

STATE OF WASHINGTON TOURISM

Final Report for RFP No. DPADG2023 - Destination Planning & Development Grants

Executive Summary

In 2023, State of Washington Tourism (SWT), applied for and received approximately \$3.5 million from the Washington State Department of Commerce to administer grant programs associated with destination development. These funds were part of a larger block grant award to the state from the Economic Development Administration (EDA), under the American Rescue Plan Act, to help the tourism industry recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Scope

SWT oversaw 140 grant projects between 2024 and 2025. Grant funds were dispersed through a competitive, needs-based process for local governments, tribes, chambers of commerce, destination organizations, and other nonprofit organizations that support travel and tourism in the State of Washington. All 478 applicants were encouraged to collaborate with industry partners on eligible projects and match a portion of their grant request with cash or in-kind contributions.

Resources and Expertise

SWT's statewide industry role, relationships, reputation and deep understanding of travel and tourism industry developmental needs played a critical role in managing a grant of this magnitude and complexity. SWT deployed established communication channels to promote grant applications, hosted industry webinars and convened grant-writing experts to assist in industry readiness, CFR explanation and navigation resources were provided and SWT staff members counseled industry members individually throughout the long grant process.

Grant Budget and Awards

SWT created a statewide program consisting of nine grants to reach different parts of the industry. \$3,204,000 was originally allocated with only a small percentage of the unused funds returned. SWT also allocated \$356,000, or 10% of the award, to operational costs (e.g., staff salaries, grant management software, promotion of grant programs, etc.) as allowed by the Department of Commerce. The original budget for each grant program is listed below.

Budget for Destination Planning and Development Grants (2024-25)

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Grant	Amount
Arts and Culture	\$325,000.00
Indigenous Tourism Marketing & Production	\$200,000.00
Indigenous Tourism Support (ITS) Program	\$145,000.00
Rural Tourism Marketing & Production	\$710,000.00
Rural Tourism Research & Data	\$304,000.00
Rural Tourism Support (RTS) Program	\$290,000.00
Sports Incentivization	\$300,000.00
Technical Assistance	\$150,000.00
Tourism Regeneration	\$780,000.00
Total	\$3,204,000.00

While total applications of \$11,402,259.87 were received, grant limitations allowed for a total combined award of \$3,105,918. These funds supported a wide range of projects, including research and data, marketing production, arts and culture, sports incentives, as well as technical assistance for other forms and aspects of travel and tourism. Grant funds also went toward projects within the Rural Tourism Support (RTS) program and the Indigenous Tourism Support (ITS) program. SWT dedicated \$30,000 for grant projects associated with each program, in addition to operational costs for consulting services, staff travel, catering, and other expenses.

A committee of industry experts from around the state reviewed leading grant applications and based their evaluations on the following criteria:

- Detailed proposal (e.g., timeline, partners, budget summary, etc.)
- Strategic application to travel and tourism
- Statement of need
- Project incorporates safety and security, accessibility and inclusion
- Ratio of anticipated matching funds or in-kind contributions
- Ability to comply with all reporting requirements

SWT took steps to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts for all grant applicants. It launched an outreach plan to promote the grant programs that included webinars, emails, and in-person presentations. SWT also retained a professional grant writer to advise applicants and assist in the development of grant programs, policies, and procedures. Interested parties could access grant information from SWT staff, the industry website and newsletter, and the online application portal.

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SWT collected demographic information on award recipients in accordance with the stipulations outlined by the Department of Commerce for reporting. Please see Appendix A for this detailed information.

Grant Programs and Project Highlights

Arts and Culture

This grant program supported the promotion and management of artistic and cultural forms of expression as tourism assets. These included art shows, concerts, festivals and events, as well as museums, historic sites, cultural institutes, and creative districts. Applicants could request up to \$30,000 in grant funds to help boost local economies by attracting overnight visitors to experience the artistic and cultural offerings of a people and a place, while mitigating any negative impacts on residents, social services, and public infrastructure.

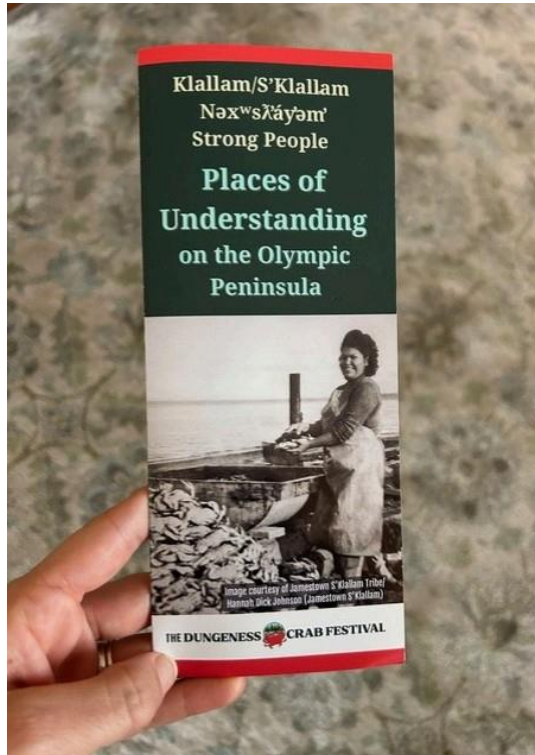
In 2024, SWT received 96 applications for the Arts and Culture Grant Program. Applicants requested \$2,302,302.32 in grant funds. SWT awarded 13 grants totaling \$162,500. Grant applications were down slightly in 2025. 66 applicants requested a total of \$1,494,130. SWT awarded 12 grants totaling \$162,500. Two of the 25 arts and culture grant projects are highlighted below.

Grantee: Washington Festivals & Events Association (WFEA), Education Foundation

Project: The Dungeness Crab Festival Indigenous Culture Guide

Award: \$10,000

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In 2024, WFEA, in partnership with The Dungeness Crab Festival and local tribes, created a programmatic self-guided tour brochure highlighting the historical and cultural significance of Klallam/S'Klallam sites for the three tribal governments in the area: the Lower Elwha Klallam, Jamestown S'Klallam, and Port Gamble S'Klallam. Grant funds paid for the research, design, printing, and web versions of the brochure titled "Places of Understanding." The brochure enabled visitors and locals to discover ten cultural sites and natural landmarks across the Olympic Peninsula. Showcasing points of interest between the mouth of the Elwha River and the western edge of the Kitsap Peninsula, this guide allowed independent travelers an opportunity to learn more about the ancient homelands of Klallam/S'Klallam people as well as

indigenous history, cultural practices, and ways of life, including the harvest, preparation, and sharing of traditional foods gleaned from the Elwha River and Salish Sea.

"Places of Understanding" became one of the first travel guides for indigenous tourism on the Olympic Peninsula. It also aligned with several goals and action items in the Olympic Peninsula Visitor Bureau's five-year master plan.

