

## Pilot Community Tourism Grant Program Frequently Asked Questions

- **What is the purpose of the Pilot Community Tourism Grant Program?**

The purpose of the Pilot Community Tourism Grant Program (“PCTGP”) is to elevate communities across the state, increase their economic vibrancy by improving their appeal as visitor destinations, and improve their resilience as a destination by enhancing and diversifying tourism-related assets and infrastructure. Through this program, communities can cultivate regional visions, identify strategies to harness the power of tourism, and develop unique experiences in tourism.
- **How is a Community defined to be considered a potential fit for funds?**

A community is defined as a specific geo-location or a group of communities within a destination that has prioritized tourism as an economic development strategy and are interested in working collaboratively. A group of communities can be based on various factors including geographic location, shared values, cultural identity, and/or common tourism asset development.
- **What types of communities are eligible to apply for the PCTGP and how often?**

To meet the layers of intent within SB 540, applicants can be made up of one Rural Community, multiple Rural Communities partnering together, one Under-visited Community, multiple Under-visited Communities partnering together, an Under-visited Community partnering with a Rural Community, an Urban Community that partners with a Rural and/or Under-visited Community, or an Over-visited Community that partners with an Under-visited and/or Rural Community. Eligible entities are limited to one application per funding cycle.
- **What Communities are considered Over-visited?**

The 4% Lodging Facility Use Tax dataset determines if a place is over or under visited, based on a 3-year average of CVB’s bed tax collection. If a CVB’s bed tax collection is above the simple average of all CVB’s bed tax collections, then it is over-visited. This designation will be analyzed yearly, and can be reviewed online, [Urban and Over-visited Designations Map](#).
- **What Communities are considered Urban? Or Rural?**

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. Rural is defined as “not Urban.”
- **What are eligible uses of funds set forth under the PCTGP?**

Selected tourism ready communities may be awarded up to \$2.75M in total grant funds for up to 60 months to financially support resources, project support, tourism asset and product development, and training in collaborative marketing for businesses and communities to develop meaningful, regenerative tourism to support all phases of wholistic tourism development within a community.
- **What are ineligible uses of funds set forth under the PCTGP?**

Funds will not be reimbursed for any uses that prohibit the signed contract, the grant guidelines or any uses prohibited by Montana or federal law, ongoing or monthly operational costs, purchases of transferable property or operating equipment, costs related to refinancing, servicing, or interest on any existing debt, any unauthorized costs incurred prior to the date identified in the award letter, staff costs not directly attributed to PCTGP activity, office supplies, promotional items, subscriptions or membership costs, domain registration, and website hosting.

- **How is the [funding](#) broken down for each phase?**  
The department may reimburse Grantees up to \$250,000 for eligible expenses in year 1, up to \$1,000,000 in year 2, up to \$750,000 in year 3, up to \$500,000 in year 4, and up to \$250,000 in the last year contingent upon each previous year's contract conditions being met.
- **What are [tourism ready indicators](#) to help determine if our Community is ready to apply?**  
First, the Community will need to have an invested and cross-sectored steering committee of 8-12 members. Through the steering committee, the Community should identify the tourism asset or product development opportunities, including the timeline of development, what funding is needed, as well as what partners need to be involved to make the identified tourism assets or product developments happen. A tourism ready community should have recently participated in a professional strategic planning process that has identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges related to tourism asset and product development. Also, a tourism ready community should be able to devise successful strategies to overcome challenges that could potentially hinder tourism development. Refer to the [PCTGP Flow Chart](#) for a quick understanding of tourism readiness indicators for a community.
- **What is the required [Steering Committee](#) within the planning stages of the grant opportunity and how many members are required to participate?**  
The steering committee should be a cross-sectored, engaged, and dedicated planning committee that keeps things moving. The *minimum requirement* is 8-12 local champions but could consist of more members depending on the vested interest, scope of the project, and ability to build united interest from the community around the same table.
- **How does a Community submit an [application](#) for the PCTGP?**  
The application portal will be available on the [PCTGP webpage](#) when the grant cycle is open. The lead agency, as identified by the steering committee, will submit an application for or on behalf of the community. Completed applications will be evaluated by a Destination MT review committee within 45 business days of the grant cycle close date.
- **How are [applications ranked](#) when reviewed?**  
All applications are first reviewed for completeness. Completed applications are then evaluated to determine how well the Community meets the goals of the PCTGP and the purpose of SB 540. Based on the scoring criteria, an identified tourism ready community / communities will be scheduled for an in-person community overview and assessment by the Pilot Community grant review committee for potential funding as allocated by the cohort schedule.
- **What [tools and resources](#) can the PCTGP provide?**  
On the Tourism Grant Program website there are several templates and resources for potential community applicants as well as post-award grant management documents within the [Pilot Community Toolkit](#).

For more information on the **Tourism Grant Program and Opportunities** please visit our website [Tourism Grant Program](#) or contact Tourism Grant Program staff by email [TourismGrants@mt.gov](mailto:TourismGrants@mt.gov).