

VisitMercerCountyPA FY 2016/17 Tourism Attraction Development Grant (MCTAG)

The Mercer County Tourism Attraction Development Grant (MCTAG) provides funds for the development and expansion of tourism attractions in Mercer County, PA. For FY 2016/17 Mercer County Tourism Attraction Grant funding available is \$60,000.00.

Grant funds may be used for a wide variety of activities necessary to develop a new tourist attraction or expand an existing tourist attraction including but not limited to: land acquisition; purchase, construction or renovation of buildings; purchase or installation of machinery or equipment; creation and implementation of interpretive programs.

The maximum grant amount to tourism attractions for FY 16/17 is \$20,000.00 and must be leveraged with at least 50% of the eligible project expenditures from other sources. Funds from other sources must be available to the project at the time of application submittal. The amount available for matching purposes must be expended during the grant period, which is one year following the award. Requests for budget modifications or extensions must be received by VisitMercerCountyPA no later than 45 days prior to the expiration of the contract.

You may call (724) 346-3771 for additional information.

MCTAG GUIDELINES & APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

I. Purpose

VisitMercerCountyPA (hereafter referred to as VisitMCPA) will make grants to not-for-profit organizations and for-profit businesses to assist with the development or expansion of tourism attractions in Mercer County.

II. Intent

The intent of the Mercer County Tourism Attraction Development Grant (MCTAG) is to provide matching grants to assist in the development or expansion of projects that increase the economic impact of tourism.

III. Funding (FY 2016/17)

MCTAG grants to tourism attractions shall not exceed \$20,000.00. For five years following their last approval, any project that has already received MCTAG funds two times will not be considered until allocations have been recommended for new projects.

IV. Eligible Applicants

To qualify for the MCTAG, an Applicant must be:

- a. A not-for-profit organization or for-profit corporation or business developing or expanding a tourism attraction in Mercer County, PA
- b. A grantee must be a member of VisitMCPA prior to disbursement of funds.

V. Application Procedures

A. VisitMCPA shall supply interested entities with Application Guidelines upon request. Applications should be submitted by Dec. 2, 2016 with awards granted in January. Any remaining fund will be available on a first come, first serve basis until funds are gone. Requests for remaining funds must be submitted for TAG Committee review by May 1, 2017. Applications must be typed or computer generated using the current approved format provided by VisitMCPA, including one original and 7 copies.

An application will be considered delivered on the date it is postmarked or delivered to: VisitMCPA, 50 North Water Ave. Sharon, PA 16146.

B. Pre-Application Screening – Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to submit a brief pre-application discussing their proposed project. A response to the pre-application encouraging or discouraging a formal application will be communicated to the applicant within 30 days. This screening is to provide guidance. The decision on whether to proceed or not proceed with a formal application rests totally with the applicant.

VI. Review of Applications

Within 15 business days after Visit MCPA receives the application, the Executive Director shall notify the Applicant whether, after a brief review, the application and attachments, if any, are complete. This notice is not in any way an acknowledgement by VisitMCPA as to the adequacy of the substance of the application. If the application and attachments are incomplete, the applicant will be notified of the deficiencies and will have 15 business days to remedy any deficiencies. In the event the applicant fails to remedy all deficiencies within the 15 business days the application shall be considered null and void.

Accepted applications will be sent to a review committee which will rate each submission and make recommendations to the Board of Directors, which will make the final determination.

VII. Grant Agreement

Upon approving a given application, VisitMCPA will notify the organization/business of the grant amount and execute a contract between that entity and the agency.

VIII. Disbursement of Grant Funds

Fifty percent of the grant award will be disbursed to the Grantee within 30 days of receipt by VisitMCPA of a signed Grant Agreement. The remaining 50 percent will be disbursed upon receiving the documentation verifying that the initial grant payment and matching funds have been partially expended or documentation of cash needs to further the Project.

IX. Reports

The grantee will be responsible for submitting a closeout report. Copies of original vendor invoices showing the actual matching and grant costs incurred, the check number, and date of the check corresponding to the invoices shall be submitted to VisitMCPA with the closeout report. Completion of the project must be one year following the award unless an extension is requested and approved.

X. Recognition

The grantee must acknowledge VisitMCPA as a sponsor of the project. All construction related projects that are funded through this Program must include a sign displayed at the project site stating

“This project was partially funded by a Grant from VisitMercerCountyPA.” The grantee shall prominently acknowledge the participation of VisitMCPA in all press releases, publications and promotional materials presented to the media or otherwise disseminated or published concerning the project. Failure to comply with this request may affect the applicant’s future funding.

XI. Eligible Projects and Activities include:

Projects and activities eligible for funding include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. Capital Projects – land acquisition, construction, expansion or acquisition of buildings
- B. Equipment – purchase and installation of machinery and equipment related to the expansion or new development.
- C. Interpretive Programs – creation and implementation of interpretive programs
- D. Exceptional new projects that would generate overnight stays.

XII. Ineligible Projects and Activities

Projects and activities ineligible for funding include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. Debt refinancing
- B. Contingency funding
- C. Staff
- D. Operating expenses
- E. Administrative expenses

XIII. Matching Funds

The grantee shall provide matching funds to the total Project costs which are identified in the application budget. Matching funds must be cash.

