

Benefits of applying for certification for the DeKalb County CVB

The DeKalb County CVB has been working toward a long-term goal to file for certification with the bureau with the Office of Tourism. The criteria for certification includes representing a multi-community or regional service area, two years of operation with a full-time paid director, independent 501 C 6 status (or part of another governmental body), and a track record of tourism marketing programs reaching potential overnight visitors. Actually, the requirements for marketing state that efforts must be focused outside of a 50 mile radius of your community.

The Office of Tourism in Illinois works directly through its network of state certified bureaus on gathering information, media initiatives, and product development, which is one of the reasons that we are working towards that goal.

Why we need a certified visitors bureau for DeKalb County

The two main benefits of certification are establishing direct relationships between the DCCVB and the Office of Tourism in Illinois, and additional grant opportunities that are only made available to certified bureaus.

Certification increases the grant opportunities available to DeKalb County which aren't afforded to non certified bureaus. The Local Tourism Convention grant program is only awarded to bureaus that are certified and have been accepted into the program by the Office of Tourism. The DeKalb County CVB has been able to secure grant dollars through other Marketing Partnership grants, and also was instrumental in the J.F. Glidden Homestead receiving a TAP grant. In 2010, no Marketing Partnership grants were made available to our bureau due to state cut backs and on-going budget issues. However the LTCB grant offers a much greater threshold of grant dollars that would have a significant impact of the marketing and operations budget for the DeKalb County CVB.

Certification will give the DeKalb County CVB direct access to the Office of Tourism and is the only way we can bring a portion of the state hotel/motel tax back to DeKalb County. Certification combined with the ability to pursue other tourism grants are a huge benefit to of regional development tourism bureaus and visitors' bureaus.

The increase in grant money is beneficial however the DCCVB must match every dollar of grant money with local dollars to demonstrate a commitment to tourism marketing.

That fact makes local funding from the county, municipalities and private sector even more important because grant dollars will be lost if local matching funds

aren't available. In short, DeKalb County municipalities have to prove that they are committed to tourism marketing locally before the Office of Tourism in Springfield will even consider awarding those coveted dollars to DeKalb County. In the meantime, the other 43 certified bureaus are benefitting from the hotel/motel dollars that are collected by DeKalb County and sent to Springfield since those funds support certified bureaus and many of their tourism initiatives. Having a certified bureau is the only way to get any portion of those dollars contributed by DeKalb County back into our DCCVB to reinvest in marketing ourselves through tourism.

Currently, the DCCVB is funded by the following financial partners:

The City of DeKalb
Sycamore Tourism
DeKalb County Board
NIU Athletics

We also have sponsorship agreements with:

The DeKalb, Genoa, and Sycamore Chambers
Morning Star Media, Ltd.
Sieperts
TBC Net

Bureaus wishing to file for certification must submit all require documents prior to the Office of Tourism in Springfield, Illinois prior to March 31st each year. The Office of Tourism has complete authority to accept or deny any visitors bureau certification based on a through review that is conducted over a six month time period. Bureaus that have files for consideration of certification are notified by July of the same year that they filed. This allows time for a complete review and any follow-up questions or documentation required by the Office of Tourism. Many bureaus have to file multiple times before they are awarded this esteemed certification. Simply put, the road to certification for any visitors bureau is a marathon vs. a sprint. The Office of Tourism wants to ensure that they certify bureaus that will contribute tourism dollars back to the State of Illinois as well as their own county.

Marketing in 2011

The DCCVB is actively seeking new events/groups to come to DeKalb County with an ad in the Midwest Meeting Planners Guide that will be distributed to over 35,000 meeting planners in 2011.

We are also busy working on a redesign of our website which will include more social networking for effective and efficient use of marketing dollars, easy

navigation, a more comprehensive calendar of events, and will allow smart phones, etc. and other technological devices to receive information in proper format.

The 2011 DeKalb County Visitors Guide will be available in early January and will be distributed at both the DeKalb and Belvidere Travel Oasis Kiosks as well as DeKalb County Municipality offices, many local Chambers, area hotels, and attractions. These guides are also the premiere marketing piece used to promote DeKalb County by both the DCCVB and the DeKalb County Board.

We also have an ad that promotes DeKalb County in the Northern Illinois Tourism Development Visitors Guide for 2011. This guide has a 50,000 circulation and is distributed at over 7 tollway travel kiosks throughout Illinois and many other regional tourism offices as well as Chambers, tradeshow, and regional attractions.

Our relationships and affiliations with other tourism organizations such as NITDO (Northern Illinois Tourism Development Office) and ILHC (Illinois Lincoln Highway Coalition) also brings tourism and grant dollars back to DeKalb County. In the last two years alone, DeKalb County has seen the installation of murals in DeKalb, Malta, Genoa, Cortland, and Maple Park as well as gazebos for DeKalb and Malta.

We also have the benefit of both of these organizations actively promoting and listing our events on their websites (www.visitnorthernillinois.com and drivelincolnhighway.com).

Beginning in January 2011, the DCCVB board will be approaching all the municipalities in DeKalb County to obtain letters-of-support for the DCCVB as the official tourism organization of DeKalb County and additional funding to allow the DCCVB to get to the next level with increased marketing. The more endorsements and funding that are raised locally increases the strength of our certification application.

The DCCVB has been actively promoting all of DeKalb County since 2007. The DCCVB benefits all communities in DeKalb County. All municipalities are promoted in the annual DeKalb County Visitors Guide, the DCCVB website, through social networking tools, phone inquires, press releases distribution, and to other regional tourism partners throughout Illinois.

The DCCVB works diligently to promote tourism in DeKalb County every day. We need more funding in order to take our efforts to the next level. We need to increase our marketing and operational dollars by garnering more dollars from municipalities that are benefiting from our marketing efforts but aren't

contributing funding to-date. The objective studies done to show the impact that tourism marketing dollars have are an impressive \$9 return for each \$1 invested. Remember these dollars don't just benefit hotels. These tourism dollars grow and sustain all local businesses from the restaurant, to the wait staff, to the retail shops, to the attractions, to the farmer, to the grocers, to the gas stations, and inevitably to the communities that have a certified bureau working hard to promote tourism on an on-going basis.

More dollars collected through tourism also benefits each average house-hold of 4 by saving \$1,000 in taxes according to the numbers provided to the Illinois Office of Economic Development.

Travel and tourism is an economic engine and CVBs are the key drivers.

CVBs help develop long-term marketing plans that promote tourism to generate revenue for their county. CVBs are like the key to the city.

What is State Certification/LTCV Grant Program

Bureaus wishing to be considered for certification only have one opportunity to file each year. All applicants must be received by the State of Illinois prior to March 31st.

The State of Illinois reviews the file and notifies the applicant of the status in July of the same year. Many bureaus have to file multiple times before the State deems them worthy of certification.

Local Tourism and Convention Bureau (LTCB) grant certification criteria

There is a complete list of requirements that have to be met prior to filing for certification:

Must be either a unit of local government or incorporated as a non-for-profit with applicable State employees

Employ a full-time (minimum of 35 hours per week) paid professional Executive Director (CEO)

Been in legal existence for a minimum of 2 years, representing one county or contiguous counties or one or more municipalities, and receive hotel/motel tax receipts from one or more municipalities or counties in the applicant's proposed service area prior to requesting certification

A statement that it employs a full-time professional paid chief executive officer

A statement listing municipalities or counties in its service area

A complete listing of hotel/motels collecting the State's hotel/motel tax with the service area and the number of rooms in each

A statement certified by the applicant's fiscal officer specifying the local hotel/motel tax revenues and/or other government funding received/projected and/or expected by the bureau in the fiscal year prior to certification that can be used as matching dollars for the State grant

Certified bureaus must be recertified by the State annually to ensure that they are still adhering to standards that set forth in the LTCV grant program as well as maintaining a marketing program that promotes the best interests of the program.

Why do we need a certified bureau for DeKalb County?

It is the only way that we can get a portion of the DeKalb County hotel/motel tax dollars generated by DeKalb County to the State of Illinois back to DeKalb County to reinvest in tourism marketing. Right now the other 42 certified bureaus are awarded these funds to spend on promoting tourism in their counties.

To promote tourism in DeKalb County effectively and take our marketing efforts to the next level

To generate more revenue for DeKalb County hotels, attractions, retail, and local businesses

To contribute tourism dollars back to DeKalb County which in turn improve the quality of life for our residents

To increase the dollar amount generated by tourism dollars thru marketing and grant programs

To have direct access to the State of Illinois Office of Tourism (IOT)

To be promoted on the Enjoy Illinois ([www.enjoyillinois](http://www.enjoyillinois.com)) website and all other marketing publications provided to certified bureaus

What we need to Promote DeKalb County and increase our probability of certification

We are expected to raise local funding for tourism marketing on our own each year through hotel/motel taxes and from other partners and/or municipalities. The State never awards grants unless our community/DCCVB can raise local funding that matches the amount of any grant applied for

Demonstrate a local commitment to attracting tourists to DeKalb County with local funding provided by all municipalities in DeKalb County—What we raise locally will help determine the level of our dedications, effectiveness, and will be a determining factor in both the amount of funding we are eligible to received back from the State or whether or not we meet their criteria for certification

The DCCVB and board members plan to go before all DeKalb County municipalities in the 1st quarter of 2011 to:

Present our mission and vision for the future
Demonstrate the goals that we've achieved through tourism marketing
Solicit funding to strengthen our effectiveness and reach for tourism marketing
Gain a commitment to help generate more revenue for DeKalb County
Obtain letters of support as the recognized DeKalb County tourism organization
Continue to develop a cohesive marketing plan that will strengthen the DCCVB
To solidify and grow the DCCVB as an effective revenue generator for DeKalb County

What LTCB funds can be used for

These funds are utilized to continue development of the local and state tourism industry. There are three categories which these funds can be used for as designated by the State of Illinois: Overhead and Operational Expenses, Marketing, and Development