



PLATTE COUNTY

IMPROVEMENT FUND GRANT GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION

PURPOSE OF FUNDS

The purpose of the Platte County Improvement Fund grant is to provide funding for the improvement of existing or creation of new visitor attractions and facilities in Platte County. The funds available through this program are provided from the lodging tax revenue fund and are to be used for visitor attractions or recreational facilities that attract visitors to Platte County, Nebraska, owned by the public or any nonprofit organization, as the Nebraska Visitors Development Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. §81-3701 through §81-3724, et seq. provides.

USE OF FUNDS

Tax revenues are deposited in one or both of two funds: 1) a County Visitors Promotion Fund and/or 2) a County Visitors Improvement Fund.

For the **County Visitors Promotion Fund**, a maximum 2% lodging tax can be collected for use in tourism promotion and marketing, but not for construction of attractions or other tourism facilities.

For the **County Visitors Improvement Fund**, a maximum 2% lodging tax can be collected for: 1) making grants for planning, construction, renovation, expanding, and improving attractions owned by the public or any nonprofit organization (except for attractions where pari-mutuel wagering is conducted), or 2) tourism promotion and marketing, when the attractions in a county are determined to be adequate and not needing improvement. Revenues in only the County Visitors Improvement Fund can be used for capital construction and must be for attractions that are open to the public and are of educational, cultural, historical, artistic, or recreational significance. Revenues may also be used for acquiring or expanding exhibits for existing attractions. The maximum grant from the Improvement Fund cannot be greater than the annual proceeds from a 1% lodging tax for a term not to exceed 20 years.

Revenues in both funds can be used for printing brochures, erecting signs, mass media advertising, and other tourism promotion and marketing.

CRITERIA FOR GRANTS:

Applications for funding from the Improvement Fund will be considered based on the Committee's assessment of these criteria:

- a project's potential to draw overnight guests to Platte County will be given priority consideration.
- long-term investment in the community, and will provide a good "rate of return" to the region comparing the amount of money requested with the total revenue from out-of-town.
- is unique to the area; something that can be identified with Platte County and when visitors think of the attraction, they think of Platte County.
- will encourage and solicit attendance from the general public.
- attraction must generate positive visibility for Platte County.

EXCLUSIONS

No part of the grant funds may be used for:

- general operating funds
- for additional or current personnel salaries
- for supplies and equipment
- for general maintenance of an existing facility
- for items not included in the approved grant application
- in any manner that would violate the Nebraska Visitors Development Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. §81-3701 through §81-3724, et seq. All grants are discretionary, based upon available funds, other anticipated uses, appropriateness and anticipated effectiveness of proposed use.

APPLICATION PROCESS

APPLICATION

Each grant application must include a complete grant application; project description, timeline and budget; contractor bids, proof of nonprofit status and letters of support (minimum of 3). No faxed copies of the grant will be accepted. Failure to complete the entire application may result in rejection of your fund request.

DEADLINES

All Visitor Improvement Fund Grant applications must be submitted to the Visit Columbus Platte County, Nebraska office by 12:00 pm CT Tuesday, October 13, 2026. NO EXCEPTIONS. One original application and 3 complete copies, as well as submitted via email to tgrape@plattecounty.ne.gov as an attachment, must be submitted at this time. Faxed copies will not be accepted.

The Visit Columbus Platte County, Nebraska Advisory Committee will review each grant application. Upon approval or modification by the Platte County Board of Supervisors, considering the Advisory Committee recommendation, notification will be made in writing to the winning applicants.

Projects funded through the Improvement Fund must be completed within 18 months of the date of application approval, unless written authorization of deadline extension is received from Platte County. For projects not completed within the 18-month time frame without written authorization of extension, the grant will immediately be terminated, and funds will not be distributed. Multi-year projects must provide a progress report quarterly.

PRESENTATION

- Applicants must be present at the Advisory Committee meeting at which their application is reviewed.
- Applicants will be notified of presentation date & time by the Visit Columbus Director.
- Presentations must not be longer than 15 minutes.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF AWARD

Approved applicants will be notified by the Visit Columbus Platte County, Nebraska and additional paperwork will be required.

CONTRACT

All awards are subject to Platte County (Grantor) and awarded applicant (Grantee) entering into a contract detailing each parties' obligations. If the parties are unable to enter into a mutually agreeable contract, then the awarded grant will be disallowed.

The Grantee will obtain all necessary local and state permits.

CREDITING REQUIREMENT

Upon project completion a permanent sign or plaque acknowledging the Visit Columbus Platte County, Nebraska's support shall be placed in a prominent location. For multi-year improvement projects, temporary signage acknowledging the support of Visit Columbus Platte County, Nebraska should be placed in a prominent location.

REPORTING

Thirty days after the completion of the project, or the end of the calendar year for multi-year projects, a report will be submitted to Visit Columbus giving final results or progress toward results. The report must outline if the objectives of the project were met, if not, what were the circumstances that led to the lack of progress. The report will also include copies of all paid receipts/invoices and copies of checks used to pay the invoices. No money will be released until the final report is presented and approved. Furthermore, no money will be released beyond those expenses documented by paid receipts.

PAYMENT

- Grants are paid directly to the grantee, not to vendors of products or services.
- Upon receipt and acceptance of the final project report or the end-of-year progress report, the Visit Columbus Platte County, Nebraska will request a check from the Platte County Clerk for the payment of grant funds, depending upon availability of funds. This check will be sent by the Clerk directly to the grantee.
- The Platte County Board of Supervisors and Visit Columbus Platte County, Nebraska can only use proceeds from the Platte County Visitors Improvement Fund to fund any project herein and shall not obligate itself to use any money outside the Platte County Visitors Improvement Fund to fund any project herein.
- Furthermore, Visit Columbus shall not give multi-year grants (taking into consideration all other grants) that obligate Platte County to amounts over and above amounts accruing in the Improvement Fund through the collection of the 2% Lodging Tax.

