

## Proposed law would divert Fla. tourism funds

A bill has been filed by a Florida lawmaker that would divert some of the state's tourism taxes to subsidize the state's film industry.

State Sen. Linda Stewart, D-Orlando, sponsored Senate Bill 872. It would authorize using proceeds in counties that impose a tourist development tax to fund incentives for film and television productions.

Tourist development tax is only authorized to be used to promote tourism in Florida or improve, acquire, or maintain publicly owned and operated convention centers, sports arenas, zoos, beaches and other public facilities located within the boundaries of the county or special taxing district where the tax is levied.

Florida Democrats argue that Florida is missing out on business and employment opportunities to neighboring states Georgia and North Carolina because both states have more film industry incentives to offer.

A December audit report from the Georgia State University Fiscal Research Center evaluated tax incentives of Georgia's film tax credit and found that industry claims that it created around 60,000 jobs in the Peach State were overstated.

The audit found that Georgia's film tax credit is the most significant tax expense among the state's economic development incentives.

– [victoriaadvocate.com](http://victoriaadvocate.com)



The Peak Shenandoah Wine Region received a \$5,000 grant. Rappahannock Cellars of Huntly, Va., is one of the region's partners.

## States dole out cash for local development

Some state tourism offices and DMOs hand out funding to support hundreds of local economic development projects or businesses that could benefit from a boost of cash, which could range from a few hundred dollars to many thousands.

Virginia Tourism Corporation's Microbusiness Marketing Leverage Program late in 2023 awarded more than \$757,000 in matching grant funds to 131 small businesses, destination marketing organizations, downtown business associations, and chambers of commerce.

Local entities getting grant money include a mini-golf course (\$664), a surf shop (\$3,500), a partnership of

four wineries (\$5,000), and a Main Street program (\$10,000).

– [shoredailynews.com](http://shoredailynews.com)

Here are some other examples.

### In Kansas

Several local attractions in northeast Kansas will be getting a boost through dollars provided by the state in Attraction Development Grants.

More than \$500,000 will be distributed among 14 communities across the Sunflower State to help improve tourism attractions in Kansas, according to a press release from the Kansas Department of Commerce (KDC).

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## Indigenous leaders seek federal investment

Indigenous leaders met in Washington, D.C., recently to discuss federal partnerships to boost tourism, as well as a path to building on existing relationships.

Some leaders said federal assistance that was expected nearly a decade ago is arriving more slowly than anticipated. While there are many different programs working to help develop tourism in Indigenous

communities, Indigenous leaders are calling on federal agencies to step up and honor their obligations under the NATIVE Act.

When President Barack Obama signed the NATIVE Act in 2016, Indigenous leaders were hopeful it would stimulate a vibrant tourism industry in their communities. The act called for some federal agencies to assist

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## State DMOs share funding for local developments

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The grants are meant to enhance travel experiences for those coming to Kansas, leading to a positive economic impact for local communities.

Local entities receiving state dollars for tourism projects include a historic farm site (\$3,920), a brewery (\$10,800), a marina (\$27,996), and a children's museum (\$28,435).

– *ksnt.com*

### In Iowa

Nearly \$400,000 in tourism grants are going to 45 organizations in Iowa.

The Iowa Tourism Office says the grants go toward tourism-related marketing initiatives, meetings, and events that benefit both local economies and the state's economy with awards ranging from \$2,500-\$10,000 with a 20% cash match.

A grant of \$10,000 is going to Cedar Summerstock Theatre in Osage for

its Minnesota Marketing Project. \$10,000 is going to the Clear Lake Area Chamber of Commerce for its "Surf, Sand, and Rock 'n' Roll: Clear Lake's All-In-One Adventure Marketing Campaign." \$9,600 is going to Winneshiek County Development and Tourism for promoting hub and spoke travel in the county.

– *kimt.com*

### In Illinois

The "Illinois Made" program, which helps dozens of small businesses, the state is hoping to attract more customers for them while boosting tourism.

Each year small businesses are added to the program. The governor's office said 48 small businesses were added this year, bringing the total to 276.

– *audacity.com*

### In South Dakota

Travel South Dakota's new Tourism Advertising Promotion (TAP) Grant program has awarded a total of \$215,025 to assist South Dakota's tourism industry and increase visitation to tourism-related events.

The purpose of this new grant is to provide marketing funds to tourism-related events such as festivals, concerts, rodeos, and powwows.

This grant program is focused on providing funding to events in smaller towns, cities, and rural areas of the state, but entities and events of all sizes were encouraged to apply. The grants range from \$1,000 to \$10,000.

– *grandforksherald.com*

### In Pennsylvania

**Somerset County, Pa.**, recently awarded a record \$607,832 to 45 lodging providers, event promoters and tourism hubs to promote and market themselves and the county itself to future visitors.

(*tribdem.com*)

**Westmoreland County, Pa.**, granted 58 of the county's tourism-related businesses assistance that totaled \$616,271 in grants.

(*latrobebulletinnews.com*)

Pennsylvania's counties have been able to impose a hotel tax for more than 20 years and use the revenue for tourism-related purposes.

## Indigenous leaders request more federal investment in tourism

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Indigenous communities in developing tourism— although the act did not provide specific definitions about what that assistance would look like.

A multi-agency report to Congress documented the impacts that the act has had in Indigenous communities around the United States.

In recent years, the report said, millions of dollars have gone to Indigenous businesses and programs to help develop a tourism economy. For example, in 2021 the Office of

Indian Economic Development gave just under \$150,000 to the Pueblo of San Felipe for a feasibility study on tribal tourism and a business plan based on that research.

"The NATIVE Act attempts to address the need for long-term investment from the federal government in building tribal capacity for tourism and economic development," said Wizipan Little Elk Garriott, who is principal deputy assistant secretary for Indian Affairs in the Interior Department and a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe.

Garriott, the keynote speaker at the meeting, said federal agencies were sluggish to meet the provisions of the act after the first year.

He said the federal government should do more to honor the language of the law.

"Part of the reason I'm here today is to issue a call to action to our federal partners who share responsibility for implementing the NATIVE Act at their respective agencies," Garriott said.

– *wyomingpublicmedia.org*