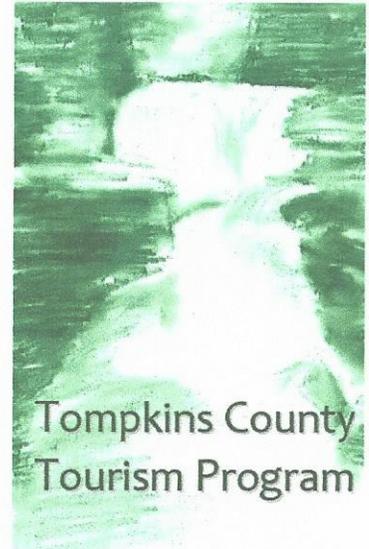


COVER PAGE

2016 Budget Request Form Tompkins County Tourism Program



I. BASIC INFORMATION

Program: Discovery Trail

Applicant Organization: Discovery Trail

Contact Person: Nancy Grossman

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2016 Request: \$37,137.00 Product Development or Marketing? Marketing

Year	Tourism Program Allocation**	\$ Change	% Change	% of Program Budget*
2012	36,270.00	536.00	1.5%	22% overall and 70% marketing and admin
2013	36,270.00	0	0	Same as 2012
2014	37,360.00	1,090.00	3%	20% overall and 66% marketing and admin
2015	36,055.00	1,005.00	-3.5%	14% overall and 66% marketing and admin
Request 2016	37,137.00	1,082.00	3%	12.7% overall and 65.4% marketing

* Enter the % of the total program budget that would come from the Tompkins County Tourism Program.

** Enter modified budget amounts where applicable.

II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Describe the program in two or three sentences.

The Discovery Trail is a collaborative of eight Tompkins County attractions, including seven museums and the TC Public Library. The Discovery Trail pools its resources, including projected annual member contributions of \$19,627 plus \$25,260 of in-kind support in 2016, to co-promote the member organizations, and thereby extends its marketing reach beyond what each organization could individually accomplish.

III. CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Very briefly state overarching challenges and opportunities related to your program (current or anticipated in 2016) and describe you how propose to address them.

Challenges: 2015 is a transition year for the Discovery Trail as we are in the process of reviewing our staffing needs. Our goal is to expand staff time which will impact marketing and allow us to engage in more opportunities in 2016.

Opportunities: The Discovery Trail is an incredible product. We have eight international quality educational institutions providing rich and engaging experiences to all ages every season of the year. This wide range of appeal offers us endless marketing opportunities to engage visitors and we hope with more hours more initiatives will be presented in the coming year.

IV. BUDGET NARRATIVE

Describe how you propose to use the requested funds. You may also use this section to expand on your answers to questions II and III.

The Discovery Trail is changing our fiscal year in 2015. We are operating on a short year from January 1 – June 30, 2015 and then changing to a July 1 fiscal year to better accommodate the funding cycle for our school program – *Kids Discover the Trail!* We will continue to structure our annual budget by programs: *KDT!* Grants, *KDT!* Programs and Marketing.

The Discovery Trail's marketing efforts are tracked separately from the other DT expenses.

Member dues were increased by 3% from 2014-2015 and we are budgeting for another 3% increase in 2016. We also computed in-kind DT partner support at \$25,260 for DT directors, marketing committee, and DT Chair time.

With the available marketing funds for 2015 we are focusing on a new rack card design and printing, distribution of our current brochure and new rack card as well as print and web advertising. We are also looking into expanding the reach of our website, updated in 2014, through search engine optimizing to increase our unique web visitors.

In 2016, the requested funds will be used to increase promotion of Discovery Trail offerings to potential out of area visitors with the goal of extended overnight stays in Tompkins County using more web based platforms and social media. We plan to work with the CVB to establish a more integrated plan. We will also partner with the CVB and Tourism Program on the 2016 Chmura Report update. With the completion of the Commons project, we expect to partner with the Downtown Ithaca Alliance on a new downtown/Discovery Trail map. Our plans are outlined in the program goals section.

V. PROGRAM GOALS

List and describe program goals for 2016, using the sample format. For each goal listed, describe how you will measure achievement of that goal (you may list more than one measure of achievement for each goal). This will require you to consider appropriate numerical measures and baselines.

Also, which goals and critical actions of the Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan does this program respond to, and how do your proposed program goals align with goals stated in the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan?

