

Greater Merrimack Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau FY25 Mini Grant Program Description & FAQ's

The Greater Merrimack Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau (GMVCVB) is pleased to announce that their FY25 mini-grant applications cycle is now open through the deadline of **Friday, January 31st at 5pm EST**. For the Fiscal Year ending **June 30, 2025**. All projects must be invoiced from the vendor to GMVCVB no later than **May 15, 2025**.

The GMVCVB plays a vital role in promoting the region as a year-round leisure, sports, educational, and business travel destination. Our region has a lot to offer both domestic and international visitors, including history, culture, cuisine, fairs, festivals and outdoor activities. By focusing on the 21 cities and towns in the GMVCVB region, the GMVCVB works to support marketing efforts of local organizations and businesses that align with its mission of generating revenue through tourism. This collaborative approach helps to showcase the area's attractions, events, and services, boosting local economies.

GMVCVB is designated as a Regional Tourism Council (RTC). The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is divided into sixteen individual tourism regions and each region is marketed by the designated RTC, a nonprofit, **membership-based** organization. RTCs develop regional advertising, public relations, networking and education as well as hosted buyer programs (familiarization "FAM" tours), attend trade shows to sell the region to international, national and bus tour and educational operators. The GMVCVB is busy with initiatives to market the region through the year with grant funding from the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT).

The GMVCVB will consider mini-grant applications for advertising projects devoted to marketing an event, attraction, business, service, or cultural offering. The marketing project must be targeted, at least partially, at potential visitors to our area. ("Visitor" is defined as one who travels more than 50 miles or who stays overnight.) The mini-grant applicant does not need to be a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

Q. Who is eligible to apply for a mini grant?

A. The applicant must be a member of the GMVCVB based in one of the 21 cities and towns that comprise the GMVCVB region or be devoted to attracting potential visitors to the 21 cities & towns in the region. Our region includes Acton, Bedford, Billerica, Boxborough, Burlington, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Concord, Dracut, Dunstable, Lexington, Lincoln, Littleton, Lowell, Maynard, Stow, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, Westford, Wilmington, and Woburn.

If you are not currently a member, you must apply and pay for your membership **PRIOR** to applying for a grant to be considered. Visit [here](#) to sign up for membership. Contact **Kimberly Prosper, Director of Partnership Development, Engagement & Event Services**, kprosper@merrimackvalley.org, **978-770-2732** with any questions you may have about your membership status.

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Q. How much can I apply for?

A. Mini-Grants of \$1,000 - \$10,000 will be awarded during this grant cycle.

- **For non-profits (municipalities):** grants will cover up to 25% of your total ad budget, not to exceed \$10,000. So, if your ad campaign is \$4,000, you can receive up to \$1,000. If your ad budget is \$50,000, you can receive up to \$10,000.
- **For for-profits:** grants will cover up to 10% of your total ad budget, not to exceed \$10,000. So, if your ad campaign is \$10,000, you can receive up to \$1,000. If your ad budget is \$100,000, you can receive up to \$10,000. Not all applicants may be awarded funds, and not all awards will be for the requested amount. Grants cannot cover ads that have already been contracted unless those contracts can be reissued with the GMVCVB as the agency of record. Grants cannot cover any advertising that has already run.

Q. What types of costs are eligible?

A. These are marketing and advertising grants. Print, digital, TV, radio, billboard, website and social media advertising can be included in your project. Social media can ONLY be included when run through an agency capable of invoicing the GMVCVB. Mini-grants do **NOT** cover postage, graphic design, staff hours, agency commissions, or non-advertising related expenses such as operational costs, food & beverage, etc.

All campaigns must be targeted, at least in part, to reach visitors more than 50 miles outside of your location. All campaigns must be focused on marketing tourism and hospitality attractions and/or events. These include, but are not limited to, hotels, restaurants, arts, historical & cultural attractions and events, entertainment, sports & recreation attractions, and shopping/retail focused on visitors.

Eligible projects: These are marketing and advertising grants. You may use your grant for:

- Print advertising
- Digital advertising
- TV advertising
- Radio advertising
- Brochures, fliers, direct mail pieces, and printed collateral when the intended audience is OUTSIDE of your town
- Billboard or outdoor advertising if the signage is OUTSIDE of your town
- Email campaigns through an agency or provider
- Social media campaigns ONLY through an agency (you cannot apply for social campaigns that you contract directly with Facebook, Instagram, etc. for, as those campaigns cannot be invoiced)
- Website design
- Co-op advertising with the GMVCVB Co-op program (print ads, sponsored content articles, banner ads or newsletter ads)

Ineligible projects: You CANNOT use your grant funds for:

- Non-advertising projects
- Operational expenses including operation of an event
- Food or beverage
- Event signage
- T-shirts or other clothing

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You may use your grant for a media campaign of your own devising or use it to participate in the GMVCVB Co-op Advertising Program.

