

Tourism Capital Grants

2023 Guidelines



Funding Purpose + Overview

Tourism Capital grants support major investments in visitor-generating projects such as theaters, trails, museums, and other major cultural and recreational attractions. The funds can be used for design, renovation, and new building projects; investments in unique permanent installations such as exhibits; and feasibility studies of potential capital projects.

- Award Range: \$5,000 to \$100,000
- Deadline: August 31, 2023
- Contact: Kurt Anderson – kurta@ithacaareaed.org – 607-273-0005

Examples of projects funded include the Dryden Rail Trail; Friends of Stewart Park Inclusive Playground Building and Splash Pad; renovation of Discover Cayuga Lake's charter boat for eco-cruises; Tompkins Center for History and Culture buildout; and visitor amenities for the Cayuga Waterfront Trail.

This grant is funded by Hotel Room Occupancy Tax collected in Tompkins County, NY. Ithaca Area Economic Development (IAED) administers the program with review by the Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB). A total of \$291,000 was budgeted for this grant in 2023.

All applications must be submitted online through [Common Grant Application](#).

Eligibility

Eligible Applicants

- Non-profit organizations designated as 501(c)3
- Municipalities within Tompkins County

Eligible Activities – Capital Investment Projects

New construction and renovation projects are eligible. The project may provide expansion or renovation to existing facilities or establish a new facility. Project will typically be valued at \$75,000 or higher. Grant funds may contribute up to one-third (33%) 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

Eligible Activities – Feasibility Studies

Studies should lead to a capital investment as described above. Eligible projects include:

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

Other Limitations and Considerations

- Grant funds cannot be used to refinance existing debt, for applicant's overhead costs, or for operating expenses.
- Applicants for capital investment projects must demonstrate a financial **match** of at least two-thirds (67%) of the total project cost. This match can be provided from the following sources:
 - Cash
 - In-kind donations of goods and services that would otherwise be purchased
- Capital investment projects are expected to have a minimum five-year useful life span.
- Applicants for feasibility studies are not required to provide a financial **match**. However, applications that show the applicant's financial investment in the project will be more competitive.
- Fundraising feasibility studies are not eligible.
- All applicants are expected to have an adopted policy on diversity, equity and inclusion.

Preparing Your Application

Please keep the following review criteria in mind when developing your grant application. The grant review committee will score applications based on how they respond to the following questions:

Evaluation Criteria – All Applications

- Organizational capacity to carry out the project
- Likelihood of the project to increase or improve tourism over five years
- Project/organization role in the Tompkins County tourism industry
- Benefits/cost -- return on investment
- Value of project to community
- Advancement of the [Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan](#)
- Ability of project to attract diverse audiences and represent the county's diverse population

Evaluation Criteria – Capital Investment Projects

- Financial feasibility of the project
- Organizational history of successful project implementation
- 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

Evaluation Criteria – Feasibility Studies

- 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

Considerations

Applicants should be aware of the [Diversity Statement](#) approved by the Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB). The STPB encourages applicants to consider how their projects can appeal to diverse audiences and reflect the diversity of our community.

Applicants should review the [Strategic Tourism Plan](#) to determine how their proposal supports stated goals and focus areas.

Applicants should be aware of the permits, licenses, and approvals that will be required to complete the project and be prepared to describe them in the application.

Applicants should be able to describe the current annual attendance (or audience). Applicants should be able to describe the portion of their current attendance (or audience) that comes from outside of Tompkins County.

Attachments

- 1) Detailed project budget
- 2) Nonprofit organizations are required to submit proof of their 501(c)3 status by uploading their [IRS determination letter](#). Municipal applicants are exempt from this requirement.
- 3) **Financial plan materials:** current financial statements, three-year projection of revenues and expenses, financing sources, cash flow
- 4) **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy:** please provide as an attachment or link to your organization's current policy.
- 5) **Other materials:** these include letters of support from key partners, promotional materials, graphics, and ancillary documentation (including video and audio files).

Award Decision Process

- IAED staff review applications for completeness and eligibility. Complete and eligible applications are shared with the appropriate grant review committee.
- The review committee makes funding recommendations for each application to the STPB.
- The STPB makes a funding recommendation to the Tompkins County Legislature.
- The Legislature votes on the grant awards.
- Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability staff send emails to all applicants with funding decision and a contract.

Grant Recipient Responsibilities

Grant awardees are required to enter into a contract with Tompkins County. Several of the responsibilities listed below are included in the contract.

Grant recipients are responsible for securing all necessary permits, authorizations, and approvals necessary for their project.

Awards will be paid directly to eligible awardees.

If any changes have occurred since the time of application, grant recipients are expected to submit an up-to-date budget and statement of work.

Terms of grant disbursement for Capital Improvement Projects are disbursed upon receipt of a signed contract and a valid payment voucher.

Grant funds for Feasibility Studies are disbursed on a reimbursement basis upon receipt of a signed contract, a valid payment voucher, and delivery of the completed study. Grant funds for Capital Improvement awards are disbursed following the payment schedule established in the agreement. The County reserves the right to define payment terms on a case-by-case basis.

All unspent funds must be returned to the County.

Grant recipients are expected to acknowledge the support of the Tompkins County Tourism Program in public relations materials, posters, and programs. The standard acknowledgment statement is: “*Made possible in part by a grant from the Tompkins County Tourism Program.*” Grant recipients may use the Tompkins County Tourism Program logo in accordance with the [recognition guidelines](#).

Grant recipients are expected to submit an annual **grant report**. The report asks for information about visitor origin, demographics, and purpose of travel, as well as data collection and marketing methods. A template report is available on request.

Submitting Your Application

Pre-Application Checklist

- ✓ My organization is an **eligible recipient**.
- ✓ My project is **eligible**.
- ✓ I have documented **matching funds**.
- ✓ I have a detailed **project budget** to attach to my application.
- ✓ I have the other **required attachments**.
- ✓ I have reviewed the **evaluation criteria** and **considerations**.
- ✓ I understand the **grant recipient responsibilities**.

Application Instructions

All applications must be submitted through [Common Grant Application](#). Use one of the links below to start an application:

- Already have an account: [Log in to start an application](#).
- First time applying: [Register for a new account and start an application](#).
- Review [other grants](#) offered by Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability/Tourism Program.

Resources

The Ithaca/Tompkins County **Convention and Visitors Bureau** is available to provide technical assistance related to tourism. For more information contact Peggy Coleman, VP Tourism & Community Relations, peggy@visitithaca.com.

Additional funding opportunities are listed on the following websites:

- [Tompkins County Administration](#)
- [Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County](#)