

TRAVEL OREGON
COMPETITIVE GRANTS
2024–2025 GUIDELINES



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PROGRAM INTENT

Is your community or organization working to make Oregon a welcoming destination for all? Do you have an inclusive project that will drive economic prosperity while delivering a remarkable visitor experience? This grant program is designed to increase access and equity for those who may have experienced barriers to visiting our great state—whether by better addressing various mobility challenges or celebrating the diversity of people and communities who live in and travel to Oregon. By funding tourism infrastructure and promotion that lessens or removes barriers to access, the 2024-2025 Competitive Grant program will champion efforts across Oregon’s seven tourism regions that aim to make Oregon a truly inclusive destination.

TRAVEL OREGON'S MISSION AND PRIORITIES

The mission of the Oregon Tourism Commission (Travel Oregon) is to inspire travel that uplifts Oregon communities. Collaborating with stakeholders and partners to align as stewards of Oregon, we work to optimize economic opportunity, advance equity and respect the ecosystems, cultures and places that make Oregon...Oregon.

Travel Oregon’s [10-Year Strategic Vision](#) holds four objectives:

- Oregon’s tourism economy is flourishing.
- Oregon is striving to be a place of equity.
- Oregon delivers remarkable experiences.
- Oregon respects its natural environments.

Travel Oregon has established a program to grant awards “to eligible applicants for projects that contribute to the development and improvement of communities throughout the state by means of the enhancement, expansion and promotion of the visitor industry.”

Each of the interconnected objectives are supported by strategies to help bring Travel Oregon’s mission to life. The 2024-2025 Competitive Grants Program is designed to address the following parts of [Travel Oregon’s 2023-2025 Biennial Plan](#):

1. Reduce high visitation pressures and increase community livability by investing in the development of niche tourism product that is based on growing visitor demand and Oregon’s competitive advantage (e.g., outdoor recreation, culinary, agritourism, arts and culture).
2. Expand opportunities for residents and tourism stakeholders to actively engage and collaborate in destination management processes.
3. Align and support communications across the tourism industry to improve visitor behaviors and experiences with timely information, responsible recreation practices and respect for all communities.
4. Support the development of new and existing tourism-related facilities and products (e.g., visitor experiences, attractions, and public spaces) to better serve historically and currently underserved and under-resourced communities.
5. Increase demand by leveraging Oregon’s brand through engagement of broader audiences inclusive of Oregon’s diverse cultures, people and places.

GRANT PROGRAM PURPOSE

Grant funds are intended to support projects that align with Travel Oregon’s vision: Oregon is a welcoming destination where tourism drives economic prosperity, benefits the natural environment and celebrates rich, diverse cultures. In alignment with the objectives and strategies above, the 2024-2025 Competitive Grants Program will focus funding on projects that increase access and inclusion for historically and currently underserved or under-resourced communities as defined in the [State of Oregon’s DEI Action Plan](#).

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants include those listed below that are *doing business* in Oregon and can demonstrate direct work in support of improving the economic impacts of Oregon's travel and tourism industry:

- Local governments
- Port districts
- Federally recognized tribes
- Non-profit entities registered with the Oregon Secretary of State's Office

PROJECT PREFERENCES

Applicants must propose a project that focuses on either *tourism infrastructure* or *tourism promotion* that increases access and inclusion. Only one application may be submitted per entity, and only one proposal may be submitted per project (multiple entities may not request funding for the same project).

Though not a comprehensive list of preferred project types, those below are strongly aligned with this grant program.

- 1) *Tourism infrastructure that expands or enhances Oregon's ability to be a welcoming destination for all through increased access and inclusion.*

Preferred project types include, but are not limited to:

- Assistive technology (including adaptive devices) that improves universal access
- Multi-language, access-increasing or culturally interpretive signage or wayfinding
- Development of culturally relevant programming, products and/or materials
- Adaptation of services to provide sensory-friendly experiences
- Improvement or innovation of signature events to be more welcoming
- Access point improvements to recreational activities, including improvements to the entrance to a trailhead to increase access
- Removal or mitigation of physical barriers and/or obstacles for visitors with mobility or sensory needs
- Improvements to structures, pathways, gates and doorways at tourism-related facilities
- Parking/transportation strategies and solutions in areas of high visitation
- Accessibility and inclusion audits
- Planning/feasibility studies for tourism-related facilities (includes attractions, public spaces, and visitor experiences)

- 2) *Tourism promotion which increases access and inclusion.*

Preferred project types include, but are not limited to:

