

# Tourism Project Grants

2020 Guidelines



## Funding Purpose + Overview

Tourism Project Grants fund efforts that draw visitors to Tompkins County for overnight stays or accomplish other critical actions listed in the "2020 Strategic Tourism Plan."

- Award Range: \$1,000 to \$25,000
- Deadline: February 27, 2020
- Contact: Nick Helmholdt – [tourism@tompkins-co.org](mailto:tourism@tompkins-co.org) – 607-274-5560

Examples of projects that have been funded in the past include Wizarding Weekend, Ithaca Reggae Fest, Spring Writes Literary Festival, Finger Lakes International Dragon Boat Festival, museum exhibits, and a variety of theatrical performances.

This grant is intended to fund both new and established projects. The grant review committee will aim to allocate at least 30% of the total funding to projects that have occurred for three years or less.

This grant is funded by Hotel Room Occupancy Tax collected in Tompkins County, NY. A total of \$27,159 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

### *Eligible Activities*

Many activities are eligible uses of Tourism Project Grant funds, including:

- Projects aligned with the Strategic Tourism Plan or other tourism implementation plans. You can review these plans online at <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/plan>
- 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. 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 \$25.43 per hour<sup>1</sup>.
- 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*

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<sup>1</sup> This is an independent estimate of the value of volunteer time in the United States in 2018. Source: Independent Sector. <https://independentsector.org/value-of-volunteer-time-2018/>

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?
  - 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 deliver?
  - 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 project description demonstrate understanding of the specific steps that will be taken to deliver a successful project?
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?
  - Will the project support tourism growth in the winter, on soft weekends, or during the mid-week?
  - Are the expected economic benefits likely to be realized, given other constraints or barriers?
  - Are there additional 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 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 marketing strategy align with the marketing strategies of the CVB and/or show coordination with the CVB?

## 7. New Projects

- How long has this activity been going on?

### *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>

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, including major cities and small towns. **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 and set specific goals for future visitor attendance, as well as to outline strategies 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.

Tompkins County will prioritize projects that hold potential to draw visitors during the mid-week and/or from mid-November through April.

### *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 Tourism Project Grant 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, 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**

- Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability (DPS) 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.
- DPS staff send emails to all applicants with funding decision and a contract.

Applicants can appeal the decision of a grant award. A denial of funding, or dissatisfaction with the amount of the award, is not justification for an appeal. An appeal may only be made due to improprieties in the grant selection process. You may appeal the decision based on misrepresentation of information; non-presentation of information; or improper procedures. To appeal a funding decision, send a letter stating the reason for the appeal to the grant administrator or STPB chair within 14 days of receiving written notification of the grant decision.

#### **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 municipalities.

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

Grant funds are disbursed upon the receipt of an updated budget, and 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, which can be downloaded from the Tourism Program webpage: <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/recognition>

Grant recipients are expected to submit a grant report no later than 60 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 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 February 27, 2020.

For additional assistance, please contact Nick Helmholdt – [tourism@tom-pkins-co.org](mailto:tourism@tom-pkins-co.org) – 607-273-5560.

## Resources

The **Tompkins Festivals Program** is available to help event organizers with:

- Annual event management workshops
- 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 at <http://www.tompkinsfestivals.com> and contact Scott Rougeau at the Downtown Ithaca Alliance [scott@downtownithaca.com](mailto:scott@downtownithaca.com).

The **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 of Tompkins County. For more information contact Peggy Coleman, VP Tourism & Community Relations, [peggy@visitithaca.com](mailto:peggy@visitithaca.com).

Additional funding opportunities are listed on the following websites:

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