

Ontario County, New York

Connection 2020: A Strategic Plan for the Travel Industry

*Developed by:
Finger Lakes Visitors Connection
Official Travel Promotion Agency for Ontario County*

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- *Plan Prepared: January 2016*
- *Plan Adopted: March 2016*

Mission: To drive increased visitation and economic vitality by marketing and developing the assets of Ontario County as a premier leisure and meetings destination.

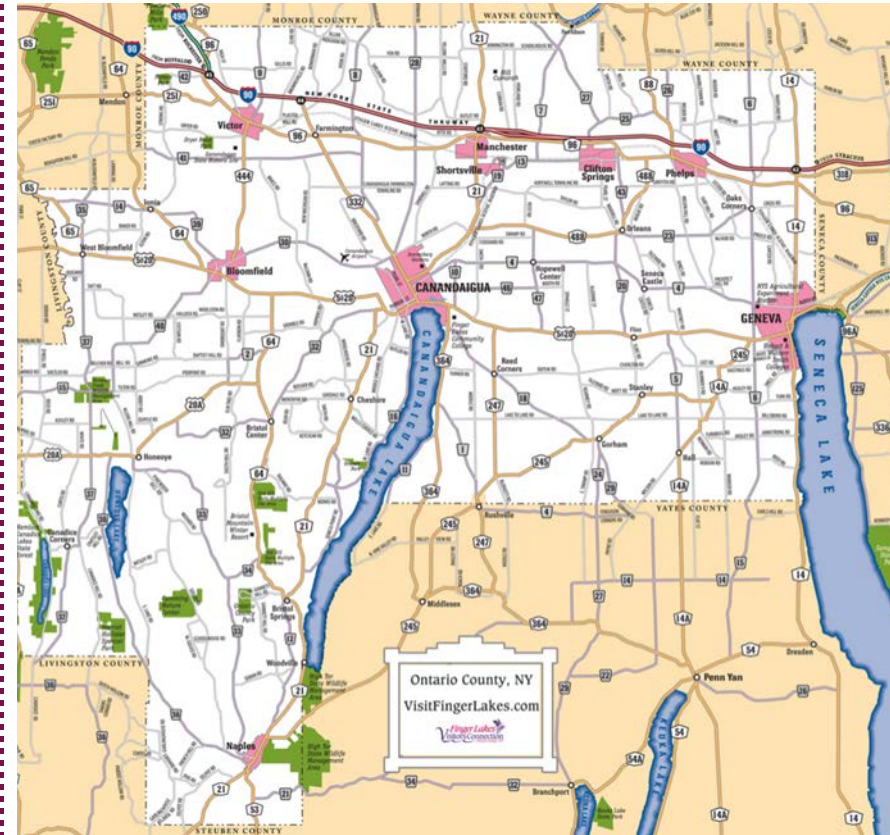




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Finger Lakes Visitors Connection is focused on driving sustainable economic growth by promoting Ontario County as a travel destination.