- Content development supporting broader tourism marketing, including photography and video
- Familiarization tour support focused on expanding relationships with underserved populations
- Promotion of guided experiences or signature events focused on, or undertaken in partnership with, underserved communities
- Focused print/broadcast advertising
- Focused digital advertising, including social media and search optimization
- Support for influencer and/or ambassador marketing efforts

PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES NOT FUNDED

The following activities are **not** eligible for grants in this program:

- Mobile app development
- Deferred, regular or ongoing maintenance and upkeep
- Cannabis or tobacco tourism-related projects
- Full scale recreational trail construction

AWARD AMOUNTS

AVAILABLE FUNDING

Total funding available for the 2024-2025 Competitive Grants program is expected to be \$5.2 million. Of that, \$1,000,000 will be dedicated to tourism promotion projects that increase access and inclusion. Requests between \$20,000 to \$150,000 will be accepted. No matching funds are required, however applications with additional cash or in-kind contributions may be given preference.

Travel Oregon reserves the right to award grants in amounts totaling less than all funds available under the Competitive Grants Program, to award a different amount than is requested in a grant application, to make changes to the Grant Guidelines or to cancel the Competitive Grants Program in its entirety.

PROGRAM TIMELINE

October 24, 2024	Grant Guidelines available online
December 2, 2024 (8 a.m. PT)	Letter of intent form available online
January 15, 2025 (5 p.m. PT)	Deadline to submit letter of intent form*
February 27, 2025 (5 p.m. PT)	Deadline to submit application
June 17, 2025	Funding decisions announced
February 17, 2026	Mid-Project Report due (includes updated project status and budget-to-date)
November 3, 2026	Project completion deadline (grant funds spent)
November 17, 2026	Accomplishment Report due (includes final budget and proof of spending)

* Review of the letter of intent will occur based on the order received from December 2-January 15 and may take up to 21 days for a response. The letter of intent must be approved before access is granted to the online application. For more information, see Review Process on Page 7.

HOW TO APPLY

Step 1: Submit a letter of intent form between 8 a.m. PT on December 2, 2024 and 5 p.m. PT on January 15, 2025 via the online system.

Step 2: Staff will review your letter of intent, confirm your eligibility and may suggest revisions to strengthen your project concept.

Step 3: If requested, revise letter of intent and resubmit.

Step 4: After approval of your letter of intent, use the email notification to access and complete the online application by 5 p.m. PT on February 27, 2025. No applications or materials will be accepted after this deadline.

Before beginning the online process, we encourage applicants to gather all information and documents listed in the Letter of Intent and Application sections below.

LETTER OF INTENT

Review and approval of the letter of intent will be based upon the order received (submission date). Applicants should plan to have a response to their letter of intent within 21 days from the date of submission. All potential applicants need to submit a letter of intent form by the 5 p.m. PT deadline on January 15, 2025 to be considered for funding. The [letter of intent questions are available online](#).

The following uploads are required as part of the letter of intent form:

- ✓ [Travel Oregon Substitute Federal W-9 Form](#) – form must be complete, signed and dated
- ✓ Project Budget ([must use the form provided](#))

APPLICATION

Once the letter of intent is approved, the applicant will receive an email providing access to the online application. *Applications that vary substantially from the approved letter of intent will be ineligible to receive funding.* Deadline to complete the online application is 5 p.m. PT on February 27, 2025. The [application questions are available online](#).

The following uploads must be resubmitted with the application and include any updates identified in the LOI stage:

- ✓ [Travel Oregon Substitute Federal W-9 Form](#) – form must be complete, signed and dated
- ✓ Project Budget ([must use the form provided](#))

The following additional uploads are required as part of the application:

- ✓ Project Timeline ([sample](#))
- ✓ Project Specific Uploads
 - **Construction Permitting:** Evidence of approval from permitting authorities for tourism infrastructure development/construction (if required locally)
 - **Signage Project:** evidence of approval to place signage (if signage is included in project scope)
 - **Distribution Plan:** A distribution plan and associated budget costs (if producing collateral is included in project scope)

Applicants may choose to upload Project Support Letters. Including letters is recommended, but not required.

ONLINE APPLICATION SYSTEM

Access the letter of intent form between December 2, 2024 and January 15, 2025 here:

<https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=otc>

Applicants who have previously applied for a Travel Oregon Competitive Grant or an Oregon Wine Country License Plates Matching Grant may use their existing password to log in. Once logged into your applicant dashboard, you can access the letter of intent by selecting “Apply” in the top navigation. All other applicants will need to select “Create New Account” to begin.

Upon approval of the Letter of Intent, Travel Oregon will email applicants with an invitation to complete the online application. The application will be accessed through the same online application system using the link above.

