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FUNDING ANNOUNCED FOR ROUND TWO OF "EXPLORE NY" GRANTS
Applications Due to ESD by 5pm on March 7th, 2008

Governor Spitzer's Administration has appropriated \$1 million to fund the second round of Explore NY, the grant program designed to encourage integrated, thematic approaches to tourism promotion. Empire State Development (ESD), New York State's economic development agency and manager of the I LOVE NEW YORK tourism campaign, will match \$1 for every dollar incurred by applicants, up to \$50,000. All applications must be received by ESD no later than 5pm on March 7th, 2008.

Explore NY is part of a larger movement that is currently underway to reinvigorate the I LOVE NEW YORK brand and stimulate tourism – and the economy - throughout the state. Governor Spitzer is supporting these efforts by increasing New York's 2007-08 tourism budget to \$16 million, an increase of nearly 50 percent over the previous year's allocation. Some of this funding has provided for the launch of the revamped www.iloveny.com web site and the creation of multiple partnerships with private companies to raise awareness of the I LOVE NEW YORK brand and attract even more visitors to the state.

Continuing the partnering theme, Explore NY eligibility requirements mandate that partnerships be forged between two or more counties, Tourism Promotion Agencies or series or collection of two or more thematically related entities who choose to market multiple, thematically related assets or activities in a single marketing campaign. These entities may include, but are not limited to municipalities, not-for-profit and/or for-profit businesses.

Thomas Ranese, Chief Marketing Officer of ESD said, "We are excited to announce the second round of funding for Explore NY and look forward to seeing many innovative products emerge as a result of this program. Given the success of the first round of funding, there is little doubt that this set will also spur integral partnerships and create world-class travel experiences throughout the state."

For the second round of Explore NY, applications must fall under one of the three thematic components identified as key to the strategic vision of the I LOVE NEW YORK campaign -- Scenic Outdoors & Recreation, Arts & Local Culture and Culinary & Agri-Tourism. Examples of these themes may include:

- Scenic Outdoors & Recreation - Projects featuring scenic beauty and recreational activities of New York State, including outdoor recreation, soft adventure, hiking, biking, golfing, eco-tourism, etc.

- Arts & Local Culture - Projects featuring the distinct personality and history of a region, including historic sites, local crafts/artists, antiques or a theme that builds on a distinct historical feature of the area.
- Culinary & Agri-Tourism - Projects featuring experiences of local foods and farms of New York State, including wineries, breweries, cooking schools/classes, farm tours, local agriculture, etc.

The first round of Explore NY funding resulted in several successful programs that worked in tandem with ESD's efforts to draw visitors to the Empire State. The Finger Lakes Region was home to "Slice, Dice and Spice NY," a culinary tourism project that focused on the culinary, agricultural, food and wine specialties of the state and the region in particular. In the Capital-Saratoga Region, Explore NY funding was used to promote the Great Sacandaga Lake area by way of a *Bass Club World Championship* regional fishing tournament. Funding was also used to highlight the visual arts resources of the Greater Niagara Region through the "Beyond/In Western New York" project, a wide-ranging cultural tourism marketing campaign.

All grants will be awarded to applicants based on how well their proposed projects, put forth in a single marketing plan, relate and adhere to thematically related activities that present an economical and effective plan for promoting tourism in New York State. Specifically, applications will be scored according to their compliance with the thematic components of the program, their ability to deliver on the project outlined in their application and their degrees of innovation and effectiveness.

Applications can be submitted electronically via email or on CD; hard copy submissions will also be accepted. Funds will be awarded no later than May 2, 2008, following an assessment of the applications by the chairman of ESD and the Governor's Tourism Advisory Council (TAC).

For more information, to view the full program guidelines or to find more details on how to submit an application, visit "What's New" at www.iloveny.com or email exploreny@empire.state.ny.us.

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