

Discover Manitowoc Grant Application

900 Quay St, Manitowoc, WI 54220 - (920) 686-3508



Please email completed applications to chansen@manitowoc.org by March 24, 2025.

Name of event: USS Cobia Send-Off	
Date and time of event: Wednesday, September 3, 2025 from 5 - 9 PM & Thursday, September 4, 2025 from 6 AM - 4 PM	
Name of organization: Wisconsin Maritime Museum	
Federal ID number: 39-1128473	Tax status: 501c3
\$ Amount request: \$13,675	
If you received funding from the Discover Manitowoc Grant in the past, how many years, which years, and how much each year? Yes, we have received funding in the past for Subfest. \$25,000 in 2017. \$16,400 in 2018. \$8,000 in 2019	

Event Coordinator Information

Name: Kevin Cullen
Address: 75 Maritime Dr Manitowoc, WI 54220
Phone: 920-374-4006
Email:kcullen@wisconsinmaritime.org

Estimate the expected attendance of participants and visitors. Include attendance from Manitowoc County as well as outside of Manitowoc County. Provide specifics on total estimated daily attendance, historical attendance data, and how you came to these estimations.

Attached.

Priority will be given to events that generate overnight stays. How many room nights will your event generate and at which lodging establishments? Include how you measure room nights and came to this estimation.

Attached.

Project Summary

Attach a detailed description of the event including goals, target demographics, how this event will bring overnight visitors to Manitowoc, and the plans and timeline for marketing. List the roles of key team members and their experience. Include how you will measure the success of this event (surveys, room night tracking).

Budget Information

Attach the event's budget showing the use of anticipated funds and sources of those funds. The budget must show all resources required for the event and indicate who is responsible. The budget must also demonstrate the need for financial assistance. If total funding is not awarded, be prepared to prioritize financial needs.

Sign below certifying that all information in this application has been provided truthfully and in acknowledgement of Discover Manitowoc Grant policies.

Event Coordinator: Kevin Cullen
Date: 3/24/2025

Discover Manitowoc Grant

Estimate the expected attendance of participants and visitors. Include attendance from Manitowoc County as well as outside of Manitowoc County. Provide specifics on total estimated daily attendance, historical attendance data, and how you came to these estimations.

We estimate a total attendance of nearly 2,100 participants and visitors for the USS *Cobia* departure event, which will take place over two days. On the evening of September 3rd, we will host a 1940s-themed party with an anticipated attendance of 75-100 guests. On September 4th, we expect approximately 500 attendees from Manitowoc County and 600 attendees from the surrounding counties within a 50-mile radius, including Kewaunee, Sheboygan, Calumet, and Brown counties. Additionally, we anticipate around 600 non-local day-trip visitors from the Milwaukee, Fox Valley, and Madison regions, as well as approximately 350 non-local overnight attendees. These overnight attendees will include submarine veterans from the Midwest and maritime or military history enthusiasts from neighboring states such as Michigan, Illinois, and Minnesota.

Since the last USS *Cobia* departure event occurred in 1996, we do not have recent historical attendance data to rely on. However, significant advancements in digital marketing and social media provide new opportunities to reach a broader audience. The museum's established digital presence, combined with the unique nature of this historic event, supports our expectation of strong attendance. Our estimates are informed by participation at other large-scale museum events, such as Subfest, general visitor trends, and interest expressed by individuals and national and regional media.

Priority will be given to events that generate overnight stays. How many room nights will your event generate and at which lodging establishments? Include how you measure room nights and came to this estimation.

We estimate that the USS *Cobia* Send-Off will generate approximately 350 non-local overnight stays. This estimate is based on our knowledge of submarine veterans who plan to travel for the event, as well as data from previous events like Subfest, which consistently draws a significant number of out-of-town attendees. Given the early morning departure of USS *Cobia*, we expect many visitors traveling from more than three to four hours away to arrive the day before and stay overnight. This includes veterans, history enthusiasts, and Midwest travelers who will want to ensure they are in Manitowoc in time for the departure.

