TRAVEL OREGON
COMPETITIVE GRANTS
2026 GUIDELINES

Contents

PROGRAM INTENT

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 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.

> To support the development and improvement of local economies and communities throughout Oregon, 10% of Travel Oregon's budget is dedicated to a Competitive Grants Program for the means of enhancement, expansion and promotion of the visitor industry.

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**

Each of the interconnected objectives are supported by strategies to help bring Travel Oregon's mission to life. The 2026 Competitive Grants Program is designed to align with the objectives above. While it falls under the "Required to Operate" section of [Travel Oregon's 2025-2027 Biennial Plan](#), it has been developed to align most closely with the following Key Performance Indicators:
- Measure and monitor visitor spending & tourism employment
- Measure and monitor visitor & resident sentiment

> The 2026 Competitive Grant Program will focus funding on projects that extend the visitor season, increasing spending and opportunities for year-round employment.

GRANT 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. Fluctuations in the seasonality of visitation offer key points in time when strategic investments can positively impact visitor spending. By emphasizing a destination stewardship approach, funds can benefit the economy while reducing environmental impact and balancing visitor experience with resident sentiment.

The 2026 Competitive Grants Program will focus funding on projects that extend the visitor season, increasing visitor spending and opportunities for year-round employment. These projects must be completed and show impact between September 23, 2026 and September 23, 2028 to be considered for funding. The Oregon Tourism Commission is mandated to fund programs and base grant awards on demonstrated return on investment, geographic equity and community support.

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 (city or county, not state or federal agencies)
- Port districts
- Federally recognized tribes
- Non-profit entities registered with the Oregon Secretary of State's Office

Ineligible applicants include those listed below:

- For-profit entities
- Entities that have a bankruptcy or other financial corruption within the past five years
- Entities that have failed to fulfill past grant award requirements within the past three years, including project completion, completion of required grant reporting, and proper use of grant funds

Only one proposal may be submitted per entity, and only one proposal may be submitted per project (multiple entities may not request funding for the same project).

PROJECT PREFERENCES

Applicants must propose a project that extends the visitor season, increasing visitor spending and opportunities for year-round employment through either tourism infrastructure or tourism promotion.

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

1) *Outdoor Recreation*
   - Trail conversion/upgrades to increase off-season use
   - Increasing access to wildlife and recreation in coordination with efforts to steward the environment
2) *Sports Tourism*
   - Securing competitive sporting events that attract overnight visitors
   - Facility upgrades to increase visitation such as HVAC or winterization
3) *Arts, Culture and Events*
   - Partnership packages of multi-day events designed to increase overnight stays, such as entertainment + lodging or culinary celebrations
   - Securing business conferences or major national/international events that attract overnight visitors
   - Facility upgrades to increase visitation such as HVAC or winterization
4) *Transportation*
   - Solutions to deliver new or additional visitors to destinations
5) *Marketing/Promotion*
   - New or expanded campaign that strengthens the destination's presence in key markets
   - Branding effort to bring partners together around a shared message or product offering

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
- Expenses incurred prior to September 23, 2026

AWARD AMOUNTS

AVAILABLE FUNDING

Total funding available for the 2026 Competitive Grants program is $5 million. The minimum award for this application cycle is $500,000. Only projects with expenses totaling $1 million or greater will be considered for funding. Successful letters of intent (LOI) will be invited to submit a full application that includes a funding request amount determined by the Oregon Tourism Commission through a public review process.

PROGRAM TIMELINE

Tues, April 7, 2026 (8 a.m. PT)	Letter of intent form available online
Mon, April 27, 2026 (5 p.m. PT)	Deadline to submit letter of intent
Wed, June 10, 2026 (8 a.m. PT)	Application form available online (for invited applicants)
Wed, July 1, 2026 (5 p.m. PT)	Deadline to submit application
Wed, September 23, 2026	Funding decisions announced
Tues, August 31, 2027	Mid-Project Report due (includes updated project status and budget-to-date)
Fall, 2027	Presentation of results-to-date at Oregon Tourism Commission meeting (exact date TBD)
Sat, September 23, 2028	Project completion deadline (grant funds spent)
Mon, October 23, 2028	Accomplishment Report due (includes final budget and proof of spending)
Winter, 2028	Presentation of results at Oregon Tourism Commission meeting (exact date TBD)

HOW TO APPLY

Step 1: Submit a letter of intent form between 8 a.m. PT on April 7, 2026 and 5 p.m. PT on April 27, 2026 via the online system.

Step 2: Staff will review your letter of intent and confirm your eligibility.

Step 3: The Oregon Tourism Commission will review eligible letters of intent and may suggest revisions to strengthen your project concept. Request amounts will be determined at this time by the Oregon Tourism Commission.

