



**MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE**

Destination MT Division

AGRITOURISM GRANTS PROGRAM

Section 1(c) of SB 540 (2023)

**Agritourism Grants Program Guidelines, Application,
and Grant Administration**

(406) 841-2870

TourismGrants@mt.gov

<https://commerce.mt.gov/Business/Programs-and-Services/Tourism-Marketing/Tourism-Grant-Program/Agritourism-Grant-Program>

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Attachment A

Agritourism Grants Program: Application Scoring Criteria

Alternative accessible formats for this document will be provided upon request. If you need this document in an alternative format, such as large print, Braille, audio tape, or computer diskette, please contact the Montana Department of Commerce's Destination MT Division at (406) 841-2870, TDD (406) 841-2702, or the Relay Services number, 711.

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Agritourism Grants Program

Guidelines, Application, and Grant Administration Manual

I. Introduction

The 2023 Montana Legislature authorized the Montana Department of Commerce (“Department”) to establish the Agritourism Grants Program (“Agritourism Grants” or “Program”) by enacting § 1(c) of Senate Bill 540 (“SB 540”). The purpose of Agritourism Grants is to assist Montana’s Rural and tribal agricultural businesses and communities and to promote Agritourism diversification and support in Montana. The Department’s Destination MT Division (“Destination MT” or “Division”) will administer Agritourism Grants in accordance with these Guidelines.

The Program is intended to:

- (i) Encourage Montana’s farmers and ranchers to diversify operations through new or enhanced Agritourism revenue options;
- (ii) develop and enhance Agritourism opportunities, with an emphasis on Rural locations, Under-visited locations, and Tribal Locations; and
- (iii) generate tourism revenue for the benefit of local Montana economies.

II. Definitions

Consistent with § 1(4)(b) of SB 540, the Department has adopted the following definitions:

Activity: An eligible, planned occurrence or Project that fulfills a specific purpose.

Agriculture Experience: A structured, hands-on or place-based learning opportunity in agriculture.

Agritourism: Montana law generally defines this term as “a form of commercial enterprise that links agricultural production or agricultural processing with tourism in order to attract visitors to a farm, ranch, or other agricultural business for purposes of entertaining or educating the visitors.” See Mont. Code Ann. § [27-1-752\(1\)](#).

Under this Program, Agritourism also will be defined to include the following:

- Agriculture Experiences;
- Direct sales;
- Education;
- Entertainment;
- Hospitality; and

- Outdoor recreation.

Please see this journal [article](#) to learn more about Agritourism in general.

Development: Enhancing or diversifying current and/or new Activities, services, and/or infrastructure that directly support Agritourism.

Direct Sales: Agriculture-related sales that occur between a business and the customer without a distributor. Examples include, but are not limited to, farm stands, u-pick/cut, and farmers' markets.

Education: The process of teaching others about Montana's agriculture, agricultural production, or agricultural processing. Examples include, but are not limited to, on-farm classes and tours and off-farm agriculture museums or fairs.

Entertainment: A type of Activity that allows the public to participate in farm-related Activities and Agriculture Experiences. Examples include, but are not limited to, on-farm festivals, mazes, hayrides.

Grantee: An individual, business, or form of local government that applies for, and is awarded, an Agritourism Grant from the Department.

Hospitality: The business of providing food, drink, or accommodations for customers. Examples include, but are not limited to, farm stays and farm-to-table dinners and tastings.

In-kind: Payment made in the form of goods or services as opposed to money.

Invoices: Grantees must submit invoices to the Department to receive Agritourism Grants funds. Invoices generally should include: the invoice number(s), a brief description of goods delivered and/or services performed, date(s) service was performed, type(s)/number of delivered goods, and total amount being billed.

Match: The portion of funds that the Grantee contributes to the total cost of the Project.

Outdoor Recreation: Activities done outside, most commonly in a rural or natural setting. Examples include, but are not limited to, classes and tours, horseback riding, hiking, and wildlife viewing.

Project: The Agritourism Development for which a Grantee has received Program funding, as established in the approved application.

Rural: Rural is defined as "not Urban," as that term is defined below.

Tribal Location: Any land in Montana that is either (i) located within the boundaries of an Indian reservation or (ii) located outside of an Indian reservation that is owned by or in trust for the benefit of an Indian tribe.

Under-visited: The 4% Lodging Facility Use Tax dataset determines if a place is over-visited or Under-visited, based on a 3-year average of a CVB's bed tax collection. If a CVB's bed tax collection is below the simple average of all CVBs' bed tax collections, then it is Under-visited. This designation will be analyzed every year and the [Map of Urban and Overvisited Designations](#) will be updated accordingly.

Urban: Urban places are defined as either: 1) a census Urban area with a population at or exceeding 30,000 people according to the most recent United States census; or 2) an incorporated city/town within 10 miles of one of those large Urban areas. Areas in Montana that meet this definition currently include Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Great Falls, Helena, Kalispell, Missoula, Belgrade, Columbia Falls, East Helena, Laurel, Walkerville, and Whitefish.

