



Destination MT Division

**ECONOMIC IMPACT AND DESTINATION EVENT GRANT
PROGRAM**

Section I(c) of [SB 540](#) (2023)

**Economic Impact and Destination Event Grant Program
Guidelines, Application, and Grant Administration**

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TourismGrants@mt.gov

<https://brand.mt.gov/Programs/Office-Of-Tourism/Tourism-Grant-Program>

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Economic Impact and Destination Event Grant Program Guidelines, Application, and Grant Administration Manual

I. Introduction

The 2023 Montana Legislature authorized the Economic Impact and Destination Event Grant Program (“Event Grants” or “Program”) by enacting § 1(c) of Senate Bill 540 (“[SB 540](#)”). The purpose of Event Grants is to assist Montana’s communities with Destination Events and new Events that will increase tourism (including regional, national, and international visitors), promote Montana’s unique attributes, and generate additional community revenue. The Montana Department of Commerce (“Department”), Destination MT Division (“Destination MT”), will administer Event Grants in accordance with these Guidelines.

Alternative accessible formats for this document will be provided upon request. If you need this document in an alternative format, such as large print, Braille, audio tape, or computer diskette, please contact the Montana Department of Commerce Destination MT Division at (406) 841-2870, TDD (406) 841-2702, or the Relay Services number, 711.

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II. Definitions

Consistent with § 1(4) of SB 540, the Department has adopted the following definitions:

Destination Event: A special gathering or occurrence that takes place at a specific location that individuals or groups choose to attend due to the unique attributes of the location and/or the purpose of the Destination Event.

Economic Impact: The quantifiable effect a particular activity or Event has on the economy of a specific area, county, or region.

Event: A planned occurrence or happening, often organized to fulfill a specific purpose such as social, cultural, recreational, or educational objectives.

Grantee: Defined as one applicant who applies for and is awarded an Event Grant from the Department.

Invoice: The detailed invoices the Grantees must submit to receive Event Grant funds. Invoices generally should include: the Invoice number(s), a brief description of goods delivered and/or services performed, date(s) service was performed, type(s)/number of delivered goods, and total amount being billed.

Rural: Rural is defined as “not Urban.” See below.

Shoulder Season: Defined as the period of time between the peak of Montana’s typical tourism season and the beginning of Montana’s next typical tourism season. Shoulder Seasons may vary based on geographic location within Montana.

Traditional Advertising: Defined as an eligible form of marketing that uses offline media to reach an audience, such as television, radio, newspaper, printed materials, and/or billboards.

Urban: Urban places are defined as either: 1) a census urban area with a population at or exceeding 30,000 people according to the most recent United States census; or 2) an incorporated city/town within 10 miles of one of those large urban areas. Areas in Montana that meet this definition currently include Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Great Falls, Helena, Kalispell, Missoula, Belgrade, Columbia Falls, East Helena, Laurel, Walkerville, and Whitefish.

III. Eligible Applicants

Only the following entities are eligible to apply for an Event Grant:

- A primary, registered non-profit 501(c) organization;
- A Cooperative;
- An incorporated city or town;
- A county government;
- A consolidated government; or
- A tribal government (a waiver of sovereign immunity likely will be required for a tribal government to receive Event Grants funding).

IV. Eligible Events

Destination MT generally will consider eligible applicant’s proposals to host Events that promote tourism, community pride, and Montana’s unique cultural heritage including, but are not limited to:

- Cultural festivals and concerts;
- Entertainment shows and productions;
- Educational workshops;
- Indigenous, niche or signatory activities; and/or
- Historical celebrations.

If you have specific Event eligibility questions, please contact Destination MT staff at the Department directly.

IV. Ineligible Events

Event activities that are not eligible to be supported with Event Grant funds include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Any Event prohibited by Montana or federal law;
- A state, county, or community, trade, or job fair;
- Any school or league tournament, including athletics tournaments;
- A high-school, college, or family reunion;
- Any professional sporting Event that is not open to public participation;
- Any private and/or members-only Event; or
- An Event that is held for the main purpose of fundraising.

VI. Eligible Uses of Funds

Based on availability of funds, the Department may award Grantees up to \$25,000 for eligible Event Grant activities on a reimbursement basis. A local match is not required to receive Event Grant funding. Event Grants funding recipients may obtain reimbursements for the following allowable expenses once they sign a contract with the Department and submit Invoices to the Department, as described below:

- **Advertisement/Marketing:**
Grantees may use Event Grants funding for marketing purposes to generate and increase out-of-area visitor and resident attendance, including through:
 - Content creation specific to the Event;
 - Digital marketing campaigns,
 - i. Social media post boosts;
 - ii. Social media ads;
 - iii. E-communications (“e-mail blasts”) to paid-for targeted market segments;
 - iv. Geo-fencing; and/or
 - Traditional Advertising.

