



Spring 2025 Marketing Leverage Program (MLP)

Terms & Conditions

Applicants must attest to these terms and conditions at the time of application. For information on how to apply to this program, please refer to the Spring 2025 Marketing Leverage Program Instructions, Sample Application, and Webinar recording.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Funding available in this grant program: **\$850,000**

of proposals to be funded this round: **60**

Application Window: **February 11th, 9:00AM – March 13th, 5:00PM (NO EXTENSIONS)**

Two Award Tiers

- Applicants can request up to **\$20,000** if they list a minimum of 1:1 Cash Match.
- Applicants can request more than \$20,000 if they list a minimum of 2:1 Cash Match. The max award in this tier is **\$50,000**.

Applicants are not required to apply for the maximum award and we encourage applicants to only apply for the amount of funds they need for a **targeted marketing campaign. These funds are not intended to replace your normal marketing budget, but are intended to extend your marketing.*

Matching Grant Program

- To receive the award amount you request, you must list the minimum amount of match required, depending on the tier you are in:
- **Example 1:** *In the application, if you are requesting an award of \$20,000 from VTC to use on your eligible marketing expenses, you must list a minimum of \$20,000 in matching eligible expenses. (1:1 Match)*
- **Example 2:** *In the application, if you are requesting an award of \$30,000 from VTC to use on your eligible marketing expenses, you must list a minimum of \$60,000 in matching eligible expenses. (2:1 Match)*
- **Example 3:** *In the application, if you are requesting an award of \$50,000 from VTC to use on your eligible marketing expenses, you must list a minimum of \$100,000 in matching eligible expenses. (2:1 Match)*
- Only items listed in the Eligible Expenses section of this document can be used as cash match to obtain your award.

Reimbursement-Based Grant

- **Funds are not awarded up-front.** Your award is held in a grant account with VTC, and you may spend-down your funds by submitting your invoices, proofs of advertising, and proofs of payment for review. Once reimbursement is approved, your funds will be paid to you. VTC does allow for intermittent reimbursement so you may draw down funds as needed until the full award balance has been disbursed. Final reimbursements will only be processed if the required Final Report with performance outcomes is included.

For Established & Officially Recognized Destination Marketing Organizations Only

- Your business/organization must be open to the public and operational at the time of application and have an officially registered Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN).
- If you are a sole proprietor, you may use the sole proprietor's Social Security Number (SSN)
- Your business/organization must have a brick-and-mortar location in Virginia that is open, operating, has appropriate local licensing, and appeals to tourists and visitors. Online storefronts and organizations are not eligible for this program. However, food trucks that are licensed to operate within a Virginia locality are eligible.
- If your organization is one that promotes tourism-oriented brick and mortar businesses in Virginia and events in Virginia, such as a Chamber of Commerce, craft beverage trail, event management company, etc., you ARE eligible, but the organization's AND/OR event's address must be in Virginia.

Only online applications entered through our website will be accepted. The application for this program can be found at this link ONLY when the grant officially opens: <https://vatc.org/grants/>

APPLICANT & PARTNER/SPOKE ELIGIBILITY

Applicants to the Marketing Leverage Program...

- **Must be an open and operational tourism-oriented businesses/organization in Virginia.**
- **Must have a FEIN or SSN (if sole proprietor).**
- **Must have a brick-and-mortar location in Virginia with appropriate locality licenses and/or an appropriate food truck license. (If your organization is one that promotes tourism-oriented brick-and-mortar businesses in Virginia and events in Virginia, such as a Chamber of Commerce, craft beverage trail, event management company, etc., you ARE eligible, but the organization's address must be in Virginia.)**
- **CANNOT be a federal or state agency. CANNOT be a personal health and wellness business, such as nail salons, gyms, massage parlors, and yoga studios. If the aforementioned businesses in a lodging resort, as a tourism attraction, ARE ELIGIBLE to apply.**
- **CANNOT be a vendor of services, such as an advertising agency, PR firm, printing agency, television channel, web developer, influencer, marketing consultant, etc.**
- **MUST show a significant and positive economic impact on the business and surrounding community, as the goal of this program is to grow out-of-region visitation and increase visitor spending.**

Partners/Spokes...

