

Tourism Incentive Grant Program FAQ

1. What is the purpose of the Tourism Incentive Grant Program?

To provide grant funding for establishment of an Incentive Grant Program used by eligible entities to attract new, out-of-state events to Illinois when competing with other states' destinations. It may also be used to retain existing business when documentation is provided that the entity is competing against other states' destinations to retain the business in Illinois. Grant funds for the Incentive Grant Program cannot be offered to an event if multiple Illinois destinations are in competition for this same event.

2. How is incentive defined?

Incentive is defined as (1) a financial incentive provided by a unit of local government, local promotion group, not-for-profit organization, for-profit organization, or convention center authority to attract a convention, meeting, or trade show but for the incentive, would not have occurred in the State or been retained in the State; or (2) a financial incentive provided by a unit of local government, local promotion group, not-for-profit organization, for-profit organization, or convention center authority for attracting a sporting event, but for the incentive, would not have occurred in the state or been retained in the State; but (3) only a financial incentive offered or provided to a person or entity in the form of financial benefits or costs which are allowable costs pursuant to the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act.

The incentives provided for the events must be able to be tracked and reported to the Department to receive funding for the incentives provided to the events.

3. Do Grantees need to provide the Department with a listing of events that they have secured or are in the process of potentially securing?

Yes. Please provide details for each event within the pre-event verification form here: [Tourism Incentive - Pre-Event Verification](#). Only one event per submission should be completed. A submission must be completed for each event. Submission of this form is **NOT** a formal approval for a Grantee to move forward with securing the event. The purpose of this form is to inform DCEO of events each Grantee has secured or is trying to secure and prevent any duplications or overlapping efforts by Grantees for the same event. The only response a Grantee will receive is if there are multiple Grantees attempting to secure the same event.

4. What are eligible expenses?

Expenditures should relate to specific terms or obligations within the contract or host agreement for the event brought to or retained in the State. Examples of eligible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Event space/venue rental: Room rental, event staging – build, setup, trussing, lighting, pipe and draping, power and sound, security, traffic control. If the applicant is a venue that owns the facility and controls any assets outlined in this example those costs are not allowable.
- Event rentals: Tables, seating, décor, tents, dinnerware, flatware, glassware, linens
- Food/Beverage: Meals, beverages (excluding alcoholic beverages), service labor fees
- Audio/Visual Support: Microphones, screens/projectors, other specialized equipment, internet access, service labor fees
- Entertainment (as part of an otherwise planned event): Speakers, DJs, performing acts
- Registration & Event Management: Event management technology software that handles online event registration; virtual, hybrid and onsite solutions and attendee engagement
- Transportation: Shuttle service provided to move overnight guests to and from the event/venue space on a master account (individual guest receipts are not eligible). Shuttle service to pick up overnight guests at the airport and drop them off at the hotel and vice versa upon the conclusion of the meeting/event; this is for guests on a master account as individual guest receipts are not eligible.
- Bid fees associated with attracting a new event to Illinois
- Room night credits that are actualized, contracted, revenue-generating group room nights directly sourced by the bureau and must exceed 300 for outside the City of Chicago and 5000 for the City of Chicago

5. What are ineligible expenses?

Ineligible Projects and Activities – Activities that are ineligible for funding include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Incentive costs that are not specifically outlined within the contract or other binding documents.
- Costs outlined in the eligible expenses that are associated with any Grantee-owned or controlled venue and/or asset.

- Costs of developing or making permanent improvements to facilities.
- Purchase of equipment.
- Normal payroll or operating expenses; and
- Purchase of alcoholic beverages.

6. How does a Grantee request state approval to fund an event?

The attraction of events to Illinois requires the ability to access funds in short notice as part of the grant agreement. If an event is approved for this program, the Department is committed to responding within 5 business days of requests for funds and will supply a letter of support, committing the Department to providing these funds as a reimbursement or working capital advance. The support letter will outline the amount of approved and/or denied expenses. When requesting funding from the Department for incentives, a link to a standardized form has been provided to each Grantee within each Grant Agreement in Exhibit B. The form will include the following details:

1. Event Name, Event Venue Name, Event Venue City, Event Venue County, Event Dates.
2. Type of Event: Meeting, Trade Show, Convention, Sporting Event, Conference, Other.
3. Documentation that this is a new event – not held in Illinois in last 3 years or would have been relocated out of state without the incentive and competition with other states' destinations.
4. Host Hotel(s)
5. Attendance and number of room nights booked during the event – must be a minimum of 300 for non-City of Chicago events and 5,000 for City of Chicago events. If attendees stay at one or more than one lodging property, the property or properties must agree to report the room nights booked for the qualified event. Upon completion of the event, the property must verify in writing the total room pick-up associated with the specified event. If a pickup report is unavailable, documentation from the property on business letterhead, signed by the property general manager or another officer with the authority to make such a statement on the property's behalf.
6. Eligible hard costs provided as incentive must include documentation to support the eligible hard costs.
7. Contract or other binding documents for bid fees.

