



Opportunity Attraction Fund Program

Program Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2025	
Lead Division: Marketing and Brand Strategy	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New	<input type="checkbox"/> Revised
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grant	<input type="checkbox"/> Loan <input type="checkbox"/> Tax Credit <input type="checkbox"/> Technical Assistance

Introduction

Background Information: The purpose of the Opportunity Attraction Fund Program is to attract major opportunities and events to the State of Wisconsin, as directed by the Legislature in [2023 Wisconsin Act 169](#). Until the current legislation was passed, there was not a state-wide effort or fund to assist with the attraction of large, economically impactful events.

Program’s Purpose: The purpose of the Opportunity Attraction Fund Program is to attract major opportunities and events to the State of Wisconsin, to improve perception and increased awareness of Wisconsin as a place to travel and live. The Program provides funds for eligible entities to attract to Wisconsin, or host in Wisconsin, events and opportunities that are secured through competitive bidding against other states or jurisdictions outside of Wisconsin. Events or major opportunities secured through this program should drive economic impact within Wisconsin. Additional benefits may include increased travel and tourism activity within the state, as well as out-of-state talent attraction.

Eligibility Requirements

Eligible Applicants: Opportunity Attraction Fund applicants may be:

- A city, village, town, or county.
- An American Indian tribe or band in this state.
- An area visitor and convention bureau.
- A business improvement district.
- A private entity.¹

Eligible Use of Funds: Applicants may use Opportunity Attraction grant funds on a project as specified in the application to attract to Wisconsin, or host in Wisconsin, or both, a major opportunity event that is open to the public, whether or not free of charge². Specifically, grant funds may be used to undertake a project to do one or more of the following:

1. Bid

Bid against other states or jurisdictions outside of Wisconsin to attract an opportunity or event that will draw national exposure and drive economic development and visitors to Wisconsin.³

¹ Wis. Stat. § 238.143(1)

² Wis. Stat. § 238.143(3)(b)

³ Wis. Stat. § 238.143(3)(b)1

Such costs may include, among others, documented out-of-pocket expenses for materials and travel to present the bid, or the use of [staff](#) time [or](#) outside consultants to prepare a bid.

2. Host

Host an opportunity or event that will attract national exposure and drive economic development and visitors to Wisconsin that the applicant has secured through a competitive bid against other states or jurisdictions outside of Wisconsin.⁴

Such costs may include, among others, sponsorship or other fees required for hosting the event in Wisconsin, costs related to event space and logistic expenses, lodging, catering, and capital investment for infrastructure related to the event, as well as expenses related to marketing the event.

Matching: Grant recipients must provide matching funds equal to the amount of the grant. Matching Funds must be provided from non-state funds.⁵

Available Incentives

FY25: \$5,000,000

Award sizes:

1. Bid

Grants for expenses related to a bid for an event or opportunity may not exceed \$100,000.

2. Host

Grants for expenses related to hosting an event or opportunity may not exceed \$5,000,000.

Activities and Expected Outcomes

Assist three businesses or communities and achieve a 1:1 leverage of other investment.

Impact: Direct and indirect economic impact through increased out-of-state visitor attraction to Wisconsin, national exposure via earned media, tourism and related spending by visitors, event-related spending, and possible capital investment related to an event.

Metrics:

1. Bid

- Leverage – Total.

⁴ Wis. Stat. § 238.143(3)(b)2

⁵ Wis. Stat. § 238.143(4)

- Performance Milestone, bid won/lost for opportunity/event.
- Plans Completed, compiled bid data and pitch completed and delivered.

2. Host

- Leverage – Total.
- Capital Investment.
- Individuals Served/Engaged.
- Performance Milestone, if applicable.

Application Guideline

Timeline: The Opportunity Attraction Fund program has a continuous application process.

Review Considerations: Applicants must support their request with an estimate of projected direct and indirect economic benefits of the proposed opportunity or event to Wisconsin and a related cost-benefit analysis concerning the opportunity or event.⁶ To support WEDC's evaluation of impact estimates, applicants must provide a breakdown of any economic events and assumptions used to create their estimate. In addition, all applicants will be expected to provide the following:

- An estimate of the number of event attendees from outside the county and from outside state.
- Estimates of average per visitor spending by category, as well as the basis for those estimates.
- A breakdown of planned capital expenditures, including construction and equipment, that will be made to host the event.

WEDC will consult with the Wisconsin Department of Tourism⁷ prior to making an award under this program and may take the following into account when evaluating applicants:

1. Bid

- Whether or not the event or opportunity is appropriate and desirable for support by the State of Wisconsin.
- Whether or not the applicant has demonstrated sufficient direct and indirect impact to justify WEDC's investment.
- Whether or not the applicant's expected out-of-pocket costs for preparing and submitting its bid are reasonable.
- Whether or not the applicant is based in Wisconsin.

2. Host

- Whether or not the event or opportunity is appropriate and desirable for support by the State of Wisconsin.
- Whether or not the applicant has demonstrated sufficient direct and indirect impact to justify WEDC's investment.

⁶ Wis. Stat. § 238.143(3)(a)

⁷ Wis. Stat. § 238.143(5)



- Whether or not the applicant's expected out-of-pocket costs for preparing and submitting its bid are reasonable.
- Whether or not the applicant is based in Wisconsin.
- The extent to which Wisconsin vendors will be used in supporting the event or opportunity.

How to Apply: An interested applicant should contact a WEDC Account Manager to determine if their project is right for the program. Upon review of the project, and alignment with eligibility criteria, an applicant will be invited to submit their application through Network Wisconsin.

Award Process: The completed application will be assigned to a WEDC underwriter and go through WEDC's awards administration process.

Performance Reporting: Recipients must periodically submit a performance report documenting specific project activities and any other contract deliverables.

WEDC annually selects awards on a sample basis for an audit. All backup to the performance report and financial records are required to be maintained by the Recipient for a period of at least three (3) years after the last performance report is due.

WEDC may impose additional reporting requirements to evaluate project performance and to ensure compliance with contract deliverables.

Opportunity grants are not subject to Wis. Stat. § 238.03(3)(a).⁸

Revision History

Program Inception – Fiscal Year 2025

⁸ Wis. Stat. § 238.143(3)(c)