



## Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

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### **PRITZKER ADMINISTRATION LAUNCHES \$10 MILLION GRANTS PROGRAM TO SUPPORT NEW AND EXISTING TOURISM ATTRACTIONS AND FESTIVALS ACROSS ILLINOIS**

*New economic recovery program leverages ARPA funding to revitalize hard hit industry and boost tourism to the state*

SPRINGFIELD – Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO) today announced a new \$10 million grants program aimed at revitalizing the hard-hit tourism industry by bringing back new and returning tourism attractions and festivals to our state. The Tourism Attractions and Festivals Grant program is made possible with support of federal dollars from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and is part of a broader effort underway by the Pritzker administration to help reinvigorate tourism in Illinois and to put the industry on a path to economic recovery from COVID-19.

Through a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) issued today, tourism and festival businesses and entities can submit for grants of up to \$1 million that may be used to establish and enhance tourism attractions or festivals planned for this year or next. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until funds are depleted with awards made quarterly and the department will have the ability to fund applications most closely aligned to eligibility criteria approved for immediate funding. To view the NOFO, please visit <https://bit.ly/3fRxKgN>.

“From our state parks to our famous drives to our world-renowned restaurants, wineries, and architecture, Illinois has earned our status as a major international destination for business and leisure travel,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “In partnership with the General Assembly, I’ve built an expanded tourism recovery grants program to help more of Illinois’ communities reclaim their piece of the pie. We’re bringing visitors back into our communities, supporting our hospitality & entertainment businesses, and helping to return more Illinois residents to the job – another step toward getting our state back on track.”

The **Tourism Attraction and Festivals Grant program** will help develop new or enhance existing tourism attractions located across the state – including but not limited to museums, businesses, events, performances, and festivals. To maximize the impact of the program, DCEO will utilize ARPA federal recovery dollars to provide grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$1 million and will require a local match. The goal of the program is to attract additional visitors and overnight stays that will bring foot traffic back in communities across Illinois.

"Travel and tourism play a vital role in our Illinois economy, fueling hundreds of thousands of jobs and driving significant economic activity across our communities every year," **said Sylvia Garcia, Acting Director of the Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO)**. "To help the tourism industry with its continued recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Illinois has launched a new \$10 million program to help communities attract new and returning visitors to their attractions, events and festivals. Under Governor Pritzker's leadership, Illinois is focused on deploying resources to market the state and provide direct aid to tourism related businesses, which will boost spending, bring back jobs and keep Illinois front of mind as a top travel destination."

Eligible applicants include units of local government, municipalities, county, not-for-profit and for-profit organizations, or local promotions groups. The funds may be utilized for capital projects, equipment, training, transportation, housing, receptions, entertainment, photography, temporary housing, and interpretive programs, like exhibits and installations - to further develop new attractions and events to attract visitors to Illinois. In turn, these grants will result in increased visitor spending in local communities, generating revenue and creating jobs for Illinoisans.

"Illinois' travel and tourism industry is an enormous economic and brand driver for the state," **said Dave Herrell, Chair, Illinois Council of Convention and Visitor Bureaus (ICCVB)**. "This investment announced today will further possibilities for communities to leverage and invigorate their respective destinations and tourism marketing efforts. Illinois must remain competitive in both leisure and business travel and continue to add value for the state's visitor economy. These resources are yet another opportunity to enhance Illinois' assets, create jobs, and showcase the state."

Proposed attractions and festivals must demonstrate how this award will help businesses in the surrounding area and will be evaluated based on marketing value and ability to attract visitors for overnight stays. Projects will score higher based on proximity to commercial corridors and services - including hotels/motels, restaurants, retail, and other commercial operations. Attractions include but are not limited to: museums and cultural centers; theme/amusement parks; outdoor activities and recreation sites; and other facilities or businesses that attract or serve visitors.

"Tourism is vital for my district and many others across the state," **said Sen. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago), Chair of the Senate's Tourism and Hospitality Committee**. "This new program by the Pritzker Administration will provide a needed opportunity for communities to showcase the amazing festivals and attractions we have right here in Illinois. Our restaurants, hotels and small businesses are ready to safely welcome visitors back."

This additional support for the tourism industry follows on the launch of a new campaign earlier this year to reinvigorate the industry and to support convention and visitor bureau (CVB) partners in attracting visitors back into all areas across the state. "**Time for Me to Drive**," is the first new tourism campaign since COVID-19 hit last year and seizes on pent up travel demand - namely road trips--to encourage residents and visitors to enjoy Illinois' diverse communities and scenic landscapes safely. The campaign encompasses over 60 unique itineraries - more information can be found at the State's official tourism website, [enjoyillinois.com](http://enjoyillinois.com).

"With the leadership of Governor Pritzker and the General Assembly, Illinois is reviving and revitalizing our tourism industry," **said Rep. Lamont J. Robinson, Jr. (D-Chicago), Chair of the House Tourism Committee**. "The \$10 million in tourism recovery grants from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity will provide our diverse communities a springboard to attract visitors to experience Illinois' world-class museums, iconic festivals, and historic landmarks. My legislative

colleagues and I on the House Tourism Committee look forward to working with the Pritzker Administration to build a re-energized, re-imagined, 21st Century Illinois tourism industry."

A technical assistance webinar will be held on Wednesday, August 25, from 1 – 2 p.m. to explain application requirements, program eligibility and program guidelines. To sign up for the webinar, please visit [this link](#).

From the outset, the Pritzker administration has prioritized tourism as an industry hit hard and early by the pandemic, ensuring resources are available to offset their losses. Through the State's Business Interruption Grants (BIG) program, more than \$75 million in grants have been directed to tourism related businesses. This is on top of \$133 million provided to restaurants and bars – key tourism destinations in their own right – since the pandemic began.

For regular updates on funding opportunities and resources available for businesses and communities, please visit the DCEO website and follow us on social media [@IllinoisDCEO](#).

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