8. Documentation that indicates only non-Illinois destinations were competing to hold this event.

7. How does a Grantee request funding when needed?

The Tourism Incentive Grant Program payment link which is the form for requesting funds. At a minimum you will have to have a contract or obligation agreement (bid or other) that outlines those expenditures were part of the incentive required to get a working capital advance. In the documentation part of the form, you would choose the documents to justify your expenses needed. When funding is needed you will submit that request through the Tourism Incentive Grant Payment Request link:

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/499ddae934b04ad7988ec805d22e63af>

8. How will a Grantee receive notice that a request for funding has been approved?

Upon submission of a request form through the Request for Funding link the Department will review and respond within 5 business days, or a reasonable timeframe thereafter. DCEO's response will be via letter and will include approval or denial of the funding request, the date of approval or denial, and the amount approved or denied. DCEO will ensure the expenses and materials submitted align with the NOFO requirements and subsequently approved or denied, in whole or part. Once the Illinois Office of Tourism (IOT) has approved/denied a funding request a notification then goes to the Office of Grants Management (OGM) of the final decision and to coordinate funding.

9. Can I submit multiple events in one submission through the Smartsheet links?

No, only one event per submission.

10. Once the event has taken place what do I need to provide in the Tourism Incentive Grant Payment Request.

Complete and submit <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/499ddae934b04ad7988ec805d22e63af> with the following information:

1. Event Name, Event Venue Name, Event Venue City, Event Venue County, Event Dates.
2. Type of Event: Meeting, Trade Show, Convention, Sporting Event, Conference, Other.

3. Documentation that this is a new event – not held in Illinois in last 3 years or would have been relocated out of state without the incentive and competition with other states’ destinations.
4. Eligible hard costs provided as incentive must include documentation to support the eligible hard costs.
5. Contract or other binding documents for bid fees.
6. Documentation that indicates only non-Illinois destinations were competing to hold this event.
7. Host Hotel(s)
8. Attendance and number of room nights booked during the event – must be a minimum of 300 for non-City of Chicago events and 5,000 for City of Chicago events. If attendees stay at one or more than one lodging property, the property or properties must agree to report the room nights booked for the qualified event. ***Upon completion of the event, the property must verify in writing the total room pick-up associated with the specified event. If a pickup report is unavailable documentation from the property on business letterhead, signed by the property general***

11. What if the event has not taken place but funding is needed for the bid fee and/or working capital towards the event?

If the event has not taken place yet these items should be included in the working capital request. Therefore, when requesting funding from the Department for incentives use this Grant Payment Request link:

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/499ddae934b04ad7988ec805d22e63af>.

The form requests the following information:

1. Event Name, Event Venue Name, Event Venue City, Event Venue County, Event Dates.
2. Type of Event: Meeting, Trade Show, Convention, Sporting Event, Conference, Other.
3. Documentation that this is a new event – not held in Illinois in last 3 years or would have been relocated out of state without the incentive and competition with other states’ destinations.
4. Eligible hard costs provided as incentive must include documentation to support the eligible hard costs.
5. Contract and/or other binding documents for bid fees must be on file for any working capital advance request.

6. Documentation that indicates only non-Illinois destinations were competing to hold this event.

Once the event is over and final request is made if the metrics outlined above in Question 10 are not met, the grantee will be required to pay the grant funds back.

12. Do I need to give the DCEO recognition?

Yes.

1. All project materials funded through this Grant Agreement shall incorporate the current Department logo and/or statement that identify the project as being developed in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity/Illinois Office of Tourism.
2. Grantees must follow specific instructions for logo usage that are on the web site at <https://media.enjoyillinois.com/brand-guidelines/> . Failure to include the current Department logo or appropriate identification on a portion of a grant project will result in cost disallowance for that portion of the project. Failure to utilize the Department logo correctly (e.g. size, placement etc.) will result in a deduction of 10% of the total project costs.

13. How should the PFR and PPR be completed?

The information you provide will outline several key requirements for submitting and documenting incentive events within a Grant or funding process.

PPR:

Before the event: the PPR should detail the incentive event once it is secured and the date it will take place. Document the date you submitted the event into DCEO's form(s).

After the event: the PPR should detail the incentive has taken place, an additional documentation form should be completed and submitted with the PPR once the event has concluded.

The PFR and ledger will be completed, but not in the regard that you are used to. Each request for payment form that is submitted should include a contract between the Grantee and the Entity that is receiving the incentive. When a payment request form is submitted to DCEO OGM will have access to the contract submitted with the request. DCEO will be able to see, by way of the contract, the details as to what is being covered with the Grant funds (i.e. event venue, entertainment, one-time incentive fee for event being in Illinois).

The Ledger information will correspond with the items outlined in the contract. Your organization would be responsible to submitting the supporting documentation for the contact and outlining it accordingly (i.e. PDF labeled IPW Venue Fee).

Expenses should not be included on the PFR that do not have prior approval to be funded.

14. Can any expenses relating to the Incentive Event be reported on the on the PFR and Ledger?

No. The expenses detailed on the PFR and Ledger must be expenses explicitly outlined within the contract for securing the event. Additional expenses may not be included or applied to the Grant.

15. The grant term is only 1 or 2 years, but the NoFO stated the period of performance was 5 years. Why is my grant term shorter?

Due to GATA rules and regulations the State can only allow a grant to be issued for an initial 1 or 2 years without the program having an exception request and approval in place. This program did not have that so each initial grant term is for 1 or 2 years and can be extended through 1/31/2029 if all grant-funded activities have not been completed within the existing term.

16. How may I get assistance in understanding State grant rules, regulations, and processes?

DCEO provides resources for grantees through our Help Desk by contacting ceo.granthelp@illinois.gov or by visiting the website <https://dceo.illinois.gov/dceo-grants.html>