III. Eligible Applicants

Individuals and entities that work in Montana's agriculture sector, provide Agriculture Experiences, or provide Agritourism opportunities to the public may apply for an Agritourism Grant. Eligible individuals and entities include the following:

- Local governments, including city governments, county governments, and consolidated governments;
- Schools, including K-12, universities, and colleges;
- Tribal governments (a waiver of sovereign immunity likely will be required for a tribal government to receive Agritourism Grants funding);
- Enrolled member(s) of the eight (8) federally-recognized Montana Tribes;
- Montana residents; and
- Businesses, including not-for-profit businesses, that are registered and in good standing with the Montana Secretary of State if required by Montana law.

Eligible applicants are limited to one submission per grant cycle.

IV. Eligible Uses of Agritourism Grant Funds and Match

Grantees generally may use Program funds to provide Agritourism services in Montana. Eligible uses of Program funds for Agritourism purposes include:

- Advertising and marketing
- Agriculture Experiences or Activities

- Business planning and development
- Education and outreach
- Safety and accessibility additions or improvements

Based on availability of funds, the Department may award Grantees up to \$50,000 on a reimbursement basis. A Match is not required for Projects up to \$10,000. A 1:1 Match is required for Projects between \$10,001 and \$50,000 and must be met on each request for funds. Up to 25% of required Match can be In-kind.

Agritourism Grants funding recipients may obtain reimbursements for allowable expenses after they sign a contract with the Department and submit Invoices to the Department.

V. Ineligible Uses of Agritourism Grant Funds

Grantees may not use Program funds for the following purposes:

- Any ongoing or monthly general operating expenses such as wages, insurance, equipment, office supplies, postage, or machinery needed for day-to-day operations.
- Any reimbursement for travel expenses.
- Costs related to refinancing, servicing, or interest on any debt.
- Any costs incurred prior to the date identified in the award letter.
- Purchase of real estate property, live animals, or motorized vehicles, including but not limited to automobiles, snowmobiles, snow machines, sport utility vehicles, all-terrain vehicles, and utility terrain vehicles.
- Any undertaking prohibited by Montana or federal law.
- Any undertaking that violates federal law or does not meet all federal, state, and local building, food safety, and regulatory requirements.
- Any undertaking that would occur outside of Montana or tribal boundaries located within Montana.
- Any undertaking prohibited by the contract signed by the Grantee and Department, or that is inconsistent with other Department directives.

VI. Application Process

To apply for an Agritourism Grant, interested and eligible applicants must complete and submit to the Department the application that is located on Destination MT's website at <https://brand.mt.gov/Programs/Office-Of-Tourism/Tourism-Grant-Program>. Additionally, the Department has created a Toolkit on its website, which contains various templates and other form documents that Grantees may wish to use while participating in the Agritourism Grants Program.

Interested parties can also e-mail TourismGrants@mt.gov or call Destination MT staff at (406) 841-2870 to ask any questions they may have about Agritourism Grants.

VII. Application Review and Scoring Criteria

All applications received through the online platform are initially reviewed by Destination MT staff for completeness. All eligible applications received will be reviewed and evaluated by the Program's review committee. Please note that the review committee will apply scoring enhancements to certain applicants, including applicants whose proposed Projects will take place in a Rural location, Under-visited location, or Tribal Location.

The review committee will review eligible applications by applying the scoring criteria identified in Attachment A available on Destination MT's website at <https://brand.mt.gov/Programs/Office-Of-Tourism/Tourism-Grant-Program> before making recommendations to the Department's Director. During the review, Destination MT staff may contact an applicant to discuss any concerns or questions, or to request additional information or documentation. Staff may require additional information from the applicant to clarify information presented in the application; however, the applicant may only submit additional information after the initial application if specifically requested by Destination MT staff.

VIII. Award Process and Grant Administration

After the successful completion of the final review process, Destination MT staff will notify all successful applicants, i.e., Grantees of an Agritourism award, by sending a formal award letter.

Once award letters are sent, Grantees must sign the contract required by the Department to receive Agritourism funds.

Each Grantee will be assigned a Destination MT liaison. The liaison will facilitate Grantee Project monitoring, quarterly reporting, and final Project reporting requirements. During the contracting process, the Grantee and Destination MT staff liaison will review Project administration requirements, including:

- All reporting requirements;
- How to submit forms and other documents to the Department; and
- How to submit a request for funds.

Grantees must notify Destination MT in writing if issues occur in relation to the Project, including:

- Modifications over \$5000 to the budget or approved costs; and
- Performing the duties required of the Agritourism Grant, including how to handle making any necessary changes to the Grantee's primary or secondary contact information or legal signatory.

The Grantee's Project contract generally will not exceed sixteen (16) months unless approved by the Department in writing and must be signed by the Grantee prior to disbursement of any grant award.

The Department logo will be provided to each Grantee and, as applicable, must be displayed on sponsor banner(s), signage, social media, printed materials, and the Grantee's website. The Grantee must also recognize the Department in any announcements of financial or sponsorship support.

If you have any questions about these Guidelines, please contact:

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Tourism Grant Program
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