



CITY OF COTTAGE GROVE
12800 Ravine Parkway South
Cottage Grove, Minnesota 55016
Council Chamber - 7:30 AM

June 3, 2025

Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau
AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
4. Adoption of Agenda
5. Approval of Minutes
 - 1 11/26/2024 CVB Minutes
Staff Recommendation: Approve 11/26/2024 CVB minutes.
6. Presentations
7. Business Items
 - 1 2024 Q4 and 2025 Q1 Lodging Tax Collection
Staff Recommendation: Receive 2024 Q4 and 2025 Q1 lodging tax collection information.
 - 2 2024 Annual Report
Staff Recommendation: Receive the 2024 Cottage Grove Convention and Visitor's Bureau Annual Report.
 - 3 2026 Explore Minnesota Tourism Grant
Staff Recommendation: Approve the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitor Bureau to execute the grant agreement between Explore Minnesota and the Cottage Grove CVB.
 - 4 2025 Events Update
Staff Recommendation: Receive the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau events information.
8. Workshop
 - 1 CVB Website Discussion
9. Comments
10. Adjournment

Regular Meeting



MINUTES

NOVEMBER 26, 2024

**CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU
CITY OF COTTAGE GROVE
12800 RAVINE PARKWAY SOUTH
COTTAGE GROVE, MINNESOTA 55016**

CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBER - 7:30 A.M.

A meeting of the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau was held on the 26th day of November, 2024, at 7:30 a.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. by Chairman Justin Olsen.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Olsen asked everyone to please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Chairman Olsen asked Alexa Anderson, Communications Specialist, to please do the roll.

Members Present: Justin Olsen, Chairman
Tony Khambata, Vice Chairman
Sarah Grecula, Director
Steve Hanson, Director
Laurie Levine, Director
Erik Olson, Director

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Jennifer Levitt, City Administrator
Jaime Mann, Assistant to the City Administrator
Alexa Anderson, Communications Specialist
Phil Jents, Communications Manager
Gretchen Larson, Economic Development Director
Molly Pietruszewski, Recreation Services Manager
Courtney Pirsig, Communications Specialist

Others Present: None.

4. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Director Erik Olson made a motion to approve the agenda, Director Laurie Levine seconded. Motion carried: 6-0.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

5.1 Approval of February 27, 2024 CGCVB Meeting Minutes

Chairman Olsen asked if anyone had any changes or corrections they wanted to make on the minutes; as there were none, Chairman Olsen said those will stand approved by unanimous consent.

5.2 Approval of June 4, 2024 CGCVB Meeting Minutes

Chairman Olsen asked if anyone had any changes, corrections, or recommendations on those; as there were none, Chairman Olsen said those will stand approved by unanimous consent.

6. PRESENTATIONS

2024 Holiday Events in Cottage Grove

Chairman Olsen said I had a chance to see this on Wednesday night, and Molly did a fantastic job.

Molly Pietruszewski, Recreation Services Manager, said I'm here to speak on behalf of the Cottage Grove Parks and Recreation Department. We have a ton of holiday events coming up here in Cottage Grove, so we just want to quickly give you a brief overview of all of those upcoming events. Hale to the Bird 5K Race: That will take place on Thanksgiving, this Thursday, November 28, at Hamlet Park. The race begins at 9:00 a.m., and all money raised goes through the Holiday Train Committee, directly to the Friends in Need Food Shelf. You can still register online via ActiveNet.com, with the keywords Hale to the Bird; or you can register onsite as well. It's a great event, usually just shy of about 1,000 people, so we invite the community to come on out and support the food shelf right away on Thanksgiving morning. Holiday Lights Tour: Efforts have begun so the map is going to be coming up soon, but you can still enter your addresses online, now through December 15, that's the last day we'll update the map. If you go to the City of Cottage Grove's website, there's a link on there where you can enter your home address or maybe another family member's address that you know is brightly lit here in Cottage Grove. The website makes a map. On the flip side of that, if you're a family in town looking for something fun to do on a Friday or Saturday night, pack up the kids, punch in that map on your phone, and take a tour around Cottage Grove to see all the houses lit up. Typically, we have between 30 and 40 houses, so it makes for a great event night out with your family. Hometown Holiday: This is coming next week already, Thursday, December 5, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. As you pull into City Hall, you'll see things are starting to change a little bit outside. We'll be hosting the Hometown Holiday event here at City Hall; it's a great event with Santa, Mrs. Claus, live reindeer, food trucks, kids games, and we light this whole trail with about 30 inflatables going down the back of City Hall. The Park High School choir will be here, there will be free cocoa and cookies. Wagons are going to start delivering people from either the Washington County building or the HERO Center at 4:30 p.m. Mayor Bailey, Santa, and Mrs. Claus will pull in via a fire truck at 5:00 to light the tree and kick off the festivities. Again, this is another great event, we're hoping the weather warms up a little bit. We invite people to come out for the night. Breakfast with Santa at River Oaks: On Sunday, December 8, this event is sold out; so, if you have your tickets, you're set. CPKC Holiday Train: The train is scheduled to arrive on Wednesday, December 11, at 5:15 p.m. This is one of the larger community events that I have the pleasure of working with throughout the year. Festivities begin at 3:30 p.m. with food trucks, merchandise, onsite warming, lots of fun activities down at the Holiday Train stop, which is really adjacent to the Youth Service Bureau, which is a pillar in the community. This is the 20th year that we have had the CPKC Holiday Train stop in Cottage Grove; it's not a given, so our community strongly supports the Friends in Need Food Shelf, so we were chosen as a stop again. While the train arrives at 5:15, it takes about 15 minutes to set up. The middle boxcar opens, and they perform on stage for about a half hour, and then they pull out of town. We use the wagons provided by Zywiec's to transport people in from the Park and Ride; it will be a little bit busy because as we know a lot of commuters come back on the buses at about 5:00 or 5:15, as it's a weeknight, so we encourage people to come a little early and leave a little extra time to get parked and get down to the site. Parks & Recreation, Get Out and Play!: We just like to remind people that we are just as busy in the winter as we are the summer, so our parks are groomed, there's lots of outside play time where the ground is clean, not a lot of snow. Trails are groomed all winter, so we try to keep the main trails plowed as possible for walkers and runners. Warming houses and outdoor skating rinks are scheduled to always open on December 26, and we're on track this year; last year, we were unsuccessful due to the weather, so we're really hoping for a stronger outdoor skating/warming house season this year. We are opening Glacial Valley Park this winter as an additional outdoor skating rink. Sledding Hills, we have several good hills in Cottage Grove where you can get out there and sled and then utilize those warming houses if you need to. River Oaks grooms cross-country ski trails during the winter once they have enough snow on the ground; it's the same with our snowshoes, it takes quite a bit of snow to get our snowshoe trailer out. We retrofit the kayak trailer from which we rent kayaks in the summer; we rebuild the inside and then we rent snowshoes out of that in the winter. It is kind of looking like they may be back at Oakwood Park again this year. We were hoping for Mississippi Dunes, but the roads just aren't going to be quite ready yet to make sure we can keep them plowed and open in there as much as we'd like to, to make sure the snowshoes are accessible, so we're looking at Oakwood Park one more year again for the snowshoes this winter.

Other Festive Happenings in Cottage Grove

- We had Grocery Bagging at Cub Foods, November 24, it was a great kickoff for the Holiday Train.
- There are a few events at Shepard Farm: Turkey Time on November 29; Introduction to Glowforge: Ornament, on December 3; Snow Much Fun, a Sensory Friendly Saturday, on December 21. Shepard Farm is a great one I would follow on

social media if you have a family here in Cottage Grove or check out their website, as they have a lot of cool, amazing things that they do. You really don't even feel like you're in Cottage Grove but you are, you're right in the heart of it.

- Procrastinator's Market Craft Show at River Oaks on November 30, which is this Saturday, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- Fill a Fire Truck is coming up, this year it is going to be down at the Friends in Need Food Shelf; so, it's a great opportunity for families to drop off paper products, which is what they're requesting (toilet paper, paper towels, Kleenex, etc.). So, come and get a tour of the food shelf, see what it's like on the inside. If you've never been there, it's an amazing operation, very well run, and I highly recommend it. So, it's an opportunity to see the fire truck and drop off supplies for those who need it most this season.
- Lions Club Santa Breakfast is at the VFW on December 8, from 8:00 a.m. to noon. Tickets can be purchased right at the door, and it's a great event, very popular in our community.

Molly said that is all that we have going on. I'll be happy to answer any questions that you might have about upcoming events or things related to Parks and Recreation this winter; the Board had no questions.

Chairman Olsen said I've got to tell you, the second time hearing it, it still sounds like a lot. It's a great time of year in Cottage Grove, and I could say that about any time of year, but for those of you who aren't aware, Mayor Bailey has a nickname, we affectionately call him Mayor Christmas because he loves Christmas. He absolutely loves it, and I know that he's behind sort of pushing the staff to add certain events each year, etc. If you haven't been by his home yet, he started lighting it up on Sunday night, so my kids and my wife and I went by for day one, and he's added some new things to his yard; you can land a plane by his yard as it is very, very lit up. Director Levine, you live near there, I'm sure you see the glow; she replied yes. But there's a lot going on and I would encourage everybody to take advantage of one of these opportunities.

Molly mentioned that the Santa Breakfast at River Oaks is sold out, but you can still come to the Cottage Grove Lions Santa Breakfast, also on December 8, it starts at 8:00 a.m. and goes until noon at the VFW; adults are \$12, children are \$8. Santa and Sparkles the Elf will be on hand for you to take pictures and tell Santa what you want for Christmas. So, if you can't get into River Oaks, certainly please come and see us, or do what I do and go to both.

Chairman Olsen said I also want to mention the East Cottage Grove Scramblers, our local Snowmobile Club, has their annual Dust 'Em Off Snowmobile Vintage Swap extravaganza, on January 4, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; it's a great day to get outside over at 70th Street and County Road 19. The Cottage Grove Lions will be there helping out with that, too. So, if you miss some of the Christmas events and you decide you want to get outside and have a little bit of fun after Christmas, come check out the Cottage Grove Scramblers. They'll have a radar run, and they have a lot of vintage snowmobiles.

Board Member Olson, I know you've participated in this, so go ahead, what would you like to talk about?

Director Olson said Molly, you did a great job. Most of these events are free, that's neat for families, so thank you.

Molly said there are lots of opportunities to get outside and play.

Director Olson said that's very welcoming.

Chairman Olsen said it is, that's one of the things that makes Cottage Grove so special, so, thank you very much, Molly, and we'll look forward to seeing you I'm sure at multiple events over the next several weeks.

Molly said yes, as we start to see less and less of people's faces, as we start to bundle up more and more.

Chairman Olsen said let's all hope for some really nice weather for our Hometown Holiday Celebration; we had one year where it was a little nippy, last year wasn't quite so bad, so we'll hope for a repeat. Thanks again.

7. BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Cottage Grove Painting and 2024 Food Truck Festival Recap

Jaime Mann, Assistant to the City Administrator, said I'm going to give you a quick recap of the Dowdle Painting Unveiling and our Cottage Grove Food Truck Festival, which was a huge success again this year.

