

2026 Tourism Partnership Grant Guidelines

Sponsored by Cumberland Area Economic Development Corporation (CAEDC)
d/b/a Cumberland Valley Visitors Bureau (CVVB)

Revised & Effective July 10, 2026

TOURISM PARTNERSHIP GRANT PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Grant Request Minimum & Maximum: \$2,500 - \$10,000

Required Grant Cash Match

- For-Profit Applicants: \$0.50 cash for every \$1.00 in grant request
- Non-Profit Applicants: \$0.38 cash and \$0.12 in-kind for every \$1.00 in grant request

Application Deadlines: September 4, 2026

Goals of Tourism Partnership Grant

1. Increase the number of products, experiences and services that will draw overnight visitors to Cumberland Valley.
2. Grow the number of visits, length of stay and spending by visitors to Cumberland Valley.
3. Keep Cumberland Valley's tourism assets competitive with other destinations.

For tourism purposes, a visitor is considered a non-resident of Cumberland County, living at least 50 miles outside of the county, visiting the area for leisure or business for a period of less than 28 days.

ABOUT CAEDC

Cumberland Area Economic Development Corporation (CAEDC) is the official Destination Marketing Organization serving Cumberland County. CAEDC's tourism efforts exist to generate visitor volume and spending by attracting business and leisure visitors, meetings or conventions and events to Cumberland Valley. CAEDC promotes Cumberland Valley as a tourist destination, attracts visitors to the area, enhances the visitors' experience, and encourages and promotes overnight stays. Destination marketing efforts are funded by a 5% county lodging tax that is assessed on each overnight stay in hotels, motels and short-term rentals in Cumberland Valley.

For more information, visit CumberlandBusiness.com/Tourism-Grants

Since 2010, CAEDC has offered a variety of grant opportunities to Cumberland Valley partners to grow the number of visits, length of stay and spending by visitors to Cumberland Valley. There are currently three tourism-specific grant programs available.

TOURISM PARTNERSHIP GRANT PROGRAM PROJECT CRITERIA

The Tourism Partnership Grant Program was designed to foster development of tourism assets that will attract or support overnight visitation to Cumberland Valley.

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

- increases visitation and/or length of stay;
- the tourism sector supports the project and the project does not create an unfair competitive disadvantage to other local businesses;
- integrates well with the existing destination product;
- generates economic benefits and/or quality of life improvements for local community;
- is sustainable, and financially and conceptually viable; and
- results in a tourism asset that will be open and accessible to the public and visitors upon the scoped Tourism Grant Program project completion.

TOURISM PARTNERSHIP GRANT PROGRAM FOCUS AREAS

The Tourism Partnership Grant was created to foster small-scale projects that will have a positive impact on tourism in Cumberland Valley. Focus areas for 2026 are listed below. *Please note that this list is not exhaustive, and any submitted project with tourism merit will be considered.*

- **Outdoor Recreation Amenities**
 - Creation of, upgrades to or connection of land and water trails
 - Creation of, or upgrades to resources that improve and extend the visitor experience, such as boat launches or bicycle repair stations
 - Creation of, or upgrades to lodging and dining projects that directly support outdoor recreation
 - Marketing materials to support the trail experience, such as maps or trailhead signage
- **Agritourism Amenities**
 - Creation of, or upgrades to agritourism experiences, such as farm tours, trail rides or access to farm products
 - Creation of, or upgrades to resources that improve and extend the visitor experience, such as wayfinding signage or printing materials for group instruction
 - Creation of, or upgrades to lodging and dining projects that directly support agritourism
- **Group Facilities Amenities**
 - Creation of, or upgrades to meeting or conference venues (min capacity of 100 people)

- Creation of, or upgrades to sports venues or fields that supports the youth travel sports market
- Creation of, or upgrades to dining options for large groups, including youth travel sports market (min capacity of 100 people)
- **Downtown Amenities & Signage**
 - Creating product that is not represented in a downtown area, such as bike racks, public art or map directories
 - Creating wayfinding signage, self-guided tours and other visitor-enhancing products

ELIGIBILITY

In order to be eligible to participate, an Applicant must be:

- submitting an application that directly impacts tourism to Cumberland County, PA;
- a for-profit, not-for-profit or governmental enterprise;
- a partner (as defined by CAEDC) in good standing;
- closed out of any open Tourism Partnership Grants facilitated by CAEDC at the time of grant application submittal; and
- applying for funds for a non-retroactive project.

