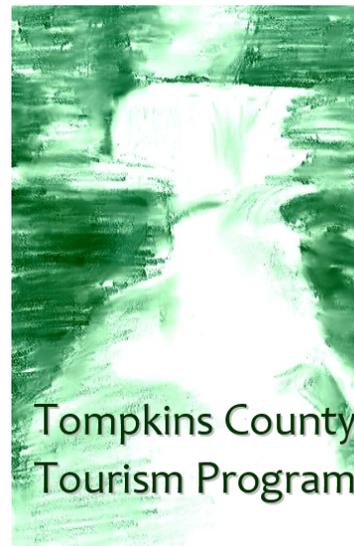


COVER PAGE

2017 Budget Request Form

Tompkins County Tourism Program



I. BASIC INFORMATION

Program: Discovery Trail

Applicant Organization: Discovery Trail

Contact Person: Star Bressler

Phone: 607-254-1102 Email: director@discoverytrail.com

2015 Request: 36,055 Product Development or Marketing? Marketing

Year	Tourism Program Allocation**	\$ Change	% Change	% of Program Budget*
2013	36,270.00	536.00	1.5%	22% overall and 70% marketing and admin
2014	37,360.00	1,090.00	3%	20% overall and 66% marketing and admin
2015	36,055.00	1,005.00	-3.5%	14% overall and 66% marketing and admin
2016	37,137.00	1,082.00	3%	12.7% overall and 65.4% marketing
Request 2017	37,694.00	557	1.5%	12.7% overall and 65.4% marketing
OTR 2017	N/A			

* Enter the % of the total program budget that would come from the Tompkins County Tourism Program.

** Enter modified budget amounts where applicable.

II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Describe the program in two or three sentences.

The Discovery Trail is a collaborative of eight Tompkins County educational organizations, including seven museums and the Tomkins County Public Library. The Discovery Trail increases the quality of life for residents and attracts visitors by promoting educational enrichment for children of all ages and connections among art, nature, culture, and science. The Discovery Trail pools its resources, including projected annual member contributions of \$19,627 plus \$25,260 of in-kind support in 2017, to co-promote the events and exhibits (and thereby extends its marketing reach beyond what each organization could individually accomplish).

III. CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Very briefly state overarching challenges and opportunities related to your program (current or anticipated in 2016) and describe you how propose to address them.

Challenges: 2015 was a transition year for the Discovery Trail as we hired the first full time Director to provide vision and leadership. There will be some growing pains expected with launching new initiatives. With this change brings the opportunity to expand our efforts in social media, themed promotions, training staff about the Discovery Trail as well as the hospitality industry. The Discovery Trail Board also invested time to created a unified mission and vision.

Opportunities: The Discovery Trail is an incredible product. We have eight international quality educational institutions providing rich and engaging indoor and outdoor experiences to all ages every season of the year. This wide range of appeal offers us endless marketing opportunities to engage visitors and we hope with more hours more initiatives will be presented in the coming year.

IV. BUDGET NARRATIVE

Describe how you propose to use the requested funds. You may also use this section to expand on your answers to questions II and III.

The Discovery Trail's marketing efforts are tracked separately from the other DT expenses.

Member dues will be increased by 2% in the 2016-17 Discovery Trail Budget. We also computed in-kind DT partner support at \$25,260 for DT directors, marketing committee, and DT Chair time.

With the available marketing funds for 2017 we will focus on advertising in social media, distribution of our new rack card design, outreach with hotels, as well as print and web advertising (with more pictures and engaging content). We are also looking into developing themed promotions among the Discovery Trail member sites.

In 2017, the requested funds will be used to increase promotion of the Discovery Trail offerings to potential out of area visitors with the goal of extended overnight stays in Tompkins County using more web based platforms and social media. Discovery Trail would like to partner with the CVB to develop familiarization tours for hospitality industry staff (including offsetting staff wages). Our plans are outlined in the program goals section. Discovery Trail will print more visitor maps in partnership with the downtown alliance.

V. PROGRAM GOALS

List and describe program goals for 2016, using the sample format. For each goal listed, describe how you will measure achievement of that goal (you may list more than one measure of achievement for each goal). This will require you to consider appropriate numerical measures and baselines.

Also, which goals and critical actions of the Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan does this program respond to, and how do your proposed program goals align with goals stated in the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan?

