Hello Former, Current, and Future Virginia Tourism Partners,

In this webinar I am going to go over the Special Events and Festivals Sponsorship Program and how to maximize your scoring potential. This program is open to events that are a minimum of TWO CONSECUTIVE DAYS AND HAVE BEEN HELD AT LEAST TWICE SINCE 2017 AT THE SAME LOCATION AND UNDER THE SAME NAME.

If your event is a series that takes place over multiple months and/or is not consecutive days then it is not eligible for this program. The Marketing Leverage program would be a better fit.

If you are questioning your eligibility, you can email the Grants Team with any questions about eligibility. The grants team email for this program is VTCSEFPROGRAM@VIRGINIA.ORG

This is a very competitive program. Be sure to take your time with the application and please remember there are some new questions and a new application format this year.

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

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.

This is a 50% cash or in-kind match program. Match can be both production and marketing eligible expenses. Only eligible production and marketing expenses that have been invoiced and have documented proof of payment along with images, recordings or other evidence of placement will be eligible for reimbursement. This program does not allow for staff costs, equipment purchases, or most types of signage among other ineligible items. Be sure to thoroughly read the list of eligible and ineligible expenses in the Terms and Conditions document.

This is a reimbursement program so we encourage events to only apply for an award for which they can handle the cashflow with regards to spending and waiting for reimbursements. No funds will be available up-front.

The maximum award is $20,000. Events with 20,000 or fewer projected attendance qualify for up to $10,000. Events with 20,0001 or more projected attendance qualify for up to $20,000. You don’t have to request the maximum.

Scroll through application

Information Section

**The very first question we ask is if the event is listed on the state tourism website** [**www.virginia.org**](http://www.virginia.org)**. Listings are free.**

There is a link in the instructions document that will take you to the site with a webinar on how to set up an account and get your listing set up with photos. Try to do this before you apply. You must have a listing on Virginia.org to be eligible for reimbursement.

In the first part of the application we ask for some general information. For event/festival name this means the NAME of the EVENT or FESTIVAL not the Event organizer’s name. We must know the locality in which the event is being held for our economic impact and allocation formulas.

Please include the start and end date of your event or festival. Remember events must be at least two consecutive days and must have a history of being held two consecutive days.

If you had a one-day event that you are now expanding to two days in 2023 you will not qualify for the Special Events and Festivals Program. However, you would be eligible for the Marketing Leverage Program.

List your event history. Events must have been held at least twice since 2017. You must answer the questions about attendance years and attendance history in order to quality

Our programs are tracked by EIN or Social Security number if it is a sole proprietorship. Only ONE application per business/per EIN/per SSN is allowed. Applicants may only enter one event in this round. We will not consider multiple applications from the same EIN/SS# even if it is for different events.

We are asking for secondary contact for your application. As you know we are seeing some turnover in hospitality 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.

Remember this program is only open to Virginia event organizers and Virginia events.

Indicate your award request. The maximum is $20,000 for large event with over 20,001 attendees. Smaller events would apply for the $10,000 maximum award.

We request that VTC needs to be added as a “interested party’ to your event liability insurance or regular liability insurance. This is required for this program. You can use up to 10% of you award for insurance policy fees. If you do not yet have your insurance policies in place, answer no and we will send you reminders to submit your insurance information. If you do not get event liability insurance before your event with VTC listed as an interested party, you will be disqualified from reimbursements.

We strongly recommend that event organizers purchase event cancellation insurance. The types of policies can provide compensation should your event be cancelled which will allow you to recoup some revenue and continue the event later in the year or in 2024. You are permitted a 10% of award allowance for insurance.

We are asking for the social media account info for the event 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 event. This is so we can easily find program types when we are looking for content opportunities. We’ve expanded these selections. Please do your best to select the one best category.

We want you to describe your event marketing plans—what’s different this year, who are you targeting, are you targeting new markets, new demographics?

The Special Events and Festivals Sponsorship Programs allows from program dates no earlier than August 1, 2022 and not later than October, 2024. That means that if you get an award and had some expenses prior to mid-April when we make award announcements you can use those expenses in either your match plan or your reimbursement plan.

Programs end no later than 30 days after the event date. We understand some applicants may placed thank you ad to sponsor after an event. However, all expenses must be wrapped up and invoiced within 30 days after the event. Final reports are due 60 days after the event.

Tell us how these funds will enhance your normal marketing budget. Our funds are designed not to replace your marketing budget but to help you stretch your dollars to target new markets and new audiences.

Driving overnight visitation is critical for this program. It is actually backed by legislation that requires significant overnight economic impact.

Make projected estimates of your event attendance based on visitor type. We need to know the # of out-of-state visitors, # of out-of-region visitors, and the # of daytrippers to the event. Total that number and that is the projected attendance. We will be looking at prior event history. Doubling your attendance from one year to the next is not a reasonable projection. Be mindful that you aren’t inflating attendance numbers to try to get to the higher award tier.

