

**CRITERIA GOVERNING THE DESIGNATION OF THE
REGIONAL VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER PROGRAM (RVIC)
THROUGH THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The criteria governing the designation of the Regional Visitor Information Center Program (referred to as RVIC throughout the remainder of the document), as established by the Georgia Department of Economic Development is as follows:

I. Eligibility for State Funding and General Provisions

1. The RVIC must be in operation for one full year and meet approved criteria to receive official designation and state funding. An application must be submitted to the Coordinator of the RVIC program no later than November 1st. Pending approval of designation, funding will be accessible the following state fiscal year. *For example: Applications approved by Nov. '08, funding will be accessible (pending availability) in July '09, which would be FY10 (state fiscal year).*
2. State funding and official designation will be offered in five (5) levels; \$0 funding (designation status only); \$1250 funding; \$2500 funding; \$3750 funding; and \$5000 funding. If the appropriation to fund the RVIC Program during any State fiscal year is altered by the Georgia General Assembly, funding will be adjusted appropriately. As always, the appropriation funding for this program is the exclusive privilege of the Georgia General Assembly. Funding must be obtained by your legislative delegation after all criteria are met. It will be your responsibility to ask your legislators for the funding, if approved.
3. The RVIC must be opened year round but may follow their local administration holiday schedule. RVIC's are to be open a minimum of five days a week. Total hours of operation must exceed 35 hours per week. With the Coordinators approval, hours of operation may be below 35 hours per week. This will be done on case by case basis.
4. Restroom facilities must be located within the building housing the RVIC. Building, grounds, and restrooms must be kept neat and free of refuse at all times. The RVIC, including the restrooms, must be ADA compliant.
5. The RVIC must be located on or near to an established traveled highway with adequate directional signs to the RVIC.
6. The RVIC must prominently display all Georgia Department of Economic Development approved branding Georgia materials indicating the facility is a part of the overall state supported RVIC Program. Examples of materials may include but not limited to: door/window stickers, banners, Official Georgia State Travel Guide, Official Georgia Calendar of Events, Official Georgia Highway Map, etc.
7. The RVIC must have permanent brochure racks for promotional literature and must be accessible to the public in a primary location that is visible upon entering the Center. Brochure supplies must be on the 50/50 basis. This being, at least 50% supply of promotional literature on statewide travel industries and no more than a 50% supply of promotional literature on the immediate area. At least 95 % of information available must be Georgia related. The RVIC is responsible for maintaining this supply of literature.

8. The agency operating a RVIC must be a non-profit organization. Each RVIC must be primarily operated as a visitor information center.

9. The RVIC must have a full time manager and an ongoing tourism program designated by a Convention and Visitor Bureau, Downtown Development Authority, City or Tourism Authority. A Chamber of Commerce must have a full-time tourism position. All RVIC's must have a designated area to provide visitors information in accordance with item number 7.

10. The manager of the RVIC must complete the appropriately required hours of cross-training per calendar year (January – December). For new applicants, cross-training hours can be done after approval but must be done before receiving any funding.

11. The RVIC must identify local funds to match state funds and is required to record all receipts and disbursements of state funds in a separate line item.

12. After all criteria are met, the RVIC will display signage provided by Georgia Department of Economic Development in a prominent location that is visible to the public upon entering the center indicating that the facility is operated in cooperation with the Georgia Department of Economic Development and constituent of the overall state designated RVIC Program. Official Department of Transportation highway signage will be placed on the highway to direct visitors to the Center.

II. State Funding/Designation Requirements

Level 1 Requirements*

1. Meet all requirements as stated in Section I – **Eligibility for State Funding and General Provisions.**

2. The RVIC must have a minimum annual visitation of 1,000 visitors. **Visitors are defined as:** only walk-in visitors to the Center requesting information for travel in the state/region. All others will not be considered qualified visitors.

3. The Manager of the RVIC must complete six (6) hours of cross-training per calendar year (January – December). Cross-training hours can be acquired as follows: at a State Visitor Center (1 credit hour), FAMS hosted by Georgia Department of Economic Development (2 credit hours), State RVIC training seminars/workshops (3 credit hours), Governor's Conference on Tourism (3 credit hours), Regional Travel Association meeting (1 credit hour), or any event sponsored by the Georgia Department of Economic Development (credit hours to be determined based on event).

