



Marketing Assistance Funding Program Fiscal Year 2024–2025

Executive Summary

The Marketing Assistance Funding Program (MAFP) supported 13 local businesses and cultural organizations in Marion County with targeted marketing grants to enhance their visibility, drive tourism, and grow audience engagement. The program funded digital campaigns, print and radio advertising, website enhancements, and media production.

Program Highlights

- Total Applicants Funded: 13
- Total Budget: \$75,000
- Total Reimbursed: \$36,652.94
- Marketing Channels Used:
 - Digital Advertising (Facebook, Instagram, Google)
 - Print Media (Magazines, Newspapers)
 - Website Development
 - Email Marketing
 - Radio and TV Ads
 - Photography & Video Production



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Impact Snapshot

- **Web & Social Engagement:**
 - Multiple partners saw 300–800% increases in website visitors and social media impressions.
 - Fort King Heritage Foundation gained 438 new followers on social media and over 200K video views.
 - Diamondz and Pearlz saw views surge from 14,000 to over 521,000 on social media.
- **Bookings & Attendance:**
 - Grandview Clydesdale Tours nearly doubled bookings post-campaign.
 - Beautiful Creatures Animal Ranch saw bookings double, confirmed by call tracking.
- **Out-of-County & Global Reach:**
 - Targeted campaigns reached across Florida, the U.S., and internationally (UK, Canada, India, Germany, Australia, etc.).
 - Marion Cultural Alliance's website gained 10,000+ new users, many from large metro areas and international locations.

Successful Use Cases

- Acadia Acres and Swampy's Bar and Grille leveraged Facebook ads to quadruple web traffic.
- Appleton Museum aligned print ads with distribution areas and saw 22.7% engagement from targeted zip codes.
- Reilly Arts Center and Rainbow Springs Art strategically used local publications to attract visitors from surrounding counties.



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Challenges & Withdrawals

- 5 applicants withdrew or did not complete their campaigns due to business closures, incomplete projects, or other issues.

Conclusion

The MAFP proved highly effective in strengthening tourism marketing for small businesses and cultural organizations. Measurable outcomes, such as increased bookings, expanded regional visibility, and digital engagement, reinforce the value of continued investment in targeted marketing support.



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Detailed Report

Program Overview

The Marketing Assistance Funding Program provided financial support to local businesses and cultural organizations to enhance marketing efforts aimed at increasing visibility, driving tourism, and expanding audience engagement. Of the 18 approved applicants, 13 partners completed their campaigns and submitted reimbursement requests. Five applicants either withdrew or did not follow through with submission.

Partner Outcomes

1. Acadia Acres

- Funding Requested/Reimbursed: \$5,000 / \$5,000
- Activities: Digital marketing – social media, SEO, email campaigns
- Content Examples:
 - "Discover the Wildlife of Ocala"
 - "Movie Night Under the Stars"
- Results:
 - Website traffic increased from 579 to 2,569 unique visitors
 - Out-of-county reach: U.S. (e.g., Williston, Wellington), and internationally (e.g., Canada, UK, India, Australia)



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2. Appleton Museum of Art

- Funding Requested/Reimbursed: \$5,000 / \$2,820
- Activities: Print, billboard, and direct mail advertising
- Publications: Fort Myers Magazine, Tampa Bay Magazine, Lake Sumter Style
- Results:
 - 1,008 zip codes collected (458 out-of-county)
 - 22.7% of out-of-county visitors were from target distribution areas
 - Out-of-county reach: Pinellas, Hillsborough, Collier, Lake, and Sumter Counties

3. Crazy Cucumber

- Funding Requested/Reimbursed: \$5,000 / \$329.69
- Activities: Facebook post, new photography
- Results:
 - Social media viewers increased from 1,300 to 4,100
 - Social media views increased from 4,300 to 9,400
 - Out-of-county reach: Citrus, Alachua, Volusia, and surrounding counties

4. Diamondz and Pearlz

- Funding Requested/Reimbursed: \$5,000 / \$1,690.68
- Activities: Facebook marketing
- Results:
 - Views surged from 14,090 to 521,634
 - Out-of-county reach: California, New York, Georgia, Fort Myers, Jacksonville



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5. Beautiful Creatures Animal Ranch

- Funding Requested/Reimbursed: \$5,000 / \$2,328.17
- Activities: Facebook marketing, print, and digital ad design
- Results:
 - Bookings doubled during campaign (based on area code data)
 - Out-of-county reach: Daytona Beach, Jacksonville, Tampa, Orlando

6. Fort King Heritage Foundation

- Funding Requested/Reimbursed: \$5,000 / \$5,000
- Activities: Facebook & Instagram campaigns
- Results:
 - Facebook:
 - +223 followers (total 850), 143K video plays, 1,220 website clicks
 - Instagram:
 - +215 followers (total 230), 66K video plays, 1,625 website clicks
 - Out-of-county reach: Tampa, Gainesville, Jacksonville, St. Petersburg

7. Grandview Clydesdale Tours

- Funding Requested/Reimbursed: \$5,000 / \$5,000
- Activities: Print & digital advertising, website enhancement, photography
- Publication: The Villages Daily Sun
- Results:
 - Bookings increased from 48 to 84
 - 88% of publication circulation outside Marion County



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8. Horse and Hounds Restaurant

- Funding Requested/Reimbursed: \$5,000 / \$329.84
- Activities: Facebook marketing, new photography
- Results:
 - Social media viewers increased from 588 to 1,959
 - Social media views increased from 1,400 to 5,776
 - Out-of-county reach: Citrus, Sumter, Alachua, Volusia Counties

9. Marion Cultural Alliance

- Funding Requested/Reimbursed: \$5,000 / \$5,000
- Activities: Website enhancements – Ocala Metro Art Scene
- Results:
 - Gained 10,038 website new users
 - Out-of-county reach: Major Florida cities and internationally (Ireland, Singapore, Germany, etc.)

10. Marion Theatre

- Funding Requested/Reimbursed: \$2,500 / \$2,499.71
- Activities: Facebook advertising
- Results:
 - Social media impressions increased from 311,310 to 823,506
 - Out-of-county reach: Gainesville, Homosassa, The Villages



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11. Rainbow Springs Art

- Funding Requested/Reimbursed: \$5,000 / \$1,325
- Activities: Print and radio advertising
- Publications: Citrus County Life Magazine, WUFT
- Out-of-county reach: 12 surrounding counties including Alachua, Gilchrist, and Columbia

12. Reilly Arts Center

- Funding Requested/Reimbursed: \$5,000 / \$5,000
- Activities: Digital and print marketing
- Publications: Lake Sumter Style, The Villages Daily Sun
- Out-of-county reach: The Villages, Gainesville, Lake and Sumter Counties

13. Swampy's Bar and Grille

- Funding Requested/Reimbursed: \$5,000 / \$329.85
- Activities: Facebook post, new photography
- Results:
 - Social media viewers increased from 1,900 to 9,416
 - Social media views increased from 4,500 to 15,175
 - Out-of-county reach: Citrus, Alachua, Lake, Volusia Counties



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Withdrawn or Inactive Participants

- Big Lee's Serious About BBQ – Withdrew
- Gypsy Gold Horse Farm – Withdrew
- James Two Brothers Distillers – Closed
- Midtown Eateries – Withdrew (facility not ready)
- Ocala Main Street – Did not submit reimbursement
- Santos Bike Shop – Withdrew