

Strategic Tourism Implementation Grant

2020 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. 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: Approx. \$25,000 to \$100,000
- Deadline: Letters of interest will be accepted through November 1, 2020.
- Contact: Nick Helmholdt – tourism@tompkins-co.org – 607-274-5560

The grant is intended to support projects which:

- Advance the development of a conference center
- Have the potential to directly implement a critical action identified by the Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan or a strategic priority of the STPB.
- Can demonstrate the potential for economic benefits through additional room nights and visitor spending in Tompkins County.
- Can enhance the quality of life of residents of Tompkins County.

Prospective applicants are required to submit a letter of interest prior to submitting a full application.

This grant is funded by Hotel Room Occupancy Tax collected in Tompkins County, NY. A total of \$49,830 was budgeted for this grant in 2020.

Please Note: all letters of interest and applications must be submitted online through Common Grant Application. Please see the section titled "Prepare and Submit Your Application" for details.

Eligibility

Eligible Applicants

- Non-profit organizations designated as 501(c)3

- Municipalities within Tompkins County

Eligible Activities

- Activities that advance the development of a conference center
- The critical actions identified in the “2020 Strategic Tourism Plan”
- 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

The top priority for this grant is to advance the development of a downtown conference center in 2020.

The Strategic Tourism Implementation grant is not intended to support general operating expenses. Each application must demonstrate how the proposed project will have an impact with a single award. While organizations may submit multiple applications, those applications may be ranked lower by the review committee. (Contact the Tourism Program Director to learn about other potential funding sources.) 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 falls outside the existing core work plan. However, projects must fall within the mission and purpose of the applicant organization. Projects not within the recognized scope of the applicant’s mission are discouraged.

There is no match requirement, but proposals demonstrating community support by way of matching financial and in-kind support will be rated more highly.

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 Critical Action or Strategic Priority.
 - Does the proposal implement an action of the Strategic Tourism Plan or a strategic priority of the STPB in a significant way?
- 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 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. Organizational Capacity.
 - Is the proposed schedule of work 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?
- 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 cash and in-kind contributions secured or likely?
 - Is evidence of partnerships provided?
 - Does the proposal contain Letters of Commitment from participants, co-funders, and related businesses and other organizations?

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 events can appeal to diverse audiences and reflect the diversity of our community. You can review the Diversity Statement online at <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/board>

Applicants should be aware of recently completed Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan which describes new priorities for local tourism investments. Applicants are encouraged to consider how their projects can support goals in this plan. You can review the Plan online at <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/plan>

Applicants should be aware of any permits and/or licenses that may 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 a 501(c)3 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 *strongly encouraged* to clearly specify project start and end dates, a project schedule, 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/or 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 two-page 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 file a 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, which can be downloaded from the Tourism Program webpage: <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/recognition>

Prepare and Submit Your Letter of Interest & Application

Letter of Interest

- ✓ I have a two-page **letter** describing an eligible project.

Application

- ✓ I have been **invited** to submit a full application by the grant review committee
- ✓ My organization is an **eligible recipient**
- ✓ My celebration is an **eligible activity**
- ✓ I have a detailed **project budget** to attach to my application
- ✓ I have a detailed **statement of work** 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

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 or specific local tourism research need. It should also state a specific dollar amount or range that would be requested and other sources of funding and support.

All letters of interest must be submitted through Common Grant Application. Use this link to sign up for an account and start an application:

<https://www.commongrantapplication.com/register.php?refOrgId=70636&refProgId=686&refProgType=grantsNew>

All Tompkins County Tourism Program grant applications are available online:

<https://www.commongrantapplication.com/grantmakers/70636/Tompkins-County-Department-of-Planning-and-Sustainability.html#gmkProgGrants>

If invited to submit a **full proposal**, please provide complete and concise answers to all questions in the application narrative. You may provide a maximum of ten (10) pages for the narrative. There are two required attachments: a detailed project budget and a statement of work. There is no page limit for attachments. Applicants are encouraged, but not required to submit letters of support/commitment from key partners. Do not submit the proposal guidelines with your proposal; the application cover page should be the first page of your proposal.

Application instructions will be sent to organizations selected to apply.

For additional assistance, please contact Nick Helmholdt – 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. The plan is available here: www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/plan. A concise list of critical actions may be found in Appendix A of the Plan. All other tourism implementation plans can also be accessed on this website.