



2021 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 and visitor dollars to North Dakota communities.

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 Division 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 North Dakota for at least one overnight stay. New attractions funded would give the community and state another experience to entertain visitors and potential new residents.

Eligible Projects: 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.

Grant Amount: Requests can be up to \$15,000.

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. Projects that will use grant funding to 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" 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 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 community vibrancy, attracting visitors and residents year-round and during weekend and 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.

Matching Funds: The 2021 Main Street Grant is a **2:1** matching grant program and all grant payments are made on a reimbursement basis. The state will pay two dollars for every dollar spent by the grant recipient. The match must be in "hard" dollars, actual monetary investment. In-kind services or pledges for future donations will not be considered as part of the hard match amount. Matching dollars cannot be from other State of North Dakota grants. Money put toward the awarded project in the current and previous fiscal year may be considered as part of the hard match.

Example: For a project awarded \$15,000, the grant recipient would need to submit \$22,500 in receipts for qualified project expenses within the scope of the granted project to receive the full awarded amount of fifteen thousand dollars. The first \$7,500 would be considered the match portion, funded entirely by the grant recipient. Money put toward the project in the current and previous fiscal years can be considered match. The other \$15,000 would be grant funded, to be reimbursed by the state. Receipts for the grant portion must be paid within the grant period, February 5, 2021-June 11, 2021.

When requesting distribution of the grant, the awarded entity must submit receipts and statements confirming project expenditures. The recipient must also classify which of the project expenses are considered matching dollars and which expenses are to be grant funded.

Timeframe: Applications are due no later than January 22, 2021 with successful candidates notified by February 5, 2021. The grant-eligible portion of the project must be completed by June 11, 2021, with all documentation due by June 25, 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. *(25 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 estimated 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. (10 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. How would this project differentiate you from other communities and neighboring states? (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)

