

Tourism Capital Grants

2020 Guidelines



Funding Purpose + Overview

Tourism Capital grants support major investments in visitor-generating projects such as theaters, 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.

- Typical Award Range: \$5,000 to \$100,000
- Deadline: March 17, 2020
- Contact: Heather McDaniel – heatherm@tcad.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. Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD) administers the program with review by the Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB). A total of \$244,000 was budgeted for this grant in 2020.

Please Note: all 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
- Farmers Markets

Eligible Activities – Capital Investment Projects

Project will typically be valued at \$75,000 or higher. New construction and renovation projects are eligible. The project may provide expansion or renovation to existing facilities or may be a totally new facility. 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

- Grant funds cannot be used to refinance existing debt, for applicant's overhead costs, or for operating expenses.
- All applicants are expected to track visitors to establish the tourism impact of the proposed project.
- 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 professional services that would otherwise be purchased for the project
- Capital Investment Projects are expected to have a minimum five-year useful life span.
- Applicants for Feasibility Studies are not required to demonstrate a financial **match**. However, applications that demonstrate the applicant's financial investment in the project may be more competitive.
- Fundraising feasibility studies are not eligible.

Creating a Strong Application

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
- Contribution to the County's Strategic Tourism Plan
<http://tompkinscountyny.gov/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 capacity and 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 STPB. The STPB encourages applicants to consider how their proposals 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 review the Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan: 2021-2027 to determine how their proposal supports stated goals and critical actions. 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 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.

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 provide a detailed budget for the proposed capital project prepared by a design professional if available.)
- 2) Proof of non-profit status in the form of a 501(c)3 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

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

- TCAD 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.

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.

Grant funds for Capital Improvement Projects are disbursed upon receipt of a signed contract and a valid payment voucher. (Multi-year grant awards are disbursed over two or three years.)

Grant funds for Feasibility Studies are disbursed on a reimbursement basis upon receipt of a signed contract, a valid payment voucher, and a copy of the completed study.

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 project 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>

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 attached to each contract.

Prepare and Submit Your Application

- ✓ My organization is an **eligible recipient**.
- ✓ My project is **eligible**.
- ✓ I have documented **matching funds** equal to at least two thirds (67%) of the total project cost (Capital Investment Projects only).
- ✓ 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 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>

The deadline for applications is March 17, 2020.

For additional assistance, please contact Heather D. McDaniel – heatherm@tcad.org – 607-273-0005

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: <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/ctyadmin/Grants/index>
- Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County: <https://hsctc.org/funders/>
- Community Foundation of Tompkins County: <http://www.cftompkins.org/resources/funding-opportunities-from-other-tompkins-county-funders/>