



Director@travelbuchanan.com

The requested funding will play a critical role in boosting Buchanan County Tourism's efforts. By supporting these initiatives, we can strengthen our city's position as a top tourism destination, benefiting both visitors and the local economy. We respectfully request your support in this important endeavor.

Value of Tourism in Buchanan County:

Tourism continues to play a crucial role in the local economy. In 2023, Iowa saw an impressive \$7.3 billion in visitor spending, demonstrating the state's strong tourism market. Buchanan County itself experienced a 3.5% increase in visitor spending from 2022 to 2023, bringing the total amount spent on tourism to \$17.6 million, indicating a robust local tourism market.

According to data compiled through mentorship from iTIP and Arrivalist, Buchanan County saw 33,000 adult trips in 2022, with 52% of those trips including overnight stays in Independence. Visitors primarily came from nearby cities like Cedar Rapids and Waterloo, as well as from farther locations such as Rochester, Madison, and La Crosse. Additionally, 64% of U.S. adults have considered relocating due to travel, emphasizing the long-term impact tourism can have on local growth and population.

Buchanan County has seen growth across several key areas, including visitor spending, total business sales, employment, labor income, and long-term growth. Since 2019, visitor spending in Buchanan County has increased by 19.3%, reflecting a strong recovery and consistent growth following the pandemic. These statistics demonstrate the significant financial contribution of tourism to the local economy and its ongoing development.

Buchanan County Tourism's Mission:

Buchanan County Tourism Bureau exists to promote area attractions and amenities through public education, research and development of tourism.

BCTB exists to:

- 1) Educate the public on cultural, historical and natural resources of Buchanan County
- 2) Market attractions and events throughout Buchanan County.
- 3) Promote economic growth for businesses and organizations in Buchanan County.

Your support enabled BCTB to accomplish these goals in 2024:

- Work towards producing and printing an independent visitor guide (estimate of \$6,500 to be printed on a 3-year rotation).
- Applied for the Iowa Tourism Grant in the amount of \$10,000 for the implementation of new branding, marketing, and a new website.
- Represented Buchanan County at the Iowa State Fair, and participated in 4 local parades, and provided coverage of 6 additional community celebrations.
- Created a TikTok page that garners great engagement on every video, typically around 3,000-4,000 views.
- Post frequently on Facebook and Instagram reaching an average of 4,000 people each week.

- Updates to the website and improved social media presence.
- Partnership with iTIP and mentorship with Terry Baker, Director of Tourism in Fairfield, Iowa.
- Onboarding Tourism Director from May to present working toward sharing Tourism related materials and information, finding and sharing information on local attractions, amenities and events, and offering tours and information.
- Created a new Amish map while gaining valuable connections in the Amish Community, our top attraction by both number of visitors and internet searches. The new maps reflect changes in businesses, a more eye-catching cover, addresses included on the legend, and the map is organized by business type.
- Attended meetings and worked with both the Celebrate Indee committee and the fair board. This helped us connect with the people who are doing all the things, and help plan and volunteer when needed to ensure both events went well.

Statement of intended use of funds for FY 2024/2025:

Tourism intends to accomplish each of the following objectives:

- Continue group memberships and partnerships; ITIP, Historic Highway 20, etc.
- Promote and expand website, social media and promotional efforts.
- Target businesses integral to tourists and build relationships to encourage membership and positive working relationships.
- Develop a volunteer program for Tourism: Assess needs, recruit potential individuals, train and educate, maintain an active volunteer calendar, and recognize volunteers yearly for sharing time and talents.
- Attend the Iowa Tourism Conference, and additional conferences that are beneficial to the position.
- Create presence at neighboring fairs with brochures, event information, and promotional materials.
- Expand exposure in the area by participating in fairs, events, & parades, seek additional and increased funding opportunities, market ads for the Buchanan County Visitor Guide and brochures, merchandise, etc.
- Ad sales in Amish map and Visitor's Guide.
- Continue growing our social media. By regularly and systematically updating our social media we have seen more engagement and brand recognition.
- A summer movie series taking place and partnering with our local parks.
- Go Wild will be revamped to be more community focused.
- Continue serving Independence through marketing, public education, research, and the development of tourism which helps boost our local economy and population.

Thank you in advance for believing in and supporting Buchanan County Tourism Bureau; it is a pleasure to highlight the attractions and amenities that make Buchanan County the best place to live, work, and play! For any questions, please contact BCTB Director, Isabel Thurn at director@travelbuchanan.com or 319-334-3439.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Isabel Thurn".

Isabel Thurn, BCTB - Director

Kriss McGraw, BCTB - President