



# VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS®

**VIRGINIA 250 TOURISM MARKETING PROGRAM**

**Spring 2025 FUNDING CYCLE**

**OPEN TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2025, 9 A.M.**

**CLOSE THURSDAY, APRIL 24, 2025, 5 P.M.**

**Award Notifications: mid-June 2025**

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➤ **MAXIMUM AWARD AMOUNT \$10,000**

**PLEASE READ ENTIRE DOCUMENT BEFORE BEGINNING THIS APPLICATION**

The Virginia 250 Commission was created by the General Assembly to plan, develop, and carry out programs and activities to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the United States of America.

The purpose of the Virginia 250 Tourism Marketing Program - administered by the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) - is to assist Virginia communities and related sites to market commemorative events, locations, and destinations related to 250 years of American democracy, including themes related to history, freedom, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

This objective can be accomplished through actions including the following:

- Encouraging and stimulating investment by combined efforts of local, regional, and statewide entities for Virginia 250 cultural marketing initiatives
- Marketing Virginia as a year-round travel destination for individuals and groups
- Marketing the historical and cultural attractions of Virginia to international travelers and out-of-state visitors

**Proposed events or projects must support and further the Commission's established programs, commemoration themes, and goals which can be found in the VA250 Commission's Toolkit.**

**Access the toolkit here:**

**Digital toolkit:** <https://live.standards.site/va250-toolkit/>

**Password:** USAVA1776

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

**1. Partnership is the most important element of this grant program.** A minimum of three Virginia entities must partner financially to apply for funding consideration. One partner must serve as lead partner and can be an official VA250 committee, historic site, or museum, who will administer the project. Partners may consist of Virginia towns, cities, counties, convention and visitors' bureaus, chambers of commerce, other local or regional destination marketing organizations (DMO), private businesses, attractions, cultural events, and other tourism-related entities. An entity that may function, whether directly or indirectly, as a vendor of services for the project, is not permitted to be a partner in the application. A vendor is defined as a paid service provider as part of your marketing plan.

Programs that are regional in scope are encouraged. If you have non-Virginia partners, you **MUST** have a minimum of three **Virginia** financial partners, one of which must be a Virginia officially recognized VA250 committee. In addition, your program must be located in Virginia and encourage visitation to Virginia.

Applicants must be an official VA250 certified committee or museum, or historic site acting on behalf of the VA250 Committee. Information on how to become an official VA250 certified committee and a sample resolution is available at: [www.va250.org](http://www.va250.org)

**2. Application must be accompanied by a support letter from each Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)** within the project coverage area and a letter of support from the VA250 Committee if the Committee is not also the DMO. Application partnerships with DMOs are encouraged. (For a list of DMOs, see [https://vatc.org/business-directory/wpbdp\\_category/dmo/](https://vatc.org/business-directory/wpbdp_category/dmo/)) In the absence of a DMO, the highest-ranking local government official should provide support letter.

**3. Grantees must use the VA250 Commission and Virginia is for Lovers logo** and display the VA250 Commission's website ([www.va250.org](http://www.va250.org)) and Virginia Tourism Corporation's website ([www.virginia.org](http://www.virginia.org)) on all marketing materials for grant funded projects.

**All project partners must register**, create a listing, and add all local VA250 related events to the statewide calendar available at [www.va250.org](http://www.va250.org), as well as provide a reciprocal link from their websites to [www.va250.org](http://www.va250.org)

**4. Applicants may apply for only one project per funding cycle.** All applications must be for new initiatives. Projects that are regional in scope will be given preference.

**5. Application must include a detailed marketing plan.** This plan will state specific media placements, timelines, and costs. The Marketing Plan section of the application must be detailed. Projects that involve the production of printed brochures, websites or other visual materials must include the date of printing and publication quantity.

**6. Application must provide clearly stated performance measures.** A detailed plan to measure effectiveness of the proposed project must be included in the application. The plan must clearly

state expectations, targets, outcomes, and progress of the project, and how that information will be measured and reported to the VA250 Commission and Virginia Tourism Corporation.

**7. Application should describe a sustainability mechanism** for any project that will continue after the funding cycle, as well as plans for funding project in case full funding is not awarded.

