

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

**Washington County Tourism Promotion Agency:  
Sphere of invitation grows with advertising and promotion**

Just three years ago, the Washington County Tourism Promotion Agency was nearly non-existent, just a small line item on the county budget. In those days, “promotion” meant a couple of newspaper ads in local papers and some radio ads – maybe. Outreach was limited to 25 or 30 miles from Washington, PA, the county seat.

Today, however, the TPA attracts \$89,000 from the state Matching Grant Program. With another \$460,000 from the county room tax, the organization has extended its advertising reach to include Columbus and Cleveland, as well as the Erie feeder markets.

“All indicators show significant growth in our overnight visitor rates,” noted Mark Tallarico, executive director of the Washington County TPA. “We’ve also been able to reach down into West Virginia and out to Ohio with radio ads, print and periodicals.” The group also has retained a creative agency to help develop professional advertising and conduct familiarization tours from outdoor and travel writers.

In addition to their local initiatives, Washington County TPA also is part of a voluntary cooperative effort with other counties in southwestern Pennsylvania. The regional program provides some joint marketing, but like many other local TPA leaders, Tallarico applauds the efficacy of the Matching Grant program from the state.

“We have been very diligent about using marketing strategies proven in our area, and we’ve seen an exponential increase when we’ve combined advertising with other creative communications,” Tallarico added. “We see a nice rate of return for the dollars we get from the state.”

**NEED STATISTICAL OR ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE OF RETURN ON MGP DOLLARS**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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