



# Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

**5B**  
Agenda Item #

**Requested Meeting Date:** September 9, 2025

**Title of Item:** 2026 Business Development & Recreation Grant Program Approval

<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 minutes
<b>Summary of Issue:</b>  Economic Development staff, with collaboration and recommendation by the Economic Development Committee, offers the 2026 Business Development & Recreation Grant for approval.  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.  The Economic Development Committee recommends approval to execute this program. The County Attorney has reviewed the document.		
<b>Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:</b>   		
<b>Recommended Action/Motion:</b> Economic Development requests a motion to approve execution of the Business Development & Recreation Grant Program.		
<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 <span style="float: right;"><i>Please Explain:</i></span>		



## ***AITKIN COUNTY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & RECREATION GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES***

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.

**Grant Guidelines:** Guidelines for application and awarding of Aitkin County Business Development & Recreation Grants are as follows:

1. **Funding Limits:** Minimum of \$100 and a maximum of \$2,000 per grant application. 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.
2. **Matching Funds:** The Aitkin County Business Development & Recreation Grant Program is designed to leverage locally funded promotions, not replace them. A 1:1 match to the funds requested is required (e.g., the applicant must commit \$2,000 to request for a \$2,000 award). Significant consideration will be given to the amount and quality of matching funds and in-kind contributions when grant applications are evaluated by the Economic Development Committee and County Board.
3. **Countywide Distribution:** The intent of this program is to provide assistance throughout Aitkin County. Consideration shall be given to the amounts awarded and number of grants approved per year for any particular region of the county to ensure that an equitable level of funding is available throughout the county.
4. **Organizations that receive a grant award are not eligible to receive BD&R Grant Awards in the following year. Grants may be awarded to the same organization only once every other year.**
5. **Grant funds shall not be used to pay the salaries of part- or full-time staff associated with a particular event/business development activity or organization associated with an event/business development activity. Funds shall not be used for any type of prizes or other material items that may be offered, awarded, sold or given away. Funds are not intended to be an annual budget supplement. Funds are intended for incremental business development and recreation.**
6. **Aitkin County Business Development and Recreation Grant funds may not be used to reimburse expenses that occurred prior to grant approval by Aitkin County.**



7. Grant funds are intended to support tourism and business attraction events that drive visitors to Aitkin County, ultimately creating a positive economic impact.
8. Eligible Event Examples:
  - Annual events promoting tourism & recreation
  - Events that provide incremental tourism growth
  - Grant Funds shall be used to market business development activities that create sustainable tourism or recreation growth or activities/businesses that will enhance the Aitkin County economy.
9. Eligible organizations:
  - Businesses located in Aitkin County.
  - Non-Profit organizations that serve Aitkin County
  - Special consideration will be given to applications that will enhance the Northwood's ATV Trail or River Trails through signage, promotion, activities or trail amenities.

**Application Procedure:** Guidelines for applications are as follows:

1. Grant requests should be submitted by EMAIL to:  
[Mark.jeffers@aitkincountymn.gov](mailto:Mark.jeffers@aitkincountymn.gov)  
subject line: BD&R2026  
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. The application deadline is **May 31, 2026**.
3. Committee recommendations will be submitted to the Aitkin County Board of Commissioners for final approval.



### **Reporting Requirements**

1. Applicants that are awarded a Business Development & Recreation grant are required to submit proof of fund use prior to the end of the one-year grant period (January 1 - December 31). Reporting information documents and deadlines will be included in the award letter.
2. Economic Development staff will collaborate with grant award winners to verify qualified grant use.
3. Unused funds at the conclusion of the one-year grant period must be returned to Aitkin County.

Further information and additional forms and materials may be obtained by contacting:

Mark Jeffers  
Aitkin County Economic Development Coordinator  
218-531-6188  
[Mark.jeffers@aitkincountymn.gov](mailto:Mark.jeffers@aitkincountymn.gov)





## Application for Aitkin County Business Development & Recreation Grant Program

January 1, 2026 - December 31, 2026

1. Grant requests should be submitted by EMAIL to:  
[Mark.jeffers@aitkincountymn.gov](mailto:Mark.jeffers@aitkincountymn.gov)  
subject line: BD&R2026 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, 2026**.
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:**

**Date(s) of Project/Event:**

**Location of Project/Event:**

**Organization/Community Name:**

**Person in Charge of Project:**

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

**Contact Person's Phone #:**

**Contact Person's Email:**

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



**FUNDING:**

Amount requested from Aitkin County \$

(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 \$

Total projected budget \$

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

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

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

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**List target audience:**

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

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



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

Category	Grant Funds	Applicant Funds	Total
<b>TOTALS</b>			

Contact Signature:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## AITKIN COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Aitkin County Government Center  
307 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NW  
Aitkin, MN 56431

Mark Jeffers  
Mark.jeffers@aitkincountymn.gov  
Phone: 218-927-7305  
Cell: 218-513-6188

**TO:**  
**FROM:** Mark Jeffers  
**DATE:**  
**Award Amount:**

The undersigned agrees:

1. To use funds only for the designated purposes as described in the grant application and to notify Aitkin County Business Development and Recreation Grant Administration (BD&R) and receive consent to any substantial deviation from the grant application.
2. That the total amount of the grant may be discontinued, modified or withheld at any time, when, in the judgment of the BD&R, such action is necessary to comply with the requirements of the law or when, compliance to all of the rules stated on the recipient agreement form are not met.
3. An Expense Worksheet must be completed and returned along with copies of all receipts upon completion of the event/project.
4. A grant closure letter will be provided once all documents are complete.
5. All materials and promotion of the program must indicate/acknowledge Aitkin County Economic Development as a supporter (not sponsor) of the event/project.
6. A check for all remaining grant money must be returned to Aitkin County with the final financial statement and evaluation.
7. NO interest shall accrue on grant funds provided through this program.
8. No reimbursement grants will be awarded.
9. Grant funds shall not be used to pay the salaries of part- or full-time staff associated with a particular event/business development activity or organization associated with an event/business development activity.
10. Funds shall not be used for any type of prizes or other material items that may be offered, awarded, sold or given away. Funds are not intended to be an annual budget supplement. Funds are intended for incremental business development and recreation.
11. Events must provide incremental tourism growth
12. Grant Funds shall be used to market business development activities that create sustainable tourism or recreation growth or activities/businesses that will enhance the Aitkin County economy.
13. Events and grant documents must be completed by December 31.

Grant Recipient accepts the conditions of this Agreement and requests that the grant payment be executed.

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Grant Recipient

Date

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Economic Development Coordinator

Date