



Tompkins County
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
AND SUSTAINABILITY

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TO: Tompkins County Legislature
FROM: Tom Knipe, Principal Planner / Tourism Program Director
CC: Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
DATE: February 6, 2017
RE: **Award of 2017 Strategic Tourism Implementation Funding to three projects: the Tompkins County Heritage Center, the CVB Agriculinary Tourism Initiative, and Tourism Program Communications**

Action Requested

Award Strategic Tourism Implementation funding for the following projects:

CVB Agriculinary Tourism Initiative	\$30,000
Heritage Education Center	\$35,500
<u>Tourism Program Communications</u>	<u>\$3,500</u>
Total	\$69,000

Also, adjust the 2017 Strategic Tourism Implementation budget from \$100,000 to \$365,000 by adding \$265,000 from the previous year's allocated but unspent funds back into this year's budget.

Background

At the September 2016 STPB meeting, the board established guidelines and a process for award of Strategic Tourism Implementation (STI) funding, a special line in the Tompkins County Tourism Program budget to support "significant implementation of critical actions identified in the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan and related tourism implementation plans". Projects which have been identified as priorities and which are to be implemented directly by the County are also eligible. The grant guidelines are available at this link: <http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/tourism/plan>.

Two organizations - The History Center and Chamber of Commerce - submitted letters of interest in fall 2016 and were invited to submit full proposals based on review by the Planning & Evaluation Committee of the STPB. A Strategic Tourism Implementation Review Panel then reviewed these full proposals and submitted recommendations to the STPB to fund these projects in full. Panel members who participated in the review were Ken Jupiter (chair), Anne Kellerman, Josh Friedman, Martha Armstrong, Mary Kate Wheeler, and Mike Mellor. The full STPB voted unanimously to approve these recommendations at their January 2017 meeting.

In addition, the STPB voted at their November 2016 meeting to consider and then to recommend funding for implementation of a small communications project for the Tourism Program which was developed by the STPB's Branding and Communications Committee. This project was considered by

the STPB under Category C, as an “internal project identified as a priority by the STPB/Tompkins County Tourism Program”.

Summaries of each of the three projects recommended for funding are provided below. The full proposals are available to download and view at this link:
<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/2017JanSTI>.

CVB Agriculinary Tourism Initiative

This project strategically leverages outside USDA grant funding and annual CVB allocations to fully implement actions identified as priorities in the Tompkins County Agriculinary Tourism Implementation Plan. This plan was developed by an STPB Task Force and adopted by the board in September, 2016. It is available online at the following link:
<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/tourism/plan>

Below is a brief description of items included in the Agriculinary Tourism Implementation Plan which identifies the CVB as the lead organization for ensuring implementation, and which are supported by this investment:

- A. Agriculinary Tourism Backbone: Continue building backbone program support at CVB. Assessment for Agriculinary Businesses: CVB will collaborate with CCE to conduct the “visitor ready” and “group ready” portion of surveys for farms and businesses wishing to host visitors.
- B. Asset inventory: CVB will lead the effort to facilitate regular updates to our marketable asset inventory
- C. B2B Networking and educational events: Work with program partners and the agriculinary tourism committee to plan and execute events on a quarterly basis
- D. Marketing & Social Media: CVB will lead efforts to implement an annual marketing & social media program for the agriculinary tourism product available in Tompkins County.
- E. Branding Guidelines for Partners: Create and implement a branding and style guide for participants.
- F. Online Destination/Website: Continue to integrate IthacaFork.com into the CVB’s Visit Ithaca website.
- G. Microgrant Program Development: In addition, the CVB intends to create a microgrant program, making up to \$500 available to farmers or farm businesses in Tompkins County looking to start new agriculinary enterprises or to market or expand existing enterprises.

The CVB intends to support existing program objectives and accomplish new work plan objectives detailed above through a combination of existing staff resources and leveraging outside contractor support in the role of Agriculinary Tourism Program Coordinator.

Committee Feedback

- Concrete, measurable, achievable goals.
- Strong likelihood of encouraging longer stays and more return visits.
- Good leveraging of outside USDA funding.
- Precisely in line with the vision for implementation described in the Agriculinary Tourism Plan.

Heritage Education Center

The History Center in Tompkins County is leading a project to bring several complementary nonprofits together to become a new Heritage Education Center for Ithaca and Tompkins County. This

new collaborative entity will serve as a community hub that celebrates our rich history, heritage and culture in an exciting, synergistic way.

The heritage center will be located on the Ithaca Commons, in the heart of Tompkins County, welcoming visitors as a gateway to the area's many cultural destinations and serving as a gathering place for community members. The center will include staff to greet residents and visitors and to orient them to visitor services, exhibits, the library and archival resources, scheduled programs, multi-media presentations covering the history of the City and County, and a retail space.

