



# Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

**9A**  
Agenda Item #

**Requested Meeting Date:** May 13, 2025

**Title of Item:** Award Business Development & Recreation Grants

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA  <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA	<b>Action Requested:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft) <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing <i>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item <input type="checkbox"/> Information Only
<b>Submitted by:</b> Mark Jeffers		<b>Department:</b> Economic Development
<b>Presenter (Name and Title):</b> Mark Jeffers, Economic Development Coordinator		<b>Estimated Time Needed:</b> 5 min
<b>Summary of Issue:</b> <p>The Aitkin County Economic Development Committee has received and reviewed grant funding requests for the Business Development &amp; Recreation Grant Program. Grant applications and grant award summary are included.</p> <p>The Committee was unanimous on the recommendation. The Committee recommends and requests approval to award the following grants at this time:</p> <p>Riverboat Heritage Days    \$2,000          Paddle Your Glass Off    \$2,000</p> <p>The purpose of this grant fund is to leverage county funds, private funds, and volunteer efforts to enhance small business development activities in Aitkin County, with a focus on increasing sustained tourism and recreational events. Organizations may apply individually or submit a joint application. To demonstrate their commitment to the grant request, organizations must provide a 1:1 match of funds in good faith. The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners has approved this funding to be used directly for the benefit of the Aitkin County community through the Aitkin County Business Development &amp; Recreation Grant.</p>		
<b>Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:</b>  		
<b>Recommended Action/Motion:</b> Economic Development requests approval of a motion to award the recommended grants.		
<b>Financial Impact:</b> <i>Is there a cost associated with this request?</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$</i> <i>Is this budgeted?</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>Please Explain:</i>		

**Business Development and Recreation Grant**

#	Facility Name	Project Name	Contact Name	Email	City	Phone	\$ requested	\$ Awarded
1	Growth Innovations	multi-tenant signage	Tami Jacobs	<a href="mailto:tjacobs@growthiv.org">tjacobs@growthiv.org</a>	Aitkin	218.927.2172	\$ 1,025	\$ -
2	Clear Lake Gardens	Aitkin Farm Trail	Kelley Rajala	<a href="mailto:clearlakegardens@gmail.com">clearlakegardens@gmail.com</a>	Aitkin	707.331.6850	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000
3	Long Lake Foundation	Nature Rocks	Bob Marcum, Dave McMillan	<a href="mailto:rmarcum@lcfoundation.org">rmarcum@lcfoundation.org</a>	Aitkin	218.768.4653	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000
4	Food as Medicine Festival	Riverwood/Clear Lake Gardens	Kelley Rajala	<a href="mailto:clearlakegardens@gmail.com">clearlakegardens@gmail.com</a>	Aitkin	707.331.6850	\$ 500	\$ 500
5	Aitkin Area Chamber of Commerce	Riverboat Heritage Days	Stephanie Mollet	<a href="mailto:smollet@aitkin.com">smollet@aitkin.com</a>	Aitkin	218.394.2202	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000
6	Aitkin Area Chamber of Commerce	Paddle Your Glass Off	Stephanie Mollet	<a href="mailto:smollet@aitkin.com">smollet@aitkin.com</a>	Aitkin	218.394.2202	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000
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## Application for Aitkin County Business Development & Recreation Grant Program

January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025

1. Grant requests should be submitted by EMAIL to:  
[mark.jeffers@co.aitkin.mn.us](mailto:mark.jeffers@co.aitkin.mn.us), subject line: BD&R2025 or  
by mail to:  
Mark Jeffers  
Aitkin County Government Center  
307 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NW, Room 316  
Aitkin, MN 56431
2. Funding recommendations will be considered at the regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the Aitkin County Economic Development Committee. Application deadline is **May 31, 2025**.
3. Committee recommendations will be submitted to the Aitkin County Board of Commissioners for final approval.
4. The purpose of this grant fund is to leverage county funds, private funds, and volunteer efforts to enhance small business development activities in Aitkin County, with a focus on increasing sustained tourism and recreational events. Organizations may apply individually or submit a joint application. To demonstrate their commitment to the grant request, organizations must provide a 1:1 match of funds in good faith. The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners has approved this funding to be used directly for the benefit of the Aitkin County community through the Aitkin County Business Development & Recreation Grant.

### APPLICANT INFORMATION

#### PROGRAM INFORMATION

**Project/Event Name:** Aitkin MN Riverboat Heritage Days

**Date(s) of Project/Event:** August 2nd, 2025

**Location of Project/Event:** Downtown Aitkin

**Organization/Community Name:** Aitkin Area Chamber of Commerce

**Person in Charge of Project:** Stephanie Mollet - Outreach Cord.

**Organization Mailing Address (Street Name or P.O. Box or Route and Box # and City and Zip Code):**

PO Box 127 Aitkin, MN 56431 Physical: 301 Minnesota Ave N STE 4

**Contact Person's Phone #:** 218-394-2202

**Contact Person's Email:** [upnorth@aitkin.com](mailto:upnorth@aitkin.com)

**Description/focus/purpose of your organization:**

We advocate for & support our members to build & strengthen our community.



**FUNDING:**

Amount requested from Aitkin County \$ 2000  
(Minimum \$100.00, maximum request is 2,000.00). The Economic Development Committee may recommend to the Board of Commissioners to increase or decrease the amount awarded at their discretion. The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners grants the final approval for funding.

Amount of your organization's match \$ 2000

Total projected budget \$ 8200

**PROJECT/EVENT DESCRIPTION: Be concise and complete; attach supporting information if needed.**

Aitkin Riverboat Heritage Days is an annual event celebrating Aitkin's heritage as a Mississippi riverboat town.

The Aitkin Chamber of Commerce will manage the kid's zone, parade, and vendor fair. These activities aim to foster community spirit, promote local heritage, and support economic growth by attracting visitors and encouraging them to engage with local businesses.

**What do you hope to accomplish, how it will be done and specifically how the grant funds will be used.**

We aim to bring more people to Aitkin, MN to see how it is Naturally Better and enhance collaboration with community partner events, such as Ripplesippi, Atwater's Car Show, Rosallini's Duck Races, and CAPS STAY Run which will occur on the same weekend.

The grant funds will be used to assist with marketing efforts, performers, rentals, and more

**Explain how your project will bring visitors to or provide a positive and sustainable economic impact on Aitkin County.**

The event will draw visitors with its parade, vendor fair, and live music, while engaging the community and spreading the word through social media and local ads. The festival boosts local businesses, creates jobs, and promotes sustainable tourism.

Plus, it reinvests in community projects and preserves local heritage, making it a true celebration of Aitkin County's spirit and pride.

**List target audience:**

Families, locals, travelers from the Brainerd and Metro areas. Our social media demographics show women (78.1%) and men (28.9%).

**How many people usually attend this project/event?**

3,000

**If awarded, how many incremental visitors do you hope to attract?**

5,000



4. **PROJECT BUDGET:** in the space below, provide a budget for the entire event.

Category	Grant Funds	Applicant Funds	Total
Marketing (digital, print, radio)	500	3700	4200
Buttons		1000	1000
Tshirts Aitkin County Naturally Better logo	1500		1500
Performers		500	500
License Fees		50	50
Showboat Float Decorations		150	150
Rentals		800	800
<b>TOTALS</b>	2000	6200	8200

Contact Signature:

Name

Date:

4/4/2025



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Aitkin County Government Center  
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### APPLICANT INFORMATION

#### PROGRAM INFORMATION

**Project/Event Name:** Paddle Your Glass Off 2025

**Date(s) of Project/Event:** June 14th, 2025

**Location of Project/Event:** Kimball Run Access and Aitkin County Campgrounds

**Organization/Community Name:** Aitkin Area Chamber of Commerce

**Person in Charge of Project:** Stephanie Mollet - Outreach Cord.

**Organization Mailing Address (Street Name or P.O. Box or Route and Box # and City and Zip Code):**

PO Box 127 Aitkin, MN 56431 Physical: 301 Minnesota Ave N STE 4

**Contact Person's Phone #:** 218-394-2202

**Contact Person's Email:** [upnorth@aitkin.com](mailto:upnorth@aitkin.com)

**Description/focus/purpose of your organization:**

We advocate for & support our members to build & strengthen our community.



**FUNDING:**

Amount requested from Aitkin County \$ 2,000  
(Minimum \$100.00, maximum request is 2,000.00). The Economic Development Committee may recommend to the Board of Commissioners to increase or decrease the amount awarded at their discretion. The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners grants the final approval for funding.

Amount of your organization's match \$ 2000

Total projected budget \$ 4000

**PROJECT/EVENT DESCRIPTION: Be concise and complete; attach supporting information if needed.**

Our event includes a paddle along the Mississippi River, followed by a tasting of beer, wine, and spirits from local vendors, with live music. Paddlers will start at Kimball Public Access and end at the Aitkin County Campgrounds, where the tasting will be held. We will provide shuttle services and help with launching and landing to ensure everything runs smoothly.

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**What do you hope to accomplish, how it will be done and specifically how the grant funds will be used.**

Objective: We aim to raise awareness about Aitkin's waterways and highlight their value as recreational assets.

How It Will Be Done: We will introduce people to our river trails, showcasing their beauty and recreational opportunities.

Use of Grant Funds: The grant funds will be used for marketing efforts, rentals, water, snacks, and more.

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**Explain how your project will bring visitors to or provide a positive and sustainable economic impact on Aitkin County.**

Our event attracts diverse crowds, including locals and visitors from the Metro and Brainerd Lakes Area. Attendees often dine at local restaurants and explore Aitkin's waterways, fostering a deeper connection with the community. This interaction supports local businesses like eateries, gas stations, rental companies, and stores. As more people become familiar with Aitkin, we expect increased support for lodging establishments, boosting the local economy and community pride.

**List target audience:**

Our target audience includes past event attendees, primarily adults aged 21 and above who are active on social media and listen to our local radio stations. Our demographic analysis shows women (78.1%) and men (28.9%).

**How many people usually attend this project/event?**

100 attendees and 20 volunteers

**If awarded, how many incremental visitors do you hope to attract?**

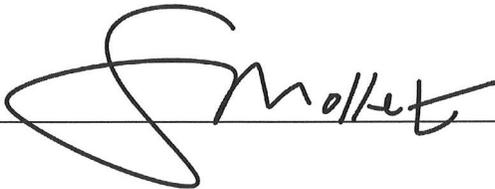
We hope to grow this event every year. We are currently capped at 100 attendees due to shuttling constraints.



4. **PROJECT BUDGET:** in the space below, provide a budget for the entire event.

Category	Grant Funds	Applicant Funds	Total
Kayak Rentals		1200	1200
Shirts (Shirts Plus) with Naturally Better Aitkin County Logo	1300		1300
Stickers		100	100
Music	400		400
Porta Potties		500	500
License Fees		50	50
Marketing (Social Media, Radio, Print)	300		300
Snacks/Water		150	150
<b>TOTALS</b>	2000	2000	4000

Contact Signature:

Name  Date: 4/4/2025