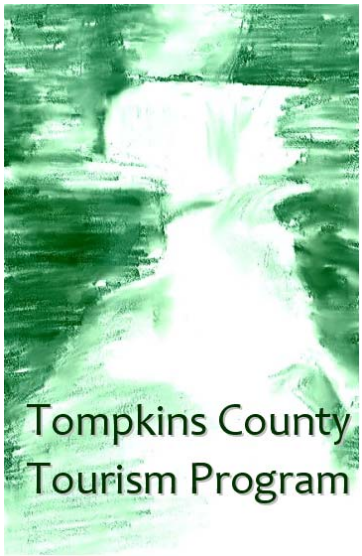
GRANT GUIDELINES – SPRING 2014

Tourism Project Grants and New Tourism Initiative Grants



Deadline

Grant applications must be submitted online by **11am, Friday February 21, 2014**. Links and instructions to access the new browser-based online application form are available here: www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism. Contact: Tom Knipe, tknipe@tompkins-co.org, 607-274-5560.

Summary of Funding Opportunity

Tourism Project Grants and New Tourism Initiative Grants are awarded on a competitive basis for projects that are likely to motivate many visitors to stay overnight in Tompkins County hotels and bed and breakfasts, and that are likely to implement key strategies identified in the 2020 Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan. New Tourism Initiative Grants are awarded for projects that have occurred for no more than three years, and Tourism Project Grants are awarded for projects that have been in existence for more than three years. Projects which have been funded in the past through these grants include events, exhibits, and projects of lasting value that support a strong tourism infrastructure.

The 2014 budget for the Tompkins County Tourism Program identifies $78,300 to support Tourism Project Grants and $75,300 to support New Tourism Initiative Grants. It is common for most of the available funding in these grant categories to be awarded in the spring grant round; however there may be a second smaller grant round in fall 2014. The maximum request in each grant category is $25,000, and the minimum request is $1,000. Historically, few projects have received the maximum award. The average award amounts over the past five years have been $9,800 for New Tourism Initiative Grants and $7,750 for Tourism Project Grants.

Applicants for a Tourism Project Grant or a New Tourism Initiative Grant who wish to apply for marketing and advertising support for the same project may apply simultaneously for a Tourism Marketing & Advertising Grant using the same application. Please read the separate grant guidelines for the Tourism Marketing & Advertising Grant program. **All applicants in any of these three grant categories must use the new browser-based online grant application which is being hosted through a partnership with the United Way of Tompkins County.** See below and the Tourism Program website for technical details about how to access the online application.

These grants are funded entirely by the Tompkins County hotel room occupancy tax, which is a percentage tax on occupancy charges in hotels, motels, inns, and bed and breakfast establishments in Tompkins County. By law, local room occupancy tax funds are used exclusively for the purpose of developing and promoting tourism, and the overarching goals of the Tompkins County Tourism Program are to promote economic development and enhance the quality of life in

Tompkins County. Grant awards are made by the Tompkins County Legislature on recommendation of the Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB), the County's official advisory board for tourism development.

Under Which Category to Apply – Tourism Project or New Tourism Initiative?

New Tourism Initiative Grants support projects that generate significant amounts of new tourism in Tompkins County. New Tourism Initiatives must have occurred for less than three years in a row, and be produced by not-for-profit organizations or municipalities. Not-for-profit organizations that have been in existence for longer than three years may apply for a New Tourism Initiative Grant if the project is truly a new concept that is outside of the current range of activities undertaken by the organization and which is designed to be an annual or lasting tourism generator.

Projects that mainly serve to enhance the value of tourism offerings that have been in existence for three years or more, or that are single projects of organizations that have been in existence for longer than three years and are in line with similar offerings that they have presented in the past should apply for a Tourism Project Grant.

Eligibility

Under New York State Law, not all entities are eligible to receive funding from County government. For example, a County government may award a grant to another municipality or certain not-for-profit agencies. Before completing the application, please consult with the grant administrator (Tom Knipe, 607-274-5560, tknipe@tompkins-co.org) to confirm that your organization is eligible to receive grant funding from a County government.

Eligibility and Funding Details:

1. Requests are accepted from 501(c)3 not-for-profit entities, only for non-sectarian projects.
2. Proposed projects must demonstrate the strong likelihood of significant visitor attendance/participation and overnight stays in County hotels, motels and B&Bs.
3. Applications for New Tourism Initiative Grants may be made annually, for a maximum of three years. There is no guarantee of multi-year support. A baseline for tourism growth shall be established at the outset of the grant and measured each year.
4. Allowable uses of funds include but are not limited to the following examples:
    a. Expenses associated with temporary and permanent exhibits to include design, construction and interpretive materials.
    b. Public art acquisition.
    c. Partial support of artistic salary of select, notable talent the presenting of which will generate significant out-of-town visitor attendance/participation.
    d. Interpretive materials for significant natural, historic, architectural assets.
    e. Additional short-term staff position for the term of the project, or to increase the hours of current part-time staff for the term of the project.
5. A minimum 2/3 match is required; grant requests shall not exceed 33% (1/3) of budgeted expenses. If applying simultaneously for a Tourism Marketing and Advertising Grant, the TOTAL request from both sources must not exceed 1/3 of the project budget.

