

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	Tourism Private Sector Grant Program
CSFA Number	420-25-2167
CSFA Popular Name	Tourism Private Sector Grant Program
Anticipated Number of Awards	0
Estimated Total Program Funding	\$600,000
Award Range	\$10000 - \$50000
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/5e7e0ed93d8c4ff5969a33a6e043f3ad
Technical Assistance Session	Offered : Yes Mandatory : No Date : 10/08/2025 : 2:00 PM Registration link : https://illinois.webex.com/weblink/register/r51b6e8eab5fe9c671cb30ceb8472fbe

Agency-specific Content for the Notice of Funding Opportunity

Tourism Private Sector Grant Program

NOFO ID: 2167-3162

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 provide grants for the purpose of attracting, hosting and developing new events and festivals in Illinois or enhancing existing festivals and events. Grantees must be able to match grant award dollar-for-dollar from any non-governmental entity; however, up to 25% of the required match may be substituted with in-kind contributions. Costs associated with hosting existing or repeat events and festivals will not be eligible unless documentation can be provided that the event was secured in direct competition with other states or significant enhancements will be made to the event or festival to increase the attendance from travel outside 50 miles. Also, grant funds cannot be used to assist one community in attracting an existing Illinois event from another Illinois community.

Program Description

Section 5(b) of the Illinois Promotion Act (20 ILCS 665) authorizes the Department to make grants to Illinois not-for-profit organizations, for-profit entities, counties, municipalities and local promotion groups to match funds from sources in the private sector for the purpose of attracting and hosting tourism events in Illinois and developing new events and festivals in Illinois or enhancing existing Illinois festivals.

Tourism Event is defined as an event, such as a major convention, trade show, sporting activity or festival, with potential to attract visitors from outside a 50-mile radius and to produce significantly increased economic impact for the State of Illinois through overnight stays.

Tourism Festival is defined as an organized series of public activities for a specific duration that may include, but are not limited to, cultural performances, exhibitions, fairs, or carnivals that may include music and the service of food and beverages.

Program History

This program was funded annually through FY20, then paused during the COVID-19 Pandemic until FY 22 and was funded in FY25.

Performance Goals and Measures

Applicant must identify performance measurements they will use to identify successful outcomes as a result of the grant funding such as:

1. Estimated number or percentage of increase visitation as a result of the festival or event;
2. Estimated increase in local hotel tax revenue to the area served after event or festival;
3. Number of media impressions and value for promotion of the festival or event;
4. Estimated increase in sales tax revenue as a result of the festival or event.

Other Information

N/A

B. Funding Information

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This grant program is utilizing state funds appropriated by Public Act 103-0589. Total amount of funding expected to be awarded through this NOFO is \$600,000. Awards will range from \$10,000 to \$50,000.

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 through the grant execution..

Eligible Projects and Activities – Activities eligible for funding include, but are not limited to, the following costs associated with attracting and hosting events and festivals:

1. Advertising and marketing activities directed toward areas outside of 50 miles from the event;
2. Transportation and housing;
3. Prize/award money;
4. Building or equipment rental;
5. Receptions and banquets;
6. Registrations;
7. Entertainment and speakers;
8. Programming;
9. Photography, postage and printing;
10. Audiovisual;
11. Telemarketing;
12. Promotional items; and
13. Temporary staff.

Ineligible Projects and Activities – Activities that are ineligible for funding include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Developing or making permanent improvements to facilities;
2. Purchase of equipment;
3. Normal payroll or operating expenses; and
4. Purchase of alcoholic beverages.

Grant Funds cannot be used to assist one community in attracting an existing Illinois event from another Illinois community. If multiple eligible Illinois entities apply for a grant associated with attracting the same event, no entity will receive Grant Funds for the attraction of that event. If an Illinois entity is successful in its bid and gets the event, Grant Funds may be available to that entity for the hosting of the event.

Costs associated with hosting existing or repeat events will not be eligible unless documentation can be provided that the event was secured in direct competition with other states or significant enhancements will be made to the event or festival to increase the attendance from travel outside 50 miles.

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:

1. Illinois for-profit entity
2. County;
3. Municipality;
4. Not-for-profit entity;
5. Local promotion groups – means 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.

The Grantee shall provide Matching Funds to the Total Project Cost that:

1. Are identified in the budget of the Grant Agreement;
2. In no case shall be less than an amount equal to the grant award
3. Are not other government funds or funds used to match any other grants; and
4. Are necessary and irrevocably obligated to the Project.

Grant funds must be matched with dollar-for-dollar cash funding from the Private Sector defined as non-government funds. Up to 25 percent of the match amount requirement may be substituted with in-kind contributions from the private sector for which the value is easily documented, such as hotel services and transportation company services.

The following match is not allowed:

1. Costs incurred or funds expended prior to the date of the grant award, unless those costs are approved by the Department as being otherwise compliant;

2. Post-Project costs not identified in the budget of the Grant Agreement;
3. Funds from sources other than the private sector (although they may be used to further the Project);
4. Funds used as match for other grant programs; and
5. Normal operational expenses such as payroll costs, office and equipment rental, utilities, etc.;
6. Government entity funding

3. Indirect Cost Rate.

Indirect costs are not allowed under this opportunity

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 Street
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.

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- 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/5e7e0ed93d8c4ff5969a33a6e043f3ad>.

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.

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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.

Need- Identification of stakeholders, facts, and evidence that demonstrate the proposal supports the grant program purpose	
Extent the festival/event is necessary and held within 30 miles of an area with Supporting Visitor Services? If an existing or repeat festival/event, the extent documentation been provided to justify through direct competition with other states or significantly enhanced to increase the attendance from travel outside 50 miles.	10 Points
The extent the costs itemized on the budget are reasonable and necessary to hold the festival/event and help to increase attendance with justification for the costs provided.	10 Points
Capacity- The ability of the applicant to execute the project according to requirements of the grant program	
The extent the festival/event will attract visitors from outside a 50-mile radius.	10 Points
The extent the festival/event will increase visitation, length of stay and/or tourism expenditures through estimated tourism impacts for the local area.	10 Points
To what extent will the festival/event generate media coverage outside the local area to bring awareness to the festival and attract more attendance.	10 Points
The extent the festival/event will be marketed to visitors outside a 50-mile radius in order to increase attendance.	10 Points
Quality- The totality of features and characteristics of the project that indicate its ability to satisfy the requirements of the grant program	
The extent the generated State and local tax revenue (assuming 9.7 cents in State and local taxes generated for every \$1 in visitor expenditures) compares to the amount requested from the festival/event.	10 Points
The extent there are established tracking and evaluation methodologies and performance measures to reflect the success of the festival/event	10 Points
The extent the festival/event will significantly impact the area's overall tourism efforts.	10 Points
The extent the festival/event will significantly impact the State's overall tourism efforts.	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 the lowest score until funding is exhausted as well as geographical dispersion will be considered. An application must receive a minimum of 60 of 100 possible points to be considered eligible for funding.

The Merit Based Review process is subject to appeal per <https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/grantopportunities/meritappreview.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