Research Summary

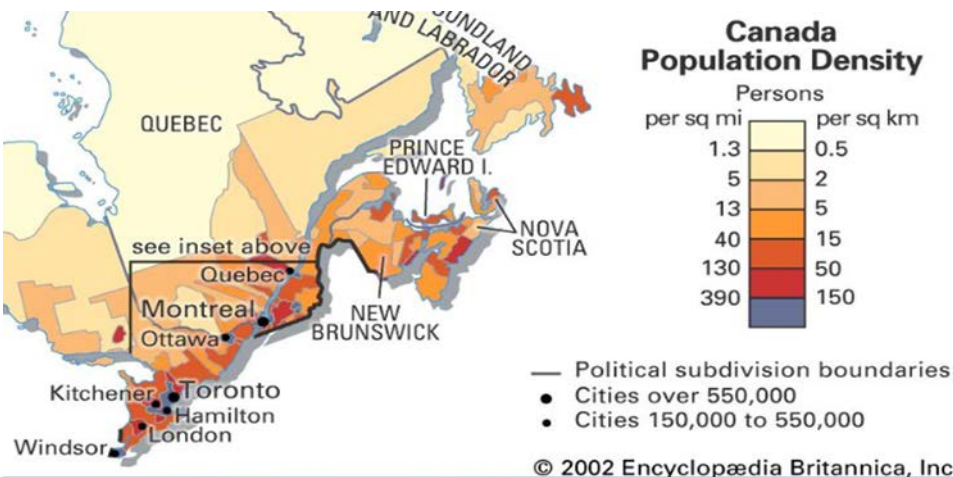
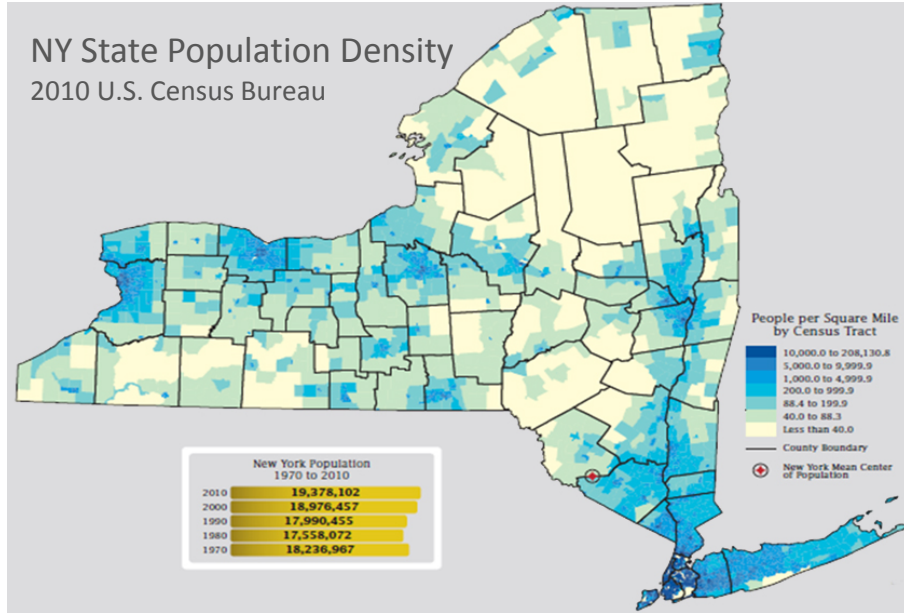
- ❖ Overnight travelers spend 2-3 times as much as day-trippers (YSI, p.37). Promotion of Ontario County as an overnight destination will also generate day-trippers and deliver the maximum return-on-investment.
- ❖ Focus on periods when rooms are available, November – April, weekdays. Weekend lodging occupancy outpaces weekdays throughout the year. Summer weekends have the highest occupancy. Sundays & Mondays are the lowest occupancy nights. Tuesday – Thursday nights remain below 60% occupancy 6 months of the year (January – April, November – December). (YSI, pgs. 9 – 13)
- ❖ The leisure weekend market is maxed-out in peak season(YSI, pgs. 9 – 13), which requires a shift to marketing weeknights during the summer months.
- ❖ Lower occupancy rates during weeknights year-round confirm the hoteliers desire for increased marketing to drive corporate small meetings focusing on the western New York State drive market (YSI, pg. 16).
- ❖ Maintain existing dominance in leisure market within the Finger Lakes and shift the existing group sales strategy to marketing the destination to smaller corporate groups and leisure.
- ❖ Non-summer outdoor sports is an opportunity for growth. Leveraging the downhill, cross-country ski market, fishing, hiking, etc. into a broader range of sports throughout Ontario County during low occupancy periods.
- ❖ Leisure marketing should expand in digital & social arenas while maintaining the traditional marketing methods that have been successful.
- ❖ Ontario County has four primary gateway cities – Victor, Geneva, Canandaigua and Naples - focus on greeting & keeping visitors in the County to drive maximum spending & impact.

Footnotes reference the Young Strategies, Inc. (YSI) Research Report available through FLVC.

Section 2. Finger Lakes Visitors Connection - Overall Direction & Goals

STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND GOALS

Finger Lakes Visitors Connection (FLVC) is a destination marketing and management organization focused on driving sustainable economic growth by promoting Ontario County as a travel destination. The majority of future visitors to Ontario County will come from within the 5-hour drive markets in New York State, Pennsylvania and the lower portion of the Province of Ontario. As one of the 14 counties in the Finger Lakes Region of New York, Ontario County must differentiate itself and stand-out as a unique place to visit in a region where most counties offer similar products (lakes, wineries, small towns, historic sites) but dissimilar experiences. FLVC leaders must be objective and match-up the unique experiences in Ontario County with the travel desires of the residents in western New York (right) and southern Ontario Province (below) as well as mid and western Pennsylvania. These are the core feeder markets for Ontario County with a population exceeding 5 million people.



The Finger Lakes Visitors Connection team will focus on the following priorities during the period 2016 – 2020 to increase the economic impact of travelers who visit Ontario County:

- Utilize market research to guide planning and vision to market and manage the destination experience in Ontario County.
- Aggressive marketing to attract visitors from the core markets.
- Partnership with other destination marketing groups within the region and state to build awareness of Ontario County and expand beyond the core 5-hour drive market.
- Foster a highly skilled, technologically savvy, and motivated team in a creative environment to provide top-tier marketing leadership for the local travel industry.

