



FY26 COASTAL MISSISSIPPI MARKETING & PR GRANT GUIDELINES

OVERVIEW

Coastal Mississippi's Marketing & PR Grant allocates funds to support tourism marketing and public relations for partners in Harrison, Hancock, and Jackson counties. The grant aims to stimulate economic activity and increase overnight visits in Coastal Mississippi. By leveraging our tourism partners' marketing budgets, the program seeks to enhance the economic impact of tourism in both the region and the state.

Coastal Mississippi sales and marketing programs are funded by lodging tax, which is governed by Mississippi law. Coastal Mississippi tourism revenue is earned through advertising sales and lodging reservations booked and actualized room nights. Coastal Mississippi Tourism awarded federal and state grant dollars, which are strictly prohibited from any sub-award and are not included in any support. Awarded funds are ineligible to be transferred from one organization to another. Applicant organizations receiving grant funding must be responsible for all expenditures with no exceptions.

FUNDING

The maximum award for this grant is \$10,000.

This grant requires a 1:1 cash match of awarded funds. For instance, if you request a \$10,000 award, you must show adequate proof of a \$10,000 cash match.

The number of grants is limited by available funds and commission approval. Applications meeting and exemplifying the qualifications are presented to the commission for final approval.

This program is not intended to be a sustainable funding source. Tourism partners are eligible to receive funds for a maximum of three (3) years, but they are not guaranteed to receive them.

RULES & ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants for this grant include tourism partners such as boutique retail, boutique lodging, B&Bs, craft breweries, museums, restaurants, attractions, events, and festivals focused on off-season visitation. These partners aim to leverage marketing funds by creating or participating in unique marketing and PR activities to boost overnight visitation to Coastal Mississippi.

To qualify for this grant, applicants must:

- Generate overnight visitation and identify a lodging partner.
- Occur in Coastal Mississippi or drive media to these areas.
- Generate a significant economic impact.

This grant will not fund:

- Start-up events
- Event production
- Costs incurred from travel

- Events that occur once a week, once a month, or intermittently over a season
- Agency commissions, consulting fees
- Merchandise or items for resale
- Lobbying/advocacy
- Expos (for profit trade shows)
- Construction
- Expenses incurred prior to the award letter
- Community events – see Community Grant
- Civic events
- Operation costs – salaries, utilities, clean-up/trash, and other administrative costs

The applicant contact must be a representative of the event and will be the sole point of contact with Coastal Mississippi for application communications, payments, graphic approval, and reporting. Coastal Mississippi will not discuss the application or grant details with any other contact. Potential vendors (advertising agencies, PR firms, printers, web developers, podcasters, influencers, and media vendors) cannot be a partner in the application.

Event and marketing/PR programming must occur between October 1, 2025, and September 30, 2026 (FY26).

Marketing and PR programming that is rescheduled due to circumstances beyond the partner's control may be eligible for revising their marketing plans and utilizing funds. Applicants must contact the Director of Marketing as soon as possible for approval. If the activity is canceled, applicants must return all funds distributed.

The deadline to submit applications for FY26 is August 1, 2025.

Funds will be distributed based on the following schedule:

- 75% of the total award amount will be distributed 30 days prior to the marketing/PR activity but not before October 1, 2025.
- The remaining 25% of the total award will be distributed after the marketing/PR activity and upon receipt of the required documentation.

Applicants may only submit one application per fiscal year grant cycle.

While the applicants will project estimated attendance and room nights, those projections must be backed up by research, data (lodging/ticketing reports), and information. Proof of prior attendance and lodging is required with your application.

MARKETING & PR PROGRAMMING

Funds received can be used for:

- Media placement in out-of-market DMAs as defined by Coastal Mississippi.
- PR activations in out-of-market DMAs. PR activations include consumer shows, festival activation, and media events and tours.

A marketing plan designed to drive overnight visitation to Coastal Mississippi must be submitted at the time of application. The plan must include quotes, invoices, or contracts with eligible advertising vendors or tradeshow.

Eligible marketing channels include digital placement (programmatic, display), OTT, paid social media advertising, billboards, radio or TV, and print publications (magazines). The Play Coastal Mississippi logo must be included in digital, print, and TV ads. For scripted ads, "In partnership with Coastal Mississippi" must be included in the script. All ads must be approved by the Coastal Mississippi brand manager prior to placement.

Advertisements must be placed outside of the Coastal Mississippi DMA. Eligible DMAs include, but are not limited to:

- Mobile/Pensacola
- New Orleans
- North Shore
- Hattiesburg/Laurel
- Jackson
- Baton Rouge

SCORING

Due to limited funding for this program, awards will be based on a merit scale. Funds will be awarded based on the information submitted with the application and will be scored based on Coastal Mississippi Marketing and PR Grant scoring guidelines. Submit complete applications with all requested reports and back-up. The actual award may differ from the amount requested.

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Points</u>
Target Markets/Demographics	20
Media Plan with quotes/estimates, contracts	10
Regional Partnerships/Collaborations	25
Performance Goals & Measurements	25
Program Focus	10
Media Opportunities with Coastal Mississippi	10
Total	100

IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If your event does not qualify for this grant, the review committee will consider it for the Community Grant and the Cultural Events Grant.

Please note that application to the Marketing & PR Grant or any other Coastal Mississippi grant does not guarantee funding.