We anticipate that many overnight attendees will choose lodging establishments near the museum, given the early morning departure of USS *Cobia*. Hotels such as The Inn on Maritime Bay, located directly adjacent to the museum, are expected to see a significant benefit. Additionally, other Manitowoc hotels within a short drive, including those along the I-43 corridor, will likely experience increased bookings. This convenient proximity will allow attendees to fully participate in both the evening festivities on September 3 and the submarine's departure on

September 4. To measure room nights, we will collaborate with local lodging establishments to gather booking data and identify any spikes in reservations around the event dates.

Project Summary

Attach a detailed description of the event including goals, target demographics, how this event will bring overnight visitors to Manitowoc, and the plans and timeline for marketing. List roles of key team members and their experience. Include how you will measure the success of this event (surveys, room night tracking).

The USS *Cobia* Send-Off on September 4, 2025, will offer a rare and unforgettable experience as the World War II submarine embarks on its journey to dry dock in Sturgeon Bay. This will be the first time the submarine has left its berth for this reason since 1996, creating a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for visitors to witness a significant moment in maritime history. The event will provide a front-row view of *Cobia*'s departure as it is towed by tug boats along the Manitowoc River, past the Manitowoc Breakwater Lighthouse and the SS *Badger* dock, and onto Lake Michigan.

Kicking off the festivities, a 1940s-themed party will be held on the evening of September 3. Guests can enjoy live big band music, themed drinks, and a nostalgic atmosphere reminiscent of the era in which USS *Cobia* served. Food trucks will be available, offering a variety of options for attendees to enjoy while celebrating this historic occasion.

On September 4, *Cobia* is anticipated to depart between 6:00 AM and 9:00 AM. Spectators will have multiple vantage points to witness the submarine's journey, including the Manitowoc Riverwalk, areas across from the museum, and iconic locations like the Manitowoc Breakwater Lighthouse and Mariners Trail. For a truly unique perspective, the Sub Pub rooftop bar will be open, offering prime views of the departure.

Following *Cobia*'s send-off, the Wisconsin Maritime Museum will welcome visitors with discounted admission and additional educational activities. Special presentations by submarine veterans will offer firsthand accounts of life aboard a World War II submarine, providing guests with a deeper understanding of naval history. Food trucks will remain on-site, offering refreshments throughout the day.

The primary goals of the event are to increase museum attendance, promote regional tourism, and raise awareness about the importance of USS *Cobia*'s preservation. We anticipate drawing nearly 2,000 attendees, including approximately 500 from Manitowoc County and 600 from surrounding counties such as Kewaunee, Sheboygan, Calumet, and Brown. Additionally, we expect around 600 non-local day-trip visitors from Milwaukee, the Fox Valley, and Madison regions. Approximately 350 attendees are anticipated to stay overnight, primarily submarine veterans from the midwest and maritime and military history enthusiasts from Michigan, Illinois, and Minnesota.

The Wisconsin Maritime Museum has developed a comprehensive communications plan to promote the USS *Cobia* departure event. This plan outlines a strategic approach to raising awareness across multiple channels. Promotion began in September 2024, with ongoing social media posts, email newsletters and pitching the story to regional and national media outlets. However, a more intensive marketing campaign will kick off in June 2025, leading up to the event on September 4, 2025.

The target demographics for the event include veterans aged 50-80, who have a strong connection to military history and are particularly interested in submarines or World War II history. Military and maritime enthusiasts aged 50-75 are also a key audience, with a passion for naval history and preservation. Families with children, especially parents aged 30-50, seeking unique and educational activities, will be drawn to the event's programming and the chance to witness a historic moment. While we recognize that the event falls during the first week of school for many districts across the state, we plan to engage homeschool families who have the flexibility to attend. With an established network of homeschool family contacts, we are well-positioned to effectively reach and invite this audience. Additionally, we aim to engage regional tourists and local residents who are interested in cultural and historical experiences.

To effectively reach our target demographics and generate overnight stays, we've developed a comprehensive multi-channel advertising strategy. Our campaign will include TV, radio, digital, and social media ads in key regional markets such as Green Bay, Madison, Milwaukee, Grand Rapids, and Minneapolis. Wisconsin Public Radio will boost our reach with statewide coverage, ensuring we engage both local audiences and those from across the state. These efforts will specifically target veterans, military and history enthusiasts, as well as families and individuals seeking unique experiences.