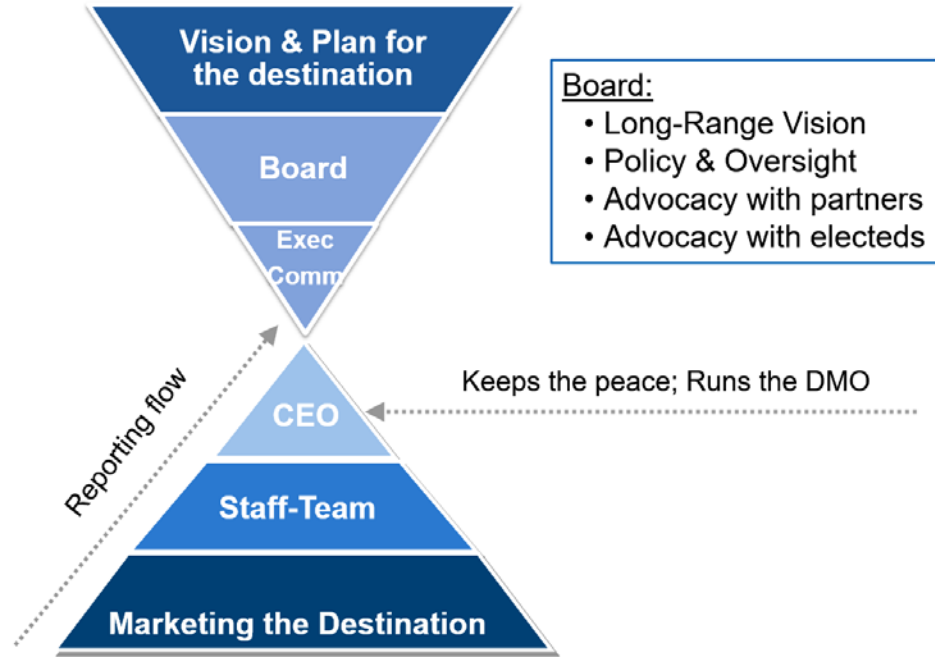
2. Finger Lakes Visitors Connection - Organization & Board Structure

STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND GOALS

Finger Lakes Visitors Connection will drive increased visitation and sustainable economic return-on-investment for Ontario County by staying at the cutting edge of destination marketing and management. The chart on the right shows the FLVC leadership structure with the Board working with the President/CEO to focus on the long-range vision and direction of the County as a travel destination. The Board will be engaged in providing proper fiduciary oversight and guidance. The Board of seventeen is appointed per the Bylaws of the organization and provides broad-based representation and input for all aspects and segments of the Ontario County travel industry.

While the Board is appointed from specific entities or organizations, the Board is focused on the overall good for the broad Ontario County travel industry. The Executive Committee is elected from the full Board and is composed of the Chair, Vice-Chair(s), Treasurer, Secretary and immediate past chair. The President/CEO reports to the Executive Committee/Board and manages the day-to-day operation and manages the destination. The President/CEO brings the highest level of research, travel industry trends and best-practices to guide the vision and plan for the organization. The staff reports to the President/CEO and is focused on the day-to-day marketing of the Ontario County travel experience.

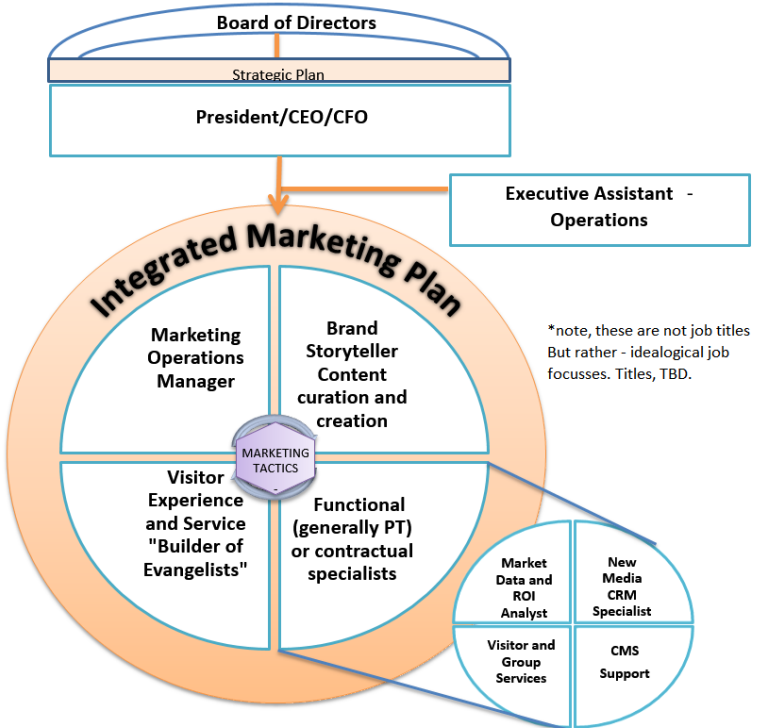
ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE



Each year the President/CEO will provide the Board with an update/review session of the progress made on this strategic plan, along with recommended plans for the coming year. This annual review serves to update the 5-year vision plan and set any new strategic action and objectives. Tactical solutions to market the destination are the responsibility for the FLVC staff and team.

