



## 2025-2026 Expedited Off-Cycle Grant Program Guidelines

### Description of Program/Eligible Applicants

Due to the passage of Legislative Bill 1071 in April of 2026, there is included in the appropriation for Nebraska Tourism Commission dba Visit Nebraska to this program FY2025-26 \$175,000 Cash Funds for state aid, which shall only be used for a marketing grant related to international volleyball events at a city of the metropolitan class. There is included in the appropriation to this program for FY2025-26 \$150,000 Cash Funds for state aid, which shall only be used for a tourism and visitor promotion grant to an organization that provides tourism and visitor promotion services in the state through exhibits and trails and that is located along the Missouri River and within five miles of a city of the first class.

**NOTE:** A federal identification number is required in the submittal of an application. Federal and State government agencies are not eligible to apply for grant funds.

The Nebraska Tourism Commission dba Visit Nebraska administers agency grant programs, per **Nebraska Revised Statute 81-3725:**

(1) The commission shall develop a program to provide marketing assistance grants to communities and organizations hosting national or international-caliber events held in Nebraska that have the potential to attract a significant percentage of out-of-state visitors and to generate favorable national or international press coverage for Nebraska.

(2) A community or organization applying for a marketing assistance grant shall provide a plan to the commission that includes: (a) Documentation that the event will attract out-of-state visitors; (b) details regarding the type of marketing that would be carried out with state funds; (c) methodologies used to track the impact of marketing efforts and the number of out-of-state visitors attending the event; and (d) details regarding the potential national or international press coverage that will be generated by the event.

(3)(a) The commission shall develop a program to provide innovative tourism grants to communities or organizations that provide tourism and visitor promotion services, host events, or promote attractions that result in either (i) an increased number of nonlocal, instate visitors or (ii) an increased number of both nonlocal, instate visitors and out-of-state visitors. Innovative tourism grants may include, but not be limited to, marketing assistance, planning assistance, basic support, and regional cooperation. Innovative tourism **grants shall not be used for equipment or capital facility development or improvements.**

**Notice:** This guidance document is advisory in nature but is binding on an agency until amended by such agency. A guidance document does not include internal procedural documents that only affect the internal operations of the agency and does not impose additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties or include confidential information or rules and regulations made in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act. If you believe that this guidance document imposes additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties, you may request a review of the document.

## **Grant Schedule**

**April 27, 2026**  
**May 8, 2026**  
**May 14, 2026**

**Expedited guidelines become available**  
**Application deadline**  
**Grant recipients are announced**

**Grant recipients must complete projects and pay in full all items (grant and match) prior to reimbursement. Grant recipients will be required to submit only one (1) reimbursement request and final reporting documentation including event attendance, use of funds, and marketing impact information within 90 days after the completion of the project/event or no later than *May 31, 2027 (whichever occurs first)*.**

## **Grant Match and Eligible Expenses**

**All grantees must provide at least a 25% match.** At least half (12.5%) must be cash *spent towards the project*, the other half (12.5%) can be in-kind services and/or donated materials towards the project; however, documentation must be provided for any in-kind match. Volunteer work is valued at \$15/hour and must be documented, including dates and list of volunteers, the services they provided and their hours of service.

**Note:** Nonprofit organizations who cannot meet the match requirement can qualify for grant funds by including hardship financial documentation in their application, describing their financial situation and budget.

### **Eligible grant expenses include, but are not limited to:**

- Website development, enhancement and online marketing
- App development and enhancement
- Regional cooperation promotions, brand creation/planning
- Image marketing (photo/film libraries, logo/ad development)
- Tourism awareness programs and customer service programs
- Brochure design and printing
- Media advertising (TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, billboard, etc.)

### **The following expenses are NOT eligible for grant funding:**

- Equipment or capital facility development or improvements
- Food, lodging, mileage and transportation costs
- Telephone expenses, postage and handling expenses
- Brochure racks
- Envelopes, letterhead, business cards and miscellaneous office supplies
- Membership dues
- Talent/dignitary honorariums or awards
- Physical construction of billboards/physical construction of roadway signage
- Gift cards, t-shirts, merchandise or other items for resale

When developing your grant application, be creative and innovative, tell us what marketing tools your community, event, destination, or region is lacking that will help you attract more visitors. Outline your needs in your application and include how, when, why, and where you plan to implement the tools.

Need to pay a marketing firm to develop ads, produce a video, or create other ad materials to utilize in marketing projects? Include the request for funding those services within your application - be sure to include at least two (2) bids from professional firms.

If you have been awarded funding in a previous grant cycle for the same destination or event, consider requesting grant funding for new promotions to draw new visitors. Perhaps broaden your target audience, seek new promotional strategies not yet attempted, try a new marketing outlet, etc. and highlight *what's new* about your marketing efforts!

