

Governor Pritzker Launches \$15.4 Million Tourism Grant Programs

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CHICAGO – Today, Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) launched \$15.4 million in tourism funding through two grant programs, the Tourism Attractions Grant Program (\$10.8 million) and the Tourism Private Sector Grant Program (\$4.6 million). Eligible entities can apply for grants to attract, develop, and improve new and existing tourism-related projects, events

and festivals in an effort to boost tourism across the state and welcome more visitors. Grantees will be selected through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) process.

“Illinois is the heart of the Midwest—attracting visitors from throughout the nation and around the globe,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “As our tourism industry continues to bounce back from the pandemic, I’m happy to announce another \$15.4 million in tourism funding, so we can keep breaking records and displaying Illinois values of resilience and strength on an international scale.”

The \$10.8 million Tourism Attractions Grant Program will provide funding for the development or improvement of tourism attractions in Illinois, such as museums, recreation areas, amusement parks, and more. The goal of the program is to provide assistance for projects that increase the economic impact of tourism throughout Illinois by increasing visitation rates, boosting hotel occupancy, increasing local hotel and sales tax revenue, and more.

“Illinois is the 'middle of everything' and that's evident from our booming tourism industry. These new grant programs will build upon our robust tourism attractions and bring even more visitors to our great state,” said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton. “This growth will benefit communities across Illinois-- from small business owners to local economies and our working families.”

DCEO is also allocating \$4.6 million through the Tourism Private Sector Grant Program which provides funding to entities to attract, host and develop new or enhanced events and festivals across Illinois. The grant opportunity is open to non-profits, government entities, for-profit institutions, and local promotional groups and as defined in state statute, matching funds must be provided by private sector entities, which is the origin of the program’s name. Grant funds can be used for a variety of purposes that support new, expanded, or enhanced events and festivals including advertising and marketing, transportation, building or equipment rental, receptions and banquets, registration, entertainment, and more.

“Illinois continues to break tourism records, and DCEO is building upon this momentum by continuing to support attractions and festivals in every corner of the state,” said DCEO Director Kristin Richards. “By attracting new events and supporting attractions across the state, we’re increasing opportunities to show visitors from near and far that Illinois is the best place to live, work and do business.”

Eligible applicants for both tourism grants include counties, municipalities, not-for-profit organizations, local promotion groups, and for-profit entities, and Tourism Attraction grants are also open to units of local government.

“Illinois’ tourism industry is unmatched, and the funding provided by these grants will help the state draw in visitors for years to come,” said Sen. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago). “World-class attractions across Illinois have helped the state make a name itself, and I encourage eligible entities to apply for grant funding to attract and improve events, festivals and other tourism-related projects.”

For the Tourism Attraction program, qualified entities can apply for grants between \$15,000 to \$500,000, with a 1:1 match required. Applications will be accepted until December 18, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. To view the NOFO and apply for the grant, please visit the [DCEO website](#). To help applicants prepare to apply for funding, DCEO will be holding a [webinar](#) focused on the Tourism Attraction Grant Program from 1-2 p.m. on Thursday, October 26.

“Illinois is known as the Middle of Everything for a reason – from world-class cities to beloved attractions and breathtaking nature, Illinois is a premier travel destination,” said Sen. Steve Stadelman (D-Rockford). “The State-supported tourism funding opportunities will support both new and existing events and attractions, thus bolstering local economies throughout the state.”

Eligible entities can apply for Tourism Private Sector grants between \$10,000 to \$500,000, with a 1:1 match requirement. Applications will be accepted until December 4, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. To view the NOFO and apply for the grant, please visit the [DCEO website](#). To help applicants prepare to apply for funding, DCEO will be holding a [webinar](#) focused on the Tourism Private Sector Grant Program from 1-2 p.m. on Wednesday, October 25.

Interested parties are also encouraged to reach out to CEO.GrantHelp@illinois.gov for application assistance.

“As Illinois’ tourism industry continues to grow, communities are reaping the benefits of increased foot traffic, hotel occupancy, patronage at local businesses and restaurants, and more,” said Rep. Kimberly du Buclet (D-Chicago). “Eligible entities can make a direct impact on their local communities by applying for the Tourism Attractions and Tourism Private Sector Grant Programs.”

The State of Illinois continues to prioritize its tourism industry as millions of visitors spend billions of dollars annually across Illinois, boosting economic development and supporting jobs in the industry. Illinois reached its highest-ever hotel revenue figures in FY23 with \$308 million – surpassing the pre-pandemic record in FY19. Additionally, Illinois welcomed 111 million visitors who spent \$44 billion in 2022 – representing 14 million additional travelers spending \$12 billion more than calendar year 2021.

The success of Illinois' tourism sector is due to commitment to supporting the industry as well as the Illinois Office of Tourism's award-winning “[Middle of Everything](#)” campaign. Since it launched in 2022, the campaign has contributed to an additional 2 million trips equaling an additional \$1 billion spent in Illinois hotels, restaurants, small businesses, and attractions, according to data from Longwoods International. Additionally, every \$1 spent on the campaign equated to \$91 in visitor spending while generating \$10 in state and local tax revenue for every dollar spent - an enormous return on investment.

To learn more about Illinois and to plan an Illinois getaway, visit www.EnjoyIllinois.com.

About the Illinois Office of Tourism

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), Office of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents. To learn more, visit EnjoyIllinois.com.