6. For the purposes of establishing a match, the total budget may include the value of in-kind contributions of goods, staff time and professional services.
    a. Volunteer time may be included towards a calculation of in-kind contributions ONLY where this time would otherwise need to be replaced by paid staff time or paid professional services. General volunteers, such as registration volunteers or organizing committee members, may NOT be counted towards in-kind support for the purposes of demonstrating a match. Where the specific value of the service is not estimated directly by the service provider, use an estimate of $21.79 per hour.
    b. The value of donated goods will be their estimated retail value.
7. The maximum request is $25,000. The minimum request is $1,000.
8. Projects must fall within the mission and purpose of the applicant organization and serve to strengthen and develop the organization. Projects not within the recognized scope of the applicant's mission are discouraged.
9. Large capital requests (for the purchase of property, the construction of a facility, remodeling, or expansion of a facility) are generally not eligible under this program but may be eligible under the Tompkins County Tourism Capital Grants program. For more information about Tourism Capital Grants, contact Martha Armstrong at Tompkins County Area Development, marthaa@lightlink.com or 607-273-0005.
10. Requests for general operating support will not be accepted.
11. Requests for retroactive support will not be accepted.

Considerations

Consider the following when formulating your proposal for a Tourism Project Grant or a New Tourism Initiative Grant.

Tourism Development. Projects must show how they will draw and/or serve visitors, especially overnight visitors, to Tompkins County. The primary focus is on out-of-county attendance from areas at least 90 miles from Ithaca, including major cities and small towns. Projects limited to serving the local community without a strategy for growth and regional outreach are not likely to be funded. All applicants are required to document past visitor attendance and set specific goals for future visitor attendance, as well as to outline strategies for collecting this data.

Collecting Survey Data. Except in limited cases where it would be impossible or extremely difficult, grant recipients are required to collect survey data to estimate the impact of their project on tourism. We have prepared a questionnaire template with questions which successful applicants will be required to ask of participants/attendees/customers, along with an overview about how to conduct effective market research using surveys. Visit the project grant webpage to access these resources: http://tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/projectgrants

Community Support. Although not required to be eligible for funding, the Tompkins County Tourism Program is interested in responding to applications that demonstrate strong partnerships and community support. Collaboration between for-profit and not-for-profit organizations is permitted as long as the lead agent is eligible under NY State Municipal Law to receive funding

from a County. Where applicable, letters of support from partnering organizations should accompany the grant application.

2020 Strategic Tourism Plan. All applications must demonstrate alignment of the project with the aims and policies of the Tompkins County 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan. In addition, all applicants, and especially those to the New Tourism Initiative Grant program, are encouraged to document how their project will advance strategies related to one or more of the focus areas for tourism development that are identified by the Plan.

Season. Tompkins County will give priority to projects that hold potential to draw visitors during the mid-week and/or from mid-November through April.

Marketing. Preference will be given to organizations and projects that outline a strong marketing strategy. The best way to demonstrate this is by providing a detailed marketing plan for the project. The marketing plan should include a description of your intentions regarding placement for the **Tompkins County Tourism Program** on advertising and collateral materials**.** Marketing plans from applicants who wish to simultaneously apply for a Tourism Marketing & Advertising Grant will receive additional scrutiny (see Tourism Marketing & Advertising Grant guidelines for details). Applicants are asked to spell out in detail which marketing vehicles they propose to use, the costs of those investments, the expected number of marketing impressions generated and the estimated portion of those impressions which will be for non-Tompkins County residents.

Reporting on Past Grant Awards. Applicants who have previously received a grant from the Tompkins County Tourism Program and whose project is complete prior to the current application deadline are required to submit a complete grant report before another grant request will be considered.

Limitations

Year to Year Support. New Tourism Initiative Grants and Tourism Project Grants are awarded based on an annual or bi-annual competitive evaluation process. Funds must be spent within the contract period. Organizations may reapply for grants in future years for the same or new projects, but are not guaranteed continued funding or funding at the same level. To receive funding for the same project again, an applicant must demonstrate that they are taking meaningful steps to achieve financial sustainability. Applicant organizations should not consider this grant to be a part of their general operating budget, but rather additional money to be used for a specific project.

