



Ohio River Commission Grant Program Guidelines

Applications Available Online August 2026

The Ohio River Commission is launching a competitive grant program to support projects that strengthen economic resilience, expand workforce readiness, and enhance river tourism and recreation across the 14 Ohio River counties. Approximately \$500,000 is available, with awards anticipated by October 2026. Local governments, schools, career centers, non-profits, ports, terminals, and economic development agencies are eligible to apply for up to \$100,000 per project.

How to Apply

The online application will open at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 12, 2026 and be available for a period of 30 days. Applicants will be required to submit the following:

- **Letter of Interest** summarizing project goals, benefits, and other funding committed/sought
- **Scope of Work** showing a list of partners and their roles, a list of activities that will be completed and the completion date for each
- **Organizational Capacity** – provide evidence of your capacity to complete the project and a 200-word description of up to 3 completed projects over the last 5 years
- **Amount Requested**, not to exceed the maximum award limit of \$100,000

Funding Categories

Applicants may propose projects in any one of the following categories or across multiple categories. The Commission is not allocating separate set-aside amounts for each category, rather it is aiming to ensure projects achieve maximum benefit and are appropriately scaled to available funding.

- **Riverfront Infrastructure & Port Readiness Planning:** Supports planning and pre-development work for riverfront infrastructure, including ports, terminals, intermodal connections, and industrial site readiness. Eligible activities include modernization planning, dredging and site assessments, transportation access studies, land-use planning, and environmental or pre-permitting work.
- **Maritime & River-Based Workforce Development:** Advances workforce pipelines for maritime, logistics, and river-operations careers. Eligible activities may include training equipment, credentialing programs, youth exposure initiatives, and school -industry partnerships.
- **River Tourism and Recreation:** Supports tourism, recreation access, and riverfront activation planning, including access improvements, wayfinding, and cultural or heritage initiatives tied to the Ohio River. Eligible activities include enhancing public access, strengthening regional tourism assets, and improving community visibility.

Evaluation Criteria

All eligible applications will be reviewed using a clear scoring framework, including:

- **Strategic Alignment** – Connection to Commission priorities
- **Regional Impact & Visibility** – Benefits to communities and counties
- **Feasibility & Readiness** – Clear plan, timeline, and organizational capacity
- **Leveraging & Partnerships** – Collaboration and additional funding sources
- **Sustainability** – Long-term value beyond the grant period

Following completion of scoring, the Director of the Ohio Department of Development, in partnership with the Ohio River Commission, may exercise limited discretion to ensure balanced regional distribution of awards across Ohio's 14 Ohio River counties. This authority allows both the Department and the Commission to address geographic gaps, promote equitable access to funding opportunities, and respond to unforeseen circumstances that may arise during the award cycle.

Any use of this discretion will occur after the scoring process is complete, will not alter the scoring rubric, and will be applied in a manner that maintains the integrity, fairness, and transparency of the program.

A Regional Opportunity for Impact

This program represents a significant opportunity for communities along the Ohio River to advance economic development, strengthen workforce pipelines, and expand tourism and recreation assets. The Commission looks forward to partnering with eligible applicants to deliver visible, high-impact results across the region.