We feel the Discovery Trail is a positive investment for the Tourism Program. Our marketing initiatives correspond with the continued growth of the internet for travel planning. The majority of Tompkins County tourists are in the age range of 45-64 years as outlined in the Chmura Report and this group is reaching out to the web for more information. Updating to a responsive design website addressed this growing population segment. The Discovery Trail plans to continue with our successful initiatives and make adjustments in 2016 to include more social media, search optimizing, plus continue our *What's Hot* campaign with the goal of increasing attendance and name recognition.

Our continuing work to expand *Kids Discover the Trail!*, the Discovery Trail's educational program, from Ithaca and Trumansburg districts to include the remaining four districts in Tompkins County mirrors a STPB Tourism goal of improving the quality of life for local residents. For the 2014-15 school year, Groton grade 2 and 5 students, Lansing grade 1 students and Newfield grade 2 and 5 students are participating. We are working with the remaining district with the hope of bringing them on board with a pilot program during the 2015-16 school year as well as expanding programming in Groton, Lansing and Newfield. While *KDT!* is an important part of what the Discovery Trail does as an organization, *KDT!* is a separate program from our marketing. As noted in section IV *KDT!* is funded separately and Tourism Program funds are not used.

2016 Program Goals:

Goal 1: The Discovery Trail will continue to improve the use of tracking and analytics in our marketing planning.

Measure of Achievement: We are using analytics and cost per impression data to determine the success of our advertising vehicles. We will analyze data from 2014 to 2015 to determine changes in data.

Narrative: We plan to increase the use of analytics offered by Facebook and Google as we focus on specific geographic regions, age groups and interests. As we drill into this data the information we acquire will allow us to make the most of our advertising decisions and then have the best rate of return with our advertising dollars. In addition, we track the number of brochures distributed with our contracted suppliers. In 2014, Brochures Unlimited distributed 24,250 brochures.

Goal 2: To continue with the *What's Hot* campaign in 2015 and 2016.

Measure of Achievement: To determine the *What's Hot* campaign success we will review data from 2014 to 2015 to determine the change in unique visitors, page views, as well as traffic sources.

Narrative: The *What's Hot* campaign is an integrated approach to marketing specific events and exhibits at DT sites. We started in 2013 by selecting two items per month as a feature. When the event is featured, for example the Strange Matter exhibition at the Sciencenter starting mid-May 2015, we have a cover photo on Facebook, photo and text on the CVB's feature listing, and photo and text on the *What's Hot* page on www.discoverytrail.com that all focus on this specific event or exhibition. Based on strong referral data from Google Analytics we expanded our buy for web banner ads with Fingerlakes Tourism Alliance in 2014 and again in 2015. Our ad buy with FLTA is during the busier travel months of April, May, June and July and will focus on one of the *What's Hot* feature for that month.

This program aligns with the goals stated in the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan to "develop Ithaca and Tompkins County as a central arts, cultural and heritage tourism destination in the Finger Lakes" and to "increase educational tourism".

Goal 3: Attendance and Name Recognition. Continue to increase visitor attendance to our sites by 5% annually.

Measure of Achievement: We conducted our last visitor survey in 2013 and goals for 2014 and 2015 were based on this data. We had planned to have a new survey in 2015 however after discussing with the CVB and Tourism Program the Discovery Trail will postpone our plans and collaborate on the 2016 Chmura Report with intercept surveys focusing on our eight sites. Our goals for 2016 are to:

- Increase total attendance at the eight Discovery Trail sites by 5% for 2016. Museum attendance increased by 1.8% from 337,410 in 2013 to 343,663 in 2014.
- Increase out-of-county name recognition of Discovery Trail by 5%, based on 26% in 2013.
- Increase in-county name recognition of Discovery Trail by 5%, based on 56% in 2013.

Narrative: A goal of the Discovery Trail is to continue to increase our out-of-area visitation and name recognition by in and out of county attendees. Data from the 2013 visitor survey demonstrates the importance of both local and out of area visitors being familiar with the Discovery Trail. In 2013, 70% of visitors surveyed had previously visited Tompkins County. For those who live in the area, it is difficult to pinpoint a precise source of awareness about the site they were visiting (42% just know of it on their own – 25% from living, working or going to school here, 12% from driving by, 4% from having visited the site before, etc.). Instead, referrals (primarily from friends/family) seem to be on the rise (31% in 2013 vs. 20% in 2011) as the way in which visitors primarily became aware of the site where they were surveyed. Based on this information we added back print advertising with the Ithaca Child publications in 2014 and have continued in 2015 as well as advertising in all of the seasonal Ithaca Times guides to reach new arrivals and continue to build awareness in Tompkins and surrounding counties. In 2014 overall attendance at the Discovery Trail dropped due to a reduction in visitors at Tompkins County Public Library that was attributed to an increase in on-line borrowing and drop in foot traffic due to construction surrounding the facility. However attendance at Library programming showed a first quarter 2015 total program attendance increase of 56% with children and young adults the strongest segment.

VI. ACHIEVEMENTS

Please describe your most significant program achievements during 2014 and the first quarter (January through March) of 2015. If possible, please use this as an opportunity to restate your program goals for the 2014 and 2015 budget years and describe progress towards these goals.

2014 achievements include:

- ❖ Brochure exchanges: Cayuga Lake Wine Trail, CVB and FLTA
- ❖ Responsive Design overhaul to DT website "live" late May 2014
- ❖ Brochure distribution with Brochures Unlimited, Fingerlakes Tourism Alliance, Grapevine Distribution, Ithaca Mall, Gateway Info Center, Preble Visitor Center and 1,000 Islands Tourism Council.
- ❖ Binghamton's WBNG aired an Action News segment interviewing the coordinator and followed up with thirty-five TV commercials October 1-10 with a link to the DT website on WBNG's website.
- ❖ Media News: Museum of the Earth was featured in *Mandarin Quarterly* (Circulation: 35,000), a glossy lifestyle magazine written for a specialty audience of high-net-worth Mandarin-speaking business leaders, trendsetters and opinion makers living in NYC. *Travel & Leisure* ranked PRI's Darwin Days #4 in their "quirkiest town" story. Ithaca Times: Family Matters story on what to do with your children on the Discovery Trail during the summer with a Lab of O photo. Plus summer visitors, new students and families learned about the DT in the August 13-19 *Ithaca Times* where we were featured as one of the "Ten Cool Places" Getting off Campus and Checking out the Region locations.
- ❖ Goodie bags were hand delivered to front end hotel staff at the new properties on route 13 to help promote guest referrals.
- ❖ Web presence: CVB feature listings, event and exhibition postings (updated weekly) on Edible Fingerlakes, Fingerlakes Tourism Alliance and Life in Fingerlakes and weekly updates to DT events and news on discoverytrail.com and DT Facebook page.
- ❖ What's Hot: bimonthly updated features of DT event or exhibition.
- ❖ CVB: monthly feature listings on visithaca.com, enews features, Winter Recess program back cover, Star Hospitality program and familiarization tours in June.
- ❖ Museum attendance increased by 1.8% from 337,410 in 2013 to 343,663 in 2014.

2015 to date achievements include:

- New rack card in design phase and printing scheduled for June.
- Brochure exchanges in May for CVB and FLTA.
- Fingerlakes Tourism Alliance: promotion at American Bus Association January conference in St. Louis, MO included DT as one of the area's great group travel friendly businesses. Interview at Johnson Museum with Laura Menegazzo, a writer from France representing Le Petit Fute. Also organized by FLTA, the publication was released in May.
- Media: CVB e-news to 20K featuring "The Discovery Trail is Hot this Winter! With specific event and exhibition highlights. March 25: Ithaca Times – All About Ithaca 2015 – one page story titled "On the Trail: Eight Local Cultural Institutions Provide a Linked Learning Experience". Reprinted on Ithaca.com April 9.
- April 24-27: Cornell Charter Day weekend. DT events listed on CU website with link to DT website. Posting started in January 2015.

2016 on the schedule:

- Collaborating with CVB and Tourism Program on next Discovery Trail visitor survey
- Expanding rack card distribution to Albany and PA markets
- Increased collaboration with CVB on marketing planning
- Review of DT website with possibility of design updating
- Goodie Bags to new Ithaca hotel properties

VII. IMPACT OF FUNDING

What would be the specific impact of receiving less funding than you are requesting? For example, what are the things that you would like to be able to do that you would not be able to do? What would be removed or reduced from your plans if you had to make do with less than requested?

We have requested a 3% increase in funding based on the 2015 room tax budget allocations. This will increase our marketing resources. In 2016 we expect an increase in staffing time allocated to marketing with the proposed hiring of an Executive Director. The new ED will be the main person to implement marketing projects with the assistance of the DT Chair and DT marketing committee.

VIII. COLLABORATION

What steps have you taken and/or what new steps do you propose to take to collaborate, coordinate, partner, and share information and resources between your program(s) and other room-tax funded programs?

The Discovery Trail maintains a strong working relationship with the Ithaca CVB through collaboration on marketing campaigns and participation in CVB initiatives such as the VIsitithaca.com feature listings, seasonal e-news blasts, bus tour offerings, and Star Hospitality offerings. The CVB shares their plans and marketing research which helps the Discovery Trail determine the best avenues to pursue to expand the outreach for potential visitors to Tompkins County. Our brochures are a prominent feature in the East Shore and Commons Visitor Centers and the Commons center also features our 27.5" by 71" banner. We plan to increase our communication and planning with the CVB for 2016.

In addition, the Discovery Trail in and of itself is a collaboration and we are always receptive to other ways to participate in our community.

IX. STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES (optional)

What strategic opportunities related to your program outside of this 2016 budget request would you like the STPB to be aware of?

We are planning to start work on a collaborative 20th anniversary celebration that will feature exhibitions in 2019 at each of the Discovery Trail sites.

Discovery Trail

2016 Budget Request - Tompkins County Tourism Program

For previous years budgets, used modified budget amounts.

REVENUE	2013 Budget	2014 Budget	2015 Budget	2016 Request	Notes
TCTP*	\$36,270.00	\$37,360.00	\$36,055.00	\$37,137.00	
DT Member Dues	\$17,289.65	\$18,600.00	\$19,500.00	\$19,627.00	
SUBTOTAL	\$53,559.65	\$55,960.00	\$55,555.00	\$56,764.00	
TOTAL REVENUES	\$53,559.65	\$55,960.00	\$55,555.00	\$56,764.00	
TOTAL TCTP*	\$36,270.00	\$37,360.00	\$36,055.00	\$37,137.00	
TCTP Share	67.7%	66.8%	64.9%	65.4%	
EXPENSES					
Advertising - DM	\$12,690.00	\$9,402.68	\$15,195.00	\$11,500.00	Print and Web
Visitor Survey - DM	\$2,000.00	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	budgeting 3 years for Chmura study update in 2016
Website updating & maintenance-DM		\$7,612.50	\$500.00	\$5,000.00	mobile redesign in 2014 and possible updating in 2016
Brochure Reprint/design - DM	\$4,809.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	
Brochure Distribution - DM	\$5,465.50	\$5,149.30	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00	includes shipping to brochure distributor
Web Design/Hosting - DM	\$515.00	\$590.34	\$65.00	\$0.00	switched to GoDaddy in 2015 and paid for two years - substantial drop in rate from previous hosting service
Local advertising & fliers - DA & DM	\$1,740.00	\$1,280.00	\$1,440.00	\$1,560.00	
Maps - DM	\$499.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$550.00	
Professional Fees - DA & DM	\$2,400.00	\$2,710.00	\$2,900.00	\$2,700.00	annual audit
Accounting - LAP - DA & DM	\$887.50	\$1,826.00	\$1,900.00	\$1,900.00	
Coordinator - federal taxes - DA & DM	\$1,325.68	\$2,264.00	\$1,555.00	\$1,554.00	
Coordinator wages - administration - DA	\$11,943.00	\$10,520.00	\$10,500.00	\$10,500.00	
Coordinator - marketing - DM	\$9,285.00	\$8,105.18	\$8,500.00	\$8,500.00	
SUBTOTAL	\$53,559.68	\$55,960.00	\$55,555.00	\$56,764.00	
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$53,559.68	\$55,960.00	\$55,555.00	\$56,764.00	
TOTAL TCTP*	\$36,270.00	\$37,360.00	\$36,055.00	\$37,137.00	
TCTP share	67.7%	66.8%	64.9%	65.4%	
REVENUES LESS EXPENSES	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	

*TCTP-Tompkins County Tourism Program

Note: expenses for overall DT administration are noted with a DA & marketing expenses with a DM.