Section 2. Finger Lakes Visitors Connection - Organization & Staff Structure

The FLVC staff structure will be nimble and adjust in response to the demands of the marketplace. Destination marketing is changing rapidly and the staffing will remain fluid. A dynamic President/CEO is critical to lead the organization, connect the research driven vision to marketing execution and communicate with the local, regional and state leadership. FLVC team members must be team oriented – utilizing complementary skills and experience to accomplish the mission. This organizational chart depicts the interconnectivity needed for marketing success.



The FLVC staff structure, size and job descriptions will be determined by the President/CEO with Board input. The President will guide the FLVC team to engage in focused educational and professional development. Destination marketing best practices will be adhered to as the staff will be encouraged to maintain the highest standards of excellence and on-going education.

The team must be highly skilled, technologically savvy, and motivated to contribute to a creative, research based marketing environment.

While certain team members may have particular job expertise and skills there will be no “silos” of marketing tactics or audiences or goals. Ultimately, the team will provide top-tier marketing leadership for the local travel industry, “paying forward” their experience and skills.

Section 2. FLVC – Regional Partnerships

STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND GOALS

Ontario County is one of 14 counties in the Finger Lakes travel region and one of 62 counties in New York. Destination promotion is very competitive and FLVC cannot succeed going it alone; partnership with regional and statewide entities is critical to success. FLVC is a regional leader encouraging partnerships that raise awareness of Ontario County and the Finger Lakes. FLVC is the official Tourism Promotion Agency (TPA) for Ontario County and as such, is eligible for New York State matching funds that extend the marketing reach of FLVC. Cooperative programs must adhere to the guidelines of the funding source, but have high ROI. Partnerships are perpetual and while some activities may not generate immediate ROI, the long-term benefits are measurable. Partnerships allow FLVC to reach beyond the immediate markets into areas and market segments otherwise beyond the budget.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

2016 – 2020 Annually review goals and align partnerships to achieve goals in a productive and cost effective manner.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

Maintain effective and mutually beneficial partnerships

- Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council (TMP)
- Ontario County ED and FLREDC; Planning (DEV)
- Chambers, BID's (DEV) (TMP) (BUS)
- Ontario County, city and local governments (GOV)
- ROC, SYR, BUF & Niagara Falls - nearby hubs (TMP)
- Empire State Development, I Love NY (TMP) (GOV)
- Private Sector, Business and Associations (BUS)

	Extended Marketing Impact	People Time Value Extension	Market Intelligence	Consideration of "issues/ideas" Products and Policies	Increased "coop-etition"
	More money – more market share	Many hands make light work. Friends "talk"	Data is better when it's bigger & more plentiful	Seat at the table – "Me First – ask me First"	If you can't beat 'em get 'em to join you!
Economic Dev. Offices (DEV)			X	X	
Tourism Marketing Partners (TMP)	X	X	X		X
Government (GOV)	Funding		X	X	
Private Sector and Business (BUS)	X	X	X	X	X

3. Unique Destination Positioning

STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND GOALS

Ontario County has been marketed as a destination as Finger Lakes Visitors Connection since 1996. This positioning identifies Ontario County as the primary connection for visitors who want to experience the best of the Finger Lakes Region. It puts the county in a dominant position when travelers are searching for a connection to the Finger Lakes. Ontario County must stand-out among the 62 New York counties in the competitive destination marketing arena. The FLVC staff will monitor destination marketing trends and use specific Ontario County market research to drive a high-energy marketing program. FLVC will produce an annual marketing plan to outline updated strategies to drive increased visitation and fulfill the long-term vision in this “Direction 2020” strategic plan. The core elements of FLVC brand positioning are: unique community experiences found among lakes, farm/wine-to-table, Native American heritage, outdoor sports/recreation and arts and entertainment; connecting fun days into fun evenings.

Finger Lakes Visitors Connection will focus on marketing Ontario County as a whole as well as maintaining a focus on the destinations within Ontario County. The three core areas that drive the most significant visitor spending are: Victor, Geneva and Canandaigua. Each of these have a cluster of lodging, attractions, shopping and dining that drive economic impact. Further, there are attractions, lodging and wineries scattered throughout the County, each of which attracts visitors and will be marketed appropriately. Visitor research confirms the parts of the County are far more successful when marketed as a whole because visitors don’t know the geographic lines; visitors travel throughout the County once they arrive.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS – UNIQUE POSITIONING

- 2016 –Marketing plan and tactics aligned with research (Example: new website and brand positioning core elements)
- 2017 – Re-evaluate the plan and retool as needed
- 2018 –
- 2019 – Research to determine if new direction is needed
- 2020 – Strategic planning & new strategic plan for 2025

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- Young Strategies Inc. - 2015/16 Full Research Study
- Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council – SAG (Strategic Advisory Group Study) – outlining key market positions and audience opportunities
- Simpleview – Data and research for build of the website and SEO analytics
- Dixon Schwabl – Social media metrics
- Ontario County Office of Economic Development – 2016 Research and positioning study
- Center for Governmental Research
- Tourism Economics – 2014 Study (ongoing through I Love NY)

