

**ADMINISTRATIVE RULES
REPORT TO LEGISLATURE
Clearinghouse Rule 09-111**

By the Department of Tourism relating to Chapter Tour 3

Basis and Purpose of Proposed Rule:

The Department proposes to create Chapter Tour 3, relating to grants to municipalities and organizations for regional tourist information centers under 2009 Wisconsin Act 28. Pursuant to s. 41.16(3)(c), Stats., the Department is required to promulgate rules to administer the grants under this section, including the preparation of an application form. The proposed rule sets forth the procedures and guidelines for the distribution of department funding for tourist information center grants.

Response to Legislative Council Staff Recommendations:

A copy of the Clearinghouse Report is attached. All of the recommendations have been accepted.

2. Form, Style and Placement in Administrative Code

In the rule preface, the acronym "JEM" has been expanded to Joint Effort Marketing.

5. Clarity, Grammar, Punctuation and Use of Plain Language

- a. Recommended grammar changes made in s. Tour 3.03.
- b. Added citation and changed punctuation according to recommendations in s. Tour 3.04.
- c. Replaced word in s. Tour 3.05.
- d. Recommended grammar changes made in s. Tour 3.06.
- e. Phrase in s. Tour 3.07 modified.

Public Hearing and List of Persons Who Appeared or Registered at Public Hearing:

A public hearing was held on the proposed rule on February 1, 2010 in Madison. Transcripts of the hearing are attached. Modifications were made to the proposed rule and the application form as a result of testimony at the hearing and comments received from the tourism industry.

The following persons registered at the hearing for informational purposes only:

Christine Rebout	Janesville Area Convention & Visitors Bureau	Opposed
Tom Barrett	Stevens Point Convention & Visitors Bureau	Supports w/minor changes
Diane Morgenthaler	Greater Madison CVB	No Position
Kate Dale	Greater Madison CVB	No Position

The following persons registered at the hearing to present testimony:

Dave Blank	Real Racine	Supports w/minor changes
Julia Hertel	WI Association of CVBs	Supports w/minor changes
Kathy Kopp	Platteville Area Chamber of Commerce	Supports
Lola Roeh	Governor Council on Tourism Chair	No Position

Summary of Public Comments and Agency Response to Comments:

Copies of comments are attached.

1. Tom Barrett, Executive Director of Stevens Point Convention & Visitors Bureau

- Explained his current operations and how they generally already serve as a regional/statewide visitor center.
- Grant would allow them to expand hours by covering staffing costs.
- Supports grant program.

2. Dave Clements, Executive Director of La Crosse Convention & Visitors Bureau

- Need to clarify a visitor center as a regional distribution facility.
- Believes the program was created to assist local organizations in 9 communities where Welcome Centers were previously located and so need to develop criteria to address this fact.
- Suggest these 9 communities be given priority. They have experience, are qualified and so will be best ROI.
- Criteria should include a minimum number of visitors to the center, location at key entry points, hours of operation, professional staffing and Tier 1 publications.

3. Dave Blank, President/CEO Real Racine

- Needs to be more definition of the criteria for the type of visitor center that would qualify for program.
- Applicants should carry, at minimum, all Tier 1 and Tier 2 publications as defined by Department of Tourism Guidelines.
- Number of visitors during the prior year should be considered; want to impact greatest number of people as possible with the program.
- Center should be required to obtain basic demographic information from their guests.

4. Julia Hertel, Executive Director WI Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus

- Representing 33 destination marketing organizations across Wisconsin that share similar mission of serving visitors and driving tourism economic growth in the state.
- Rule needs to better address what entity or center qualifies as regional distribution point.
- Application should require visitor count from prior year.
- Should require applicants to describe why the center location attracts tourists seeking travel information.
- Require applicant to carry statewide travel publications and visitor guides of Wisconsin top destinations.
- Best ROI will be if grants awarded to visitor centers that are highly visible and provide statewide travel information.

5. Robert Moses, Executive Director Prairie du Chien Area Chamber of Commerce

Prairie du Chien Chamber represents 350 member organizations.

- Rules need to clearly address and clarify which organizations and visitor centers qualify as a regional distribution facility.
- Suggest that the nine communities affected by the closing of Welcome Centers be given top priority.

- Need to ensure experienced, qualified organizations are utilizing funds to ensure maximum ROI.
- Organizations should identify number of visitors to center from previous year.
- Identify why the visitor center location attracts tourists seeking travel information.
- Center should carry statewide travel publications and visitor guides of Wisconsin's top destinations.

6. Donna Amedro, Board Member Friends of Necedah National Wildlife Refuge

- Asks that non-profit visitor centers be included in the criteria for grants to tourist information centers.

7. David Minor, President/CEO Superior-Douglas County Area Chamber

Suggests language in the grant program that requires:

- An eligible applicant to carry and display the 'tiers' of information from our statewide tourism partners.
- Provide highway signage that directs traffic to that visitor center.
- Minimum number of hours/days per week that the visitor center must be open.

8. Kathy Kopp, Platteville Area Chamber of Commerce

Feels very strongly that language should be included that requires:

- An eligible applicant carries and display tiers of information from our statewide tourism partners.
- Highway signage that directs traffic to the tourist information center.
- Minimum number of days and hours per week that center is open.

Based on the comments received from the tourism industry, the Department has made the following modifications to the administrative rules and to the application form.

- In s. Tour 3.04, added definition of "regional tourist information center" as (5) and re-numbered "Tourist information center committee" to (6).
- In s. Tour 3.05, "promotional materials such as signage or equipment to promote the region" was added to clarify the use of funds.
- The following comments apply to s. Tour 3.06 (2):
 - changed wording from "annual attendance" to "previous year's annual visitor count"
 - added "a list of publications distributed from outside the local community."
 - changed wording to "a brief description of how the applicant provides information on and promotes Wisconsin businesses including cultural or recreational attractions in the region such as restaurant, lodging, campground and retail establishments" to match wording on application form.
 - added "a brief description of why the center's location attracts tourists seeking travel information."

- In s. Tour 3.07 (1), modified “that the applicant provides information on and promotes Wisconsin businesses including cultural or recreational attractions in the region such as restaurant, lodging, campground and retail establishments.”
- In s. Tour 3.07 added (3) “That the tourist information center will generate increased visitors into or within the state and make a positive economic impact in the region.”
- In Tourist Information Center Grant Guidelines, modified par. 3 to read “Funding may not be used for office overhead, publications or printing, advertising, promotional items (coffee mugs, key chains), PR or matching dollars for a Joint Effort Marketing project.”
- The following changes apply to the Tourist Information Center Grant Application:
 - I. Application Information to include Website address.
 - II. Dates and Hours of Operation to include:
 1. Previous Year’s Annual Visitor Count
 2. Brief description of how the applicant provides information on and promotes Wisconsin tourism businesses including cultural or recreational attractions in the region such as restaurant, lodging, campground and retail establishments.
 3. Description of why the center’s location attracts tourist seeking travel information.
 4. A list of publications distributed from outside the local community

Final Regulatory Flexibility Analysis:

A final regulatory flexibility analysis is not required because the rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small businesses, as defined in s. 227.114(1), Stats.