Equipment Rental and Purchase. With limited exceptions, purchase of equipment is disallowed; only the rental of equipment is permitted.

Fundraising Events. Applications will typically not be accepted for general fundraising events where the primary purpose of holding the event is for participants to actively raise funds for a specific cause.

Entertainment Costs. Grant funds may not be used to cover general entertainment costs such as for theater parties, museum receptions, etc.

Events Only Open to Members and Faith Congregations. Membership in an organization must not be required in order to participate in or benefit from the project.

Conferences and Gatherings for a Specific Interest Group. Groups offering conferences or gatherings in Tompkins County targeting very specific and limited interests should work through the Convention and Visitors Bureau to obtain conference services. These gatherings are not eligible for support from this program.

Grant Application Process

Applicants are encouraged to attend a Tompkins County Tourism grant workshop, generally held four to six weeks before the application deadline, to learn about current requirements of the tourism grant programs and any technical details about how to apply. Workshop schedules are announced in Tompkins County newspapers and can be obtained by contacting the grant administrator, who will also be available to answer questions and provide technical assistance upon request. If you wish, you may submit a draft of your application to the grant administrator for review and comment. Drafts submitted 10 days or more before the deadline with a request for comment, will receive comments.

When to apply. Apply in the spring grant round for projects with major activities beginning anytime between May of the year that the application is due and April of the following year. A fall grant round may or may not be offered based on availability of funds.

Grant Review Process

The review process takes approximately two months from the application deadline for final decisions to be made. There are several steps in the approval process:

Staff Review. Once your final application has been received, the grant administrator will check it for clarity and completeness. If your application is ambiguous or incomplete, you may be contacted for clarification. The grant administrator serves as an impartial coach to potential applicants and coordinates the application review and evaluation process. At no point in the review process will a staff member advocate for any applicant during the review process or request or respond to questions that do not permit an objective answer, based on available facts.

Review Committee and Award Process. A grant review committee will review, score and rank proposals based on evaluation criteria and recommend awards to the STPB. The initial results of the review process become public at the point when the STPB receives the review committee's recommendations. The final decision regarding grant 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 application and review process. In accordance with STPB bylaws, the chair of the STPB will appoint review committee members.

Letting Contracts. 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 generally be made up-front. Contracts with awardees will be written for a period not to exceed twelve months; the funds typically must be used within a year of the start date of the contract. Please note that the County's requirements for insurance coverage for your event or organization may be sizable. Grant awards will not be released until proof of insurance is provided. For advance information regarding the insurance requirements, please contact the grant administrator.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on how well they respond to the criteria below:

Cohesiveness of proposal. Is the application clear and well written? Does the proposal lend itself well to financial evaluation?

Organizational Capacity. Is the proposed project clear and technically feasible? Does the project team that has been assembled have the right skills and experience to deliver? Does the project team have a demonstrated history of success in carrying out similar projects? Does the applicant organization demonstrate the appropriate level of financial security to carry out the project? Does the project description demonstrate understanding of the specific steps that will be taken to deliver a successful project?

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? Will the project support tourism growth in the winter, on soft weekends or during the mid-week? Are the expected economic benefits likely to be realized, given other constraints or barriers? Are there additional significant quality of life benefits? Measurable benefits may occur in years subsequent to 2014.

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?

Alignment with Strategic Tourism Plan. Does the project show strong alignment with the aims, policies, goals and actions of the Tompkins County 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan?

Marketing Plan. Does the application contain a clear, well thought-out marketing plan that identifies target visitor groups? Does the marketing strategy align with the marketing strategies of the Ithaca Tompkins County Convention and Visitor's Bureau (CVB), and/or demonstrate coordination with the CVB?

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.

Appeals Process

Applicants can appeal the decision of a grant award. A denial of funding, or dissatisfaction with the amount of the award, is not justification for an appeal. An appeal may only be made due to improprieties in the grant selection process. You have the right to appeal the decision based on any of the following criteria:

1) Misrepresentation of information
2) Non-presentation of information
3) Improper procedures

Please note that these criteria refer to potential failure on the part of the County, not the applicant. For example, if the County loses a part of your application or a crucial letter of support, or if a staff member misrepresents answers to follow-up questions, an appeal may be made. To appeal a funding decision, send a letter stating the reason for the appeal to the Chair of the STPB within 14 days of receiving written notification of the grant decision.

Application Directions

Grant applications for these three programs are now accepted ONLY through the online Community Impact Manager (CIM) grant management system. Applications will not be accepted by any other method. Tompkins County has partnered with the United Way of Tompkins County to provide this browser-based application in order to increase the Tourism Program's capacity for program evaluation and streamline our grant-making processes. Details on how to create a user account and how to access the tourism grant application are below. Technical assistance is also available by contacting the grant administrator.

Creating an Account on Community Impact Manager (CIM):

1. Go to https://www.ctkodm.com/uwtc/
2. If you do not already have a username and password, login using:
   Username: ***apply***
   Password: ***apply***
3. On the left-hand side of the screen, under Create New, click "Agency Intake"
4. Complete the Agency Intake form
5. Your account will be activated by the United Way.

Accessing Your Tourism Grant Application(s):

**Please see above instructions to create an account. Once your account is activated:

1. Go to https://www.ctkodm.com/uwtc/

2. Login in using your unique username and password.
3. On the left-hand side of the screen, under My Folders, click your agency name.
4. Click "Agency Information" or "Program Information" to view past applications
5. Click "View Application" to access current grant applications.
6. To create a new application form, click "Tompkins County Tourism Grant" on the left-hand side and then click "Create New".
7. To edit an application which you have already started, click the "Edit" button to the right of application name. You may edit and save the application as many times as needed prior to the application deadline.
8. **Be sure to click "Save" in the upper right-hand of the screen often, as forms do not save automatically.**
9. Do not click "Submit Application" until all your application forms are complete. Submitting will lock the application forms. (If you have submitted your application and need it to be re-opened, please contact the grant administrator.) The submit button is located on the left-hand side of the "View Application" page.
10. Submit your application by 11am, Friday, February 21st for the spring 2014 grant round.

Attachments. There are up to three required attachments: 1) proof of nonprofit status in the form of a 501c3 determination letter, 2) for returning applicants, your grant report for the most recently completed project, and 3) your detailed operational budget. You may also attach any qualifications, drawings or ancillary information that is necessary to support your proposal, but keep in mind that the primary focus of reviewers will be on the required materials: the information in the online application and your project budget. Applicants are also encouraged, but not required to attach letters of support/commitment from key partners who are critical to the success of the project. There is no page limit for attachments.

Program Budget Worksheet – Required Attachment. In addition to the general budget information and detailed marketing plan that you are asked to provide in the online application form, you are required to submit a detailed operational budget for your project. For this detailed operational budget, you may use your own preferred format, or the budget worksheet template that is provided in Excel on the Tourism Program website. This is not your organizational budget, but a budget for the project for which you are requesting grant funding. You may modify the template as needed to provide a clear and accurate budget for your project. All major categories of expenses should be listed. In addition, please list revenues and/or the value of in-kind donations from sources other than the Tompkins County Tourism Program in the designated spaces. An overall organizational budget is not required.

Reporting

Successful applicants will be required to file a grant report in a format to be provided. In addition, grant recipients will be required to provide the following upon completion of the campaign, project or event.

1. Any unspent funds that remain upon completion of the contractual agreement must be returned to Tompkins County.
2. Survey results, statistics or compiled data obtained in conjunction with this project.

3. Evidence of acknowledgment.

Standard Acknowledgment

Project advertising, collateral and promotional materials must recognize the Tompkins County Tourism Program with one of these two phrases: "**This program was made possible by a grant from the Tompkins County Tourism Program",** or **"This program was made possible, in part, by a grant from the Tomkins County Tourism Program.** A logo is available for web-based purposes on the Tourism Program website: www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism

Assistance

Grant Administrator. Please call or email the grant administrator if you have any questions or need help putting together your application. Submission of a draft for review and comment is strongly encouraged. Drafts received at least 10 days before the final grant deadline will receive written comments.

Tom Knipe, Senior Planner/Tourism Coordinator
Tompkins County Planning Department
121 E. Court St; Ithaca, NY 14850
tknipe@tompkins-co.org, 607-274-5560

CVB. The Ithaca Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) is available to provide technical assistance related to project marketing. All applicants, both new and returning, are invited to review their marketing plans with Bruce Stoff, Director of the CVB, bruce@visitithaca.com, 607-272-1313,

Tompkins County Festivals Program. Applicants requesting support for a festival or event are strongly encouraged to take advantage of resources provided by the Tompkins Festivals Program:

- Annual event management workshops – various topics. Led by the Downtown Ithaca Alliance.
- Technical event assistance. Topics of individualized technical assistance include, but are not limited to: budgeting and fundraising, site planning and permitting, volunteer management, site management, succession planning, etc.
- Event equipment loan service.
- Tompkins County event vendor lists.
- Tompkins County event planning manual.

For more information, visit the Tompkins Festivals website at www.tompkinsfestivals.com or contact Tompkins Festivals Program Coordinator Vicki Taylor-Brous at the Downtown Ithaca Alliance, vickit@downtownithaca.com.

Tourism Marketing Tips and Tactics - pointers from the Ithaca Tompkins County CVB to help you get the maximum results from your tourism related marketing investments are available on the project grant website: http://tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/projectgrants