Section 3. Unique Tactical Implementation

TACTICAL DIRECTION AND GOALS

The FLVC marketing team is well trained and the Board has continued to invest in state of the art technological resources. The team has developed strong professional partnerships and research resources. For maximum effectiveness leveraging all these resources is imperative. An annual plan will provide details: annual tactics and expected outcomes. For example: visitor “personas” will be developed and addressed to maintain focus and clarity.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS – TACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION

- 2016 – Persona development; Audience plans outlined
- 2017 – Integrate and report on analytics within Simpleview
- 2018 – Review and adjust travel distribution systems by persona
- 2019 – Evaluate partnerships, ROI, and partner cost/benefit via analytics and current best practices
- 2020 – Website rebuild

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

Core elements to deliver the message include traditional marketing vehicles as well as ever-changing “disruptive” placements to put the message in front of people where they least expect to see it:

- **Paid Media:** Print, advertising, sponsorships, paid search, banners; partnerships
- **Owned assets:** Websites, video content, in-house blogs, SEO, email, content, visitor guide and print digital properties, mobile, gateway presence
- **Earned Media and Friends:** Public Relations, fans, views, influencer engagement
- **Social platforms and referrals:** media – Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, Twitter, forums, email, Blogosphere
- **Shared:** Comments, photos & videos uploaded by others, brand ambassadors



Section 4. Leisure and Niche Marketing – Traditional & Digital

STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND GOALS

Finger Lakes Visitors Connection markets Ontario County to a broad range of travel segments (leisure, group, etc.) with primary focus on driving leisure visitation (individual travel parties) in all twelve months of the year. The marketing effort will generate interest in return visits among prior visitors as well as potential first-timers. Digital marketing will be the primary focus because it provides the biggest ROI, however, traditional print advertising will continue to be a critical component for building awareness. Web-based technology is the most cost-effective medium for communicating regularly, effectively, efficiently and directly with consumers, travel trade and media. Marketing programs will have a market-specific, web-based component where applicable. The design and look of the website, visitor guide, collateral, social media and other marketing materials deliver the positioning elements and convert inquirers to visitors.

Target markets – Highway corridor drive markets (all within a 6-hour drive or less)

1. Interstate 90 West – Rochester to Buffalo/Niagara Falls (core drive)
2. Southern Ontario Province, Canada – Metro Toronto and south (core drive)
3. Central & West Pennsylvania – Harrisburg to Pittsburgh (core drive)
4. Interstate 90 East – Syracuse, Utica; Albany; (core drive)
5. International – partner with State Travel Office (UK, GR & CH)

Demographics – Maintain interest from Boomers while targeting upscale (spenders) GenXers & Millennials with publications, websites, social and online promotions.

Travel Party – Adults without children first followed by families (winter sports). Adult couples are available to travel year-round (winter/spring) and higher incomes travel more often. Single Millennials are solid target for winter.

Media – A mix of traditional and digital. Traditional lifestyle publications as well as digital advertising and social media in the platforms identified in the research. TripAdvisor and Facebook are among the most important.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS – LEISURE AND NICHE

- 2016 – Develop a strategic template & program evaluation standards
- 2017 – Offer cooperative marketing buy-in. DTN.
- 2017 - Attend shows & host fams for partnership opportunities in International markets
- 2018 – Look for unique partnerships (i.e. dog food company for pet friendly)
- 2019 – Research to determine if new direction is needed
- 2020 –

GOALS:

- Primary focus is driving increased leisure visitation from the core drive markets. Drive year-round visitation with focus on Jan – May, Sep & Nov - ads & promotions. Summer months have highest occupancy = focus on other months.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- Digital marketing and occasional use of “disruptive” placement will drive growth.
- Ad placement in lifestyle publications, newspaper inserts, radio and travel guides.
- Inquiry fulfillment through print visitor guides (less), website/digital media (more).
- Partnership co-op integrated marketing programs to extend reach into core markets.

Section 5. Travel Tour and Trade

STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND GOALS

FLVC travel tour and trade marketing effort (formerly known as “group sales”) is focused on recruiting new groups in partnership with lodging and event venues in Ontario County. FLVC does not enter into contracts with groups and is therefore not a sales organization. FLVC will act as a “group” marketing agent to bring leads to the hotels and event facilities. The event facilities’ sales personnel are responsible for sales, booking and contracts.

Lodging market research revealed hotel occupancy exceeding 60% more than half the days in the year (YSI, pg. 13). Therefore, FLVC will partner with lodging to determine the need periods when rooms are available for groups and an effective ROI can be gained. Out-of-market promotion efforts to drive group visitation into Ontario County when occupancy is below 65%. Efforts to attract or retain small to medium sized groups are likely to be most successful year-round on weekdays.

FLVC will market Ontario County as a group destination (in close partnership with group facilities) to the following segments: group tour, small meetings (10 – 75 people), sports and reunions (particularly non-summer activities), “convention” spin-offs from near-by markets. Additionally, FLVC will interface with local leaders to facilitate lead development and new business opportunities.