REQUEST AMOUNTS & MATCH REQUIREMENTS

Grant requests may be made for \$2,500 to \$10,000.

The Applicant must provide at least a \$0.50 match for each dollar awarded. For example, for a \$15,000 total project, a \$10,000 award would be matched by \$5,000 from the Applicant. Applicants that exceed the required cash match may receive higher consideration.

Non-profit and governmental organizations may meet part of the match through in-kind services or product contribution, provided they have a minimum of 25% additional cash match. For example, for a \$15,000 total project, a \$10,000 award could be matched by \$1,250 in-kind services or product contribution plus \$3,750 cash from the Applicant. For-profit organizations may not use in-kind services or product contributions as the local share match. For-profit match must be cash or other grants.

CAEDC reserves the right to require financial information to help assess the Applicant's strength and capacity to deliver on the project. Basic financial requirements are listed by request amount below, but CAEDC may request additional information based on the project.

Required Entity & Financial Information

- Previous Two Year's Tax Returns
- Previous Two Year's and Year-to-Date Financial Statements
- Certificate of Organization, Articles of Incorporation or Certificate of Limited Partnership

- Operating Agreement, Bylaws or Partnership Agreement
- Quotes for all activities included in your application

Timeline

Applications for the grant are accepted as funds are available.

The final 2026 Tourism Grant application round will open August 3, 2026 and close September 4, 2026. Applicants can expect to be notified of funding decisions and to be named in public announcements about awarded projects in early November 2026.

Project timelines should start the month the Grant Award Agreement is received based on your application deadline period. Applicants have 12 months from the date CAEDC signed the Grant Award Agreement to complete their projects. Fund disbursement requests can be submitted with a signed Agreement, pending all requested materials, including permits, have been obtained. Please allow 30 days for invoice processing.

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Interested Applicants should schedule an in-person meeting with the Tourism Development Manager prior to submitting an application. This early step is designed to assist the Applicant with their application with the intent to provide competitive advantage and ensure that the project is well-defined.
2. The application is available through the website portal. It must be submitted electronically. **Please visit <https://cumberlandbusiness.com/tourism-grants/>.**
3. All required attachments must be digital files. No handwritten responses will be accepted.
4. Upon successful submission of an application and supporting materials; an electronic response is sent. Be sure to check your spam or junk folders. It is the responsibility of the Applicant to confirm receipt of the grant application.
5. Grant applications are reviewed by CAEDC staff, the Tourism Committee, the Finance Committee, and CAEDC's Board of Directors. If any portion of your application contains sensitive or proprietary business information you wish to keep confidential, please identify those documents within your application at the time of submission.

AWARD GUIDELINES & REQUIREMENTS

A for-profit business that receives a grant is required to treat the grant as income and is responsible for paying any federal, state and local taxes.

Awards for tourism grant programs are merit-based. Applications are evaluated using a rubric that assesses each project across multiple criteria, including overnight and overall visitation impact, alignment with Cumberland Valley's tourism mission, project readiness, visitor experience, and lasting impact and strategic value. Each component of the proposed project will be evaluated individually for eligibility, necessity, and alignment with the grant program's goals. Applicants are encouraged to address each of these areas thoroughly in their application narrative.

Criteria	Sub-Criterion
Overnight and Overall Visitation Impact	• Overnight Visitor Connection • Draw Market & Distance • Quantified Impact Projections
Alignment with Cumberland Valley's Tourism Mission	• Fit with Destination Identity • Competitive Impact on Existing Businesses • Focus Area Alignment
Applicant's Financial Health	• This section evaluates whether the applicant has the financial strength and operational readiness to successfully deliver the project.
Project Readiness & Viability	• Budget Quality & Documentation • Quality of Project Plan • Timeline Feasibility
Visitor Experience & Marketing Integration	• Visitor Experience Enhancement • Marketing Integration
Lasting Impact & Strategic Value	• Legacy & Destination Impact • Community & Economic Benefit • Transformative Impact on Business

This grant program cannot fund operating labor costs, inventory purchases, insurance, marketing or advertising, business signage or other routine expenditures that are a part of the Applicant's normal operating budget. This grant program also cannot fund feasibility or other studies, or acquisition of buildings or land. All funds must directly support the project as scoped and defined in the application submitted by the Applicant.

