

Tourism Capital Grant Program Overview

The Tourism Capital Grant program is funded by the Tompkins County Hotel Room Occupancy Tax. Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD) administers the program with review by the Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB). Awards are made by the Tompkins County Legislature. Applications are usually accepted in March; confirm deadlines with the program administrator.

Tourism Capital Grants focus on major visitor-generating projects such as theaters, museums, and other major cultural and recreational attractions. The funds can be used for:

- Design, renovation, and new building projects
- Investments in unique, permanent (minimum 5-year life) installations such as exhibits
- Feasibility studies of potential capital projects

The funds cannot be used to refinance existing debt, or for operating expenses.

Eligibility

Applicant Eligibility: Large, tourist/visitor generating not-for-profit or public-purpose projects. Examples of projects which have been awarded Tourism Capital Grant funds in the past include the Sciencenter Touch Tank permanent exhibit, the Hangar Theater renovations for winter operations, the Museum of the Earth new building, and visitor amenities for the Cayuga Waterfront Trail. The organization must track where visitors are from in order to establish tourism impact. The organization must market to visitors beyond Tompkins County.

Project Eligibility

Applications for two general types of project are accepted: Capital Investment Projects, and Feasibility Studies.

A. *Capital Investment Projects*: New construction and renovation projects are eligible. The project may provide expansion or renovation to existing facilities, or may be a totally new facility. The Tourism Capital Grant fund will usually participate at the \$25,000 level or higher. Funds may contribute up to one third of eligible costs that include:

- Acquisition of land
- Acquisition, construction, and renovation of buildings
- Acquisition of furnishings, equipment, permanent exhibitions, and other capital improvements designed to serve or promote tourism over a minimum of five years
- Design services for the project

B. *Feasibility Studies*: Studies should potentially lead to a capital investment as described above. Grants may fund up to 100% of a feasibility study. Eligible projects include:

- Concept level design and cost estimates
- Tourism plan for a capital project
- Business plan for a capital project

Not eligible: fundraising feasibility study

Evaluation Criteria

Grant proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria.

A. Capital Investment Projects:

The application must demonstrate:

- Financial feasibility of the project
- Organizational capacity and commitment to make the project a success
- Likelihood of
 - increased visitors to the facility and/or
 - improved visitor experience and/or
 - visitors increasing their length of stay in order to visit the facility

B. Feasibility Studies:

The application must demonstrate:

- Preliminary research that supports proceeding to a full scale feasibility study
- Organizational commitment to the project being studied, including evidence of investment
- Possibility of:
 - increased visitors to the facility and/or
 - improved visitor experience and/or
 - visitors increasing their length of stay in order to visit the facility

For more information contact the Tourism Capital Grant Administrator, Martha Armstrong, TCAD, marthaa@tcad.org, 273-0005

**For additional details on how to apply visit:
<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/capital>**