



Grand Island/ Hall County Convention and Visitors Bureau Visitor Improvement Fund

Fund Origin:

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 GICVB 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.* (amended from time to time).

Use of the Grant Funds:

Grant Funds 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.

Other things the reviewers will be looking at:

- Does it advance tourism priorities?
- Is there sound planning and design?
- What are the economic impacts to local tourism?
- Is the business plan sound and cost effective?
- What is the duration of benefits (# or years)?
- Are there matching monetary or in-kind resources? A dollar match is not required in any amount or percentage. However, a grant application that includes matching funds may score higher.
- What is the number of people or communities served?
- What is the general public or community benefit?
- What is the evaluation plan?
- Does this fill a unique need?
- Is this an individual or local initiative?

Grant Exclusions:

- General operating expenses.
- Additional or current personnel or salaries.
- General operating supplies or equipment.
- General maintenance or replacement of an existing structural component in an existing facility.
- 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.

Additional information:

- 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.
- Additional information may be requested, including the most recent 990 Tax Return.

Review Process:

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

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 VPC.

Grant Year Cycle (January 1 – December 31)

Application:

Grants due to review committee	September 1
Grants reviewed	September-October
Grant recommendations to the VPC	November
Grant recommendations to the Hall Co. Board	December

If awarded:

Signed Award Agreement submission	No later than January 31
Project progress reporting	March, June, September and December
Final date for requesting grant reimbursements	December 15

Payment, if Awarded:

Grant awardees will be provided with a Request for Payment form which must be submitted along with a detailed listing of approved grant expenditures and copies of all original receipts, contracts and/or other documents that substantiate those expenditures. Payment of funds will not take place until this is supplied.

All grant monies awarded must be spent or contractually committed by the close of the grant year. Due to processing, requests should be in by December 15. 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.

GICVB Recognition Requirement:

At the conclusion of approved projects, support given through the grant must be acknowledged through appropriate visual notification using approved Grand Island Convention and Visitor Bureau branding. Notification shall be placed on grantee’s websites, in materials or within the facility at the cost of the grantee. Contact dana@visitgrandisland.com for appropriate brand standards.