At minimum, 25% of the overall grant funding must be in the category of advertisement/marketing costs in the budget template provided within the application.

- **Event Infrastructure:**

Grantees may use Event Grants funding to support infrastructure used to host an Event, including the following expenses:

- Portable restrooms;
 - Portable wash stations;
 - Up to 25% of the rental costs for a venue/facility where the Event will take place; and/or
 - Up to 25% for rental of equipment such as stage, sound system, tables, chairs, and/or tents.
- **Signage:**
Grantees may use Event Grants funding to create Event signing, including the following expenses:
 - Production, construction, and/or installation costs of signage directing attendees to the Event site; and/or
 - Banners and/or posters promoting the Event.

VII. Ineligible Uses of Funds

Expenses that generally are not eligible to be supported with Event Grant funds include:

- Any uses prohibited by the contract signed by the Grantee and Department;
- Any uses prohibited by these Guidelines or other Department directives;
- Any uses prohibited by Montana or federal law;
- Ongoing or monthly operational costs, except for those specifically listed in the Eligible Uses section above;
- Purchases of transferable property or operating equipment, except for those specifically listed in the Eligible Uses section above;
- Costs related to refinancing, servicing, or interest on any existing debt;
- Any costs incurred prior to the date identified in the award memo;
- Office supplies;
- Per diem and/or accommodations for activity attendees, volunteers, and/or contractors;
- Salaries (including salaries for Grantees' staff);
- Promotional items, except for those specifically listed in the Eligible Uses section above;
- Subscriptions or membership costs;
- Postage;
- Domain registration;
- Website development or updates, except as specifically required in these Guidelines; and
- Website hosting.

VIII. Application Submission

To apply for an Event Grant, interested and eligible applicants must complete and submit to the Department the application that is located on Destination MT's website at <https://brand.mt.gov/Programs/Office-Of-Tourism/Tourism-Grant-Program>. Additionally, the Department has created a Toolkit on its website, which contains various templates and other

form documents that Grantees may wish to use while participating in the Economic Impact and Destination Event Grant Program.

Interested parties can also e-mail TourismGrants@mt.gov or call the Tourism Grant Program at (406) 841-2796 to ask any questions they may have about Event Grants.

IX. Application Review and Ranking Criteria

Destination MT staff will first review each application for completeness. All Event Grant applications will be evaluated by a Destination MT committee within 45 business days following submission. During this review, staff may contact an applicant to discuss any concerns or questions, or to request additional information or documentation. Staff may require additional information from the applicant to clarify information presented in the application; however, the applicant may only submit additional information after the initial application if specifically requested by Destination MT staff. Destination MT may take additional information into account based upon Destination MT's or other agency's knowledge about a proposed activity in the scoring of the application.

I. Ranking Criteria

In addition to evaluating how well the proposed activity meets the goals of these Event Grants guidelines and the purpose of SB 540, Destination MT staff will consider the overall quality of the application and supporting materials based on the following ranking criteria:

- Whether the eligible applicant is based in Montana, according to the applicant's tax records;
- Whether the applicant is the primary organizer of the Event;
- Strength of advertising and marketing plan for the Event;
- Strength of the applicant's proposed data collections and post-Event evaluation;
- Whether the eligible applicant has a significant amount of alignment with the Department's published tourism goals for Montana;
- Whether the eligible applicant is in good standing with the IRS;
- Whether the eligible applicant's information matches the filed Tax Identification or most recently filed Form 990-N; and
- Whether the activity is suitable for audiences of all ages.

Priority will be given to applicants who plan to hold an Event in a Rural community, a tribal community, and/or during the Shoulder Season of the year.

X. Economic Impact and Destination Event Grant Program Administration

After completing the application review process, Destination MT staff will notify successful applicants, i.e., Grantees, they have received an Event Grant award. The Grantee's completed application, including any written modifications resulting from the review of the application and assessment by Destination MT staff, will be incorporated into the contract between the

Department and the Grantee. The grant contract must be executed by an authorized agent of the Grantee prior to disbursement of any grant award on a reimbursement basis.

Grantees may incur eligible project costs once the Department provides notice of an award. However, the Department may only reimburse those eligible activity costs once Grantees execute a contract with the Department and submit the final Event grant report (discussed below) with necessary supporting Invoices. To the extent these guidelines and/or grant administration procedures conflict with that contract, the contract controls. Grantees are responsible for administering their Event Grant in accordance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws, and are responsible for obtaining liability insurance.

