

# APPLICATION GUIDELINES

## 2018 Strategic Tourism Implementation Grant Funding Opportunity



### Deadline

Applications will be accepted in a two-step process.

- STEP ONE: Letters of interest with a maximum length of two pages will be accepted through *November 1, 2018*.
- STEP TWO: The Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) will review the letters of interest and then select applicants from whom to invite full proposals.

A goal is to make final funding awards by *November 30, 2018*

### Contact:

Nick Helmholdt, Principal Planner/Tourism Program Director  
Tompkins County Planning & Sustainability Department  
121 E. Court St. Ithaca, NY 14850  
607-274-5575

Email letters of interest by *November 1, 2018* to: [nhelmholdt@tompkins-co.org](mailto:nhelmholdt@tompkins-co.org)

### Summary of Funding Opportunity

\$TBD is available in the 2018 budget of the Tompkins County Tourism Program for Strategic Tourism Implementation. The Tourism Program is funded by the County's hotel room occupancy tax. The final amount available through the Strategic Tourism Implementation grant process described in these grant guidelines will be established prior to inviting full proposals. The overarching purpose of these one-time funds is to support significant implementation of *critical actions* identified in the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan.

The Tompkins County Tourism Program will usually participate at the \$25,000 level or higher. The maximum amount is \$100,000. There is no match requirement, but proposals demonstrating community support by way of matching financial and in-kind support, and demonstrating potential to leverage other funding will be rated more highly. The total number of individual awards made through this funding opportunity will likely be between two and four. Grant awards will be made through a competitive process. Both existing programs/projects and new programs/projects are eligible to submit Letters of Interest. This funding opportunity is not subject to the 60/40 split for tourism marketing/product development that is currently used as an annual budgeting guideline by the Tompkins County Tourism Program. This funding opportunity is designed to be flexible in terms of the types of proposals that will be considered and at the same time focused on direct implementation of *critical actions* and plans identified as *critical actions* by the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan along with local tourism program/industry research priorities. It does not replace any existing grant program of the Tompkins County Tourism Program.

### Critical Actions

Please refer to the Tompkins County 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan for a complete description of *critical actions*. The plan is available here: [www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism](http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism). A concise list of *critical actions* may be found on pages 36 and 37 of the Plan; letters of interest from organizations other than those referenced as *lead organizations* will be considered.

Several detailed plans and strategies have grown directly out of *critical actions* from the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan. As such, Letters of Interest for projects which will significantly implement any the following tourism-related plans will also be considered:

- a. Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail Plan
- b. Tompkins County Agriculinary Tourism Implementation Plan
- c. Tompkins County Heritage Tourism Implementation Plan
- d. Tompkins County Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage Plan
- e. Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy
- f. Tompkins County Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan

### Eligibility

Not all entities are eligible to receive funding from Tompkins County government. In general, a County government may award a grant to another municipality and certain not-for-profit agencies. Before applying, please consult with your accountant or attorney to confirm that your entity is legally eligible to receive money from a County government.

Organizations currently funded through ongoing room tax budget allocations are eligible, and entities proposing new projects that are not currently funded through ongoing tourism budget allocations are also potentially eligible. Proposals for capital projects are potentially eligible. If you are unsure about your eligibility, please consult with the grant administrator.

### Limitations

This is a one-time funding opportunity. Proposals must demonstrate how the project will have an impact with one-time funding. Proposals that are funded in this new one-time grant category may be eligible to apply for additional funding through a different grant program of the Tompkins County Tourism Program or through a future annual budget request, but no continuation of funding will be guaranteed.

While proposals must implement a *critical action* identified in the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan or address a specific research need, not all projects that would support implementation of a *critical action* qualify. The following types of projects are **do not qualify to apply** for Strategic Tourism Implementation funds; rather, these may qualify to apply for funding through one of the existing grant programs of the Tompkins County Tourism Program, or through the annual Tourism Program budgeting process.

- New Tourism Initiatives whose total one time request is less than \$25,000.
- An ongoing event or project that has been funded in the past through a Tourism Project Grant, New Tourism Initiative Grant, and/or Tourism Marketing and Advertising Grant and is not proposing a significant new offering.

- Projects that are part of the current work plan of an existing program that is funded by the Tompkins County Tourism Program, and where a critical action will be best implemented through an alignment of existing resources.

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.