**8. Applicants may apply for up to \$10,000 with a 1:1 cash match required.** *No in-kind goods or services can be used as match UNLESS the applicant is in a federally designated Economic Development District (EDD's). A full list of EDD's can be found [HERE](#). In-Kind match guidelines can be found in the application instructions document. Only In-kind marketing after April 1, 2024 may be counted. (See page 7 for more details)* **Proposed** use of Commission/VTC funds must be clearly specified in the application. Minimum partner financial commitment is \$250.

**9. Applications are scored on a merit scale** based on the VA250 Tourism Marketing Program Scoring Guidelines in this packet (Page 8). Incomplete applications will receive low scores and will not be funded. The award may not equal the full amount requested.

**10. In awarding grants, the VA250 Commission and Virginia Tourism Corporation may consider** such factors as type and scope of proposed project; applicant and partner resources; campaign audience and message; timetable; past applications from - and awards to - applying organizations; impact, priority, and merit of proposed project; and applicant's ability to increase and track overnight stays and visitor revenue in project coverage area. Other considerations may include availability of funds and the number and dollar amount of applications received.

**11. Funds will be disbursed upon a reimbursement basis** upon receipt by Virginia Tourism Corporation of copies of vendor invoices showing the actual costs and proof of payment of invoices. In addition, documentation is required of product or ad campaign (tear sheets, examples of print materials, copies of audio or video tapes, etc.), and/or screen captures and active web addresses for website related projects.

**12. Applicants are encouraged to seek services through a competitive bid process** and are encouraged to utilize SWaM (Small, Women, and Minority-Owned Business) vendors when possible. For more information, please visit <https://www.sbsd.virginia.gov/>.

**13. All projects must be completed within 18 months** of the award notification date. A final report must be submitted to the Virginia Tourism Corporation at the end of the project and no later than 60 days after completion, detailing the results of the project, including return on investment, performance measure outcomes, and other supporting data.

### **Eligible activities include the following:**

1. Interpretive Markers that interpret and draw visitors to sites of significance to the quest for freedom for all, whether on the battlefield or home front. A draft of the marker text will need to be submitted with your application. In addition, narrative on how the

availability of the interpretive marker will be marketed to the public, along with a marketing plan, must be included. Applicants are encouraged to explore opportunities and interpretive signage projects that include the Road to Revolution Trail interpretive markers. An application for a project that features the Road to Revolution interpretive markers must be endorsed by Drew Gruber, Executive Director, Civil War Trails, Inc. (Contact: 757-378-5462 or Virginia Civil War Trails, PO Box 1862, Williamsburg, VA 23187). This endorsement must be indicated in your program description, and proof of endorsement (signed letter) must be included with reimbursement requests for Virginia Road to Revolution markers. **Applications for interpretive markers only – with no marketing component – will not be approved.**

2. Marketing of lectures and exhibits that support the commemorative theme of the Commission's projects or annual Signature Event. (Note: creation and fabrication of the exhibit is NOT an allowable expense).
3. Print Materials – Travel-related print materials including brochures, rack cards, media kits, group tour publications, meeting planner publications and other print informational materials designed to promote the partner's area as a travel destination. \*NOTE: if using the VTC Welcome Center PMAP marketing program ([www.welcomeva.com](http://www.welcomeva.com)), indicate which welcome centers and safety rest area you are selecting for rack card distribution. Please include a brief description of the print material content in your marketing plan.
4. Placement of Advertisements – (print, radio, web, and television advertising). Ads must promote the area to visitors and highlight connections to the quest for freedom in America. Applicants are encouraged to incorporate the Virginia Tourism Corporation's Partnership Advertising Opportunities. More information on VTC Advertising Opportunities can be found at <http://www.vatc.org/marketing/advertising/partneradvertising/>.
5. Website Development – Development of a website to promote the applicant's area is eligible. Maintenance fees for a website are NOT eligible. Websites must include the "VA250" logo and the "VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS" logo and must provide a reciprocal link to [www.va250.org](http://www.va250.org) and [www.virginia.org](http://www.virginia.org) from the partner's website. Website development programs must include a marketing mechanism and plan for promoting the awareness and availability of such websites. NOTE: Costs associated with programming of your current website to allow data share with Virginia.org is an eligible expense.
6. Travel and Trade Show Booth Rental/Participation Fees – Fees associated with registration at travel and trade shows are eligible. These include fees for placement of promotional materials at Virginia Welcome Centers. Travel expenses, including accommodations and transportation, are NOT eligible.
7. Fulfillment Costs – Fees associated with mailing collateral materials because of the marketing project are eligible.
8. Trade Show Displays – Design and production of display units that will be used in

conjunction with travel promotions at travel and tradeshow are eligible. Static displays that are onsite will NOT be an eligible expense.

