**Slide 1**

Into and Information

Welcome! My name is Staci Martin and I am the Partnership Marketing Grants Manager for Virginia Tourism Corporation. Today, we are going to cover information and how to apply for the Virginia Tourism Corporation Microbusiness Marketing Leverage Program.

We have completely revamped the Marketing Leverage Program application so if you have applied before, be sure to follow along so you understand the changes that we have made for this round.

However, before we get started with the presentation, I want to walk you through a variety of resources on Virginia Tourism Corporation’s tourism industry website: [www.vatc.org](http://www.vatc.org)

You can find information on our grant programs by clicking the Grants tab.

You can find information about our Traveler Profiles and Economic Impact Data by clicking the Research tab.

You can find information about how to request the Virginia is for Lovers logo on the Essentials tab.

You can find information on how to sign up to get listed on our traveler website virginia.org by clicking the Marketing tab and then clicking the Digital Marketing tab.

You can find information on the Drive Tourism state and regional plans by clicking Partnership Marketing then Drive Outdoor. The state and regional tourism plans have excellent info on the hub and spoke model of partnerships and marketing that are part of the Microbusiness Marketing Leverage Program

Be sure to bookmark those sites and look over them as you prepare your application.

So now let’s switch over to the Presentation on the program and how to apply.

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This program opens August 4 and closes September 20. No applications will be accepted after 5pm on September 20 and no mailed applications will be accepted. You must apply through the online portal.

The maximum award for this program is $5,000. Please remember that this is a reimbursement program. You need to submit invoices, screenshots of your marketing, and proof of payment for reimbursement. There are strict rules of what expenses are eligible for reimbursement and what information and logos must be in your marketing materials. Read the Terms and Conditions closely BEFORE you apply.

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For this program, we are focusing on small businesses and off-peak shoulder season travel. Small businesses with 20 or fewer full-time employees may apply. There is information in the Application Instructions on how to calculate your number of employees based on part-time and full-time hours. Examples of program that might qualify include promoting holiday shopping; promoting fall and spring paddling programs; promoting pumpkin patch and fall agritourism events; focusing on long weekend specials by partnering with lodging and restaurants.

This program is also open to organizations like Chambers of Commerce or Main Streets, but the application must focus on small businesses and/or off-peak shoulder season travel. Example of programs that might qualify could be a winter concert series, promoting holiday shopping downtown, promote fall and early spring travel, promoting spring break travel, etc.

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You can access the application starting August 4 at [www.vatc.org/grants](http://www.vatc.org/grants) and clicking the Microbusiness Marketing Leverage Grant link OR by visiting [www.vatc.org](http://www.vatc.org) clicking the grants tab and then clicking the Microbusiness Marketing Leverage Program.

No password will be required to access the application, but you will not be able to access the application portal until August 4.

It is critical that you read the FAQs, the instructions, and the Terms and Conditions. The Terms and Conditions are a legal document you will agree to at the end of the application and acknowledging the Terms and Conditions is required to submit your application.

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We have completely updated the application portal from past Marketing Leverage Program rounds. We have added some drop down boxes to help you focus your application on specific marketing requirements. In this application, you are limited to 7 line items in your in-kind marketing match plan and in your marketing plan. Think about how you want to spend funds between media outlets.

This program does require that 25% of your award be spend in an out-of-state market. This can be accomplished via digital marketing, social media paid boosts and ads, or by advertising in out-of-state print media. The choice is yours, but you must spend at least 25% of the award in an out-of-state market.

Out-of-state visitors are a critical part of Virginia’s tourism economy.

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The program closes September 20. We can not review applications before you submit. Because some businesses are already marketing their fall and spring events and programs, we are allowing a short lookback period if you earn an award. If you make ELIGIBLE expenditures between June 1, 2022 and May 31, 2023 you may submit them for reimbursement. However, I want to stress that they must be ELIGIBLE expenditures. The list of eligible and ineligible expenditures is in the program Terms and Conditions. We will notify you if you have earned an award in late October. Final reimbursement requests and final reports are due no later than August 31, 2022. You can focus your marketing efforts all in one month or you can stretch it out all the way to May 31, 2022. It is up to you and how you are building your marketing plan. However, all programs must be completed and closed out by August 31, 2022. A short one-page final report is required.

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Detailed instructions on the Applicant Information sections are contained in the program instructions document. Be sure to read over that information. You must include your Federal EIN or SS# in order to apply.