The Discovery Trail aligns with several of the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan key focus areas including: Education Tourism, Arts, Culture and Heritage Tourism. The Discovery Trail is a positive investment for the Tourism Program. Our marketing initiatives correspond with the continued growth of the internet for travel planning. The majority of Tompkins County tourists are in the age range of 45-64 years as outlined in the Chmura Report and this group is reaching out to the web for more information. Updating to a responsive design website addressed this growing population segment. The Discovery Trail plans to continue with our successful initiatives and make adjustments in 2016 to include more social media, search optimizing, plus continue our *What's Hot* campaign with the goal of increasing attendance and name recognition. Additionally, the Discovery Trail plans to develop a "Culture of the Discovery Trail" through cross promotion at our member sites. We plan to partner with the CVB on a "Familiarization-Tour" for hospitality industry staff. Lastly, we will partner with our sites to develop pocket-sights tours for 2017.

Our continuing work to expand *Kids Discover the Trail!*, the Discovery Trail's educational program, from Ithaca and Trumansburg districts to include the remaining four districts in Tompkins County strongly supports the STPB Tourism goal of improving the quality of life for local residents. *KDT!* served 75% of all elementary school students in 2015-16 and during the 2016-17 school year Dryden students will join the program in a pilot. While *KDT!* is an important part of what the Discovery Trail does as an organization, *KDT!* is a separate program from our marketing. *KDT!* is funded separately and Tourism Program funds are not used.

1. **Goal 1:** Promotion to out of area audiences and increase awareness of the Discovery Trail/Discovery Trail sites.
Measure of Achievement 1A: Increase out-of-county name recognition of Discovery Trail by 5% in the 2016 visitor survey based on 26% in 2013.
Measure of Achievement 1B: Increase number of Facebook page likes by 25% from 417 in 2015 to 521 in 2016.

Narrative: We conducted our last visitor survey in 2013 and goals for 2014 and 2015 were based on these data. We had planned to have a new survey in 2015 however after discussing with the CVB and Tourism Program the Discovery Trail will postpone our plans and collaborate on the 2016 Chmura Report with intercept surveys focusing on our eight sites. Data from the 2013 visitor survey demonstrates the importance of both local and out of area visitors being familiar with the Discovery Trail. In 2013, 70% of visitors surveyed had previously visited Tompkins County.

In order to attract out of county audiences the Discovery Trail will increase social media marketing (four posts a week) in Facebook and Instagram. Additionally, boosting special events with paid advertisements in out of county areas e.g. Rochester, Syracuse and Binghamton. We will engage visitors with interesting photos and captions. The Discovery Trail will develop themed packages with discounts to the sites or gift shops. For example, the TCPL and MoTe are collaborating on an exhibit called Human Origins Exhibit. This will be used as a trial to incentivize visitors to visit multiple DT locations. Additional efforts include: Advertise Edu-tourism opportunities (example Fall Discovery Trail Lecture series). Update web and print advertisements with changing events and new photos relating to the season/events. Advertise discounted admission and retail for on Monday/Tuesday to increase mid week hotel stays over the summer.

2. **Goal 2:** Increase attendance at the Discovery Trail sites by 1.5% and track zip codes where possible.
Measure of Achievement 2A: Increase attendance from 713,543 in 2015 to 724,246 in 2016 (including the TCPL).

Narrative: Previously the TCPL was not included in the Discovery Trail attendance goal. We would like to start including the attendance to the TCPL as part of our overall DT attendance. Museum attendance increased by 1.8% from 337,410 in 2013 to 343,663 in 2014, not including the TCPL. Attendance increased by 1.2 % to 347,794 in 2015 not including the TCPL.

3. **Goal 3:** Promotion to local visitors. *Increase awareness among residents of Tompkins County of the Discovery Trail and member sites as a means to increase positive word of mouth promotion to out-of town visitors. 2/3 of museum visitors attend from word-of mouth.*
Measure of Achievement 3A: In the 2016 visitor survey the number of visitors attending a Discovery Trail site from a referral will increase 10% from the 2013 Visitor survey (increase from 34% to 44%).
Measure of Achievement 3B: Increase in-county name recognition of Discovery Trail by 5%, based on 56% in 2013.

Narrative: One of the strongest take-aways from our January planning meeting was to develop a culture of Discovery Trail that allows for more cross-promotion and joint programming. For example, training all visitor staff about the other sites and recommending other locations related to specific interests (i.e. for families, nature etc.). The Discovery Trail will use marketing funds to take both Discovery Trail visitor staff and hotel staff on Fam-Tour (or Discovery Trail led tour).

For Tompkins County residents, it is difficult to pinpoint a precise source of awareness about the site they were visiting (42% just know of it on their own – 25% from living, working or going to school here, 12% from driving by, 4% from having visited the site before, etc.). Instead, referrals (primarily from friends/family) seem to be on the rise (31% in 2013 vs. 20% in 2011) as the way in which visitors primarily became aware of the site where they were surveyed. Based on this information we added back print advertising with the Ithaca Child publications in 2014 and have continued in 2016 as well as advertising in all of the seasonal Ithaca Times guides to reach new arrivals and continue to build awareness in Tompkins and surrounding counties

4. Goal 4: To continue with the *What's Hot* campaign in 2016 and 2017.

Measure of Achievement 4A: Increase web traffic to Discovery Trail website by 10%. Increase page views from 18,112 in 2015 to 19, 923 in 2016.

Narrative: The *What's Hot* campaign is an integrated approach to marketing specific events and exhibits at DT sites. We started in 2013 by selecting two items per month as a feature. When the event is featured, for example

the Strange Matter exhibition at the Sciencenter starting mid-May 2015, we have a cover photo on Facebook, photo and text on the CVB's feature listing, and photo and text on the *What's Hot* page on www.discoverytrail.com that all focus on this specific event or exhibition. Based on strong referral data from Google Analytics we expanded our buy for web banner ads with Fingerlakes Tourism Alliance in 2014, 2015 and 2016. Our ad buy with FLTA is during the busier travel months of April, May, June and July and will focus on one of the What's Hot feature for that month.

This program aligns with the goals stated in the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan to “develop Ithaca and Tompkins County as a central art, cultural and heritage tourism destination in the Finger Lakes” and to “increase educational tourism”.

VI. ACHIEVEMENTS

Please describe your most significant program achievements during 2015 and the first quarter (January through March) of 2016. If possible, please use this as an opportunity to restate your program goals for the 2016 and 2016 budget years and describe progress towards these goals.

The Discovery Trail hired its first full-time Director in July 2015. This is an opportunity to provide more vision and leadership and staff time dedicated to marketing and growing the visibility of Discovery Trail for visitors coming to Tompkins County. Additionally, a non-paid graduate student studying strategic communication completed an internship on social media and web event promotion.

The Discovery Trail switched from a brochure to a new rack card. The new rack card was distributed through Brochures Unlimited, Grapevine Distribution, Ithaca Mall, Preble Visitors Info Center on Rt 81, the 1,000 Islands International Tourism Council and I-86 Visitor Center on Chautauqua Lake. Additionally, brochures were distributed at all of the State Parks and Cornell Events (for new students and parents). IC distributed at the office of student engagement & multicultural affairs. A total of 43,000 brochures were distributed in 2015.

Recent press included a Familytravelck blog story featuring Discovery Trail: <http://familytravelck.com/blog/seven-college-towns-that-are-worth-more-than-just-a-college-visit/>. Discovery Trail members shared the story on their individual pages. DT Director interviewed and provided free entrance to all DT sites for Marie-France Bornais, a travel writer from Quebec City. The travel guide will be published in Spring 2016.

Our What's Hot campaign continues to highlights two specific events or exhibitions at one of our eight sites each month. Our Facebook page cover image reflects the current feature and our website What's Hot sunburst on the home page and top banner directs viewers to a specific feature page which also lists previous features from 2013 and 2014. We also advertise this featured event on the two websites the CVB manages: visitithaca.com and Ithacaevents.com

Web ads/banners are featured on Edible Fingerlakes, FingerLakes Tourism Alliance (FLTA), Ithaca Child and Visithaca.com and weekly event listings on Edible, IthacaEvents.com, Facebook, FLTA and Life in the Fingerlakes. The CVB updated their website and I met with CVB staff to learn about new advertisement opportunities for 2016. DT worked with a web designer to set up a Facebook feed to advertise events on the Discovery Trail.com website.

2016 to date achievements include:

- Increase social media ads and reach of ads.
- Will Collaborating with CVB and Tourism Program on next Discovery Trail visitor survey
- Discovery Trail Strategic Planning Meetings with Board and Marketing staff to identify goals
- Updating Downtown Map for visitors (partnering with CVB to distribute).
- Raise visibility of the Discovery Trail on a national level through media and awards. Example, Applied for Mutual of America Award Community Partnership Award in March.

VII. IMPACT OF FUNDING

What would be the specific impact of receiving less funding than you are requesting? For example, what are the things that you would like to be able to do that you would not be able to do? What would be removed or reduced from your plans if you had to make do with less than requested?

The Discovery Trail's marketing efforts would be impacted significantly if we did not receive the STPB funds. All of our marketing efforts would be reduced. Particularly, we are excited to use the marketing funds to familiarize hotel and DT front staff about the Discovery Trail sites. We would not be able to offer this without the STPB funds. We also use these funds for print/web advertising, brochure printing and distribution, and social media ads. All of these items would be reduced.

VIII. COLLABORATION

What steps have you taken and/or what new steps do you propose to take to collaborate, coordinate, partner, and share information and resources between your program(s) and other room-tax funded programs?

The Discovery Trail maintains a strong working relationship with the Ithaca CVB through collaboration on marketing campaigns and participation in CVB initiatives such as the VIsitithaca.com feature listings, seasonal e-news blasts, bus tour offerings, and Star Hospitality offerings. The CVB shares their plans and marketing research which helps the Discovery Trail determine the best avenues to pursue to expand the outreach for potential visitors to Tompkins County. Our brochures are a prominent feature in the East Shore and Commons Visitor Centers and the Commons center also features our 27.5" by 71" banner. We plan to increase our communication and planning with the CVB for 2016. We would like to offer Familiarization-tours for hospitality industry staff. We will be working closely to complete the 2016 visitor survey.

The Discovery Trail will collaborate with the History Center around Heritage Tourism (attend meetings, share resources and develop pocket sight tours). Additionally, the Discovery Trail will collaborate with TCPL Human Origins exhibit. The Discovery Trail plans to offer group education discounts and co-exhibits from November 2016-February 2017.

ATTACHMENTS

____ Attachment A

2016 project budget in Microsoft Excel.

Discovery Trail

2017 Budget Request - Tompkins County Tourism Program

For previous years budgets, used modified budget amounts.

REVENUE		2014 Budget	2015 Budget	2016 Request	2017 Request	Notes
TCTP*		\$37,360.00	\$36,055.00	\$37,137.00	37,694.00	
DT Member Dues		\$18,600.00	\$19,500.00	\$19,627.00	\$19,627.00	
SUBTOTAL		\$55,960.00	\$55,555.00	\$56,764.00	\$57,321.00	
TOTAL REVENUES		\$55,960.00	\$55,555.00	\$56,764.00	\$57,321.00	
TOTAL TCTP*		\$37,360.00	\$36,055.00	\$37,137.00	\$37,694.00	
TCTP Share		66.8%	64.9%	65.4%	65.8%	
EXPENSES						
Advertising - DM		\$9,402.68	\$15,195.00	\$11,500.00	\$12,700.00	Print, Web, social medial budgeting 3 years for
Visitor Survey - DM		\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$0.00	Chmura study update in 2016
Website updating & maintenance-DM		\$7,612.50	\$500.00	\$5,000.00	\$1,500.00	mobile redesign in 2014 and possible updating in 2016
Brochure Reprint/design - DM		\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	
Brochure Distribution - DM		\$5,149.30	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00	\$6,000.00	includes shipping to brochure distributor
Training hospitality industry and DT visitor staff					\$4,000.00	Will need to revise once receive information about hotel staff/Dt visitor wages
Web Design/Hosting - DM		\$590.34	\$65.00	\$0.00	\$450.00	
Local advertising- DA & DM		\$1,280.00	\$1,440.00	\$1,560.00	\$2,000.00	
Maps - DM		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$550.00	\$550.00	
Professional Fees - DA & DM		\$2,710.00	\$2,900.00	\$2,700.00	\$2,700.00	annual audit
Accounting - LAP - DA & DM		\$1,826.00	\$1,900.00	\$1,900.00	\$1,900.00	
Coordinator - federal taxes - DA & DM		\$2,264.00	\$1,555.00	\$1,554.00	\$2,000.00	
Coordinator wages - administration - DA		\$10,520.00	\$10,500.00	\$10,500.00	\$11,000.00	
Coordinator - marketing - DM		\$8,105.18	\$8,500.00	\$8,500.00	\$8,500.00	
SUBTOTAL		\$55,960.00	\$55,555.00	\$56,764.00	\$57,300.00	
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$55,960.00	\$55,555.00	\$56,764.00	\$57,300.00	
TOTAL TCTP*		\$37,360.00	\$36,055.00	\$37,137.00	\$37,694.00	
TCTP share		66.8%	64.9%	65.4%	65.8%	
REVENUES LESS EXPENSES		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$21	

*TCTP-Tompkins County Tourism Program

Note: expenses for overall DT administration are noted with a DA & marketing expenses with a DM.