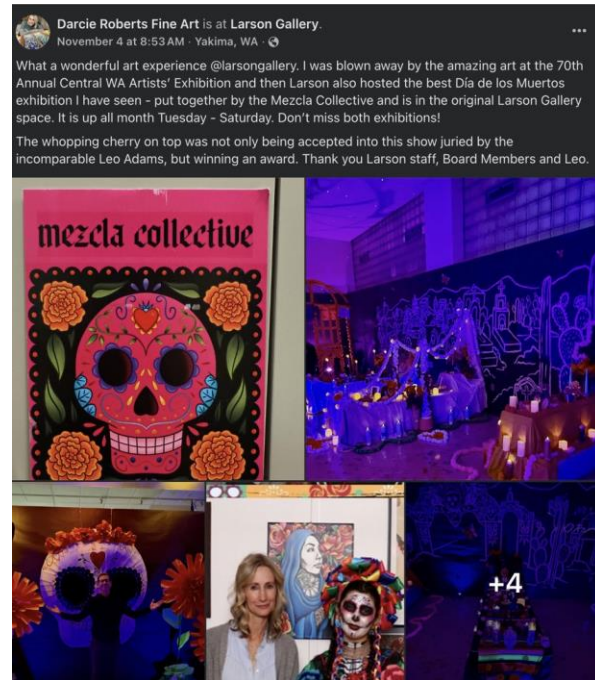
Grantee: Larson Gallery Guild

Project: Day of the Dead Art Installation at the Larson Gallery

Award: \$7,000

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Day of the Dead is an important cultural event for Latinos in the Yakima Valley. In 2025, the Larson Gallery commissioned local artist Antonio Armas to create a site-specific installation for Day of the Dead. Antonio is a member of the Mezcla Collective, and he worked with other members of the collective to create the installation titled “Path of Petals, a Cultural Journey Through the Day of the Dead.” The installation was free and open to the public from November 1 until December 6.



Indigenous Tourism Marketing and Production

Indigenous Tourism Marketing and Production Grants helped native communities create promotional assets to complement marketing strategies and tactics. Tribal entities in Washington State were the only applicants eligible for this grant program, which included museums, art galleries, and cultural centers; departments responsible for managing natural resources and outdoor recreation; and economic development offices, as well as some enterprises. Tribal casinos and content associated with Indian gaming could not receive grant funding. Applicants could request up to \$50,000 in grant funding for content creation, including photos, video, and written material for digital and print channels.

In 2024, SWT received five applications for the Indigenous Tourism Marketing and Production Grant Program. Applicants requested \$198,260 in grant funds. SWT awarded three grants totaling \$100,000. Grant applications and funding requests followed a similar pattern in 2025. Four applicants requested a total of \$183,000. SWT awarded three grants totaling \$100,000. Two of the six grant projects for indigenous tourism marketing and production are highlighted below.

Grantee: Spokane Tribe of Indians

Project: Asset Creation to Promote Tribal Fisheries

Award: \$33,445

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In 2024, the Spokane Tribe of Indians used grant funds to plan and collect over 22 hours of footage and 250 photographs involving the white sturgeon, trout/kokanee, and walleye fisheries in northeast Washington. The Spokane Tribe of Indians manages these fisheries and considers them culturally significant. It will use the video and photo content to demonstrate efforts to ensure and enhance a healthy, harvestable fishery for tribal and non-tribal recreational anglers.

Coho Media Group, a well-known and respected media firm in Spokane, was contracted to assist with planning and the collection of video and photo content of fishing opportunities on Lake Roosevelt. Project deliverables included:

- Sturgeon: 8 hours of video, 100 photos
- Trout/Kokanee: 4 hours of video, 50 photos
- Walleye: 8 hours of video, 100 photos
- Infrastructure/Interviews: 2 hours of video



Spokane Tribe of Indians: Asset Creation to Promote Tribal Fisheries

Lastly, the collection of this content spurred collaboration between Spokane Tribal Fisheries and Spokane Tribal Enterprises Two River Resort, located at the confluence of the Columbia and Spokane Rivers. Both entities are discussing how to leverage the digital assets that drive traffic to the resort.

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Grantee: Duwamish Tribal Services

Project: Longhouse Message Board

Award: \$32,000



In 2025, Duwamish Tribal Services received \$32,000 in grant funding for a digital message board outside of the Duwamish Longhouse and Cultural Center. This marketing asset will enable the Duwamish Tribe to share important messages, updates, and announcements with commuters, customers, and visitors in real time. This includes new events, product launches, or changes to operational hours. Bright visuals and dynamic content on a digital message board are more attention-grabbing than those on a traditional sign. It will engage readers more effectively, improving overall visibility for special events and other communications.

Indigenous Tourism Support Program

Modeled on a similar SWT initiative, the Indigenous Tourism Support (ITS) program adopted a long-term, community-driven, and culturally respectful approach to tourism planning and policy. This program was intended for tribal entities seeking to develop or manage tourism assets outside of gaming, including festivals and events, cultural heritage, outdoor recreation, and agritourism. It would operate with the consent of indigenous communities, and program decisions would be made by a steering committee comprised of community and industry leaders. SWT would work with a consulting team, steering committee, and the local convener (a person backed by a tribal entity) to provide structure and guidance for tourism planning and policy recommendations.

TEQWU?MA?, a nonprofit organization affiliated with the Nisqually Indian Tribe, was selected to participate in the ITS program based on the following criteria: tourism impact, convening capacity, project readiness, and community engagement. To aid in the design and facilitation of the program, SWT selected George Washington University (GW) for consulting services after a competitive RFP process. The steering committee, SWT, GW, and TEQWU?MA? worked together to tailor the ITS program for a specific destination, addressing unique community, business, and environmental needs. As a result, these parties agreed to implement the ITS program in a phased approach, which included data collection, product development and guide training, as well as digital content for the launch of a tourism website.

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After completing the first two phases of the ITS program (lasting six to eight months), TEQWU?MA? applied for and was awarded \$30,000 in SWT grant funds to support a series of tourism development projects. These projects aligned with the destination's broader tourism vision and sought the involvement of the local destination marketing organization, industry partners, and Nisqually community members. TEQWU?MA? initially started with three grant projects, but only two were successful: website design and art/cultural installations. Due to time constraints, the grantee returned \$10,000 earmarked for digital asset creation.



TEQWU?MA?: Coast Salish welcome figure and cultural artwork for a walking tour at the Nisqually Cultural Center. Additional phases of this project will include interpretive signage and a welcome sign.



TEQWU?MA? website, "About" webpage

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TEQWU?MA? website, wallpaper image



[ADDITIONAL INFORMATION]

Inquiry Request

Name (required)

First Name

Last Name

Email (required)

☐ Sign up for news and updates

Tour of Interest

TEQWU?MA? website, "Booking" webpage

Rural Tourism Marketing and Production

Rural Tourism Marketing and Production Grants helped destination communities create promotional assets for a wide range of marketing needs. Tourism stakeholders could request up to \$50,000 in grant funding for content creation, including photos, video, and written material for digital and print channels.

In 2024, SWT received 67 applications for the Rural Tourism Marketing and Production Grant Program. Applicants requested \$1,756,396.50 in grant funds. SWT awarded 19 grants totaling \$355,000. Grant applications and funding requests were lower in 2025. 41 applicants requested a total of \$1,016,222.30. SWT awarded 22 grants totaling \$355,000. Two of the 108 grant projects for rural tourism marketing and production are highlighted below.

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Grantee: Visit Issaquah

Project: Shoulder Season Video and Photography Initiative

Award: \$17,000

In 2024, Visit Issaquah sought to enhance the city's visibility and appeal as a visitor destination through high-quality imagery, tailored to boost engagement across various media platforms. It focused on Issaquah's fall shoulder season, highlighting outdoor recreation, the arts, and the area's scenic beauty. Visit Issaquah intentionally portrayed differently abled and BIPOC individuals in production to showcase the community's desire to be seen as a welcoming, accessible destination for all people, regardless of their abilities. Grant funding covered the entire contract amount with North Cascade Films, a production company based in Washington state. Project deliverables included:

- 13 horizontal micro-commercials
- 13 vertical micro-commercials
- 3, 15-second commercials formatted for a specific advertising purchase targeting outdoor recreation and the BIPOC community across Canada (not funded by SWT)
- high-resolution still photography and B-roll video



Visit Issaquah: Shoulder Season Video and Photography Initiative

Grantee: Reel Recreation

Project: Reel in Adventure: Showcasing Outdoor Spirit

Award: \$10,500

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In 2025, Reel Recreation, a youth outdoor recreation and education organization, sought to promote Electric City as a premier destination for outdoor activities in eastern Washington. With funding from the Rural Tourism Marketing and Production Grant, Reel Recreation contracted with Voortex Productions, based in Cashmere, to produce a series of professionally shot and edited videos showcasing the area's natural beauty, fishing, and boating. Grant funds were used exclusively for production and post-production services, in line with grant eligibility guidelines, to ensure the highest quality content and maximum outreach impact.



Reel in Adventure: Showcasing Outdoor Spirit

Rural Tourism Research and Data

This grant program helped destination communities discover and share critical information for improving the efficiency, sustainability, and overall economic impact of the tourism industry. Tourism stakeholders could request up to \$25,000 in grant funding for a variety of projects, including but not limited to the following categories:

- Economic Impact
- SWOT Analysis
- Environmental Impact
- Market Research
- Feasibility Studies
- Asset Mapping
- Placemaking
- Visitor/Resident Surveys
- Hotel and Short-Term Rental Analytics
- Geolocation Data

In 2024, SWT received 21 applications for the Rural Tourism Research and Data Grant Program. Applicants requested \$457,500 in grant funds. SWT awarded eight grants totaling \$152,000. In 2025, 14 applicants requested a total of \$329,672.75. SWT awarded eight grants totaling \$152,000. Two of

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the 35 grant projects for rural tourism research and data are highlighted below.

Grantee: Visitor & Convention Bureau of Thurston County

Project: Website Usability Study

Award: \$20,000

In 2024, the Thurston County Visitor and Convention Bureau contracted with Future Partners to conduct a website usability study. Future Partners is a creative insights firm that helps travel, tourism, and hospitality leaders with market research and strategy. For this project, researchers assessed the site's overall appeal; gathered feedback on content and relevance; examined engagement with the site, content, and features; generated ideas for potential features, functions, and content; and examined specific pages and/or functionality and accessibility.

The methodology for this study was based on eleven, 40-minute interviews with leisure travelers. Study participants were drawn from Experience Olympia & Beyond's target audience (demographics, markets, and sought-after experiences) and expressed interest in visiting Thurston County. Selected participants reviewed experienceolympia.com as a Future Partners moderator observed their actions. During the interview, participants answered questions based on the key objectives of this study.

The findings from the website usability study improved the overall effectiveness of experienceolympia.com as a tourism marketing tool. Insights from this research provided the tourism bureau with short and long-term strategies aligned with the needs and interests of potential leisure travelers to Thurston County.

Grantee: Skamania Economic Development Council

Project: Tourism Assessment and Visitor Profile Study

Award: \$20,000

In 2025, the Skamania Economic Development Council contracted with Blue Room Research to conduct a tourism assessment and visitor profile study for the county. Research objectives for this project were to evaluate current visitation levels, help forecast future demand, and develop a traveler profile using geolocation, short-term rental, and publicly available data sources. Insights from the tourism assessment and visitor profile resulted in the following recommendations for Skamania County:

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- Create a larger, regional destination with a cohesive brand that can combine resources across cities to reduce duplicative spending and cast a wider net with advertising and marketing.
- As most of the county's visitation comes from nearby drive markets, unique itineraries can encourage countywide road trips that highlight local shopping, dining, attractions, and entertainment options, generating more demand throughout the year.
- Consider more signature events during key need periods, such as a themed festival in the spring or fall shoulder seasons, or a recurring farmers market-type event on weekdays during the slower seasons to encourage more visitation when needed.
- Since half of all Seattle-metro residents who visit Skamania County stay at least one night, more advertising dollars should be spent in this market (especially during the shoulder and off seasons).

Rural Tourism Support Program

The Rural Tourism Support (RTS) program focused on long-term, sustainable destination development for underserved communities. It adopted a community-based approach to destination development and was a significant investment of time and resources to support travel and tourism in the regional destination. The RTS program helped tourism stakeholders organize and collaborate on small projects and specific issues to build momentum toward fulfilling a 10-year tourism vision. It also helped identify community-shared values and tourism assets.

There were two cycles of the RTS program between 2024-25, each with one awardee. The Snoqualmie Valley Chamber of Commerce and Skagit Tourism Bureau were selected to participate in the RTS program based on the following criteria: regional benefit, convening capacity, project readiness, and community engagement. To support the program's design and facilitation, SWT selected Crosscurrent Collective for consulting services following a competitive RFP process. All parties worked together to tailor the RTS program for a specific destination, addressing unique community, business, and environmental needs. As a result, the parties agreed to implement the RTS program in a phased approach, which included research and data collection, community workshops, and grant projects.

After completing the first two phases of the RTS program (lasting six to eight months), tourism stakeholders applied for and were awarded \$30,000

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in SWT grant funds to support a series of tourism development projects. These projects aligned with the destination's broader tourism vision and sought to involve industry partners and community members. The Snoqualmie Valley Chamber of Commerce had three grant projects: promotional material for the Snoqualmie Valley Heritage Trail, visitor education collateral to encourage folks to recreate responsibly in the outdoors, and research and data collection for destination development and strategic planning. The Skagit Tourism Bureau focused its limited time and resources on a single project: a feasibility study for an indoor sports complex. More information on grant projects for each destination in the RTS program is highlighted below.

Work on the RTS program in the Snoqualmie Valley began in 2024. It was designed to address the valley's position as a popular destination for outdoor recreation, find solutions for community and environmental sustainability, and improve local storytelling. A steering committee was formed early in the RTS process and comprised a diverse cross-section of the tourism sector, including businesses, nonprofits, government officials, and the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe. Other features of the RTS program rolled out in the first quarter of 2025. These included a series of community workshops designed to bring people together and collaborate on a vision and strategies for a thriving visitor economy. Three evening networking events and two steering committee meetings also occurred during this timeframe.

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PHASE 2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – RECAP

JANUARY – MARCH 2025

RESULTS SUMMARY

Community members participated in multiple sessions where they:

- Developed a unique, agreed-upon future tourism scenario for the region.
- Clarified elements of what future success will look like.
- Determined priority actions in the following areas:
 - Evolving our current visitation mix from primarily day-trippers/outdoor recreationists.
 - Building our regional connections and cohesiveness, in part by improving communication and increasing collaboration.
 - Managing existing outdoor recreation.
 - Developing a destination stewardship approach.
 - Improving visitor transportation.
 - Finding ways to incorporate and celebrate our region's cultural heritage.
 - Creating strategies for better dispersing visitors to appropriate places during appropriate seasons.

A total of 93 participants took part in the series of networking events and workshops in the community engagement phase.

Workshop participants included people from the following sectors:

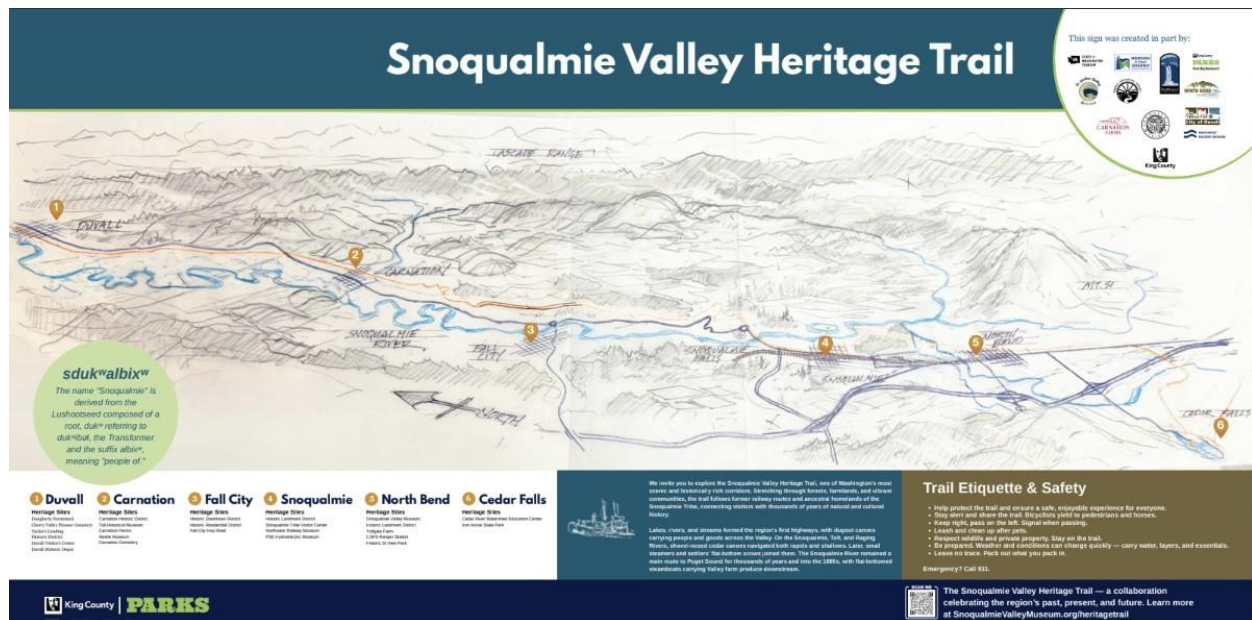
- Tribal nations
- Businesses
- Community organizations
- Outdoor recreation advocates
- Elected officials
- Chambers of commerce
- Arts and culture organizations
- Public land agencies
- Economic development agencies

RTS Program in Snoqualmie Valley, Community Engagement Phase

The Snoqualmie Valley Chamber of Commerce launched its grant projects in the latter half of 2025. It contracted with the Snoqualmie Valley Museum for promotional material for the Snoqualmie Valley Heritage Trail. Deliverables for this project included:

- Painting of the Snoqualmie Valley Heritage Trail map and six historic images for customization of the wayfinding signage
- Design of wayfinding signage at trailhead sites
- Design of printable maps for the Snoqualmie Valley Heritage Trail
- Website design for the Snoqualmie Valley Heritage Trail with directions and interpretation for at least 25 historic points of interest

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RTS Program in Snoqualmie Valley, Snoqualmie Valley Heritage Trail

For the visitor education project, the chamber partnered with OnMerit Marketing to develop, design, and produce the “Wander Wisely Visitor Education Campaign.” Deliverables included printed magnets, digital assets, and other educational materials. This initiative will provide clear, accessible, and culturally respectful visitor education tools that promote safe and responsible recreation throughout the Snoqualmie Valley. The key to this project was creating durable bus magnets and laminated materials for display on MTR Western buses and distribution to hotels, visitor-facing businesses, and partner locations. These assets were critical safety and stewardship tools designed to:

- Highlight the importance of responsible recreation
- Increase visitor awareness of local safety hazards
- Reinforce respectful use of the Snoqualmie Tribe's ancestral lands
- Encourage Leave No Trace and community-minded behaviors
- Support sustainable tourism before, during, and after major events (including the FIFA World Cup)

In 2025, the Skagit Tourism Bureau selected Huddle Up Group to evaluate market demand, economic potential, and infrastructure needs for sports tourism in Skagit County. While the county currently hosts multiple outdoor tournaments at Skagit River Park, adding an indoor facility would enable year-round tournaments and training. This would shift demand beyond the current 4-5-month peak season and drive higher visitation during the shoulder and winter seasons.

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RTS Program in Skagit Valley, Community Engagement Phase

The feasibility study conducted by Huddle Up Group examined the development and enhancement of a multi-purpose sports complex capable of attracting higher-impact tournaments and generating overnight visitation. Consulting services included market analysis, evaluation of existing facilities and infrastructure gaps, analysis of high-impact sports and tournament opportunities, and development of a strategic plan for sports tourism. This feasibility study will serve as a data-driven foundation for informed decision-making by tourism entities, local governments, and economic development partners.

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SKAGIT VALLEY SPORTS COMMISSION

FEASIBILITY STUDY AND STRATEGIC PLAN INDOOR SPORTS COMPLEX

RTS Program in Skagit Valley, Feasibility Study for Indoor Sports Complex

Sports Incentivization

Nonprofit organizations used this grant program to attract sporting events and overnight visitors to destination communities across the state.

Applicants requested up to \$30,000 to offset the costs of hosting sporting events and incentivize sports rights holders to bring competitions to Washington, and spur economic activity.

Grant funds could only support sporting events coming to a destination community for the first time or those not held in the community for at least 3 years. These sporting events required at least 50 athletes and coaches over at least two days. Single-day events were considered only if a majority of athletes traveled 50+ miles away.

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SWT reserved grant funds for successful applicants from a pool to reimburse travel and lodging expenses for participants, provide amenities, pay venue usage fees, and cover other eligible expenses, pending a successful bid for the sporting event from a sports rights holder.

In 2024, SWT received 22 applications for the Sports Incentivization Grant Program. Applicants requested \$424,500 in grant funds. SWT awarded \$143,500 across six grant projects. Grant applications and funding requests followed a similar pattern in 2025. 18 applicants requested a total of \$402,500. SWT awarded six grants totaling \$115,500. Two of the 40 grant projects for sports incentivization are highlighted below.

Grantee: Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism
Project: West Coast League All-Star Game
Award: \$23,500

Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism successfully bid on the 2024 West Coast League All-Star Game, which took place in Bellingham on July 17. The Bellingham Bells hosted the event, and grant funds were used to enhance photography and videography for the MLB broadcast, heighten fan engagement, and provide hospitality perks to players, coaches, and VIPs.

The West Coast League is the premier summer collegiate baseball league in western North America. Encompassing Washington, Oregon, British Columbia, and Alberta, the league showcases pro prospects from major collegiate conferences around the nation. All 16 West Coast League teams sent players to the all-star game in Bellingham. All-stars were accompanied by team management and coaches. Several events associated with the all-star game were held, including a community champions adaptive baseball game with local nonprofit Max Higbee Center, a luncheon, and a pro-style draft workout featuring MLB scouts.

Grant funds were used for high-quality media content, which elevated the profile of the game, players, and league to a level of professionalism found elsewhere around the country. The all-star game was televised on MLB TV and produced by a professional crew of over 50 individuals. A sellout crowd of 3,108 attended the game with many first-time visitors.

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Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism: West Coast League All-Star Game

An estimated 500-750 people, including players, coaches, team personnel, scouts, league associates, and fans, traveled to Bellingham for the all-star game, resulting in nearly 500 room nights over two days. Additionally, the broadcast game on MLB TV reached 70,000 people. The broadcast footage and announcers showcased Bellingham throughout the game, promoting future tourism to the area.

Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism used the Event Impact Calculator, by the trade association Destinations International, to gauge the economic impact of the all-star game. Direct business sales were estimated at over \$387,000, and, when combined with indirect business sales, the total economic impact on local businesses exceeded \$583,000. The return on investment for this event was estimated at over \$11,600 (or over 360%), including \$47,091 in federal, \$23,307 in state, and \$11,622 in local taxes.

Grantee: Spokane Regional Sports Commission

Project: 2025 International Table Tennis Federation (ITTD) Para U.S. Open

Award: \$30,000

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The awarded grant provided critical support for bringing the ITTF Para US Open Elite & Futures event to Washington state, attracting elite para sport athletes and their coaches to the Spokane area. This event showcased the state as a premier sports destination, drawing visitors who contributed to the local economy through lodging, dining, and retail spending. By hosting athletes and teams from multiple countries, the grant also fostered cultural exchange and positioned the state as a welcoming, globally connected hub for future sporting events.

Grant funds were used to cover operational needs for ITTF events, including security measures and professional audio/visual services. For example, grant funds enabled Spokane Sports to open the event to the community for two championship-viewing days and fully cover security for the extended event. Event organizers praised the ease of setup and exceptional quality of the A/V services, which supported digital screens, live streaming of main events, and the venue's overall presentation.

Grant funds for ITTF event operations ensured a safe, well-managed environment for athletes, officials, and spectators while elevating the competition experience through high-quality sound, lighting, and live coverage. As a result, this competition met international standards, reinforced Washington state's reputation for hosting world-class sports, and left a lasting positive impression on participants and visitors alike.

Technical Assistance

Grant funds in this category subsidized industry-specific expertise for tourism-related projects that stimulated economic development in destination communities. Eligible projects for this grant program included design plans for tourism infrastructure, marketing expertise, workforce training programs, and other consulting services for tourism pursuits. Applicants requested up to \$15,000 in grant funding, subject to project eligibility.

In 2024, SWT received 21 applications for the Technical Assistance Grant Program. Applicants requested \$244,811.50 in grant funds. SWT awarded seven grants totaling \$75,000. Grant applications and funding requests followed a similar pattern in 2025. 23 applicants requested a total of \$286,663.50. SWT awarded six grants totaling \$75,000. Two of the 44 grant projects for technical assistance are highlighted below.

Grantee: Mount St. Helens Institute

Project: Mount St. Helens Institute Website Redesign

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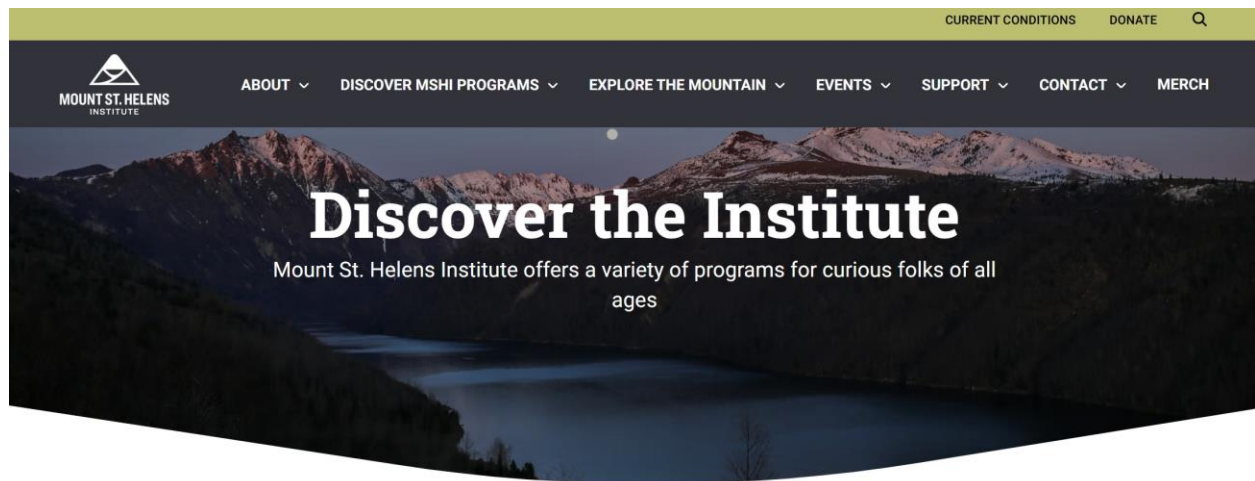
Award: \$10,000

In 2024, the Mount St. Helens Institute (MSHI) used a technical assistance grant from SWT to support website enhancements and visitor education. The primary deliverable for this grant project was a completely redesigned organizational website (www.mshinstitute.org) that modernized MSHI's digital presence. The second major deliverable was the creation of a dedicated visitor resource section (www.mshinstitute.org/visit) that would serve as a comprehensive “one-stop shop” for visitors planning a trip to the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument.

This grant project addressed a significant gap in visitor education by creating a comprehensive, specialized resource dedicated exclusively to Mount St. Helens visitor information. The new website launched on June 15 and provided immediate access to trip-planning resources and information about MSHI's guided programs. While regional tourism offices provided general information about Mount St. Helens, no single resource previously offered the depth of specialized knowledge and real-time updates that visitors required.

The total cost of MSHI's grant project was \$16,050, which included \$10,000 from SWT and \$6,050 for in-kind work. The funds were strategically allocated to maximize technical assistance from Riff Creative, a locally based agency specializing in nonprofit digital solutions. These investments resulted in a comprehensive digital transformation initiative that enhanced organizational capacity and public engagement by improving MSHI's web presence.

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Field Trips with Mount St. Helens Institute are a BLAST!

Students join us on the mountain for unforgettable adventures, hands-on field science, and standards-aligned curriculum. [Find out more!](#)

Mount St. Helens Institute: Website Redesign

Grantee: Quimper Events Collective

Project: Hospitality Workforce Development & Training Program

Award: \$13,000

In 2025, the Quimper Events Collective used a technical assistance grant to plan and deliver a multi-session hospitality and tourism workforce development program to strengthen professional skills, cross-sector collaboration, and industry readiness within Washington's visitor economy. It provided industry-specific training and shared resources to stakeholders across hospitality, tourism, workforce development, education, and small businesses, with an emphasis on practical application and long-term workforce resilience. This program consisted of four in-person training sessions, held on Sundays in October 2025, to maximize accessibility for young working professionals, high school students exploring career pathways, and frontline hospitality workers. Sessions were intentionally scheduled outside peak business hours to reduce barriers to participation for small business owner-operators and service-industry employees, many of whom have limited availability on standard weekdays.

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Industry-specific expertise was central to the program's success. Facilitators and program stakeholders brought direct experience from Washington's hospitality and tourism sectors, ensuring the training addressed real operational challenges businesses face today. This approach helped participants connect workforce development strategies directly to visitor satisfaction, service quality, and long-term economic resilience. By improving skills, enhancing compliance awareness, and deepening cross-sector understanding, this grant project strengthened and better prepared the tourism workforce—ultimately benefiting visitors, businesses, and communities throughout Washington state.



Tourism Regeneration

This grant program fostered safer, more inclusive, and sustainable visitor experiences across the state and drove overnight visitation to rural and underserved communities. Project eligibility for Tourism Regeneration Grants ranged from visitor education campaigns to disaster and climate adaptation planning. Tourism stakeholders could request up to \$50,000 in grant funding for projects, including but not limited to tourism infrastructure, outdoor recreation, festivals and events, and customer service training.

In 2024, SWT received 53 applications for the Tourism Regeneration Grant Program. Applicants requested \$1,860,578.30 in grant funds. SWT awarded 24 grants totaling \$780,000, with projects required to be completed by the end of 2025. Awardees were to submit two reports (an interim and a final evaluation) and attend quarterly check-in meetings for each grant project. If they failed to do so, their consideration for future grants with SWT could be adversely affected. For the final evaluation of a grant project, awardees were to include:

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- A final budget
- Proof of spending
- Vendor tax form (W-9)
- Key findings/metrics that will guide strategy for travel and tourism in a destination community

Three of the 53 tourism regeneration projects are highlighted below. SWT did not offer this grant program in 2025.

Grantee: City of Waitsburg

Project: Waitsburg Fairground Restroom Replacement

Award: \$30,000

The City of Waitsburg used grant funds for a tourism infrastructure project. It involved replacing an outdated restroom facility with an ADA accessible restroom trailer at the Waitsburg Fairgrounds. The city solicited three estimates and selected the lowest responsible bidder based on project needs. The trailer was ordered after SWT approval and arrived on site, ready for setup in April 2025. The trailer provided fully ADA-accessible restrooms for men and women, allowing individuals to use the restrooms without limitation. It is mobile and can be utilized at other events for additional restrooms.



City of Waitsburg: Fairground Restroom Replacement

Grantee: Olympic Peninsula Visitor Bureau

Project: Olympic Peninsula Welcome Signage - Hood Canal Traffic Circle

Award: \$50,000

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On the Olympic Peninsula, grant funds supported the development of an iconic “welcome” sign at a major transportation hub. This project advanced Goal #3 of the Olympic Peninsula Tourism Master Plan, which emphasized a strong sense of arrival to set the tone for the entire trip, establish a visual identity, communicate hospitality, and guide visitors on their journey. It fulfilled that mandate by creating a signature placemaking landmark that will serve as a hallmark for future wayfinding and identity elements throughout the region.

The project was executed through a highly collaborative, multi-jurisdictional process. A steering committee was formed with representatives from Jefferson and Clallam Counties, including arts organizations, tribal engagement specialists, tourism industry leaders, and municipal and county staff. This committee guided decision-making, ensured diverse perspectives, and provided accountability for timeline, budget, and design integrity. To ground our work in best practices, the project team conducted interviews and reviewed lessons learned from the City of Poulsbo, whose Highway 305 roundabout installation provided a valuable model. Those insights helped the Olympic Peninsula Visitor Bureau refine its approach to procurement, design review, permitting, and long-term stewardship.

The grantee issued a competitive RFP attracting designers and fabricators with national portfolios. Following a structured review process, the committee selected the team of sky design + CREO, recognized for excellence in environmental graphics, public art, and durable fabrication. Support from WSDOT throughout this phase of the project was critical, as technical staff advised the steering committee on Public Art Plan requirements, structural standards, and long-term maintenance considerations specific to installing artwork within a high-traffic state right-of-way.

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Olympic Peninsula Visitor Bureau: Welcome Signage - Hood Canal Traffic Circle

Lastly, the steering committee made sincere strides toward stakeholder engagement and tribal consultation with this grant project. The design concept for the welcome sign underwent iterative workshops with civic committees, city and county officials, and representatives from all nine federally recognized tribes of the Olympic Peninsula. Tribal leaders identified cultural considerations regarding both the location and the proposed imagery. In response, the design team modified visual elements, language, and symbolic components to ensure the final product reflected a shared, culturally respectful identity of the region. The unanimous tribal support for the final design represented a significant milestone and elevated the sign as a symbol of a collective welcome.

In sum, the Tourism Regeneration Grant from SWT enabled the creation of a landmark gateway feature that embodied regional collaboration, cultural respect, design excellence, and long-term strategic alignment with the Olympic Peninsula Tourism Master Plan. The project's deliverables—design development, tribal consultation, fabrication, installation planning, and interlocal maintenance agreements—position this sign to serve as a durable symbol of welcome for residents and visitors alike.

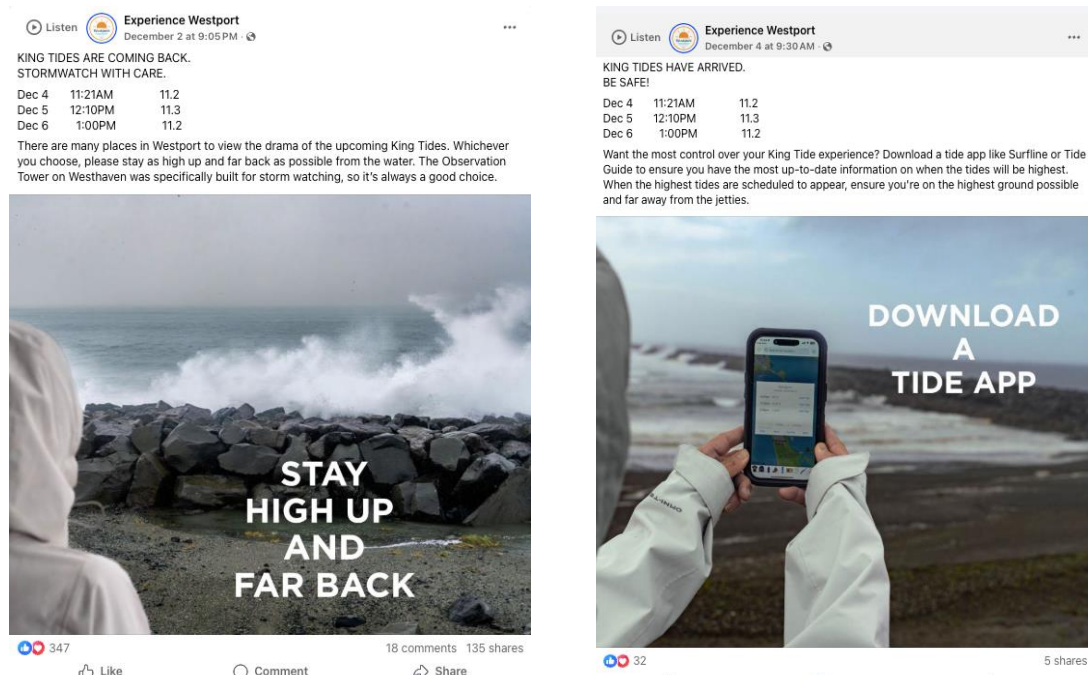
Grantee: The City of Westport, dba Experience Westport

Project: Winter Safety Campaign for King Tides and Storm Watching

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Award: \$50,000

SWT awarded grant funds to Experience Westport for a visitor education campaign, how to safely experience the “king tides,” “winter storm watching,” and other winter tourism activities in and around Westport. Experience Westport contracted with Fish Marketing for technical assistance on this grant project. Fish began by conducting background research and interviewing storm watchers who visit Washington and Westport residents to understand king tides. It also completed a 3-day photo and video shoot in early November. The shoot captured digital assets of king tides and razor-clamming, a very popular winter tourism activity in Westport. Post-shoot, Fish provided copywriting for king tides safety, reviewed all photo and video assets, and completed post-production of all image and video assets. Assets were then edited into short videos and posts for a dedicated “storm watching” landing page, as well as on other websites and social media channels. Overall, the visitor education campaign increased brand awareness of Westport as a travel destination while fostering a safer, more sustainable winter tourism experience.



Winter Safety Campaign for King Tides and Storm Watching in Westport

Conclusion

Over the last two years, SWT has helped communities throughout the state as the recipient of RFP No. DPADG2023 from the Washington Department of

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Commerce. SWT administered approximately \$3.5 million in EDA funds and oversaw 140 grant projects across nine grant programs designed for different segments of the tourism industry. It procured grant management software to build a secure, user-friendly application portal and provided ongoing technical and administrative support to applicants/awardees while conducting widespread promotional efforts for the grant programs. SWT ensured a fair and equitable process for reviewing grant applications and award decisions, in accordance with federal procurement standards and SWT's policies and procedures. SWT also complied with the Department of Commerce's reporting requirements and obtained the appropriate tax and other documents from awardees.

Grant funds were dispersed through a competitive, needs-based process for local governments, tribes, chambers of commerce, destination organizations, and other nonprofit organizations that supported travel and tourism in the State of Washington. All 478 applicants were encouraged to collaborate with industry partners on eligible projects and match a portion of their grant request with cash or in-kind contributions. Less than 6% of the total funds allocated to grant programs were returned to SWT by award recipients. Tourism stakeholders were excited and thankful for grant opportunities that supported industry recovery efforts in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. These grants supported destination planning and development projects involving infrastructure, visitor education, sports tourism incentives, workforce recruitment and retention programs, marketing assets, feasibility studies, and many other aspects of travel and tourism.

SWT looks forward to working with the Department of Commerce and other tourism stakeholders on future investments that benefit the industry statewide, helping optimize economic impact through visitor expenditures, tax contributions, job growth and earnings.

Appendix A - Demographic Information of Award Recipients

Grant Program: Arts and Culture				
Recipient	Organization	Location	Rural/Urban	Population
City of Edmonds	Municipality	Edmonds	Urban	42,871

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Friday Harbor Film Festival	501 (c) (3)	Friday Harbor	Rural	2,751
Grand Coulee Dam Area Chamber of Commerce	501 (c) (3)	Grand Coulee	Rural	955
House of Kala	501 (c) (3)	Renton	Urban	105,543
International Mermaid Museum	501 (c) (3)	Aberdeen	Rural	17,044
Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce	501 (c) (6)	Ellensburg	Rural	20,100
LANGSTON	501 (c) (3)	Seattle	Urban	755,078
Maryhill Museum of Art	501 (c) (3)	Goldendale	Rural	3,434
Northwest Agriculture Business Center	501 (c) (3)	La Conner	Rural	963
Pacific County Tourism Bureau	501 (c) (6)	Long Beach	Rural	1,754
Paper Whale Arts SPC	501 (c) (3)	Bellingham	Urban	95,860
Suquamish Indian Tribe of the Port Madison Reservation	Tribal Government	Suquamish	Urban	4,329
WFEA Education Foundation	501 (c) (3)	Port Angeles	Rural	20,112
Edmonds-South Snohomish County Historical Society	501 (c) (3)	Edmonds	Urban	42,701
Coastal Interpretive Center	501 (c) (3)	Ocean Shores	Rural	7,731
Spokane Conservation District	Local Government	Spokane	Urban	230,609
City of Everett	Municipality	Everett	Urban	113,011
TEQWUMA	Tribal Entity	Olympia	Urban	55,733
Port of Everett	Local Government	Everett	Urban	113,011
Bainbridge Island Museum of Art	501 (c) (3)	Bainbridge Island	Urban	24,618
Highlands Community Support Coalition	501 (c) (3)	Oroville	Rural	1,852

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City of Duvall	Municipality	Duvall	Urban	9,176
Discover Burien	501 (c) (3)	Burien	Urban	50,730
Vancouver National Historic Reserve Trust dba The Historic Trust	501 (c) (3)	Vancouver	Urban	198,992
Larson Gallery Guild	501 (c) (3)	Yakima	Rural	97,390

Grant Program: Indigenous Tourism Marketing & Production				
Recipient	Organization	Location	Rural/Urban	Population
Snoqualmie Indian Tribe	Tribal Government	Snoqualmie	Urban	13,748
Spokane Tribe of Indians	Tribal Government	Spokane	Urban	230,609
Suquamish Indian Tribe of the Port Madison Reservation	Tribal Government	Suquamish	Urban	4,329
Duwamish Tribal Services	Tribal Entity	Seattle	Urban	755,078
Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation	Tribal Government	Toppenish	Rural	8,658
Office of Economic Policy (Lummi Nation)	Tribal Entity	Bellingham	Rural	97,270

Grant Program: Indigenous Tourism Support (ITS)				
Recipient	Organization	Location	Rural/Urban	Population
TEQWUMA	Tribal Entity	Olympia	Urban	55,733

Grant Program: Rural Tourism Marketing & Production				
Recipient	Organization	Location	Rural/Urban	Population
Anacortes Arts Festival	501 (c) (3)	Anacortes	Rural	18,148
Business Association of San Juan County	501 (c) (6)	Friday Harbor	Rural	2,613

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Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County	501 (c) (3)	Mount Vernon	Rural	35,334
Grand Coulee Dam Area Chamber of Commerce	501 (c) (3)	Grand Coulee	Rural	955
Jefferson County Farmers Market	501 (c) (3)	Port Townsend	Rural	10,649
Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce	501 (c) (6)	Ellensburg	Rural	21,000
Mount Rainier visitor Association dba Mount Rainier Business Alliance	501 (c) (6)	Ashford	Urban	675
Mt Adams Chamber of Commerce	501 (c) (6)	White Salmon	Rural	2,562
Port of Columbia	Local Government	Dayton	Rural	2,512
Sky Valley Chamber of Commerce	501 (c) (6)	Sultan	Urban	7,002
Snoqualmie Valley Chamber of Commerce	501 (c) (6)	North Bend	Urban	8,553
Sustainable Connections	501 (c) (3)	Bellingham	Urban	95,860
Tri County Economic Development District	501 (c) (3)	Colville	Rural	5,009
TwispWorks	501 (c) (3)	Twisp	Rural	1,036
Visit Issaquah	501 (c) (3)	Issaquah	Urban	39,000
Visitor & Convention Bureau of Thurston County	501 (c) (6)	Olympia	Urban	55,733
Washington Filmworks	501 (c) (6)	Seattle	Urban	755,078
Wenatchee Valley Chamber of Commerce	501 (c) (6)	Wenatchee	Rural	35,401

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Woodinville Wine Country	501 (c) (6)	Woodinville	Urban	13,942
Bellingham SeaFeast	501 (c) (3)	Bellingham	Urban	95,860
Business Association of San Juan County	501 (c) (6)	Friday Harbor	Rural	2,613
City of Carnation	Municipality	Carnation	Urban	2,176
City of Port Townsend	Municipality	Port Townsend	Rural	10,649
Downtown Bremerton Association	501 (c) (3)	Bremerton	Urban	45,291
East Lewis County Chamber of Commerce	501 (c) (6)	Morton	Rural	1,142
Economic Alliance of Lewis County	501 (c) (6)	Centralia	Rural	18,754
Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance	501 (c) (3)	North Bend	Urban	8,553
Gig Harbor Peninsula Area Chamber of Commerce	501 (c) (6)	Gig Harbor	Urban	12,643
Grant County Tourism	Local Government	Ephrata	Rural	8,718
Lake Chelan Grape Growers	501 (c) (6)	Chelan	Rural	4,412
Lilac Bloomsday Association	501 (c) (3)	Spokane	Urban	230,609
Pacific County Tourism Bureau	501 (c) (6)	Seaview	Rural	473
Pacific Northwest Music Project	501 (c) (3)	Aberdeen	Rural	17,044
Reel Recreation	501 (c) (3)	Electric City	Rural	975
Skagit Tourism Bureau	501 (c) (6)	Mount Vernon	Rural	35,334
Tourism Walla Walla dba Visit Walla Walla	501 (c) (6)	Walla Walla	Rural	33,339
Tri County Economic Development District	501 (c) (3)	Colville	Rural	5,009

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Tri-Cities Visitor & Convention Bureau	501 (c) (6)	Pasco	Urban	81,724
Visit Issaquah	501 (c) (3)	Issaquah	Urban	39,000
Washington Trust for Historic Preservation	501 (c) (3)	Anacortes	Rural	18,148
Yakima Valley Tourism	501 (c) (6)	Yakima	Rural	97,390

Grant Program: Rural Tourism Research & Data				
Recipient	Organization	Location	Rural/Urban	Population
Economic Alliance of Lewis County	501 (c) (6)	Centralia	Rural	18,754
Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County	501 (c) (3)	Mount Vernon	Rural	35,334
Greater Grays Harbor, Incorporated	501 (c) (6)	Aberdeen	Rural	17,044
Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce	501 (c) (6)	Ellensburg	Rural	21,000
Methow Valley Sport Trails Association	501 (c) (3)	Winthrop	Rural	603
Okanogan County Tourism Council	501 (c) (6)	Omak	Rural	5,167
The Kalispel Indian Community of the Kalispel Reservation	Tribal Government	Usk	Rural	613
Visitor & Convention Bureau of Thurston County	501 (c) (6)	Olympia	Urban	55,733
Business Association of San Juan County	501 (c) (6)	Friday Harbor	Rural	2,613
City of Lynnwood	Municipality	Snohomish County	Urban	41,597
Economic Alliance of Lewis County	501 (c) (6)	Centralia	Rural	18,754

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Skagit Tourism Bureau	501 (c) (6)	Mount Vernon	Rural	35,334
Skamania Economic Development Council	501 (c) (3)	Stevenson	Rural	1,600
Visitor & Convention Bureau of Thurston County	501 (c) (6)	Olympia	Urban	55,733
Washington Trails Association	501 (c) (3)	Seattle	Urban	749,256
Gig Harbor Peninsula Area Chamber of Commerce	501 (c) (6)	Gig Harbor	Urban	12,643

Grant Program: Rural Tourism Support (RTS)				
Recipient	Organization	Location	Rural/Urban	Population
Snoqualmie Valley Chamber of Commerce	501 (c) (6)	North Bend	Urban	8,553
Skagit Tourism Bureau	501 (c) (6)	Mount Vernon	Rural	35,334

Grant Program: Sports Incentivization				
Recipient	Organization	Location	Rural/Urban	Population
Tri-Cities Visitor & Convention Bureau	501 (c) (6)	Richland	Urban	64,372
Amateur Athletics Commission of Snohomish County	501 (c) (3)	Everett	Urban	113,011
Marymoor Velodrome Association	501 (c) (3)	Redmond	Urban	82,195
Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism	501 (c) (6)	Bellingham	Urban	95,860
Spokane Regional Sports Commission	501 (c) (3)	Spokane	Urban	230,609

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Tri-Cities Visitor & Convention Bureau dba Visit Tri-Cities	501 (c) (6)	Kennewick	Urban	86,728
Columbia Basin College	Educational Institution	Pasco	Urban	81,724
North Olympic Youth Baseball and Softball - American	501 (c) (3)	Port Angeles	Rural	20,112
Spokane Regional Sports Commission	501 (c) (3)	Spokane	Urban	230,609
Tri-Cities Visitor & Convention Bureau	501 (c) (6)	Richland	Urban	64,372
Washington Men's Gymnastics Foundation	501 (c) (3)	Everett	Urban	113,011
Yakima Valley Sports Commission	501 (c) (6)	Yakima	Rural	97,390

Grant Program: Technical Assistance				
Recipient	Organization	Location	Rural/Urban	Population
City of Redmond	Municipality	Redmond	Urban	82,195
Mount St. Helens Institute	501 (c) (3)	Amboy	Urban	1,680
Pacific County Tourism Bureau	501 (c) (6)	Seaview	Rural	473
The Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust	501 (c) (3)	Seattle	Urban	755,078
TwispWorks	501 (c) (3)	Twisp	Rural	1,036
Visit Issaquah	501 (c) (3)	Issaquah	Urban	39,000
Yakima Valley Tourism	501 (c) (6)	Yakima	Rural	97,390
Rattlesnake Hills Wine Trail	501 (c) (6)	Zillah	Rural	3,664
Quimper Events Collective	501 (c) (6)	Port Townsend	Rural	10,649
Economic Alliance of Lewis County	501 (c) (6)	Centralia	Rural	18,754

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Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce	501 (c) (6)	Ellensburg	Rural	20,100
Oak Harbor Creative Arts Foundation	501 (c) (3)	Oak Harbor	Rural	24,163
Friends of Issaquah Salmon Hatchery	501 (c) (3)	Issaquah	Urban	39,000

Grant Program: Tourism Regeneration				
Recipient	Organization	Location	Rural/Urban	Population
Alliance for Pioneer Square	501 (c) (3)	Seattle	Urban	755,078
Camano Island Chamber of Commerce	501 (c) (6)	Camano Island	Rural	20,585
City of Benton City	Municipality	Benton City	Rural	3,733
City of Kenmore	Municipality	Kenmore	Urban	24,166
City of Waitsburg	Municipality	Waitsburg	Rural	1,174
E.B. Dunn Historic Garden Trust	501 (c) (3)	Seattle	Urban	755,078
Economic Alliance of Lewis County	501 (c) (6)	Mineral	Rural	69
Kruckeberg Botanic Garden Foundation	501 (c) (3)	Shoreline	Urban	66,251
Make.Shift	501 (c) (3)	Bellingham	Urban	95,860
Mount Vernon Downtown Association	501 (c) (3)	Mount Vernon	Rural	35,334
Olympic Peninsula Visitor Bureau	501 (c) (6)	Port Angeles	Rural	20,112
Organic Farm School	501 (c) (3)	Freeland	Rural	1,894
Port Gamble S'Klallam Foundation	Tribal Entity	Kingston	Rural	3,000
Gesa Power House Theatre	501 (c) (3)	Walla Walla	Rural	33,339
Snohomish Youth Soccer Club	501 (c) (3)	Snohomish	Rural	10,534

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SPARK Museum of Electrical Invention	501 (c) (3)	Bellingham	Urban	95,860
Port Angeles Chamber of Commerce	501 (c) (6)	Port Angeles	Rural	20,112
The City of Westport, dba Experience Westport	Municipality	Westport	Rural	2,286
The Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust	501 (c) (3)	Issaquah	Urban	39,000
Town of Bingen (dba City of Bingen)	Municipality	Bingen	Rural	774
Visit Issaquah	501 (c) (3)	Issaquah	Urban	39,000
Wahkiakum Chamber of Commerce	501 (c) (6)	Cathlamet	Rural	594
Washington Filmworks	501 (c) (6)	Seattle	Urban	755,078
Woodinville Wine Country	501 (c) (6)	Woodinville	Urban	13,942