



2025 Tourism Product Development Grant Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

The Augusta Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), DBA Destination Augusta, is pleased to offer the 2025 Tourism Product Development Grant Program designed to enhance visitor experiences and engagement through tourism product development for the Augusta area. The Tourism Product Development Grant assists Augusta non-profit or government entities with tourism product development, through attractions, special events, and festivals that will foster local economic impact and higher destination appeal through tourism ultimately resulting in increased visitation from outside of the Augusta.

Destination Augusta administers the grant under contract with the City of Augusta which is funded through a portion of the local hotel/motel 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.

The Tourism Product Development Committee, which is comprised of the same members as the Tourism Grant Committee, is authorized to use up to twenty-five percent (25%) of the tourism grant funds for the purpose of developing new tourism products and enhanced experiences designed to attract visitors to Augusta.

MISSION

The purpose of this grant program is to provide funds for product development which will increase 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 of 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.
 - Applicants must be located in Augusta and/or a board of directors composed of at least one-half Augusta residents and must meet on a regular basis. Or, if it is a festival/event it must take place in Augusta.
- Tourism Product Development Core Stipulations

Tourism Product Development Core Stipulations

- Failure to use funds as specified in the contract 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. Submit any requests for official modification to Jennifer Bowen at Jennifer@VisitAugusta.com.
- Organizations receiving a Tourism Product Development Grant must have a reciprocal link on their website to www.VisitAugusta.com. The consumer must be able to reach www.VisitAugusta.com in one click.
- Any media obtained through this grant program should 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.
- An application and all related documents must be submitted and approved by the Tourism Grant Committee.
- A contract must be signed by the applicant and Destination Augusta prior to distribution of funds. The contract may be for a term of one year, but no more than five years based on qualifications.
- A mid-term and final report is required for product development grants and for each year during the grant period. 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 if applicable
 - Impact it had on tourism in Augusta
 - Effect on City hotels. Provide number of room nights generated in Augusta hotels if applicable
 - A form will be provided for mid-term reports, the final report is a 1 page typed report.
- 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.
- An annual financial agreed upon procedures review must be conducted by Destination Augusta's chosen CPA firm.

Product Development Grant Applicants: Project Criteria

For a project to be considered it should meet the following basic criteria:

- Increases visitation or enhances visitor experiences;
- The tourism sector supports it and it does not create an unfair competitive disadvantage to other local business;
- Integrates well with the existing destination product and Augusta's brand;
- Generates economic benefits and/or quality of life improvements for local community; and
- Is sustainable, and financially and conceptually viable

Product Development Grant Applicants: Goals of Tourism Product Development

1. Increase the number of products, experiences, and services available for visitors and locals.
2. Grow the number of visits, length of stay and spending by visitors.
3. Improve the profitability of tourism businesses.
4. Keep Augusta, GA competitive with other destinations

Product Development Grant Applicants: Match Required

A 25% cash match is required for the Tourism Product Development Grant. For example, the applicant must be able to match each dollar by a quarter (\$75 grant request + \$25 your match = \$100 project costs).

Product Development Grant Applicants: Tourism Product Development Focus Areas

Tourism Product Development Grant comprises those experiences, activities and products that are specifically provided for the visitor and community. Projects which align with Augusta's Destination Blueprint, a quality of place plan, will be given special consideration. Please find more details about Destination Blueprint at www.DestinationBlueprint.com, also review the Augusta Public Art Master Plan and The Augusta Festival & Events Plan there for more information. The areas of recommendation included in Destination Blueprint include:

Please note that this list is not all-inclusive.

Connectivity with the Savannah River

Soft Product Development

Event development (500+) that could be expanded to create overnight stays – event focused on the Savannah River

Arts & Culture

Soft Product Development

Event development (500+) that could be expanded to create overnight stays focused on arts and culture

Asset Product Development

- b. Public Art – sculptures, development of a sculpture walk, or monumental art
- c. Downtown Art and Event Venue – reuse of existing vacant space for a multi-use gallery, studio, and small event space
- d. Art to beautify empty or vacant buildings

Events & Festivals

Soft Product Development

a. Event development (500+) that could be expanded to create overnight stays focused on the river, arts, and food

Celebrate the River – a camp out concert music series

City-wide Southern Hospitality Event

Outdoor adventure combining hiking, biking, paddling into a multi-day festival

Outdoor & Adventure

Soft Product Development

a. Packaging assets such as hiking, biking, or paddling into one experience

b. Tour Development

Asset Product Development

Trails that connect to other trails

Boat ramps or access areas for paddling

Rentals such as personal watercraft, canoes, kayaks, paddleboards, bikes or bikeshare programs

Zip lines, Rock Walls, unique Outdoor lodging

Tourism Grant Product Development Allowable Expenses

Allowable Expenses

This is not a conclusive list:

- Development of new events or major exhibits and activities
- Artists & Entertainer fees
- Production costs related to arts or events
- Contractor and/or Construction Costs
- Public Art purchases
- Event Management Fees

Disallowable Expenses

- Product Development Research or Feasibility Studies
- 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 directly related to the approved program
- Activities related to any for-profit organization or Activities or materials which violate the law

Tourism Grant Application Process

The Tourism Grant Program consists of six basic areas:

- 1)** Completed application
- 2)** Grant awarded by the Tourism Grant Committee
- 3)** Signed contract between the applicant and Destination Augusta
- 4)** Attend the tourism grant workshop reviewing proper use of grant funds and procedures
- 5)** All supporting information is due to Destination Augusta's chosen CPA firm by the end of December for conducting the annual financial agreed upon procedures review (as mentioned in the eligibility requirements).
- 6)** A final report and agreed upon procedures are due to Destination Augusta before January 31st of the year following the award.

In 2025, the Tourism Product Development Grant is offered on a rolling timeline. An application may be submitted at any time and will be reviewed, and a recommendation made to the applicant within no more than a 45-day term. However, any requests related to events need to be submitted at least 6 months in advance to allow for proper marketing.