The Dowdle Unveiling happened on the morning of September 14, right before the Food Truck Festival began. We had 16 people, representing 14 different people, places, or landmarks within the City, who all got to put their piece in the puzzle after the painting was revealed. They got to say a few words about their organization or the item that they were putting their piece in; there were about 200 attendees at the event.

At the event, we also kicked off our puzzle sales; so, we sold about 540 puzzles that day, between the unveiling event and the Food Truck Festival. Eric Dowdle was at the unveiling to sign puzzles and also take photos with people, and then he came down to the Food Truck Festival because we had done a coloring contest with some kids; it was in the *Cottage Grove Reports* that they could color a painting for a chance to be a finalist to be awarded a little medallion by Eric Dowdle. You can see on the screen he presented

them with the medallion and their framed coloring-contest piece. He also came to sign puzzles, met people at the Food Truck Festival, and it was a fantastic day. So far, as of November 15, we've sold 941 puzzles; so, we're just about a third of the way through our puzzles that we purchased through Eric Dowdle.

This is a great video, a drone shot by SWCTC, so you can kind of see the full scale as I'm talking through the details of the Food Truck Festival. So, we are estimating over the course of the 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. timeframe, we had between 8,000 and 9,000 people in attendance. There were 40 food trucks at the event, which you can see, it's a full parking lot of food trucks. We had bounce houses, we had Strawberry Fest Ambassadors there running carnival games. We had police presence there, 17 marketplace vendors this year, and our goal was about 10, so we came in well above our goal. We had 10 sponsors at the event, we had great entertainment in Basic and Boring, who opened the day for us. We had Liv McNair, who then opened for Hailey James, who was kind of our headliner for the event. The Lions Club was there, in the beer tent, we had Dowdle puzzle sales at the event, *Discover Cottage Grove* also had a booth there, and some of you worked that day with us, and we got to talk to a lot of people and hand out a lot of our swag that we have.

Jaime said I'll pull up our revenue. We estimated the event coming in at just a slight loss before we actually had everything come in for the event; our estimates were based on last year's Food Truck Festival event. So, last year, we had 23 food trucks, this year we had 40, we were a little worried that they weren't all going to fit in the parking lot, so I think about 35 is an ideal number of food trucks for next year. That is our goal for our food truck count for next year, just to make sure everybody fits. We actually came in at just over \$7,000 in profit after all is said and done, and you have a copy of this in front of you as well. So, we received great feedback from our vendors, participants, and the public. I had a phone call the day after the event saying please don't ever let this event go away, so we are extremely happy with how the event turned out this year. I would be happy to stand for any questions.

Chairman Olsen said thank you very much, that is just amazing, isn't it? It's got to feel pretty good. He asked if there were any questions at all for Jaime.

Director Olson said I have a thought. From the Lions' perspective, the Cottage Grove Lions are very happy with the event, I'm also on that membership, so thank you from the Lions Club. We had a successful day, and it was wonderful weather, right? So, that helps, so we enjoyed that. The spools, the wooden spools, people seemed to really gravitate and like those for eating, drinking, hey, let's meet and visit. Is there any way, potentially in the future, we could get five-to-eight more spools? Or who is our source for that?

Jaime replied we actually get those free from VanMeter, and at the event, we had talked about putting some at both ends as well, because down by the bounce houses there was no place for people to kind of eat and stand as their kids were playing in the bounce houses. So, we are looking at probably getting a few more for next year so that we could have them at both ends, but we could look at adding some additional down to the stage area, too.

Chairman Olsen said as a note, that's actually one of our Lions member's, Brian Atkinson, who helps us with that; so, I think we can figure out a way to make that happen, no problem. He asked if there were any other questions or thoughts at all for Jaime, but there were none.

Chairman Olsen said I want to say, first of all, a very, very hearty thank you to Jaime and her team; the amount of work that went into putting this festival on is probably not well known to the public. They spent months and months and months and many hours putting this Food Truck Festival together. Then, for those of you who may not recall, we were not originally supposed to do the Dowdle Puzzle Unveiling that day, it was supposed to happen at Strawberry Fest. Because of some logistical challenges, we had to make an adjustment midstream, and Jaime and the rest of the staff here at City Hall found a way to accommodate that and really make it an essential part of a big day for us. I think a lot of people went to the Dowdle Puzzle Unveiling and then just transitioned right over to the Food Truck Festival; they just walked down the hill, basically. But that was no easy feat either because you had to deal with logistics through the School District and Dowdle and his team, etc. So, again, I really can't say thank you enough for everything that you did. The financials speak for themselves clearly; what a difference between year one and year two, and a lot of enhancements. As we continue to learn, I have no doubt there will be even more enhancements, but it was a really special day.

If people like me want to buy the puzzles as Christmas gifts this year, because I plan to give a Dowdle puzzle to pretty much every person I know, how do they do that?

Jaime replied we actually have a Black Friday sale going on right now, where if you purchase between now and I believe its November 30, you have a chance to get a signed puzzle as we have some remaining signed puzzles, so we have 10 people that are going to get a signed puzzle to replace the one that's not signed, that they purchased. But they can go on our website to purchase online, or they can come here in person and purchase them. Also, throughout the next year or so, we will be participating in a lot of events where you'll see puzzle sales going on at community events.

Chairman Olsen asked and what are the costs again, please?

Jaime replied it is \$28 for the 500-piece puzzle and \$30 for the 1,000-piece puzzle.

Chairman Olsen said okay, and you said the Black Friday sale is now through November 30? Jaime replied yes. Chairman Olsen said and they have an opportunity to win a signed puzzle.

Jaime replied well, they're not technically winning it; the puzzle that they were going to get is just going to be signed one instead of the standard puzzle.

Chairman Olsen said I understand, thanks for clarifying that for me; well, that's kind of a cool thing, too, wow. Again, just thank you, I don't know what else to say. It was absolutely fantastic, and I can't wait until next year. Good job.

2. 2024 Q2 and Q3 Lodging Tax and Revenue Collection

Chairman Olsen said Phil Jents is the newest member of our team here, or close to, in the City of Cottage Grove. For those of you who don't know Phil, I want to give him just a minute to introduce himself. I will say he's a local guy, he flew the coop for a while, but we got him back. So, welcome, Phil; can you, first of all, kind of tell the team here and the people watching at home a little bit about yourself?

Phil replied sure. Good morning and thank you, and thank you for the very kind introduction, Chairman Olsen. My name is Phil Jents, I'm the City's Communications Manager. It is true that I grew up in Cottage Grove. A phrase, interestingly enough, that I did not know growing up here until taking this position was that I have a Ph.D., and it's not even on my resumé, or reflected anywhere in a bio, and that's that I graduated from Park High; so, that's a new phrase I got to learn that I definitely use in my personal life. But you're correct, I grew up in Cottage Grove, I'm very happy to be back home, so to speak. I have worked to manage communications in another city prior to Cottage Grove, so it's very interesting and very rewarding to come back here to my hometown and be able to serve the community in this capacity. We have a great team, great colleagues, and everyone, including yourselves, that I've had a chance to work with and meet, I've had nothing but very great interactions with. So, I'm having a really good time so far, and enjoying serving the community.

Chairman Olsen said Phil did not have much time to acclimate; I think we had him rolling up his sleeves on Day 1, if I remember right, and he jumped right in. I think it's sort of been 100 miles an hour, downhill, with your hair on fire ever since, but he's really been a great addition to the team, highly respected, very humble; he won't tell you that he worked in Duluth, but he did, and he did a great job up there for a long time. We're very fortunate to have had the opportunity to bring Phil on staff and look forward to working with him for a long time as he wants to tell Cottage Grove's story, and we're very appreciative of that.

Phil is here today to talk to us a little bit about the Q2 and Q3 Lodging Tax and Revenue Collection, and then I think you're going to move forward into the Budget Approval, so, take it away.

Phil said yes, I'm here to talk about the Q2 and Q3 Lodging Tax and Revenue Collections. So, the 2024 Budget uses a 63% occupancy rate when calculating our 2024 Lodging Tax projections. We also know that lodging typically does dip down in the winter months in Cottage Grove and then goes up in the warmer months, nothing too surprising there, but just something to point out. So, this average keeps our projections consistent throughout the year, and the City of Cottage Grove has collected all of our second and third quarter Lodging Tax and received the following amounts, which you see before you:

Quarter 2: \$21,340

Quarter 3: \$54,186

Total: \$75,526

Lodging Tax collections were higher than projected by about \$54,638.

We also collected additional payments for the Food Truck Festival, beginning in the second quarter, to total \$3,200. Quarter 2 totals show a deficit of \$8,229 based on our revenue projections, but a higher amount of payments were expected to come in earlier for the Food Truck Festival. Those deficit numbers were made up in Quarter 3 money, which collected for the Food Truck Festival.

With that, I'll stand for any questions regarding the Quarter 2, Quarter 3 Lodging Tax collections.

Chairman Olsen asked if there were any questions for Phil on his report; none were asked.

3. 2025 Budget Approval

Phil said the 2025 Budget Approval is before you. Again, as stated in the previous presentation, projections of a 63% occupancy were used when forecasting for the 2024 Lodging Tax Revenue, which estimates a total of \$72,300 in revenue. In looking back at previous years, on average the CVB has averaged a revenue of almost 65% occupancy for the full year; so, for 2025, the recommendation is to continue the projected occupancy rate of 63% for budgeting total Lodging Tax revenue, which would give us a projected revenue of \$72,300. This falls more in line with what has historically been collected yearly from our lodging facilities. It is also estimated that the advertising for the Visitors Guide in 2024 will be \$4,500, which helps offset the cost of printing for the Visitor Guide. Added in 2025

City of Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau

November 26, 2024

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are estimates for the Food Truck Festival, which based on projections it's estimated that the CVB will collect \$15,500 in both food truck and marketplace vendor payments and \$8,000 from sponsorships of the event. **Total Revenue Projected: \$100,300.00**

Moving on to expenses, those are broken out into two categories: Marketing Expenses and Operations.

So, before you on this slide you see Marketing Expenses, which are the core to the CVB's mission: To promote Cottage Grove as a premier destination for leisure, travelers, weddings, and outdoor enthusiasts; recognized as a successful host city for meetings and conventions, and a prominent and respected venue for sporting events.

As you look at those marketing expenditures, it is in service of that core mission. A reliable history for activities of the CVB is still being established, so funding levels for each line item and initiative for the 2025 budget are based on actual and projected spending.