When applicants log back into their account after receiving the invitation email, the application will be assigned in the “Active Requests” tab. On the right-hand side, in blue, click “Edit Application.” NOTE: Clicking on “Apply” at this point will open a new letter of intent form, not the application.

All applications must be completed and submitted online by 5 p.m. PT on February 27, 2025. All submissions are final. Be sure to check all work prior to submitting the application.

DEVELOPING A STRONG PROPOSAL

A full list of [previously awarded projects](#) is available online. Reviewing this list will provide an overview of the types of activities Travel Oregon is most interested in funding.

REVIEW PROCESS

Proposals are reviewed in several different stages to provide multiple points of view and opportunities for success.

First, staff will read the letter of intent to understand how the project idea aligns with the grant program goals. Staff will also verify the organization's eligibility status. The goal in this stage is to help applicants craft the strongest possible application by offering suggestions about how to clarify project goals and scope.

Once an application is submitted, staff will use the additional detail provided to understand the different ways the proposal supports the grant priorities and preferences. These include:

- Does the project leverage additional funds?
- Is the project aligned with project preferences? (Page 3)
- Does the proposal emphasize marketing of an infrastructure project funded in the 2023-2025 cycle?
- Are the necessary permits secured?

Finally, a team of trained reviewers will score each application using the rubric in these guidelines. Those scores will be used to help determine the most strategic investment of grant funds in this cycle. For more information about what makes an excellent proposal, see "Review Criteria" on page 9-10.

RESOURCES

For accessible/inclusive marketing projects, strong applications communicate what factors are guiding advertising decisions (demographics/census/audience data). For example: [Here are some of the DEI insights and key performance indicators that Travel Oregon uses.](#)

When considering how to broaden access and inclusion efforts, focus on one of the seven principles of Universal Design, which emphasizes ways to create more usable products and environments. [Centre for Excellence in Universal Design.](#)

For applications focused on tourism infrastructure to increase access and inclusion, the [Oregon Parks and Recreation Department – Accessibility Design Standards for all Future Projects](#) provides a resource guide.

The project budget can be used to demonstrate thoughtfulness about the structure of a proposal. This includes opportunities for community support (through both cash and in-kind contributions), organizational resources (through appropriate commitment of staff time) and considerations of necessary outside expertise (through compensation for lived experience or skills beyond the applicant's knowledge).

INVOLVING YOUR REGIONAL DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION (RDMO)

Travel Oregon has identified seven regions within the state through the [Regional Cooperative Tourism Program](#). Each region of the state is represented by a Regional Destination Management Organization (see Page 12).

Letter of Intent will be shared with the appropriate RDMO. Applicants are encouraged to discuss their project idea with their RDMO prior to completing the grant application. RDMOs will **not** write letters of support for applicants, but may provide feedback to Travel Oregon for the grant review committee based on the letter of intent form.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to reach out to their local [Destination Management Organization](#) (DMO) about the grant project and request letters of support to enhance their overall application.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

View the Competitive Grants Program [Frequently Asked Questions page](#) for commonly asked questions.

APPLICANT INFORMATION SESSIONS

Oregon will host a variety of applicant information sessions via Zoom. Attendees will need to register in advance. Questions and answers will be added to the website above.

Wednesday, November 20, 2024: 9-10 am	Overview of Grant Program Session A
Monday, December 2, 2024: 12-1 pm	Overview of Grant Program Session B (repeat of 11/20 content)
Tuesday, December 10, 2024: 4-5 pm	Topic-Specific Info Session A (TBD)
Thursday, December 19, 2025: 12-1 pm	Topic-Specific Info Session B (TBD)
Monday, January 6, 2025: 3-4 pm	Topic-Specific Info Session C (TBD)
Wednesday, January 8, 2025: 9-10 am	Open Hour for general questions
Friday, January 10, 2025: 3-4 pm	Open Hour for general questions

CONTACT US

Submit additional questions via email to Grants@TravelOregon.com. Please be aware that email response time may be delayed, but questions will be answered as quickly as possible.

GRANT REQUIREMENTS (IF AWARDED FUNDS)

Applicants who are awarded a grant will enter into a contract with Travel Oregon that includes agreements to comply with all guideline requirements and to complete the project as approved.

FUNDING USE, BUDGET AND SPENDING TIMELINE

Projects will be monitored by Travel Oregon. Grant recipients shall maintain accurate records of how dollars are spent and must agree to provide Travel Oregon with access to these records in a timely manner, when requested. Grant recipients will be required to keep an ongoing, updated timeline and budget throughout the lifetime of the grant. Grant recipients are required to spend awarded funds by November 3, 2026. Any unspent funds must be returned to Travel Oregon.

