

Tourism Capital Grants

Program Overview

The Tourism Capital Grants program is funded by the County's Room Tax. Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD) administrators the program with review by the Strategic Tourism Planning (STP) Board and final approval from the Tompkins County Legislature. Applications are usually accepted in March – confirm deadlines with the program administrator.

These grants focus on major visitor-generating projects such as museums, performance venues, and other major cultural and recreational tourist attractions. The funds can be used for:

- feasibility studies of potential capital projects
- seed money or one-time investments in unique capital projects
- ongoing debt funding of building projects

Applicant Eligibility: large, tourist/visitor generating not-for-profit or public-purpose projects. Examples of projects include the new Museum of the Earth, the Hangar Theater renovation, and The Sciencenter's Touch Tank exhibit. The organization must track visitor information in order to establish tourism impact. The organization must also market outside Tompkins County.

A. *Capital Investment Projects:* New construction, expansion, and renovation projects are eligible. The grants are to fund investments in capital projects that will facilitate tourism for a minimum of five years. The grants may not fund general operating expenses such as salaries. The fund cannot be used to pay-down existing debt. The fund will usually participate at the \$25,000 level or higher. Funds may contribute up to one third of eligible costs, which include:

- acquisition of land
- construction and renovation of buildings and related site work
- acquisition of furnishings, equipment, permanent exhibitions (enduring at least 5 years)

The application must demonstrate

- financial feasibility of the project
- organizational capacity to make the project a success

B. *Feasibility Studies:* Studies will be for a tourism capital project as described above, including:

- Assessing and optimizing tourism impact of a capital project, for example:
 - Potential markets and visitor numbers
 - Best use of a site to maximize the tourism impact
 - Getting the right mix of "tourism product" for a given venture
- Business viability and planning specific to a tourism capital project

Grants may fund up to 100% of a feasibility study, but a cash contribution is typical.

The application must demonstrate

- preliminary research that supports proceeding to a full scale feasibility study
- organizational commitment to the project being studied

All proposals must demonstrate likelihood of improved visitor experience, increased visitors to the facility, and/or visitors increasing their length of stay in order to visit the facility.

Applications should demonstrate alignment with the Tompkins County Tourism Strategy.

for more information contact

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