2015 ONTARIO COUNTY HOTEL DAILY OCCUPANCY PERCENTAGES:

- # of days 60% - 69% = 67 (18.4% of the year)
 - # of days 70% - 79% = 43 (11.8% of the year)
 - # of days 80% - 89% = 42 (11.5% of the year)
 - # of days 90% or above = 42 (11.5% of the year)
- TOTAL days 60% or above occupancy = 194 (53.2% of the year)**

Source: YSI Research for FLVC, 2015.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS – TRAVEL TOUR AND TRADE

- 2016 – Integrate travel and tour trade into marketing team focus. Develop spin-off tactics to differentiate product to market and match product inventory.
- 2017 – Seek partnerships in niche markets for off season groups and lead development
- 2018 – Reevaluate travel tour and trade/meetings strategy based on changes in product and results
- 2019 –
- 2020 –

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- Comprehensive, targeted marketing tactics to reach trade
- Sponsorship and participation in group planner associations and feeder market cities.
- Group shows (ABA & NTA) attend in alternating years.



Section 6. Public Relations – Audience Development and Content

STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND GOALS

Editorial coverage in travel and lifestyle publications is invaluable to build awareness of travel experiences. A public relations (PR) effort is required to pitch stories to travel writers to generate both digital and traditional coverage. PR is the most cost-effective form of communication because the FLVC could never afford to buy the level of exposure delivered by editorial stories. Therefore, FLVC dedicates staff to reach targeted media in key domestic and international markets. Partnerships are critical to ensure Ontario County remains appropriately visible within travel publications touting New York as a destination.

Unique angles to promote Ontario County that will drive visitation during slow periods include: farm to table/unique dining and wine pairings/experiences, entertaining evenings, wake boarding & adventure sports, winter sports, unique settings for meetings/events. Coverage for new products needs to be an ongoing tactic.

Concurrently, a local PR effort within Ontario County is important. Maintaining visibility and support for FLVC programs within Ontario County is essential toward the long-term goal of building awareness of Ontario County as a destination. The FLVC President/CEO has primary responsibility for the organization's image and visibility within the County and immediate area. The team can augment this coverage with a positive profile in the communities as well. It is vital to maintain civic buy-in by advocating with local leaders that travel promotion is sustainable and green economic development. Maintaining partnerships with governing bodies and community leadership is critical to the success of this plan led by the President/CEO. FLVC partnership within the local travel industry plays a significant role in achieving success.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS – AUDIENCES AND CONTENT

- 2016 – Integrate existing assets into FLVC CMS to leverage and account for earned and social and shared media
- 2017 – Brand guidelines updated and storytelling vision in place
- 2017 – PR Kit finished (traditional or online)
- 2018 – Consider a speaker's bureau, expert panels
- 2019 – Host community forums to expose audiences to the business of tourism, research for next strategic plan
- 2020 –

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

Audiences: Leisure Markets and Niche

Develop annual PR plan & goals.

- Maintain digital image library, inventory of unique experiences, local contacts, press contacts, etc.
- Host travel writer FAM tours.
- Creative story placement promotions.

Audiences: Travel Trade and Industry

- Industry expertise, packages, incentives, resources

Audiences: Communities and Government - Local PR

- Annual ROI, economic impact & plan update report
- Annual presentations to County & city governments
- Press releases to local and regional media
- Press conferences

Section 6. Public Relations – Relationship Management

STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND GOALS

Future communication, marketing and inquiry collection (CRM) will emphasize the increased collection of email addresses which can be monitored by the percentage of email addresses in database contacts.

Finger Lakes Visitors Connection needs to have a communications and marketing plan that generates leads and contains methodology that sustains relationships. Annual simple inquiry conversion studies – Send online survey (10 questions) out to track conversion.

YSI will support FLVC in the editing and distribution of the surveys. Database management and the maintenance of online visitor relationships is critical to success.

Additionally, FLVC will maintain its profile and partnerships at the various levels of the tourism distribution network, ensuring that opportunities for Ontario County tourism market development and economic development are top-of-mind.



KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS – PR RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

2016 – Grow the FLVC - CRM database and facilitate an ongoing communications plan to the varied audiences

2017 – Educate community leaders on tourism

2017 – Set-up consistent data collection and friend gathering in all marketing endeavors and partnerships

2017 – Begin online surveys for conversion, satisfaction and engagement

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- FLVC database
- Social media and 3rd party booking partnerships
- Strategic Advisory Group – Finger Lakes Regional TPAs research study and Neilson data
- “Visitors” in region at key visitor hubs and gateways
- Industry partner relationships
- Maintain partnerships with State Travel Office, Finger Lakes Region E.D. and Finger Lakes tourism region.

Section 7. Visitor Experience - Services

STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND GOALS

The primary focus of FLVC efforts will be to attract first-time and repeat visitors to Ontario County. The secondary focus of the FLVC long-term strategy will be to drive increased visitor engagement and spending once travelers arrive. Connecting travelers to experiences within Ontario County to drive increased spending is the goal.