TRAVEL OREGON RECOGNITION

In many areas of Oregon, a regional style guide has been developed for use by tourism businesses and destination marketers. Grant recipients are encouraged to adopt these guidelines to better align with other communication efforts. Travel Oregon may be available to consult on specific design needs.

Grant recipients shall visibly display on all finished grant projects (publications, websites and other significantly visible project activities) Travel Oregon's logo along with the acknowledgement: "This project has been funded in part by a grant from Travel Oregon." Travel Oregon will work with grant recipients to ensure proper usage and placement of the Travel Oregon logo.

Do not place Travel Oregon recognition on wayfinding signage, unless authorized by Travel Oregon to do so. Grant recipients must submit signage designs to Travel Oregon for review prior to production and placement.

When designing signage, collateral or marketing materials associated with a grant-funded project, grant recipients shall allow at least two weeks for Travel Oregon to review the project design and provide feedback (timing will depend on the complexity of the project). Grant recipients must cease further grant project design work until feedback from Travel Oregon has been delivered. While grant recipients are not required to make all recommended changes Travel

Oregon may provide, grant recipients must adhere to all grant program requirements. Recognition requirements will be included in grant recipients' contracts.

GRANT REPORTS

Required reports will be submitted through Travel Oregon's online grant management system.

Mid-Project Report

Grant recipients are required to provide an update on the status of their project and submit a current project budget to Travel Oregon eight months after award notification. The Mid-Project Report is due February 17, 2026.

Accomplishment Report and Final Budget

Recipients are required to complete a final Accomplishment Report. The final project budget along with copies of detailed project expenses (receipts) must be uploaded as part of the report. The Accomplishment Report is due by November 17, 2026.

GRANT FUNDS DISBURSEMENT

Following approval and execution of contract, an initial disbursement of 50% of the grant award will be sent to recipients. Recipients are eligible to receive up to 90% of the remaining awarded funds through a reimbursement system upon invoice and with documentation of expenses. Final disbursement of funds will be sent once the project is complete, the Accomplishment Report has been submitted and the final budget and proof of spending documentation has been reviewed and approved by Travel Oregon.

Any grant funds not used as approved shall be returned to Travel Oregon pursuant to the grant contract. Grant funds may only be used for costs related to the project and clearly identified in the grant budget. Projects must be completed within the approved project timeline.

REVIEW CRITERIA

Criteria	Excellent	Strong	Satisfactory, with Room to Grow	Needs Improvement	Where reviewers will look for these criteria
Project Intent <i>(1 to 4 points available)</i>	Project is clearly centered on increasing access/inclusion for communities that are underserved/under-resourced. Applicant demonstrates relationships or past progress in this area. Proposal is strongly connected to project preferences.	Project generally aligns with the goal of increased access/inclusion for communities that are underserved/under-resourced. Applicant is developing relationships and working towards progress in this area. Proposals is aligned with project preferences.	Difficult to determine how the project aligns with increased access/inclusion for communities that are underserved/under-resourced. Applicant has few relationships or limited progress in this area. Proposal is not well aligned with project preferences.	Project does not align increased access/inclusion for communities that are underserved/under-resourced. Applicant has not developed relationships or done work in this area. Proposal is disconnected from project preferences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project description narrative • Communities served • Project intent narrative • Alignment with preferred project types
Immediate Need <i>(1 to 4 points available)</i>	Application clearly demonstrates an immediate need for the project to be completed. Required permitting and distribution plans are complete at time of application.	Demonstrates some need in why the project should be completed immediately. Permitting process has been initiated.	Difficult to determine if there is an immediate need to complete the project. Permitting timeline is uncertain.	Does not demonstrate an immediate need for the project to be completed. Permitting is not likely to be secured during the funding period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project need narrative • Uploaded support documents
Feasibility <i>(1 to 4 points available)</i>	Application clearly demonstrates confidence that the project can be completed in the timeline, supported by contractor bids (if needed). Partner relationships are solidly in place to support the work.	Application demonstrates that project can be completed in the required timeline. Partner relationships are developing in support of the work. Contractor bids generally support the overall timeline.	Difficult to determine if the project can realistically be completed in the required timeline. Partner relationships are limited in support of the work. Contractor bids are unclear or not included.	Application does not demonstrate the project can be completed in the required timeline. Application lacks partner relationships. Contracting process has not yet been initiated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project planning narrative • Uploaded project timeline • Uploaded bids for work or proposals from contractors