2025 Marketing Expenses, broken out as follows:

Website Hosting	\$ 1,680.00
Printing of 2025 Visitor Guide	\$11,000.00
Brochure Programs Expenses (Mall of America & Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport)	\$ 4,630.00
Professional Services (Includes Transcription Services)	\$ 400.00
Food Truck Festival	\$20,000.00
Flexibility in Budget and Marketing, Local Events Advertising	\$ 6,425.00
Social Media, will continue to be the focus for the CVB's marketing efforts	<u>\$12,000.00</u>
	\$56,135.00

Operations Expenses, \$104,131.25, includes day-to-day expenses:

Office Supplies and Postage	\$ 1,100.00
2025 Membership with the Minnesota Association of Convention and Visitors	\$ 410.00
Continuing Education (includes MACVB Annual Conference)	\$ 1,700.00
5% Administrative Fee that is paid back to the City for facilitating the CVB	\$ 3,615.00
Contractual Services of 25% to the City (accounting audit, clerical, legal)	\$17,171.25
Portion of salary & benefits of Communications Specialist position	<u>\$24,000.00</u>
	\$47,996.25

Total Revenue Projections:	\$100,300.00
Total Expenses Projections:	\$104,131.25
Net Loss:	\$ -3,831.25

So, moving forward, the CVB is still determining Best Practices and methods for marketing the City, which you'll hear a little bit more about later. Also, the 2025 Budget is meant as a guide that allows for flexibility to adapt and change as we move forward. With that, there is a motion before you.

Recommendation: By motion, Approve the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau 2025 Budget.

Chairman Olsen said thank you very much. Before we move to approve this budget, I want to see who might have some questions.

Vice Chair Khambata asked on the projected revenues for Food Truck Donations and Sponsors, Line 3812, for June, July, August, and September, the vertical column doesn't add up for those four months, but then the end of the year totals do; so, I don't know if that's just a quirk with the Excel spreadsheet to get the formula right, but it didn't seem to affect the overall math in the Totals column. It's just something I noticed in that those four months, the subtotals are \$2,000 off on each of those months.

Phil replied thank you for pointing that out; we will look into that further and if any corrections need to be made, we will certainly make those.

Chairman Olsen said thank you, that stood out to me, too, and it could just be the way we're interpreting the data, but it just appears, using my Ph.D., that the math doesn't math. So, if you could check that, it would be much appreciated. But to the Vice Chair's point, when we look at the totals on the far right-hand side, everything appears to be accurate. So, just something to check into.

Chairman Olsen asked if there were any other questions on the budget; none were asked.

Vice Chair Khambata made a motion to approve the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau 2025 Budget; Director Hanson seconded the motion. Motion carried: 6-0.

4. 2024 Chandler Thinks Strategic Plan Update

Gretchen Larson, Economic Development Director, said we are going to talk a little bit about the updates for the Strategic Planning process. As you may recall, Chandler Thinks was selected in June to be the consultant that helps us develop the plan. They did their on-site visits on October 7 and 8; we of course interviewed the CVB Board, City Council, the EDA, area businesses, and City staff. Also, the Cottage Grove Athletic Association was our last big interview, and that was on November 10. So, we're essentially done with all the interview processes for right now.

Some observations that came out of that Phase I we'd like to share with you:

- A recommendation to pare down the amount of content in the Visitors Guide and make it more destination focused.
- A need for one or more brand hotels in the City; I'm sure that comes as no surprise to some of you who've been on the Board a while.
- To conduct a short survey of larger businesses to see how many vendors, contractors, corporate visits they have each year and how many overnight stays they may have and what we may be missing.
- Most of the people in town for sporting events and tournaments stay at Woodbury because two teams will fill up the entire Country Inn & Suites.
- The final recommendation, which is interesting, is that we should begin to think about creating destination marketing packages for not only our businesses, but to kind of partner with other areas that are of interest, like Afton Alps or the apple orchard. An example of a weekend package would include like staying at Hope Glen, having coffee or breakfast at Caribou, lunch at Junction 70, dinner at River Oaks, and then you could do things, depending on the time of the year, include golf at River Oaks or a massage at The Healing Place. Again, Shepard's Farm has apple picking and you can learn how to bake a pie, so things like that, that would just expand not just our influence but come stay here and you're only 20 minutes from all sorts of things here and elsewhere. So, that was a recommendation that we found very interesting.

Phase 1 is now essentially complete. They will review their findings with the City Administrator and staff on December 9, and then we'll send an interim report thereafter to the Board and let you know about the Phase I. Then we'll move on to the rest of the phases:

- Phase II is the GAP analysis and a survey regarding the overnight stays, and that has actually already been sent out; we've received responses, and now the analysis of that will begin.
- Phase III is important for all of you because this is your SWOT analysis, which includes your goal setting. I just received an email this morning from them, and they're looking at January 9, 10, or 11 for a two-hour meeting, which would be a virtual meeting with them. So, if you can just put those three dates in your head and make sure that when I send the email that we can nail down one of those three dates.
- Phase IV will be the final report, the tourism action plan, and the roadmap for the next three-to-five years. We anticipate that the report will be done sometime in mid-January, and it will be presented to you in February.

Director Larson said with that, I'll stand for any questions that you have.

Chairman Olsen said thank you for the update, a lot of interesting things came out of that interview process, I think, both on behalf of those being interviewed and those doing the interviews because of their experience in this particular niche, and definitely I think there's a lot of fun things ahead. He asked what questions the Board had with respect to the Chandler Thinks update?

Director Grecula asked what content were they suggesting that we remove from the Visitors Guide?

Director Larson replied well, my colleague, Courtney, is going to go a little bit more into that, but they were just saying that if you're going to be a tourist destination, be a tourist destination, give people itineraries, things to do, like what I mentioned. Even package deals, why are they coming here, as opposed to things like recipes and book reviews and movie reviews; all of that's good, it's actually very good, but the idea is that at some point, we need to split those apart so that when you're focusing on tourism, that's all it is. All the fun Hometown Holiday stuff and all of that can be a partial draw, but it's also for the community, as opposed to visitors.

Director Grecula said that makes sense. My second question, I thought it was an interesting idea, the partnerships with other cities to make packages. Do we have people who have good relationships with the city governments in Afton or Hastings? Director Larson replied yes, we do, and of course we have our Chamber as well; so, yes, we do have relationships with folks, and we think we can build some interesting packages. We also introduced the folks at Chandler Thinks to visit St. Paul and visit Minneapolis, so we really think that we can do that 20 minutes; it's still ideal to stay here, we hope to still get another hotel or two, so you would come here and stay, and you would do all the fun things here. Then you could still go pick apples, go skiing, whatever, because

they're only just a few minutes away. So, why not? In economic development, we always say the best place is our place, and the next best place is right next door.

Chairman Olsen asked if there were any other questions, none were asked. He said I will say that from an elected official's perspective, we do have very good relationships with our partner elected officials in all of our surrounding communities. I consider many of those folks colleagues and friends, and they always seem very willing to want to work with us to find mutually beneficial solutions to the challenges that we face. In fact, we meet once a year for a full workshop with the City of Woodbury and their staff and Council. We also have a little competition when we meet with them to kind of kick things off, and at this point, we've never lost to them; I just want to make that very clear for those people watching at home that there may come a day, but not while I'm around.

I did want to make a couple comments on Chandler Thinks real quick; one thing that I took away was Chandler Thinks very much stressed that tourism means an overnight stay. They were adamant about the fact that we are extremely short when it comes to lodging, we definitely have a focus to try to gain additional lodging, and you mentioned sort of the brand names, and that is something that the City staff and the EDA have been working on for quite some time. When the mayor and I went to Las Vegas this year for the ICSC convention, which we do every year to market the City, we spent a good amount of time talking with various brokers and lodging purveyors to try to work towards gaining some additional foothold for lodging. We do have a lot of tournaments here in town; you know that in the summer months, we have a lot of softball tournaments, baseball tournaments, things of that nature. In the winter months, our Ice Arena is continually packed, there's a lot of hockey tournaments that take place here in addition to just the regular games. It pains me to send those people away to eat someplace else and stay someplace else, so I think that is, for me, anyway, one of the primary strategies that came out of that is we need to double our efforts on that. But it was really good to interface with them, and I look forward to their work.

Director Levine said I was able to be a part of a few of those conversations, along with a good handful of the Chamber members, and that is the biggest thing that probably came out of that is the topic of a potential for a hotel, especially a name-brand hotel. Every time I turn around, people are asking like when is it coming? When is it coming, you know? So, that's exciting to hear that, especially from our Business Park members, our businesses there, that it will be very well received and can't come quick enough.

Chairman Olsen said I agree, because as our Business Park members continue to expand and they do, they expand their footprints regularly, they need to bring people in for meetings and conferences, etc., and where do they stay? So, that's a challenge. Good, are there any other thoughts on that?

Vice Chair Khambata said I'd like to kind of complement what you said regarding sitting down with the people at Chandler Thinks. The takeaway that I got from it is we've got a lot of activities that draw people in, and the question kept coming up, well, where are they staying? And they're staying in Woodbury, or they're staying somewhere else and coming here. I think when he highlighted the fact that tourism dollars means keeping people here overnight to spend money, to eat and recreate and whatever. I think highlighting that fact, much like Gretchen said, where our proximity to a lot of activities and recreational opportunities is about equal, we need to try and use that, to sell that, to bring in additional lodging. Again, keep those dollars here rather than being the stopover destination for somebody who is staying somewhere else.

Chairman Olsen said absolutely, I couldn't agree more. He asked if there were any other comments at all, but there were none. He thanked Gretchen for the update.

5. 2025 Visitor Guide

Courtney Pirsig, Communications Specialist, stated as Gretchen mentioned, feedback from our strategic partnership with Chandler Thinks has been incorporated into the 2025 Visitor Guide. As we talked with Chandler Thinks, today the average Cottage Grove visitor is a Daytripper, they're typically traveling 40-to-65 miles in distance and not spending the night. So, this edition of the Visitor Guide focuses on the main objective, which is to inspire a visit and encourage that overnight stay. Rather than including community-based stories, which we did in the 2024 edition, we've slimmed down the Guide and focused on the Core Mission of the CVB: Providing our visitors with helpful suggestions and resources. So, as you can see at the bottom, our page count has gone from 44 to 20, but that was very intentional.

So, the contents of this Guide are four key sections: The first section is like your main key attractions, so dining and lodging are a couple of the main reasons people are coming here. We also still are offering suggestions of things to do, outdoor adventure, highlighting some of our annual events, and now including nearby attractions; so, you will see mention of the Mall of America, the Como Zoo, things that are 20 miles from Cottage Grove.

Chandler Thinks also mentioned that we really need to focus on weddings and groups, as that's a big draw, too. We have multiple wedding venues here, so we have contact information for services, resources for weddings and groups that are coming to Cottage Grove, and then some entertainment ideas as well.

The last section includes information regarding the Cottage Grove Puzzle, which is a fun thing that we offer now for residents and visitors; we also provided a travel itinerary sample for someone who isn't familiar with Cottage Grove and is just here for the day and wants to plan their visit before coming.

So, before you is a printed draft of the Visitor Guide; that is not done, but you can see that the design stayed relatively the same. We had really positive feedback on the design, it was more so the content that we had included in it. So, that is why we stripped it down, we kept a similar design, of course had our sponsor's ads, who we really appreciate.

Featured on the front cover is the Cottage Grove Bike Park; that is a staple in Cottage Grove, it's something we offer that many cities don't have, so we wanted to make sure that when its sitting on a shelf, someone sees it and says, hey, what's that? I want to do that when I go there. It falls under that travel itinerary as something to do when the family's here. And then in comparison to last year, I mentioned this before, the design has kept a similar theme, but we are just now switching to a visitor resource vs. a community-based recreation guide. This Guide provides visitors with more direct information, such as location and contact details; that was something Chandler Thinks highly recommended. Having a direct source to the website and the phone number instead of reading through paragraphs of information that they won't remember having that direct source to the location, essentially; that's what it's for, its a Guide to these businesses.

