Tourism Project Grants

Fall 2022 Guidelines

Funding Purpose + Overview

Tourism Project Grants fund efforts that draw visitors to Tompkins County for overnight stays or accomplish other actions listed in the Strategic Tourism Plan.

- Award Range: $1,000 to $10,000
- Deadline: September 12, 2022
- Contact: Nick Helmholdt – tourism@tompkins-co.org – 607-274-5560

Examples of projects that have been funded in the past include, Ithaca Reggae Fest, Spring Writes Literary Festival, Ithaca Gus Macker Basketball Tournament, Shakespeare Festival, museum exhibits, and a variety of theatrical performances.

This grant is funded by Hotel Room Occupancy Tax collected in Tompkins County, NY. Up to $25,000 is available for fall 2022 grants. This grant cycle can support events taking place from December 2022 through April 2023. A grant workshop will be held on August 2, 2022.

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
- Applicant must have an adopted organizational policy on diversity, equity, and inclusion

Eligible Activities

Projects aligned with the Strategic Tourism Plan or other tourism implementation plans are eligible for funding. Examples of eligible uses of Tourism Project Grant funds include:

- Artistic events and performances
- Heritage tourism events
- Agriculinary events
- Outdoor recreation events

- Events which attract a niche audience
- Festivals
- Temporary exhibits
- Guided tours
- Art installations

Other Limitations

- Applicants must demonstrate a financial **match** of at least two-thirds (67%) of the total project cost. (For example, a grant application for $1,000 must demonstrate a total project cost of $3,000 or greater.) This match can be provided from the following sources:
  - Cash
  - In-kind donations of goods and professional services
  - Volunteer time only if this time would otherwise need to be replaced by paid staff time or paid professional services. Where the specific value of the service is not estimated by the provider, use an estimate of $29.95 per hour[1].
- With limited exceptions, purchase of **equipment** with grant funds is not eligible. Grant funds can support the rental of equipment.
- Grant funds may not be used for projects whose primary purpose is **fundraising** for a specific cause.
- Applications that exclusively promote a **religious** tradition are ineligible.
- Promoted events must be **open to the public**. Membership in an organization must not be required to participate in the proposed event.
- Groups planning **conferences** or meetings in Tompkins County targeting specific interests should work through the Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) to obtain conference services. Conferences and meetings are not eligible for support from this grant.
- Grant funds may not be used to cover general entertainment costs such as for theater parties, museum receptions, etc.

Creating a Strong Application

Evaluation Criteria

The review committee will score applications based on how well they meet the following criteria and answer the related questions:

1. Cohesiveness of Proposal
   - Is the application clear and well written?

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[1] This is an independent estimate of the value of volunteer time in the United States in 2022. Source: Independent Sector. https://independentsector.org/value-of-volunteer-time-2022/

- Is the proposal's budget clear?

2. Organizational Capacity
   - Is the proposed project clear and technically feasible?
   - Does the project team have the right skills and experience to administer the award and carry out the project?
   - Do team members 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 application demonstrate understanding of the specific steps that will be taken to deliver a successful project?

3. Project Benefits
   - What 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, given other constraints or barriers?
   - Are there significant quality of life benefits?
   - Do projects with longer life spans (such as signage) demonstrate measurable benefits for up to five years?
   - Does the application describe how diverse populations will participate in and benefit from this project?

4. Project Outcome and Cost
   - Are the overall project cost and requested grant funds 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?

5. Alignment with Strategic Tourism Plan
   - Does the project show strong alignment with the values, goals, and actions of the Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan?

6. Marketing Plan
   - Does the application contain a clear, well-thought-out marketing plan that identifies target visitor groups?
   - Does the marketing plan demonstrate efforts to attract a diverse audience?
   - Does the project's marketing strategy align with the CVB?

Additional 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. You can [review the Diversity Statement online](#).

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. **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 (if applicable) and set specific goals for future visitor attendance, as well as to outline methods for collecting this data.

All applications must demonstrate alignment of the project with the goals of the Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan.

Projects should 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.

Applicants are encouraged to source goods and services locally.

A previous award for the same event does not guarantee future funding.

Applicants should consider if their event will require specific permits, licenses, or other permissions. If so, these should be described in the application.

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 a 501(c)3 determination letter. (Municipal applicants are exempt from this requirement.)
3) Returning applicants must submit the final report from their most recent grant-funded project. (New applicants are exempt from this requirement.)

Optional Attachments

Applicants may submit letters of support from key partners, graphics, or ancillary documentation (including video and audio files). However, the grant review committee will focus primarily on evaluating the information in the online application and the project budget.

Award Decision Process

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

Appeal Process

Applicants can appeal the decision of a funding award based on improprieties in the grant selection process. These include misrepresentation of information, non-presentation of information, or improper procedures. A denial of funding, or dissatisfaction with the amount of the award, is not justification for an appeal. To appeal a funding decision, send a letter stating the reason for the appeal to tourism@tompkins-co.org or STPB chair within 14 days of receiving written notification of the grant decision.

Grant Recipient Responsibilities

Please check for COVID updates available on the Tompkins County Health Department website: https://tompkinscountyny.gov/health

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 municipalities.

Grant awardees who are awarded less than they requested may be asked to submit an updated project budget. This document may be required to authorize payment.

Grant funds are disbursed upon the receipt of an authorized payment voucher. This grant is paid in advance. 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](#).

Grant recipients are expected to submit a grant report no later than 30 days after their event. The grant report asks for information about attendance, actual expenses, economic impact, data collection methods, and event promotion. A template report is attached to each contract.

Prepare and Submit Your Application

Pre-Application Checklist

- ✓ My organization is an **eligible recipient**.
- ✓ My project is an **eligible activity**.
- ✓ I have documented **matching funds** equal to at least two-thirds (67%) of the total project cost.
- ✓ 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 **Tompkins Festivals Program** is available to help event organizers with:

- Technical event assistance to support budgeting, 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](#) and contact Scott Rougeau at the Downtown Ithaca Alliance: scott@downtownithaca.com.

The **Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)** is available to provide technical assistance related to promoting your event. Grant recipients are encouraged to work with the CVB if they would like to attract visitors from outside Tompkins County. 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](#)