9. Production of photography and video marketing materials:

- All photography and video marketing materials created using a VA250 grant should include usage rights for VA250 and VTC in perpetuity. You can secure those rights for the VA250 committee and Virginia Tourism corporation in one of two ways:
  - 1. When creating your for-hire contract, include language that allows you to transfer usage rights to partners. Not only is it a great way to maximize your marketing dollars, but it is a practice VTC has been implementing for years. It is what allows us to share our photo assets with partners like yourself.
    - For an example of the language we use in our contracts, see section 3 in our [licensing terms & conditions](#). Please feel free to copy and adapt this language for your own contracts.
  - 2. You can have the copyright owner complete our [photo & video release form](#). This MUST be completed by the copyright owner, not by the licensing entity.
- For information on planning your photo shoot, please see our [How to Plan a Photo Shoot](#) document. Here, we break down our planning process while giving recommendations and tips on maximizing your budget, staying organized, and considering the details.
  - Note: The cost of purchasing equipment for photographic and video production is NOT an eligible expense.
  - Note: The costs of food and other props during a photo shoot are NOT eligible expenses.
- High resolution photography and b-roll must be mailed with accompanying documents on a flash drive or portal hard drive to
  - Noah Salaah ad-Deen, Grants Manager, Virginia Tourism Corporation, 901 East Cary Street, Suite 901 Richmond, Virginia 23219.

10. The cost of music licensing fees for concerts, performances, or use in video content.

Music licensing fees may be up to 10% of your overall marketing budget. Examples of music licensing fees include fees charged by ASCAP, BMI, SESAC and other licensing companies.

11. The cost of event cancellation insurance and/or event liability insurance. Up to 10% of your overall marketing budget may be used for insurance policy costs. However, VTC must be added as an interested party to any event liability insurance policy AND a copy of the policy must be submitted for reimbursement. Event liability insurance is required

for applications that include events, meetings, or conventions outside your normal scope of business.

12. The cost of Audio-Visual equipment rental as part of hosting an event, meeting, or convention. Up to 10% of your overall marketing budget may be used for A/V equipment rental.
13. The cost of Wi-Fi Internet fees as part of hosting an event, meeting, or convention. Up to 10% of your overall marketing budget may be used to cover these costs.

**Ineligible activities, which will NOT be funded, include the following:**

1. Projects that do not contribute to increased visitation to the applicant's area and to Virginia.
2. Programs that promote and market cannabis will not qualify.
3. Costs, other than marketing, associated with any battle reenactment or other historic event re-enactment.
4. Operating or overhead expenses. Funds are to be used only for marketing purposes as stated in these guidelines and in the application.
5. Administrative expenses including office space, salary and personnel costs, office supplies, office equipment, normal office postage, and other administrative costs are not allowable expenses.
6. Travel expenses, including accommodations, transportation, are not allowable expenses.
7. Event start-up and production costs; however, marketing of events is an allowable expense.
8. Production of items such as books, art, music, etc. are NOT eligible expenses.
9. Costs of exhibit creation and construction is NOT an allowable expense; however, marketing of the exhibit is an allowable expense.
10. Costs of promotional items such as general merchandise, pens, pencils, t-shirts, etc.
11. Directional signage including yard signs, vehicle wraps, banners, and other local signage.
12. Website maintenance fees such as domain renewals, and monthly hosting fees.
13. Programs that focus on a tangible product's marketing (such as books, art prints, etc.) are NOT eligible expenses.
14. Sponsorship costs not directly related to marketing activities are NOT eligible expenses.