Step 4: If invited to submit a full application, use the email notification to access and complete the online application by 5 p.m. PT on July 1, 2026. 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

All potential applicants need to submit a letter of intent form by the 5 p.m. PT deadline on April 27, 2026 to be considered for funding. The LOI questions are on pages 12 and 13 of this document.

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 July 1, 2026. The application questions are on pages 12 and 13 of this document.

The following uploads are required as part of the application:
- ✓ [Travel Oregon Substitute Federal W-9 Form](#) – form must be complete, signed and dated
- ✓ [Project Budget Form](#) (must use the form provided)
    - o No more than 10% of the request amount may pay for administrative/non-project costs
    - o Applicants with annual operating expenses under $1,000,000 per year and tribal entities may include up to 15% administrative/non-project costs
- ✓ Project Specific Uploads
    - o *Construction Permitting:* Evidence of approval from permitting authorities for tourism infrastructure development/construction (if required locally)
    - o *Signage Approval:* evidence of approval to place signage (if signage is included in project scope)
    - o *Distribution Plan:* A distribution plan and associated budget costs (if producing collateral is included in project scope)
- ✓ Letters of Support: between 3 and 5 project endorsements from external partners that speak to the potential impact of the extended visitor season

MATCHING FUNDS

Due to the high dollar value of awards in this cycle, 1:1 matching funds are required. This means that for every dollar an applicant requests in a grant award, they must contribute a dollar, either from their own budget or an external source.

For applicants with annual operating expenses under $1,000,000 per year and Tribal entities, in-kind resources may be used to reach up to 50% of the required matching funds.

ONLINE APPLICATION SYSTEM

Access the letter of intent form between April 7, 2026 and April 28, 2026 via [Travel Oregon's online grant system](#).

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 LOI form, not the application.

All submissions must be completed and submitted online by the posted deadline. All submissions are final. Be sure to check all work prior to submission.

DEVELOPING A STRONG PROPOSAL

REVIEW PROCESS

Proposals are reviewed by different audiences to provide multiple points of view and opportunities for success.

Eligible letters of intent will be reviewed by a group of staff members from Travel Oregon using the Review Criteria rubric in these guidelines. The results of that scoring will be presented to the Oregon Tourism Commission, who will determine which proposals to invite forward to submit a full application and at what grant request amount.

Complete applications will be shared with Oregon Tourism Commissioners who will score each application using the full Review Criteria rubric in these guidelines. Reviewers will be able to reference the letter of intent in addition to all application materials. These scores will provide information to help the Oregon Tourism Commission determine the most strategic investment of grant funds in this cycle.

All applicants should be prepared to record a 5-7 minute presentation on the overview and potential impact of their project to be shown, and made available to the public, at the September, 23, 2026 Oregon Tourism Commission meeting. Details will be provided at the time of invitation to apply.

APPLICANT INFORMATION SESSIONS

A variety of applicant information sessions are available via Zoom in partnership with other Travel Oregon staff members. Attendees will need to register in advance using the links below, but sessions will be recorded and shared.

Thurs., April 2, 2026, 2 p.m.   Grant Program Overview Webinar Registration *
Thurs., April 9, 2026, 11 a.m.   Destination Stewardship Alignment Webinar Registration*
Wed., April 15, 2026, 9 a.m.   Capacity for Large Scale Marketing Projects Webinar Registration *
Thurs., April 16, 2026, 10 a.m. Using Data to Measure Impact Webinar Registration *
Wed., April 22, 2026, 10 a.m.   Join Drop In Office Hours for Tech Support (not recorded, no registration required)
Fri., April 24, 2026, 11 a.m.   Join Drop In Office Hours for Tech Support (not recorded, no registration required)

GRANT REQUIREMENTS (IF AWARDED FUNDS)

Applicants who are awarded a grant will enter into a contractual relationship with Travel Oregon that includes agreements to comply with all guideline requirements and to complete the project as approved. Signed contracts should be returned within thirty days.

FUNDING USE, BUDGET AND SPENDING TIMELINE

Projects will be monitored by Travel Oregon. Grant recipients are required to 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 September 23, 2028. Any unspent funds must be returned to Travel Oregon.

The grant project budget must be submitted using the Excel template provided by Travel Oregon. A final budget, including proof of spending for expenses incurred, will be required to be uploaded in the Grant Accomplishment Report. Grant recipients are strongly encouraged to use the "Receipt Tracker" tool provided in the Excel template to track which budget line items proof of spending is tied to, but applicants may provide the information in another format if that is more efficient.

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 Travel Oregon's logo on all finished grant projects (publications, websites and other significantly visible project activities) 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 11 months after award notification. The Mid-Project Report is due August 31, 2027.

