

About the CVB

The Martinsburg-Berkeley County Convention and Visitors Bureau (or CVB) is the tourism marketing organization for the Martinsburg-Berkeley County Area. If you are a traveler and need help finding the information you are looking for, please call or email us.

What does CVB mean?

CVB stands for Convention and Visitors Bureau.

How are CVBs funded?

The CVB is funded by a Hotel/Motel tax collected in Berkeley County. State, local taxes and a 6% Hotel/Motel Tax are included when a hotel room is rented. Per WV State legislation, half of the 6% goes to local Government (County Commission and/or Town Counsels), while the other half is for the CVB. The CVB may also receive some funding through grants and sponsorships. Local citizens' taxes do not fund CVBs.

What do CVBs do?

CVBs are DMOs which stands for Destination Marketing Organizations. The primary purpose of DMOs of all kinds is to promote tourism (the visitation of people from outside the area, typically fifty plus) to their respective area or destination. This is mainly done through advertising and the distribution of printed products like brochures and travel guides. Tourism promotion can be accomplished in many ways, but advertising is usually the main focus of any DMO.

How does My CVB advertise?

The Martinsburg-Berkeley County CVB advertises in specialty print media to target travelers with specific goals in mind. The CVB also advertises digitally through social media and search engine keywords. We produce many printed pieces which promote our area and distribute them throughout the state and beyond. The CVB also produces press releases and invites media outlets to cover area activities. The CVB runs numerous social media accounts to extend our reach further. The CVB aids travelers and event planners in making local connections and finding resources to help their efforts have the maximum impact.

Are CVBs the same thing as a chamber of commerce?

CVBs are not the same thing as a chamber of commerce. Chambers are usually associations comprised of local businesses to help each other reach common goals. Typically, the goals are regionally based and are seldom aimed at meeting the needs of travelers to the area, but primarily serve to support local businesses' needs. Chambers and CVBs can often use each other for resource gathering and networking. However, their respective goals will seldom be the same. The bottom line is that CVBs are focused on tourism, and chambers of commerce are focused on the businesses in the community.

Are CVB's Economic Development Authorities (EDA)?

CVBs are not Economic Development Authorities. The goal of EDAs is to stimulate economic growth in their area by encouraging business development to fill underdeveloped markets and hone the underutilized skills and talents of the people in their area. Their goals can sometimes relate to tourism if the conditions are right for it; however, this doesn't necessarily have to be a goal of an EDA. The bottom line is that CVBs focus on tourism to an area, and EDAs are focused on economic development.

Do my tax dollars fund CVB efforts?

Your tax dollars DO NOT fund the CVB unless you have rented a hotel room in Berkeley County and paid tax on that room. Our CVB, like all of West Virginia's CVBs, is funded entirely by the hotel/motel taxes collected by Berkeley County's lodging establishments. The CVB is merely an entity set up by the State of West Virginia to promote tourism in its area and operates on the tax revenue charged on overnight stays.

Why don't I see the CVBs advertising efforts?

It is typical for a CVB to market nearly exclusively to potential travelers outside the area, depending on the location and messaging. CVBs understand how it can be confusing to their local residents to know the CVB is spending funds on efforts that they can't see. However, while plenty of marketing is going on, residents are not the target market as they already live in the area and likely don't need to stay overnight. A CVB's job is to bring people (tourists, visitors, vacationers, etc.) into the area to stay in our hotels and spend THEIR money, thus raising the cash flow in the represented region. As one CVB director once said, "I import money!" CVBs often remind themselves that their role is to "put heads on beds." Everything we do must relate to that goal; otherwise, CVBs will face a decrease in funding, hampering their advertising efforts.

Why doesn't the CVB put on more events?

CVBs are “marketers” of the area’s attractions, events, and tourism-related activities. Events require staffing and incredible amounts of time and resources. Most CVBs do not have much staff, and that staff has limited time. For instance, our CVB has two full-time staff, an Executive Director and a Communications Director, and two part-time staff for weekends. Often a CVB has to determine what efforts will have the most positive and measurable impact on the area they represent. So, often, lower-effort/higher-reward activities can be taken on by our CVB, but high-effort/high staffing activities are not an option. The bottom line here is that CVBs are charged with “marketing and supporting” events in the county but not organizing them.

Do you sponsor local events?

The Martinsburg-Berkeley County CVB does not sponsor events but has grants available at multiple levels. If you’ve read all the questions and answers above, you’ve probably noticed a pattern emerging, and you’ve probably already guessed that we will give preferential treatment to those events which will have the highest likelihood of bringing travelers, tourists, vacationers, and over-night stays to our local area. Our funds are limited; therefore, we can only budget so much for grants. If an organization wishes to host a tourism-related event and wants to inquire about CVB funding through grants, it is always best to approach us early as the consideration process may take some time. Even if the CVB cannot provide grant funding for a local event, it will always be happy to discuss advertising options via our social media marketing. We can also offer marketing opportunities through our literature racks at the Visitors Center.

Do you sponsor local organizations?

Instead of sponsorships, the CVB offers grant opportunities to tourism-focused organizations for their tourism-focused events. Priorities are given to the following considerations: Is the organization tourism related? Does the organization reach out to tourists, out-of-county visitors, who may stay overnight in one of our hotels? Remember, a CVB is funded through the hotel/motel tax collected for overnight stays. Therefore priority is given to an organization whose event encourages overnight stays. Please be reminded that the CVB is happy to host your tourism-related brochures at the Visitors Center.

Can I request grants?

You can request grants from the CVB. The CVB has multiple grant options available online, dependent on your needs. Be sure to read the questions and responses above to understand our limitations concerning grants. We have stringent requirements about your organization's marketing timeline and efforts. If your event is not marketed to bring tourists and visitors but is solely a local event with local attendees, it will not meet the CVB grant requirements. Even if the CVB cannot provide grant funding for a local event, it will always be happy to discuss advertising options via our social media marketing. We can also offer marketing opportunities through our literature racks at the Visitors Center.

How is the CVB organized?

The Martinsburg-Berkeley County Convention and Visitors' Bureau was formed through the mutual agreement of the Berkeley County, West Virginia Commission, and the City of Martinsburg, West Virginia, thus qualifying as a political subdivision of the State of West Virginia. The Martinsburg-Berkeley County CVB is recognized as tax-exempt under Section 501 of the IRC; the Internal Revenue Service also automatically grants tax-exempt status to organizations considered "governmental units." In addition, board members are appointed by each referenced entity, and all contributions are used for the public purpose of promoting tourism and attracting conventions, conferences, and visitors to the area.

Why do you sell things at your office if you're supposed to be non-profit?

CVBs are allowed to sell souvenirs. Many CVBs even have full-scale stores marketing the area. Anything a CVB can do to promote the area it represents is a good thing. We discovered early on that visitors to our Visitors Center were disappointed about having to leave without a souvenir. Since we are in the business of providing a good visitor experience, we are obliged to keep a limited inventory of items on hand to sell to visitors. We try to price everything as inexpensively as possible because everyone likes affordable things, and we aren't in the business of making a profit. The bottom line is that folks walk around "advertising" Martinsburg-Berkeley County when they buy something from our small store. All profits from the sale of our MBCCVB merchandise help to support the marketing efforts of the county's tourism-focused attractions and events.