

FY27 Destination Forward Application Webinar Transcript

0:01	Good morning and thank you for joining us.
0:03	Hi, my name is Marisol Lucero, and I am the Tourism Development Director here at the New Mexico Tourism Department.
0:11	We here in the Tourism Department are happy to be able to offer the Destination Forward grant to New Mexico communities for a 4 th fiscal year.
0:20	I want to offer a big thank you to our legislators for continuing to support tourism infrastructure.
0:26	Today's webinar will provide you with an overview of the Destination Forward Grant program.
0:31	This is a competitive grant that supports the long-term development and implementation of tourism infrastructure projects throughout New Mexico.
0:41	First, for those of you new to the Tourism Department and our grant programs, I would like to begin with some information about us.
0:48	Our vision is to be the primary destination for veterans and travelers.
0:54	Our mission is to grow New Mexico's economy through tourism, and how we do that is by marketing our state by making a promise of adventure steeped in culture.

1:07	The Tourism Development Division delivers on that promise through quality amenities, attractions and equitable access.
1:15	This is where Tourism Infrastructure and the Destination Forward grant meet.
1:20	As mentioned earlier, the Destination Forward Program is a competitive grant that supports long term development and implementation of tourism infrastructure projects throughout New Mexico.
1:30	For two years, the Tourism Department worked closely with the Council of Government to help highlight and support tourism infrastructure projects.
1:38	This collaboration ultimately led to the development of the Destination Forward Program.
1:43	This program's guiding principles are to increase visitation, increase tourism capacity and or improve the visitor experience.
1:51	The photo on this slide is an example of the current partner project in Albuquerque of the Route 66 E Gateway neon sign, which is currently under construction and expects to be finished this spring to welcome Route 66 Centennial visitors to the city.
2:07	So why are we doing this?
2:09	I would like to begin with background information on tourism infrastructure and why tourism is important to New Mexico.
2:16	The total economic impact of tourism in New Mexico in 2024 was \$12 billion, of which 8.8 billion was direct visitor spending.

2:28	Some examples of direct visitor spending include retail transactions, lodging, transportation, entertainment and dining which occurred directly between consumers and travel related businesses.
2:40	To remain competitive, it is critical that we New Mexico focus strategically on improving tourism related assets by investing in our infrastructure that our visitors and our residents enjoy.
2:51	As tourism grows, it strengthens our communities.
2:56	In FY24, the Tourism Department, through legislative support, implemented the Destination Forward Grant Program, a source of additional funding to support tourism infrastructure-related projects throughout our state.
3:09	This grant supports both capital outlay tourism related projects as well as projects that are in various stages of development, construction and implementation.
3:18	Local governments, including special districts and political subdivisions, tribal governments and municipalities are eligible to apply.
3:26	Nonprofit organizations must partner with an eligible fiscal agent to apply.
3:31	For profit companies are ineligible for this grant program.
3:35	The Destination for Grant aims to adhere to its commitment to New Mexico communities and the environment by delivering on five main goals.
3:43	Increase visitation, improve or enhance the visitor and resident experience, spur economic growth opportunities for residents, increase national and global recognition of New Mexico as a sustainable tourism destination, and increase positive impacts on the local environment while decreasing negative impacts.

4:03	As you start your application process, be sure to review the objectives for each goal included in the Grant Guidelines document, which is found on the New Mexico Tourism Department Destination Forward website.
4:14	A QR code will be provided to you at the end of this presentation.
4:20	Here's a list of FY26 partners.
4:23	There were 16 Destination Forward projects awarded in FY26 supporting 13 communities around the state, including two accessibility projects for a total award amount of \$1.9 million.
4:37	We also wanted to provide some additional sample ideas of tourism infrastructure projects.
4:41	There's a longer list included in the Destination Forward grant guidelines located on the Destination Forward web page.
4:47	This grant can fund a project feasibility study, a capital outlay project master plan, a design plan, and more.
4:57	Project types vary but must be tourism related, have public benefit, and contribute to tourism infrastructure development in the area impacted.
5:06	This program is designed to support infrastructure developments at various levels of the project process.
5:11	Therefore, we ask the dependent on the chair you are applying for your project must be shovel worthy meaning have begun the planning and design phase of the

	project and have demonstrated support from local government to begin construction and or be shovel ready meaning have completed the planning and design phase and can begin construction in the near future.
5:32	Projects must also align with Destination Forward Fund goals and objectives and align with the region's Economic/Comprehensive and/or Regional Development plan.
5:45	New for the FY27 grant cycle, the Destination Forward Grant program has consolidated to a three-tier program.
5:52	The tiers and funding limits are listed here.
5:54	I want to point out two key changes to the tiers.
5:58	Tier 1 ready projects will not require a match.
6:01	Tier 3 signature projects are for requests greater than \$250,000 and will require the applicant to deliver a project presentation to the Grant Review Committee as a part of the evaluation process.
6:14	Please review the guidelines and checklist for the required documents for each tier as there are differences.
6:20	For any additional questions, please send an e-mail to the grant info@td.nm.gov e-mail address.
6:29	Here are some general grant requirements.

