



Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT GRANT FUND
Overview & Criteria

Overview

Since its inception, the Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) has allocated a percentage of its room tax revenue for the **development or expansion of visitor attractions and amenities** through a grant program. Originally called the Capital Development Grant Program, the name was changed to Tourism Development Grant Fund in 2011 to better clarify the purpose of the fund.

During the CVB's 30+ years, we have made more than \$9 million in grants through the program. Grants have ranged between \$1,900 and \$1,000,000.

General Funding Considerations

The CVB accepts grant applications for costs related to development of Fox Cities visitor attractions, amenities, and interactive, hands-on experiences as well high-impact traveling exhibitions and certain types of signage. All projects must be likely to generate overnight hotel stays or enhance the visitor experience in the area.

Applicable Projects

Projects that are funded under this program include:

1. Capital Projects
 - a. New capital construction projects
 - b. Upgrades, enhancements, expansions to existing facilities
 - c. Permanent exhibit installations
 - d. Interactive, hands-on experiences that allow visitors to do or create something (eligible costs: capital expenditures to create a space, equipment and supplies)
2. Special Programs
 - a. WOW! exhibitions or events
 - b. Signage (Wayfinding (vehicular and trails), On-site Attraction, Visitor Information Kiosk – (***See separate program guidelines for these types of grants.***).

Grant Process

The CVB's Tourism Development Grants Committee meets every-other month to review grant applications. Applications approved by the Grants Committee are forwarded to the CVB's Board of Directors for their review and approval.

Criteria

When considering an application for a Fox Cities Tourism Development Grant, the Grants Committee ranks applications on the following criteria:

Tourism Impact Criteria

- Is this project consistent with CVB priorities and objectives or does it support and enhance the brand or visitor experience?
- Is the project interactive? What type of experience does it provide for the visitor?
- Is this a new visitor attraction, or is it a substantial expansion of an existing attraction?
- Is it open to the public?
- Is it open year-round, or at least 180 days a year?
- Will it be available after 6 p.m. or on Sundays?
- Will it serve a substantial number of overnight visitors? Will it generate hotel room nights? How many?
- Will it contribute to our ability to attract leisure travelers, conventions or sporting events?

Operational Criteria

- Is it located within the Fox Cities Convention & Visitors CVB Service Area?
- Does the organization have not-for-profit status or is it a unit of government?
- Is this a “bricks and mortar” project?
- The project is the result of a planning process that has had public involvement? Do others in the community understand and support the project?
- Have the other funds necessary to the project already been raised, or are there well-developed plans for raising them?
- Is there a solid plan to fund the project, ongoing operating costs and maintenance?
- Are there established marketing plans?
- Is there an established management/staffing structure for the project?

Projects Not Eligible

The CVB does not give grants for any of the following purposes:

- Festivals and events, unless considered a WOW! event per our guidelines
- Scenic vista development
- Feasibility studies
- Operating expenses
- Annual fund drives
- Endowment funds
- Reimbursement for previously incurred expenses
- Marketing or research
- Travel
- Expenses typically considered to be overhead

Eligible Applicants

To be eligible, a potential grantee must be a not-for-profit or unit of government. Applicants must also be located in a municipality affiliated with the CVB. An “affiliated” municipality is one that has passed a room tax ordinance supporting the CVB with a tax of 3%.

Attractions that are privately owned, for-profit businesses are not eligible.

Funds Available & Use of Grant Funds

- ❑ Tourism Development grants for capital projects will not be more than 30% of the total project cost.
- ❑ WOW! Exhibits and Events may request grants of up to \$100,000.
- ❑ Project cash match can come from the operating budget, or may be secured from other grants, donors, sponsors, or other sources.
- ❑ Grant funds may not be spent on local marketing or for operational costs that would be incurred even without the project.

Payment of Grants

- ❑ New and upgraded capital projects and permanent exhibit grants will be paid upon documented completion of the project or per a specific payment schedule outlined in the grant contract.
- ❑ WOW! Exhibits and Events grant recipients will receive 70% of the funds when needed to pay for exhibit costs. The remaining 30% will be paid after the exhibit or event is over and a post-exhibit/event report has been submitted to the CVB.

Trail Project Funding Guidelines

As a general rule the Tourism Development Grant Committee does not fund elements of trail construction projects. There are, however, exceptions where a trail project will be considered under the capital project category. Most often these will be unique or unusual crossings or bridges that are key to the success of a particular trail project.

To be considered, a project must have the potential to help attract overnight stays. The project **must meet at least two** of the criteria below. Projects meeting a larger number of criteria have an increased likelihood of being funded.

- ❑ The trail project is a segment of an officially designated state trail or a trail that connects with a statewide trail. It connects, or will eventually connect, the Fox Cities with communities in other parts of the state.
- ❑ It is located near Fox Cities hotels and connects hotel guests to Fox Cities attractions.
- ❑ It provides opportunities for year-round usage, including snowmobiling or cross-country skiing in the winter.
- ❑ It is unique in the state or gives visitors access to a Fox Cities body of water.
- ❑ There is reason to believe the trail will get a large amount of use by overnight visitors in the community.
- ❑ The project has secured a significant amount of cash and in-kind support from throughout the Fox Cities.
- ❑ The trail is consistent with CVB's strategic vision of the Fox Cities as a thriving visitor destination hosting conventions, sports tournaments and leisure visitors.

Tourism Development Grants must supplement, not replace, existing state, federal and local financial commitments.

Every grant application will be considered on its own merits and it is within the CVB's authority to approve or deny any grant for any reason.

Applicable Project Definitions

1. New Capital Projects

This category is for bricks and mortar projects. Funds can be used for:

- a. Real estate acquisition
- b. Construction
- c. Architectural and engineering costs

2. Upgrades, Enhancements and/or Expansions to existing facilities

This category is for bricks and mortar project. Funds can be used for:

- a. Real estate acquisition
- b. Construction
- c. Architectural and engineering costs
- d. Space and materials to support an interactive visitor experience

3. Permanent Exhibit Installations

Funds can be used to establish exhibits that may stay for a period of months or years, but will continue to be large tourism magnets or have the potential to generate long-term publicity, bringing new visitors into the area. Generally, these exhibits will be unique to the area or showcase something unique about the area. The A.K.A. Houdini exhibit at The History Museum at the Castle is a good example of this type of exhibit.

4. WOW! Exhibitions or Events

Funds can be used for high profile temporary exhibits or events that can draw visitors from outside a 100-mile radius. Exhibits or events considered for funding under this program will meet the following criteria:

- Exhibits will be installed at a Fox Cities attraction for a period of no less than 8 weeks and preferably 12 weeks or more.
- They will generally be exhibits that are not available elsewhere in Wisconsin.
- Events must be multi-day and have programming throughout the event dates.
- Exhibits and events should be large and exciting enough to attract visitors from at least 100 miles away and have the potential to generate overnight stays in the Fox Cities.
- Exhibits and events will generate media attention in the Fox Cities and beyond.
- Exhibits and events will be hosted by one or more not-for-profit organizations with adequate personnel and resources to:
 - market the exhibit or event outside the region
 - present the exhibit or event attractively
 - insure a positive visitor experience
- Exhibit or event organizer has formed partnerships with one or more other tourism businesses to provide a larger visitor experience.