

2026 Tourism Grant Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Q: Who is eligible to apply for the 2026 Tourism Grant Program?

A: Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) / Municipal DMOs / Tribal Nations

- Destination Marketing Organizations - Legally organized, nonprofit (501c6 or 501c3) Minnesota organizations whose primary purpose is to market their community or area for tourism or has been appointed this authority by the area(s) they represent.
- Examples of eligible organizations include, but are not limited to, convention and visitor bureaus, chambers of commerce and resort associations.
- Municipal DMOs - Municipal DMOs must have designated city staff that devote time to marketing their community for tourism and have a tourism-focused website separate from their city website.
- Tribal Nations defined as the 11 federally recognized Tribal Nations that share geography with Minnesota.

NOTE - there is a limit of one grant award per eligible organization in the same community or area.

Q: If our destination marketing is part of the city, are we eligible to apply for a grant?

A: Yes, but **ONLY** if your Municipal DMOs has designated city staff that devote time to marketing their community for tourism and have a tourism-focused website separate from their city website and is the primary tourism marketing entity for your community or area.

Q: Can I apply for a grant for my organization and a group/collaborative or multi-community grant?

A: No, Statewide associations and collaborative initiatives are not eligible under this program.

Q: Can I apply for the 2026 Tourism grant if I still have an open 2025 Recovery Grant (the round that ends June 30)?

A: Yes. This is a new 2026 Grant Program and does not require you to reconcile your 2025 Recovery Grant prior to applying.

Q: What are the 2026 Tourism Grant key program dates?

A: See key program dates below:

- **April 21, 2025, at 9 a.m. CST:** The Open Solicitation Period (application period) begins and continues until all funds are awarded or **June 20, 2025, at 4 p.m. CST.**
- **June 1, 2025:** Grantees with executed contracts may begin work. No expenses can be incurred before this date, or the date when all parties have signed the contract, executing it and making it effective, whichever date is later.
- **June 30, 2025:** All grant contracts must be fully executed.
- **December 5, 2025:** Grant progress reports due.
- **April 17, 2026:** All eligible tactics must be completed.
- **May 22, 2026:** Deadline for all reimbursement requests and reconciliation documentation to be received.

Q: What are the Grant Award Levels for the 2026 Tourism Grant?

A: Award amounts vary based on the organization's total budget, with a maximum award of \$11,000. Municipal DMOs may receive up to \$2,000. Tribal Nations may receive up to \$11,000. All awards require a 1:1 cash match.

Q: Will there be another grant offered in calendar year 2025?

A: Not at this time.

Q: We have not applied for an Explore Minnesota grant for several years; how can we find out what our Swift number is?

A: For help regarding Supplier Portal Registrations, User ID Requests, Password Resets, EFT Forms & Bank Change Requests, Supplier Portal Navigation, Supplier Updates (i.e., banking, addresses, contacts, etc.), and Payment Review., Contact Minnesota Management & Budget – EFT Helpline, efthelpline.mmb@state.mn.us Phone: 651-201-8106 Fax: 651-797-1305

Q: Do you have to provide a detailed marketing plan in the application?

A: No, however, when applying you will be asked to outline your request for grant funds on a project summary worksheet and project budget worksheet; please answer all of the questions and provide as many details as you can at the time of application. Ensure that your budget worksheet demonstrates understanding of the 1:1 cash match.

Q: Is there only one reimbursement from Explore Minnesota?

A: Yes. Please enter all completed projects/campaigns on one request for reimbursement form and submit all reconciliation materials at one time no later than the reconciliation deadline of **May 22, 2026**.

Q: Does this Grant cover Livability Marketing?

A: No, this Grant is NOT designed for livability, resident recruitment or workforce development campaigns, it is intended for Tourism Marketing ONLY. Please be sure you indicate your intention to use the grant funds in your application and in your budget worksheet form when applying.

Q: If I get my grant contract executed before June 1, can I start my advertising early?

A: Although your grant contract could be executed before June 1 (all signatures received and awarded) no marketing/advertising programs can start under this grant **until or after June 1**.

