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Item No. 8i supp
Meeting Date: February 13, 2024

Tourism Marketing Support Program Authorization

Supporting Tourism Partnerships

Requesting Commission authorization for the Executive Director to execute contract agreements and implement the 2024-25 Tourism Marketing Support Program in an amount not to exceed \$600,000.

2

Background

The Port's Tourism Marketing Grant program was established in 2016 to

1. Drive out-of-state visitor-spending to the region RCW 53.08.255

Tourism promotion and tourism-

2. Increase the economic impact of Port facilities such related facilities authorized as SEA Airport and cruise terminals

Any port district in this state, acting

- Over the past eight years the Port's Tourism Marketing through its commission, has power to Support Program (TMSP) has helped fund \$2,315,428 of expend moneys and conduct promotion of resources and facilities

marketing efforts through 178 grants statewide. in the district or general area by

- Initially the Port invested \$100,000 per year into advertising, publicizing, or otherwise distributing information to attract

these partnership grants. We increased Port funding visitors and encourage tourist to \$200,000 in 2018 expansion.

- The evaluation criteria were first modified in 2018 to put emphasis on eco and cultural tourism.

Grant Details

2016-2023

Regional Breakdown

- Seattle/King County – 41%

178 grants awarded

- Western WA – 37%

Maximum \$10k (2:1 match)

- Central WA – 20%

\$1,276,114 in actual funds paid

- Eastern WA – 12%

\$1,039,315 in actual match funds

Project Focus

Emphasis on Port priorities has been increased over the

Funded Projects years and the proposed changes for 2024 will provide

Each applicant provides a detailed description that even greater clarity.

outlines the project's objectives, how it delivers on

Port goals, and the key metrics which will be Focus All-Time 2023

submitted as part of the final report. Projects have DEI 30% 55%

included:

- Digital Campaigns/Advertising Eco-tourism 20% 27%

- Media and Travel Trade Familiarization Tours Shoulder Season 12% 9%

- Event Promotion

Cultural Organizations 10% 18%

- Content Creation

- Visitor Transportation Enhancement Note: Does not total 100%. Some projects encompassed more than one of the

themes, others none.

- Industry Events

Program Evaluation

- Over the past eight months the Tourism Department has engaged with current, former and potential TMSP grant recipients to gather feedback about their experience with the program.
- In general, TMSP is a very well-received program, but some challenges were identified, especially from smaller organizations. These obstacles included:
 - Inflation and increased costs have lessened the impact of received funds
 - Short window to execute marketing plans eliminated shoulder seasons and limited scope of projects
 - Evaluation scorecard did not clearly reflect Port's DEI and sustainability priorities
 - Focus on "new" programs created more work and lessened impact of current programs in need of enhancement
 - Low match contribution levels allowed for admin of projects impacted smaller organizations' ability to participate
 - Notification of the program and the application window

Moving Forward – Key Refinements to 2024/25 Program

1. Converting to a two-year grant program
2. Increase the maximum award for grants to \$20k and creating a second tier of grants at \$10k
 - Second tier grant to provide greater access for smaller, cultural organizations that may not have the capacity to apply for the first tier grant. The main goal of the program remains unchanged: To drive additional time and help with applications and visitor-related spending to the project scoping region through the use of Port
3. Moving and expanding the window of time to execute facilities. projects to encourage visitation during shoulder seasons and other need periods
4. Modifying the evaluation process to further emphasize diversity, equity and inclusion and other Port priorities
5. Increasing outreach to encourage applications, cultivate inclusion and provide support throughout

Two-Tiers of Grants

Tier One – Up to \$20k

- For larger organizations (DMOs, major attractions, chambers of commerce, etc.)
- 2:1 match, Port funds to actual funds
- Open to all applicants

Tier Two – Up to \$10k

- Designed for smaller, arts, and culturally-focused organizations whose missions specifically address diversity, equity and inclusion and that may not have the capacity or resources to participate in the Tier 1 program.
- 2:1 match, Port funds to actual funds
- Admin/staff time can account for up to 50% of actual match funds.

MAXIMUM TOTAL FOR ALL GRANTS - \$600k over 2 years, Increased from \$200k per year to provide greater impact and help overcome increased costs.

Benefits of a Two-Year Program

- Provides more time to execute projects and measure their impact
- Allows greater emphasis on shoulder season and other need periods, a key responsible tourism goal
- Allows Port staff more time to provide guidance through informational webinars and Q&A sessions.
- Increases program accessibility by creating longer application window
- Expands range of projects which can be executed

Updated Evaluation Process

The updated evaluation scorecard used by the evaluation panel clarifies Port priorities and provides increased emphasis on responsible tourism.

Current Evaluation Scoring Updated Evaluation Scoring
Criteria Max. Value Criteria Max. Value
Project Scope 50 Overall Impact 40
Responsible Tourism/DEI 25 Shoulder Season Impact 20
Clear Metrics 10 DEI Impact 20
Community Collaboration 5 Environmental 20
Project Sustainability 5 Total 100
Shoulder Season Impact 5
Total 100

Focus on Responsible Travel

The Port's Responsible Travel Handbook will be linked to the TMSP application process to provide guidance and inspiration for applicants as they design their marketing plans.

In an effort to advance conversations around tourism's impact on the environment, destination stewardship, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), the Port led a collaborative effort with statewide partners to develop this resource in 2023. The contents provide practical guidance on how organizations can help usher in a better version of the tourism industry that works for all Washingtonians.

New Timeline

February 13, 2024 – Program Authorized by Commission
February 14, 2024 – Application Window Opens
Feb-March 2024 – Three Informational Sessions Held
End of March – Applications Due
April 2024 – Evaluation Panel Meets/Recipients Selected
April-June 2024 – Contracts Executed and Projects Begin
June 2024-Sep. 2025 – Check-ins, Support and Progress Reports
Dec 2025 – Final Deadline for Reports and Payments