



Choose Tamaqua

Business Plan Competition

2026 – 2027

Official Rules and Eligibility Criteria

A partnership of the Tamaqua Area Community Partnership, Tamaqua Financial Opportunity Center, and the Tamaqua CRIZ Authority

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Vision Statement

The Tamaqua Choose Happiness Business Plan Competition was designed to create an intentional, non-traditional form of economic development by investing in our community's human capital. The competition will facilitate a greater small business ecosystem across the Tamaqua Area School District by investing in entrepreneurs and energizing the local business community, with special emphasis on Downtown Tamaqua and the Tamaqua City Revitalization and Improvement Zone (CRIZ).

The Tamaqua Area Community Partnership and the Tamaqua CRIZ Authority are deliberately focusing on boosting the local economy by strengthening the downtown business district in both density and quality, building on the momentum of Tamaqua's status as Pennsylvania's pilot CRIZ community and the community-driven revitalization vision expressed in the Tamaqua Community Action Plan.

Why the Choose Happiness Competition?

We believe the results of this competition are vital to the community's continued revitalization because:

- We know it can be difficult to finance “start-ups” in the area due to demographic and physical challenges.
- We know that a sustained revitalization takes more than small loans and other financial incentives.
- We know that the ultimate purpose of a resilient economy and community of businesses is to create and retain jobs, increase foot traffic, provide goods and services, and restore currently vacant or underutilized buildings, particularly within the CRIZ and downtown core.

Concept

- Leverage local assets, CRIZ incentives, and regional partnerships to provide financial startup capital, as well as goods and services, to entrepreneurs seeking funding.
- Facilitate the development of up to (3) new businesses within the Tamaqua Area School District — with priority given to businesses locating in Downtown Tamaqua and/or the designated CRIZ area — by awarding startup capital and free or reduced goods and services to the winners of the competition. Total award amount will be \$50,000 in startup capital and estimated in-kind goods/services value of \$10,000.

Competition Partners

- Tamaqua Area Community Partnership
- Tamaqua CRIZ Authority
- Tamaqua Financial Opportunity Center

Schedule and Deadlines

- **October 15, 2026:** Start accepting applications
- **November 27, 2026:** Deadline for Phase I submissions (application)
- **Early December 2026:** Judges review applications and select entrepreneurs to advance to Phase II
- **Mid-December 2026:** Business plan development classes begin (Phase II)
- **December 2026 – March 2027:** Business plan development, mentorship, and coursework
- **April 2027:** Deadline for Phase III final deliverables
- **May 2027:** Final presentations and awards

Exact dates within each month will be communicated to participants and the public as they are finalized.

Phase I: Application

All of the following items must be submitted in their entirety to the Tamaqua Area Community Partnership between October 5, 2026 and November 27, 2026:

- Formal Application: available at **www.tacp.info** beginning October 5, 2026
- Executive Summary: (2–5) typed pages describing the entrepreneur's business proposal
- Video Pitch: (1–5) minute video presentation describing the entrepreneur's business proposal

Phase II: Business Plan Development & Mentorship

Upon completion of Phase I, judges will narrow the field of participating entrepreneurs based on predetermined criteria and collaborative discussion. All remaining entrepreneurs will be notified by email and invited to compete in Phase II.

Beginning in December 2026, entrepreneurs will:

- Attend business plan development classes and workshops offered through the competition
- Be paired with an individual business mentor to develop their comprehensive business plan
- Begin drafting a 3-year financial forecast and personal finance statement
- Explore available real estate within Downtown Tamaqua and/or the CRIZ area, where applicable

Phase III: Final Deliverables

All of the following items must be completed and submitted to the Tamaqua Area Community Partnership by the Phase III deadline in April 2027:

- Submission of comprehensive business plan
- Submission of 3-year financial forecast
- Submission of projected total startup costs, itemizing all anticipated one-time and pre-opening expenses (e.g., real estate/leasehold improvements, equipment, permitting and licensing, initial inventory, and working capital reserves)
- Submission of personal finance statement by all principals involved in the business
- Scheduled interview with the judges

Final Stage: Presentations and Awards

Final Stage = April 2027 – May 2027

During this time:

- Entrepreneurs will continue working with their business mentors to hone, edit, and finalize their comprehensive business plans in preparation for final presentations.
- Entrepreneurs and judges will assess proposed real estate for the proposed business, with priority consideration for sites within Downtown Tamaqua and/or the designated CRIZ area.
- Entrepreneurs will legally create their companies in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The Tamaqua Choose Happiness Business Plan Competition will conclude in May 2027, when final judging, presentations, and the awarding of winners will be scheduled. This date will be communicated to participants and the public well in advance, as soon as it is determined.