Accomplishment Report and Final Budget

Recipients are required to complete a final Accomplishment Report. The final project budget along with proof of spending must be uploaded as part of the report. The Accomplishment Report is due by October 23, 2028. Recipients will be asked to share project accomplishments in a presentation to the Oregon Tourism Commission in December, 2028.

You may submit reports earlier than required dates if your project timeline allows. Failure to submit reports by their deadline may result in ineligibility for any future grant programs offered by Travel Oregon.

GRANT FUNDS DISBURSEMENT

Following approval and execution of contract, an initial disbursement of up to 50% of the grant award will be sent to recipients upon request. Recipients are eligible to receive up to 90% of the remaining awarded funds through a reimbursement system 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.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

DEFINITIONS

Visitor
Travel Oregon defines a visitor as a person traveling more than 50 miles to reach a destination or a person utilizing an overnight stay at a destination. While successful projects should take into account the needs and capacity of immediate community members, proposals for this grant program must have a primary focus on enhancing, expanding or promoting visitor experiences.

Annual Operating Expenses
Nonprofits should use the figure on line 18 of their most recently filed 990. Other entities should total the day-to-day costs required to maintain normal operations. The figure should not include capital expenditures, depreciation or debt.

In-kind Donations
An in-kind donation is a nonfinancial contribution from an external party of goods or services. They may also include gifts of land or buildings, use of facilities, advertising time or works of art.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Responses to programmatic questions submitted in writing will be posted on the Competitive Grants Program Frequently Asked Questions page (URL to be added when page is active).

AI USE

Travel Oregon does not use AI to screen or evaluate applications received. If applicants choose to utilize AI in developing their applications, human review is strongly encouraged to confirm all criteria are addressed, questions are answered thoroughly, the overall presentation of the project makes sense and that the project deliverables are achievable by your organization if awarded funds. Clear proposals with specific information about your request will be the most successful.

CONTACT US

Submit additional questions via email to [Grants@TravelOregon.com,](mailto:Grants@TravelOregon.com) including those about accessibility or accommodations for persons with disabilities, or to request a translator, interpreter or other communication aid. Please be aware that email response time may be delayed, but questions will be answered as quickly as possible.

Travel Oregon's online application system conforms to WCAG 2.0/2.1/2.2 criteria, Section 508 Refresh, ADA Compliance, EN301 549 (EU), or ISO 32000 (2008) & 14289-1 (2014) standards and overall accessibility of the website to users with disabilities. The site uses non-color dependent text and is compatible with screen-readers, speech-to-text tools and other assistive technologies.

Travel Oregon reserves the right to award grants in amounts totaling less than all funds available, 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.

REVIEW CRITERIA

Category Title	Where Criteria are Addressed		Scoring Descriptions (Recommended Scoring Range)			
Category Title	Letter of Intent	Application	Exemplary	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Missing
Potential for impact on visitor spend and employment (0 to 12 points available: *point scale intentionally omits some scores to emphasize the importance of this category*)	Project Description	Measures of Success	Project has an extremely high potential to visibly increase visitor spend and year-round employment on a statewide scale. (11 to 12 points)	Project shows promise of increasing visitor spend and/or year-round employment. Impact of project is regional. (7 to 10 points)	Project does not meaningfully contribute to increasing visitor spend and/or year-round employment. Impact of project is locally focused. (1 to 3 points)	Project does not align with program goals. (0 points)
Value of investment of Travel Oregon funds (0 to 6 points available)	Scale of Request	Fund Usage	Impact potential is high enough to make the scale of request an excellent value. Travel Oregon funding is the last component required for project to launch. (5 to 6 points)	Scale of request is in alignment with the value of the impact. (3 to 4 points)	Scale of request is high in proportion with the value of the impact. (1 to 2 points)	Scale of request is out of balance with potential impact. (0 points)
Viability of project (0 to 6 points available)	Financial Information	Timeline Budget Distribution Plan (if applicable)	Entity budget size is in proportion to the project scale. Matching funds secured or have a high potential of being in place at time of application. Administrative costs are at or below required minimum. (5 to 6 points)	Project scale is ambitious, but not out of scope of entity capacity. Most matching funds are in place. Administrative costs are at the required minimum. (3 to 4 points)	Potential challenges for entity to undertake a project of this scale. Less than 50% of matching funds are in place. Administrative costs are at the required minimum. (1 to 2 points)	Project is not viable. Administrative costs are above required minimum. (0 points)
Readiness of project to launch/implement (0 to 6 points available)	Project Description Research	Letters of Support Timeline Partners Sign Placement Permission (if applicable)	Clearly demonstrates the project can be completed in the timeline. Research shows project has a high likelihood of achieving desired impact. Partnerships are solidly in place to support the work. Project is ready to implement. (5 to 6 points)	Project timeline is sufficient to complete the work. Project is somewhat tied to data/research. Minimal partnerships in place. (3 to 4 points)	Project faces barriers that have not been addressed. Lacks partner relationships. Significant effort is needed to launch the project. (1 to 2 points)	Project cannot be completed in the grant timeline. (0 points)

