



Ruston Lincoln Convention & Visitors Bureau
Destination Development Grants Program

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Destination Development Grants Program Overview

The Ruston Lincoln Convention & Visitors Bureau's mission is to grow Ruston & Lincoln Parish through tourism promotion and community connection. Our organization focuses on destination marketing, forming strategic partnerships, and investing in assets and activities that will ultimately boost economic growth as well as enhance the quality of life of our residents. We believe that by working cooperatively with other government and community organizations, groups, and individuals on projects large and small, we can expand our destination's offerings, drive visitation, stimulate further progress, and make a lasting impact on the visitor economy of Ruston & Lincoln Parish.

The primary purpose of the Destination Development Grant Program is to generate new visitor traffic in Ruston & Lincoln Parish. Additionally, this program aims to develop new tourism products, improve existing tourism assets, create new visitors experiences, and offer marketing assistance and support to events that will generate overnight visitation. This is a matching grant program and consists of three funding opportunities. These grants are exclusively used for tourism-related initiatives that help meet the mission of the CVB and drive overnight visitation to Ruston & Lincoln Parish.

Examples of appropriate projects include:

- Expansion or renovations for an existing attraction
- Construction of a new tourism attraction
- Creation of visitor-friendly experiences
- Cultural or historic tours/hands-on activities
- Acquiring public shows/exhibitions that are appealing to a large audience
- Beautification and revitalization initiatives for tourism-related space
- Multi-day events that will generate trackable overnight stays.

Below you will find an outline for each grant opportunity and information to help you decide which grant best aligns with your project.

- I. **Product Enhancement Grant:** This grant is available to public and non-profit organizations and groups who are creating, improving, or expanding a tourism asset, activity, or event. Grant amounts range from \$500 to \$4,999. This grant is to be matched at 30% by the applicant; matching funds must be secured prior to application.
- II. **Capital Improvement Grant:** This grant is available to public and non-profit organizations and groups with a new tourism-related project that is deemed significant. Grant amounts range from \$5,000 to \$100,000. This grant is to be

matched at 30% by the applicant; matching funds must be secured prior to application.

- III. Private Partnership Support Grant:** This funding opportunity is only available to privately funded entities and businesses. Grant amounts range from \$500-\$10,000. Grant allocation may not be more than 25% of the total project cost. This grant is to be matched at 50% by the applicant; matching funds must be secured prior to application. Only one application per person, entity, or business per calendar year will be considered.

The Destination Development Grants Program is intended to assist public, private, and non-profit sectors to bring desirable projects to completion. These grants should not be a project's only source of funding. These grants are not intended for general operating or overhead expenses or fundraising. Grant funds are awarded quarterly upon application approval from the CVB's Product Development Committee. Grant funds must be used within 12 months of when they are received.

The CVB Board of Directors may choose, at any time, to expend any amount of CVB grant funds within a grant cycle. The CVB Board of Directors retains the right to set the amount and criteria for each grant opportunity as it sees fit. If grant funding is not fully expended by the end of the calendar year, the funds may be returned to the CVB's general operating budget or otherwise dedicated at the Board of Directors discretion. For more specific information about each grant opportunity, please see the Application Guidelines. Additional questions should be directed to CVB President/CEO Amanda Carrier at acarrier@rustonlincoln.com.

Application Deadlines

First Quarter: Friday, March 29, 2024

~~Approved grant funds will be award after April 25, 2024.~~

Second Quarter: Friday, June 28, 2024

Approved grant funds will be award after July 25, 2024.

Third Quarter: Monday, September 30, 2024

Approved grant funds will be award after October 24, 2024.

Fourth Quarter: Friday, December 13, 2024

Approved grant funds will be award after December 26, 2024

Application Guidelines

The goal of the Destination Development Grant Program Product Enhancement Grant is to support projects, activities, and events that will generate economic growth through overnight visitation and expand the tourism offerings in Ruston & Lincoln Parish.

Those eligible for funding for the **Product Enhancement Grant** and **Capital Improvement Grant** are public or non-profit organizations or groups only. Those eligible for the **Private Partnership Support Grant** are privately funded entities and businesses only. All projects must begin within 12 months of the application submission with a well-defined timeline for completion.

Additional selection criteria includes:

- Applicant's commitment to expanding destination offerings
- Evidence that the project serves to generate visitor traffic
- Applicant obtaining additional funding sources
- Project is sustainable and marketable
- Project offers unique opportunities for programming/activities for residents and visitors
- Project is collaborative and showcase a desire to partner with other organizations and businesses.

