



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT FY 2026 - 2027 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 2026 - 2027 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 2026 - 2027 Tourism Marketing Grant:

- \$1,500,000 TDTD budget
- **Eligible projects must be completed between July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027.**
- **Reimbursement requests must be submitted at least quarterly, but no more than monthly.**
- 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 other grant programs. No overlap between programs is allowed.
- Partners will be required to use the state's new grants management system for all requests, updates, reports, etc. once it is available.

Eligible Organizations:

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. **"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."

What organizations are *NOT* eligible?

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

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- 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*)

Definitions

1. **“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;
2. **“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;
3. **“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;
4. **“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
5. **“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.

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*)

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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 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.
 - 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:

- ☐ I understand that the Budget Survey by the TDTD Research Team must be completed prior to the contract being executed, if grant funds are awarded. The survey will be shared at a later date.
- ☐ 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 by **August 21, 2026**, at the link provided.

Please note, timeline dates may shift as we work through the transition to the new grants management system. Any date changes will be communicated with grantees as early as possible.

If you have any questions about your application, contact Andi.Grindley@tn.gov.

Timeline:

Aug 5, 2026	Applications open
Aug 21, 2026	Applications due via Formstack form link
Aug 24 - 28, 2026	Application review and scoring period
Sep 4, 2026	Award notifications and contracts sent to partners
Sep 30, 2026	Q1 reimbursement requests due in Salesforce
Oct 30, 2026	Signed contracts due
Dec 31, 2026	Q2 reimbursement requests due in Salesforce
Feb 5, 2027	Progress reports due in Salesforce
Mar 31, 2027	Q3 reimbursement requests due in Salesforce
Jun 30, 2027	Q4 reimbursement requests due in Salesforce. All projects must be complete by this date. The reimbursement request should include every expense incurred in Q4 unless the payment has not yet cleared.
Aug 30, 2027	Final reimbursement requests due with any items that could not be included on the Q4 report.
Sep 29, 2027	Final reports due in Salesforce