

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

Awarding Agency Name	Commerce And Econ Opp
Agency Contact	Greg Mihalich (greg.mihalich@illinois.gov)
Announcement Type	Initial
Type of Assistance Instrument	Grant
Funding Opportunity Number	FY26-2
Funding Opportunity Title	Route 66 Grant Program
CSFA Number	420-25-2758
CSFA Popular Name	Route 66 Grant Program
Anticipated Number of Awards	0
Estimated Total Program Funding	\$209,327
Award Range	\$20000 - \$209327
Source of Funding	State
Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements	No
Indirect Costs Allowed	No
Restrictions on Indirect Costs	No
Posted Date	01/26/2026
Application Date Range	General announcement open for a period of time with no specific due dates for applications.
Grant Application Link	Please select the entire address below and paste it into the browser... https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/6f6d76720c034d1bb5767cb99fcad6b1
Technical Assistance Session	No

Agency-specific Content for the Notice of Funding Opportunity

Route 66 Grant Program NOFO ID: 2758-4229

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 award grants to certified convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs) for the development of tourism, education, preservation and promotion of the 100th anniversary of Route 66 in 2026. The Route 66 grant program is made possible by funds appropriated in Public Act 103-0589.

Program Description

Since 1926, Route 66 defined a remarkable era in our nation's history and it lives on today in Illinois' many Route 66 roadside attractions, museums and restaurants. Route 66 is one of the most famous roads in America. Generations of travelers have romanticized this highway as a symbol of unlimited mobility and freedom of the road. Its iconic status is enhanced by the unprecedented volume of music, books, films, and other art forms that depict it as the essence of America's highway culture.

It was born in 1926 as part of the new numbered highway network and quickly grew to be the preferred road west for a nation on the move. US Highway 66 was not as old or as long as some other transcontinental routes like the Yellowstone or the Lincoln Highway, but it quickly gained fame as the shortest, year-round route between the Midwest and the coast as it passed through the fabled landscape of the American Southwest. The construction of this thin, ribbon of the road helped to transform the American West from an isolated frontier to an economically vital region of the country and made it accessible to anyone with a car.

Part of the charm of Route 66 is its idiosyncratic personality. Like a giant carnival Midway, this corridor of neon signs and gaudy roadside attractions was embraced by the traveling public as an exciting diversion from ordinary life. A trip on Route 66 promised an exhilarating pilgrimage where one might discover the unknown and experience the unusual. Route 66 is synonymous with fun and adventure.

Route 66 is also synonymous with endless opportunity. As our transportation sector evolves and electrifies, more drivers will be choosing electric vehicles (EVs) to traverse our state's roads and highways. Embracing future tourism trends like electrified transportation and promoting the state's tourism areas as EV destinations will unlock all Route 66 has to offer for EV drivers who want to shop, dine, and explore Route 66's local attractions.

In Illinois we have over 300 miles of Route 66 to travel from its starting point in Chicago to the Chain of Rocks Bridge. This funding opportunity provides the certified convention and visitors bureaus along the route to partner and develop projects which will enhance the Route 66 experience in Illinois.

Preference will be given to projects that:

- Are statewide in nature and benefit the entire Illinois portion of Route 66 from Chicago to Chain of Rocks Bridge.

- Develop new or enhance existing attractions that elevate the Route 66 experience in Illinois for visitors.
- Support improved wayfinding for visitors traveling Route 66.
- Strengthen future tourism trends that includes electrified transportation (i.e., electric vehicles and preferably super chargers).

Program History

This is the second round of funding for the Centennial of Route 66 for this year.

Performance Goals and Measures

Grantees will be required to report on the expenditure of funds and the successful performance measure outcomes using the periodic financial and performance reporting templates.

The project specific performance measures shall include the following standardized performance:

- 1) Did the deliverables specified lead to the completion of the project as described within the Agreement?
- 2) Given the total amount of Grant funds available, does the percentage currently drawn and expended directly correlate to the percent of the completion of the project to date?
- 3) At the time of award closeout, has the Grantee fulfilled the public purpose of the project outlined?

