

TOURISM MARKETING GRANT GUIDELINES & APPLICATION

The Community Development Grant Program provides startup funding to registered nonprofits in good standing (501c3 and 501c6) for events that promote the community positively, have a positive economic impact on area businesses, and hotels, and support the development and growth of overnight visitation to West Plains. Grant funding is made possible through an allocation from the City of West Plains Hotel/Motel Tax. More than \$225,000 has been awarded by the City of West Plains Tourism Department to support area events since 2021.

Tourism Marketing Grant funding is made possible through the City of West Plains Hotel/Motel Tax to promote tourism and economic development in West Plains and is administered through the City of West Plains Tourism Department (Explore West Plains) with recommendations made by the Tourism Advisory Council and approved by the City Council.

Tourism Marketing Grants are being awarded for events held January 1 through December 31, 2026. Applications must be submitted at least 60 days prior to the event. Funding awarded will be based upon the event's impact on West Plains tourism stakeholders. The Tourism Advisory Council has the authority to approve or deny all Tourism Marketing Grant requests.

Applicants must provide an estimate of the number of hotel rooms the event will generate. Within two weeks (14 days) of receiving the grant award notification, the applicant must reserve a hotel room block for the estimated number of rooms with a West Plains hotel(s). The reservation confirmation must be communicated with the City of West Plains Tourism Manager. Failure to make the hotel room block reservation within the deadline or failure to utilize at least 50% of the rooms estimated, may eliminate the grant from being awarded or future grant awards.

Applications may be submitted beginning September 2, 2025, and will be accepted until funds are exhausted or October 31, 2026, whichever comes first.

Explore West Plains has allocated \$12,000 for 2026 Tourism Marketing Grants, with the maximum individual award of \$4,000. The grant award can be no more than 50% of the total event budget.

Events are eligible to receive the grant for up to three years. The Tourism Advisory Board reserves the right to fund additional years IF the event has shown substantial growth and/or a new component to the event has been added. Ideally, the grants are intended to be used for startup funds or event expansion and not a permanent revenue source for the event.

Eligible expenses for the Tourism Marketing Grant include event marketing targeted to those 50+ miles from 65775. Advertising can be in the form of print, digital, radio or TV. If an expense's eligibility for reimbursement is questioned, please contact the City of West Plains Tourism Department for clarification. This grant is a reimbursement grant. Only approved, eligible expenses submitted on the application will be reimbursed. Copies of invoices and receipts for all expenses must be submitted along with the reimbursement form with the final report.

Tourism Marketing Grant Criteria:

- Registered 501c3 or 501c6; or business working with nonprofit.
- A W9 must be completed and submitted to City of West Plains Tourism Department after notice of award.
- Event must be held in the 65775 postal code.
- Application must clearly demonstrate the event has the potential to increase demand for West Plains' tourism industry.
- NOT eligible for any other tourism grant or sponsorship offered by the City of West Plains for 2026.
- Application must be submitted a minimum of 60 days before the event date.
- One Tourism Marketing application per organization per program year. Events are only eligible for Tourism Marketing Grant for a maximum of three years unless the event has had substantial growth, or a new component has been added.
- Clearly demonstrate event will increase demand for overnight lodging in West Plains.
- Contact West Plains hotel(s) to reserve at least the number of rooms estimated on the application within two weeks (14 days) of receiving award notification. Forward confirmation to tourism manager at melissa.wharton@westplains.gov.
- Funding requested must go toward event advertising and not pay salaries, commissions, bonuses, or other incentives for organization staff/board members. The total funds requested cannot exceed 50% of the event's total budget. The maximum sports grant award is \$4,000.
- If awarded, the applicant agrees to recognize Explore West Plains accordingly by including the Explore West Plains logo and/or text in prominent size font on promotional materials, "Financial assistance for this event has been provided by Explore West Plains." All digital (web and social media) recognizing the event sponsors will need to include Explore West Plains. Failure to recognize Explore West Plains for its sponsorship will disqualify the applicant from future fund allocations from the City of West Plains Tourism Department.
- Reimbursement documentation is due within 30 days following the event conclusion. Incomplete documentation may result in funding not being awarded.

TOURISM MARKETING GRANT CHECKLIST

Before starting the application, please review the checklist to ensure you have everything you need.

- ☐ Provide a point of contact for the grant along with current contact information. This will be the individual that Explore West Plains will work with for all matters regarding the grant.
- ☐ Event Date: Application must be submitted at least 60 days prior to the event.
- ☐ Event Location: Must be held in the 65775 postal code.
- ☐ Completed W9: Must be submitted after award notice. Funds will not be issued unless W9 is on file.
- ☐ Proof of Event Liability Insurance.
- ☐ EIN Number: Must be registered nonprofit in good standing (501c3 or 501c6) or business working with a nonprofit.
- ☐ Event TOTAL Budget (Grant cannot exceed 50% of event budget)
- ☐ Event Advertising Budget
- ☐ Amount Requested (Maximum Tourism Marketing Grant request is \$4,000)

- ☐ Clearly demonstrates event will increase demand for overnight lodging in West Plains
 - ☐ Agree to contact West Plains hotel(s) to reserve at least the number of rooms estimated on the application within two weeks (14 days) of receiving award notification. Forward confirmation to tourism manager at melissa.wharton@westplains.gov
 - ☐ Provide plan to track overnight hotel rooms generated from the event.
 - ☐ Brief description of the event that clearly states its impact on West Plains tourism industry.
 - ☐ Brief description of how the funds will be utilized to support the event.
 - ☐ Brief marketing plan for the event.
 - ☐ Only one grant award per organization per program year.
 - ☐ Verify all City of West Plains permits/licenses have been obtained, if applicable.
 - ☐ Agree to recognize Explore West Plains accordingly and understand failure will result in future funds not being available from the City of West Plains Tourism Department.
 - ☐ Agree to respond to the City of West Plains Tourism Department request for a Final Report following the event within 30 days of the event and understand failure to respond will result in future funds not being available from the City of West Plains Tourism Department.
 - ☐ Agree to submit reimbursement documentation within 30 days of the event's conclusion (copies of invoices, receipts, and proof of recognition are required).
 - ☐ Understand the application and materials regarding the application will be a matter of public record, open to inspection by any citizen, under RSMo Chapter 610.
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