

Tompkins Outdoors Grant

2025 Guidelines



Funding Purpose + Overview

The Tompkins Outdoors Grant aims to strengthen organizations that enhance Tompkins County's reputation and profile as a leading outdoor recreation destination.

Award Information

- Grants up to \$19,000 OR 10% of organizational budget (whichever is less)
- Application deadlines:
 - Eligibility Questionnaire: Jan. 22, 2025, at 11:59 PM ET
 - Full Application: Feb. 27, 2025, at 11:59 PM ET

Contact: Email the [Tourism Program](#) or call 607-274-5560

What is Considered Outdoor Recreation?

The five primary categories of outdoor recreation for consideration in this grant include:

1. Water-based
2. Hiking & running
3. Bicycling
4. Kids in nature
5. Niche & adventure

Apply Now:

- [Common Grant Application](#) (scroll to Tompkins Outdoors)

Funding Source

This grant is funded by [Hotel Room Occupancy Tax](#) collected in Tompkins County, New York. A total of \$54,500 is available for 2025 grants.

Who Can Apply?

- Nonprofit organizations designated as 501(c)3 that either:
 - manage natural areas, or
 - offer outdoor recreation tours.
- Eligible applicants are also required to satisfy the following criteria:
 - Established for at least one year.
 - Overseen by an elected board of directors.
 - Have documented history of long-range planning.
 - Have an adopted organizational policy on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

What is Eligible for Funding?

This award provides general operating support. The award can support specific activities, projects, and staff within an organization. Awards are intended to build organizational capacity in alignment with goals established in the [Strategic Tourism Plan: 2021-2027](#) and [Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan](#). Applicants will also be asked to provide a detailed description of how they intend to use funding awards toward the stated funding purpose.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated in four categories: Tourism Impact, Outdoor Recreation Impact, Operating Capability, and Administrative Capability. Indicators within each category will be scored from 0 to 5 by grant review committee members as applicable. The total score for each application will be weighted as shown below. Specific indicators are:

Tourism Impact (weighted at 35% of overall score)

- Demonstrated ability to attract visitors from outside Tompkins County (proxy measures may be used such as website analytics, visitor logs, etc.)
- Seasonal hours and capacity as applicable
- Site accessible to people of all abilities
- Programming reflects a significant effort to reach a broad array of people
- Web traffic and social media reach
- Written annual marketing plan and budget
- Demonstration of a working relationship with the Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)
- Effectiveness of past marketing campaigns

Outdoor Recreation Impact (weighted at 35% of overall score)

- Unique landscape, environment, or scenic view offered
- Variety of active and passive recreational activities offered
- Visitor amenities provided (restrooms, interpretive signage, etc.)
- Days of programming offered, if applicable
- Evidence of past successes and growth
- Evidence of the uniqueness of program offerings
- Memberships in national or regional organizations
- Environmentally sustainable practices
- Evidence of programming that gives voice to diverse and non-dominant cultures

Operating Capability (weighted at 15% of overall score)

- Clear and coherent operating budget
- Percentage of funding from local donors / individuals and businesses
- Number of donors / members / subscribers / students
- Number of full-time and part-time year-round staff
- Percent of work performed within Tompkins County

Administrative Capability (weighted at 15% of overall score)

- Evidence of the following:
 - Mission statement
 - Board roster that includes length of service
 - Bylaws
 - Employee manual
 - Strategic plan
 - Active financial management
 - Revenue from an array of funding sources
 - Last completed audit or financial review
 - Grant reporting history
 - Succession planning
 - Diverse staff and board of directors
 - Collaboration with other organizations
 - Documentation of livable wage

Additional Key Points

- **Operating Support:** Organizations that have been awarded the Arts and Culture Organization Development Grant in the same year are not eligible for this award since both grants fund general operating support.
- **Diversity, Equity Inclusion and Belonging:** The STPB encourages applicants to consider how their programs can appeal to diverse audiences and reflect the diversity of our community.
- **Organization Budget:** is defined as the previous fiscal year's total operating expenses.
- **Funding Recommendations:** The grant review committee may recommend funding amounts that do not correspond strictly with evaluation criteria.

Attachments

1. Proof of 501(c)3 Status: (upload [IRS determination letter](#)).
2. Current organizational budget.
3. Current board roster.
4. Other materials (letters of support, promotional collateral, graphics, or relevant documentation).

Award Decision Process

1. Staff review applications for completeness and eligibility.
2. The review committee scores each application and recommends funding for each application to the Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB).
3. The STPB recommends funding to the Tompkins County Legislature.
4. The Legislature votes on the grant awards.
5. Staff send emails to all applicants with funding decision and if applicable 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. Contract terms will run from the award date to December 31, 2025. Grant funds are paid in two installments. All unspent funds must be returned to the County.

Grant recipients are responsible for securing all necessary permits, authorizations, and approvals necessary for their project.

Grant recipients are required to attend an annual marketing workshop hosted by the CVB.

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 Tourism Program logo in accordance with the [recognition guidelines](#).

Grant recipients are required to submit progress reports as requested and final reports.

Prepare and Submit Your Application

All applications must be submitted through [Common Grant Application](#). Use one of the links below to start an application:

- Already have an account: [Log in to start an application](#)
- First time applying: [Register for a new account and start an application](#)
- Review [other grants](#) offered by Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability

Resources

The [Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau](#) (CVB) is available to provide technical assistance related to promoting your programs. Grant recipients are encouraged to work with the CVB. For more information contact Peggy Coleman, VP Tourism & Community Relations, peggy@visitithaca.com.