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New in the application is a drop-down box to select the type of business that you have. Select the choice that best fits the main aspect of your business. For instance, if you are a craft brewery that has a music stage, select Craft Beverage and do not select Venue.

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Be sure to decide who is the best contact for this grant program. Because these proposals often have proprietary information, we will only speak with the designated contact for your application. This is the person to which we would communicate award info, reimbursement info, etc. We can only change that point of contact in writing.

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In this section, you will list the amount of funding you are requesting from VTC. The maximum award is $5,000. You may request less.

You will also need to make sure your listing on Virginia.org is complete and copy and paste the url from your listing into the application.

We would also like you to list your social media and website information so we can engage with your channels.

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In the program focus section, we want you to select from the drop-down list which focus area best fits your application.

List your program start and end date. This could be as long as two-weeks if you want to make a major push into select markets over a short time period or this could be as long as 12 months where you are doing marketing every week or month.

Also include a robust detail description of your program. What are you trying to accomplish with this program and why is that important to your business or destination?

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Because out-of-state visitors are a critical part of our tourism economy, we are requiring that you target one out-of-state market from the drop-down list. You must allocate at least 25% of your requested award to an out-of-state market. These primary, secondary, and tertiary markets VTC is focusing on for economic recovery. Layering in your marketing in one of these markets will help drive visitation to Virginia.

Please note that Washington D.C. is listed as both an in-state and out-of-state market. Businesses located in Northern Virginia, Richmond and Hampton Roads should consider Washington D.C. to be an in-state market. Businesses in Southwest Virginia and far Southwest Virginia can consider Washington D.C. to be an out-of-state market.

Your out-of-state expenditure can be digital, social or print.

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For the In-State Target Market, you will select one in-state target from the drop-down list of major metro areas in Virginia. The balance of your marketing plan should be spent targeting one of these markets.

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For the hub & spoke section, list your business as the hub or lure. Then identify three additional businesses or organizations that you can partner with on marketing.

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The In-Kind Marketing Match section is where you will list your in-kind match. You must review the Terms and Conditions document to know what kind of marketing expenses can count as in-kind match. There is specific information in the instructions on how to value your social media followers and how to value editorial coverage. This program requires a 1:1 match so you must list AT LEAST $5,000 in in-kind match to qualify for a $5,000 award. You can list more than $5,000 in in-kind match.

There are only 7 line items in this section so carefully select which items you want counted as in-kind match.

List when these marketing items occurred, the value amount, and a brief description. For instance, if you got a half page editorial in a travel magazine in June, you could list that as in-kind match. List the magazine name; list the date the story ran; find out the advertising equivalency rate for that much space in the magazine then list that amount as the value. The provide a brief description of the article.

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The marketing plan section is where you will list eligible marketing expenses for which you are seeking reimbursement from VTC. Be sur to review the list of eligible expenses in the Terms and Conditions (I know I’ve said that at least 10 times in the last 10 minutes, but I can’t stress this enough. Read the Terms and Conditions and have it next to you as you develop your marketing plan!)

Be sure to include placement/promotion dates, amount of the marketing expense, and a robust description of the line item including media outlet name, targeted audience, etc.

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The Performance Measures section is critical to measuring the success of your marketing efforts. Select from the drop-down list two performance measures that you can easily track. Enter where you are at today and where you want to be in May 2023. These numbers will be part of your final report.

You can find revenue data for various Virginia localities on the VTC Research page on [www.vatc.org](http://www.vatc.org); you can use data from your businesses, visitor counts to events, ticket sales. The choice is yours, but make sure it connects with your business or destination and is easy to track.

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There are two questions in the Performance Measures section related to jobs, operating hours, and seasonal operations. Be sure to answer those two questions in detail so we can better understand the impact these funds will have on your operations.

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The Bonus section is an opportunity for you to share ways that you will partner with VTC to move the needle on visitation. Select the items from the drop-down box that are doing and give a description of each item. There are up to 5 bonus points available.

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You must accept the Terms and Conditions of this program to submit your application. After submitting, you will be emailed a pdf copy of your application. No changes can be made after submission.

We will not review any applications until all are submitted. Scoring will begin in late September and continue through late October.

Your will be notified via email if your award status.

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For any questions, please email our central mailbox [VTCMLPGrant@virginia.org](mailto:VTCMLPGrant@virginia.org). We have three staff members monitoring this mailbox. With summer vacations and staff leave time, please use this central email so that we can answer your questions as quickly as possible.

Be sure to review the FAQs document before submitting a question via email. We will be updating that document on a regular basis throughout the application period.