



TOURISM PARTNER SERVICES

RESOURCES & OPPORTUNITIES

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DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

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TOURISM PARTNER SERVICES: RESOURCES & OPPORTUNITIES

The West Virginia Department of Tourism promotes West Virginia as a world-class travel destination and supports tourism partners by offering targeted resources and opportunities. Through these programs, the Department works with partners to improve visitor experiences, strengthen our resilience as an industry and increase tourism's overall economic impact.

Nearly all of our resources for partners can be accessed through our Partner Portal. First-time users should sign up at [WVtourism.com/portal-registration/](https://www.wvtourism.com/portal-registration/).

When you sign up for the Portal, you will also have the opportunity to enroll in our weekly industry newsletter, circulated via email. The newsletter includes announcements about Cooperative Advertising Program opportunities, useful webinars, events, research about visitor trends, and general updates.

If you would like to sign up for the Department's weekly partner calls, request help getting started with the Partner Portal, or find out more about any of the services detailed in this guide, please contact Partner Communications and Events Specialist, Brenna Dugan at Brenna.C.Dugan@wv.gov or 304-558-2200.



MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSISTANCE

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSISTANCE

BUSINESS PROMOTION ON WVTOURISM.COM

Tourism businesses of all types are invited to create and update listings on our website. These free listings drive traffic to partners' websites and make tourism information easily accessible for visitors who can search by region and visitor resource type - from places to stay and eat to activities. WVtourism.com receives over 5.5 million views annually, so creating a listing here can help to increase web traffic totals on your website as well. For example, last year, website visitors clicked through to partners' websites over 500,000 times from WVtourism.com.

EVENT PROMOTION ON WVTOURISM.COM

One of the most popular parts of our website is the [Events Calendar](#). Partners may submit event details through the Partner Portal for free to help spread the word and attract visitors. The Events Calendar is one of the most visited parts of our website with more than 100,000 annual views. It consistently ranks in the top five most-viewed pages. Visitors can search by month and geographic region to find events that will be taking place during their trips to West Virginia.

The West Virginia Department of Tourism's Events Calendar: <https://wvtourism.com/events-festivals/>

BROCHURE DISTRIBUTION

The West Virginia Department of Tourism oversees eight Welcome Centers that are located on the borders of West Virginia. Welcome Center staff assist travelers throughout the state by providing itineraries, brochures, and may place reservations at West Virginia hotels, motels, state parks, and bed & breakfasts. Last year, the Welcome Centers served over 2.4 million visitors.

To submit a rack card or brochure for free distribution through one or more of the centers, partners are invited to review the criteria on our website and complete a simple application form in the Partner Portal. Partners are responsible for creating and printing their brochures.

Brochure distribution application form: <https://bit.ly/brochure-distribution>

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSISTANCE

COOPERATIVE ADVERTISING PROGRAM

The Cooperative Advertising Program provides partners with the opportunity to leverage state resources and brand identity to advertise individual destinations, attractions and events. The program has created more than \$14 million in advertisements to-date, driving visitation to West Virginia and partnering with over 100 tourism businesses since its launch in 2017.



**ALMOST HEAVEN
BRANDING**



**PARTNER MATCH,
PLUS REDUCED MEDIA COST
BECAUSE OF BUYING POWER**



**RESEARCH,
ANALYTICS, PLACEMENT
AND MONITORING**

This matching program allows partners to select from a range of curated advertising options - everything from social media and print to billboards and television spots. The Department of Tourism typically pays for 50% of the advertising placement and covers the cost of creating the advertisements.

Participation in the co-op program also qualifies partners for bonus marketing incentives. During the season's advertising window, the Department of Tourism will help boost ad performance and drive travel to partner destinations by featuring their business in blogs, social media posts and emails, as well as updating listings and optimizing placements on WVtourism.com.

In addition to the matching funds that the Department of Tourism provides directly, buying these media placements together also helps drive down the prices overall. On average, the program allows partners across the state to save about 20% on the cost of the placements, which - with the 50% matching funds - adds up to roughly 70% off the total price of the same placement purchased outside the matching program.

Check for any special initiatives when the program opens each season.

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSISTANCE

MEDIA LIBRARY AND PHOTOGRAPHY ASSISTANCE

The West Virginia Department of Tourism maintains an image and b-roll library that includes assets that are free for partners to use. Please credit the West Virginia Department of Tourism with each image or video that you use.

We also provide professional photography of tourism businesses upon request. Partners are invited to submit photography assistance requests through the Portal and a member of our staff will be in contact about scheduling a time to visit your site.

PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSISTANCE

The West Virginia Department of Tourism helps destinations, businesses, and attractions garner earned media attention by circulating press releases and including your site in seasonal pitching efforts. We also host top tier travel writers and social media influencers seasonally on familiarization (FAM) trips, and would love to work with you to bring these folks to your destination. Submit a request through the Partner Portal to talk with a member of our PR team about these services.

Each year, the West Virginia Department of Tourism produces its vacation guide that features each of the nine travel regions along with where to stay, what to do, where to eat and much more. Participating co-op partners are ensured a mention in this printed piece.

BLOG CONTENT ON WVTOURISM.COM

Writing and submitting Explorer blog content is yet another way to share information about your region's tourism assets on our website. Our content team will work with you to edit the material as needed to make sure that the blog is a good fit for our audience and will drive traffic to the featured sites. Shared not only on wvtourism.com, these blogs are also promoted on our social media platforms. With an annual social media reach of more than 17 million users, blog submissions are a free and effective way to promote your organization.



MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSISTANCE

ONSITE EVENT SUPPORT

If you are hosting an event and would like the West Virginia Department of Tourism to have a presence on-site, submit a request through the Partner Portal in advance. Depending on our availability, we will either send materials; staff a table; or even set up our airstream, which functions as a mobile visitor center.

ASSISTANCE WITH EVENT BID PACKAGES

If your organization or municipality is engaged in a competitive bidding process to bring a large-scale national or international event or series of events to your region, the Department of Tourism is eager to support you – from providing letters of support and data to back-up your bid to assisting you with creating a branded cohesive bid package.

PUBLICATIONS AND MATERIALS REQUESTS

Each year, we develop and circulate vacation guides and highway maps to hundreds of thousands of visitors. Our Cooperative Advertising Program partners are prominently featured in the vacation guides.

Tourism businesses are also encouraged to help us distribute these materials as resources for those visiting your site. Submit a materials request through the Partner Portal to get started.



INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

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INDUSTRY TRAINING WEBINARS

The West Virginia Department of Tourism holds monthly webinars, hosting experts on a wide range of topics to serve the training and education needs of our partners. Past webinars have included guidance on marketing strategies, visitor trends, grant opportunities, our Cooperative Advertising Program, mountain bike trail development, and more.

TOURISM DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE

Each winter, during West Virginia's legislative session, we organize Tourism Day at the Capitol. Partners from across the state are invited to set up displays and help to showcase the breadth of the industry. This event is our chance for our Department to provide education about the industry and underscore the importance of tourism's economic impact. It is also an opportunity for our partners to advocate for tourism initiatives.

GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ON TOURISM

Each fall, the Governor's Conference on Tourism spans several days and features prominent speakers and expert panels on a range of tourism-related topics. This annual event provides a time for both in-depth education about tourism trends and best practices and an opportunity for valuable statewide networking.



INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

INTERNATIONAL TOURISM ASSISTANCE

Submit a request in the Partner Portal to let our team know that you are interested in catering to international tourists, and a staff member will put you in contact with an expert on this topic who can advise you on entering the market and how to work with group tour operators. As West Virginia receives more and more accolades as a must-see destination for travelers across the globe, positioning your business to market to and welcome international tourists is becoming increasingly important.

RESEARCH AND IMPACT

The West Virginia Department of Tourism provides economic impact data – organized by county and region – and visitor trend research to help inform our partners’ decision-making. These reports can be accessed online at WVtourism.com/research-reports/ and we encourage you to reach out to our Destination Development team with any questions about the data.

TRADE SHOWS

The West Virginia Department of Tourism represents our state at several international, national, and regional trade shows each year, driving increased group tour visitation to our state and helping to get out the word that Almost Heaven is a world-class destination. If you are interested in attending a trade show with us, please reach out. We may be able to cover a portion of your registration costs



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ACT (TDA) TAX CREDIT

This credit on State Sales and Use Tax is an essential tool for attracting new tourism businesses to our state and supporting the expansion of existing partners. Administered by the West Virginia Department of Economic Development, it is one of the most generous tax incentives for tourism in the nation and has supported projects that represent nearly \$300 million in private investment over the last four years.

Partners who are starting or expanding a tourism business in West Virginia and expecting to spend at least \$1 million on the project, should read about the program and other eligibility requirements online at Westvirginia.gov/tourism-development-act/.

GRANT AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE

If you are looking to start or expand a tourism business or undertake a new project in need of funding, submit the form to request economic development support in the Partner Portal or reach out to our Destination Development team directly to schedule a call. We would love to hear about your project goals, connect you with technical assistance if needed, and make recommendations for grants, incentives, and lending opportunities.

Please review our [Funding and Resource Guide](#) for information on tourism-related grants, tax credits, and other financial incentives: wvtourism.com/funding

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WEST VIRGINIA EDA LENDING

The West Virginia Department of Tourism works closely with the West Virginia Economic Development Authority (EDA). We can put your tourism business in contact with a loan officer to discuss the EDA's Direct Loan Program. This program is for applicants seeking a loan between \$50,000 and \$10,000,000. The WVEDA has a two-tiered pricing system. For loans \$50,000 to \$1,000,000, the interest rate is fixed at closing using Wall Street Journal Prime times 75%. The interest rate for loans above \$1,000,000 is fixed at closing at the U.S. Treasury Note rate plus three quarters of one percent and the interest rate adjusts every five years. All loans have a floor of 2.75% and no ceiling.

Loan applicants are requested to submit pre-application information to allow WVEDA to determine project eligibility.

WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS SIGNAGE

West Virginia Department of Tourism works closely with the West Virginia Department of Highways to ensure that tourism businesses benefit from appropriate signage. Please contact the Destination Development team to request assistance. We also review and advise partners on regional and local wayfinding and signage plans.

INDUSTRIAL ROAD ACCESS FUND

As tourism destinations expand and attract more visitation, they often outgrow the capacity of the roads that lead to their businesses. If a state road leading to your business is in need of upgrading or critical maintenance to better serve visitors, please contact the Destination Development team. We work closely with the West Virginia Department of Highways to address these issues, and in some cases provide funding through the Industrial Road Access Fund.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TOURISM WORKS: WORKFORCE TRAINING ASSISTANCE

The West Virginia Department of Tourism works closely with our partners at the West Virginia Department of Economic Development, West Virginia Department of Education, and West Virginia's Community and Technical Colleges to provide customized training programs for tourism businesses. If you have employees in need of training, please contact the Destination Development Team to inquire about arranging customized training for our business. We also work with our sister agency partners to connect high school and college students with opportunities for on-site training programs in tourism and hospitality.

NAVIGATING STATE GOVERNMENT

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QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES?

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