Q: Where can I find information about the 2026 Tourism Grant Program, FAQ's, Webinar Recording, Guidelines and Application?

A: All of the 2026 Tourism Grant Program details will be posted on the Explore Minnesota Industry Website: <https://mn.gov/tourism-industry/industry-opportunities/grant-programs/2026-tourism-grant.jsp>

Q: If work cannot begin before June 1, can I commit to advertising now (before June 1) even if I do not pay for the Ad until after I have my grant executed and in place to use?

A: It is advised NOT to reserve or commit to advertising until you have a fully executed grant after June 1, 2025. Grant funding should not be assumed and cannot be promised as payment until an official award has been made with a fully executed contract in place and after June 1, 2025.

Q: If you use your grant for SEO, what additional requirements are there beyond having the Explore Minnesota Logo on your website?

A: To utilize the program for SEO tactics, you must contract the service with a 3rd-party vendor, provide a detailed invoice (this indicates proof of service) and qualified payment information (this indicates proof of payment for the services referenced) when you are submitting reconciliation materials.

Q: What if I do not submit my application on the opening date? Could all of the 2026 Tourism Grant Funds be consumed/contracted within the first few weeks of the application opening date?

A: There is a total of \$500,000 available for funding the 2026 Tourism Grant. Applications and awards are based on your organizations total budget and requires a 1:1 match. Your organization may choose to apply for up to the full grant award available based on your organizational budget or your organization can take less than the grant award allotted based on your budget category. The application period will open **April 21, 2025, at 9 a.m. CST**; and continues until all funds are awarded or **June 20, 2025, at 4 p.m. CST**.

Q: What if my 2024 990 Form is not available when the 2026 Tourism Grant opens?

A: Please provide your most recent 990 Tax Form; it can be as recent as the last two years (tax year 2022 or 2023).

Q: Has the requirement for proof of payment changed?

A: The requirement has changed to require a bank statement or cancelled check as proof of payment when reconciling. Zero balance invoices from vendors will no longer be accepted as proof of payment.

Q: Can you share the strategy behind the changes to this Grant Program? How much is based on the state's unique budget situation, and what does it mean for the future of this program?

A: The last two Recovery Grants were funded by one-time funding from the Legislature. This program is using FY25 money due to ensure there can be a grant program available to DMOs for FY26. For the future FY27 cycle, \$500,000 of Explore Minnesota's base budget will be earmarked to underwrite this grant program to maintain consistency of this grant and levels with more predictability. If the State Legislature would offer any additional special appropriations, additional grant programs could become available, but it is unknown and undefined at this time

Q: What is a COI?

A: A COI refers to a Certificate of Incorporation and is filed when forming a new corporation in Minnesota. It outlines the corporation's basic information, such as its name, purpose, and registered agent. A COI should be filed with the [Minnesota Secretary of State](#) annually.

In addition to providing your organization's most recent 990 Tax Form, a Minnesota Secretary of State Certificate of Incorporation (COI) is also required when you make your grant application.

Q: Can I advertise in the 2026 State Travel Guide using the 2026 Tourism Grant?

A: The early-bird rate for the 2026 State Travel Guide will NOT qualify under the 2026 Tourism Grant. However, if you reserve and pay for an Ad in the 2026 State Travel Guide after you have a fully executed grant contract and after June 1, 2025, then YES you can purchase an Ad with your 2026 Tourism Grant.

Q: Is the 1:1 match requirement new to the 2026 Tourism Grant Program?

A: Matching funds have not been required in the last two bienniums. Explore Minnesota is re-instituting a cash match under the grant program to help unlock the legislatively appropriated private-sector match incentive funds to continue the program.

Q: Should I include all the pages of our 990 tax form(s) with my grant applications, or is the first page of my 990 acceptable?

A: A 990 EZ File Tax Form will be accepted; however, if your organization does not file a 990 EZ file form, you must include your organization's entire 990 filing documents, including all schedules, with your 2026 Tourism Grant Application to be considered.