15. FAM/Media Tours costs associated with travel (transportation, lodging, meals, etc.) are NOT eligible expenses. Development of media kits and/or other collateral marketing materials are eligible expenses.
16. Programs that focus exclusively on a RESEARCH project, will not qualify. **SUCH APPLICATIONS MUST INCLUDE EXTENSIVE MARKETING INITIATIVES AND NOT JUST FOCUS ON RESEARCH.** The Research cost must be directly associated with the marketing program. Research costs not directly associated with the program are NOT eligible expenses.
17. Programs that focus exclusively on a BRANDING project will not qualify. **SUCH APPLICATIONS MUST INCLUDE EXTENSIVE MARKETING INITIATIVES AND NOT JUST FOCUS ON BRANDING.** The branding initiative must be directly associated with the marketing program. Branding costs not directly associated with the program are NOT eligible expenses.
18. The cost of purchasing computers/equipment/cameras (such as iPads, drones, lenses, Point of Sale devices, cameras, etc.) are NOT eligible expenses.

In-Kind Match Guidelines (*locality MUST be in an Economic Development District*)

- This section lists the match that you are spending or attesting to in order to meet the 1:1 match minimum requirement. These are not the items for which you would seek reimbursement. These are items that you have paid for or earned that you are listing as match for this program. The items for which you would seek reimbursement go in the next section. For items where you are splitting the cost between your match and your reimbursement line items, then you list them separately. Example: If you are spending \$10,000 on Facebook boosts, you can list \$5,000 in the cash in-kind match marketing plan section and \$5,000 in the reimbursable marketing plan section. You would only be reimbursed for the \$5,000 in the reimbursable marketing plan section.
- **Owned Media** is media you create and control. This could be your business blog, YouTube Channel, Instagram account, website, or Facebook page.
- **Earned Media** is when customers, the press, or the public share your content. This includes the advertising equivalent value of media coverage.
- **Paid Media** is when you pay for marketing, such as advertising through media outlets.
- You may have methods of determining the value of your Owned, Earned, and Paid Media. If so, then use those methods in estimating the value of your marketing media.
- Your match can exceed the 1:1 requirement. For instance, you may list \$10,000 in match for a \$5,000 requested award. The minimum match is 1:1.
- For owned media, you can count the number of site visits (use your web analytic tools) from **November 1, 2024 (lookback period)** onward at 10 cents each as in-kind match. You can count social media channel followers at 10 cents each. Look at your

Facebook and Instagram insights for this data. For instance, if you have 1,000 Facebook followers, your in-kind match for Facebook is \$100.

- For earned media, use advertising rate equivalency. For instance, if you have ¼ page of editorial in a publication and ¼ page of advertising in that publication costs \$100, you can count \$100 as in-kind match. You may only count earned media back to **November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 (lookback period).**
- For paid media/advertising and marketing costs that you have paid for list them as line items. If you paid \$100 for an ad in a publication, you could list that paid ad as match. You may only count paid media back to **November 1st, 2024 (lookback period).**

## **Scoring**

There are limited funds for this program, therefore funding will be awarded on a merit scale. Awarding of funding is based upon information contained in the application and will be scored based upon the VA250 Tourism Marketing Program guidelines. Since awards are determined from these scores, the application must be as complete as possible. Do not assume that the review team is familiar with your area, or program, so be sure to include all requested information. Actual award may or may not equal amount requested and is based on available funds at the time of award. Maximum award for this program is \$10,000. In making decisions on funding applications, the VA250 Commission and the Virginia Tourism Corporation may consider such factors as type and scope of the applying organizations, campaign audience and message, the organization's additional resources, past awards to – and applications from – the applying organizations, the impact and priority of the proposed program, the timetable, the number of applications received, the dollar amounts of the applications received and most importantly, the impact of the program's ability to drive visitation, and visitor revenue in the program coverage area.

**The following points are assigned to sections in determining your application score:**

<b>APPLICATION SECTION</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
Program Focus	20 points
Partnerships	15 points
Cash Match Marketing Plan	20 points
Marketing Plan	20 points
Performance Measures	20 points
BONUS - VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS Campaign Tie -in	5 points
<b>Total Possible Points</b>	<b>105 points</b>