	Where Criteria are Addressed		Scoring Descriptions (Recommended Scoring Range)			
Category Title	Letter of Intent	Application	Exemplary	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Missing
Destination Stewardship balance (0 to 6 points available)	Not evaluated at this stage	Destination Stewardship Environmental Considerations	Project successfully balances economic development with environmental impacts of tourism, while considering excellent visitor and resident experiences. (5 to 6 points)	Project incorporates elements of economic development and environmental impact, as well as visitor and resident experiences. (2 to 3 points)	Little to no consideration of mitigating potential negative impacts in one or more areas of destination stewardship. (1 to 2 points)	Project does not take destination stewardship into account. (0 points)
Visitor experience and community support (0 to 6 points available)	Not evaluated at this stage	Communities Impacted Letters of Support	Project design was informed by input from those most impacted by the outcome and can adapt to changing needs. It intentionally creates positive experiences for most visitors. (5 to 6 points)	Project design considers the impact on the general population. Design has potential to adapt/change. Project will likely result in positive experiences for many visitors. (2 to 3 points)	Project design does not incorporate input from those most impacted. Project has potential to result in positive experiences for some visitors. 1 to 2 points)	Input was not asked for or included from outside perspectives. Project design is rigid and unable to adapt to changing circumstances. (0 points)

PREPARING TO APPLY

In addition to the program-specific questions and information below, applicants will be expected to provide general information in their account set-up such as organization name, federal tax identification number, mailing address, project contact person, etc. We encourage you to gather this information ahead of time as well as consider potential responses to the questions below as you develop your project.

NON-NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

The following information will be required in the Letter of Intent.
- End date of most recently completed fiscal year
- Applicant total operating expenses for most recently completed fiscal year
- Estimated total project expenses
- Estimated in-kind income for project
- Estimated Secured Income to date (progress towards achieving required match)
- Estimated Pending project income to date (requests submitted/under review by funder)
- Estimated Planned project income to date (upcoming requests)

NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

Review Criteria Category	Relevant Questions in LOI	Relevant Questions in Application
Potential for impact on visitor spend and employment (0 to 12 points available)	**Project Description**: Describe the project and the expected impact on the state. Make the case for how it will reach the grant program goal of extending the visitor season, increasing visitor spend and opportunities for year-round employment. (3,000 character limit)	**Measures of Success**: How will visitor spending and opportunities for year-round employment change as a result of your project and how will you measure that change? (3,000 character limit)
Value of Travel Oregon funding (0 to 6 points available)	**Scale of Request**: The Oregon Tourism Commission will determine the award amount applicants are invited to ask for. To aid in that decision, explain how you would leverage funds from Travel Oregon to enhance the project. (3,000 character limit)	**Fund Usage**: Describe how your organization would use grant funds from Travel Oregon to support this project. Specifically, what would grant funds be used to pay for? (3,000 character limit)

Review Criteria Category	Relevant Questions in LOI	Relevant Questions in Application
Viability of project (0 to 6 points available)	Non-Narrative Financial Questions	**Timeline**: Using reporting dates outlined in the grant guidelines, identify key project milestones for completing the work, including timing for any public-facing components. Highlight any potential issues to the timeline that could impact project completion by September 22, 2028. (3,000 character limit)
Readiness of project to launch/implement (0 to 6 points available)	Project Description (above) **Research**: How are you defining your extended season and how do you know that your project will help extend it, increase visitor spending and promote job creation? (3,000 character limit)	**Partners**: Who are the partners involved in this project and what role will they play in helping it be successful? (3,000 character limit)
Destination Stewardship balance (0 to 6 points available)	Not evaluated at this stage	**Destination Stewardship**: How does your project consider the experiences of both visitors and community members? (3,000 character limit)

Environmental Considerations: What elements of your project are sustainable or regenerative, contributing to increasing respect for the natural environment (in alignment with Travel Oregon's organizational objectives)? (3,000 character limit) |
| Visitor experience and community support (0 to 6 points available) | Not evaluated at this stage | **Communities Impacted**: Which communities (geographic or demographic) will be most impacted by this project? How has the project design taken their input into account to minimize negative and maximize positive impact? (3,000 character limit) Letters of Support |

*3,000 characters equal approximately 500 words.

Photo on cover page: The majestic rock formations of Smith Rock State Park. Credit: Gritchelle Fallesgon.