The Manager of a RVIC must attend one of the following: a State Regional Visitor Information Center seminar/workshop and/or The Georgia Governor's Conference on Tourism.

4. The RVIC chooses to not receive any funding from Georgia Department of Economic Development. The RVIC chooses to receive designation status only.

***Please note:**

- There are no required weekend hours of operation, with weekends defined as Saturday and Sunday.
- There is no funding at this level – Level 1 is designation status only.

Level 2 Requirements*

1. Meet all requirements as stated in Section I – **Eligibility for State Funding and General Provisions.**
2. The RVIC must have a minimum annual visitation of 1,000 visitors. **Visitors are defined as:** only walk-in visitors to the Center requesting information for travel in the state/region. All others will not be considered qualified visitors.
3. The Manager of the RVIC must complete six (6) hours of cross-training per calendar year (January – December). Cross-training hours can be acquired as follows: at a State Visitor Center (1 credit hour), FAMS hosted by Georgia Department of Economic Development (2 credit hours), State RVIC training seminars/workshops (3 credit hours), Governor’s Conference on Tourism (3 credit hours), Regional Travel Association meeting (1 credit hour), or any event sponsored by the Georgia Department of Economic Development (credit hours to be determined based on event).

The Manager of a RVIC must attend one of the following: a State Regional Visitor Information Center seminar/workshop and/or the Georgia Governor's Conference on Tourism.

4. If state funds are available, the funding eligibility is \$1,250.

***Please note:**

- There are no required weekend hours of operation, with weekends defined as Saturday and Sunday.

Level 3 Requirements*

1. Meet all requirements as stated in Section I – **Eligibility for State Funding and General Provisions.**
2. The RVIC must have a minimum annual visitation of 2,500 visitors. **Visitors are defined as:** only walk-in visitors to the Center requesting information for travel in the state/region. All others will not be considered qualified visitors.
3. The Manager of the RVIC must complete six (6) hours of cross-training per calendar year (January – December). Cross-training hours can be acquired as follows: at a State Visitor Center (1 credit hour), FAMS hosted by Georgia Department of Economic Development (2 credit hours), State RVIC training seminars/workshops (3 credit hours), Governor’s Conference on Tourism (3 credit hours), Regional Travel Association meeting (1 credit hour), or any event sponsored by the Georgia Department of Economic Development (credit hours to be determined based on event).

The Manager of a RVIC must attend one of the following: a State Regional Visitor Information Center seminar/workshop and/or the Georgia Governor's Conference on Tourism.

4. If state funds are available, the funding eligibility is \$2,500.

***Please note:** There are no required weekend hours of operation, with weekends defined as Saturday and Sunday.

Level 4 Requirements

1. Meet all requirements as stated in Section I – **Eligibility for State Funding and General Provisions.**
2. The RVIC must have a minimum annual visitation of 5,000 visitors. **Visitors are defined as:** only walk-in visitors to the Center requesting information for travel in the state/region. All others will not be considered qualified visitors.
3. The Manager of the RVIC must complete six (6) hours of cross-training per calendar year (January – December). Cross-training hours can be acquired as follows: at a State Visitor Center (1 credit hour), FAMS hosted by Georgia Department of Economic Development (2 credit hours), State RVIC training seminars/workshops (3 credit hours), Governor’s Conference on Tourism (3 credit hours), Regional Travel Association meeting (1 credit hour), or any event sponsored by the Georgia Department of Economic Development (credit hours to be determined based on event).

The Manager of a RVIC must attend one of the following: a State Regional Visitor Information Center seminar/workshop and/or the Georgia Governor’s Conference on Tourism
4. Must be open five (5) days a week to include one (1) weekend day, with weekends defined as Saturday and Sunday.
5. If state funds are available, the funding eligibility is \$3,750.

Level 5 Requirements

1. Meet all requirements as stated in Section I – **Eligibility for State Funding and General Provisions.**
2. The RVIC must have a minimum annual visitation of 10,000 visitors. **Visitors are defined as:** only walk-in visitors to the Center requesting information for travel in the state/region. All others will not be considered qualified visitors.
3. The Manager of the RVIC must complete six (6) hours of cross-training per calendar year (January – December). Cross-training hours can be acquired as follows: at a State Visitor Center (1 credit hour), FAMS hosted by Georgia Department of Economic Development (2 credit hours), State RVIC training seminars/workshops (3 credit hours), Governor’s Conference on Tourism (3 credit hours), Regional Travel Association meeting (1 credit hour), or any event sponsored by the Georgia Department of Economic Development (credit hours to be determined based on event).

The Manager of a RVIC must attend one of the following: a State Regional Visitor Information Center seminar/workshop and/or the Georgia Governor’s Conference on Tourism
4. Must be open five (5) days a week to include one (1) weekend day, with weekends defined as Saturday and Sunday.
5. If state funds are available, the funding eligibility is \$5,000.

III. Appropriate Use of State Funding/Reporting Requirements

1. Funds appropriated for implementing the RVIC Program shall be used only in connection with the operation of the RVIC.
2. The agency operating a RVIC must be a nonprofit organization and each RVIC must be operated primarily as a RVIC. The primary responsibilities include: providing statewide attraction and facility information to the public, maintaining adequate supplies of promotional literature, and a working knowledge of special events which will encourage a traveler to spend more time visiting in Georgia. Other functions of the facility must be complimentary to the purpose of the RVIC Program thus enhancing the appeal for travel in the region/state. Items for sale must have state/regional significance and should hold a secondary position in display space to informational literature.
3. The RVIC will display a sign/plaque approved by Georgia Department of Economic Development indicating that the facility is part of the overall state designated RVIC Program. Upon endorsement of designation, the sign/plaque, which is 12"x15", will be provided by the Georgia Department of Economic Development. The sign/plaque is to be displayed in a prominent location that is visible to the public upon entering the center. The Georgia Department of Economic Development reserves the right to modify the required signage at any time.
4. The Georgia Department of Economic Development shall implement state participation in the operation of the RVIC Program each State fiscal year with the signing of a renewal application no later than April 15th. This application shall consist of an endorsed criterion, visitation report for the previous calendar year, training verification form(s), and an assessment form.
5. If the funding of the RVIC Program during any fiscal year is reduced by the General Assembly, all RVIC budgets can be reduced on a prorated basis. Newly appointed RVICs will be funded as they meet approved criteria and funds become available.
6. State participation funds may be used for operating expenses, updating displays, marketing and promotion of the RVIC, registration fees for Tourism Conference or other training opportunities, and improvements requested by the Georgia Department of Economic Development. It may not be used for salaries.
7. Such state participating funds for any such RVIC shall not exceed one-half of the operating expenses of the RVIC for the State fiscal year.
8. To facilitate an accurate accounting of State Funds for each State fiscal year (July – June), agencies operating a RVIC are to record all receipts and disbursements of state funds for the operation of the Center in a report should be completed and placed on file with the Manager of the RVIC program within two (2) months of the closing of the State fiscal year. Specifically, the RVIC must provide:
 - a) The total receipts/revenue and expense/disbursements for the previous state fiscal year.
 - b) A listing of receipts/revenue by source and amount (i.e. State, federal, county, etc.) To meet the state matching requirement, the total of all funds shall be equal to or greater than the amount of state funds received during the fiscal year.
 - c) A listing of expense/disbursements by purpose and amount, (i.e. supplies, etc.)
 - d) The total number of visitors coming through the RVIC during the previous State fiscal year.

IV. Miscellaneous

1. The Georgia Department of Economic Development or its authorized representative may inspect the premises and records of any designated RVIC at any time during reasonable business hours throughout the year.

2. The effectiveness and performance of each RVIC will be analyzed prior to the execution of each annual contract. If the effectiveness and/or performance of a RVIC, including visitation requirements, are determined by the Georgia Department of Economic Development to be below a reasonable standard, the Department may elect removal from the program and/or withhold/reduce funding of said RVIC upon notification of noncompliance if corrective action is not taken within one (1) year after official notification.

3. Upon notification of noncompliance official Department of Transportation highway signage may be removed if corrective action is not taken within the one (1) year period after official notification.

4. The provisions of these criteria must be met to maintain active status and state funding for the RVIC Program.

Regional Visitor Information Center

RVIC Authorized Signature

Title

Date

GDEcD Authorized Signature

Title

Date