Tell us how you arrived at those projections and the data you used such as prior ticketing reports.

Visitor Experience Section

The visitor experience section is new. We want you to fully explain the visitor activities for each day of your event or festival. Tell us how this funds will allow you to expand the festival footprint or increase event/festival capacity. Tell us if you event or festival support small business and artisans with a vendor market area or food truck area. And then tell us how these funds will help you marketing to new audiences or improve accessibility at the event.

Then we get to the DMO question. If you are new to the tourism industry, I’ll explain what a DMO is. 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.

Hub & Spoke Section

We want a modified Hub & Spoke model for these applications. The Hub & Spoke graphic will not show up in the application portal, but I included the circle and spokes here so you can visualize how the model helps build an itinerary around your event.

We want you to name three partners that will be involved in cross-marketing your event. This could be vendors, the local tourism office, the locality, or other tourism-oriented businesses in the destination.

It really helps us see the marketing potential of your eventwhen you list partners who you will cooperatively market with and list the spokes who might also join in your marketing program. 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.

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.

Target Markets

We changed up the Target Markets section from the Fall 2022 Microbusiness application. 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. You need to pick at least two target markets, but you can select three. 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 away and out-of-state.

**Marketing and Production Plans (30 points)**

**Your marketing and production plan is a critical component of your application. Please be sure to reference the Terms and Conditions of this program for a list of eligible and ineligible marketing and production expenses. *The list of eligible expenses is driven by legislation.* There are no exceptions**

**This section has four parts:**

1. **Cash and/or In-Kind Match Marketing Plan**
2. **Cash and/or In-Kind Match Production Plan**
3. **VTC Reimbursable Marketing Plan (must be at least 50% of requested award)**
4. **VTC Reimbursable Production Plan (may not be more than 50% of requested award)**

**VTC recommends that you research the VTC Co-op Industry Advertising Plan that provides some discounts with certain publications. Information on those opportunities can be found at:** [**https://vatc.org/marketing/advertising/partneradvertising/**](https://vatc.org/marketing/advertising/partneradvertising/)

**You may also want to research special event and festival advertising opportunities through the PMAP/Welcome Center program managed by VTC. You can find information on those opportunities here:** [**www.welcomeva.com**](http://www.welcomeva.com)

**Be sure to indicate the name of the vendor, such as Facebook/Meta or Instagram/Meta or Joe’s Tent Rentals or Jane’s AV services in your marketing plan. If you don’t yet know the name of the vendor, such as an event insurance policy underwriter, then please describe the vendor/business type in that column.**

**This program allows for both in-kind and cash match.**

**For cash marketing and production match, simply list the vendor, items/target demographics if applicable, date, and projected dollar value**

**For in-kind marketing match, the following criteria applies:**

**Only eligible marketing expenses listed in the Terms and Conditions can be counted as in-kind marketing match.**

**Value social media followers at 10c each.**

**Value social media click/shares at 10c each for posts.**

**Value earned media, such as editorial in magazines, mentions in broadcast TV/radio, and online articles, at the advertising equivalency value.**

**Value owned media based web analytics with clicks/visits counting as 10c each.**

**Be sure to fully explain the owned and earned media assets in the marketing plan, including any weblinks and be sure to fully explain how you arrived at the in-kind match value**

**For in-kind production match, the following criteria applies:**

**Only eligible production expenses listed in the Terms and Conditions can be counted as in-kind production match. Absolutely no staff time, security or EMT costs can count as production match. Signage is not eligible. However, banners are eligible under the promotional items allowance.**

**For donated costs, such as donated tent rentals or a performer waiving fees, list the vendor, items, dates, and projected dollar value of the donated item or service.**

We encourage you to look at the Virginia Tourism Industry Marketing Plan that offers discounts with some major advertising channels and we encourage to look at our PMAP Welcome Center marketing program where you can have your rack cards hosted at the Welcome Centers and safety rest areas across the state.

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.

Detailed information on allowable marketing and production expenses and expenditure limits are listed in the Terms and Condition document. Information about the requirement to use the Virginia is for Lovers logo and links in your advertising is also included in the Terms and Conditions documents. Only marketing materials that have the logo and/or link are eligible for reimbursement.

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.

Please review the examples provided and make sure you are very detailed in your marketing and production plans.

You will use the PLUS button to add lines to your marketing and production plans.

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 the last time your held the festival or event and then the goal for this year’s festival or event. Your final actual numbers will be part of your final report. We do not clawback funding if your event does not reach its target goals. But we need accurate information to measure our projected and actual economic impact from these programs.

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 at the event 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 the event. For instance, if you are having a hot air balloon festival and an air pilot is willing to take up a Virginia is for Lovers photographer or contracted photographer list that opportunity.

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.

Please note we not have staffing to activate every opportunity you list for your event. You will still receive points for listing it and we will reach out before our event on which aspects we may want to activate to see if the opportunity is still available.

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. You can use up to 10% of the your award for Virginia is for Lovers banners or other promotional items.

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!