**Grand Island/ Hall County Convention and Visitors Bureau**

# The Visitor Improvement Fund is administered through the Grand Island/Hall County Convention and Visitors Bureau (GICVB) which was established by the Hall County Board of Supervisors under the authority of Neb. Rev. Stat. § 81-3716. The CVB is governed by a Visitor Promotion Committee. (VPC) As the official destination marketing organization for this community, the purpose of the GICVB is to grow the tourism economy in Hall County and identify the Grand Island area as a destination.

**Source of the Grant Funds:**

Grants are funded through Visitor Improvement Funds derived from a 2% occupancy tax on Hall County hotel properties. This is authorized under Neb. rev. stat. § 81-3716, meaning that people who stay in Hall County hotel properties for work and pleasure are helping keep Hall County a vibrant and attractive visitor destination.

**Purpose of the Grant Funds:**

The purpose of the Hall County Visitor Improvement Fund grant is to provide funding that creates new or improves existing visitor attractions and/or facilities within Hall County. The recipients of this grant should be owned by the public or any nonprofit organization as outlined in the Nebraska Visitors Development Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. §81-3701 through § 81-3724, *et seq.* (as amended from time to time).

**Use of the Grant Funds:**

Improvement Fund grants shall be used to improve the visitor attractions and facilities owned by the public or any non-profit organization in Hall County, except that no proceeds shall be used to improve a facility in which pari-mutuel wagering is conducted. Grant funding can be used for multiple-year improvement projects.

**Grant Priorities:**

The fund shall be used to make grants for expanding and improving facilities at any existing or new visitor attraction, acquiring or expanding exhibits for existing or new visitor attractions, constructing visitor attractions, or planning or developing such expansions, improvements, or construction. Projects with potential to increase visibility of and draw overnight guests to Hall County will be given priority consideration. Absent any viable improvement grant proposal, the Improvement Fund may be used for Visitor Promotion grants.

**Exclusions:**

* General operating expenses.
* For additional or current personnel or salaries.
* For general operating supplies or equipment.
* For general maintenance or replacement of an existing structural component in an existing facility.
* For items not mentioned or included in the approved grant application.
* Items purchased prior to the grant approval.
* Any manner that would violate the Nebraska Visitor Development Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. § 81-1245 through § 81-1263, *et seq.* All grants are discretionary, based upon available funds, other anticipated uses and appropriateness and anticipated effectiveness of proposed use.

**Matching Funds:**

A dollar match is not required in any amount or percentage. However, a grant application that includes matching funds will score higher in the evaluation process. In-kind contributions may be considered as part of a matching fund.

**Definitions:**

*Project Sponsor:* The primary entity involved in the project and who is ultimately responsible for its success.

*Project Partner(s):* Any other entities involved financially or programmatically in the project.

*Project Location:* Address where the project will be located. (May differ from the Project Sponsor address.)

*Government agencies:* List source(s) of income available, current revenue, appropriation and/or current levy and levy limit (if applicable). Provide current annual budget summary.

*Private not-for-profit organizations:* Provide operating budget for the current year and most recent Form 990 Tax Return.

**Minor Grant**:

Project sponsor fund requests shall not exceed $9,999 per grant year.

**Major Grants**:

Project sponsor fund requests of $10,000 or more per grant year are considered major grants.

Major Grants may include new construction and expansion of an existing attraction, and may include multi-year commitments. Major grant requests will need initial review by the committee, prior to the grant application deadline. Contact the GICVB Director to discuss the review process. A special meeting of the Visitor Promotion Committee can be called based on project and timeline if requested by the review committee.

**Grant Year Cycle** (January 1 – December 31)

Grants due to review committee October 14

Grants reviewed October

Grants awarded December

Final date for requesting grant reimbursements 12 months from project award date.

**Guidelines and Instructions:**

* Any visitor attraction in Hall County owned by the public or non-profit organization, whose primary purpose is to operate a visitor attraction, is eligible for fund allocation. Only one application from an entity will be accepted each grant year.
* Six (6) copies of the completed application **must be postmarked** on or before the application deadline date to be considered within that grant cycle.
* You will receive a letter of confirmation after your application has been received. Please fill out your application completely and use only the forms provided. (See below)
* Letters of support/endorsement are allowed. (limit of 5) Commitment letters from any project partners (if any) are required. The GICVB will only accept hard copy submissions of applications. Early submissions are welcome.
* Six (6) hard copy submissions should be mailed to:

Grand Island/Hall County Convention and Visitors Bureau

Attn: Grant Review Committee

2424 S. Locust Street, Ste. C

Grand Island, NE 68801

**Review Process:**

Grants are discretionary, and are based on available funds, other anticipated uses, and appropriateness and anticipated effectiveness of the accepted grant project. Furthermore, said project must continue to comply with the Nebraska Visitor Development Act.

