

State of Illinois Uniform Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
Summary Information

Awarding Agency Name	Commerce And Econ Opp
Agency Contact	Greg Mihalich (ceo.tourismgrants@illinois.gov)
Announcement Type	Initial
Type of Assistance Instrument	Grant
Funding Opportunity Number	FY26-1
Funding Opportunity Title	Promotion of Illinois Tourism
CSFA Number	420-25-2087
CSFA Popular Name	Marketing Partnership Program - Balance of State
Anticipated Number of Awards	125
Estimated Total Program Funding	\$1,250,000
Award Range	\$10000 - \$100000
Source of Funding	State
Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements	Yes
Indirect Costs Allowed	No
Restrictions on Indirect Costs	No
Posted Date	10/03/2025
Application Date Range	10/03/2025 - 11/03/2025 : 5:00 PM
Grant Application Link	Please select the entire address below and paste it into the browser... https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/653a307dda4748598004abf8bc083099
Technical Assistance Session	Offered : Yes Mandatory : No Date : 10/09/2025 : 2:00 PM Registration link : https://illinois.webex.com/weblink/register/r4d79379e919dcee3a4db17380dfeab90

Agency-specific Content for the Notice of Funding Opportunity

Marketing Partnership Program – Balance of State

NOFO ID: 2087-3164

For information about grants please visit:

<https://dceo.illinois.gov/dceo-grants.html>

A. Program Description

Notice of Funding Opportunity Intent

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (the “Department” or “DCEO”) is issuing this Notice of Funding Opportunity (“NOFO”) to match/leverage local funds with State funds to market and promote destinations, tourism attractions and tourism events throughout the State. The goal of the program is to increase overnight stays in paid accommodations.

Program Description

Section 5 (a) of the Illinois Promotion Act [20 ILCS 665/5-8] authorizes the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to award grants to counties, municipalities, not-for-profit organizations, and local promotion groups for the promotion of tourism attractions, destinations and tourism events in Illinois.

This particular opportunity is for projects outside Cook County. The complementary program for projects within Cook County is NOFO #: 2097-3163.

Program History

This is an existing program that was last funded in FY 24.

Performance Goals and Measures

Examples of program goals or performance measures include:

1. Visitors to a region or area (measured by tickets sold (for events))
2. Increase in sales tax revenue compared to previous year
3. Increase in hotel tax revenue compared to previous year
4. Advertising conversion.

Other Information

N/A

B. Funding Information

This grant program is utilizing state funds appropriated by Public Act 104-0003. Total amount of funding expected to be awarded through this NOFO is \$1,250,000. Awards will range from \$10,000 to \$100,000. The Department expects to make between 13 and 125 awards through this NOFO.

The Total Project Cost must equal or exceed \$20,000 in order to be considered for a grant award.

Up to 50 percent of the Total Project Cost may be funded for Projects that generate significant visitation and overnight stays to the area.

Grantees that charge "for-profit" participants for inclusion in promotional projects must also include the promotion of the entire destination in advertisements. Charges for participation from any source cannot exceed the match requirement or it will lower the Department's grant award.

NOFO ID: 2087-3164

The period of performance is expected to be date of grant execution through June 30, 2026.

Pre award or prior incurred costs are allowable if they are incurred on or after July 1, 2025.

Eligible Promotional Projects and Activities – The Program shall provide matching grants to eligible Applicants to assist in promotional activities including, but not limited to, the following:

- 1) Travel Related Promotional Materials: Costs related to production, design and distribution of travel related brochures, visitor guides, direct mail literature or travel guides that are primarily used to promote areas outside of 50 miles from the Tourism Attractions, Tourism Destinations or Tourism Events in Illinois
- 2) Media: Costs related to production, design and placement for print advertising, radio advertising, on line advertising, out of home advertising and television advertising directed toward areas outside of 50 miles from the Tourism Attraction, Tourism Destination or Tourism Event in Illinois;
- 3) Billboards: Costs related to design and production of billboard artwork and rental of billboard space directed toward areas outside of 30 miles from the Tourism Attraction, Tourism Destination or Tourism Event in Illinois, unless the billboard is placed on an intrastate;
- 4) Web Sites: Costs related to Web site development, including hosting fees, domain registration and related maintenance fees, search engine optimization and key word searches;
- 5) Market Research: Costs to conduct research to optimize the effectiveness of marketing the tourism Attraction, Tourism Destination or Tourism Event in Illinois to areas outside of 50 miles;
- 6) Travel/Trade Shows: Costs related to travel/trade show booth space rental and related expenses, including travel show registration fees for domestic and international marketing, utilities, furniture rental, cleaning, etc.;
- 7) Visitor Inquiries: Costs related to telephone expenses for toll free telephone numbers for visitor inquiries;
- 8) Mail Promotions: Costs of the purchase and use of mailing lists for direct mail promotions, provided the promotional material is printed under this Program and provided the postage is billed at bulk rate;
- 9) Promotional Publications: Expenses for shipping and distribution of promotional publications printed under this Program to State funded Tourism information centers;
- 10) Ad Campaigns: Costs related to email newsletters and ad mail campaigns primarily directed towards visitors outside a 50 mile radius from the Tourism Attraction, Tourism Destination or Tourism Event in Illinois; and
- 11) Maps: Costs related to the design and production of maps illustrating the Tourism Attractions of an area being promoted.

Ineligible promotional projects and activities are those that do not contribute to increasing visitation and travel expenditures in Illinois, including, but not limited to:

- 1) Administrative expenses (e.g., stationery, envelopes, basic telephone service charges except for toll free number phone expenses for visitor inquiries, rent, newsletters, supplies, personnel or equipment, and grant management fees);
- 2) Normal postage, distribution and shipping expenses, except for those allowed in subsections (8)

and (9) (above);

3) Association or organizational dues;

4) Street banners, bumper stickers, placements or any type of specialty item;

5) Any type of quick-print material/flyer;

6) Purchase or rental of av equipment;

7) Projects solely promoting for-profit entities;

8) Event production expenses(e.g., audio equipment, awards, entertainment, fireworks, portable restrooms, hired labor, refreshments, etc.) ;

9) Travel expenses (transportation, lodging, per diem; and

10) Promotion of county fairs.

The release of this NOFO does not obligate the Department to make an award.

C. Eligibility Information

An entity must be registered in the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) Grantee Portal, <https://grants.illinois.gov/portal/>, at the time of grant application. The portal will verify that the entity:

- Has a valid FEIN number (<https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/get-an-employer-identification-number>)
- Has a current SAM.gov registration (<https://sam.gov>). SAM.gov registrations must be marked as “public” to allow the GATA Grantee Portal to expedite the review of the federal information;
- Has a valid UEI number (<https://sam.gov>)
- Is not on the Federal Excluded Parties List (verified at <https://sam.gov>)
- Is in Good Standing with the Illinois Secretary of State, as applicable (https://www.ilsos.gov/departments/business_services/corp.html)
- Is not on the Illinois Stop Payment list (verified once entity is registered in GATA Grantee Portal); and
- Is not on the Department of Healthcare and Family Services Provider Sanctions list (<https://www.illinois.gov/hfs/oig/Pages/SanctionsList.aspx>)

Entities on the Illinois Stop Payment List and/or the Federal Excluded Parties List at time of application submission will not be considered for an award.

An automated email notification to the entity alerts them of “qualified” status or informs how to remediate a negative verification (e.g., not in good standing with the Secretary of State). A federal Debarred and Suspended status cannot be remediated.

At this time, federal memo M-21-20 allows entities to apply for grant awards without a valid UEI number. The UEI number must be obtained prior to grant execution. The State of Illinois has adopted this guidance for the issuance of state awards also.

Pursuant to the policy of the Illinois Office of the Comptroller, to receive grant funds from the State of Illinois, a grantee must be considered a regarded entity by the IRS for federal income tax purposes. Disregarded entities will not be eligible to receive grant funds.

1. Eligible Applicants include:

- Counties located outside Cook County
- Municipalities located outside Cook County
- Not-for-profit organizations located outside Cook County
- Local promotion groups located outside of Cook County that includes any non-profit corporation, organization, association, agency or committee thereof formed for the primary purpose of publicizing, promoting, advertising or otherwise encouraging the development of tourism in any municipality, county, or region of Illinois

The Department complies with all applicable provisions of state and federal laws and regulations pertaining to nondiscrimination, sexual harassment and equal employment opportunity including, but not limited to: The Illinois Human Rights Act (775 ILCS 5/1-101 et seq.), The Public Works Employment Discrimination Act (775 ILCS 10/1 et seq.), The United States Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as amended) (42 USC 2000a-and 2000H-6), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC 794), The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 USC 12101 et seq.), and The Age Discrimination Act (42 USC 6101 et seq.).

2. Cost Sharing or Matching.

Each grantee shall provide matching funds equal to no less than 100% of the Grant Amount. If grantee fails to match any portion of the grant award in a given Fiscal Year, that portion of the grant shall be refunded to the Department in accordance with the terms of the Grant Agreement.

The grantee shall provide matching funds to the Total Project Costs that:

- a) Are identified in the budget of the Grant Agreement;
- b) In no case shall be less than 50 percent of the Total Project Cost;
- c) Are not funds from other Department funded grant programs or funds used to match any other grants; and
- d) Are necessary and irrevocably obligated to the Project.

