

2026 Cortland County Tourism Marketing Grants

Application + Guidelines

Tourism Marketing Grants Overview:

Cortland County collects a 5% tax per room night on overnight lodging stays, known as an Occupancy Tax. The intent of the local occupancy tax law is to enhance funding for tourism and cultural activities for the benefit of Cortland County and to further support economic development as it relates to tourism. The Cortland County Tourism Marketing Grant program aims to provide support for external marketing efforts (outside of Cortland County) that will stimulate increased overnight stays, tourism business and visitor spending in Cortland County. Interested applicants must submit this completed Application and all required Supporting Documentation. A timeline for the process is included below.

Grant Allocation Priorities:

The primary purpose of the Tourism Marketing Grant program is to generate the greatest possible return on investment. Allocation preference will be given in priority order to:

- Attractions, events, programs, and activities that ***generate multi-day or overnight visits***, such as but not limited to, conventions, trade shows, exhibitions, festivals, consumer shows, and cultural events.
- Attractions, events, programs, and activities that attract or have the potential to ***attract a significant number of attendees from outside Cortland County***.
- Attractions, events, programs, and activities that benefit residents and ***increase economic activity***.

Eligibility:

Duly incorporated tourism-related not-for-profit or not-for-profit organizations recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as 501c3 are eligible to apply for 2026 Cortland County Tourism Marketing Grants.

Advertising Criteria:

This grant program supports external marketing efforts intended to reach audiences outside Cortland County. Applicants should describe how each funded tactic will be placed, distributed, or targeted outside the county (for example: out-of-county publication buys; regional radio/TV; direct mail to out-of-county zip codes; or digital advertising with out-of-county geo-targeting).

Eligible advertising/marketing expenses utilizing the Tourism Marketing Grants include, but are not limited to:

- Printed material such as brochures, rack cards, flyers, and posters.
- Print advertising in recognized newspapers, magazines or other periodicals, extending outside Cortland County borders.
- Digital advertising such as e-newsletters and paid social media, targeted to audiences outside Cortland County.
- Radio or television advertising, extending outside Cortland County borders.
- Websites or other appropriate electronic advertising used to reach audiences outside Cortland County.
- Billboards or banners, if used outside of Cortland County.

- Services contracted through a third-party vendor including website development and enhancement, production of photo and video assets, media production, ad creation and graphic design services, and direct mail campaigns, if outside Cortland County.

The following are ineligible expenses under the Tourism Marketing Grant program:

- Administrative, clerical, production or normal operating costs.
- Capital projects.
- Equipment or capital facility development or improvements.
- Food, lodging, mileage and transportation costs.
- Telephone expenses, postage and handling expenses.
- Brochure racks.
- Envelopes, letterhead, business cards and miscellaneous office supplies.
- Membership dues and salaries.
- Gift cards, t-shirts and items for resale.

Step-by-Step Outline:

- Complete and Submit 2026 Tourism Marketing Grant Application by **5PM, Friday, January 30, 2026.**
 - ***All required information must be provided, and the application must be signed.***
- Tourism Marketing Grant Applicants will be notified of their grant status by March 2026.
 - Upon notification of Grant status, all awardees will be required to enter into a contract with the Convention + Visitors Bureau to voucher for their funds.

Tourism Marketing Grants Evaluation Criteria:

Full proposals will be evaluated and scored by the Tourism Marketing Grant Committee based on how well they respond to the criteria below -

» **Applicant Readiness**

- Did the application include all required documentation? (see the Required Documentation section)
- Does the application demonstrate readiness to use the grant funds and implement the proposed plan within 12 months of being funded?

» **Plan Benefits**

- Does the provided 2026 marketing plan effectively demonstrate how the grant funds will be utilized to promote outside Cortland County?
- If awarded a Tourism Marketing Grant in 2025, did the agency/event demonstrate the success of their marketing efforts, including attendance and clarification on spending of funds?
- How significant is the potential for direct, measurable tourism impact in Cortland County?
- Is there potential for economic benefits in Cortland County in the form of additional hotel room nights and visitor spending?
- Are there additional significant quality-of-life benefits? Measurable benefits may occur in future years.

» **Plan Budget + Measurements**

- Is requested funding reasonable based on the expected benefits?

- Does the applicant demonstrate sound and measurable evaluation techniques of marketing plans, with a focus on visitation from outside Cortland County?

Award Decision Process:

- The Tourism Marketing Grant Committee will review submitted applications from prospective applicants for completeness and eligibility.
- The review committee makes funding recommendations to the Cortland County Finance & Administration Committee and the Cortland County Legislature.
- The Legislature votes on the grant awards.
- The Cortland County CVB sends award letters to all applicants with funding decision and a contract.