### **Grant Application Instructions**

Applicants must complete the following steps:

1. Complete the cover page and include a federal identification number.
2. Describe the project in no more than three (3) typed pages of narrative. Remember, the goal of the program is to increase nonlocal, in-state visitors and out-of-state visitors. Identify the target market of promotions and outline anticipated positive effects of the project including:
  - a. How will the event/project attract visitors from instate and out-of-state?
  - b. Details regarding the type of marketing that will be carried out with grant funds.
  - c. Methodologies used to track the impact of marketing efforts and number of visitors from instate and out-of-state.
3. Complete a budget worksheet (see attached form) including a detailed budget, showing line-item costs, broken down by proposed funding (grant and match) plus the total amount.
4. Include coverage-area maps for all media buys (print or electronic media including TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, etc.). Be sure to include information that shows their audience and reach, and why this target market was chosen.
5. Include a minimum of two (2) written bids for all printing and advertising projects for which you are requesting grant dollars. Projects such as website design, traditional and online marketing campaigns carried out by an advertising agency, booth displays, logo enhancement, graphic design services, app development, image marketing, brochure printing and ***any project that can be completed by a variety of marketing firms must provide at least two (2) written bids***. If two bids are not included, that portion of the application may not be considered.

**After completing steps 1-5, submit all application components by the deadline of May 8, 2026** (including cover page, budget worksheet, description of activities, and any supporting material) **via email titled "2025-2026 Expedited Off-Cycle Grant Application"** in .pdf, .doc, .docx, or scanned image format to:

[heather.hogue@nebraska.gov](mailto:heather.hogue@nebraska.gov)

**All applications received by the May 8, 2026 deadline will receive an emailed confirmation receipt.**

If you don't receive a confirmation receipt, or if you have any questions regarding eligibility, timeline, reimbursement process, etc., please contact the Grant Administrator: Heather Hogue at 402-471-3774 or [heather.hogue@nebraska.gov](mailto:heather.hogue@nebraska.gov)

### **Reimbursement Details**

Once notification is given to projects selected for a grant, a contract will be made between Visit Nebraska and the applicant outlining which activities referenced from the project Budget Worksheet have been awarded funding. The grants are awarded on a reimbursement basis. It is the responsibility of the applicant to initially pay all expenses in full to complete the project. After completion of a project and after verification that the entire project was paid for, the State will reimburse for the pre-approved portion of the project.

**Once your project is complete, submit only one (1) reimbursement request and final reporting documentation including event attendance, use of funds, and marketing impact information within 90 days after the completion of the project/event or no later than *May 31, 2027 (whichever occurs first)* with all of the following components:**

- 1. Completed Reimbursement Request Form.**
- 2. Copies of vendor invoices and proof of payment: copies of cleared checks and/or paid invoices showing the actual costs incurred, obligated, and paid for both grant expenses and match expenses.**
- 3. Final Project Report: synopsis of the project, how grant funds were used, measurements of marketing effectiveness and impact (attendance counts of in-state and out-of-state visitors, number of advertising-stimulated inquiries, etc.) and a copy of all tangible items produced using grant funds, including but not limited to, advertisements, literature, publications, and videos.**

**NOTE: If the event being funded takes place after May 31, 2027, that is acceptable as long as all funds (grant and match) are expended and the reimbursement request is submitted by the May 31, 2027 deadline. An event taking place after May 31, 2027 must provide all items outlined in #3 Final Project Report (above) within 90 days of completion of the event for which grant funds were awarded.**

**2025-2026 Expedited Off-Cycle Grant Cover Page**  
**(Complete This Page for Each Grant You Are Applying For)**

Name of Grant Application/Project \_\_\_\_\_

Is funding being requested to promote an event? \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no

If yes, event name: \_\_\_\_\_ Event date/year: \_\_\_\_\_

If annual/reoccurring event, list visitor attendance of previous year: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Sponsoring Organization/Community \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person/Title \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Web Site \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: the above contact information is used by Visit Nebraska to notify the applicant if grant funds are awarded. Funding notification and the required paperwork will be sent to the above contact person at the email address provided. Please ensure the information is valid and legible.*

Federal ID # \_\_\_\_\_

Business/Organization Federal ID # Assigned to \_\_\_\_\_

Is applicant a State or Federal Government Agency? \_\_\_No \_\_\_Yes (Note: State and Federal government agencies are **not eligible** to receive funding through this grant program.)

Grant Amount Requested \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Cash Match \$ \_\_\_\_\_ In-Kind Match \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant Date

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**2025-2026 Expedited Off-Cycle Grant Budget Worksheet**  
 (Include Advertising and Contractor Bids if Applicable)

Please use this worksheet to outline each marketing activity of the project you are requesting funding towards. Multiple activities can be listed. Be specific regarding types of activities (for example: magazine ad, newspaper ad, radio ad, TV ad, visitors guides, rack cards, brochures, web sites, booth registration, conference registration fees, etc.) Each activity/advertising promotion must be listed separately in the chart below. List radio and TV advertising by both call letters and city of origin (for example, KRVN-Lexington) and magazine and newspaper advertising by individual publications and costs.

You must show how both the grant amount requested and the matches (both cash and in-kind) will be allocated among activities. Remember that a 25% match is required, and that at least half of the match (or 12.5% of the match amount) must be cash spent towards the project. The other half of the match can be “in-kind,” consisting of volunteer services and donated materials towards the project. Volunteer services should be valued at \$15 per hour.

Application/Project \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Name of Grant)

City/Town of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_ Federal ID #: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity	Grant Amount Requested	Cash Match	In-Kind Match	Source of Match	Total Funds
<b>Column Totals:</b>					

(Total of Grant Amount Requested + Match (Cash) + Match (In-Kind) = Final Column Total.)