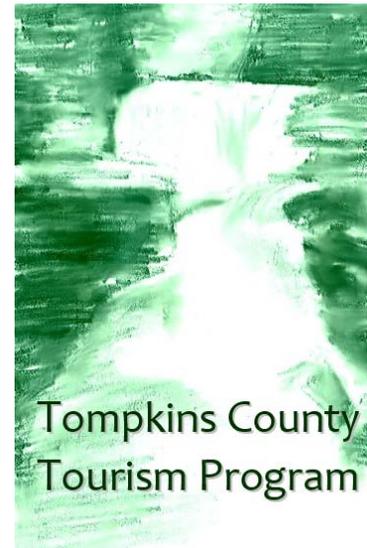


APPLICATION GUIDELINES

2016-2017 Strategic Tourism Implementation (STI) Funding Opportunity

Approximately \$200,000, combined from 2016 and 2017 budget years, is expected to be made available in the budget of the Tompkins County Tourism Program for Strategic Tourism Implementation (STI). The Tourism Program is funded by the County's hotel room occupancy tax, with oversight and strategic direction for use of the funds provided by the Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB). The overarching purpose of STI funds is to support significant implementation of *critical actions* identified in the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan and related tourism implementation plans.



Funding Priorities

Requests for STI funding will fit within one of the following three categories:

Category A. Implementation of Critical Actions

Please refer to the Tompkins County 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan for a complete description of *critical actions*. The plan and related implementation plans are available here: <http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/tourism/plan>. A concise list of *critical actions* may be found on pages 36 and 37 of the Plan; letters of interest from *lead organizations* as well as organizations other than those referenced as *lead organizations* will be considered.

Category B. Implementation of an STPB-Adopted Tourism Implementation Plan

Several detailed plans and strategies have grown directly out of *critical actions* from the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan. As such, Letters of Interest for projects which will significantly implement any the following tourism-related plans will also be considered:

- a. Tompkins County Agriculinary Tourism Implementation Plan
- b. Tompkins County Heritage Tourism Implementation Plan
- c. Tompkins County Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage Plan
- d. Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy
- e. Tompkins County Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan
- f. Tompkins County Beautification, Signage and Public Art Strategic Plan
- g. Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail Plan

Category C. Internal Projects Identified as Priorities by the STPB/Tompkins County Tourism Program

Examples of projects which may fit within this category include tourism research in support of strategic planning activities such as the Visitor Profile Study, and other programmatic priorities identified by the STPB, to be carried out by program staff. This category is not available to outside proposers.

Application Process

Applications will be accepted in a two-step process:

- STEP ONE: During an initial round, Letters of Interest are requested by 10/27/16 and then will be accepted on a rolling basis until Nov 1, 2017 while funds last.
- STEP TWO: The Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) Planning & Evaluation Committee will review each letter of interest and then decide whether or not to invite a full proposal. A deadline for submission of full proposals will be established on a case-by-case basis.

Contact / Program Officer

Tom Knipe, Principal Planner/Tourism Program Director

Tompkins County Planning Department

121 E. Court St. Ithaca, NY 14850

607-274-5560

Email letters of interest to: tknipe@tompkins-co.org

Eligibility

Both existing programs/projects and new programs/projects are eligible to submit Letters of Interest. This funding opportunity is not subject to the 60/40 split for tourism marketing/product development that is currently used as an annual budgeting guideline by the Tompkins County Tourism Program. This funding opportunity is designed to be flexible in terms of the types of proposals that will be considered and at the same time focused on direct implementation of *critical actions* from the 2020 Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan and tourism implementation plans adopted by the STPB. It does not replace or overlap with any existing grant program of the Tompkins County Tourism Program.

Projects that are proposed directly by Tompkins County Tourism Program staff and/or the STPB (*internal projects*) are eligible for STI funding in any of the three categories listed. For *internal projects*, there shall be no minimum request. Organizations other than the County Tourism Program and STPB are also eligible, however the minimum amount that may be requested by outside proposers is \$25,000, and the maximum amount is \$100,000. Outside proposers are only eligible for funding through Categories A and B. There is no match requirement for STI funding, but proposals demonstrating community support by way of matching financial and in-kind support and demonstrating potential to leverage other funding may be rated more highly (see the evaluation criteria listed beginning on page 4 of this document). Funding awards will be made through a competitive process.