Criteria	Excellent	Strong	Satisfactory, with Room to Grow	Needs Improvement	Where reviewers will look for these criteria
Budget <i>(1 to 4 points available)</i>	Application clearly outlines how the grant funds will be spent and those expenses align with the grant program intent. Application provides strong clarity of purpose for grant funds and intent to provide fair compensation for expertise of individuals involved.	Application provides enough detail to show how the grant funds will be spent and those expenses align with the grant program intent. Application provides reasonable clarity of purpose for grant funds and plans for reasonable compensation in most cases.	Difficult to determine how the grant funds will be spent or if the expenses align with the grant program intent. Application provides limited information on purpose of grant funds and does not fully account for compensation.	Application does not outline how the grant funds will be spent and funds do not support the grant program. Application does not explain purpose of grant funds and does not consider compensation for expertise of individuals involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uploaded budget document • Fund usage narrative
Case for Support <i>(1 to 4 points available)</i>	Application is complete, contains all information required and clearly provides a compelling case for support. Application includes enthusiastic letters of support.	Application is complete, contains all information required and presents an adequate case for support. Application includes positive letter(s) of support.	Difficult to determine if the application is complete but contains all information required. Case for support needs improvement. Letter(s) of support are included, but vague or generalized.	Application is incomplete and does not contain all information required by grant guidelines. Application is difficult to understand. Letters of support are not included.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project need narrative • Uploaded letters of support
Welcoming Destination <i>(1 to 8 points available)</i>	Project is specifically designed to enhance, expand or promote a welcoming destination for all, while remaining grounded in the capacity of the local community. Specific populations' needs and inputs inform the project design.	Project will enhance, expand or promote a welcoming destination for many visitors, including the local community. Some unique needs are considered in project design.	Project will enhance, expand or promote a destination for some visitors, with an emphasis on groups that have visited before in the past. Project is overly focused on local needs, with little consideration of visitors.	Project is focused only on benefitting the immediate community with little to no consideration of how to make the destination more welcoming to new visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming destination narrative • Communities served • Project description narrative

REGIONAL DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS (RDMO's)

The Oregon Tourism Commission has identified seven regions within the state. Each region has one DMO to act as its Regional Destination Management Organization (RDMO). RDMO's submit regional plan proposals for use of state dollars for the Regional Cooperative Tourism Program (RCTP). By leveraging state dollars along with private and public resources, the RDMO's work with Travel Oregon to bolster Oregon's tourism economy. RDMO contact information is listed below.



CENTRAL OREGON

Visit Central Oregon
visitcentraloregon.com | 800.800.8334

Kristine McConnell,

kristine@visitcentraloregon.com

**Counties: Jefferson, Deschutes, Crook, South Wasco County*



MT. HOOD AND COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE

Experience Mt. Hood and the Gorge
hood-gorge.com | 971.378.4006

Lizzie Keenan, lizzie@hood-gorge.com

**Counties: Hood River, portions of Wasco, Multnomah and Clackamas*



EASTERN OREGON

Eastern Oregon Visitors Association
visiteasteroregon.com | 541.970.4551

Alana Garner Carollo,

execdirector@visiteasternoregon.com

**Counties: Sherman, Gilliam, Wheeler, Morrow, Union, Umatilla, Wallowa, Grant, Baker, Harney, Malheur*



OREGON COAST

Oregon Coast Visitors Association
visittheoregoncoast.com | 541.819.9240

Arica Sears, deputy@thepeoplescoast.com

**Counties: Clatsop, Tillamook, Lincoln, Coos, Curry, portions of Lane and Douglas*



PORTLAND REGION

Travel Portland
travelportland.com | 503.866.9505

Michael Cavanaugh,

michael@travelportland.com

**Counties: Washington, Columbia, portions of Multnomah and Clackamas*



SOUTHERN OREGON

Travel Southern Oregon
southernoregon.org | 541.326.2640

Bob Hackett, bob@southernoregon.org

**Counties: Klamath, Lake, Jackson, Josephine, portions of Douglas*

ACCESS AND DOWNLOAD REGIONAL TOURISM PLANS

<https://industry.traveloregon.com/opportunities/programs-initiatives/regional-cooperative-tourism-program/>



WILLAMETTE VALLEY

Willamette Valley Visitors Association
willamettevalley.org | 971.388.6185

Jessy Fabrizio-Stover, jessy@willamettevalley.org

**Counties: Yamhill, Polk, Benton, Marion, Linn, portions of Lane and Clackamas*

Photo on cover page: Snowshoe guided tour in the Mt. Hood National Forest with Mt. Hood Outfitters.