In-Kind Contributions are not allowed as match

3. Indirect Cost Rate.

Indirect costs are not eligible for this program.

4. Freedom of Information Act/Confidential Information.

Applications and accompanying materials are subject to disclosure in response to requests received under provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (5 ILCS 140/1 et seq.). Information that could be proprietary, privileged, or confidential commercial or financial information should be clearly identified as such in the application materials. The Department will maintain the confidentiality of that information only to the extent permitted by law.

5. Other, if applicable.

Applicants may submit one (1) application for this opportunity.

D. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package.

Grant application forms are available at the web link provided in the “Grant Application Link” field of this announcement or by contacting the Program Manager:

Greg Mihalich
Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
1011 South 2nd St.
Springfield, IL 62704
Tele: 217-299-1323
Email: ceo.tourismgrants@illinois.gov

2. Content and Form of Application Submission.

A standard application package must be submitted to and reviewed by DCEO. Each package must contain the following items:

- ☐ Uniform Grant Application in fillable PDF format.
 - Signature page must be signed by the authorized signatory before submission
 - Can be printed, signed, and scanned
 - Can be signed digitally
- ☐ Uniform Budget utilizing the template provided by DCEO for this project.
 - The entire Excel document with all the tabs included, even if the tabs are not relevant to the grant opportunity, must be submitted.
 - Do not send a restricted version of the Uniform Budget.
 - Certification page must be signed by the authorized signatory before submission
 - Can be printed, signed, and scanned
 - Can be signed digitally
- ☐ Conflict of Interest Disclosure.
 - Conflict of Interest Disclosure must be signed by the authorized signatory before submission
 - Can be printed, signed, and scanned
 - Can be signed digitally
- ☐ Mandatory Disclosure.
 - Mandatory Disclosure must be signed by the authorized signatory before submission
 - Can be printed, signed, and scanned
 - Can be signed digitally

This Notice of Funding Opportunity also requires the submission of the following other programmatic specific items as part of the program application:

- ☐ Program Application

Please note there is a maximum upload of 10 documents in the web form that you submit the application, so combining files may be necessary.

3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM).

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal or State awarding agency that is exempt from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal or State awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to:

- (i) Be registered in SAM. To establish a SAM registration, go to <https://sam.gov> and/or utilize this instructional link: How to Register in SAM from the gata.illinois.gov Resource Library tab. SAM.gov registrations must be “public.”
- (ii) Provide a valid UEI number in the GATA Grantee Portal registration.
- (iii) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal, Federal pass-through or State award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal or State awarding agency. The State awarding agency may not make a Federal pass-through or State award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable UEI and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the State awarding agency is ready to make a Federal pass-through or State award, the State awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal pass-through or State award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal pass-through or State award to another applicant.

4. Submission Dates and Times.

Applications for this opportunity must be submitted by 30 days

Application materials must be submitted to the Department via electronic form at <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/653a307dda4748598004abf8bc083099>.

The Department is under no obligation to review applications that do not comply with the above requirements. Failure to meet the application deadline may result in the Department returning application without review or may preclude the Department from making the award.

5. Intergovernmental Review, if applicable.

N/A

6. Funding Restrictions.

This opportunity does allow reimbursement of pre-award costs. Other restrictions can be found in Sections A., B., and C.

7. Other Submission Requirements.

Documents stored in Google Docs or other cloud-based servers are not allowed.

The applicant can receive a copy of their submitted application by checking the “Send me a copy of my responses” box at the bottom of the application submission form.

Applicants may confirm receipt of the application and documents by contacting the program contact listed in this NOFO.

E. Application Review Information

1. Criteria.

Grant proposals will be reviewed on a competitive basis. Each proposal will be scored on a 100-point scale (or on a percentage scale). The Department shall consider the following criteria when evaluating the application submittal: Need, Capacity, and Quality.

Need- Identification of stakeholders, facts, and evidence that demonstrate the proposal supports the grant program purpose	
To what extent is the Project part of the applicant's overall marketing plan and based on research. Use marketing data to support need for the project.	10 points
To what extent does the Project include repeat marketing efforts and to what extent do the results from those efforts justify repeat funding.	10 points
Capacity- The ability of the applicant to execute the project according to requirements of the grant program	
To what extent does the Project promote a viable tourism attraction, tourism destination or tourism event located within 30 miles of an area with supporting visitor services.	10 Points
To what extent does the Project include tracking and evaluation measures? Please include along with performance measurements.	10 Points
Quality- The totality of features and characteristics of the project that indicate its ability to satisfy the requirements of the grant program	
To what extent do the geographic advertising markets appear reasonable and based upon research to drive overnight stays.	10 Points
To what extent does Project demonstrate how it will increase visitation, length of stay and/or tourism expenditures from outside of 50 miles.	10 Points
To what extent will the Project have a significant impact on the area's overall tourism efforts.	10 Points
To what extent will the Project have a significant impact on the State's overall tourism efforts.	10 Points
To what extent does the Project encompass multiple attractions, municipalities, or geographic areas. Provide a brief description of those attractions/areas.	10 Points
To what extent will the marketing be targeted to attract visitors from outside 50 miles to stay overnight.	10 Points