Key partners involved in the development of a heritage education center include The History Center in Tompkins County, the Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Historic Ithaca, Dorothy Cotton Institute, Ithaca Aviation Heritage Foundation and the Wharton Studio Museum. Three main goals are to 1) build community by offering opportunities to deepen connections among County residents through sharing of narratives and place based initiatives; 2) engage the public in a vibrant exploration of our unique community through history, heritage and cultural lenses; and 3) orient visitors to tourism, specifically heritage tourism, opportunities.

Overall there is a two year (plus) timeline for the project. This proposal focuses on 2017 with an emphasis on the first 8 months. Deliverables include: community presentations, operational and partnership agreements, a retail space plan, branding language and a name for the center, a concept overview, a website, finalized floor plans, an exhibit design, and an initiated capital campaign. There is also a fair amount of "process" work behind the deliverables, e.g., ongoing partnership meetings.

Committee Feedback

- Leverages program investment in the Downtown Visitors Center and many partner organizations.
- Directly implements an action identified as a priority in the Heritage Tourism Implementation Plan, adopted by the STPB in January 2016.
- Will create a new attraction in a central location on the Commons, which would have other positive economic effects on the downtown.
- The new exhibits and space should indeed be "spectacular" to match the quality of the space and create a draw...the steps in this project are the right steps to achieve that.
- Leverages past funding. The Tourism Program has already invested somewhat in this project, including feasibility studies for partnership between the History Center and the Wharton Studio and Ithaca Heritage Aviation.
- Biggest risk concern is around organizational capacity to support the implementation of a major development project. Tourism Program staff are encouraged to monitor project implementation and support The History Center to address this.
- Two contingencies are recommended:
 1. If purchase of the building is approved by the County and moves forward.
 2. Administratively, funds are recommended to be released as significant progress is demonstrated, such as based on an acceptable interim report(s).

Tompkins County Tourism Program Communications Project

This project scope was developed by an ad-hoc committee of the STPB, with a purpose of building overall awareness and appreciation for the County's Tourism Program among community members, visitors, and tourism industry stakeholders. Specifically, working on behalf of the STPB and County Tourism Program, the County Planning Department proposes to hire a graphic designer to replace an old and sub-optimal program logo and a 2016 annual report for the Tompkins County Tourism

Program. In addition, an attractive annual report template will be established which can be used to develop the annual report internally in subsequent years. Finally, the project will create branding guidelines for partners, similar to the “I Love NY” branding guidelines, that will give room tax funding recipients clear direction to ensure appropriate and identifiable recognition for the room tax investments being made by the County.

Budget Implications

Strategic Tourism Implementation funds come exclusively from hotel room occupancy tax, and funds for these awards are available in the 2017 Tourism Program budget, as detailed in the table below. \$265,000 in the Strategic Tourism Implementation line was allocated, but unspent in 2016; those funds are recommended to be brought into the 2017 budget with a budget adjustment. After award of funding for these two projects, up to \$146,000 of additional funding would be available in 2017 to support new Strategic Tourism Implementation grants. Additional letters of interest for this program will continue to be accepted on a rolling basis.

Summary of Available STI Funding

The 2017 Tourism Program budget identifies \$100,000 in its Strategic Tourism Implementation (STI) fund. A recommended adjustment to the 2017 budget to include previous year’s allocated but unspent funds will add \$265,000 to grow the total funding pool to \$365,000. The STPB has previously voted to recommend \$150,000 in STI funding for implementation of the Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage Plan. Formal allocation of those funds is likely to be considered later this year, once a revised project plan has been drawn up. This then leaves up to \$215,000 available for new awards in 2017. The recommendation currently before the Legislature allocates \$69,000 of those funds leaving a balance of up to \$146,000 in funding available for additional STI grants in 2017.

Strategic Tourism Implementation Funding

2017 Budget Allocation	100,000	<i>Budgeted</i>
2017 Budget Adjustment	265,000	<i>Adding previous year's allocated but unspent funds</i>
New 2017 Total Budget with Adjustment	365,000	

Strategic Tourism Implementation Expected Allocations

Tourism Program Communications	3,500	<i>this recommendation</i>
CVB Agriculinary Tourism	30,000	<i>this recommendation</i>
Heritage Education Center	<u>35,500</u>	<i>this recommendation</i>
	69,000	<i>total new awards recommended</i>
Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage	<u>150,000</u>	<i>STPB voted to recommend; not yet formally awarded</i>
Subtotal	219,000	<i>STPB recommendations - all combined</i>
New 2017 Total Budget with Adjustment	<u>365,000</u>	<i>from above</i>
Difference	146,000	<i>Available for additional STI 2017 grants (with budget adjustment)</i>

Contact Information

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