Please refer to the Tompkins County Tourism Program's website for information about other grant programs of the Tompkins County Tourism Program: [www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism](http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism). Other grants may be available in these program categories:

- Arts and Culture Organizational Development
- New Tourism Initiatives
- Tourism Projects
- Tourism Capital
- Tourism Marketing & Advertising
- Town Beautification
- Community Celebrations

### **Application Timing**

A funding opportunity announcement will be made by October 1, 2018. Two-page Letters of Interest will be due by November 1, 2018. Full proposals will then be invited from among projects for which a Letter of Interest was received. The STPB and legislative review process and decisions will likely take place by November 30, 2018. Adhering to this schedule will allow successful applicants to begin putting these funds to use in 2018.

### **Review Committee and Award Process**

A Strategic Tourism Implementation Review Committee will be formed to review, score and rank Letters of Interest and full proposals based on the criteria below and recommend awards to the STPB. The final decision regarding grant awards will be made by the Tompkins County Legislature. Applicants are strongly discouraged from soliciting support from review committee members, STPB members or members of the legislature outside of this objective application and review process. In accordance with STPB bylaws, the chair of the STPB will appoint review committee members. The size of the review committee will be between five and eight members. Committee membership will consist of:

- At least two members of the Planning & Evaluation Committee of the STPB,
  - At least one member of the Tourism Capital Grant review committee,
  - At least one member of the New Tourism Initiative/Tourism Project Grant review committee, and
  - At least one member of the Marketing and Advertising Grant review committee.
- In any case, a majority of review committee members shall consist of voting STPB members, but not all IRC members need be STPB members.

- Potential review committee members will be asked to disclose their organizational ties in order to limit conflicts of interest.

All Letters of Interest and full proposals will be evaluated together as a pool. After Letters of Interest are reviewed, the committee will issue a letter to each applicant either inviting the applicant to submit a full proposal or not. Applicants invited to the proposal stage are not guaranteed funding, but will have a higher likelihood of being funded than if submitting a full proposal blind. After awards are approved by the Tompkins County Legislature, funds will be disbursed pursuant to a contract with the County. Awards are not intended to be on a reimbursement basis; they will be made up-front.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Full proposals will be evaluated and scored by the Strategic Tourism Implementation Review Committee based on how well they respond to the criteria below.

**Project Readiness.** Does the proposal demonstrate readiness to use the grant funds and implement the proposed project within 12 months of being funded?

**Implements Critical Action or Strategic Priority.** Does the proposal implement a critical action of the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan or a strategic priority of the STPB in a significant way?

**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 years subsequent to 2018.

**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?

**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?

**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? Although no match is required, applications demonstrating community support by way of matching financial and in-kind support will be rated more highly on this criterion. Does the proposal contain Letters of Commitment from participants, co-funders, and related businesses and other organizations?

**Other Considerations.** Proposals will be reviewed for eligibility and to determine if they reflect the Tompkins County Tourism Program’s overall objectives, including: encouragement of diversity and sustainability, coordination with similar ongoing or completed tourism projects, the general distribution of tourism projects among organizations and among focus areas identified by the strategic tourism plan, and the geographical distribution of projects within Tompkins County.

**Requirements.** Proposals must meet the following requirements:

- ✓ Have the potential to directly implement a critical action identified by the Tompkins County 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan or a strategic priority of the STPB.
- ✓ Document the potential for economic benefits through additional room nights and visitor spending in Tompkins County.
- ✓ Enhance the quality of life of residents of Tompkins County.

**Attachments.** For those projects invited to the full proposal phase, a Budget Worksheet and a Statement of Work are required as attachments. In addition, you may include any qualifications, drawings or ancillary information that is necessary to support your proposal. If appropriate; also include:

**Letters of Interest or Commitment.** If you are relying on any other organization to provide services, equipment or cost share, include a letter from that organization describing their planned participation. However, due to their active sponsorship of this solicitation, Letters of Interest or Commitment should not be solicited from Strategic Tourism Planning Board members, members of the Tompkins County Legislature or staff of the Tompkins County Tourism Program. Also include letters of interest or commitment from team members, businesses or other organizations critical to the success of the project.

### **STEP ONE Application Directions – Letter of Interest**

The Letter of Interest should be no more than two pages long and should be provided on the 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 a critical action from the 2020 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. Submit your Letter of Interest via email to [nhelmholdt@tompkins-co.org](mailto:nhelmholdt@tompkins-co.org).

