

# Tourism Capital Grants

2024 Guidelines



## Funding Purpose + Overview

Tourism Capital grants support significant investments in visitor-generating projects such as theaters, museums, trails, and other major cultural and recreational attractions. The funds can be used for design, renovation, and new building projects; investments in unique permanent installations such as exhibits; and feasibility studies of potential capital projects.

[Ithaca Area Economic Development \(IAED\)](#) administers the program with review by the [Strategic Tourism Planning Board \(STPB\)](#).

## Award Information

- Grants range from \$5,000 to \$100,000.
- Applications are due August 26, 2024, at 11:59 PM ET.
- A grant information session is scheduled for Thursday, August 1, 2024 – 1:00 to 3:00 PM – at the CAP ArtSpace in the Tompkins Center for History and Culture (110 N. Tioga Street, Ithaca, New York).

**Contact:** Email [Kurt Anderson](#) or call 607-273-0005.

## Supported Activities

Past projects funded include the Dryden Rail Trail; Stewart Park Inclusive Playground; renovation of Discover Cayuga Lake's charter boat for eco-cruises; Tompkins Center for History and Culture buildout; and visitor amenities for the Cayuga Waterfront Trail.

## Apply Now

- [Common Grant Application](#) (scroll to Tourism Capital Grant)

## Funding Source

This grant is funded by Hotel Room Occupancy Tax collected in Tompkins County, New York. A total of \$328,000 was budgeted for this grant in 2024.

## Who Can Apply?

- Nonprofit organizations designated as 501(c)3

- Municipalities within Tompkins County
- Farmers Markets

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

## **What is Eligible for Funding?**

### *Capital Investment Projects*

New construction and renovation projects are eligible. The project may provide expansion or renovation to existing facilities or may be a new facility. Project will typically be valued at \$75,000 or higher. Grant funds may contribute up to one-third (33%) of eligible costs that include:

- Acquisition of land
- Acquisition, construction, and renovation of buildings
- Acquisition of furnishings, equipment, permanent exhibitions, and other capital improvements designed to serve or promote tourism over a minimum of five years
- Design services for the project

### *Feasibility Studies*

Studies should lead to a capital investment as described above. Eligible projects include:

- Concept-level design and determination of cost estimates
- Tourism plan for a capital project
- Business plan for a capital project

## **Limitations + Conditions:**

- **Matching funds:**
  - Capital Investment Project applications should demonstrate a financial match of at least two-thirds (67%) of the total project cost. Accepted sources include cash and in-kind donations.
  - Feasibility Study applications are not required to demonstrate a financial match.
- **Ineligible expenses:** Operating expenses, refinancing existing debt, overhead costs, fundraising studies.
- **Minimum Useful Life:** All projects are expected to have a minimum five-year useful life span.

## Evaluation Criteria

### *All Applications*

- **Organizational capacity:** Does your organization have the personnel, resources, and funding to successfully execute the project? Are you aware of necessary permits and approvals?
- **Travel demand generation:** Will the project attract overnight stays in Tompkins County, especially during low travel times like mid-week or winter? Does your project address a need of the tourism industry?
- **Strategic Tourism Plan alignment:** How well does your project advance the goals and actions of the [Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan 2021-2027](#)?
- **Outcomes and cost-effectiveness:** Are the potential benefits of your project significant compared to the requested funding? Does your project present a significant value to the community?
- **Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging:** Does your project promote a sense of belonging for diverse communities? Is it accessible to all people? Does the application demonstrate efforts to attract a diverse audience?

### *Criteria for Capital Investment Project Applications*

- Financial feasibility of the project
- Organizational capacity and history of successful project implementation
- Likelihood of
  - increased visitors to the facility and/or
  - improved visitor experience and/or
  - visitors increasing their length of stay in order to visit the facility

### *Criteria for Feasibility Study Applications*

- Preliminary research that supports proceeding to a full-scale feasibility study
- Organizational commitment to the project being studied, including evidence of investment
- Possibility of
  - increased visitors to the facility and/or
  - improved visitor experience and/or
  - visitors increasing their length of stay in order to visit the facility

## Additional Key Points

- **Diversity and inclusion:** Consider the [STPB Diversity Statement](#) and how your project reflects the community's richness.
- **Permits and Licenses:** Applicants should be aware of all permits and licenses that will be required to complete the project and describe them in the application.

- **Further notes:** Previous funding does not guarantee future support. Applicants should be able to describe their current annual attendance (or audience) and the portion that comes from outside of Tompkins County.

## **Attachments**

- 1) Detailed project budget that includes all expenses and revenue sources.
- 2) Proof of 501(c)3 status: Nonprofits only (upload [IRS determination letter](#)).
- 3) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy: Provide an attachment or link.
- 4) Other materials (letters of support, promotional collateral, graphics, and other relevant documentation).
- 5) Financial plan materials (current financial statements, three-year projection of revenues and expenses, financing sources, cash flow).

## **Award Decision Process**

1. IAED staff review applications for completeness and eligibility. Complete and eligible applications are shared with the appropriate grant review committee.
2. The grant review committee makes funding recommendations for each application to the STPB.
3. The STPB makes a funding recommendation to the Tompkins County Legislature.
4. The Legislature votes on the grant awards.
5. Staff email all applicants with 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 based on contract terms. All unspent funds must be returned.

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

Awards will be paid directly to registered nonprofit organizations or municipal governments.

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: *“Made possible in part by a grant from the Tompkins County Tourism Program.”* Grant recipients may use the Tompkins County Tourism Program logo in accordance with the [recognition guidelines](#).

Grant recipients are expected to submit an annual grant report. The report asks for information about visitor origin, demographics, and purpose of travel, as well as data collection and marketing methods. A template report is attached to each contract.

Grant recipients are expected to notify the program administrator and submit an up-to-date budget and statement of work if any changes have occurred since the time of application.

### **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/Tourism Program.

### **Resources**

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

Additional funding opportunities are listed on the following websites:

- [Tompkins County Administration](#)
- [Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County](#)