

# U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION®

June 2, 2020

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin  
Secretary of Treasury  
Department of Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Mnuchin,

We write in pursuit of urgent guidance for states and local governments regarding the use of funds from the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF). As you know, the travel industry has been hard hit by the economic fallout of the coronavirus. One of the key pillars of the industry are destination marketing organizations (DMOs), which function to connect customers to local travel businesses, manage convention and group meeting sales, and drive traffic to areas of the country often overlooked by mainstream media.

Most DMOs are facing extreme financial distress due to the collapse of their local travel market and the related lodging tax revenue they rely on for funding. In response, they have had to shed most of their workforce and change the way they operate. Yet, many are still struggling to make ends meet and may be forced to shut down permanently if they can't find the financial relief they need.

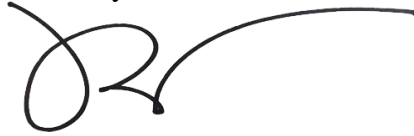
To that end, we believe the CRF could offer a glimmer of hope to those that have taken on new tasks to respond to this new environment. According to guidance issued by the Treasury Department, CRF grantees can use their allocations on existing budget line items, but only if the money is used for a purpose that responds to the effects of COVID-19 and is substantially different than the purpose of previously budgeted items before March 27, 2020.

We believe further clarity is needed to determine if the new activities of DMOs qualify for CRF assistance. Please advise if any of the new activities listed below would not be considered to be "substantially different" than the normal activities of DMOs, which includes (1) producing advertisement campaigns for regional attractions, (2) identifying and managing sales opportunities for the use of meeting and convention space, and (3) directing out-of-town travelers to local businesses:

- Provide health information to travelers
- Connect essential healthcare workers with lodging accommodations
- Help state and local governments draft economic recovery plans
- Provide web services for virtual tourism experiences
- Track and distribute information about modified operations at local businesses (i.e. restaurants doing take-out, modified open hours, senior hours, etc.)
- Help local businesses and governmental entities seek financial assistance, including by engaging in grant writing.

Many states and local governments have stated their reluctance to offer assistance to DMOs using CRF funds without explicit guidance from Treasury defining what qualifies as substantially different. Therefore, it is vital that you provide this guidance as soon as possible. Thank you for your prompt attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tori Emerson Barnes', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Tori Emerson Barnes**  
Executive Vice President  
Public Affairs and Policy