The provisions below describe some of the more significant requirements with which the Event Grantee must comply. All procedures and requirements that the award recipient must comply with will be set forth in the Grantee's contract with the Department. Forms and templates are available on the Destination MT website at <https://brand.mt.gov/Programs/Office-Of-Tourism/Tourism-Grant-Program>.

I. Grant Administration Workshop

Each awarded Grantee will be required to attend a virtual grant administration workshop held by Destination MT. The grant administration workshop will review:

- Startup conditions Grantees must meet prior to signing a contract with the Department;
- Creating a free Event listing on Visitmt.com;
- Review of the Department's template contract and approved budget for Grantees;
- Forms and templates included in the Department's Event Grant Toolkit;
- How to submit specific forms and other documents to the Department;
- An overview of a final Event grant report the Grantee must submit to the Department; and
- Notification Grantees must provide to Destination MT should issues occur in relation to certain activities, including:
 - Date(s) of Event performance;
 - Modifications over \$500 to the budget and/or approved costs; and
 - Performing the duties required of the Event Grant, including how to handle making any necessary changes to the Grantee's primary and/or secondary contact information and/or the legal signatory.

The Department logo will be provided to each Grantee and must be displayed on sponsor banner(s) / signage, social media, printed materials and, if applicable, the Grantee's website. The Grantee must also recognize the Department in any announcements of financial or sponsorship support during the Event.

2. Event Grant Contract

Once notice of award has been given to applicants, the Grantee must enter into a contract with the Department, which generally will not exceed 12 months. The executed contract between the Grantee and the Department is the legal document that governs the administration of the grant. Failure to meet the conditions of the contract may result in contract termination. Sample contract provisions are discussed below but may be subject to change prior to execution.

3. Final Event Grant Report

Within 60 days of the date of the Event, the Grantee must provide a written Event report to Destination MT demonstrating how Event Grant funds were effectively utilized to achieve the Event-based activities and generated positive Economic Impacts. The template for the Event report will be available on the Destination MT website.

4. Payment

Destination MT will disburse Event Grant funds to Grantees on a reimbursement basis for expenses outlined in the approved budget for the Event after Event is held and the completed final Event grant report has been submitted. For grant funds to be dispersed, the Grantee must submit to the Department a completed written request for funds form supported by detailed Invoices for each category of cost in the approved budget.

5. Public's Right to Know

Applications and other documents submitted to the Department may be subject to public disclosure in response to requests received under the Montana Constitution (Art. II, § 9) and/or Montana's Public Records Act. If an applicant believes their application or other documents contain information that could reasonably be considered to be proprietary, privileged, private or confidential in nature, they should contact the Department prior to submitting and request to fill out an affidavit identifying what information they contend should be protected from public disclosure.

6. Compliance with Laws

Applicants must certify on the application that the proposed Event complies with all state, federal, and local laws, ordinances, and regulations.

7. Compliance with Contract Conditions

The Department may require the Grantees to adhere to technical guiding documents and templates in the Department's Toolkit on its website based on the scope of the Event, if applicable.

8. Dissemination of Information/Technology Transfer

Grantees will be contractually required to allow the Department access to any Event venue during an Event, and to provide the Department with the ability to obtain, publish, disseminate, or distribute any and all information obtained from the activity (except any data or information identified as confidential or proprietary), without restriction and without payment or compensation by the Department.

9. Return of Funds

At the Department's sole discretion, the Grantee will be required to and agrees it shall return to the Department any and all funds that are determined by the Department to have been spent in violation of the terms and conditions of the grant contract.

10. Cost Savings

In the Event that eligible expenses for an Event are less than the projected costs and grant award, the Department may, at its sole discretion, authorize additional related planning efforts for the same applicant to enhance the overall Event or reduce the Event Grant award accordingly.

11. Available Funding

The Department must, by law, terminate this Contract if funds are not appropriated or otherwise made available to support the Department's continuation of performance of this Contract in a subsequent fiscal period. See § 18-4-313(4), MCA. If funds are not appropriated or otherwise made available through the state budgeting process to support continued performance of this Contract (whether at an initial contract payment level or any contract increases to that initial level) in subsequent fiscal periods, the Department shall terminate this Contract as required by law.

12. Access to Records

The Grantee shall provide the Department, Legislative Auditor, or their authorized agents access to any records related to the Grantee's participation in Event Grants at no cost. The

Department may terminate this Contract without incurring liability due to Grantee's refusal to allow access as required by this section. See § 18-1-118, MCA. The Grantee must maintain all records associated with Event Grant funds, including but not limited to:

- Financial records;
- Supporting documents; and
- Other records as required by law or other authority for five (5) years after either the completion of the contract or the conclusion of any claim, litigation, or exception relating to the Event taken by the State of Montana or any third party, whichever is later.