Judging Criteria

The following will be the main criteria with which business plans will be judged. Judging criteria includes, but is not limited to:

- Positive impact on foot traffic in Downtown Tamaqua and/or the CRIZ area, and probable draw to the community.
- The amount of new and sustained jobs the proposed business will create.
- The perceived need for the proposed business within the Tamaqua Area School District, with additional weight given to businesses locating in Downtown Tamaqua and/or the designated CRIZ area.
- The potential positive impact on tax revenue and CRIZ tax increment the business could create.
- Alignment with the community's "Choose Happiness" vision for heritage tourism, walkability, and quality of life, as reflected in the Tamaqua Community Action Plan.
- The proven or perceived ability of entrepreneurs to financially create and sustain the proposed business over a length of time.

Eligibility

- Any entrepreneur wishing to create a "new" small business located within the Tamaqua Area School District — encompassing Tamaqua Borough, Rush Township, Schuylkill Township, Walker Township, and West Penn Township (see attached map) — is eligible to participate in the Tamaqua Choose Happiness Business Plan Competition.
- Priority consideration will be given to business plans proposing a location in Downtown Tamaqua and/or the designated CRIZ area.
- All business submissions must be "for profit" entities.
- Businesses may exist in other geographic areas outside the Tamaqua Area School District. Additional locations for existing businesses will be considered.
- Operating businesses that currently reside within the eligible area are not eligible to enter the competition for the purpose of expansion. New business ventures coming from current business owners are eligible.
- All ages are welcome to participate.

Additional Information

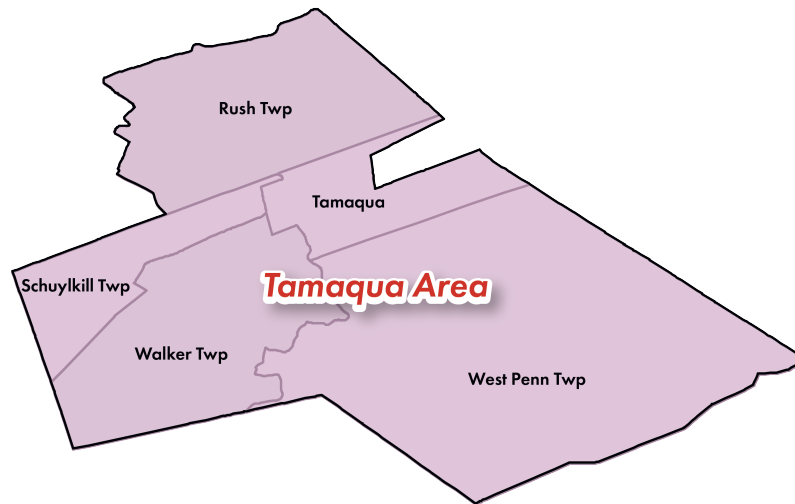
- Questions about any aspect of the competition can be directed to **Micah Gursky**, Tamaqua Area Community Partnership, at admin@tacp.info
- There is a fee of **\$300** to enter the competition (payable by Week 2 of classes). However, with any business startup, capital is essential. Capital to create and sustain the business will be one of the most important judging criteria.
- For more information on the Tamaqua Choose Happiness Plan, please visit www.choosehappiness.org.
- For more information on the Tamaqua Area Community Partnership and the CRIZ program, please visit www.tacp.info.

Eligible Area and Priority-Zone Maps

The maps below show the eligible competition area and the two priority zones — the Downtown Tamaqua Historic District and the Tamaqua CRIZ area — that will receive additional weight in judging.

1. Eligible Competition Area — Tamaqua Area School District

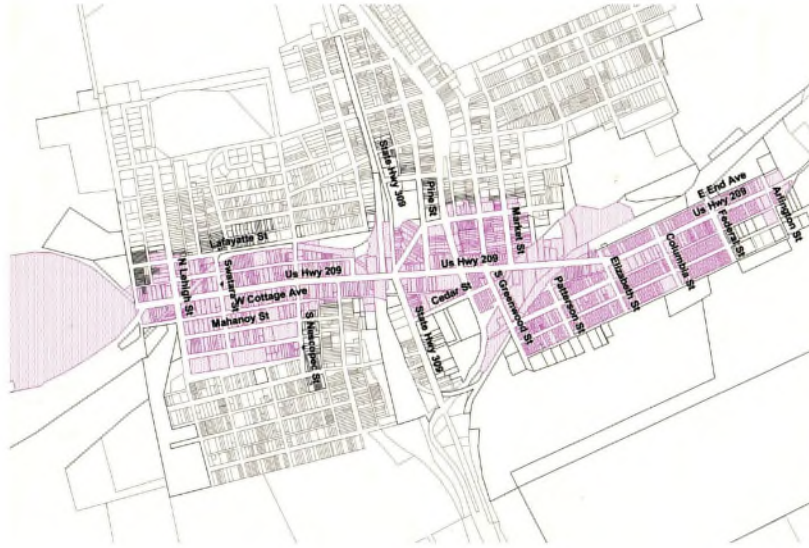
Any new business proposed for a location anywhere within the Tamaqua Area School District is eligible to enter the competition.



Tamaqua Area School District — eligible competition area

2. Downtown Tamaqua Historic District

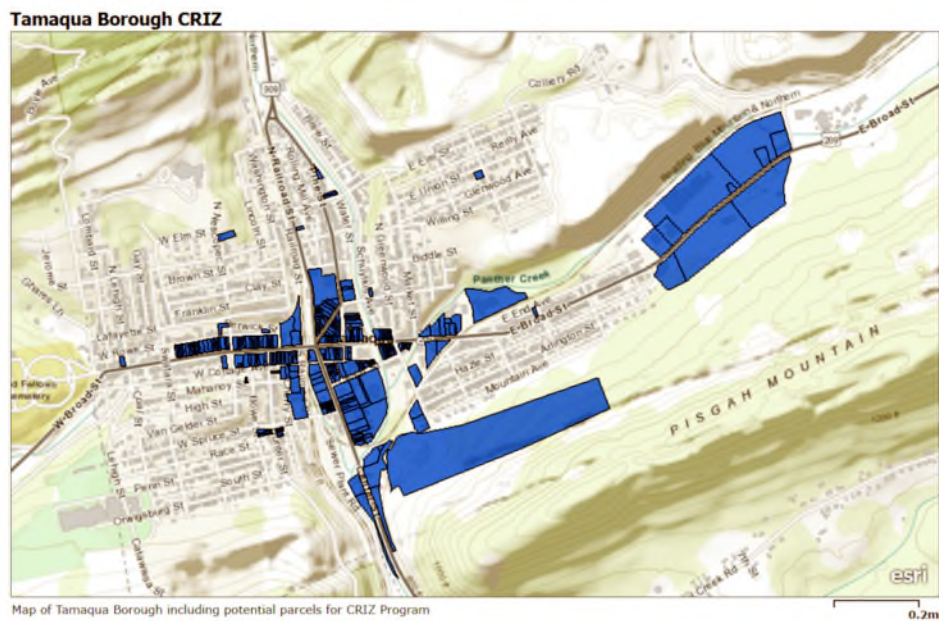
Business plans proposing a location within the Downtown Tamaqua Historic District (shaded below) will receive priority consideration in judging.



Downtown Tamaqua Historic District

3. Tamaqua CRIZ (City Revitalization and Improvement Zone)

Business plans proposing a location within the designated Tamaqua CRIZ parcels (shaded below) will also receive priority consideration in judging.



Tamaqua Borough CRIZ — designated parcels (map: Tamaqua Borough / Esri)