- **Must be tourism-oriented businesses/attractions that are open, operating, and have appropriate locality licensing.**
- **CANNOT be a personal health and wellness business, such as nail salons, gyms, massage parlors, and yoga studios unless they are in a lodging resort which is a tourist attraction.**
- **ARE allowed to be a state or federal entity, such as a state or national park.**
- **CANNOT be a vendor of services, such as an advertising agency, PR firm, printing agency, television channel, web developer, influencer, marketing consultant, etc.**
- **CANNOT be Cannabis-oriented businesses**

If you or your listed partners/spokes do not meet the above criteria, your program will not be awarded. VTC reserves the right to determine applicant and partner eligibility. Please reach out to the VTC Grants team with any questions on eligibility.

Partner/Spoke Involvement Requirements

Using VTC's Hub & Spoke Itinerary model, the partners/spokes you list in your application must contribute to your program initiative, either through a financial commitment to the marketing initiative or through marketing collaboration. Please refer to the application instructions for more details on the Hub & Spoke model. These contributions/collaborations must be documented in the application narrative and will be evaluated.

Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) Letter of Support

- **To apply for this program, you must have a letter of support from your local or regional DMO that clearly states their support for your program. You can find a list of DMOs on www.vatc.org/dmolist.**
- **If you do not have a local or regional DMO serving your area, you must obtain a letter of support from your locality leader (such as your town manager, city manager, or county manager).**

Lodging Partner Requirement

- **To apply for this program, you must list a lodging business as a partner in your application. This can be a hotel, bed & breakfast, resort, campground, or state park.**
- **You DO NOT need a letter of support from this lodging partner. However, you must list how they will support your program through contributions/collaborations.**
- **If you, as the applicant, are a lodging business, you will need to list yourself as the lodging partner in the **Goals & Partnerships** section.**

APPLICATION PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Your marketing proposal must meet the following requirements to be considered for an award:

- Applicants can only submit ONE application proposal per FEIN.
- **Marketing proposal must have an end-date no later than October 31st, 2026.**
- This is a competitive grant program, with programs awarded by the strength and score of their applications. Applicants must develop new marketing initiatives for their event or expand upon previously generated initiatives. Applications must explain and justify how the proposal's target markets, demographics, and marketing channels will drive overnight and out of region visitation to their locality. Proposals which lack adequate justification of the choices outlined in the application may be subject to a reduced award or not receive funding. Applicants are encouraged to use their own data/research, their local DMO research, and/or data/research provided by VTC in the application. VTC's research portal can be found here:
<https://www.vatc.org/research/>
- The program has a **look back period** and expenses may be dated back to **December 1st, 2024.**
- If you need to make any substantial changes to your marketing proposal after the time you are awarded, you must submit a VTC Plan Revision form to the VTC Grants Team and have it approved.
- A final report is required to be submitted after the completion of your initiative. **YOU WILL NOT RECEIVE REIMBURSEMENT UNTIL YOUR FINAL REPORT IS SUBMITTED.** We recommend that you submit your Final Report along with your Final Reimbursement. Final Reports are due **October 31st, 2026.**
- Please note: Successful applicants who receive an award through the Marketing Leverage Program may receive a reduced award total IF they are awarded in a different VTC grant program.

Ineligible Programs:

- Non-tourism related businesses/events
- Cannabis-related businesses/events
- Businesses/events related to political activities.
- Private events (like family reunions, weddings, birthday parties, and "members-only" events)

SCORING PROTOCOL

Scoring Statements

There are limited funds available for this program. Therefore, funding will be awarded on a merit scale; only the highest scoring application proposals will be funded. Since awards are determined from these scores, your application must be complete and thorough. Actual awards may or may not equal the amount you originally requested and are based on available funds at the time of award.

Do not assume that the review team is familiar with your area, destination, business, event, or festival. You should include all requested information and be as detailed as possible.

When determining the award total for an application, Virginia Tourism Corporation may consider a variety of factors. These include the type and scope of the organization, the proposal's audience and message, the number of applications received, the regional distribution of funds, and **MOST IMPORTANTLY**, the economic impact of the program and its ability to drive visitation/visitor revenue in the program coverage area.

Please see the score breakdown for each section below:

GOALS & PARTNERSHIPS – 25 POINTS

RESEARCH/DATA – 25 POINTS

MARKETING PLANS – 50 POINTS

BONUS SECTION – 5 POINTS

REIMBURSEMENT PAYMENT PROCESS

This is a reimbursement-based grant program. Awarded funds will not be disbursed up-front.

Once you receive an award notification, via email, from the VTC Grants Team, we will place your award in a grant account that you can spend down on your own basis, up until the final date we accept reimbursements (**Due Date: October 31st, 2026**). **Failure to utilize your awarded funds by this due date will result in VTC releasing your award back to the grant funding pool.**

You must have a valid virginia.org listing of your business or event BEFORE you can receive VTC reimbursement.

You must submit your final report BEFORE you can receive your final VTC reimbursement.

How To Submit A VTC Reimbursement Request

(follow the VTC Reimbursement Instructions Document for more details)

You will need the following information in your reimbursement package:

- VTC Reimbursement Request Form
- W-9
- ACH Direct Deposit Form (optional)
- Invoices & Proofs of Payment of these expenses being paid.
- Proofs of Placement of your marketing, including social media, digital media, radio ads, video ads, etc. (These should be included on a USB drive and mailed with the rest of the items)
- Photography Release (if grant funds were used for photography/videography)

You can download the forms listed above from vatc.org/grants

You MUST mail the above items, in one package, to our main office addressed to:

VTC Grants Team; 901 East Cary Street, Suite 900, Richmond, Virginia, 23219.

After the VTC Grants Team receives your reimbursement request package, it will be reviewed. You will be notified, via email, regarding the status of your reimbursement request and whether we need further information.

- **NOTE: *Only the PRIMARY contact on your application/grant account can submit reimbursement requests to VTC.*** Reimbursement requests CANNOT be submitted by partners/spokes or any other parties; requests submitted by those parties WILL NOT be reviewed or processed.
- VTC Reimbursement payments will ONLY be sent to the applicant business/organizations. No other party will receive payment from VTC.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES FOR MATCH AND REIMBURSEMENT

ALL MARKETING/ADVERTISING SUBMITTED TO VTC FOR MATCH or REIMBURSEMENT REQUIRES THE USE OF THE “VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS” LOGO, LINK, AND/OR HASHTAG #LOVEVA

AT LEAST 75% OF YOUR MARKETING EXPENSES IN THIS PROGRAM MUST BE SPENT TARGETING OUT-OF-REGION VISITORS (50 MILES FROM YOUR BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION)

ELIGIBLE EXPENSE PERIOD: December 1st, 2024, THROUGH October 31st, 2026

Below are the ONLY expenses that can be used as Cash Match for this grant award and that can be submitted to VTC for reimbursement. Please reference the logo usage section for more information on how to incorporate the Virginia is for Lover’s brand and logo into your marketing:

- **Social Media advertising**
- **Digital Media advertising**
- **Radio advertising**
- **Video advertising**
- **Newspaper advertising**
- **Streaming video/radio advertising**
- **Magazine Advertising**
- **Print Advertising & Distribution (Brochures & Flyers)**
- **Contracting a Photographer/Videographer**
 - All photography and video marketing materials created using this VTC grant should include usage rights for VTC in perpetuity. You can secure those rights for Virginia Tourism corporation in one of two ways:
 - When creating your for-hire contract, include language that allows you to transfer usage rights to partners (like VTC). Not only is it a great way to maximize your marketing dollars, but it is a practice VTC has been implementing for years. This agreement allows us to share photo assets with VTC partners.
 - For an example of the language we use in our contracts, see section 3 in our [licensing terms & conditions](#). Please feel free to copy and adapt this language for your own contracts.
 - 2. You can have the copyright owner complete our [photo & video release form](#). This MUST be completed by the copyright owner, not by the licensing entity.
 - For information on planning your photo shoot, please see our [How to Plan a Photo Shoot](#) document. Here, we break down our planning process while giving recommendations and tips on maximizing your budget, staying organized, and considering the details.
 - Note: The cost of purchasing equipment for photographic and video production is NOT an eligible expense.
 - Note: The costs of food and other props during a photo shoot are NOT eligible expenses.
 - High resolution photography and b-roll may be delivered to Sarah Atkins. Please contact her at satkins@virginia.org with assets and any questions.
- **Contracting a Marketing Consultant**
- **Contracting a Creative Agency**
- **Contracting an Influencer**
 - **Influencer fees MUST be invoiced under one all-encompassing document when being submitted for VTC reimbursement. VTC WILL NOT reimburse individual receipted expenses for influencers, like lodging receipts, meal, receipts, transportation receipts, etc...**
- **Website/Apps Development/Updates**

- (Hosting & Maintenance Fees are NOT ELIGIBLE).
- (“Virginia is for Lovers” logo REQUIRED on the website)
- (Invoices for website development MUST include a scope of work)
- Expenses related to participating in the VTC PMAP Program
 - (Participate Here: <https://welcomeva.com/>)
- Virginia is for Lovers Promotional Items
 - (Only 10% of your award can be used).
 - (These promotional items must be acquired using Creative Color, VTC’s Contractor of Record for merchandise. It can be found here: <https://vatc.org/about/merchandise/>)
- Outdoor advertising through paid billboards that are 50 miles away from the location of business/organization.
 - (Billboards listed in the application MUST have the exact location stated as well)
- ASCAP/BMI Fees
 - (Only 10% of your award can be used)
- Tradeshow Booth Rentals
- Cost of Event Liability Insurance
 - (Only 10% of your award can be used)
- Cost of mobile vehicle wrap advertising that is managed by a third-party marketing agency where the vehicle is driven 50 miles away from the applicant’s destination.
 - (NOTE: Wrapping DMO-owned, business-owned, organization-owned, or locality-owned vehicles IS NOT eligible).

***** Any other marketing or event production expenses are ineligible. Grant funds cannot be used to pay for staff, police, fire, or emergency services, referees, timekeepers, vehicle rentals, temporary or permanent signage, fireworks/pyrotechnics, food, beverage, accommodations, or any other equipment rentals or event production costs.**

VIFL Logo Usage Section

Below are the ways you must incorporate the “Virginia is for Lovers” brand into your marketing to receive VTC reimbursement:

- Any social media posts, digital media, or website/app creation MUST include the “Virginia is for Lovers” logo or a Virginia is for Lovers sub-brand logo, link to Virginia.org AND/OR Hashtag #LoveVA to be eligible as MATCH or be approved for REIMBURSEMENT. Sub-brand examples include but are not limited to “Virginia is for History Lovers” or “Virginia is for Wine Lovers”. Logos can be requested at <https://vatc.org/marketing/advertising/vifl-logo-request/>.
- Any print media, like brochures, flyers, magazines, newspapers, etc., MUST include the “Virginia is for Lovers” logo or a Virginia is for Lovers sub-brand logo, link to Virginia.org AND/OR Hashtag #LoveVA to be eligible as MATCH or be approved for REIMBURSEMENT. Sub-brand examples include but are not limited to “Virginia is for History Lovers” or “Virginia is for Wine Lovers”. Logos can be requested at <https://vatc.org/marketing/advertising/vifl-logo-request/>.
- Radio ads that are LONGER THAN 30 SECONDS must include the “Virginia is for Lovers” phrase within the advertisement. This can be included as part of the advertisement narrative, such as “Everyone knows Virginia is for Lovers, and you’re going to love this event...”
- Video ads (OF ANY LENGTH) MUST include the “Virginia is for Lovers” logo AND/OR phrase within the advertisement. An example of this can include a banner in the background or an actor/performer wearing Virginia is for Lovers apparel.

Open Records Policy

As a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Virginia Tourism Authority (DBA Virginia Tourism Corporation) must comply with open records policies per Virginia Code §2.2-3700, and therefore must provide copies of awarded grant applications when requested. If your application is requested by an individual or organization, you will be notified, and any personal and banking information will be redacted.

VTC GRANTS TEAM CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions regarding any of the information in this document, please reach out to the VTC Grants Team:

VTC Marketing Leverage Email: vtcmlpgrant@virginia.org

Staci Martin, Grants Director smartin@virginia.org

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