Although eligible to apply, Applicants should not assume that they will be awarded a grant on an annual basis, nor should they consider this grant program a permanent addition to their annual budget. Applicants that can communicate a compelling need that directly enhances CAEDC's tourism mission with quantifiable results may be given higher consideration. Past grant stewardship and compliance with grant requirements will be considered while reviewing new applications from Applicants who have received tourism grants in the past, which may impact future grant awards.

Additional criteria may be required for your grant application. The Grant Award Agreement will clearly outline all criteria and timeframes for meeting stipulations.

Once approved, a Grant Award Agreement will be mailed to the successful Applicant (the "Grantee") for execution. Upon execution of the Grant Award Agreement, programs must be executed and award amount

must be used within 12 months of the date CAEDC signed the Grant Award Agreement. If the funds are not expended within the 12-month period, the Grantee must inform the Tourism Development Manager in writing that the project has been canceled or to request an extension. CAEDC reserves the right to reject a request for extension and cancel the grant.

As a provision of accepting these funds, Grantee must provide adequate proof (receipts, invoices, canceled checks, credit card statements, wire transfers, etc.) that the funds received were used for their intended purpose. CAEDC reserves the right to audit the Grantees records and use of funds.

A Final Project Report is required within 60 calendar days of the completion of the project. A template will be provided to the Grantee.

Grant Award Agreements will clearly outline when and how much funding will be dispersed, and any documentation that must be submitted or activities that must happen prior the fund disbursement. A minimum of 20% of the grant funds will be held as a reimbursement at the end of the project; depending on the project, this amount may be higher than 20% and will be defined in the Grant Award Agreement. The funding held will be disbursed following submission and approval of the Final Report and a site visit from CAEDC staff.

Grantees that do not meet the post-award requirements will be deemed ineligible to apply for future cycle grant rounds or other programs.

The Pennsylvania Prevailing Wage Act (43 P.S. §165-1 et. seq.) may be applicable to a project funded under this program. Prevailing Wage requirements are generally applicable to grants for construction, reconstruction, demolition, alterations, repair work, renovations, build-out and installation of machinery and equipment in excess of \$25,000. If applicable, the Applicant is responsible for including prevailing wage rates in all bid documents, specifications, and construction contracts pertaining to the project funded under this program. The Department of Labor and Industry (L & I) has final authority to make prevailing wage applicability determinations.

Projects subject to the Pennsylvania Prevailing Wage Act requirements must solicit three (3) quotes for their project. These quotes must be from qualified vendors and be for the same work and materials and include prevailing wage rates. Applicants will be asked to document the companies that quotes were solicited from, and why the chosen quote was selected on their grant application.

Grant Award Announcement & Recognition

CAEDC shall make the initial public announcement of the grant award; Grantee shall not make a public announcement of the grant award until after CAEDC's announcement has been made.

Grantee shall publicly acknowledge the support that the CAEDC grant program provided through all reasonable vehicles as a stipulation of accepting such awards. Grantee is required to have a hyperlinked Cumberland Valley PA destination logo on their website following the award of the grant. Additional required recognition will be outlined in the Grant Award Agreement. By submitting an application, CAEDC reserves the right to promote this grant program, Applicants and Grantees as deemed appropriate or beneficial to the CAEDC. Any media obtained through this grant program must be shared with CAEDC for promotional use.

The information provided herein is a guideline for eligibility to partake in the Tourism Partnership Grant Program and should not be relied upon by an Applicant who believes they will receive a grant based upon the information herein. A grant award letter will be issued to all successful grant applicants and until such letter is issued, CAEDC reserves the right to deny any application based upon its determination that the Applicant did not meet the requirements of the program.