REVIEW PROCESS

Grants are discretionary, based upon available funds, other anticipated uses, appropriateness and anticipated effectiveness of the accepted project. Furthermore, said project must continue to comply with the Nebraska Visitors Development Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. §81-3701 through §81-3724, et seq.



IMPROVEMENT FUND GRANT APPLICATION

For Platte County visitor attraction and recreational facility improvement projects.

IMPORTANT: Complete the entire application and attach all required supporting documents. Incomplete applications may be rejected. Use additional pages when necessary.

1. Applicant Information

Legal name of applicant	
Organization / Attraction Name	
Organization Type	☐ Public entity ☐ Nonprofit organization
Primary Contact Name & Title	
Mailing Address	
City / State / ZIP	
Phone	
Email	
Project / Attraction Address	
Federal EIN (if applicable)	

2. Project & Funding Request

Project Title	
Total Project Cost	\$
Improvement Fund Amount Requested	\$
Other Committed Funding	\$
Anticipated Project Start Date	
Anticipated Completion Date	
Is this a multi-year project?	☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Eligibility & Public Benefit

The Improvement Fund is intended for the improvement of existing or creation of new visitor attractions and facilities in Platte County. Eligible capital uses include planning, construction, renovation, expansion, improvement, and acquiring or expanding exhibits for qualifying attractions.

- ☐ The attraction/facility is located in Platte County, Nebraska.
- ☐ The attraction/facility is owned by a public entity or nonprofit organization.
- ☐ The attraction/facility is open to the public.
- ☐ The attraction/facility has educational, cultural, historical, artistic, or recreational significance.
- ☐ The proposed use of funds is not for general operating funds, personnel salaries, supplies/equipment, general maintenance, or items outside the approved grant application.



B. Long-term investment / rate of return - Explain the long-term value to the community and region. Compare the grant amount requested with anticipated visitor spending, attendance, overnight stays, or other measurable economic benefit. Include any research completed supporting a positive rate of return to the area. (Ex: Visiting similar projects/entities in other communities; impact studies generated, etc.)

C. Unique connection to Platte County - Explain what makes this project or attraction unique to the area and how it will be identified with Platte County.

D. General public attendance - Explain how the project will encourage and solicit attendance from the general public.

E. Positive visibility - Explain how the attraction/project will generate positive visibility for Platte County.

6. Project Timeline

Projects must be completed within 18 months of application approval unless a written deadline extension is authorized by Visit Columbus Platte County, Nebraska. Multi-year projects must provide quarterly progress reports.

Phase / Activity	Start Date	Completion Date	Responsible Party

7. Project Budget

List the specific project costs included in this request. Attach contractor bids/estimates supporting the amounts below.

Project Item / Scope	Vendor / Contractor	Total Cost	Grant Funds Requested
TOTAL		\$	\$

8. Other Funding Sources

List your investment in the project as well as other funding sources.

Source	Amount	Status (Committed/Pending)	Restrictions / Notes



9. Long-Term Project Goals & Outcomes

What are your projected goals and anticipated outcomes for this project over the next 5 years and 10 years? Describe how the project is expected to grow, remain sustainable, increase visitation, strengthen its impact on Platte County, and continue providing value to visitors and the community.

5-Year Projected Goals & Outcomes:

10-Year Projected Goals & Outcomes:

10. Required Attachments

- ☐ List of Board of Directors
- ☐ Copy of Bylaws
- ☐ Schedule of Board Meetings
- ☐ Copy of Determination Letter from the IRS confirming tax exempt status
- ☐ Detailed project description.
- ☐ Project timeline.
- ☐ Detailed project budget.
- ☐ Contractor bids/estimates.
- ☐ Proof of nonprofit status, if applicant is a nonprofit organization.
- ☐ Minimum of three (3) letters of support.
- ☐ Any additional plans, drawings, photographs, or documentation that help explain the project.



11. Applicant Acknowledgments

- ☐ I understand grant awards are discretionary and depend on available funds, anticipated uses, appropriateness, and anticipated effectiveness of the project.
- ☐ I understand awarded projects are subject to a contract between Platte County (Grantor) and the awarded applicant (Grantee).
- ☐ I understand the Grantee is responsible for obtaining all necessary local and state permits.
- ☐ I understand grant funds are paid directly to the Grantee, not to vendors.
- ☐ I understand payment is dependent upon required reporting, approval, documentation of paid expenses, and availability of Improvement Fund monies.
- ☐ I understand no funds will be released beyond expenses documented by paid receipts/invoices and copies of checks used to pay those invoices.
- ☐ I agree to submit a final report within 30 days after project completion, or required progress reports for a multi-year project.
- ☐ I agree to place required permanent or temporary signage acknowledging Visit Columbus Platte County, Nebraska support.
- ☐ I understand the project must continue to comply with the Nebraska Visitors Development Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. §81-3701 through §81-3724, et seq. (as amended from time to time)

12. Certification & Signature

I certify the information contained in this application and its attachments is true and complete to the best of my knowledge, and I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the applicant.

Authorized representative name/title	
Signature	
Date	

Submission & Presentation Requirements

Based on the attached guidelines (Form date 8/25/2026): applications are required by 12:00 p.m. CT Tuesday, October 13, 2026, with, one original, and three complete copies; as well as submitted via email to tgrape@plattecounty.ne.gov as an attachment. Faxed applications are not accepted. Applicants must attend the Advisory Committee meeting at which the application is reviewed, and presentations may not exceed 15 minutes. Final application approvals are made by the Board of Supervisors. Confirm the deadline and submission requirements for the current grant cycle before completing this form.