

FY28 DMO Certification Guidelines

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DMO Certification Overview & Timelines

DMO Certification Overview

The Missouri Division of Tourism (MDT) partners with Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) across the state to advertise and promote Missouri's tourism assets. The Division's Cooperative Marketing Programs invest in projects that are specifically designed to increase visitation and visitor spending throughout the state.

The goals and executions of Cooperative Marketing are aligned with the goals established in MDT's strategic plan. Funds are distributed among separate matching grant programs, and MDT funds qualified advertising and marketing projects to achieve the following objectives:

- Support and further MDT's overall annual marketing strategy as outlined in the annual marketing plan and position Missouri to compete more effectively for travel and tourism market share.

- Create programs based on the common marketing goals of MDT and the DMO, thereby creating mutually beneficial marketing executions.

- Create a program that is efficient to implement for both MDT and its partners.

MDT has several programs available to all DMOs; however, DMO certification is required to participate in the Marketing Matching Grant (MMG). To learn more about the programs available, visit the site at Industry.VisitMO.com.

ADMINISTRATION

MDT administers the Cooperative marketing programs on behalf of the Missouri Tourism Commission, which reserves the right to make all final decisions.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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DISCLOSURES

- The state of Missouri reserves the right to review/audit participants' certification records for five years following certification.
- MDT may suspend or revoke certification upon discovering a violation of certification requirements.
- The Missouri Tourism Commission reserves the right to make all final decisions concerning the administration of cooperative marketing programs.

Timelines

TIMELINES

DATE	ACTIVITY
January 1	DMO Certification Application Opens
February 28	DMO Certification Application Closes
March 15	Certifications are Announced
April 1	MMG Applications Open
April 30	MMG Applications Close
June 15	MMG Awards Announced
July 1	New Fiscal Year Begins

DMO Eligibility

DMO REQUIREMENTS

Missouri Division of Tourism (MDT) defines a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) as a non-profit (under Missouri Chapter 355) or benevolent (under Missouri Chapter 352) Missouri corporation or government unit responsible for and actively engaged in the promotion and marketing of travel and tourism in Missouri, supported by the organization's mission, charter, budget, funding sources and financial statements.

A DMO meets the following requirements:

- The organization is one of the following types of nonprofit or benevolent organizations:
  - Convention and Visitors Bureau/Commission (MACVB or DMAI approved)
  - Chamber of Commerce (MCC or US Chamber of Commerce approved)
  - A city or county government, or a subdivision of a city or county government, that functions as a DMO, (ex. city or county tourism department)
  - City or county (or designee) taxing authority that operates by contract as the primary tourism marketing organization for the city or county
  - Tourism commission or board that operates by contract as the primary tourism marketing organization for the city or county
  - Regional partnership
- The organization has an established funding source in place
- The organization has been incorporated as a nonprofit or benevolent entity and is registered and in good standing with the State of Missouri (city and county tourism departments are exempt)

The following organizations do not satisfy requirements above:

- Special event organizations and event organizers
- Single attractions or organizations representing single attractions

MDT has several partnership opportunities available to DMO (non-certified) – for more information, visit the Industry.VisitMO.com website.

A DMO must become a Certified DMO to participate in the Marketing Matching Grant (MMG) Program. Participating in the MMG Program is the only reason a DMO needs to be 'certified'.

CERTIFIED DMO REQUIREMENTS

To qualify as a certified DMO, an entity must be able to satisfy all the DMO requirements, as well as the following requirements:

- The organization is recognized through an adopted resolution by the county commission/governing body as the county's single official countywide DMO for participation in MMG Program (St. Louis meets this qualification per statute 67.607)
- The organization employs an adequate number of staff to ensure management of the requested funding – if you are unsure of your County Tourism Level (CTL), please contact the Cooperative Marketing team.
    - For an organization with a CTL of 5 or less, one full-time (32 hours a week, at least minimum wage) paid staff member exclusively dedicated to travel/tourism is required
    - For non-government organizations with a CTL of 6 or higher, three paid full-time employees (32 hours per week, at least minimum wage) who are exclusively dedicated to travel/tourism are required for DMO certification and participation in the MMG Program
    - Government organizations with their own administrative departments, to include financial, legal and other supervisory roles, are required to have one full-time paid employee (32 hours per week, at least minimum wage) exclusively dedicated to travel/tourism to become a certified DMO and participate in the MMG Program
    - If an organization's sole purpose is travel/tourism, then all employees, including administration, would be considered a travel/tourism employee. However, an organization that is not strictly dedicated to travel/tourism must only count employees that are directly responsible for promotion of travel/tourism. This includes staff members dedicated to marketing, public relations, group travel, convention sales, etc.
- The organization can demonstrate it is currently, and has been, actively engaged in tourism destination marketing for a minimum of two years OR the 'Project Manager' has actively participated in the MDT programs for a minimum of two years
- The organization has a tourism exclusive marketing brochure
- The organization has a tourism exclusive website

Exceptions to DMO certification may be made by MDT on a case-by-case basis.