The review committee will meet within 30 days after the deadlines listed in the Grant Year Cycle. A recommendation of acceptance or denial will then be passed on to the Hall County Board of Supervisors for final approval.

Major grant applicants will have the opportunity to present to the grant review committee prior to any recommendation. Grant request presentation times will be determined by the review committee.

Fund applicants must complete the entire *Visitor Improvement Fund* application outlining use and benefits of requested funds. Failure to complete the entire application may result in the rejection of your fund request.

**Notification:**

Grant applicants will be notified of the status of their request in December unless determined otherwise by the Visitors Promotion Committee and/or the Hall County Board of Supervisors. Grant recipients will *be required to fill out additional paperwork* that will be provided by the Visitor Promotion Committee.

Please see that the following support paperwork (where applicable) accompanies your application.

1. Project description.
2. Architectural drawings.
3. Grant project budget.
4. Your organization’s annual operating budget.
5. Anticipated direct total lodging room nights.
6. Contractors bid(s)
7. Support letters and/or entity board approval.
8. Proof of 501 (c) 3 or 6 status.
9. Six (6) complete copies of the application, stapled.

Incomplete applications will not be considered by the Visitors Promotion Committee.

**Payment:**

To request the reimbursement award fund, your organization must supply a detailed listing of approved grant expenditures and copies of all original receipts, contracts and/or other documents that substantiate those expenditures. Current payment of funds will not take place until this information is supplied. Furthermore, Hall County Board of Supervisors shall not give multi-year grants (taking into consideration all other grants) that obligate Hall County to amounts over and above amounts accruing in the Fund through the collection of the 2% Lodging Tax.

Larger grant awards of more than $10,000 will require quarterly updates to the VPC. This may include an on-site inspection.

All grant monies awarded must be spent or contractually committed by the grant recipient one year from date that the grant was awarded. Any monies that the grant recipient has not spent or contractually committed by this deadline shall be returned to the Hall County Visitor Improvement Fund. All applicants are required to submit a preliminary budget with this application.

**GICVB Recognition Requirement:**

At the conclusion of approved projects, support given through the grant must be acknowledged through appropriate use of the approved Grand Island Convention and Visitor Bureau signage. A plaque, sign or appropriate visual notification will be placed on grantee’s websites, materials or within the facility at the cost of the grantee. The Grand Island Convention and Visitor Bureau will furnish appropriate brand standards for branding placement and use.

HALL COUNTY VISITORS IMPROVEMENT FUND

GRANT APPLICATION

COVER SHEET

**Basic Information**

Date:

Major Grant  Minor Grant

Project Sponsor Name:

Contact Person:

Street Address:

City:

State: Zip:

Telephone:

Fax:

Email:

**Organization Information**

Organization Status:

Non-Profit

Association

Civic Group

Other

Applicant government/organization Federal Tax ID number:

If tax exempt organization, designate IRS classification: 501(c)3  501(c)6

Provide a brief description of your current exhibit/attraction/facility:

Number of annual attendees estimated:

Out of town:  
Local:

**Project Information**

Check all that apply:

Expanding and improving any existing visitor attraction.

Creating a new visitor attraction.

Marketing an attraction or event.

Planning or developing such expansion improvements, exhibits or additions.

Acquiring or expanding exhibits for existing visitor attractions.

Promotion and advertising costs associated with such events or exhibits.

Please describe project as indicated above. (Summary of 300 words or less)

Project Start Date:

Project Completion Date:

Project location, if different from sponsoring organizations address: Yes  No

Is this project part of a larger renovation project? Yes  No

If yes, please describe the entire project:

Project Partner(s): Are other entities financially involved with this project? Yes  No

If yes, provide their names here:

As it pertains to your grant project, provide an overview of your marketing efforts including radio, television, print media, web and any other informational efforts:

Do you anticipate submitting future applications for projects relating to this project?

Estimated impact on new visitor recruitment and hotel lodging tax revenues?

Is this grant request in addition to other project related grant requests? Yes  No

If yes, then list other grant requests:

**Total grant dollar amount requested from Visitors Promotion Committee: $**

**On behalf of the sponsor(s) named above, I hereby certify that the information contained in this application, including all attachments, is true, accurate and complete.**

Authorized Signature of Sponsor Organization:

Title:

Typed or Printed Name of Authorized Signatory:

Typed or Printed Title: