



**Virginia Tourism Corporation  
Microbusiness Marketing Leverage Program (MMLP)  
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 Summer 2026 Microbusiness Marketing Leverage Program instructions, sample application, and webinar recording.*

## Contents

General MMLP Grant Program Information.....	2
Partner/Spoke Involvement Requirements.....	4
Eligible Expenses for Reimbursement & Match .....	5
Reimbursement Payment Process .....	8
VIFL Logo Usage Section .....	9
Scoring Protocol .....	10
Open Records Policy .....	10
VTC Grant Programs Contact Information.....	11

# General MMLP Grant Program Information

MMLP Grant Application Window: June 23, 2026 | 9:00 a.m. ET – July 30, 2026 5:00 p.m. ET

Extensions: The MMLP program is not eligible for project extensions.

Max Award: \$5,000

Eligible Applicants: Small tourism-related businesses (20 or fewer full-time equivalent employees), Chambers of Commerce, Main Street Organization, Planning District Commissions, Economic Development Authorities, or other organizations that promote and market tourism-oriented small businesses.

*\*Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) are not eligible for the MMLP grant program. DMOs are encouraged to apply for the [FY27 Co-op advertising opportunities](#).*

## Matching Grant Program

- To receive the award amount requested, you must list an equal or exceeding amount of cash or in-kind matching expenses in the application.
  - For example, if you are requesting \$5,000 in VTC funds to use on eligible marketing expenses you must list a minimum of \$5,000 in matching funds on eligible expenses.
- Only items listed in the Eligible Expenses section of this document can be used as cash or in-kind match are eligible to obtain your award. However, Earned and Owned media may be counted as in-kind match. Please refer to the application instructions to learn how to value your Earned and Owned media.

## Reimbursement-Based Grant Program

Funds are not awarded upfront. Your award is held in a grant account with VTC, and you may spend down your funds by submitting invoices, proofs of advertising, proofs of payment, and *Virginia is for Lovers* (VIFL) proof of placement for review. Once reimbursement is approved, your funds will be paid to you. VTC does allow for intermittent reimbursement. A maximum of two reimbursements can be requested throughout the program period until the full award balance has been disbursed; this includes an interim reimbursement and final reimbursement.

## For Established Tourism Businesses/Organizations Only

- Your business/organization must be open to the public and operational at the time of application and have an officially registered Federal Employee 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 & mortar location that is open, operating, has appropriate local licensing, and appeals to tourists and visitors.
- Food trucks that are licensed to operate within a locality are eligible.
- Online storefronts and organizations are not eligible for this program.
- Organizations that promote tourism-oriented brick & mortar businesses and events, such as a Chamber of Commerce, craft beverage trail, event management company, etc. are eligible; however, the organization/event address must be in Virginia.

### **Application Process**

Online application must be entered through [vatc.org](http://vatc.org). The application program can be found at [\(VTC\) Microbusiness Marketing Leverage Program - Virginia Tourism Corporation](#) when the grant officially opens on June 23, 2026.

### **Applicant & Partner/Spoke Eligibility**

Eligible applicants for the Microbusiness Marketing Leverage Program must meet the following requirements:

- Must be an open and operational tourism-oriented business/organization with 20 or fewer full-time employees.
- Must have a brick & mortar location with appropriate locality licenses and/or an appropriate food truck license.
- Organizations that promote tourism-oriented brick & mortar businesses and events, such as Chambers of Commerce, museums, craft beverage trails, event management companies, etc. The organization’s address must be in Virginia.
- The goal of this program is to grow out-of-region and out-of-state visitation and increase visitor spending. Applications must show a significant and positive economic impact on the business and surrounding community.
- Must have a FEIN or SSN (if sole proprietor)

### **Ineligible Applicants**

Ineligible applicants include the following:

- Personal health and wellness businesses, such as nail salons, gyms, massage parlors, and yoga studios. If the aforementioned businesses are located in a lodging resort as a tourism attraction, they are eligible to apply.
- Federal or state agency

- A vendor or service, such as an advertising agency, PR firm, printing agency, television channel, web developer, influencer, marketing consultant, etc.

If you or your listed partners/spokes do not meet the above criteria, your application will be deemed ineligible.

VTC retains the right to determine applicant and partner/spoke eligibility.

## Partner/Spoke Involvement Requirements

Using Virginia Tourism Corporation's Hub & Spoke model, the partners/spokes listed 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.

Below is a list of required documentation for partners/spoke involvement:

- Signed Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) Letter of Support
  - This must clearly state the DMOs support for your program. The list of Virginia DMOs can be found on [vatc.org/dmolist](http://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 leaders such as the town manager, city manager, or county administrator.
- Signed Lodging Letter of Support
  - This letter must clearly state the lodging partners support for your program.
  - This can be a hotel, bed & breakfast, resort, campground, or state park.
  - If you, as the applicant, are a lodging business, you will need to list yourself as the lodging partner in the Goals & Partnerships section of the application.

## Eligible Expenses for Reimbursement & Match

All marketing/advertising submitted to Virginia Tourism Corporation for match or reimbursement requires the use of the *Virginia is for Lovers* logo, link, tag, and/or hashtag #LoveVA

Eligible Expense Period: May 1, 2026 – May 31, 2027

Below are the only expenses that can be used as cash match or this grant award and that can be submitted for reimbursement. Please reference the logo usage section for more information on how to incorporate the *Virginia is for Lovers* brand and logo into your marketing campaign.

### Eligible Expenses & Cash Match

Eligible cash match can include the following:

- Social Media Advertising
- Digital Media Advertising
- Radio Advertising
- Newspaper Advertising
- Magazine Advertising
- Printing & Distribution of Brochures & Rack Cards
- Contracting a Photographer/Videographer
  - All photography and video marketing materials created used VTC grants should include usage rights for VTC in perpetuity. You can secure those rights for VTC in one of two ways:
    1. When creating your for-hire contract, include language that allows you to transfer usage right to partners (like VTC). This agreement allows us to share phot assets with VTC partners.
    2. You can have the copyright owner complete the VTC [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.
  - 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

- High resolution photography and videography should be shared with the VTC team. Visit [How to Share Photos and Video with VTC - Virginia Tourism Corporation](#) to learn more about this process.
- The cost of purchasing equipment for photographic and video production is not an eligible expense.
- The cost of food and other props during a photo shoot is not an eligible expense.
- Contracting a Marketing Consultant
- Contracting a Creative Agency
- Contracting an Influencer
  - Influencer fees must be invoiced under one all-encompassing document when submitted for VTC reimbursement. VTC will not reimburse individual receipted expenses for influencers such as lodging receipts, meal receipts, transportation receipts, etc.
- Website/Apps Development/Updates
  - Hosting and maintenance fees are not eligible
  - Invoices for websites development must include a scope of work
  - *Virginia is for Lovers* logo is required on the website
- Expenses related to participating in the [VTC Partnership Marketing & Advertising Program \(PMAP\)](#)
- *Virginia is for Lovers* Promotional Items
  - Maximum of 10% of VTC award can be used
  - Promotional items must be acquired using Creative Color, VTC's Contractor of Record for merchandising.
  - [Virginia is for Lovers® Merchandising - Virginia Tourism Corporation](#)
- Outdoor billboards
  - Must be 50 miles or more away from the location of the business organization
  - Billboard listed in the application must have the exact location stated
- Tradeshow Booth Rentals
- Event Liability Insurance
  - Maximum of 10% of VTC award can be used
- Mobile Vehicle Wrap Advertising
  - Must be managed by a third-party marketing agency and the vehicle must be driven 50 miles or more away from the applicant's destination

## **Eligible In-kind Match**

Eligible In-kind match can include paid media, owned media, and earned media.

Instructions on how to value earned and owned media are listed below:

- Print editorial – \$250/quarter page
  - Publication date must be within program dates.
- Print editorial – \$1,000/full page
  - Publication date must be within program dates.
- Online editorial – \$500/quarter page | \$2,000/full page
  - Must still be online.
- Social media followers – 10 cents/each.
  - Screenshot of follower/insights must be during program allowable dates.
- Owned website clicks – 10 cents/each
  - Screenshot must be during program allowable dates
- Print listing – \$100/each
  - Publication date must be within program dates.
- Online listing – \$200/each
  - Must still be online.
- Social Media Likes/Shares per Post – 10 cents/each
  - Screenshot showing likes/shares must be during program allowable dates.

## **Ineligible Expenses**

Below is a list of ineligible expenses

- Billboard without an exact location
- Individual receipted expenses for influencers
- Mobile vehicles wrapped for DMO-owned, business-owned, organization-owned or locality-owned vehicles
- Promotional merchandise not acquired through Creative Color
- Equipment for photographic and video production
- Food and other props during a photo shoot
- Staff, police, fire, emergency services, referees, timekeepers
- Vehicle rentals
- Temporary permanent signage
- Fireworks/pyrotechnics
- Food & beverage
- Accommodations
- Equipment rentals
- Event production costs

## Reimbursement Payment Process

This is a competitive reimbursement-based grant program. Award funds will not be paid out upfront.

All awardees are required to attend the VTC MMLP Awardee Webinar on October 14, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. Upon award notice, you will receive a link to this webinar.

Once you receive an award notification via email from the Virginia Tourism Grants Team, your award will be placed in a grant account that you can spend down on your own basis until the final project close date. A maximum of two reimbursements can be requested throughout the program period until the full award balance has been disbursed; this includes an interim reimbursement and final reimbursement.

Awardees will be required to submit appropriate reports, documentation, VIFL proof of placement, and reimbursement forms via Microsoft SharePoint. Each awardee will be assigned a SharePoint Grantee Folder that will have the appropriate forms and a copy for your award letter and application.

Grant Due Date: July 31, 2027 - Failure to utilize your awarded funds by this due date will result in VTC releasing your award back to the grant funding pool.

If your proposal was for an event, you must submit a copy of your liability insurance before you can receive reimbursement.

If you submit your reimbursement request prior to this date for your full award balance, you must include your final report at the time of that submission.

### **How to Submit a VTC Reimbursement Request**

Grantees will need the following information in your reimbursement submission. This information will be included in your assigned Microsoft SharePoint Grantee Folder. Grantees will notify the VTC Grants Team via email at [vtcgrants@virginia.org](mailto:vtcgrants@virginia.org) to alert the team that appropriate documentation has been uploaded to the grantee folder.

After the VTC grants Team receives grantee documentation it will be reviewed. You will be notified via email regarding the status of your reimbursement request and whether further information is needed.

Only the primary and/or secondary point of contact on your application/grant account can submit reimbursement requests. Reimbursement requests cannot be submitted by partners/spokes or any other parties. Requests submitted by those parties will not be reviewed or processed.

Reimbursement payments will only be sent to the applicant business/organization by desired payment method, direct deposit or check. No other party will receive payment from VTC.

- W-9
- ACH Direct Deposit Form (optional)
- Interim Reports (as applicable)
- Closeout Reports
- Reimbursement Form
- Invoices & Proofs of Payment of expenses being paid
- Proofs of placement of your marketing, including social media, digital media, radio ads, video ads, etc. These will be uploaded to your designated Microsoft SharePoint Grantee Folder.
- VIFL Proof of Placement on all reimbursable marketing materials
- Photography Release Form (as applicable) – if grant funds were used for photography/videography

## VIFL Logo Usage Section

Below are the ways you must incorporate the *Virginia is for Lovers* brand into your marketing to receive 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](http://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 [vatc.org](http://vatc.org). Google Search expenses must show *Virginia is for Lovers* on the website landing page that is being promoted in Google Search.
- 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](http://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 [vatc.org](http://vatc.org).
- 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 purchased through the [VIFL wholesale application process](#).

## Scoring Protocol

There are limited funds available for this competitive grant 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, thorough, and include all required materials for eligibility. Actual award may or may not equal the amount originally requested and are based on available funds at the time of award.

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 applicants 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.

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.

Below is the score breakdown for each section:

- Goals & Partnerships – 25 Points
- Research & Data – 25 Points
- Marketing Plans – 50 Points
- Bonus Section – 5 Points

## 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 Grant Programs Contact Information

For questions regarding information in this document and VTC grant program, contact the VTC Grants Team.

- Kalen Hunter, Managing Director of Grants & Strategic Development ([khunter@virginial.org](mailto:khunter@virginial.org))
- Shruthi Manimaran, Grants Coordinator ([smanimaran@virginia.org](mailto:smanimaran@virginia.org))
- Zoë Macgill, Grants Assistant ([zmacgill@virginia.org](mailto:zmacgill@virginia.org))
- VTC Grant Reimbursements & Reporting ([vtcgrants@virginia.org](mailto:vtcgrants@virginia.org))