Certification and Application

CERTIFICATION

Organizations receiving MDT certification must work with tourism organizations and businesses within the county to promote on a countywide basis. No more than one DMO can be certified for each Missouri county; however, a DMO may represent up to three contiguous counties.

MDT reviews the certification application and documentation, and based on the information provided, the application is approved or rejected. The DMO certification is valid for five years. Any certified DMO that is inactive in an MDT program for two consecutive fiscal years is required to re-certify. However, MDT reserves the right to re-evaluate and/or review information to ensure that the organization continues to meet all requirements throughout the duration of the certification. If the organization fails to meet the DMO certification requirements, program participation will be suspended and/or certification will be revoked.

Certified DMOs are responsible for notifying MDT of significant organizational changes that may affect certification eligibility, including changes to staffing, organizational structure, or official DMO designation.

APPLICATION

To qualify for participation in the MMG Program, qualified organizations not currently certified must submit the official certification application (that opens January 1) and required documents to the MDT by 5 pm on February 28. The DMO certification application and required documentation are available on the Submittable website.

DMOs with certifications expiring prior to July 1 must re-certify to participate in the MMG Program. The organization must submit the official re-certification application and required documents to the MDT by 5 pm on February 28. The DMO re-certification application and required documentation are available on the Submittable website.

If a DMO does not meet certification or re-certification requirements for the MMG Program fiscal year, they can apply for the next fiscal year. Applications for each new program year open on January 1 and are due by 5 pm February 28. These applications and required documentation will be available on the Submittable website.

The DMO certification and MMG awards are separate applications and are due at separate times.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION	NEW CERTIFICATION	RE-CERTIFICATION
County Resolution	✓	✓
Employee Attestation	✓	✓
Financial Statements	✓	
Statement of Activities	✓	
Marketing Plan	✓	
Brochure	✓	
Website	✓	

The following required documentation must be provided to MDT along with the DMO certification application by the application deadline:

- **Resolution** – A resolution adopted by the county commission recognizing the applicant as the official DMO for the county/counties to participate in the MMG Program. (This must be an official form on letterhead and signed by a commissioner – a sample is attached to the application) St. Louis City/County is the exception and needs no resolution (per statute 67.607). The resolution must be signed in the same year as the certification or re-certification application.
- **Employee Attestation** – A letter from the organization signed by the president/CEO attesting to the number of full-time (32 hours per week, at least minimum wage) paid travel and tourism staff members.
- **Financial Statements** – Financial statements reflecting budget, revenues and expenses for the previous two years detailing applicant organization's travel and tourism marketing expenditures, payroll/administrative expenses and sources of revenue.
    - If the financial statements do not show travel and tourism marketing, the organization must submit an attestation (on letterhead and signed by the Project Manager) to attest that the Project Manager has been working with MDT in the Cooperative Marketing Programs for at least two years.
- **Statement of Activities** – A statement of travel and tourism marketing activities successfully completed and paid for by the applicant organization in the last two years. Include samples all travel and tourism marketing materials listed. These activities must be detailed in the financial statements.

    - Activities do not have to be listed on the financial statements IF the Project Manager has attested to previous MDT Cooperative Marketing experience. (see above)
- **Marketing Plan** – The organization's current marketing plan with detailed action plan.
- **Brochure** – A current tourism marketing brochure or guide.
- **Website** – The organization's tourism marketing website address. The website must be a tourism website that will be the 'call to action' on marketing materials paid for through the Cooperative Marketing Programs.

The documents above are required for all new DMO certifications; however, only the Commission Resolution and Employee Attestation are required for re-certification.

MDT reserves the right to request additional documentation as needed to verify eligibility or certification requirements.

NEXT STEPS

DMO certification does NOT guarantee funding. The certified DMO must apply for individual grants or cooperative marketing opportunities – separate from the DMO certification. DMO certification applications are completed between January and February, and organizations are notified of their status in March. The MMG application period takes place in April, and the grant awards are announced in early summer. Please see the Timelines section for specific dates.

Sample Resolution

For the Official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for the Division of Tourism

The county government must formally adopt this resolution.

WHEREAS, _____*(name of applicant)*_____, a legitimate department, agency, or representative of _____*(county)*___, is engaged primarily in the marketing and promotion of tourism; and

WHEREAS, this organization has shown and demonstrated evidence of its on-going tourism marketing activities and plans for promotion of _____*(county)*county; and

WHEREAS, this organization requires formal acknowledgement and recognition by the governing body of the county to become a qualified participant in the programs administered by the Missouri Division of Tourism:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that ____*(applicant)*_____is hereby designated and recognized as the single representative organization to solicit and service tourism in _____*(county)*___for participation in the Missouri Division of Tourism's Marketing Matching Grant.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand, in

____*(county)*___ county, this _____day of _____ , 20___.

_____*(signature*)_____

(Presiding commissioner)

Resolution number _____