

*Pennsylvania Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus  
Case Study: Effective Use of Matching Grant Program*

Oil Regional Alliance of Business, Industry and Tourism:  
Familiarization tours prompt media coverage, increased requests for info

Although the Oil Regional Alliance receives only \$29,000 through Pennsylvania's Matching Grants for Tourism program – making it sixth from the bottom in terms of state support – Betty Squire and her members are putting the money to good use.

“Our region includes Venango and Crawford counties, and the state's matching grants allow us to sponsor familiarization tours for outdoor writers,” she explains. “We invite these journalists to visit our amenities and fish in our waterways, and the grant allows us to provide food and lodging during their visits.”

Squire noted that the return on the investment is prompt and obvious: The local visitors center reported an 11 percent increase in 2004 and has had to call out additional staff to help answer the phone calls following publication of a story.

“Every time one of the releases runs in the Pittsburgh paper, we can track a significant increase in the number of requests for information that we receive,” she added. “It's a fair amount of return for a relatively small investment. Without the matching grants, we don't have access to the Post-Gazette because we can't afford to advertise in print.”

Individual entrepreneurs have modeled their own marketing efforts on the success of the regional partnership with media representatives. Squire reports that one small business owner runs “Fishing with Darryl Black,” which brings fishing enthusiasts to the region to . . . .

In addition, Squire and her members typically attend two or three outdoor shows each year, including Pittsburgh, Erie and New York State. In 2005, the Alliance hopes to move into the Ohio market with a booth at the Akron Outdoors Show.

The matching grant program offers a comparative advantage over other sources of program funding. The Oil Heritage region, like many others, reports that hotel tax revenues leave tourism funding at the discretion of County Commissioners, who have to allocate resources for economic development versus other community needs.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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