Other Information

The applicant that submits the statewide marketing activities application on behalf of the certified convention and visitors bureaus along the route can submit one (1) additional application for their respective bureau's projects.

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 \$209,327. Awards will range from \$20,000 to \$209,327.

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

Applications for this opportunity will be accepted on a rolling bases until 1) funds are exhausted or 2) March 1, 2026 @ 5PM CST, whichever occurs first.

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

Payment Methodology

Eligible Projects and Activities include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Travel - Travel-related expenses associated with the project scope by the Grantee's employees, as identified within the application;
- 2) Equipment - Purchase and/or lease of equipment to be used or installed as part of the project, including associated labor/installation/training costs, as identified within the application;
- 3) Contractual Services - Specific one-time contracts for provision of services necessary for completion of the Grant-funded project, as identified within the application;
- 4) Consultant (Professional services) - Specific one-time contracts for provision of services necessary for completion of the Grant-funded project, as identified within the application;
- 5) Construction - Costs associated with construction, renovation, and/or preservation of buildings for creating or enhancing a tourism attraction, as identified within the application;

- 6) Research & Development - Costs associated with any relevant research needed to enhance the Route 66 experience in Illinois and to help with readiness for the route's 100th anniversary, as identified within the application;
- 7) Miscellaneous Costs - Costs necessary for completion of the project which cannot be easily broken out into or covered by other individual/specific budgetary line items, as identified within application;
- 8) Familiarization tours for media and trade on Route 66 as identified within the application;

Ineligible projects and activities include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Advertising and marketing costs
- 2) Travel related expenses for any other staff other than the awarded grantee's employees
- 3) Debt refinancing
- 4) Contingency funding
- 5) Normal payroll or operating expenses
- 6) Administrative expenses
- 7) Purchase of alcoholic beverages
- 8) Costs associated with creating, attracting or hosting events and/or festivals

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:

Eligible applicants include: convention and visitors bureaus certified by the Department pursuant to 20 ILCS 605/605-707

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.

No matching funds are required for this program.

3. Indirect Cost Rate.

Indirect costs are not allowed for 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 S. 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.
 - 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 will be accepted on a rolling bases until 1) funds are exhausted or 2) March 1, 2026 @ 5PM CST, whichever occurs first.

Application materials must be submitted to the Department via electronic form at <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/6f6d76720c034d1bb5767cb99fcad6b1>.

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 and scored by a merit review committee on a competitive basis. Each proposal will be scored on a 100-point scale. The Department shall consider the following criteria when evaluating the application submittal: Quality, Capacity and Need.

Need- Identification of stakeholders, facts, and evidence that demonstrate the proposal supports the grant program purpose	
The potential impact the program will have on communities and businesses located along Route 66 in generating more tourism dollars to the area.	10
Need of communities and businesses assisted by the project.	10
Capacity- The ability of the applicant to execute the project according to requirements of the grant program	
The applicant's experience and ability to provide services outlined in the NOFO and successfully complete the project tasks within the proposed grant period.	8
The applicant's ability and quality of systems/methodologies to track and measure the performance of the project.	8
Organizational and/or staff experience receiving State grants and overseeing subgrantees of state grants, if applicable.	4
Quality- The totality of features and characteristics of the project that indicate its ability to satisfy the requirements of the grant program	
A timeline and budget that are appropriate for the project and that align with the intent of this opportunity.	10
Geographic scope of the services that will be provided to attractions and businesses along Route 66 and have the greatest potential to generate increased tourism to the area.	10

The estimate that this project will have a tourism economic impact on the communities and businesses located along Route 66.	10
Feasibility of the plan for sustainability of the project beyond the grant period.	10
Demonstrated ability to tie in to 100th Anniversary of Route 66.	10
Potential for promoting future tourism trends that include electrified transportation (i.e., electric vehicles).	10

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. Applications will be reviewed on a first come, first serve basis. Applications that score 60 or higher will be recommended 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