Hello DMOs---

In this webinar I am going to go over the DMO Marketing Program and how to maximize your scoring potential. But first, for those that are viewing this and might not know what a DMO is, I’ll explain since this program is ONLY open to officially recognized DMO who have been listed by December 31, 2022.

A DMO is a destination marketing organization that is designated by a locality or several localities and VTC to manage tourism marketing and tourism development in a locality or region. Becoming a DMO requires legislation at the local level and extensive review by VTC at the state level.

If you are interested in your organization becoming a DMO, please visit our website [www.vatc.org](http://www.vatc.org) for more information.

So if you do not represent a DMO that has been officially recognized by VTC by December 31, 2022, you may not want to take the time to review this webinar since you would not be eligible for this program. However, your organization may be eligible for the other program we have open—the Marketing Leverage Program and the Special Events and Festival Sponsorship Program.

Open vatc.org/grants

So, hello again officially recognized DMOs. This is a small competitive round consisting of only the 135 or so officially recognized DMOs in the Commonwealth. However, it is still a competitive round so be sure to take your time with the application and please remember there are some new questions and a new application format.

Talk about competition DMOs are eligible for all three programs that are open. The DMO Marketing program, the Marketing Leverage Program, and the Special Events and Festival Sponsorship Program. Those other programs will have a separate webinar.

You’ll start your application process on this page [www.vatc.org/grants](http://www.vatc.org/grants). You’ll click on the DMO Marketing Program and it will bring you to a new page.

It will not be password protected when you access it. To start you application, you will simply scroll down and start filling it out. But wait---don’t just dive right in!!

Mouse over right-side bar

On the right hand side bar are three documents that you’ll want to print out and read.

The first is a Guidance document. This has detailed instructions for filling out the application and it has an application template. You can type your answers into this word document then copy and paste them over to the online portal when you are ready to apply. The second is the program Terms and Conditions and the third is the FAQs document. FAQs will be updated every Tuesday during the grant round as we get questions into our email boxes.

There are some changes compared to the 2022 round.

First off, this is still a 50% cash or in-kind match program. You will find in the instructions document information on how to value your in-kind match. Essentially social media followers, shares, and website clicks can be valued at 10cents each. This is a standard established by Forbes magazine on the value of followers, shares, and clicks.

Documentation of match is not required, but you do have to attest to the truth of your match when you submit.

The maximum award is $20,000. You don’t have to request the maximum. It all depends on your organizations budget and cash flow since this is a reimbursement program.

Scroll through application

Information Section

So, this time we are asking for secondary contact at the DMO. As you know we are seeing some turnover in staff and so to ensure continuity of the program please give us a second contact. If you are very small DMO managed by a locality, use your County Manager or Finance Officer as the second contact.

Then we still request that insurance information if you are doing events outside the scope of your normal operations. VTC needs to be added as a “interested party’ to your event liability insurance if events are not covered by your regular liability insurance. You can use up to 10% of you award for insurance policy fees.

We are asking for social media account info which we will provide to VTC’s content and marketing teams.

Program Marketing Goals Section

In the Program Marketing Goals section we need you to pick the focus category that best fits your campaign. This is so we can easily find program types when we are looking for content opportunities. We’ve expanded these selections. Please do you best to select the one best category.

In the next section, you will name your program. Please select a creative name and not the name of your DMO and not your name. Our computer system is aging and it gets easily confused. We are working on modernizing our software and we hope to have that in place by 2024. More on that this summer.

There is a new question about diversity and accessibility. It isn’t required to market to those constituent groups, but we do encourage you to think about it in your marketing plans.

Driving overnight visitation is critical for this program. It is actually backed by legislation that requires significant overnight economic impact. So these questions about overnight visitation and projected visitor types is critical.

As you think about estimating projected visitors, but think about the length of your marketing plan—take a look at your prior years/seasonal tax revenue and try to project based on prior year’s and what you think this program’s conversion rate will be. Estimates are perfectly fine. But don’t just enter something wildly inaccurate—we know a $40,000 marketing campaign probably won’t result in a million visitors.

Competition Section

For the competition section, think about your competition. Identify both your main in-state competition and your main out-of-state competition. We really want to be sure we are learning from our competition and maintaining competitiveness with other states. If you’ve been through any of the Drive programs, take a look at your responses and research from those applications. Tell us how these funds will help you be more competitive.

