



2020 TOURISM MAIN STREET EXPANSION GRANT PROGRAM

Overview: The Tourism Main Street Expansion Grants support new or expanding businesses that provide an improved visitor experience, with an emphasis on attracting visitors to a city or town's downtown core.

Mission: Commerce leads the efforts to attract, retain and expand wealth and improve the quality of life for the people of North Dakota (ND). The Tourism Divisions strengthens the positive image of ND by showcasing opportunities and inspiring nonresidents to Be Legendary.

Program Objective: The intent is to fund new projects capable of attracting visitors from outside of ND for at least one overnight stay. New attractions funded would help give the community and state another experience to entertain visitors and potential new residents.

What projects are eligible? Grant funds are to be used for building new attractions, expansions offering a new experience and supporting services for visitors. They cannot be used for marketing or ongoing operating expenses.

What are the grant amounts? Requests can be up to \$10,000.

What makes a strong project? All infrastructure needs are important, and each application is judged on its own merit. However stronger projects are ones that address some of the following needs:

1. Projects that clearly demonstrate their role in attracting and retaining visitors to their community and region, and the benefits the project will provide through enhancing or expanding the visitor attraction or amenity.
2. All project funding is in place and grant funding will complete a project rather than provide "seed money" to start a project.
3. The demand for the project is clearly demonstrated through research and analysis.
4. Restoration/repurposing of existing buildings that serve as an attraction or destination to visitors.
5. Creation of a unique "niche" in a downtown business district that can be used as an asset to attract visitors.
6. Projects that fill "gaps" in visitor services, such as unique dining or lodging in a downtown business district.
7. New entertainment venues that attract not only locals but out-of-town visitors and tour groups.
8. Downtown beautification projects – planters, benches, unique lighting, pocket parks, alley utilization and way-finding signage.

9. Businesses with the potential to be a catalyst for downtown core vibrancy, attracting visitors and residents year-round and during evening hours.
10. Projects will score higher if they retain or attract regional and out-of-state visitors to a community hub, creating an activity-based culture of entertainment, recreation and personal interaction.

What are the requirements for matching dollars? The required match is 1:1 and all grant payments are made on a reimbursement basis. For every dollar of grant money being requested, the sponsor provides one dollar and must submit receipts showing both the grant dollars and matching dollars. Matching dollars cannot be from other State of North Dakota grants.

The match must be in "hard" dollars, an actual money investment. In-kind services will not be considered as part of the hard match amount.

Money that has been put toward the project in the current and previous fiscal year may be considered as part of the hard match but must include documented verification.

Due to the timeframe of this program, pledges for future donations will not be considered part of a cash match.

What is the timeframe for completing projects? Applications are due no later than January 3, 2020 with successful candidates notified by February 3, 2020. The grant-eligible portion of the project must be completed by June 1, 2021, with all documentation due by June 20, 2021.

Please briefly address the following on a separate, typewritten document:

Selection Criteria: (A maximum of 300 points to be awarded for the application's sections I-III) **LATE or INCOMPLETE applications will not be considered.**

I. Project Description & Operating Plans (100 total points for this section)

- A) Provide a clear, concise description of your project. Be sure to include project location, facility owner (if different than applicant), what cash matching funds will be used for (\$1 hard match for every \$1 in Grant Funds requested/awarded), and how the project complies with the purpose of the grant program, which is to support new or expanding businesses that provide an improved visitor experience, with an emphasis on attracting visitors to a city or town's downtown core. You may include project description documents such as architectural drawings as an addendum to the application. *(25 points)*
- B) Provide budget and timeline details. *(20 points)*
 - 1) A development and implementation timeline for your project and the investment of grant funds in it.
 - 2) A development and implementation budget for the entire project, specifically identifying the amount of grant funds to be used for each phase of your project.
 - 3) A budget of all other funds for the entire project, specifically identifying the amounts to be used for each phase of the project.

- 4) Budget totals.
- C) Sustainability (20 points)
- 1) Present an operating budget for the facility's ongoing costs (staffing, maintenance, utilities, supplies, insurance, marketing, etc.) once this project is complete.
 - 2) Explain how these ongoing expenses will be funded.
- D) Marketing Plan (20 points)
- 1) Outline the marketing strategies for this attraction or facility now and once the project is completed and how the marketing is financed.
 - 2) Provide details of media used, target markets, any marketing partnerships or cooperative efforts involved.
- E) Describe the tourism and/or hospitality experience of those involved in the development and operation of this project. (15 points)

II. Project Compatibility & Appeal (100 total points for this section)

- A) Describe how the project will provide broad, long term appeal to visitors and residents. (50 points)
- 1) If this is an existing business or attraction, include information about your facility's annual visitation numbers, percentage of out-of-state and North Dakota visitors, hours of operation including evenings and weekends, and if you expect any changes in these areas once the project is complete. Will the expansion attract new visitors?
 - 2) If this is a new project, what are your anticipated visitation numbers? What research have you done to arrive at these numbers?
- B) Uniqueness - Describe what sets this project apart from others in your area or the State of North Dakota (25 points)
- C) Length of Stay - Describe the components of this project which will extend the time that visitors will spend in the area. How will it enhance other existing or planned tourism development and marketing efforts in the community and region? (25 points)

III. Need for Project (100 total points for this section)

- A) Describe how the proposed project will have an economic benefit on the local area, region and state. What is the anticipated tax base to be created and amount of visitor spending to result from this project? (20 points)
- B) Describe the cultural heritage, traditions, values and other "quality of life" aspects the proposed project will have on the local area, region and state. (20 points)

