



## 2025 TOURISM MARKETING GRANT GUIDELINES

### INTRODUCTION

The Augusta Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), dba Destination Augusta is pleased to announce the 2025 Tourism Marketing Grant Program designed to enhance visitor and tourism promotional efforts for the Augusta area. The Tourism Marketing Grant assists entities with tourism marketing and promotion that will foster local economic impact through tourism ultimately resulting in increased visitation from outside of the Augusta area and higher destination appeal.

Destination Augusta administers the grant under contract with the City of Augusta which is funded through a portion of the local lodging tax. Grants are reviewed by the Tourism Grant Committee, which is comprised of the Mayor Pro Tem, two commissioners, and four members of the Destination Augusta Board of Directors.

### MISSION

The purpose of this grant program is to provide funds for marketing and other qualified expenses directed towards increasing the number of overnight visitors to Augusta from outside of the area.

### QUALIFYING PROGRAMS & EVENTS

**Programs:** Qualifying entities may be attractions, associations, organizations or governmental or quasi-governmental agencies which promote their products and/or services to visitors from outside the area.

**Festival/Event:** A public, themed celebration or activity that has the potential & mission of drawing out-of-market visitors, as well as generating room nights

**Organization/Associations:** Organizations whose project, event or initiative will enhance Augusta's tourism efforts

There is no guarantee that all applicants will be awarded a grant. Even though a project may qualify, limited funds may not allow all projects to receive assistance. All decisions regarding awarding or not awarding grants are at the sole discretion of the Tourism Grant Committee.

### ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

***Applicants must fulfill all the following:***

- Be a documented not-for-profit, governmental or quasi-governmental entity
- Have completed at least one year of fiscal operation as a not-for-profit organization
- All applicants must represent an ongoing, sustainable activity
- Applying for funds for a non-retroactive project
- Be a partner in good standing
- No qualified entity may serve as a fiscal agent for a non-qualified entity
- Applicants should be able to demonstrate the ability to execute their project without depending on the continued financial assistance from these funds. It should be the intention of the organization to be self-sustaining.

## FUNDING PURPOSES

Grants must be used for marketing and other qualified expenses directed toward increasing lodging room nights (overnight visitors) and toward bringing people to Augusta from outside the metropolitan area. Marketing plans for this grant should include at least 75% out-of-market advertising/promotion tactics. Local advertising/promotions should be considered additive.

Greater consideration is given to projects that:

- Develop partnerships or are done in conjunction with another non-profit organization
- Align and compliment Destination Augusta's mission, vision, marketing and messaging strategy

The list below is a guide but is not comprehensive. Allowable and disallowable expenses include, but are not limited to the following:

### Allowable Expenses

- Development of new events or major exhibits and activities
- Out-of-Market tourism advertising/marketing or promotion including digital, social media, print, television, direct mail, radio, or other types of advertising/marketing. For purposes of this grant "Out-of-Market" is considered 60+ miles outside of Augusta. Marketing plans for this grant should include at least 75% out-of-market advertising/promotion tactics. Local advertising/promotions should be considered additive.
- Promotional activities that compliment advertising, including materials that create awareness and build or maintain a good image of Augusta, e.g., printing of brochures, inserts, and display banners for events
- Production costs of media advertising, photography, videography, website, and social media development
- Marketing expenses, including outside professional marketing service or agency
- No more than 50% of grant funds may be used for postage

### Disallowable Expenses

- Capital expenditures
- Rent of offices, repairs, renovation and/or remodeling of facilities
- General operating or administrative expenses
- General staff or personnel costs (excluding sales and marketing staff)
- Interest or the reduction of deficits or loans
- Expenses incurred or obligated before grant project approval
- Expenditures for local food and beverage events
- Projects restricted to private or exclusive participation, other than certain grand and pre-opening expenses
- Scholarships or endowments
- Cash awards of any description
- Expenses not related to the approved program
- Activities related to any for-profit organization
- Activities or materials which violate the law

# DESTINATION AUGUSTA: BACKGROUND AND MARKETING STRATEGY

**MISSION STATEMENT:** Destination Augusta develops and promotes our community, inspiring people to have unforgettable experiences.

**VISION STATEMENT:** Augusta is a thriving community rich with experiences that attract people.

**POSITIONING STATEMENT:** Augusta’s River Region provides travelers the opportunity to experience a new destination like a local by offering accessible, authentic travel experiences to leisure travelers in the Southeast with a comfortable friendliness that brings them into the fold of the Augusta community.

**TARGET LEISURE AUDIENCE PRIMARY:** Adults 25-54 which encompasses both Millennials (25-40) and Gen Xers (41-54) interested in travel; layering in additional interest categories that Augusta is strong in to include outdoors, history, arts, music, culinary, festivals and events.

