
 - Is there a commitment to seeing the project through?
 - Be cautious in applying for funds that you aren't certain you can spend.

Q: Who is eligible?

A:

The Destination Marketing Organization for each county or region, such as:

- Convention & Visitors Bureaus
- Chambers of Commerce

Community development-related organizations that are non-profit and considered "tourism organizations" (*i.e. Middle East Tennessee Tourism Council, South Central Tourism Association*)

Regional organizations that are non-profit who brand and market tourism to drive visitation (*i.e. Tennessee Distillers Guild, Tennessee Farm Winegrowers Alliance*)

- Note: The following Destination Marketing Organizations in the top five counties are **NOT eligible** for this grant: (*Nashville CVC, Chattanooga Tourism, Visit Knoxville, Gatlinburg CVB, Pigeon Forge Dept. of Tourism, Sevierville CVB and Memphis Tourism*)

Q: What is the definition of a "Destination Marketing Organization", "Tourism Organization" and "Regional Organization"?

A: "Destination Marketing Organization (or "DMO")" means a nonprofit entity or governmental unit responsible for attracting tourists through tourism promotion or tourism development efforts on behalf of one or more municipalities. The organization must operate on a year-round basis and utilize a dedicated tourism marketing budget supported by a consistent funding source.



A: "Tourism Organization" means an organization designated by a county or municipality as the entity that promotes the region as a tourist destination.

A: "Regional Organization" means a non-profit organization that seeks to brand and market tourism to drive visitation in a particular industry.

Q: Will you accept more than one application from a county?

A: More than one entity in a county can apply, as long as those entities are a DMO or Tourism Organization as defined in the grant.

Q: What if we didn't use our grant funds last year? Can we apply?

A: Organizations that did not utilize funds can still apply, although this will be considered when reviewing grants and determining award amount.

Q: Can you apply for more than one project?

A: Yes, you can apply for multiple marketing projects. Projects must be itemized and prioritized on the application.

Q: Can you give us examples of what you have funded in the past?

A: This grant has funded many projects. Examples include but are not limited to: photography, videography, outdoor or digital advertising, social media paid advertising, rack cards, brochures, new or updated websites, trade show materials, branded racks, and branded promotional items.

ELIGIBILITY:

Q: What projects/expenditures are eligible?

A: The grant projects should be for tourism marketing and should align with the state's pillars and brand; they should allow for strong measurement capabilities. The following is a list of potential marketing projects that are eligible:

- Tourism related rack cards, brochures, visitor guides, newsletters, etc.
(The distribution must reach consumers, not the organization's members.)
- Photography and videography
- Rack card design
- Interpretive or directional signage **See signage examples below*
- Print advertising
- Broadcast advertising
- Digital support programs, such as paid media/ads, social media (i.e. Facebook boosts) or paid search.
(This does not pay admin for someone to post to social media.)
- Website development or enhancement of existing site
- Tourism-related tradeshow and exhibit promotional materials
(Does not include travel expenses, registration or expenses while on-site.)

Q: What projects/expenditures are NOT eligible?

- Projects included in approved scope of work for ARPA. No overlap between the two programs is allowed.
- Agency time
(Projects completed by an agency are eligible, but commission for ad buys or retainer fees is not.)
- Reprinting of an existing brochure, etc. without changes or updates
- Salaries or administrative expenses, such as travel reimbursement or office equipment
- Fees paid to TDTD for program participation (Retire TN, Sales Program sponsorships, advertising co-op programs)

TENNESSEE

SOUNDS PERFECT

- Development or enhancements to infrastructure
- Speaker fees, entertainment, trophies, prize money or event supplies
- Promotion for **community-based** events/campaigns that are not a draw for visitors from 50+ miles away
- Hosting expenses for influencers such as hotels, gift cards, travel expenses, etc.

