

Strategic Tourism Implementation Grant

2023 Guidelines



Funding Purpose + Overview

The Strategic Tourism Implementation grant supports projects that substantially advance actions identified in the Strategic Tourism Plan or other tourism implementation plans or strategic priorities of the STPB. This funding opportunity is intended to be flexible in terms of the types of proposals that will be considered which may include local tourism program and industry research priorities.

- Award Range: \$10,000 to \$100,000
- Deadline: Letters of interest will be accepted through November 1, 2023.
- Contact: Nick Helmholdt – tourism@tompkins-co.org – 607-274-5560

This grant is funded by Hotel Room Occupancy Tax collected in Tompkins County, NY. A total of \$500,000 is available for 2023 grant awards.

Prospective applicants are required to submit a letter of interest prior to submitting a full application. All letters of interest and applications must be submitted online through [Common Grant Application](#).

Eligibility

Eligible Applicants

- Non-profit organizations designated as 501(c)3 or 501(c)6
- Municipalities within Tompkins County

Eligible Activities

- The actions identified in the “Strategic Tourism Plan: 2021-2027”
- Implementation of actions identified in:
 - Tompkins County Agriculinary Tourism Implementation Plan
 - Tompkins County Heritage Tourism Implementation Plan
 - Tompkins County Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage Plan
 - Tompkins County Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan

Other Limitations

Each application must show how the proposed project will have an impact with a single award.

Strategic Tourism Implementation funds are not intended to provide general operating support nor ongoing financial assistance.

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 is outside their existing work plan.

Grant recipients are expected to provide a minimum of 10% financial match to the grant award.

Creating a Strong Application

Evaluation Criteria

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

1. Project Readiness
 - Does the proposal demonstrate readiness to use the grant funds and implement the proposed project within 12 months of being funded?
2. Implements an Action in the Strategic Tourism Plan
 - Does the proposal implement an action of the Strategic Tourism Plan?
3. 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? Measurable benefits may occur in future years.
 - Does the application describe how diverse populations will participate in this project?
 - If the project includes marketing, does the marketing plan demonstrate efforts to attract a diverse audience?
4. Project Outcome and Cost
 - Is the overall project cost reasonable 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?
5. Organizational Capacity
 - Is the proposed schedule of work clear and technically feasible?
 - Does the project team have the skills and experience necessary?
 - Does the project team have a demonstrated history of success in similar projects?
6. 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 contributions secured?
 - Has the applicant demonstrated partnerships with other community stakeholders?
 - Does the proposal contain commitment letters from participants, funders, and related businesses and other organizations?

Considerations

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

Applicants should have a clear understanding of all permits and licenses that will be required to complete the project.

Required Attachments

Failure to provide the following required attachments will cause your application to be ineligible for funding.

- 1) Detailed project budget. (Applicants are *strongly encouraged* to use the template budget spreadsheet available on the application webpage. All major categories of expenses should be listed along with all types of revenue and donations.)
- 2) Proof of non-profit status in the form of an IRS determination letter. (Municipal applicants are exempt from this requirement.)
- 3) Statement of work. This document describes how you will implement your proposed project and achieve its objectives. Applicants are required to specify project start and end dates, a project schedule, expected environmental impacts, deliverables, responsibilities of key people or organizations, measures of success and methods of tracking progress.

Optional Attachments

Applicants may submit additional material including marketing plans, letters of support from key partners, qualifications, drawings, or ancillary supporting information (including video and audio files). The primary focus of the review committee will be on the information in the online application and the project budget.

Award Decision Process

- The Strategic Tourism Planning Board's (STPB) Strategic Tourism Implementation grant review committee considers letters of intent from prospective applicants. If the committee deems that the proposal is worth considering, the applicant will be invited to prepare a full application.
- Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability (DPS) staff review applications for completeness and eligibility. Complete and eligible applications are shared with the Strategic Tourism Implementation 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.
- DPS 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.

Awards will be paid directly to registered not-for-profit organizations or municipal governments.

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.

The grant administrator reserves the right to establish a payment schedule based on project progress. Grant funds are disbursed upon receipt of a signed contract and a valid payment voucher.

Successful applicants will be required to prepare and submit a final grant report.

Grant funds are disbursed in a manner deemed appropriate by the grant administrator. All unspent funds must be returned to the County.

Grant recipients are required to acknowledge the support of the Tompkins County Tourism Program in all public relations materials, posters, and programs. The standard acknowledgment statement is: "This program was 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](#),

Prepare and Submit Your Letter of Interest & Application

Application Instructions

The **letter of interest** should be no more than two (2) pages long and should be on your organization's letterhead. At a minimum, it should provide a description of the project and organization, a statement about the need or opportunity, and a description of how the project implements an action from the Strategic Tourism Plan. It should also state a specific dollar amount or range that would be requested and other sources of funding.

All letters of interest 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 a new application](#)
- First time applying: [Register for a new account and start an application](#).

If you are invited to submit a **full proposal**, please provide complete and concise answers to all questions in the application narrative. There are two required attachments: a detailed project budget and a statement of work. Applicants are encouraged, but not required to submit letters of support/commitment from key partners.

For additional assistance, contact Nick Helmholdt at tourism@tompkins-co.org, 607-273-5560.

Resources

Please refer to the Tompkins County [Strategic Tourism Plan](#) for a complete list of all proposed actions. All other tourism implementation plans can also be accessed on this website.