Any fund awarded through the **Product Enhancement Grant** and **Capital Improvement Grant** can be used for expenditures for surveys and plans for revitalization or improvements on an existing tourism-related facility or attraction, and for costs associated with special projects deemed to be of community-wide interest. Funding cannot be used for operating expenses, fundraising, personnel expenses, travel, or similar overhead expenditures. Funding requested through this program should not be more than 70% of the total project budget. Applicants must be able to pledge 30% of the total project request in order to be considered. Matching funds must be secured prior to application.

Applicants can receive up to 75% of approved grant funds prior to the project completion pending approval from the Product Development Committee. The final 25% of funds will be distributed following project completion with a 30-day requirement to file a final report. Any need for special consideration of guidelines should be communicated at the time of application. The final report should include a final budget, summary of the project, as well as photos of the completed project. If applicant does not request via invoice the remaining funds within 12 months of the award date, the applicant forfeits their final 25% of funds.

Failure to comply with these guidelines, inaccurately representing the project, or making substantial changes to the project without prior approval may lead to the withdrawal or reduction of funding and will disqualify the applicant from future funding consideration.

Required Documentation

Product Enhancement Grant Application

- Projected budget for project
- Minimum two estimates/quotes from appropriately licensed builders
- Mockup or sample of the project design including the CVB's logo, website, or approved artwork as a design element **or** sample marketing materials and ads including the CVB's logo, website, or approved artwork
- Three letters of endorsement in support of this application.
- Copy of IRS letter specifying tax-exempt status
- Most recent financial audit or most recent year-end financial statement
- If applicable, a list of current board members

Capital Improvements Grant Application

- Projected budget for project
- Minimum two estimates/quotes from appropriately licensed builders
- Mockup or sample of the project design including the CVB's logo, website, or approved artwork as a design element **or** sample marketing materials and ads including the CVB's logo, website, or approved artwork
- Three letters of endorsement in support of this application.
- Copy of IRS letter specifying tax-exempt status
- Most recent financial audit or most recent year-end financial statement
- If applicable, a list of current board members

Private Partnership Support Application

- Projected budget for project
- Minimum two estimates/quotes from appropriately licensed builders
- Mockup or sample of the project design including the CVB's logo, website, or approved artwork as a design element **or** sample of marketing materials and ads including the CVB's logo, website, or approved artwork
- Three letters of endorsement in support of this application.
- Copy of certificate of good standing from the Secretary of State office or accreditation from the Better Business Bureau
- Copy of your current business license
- Copies of any additional certifications or accreditations conferred by state or national associations or governing bodies in your field of work.
- Copy of W-9 form

Destination Development Grants Application

Contact Information

Legal name of applicant/organization:

Address:

Phone:

Website:

State tax ID/tax exempt number:

Contact person:

Address:

Phone:

Email address:

Project Description

Name of project:

Project location:

Is your project new development of improvements to an existing facility or attraction?

Describe your project. Attach an additional sheet, if needed.

What is the timeline for your project? (Start to finish, including preparation time)

What is the total budget of your project. Please attach a budget with revenues and expenses by category.

What is the total amount of funding you are seeking?

List all other revenue you have secured for your project including source, amount, and payment status. Please note that matching funds of at least 30% are required.

How will you fund this project if you are not awarded the full amount requested or if the cost of the project increases?

How will you continue to fund and/or support this project in subsequent years without the aid of the CVB's grant program as a resource?

How will this project affect the tourism economy of Ruston & Lincoln Parish? How will this project increase overnight visitation?

How many visitors do you anticipate your project will draw over the course of one year?

Describe the experience of the primary contact or applicant organization in managing similar projects. Please attach any supporting documentation.

Estimated Community Impact

Does this project require tickets or charge admission or usage fees?

How will you track visitation resulting from the completion of this project?

Describe who will benefit from this project.

Describe the impact this project will have on the Ruston & Lincoln Parish community.

Provide an explanation for how you determine community impact. (e.g. impact calculator, research, case studies)

How do you intend to market and promote this project to reach visitors outside of Lincoln Parish? Please attach your marketing and/or sales plan.

Provide details of the target audience, geographic reach, promotional opportunities, campaigns, etc.

Is this project a collaboration with another organization or business? If yes, please explain.

APPLICANT’S STATEMENT OF AGREEMENT

By providing my name, initials and today’s date, I agree that everything I have stated in this application is correct and accurate to the best of my knowledge; I confirm that I have read and understand the Destination Development Grant Programs guidelines, expectations, and required materials; I understand that no amount of grant funding is guaranteed and that applications must be approved by the CVB President & CEO, CVB Product Development Committee, and CVB Board of Directors.

Applicant initials:

Date: