

# Community Celebrations Grant

*Spring 2025 Guidelines*



## **Funding Purpose + Overview**

Bring your community together and showcase the unique culture and history of Tompkins County with a Community Celebrations grant! These grants support events that enhance quality of life, promote community understanding and identity, and are informative, educational, and just plain fun.

## **Award Information**

- Grants range from \$500 to \$2,500.
- Applications are due Feb. 27, 2025, at 11:59 PM ET.
- Grant activity period runs from May 2025 to April 2026.

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

## **What is a Celebration?**

We're looking for events, programs, and series that:

- Are endorsed by a municipality or community group.
- Commemorate the cultural heritage of Tompkins County.
- Take the form of a festival, fair, or event recognizing a specific community, neighborhood, or cultural interest.

## **Examples of Supported Events**

- International Mud Day
- Brooktondale Apple Festival
- GIAC Festival of Nations
- Music in the Hollow
- Groton Cabin Fever Festival
- Latino Civic Association Annual Picnic
- And many more!

## How to Apply

- [Common Grant Application](#) (scroll to Community Celebrations)

## Audio/Video Applications

Record your project idea instead of writing! (3-5 minutes, max. 8 minutes). Describe the celebration's importance, cultural elements, activities, target audience, location, date, and promotion methods. Upload directly or link to YouTube, Google Drive, etc. (under 128 MB). Don't worry about style, just clear sound. Smartphones are OK! Avoid background noise and get consent from people in videos.

**Note:** An application form is still required, and recordings must be linked or uploaded to Common Grant Application. Our intent is to help celebration organizers who may have difficulty expressing themselves clearly in writing and to expand the diversity of the grants awarded from this program.

## Funding Source + Eligibility

This grant is funded by [Hotel Room Occupancy Tax](#) collected in Tompkins County, New York, and provides a total of \$26,000 to support events taking place between May 2025 and April 2026.

## Who can apply?

- Nonprofit organizations designated as 501(c)3.
- Municipalities within Tompkins County.
- Other organizations with a fiscal sponsor meeting the above criteria.

**Note:** All applicants must have an adopted diversity, equity, and inclusion policy.

## What is Eligible for Funding?

- Supporting local artists, performers, or cultural programmers.
- Promotion and marketing.
- Professional services needed for a successful event.
- Educational materials.
- Reusable banners or promotional items.

## Limitations + Conditions

- Events must:
  - Be open to the public without discrimination.
  - Offer at least one free component.
  - Occur within Tompkins County.
  - Not require a New York State Mass Gathering Permit\*.
  - Not exclusively promote a religious tradition, political cause, or candidate.
- Ineligible expenses
  - Carnival rides, bounce houses, fireworks.
  - Building repairs or alterations.
  - Gifts, prizes, T-shirts, and other apparel for event volunteers.
  - Food not integral to the celebration's cultural or educational aspects.
  - Paid staff time or ongoing program expenses.

## Matching Funds

Applicants should demonstrate a **financial match of at least 50%** of the total project cost. This can include cash, in-kind donations, and volunteer time†.

## Evaluation Criteria

- **Cultural and Historic Value:** Does the celebration build community, highlight local heritage, and incorporate educational elements?
- **Community Value:** Does the celebration have strong community support, feature local products and services, and promote sustainability?
- **Ability to Deliver:** Does the team have the experience and resources to carry out the event? Have they learned from past events?
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging:** Does the celebration promote inclusivity, and does the application demonstrate efforts to attract a diverse audience?
- **Clarity of Application and Budget:** Is the application complete, coherent, and compelling? Does the budget clearly explain expenses and revenue?

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\* Events likely to attract over 5,000 people for a period of 24 hours or more are considered "Mass Gatherings" in New York State and require this permit.

† Where the specific value of the service is not known, use an estimate of \$33.49 per hour. Source: Independent Sector. <https://independentsector.org/resource/value-of-volunteer-time/>

We strive to support applications representing the county's diverse geography. Previous awards do not guarantee future funding. Applicants should consider methods for inviting attendees and tracking event attendance.

### **Start your application now.**

- [Common Grant Application](#) (scroll to Community Celebrations)

### **Attachments**

1. Audio/Video Recording (optional substitute for written portions).
2. Proof of 501(c)3 Status: Nonprofits only (upload [IRS determination letter](#)).
3. Fiscal Sponsorship Confirmation Letter (if applicable): Must be written on the sponsor's official letterhead. See [guidance regarding fiscal sponsorship](#).
4. Returning Applicant Report (if applicable): If you cannot locate your most recent Community Celebrations grant report, please email the [Tourism Program](#) for assistance.
5. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy: Provide an attachment or link.
6. Supplemental project budget: A more detailed budget that meets the minimum requirements described in the application may be attached.
7. Other Materials (letters of support, promotional collateral, graphics, etc.).

### **Award Decision Process**

1. Staff review applications for completeness and eligibility.
2. The grant review committee 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 email applicants with the funding decision and a contract.

### **Grant Recipient Responsibilities**

Grant recipients are required to enter into a contract with Tompkins County. Several of the responsibilities listed below are included in the contract. Grant funds are paid upon contract execution. All unspent funds must be returned.

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

Awards will be paid directly to registered nonprofit organizations or municipal governments. (Successful applicants under the fiscal sponsorship of a municipality should contact their individual municipality for payment instructions.)

Grant recipients are expected to acknowledge the support of the Tompkins County Tourism Program in public relations materials, posters, and programs. The standard acknowledgment statement is: *"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 expected to submit a grant report via Common Grant Application no later than 30 days after their event. The grant report asks for information about attendance, actual expenses, and event promotion. A blank template report is available on request.

### **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 the Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability/Tourism Program.

### **Resources**

The [Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau](#) (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 Tompkins County. For more information, contact Peggy Coleman, VP Tourism & Community Relations, [peggy@visitithaca.com](mailto:peggy@visitithaca.com).