Not all entities are eligible to receive funding from Tompkins County government. In general, a County government may award a grant to another municipality and certain not-for-profit agencies. Organizations currently funded through ongoing room tax budget allocations are eligible, and entities proposing new projects that are not currently funded through ongoing tourism budget allocations are also potentially eligible. Proposals for capital projects are potentially eligible. If you are unsure about your eligibility, please consult with the Tourism Program Director.

Limitations

Proposals must demonstrate how the project will have an impact with this one-time funding. Proposals that receive STI funding may be eligible to apply for additional funding through a different grant program of the Tompkins County Tourism Program or through a future annual budget request, but no continuation of funding will be guaranteed.

While proposals must implement a *critical action* identified in the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan or a related tourism implementation plan, not all projects that would support implementation of a *critical action* qualify. The following types of projects **do not qualify to apply** for Strategic Tourism Implementation funds; rather, these may qualify to apply for funding through one of the existing grant programs of the Tompkins County Tourism Program, or through the annual Tourism Program budgeting process.

- New Tourism Initiatives for which the total one time request is less than \$25,000.
- An ongoing event or project that has been funded in the past through a Tourism Project Grant, New Tourism Initiative Grant, and/or Tourism Marketing and Advertising Grant and is not proposing a significant new offering.
- Projects that are part of the current work plan of an existing program that is funded by the Tompkins County Tourism Program, and where a critical action will be best implemented through an alignment of existing resources.

Programs that are currently funded by the Tompkins County Tourism Program who wish to apply for Strategic Tourism Implementation funds must demonstrate that their proposal represents a significant new offering that falls outside the existing core work program. However, projects must also fall within the mission and purpose of the applicant organization. Projects not within the recognized scope of the applicant's mission are discouraged.

Please refer to the Tompkins County Tourism Program's website for information about other grant programs of the Tompkins County Tourism Program: www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism. Other grants may be available in these program categories:

- Arts and Culture Organizational Development
- New Tourism Initiatives
- Tourism Projects
- Tourism Capital
- Tourism Marketing & Advertising
- Town Beautification
- Community Celebrations

Application Timing

Notice of Funding Availability will be made by October 3, 2016. Two-page Letters of Interest are invited to be submitted on a rolling basis after this date and until funds are expended or until November 1, 2017, whichever comes first. An initial round of letters is requested by 5pm October 27, 2016. Letters of Interest will be reviewed in a timely manner by the Planning and Evaluation Committee of the STPB and full proposals may be invited from among projects for which a Letter of Interest is received.

Review Committee and Award Process

The Planning and Evaluation Committee of the STPB will review Letters of Interest and decide in a timely manner whether or not to request full proposals based on Letters of Interest. Letters of Interest in Category C will also be reviewed by the full STPB prior to invitation to the proposal stage. A Strategic Tourism Implementation Grant Panel (STIGP) will be formed to review and score full proposals based on the criteria below and recommend funding awards to the STPB. The final decision regarding funding awards will be made by the Tompkins County Legislature. Applicants are strongly discouraged from soliciting support from review committee members, STPB members or members of the legislature outside of this objective application and review process. In accordance with STPB bylaws, the chair of the STPB will appoint review committee members. The size of the STIGP will be between five and eight members. Committee membership will consist of at least three voting members of the Planning & Evaluation Committee of the STPB. A majority of review committee members shall consist of voting STPB members, but not all STIGP members need be STPB members. Potential review committee members will be asked to disclose their organizational ties in order to limit conflicts of interest.

Letters of Interest and full proposals may be evaluated independently or together as a pool. After Letters of Interest are reviewed, the Planning and Evaluation Committee will issue a letter to each applicant either inviting the applicant to submit a full proposal or not. Applicants invited to the proposal stage are not guaranteed funding. After awards are approved by the Tompkins County Legislature, funds will be disbursed pursuant to a contract with the County. Awards are not intended to be on a reimbursement basis; they will be made up-front.

Evaluation Criteria

Full proposals will be evaluated and scored by the review committee based on how well they respond to the criteria below.

Project Readiness. Does the proposal demonstrate readiness to use the funds and implement the proposed project within 12 months of being funded?

Implements Critical Action or Strategic Priority. Does the proposal implement a critical action of the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan or a related tourism implementation plan in a significant way? Does the proposal implement a strategic priority of the STPB as identified by adopted policies or plans?

