



## TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT FY 2025 - 2026 TOURISM MARKETING GRANT OVERVIEW

### **Overview:**

The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development (TDTD) is pleased to announce that we will once again provide matching funds for FY 2025 - 2026 through the Tourism Marketing Grant Program.

This grant provides tourism organizations the opportunity to expand the impact of their marketing message, increase visitation to their community and increase travel-generated revenue, while leveraging TDTD's brand and marketing efforts/initiatives.

Contracts awarded are limited to available funds, as well as the number of requests. Below is a snapshot of the details for the 2025 - 2026 Tourism Marketing Grant:

- \$1,500,000 TDTD budget
- **Eligible projects must be completed between July 1, 2025 – May 29, 2026.**
- **Project completion and appropriate proof of payment must be received by May 29, 2026.**
- Organizations within counties that are designated as at-risk per the current or previous two FYs Appalachian Regional Commission guidelines are eligible for a 70/30 reimbursable grant. 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. All other qualified organizations will be eligible for the regular 50/50 reimbursable grant as offered in years past.
- For tourism marketing only
- Contracts will be issued
- **\*All State logo usage must be approved. See FAQ and Brand Guidelines. Department logo is *not* required on advertising.**
- Projects included in approved scope of work for this grant will ***not*** be eligible for ARPA reimbursement. No overlap between the two programs is allowed.
- Partners will be required to submit their final report via an online form.

### **What organizations are eligible:**

- Official Destination Marketing Organization for each county or region, such as, Chambers of Commerce with dedicated tourism funding.
- Official Tourism Organizations, such as, Middle East Tennessee Tourism Council.
- Regional Organizations, such as, Tennessee Distillers Guild.

### **What organizations are *NOT* eligible?**

Tourism partners that are not considered one of the above, such as:

- Attractions, Museums, Tennessee Main Street organizations, Festivals – although an organization can use funds to market an event that is a draw for tourists
- Multi-state programs
- The following DMOs in the top five counties (*Nashville CVC, Chattanooga Tourism, Visit Knoxville, Gatlinburg CVB, Pigeon Forge Dept. of Tourism, Sevierville CVB and Memphis Tourism*)

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## **Definitions**

“Tourism” means attracting tourists to visit a particular municipality for day and overnight travel and encouraging those tourists to spend money in the municipality, which includes travel related to both leisure and business activities.

“Tourism promotion” means planning, conducting, or participating in programs of information, publicity, and advertising that are designed to attract tourists and foster economic activity through tourism.

## **What projects/expenditures are eligible?**

The grant projects should be for tourism marketing and should align with the state’s pillars and brand, and 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
- 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 (*includes the enhancement of an existing website or a new site*)
- Tourism-related tradeshow and exhibit promotional materials (*does **not** include travel expenses, registration, or expenses while on-site*)

*If you have an idea that is not listed above, but you think it directly promotes Tennessee’s brands, message, and tourism to Tennessee, please contact [Andi.Grindley@tn.gov](mailto:Andi.Grindley@tn.gov) to determine eligibility.*

## **What projects 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 is not
- Reprinting of an existing brochure, etc. without changes or updates
- Salaries or administrative expenses, such as travel reimbursement, office equipment or staff time.
- Fees paid to TDTD for program participation (Retire TN, Sales program sponsorships, state sponsored advertising co-ops)
- Development or enhancements to infrastructure
- Speaker fees, entertainment, event supplies, trophies, or prize money
- Promotions for events or campaigns that are community-based and are not a draw for visitors more than 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 regulations on a case-by-case basis.*

## **THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE APPLYING:**

- Total requests typically far exceed the allocated budget. All proposed projects may not be funded.
- This is a competitive grant; you must give a compelling case of why this will increase tourism.

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- 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?
  - Do not apply for funds that you aren't certain you can spend. We realize things happen, but we have to consider future funding decreases if funds are not used.
  - Is there a commitment to seeing the project through?
- Please be mindful of the timeline and deadlines when choosing projects.
- You must show proof the payment was processed (bank statement, credit card statement, cleared check or zero balance statement from vendor) for reimbursement; QuickBooks-type reports or copies of the front of the check will **not** fulfill this requirement.

## Checklist:

- ☐ [Budget Survey](#) by the TDTD Research Team has been completed
- ☐ Projects are prioritized and itemized in the chart on the application
- ☐ I have read and understand [Tennessee Sounds Perfect brand guidelines](#)
- ☐ I currently receive the industry e-newsletter or have [registered](#)
- ☐ The Tennessee Sounds Perfect logo is on the home page of the 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.**

## Deadlines

Submit your application and required documents by **August 1, 2025** to: [Andi.Grindley@tn.gov](mailto:Andi.Grindley@tn.gov)

*If you have any questions about your application, contact [Andi.Grindley@tn.gov](mailto:Andi.Grindley@tn.gov).*

## Timeline:

|              |                                                                                                                     |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jul 14, 2025 | Applications open                                                                                                   |
| Aug 1, 2025  | Applications due                                                                                                    |
| Aug 15, 2025 | Award notifications and contracts sent to partners                                                                  |
| Oct 31, 2025 | Signed contracts due                                                                                                |
| Feb 6, 2026  | Progress reports due                                                                                                |
| May 29, 2026 | Project completion date. Grant reimbursement paperwork and final reports due <b>without justification statement</b> |

- This is the **FINAL date** to complete your project. You must have all documentation including appropriate proof of payment which includes bank statements or cleared checks, etc. **All paperwork must be submitted via email.**

\*Invoices must be submitted within ninety (90) days of your accrual. We encourage you to submit this paperwork throughout the year or a justification statement will be necessary.