Digital advertising will include geo-targeted social media ads on platforms like Facebook, as well as display ads on websites through partnerships with businesses such as Fox 47 in Madison. Additionally, we will leverage our extensive media contact list, developed through contacts received from Travel Wisconsin, to distribute press releases and pitch stories to outlets in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, and Michigan. By securing earned media coverage through newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, and influencers, we will further raise awareness and encourage attendance.

To measure the impact of our efforts, we will collaborate with local hotels to monitor increased bookings and assess the correlation with our campaign. This integrated marketing approach is designed to maximize visibility, attract regional visitors, and create a significant economic impact for the community.

Although there is no historical attendance data from the last USS *Cobia* departure event in 1996, the museum's expanded digital presence and marketing capabilities provide a strong foundation for broad visibility and engagement. Recent media coverage, including stories by *Business Insider*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, *Maritime Reporter*, and CNN, highlights the growing interest in *Cobia's* preservation. A comprehensive promotional plan, including social media campaigns, email newsletters, and regional press outreach, will ensure the event reaches a

wide audience. Additionally, video content featuring key community leaders and sponsors will build excitement leading up to the event. By emphasizing the rarity and significance of the USS *Cobia* departure, the Wisconsin Maritime Museum expects this event to generate strong attendance, contribute to regional tourism, and leave a lasting impact on the community.

To track the success of the event and collect the necessary data for reporting, we will use a multi-faceted approach. Volunteers will conduct surveys with a representative sample of event attendees to gather information such as zip codes, overnight stays, and how attendees learned about the event. This data will help us assess the effectiveness of various promotional strategies and understand the geographic and demographic makeup of our visitors. In addition to surveys, we will monitor social media analytics to measure engagement, reach, and impressions, providing valuable insights into the impact of our online campaigns. Website traffic will also be tracked to evaluate how many visitors are accessing our site as a result of promotional activities, as well as any patterns in search queries or event-related page views. For our TV ads, we will collect data on impressions and audience reach to gauge the effectiveness of our media buys. Additionally, we will work with local hotels to monitor room bookings and identify any increases in occupancy that align with the event, providing further insights into the economic impact and regional draw. Museum admissions will serve as a primary indicator of success, with our Square system offering real-time tracking of visitor check-ins. This will allow us to analyze attendance patterns and compare them to previous events or typical museum traffic. By combining survey data, digital and media metrics, hotel booking information, and museum admissions tracking, we will gain a comprehensive understanding of the event's reach and the effectiveness of our promotional efforts, providing actionable insights for future events and ensuring accurate final reporting.

Budget Information

Attach the event's budget showing the use of anticipated funds and sources of those funds. The budget must show all resources required for the event and indicate who is responsible. The budget must also demonstrate the need for financial assistance. If total funding is not awarded, be prepared to prioritize financial needs.

Attached Separately.

Marketing Expenses				
Name	Amount	Target Area	Notes	Covered by this grant?
Fox 47	\$1,750	Madison, WI & Cook County IL	Targeted digital ads	Yes
Grand Rapids TV	\$4,000	Grand Rapids metropolitan area	TV ads	Yes
LakeCoast Local	\$23,930	Wisconsin - Statewide	Production of 6-promotional videos for use on social media and 1- 25-30 minute documentary	No
Minneapolis Radio	\$4,000	Minneapolis metropolitan area	Radio ads	Yes
TMJ4	\$2,500	Milwaukee	Morning Show Blend & Digital ads	Yes
WPR	\$1,425	Wisconsin - Statewide	WPR News Network Station radio ads, inkind media contribution from WPR as well	Yes
Total Marketing Expenses	\$37,605			
Operational Expenses - Covered by the museum				
Personnel Costs (Wages, Benefits for FT & PT Staff)	\$4,500			
Cost of Goods	\$3,750			
Administrative Overhead	\$1,265			
Misc Supplies	\$1,000			
Copier, Printing	\$300			
Insurance	\$500			
Special Event Permit	\$75			
Educational Programming	\$500			
Equipment Rental (Tables, Chairs, Porta Potties and Trash Cans)	\$1,460			
Trash Pickup	\$60			
Entertainment	\$500			
Total Operational Expenses	\$13,910			
Total Expenses	\$51,515			