Hub & Spoke Section

We do want a full Hub & Spoke model for these applications. It really helps us see the marketing potential and helps use plan how much funding we may need to try to allocate for Drive programs and tourism development funding. Do not use general categories in your spokes—name the names of businesses. You will lose points if one of your spokes is generic such as “restaurants” or “lodging.” Name the business names. Joe’s Café or Riverside B&B.

**You will need letters of support from two partners. This is a change from the 2022 application.**

If your partners are not listed on Virginia.org yet---it can be done after you apply, but needs to be done before reimbursements will be processed. If your partners needs help with their listing, they can reach out to Robin Mamunes or they can reach out to their Destination Development Manager.

Target Markets

We changed up the Target Markets section. There is a drop-down box with the same markets VTC is targeting out-of-state and all the major metro areas in the state. There is also an option to pick “Other” and list a target market that is not on the drop-down list.

We aren’t requiring that you spend at least 25% on out-of-state marketing, but we are encouraging it and applications that do will score higher.

Remember this program needs to drive overnight visitation. Try not to allocate funding to in-market visitation---your marketing should really be focused on visitors at least 50 miles away if not further and out-of-state.

Marketing Plans

We updated this section to be more clear on what items are match and what items you will seek reimbursement for. These are still two separate tables, but we will be scoring the marketing plan section holistically.

You’ll create your in-kind match plan and then you’ll create a plan of the items for which you seek reimbursement from VTC. This is just a semantics change to help some of our new folks and new businesses understand match and reimbursement.

We put in some guidelines to follow when calculating your in-kind owned and earned media match.

Use the plus button to add lines to your marketing plan. You are encouraged to list more than the minimum 50% match.

I also included examples of how detailed we would like your marketing plans to be. Being detailed will help you score higher and will help us make comparisons if you need to request changes to your marketing plan.

Remember certain categories of expenses like insurance, music licensing fees, promotional items, and AV rentals only have a 10% of requested award maximum allowance. Double check to make sure you aren’t going over that allowable amount. If you are only awarded a partial award, then your marketing plan allowance for those items would also be reduced.

Please double check your totals in the web portal. Sometimes you will need to tab back through your application to get the auto-sum features to update the total if you change any of your line items.

Performance Outcomes

For the Performance Outcomes section, we want to pick two performance measures from the drop-down boxes.

New in this round is we want you to list your baseline for that measurement and the date you took that measurement. Then we want you to set a goal and that date that will you will measure that again.

I included an example in the instructions that will help you understand this change. This will help us make some comparisons to your final report and to make sure we are meeting our economic impact goals.

Bonus Section

For the last section of the application, you will do the Bonus Section. There is a drop-down box of choices, and you can also select “other” if you want to get super creative. There are up to five bonus points available.

We made these a bit more comprehensive in terms of merchandising, activating the Virginia is for Lovers brand on site and in the destination, and offering opportunities for content teams to capture photography and videography. Considering our limited staffing and the schedules of contracted writers, we won’t always be able to come out to activate these opportunities, but you will still receive bonus points for listing them.

The ”behind the scenes” opportunity is a new option and what that means is that there is something unique going on at your destination---like grape picking or wine bottling—something that would make for some really compelling photography.

Or maybe you are having an event or celebrity come to your destination. Let us know if there would be a “behind the scenes” opportunity for an exclusive interview.

Recognition of VTC as a sponsor of an event could be as simple as an announcement from the stage or as high tech as spotlights with the Virginia is for Lovers logo being projected onto nearby buildings.

We really want to find new and unique ways to activate our brand with yours so get creative in this section.

Checkbox and Submit

Finally, in the web portal, you will need to attest to the match is true and correct and that you have read the Terms and Conditions of the program. Remember, this is a reimbursement program so manage that cash flow and reimbursement carefully.

If you need to stop and start your application, you can bookmark the url at the top of your application and click Save so you can come back and add more information later.

The deadline for this program is 5pm on Tuesday, February 28, 2023. There are no exceptions to this deadline.

There is a technical assistance request box in the sidebar and that will trigger an email to the grants team to reach out to you via email.

Please feel free to reach out the me (Staci Martin), Angela Wiggins, or Noah Salaah ad-Deen. We are your grants management team, and we look forward to assisting you and reviewing your application. We are so excited about the 2023 travel season and value your partnership in tourism marketing and tourism development.

Thank you!