Online training will be developed to instill a consistent level of knowledge of Ontario County among front-line employees. Additionally, FLVC audits the online apps and mobile sites (TripAdvisor, Yelp, etc.) that travelers use to find their way and make plans while traveling. Training sessions with local travel industry partners will maximize the use of mobile planning devices. Frequent “lunch and learn” free training sessions will help the local travel industry partners become better marketing partners. Training will focus on methods to deliver accurate information while upselling in a hospitable manner. A push-pull strategy should be utilized to drive visitors throughout the County.

To support small meetings marketing and events, FLVC will develop value-added resources and guidance to provide a welcoming experience, focused on those off-season experiences and meetings.

Niche market segment materials need to be developed to more closely match the visitors with their interests (persona development) and informational needs (i.e. what can I do in two hours, two days, etc.) Consideration must be given to diversify and provide relevant content to specific audiences such as the LGBT audience, technical tours, weddings and related niche markets.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS - VISITOR EXPERIENCE - SERVICES

- 2016 – Value added resources (i.e. what to do in two hours, four hours, etc.) developed to provide welcome experiences to meetings and niches
- 2017 – Launch a “lunch & learn” program to improve skills and knowledge of the industry
- 2018 – Online training program development
- 2019 –
- 2020 –

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- Maps & guides
- Mobile audit and training sessions
- Online hospitality training program
- Niche market materials, itineraries, planning tools
- In-region service and promotional materials refreshed



Section 8. Visitor Experience – Gateways and Hubs

STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND GOALS

Ontario County is a large, diverse county with multiple tourism assets. The research confirms three primary hubs for visitors are near gateways where lodging, attractions, shopping and dining are found in close proximity. The three hubs are: Geneva, Victor and Canandaigua. They each have exits off the I-90 Thruway exits and serve as the main gathering points for visitors. Victor and Geneva are in close proximity to the County line and need to promote other Ontario County businesses to prevent economic leakage of visitor dollars to our neighboring counties. Additionally, Naples serves as the gateway hub in the more rural southwest portion of the County. FLVC will partner to provide consistent, high quality, visitor information in a cost-effective manner.

It is important to engage travelers where they gather (lodging, event venues, shopping areas) which may be seasonal at some sites. A mobile information program will be implemented to intercept visitors throughout the County and connect them with experiences, foster return visitation and extended stays, and shared and referred positive social discussions. FLVC recognizes that the accommodations segment is key to providing a more robust experience for a visitor and technically serve as mini-hubs of information.

Signage and transportation options are critical components to a positive visitor experience. FLVC must advance opportunities to improve wayfinding – including, but not limited to transportation signage and mobile information services.

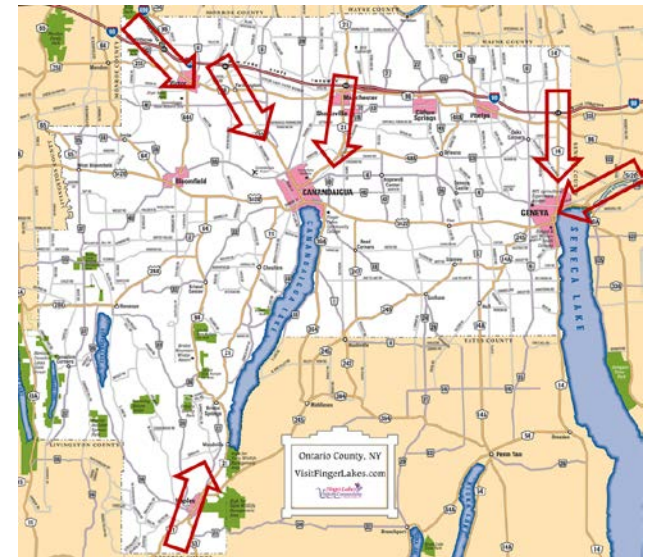
Finally, while most travelers come by car, there is potential for a growing market segment arriving by air. Canandaigua’s airport, along with the major airports of ROC and SYR should be monitored for opportunities to provide an effective welcome and brand positioning.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS - VISITOR EXPERIENCE

- 2016 – Articulate vision & timeline for gateway, mobile, mini-hub services, set up countywide data collection model
- 2017 – Assess data on gateways (including virtual – mobile) consumer use
- 2017 – Tactical plan - foster return visitation, extend stays
- 2018 – Engage in Canandaigua Airport Branding
- 2019 – Signage opportunities reviewed and articulated
- 2020 –

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- Mobile Information Services
- Brand Materials



Section 9. Visitor Experience Sustainability - Business Retention and Expansion

STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND GOALS

FLVC is in a unique position to facilitate the understanding of the full social and economic dimensions of tourism, both in terms of demand and the consumption of goods and services. FLVC has professional insights on tourism supply and demand at a macro and a micro level. With this understanding, insight and access to data, comes a responsibility for engagement on social, environmental, and policy issues which impact the potential growth and sustainability of the visitor experience and our area's quality of life.