### **STEP TWO Application Directions – Full Proposal**

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 10 pages for the narrative. There are two required attachments: a Budget Worksheet 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. **Submit one .pdf file containing your entire proposal via email to [nhelmholdt@tomkpkins-co.org](mailto:nhelmholdt@tomkpkins-co.org).**

### **Program Budget Worksheet – Required Attachment for Full Proposals**

Full proposals are required to include a program Budget Worksheet alongside the narrative. This is not the organizational budget, but a budget for the project for which you are requesting grant funding. Please start with the Budget Worksheet Template that is provided as a Microsoft Excel document. All major categories of expenses should be listed. In addition, if your project will receive funding or in-kind support from sources other than the Tompkins County Tourism Program, please list revenues from other sources and/or the value of in-kind support in the designated space. An overall organizational budget is not required, but please do provide the percentage of your organization's overall annual budget that the project would constitute.

### **Statement of Work – Required Attachment for Full Proposals**

Applicants invited to submit full proposals must include a Statement of Work. The Statement of Work should, at a minimum, include project start and end dates, a project schedule, deliverables, and roles and responsibilities of key people or organizations. Strong proposals will also include specific measures of success and means of tracking progress. This is the document that describes how you will implement your proposed project, and achieve the objectives that you have set out for the project.

### **Reporting**

Successful applicants will be required to file a grant report or reports - format to be provided.

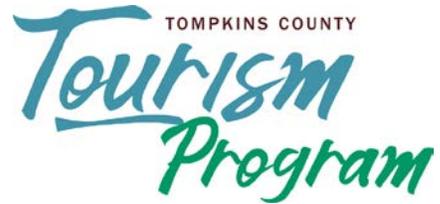
### **Assistance**

Please call or email the grant administrator if you have any questions or need help putting together your application. Submission of drafts for review and feedback prior to the application deadline is strongly encouraged.

Nick Helmholdt, Principal Planner/Tourism Program Director  
Tompkins County Planning & Sustainability Department  
121 E. Court St; Ithaca, NY 14850  
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# APPLICATION (FULL PROPOSALS)

## 2015 Strategic Tourism Implementation Grant Funding Opportunity



### I. BASIC INFORMATION

Project/Proposal Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Request: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Instruction: You may use up to 10 pages to answer the questions in the narrative section.*

### II. PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION

Describe your proposed project.

### III. STRATEGIC TOURISM IMPLEMENTATION

Document how your proposal responds to goal(s) and action(s) of the Tompkins County 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan and/or a Strategic Priority of the STPB. Describe how your proposal aligns with the aims and policies of the Tompkins County Tourism Program.

### IV. EXPECTED BENEFITS

Describe, in as much detail as possible, the specific economic and quality of life benefits that you expect this project to deliver.

### V. ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

Provide a description of the applicant organization(s), its mission, board/governance, annual budget, year founded, key staff, how this proposal fits with other activities, and record in implementing similar types of projects.

### VI. BUDGET NARRATIVE

Describe how you propose to use the requested funds.

### VII. IMPACT OF FUNDING

What would be the specific impact(s) on the project of receiving less funding than you are requesting?

### ATTACHMENTS

\_\_\_\_ Attachment A - Budget Worksheet – **REQUIRED (template provided)**

\_\_\_\_ Attachment B – Statement of Work – **REQUIRED (no template)**

\_\_\_\_ Other Attachments - **OPTIONAL**

Qualifications, letters of commitment/support, drawings or ancillary information

# **This page is for your information only. Please do not submit it with your proposal.**

## **PROPOSAL CHECKLIST**

Please review the following checklist prior to submitting your funding request.

- 1) \_\_\_\_ A Letter of Interest is submitted by no later than **11am, DATE HERE.**

**If invited to submit a full proposal, continue to #2. If not invited to submit a full proposal, stop here.**

- 2) \_\_\_\_ Questions I through VII are answered completely and concisely, in no more than ten pages (proposal narrative)
- 3) \_\_\_\_ The budget worksheet is completed using the template (required attachment)
- 4) \_\_\_\_ The Statement of Work is complete and accurate (required attachment)
- 5) \_\_\_\_ Optional attachments are provided as needed
- 6) \_\_\_\_ The proposal narrative, required attachments, and any optional attachments are compiled into **a single .pdf file.**
- 7) \_\_\_\_ **Email this proposal file electronically** to [nhelmholdt@tompkins-co.org](mailto:nhelmholdt@tompkins-co.org) **no later than** the deadline. Mailed, faxed or hand-delivered proposals will not be accepted. Upon receipt of your complete proposal, you will receive an email confirmation of receipt.

**If you do not receive a confirmation via email by the end of business on the day the letter or proposal is due, please follow up to ensure that your letter or proposal was received!**

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