Q. What is the Greater Merrimack Valley CVB Co-op Advertising Program? How can I use my mini grant towards this program?

A. This program allows member organizations to “buy in” to large advertising campaigns that the GMVCVB runs for a fraction of the price. Each full-page print ad in the co-op campaign features multiple organizations. Each organization pays a portion of the ad cost, thereby allowing them the greater exposure that comes with full page advertising in regional and national publications for a much smaller investment. You may apply for a mini grant to be used towards our Co-op Advertising Program. The same rules apply to contracts for a certain number of ad placements, and your mini grant could cover 10% or 25% of your campaign depending on your status. You will be invoiced for the balance. If your advertising commitment is dependent upon receiving a mini-grant, you may wait for mini-grant decisions to sign your co-op ad agreement. Contact GMVCVB with any questions.

Q. Can I use my grant towards other GMVCVB advertising such as banner ads or the visitors guide?

A. You may use your mini grant towards banner ads on the GMVCVB website or in our newsletter. Ads in our printed visitors guide are **NOT** eligible. GMVCVB has over 12k visitors to our website per month and over 13K subscribers to our E-Blasts. Our social media channels always have a growing audience.

Q. Are these reimbursement grants?

A. No. Your vendor must invoice the GMVCVB for the total cost of your project. We will then invoice you for the project amount less your grant award. You must pay your invoice to us no later than June 1, 2025, or risk losing your award.

Q. Will these grants cover operational expenses for an event, for example, my DJ or catering?

A. No, these grants will not cover operational expenses. They cover advertising only.

Q. Will these grants cover marketing expenses such as printed collateral, fliers for an event, or yard signs?

A. These grants can cover most marketing expenses when the project targets visitors to the region. The grants do NOT cover local advertising such as yard signs or print ads in your town’s paper.

Q. I am a local business who only draws from Merrimack Valley. Can I apply for a campaign that just advertises to my surrounding community?

A. No. These grants are intended to drive traffic into the Greater Merrimack Valley region from outside the region. At least part of your marketing campaign MUST target people outside of the region.

Q. When are applications due, when will award decisions be made and will late applications be accepted?

A. Applications open now and close **Friday, January 31, 2025, at 5pm EST. Applicants will be notified via email in early March.** Late applications will only be considered if we have additional, unawarded grant funds, which are never guaranteed.

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Q. What are my chances of being awarded funding?

A. While we do not guarantee funding to all applicants because we do not know how many requests we will receive each year; we do make every effort to award at least some funding to every eligible project.

Q. What is the timeline for projects?

A. Projects must be invoiced from the vendor to GMVVCVB by May 15, 2025. The grantee must pay the GMVVCVB their portion of the project no later than June 1, 2025, or risk losing their grant award.

Q. Does the GMVVCVB have to approve my ad creative?

A. Yes. You must include either the GMVVCVB logo or the line “Funded, in part, by” on your project. GMVVCVB must approve this funding acknowledgement PRIOR to your piece being published. GMVVCVB will not control the content of your advertising outside of ensuring the funding acknowledgement and correct logos for GMVVCVB and MOTT are in place.

Q. My project timeline changed. Can I have an extension to the May 15 deadline for project invoicing?

A. No, all projects **MUST be invoiced by May 15**, or the grant funding will be lost.

Q. Who should I contact with questions about the mini-grant program or the application process?

A. Most questions can be answered in the initial information and eligibility section of the application or these FAQ's.

Please make sure that you clearly detail in your application the following: who you are as an organization, the nature of the marketing project proposed and how that will drive visitors to the Greater Merrimack Valley region, any prior experience or successes with these types of initiatives, and details of your budget and plans so that we understand exactly what you wish to do and how you plan to accomplish it.

Please address any questions regarding the FY25 mini grant process, to **Brian Bradbury, Executive Director**, at BBradbury@merrimackvalley.org or for membership questions, please contact **Kimberly Prosper, Director of Partnership Development, Engagement & Event Services**, at kprosper@merrimackvalley.org.

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