**DESTINATION LEISURE MESSAGING STRATEGY:** Implement brand-centered messaging through the Come See Augusta campaign with a focus on Augusta's core brand pillars of outdoors, arts, music, history, culinary, festivals and events. In addition to a consistent brand message, we tailor messaging to hit on Augusta’s unique selling propositions (USP’s):

- Ease & accessibility
- Authentic undiscovered experiences
- Comfortable friendliness
- Great pop-over stop on a longer trip or weekend getaway



## AUGUSTA DOMESTIC VISITOR ORIGIN STATES AND METRO AREAS

### Domestic Visitors



#### Top Visitor Origin States



#### Top Visitor Origin DMAs



Source: Tourism Economics  
Symphony Dashboard Visitor

## CORE STIPULATIONS

- An application and all related documents must be submitted and approved by the Tourism Grant Committee.
- Grant recipients will leverage available resources to help Destination Augusta increase exposure of their program/event and tourism in Augusta. Examples could include but are not limited to event tickets, website exposure, print advertising acknowledgement, press passes, etc.
- An annual financial agreed upon procedures review must be conducted by Destination Augusta's chosen CPA firm.
- A contract must be signed by the applicant and Destination Augusta prior to distribution of funds.
- A final report is required for each grant and for each year during the grant. It should be submitted in the form of summary which addresses the following:
  - A description of the Performance under Contract
  - Benefits to Augusta and the public
  - Actual Attendance & Attendance Tracking Method
  - Impact it had on tourism in Augusta
  - Marketing plan results and analytics
  - Effect on City hotels. Provide number of room nights generated in Augusta hotels.
  - Samples of advertising and promotion including tear sheets, brochures, photographs, video, other collateral, digital advertising, broadcast affidavits, etc. may be attached.
- Failure to use funds as specified in the contract may result in penalties up to and including a full refund of grant funds.
- Failure to submit the agreed upon procedures and final report by the deadline is unacceptable and may result in penalties up to and including a full refund of grant funds.
- Project applicants cannot transfer funds from one specific tourism project to another without a written request and addendum to the contract. Official modification forms can be submitted to Karen Lee Davis at [Karen@VisitAugusta.com](mailto:Karen@VisitAugusta.com).
- Organizations receiving a Tourism Grant must have a reciprocal link on their website to [VisitAugusta.com](http://VisitAugusta.com). The consumer must be able to reach [VisitAugusta.com](http://VisitAugusta.com) in one click.
- Any media obtained through this grant program must be shared with Destination Augusta for promotional use.
- Applicants who do not comply with all deadlines and procedures may be disqualified and ineligible to receive Tourism Grant Funds for one year.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

### ***First Time Applicants must provide the following:***

- Verification of your non-profit status; preferably a copy of IRS documentation.
- A line-item detailed budget for the entire organization.
- A brief history of your program/organization or festival/event including date founded and mission statement (1-page maximum).

### ***All Applicants must provide:***

A completed application with the following attachments:

- 1) A list of your Board of Directors including name, employer, position, business address, phone, and email.
- 2) A brief proposal summary explaining the primary benefits of your program or event as it relates to this grant addressing the questions and specifications listed below. For events, please provide detailed event schedules, dates, duration, frequency, and venues (2-page maximum).
  - a. Provide a (1) description, including history/background of the project. (2) how your project will increase visitation and/or enhance the visitor experience and (3) how it will impact your business. Include expected percentage increases in customers, overnight visitation, and estimated economic impact.
  - b. How many customers/visitors did your business or event receive in the past two full calendar years? Provide any demographic information you have about your customers/visitors, i.e., age, income, geographic location of residency, etc.
  - c. If your project cannot be fully funded, how would you adapt the project?
  - d. Explain how your project fits into the current tourism and events landscape. Is there a need for this kind of program/event?
  - e. Identify competing projects or like-events held within the region
  - f. Outline how you intend to evaluate the project/events (i.e., survey methods, ticket sales, key performance indicators (KPI's), etc.) and whether this varies from the most recent method applied to this project/event.
- 3) A marketing plan for attracting out-of-market visitors to Augusta. (1-page maximum)
- 4) A proposed budget for the project with Tourism Grant request line-item detail (1-page maximum).
- 5) Methods for calculating the number of delegates, attendance statistics (surveys, ticket sales, etc.) and hotel room nights.

***Timing:***

**2025 Rolling Grant Cycle**

In 2025, the Tourism Marketing Grant will be offered on a rolling timeline. An application may be submitted at any time, at least 6 months in advance of when you want the advertising to begin to ensure the promotion is in the market long enough to make an impact.

**Questions?**

Contact:  
Karen Lee Davis, Chief Marketing Officer  
Destination Augusta  
[Karen@VisitAugusta.com](mailto:Karen@VisitAugusta.com)

[Click here](#) to view Tourism Grant Guidelines and Applications online.