



FY 2026-2027 Tourism Marketing Grant Definitions & FAQs

As defined in Public Chapter 707 (2026):

1. **“Destination marketing organization”** means a nonprofit entity or governmental unit that:
 - (A) Is responsible for attracting tourists through tourism promotion or tourism development efforts on behalf of one (1) or more municipalities;
 - (B) Operates on a year-round basis; and
 - (C) Utilizes a dedicated tourism marketing budget supported by a consistent funding source;
2. **“Tourism”** means attracting tourists to visit a particular area for day and overnight travel and encouraging those tourists to spend money in the area, which includes travel related to both leisure and business activities;
3. **“Tourism development”** means the creation or expansion of physical attractions, facilities, or events that are available and open to the public, that improve the appeal of destinations to tourists, and that enhance tourist experiences that are primarily promoted to or used by tourists;
4. **“Tourism event”** means a planned occurrence, festival, exhibition, performance, sporting event, or similar organized activity which is designed and intended to attract tourists and visitors from at least fifty (50) miles away with the intent of generating overnight stay or increased visitation and expenditures that contribute to the local or regional economy through lodging, dining, retail, transportation, and other visitor-related services;
5. **“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; and
6. **“Tourist” or “visitor”** means an individual who travels more than fifty (50) miles from their primary residence or travels from an out-of-state primary residence to a destination for the infrequent purpose of leisure, entertainment, business, or recreation, and whose spending contributes to this state’s tourism economy.

Program Definitions

1. **“Regional tourism organization”** means either an entity confirmed in accordance with Tenn. Code Ann. § 4-3-2207 or a nonprofit organization whose primary purpose includes the promotion, branding, or marketing of a statewide, regional, or industry-based tourism sector, network of destinations, attractions, experiences, or tourism-related businesses, with the objective of increasing visitor spending and travel within Tennessee.”

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: How many grants will be awarded?

A: Last year, 88 were awarded. The amount varies based on budget, number of applicants, and the amounts requested.

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 funding 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: Destination marketing organizations and regional tourism organizations, as defined above.

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

A: Yes, more than one entity in a county can apply.

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.)

TENNESSEE

SOUNDS PERFECT

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)
- 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! Reimbursement requests must be submitted at least quarterly, but no more than monthly.

Q: What are considered supporting documents?

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

- Invoice from the vendor or provider who has completed the project
- Proof that payment to the vendor has been processed.
 - *(Bank/credit card statement, copy of cleared check, or updated invoice from the vendor showing the payment and a \$0 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 submitted through the link provided.



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 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 **September 4, 2026**. 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 30, 2026. Eligible projects must be completed and paid for between July 1, 2026, and June 30, 2027.

For any additional questions regarding the FY 2026-2027 Tourism Marketing Grant, please contact: Andi.Grindley@tn.gov