



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
JB Pritzker, Governor

Contact:

Charity Greene,
charity.greene@illinois.gov

The Illinois Office of Tourism Announces Tourism Grant Recipients

CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO), Office of Tourism, is pleased to announce funding for two grant programs designed to increase tourism across the state. The grants, which haven't been awarded since 2015, will help bolster the state's tourism industry which generated over \$3 billion in tax revenue for state and local communities last year.

The **Tourism Attraction Grant Program** will help develop new or enhance existing tourism attractions to grow visitation and overnight stays in Illinois. DCEO provided grant funding to 13 organizations in the amount of \$1.4 million. There was significant demand for this grant program, receiving four times the number of requests than available funding. The **Tourism Private Sector Grant Program** will help attract major new events to the state or significantly enhance existing events to increase visitation. DCEO provided grant funding to four applicants in the amount of \$402,160.

"Travel and tourism in Illinois is a \$40 billion industry and we are glad to support our communities in their efforts to attract new and returning visitors to their attractions," said Erin Guthrie, Acting Director of the Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO). "We are glad DCEO can support the tourism economy in local communities with these grant programs."

"Developing new attractions and events is necessary to attract new audiences to visit Illinois. These grants will result in increased visitor spending in local communities, generating revenue and creating jobs for Illinoisans." said Jan Kemmerling, Acting Deputy Director of the Illinois Office of Tourism.

Below is a list of grant recipients from the two grant programs.

Tourism Private Sector Grant Recipients

DuPage Convention & Visitors Bureau: \$100,000

United States Bowling Congress (USBC) Women's Championships 2021 has selected DuPage County Convention & Visitors Bureau (DCVB) and Stardust Bowl of Addison to host this annual event. Per the agreement, USBC requires a bid fee of \$200,000. In partnership with the County of DuPage and several key municipal partners, the DCVB has raised \$100,000.

Chicagoland Speedway: \$200,000

The Ultimate Summer NASCAR Festival Weekend (June 27-30), has been enhanced to include a new carnival, pit bike motocross national, headline musical entertainment and professionally judged barbeque competition to increase attendance for race weekend and sell more multi-day tickets.

The Farnsworth House: \$10,360

The Farnsworth House will use the grant to develop and support new programming enabling its participation in the Bauhaus100 Centennial - an international celebration of the ongoing legacy of the influential German design and architecture school. Programming will include new exhibitions and related public events, appealing to a wide audience, attracting more visitors and increasing tourist traffic in the Yorkville region.

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau: \$91,800

CRE8IV: transformational ART, is a new mural festival, May 15-19, at various locations in downtown Rockford. CRE8IV (pronounced "Creative") is a community-building, arts-infused event. Over the course of the festival, eight lead artists will work with teams of artists to create eight large-scale murals in Rockford's central city. Each day the festival includes a free-to-attend Block pARTy at one of the mural locations.

Tourism Attraction Grant Recipients

Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois: \$200,000

A new groundbreaking Virtual Reality Experience- Tours of Auschwitz, Mauthausen and Ebensee Concentration Camps with Holocaust Survivors – will open as a long-term exhibition in early 2020, offering an extraordinary tourism attraction. The Experience will feature two virtual reality films, each approximately 10-minutes long, providing personalized tours of the notorious Auschwitz, Mauthausen, and Ebensee Concentration Camps led by Holocaust Survivors Fritzie Fritzhall and George Brent. As Holocaust Survivors dwindle, these films will vividly preserve and enable sharing of Survivors experiences for generations.

Chicago Zoological Society: \$130,984.84

Four of the most heavily trafficked areas throughout Brookfield Zoo will receive WiFi coverage with the zoo's new WiFi expansion set to increase outdoor coverage by 90 percent to better accommodate visitors.

Chicagoland Speedway/Route 66 Raceway: \$122,500

After 20 years of operation and wear, it is essential that the Suite Tower and Roof Top at the Route 66 Raceway be renovated to continue driving existing fans as well as new fans to experience racing in a unique and authentic way. The Club 66, general suites, and Roof Top experiences will encourage event promoters to bring existing and new events to Will County and will entice fans to stay longer (more days) to increase overnight stays in the area.

