



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
subject line: BD&R2026
or by mail to:
Mark Jeffers
Aitkin County Government Center,
307 2nd 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