



Asa Hutchinson  
Governor  
Stacy Hurst  
Secretary

## Ex. M.1

January 14, 2022

To PEER-Review, Senator Dismang, and Representative Gray:

During the last PEER meeting, Arkansas Tourism received approval for the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration Grant Project Narrative and an update in next month's meeting was requested.

On November 16, 2021, the EDA notified Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism of the EDA grant approval in the amount of \$3,073,713 to support travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation sections in Arkansas as part of EDA's implementation of the American Rescue Plan Act.

The grant scope of work includes Transformational Development Planning, Brand Development & Paid Media, Marketing & promotional items, Outdoor Recreation, Visitor Engagement, and Workforce Development.

Arkansas Tourism is developing the official Grant Administration Plan and budget Form SF 424-A due on January 31, 2022, which outlines specific tasks, timelines, and budgets for each project. Arkansas Tourism has successfully enrolled in the Federal Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP) system to draw down funds reserved for this grant.

On February 1, 2022, Arkansas Tourism will begin working on each project as outlined in the Grant Administration Plan and will provide regular project reports to the EDA through the period of performance as outlined in the award information packet.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "T. Napper".

Travis Napper, Director  
Arkansas Tourism

## EDA State Grant: Project Narrative

Arkansas Tourism will allocate the EDA state grant funds as outlined by the budget and project narrative below.

### Budget

Transformational Development Planning	\$350,000
Brand Development & Paid Media	\$1,453,713
Marketing & Promotional Items	\$570,000
Outdoor Recreation	\$500,000
Visitor Engagement	\$100,000
Workforce Training	\$100,000

### Transformational Development Planning

Arkansas Tourism will enlist the help of an outside consultant and representative(s) from each development region to create a documented, responsive strategic plan that reinforces the state's vision as it relates to tourism related economic development both in the short and long term. This plan will include the development of key tactics to help identify and meet specific tourism economic growth goals during and after the pandemic while following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's travel guidelines.

The following concepts will be included in the strategic plan. Any costs incurred for these concepts are included in the transformational development planning line item of the budget.

- Develop market expansion strategies to grow out-of-state awareness outside of current key markets to attract a more diversified visitor base.
- Provide local tourism industry insights and tools to stimulate marketing partnerships and collaboration.
- Review, refine, and potentially redefine tourist regions so out-of-state visitors can easily identify the offerings of each region which will lead to better alignment with individual preferences and an increase in length of stay, repeat visitation and dispersion across the state.
- Assess outdoor recreation assets and initiatives to ensure alignment with strategic goals which include promoting lesser-known areas to reduce visitor pressure at high volume outdoor areas and developing a plan to preserve our natural resources through sustainability projects.
- Outline initiatives that reach underserved communities and populations to further stimulate tourism related economic growth in adversely affected areas across the state.
- Develop a crisis management and resilience plan that includes instructions on how to resist and recover from the effects of an event (i.e., tornado, flood, pandemic, technology disruption, etc.) in a timely and efficient manner.

Timeline: Strategic Planning completion goal date within one (1) year from funding approval date.

## **Brand Development & Paid Media**

Arkansas Tourism will hire a brand consultant to review and redefine our tourism brand and ensure it aligns with our tourism related economic development initiatives as outlined in our strategic plan.

Once our new brand identity has been established, Arkansas Tourism will work to update all brand assets which could include logos, website design, email programs, photography, video, printed collateral, social media, advertising, etc.

After brand assets have been updated, a brand awareness campaign will commence to share our new brand with markets as determined in the strategic plan to support tourism related economic growth.

This new brand creative will then be tailored to highlight unique qualities in each tourist region and shared with each region at no cost. This will create a unified brand across the state that is easily identifiable to visitors and enhances brand awareness and marketing initiatives.

Timeline: Brand Development complete within 1.5 years from funding approval date; Brand Awareness Campaign complete within two (2) years after brand development is complete.

## **Marketing & Promotional Items**

Arkansas Tourism will allocate this portion of the budget to various marketing and promotional initiatives which includes, but is not limited to, the items listed below.

- Assist Arkansas Tourist Regions in the development of strategic marketing plans that align with the state's strategic plan and tourism growth goals.
- Provide Arkansas Tourist Regions, Destination Marketing Organizations, Convention & Visitors Bureaus, and/or Advertising & Promotion Commissions access to data dashboards, digital passport programs, digital advertising opportunities, and other digital co-ops at a reduced or no cost.
- Offer solar eclipse safety sunglasses to spectators during this rare event in April 2024.

Timeline: Marketing & Promotional Item budget allocation to span through 2024.

## **Outdoor Recreation**

Outdoor recreation will use the funds to enhance the outdoor recreation assets and promotion of the division through website and content development and an economic impact study. Outdoor Recreation will also allocate some of the funds to conduct a state-wide health and wellness study.

Timeline: Outdoor recreation funds will be used within three (3) years from funding approval date.

## **Visitor Engagement**

Arkansas Tourism will work with a vendor that provides digital passport experiences which challenge visitors to travel around the entire state by asking them to check-in at specific locations and receive rewards for completing each passport. This will allow us to create more engaging visitor experiences virtually and in-person while obtaining first party data through the application.

With a digital passport we are also able to capture visitor data such as emails, phone numbers, and city/state as well as when they visited a location. We can then use that data to retarget to these visitors in a more meaningful and engaging way through other marketing initiatives as outlined in our strategic plan.

Timeline: Visitor Engagement Program budget to be used for a multi-year contract spanning 3-5 years.

## **Workforce Training**

Arkansas Tourism will work with the Arkansas Hospitality Association to rework the former in-person customer service training program and move to learning management software that allows scalability with fewer resources. The new workforce development program will include additional learning paths about Arkansas and tourism, so employees feel a sense of connectedness to the state and industry creating a more pleasant visitor experience.

The training program will include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Arkansas Culture, Values & Core Principals
- Arkansas Tourist Regions
- Arkansas Customer Service Standards
- Arkansas Travel Safety
- Arkansas Inclusivity

Timeline: Workforce Development budget to be for a multi-year contract spanning 3-4 years.