After presenting you with this draft, I'll be happy to stand for any questions.

Director Olson said I see some very nice promotional content or ads, Country Inn & Suites, Afton Apple, St. Paul Saints; are they paying for this space, or are we just including them because, or if not, are we going to approach them for ad space?

Courtney replied yes, we have six approved ads; the ones with logos included and website and contact information, those are all paid for. The mention of, you know we have the list of contact details, etc., if there's no logo, it's more so just mentioned, so visitors are aware.

Vice Chair Khambata asked so, where it says like half place ad placement, if no one purchases that, do you have like a backup or something to fill it?

Courtney replied yes, definitely. When we start the Guide, we start with a long list of things we want to include; so, there's definitely things that we kept out to make space for the ads. As of now, the ads are closed, but we do still have potential space, if needed, since this is not final. But, yes, we do have information we can include there.

Vice Chair Khambata said otherwise, I like the layout. I think it looks very attractive. Courtney thanked him.

Director Levine replied yeah, I'll add, too, this is beautiful again; you do such a great job every year, and I have a great understanding of how much work goes into one of these, so congrats on that. Just remind me again, when does this publish?

Courtney replied it will be distributed in January, 2025. Director Levine replied thank you.

Chairman Olsen said I'm all for bringing people into the community, although I'm not sure Latin's probably the language we want to use in here; I know that that's just a default, but I wanted to just point that out. I was looking through the Guide and trying to find references to some of our kind of unique outdoor venues, as an example, the Disc Golf Course. So, when I look at the Go Outside page, and I see Spring, subtitle here, Summer, subtitle here, Fall, subtitle, I'm assuming that's where some of that stuff is going to go?

Courtney replied, yes, that's correct.

Chairman Olsen said all right, good enough, because there are so many outdoor things to do here, and of course, we're very excited about the Mississippi Dunes Park and access to the river. So, having that included I think will be something that not only locals will appreciate, but those who want to visit will appreciate. We're hopeful that those are the things that will attract people to the community and get them to stay. For people at home who don't know, we've actually been a destination for the State Disc Golf Tournament on a couple of different occasions, and that Disc Golf Course gets a lot of use. So, that's why I was looking for it. But the layout's beautiful, I think condensing to some degree was a wise decision for sure, and I look forward to seeing the final product, I really can't wait. Great photography as well, so using the Bike Park on the cover I think is a real grab-you kind of a photograph, and I just think it's beautiful. Thank you.

Director Khambata said the back cover is beautiful, as well, that's a nice shot of the golf course. Chairman Olsen said, yes, it is, isn't that a great shot of the golf course? And the light's just perfect, yeah, so really great.

Chairman Olsen thanked Courtney and asked her when will we see the finished product, did you say? Courtney replied before my maternity leave in January. Chairman Olsen said congratulations to you, how wonderful is that?

City Administrator Jennifer Levitt stated we have one action we do need, related to the Visitor Guide.

Chairman Olsen said I see it here on the screen. So, you need approval for the printing costs, right?

Courtney replied yes, so displayed on the screen are two quotes from companies that we have worked with before for a very similar product that we've done, full color. This is a 16-page booklet and we are requesting 7,000 copies. You will notice in comparison to last year that there is a significant cost decrease, which is a result of the smaller page count. Last year, we had 44 pages, which cost us about \$10,000, and this year its 20 pages, which will be \$6,228.

Chairman Olsen said I didn't look, but did this reduced cost get included in our prospective budget for 2025? Did that get entered in there? Do we know?

Phil replied the projected budget was \$11,000.

Council Member Olsen said so, there goes our \$3,000 loss right there, look at that. Wow, you're really good! Okay, so were you hoping for approval for Ideal?

Courtney replied, yes, so with that, I present you with a recommendation to approve the quote.

Recommendation: Approve quote for the printing of 7,000 copies of the 2025 Visitor Guide through Ideal Printers, Inc. for \$6,220.

Director Grecula made a motion to approve quote for the printing of 7,000 copies of the 2025 Visitor Guide through Ideal Printers, Inc. for \$6,220; Vice Chair Khambata seconded the motion. Motion carried: 6-0.

8. WORKSHOP - None.

9. CVB COMMENTS

Chairman Olsen said I do want to take a moment to thank our Vice Chair, Tony Khambata, for his service to the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau. Tony will be moving on from his elected role here at the end of 2024, but I know he's going to stay involved with the City in various forms and fashions; I'm not sure what all of that is going to look like, but I have a few ideas. Tony's been instrumental in helping us drive this process, he's been a wonderful City Council Member and colleague, and he's just a really good guy. So, I wanted to just take a moment to say thanks to Tony for everything that he's done for the Board, for the City, and I look forward to your continued involvement in City policy making.

He said I also want to congratulate our Board Member to my left, Laurie Levine. For those of you at home who may not know Laurie, and I don't know that there's probably 10 people in town who don't, but Laurie is the C.E.O.-President of the Cottage Grove Area Chamber of Commerce; recently, at the Chamber's Evening of Excellence, which Tony and I had the opportunity to attend with our Council colleagues and staff, Laurie received some very well-deserved recognition for her hard work as a great advocate for all of our Chamber members, including those in Cottage Grove. I've got to tell you, she's the hardest-working lady in business, she's tireless. I have a lot of admiration for the work that she does, so, I'm going to give you a minute, Laurie, if you want to speak, you don't have to, but maybe you can tell the folks at home kind of what you received and why.

Director Levine replied that was not on the agenda. So, thank you, thank you very much. So, I celebrated five years in my position at the Cottage Grove Area Chamber of Commerce as President and C.E.O., along with the Women in Business Organization. So, it was really exciting to see where the Chamber of Commerce was when I took the position to where we are now, and it's just so exciting to see where we're going to be in five more years from that. And, so, our partnership with our cities, with our members, with our businesses is just incredible to see kind of what can happen over years. So, thank you for those kind words, and I can't wait to see what the future brings.

Chairman Olsen said you have done so much to grow the influence of the Chamber, not to mention just the membership count. Earlier, when we talked about Chandler Thinks and the question came up about working with our partner communities around us in South Washington County and Dakota County, Laurie is the tip of the spear when we do that. She has amazing relationships that we are able to benefit from, and we're so grateful to have her in that role. So, again, congratulations.

Vice Chair Khambata said so, I wasn't going to bring this up, but thank you for the kind words as well. I was thinking this morning about how the Convention and Visitors Bureau even came into existence, which was a collaboration with our Chamber; and then we advocated for a Lodging Tax, and then the City came on board and kind of helped us guide it. And it's grown into what it is now, which to me is amazing because I remember being at like a networking function with the Chamber members and being like, wouldn't this be a great idea? And that was well before I was ever on Council, and it's been mostly a volunteer effort, so thank you, everyone for helping to build this into what it is, and it benefits everyone in the City. So, great work.

City of Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau

November 26, 2024

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Chairman Olsen said, yes, I agree. We should be proud of the hard work that went into that. So, if there are no further comments, I will seek a motion to adjourn.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Khambata made a motion to adjourn; the motion was seconded by Director Hanson. Motion carried: 6-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Phil Jents, Communications Manager

/jag



TO: Board of Directors, Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau

FROM: Phil Jents, Communications Manager

DATE: May 30, 2025

RE: 2024 Q4 and 2025 Q1 Lodging Tax and Revenue Collection

Discussion

2024 Q4 and 2025 Q1 Lodging Tax Collections

The 2025 budget used a 63% occupancy rate when calculating our 2025 lodging tax projections. The City of Cottage Grove has collected all but one month for one lodging facility for 1st quarter lodging tax and received the following amounts:

2024 Q4 Lodging Tax Collections for the City of Cottage Grove

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Lodging Tax Revenue	\$ 14,562	\$ 18,140	\$ 21,016	\$ 15,865	\$ 69,583
Other Revenue	\$ 4,450	\$ 3,200	\$ 33,400	\$ 1,584	\$ 42,634
2024 Total Revenue	\$ 19,012	\$ 21,340	\$ 54,416	\$ 17,449	\$ 112,218
2024 Budgeted	\$ 23,164	\$ 29,569	\$ 28,069	\$ 18,069	\$ 98,871

2025 Q1 Lodging Tax Collections for the City of Cottage Grove

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Lodging Tax Revenue	\$ 13,194	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 13,194
Other Revenue	\$ 3,275	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,275
2025 Total Revenue	\$ 16,469	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 16,469
2025 Budgeted	\$ 23,164	\$ 29,569	\$ 28,069	\$ 18,069	\$ 98,871

In total, 2024 Q4 lodging tax collections was \$17,449. This is 13.5% over the 2024 total budgeted revenue. The Food Truck Festival revenue contributed heavily to this surplus. 2025 Q1 lodging tax collections were \$16,469.

Recommendation:

Receive 2024 Q4 and 2025 Q1 lodging tax collection information.



TO: Board of Directors, Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau

FROM: Phil Jents, Communications Manager

DATE: May 30, 2025

RE: 2024 Annual Report

Background/Discussion

According to the bylaws for the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitor's Bureau (CVB), each year the CVB is required to submit a written Annual Report to the City Council no later than 2nd Quarter of the following year. The Annual Report provides an overview of highlights, activities, and the budget from the 2024 calendar year.

Recommendation

Receive the 2024 Cottage Grove Convention and Visitor's Bureau Annual Report.



MORE THAN YOU
Imagine

**Cottage Grove Convention
& Visitors Bureau**
2024 Annual Report

12800 Ravine Parkway South
Cottage Grove, MN 55016
651-458-2800 | [DiscoverCottageGrove.com](https://www.discovercottagegrove.com)

DISCOVER
COTTAGE GROVE





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A Message From The CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Dear Friends, Partners and Visitors,

As Chairman of the Board of the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB), I am proud to reflect on a year marked by progress, purpose, and growing momentum. In 2024, the CVB reaffirmed its commitment to promoting Cottage Grove as a welcoming, vibrant destination, one that celebrates our community's natural beauty, rich amenities, and exceptional quality of life.

Our mission is to support local economic vitality by attracting visitors, encouraging exploration, and enhancing the overall experience of those who live, work, and play in Cottage Grove. This past year, we laid the foundation for long-term growth through focused planning, expanded partnerships, and strategic investments in tourism development.

Looking ahead, our efforts will continue to center on promoting Cottage Grove's unique story. We are building stronger connections with local businesses, developing compelling marketing campaigns, and supporting events and initiatives that showcase everything our city has to offer. From our scenic parks and trail systems to our family-friendly events and growing hospitality sector, the future of tourism in Cottage Grove is full of promise.

We are grateful for the collaboration of our community partners, the dedication of our board and staff, and the ongoing support of our residents. Together, we are creating lasting impact and driving Cottage Grove forward as a destination of choice in Minnesota.

Thank you for your continued trust and enthusiasm.

Justin Olsen

Chairman of the Board
Cottage Grove Convention and Visitor Bureau





Live. Work. Play. Visit.

Nestled between Wisconsin and the Twin Cities Metro, Cottage Grove is a haven for those seeking an active lifestyle and a deep connection with nature. With its extensive network of parks and trails, it beckons residents and visitors alike to explore and unwind amidst lush greenery and scenic landscapes. From sprawling urban parks teeming with recreational facilities to winding trails that meander through picturesque woodlands and along tranquil rivers, there's something for every outdoor enthusiast to enjoy. Families gather for picnics, friends engage in friendly games, and fitness enthusiasts jog or cycle along the paths, invigorated by the fresh air and revitalizing surroundings. Amidst the hustle and bustle of city living, these green oases provide a sanctuary for rejuvenation, reflection, and connection with the natural world, embodying the perfect balance between urban excitement and natural tranquility.

Whether you're here for a long time or just a fun time, Cottage Grove offers ample opportunities for housing, work, and play. Not only are we a safe and prosperous community, we pride ourselves in being a warm and welcoming place for residents and visitors to live, work, play, and visit.



MEET OUR TEAM

The Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) markets and promotes Cottage Grove as a year-round visitor destination, working in partnership with industries, corporate partners, state partners, city departments, and regional destination marketing organizations. The CVB serves as the primary marketing organization responsible for executing promotional programs to ensure positive economic impact in Cottage Grove through steady growth of the travel industry.

Mission

The CVB's mission is to promote Cottage Grove as a premier destination for leisure travelers, weddings, and outdoor enthusiasts, a recognized and successful host city for meetings and conventions, and a prominent and respected venue for sporting events.

To learn more about the CVB's activities, please visit our website or sign up for our newsletter.

2024 Board Members



Justin Olsen
Chair



Tony Khambata
Vice Chair



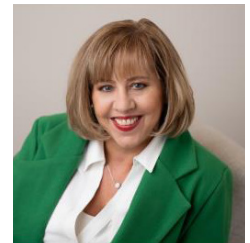
Sarah Grecula
Director



Steve Hanson
Director



Erik Olsen
Director



Laurie Levine
Director

Staff Members



Jennifer Levitt
City Administrator



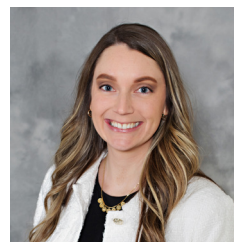
Jaime Mann
Assistant to the
City Administrator



Gretchen Larson
Economic
Development
Director



Phil Jents
Communications
Manager



Courtney Pirsig
Communications
Specialist



Alexa Anderson
Communications
Specialist



Key Accomplishments

2024 VISITOR GUIDE

The 44-page guide represents the opportunities for visitors and travelers alike to discover our unique city. From lodging facilities, outdoor parks and recreation, events, meeting venues and more, there's something inside for everyone. Flipping through the pages is truly a reminder of what people who live here already know: The city is a special place to live, work and play.

By the Numbers

- This is the third annual publication for Cottage Grove.
- This guide boasts 44 pages full of amenities, activities and information about Cottage Grove.
- There are 6 total ads in this publication.
- \$4,450 in revenue was collected from advertising dollars through this publication.

In Addition to the Numbers

- This publication was created entirely in-house, providing massive cost savings to the CVB by not hiring an outside organization.
- There is a digital flipbook of the guide hosted on DiscoverCottageGrove.com, which is an elevated version of the printed piece. This includes links driving traffic to local businesses and advertisers.

Where Can I Find It?

- Mall of America, Welcome Centers and Visitor Centers, and mail by request.
- City Hall, Cottage Grove Ice Arena, and other local locations.
- To see the digital flipbook, visit our website: DiscoverCottageGrove.com/Visitors-Guide



7,000
Copies Printed



6
Paid Advertisers



\$4,450
Revenue Collected

Key Accomplishments

WEBSITE

The CVB's most valuable marketing asset is our website, DiscoverCottageGrove.com. Here is where residents and visitors can access the Visitor Guide, our events calendar, and a list of suggestions for dining, lodging, entertainment and more.



Users by Month

January – 828	↓ 55%
February – 1.7K	↑ 25%
March – 1.3K	↓ 62%
April – 837	↓ 78%
May – 2.8K	↓ 53%
June – 9.8K	↑ 81%
July – 2K	↓ 53%
August – 1.6K	↓ 48%
September – 5.4K	
October – 1.8K	↓ 54%
November – 1.6K	↓ 21%
December – 2.5K	↓ 8%

Most Viewed Pages

1. Food Truck Festival
2. Strawberry Fest
3. Holiday Train
4. Calendar
5. One Family Fest

<input type="checkbox"/>	Session primary...Channel Group) +	Active users	↓ Sessions	Engaged sessions
Total Users (YOY)				
<input type="checkbox"/>	Total	32,020 100% of total	39,964 100% of total	17,064 100% of total
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 Organic Search	16,403 (51.23%)	22,252 (55.68%)	11,464 (67.18%)
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 Paid Social	8,888 (27.76%)	9,631 (24.1%)	2,817 (16.51%)
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 Direct	3,162 (9.88%)	3,949 (9.88%)	1,316 (7.71%)
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 Referral	1,712 (5.35%)	1,984 (4.96%)	534 (3.13%)
<input type="checkbox"/>	5 Organic Social	1,718 (5.37%)	1,928 (4.82%)	590 (3.46%)
<input type="checkbox"/>	6 Unassigned	89 (0.28%)	92 (0.23%)	7 (0.04%)
<input type="checkbox"/>	7 Paid Other	7 (0.02%)	8 (0.02%)	3 (0.02%)

Organic: Visitors landing on your website due to unpaid search results. (SEO, keywords, etc.)

Direct: Visitors who arrive at your site by typing your website URL directly into their browser's address bar.

Referral: Visitors who land on your website from sites other than the major search engines. (Facebook, Google, Private Domains, etc.)



Key Accomplishments

PHOTO & VIDEO

Working with local talent builds professional relationships within our community, all while highlighting the authentic beauty Cottage Grove has to offer, at little or no cost to us. The CVB worked with various professional photographers in the area: Kelly Birch, Dylan Buss, Isaac Pavek, David Parker, and others. We also partnered with South Washington County Telecommunications Commission (SWCTC) to produce 15 videos that highlight the city's unique events and activities.

Key Accomplishments

SOCIAL MEDIA

Effective social media plays a key role in building our brand and bringing people to Cottage Grove. The interactive and visual nature of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram all provide powerful opportunities for people to engage and experience Cottage Grove through video and photos. Giving potential visitors a first-hand look at the city’s restaurants, parks, recreational opportunities, wedding venues and other offerings has been incredibly effective. We’ve reached thousands of people and shown them all the city has to offer.

Ad Campaigns

Not only does social media build our brand, but effective social media ad campaigns reach new users, target specific audiences, increases brand visibility, and helps to increase sign-ups and lead generation. An advantage of marketing through social media as opposed to “traditional” print advertising is the ability to allow for consumer interaction. Not only can people click where to go, they can also “like” and “share” without any additional cost to the producer.



*Food Truck Festival Budget

Boosted Ads

ONE FAMILY FEST
(Facebook Post)
114.7K Impressions
\$500 Spent

STRAWBERRY FEST
(Facebook Event)
96.4K Impressions
\$999.68 Spent

FOOD TRUCK FESTIVAL
(Facebook Event)
162.6K Impressions
\$2,000 Spent



Top Performing Campaign

GET OUT AND EXPLORE MN
ONE FAMILY FEST
(Facebook Post)
114.7K Impressions

Top Performing Video

FOOD TRUCK FESTIVAL
THAT’S A WRAP!
(Facebook Video)
2.5K Impressions

Facebook Stats

January 1 - December 31, 2024
360,300 Users Reached ↓ 6%
6,100 Engagements ↑ 3%
15,900 Impressions ↓ 24%
4,200 Followers ↑ 8%

Instagram Stats

January 1 - December 31, 2024
32,710 Users Reached ↓ 38%
912 Followers ↑ 6%
845 Engagements ↓ 2%
12 Reels/Videos ↑ 20%
197 Posts ↓ 9%

Twitter (X) Stats

January 1 - December 31, 2024
202 Tweets ↑ 1%
66 Followers ↓ 27%

YouTube Stats

Pickleball in Cottage Grove
448 views

Strawberry Fest
227 views

Life of a Haunter
196 views

Cottage Grove Dowdle Puzzle
185 views

Saturdays at the Park
180 views

Convention and Visitors Bureau
60 views

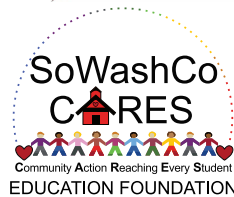
Holiday Train - Live
59 views



Public Relations

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Effectively marketing the city and showcasing it as a recreation, retail and meeting destination requires a multi-faceted approach. We use strategic practices to promote our community, such as the visitor guide, partnerships, paid media, blog posts, monthly newsletter, community engagement, sponsorships, and more.



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Throughout 2024, Discover Cottage Grove partnered and collaborated with top brands on unique promotions that drive awareness and demand for the destination in non-traditional tourism channels. Both Discover Cottage Grove and its partners were able to take advantage of these co-op opportunities for added reach and credibility.

Public Relations

PAID MEDIA

Minnesota Monthly – \$2,410

- Run of Site Advertising
- E-Newsletter Sponsorship
- Fall Bucket List
- Multi-Generational Getaways Article

Have Fun Biking Magazine – \$2,580

- 2024 Bike/Hike Guide Ad

BLOG POSTS

Discover Cottage Grove Blog

- Where to find that Hot n’ Bubbly Pizza
- Where to Tie the Knot in Cottage Grove
- It’s a Fish Fry Frenzy in Cottage Grove
- Totes Ma Goats!
- Best Patios in the Grove
- Win Tickets to the St. Paul Saints!
- ... and more!

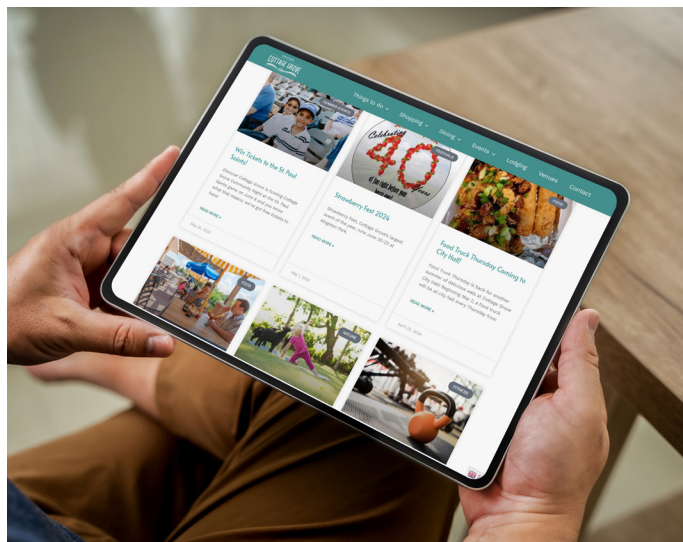
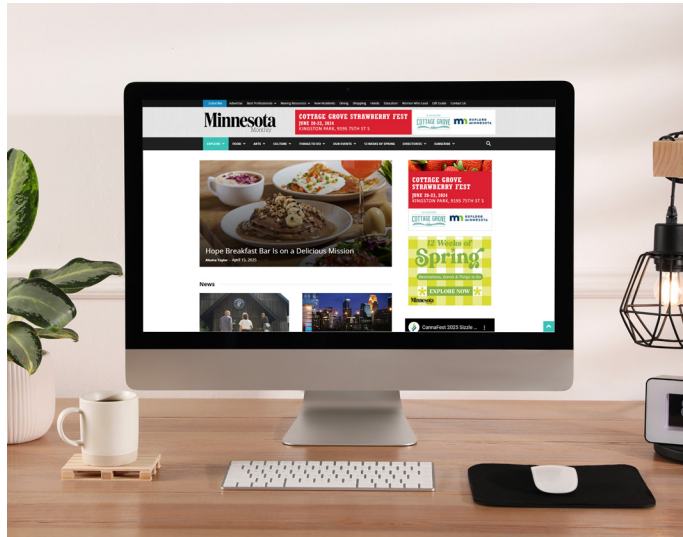
E-NEWSLETTER

The Insider | Monthly Newsletter

Our monthly E-newsletter, The Insider, delivers a curated blend of local events, classes, tips, tricks, helpful links, ideas, and more. Each month is full of seasonal happenings with a direct link to our Discover Cottage Grove event calendar. You can also access our social media platforms and visitor guide. Your ultimate, digital guide to Cottage Grove. The Insider currently has 2,960 subscribers.

SWAG

In 2024, we handed out a few different swag items: branded luggage tags, glow-in-the-dark cups, drawstring bags, flex pencils, and visitor guides.

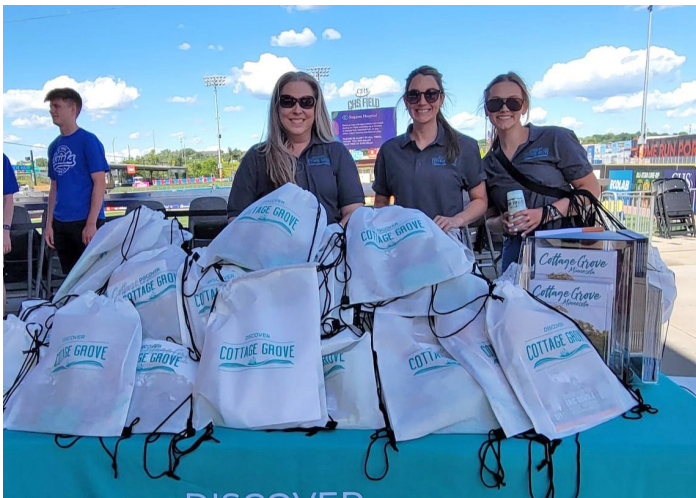


COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Cottage Grove Area Chamber of Commerce Community Showcase

Staff from both the City and Discover Cottage Grove enjoyed socializing with attendees at the annual Cottage Grove Area Chamber of Commerce Community Showcase. We shared insight into what makes the city a great place to live, work, play and visit. Branded swag and informative handouts were available to take.



Community Night at CHS Field

Discover Cottage Grove teamed up with the St. Paul Saints on June 8, 2024, to promote Cottage Grove Community Night at the St. Paul Saints game. As we passed out DCG swag facing the front entrance gate doors, we enjoyed talking to attendees about Strawberry Fest, Food Truck Festival, and all Cottage Grove has to offer.



Cottage Grove Strawberry Fest

We promoted the Cottage Grove Strawberry Fest to bring families together for the annual, four-day event. The festival is run completely by volunteers with no admission fee or cost to watch the main stage events. We are continuous supporters of Cottage Grove Strawberry Fest and have a DCG booth in the marketplace area.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



8,000 - 9,000
Attendance



40
Food Trucks



10
Sponsors



17
Marketplace Booths



Food Truck Festival

The annual Discover Cottage Grove Food Truck Festival was a huge success! Guests enjoyed a variety of food trucks, live music, a beer garden, marketplace, free admission, the Cottage Grove puzzle, and more.

Expenses Summary

Site	\$8,336.83
Entertainment	\$3,500.00
Kids Activities	\$1,215.44
Other	\$6,419.56
Total	\$19,471.83

Income Summary

Food Trucks & Marketplace	\$17,900.00
Sponsorships	\$8,584.40
Total	\$26,484.40

Profit & Loss Summary

Total Income	\$26,484.40
Total Expenses	\$19,471.83
Profit (or Loss)	\$7,012.57

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Revenue

Budgeted Revenue = \$98,871

Total 2024 Revenue = \$112,218

Revenue Breakdown

Lodging Tax = \$69,583

Other Revenue = \$42,634

Q1

- Budgeted: \$23,164
- Actual: \$19,012
- -17.9%

Q2

- Budgeted: \$29,569
- Actual: \$21,340
- -27.8%

Q3

- Budgeted: \$28,069
- Actual: \$54,416
- 93.9%

Q4

- Budgeted: \$18,069
- Actual: \$17,449
- -3.4%

Overall

- Budgeted: \$98,871
- Actual: \$112,218
- 13.5%

Expenses

Budgeted Expenses = \$104,131

Total 2024 Expenses = \$137,067

Summary

2024	Budget	Actual
Revenue	\$100,300	\$112,218
Expense	\$104,131	\$137,066

Strategic Plan

LOOKING AHEAD

Creating new ideas is key for a visitor bureau to stay relevant, innovative, and competitive in the ever-evolving tourism industry. Fresh ideas enable visitor bureaus to adapt to changing traveler preferences, market trends, and technological advancements, ensuring they remain ahead of the curve. Introducing new concepts, experiences, and initiatives not only attracts attention but also keeps visitors engaged and excited about the destination.

Develop A Strong Tourism Culture

Discover Cottage Grove completed its partnership with Chandlerthinks, a group of destination branding specialists, to create a strategic plan and comprehensive roadmap for the visitor bureau. This plan provides a framework for decision-making and resource allocation, guiding the visitor bureau to achieve its mission and fulfill its mandate of promoting the destination to a wider audience. The plan was recently completed and many of its recommendations are underway.

*In the list below, projects that have or will have guaranteed active efforts are marked with a *.*

Marketing Initiatives

- Branding: Develop a strong, well-planned brand identity for Cottage Grove tourism.*
- Update Website and Content: Revamp the website with fresh content and design that highlights the city's attractions.*
- Active Social Media Presence: Maintain an engaging social media calendar with regular posts, photos, and videos.*
- Digital Ad Campaigns: Run targeted digital ad campaigns to attract visitors from the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area.
- Build a Visitor Database: Collect visitor information for email marketing and to measure tourism initiatives.
- Create a Focused Visitor Guide: Produce a visitor guide that emphasizes the unique experiences our city has to offer.

Partnerships and Product Development

- Package Existing Assets: Create tourism packages by partnering with local businesses and nearby communities.
- Develop New Attractions: Explore the possibility of adding a boutique hotel, a "Winter Wonderland" event, restoring the Cedarhurst Mansion, creating a town center, and adding more family-friendly and recreational attractions.
- Engage with Stakeholders: Gather input and ideas from tourism stakeholders to develop new programs and events.
- Highlight Family and Friend Gatherings: Encourage residents to host their friends and family by creating a guide to the top five must-do activities in Cottage Grove.
- Annual Wedding Fair: Organize a wedding fair to showcase Cottage Grove as a premier wedding destination.
- Enhance the Strawberry Festival: Introduce a "Bring a Friend" initiative and other enhancements to attract more visitors to this signature event.*
- Cottage Grove Patio Week: Launch a patio week to celebrate the local food scene and encourage people to try new restaurants. This project is currently in the works and will be presented as "Patio Week" to interested businesses.*
- Sponsor or attend community events that are outside of the Cottage Grove area. (ex. Lumberjack Days, Hockey Day Minnesota, Woodbury Days, Heritage Days, etc.)*

Social Media

Connecting people and fostering communication is one of the highest priorities for the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau. In future months, our team plans to focus on local series, spotlights and promotions that showcase our attractions and experiences. While using high-quality visuals and relevant hashtags, efforts will continue to engage followers and build community engagement.



Cottage Grove Convention & Visitors Bureau

12800 Ravine Parkway South
Cottage Grove, MN 55016
651-458-2800 | DiscoverCottageGrove.com

DISCOVER
COTTAGE GROVE




TO: Board of Directors, Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau

FROM: Phil Jents, Communications Manager

DATE: May 30, 2025

RE: Explore Minnesota 2026 Tourism Grant

Background

The 2026 Explore Minnesota Tourism Grant provides funding to support tourism marketing campaigns and initiatives of primary Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) for the economic benefit of their communities.

Discussion

This grant opportunity was a competitive grant program offered via an open solicitation period. Applications were awarded based on application review and acceptance in the order they were received. The window to apply closed on April 21, 2025. Given this deadline and the first come, first serve nature of the program, the Cottage Grove CVB wrote a compelling grant application for an online marketing campaign: "Savor the Summer." This campaign will be geared toward foodies both local and beyond to attend Cottage Grove's Food Truck Festival, One Family Festival, Patio Week, and other Cottage Grove food destinations and events.

A maximum of one grant is awarded per organization. Award levels were as follows:

- Award levels for nonprofit DMOs and Tribal Nations are determined by the total organizational budget.
- Municipal DMOs may receive a maximum award amount of \$2,000.
- Organizations may request less than the maximum award of their eligible funding level. If requesting less than the maximum grant award, additional funding cannot be requested after the grant contract is executed.

This grant application requires a 1:1 cash match, meaning for every dollar awarded, the grantee must contribute an equal amount of funding from their own resources. Work for eligible grant items cannot begin and expenses cannot be incurred for this grant prior to June 1, 2025 and must be completed by April 17, 2026.

Given the CGCVB's municipal DMO status, the CGCVB was eligible for up to \$2,000 in grant funds, with a 1:1 cash match. Also given the CVB's approved marketing budget and existing need to market summer events such as the Food Truck Festival, One Family Festival, etc., staff thought it prudent to maximize funds already earmarked for marketing by leveraging grant dollars through this program. The matching dollars for the grant are already accounted for in our marketing budget and the grant will offset the additional expense incurred for marketing.

Discover Cottage Grove was awarded \$2,000 from the Explore Minnesota Tourism Grant program.

Recommendation

1. Approve the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitor Bureau to execute the grant agreement between Explore Minnesota and the Cottage Grove CVB.

Attachments

Explore MN 2026 Tourism Grant Application and Agreement.

Applications will be accepted beginning April 21, 2025, at 9 a.m. CT. Completed applications must be submitted to EMTgrant@state.mn.us and will be accepted through **June 20, 2025, at 4 p.m.**, or until all funds have been awarded, whichever occurs first. Incomplete applications will be rejected and returned to applicant. Rejected applications will lose queue priority but may be resubmitted if program funding is available. The [2026 Tourism Grant Guidelines](#) can be found on the [industry website](#).

Contact Information

Organization Name

Address City Zip

Contact Title

Email Phone

Organization's Website

Web address where the linked Explore Minnesota logo will be placed.

Minnesota Supplier/Vendor ID

If you do not know your state-issued supplier/vendor ID, contact Vendor Resources before submitting your application.

Our organization is set up to receive funds from the State of Minnesota via ACH/EFT direct deposit.

Vendor Resources	Website or Email Address	Phone
	mn.gov/mmb/accounting/swift/vendor-resources/	
ACH/EFT/Direct Deposit Assistance	efthelpline.mmb@state.mn.us	651-201-8106
Supplier/Vendor ID Assistance	vendor.mmbfax@state.mn.us	651-201-8100

Select from the Eligible Organizations list below that best describes your organization:

- A nonprofit DMO** such as a convention & visitor's bureau (CVB), a chamber of commerce or resort association. A recent copy of IRS Form 990 and Certificate of Incorporation (COI) from the Minnesota Secretary of State are required to apply for funding.
- A municipal DMO** that is the primary tourism marketing organization in their community, with designated city staff who devote time to marketing their community for tourism and has a tourism-focused website separate from their city website.
- A federally recognized Tribal Nation** sharing geography with Minnesota.

Grant Funding Limits

Organizations are not required to request the maximum award provided below. Award maximums are based on the organizational budget. More information on award levels can be found in the [2026 Tourism Grant Guidelines](#).

Check One:

Award Categories (based on Organization Budget)	Maximum Award Amount
<input checked="" type="radio"/> \$99,999 or less and Municipal DMOs	Up to \$2,000
<input type="radio"/> \$100,000 to \$499,999	Up to \$3,500
<input type="radio"/> \$500,000 to \$999,999	Up to \$5,500
<input type="radio"/> \$1,000,000 to \$4,999,999	Up to \$8,500
<input type="radio"/> \$5,000,000 and over	Up to \$11,000

Grant Funding Request

= total grant award amount being requested.

Certification

I, (person completing application), am authorized to request **2026 Tourism Grant** funding on behalf of (organization).

By checking all boxes and signing below, I certify:

- The organization I represent is an eligible entity under the [2026 Tourism Grant Guidelines](#).
- By accepting this grant award, I am obligating State funding which cannot be used for any other purpose.
- The organization above accepts all responsibilities as outlined in the [2026 Tourism Grant Guidelines](#) and are not contingent upon by continued employment with the organization.
- A progress report with the status of grant funding expenditures, project planning and a reconciliation status will be submitted on or before December 5, 2025.
- State grant funds will be utilized in accordance with the [2026 Tourism Grant Guidelines](#) with all grant projects started after July 1, 2025, and completed on or before April 17, 2026.
- Reconciliation material will be completed and submitted for reimbursement on or before May 22, 2026.
- The Project Summary and Budget Worksheets have been completed for this grant funding request.
- For nonprofit DMOs, a recent copy of IRS Form 990 and COI are included.

Authorized Signature:

Date:

A typed or script font cannot be used in place of a wet or uploaded image signature.

Explore Minnesota OFFICE USE ONLY

Industry Relations: _____ Date: _____

Senior Manager: _____ Date: _____

Supplier Contract: _____ PO: _____

Project Summary Worksheet

Please provide a brief description of the project(s) you intend to use the grant funding toward:

Discover Cottage Grove is excited to launch the "Savor the Summer" campaign, a targeted digital marketing initiative designed to boost regional tourism for the Cottage Grove Food Truck Festival and One Family Fest. These flagship, late-summer events features 35+ food trucks, live music, beverages, sports, and family-friendly activities, drawing thousands of attendees. This campaign will focus on increasing out-of-town attendance and driving economic activity in the community by leveraging paid digital advertising on Facebook and Instagram. Through audience targeting and location-based promotions, Discover Cottage Grove will reach new potential visitors from the Twin Cities metro and surrounding regions. The grant funds will be used entirely for Facebook ad placements to promote the event, encourage weekend visits, and invite audiences to explore all that Cottage Grove has to offer. Ads will link to a landing page or Facebook event with full festival details and nearby travel options. With a modest budget and high-impact marketing tools, this campaign presents an efficient way to drive tourism, visibility, and engagement around two of Cottage Grove's most anticipated summer events.

Project Start Date:

Project End Date:

Indicate approximate placement, run or end date as to when the project will begin.

Indicate approximate completion date.

Describe the project's target audience, geographical markets and demographics:

The primary target audience for the "Savor the Summer" campaign includes families, young professionals, and food enthusiasts seeking unique, affordable summer experiences within driving distance of the Twin Cities. The campaign will focus on attracting day-trippers and weekend visitors from the Minneapolis–St. Paul metro area, southeastern Minnesota, and western Wisconsin. Geographically, digital ads will be geo-targeted to audiences living 20–60 miles from Cottage Grove, with a focus on suburban and urban areas that have demonstrated interest in food festivals, outdoor events, and community gatherings. Specific targeting will include users who have engaged with similar events, local tourism pages, or regional entertainment content on Facebook and Instagram. Demographically, the campaign will prioritize adults ages 25–54, particularly parents with children, couples, and groups of friends looking for a fun day trip. The messaging will emphasize food variety, live entertainment, family-friendly fun, and the unique small-town charm of Cottage Grove. The campaign will also consider bilingual ad creative to reach growing segments of Minnesota's regional tourism.

How will this grant support tourism in your community and how will you measure success?

- Increase attendance at the Cottage Grove Food Truck Festival from outside the local area
- Promote Cottage Grove as a welcoming, family-friendly destination
- Improve Facebook event reach, ad engagement, and click-through rates
- Support local vendors, hospitality businesses, and community visibility
- Lay the groundwork for scalable digital campaigns in future years

Project Budget Worksheet

Please estimate your organization's anticipated expenses as they relate to the project(s) outlined on the Project Summary Worksheet (page 3). Eligible tactics are also referenced in the [2026 Tourism Grant Guidelines](#).

Estimated Budget Expenses	
\$ 4,300.00	Consumer Advertising
	Travel Trade, Meetings and Conventions & Sports Advertising
	Trade Shows
	Website Development & Enhancement
	Social Media Management
	Fulfillment Pieces (such as visitor guides, maps, and brochures)
	Media and Graphic Design Production (including photo and video assets)
	Direct Mail
	Public Relations Services
	Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Marketing & Programming
	Public Events Marketing
	Research & Data
\$ 4,300.00	Total of Anticipated Expenses

STATE OF MINNESOTA GRANT CONTRACT AGREEMENT

This grant contract agreement is between the State of Minnesota, acting through its Executive Director of Explore Minnesota ("State") and **City of Cottage Grove, 12800 Ravine Pkwy S, Cottage Grove, MN 55016** ("Grantee").

Recitals

1. Under Minn. Stat. §116U.30, the State is empowered to enter into this grant contract agreement.
2. The State is in need of marketing programs initiated by the Minnesota tourism industry to stimulate travel, and for the amplification of Explore Minnesota's brand for the economic benefit of the state.
3. The Grantee represents that it is duly qualified and agrees to perform all services described in this grant contract agreement to the satisfaction of the State. Pursuant to Minn. Stat. §16B.98, Subd. 1, the Grantee agrees to minimize administrative costs as a condition of this grant contract agreement.

Grant Contract Agreement

1 Term of Grant Contract Agreement

- 1.1 **Effective Date. June 1, 2025**, or the date the State obtains all required signatures under Minn. Stat. §16B.98, Subd. 5, whichever is later. The Grantee must not begin work until this grant contract agreement is fully executed and the State's Authorized Representative has notified the Grantee that work may commence. Per Minn. Stat. §16B.98, Subd. 7, no payments will be made to the Grantee until this grant contract agreement is fully executed.
- 1.2 **Expiration Date. April 17, 2026**, or until all obligations have been satisfactorily fulfilled, whichever occurs first.
- 1.3 **Survival of Terms.** The following clauses survive the expiration or cancellation of this grant contract agreement: 8. Liability; 9. State Audits; 10. Government Data Practices and Intellectual Property; 12. Publicity and Endorsement; 13. Governing Law, Jurisdiction, and Venue; and 15. Data Disclosure.

2 Grantee's Duties

The Grantee, who is not a state employee, will:

- a) Market and promote tourism for the economic benefit of their community(ies) and perform according to the **2026 Tourism Grant Program Guidelines** which are incorporated into this grant contract by reference.
- b) Comply with required grants management policies and procedures set forth through Minn. Stat. §16B.97, Subd. 4 (a) (1).

3 Time

The Grantee must comply with all the time requirements described in this grant contract agreement. In the performance of this grant contract agreement, time is of the essence.

4 Consideration and Payment

- 4.1 **Consideration.** The State will pay for all services performed by the Grantee under this grant contract agreement as follows:
 - a) **Compensation.** The Grantee will be paid **\$2,000** for supporting marketing programs that will help promote and stimulate the state's tourism industry.
 - b) **Travel Expenses.** Not applicable.
 - c) **Total Obligation.** The total obligation of the State for all compensation and reimbursements to the Grantee under this grant contract agreement will not exceed **\$2,000**.
- 4.2 **Payment.** The State will promptly pay the Grantee after the Grantee presents the required reconciliation documentation for the services performed and the State's Authorized Representative accepts, reviews, and approves the documentation submitted. Invoices must be submitted timely and according to the following schedule:
 - a) **Reconciliation Deadline.** Requests for reimbursement must be submitted when all projects are completed but no later than **May 22, 2026**. Partial requests for reimbursement will not be accepted.
 - b) **Supporting Documentation.** To receive payment, submit a completed Reimbursement Request Form with all required supporting documentation as outlined in the **2026 Tourism Grant Program Reconciliation Checklist**.
 - c) **Matching Funds.** State funds paid to the grantee under this contract may not be used to match other state funds.
 - d) **Unexpended Funds.** The Grantee must promptly return to the State any unexpended funds that have not been accounted for annually in a financial report to the State due at grant closeout.

4.1 Contracting and Bidding Requirements

- a) Any services and/or materials that are expected to cost \$100,000 or more must undergo a formal notice and bidding process.
- b) Services and/or materials that are expected to cost between \$25,000 and \$99,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of three (3) verbal quotes or bids.
- c) Services and/or materials that are expected to cost between \$10,000 and \$24,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of two (2) verbal quotes or bids or awarded to a targeted vendor.
- d) The grantee must take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that targeted vendors from businesses with active certifications through these entities are used when possible:
 - a. [State Department of Administration's Certified Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned Vendor List](#)
 - b. Metropolitan Council Underutilized Business Program: MCUB: [Metropolitan Council Underutilized Business Program](#)
 - c. Small Business Certification Program through Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and City of St. Paul: [Central Certification Directory](#)
- e) The grantee must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award, and administration of contracts.
- f) The grantee must maintain support documentation of the purchasing or bidding process used to contract services in their financial records, including support documentation justifying a single/sole source bid, if applicable.
- g) Notwithstanding (a) - (d) above, the State may waive bidding process requirements when:
 - a. Vendors included in response to competitive grant request for proposal process were approved and incorporated as an approved work plan for the grant.
 - b. It is determined there is only one legitimate or practical source for such materials or services and that grantee has established a fair and reasonable price.
- h) For projects that include construction work of \$25,000 or more, prevailing wage rules apply per Minn. Stat. §177.41 through §177.44. These rules require that the wages of laborers and workers should be comparable to wages paid for similar work in the community as a whole.
- i) The grantee must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred in MN: <https://mn.gov/admin/osp/government/suspended-debarred/index2.jsp>

5 Conditions of Payment

All services provided by the Grantee under this grant contract agreement must be performed to the State's satisfaction, as determined at the sole discretion of the State's Authorized Representative and in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, ordinances, rules, and regulations. The Grantee will not receive payment for work found by the State to be unsatisfactory or performed in violation of federal, state, or local law. All projects and expenditures must follow the **2026 Tourism Grant Program Guidelines**, which are incorporated in this Contract by reference.

6 Authorized Representative

The State's Authorized Representative is **Michael Hernandez, Industry Relations, 651-757-1876 (o), 612-300-1311 (c), michael.hernandez@state.mn.us**, or their successor, and has the responsibility to monitor the Grantee's performance and the authority to accept the services provided under this grant contract agreement. If the services are satisfactory, the State's Authorized Representative will certify acceptance on each invoice submitted for payment.

The Grantee's Authorized Representative is **Phil Jents, Discover Cottage Grove, 651-458-2860, pjents@cottagegrovemn.gov**. If the Grantee's Authorized Representative changes at any time during this grant contract agreement, the Grantee must immediately notify the State.

7 Assignment Amendments, Waiver, and Grant Contract Agreement Complete

- 7.1 **Assignment.** The Grantee shall neither assign nor transfer any rights or obligations under this grant contract agreement without the prior written consent of the State, approved by the same parties who executed and approved this grant contract agreement, or their successors in office.
- 7.2 **Amendments.** Any amendments to this grant contract must be in writing and will not be effective until it has been executed and approved by the same parties who executed and approved the original grant contract, or their successors in office.
- 7.3 **Waiver.** If the State fails to enforce any provision of this grant contract, that failure does not waive the provision or the State's right to enforce it.
- 7.4 **Grant Contract Complete.** This grant contract contains all negotiations and agreements between the State and the

Grantee. No other understanding regarding this grant contract, whether written or oral, may be used to bind either party.

8 Liability

The Grantee must indemnify, save, and hold the State, its agents, and employees harmless from any claims or causes of action, including attorney's fees incurred by the State, arising from the performance of this grant contract by the Grantee or the Grantee's agents or employees. This clause will not be construed to bar any legal remedies the Grantee may have for the State's failure to fulfill its obligations under this grant contract.

9 State Audits

Under Minn. Stat. §16B.98, Subd. 8, the Grantee's books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the Grantee or other party relevant to this grant contract agreement or transaction are subject to examination by the Commissioner of Administration, by the State granting agency and/or the State Auditor or Legislative Auditor, as appropriate, for a minimum of six years from the end of this grant contract agreement, receipt and approval of all final reports, or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

10 Government Data Practices and Intellectual Property Rights

10.1 **Government Data Practices.** The Grantee and State must comply with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minn. Stat. Ch. 13, as it applies to all data provided by the State under this grant contract, and as it applies to all data created, collected, received, stored, used, maintained, or disseminated by the Grantee under this grant contract. The civil remedies of Minn. Stat. §13.08 apply to the release of the data referred to in this clause by either the Grantee or the State. If the Grantee receives a request to release the data referred to in this Clause, the Grantee must immediately notify the State. The State will give the Grantee instructions concerning the release of the data to the requesting party before the data is released. The Grantee's response to the request shall comply with applicable law.

10.2 **Intellectual Property Rights.** Not applicable.

11 Workers Compensation

The Grantee certifies that it is in compliance with Minn. Stat. §176.181, Subd. 2, pertaining to workers' compensation insurance coverage. The Grantee's employees and agents will not be considered State employees. Any claims that may arise under the Minnesota Workers' Compensation Act on behalf of these employees and any claims made by any third party as a consequence of any act or omission on the part of these employees are in no way the State's obligation or responsibility.

12 Publicity and Endorsement

12.1 **Publicity.** Any publicity regarding the subject matter of this grant contract must identify the State as the sponsoring agency and must not be released without prior written approval from the State's Authorized Representative. For purposes of this provision, publicity includes notices, informational pamphlets, press releases, research, reports, signs, and similar public notices prepared by or for the Grantee individually or jointly with others, or any subcontractors, with respect to the program, publications, or services provided resulting from this grant contract. All projects primarily funded by state grant appropriations must publicly credit the State of Minnesota, including on the grantee's website when practicable.

12.2 **Endorsement.** The Grantee must not claim that the State endorses its products or services.

13 Governing Law, Jurisdiction, and Venue

Minnesota law, without regard to its choice-of-law provisions, governs this grant contract agreement. Venue for all legal proceedings out of this grant contract, or its breach, must be in the appropriate state or federal court with competent jurisdiction in Ramsey County, Minnesota.

14 Termination

14.1 Termination by the State

- a) **Without Cause.** The State may terminate this grant contract agreement without cause, upon 30 days' written notice to the Grantee. Upon termination, the Grantee will be entitled to payment, determined on a pro rata basis, for services satisfactorily performed.
- b) **With Cause.** The State may immediately terminate this grant contract agreement if the State finds that there has been a failure to comply with the provisions of this grant contract, that reasonable progress has not been made or that the purposes for which the funds were granted have not been or will not be fulfilled. The State may take action to protect the interests of the State of Minnesota, including the refusal to disburse additional

funds and requiring the return of all or part of the funds already disbursed.

14.2 Termination by The Commissioner of Administration

The Commissioner of Administration may immediately and unilaterally cancel this grant contract agreement if further performance under the agreement would not serve agency purposes or is not in the best interest of the State.

14.3 Termination for Insufficient Funding

The State may immediately terminate this grant contract agreement if:

- a) It does not obtain funding from the Minnesota Legislature.
- b) Or, if funding cannot be continued at a level sufficient to allow for the payment of the services covered here. Termination must be by written or fax notice to the Grantee. The State is not obligated to pay for any services that are provided after notice and effective date of termination. However, the Grantee will be entitled to payment, determined on a pro rata basis, for services satisfactorily performed to the extent that funds are available. The State will not be assessed any penalty if the grant contract agreement is terminated because of the decision of the Minnesota Legislature, or other funding source, not to appropriate funds. The State must provide the Grantee notice of the lack of funding within a reasonable time of the State's receiving that notice.

15 Data Disclosure

Under Minn. Stat. §270C.65, Subd. 3, and other applicable law, the Grantee consents to disclosure of its social security number, federal employer tax identification number, and/or Minnesota tax identification number, already provided to the State, to federal and state tax agencies and state personnel involved in the payment of state obligations. These identification numbers may be used in the enforcement of federal and state tax laws which could result in action requiring the Grantee to file state tax returns and pay delinquent state tax liabilities, if any.

1. State Encumbrance Verification

Individual certifies that funds have been encumbered as required by Minn. Stat. §16A.15.

Print name: Dawn Bushman

Signature: 

Title: Contract Coordinator Date: 5/20/2025

SWIFT Contract No. 269337

SWIFT PO No: 7629

3. State Agency

With delegated authority

Print name: _____

Signature: _____

Title: _____ Date: _____

2. Grantee

The Grantee certifies that the appropriate person(s) have executed the Grant Contract on behalf of the Grantee as required by applicable articles, bylaws, resolutions, or ordinances.

Print name: Phil Jents

Signature: _____

Title: _____ Date: _____

Distribution:

- Agency
- Grantee
- State's Authorized Representative



TO: Board of Directors, Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau

FROM: Alexa Anderson, Communications Specialist
Courtney Pirsig, Communications Specialist
Phil Jents, Communications Manager

DATE: May 30, 2025

RE: Convention and Visitors Bureau Events Update

Background/Discussion

June 19-22: Strawberry Fest, Strawberry Fields Marketplace

Details: Discover Cottage Grove, along with other organizations and businesses, will be at Cottage Grove's Strawberry Festival Marketplace from 4-9 p.m. on Friday, June 20 and 10 a.m.-6 p.m. on Saturday, June 21. Eric Dowdle will be attending to help boost puzzle sales, to sign puzzles, and create buzz and excitement for this incredible event.

Marketing: Ad placed in Minnesota Monthly magazine's May/June edition, social media posts including general event postings and individual event postings, social media paid ad campaign, Explore MN events calendar, Discover Cottage Grove events calendar and monthly e-newsletter, Cottage Grove Reports insert in May edition (including Strawberry Fest coloring contest). **The Strawberry Fest Committee has also done their own marketing for this event.*

Giveaway Items: Backpacks filled with a Visitor Guide, DCG beachball, a DCG cup, DCG luggage tag, , and Food Truck Festival information. We will be there answering questions about Cottage Grove. There will be DCG bendy pencils on hand to giveaway.

July 13-19: Patio Week

Details: DCG is hosting our first ever "Patio Week"! Online marketing event to promote patio dining at local restaurants. This is a way for DCG to encourage visitors and residents to savor the summer and find a patio to enjoy a delicious meal, a refreshing beverage, and encourage online promotion of the week, our restaurants, etc.

Marketing: Inside partnering local restaurants, Cottage Grove Connect, social media posts, paid online advertising targeting day trippers from the Twin Cities area, Discover Cottage Grove website, Cottage Grove Reports.

September 13: Cottage Grove Food Truck Festival Hosted by DCG

Details: Discover Cottage Grove will have a booth set-up at the Food Truck Festival from 11 a.m.- 6 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 13 selling puzzles and talking with people about the upcoming fall events.

Marketing: Social media posts, social media event creation, social media paid ad campaign, City of Cottage Grove website, Discover Cottage Grove website, City of Cottage Grove Reports monthly newsletter to homes, Discover Cottage Grove monthly e-newsletter to subscribers, Explore MN events calendar, Discover Cottage Grove events calendar.

Giveaway Items: Puzzles will be for sale at the festival. There will also be giveaways at the booth of DCG beachballs, DCG cups, , and DCG luggage tags, along with Visitor Guides.

Recommendation

Receive the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau events information.



TO: Board of Directors, Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau
FROM: Phil Jents, Communications Manager
DATE: May 30, 2025
RE: CGCVB Website Discussion

Background/Discussion

As part of the CVB's strategic plan, the Discover Cottage Grove website, hosting service, and design has been under review by staff.

The current website's hosting service makes it difficult to make quick, easy edits to web content, and the overall design is ripe for an update in order to keep the Discover Cottage Grove image and branding fresh and competitive with surrounding / similar communities.

There are three options regarding the DCG website:

1. Leave as-is
2. Keep current design and pay to migrate the site to a new, more user-friendly platform
3. Redesign the website fully

Staff are currently looking into information for options two and three, and are looking for guidance from the Board regarding the overall approach to the future of the DCG website.