

**Mercer County Internal Matching Fund Program
For Cooperative Marketing 2025/2026
Information and Guidelines**

1. Funds Available:

- There is a total of \$100,000 available for the VisitMercerCountyPA Internal Matching Fund Co-op Advertising program for 2025/2026.

2 Who Can Apply:

- Applicants must be members of VisitMercerCountyPA. This program is available to members within Mercer County. The program being funded must feature no less than two (2) participants directly related to the travel industry, in addition to VisitMercerCountyPA. Participant contributions must be in cash, not trade. In-kind expenditures are not eligible.

3 How the program Works:

- **Campaign Focus to generate Overnight Stays in Mercer County offers a dollar-for-dollar match.** VisitMercerCountyPA would match dollar for dollar on an advertising or promotional campaign that will generate **overnight stays** in Mercer County. **Example:** If two or more tourism related properties develop a campaign that promotes overnight stays in Mercer County and the campaign costs \$3,000.00, VisitMercerCountyPA will provide \$1,500.00 for the campaign with the other \$1,500.00 coming from the participants.
- **Campaign Focus to generate daytrips to Mercer County offers a fifty-cent match on each dollar.** VisitMercerCountyPA would match fifty cents for each dollar on an advertising or promotional campaign that will generate day trips to Mercer County. **Example:** If two or more tourism related properties develop a campaign that promotes day trips to Mercer County and the campaign costs \$3,000.00, VisitMercerCountyPA will provide \$1,000.00 for the campaign with the other \$2,000.00 coming from the participants.
- The designation of daytrip or overnight and the match ratio will be the judgment of VisitMercerCountyPA.

4. Goals:

- To generate increased tourism to the Mercer County area by leveraging VisitMercerCountyPA dollars with dollars of eligible local participants in cooperative marketing/ advertising programs that will favorably impact Mercer County as a whole.
- To encourage member tourist related facilities in Mercer County to do more cooperative marketing in partnership with VisitMercerCountyPA.

5. Participation Criteria

- a. *The program being funded must feature no less than two (2) participants directly related to the travel industry, in addition to VisitMercerCountyPA.*
- b. Plans should be geared to overnight or daytrip markets. Any plan with a primary target market of the Mercer County area will not be considered.
- c. Advertising (media can be radio, online, print, outdoor or television), public relations, direct mail, trade shows, FAMS, etc. would be eligible.
- d. All expenditures must be billed through and paid by VisitMercerCountyPA.

Note: VisitMercerCountyPA does not allow co-ops within its own programs or publications.

6. Funding Guidelines

- a. Requests cannot exceed \$20,000.00 for FY 25/26.
- b. There would be a cap of \$5,000.00 on any individual property for each of the semi-annual allocations. Starting May 1, 2026, any remaining funds become open without regard to previous allocations or individual limit until funds are exhausted.

7. Creative

- a. Approval is contingent upon review of creative prior to publication. All creative must be approved by the president/CEO before publication is published and contain the following:
 1. VisitMercerCountyPA logo must be used wherever possible
- b. Matching fund recipients must put a link with the VisitMercerCountyPA logo in a prominent location on their website, preferably the homepage.
- c. Exceptions to the aforementioned requirements such as online banner ads must be approved by the president/CEO prior to publication.

8. Selection Criteria

VisitMercerCountyPA will decide which applications receive funding and the amount to be funded. Priority would be given to programs that:

- Best complement VisitMercerCountyPA marketing and strategic plan.
- Have the potential to generate the greatest overnight business.
- Have the potential to generate off-peak business (e.g., midweek, non-holiday, and off season, e.g., Jan-April business).
- Impact the greatest number of facilities.

9. Decision Process

Applications are accepted on a regular basis and must be submitted prior to the beginning of the intended program. Applications may be for any future period. \$50,000.00 will be available July 2025 –December 2025 with the remaining \$50,000 available January 2026 – June 2026. Applications will be considered in the order in which they are received until funds are exhausted. Application requests of \$10,000.00 or less for FY 25/26 are reviewed by the president/CEO. Any requests over \$10,000.00 are reviewed by the board of directors.

10. Requests for exceptions to this policy will need to be reviewed by the Board of Directors.

**Mercer County Internal Matching Fund Program
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Application Form**

Please follow this outline when submitting your funding request.

I. Definitions

A. The Matching Funds Participants

What entities are submitting this plan? Name the members/associations/committees involved.

The program being funded must feature no less than two (2) participants directly related to the travel industry, in addition to VisitMercerCountyPA.

B. The Target Market

What geographic markets will your program target? (e.g., Western NY, N.E. Ohio, Greater Pittsburgh Area) _____

II. Regional Promotion

How will your marketing/advertising program promote Mercer County as a destination and bring more overnight/day visitors to the region?

What areas of Mercer County do you expect to benefit from this promotion?

III. Plan

A. Goals

What do you hope to accomplish? (Please be as specific as possible and use numbers whenever possible, e.g., “generate 500 additional room nights”)

B. Programs/Budget

What will you spend the money on to reach your goals?

On a separate sheet explain the elements of your program, e.g., advertising (media and creative), public relations activities, e.g., press releases, etc. Provide a budget showing your projected program expenditures and your sources for all revenue.

C. Creative Concept

Provide a brief description of your creative concept, e.g., message to be communicated.

D. Timetable

On a separate sheet show your estimated timetable for the plan, start to finish.

E. Contact Information

Name

Address

Telephone/Fax

Email