2. Review and Selection Process.

Applications will be graded using the Merit Review Process and scored on the criteria specified in Section E.1. The Department will designate an Evaluation Committee to grade each application received for this funding opportunity. The final score of each Committee member will be calculated and an average of all scores will be the final applicant score. Grants will be awarded in order from highest score to lowest scores until funding is exhausted. An applicant's final score must be at least 60 points to be considered eligible for funding

The Merit Based Review process is subject to appeal per <https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/meritappeview.html>. However, competitive grant appeals are limited to the evaluation process. Evaluation scores may not be protested. Only the evaluation process is subject to appeal. The appeal must be submitted through the merit review appeal request form (<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/6444bed39ef140c589f002f53b9bc092>) within 14 calendar days after the date that the grant award notice has been published.

3. Anticipated Announcement and State Award Dates, if applicable.

After the application period is closed, the Department will conduct a meritbased review of eligible applications. Successful applicants will receive a Notice of State Award (NOSA) to initiate the grant agreement phase. During this phase, you will be contacted by a grant manager to develop a grant agreement, which can be a months long process depending on complexity, cooperation, and conformity with all applicable federal and state laws.

The Department reserves the right to issue a reduced award, or not to issue any award.

F. Award Administration Information

1. State Award Notices.

The Notice of State Award (NOSA) will specify the funding terms and specific conditions resulting from the pre-award risk assessments and the merit-based review process. The NOSA must be accepted in the GATA Portal by an authorized representative of the grantee organization. The NOSA is not an authorization to begin performance or incur costs.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.

Subrecipients and Subcontractors: Agreement(s) and budget(s) with subrecipients and subcontractors must be pre-approved by and on file with DCEO. Agreements can be submitted to DCEO when available. Subcontractors and subrecipients are subject to all applicable provisions of the Agreement(s) executed between DCEO and the grantee. The successful applicant shall retain sole responsibility for the performance of its subrecipient(s) and/or subcontractor(s).

Grant Uniform Requirements: The Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (30 ILCS 708/1 *et seq.*) (and its related administrative rules, 44 Ill. Admin. Code Part 7000), was enacted to increase the accountability and transparency in the use of grant funds from whatever source and to reduce administrative burdens on both State agencies and grantees by adopting federal guidance and regulations applicable to those grant funds; specifically, the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR 200).

Procurement: Grantees will be required to adhere to methods of procurement per the Procurement Standards (2 CFR 200.317 – 2 CFR 200.327).

3. Reporting.

Periodic Performance Report (PPR) and Periodic Financial Report (PFR)

Grantees funded through this NOFO are required to submit in the format required by the Grantor, at least on a quarterly basis, the PPR and PFR electronically to their assigned grant manager. The first of such reports shall cover the first three months after the award begins. Pursuant to 2 CFR 200.328, Periodic Financial Reports shall be submitted no later than 30 calendar days following the period covered by the report. Pursuant to 2 CFR 200.329, Periodic Performance Reports shall be submitted no later than 30 calendar days following the period covered by the report. Any additional reporting requirements will be disclosed in the NOSA. Grantees are required within 45 calendar days following the end of the period of performance to submit a final closeout report in the format required by the Grantor (See 2 CFR 200.344).

Monitoring

Grantees funded through this NOFO are subject to fiscal and programmatic monitoring visits by the Department in accordance with 2 CFR 200.337. They must have an open-door policy allowing periodic visits by Department monitors to evaluate the progress of the project and provide documentation upon request of the monitor. Program staff will also maintain contact with participants and monitor progress and performance of the contracts. The Department may modify grants based on performance.

Audit

Grantees shall be subject to Illinois' statewide Audit Report Review requirements. Terms of the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 (31 USC 7501-7507), Subpart F of 2 CFR Part 200, and the audit rules set forth under the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act Admin Rules shall apply (See 44 IL Admin Code 7000.90).

G. State Awarding Agency Contact(s)

Grant Help Desk
Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
Email: CEO.GrantHelp@illinois.gov

H. Other Information, if applicable

N/A