



# Visitors Investment Fund

*Administered by the 1000 Islands International Tourism Council*

## Guidelines

**Overview** The Jefferson County Visitors Investment Fund supports re-investment in tourism-related products and infrastructure that enhances the visitor experience in Jefferson County, New York. Projects funded through this program are intended to:

- Increase the quality and diversity of tourism offerings,
- Encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more,
- Support tourism throughout Jefferson County.

While the Fund's primary focus is to serve visitors, projects that also contribute meaningfully to the quality of life for Jefferson County residents will be given additional consideration.

**Funding Source** The Fund is supported by Jefferson County's occupancy tax revenues, paid by overnight visitors. These dollars are reinvested into the community through this program to stimulate further economic activity and improve amenities that benefit both visitors and residents.

**Strategic Priorities** Projects that address multiple priorities are more likely to be funded. Priorities include:

- Creating or enhancing visitor experiences that are publicly accessible
- Lengthening visitor stays or increasing visitor spending
- Geographic diversity – spreading investment throughout the county
- Demonstrating collaboration across entities, sectors, or jurisdictions
- Leveraging additional resources and match funding beyond the minimum requirement
- Providing tangible results that are lasting, visible, and measurable
- Positively impacting residents' quality of life through tourism-related improvements

**Eligibility** Eligible Applicants:

- Private, for-profit operators
- Not-for-profit organizations
- Municipalities limited to incorporated towns and villages within Jefferson County, as well as the City of Watertown



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## Eligibility

Projects must:

- Be located in Jefferson County, NY
- Directly serve Jefferson County visitors

Ineligible Projects:

- Standalone events
- Improvements to residential housing stock, including short-term rentals
- Marketing, staffing or other operational expenses

## Funding Details

- Maximum Award: \$25,000
- Required Match: Minimum 10% cash match from the applicant
  - Projects leveraging additional or third-party funding will be scored more favorably, i.e. award goes toward project total that significantly supersedes award amount
- Award Timing: Grants are awarded upon application approval and submission of proof of match

## Application Process Deadlines

- Round 1: April 30, 2026
- Round 2: August 1, 2026

**Required Materials** Applications are available via the Tourism Council and must include:

- Project narrative addressing alignment with strategic priorities
- Project timeline and expected outcomes
- Detailed budget including project total
- Proof of at least 10% match funding
- Supporting documentation (photos, designs, letters of support, etc.)
- Signed application agreement from chief officer for all requirements including project outcomes report



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**Common Types of Eligible Projects** To help clarify eligibility, the most competitive projects typically fall into one or more of the following categories:

## 1. **Tangible Visitor Infrastructure**

- New construction or upgrades to visitor amenities (trails, docks, restrooms, etc.)
- Installation of permanent interpretive or wayfinding signage
- Capital enhancements to tourism venues, attractions, or public gathering areas, i.e. facades, parks, etc.

## 2. **Public-Facing Enhancements**

- Visitor information kiosks or digital platforms
- Customer-facing equipment or furnishings
- Accessibility upgrades or beautification efforts at tourism assets

## 3. **Visitor Education and Engagement**

- Guided programs, tours, or interpretive services
- Educational installations or exhibits
- Public-facing cultural or nature-based programming (excluding one-time events)

The Fund encourages creative proposals that may not fit neatly into a single category but still clearly benefit both visitors and the Jefferson County community. If you're unsure, contact the 1000 Islands International Tourism Council for a conversation before submitting.

## **Review Process**

- Applications will be scored using a defined review matrix that evaluates alignment with priorities, impact, feasibility and match strength.
- The Visitors Investment Fund Review Committee will score applications and endorse projects for funding.
- The 1000 Islands International Tourism Council will:
  - Manage the application process
  - Support applicants with tourism data and insights
  - Publicly announce all grant recipients
  - Oversee all aspects of the program



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**Pre-Application Support** Applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with the 1000 Islands International Tourism Council before submitting an application. Early conversations can:

- Clarify eligibility
- Help shape a competitive proposal
- Save applicants time and effort

To schedule a pre-application consultation, email Corey Fram, director of tourism, at [corey@visit1000islands.com](mailto:corey@visit1000islands.com) or call (315) 482.2520

**Award Process** The 1000 Islands International Tourism Council will alert applicants of their grant award status following review by the Review Committee and the Council Board of Directors. Funded applicants will receive a copy of the GRANT AGREEMENT to be completed and returned to the Council to initiate award. Following successful completion of GRANT AGREEMENT, Council will release 75% of award total to recipient. Remaining 25% to be released upon successful completion of all project close out criteria including proof of total project payment.

**Transparency and Recognition** All awarded projects will be publicly announced and recipients must publicly acknowledge support from the Jefferson County Visitors Investment Fund in announcement, signage, and other relevant materials.