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Gov. Evers Announces \$8 Million TRAVEL Grants Program for Tourism Industry

Grant application period open for tourism promotion and development organizations to support tourism operations, marketing impacted by COVID-19

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers and Tourism Secretary-designee Sara Meaney today announced the launch of the Tourism Relief to Accelerate Vitality and Economic Lift (TRAVEL) stimulus grant program. This \$8 million effort is aimed at providing much-needed support to the tourism industry. Administered by the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, TRAVEL grants will be distributed to Wisconsin's tourism promotion and tourism development organizations for the purposes of resuming business operations and helping restore economic activity stemming from the COVID-19 public health emergency.

"The tourism industry is among the hardest hit by COVID-19," said Gov. Evers. "The TRAVEL grants are designed to sustain local operations, staffing, and relief stimulus activities to drive immediate spending and reinforce safe travel in support of local businesses across the state."

Two types of grant funding will be available through the TRAVEL grants: funds to support the continuation of operations due to impacts of COVID-19 and marketing funds to promote a safe and healthy experience for travelers and resident consumers amid the COVID-19 public health emergency. Tourism promotion and tourism development organizations can apply for one or both types of grant funding. Long-term marketing campaigns unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic are not eligible.

This effort is funded through the state's discretionary Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act dollars. Full program details, eligibility standards, grant application, and program contact information are available [here](#). The Department of Tourism is accepting applications now through 4:00 pm Central Time on September 28, 2020 and grants will be announced by late October.

"We're thankful to Governor Evers for allocating CARES Act funding to this much needed TRAVEL grant program," said Secretary-designee Meaney. "While these grants will provide immediate opportunities to sustain the important economic development activities of tourism organizations, they will also fuel Wisconsin's economic recovery in every sector that tourism touches."

Tourism is an important pillar of Wisconsin's economy and the industry saw its biggest year on record in 2019. Over 113.2 million visits statewide generated an estimated \$22.2 billion, including \$1.6 billion in state and local tax revenue. The tourism industry supports 202,217 full- and part-time jobs in Wisconsin and last year, the state achieved a return on investment of \$8 in tax revenue per \$1 promotional spend. While this data underscores that tourism is one of Wisconsin's most financially valuable industries, the impact of tourism advancement activities upon Wisconsin's economy stretches well beyond the tourism industry. The halo effect of tourism's advertising and attraction of travelers is a significant asset in recruiting entrepreneurs, workers, students, retirees, and investors.

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