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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Visit Canton Announces New Grant for Destination Development

Stark County, Ohio – Visit Canton, the Stark County Convention & Visitors’ Bureau, is accepting applications for a new grant program. The Recovery and Destination Development Grants are intended to incentivize investment into destination-based assets. Grants will be awarded to projects that align with Visit Canton’s mission to increase tourism and enhance the visitor experience, with preference given to large-scale projects that bring together multiple businesses, economic development organizations, and/or government agencies in strategic partnerships to enhance the destination’s appeal.

Applications for the new Recovery and Destination Development Grants are due by 5:00 PM ET on Friday, November 19, 2021. All requirements must be submitted to be considered for funding in what is expected to be a very competitive application review process. The total number of grants awarded will depend upon the quantity and quality of applications received, with up to \$300,000 eligible to be awarded in total.

Applications for the Recovery and Destination Development Grant may request between \$10,000 to \$50,000 toward the cost of the proposed project. The requested amount may not represent more than 50% of the total project cost. Eligible projects must begin by the 2022 calendar year and be completed within two years of receiving the grant.

“We want to support big, transformative ideas,” said Allyson Bussey, president of Visit Canton, “and incentivize projects that foster community collaboration under a clear, shared, strategic vision.”

Additional application details for the Recovery and Destination Development Grants are available at www.VisitCanton.com/partners.

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Visit Canton

The Stark County Convention & Visitors’ Bureau, d.b.a. Visit Canton, is funded by a lodging tax administered through the Stark County Commissioners. The organization’s mission is to promote travel to Stark County.

Recovery and Destination Development Grants

Mission

The mission of Visit Canton, the Stark County Convention & Visitors' Bureau, is to attract and engage visitors, serve and educate regional tourism partners, and generate economic growth for the community through travel and tourism development.

Goals

The goals of the Recovery and Destination Development Grant Program include:

- **Developing and enhancing destination-based assets that are in concert with the Visit Canton mission that help attract visitors, talent, and increased visitor spending to the region.**
- **Foster strategic vision as well as industry and community collaboration.**
- **Maximize the economic return on public and private investments for travel and tourism destinations in Stark County.**
- **Enhance the quality of life for residents as a result of the elevated destination assets.**

Eligibility

Applicant Eligibility

Applications must be signed by an official authorized to legally bind the applicant to perform the project. The lead applicant is responsible for meeting all grant requirements. Eligible organizations include, but are not limited to, local governments, for-profit enterprises and non-profit organizations.

*****If a for-profit enterprise is the lead or a partner applicant, the project must reflect an economic benefit for the city, township, or county at large.***

Project Eligibility

Projects should target the development of quality-of-place amenities, attractions, and facilities that enhance the visitor experience and foster connectivity within the specific destination or geographic area. They should align with Visit Canton's mission and increase the likelihood of visitation from outside the area.

Partnerships that bring together local and regional organizations, economic development and/or government organizations and tourism-related businesses will be looked upon favorably.

Preference will be given to large-scale projects that enhance communities with visitor attraction efforts. Proposals are expected to detail transformational projects that strengthen the applicant's destination profile.

A cost match is required to be eligible for grant dollars (see Awards and Timeline section for more information).

Project proposals are not limited to, but may focus on one of the following categories:

- **Spectator sports, participation sports, and outdoor recreation**
- **Culinary and agricultural activities**
- **Heritage and historical experiences**
- **Arts and culture**

Project examples within the categories include:

- **Community wayfinding signage or placemaking**
- **Business sign and façade improvements, art installations, etc.**
- **Projects that elevate the visitor/guest experience within the destination.**

The following expenses are **ineligible** for grant funding:

- Marketing materials or campaigns
- Replacement office furniture, fixtures, and equipment
- Annual service fees
- Staff salaries, mileage, or other fees that are already budgeted to carry out daily work
- Food, alcohol, or other hospitality items
- Projects that do not have a regional impact, either directly or indirectly

Awards and Timeline

- **Up to 30 grants available for the 2021 grant cycle.**
- **Grant requests from \$10,000–\$50,000 will be considered through this competitive application process.**
- **Visit Canton grant dollars may not represent more than 50% of the total project cost.**
- **Projects must be started in the 2022 calendar year.**
- **Projects must be completed within two years of the award.**

Grant Application Requirements

For consideration, grant applications must provide the following in a written proposal:

1. A detailed line-item budget showing overall project scope and sources and uses for all funding associated with the project, and identifying status of funding (e.g., secured, contingent, applied for, etc.)
2. Authorized signatures from the applicant's Board Chair and Executive Director/CEO approving all matching funds are on hand and documentation of commitment from all organizations supplying matching funds
3. A project timeline
4. Project photograph(s) and/or rendering(s)
5. Vendor quotes if applicable
6. If a project application contains multiple destination or community partners, letters of support from each partner committing to the project
7. A demonstration that the project complements and is consistent with existing local tourism development, talent attraction efforts, and marketing initiatives.
8. Quantitative demonstration of benefits from the project, which may include economic impact projections or other data demonstrating a benefit to the local economy
9. Qualitative demonstration of benefits from the project. For example, an explanation of how this project will enhance the visitor experience as well as quality of life for residents
10. Marketing and sustainability plans that explain how the asset will be promoted and maintained into the future.

Applications that do not submit all of the requirements will not be scored.

Scoring Considerations

Applications that have addressed all requirements above will be scored. Applications that reflect collaboration and financial commitment by two or more partners on the project are highly desired. The inclusion of endorsement letters with the application is strongly encouraged. Endorsement letters may be from, but not limited to, community leaders, industry partners, or peers and other organizations involved in or affected by the project.

Application Proposal Submission

Application Proposals due by **5:00 p.m. on Friday, November 19, 2021**, PREFERABLY by email to: RosieK@VisitCanton.com or mailed to: Visit Canton at 227 2nd Street. NW, Canton, OH, 44702. Proposals must arrive by the deadline.

If your project is selected as a finalist, Visit Canton will notify you to schedule a Zoom or conference call to discuss your proposal in greater detail and to ask any final questions or request additional information.

Projected Timeline

Event	Date
Call for Application Proposals	August 13, 2021
Zoom Webinar to education on Grant process	Thursday, August 19, 2021 at 12pm
Application Proposals Due	Friday, November 19, 2021 at 5pm
Notification of Finalists	Monday, November 29, 2021
Finalist meetings	December 2-6, 2021
Grants Awarded	December 10, 2021

Recognition and Acknowledgement Requirements

Visit Canton will notify grant award recipients by **December 10th, 2021** following approval by the Visit Canton Grant Committee. Applicants receiving grant funds will be issued a Memorandum of Understanding that must be signed and returned to receive funding. Visit Canton will be identified as a grantor in any press releases, media outreach or any other recognition of project funders.

Reporting

Quarterly Project Status Report

A Quarterly project status report must be submitted to Visit Canton in the requested format.

Project Completion Report

At the conclusion of the project, a report summarizing the deliverables and accomplishments must be submitted to Visit Canton along with proof of completion (e.g., pictures, marketing materials, copies of invoices for related expenses)