Project Benefits. How significant is the potential for direct, measurable tourism impact in Tompkins County? If developed, will there be economic benefits in Tompkins County in the form of additional hotel/B&B room nights and visitor spending? Are the expected economic benefits likely to be realized, given other constraints or barriers? Are there additional significant quality of life benefits?

Project Outcome and Cost. Is the overall project cost justified based on the expected benefits? Relative to the project cost, how significant are the potential benefits? How appropriate are the applicant's cost share contributions (sources and amounts) with respect to the degree of risk,

potential to benefit from the work, and financial status of the proposing organization and project team?

Organizational Capacity. Is the proposed schedule of work clear and technically feasible? Does the project team have the right skills and experience to deliver? Does the organization have a demonstrated history of success in carrying out similar projects?

Demonstration of Community Support. Does the project demonstrate potential to leverage funds from regional, state, private, and/or local sources other than room tax? Are matching cash and in-kind contributions secured or likely? Is evidence of partnerships provided? Although no match is required, applications demonstrating community support by way of matching financial and in-kind support will be rated more highly on this criterion. Does the full proposal contain Letters of Commitment from participants, co-funders, and related businesses and other organizations?

Other Considerations. Proposals will be reviewed for eligibility and to determine if they reflect the Tompkins County Tourism Program's overall objectives, including: encouragement of diversity and sustainability, coordination with similar ongoing or completed tourism projects, the general distribution of tourism projects among organizations and among focus areas identified by the strategic tourism plan, and the geographical distribution of projects within Tompkins County.

Requirements. Outside proposals must:

- ✓ Have the potential to directly implement a critical action identified by the Tompkins County 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan or a related strategic tourism implementation plan.
- ✓ Demonstrate the potential for direct or indirect economic benefits through additional room nights and visitor spending in Tompkins County. Projects which will improve the community's tourism infrastructure over the long-term are encouraged.
- ✓ Provide additional quality of life benefits to residents of Tompkins County.

Attachments. For those projects invited to the full proposal phase, a Budget Worksheet and a Statement of Work may be required as attachments. In addition, you may include any qualifications, drawings or ancillary information that is necessary to support your proposal. If appropriate; also include:

Letters of Interest or Commitment. If you are relying on any other organization to provide services, equipment or cost share, include a letter from that organization describing their planned participation. However, due to their active sponsorship of this solicitation, Letters of Interest or Commitment should not be solicited from Strategic Tourism Planning Board members, members of the Tompkins County Legislature or staff of the Tompkins County Tourism Program. Where appropriate, proposers should include planning or policy documents of the STPB as evidence of priority. Also include letters of interest or commitment from team members, businesses or other organizations critical to the success of the project.

STEP ONE Application Directions – Letter of Interest

The Letter of Interest should be no more than two pages long and should be provided on the organization's letterhead. The subject line of your letter must include the project title and expected amount of the request. The letter should include a description of the project and organization, a statement about the need or opportunity, and a description of how the project implements a critical action from the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan or related tourism implementation plan. It should also state a specific dollar amount or range that would be requested and other sources of funding and support. Also include the proposed project start date, deliverables, and date of delivery. Submit your Letter of Interest as a .pdf document via email to tknipe@tompkins-co.org.

STEP TWO Application Directions – Full Proposal

If invited to submit a full proposal, please provide complete and concise answers to all questions in the application narrative. You may use as much space as needed, up to a maximum of 10 pages for the narrative. Attachments may be required for larger projects: a Budget Worksheet and a Statement of Work. Applicants will be informed whether these elements will be required to be submitted with the full proposal at the time they are invited to submit a full proposal. There is no page limit for attachments. Applicants are encouraged, but not required to submit letters of support/commitment from key partners. Do not submit the proposal *guidelines* with your proposal; the application cover page should be the first page of your proposal. **Submit one .pdf file containing your entire proposal via email to tknipe@tompkins-co.org.**

Program Budget Worksheet – Required Attachment for Large Full Proposals

Large full proposals will be required to include a program Budget Worksheet alongside the narrative. This is not the organizational budget, but a budget for the project for which you are requesting grant funding. Please start with the Budget Worksheet Template that is provided as a Microsoft Excel document. All major categories of expenses should be listed. In addition, if your project will receive funding or in-kind support from sources other than the Tompkins County Tourism Program, please list revenues from other sources and/or the value of in-kind support in the designated space. An overall organizational budget is not required, but please do provide the percentage of your organization's overall annual budget that the project would constitute.

Statement of Work – Required Attachment for Large Full Proposals

Applicants invited to submit full proposals for large projects will be required to include a Statement of Work. The Statement of Work should, at a minimum, include project start and end dates, a project schedule, deliverables, and roles and responsibilities of key people or organizations. Strong proposals will also include specific measures of success and means of tracking progress towards those. This is the document that describes how you will implement your proposed project, and achieve the objectives that you have set out for the project.

Reporting

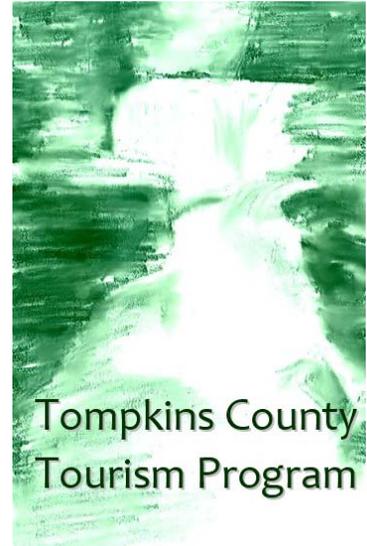
Successful applicants will be required to file a final grant report, and may also be required to file interim reports. Reporting expectations and format will be articulated upon award of funds.

Assistance

Please call or email the program officer if you have any questions or need help putting together your application. Submission of drafts for review and feedback prior to the application deadline is encouraged.

APPLICATION (FULL PROPOSALS)

2016-2017 Strategic Tourism Implementation Funding Opportunity



I. BASIC INFORMATION

Project/Proposal Name: _____

Applicant Organization: _____

Contact Person: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Request: \$ _____

Instruction: You may use up to 10 pages to answer the questions in the narrative section.

II. PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION

Describe your proposed project. Include a description of project deliverables and date of delivery.

III. STRATEGIC TOURISM IMPLEMENTATION

Document how your proposal responds to goal(s) and action(s) of the Tompkins County 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan and/or a Strategic Priority of the STPB. Identify under which STI funding category you are applying. Describe how your proposal aligns with the aims and policies of the Tompkins County Tourism Program.

IV. EXPECTED BENEFITS

Describe, in as much detail as possible, the specific economic and quality of life benefits that you expect this project to deliver.

V. ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

Provide a description of the applicant organization(s), its mission, board/governance, annual budget, year founded, key staff, how this proposal fits with other activities, and record in implementing similar types of projects.

VI. BUDGET NARRATIVE

Describe how you propose to use the requested funds.

VII. IMPACT OF FUNDING

What would be the specific impact(s) on the project of receiving less funding than you are requesting?

ATTACHMENTS

____ Attachment A - Budget Worksheet – **REQUIRED for large projects (template provided)**

____ Attachment B – Statement of Work – **REQUIRED for large projects (no template)**

____ Other Attachments - OPTIONAL

Qualifications, letters of commitment/support, drawings or ancillary information

This page is for your information only. Please do not submit it with your proposal.

PROPOSAL CHECKLIST

Please review the following checklist prior to submitting your funding request.

- 1) ___ A Letter of Interest is submitted.

If invited to submit a full proposal, continue to #2. If not invited to submit a full proposal, stop here.

- 2) ___ Questions I through VII are answered completely and concisely, in no more than ten pages (proposal narrative)
- 3) ___ The budget worksheet is completed using the template (required attachment)
- 4) ___ The Statement of Work is complete and accurate (required attachment)
- 5) ___ Optional attachments are provided as needed
- 6) ___ The proposal narrative, required attachments, and any optional attachments are compiled into a **single .pdf file**.
- 7) ___ **Email this proposal file electronically** to tknipe@tompkins-co.org no later than the specific deadline established for your proposal. Mailed, faxed or hand-delivered proposals will not be accepted. Upon receipt of your complete proposal, you will receive an email confirmation of receipt.

If you do not receive a confirmation via email by the end of business on the day the letter or proposal is due, please follow up to ensure that your letter or proposal was received!