Laurent House Foundation: \$250,000 (\$125,000 FY19 & \$125,000 FY20)

Laurent House is the only Frank Lloyd Wright designed home for a disabled client. Due to the nature of the historic home museum, it cannot serve as a Visitor Center, which limits the museums ability to expand and grow. This grant will allow the Foundation to purchase the adjacent residential home and surrounding 1.3 acres to build a Visitors Center and offer bus and visitor parking. The additional space will also accommodate offices, a tour staging area, gift shop, archival storage, library, accessible bathrooms and meeting area.

Bald Knob Cross of Peace, Inc.: \$53,071.50

Bald Knob Cross of Peace will construct a covered stage for annual and seasonal events; expand and resurface its parking area, add handicap accessible walking paths and purchase a handicap accessible free-standing telescope (binoculars). Bald Knob Cross stands 111 feet tall, overlooking the Shawnee National Forest and three states, Illinois, Kentucky and Missouri.

City of Joliet: \$250,000 (\$125,000 FY'19 & \$125,000 FY'20)

The City of Joliet will apply its grant award to improving the Old Joliet Prison Historic Site. Plans include converting a former guard house facility into a visitor's center, adding interpretive signage both inside and outside the prison, and new exterior lighting to highlight the architecture. The Old Joliet Prison attracts visitors from around the world.

Preservation of Egyptian Theatre, Inc.: \$200,000

A two-story building addition with restroom and concession improvements will enhance the visitor experience at the historic Egyptian Theater in DeKalb. Most importantly, installation of air conditioning will allow the theatre to remain open year-round with programming, and for the first time have a substantial positive economic and cultural impact on the community (prior to this HVAC improvement, the theatre closed during the summer months).

Canal Corridor Association: \$134,474

The historic I & M Canal Visitor Center will enhance the visitor experience along the I & M Canal State Trail through a system of bike rentals. These modest improvements will enhance the visitor experience substantially while visiting the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Area (IMCNHA). The improvements are based upon visitor requests along the I & M Canal Trails.

City of Aurora: \$43,131

The City of Aurora is making RiverEdge Park concert/festival site more accessible to those with special needs including ADA-certified accessible golf cars to transport people with disabilities from the parking area to the venue. The park hosts concerts, festivals, July 4th celebrations, and

marathons along the river. Approximately 900 people require ADA assistance while attending summer events at RiverEdge Park.

Timber Lake Playhouse: \$95,755.58

Timber Lake Playhouse will winterize its theatre to extend its theatre production season from May into December. This project will increase visitation and tourism expenditures by adding additional production weeks.

Champaign Park District/Virginia Theatre: \$50,000

The addition of modern "intelligent" theatrical lighting will allow the Virginia Theatre to host a greater number and variety of touring events attracting more patrons from across the state.

Western Illinois Tourism Council: \$13,285

Refurbishing seven kiosks along the Great River Road in Illinois and creating 22 replacement interpretive panels for Great River Road in Illinois kiosks. The Great River Road is one of Illinois' seven Scenic Byways and a National Scenic Byway. The route connects visitors directly with a multitude of attractions as it navigates over 550 miles along Illinois' western border. These improvements will provide visitors with welcoming and informational signage along the byway.

Abbey Ridge Brewery & Tap Room: \$106,798

The Abbey Ridge Brewery & Tap Room will be rebuilt after a fire completely destroyed the structure in 2017. Located along the Shawnee Hills Wine and Beer Trail, Abbey Ridge was the first microbrewery in a three-county region offering craft beer, wine and cocktails paired with unique food, entertainment and event options. Once rebuilt, Abbey Ridge will continue with beer making tours, and host events including weddings and themed dinners consistent with its old medieval décor. The new facility will be structured with an 11th century European facade similar to the French Monastery Abbey de Senanque where beer was brewed by monks.

For more information on the areas and events around Illinois visit www.EnjoyIllinois.com.

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The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents.