2026 Mission Grant Application

Mission Grant Overview

The DRA Mission Grant program is designed for bold ideas that have the potential to create transformational change and advance People Attraction - driving population growth, retention, and tourism.

Key Details

- Requests from $50,000 or more will be accepted.
- Preference given to projects that strengthen organizations through capacity building
- Funds are provided upfront upon acceptance of the grant award
- Follow-up reports are required within 12 months of receiving funds
- Multi-year funding requests will be considered
- **Two-Phase Application Process:**
  - Phase 1: Submit the application outlining the project and impact.
  - Phase 2: Selected applicants will present their proposal to the grant committee with a Q&A session.

Key Dates

Application Available	Application Deadline	Grant Announcement
Monday, April 6	Friday, April 17	May/June

Grant Focus

Applications must align with **People Attraction**, supporting population growth, retention, and tourism. This focus advances the DRA's mission to foster community betterment and strengthen the quality of life and economic vitality across the tri-state area.

Capacity Building

Historically, the DRA primarily funded material items. Beginning in 2022, the program evolved to emphasize capacity building in addition to tangible purchases, helping organizations strengthen their operations, expand impact, and build long-term sustainability.

What is Capacity Building?

Capacity building is the process of developing and strengthening the skills, systems, and strategies organizations and communities need to adapt, grow, and thrive in a changing environment.

Examples of Capacity-Building Activities

Planning & Strategy

Conducting organizational assessments, strategic planning, or developing growth and sustainability plans.

Organizational Systems & Operations

Upgrading databases, financial systems, volunteer management tools, or internal processes that improve efficiency.

Marketing & Fund Development

Creating or improving websites, branding, communication materials, or donor engagement tools that strengthen visibility and fundraising.

Partnerships & Collaboration

Building stronger relationships with community partners, professional advisors, and other nonprofits to increase impact.

Professional & Leadership Development

Providing training, attending conferences, or other learning opportunities for staff and volunteers.

Financial Accountability & Readiness

Completing first-time or expanded financial audits or reviews that position the organization for future funding opportunities.

Coverage Area

The DRA's geographic focus is the tri-state area, with emphasis on Dubuque and its contiguous counties:

- **Iowa:** Clayton, Delaware, Jackson, and Jones
- **Wisconsin:** Grant, Lafayette, and Iowa
- **Illinois:** Jo Daviess

Eligible Organizations

Eligible nonprofit organizations and units of government are encouraged to apply. Each application is reviewed on a case-by-case basis for its alignment with People Attraction

Applications are welcome from organizations across all sectors, including:

Animal Welfare	**Arts, Culture & Recreation**	**Civic & Community**
Education	**Emergency Services**	**Governmental**
Health & Human Services	**Religious Affiliation**	**Veterans**

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for the 2026 Mission Grant cycle:

- Any prior DRA Mission or Core Grant must be fully closed, the project completed and the Grant Summary Report submitted, prior to applying.
- Applicants must be a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization with one of the following designations: 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), 501(c)5, 501(c)6, 501(c)(7), 501(c)(8), 501(c)(10), or 501(c)(19); or a unit of political subdivision (e.g. city, town, or conservation district).
- Each 501(c) organization may submit one application
- The name on the application must match the name on the IRS determination letter.
- Individual schools, churches, and volunteer fire departments will not need to provide a 501(c) letter if they are exempt by law or covered under a municipal exemption.
- Cities, towns, villages, and counties are limited to one application per jurisdiction and must include a statement of support from the respective administrator or governing body.

School Eligibility

- Applications must be submitted through the district office (or approved by the school principal/administrator if no district office exists).
- Each district should submit one application encompassing all schools within the district.
- If an affiliated nonprofit applies on behalf of a school, the organization must hold it's own 501(c) status and include a letter from school administration confirming that the school district will not apply independently.

Eligibility Limitations

DRA Mission Grants will **NOT** fund:

- Endowment Funds
- Political causes, candidates, or lobbying
- Individuals, including scholarships and personal benefits
- Debt repayment or purchases made prior to the 2026 calendar year

Scoring Criteria

Applications will be evaluated on the following criteria:

DRA Mission Alignment

How well does the project advance People Attraction goals?

Organizational Alignment

Fit with the applicant's mission and long-term strategy.

Project Description

Clarity, purpose, and execution plan.

Nature of Need

Evidence-based justification and community demand.

Collaboration & Partnerships

Demonstrated cooperation and shared goals.

Agency Overview

Capacity and readiness to deliver results.

Budget & Financial Feasibility

Realistic costs, transparency, and sustainability.

Measurement of Success

Defined outcomes and metrics for impact.

Recognition of Funding

All funded organizations must properly acknowledge DRA support. Recognition may include:

- Press release announcing the award and project impact
- Social media post highlighting the partnership
- Use of the **DRA logo lock-up** on materials
- Signage or on-site acknowledgment at project locations or events

Questions? Contact info@dradubuque.com