6:31	Projects must be compliant with local zoning codes, protected areas and cultural heritage.
6:36	Projects should provide long term financial benefit and public access to the community.
6:42	Applicants must demonstrate capacity for ongoing monitoring of the site.
6:46	Project should generate value and include long term intangible and tangible assets and investments.
6:52	Please include this information in your application.
6:56	The exception of Tier 1 ready projects, Applicant should be able to match 5% of eligible expenditures for capital outlay projects.
7:04	A resolution of sponsorship from a governing body or an official signed letter from a primary applicant and or budget authority indicating the availability of the match is required when you submit your application.
7:16	Applicants that can provide a match greater than 5% may be given preference by the review committee.
7:22	If the applicant is unable to meet a 5% match, they may indicate their intention to apply for a hardship slash match waiver in the application.
7:32	As a reminder, Tier 1 ready projects do not need to meet a match.

7:38	In the past 3 grant cycles, the Tourism Department has received requests up to 10 times more than what the program has been funded.
7:46	This is a highly competitive grant, so we encourage you to submit a strong Tourism Focus application.
7:53	Some ways to strengthen your application include ensuring that your project is listed on the state of New Mexico Department of Finance Administration's Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan ICIP list.
8:06	A sample of the ICIP dashboard listing is included on this slide and should be included with your application if applicable.
8:13	If your project is on the ICIP list, your application may be given preference by the review committee.
8:20	Community and regional collaboration will also strengthen your application, as will the inclusion of any of the documents on the Grant Application Document Upload checklist.
8:29	This list is located on the New Mexico Tourism Department Destination Forward website.
8:34	Just to reiterate, this is a competitive grant, which means applications are subject to be funded in whole, in part, or not at all.
8:42	Each application is individually reviewed by the Destination Forward Grant Review Panel with careful consideration of relevance, impact and feasibility, so a strong application is key.
8:55	The application review process includes assessment of eligibility.

8:59	A project must support the tourism sector, be in New Mexico, and be an eligible applicant and project according to the guidelines.
9:09	The panel will assess how well the project meets the destination for grant goals and objectives.
9:14	The panel will evaluate if there is an innovative approach to partnership and community building.
9:19	Determine organizational capacity, project shovel readiness or shovel worthiness, and how the application will measure and report success and overall project sustainability.
9:32	If your project is awarded, the Tourism Department will outline the frequency and type of reporting for the grant in the executed award agreement.
9:41	This will likely include at minimum a midpoint and final report.
9:45	There is up to a two-year program life cycle with this fiscal year award depending on the project type and face.
9:52	So, reporting timelines will be individualized by project.
9:56	Changes in the timeline, budget and our milestones must be reported to the tourism department.
10:02	Disbursement of the award is typically 100% upfront.

10:07	As mentioned, the New Mexico Tourism Department's Destination Forward web page has additional resources for you, including a complete list of FY27 grant guidelines, the grant application document upload checklist, a sample copy of the application, and a copy of this webinar and slides.
10:24	If you have any questions or concerns, e-mail grant info@td.nm.gov.
10:31	The application window opens this coming Monday, March 16th at 8:00 AM and close this Tuesday, April 14th at 11:59 PM.
10:41	This QR code on the page will take you directly to the Destination Forward Program page on our website.
10:47	This slide provides you with the direct link to Submittable where you will complete and submit your application.
10:53	If this is your first time applying, you may be prompted to make an account.
11:00	Here's the contact information for the Tourism Development team members working on this grant, should you have any questions.
11:06	Jill Slaby is our Tourism Development Coordinator and myself, Marisol Lucero, the Tourism Development Director.
11:14	Stay up to date on New Mexico Tourism Department programs and projects by following us on social media.
11:20	Please be sure to sign up for our industry newsletter here with this QR code and follow us on Facebook Threads and or Instagram.

11:28

Thank you for your time and interest, and we look forward to reviewing your excellent tourism infrastructure projects.