If you have any questions, please contact Michelle Enright, Executive Director of the Cortland County CVB at michelle@experiencecortland.com or 607-753-8463.

2026 Cortland County Tourism Marketing Grants Application

Application Deadline: 5PM on Friday, January 30, 2026

Application and all supporting documentation must be submitted in one packet to the Cortland County Convention + Visitors Bureau via email to michelle@experiencecortland.com or delivered/mailed to the CVB Office, 42 Main Street, Cortland, NY 13045.

1. Is the applying organization/event a 501c3?

You will be required to submit proof of 501c3 status with your application.

_____ YES, we have 501c3 status. *Please continue to Question 2.*

_____ NO, we do not have 501c3 status.

NOTE: If you are not a 501c3 organization, STOP - you are not eligible to apply for Cortland County Tourism Marketing grant funds. Please contact the Cortland County Convention + Visitors Bureau at 607-753-8463 for information on other potential funding opportunities.

2. Name of Agency/Event Applying: _____

3. Contact Person: _____

4. Contact Person's Title: _____

5. Physical Address: _____

6. Mailing Address (if different from above): _____

7. Telephone: _____

8. Email: _____

9. Event/Agency Website: _____

10. Event/Agency Social Media Links:

Facebook: _____

Instagram: _____

TikTok: _____

Other: _____

11. Have you been awarded a Cortland County Tourism Marketing grant before? *PLEASE NOTE – additional documentation is required if you've been awarded a Tourism Marketing grant in a prior year. A formal narrative describing the most recent grant year's fund use, including the success of the marketing efforts, attendance reports and clarification on spending of the awarded funds (or lack of spending of complete award) must be included.*

_____ YES, we have received an award before. *Please answer Questions 11A, 11B and 11C.*

_____ NO, we have never been awarded through this funding stream before. *Continue to Question 12.*

11A. What was the most recent year you received a Tourism Marketing grant? _____

11B. What was the total amount awarded to your agency? _____

11C. How much of the award did you spend/voucher for? _____

12. Date of Event (if applicable): _____

13. Briefly Describe the Event/Agency and its Main Focus/Goals of the Event/Agency:

14. Total Marketing/Advertising Budget: _____

15. Amount of Funding Requested: _____

16. Please list all other funding sources and amount of funding:

17. Visitation to the agency/event is expected to be tracked, with a particular focus on visitation from outside Cortland County. Please describe the tracking mechanism you will be utilizing. Documentation will be required immediately after completion of the event. Failure to provide tracking statistics could result in disqualification from future grants.

18. The following documents must be submitted with your application. PLEASE NOTE – Failure to submit a complete application packet, including all below documents, will deem the application ineligible for review, and grant funds WILL NOT be awarded.

☐ **2026 Tourism Marketing Plan**

A complete marketing plan, showing the planned use of requested grant funds, including breakdown of forms of marketing as well as outlets advertisements will be placed in, MUST be included with your application. Please keep the grant guidelines in mind when developing your marketing plan.

☐ **Proof of Organizational 501c3 Status and/or Certificate of Incorporation**

☐ **Proof that Agent Submitting Application is Authorized Agent of the Agency**

A Board Resolution indicating that the person signing the application is an authorized agent of the Organization would be sufficient.

☐ **Proof of Insurance for Agency/Event**

If you are a once-yearly event that does not receive insurance paperwork until the event occurs, please include a copy of the Insurance Certification from the 2025 event and indicate as such. PLEASE NOTE – if funding is awarded, you must submit proof of 2026 event insurance before any funds will be released.

☐ **IRS Employer Identification Number**

☐ **Narrative of Previously Awarded Grant Spend**

ONLY required if you answered YES in Question 11.

By signing and submitting this application, you agree to the guidelines and terms for Cortland County Tourism Marketing Grants and indicate that you are an authorized agent of the submitting Agency/Event and are eligible to sign and submit said application.

_____ **I have fully completed this application and have included all required documents. Please initial.**

Agency/Event Representative Signature: _____

Agency/Event Representative Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Please submit a completed application packet to the Cortland County Convention + Visitors Bureau, by 5PM on Friday, January 30, 2026, in one of the following ways:

VIA EMAIL

michelle@experiencecortland.com

Submit as PDF

VIA MAIL

Cortland County CVB
Attn: Michelle Enright
42 Main Street, Cortland NY 13045

DELIVER TO OFFICE

42 Main Street, Cortland NY 13045
Mon-Fri 9a-4p
Please call the Visitors Center to schedule drop off time.

If you have any questions, please contact Michelle Enright, Executive Director of the Cortland County CVB at michelle@experiencecortland.com or 607-753-8463.