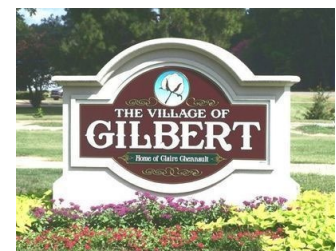
TDTD maintains the discretionary right to create exceptions or additional eligibility requirements on a case-by-case basis.

Q: What are some examples of interpretive or directional signage?

A: The following are examples of **eligible** interpretive or directional signage:



A: The following are examples of **ineligible** signage:



Q: Must we include “Tennessee Sounds Perfect” or “Discover Tennessee Trails and Byways” logo on all projects?

A: No, the logos do not have to be on all ads and brochures. However, the current TDTD brand logo must be on the home page of each organization’s tourism website. The logo must be within the current TDTD brand guidelines. [Click here](#) to read the latest brand guidelines and download the logo. **All department logo usage must be approved.**

Q: Can we use TDTD logos on items that will be sold?

A: No, state logos cannot be used on items for sale without a licensing agreement. Items funded by the grant may not be sold.

Q: If we want to include the logo in our projects, do we need approval?

A: Yes, the grant now requires approval before using the logo on projects. In some cases, a licensing agreement may be requested.

FUNDS:

Q: Can the funds be used in connection with other grants?

A: It depends. Other grants cannot be used as the matching funds, but if the community puts in the required match, then other grant funds can be used to complete a bigger, more impactful project.



Q: What is my match?

A: Organizations within counties that are designated as distressed per the current or previous two FYs Appalachian Regional Commission guidelines are eligible for an 80/20 reimbursable grant. Organizations within counties that are designated as at-risk per the current or previous two FYs Appalachian Regional Commission guidelines are eligible for an 70/30 reimbursable grant. All other qualified organizations will be eligible for the regular 50/50 reimbursable grant as offered in years past.

Q: Does TDTD pay part and we pay part?

A: No. The DMO must pay for the entire project, then submit paperwork to TDTD for reimbursement of 80%, 70% or 50%, depending on county economic status.

Q: Do I have to submit for reimbursement all at once?

A: No! We **strongly** encourage you to submit for reimbursement throughout the year as expenses are accrued and paid.

Q: What are considered supporting documents?

A: You must show the following supporting documents when submitting for reimbursement:

- An invoice from your organization to TDTD for the reimbursement funds with the information listed in C.5.a. of the grant contract
- Completed reimbursement spreadsheet that was sent with the contract
- Invoice from the vendor or provider who has completed the project
- Proof that payment to the vendor has been processed by May 29, 2026.
 - *(Bank/credit card statement, copy of cleared check, or updated invoice from the vendor showing the payment and a zero balance due.*
 - *QuickBooks reports or copies of the front of the check only do **not** fulfill this requirement.)*
- Proof the project has been completed
 - *(Digital copy, screen shots of ads, links to videos, a copy of project, etc.)*

Q: How soon can I submit for reimbursement?

A: As soon as your contract has been fully executed, the project has been completed and you have proof that the payment has cleared.

Q: What if we use an agency to purchase advertising or to work on a project?

A: Using an agency is fine, although TDTD will not reimburse for commission or agency retainer fees.

SUBMISSION:

Q: Can I mail in my application or reimbursement paperwork?

A: No. It must be typed and submitted via email to Andi.Grindley@tn.gov

Q: What is my Edison Vendor ID?

A: Your Edison Vendor ID is the number assigned to your organization in the state accounting system. It is a 10-digit number that can be found on the seventh line of your grant contract and begins with several zeros.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Q: How will we know if we are awarded?

A: Tourism Marketing Grant award notifications will be sent on or before **August 15, 2025**. You will receive official notification of your award status via email.



Q: Once awarded, do I have to be contracted to start projects?

A: No, however the signed contract is due back to TDTD by October 31, 2025. Eligible projects must be completed and paid for between July 1, 2025 and May 29, 2026.

For any additional questions regarding the FY 2025-2026 Tourism Marketing Grant please contact: Andi.Grindley@tn.gov