XIV. Application Evaluation and Selection Process- Tourism Attractions Capital Projects

VisitMCPA’s internal review (TAG) committee shall conduct an evaluation of each application. The criteria used in determining whether an application will be considered for a grant award include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Will the Project be a viable tourism attraction drawing visitors from a distance of 50 miles or more one-way or for an overnight stay?
2. Is the tourism attraction currently marketed or going to be marketed to visitors from outside 50 miles?
3. Does the Project demonstrate how it will increase visitation, length of stay, and/or tourism expenditures?
4. Does the Project include adequate tracking and evaluation measures?
5. Will the development or enhancement of the tourism attraction be completed and open to the public with regular scheduled hours by the end of the grant period?
6. Will the increase in expenditures from additional visitors generate a Return on Investment (ROI) for the County within three years?
7. Does the Project demonstrate the potential for sustainable economic growth and job creation, or a significant impact on the area’s overall tourism efforts?

Each of the above criteria will be rated with 100 points possible. Criteria (1) one to forty points and criteria (2-7) one to ten points. An application must receive a minimum of 55 points to be considered eligible for funding. The review committee will forward all eligible applications together with its recommendations to the VisitMCPA Board of Directors for final determination.

Requests for exceptions to this policy will need to be reviewed by the Board of Directors

**VisitMercerCountyPA
Tourism Attraction Development Grant Application**

COVER PAGE (This sheet must be completed by all applicants)

1. Applicant Organization: _____

Authorized Official (Name and Title: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Daytime Telephone: _____ **Fax:** _____

Email: _____

Location of Attraction (Street Address if applicable, otherwise a description of location):

2. Applicant's F.E.I.N.#: _____

3. Applicant Organization Status: ___Not-For-Profit___ For-Profit

4. Project Contact Person: _____

Telephone: _____

5. Project Title: _____

6. Anticipated project initiation and completion dates:

From: _____ **To:** _____

7. Total Cost of Project: \$ _____ **Grant Request: \$** _____
(As Reflected on Itemized Budget)

8. Anticipated employment positions created by project if applicable: Full Time _____
Part Time _____

To the best of my knowledge and belief, information in this application is true and correct, and the governing body of the Applicant Organization has duly authorized this document.

Signature of Authorized Official/Title/Date:

Tourism Attraction Development Grant Application
Tourism Attractions Capital Projects

The following 12 items must be addressed by tourism attractions seeking funding. Responses are scored so it is important that you answered each item completely.

NOTE: Each of the following numbered Application sections (1-12) must be addressed on separate sheets of paper and attached to the Application Cover Page.

1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Describe the proposed Project clearly and concisely. State the goal, strategy, and the target audience. Describe how this Project will increase visitation, length of stay, and/or tourism expenditures from visitors outside a 50-mile area.

2. BUDGET CATEGORY BREAKDOWN: Describe the use of funds being requested on the budget sheet, explaining how the money will be spent. The budget must be submitted in a Budget Grid Format (see sample budget format). Each project category must provide an itemized budget that lists the requested eligible budget items pertaining to the Project and documented with supporting vendor attachments.

3. MARKETING ATTRACTION: Describe the current promotional efforts for the attraction as well as the anticipated efforts to advertise the attraction outside a 50-mile area.

4. EVALUATION MEASURES: Describe the methods to be used to track the success of this Project.

5. HOURS OF OPERATION: Detail the attraction's current or proposed schedule of operation (days and hours) that it will be open to the public. Describe the source of funding for personnel to staff and operate the attraction.

6. RETURN ON INVESTMENT: Describe how this Project will increase expenditures from additional visitors generating a Return on Investment (ROI) for the County within three years.

7. SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH POTENTIAL: Demonstrate the potential for sustainable economic growth and job creation or the significant impact on the area's overall tourism efforts that will occur as a result of this development. Provide the number of jobs this Project is expected to create. How will the County benefit from Project? Preference will be given to Projects that demonstrate the greatest potential for significantly increasing overnight stays and travel into and throughout Mercer County.

8. HISTORY OF THE APPLICANT'S TOURISM EFFORTS: Provide a description of the Applicant's tourism efforts, including any public financial assistance received or private efforts utilized to generate increased tourism travel to the location.

9. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE: Provide a list of the time lines for major project milestones and/or activities including the start and end date of each major activity (month and year).

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10. LAND AND BUILDING INFORMATION (if applicable): For land and/or building acquisition, an appraisal performed by a Member of the Appraisal Institute (MAI) and a copy of the

purchase option or agreement must be provided. For building construction or renovation, copies of contractor's bids must be submitted on bidder's letterhead .

11. DESCRIPTION OF MACHINERY AND/OR EQUIPMENT (if applicable):

Identify major equipment to be acquired with grant and/or match funds, and provide copies of bids on bidder's letterhead or selected vendor's quotes/estimates if bids are not required.

New Machinery and/or Equipment: Attach a copy of vendor's cost estimates or provide copies of bids on bidder's letterhead.

Used Machinery and/or Equipment: Attach an appraisal demonstrating that the fair market value is consistent with the purchase price.

Installation or Moving of Machinery and/or Equipment: Attach written cost estimates on vendor's letterhead or provide copies of bids on bidder's letterhead.

12. LETTERS OF FINANCIAL COMMITMENT: List the source(s) and amount(s) of local or private matching funds in the form of specific commitment letters. Loan commitment letters from financial institutions must have language indicating the loan amount, the specified term and interest, collateral, conditions pertaining to the loan, and the fact that the loan is approved. If the matching source is an individual, evidence of available assets such as balance sheets, financial banking statements, stock dividends must be provided or it will not be considered as matching commitment

Sample Budget Format

Item Description	Grant	Match	Total
(4) Exhibits for Underground Railroad Tour	10,000.00	10,000.00	20,000.00
Interpretative panels for three sites	7,000.00	7,000.00	14,000.00
Total Project Cost	17,000.00	17,000.00	34,000.00