The following issues need vigilance to thwart threats and seize opportunities. The efforts need to be proactive, not reactive where possible.

- Shifting trends that affect current product visitor volumes and revenues
 - Retail sales and the online economy
 - Travel distribution systems and planning tools such as OTAs, etc.
- Retention and expansion of unique assets and foundation elements which have helped build Ontario County's core brand
 - Historic preservation, agricultural economies , park development.
- Environmental quality and related "Finger Lakes" brand identity
 - Water quality, air quality, visual quality, specific development issues
- Changes in travel behavior and demand which affect desirability of existing product and/or new product potential.
 - Development of the shared economy – Uber in transportation and Air B and B in the accommodations sector
 - Demographic and psychographic shifts (boomers to millennials)
- Governmental policy changes which may impact competitive "playing field"
 - Example – casino legislation changes

Finger Lakes Visitors Connection is viewed as the "Quality of Life Experts" for Ontario County. Developing the mantra that a "great place to visit is a great place to live" (and vice versa) will aid success in product development and visitor experience sustainability.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS - SUSTAINABILITY

- 2016 – Develop strong community connections through the FLVC team to understand policy issues facing each community
- 2016 – Address travel industry role and opportunities in maximizing local revenues in light of increase in online economies
- 2017 – Address the Shared economies industries
- 2018 – Include a business retention and expansion component in the product development plan
- 2019 –
- 2020 –

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- Awareness and engagement in communities
- Meet regularly with economic development leaders to bring development ideas to the table.
- Resources of Center for Governmental Research
- Partnerships (informational and cooperative marketing) developed with organizations citing similar goals and missions.
- FLVC serves as a catalyst for the redevelopment of existing experiences.

Section 10. Visitor Experience - New Product Development

STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND GOALS

A dynamic destination is in a constant state of growth and evolution to keep up with the changing tastes of the traveling public. FLVC has not been a bricks and mortar development organization, but should be a catalyst for growth by sharing research and working in close partnership with OCOED and OCEDC, encouraging the development of those activities that rated highly in the research study.

The new/potential activities that generated the most interest from survey respondents involved the following characteristics (see table below) :

- Lakefront
- Entertainment & fun
- Connectivity/unique experiences in proximity to one-another
- Unique experiences that create memories to last a lifetime
- Connecting indoor and outdoor experiences

These findings are very similar to other research conducted in western New York and reveal a consistency in traveler desires. Growth will come from differentiating Ontario County among the other New York counties by offering unique experiences. FLVC will work with the travel industry and other economic development agencies to create and maintain a prioritized travel experience development plan.

Answer Options (rated on a 1 – 5 scale, 5 is highest)	Overnight	Daytrip
Lakefront village with shopping & dining	4.04	4.08
Trolley to wine tastings	3.64	3.65
Cozy winter getaway package	3.59	3.66
Lodging - retreat house with high level spa & food (4 diamond)	3.27	3.20
Evening entertainment district	3.22	3.29

Source: YSI Research 2015, pg. 36

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS – PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

- 2016 – Finalize town based inventory of tourism assets
- 2017 – Develop and prioritize inventory, product list and prioritized travel experience plan
- 2018 – Fund for focus groups (need co-op funding) to market test development ideas.
- 2019 –
- 2020 –

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- Make research accessible to developers and provide interpretation and suggestions for growth.
- Meet regularly with economic development leaders to bring development ideas to the table.



Section 11. Accountability & Future Planning

STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND GOALS

FLVC is a research-based, strategic destination marketing & management organization. As the DMO (Destination Management Organization) for Ontario County, FLVC needs to maintain the highest standards of operation. Engagement in professional DMO focused organizations, such as DMAI, are key to assist in “future-vision” and to create benchmarks for success. The President/CEO will have primary oversight of on-going tracking, accountability and reporting and needs to develop a resource base to assist and gather data.

Progress on accomplishing strategic goals will be tracked annually and progress reports presented to the FLVC Board of Directors, elected officials and civic leaders.

An annual review session will cover prior year accomplishments, set goals for the coming year and determine if a full retreat is necessary to change the strategic direction of the FLVC.



KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS – FUTURE PLANNING

2016 – Integrate Simpleview CRM and tracking software for data management and internal reporting. Translate to appropriate economic impact models.

2017 – Pursue DMAI certification

2018 –

2019 – Retain firm for research update

2020 – Strategic planning & new strategic plan for 2025

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- Independent research firms to conduct regular research (every 4-5 years), updates
- Conduct annual in-house review as part of planning process to track progress and economic impact of FLVC program of work.
- Professional memberships such as DMAI and leadership roles maintained as information resources.

NOTE

A planning retreat should be scheduled only when the President/CEO and Board determine that significant changes in the economy, travel trends or marketplace require major changes to be made in the long range plan.